ESSENTIALS

EFAC AUSTRALIA SUMMER 2016-7

BIBLE STUDY

BOOK REVIEWS

The 'good old days'?

The olden days feature in this issue. Some may wish to label Peter Brain's article as a product of the 'sentimental generation'. John Yates' article might be regarded as antiquarian by some.

These articles remind us of the problem of what happens a generation or so after the 'good old days' (or after a big revival). Both Methodism and Pentecostalism can be seen as heirs of the eighteenth century revival. Nowadays neither look like the kind of religious communities overseen by Whitfield and Wesley.

We rightly praise God for the remarkable growth of the church in Africa, Asia and South America. But what will sustain the present life of those churches to the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of today's saints?

Forms continue but hearts change. Ideas and doctrines change slowly, as much under the power of the culture as under the power of the Word and Spirit.

Pauline Dixon, Ben Underwood and others in this issue help us apply our minds to questions and issues of our generation. But making these days the 'good old days' for the next generation also means doing the inner things that each good generation has done before: knowing God deeply; living by the Spirit; following Christ; hearing God's word; doing what God has said; having fellowship with the Father and the Son and those who belong to the Son; taking time to call out to God; having our minds transformed.

Our days should also become the 'good old days' if we pass on not just form and ideas, but the secrets of how hearts grow to know and love God: 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.'

Dale Appleby, WA
Editor

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

Essentials is published by EFAC Australia. www.efac.org.au. ISSN 1328-5858

Editorial correspondence
Dale Appleby, Editor
13 Paddington St Bayswater, WA 6053
essentialsed@gmail.com

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

Subscriptions
Renew your subscription. Give a gift subscription. Become a member of EFAC. Renew your membership. Donate to EFAC. Do it all now at:

www.efac.org.au

efac

Why we must pay attention to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

Pauline Dixon is an Executive Manager in a not for profit agency working with families and children in WA. She attends St Matthew's Shenton Park.

Over the last two years Australia has been subject to a gradual awakening of what makes up part of our history, a history that has until now remained out of the public realm. News items depicting courageous survivors of abuse suffered in major institutions have shaken the community, the church and those who work with families and children. The public hearings are only one part of the work of the Royal Commission, with survivors having the option of private hearings. As of October 1, 2016, the Royal Commission has received 34,863 calls, 19,848 letters and emails, 5,961 private sessions and has made 1,703 referrals to authorities including the police.

The commissioners have made a number of keynote presentations at conferences during this time and even for those who work in the field and are aware of the consequences of abuse, the stories have been harrowing. Case studies paint a picture of vulnerable children and breach of trust by adults who should have been caring for them. They tell complicated stories that unfortunately implicate many of our churches and people in authority who either were active abusers or could have managed the disclosures differently. The work of the Royal Commission is ongoing. Although many of the stories happened last century when there was a different understanding of children, much of what has been learned is applicable today. We ignore it at our peril.

As a social worker who started my career in child protection and has worked with families and children for 27 years, the work of the Royal Commission is a welcome development in our responsibility towards children in the community, particularly those who are vulnerable and whose voices have been ignored. Despite my affinity with the subject, I have been surprised at the extent of the abuse, the misuse of power and the nature of our institutions that have failed to protect children or act when it was clear that something was wrong.

My own motivation to become a social worker and commence my career in child protection was not clear at the time I made the decision to follow this path. On reflection I am aware that things I noticed and that made me uncomfortable were actually signals of something that should not have been allowed to happen. There was a paedophile in our local community, and he preyed on the children at our church and they disclosed to me. As a fourteen year old I was not equipped to know what to do; however, I listened, believed and reported what I had been told, which are key features of what needs to occur when abuse is present in a community. There were not the systems and processes available that there are today and I'm sure this experience helped propel me into my chosen career path.

The secrecy and denial around abuse has an ongoing traumatic effect on survivors. This is a major reason why we must pay attention to the work and findings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. We cannot pretend it hasn't happened and unless we work to make our institutions safer for children, it will continue to occur. Sexual abuse still happens today and we can learn from the extensive work of the Royal Commission. They are doing much more than simply listening to the stories and confronting those who should have known better. They are conducting crucial pieces of research to establish new ways of working that will ensure the abuse of the past never takes place again. They are uncovering many layers of the misuse of power by the perpetrators and the many people around them who either didn't believe the children concerned or whose interests were served by covering it up.

It is helpful to understand sexual abuse as a process rather than an event as this recognises the complex dynamics that allow abuse to occur. Finklehor (1984) suggests that there are four preconditions which must be met before sexual abuse can occur:

1. A potential offender (needs) to have some motivation to abuse a child sexually.
2. The potential offender (has) to overcome internal inhibitors against acting on the motivation.
3. The potential offender (has) to overcome external impediments to committing sexual abuse.
4. The potential offender or some other factor (has) to undermine or overcome a child's possible resistance to the sexual abuse.

Confronting as these preconditions are, it is clear that many stories coming from the Royal Commission, particularly those covered on the news, are of vulnerable children who were preyed upon by those highly motivated to abuse. Institutional structures were not enough of an external impediment to those determined to commit abuse. At a conference I attended last year I heard the story of a social worker who had been placed in a church-run boys' home as part of his educational placement in the early 1980s. The home was ruled by harsh corporal punishment and the dom-

inance of the physically aggressive older boys. The way the institution was run allowed the older boys to prey on the younger boys, and the gentle student on placement was no match for them. The reasons for the ongoing nature of abuse are complex and there are many who worked in places where they knew things were not okay but they were as powerless as the children to do anything about it.

The Royal Commission has commissioned a number of pieces

"We are given the greatest responsibility when parents entrust their children to the programs run in our churches"

of research as part of its terms of reference. One such piece has been an inquiry into what institutions and governments should do to better protect children against sexual abuse and related matters in institutional contexts. Although many institutions have been working on improving their protection of children, the Royal Commission has a role in future planning.

According to the Royal Commission's website it has:

'identified the elements of a child safe institution, tested the elements with feedback obtained from a panel of 40 Australian and international independent experts, including academics, children's commissioners and guardians, regulators and other child safe industry experts and practitioners... As part of the final report there will be a volume dedicated to making institutions child safe with a number of recommendations on ways in which children can be better protected through: implementing the child safe elements, building the capacity of institutions and holding institutions to account through independent oversight and monitoring.'

It also outlines the elements of a Child Safe Institution:

1. Child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture
2. Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
3. Family and communities are informed and involved
4. Equity is promoted and diversity respected
5. People working with children are suitable and supported
6. Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focussed
7. Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training
8. Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur
9. Implementation of child safe standards is continuously reviewed and improved
10. Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe

Although the work of the Royal Commission is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, as Christians we have a higher authority in the Bible, the word of God. The picture presented in the Gospels of the relationship that Jesus had with children is a model for us in how we need to teach, cherish and respect children. One example is found in Matthew 19:14: 'Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these"'. In the Gospel of Mark there is a picture of Jesus overcoming the religious and cultural obstacles to embracing children's full and equal participation in the gospel. Bunge (2008) highlights that in the Gospel of Luke children play a prominent and important role. In Luke 9:46-48 and 18:15-17 Jesus points his disciples to children as exemplars of God's work in the world and affirms that hospitality toward children reflects one's attitude toward God. There are many other verses that exhort parents to teach and care for their children, enabling them to grow in their knowledge and understanding of their Father in heaven and of his Son our Lord Jesus. The history of what has happened in many religious institutions has hindered and harmed children. Child sexual abuse survivors recount how the abuse suffered at the hands of representatives of the church has severely affected their relationship with God and the church for their entire lives.

We are given the greatest responsibility when parents entrust their children to the programs run in our churches. It is incumbent on us to ensure that all who come in contact with children are safe to do so. We have an enormous job in rebuilding trust with survivors and with the broader community who are learning the sad and awful truth of the abuse of trust through the open sessions of the Royal Commission. There will be far and long reaching consequences for the place of the church in our community. It has been experienced across many denominations. We can only rebuild this trust by our individual practices within our local communities. We need to ensure that the kind of abuse that is coming to light never happens again. We need to pay attention to the findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission and implement the suggested changes if we have not already done so. Current minimum standards such as Working with Children's Check and National Police Clearance only pick up offences that have been through the court system; however, they do provide a deterrent to those who have been convicted. Educating and supporting our children's workers and encouraging children to speak up if they are uncomfortable are foundational in building a safe children's ministry. Developing a culture where children are respected and cherished, and where people know what to do when they are worried about a child, are good ways to ensure that our children will remain safe.

References

Bunge, M (ed). (2008). *The Child in the Bible*. Eerdmans.

Finklehor, D. (1984). *Child sexual abuse: new theory & research*. NY: The Free Press.

http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au

Enriching ministry through further study

Jill Firth writes about options for ministers who would like to refresh their ministry by further study.

Jill Firth recently finished a PhD on the Psalms. She is a lecturer in Hebrew and Old Testament at Ridley and an Associate Minister at St Paul's Cathedral Melbourne.

A **variety of options for further study** are available for those who hold a three year theological qualification, from enrolling in a Graduate Certificate to a PhD.

David has recently been appointed Vicar in his parish and is interested in upgrading his skills in Christian theology and leadership. Rachel is preparing a study series on Isaiah and wonders what has happened in Isaiah scholarship since she graduated a decade ago. Ian ministers in a remote location and wishes he could have more interaction on biblical and ministry topics to stimulate his thinking. Jan has long service leave coming up and wants to use it in a way that will refresh her ministry in the coming years.

David, Rachel, Ian and Jan are some of the people in ministry who have been attracted in the past few years to return to theological college for further study in biblical and ministry subjects.

David did some internet research and chose to enrol in an MA (Theology) within the ACT. He found he could attend intensives through his local college in Perth, Trinity College, and could choose eight subjects from Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, Theology, Languages, Philosophy & Ethics, Evangelism & Mission, Developmental Ministry, Pastoral Church Focussed Ministry, and Integrative Studies. If he desired a shorter programme, he could exit with a Grad Dip after completing four subjects. If David lived in Adelaide, he could study a Grad Cert (two subjects), Grad Dip (four subjects) or MA (eight subjects) at BCSA. Similar options are found at ACT colleges throughout Australia, and David could travel to interstate ACT colleges to pick up topics of particular interest. At Moore College, the MA (Theology) is also offered; students must have achieved an adequate level of Greek exegesis. Ridley and other colleges also offer an MA in Ministry.

Rachel discovered that she could study for an MA in Theology or Ministry by attending a residential week-long intensive each year, in the Yarra Valley near Melbourne, in the Ridley MA Gold programme. She had the opportunity to hear recent scholarship from local and international faculty, as well as build up relationships and camaraderie with others with similar goals. Travel scholarships were available to attend from interstate. She also had the option of joining a study tour to Israel, Greece and Turkey, or Reformation Europe, with most of the costs covered by FEE-Help.

Ian realised that he could enrol online through MST in a Graduate Diploma to pick up subjects he had not previously covered in his degree, such as exegesis in Hebrews. He could also enrol through Ridley online to pick up subjects towards a Grad Cert, Grad Dip or MA. He could use his annual study leave to attend an MA intensive at an ACT college anywhere in Australia, or to join a study tour.

Jan was excited to find that she could enrol for a Graduate Certificate at the Mediterranean campus of Ridley College in Turkey. In one semester, she could complete subjects in Biblical Archaeology, the Book of Revelation and an Israel tour that would add insights to her sermons for years to come.

Photo: 'Studying' by Zwenzini, used under a creative commons licence.
flickr.com/photos/131918149@N07/18713999591

Australian Government rules allow for FEE-Help to be used for these tertiary degrees, including part of the costs of study tours. Students pay back their costs according to a schedule which considers their income level.

Clergy returning to study after a long period may like to get back into the study habit by some pre-reading related to the units they are looking forward to. Another useful idea is to offer a study group based on semester-long video courses designed for lay training from the Ridley Certificate or one of the online Moore College courses such as Moore Access, PTC or ITS. These courses are presented by expert lecturers and will help bring you up to speed on recent thinking in your discipline. Members of your parish who attend the course will also benefit, and will be further equipped to discuss your learning with you while you are studying.

Research degrees including MTh, DMin and PhD are on the agenda for some clergy. The MTh is a shorter degree, offered at colleges including Trinity Perth, BCSA and Ridley. The PhD can be undertaken full time (3 years) or part time (6 years) through the ACT. Contact the Research Coordinator of the college of your choice to find out more. Theological, ministry and biblical topics can also be chosen for a PhD through other universities, such as BCQ.

Ministers who return to study generally find it refreshing and reinvigorating. Time for study is best negotiated with the parish council, as squeezing it into days off will not work in busy periods. Appropriate enrichment leads to more productive ministry.

What happened to our piety?

Peter Brain recalls the warm piety of past evangelical leaders, and wonders whether we will be weakened by losing something vital that these leaders experienced and cultivated.

Bishop Peter Brain, formerly Bishop of Armidale, NSW, is Rector of Rockingham, WA.

This important question was raised by Rory Shiner in his thoughtful review of Allan Blanch's biography of Sir Marcus Loane (*Essentials* Spring 2016). I tread warily as I seek to offer some thoughts on this important issue which has occupied my own thinking over the last decade or so.

My own assessment of statesmen like Marcus Loane, Leon Morris and John Stott is that whilst they may have been unique in extraordinary gifts and iron discipline, they were not alone in terms of their personal piety and godliness. As one who attended a typical Sydney evangelical parish from Sunday School in 1954, through youth group in the 1960s, being converted in late 1964 (during which time Loane was at Moore and then Bishop and Archbishop till his retirement in 1981), I recall a deep piety among our clergy and lay leaders which mirrored that of Loane, Morris and Stott. It was standard fare to have a quiet time which included Bible reading and prayer. Church was primarily a time of worship which included teaching and training within the context of warm-hearted and caring fellowship. Within a week or so after my coming to Christ I was encouraged by one of the laymen of our parish 'to try to read the Bible every day and expect God to speak to you.'

I mention this because during the last 25 years daily Bible reading appears to have decreased (judged by the decline in Bible reading notes) and the worship aspect of church downplayed at best and sometimes denied. There is little doubt that this has diminished us all with the result that we expect far too much from each other and not nearly enough from God. Without realising it, our piety has morphed into a reliance on the approval of others and a dependency on their wisdom rather than our heavenly Father's leading and strength. Ironically the casualty has been our much sought-after fellowship. It is far easier to talk about the Bible and its wonderful teachings than about the God of the Bible. As I look back on my own opportunities to encourage my peers, I fear I talked more about exegesis than my experience of God and this often led to criticism of fellows, especially leaders. Sharing experiences of our heavenly Father's faithfulness were squandered. Fellowship was severely diminished because I did not have as much to give since I had not received as much as God would have given. I am not sure where this came from. It did not happen overnight yet I fear that it has happened. Hence the question raised by Rory in his review.

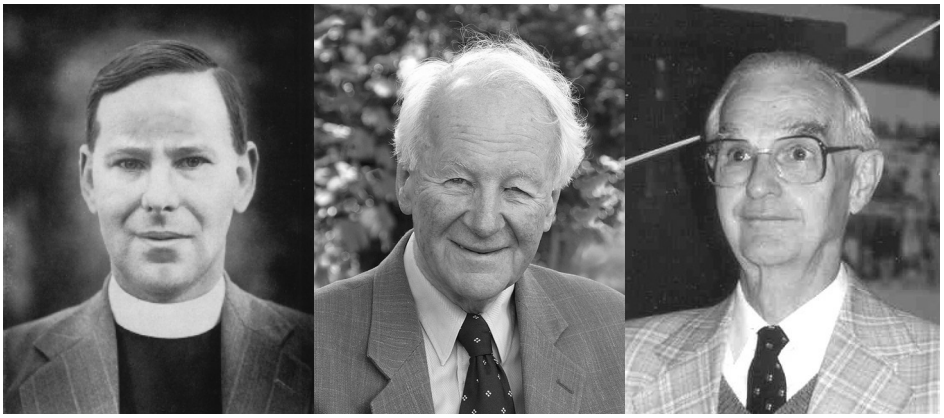
Very often our weaknesses flow out of our strengths. Our strength as evangelicals is that we love the Bible because we are committed to revealed truth and converted by its core message. Add to this J. I. Packer's observation that the evangelical and reformed system of theology, especially within our Anglican expression, is very satisfying and intellectually stimulating, and we can see how we might settle for a diminished experience of God. The careful exegesis of the text held together in a rational and thoughtful way can so easily become an end in itself since it is so intellectually satisfying. The means can become the end. Perhaps we settle for less because it is somehow easier to talk about the Bible and its treasures than our ever-generous God whose fellowship is to be treasured above all else.

I saw this happen in the 1970s with the rise of the charismatic movement. In evangelical responses to that movement it was often remarked that 'it is not the work of the Spirit within but the work of Christ outside us that saves us'. Biblical balance should

> **"we expect far too much from each other and not nearly enough from God"**

have helped us to cherish these twin acts of God's grace since they are obviously both necessary for our salvation. At a later time we found ourselves talking more about the Risen Christ than the Living Christ. We rightly defended the bodily resurrection, but somehow forgot that his resurrection means he lives and dwells within (Col 1:28 and Rev 3:20). Marcus Loanes's tract on Revelation 3:20 was criticised as not appropriate for evangelism since the text is addressed to lukewarm Christians. This point was noted by Loane in the tract. But surely the prescription to lukewarm Christians can be applied to non-Christians since the New Testament envisages Christ's presence in us, and we regularly appeal to Col 2:6-7 that we go on as disciples in the same way that we began. I have to confess to teaching the youth group that it was better to sing 'Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so' than 'you ask me how I know he lives? He lives within my heart'. I am astounded by my eccentric teaching and emphasis since both are taught in the scriptures and have been an essential pairing in evangelical devotion, testimony and piety. What happened served to make us less likely to speak to each other of subjective experiences. I fear this has contributed to the piety gap and worse, our ability to find nourishment and contentment in difficult circumstances.

The New Testament church that scares me more than any other is that in Ephesus. It was clearly one that displayed warm commitment to the apostle (Acts 20), played a vital part in the church plants of the Lychus Valley, loved sound doctrine, hated immorality and displayed remarkable perseverance (Rev 2:1-7).



L to R: Marcus Loane, John Stott and Leon Morris

However, they heard that devastating indictment of our Risen Lord: 'I have this one thing against you; you have lost your first love'. I am scared because this sounds like the evangelical church I want to be part of and for which I've laboured. Living in an age where the love of many continues to grow cold—except perhaps love for our own group, which of course is not Christ-like love—I find that I must be nurtured by more than reminders of God's objective love for me (Rom 5:8). The subjective love of the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5) and fellowship with the living Christ (Rev 3:20, Col 1:28 and John 14-16) have been at the heart of evangelical piety and proved to be the means of sustaining Christians through thick and thin, in congenial and difficult circumstances alike.

One reason why Loane, Morris and Stott were not unique is the observable pastoral fact that in the 1950s and 60s it was the norm for men and women to teach Sunday school and school Scripture, and lead youth groups for years on end (when many worked five and a half days a week and enjoyed only two weeks annual leave). Now it is a matter of great rejoicing to have someone commit to a term! Could there be a link between warm-hearted piety and whole-hearted commitment? At another level, Christians who sustained themselves by reliance upon God in worship and the fellowship of the living Christ through the Holy Spirit seemed to be happier to put up their hands to serve in tougher, smaller and less-noticed places.

Another evidence of the piety gap may be the move away from speaking of the call to ordained ministry. It is often suggested that there is no clear prescriptive text suggesting a call to ministry. Older evangelicals unashamedly asked God to confirm their sense of leading and expected the Holy Spirit to give them a clear assurance for such an important step. When this expectant leading is replaced simply with encouragement from fellow Christians, an important element of pastoral confidence and ability to handle disappointment and loneliness is removed. The danger of this flattened approach may lead us to seek reliance and encouragement only from others.

"The subjective love of the Holy Spirit and fellowship with the living Christ have been at the heart of evangelical piety"

I fear that we may, unintentionally be leading to what I would call 'christism', something akin to deism, an absent Christ. The wonderful evangelical revival of the eighteenth century was, I recall, diminished by the middle of the next century by deism. God was still believed in, but he was essentially absent and disinterested. This led to a joyless, arm's-length experience that inevitably spawned a formal, anti-supernatural faith and practice. Evangelicals kept themselves alive and vibrant with a warm-hearted piety that found deep joy and assurance from the Scriptures, mediated by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. This was in reality the living Christ within, to be with them always, as promised in Matthew 28:20.

As one who had the great privilege of hearing Loane, Morris and Stott preach on a number of occasions, there was never any doubt that God had spoken through these servants with an authority that transcended their thorough preparation and compelling delivery. I am sure that this can only be put down to the fact that they knew the God of their Bibles as well as they knew their Bibles.

"they knew the God of their Bibles as well as they knew their Bibles"

A great blessing of biographies is that we are challenged. To have been able to learn from Christian leaders like these will always be a two-edged experience. The obvious challenge of exceptionally gifted and disciplined Christians causes us to examine our own discipleship. The great thing about these three is that they would remind us above all else that they, with us, stand before God only as forgiven sinners saved by his marvellous grace to us in Christ, sheeted home by the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, like the converted apostle they would remind us that God's grace is always given that we might work hard at the good works God has prepared for us (Eph. 2:10 and 1 Cor. 15:10). One of these, of course, is to play our part in bringing the message of Christ to our generation. One of God's means in doing this is to allow the clear strengths of such leaders, which in my experience was evident in many—men and women, lay and ordained—of their era.

I trust that these observations may be a help to us in our ongoing discipleship and a solemn charge to hand on to others what has been delivered to us. The words of A. Morgan Derham: 'If we do not consider the errors of our predecessors, we shall repeat them; if we do not contemplate their victories, we rob ourselves of our rightful heritage', remain timely.

The lost spirit of Communion

John Yates is Acting Chair of the Evangelical Alliance Foundation.

My experience as a church goer across various Bible-believing denominations is that the default understanding of the Lord's Supper is Zwinglian. The central agent in the divine-human encounter at the Supper is the believer who acts by faith to personalise his or her relationship with God. In these appropriationist models of salvation stress is laid on receiving what Christ has done for us. There is a focus on knowing the benefits of Christ rather than abiding in our present union with the Lord. It seems many evangelicals have so elevated the audible word above the visible word of the sacrament (Augustine) that they could abandon Communion altogether without feeling substantial loss. My theological father in rejecting approaches which stress the efforts of personal piety in favour of a much more elevated spirituality has long been John Calvin (*Institutes* 4.14 and 17 especially). Calvin directs our attention to how the Spirit of the ascended heavenly Lord instructs us through the very materiality of the sacramental elements that our salvation is fully complete in Christ (cf. Col 2:9-10). The liturgical exhortation 'Lift up your hearts' (Origen) is a provocation to realise by faith through the action of the Supper that we are 'seated with Christ in the heavenly places' (Eph 2:6). As such we participate in the communion of the Father with the humanity of Jesus in heaven through the ministry of the Spirit. A recovery of the glorious heavenly dimensions of our union with Christ in the context of the Lord's Supper holds promise to reactivate in our midst the eschatological tension essential to New Testament discipleship.

Pointers from Calvin

Union with Christ is the famous central motif of Calvin's theology of salvation; 'as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us.' (*Inst*. 3.1.1). His key text for asserting a real participation in the body of the risen Christ through the Supper is 1 Corinthians 10:16; 'The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?' The parallelism between 'blood of Christ', which in the New Testament never refers to the Church, and 'body of Christ' makes it clear that some form of spiritual communion with the physical body of Jesus is meant. Avoiding both subjectivism and philosophically-grounded interpretations of objective local presence, Calvin adopts a Trinitarian framework in understanding the grace of the sacrament. Central to the divine-human interaction in the Supper is the life of the ascended Lord communicated by the Spirit.

Calvin intentionally employs paradoxical language in speaking of a descent of Christ 'by which he lifts us up to himself.' (*Inst.* 4. 17.16). The ascended, glorified humanity of Christ acts as a 'channel' for the power and life of his deity communicated to us (*Inst.* 4, 17:10, 12). Such talk of being lifted up to heaven to feed there on Christ is consistent with where the writers of the New Testament see the present location of the Church. For example, 'you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,' (Heb 12:22 cf. Eph 2:6; Gal 4:26). This is why our eucharistic piety is attested 'in the presence of the Lord and of his angels' (*Inst.* 4.14.1).

Consistent with his insistence on the real humanity of Jesus with a body presently localised in heaven (*Inst.* 4.17.12), Calvin invokes the ministry of the Spirit to unite what is separated by space (*Inst.* 3.1.1; 4:17.10); 'the secret power of the Spirit is the bond of our union with Christ' (*Inst.* 4.17.33). Such a vital role for the Holy Spirit in the Lord's Supper follows from the broader fact that it is always the Spirit who unites us with the Son's relationship with the Father (Rom 8:9-16 etc). The Spirit is the agent who in resurrection has eschatologically transformed the humanity of Christ making it available to God's elect (John 15:26-27; 1 Cor 15:20-22; 42-45; 1 Tim 3:16). In Christ by the Spirit through the Supper we encounter a nexus between the old and new creations which has immense application for sacramental practice.

The Goal of the Spirit

The Spirit imparts a sense of identity to the children of God and releases their cry, 'Abba! Father!' (Rom 8:15). This should be our experience as we behold the limitless grace of God in the Supper. Hence Calvin's enthusiasm about feeding on Christ, 'All, like hungry men, should flock to such a bounteous repast.' (*Inst.* 4.17.44, 46). Such sentiments seem however so counter-cultural to much contemporary Christian sacramental devotion as to suggest we have unwittingly grieved the eschatological dimensions of the Spirit's work.

To proclaim the Lord's death through eating and drinking in his presence 'until he comes' (1 Cor 11:26) should be a deeply intimate conjoint utterance of the Spirit and the Bride in an intense mutual longing for the consummation of all history in the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 22:17). The fellowship we have with Christ and one another in the Spirit at the Supper anticipates the fellowship of the messianic banquet of the *eschaton* (Luke 13:29; 22:15; Rev 19:9). The Spirit, by setting forth in the signs of the Supper our future as realised in the glorification of the ascended Jesus heightens the hunger of the church for the *not yet* beyond the *already*. As he lifts us up to our heavenly Lord we participate in a foretaste of the consummation of all things in Christ (Acts 3:21). From this perspective we can anticipate a 're-sacramentalising' of creation that will overcome a prevalent 'flattened Re-

formed theology of everyday life' (Preece). As the Spirit glorified the materiality of Jesus in resurrection and ascension, the very Lord with whom we have fellowship in Communion, so we understand the created order will be perfected in Christ. Such insight should stimulate active Christian concern and involvement in all the secular spheres of life. That such a vision is rare today indicates we have lost a functional eschatology; not the least because we have substituted the action of our faith for the power of the Spirit in the Lord's Supper. The service of Holy Communion should prevent us from settling down comfortably in this world and motivate us to costly discipleship. To illustrate let me use a personal example.

"Holy Communion should prevent us from settling down comfortably in this world"

Broken Again

During a recent Communion service a text came to mind that illustrates the eschatological force present in the celebration of the sacrament; 'They will look on the one they have pierced.' (Zech 12:10; John 19:37; Rev 1:7). John's Gospel sees Zechariah's words as prophetically fulfilled at the cross, but Revelation transposes the scene to the Second Coming when upon seeing Jesus multitudes will be moved to mourning and repentance. Through the broken bread and outpoured wine of the Supper the Spirit illuminates the Lordship of the one pierced and raised from the dead; it is this glory we proclaim 'until he comes' (1 Cor 11:26). By the enlightenment of the Spirit the eschatological fulfilment of the saving work of Christ is neither distant nor abstract but full of present power to transform our lives in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings for the redemption of the world (Phil 3:10). God through the Spirit places the desire in our hearts to live in the likeness of what we behold in the Supper; in love we desire to live broken and pierced lives in this world for the sake of others (Col 1:24). Such lives signify the end goal of all things in Christ. That the dominical commands, 'Do this in remembrance of me' and, 'Go and make disciples of all nations' are essentially one is a reality conveyed to the evangelical Church by the Spirit in her union with Christ (Matt 28:18-20; Luke 22:19).

Conclusion

'Evangelicals neglect the Supper at our peril. ... to disregard it is to put ourselves in danger of an eviscerated experience of God's gracious promises to us in his Son' (Mason). Formally, Christians of a Reformed bent affirm the 'wonderful exchange' (*Inst* 4.17.2) which brings us salvation in Christ. But how many of us are conscious that it is only as 'we are lifted up to heaven with our eyes and minds, to seek Christ there in the glory of his Kingdom' that we can 'have the full enjoyment of him' (*Inst.* 4.17.18)? The celebration of the Lord's Supper is a crucial place where we can be 'filled with the Spirit' and with an 'inexpressible joy filled with glory' (Eph 5:18-20; 1 Pet 1:8). Our joy experienced in Communion can be nothing less than a share in the joy of the Spirit's own fellowship with the glorious ascended Lord in the presence of the Father (John 15:11; Heb 12:2). Since the Lord's Supper opens up a foretaste of the Trinitarian fellowship in which we will be immersed forever it is intensely eschatological in orientation and expectation. If such assertions seem radical it is because we have been enculturated by an understanding of the Lord's Supper that is less than the light of the New Testament witness. If we are not excited by the prospect of meeting the Lord in his Supper then I fear we are guilty of a real quenching of the Spirit (1 Thess 5:19). *Maranatha* (1 Cor 16:22).

Ministering to each generation

Mark McDonald is Coordinating Minister of the St Hilary's site in Kew, Victoria.

At any given time in the life of a local church it aims to reach the people in their community with the Good News about Jesus Christ. In seeking to do so each local church must engage with people who are shaped and formed by the culture in which it exists. As each generation of children within their community grows up, they are shaped by the surrounding culture. And as this culture changes over time, the different cohorts of children are shaped in different ways creating distinctive generational groups.

Generation theory is not a new concept and there is still debate about how much it influences church styles and ministry approaches. Do we keep doing the same things we have always done, or do we adapt to the culture around us? The ministry reality for most churches is a bit of both; we preach the same gospel in different ways to differing generations.

So what are the key generations in our church?

In the post-WWII era the *Baby Boomers* grew society at such a fast pace because there were twice as many baby boomers as their parents. The culture expanded to include this boom in population growth. The first generation of dedicated youth ministers grew up to reach this generation.

After the baby boom of the postwar era, the population growth was more moderate through the 1970s and 1980s. The next generation to come through society are known as *Generation X*. There

were slightly less Gen X people than Boomers and they always felt they were in the shadow of the Boomers. Many Gen X grew up in a church with a separate youth ministry which aimed to keep young people from dropping out of the church.

Generation Y, or *Millennials,* were those that finished high school after 2000. This generation saw an expansion of communication technologies such as computers, mobile phones the creation of online social networking. There are slightly more Gen Y than Boomers.

The current group of children growing up right now are sometimes referred to as the *iGeneration* because of their use of iPads, iPhones and other technologies from birth. This generation will grow up in a church that is no longer dominant in their culture.

Some churches seek to minister to one particular generation and do that really well. They become experts at reaching that generation and attract people from that generation; they adapt ministry styles and programs to suit that generation. Other churches start with one generation and seek to add other generations in their focus over time. Usually these churches keep stage-of-life programs, but adapt them to each generation as the generations cycle through the church. For example, at St Hilary's Kew Reverend Peter Corney, one of Australia's first youth ministers, targeted his ministry to Baby Boomers when they were young. The style of ministry at St Hilary's was adapted to engage this generation with programs to suit their style and tastes. As Boomers grew out of the youth ministry and were replaced by Gen X, the church ministry team added programs to the ministry mix to reach both generations at the same time.

A decade ago when Gen Y moved into the children's and youth ministry, St Hilary's had to expand its ministry to cater for Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y. Now that a new generation of children comes into our children's ministry our church aims to minister to Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y and the iGeneration. Currently we are exploring how we will add the next generation of toddlers, Gen Alpha, into our ministry mix as well.

More generally, any local church that attracts a particular generation through children's ministry or youth ministry can develop ministry styles in one of three ways.

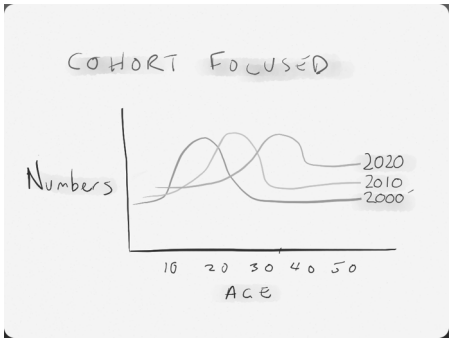
Three ways to approach generational ministry

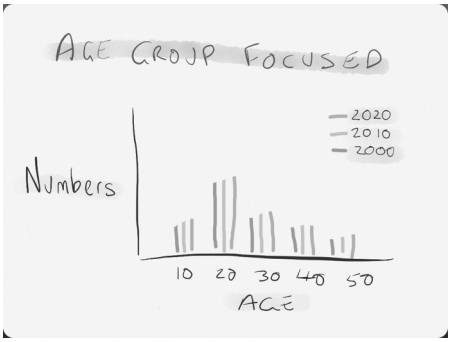
1. *Cohort focused* – These churches do well by attracting a targeted generation and travel through life with this same cohort of people or the same generation. If a church keeps developing programs for the people they have, who are all from within one generation, then the church will become dated and lose touch with successive generations.

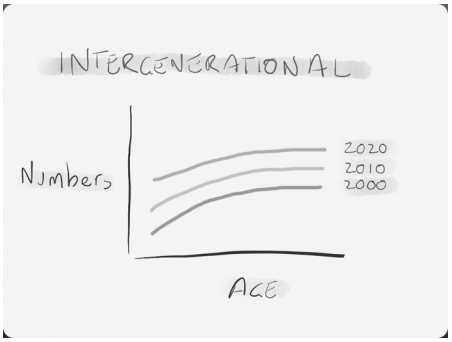
2. *Age group focused* – These churches focus on a stage of life and keep focusing on that same stage of life. So a church with a strong youth ministry may stay focused on youth ministry even though some members graduate to the young adult phase. These churches welcome other people to stay but they don't offer particular programs to every generation. People will be attracted to these churches if they are in the targeted stage of life but tend to leave once they reach a new stage of life.

3. *Intergenerational* – Thirdly, a church can aim to be multigenerational. Rather than going after one specific generation or one specific stage of life they seek to offer ministry to all generations through all stages of life. Whilst some churches say that they are multigenerational, this style of ministry is much more complex than being stage of life focused. It requires every generation to adapt to the times rather than staying fixed on how things have always been done before. Ministry to one generation can be hard enough, but catering to four generations at once? This task of being a multigenerational church is what many churches want to do, but it is the most difficult path. Many churches say they are multigenerational, but they just want young people to join the way they have been doing church for decades.

The challenge for our church at St Hilary's is to realise that we aren't just a Boomer church, even though Boomers were once the key targeted age group. Again, just because we once had a strong youth ministry in the past doesn't mean that St Hilary's is just a Gen Y church. Currently at St Hilary's we are seeking to minister to five generations at once; each generation with their own styles and needs. This is not the easiest path forward but it is the path that we feel God has called us to. With God's help we hope that we can pull it off.







‘I noticed you have a Healing Service… what happens there?’

Chris Allan opens the door on the Healing Service at St Andrew’s Cathedral in Sydney.

Christopher Allan is the leader of the Healing Ministry at St Andrew’s Cathedral, Sydney.

For some, the Healing Service at St Andrew’s Cathedral is something of an anomaly for the Anglican Diocese of Sydney – some have even suggested it’s a novelty. For those coming for prayer, however, theological debate and Diocesan stereotypes are the furthest things from their mind. They seek God’s divine healing.

The Cathedral’s weekly program has a diversity unlike many other churches. 1662 Book of Common Prayer Holy Communion and Evensong services sit beside the liturgy-free evening church where it’s not uncommon to see the preacher in shorts (even the Dean). Yet time and time again when talking to visitors to our cathedral who have done their homework visiting our website, they share the same question: “I noticed you have a Healing Service…what happens there?”

My answer is simple: we gather together to ask God to heal us. We respond to God’s mercy in prayer. We take comfort in God’s sovereignty in all things. And we rejoice in the knowledge of God’s love displayed in Jesus’ atoning death for us.

For close to sixty years the Healing Service has gathered in the Cathedral at 6pm every Wednesday night to pray for the needs of all those who come. And they all come. Homeless and rich. Doctors and accountants. Lawyers and civil servants. Teachers and nurses. Retirees and unemployed.

On my first visit, I was expecting to see a line of people in wheelchairs. Instead I saw people who looked like me. People impacted by sin. The litany of needs brought to God include depression, addiction, loneliness, sickness, anxiety, unemployment, disease, pain, grief, fear and guilt. People ask for prayer for themselves and loved ones.

The Healing Service is not dissimilar to the usual Sydney Anglican Church in the suburbs. That is to say, Scripture is read followed by a sermon based on the passage. Songs are sung. There is a little liturgy (confession and absolution). Supper follows the service. Regrettably, there are even announcements (they always take too long). But, significantly, there is substantial time allotted to personal prayer.

Towards the end of the service, personal prayer is offered. In particular, prayer for healing. Our prayer team respond to people who put their hands in the air by sitting beside our guests, asking what we may pray for, placing a hand on their shoulder and then asking God for healing.

Prayer for healing may be for physical, spiritual, emotional or relational needs. We make it clear that it is not a time of counselling or hearing confession. Our prayer team are not expert Christians or professional prayers. They themselves have been recipients of prayer at the Healing Service.

Visually, to see thirty hands go into the air, and then the same number of Christians moving amongst the pews to sit beside people is an amazing sight. Christians praying in twos and threes is an amazing physical sign of our dependence on God that we should be used to seeing.

The Healing Service seeks to be a safe place for people to receive a listening ear and believing prayer. As a church and as leaders of this ministry we are acutely aware of the excesses of some healing ministries and the damage they do to the gospel’s reputation. Interestingly, for those seeking prayer, this is often the least of their concerns, but it is always in our thoughts. We assume a fragility in all who attend. Our team members abide by a code of conduct (renewed annually). Our practice complements our Cathedral and Diocese.

We are unashamed in teaching that our most profound healing is spiritual. The forgiveness of our sins by the death of Jesus is our primary focus. We are overjoyed as a community when people come into the Cathedral for prayer and leave in a relationship with Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. People become Christians at the Wednesday Healing Service. When Phillip Jensen became Dean of the Cathedral, he noted publicly the incredible number of people who had become Christians through this ministry. C.S. Lewis spoke aptly when he said ‘God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.’

We are not embarrassed when God does not answer our prayers in the way we ask. We entrust ourselves to him. He is God. He is sovereign. Nothing is impossible for God. We ask for greater trust. We ask that in all things, his name may be glorified. We delight in shared experiences of pain and healing. Yet we are still left with questions, disappointments and grief as people on this side of Jesus’ return.

The Archbishop of Sydney, Glenn Davies, in his Presidential Address in 2016 said, ‘Prayer is one of God’s gifts of grace, which is essential for all our ministry, as it reminds us of our complete dependence upon God for how we live—or whether we live. Such miracles of healing are a fresh reminder of God’s love for us and of his desire that we continue to live for him and through him for his glory alone.’

We thank God for the privileges afforded to us in this ministry in the centre of Sydney that is neither anomaly nor novelty, but sits at the heart of the mission of the church: pointing people to a dependant relationship with God’s Son and the privilege of asking God to heal.

BIBLE STUDY

Co-existing with Compromise

"Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn."
Matthew 13:30

Every generation has its 'isms' which stand opposed to Christ's message and threaten to relegate Christianity to the history books. Islamism and big S Secularism worry us most today. The media tries desperately to convince us that Islam is a religion of peace. Most Muslims are peaceful; the religion itself proclaims peace upon the house of Islam, but in the 'house of war' – well, the name says it all. By big S Secularism I mean not the separation of church and state, but the attempt to create a world culture with God removed. These two 'isms' are happy to see Christianity in decline, and sometime they appear to prevail. There are other problems, of course, including apathy and revisionist versions of Christianity within our churches.

How Christians respond will depend in part on how threatened we feel. The Parable of the Weeds in Matthew 13 helps us see how Jesus felt about opposition.

'The kingdom of heaven', he said, 'is like a man who sowed his field with good seed, but an enemy came at night and over-sowed the crop with weeds'. You can imagine the dismay of the farmer and his servants when the plants appeared. The only thing for it was a mammoth weeding exercise. Anyone who has had any experience of gardening knows this is the best thing to do. So the farmer's decision to do nothing is more than surprising: 'Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters, "First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn."' It sounds like a lot of work for what is bound to be a very meagre return. I think any farmer listening may have scratched his head and remembered that after all Jesus was trained as a carpenter!

What in fact Jesus is revealing here is God's strategy for building his kingdom. John the Baptist announced that God was going to bring about a great separation of the righteous and the wicked; he would clear his threshing floor, gather the grain into his granary and burn the chaff with unquenchable fire. He expected that the Coming One would get straight to it. But now comes the Son of God preaching forgiveness and sowing the world-field with his life-producing gospel. And as the new life began to appear, so did all the other growth of 'isms'—the mutant gospels and apathy that have characterized the past two thousand years. Far from carrying out the great separation then and there, Jesus lets all grow together until the harvest. It was not as John imagined, nor did it please his disciples, but Jesus knew it was the best way to get the crop he longed for.

We should learn from this, firstly, that the kingdom of God will come. Jesus had no doubt about that; at the time of the harvest something will be found, and it will be a better harvest for doing things his way than any other. Second, we should see that it is the Lord's decision to allow his children to grow up in the midst of opposition. He could have ordered his servants to remove the weeds, but no, he allows all to ripen together. There must be a good reason for that.

Let us pause here and reflect how different Jesus' strategy is from that of Islam. Muslims, like us, want to see the kingdom of God established on earth. But their strategy is to create here and now a pure Muslim society and remove from it all who might bring contamination. Jesus words are sobering: 'No! In pulling the weeds you may root up the wheat.' Attempts to create a pure society have never succeeded. Not many years ago sixty million souls were rooted up in the USSR in the attempt. That was the 'Ism' of another generation. We must resist the temptation to think we Christians could do it better. The devil masquerades as an angel of light, and so do his children. If preferment is to be had through the Church, they will soon find a way to take over. Sadly, most of those who were weeded out in the days of Church power were God's true children.

The third lesson—from the parable's interpretation—is that the great separation is not to be carried out by humans, but by angels. God once used Israel to make a separation, but much wheat ended up as weeds, and some weeds ended as wheat. At the end of the age God will send out his angels, and notice that the first thing they will do is gather the weeds. This is the reverse of our usual picture of Christ's coming. We imagine him coming to rescue his children from the world—taking them away to the home he has prepared for them. Not so! The weeds are removed first, and lo, the kingdom which God has been quietly preparing through the ages is found to be there all the time. And what a kingdom it is revealed to be! The Lord's strategy will turn out to have worked: there will not only be a harvest, but it will be a harvest of good fruit. 'The righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.'

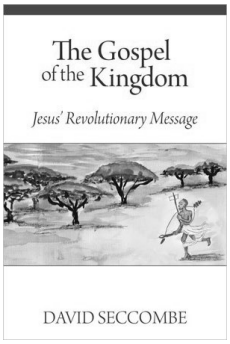
Jesus told this parable to instruct us about something vital. 'Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.' We should not despair at the prevalence of opposition and apathy. It has to be. We should get on with gospelling, sowing the seed that will grow the world-to-come. This is the way God has decreed that his kingdom will come.

David Seccombe was Principal of George Whitefield College in South Africa, and is now back in WA

BOOK REVIEWS

The Gospel of the Kingdom

Jesus' Revolutionary Message
David Seccombe
Whitefield Publications, 2016.



Do we really need another book on the gospel of the Kingdom of God? One would have thought the market is flooded. Many of us think we know the gospel back to front. Many of us think we are well aware of the foundations of our faith and believe that to re-examine the basics of the Christian message is a useful reminder but no more than that. I defy anyone to maintain this view after reading David Seccombe's latest book.

In C.S. Lewis' classic *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe,* when Aslan is asked what his rising from the dead means, he replies, 'It means that though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is magic deeper still that she did not know.' This book is about the deeper magic.

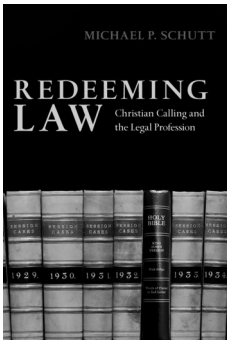
In this book the deep definition, the internal workings, the far-reaching ramifications and the global effect of Jesus' revolutionary message are examined with a clear and passionate mind. *The Gospel of the Kingdom* examines many of the questions we Christians have suppressed long ago. (E.g. where is the Kingdom now? Why is it justification by faith? What happens when we die?) It looks forward to the future and examines why the early Christians were so motivated. These are weighty themes but Seccombe's writing brings these topics to life. Though dense in subject matter this beautiful book is eminently readable, being without the usual gimmicks of lengthy anecdotes and long-winded metaphors. On reading it one feels as if one is absorbing the distillation of a lifetime spent pondering these wonderful things. Considering the subject matter it could easily be triple the length, but at about three hundred pages the writing is crisp, lean and unencumbered.

In short, this is a tremendous book from one of the nation's most original Christian thinkers and it deserves to become a classic. Seccombe has taken some of the most clichéd and hackneyed terms of the Christian faith and brought them back to the original and deep meaning that empowered the apostles in the first century and can still empower us today.

Tim Chappell, WA

Redeeming Law

Christian Calling and the Legal Profession
Michael Schutt
IVP, 2007.



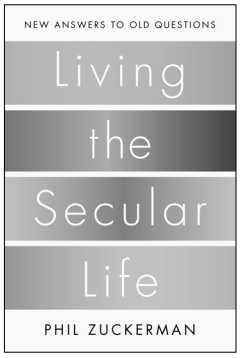
In his book *Redeeming Law: Christian Calling and the Legal Profession*, Michael Schutt asks whether (and, if so, how) Christians can serve God in the legal profession. His examination of the state of the legal profession and the Christians who work within it focuses on America and is bleak at best. Thankfully it doesn't (yet) describe the situation the Australian lawyer finds him or herself practising in, as the picture he paints is far from what he (rightly) attributes as the Christian orthodox foundation of our legal system.

Schutt discusses vocation and the Christian calling in a general manner, which is thought-provoking and perhaps even slightly counter-cultural. He then addresses how the Christian should think and practise as a lawyer with integrity in the ruthless profession that he describes the American legal profession as being; intertwining theoretical concepts with some practical ideas both for those studying and for those practising the law as a daily pursuit.

At the very least, reading this book will get you thinking about whether the way that you work and relate to others in your profession is integrated with your Christian faith.

Tamasin Jonker, WA

Living the Secular Life
New Answers to Old Questions
Phil Zuckerman
Penguin Press, New York, 2014.



Phil Zuckerman is an American sociologist who 5 years ago founded the Department of Secular Studies at Pitzer College, California. His principal interest is in studying secular people, those who profess no religion, and he is an enthusiastically secular person himself. He is also an apologist for the secular way of life, who engages with the strongly religious elements of his US culture. The religious can be mistrustful of atheists and unbelievers, and Zuckerman wants to talk about that.

Hence the chapters of *Living the Secular Life* address common suspicions religious people might have about secular people. Chapter 2, 'Morality', seeks to counter the thought that atheists have no reason to be moral, and so probably won't be. Chapter 3, 'The Good Society' tries to upend the related idea that a secular society will be a dysfunctional society. Chapter 4 'Irreligion Rising' takes on the notion that religion is natural to human beings and irreligion is unnatural. Chapter 6, 'Trying Times' tests the claim that secular people have no true resources to help them face tragedy and suffering; chapter 7, 'Don't Fear the Reaper' challenges the conception that death as final extinction leaves life meaningless and full of dread, and chapter 8 'Aweism' seeks to debunk the feeling that atheism cannot admit a positive sense of wonder, joy and mystery into life and living. So just as the early Christian apologists had to defend themselves against the accusations of the world of Late Antiquity that they were atheists, cannibals or seditious, so Phil Zuckerman, secular apologist, seeks to defend the irreligious from the slurs of the religious.

But Zuckerman has a broader purpose than just the apologetic. He writes to equip and encourage his fellow secularists with ways of understanding themselves, explaining themselves and developing the emerging secularist culture. He opens the book with two anecdotes, one about a secular woman who worries that she is raising her kids as 'nothing' if she does not give them some religious affiliation, and the other about a religious woman who commented to Zuckerman, 'without religion, you've got nothing' (p3). Zuckerman wants to tell secular people (as well as everyone else) that the secular life is not a nothing life, it is, at its best, a reasonable, engaged, humane, profound way to live.

In pursuit of this end, Zuckerman recommends characteristic values and attitudes that he detects among secular people when it comes to certain central questions and activities of life. Hence his chapters on moral reasoning, raising children, creating community, facing suffering and death and appreciating the goodness of life. As far as morality goes, Zuckerman defends the Golden Rule of moral conduct (with its 'basic, simple logic') teamed with 'fundamental human empathy', as a sufficient basis for the moral life (p13-14). The chapters on 'Raising Kids' and 'Creating Community' tackle various intricacies of the secular person's experience. In 'Raising Kids' Zuckerman muses on interacting with religious relatives and fellow citizens (and any prejudice they may harbour). He also reflects on parenting in the delicate situation of the freethinker who does not want to indoctrinate his children with a particular point of view, yet who wants his children nonetheless to adopt values like 'obeying the Golden Rule, being environmentally conscious, developing empathy, cultivating independent thinking and relying upon rational problem solving' (p96). In 'Creating Community' Zuckerman surveys the ways secularists are trying to reproduce what religious communities have developed: fellowships of like minded people for mutual learning and support, community service groups, kids' camps etc. He wrestles with the fact that for many secular people, being secular is not a motivating part of their identity, and their individualism means that they say—as Zuckerman's wife said to him— 'Ugh. Who needs community?' (p134). Zuckerman is the opposite—he is excited about the prospect of secularist 'churches', and hopes to see them develop as the irreligious grow and mature in their secularity. All in all, Zuckerman wants to say that the secular life is not nothing, but rather it is something quite wonderful and worth embracing.

Zuckerman's approach is not angry or generally debunking of religion, and he is capable of acknowledging strengths of religion and weaknesses of secularism. This is most notably seen in his telling the story of a secular woman, Sarah, whose best comforters after the death of her eight year old son were from the women's group at her neighbour's church. Sarah said to Zuckerman, 'I'll never forget how those religious women took me in . [...] Let me tell you: there's nothing like that out there when you're secular.' (p167.) But still, Zuckerman's convictions that belief in the supernatural, the divine etc is illusory baggage without a scrap of evidence or rationality are there in his book. Religious people *believe* in life after death, but secular people *accept the fact* that death is oblivion forever (p180). Religious people *believe* that God lies beneath the wonder of existence, while secular people *accept the fact* that we will never know what lies beneath the wonder of existence: 'We will never, ever know why or exactly how all this comes about. That's the situation. Deal with it. Accept it.' (p201).

"Phil Zuckerman, secular apologist, seeks to defend the irreligious from the slurs of the religious"

But is it really that religious people have *beliefs* about God, death etc, while secular people do not have beliefs about these things, but rather accept *the facts* about God and death etc? This seems to me one of the several illusions secularists like Zuckerman labour under and seek to perpetuate. It seems more honest to recognise

secularists are not *accepting facts* or *making decsions based on evidence*—or lack thereof—when they say they came not to believe in God. It seems more accurate to say that secularists hold beliefs about the big questions just as much as theists or anyone else. And they come to hold those beliefs in similar ways to the ways religious believers come to hold theirs: usually a massive dose of parental upbringing and example gets mixed with influences from peers and social contexts like schools, clubs and societies, churches, arts and entertainment etc. Individuals receive or reject these influences to various degrees according perhaps to certain inner intangibles and personal quirks of temperament, reflection, judgement and experience.

Sunday Assemblies get secularists together to enjoy 'the best bits of church but with no religion'.

At times Zuckerman does seem to acknowledge all this, and some of the testimonies of loss-of-faith in the book bear this out. For example Amber, raised Mormon in Utah, says, 'I really did believe'. But then various things happened: she moved to Montana and then back to Utah, and: 'Maybe it was getting away from Provo for a spell'—or making non-Mormon friends, or puberty—'but whatever it was, ... her faith melted away'(p142). As Amber explained to Zuckerman: 'I was sixteen or seventeen. At that point it was just like, "This is crazy." *I just knew*" (italics mine). She expanded on her new incredulity: 'I mean, you die, and there's something that goes somewhere? What? *I just don't believe that*' (p142-3, italics mine). Or take Scott, a soldier who went to Iraq a Christian and came back an atheist. In the midst of convoy operations in which US soldiers were dying, a chaplain said to Scott's unit that, 'the reason my unit hadn't had any serious losses yet was because God was protecting us' (p110). Scott's response was, 'Well, what about those four guys in that other unit—and I knew two of them— who got killed just yesterday morning? Where was God then? That's when it really just clicked for me' (p 111).

These are conversion stories—one spiritual stance is left behind, and another one is embraced. There is a certain amount of mystery to them. Expanding experience creates tensions which could be resolved in various ways, and in other individuals might be. But in these cases, the tension was resolved by losing one set of convictions and embracing another. And this was not primarily because of new facts coming to someone's attention, nor a process of rational judgement, but rather a catalytic, personal, almost unchosen step into another point of view. Sure, these baby secularists had a lot to learn, but at that time they were 'born again', so to speak. Other secularists (like Zuckerman himself) have no conversion story, because they were raised in secular households, and 'can't remember a time when they *did* believe in God', so to speak. But they, too, just like religious believers, grew in faith as time went on. My point is that the claims that secularists 'accept the facts', rather than that they 'believe certain things' is a self-serving story, not a true story. They have embraced a set of convictions, not accepted a set of facts.

Why are these secularist convictions being more and more commonly embraced? What is it in our cultural evolution that makes secularist convictions seem not only plausible, but obvious, or even indubitable, to many? Zuckerman has a section on this in his chapter 'Irreligion Rising', but it seems thin to me. Zuckerman minimises long term intellectual factors in favour of some very recent American developments. He cites backlash against the religious right and paedophile Catholic priests (which might be straws breaking camels' backs, but don't seem to me to be the major part of the pre-existing load). He turns to Callum Brown's thesis about working women, which may be more significant, only to lapse back into consideration of very recent factors like growing acceptance of homosexuality, and the internet. While there must be important recent catalytic factors in the rise of the 'nones', the story of modern secular humanism is longer and more complex than this, but digging into it properly might turn up the fact that Zuckerman's secularist convictions are indeed the artifice of a complex cultural and intellectual history, not the peeling away of all illusions to a clear-eyed, reasoned, acceptance of the facts. (See, for example *A Secular Age*, by Charles Taylor.)

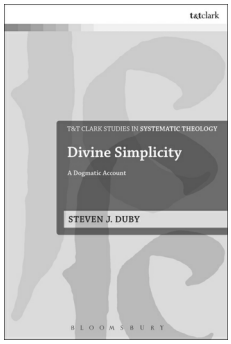
But of course, whoever we are, it's difficult not to characterise the convictions you hold as reasonable, factual, based on evidence, humane etc, and to characterise conflicting convictions as unreasonable, illusory, inhumane and dangerous. And there is an activist streak in Zuckerman, he does want to challenge religion. He feels there's a job to do for secularists to make a space for nonbelief in a religious country which he feels distrusts and despises atheists and humanists.

I could take up various other aspects of his book (I thought his chapter on morality was pretty unconvincing), but I'll wind up by saying that I like reading Zuckerman because he's a good writer interested in important changes in western society, which he analyses both as a professional sociologist and an irenic but committed secularist. His books are peppered with people's stories, in their own words. I'm not cheering on his project, but I appreciate Zuckerman's candour, his generally respectful tone, his openness to good things in religion and his deep interest in the big questions of life.

Ben Underwood, WA

Photo: Sunday Assembly Hamburg by Rainer Sax.
Used under a Creative Commons licence. flickr.com/photos/rainersax/17318260596

Divine Simplicity
A Dogmatic Account
Steven J. Duby
Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016.



While I was at theological college I was puzzled by a reference I once came across to God being 'simple'. It was not clear to me what this meant or why it might be important. I asked my theology lecturer who explained it with words to the effect that 'God is God all the way through', which was intriguing, although not an entire resolution of all my ignorance on the matter. My curiosity about divine simplicity lay idle for some time after that. I did come to realise that as an Anglican clergyman I was committed to the doctrine of God's simplicity via Article 1 of the 39 Articles which teaches that God is 'without parts', which is to say he is simple. But what that meant and why it was believed was still not clear to me. It was not obvious to me that God would be simple. As one God in three persons he might be imagined to be rather complex. As the creator of creatures diverse and intricate, you might imagine he would be diverse and intricate himself. Certainly Richard Dawkins in *The God Delusion* assumed that, 'A God capable of continuously monitoring and controlling the individual status of every particle in the universe cannot be simple. His existence is going to need a mammoth explanation in its own right' (p149). If we think of God as complex, diverse and intricate, it does seem to confirm what Dawkins suggests: that the question arises, 'What explains that complexity?'

David Bentley Hart, in *The Experience of God*, gave me an appreciation of the meaning of, and reason for the claim that God is simple, a claim that Christians from Clement of Alexandria to Karl Barth have accepted, explained and defended one way or another (see pp 128-142 of Hart's book). The simplicity of God is one of those deductions that follows from believing that God is truly the creator of all things, who does not draw his being from any separately existing or logically prior thing. If God were to have parts which together were to make him who he is, then the union of those parts would require some explanation, which would be an account of what causes God to be God, which is impossible if God is truly the creator, from whom are all things (Rom 11:36). Hence God is without parts; that is, simple.

Another way to express the simplicity of God is to say God is what he has. We creatures may have certain attributes—we possess some goodness, some power, some wisdom. But we are not these attributes that we have. We may corrupt the goodness we possess and lose some of it, or we may grow in power or deepen in wisdom, because we are finite, dependent creatures who have some share in goodness, power and wisdom, which we receive or participate in. But God is not finite, nor dependent, and therefore he does not obtain goodness, or participate in a goodness that has any kind of existence prior to him, or independent of him. (If he did, he would not be the one from whom are all things.) God is not merely good (even perfectly good), he is his goodness; the goodness from which all goodness derives. He is not merely (utterly) powerful, he is his power; the power from which all power is given. He is not merely wise, he is his wisdom; the wisdom which enlightens everyone wise. God is what he has. God is God all the way through; there is nothing in God that is not God. He is simple in this way: in him 'quality and substance are one and the same' (Augustine, *City of God* XI.10).

I am slow to get to the actual book review part of this book review in case, dear reader, you would hesitate if asked, 'What is divine simplicity anyway?' But you may be chapter and verse on all this, and well aware that there is quite a discussion of the doctrine of God's simplicity going on in the circles of theology and philosophical theology, thanks, on the one hand, to certain misgivings about the classic scholastic expositions of God's simplicity (e.g. by Thomas Aquinas) on the part of theologians like Barth, Pannenberg, Moltmann, Torrrance, Jenson and Gunton. On the other hand, Christian philosophers like Alvin Plantinga, Nicholas Woltersdorff, William Lane Craig, J.P. Moreland and Thomas Morris question the coherence of the doctrine and regard it as incompatible with a biblical understanding of God.

Many have sprung to the defence of divine simplicity either in its classic form, or via some modification of the doctrine. Steven Duby's *Divine Simplicity: A Dogmatic Account* defends the classic account of God's simplicity. He uses the resources of Protestant scholastics and metaphysicians such as Zanchi, Polanus, Owen, Turretin, van Mastricht, Alsted and Maccovius, but Duby seeks to ground the doctrine in the teaching of Scripture as a first priority.

His book is in five chapters. Chapter One is an historical survey of the doctrine in Christian thought, becoming detailed in the modern period, and especially outlining the contemporary situation of 'theological misgivings' (p34), and 'analytical criticisms and defences' (p42). Chapter Two provides an orientation to Duby's own project, with his account of the proper relationships between biblical exegesis, metaphysics and dogmatics. He distances himself from an approach he detects in some Christian analytic philosophers, which Duby sees as detached from the control of biblical exegesis, overconfident in human reason in the things of God, mistakenly insisting on univocity in theological description, and a kind of Platonic ontology. Duby wants to begin with Scripture and draw on the resources of a Thomistic, Reformed metaphysics, which he feels is a better handmaiden to Christian theology than the contemporary analytic alternatives. He then gives a nine-page ex-

The simplicity of God is one of those deductions that follows from believing that God is truly the creator of all things

position of the doctrine of God's simplicity in those metaphysical terms, which will be familiar if you have read Aquinas' account of simplicity in his *Summa Theologiae* (Q3).

Chapters Three and Four of the book seek to make 'An Exegetical-Dogmatic Case for Divine Simplicity' in two parts, drawing the doctrine firstly from the scriptural teaching about God's absolute singularity, and free and independent life (aseity) in chapter three, and then secondly, from God's immutability, infinity and his creation ex nihilo in chapter four. These subsections each begin with 'biblical teaching' and proceed dogmatically 'towards simplicity'.

Chapter Five seeks to meet three major areas of criticism of the classic doctrine of God's simplicity. These are: firstly, that it is incompatible with the plurality of God's attributes. (The criticism runs like this: if God is what he has, then God's wisdom *is* God's power *is* God's love *is* God. So then there would be no real distinction between any of God's attributes and God himself, if he is simple.) Secondly, God's simplicity is incompatible with the freedom of God. (The criticism goes like this: one of the ways God is understood to be simple is that he is *actus purus*, pure actuality, with no potentiality in him. It is important that God is seen to be *actus purus*, without potentiality, because if he had any potentiality, he would be open to change, which is incompatible with his immutability, and his aseity. But if God cannot be touched at any point by potentiality, then surely he cannot in any sense have been only potentially the creator of all things, which means he must *necessarily* be the creator of all things, which is to say, God was not free not to make the world, or indeed to do or not do anything he actually does.) The last objection is that God's simplicity is incompatible with the doctrine of the Trinity. (This objection to simplicity goes like this: simplicity rules out real distinctions in God; you cannot analyse God into distinct parts in any way. But surely, goes the objection, the three persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit must represent some distinctions in the Godhead. For if they did not, how could we avoid saying that the Father is the Son is the Spirit?)

Duby wants to begin with Scripture and draw on … a reformed Thomistic metaphysics

Duby's project is large in scope—he deploys Thomistic metaphysics against contemporary philosophical theology in analytic mode and against the suspicion of old metaphysics found in recent systematic theology. The objections he grapples with are difficult, and hence his book is dense, and is perhaps not the place to start if you are new to divine simplicity. But Duby's book is a considered, thorough, informed and committed contribution to the debate at a high level, firmly in favour of the classical theism in Thomistic mode, as re-articulated by the seventeenth-century Reformed divines.

It seems to me that this discussion is important if we are really to consider what it means for God to be God—that is, the one from whom are all things, the creator of the heavens and the earth. Does God—infinite, holy, almighty—just happen to be? Uncaused, but with an inexplicable compounding of parts, or qualities, or potentialities that bequeath to him his character and abilities? Or, does God exist in a way consonant with his being the source of all things: uncaused and uncompounded: single and indivisible, entirely and boundlessly and eternally actual, light without darkness, life without death, knowledge without ignorance, love without reservation; and one whose light is life, whose life is knowledge, whose knowledge is love?

It seems to me that one of the things our culture has lost is its sense of God. 'God is dead' means God is dead to us, we haven't much of a compelling notion of him. Our cultural imagination of God as the one from whom and through whom and to whom are all things; who does not exist within a space of possibilities as one inhabitant of that space, but is the one upon whom all possibility depends is, I suggest, at a low ebb. Christians have for centuries sought to honour God as the creator by distinguishing the creature, which exists in a composite and derived manner, from God, who exists simply, i.e. in a manner that does not admit any composition, derivation or divisibility. Perhaps we would be richer, and better prepared to face the thin view of God our current culture possesses, if we meditated a little on the simplicity of God.

Ben Underwood, WA

Assertive self-interest and social decay

Peter Corney explores why an unrealistic view of human nature undermines democracy and human flourishing.

Peter Corney writes, speaks, mentors and consults on leadership for various organisations

"Never underestimate the power of self-interest."
Paul Keating

In 1944, not long before the Allies' final victory over German fascism and the demonic forces unleashed by the Nazis in WWII, the Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr wrote his memorable book *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness.* It is a spirited defence of democracy and a reminder of its dependence on an honest and realistic view of human nature. This view, Niebuhr maintained, was underpinned by the Christian understanding of reality and its view of human nature. In his introduction he says that the political philosophy on which his defence of democracy rests is,

> 'informed by the belief that a Christian view of human nature is more adequate for the development of a democratic society than either the optimism with which democracy has become historically associated or the moral cynicism which leads to the abuse of power and which inclines human communities to tyrannical strategies for solutions to situations of social decay.'

The tyrannical strategies he had in mind of course were those of Nazi fascism and Soviet communism.

Writing as he was at the time of the unfolding knowledge of the scale of the Jewish Holocaust and the human catastrophe that had taken place in Europe, his warnings must be taken seriously by us now as Europe lurches into a new crisis. His warning is never to underestimate 'the power of human self-interest, both individual and collective, in modern society'. He says that 'evil is always the assertion of some self-interest without regard to the whole'. By the whole he means the common good, including the wider international community of humanity as well as the individual nation state.

Niebuhr is concerned that Western liberal democrats and secular idealists have too superficial, sentimental and optimistic a view of human nature. It does not account for the potency of individual freedom for both creative initiative and destructive self-interest. That is why freedom needs a framework of order and objective values that transcend the individual. It is why moral relativism is in the end corrosive to society and democracy. It is why the Postmodern emphasis on the rejection of absolutes and their substitute with the autonomous authority of the individual's perspective unmodified by any transcendent set of values and meaning will lead to a particularly destructive form of self-interest.

It is sadly ironic that what at first may be seen as a way to self-fulfilment turns out in the end to be self-destructive. For, as Niebuhr points out, for true and full human flourishing the individual needs not only personal freedom but also community, communal responsibility and obligation, because he is by nature social. He cannot fulfil his life within himself, but only in responsible and mutual relations with his fellows. 'The individual cannot be a true self in isolation'.

Niebuhr's views are very relevant to our current situation in Western culture where the quest for individual freedom has reached an extreme and destructive hyper-individualism. Anne Mann in her recent book *The Life of I* has described it as a form of social narcissism. Personal freedom has been redefined, having broken loose from its Judeo/Christian influences where it was understood as a freedom from our tendency to a dominating self-interest so that we might be free for the service of God and others; to 'love God and love your neighbour'. It is now about the unrestricted freedom of my will to choose whatever I decide. It has become what Friedrich Nietzsche, that influential nineteenth century prophet of unrestrained freedom of the will, predicted and championed: 'the triumph of the will.' (For an insight into Nietzsche's disturbing ideas and their tragic logic about human nature once the Christian faith is rejected, see the quotation in the reference notes below.)

the quest for individual freedom has reached an extreme and destructive hyper-individualism.

A major problem with the current view of personal freedom is that it leaves people trapped in their own limited interior world of subjective feelings, impressions and limited perspectives, a world that is frequently disturbed and dysfunctional. For adolescents and young adults in particular, they are left without any larger and more objective framework of meaning with which to make sense of their questions and to navigate a very confusing world. Coupled with prosperity and consumerism and the growth of a culture of entitlement and exaggerated individualism, they are set upon a journey that will lead them into a lifestyle of destructive self-interest. Remember Niebuhr's penetrating insight that 'evil is always some assertion of self-interest without regard to the whole.'

Nietzsche, in *The Gay Science,* has an arresting image to describe what will happen when Western culture leaves the stability of its Christian heritage and moral framework. (It is of course a result he approved of, his whole intellectual energy was devoted to overcoming that heritage and what he believed was its repressive hold on the Western intellect and spirit!) He says it will be like

leaving the stability of the land and launching out onto the restless uncertain sea. 'We have left the land and embarked....we have burned our bridges behind us—indeed we have gone farther and destroyed the land behind us....Woe then when you feel homesick for the land....there is no longer any land'. His prediction is a devastatingly accurate description of twenty-first century Western culture.

Through Existentialism and Postmodernism Nietzsche's ideas have filtered down to influence a new generation of Western intellectuals who, having driven out transcendent values and Christian faith, have succeeded in contributing to the creation of a spiritual, moral and cultural desert in Western culture. With its old moral energy fading, it is now focused almost solely on the creation of material wealth, but in increasingly unequal distribution. The West's moral confusion, its growing social and relational instability and restless uncertainty about its ultimate purpose is fast approaching Nietzsche's graphic image, and with it comes a crisis, a storm that will sink individual flourishing and may endanger even democracy itself.

If undeliverable, return to:
EFAC Australia
20 Gordon St
Fairfield VIC 3078

PRINT POST 100001974

POSTAGE PAID AUSTRALIA

ESSENTIALS

Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion Australia
SUMMER 2016-7