

# ESSENTIALS

EFAC AUSTRALIA

WINTER 2017

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

# CHANGING DRIVERS

Ben Underwood

Ben Underwood  
St Matthew's Anglican Church  
Shenton Park



Dale Appleby, who has steered *Essentials* so capably since Spring 2013, has stepped out of the editor's chair, and deftly manoeuvred me into it. I could not persuade him to write a farewell editorial, but then again, as he will stay on the editorial team, it is not really goodbye (just see Dale's piece on rage and fear in politics, which you will find in the Caboose, down the back of this issue). Dale displays there his characteristic concern for the state of Australian society and the opportunities Christians (especially evangelical Anglican Christians) have to contribute to the life of our communities and our country. Thanks, Dale for your excellent work as *Essentials* Editor. May you not slip away too quickly!

This issue brings other glimpses of Christians working hard to contribute to the good of community and church.

Karan Moxham writes about life and ministry at Nungalinya College in Darwin, and Kaye and Ian Malcolm write about starting free English classes in a local church, for the benefit of those who appreciate an English speaking context accessible to those whose first language is not English. These are inspiring and very Australian stories.

The ever-evolving conversation in our culture about gender, homosexuality and moral nonconformity makes its mark on this issue too, as part 2 of my essay on same-sex marriage. I hope that *Essentials* can help us think through the various issues at stake as sympathetically, insightfully and faithfully as possible.

Instead of many book reviews, we have one substantial review essay this issue, by Tim Foster, of John Barclay's book, *Paul and*

*the Gift*, a fresh account of Paul's theology of God's grace, engaging especially with Romans and Galatians. Has Barclay healed the rift in Pauline studies that the New Perspective has opened up? Tim makes his call in this issue.

There are other treats of various kinds to be found in the following pages. I hope you find our winter issue engrosses you as you warm yourself by the fire. We plan for our next issue to have a Reformation theme, as we remember with gratitude after 500 years the blessings that God brought to his people through Martin Luther, those who prepared him and those other reformers who followed him. If you think you've got the right stuff to contribute to that issue, do be in touch.

Ben Underwood, Editor  
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## EFAC Australia membership (incl. *Essentials*)

\$40 per year (\$20 students, missionaries, retired persons). *Essentials* subscription only \$20 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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# THE GIFTS OF OUR ANGLICAN HERITAGE - an affirmation of Anglicanism from EFAC WA

**I**t is easy to feel that the churches have lost their way. Declining attendances and finances, falling Christian affiliation and loss of reputation, combined with Christian leaders trying to hold together clashing agendas being championed within their flocks, often produce the feeling that things aren't going well.

And yet, as people who love and are committed to the Anglican church, our conviction is that our Christ-centred heritage is sufficiently deep and rich to provide us with what we need to persevere in faith, hope, and love through whatever may lie ahead. We long to see the churches of our diocese grow, flourish, and be a blessing to our local communities, and we believe that under God this is possible, not despite our Anglican heritage, but because of it. We rest in the promise of Christ that he will build his church, and give thanks for the gifts of our Anglican heritage through which Christ will continue to do this by his Holy Spirit.

So in the spirit of unity, we would like to share with you what encourages and excites us about being Anglican, and why we remain convinced that our reformed catholic tradition holds out such promise for our mission and ministry in the world.

As Anglicans...

**We are Catholic** – committed to the Catholic Creeds which affirm that we worship the triune God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In them the uniqueness of Christ the Son, his full divinity and true humanity, his conception by the Holy Spirit, and bodily resurrection on the third day are declared. We rejoice that this faith binds us to all Christians throughout time and place.

**We are Reformed** – committed to the doctrines of grace, recovered during the reformation and expressed in the 39 Articles of Religion. Accordingly we are committed to the teaching that we are unable to save ourselves because of our sin and are totally reliant upon the grace of God to convict us of sin and draw us to the reconciling love of Christ.

**We love the Bible** – being committed to the Canon of the Old and New Testaments as God's gift, written by various human authors who were carried along by the Holy Spirit. We receive them as trustworthy, true, and sufficient for framing our lives, shaping our minds, and teaching our congregations the will, work and ways of God. We value reason and the tradition of the church, and uphold the Scriptures as God's Word and therefore



the supreme and the ultimate authority in matters of salvation, practice and faith.

**We cherish our history** – recognising with gratitude and humility that we have inherited both good and bad teaching and examples in our denomination. We cherish the good yet are mindful of the bad, including moral failures towards children and adults, and loss of our nerve in proclaiming the Kingdom. Whilst cherishing our history we seek to be humble and repentant, constantly allowing ourselves to come under our Lord's scrutiny.

**We are gospel people** – because the gospel of Christ is of first importance, we believe that sharing the gospel is central to everything we do. Some are gifted to be evangelists, but all are called to be witnesses to the hope we have. We therefore encourage one another to take every opportunity to make the love of Christ known, prayerfully depending on the Holy Spirit who enables us to live out the sacrificial love of Jesus. Because the gospel both saves and grows people in faith, we are committed to the ministry of Word and Sacrament, by which Christ welcomes and nourishes us, and assures us of eternal life.

**We are pastoral people** – mindful of the exhortation given at the ordination of priests to encourage and build up the body of Christ, we are committed to the pastoral care of Christ's flock and the wider community,

'caring alike for young and old, rich and poor, weak and strong'. We seek by God's grace to serve our world and communities through evangelism, good works, and striving for justice.

**We embrace episcopal leadership** – recognising that good leadership is vitally important for the church. As Jesus is the great Shepherd and Overseer of our souls so leaders in his church are called to shepherd and teach according to his example. We are thankful to God for such leadership, especially from our bishops. We seek to respond to Christ's call and example ourselves when in positions of leadership in the church.

**We love our congregations** – because in local congregations we see the church in its clearest expression as the body of Christ. This is where God gathers his people, nurturing and equipping them through Word and Sacrament, to serve one another and show forth the love of Christ in their local communities. We see the parish congregations as the backbone of the Diocese. We rejoice in our ordered, Scriptural and participatory liturgy which enables us to worship God in Spirit and in truth. Our Anglican liturgy engages our minds, forms our hearts and equips us for a life of worship.

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## Nungalinya

### Karan Moxham

*Karan and Peter Moxham work at Nungalinya College, a Combined Churches Training College for Indigenous Australians in Darwin. In this article Karen describes life on cross-cultural mission in Nungalinya, a theological college in Darwin.*

**We** are on cross-cultural mission but we are still in Australia. All the things that apply to Christians who go to Africa or Indonesia or other countries still apply to us but for one difference. Our indigenous brothers and sisters have come half way to meet us. They have learned our language and customs and are extremely forgiving when we in our ignorance, insult or disparage theirs. For an indigenous person to communicate their world view in a language that is not

their native tongue is extremely hard, as it is for us to teach theology in a way that is culturally appropriate and sensitive.

But that's what Nungalinya does. It is an adult theological residential college in a suburb of Darwin. Our students are indigenous Christians from remote areas all around Australia. We teach literacy and numeracy, music, media and discipleship as well as theology.

For a lot of our students, just getting to Nungalinga is a serious challenge. Let me explain. Students Marlene, Carol and Roderick travel an hour by 4WD over a very rough road with multiple river crossings to then get on a barge to take them across the biggest river. On the other side there is another three hours of 4WD tracks before getting onto the main highway and then another four hours to get to Nungalinga. Or Amaryllis and Mary whose pastor drives them over rough dirt roads to the nearest town on the highway so they can get on the bus at 3am in the morning and take the 16 hour journey to Darwin. A lot of the students come in by air in tiny 6 seater planes that take off from a dirt runway in the middle of nowhere. They are scared. They don't like the small planes that are buffeted by cross-winds and are cold and noisy. So for many their journey to Nungalinga is not a pleasant one. So why do they come? Why do they turn up at all? I can't speak for all of them but the conversations I have had tell me that they come because they want to learn more about God and his Son. They want to be able to read the Word for themselves, to understand and to teach their children and their community about Christ. Louise from Gunbalanya told me "Before I came to know Jesus my life was not good: I used to drink at the Club and smoked. I changed my life in 2007 when I gave up everything and started trying. I was reading the Bible, and I felt better. After I came to know Jesus, I wanted to tell other people." Louise now wants to be involved in teaching the kids in her church about Jesus.

When we arrived we had no understanding of indigenous culture. And we have made so many cultural mistakes since starting at Nungalinga but we are continuing to learn and the students are very forgiving. We have grown to love our indigenous brothers and sisters and are constantly inspired by their journeys and the sacrifices they make to study here. We have had the privilege of visiting some communities in Arnhem Land and Bathurst Island and this has been a really valuable experience bringing home both the gulf of understanding that needs to be crossed but also the resilience of these people and their commitment to God, family and the wider community in which they live and breathe.

So what does our life look like here at Nungalinga? Peter works maintaining the college property and helps in the music course from time to time introducing the students to new chords which is always well received. I assist the students in their health needs while staying with us. Many of our students suffer from

poor health including kidney and heart disease, diabetes and numerous other problems associated with poor nutrition. While they are in Darwin to study it provides the opportunity to get health check-ups, medication and treatment that is not available in the remote communities.

Each day starts with a chapel service. As part of their studies the students are mentored in leading this worship time and we are often treated to singing in a variety of languages, and dancing as we meet together. After classes have finished for the day, and after the evening meal, often students will gather again in the chapel for more worship time.

At any one time we can have up to a dozen different communities staying at the college with just as many different languages. Most students are multi-lingual, speaking four or more distinct languages as well as dialects. One of the strengths I have found of Nungalinga is in how it teaches that we are all one community under Christ. When new students arrive you will see them gathering in the dining room in their individual groups but by the end of their study here they are mixing with each other more. At graduations students write a small article reflecting on their time studying here which is read out. Many students comment that they enjoyed getting to know other students from different communities as one of their highlights.

It is honestly a privilege and blessing to be serving Christ here. If you are interested in a copy of the article "Indigenous Ministry in the Top End – Cross Cultural Insights" which is excellent, contact me at [kmoxham@nungalinga.edu.au](mailto:kmoxham@nungalinga.edu.au) and I will forward it to you. Likewise if you are interested in receiving Nungalinga College's newsletter, I can put you on the mailing list (it is emailed quarterly).



*The staff at Nungalinga College in Darwin.*

# English Classes at Church

Kaye and Ian Malcolm

*Kaye and Ian Malcolm write about starting free English classes in a local church, for the benefit of those who appreciate an English speaking context accessible to those whose first language is not English.*

### Essentials:

**T**ell us about how the idea of English as a Second/ Additional Language at Karrinyup came about.

**Kay and Ian:** Well, having spent periods abroad, we know what it's like to be in a foreign-language speaking environment. After a period teaching in China, we had the opportunity of welcoming many Chinese students to our home when they came to Perth for further study, and we could see how much they appreciated getting into an accessible English-speaking context. As linguists, we could see how further training would help them.

### Essentials: How did you go about getting it up and running?

**Kay and Ian:** We talked and prayed about it with interested friends within the congregation and brought a proposal to the Parish Council. The idea was that we would offer free English classes in the church facilities for one morning a week. The only charge would be \$4 for morning tea. With the help of a core group of teachers we would offer classes

at a range of levels, during school terms. Once the proposal was approved, we put publicity in local newspapers and on shopping centre notice boards.

### Essentials: What helps and hindrances did you encounter?

**Kay and Ian:** We were not the only church offering this kind of service, so we benefited from being in contact with other groups. We also found useful resources online, and we took advantage of university libraries and language bookstores offloading stock to enable us to build up library resources. Once we got started, the regular attendance soon grew to the twenties, though we needed to cope with the fact that the same people didn't necessarily come each week. One complication which arose was that some mothers wished to bring their babies or small children with them. We accommodated this as best we could, though decided not to extend our service to child minding.

As the work got known we had wonderful support from volunteers from the church who provided practical back-up. There were also offers from qualified people outside

of the church. We needed to explain that, as this was intended as an extension of the church's ministries, it was important for us to have a team who shared our Christian commitment. Some ESL/EAL ministries use the Bible as the main teaching resource. In our case, we initially invited people interested in exploring the Bible to stay on over lunch after the three-hour class for some overt Christian instruction. A new development is for individual teachers to spend an optional 15 minutes after the lesson concludes looking at the biblical implications of themes raised in the lesson or pursuing biblical storytelling.



*Kaye Malcolm at work teaching English at Karrinyup Anglican Church*

## Essentials: What are one or two encouraging stories?

**Kay and Ian:** We found it encouraging that some people who came to us on Friday took the opportunity to go to a class in one of our associated churches on another day of the week. Some also showed interest in meeting in a home on another day of the week for an “easy English” Bible study. At the Karrinyup church, when there were special events for Christmas and Easter, some of the students came along. We were impressed that one of our students was prepared to travel by public transport 90 minutes each way to come to our classes. One special production by the students was a collection of articles written by them under the title Write around the World, where they contributed descriptions of the places they had come from. One of the great outcomes of the English classes was the sense of community which developed. We would go on end of term picnics, and some of the students invited teachers to meals in their homes.

## Essentials: What do you think the value of ESL/EAL ministry is? What opportunities does it present?

**Kay and Ian:** Our experience shows without a doubt that this service meets a need, both for language help and for social interaction on the part of the people who participate. It also draws out gifts and abilities on the part of church members and helps to make the church accessible to people who might not otherwise have contact with it. Above all, the value of this ministry is the opportunity it presents to share the gospel in life and word.

## Essentials: What is the next step forward for the ministry that you hope to see it take?

**Kay and Ian:** Given the option to stay on after the lesson and consider biblical implications, nearly all the students are taking it. The enthusiasm to continue with this is strong. With interest in the Bible growing we are thinking and praying about how best to meet this welcome demand.

## Giving in a Cashless Culture

### Bishop Stephen Hale

*Bishop Stephen Hale has been the Lead Minister at St Hilary's since 2009. A recent media focus has been on the growing number of people who no longer carry any cash with them as they go about their daily lives. In this article Bishop Hale discusses the implications for us and for our churches*

For the first time, cards account for more of our purchases than cash. Whether it's payWave or myki, Opal or MyWay for the small things, or Visa, MasterCard and debit cards for the big ones, we are using cards more often than ever before and taking less cash out of ATMs than at any time in the past 15 years.

A new Reserve Bank report released last week finds that an astonishing one-fifth of Australians carried no cash whatsoever on the day they were surveyed, up from 8 per cent three years before. The typical amount carried fell from \$55 to \$40. The typical amount secreted away around the home (such as in bedrooms and under fruit bowls) is \$100.

Only for payments of less than \$10 did cash still hold its own, and predominantly among older and poorer Australians.

**Approximately 44.1% of our current giving now comes from Pushpay.**



**44.1%**  
PushPay



**44%**  
Direct Debit



**7.9%**  
Open Plate



**4%**  
Envelopes

Ironically there has been a jump in the number of people using \$100 notes. This applies for people, it seems, who only pay cash!!

Traditionally in churches people put money – cash – in the plate. The Offertory was an act of devotion during public worship having been reverently collected and then received

by the minister with a prayer of thanks and offering. In the 70's and 80's this was partly altered as people used envelopes to put cash/cheques in the envelope and put them in the plate. The next evolution in the 90's was the introduction of Direct Debit/Credit Card Authorisations. At our church we've been at the upper end of the percentage of people who give electronically – 85% to 90%. In other churches it may be more like 60 – 70%. Research indicates that most churches that rely heavily on traditional forms of electronic giving have static offertory incomes because most people do not adjust (i.e. increase) their giving from one year to the next. The critical thing these days is to eliminate the steps. If you're relying on people to take home a form and complete it, chances are you'll get a limited response.

At present in the church I lead we're going through another revolution as more and more people give via the Push Pay App. Approximately 43% of our current giving now comes via PushPay. Given we only introduced this less than two years ago this is a major shift. The huge advantage of PushPay is that people can manage their own giving and can adjust it instantly. Your information is loaded in the App and it is a two-step process to give or manage your regular giving. People can spontaneously give to particular appeals or other appeals via the App. With an App like PushPay people can manage their giving in the same way as most people now manage their other financial transactions by having it pre-set and digitised. There is also the challenge that if they're not happy with something they can act immediately!

These changes have significant implications for us and for all churches. We still have offertories but as we all know only a small amount is given by a small number of people. In 2016 we introduced an offertory at each of our Sunday Schools because some parents became aware that their children had never seen them give any money at church! Some people still use envelopes and many still have Direct Debit arrangements or Credit Card transfer authorisations. As indicated a growing number of people are choosing to use PushPay. Recently I was told that a Pentecostal Church nearby has the standard two offertories (tithes and then another after the giving appeal). They have volunteers who stand in the aisles with tap and pay machines!

It would be true to say that for a range of people these sorts of innovations are personally challenging as they impact the sense of piety and expectation they have around the idea of making an offering to God.

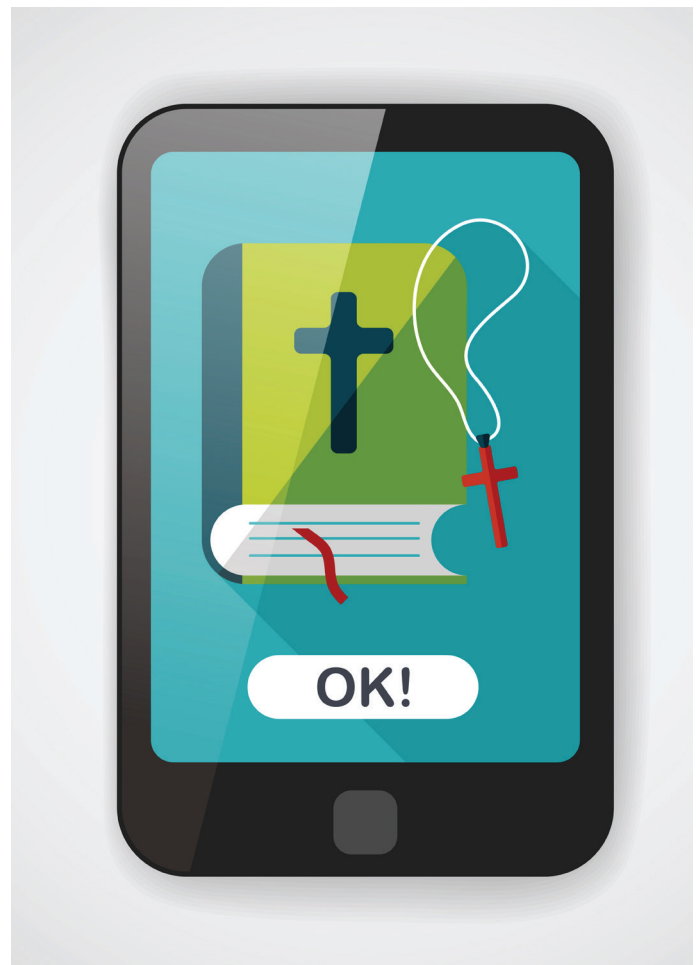
Our church is on a journey in this space. Most of us are evolving how we manage our finances and make payments. We don't have all the answers and we are currently checking out what other leading churches are doing in this space. I recently spoke at the Diocesan Training Program for new Incumbents. None of them had heard of PushPay!

In one sense that's not surprising as most of them are leading smaller churches which rely on fairly traditional approaches. Unfortunately the traditional approaches are being surpassed by contemporary technology.

Many of you I'm sure will be wondering, has this worked? Has your giving gone up?

The answer is yes. Last year our giving grew by 6% and it has grown again in 2017. Is this due to the new technology? It's probably too early to know. We've also grown numerically. I'll let you be the judge on that one. I would suggest that with 43% uptake in less than two years it has been an important shift to be a part of, especially for younger people.

N.B. There are no fees for the individuals who give, but PushPay charges organisations an annual service fee that may vary based on certain factors.



# Same sex marriage - is it a big deal?

## Part Two

Ben Underwood

*Last issue in Part One Ben looked at the same sex marriage debate from the point of view of its advocates and started in at the Christian perspective. He picks up here in Part Two looking at homosexuality.*

### So what about homosexual relationships?

In what we have looked at so far in the Bible, homosexuality seems invisible. Does that give us latitude to include homosexual relationships in the institution of marriage by the partial analogy they might provide, namely two individuals committing to faithfully care for one another and share an exclusive sexual relationship? The difficulty is that because Genesis 1-2 articulates something deep about the way God intended human beings to be, they set norms which understand maleness to be for femaleness and femaleness to be for maleness, rather than maleness for maleness or femaleness for femaleness, and so homosexuality is being addressed implicitly. So it is not a surprise, really, when later we see that the Bible accepts neither homosexual desire nor homosexual practice as something holy and good, but regards these as the (shameful) exchange of something proper (heterosexual sex) for something improper (see Romans 1:24-27).

This is a moral position that is increasingly being regarded as outrageous, and indefensible, because as a culture we operate more and more

**This paper was written for Christians, to help them grasp the viewpoint of many of the supporters of the change to the Marriage Act, as well as to grasp the Christian point of view more deeply.**

from moral philosophies that reject the idea that God's intention for something such as human sexuality, or marriage, exists, or, even if it does exist, the idea that it is to be found in the Bible is not taken seriously. Rather, the rights and wrongs of human sexual behaviour, or same sex marriage, are to be judged by whether or not they do harm, or impinge on rights or freedoms of others.

Hence, moral condemnation might be justified if a person's homosexuality was exploitative, or harmful to others. Moral reservation might be justified if a person's homosexuality was a kind of decadent acquired sexual taste that invariably went along with other wanton or self-destructive behaviours, or was evidently a flawed way of coping with personal deficits or traumas in the past or present. No doubt some people's homosexuality does exhibit some or many of these characteristics, just as many people's heterosexuality exhibits similar flaws. But to condemn homosexuality per se, even in its most innocent forms, seems these days to be plain wrong. Consider the well-adjusted teen who discovers themselves, through no choice of their



own, to be same-sex attracted; who does not want to engage in reckless promiscuity, or exploitative sexual practice, or tear the heterosexual world down. They just want to fall in love and pursue a romance like others do: a respectful, tender, exciting romance, and in time a lasting, loving partnership for life. Why stand in the way of this? Why not guide, guard and ultimately bless these instincts, just as we do for our heterosexual youth? The Bible seems to talk in overly lurid terms of impurity, degradation, shame and unnaturalness, which don't seem appropriate to the case of our honest and good-hearted teen.

Now it should be noted that the Bible's language often sounds over the top next to our typically reserved forms of expression. Read Romans 1 and note that homosexuality is not more vigorously condemned than envy, gossip or disobedience of parents. St Paul was not unusually indignant about homosexuals, regarding them as the worst of sinners. Not at all. We can and should recognise that a same-sex attracted person is not, on account of that temptation to homosexual behaviour, more depraved than one tempted to boast, or to be unmerciful, or than any other human being subject to any temptation. In the West, homosexuality has been firstly criminalised and then medicalised, and there has been injustice done to homosexual people in those approaches. This injustice gives the current push for homosexual inclusion a great deal of moral energy and legitimacy, and it is right that we repent of such sins of our ancestors as executing, imprisoning or imposing involuntary medical interventions upon homosexual people. Such honest and good-hearted teens as we have imagined above should not fear that in admitting their situations to themselves or others, they might come in for any kind of ill-treatment.

Still, to discover yourself to be sexually attracted to members of your own sex is clearly a momentous thing. It is to discover yourself to be in a particular minority of the human experience, and it does require you to understand it in some moral context. If that moral context is an ethic of maximal self-expression and self-determination, (as long as you don't harm others who do not consent to your actions) then it seems you should be free to seek the fulfillment of that sexual attraction if you wish, as long as you don't do wrong by others in the process.

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However, if the moral context in which you make sense of your same sex attraction is the Bible, with its teaching that, 'At the beginning of creation God made them male and female', and, 'for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh', then you can't help but see the decision to pursue a homosexual attraction as a thing unspoken in the plan of God. And if God made maleness for femaleness and femaleness for maleness, then to pair maleness with maleness, or femaleness with femaleness is to pair things that may not in the end pair well together. It may not be at all clear at the outset of pursuing a homosexual relationship where it might take you and what it might work upon you and in you. Maybe it will all seem to work well enough at first, and even for a while. Maybe it will seem to be just as good—or perhaps even better—than the heterosexual pairing. But maybe we don't see what even the best of homosexual relationships—those partnerships said to be 'akin to marriage', in their lifelong, exclusive faithfulness—mean for the true wholeness of those who pursue them. Perhaps the power of our sexuality works upon us and our companions for ill when we desire our own sex, when the male carnally seeks the male, or the female sexually finds the female. If there is something we are meant to find in the otherness of the other sex, we will not find it if we marry ourselves to someone of our sex.

This is rather vague, I admit, but ultimately the Christian relies for moral guidance on the Scriptures, to which we entrust ourselves. Unlike the LGBTI moral vision, we don't rely on our own determination that the expression and fulfillment of our own sexual desires and gender identity are an important part of living a healthy, happy life, and the harm only comes when we live in fear of abuse and discrimination at the hands of bigots, or internalise the homophobia of the heteronormal culture.

To return to the trembling teen, they must decide somehow whether their best hope lies in learning how to become gay (i.e. come out and develop a social identity as a person embracing his or her homosexuality somehow), or in learning how to honour the maleness and femaleness that God has given us by refusing to pair maleness sexually with maleness, or femaleness with femaleness. Ultimately to choose the latter moral

meaning of gender, desire and sexual behaviour over the former is an act of trust in the God who addresses us in the Bible, and an act that must be an individual's Christian discipleship.

But if our vulnerable, same-sex attracted youths are to navigate this momentous development in their lives, they will need a community that can be trusted to treat them with love, care and seriousness at all times, whether or not they accept all the guidance they are offered. So we cannot have parents who turn away from their children over this. We cannot have peer groups that bully or intimidate or jeer at anyone who dares be less than robustly, constantly heterosexual. We cannot have churches that blithely speak as if 'those homosexuals' are all out there, and presume that 'of course none of us are ever anything like them'. Rather we need our communities to have people in them who have enough gentleness and openness for vulnerable and apprehensive people to trust enough to confess to them their great matter; the thing that perhaps dominates their self-perception and waking consciousness. And having revealed this momentous thing, same-sex attracted people need to be treated with dignity, kindness and as much wisdom and love as we can muster from the Lord who made us and redeems us, and speaks to us in the Bible.

### **So, what do Christians fear in all this?**

I wrote above that supporters of the change to the Marriage Act fear rejection, and a continued sense of exclusion, and that more LGBTIQI people will end up more despairing and suicidal. What do the opponents of same-sex marriage fear? Specifically, what do Christian opponents of same sex marriage fear? One thing we fear for our culture is that the more we do cast aside the teachings of the Bible, the more people will be cast adrift morally, and suffer for it in very real ways. Christians look at the considerable angst constantly generated within a heterosexual culture of dating, sex and marriage that has left Christian sexual ethics behind. Men are made shallower and commitment-shy, and women are frustrated at the pressure and difficulty of forming lasting, satisfying connections and founding families. Because marriage is subordinated to the personal satisfaction of those in it, divorce is too easy an answer when satisfaction is wanting, to the long-term detriment of the children and

## **Christians fear that same-sex marriage could lead to bad outcomes for at least some children down the track.**

extended families of the divorcing couple. And of course, many couples never even marry, and many people live with a string of partners, and many children suffer in their households from a lack of secure love and attention from parents who are themselves secure and cherished. Because the embrace and normalisation of homosexuality is carried out in conscious rejection of the inherited Christian sexual ethic, Christians fear this normalisation will not push us back towards a high view of marriage, but will just reinforce some of the bad things we see in the post-sexual-revolution heterosexual ethic.

### **Children**

Christians (and others) fear that same-sex marriage could lead to bad outcomes for at least some children down the track. For a start, there is the way that homosexual couples become parents. This is not essentially connected to same-sex marriage, but is a related issue that goes along with it because some homosexual couples do wish to found families. Often this involves the use of sperm donation, or surrogacy (whether commercial or altruistic), or other emerging reproductive technologies. And these things can be done well or badly. Children frequently do wish to know who their biological parents are at some point in their lives, and feel somehow hard done by if this is kept from them, or if it is made impossible by the arrangements surrounding their conception and birth.<sup>1</sup> Surrogacy is a tightly regulated practice for good reason – the stakes (emotional and financial) are high for those seeking a child, for those acting as surrogate mothers, and for the children produced, and the same issues about children knowing the mother who carried and gave birth to them arise in the long run. In Australia, gay men increasingly use overseas surrogates which introduces further complications. These issues that arise with third party assisted reproduction would become more pressing if same-sex marriage were to become an incentive for more homosexual couples to found families, and if it were to establish a clearer right for them to do so. Christians already have great reservations about the lengths to which some couples will go to have children via surrogacy or other means. The idea that many other couples might come forward who must use these means to found families does make some apprehensive that there will be casualties on all sides.

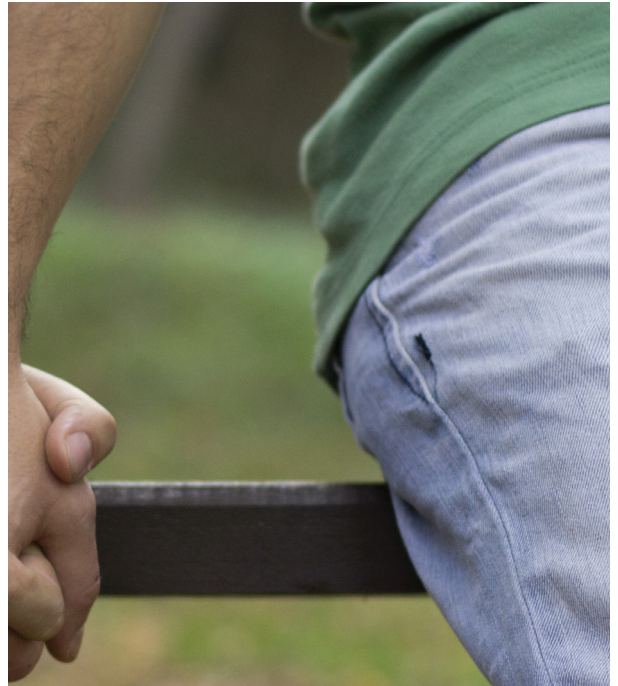
The other issues regarding children is: to what extent do children do better with a male and a female parental figure and worse without both? Many Christians might be predisposed to believe that mothers and fathers give different and complementary gifts as they raise their children (not an unreasonable thought, and one which is widely held, even by those same sex parents who deliberately involve opposite sex adults in the lives of their kids). Despite the testimonies of some children raised by same sex parents that there is something lacking from their experience of self-formation,<sup>2</sup> there is a body of research emerging which suggests that children of same-sex couples do just as well as children of opposite-sex couples.<sup>3</sup> There may be much truth to this, however, the topic is such a part of an ongoing moral struggle in the culture, and the research is in such an incipient phase, that it is hard to know where the dust will settle in the long run. It is in some ways surprising that parents drawn from a community that suffers higher rates of mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse, minority stress, discrimination etc. do manage to parent just as well as the rest of society, but perhaps gay parents are generally drawn from the less troubled sections of the gay community.

All in all, it seems to me that the jury is still out on this. If we are going to pursue policies based on the best and latest social science, it suggests that we should not worry right now that kids are inescapably disadvantaged by being brought up by a homosexual couple. But Christians will always be uneasy for the children of gay parents, if only because we think such children are being brought up by a couple whose sexual relationship is contrary to God's intention for men and women. This means the message they receive about gender and family conflicts with the order God created for our flourishing. They may be in most ways just fine, especially if their parents are loving, kind, attentive and their home is stable and secure. Indeed, this may make them in many ways better off than the children of a heterosexual union that lacks love and security. But there may be some ways where they have a confusion introduced into their lives, which may have its impact in time.

### Legitimacy and acceptance

Probably the most urgent fear that Christians have is about the future legitimacy and acceptance

**...children are being brought up by a couple whose sexual relationship is contrary to God's intention...**



of Christians, if we do not become supportive of the normalisation of homosexuality, and of gay marriage in particular. There are already many people who feel that there can be no principled objection to same sex marriage – only a bigoted objection, on a par with racism, sexism or anti-Semitism.

In the ABC's Q&A episode 'Ethics, Equality & Evasion' (Aug 2015),<sup>4</sup> American campaigner for traditional marriage Katy Faust was a guest, and the topic of same sex marriage was up for discussion. Richard Di Natale began by saying, *'Tony Abbott had a chance to drag the country into the 21st century and end discrimination, to end prejudice and he used every tactic in the book to block it, to continue to support prejudice and discrimination in marriage'*.

He later added, *'The only justification for that (resisting same sex marriage) is that you think that the love between those people is somehow lesser, it's worth less, it is not as important and it's different and that's what prejudice is' (emphasis added)*.

So opposition is prejudice: an ungrounded, irrational and unjust judgement. Sam Dastyari took it up a notch when he responded to Katy Faust. He said, *'There is so much with what you have said just then that is so offensive, it's hard to know where to start. ... I find it very hard to respect a lot of your views on what you have said*

*because I don't think it comes from a place of love. I think it comes from a place of hate ... I think some of it stems from an issue with homosexuality ... You have said that homosexuality drives us further away from God. .... I'm sorry, but I think this American evangelical claptrap is the last thing we need in the debate.'*

As far as Di Natale and Dastyari are concerned, there is no legitimate argument remaining against same sex marriage. The religious types still objecting are simply prejudiced, motivated by hatred, and respecting them is becoming very difficult. If this view becomes the standard, then orthodox Christians will be thought of on a par with white supremacists or misogynists or other pariahs and outlaws from civilised society. This will be tough for Christians to live with.

However, some people think that there is a place for objection to same sex marriage, especially religious objections. Kelly O'Dwyer did not share Di Natale's and Dastyari's view. She advocates same sex marriage, but said of objectors to same sex marriage, *'I do respect that they have a different view to mine and I respect that it is based, for them, on their religious beliefs in many cases. I do think that we do need to understand that in society there are people who have got different views on this issue'*.

But it was Brendan O'Neill who really took on Di Natale and Dastyari. He said, *'Here is what freaks me out about gay marriage. It presents itself as this kind of liberal civil rightsy issue but it has this really ugly intolerant streak to it. Anyone who opposes gay marriage is demonised, harassed, we have seen people thrown out of their jobs because they criticised gay marriage.... It's like a 21st century form of religious persecution. ... as we have just seen in Sam's attack on Katy, calling her hateful and saying she's talking claptrap, it's not acceptable to express this sentiment in public life.'*

O'Dwyer seconded O'Neill, saying, *'we need to be tolerant of everyone's views. And I think the idea that people are demonised for their very heartfelt, very sincere views is actually quite wrong.'*

This is a delicate situation, because any society has certain limits of tolerance. These days heartfelt, sincere views that are judged racist, misogynist or anti-Semitic will not get a hearing, because the moral conviction of our culture

**This is a delicate situation, because any society has certain limits of tolerance**

is that a principled assertion of white racial superiority, or female inferiority, or essential Jewish degeneracy is impossible, and such views only serve to tap dark passions that lead to abuse and violence of one kind or another. If you seek to live and speak according to such convictions, you will be excluded.

Now because our western, (imperfectly) Christian past has pressed pretty hard on homosexuality at times—making it a criminal offense or a psychological disorder, not to mention a target of disgust, abuse or violence—we are finding it hard to escape the suspicion that it is Christianity that encourages similar dark passions that lead to abuse and harm. There is a great test for our society in all this. Will there be a place for any principled objection to the moral equivalence of heterosexual and homosexual relationships? Or will the prevailing view come to be that principled objection to homosexuality is impossible? If refusing to endorse homosexual relationships becomes equivalent to refusing to endorse equitable treatment of Indigenous people or women or Jews, then our culture won't tolerate Christians who do not adjust their convictions. Christians have been out of step with the moral convictions of our time for a while now (Churches still teach against sex before marriage, for example), but if the mood of the culture waxes controlling and punitive (as O'Neill feels some advocacy of gay marriage has become), we could be in for a bruising time.

We might hope that Christian objections to homosexuality might be thought of in the way anti-abortion views are thought of. While some people feel passionately that abortion is a woman's right, and that the anti-abortionists are vile, there is still generally a sense that there are two real sides to the question of abortion, held by people of principle, even if those principles are different. And so anti-abortionists are not universally regarded as reprehensible, as, e.g., neo-Nazis tend to be. I would prefer those who object to the introduction of same-sex marriage might be thought of as principled, morally serious people, rather than hate-fuelled bigots.

Flowing out of that judgment about why people are objecting to same sex marriage comes the question of whether Christian objections to homosexuality or same sex marriage should be

legally accommodated under any new legislation, or whether Christian objections are an obstacle to the good order of our society, and must be publicly repudiated and legally suppressed. Christians look with anxiety upon court cases arising that charge Christians with unlawful discrimination. One recent case in Ireland involved Gareth Lee bringing Ashers Bakery to court under Ireland's Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2006. Having taken his order, Asher's subsequently declined to provide Mr Lee with a cake decorated with a pro-gay marriage slogan on the grounds that to do so would, they felt, involve them in promoting a cause to which they had moral objections on religious grounds. Mr Lee took Ashers to court with the assistance of Ireland's Equality Commission, as a 'pathfinder case', to confirm the meaning and effect of Ireland's anti-discrimination legislation. Mr Lee won the case and the subsequent appeal. At the appeal, the judge said, *'The supplier (of a service) may provide the particular service to all or to none but not to a selection of customers based on prohibited grounds. In the present case the appellants might elect not to provide a service that involves any religious or political message. What they may not do is provide a service that only reflects their own political or religious message in relation to sexual orientation.'*<sup>5</sup>

Daniel McArthur, manager of Ashers, said, after the appeal was lost, *'We wouldn't decorate a cake*

## Christians look with anxiety upon court cases arising that charge Christians

*with a pornographic picture, or with swear words, we wouldn't even decorate a cake with a spiteful message about gay people, because to do so would be to endorse and promote it.'*<sup>6</sup>

As McArthur saw it, this was not a refusal of service on the grounds that his customer was gay, but rather a refusal on the grounds that Ashers was being asked to support a cause they could not in conscience support. One journalist, Peter Tatchell, who initially supported Lee against Asher's, changed his mind and wrote his reasons: *'This finding of political discrimination against Lee sets a worrying precedent. Northern Ireland's laws against discrimination on the grounds of political opinion were framed in the context of decades of conflict. They were designed to heal the sectarian divide by preventing the denial of jobs, housing and services to people because of their politics. There was never an intention that this law should compel people to promote political ideas with which they disagreed.'*

*'The judge concluded that service providers are required to facilitate any "lawful" message, even if they have a conscientious objection. This raises the question: should Muslim printers be obliged to publish cartoons of Mohammed? Or Jewish ones publish the words of a Holocaust denier? Or gay bakers accept orders for cakes with homophobic slurs? If the Ashers verdict stands it could, for example, encourage far-right extremists to demand that bakeries and other service providers facilitate the promotion of anti-migrant and anti-Muslim opinions. It would leave businesses unable to refuse to decorate cakes or print posters with bigoted messages.'*

*'In my view, it is an infringement of freedom to require businesses to aid the promotion of ideas to which they conscientiously object. Discrimination against people should be unlawful, but not against ideas.'*<sup>7</sup>

The issues here are subtle, and it is easy to have sympathy with each side of the case: with Mr Lee, for thinking it important to have the equality laws tested and enforced, so that they do what their framers wished them to do in society; and with Ashers, who were not simply refusing service to a gay man (which would be unacceptable), but were trying to avoid making a cake in support of a cause that made them morally uneasy. Christians may fear that they will need to tread carefully or leave certain lines



of business altogether to avoid becoming the target of devastating court cases designed to advance a cause they cannot support. But legal suppression is unlikely to change Christian minds. Christians have a track record of being able to endure with patience the suppression of their views and freedoms (and other sufferings too) without losing their convictions.

## Conclusion

We have surveyed the debate from both sides. Although I have clearly spent far more time articulating the Christian side of things, I have wanted to represent the perspectives and fears of each side of the debate with some truth and sympathy. I hope I have not fallen too far short of this. I have also wanted to discuss the issues in a measured, thorough, fair-minded way, and not in slogans or tendentious rhetoric. Again, I hope I have not fallen too far short of this.

It seems clear to me that the cause of same sex marriage is part of a clash of moral visions: an older Christian one which is being challenged and partially displaced by an evolving new moral outlook concerned with rights, freedom, self-expression, individual autonomy and concerned with the challenging and overturning of received norms in service of a better future we are fighting our way towards. Will these moral visions fight to the death in a zero-sum game where one must win and the other must submit or die? Or will we be able to figure out a way for each to permit the other to exist according to its own integrity, and to speak its mind publicly, and to commend itself, and persuade others in our cultural forums, forming real a moral multiculturalism? (This may be the best, if not the easiest, future to aim for together.)

It seems to me that many Christians have been able to make space for homosexuality in our society. This has happened slowly, and not without some regrettable unkindnesses. There is much that we can happily support in our changing context: the decriminalisation and demedicalisation of our approach to same-sex attracted people, for instance. The insistence that homosexual people are not mocked, belittled, threatened or abused, but are treated as our fellow human beings, our valued neighbours.

There are ways we won't join the movement to normalise homosexuality. I'd expect many,

**the cause of same sex marriage is part of a clash of moral visions: an older Christian one which is being challenged and partially displaced by an evolving new moral outlook**

perhaps most, Christians would vote against introducing same-sex marriage if it came to a plebiscite, given the long-established teaching of the Bible and the churches that homosexual behaviour is not good for those who engage in it, nor pleasing to God. Some Christians opposed to homosexuality might vote in favour of it, believing that it will do more good than harm to encourage homosexual partners to commit to faithful, lifelong unions, or for a range of other reasons.

Whatever individual Christians might do, within many of our churches we will discourage people from homosexual behaviour, and expect Christians to refrain from it throughout their lives. The different moral assessment of homosexual behaviour amongst Christians will persist, and we will try to commend the Bible's vision of gender and sexuality to all and sundry. We believe it is the best and truest vision, even if we ourselves only grasp it imperfectly and can learn new things from it still.

I hope that the LGBTIQ movement will not use their growing influence to go after Christians, poison others against Christians, to drive Christian voices out of the public space with cries of 'bigot' and 'homophobe'. No doubt the LGBTIQ movement will continue to try to persuade people that it has a better moral vision of gender, sexuality and human life than the Christian one, and that's to be expected. But it may also find it can give a place to allow dissent from Christians and other conscientious objectors from LGBTIQ moral vision. I hope it will.

## Endnotes:

1. See, eg, [www.dcs.org.au](http://www.dcs.org.au), [www.tangledwebs.org.uk](http://www.tangledwebs.org.uk), [www.telegraph.co.uk/lifestyle/wellbeing/11607985/Is-it-time-to-question-the-ethics-of-donor-conception.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/lifestyle/wellbeing/11607985/Is-it-time-to-question-the-ethics-of-donor-conception.html), <http://theconversation.com/secrets-and-lies-why-donor-conceived-children-need-to-know-their-origins-44015>,
2. See, eg, <http://australianmarriage.org/quartet-of-truth-adult-kids-of-gay-parents-speak-out/>
3. See, eg, <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/same-sex-parented-families-australia>
4. <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/qanda/txt/s4273039.htm>
5. As reported at [www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/oct/24/born-again-christian-ashers-bakery-lose-court-appeal-in-gay-cake-row](http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/oct/24/born-again-christian-ashers-bakery-lose-court-appeal-in-gay-cake-row)
6. Watch the video of McArthur at [www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/oct/24/born-again-christian-ashers-bakery-lose-court-appeal-in-gay-cake-row](http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/oct/24/born-again-christian-ashers-bakery-lose-court-appeal-in-gay-cake-row)
7. [www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/feb/01/gay-cake-row-i-changed-my-mind-ashers-bakery-freedom-of-conscience-religion](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/feb/01/gay-cake-row-i-changed-my-mind-ashers-bakery-freedom-of-conscience-religion)

# Instuments of Hope Neil Bach

Recently I read the first of three large fictional works described as ‘thrillers’. One critic described these monumental detective stories as books ‘that will not be forgotten once closed’. The writer of the trilogy was brilliant at weaving his story and creating tension, but as the first story proceeded I was confronted with descriptions of violence and sexual perversion amongst most characters that highlighted the worst and evil aspects of our societies.

The descriptions were not necessary to sustain the book’s plot and they left me feeling that my soul had been assailed rather than enlightened. Consequently I only flicked through the last sections of the book to see who were the villains, and took the remaining two volumes back to the library without reading them.

It is just one sobering example of my own survey of society. My recent experience of ‘retiring’ from full time Christian ministry has meant being able to watch more films than the average one per year my wife and I saw at a cinema. I have also engaged afresh with the general culture. Despite the many wonderful benefits in our societies my recent experience leaves me troubled at western societies’ direction. Secular and non-Christian values have been disseminated and are absorbed by western people in an extremely wide way. Further our society not only finds little room for God, but some within it are currently engaged in seeking to deconstruct the Christian values that have made our society great.

I know that I am not alone, and my observation of western democracies indicates to me that conservative people of Christian persuasion are saying, “we’ve had enough and are not allowing our society to disappear down some sink hole of godless irrelevance.”

From where do I draw strength at the present time? There are three things that act for me, as

**From  
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...

anchors for my soul, to give hope in Christ-like living.

The first is the anchor of the cross of Christ. Despite the existence of Easter celebrations in the west, the cross of Christ is easily pushed to the edges in modern Christian writing and living, and often the cross’ meaning is diluted. For the cross is the only answer to the reality of evil in our world, it is the only solution ... for education, psychology, and decent living, that have their place, cannot deal with evil. Billy Graham once wrote “Jesus’ greatest work was accomplished in just three dark hours on Calvary where he died for our sins.”<sup>1</sup>

That work showed God’s deepest love for us, the depravity of human evil he had to deal with, and his deep hatred of sin. Christ’s death dealt with God’s rightful anger at human sin, and paid the penalty for our sins. He stood in our place, and gained salvation for all who put their trust in God’s completed work at the cross.<sup>2</sup> God converts those who accept the power of the cross into their lives, and makes us new creatures able to live for him in his world. Our values and lives are transformed and so is the society in which we live when it accepts the importance of the cross and Christianity.

The second is the anchor of the Holy Spirit. The slave trader turned clergyman John Newton said “The religion of a sinner stands on two pillars, namely what Christ did for us in his flesh, and what he performs in us by his Spirit. Most errors arise from an attempt to separate these two.”<sup>3</sup> It is true in my experience that to just trust in the cross of Christ, as crucial as that is, is not enough. I need to daily seek the fullness of the Holy Spirit to live for God; to deflect and defeat the wrong values and experiences the world can offer. When I have neglected to live in the Spirit’s power, thinking I could exist on cruise control, I have been diminished in effectiveness. Spirit living means to deeply understand the

Bible, through study and daily reading and then praying earnestly for God's strength, sensitivity and wisdom day by day. It means responding to God's agendas not mine. It starts with my own person and radiates like a stone thrown into the pond, to all my thoughts and actions and to everyone and every organization that I meet and correspond with. This is to do what Scripture teaches, "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."<sup>4</sup>

The third is the anchor of a future that is God's future. It strongly encourages my heart that God's kingly rule continues to be felt in his world now, to transform people and institutions, and that this rule of God will not end. We are assured that the future is God and God's heaven. Years ago a friend and I walked on a campus and a great number of people leaving a class were walking the other way. My young Christian friend, not long

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converted, said to me, "story of my life walking against the crowd." He is still doing it. So are all Christians, not weighed down by a world that is for the moment, walking in the other direction.

We know that by embracing the power of the cross, seeking the filling of the Holy Spirit, and anticipating our future hope, we can be the powerful instruments for God in a society needing him.

#### **End notes:**

1. 'What kept Jesus on the cross?'. Billy Graham, Decision March 2001, p1
2. Romans 3:21-26
3. Memoirs of the Rev John Newton'. John Newton, Newton's Works April 1839, xlvii.
4. Ephesians 5:18
5. James 1: 5 New International Version, 2011.

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## 2018 Anglican Future Conference EFAC and FCA Australia

The 2018 Anglican Future Conference will be held at the Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre from Friday 7th September till lunchtime on Sunday 9th September with a commencement service on Thursday evening 6th September 2018.

EFAC (Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion) and FCA (Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans - Australia) partnered together in 2015 to run the first Anglican Future Conference in Melbourne with over 450 participating. The partner organisations are planning for this to be a much bigger Conference with the expectation of strong lay participation.

Confirmed speakers are Frog Orr-Ewing and Wesley Hill. Frog is the Rector of Latimer Minster, as well as Chaplain and Missioner for the Oxford

Centre for Christian Apologetics, with teaching responsibilities at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford. Frog will speak on Mission and Culture. Dr Wesley Hill is assistant professor of biblical studies at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, and author of "Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality" as well as "Spiritual Friendship". Wes will open up the Scriptures on the area of Faithful Sexuality as he reflects on his own journey as a same sex attracted person.

The Conference will be preceded on Thursday 6th September with a range of Ministry and Mission Intensives. Each Intensive will run during the day and will be led by experienced leaders in key areas. For further information contact Chris Appleby - [cappleby@cappleby.net.au](mailto:cappleby@cappleby.net.au)



## Luke 6:17-26

David Seccombe

**L**et's try to answer some questions about Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

**Is Luke's Sermon on the Mount the same as Matthew's or from some other occasion?**

It is a mistake to see it as a Sermon on a Plain. Jesus has been praying in a mountain about the selection of his twelve apostles. He has called them to himself and now descends to a level place (on the mountain) where he meets with the crowds.

**Is Jesus addressing the disciples or the crowds?**

The picture Luke paints of the occasion is interesting. There are the twelve newly appointed apostles, a great number of disciples, and a representative gathering of the laos (people) of Israel from all over the land and beyond. Jesus is invested with power – truly the Messiah amidst his people. The Beatitudes have special reference to disciples ("having raised his eyes on his disciples"), but are heard by all.

**Who are those who are pronounced happy? Are they four different categories of person or one?**

Jesus characterizes his disciples (more than the twelve) as "poor-hungry-weeping". This is how Israel in exile understood itself; God was the protector of the helpless and now the nation had fallen into that state. Through Isaiah God had promised that he would save poor, hungry, mourning Zion. But that raised the question whether all Israel would be saved, or only some. In the fourth beatitude Jesus identifies true "poor-hungry-weeping Zion" as those who are hated, excluded and insulted because of their association with the suffering Son of Man.

**How can these people be said to be happy?**

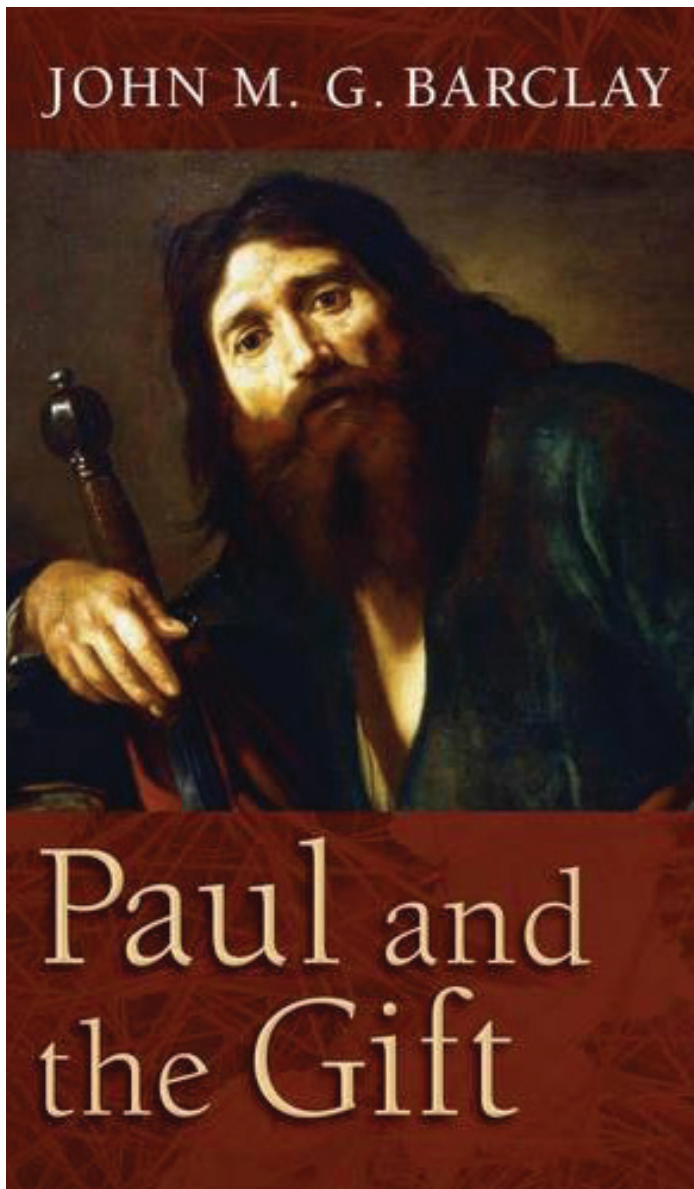
True disciples will be happy - when Messiah establishes his kingdom and all forms of poverty and need are abolished. They are happy now because they know their sufferings are light and momentary and will give way to something glorious: they rejoice in what will be. Christians are consoled when they suffer rejection because of Jesus, because they know their reward is great in heaven. I don't think this means when they go to heaven, but that good things are stored up for them now and later with God, who is in heaven.

**Who does Jesus address as rich, well-fed and laughing?**

These are those who can be characterized as opposite to disciples. Remember that Jesus is addressing the whole people with disciples mingled amongst them. Each person needed to decide for himself or herself whether he or she would believe Jesus' gospel and stand by the Son of Man and suffer exclusion for his sake, or to seek acceptance from those with influence. Jesus implies that these latter are a non-Israel whose fate is to lose even the good things they now enjoy, and whose laughter will turn to bitter tears on the day the kingdom is revealed in all its fullness.

**So what is going on here?**

Jesus is announcing the coming of the kingdom for Israel but warning that it will only be enjoyed by those who stand with him in the time of his rejection and suffering. Those who prefer what this world has to offer above the promises of the kingdom will ultimately lose everything, but those who go on believing the gospel will inherit Israel's restoration future where poverty, hunger and unhappiness will be things of the past. Jesus is dividing the people.



### ***Paul and the Gift***

**John Barclay.**

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2015 (656 pp.)

John Barclay's *Paul and the Gift* is the most significant contribution in Pauline theology since E. P. Sanders's *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977). That's a big call given the proliferation of books in the past 40 years amidst a ferocious debate on Pauline theology; not the least being N. T. Wright's monumental *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*. What sets Barclay's work apart is that he offers an approach that may make the debate less polarised and move scholarship beyond the present impasse. His approach to Paul is fresh, bold and incisive, while his thesis is possessed of rigorous logic, clear methodology and great clarity. The result is a reading of *Romans* and *Galatians* which is coherent, consistent and compelling.

The premise of the book is that modern conception of "grace" – as "a gift given without expectation of return" (unreciprocated) is a recent cultural product that is very much at odds with Greco-Roman and Jewish assumptions about gift-giving. In particular, ancient conceptions of gift were never free from the expectation of reciprocation. Not only is Paul's theology of grace incorrectly read through this modernist lens, but the exegesis of key Pauline texts and the theology that is constructed upon it lacks sufficient nuance to represent him properly.

Far from being a singular concept Barclay examines the cultural dimension of gift exchange and finds that grace is a multi-faceted idea that can be understood (or "perfected") in six different ways:

- Superabundance – the abundance and/or permanence of the gift;
- Singularity – the giver is characterised by this trait alone, without any corresponding concern for justice/

judgement;

- Priority – the giver initiates the giving without any prior action on the part of the recipient;
- Incongruity – the gift bears no relation to the worthiness of the recipient;
- Efficacy – the gift achieves its purpose;
- Non-circularity – there is no expectation of reciprocity (69).

Given the number of meanings that can be attached to grace Barclay examines more than a dozen theologians in order to observe which aspects they highlight and why they stress those particular facets. Luther offers the richest interpretation of grace, perfecting five of the six aspects – superabundance, singularity (to a large extent), priority, incongruity and non-circularity; only efficacy is absent in Luther's theology. His emphasis on non-circularity is especially significant because it gives Luther's theology its particular character. As Barclay writes, *"Against all possible misunderstandings, Luther insists again and again that these works will result from faith ... but he refused to allow that they are integral to faith or to justification lest they become again a necessary means to salvation ... Stripped of this conditionality, believers act out of love for God, not from self-concern"* (114). As we will see, it is this understanding of grace, the non-circularity of the gift, that Barclay will claim is absent in Pauline theology.

While both Luther and Calvin emphasise the superabundance and incongruence of grace, along with the priority of God in salvation they differ in respect of non-circularity. As Barclay explains, *"Calvin's task — and considerable achievement — is to position a life of good works within the scheme of salvation, without making these gifts instrumental in obtaining or 'meriting' grace, that is, without compromising the priority and incongruity of grace"* (124). The purpose of salvation is regeneration (124), therefore Calvin maintains the strong prospect of moral progress (sanctification) (127). Grace "incites" the believers will towards obedience. Thus efficacy of grace is a major emphasis, as the Spirit graciously works to bring about sanctification in the believer's life (129). However, Calvin does not perfect the non-circularity of the gift. As Barclay quotes Calvin, *"In all covenants of his mercy the Lord requires of his servants in return uprightness and sanctity of life"* (Institutes, III.17.5). Importantly for Calvin, *"the believers' return to God, which arises from God's grace, is never instrumental in acquiring initial or subsequent grace from God. Nonetheless, believers' active commitment to holiness is a necessary sign of the grace that activates their work"* (130). Calvin expects the circulation of love towards the neighbour as part of their return to God.

Since the 1970s the New Perspective on Paul (NPP) has challenged the Reformed consensus on Paul, in particular the characterisation of first-century Judaism as a religion of works, as opposed to Christianity with its emphasis on grace. According to NPP scholars like James Dunn, "works of the Law" were not performed in Judaism to gain divine favour, but were "badges" of belonging to the people of God. The problem with Judaism was not its understanding of grace, but its insistence that believers were marked by circumcision, food laws and Sabbath observance and not faith in Christ. Because faith in Christ and not works of the Law is the marker of being "in" salvation is open

to all without (ethnic) distinction, and reconciliation among believers, especially Jews and Gentiles, is the major implication of the gospel (cf. Gal 3:21). The "righteousness of God" (Rom 1:17), is not the alien righteousness of Christ imputed to the believer, but God's own faithfulness to the Abrahamic covenant in bringing salvation to all the nations while remaining true to Israel. According to E. P. Sanders Paul was in agreement with Judaism that "works are the condition of remaining 'in,' but they do not earn salvation" (157). This schema highlights the priority (and probably the superabundance) of grace, but its insistence that works are necessary for remaining 'in' indicates that non-circularity does not figure.

The NPP has been received with alarm from those who see it undermining the Reformers' emphasis on grace. Barclay explains this angst: *"if salvation is 'by grace alone'... it is not sufficient that it is merely prior: it must be incongruous with the work of the recipient (even at the final judgement) and efficacious in one form or another (through the work of the Spirit)"* (169. *Emphasis added*). However, Barclay makes the vital point in response to this critique that they have assumed *"a particular definition of 'grace'... and little attempt is made to distinguish between the different meanings of the term or (in our terms) the different perfections of this motif"* (169). It is here that Barclay's work offers the possibility of exciting new

**What sets Barclay's work apart is that he offers an approach that may make the debate less polarised and move scholarship beyond the present impasse.**

insight, applying his six perfections of grace to gain a more nuanced understating of Pauline theology in the hope of moving beyond the simple dichotomies that have developed.

However, before we get to Paul, Barclay examines in detail five Jewish texts from the Second Temple period (530BC to AD70) that reflect on the beneficence of God. What he discovers is that *“grace is everywhere in the theology of Second Temple Judaism, but not everywhere the same”* (565). Surprisingly perhaps, Paul’s answers “stand in close proximity” to these voices, though with his own unique perspective (328). Where Paul is distinctive is not in his belief in a gracious God, but in the significance of the “Christ-event,” its implications for Gentile mission and his emphasis on the incongruous nature of the mercy of God.

In his final section Barclay proceeds to exegete closely Galatians and Romans. He hopes that the preceding 328 pages of work will allow him to do so wary of preconceptions concerning the meaning of grace, and in particular, allow him to dispense with the modern Western notion of grace as “pure” gift that is given with no strings attached. Barclay’s exegesis is scintillating, providing clarity to the structure and argument of these letters that is rare. He is at pains to provide an explanation that gives equal weight to every section and every verse, not sublimating those which do not sit comfortably into his reconstruction of Paul’s argument. As a result — and this is the real benefit of this whole volume — we are able to see the argument of these letters, the theology of Paul and these important doctrines with far greater precision and nuance than before.

So what did he find concerning grace? In both Galatians and Romans he finds that *“Paul figures God’s gift or favour as incongruous with the worth of its recipients.” Paul’s emphasis on the incongruity of God’s gift is seen, for example, where Paul argues,*

*The righteousness of God is revealed in Christ in the justification of sinners (3:21-26); Christ does not for the good, but for the ungodly (5:6-8). Paul parades not the match but the mismatch between the act of God and the value or condition of its human beneficiaries: divine faithfulness is displayed in human faithlessness (3:1-8), life is created out of human death (4:16-22) (490).*

Paul *“explores the incongruity of grace, which he relates to the Christ-event as the definitive enactment of God’s love for the unlovely, and to the Gentile mission, where the gifts of God ignore ethnic differentials of worth and Torah-based definitions of value (‘righteousness’)”* (565–566 ). Because everyone without distinction, including the Jews,

are unworthy of grace we receive this gift irrespective of worth, meaning that it belongs to no one race and is for every person regardless of ethnicity.

If incongruity is radicalised by Paul and the preeminent way he understands grace, what of the other perfections? Barclay argues that grace in Paul is not non-circular. That is, there is an expectation of reciprocity in God’s gift of Christ. *“God’s grace is designed to produce obedience, lives that perform, by heart-inscription, the intent of the Law”* (492). *God intends to transform the human condition as he brings about the “obedience of faith”* (Rom 1:5)

which is the life created through God’s incongruous gift. God judges sinners according to their obedience that arises out of faith and not their ethnicity. Importantly, Barclay adds, *“it is the act of God that produces the necessary human obedience ... This power is incongruous in its impact on sinful human material, but its transformative results are finally congruous with the last judgement of God”* (467). Moreover, the good work that leads to eternal life *“is an act of divine power, an incongruous gift to sinful humanity whose transformative effects will be evident at the judgement”* (473).

Some will protest that grace with reciprocity is not grace at all; leaving an approach that is not sufficiently reformed and opens the door to works. However, this is where Barclay’s taxonomy and historical perspective are so useful. His view of Paul is largely at odds with Luther (and also modern notions of gift requiring no reciprocity), but entirely consistent with Calvin’s reading of grace. It is reformed in promoting the priority of grace, its efficacy and, most of all, its incongruity. Where it differs is in respect of singularity and non-circularity, which makes it different to Luther, but not unreformed.

Barclay entertains the hope that his approach might bridge the NPP and Reformed view of Paul providing a basis for some kind of consensus. My view is that his approach is too

**Pastors and lay people will find a great deal of fresh and accessible material**

similar to that of the NPP (closer than Barclay seems prepared to admit) to form a bridge. His understanding of “works of the law” may be broader than Sanders’, and his analysis of Second Temple Judaism far more nuanced, but in both of these he remains well inside the NPP camp. His understanding of the righteousness of God as subjective, and his apparent rejection of imputation also place him in the NPP orbit. Like the NPP he interprets Paul against the background of the Gentile mission, and understands the doctrine of justification as being more about the constitution of the people of God than personal salvation. This approach is a considerable step forward in overcoming many of the objections that have been levelled at the NPP, and his taxonomy clarifies several aspects of the debate, but it cannot be understood or represented as a “third-way” or “bridge” between the various perspectives.

It is not necessary to read every one of the 656 pages of Paul and the Gift. The one hundred page analysis of Second Temple texts can be missed, and the excellent summary chapter read instead. The same could be said for the historical survey – except that he offers such a helpful refresher of historical theology that it is a worthwhile read. Moreover, this is not a dry book of purely academic interest. Pastors and lay people will find a great deal of fresh and accessible material that will stimulate their thinking on key Reformation doctrines and greatly enhance their preaching – especially of the Reformation, Romans and Galatians.

*Tim Foster, Victoria*



## The Politics of Rage

### Dale Appleby

Christos Tsiolkas concludes his article by bemoaning the impact of anger in public debate: “...but this rage and this pornography of wrath, it is proving dangerous.” (35). His discussion claims that rage is everywhere and expressed by all kinds of parties. “There is a narrative of this anger...: that the rage festers in the disenfranchised white working class of the globalised capitalist world.” (30) A narrative he says, which is mistaken. “We are fooling ourselves if we believe the rage

“The Second Coming: On the politics of rage”. Christos Tsiolkas. *The Monthly* Dec 16-Jan17

*The White Queen: One Nation and the Politics of Race*. David Marr Quarterly Essay 65 2017

is only misogynistic or rural, only white and right-wing, baby-boomer and not millennial.” (30)

His view is that it has invaded all aspects of public discourse. Some if it is the language of elites used against those who don’t speak that language – the less educated for example. “...identity politics has become a weapon to punish any ambivalence of thought and expression, any incorrect use of gendered, racial or theoretical nomenclature, and to launch accusations of bad faith.”

(31) Some of it is exacerbated by “..the internet, which allows for a lubrication and indulgence in wrath just as much as it does for lust” (30). It shows itself in the increase in dichotomies, false distinctions and separations. Each group thinking in their own bubbles, class divisions and lack of understandings. His suggestion is that “We have to relearn listening and we have to relearn argument, to free both activities from the indulgent wrath of the new digital age.” (34)

David Marr discusses the rise and influence of Pauline Hanson and her One Nation Party. Despite her appeal to those disaffected with politics and politicians, those fed up with the influence of elites, and her positioning as part of a working class and nostalgic group, her central appeal has to do with race, according to Marr. The focus of the rage against other races has changed over the years. At present it is Muslims. Previously it was Aborigines and Asians. Dr Anne Aly agrees with various researchers who think that there is around 14 per cent of the population that are clearly hostile to Muslims and another 10 per cent that hold vaguer fears towards Muslims (17).

Marr thinks Hanson has harnessed the fear and anger of this part of the population. Her power, he says, is not just that it has won her another term in the Senate, but that she holds sway over a significant voting block which affects the fortunes of the major parties. Hence the gradual and unashamed adoption of many of One Nation’s policies by the Government, and the refusal of any of the leaders of the major parties to call her on her racism. Because that would immediately alienate a group which the major parties need to woo.

Marr’s essay outlines a deliberate use of fear and racial hatred to promote a political agenda. Hanson would say that she is merely giving that 24 per cent of the population a voice. Marr’s conclusion is that “the far right where politicians are spending so much energy harvesting votes these days is not Australia. Nearly all of us are somewhere

else, scattered around the centre, waiting for a government that will take this good, prosperous, generous country into the future.” (95).

Both essays are rational and irenic. Both are speaking the language of their group. Marr’s is an attempt to explain and dismiss. Tsiolkas offers some advice about listening and arguing. And a plea to give up anger. But what is the alternative, or antidote, to engineered anger?

At a community level, fear and engineered hate are ways of reinforcing tribal boundaries. Because tribal boundaries are felt as means of retaining security. Listening and arguing better may be of some help to those who want less tribal conflict. But some of the talk needs to be inside the tribe to identify other ways not to be afraid. And leadership that shows a path for righteous anger not to become festured anger.

I was at a meeting of EFAC members recently at which the discussion came around to the kind of hate that is directed towards evangelicals. Some of it is passive, of course, and most of it may not be addressed directly. Yet there is a strong antipathy to what evangelicals are perceived to stand for. Inside the evangelical tribe there is a strong desire to listen and argue gently, humbly and in a conciliatory spirit. There is also anger particularly by those who are chronically marginalised. But evangelicals don’t need to be afraid and they don’t need to feed their anger. Either as members of a church or as citizens in a nation.

What they do have is a way of thinking, living and feeling that follows the principle of “blessing those who curse you”, and of “doing to others what you want them to do to you”. Marr wants a government to lead this nation into a better future. Christians still have the opportunity to show their church and nation (and political parties) how the tribes of the earth can listen and argue and grow together in friendship.



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