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

Editorial

In this first edition of *Essentials* for which I have editorial responsibility I am glad for the quality and range of focus on the content that follows. If there is a thread that holds together each element of *Essentials* Spring 2019 it is the theme of ministry.

Simon Manchester, now approaching the conclusion of thirty years as Senior Minister at St Thomas' North Sydney, reflects firstly on the importance of a pastoral approach fuelled and characterised by grace rather than frustration. Simon then steers us towards three books that focus on the weighty responsibility and matching joy of gospel ministry.

Adrian Lane reminds us of the wonderful work of BCA in this its

centenary year, and in that light also gladly commends to us a new and expanded edition of Leon Morris' autobiographical account of his time serving as a BCA minister during World War II.

On a sadder, but nonetheless vital, note Christopher Ash considers how we ought to respond in a wise and godly way when a Christian ministry is undermined by revelations of abuse.

In his review of the new book of essays from the Doctrine Commission of General Synod *Marriage, Same Sex Marriage and the Anglican Church of Australia*, Bishop Rick Lewers helpfully draws out the results of two contrasting approaches to ministry that flow from two contrasting attitudes to the nature and authority of Scripture. In the process

we are drawn straight to the heart of this issue.

As I read through these contributions and others in this edition of *Essentials* I am reminded of the core truth that although ministry is not getting any easier or less complex, the gospel of repentance and faith for the forgiveness of sins is no less powerful or glorious. Even when we fail, or when those around us fail, God is good and Jesus is keeping his promise that "*repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations*" (Luke 24:47, NIV).

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What is EFAC?

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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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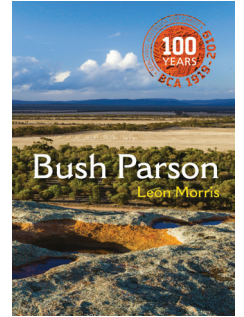
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Bush Church Aid launches a new edition of Leon Morris' *Bush Parson*

Adrian Lane



As part of its centenary celebrations, Bush Church Aid has republished a new expanded edition of Leon Morris' Bush Parson. Adrian Lane is the Victorian Regional Officer of Bush Church Aid.

Bush Parson is Morris' autobiographical account of his service as the Bush Church Aid-supported minister of the massive and challenging Minnipa parish on South Australia's Eyre Peninsula during the Second World War.

Leon and his wife Mildred, a nurse, travelled around the parish in a large green van named the St Patrick's Van by its Irish donors. The van served as ambulance, clinic, bedroom, kitchen and study for Leon and Mildred. Mildred often drove over sandy, dusty and boggy tracks while Leon studied the Scriptures in their original languages!

Leon writes, "This...is my tribute to the big-hearted people I met in the outback. I want to acknowledge my debt to so many battlers in their very difficult situations. And with them I want to link those in our cities who are interested enough in what is done in this vast country to support with their prayers and their gifts those who go out to minister to their outback cousins. I am indebted to them both."

Royalties from the book's sales have been donated to Bush Church Aid by the Leon and Mildred Morris Foundation. Its Chair, the Revd Neil Bach, also Leon's biographer, comments, "Leon wrote over 50 internationally-acclaimed theological works, yet only one was autobiographical - the one describing his service with BCA. Who ever thought that this ministry would lay the foundations for Australia's greatest theological scholar and writer?"

The book was originally published in 1995 by Acorn Press. However, when the BCA Victorian Regional Officer, the Revd Adrian Lane, discovered it was unobtainable, new or used, BCA approached Acorn requesting a new edition. Acorn, now an imprint of the Bible Society, generously agreed to cover all pre-publication costs. The new centenary edition includes rare archival colour photos from glass negatives from the BCA Archives and the Morris Archives, held in the Ridley College Library. A number of appendices from these archives are also included, including Leon's original Application for Service with BCA. Adrian Lane comments, "The new edition is a significant value-add to the original, with its photos and appendices, all of

which will make further study of Leon and Mildred's ministry and remote area ministry more generally much easier."

The new edition was launched at the BCA Victoria Centenary Dinner on the 4 May 2019 at Glen Waverley Anglican Church



The Revd Adrian Lane, Victorian Regional Officer, Bush Church Aid; Dr Kris Argall, Commissioning Editor, Acorn Books; and the Revd Neil Bach, Chair, Leon and Mildred Morris Foundation, launching the BCA Centenary Edition of Bush Parson at the BCA Victoria Centenary Dinner at Glen Waverley Anglican Church on 4 May 2019

by Dr Kris Argall, Commissioning Editor of Acorn Press, the Revd Neil Bach and the Revd Adrian Lane, who prayed for its fruitfulness.

The book is an interesting, engaging, easy read. Copies are available from from BCA state and National offices, <https://www.bushchurchaid.com.au/content/shop/gjjyqg> and from other book sellers.

Book of the Year shortlist

A strong collection of books were shortlisted for the Australian Christian Book of the Year Award 2019. Reviews will be published in following editions of Essentials. At the SparkLit Awards Night on August 15 The Fountain of Public Prosperity: Evangelical Christians in Australian History was declared the worthy winner. Congratulations to Stuart Piggin and Robert Linder.

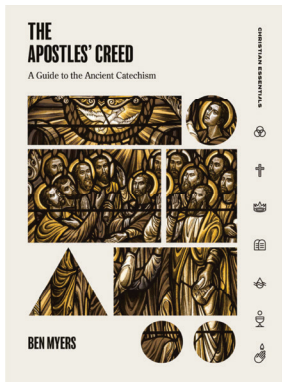
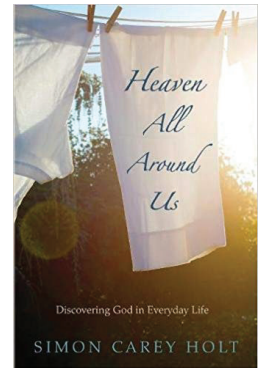


THE APOSTLES' CREED: A Guide to the Ancient Catechism.
By Ben Myers (Lexham Press).

COMING HOME: Discipleship, Ecology and Everyday Economics.
By Jonathan Cornford (Morning Star)

FOR THE JOY: 21 Australian Missionary Mother Stories on Cross-Cultural Parenting and Life.
Edited by Miriam Chan & Sophia Russell (Grace Abounding Books).

THE FOUNTAIN OF PUBLIC PROSPERITY: Evangelical Christians in Australian History 1740–1914.
By Stuart Piggin & Robert Linder (Monash University Publishing).

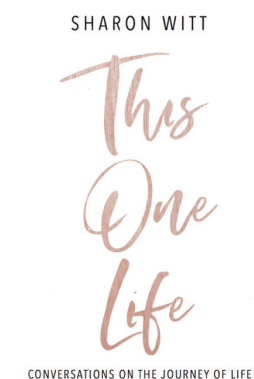


GOD IS GOOD FOR YOU: A Defence of Christianity in Troubled Times.
By Greg Sheridan (Allen & Unwin)

HEAVEN ALL AROUND US: Discovering God in Everyday Life.
By Simon Carey Holt (Cascade Books).

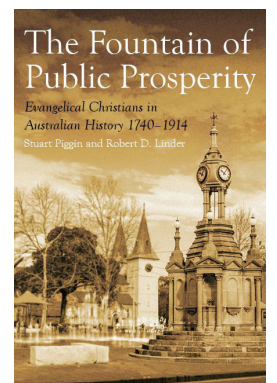
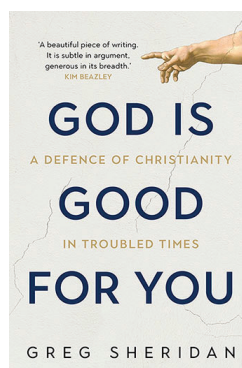
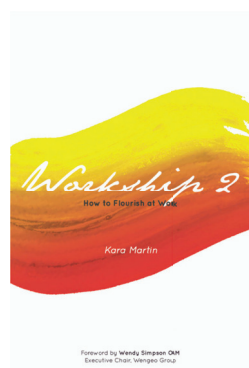
TEA & THREAD: Portraits of Middle Eastern Women Far from Home.
By Sally Bathgate & Katrina Flett Gulbrandsen (Grace Abounding Books).

THIS ONE LIFE: Conversations on the Journey of Life.
By Sharon Witt (Collective Wisdom Publications)



UNEXPECTED: Leave Fear Behind, Move Forward in Faith, Embrace the Adventure.
By Christine Caine (Zondervan).

WORKSHIP 2: How to Flourish at Work.
By Kara Martin (Graceworks).



The default position of the frustrated minister

Simon Manchester



After almost 30 years as Senior Minister of St Thomas' North Sydney, Simon Manchester reflects back on the vital importance of a ministry characterised by grace rather than frustration at stubborn sheep.

I have often said publicly that I was rescued by a friend from a joyless ministry. He had the courage to tell me that though grace drove my evangelism it did not drive my ministry. I thought his comment was nonsense at first, but he was right.

My message, to put it crassly, was “to the lost there is grace.... to the found ‘lift your game’.” The only way you can do that kind of ministry is in short bursts-five years will drive people to submission or rebellion, then you move on to the next place.

Having said that, I notice preaching grace often does not get all the cooperation from a congregation that a pastor would like. You can preach the loveliness of Christ and the privilege of believing, and still find that people are frustratingly inconsistent. What is going on? We lift the burdens off their backs and give them all the freedom of the gospel and it just does not turn our people into cooperative members of our pastoral cause.

It is here that we so easily go back to the law to get things done. After all what is left to do if the gospel is not doing it? Have we not all noticed that the “searching application” (also known as cutting to the bone of congregational non-cooperation) has a strange power that people often feel? Are there not a few parishioners who love and encourage a good whack every now and again? Can we lurch like that from gospel to law?

Whatever may be said for a sermon with proper reproof or correction (and there is a time for this) the big question is, what is driving the ministry? If you think this is irrelevant simply ask yourself what your people consider to be the driving message of your ministry. Once a term I meet with the Sunday School teachers (God bless them) to talk through what gospel ministry to children – not moralising – looks like. When I meet with the youth leaders (could there be a finer group?) it is to keep them in the love of Christ. We want the young people of the church to go home from their group saying, “How great is Jesus!”

So it is with our people. The pastor-teacher needs to take great care that the congregation hears the sufficiency of Christ for salvation and service all the time. As Paul infuses his letters with sentences like “the one who calls you is faithful and he will do it” so we must allow this grace to infuse our ministry also. Too often I hear sermons where the preacher loses the roots of the gospel and calls for the fruits. We not only need to show people what righteous living looks like but where it comes from.

The “strange power” of reproof that I mentioned above is a temporary and surface power. The real power is gospel deep and

gospel strong. You may be called to abandon the happy side of the faith for the sad side of correction but it should never be cut off from Jesus Christ. People who hear us should leave saying, “what I am called to do he will enable me to do”.

Nothing else will give your people joy in their fellowship with each other. If you lay a big burden on your burdened people with no good news of his power at work then they will begin to wonder if the bar of performance is too high and there is little to share. Nothing else will give your people joy in their witness through the week. Do you want to see your people overflow with the desire to see people saved? Do not send them out with a miserable message. Send them out with a proper sense of privilege which causes them to say to themselves “there is hope for me” and to think for their friends “you need to get this”. I’m reminded of the young man who refused to become a Christian because he refused to be an annoying witness. Finally, a shrewd old saint told him that he should forget about witnessing and just become a Christian. The young man believes in Christ and runs outside yelling “I’m a Christian and I don’t have to tell anybody!”

I am not suggesting a “positive” gospel. I am not suggesting a “half” gospel. I am simply urging a present gospel not an absent gospel. You may say this is obvious, but I have noticed that in a day of harder ministry, people are being given either nothing to rejoice in (because it’s so predictably bland) or something to struggle in (because it is so frustrating for the preacher).

Are you teaching on David and Goliath? Let your people leave with joy in a greater David. Are you teaching on Jonah? Let your people leave with gratitude for a compassionate Saviour. Are you teaching the Sermon on the Mount? Let your people leave with gratitude for a new life through the One who died. Are you teaching the Epistles? Let your people leave with the same love that the author wrote with.

And if you think that such a gospel-driven ministry is all too soft and all too ineffective ask yourself whether in those times where the condition of your soul felt dead and hopeless you were grateful for another guilty feeling – or the realisation that the love of Jesus was deeper, wider, longer and higher than you’d felt possible. Then pass on to others what really works.

“To him who is able to do more than we ask or imagine” – this is the fuel for the work.

How does a church come to terms with revelations of abuse by a leader?

Christopher Ash



This article was prompted by some behaviour disclosures in the UK. Details (and a longer article by the author) can be found at walkingwith.uk. Christopher Ash is Writer-in-Residence at Tyndale House, Cambridge.

I recently wrote a blog post asking in general terms, how we should respond when a church leader falls. This paper follows on from that and asks the more specific question: how does a church come to terms with revelations of abuse by a leader? My general reflections in the previous blog post still apply. But I want to consider the more particular, and distressing, situation where there has been abuse.

In 1 Timothy 5:19, the apostle Paul writes, “Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.” Referring back to an Old Testament law, the expression “two or three witnesses” is a Bible idiom for careful and independent attestation of the truth of the accusations. This acknowledges that false accusations are sometimes levelled at church leaders. This paper is written for a situation where the facts have been established.

This paper is limited. It does not seek to address three vital questions. First, how ought we to comfort, love, and help victims of abuse? This is of paramount importance, but I am not addressing it here. Second, what lessons need to be learned by a particular church or denomination or Christian agency? That is to say, are there previously unrecognized elements in the culture of the church (or mission agency or para-church ministry) that may have allowed abuse to take place? Third, following from this, what can be done to guard – as best we possibly can – against any repetition of this abuse? While recognising that no church can ever be completely safeguarded, we will want to put in place every possible good safeguarding practice. This too I have not attempted to cover in this paper.

My reflection is in three parts. First, I want to focus on the dangers to our own hearts in even engaging in this response. Then I shall try to help us come to terms with the disorientation and even disillusion that may result from disclosures of abuse. Finally I seek to point forwards in terms of our corporate lament and prayer life.

A. We need to guard our own hearts...

Revelations of abuse arouse in us first disbelief and then dismay, shock, and horror. We rightly distance ourselves from abusive behaviours and see how terribly wrong they are. And yet the moment we do this we are in great danger. I want to suggest

three dangers against which we must guard ourselves.

1. ...against self-righteousness

There can be no place for self-righteousness (Luke 18:9-14). The danger with expressing our horror and revulsion at abusive behaviours is that we slip into a pharisaic smug complacency, thanking God that we are not guilty of these sins. We must not do this. We have not, please God, been guilty of, or complicit in, the abuse that may have been uncovered. But there are many sins of which we have been guilty. We have been proud, we have been self-centred, we have cherished idols, we have loved the praise of people, we have indulged in lust, we have given space to greed in our hearts, we have been lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, and in many other ways we have sinned. We need deeply to repent. This scandal ought to move us to a fresh and honest repentance of our own sins. We stand before God as sinners forgiven in Christ; we have nothing of which to be proud, and we never shall.

2. ...against an unhealthy interest

In the context of a Christian being “caught in...transgression,” Paul exhorts his readers: “Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted” (Galatians 6:1). We may not be tempted by the ugly features of any particular abuse. But it is easy to gossip and, especially when (as often) abuse may have sexual content or sexual overtones, there is a terrible danger of indulging a prurient interest and wanting to know more and more. But sinful behaviour of any kind sticks to us like dirt; knowing about ugly actions is a little like pornography; it lurks in our memories and drags us down in our thoughts and emotions. Rather we need afresh to hear the exhortation, “whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Philippians 4:8).

3. ...against a twisted gladness

When Judah came under the judgement of God at the time of the Babylonian exile, the prophets have a special word of condemnation for the Edomites, who cheered on the Babylonians and rejoiced at the disaster that befell Judah. “But do not gloat over the day of your brother in the day of his misfortune; do not rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their ruin,” warns

Obadiah (Obadiah 12). *Schadenfreude* is the German word that expresses this twisted delight when something bad happens to someone else. This too is a danger for us, and perhaps especially when a Christian leader falls. While the event of a leader's fall is sobering, the responses to that fall can be darkly revealing about those who respond with something approaching gloating. Hidden agendas, long-nursed resentments, can surface at such a time. We need to guard our hearts against this.

B. We have to face our deep disorientation and even disillusion and trust afresh in Christ alone.

The shock of all revelations of abuse is peculiarly acute when the one whom they concern has been a blessing to many; this is so often the case when a church leader is guilty. How can something so good be intimately associated with something so evil, and all bound up in the same person? It is deeply disorienting to find that a man (for it is usually a man) we thought we knew, perhaps the man some looked up to as a father-figure¹, is not the man we thought he was. It feels like the foundations are being taken away from beneath us. There is a painful sense of loss, akin to a bereavement. How are we to make any sense of this apparently senseless coming together of good and evil in one person?

One immediate response is perhaps to remind ourselves of the depth and extent of our sinful depravity. The heroes of faith in the Bible are flawed people; even the great and pious King David committed adultery and was complicit in murder (2 Samuel 11). Solomon had great wisdom and failed terribly. We too are deeply sinful even as regenerate people (Romans 7). This is true. Any one of us is capable of committing all manner of terrible sins. And, if we think we are not in such danger, we need to take heed lest we fall (1 Corinthians 10:12).

But while this is true, it does not entirely explain the particular tragedy of abuse by a church leader. What I think we need to grapple with is how good things and evil things can be very close. We are talking about the deceitfulness of sin.

Let us begin with a wholesome model of pastoral care. A pastor who is a more mature believer in Christ takes a younger believer under his (usually 'his') care. He prays for them. He instructs and encourages them. He keeps in touch with them. He meets with them and, in the context of friendship, exhorts them to keep on following Jesus faithfully. Many a young person has been grateful to God for such pastoral care; I am myself, from those leaders who mentored and encouraged me early in my Christian life.

But then extrapolate from this. Perhaps the loving care is so intense that the friendship becomes a little exclusive. The older believer begins to think of this younger believer as 'his' – not only his pastoral responsibility, but his prerogative, so that no one else is really allowed to encourage this younger person in their faith. It is perhaps not difficult to see how a wholesome pastoral care might metamorphose into something much darker, and the younger man ends up being used for the purposes of the older pastor rather than the older pastor sacrificially serving the younger disciple. Who knows what are the thoughts and intentions of the heart in this process? Probably the leader is not fully aware himself, such is the deceitfulness of the human heart.

What might be the warning signs of this dark exchange? Exclusivity might be one. Favouritism might be another. When there is a perception that some are 'the favoured ones' and others are not, danger lurks.

C.S. Lewis² makes the point that it is precisely in the human experiences that most closely approach the character of God that we are most at risk of confusing them with God. He uses the analogy of being almost home at the end of a ramble, but finding ourselves at the top of a cliff overlooking our home. On the map we are close to home, but in reality we have a lot of walking still to do. Lewis applies this to erotic love and patriotic love for one's country, both of which are like God's love and yet very far from it. Perhaps in a slightly similar way, the kind of close and affectionate pastoral care that approximates the care of Jesus our Good Shepherd may begin to arrogate to itself the prerogatives of authority and influence that belong properly to Jesus alone. And so, by a diabolical alchemy, something wholesome and nourishing metamorphoses into something abusive.

But even if we can slowly begin to grasp something of how the abuse might have happened – and such a grasp will be at best tentative, for we cannot see the heart of another – even then we need to face the frightening fear that the blessings we thought we had experienced through this leader might not be true blessings at all. Might they not be in some way invalidated by these revelations, tainted beyond recovery by the sin with which we now know they were associated? These are truly frightening questions, for the blessings we are considering concern salvation and eternal destiny.

Paul encourages Timothy to "continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it," presumably meaning Timothy's godly mother and grandmother, and indeed the apostle himself (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14). As Timothy remembers the godliness and integrity of those from whom he learned faith in Christ, he is encouraged to continue on the path of faith. But what if we discover that one from whom we learned the things of Christ did not have the integrity and godliness that we thought he had? Is that not deeply disturbing? It is.

And yet we must come back to the fundamental truth that the blessings we have – all the blessings we have – come to us through and in Christ, and Christ alone, in whom there is no sin, in whose life we see pure goodness, unbroken sacrificial service of others, and the polar opposite of each and every kind of abuse.

Repeatedly the scriptures warn us not to put our trust in people other than God and his Christ. "It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes" warns the King in Psalm 118 (Ps.118:9). "Put not your trust in princes," warns the psalmist in Psalm 146, for blessing comes only to the one "whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God" (Ps.146:3-5).

So, while it is a good thing, and an encouraging and reassuring experience, when those from whom we learned the things of Christ prove to be godly and to have integrity, it is not essential. Writing from prison to the church in Philippi, Paul is sad that "Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry"; but he takes comfort that, whatever their motives – whether bad or good – "Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice" (Phil.1:15-

18). The channels through whom we hear the good news of Jesus will never be perfect; sometimes they will prove deeply flawed, whether through bad motives (as in Paul's day) or even through the ugliness of abuse. But the blessing comes from Jesus Christ, and no flaws in the channel can take away from us the sheer goodness, beauty, and kindness of God given to us in Jesus.

The reformers grappled with a similar question. Article 26 of the 39 Articles of the *Book of Common Prayer* of the Church of England is entitled, "Of the unworthiness of ministers." In it we read this: ALTHOUGH in the visible Church the evil be ever mingled with the good, and sometimes the evil have chief authority in the Ministration of the Word and Sacraments, yet forasmuch as they do not the same in their own name, but in Christ's, and do minister by his commission and authority, we may use their Ministry, both in hearing the Word of God, and in receiving of the Sacraments. Neither is the effect of Christ's ordinance taken away by their wickedness, nor the grace of God's gifts diminished from such as by faith and rightly do receive the Sacraments ministered unto them; which be effectual, because of Christ's institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men.

The article goes on to say, "Nevertheless, it appertaineth to the discipline of the Church, that inquiry be made of evil Ministers, and that they be accused by those that have knowledge of their offences; and finally being found guilty, by just judgement be deposed."

But for our purposes the point is this: the blessings of the gospel (in the preached word and also signified in the gospel sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper) are effective in our lives "because of Christ's institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men".

Suppose someone came to faith in Christ through the ministry of this leader, or someone else looks back to a signal time of growth in grace and faith through his preaching, or another is in Christian ministry or cross-cultural mission because of this leader's encouragement. How are these now to view their conversion, their growth in grace, or their being in Christian ministry?

The answer I think is this: they may be grateful to God for his overwhelming kindness to them, that God appointed a channel through whom they heard the gospel, through whom they grew in grace, through whom they entered ministry. Nothing about any of those blessings is invalidated by the subsequent sad discovery of the flawed behaviour of this leader, for all these blessings rest upon Christ and not one of them rests on the character of this leader or any other leader.

There may need, for some, to be a period of painful readjustment. We may need to hear afresh the admonition not to put our trust in "princes" (including Christian leaders), perhaps to repent if our trust has become mixed, with some of it focussing unhelpfully on a leader, but in the end to take fresh comfort from all that is ours in Christ.

C. We lament together, repent together, and are humbled together under the mighty hand of God.

I want to conclude with a brief reflection that focuses on the church of Christ corporately.

When the Old Testament church, the assembly of the covenant people of God, came under God's judgment in the Babylonian exile, those who were true and even blameless believers were caught up in the judgement with those who were arrogant idolaters. We hear the voices of these true believers in a number of places. In Psalm 79, for example, provoked by the destruction of the temple and the sack of Jerusalem (verse 1), this godly Spirit-inspired psalmist grieves when the surrounding nations taunted them all with the mocking question, "Where is their God?" (verse 10). It is said to him also; it is not said only to those whose idolatry had provoked the exile. In his prayer in Daniel 9:1-19, the godly Daniel laments the "open shame" that has come "to us" (verses 7,8) for we have all "become a byword among all who are around us" (verse 16). The godly Nehemiah laments that, because of the ungodliness of the people, "we are slaves" (Neh.9:36); all of us come under the shadow of this disciplinary judgement of God, whether or not we have individually and personally been guilty of covenant-breaking and idolatry.

When abuse from a church leader is exposed, we must expect that the whole church of Christ will be reviled. We will be taunted as hypocrites. We will be laughed at when we seek to speak of godly virtue and the law of God. We should not be surprised when this happens. Some who are lifelong enemies of the gospel of Christ will use these sad events as a vehicle to make life miserable for the church of Christ. Others – and this is more tragic – who might have seemed to be seeking and to have a genuine interest in Christian faith, will be driven away from a message whose messengers now seem to them to be hypocrites or worse.

All this is desperately painful and we must expect it to be so. As believers did after the exile, we too may learn to lament together for the desperate and sad state of the church of Christ. We grieve for the victims and seek to love and care for them as best we can. We grieve for the honour of Christ.

And yet, even as we lament and repent afresh of our own sins, we still claim and hold on to the promises of God. For Jesus Christ has said he will build his church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it (Matt.16:18). That promise stands on the darkest day. So let us encourage one another to hold more firmly yet to the gospel of Jesus Christ, in whom is our only hope.

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1. Incidentally, the whole concept of a "father figure" is fraught with danger. While it is true that Paul can address Timothy as "my beloved child" (sc. in the faith, 2 Timothy 1:2; cf. 1 Corinthians 4:15), we need to heed the warning of the Lord Jesus to "call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven" (Matthew 23:9). This warning needs, at least metaphorically, to be emblazoned above the office of every pastor.

2. C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (London: Fount Paperbacks, 1977). pages 10-12.

Habits

Ben Underwood



Habit formation is part of how we are wired, but what place do habits play in Christian discipleship? Ben Underwood is Associate Minister at St Matthew's Shenton Park. Thanks to James Clear, Dan Groenewald and David Brooks for some of the ideas in this article.

I suspect you don't decide your life afresh every morning

How often do you wake up with the whole day stretching before you, without plans or obligations, ready for you to decide what you will do with the day as you lie there gazing at the ceiling? I suspect for many of us it is pretty much never. There's always something to be done—right now, then after that, and after that all the way to dinner time and beyond. We live busy, planned, scheduled lives, and if you want to have any chance of shaping what you do this week, this month, this year according to what you really want, then you need to learn to get better at taking control of the routines of your life.

What do you want to be?

Suppose you want to be a mature Christian. You want to be someone with a good knowledge of the Christian faith, a strong involvement with a Christian community, and an attractive Christian character. How is this going to happen? Well, you are going to have to be a person whose way of life is to learn the Christian faith, to be a committed member of a church and someone who reflects on themselves and their conduct humbly, puts off what is ugly and wrong, and puts on what is handsome and good. How will this happen? Spiritually speaking, this is the work of the Spirit of God, but we are told to 'live in accordance with the Spirit', to 'walk by the Spirit', and so we can pay attention to the very human activities of living and walking, which is to say the daily habits and routines of everyday life.

Identity: I am a person who learns their faith, who's involved at church, who's growing like Christ

Jesus and his apostles are keen in the New Testament to impress on Christians that they belong to God and that God will bring them to Christian maturity. 'Now you are light in the Lord', says Paul in Ephesians 5:8. If you see yourself as a musician, as someone who will play an instrument, and play it throughout their life, you are more likely to persevere in practice and go on to play long term and competently. If you believe what the Bible says about you as a Christian—that you are God's dearly loved child (Eph 5:1); that God will teach you truth and reveal himself to you; that you belong amongst his people in the church; and that he will enable you to bear the fruit

of the Spirit—then I suspect you are more likely to persevere in learning, churchgoing and repentance than otherwise.

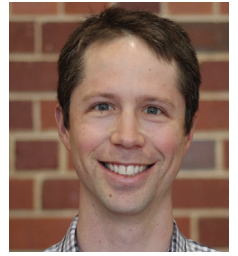
Automate the habit so it becomes a powerful and enduring way of life

Suppose you want to embrace the identity that I am a person who goes to church—or, if you are a parent, that we are a family who goes to church. Prove it to yourself by turning up to church once. But then think about how you are going to automate the habit of going to church so that it is as much a part of your life as brushing your teeth. You might find it helpful to break down the habit into smaller habits and plan a sequence of habits that will become one powerful and enduring routine. If I need to leave at a certain time, what needs to happen in the hour beforehand to make departure as easy as possible? If we are going to be back at a certain time, what needs to be done so coming home again does not present problems that deflate me on arrival? You will need to anticipate what might disrupt this routine and plan what you will do about it when that happens. When someone asks you or your child to a social event that clashes with church what will you do? Because you are a person who goes to church, this invitation will have to respect that reality. So maybe you will decline it. Or maybe you will go to church at a different time that day. But you are not the person who lets social occasions habitually trump church, because you are a person who goes to church. It is the way of life that is building you into a mature Christian and that is the core of who you are. There is more to think about, and in any case you won't be perfectly consistent at church, but you will be consistent. Your habit will be going, not missing. And you will learn to live as the child of light that you are.



Fear and the Christian

Jeff Hunt



What will lead us to overcome the fears that keep us silent when people really need us to speak? Jeff Hunt is Unichurch Minister at St Matthew's Shenton Park W.A.

The group's conversation takes a turn, suddenly you're all discussing the evil of terrorism and religious extremism, your friend turns to you and says: "You're a Christian, right?"

Below the various thoughts that rush into your mind, a situation like this will undoubtedly bring a stream of emotions too, chief among them: fear.

Fear that somehow this conversation will bring embarrassment or rejection. Fear that we will be exposed: not knowing how to articulate what we believe. Those anxieties might be real, and yet, it's crucial that we work out how to overcome our fear if we're to love God and our neighbours by sharing the good news of Jesus.

The problem with fear

The American philosopher, Martha Nussbaum calls fear "the emotion of narcissism" since it "is always relentlessly focused on the self and the safety of the self." This resonates with our experience of life: the presence of fear often drives us into ourselves, concerned primarily for self-preservation above all else. By necessity then, it prevents us loving God or others as we ought. Or as Nussbaum states: "Fear is a 'dimming preoccupation': an intense focus on the self that casts others into darkness."¹

This is especially true in conversations that involve Jesus. How can we break free of fear, so that we might be able to consider the needs of the person in front of us? How can we overcome our own worries, so we can see the profound difference the gospel will make for their lives? How can we stop fixating on what people will think of us, and start caring about what they will think of Christ?

The prayer for courage

The apostle Paul too, was someone who regularly faced fearful situations. From shipwrecks to imprisonment awaiting trial, Paul's story is one of constant danger as he travelled around proclaiming the gospel. So it's possible to imagine Paul as this gung-ho, alpha-male type, impervious to fear. But consider his prayer request to the Ephesians:

¹⁹Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. Ephesians 6:19-20

Paul realizes that fear will stop him proclaiming the gospel. And since he's in prison right now he's got good reason for fear! So, he asks his Christian brothers and sisters to pray - not that he might never feel fear, but that he might not be controlled by it. To pray he will keep declaring the gospel fearlessly—as if—he wasn't afraid at all.

It's a prayer I think we should continue to pray for each other: that God would give us courage to act over our fears, especially in our sharing of the gospel like Paul.

The power of security

In the face of fear, we're to pray for courage to act, but the Christian's basis for that is our security. We know we can cry out to God in prayer because our value and identity are secure. No matter how thoroughly we stuff up this conversation, or how much ridicule we face, the Christian can't be dislodged from the eternal salvation that is theirs Christ.

That's the logic of Paul's triumphant summary in Romans 8. The assurance of the love of God is the basis for our courage and confidence in the face of every pain and pressure, threat and fear.

³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39

So next time you're graciously thrust into a wild, random, gospel-sharing opportunity, take a moment to register if you're afraid, then cast it aside with the help and security given by king Jesus.

Australia for Christ: it starts small

The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast (Luke 13:18-21)

Adrian Lane



This is the text of a sermon originally preached at St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne, for the Bush Church Aid Centenary Celebration Service, 26 May 2019 by Adrian Lane, the Victorian Regional Office of The Bush Church Aid Society.

This year is a great celebration! On the 26 May, 1919, one hundred years ago, “on a wet and windy night, a small gathering of 26 met to form the Bush Church Aid Society.”¹ The first Organising Missioner, Syd Kirkby, wrote, “‘A day of small things’ it appeared to be, and, in point of numbers, carrying no great promise to those present.”²

In our gospel reading we read of another “small thing”: a mustard seed, “which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air perched in its branches.” (v19)³ We also read of another “small thing”: “Yeast, that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour, until it worked all through the dough.” (v21) And Jesus says, “This is what the kingdom of God is like.” In other words, “It starts small.”

Jesus has in mind here a kitchen garden, with its vegies and herbs, and perhaps a few fruit trees or olives. Now, the mustard

seed is not necessarily the smallest of seeds, but it’s pretty small. I’ve got one here between my fingers and I can hardly see it. It’s inconspicuous and easily overlooked. Yet when it is sown in good soil and watered, it grows into a substantial tree in the garden: 3 or 4 metres high, so that even “the birds of the air make nests in its branches.”

Or think of the woman adding a small bit of last week’s yeast to her dough. Jesus is talking about a lot of flour here – probably 22 litres worth. Yet a small amount of yeast works through the whole batch, so that when it’s baked we now have bread for over 100 people.

This is what the kingdom of God is like. It starts small. And it grows imperceptibly, quietly. You don’t even realise it’s growing till you go away, perhaps for holidays, and come back – and, “My goodness, hasn’t the garden grown!” It’s a bit like teenagers who grow through the summer – you don’t even realise how much they’ve grown till they put on their old school shoes – and they just don’t fit! They’ve grown, steadily, quietly. Or it’s a bit like some Australian eucalypts that just keep growing, even in tough times, through drought and heat.

Bush Church Aid’s history is a bit like that. Those early founders in 1919 wanted to serve those in isolated parts of Australia – beyond the railway line. Yet think of the difficulties they faced: The First World War with its terrible loss and trauma had only just finished. The Spanish Flu was now taking an even greater toll. Our nation was just 18 years old. And returning soldiers were being sent to dry mallee blocks that would never be sustaining.

Yet those early founders were committed to reaching all of “Australia for Christ.” They wanted every man, woman and child to hear of his love, of his care, of his death on the cross to pay the penalty for all the wrong they’d ever done, of his physical resurrection from the grave, proving that



that penalty of death had been paid. They wanted every one to hear of his gift of his Spirit to all who believe. And they wanted every Australian to have the sure hope of eternal life, in new bodies, with believers from every tribe and nation.

Within 10 years, Ministers and Bush Deaconesses had been sent to Menindee, Cobar, East Gippsland, the Eyre Peninsula and the South Australian border. Hostels had been established at Wilcannia and Mungindi so that isolated kids could go to Primary School. A Sunday School by Post was now reaching 700 children. A hospital had been established at Ceduna, way out on the Bight. Even a plane had been purchased for Padre-Pilot Len Daniels. And 13 students preparing for country ministry were being supported at theological colleges – 8 men and 5 women. Yet all this started small – very small.

I don't know if you've thought about this or not, but all through the Bible we see God starting substantial and eternal things in very small and ordinary ways. God began his people through Abraham and Sarah, who never believed they'd even have children – Abraham was 100 years old! God rescued his people through one man, Joseph, who'd been sold into slavery by his brothers for 20 shekels of silver. God rescued his people again through Moses, who miraculously escaped murder as a baby in a little floating basket! Yet again God rescued his people in exile through Esther, an orphan and a foreigner, who put her life on the line with the king of the empire! And ultimately God rescues his people eternally through a baby born in a cowshed, who himself miraculously escaped murder as an infant. And whoever would have thought that a small dispirited band of followers who'd gone back to fishing after the crucifixion would start a church that now numbers billions?

God loves to make something out of nothing! – just like he rescued the widow and her sons in our first reading – through a little bit of oil, all that she had, that just kept flowing. Don't despise the small! God's kingdom starts with the small. God's eternal, massive kingdom starts with the small.

Secondly, do you notice how the kingdom of God completely transforms?

I don't know if you've ever been to a cheese factory. Into these vast vats of churned milk they throw a couple of handfuls of starter culture. And just like the yeast it quietly works through the whole. A little goes a long way.

Or it's just like the glassmaker I saw down near Lakes Entrance. Into the clear molten glass she threw the tiniest piece of coloured glass, which completely transformed the whole. So it is with the Kingdom of God. It transforms. It transforms those who believe it. And it transforms those with whom it comes into contact.

I used to work for the Navy. I discovered that whenever I returned from leave, the language on my floor had significantly

deteriorated. But as soon as they realised I was back, it suddenly transformed! I hadn't even told them I was a Christian. And I hadn't made any comments on their language. In fact, I'd been a bit overwhelmed by the whole culture and was keeping my head down. Yet somehow my shy presence made a difference.

And that's our prayer at Bush Church Aid – that each of our field staff and their families would make a transformative difference in their communities – as they seek to reach Australia for Christ, whether it be Alfrene as she serves as an Indigenous School Chaplain at Gulargambone, or Ayumi as she teaches Scripture at Gilgandra, or Dale as he cares for people up at Red Cliffs, one of the poorest parts of Victoria. The kingdom of God transforms.

Finally, do you notice how wonderfully delightful the Kingdom of God is, as the birds nest in the mustard tree with their little babies and as we share fresh, crusty bread?

Some years ago I went through a period of chronic illness and was confined to bed. Outside my bedroom window were some fuchsias. The birds just loved their nectar. But fuchsia flowers hang upside-down, on very thin and supple stems. So to get to the nectar the birds had to do a constant variety of upside-down acrobatics on bouncing, bending stems. Watching those birds feeding and dancing in the sun in my garden was such a delight – it kept me going through some of my darkest days.

What a delight it is to be part of the kingdom of God, with people from many nations, each seeking to “declare his glory among the nations, his marvellous deeds among all peoples,” as we read in Psalm 96:3. My prayer is that each one of us here has given back to God all that he has given us, and that each one of us here is using all that God has given us to extend his kingdom, to declare his glory among the nations.

God leads each one of us to the harvest fields he'd have us work in – through our prayers, our life, our gifts. My prayer is that we would commit ourselves afresh to reaching Australia for Christ, to serving those in remote, rural and regional Australia, through our prayers, our life, our gifts.

God's kingdom is like a mustard seed, it's like yeast. It starts small. It transforms. It's an eternal delight. Let's praise God for all that he has done to build his kingdom through Bush Church Aid these last one hundred years, and let's commit ourselves afresh to growing his kingdom, to reaching Australia for Christ, especially remote, rural and regional Australia.

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Not losing heart

2 Corinthians 4

Gavin Perkins

Each of us tends towards optimism or pessimism, and both present dangers. It is certainly possible to lose heart in ministry due to pessimism. The difficulties and trials can seem intractable, the fruit all too scarce, and we lose heart. It is also possible to lose heart in ministry due to over optimism. When the courageous vision collapses around us it is crushing, and we lose heart.

Paul knew all too well that Christian ministry has both its tribulations and triumphs. In 2 Corinthians 4 he makes it clear that losing heart in ministry is a very real phenomenon (2 Cor 4:1, 16). However, he is equally confident that he and his co-workers will not lose heart. Our aim here is to consider the theology and philosophy of ministry that fueled Paul's persistence in ministry.

What Paul holds out is a realistic optimism grounded in his understanding of the gospel itself, his own commission, and a clear grasp of the season of salvation history in which we live. He knew and expected the tribulations of ministry, but he also knew and discerned the glorious triumphs of ministry.

In 2 Corinthians, his most personal letter, the apostle Paul identifies death as a metaphor for the normal experience of ministry. His ministry is an ongoing slow death, but one that brings life to others:

We are afflicted in every way... always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. (2 Cor 4:8-12)

When facing the temptation to lose heart as he was confronted by disdain, division and discord, Paul could say to himself, "Of course it's like this, ministry is death." Ministry is a long death march that simultaneously and gloriously brings life, and we must not fall for the lie that it was ever supposed to be anything else. The normal reality of Christian ministry is to feel like a useless clay pot, and yet nevertheless look around

and see signs of life because of the all surpassing power of God at work (2 Cor 4:7).

For Paul the link between ministry and suffering goes back to his commissioning. God declares through Ananias that Paul "is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name" (Acts 9:15-16). He is transformed from the one actively engaged in causing suffering for those who bear the name of Christ, to the one who himself suffers for the name of Christ. His commission came with a cost, but a cost he is willing to bear.

It is Paul's particular role as the initiator of the mission to the Gentiles and their apostle that especially connects him with suffering. Paul makes the link explicit at a crucial turning point of his first missionary journey in Acts 13. He quotes from one of Isaiah's 'suffering servant' songs and claims that his ministry is a fulfilment of those prophecies. Paul and Barnabas' heightened focus on Gentile mission was driven by theological and not just strategic or pragmatic considerations. In quoting from a servant song (Isa 49:6) Paul declares, "For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth'" (Acts 13:47). In Isaiah 49 the 'you' refers to the suffering servant, but here Paul and Barnabas take it as directly referring to them. It is what "the Lord has commanded us"—that is, Paul and his missionary co-workers. The commission to the servant has become for them a command to engage in Gentile mission. As he and Barnabas are engaged in that ministry of the servant, as they plant Gentile churches, Paul unequivocally sees them as fulfilling the ministry of the suffering servant to be a light for the nations and bring salvation to the ends of the earth. In his commission God set Paul apart to proclaim the gospel to the ends of the earth, and as he does the work of the servant, so he will also bear the stripes of the servant. Furthermore, God includes in that commission those who partner with Paul in the work.

As Paul addresses the Corinthian church he can say "we do

not lose heart”, and this despite his “light momentary affliction” (2 Cor 4:16-17). A life dedicated to sharing the truth about Jesus to the ends of the earth is hard, but in the context of eternity Paul can brush aside these tribulations. Such things as being beaten up and whipped, thrown in prison and shipwrecked, abandoned by some of his closest friends and co-workers, watching as churches he worked hard to build are torn apart by false teachers, and seeing people abandon Jesus, are but light and momentary troubles (see 2 Cor 11:23-29).

It is instructive that the culmination of his list of sufferings is the “daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches”, for in the midst of the beatings and imprisonments it was Paul’s passionate burden for the health of the church that was his most

abiding trial. When they faint, he faints; when they rejoice, he rejoices; and when they wander, he is downcast. And yet as we read on with Paul in 2 Corinthians 4, we see that in the face of eternity these trials are light and momentary; they are preparing us for “an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” (2 Cor 4:17). It is on that reality that the believer must fix their eyes. Paul grounds his ministry philosophy and self-understanding on the figure of the suffering servant, and the way that frames his own experience in the light of the experience of Christ.

The tribulations of ministry are real, but temporary. The triumphs are often unseen, but they resound for eternity. And so we do not lose heart.



Marriage, Same Sex Marriage and the Anglican Church of Australia:
Essays from the Doctrine Commission
The Doctrine Commission of the Anglican Church of Australia,
The Anglican Church of Australia, 2019

MARRIAGE,
SAME-SEX MARRIAGE
AND THE ANGLICAN
CHURCH OF
AUSTRALIA

This book review title should be *The book that should be read but cannot be fully recommended.*

Background

In 2017 the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia, by motion, instructed its Doctrine Committee to, “facilitate a respectful conversation in our church by means of a collection of essays on marriage and same sex relationships that explore scriptural and theological issues...”

To summarise the scope of the request: it sought to address Anglican Formularies, the exploration of state definitions of marriage and the church’s doctrine of marriage, our view of Scripture and the methods we use for coming to an understanding of them and the nature of our relationships where disagreement exists.

The outcome of the request was

the production of the book, *Marriage, Same Sex Marriage and the Anglican Church of Australia: Essays from the Doctrine Commission*. This book was published in paperback in June and is currently free to download.¹

The Relational Issue

The issues addressed in the book are not insignificant and, on paper, positions are easily expressed. However, one’s thinking on the issues cannot be divorced from all human relationships as expressed in the two great commandments, “to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and to love your neighbour as yourself.” As the commands begin with an upward look to God so the outward look to others gathers importance. To neglect one is to fail the other. To miss the priority of the first unties us from a God-given

Essays from the Doctrine Commission



THE DOCTRINE COMMISSION
OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

accountability in our loving of others. If we are to glorify God, and if people are to enjoy him forever, then our discussion of something as close to us as our created, human sexuality requires more than human opinion or general observations, it requires God’s special revelation. As such the Scriptures are crucial to our discussion.

The Historical Issue

The problem for the Anglican Church of Australia as evidenced in the book and played out in the Anglican Communion around the world, is the disjunction between divine revelation and human opinion. Historically this problem is one of emphasis, expressed by the likes of Richard Hooker in terms of Scripture, tradition and reason, to which could be added experience. But even the history of the three – Scripture, Tradition and Reason – has suffered from the revisionists who in one breath declare Richard Hooker as their friend but in the next misrepresent the priority given by Hooker to the Scriptures over reason, tradition and experience. Bishop Michael Stead in the closing essay of the book offers an extended reflection on these four as he deals with the case against same sex marriage.

The Anglican Issue

There are eleven contributors to the book who represent divergent views on the issue of same sex marriage and blessing. The significance of these divergent views goes to the very core of a Christian Anglican identity. Most obviously, these divergent views on same sex marriage and blessings reveal divergent views on the authority of Scripture which is central to our Anglican identity. The 39 Articles of Religion highlight the place of the Scriptures as governing God's church in all matters of faith and practice consistent with the reformation tenet of "sola Scriptura", and most importantly, as defended by the Bible's own internal witness to itself as God's breathed out Word.²

Needless to say, divergent views of the Scriptures have led to divergent views on human sexuality that have inevitably caused a divide to occur across the global Anglican Communion. This divide has giving rise to the GAFCON movement and the establishment of new Anglican Dioceses, not recognised by Canterbury. These include Canada, Europe, Jamaica and most recently New Zealand and Polynesia. As the historical survey in the third essay makes clear the implications for the Australian Anglican Church are quite clear, "you can't change the doctrine of the church and expect that people will continue to live in partnership, fellowship or communion". It is why this book is so important. Its

contributors expose the problem by their declared positions and as a result we, the readers, can reflect on the arguments presented and respond accordingly.

The Contents of the Book

After an introduction, the book has a series of essays to set the context, sketching out the history of these issues across the wider Anglican Church, and the highlighting the peculiarity of the situation of the Anglican Church of Australia, which has uniquely bound itself to the doctrine and principles of the Book of Common Prayer, Ordinal and 39 Articles.

These essays are followed by paired essays which respectively examine the arguments for and against same-sex marriage, exploring hermeneutics, Old Testament, New Testament, the history of marriage and friendship.

Next a series of stand-alone essays on blessing, desire and godly disagreement. The final two essays seek to sum up the arguments for and against same-sex marriage.

The Key Issue

In the scope of this review, it is not possible to give a summary of all the arguments. Instead, I will focus on the one key issue which is the hinge on which the other essays turn.

One contributor to the book, the Rev. Dr Matthew Anstey, highlights what is key to the Church's discussion of same sex marriage and blessing when he says, "that the role Scripture plays in the debate is where the most important differences lie."³

To the uninitiated, the divergent views of Scripture may seem subtle but their outcomes are anything but subtle and the threat to the locus of authority in the church is of enormous concern.

So to the book itself. There is no substitute to reading the book for yourself and I acknowledge my subjectivity, which I hope is a Biblically informed one, in dealing with aspects of the book while hoping not to misrepresent its content.

The essays range in quality and complexity. While some papers stand alone, others provide a contributor's view followed by another contributor's critique. As a standalone essay, I found the Rev. Dr Rhys Bezzant's essay on 'The Blessing of Same Sex Marriage' very instructive in offering a defence as to why we cannot bless

same sex marriages. The most significant essays in the collection, however, centre on Scripture and hermeneutics. We could describe this section of the book and in particular Matthew Anstey's essay and Mark Thompson's response to it as the skeleton around which the discussion must be clothed. In terms of the church, the seriousness of skeletal damage will always be the bodily dysfunction that follows, so it is crucial to give the arguments our attention.

To highlight the issue, it is worth listening to Anstey and Thompson.

The Rev Dr. Anstey, commenting on the evaluating of our doctrinal position on same sex marriage states, "The fact that such evaluation is occurring and books such as this are being written, speaks to the reality that the church is able to perceive and discern through the Spirit the work of God in the world and 'decide for God' in response to such discernment..."

As the essay proceeds the Rev. Dr Anstey is quite definitive, "...Let me be clear about my view from the outset, Scripture shows us how the people of God come to make moral and theological judgements rather than providing the substantive content of those judgements. Hence to be faithful to Scripture in this debate (as in all debates) does not mean we exegete Scripture and apply to living human experience a timeless moral-doctrinal precept (and such a so called 'excavative' approach is adopted by opponents to same sex marriage in this volume) but rather we seek to make our case for the doctrinal position we are arguing in dialogue with both Scripture and lived human experience."

One must read all that the Rev Anstey writes to be fully cognizant of his position but to any exegete of the Scriptures who believes in the absolutes of God as set down, for example, in the Decalogue, his words are concerning.

In his response to the Rev. Dr Anstey's essay, the Rev. Dr Mark Thompson takes quite a different theological stance when it comes to the Scriptures and I quote, "The 39 Articles, which include an endorsement of the Book of Homilies (Article XXXV) remains the confessional document of Anglicanism and so is included in the Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia. The Articles provide us with a strong statement of the identity of Scripture as 'God's Word written', the final authority of biblical teaching, the boundary

condition of recognising and honouring the coherence and unity of biblical teaching and the stance of the reader: humility, prayerfulness, a concern for the glory of God and restraint in exposition.”

The outworking of Anstey’s hermeneutic is consistent with his revisionist view of the place of Scripture, tradition, reason and experience, just as the outworking of Thompson’s hermeneutic is demonstrated by sitting under the Bible’s authority not over it. Anstey elevates the “Spirit”-led discernment of the individual above that of the Scriptures, and Thompson prioritises the Scriptures over the individual, who must sit under the Scriptures and surrender to them.

Anstey’s words, “...that the church is able to perceive and discern through the Spirit ‘the work of God in the world and “decide for God”...” are concerning in both what is said and not said. He separates Word and Spirit thus removing the objective basis on which to test the “spirit” of such discernment. By contrast Thompson sees the authority of the Spirit as expressed in the Word, thus holding the two together which is consistent with Christian Anglicanism as expressed in our Anglican formularies.

On personal reflection, a fallen humanity to “decide for God” under a spirit that cannot be tested seems like foolishness. The Rev. Dr Anstey’s essay could be accused of suggesting that God has inadequately communicated his will to us. It is no surprise that when we sit over God’s word and “decide for God” that humanity seeks to become a permission-giver to things contrary to God’s will and not a servant of God’s will in calling people to repentance and faith. But equally when people begin to “decide for God” it is crucial to recognise that authority has moved from God to those who think they should decide. That would seem a recipe for authoritarian disaster that does not end in permissions but rule of law by the fallen.

Reflecting on both positions I see the distinctions best expressed by the words “interpret” and “understand.” The difference may be subtle but not unimportant.

Understanding the Scriptures requires

you listen to what God has said and sit under his authority which requires the most careful exegesis of the texts of Scripture. Where a part of the Bible is unclear we do not ignore it but we look to the rest of the Bible to offer us further understanding. By contrast, interpreting the Scriptures makes you the authority over what God has said allowing outside influences such as tradition, reason and experience to determine your thoughts.

This is not just semantics. When we seek to understand, understanding submits our reason, tradition, and experience to God’s Word. When we seek to interpret, interpreting submits God’s word to our reason, traditions and experience. The outcomes can be significantly different when it comes to faith and practice.

Start with God and you start with the Almighty, the Sovereign, the Holy and Perfect. Start with humanity and every effort is flawed from the start by our creatureliness, weakness, and fallen nature. It is hardly surprising that when we get God wrong we get ourselves wrong. It is hardly surprising when we put ourselves in God’s place that we will compromise God’s absolutes.

Given that contrast, it can only be the sin of hubris that would have us pursuing interpretations that offer permissions to things God has spoken against rather than encouraging repentance and faith that comes with understanding God’s word.

Such hubris will heal no ills, trivialise sin, reduce Christ, profit no salvation and consign people to hell.

What a difference the truth understood makes. It puts God on his throne and straight-talks the problem of sin and the fallen nature of our humanity. By way of encouragement, the heavens proclaim his glory and his Word reveals the inspirational love of our maker and redeemer. It speaks to our reconciliation with God and offers the restoration of one’s person. In a lost and confused age the Christian gospel offers the repentant: new birth, justification by faith, atonement through propitiation and the substitutionary death of Christ and resurrection to eternal life. The Christian gospel does not offer permission to sin and

warns of the judgement to come. For the repentant, God grants us the fellowship of the Holy Spirit to comfort and sustain us amidst the myriad temptations we face.

I would not normally recommend some of the essays in this book but they are educative in understanding why there are divisions in the Anglican Communion. Those divisions will inevitably impact the General Synod of our church in 2020 and our churches beyond. It is important for all God’s people to be informed and prepared should those who depart from the Scriptures force upon themselves their departure from the Christian Anglican Communion. Let us all pray for the humility to sit under God’s Word and repent such that the unity of God’s church would advance the mission of God for the salvation of the lost. Let us pray that we love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and then rightly love our neighbours as ourselves.

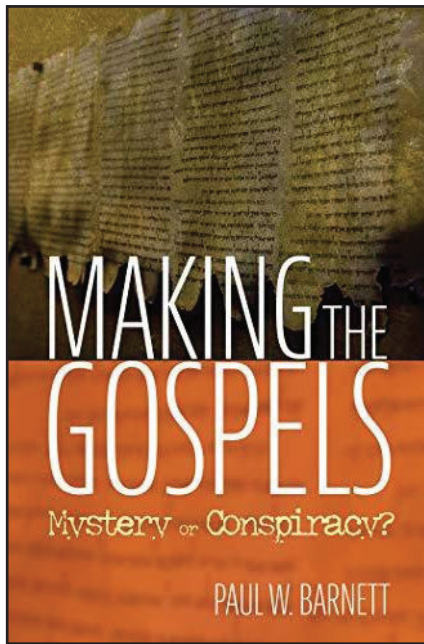
An encouragement

*“Last eve I paused beside the blacksmith’s door,
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
Then looking in, I saw upon the floor,
Old hammers, worn with beating years of time.
“How many anvils have you had,” said I,
‘To wear and batter all these hammers so?’
‘Just one,’ said he, and then with twinkling eye,
‘The anvil wears the hammers out, you know.’
“And so, I thought, the Anvil of God’s Word
For ages skeptic blows have beat upon;
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,
The Anvil is unharmed, the hammers gone.”
—Attributed to John Clifford*

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Bishop Rick Lewers, NSW



Making the gospels: Mystery or Conspiracy? Paul Barnett, Cascade, 2019

Birthday Honours List, being made a Member of the Order of Australia for significant service to the Anglican Church of Australia. He is a prolific author, who has this year added a new title to his list of publications, namely *Making the gospels: Mystery or Conspiracy?*

The burden of this book is to probe the mystery of the process by which we came to have the four gospels of the New Testament. In doing this, Barnett argues that although this process may remain in many ways a mystery, it is implausible and ungrounded to believe that it involved a conspiracy of any sort. The idea that the gospels present a figure concocted by Paul, or Mark, or later editors of Q is not credible, given what the historical evidence makes likely about the production of the gospels. In summary, Barnett argues that the role of the disciples as witnesses of the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus is to be taken seriously, and that we should respect the indications that the New Testament gives that its authors were committed to the faithful transmission of what the eyewitnesses had said. Neither the short period between Jesus and the gospels, nor the culture governing the transmission of the accounts of Jesus, make it plausible to suppose that great metamorphoses have been wrought upon the figure at the heart of these accounts.

One new conviction Barnett comes to in the writing of this book—a conclusion which takes him by surprise—is that Jesus most likely taught publicly in both Aramaic and Greek. In Chapter 19 he cites the work of Meyers and Strange who find that in the first century BC Aramaic declined and Greek gained ground even in country areas. The Twelve have Greek names among them (Philip, Simon and Andrew) and Jesus had conversations with Gentiles (the Syrophenician women, the centurion, even Pilate) who probably had at best limited Aramaic. Jesus' travels in the north and east of Galilee would make it natural for him to prefer speaking Greek in these places. Crowds came to him from Greek-speaking areas like the Decapolis, and the environs of Tyre and Sidon, and

it would make sense for Jesus to teach in Greek for these hearers. The upshot of this is that Jesus's teachings need not have existed originally only in Aramaic, and so they needed no subsequent process of translation into Greek for them to take the form they do in our gospels.

Barnett further notes the probable literacy (not illiteracy) of at least some of the disciples makes it plausible that accounts of Jesus' teachings were 'committed to writing in Greek from the earliest times', beginning during the earthly ministry of Jesus itself (p. 93). This pair of conclusions relativises both the role of oral transmission of the accounts of Jesus, and of Aramaic as the medium of such transmission. This in turn means the written sources which underlie the gospels may be as close to the ministry of Jesus as any oral streams of transmission in Aramaic that may also have carried the knowledge of Jesus to the gospel writers. Barnett acknowledges this is a controversial conclusion, and somewhat out of step with the recent focus on modes of oral transmission by Kenneth Bailey and James Dunn, but he's arguing for the substantial importance of individual eyewitness accounts in written Greek.

Barnett covers a great deal of ground, and touches on verbal parallels to gospel material in the New Testament epistles, on the provenance and theologies of Mark, Q, M and L, on the use of Mark by Matthew and Luke, on the audiences the individual gospels appear attuned towards and a host of other issues. Throughout it all his constant theme is that while there is indeed mystery surrounding the process by which the gospels came to be, this in no way licences conspiracy theories. It should not be accepted that Jesus—imagined as a Jewish rabbi of reformist, charismatic or sapiential character—has been dishonourably repackaged as a dying and rising redeemer. 'The earliest "traditions" are focussed on the redemptive Jesus.' (p. 235)

The whole is written in vintage Barnett style, exhibiting familiarity with current scholarship and an independent

The question of how the four gospels came to be as they are is intriguing and important for Christians (well, for everyone, really, but certainly for Christians). Matthew, Mark, Luke and John present Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God, the ransom for many, the one who suffers, dies and rises from the dead according to the scriptures. The man they introduce breaks many rules of ordinary humanity, and the question is whether they paint a fair and faithful portrait of Jesus, or whether some more modest Jewish figure been transformed into the miracle-working redeemer of the gospels by some innocent or not-so-innocent process of exaggeration, embellishment, and exaltation. This pressing question is complicated by the fact that we have only hints (compared to what we might like to have) as to the process by which the gospels came to be as they are.

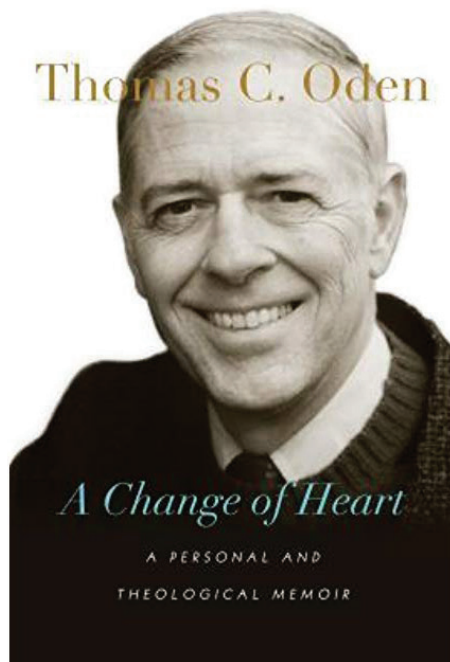
Paul Barnett has spent a career researching, thinking and writing about the earliest Christianity, from the life of Jesus to the completion of the New Testament and the close of the apostolic age. He has taken on the hard task of discovering what we can know about matters demanding ingenious historical detective work to bring into some view. He has also taken on those who would undermine the integrity of the New Testament as a reliable testimony to the true nature of the events and people in its pages. He was this year on the Queen's

development of thought. Close attention to particular texts across the New Testament and their interconnections alternates with broad awareness of the history, geography and culture of the ancient Mediterranean world in its Jewish, Hellenistic and Roman modes. Barnett writes to communicate

with the general reader but does not make his content 'lite'. In this as in many previous works, he connects the general reader to the scholarly world and the historical scene in a way that few others have done, certainly amongst Australian scholars. Here is a concise, up-to-date

account of the production of the gospels by a seasoned scholar and passionate student of the history and literature surrounding the central figure of the New Testament: Jesus, whom this Paul also serves.

Ben Underwood, WA



A Change of Heart

Thomas Oden, IVP Academic, 2014

I'm getting tired of new books that pretend to be cutting edge Christian books and begin with Tom and Lucy looking out on their vegetable gardens and having some twee conversation. I'm also getting tired of books that have blurbs that give the impression this is the greatest book ever written but the content is empty and vacuous. Am I just getting old and grumpy – probably yes – but I'm also hungry for some substance.

One book that came as a pleasant weighty surprise is Sinclair Ferguson's *Some Pastors and Teachers*. It's a collection of many of Ferguson's short articles linked to Owen, Calvin and others and since each chapter is about 6-8 pages long it can be read devotionally with great food for the mind and heart. If you have been waiting for something to fuel your faith this could be it.

Another Ferguson book worth reading is *The Whole Christ* which grapples with a

moment in Scottish history when a young candidate for the ministry is asked if repentance is necessary to come to Christ. The young man said "yes" then changed his answer to "no" and was disqualified from entry. Men gathered around him to defend him and the book explains why. It introduces the knife-edge question as to whether people are hearing good news from us or not.

But another book that is a treat to read is *A Change of Heart* by Thomas Oden. He was born in 1930 and died in 2016 – the first half of his life a liberal pastor and theologian – the second half a reformed academic. What makes the book so striking is that he exposes his own inner workings as he went down the liberal road – now writing as a repentant and orthodox man.

For example, he talks about reading his New Testament with the cross and resurrection deliberately pushed to the edge. His prayer life dried up and he found himself saying the creed in church with great difficulty. His new gospel became freedom from anxiety, guilt and boredom – the "theo" in theology had become a question mark.

"I loved the illusions... I imagined I was being critical and rational... I imagined I had a share in transforming human history... (but) I did not examine my own motives. The biblical words for this are egocentricity, arrogance and moral blindness" p.56.

The turning point came for Oden when an orthodox Jew accused him of being a lightweight – unfamiliar with

the Founding Fathers of the Christian faith. He went back to the roots of the Church and found men with finer minds asking finer questions and giving finer answers. "I was amazed that the intergenerational wisdom of the ancient community of faith was completely accessible within modernity... I had been in love with modernity. Candidly I had been in love with heresy. Now I was waking up from this to meet a two thousand year stable memory... I came to trust the very orthodoxy I had once dismissed... I became even more relevant, not less relevant, to modern partners in dialogue... I found myself standing within the blessed presence of the communion of saints... the antiphonal choir with whom I was singing" p. 140.

Not only does Oden write humbly – but beautifully. It's a delight to read how he expresses the faith in glorious terms.

The second half of his life takes him into many global opportunities – exposing the hypocrisy he knows so well but also building relationships across a wide spectrum of believers. I found his ecumenical spirit too generous for me but you can decide that one for yourself.

For those of us who have walked a pretty orthodox road most of our days and may find our doctrines getting familiar to the point of contempt this is a fresh set of eyes. For those who teach and toy with liberal scholarship – thinking your students cannot see the uselessness of your position – this is a devastatingly honest expose.

Simon Manchester, NSW



Testing teaching

Gavin Perkins

If it was good for the first disciples to hold up the teaching of the Apostles against the rule of Scripture, then how do we make sure we commend rather than condemn those who do the same today?

A vital part of growing in maturity as a Christian is learning how to be more discerning with the teaching we receive. If we lack discernment then we can be like spiritual infants “tossed back and forth by the waves and blown here and there by every wind of teaching.” (Ephesians 4:14).

A child hears and trusts implicitly what their parents tell them about life and the world, but as they grow into maturity, they begin to rightly question all that they have learnt and received. If the parents’ teaching is good and right, the child ought to grow into adulthood and find themselves believing and knowing the same things they did as a child, but now with the added conviction of having tested them and found them true in a deeper, richer and more personal way. So it is with healthy growth into spiritual adulthood.

When the Apostle Paul taught the Jews of Berea about the Christ, they were commended for not just accepting the teaching, but they “examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.” (Acts 17:11) If that examination and testing is admirable

when the one teaching is the Apostle Paul, how much more so when we hear the Word being taught today. They also tested this teaching, even though they had already “received the message with great eagerness.” They loved what they heard, it connected with them and the truth resonated in their hearts, but that was not enough. They would only be truly convinced if what was being taught by Paul was actually what the Word of God teaches.

It is only when the Word is faithfully taught that it is backed by the authority of God himself. Each word needs to be tested by the Word before it is received and applied to anyone else. A sermon, a book or a bible study can be true, wise and even helpful, but it only has the authority of God if God’s Word is being taught.

I recently heard a talk on 2 Corinthians 3 about the veil over Moses’ face after he had met with God and was bringing the people the Word. Paul’s point is that as new covenant believers we see and are transformed by the full glory of God in Christ in a way that was never true for Israel. The sermon however was all about the veils we put up to hide our true

selves from each other in the way we talk, present ourselves and use social media. It was full of useful insights, but to claim the authority of God for those insights is dangerous and deceptive. A more honest approach would have been to simply present the content of the talk as a series of wise suggestions and make no implicit claim to the authority of God.

It is a dangerous thing to stand before the people of God and claim the authority of God. It is only safe to do so if you are speaking the words of God.

The way to safely navigate the path from spiritual infancy to maturity is through consistently hearing the truth spoken with loving authority within a church fellowship (Ephesians 4:15-16).

So as we encourage people to weigh truth of the teaching they hear urge them to pay attention to three F’s.

- Foundation: is this word consistent with the foundation laid in God’s Word?
- Fruit: will this word produce fruit consistent with the work of God’s Spirit?
- Fellowship: seek the advice of wise saints in a healthy Christian fellowship.

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