

THE AUSTRALIAN

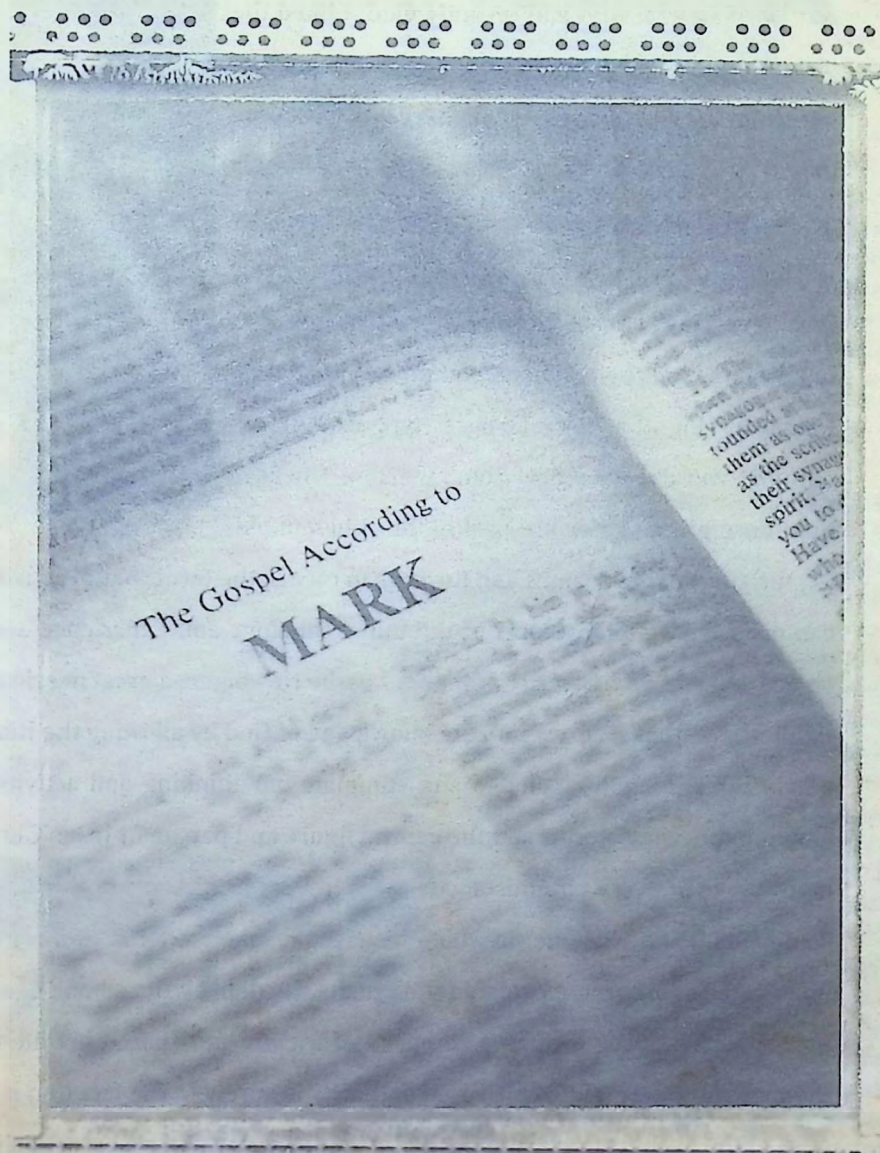
Christian

NATIONAL JOURNAL OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN AUSTRALIA



Vol. 100 No. 12, 19 July 1997

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The Bible

"Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another."

2 Tim 3:16 (THE MESSAGE)



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NATIONAL JOURNAL OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN AUSTRALIA

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Editorial

An Invitation

DON SMITH

As a six-year-old I received a Bible in memory of an aunt who had recently died. I liked the pictures, especially Daniel in the Lion's Den and the one about the fiery furnace. Then there was the storm-tossed Ark. That appealed because we lived near a port and I liked stories of ships and sailors. From my Baptist Sunday School Primary Department I vividly recall the story of a very bad boy who tore pages from his Bible. From the teacher's comment I judged he was deserving of a "fiery furnace" type experience, one that you didn't escape from! * Now, I believe that these great stories are part of the Bible unfold-



ing the story of the cosmos and the human race in the terms of the activity of its Author. We can discover we too are part of the universal story and experience a sense of where we come from and where we are going. * Lesslie Newbigen, a great missionary statesman and thinker, says that we grow into the knowledge of God by allowing the Bible story to awaken our imagination and challenge and stimulate our thinking and activity. If we dig deeply enough, the many stories and the central figure and person of Jesus Christ will sustain and motivate us in every circumstance of life. In his recent book *Proper Confidence*, Newbigen comments that the manner in which Jesus makes the Father known is not couched in infallible, unrevisable or irreformable statements. He didn't write a book of unchangeable statements. Rather Jesus formed a company of friends and shared his life with them and left them as witnesses. The Bible's real authority is surely in the fact that it is the primary witness to the events of revelation—the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Newbigen comments that when we deal with the Bible, the liberal flaw within us is to see ourselves as sovereign explorers who determine the real questions in our search for reality. The fundamentalist within wants to claim the factual truth of every statement in the Bible—to lose one is to lose everything! * An open Bible before us is an invitation to discipleship and a journey with Jesus. *



The Bible

In our annual feature on the Bible, our writers comment on the use of the Bible and we consider the influence of postmodernism.

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The Australian Christian welcomes letters from its readers. Short letters up to 175 words stand the best chance of publication. All letters may be edited. We reserve the right to omit letters altogether.

Prayer for Tasman Peninsula

To the Editor,
Living on the Tasman Peninsula at present is not easy, with the aftermath of 28 April 1996 still causing serious concerns in our area.

With this in mind, we met together recently, and decided that through this column, we would request the prayers of all the Churches of Christ to support us as we endeavour to lift high the name of Jesus, in this part of Tasmania.

We constantly see hopes dashed, relationships broken, while uncertainty is all around, and the great need people have of knowing the one who forgives, bears burdens, heals relationships and brings peace and hope. Please pray for us, that we all may witness to the salvation he brings, also the love and peace that comes from knowing him as a personal friend.

We are planning to commence a group of "personal carers" and to increase our witness, and for this we ask you to pray earnestly, for opportunities and for open doors.

—Pam Williams
(PO Box 777, Nubeena, 7184)

MOPS Ministry

To the Editor,
Darren Kittel's article about MOPS ("AC" 17.5.97) deserves commendation. Darren and others interested in MOPS (Mothers

of Pre-School Children) and those in other forms of ministry to young families would be interested to know that Carol Kuykendal, the International Vice President of MOPS, will be our keynote speaker at our "Ministering to Young Families" seminar to be held at Wollongong Church of Christ, NSW, 1-2 November 1997. The seminar will attract ministers and church leaders who are interested in being challenged to minister to this vital segment of our community. Carol's visit is being sponsored by MOPS International and so seminar costs will be kept to a low level. More details will be published in *The Australian Christian* at a later date.

—Ted Keating
(Wollongong, NSW)

First Church of Christ

To the Editor
Its good to have the support of Ken Patterson regarding the beginnings of Churches of Christ in South Australia (Historical Society Digest, "AC" 21.6.97). My latest research (1995) shows John Lawrie briefly joined the Scotch Baptists in Scotland; became a Disciple; commenced a Disciples' congregation where his brothers James, Robert and step-brother Alexander, his sister Marion Greenshields and husband Archibald, John Aird and John Watson, became Disciples. Coming to South Australia in 1839 and 1847, they all settled south of Adelaide. While they worked and associated with Scotch Baptists, John Lawrie's "converts" never belonged to a Scotch Baptist church in Scotland nor the Adelaide Scotch Baptist church. They were all Disciples/Church of Christ whom John Aird gathered (except Alexander) into the first SA church in 1847.

—Trevor Lawrie
(Athelstone, SA)

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Letters to the Editor

Restoration World Perspective

To the Editor,

The letter from A. Rackemann ("AC" 21.6.97) needs some clarification.

He referred to the Disciples of Christ as the smallest of the three American streams of the Restoration Movement, with no overseas churches.

In fact, this mainline body has missionaries in scores of nations all the way from Argentina to Zaire, now the Republic of Congo and has had for over a century.

This substantial American denomination whose official name is The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), spends millions of dollars each year for work beyond the shores of the United States and Canada.

Perhaps the difference is that the Disciples insist that all its overseas personnel work for the churches in the nations to which they are sent.

We have no desire either to perpetuate sectarianism or to make any church subject to an American mission board or given an American flavor.

In addition, we have recently joined our efforts with the United Church of Christ, itself the result of a four-church merger. Few denominations are more attuned to the world mission of the church, and few make a greater contribution to a global Christian witness. (Wendy and Charles Bayer are currently serving at CCTC, Mulgrave, sent by the Disciples of Christ and the United Church of Christ.

—Charles Bayer
(Mulgrave, Vic)

Two Tracks for Churches of Christ.

To the Editor,

Travelling in late 1996 I noticed main line churches but also

churches of the Open Door, of the Word, and, on the Rock. I thought, much still remains for Churches of Christ to fulfil their original mission, their "polar star" of unity of Christ's followers, as John records Jesus' prayer to his Father in John 17:21.

Then came the Editorial ("AC" 1.2.97), "The Future Counts", stating, "We have (also) seen our Australian Movement pass through the stages from sect to become a small mainline denomination".

That may be the view of the writer, but I'm unaware of any change to our Australian constitution deleting our special commitment to our ecumenical work outside of, and within State and National Councils of Churches.

In vain I have waited for four months for letters correcting this view.

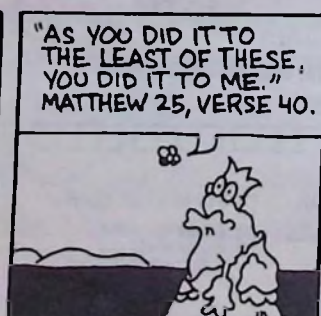
My soul is sad since our mission is unfulfilled, the need for unity in Christ is still the way to peace and quality living throughout the world. Surely Churches of Christ commitments are to two tracks: conversions (Matt 28:19) and unity (John 17:21).

Thus I ask of our Federal Executive, a clear statement in our National Journal of the objective/s of Churches of Christ in Australia, within those two primary areas of service.

—David Allison
(Black Rock, Vic)



Pontius' Puddle



Update

Dear readers,

This issue has a focus on the Bible. Bible Sunday, which is observed on 27 July this year, is used to stress the importance of the Bible in the life of Christians and the church. Our features explore a variety of themes relating to the Bible. There are many more. We shall return to them on other occasions.

Our cover photograph is the work of Jacqui Henshaw. We thank her for her contribution. The cover Scripture quotation is from *The Message*, copyright 1993, 1994, 1995, used by permission of Nav Press Publishing Group. For interested readers, details of Lesslie Newbigin's book referred to in the editorial are as follows: *Proper Confidence*, Eerdmans, 1995, 105 pp. Within the next two weeks mailings of promotional material will be sent to churches throughout Australia. We have suggested goals for new subscriptions. The timing for the presentation to the local church is a matter of local decision. We suggest it is spread over some weeks. If churches achieve these goals we would hope to achieve a substantial increase in subscribers, with the ensuing

benefit of continued improvement in the paper. Each envelope contains a few sample copies. The limited sample of copies is due to postage costs. We are keen for your church to receive as many copies as needed. Larger quantities are available by contacting our office. It will help to have an adequate supply on hand for your promotion. Also included are copies of a colourful poster prepared by NSW Board member Tom Glynn. Please display prominently. Additional copies are also available. We invite you as readers to cooperate with your leaders to promote the paper. Our sub-editor Nigel Pegram and his family will be returning to Perth for a month's holiday. We wish Nigel well after an especially busy period here. Later this year we plan a focus on evangelism. There will be a feature on the evangelist E.C. Hinrichsen. If any reader has a photo of the typical example of converts outside the mission tent please contact us.

Sam Smith

From Drug Trafficker to Church Planter

A testimony from Carlos of Colombia

I am one of fourteen brothers. My parents were kept very busy and didn't have much time for us. Because of this we grew up full of hatred one for the other. At fourteen years of age, and tired of fighting with my brothers, I decided to leave my home and travel throughout the country, winding up at Bogota to study.

When I finished my studies, I travelled to the coast, and in Santa Marta I became involved in drug trafficking, planting and cultivating marijuana and coca. I had several hectares of coca plants with a team of 40 workers.

On one occasion I was called to

examine a plot some distance away, and I didn't bring anything along to read, as is my custom. I was bored and the old lady on the plantation found a copy of a New Testament which had been given to her son during his time in the army. That New Testament so impressed my life that I began to share it with my gang. That became our thing, to study it in a group after work.

One day, when my companions had left on holiday, I had an accident. Nobody was there to help me. I spent the whole day losing blood, and at night I grasped a radio to distract my mind. I found



Drugs, a frequent legacy of life on the streets

Trans World Radio (TWR), which was airing the program El Camino de la Vida. Eliseo Tohirak was preaching and gave a message where he described my life exactly: full of sin, empty. I felt I had no alternative but to accept Jesus into my life. I felt the peace of heaven, and at that moment I was happy for the first time. It was unforgettable.

Over the next weeks I cut down the plants, burned the laboratory, and got rid of everything in my life related to drug trafficking. When my gang came back from their holidays, I shared my experience

with them and explained what they were lacking, since they had already read the New Testament. At this point they all accepted Jesus as their Saviour as well. Glory to God.

From our little band of coca farmers have come twelve pastors, and for the last six years I have pastored in a little town in the interior of the country and I study by correspondence. The old lady who gave me the New Testament is the leader of a group up in the Sierra Nevada, preaching and teaching. The other pastors are in other parts of the country. I, myself, have planted 10 churches. Four years ago I got married and now have a son. I am a happy family man.

We are living proof of how effective TWR's ministry is. I have never written before for fear of reprisals, but I pray for you and love you very much. May the Lord continue to bless you, strengthen you, and encourage you to keep on going.

For more information contact: Trans World Radio on (03) 9888 7061.



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Vision Fulfilled

Long-awaited book arrives in Swaziland

A legend which has been preserved for over one and a half centuries is again being discussed in Swaziland, Africa.

Local history in Swaziland has it that the founder of the nation, King Somhlolo, who ruled in 1844, had a vision in which he saw people of a different colour coming to him bearing two objects. One was a book (umculu), the other a circular object (indilinga). The king was advised in his dream to spurn the circular object (interpreted as money), but to take the book (the Bible). So he sent four messengers to find the men with the book. They went down to the Methodist Mission at Thaba Nchu in the Free State and their visit resulted in two missionaries going to Swaziland in 1844. Early this year the complete Bible in Swati was jointly published by the Bible Society of South Africa and the Bible Society in Swaziland, and King Somhlolo's vision of 153 years ago, which was partly fulfilled with the coming of the missionaries bearing the Christian Gospel in 1844, has at last been perfectly fulfilled.

For the first time ever, almost two million Swati speakers living in Swaziland and South Africa are able to read and hear the Bible in their own language. Before the production of this Bible, Swati speakers wanting to read the full Bible have had to read it in English or Zulu.

The New Testament was published in 1981 and an edition with Psalms in 1986.

His Majesty King Mswati III of Swaziland instructed that a special thanksgiving day be held to celebrate the arrival of the first Swati Bible.



Three other African nations celebrated the arrival of new Scriptures earlier this year.

In January the Kabiye New Testament was launched in Kara, Togo, in the presence of about 4,500 people, including members of the government.

In February the Igikuria New Testament was launched for Abakuria communities living on Kenya's border with Tanzania.

And in April the Bible Society in Mozambique published a new inter-confessional New Testament in the Gitonga language. About 4,000 people joined in a joyful celebration and within an hour of the launch 715 copies were sold!

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Presidents Changeover in NSW

Introducing incoming NSW Conference Presidents



New South Wales Conference held at Stanwell Tops Centre on 17 May saw the changeover of Presidents. John Bagley (right) who served during 1996–1997 completed his term and handed over the responsibilities of office to incoming President, Graham Long (centre), minister at Pendle Hill and currently Acting Conference Ministry Coordinator. Richard Menteith (left) is the President Elect and will assume office as President from the 1998 Conference. Richard is a member of the Greenacre church and General Manager, Corporate Services, Wesley Mission, Sydney.

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Sunstate 97

Successful convention format continues with four top speakers



Trunell Felder

Following the outstanding success of the 1996 Annual Conference of Churches of Christ in Queensland, the convention format will continue again this year.

Sunstate 97 will be held at Boonah, located in the beautiful Fassifern Valley, approximately 95 km south-west of Brisbane, 9-11 October 1997.

Four outstanding keynote speakers will share their experience and insights.

Dr Cynthia Hale is from the Ray of Hope Christian Church in Decatur, Georgia, USA. Beginning with only four people meeting in a Bible study group, Dr Hale has seen the church grow to over 2000 people in a period of ten years. This makes the Ray of Hope Church the fastest-growing Disciple Church in Georgia. She has a natural musical talent. She holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree, a Master of Divinity and a Doctorate of Ministry.

Rev Trunell Felder serves as an associate pastor at the Ray of

Hope Christian Church. He holds a BA Degree in Marketing, a Master of Divinity and is currently enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program. He is a sought-after speaker in the area of evangelism. His current responsibilities include ministries of shepherding and men and youth.

Milton Oliver has become something of a church-planting legend in recent years, being one of the few people to successfully plant, grow and reproduce a church, that is now up to approximately 400 people, with 50% conversion growth, in the outer western suburbs of Melbourne. His special vision is keeping and rekindling a passion for ministry.

Karl Faase comes to us with a wealth of experience that belies his years. A popular Sydney media personality, Karl has also published two works that address the church, young people and worship. He is the senior minister at Gympie Baptist Church, Kirrawee, NSW and was keynote speaker for the Asian Baptist Youth Convention. He has a desire for the church to become effective in its communication of the gospel.



Cynthia Hale

Sunstate 97 will be fully catered and will offer a range of accommodation options. Other features will include a variety of guest artists, uplifting worship, trade displays and eighteen elective topics. Sunstate 97 is being presented by Churches of Christ in Queensland, but churches, ministers and leaders from other states are warmly invited to share in the inspiration of this great event. For further information and registration brochures contact the Queensland Conference Office on (07) 3378 4600.



Situations Vacant

Horse Person Program Coordinator

Shiloh Ranch is an interdenominational Christian camping centre catering for around 4,000 campers each year in cabin-style accommodation, set on 50 delightful hectares of undulating pastures and bushland overlooking Westernport Bay, at Grantville, Victoria.

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Here and There

Inclusive Language for NIV Suspended

The International Bible Society has cancelled plans to publish an American edition of the New International Version with inclusive language. The IBS board voted to abandon all plans for gender-related changes. It added it would try to get the British publishers, Hodder & Stoughton, to stop publishing a version of the NIV with inclusive language already on sale in Britain and Australia. Controversy in US conservative circles arose concerning "feminist seduction of the evangelical church" through publication of a "unisex" Bible. The vice president for translation, Eugene Rubingh, said the attacks had been slanderous in claiming that all gender references would be neutralised. Rubingh said the only changes proposed referred to human beings, not to God and Christ as some versions had done. Some members of the IBS board feared that the board had bowed to the US "religious right". The translation committee was an international group of conservatives. The decision is regarded as a "cruel waste of time and talent to scrap all the years of work".

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- Bible college graduate and
- Teaching and teamwork skills.

This person will need to:

- Have pastoral care skills
- Be compassionate
- Have experience with people from a low socio-economic background
- Have a creative approach to problem solving and
- Be committed to leading the Church and making all decisions based on the Word of God.

Applications close 15 August 1997.

Please send your application to:
The Selection Committee, Mount Druitt Community Church,
c/o 100a Callagher Street, Mount Druitt NSW 2770.

Current applicants are still being considered and need not reapply.

Riverlands Affiliates

New church joins Queensland conference



The first anniversary of the Riverlands, Qld church was celebrated on 15 June with 126 people present. Robert Warwick, Queensland Conference President, preached and presented a letter of affiliation from the Conference. Pictured is Alan Leane, minister (centre front) and Robert Warwick (right) with the elders who received the letter on behalf of the congregation.

New "Opportunity"

A service and an advert in one



In March the Mornington Church of Christ, Vic, opened an Opportunity Shop (pictured above) in Wilsons Road, Mornington. With only fifty to sixty families, the venture was inlaid with great faith. Three ladies, Mavis Peet, Carole Taylor and Joy Murphy, put the idea together and set the wheels in motion.

This was to be the sixth Op Shop in Mornington, but was not situated in the Main Street with the other five. It is on a major road back in a quiet shopping strip. We had great help from Stuart Peterson of the Vic-Tas Department of Community Care.

Since the opening the shop has traded extremely well. It has taken \$1000 per week. It has repaid its debts, is now a month in advance and has money in the

bank. We have been surprised and elated by the support from the congregation and the community. A number of our sister congregations have also contributed goods for the shop. We have a volunteer staff of up to twenty who work tirelessly 5½ days a week.

We have five to six hundred who pass through the shop every week.

Seeing we have no building as such, the shop has become a meeting place—a drop-in centre—a refuge for those who just want someone to talk to. It not only serves the community, but is also a permanent advertisement for the church.

Donations would be gladly received. Ring the shop for information on (03) 5975 0979.

—Allan Avery

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The Bible

My Family Treasure

CHRIS COHEN

At eight years of age I made the grandest of discoveries. As soon as I opened the bottom door of the old bookcase, I spotted it. It was struggling to be seen, somewhat overshadowed by the turn of the century Webster's Dictionary above it. But nevertheless, I could see it and I could tell it was something precious. *

As my mother dug it out for me, she explained that this was a very special book. It was a Bible, different from the ones we regularly used. It certainly didn't look

Not only did this family Bible belong to me but, more importantly, I belonged to a Bible family

anything like my Bible—a paperback New Testament. This Bible was big! It was a family Bible, originally belonging to my great-grandparents. Hidden away to avoid the destruction of three toddlers, then forgotten, I had uncovered what became for me a sort of family treasure chest. *

The rice paper crinkled as we opened it up. We had to be very careful because this Bible was falling apart. Every page had a trail of smudgy finger prints. This Bible was well used. I had discovered more than my family Bible. I now knew that the Word of God was part of my heritage! * Turning over the pages, I started to come across inserts. At meaningful locations throughout the Bible were bookmarks from each generation, children's poetry, notes in funny, fancy writing, paper clippings about dead relatives, photos of stern-looking people holding babies, and mushy-sounding letters written by sol-

diers. Another discovery was that my family's life was central to this Bible. This was significant for me, even as an eight-year-old. Not only did this family Bible belong to me but, more importantly, I belonged to a Bible family. *

Recently my three-year-old decided to take his Bible story book for show and tell at the neighbourhood children's centre. As the group leader and five or six of his peers browsed its pages, he proudly announced, "My mum has lots of Bibles at our home!" *

I was so pleased when I heard him say this. For his age this showed an appropriate appreciation for the Word of God and its place in our family life. As I thought about his statement, though, it became a caution for me. Are these Bibles collector's items for our bookcase or are they open chests that can spill out invaluable treasure for us to enjoy? The Bible, even for a "ministry family" such as ours, can so easily be the former. *

Having parents, siblings and especially children around is a major reason why we should take our Bibles out of the bookcase. Often though, they are our excuse not to. *

At the age of four my eldest son was too scared to travel the long, gloomy passage to the toilet. For him, there were scary things up there. We could have rationalised with him that there were no monsters. However, we used this opportunity for the Word to come alive in our family. Together we looked at Ephesians 6 and talked about using the armour of God. He learnt that when he's scared he can "draw swords" (of the Spirit). No more hesitations! My son's new-found treasure brought him freedom (as Jesus promised in John 8:31-32!). *

What I like about children discovering treasure is that they don't put it back again! They like to wear the treasure they



find. After all, like jewellery, it is made to be worn. My son, now seven years old, still wears his treasure. Recently he announced that he was taking two Bibles to bed in case any monsters tried to come into his dreams and scare him. He explained that he had highlighted different verses in each. He would have two swords to draw! *

The psalmist declared, "The unfolding of [God's] words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple." (119:30 NIV) That's why I love exploring the Word of God in the context of my family. It doesn't get too complicated and yet we always make an exiting discovery. My children love a good treasure hunt and their enthusiasm rewards them well. They gain a lot from both the experience of the hunt and the treasure they find. If we approach the Bible like children on a treasure hunt, I believe that we will be well rewarded. After all, the Bible contains treasure more valuable than silver or gold. Nothing can compare with this Word of God, the knowledge of him in our lives. (Prov 3:13-15 NIV). *

Will you have a family Bible and a Bible family? I pray, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." (Col 3:16) *

Chris Cohen is Associate Minister at Mandurah City Church of Christ in Western Australia.

The Bible

So Many Translations

BARBARA KENNEDY

The group took turns, reading a couple of verses each from the Bible passage they were studying that evening. As they finished, Marlene took a deep breath and said, "I find it very disconcerting to read the Bible this way, jumping from one version to another. I got lost halfway through when three versions were different from mine. How do I know what is right to follow and which version is best to use?" *



What can be 'new' about God's Word?

A buzz of interest went around the room. *

John, the leader, made a quick decision to invite discussion. *

"Marlene, you sound frustrated. Let's say a little about the version we use." *

"I always use the King James Version."

Trevor's voice was authoritative. *

"Why?" asked Marlene. *

"When I was a kid my grandmother read it to me. In Sunday School I learnt verses and passages like Psalm 23. They don't seem to carry the same impact in newer versions." *

"Trevor, but do you always understand it? After all, it was translated in Shakespeare's time, how many people use that language now? What about as you share your faith with people, do they understand you?" questioned George. *

"But does that mean Trevor should abandon the version he loves and remember?" interposed Peter. Looking around the group, he continued, "May I share my experience?" *

There were nods of agreement. *

"Well, John recently asked me to take a class in the children's program. It's a

group of older primary-aged children. Some are good enthusiastic readers; some believe books are there to prop open doors." *

"So you got a large, thick Bible!" quipped George. *

"Mmmm", laughed Peter. "I want these people to enjoy the Bible stories so they can learn to love the Word and apply the principles to their lives. *

"What did you decide on?" asked James. *

"The Good News Bible. I don't really like it myself, but they can understand it and the pictures are simple but eye-catching." *

"Peter, what version do you read?" asked Suzanne. "I have found that the New International Version is best for me. I can understand it, and the language is not too simplified." *

"I get angry sometimes," said Suzanne. "I've not been a Christian long, I don't know much background to the Bible—which translations are right. I was overwhelmed by the shelves of different Bibles at the Christian Bookshop. I bought the one recommended to me. It's a Study Bible, with lots of explanations and boxed information that interrupts the flow. Why are the Bibles presented with columns down the pages, not set out like an ordinary book?" *

"Yes, we do need to be careful as we choose," said John. "George, is your Bible good? Does it help your understanding?" *

"Yes it does. It is the New Revised Standard Version. It's easy to read, but it doesn't insult my intelligence. I'm happy with it. I'm not aware of problems in translation," answered George. *

"But why do so many Bibles have titles that include the word 'new'? That confuses me," offered Marlene. "What can be 'new' about God's Word, written nearly two thousand years ago?" *

"That takes us back to George's comment to Trevor, John reminded them. "Language changes constantly. Translations must be 'up-dated' to be intelligible to modern readers." *

"John, what about you? What version do you use?" asked Margaret. "I have just bought *The Message* by Eugene Peterson. It's fun, easy to read and helps my understanding. It's an interpretation rather than a translation." *

"Yes," agreed John. "I think it is perhaps a more modern *Living Bible* that includes explanation and interpretation of Peterson's theology. I don't use it in sermons or studies. I use the New—that word again!—American Standard Bible. It is a faithful, literal translation and gives me insights through taking me back to the original message" *

Lisa spoke for the first time. "I've got *The Bible for Today*. The cover says it's readable, relevant, reliable, the sticker, 'This bible reads like a magazine'." *

"This discussion has been really interesting," said James. "But I think there are issues we've passed over." *

"You are right," said John. Let's bring any new thoughts next week?" *

Barbara Kennedy is a pastor at Belconnen church and teaches biblical studies and pastoral care in the church's Institute for Christian Revival.

The Bible

Postmodernity and the Bible

GRAHAM LONG

I feel some sympathy for readers who get annoyed with articles that keep appearing on the theme of postmodernity. Most of our ordinary readers, indeed most of our pastors, have no understanding of the complexities that are addressed in such a discussion. Sadly, if we fail to address the issues of the postmodern age we will become like old people who lament their old age and wish they were 20 years old again. *

There is a new vitality and accountability on its way

The modern age is the world we all grew up in. The world was not always like this. In ancient and medieval times people had a very different way of living and thinking.

The age that we call modern began with the growing belief that individual people were competent to decide their own destiny. The divine right of kings to rule was once unquestioned. Even in my early Sunday school days we used to sing:

"The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate,
God made them high and lowly,
and ordered their estate." *

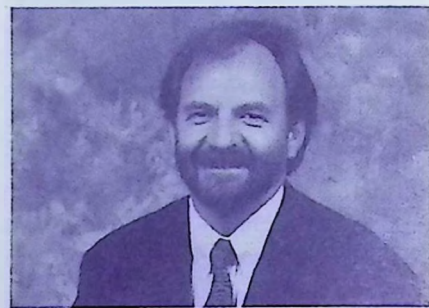
So modernity came with all of its own complexity. Kings were swept away or gradually lost their power as the new age asserted itself with previously unthought of claims to power. ("We the people ...") *

But it wasn't just kings who held back the modern age. The Church also was

an obstacle. The modern age fought against the right of the church to rule by its own tradition. A new church began to emerge in many different forms. Modernity believed that individuals could decide right from wrong and determine God's will by reading the Scriptures for themselves. That the individual could find the will of God by reading the Bible is a thoroughly modern idea. As the modern age has grown older, there has been a growing conviction that what readers of the Bible come to know in their reading is their **own** idea of God's will. Countless numbers of churches and sects have developed all claiming the Bible as their foundation. *

In the postmodern age the ability of the individual to know, is questioned. Anything that claims to explain everything is suspect. At the beginning of the postmodern times, just as at the beginning of the modern times, there are those who claim that the Church is finished. There were those who in modern times saw the move away from tradition as godlessness. Just as there are those now who see the move away from reason as godlessness. *

I think it could be argued that while there was a godless dimension to the modern age, it nevertheless brought a new vitality to the church in these past few hundred years. The same movement that rejected the tradition of the Church found new life in the ability of the individual to find salvation as a personal phenomenon. The same movement that lost confidence in the tradition of the Church found confidence in the capacity of the individual to find God's truth in the Bible. *



In the postmodern age salvation will be communal rather than personal. Some will see this shift as the loss of foundation. I am inclined to think there is a new vitality and accountability on its way.

The modern age has turned out to be an age of loneliness. In the postmodern age I believe the Church will rediscover the value and indispensability of its own communal nature and of the communal nature of God. In the postmodern age, the shift away from reason will become a shift toward story. The Bible will no longer be thought of as a kind of recipe book for Christian living. It will nevertheless give new life to the church as it bears witness to how God revealed himself in the lived life of ordinary communities. *

New scholarship will proceed with a respect for the limits of the individual to know. Such scholarship is quite unlike the scholarship that we learned when I was in college. This scholarship is emerging and bringing with it a word for our postmodern age. I urge readers to read Bruggeman's *The Bible and Postmodern Imagination: Texts under Negotiation*, a different but wonderful treatment of the Bible. *

Graham Long is minister at Pendle Hill, NSW, and NSW Conference Ministry Coordinator.

The Bible

Mission in an Oral World

ASHLEY BARKER

One of the many mistakes I have made was asking a young guy to read the Bible. It was a Christian inquirers group in a public housing estate. All the heads went down (and not to pray either!) as the lad loudly protested and refused to read. Eventually another read aloud, but the group felt like they had failed at this "God thing". I later found out that the guy in question could not read or write much at all, never mind feeling confident enough to read in front of his mates. *

But the group felt like they had failed at this "God thing"

This type of experience led us to do some more research. We were shocked by what we found:

- One million Australian adults (1 in 10) have basic reading and writing difficulties.
- Of the individuals who have entered the education system since 1985, 20–30% will leave the system illiterate.
- Statistically speaking, there is a direct relationship between literacy and income. *

If Christians are "people of the book", what does mission look like among those who do not read books? This question has driven us to develop new approaches to the way we do mission among those who are primarily "oral" in culture, rather than "literate". * We must recognise that there is an oral "culture". Dave Cave, an urban worker in Liverpool, describes this culture as,

"We think in pictures not words. We think in patterns of pictures which connect for us, rather than in logical lines. We rely on memory, rather than writing. We convert what we learn into memorable experiences, rather than putting them on disks and files. Our thinking is emotionally involved and very hot, as against cool and removed. We value traditions customs, songs, proverbs and sayings." *

Tex Sample, an American working among blue collar workers, has written one of the few books on "Ministry in an Oral Culture". *

He suggests that for transformation to occur in oral cultures there should be "an array of indigenous practices" that include: thinking in stories, proverbs and relationships; memorisation; mentoring and apprenticeship; with the focus on concrete and practical life and the use of tradition. *

These "indigenous practices" have been helpful as we have sought to help people from oral cultures encounter the Jesus of the Bible. Our use of these includes: developing a house church called "Rainbow" that is owned and run by people from oral cultures; a discipleship course that starts with the *Jesus* video, based on Luke's Gospel, which is broken down into 2–3 minute blocks for discussion and goes for ten one-hour sessions; mentoring for emerging leaders; and being open to discuss the Gospel in resolving conflict whenever it happens, using sayings (many from *Grow*) that can be remembered and given (and received) as advice. *

Part of transformation, when the dominant culture is literate, is to help people learn to read when they choose to. *

Of course, literacy is not a prerequisite for entering the Kingdom. All four Gos-



pels probably had a long period of "oral tradition" before being written down. Yet those who cannot read are very vulnerable when it comes to housing (e.g. contracts), employment (e.g. an increasingly technical work place) and in communication with institutions (e.g. Government, courts and churches). We must offer literacy courses that empower and help those from an oral culture be able to cope with the literate world. One of my most meaningful experiences in mission has been helping a young man learn to read using the Bible. *

Those who can, must really read the Bible. For those of us who have grown up in a literate culture we have much that is required of us. The biggest inequality today is no longer simply access to money. Information is power. The root cause of much of the poverty we are seeing has to do with access to information. The great challenge for Christians from a literate culture is to be awake to what the Bible is saying to us about our responsibilities to the world around us. *

Ashley Barker works in Springvale, Vic. He is the Director of the Urban Neighbourhoods of Hope mission.

The Bible

Prophecy and Proof Texts

MERRYL BLAIR

The term "prophecy" has evolved over time to take on a meaning that is far removed from how it was understood in the Old Testament. The usual understanding of the term now, especially among groups who attach a strong importance to "prophecy", tends to focus either on prediction of future events or on relating events portrayed in Old Testament (OT) prophetic books to present happenings in the world ("proof texting"). Both of these foci are largely predictive. However, was prediction of the future,

Who could ever know if a prophet was true or false?

especially some far distant future, really what the OT prophets were interested in? *

Prediction of the future was a minor, auxiliary part of OT prophecy. The prophets were firmly dedicated to calling people back into a covenant relationship with God. This call was based on the belief that God had revealed himself to the people of Israel in their history by calling them out of slavery into a new state of freedom and equality, in which each person was responsible for maintaining a covenant relationship with God and with each other. This relationship was based on a knowledge of God, who had shown himself to be concerned with justice and righteousness. (That is, living in a way that witnessed to the essential character of God in his loving concern for individuals and community.) A covenant consisted not only of promises of blessings if the covenant was kept, but also of threats of curses if the covenant was broken. *

At the simplest level, the prophets can be seen as announcing the covenant curses to the people of Israel in times when the covenant was clearly being broken. Thus, for example, Amos proclaims destruction against Israel because of widespread injustice and oppression:

"For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath.

They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals." * (Amos 2:6 NIV)

Hosea announces similar destruction, but focuses on a different area of the covenant relationship:

"Hear the word of the Lord, you Israelites, because the Lord has a charge to bring against you who live in the land:

"There is no faithfulness, no love, no knowledge of God in the land." * (Hosea 4:1)

Prediction of the future is simply announcing the consequences of disobeying the covenant: in other words, relevant only to this group of people at this time, and expected to take place within the immediate future. *

The only test of a true prophet actually set out in the OT lies in Deut 18:18-22. This states that a true prophet can be known by the fact that the spoken prophecy comes to pass (i.e. their predictions are true). This passage places a strong focus on the predictive element, but also stresses the immediacy of prophecy; if predictions were aimed at some distant, nebulous future, who could ever know if a prophet was true or false? The relevance of this predictive test of a true prophet is questioned in other parts of the OT. Jeremiah suggests that a true prophet is one who



calls the people to repentance (Jer 23:9-22). This passage brings to our attention the contingency of prophecy: the aim of the prophet was not so much prediction as repentance. The future outlined for the people was always contingent on their response to the call of the prophet, and God speaks and acts with fresh words and actions at all times in history, to call people to himself. * The Book of Jonah makes this clear, in a way that lampoons the predictive model of testing a "true prophet". It ends with a question: "Should I not be concerned about that great city?" (Jonah 4:11). Prophecy, for the author of this wonderful story, is not about prediction, but about witnessing to the wonder of God's universal love and mercy. Despite the fact that other prophets had announced destruction for the enemies of God's people, and despite the announcement of destruction against Nineveh by Jonah himself, true prophecy recognises and brings to attention the character of God: one who loves and demands justice and righteousness, who is merciful and willing to forgive, and who knows no racial (or other) boundaries. *

Meryll Blair is lecturer in Old Testament at CCTC, Mulgrave Vic.

Hong Kong—History Unfolding

GLYNTHIA FINGER

All eyes were focused on the lights that make up the unique clock that forms the top of the Central Plaza Building in the heart of Central on Hong Kong Island. As the last light changed colour to mark the fourth quarter of the hour that heralded midnight, 30 June 1997, a massive cheer rose from the crowd of spectators gathered together on the opposite side of the Vic-

Some journalists had come with their stories already written

toria Harbour next to the Star Ferry in front of the Cultural centre. It rumbled down the promenade to east Tsim Tsim Tsui and mixed with cheers across Hong Kong Island, the New Territories, across the border and up to Beijing. It was now official, Hong Kong had returned to the motherland! One hundred and fifty-six years of British rule were concluded. Tears were wiped from eyes, people hugged and kissed and smiled into the darkness. *

The crowd, somewhat subdued, relieved and aware that they were participants in history, continued to stand and gaze across the magnificently lit harbour with its brightly lit messages announcing congratulations at the reunification of Hong Kong with China. All focus was now on the site of the newly constructed Convention and Exhibition Centre, where history was being enacted. The government for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China was sworn in with a promise that "one country, two systems" can and will work. Eyes also followed the *Britannia* as it slowly pulled away from the dock alongside the centre and started its slow process through the harbour en-route to Manila, carrying Prince Charles and the 28th and final Governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten, and his family, who had been part of an emotional farewell that afternoon as crowds had gathered to witness the departure from Government House. *

Only hours before reunification, the crowd had gathered in the pouring rain to watch the massive fireworks display that constituted part of the official ceremony held by Britain as it bid

farewell to its colony. What could strongly be felt under the sea of colourful umbrellas (beside the rain trickling down most necks as water dripped off the umbrellas) was the feeling of goodwill and celebration as people from many different countries stood shoulder to shoulder to share in this jubilant occasion for the Hong Kong people. *

The anxieties of what this transfer means for the ongoing life of the people of this great international city were put aside for the moment as people entered into the occasion with a spirit of enthusiasm and hopefulness. However, these concerns for democracy and freedom as Hong Kong moves into its new future found voice and were witnessed to in the protests taking place in the designated protest areas in Wan Chai. The evening of SAR Celebration Day (1 July), again saw the streets around the harbour and city areas packed tightly with people gathering to watch the fireworks to mark the celebration. *

Over 8,000 journalists were in Hong Kong to witness and report on this historical event. For those of us in Hong Kong, it did become obvious at times that some journalists had come with their stories already written and it was from this perspective that they viewed each event that occurred. *

But the real story of what will happen in Hong Kong is being written as each day unfolds. It will not be written by overseas journalists and commentators, but by the present government and by the decisions of the election said to happen in the latter half of next year. Above all, it will be written by the people who form this city as they seek to live each day as the citizens



of Hong Kong SAR. It will be written by the people in the street: those who stood in the pouring rain to watch history in the making, the people who ride the MTR each morning and evening to and from work, who wait in the queues at the bus stops and shop in the markets for their daily food and share family yum cha together each Sunday morning. It will be written by the children in school and the students at university. And, let us remember, this history will be written in the languages of the people, Cantonese and Mandarin, as they express what this return means for them. *

On Sunday, 29 June, people across Hong Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories gathered in the local churches to pray for the events ahead and for the years to come. They prayed that God's presence would be real and that they as Christians would enter the coming years with faith, hope and commitment, not only in God but also in their country. It is for us to support them as they seek to live with wisdom, discernment and faith in God. *

Glynthia Finger is an Australian Churches of Christ minister and a staff member of the Christian Conference of Asia, who is based in Hong Kong.

Minister Wanted

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Classifieds

IN MEMORIAM

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Here and There

The Manila Envelope

Ross and Cherry Wissman report in their newsletter *The Manila Envelope* on their current work in the Philippines. They are the newest staff members at the Manila Bible Seminary, which also has seven full-time and five part-time Filipino staff. While in the US in June, Cherry will participate in a graduation service at the Emmanuel School of Religion. The Wissmans are formerly from Queensland and until one year ago served with British Churches of Christ in a ministry at Sawbridgeworth.

Pastoral Care Phases of Grief

GLEN WEGNER

There are a number of phases that people may move through when grieving. If a death is sudden, people are likely to experience shock, where it is difficult to accept the reality of what has happened. In other circumstances there may be denial, when it is so hard to believe someone is dead. The sense of finality hits so hard that our cop-



Anger is a normal grieving response.

ing abilities are overworked, and, while being made aware that a death has occurred, there's a sense that this is not real. Hence we experience shock, denial or both. *

It's not unusual for grieving people to become angry. Anger is a normal grieving response. Such anger may be expressed silently, or as criticism directed at another, or in extreme circumstances, as physical violence. * Often there may be two conditions that grieving people focus on. These being resistance or acceptance. Resistance is when people stay with denial and are unable to move. This may last from a few hours to several months. Acceptance refers to movement in the grieving process where a person is able to

journey towards an acceptance of what has happened. *

Pastoral carers may keep two goals in mind when working with the bereaved. *

The first is to assist with expressing grief, and the acceptance of reality. For the carer, this may mean helping the bereaved person to see the deceased, and accepting their tears and anger. It will also mean listening a number of times to the story of what happened. *

The second task involves helping with emotional withdrawal from the deceased. This involves readjustments, and a refocus of energies. This task may begin a few days after the funeral and extend for some months. *

Remember, grief is not a disease, but a normal response to loss. Most people, when given support and time, gradually move through the grief process to recovery. *

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A Foreign Legion

VINEY LONGTHORP

A phrase used as a guiding light in this year's Melbourne Film Festival claimed that, "A good film is a great journey". Here are three newly-released films, made in non-English speaking communities, which are guaranteed to enlarge our mental and cultural horizons as great journeys should. Each in their own way are highly entertaining productions, in the best sense of that often misunderstood word. *

The real casualties of war extend far beyond the field of battle

From France comes *Beaumarchais*. This film is straight biography. Beaumarchais lived in late eighteenth-century France, a character larger than life. Depending on where sympathies and loyalties lay, he was regarded as a scoundrel who lived off the fortunes of his two former wives; others saw him as a many-sided genius. He was, above all else, a brilliant playwright with a gift for biting satire after the style of his two heroes, Moliere and Voltaire. Like them he held up to ridicule the phoney politics of the day and

poked fun at the hypocrisy of people in high places, as well as revealing the injustices they endorsed. His play, *The Marriage of Figaro* was set to music by both Mozart and (later) Rossini. Both operas were full of his social banter. Later, Napoleon I remarked that his work "was the essence of the French Revolution". *

Needless to say people in high places were not amused. But what saved him was that Louis XVI found him useful: "Beaumarchais is the only man I can trust." Thus he was sent to the infant republic of America as an emissary, and later to France's implacable enemy, "perfidious Albion" (read "England") on a secret and sensitive mission of state. *

The producer of the film, Edouard Molinaro, presents the story with an appropriate Gallic romp—there is never a dull moment. A voice-over at the film's end informs us that when the hapless Louis allowed Beaumarchais to stage the "Marriage", he "unwittingly signed the birth certificate of the new order of things"—and his own death warrant. Such are the power of ideas and the words which embody them. Despots of all ages have intuitively understood this. Significant writings still remain the harbingers of freedom. *

From Russia comes *Prisoner of the Mountains*. This powerful movie relates an incident in the recent conflict between Russia and the Chechen rebels. It is the story of two young Russian soldiers who are captured by the rebels and held for ransom. The breathtaking scenery of the raw landscapes of the Caucasian Mountains where the action takes place casts its own spell over the story. Its wild nature lends the film a timeless quality. The respective attitudes of the Muslim rebels and the Russian military tells more than news reports can of the nature of post-communist Russian society, where a mosaic of nationalities and races yearn for independence. Here are scenes of yet another empire in process of disintegration. This is territory of which Tolstoy wrote 130 years ago, "where imperialism cannot win". *

The movie concentrates on the richly-varied human characters and their interaction in dangerous and tragic situations. Where friendships modify brutal systems and where simple generosity and human values cross chasms of cultural and language differences. *

Sasha, a dashing veteran, and Vania, the "raw, reticent rookie", are chained together in the house of their captor, Abdoul Mourat. The young daughter of Abdoul, wise beyond her years, serves as the voice of compassion. The hint of young love that might have blossomed between her and Vania in another time and place is but one reminder the film gives that the real casualties of war extend far beyond the field of battle. At the end, when the great Russian gunships roar over the little village to exact retribution, we know that it will solve nothing. Such



Sergei Bodrov plays Vania, a captured soldier in "Prisoner of the Mountains"

is the power of the media that the *Globe and Mail* of Toronto claimed that, "A week after Boris Yeltsin saw *Prisoner of the Mountains* he began to push for peace." *

Again from France comes *The Eighth Day*. I have not had the opportunity to see it, but it comes with glowing recommendations from a most-trusted movie-buff, Michelle Haines Thomas in her regular column in the Christian journal, *Southern Cross*. With her permission we publish part of her article. * Society has long assumed that living with a disability must be a fate worse than death. But French director Jaco van Dormeal suspected that those with Down's syndrome may not only have worthwhile lives, but might have also something to teach us. *The Eighth Day* is the result of this view. The film's star is a "mongol" (as the French still call them) in search of his dead mother. It is a touching and thoughtful film, which only just avoids sentimentality by not ignoring the frustration and, in the end, despair experienced by the mentally impaired and those who love them. *

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Empowered for Living as a Woman

Rational or Irrational?

GLEN WEGNER

I note with interest, but not enthusiasm, that Australia has a new political party: the Pauline Hanson One Nation Party. It's not a new political party we need, but rather a change in direction from our parliamentarians, whether they be Liberal or Labor. Both federal and state leaders seem to have been seduced by the dogma of economic rationalism. (Economic rationalism is the pursuit of economic efficiency as an end in itself.) *

We are not valued for being citizens, but for being customers

At first this dogma seems plausible: sound economic management, cost cutting, reducing state and national debt, responsible fiscal policy and fewer bureaucrats. The reckless spending of the eighties is to be replaced by prudent politics for the nineties, with policies and ideas to take us into the global economy of the new millennium. *

Economic rationalism is based on the notion that appropriate economic management will produce a trickle-down effect, where in good time everyone will benefit. But how rational is economic rationalism, which is influencing both government and business strategies? For example take casinos. Economic rationalists love them. Every state government seems to want one. Why? They bring home the economic bacon without increases in taxes. When the end justifies the means, moral and ethical values pale into insignificance. *

One satirical writer summed it well, "Economic rationalism is working well, pity about people." An apt comment, as economic rationalists have their focus on management of the economy and not the community. Now some will do well under economic rationalism. Those Australians with good health, an education, no debt, and some wealth, may well prosper. But the marginal, the poor, and the powerless will find that the old maxim, of the rich getting richer while the poor get poorer, is even more pronounced under economic rationalism. *

With economic rationalism, we are not valued for being citizens, but instead for being customers. Once banks, business and services were concerned about what they could provide. Now their main concerns are for the shareholders. The economy is nothing more than an opportunity for profit. The sense of purpose and meaning in work and professionalism is being eroded as labourers and professionals are not valued for who and what they are, but just for what they can contribute to the organisation's economic progress. *

Critics of economic rationalism often point out that while economic rationalism may produce a balanced budget, its conse-

quences may undermine moral and social values, which are the hallmarks of a fair and just society. While not opposed to change, changes initiated by economic rationalists, such as seven-day trading, seem concerned about what's good for business, while community values are secondary. *

When looking at the whole picture, one would have thought that the economy should be the servant of the community. With economic rationalism it's the other way around. This article is not a plea for lavish government spending or rampant socialism. The intention is to ask, "Where is economic rationalism taking our country?" How rational is it? What will Australia be like after 20 years of economic rationalism? *

The sermons of Jesus challenge us to bless people, not to burden them. Jesus teaches us to love others, not to make life a struggle for them. His values focus on abundant life. Economic rationalists appear unconcerned about values that are at the heart of the gospel and the Christian ethic. Or to put it another way: as Christians who respect the teachings of the sermon on the mount, can we remain comfortable with the direction Australia is taking under economic rationalism? *

OBITUARIES

Obituaries are limited to 100 words
LAWRIE, Mercy Wilhelmina Gilber (13.6.97) Mercy grew up in a loving Christian family. After giving her life to Christ during a Warren and Forbes Mission she entered the College of the Bible, Glen Iris, Vic, where she gained excellent marks in all her subjects. Here she met then married Merv Lawrie and shared with him in ministries over the next 61 years. While very busy raising a family of five children, Mercy was still able to be very involved with church life and the care of its members. She came to Parkrose Village four years ago due to ill health and for the past two years was confined to the Nursing Home. Mercy is lovingly remembered by her family.
—T. Lawrie

DEATHS

•Ron Pedersen, Warragul, Vic •Thomas Martin, Ann St, Brisbane •Mildred Whiting, Balaklava, SA •Edna Miles, Ormond, Vic

Church News

VIC

BAYSWATER (P. Clayton) Conference President, Lindsay Dewberry, speaker 15 June ... Increased numbers at girls' & boys' clubs ... Friendship Group held "Product Management" presentation & church talent evening, together raising \$558 for kitchen fund ... Church rejoices with Trudi Steele & Chris Brand, who recently announced engagement ... Visit by Shirley Wallace, Vic-Tas Past President, to CWF meeting.

PRESTON (Roger Bone, Mike Janssen, Bill Sharrock, Kaye Twining) Friday night service in sixth month & going strong, with growing attendance & relationships ... Monthly Kids' Club format

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Advance bookings appreciated

proving popular ... Deb Randals & Dave Edwards spoke at combined service of new UNOH work in the Preston area ... Roger Bone graduated with Degree in Theology ... CWF "Christmas in July" dinner well supported ... Church saddened by passing of Ray Garth, elder emeritus & long-standing member.

WARRAGUL (Les Medley) John Farmer returned from three months in PNG, training nurses in primary eye care ... Anne Evans to visit Burma with Sarah John Foundation ... Steven Ward commissioned as Warragul Regional College Chaplain ... Young people took part in State Youth Games in Warragul ... Sunday School raised \$75 from a "Coin Line" towards child sponsorship ... Three babies born recently ... Lindsay Dewberry guest speaker.

WARRNAMBOOL (Peter Broadbent) Joyce Gordon enjoying services again after time of sickness ... Wonderful co-operation between churches for Bill Newman meetings ... Engagement barbecue held for Jonathan Broadbent & Elisa Shaw ... New improved sound/speaker system has been installed ... Graeme & Daisy Mason working short-term in Darwin with Mobile Mission Maintenance ... During term three, church running "Search for Significance" group.

ORMOND (All Thistlethwaite) Christmas in June celebrated with an evening of carols, 22 June ... Gifts of groceries received for emergency food box ... Olive Ryall making good recovery from surgery ... \$320 raised from trivia/coffee night for Darwin ... 72nd church anniversary held 29 June, with luncheon following ... Paul Hawksley from SIMAID speaker 6 July. Leo Rosner of "Schindler's List" guest speaker & musician at Drop In 10 July.

ASCOT VALE (Chris Newland) Celebrated Lewis Newland's dedication ... Outreach to new migrants/refugees developing with weekly social group & bus outing to Ripponlea ... Youth group had great time at State Youth Games, winning small church award & coming equal ninth ... Ann Ryan recognised for 20 years' pastoral care service ... Alan

Niven conducted series on pastoral care, attended by many from local churches ... Worship enhanced with youth playing instruments ... Mixed netball team won local competition grand final.

QLD

ANN ST, BRISBANE (W.J. Flett) Continuing prayer & concern for Jess Clark suffering severe injuries from burning accident several weeks ago ... Bastien Kastanya of

Indonesian Christian Church & Gordon Jones guest speakers during absence of minister & wife on holidays ... Church saddened by passing of long-time member Tom Martin in his 98th year ... Attendances down due to several members being absent on holidays, some overseas.

SA

MOUNT BARKER (Julie & Grant Simpson) Ministry still involving cir-

cuit work ... Julie special chaplain at local hospital ... Council approved plans for development of Wellington Rd property ... Working bees completing fencing ... Two weekly Bible study groups ... Greg Barrow welcomed by transfer from Tumby Bay ... Shannon Simpson played Mini-League, Football Park. Michael, Lauren Hill Basketball team National Comp, Vic. Bronwyn Simpson third place Piano, Strath Eisteddfod.

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An Historic Handshake

GORDON STIRLING

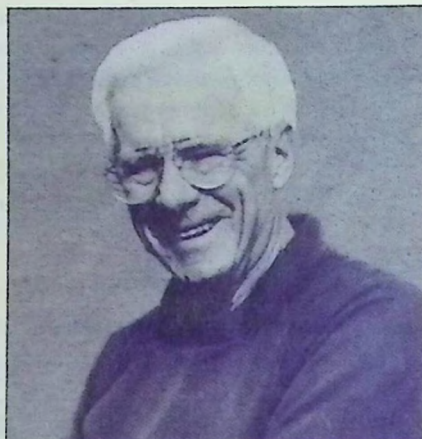
In the "AC" (21.6.97 and 19.4.97) we saw the formation of a group calling themselves Christians under the leadership of Barton Stone. *

These Christian churches were active in some of the same areas as Alexander Campbell's Disciples. Both became quickly aware of their similarity. In Kentucky, some worked and worshipped together. *

Representatives of both groups eventually met in late 1831 and early 1832 to discuss uniting both bodies. They met at the Hill Street Christian chapel in Lexington, Kentucky. On the last day of the conference, 2 January, Barton Stone, representing the Christians and Racoon John Smith, representing the Disciples, shook hands before the Assembly as a sign of their mutual trust and the union of the two bodies. The congregation joined hands and then celebrated the Lord's Supper together. *

There was no written document. They did not believe in such a credal statement. There was only the handshake and a resolution that John Smith of the Disciples, and John Rogers of the Christians should mount their horses and take the good news of the union to the churches. *

There were significant differences between them. Only ordained ministers could administer the Lord's Supper among the Christians. The Christians practised open communion. There were differences about the work of the Holy Spirit and the relationship of baptism to salvation. There were the different names of each (both names persist

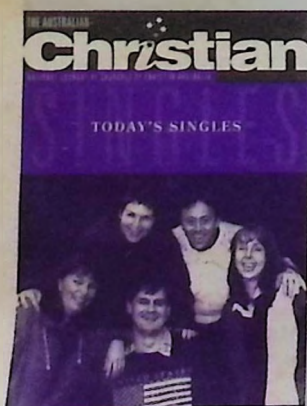


to this day). But rather than wait until the differences were resolved, they decided to unite to resolve them later. *

Meanwhile, a trans-Atlantic union was taking place between American Disciples and British Churches of Christ. In 1804 a Church of Christ was set up in Dungannon, Ireland, and in Auchtermuchty, Scotland, in 1807. By the 1830s there were over 50 of them. The Americans and the British came into fellowship with each other without a credal statement, without a consummation date, and without even a handshake! It simply happened. *

This union had a profound effect on Churches of Christ in Australia. Migrants from Churches of Christ in Britain "set up the Lord's Table" in tents, homes and community halls. And American evangelists came to assist in the growth and development of these young churches. *

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The Last Word

It is the perseverance of waves I admire. They have an inherent sense of resolution. They can caress the shore and shape soft sandbanks with their wash, or they can carve across the rock face of the cliffs with their curling might. Waves are aware of the power of persistence.

—Tony Moore

Who was the most upset at the return of the Prodigal Son? The fatted calf.

Noah would have made a great businessman. He managed to float a company when the whole world was in liquidation.

"So what do you think of Red China?"

"I think it looks lovely on a blue tablecloth."

"All the animals entered the ark in pairs."

"Except the worms."

"What do you mean?"

"They entered the ark in apples."

Is a chairperson the same thing as a layabout?



"It never fails, first we have an earthquake and then it snows."

From *Marriage Ain't for Wimps*
edited by Ron Lee
(Zondervan, 1995).