

ESSENTIALS

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Bringing the Gospel to our World

Are we tempted to trust more in methods for gospel growth, than in the gospel itself?

The Anglican Futures Conference in Melbourne in March was a great time. Lots of people (465) from all states and New Zealand, excellent organisation, stimulating plenary sessions and a great variety of highly appreciated workshops. And finished with a financial surplus. The Conference touched on a number of important areas in our life as Anglican Christians and this issue of *Essentials* follows up more of those matters.

We have more summaries of some of the papers and discussions of other issues as well. Jude Long continues to give us some insights into Indigenous matters and Peter Brain critiques the significant General Synod *Report of the Viability and Structures Task Force*. (Peter has further material in *Facing the Future: Bishops Imagine A Different Church* Stephen Hale (Ed), Andrew Curnow (Ed) ISBN 9780908284900).

Plans, methods, schemes and models continue to proliferate in the attempt to bring the gospel to our world. Many of them represent ways in which God has blessed the work of his servants. However evangelicals know better than to trust in the repetition of things that worked somewhere else. What we ought to continue to trust in is the gospel itself and the Lord who continues to spontaneously expand his church, to use the words of Roland Allen.

Allen has wise words for a generation entrenched in method. "By spontaneous expansion I mean something which we cannot control. And if we cannot control it, we ought, as I think, to rejoice that we cannot control it. For if we cannot control it, it is because it is too great for us, not because it is too small for us. The great things of God are beyond our control. Therein lies a vast hope. Spontaneous expansion could fill the continents with the knowledge of Christ..." That was in 1927. It seems that he was right. A number of our book reviews highlight the same story.

In the face of competing stresses, opposition, and white-anting, evangelicals are under pressure to be ashamed of the gospel. But most evangelicals are unlikely to give it away. We are more likely to be tempted to trust in gospel methods than in the gospel.

Dale Appleby, *Essentials* Editor



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The Missing Question

Peter Brain considers the *Report of the Viability and Structures Task Force*, produced for the 2014 General Synod of The Anglican Church of Australia.

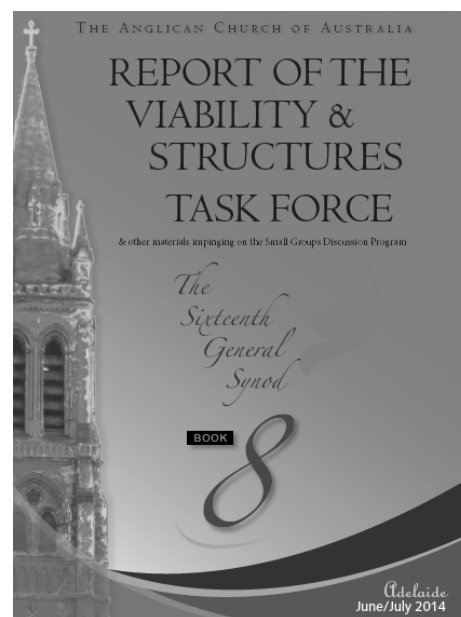


Peter Brain, formerly Bishop of the Diocese of Armidale, is the rector of Rockingham, WA

This is a sad report. Not because of declining numbers, the precarious financial status of many dioceses, or the difficulty most dioceses have in attracting ordinands. Those anxieties for church members, local church and denominational leadership are real. The real sadness of this report is its failure to address, or even pose, the possibility that our problems might be theological. Could there be a failure to be clear on the nature of our calling, the content and power of the gospel and the primacy of the local church?

Time after time the *Report* suggests that our problems stem from the fact that the number of nominal Anglicans is declining. In all the years of being a Christian it has never occurred to me that my ministry should be restricted to Anglicans. As long as there are people who do not know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour our Lord calls us to take the gospel to them because they are perishing. People who are not members of other local Christian churches are our mission field too.

Could this be the result of a far deeper and more serious problem? A failure to be on the same page as Jesus in regard to the content of the gospel and its power to save sinners. The *Report* nowhere speaks about this matter. On a couple of occasions it makes the assumption that we are Christians by virtue of our baptism. Apart from having no Biblical warrant, honest reflection would keep us from this folly. Not



only does it ascribe to the sacrament a power it cannot possess, robbing the Holy Spirit of his wonderfully life changing work, but the fruits and habits of baptised uncommitted Anglicans betray their need for conversion.

The focus of the *Report* is on the diocese. Indeed the report, in response to the tragic problems caused by some of our members in improper sexual behaviour, suggests that we ought to be one national church. Whilst the reasoning — that people and governments don't understand our diocesan diversity — may be laudable, it is an approach that can only move us further away from the coalface of healthy and vibrant local churches. This betrays a misunderstanding of where real growth, healing and discipleship takes place.

At the risk of opening myself to the criticism of pride or grandstanding, the *Report*, whilst acknowledging the low ratio of ordained pastors to census Anglicans, the availability of ordinands, the healthy financial position and the numbers of attenders of Sydney and Armidale Dioceses, never posed the question as to whether there may be a correlation between these facts and the kind of theology and ecclesiology practised and held in these two dioceses. I would imagine that any secular investigation would be very happy to have a city and a rural diocese by which to compare what is going on. I hasten to add that neither of these dioceses would be content with either the size of congregations or with their rate of growth. But they are there and there are clear differences between these dioceses and others. They provide an opportunity that was missed by the *Report* to compare, contrast and enquire.

The emphasis of these two dioceses on the authority of the Bible gives to their pastors and members a confidence in God and the content of the gospel. The fact that Jesus is Lord and that repentance towards God and trust in Jesus form both the content and call of the gospel means that false hopes (like you are saved because you are baptised, good, spiritual, sincere) are consistently exposed and the sure hope based on God's grace to us through the uniqueness of Christ, his substitutionary atonement and bodily resurrection, con-

“It is in a warm hearted and gospel focussed local church that those hurt by past sins might regain confidence.”

fidently held out to all. The emphasis on the life of the local church, where converts and seekers are drawn into its fellowship, provides a context for these gospel realities to be observed, tested, proved and learnt. The diocese can nurture and encourage this ministry (and must do so) but the diocese will never be a viable substitute for the local church.

As one who has returned to parish ministry after 12 years in diocesan leadership I am rediscovering the privilege but also the challenges of this coal face work in evangelism and pastoral care. It is in a warm hearted and gospel focussed local church that those hurt by past sins might regain confidence. Those of us who are committed to evangelical truths have no right to be proud, smug or self-confident. We do however, have a mandate from our risen Lord to be confident in him and the gospel he has entrusted to us. We are part of a denomination that is struggling and asking questions. The *Report* is honest at this level. However the *Report* does not encourage us to find any answers from God who has so graciously called us to build his church through his gospel.



The *Report of the Viability and Structures Task Force* is General Synod 2014 Book 8, and is available at www.anglican.org.au/general-synods/2014/documents/books/book%208_for%20website.pdf.

Closing the Gap

Jude Long shares some insights about some of the crucial issues for Indigenous people in the remote parts of Australia.



Dr Jude Long is Principal of Nungalinga College, Darwin, NT

We hear a lot today about closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Government policies are developed, and decisions are made about how we (usually meaning non-Indigenous people) are going to do that.

“The gap” has become a shorthand way of describing the inequalities in Australian society between the first and second peoples of this country. The gap exists across Australia, but it is very different for urban Indigenous people compared to those in remote communities. I can only talk from the context of Nungalinga College where most of our students come from remote communities across the Top End and down into the Centre of Australia.

Health Gap

Here is a story to illustrate the health gap for people in remote communities. We had a student come in to an intensive with a sore foot which had been burnt in a fire. Her community did have a clinic but it was currently closed because a 14 year old girl had committed suicide by hanging herself outside the clinic and so everyone was too scared to go to the there. She showed her foot to our staff who thought it smelled not so good so took her along to the hospital. It turned out that she had gangrene and had to have 3 toes amputated.

Life Expectancy Gap

Sadly, many people in remote communities die young – through suicide, accident or chronic illness. Life expectancy

for Aboriginal people in the NT is about 61 for men and 69 for women. The issue of suicide in communities is becoming alarming. Statistics up to 2012 indicate the suicide rate in for Indigenous people is double that for the general population and anecdotally, the situation appears to be getting worse.

We had one student whose 2 brothers both committed suicide, and then his 9 year old nephew followed suit. The power poles on the Tiwi Islands all have spikes pointing downwards to stop people climbing up and touching their heads to the wires. These are shocking stories, but sadly commonplace in the top end.

Safety Gap

Violence is a serious issue in many Aboriginal communities and in Darwin itself. Statistics show that Indigenous women in the NT are 23 times more likely to be victims of domestic violence than non-indigenous women. As the research also says that probably 49% of assaults are unreported, the situation is actually even worse than the statistics show. A lot of the violence in communities is related to alcohol and substance abuse.

Literacy Gap

We hear quite a bit about this in the mainstream media, although the focus is primarily on children. However, in the Top End, new generations have a critical problem with literacy. Being unable to read is immensely disempowering. All the basic things in life in modern Australian society become a struggle – filling in a form, managing money, working, dealing with the justice system etc.

The Christian Gap

The issues of literacy, health and safety are general issues for all Aboriginal people, but for Indigenous Christians there is a further gap – related to their Christian faith. For well-educated English speaking Christians there are many options available to us if we want to grow in our faith and follow God more closely. We can read the Bible in our own language in probably hundreds of different versions, as well as access all sorts of Bible study aids. There are hundreds of churches to choose from and even a wide range of theological colleges for those training for ministry.



Photo by Cicely Binford. Used under a creative commons licence.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Buskers_Fremantle_Markets.jpg


For Aboriginal people from remote communities the story is very different. There is only one full Bible in an Indigenous language, Kriol. There are also portions in some other languages. There are a few study aids being developed in language, but there are no commentaries, no Bible handbooks, and no theological textbooks in Indigenous languages.

The churches are often small, led by leaders with a limited understanding of the Bible, but faithful and committed in their practice. Rather than Sunday mornings, the life of the churches is in the evening fellowships where people sing,

“There is a gap that needs to be closed, but it can’t just be non indigenous people working to close the gap on their terms”

dance, pray and share, often several times a week. However, alongside that is the problem that there are all sorts of people coming in telling different stories about what is true and it gets very confusing. There are lots of funerals.

If a person wants to learn more about their faith or be trained for ministry, they can go to Nungalinga College to study but only to Cert IV level and they often struggle with coping with studying in a foreign language and culture.

You get the picture I am sure. There is a gap that needs to be closed, but it can’t just be non-indigenous people working to close the gap on their terms, it requires a real partnership where Indigenous people are empowered, and have a say in what the final outcome will look like. 

The End of Gender?

Rob and Claire Smith begin to address what you have probably noticed – that there is a continuing and deepening advocacy in our culture for further revolution in our attitudes to gender and identity.



Rev Rob Smith is an Anglican Minister at St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney. He teaches theology at Sydney Missionary & Bible College and works for the Department of Ministry Training & Development.



Dr Claire Smith is women's Bible teacher and the author of *God's Good Design: What the Bible Really Says About Men and Women* (Matthias Media, 2012).

The transgender tipping point

In May 2014, a year before Bruce/Caitlyn Jenner became headline news around the world, the cover story of *TIME* magazine declared that we've now reached a 'transgender tipping point'. Sociologically speaking, a tipping point is that point in time when a minority is able to bring about a significant change in the minds of the majority, such that long-held attitudes are reversed and the momentum on an issue begins to move in a completely new direction.

That new attitude and direction is, in essence, a new way of thinking about gender. And it really is new. Much of the discourse on homosexuality over the last 40 years has been about the fluidity or variability of *sexual orientation*, but not about the fluidity or variability of *gender itself*. In fact, both sides in the same-sex 'debate' have tended to view gender as something that is not only *binary* (i.e., you're either male or female) but also as something that is *fixed* (i.e., it's determined by your biological sex).

What is transgenderism?

The new way of thinking, however, makes a sharp distinction between sex and gender. Sex is still seen as *biologically determined*, but gender is now seen as entirely *socially constructed* and/or *personally chosen*. This means that there is

no necessary connection between your gender identity and your biological sex. The two may be the same or they may be different. 'Transgender' is the popular term that describes the experience of difference or dissonance between one's biological sex and one's gender identity. 'Gender dysphoria' is the latest technical diagnostic label for the psychological distress arising from this dissonance.¹

Transgenderism, however, must not be confused with the handful of rare conditions that fall under the 'intersex' umbrella, where there are varying degrees of genital, gonadal or (even more rarely) chromosomal ambiguity with a person's biological sex. These are *physical* variations, and on their own do not involve questions of either sexual orientation or gender identity. In other words, with intersex we are talking about a physiological condition with a clear biological basis, not a psychological condition with no apparent biological basis, as is the case with gender dysphoria.²

Are we ready for the revolution?

As we are very much aware, for some time now the question of same-sex marriage has pre-occupied societies and Christian denominations around the world. But what the enthusiastic media (and social media) response to Jenner's gender transition reveals is that behind the homosexual revolution (about which much has been written), the transgender revolution (about which much less has been written) has always been present and has been steadily gaining momentum. It is, therefore, now apparent that the move toward same-sex marriage is part of a much bigger set of questions about gender, identity and the nature of human sexuality – captured by the acronyms LGBT, LGBTI or LGBTQ (Q = 'queer' or 'questioning') – and a much broader 'gender agenda' aimed at a radical and thoroughgoing moral, social, psychological and sexual revolution.

The consequence of all this, as societal, political and legislative developments both here and around the world indicate, is that transgenderism is the next major issue that Christians are going to have to come to grips with – theologically, morally and pastorally. And yet, because of the way it has been largely obscured by the homosexual debate, most churches are far from ready for it. But get ready we must, for it is coming like a freight train!

Understanding transgender ideology

Transgenderism has largely grown out of the feminist and homosexual revolutions. If there is no necessary correlation between your biological sex and your 'destiny' or life roles (feminism), or if there is no necessary correlation be-

tween your biological sex and your sexual orientation (homosexuality), then why should there be any necessary correlation between your biological sex and your gender identity? As it has often been put, ‘sexual orientation’ determines *who* you want to go to bed *with*, whereas ‘gender identity’ determines *what* you want to go to bed *as*. The bottom line is that *biology* determines neither!

But there’s a further point. Just as you can *choose who* you go to bed with, so you can *choose what* you go to bed as. It is a matter of choice. Nothing is fixed or given; everything is, ultimately, self-selected. What’s more, once we decouple gender identity and biological sex, we are free to recognize that there are many genders, or perhaps none at all, and that gender identity is (potentially, if not actually) perpetually fluid. The end point of such logic is that there is no pressing need for any person to align their biological sex with their gender identity.

The tensions of transgender experience

However, interestingly and paradoxically, not all trans advocates are comfortable with such voluntarism, nor with a radical separation of sex and gender. Indeed, as is the case in the homosexual community, many transgender people argue for a kind of ‘born this way’ determinism.³ That is, they believe that the disparity they experience between their biological sex and their gender identity is not something that has been chosen by them, but is determined by forces beyond their control. But rather than live with this tension, they long for alignment. They feel they’ve been given the wrong body and so want it changed!

Such an explanation sits better with the experience of those who have known gender dysphoria from a young age,

“transgenderism is the next major issue that Christians are going to have to come to grips with”

and are not part of the majority of sufferers (over 70%) whose dysphoria resolves to a point where they come to accept and embrace their biological sex. Even so, some measure of self-determination seems unavoidable – firstly, at the level of self-belief (e.g., I believe I am a female trapped in a male body) and, secondly, in terms of the chosen way of addressing the perceived problem (e.g., I have decided to change my appearance to align with my self-belief).

The current approach to treatment

Whilst both medical and psychological research continues into gender dysphoria, its cause or causes are a long way from being fully understood. As with same-sex attraction, it appears to be both *multifactorial* and *case specific*, with the mix of causal factors varying from person to person. What is common, and contrary to the notion of ‘gender plasticity’, is the desire of those who experience it to achieve some measure of alignment between mind and body. In other words, most of those who experience gender dysphoria want to look on the outside the way they feel on the inside.

Since the 1980s, there has been a trend both in medical practice and in public opinion no longer to regard the experience of dissonance between biological sex and gender identity as a psychiatric illness or thought disorder (hence the nomenclature change from ‘gender identity disorder’ to ‘gender dysphoria’), but simply as a ‘condition’. Even more significantly, the preferred way of responding to this condition is not by focusing treatment on the person’s mental health and psychology, but by seeking to change their appearance, hormones and anatomy. In other words, instead of trying to change the mind to fit with the body, the body is changed to fit with the mind.

The tragedy of this approach

The tragedy of such a shift in both diagnosis and treatment is that ‘sex change’ is actually a biological impossibility, whereas psychological change is not. Chromosomes cannot be redesigned and real, functioning genitalia cannot be surgically constructed. A person’s self-perception, however, can be altered. In short, whatever the best way to classify gender incongruence, it should be treated with psychotherapy, not surgery. However, according to Paul McHugh (Professor of Psychiatry at Johns Hopkins Medical School), the ‘meme’ that “whether you are a man or a woman, a boy or a

girl, is more of a disposition or feeling about yourself than a fact of nature” has so permeated our culture that, like the emperor’s new clothes, few are willing to question it.⁴

Nonetheless, despite its ubiquity and popularity, McHugh believes that the ‘meme’ is a ‘pathogenic’ one, based on a disastrous diagnostic misapprehension that is leaving a train of casualties in its wake. And he says this, as head of a department that was among the first to go down the path of sex-change treatment – a practice it has now abandoned. Rather than treating the condition, those who promote sex-change through hormone treatment and surgery, McHugh argues, are collaborating with and promoting a mental disorder, and encouraging genital mutilation. Not surprisingly, the instance of ‘sex-change regret’ is disturbingly high (and little publicised) and, tragically, the experience of undergoing ‘gender transition’ does little to address the extremely high attempted-suicide rates of transgendered people (over 40%). Indeed, one longitudinal Swedish study found the attempted-suicide rate following transition was some twenty times that of comparable peers.

Personal and political responses


What must not be lost sight of in all this is that those who experience gender dysphoria need our heartfelt compassion and clear-headed help, as do their families and wider support networks. What they do not need, however, is to be encouraged in their disordered thinking and empowered to engage in serious and irreversible self-harm. But if *TIME* magazine and the response to the Jenner story are any barometer of societal change, then the cultural momentum is with those who have accepted the transgender meme. If so, then we have indeed reached a genuine tipping point and are now engaged in a major social, sexual and surgical experiment the likes of which has not been seen before.

So this is not the time to withdraw, sit on our hands or concede the point. As Christians we must pray fervently and, where possible, agitate publicly and politically for a more responsible and coherent therapeutic approach to the treatment of gender dysphoria. Our task, as Francis Schaeffer was wont to say, is to present the truth with compassion and without compromise.

Theological and pastoral responses

Even more importantly, we need to deepen our appreciation of the Bible’s teaching about the basic, binary nature of human sexuality, the way sex determines gender, and the goodness of being either male-men or female-women (Gen 1:26-28; 2:18-25). We likewise need to understand the impact

of sin upon all aspects of our humanity, including our biology, psychology, self-esteem and self-perception, and the need, therefore, for all people to be redeemed and remade into the image of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. For only in Christ can any of us find our true identity and experience lasting contentment. We also need to understand God’s glorious purpose to raise our gendered bodies, removing all imperfections and banishing all disease, dysphoria and disappointment forever.

Finally, with the help of God’s Spirit, we must work out how we speak to and care for those who suffer from gender dysphoria (as well as their family and friends), with clarity and compassion informed by God’s word. And in so doing we need to ensure that the temporary does not overshadow the eternal. As with all people, the greatest need of those who identify as transgender is not for their gender identity confusion to be resolved, or to have their attempts at transition reversed, but to be reconciled to God and adopted as his children. Trans people, therefore, need the gospel of Jesus Christ above all else. For the gospel offers real, existential peace; a better peace than anything this world can ever provide; a peace not just for this life, but for eternity. 

¹ According to the most recent *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5), ‘gender dysphoria’ is a more appropriate diagnostic name, given the symptoms and behaviours it seeks to describe. It is, however, a significant shift away from the earlier term, ‘gender identity disorder’, which identified the condition itself as a ‘disorder.’ Now it is only the distress caused by the condition that is regarded as a disorder.

² This is why many in the intersex community do not want to be included in the LGBT(I) acronym, and why there has been some criticism of DSM-5’s subsuming of ‘Intersex’ under the category of ‘Gender Dysphoria’. That said, people with intersex conditions can experience significant psychological distress, particularly if they come to reject medical decisions made for them at birth.

³ To date, and despite claims to the contrary, there doesn’t appear to be any biological basis for transgenderism. This, of course, doesn’t mean that no biological component will ever be identified, nor does it rule out other ‘softer’ forms of determinism (e.g. psychological, familial, social or environmental).

⁴ See Paul McHugh, “Transgenderism: A Pathogenic Meme”, June 10th, 2015. Online at: www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2015/06/15145. Accessed 25 July, 2015.

When Christians Differ



At the Anglican Future Conference, Brian Rosner led a workshop called *Disputable Matters: What to Do When Christians Disagree*. This is a lightly edited outline of the content of his workshop.

Rev Dr Brian Rosner is Principal of Ridley College and President of EFAC Victoria.

Summary

With respect to disputable matters, in Romans 14-15 Paul stresses the need for personal convictions, flexibility, not judging or despising those who disagree, and the goal of peace and edification. As it turns out, the theological foundations of his teaching on disputable matters are remarkably profound.

Disputable matters in Romans 14:1-15:7

Some matters are beyond dispute, of “first importance” (1 Corinthians 15:1). Other matters are “disputable” (Romans 14:1)

1. *Weak and Strong: Mosaic laws to do with diet (14:2, 21) and calendar (14:5).*

Two groups are mentioned: ‘the weak’ and ‘the strong’. Whereas “the weak” in the church (probably mainly Christians from a Jewish background) kept Jewish kosher laws and observed the Sabbath, “the strong” (mainly Gentile Christians) did not. Paul actually counts himself among the strong (15:1) and is convinced that the Christian believer may “eat anything” (14:2). Peter Adam says: “If I had been writing Romans 14, I would have told those who were weak in faith, and still kept special days, to sort themselves out, and to know that they are justified by grace through faith, not by keeping special days of Jewish practice. Paul, on the other hand, told the strong in faith to accept the weak in faith, and the weak in faith to accept the strong in faith. Both the strong and the weak are answerable to God, not to each other. So we must allow people to act differently in matters that don’t contradict the gospel.”

2. How were the two groups behaving?

“The one who eats everything [the strong] must not despise [*exoutheneō*] the one who does not [the weak], and the one who does not eat everything [the weak] must not judge [*krinō*] the one who does [the strong], for God has accepted that person” (14:3). In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus also warns about judging and despising other believers. “Do not judge, or you too will be judged” (Matt. 7:1). In his application of the commandment not to murder, he states: “whoever says to his brother, ‘Fool!’ will be subject to the Sanhedrin. But whoever says, ‘You moron!’ will be subject to hellfire” (Matt. 5:22, HCSB).

3. Paul’s instructions and his reasons

Paul’s basic instruction is to accept, rather than judge or despise one another: “Accept those whose faith is weak, without quarrelling over disputable matters” (14:1). “Accept one another, just as Christ has accepted you” (15:7). In response to Christians judging and despising each other, Paul reasons that each person is responsible directly to God, an accountability based on the status of all believers as belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ: “Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall” (14:4a). Paul explains that personal convictions are needed, for “those who have doubts are condemned if they eat, because their eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin” (14:23). “Everyone should be fully convinced in their own mind” (Romans 14:5b).

Christian leaders may teach a position on a disputable matter: “I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself” (14:14a), but not insistently: “Still to someone who considers a thing unclean, to that one it is unclean” (14:14b). In Paul’s view, at least in the case of the strong, some flexibility may be needed. Speaking to the strong, and including himself, Paul reasons that we may need to vary our practice in certain settings. We are not just “to please ourselves” (15:1). Rather, “each of us should please our neighbours for their good, to build them up” (15:2). In doing so we act in imitation of Christ, who “did not please himself” (15:3).

4. What was at stake?

Firstly, the health and happiness of the church: “For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (14:17). Secondly, the progress of the gospel. For Paul’s mission to succeed he needs the Roman Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, to accept one another, and not to squabble, so that with one mind and voice they might glorify God (15:6). Thirdly, the glory of God. Paul’s ultimate purpose in dealing with the quarrels in the churches in Rome is not to ‘smooth things over’; it is that “the Gentiles might glorify God” (15:9; cf. 15:6, 7).

Conclusion

With respect to disputable matters, in Romans 14-15 Paul stresses the need for personal convictions, flexibility, not judging or despising those who disagree, and the goal of peace and edification. As it turns out, the theological foundations of his teaching on disputable matters are remarkably profound. Doctrine matters. Paul appeals to the lordship of Christ, the imitation of Christ, justification by faith, and the work of the Spirit in the Kingdom of God. To behave badly will damage the health and happiness of the church, impede the progress of the gospel and diminish the glory of God.



Rural Ministry and the Future of Mission

At the Anglican Future Conference Mark Short sought to turn assumptions about life in the bush on their head. Here's how he went about it.



Mark Short is the National Director of Bush Church Aid Australia (BCA).

Earlier this year Monica and I were in the audience for the 'When the Bush Comes to Town' edition of Q and A. The makeshift studio was decorated with hay bales, there were a couple of bemused-looking alpacas greeting us as we walked into the venue and before the broadcast we were warmed up by a bloke with a guitar singing 80's rock covers with a generic country twang. Clearly the producers had their own assumptions about what life in the bush looks and sounds like!

In mission our unspoken and untested assumptions are generally the most misleading. When the AFC organisers kindly invited me to share at the conference I was given the title 'The Future of Rural Ministry'. I asked if I could change it 'Rural Ministry and the Future of Mission.' The change is subtle but significant. We often assume that the bush is sheltered, at least for a time, from the cultural and technological changes sweeping through the rest of western culture. It can even be comforting to imagine that somewhere over the ranges there is a rustic backwater where life is simpler. If we want to understand the challenges facing the church in the west we are told to look to our big cities, because as goes the city, so goes the culture.

I'm going to turn that assumption on its head, for two reasons. Firstly, in an era of rapid globalisation there really are no backwaters. The modern farmer who follows the weather on the Bureau of Meteorology website, who makes decisions based on movements in the Chicago futures market and who downloads GPS data before sowing is under no illusion that the reach of capitalism and technology stops at the farm gate. Secondly, there is what you might call the 'localised diversity' of the bush. The Australian bush is every bit as diverse as our cities but the different aspects of that diversity are often concentrated in particular geographical locations. Let me unpack that final point by describing five

different types of rural communities we encounter at BCA and how each one highlights a pressing missional challenge for all of us.

Mining communities and the challenge of fluidity

If I were to ask what are the main features of our big cities I reckon you'd come up with a list that included mobility, cultural diversity, a young age profile and a blurring of the boundaries between home and work. I've chosen the label *fluidity* to sum up those trends — everything and everyone seems to be on the move. Then let me tell you about places in Australia that are *even more* fluid than our big cities. It's not unusual for a BCA minister in one of our mining towns to farewell half of their congregation each year. And that congregation will be young and culturally diverse — when I visited the church at Newman there were something like 20 nationalities in a congregation of 60. Members of that congregation will be engaged in a variety of working arrangements — not only FIFO, where the mine worker leaves home in the city to relocate to a mining camp for up to two weeks at a time, but the emerging pattern of reverse FIFO where a worker sets up home in the mining town and flies to the city every couple of weeks to catch up with his wife and family.

“in an era of rapid globalisation there really are no backwaters”

Our Anglican parish structures originally developed in a settled world, where people were born, lived, work and died within a few square kilometres around which we placed discrete parish boundaries. But that is not our world and it is certainly not the world of our brothers and sisters in mining communities. We have much to learn with them and from them as they adopt a generous kingdom perspective that equips Christians for ministry wherever life and work might take them.

Farming communities and the challenge of faithful innovation

For many of our farming communities the challenges are different. Their populations are older and less mobile. Declining terms of trade and increases in productivity mean that many of them are experiencing steady declines in population as young adults have to re-locate to larger centres for education and/or work. Here the great challenge is both to tend inherited structures of ministry and mission while also developing new expressions to engage those not yet Chris-

tian. You could call this the challenge of faithful innovation — recognising the good in the old so it becomes the inspiration for the best of the new. By God's grace, we have seen this happen in some of our BCA locations both through the renewal of existing ministries and the establishment of new ones. Of course this is a challenge for many of us regardless of where we live and so once again we have much to learn with and from one another.

Regional communities and the challenge of networking for growth

Larger regional centres like Bendigo, Ballarat, Wagga Wagga, Tamworth, Toowoomba, Mt Gambier and Geraldton are often called sponge communities because they have a tendency to soak up resources and people from their surrounding districts. They become the places people must go to for health care and shopping and to deal with banks and government departments. The great challenge for ministry and mission in these regional centres is to squeeze the sponge so that some of the resources and maybe even some of the people begin to flow outwards again.

What might that look like? It might look like a church in a regional city becoming a hub for the training and support of Christians in outlying towns. It might look like a regional university campus becoming a centre where young people are disciplined and given a vision for servant-hearted ministry in the bush beyond graduation — as we're seeing in BCA-supported ministry at Launceston. It might look like Christians dispersed across a wide area engaging and learning through online technology. In a world where people wish to connect through networks rather than serve under hierarchies we have much to learn with and from the bush.

Lifestyle communities and the challenge of scepticism

We live in an age of increased scepticism and even hostility toward the Christian faith, but we often assume that the bush is somehow immune from those trends as if closeness to creation gives you a head start in knowing the creator. But the reality is that many rural communities, and particularly those with a high lifestyle component, are notable for their high level of scepticism towards what they see as organised religion. Locations like Maleny in Queensland, Nimbin and Byron Bay in New South Wales, Daylesford and Castlemaine in Victoria, Kangaroo Island in South Australia and Denmark in Western Australia have the same mixture of aggressive secularism and diffuse spirituality you might associate with inner city Sydney or Melbourne. At BCA we are learning to engage with these communities through

friendship and courageous, clear and creative gospel proclamation — there is much we can learn from each other.

Indigenous communities and the challenge of partnership

I find it fascinating that people often imagine that issues of justice for our Indigenous brothers and sisters are uniquely relevant in the bush, as if the land on which the AFC was held isn't also colonised/invaded/stolen. Having said that, ministry in Indigenous communities in the bush does (or should) force us to engage with the issue of genuine partnership. How can we create sustainable pathways into leadership for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Christians so they are not burdened with almost crippling obligation and expectations? How can we move beyond paternalism and into a genuine partnership where ministry with and from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Christians is the norm rather than ministry to them? How can we engage the mixed record of our church in this area in a way that both acknowledges the past and does justice in the present? Surely these are vital challenges for all of us. At BCA we are beginning to learn what God is asking of us in response as we seek to support both the current and the new generation of Indigenous Christian leaders. We would love you to learn with us as we learn from them.

Conclusion

You may have noticed that I've asked many questions and given few answers. For now I want us to sit with the questions and the challenges because it's from here that I believe that we have our best opportunity to strengthen our partnership in the gospel. I would love to see a network develop around each of these questions, or adaptive challenges that I've outlined: a set of networks that are solidly grounded in God's word; that reach across diocesan and cultural boundaries; that are committed to mutual learning and courageous experimentation under God; through which the city and the bush discover they have more in common than they might ever have imagined. Of course, the real challenges facing the church in the West are not organisational and neither are faithful responses. The key issue is profoundly theological — will we drive our foundations deep into the bedrock of God's gracious sovereignty revealed in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus? The goodness, the power and the wisdom of God are to be found where our world least expects to see them — in a man condemned to death on a cross. Now, as then, God turns our assumptions on their head.





BIBLE STUDY

1 John 3:16-24

¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

¹⁹ This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: ²⁰ if our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. ²¹ Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God ²² and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. ²³ And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. ²⁴ The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: we know it by the Spirit he gave us.

New International Version

Last year I had the privilege of speaking at the Melbourne Diocesan Curate's conference on the charges given in the ordinal. We considered how the charge, 'Be a pastor after the pattern of Christ the Great Shepherd, who laid down his life for the sheep', can become a heavy burden in long-term ordained ministry and we turned to 1 John 3:16-24 for wisdom.

The key text is: This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. (1 John 3:16). The context of the apostle John's letter is schism. The church had split, people had left (2:19) but those who had left were still in the local community accusing and misleading those who remained in the church. John's treatment for a difficult pastoral situation is to provide theological guidance based on tested authority (1:1-4) because we need meaning that is reliable. That is how we hope. John provides four interwo-

ven tests of genuine Christianity to encourage those who remain. Three are observable tests and one is a subjective test. They are:

1. The social test or test of love. Love is defined as the love God showed us in Christ - self sacrificial love. (2:9-11; 3:13,16-18; 4:10-12)

2. The theological test of Christology and Incarnation. That Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ the Son of God. Or, to put that another way, the Jesus of history is the Christ of faith. (2:22,23; 3:23; 4:1-6)

3. The moral test. John is realistic; where there is pastoral and theological confusion there will be moral failure. (1:8-10; 2:3-6; 3:7-10)

4. The subjective experience of the Holy Spirit and answered prayer. (3:21,22,24)

What is of interest to pastors under pressure is how John applies these tests to our consciences and motivations. In 3:16-21 John is practical and unsentimental about love. Love means to share possessions, because that is literally to lay down life by giving up livelihood (time and the possessions gained by our time) to serve others. John applies the cross of Christ, the atonement, directly to his people as a model of Christian living (3:18). He then goes on to apply this evidence of practical, atoning love to his people's consciences. The living out of atoning love, by the practical sharing of material possessions and giving life is evidence to our consciences that we belong to Christ.

This is a hard thought for biblical believers as we are nervous of any hint that our works may contribute to our salvation. Our mental habit is to discount the value of the Christ-like works we do but, it turns out, that is to dishonour the work of God. John is clear; our attempt to imitate the atonement of Christ in practical love is not evidence that we can save ourselves. In 2:2, Jesus alone is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, in 4:19 we love only because he first loved us. However, our love is evidence that we have been saved, that God is at work in and with us. So, when our hearts condemn

us (3:21) we can set out hearts at rest in his presence (3:19). This is akin to the kind of spiritual self-talk we see modelled in the Psalms, when the Psalmist gathers up the evidence of God's promises and actions to rebuke his discouraged soul (eg. Psalms 37, 42). In 1 John, part of God's action is the stumbling practical love he enables us to do; we can speak to our conscience even when it wavers and condemns us and tell it no, we belong here, in the presence of the living God.

Because having an argument with your conscience is one of the toughest, long-term debates we ever have — especially if others around us are also accusing us (2:26), John adds to the evidence of sacrificial love the evidence of belief; belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. He weaves together the social test (love as Christ loved) and the theological test (what we believe about Jesus, 3:23) into a practical outcome; that we will see answered prayer in the life of the church (3:22) and experience the presence of Christ through his Holy Spirit (3:24). It is worth noting that for John this fourth subjective test accompanies the objective ones or it is not true. (2:20-27).

I am deeply encouraged that though John was not writing to perfect people (2:1) in a perfect church, nevertheless their hard won growth in Christ seen in the tests of sacrificial love, theological understanding, moral effort and the experience of God's Spirit can be held up to their consciences as evidence of God amongst them. Ladies and gentlemen, here is how to measure ministry success. Here is help for sustaining the long-term work of laying down our lives for the sheep. Rebuke your conscience.



Michael Flynn is the vicar of St Columb's Hawthorn, VIC.

Anglican Future Conference Report



The Anglican Future Conference was held in Melbourne, on 25-27 March, 2015. It was hosted by EFAC (AUST) and FCA (AUS), organised by The Peter Corney Training Centre and 465 people attended. These were mostly clergy, representing every state and territory (excluding the ACT) as well as a group from New Zealand. Over 100 women attended the conference. The three day conference received high scores in its evaluation feedback from participants, with 90% of attendee's rating the conference overall as either Excellent or Very Good. This is an outstanding result. Selected video and audio from the conference will be available on the EFAC website in the near future.



EFAC@NYMC

Join a group of evangelical Anglican youth ministers from Brisbane at the National Youth Ministry Convention on the Gold Coast in October.

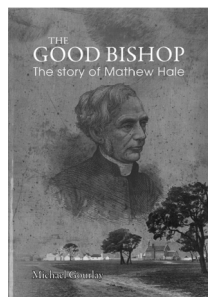
Contact Graham Stanton (email below) from the Matthew Hale Public Library for details and group booking code.

gs.abroad@gmail.com

www.nymc.org.au



BOOK REVIEWS



The Good Bishop

The Story of Mathew Hale

By Michael Gourlay

Mathew Hale Public Library, 2015

On September 2, 1847 Mathew Bladgen Hale sailed from England for Adelaide on the barque *Derwent*. He came to Adelaide with Bishop Augustus Short as archdeacon in the freshly minted diocese. Hale went on to become the first Bishop of Perth, and the second Bishop of Brisbane, and over the near forty year period of his public ministry in Australia this vigorous evangelical threw himself into serving Aboriginal people, establishing churches, advocating better treatment of convicts, pioneering education, recruiting and encouraging clergy and stirring up Christians to give to support new ministry in regional areas. Dr Michael Gourlay, a retired engineering academic from Brisbane, has expanded an address he gave at the Mathew Hale Public Library to mark the 200th anniversary of Hale's birth into a brief, engaging biography of a very significant colonial ministry. Gourlay has interspersed many relevant illustrations throughout the text, and has frequently woven the words of Hale and his contemporaries into his account of events. I have many times walked past

the statue of Hale with outstretched hand on St George's Terrace in Perth, so it was wonderful to fill in my understanding of the man and his times.

Hale might have been thought a spent force in 1845, when, just short of his 34th birthday, he resigned from the busy parish of Stroud, Gloucestershire, having suffered an emotional breakdown following the death of his first wife, Sophia. He retreated to the quiet of his family's rural parish of Alderley. But Hale was far from spent, and, having sailed to Adelaide to minister in the newly established diocese that stretched west to include Western Australia, he became first rector of St Matthew's Kensington, and as archdeacon travelled to Albany, the Vasse (Busselton), Bunbury and Perth. In 1848 at *Fairlawn* in the Vasse, Hale met and, it seems, fell promptly in love with Sabina Molloy, eldest daughter of John and Georgiana Molloy. (The late Georgiana had been, by one contemporary assessment, 'the best informed, the most accomplished, the most elegant, the most lady-like woman who ever came to the colony' – p20). Sabina quickly became

Hale's second wife, and their marriage lasted all his life. Sabina died in 1905 in Tasmania, having lived with Hale in England during his retirement until his death, then having returned to Australia to her son Harold. I really enjoyed all this human detail in Gourlay's telling, it gave individuality to people who have given their names to Western Australian Anglican schools.

Hale was so concerned with the vulnerable position of Aboriginal people in the harsh new realities of colonisation, and so moved to seek to bring them the gospel, along with Western education and training, that he gave himself to this work for six full years from 1850. Inspired by a Christian village for Aboriginals being established by Wesleyans at Wanneroo, north of Perth, Hale enlisted South Australian government support and also gave his own resources to establish The Poonindie Institute, which



The reviewer and the statue of Mathew Hale on St Georges Terrace, Perth.

became a kind of English village populated by Aboriginal people. Hale hit his targets of evangelising and Europeanising the Aboriginals at Poonindie in many ways. One of the motives that shaped his work seemed to be to demonstrate to his fellow colonists that Aboriginal people were in no way sub-human, nor incapable of receiving and mastering whatever the colonists might have received or mastered. Hale's concern for Aborigines was lifelong – in 1870 he proposed to resign as Bishop of Perth to become the chaplain of an orphanage for Aboriginals which was threatened with closure after its supervisor fell ill. A deputation of over sixty gathered to persuade him to continue as bishop. Later he became the chairman of the Queensland Commission for the Protection of Aborigines.

There is, of course, much more to the book than I have indicated here, and even more to Hale himself. Gourlay focusses proportionally more upon Hale's later Brisbane years (he was 64 when he left Perth), than upon the bulk of his Australian ministry which took place in South Australia and Western Australia, but this hardly mars the work. Gourlay says of this biography that he has 'attempted to bring the life and work of a truly good and faithful servant of Jesus Christ and loyal member of the 19th century Anglican church in Australia to the knowledge of 21st century Christian disciples.' (p ix), and this is an excellent aim well carried out. The book is pretty well designed and well produced, and has plenty of supplementary end matter. I read it to my profit.

Ben Underwood, Shenton Park, WA

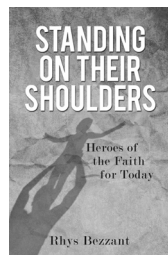
Standing on Their Shoulders

Heroes of the Faith for Today

Rhys Bezzant

Acorn Press, 2015

We live in an age where many people in the church will know more about the Marvel or DC comic superheroes than the historical heroes of the Christian faith. This small book from Rhys Bezzant seeks to redress at least some of this paucity of knowledge. *Standing on Their Shoulders* consists of twelve brief vignettes of Christians who have greatly impacted our modern faith. These vignettes begin with the church fathers—Athanasius and Augustine—through the Reformation era of Luther, Calvin and Cranmer. Continuing with the post-Puritans: Jonathan Edwards, John Newton, William Wilberforce, and Charles Spurgeon, before finishing in the 20th century considering the impact of Pandita Ramabai, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Billy Graham. Each of the twelve vignettes provides a short and succinct overview of the hero's life and context, along with the biblical, ecclesial and social impetus that underpinned their ministry. Helpfully, each focuses on a relatively narrow aspect of the individual's ministry while remaining historically broad. This allows the reader an insight into each person and their context without being overwhelmed with new information. Concluding each chapter is a series of reflective questions that help the reader to draw connections from history to their life. These questions also enable the book to be used in a teaching setting. (Bezzant originally presented these vignettes to his students).

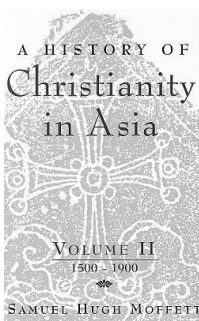
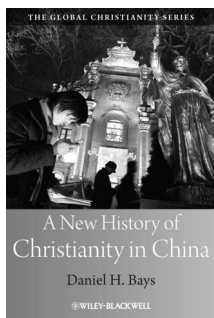
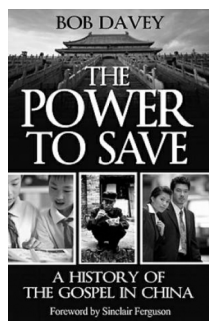


While some attempts at this form of historical reflection end up in hagiographic territory, Bezzant here helpfully gives a rounded picture of each figure. The vignettes do not shy away from seeing the failings and troubles of each character, and even for some highlights how God still used them. However, two gentle critiques may be made. Firstly, the book focuses primarily on Reformation and post-Reformation figures, with Luther being presented in chapter 3. The thousand years of history between Augustine and Luther provides a host of other characters whose various profiles would also serve to edify the church, such as Thomas Aquinas, and John Knox to name but two. This gap causes the book to feel slightly lopsided as a result. Secondly, the book focuses relatively heavily upon Anglo-Saxon males, with Pandita Ramabai being the only female and majority world figure to be profiled in the later sections of the book. However both of these points are likely a product of the original setting for these chapters: as conference training talks and studies. Hopefully the rumoured second volume of the work will expand and address these gaps.

Throughout this book Bezzant's complementary passions for teaching church history and edifying the saints shine through. The book is written in a pleasant and emotive style that assists in the absorption and understanding of the material. Throughout it seeks to challenge, encourage and edify modern Christians as we realise we are standing on the shoulders of giants to see further. This book is highly recommended for individuals, small groups and churches—indeed the whole body of saints.

*Chris Porter, Melbourne, Vic
(originally posted on Euangelion.)*

The Gospel in China: Three Titles



The Power to Save: A History of the Gospel in China.
Bob Davey. EP Books, 2011.

A New History of Christianity in China
Daniel H. Bays. Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

A History of Christianity in Asia, Volume II 1500-1900.
Samuel Hugh Moffett. Orbis Books, 2005.

China continues to be in the news for many reasons. Not least because of the growth of the Christian church there. A growth symbolised perhaps by Amity Press which, by the time of the visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury in June 2015, had printed 135,602,476 copies of the Bible.

The existence of Amity Press is a remarkable political, religious and spiritual reality. The story of *The Heavenly Man* is perhaps better known to modern western Christians. Some will also know of the work of Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission. And of other famous names such as Watchman Nee and Gladys Aylward. Beyond that not much is known.

Unfortunately. The story of the gospel in China goes back to Nestorian times. Around 1625, in the west of Xi'an a three metre high marble stele was unearthed. In Chinese characters and Syriac a Christian monk named Jingjing, writing in 781, tells of the history of Nestorian Christianity in Chi-

na which started back in 635. It seems the gospel came via the Old Silk Road.

That church didn't prosper too long. Later Jesuit missions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries made significant inroads against strong opposition, led in the early days by the amazing Matteo Ricci who nurtured the Three Pillars of the Chinese church of the time, Paul Hsu, Michael Yang and Leon Li. The story of the Jesuit mission is worth studying. It practised many of the principles that Hudson Taylor was later to adopt. It provided a kind of mission training that modern ordination programs could learn from.

The story is told well in Daniel Bays book which is a brief academic study. Moffett's larger book contains very valuable chapters on China and is in some ways more thorough. All three books cover the period from the 19th century onwards. It should be noted that there is much more to the story than the amazing CIM. Bays and Davey give pretty up to date and detailed accounts of the 20th century, bringing the story back to the Old Silk

Road and the Back to Jerusalem mission.

Davey's book is written for the broader audience. Bays is more detailed with lots of end notes but very readable. Moffett's is probably more detailed and of course ranges over the whole of Asia. The good thing about all three books is that they all show a heart for the gospel. The more academic books are not dry and detached but as much taken with the wonders of the gospel as Davey's is. Moffett concludes his book with a story of an unnamed Baptist deacon in Burma. Christian Karens in the hills were starving after rats had eaten their crops. They were reduced to eating the rats. The deacon brought ten rupees (5 dollars) to the missionaries from his church for the mission among the Ka-Khyen, a tribe further north. The missionaries said, no, you must use this for your needs. You are starving. The deacon shook his head. "Yes, but we can live on rats. The Ka-Khyen cannot live without the gospel."

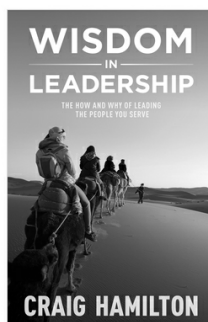
Dale Appleby, Bayswater, WA

Wisdom in Leadership

The How and Why of Leading the People You Serve

Craig Hamilton

Matthias Media, 2015.



Ever since I started in parish ministry I have wrestled with the question of how best to do the work. Where is the best investment of time? What of all the activities I could undertake will yield the most gospel benefit? How is the best way to go about those activities? Being in local church ministry leadership often leaves you with freedom to shape your priorities, your week, your day, but using that freedom well requires wisdom and discipline. Being in church ministry leadership requires learning quite an array of skills and developing quite a set of capacities. In this it is not unique. For example, the skill and discipline of managing yourself – observing yourself; setting priorities, planning and organising yourself; doing and then reviewing what you planned to do – is something many workers have to master. There are also the skills and disciplines of working with others, whether as a subordinate, a colleague, a supervisor or a leader. Lately I have found it useful to read some books to help me get better at these things. Some Christian authors are processing the thinking from secular writers

and trying to present the best of it for Christians generally and ministry leaders in particular. I read *What's Best Next*, by Matt Perman and scoffed a little at chapter sub-headings like “Why knowing how to get things done is essential for Christian discipleship”, but by the end of the book I made significant, lasting changes to my work habits that decreased my daily anxiety about getting my stuff done. I went on to pick up some of the secular literature Perman mentioned, and listened to a few useful podcasts.

So when Craig Hamilton's book *Wisdom in Leadership* came to my attention with a friend's recommendation, I was keen to sample it, and I must say I have enjoyed immensely Hamilton's short, punchy chapters on good topics. This substantial book (495 pages!) has 78 short chapters divided into four sections: Leading Foundations, Leading Yourself, Leading Other People and Leading the Ministry. Further to that there are subsections in sections three and four that aim to address those who lead teams of leaders. Chapter titles are maxims like ‘Character is King’ or ‘Stop Listening to Yourself’ or ‘Waiting is doing something’ that are then expounded over 2-3 pages. Often there are cross references to related chapters at the chapter's end. The book is well designed and produced, and you could read it from front to back (there is a progression and development in its structure), or you could dip in and out according to need or interest. It is good to read a thoughtful Australian voice on topics that often come to us in an American idiom.

Hamilton (a self-described *Bible and-theology* guy) takes the approach that there is a lot of wisdom to be learned about working with people in groups that will prevent frustrating

and foreseeable problems arising in the work of Christian ministry. This wisdom can be learned by careful observation of the ordered world God has made (even in its fallen partial disorder). Hamilton's basic approach to developing the material in the book reflects that conviction: he read leadership books and exercised his curiosity in careful observation when he met with people in groups. You can see both his sources and his own reflections showing through at various points.

Hamilton writes for those who want to get better at leading people, and are willing to work at it, and suggests that the book could be used in meetings with staff teams, or church councils, or any church leadership groups. I agree with this. The book is not a theological vision of church, ministry or leadership, nor a programme for building or reforming church ministry, but it is full of stimulating, instructive, varied and practical material that I can imagine would kick off worthwhile discussions for individuals and teams. It is a book about people, and about living with them, loving them and loving them in particular by leading them. You might think differently at points, and this book is not the key to ministry, but Hamilton is simply trying to help ministers avoid avoidable frustrations to make leadership, not easy, but easier. As these arts and skills are not taught in theological college (and can't be, really – they need to be mastered on the job), and as they take time to develop *in medias res*, books like these are a real help to those who do want to get better at managing themselves and leading others. Hamilton has done us a service in bringing this grist to the mill.

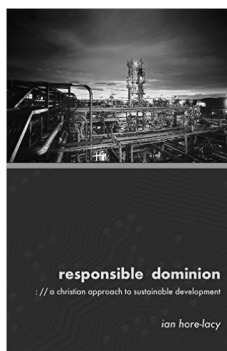
Ben Underwood, Shenton Park, WA

Responsible Dominion

a Christian approach to Sustainable Development

Ian Hore-Lacy

Second Edition, Kindle, 2016



A new edition of Ian Hore-Lacy's 2006 *Responsible Dominion: a Christian approach to Sustainable Development* has just been published in Kindle:

www.amazon.com/dp/B00YGJTUNE. It has a completely rewritten and expanded chapter 1 setting out a Christian perspective on resources and environment. "The thrust of this chapter is to establish the theological basis of a balance between respect for biodiversity and 'the environment' on the one hand and respect for God's purposes vis a vis people on the other, while steering clear of the kind of anthropocentrism just defined and critiquing ecocentrism."

The introduction is recast to include mention of the *Ecomodernist Manifesto*. Hore-Lacy brings the debate up to date with respect to both theological and scientific developments. "...a significant counter to the widely-accepted views of contemporary environmentalism was published over the names of 18 individuals known for their environmental stance and writings. 'We call ourselves ecopragmatists and ecomodernists.'"

"But we do have an evolving consensus regarding God's priorities in the world, expressed for instance in the Lausanne Statement and subsequent Cape Town Commitment from the same source, and stressing the importance of considering the physical needs of people alongside their spiritual needs."

Updated theological discussion includes creation and fall, and the redemption of creation, and interaction with recent discussions by McGrath and Wright for example.

One of the helpful aspects of the book is that it takes issue with the impact of ideology on science. Many assertions are made in the name of science, which are not scientific but rather ideological or religious (in this case green religion).

Overall for those interested in the environment and sustainable development or who want another perspective on the emerging debate about nuclear energy, this is a good book, written from a biblical perspective and challenging many assumptions of the green movement.

Dale Appleby, Bayswater, WA

Coalition building

An Australian expression of The Gospel Coalition is up and running, seeking to unite and energise evangelical and reformed Christians across Australia.



On 23 July in the Brisbane Town Hall the launch of The Gospel Coalition Australia (TGC AU) was held. You may know of The Gospel Coalition USA, which consists of a council of 54 men of reformed and evangelical convictions, most of them pastors or theological educators. The purpose of the US coalition is to advocate gospel-centred principle and practices to younger Christian leaders, to link like-minded people across denominational, class and ethnic lines, to renew the contemporary church in the ancient gospel. They do this most visibly (in Australia) by running an impressive website, posting articles and essays themed in channels including Current Events, Ministry, Arts and Culture, Bible & Theology and Faith & Work. The website also hosts blogs, contains resources of various kinds and aggregates relevant external material. This website has grown popular in many reformed and evangelical circles in Australia (apparently Sydney is the city with the 6th highest number of visitors to the website in the world, including all US cities), and so TGC has built a certain amount of loyalty and brand recognition in Australia. TGC USA also got on the ground in the US by running regional chapters which hold regional conferences.

Some leaders in Australia were attracted to the TGC project of rallying reformed and evangelical Christian leaders together from across denominational and other lines, and linking them regionally. *What about a chapter of TGC where I am?* they asked. *After all we are fellow travellers with the US leadership, and there'd be an advantage in linking to the established TGC brand.* And so the US leadership linked two Australians with the same desire, and in time an Australian council of 13 men — all pastors of churches — was formed to establish The Gospel Coalition Australia. An Australian website, sister to the US one, went up, featuring Australian content and contributors, and a National Con-

sultation with a wider circle of Australian Christian leaders from across denominations and states was organised in Brisbane, to engage a wider circle as supporters and to discover any sticking points or issues that might cause other reformed and evangelical Christian leaders to stand aloof from the enterprise.

At that National Consultation in Brisbane about one hundred Christian

ministers from around Australia looked over details of the foundation documents of TGC, spent time in regional groups discussing how TGC AU might contribute to the strengthening of gospel ministry in the Australian states, and also spent time in groups devoted to particular interests — church planting, or public theology, or women's ministry, for example.

The council worked hard to introduce

itself, its reasoning and hopes for TGC Australia, and the results of this consultation will no doubt stand it in good stead for discussions about their priorities and next steps. The Consultation was itself a great gift, bringing like-minded Christian leaders from around Australia together for a few days, to meet, discuss and encourage one another.

Ben Underwood, Shenton Park, WA

EFAC Australia membership (incl. Essentials)

\$40 per year (\$25 students, missionaries, retired persons).
Essentials subscription only \$25 p.a.

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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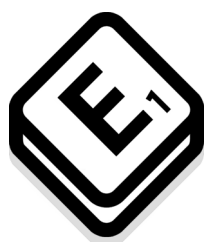
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