

pastoral

biblical

theology

what use?

evangelical

gospel

punk



Editorial

This issue of *Essentials* is dominated by theology. I wanted to title it "A Thicket of Theologians", but thought that some might take offence and others might take fright. But a ram was once found in a thicket, and in this issue some wonderful encouragements will be found by those who look. Evangelicals like theology and we know that it is always practical because it brings us back to God and his word. **John Yates** takes our thoughts into heaven and the church; **Glenn Hohnberg** continues his encouragement to evangelism, this time with good ideas for action; **Peter Corney** (with tongue in cheek and a ringing in the ears) takes aim at the idols of modernity and the poverty of liberal critiques of our culture; **Peter Smith** encourages us to stay on task in maintaining the great heritage of the faith in the battle for the supremacy of God's word; and **Marty Foord** reviews and critiques Michael Bird's *Evangelical Theology*. As well, the **Archbishop of Sydney** answers our questions, and **Gordon Killow** and his ministry team from Perth tell us how they do gospel work in the parish. Finally **Michael Bennett** argues for John as the gospel writer who started to write first. We may not agree with everything others have written, but I hope it might help us clarify what we do believe and why.

There are also some important announcements of coming EFAC Conferences.

Dale Appleby is the rector of Christ the King Willetton and the editor of *Essentials*



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COVER: Andrew Melville upbraids a bishop at the court of James VI (Creative Commons Licence)

Ascended Fullness

John Yates writes under the conviction that the ascension is one of the most neglected of all Christian doctrines.

As a doctrine concerning the life of Christ its implications for our perspective on the nature of the Church and Christian ministry are numerous. Perhaps the lack of teaching on the ascension derives from the fact that apart from brief descriptions provided by Luke (Luke 24:50-52; Acts 1:9-11) the translation of Jesus to heaven is simply assumed throughout the rest of the New Testament (Acts 2:30-33; Eph 4:8-10; Heb 10:12). Whatever the reason for overlooking the ascension, it is the pinnacle of the redemptive purpose of the Incarnation, the “taking of humanity into God” (Athanasian Creed). Unless Jesus returned to the heavenly glory he had with the Father before the world was made (John 17:5) we could never be “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4). My hope is that by focusing on the ascension we will be more deeply grasped by “the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe” (Eph 1:19-20).

Ministers of the Ascended Lord

One of the most influential texts for my personal thinking on ministry relates to the ascension. “But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it says, ‘When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.’ (In saying, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean but that he had also descended into the

lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,” (Ephesians 4:7-12 ESV). The ministry gifts by which Christ equips his Body relate directly to his ascended authority. As post-resurrection impartations they empower the people of God in their vocation to “fill all things” on behalf of Christ who reigns from heaven. From this perspective there can be no secular/sacred divide in Christian thinking, the vision of the ascended “Lord of glory” (James 2:1) motivates his ministers to empower all believers to take the presence of Christ into the marketplace of “all things”. The practical enacting of this vision depends on an ecclesial paradigm that transcends the differences between “High” and “Low” churchmanship.

The Church as Fullness

Of the many sermons I have heard on the nature of the Church

I cannot recall one on Church as “fullness”. It is Christ ascended “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion” who is “head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.” (Ephesians 1:20-23 ESV). In the context of Paul’s cosmic Christology the Church’s destiny is to become as unbounded as the exalted humanity of her Lord, “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13). When the apostle decrees, “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness.” (Col 2:9-10) he explains that being a member of the Church involves communion with all that Jesus has become as a glorified human being. This has many implications for how we understand and minister the means of grace.

The Supper of Glory

We are familiar with designating our communion celebration as “the Lord’s Supper” (1 Cor 11:20), but it is easy to forget that the one with whom we celebrate the Supper is “the Lord of glory” (1 Cor 2:9). It was reading John Calvin’s exalted sacramental theology that first activated my thinking about such wonders.

Christians enjoy a real communion with Christ’s human body unimpeded by “distance of place” (Institutes, 4.17.10), this is a direct consequence of the ascension. “And, indeed we see how much more abundantly his Spirit was poured out, how much more gloriously his kingdom was advanced, how much greater power was employed in aiding his followers and discomfiting his enemies. Being raised to heaven, he withdrew his bodily presence from our sight, not that he might cease to be with his followers, who are still pilgrims on the earth, but that he might rule both heaven and earth more immediately by his power; or rather, the promise which he made to be with us even to the end of the world, he fulfilled by this ascension, by which, as his body has been raised above all heavens, so his power and efficacy have been propagated and diffused beyond all the bounds of heaven and earth.” (Institutes 2.16.14).

It is Jesus’ returning to the greater glory of the Father that makes it possible for him to send the Spirit in undiminished power to his disciples across the earth (John 14:28; Acts 2:33). Through the Lord’s Supper and by the Spirit “we are carried to heaven with our eyes and minds, that we may there behold

Unless Jesus returned to the heavenly glory he had with the Father before the world was made we could never be “partakers of the divine nature”.

Christ in the glory of his kingdom” (Institutes, 4.17.18). Unlike the position of many contemporary Evangelicals Calvin sees the Supper as far more than a mere remembrance, it is an actual feeding of our souls in the very presence of the heavenly Lord. The narrowly cognitive interpretation of Holy Communion found in many churches is a direct consequence of a failure to understand the limitless authority of the ascended Lord.

What Word is That?

A previous mentor of mine used to love provoking pastors by saying, “Do you fellas really believe that the Word you preach is the Word which created the world?” If the Word in our mouths and hearts (Rom 10:8) is actually the Word made flesh and present in the Spirit, then the glory of this Word is as illimitable. That is, the Word we minister is the presence of the ascended and glorified Lord himself, the one who will appear soon to judge the living and the dead (Rev 22:12). Unfortunately the Church abounds with many conscious or unconscious images of Christ that subtract from the immensity of the transformation effected by the cross. Jesus is no longer, for example, “the bearded and sandalled one of the Gospels” (Ortiz). The one in whose name we minister today is the one who appeared to Stephen in the glory of God (Acts 7:55), dazzled Saul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3), and whose visage induced a death-like state in the apostle John (Rev 1:17). This is the one who by his ascended glory commissions us to speak his Word.

Conclusion

By and large the Church in Australia has lost a vision of the greatness of who Jesus is. This vision of greatness, with all its effects, can only be restored by a deeper insight into the transformation which occurred when Jesus was “taken up in glory” (1 Tim 3:16). I am not here attempting to provoke a renewed interest in the theology of the ascension but a prayerful request to the Lord of glory for a deeper revelation of the perfection of his humanity. This after all is the destiny for which he came, died and was raised on our behalf.

John Yates divides his time between mentoring/spiritual direction and writing for his own list and website. He has helped establish several marketplace networks in WA for Christian professionals. He is a part of the pastoral team at the Church on the Rise Bassendean where he works principally with men.

EFAC National Report

The EFAC Australia Committee met recently in Sydney. It was encouraging to hear of the many signs of genuine growth amongst evangelical Anglicans across Australia. As always we heard of the joys and challenges in being a part of the complex entity called the Anglican Church. In some places there are minimal obstacles to gospel work. In other places it is in a context of genuine tension. It was great to have Bishop Rick Lewers with us which helped us to reflect on ministry in the bush as well as both metropolitan and regional cities.

Stephen Hale

National Anglican Future Conference

Wednesday 25th to Friday 27th March, 2015

Location: Melbourne

A joint Conference of EFAC Australia and FCA Australia

Exploring God's word with Kanishka Raffel

Exploring the future of the gospel in our nation

Exploring our Anglican identity with Ashley Null

Exploring new trends in church ministry and mission

Exploring the challenges of being Anglican in Australia and the world

Launch of FCA Australia with Archbishop Glenn Davies

Chair of the Organising Committee

Archdeacon Richard Condie

Conference Organiser

Rev Tracy Lauersen

Lock in the dates now.

Full program and booking information will be available in early May.

EFAC Australia Emerging Leaders Gathering

21st to 23rd September 2014

Location: Melbourne

A smaller gathering of emerging leaders from across Australia to meet, read God's word and explore their part in leadership and ministry in the Anglican Church in the future.

Each State Director is currently submitting names to be invited. Expressions of interest can be sent to them or the organisers.

Co-Chairs of Organising Committee

Adam Certrangelo (adam@esalt.com.au) and

Adam Lowe (adammlowe@me.com)

Rethinking Reaching Australia

Part 2

Glenn Hohnberg continues with his challenge to our thinking and practice of evangelism in this second part of last years Mathew Hale Library Lecture.

We are not reaching Australia with the great news of Jesus. 2012 McCrindle Research showed that despite Australia's population doubling since 1966, one million fewer people go to church now than in 1966. Even considering the dead nominalism that may have existed in the 1950-60s, this ought to be very confronting

Why are we failing to reach Australia? In the first part of my article I boldly proposed two major reasons why this is so. First, we focus our evangelism on our local, geographic neighbours, the people we live near. Due to the cultural changes of the last thirty years, these are the people we almost never see. While focusing on them we neglect those that we see every day at work.

Second, our churches, the centre of Christian life and thinking, devote very few resources to adult evangelism. And so adult evangelism doesn't succeed, thus perpetuating a cycle of not discipling and training in adult evangelism.

Perhaps things are harder now than they have ever been. However, the most crucial things have not changed and these should give us great confidence in trying to reach Australia.

What hasn't changed?

God wants to save people. God has an eternal plan to save people and he sent his Son at cost to his very self to save people. Do we think that God has backed out now? Of course not!

We know He is still at work saving people.

The Gospel is growing. Jesus warned us the Kingdom of God grows like a crop, unseen over night. Paul said exactly the same thing to the Colossian Christians. The gospel is growing. Just because we can't see it doesn't mean it isn't growing. When we stop thinking the gospel is growing we are judging by what we can see.

God's word is powerful. It is God's word that made the world, that makes nations rise and fall and even now cleaves into the centre of people beyond their expectation or defence. It lays the marrow of our hearts bare. Proclaiming it will have an impact.

God uses what he has always used. The pattern of the gospel going forward in the world is always the same: people sacrificially praying and people sacrificially proclaiming God's word. These concepts are both clearly captured in the end of the letter to the Colossians. Paul is in prison for proclaiming the gospel and asks for prayer to boldly and clearly proclaim the gospel. That is sacrificial, to pray for more of the very thing that

got you into prison in the first place.

These four truths should give us great courage. They are the reason that evangelism can be successful. Now, in light of my critique in part 1 and in light of these truths I want to suggest some ways forward.

Recognise that strong relationships are now in the work place

A key change in our culture is that the work place is now the place of many deep and strong relationships, trumping local geographic neighbourhoods.

The reason for this is that people's desire for relationship hasn't changed. People are made in the image of God and made for relationship with Him and each other. Since we are not finding relationships where we live we find them at work or in our play.

Recent research shows that many Australians prefer to socialise with their workmates rather than chat to their neighbours. The office is the local neighbourhood.¹ KPMG demographer Bernard Salt points out people now opt to talk to their workmates across the office partition rather than chat to their neighbours over the fence. "People say that it's a bad thing, that there has been a sense of community lost, but really it's just shifted from suburbia to the

office"²

A part of this may be that in our individualistic 3rd millennium culture, work is now a place where people find much of their value and their identity, rather than in the home or local community. And so, they naturally want to be with those who value them and where they find their identity.

A stroll through any Australian CBD on a working morning will prove the office is the new neighbourhood. Cafes and coffee shops are spilling over with groups of professionals and even tradies laughing and talking over coffee. Before work there will be the host of M.A.M.I.Ls (Middle Aged Men In Lycra) who've

1 Callie Watson and Melanie Christiansen, The Courier-Mail, January 07, 2010 www.news.com.au/business/work-colleagues-are-the-new-neighbours/story-e6frfm1i-1225816834965?from=public_rss, according to demographer Bernard Salt / AFP Source: A recent survey of 2100 Australian households for NRMA Insurance found: 1 in 2 people never or rarely spoke to their neighbours, 1 in 3 people said they were too busy to get to know their neighbours, only 1 in 5 knew all their neighbours names.

2 Cited in Courier-Mail article

A key change in our culture is that the work place is now the place of many deep and strong relationships, trumping local geographic neighbourhoods.

combined their work and play, while the larger companies have been upgrading their lunch rooms from small dingy affairs to large swish rooms with large screen tvs, coffee machines and other inviting features so workers can lunch together.

If this thesis is right, or even partially right, we need to rethink our evangelism. What might we do?

1. As churches and Christian groups we need to start talking about our work places and the relationships there. We need to start to pray for Christians' workplaces and their relationships in the work place. In my experience many churches don't talk about the work place and they very rarely pray for Christians' work places.

2. Start thinking about evangelism in a relational way and stop thinking about evangelism and ministry in a primarily geographic way: where the church building is and where congregation members live. A simple way to do this is speak to each congregation member (over 2-3 months) and find out when and where they spend time with non Christians. And, crucially, how much time? This would enable you to get a clear idea of what relationships Christians are already in. Make sure you ask about work.

If you keep an A4 page from each interview you'll have a great basis for ongoing encouragement and prayer with each Christian. You may even see some natural connections that enable you to plan some small targeted evangelism or specific training. If you had a handful of Christian tradies in your congregation what particular skills, resources or even small opportunity might suit them and their mates? Or what about 2-3 young men or women who work in the finance industry?

If we neglect to explore Christians' work relationships we stop Christians from seeing the real possibilities in these relationships. But, not only this, if Christians are only encouraged to befriend their geographic neighbour they may be banging their head away against an evangelistic strategy that is doomed from the start. I can hardly think of anything more discouraging.

Focusing on the Christian worker as someone who takes the gospel out to their work place overcomes a significant problem in evangelism in our 3rd millennium. Many Christians attending a church in a city don't live locally to the church. We commute to churches. If our evangelism is primarily church based, by expecting the non Christian to come to our church meeting, we are now asking our guests to commute to church with us. This is a high bar indeed, unless your church is renowned for offering a very good show on a Sunday morning or evening.

3. Christians' lives are lived out in front of many non

Christian witnesses in the work place, so we need to preach and teach what the Christian life looks like lived out in the work place. In other words, church teaching ought to be regularly and systematically applied to the work place where Christians spend the majority of their hours. And if we are not sure how to apply it, this may just show that we don't think about Christians' work or work places very much. But this can be rectified.

4. Related to the above, opportunities come in the work place in many forms. Some arise because Christians will stand out in the work place (or they ought to!) and others because Christians are looking for opportunities. As such we need to train Christians for evangelistic conversations in the workplace in a way that goes beyond the standard evangelistic course. Most of these courses help you present

One consistent thing has come out of 6 years of conversations about prayer. Christian city workers don't pray for the salvation of those they work with. I usually ask two questions of Christian city workers: how often they pray for their work colleagues and how often they pray specifically for the salvation of their colleagues. The consistent answers, and all the more shocking because they are consistent, are: 'Almost never' and 'never'.

the gospel when you are on the topic. We need this. But key in the work place is knowing how to boldly and yet wisely offer a Christian perspective in everyday conversations that touch on a myriad of topics. And then how to move onto the topic of Jesus when the time is right.

All this means the church is still a place of evangelism, but with a new model. Consider this summary of American research by the Barna Group:

"The weekend church service is no longer the primary mechanism for salvation decisions; only one out of every ten believers who makes a decision to follow Christ does so in a church setting or service. On the other hand, personal relationships have become even more important in evangelism, with a majority of salvation decisions coming in direct response to an invitation given by a family member or friend."³

So what does this mean for church evangelism? Churches need to be training centres for evangelism like never before.

5. As above, but taking it further, I think the training needed is discipleship in evangelism: investing in a handful of adults to train them in adult evangelism like we would train the leaders of a youth group. Sure, we'd get them to do a course but then we'd mentor them, meet with them regularly, offer them feedback, give additional Bible teaching and skills teaching when needed. We'd pray for them, we'd resource them and we'd protect their time so they are freed up for this crucial ministry. You get the idea.

You've probably noticed this isn't rocket science. So why don't most churches do it? One colleague has suggested an intriguing idea. Perhaps part of the problem is many pastors' lives are different from most in their congregation. They live

³ <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/196-evangelism-is-most-effective-among-kids#.UoGQaifiQUY>

and work locally to their church and so their relationships with non Christians are near their home or their church. And so, this is their evangelistic pattern and model. But this isn't where most of the congregation members' relationships are. To set up the church's evangelism around geography of home and/or church is actually trying to force, inadvertently, the pastor's evangelistic goals and possibilities onto the congregation members.

Whatever the cause, if churches and ministries think primarily in a geographic way about evangelism, dictated not by real relationship possibilities but by buildings and geography, it will not only limit evangelism, it will probably kill it.

I'd like now to touch briefly on one more strand that we need to rethink to reach Australia.

Prayer for the lost, anyone?

Through the ministry of the City Bible Forum I talk to a lot of Christian city workers about their prayer lives. I'm trying to persuade them to join the City Bible Forum's Evangelistic Prayer Teams.

One consistent thing has come out of 6 years of conversations about prayer. Christian city workers don't pray for the salvation of those they work with. I usually ask two questions of Christian city workers: how often they pray for their work colleagues and how often they pray specifically for the salvation of their colleagues. The consistent answers, and all the more shocking because they are consistent, are: 'Almost never' and 'never'.

Yes, Christians pray for their colleagues when there is some disaster in their colleagues' life, hence only 'almost never'. But they are deeply consistent in not praying for the salvation of their colleagues⁴ who are going to hell.

This tells us that we Christians either don't care about the people we work with or that we don't believe in the power of prayer for salvation. If either of these things is true then we must not believe in God's desire to save people, the truth of the gospel, the power of the gospel, nor the power of prayer. If we are

to reach Australia, this desperately needs to change.

We must retrain our churches so we have Jesus' vision for relationships. When Jesus said to love your neighbours, he didn't mean those with whom you share a fence. His classic story on this issue involves a Samaritan probably travelling for work. And Jesus defines a neighbour as anyone to whom we can show mercy. Those we work with are those who need the mercy of the gospel. And if not at work, we need to work out our relational networks then pursue these with a deliberateness and a steadfastness that reflects that God's gospel is powerful even if it takes many years.

In conclusion

We are not reaching Australia. We are going backwards. Significant culture changes have occurred, driven by working lives. These cultural changes have affected not just relationships but the possibility of relationships. Easy natural relationships with those we live near are now very difficult to achieve. And yet we pursue an evangelistic strategy directed towards people we don't see and so can't speak the gospel to. At the same time we fail to direct our evangelistic energy toward those we are in relationship with, and many of these are at work. And at the same time our churches direct relatively few resources toward adult evangelism, whilst wondering why we are not successful. And perhaps worst of all, is our lack of prayer for the salvation of unbelievers all around us. We need to rethink all these if we are to reach Australia with the gospel.

Glenn Hohnberg has worked with the City Bible Forum in Brisbane for six years. Glenn grew up in bush NSW, lived in Sydney and trained at Moore Theological College, but now lives in Southside Brisbane. Glenn is married to Kathryn and has four young boys.



⁴ As opposed to prayers for their work colleague's grandmother's knee.

Mission Impossible?

By the Reverend John Arnold

Why and how well did three 19th century Christian missionaries to Australian Aborigines swim against the tide of colonial policies and prejudices? Pastor J.G. Haussmann (German Lutheran), Bishop M.B. Hale (English C of E), and Father D. McNab (Scottish Catholic)?



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Punk Theology

Peter Corney reflects on his youth and the present and comes up with a New Theology

Punk Rock was created in the UK by the Sex Pistols in 1975 with Johnny Rotten, joined later by Sid Vicious; they were closely followed by another creative Punk band The Clash. They took the rock scene by storm and created a whole new wave of music that was a vehicle for a radical form of political dissent from the establishment. Their concerts often ended in a riot! They also inspired new styles in dress and fashion. Later this was followed by Punk art, Punk poetry and even Punk film such as the classic "The Decline of Western Civilisation." They were anti-establishment, anti-authority, anti-capitalist, nonconformist and iconoclastic. They were for freedom, equality, direct action and free thought, opposed to selling out to the dominant culture.

The name and image has been hijacked now by all sorts of alternative and New wave arts and social movements who want to challenge the established artistic or cultural scene. There is even a self-styled "mystic Punk-art collective" called "Punkasila" based in Jakarta of all places that is to perform in Melbourne soon.

As someone who survived the 70's it occurred to me that some contemporary theology could be described as "Punk Theology" - iconoclastic, rejecting the historic tradition and anti-authority. *But where it differs from authentic Punk is that strangely it is not opposed to selling out to the dominant culture, a strong theme in genuine Punk.* In fact much contemporary liberal theology is accommodationist - reducing and adapting the Gospel to the prevailing culture and its plausibility structure-what it finds easy to believe and is congenial to its morality. Despite its radical pose it is oddly intellectually provincial, reflecting the attitudes and values of its times. Rather than offering a critique of the contemporary culture and its values from the foundation of the historic faith it does the opposite. A visit to a "Progressive Christianity", "Progressive Spirituality" or "Emerging Christianity" website will be enough to reveal how un-Punk much contemporary liberal Christianity has become. Alternatively read Ross Douthat's very insightful book "Bad Religion" (Free Press 2012).

A truly authentic Punk theology would radically attack and critique the contemporary intellectual and cultural idols of hyper modernity. These idols include Western cultures hyper individualism and narcissistic selfism, its redefining of personal freedom as the freedom from any restraints on the individual's choice, its reduction of decisions about sexual ethics to the narrow private concept of individual consent, its boundaryless

radical inclusivism and hypocritical cultural relativism*, its intellectually lazy religious syncretism that refuses to grapple with fundamentally contradictory ideas and world views. Then there is the empirical and reality denying embrace of 'new literary theory' and deconstruction to justify the rejection of any objective meaning in human communication - turning every interpretation into a mirror of the self's inner world of murky motives and emotions and our dysfunctional psyches. This radical subjectivism eliminates all objective meaning and any moral and ethical criteria. Then there's its highly selective and phoney embrace of Eastern Mysticism's idea of the self as a divine spark that if realised will not just connect you to but merge you with the Divine. Re-packaged for Western consumption by the merchants of the self-realisation and self-fulfilment movement this naive adoption of Eastern ideas feeds our contemporary inflation of the self. It adroitly avoids the real message of Eastern Mysticism, the elimination of the self in the 'great sea of cosmic consciousness,' a kind of ultimate suicide of the self, definitely not a congenial idea to the ego focussed selfism of the West! ** If we still had a Biblical memory we might recognise the echo of the Tempter's lie from Genesis 3:4 seducing us away from listening to God's voice, "...you will not surely die.... you will be like God...". But alas all we hear now is our own voice.

The list of the West's present cultural follies that a truly radical Punk theology could challenge is a long one but you get the idea.

I say, bring back 'The Clash'!

Peter Corney is the Vicar Emeritus of St. Hilary's Kew. He is a senior advisor to the Australian Arrow Leadership Program and a leadership consultant to churches, independent schools and Christian organization. He is the author of nine books on evangelism, parish development and leadership and writes regularly for Equip, Zadok, The Melbourne Anglican and other journals.

*See the article on the website <petercorney.com>: "Christianity's radical challenge to Cultural Relativism" (Category: "Christ and Culture.")

**See the article on the website <petercorney.com>: "Remaking the Western Mind - How God and the Self Blurred into One" (Category: "Christ and Culture.")

By Whose Authority?

Peter Smith summarises a talk he gave at the February 2014 QLD EFAC Meeting in which he gives reasons why we should keep on contending for the faith we have received.

*They distort and rearrange passages, like someone who “rearranges gems,” making them form a picture of their own devising, or turning something beautiful “into a dog or a fox”.*¹

Introduction

Over in Western Australia the Perth Anglicans are divided over matters of human sexuality. The attempt to affirm same sex civil unions at the previous two synods is no minor issue. Although the media narrowed in on the homosexual issue there is a deeper concern about the nature of Anglican authority. Is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ our supreme authority OR are we at liberty to determine our own identity and set our own agenda according to human reason? In other words, are we members of God's holy, catholic, apostolic church ruled by God's word or are we a human invention, a creature of our own thoughts and no church at all?

Since the re-formation of the Church of England in the sixteenth century there have been numerous stoushes about the nature of Anglican authority. The newly reformed church under Cranmer rejected the Roman Catholic Magisterium.² In doing so, “They understood that they were restoring the church to its catholic and apostolic character and not replacing it with something new. For them the phrase ‘Reformed Catholic’ was a tautology.”³ Cranmer, under Edward VI established the Bible as the ultimate authority for resolving disputes and determining the life and health of the church.⁴

Under Cranmer, *God's word written*, both Old and New Testaments, read in the Anglican way of OT promise and NT fulfilment in the gospel Christ, became the supreme authority. Cranmer, like Hooker who came after him, was not so naïve as to say “no authority” but the Bible. He understood that an honest

reading of Scripture required humble submission to the authority triad of Scripture, a careful reading of tradition and the exercise of human reason (ascending rungs of a ladder with the Bible as the top rung or supreme authority).

New, novel or fanciful interpretations of Scripture were to be received with suspicion. The Anglican hermeneutic involved submission to the supreme authority of the Bible. It was then read in the light of the faithful from earlier ages. For Cranmer, this meant the Church Fathers who themselves were in submission to *God's word written*. Needless to say, every Anglican conflict involves the three contenders for authority (*God's Word Written*, theological tradition and the place of new learning aided by human reason).

A short history of the debate for supreme authority

The Caroline Divines in the seventeenth century tied the authority of the church, not to the sovereign and free God of the Bible, (as expressed by her formularies - *The Homilies* and *The Articles*) but to the prayers and ancient creeds of the Fathers.⁶ Their vision was of a church where grace was piped through the sacraments to the faithful. They believed the liturgy should be performed with heavenly splendour, and human wills were exhorted to complement what was received from regular infusions of sacramental grace. By doing so they wrongly assumed the Church Fathers were united on the matters that were important for the Laudians.⁷ Consequently, Church Tradition (of the Fathers) was seen to trump the authority of the Bible.

After the Restoration, human reason was enshrined as the official source of the Church's authority. Four hundred clergy, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, were forced out of the Church of England. The Church of England was

1 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.8.1.

2 It was obvious to the Cranmer and co that the failure of apostolic succession – to ensure apostolic teaching - not to mention apostolic morality, meant that the whole concept was flawed!

3 Ashley Null, *Anglican Identity*; pp 191-203 in Ed', Michael, P. Jensen, *Church Of The Triune God: Understanding God's word in his people today*, The chapter is an excellent introduction and overview of the Anglican struggle for catholic apostolic orthodoxy post the sixteenth century and is the basis of the ideas in this article.

4 Article XX in the Thirty Nine Articles which were Forty Two Articles during the time of Cranmer and The Homilies laid out the priority of the Bible as the ultimate standard for all matters pertaining to faith and morality.

5 See Cranmer's 'A Fruitfull Exhortation to the Reading and Knowledge of Holy Scripture' in the Two Books of Homilies Appointed to be Read in Churches (ed. John Griffiths; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1859), for a full explanation of the Anglican Way of reading and applying the Bible for life and doctrine.

6 Jean-Louis Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity: The Construction of A Confessional Identity in the 17th Century*. Oxford University Press; Oxford, 2009. Quantin's magisterial study demolishes the notion that the Church Fathers were united on the matters that were important for the Laudians.

7 In the second century Irenaeus (c.130-200) speaks of the heretics who “disregard the order and the connection of the Scriptures and ... dismember and destroy the truth. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.8.1; ANF, vol. 1, 326. They distort and rearrange passages, like someone who “rearranges gems,” making them form a picture of their own devising, or turning something beautiful “into a dog or a fox” (*Against Heresies* 1.8.1. Irenaeus insists that “the entire Scriptures...can clearly, unambiguously, and harmoniously be understood.” (*Against Heresies* 2.27.2; ANF, Vol.1, 344 cf *Against Heresies* 1.18.1-4 and 2.10.1,2; ANF vol.1 243-44 and 369-70. Clement, Tertullian, Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Basil of Alexandria and Augustine had no few doubts that God spoke through the Scriptures and his word resolved disputes.

lurching towards the abyss, with no gospel word to save her and no word of God from outside herself to give her power for life and witness.

A fourth battle for Anglican authority was waged in the 19th century. The church had splintered into three parties. The evangelicals stood for Biblical authority (following Cranmer and Hooker). The High Church or Catholic Orthodox party championed the Church Fathers, and the radical liberals championed human reason.

Conclusion

The Church of England along with the world wide communion of churches has never known a pristine age where all were in glad submission to God and his word written. The battle to maintain the Anglican identity as true members of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church must be fought in every age. We should not be surprised nor alarmed by recent events. We are living in an age that is, at least in biblical and historical terms, normal.

The battle for the supremacy of God's word may be protracted and drawn out.⁸ Being true to Christ and our faithful forebears may mean losing our licences to officiate. Ejection from our church properties and the loss of many privileges of modern western ministerial life may follow (if the American situation is played out in Australia). Our age of ministry has been a time of luxury - titles, opportunities and privileges unknown to our forebears. Making more of the Lord Jesus and his honour (than our own comforts) has meant blessing from God.

Perth EFAC members meet regularly to pray for our Archbishop, clergy and laity, and we seek God's leading from the Bible. Both the 2012 and 2013 synods were marked by a spirit of generosity in even the most contentious of debates (with a few noteworthy exceptions). The very worst thing we could do is remain silent. Pretending that all are in agreement would be a rejection of our Anglican identity and a betrayal of our faithful forebears. Remaining silent in the midst of those who jettison the most basic of Biblical truths means partaking of their sin. As long as our Australian Anglican constitution upholds biblical morality we pray for the grace to contend for the truth of God's word written. God's Spirit inspired word will accomplish God's work and gather the faithful. Of that we can be assured. This is a time of reckoning.

Peter Smith

is the Rector of St Lawrence's Dalkeith and Chair of EFAC WA

⁸ Athanasius was in exile for twenty years until his view triumphed over error.

Emerging Leaders Conference

Adam Cetrangolo

EFAC Australia is delighted to be holding an Emerging Leaders Conference in September 2014 in Melbourne.

EFAC Australia is at a crossroads as a generation moves out of leadership. Many branches have struggled to engage younger leaders through EFAC. Who will take the place of a previous generation of leaders? And what

mechanism or fellowship will gather them together? The 2014 EFAC Emerging Leaders Conference is an opportunity to gather the next generation of Evangelical Anglican leaders. Many of those who attend will already be in Christian leadership – lay or ordained – but due to the vastness of our nation and the demands of ministry may seldom have the opportunity to connect with leaders similar to themselves in other parts of Australia.

There are many obstacles that hinder Christian leaders from going the distance. Research suggests that 70% of Pastors consider leaving ministry due to stress and burn-out and about 35% actually do. Strategies that can reduce these rates include regular theological / biblical input and a strong support network, i.e. friends, family, colleagues, mentors, etc. These are things that traditionally EFAC has been able to offer her members and it is our belief that this conference can empower and encourage these younger leaders to develop and enhance their existing strategies and to support them through EFAC.

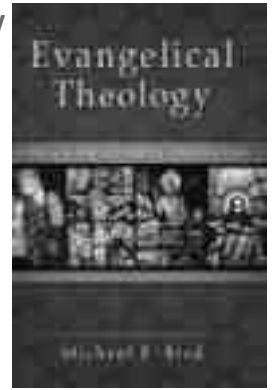
Therefore, a secondary aim of the conference is that participants would develop a network of other Christian leaders. This will be a small conference of 30-40 participants (approximately 5-6 from each branch/region). This will enable the participants to engage widely with all participants rather than being limited to a small group and hopefully forge lasting friendships. The upcoming 2015 Anglican Future Conference is likely to provide a good opportunity for some of these leaders to reconnect again within twelve months.

The conference itself will take place over three days beginning on Sunday 21 September with a visit to a local Church plant and then continue on Monday and Tuesday with input from guest speakers and opportunities to network and discuss the challenges that face us as Evangelical Anglicans in twenty-first century Australia. Guest presenters include: Andrew Katay, Stephen Hale, Julie-anne Laird and Lindsay Brown (International Director of The Lausanne Movement). If you know of someone that you think should be encouraged to attend, feel free to contact the committee via the details below.

For more information please visit www.anglicanemergingleaders.com or call (03) 9816 7100.

Adam Cetrangolo is presently the Lead Pastor of SALT: a Church plant of St Clement's Elsternwick and St Mary's Caulfield. He is also the Chair of EFAC Victoria-Tasmania and the Secretary of EFAC Australia.

Evangelical Theology



Marty Foord reviews Michael Bird's *Evangelical Theology*. Zondervan 2013. 912 pages.
ISBN 0310494419

Michael Bird writes books faster than I can read them! In his latest publication, *Evangelical Theology*, Bird has turned from his usual work in NT studies to the discipline of systematic theology. It arrives amidst the release of several other significant systems of theology by the likes of Michael Horton (*The Christian Faith*), Gerald Bray (*God is Love*), and John Frame (*Systematic Theology*). Bray and Frame have produced their systems of theology late in their career, whereas Bird has authored his early on in his career.

Putting 'Evangelical' Back Into Theology

Why has Bird written *Evangelical Theology*? In his words, "I do not believe that there is yet a genuinely evangelical theology textbook" (11). Quite a claim! For Bird, a truly evangelical theology is one "that has its content, structure, and substance singularly determined by the evangel [Gospel]" (11). This is magnificent. Not only is it evangelical more importantly it is Scriptural. Bird's desire for a Gospel-centred theology follows in the vein of the Gospel Coalition, recent theologians such as John Webster and Peter Jensen, and ultimately goes back to Martin Luther who said the Gospel is the "principal article of Christian teaching, in which the knowledge of all godliness is comprehended".¹

But what, for Bird, characterises a Gospel-centred system of theology? He uses a five step method (81-82). Firstly, Bird provides a careful and helpful definition of the Gospel as the proper subject of theological prolegomena. Secondly, he seeks to show how the Gospel relates to the traditional topics in a system of theology. Thirdly, each of the major topics is then elucidated via a "creative dialogue between the sources of theology", which he has defined as Scripture, tradition, nature, and experience (62-76). Next, the elucidated topic is then to be practically applied; the topic is to be lived out. And finally, the Christian is then encouraged to go back and follow the same five-step process in light of what has been learned by living out the doctrine.

Bird follows his "Gospel-driven" method according to eight sections that indicate something of how the Gospel is kept central throughout:

1. Prolegomena: Beginning to Talk about God
2. The God of the Gospel: The Triune God in Being and Action
3. The Gospel of the Kingdom: The Now and the Not Yet
4. The Gospel of God's Son: The Lord Jesus Christ

5. The Gospel of Salvation

6. The Promise and Power of the Gospel: The Holy Spirit

7. The Gospel and Humanity

8. The Community of the Gospelized

Here we can see that Bird covers the traditional topics of systematic theology, but they have been somewhat re-ordered. For example, eschatology (section 3) has moved from its usual final position and placed prior to soteriology (sections 5-6) presumably because the now / not-yet Kingdom proclaimed in the Gospel provides the appropriate framework with which properly to grasp soteriology.

Bird's self-conscious Gospel-driven approach is nothing less than a breath of fresh air for the discipline of systematics. Moreover, Bird's NT background means that this systematic theology interacts strongly with Scripture. He regularly engages in both exegesis and biblical theology. An example of how this shapes Bird's theological conclusions is in his discussion of "sanctification" (541-544). He notes that in the past systematic theology used the word "sanctification" to signify a process of ongoing growth in personal holiness. But Bird rightly contends that in Scripture "sanctification" is fundamentally (but not exclusively) a once-off experience where a believer is set apart or consecrated for special use. Hence, Bird appropriately renames the ongoing process of a believer's inner renewal as "transformation". Here, he superbly allows Scripture to shape his theological vocabulary. This is exactly how an evangelical theology should proceed.

Putting Theology Back into 'Evangelical'

Systematic theology is the attempt to summarise Christian belief according to the major biblical topics and show how they relate to each other. It is a notoriously difficult field to master in depth because it draws upon an array of disciplines. One needs some competence in biblical studies, historical theology, biblical theology, hermeneutics, and philosophy, at least. This has been made all the more difficult with the contemporary demand for ever-increasing specialisation. Just mastering one theological topic properly can be quite a task! That is why theologians tend to produce in depth systems of theology later in life because time is needed to master a large area of learning. I wonder therefore if Bird, a NT specialist, has bitten off more than he can chew producing a 900 page system of theology.

This is seen, firstly, in many discrepancies. Here are some

1 Luther, Lectures on Galatians (1535) 2:4-5, D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehmann (Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1883-), 40:168.20-26.

examples. Bird says that “the Apostles’ Creed precedes the existence of a biblical canon” (66). However, the origin of the Apostles’ Creed as we know it today was in the late sixth or seventh century, hundreds of years after the biblical canon formed.² Bird asserts that “During the Middle Ages there emerged a different view of tradition as something apart from Scripture that was considered as authoritative as revelation” (68). In fact this idea arose in the patristic era, not least through Basil of Caesarea. He asserts that God as timeless means he “knows neither the past nor the future” (128). No reputable theologian has ever claimed such. Bird believes that “Only love is predicated of God in an absolute way (1 John 4:8, 16)” (139). Not so. There is also “God is light” (1 John 1:5), “God is spirit” (John 4:24), and “God is faithful” (1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13). Bird states that the Monophysites advocated that “Jesus had one nature where his divinity was absorbed by his humanity” (483). In fact, it was the other way around: Christ’s humanity was absorbed into his divinity. Then Bird asserts that monophysitism is the teaching of the Coptic and Ethiopic Orthodox churches, and calls it “two natures in a blender Christology” (483). Not only is this statement likely to offend our Oriental Orthodox sisters and brothers, it is also false. Oriental Orthodoxy is miaphysite not monophysite: Christ’s humanity and deity are united in one nature, without the two being altered, separated, or confused. Bird identifies the “integrating motif” or “organic principle” in the systems of Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Barth, and Dispensationalism (43). Not only are Bird’s identifications dubious, but as Richard Muller has so effectively shown, the notion of an “integrating motif” is alien to systematic theology prior to Schleiermacher.³ One gets the sense Bird has not gotten familiar enough with the theological discipline.

Secondly, Bird’s discussion of the Gospel’s relation to systematic theology lacks clarity. Five times he states that the Gospel is the “center and boundary” (21, 41, 45, 85, 807) of systematic theology. “Center” yes, but “boundary”? How can the Gospel be the “boundary” when certain NT teachings not in the Gospel are critical for salvation (1 Cor. 6:9-10)? Paul taught his churches the “word of God”, the Gospel (e.g. 1 Thess. 2:13), as well as the “will of God”, a Christian way of life commensurate with the Gospel but not strictly found in the Gospel (e.g. 1 Thess. 4:1-7). Recent Lutheran thinkers have argued, for example, that because the Gospel says nothing about monogamous gay marriage, it is an indifferent issue for Christians. It is not helped when Bird speaks of the Gospel as the “canon within the canon” (21), a typical Lutheran dictum. Is the Gospel more inspired than the rest of Scripture? Essential to Christian living is a code of conduct that accords with the Gospel but is not actually the Gospel (Titus 2:1-10). It is a sad development that modern systems do not expound this Christian code of conduct,

also absent from Bird’s work. Moreover, Bird asserts that the Gospel “permeates all other doctrines” (21). But when Paul preaches to the Athenian pagans in Acts 17 he covers the doctrines of creation, God, general revelation, and sin before there is any mention of the Gospel. The Gospel presupposes certain doctrines rather than “permeates” them all. Bird’s position runs the risk of being Gospel-monist not Gospel-centric. It is evidenced in his ordering of theological topics. The doctrine of sin (section 7) is covered after Christ’s person and work (section 4), and soteriology (sections 5-6). This is conceptually and pedagogically awkward if indeed “Christ died for sins” (1 Cor. 15:3). Indeed, sin is an enormously important topic that deserves to be covered as a doctrine in its own right. But Bird examines it as a subtopic of humanity.

Thirdly, Bird’s theological discussion is, at times, shallow. An example is his rejection of verbal inspiration (which does not sit comfortably in a volume entitled ‘Evangelical’). Bird believes inspiration is at the “level of concepts, framework, worldview, and idea” not words. He avers that 2 Peter 1:20-21 speaks only of the inspiration of biblical authors and “God-breathed” in 2 Tim. 3:16 as a “neologism” is “ambiguous” (639). But there is no interaction with the classic biblical texts used to prove verbal inspiration. For example, Paul believed the apostles’ message was inspired right down to the very words they used (1 Cor. 2:13). Israel received the “very words [ta logia] of God” (Rom. 3:2; Acts 7:38). Jesus cited the human comment in Gen. 2:24 with the introduction “the creator [God] said” (Matt. 19:4-5). Indeed, the NT uses “God said” and “Scripture said” interchangeably (e.g. Rom. 9:13, 15, 17). When the OT prophets proclaimed, “Thus says the Lord” was it true or not? These are well-trodden paths but Bird seems unaware of them and that about a critical topic.

Michael Bird’s books as NT specialist are superb. I have found them spectacularly helpful and recommend them highly. I wish I could say the same about *Evangelical Theology*.

Marty Foord

is an ordained Anglican minister and for the last fourteen years has been teaching systematic theology at Trinity Theological College, Perth.



2 J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (3d ed.; New York: D. McKay Co., 1972), 420. See especially Liuwe H. Westra, *The Apostles’ Creed: Origin, History and Some Early Commentaries* (Instrumenta Patristica Et Mediaevalia 43; Turnhout: Brepols, 2002).
3. Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, Ca. 1520 to Ca. 1725* (4 vols., 2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2003).

Interview with the President of EFAC

Dr Glenn Davies



1. When did you first join EFAC and what prompted you to join?

I joined EFAC in 1981, when I was ordained deacon. My rector, the Rev. Theo Hayman (ex-BCA Fed Sec) encouraged me to join as he said it was important for Sydney clergy and laity to join because of the benefits of EFAC for other dioceses and Sydney should take the lead in encouraging Evangelicals in places where Evangelical ministry is not well supported.

2. What do you see as the benefits of EFAC for Evangelicals in Australia?

The simple fact that you are not alone is a great comfort. EFAC provides significant networks for ministers and lay people for sharing ideas, resources and strategies where the culture of their diocese is either indifferent or hostile to Evangelicals. Essentials is just one tangible aspect of linking us together and sharing our resources. The support network that EFAC provides is a significant blessing to those in tough ministry places.

3. What do you see as the big challenges facing Anglicans in Australia in the next 20 years?

The big challenges are

(1) the increasing secularisation of Australia, where freedom of religion, which was once a bedrock principle of Western democracy, is now under attack as it is taking a battering in legislative environments.

(2) The abandonment of the definition of marriage as a lifelong, exclusive union of a man and a woman will continue to come under pressure and Anglicans need to be fortified for this debate as the proponents of so-called 'gay' marriage show no sign of giving up their battle until it is won.

(3) Multiculturalism and a multi-faith society will bring fresh challenges to the Anglican Church, as the temptation will be to water down the differences between Christianity and other religious beliefs, compromising the gospel and the Lordship of Christ, with the accompanying temptation of avoiding or diminishing the plain teaching of Scripture in favour of human autonomy, which is at the heart of liberalism.

4. What are the key contributions EFAC can make to the Anglican church in Australia in the light of these challenges?

One of the strengths of Evangelicalism is that the gospel is at the heart of its identity. Evangelicals are gospel men and women, by definition. Moreover, we rightly claim that the way in which we understand the Bible is the way in which Cranmer and the English Reformers (as well as the apostles and church fathers) did. Notwithstanding that the term 'Evangelical' may not have been coined till much later than the 16th century, its essence is at the core of apostolic Christianity. If it weren't, then we should abandon the label! We have a great heritage which we should continue to promote, realising that the cultural expressions of Evangelicalism will differ from century to century. EFAC's engagement with current issues, reflected upon with integrity and academic rigour within the framework of the authority of Scripture will continue to be a lasting benefit to the Anglican Church as a whole, and Evangelicals in particular.

5. Any other comment you would like to make?

It was a great privilege to be Federal Chair of EFAC for 10 years and to move around the country to see the various branches seeking to be faithful to the gospel in their own setting. Now that I am President, it is a singular honour to be in this position and I trust that I can continue to support, encourage and promote Evangelical ministry and mission throughout the Anglican Church of Australia.

Making it work in the Parish

Gordon Killow, Graeme Middlewick and Matt Harding form the paid ministry team at Kallaroo Anglican Church in Perth WA. Essentials asked them about how they are getting on.



Who is in your ministry team?

Three full-time, paid workers: Senior minister – Gordon; Assistant minister – Graeme; and Assistant minister (Young adults) – Matt. Many who work through the week, leading Bible studies, ministry groups, parish council & wardens, newsletter & web-page, flower roster etc

What are the main activities of the church?

Preaching and teaching the Bible in Sunday services, home groups, Bible studies, children and youth groups, Simply Christianity courses and occasional training courses for things like Welcoming and evangelism.

How do you get the money for the paid workers? Has this been a difficulty?

The generosity of the saints. We believe that God gives us what we need, to do what he wants us to do, including the finances. So Christians often need good things to give their money to (otherwise we just end up spending it on ourselves). Therefore we don't do 'fundraising' for ministry costs. When we wanted to expand our team to a third full-time worker, which would be a stretch for us, we asked the parish as a whole and some individual members with a capacity to give larger amounts, to consider the opportunity to grow and their ability to give to it, then make pledges. Based on this we went ahead and appointed the third worker. This is still a stretch, but we keep the need before the congregations, as well as the potential for growth in new areas.

What kind of a team have you gathered and what is the underlying theory/rationale for your team's composition and operation?

The second worker is a general pastor teacher, like the senior minister, which allows the load to be spread out. Graeme, our second worker, has also been overseeing the children's ministries for a couple of years as this is a growth area and needs special attention and we don't have anyone in the

congregation at present who would be suited to this oversight role. Matt, our third worker, has been appointed to pioneer a work among young adults. This is an area we have had little contact with, but have great opportunity to work in. While children's work is the pressing need, we reasoned that young adults work is a more long term goal. If a work is established, this will provide us with workers for children and youth ministries, and other possibilities. We are able to maintain a children's work as we are, but to begin and grow a young adults work we will need to free up someone to work full time on it.

What kind of aims, goals do you have as a parish? Where are you heading, or what are you trying to build, or fix, or expand? How do you use the team to pursue these aims?

Our church mission statement / logo is "Equip, build up, build out, for God's glory." We teach the Bible so that God equips us for ministry. Our aim is to build the people of God here in maturity and works of service (build up) and to work for the conversion of those outside of God's kingdom (build out). And our desire is to do this all in order to glorify God. Our local context is quite mixed, with many churches struggling to stay viable and a synod that has shown a desire to approve of a more secular than biblical agenda, specifically in the area of human sexuality. So we aim to let the gospel speak for itself, producing church health and church growth, so that we provide a positive alternative.

What have you learnt about working together: being the boss with assistants, being the assistant with a boss. How do you deal with style cramping and conflicts of aspirations?

Gordon – I've learned that in team ministries, while abilities, theology, godliness are all non-negotiables whether in your boss or in staff you appoint, it's also critical that you 'get along' – that you can work side by side, genuinely appreciate each other (without having to be exactly the same in everything). This allows you to accept each other's differences much more easily, and allows for a longer term in working

together. I've also learned that if someone is given responsibility in one area, they need to have the authority too – making decisions, dealing with problems etc. If everything has to keep coming back to the senior minister, there will be a raft of problems that develop, including the frustration of the co-workers.

Matt – Having only begun a formal ministry position this year, I am most thankful to be working alongside godly, like-minded and gospel-focused colleagues. Like Gordon said, being friends is a really helpful aspect of working together. It is also essential that I know that Gordon and Graeme will support me in what I do – even when I make mistakes and they need to be sorted out. They have been great at allowing me the space to try things out and 'give it a go' while also giving feedback, acting as sounding boards, and genuinely being excited about what we are trying to do. Ministry as a team seems easier when we are communicating well and making time to share our joys and struggles of ministry.

Graeme – Having spent time in solo ministry and team ministry I really value the benefits of working as part of a team. Working as a team, it is crucial to have the same core belief structure and idea of what it means to reach, teach and build people in their relationship with Christ. However, I also appreciate the differences in ideas, experience and abilities that come in a team structure. Having someone to bounce ideas off in areas like pastoral care, programs, etc is very helpful when considering what to do. As Gordon and Matt have said, getting along in the team goes a long way towards the team working well for a good length of time. Having a person who cares about you and your ministry, and who

gives you feedback and encouragement, helps keep you growing and going in ministry.

What are the main difficulties in ministry where you are? And what are the key elements in effective ministry where you are?

Getting an audience for the gospel among people whose lifestyles suggest 'heaven on earth', ie home near beach, money, holidays, sport and leisure – who needs God when you have all that? This means we ourselves will need constant reminding of our true treasure, since we live in this same 'heaven on earth' with the constant pressure to believe the lie and so be ineffective disciples of Jesus. Only the gospel changes hearts, so we keep preaching it and reminding one another of its truth. We've found no special techniques or programs that break through the veneer of wealth and material satisfaction. But we want to keep our services as 'unchurchy' and legible for any outsider who joins us, as well as keep encouraging and equipping our people to pray for their unbelieving family and friends and share their faith with them, as well as offering evangelistic courses and using events like Easter and Christmas to proclaim Christ to those who don't yet know him. Some other 'key elements' here would include continually looking to give people ministries that they are suited to (or prepared to have a go at), so that almost every person who we would consider 'core' is involved in some way and not just an 'attender'; an after school kids club has been a wonderful introduction for the gospel into the households of many outsiders, a playgroup run by our members has also opened up many opportunities for relationships within our community, and home groups have been key in helping many people connect with others and grow in maturity as believers and ministers of God's word.

Did John's gospel come first?

Michael Bennett tells us why he thinks John's gospel did come first.

Since first beginning to study at theological college (Moore 1965-68) I have been taught that the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke were composed before John's Gospel. The evidence for this seems to rest on a number of proofs:

i) It is argued that the "Word" theology of John Ch.1 is too advanced to have been written at an early date. John may have also have been influenced by the Jewish philosopher Philo (d. 50A.D.) who also emphasised the central role of the "Word" in the Old Testament scriptures.

ii) John 21:18-19 refers to death of Peter. It is argued that this could not have been written until after the Neronian persecutions of 64 A.D.

iii) Most telling is the statement by the early church father, Irenaeus: "John, the disciple of the Lord, who leaned on his breast, published a Gospel while he was resident at Ephesus in Asia." (Against Heresies iii.1.2) When John moved to Ephesus is unknown (and even disputed), but it was probably precipitated by the approaching fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. This seems to point to a late date of composition.

But as D.A. Carson admits, “almost any date between AD 55 and AD 95 is possible.” (*Commentary on John’s Gospel* Eerdmans p82) and adds “More by way of default than anything else, I tentatively hold to a date about AD 80”.

But in recent times, through pastoral ministry of the Word, I have begun to doubt this basic thesis that John was written after the Synoptic Gospels. My doubts began as I was considering the raising of Lazarus in John Ch.11. Here we have surely the most stupendous of all Jesus’ miracles, apart from his own resurrection.

The man born blind says about his own healing, “Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind” (John 9:32), but in the case of Lazarus we have the reconstruction of every organ, every cell of a human body. For four days Lazarus has lain in his tomb, with every cell of his body beginning to die and decompose. (Carson comments that Jews, unlike the Egyptians, did not practice embalming, but spices were added to the tomb to reduce the odour (p417). If this is so, it would make the apparent embalming of Jesus body highly unusual for the culture.) John makes it clear that Jesus stayed where he was for two days so that, by the time he arrived at the tomb, Lazarus had been buried for four days (John 11:6). Jesus is deliberately setting out to do a miracle close by Jerusalem which no person can gainsay. The sisters are there; the disciples are there; so are many visitors from Jerusalem who have come down to comfort the sisters (John 11:19).

It was Jesus’ normal practice to downplay his miracles, ordering the healed person not to tell anyone, and even taking the sufferer to a private place to effect healing. But there is none of that here. This is open, public and deliberate. He even tells Martha, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” (John 11:40). Such a statement is so rare from Jesus’ lips that he immediately offers a word of explanation to God for saying it: “Father, I know that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.” (John 11:42).

My main point is this: Why is this incredible and strategic miracle not mentioned or even hinted at by any of the Synoptic writers? How could these three Gospel writers, whom we know borrowed from each other to some degree, never have thought, “Hang on, something important is missing here!” Peter is there at the raising of Lazarus if we accept him to be the source of Mark’s Gospel; there is no reason for Matthew not to be there; Luke is not there, but since he assures us he has carefully consulted with the eye-witnesses (Luke 1:1-4) he is in a sense there in the eyes of those beholding the seemingly impossible. How could Luke, whose trustworthiness as an historian of first rank has not seriously been challenged since the publication of W. M. Ramsay’s *St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen* (1895), and who has an eye for detail, such as Jesus’ sweat of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane, have missed such an elephant sized detail, or considered it not important enough to have been included in his account? As a physician, the scope of this miracle must have arrested his attention.

I can come up with only one reason that makes sense - that John’s account of this event was already written and in circulation, and that the other gospel writers, out of deference to John, have deliberately chosen not to include it. I am not saying that John’s Gospel as a whole was written at this time, but that substantial sections were written and known. These sections would include the turning of water into wine, the healing of the man born blind, the feet washing, the whole of the upper room teaching and prayer, all the “I am” sayings and much more.

The underlying assertion here, that John’s Gospel was written largely to Christians (in churches) and not essentially as an evangelistic tract for non-Christians, is borne out by a correct translation of John 20:31:

“But these things are written that you may go on believing that Jesus is the Christ, and that by believing you might have life in his name.” (As pointed out by Paul Barnett in *The Shepherd King*, p311)

It is worth recalling that the earliest manuscript of the New Testament we have, the John Ryland’s fragment, dated 100-150AD, is from John’s Gospel (Part of Ch.18).

I will suggest soon a two-stage process by which I believe John may have been written, but first I need to point out an unusual feature about this gospel:

John seems to be writing on behalf of what we may term a “confirming body”, at least a group of people who are reviewing his narrative writing, and giving their imprimatur to it. We hear their voice first at the very beginning, in 1:14:

“We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (Do we hear an echo of Jesus’ unusual words to Martha?). This group seem to be saying, “We have been eye-witnesses to what follows, and can vouch for it”.

And again in 1:16: “From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.”

Whose is this voice, “we”?

We hear their voice again if we turn right to the very end of the Gospel. After a not-too-veiled reference to John as the “disciple whom Jesus loved”, the “we” group add their stamp of approval to what he has written:

“This is the disciple who testifies to these things, and who wrote them down. And we know that his testimony is true.” (John 21:24).

C.K.Barrett comments: “The ‘we’ is to be taken with full seriousness; there exists an apostolic church capable of verifying and affirming the apostolic witness”.

There is one other unusual reference in John which also may be the voice of the group standing behind John. In the middle of Jesus’ well known discussion with Nicodemus, the famous “born again” passage, we strike this:

“I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, yet you people do not accept our testimony.” (John 3:11).

This statement leaps from the page. Although it begins with

"I tell you the truth..." suggesting Jesus is speaking, the rest of the verse does not sound like something Jesus would say, especially not in the context of John's Gospel. In this gospel Jesus speaks on his own authority from beginning to end. It contains the seven "I am" teachings, as well as at least five other uses of "I am". Jesus never refers to his teaching as that held by himself and his disciples in some form of shared collaboration. It is hard to avoid the impression the imprimatur group is making itself heard at this point as well. They seem to be saying, "We Apostles give eye-witness testimony to what we have seen, heard and know to be true. The trouble with you Pharisees (like Nicodemus) is that you will not face up to the clear evidence!"

One colleague objected to this idea of John largely being written first. "Surely each Gospel writer had his own agenda, his own purpose in writing". Let us examine this statement. What was Mark's purpose in writing? He tells us in the very first verse: His purpose was to present ..."Jesus Christ, the Son of God". He does this, in part, by presenting us with demonstrations of Jesus' authority and power - teaching, healing, casting out evil spirits, calming the storm etc. If Mark's declared purpose is to present Jesus to us as the Son of God, I argue that nothing would have suited his purpose better than to include the raising of Lazarus, four days dead! Why does he not include it? The example he does include is of a twelve year old girl, only dead for a short time, of whom Jesus says, "The girl is not dead but asleep." (Mark 5:39). Surely the raising of Lazarus would have been a much more powerful example to use? Why does he not?

Putting all this together, I would like to present the following as a suggestion as to how John's Gospel may have been written in two stages:

How John's Gospel came to be written

A scenario:

From the very birthday of the Christian Church on the Day of Pentecost, there would have been a desperate need for written material regarding the life, times and teaching of Jesus. The account of that dramatic Pentecost day in Acts 2:7-11 informs us of visitors from far-flung corners of the Roman Empire, even from Rome itself, who heard the gospel, were converted and baptised at that time. Eventually, they would have returned to their homes, bringing with them a verbal account about Jesus. Many of them would have witnessed his death. Few of them would have actually seen the risen Christ, for Peter later tells Cornelius, "He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen- by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead." (Acts 10:41)

In the meantime, within the first ten years after Pentecost, the church began to mushroom from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and the world, as the Lord had commissioned. Within that decade the Jerusalem church is scattered (Acts 8:1), except for the apostles. The gospel reaches Samaria (Acts 8:9f), Saul is chasing believers as far away as Damascus (Acts 9), Cornelius is the first full-blown Gentile to be converted and a church is apparently established in Caesarea (Acts 10), and then the flood-gates to the Gentile world are open. Probably by the year

40AD the gospel has reached Antioch (Acts 11:19f), the third largest city in the Roman Empire, and a major trading centre. Paul by now is evangelising in Tarsus. By God's grace, the gospel has an expansionary life of its own.

The Apostles must have seen the desperate need for reliable information to be provided to these infant churches, and in return must have received urgent requests for the same. The supply of eye-witnesses (and remember this did not included the Apostles who remained in Jerusalem) could only spread so far, and no doubt some doubtful legends about Jesus were beginning to do the rounds.

The Apostles, therefore, commissioned the Apostle John to write material which could be provided to the churches, which would be reliable, accurate and able to be used for teaching. Before being distributed, these writings would be checked and authenticated by the other apostolic witnesses. John was a natural choice. He was one of the first fishermen to be chosen by Jesus, he was there as the only apostle at the cross and outran Peter to the empty tomb, so he knew the whole story from beginning to end. He was also one of the inner three of Peter, James and John. He was well educated as far as we can tell from his writings, had contacts in high places (John 18:15), and had a "way with words". Most importantly, he had a phenomenal memory and recall for even the most complex teachings of Jesus, aided in this, as Jesus promised, by the Holy Spirit (John 14:26), but was able to express the works and words of Jesus in quite simple language and vocabulary, accessible to all.

The urgency of the situation did not afford John the luxury of writing what we would call a full-blown gospel. What he gradually composed I will call "Episodes in the Life of Jesus". These Episodes would usually begin with some incident in the life of Jesus. It might be a miracle (like the raising of Lazarus, or the feeding of the 5000), or an event (like the washing of the disciple's feet) or a personal encounter (like that with Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman or the "Greeks" in 12:20). These incidents would then be springboards into extended accounts of Jesus' teaching, teachings which would be expressed in quite simple language, yet very stretching and at times complex in content. These would have represented excellent teaching materials for the infant churches, providing accurate information about the life of Jesus, as well as teaching material which was solid enough to be used for some time.

Whether these Episodes were distributed separately or grouped together into a sort of "Draft Gospel" we can only imagine.

As previously mentioned, these Episodes were checked and authenticated by the other apostles, whose presence may be discerned in the several "we" passages. The most striking of these comes in John 21:24:

"This is the disciple who testifies to these things and wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true." The "we", I propose, refers to the other apostles.

At a later time, but probably before the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in 70AD, it became clear to the church leaders there

were large sections of the life and ministry of Jesus which were not covered by John's Episodes. The birth of Jesus was not included, nor, strangely, the Last Supper. John's Episodes focussed largely on the Jerusalem ministry of Jesus, so there were large gaps in the account of his time in Galilee. Also many of the miracles, parables and teaching of Jesus (such as the Sower and the Sermon on the Mount) were not included. Remember, the gospel writers had to record onto scrolls, not books, which were then copied by hand onto other scrolls, an expensive process. The linear length of available scrolls would have been a limiting factor. (Is this why Mark's Gospel ends so abruptly?)

After the fall of Jerusalem, John then moved to Ephesus. Of this time, Irenaeus, an early church father, records,

"Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned upon his breast, did himself publish a gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia." Notice Irenaeus does not say John wrote or composed a gospel, but that he published one. (Or "issued" - P. Barnett.)

John constructed an amalgamation of his Episodes in the Life of Jesus, though making some additions. The "Prologue" (John 1:1-18) may have been added at this time, as many writers feel the Prologue expresses a more developed theology than may have been possible pre-70AD - this is debatable; several reference to time lapses may have been included to smooth out the narrative, such as "the next day", "on the third day", and "after this". The reference to the subsequent death of Peter could also have been added at this time (John 21:19).

So, John's gospel was written both first and last.

This two-phase authorship of John is not particularly novel. Leon Morris, for instance, makes the comment:

"A number of scholars have argued for an early date for part at any rate of the tradition embodied in this Gospel and a late date for its actual composition". (Marshall, Morgan and Scott commentary p34.)

And Paul Barnett in *John, the Shepherd King* (Aquila Press), adds in a similar vein:

"It is likely John began to write his Gospel in the forties and fifties in Palestine..." "He had brought his incomplete Gospel with him (to Ephesus), but he may have "issued" it soon afterwards with some changes suitable for the new situation" (pp 338-339).

Michael Bennett trained at Moore College. He developed the Christianity Explained course, and from 1985 - 1996 he worked with the Scripture Union organization, further developing and promoting the course.



Anglican Relief and
Development Fund
Australia

Report from the Anglican Relief and Development Fund
Australia (ARDFA)

Vocational Training for the Deaf

Early in 2014, and using the proceeds of the sale of his modest apartment in Egypt, the Rev Farag Hanna set off for Australia to seek PhD enrolment at La Trobe University. Encouraged during his ministry in the Middle East by his bishop, as well as CBM, Wycliffe, CMS-UK and others, Farag believes that the Christian gospel has a lot to say about the marginalization and prejudice which faces deaf and hearing impaired people in developing countries, and the great need of financial support for this groundbreaking research on problems facing bilingual education for the deaf.

An experienced teacher of the deaf, Farag Hanna was ordained in 2009 and is now the leader of the 400 member Deaf Church in Cairo – a ministry of the diocese under the oversight of Archbishop Mounseer Anis who spoke at the CMS-A Summer Schools a few years ago. His international ministry with training teachers of the deaf has taken him to Jordan, Syria, and more recently Myanmar.

In God's wonderful providence, Farag is also the head of Egypt Diocese's Deaf Unit which runs a sign bilingual primary school for deaf children, offering kindergarten to primary levels and a boarding house for students. The Unit is co-sponsoring ARDFA's first community development project - a Vocational Training Centre for the Deaf (VTCD) in Cairo – a microfinance project – seen as a strategic to the mission focus of the Diocese of Egypt.

Noting that the Diocese of Melbourne has agreed to cover six of the 18 months accommodation needs of the Farag family, ARDFA wishes to help and is now appealing to the Essentials' constituency to make a special appeal within their parishes during 2014-15*.

ARDFA invites readers of Essentials to pray for the ministry of the Deaf Unit and to help resource the VTCD project by making –
a tax deductible donation to support the VTCD project,
including Farag's related research project; and/or
a non tax deductible donation to support gospel promotion
and ministry of the Deaf Church in Cairo

*To financially support any of the above initiatives, you can bank transfer your gift to ARDF Australia at: 083 166 19-810-4947 or donate online at www.ardfa.org.au. For a project proposal for your parish, or further information send an email to: kim@ardfa.org.au.



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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

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

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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