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Is God Green?

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**Essentials is the journal of
the Evangelical Fellowship in
the Anglican Communion.
Promoting Christ-centred
biblical ministry.**

Fresh legs

This year will bring some fresh legs onto the *Essentials* editorial team. You may have noticed that a disproportionate number of the contributions to *Essentials* come from Western Australia (which is the price you pay when the editor lives in Perth!) In order better to tap into the EFAC networks in other states, we are glad to be welcoming two new editors: Gavin Perkins, Rector of St Judes, Bowral, NSW, and Mark Juers, Assistant Minister at St Hilary's Network, Kew, Victoria. I hope and expect that these two will help us hear from new contributors and bring more national breadth to the journal. I am very much looking forward to what they will bring to this journal in 2019 and beyond.

Of course, as I always do, I encourage readers to contact me about making contributions to *Essentials*, wherever you live. It gives me great pleasure to have articles, book reviews, Bible Studies and Caboozes from city and bush, east and west, north and south, and off the mainland too.

And so in this issue we hear Stephen Hale's news of EFAC International's rebirth as EFAC Global and the meeting of the reconstituted Global Council in Nairobi. Landing then in Sydney, Kara Hartley writes of the measures the Diocese of Sydney have taken to raise awareness, and levels of education and preparedness when it comes to the terrible blight of domestic violence, as it finds its way into churches, and the homes of Christians. A long haul from there

to Geraldton, from where Eugenie Harris gives us a snapshot of life and ministry in the north of WA. Our feature essay this issue picks up a phrase from Article 1 of the 39 Articles, and delves into what lies behind our conviction that God is 'without parts'. In our Bible Study, political junkie and Perth rector Marc Dale meditates on how Jesus' Nazareth sermon pointed far beyond any political revolution, and how good that is. Reviews of books on ministry and leadership, evolution, environmental action and mutual care populate our back pages, and the Caboose questions whether some books on ministry burn-out undo themselves in the end. I hope you find plenty to think on here.

Ben Underwood - essentialised@gmail.com

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What is EFAC?

EFAC is a group of Anglican clergy and lay people who value the evangelical heritage of the Anglican Church, and who endeavour to make a positive, constructive contribution at local, diocesan and national levels. EFAC Australia is part of the world-wide Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion.

The purpose of EFAC is to maintain and promote a strong biblical witness in and through the Anglican Church so as to advance the cause of the gospel in Australia.

The aims of EFAC are:

1. To promote the ultimate authority, the teaching and the use of God's written word in matters of both faith and conduct.
2. To promote this biblical obedience particularly in the areas of Christian discipleship, servant leadership, church renewal, and mission in the world.

3. To foster support and collaboration among evangelical Anglicans throughout Australia.
4. To function as a resource group to develop and encourage biblically faithful leadership in all spheres of life.
5. To provide a forum, where appropriate:
 - a) for taking counsel together to develop policies and strategies in matters of common concern
 - b) for articulating gospel distinctives in the area of faith, order, life and mission by consultations and publications.
6. To promote evangelism through the local church and planting new congregations.
7. To coordinate and encourage EFAC branches/ groups in provinces or dioceses of the Anglican Church in Australia.



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Editorial Team: Dale Appleby, Ben Underwood, Adam Cetrangolo, Bishop Stephen Hale
Panel of reference: Graeme Goldsworthy, Robert Forsyth, Peter Corney
Layout: Marsha Dale

Editorial correspondence
Ben Underwood, Editor
c/-114 Onslow Rd, Shenton Park WA 6008
essentialised@gmail.com

To notify of a change of address, contact
Rev Chris Appleby
20 Gordon St Fairfield VIC 3078
T. 9489 7127 M. 0422 187 127
cappleby@cappleby.net.au

Subscriptions, memberships and donations - all at: www.efac.org.au

EFAC's global reboot

Stephen Hale



EFAC is back, internationally speaking. Changing times in the Anglican Communion have catalysed the restart of the global dimension of EFAC. Stephen Hale, Chair of EFAC Australia, was our man on the spot.

Recently I had the privilege of attending the meeting of the revived Global Council of EFAC in Nairobi. EFAC International (now EFAC Global) has been inactive for the past decade or so, however in 2017 the Trustees (Bishop Keith Sinclair, Canon Chris Sugden, Stephen Hofmeyr, Bishop-elect Phillip Mountstephen) met and resolved to reactivate the Global Council of EFAC. There was a constitution, a set of aims and a statement of faith plus some money in a bank account. Richard Crocker was appointed as the General Secretary, ably assisted by his wife Caroline. They have worked tirelessly since to get EFAC Global back into operation.

The Council meeting took place in two parts, firstly at GAFCON where Richard Trist was present and then more fully in Nairobi. Present in Nairobi were representatives from existing EFAC National groups: England (CEEC), the USA, South Africa, Nigeria, Australia, Scotland, Madagascar plus Peter Walker who is Convenor of the Theological Resource Network. Also present were the Trustees, plus people from India, Kenya, Congo, Mozambique, Tanzania, Malawi and Burundi. The potential for new EFAC National groups to form is high. They were a fascinating group to be with and it was privilege to forge new friendships. The only weakness was the total lack of gender balance which we have vowed won't happen next time!

We resolved to establish a new Council with representatives from existing EFAC groups and to add members as new national groups emerge. We also appointed an Executive comprising Bishop Keith as Chair, Bishop Henry Okele from Nigeria, Canon Vijay Kumar from North India, Bishop Seth Ndayirukiye from Burundi, Richard Crocker, Stephen Hofmeyr and myself. We are one of the strongest EFACs globally but pale into comparison with Nigeria with its 35,000 members! We also supported a resolution to amend the Statement of Faith to incorporate the GAFCON statement on atonement and to add a new supplementary statement which is the GAFCON statement on marriage.

EFAC was affirmed as a fellowship which enables evangelical Anglicans to come together.

EFAC was affirmed as a fellowship which enables evangelical Anglicans to come together. In Scotland and the US, for example, it is a good place for evangelicals who have stayed and evangelicals who have left to come together. We also had the opportunity to participate in the 10th Anniversary Celebrations of CMS Africa. This in itself was intriguing as many African nations now work together to share in mission in and beyond Africa.



The Global Council of EFAC

Addressing Domestic Violence

Recent initiatives in the Diocese of Sydney

Kara Hartley



We can't ignore the fact that rotten things go on in Christian households too. Kara introduces the ways Sydney Diocese has recently sought to improve its practices of education and response to the scourge of domestic abuse. Kara is the Archdeacon for Women in the Diocese of Sydney.

In 2014 domestic violence became a national conversation after the death of Luke Batty at the hands of his father. Luke's mother Rosie was named Australian of the Year in 2015 and became a strong voice for the victims of domestic abuse. Since that time greater attention and resources have been directed to raising awareness of this significant problem in our community.

Yet for the Christian church it is not just a problem 'out there'. Tragically, it is also a problem within our own community and a problem we have often been too slow to acknowledge. At times, due, perhaps, to naivety or misplaced generosity, we've downplayed, dismissed or dealt poorly with claims of domestic abuse from those within our congregations. Yet domestic abuse in its various forms—physical, emotional, and, yes, even spiritual—does exist in the Christian community. It causes untold pain and anguish; primarily for its victims, but also for the church as a whole. It is shocking and painful to discover a member of our fellowship, perhaps even a leader, is a perpetrator of domestic abuse. It is distressing to know a spouse has been suffering—often silently—the trauma and ordeal of an abuse victim. It is an evil that does not belong in any marriage, especially one where the couple profess Jesus as Lord.

In 2015 the Sydney Diocesan Synod established the

Domestic Violence Taskforce with the aim of developing a Diocesan response to domestic violence. The work included surveying other dioceses (nationally and internationally) and church groups to see what resources they had compiled. Importantly, the testimony of victims shaped the response, as they shared their experience of disclosing abuse to a church leader. The work of the taskforce was completed in 2018 as the Synod passed the 'Responding to Domestic Abuse: Policy' as a policy of the Diocese and the Good Practice Guidelines were adopted for use in the churches.

In essence the policy both educates and informs. The Good Practice Guidelines provide clarity for best practice in caring for and supporting victims of domestic abuse. A key resource is the flow chart setting out the steps to follow when someone discloses domestic abuse. Other resources include important telephone numbers and websites, as well as templates for parish policies, and safety and exit plans. It is a comprehensive document aimed at equipping those involved in assisting people in domestic abuse situations. One significant outcome has been further development in educating clergy and those in training. Both Moore College and the Diocesan Ministry Development department teach modules on recognising and dealing with domestic abuse in churches.

Among the appendices is a guide to the use and misuse of Scripture with regard to domestic abuse. It has been claimed through the media and within church circles that certain views held on marriage and leadership give rise to the existence of domestic abuse. To ensure clarity about what the Bible does and doesn't say, a short explanation is given for six key passages such as Ephesians 5 and Genesis 2. The former Archbishop Peter Jensen and current Archbishop Glenn Davies have each made clear statements condemning the use of Scripture to perpetrate violence within a marriage. Archbishop Jensen did this in 2012. This appendix is important for both perpetrators and victims, helping each know and understand God's intention for marriage and correcting any thought otherwise.

An area where the Diocese has taken a strong and leading stand is in regards to clergy and ministry



families. The shocking truth is those in ministry are not immune from this evil. In an effort to ensure ministry spouses are supported when instances of domestic abuse are uncovered a fund has been established. A one-off payment can be made to assist with any financial hardship experienced by the victim and any children if they need to separate from their spouse due to the abuse.

While the taskforce's job is finished, the work of education and awareness continues. The Safe Ministry Committee in conjunction with Anglicare will now produce posters, and provide ongoing education and direction for churches. The

Anglicare Family and Domestic Violence Adviser continues to help rectors navigate this complex area. Overall it is hoped through the creation of this policy and the subsequent rise in awareness and education we will not just be responding to domestic abuse but also contribute to its prevention.

Resources

safeministry.org.au/for-parishes/domestic-violence-resources

safeministry.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Responding-to-Domestic-Abuse-Policy-Guidelines-and-Resources.pdf

safeministry.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Domestic-Abuse-Charts.pdf

safeministry.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/DV-HowToRespond.pdf

Bringing the gospel to the nations in the North West

Eugenie Harris



The wild, wide open spaces of the north of Western Australia make a big impression. Eugenie Harris sends us a postcard from the Diocese of North West Australia.

Arriving in the Diocese of the North West, my first impression was of 'Australia on steroids'. Everything seems extreme. We've got the busiest port, the hottest town, most isolated community, most dramatic gorges...and the list goes on, because the region effectively powers our nation.

This vast land area draws people from all over the world, people chasing their fortune, pursuing travel experiences or escaping unhappy life circumstances. And the Diocese of the North West welcomes them all, taking every opportunity to proclaim the good news of Jesus. We are truly 'bringing the gospel to the nations'.



Near Wyndham. Photo: Jon Connell, used under CC licence [flickr.com/photos/ciamabue/6106791732](https://www.flickr.com/photos/ciamabue/6106791732)



Broome. Photo Ian Cochrane. Used under CC licence [flickr.com/photos/iancochrane_2011/6134973178](https://www.flickr.com/photos/iancochrane_2011/6134973178)

The Diocese—two million square kilometres and probably the biggest single land-based diocese in the world—was formed in 1910 as a 'missionary diocese'. The first bishop was expected to fund his own position and the costs of his own administration. Consequently, the funds needed to fully 'endow' the new diocese never eventuated. Still today, the bishop is expected to fundraise for his own position and, with mostly small church congregations, the Diocese relies upon financial support from partners elsewhere for our church ministry.

The Anglican Church here is evangelical and stands on the

shoulders of former bishops—most recently Bishop Tony Nichols and Bishop David Mulready. These men, along with the current Bishop Gary Nelson, have worked faithfully and tirelessly to recruit ministers who are gospel-focused, theologically-trained, Jesus-loving servants of the Word. No matter which church you enter, you will hear the Word preached faithfully, you'll be invited to join a Bible study and pray, and you'll be encouraged to trust the Lord Jesus and be equipped to serve him.

The Anglican Church in the North West is an excellent place to come and meet the Saviour.

Though most of our congregations at any point in time remain small and poorly resourced, our mission reach is large. The communities are so transient that it's common for the whole congregation to turn over within a couple of years.

(Regular ministries are hard to sustain.) However, in this way, God has given us the privilege of sowing seeds for the kingdom which we pray and trust bear fruit elsewhere. If all the people who have been blessed by the ministry of this diocese stood shoulder to shoulder, there would be a great gathering.

Belinda would be among the crowd. As a young teacher in the outback, her closest Christian minister lived six hours away. Once a month he would arrive by motorbike, run a service for a couple of people and spend the night in a swag on the church floor. It was in the days before the internet and cheap communication, and this faithfulness spoke volumes to her. She credits this precious Christian fellowship with helping her persevere in the faith and endure the isolation.

Why, I wonder, is it so hard to recruit ministers to the North West? There are always churches without a minister, often for long periods of time. Former Bishop Tony reckoned he'd make



One Arm Point Bardi Fellowship

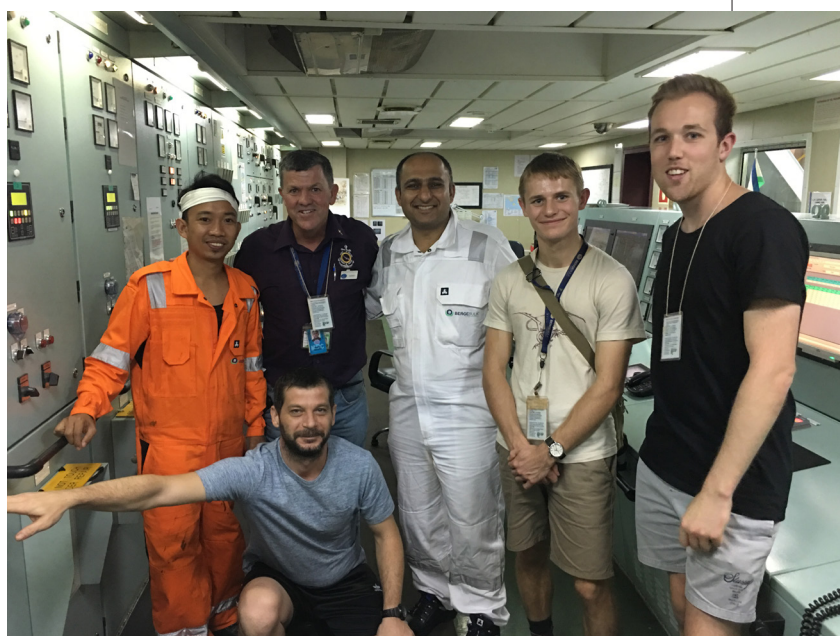
100 approaches for each appointment. Currently, the Karratha church is without a minister and Bishop Gary has had more than 40 knockbacks and counting. I guess there's not the allure of serving God overseas. There's no excitement of learning new language, culture or customs. It's just outback Australia, with incredible isolation (it's cheaper to travel overseas than fly to the NW), extreme heat (most days over 39 degrees in Kununurra Oct-Jan) and an assortment of odd characters.

Nevertheless, there are many joys and I am encouraged by the strategic role of the Anglican Church in these towns. In a number of places the church has the only full-time, theologically trained minister, which provides important opportunities for faithful gospel proclamation to regional Australia. A full picture of ministry in the North West Anglican Church must include mention of two other key ministries—ministry to Aboriginal communities and ministry to seafarers.

There's a growing ministry in West Kimberley with CMS Missionaries Chris and Karen Webb working in the Broome Parish. Aboriginal people are coming to know Christ and finding freedom and hope in the cross in miraculous ways. Efforts are beginning to increase ministry in the East Kimberley and the Pilbara region.

More than 6500 international seafarers a month visit Mission to Seafarers centres at Geraldton, Port Hedland and Dampier. The chaplains provide seafarers with care and love, sharing the gospel and the Scriptures with men who are often away from home for months at a time.

A friend told me it's wise to avoid personal topics early in a friendship in the North West. That's because a number of people find their way here as a result of family dysfunction, trouble or tragedy. 'Where's a good place to go on the weekend?' is a much better question than 'What brought you here?' It's a reminder that we are all broken people who need Jesus to bring forgiveness, healing and salvation. The Anglican Church in the North West is an excellent place to come and meet the Saviour.



NW Chaplain visiting a ship in Port at Port Hedland with some Trinity Theological College students on mission.



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Divine Simplicity

Ben Underwood



Surely God is complicated. How else could he be both one and three? Or create and uphold the swirling, manifold world we inhabit? Or be both just and loving towards us? Ben Underwood investigates. Ben is Associate Minister at St Matthew's Shenton Park, WA.

'There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions' (Article 1 of The 39 Articles.)

I had a good grounding at theological college in Biblical studies, Biblical languages, Biblical theology and some areas of doctrine—atonement and justification for example. But you can't cover everything, and one of the areas in which I did not manage to get much under my belt was in the doctrine of God. In recent years I have become interested in theology proper, the quest to think about what it is for God to be God, which includes trying to talk about the being and attributes of God. It has been a perennial conviction of Christian theology that one of the unique characterisations of God is that he is simple. But the student of theology quickly discovers that divine simplicity is in many ways counter-intuitive and not easy to grasp. And yet thinking about it has repaid the effort for me, as a way into reflecting on how God is not like his creatures, but transcends them, and why he can be depended upon.

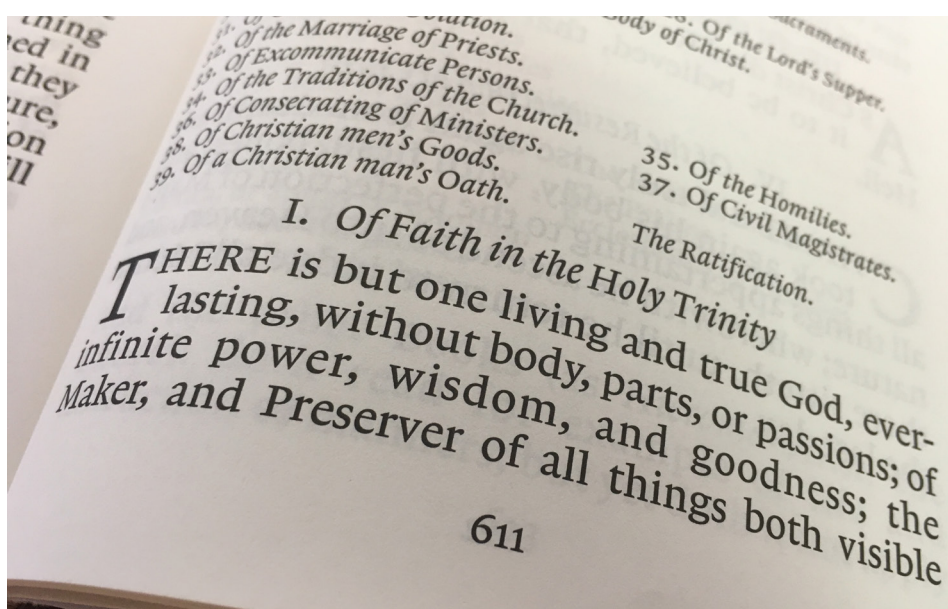
Getting a feel for the meaning of God's simplicity

God has no parts

Simplicity is a positive term, but the concept is often conveniently stated negatively. One negative characterisation of simplicity is incompositeness. To say that God is simple means he is without parts of any kind, whether concrete or abstract. God cannot be thought of as containing anything that has its own essence or substance that is different from the essence or substance of God. No prior process produced God, and God is not the union of any things that are different to everything that he is.

God is undivided and indivisible

Another negative characterisation of God's simplicity is to say that he is undivided and indivisible. There is no way that God can have any divisions in his being. Whatever might be in God, and whatever distinctions we might wish to make as we consider who God is, these distinctions cannot divide God into one thing and another, different thing. This means that everything that



Article One

God is in himself is inseparable from everything else God is. God's mercy is never without his justice (and vice versa), nor is the Father ever without the Son and the Spirit (and severally). Lastly, God is uncompounded and uncompoundable, which is to say that he cannot enter into composition with anything that he is not. His divinity cannot be mingled, combined or amalgamated to produce a composite thing in which God's being is a part or factor.

God is always and everywhere all that he is

Put positively, simplicity means that God is always and everywhere wholly and only all that he is. His being, character, action is always entire, integral and perfected: never partial, never divided, never diluted, never imperfect. Here are some quotations to give you a feel for what some prominent theologians have said in defining God as simple:

'He is simple, non-composite, not made up of different members, altogether like and equal to himself, because he is wholly intellect, wholly spirit, wholly mind, wholly thought, wholly reason, wholly hearing, wholly seeing, wholly light, and

the whole source of all that is good' (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* II.13.3-4)

'God is in no way composite. Rather, he is entirely simple' (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a 3.7)

'God cannot enter into composition with anything in any way' (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a 3.8)

'The essence of God is simple and undivided, and he contains all in himself, without portion or derivation, but in integral perfection'. (Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.XIII.2)

'...in all He is and does, He is wholly and undividedly Himself. At no time or place is He composed out of what is distinct from himself. At no time or place, then, is He divided or divisible.' (Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II.1 p. 445)

'God is simple without the least possibility of either internal or external composition.' (Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II.1 p. 447)

So as an initial statement of the simplicity of God we say that he is one undivided and indivisible wholeness, he is not composed of distinct parts of any kind, and any way of talking about God that entails that he is composed of distinct parts, or is, or could be, the product of, or participant in, any kind of process of composition cannot be true.

Everything in God is God

An extension of this positive characterisation of the simplicity of God to introduce is to say that God's simplicity means that everything in God is God—so that if there is divine goodness in God, it is not a part of God, but God's goodness is the whole of God without remainder. God is his goodness, and God's goodness is his whole divine being. You cannot discover some part of God which is not wholly and utterly his goodness. Further, if God has goodness, his goodness is not a sharing or exemplification of an abstract virtue of goodness that exists apart from and somehow beyond God's being, but that the divine goodness that God has is nothing but his entire divine being. This way of expressing the simplicity of God may also be put thus: that God is what he has.

'the nature of the Trinity is called simple [...] because it is not something different from what it has' (Augustine, *City of God*, XI.10)

This leads to a counter-intuitive, not to say paradoxical, characteristic of divine simplicity, sometimes called the identity thesis, namely that all God's essential attributes are each identical with the whole being of God, and that in God these attributes are identical with one another. For if, as Irenaeus puts it, God is 'wholly intellect, wholly spirit, wholly mind, wholly thought, wholly reason, wholly hearing, wholly seeing, wholly light, and the whole source of all that is good', then God's intellect and God's spiritual nature, his seeing and his being the whole source of all goodness coincide with his entire being and therefore, presumably, with one another. God's simplicity means self-identity: that while we may speak about God's mercy and distinguish it from his righteousness, God's simplicity is that he is identical with all the attributes of his being, and these attributes are all identical with one another, so that in the being of God, his mercy is identical with his righteousness and with the whole being of God. As Irenaeus says, 'He is [...] altogether

like and equal to himself'. Here are some further expressions of this conviction:

'But we indeed use many different words concerning God, in order to bring out that he is great, good, wise, blessed true, and whatever else he may be called that is not unworthy of him. But his greatness is the same as his wisdom, for he is great not by bulk, but by power. Similarly, his goodness is the same as his wisdom and greatness; and his truth is the same as all these qualities. And in him it is not one thing to be blessed, and another thing to be great, or to be wise, or to be true, or to be good, or in a word to be himself.' (Augustine, *The Trinity*, VI.7.)

'for God to be is the same as to be strong, or to be just or to be wise, and to be whatever else you may say of that simple multiplicity, or that multiple simplicity, whereby his substance is signified.' (Augustine, *The Trinity*, VI.4.)

'God, who, as I have said, is not composed of matter and form, is identical with his own divinity, his own life, and with whatever else is similarly predicated of him' (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a 3.3)

'Our doctrine therefore means that every individual perfection in God is nothing but God Himself and therefore nothing but every other divine perfection. It means equally strictly on the other hand that God Himself is nothing other than each one of His perfections in its individuality, and that each individual perfection is identical with every other and with the fulness of them all.' (Barth, *CD* II.2 p. 333).

Why would we believe that God is simple in this way?

Simplicity is not a biblical term, and the Bible does not say directly that God is without parts. We might feel that this doctrine is a dangerous philosophical imposition upon our theology, a humanly conceived notion about God, and not a divinely revealed one. Here are a couple of reasons why Christians might think it right to believe that God is simple:

God is one

'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one.' Deut 6:4

'...for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.' 1 Cor 8:6

That God is one means that he is unique—there is no one like him, and there is no other God beside him, he alone is the Most High. But that God is one means also that there is a fundamental unity to his being, an integrity and coherence that means he is not and cannot be divided, or conflicted by rival elements of his nature, or at risk of coming apart. God's simplicity is then an exposition of God's unity. The simpler something is, the fewer divisions and distinctions it has, the more it is truly one thing. If God is truly and really one, absolutely one, he will be simple, indeed he will be absolutely simple.

God is the creator of all things

'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' Genesis 1:1

'For from him and through him and for him are all things. To

him be the glory for ever! Amen.’ Romans 11:36

If God is the one through whom all things come, then there is nothing prior to God in any way. If God had distinct parts, these parts could not have come from him. They would be things that are not God, yet which did not come from God. If God is the creator of all that is not himself, there are and can be no such things. Therefore God is without parts, he is simple, and not the product of a process of composition by participation in prior possibilities, or union of distinct parts. He does not acquire or exemplify something independent of himself to become what he is.

What does a careful doctrine of divine simplicity have to take into account?

The basic drive of the idea of God’s simplicity is to unify, simplify and remove anything that might entail division, composition or separable parts in the being of God. In this way, simplicity is like a theological force of gravity—it seeks to pull everything about God’s being together and make it one indivisible, partless thing, a divine singularity. This connects well with the thought that God is immutable, impassible, eternal and absolute. It does not cohere so obviously with the idea that there may be distinctions to be made as we talk about the being of God, such as that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, or that he is wise and loving, righteous and patient, or that his works are free and diverse and that his dealings with his creatures are various, or that ‘the Word became flesh’ (John 1:14). These Christian convictions introduce a different drive into the doctrine of God—the drive to distinguish and account for the multiplicity that seems necessary to understand the God of the Bible. Trinitarian distinctions must be made, for the Father is not the Son nor the Spirit (and severally); distinctions must be made to account for the various qualities attributed to God in Scripture; distinctions must be made so as to understand God’s will to create thus and

not so, to judge thus and not so, to save thus and not so.

This drive to make such distinctions, to include difference and plurality in our doctrine of God, presses out, countering the collapse, under the gravity of unqualified simplicity, of God’s being into a kind of black hole, where even the things that Scripture says about God’s many and various attributes and works lie on our side of a kind of theological event horizon, but what lies beyond the event horizon, what God is in himself, in the ultimate simplicity of the divine singularity, this is unknown and unknowable, utterly disconnected even from the ways Scripture speaks of God.

We can illustrate the consciousness that multiplicity does have its place in our understanding of God, and that God’s simple oneness does not preclude manifoldness via some further quotations:

‘for God to be is the same as to be strong, or to be just or to be wise, and to be whatever else you may say of *that simple multiplicity, or that multiple simplicity*, whereby his substance is signified.’ (Augustine, *The Trinity*, VI.4. Italics mine.)

‘He is one in an unchanging and transcendent way. He is not one part of a plurality nor yet a total of parts. Indeed his oneness is not of this kind at all, for he does not share in unity, nor have it for his possession. Rather, he is one in a manner completely different from all this. He transcends the unity which is in beings. He is *indivisible multiplicity*, the unfilled overfullness which produces, perfects, and preserves all unity and all multiplicity.’ (Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names*, II.11. Italics mine.)

‘The essence of God is simple and undivided, and *he contains all in himself*, without portion or derivation, but in integral perfection.’ (Calvin, *Institutes*, I.XIII.2. Italics mine.)

‘we have Dionysius saying that, “God pre-contains in one all existing things” [...] the perfections of everything exist in God.’ (Aquinas, *ST* 1a 4.2).



A black hole

‘Things that are diverse and opposite in themselves pre-exist as one in God without detriment to his simplicity’ (Aquinas, *ST* 1a 4.2).

God’s simplicity should not be understood as a bare, elemental featurelessness, but as the name of the way God’s being transcendentally includes, unifies and integrates all that it means for him to be the glorious God of many perfections and diverse works, yet without any tension, division or complexity.

To come this far by no means makes plain and readily understood what God’s simplicity really is. God’s simplicity is not simple, that is, it is not comprehensible to us. How God’s wisdom and his power can be the same in him; how ‘things diverse and opposite can pre-exist in God without detriment to his simplicity’—these are

not necessarily things we can imagine. But thinking about what it must mean for God to be one, for God to be the creator, we come to believe that these counter-intuitive things follow nonetheless.

What comfort and what challenge is the doctrine of God's simplicity?

We might wonder if to believe that God is simple has any consequence for living, or whether it is sheer theological frippery. Let me offer one comfort and one challenge that seems to me to flow from the conviction of God's simplicity.

God's simplicity is his trustworthiness

One of the most-repeated truths about God we read in the Bible is that he is trustworthy and true, he is faithful, he can be relied upon. And I suggest that God's simplicity and God's trustworthiness are really two sides of the same coin (here following Karl Barth as he writes in *CD II.1* pp. 458ff). For if God were a union of parts, if he were divided or divisible, then there would be separate elements in God that would need to be integrated—elements which would then moderate one another—for God to be who he is. If, for example, his righteousness is not in the end inseparable from and identical to his love, but if at some level they are separable things, attributes of God put together or interacting, they might be in some tension with one another. Then God is not one, not wholly aligned on every level in himself in all that he is. Then things could possibly shift in God: be rebalanced and redistributed, rearticulated and restructured, reconfiguring the way his love and righteousness exist within him and therefore towards us. Then he may come to speak a different word to us, and that shifting in God will mean he is not the Rock who is the same yesterday and today and forever, and may not be relied on as such. But if God is understood as simple, and his love and righteousness (for example) are not competing and different aspects of his

being, but are in the end inseparably and wholly contained in one another, and coincident, individually and together, with the whole being of God, then God will of course express his love and righteousness as the single, whole movement which is his entire being, and thus he will be faithful, constant, trustworthy.

God's simplicity calls for our simplicity

The perfection of God's wholly-integrated, single, constant, uncomplicated nature is something divine, something holy, which is to be praised and, to the degree that we may, in the Spirit's power, emulate his holiness, to be imitated. The Greek word *haplotes* (meaning simplicity, purity of motive, integrity, sincerity) is commended to believers as a quality that should characterise our devotion to Christ and our dealings with one another (e.g. 2 Cor 11:3 and 1:12). While as creatures we will always be composite in our beings, we can strive in our hearts and wills for simplicity, for straightforwardness, integrity, purity, constancy and trustworthiness; and we can seek to avoid duplicity, contradiction, contrariness and caprice as unworthy of those who belong to God.

Further reading

The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss by David Bentley Hart has a section on divine simplicity in its wider concern with the doctrine of God. James E. Dolezal has written two books, first, *God Without Parts: Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysics of God's Absoluteness* which focusses on divine simplicity, and followed up by *All that is in God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism*, which critiques modern evangelicalism from within over the nature of God. Two recent, quality monographs on simplicity are *Divine Simplicity: A Biblical and Trinitarian Account* by Jordan P. Barrett and *Divine Simplicity: A Dogmatic Account* by Steven J. Duby.

Karen Anglican Mission on the Border

Marc Dale

The Karen people on the Thai/Myanmar border have been persecuted for over sixty years, mostly because they are Christians. They are a minority ethnic group who have been driven from their homes with many living in large 'resettlement (refugee) camps'.

Anglican ministry amongst the Karen began some decades ago through a few trained evangelists who travelled through the jungles and villages of both the Thai and Myanmar sides of the border, establishing churches. These churches are together known as the KAMB – Karen Anglican Mission at the Border. They remain isolated from the resources of their official diocese, which is in Myanmar.

Christ Church Bangkok has been co-ordinating emergency supplies for the Karen since 1984, focussing upon the needs of the Karen refugees living inside the camps, but also supporting

the Karen churches in the Thai border area, bringing training and encouragement to leaders.

Each September a small group of Australian Anglican ministers and lay people go to the border to train and encourage pastors, theological students, elders and layworkers from the churches on both sides of the border.

If you would like more information on how to get involved with this vital work - please contact Peter Judge-Mears (Wishart Anglican) on peter@stjohnswishart.com.au or Marc Dale (St Alban's, Highgate) on marc@stalbens.org.



No mere political manifesto

Jesus' campaign launch at Nazareth: Luke 4:16-21

Marc Dale

Marc Dale is the Rector of Highgate in the Diocese of Perth.

¹⁶He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: ¹⁸“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” ²⁰Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. ²¹He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Political leaders give some of their most memorable and powerful speeches at their campaign launches and inaugurations. In May 1940, Winston Churchill addressed the House of Commons with these words, ‘You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: victory. Victory at all costs—victory in spite of all terror—victory, however long and hard the road may be, for without victory there is no survival.’

Gough Whitlam launched his historic election campaign in November 1972 with these words, ‘Men and Women of Australia! The decision we will make for our country on the second of December is a choice between the past and the future, between the habits and fears of the past, and the demands and opportunities of the future. There are moments in history when the whole fate and future of nations can be decided by a single decision. For Australia, this is such a time.’

In his inauguration speech in January 1981, Ronald Reagan declared, ‘It is time for us to realize that we are too great a nation to limit ourselves to small dreams. We are not, as some would have us believe, doomed to an inevitable decline. I do not believe in a fate that will fall on us no matter what we do. I do believe in a fate that will fall on us if we do nothing.’

The one thing each of those speeches, and many more like

them, have in common is that they hold out hope and expectation that depend on human endeavour for their fulfillment, so they’re naturally bound by the finiteness and frailty of human beings.

In Luke 4:16-21 Jesus makes his campaign launch speech, but it has a radically different scope and trajectory to those of politicians and statesmen. He delivers it before a home town crowd and as the scene unfolds, there’s nothing out of the ordinary. Jesus had taken his place in the local synagogue and was invited to read the Scriptures (something he’d certainly done many times before) and no-one would have been expecting anything unusual. It was no coincidence that it was the scroll of the prophet Isaiah that was handed to him, from which he read,

‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’

In the first few chapters of his gospel Luke carefully builds his case, showing us by his baptism in the Jordan, his anointing, his family tree and his triumph over Satan that Jesus’ is the new Israel, the new, true human and the true King. He’s the one

through whom God will fulfil his plans and keep his promises for Israel and the whole world.

In Luke 4:16-21 Jesus announces that he is the one for whom Israel had been waiting—God’s promised King—and he tells them what his rule will be. He wasn’t seeking election to high office. God had already bestowed on him the highest office and authority that there is. Jesus has always been ruler of all. He had come to bring life to the dead, to bring the lost home, to make God’s enemies his friends, to exalt and raise up the broken and rejected and to set a world full of prisoners free. This was not a mere political manifesto.

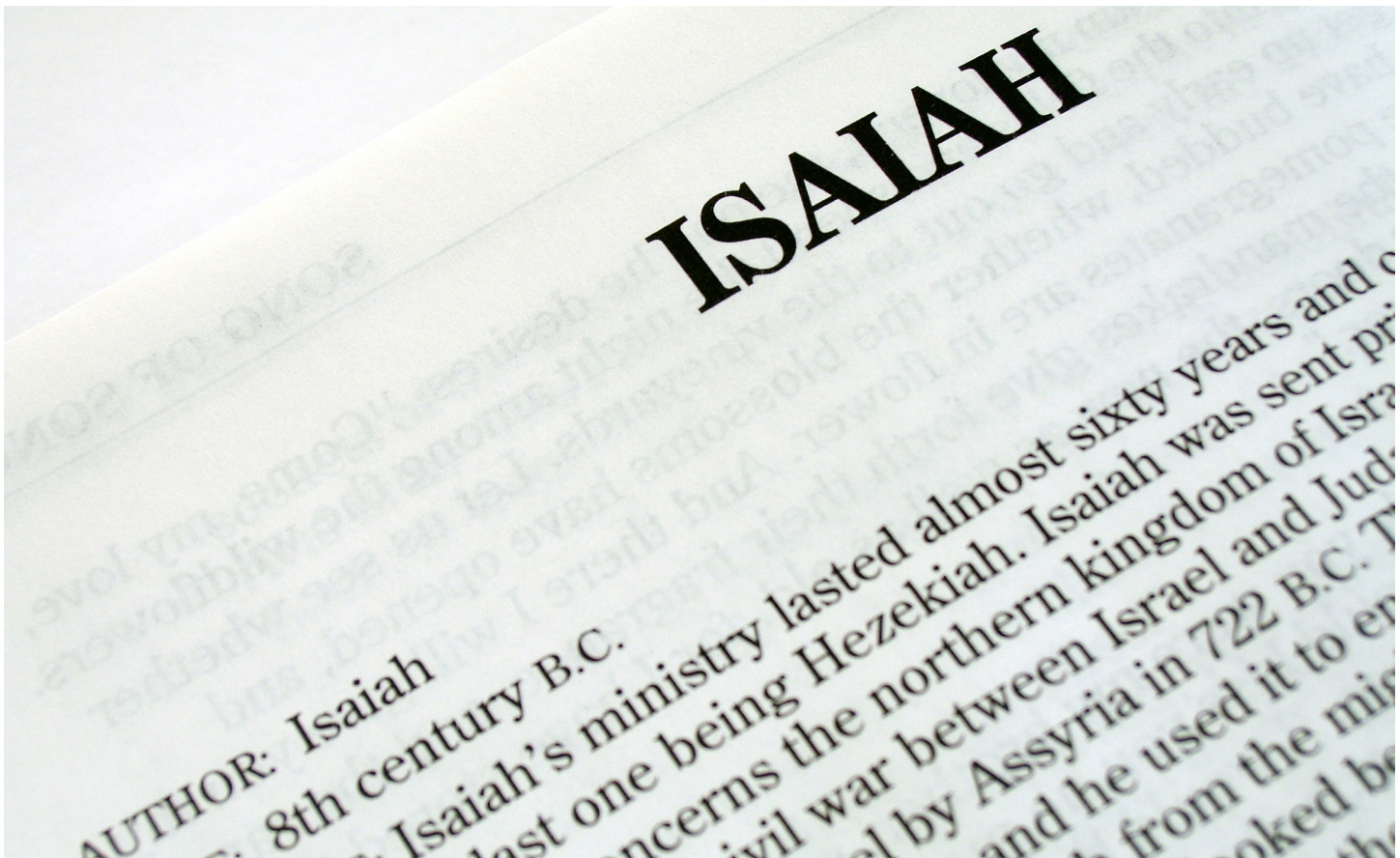
Isaiah knew that what God had promised was something much greater than earthly political revolution, but by Jesus’ day many Jews had limited it to merely that. It had been four hundred years since God had sent a prophet. They’d been invaded and oppressed by successive foreign powers and now they’d been subsumed into the pagan Roman Empire. They wanted a political revolution to overturn their immediate, present circumstances. That’s understandable, but it made their expectations for a Messiah very small. Many Christians do the same the thing today. They limit Jesus’ mandate to political and social revolution in this world or even to just turning their own situation around, but when we read the rest of Luke and listen to what Jesus says about his Kingdom, it’s clear that those things are a consequence of his Kingship not its end goal.

God’s grand purpose in sending Jesus is to ‘rescue us from the dominion of darkness and bring us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.’ (Col 1:13) The scope and trajectory of Jesus’

kingdom are eternal. That doesn’t mean it’s only about the future beyond this life. God’s kingdom comes here and now when a person accepts Jesus as Lord and when people have Jesus as their King—when they love him, trust him, follow him—God uses them to transform the world.

If political, economic and social revolution was the primary objective of Jesus’ mission in Judea, then it was an abject failure. In Luke 7, John the Baptist was languishing in Herod’s dungeon when he sent his disciples to ask if Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus pointed to his miracles and preaching (Lk 7:22) and said the same thing as had said that day in the synagogue: ‘Yes, I’m the one you’ve been waiting for’. But he didn’t storm Herod’s stronghold and set John free from prison or save his life from the executioner. Jesus healed many people and raised some from the dead, but not most. He didn’t drive the Romans out of Judea or improve living standards or reform the justice system. That’s not because justice and human dignity and flourishing don’t matter to him or because he didn’t have the power to do it. Satan had offered him that option in the wilderness. He could have done all of that and limited his agenda to temporal, earthly matters but he had come for much more than that.

Jesus’ miracles and even his challenges to the politically powerful and affluent of his day were never an end in themselves. They always pointed to the eternal picture and because Jesus stuck to the mission God had given him and refused to be limited to political revolution, countless millions have been rescued and are being rescued from the dominion of darkness and brought into his Kingdom.





10TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION • REVISED

A FAILURE OF NERVE

Foreword by Peter L. Steinke, author of
How Your Church Family Works and Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times

Leadership in the
Age of the Quick Fix

EDWIN H.
FRIEDMAN

The purpose of this review is to help Christian leaders engage with Edwin Friedman's genuine insights into leadership in a society that has become increasingly anxious. I will offer up at points, in no great triumph of exegesis, some scriptural observations as to why we might not always wholeheartedly agree with him, yet in general affirm his conclusions on leadership. Friedman was an ordained rabbi who was for twenty years a leader in a synagogue. He was also a practicing family therapist and consultant to leadership in different spheres of life, from the family through to the American defence force. *A Failure of Nerve* was published sometime after his death and is at points an incomplete manuscript. This book is great, a summary of a secular sage's life investment in leadership.

Here is Friedman's own confession of who the book is for and what it is about:

'This book is for parents and presidents. It is also for CEOs and educators, prioresses and coaches, healers and generals, managers and clergy. It is about

A Failure of Nerve

Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix

Edwin H. Friedman, Seabury Books, 2007

the leadership in the land of the quick fix, about leadership in a society so reactive that it cannot choose leaders who might calm its anxiety.'

Friedman makes his analysis based on American society, but this book is so compelling because of the universal nature of the behaviours of people in a chronically anxious system. Needless to say, if he is right, this book has a global appeal for leaders and goes at least part of the way in helping us understand why leadership today is in urgent need of people who are able to hold their nerve and stay the course in a highly anxious society.

Here is a quick taste of the contents: chronically anxious systems are stuck, unable to move forward. Anxious systems don't have to be societies, of course. They can be families, business relationships, churches etc. We can all be trapped into thinking we cannot possibly do X or Y because we live with what Friedman calls 'emotional equators'. Sometimes our fears and insecurities are the emotional equators and when we do not recognise these 'equators' for what they are, we become a regressive, rather than evolving, progressive society, workplace, family etc. Friedman explores what a chronically anxious environment looks like. Without spoiling the book, here are the essentials of a highly anxious community; highly reactive, herding, blame displacement, a quick fix mentality, and a failure of nerve in leadership.

The chapters following offer a critique of a data driven world, and a negative analysis of empathy—which is food for thought. Other chapters include a robust argument for the importance of 'self' and

how the concept of self is being eradicated and renamed 'selfish'; an analysis of relationships as emotional triangles and the importance of understanding these relational dynamics if we are to lead change through the path of least resistance; and a chapter on 'crisis and sabotage' with some of the soundest advice of the book.

These three things I liked about Friedman's book: first, it attempts to free leaders to make decisions and follow through on them, to use their imagination, to risk, to refuse to be driven by data alone, and to realise that all good leadership will be subject to sabotage. Second, the book has an amazing set of metaphors or allegories and stories that excite and motivate leaders to be decisive, even in an anxious climate, affirming a clear, calm, connected approach that encourages leaders to be patient and hold their nerve. Third, its appreciation of the fact that when people make decisions, they are rarely driven by rational processes alone. Decisions are almost always driven in part if not in whole by emotional processes.

However, I did not like everything. The references to the evolutionary processes of how we came to be who we are felt a little forced. Though the allegory of evolutionary development is novel and fruitful in helping the reader understand concepts about chronically anxious systems, togetherness forces and forces of differentiation, one could equally arrive at the same conclusions via a biblical understanding of what it means to be a creature in the image of God.

Also, from a Christian perspective Friedman's definition of good leaders reads a little like Nietzsche's superman. His read

on good leaders is that they will be called narcissistic, cold, and calculating just because they refuse to be reactionary, just because they remain well differentiated. Though we can affirm that sometimes this is the case, sometimes good leaders will lead poorly and will at times be cold and calculating narcissists who need to repent of their sin.

Further, Friedman doesn't believe in empathy, only sympathy and compassion. He believes empathy has been hijacked and becomes a tool for sabotage. This may be true, but the Bible has many examples of what we might consider

empathetic gestures. The apostle Paul puts it like this; 'and our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort'. (2 Cor 1:7). If empathy is about being able to put yourself in the position of another, this passage is a good example.

Finally, Friedman provides plenty of pragmatic initiatives to help leaders remain differentiated, unaffected by the emotional processes of others whilst remaining connected. However Christian leaders need a more realistic assessment of human frailty than Friedman is willing to offer. Ironically, it is our doctrine of

weakness that makes us strong and able. It is our doctrine of childlike faith, a faith that expresses itself in total dependence upon God that will help us stay the course.

If you're a leader in a church, read this book. If you're a leader in a dying church, definitely read this book. If you're a Christian leader about to encourage a new path for your church, a necessary but unpopular path, read this book. The privilege of this book is the many years of experience that drives the conclusions that liberate leaders to take risks and enjoy a treacherous journey.

Tim Ravenhall, NSW.

Evolution:

Still a Theory in Crisis

Michael Denton, Discovery Institute Press, 2016

It is 3 am. Unable to sleep, I arose to continue reading Michael Denton's *Evolution: Still a Theory in Crisis* (2016). To my surprise I turned a page and found it was the last. Some authors have a lot of footnotes!

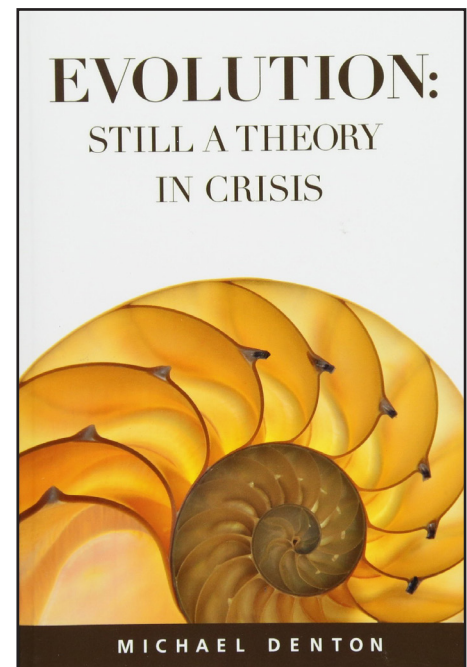
Sadly, I have never studied biology, so am unable to assess much of the evidence and argumentation, except in a superficial common sense way. I wish someone better equipped than I would help us here. Having said that, the book reinforces my own growing conviction that the Darwinian model of evolution is too simple by far, and fails to bring us to a right understanding of what one of my childhood books on evolution called 'the miracle of life'.

Denton does not declare himself as a believer or even a theist; Wikipedia calls him an agnostic. His faith position generally remains hidden. He approaches Darwinism (and Neo-Darwinism) as a molecular biologist and an evolutionist, assessing its evidential basis, finding it lacking, and reaching out for an alternative mechanism for the bewildering variety of life forms.

Variation and adaptation he fully accepts, along with the notion of natural selection. However, he observes that there are many big structures imbedded in nature—he calls them types or homologues—which are the foundations

on which this variation operates, and which cannot themselves be accounted for as gradual modifications of an original simple life-form. Examples he explores in detail are the pentadactyl limb (one bone plus two bones plus five digits) 'conserved in all tetrapods for 400 million years'; also the feather, hair, the insect body plan, the flower, the amniotic membrane, the insect wing ('every detail of the developmental program is an enigma in terms of adaptive gradualism'; p. 95), the enucleate red blood cell of all mammals (this is Denton's speciality; he did his Ph.D. on the red blood cell), and the cell itself. The ground-plan of the cell, 'the basic unit of all life on earth' is unchanged in 4000 million years (p. 120). He has many more examples; Denton speaks of 'a universe of non-adaptive forms' (p. 76). At one point he mentions a million 'taxon-defining homologues' (p. 45).

These homologues have no apparent antecedent structure in the fossil record, nor any theoretical pathway by which they might have arisen by small adaptive steps. Writing on the cell, and the developments in biology in the thirty years since he wrote *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* (1985) Denton says, 'Despite a vast increase in knowledge of supra-molecular chemistry and of cell and molecular biology; the unexpected discovery of ribozymes; and an enormous effort, both experimental



and hypothetical, devoted to providing a gradualistic functionalist account of the origins of life in terms of a long series of less complex functional replicating systems ... leading from chemistry to the cell, no one has provided even the vaguest outlines of a feasible scenario, let alone a convincing one.' (p. 121) This should be read along with his mind-blowing description of the cell in the 1985 book: pp. 328-330.

In 1989 I read Denton's first book. It left me in wonder at the complexity of life and life forms—especially the cell—and a growing scepticism regarding the evolutionary model I had grown up with. Mistakenly, I thought Denton was challenging the whole macro-evolutionary paradigm. Reading his latest work makes

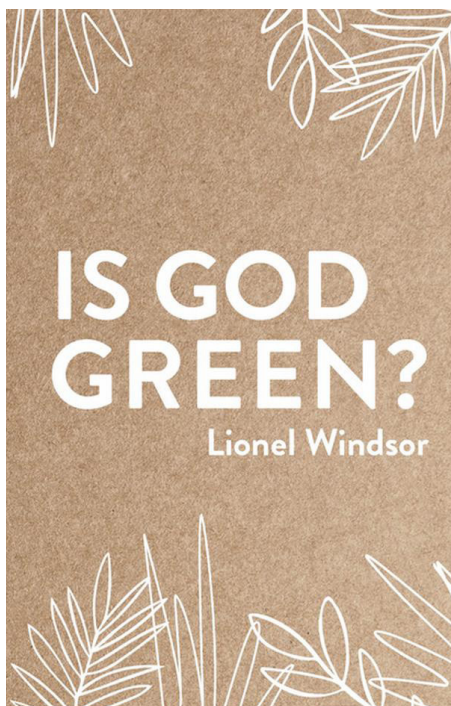
it clear that he is not. His challenge is to the Darwinian and Neo-Darwinian paradigm. His quest is for an alternative. Recently I re-read, *Evolution, A Theory in Crisis*. I see now why it impacted on me so powerfully in 1989. As a student in the 60s I accepted Darwin's notion that the whole of life evolved as a result of small changes, natural selection, and the survival of the fittest. I accommodated it easily to my new faith, reasoning that God's providence could have guided the whole process to his intended conclusion. I could not see how a structure as complicated as the eye could have arisen without some guidance; age has added to that conviction. However, doubts over Darwin arose when I was still a student. In 1959 Everyman's Library published a centenary edition of *The Origin of Species*. The introduction was by a leading Canadian biologist. He summarized the theory and then inquired whether the evidence of one hundred years supported it. He found it did not, and lamented the amount of biological research which was wasted on building imaginary evolutionary trees. From then until 1989 I was an evolution 'agnostic'. *A Theory in Crisis* (1985) reviews the evidence for grand evolution and concludes that it not only does not support Darwin's idea, but conflicts with it at many levels. Denton's

argument is so strong, especially in his own area of molecular biology, that, with my Christian spectacles, I read it as an outright refutation of grand evolution—which it is not.

This becomes clear in his later book, *Evolution: Still a Theory in Crisis* (2016). Denton thinks the world is old, and that the various forms of life evolved. The question is how. He finds Darwin's solution unworkable and seeks an alternative in what he calls 'structuralism'. In this he is going back to some of the great biologists of the nineteenth century, in particular Richard Owen, founder of the Museum of Natural History in London. There are deeply imbedded biological structures, which appear to be part of the nature of things in the physical world. In the inorganic world crystals form under certain conditions, constrained by the forces of nature; so, structures 'emerge' in the biological world as a result of physical constraints. Denton illustrates this from an amount of recent research. It was an eye-opener to me that the 20th century notion that everything is determined by what is encoded in our DNA, is being abandoned in the 21st. The shape of the human body, for example, does not seem to be determined genetically, nor does the language ability of humans (which Denton identifies as another 'homologue').

DNA is not all there is to it! Some other explanation is required, and he finds this in 'epigenetic' forces (analogous to crystallization) which emerge in extraordinarily complex protein systems. Admitting that this might be a factor in biological development, I baulk at it as an explanation of, for instance, the pentadactyl limb-structure. It clearly does not work as an explanation of the cell itself, where Denton has himself ruled out intermediate forms.

In his last chapter Denton explores the implications of his work for teleology (he avoids bringing God into the discussion) where he favours the view that the basic forms of life are 'no less built into nature than the properties of water' (p. 278). 'There is the deep hint—arising from the cosmological discovery of the fitness of nature for life—that the life forms on earth may be after all, an integral part of the cosmic order.' (p. 278f. Denton's italics.) For those who know God, this has evident interest. This latest book should be read and discussed, though the first is foundational, and is an easier read. Evangelicals who for a long time now have accorded Darwinism almost the status of a doctrine should take note of this authoritative scientific refutation of Darwin's grand scheme and review their thinking. **David Seccombe, WA**



Is God Green?

Lionel Windsor, Matthias Media, 2018

Most Christian commentary on caring for the environment leaves me completely cold. I just can't seem to muster up the motivation that other people have to 'live sustainably'. There, I said it out loud.

The topic often makes me feel enormously guilty for my pathetic failures - I keep forgetting my Keep Cup and reusable bags, I haven't done enough research into what products I buy that have microbeads ruining the oceans, and yes I know I shouldn't duck to the shops in my petrol guzzling car to pick up dinner (that probably comes in too much plastic packaging) but I excuse myself by claiming that I just don't have enough

time to do better because I'm a busy mum who is just trying to get through the day. Too much mental load, people! Am I the only one who feels like this? I suspect not.

There are many different ways that people try to motivate others to care for the environment. Guilt-inducing, crushing burdening, self-righteous virtue-signalling, judgmental finger-pointing, and fear-inducing end times hysteria are common methods. And what is frustrating is that many Christians seem to employ those exact same methods!

After one particularly annoying 'Christian' talk on caring for the environment with no mention of Jesus which left me and the audience feeling

completely guilty and burdened, I was so worked up that I decided to write a book about the topic.

Then I discovered *Is God Green?* by Lionel Windsor. Lionel has heaps more street cred than me, having been an engineer in solar cell research, and now a lecturer in New Testament at Moore College, so I'm pleased, for everyone's sake, that this is the book that got published.

Is God Green? is a very short book (60+ pages) which started off as a set of talks to University students. It is clear and simple, with a straight forward look at the topic of the environment through the lens of Biblical Theology. In 6 short chapters he looks at creation in the beginning, the fall, the cross, the future and what to do while we wait for the end of the world.

Finally, here's a book that shows how the gospel changes people, which is what

can then in turn make a difference to the world and its environmental problems. Finally here's a book that handles the Bible well and shows how the whole of God's salvation plan affects how we are to care for the environment. Finally here's a book that is not guilt-inducing nor encouraging self-righteous behaviour. What a breath of fresh air.

His thesis is that when we submit to Jesus he restores us to our rightful place as God's image bearers, who rule the world under him (p.42). As Christians we put off the old self, and put on the new (Colossians 3:5-10) which means we will put off greed and selfishness, and put on love and service. This will therefore have an impact on all the decisions we make that impact the environment.

'Will that make a difference to the world? Of course it will! You can't save the world - that's Jesus' job. But you can

make a difference, because you can live as an heir of this world, rescued from death, renewed in God's image, ruling under God.' (p.46)

Those familiar with the *Two Ways to Live* gospel outline will recognise much of the language Windsor uses (God being our ruler, and God giving us responsibility to rule the world under him). If I had to give one tiny criticism, this language tends to make the book a touch predictable. But maybe that's just me.

It would be a great book to give to young Christians, or confused Christians or enquiring non-Christians with an interest in the environment. I've bought a stack of copies to give away. Or maybe it's better to buy it in e-book format—saves paper. One thing's for sure, it's definitely a book with a message that our world needs.

Michelle Underwood, WA

Side by Side:

Walking with Others in Wisdom and Love

Edward T. Welch, Crossway 2015

We love to help people but we're not so keen on being helped. We want to support people in church but we don't know what to say. We feel like it's the job for the experts so we leave it to them. What have we to offer anyway?

Side by Side by Ed Welch is a gentle yet persuasive book about walking alongside others in love and wisdom. It prompts us to face our fears and engage in the relational struggle of others, knowing that ours is the struggle too. It's a vital commentary about creating authentic, active community, the best kind, by walking humbly alongside others.

I first picked up this book because I wanted to learn how to help people more effectively. What I love is that it spends the first half lovingly but firmly reminding me of my need. Just like everyone else, my loving Creator seeks to refine me from the messy person that I am. The biblical reality is that we are needy people who are slow to ask for help but, in every way, the gospel tells us that we need it. And so often he uses my (lack of) dependence on others to remind me of this. Only then am

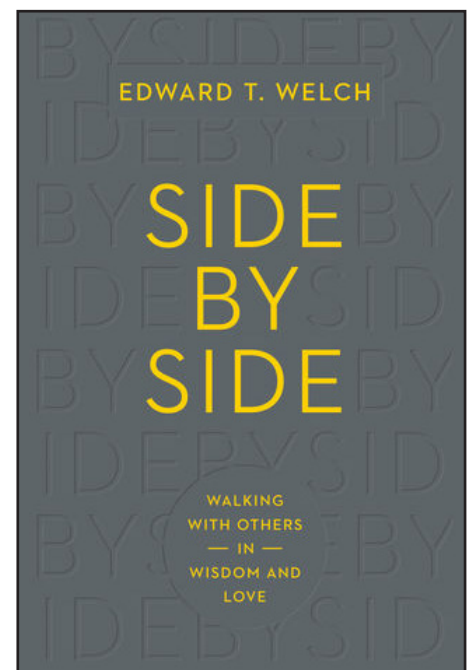
I able to offer humble, patient friendship to and alongside others. After all, God's church is served by regular, imperfect people, one to another.

From this premise, the second half of the book shows us how to do this, by moving towards others, connecting with hearts and not just day-to-day lives, and walking alongside people with thoughtful conversation, active prayer and by learning how to bring Scripture to bear in the joys and difficulties of life and faith.

We are so often fearful about helping people biblically or quick to get frustrated when people continue to struggle. This book affirms God's longing to see people moving in the direction of spiritual change, however slowly. It is not about destination; it's always about direction, moving towards him in faith.

Every believer engaged in church community should read this book. I'd like to think that I will read it once a year, a surprising goal for someone once averse to reading Christian books!

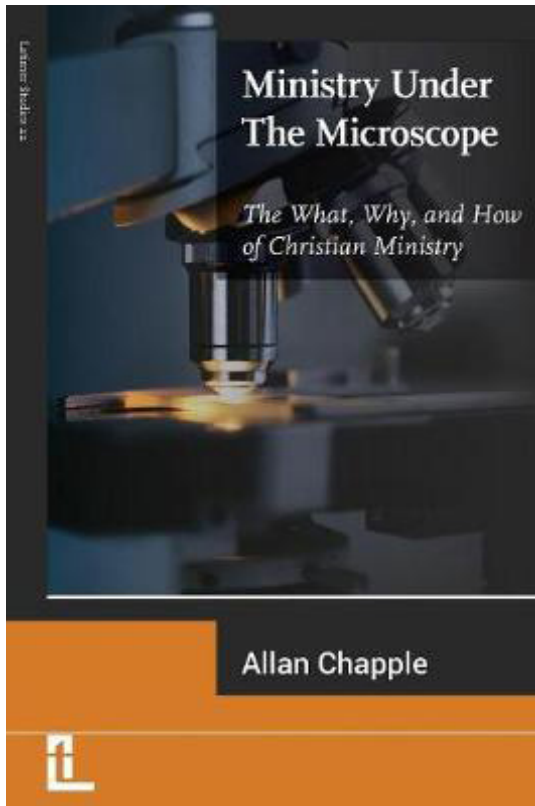
I'm a big fan of Ed Welch: he loves God and is deeply aware and candid about his failings, whilst perceptive about the



struggle of others. His style is easy to read, he offers short chapters and practical examples and gives guidance questions for discussion with others. He is often funny and heartfelt, and always honest.

We are the same. We are ordinary, flawed people and God longs to use his people to love others well, with or without a degree in theology or counselling. So this book is for all of us.

Sarah Pomphrey, WA



Ministry Under The Microscope: **The What, Why, and How of Christian Ministry** Allan Chapple, Latimer Trust, 2018

The book is structured in four parts: The Basis; The Setting; The Source; The Focus of Christian Ministry. It begins with a Ministry Map which is an excellent outline of the rest of the book, and serves both as a useful summary as well as an index of particular topics. This is a very attractive arrangement. Each of the sub-sections is short and to the point and each is accompanied by a kind of side-bar called 'Worth pondering...' In each case this consists of a series of short quotes on the topic from a range of authors, from the Reformation to the present. Chapple suggests the book could be read through in the normal way, or it could be used as

a kind of manual. It could also be used as a book for a group to study together.

Although the intended audience is those in designated ministry roles or those who might be called to such, those who have been prepared well theologically for pastoral ministry should know all this already. For them it may be a useful reference book. But more usefully I think, it could be used for teams of leaders in a church, whether lay or ordained, whether trained or not. It would be a terrific basis for in-house training and encouragement. Bible study leaders, Church Councils, ministry teams could use this book together with enormous profit. The book concludes with a 'What to do now' chapter and a wonderful, partly notated, bibliography.

Dale Appleby, WA

THE BIBLE AND ME

The wedding at Cana: Just what hour is it? **Frances Cook, Chile**

Recently, I heard some excellent teaching on John's Gospel. Setting the cultural scene for the wedding at Cana (John 2: 1-11), the speaker explained that in first century Jewish weddings, it was the duty of the bridegroom to provide the wine and so the lack of wine at the wedding would be the cause of great embarrassment for, and possibly even legal proceedings against, the bridegroom. That led me to reflect on that awkward verse 4. Mary had explained to Jesus that the bridegroom (a friend or cousin?) at this wedding was facing exactly that situation, and whatever his mother expected of Jesus here, she clearly thought he was not going to leave his mate in the lurch. But Jesus responds, 'Woman, what to me and to you? My hour has not yet come.' I have looked at the dozen or so commentaries I have access to and, besides a few which are rather vague, largely suggesting Jesus' time for miracles has not come, most say that the 'hour' referred to is Jesus' glorification in his death, resurrection and ascension.

Now please allow me the folly of boldness. Verse 1 has already hinted that we are looking beyond, or through, the Cross to 'the third day', the day of resurrection. In the

previous chapter, John the Baptist has introduced Jesus as the 'Lamb of God' (1: 29). In the following, the Baptist refers to himself as 'the friend of the bridegroom'. (3:29) These two images together point to the marriage of the Lamb (Rev 19: 7-9). In the light of all of this, would it not be reasonable to suggest that the 'hour' which Jesus refers to is that of his own marriage, for which he will provide all, abundantly, even the 'fine linen, brilliantly clean' for the bride? So, paraphrasing John 2:4, we might have something like: 'Mother, what does this wedding have to do with me and you? Mine has not yet come.'

This would mean that the preacher's jump from the wedding at Cana to the marriage of the Lamb would not just be a good bit of biblical theology but rather an exegetical necessity. Perhaps we could even see Jesus, in a sense, taking from the stock of wine for his own wedding to provide for this unfortunate bridegroom, bringing the future into the present, just as the Evangelist has done in calling to mind the 'third day', at the beginning of this account and early in this Gospel. Makes sense to me, anyway.



Why that book about ministry burn-out you're reading may be doing more harm than good

Jonathan Holt

There is an expanding section at your local Christian bookshop dedicated to helping pastors to avoid or recover from burn-out. I have read a few of these myself, but with a growing sense of disquiet. I began to notice a certain pattern to these books: firstly, they were written by someone who had experienced burn-out themselves. We respond to this experience-based knowledge, and you'll often find the opening chapters of the book tell the story. You get to hear about the wide-eyed ministry novice, brimming with confidence and ready to see the world changed for Jesus. But the story soon spirals downward and the crash at the bottom is terrible. And yet there is hope, because the author learns hard truths about themselves, they find the mistakes and miscalculations. The slow and determined work of repair and rebuilding then unfolds. They grow into a new phase of ministry: sharing what they have learned, to help others.

I am grateful for their honesty and vulnerability, in sharing their story and hoping to save others from the same pain and failure. However, it is at this point that I begin to feel the unease I mentioned earlier. It is here that the author turns their own personal path to recovery into a system for all of us to follow. All the things that helped them to experience restoration are explained, and often backed up with science, and finally put into dot-points (maybe in a box) at the end of the chapter. But it's not just the universalizing of personal experience that

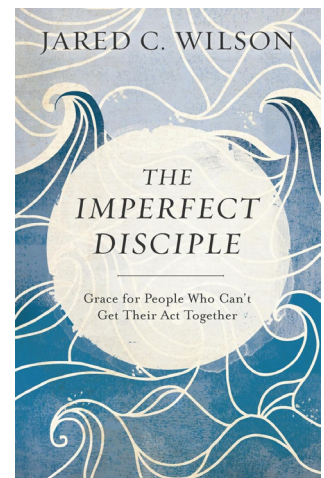
bothers me. It's the subtle move from hitting rock bottom, re-discovering the depths of God's grace, to beginning to do better, do the right things and follow the self-help actions the author offers up. The better versions of the ministry burn-out book serve us well by leading us to the deep, deep well of God's grace in the midst of failure, sin and burn-out. But they often serve us a refreshing drink and then urge us back into the fray of sorting out our priorities; doing more exercise; getting our rest right; observing the Sabbath; or whatever it was the author found renewed their energy and resource for serving Jesus. My niggling concern is that we fall so easily for the Galatian error each time we read one of these books. I hear the deep need of the author in their downward spiral, that leads them to a deeper understanding of grace. But having begun with grace, many of these books move onto the efforts I must make if I am going to avoid burn-out. Chapter after chapter guides me through the things I must do if I am going to succeed where the author had failed. But what if I needed to stay at that deep, deep well of God's grace? Not just stay there longer (before moving onto the call to get my act together, have this day off, learn that ancient practice of the early church), but just stay there. Far too many of these burn-out-recovery books have the chapter on grace towards the front and leave it there to get on with my effort, and my improved activity.

The book *The Imperfect Disciple, Grace for People Who Can't Get Their Act Together*, by Jared C. Wilson was a refreshing change.

Not least because his exploration of the sufficiency

of grace is taken up in the second last chapter (it's not the first time he mentions it, but it is the place where he takes up the topic at length). Wilson riffs on the legend of the old lady verses the scientist. Versions of this story abound, in which the scientist finishes a lecture on how the earth is round and revolves around the sun. The old lady corrects the scientist, with her view that the earth is flat and rests on a turtle. The scientist asks what the turtle rests on, to which the old lady replies, 'Another turtle.' The scientist asks again: 'And what does the second turtle rest on?' And she replies: 'It's turtles all the way down!' Wilson's point is important and good to hear over and over again: '...when it comes to our dependence on God, it is all grace or no grace. If our standing with him rests even an ounce on our works, we are utterly and hopelessly lost. No, it must be grace all the way down.' (p198)

I believe this is the kind of burn-out help we need. It was my effort; me trying to work harder, that led me into danger – how on earth could more of that be the way to recovery? I'd love to read a burn-out-recovery book, which led me to the deep, deep well of God's grace and left me there. And in that place, drinking that refreshing water, I might stand a chance of finding a way to be in ministry, safe from dangers of burn-out.



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