

# ESSENTIALS

EFAC AUSTRALIA

SUMMER 2015-6

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# Enjoying God's Work

What better thing to remember  
in the midst of our manifold concerns,  
than that God is at work?



Dale Appleby, Editor of *Essentials*.

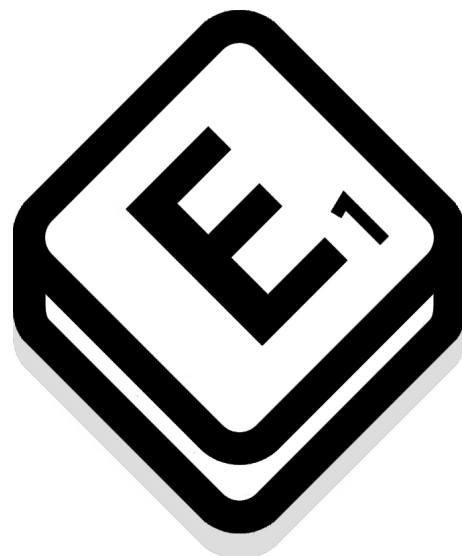
**E**vangelicals seem to have their heads facing in lots of different directions. This could be seen as a bad thing, but this issue of *Essentials* shows it to be a good thing. We have reminders of great biblical scholars and leaders, and the way they helped strengthen the roots of our traditions. We have reflections on addictions, sexuality and holiness. And reports and recommendations about our Indigenous brothers and sisters and God's work in Africa.

Plus reviews of a wide variety of books for summer reading. Books that cover a wide range of issues and interests. Evangelicals are thinking and working on so many fronts.

Although, as the Bible Study this issue reminds us, "Far more important is the fundamental recollection that God is the one at work." And that is cause for thanksgiving and encouragement. At a time when biblical Christians seem to be under pressure to conform to the beliefs and practices of the culture, we see that God is still at work in his church and through his word. Despite a culture that seems to have banded together against the Lord and his people, the Lord may still be laughing at their futile efforts (Psalm 2).

Is still laughing. And sending out his word and messengers. Building up his church. Strengthening and empowering his servants. Bringing his elect from all the nations into the body of his Son.

How wonderful.



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# Knowing the Truth of the Cross Produces a Thirst for Evangelism

Neil Bach reminds us of the life and impact of the Australian New Testament scholar Leon Morris ahead of the publication of his biography of this man who loved the gospel of Christ crucified.



Neil Bach is the author of a forthcoming biography of Leon Morris entitled *Leon Morris: One Man's Fight for Love and Truth*.

**S**ixty-five years ago the embers of a spiritual battle burst into flame. After a lecture at Cambridge University a young Australian courageously stood in front of a very great churchman.

'I don't think you were right in that, sir.'

'Oh' he said. 'Why?'

I said one or two things.

'Would you write that out for me?'

Between one lecture and the next the young man had a session with the churchman Michael Ramsey. He tried to explain to Ramsey that the scholar C. H. Dodd was wrong in eliminating propitiation from the New Testament. He thought the old boy was most interested.

We know that young man. He was Leon Morris. He remains the greatest New Testament scholar Australia has produced. He wrote extensively about the cross of Christ, with his book *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* still a fantastic read, summarizing the truths of propitiation, redemption, covenant and so on that he unearthed in his Cambridge studies. In a new biography, soon to be published by Pater-noster, called *Leon Morris: One Man's Fight for Love and Truth*, I tell his life story and the impact of his teaching ministry.

One little-known fact about Leon was that his understanding of God's love in the cross produced a deep passion for evangelism in him. Today we accept that the cross is central to our faith. Our society uses the term 'the crux of the matter' to represent the central things, borrowing Christian use.

What was it about the cross that fuelled Leon's evangelistic passion? I'll let him speak for himself in this brief summary of his thought.

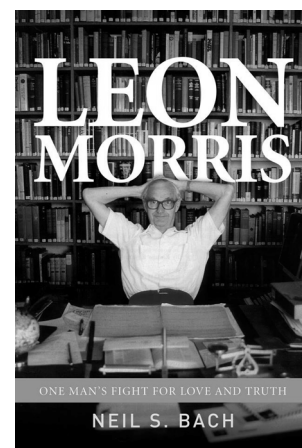
Firstly, each Gospel leads to the cross and is gives prominence to the impact of the cross for our salvation. Matthew concentrates a third of his writing, chapters 21-28, on the last week and the powerful death of Christ. When Jesus died, 'the curtain of the temple was torn in two, the earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people were raised to life' (Matthew 27:51). The apostle Paul tells us 'we preach Christ crucified' (1 Corinthians 1:23). In Revelation we see that we are saved 'by the blood of the Lamb' (Revelation 7:14). When a person is baptized it is a baptism into Christ's death (Romans 6:3) and when we take Holy Communion we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Secondly, the centrality of the cross is because of certain great facts. We must keep before us the fact of sin. While people seem to want to believe that the problems within the human person are a lack of education, or resources or whatever, the Bible consistently reminds us that we are all sinners (Romans 3:23) and that the consequences of sin are more serious than earthly dilemmas. 'We must give account of ourselves to God' (Romans 14:12).

Finally, the cross is central because there, above all, we see the love of God. God shows that he keeps loving us because he is love (1 John 4:8,16) and that his love brings about the salvation of sinners in Christ's death (Romans 5:8). We see there that God's forgiveness operates in the cross, not divorced from it.

The centrality of the cross is because while it is true that when a person repents God is graciously ready to forgive, that forgiveness 'is based on what Christ's death has accomplished ... and ... to say that no atoning act is needed is to give us a non-Christian view of salvation'

Leon pointed out many ways that the New Testament shows us what the death of Christ has done. One of his favourite terms was the term redemption. We know the word in modern use. Take the Atlanta Olympic Games 1500 metres swimming final for men. Kieren Perkins had been off the boil. No one, not even Perkins, could fathom his loss of form. He limped into the Olympic final in lane eight. The mail was that 'he was gone'. His reputation was diving in the



pool. In the final Perkins led the final through the first 1200 metres at the speed of his best years. We waited from him to blow up. But apprehension turned to elation as more laps disappeared. We stood on chairs for the last two laps with some doing a war dance. Perkins redeemed himself from two years of poor form and claimed an amazing second gold medal. Adrenalin launched him triumphantly from the pool. He had bought back his reputation in his own strength. That's a view of redemption.

But Leon noted that, while there are a bewildering number of meanings for a word like redemption in the modern world, a wide use of the word is not found in antiquity in general or the Bible in particular. It is used less often and with a narrower more precise connotation. To capture the meaning of redemption you begin with the basic word of the group, ransom. Ransom means loosing, releasing or freeing such as the loosing of prisoners of war on payment of a price. He wrote that 'it is important to realize that it is this idea of payment as the basis of release which is the reason for the existence of the whole word group. Other words were available to denote simple release'. Ransom contained the meaning of release by payment and that is how the word is used in context of the original language. So it is used of prisoners of war released by payment, or of slaves buying their freedom to secure a release.

He then considered a compound word in non-biblical literature that came from ransom and is usually expressed as redemption. He thought we might expect an emphasis more on the simple release of someone; but when he examined the only ten uses outside the New Testament he wrote 'in every passage, without exception, there is a payment of a ransom price to secure the desired release'. He found that the Old Testament contained the idea of a ransom price (Exodus 30:12) in the release from a death sentence. There were supporting examples. He looked at the Rabbinic writings and concluded the terms are used substantially with the same usage. The New Testament was critical because it recounted the story of Christ and the cross. The word ransom was found in only one saying in Mark 10:45 repeated in Matthew 20:28. Leon defended Matthew 20:28 as authentic. He concluded that the passage means Jesus gave his life as a payment price instead of us or in exchange for us. He discussed the related words redeem or redemption in the New Testament. Important passages like Titus 2:14 where Christ

'gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity'. He saw it contained a reference to the ransom saying and pointed in the direction of substitution.



Leon Morris

What of the most typical word for redemption in the New Testament? There are ten occurrences and the three clearest passages are Romans 3:24, Ephesians 1:7 and Hebrews 9:15. He noted that a redemption price is mentioned in each case.

He concluded that there were three things that emerged from the use of the redemption terminology connected to the process of atonement.

1. The state of sin – our situation is likened to slavery, a captivity where we cannot redeem ourselves.
2. The price that is paid – the terminology means Christ has paid the adequate price of our redemption. He took what we should have paid and paid it.
3. The resultant state of the believer – that we who are redeemed are brought into a state of real freedom. A liberty to do the will of God.

It was Leon's appreciation of the love of God given in the light of our deep spiritual need, seen in the Christ's work on the cross and resulting in a great freedom for Christians that overwhelmed him. He dedicated his energies to teaching the cross and finding ways to explain redemption to people everywhere. He knew that the self-redemption we champion, such as in sports people redeeming themselves, does little before a holy God and that we need Christ's redemption to return to God.

Consequently Leon got involved in reaching others. Early on he took part in the evangelistic efforts of All Soul's Leichhardt, then he served for five years with the Bush Church Aid Society, and when he arrived at Ridley Melbourne he connected with parishes doing evangelism. His most significant effort might be his time as the Follow-Up Chairman of the Billy Graham Crusade in Melbourne in 1959, where he supervised the allocation of 28,105 registered commitments to churches in the city. Later he rejoiced when people wrote to him, having been converted by reading his commentaries! Even to the end of his life he would always make the effort to attend evangelistic meetings to lend his support. The greatest miracle to Leon was that of a person coming to faith in Christ, who had died for them.

There is such a legacy that Leon left us. This is just one aspect of his amazing contribution to the Christian cause in Australia and across the world.



# Closing the Gap Part II: What Can the Church Do?

Last issue Jude Long identified important gaps between Indigenous Australians and the rest of Australian society. Here she suggests some first steps for Christians who are keen to see those gaps closed.



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

**I**n my previous article I outlined the significant gap that exists between Indigenous Christians in remote communities, and mainstream English speaking Christians. This gap includes areas such as health, life expectancy, safety, literacy, and resourcing in Christian faith. Obviously this is a huge issue! This article attempts to explore some concrete things the church in Australia can be doing to help reduce this gap.

## 1. Awareness

Many people within the church are unaware of the reality of life for Indigenous people in remote communities. Few would have an understanding of the significant cultural and linguistic differences that exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

This first step may seem obvious, but it is essential for the church to become aware of the diversity of Indigenous languages and cultures, of the history of engagement between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australians and of the situation today. I think this is especially significant for our young people. There are a number of great resources available like “Australians Together” a four part DVD series that is suitable for small groups that can really help this.

A significant part of closing the gap is also to start listening to Indigenous voices in our churches. This might be started by using Christian Indigenous songs, prayers, art work, film clips etc in our churches. To be intentionally seeking out the “good” stories coming out of Indigenous communities, and sharing them to provide a balance to the media’s presentation of hopelessness and violence, would go a long way to developing a better awareness of our Indige-

nous brothers and sisters. For example each year Nungalinga College’s media students produce a film of their own story. They are a wonderful insight into people’s lives and faith journey (search Nungalinga Media on Youtube).

## 2. Long term relationships

Having developed some awareness, the next important step is building relationships. One of the keys to closing the gap is to recognise that it is a gap between people. It is not a “problem” to be solved (particularly if the Indigenous people are painted as the ones who are the problem!) but rather a relationship to be healed.

As with any relationship this will start with small steps. Not everyone can go and meet Indigenous people in their remote communities. However, there may be ways to start relationships locally with Indigenous people. Attending public Indigenous cultural events is a start. This might be the basis of making friends with some local Indigenous people. I recognise that this is not always possible locally but to be prayerfully seeking opportunities and intentionally participating as a church would be fantastic.

At a corporate level, churches can be building relationships with Indigenous churches and also organisations

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**“One of the keys to closing the gap is to recognise that it is a gap between people”**

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working with Indigenous Christians. For example, a number of churches partner with Nungalinga College. This may involve a team or individual from the church coming and spending time at the College, and also the opportunity for a representative of the College to visit the church. A real sense of partnership is emerging through these ongoing relationships between the College and some churches.

## 3. Lobbying Government

Once there is an awareness of the challenges facing Indigenous people, the church can be vocal in lobbying government. There is a trend at present to significantly cut

Federal Government funding and programs for Indigenous people. This is causing uncertainty about the future of many long running and successful programs.

Writing letters to government may seem to have little impact, but I can report that we were contacted by the Federal government on the basis of letters that were written when Nungalinga College was facing a significant cut in funding. These letters do actually have to be addressed by government and may have contributed to a new funding offer that was made to the College.

#### 4. Paying the Rent

A more controversial suggestion of how as a church we can be working to close the gap, is to recognise that all our churches are on land that was taken from Aboriginal people. I am aware of a number of churches that intentionally seek to 'pay the rent'. This doesn't mean an actual rental paid to the traditional owners, but to intentionally direct an amount into supporting ministry with Indigenous people. This has the value of assisting those ministries, while at the same time raising the awareness of the church itself about the history of the land they are on.

#### Conclusion

There are many more ways to begin the journey of closing the gap. These are just a few starters. However, the key is an attitude of repentance for past wrongs, a desire to be one in Christ, and a willingness for the non-Indigenous church to be changed by its engagement with Indigenous brothers and sisters. This will be difficult, but is part of the challenge of following our Lord Jesus who brings reconciliation for all people with God and with each other.



## Holiness, Sexuality and Love

In August David Peterson gave the Mathew Hale Public Lecture for 2015 entitled "Holy Book and Holy Living" at the Mathew Hale Library in Brisbane. This is his abridgement of his lecture. Copies of the full text of the lecture may be purchased from the Library.



Rev Dr David Peterson is a New Testament scholar, formerly Principal of Oak Hill Theological College in the U.K., now back at Moore College in Sydney.

In the debates that have taken place about homosexuality and gay marriage, many Christians have sold out to secular values. Critical to the whole matter is the question of biblical interpretation and authority. It is clear from Paul's broader teaching about marriage and sexuality that he was one with Jesus in endorsing the principles of the Mosaic Law and applying them to believers under the New Covenant. A good example is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12.

#### Discerning the will of God

When Paul first shared the message of the gospel with his predominantly pagan converts (1:9-10), he gave them specific ethical guidelines (4:1, 'how to live in order to please God'). And he did this 'by the authority of the Lord Jesus' (4:2), as his commissioned representative.

The apostle regarded the will of God as the ultimate guide to human behaviour. In line with biblical teaching, he therefore declared that the essential will of God is that his people should be holy in all their conduct (cf. Leviticus 11:44-5; 19:2; 20:7; 1 Peter 1:15-16). But what that means in practical terms needed to be explained, since the apostle did not regard Christians as being under the written code of the Mosaic law (cf. Romans 7:1-6; 2 Corinthians 3:1-18). Paul endorsed and re-presented Old Testament ethical teaching in ways that are relevant and applicable to Christians living in the Gentile world.



The 2015 Mathew Hale Public Library Annual Lecture  
Rev Dr David Peterson  
on  
"Holy Book and Holy Living"

Delivered at  
Woolloongabba, August 26th, 2015 at 7:30PM at  
St Andrew's Church Hall, 180 Vulture Street, South Brisbane



Rev Dr David Peterson  
Principal of Oak Hill Theological College  
in the U.K., now back at Moore College in Sydney

The 2015  
Mathew Hale Public Library Lecture  
**HOLY BOOK AND HOLY LIVING**  
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### Bodies devoted to God's service

Paul's first point is that holiness must be exhibited in the sexual realm. This is consistent with Leviticus 18, where regulations about unlawful sexual relations come first in a section about ethical holiness (Leviticus 18-20). The command that a man should not 'have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman' is found in 18:22. 'Chastity is not the whole of sanctification, but it is an important element in it, and one which had to be specially stressed in the Greco-Roman world of that day.'<sup>1</sup>

Various forms of extra-marital sexual union were widely tolerated and some were even encouraged. Sexual indulgence was often associated with the practice of religious

### "In current debates among Christians about sexuality, holiness hardly ever surfaces as the controlling idea"

cults and there was no widespread public opinion to discourage immorality. It hardly needs to be pointed out that contemporary Christians find themselves in a similar ethical environment. But when the gospel is introduced into a culture it demands a new way of life in those who believe it.

Paul's claim that holiness must be expressed by abstaining from sexual immorality (1 Thessalonians 4:3, Greek *porneia*) is explained in vv. 4-7, where it appears that any form of sexual relationship outside marriage is covered by the term.<sup>2</sup> If our bodies belong to the Lord, we are no longer free to use them selfishly or in accordance with the accepted values of the time. They must be kept or controlled 'in holiness and honour' (ESV, cf. 1 Corinthians 6:20; Romans 12:1).<sup>3</sup> Those who have come to know God in Jesus Christ will treat their bodies as his property.

### Love and holiness

Paul warns against the social consequences of sexual indulgence in v. 6. Christians must beware of trespassing against brothers and sisters in Christ by behaving covetously. This theme is developed in vv. 9-10, where a close link between holiness and love is made. By crossing forbidden

sexual boundaries, we may enrich ourselves at someone else's expense. Husbands, parents, and other family members are all hurt when someone is seduced into an improper relationship. The Lord Jesus himself is 'an avenger in all these things' and will inflict the appropriate judgment on those who disregard his will (v. 6b; cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10).

Love of neighbour was central to the demand for holiness in the Mosaic Law (Leviticus 19:18). As in Leviticus 18-19, love and sexual purity come together in 1 Thessalonians 4. Love for those who are struggling with sexual temptation does not mean lowering the standards that God has set for his people. As a fellowship of believers we are bound to support and help those who struggle with sexual temptation or failure.

### Conclusion

In current debates among Christians about sexuality, holiness hardly ever surfaces as the controlling idea. Fundamental to this notion is the challenge to be different from the culture around us in values and behaviour. Biblical authority is also dangerously challenged and undermined in these debates. If, in our desire to show love to those who are same-sex attracted, we abandon the biblical teaching about marriage and sexuality, we dishonour God, obscure his best intentions for humanity, and show the world that the Bible is no longer to be taken seriously. It is merely the play-thing from which to formulate a new version of Christianity suitable for the people of the 21st century.



<sup>1</sup> Frederick F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Waco: Word, 1982), 82. He discusses the sexual mores of the Greek world more fully on pp. 86-87.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Horst Reisser, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* Vol. 1 (Exeter: Paternoster, 1975): 497-501. The word group can describe various modes of extra-marital sex 'insofar as they deviate from accepted social and religious norms (e.g. homosexuality, promiscuity, paedophilia, and especially prostitution)' (p. 497).

<sup>3</sup> 'To control his own body' (ESV, NIV) is a more appropriate rendering of the Greek in this context than 'to take a wife for himself' (ESV margin) or 'to live with his own wife' (NIV margin).

# Twelve things Christians should know about AA

You may have met people involved with Alcoholics Anonymous: they are often in our churches. Here a Christian AA member gives us a personal perspective on AA.

**T**his article is not intended as a dispassionate defence or exposition of Alcoholics Anonymous (“AA”). As a member who believes he would not have most of the good things in his life without AA, this is hardly possible. My assertions are based solely on empirical evidence, along with my contention that AA works. There are things *I know to be true*—I see the evidence in my life and the lives of those around me, but the ability to convey this often falls short.

## One: AA started as a Christian fellowship

Most people regard AA’s genesis as the seemingly unplanned meeting of 10 June 1935 in Akron, Ohio, between two certifiably ‘hopeless case’ alcoholics: Bill Wilson, a New York stockbroker, and Dr Robert Smith (‘Dr Bob’), a local physician. Their discussion that night is part of AA folklore and generally regarded as the first AA meeting. Wilson had been a member of the Oxford Group, a fellowship founded by an American Lutheran minister who’d had a life changing conversion experience. The Oxford Group’s principles infuse AA’s Twelve Steps. After falling out with the group Bill cried out to God and experienced what he later described as ‘the great reality...the God of the preachers.’<sup>1</sup>

## Two: Alcoholism was recognised as an illness by the American Medical Association in 1956

Despite obvious sympathy for the alcoholic, many people see alcoholism as a moral failing. Sentiments such as ‘well, his [job/marriage/life] would be far better if only he didn’t drink so much, he only has himself to blame’ abound. For some, it may be a question of sin: i.e. [he/she] is stuck in their sin. They won’t give it up.’ I know that the disease/illness model of addiction has its critics. For me, it was common sense. I’m responsible for my own actions, but there seemed something different about the way I drank, and it didn’t make sense that I was *choosing* to continually drink to blackout when I could see the damage it was causing.

## Three: God can (and does) remove from alcoholics the desire to drink – sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly

Sometimes, the next thought after ‘he should stop drinking’ might be ‘well, what he *really* needs is to know Jesus.’ But this need is not always met the same way. I’ve seen people healed directly, the compulsion removed immediately by God. More commonly, God renews alcoholics over weeks and months (and sometimes years), through the Twelve Steps. Most new members seem inexplicably inimical to any mention of God and without AA may be unlikely to tolerate what they see as ‘religious’ concepts. Fortunately, the enmity is generally short-lived once ‘in the rooms’.

## Four: You do not need to be a Christian, or even believe in a Higher Power, to benefit from AA

Most members don’t appear to identify as Christian, though many become curious given AA’s insistence that a relationship with God ‘as you understand him’ is the key to true serenity. In writing the Big Book,<sup>2</sup> the early drafters were undecided about how many spiritual references to include. They feared turning away those sick people with latent hostility towards anything ‘religious’. Bill completed the first draft of the Twelve Steps, which were in a slightly different form. The ‘God *as we understood him*’ epithet is a result of redrafts by other members, with Bill’s grudging acquiescence. Notable also is that the original Step Seven read ‘Humbly, *on our knees*, asked God to forgive our shortcomings’ (emphasis added).<sup>3</sup>

## Five: What happens to an AA member who stops going to meetings.

The Big Book emphasises that recovered alcoholics are never entirely out of danger. I’ve seen long-time members still sober after ceasing to attend meetings, though only where they continued to live their life in accordance with AA’s Twelve Steps. Sadly, I’ve known many more members who’ve left AA and returned, a month or 3 years later, beaten even more than when they first came in. Sadder still, in my six years of sobriety I have personally known at least four members who have died in the months after leaving AA, either by accident while intoxicated or by taking their own life.

## Six: Today, AA meetings are estimated to take place in over 170 countries<sup>4</sup>

A World Convention is held every 5 years, with the most recent held in Atlanta, Georgia in July this year. AA has been in Australia since approximately 1943, following a letter to the editor of the *American Journal of Psychiatry* by the then



Medical Superintendent of Rydalmere Hospital in Sydney. A copy of the Big Book was sent out as a gift, though it appears it was not until sometime in 1945 that the first meeting began.<sup>5</sup>

### **Seven: AA members should not identify themselves publicly**

AA's eleventh 'tradition' states that AA members '...need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.' You may notice well-known people disclosing their alcoholism in the media, but not their membership of AA. This is different to personally identifying as an AA member, which is the right of each member (as is the right to remain anonymous). Tradition Eleven protects other alcoholics. One could imagine the deleterious effect on potential members of a million-hit *YouTube* clip of (say) a famous musician and outspoken AA member on a bender.

### **Eight: A recovered alcoholic doesn't have a problem with alcohol; just with what alcohol does to them**

When I first got sober, well-meaning friends would sometimes confess they felt awkward having a glass of wine in my company. They needn't have. Through AA God removed my drinking problem, which I believe he will continue to carry if I let him. Choosing to take the first drink, or allowing myself to wallow in emotionalism or resentment are sure signs that I've decided to take the problem back into my hands. Many AA members are careful to identify as 'recovering' rather than 'recovered' alcoholics, a recognition that we will never be able to drink normally again. However, the Big Book states that alcoholics can and do recover, and that we 'can go anywhere on this earth where other free men may go [a bar, for instance] without disaster, provided [we] remain willing to maintain a certain simple attitude.'<sup>6</sup>

### **Nine: Many Twelve Step programs have arisen based on AA's model**

Most people would be familiar with the existence of many 'anonymous' programs, aimed at people living with all manner of conceivable addictions. Most of these are based on 'The Steps', with relevant modifications. Most emphasise the spiritual element. My own opinion is that all such programs target the same spiritual sickness and that most sufferers would therefore benefit from exposure to any of them.

### **Ten: Some Christian AA members may find that they can more closely maintain their conscious contact with God in the rooms, rather than in church.**

This past month my friend celebrated his 45th year of sobriety. He tells of his younger years in the communist party in the old country, and rebellion towards the notion of a Supreme Being. It took him many years to even pray, despite it being one of AA's most strident suggestions. Sixteen years after his last drink he got on his knees and asked Jesus for forgiveness. From that day to this he has not wanted to take a drink. This man does not attend church, identifies as a Christian, and believes that God's purpose for him is to help other alcoholics become sober. He helped me immensely on coming into AA.

### **Eleven: What happens to alcoholics who never find AA**

Bluntly, the AA consensus is that a person who has crossed that line and become alcoholic, and who does not become sober, is destined to die an early death or become institutionalised, e.g. in hospital, or prison. This was expressed to me not long after I joined AA and to me, it sounded overly bleak. Now that I have been around a few more years I no longer feel that way. I've seen it in the rooms and amongst friends and sometimes even family. I thank God for AA and for leading me there.

### **Twelve: There's almost certainly an AA meeting near you**

Depending on the size of your city or town, there are likely to be dozens if not scores of meetings close to you. Some are 'closed' meetings, where only those identifying as alcoholic should attend, though most are 'open', meaning anyone with any interest at all can attend and if they wish, simply sit and listen. Step Twelve is 'Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry the message to all alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.' To the sober AA member, helping other alcoholics is God's will for us, and the means by which we stay sober.



<sup>1</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous World Services (Inc.) *Pass it On: The Story of Bill Wilson and How the A.A. Message Reached the World* (1984: New York), 111.

<sup>2</sup> The colloquial name for AA's basic text, *Alcoholics Anonymous: The Story of How Many Thousands of Men and Women Have Recovered from Alcoholism* (4th Ed. 2001: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.; New York).

<sup>3</sup> *The Book that Started it All: The Original Working Manuscript of Alcoholics Anonymous* (2010: Hazelden, Center City).

<sup>4</sup> 'A.A. Around the Globe' (2013: General Service Office, New York).

<sup>5</sup> 'History of AA in Australia'. Website of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Australia. <http://www.aa.org.au/members/history.php>. Retrieved 29 October 2015.

<sup>6</sup> The Big Book, 26.



# God's Modus Operandi

## 2 Samuel 7

<sup>4</sup> But that night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying: <sup>5</sup> 'Go and tell my servant David, "This is what the Lord says: are you the one to build me a house to dwell in?" <sup>6</sup> I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. <sup>7</sup> Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?'" <sup>8</sup> 'Now then, tell my servant David, "This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. <sup>9</sup> I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth. <sup>10</sup> And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people shall not oppress them any more, as they did at the beginning <sup>11</sup> and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies. The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you..."

NIV

**D**o you enjoy vision-setting meetings? Perhaps brainstorming, or presentations of vision, mission and key values? Sometimes these events invigorate me; other times they bore me.

If King David was casting a vision for Israel, 2 Samuel 7 describes a stunning and sudden overturning of the strategy.

He was settled in a palace, and the Lord had given him rest from his enemies. It was time for some development on the domestic front. Admirably, God's chosen king chooses to honour God. He will build him a house that would be more appropriate than the travelling tent. The king is established in Jerusalem: now the Lord needs a temple.

The Lord, however, wipes the whiteboard. Actually, this is not the plan. I will tell you the plan. You will not build me a

house; I will build you a house, and it will never be destroyed.

God draws David's focus away from best intentions to a plan that would turn his world upside-down. And not only his. The one who acts and the one who is acted upon are switched. The scale of the plan goes from measurable to immeasurable, from temporal to eternal.

What is interesting about the manner in which God lays out these plans to David is that he highlights some details about himself that the familiar reader should already know, and yet more reflection on the implications might be necessary.

For example, God says that he has never dwelt in a house. He has dwelt in the midst of his people, who he led out of Egypt and through the desert. Like them, he dwelt in a tent: the Tabernacle, assembled according to the intricate detail provided by God himself.

**"The scale of the plan goes from measurable to immeasurable, from temporal to eternal."**

Likewise, he took David from being a shepherd of the flock to being ruler over his chosen nation. He did not simply recruit David, give him staff orientation and then track his performance against articulated goals. He went with him, the shepherd boy, and cut off all his enemies.

We are indeed to be amazed that the true God of all should be content to dwell in a tent and that he would call a shepherd to be the victorious king. But through this turning of tables, God reveals his *modus operandi*, or method of operation. He reveals to David more than a plan: he reveals himself.

Let us briefly point out three aspects of this *modus operandi*, and then consider their implications for our own life and ministry.

First, God's work is people-oriented. God's counter-proposal was to build David a house, but this was to be understood as a

dynasty, not a temple. We are teased by the mention of David's offspring building the house: is Solomon's temple on view? The focus rather is the kingdom that would be built for God's name, rather than the building. God would establish the throne of David's offspring, and provide a place for his people Israel to dwell in security, safe from the oppression of wicked people. The kingdom of God would do this, not the temple.

God's concern for the well-being of his people Israel is writ large in this prophecy, as well as in the prayer that follows. God dwelt amongst his people, he raised up a leader for them, and cares for their future, he redeems them for himself, and drives out nations and gods before them, establishing them as his very own forever. The centrality of David to these promises should not cause us to miss the deep concern God demonstrates for his people.

Second, God's work is persevering. David is promised an eternal throne, a kingdom to endure forever. As we read of David's offspring in the chapters that follow, and in 1 and 2 Kings, we might well wonder how the promises stack up against the repeated failures and disappointments of Israel's kings in the lead up to the Exile. And yet nothing will thwart God's strategy; not David's death, nor even the disobedience of his descendants.

Centuries of silence from God on the slightly awkward matter of the apparent disappearance of David's throne from Israel would be suddenly broken with the blast of truth from the mouth of an angel of God to a virgin in Nazareth. "You... will give birth to a son, and ... He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." (Luke 1:31-33)

The promise to David is a binding vision of the future that is hard for us to grasp, since life is so fleeting. But when the eternal, unwavering God establishes a throne forever, it amounts to a guaranteed outcome.

Third, God's work is prayer-worthy. David's response is near disbelief at the exquisite privilege of being chosen for this honour. But he displays great confidence in God through his exuberant prayer of praise and petition, accented by "O Sover-

eign Lord” seven times. He knows that it is through God’s overarching knowledge and power that this will indeed be brought to reality.


His praise has an appropriateness that we could do well to reflect upon. He not only expresses the words and ideas of God’s greatness, he also has a tone of almost speechless wonder at the extraordinary significance of what he has heard. It is as if this should be sung. This is the nature of an encounter with the true God: we not only exalt his incomparable greatness, we exalt his astounding grace.

In addition to praise, David’s prayer contains a petition. Perhaps surprisingly, he calls on the Lord to keep his promise. Is this necessary? Would it not be dishonouring to God’s promise to suggest that God needs a reminder to be a promise keeper?

Indeed yes it would! Yet for some reason the strange thought enters our mind that this petition is for God’s benefit. David’s prayer is the expression of his bold trust in God’s words. And it is his acceptance of the reality of God’s promises for himself and for Israel.

So God’s *modus operandi* points us to God himself. As we reflect on life and ministry, and the fulfilment of David’s promise through Jesus, should we use vision and strategy? Only if the meetings are not boring.

Far more important is the fundamental recollection that God is the one at work. David’s kingdom is still being built today as people put their faith in David’s greater son. It is no longer a political state established with weapons of war, but rather a global fellowship in the Spirit. It is far bigger than David (or we) could ever imagine, and yet God still uses the lowly to build it.

Nothing will stop this. Perhaps our best strategy is, like David, to praise God and continually ask him to turn his plans into reality around us. 



**Mark Peterson** is the Music Minister at Holy Trinity Church, Adelaide

## Jonathan Edwards Congress 2015

Rhys Bezzant reports on the recent international congress on Jonathan Edwards at Ridley College, Melbourne.



**I**n our quest for relevance, we easily neglect our roots, but it doesn’t take an arborist to tell us that neglect of roots jeopardises health and vitality, or that a tree without roots is dead. Evangelical Christians need to study history, and to understand our story, otherwise our fruit will wither on the vine. It is that important, though honoured chiefly in the breach. Not all evangelical colleges teach church history after first year, and few teach the history of modern evangelicalism at all. Perhaps, in a small way, the Jonathan Edwards Congress, hosted recently at Ridley, can help to set an agenda.

There are about eight Jonathan Edwards Centers around the world, and Ridley is privileged to host one. These centres are satellites of the JEC at Yale University, which is charged with cultivating the study of the texts and teachings of Edwards. And every four years one of those centres convenes a conference. This year was our turn. After four years of planning, I was pleased to welcome to Melbourne delegates from every continent (except Antarctica!), and from every state in Australia. Eight of the world’s leading Edwards scholars presented keynote addresses, and pastors and academics led parallel sessions. I attend history conferences overseas, and few of them are overtly Christian, but at Ridley we began the day with the morning office, and affirmed the contribution of pastors and junior academics in the programme. There was a clear sense of the importance of fellowship amongst the participants – after all, we were talking about revivals, preaching, missions, doctrine and piety, so encouraging a Christian mood ought not to have been out of place. We ran an MA unit as part of the conference, in which seven pastors took part. This was a global conference.

And it is indeed quite extraordinary how scholarship on Edwards is booming in every corner of the globe. South Africans are looking for a way to be Reformed after the compromises of apartheid, Poles are investigating the way the revivalists used rhetoric to communicate their message, Brazilians want depth after the expansive but shallow growth of Pentecostalism in South America, and Australians are discovering how Reformed faith provides a sense of beauty and cohesion, which together provide deep satisfaction in a fragmented post-modern world. Of particular note amongst the keynotes was Stuart Piggins’ presentation of the role of Edwards in praying for *Terra Australis* long before it was settled by Europeans, and in motivating world missions through his writings, which encouraged and equipped our earliest chaplains and later pastors.

As part of my own long-term project in writing about the ministry of mentoring, I was able to present a paper on David Brainerd, the sometime mentee of Edwards, who ministered amongst the Indians on the frontier and provided a model for future cross-cultural workers. Though often heroically portrayed as an individual fighting the elements and facing the howling wilderness at great personal cost, demonstrated in his untimely death, it was time to argue instead for the importance of the church in his ministry, his reliance on the means of grace, and his desire to place the weakness of his ministry in the context of God’s eschatological power, which was making significant advances despite Brainerd’s sin and fragility. His own agency was a function of the church’s authority – a great reminder of the high place God has for the church in his own gospel purposes.

We need more reflection on the roots of our tradition, not less. We need to give more attention to the global dimensions of the evangelical movement, not less. We need more appreciation of the church not merely as a means of outreach, but as an exalted and permanent gift of the Father to the Son. We are the bride of Christ. And how wonderful that Edwards can still serve as a midwife, delivering to us such wonderful riches.

*Rhys Bezzant, Ridley, Vic.*



# BOOK REVIEWS

## ***Time Poor, Soul Rich***

*60 second solutions and lengthier remedies for busy professional women*

**Anne Winckel**

Ark House Press, 2015.



**‘W**hat good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?’ (Mark 8:36). This question from Jesus is the subject of Anne Winckel’s book *Time Poor, Soul Rich*, a manual of ‘60-second solutions and other lengthier remedies for busy professional women’. There are many books around that deal with setting life goals, fine-tuning priorities, managing your time, and deciding what are the most important things for you to be doing. Winckel is more focussed, however, on those women who are doing basically what they feel is right or necessary, but want to do so without losing the joy and vibrancy of life. The goal is to provide these women with simple and quick strategies for re-engaging with areas of life that bring richness to our souls, without requiring radical changes in lifestyle. In Part A each chapter engages with an aspect of our inner or outer lives (such as our relationships, our engagement with the world, our knowledge and experience of our our emotions and

passions), and offers stories and tips to inspire, equip and motivate women to live more richly in that area. Part B addresses obstacles to soul enrichment such as personality traits that sabotage our efforts and negative beliefs and experiences that hold women back.

We read this book together as a couple, because though it is addressed to women, men also struggle from being time-poor and need to understand how to work with this problem in concert with the women in their lives. Our feeling was that men often struggle differently with time-poverty, not having perhaps the same pressure to ‘have it all’ as women do, but also having less ability to put into practices the kind of strategies that Winckel gives us. However, for men who read *Time Poor, Soul Rich* this is a reminder of many ways that we can support the women in our lives as they seek to enrich their souls, as well as finding ways that we can do the same for ourselves.

This is a very balanced, sane and thoughtful book overall, and very practical. It is the sort of book that would be useful for ‘dipping in’ from time to time as a constant help in staying on track. The stories that Winckel provides are drawn from the experience of a variety of women, wider even than the busy professionals who are the key target group of her writing. There are thoughts here for women with a broad mixture of roles and experiences. In terms of spiritual matters, *Time Poor, Soul Rich* is a bridge between general spirituality and specifically Christian approaches to these issues, and offers something regardless of your personal beliefs while still showcasing the positive benefits of Christian faith and involvement in nurturing church communities. Read it whether or not you have the time.

*Andrew & Camille Bowles, Vic.*

## ***A Doubter’s Guide to the Bible***

*Inside History’s Bestseller for Believers and Skeptics*

**John Dickson**

Zondervan, 2015



**L**et me say at the outset that I think this is a terrific book. It is written in winsome style with candour, clarity and character. Even more impressively, it achieves a depth of thought and engagement that is particularly challenging to attain when writing a primer genre of book. It will stimulate and provoke many of the right sorts of questions for those genuinely seeking to understand the Bible’s great narrative and the worldview it reflects.

In many ways, I am the wrong person to review this book. I would love to hear feedback and reflections from the book’s intended audience. I know well the theological framework Dickson articulates, a biblical theology framework that comes with an extensive and sophisticated in-house terminology and short hand. The extent to which John has successfully stepped outside this and employed accessible language and explanations is for others to determine, but my impression is

that he has made an excellent attempt to do so.

Firstly, a brief overview. The chapter titles pretty much flag Dickson's narrative approach: How everything is good (the creation story); Why so much is bad (Adam's story and ours); Life in three dimensions (the blessings of Father Abraham); The good life (Moses and his law); Justice for all (The violence of Joshua and the love of God); Kingdom come (the promise and failure of King David); Hope against hope (the Christmas story); The wait is over (almost): (Jesus and his gospel); The great work (the "Church" after Jesus); and finally, How everything is good again (the re-creation story). Those familiar with paradigmatic biblical theology (as with Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom*, and many others) will quickly recognise the contours of this narrative.

A good many sections stand out as particularly well presented. The literary character of Genesis 1 as a type of prose-poetic ode, located in the world of ancient Near Eastern creation narratives, is expressed with clarity and sufficient reference to other ancient texts without overdoing things. Similarly, the explanation of 'the tree of *determination* of good and evil' (39) is very well handled.

Interwoven through all this is an effective selection of citations, giving candid expression to challenges relating to many passages, together with some pertinent quotes which speak profoundly (and concisely) into such debates. Dickson reads widely, and is abreast of many contemporary contributions for and against sceptical arguments.

Something I especially appreciate is the fairness Dickson demonstrates in hearing and presenting alternative views. I didn't detect any proverbial straw men in this regard, but a respect for questions and challenges where they have something to say (the use of the scathing *West Wing* exchange in the words of (fictional) President Jed Bartlett regarding Old Testament law codes and homosexuality is but one stand out example, 81-82).

The chapter on Abraham is excellent. As Dickson notes, an understanding of the promises to Abraham and God's work in reversing the damage of prolific sin in and through Abraham and his family is absolutely vital to perceiving the greater bibli-

cal narrative. Dickson's explanation of the Abrahamic promises in the context of contemporary hopes, desires and dreams just nails it.

As one would hope, the stand out chapter is the one concerning Jesus and the gospel. These types of chapters are deceptively difficult to write; what to include, what to leave to one side, which debates to comment upon. I think Dickson gets the balance pretty much right (with justifiable cross reference to his more historically orientated books for more detail). Especially engaging is the 'Crib Notes to the Gospel', 161-171, with a wonderfully succinct overview of Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom, miracles, discipleship, the cross and resur-

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### **"the stand out chapter is the one concerning Jesus and the gospel"**

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rection (although a pity the ascension seems to have been largely left out).

You may have noticed my review to this point has been singularly positive! Are there points at which I might offer a critique? Well, a few. Along with a few other reviewers, I think Dickson tiptoes around the Six-Day Creationists just a little too much. Better to name and articulate a position (as Dickson does well), without the need to anticipate the reactions from one particular quarter. Other groups will react critically at other points, so why single out one perspective to critique quite so guardedly? However, this is a minor quibble.

Notwithstanding the undoubted strengths of this book, it did read as being shaped around the author's particular agenda, and less around questions a sceptical reader might raise when trying to read scripture on its own terms. For instance, some introduction regarding the languages of the Bible would be helpful, and also the nature of the biblical canon as a mini-library in a book, written and compiled over a considerable period of time and reflecting a diversity of authors, styles and even personalities. Dickson emphasises the greater narrative development and coherence of Scripture, but others would be struck by its diversity.

More particular questions are absent, such as what to make of the large numbers

encountered at various points (e.g. the ages of various figures in Genesis, and the population numbers in Numbers etc.), which some readers view with some scepticism). The chapter on Joshua, touching on holy war and the judgement of God upon the Canaanites, explains some elements (judgement arises out of God's love and righteousness), but doesn't address why innocent individuals are caught up in corporate acts of judgement – again, a common question from readers troubled by these passages.

Other questions curious readers might wonder about regarding the four Gospels might have been addressed, even if only briefly: what are we to make of the relationship between Matthew, Mark and Luke, and where does John's Gospel fit in?

Having noted the above, I want to affirm the clarity of all that is addressed, and my admiration for Dickson's self-discipline as an author in not trying to cram in too much in a book of this nature. The 'crib notes' summary of the apostles' teaching (189-199) is a great case in point. So much more might have been added (I would have liked to see some reference to the game-changing role of the Holy Spirit in transforming the believer's mindset, e.g. Romans 8:1-11), but Dickson otherwise maintains admirable restraint and keeps on task with the major narrative.

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### **"A measure of good writing is the capacity to finish well, and Dickson again delivers"**

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The final chapter draws various threads together, most importantly the biblical movement from creation to new creation. A measure of good writing is the capacity to finish well, and Dickson again delivers, highlighting the Bible's relevance to the big questions of life and its diverse experiences, blended with some very poignant personal anecdotes and reflections.

John Dickson is to be commended in providing a great resource shaped effectively for its intended audience. I hope thought will be given to developing small group resources to accompany this, or even some bite-sized video clips.

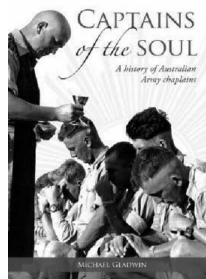
*Bp Tim Harris, SA*

## ***Captains of the Soul***

*A History of Australian Army Chaplains*

**Michael Gladwin**

Big Sky Publishing, 2015



**I**n 1942 the Reverend Hugh Cunningham was serving as a chaplain with the elements of the Australian Army captured with the fall of Singapore to the Japanese. He went into captivity with the rest of that unhappy band finding his way to imprisonment on the notorious Burma Railway. There he was treated extremely badly by the guards until one of them gained an inkling into his special status among the men and gave him an arm band with green Japanese characters on it. It was only after the war that Hugh Cunningham found out that they said, “Captain of the souls of men”. With this anecdote Dr Gladwin begins his history of Australian Army Chaplaincy which he entitles in the light of this story *Captains of the Soul*. He sums up the story of Hugh Cunningham this way, “As I will attempt to show, Cunningham personified a model of practical service and religious and moral leadership that had been forged by the Australian Army Chaplains’ Department during the Great War, and by the generation of chaplains before them in

South Africa”. So he summarises in his typically clear, winsome and succinct style his aim in writing a history of the Royal Australian Army Chaplains’ Department.

The book was commissioned and published to coincide with the formal centenary of the RAACHD on the 1st of December 2013. As such it is part of the Army History Unit’s goal of having an official history of every corps in the Army. *Captains of the Soul* goes well beyond simply an official history to be a very accessible account of the courage and commitment of Australian clergy who left their parishes to bring the presence of God to men and women who had taken up the challenge of serving their country and as a result often faced, death, injury, privation, disease and all the other horrors attendant on armed conflict.

*Captains of the Soul* grew out of the need for the story of Australian Army Chaplaincy to be told. Army Chaplaincy was one of the few Army Corps that had not yet been covered in an official history. In addition Army Chaplaincy had only been covered in part by a few scholars and by comparison with other Army chaplaincies around the world Australian Chaplaincy had received relatively scant attention. Dr Gladwin’s approach has been to provide a complete but not unnecessarily detailed history of Aus-

tralian chaplaincy from its historical antecedents up until the time of writing.

*Captains of the Soul* is a very accessible and readable account of the story of chaplains’ ministry to soldiers as well as an acutely realised account of the historical development of the Department within the Army. Dr Gladwin’s aim was to produce a readable account of a vital but as he puts it “undeservedly obscure” ministry. He has drawn as much as possible on the reminiscences of chaplains to illustrate and enliven his account of the role of the Padre (the common title used both by officers and men of chaplains). A title that captures that the chaplain’s role is both unique and valued as Padre is generally used instead of Sir as a form of address.

Dr Gladwin has succeeded in his aim and the result is a warm but not uncritical account and appraisal of an often overlooked ministry of the church. The book tells how Padres have pioneered both ecumenical and interfaith ministry and established themselves as a vital part of the life of the Australian Army. This tradition of service for God and mankind continues to this day and *Captains of the Soul* is a worthy testament to this vital ministry of God’s people.

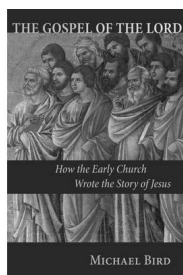
*Principal Chaplain Geoff Webb,  
Australian Army*

## ***The Gospel of the Lord***

*How the Early Church Wrote the Story of Jesus*

**Michael Bird**

Eerdmans, 2014



**A**ny review of a Michael Bird book starts with a comment on his amazing output. I liked this comment from Nijay Gupta. ‘Now that Michael Bird has finished a major book on systematic theology as well as numerous works on messianism, the historical Jesus and the Theology of Paul, I wonder if it is time for Mike to extend his brand into cook books and romance novels!.... Let’s see if the Romans commentary he is working on kills him first.’

Bird lectures in Theology at Ridley College but has an extensive background in New Testament studies. *The Gospel of the Lord* has received excellent reviews and

was listed by Christianity Today as one of the books of the year in 2014.

*The Gospel of the Lord* is concerned ‘primarily with the questions of how the Gospels came to be, what kinds of literature they are, and how they relate to Christian discourse about God’ (viii). It is not a Gospel survey, but rather a book that covers the complex issues related to the origins and development of the books we call ‘Gospels’ in the context of early church. Bird covers

such matters as the transmission of the ‘Jesus tradition’, the Synoptic problem, the genre question, and the canonisation of the ‘Fourfold Gospel’. He deals with the non-canonical Gospels – why they were written, what they are about and how they were received by the early Christians.

In our highly sceptical age it is critical that we have a clear understanding of how the primary source documents for our knowledge of Jesus came into being and can be relied upon. Bird uses his typical Aussie humour to enliven the book and traverses many scholarly disputes and discussions with clarity and a genuinely fresh perspective.

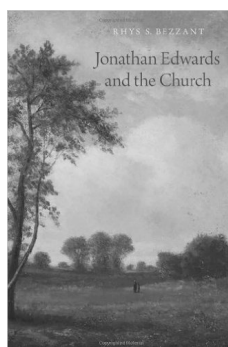
I enjoyed the book and gather from other reviews (from genuine scholarly types) that it should become a standard academic text for years to come.

*Stephen Hale, Vic*

## Jonathan Edwards and the Church

Rhys Bezzant

Oxford University Press, 2013



**A**lthough Jonathan Edwards wrote and preached on an exceedingly wide variety of theological subjects, many scholars declare that he did not have any independent ecclesiology. Rather than his ecclesiological impulses were driven by social and broader theological focuses. In *Jonathan Edwards and the Church* Rhys Bezzant demonstrates that Edwards actually held a robust ecclesiology that took into account both social and theological drivers. Bezzant sets out to expound Edwards on his oft-repeated model of the church as a 'focused domain where God's promises, presence and purpose are to be discovered.' (ix) In doing so he opines that Edwards's ecclesiology was ultimately 'a revivalist ecclesiology within a traditional ecclesiology of nurture and institutional order.' (xi)

In order to investigate Edwards's ecclesiology Bezzant follows a diachronic model, describing the various aspects of Edwards's ministry, writings and church engagement throughout his life. In chapter one Bezzant paints a rich picture of the church world of the New England colonies before Edwards's ministry, highlighting a vast array of ecclesiological and social pressures upon the Puritan endeavour. Chapters two, three, and four trace Edwards's ecclesiological development through the three primary stages of his life—delineated by two works *A Faithful Narrative* in 1735 and *A Humble Attempt* in 1747. Bezzant traces Edwards's reflections from his less-conventional conversion narrative through his early life, developing theology and burgeoning ministry—the period heavily influenced by the Great Awakening—and then into his mature ecclesial ministry and global focus. These chapters mine the depths of Edwards's own writings—recently published as a letterpress edition by Yale University Press—as well as the copious secondary literature on a variety of topics. Within the investigation of Edwards's writings these chapters are shaped by the contours of the New Eng-

land history and are firmly set within their broader context.

Throughout Bezzant helpfully shows how wider theological and social concerns impacted upon the fledgling colonies and does not seek to divorce Edwards from his historical milieu. This dual focus assists in understanding Edwards's ecclesiology as well as how it has shaped evangelical patterns in the following generations. Although there is little room for sustained modern theological reflection and application—likely a product of this forming a doctoral dissertation for the Australian College of Theology—the passion for the church of Bezzant and Edwards shines through and any astute reader will be able to draw concrete links and applications with ease. Observations such as Edwards's description of the church functioning as a tree are ripe for reflection and harvest by the reader. (101) However, when the space permits, brief observations gleam from the text such as when Bezzant observes 'the church is an expression not just of pastoral or apocalyptic functions but of prophetic aspirations too.' (198)

In the final chapters Bezzant draws the themes of the book—and Edwards's ecclesiology—together and highlights the weekly ecclesiological routine of Northampton and the broader New England church. This summary in chapter five focuses upon worship, discipline and polity and assists the reader in seeing how Edwards's ecclesiological vision played out at a broader scale—even if imperfectly. Finally Bezzant reflects upon the ecclesiological tensions and pressures present within Edwards's ministry and concludes that his ecclesiology 'highlights the orderly processes but not the ordinary origins of the church's life.' (260) This organising theme of 'orderly but not ordinary' plays out throughout the book and helps to strike a balance between the extremes of each theme.

While *Jonathan Edwards and the Church* is aimed at an academic audience, the book will appeal to academics, clergy and intent readers of all stripes. It reads easily and engagingly covering a wide variety of theological and social topics with ease. From start to finish Bezzant is comfortable with Edwards as his primary interlocutor and with the host of secondary voices in the galleries. If there is one minor quibble it is that the diachronic path can make tracing certain theological themes hard at times, but not insurmountable. Although he provides little modern theological application, this is likely of benefit as the observations in *Jonathan Edwards and the Church* are at their best when properly digested and contextualised. Ultimately it is fitting to end with the words that Bezzant chose to end his book with: 'His [Edwards's] insights, scattered amongst his works, can be for us today a modest lamp for our path, even when we struggle to fulfil our own calling to be a city on a hill.' (260)

Chris Porter, Vic.

## What If?

Dealing with doubts

By Kristen Young

Fervr: CEP, 2014



**W**hether you are a teenager or you work with teenagers, Kristen Young's compact book: *What If? Dealing with Doubts*

is an excellent resource to help stimulate your thinking about the key apologetic issues associated with the Christian faith.

In her foreword, Young invites the reader to see each theme as *Beginnings of answers*. As an accompaniment, however, she includes references at the end of each section to further related reading materials authored by well-known Christian leaders and thinkers. Therefore while this work is designed with teenagers in mind, it is both robust in its treatment of apologetic issues

as well as thorough in scope for the reader to independently delve deeper into the issue.

Secondly, Young also invites the reader to utilise *What If?* as a reference guide, suggesting that the reader is likely to not necessarily read the book from cover-to-cover but rather refer to the various sections that are immediately relevant to them.

The book itself is in a type of narrative style that feels more like a dialogue than a monologue. Organised around five broader themes of *God, Jesus, the Bible, Me and Life*, Young has structured the themes around the kind of questions teenagers might ask, i.e. *Is doubt wrong? ... What if ...? ... and So what?* What follows is an easy-to-read blend of personal testimony, examples of young people Young has known or worked with, scripture references and a rich unpacking of scriptural themes in 'teenage-speak.' All this is woven together exceptionally well.

A stand-out feature of the book is that amidst the stories and the questions, Young provides meaningful pause for thought. Whether the reader is well-connected in a Christian community or is using the book as their sole means of exploration of the Christian faith, the book doesn't simply ask *Is doubt wrong?* (or any question) but invites the reader to explore where their doubt might come from, what external factors influence our capacity to follow Jesus whole-heartedly, etc. The reader is gently invited into a deep heart-exploration while also being provided with the rigorous head-information needed to not immediately dismiss uncomfortable concepts. Each chapter also ends with a helpful summary.

Young provides helpful thinking to challenge popular myths such as truth is relative, science has rendered faith irrelevant, a Christian is a person who never sins, people suffer because of bad karma and salvation is something that we have to earn. When explaining grace in relation to John 3.16, Young good-humoredly writes: "The verse doesn't say, 'God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that whoever tries really, really, really hard to be a good person and doesn't stuff up might have eternal life is they're good enough,'" here again demon-

strating a good knowledge of her target audience as well as insight into the perhaps unspoken fears of the heart.

In recent months, my wife and I have written and presented an apologetic series for our church. Having done so, I appreciate the challenge of translating gospel truth to a modern secular context. Young's book demonstrates a great depth of experience and insight into the culture she is writing for and has done a masterful job of communicating these truths with integrity, wisdom and grace. No small task! May this work bear much fruit for his kingdom and his glory.

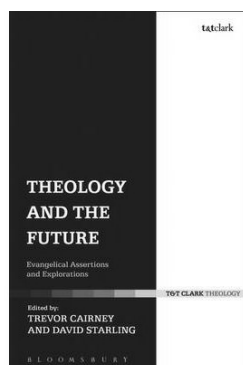
*Adam Cetrangolo, Caulfield South, Vic.*

## Theology and the Future

*Evangelical Assertions and Explorations*

**Edited by Trevor Cairney  
and David Starling**

T & T Clark, 2014



**L**ife is not easy for theology at the head of the 21st century. After centuries in the ascendant as *Regina Scientiarum* the past 250 years have seen her stripped of her regalia and cast from her throne. Once acknowledged as the voice of wisdom, the very counsellor of kings, she now calls from outside the halls of power, and even then she is rarely listened to (what, after all, could she possibly have to contribute?). Once seen as the one to connect all spheres of knowledge to form a coherent vision of the whole, she is now derided by the academy as an irrational non-subject (though she may be mercifully permitted to continue her futile labour so long as she doesn't

cause any trouble, ensures that her operations remain quarantined within the bounds set for her, and manages to get enough students to keep herself financially viable). Once prized and honoured in the Church as directive of the life of God's people, she is now regularly treated with suspi-

**"If theological modernism has been characterised by a belief that the Great Tradition has run its course ... contributors to this collection see the opposite as the case"**

cion as both divisive and disconnected from the practicalities of discipleship. In the public square, the university, and even the Church, theology's fortunes have declined, and as a consequence, the question of her future is, for many, moot.

And for that reason it is wonderful to have the collection of essays that make up *Theology and the Future* available to us. Going against the tide of current secularist and positivist opinion, the contributors to this book contend, and seek to demonstrate, that theology not only has on-going viability both in its own right and as a contributor to the broad range of contemporary conversations; it even stands as the critical voice in those conversations. Within the bounds of that shared conviction, the fifteen essays are marked by a diversity that resists simple summary in a review like this. Consequently, rather than focusing upon particular contributions for appreciation and critique, allow me to highlight two themes that are discernable through the whole and which seem to constitute, for many of the contributors, critical elements in their vision of theology's future, and to raise one question of the collection.

### Depth: Retrieval.

If theological modernism has been characterized by a belief that the Great Tradition has run its course and needs to be rejected if theology is to have any staying power, contributors to this collection see the opposite as the case: it is through the retrieval of the classical sources and judgments of theology that theology stands to



flourish. This is a major point of Michael Allen's opening essay, but such a conviction is discernable within the arguments and appeals of most. Of particular note is the example within several papers of a recent, more widely observable theological surprise: the recovery of classical theism. Such a recovery was virtually unimaginable 20 years ago; yet here, explicitly within Stephen Long's essay and embedded within those of Allen, Helm, Birkett and others, is a confidence that the future of Theology proper lies in the Theology proper of the past.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Breadth: Inter-disciplinary engagement.**

Christian theology has traditionally understood its field of study to be 'God, and all things as they relate to God'. Consequently, it is an intellectual discipline that has concerned itself with *everything*. These essays see theology's future as lying in a similarly catholic engagement. Against external attempts to keep theology cocooned within a limited field, and internal desires to retreat into the safety of that cocoon, these theologians have a cheerful confidence in taking up conversation with such diverse fields as educational theory (McDowell), literature (Jensen), the arts (Hart and Searle), the science and philosophy of emergence (Birkett), the nature of the modern city (Smith), and so on. In a cultural and academic context in which specialisation is the norm and secular rationalism would bid us operate with disconnected 'facts' – a context in which, as Chesterton put it, everything matters except *everything* – these essays demonstrate the imaginative resources of the gospel to enable a comprehensive and connected vision of humanity and the world, one which holds far more promise for the future than more atomised approaches.

#### **A question of length: voices from the majority world.**

Two essays in this collection address the future of theology from a non-Western perspective: Yeo's call for humble cross-cultural conversation in the church and Chung's illuminating discussion of the future of theology in Asia. (Another intended essay, on the future of theology in Africa, was unable to be completed due to illness.) That these essays are included is a great

strength of the book; yet given that the shift of the Church's energetic core from the West to the global South will be, arguably, the greatest shaping force for the future of Christianity and of theology with it, we might ask whether two essays (with a third intended) out of fifteen gives sufficient attention to this part of the Body of Christ. In particular, it would have been helpful to see theologians from the majority world contributing essays, not simply discussing Christianity in the majority world, but carrying out constructive theological work in their own right, as a glimpse of what the future may hold. Of course, the theological heritage of the West

**"These theologians have a cheerful confidence in taking up conversation with such diverse fields as educational theory, literature, the arts, the science and philosophy of emergence, the nature of the modern city..."**

is something that will be of on-going importance – this affirmation is inherent in any vision of theology's future that acknowledges the importance of retrieval (and indeed, picking up again the return to classical theism, such metaphysics are in many ways as foreign to the West today as they are to the South). But the church in the West – and perhaps we who are Anglican in particular – need to be quick and eager to listen to and dialogue with those brothers and sisters who represent what is increasingly the centre of gravity in the church's mission and ministry, and no doubt will become so of her theology as well. We have much to contribute to the strengthening and equipping of the Majority church; but we equally have much to learn and receive from them. Any exploration of the future of theology will consequently benefit from their more extensive representation.

*Thom Bull, Ellenbrook, WA*

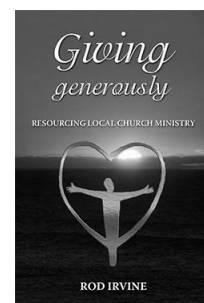
<sup>1</sup> This return to classical theism is evident amongst recent Protestant (e.g. John Webster), Roman Catholic (e.g. Tom Weinandy) and Orthodox (e.g. David Bentley Hart) theologians.

### **Giving Generously**

*Resourcing Local Church Ministry*

**By Rod Irvine**

Barton Books, 2015



**T**his book is as much about a personal journey as it is about raising money. It tells the story of Rod Irvine and how he grew in his understanding of this important area of ministry during his tenure as Rector of Figtree Anglican Church in Wollongong. He talks about overcoming his fears and the breakthroughs that happened both personally and corporately as he applied the principles he writes about.

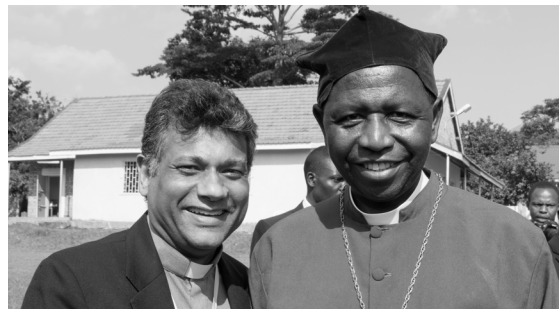
Of course there is much theory and great practical advice set out in the book which any leader in the church can take hold of and use in their own ministry context. Rod is widely read in this area and draws on much academic research as well as the insights of other church leaders. The book is well grounded in the latest literature on the raising of church finances. What makes it so readable is the way Rod sets this theory in the midst of his struggles and wrestling with both God and his people through the ups and downs of parish ministry.

This is the work of a pastor rather than prophet. Rod is concerned with resourcing the ministry of a local church to enable it to preach the gospel and win others to Christ. He understands the need for gathering people around a vision and being the leader who enables that vision to happen. He is not an Amos haranguing people about their hedonistic materialism and calling on them to repent in dust and ashes. He is a pastor seeking to woo his people to the higher ground of greater generosity.

Rod advocates using all of the program he sets out in the book and to not take

## The Church of Uganda

How would you like to be at a clergy conference of four thousand? **Kanishka Raffel** brings us a snapshot of his recent visit to Uganda, where he discovered some important spiritual roots of the church in missionaries, martyrs and revival.



Kanishka Raffel (L) and Abp Stanley Ntagali. (R) Photo: Chris Dobson

shortcuts. Is this helpful advice? The story is set in the suburb of Figtree in Wollongong. This is a 'typical' Australian suburban setting which should find a ready application in most of the cities of our country. There may be however some depressed rural areas and poor urban settings where the principles he outlines have to be applied very selectively. Some ministers may feel their temperament differs considerably from Rod and therefore the principles don't apply to them. While every leader must find their own voice it is important not to use this as an excuse to skirt around the spiritual battle that is involved in this area of ministry. To not take shortcuts is generally good advice however all ministry has a context and packaged programs need to respect that context.

The book is very practical with appendices covering the role of the senior minister, sample letters, sample commitment cards, and a sample sermon. There are references to many Bible passages throughout the book. A scripture index would improve access to the comments on these passages. There are great illustrations and quotes which could be used in sermons but will be difficult to find when returning to the book later.

This is a book by a church leader for church leaders. It will help you improve the financial condition of your church but more importantly it will help you raise the level of vision, faith and discipleship in your church. Being a personal story it is highly readable as well as offering the practical advice that raises much needed money for ministry.

*Chris Johnson, North Pine, QLD.*

**R**ecently I had the great privilege of taking part in the Provincial All Clergy Conference of the Church of Uganda, a member church of the worldwide Anglican Communion, and a founding member of the doctrinally orthodox renewal movement, the Global Anglican Future Conference. The conference was presided over by the Archbishop of Uganda, the Most Rev'd Stanley Ntagali and all 35 Diocesan Bishops were in attendance along with no less than 2500 clergy. This was only the third time in the history of the Province that a national clergy conference has taken place, the last having occurred 35 years ago.

The Church of Uganda was established through the pioneering work of two English CMS missionaries in 1877. In 1885 another CMS missionary, James Hannington was consecrated the first Bishop of East Africa but he was murdered at the order of the King of Buganda before taking up his ministry. Bishop Hannington was among the first of 55 Anglican and Roman Catholic martyrs put to death between 1885 and 1887 for refusing to renounce their Christian faith and participate in immoral and idolatrous activity commanded by the King. The sacrificial, gospel-minded zeal of the early CMS missionaries and the bravery and faithfulness of the Uganda Martyrs are much honoured roots of the spiritual life of the Ugandan church.

In 1929 another CMS missionary, Dr Joe Church joined in a few days of prayer with a Ugandan Christian, Simeon Nsibambi. From their encounter with God through close study of the Scriptures and a deep work of repentance and unity through the Holy Spirit, a movement of God began that saw thousands of people come to Christ in Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya. This movement which lasted well into the 1940s came to be known as the East Africa Revival. The East Africa Revival is a third taproot of the spiritual life of the Church of Uganda. It is an evangelical Anglican church with a deep confidence in the bible as the Word of God, the necessity of prayer and godly living, and the urgency of the task of making known the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

From the earliest days of the Church of Uganda the church has been at the forefront of providing education and medical care to the citizens of Uganda at a local and affordable level (which often means, without charge). As a result, the church is deeply connected with the local communities in which it is placed. Clergy are involved not only in the spiritual nurture and 'cure of souls' but as advocates for justice and equity and mediators between government, business

and local communities. But in the midst of this there is an abiding commitment to the proclamation of the gospel and the call to personal repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

The conference was held in the ground of the Uganda Christian University which began its life in the 1920s at the Bishop Tucker School of Divinity. In the mid-1990s, the school expanded to become a full university

offering degrees in nursing, business, communications, teaching, law and medicine. All students at the University undertake foundation courses in Old and New Testament and Christian Ethics. The School of Divinity continues to train the clergy of the Church of Uganda and is in the process of developing a qualification in Child Development. Seventy seven per cent of the population of Uganda is under the age

of 30 years. Dr Alfred Olwa, the Principal of the School of Divinity is eager to take up the opportunity to train Child Development officers (the expected need is 5000) who will be competent not only in social and health sciences but also theology and ministry, so that their work can be approached from a 'whole person' perspective. A wonderful and timely vision for a new era of Christian service in Uganda!

#### **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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