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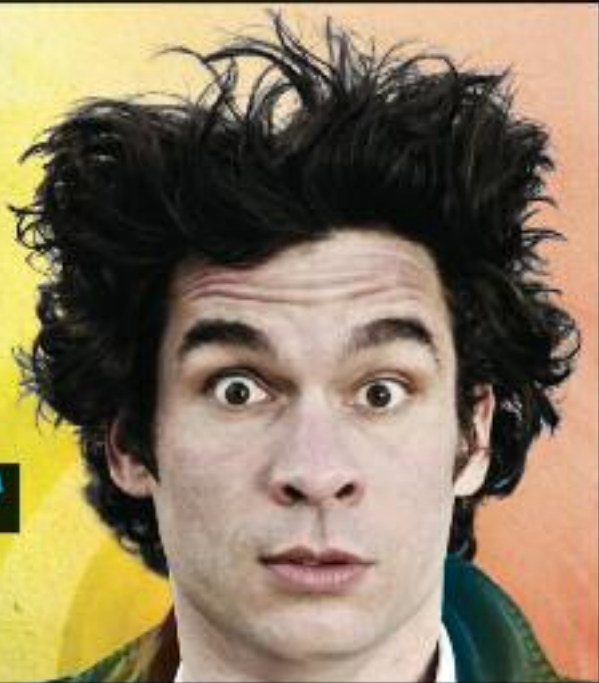
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E D I T O R I A L

Few subjects are more important to the Christian than the Holy Spirit. Scottish theologian George Smeaton regarded the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, along with "the atonement and justification by faith, as the article of a standing or falling church". And, as Calvin reminds us, it is only through our knowledge of the Spirit that we discover how it is possible for "poor and needy men ... to enjoy Christ and all His benefits".

Nevertheless, over the last 500 years within Protestantism every generation has struggled with the difficulties involved in understanding the Spirit's work. In 1660, the Puritan Thomas Goodwin claimed that the church in his time had largely forgotten the third Person of the Trinity. And, in 1674, John Owen, the former vice-chancellor of Oxford University, suggested that it was dangerous for a theologian's reputation to express an interest in the Spirit's work. He lamented that the doctrine of the Spirit, in dealing with "the deep things of God", involved matters "which by their own heavenly nature, were ... remote from the heart of man".

Again, in the late 19th century, the Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper claimed that while Christians had little difficulty in honouring the Father and the Son, in practice they thought little about the Holy Spirit and lived in Him even less. It was for this reason that he wrote his magisterial book, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*.

Over the past few decades, we have witnessed some enormously valuable contributions on the work of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, it seems that one of the hardest lessons for the church to learn in every age is that "it is not by might (well-trained ministers), nor by power (brilliant rhetoric and plentiful resources), but by My Spirit", says the Lord (Zech. 4:6). Unless the Spirit pours His blessing upon our ministries, they will yield little fruit. As Paul reminds us, the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments do not automatically guarantee the conferral of grace. The gospel must come to us not only in word and sign, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power (1 Thess. 1:5). Hence, we must learn constantly to look to the Spirit to accomplish what we cannot do ourselves.

Peter Hastie 

Transformer

MUCH MISINTERPRETED, THE SPIRIT HAS ONE GREAT TASK

Dr Sinclair Ferguson is a pastor and theologian known in Reformed circles for his teaching, writing, and editorial work. Dr Ferguson received his PhD from the University of Aberdeen and was a minister in the Church of Scotland from 1971 to 2005, when he transferred to the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in the USA. He now serves as the senior pastor of First Presbyterian Church, South Carolina. He is also a professor at Redeemer Seminary in Dallas, Texas. He has been an editor with the Banner of Truth Trust and worked as a minister at St George's-Tron Church, Glasgow. He has also been a professor of theology at Westminster Theological seminary, Philadelphia. He is a council member of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals.

Numbers of Dr Ferguson's books deal with the person of the Holy Spirit and the Christian life. He has written *The Holy Spirit* (1997), *John Owen on the Christian Life* (1987), *A Heart for God* (1996) and *The Christian Life* (1996). He recently gave the Bible expositions at the Presbyterian General Assembly of Australia.

Some people think that the church has only become interested in the Holy Spirit in the last 60 years. Have Christians only really focused on the Holy Spirit since the rise of Pentecostalism?

I guess the answer to that question is both yes and no. If you think that the church has only been interested in the Holy Spirit for the last century or so,



Sinclair Ferguson
talks to
Peter Hastie

that's probably because you have only lived during this period. Our problem is that by and large, most Christians have little or no sense of the history of the church and its theology.

There have certainly been earlier periods in church history when Christians have been deeply interested in the Spirit's person and work. The first of these occurred in the early church, when believers struggled to understand the status and role of each of the persons of the Trinity. Their discussions were fraught with difficulties because sometimes their language seemed to minimise the role of the Holy Spirit. However, once they became clear about the doctrine of the Trinity, and especially the person of Christ, they began to give proper emphasis to the Holy Spirit. In the fourth century, the Cappadocian fathers (Basil of Caesarea, his brother Gregory of Nyssa, and their friend Gregory Nazianzus), in particular, stressed that the Holy Spirit was to be honoured and worshipped together with the Father and the Son. They were concerned with showing that the Spirit was a divine person who was nevertheless intimately related with the ministry of Christ.

Unfortunately, in the Middle Ages, the church increasingly tied the reception of Christ's grace to the sacraments. In doing so, it took the Spirit's ministry

out of the Spirit's hands and put it into the hands of the clergy. In other words, during this period people believed that you received grace through the sacrament rather than through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

It was only at the time of the 16th century Reformation that the biblical teaching about the person and the work of the Holy Spirit was rediscovered. Calvin, in particular, realised that it was the Holy Spirit who applies the work of Christ to us. It is not surprising that the third book in his famous work, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, is entitled "The Way we Receive the Grace of Christ". It is in this book that Calvin emphasises the significance of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Interestingly, this sense of the significance of the Spirit's ministry continued into the 17th century as a feature of the Puritan period. In my view, the greatest work that has ever been written about the Holy Spirit was written by John Owen during this time.

Are you referring to his books, *Communion with God* and *The Holy Spirit*?

Yes, I am. They are volume two and three in the series published by The Banner of Truth. Essentially, Owen has written 1200 pages on the Holy Spirit. He was a very learned individual and had a great intellect. He was no ivory tower thinker. He was driven by a passionate belief that the Holy Spirit really is the third person of the Trinity and that it is only through the Spirit that we can know, love and serve Christ. Further, he

stressed that it's only in the Spirit's power that we can live the Christian life. Indeed, for Owen, the church is a community that is filled with the Holy Spirit.

Owen's writings on the Holy Spirit constitute the high water mark for the development of this doctrine. Although there was a powerful movement of the Holy Spirit in the 18th century, during what has become known as "the Great Awakening", there wasn't a great deal of writing about the Spirit during this period. Again, in the 19th century, it was within the ranks of reformed theology where the real interest in the Spirit and His ministry was taught and sustained. One only has to look at Abraham Kuyper's profound work on *The Work of the Holy Spirit* to understand this.

When we come to think of the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Pentecostal movement in the 20th century, it seems to me that the interest is focused on the experiential effects of the individual's religious experience rather than the Spirit's person and ministry.

How, then, do you explain the proliferation of books over the past 50 years on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit? Is there some other reason for this interest apart from the person and work of the Holy Spirit?

Quite possibly there is. I think it's helpful to keep the big picture in mind and remember the trends in theology over the last two centuries. As you may be aware, the Enlightenment presented a major crisis for the Christian church. It was a time when human reason displaced God's revelation. God's existence and His capacity to enter into a relationship with us came under challenge.

One of the leading thinkers in the church who tried to meet the challenge of the Enlightenment was the German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher redefined Christianity in terms of an inward religious experience that was marked by a sense of dependence on and taste for the infinite. This idea that the Christian faith was essentially an experience of dependence on God finally came home to roost among evangelicals who accentuated the element of "experience". I think this is a better explanation for the fascination in the church today with the idea of religious experience.

Does this mean that for many Christians, doctrine is less

important than experience?

Yes, it does, and it's usually coupled with a belief that doctrine divides while experience offers enlightenment. Obviously people who hold this view place a high value on experience. While there is a mood in the wider church that experience is all-important, Christians who have been raised to think biblically can be caught up in a subjectively centred faith while believing that they themselves are sustaining biblical



IT'S AS THOUGH GOD IS SAYING TO US, 'THIS IS THE POINT AT WHICH YOUR UNDERSTANDING FAILS BUT YOUR ADORATION NEEDS TO BEGIN.'

Christianity. However, the problem is that the next generation tends to focus on the significance of the experience itself, abstracted from any theological principle.

The other thing to note is that when a person's Christian experience becomes disconnected from the truth of the Gospel, their inner experience becomes the canon by which they live. To put it simply, if God is continuing to speak through special revelations, then this stream of revelation will become normative in the church, and the Bible will be displaced sooner or later. This happened within the Roman Catholic Church (which holds that there are two sources of divine revelation: Scripture and tradition). Inevitably tradition, the more recent revelation of God's mind, displaces the Scriptures. At that point, tradition becomes the practical canon within the Church and determines how the believer should live the Christian life. Something similar has happened in the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. So-called special revelations by the Spirit have assumed an equal authority with Scripture. From the psychological view they then become the actual driving force in the fellowship and for the individual. After all, they

come directly, immediately – even easily! No Bible study is needed!

During the 1960s and '70s, there were some people who were very surprised to learn that the Charismatic movement was alive in the Catholic Church. However, in one sense there was nothing surprising in this at all. One extra-biblical source of revelation, namely, tradition, had been supplanted by another, special revelations.

Why is the Spirit of God so necessary to Christian belief? Isn't it enough to focus simply on the Father and the Son?

I think John Calvin provides a great answer to that in the *Institutes* III:1.i, right at the beginning of his exposition on how we receive the grace of Christ. He says that so long as we are separated from Christ, everything He has done is of no use whatsoever. In a sense, I think a useful rubric for the ministry of the Holy Spirit would be Jesus' words in His farewell discourse, "when He comes, He will take from what is mine and show it to you" (Jn. 16:14).

The Spirit's role is to bring to us all the riches that Christ possesses, but are not realised in us until we are actually united to Him. The Spirit is the bond of our union with the Lord Jesus. When the New Testament speaks of Christ dwelling in us so that we are united to Him, it really means that our dwelling and union with Christ takes place by the Spirit.

Christmas is almost upon us. Is there any particular reason why we ought to be thinking about the Holy Spirit when we think about the incarnation of Christ?

It's certainly true that Christmas is not only about Jesus Christ; it's also about the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In a sense, the ultimate wonder of Christmas revolves around the mystery of how the Holy Spirit was the person responsible for the conception of Jesus Christ in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

There are many people today who dispute the Virgin Birth. You regard it as a miracle. Why?

I regard it as a miracle because this is what the Scripture teaches. Second, it also appears to be a miracle because the sinlessness of the Lord Jesus' humanity is something necessarily effected by the Holy Spirit. Jesus had to be without sin when He took upon Himself our human-

ity both in and from the virgin Mary. The Spirit was operative in the conception of Jesus because the Spirit is always involved in what God does; He always takes an active role when God brings about a new beginning. And it was absolutely essential that Jesus' humanity was sanctified for His special work of redemption.

I believe that the great events in which the Spirit participates, like the incarnation, are meant to evoke a sense of humility and wonder in us. It's as though God is saying to us, "This is the point at which your understanding fails but your adoration needs to begin. The extent of My power is utterly beyond you."

Think of the three great miracles prior to the return of Christ in which the Spirit plays a significant role. First, there is the wonder of creation that begins in darkness; second, there is the mystery of the incarnation which was accomplished in the darkness of the Virgin's womb; and finally, there is the resurrection of Christ from the darkness of the tomb. In each case, the Spirit brings about something glorious in what seems to be very unpromising circumstances.

It is easy to think of the Holy Spirit as a force rather than as a person. Does it really matter how we think of Him?

Yes, it does matter, in all kinds of interesting little ways. There are a variety of theological and spiritual implications which follow naturally from our understanding of how the Spirit works.

From the theological point of view, if we thought of the Spirit as a "force", it would mean that we are baptised into the name of two persons and an "it".

The impact of this understanding would be to gravely distort our knowledge of the God of the Bible. Owen brings this out in his book *Communion with God*. He wonderfully describes how the fellowship that we have with the Father is an intimate communion based on the fact that we are adopted sons. We have a special relationship to God with respect to Him being our Father.

Again, the Father did not die for us on the cross and so we have fellowship with the Lord Jesus in His sufferings.



THE SPIRIT MUST OPEN THE MINDS OF THOSE WHO READ THE BIBLE. THIS TAKES PLACE TIME AND TIME AGAIN AND EXPLAINS WHY SO MANY OF US HAVE COME TO CHRIST.

Further, we also have a communion with the Holy Spirit who brings us the gifts of Christ's redemption. The Spirit Himself comes to us and points us to Christ. He doesn't bring glory to Himself but to Jesus. This is something the Cappadocian fathers emphasised. And this is precisely why we should bring glory to Him.

The original Hebrew word for Spirit (ruach) conveys the idea of an inanimate force. Is there any reason why a term is used that does not suggest personality?

I wish I knew! I guess it's one of those aspects of progressive revelation that there are some things in the Old Testament that are not as clear as they are in the New. However, while there are references in the Old Testament to the Spirit that are more suggestive of naked divine power, there are others which recognise His personal character. For instance, in Isaiah 63:10 the prophet recognises the personality of the Holy Spirit in the account of the Exodus when He says "but they grieved the Holy Spirit". Paul picks up this expression in

his letter to the Ephesians (4:30). The interesting thing for us about Isaiah's use of this expression is that Isaiah can look back on the Exodus, which is a prototype for our exodus through Christ, and see that it was accomplished by the personal ministry of the Holy Spirit.

My best guess as to why the Spirit may be referred to as "breath" or "wind" in the Old Testament is that these terms are analogies of how the Spirit functions within His own being as the one who brings His tremendous power to bear on the external universe. The Spirit is the original "breath" or "wind" of power from which all other power is derived.

The other thing we should note is that although the Spirit is described as breath or wind, nevertheless He is still described as a person and personal attributes are ascribed to Him.

The authority of the Bible is constantly challenged today. How is its authority established in comparison with, say, the Qur'an, or the book of Mormon? Does the Spirit have some role in this?

This is an important question. The apostles teach quite explicitly that the Scriptures are God-breathed and that those who wrote them were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 2 Pet. 1:21). While there are many points of distinction between the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament and these other documents, for example, the style, the internal consistency, and the coherence of the plan of salvation that we find within the Bible, the fundamental thing about the Scriptures is that they are self-authenticating.

The Bible itself, through the Spirit's witness, convinces us that it is the word of God. This is an important point because it means that the ultimate ground for our persuasion of the Bible's authority does not come from outside the Bible itself. This is one of the main principles of the Reformation. The Reformers believed that we could only be convinced of the authority of the Scripture because it is God's authoritative word and the Spirit persuades us that this is so. Ultimately, it is only the Holy Spirit who will open our eyes to the truth that the Bible is the word of God. We are like the disciples on the Emmaus Road. Just as Christ opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures, so the Spirit must open the minds of those who read the Bible. This takes

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place time and time again and explains why so many of us have come to Christ.

Why do we read in the Gospels that Jesus was baptised by the Spirit when we know He was conceived by the Spirit? Why did He need this fresh infusion of power?

There are a number of dimensions that we must remember in answering this. First, the presence of the Spirit in and upon Jesus at His baptism is consistent with His public presentation as the Messiah. John the Baptist understood this because he testified, "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove, and remain on Him. I would not have known Him, except that the One who sent me to baptise with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is He who will baptise with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God" (John 1:32-34).

I also think that Luke has a real insight into the baptism because he says at the end of the first period of Jesus' life that, "He grew in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and men" (Luke 2:52). I think most evangelicals understand that Jesus didn't arrive in the world as a fully mature adult. He "grew in wisdom and stature". As He related to people, He grew "in favour with man". However, many of us may balk at the idea that He grew in wisdom and "favour with God". I suspect that many of us may have become so exhausted in protecting Christ's deity that we have lost sight of the reality of His humanity. We must remember that His reality was embryonic and fragile in the womb of the Virgin Mary. In His role as the second Adam, He grows as a man in His various capacities. Further, He learns things as He grows.

As the second Adam, He enters into a new phase of His role following His baptism. He enters upon His work of bringing in the kingdom through becoming our substitute and representative by His total dependence on the Holy Spirit. For this new phase of His ministry, He looks to the Lord for a fresh empowering by the Spirit. So at His baptism, He identifies Himself fully with us and is empowered for the next stage of His saving work. It is from then on that He drives out demons by the Spirit of God. This is the sign that the kingdom of God has come among us (Mt. 12:28).

What is the significance of the Holy

Spirit for Jesus' preaching and miracles?

I think one of the prominent themes, especially in the Synoptic Gospels, is that Jesus comes to crush Satan, particularly in terms of the fulfilment of Genesis 3:15. In the Gospels, we see Him facing down and overcoming the powers of darkness. We have something like a movie version of this in Revelation 12 where we see the serpent transformed into a dragon who has come to destroy the Christ-Child. However, the Christ overcomes him and fights for us as what Luther called "the proper man".



THIS IS NOT SIMPLY JESUS DOING WHAT WE SHOULD HAVE DONE; THIS IS JESUS UNDOING WHAT WE HAVE WRECKED.

Again in Luke's Gospel, we are told that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness where for forty days He was tempted by the devil. Whereas our temptations normally come to us, Jesus ventures into the world of temptation to overcome it. It is in the power of the Spirit that He achieves a decisive victory over Satan in the wilderness.

Again, we see that it is in the power of the Spirit that Jesus delivers Legion the demon-possessed man. Why are we told that this man was possessed by a legion of evil spirits? I mean, it doesn't take a legion of devils to drive a man out of his mind. So why is there such a concentration of demonic force in this man? It's because this is a showdown between Satan and Jesus. Who is the more powerful? Can Christ rescue us from all the force of demonic power? Indeed He can, as the One who is filled with the Spirit. The demons themselves recognise that His coming into the world is showdown time.

As the Gospel story proceeds, Satan tries to move Jesus to the cross on his terms. He enters into Judas Iscariot and so on. There are many indications in the

Gospels that Christ's ministry was essentially one of waging war on Satan's kingdom through the Spirit. This is one of the reasons why the Holy Spirit is empowering Him. This is not simply Jesus doing what we should have done; this is Jesus undoing what we have wrecked, and giving us in the process a glimpse of His final undoing of the curse of sin in the glory of the new heavens and the new earth.

Why was there a need for a fresh outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost?

I think we need to remember that while the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter explained the event in terms of what had happened to Jesus through His resurrection and ascension. The gift of the Spirit at Pentecost is the sign that Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of God and that God has made Him both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:33,36). In other words, He has been exalted above every other power and deity.

Pentecost is essentially the day of Jesus' coronation. I was born in 1948, so it took me a little while as a small boy to work out how Queen Elizabeth could have become queen in 1952 but her coronation was in 1953. You see, it was the coronation I remembered. I now see her coronation in some respect as analogous to that of Christ's. Christ became king when he conquered sin and death upon the cross but then He was exalted to the right hand of God following His ascension. Pentecost is the public display - His coronation day. I remember that when the Queen was crowned in 1953, I received a mug with her face on it. It was a gift that accompanied the coronation. Likewise, the Spirit is the gift of the enthroned Christ to his church. The apostle Peter says, "the extraordinary events that are taking place are not a sign that we are drunk with wine, but they show us that this same Jesus who was crucified is now exalted to the right hand of God and is both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:33) So there is an epochal element to Pentecost.

Then again, Pentecost also represents a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. We learn in Joel 2 that the outpouring of the Spirit is the sign that a new age has dawned and that the figures of prophet, priest and king have been consummated in Jesus Christ. Further, the mention of the many nations who were

present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost is a reminder of the promise to Abraham that “through your offspring, all nations on earth will be blessed” (Gen. 22:17,18) and of the promise to the Son of David, “Ask of me and I will give the nations as your inheritance, the ends of the earth as your possession” (Ps. 2:8).

Nor should we miss the extraordinary difference between the apostle Peter’s thinking on the night of Jesus’ death and his reflections about that event on the day of Pentecost. In just a short time, he has come to realise that the day of Pentecost represents a new age in which Christ gathers the nations to Himself in fulfilment of the Old Testament Scriptures. It also heralds a new fullness of fellowship with God and a degree of intimacy with Him that was not known before.

Some Christians believe that the ecstatic experience that Christians in Jerusalem had on the day of Pentecost teaches us that there is a subsequent experience of the Holy Spirit following conversion. Do you agree? Do you think it is one thing to be born again and another to be baptised by the Holy Spirit?

My own view is that there is a uniqueness to Pentecost that ought to make us cautious about how we apply it to present-day Christians. There are certain aspects to Pentecost which are unrepeatable. Further, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is something that happens to all Christians. Paul says, “for we were *all* baptised by one Spirit into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were *all* given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Cor. 12:13). If the baptism is something that happens to every believer, it seems to me that it relates to our regeneration, not some subsequent ecstatic experience that is marked by tongues-speaking.

Clearly, in Corinth, not everyone who was baptised in the Spirit spoke in tongues (1 Cor. 12:11, 30). Paul did not believe the gift of tongues was given to everyone. When Paul speaks of Spirit baptism, he is speaking about the reality of conversion and regeneration. Every Christian has this experience. I think the importance of that for us is that we should become more aware that we have received nothing less than the Spirit of God and that we now enjoy privileges that are beyond expression and measure. The Puritans were right to remind

us that we spend much of lives living way below the level of our privileges.

How do we relate the baptism of the Holy Spirit to the filling of the Spirit?

The baptism of the Spirit relates to the Spirit coming to dwell in us. It is a once-for-all experience in the Christian life in which the believer is united to Christ. However, since the Holy Spirit is a person, there is a relational dimension to His indwelling. A relationship needs to be maintained. Although we are united to our wives when we get married, we still need to maintain the rela-



THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS SOMETHING THAT HAPPENS TO ALL CHRISTIANS. PAUL SAYS, ‘FOR WE WERE ALL BAPTISED BY ONE SPIRIT INTO ONE BODY’.

tionship. Although the marriage relationship remains intact, it’s possible for the quality of it to ebb and flow. When a young man tells me on the day of his wedding, “I love this woman as much as it’s possible to love a woman,” I realise he has only been married for one hour! If he thinks the relationship will keep on that way throughout the rest of his married life, he needs to think again. Every day he consciously needs to think of his wife and be filled with love for her.

In the same way, a Christian must consciously remember that God has come to dwell in his heart and he must daily rejoice in that fact and surrender to the will and guidance of the Spirit. We are related to God as the Holy Trinity and we must constantly remind ourselves of what it means to have God as our heavenly Father, Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, and the Holy Spirit as our Sanctifier. As we live with this knowledge of God, we will continue to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

What does it mean to pray in the

Holy Spirit?

The Bible tells us that the Spirit and the word are in the closest possible connection. Part of the promise that God gives to us in the new covenant is that “I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow My decrees and be careful to keep My laws” (Ezek. 36:27). So the Spirit always directs us to God’s word.

A Spirit-filled prayer is going to be a prayer that is God-centred, full of thanksgiving, and thoroughly word-centred. In other words, it will be driven by what Scripture tells us about the nature of prayer and it will be informed by the promises of God. “Praying in the Spirit” does not refer to mere excitement or speaking in strange tongues. It refers principally to taking the promises of God, resting on them in faith, reciting them to God, and even reasoning with God as to why He should fulfil them.

You mean in the same way as Abraham was pleading with God for his nephew Lot in Sodom?

Yes, that’s a relevant example. When I was a student at Aberdeen and attended Gilcomston South Presbyterian Church during the days of Rev. William Still, I remember that we had an elder there by the name of Mr Ross. Mr Ross was a fine example of what it means to “pray in the Holy Spirit”. I can still recall listening to his prayers and hearing him explain to the Lord his understanding of the situation. Then, once he had done that, he would identify the main issue of his concern. Next, and this was really the turning point in his prayer, he would cry out, “But now we are coming to Thee about this, O Lord.” As a teenager who was listening in on Mr Ross’s prayer, I would think, “Well, it’s going to be all right now. Mr Ross has taken the matter up with the Lord in a way that would be hard to turn down!” When I think of genuine examples of Spirit-led prayer, I often think of him. He modelled both the humility and boldness that should characterise true prayer.

In what sense are the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s supper vehicles through which Christ mediates grace to us through the Spirit? Many evangelicals feel they are unimportant. Are they right?

No, they are wrong. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s supper are an important part of the Spirit’s ministry because God ordained them for this pur-

pose. Sadly, in some evangelical circles today this is not fully appreciated. The Scriptures make it clear that baptism and the Lord's supper are meant to have a significant place in the church's life, and not simply as bare signs of the gospel. They are meant to enable us to have communion with the Lord. The written word of God performs a similar function. We don't actually have communion with the written word itself; we have communion with the Living Word through the written word as our hearts burn within us.

The same is true when the Lord directs us to Himself, not only by words, but also by signs. These signs express the central truths of the gospel. They are meant to help us enjoy communion with Christ with respect to those aspects of His work that are represented by these emblems. They are different from one another. Baptism is an emblem of our union with Christ, while the Lord's Supper is an emblem of our communion with Him. I often wish that our people would have a deeper grasp of all that is taking place at the Lord's Table. We would be so much the richer for this knowledge.

You mean that the Lord's Supper is more than a mere memorial to an absentee Lord?

Precisely! I sometimes use the well-known passage in Revelation 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock, and if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with Me", to explain what is happening at the Lord's Table. Here we have Christ standing at the door and knocking. I am interested in that text for two reasons; first, because of its connection with the Song of Solomon, but, second, because it's a sacramental text for believers as opposed to being an evangelistic text for unbelievers. It's a reminder that Christ wants to have fellowship with us as we eat the one meal that points exclusively to His saving work.

I understand the Protestant reaction at the time of the Reformation to the Catholic practice of the elevation of the Host (the bread or wafer) at the meal. However, by so decisively rejecting the Roman Catholic understanding of the Mass, we have now lost sight of the fact that it is the Lord Himself who is the Host at the Table. The bread and wine are His gifts to us. It is through our partaking of them that we have communion with Him. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians

10:16, "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation (*koinonia* – communion) in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation (*koinonia* – communion) in the body of Christ?" I think this makes it clear that while remembrance of Christ is an important element of what is hap-



THE PROBLEM IN CORINTH IS THAT PEOPLE FORGOT THAT THE CHIEF WORK OF THE SPIRIT IS TO TRANSFORM US INTO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST.

pening in the Lord's Supper, we mustn't overlook the New Testament emphasis on communion with the risen Christ through the Spirit either.

Today in some of the largest churches in the evangelical world there is a strong emphasis on the more extraordinary gifts of the Spirit like speaking in tongues, signs, wonders and prophecy. Is this right? If not, what do you think should be the chief marks of the Spirit's work?

Perhaps the Rev. William Still's warning is not only to the point, but it's probably the most memorable answer that I could give. Mr Still used to say, "If you've

got the Word without the Spirit, you will dry up. If you've got the Spirit without the Word, you will blow up. However, it's only as you have the Word and the Spirit together that you will grow up."

I think the focus on these more spectacular gifts of the Spirit isn't healthy, especially if it diverts the believer's attention away from central truths of the gospel. I think it's clear from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians that while it's possible to have a large number of spiritual gifts, a church can also be confused about the nature of the gospel and be riddled with factionalism and divided over the nature of leadership. In other words, you can lose sight of the basic message and the ministry that is supposed to proclaim it. The other problem in Corinth is that people were so excited about the spiritual gifts that they possessed, that they lost sight of the fact that they were always to be exercised in love and holiness. In other words, they forgot that the chief work of the Spirit is to transform us into the image of Christ.

In the United States, where I now live, I have noticed that although there has been an explosive growth of churches that emphasise the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, the statistics of these churches reveal that the presence of these gifts doesn't seem to make any measurable difference to lifestyle transformation. And at the end of the day, that's what really matters. So I am definitely committed to the principle that the way to build the church and reach the world is through the grace that God has given us in His word and through the administration of the two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. It is through the use of these means that the Holy Spirit works to build us up in Christlike character, service and outreach to our lost and needy world. **CP**

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God's harvest

ACTS 2 AND THE SPIRIT-FILLED

Ian Smith

A message of fullness and power resonates with a society that feels its emptiness and impotence. Modern society, with its stress on individualism and success has created a climate of emptiness that is seen financially, socially, relationally, physically, emotionally – the list continues. This felt need, however, also creates a danger. We can too easily create a doctrine of the Holy Spirit that meets our perceived needs of wealth, health, prosperity and fulfillment. Such a doctrine may bear little resemblance to the teaching of Scripture.

Acts 2 gives us many insights into an understanding of what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. This chapter is often referred to as the first Pentecost, but such a designation can be unhelpful. Pentecost was an established Jewish festival prior to the New Testament, and the significance of the events of Acts 2 needs to be read in the light of its Old Testament precedents.

Pentecost finds its origins in the Festival of Weeks, so named as it is celebrated after a week of weeks (7 x 7 = 49 days) from the time that harvesters first put their sickles to the grain (Deut. 16:9). On the 50th day (hence the word *Pentecost*), after a week of weeks, the festival occurs. It is a celebration that God has provided the harvest (Ex. 34:22).

On that day no work is to be performed (Num. 28:26), all Jewish men are to gather in Jerusalem (Deut. 16:16), and a freewill offering in proportion to the blessings of the Lord are to be given as a reminder that the whole harvest belongs to the Lord. This festival is therefore similar to that in many agrarian societies – it celebrates the fullness of the harvest after the hard labour that is required to gather it.

By the time of the New Testament, Pentecost had gained an extra significance beyond that of a celebration



THAT WHICH BEGAN IN ACTS 2 HAS BEEN CONTINUING UNTIL TODAY, AS THE SAME GOSPEL IS PREACHED BEYOND JERUSALEM TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.

of harvest. It was also a celebration of the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, three months after the original Passover and deliverance from Egypt (Ex. 19:1). This covenant of Sinai was a renewal of God's original covenant to Abram (Gen. 12:1-3), at the time when a group of travelling pilgrims in the wilderness were established as a nation, the people of God.

This background becomes helpful as we look at Pentecost, which itself is the renewal of the covenant: the new covenant that is inaugurated by Jesus' blood through His death and resurrection (Lk. 22:15-20).

On the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, 50 days after the events of the Passover and its tragic yet glorious events at the time of Jesus' trial, death and resurrection, we find Jewish men gathered in Jerusalem from around the Roman Empire. These men came from places where people spoke different languages.

While they were gathered there was a sound of wind and the appearance of tongues of fire, an allusion that is reminiscent of the presence of God at the giving of the Law at Sinai (Ex. 19:16-20). This is the renewal of Israel of

which the prophets had spoken, this is the gift of the Spirit whereby God would dwell with His people, this was empowerment for mission, and as with other covenant renewal, this is the creation of a community of God's people.

At this point we need to be clear about what this bestowal of languages was that accompanied the gift of the Holy Spirit, and what was its significance. It did not result in incomprehensible utterances; it resulted in people hearing in their own languages (Acts 2:6). The gift of tongues was given to facilitate comprehension and communication for a group who had come from the far corners of the known world (Acts 2:9-11).

The reader of Acts 2 is reminded of the confusion of tongues in the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11. In that story, human pride was such that the nations of the earth thought they could build a great city with a tower that would reach the heavens. This tower was to be a monument to human hubris. The careful reader, however, hears the humour in Gen. 11:7 as the Lord needs to come down to see the tower and the city; the builders of the tower had not reached their objective. God then destroys that city, scatters the people and confuses their languages.

Acts 2 becomes the reversal of Babel, but it is a reversal with a difference. God does not impose a new universal language whereby global communication would be restored. He does something far more exciting: people hear in their own languages. A language is a window into culture, and rather than obliterating cultural differences, in Acts 2 people hear the gospel in their own cultural categories through linguistic diversity. That which began in Acts 2 has been continuing until today, as the same gospel is preached beyond Jerusalem to the ends of the Earth through different cultural incarnations.

The miracle of Pentecost was not so much in what was said, but in what was heard (Acts 2:6); the hearers heard the gospel in their own language. This gift of tongues did not divide those who heard, it united them. It was not a miracle about incomprehensibility but about understanding. A diverse church that would unite, yet respect for cultural and linguistic differences was born. Human differences were not ignored; the unity of the Spirit was able to bring together people from many different backgrounds into one Christian community.

Have you ever thought of how many different languages we speak in our various societies? In the street where I live there are people who speak English, Italian, Mandarin, Arabic, Greek, Korean and many other tongues. But these are not the only languages that divide us. There are those who speak in the concepts of Gen Y, Generation X, of the Baby Boomers. Some feel more at home at a football match because they "speak the language" while others prefer the conversations among young mums at the local playgroup. What brings us together? When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, people heard in their own tongue. It still remains true, people do not hear the message of the gospel unless the Holy Spirit moves within them and opens their ears. This should remind us of the necessity of prayer.

The gift of the Holy Spirit at the festival of Pentecost creates a powerful Christian community that both cuts across and respects personal and social boundaries. The transformative work in the lives of the recipients of the Holy Spirit should not be underestimated; the change within Jesus' disciples is breathtaking. Fifty days before these events, Peter had denied Jesus before a powerless servant girl; at Pentecost Peter proclaims the gospel to those assembled and sees 3000 people baptized.

Peter and the other disciples have witnessed the crucifixion, have met the resurrected Jesus and now have been filled with the Holy Spirit, and their worlds and priorities have been transformed. As the story of Acts continues, they will suffer and even die for their faith. The first-fruits of the harvest had arrived and the transformation that would follow would be inevitable.

It is interesting to note the sort of

community that is established with the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. In Acts 2:42-47 we see a community that focused on teaching, sharing possessions, breaking bread and prayer. Three thousand newly baptized Christians would be a challenge for any church, but it is interesting to note that the first priority that is given by the early church is to teaching. The New Testament never makes a divide between being filled with the Holy Spirit



THERE IS A LEVEL OF COMMUNITY FOR WHICH OUR SOCIETY LONGS, YET THROUGH OUR UNDERLYING VALUES OF INDIVIDUALISM WE ARE UNABLE TO FILL THE VOID.

and the need for teaching; true spirituality is not anti-intellectual, it involves the consecration of all that we are to the service of God.

The filling of the Holy Spirit led to a new appraisal within the Jerusalem church of possessions. Community was valued more highly than personal needs and desires. In the emptiness of modern society, where people are lining up outside the doors of psychologists,

counsellors and therapists, where relationships are cracking and empty, this message of community and fullness strikes a chord. There is a level of community for which our society longs, yet through our underlying values of individualism we are unable to fill the void.

The feeling of emptiness is present within people who are in our churches every Sunday. As humans we were created for intimacy and community, and this level of belonging should be evident in the Spirit-filled Christian community. It may be 2000 years since Pentecost, but the gift of the Holy Spirit still leads to the quality of relationships that reflect the destruction of the barriers that divide us.

The fullness of the Holy Spirit as given at Pentecost will thus result in radical generosity that creates a level of fellowship for which we long. We celebrate this community every time we break bread, as happened in Acts 2. It is a symbolic enactment of our unity in Christ, a declaration of God's presence with us by His Spirit whereby the community of believers is established. People who have this Spirit-filled perspective on life and church understand God's grace, teach it and practise it. It is not surprising that in Acts 2, from such a Spirit-filled community, the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:47). ap



Ian Smith lectures at the Presbyterian Theological Centre, Sydney.

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Not alone

JESUS' GOING MEANS GOD'S PEOPLE WILL NEVER BE DESERTED.

John McClean

We seem fated to be alone. Ironically in the 21st century, with more people on the planet and more ways to connect, we are more alone than ever. Our loneliness is heightened by our claim for autonomy. We have turned existence into an individual affair. We are who we make ourselves to be and we refuse to let others define us. We choose our own values and even our own destiny as much as we choose our hair styles. The modern city represents our culture – an aggregation of profoundly lonely self-defined people. In the city we make our own identities and don't know the name of our next door neighbour.

We talk about community a great deal. That is because we do not have the genuine product. The community we do have is simply what we create on the basis of autonomy. We choose our communities – whether our club or our Facebook friends, but we can opt out as easily as we opt in.

Christians can suffer the same affliction. We feel isolated in our culture, lonely voices trying to sing God's praise yet drowned out by a cacophony of other sounds. Our response is to draw in close to each other so at least we can hear some friendly voices. We throw ourselves into creating a sense of community in our churches, trying to compensate for what is missing in modern culture. Regularly our churches fail our expectations and are no more satisfying than what we find around us. It is important that churches live as real communities, but unless our community goes deeper than our attempts to create connections they will offer no more than is found in a myriad of other self-created communities.

Jesus' words to His disciples in John 14 tell us about a real community and the final answer to loneliness (all the references in this article come from John's gospel). He looked ahead know-



JESUS' DEPARTURE LOOKS LIKE A DISASTER, BUT IS, IN FACT, A GREAT TURNING POINT IN GOD'S PLAN – EVERYTHING CHANGED WHEN THE SPIRIT CAME.

ing that He was about to leave His disciples and His words must have been shocking. When He said “do not let your hearts be troubled” (14:1), there was obviously good reason that was likely, just as the instruction “do not panic” inevitably announces a good reason to do just that. Jesus goes on to warn them that the world will hate them (15:19-21) and people will want to kill them (16:2). He also tells them that they are filled with grief (16:6), though it seems they remain more confused than grieving (16:16-18).

We know more clearly what Jesus was talking about. In just a few hours He would be arrested, put on trial and executed. Then the disciples' world would fall apart. They would be bereft and their lives would be under threat. Even after His resurrection His departure would continue as He returned to glory with the Father.

What could the disciples expect? At the very least they could expect to be thrown out of the synagogues, rejected by their own people. It is no surprise that after Jesus' death the disciples met in closed rooms. Yet the frightened huddle is not what Jesus planned for His followers. He had called them to be His church, a city on a hill and light to the

world. How could they be that? What was Jesus' answer to their loneliness?

Jesus' teaching addresses life after He leaves. He tells His disciples that, despite appearances, after He goes they will not be alone. In fact they will have closer and deeper fellowship with God, because life after He leaves is life by the Spirit. Jesus says that He will ask the Father and the Father will give them the Spirit (14:16, 26). The gift of the Spirit depends on Jesus' return to the Father, and He even tells the disciples that He goes away for their good because only then will the Spirit come (16:7). Jesus' departure looks like a disaster, but is, in fact, a great turning point in God's plan. Just as everything changed when Jesus the promised Messiah came, everything changed again when the Spirit came.

Jesus promised “another Counsellor”. The word He used – *paraclete* – is a legal word. It doesn't mean a psychologist or even merely an adviser but an advocate who defends a case in court. He stands beside the accused and helps them through. The Spirit is “another” Counsellor, though Jesus is never called a counsellor in John's gospel. The parallel is probably His description of Himself as the Good Shepherd who cares for and defends and feeds His flock, and even gives His life for them. The Holy Spirit fills a similar role: He is with the disciples to care for them and guide them. Indeed the Spirit will be closer to them than Jesus had been. They had lived with Jesus, but now the Spirit would live in them (14:17).

Jesus' promise is a stunning answer to the fear of loneliness for all God's people. The Old Testament prophets expected a New Age when God's Spirit would be among His people. Jesus' promise declares that His going brings the coming of this age. So we do not live alone. God indwells us by His Spirit. No matter how isolated you might feel at

times, the reality of living as a Christian is that you are never abandoned. God is present, so present that He says that His Spirit is “in” you.

Knowing that may not stop you feeling lonely in one step. Living and growing as a Christian means trusting that we have the Spirit and resting in Him and learning to enjoy fellowship with Him. Like all of the Christian life we slowly grow into the reality that is already ours. Even as we grow in that fellowship – the reality is already true.

Jesus does not stop with the promise of the Spirit, He has more to say. Although He is going away, He Himself will return to them and they will live because He lives (14:18-19). Christian readers who know about Jesus’ “second coming” are tempted to think that He is speaking about that, but in fact He is still talking about the Spirit. The Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus, and He is present in and with the Spirit. When He ‘goes’ life is not locked away. Just the opposite, when Jesus goes away physically, He returns with the Spirit – so that the life of God which He has now fills His disciples.

Even that is not all Jesus has to say about life in the Spirit, for the presence of the Spirit also brings the Father into our lives. When Jesus says “we will come ... and make our home”, He is speaking for Himself and His Father (14:23). You can see why John 14 is so important for the doctrine of the Trinity – here Jesus teaches that to have the Spirit is to have the Father and Son make their home with us.

Yet Jesus’ point is not to teach about the doctrine of the Trinity, but to explain to the disciples that when He goes they will not be alone. In fact He must go, so that the Spirit may come. That is the full answer to loneliness – by the presence of the Spirit who comes from the Father and the Son we are brought into the Triune fellowship. We truly are not alone.

Through John’s gospel Jesus talks about giving “eternal life”. Eternal life is not merely this life extended infinitely, rather it is living in fellowship with God and His life shared with us. Jesus lives in perfect harmony with His Father, and the Father and Son are fully present in the Spirit, so when we receive His Spirit we share in the glorious, loving life of God. The presence of the Spirit means eternal life starts now, because when He comes we share in communion with God.

We won’t see that reality until Jesus returns, yet it is true for us now. We live because the Triune God lives in us.

The gift of the Spirit gives us communion with the Triune God, and that is His greatest and most wonderful work. In the rest of Jesus’ words in John 14-17 He says that the Spirit will teach His fol-




JESUS’ PROMISE IS A STUNNING ANSWER TO THE FEAR OF LONELINESS FOR ALL GOD’S PEOPLE. JESUS’ PROMISE DECLARES THAT HIS GOING BRINGS THE COMING OF THIS AGE.


lowers the truth, enable them to witness in the world and fill them with joy. Those works of the Spirit are the consequence of the great reality of communion, which is not just something the Spirit does but rests on who He is.

The Bible tells us about the fruit of the Spirit as we are transformed to be more like Christ, and the gifts of the Spirit which enable us to serve God and each other. It recounts wonderful mira-

cles done by the power of the Spirit and incredible acts of service. Impressive as all of those are, they pale in comparison to the most splendid truth – the presence of the Spirit gives us communion with the Father and Son.

That, it seems to me, is the truth which answers all our loneliness. Jesus would leave, but the disciples would not be alone because His going was the basis for His coming! And so it is for us. This truth is also the deep basis of Christian community. We are not together because we choose to join one another, but because we are united together in Spirit. We don’t create community, we enjoy a fellowship which is based outside us and our choices and preferences. This can be a far from comfortable arrangement – but the discomfort is one of the signs of its reality.

On the basis of our communion with the Triune God, the disciples did not remain huddled in fear. By the Spirit the church is able to be God’s witness in the world. Jesus sends us and gives us his Spirit (20:21-22). If you want to understand the mission of the church or the dynamics of the Christian life, then the key to understanding is the presence of the Holy Spirit. More important than understanding, the reality of life with God is communion with His Spirit. 



John McClean lectures in systematic theology and ethics at the Presbyterian Theological Centre, Sydney.

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SELFLESS LOVE OF OTHERS IS THE HALLMARK OF GENUINE FAITH.

William Harrell

I recently had the opportunity to share with an unbeliever how I was converted to Christ. Some have enjoyed the privilege of having been raised by Christian parents and cannot recall a time in their lives when they did not trust Christ for their salvation. I have had the privilege of experiencing the saving grace of God as an adult, having spent years in the vanity and pride of sin and then coming clearly and decisively from that sin into new life in Christ.

I told my friend how I had been attending Bible studies at a US Air Force base chapel where I was stationed in the early 1970s. I came to the point of realising that while I had acknowledged the existence of God (or at times merely the possibility of His existence), I had never trusted Him vitally and practically.

So one night, I cried out to God, asking him to show himself to me in a way that would win my trust. Although my friend is an unbeliever, even he thought my prayer was not very reverent or theological. Of course, he was right. But, as I explained to him, I have since then learned that God is not concerned with formal orthodoxy so much as with the genuine cry of a man's heart and soul. My friend asked me how God answered my prayer, and I told him that the Lord simply, profoundly, and lastingly changed me. God did what no man or agency could ever do; He gave



THE SIMPLICITY OF THIS IS
IN OUR ASKING IN EVERY
SITUATION AND WITH EVERY
PERSON ONE QUESTION:
WHAT IS THE LOVING THING
TO DO?

me a new heart and soul!

To this day, nearly 40 years after my prayer and its answer, I am still amazed and delighted at how the Lord did and continues to do for me exceedingly abundantly beyond what I asked or thought. But how did I know I had a new heart and soul, that I was a new man by the marvellous working of the saving grace and power of God?

That answer is one of the most simple and clear ones I can give: I became a man who loved others. I had been self-centred, but God changed me into a man who began to love Him and to love people. This loving, although I still do it very imperfectly, has become the greatest blessing of my Christian life, second only to God's love for me.

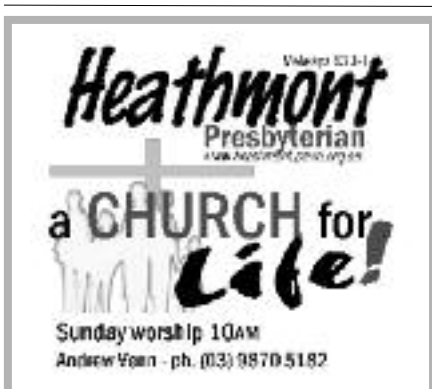
As I grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, I come less and less to question or doubt His love for me. I accept it with increasingly profound gratitude as the nourishing food, healing medicine, and liberating light of my soul. Therefore, I spend less time asking God to prove His love for me, and I spend more time asking Him to make me a better lover of Him and the people in my life.

It is in the exercise of such love,

however difficult and sacrificial it may become, that I find a blessedness that I could not experience were I to be merely a recipient of love, even of God's love. This is so because God's love does not have the character of terminating with those who receive it. The love of God impels those who truly know and possess it to love others.

This loving of others makes the living of the Christian life to be both sweet and simple. As the love Jacob had for Rachel made the years of his service to her father pass quickly and sweetly, so the love the Lord gives us to have for and demonstrate to others transforms all cost and sacrifice involved in our giving such love into blessedness for us. In Galatians 4:15, Paul equates supreme blessedness with supremely sacrificial service. The Galatians were most blessed when they were lovingly committed to giving their own eyes to relieve Paul's affliction. This can only be true if such loving service is rooted and grounded in the infinitely sacrificial and saving love that God has for us (Eph. 3:14-19). If we are so rooted, love issues from us as the natural fruit of God's Holy Spirit, not as the artificial and exhausting works of man.

The simplicity of this is in our asking in every situation and with every person one question: What is the loving thing to do? We do not need to manipulate factors or persons in any situation in order for us to love others in those situations. We do not need to wait until others seem to us worthy of our love, nor do we need to fear that our loving will impose loss upon us, when it will only prove to be for us a greater blessing to give such holy love to others than to receive anything else in all the world. **ap**



William Harrell is pastor of Immanuel Presbyterian Church, Norfolk, Virginia.

Counsel and comfort

20 DAILY BIBLE STUDIES IN JOHN 13-17

Through the Holy Spirit's ministry we have access to the interaction and conversation Jesus had with His disciples on the night before He died. What an amazing privilege! Here is this small band of ordinary, unnoteworthy men about to face what will be a profoundly confusing experience for them. They will watch the mentor they have been learning from for three years undergo an unjust trial resulting in a most cruel, painful death – and we are able to eavesdrop on the Good Shepherd as He prepares His little flock for it.

He will wash their feet and comfort them. He will tell them not to be troubled, because what is going to happen is essential to God's wonderful plan to bring them to heaven. He will promise them the Holy Spirit, and explain to them carefully the Spirit's function as their counsellor, encourager, guide, teacher, friend and coach/trainer. He will urge them to remain "connected" to Him, as a branch is joined to a vine, so that they will have useful, fruitful lives. He will urge them to love each other deeply.

We are especially privileged to overhear Him praying for them, knowing that, even now, He prays for us (Heb. 7:25). All this reminds us of the importance of the Holy Spirit's ministry to us, within us, and through us today. Let us take heart as we read through these words this month.



Bruce Christian is a former Moderator-General of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

DAY 1

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 13:1-5

THE POINT Throughout his Gospel, John has been making us aware of the depth of the tension between Jesus and the Jewish leaders: Jesus is self-consciously the Son of God, and His many miracles bear out His claim; the Jews are completely blind to this reality and therefore are vehemently opposed to Him as a blasphemer. It is significant that, as John takes us from that setting of constant confrontation into the passion narrative, we find Jesus taking on the role of a humble servant as an example to His disciples.

THE PARTICULARS

- Jesus knew it was at this exact Passover that He would die (1).

- Typically of John, his statement about the extent of Jesus' love can be understood in two ways, both of which are appropriate: it goes right to the "end" (uttermost limit) in time, and in quality. The self-abasing foot-washing anticipates the cross itself (1).

- The scene was set: the meal attached to the Passover was ready; Judas had succumbed to Satan's pressure to betray his Master; the sovereign Father was directing proceedings right through to their climax; so Jesus took on the most menial role of all, that of washing the disciples feet, dusty from the day's activities (2-5).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Reflect on John's points here in the light of Philippians 2:6-8.

DAY 2

Sprung!

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 13:6-11

THE POINT Like us, the disciples weren't very strong on humility (cf Mark 10:35-45, Luke 22:24-27). As competing peers, they didn't "do" feet-washing. But when the action of Jesus showed this up they were very embarrassed. As usual, Peter was their spokesman.

THE PARTICULARS

- Like the others, Peter was keen to defend his status among his peers; but he knew where he stood before Jesus (cf Luke 5:8), so he could not cope with his Master kneeling before him (6-8).
- In preparing His disciples to see the real meaning of the cross, Jesus used the foot-washing as symbolic of the cleans-

ing power of His shed blood to wash away their sin (7, 8b; Hebrews 9:14).

- In 8b Jesus used the feet-washing as a symbol of new birth, but in response to Peter's hyperbole in 9 He switched the metaphor (cf the gate/sheep/shepherd in ch 10) so that new birth is now pictured as a bath, and the feet-washing becomes the ongoing need for cleansing, as in 1 John 1:8-2:2 in a letter written to believers who already possessed eternal life (cf 1 John 5:11-13).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Have you had a failure to show humility exposed lately? How did it feel? Will the experience help you to take the initiative in servant-hood next time? Why are we such slow learners?

DAY 3

What's a tea towel, men?

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 13:12-17

THE POINT Jesus taught, not only by declaring God's truth in words, but by living it out in a life which He expects His followers to emulate. The two mistakes the Church tends to make are firstly, to think that the sole reason Jesus came was to show us God's way by example (liberalism); and secondly, to acknowledge that Jesus came to die on the cross in our place, bearing the punishment we deserve because of sin, but to fail to see the link between this and obeying His command to love/serve as He did (cheap grace).

THE PARTICULARS

- Official, widely-publicised foot-washing ceremonies by church leaders call for the answer "No" to Jesus' question: "Do

you understand what I have done for you?"! Jesus is not talking about ceremonies; He is talking about an attitude of humility that is so natural that picking up towels and basins and doing the menial servant chores does not call for any pomp and ceremony. It's what He meant in the Sermon on the Mount about not letting our left hand know what our right hand is doing (Matthew 6:3).

- True blessing from God follows from obedience to His will by walking humbly in the steps of our Master/Teacher (15-17).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Why do we find quiet, unheralded, humble serving so difficult?

DAY 4

'He who shares my bread...'

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 13:18-30

THE POINT John (under the Holy Spirit's guidance) has a powerful way of dealing with all the tensions associated with Jesus' being both God and Man, and with the outworking of God's predestined Plan in the context of real choices men make. Here is an example.

THE PARTICULARS

- Jesus knew exactly what was to happen, even in choosing the Twelve. The written Salvation Plan required a betrayer to be included among them (Ps. 41:9), and Jesus had to choose him, love him, and mentor him, along with all the others (18, 26); but knowing this only increased His anguish as Man (21). The Eleven were utterly bewildered by such a thought (22-25, 28-

29).

- In Greek, verse 19 ends simply, "... you will believe that I AM".

- Jesus reinforces the inseparable "Father-Son-Bible" package (cf 12:44-50) – the NT Scriptures being written under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit by Jesus' "sent ones" (apostles) (20).

- Jesus' giving the bread to Judas was a genuine act of love; but it became the final act of condemnation of a heart already well on the way to perdition. Satan now had all of Judas, and so Jesus could see no reason for further delaying the inevitable (26-27).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- What does the phrase, "And it was night", convey to us here?

Come worship with us!

IF YOU ARE PASSING THROUGH OR MOVING NEARBY, FEEL FREE TO RING THE MINISTER, CLERK OR ELDER. FIND US ON THE WEB AT: <http://www.presbyterian.org.au/states.htm>

NORTHERN TERRITORY

DARWIN

Kormilda College 10.00am.
Rev. Rob Duncanson (08) 8945 7878.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

CANBERRA, BELCONNEN

Cnr Gatty St. & Ross Smith Cres, Scullin.
Sunday Service 10:00 am
Elder: Mrs J. Cram (02) 6278 7379

CANBERRA, FORREST (St Andrew's)

1 State Circle (opp Parliament House).
Service Times: 9.30am. & 7.00pm.
Church Office: (02) 6295 3457

CANBERRA, TUGGERANONG

Isabella Plains Early Childhood School, cnr
Ellerstone Ave & Noorooma St, Isabella
Plains. Worship Service & Sunday School
10.00am. Evening service 6pm.
Session Clerk: 6296 5216.

NEW SOUTH WALES

ANNANDALE-LEICHHARDT

Hunter Baillie, Johnston & Collins Sts.
10.00am. Rev. Peter Dunstan (02) 9810 7869.

ARMIDALE (St. Paul's)

Faulkner St, 9.30am. & 7.00pm.
Rev. David M. Seaman (02) 6772 3093

ASHFIELD

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

BEACON HILL (St Andrew's)

244 Warringah Rd. 9.00am. & 7.00pm.
Rev. Trevor Cheetham (02) 9451 5076.

BEECROFT

Mary St., 8.45am. 10.30am. & 5.30pm.
Rev. Paul Cooper (02) 9876 2478.

BEGA — EDEN

Bega — 25 Upper St. 9.30am.
Contact: Mrs M. Cochrane (02) 6492 2949

BONDI

Cnr. Castlefield & Miller Sts.
10.00am & 6.00pm.
Rev. John Graham: (02) 9130 6607.

BONNYRIGG

Western Regions Chinese Church
14-16 Bibbys Place. 9.30 am. (English) &
11.00 am. (Mandarin)

S.Clerk: Stanley Chen (02) 9753 2073

BOWRAL

Cr Bendooley & Wingecarribee St. 9.30am.
Kids' Church: 9.30 am. 1st & 3rd Sunday
Sess. Clrk: Mr Peter Boggs, (02) 4861 3079.

BURWOOD (St. James)

46-48 Belmore St. 9.15am
Rev. David Maher (02) 9744 6542

BURWOOD CHINESE

46-48 Belmore St. 9.15am & 11.15am
(Cantonese) 10.30am & 5.00pm (English).
Church Office: (02) 9715 3889. Rev. Dennis
Law (Senior Minister) 0414 812 776.
Rev. Eugene Hor (English Associate) 0414
992 106. Mr Joe Lin (Chinese Assistant)
0405 203 064. Miss Amy Leong (Youth &
Children's Worker) 0415 777 829. Mr Peter
Hughes (P/T Youth Worker) 0404 949 190.

CAMPBELLTOWN

34 Lithgow St. 8.30 am. 10.00 am.
Samoan service 12.30 pm.
Rev. Jim Elliot (02) 4625 1037.

CARINGBAH

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

CASTLE HILL

247 Old Northern Rd. 9.30am & 6.00pm.
Rev. Moses Hahn (02) 9634 2911.

CHATSWOOD

St Andrew's, Anderson St. 9.00am, 10.30am
& 6.30pm. Rev. Jeff Read (02) 9419 5932
(W), (02) 9419 7349 (H). Ass. Rev. Warren
Esdale.

CHERRYBROOK

John Purchase Public School Hall,
Purchase Road. Service: 9.30 am.
Rev. Stephen Fong (02) 9875 4894

CHINESE CHURCH

Cnr Crown & Albion Sts. Surry Hills.
English 9am & 5pm / Cantonese 10.30am /
Mandarin 9am / Bilingual Service 12noon /
Sunday School 9am & 10:30am / Youth 9am.
Church Office (02) 9331 4459. Rev. David
Tsai (02) 9747 4845 or 0408 5516 606.

COFFS HARBOUR

187 Harbour Dr. 8.00am & 9.45am.
Harbourside Evangelical Church: 5.00pm &
7.00pm.

Rev. Jamie K. Newans (02) 6652 3183

CORNERSTONE

@ Concord: Meets Concord Public School
9.30 am. Cnr Burwood Rd. & Stanley St.
Concord. Rev. Mark Powell (02) 9702 5281
@ North: Meets Eastwood Heights Public
School 9.30am. Lincoln Street, Eastwood.
Rev. C. S. Tang (02) 9688 7880.

COWRA

46 Macquarie St.
Rev. David Stone Ph (02) 6342 1467.

CRONULLA

13 Croydon St. 9.30am.
Rev. Russell Stark (02) 9523 5875.

EAST MAITLAND

George St. 9.30am. **Beresfield:** Beresford Ave.
7.45am. **Raymond Terrace:** Irrawang St.
9.45am. Pastor Gordon Peden (02) 4932 0370.

EPPING

Bridge & Rawson Sts. 9.00am, 10.30am &
6.30pm. Rev. Matthew Oates (02) 9876 1188.

FORSTER/TUNCURRY

Bruce St. Forster, 9.30am, 6.00pm.
Rev. Jason Summers (02) 6557 5047

GLEN INNES

Heron St. 11.00am & 7.00pm.
All ages study groups 9.30am.
Pastor Lance Jackson (02) 6732 5707

GOSFORD

14-16 Young St. West Gosford. 8.00am.
9.45am. 6.30 pm. Rev. M. Cropper
Office: Ph (02) 4323 2490.

GOULBURN (St Andrews)

Clifford St. 9.00am. 7.00pm 2nd & 4th
Sundays. Also **Taralga, Crookwell** and
Tuena. Phone: (02) 4821 3115.

GRANVILLE/MERRYLANDS

Granville: 14 Hutchinson St. 9.30am and
11am. Chinese language. Rev. P. Tamsett 9760
0900. Merrylands & Monitor's Rd. 10.30am
P. Magee 9863 3391. Canley Heights: 3 Derria
St. Inquiries 9609 7384. East Parramatta:
Inquiries B. Frost 0433 908 130.

GRIFFITH

Opp. Collina Oval, Blumer Ave. 9.30 am.
Rev. Peter Gobbo (02) 6962 4827.
Dr L. Thorpe (02) 6962 1934

HURSTVILLE

Cnr. Park Rd. & McMahon St. 9.30am &
5.30pm. Rev. Kevin Murray (02) 9580 1425.

KIRKPLACE

Meets at 9.30am at 12-16 Derby St,
Kogarah. Rev. Steve Chong (02) 9587 1081.

KOREAN, SYDNEY (Young Nak)

7-9 Manson St, Telopea. 9.30am. 11.00am.
3.00pm. S.Clerk (02) 9816 3807

MAROUBRA

8 Robey St, 10.00am. 7.15pm.
Chinese Service, 4pm.
Rev. Johnnie Li (02) 9349 1312

MITTAGONG

Mittagong Presbyterian Community Church.
Cr Alice & Edwards Sts. 9.00am. Sess Clrk
Mr John Currie, (02) 4872 4293.

MOREE (St Andrew's)

Cnr Albert & Auburn Sts, 10.00am.
Tel. (02) 6752 1083

MORUYA

31 Evans St. 9.00am.

Rev. Peter Pallett (02) 4474 2186.

MOSMAN (Scots Kirk)

Belmont Rd. (nr Military Rd), 9.00am.

Rev. Adrian de Graaf (02) 9969 6101.

MOSS VALE

7 Browley St 9.30am & 6.00pm

Rev. Steve North (02) 4869 4795.

MURWILLUMBAH

16 Wollumbin St. 9.00am & 6.30pm.

Church Office (02) 6672 2226.

NAROOMA

1 Farncombe Ave. 11.00am.

Rev. Peter Pallett (02) 4474 2186.

NEWCASTLE (St Andrews)

Cnr. Laman & Auckland Sts 9.30am &

6.00pm. Office: (02) 4929 2857

NEWCASTLE EAST (St. Philip's)

48 Watt St., 10.00am. Surfside: 7.00pm.

Stockton: 10.30am Wednesday.

Rev. John Macintyre (02) 4929 2379.

Asst: Rev. Jon Nuttall (02) 4928 3410.

NORTH SYDNEY-GREENWICH

(St Peter's) 234 Blues Point Rd. 10.00am &

6.45pm. Wednesday 1.15pm.

Greenwich: (Taylor Memorial)

86A Greenwich Rd. 10.00am.

Rev. Dr Stephen Pym (02) 9460 9637.

ORANGE (St James)

Cnr Anson St. & Matthews Ave. 10.00am.

Rev. Robert McKean (02) 6362 6304

PARKES/FORBES/PEAK HILL

Parkes: S. School 10.00am; Service 11.00am.

Forbes: 9.00am. Peak Hill: 9.00am 1st

Sunday. Rev. Craig Bland (02) 6862 2730

PENRITH (St Andrew's)

Doonmore St. near High St, 9.00am, 10.30am

& 7.00pm.

Rev. William Morrow (02) 4721 2440.

PORT MACQUARIE (St Andrew's)

Cnr William/Munster Sts, 9.00am., 10.30am

Rev. S Donnellan (02) 6582 2505

RANDWICK

Alison Rd. & Cook St. 10.00am. & 5.00pm.

Rev. Grant Thorpe (02) 9399 3183.

REVESBY

Cnr Tower St & Eastern Avenue,

Service: 9.00am & 6.30pm.

Rev. Dr Peter Barnes (02) 9774 5740.

ROSE BAY (St Andrew's Scots)

Cnr Dover Rd & Carlisle St.

Service times: 10.00am.

Rev. Martin Spadaro (02) 9388 1206(O).

SOUTHERN CROSS

Park Ave. East Lismore. (02) 6621 3655.

SPRINGWOOD

160 Macquarie Rd. 10.30am. & 6.00pm.

Winmalee : 481 Hawkesbury Rd. 9.00am.

A. Min. Mark Armstrong (02) 4751 1188

(O). Rev. Keith Walker (02) 4751 1188 (O).

SUTHERLAND

Cnr Flora & Glencoe Sts. 9.30am & 5.30pm

Rev. Andrew Clausen (02) 9521 2361

SYDNEY (Scots Church)

44 Margaret St. Sydney. Sun: 10.30 am.

Wed: 1.15pm. Rev. Adrian Van Ash

(02) 9299 7490 (O) (02) 9817 0587 (H).

TAMWORTH (St Stephen's)

Cnr Matthews & Crown St. 9.00am &

6.30pm. Moonbi 9.00am.

Rev. Stuart Andrews (02) 6765 8754.

Tamworth Community Presb Church,

St Stephens, Cnr Matthews & Crown St.

10.30am Rev. David Hassan (02) 6765 2865.

TAREE

Albert St. 9.00am.

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

TERRIGAL (Scots Kirk)

2 Willoughby Rd. 9.00am.

Rev. Glenn Samuel (02) 4385 2240

TOUKLEY

Cnr Hargreaves St and Victoria Ave.

9.30am Morning Worship

6.00pm 2nd Sunday Mar, Jun, Sept, Dec.

Rev. Rex Swavley (02) 4392 9904.

TUROSS HEAD

277 Hector McWilliam Dr. 9.00am.

Rev. Peter Pallett (02) 4474 2186.

WAGGA WAGGA SOUTH

60-62 Coleman St. Turvey Park

9.00am & 10.30am.

Rev. Sandy McMillan (02) 6925 1228.

WAHROONGA

Wahroonga Presbyterian Church,

Cnr. Illoura Ave. & Stuart St. 9.30am.

Rev. David Yu (02) 9489 3302.

WEE WAA

Mitchell St. (02) 6795 4259

WENTWORTH FALLS (St Andrew's)

Falls Rd. 9.00 am.

Session Clerk: Mr J. Grant (02) 4759 1998

WEST WYALONG (Home Mission Station)

Pioneer Memorial, Court St. 10.30am.

Barnedman: 1st & 3rd Sunday. 9.00am.

Mirrool: 3rd Sunday. **Tallimba: Weethalle:**

Last Sunday 7.00pm. Contact Mrs Helen C.

Husking, Session Clerk (02) 6972 2143.

WOLLONGONG (St Andrew's)

Cnr Kembla & Burelli Sts. 9.45am & 6.00pm.

Rev. Granville Pillar (02) 4226 1725(O).

WOONONA

7 Gray St. Rev. Peter Currie (02) 4284 4057.

WOY WOY

118-120 Blackwall Rd. 9.00 & 10.30 am.

Rev. K. Rathbone (02) 4342 2856.

VICTORIA

ARARAT

330 Barkly St (Cnr Albert St). 10.00am.

Rev. Ian Hutton (03) 5352 4054

ASHBURTON

Junction of High St. and High Street Rd.

near Warrigal Rd. 10.15am.

ASPENDALE

Cnr Station St. & Lyle Grv. 9.00am. &

6.00pm. Rev. John Dekker (03) 9587 0661.

AUBURN

Cnr Rathmines & Station Sts Hawthorn East

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

BAIRNSDALE

159 Nicholson St. 10.00am.

1st of Month 5.00pm. S/school 9.00 am.

Rev. Gary Stephens (03) 5153 1669

BALACLAVA

106 Hotham St. & Denman Ave. 9.30am.

Rev. Bob Thomas 0417 592 646.

BENDIGO (St John's)

Forest St. 10.30am & 6.30pm (1st, 3rd & 5th

Sun.) Rev. Philip Burns (03) 5443 6189.

BLACKBURN

53 Gardenia St. 11.00am.

Rev. P Locke (03) 9725 6417

BRIMBANK

Sydenham Community Centre

Cnr, The Community Hub & Overton Lea

Blvd, 10.00am each Sunday.

Rev. Peter Owen (03) 9307 6583.

BUNDOORA

Bundoora Hall, Noorong Ave. 10.00am &

6.00pm. Office: Mrs M. Goodson (03) 9457

4962. www.bpc.org.au

BURWOOD

(Chinese Presbyterian Church) 11.00am.

Cnr. Greenwood & Tennyson Sts.

Rev. Dr John Elnatan (03) 9801 7645.

CAMBERWELL- Trinity

cnr Riversdale & Waterloo Sts. 10.00am.

Rev. Philip Mercer (03) 9882 8102

CAMPERDOWN-TERANG

Terang: 155 High St.

Camperdown: Cnr Campbell & Brooke Sts.

Session Clerk: T. Fleming (03) 5594 8231.

CANTERBURY

146 Canterbury Rd. 10.30am. & 7 pm.

Rev. Grant Lawry (03) 9836 4601.

CANTERBURY JAPANESE

146 Canterbury Rd. 10.30am

Rev. Shojc Tsuchihira (03) 9511 0421.

CAULFIELD-ELWOOD

Caulfield: Neerim/Bambra Rds. 11.15am.

Elwood: Scott/Tennyson Sts. 9.15am.

Rev. Phillip Chang (03) 9505 3013.

CHELtenham Pioneers' Presbyterian

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

Rev. David Brown (03) 9583 2785.

CLIFTON HILL

Cnr Michael & McKean Sts North Fitzroy.

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

COLAC (Scots)

90-94 Armstrong Street. 10.00am.

Rev. Marvin Hagans H: (03) 5250 4360

O: (03) 5231 2398

CRANBOURNE/LYNDHURST

Cranbourne: Cnr Russel & Sladen Sts

10.00am weekly.

Lyndhurst: 214 Westernport Hwy (entry

frm Pyramid Pl) 2.00pm 2nd & 4th Sunday of

Mth. Mod: Rev. Bill Medley (03) 9786 2976.

CROYDON HILLS

Maroondah Community Centre, Brentnall

Rd, Croydon (next to Maroondah Secondary

College). 10.00am.

Rev. Matt James (03) 9725 5370.

DANDENONG

51 Potter St. 10.00am.

Rev. John Rickard (03) 9792 4252.

DONVALE

Cnr Springvale Rd & McGowan St Donvale.

8.30am, 10.30am & 6.30pm. Rev. Gerald

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

DROMANA-MORNINGTON

St Andrew's, Gibson St. 9.00am.

Mornington (The Chapel) Cnr Strachans Rd.

& Nepean Hwy. 11.00am.

Rev. Dr Michael Wishart (03) 5975 9514.

DROUIN

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

Rev. Mark Smith (03) 5625 4112.

ELTHAM

23 Batman Rd. 10.00 am

Rev. Don Elliott (03) 9439 9720

ESSENDON

Cnr Wilson & McPherson Sts. 9.15am &

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

FLEMINGTON

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

FRANKSTON

30 Radiata St. 10.30am & 6.00pm.
Rev. Bill Medley (03) 9786 2976.
Session Clerk: Mr John Disney 8707 0462.

GEELONG (St. George's)

Cnr. Latrobe Tce & Rylie St. 10.00am.
Ministers: The Very Rev. Dr Allan Harman (03) 5255 2134. Rev. Peter Wilding (03) 5281 1723.

GEELONG NORTH

60 Victoria St. 10.00am.
Rev. Darren Middleton (03) 5278 1887.

GEELONG WEST (Scots)

Cnr. Pakington & Waratah Sts. 10.00am.
Clerk: Mr J. R. Diffen (03) 5264 8080.

GISBORNE (St Andrew's)

Fisher Street 10.30am & Evening service last Sunday of month 5.30pm (7.00pm Summer daylight savings)

HAMILTON

St Andrew's, Gray & McIntyre Sts. 10.00am. & 5.00pm. (last Sunday of month)
Rev. David Schultz (03) 5562 7777.

HAWTHORN

580 Glenferrie Rd. 11.00 am. & 7.00 pm.
Rev. Graham Nicholson (03) 9819 5347.

HEATHMONT

Cnr. Waterloo St. & Canterbury Rd.
Heathmont 10.00am.
Rev. Andrew Venn (03) 9870 5182.

HORSHAM

16 Kalkee Road 10.00am & 7.00pm.
Rev. Willem Vandenberg (03) 5382 3735.

KANGAROO GROUND

265 Eltham-Yarra Glen Rd. 9.30am.
Rev. Rod Scott (03) 9763 4248.

KOREAN MELBOURNE

16 Walnut Rd. North Balwyn. 11.00am & 2.00pm. Rev. Stephen Kim 0430 136 155.

LEONGATHA

Cnr. Bent & Turner Sts. 10.00am.
Session Clerk: (03) 5662 2107

MALVERN

161 Wattletree Rd. 10.30am. & 5.00 pm.
Rev. Philip Daffy (03) 9509 7373.

MELBOURNE

The Scots' Church, Cnr. Russell & Collins Sts. 11am & 5.30pm. Wed. 1.00pm.
10.30am (Indonesian Service) Werner Brodbeck Hall, 156 Collins St.
Rev. Douglas Robertson (03) 9650 9903.

MELTON

Mowbray College, Centenary Ave. 10.00am.
Rev. Phil Simmonds (03) 9747 8195.

MOE — YARRAM

Moe: 34 Fowler St. 10.00am.
Yarram: Cnr. Dougherty & Montgomery Sts. 2.00pm.

NOORAT

Cnr Mc Kinnons Bridge & Glenormiston Rds. 10.30am. Rev. Miles Fagan (03) 5592 5220

NUMURKAH

58 Saxton St. 11.15am. **Tallygaroopna:** Victoria St. 9.30am. **Cobram:** Cnr High and Pine Sts. (Anglican Church) 2.30pm.
Rev. Frank Savage (03) 5862 1621.

Yarram: Cnr Dougherty & Montgomery Sts. 2.00pm.

RESERVOIR (St. Andrews)

81 Edwardes St. 10.00am.
Session Clerk 9497 4785.

ROCHESTER

Cnr Victoria St. & Echuca Rd. 10.30am & 7.30pm (1st Sunday of the month).
S. Clerk – Mr Jeff Broad (03) 5484 6284.

ST KILDA

Cnr Alma Rd. & Barkly St. 11.00am & 7.00pm. Rev. Bob Thomas 0417 592 646.

SHEPPARTON

Cnr. Hayes & Leithen Sts. 9.00am. & 7.00pm. Also Stanhope, Kyabram.

Rev. Kyung Ee (03) 5831 6494.

SOMERVILLE

Cnr Jones Rd. & Park Lane.

SORRENTO-RYE

Sorrento: St Andrew's, Kerferd Avenue 11.00am. Rye: Cnr Collingwood & Lyons Sts. 9.15am. 6.00pm.
Rev. John Brennan (03) 5985 6492

SOUTH YARRA

621 Punt Rd. 10.30 am. & 5.30 pm.
S.Clerk: Mr J. Adlawan (03) 9808 7391.

SUNSHINE

McKay Memorial, Anderson Rd. 10.00am. & 6.00pm. Rev. John Cho (03) 9311 1661.

SURREY HILLS (St Stephen's)

Canterbury & Warrigal Rds. 10.15am & 6.00pm. Family Services 6.00pm (2nd & 4th Sunday). Rev. Chris Siriweera (03) 9833 3306.

Deaf Presbyterian Church

Canterbury & Warrigal Rds. 2.00pm.
Rev. Tony Salisbury (03) 9551 3634
(Mod. Rev. Chris Siriweera (03) 9833 3306)

WANGARATTA – REGIONAL PARISH

Wangaratta, 158 Rowan St. 11.00am & 5.00pm (9.00am 1st Sunday)

Yarrowonga, 47 Orr St. 8.45am (11.00am 1st Sunday). **Myrtleford,** 78 Standish St. 7.00pm (5.00pm June, July, August).

WARBURTON

3471 Warburton H'way. 10.00am.
Brian Harvey (03) 5966 2309.

WARRNAMBOOL (St John's)

Warrnambool: Spence Street. 10.00am (Includes Children's program) & 5.00pm (in the church hall Princess St).
Office: (03) 5562 2029.

South Warrnambool: MacDonald St. 9.15am.
Woodford: Mill St. 11.00 am.

Rev. Ben Johnson (03) 5562 2029.

WEST FOOTSCRAY

141 Essex St. (Scots) 10.00 am.
Session Clerk: Ms J Swift (03) 9687 5701

WEST TAMAR (Auld Kirk)

50 Auld Kirk Road Sidmouth 10.00am.
Caveside Road Mole Creek 2.00pm.

Pastor Ian Partridge (03) 6330 3702.

WILLIAMSTOWN (St Andrew's)

87 Cecil St. 10.00am.
Rev. Bruce Riding (03) 9397 5338

WOORI YALLOCK

1363 Healesville-Koo Wee Rup Rd. 9.30am.
Rev. Dean Carroll (03) 5964 7563.

WYNDHAM

116-120 Blackforest Rd. 10.00am.
Pastor Shane Cassidy (03) 9974 2024

QUEENSLAND

ACACIA RIDGE

Cnr Mortiner & Beaudesert Rds.
9:00am & 6:00pm. Rev. Daniel Bigg,

(07) 3277 0010 (O), (07) 3711 5410 (H).

ASCOT

68 Charlton St. (Near Airport).
Nundah: 14 Rode Rd
Rev. Guido Kettmiss (07) 3216 4151.
Asst. Rev. Teddy Woo (07) 3865 4185

ATHERTON (Tablelands)

Cnr. Alice & Jack Sts. 10.00am & 6.00pm.
Rev. Cameron Wills (07) 4091 7203.

BALD HILLS

58 Strathpine Rd. 9.00am. & 6.30pm.
Rev. John Trappett (07) 3103 6144.

BRISBANE KOREAN

122 Ellingham St, Kuraby 9am & 11am.
145 Ann St. 2.30pm.
Rev. Dr M. M. Y. Kim (07) 3300 3132

BRISBANE (St Paul's)

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

BUNDABERG

Cnr Water & Alice Sts. 9.00am & 7.00pm.
Rev. Wallace Brown (07) 4151 4766.

CABOOLTURE

24 Cottrill Road. 9.00am & 6.00pm.
Rev. John Nicol (07) 5499 1977 (office) 0418 876 634 (mob.)

CAIRNS

87 Sheridan St. 9.00am. & 6.30pm.
Korean 11.00am. Cook Island 11.00am.
Rev. Harry Oh (07) 4051 2238.

CALLIDE VALLEY

Biloela: Cnr. Kariboe & Melton Sts. 10.00am. Jambin: Three Ways 8.30am.
Rev. Gaius Goh (07) 4992 1441.

CHARLEVILLE/BLACKALL

78 Galatea St. 9.00am.

CLAYFIELD (Scots Memorial)

29 Bellevue Terrace, 9.30am & 6.30pm.
Rev. Andrew Richardson 0423 160 412

COORPAROO

Emlyn St. 10.00am.
Rev. Phil Case (07) 3397 8793.

CREEK ROAD

Presbyterian Ministry Centre. 1541 Creek Road (cnr Fursden Road). Carina 8.30am, 10.30am & 6.30pm. Centre: (07) 3398 4333. Rev. Steve Cree (07) 3398 4333

DECEPTION BAY-BURPENGARY

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

GLADSTONE (St Andrew's)

Goondoo & Bramston Sts. 10.00am.
Benaraby: O'Connor Rd. 8.00am.

Calliope: Dawson H'way (Stirrat St.) 2nd Sunday 9.30am; 4th Sunday 8.00am.
Ph: 4972 1058.

GOLD COAST (I)

Arundel: 132 Allied Drive 9.00am & 10.45am. (07) 5571 5676.
www.arundel.org.au
Robina: Cnr University & Cottesloe Drives 10.00am & 6.30pm.
Rev. Kevin Ridley (07) 5571 1416

GOLD COAST (II)

Mudgeeraba: Cnr Mudgeeraba Rd & Regency Pde. 9.00am & 6.30 pm.
Rev. Ray Evans (07) 5573 1458.

GRACEVILLE

12 Bank Rd, Graceville, Brisbane. 9.30am and 6.30pm. Rev. David Secomb (07) 3122 9561. davidsecomb@inet.net.au

HELENSVALE (Northlinks)

1 Shepparton Road – 9.30am.
Rev. John Evans (07) 5580 1367.

HERVEY BAY

5 Denman's Camp Road, Scarness. 9.30am & 7.00pm. Rev. John Roth (07) 4124 7018.

IPSWICH

Cnr Limestone & Gordon Sts. 9.30am, 10.00am & 6.30pm. Rev. Scott Muir.
Forest Hill: Church St, 9.00am. Office: (07) 3281 7201, Fax: (07) 3202 2571.

ITHACA

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

MACKAY

Cnr Harvey St. & Evans Ave. Nth Mackay.
8.30am & 6pm each Sunday.
Rev. Gerhard von Tonder.

Sarina: Sarina Beach Rd. 10.30am each Sunday; Ph. (07) 4957 2835.

MARANOA

Roma: Queen Street 9.00am.

MAROOCHYDORE

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

MARYBOROUGH

523 Alice Street. 9.00am (& 5.00pm first Sunday). Pastor John Vanderwal.

MILES

Cnr Warrego and Leichhardt Highways
9.00am. Rev. Walter Jones (07) 4627 1180.

NORTH PINE

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

REDCLIFFE PENINSULA

WoodyPoint, Cnr. Ellen & Hawthorne Sts.
9.30am. & 6.00pm. Scarborough: Jeays St.
8.00am. Rev. Peter Whitney (07) 3284 2578.

ROBINA

Cnr Cottesloe & University Drs.
Rev. Kevin Ridley (07) 5571 1416.

ROCKHAMPTON (Fitzroy)

St. Stevens – Burnett St. 8.30am & 6.30pm
John Knox – Rundle St. 10.00am
Mt Morgan: St Enoch's, East St. 4.00pm.
Rev. Jon Chandler (07) 4922 1825 (O)
(07) 4922 1540 (A/H)

SANDGATE

Loudon St. 9.00am & 6.00pm.
Rev. D.K. Ashman (07) 3269 1231

THE GAP

The Gap High School Auditorium
1048 Waterworks Rd, 9.30am.
Rev. Chris Perona (07) 3300 2987

TOOWOOMBA NORTH (St David's)

Mary St. Also at **Geham**.
Rev. Andrew Clarke (07) 4632 8027.

TOOWOOMBA SOUTH (St John's)

Cnr Cranley & Geddes Sts. 9:30am, 6pm.
Rev. Graeme McKay (07) 4635 4560
Murphy's Creek, Thor St 9:30am.
Westbrook, Westbrook Hall, Main St. 9am.

TOWNSVILLE (Willows)

26 Carthew St. Kirwan 8.30am, 11.00am & 6.30pm. Rev. David McDougall (07) 4723 1232.

TOWNSVILLE (St Andrew's)

113 Wills St. City. 9.00am & 6.30pm.
Rev. Peter Barber (07) 4771 2460.
Asst. Rev. Kwang-Ho Song (07) 4778 3823.

WEST TOOWOOMBA

Cnr Greenwattle & South Sts. 7.45am, 9.30am & 5.45pm. Rev. Esa Hukkinen

(07) 4613 6691, (07) 4633 4188 (O).

WINDSOR

60 Maygar St. 8.30am.
Wilston: 28 Macgregor St. 9.45am.
Rev. Stuart Atkinson (07) 3356 4124.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

BASSEDEAN

14-16 Broadway. 9.30am.
Rev. Ross Fraser (08) 9248 3252.

BICTON

Harris St. & View Tce. 9.30am & 7.00pm.

FREMANTLE (Scots)

90 South Tce. Worship & Sunday School
10.00am & 5.00pm. Rev. Stuart Bonnington
Word on Wednesday 12.30pm
(08) 9398 1304 Off. (08) 9336 6542

MANDURAH

Cnr Sutton and Gibson St 10:00am
Rev. Paul Bloomfield (08) 9319 0706.

WEST LEEDERVILLE (Henderson Memorial)

Cnr Kimberly & Ruislip Sts. 10.30am.
English & Japanese Service 1.00pm.
Rev. Steve Young (08) 9448 8755.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

ADELAIDE (St Andrew's)

92-98 Archer St. North Adelaide. 10.30 am.
Rev. Chris ten Broeke.
Session Clerk Mr D. Niven (08) 8381 4615.

ELIZABETH

106 Goodman Rd, Elizabeth South. 9.30am.
Rev. Kevin Stow (08) 8284 1719. Session
Clerk: Mr Bob Arstall (08) 8825 5226.

LARGS NORTH

Brenda Terrace. 11.00am.
Pastor Raymond Brewer (08) 8263 9692.

MILLICENT

Cnr Fifth & Sixth Sts. 10.30 am.
Also **Rendelsham**

MT BARKER

36 Hutchison St. 10.00 am.
Pastor Robert Finster (08) 8391 2270.

MT GAMBIER

Allison St. 10.00 am. 5.30 pm. Also Allendale,
Nelson (Vic). Rev. Gary Ware (08) 8723 9028.

NARACOORTE

Church St. 10.00am.

NORWOOD (St Giles)

79 The Parade. 9.15am & 7.00pm.
Session Clerk Tom Morgan (08) 8331
3499.

PARA HILLS

174 Maxwell Rd. 10.15am & 5.00pm. Rev.
Damien Carson (08) 8264 4607 (Office)
(08) 8262 7680 (Home)

PENOLA

Portland St. 9.30am.

PORT AUGUSTA

Jervois St. 10.00 am.
Barry Rossiter (08) 8642 2059.

SEACLIFF

Kauri Pde. Seaciff. 9.30am.

Rev. S. Slucki (08) 8296 1581.

WHYALLA

28 Ramsay St. 10.00 am. S/Clerk
H. Mashford (08) 8645 0818.

TASMANIA

CORNERSTONE (Hobart) 10.00am.

"The Philip Smith Centre", 2 Edward St,
Glebe. 5pm "Night Church" @ "The Cupping
Room", 105 Murray St.
Rev. Campbell Markham (03) 6234 4719.

CROSSROADS 5.30pm.

"The Philip Smith Centre", 2 Edward St, The
Glebe. H.M. Dan Shephard (03) 6234 8207.

DEVONPORT (St Columba's)

13 Edward St. 10.00am. Don: Waverley Rd.
2.00pm (1st & 3rd Sundays).
Rev. Steve Warwick (03) 6424 6066

HOBART (St John's)

10.00am & 6.30pm. 188 Macquarie St.
(03) 6223 7213.

Rev. Robert White (03) 6229 7657

Rev. Rod Waterhouse 0438 555 983.

LAUNCESTON (St Andrew's)

Civic Square. 10.00 am & 5.00 pm.
Church Office: (03) 6331 5412
Rev. Peter Thorneycroft 0438 315 412

MONTROSE

Cnr. Islington Rd. & Walker St. 10.00 am.
Mod. Rev. Rod Waterhouse 0438 555 983.

MOUNT STUART

10am "The Community Hall", Byard St.
Rev. David Jones (03) 6223 4701.

RIVERSIDE

Eden St. 10.45am. Glengarry: 9.15am.
Frankford H'way. Winkleigh: 9.15am, 2nd
Sunday. Rev. Norman Shellard (03) 6327 2967

ROKEBY

Presby. Community Church, Tollard 9.30am &
6.00pm. Clerk David Turner (03) 6247 7971.

SCOTTSDALE

George St. 11.00am. Bridport: Westwood St.
9.00am. Pastor Greg Munro (03) 6352 2527.

STANLEY (St James)

Fletcher St. 10.30am.
I.M. Rev. Steve Warwick (03) 6424 6066.

ULVERSTONE (St Andrew's)

65 Main Rd. 10.00am.
Rev. Charlie Kennedy 0400 228 241.

WEST TAMAR (Auld Kirk)

50 Auld Kirk Road Sidmouth 10.00am.
Caveside Road Mole Creek 2.00pm.

*To register your church in this section of AP
is an easy, low cost exercise.*

**Facsimile the AP office on: (03) 9723 9685
or E-mail us at: aus-pres@bigpond.net.au**

The Annual Fees are:

Congregations under 50 \$45.00 plus GST
Congregations 51 -99 \$55.00 plus GST
Congregations 100 or more \$65.00 plus GST

DAY 5

My glory all, the cross

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 13:31-38

THE POINT These words of Jesus to His disciples on the night before He died will be amplified as explained in Chapters 14-17 to follow.

THE PARTICULARS

- The disappearance of Judas into the night set in motion a course of events that would lead inexorably to the lifting up of Jesus, the Son of Man of Daniel 7:14, to die on the cross – the one event that would glorify the Triune God as the culmination of His glorious Plan of Salvation, the climax of human history (31-32).
- The path to the cross was a path that Jesus had to walk alone. "...He only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in" (33).

• Jesus' death will usher in a new community of people, united to Him by the long-anticipated new covenant sealed by His blood; and they will be recognised by the world as His people because of the way they reflect His love for them in their love for each other. It is in this sense that His command to them to "love one another as I have loved you" is a new commandment (34-35).

• Eventually Peter will follow Jesus in death, but in one sense he can't (Christ's unique, substitutionary death), and for now he won't (his own weakness that led to denying his Lord) (36-38).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Is the cross at the centre of your understanding of the Gospel?

DAY 6

One Way - Trust Me!

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 14:1-6

THE POINT As Jesus prepared to face His trial and crucifixion He knew that His disciples would be confused and devastated by these events. It was important that they be thoroughly convinced they could trust Him completely about the ultimate purpose of it all, and about their part in it: He was going back to heaven; He was doing this to make a place ready for them; the only way to come to this place is through Him; He is the basis of life and everything.

THE PARTICULARS

- Jesus spoke confidently about heaven and how to get there, and He wanted all His disciples to be fully convinced of this reality.

• Heaven is being in the Father's presence, in His house. Jesus has gone to prepare a place there for all who trust and follow Him.

- Jesus can be trusted always to guide us in absolute truth.
- Ultimately, there is no truth, no life, no heaven apart from Jesus.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Jesus didn't say "I know the truth" or "I teach the truth"; He said "I AM the truth". How does ignoring Jesus affect our thinking?
- If Jesus is right about being the only way to God, what does this say about every other religion? Why can we trust Jesus fully?

DAY 7

Jesus is God

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 14:7-11

THE POINT Jesus claimed to have represented God the Father perfectly to the disciples – seeing Jesus was exactly the same as seeing God. Jesus and the Father are one and the same entity; what the Father says, Jesus says; what the Father does, Jesus does; knowing Jesus is the same as knowing the Father. The miracles Jesus did are convincing proof of this truth for all who care to look.

THE PARTICULARS

- Jesus' earthly life was such a clear, authentic demonstration of God the Father that seeing Jesus is exactly the same as seeing God (compare Hebrews 1:1-3).

• God the Father and God the Son (Jesus) are a complete and perfect unity – each dwells in the other, but without losing the identity of each as distinct and separate persons.

- Ultimately, the truth about God's tri-une nature (one God in 3 persons) must be accepted on the basis of believing Jesus' word.
- Jesus' miracles confirm His true identity (compare John 9:39-41).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- What prevented Jesus' closest friends from recognising Him?
- What else is at stake here if we deny that Jesus is fully God?

DAY 8

Spirit power

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 14:12-21

THE POINT Jesus wanted His disciples to know that after He went back to the Father they would not be abandoned like orphans; the Holy Spirit would be with them always – to comfort, counsel, guide, encourage (the Greek idea of Paraclete in 16 covers all these).

THE PARTICULARS

- Rather than being left helpless without Jesus' physical presence to reassure them, the disciples would soon be in an even better position – God's Holy Spirit would be in them. With the Father and Son in heaven directing operations, and the Third Person of the Trinity within them, they would constitute a much more powerful force than just having Jesus physi-

cally beside them.

• Two conditions apply to this new arrangement: requests are to be made with Jesus' authority (name) in mind (ie always allowing Him to overrule or modify them); life is to be lived in loving obedience to Christ's commands. We can then ask for anything.

- This arrangement is not open to everyone, only true believers; the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – is a package deal.
- The Holy Spirit is the vehicle and guardian of absolute truth.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Why do we have trouble with Jesus' promises in verses 12-14?

DAY 9

Good news for troubled hearts

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 14:22-31

THE PARTICULARS

THE POINT Jesus wanted His disciples to understand the clear distinction between those who belong to Him and those who don't, between the Church and the world. It is about reflecting the love and obedience to the Father's will that consistently marked His own life. He wanted them to see that for those who are His there is the ongoing comfort and peace of the Holy Spirit's ministry to enable them to experience His continuing presence during His physical absence. They must not interpret the forthcoming events through the world's eyes as if the "prince of this world" (Satan) were in control and winning. His crucifixion would be a completely voluntary act of submission to the Father's will.

- The disciples were still seeing the situation in the world's way. They needed to see that, contrary to all appearances, God was working out His sovereign will for their ultimate benefit.
- Jesus wanted them to have the same peace and freedom from fear in the face of danger that He had; He gave them His peace.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- How will Jesus' words here help you to cope with the difficulties you might face today? Are you still making the mistake of interpreting your own circumstances through the world's eyes?

DAY 10

By their fruit...

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 15:1-8

THE POINT Jesus uses the example of the vine to teach two very important Gospel truths: 1. I am totally ineffective without Him; all I am stems from my relationship to Him; 2. The reality of my spiritual life is based solely on being joined to Christ (faith); the proof of this reality is based on the evidence of appropriate fruit in my life (works). Fruit does not cause a branch to be a living one, but it does show whether it is a living branch or a dead one.

THE PARTICULARS

- In calling Himself the true vine and His Father the gardener Jesus reasserts His claim to be the only source of spiritual life and the only basis on which our accountability to God is deter-

mined.

- The destiny of a branch of a vine depends only on whether or not it is connected to the vine in a life-sustaining relationship.
- Connected branches need constant pruning to make them more fruitful; unconnected ones are cut off altogether and destroyed.
- God is glorified by fruitful lives; professing Christians whose lives are inconsistent bring dishonour to God. He is our Judge.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Do you think James might have been reflecting on this teaching of Jesus (his half-brother) when he wrote James 2:14-26?

DAY 11

The joy of loving each other

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 15:9-17

THE POINT Jesus longs for His followers to have a personal relationship with Him that reflects the relationship He has with the Father. This involves being obedient to His commands and responding to Him and to each other with the same love He has for us – a completely self-sacrificing love. Continuing in such a loving relationship with Him brings great joy to both Him and to us.

THE PARTICULARS

- Jesus has done everything for us ...
- ... He has initiated His love in us ... (9)
- ... He has initiated His joy in us ... (10)
- ... He has laid down His life for us ... (13-14)

- ... He has communicated His thoughts and plans to us ... (15)
- ... He has chosen us to share in the work of His kingdom (16)
- ... He has promised to grant whatever we ask in His name (16)
- Faithful, obedient service as Jesus' friends brings us great joy.
- Jesus commands us many times in Scripture to love each other.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Why did Jesus place such emphasis on the command to love each other in this last discourse with His disciples? Are we good at this? What does it mean if we're not? How can we do better?

DAY 12

Jesus divides the world

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 15:18-25

THE POINT Having talked to the disciples about their relationship to Him and each other, Jesus now warns them about their relationship to the world. The key to the one is love; the expectation of the other is hatred. If the world hated Jesus without reason, we should be surprised (even worried?!) if they didn't hate us too.

THE PARTICULARS

- The world hated Jesus because He proclaimed and exemplified God's absolute truth; we should expect the same treatment.
- Jesus' life and witness expose man's sinful heart (as Ps. 69:4 predicted); man's response of hatred therefore condemns him.

- Opposition to Jesus is opposition to the one and only true God.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- The man behind the 2002 Bali bombings openly confessed his hatred of "followers of the cross". While lacking discernment to recognise true followers of the cross, his purpose was clear. In many places today Christians are facing vicious persecution or death. What might we expect if we stand firm for Gospel truth?
- Does the Church today try too hard to be acceptable and "user-friendly" in both its message and its practice in order to build up its numbers? What effect is this really having on its life?

DAY 13

Kept on track by the Spirit

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 15:26-16:4

THE POINT In His humanity, Jesus anticipated the difficulty the disciples would have with spiritual realities that aren't accompanied by physical manifestations. While He was with them they were OK but when He went they would not readily understand the Holy Spirit's equivalent (but unseen) ministry to them. He needed to make clear that when the inevitable opposition came they could depend on the Spirit as much as they had depended on Him.

THE PARTICULARS

- The Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son. (26)
- The Spirit operates only in the realm of truth; He won't

deceive.

- The Spirit's task is to focus people on Jesus and not on Himself.
- The 12 disciples/apostles had a particular witnessing function because they had been with Jesus from the start of His ministry.
- The world is not neutral, it is opposed to God who has revealed Himself in Jesus; violent persecution of the followers of Jesus, even by "religious" people (eg the Pharisee Saul/Paul), does not come as a surprise. Jesus never tries to hide this truth from us.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Do we need to be reminded about the promised Holy Spirit's ministry to us in times of opposition? Are we surprised by it?

DAY 14

Never alone

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 16:5-16

THE POINT Although the disciples will be confused, sad and anxious when they witness Jesus' crucifixion, His death/exaltation will open the way for the Spirit of truth to play His part in God's purposes. The Spirit's work will be so comprehensive and effective it will soon become clear to them that this is all for the best.

THE PARTICULARS

- The Holy Spirit's work includes the following ...
 - to be our Counsellor, Comforter, Encourager, Guide, Teacher;
 - to convict the world of its sin as it rejects God's truth in Jesus;

- to convict the world of its wrong idea of righteousness (eg the Pharisees'), because Jesus (whom they will crucify) is the one going to heaven (ie has the right/true idea of righteousness);
- to convict the world of its wrong idea of judgement because its "prince" (Satan) is the one being judged at the cross/tomb;
- to guide us in the way of truth, in perfect harmony with the 3-in-1 God, revealing the future, and focussing all on Christ.
- In dealing with us, God is sensitive to our frailty/limitations.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Think about the Holy Spirit's ministry to you and through you. Do you need to be more aware of the wonder of this provision?

DAY 15

Sorrow will turn into joy

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 16:16-24

THE POINT Jesus was sensitive to the confusion of His disciples. From their earth-bound perspective they had no framework into which to fit His description of the events of the next 3 days. By using the illustration of childbirth Jesus was able to reassure them that the anguish to which they were about to be subjected (his cruel death and burial, and the apparent triumph of His enemies) was only a precursor to the lasting joy and fulfilment to follow.

THE PARTICULARS

- Even before it happened, Jesus was in no doubt about the fact that very soon He would die, be buried, and come back to life.

- The disciples were confused, but unwilling to admit it openly.
- Jesus knows and understands all our unspoken bewilderment.
- "No pain, no gain" is a basic spiritual truth (eg James 1:2-4).
- In this discourse in chapters 14-16, no fewer than 6 times Jesus promises to grant whatever the disciples ask for in His name.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Have we trials or temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer. Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer.

DAY 16

True peace is trusting Jesus

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 16:25-33

THE POINT Until the disciples have actually witnessed for themselves Jesus' agonising crucifixion followed by His burial and then the amazing fact of the empty tomb and His post-resurrection appearances, until they have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, most of what Jesus was saying to them must remain an incomprehensible mystery; but later it will be crystal clear. He prepared them beforehand so they would see more clearly that, in spite of persecution, final victory and peace are assured.

THE PARTICULARS

- Jesus' language at this point was necessarily cryptic because the disciples had no way of understanding the way of the cross.

- Jesus challenged the disciples to trust Him that, in spite of every appearance to the contrary, the Father's Plan was exactly on track. By being devoted to Him they were loved and kept safe.
- The recognition that Jesus was of divine origin was the key to their understanding His message/mission; it is the same for us!
- In Christ is true peace, regardless of our adverse circumstances.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- In spite of all that is happening to the Church and in the world today, do you have Jesus' peace because you know who He is?

DAY 17

Man's Chief End

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 17:1-5

THE POINT Central to Jesus' mission, and the focus of His own glory, was to bring glory to the Father. This in turn is realised through the salvation of the elect, for whom Jesus is about to lay down His life on the cross. This pivotal truth is captured in the answer to the first question in the Shorter Catechism: "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever."

THE PARTICULARS

- Time for communion with His Father in prayer was always a high priority in Jesus' life, no less on the eve of His crucifixion.
- Jesus' death on the cross was the fulfilment, the ultimate

"appointment", of His earthly mission. "The time has come", He said.

- The glory of the one true tri-une God is dynamic and relational.
- Jesus has the Father's authority to give eternal life to His Elect.
- There is no eternal life apart from a close, personal relationship with God's Son, Jesus Christ (this is what "know" means).
- Jesus came from glory, achieved glory, and returned to glory.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Reflect on your own salvation. Does Jesus' pivotal prayer here help you to understand more fully what God has done for you?

DAY 18

If God decides, why pray?

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 17:6-12

THE POINT Because He is the Sovereign Lord, Jesus can speak confidently of His disciples' understanding and faith even though at the time they were frightened and confused. Jesus' unity with the Father, and the Father's power to save/protect, guarantee their safety, but this is not inconsistent with Jesus' praying for them. In this, Jesus sets us a good pattern for prayer to our Sovereign God.

THE PARTICULARS

- The disciples were chosen by God (he took the initiative) and their obedient response was consistent with His predetermined plan. Even Judas' defection was consistent with this Plan (12).

• Jesus invested His short 3-year ministry in just 12 men, but He devoted His time, energy and prayer to preparing them as apostles.

- Jesus is glorified in the lives of the apostles (cf eg Acts 4:13).
- There is perfect unity and mutual sharing in the Godhead; Jesus desires this unity to be reflected in the Church bearing His name.
- It is not inconsistent to plead for what we already know God will do and is doing; Jesus showed that prayer is very relational.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Do you need some encouragement in your spiritual walk? Does knowing that God chose you and that Jesus prays for you help?

DAY 19

The cost of being salt/light

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 17:13-19

THE POINT Jesus brings God's word to men, and is God's Word – God's (absolute) truth. Truth cannot be found without Jesus. Every religion that tries to understand God and His creation without acknowledging Jesus in this central role is false and deceptive. Jesus was sent into the world to establish God's absolute truth.

THE PARTICULARS

- Jesus saw His disciples as the seamless extension of His work ...
- ... He was going and they were staying and He wanted them to experience the full measure of His joy;
- ... they would be as distinct (sanctified, completely "other")

from the world as he'd chosen to be when sent by the Father (19); the cross was the epitome of His self-sanctification for man;

... they would be as alienated/hated by the world as he'd been; ... the Father sent Him, so He was sending ('apostle-ing') them.

- It is the (absolute) truth (ie God's Word) that alienates Jesus' disciples from the world/society in which they live (17).
- Jesus prayed for the disciples' protection from Satan's power.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- What is the implication of this passage for inter-faith dialogue and activity? What do multicultural Australians hate most?

DAY 20

Jesus' concern for His Bride

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 17:20-26

THE POINT Here we see Jesus in prayer for His Church, His Bride. His two-fold desire, as He pours out His heart to His Father, is for perfect love/unity among us and with God; and that we might have an experience of His presence/glory that sin has kept from us.

THE PARTICULARS

- Jesus saw His Church as the ongoing reality of His presence in the world, bringing in others through its witness to Him.
- Jesus saw the unity exemplified by His Church as the key to the world coming to believe that He is God's Saviour/Messiah.
- Jesus has given the Church the full revelation of Himself and His eternal glory in order that this purpose might be achieved.

• True harmony in the Church would prove His identity and love.

• Jesus is presently working for the perfection of His Bride; He's chosen no other means of making Himself known to the world!

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Why has the Church down through the ages fallen so far short of Jesus' expectation for her? What is our biggest problem?
- Is Jesus envisaging organic union or something else? What else?
- Should we let past failures discourage us from greater effort?



news

'BLASPHEMER' FACES DEATH

The first woman to be sentenced to die in Pakistan for allegedly blaspheming Islam's prophet is shaken and aghast that she was never asked for a statement in her defence. In an interview with *Compass* at **Sheikhupura District Jail, Asia Noreen** said through tears and a shaking voice that she was heart-broken and shattered.

The mother of two and stepmother of three was sentenced on November 8 to hang after she said that, as a Christian, she did not consider Muhammad a prophet.

"How can an innocent person be accused, have a case in court after a false FIR [First Information Report], and then be given the death sentence, without even once taking into consideration what he or she has to say?" she asked.

"In the entire year that I have spent in this jail, I have not been asked even once for my statement in court. Not by the lawyers and not by the judge."

However, there are hopes for a presidential pardon after international pressure on Pakistani diplomats and the government.

Compass Direct

SECOND 'BLASPHEMER' SHOT

Latif Masih, 22, also suffered summary justice, but not by the courts. Police suspect two Muslim extremists shot dead the Christian soon after he was granted bail in a separate "blasphemy" case – and less than a week after Islamist militants killed four members of a Christian family for their faith.

Two men with pistols killed him near his home 110 kilometres north-east of Lahore. **Inspector Rafique Ahmed** said that Masih's murder was likely linked to the case against him for allegedly desecrating the Quran. Masih was released on bail on November 3 after his accuser, **Ijaz Ahmed**, said he was not sure Masih was guilty, police said.

Meanwhile six militants apparently belonging to Islamic terrorist organisation **Lashkar-e-Taiba** killed five Christian family members, including a five-year-old boy on November 12. Dead

on the scene were two grown children of 42-year-old schoolteacher **Shahista Iqbal Gill** – 23-year-old **Atif Iqbal Gill** and 21-year-old **Tehreem Iqbal Gill** – as well as her sister-in-law, identified only as **Gulshan**, 25. **Imran Iqbal Gill**, five, died in hospital.

NEW LIFE CLOSSES

The *New Life* Christian newspaper has ceased publication as from the November 25 edition. The board of **New Life Australia** announced it has reluctantly decided to cease publication as it is no longer financially viable and subscriptions continue to decline as loyal supporters and subscribers go to be with the Lord.

Throughout its 72 years, *New Life* has promoted gospel work both in Australia and overseas. This ministry which was the vision of the late **Eric Daley**, the founding editor, has promoted and assisted the cause of evangelism and Christian mission through many churches and non-denominational agencies.

The board expressed gratitude to "all who have been involved and helped in this great work through the years, especially the editors that followed Eric – **John Coleman, Bob Thomas, Ross Prout, Helen Woodall**, and in recent years Bob Thomas again".

PALESTINIANS PRAISED

Activist comedian **Mark Thomas** has praised Palestinian Christians for their role in the growth of nonviolent resistance to Israeli occupation in a speech in London last month.

Thomas recently walked the length of the wall surrounding the Occupied Palestinian Territories, in preparation for a book and a film on the subject. He met Muslims, Christians, Jews and others who are opposing the occupation without violence.

Thomas, an atheist, said, "When Christians get it right, they really get it right".

Christian Today

BISHOPS HEAD FOR ROME

Five bishops in the **Church of England** are joining the Catholic Church under a scheme set up by the Pope for disaffected Anglicans.

The move was confirmed last month by a statement from the **Roman**

Catholic Church in England and Wales. They are **Ebbsfleet Bishop Andrew Burnham, Richborough Bishop Keith Newton, Fulham Bishop John Broadhurst**, and retired bishops **Edwin Barnes** and **David Silk**, formerly Bishop of **Ballarat**.

The ordinariate was announced by Pope Benedict XVI last year to allow disaffected Anglo-Catholics to join the Catholic Church while still maintaining some of their Anglican traditions.

Christian Today

NEW CHINESE BIBLE

The **Hong Kong Bible Society** has published a new translation of the Bible in Chinese, updating the **The Chinese Union Version (CUV)** Bible first published in 1919. The Society decided in 2006 a revision was needed to serve diverse Chinese communities worldwide. Besides varied cultural practice, many of the Chinese characters used in the CUV are no longer commonly used.

Out of this, the **Revised Chinese Union Version** was produced, with careful attention to precision and detail. Bible scholars from China, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore and the Americas – together with translation specialists from the United Bible Societies – were involved in the update. About 15% of the text was revised, but the dignified literary style of the CUV was retained, as it is cherished by Chinese churches worldwide.

The new version was launched in Sydney on November 22.

BURMESE BAPTISTS PUNISHED

Officials in Chin state, Burma, ordered a Baptist church to cease holding worship services after the pastor refused to wear an election campaign T-shirt supporting the military government's **Union Solidarity and Development Party**.

The election commission summoned **Pastor Mang Tling**, 47, of Dawdin village two days after the election and ordered him to stop holding services and discontinue the church nursery program, the **Chin Human Rights Organisation (CHRO)** reported.

Village headman **U Than Chaung** had given the pastor a campaign T-shirt to wear in support of the USDP, and when he refused to wear it, the headman filed a report with local authorities accusing him of persuading Christians

to vote for an opposing party, the **National Unity Party**.

Compass Direct

VIETNAM JAILS CHRISTIANS

Vietnam has jailed two members of a Christian ethnic minority group, the **Montagnards**, after finding them guilty of undermining national unity, state media said on November 16.

A court in the Central Highlands province of Phu Yen jailed one man in his forties for six years and another man aged about 30 for four years, said *Nhan Dan*, the Vietnam Communist Party daily.

"They were accused of having contacts with and receiving instructions from a member of **Dega**, a separatist Protestant organisation based in the United States, which Vietnamese authorities accuse of threatening national unity."

Assist

CHRISTIANS 'SILENCED'

Christian professionals are being "silenced", says a British doctor dismissed from an adoption panel because of her views on homosexuality. An employment tribunal has rejected **Dr Sheila Matthews'** claim that she was the victim of religious discrimination.

Dr Matthews was dismissed from an adoption panel by **Northamptonshire County Council** after she asked for permission to abstain from voting on the placement of children with same-sex families.

After the hearing, Dr Matthews said she brought the case to an employment tribunal to highlight a "very worrying and damaging trend". "Christian professionals, who seek to express their professional judgement in the very best interests of children, are being silenced or discriminated against," she said.

Christian Today

HILLSONG EXPANDS AGAIN

Sydney-based megachurch **Hillsong** has been expanding its locations at home and abroad, recently announcing a new extension site for one of its main campuses and holding gatherings for its first church location in the United States.

The Pentecostal church has four main campuses across Sydney and international branches in London, Kiev, Cape

Town, Stockholm, Paris, Moscow, and now New York City.

Hillsong NYC launched in October and has already expanded to three services due to the growing number of attendees. In Australia, it was due to take over Noosa Life Church on November 29 as an extension of the Brisbane campus.

Courier Mail

ONLINE WEDDING SUCCESS

The **Church of England's** online wedding planner has experienced a 74% rise in visitors in the last year. More than 240,000 people have visited the **YourChurchWedding.org** website in the last 10 months, compared to 139,000 visitors during the same period in 2009.

The site was set up by the Church of England two years ago as part of a package of measures to encourage people to have a church wedding.

The website features an online ceremony planner, which allows couples to choose their hymns and Bible readings. It has proved a surprise hit, being used by more than 39,000 out of the 112,000 couples who married at a Church of England church in the last two years.

The Church of England has reformed its approach to weddings in recent years in a bid to increase the number of people choosing a church as the setting for their wedding over the tough competition from country houses and hotels.

Christian Today

COME AND SEE: SCOT

One of the **Church of Scotland's** most senior ministers has invited **British chancellor George Osborne** to come north of the Border on a "fact-finding mission" about welfare reform.

The **Rev. Ian Galloway**, convener of the **Kirk's Church and Society Council**, believes recent welfare proposals show how out of touch the government is with deprived communities.

In a letter to the Chancellor, Galloway and the **Rev. Dr Martin Johnstone**, secretary of the **Poverty Truth Commission**, argue that the government's plans would be better informed if Mr Osborne and his team consulted with some of Scotland's poorest people.

The multimillionaire chancellor, who holds an aristocratic title, is one of an estimated 20 millionaires in the current British cabinet, including **Prime Minister David Cameron** and **Deputy**

Prime Minister Nick Clegg.

Ekklesia

AMPUTEE IN TEST CASE

An Afghani amputee in prison for his Christian faith since May faces court and a possible death sentence for converting from Islam in what one religious freedom advocate called a "kind of test case to see which law prevails in the country: Islamic or international agreements".

Authorities arrested **Said Musa**, 45, on May 31, days after the local Noorin TV station broadcast images of Afghan Christians being baptized and worshipping. Though there were other arrests in May and June during the ensuing manhunt against Christians, Musa is the only known Christian facing a court case.

Turning from Islam is a capital offence under strict Islamic laws still in place in Afghanistan, which was wrested from the Taliban regime's hard-line Islamist control in 2001.

Compass Direct

BHUTAN CHRISTIAN JAILED

A human rights organisation has learned that Bhutanese police are preparing to arrest two more Christians for their involvement in showing a movie about Jesus after **Prem Singh Gurung** was jailed for three years for showing the film.

International Christian Concern wrote to the representatives of Bhutan at the UN, protesting the sentencing of Gurung. ICC said Bhutanese officials defended the sentencing.

Assist

MEASURING HAPPINESS

The leaders of three Christian organisations have supported controversial plans by **British Prime Minister David Cameron** to measure happiness in the UK. Mr Cameron said he intended to measure "general wellbeing" alongside economic success as an indicator of British society. It is expected that the happiness index will be used to guide Government policy.

In a joint letter to the Guardian today, **CAFOD director Chris Bain**, **Tearfund CEO Matthew Frost** and **Paul Woolley**, director of theology think tank Theos, welcomed the move, saying it was important that the

Government recognise that economic growth is not the only driver towards human fulfilment.

In their recently published joint report, *Wholly Living*, the three organisations warned that economic recovery would be incomplete so long as individualism and self-interest remained at its heart.

Christian Today

DEATH FOR 'THOUGHT CRIMES'

An Iranian court has sentenced a Christian convert from Islam to death for so-called "thought crimes".

According to **Present Truth Ministries**, the official verdict has now been delivered in writing to **Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani**, stating that he is to be hung for the crime of apostasy.

PTM spokesman **Jason DeMars** says the pastor had 20 days to appeal.

Assist



PROTECT CHRISTIANS: MUSLIM

By Brian Hutt

A Muslim leader has urged the Iraqi government and US-led forces to step up their efforts to protect the Christian minority in Iraq from extinction.

Navaid Hamid, secretary of the **South Asian Council for Minorities** and a Muslim, said last month's attack on a Catholic church in Baghdad that killed 58 was a heinous crime that should be strongly condemned by the international community.

"With the murderous attack, the safety of Iraq's Christian minority has become critical and it is the prime responsibility not only of the regime in Baghdad but also that of the allied forces led by [the] US to restore confidence and provide safety because never in the history of Iraq, minorities were so vulnerable [sic]," he said.

Hamid said Christians in Iraq were "paying a high price" for their faith and living in fear because of the "unprecedented" levels of violence against them. "It is a fact that they are on the verge of extinction in Iraq," he said.

An estimated 400,000 Christians

have left Iraq and sought asylum in the US and Europe because of the persecution they face in Iraq.

The biggest victims of the US-led invasion of Iraq, Hamid said, were its minorities.

His call followed a joint statement by high-level Christian and Muslim leaders meeting in Geneva to build a "common future" also condemning the attack as an "inhumane act that contradicts all religious teachings, and Middle Eastern culture that enabled people to coexist peacefully for many centuries".

The joint statement was undersigned by **Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal of Jordan**; **Dr Muhammad Ahmed Al-Sharif**, general secretary of the **World Islamic Call Society**; the **World Council of Churches**; and representatives of the **Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Protestant Evangelical** and **Pentecostal** traditions.

The Geneva statement called on the UN Security Council and Iraqi officials to put an end to terrorist attacks "aimed at degrading Iraqi people ... and defiling Christian and Islamic sacred places".

The Islamic State of Iraq, the group which claimed responsibility for the attack, has threatened to continue targeting Christians. It says it attacked the church in retaliation for the supposed detention of two women converts to Islam by the Coptic Church in Egypt.

Christian Today

SCIENTIST DEFIES HAWKING

By Charlie Boyd

Science is no obstacle to faith for **John Lennox**, the Christian mathematician who is about to release a new book challenging **Stephen Hawking's** recent assertion that the creation of the universe happened without God.

Physicist Hawking made headlines in the summer when he claimed in his new book, *The Grand Design*, that the law of gravity means it was not necessary for God to cause the Big Bang which led to the formation of the universe.

Now Lennox has written his own book challenging Hawking's assumptions, *God and Stephen Hawking: Whose Design is it Anyway?*, out in January.

In an interview with *The Times*, Lennox argued that it was possible to believe in the creation of the universe, and multiuniverses as Hawking believes in, and still believe in God.

"You can have both," he said. "What's

to stop God creating a multiverse?"

Rather than rendering God obsolete, Lennox suggested that the Big Bang was a "singularity", or a moment in time when "God did something special".

As for intelligent design, he suggested that the Book of Genesis offers an explanation of God's involvement in the creation process in "very simple language".

He told of how, while studying at Cambridge University, he had sought out students with perspectives that differed from the Christian beliefs handed to him by his parents and that despite looking at the works of atheists such as Bertrand Russell and Camus, he still came to conclude that the beliefs he had been raised with were true.

"I believed then, and I still do believe, that Christianity is falsifiable. It's not believing in spite of the evidence; it's believing because of it. In fact, what I discovered at Cambridge was the more I exposed my faith to the opposition, the stronger it held up."

In the interview, Lennox cautioned against too readily accepting propositions on the basis of mathematical equations, saying that they were not necessarily true.

Equally, he suggested that science would still not help people to understand God as a being of love.

"God is a person, not a theory," he said.

Christian Today

MINERS TURN TO CHRIST

One of the trapped miners rescued in October in Chile has told of the conversion of many of his colleagues during the ordeal.

Jose Henriquez was the 24th man to be brought to the surface. He told thousands of people at the **Luis Palau festival** in Santiago that 22 out of the 33 trapped miners turned to Christ while waiting to be rescued.

During his time underground, Henriquez had become something of a spiritual leader to the trapped men, who called him "The Pastor".

He told the crowds that he had requested and received biblical audio messages from Palau, an American evangelist, while underground.

After thousands of people made a public commitment to Christ at the festival, Henriquez told Palau: "I do hope they will follow through and walk with Christ for life."

The six-day mission was attended by 145,000. In a meeting with **President Sebastian Piñera**, Palau spoke of the importance of public officials recognising God in their statements and speeches, as he quoted 1 Samuel 2:30 which states: "Those who honour me, I will honour."

Following the successful rescue of the miners, Piñera praised the faith of the miners' families. Some of the miners were seen praying in the moments after they emerged from the escape capsule.

Mario Sepulveda, the second miner to be freed, said he had "held on to God's hand" throughout the ordeal, while another freed miner, **Jimmy Sanchez**, said God "never left us down here".

Christian Today

FOOD CHALLENGE FOR FAITHFUL

A new global initiative is seeking to change attitudes among faith communities to the way in which food is produced, purchased and consumed.

Faith in Food has been launched worldwide by the **Alliance of Religions and Conservation** (ARC) to help faith communities think about what they eat and how it connects to their values and beliefs. It is encouraging faith communities to become part of a global movement for a fairer, healthier and more sustainable food system.

The initiative takes the approach that eating is a moral and spiritual act that affects all life on earth. It is being supported by secular and faith-based bodies, including the **WWF**, the **World Bank**, the **Fairtrade Foundation** and the **Soil Association**.

Together they will help faith communities develop policies to ensure that the food they purchase, produce or provide – for example in celebrations, schools and cafes, and retreat and conference centres – honours their beliefs about caring for the planet and the environ-

ment.

Martin Palmer, director of the British-based ARC, said he wanted the initiative to restore a sense of the sacred in food and for faith communities to promote positive values in relation to food. "This way, together we can start transforming the world – one meal at a time."

With as much as 30 per cent of an individual's carbon footprint coming from his or her food, Palmer said that choosing planet-friendly food was the most important way that people could reduce their environmental impact.

"Every faith celebrates food as a gift of God, or the gods. Every faith knows that the just distribution of the produce of the earth is a pre-requisite for a just society. This is why they all have harvest festivals. Now it is time for the spiritual insights, which have become a little trapped in ritual, to shape the everyday lives of billions of the faithful worldwide, and especially in the USA," said Palmer.

Christian Today

NEEDED, A 'NEW IMAGE'

By Jenna Lyle

Conflicts, crimes and violence are just some of the reasons why some people no longer see religion as a force for good, according to a former head of London's police, the **Metropolitan Police**.

Lord Ian Blair has warned that violence, infighting and abuse are obscuring much of the good that people of faith are doing in the world today.

Giving a lecture at theology think tank **Theos**, he said religion was behind some of the intolerance and violence seen in the world today and that people were not always aware of the achievements brought about by religion because of some of the crimes committed by people of faith as well as internal conflicts, for example within his own

Anglican Church.

"The greatest achievements and ambitions of human social history, such as the abolition of slavery and the provision of universal education or free health care for all have had their origins in religious impulse. This is not the image of religion in this past century or this past decade," he said.

"The horrors of clerical child abuse and the arguments over homosexuality... are obscuring the basic decency that comes from the commandments to peace contained in all religions."

Lord Blair said Islam had been "demonised" by the terrorist acts committed by Islamic extremists and that to most people, faith appeared "irrelevant, clannish, prejudiced, old-fashioned and violent".

But he said he believed religion was still principally a force for good and that the acts of charity and love by people of faith "should be and remain the glue that permits modern society to exist".

He said such good deeds by the faithful were the "bulwark" of public order and could help foster "tranquillity" in wider society.

However he argued that people of faith needed to shed some of their own certainty about being right, saying that doubt could be a counterbalance to "shrill conviction".

Christian Today

PARENTS FEAR MEDIA

A new report from **Mothers' Union** has laid bare the concerns of many parents in the UK over the sexualisation of their children by mass marketing and the media.

The report cites a **ComRes** poll, which found that some 80% of parents feel media and marketing with sexualised content was too easily accessible by children and that it was making them sexually aware at too young an age.

Of the 1000 parents polled, 71% agreed that the media was encouraging children to act older than they wanted to, while 67% said they believed inappropriate content was being shown on TV before the 9pm watershed.

Speaking at the launch of the *Bye Bye Childhood* report yesterday, Mothers' Union president **Rosemary Kempell** said she was concerned by the increasing levels of marketing being aimed at children.

"Brands deliberately encourage a culture of 'pester power' or use manipula-

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tive techniques such as recruiting young people as conduits for peer-to-peer marketing," she said.

"This is having a far-reaching effect on children's values, and their family life. Marketers play on the need that children have to fit in with their friends, to belong. We believe exploiting children for profit is wrong."

Mothers' Union urged retailers and the media not to sell or market goods of a sexualised nature to children under 16.

Fleur Dorrell, head of faith and policy at Mothers' Union, said she wanted to see a cultural shift, with new codes of practice put in place to ensure that childhood was respected and not seen simply as a "marketing opportunity".

She said: "Values of good parenting, of belonging and of choosing what brings happiness should not be sold to us as a product or a purchase."

CONGRESS DRAWS 4000

More than 4000 people from nearly 200 countries descended on Cape Town, South Africa, to plan strategies to evangelise the world for Christ in the 21st

Century.

Tens of thousands more around the globe tuned in via *GlobaLink* to the **Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation**, which opened on October 17.

The Congress is the brainchild of evangelist **Dr Billy Graham**, who founded its parent organisation known as **The Lausanne Movement**, which is well placed to reaffirm the primary truths of biblical Christianity.

Drawing together 4000 invited participants from 197 nations, the congress was ideally placed to gather evangelicals for a common purpose, according to Lausanne Movement chairman **Doug Birdsall**.

The theme of the third congress was "God in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself," (2 Cor. 5:19) and how to bear witness to Jesus Christ and all His teaching in every region of the world and every sphere of society.

The congress not only reaffirmed the primary truths of biblical Christianity, but also engaged with critical issues set to face the church over the next decade, identified through consultations around the world.

Birdsall said: "This is the first congress of its kind in the digital age, and we're praying it will herald a new moment for the church."

Organisers said that in this information age, traffic on the eight-language congress website was high. Radio networks relayed programs across Africa and Latin America, on the themes of the congress.

"This is an unprecedented level of Internet usage for the country of South Africa, even more than when the World Cup was here," explained **Amy Donovan, Tech Squad Manager** for the congress.

The Lausanne Movement is a worldwide movement that mobilises evangelical leaders to collaborate for world evangelisation. The 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization produced *The Lausanne Covenant*, widely regarded as one of the most significant documents in recent church history.

Two elder statesmen of the evangelical movement, **John Stott** and **Billy Graham** sent personal greetings. Both are now becoming more physically frail, but have lost none of their passion for Christ and His gospel.

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For more information please contact the Minister:
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Religion resurgent

RELIGION AND POLITICS ARE MIXING IN A NEW WAY.

Nicholas Aroney

Even though the number of people in Australia who identify themselves as Christian has declined over the years, religious convictions seem to have a significance in Australian politics that they did not have two or three decades ago. The religious beliefs of our political leaders have become an important issue in public debate.

Some, for example, tried to link John Howard with the so-called religious right, a theory that rests on a modicum of truth, provided that the wilder conspiracy theories associated with this claim are duly discounted. Responding to the view that conservative Christians were tending to vote for the Coalition, Kevin Rudd presented himself as a Christian socialist who looked to figures such as the famous German pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer for inspiration.

Tony Abbott's Catholic faith is frequently the subject of discussion, even though Abbott himself tends to play down its significance for his politics. And upon becoming Prime Minister, Julia Gillard was immediately asked about her stance towards religion, and her response that she did not have any personal religious faith was deemed significant enough to make front page news.

There have been several important books written on the relationship between Christianity and politics. Sydney Catholic Archbishop George Pell recently published a collection of essays discussing the role of Catholic faith and doctrine within the modern and post-modern conditions of contemporary Western societies. Tom Frame, the former Anglican Bishop to the Australian Armed Forces, similarly recently defended a carefully-defined role for religion in public life. Frank Brennan, the Jesuit priest and law professor at Australian Catholic University, has likewise proposed a "responsible" engagement between religion and politics in his



THE GROWTH OF ISLAM IN EUROPE AND THE GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY IN CHINA IS MAKING SCHOLARS THINK AGAIN.

recent book.

The resurfacing of religion in Australian public life is not unrelated to global developments. As German political philosopher Jürgen Habermas has argued, the collapse of Communism in Europe unveiled a world in which religion, religious difference and religious tensions would once again take centre stage. It is no longer possible to assume that western countries will automatically become more and more secularised. The growth of Islam in Europe and the growth of Christianity in China is making scholars think again.

This re-emergent role of religion raises very important questions about its role in Australian political life. One way of portraying the debate is to connect it with two fundamental principles of our constitutional system. Drawing upon the American example, the Australian Constitution contains a section that prevents the Commonwealth Parliament from making any law that either establishes any religion or prohibits the free exercise of religion. Both of these principles – non-establishment and free exercise – are important in our understanding of the role of religion in Australian politics.

According to the standard under-

standing, the "non-establishment principle" is centrally concerned with the legitimate use of the coercive force of government. In a democracy, it is argued, political debate determines when and for what purposes the coercive power of government will be exercised. Concerned that the exercise of such power is legitimate and widely accepted in a religiously plural society, it is sometimes argued that religious convictions have no legitimate role to play in justifying the use of government force. However, at the same time, the "free exercise principle" asserts that religious freedom is a fundamental right of citizens and it is argued, on the contrary, that religious citizens should be free to engage in political discussion without having to abandon their personal, religious convictions.

When put this way, the non-establishment and the free-exercise principles appear to conflict with each other. One suggests that religious convictions have no legitimate role in public debate; the other suggests that religious citizens have a fundamental right to express their convictions in political discussion. How is this tension to be resolved? To address this question it is necessary to understand the nature and grounds of the objection to the use of religious convictions in modern democratic politics.

The underlying objection to religion proceeds on at least four levels. At its most visceral and primeval level, the objection rests on the view that religion is in some sense inherently pernicious and evil. The view here is that religion, by creating false hopes of reward in an afterlife and encouraging false certainties in the truth of particular beliefs, encourages fanaticism, persecution and a gullibility that enables powerful vested interests and political demagogues to manipulate, control and tyrannise entire societies.

A second, somewhat less extreme objection to religion focuses on its sup-

posed “irrationality”: that it inculcates false beliefs and undermines scientific inquiry and rational decision-making. The implication that people sometimes draw from this is that although religion might be tolerated for the weak-minded, it should be excluded from science, philosophy and public affairs.

Third, religion is sometimes criticised as being inherently sectarian; that it divides us when we should be recognising what we have in common, with the implication that religion should especially be excluded from the exercise of public power and the coercive powers of the state.

Finally, religion is frequently seen as “other worldly” and thus irrelevant to the affairs of this present world. On this view, religion is not only excluded from public life, but people who understand their own religious faith in this way voluntarily withdraw themselves from public affairs, since they regard their religion as properly contemplative, mystical, spiritual, personal and private.

The basic fear that drives the argument that religion should have no role in democratic politics is that religious pluralism can lead to intractable conflict. The standard line of argument focuses upon the post-Reformation division of Europe into warring camps, Catholic and Protestant, as well as Lutheran, Calvinist and Anabaptist, and the infamous wars of religion which raged across Europe during much of the 16th and 17th centuries.

The original solution to this problem of seemingly unavoidable conflict, pioneered by figures such as the English philosopher, John Locke, was one of rational Enlightenment. According to Locke, European society, as most societies before it, had seen religion as the essential binding force that would hold the society together. But when religious diversity developed after the Reformation, the foundations of European society were placed in jeopardy, grounded in conflict between proponents of alternative religions visions. Philosophers of the Enlightenment proposed, against this view, that “Reason” – rather than religion – should bind society together; that individuals could be free to continue to practise their religion privately, but that the practice of religion must be removed out of the sphere of public life – out of politics and government – and relegated to the private spheres of home life and individual con-

science.

This view took hold of the imagination of the intellectual leaders of Western Europe during the period we know as the Enlightenment, and the idea that religion should be relegated to the private sphere soon became a fundamental article of faith among the “enlightened”. However, we don’t today live in the heady days of the Enlightenment. We live, it is said, in a post-modern society in which the ideals and hopes of the Enlightenment have certainly faded, if not failed altogether. The Enlightenment is now itself seen to be itself a kind of dogmatic religious doctrine which enshrined reason as a



THE ENLIGHTENMENT IS NOW SEEN TO BE ITSELF A KIND OF DOGMATIC RELIGIOUS DOCTRINE WHICH ENSHRINED REASON AS A KIND OF SECULAR GOD.

kind of secular god.

Moreover, the Enlightenment ended up producing a whole range of fundamentally incompatible doctrines, themselves embroiled in intellectual conflict as fundamental and intractable as the conflict between incompatible religious doctrines. Thus, the last three centuries have witnessed the proliferation of competing moral and political doctrines, and the 20th century in particular witnessed at least three major secular political doctrines literally at war with each other: fascism, communism and liberal democracy.

Further, the 20th century also saw what unlimited reason could do: it could invent nuclear weapons and provide rationalisations for the use of indiscriminate bombing of civilian populations as ostensibly “legitimate” and “necessary” wartime measures.

Against this background, the prevailing approach to these matters had to change. It was now obvious that religion itself was not the only problem. Not only religious doctrines but also secular

doctrines could be the cause of fundamental social division, intractable conflict and the infliction of untold political harms and military atrocities.

A new solution was proposed by the American political philosopher John Rawls. Rawls argued that the problem lay not with only “religious” convictions in politics but with any “comprehensive doctrine” that seeks to muscle its way into politics, whether that doctrine be religious or secular in character (such as the comprehensive doctrines of communism, fascism and liberalism).

Rawls believed that we need to recognise that neither side in the culture wars is going to prevail and that we must all just learn to get along. What is necessary, Rawls argued, is that partisans on all sides recognise not just the necessity of playing by the rules of the democratic game, but embrace what he called the obligations of “democratic citizenship”.

According to Rawls, a liberal society must be grounded upon what he called “reasonable comprehensive doctrines” alone. Reasonable doctrines of this kind, he said, reject the goal of subordinating the political order to their particular comprehensive worldview, and accept the basic values of a constitutional, liberal-democratic regime. Those who find themselves in a “relentless struggle to win the world for the whole truth” or who are zealous “to embody the whole truth in politics”, he said, hold positions that are incompatible with this principle.

According to Rawls, the principle of democratic citizenship requires participants in public debate to limit themselves to the use reasons that all persons, no matter what their comprehensive doctrines, can reasonably accept. These reasons, which Rawls referred to as “public reason”, can be presented in a manner that is independent of any particular comprehensive doctrine. An individual may hold a certain political position based on that person’s own comprehensive commitments. But when proposing that a particular policy be adopted by the state the ethics of liberal democracy require that citizen to present reasons that all reasonable people can, in principle, accept.

Rawls said that public reason is a kind of reason that can be presented independently of comprehensive doctrine. However, public reason is a mirage: it is either too vague to be of any use in

resolving contested political issues, or else it is too specific to be the subject of general consensus and agreement. For when we consider the nature of political debates over particular policies and laws, it becomes apparent that comprehensive doctrines of some kind are necessary to come to a decisive conclusion.

Take the contested issue of abortion for example. We might all agree about the right to life possessed by all human beings, as well as the right of every woman to control her own body. But these very general principles do not resolve the question about whether abortion is justified, in what circumstances it might be justified, and to what extent it should be regulated by law. Our comprehensive doctrines do the real work here: our deeper beliefs about what is a human being; our understanding of personal autonomy and responsibility; and our views about how these should be understood in relation to one another. These fundamental beliefs are the really important factors in the debate. There is no “public reason” as Rawls defines it that is able to resolve the issue of abortion.

Not only do our positions on contested issues such as abortion depend on our comprehensive doctrines, but an

insistence on public reason seems to be contrary to the principle of freedom of religious expression in the first place. As Christian philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff has argued, for many religious people their faith applies to their



SECULAR REASON NEEDS AN AWARENESS OF WHAT IS MISSING IN ITS OWN WORLDVIEW AND A RENEWED SENSITIVITY TO THE ISSUES THAT CRY TO HEAVEN FOR JUSTICE.

whole lives, including their political lives and it is a matter of religious conviction that they participate responsibly in political debate. Wolterstorff argues that it is fundamentally unfair to require religious citizens to abandon their convictions when engaging in political dis-


ussion.

The debate over the role of religious faith in public debate seems recently to have entered a third phase initiated by the revised positions on the issue proposed by German political philosopher Jürgen Habermas. Habermas, acknowledging the arguments of Wolterstorff, has conceded that religious citizens can't necessarily translate their religious reasons into public reasons while remaining true to their religious convictions and that it would be unfair to require them to do so. He has also gone close to conceding that public reason alone may not be sufficient to resolve our political debates and that the insights and moral challenges posed by religious faith may be necessary ingredients of an inclusive and vital public discourse.

On Habermas's view, both reason and religion have their own inherent limitations that need to be acknowledged and addressed, particularly by being open to the insights offered by both sides. Naturalistic worldviews, he points out, do not enjoy any obvious advantage over religious worldviews; there is an ultimately “inconclusive” confrontation between “self-critical reason” and “contemporary religious convictions”, he says. Indeed, secular philosophy has to recognise its own “religious-metaphysical origins”, he says, pointing out that several distinctively Christian ideas have left an enduring mark on many of the most important concepts in contemporary political and legal philosophy.

Indeed, Habermas warns very strongly against a “naturalism founded on a naive faith in science” and challenges secular reason to come to “an awareness of what is missing” in the secular worldview, and a renewed sensitivity to the issues that “cry to heaven” for justice.

While Habermas still regards himself as a child of the Enlightenment, he recognises the limitations of natural reason. In his acknowledgement of the insufficiency of secular reason, the argument over the role of religion in modern democratic politics seems to have entered a new phase, one in which religious convictions do have an important role to play. ap

 **Dr Nicholas Aroney** is professor of law at the University of Queensland and is a member of the Presbyterian Church.

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letters

GOOD WORKS

We have been receiving *AP* for many years. Recently, the thought crossed my mind – If for some reason or other its publication stopped, what a loss it would be! Maybe only then would I realise more fully what a blessing it had been.

How often we take good things for granted!

As Christians, we know that the primary message of the Scriptures is the Gospel of Jesus Christ – that is foundational. *AP* makes that loud and clear, but also deals with the many and various issues in society that we are confronted with in our lives, looking at them from a Biblical perspective. What should our stance and response be as Christians? That is so important.

Thank you so much. Keep up the good work and may God enable you to do just that.

*Jim Watson,
Toowoomba, Qld*

UNIONS ARE FOR ATHEISTS

I read the letter from Leone of Eden in October's *AP* and can only assume it was printed in a Christian magazine to invoke comment.

I don't believe trade unions are Christian! They try to take away one's dependence on Almighty God and place it in the hands of a materialistic atheistic organisation.

If I am being paid regularly by a company or organisation, I don't think it is right that I withdraw my labour, unless I resign and find another job.

If one looks at work laws from the point of view of an employer, then some shake-up is seen to be necessary. For

example, I work with folk who consider sick day awards to be holidays and save them up to make a nice break whether sick or not and who pays? Is this why many jobs are going overseas?

To me, the Micah 6:8 quote says, live according to God's will as found in the New Testament, i.e. Paul's letters – not according to the local union shop steward.

*R.J.W. Brewer, elder,
West Tamar Presbyterian Church, Tas.*

REJOICE WITH CATHOLICS

The recent canonisation of Mary MacKillop by Pope Benedict has provided a wonderful occasion of Christian witness for the whole of humanity to experience. It has also affirmed the Christian's belief in miracles, which so engages the secular, humanist world of the present age.

It has also offered a unique opportunity for Christian unity and I am hopeful that all Presbyterians will rejoice with our Catholic brethren in this exciting time for so large a portion of the body of Christ.

*William J. Fraser,
Duffy, ACT*

WISE COUNSEL

Peter Hastie's interview with David Powlison (*AP*, April, 2010) entitled "Wisdom for Life" raises a number of important questions regarding the ministry of the word in our churches in Australia. Given Powlison's conclusion that "biblical counselling is absolutely integral to Christian ministry", how do we, as congregations, deal with the personal struggles of couples and individuals and bring God's word to bear specifically on their lives?

I suspect that many ministers and leaders in our churches and theological colleges, see that their main priority should be on preaching and leadership,

including church revitalisation and planting, rather than on ministering to the suffering, brokenness and sin issues in people's lives. Even those who are pastorally gifted in their ministry often feel totally inadequate and ill-equipped to deal with such issues. The easiest solution is to refer people to secular counsellors, including Christian counsellors who adopt secular presuppositions, in the hope that they will provide the help needed.

The danger here is that both leaders and those seeking counselling fail to see the power of the gospel working to provide change as the word of God is applied individually to people's lives. As a result, spiritual revitalisation is hindered in our congregations and the church becomes more and more sidelined in our society as the word of God is seen as increasingly irrelevant amongst those who are suffering.

What then is the solution? One way forward is to take seriously the need for the training of ministers and leaders in biblical counselling in Australia, so that suitably trained leaders and lay-leaders can be raised up in our congregations. To my knowledge, such training is not regularly offered by our theological colleges, the one exception being Tyndale Bible College in Sydney which is committed to the importance of training in biblical counselling in its theological curriculum. Such training should become more readily available so that we can equip God's people to effectively minister the word to those who are suffering, and bring glory to Christ and his church.

*Phil Paul,
Thornleigh, NSW*

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JANUARY 2011

- 8 Tregar ch (charge) western Sydney with about 100 c&a (communicants and adherents) and 3 e (elders).
- 9 Safety and spiritual refreshment for all holiday-makers.
- 10 Stability and wisdom for our national government, and wise actions by the new Victorian government.
- 11 Pty (Presbytery) of Ballarat – 6 charges and 5 hm stns (home mission stations) 5 appointment charges.
- 12 Annandale-Leichardt ch inner Sydney with about 30 c&a, 10 yf (younger folk – Sunday School and Youth) and 7 e. Peter Dunstan.
- 13 Just relations between the original, newer and the most recently arrived Australians.
- 14 The effective countering of all philosophies based on the premise “there is no God”.
- 15 Gavin Henderson exit in Ayr Home Hill appointment charge with about 95 c&a and 5 e.
- 16 Pray that the Lord of the harvest will give your congregation and presbytery a vision to plant new churches.
- 17 Ask God to show us the opportunity for the Gospel provided by the presence of so many Muslims among us.
- 18 Darryl & Kath Spriggs in his exit appointment in Nambucca River ch NSW north coast including Macksville with about 120 c&a, 21 yf and 3 e.
- 19 Allan & Bronwyn Lihou *MP* (mission partners – the Australian Presbyterian World Mission) workers from Bonnyrigg, western Sydney with OMF International involved in evangelism, church planting and leadership training in Taichung, Taiwan.

- 20 Honest and effective presentation of biblical truth in tertiary educational communities this year.
- 21 Pty (Presbytery) of Brisbane – 14 chs 6 retired ministers, 3 ministers under jurisdiction, 1 defence chaplain, 2 theological teachers.
- 22 Keep praying that none in retirement residences will be forgotten or neglected.
- 23 Matt Purnell Coorparoo, Brisbane including Mcgregor with about 100 c&a, 22 yf and 10 e, assisting Ross Wilson and Phil Case.
- 24 Riverwood ch sthn Sydney with about 65 c&a, 40 yf and 5 e. Ian Stenhoue.
- 25 Peter & Ayumi Tamsett *MP* workers from Granville, Sydney raising a team of prayer and financial supporters so they can move to Chiba, eastern Tokyo with to be involved in evangelism church planting with the Presbyterian Church of Japan.
- 26 Kerang ch Vic. with about 50 c&a, 15 yf and 2 e. Rudi Schwartz.
- 27 Peace in world trouble spots such as the Middle East, South Asia and Korea.
- 28 For Christians to demonstrate the love of Jesus in acts of mercy.
- 29 Help for all affected by earthquakes, eruptions, tsunamis and mining disasters.
- 30 Gungahlin North Belconnan ch with about 85 c&a, 40 yf and 3 e. Mark Adams.
- 31 Pty of The Hawkesbury, western Sydney – 12 charges and 3 hm stns, 10 retired ministers, 3 workers among koories, 3 hospital chaplains, 1 theological teacher.

FEBRUARY 2011

- 1 Shoahaven ch (3 cgns) with about 310 c&a, 35 yf and 1 e. Fred Monckton.
- 2 Brett & Ruth Richardson in his exit appt Wollongong ch with about 250 c&a, 20 yf and 13 e.

- 3 Gordonvale ch with about 45 c&a, 20 yf and 4 e. Bruce Harrison.
- 4 Eltham ch with about 105 c&a, 45 yf and 5 e. Don Rlliot, Max Walker.
- 5 The vacant Acacia Ridge ch with about 170 c&a, 90 yf and 9 e.
- 6 Ken & Lisa Gray in his exit appointment Temora ch sthn NSW with about 70 c&a, 6 yf and 7 e.
- 7 Real help for all caught up in alcohol and other substance abuse.
- 8 Those involved in Christian ministry among workers, police officers and prisoners.
- 9 All involved in the decades-long work of translating God’s written Word into new languages.
- 10 Kristian & Kylie Hartberg exit Coonabarabran ch, NW NSW, with about 5 c&a, 80 yf and 3 e.
- 11 Pty of Melbourne North – 7 chs and 2 home mission stations 2 apptmt chs.
- 12 Bexley-Rockdale ch (2 cgns) sthn Sydney with about 125 c&a, 50 yf and 2 e. Ewen Brown.
- 13 Andrew Poyser in his exit appointment St Andrews Rockhampton Qld with about 100 c&a, 28 yf and 10 e, assisting Mike O’Connor.
- 14 A hunger of all church members to understand Christian doctrine.
- 15 The growth of the Aboigs Evangelical Fellowship.
- 16 James & Amanda McFarlane in his exit appt at Beecroft ch nthn Sydney with about 285 c&a, 80 yf and 14 e, assisting Paul Cooper.
- 17 The vacant Wahroonga ch nthn Sydney with about 80 c&a, 3 yf and 6 e.
- 18 Pray that your congregation will shift from “maintenance mode” to from “mission mode”.
- 19 Praise God for the amazing growth of the church in China and pray that it may continue.
- 20 Plead with God to keep open ways children may hear the Gospel.



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books

**The Gospel of Matthew:
The Gospel of the Kingdom**

C. H. Spurgeon
Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1893,
2010.
Reviewed by Peter Barnes

Charles Spurgeon is not usually known as a commentator – and indeed, this work is posthumous – but one can only wish that he had written rather more on books of the Bible. Not surprisingly, he has something of the same gift as J. C. Ryle for pithy and helpful summaries of gospel truth.

The prince of preachers did not always follow the accepted line on some verses. Regarding the gifts of the Magi in 2:11, Spurgeon wrote: “These choice offerings, especially the gold, would help Joseph and Mary to provide for the Royal Child, who was so soon to be exiled. God brought providers from the far East to supply the needs of His Son. Remember, Omnipotence has servants everywhere. Before the babe starts for Egypt, Oriental sages must pay his charges.”

Spurgeon knew how to sharpen the arrow, so on 5:29-30, he says: “Better a blind saint than a quick-sighted sinner.” On 5:8, he comments that “Foul hearts make dim eyes God-ward”. On 6:22-23, we read: “If our religion leads us to sin, it is worse than irreligion.”

In all his work, Spurgeon was practical and earthy, so on the calling of the fishermen he wrote (on 4:20): “They were busy in a lawful occupation when he called them to be ministers: our Lord does not call idlers, but *fishers*.” On 10:24-25, he commented: “God was slandered in Paradise, and Christ on Calvary, how can we hope to escape? Instead of wishing to avoid bearing the cross, let us be content to endure dishonour for our King’s sake.” He was humble and vigorous in his application of 11:25-26, “Lord, let me be one among them!”

Yet Spurgeon was no fanatic, and on the wheat and the tares wrote (13:29): “Where evil is clear and open, we may not hesitate to deal with it; but where it is questionable, we had better hold our hand till we have fuller guidance.”

An historical premillennialist (as opposed to a dispensationalist), he utterly repudiated those who tried too hard to gauge the date of the Second Coming (on 24:36): “We need not therefore be troubled by idle prophecies of hair-brained fanatics, even if they claim to interpret the Scriptures; for what the angels do not know has not been revealed to them.”

Finally, as might be expected, Spurgeon has some splendid words to say about preaching (13:52): “We must in our instruction of others cultivate variety, but we must not aim at it by poisoning the children with deadly drugs for the sake of giving them novel dishes. Only things worth putting into a treasury are worth bringing forth to the household. That scribe had need be well instructed who has to keep on handing out a variety of precious truth throughout a long life. Lord, make us sufficient for these things. Instruct us, that we may instruct our household. May we make no reserve for self, but bring out for thy people all that which thou hast put in our charge. Oh, to be accepted of thee in the day of thy return, because found faithful to our trust!” This is a work to be warmly recommended.

Peter Barnes is books editor of AP

Sickness, Suffering and Scripture

David Leyshon
Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2008

From Grief to Glory

James W. Bruce III
Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2008

These two short books will help pastors and the people of God with heart-rending circumstances that so often are our lot. *Sickness, Suffering and Scripture* is a series of 13 short Bible studies (consisting of an extensive Bible quote, outline comments and questions) which explore how the Christian’s view of suffering is drawn from the teaching of Scripture rather than the siren voices of “prosperity” gospel teaching which comes to us today in so many ways.

Compiled by a pastor who himself is afflicted with Parkinson’s disease, it is hard to see how the genuine believer passing through deep trials and looking for “answers” would not get substantial spiritual help from this book.

Not only is there much food for thought, but good assistance is given to the one who wishes to preach on the pressing pastoral reality of the believer and pain, trial and distress.

With *From Grief to Glory* we pass from general suffering to one of the most dreadful trials that can afflict us – the loss of a beloved child. The author writes briefly and movingly of the death of his baby son and then presents a spiritual anthology drawn from the reflections of eminent Christians who have suffered a similar blow. This is a very moving book that joins human suffering with the comfort that only the Christian faith can bring in the face of death of what appears to be the most perplexing kind.

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

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Feasts and festivities

GOD SAYS NOTHING OF CHRISTMAS. YET IT IS RIGHT TO REJOICE.

Peter Barnes

The Christian who holds to the Bible as God's all-sufficient Word tends to have mixed feelings about a festival like Christmas. In the Old Testament there were three great feasts each year (Deut. 16) – Passover (to celebrate Israel's redemption from bondage in Egypt), Weeks (or Harvest or Pentecost, to celebrate the end of the grain harvest), and Booths (or Tabernacles, to celebrate mainly the gathering of grapes and the like).

After the Jews were spared genocide at the hands of the Persians in the days of Esther, the Feast of Purim was instituted (Esther 9:20-32). Later, in 164 BC in the days of the Maccabees, the Feast of Dedication celebrated the defeat of the brutal Seleucid king, Antiochus Epiphanes IV, and the rededication of the temple. This feast is not actually mentioned in the Old Testament, but it seems that Jesus may have kept it (see John 10:22-23), although the 17th century Scottish Covenanter, George Hutcheson, sees no evidence of any approbation on Christ's part.

Christmas comes, and the Christian realises that God has not commanded that we keep a feast for Christ's birth. He has commanded that we believe that He sent His Son into this world through a virgin conception. Yet there is nothing sacrosanct about 25 December as such; it is not, as the Catholics teach, a holy day of obligation. This is a sentimental age, addicted to lazy thinking.

Some years back the popular Carols in the Domain had John Lennon's *Imagine* included amongst the carols! In his own lyrical yet dogmatic way, Lennon celebrated that there was no heaven or hell, and should be no religion. Then we have all the Santa business, which seems designed to break the tenth commandment more than anything. Add to that the absurdity of Australians dreaming of a White



THERE IS NOTHING SACROSANCT ABOUT 25 DECEMBER AS SUCH; IT IS NOT, AS THE CATHOLICS TEACH, A HOLY DAY OF OBLIGATION.

Christmas, with no mention of Christ at all.

The fact is that the centre of the gospel concerns the death and resurrection of Christ rather than His birth (1 Cor. 15:3-4). In baptism, we are baptized into Christ's death (Rom. 6:3-4), and at the Lord's Supper we proclaim His death till He comes again (1 Cor. 11:26). The reason why the unbelieving world has made some sort of peace with Christmas is that it has distorted its message. What it is all about, apparently, is not the incarnation of the Son of God but a rather vaguer spirit of Christmas.

And yet there seems to be much more that ought to be said. There is a God-ordained flexibility about these matters in making the gospel known (1 Cor. 9:19-23). God may use Christmas to

reach an unbeliever, so let us be alert to that possibility and hope. Furthermore, what Christian can resist the call of the carols? Who could have phrased the praises of Christ better than Charles Wesley in his *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*:

*Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail the incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with man to dwell,
Jesus our Immanuel!*

The coming of Christ into the world – that the Lord of glory got His feet dirty by walking on the dust of this fallen grubby earth – is something worthy of the highest praise.

Even in our own corrupt days, there are signs of a certain softening of attitude, of a slowing down of life for a time, and perhaps even moments of reflection. Then we understand why Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote that “the celebration of Advent is possible only to those who are troubled in soul, who know themselves to be poor and imperfect, who look forward to something greater to come. For these it is enough to wait in humble fear until the Holy One Himself comes down to us, God in the child in the manger. God comes. The Lord Jesus comes. Christmas comes. Christians rejoice!” ap



Peter Barnes is minister of Revesby Presbyterian Church, Sydney.

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