

Christian

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THE DRAMA OF REDEMPTION



Photo Ralph Petty



THE AUSTRALIAN

Christian

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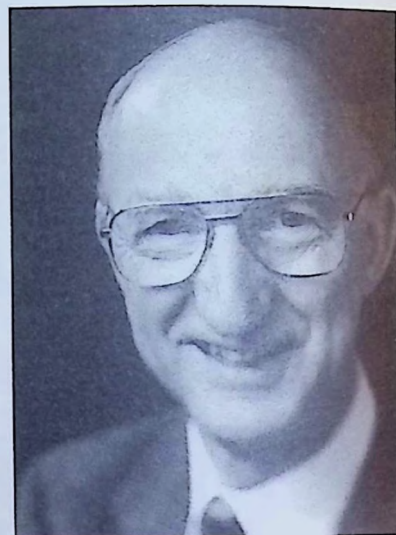


Editorial

Good Translations

DON SMITH

I recently had the need to refer to a copy of the King James authorised version of the Bible. I was astonished how unfamiliar and outdated the language seemed. What does one make of "evil concupiscence"? It sounded bad, but the meaning was obscure. Yet in my late adolescence, I recall reading this version with youthful persistence, possibly skipping the "hard bits". I also recall the enthusiasm with which the J.B. Phillips translation *Letters to Young Churches* was received. My worn copy tells me that this translation first appeared in 1947. At a later date, I read this translation of the New Testament letters



and felt that they had come alive. Several of the expressions still live with me daily. * Phillips in his translator's preface describes how that during the translation process he was struck by the vitality of the "Letters" and their living quality. He observes that he felt like an electrician re-wiring an ancient house without being able to "turn the mains off". * The whole purpose of the New testament is to confront us with the living reality of Jesus. We can be thankful for the numerous translations which have followed. Their number has certainly increased. And what different covers and how much more interesting they are when compared to older counterparts. New translations can evoke negative responses. Last year there was a US controversy which meant the International Bible Society cancelled plans to publish an American edition of the New International Version with inclusive language on the charge of "feminist seduction". This version is already on sale in the UK and Australia. How conservative we can so often be. The good translations survive and time judges them all. * The early church lived with an oral tradition. Here the Christian community mediated the facts. The late E.L. Williams in his book *Churches of Christ — An Interpretation* observed that it seems providential to us that the facts of revelation were preserved in writing and that from these the Church made a selection to give us our Scriptures. The Bible's ultimate authority comes from it's being a primary witness to the events of revelation, the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. It really needs no other. *

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R.C. Miller characterised the Bible as the “Drama of Redemption”. Our writers look at his five major themes.

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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.

Jabiluka Protest

To the Editor,
Last weekend I went to Kakadu, joining 300 people in protest against the establishment of the Jabiluka uranium mine. I went to the protest camp to find out what was happening at the blockade and to show my support for the anti-uranium mining protest.

The camp is extremely well run. However, it is not a luxury resort. As anyone who's camped at Kakadu knows, the heat, mosquitoes and dust make living conditions difficult. While there are bush showers and "Gus's laundry" gets constant use, the camping conditions and water limitations mean that inevitably people and clothes aren't pristine.

A lot of disparaging comments have been made about the protesters. They've been called "unwashed ferals" (by the NT's Deputy Chief Minister) and professional protesters "rent a crowd". These comments unfairly denigrate those whose commitment has taken them to Kakadu to express their concerns.

There were protesters whose clothing and hairstyles might seem bizarre by mainstream society's assessment, but I don't see how that means their convictions and opinions are less valid than anyone else's. I particularly get concerned when Christians point a disapproving finger—surely a reading of James 2 warns us not to be fooled or impressed by outward appearances.

There were also protesters who, by their appearance, could be part of our most conservative congregations. Opposition to uranium mining at Kakadu crosses the boundaries of age, race and social class. Unfortunately, Christians, however, seem a bit thin on the ground. I looked in vain for Christian representation among the banners I saw of various groups.

A number of the protesters face a conviction and, due to the Territory's draconian property laws, a prison sentence for relatively minor infringements. They may lose their jobs or find themselves debarred from employment. Whatever one's opinion as to the extent that civil disobedience should be taken, there is no doubt that the protesters are prepared to suffer for their beliefs, the consequences of which will remain with them for the rest of their lives. Back in Darwin I washed the Kakadu dust off in a hot shower, before preparing to sleep in my soft bed. As I did so, I wondered whether I would have the courage, like those "unwashed ferals" to risk my comfortable existence and security to demonstrate for my convictions. —Bev Maxwell (Malak, NT)

One Nation

To the Editor,
The announcement of Bill Feldmann's as the new member for the Queensland state electorate of Caboolture, and his appointment as parliamentary leader of the One Nation Party ("AC" 8.7.98), concludes with an invitation to pray. In light of the nature of the party he represents, prayer is certainly more appropriate than congratulations.

Could I suggest that we use Jesus' prayer as recorded in Luke 23:34 and pray on behalf of all One Nation representatives and supporters, "Father, forgive them, for

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Letters to the Editor

they do not know what they are doing".

—Orrell Battersby
(Nambour, Qld)

One Nation

To the Editor,

Since our national journal of Churches of Christ has endorsed the mis-named "One Nation" party ("AC" 8.7.98) it might be permissible for me to wonder how the Queensland member for Caboolture (and leader of the parliamentary party) is able to equate his political policies with his claim as a follower of Jesus Christ.

One wonders what his thoughts will be as he comes to the Lord's Table. Is he able to see a wall of separation between his secular life and his sacred responsibilities? He asks for our prayers. He deserves them not for the continuation of his parliamentary duties with all its "perks", but for his conversion. It is, however, good to note that the journal's attitude to political and social comment has apparently softened.

—Max Collyer
(Boronia, Vic)

[News reports in this paper carry no implicit endorsement of their content. —Ed]

One Nation

To the Editor,

I was so disappointed at your news that the Queensland parliamentary leader of the One Nation Party is a member of a Church of Christ ("AC" 8.7.98).

We weep with people who are suffering as a direct result of the mere articulation of some of that party's policies, people who have suffered so much already.

I want to follow Jesus in sharing and giving, not grabbing and fighting.

It is deeply ironic that the news was published in an issue devoted to taking the love of Christ into

the world. God is bringing the world to us, as well.

Let us seize the opportunities to share God's love, and not make people feel unwanted and despised.

We will certainly pray for Bill Feldmann, as we are praying for our nation.

—Peter Dixon
(Marrickville, NSW)

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Update

Dear Readers,

This issue has a focus on the Bible. The "Drama of Redemption" theme and the five supporting articles arose from a concept by R.C. Miller in his book *Biblical Theology and Christian Education*, originally published in 1956. We welcome some new writers. Our sub-editor Nigel Pegram opens the theme with his article on "Creation". At the Editor's suggestion, Nigel has also contributed an article on biblical archaeology. (The photo used along with that article comes courtesy of the Australian Institute of Archaeology. The photographer is Francis Reiss.) Some readers will already be aware that Nigel has recently completed his doctoral thesis in an Old Testament field and currently awaits the outcome of a considerable period of study. From the "Creation" theme we move through the Bible to the "Consummation" theme by our regular contributor Wayne Betts, who is also doing advanced Old Testament studies in Perth. I'm sure readers will appreciate the contribution of all our writers and especially the emerging scholarship of Wayne and Nigel.

Since the introduction of our web site on the Internet, we have been pleased to note an increasing number of "hits" or visits to the site. The address is <<http://www.ozemail.com.au/~aceditor>> Readers are also invited to join the discussion list—go to <<http://www.xcel.net.au/christian/index.htm>> All this may be new to many of us, but it is an important development as technology continues to advance.

We have a continuing number of requests for multiple copies of the paper for wider distribution and use in areas such as local study groups. We are in the midst of promotional activity in all states, which will help to build our subscriber base. This is essential for the future of the paper. We are pleased to assist in this way. Don't hesitate to be in contact if you would like sample copies. The next issue will follow a three week interval, which follows the normal pattern of having three such intervals through the year.

Sam Smith



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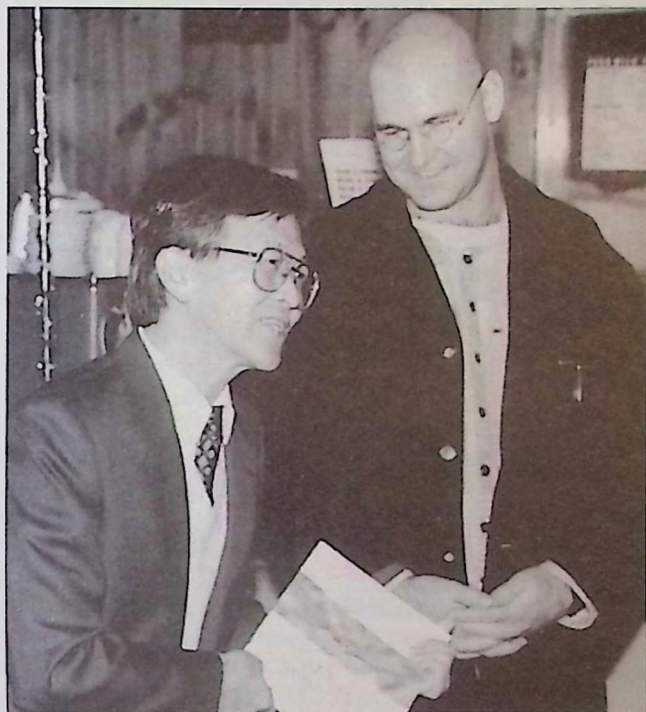
Friends and supporters of the United Neighbourhood of Hope (UNOH) mission at Springvale, Vic, gathered on 24 May at "Judy's Coffee Shop" to launch the new Vital publication *Making Connections*, written by Ashley Barker. It was standing-room-only as guests drank caffelatte or cappuccino and ate carrot or chocolate mud cake.

The author was interviewed by Stan McCredden, Vital Publications representative, with Chek Chia, Vic-Tas Conference President, formally launching the book. Guests then visited the

UNOH office for an open day, viewing of the food bank, counseling centre and training rooms.

The study, which is aimed at people who have no prior knowledge of the Gospel and who may have a low literacy level, is available from our church bookshops or Vital Publications, PO Box 101, Essendon North Vic 3041. Telephone (03) 9379 1219.

Chek Chia, Vic-Tas Conference President with "Making Connections" author Ashley Barker.



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100th Birthday

Elsie Maiden celebrates 100 years

Elsie Maiden celebrated her 100th birthday with a special party on 4 June, at Carinya Lodge, Mt Lawley, WA. The event was organised by her two children, Helen and Peter, assisted by Carinya management and staff. A twenty-page booklet, "Some Memories From Family and Friends", had been put together for the occasion, with a copy for each guest. Some 120 people were present.

Selected details from the "Memories" included: infancy in a tent home in East Perth; at 14 beginning work in Mannings' Drapery Store, Narrogin, two hours weekdays and all day Saturday for 2s 6d a week; singing before the Duke of York in Narrogin Town

Hall; in 1933 Elsie Dobbie was soloist for tent mission with Fred Buckingham of Northam, conducted at Bunbury where T.D. ("Dick") Maiden was minister; Elsie and Dick married in Northam church in 1934; Ministries at Bunbury, Bridgetown, Victoria Park, Narembeen, Harvey, Geraldton, Northam, Scarborough and, after retirement, Manning part-time.

The guest of honour, though somewhat confused by the sea of faces, appreciated the Queen's

message, the ten lit candles on the cake representing one for each decade, the face-to-face greetings of her so many friends and the particular presence of sister, Beatrice, 10 years her junior, her grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Her youngest sister, Dorothy, sent greetings from California, USA.

—K.J. Patterson



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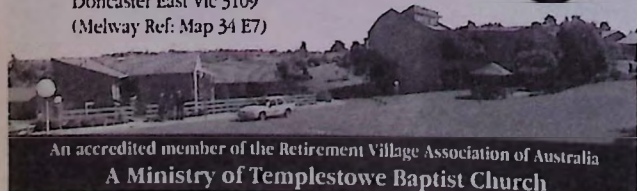
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Kalgoorlie Church of Christ, WA Centenary Celebrations

7-9 August 1998

Guest Preacher: Pastor Glen Rogers

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Sunday, 9 August	am Thanksgiving Service pm Celebration Service (Combined Churches)

All inquiries, please contact church office on (08) 9021 2296,
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Conference President Soars

**Church challenged to remove limits on
what God can do**

Chek Chia, Vic-Tas Conference President, has chosen the theme "Soaring to God's Frontier" to challenge individuals, churches and the Conference during 1998-1999. Previously an accountant, Chek has been in ministry for nearly twenty years. His first ministry was with the Clayton Church of Christ, Vic, and his first church plant was the Grace Church. Chek now ministers with the International Christian Community Church, which he commenced in 1994. He is married to Julie, and they have two children, Wesley and Ruth.

He has a strong commitment to church planting and to developing



Chek Chia, Vic-Tas Conference President

Here and There Volunteers

Geoff and Marie Harrison of York St, Ballarat, Vic, church will spend June and July assisting with a building project at Gandep Bible College, PNG. Sally Bray of Belconnen, ACT, travelled to Vanuatu in June to spend 5-6 months helping at Ranwadi High School. These projects are under the auspices of the Overseas Mission Board.

Celebrate Messiah

Over 350 attended the annual "Messiah in the Passover" banquet sponsored by Celebrate Messiah, Melbourne. Lawrence Hirsch, Director, reports that this was the largest ever attendance. In addition to Jewish believers, at least 15 other Jews had been invited by friends and experienced a Messianic Passover Seder for the first time. A Russian Passover Banquet had an additional 40 Jewish people in attendance.

Asian churches. He is the chairman of the Asian Ministry Council, which is part of the Mission and Revitalisation Division of the Vic-Tas Conference overseeing the mission and ministry of eight Asian churches. Chek fulfils a unique role as the first Asian minister to be Conference President. It is a recognition of his influential leadership and the importance of the church reflecting our multicultural society.

Based on Isaiah 40:27-31, Chek's theme emerged during a prayer summit in Singapore. It is a call to the church not to place limits on what God can do. Prayer is essential, as is dependence on the Holy Spirit, in a world of self-centredness and a culture that prevents people from soaring. He states that Australia is facing a spiritual crisis with many churches in decline. This situation needs to be met by prayer and fasting. He hopes to activate churches to be in mission, engaging people with the good news of Jesus Christ.

FEBC News

FEBC adds ministry development officer in WA



Nigel Merrick, FEBC development officer

Nigel Merrick has been appointed by the Far East Broadcasting Company (FEBC) as Ministry Development Officer for WA. He commenced his new appointment on 1 July. Nigel will also work as

minister-at-large, being available to churches in other states to learn from his experience in promoting missions in churches he has pastored. Visits to field locations is another part of the role. Nigel is completing a ten-year ministry at the Scarborough Church of Christ. Throughout his ministries over a 25-year period in Queensland, Subiaco and Scarborough, Nigel has sought to build the interest and practical support of his congregations towards missions.

David Atkinson, chairman of the Council, noted that Nigel's interest in FEBC went back to the 1970s when he was in Queens-

land. On moving to WA in 1980, he became a member of the original local FEBC committee in Perth. Though church commitments required that he had to relinquish that role, his interest has

never waned. He has made several visits to overseas FEBC locations—most recently to the Philippines where his ministry to national staff and the missionaries was warmly received.

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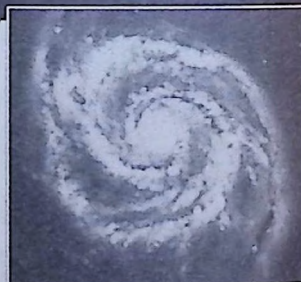
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Funding Care Ministries

Queensland Community Care supports church-based care ministries

Queensland's Department of Community Care recently wrote to each Queensland church offering to support local congregations in their caring ministries in their own locality. Churches were invited to submit proposals for assistance and \$40,000 was set aside. A number of churches will

receive grants totalling \$26,186 from the first round of funding allocations.

Hervey Bay church will conduct a ministry to young people affected by substance abuse. Many of whom are trying to cope with difficult family situations.

Pine Rivers church will use their grant to conduct seminars for people in need in their area. They plan a three-year program: Year One: Budgeting and money management and parenting to teenagers. Year Two: Building good marriages, dealing with domestic vio-

lence. Year Three: Parenting in those early years and finding support in times of stress. Following the seminars, the Pine Rivers church plans to build support groups so that people can continue to be encouraged and assisted.

Churches in the Toowoomba region will set up a funding pool for pastoral care needs. The fund will be managed by Ross Savill, a social worker with the Hume Street Church. The participating churches are Toowoomba, Toowoomba North, Withcott, Garden City and Kingsthorpe.

Westside church will receive financial help to develop their caring ministries in the Western suburbs. The church is already a visible and proactive member of the Centenary community. Their grants will assist two projects. They will provide parent education and support seminars which will run for some weeks, for 1-2 hours per week. Issues will in-



Neil Watt Qld Care worker

clude styles of parenting, child development, communication, discipline, self-esteem, toddler problems, sexual development, health issues and play. People will be encouraged to attend the whole course, or specific topics of interest to them. The second initiative is the establishment of a Resource for Living Facility where people will be able to sit and chat, and peruse useful written materials and videos. The facility will be central to many of the services already offered by the church.

Neil Watt, Director of Operation Newstart, Care's welfare program, reports: "I've been encouraged by some of the applications received in relation to the Care Grant. It's heartening to see our churches targeting the needs in their communities and developing strategies to meet those needs." Dr Don Stewart, Executive Director of Care, adds his comments: "I am delighted that our grant process is now up and running. It's important for us as a church to be relevant in our communities. In this late part of the 20th Century, there is so much change and confusion that people are hurting. We need to find out through research just what they need and how we can help."

Here and There

US Division Over Homosexuals
Division over homosexual-related issues within the United Methodist Church in the US was recently described as so deep as to "harbour the danger of explicit disunity or schism" according to a document prepared by a commission of the church. Within the denomination are those described as "incompatibilist", who are convinced that their points of view are in such conflict that it is unfaithful, impractical or inadvisable to continue in the denomination. "Compatibilists" are those who believe that the diverse views can remain together within the denomination.

(Christian Century)

Shoot the Messenger

Shoot the Messenger web site <<http://www.shootthemessenger.com.au>> is receiving many hits and, on average, two new "subscribers" each day. Subscribers leave their e-mail address with the site so they can be notified straight away of the latest updates. Over 200 are already on the list. In the first nine months of the site's operation there were over 80,000 "hits", putting it among some of the most visited sites on the web. This is a pioneering evangelism initiative by Australian Churches of Christ exploring issues of modern culture and Christianity through an "on-line electronic magazine".

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The Bible

Creation

NIGEL PEGRAM

Why start the Bible with an account of creation? To our western, scientific mind it might seem the best place to start—you know, at the beginning. Yet, for the ancient Hebrews, I doubt that this was the reason. For them, the Scriptures explained who they were as a people and who the God that they worshipped was. They started with these creation accounts because they defined in very clear terms who their God was and who they were as human beings.

It is no accident that the stories of Genesis chapters 1–11 are written so that they are very similar to other ancient near eastern (ANE) creation and flood

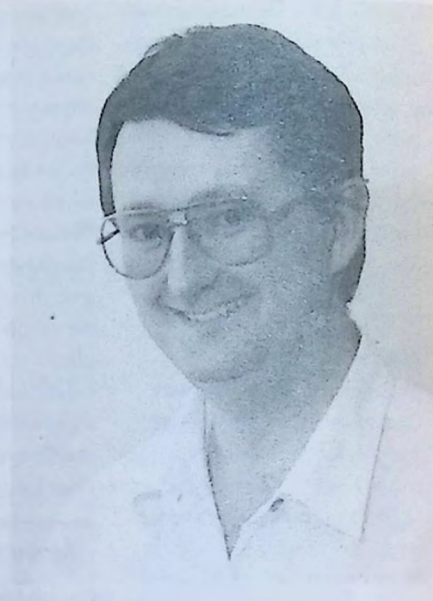
stories. They are familiar, simple, dignified and majestic, and much more difficult for them. It is even important that Genesis chapter one does not even dignify the stars, moon or sun with names, simply calling them “lights” which God made—lights which obey his command. This was because many other religions of the day worshipped the sun, moon and stars. Everything which existed is noted as being created and ordered by God. Right at the start of things, God is being declared by his people to be far greater than all the other gods who people around them were worshipping.

Second, a huge difference is seen in the position given to human beings. In other ANE creation stories, humans were created to be the slaves of the gods. One account even has their job description to be the digging of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Furthermore, when it comes to the flood, the reason for it is usually that the gods find the people too much trouble. One specific reason is that they are making too much noise to allow the gods to sleep. Genesis, however, puts humanity at the pinnacle of God’s creation. I’ve heard many a sermon on people being made in God’s image, but the best explanation I have come across is that we are to be God’s presence, his representatives, in his world. This is seen as similar to a king’s statue (his image) representing the king’s rule in a nation or city over which he had sway—a common practice in the ANE. This vice-regal image sits well with God’s command in Genesis chapter two for us to “keep” or “take care of” his creation and with the comment in chapter one that we are to rule over the earth. Far from being slaves, humanity is given a position of honour second only to God, with responsibilities to match.

God is being declared by his people to be far greater than all the other gods

stories. Whenever we want to get a point across, we always use terms and ways of speaking that will communicate most effectively with our audience. (I’m sure we’ve all listened to sermons, read books or seen TV programs which were a little less than “effective” in communication.) So, to make sure that people got the point being made, the Genesis accounts take the forms of their day and subtly alter them so that their own points are made in ways their contemporaries understand. So, what do the Genesis accounts tell us?

First, that the Hebrew’s God created the universe easily, simply by his own command. In contrast, other ANE stories had the gods battling chaos (often at length) and using each other’s carcasses for the raw materials of creation. By comparison, it was much less digni-



Once these introductions are done, we move to answer one of the most significant questions ever asked. “Why is there pain and suffering in this world?” The gods of the other nations were often capricious and whimsical. Many of them simply remind me of spoiled children.

In contrast we are told that God created everything and that it was “very good”. It is because of the event of human sin that pain and suffering are part of the world we experience. And this is the reason for the ongoing story of the drama of redemption.

I find this exciting stuff. The ancient Hebrews took the faith stories of their day and turned them on their head so that they could declare to themselves **and to their neighbours** who the true God is and what our role is in creation. It reminds me of Paul’s use of the statue of the “unknown god” in Athens. Both are marvellous examples of evangelistic communication.

Nigel Pegram is an “AC” staff member and Churches of Christ minister who has done post-graduate study in Old Testament.

The Bible Covenant

JAN CHRISTENSEN

There wasn't much drama when I signed a covenant with the developers of my housing estate, agreeing that I could buy there as long as I abided by certain conditions. For example, I could not put up a television antenna and I had to keep the place looking up to standard. It all sounded reasonable to me and I wanted the privilege of living in the area, so I signed up. I notice that there are lots of antennas up on the roofs of other houses whose owners signed the agreement just like me. So far I haven't heard of anybody being dispossessed or asked to leave because of their antenna! Maybe it's not a very binding agreement. Maybe it doesn't matter very much.

There was quite a bit of drama when God made a covenant with the people of Israel.

There was quite a bit of drama when God made a covenant with the people of Israel.

There was thunder and lightning, a thick cloud over Mount Sinai, and a loud trumpet blast. There was smoke, fire and an earthquake. It would have been hard to miss that something important was happening!

The people agreed that they would be God's treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation for God, and that they would obey the conditions that God set down. But in spite of the impressive beginning, the people were no more willing or able to keep God's conditions than the people in my housing estate. Israel started to believe that the special privileges of the covenant

were theirs to keep no matter what they did.

They started to think that the conditions didn't matter very much.

Over and over God sent his prophets to call the people back to himself, to remind them of the covenant conditions they had agreed to, but they went on their self-willed way.

Unlike the developers of my housing estate who apparently are not greatly worried by their residents' infringements of the rules, God did care about what his people were doing. He was angry with them, but yet he loved them deeply. When we read through the books that form the literature of the old covenant (i.e. the Old Testament) both of these strands are evident. The punishment he allowed his people to suffer through the hands of marauding nations shows the depth of his anger at their rejection and disobedience. His constant rescue of them when they were in trouble shows his loving concern for them.

And even while God was still taking his people to task for their rejection of the old covenant, we see that he was promising a new one:

"The time is coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers because they broke my covenant though I was a husband to them," declares the Lord.

(Jer 31:31-32 NIV.)

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What an invitation and promise from one who knew very well the failings and fallibility of those to whom he made his offer!

After a long wait, after struggles and trials for his people, God the Father sent his son to live among human be-



ings. Nothing, to my mind, ever has, or ever will, equal the drama of that loving act. The Son of God, born in a stable, cared for by a human mother while he was a helpless infant, mixing with the riffraff of society and finally allowing himself to be put to death on a cross. With that sacrifice, Christ ushered in the new covenant, a marvelously different covenant based not on law but on grace. A covenant that no longer sets standards impossible to be reached, but depends only on the forgiveness of God, and not on the right doing of humanity. A covenant, then, that is superior in every way to the old one because "it is founded on better promises" (Heb 8:6). This covenant is so generous on God's part that people find it hard to understand. All we have to do is put our faith in Jesus Christ and he remains faithful in spite of our sins and shortcomings. We might put up our illegal antennas but he still loves us!

Jan Christensen is a lecturer at Kenmore Christian College, Qld.

The Bible

Christ

ALLAN BLYTH

I loved the movie *Shawshank Redemption*. A bank teller falsely convicted of murder clings to his hope for freedom outside Shawshank, a maximum security prison. Inside a deep friendship is forged with a seasoned "lifer". Ultimately the lifer is rehabilitated. Finally, both escape and enjoy freedom. Planning, persistent chipping away, belief in possibilities beyond the prison walls, friendship, brutal opposition and escape: A moving, action packed drama!

Christ quickly rises to fame. In this relatively short appearance he claims to be one with God.

Similar is God's redemption of us.

Imagine ... the longest-running show of all time—the show *Redemption*—a drama of five acts on at the Drama Theatre of the Cosmos. Producer/Director: God; Cast: us.

Act 1 "Creation" Casting the scene.

Act 2 "Covenant" God sticks by the cast despite poor performance. **Act 3 "Christ"** Enter the hero. **Act 4 "Church"** Christ's ongoing impact on the cast. **Act 5 "Consummation"** It all comes together.

Christ is the centre of the drama. A 60s song has a line, "He's everything to me!" Another song says, "Nothing I desire compares".

Christ is vitally present, albeit behind the scenes at times, from the beginning to end. No other "actor" on or off stage compares! The immanence of his entry creates suspense throughout Act 1 and 2. In Act 3, Christ quickly rises to fame.

In this relatively short appearance he claims to be one with God—the visible appearance of the invisible God—the creator of the cosmos, all that is, ever has been and ever will be, seen and unseen. The all-powerful pure and sacred one who loves and forgives, yet demands respect and fair and decent behaviour from all.

Everything about the life of Christ during his appearing only seems to confirm that he was/is the God-one. His knowledge and stature—without compare. His power over people, to confront, change, heal and inspire. He even instructed the weather! His attitude was revolutionary—compassion, dignity toward rejects, respect and value to all. Finally he was martyred for his reform agenda. But in a stunning climax to Act 3, he rises from the dead, commissions his followers to maintain the work and returns to "the Father".

In Act 4 Christ is the motivation and spiritual power house. Anticipation of Act 5 is all suspense, wondering just what the fanfare of his return to centre stage will be like. Jesus Christ, the one who is eternally present, terrestrially incarnate, the promised Son of God, the One who is one-with-God, the giver of real life, the way to truth and freedom. Christ does make everything make sense from Act 1 to Act 5. Without him as the foundation, explanation and ultimate hope of our lives we are all imprisoned in the bleak stone walls of our own mind and imagination. An imprisonment where self reigns. Here the script of *Redemption* is corrupted. Act 1, "Creation" is re-scripted "Evolution". Act 2 becomes "A crutch"; Act 3, "A great person"; Act 4, "Remnant from a Previous Less-Enlightened Era" or maybe "Welfare Agency"; and Act 5 "Reincarnation" or "Curtains"?



There are two kinds of prisoner requiring redemption.

The first thinks, "I don't need to worry about God ... Maybe there's a God up there somewhere ... who knows. But I'm OK ... I live a good life." This denies that Jesus Christ is the agent of creation. It also denies the fact that you have a true friend, permanently committed to you, who is constantly doing all kinds of loving things for you and aches for you to reciprocate.

The second kind goes along with the crowd. They care little about others, may even abuse, and disregard principles of integrity. This attitude rejects the truth that we are made to be like a good God, loved by Jesus to be like him in beauty, wisdom, purity & holiness. It reduces Christ's death on the cross to mere history, when in fact it is the centrepiece in *Redemption*, a personal act of selfless passion to be treasured. As we believe in Christ, and decide to invite him to reign over our minds, our everything, we can be free, facing the future, no matter what that future may be, with confidence and peace.

Redemption—Don't miss it!

Allan Blyth is the minister of the Chatswood, NSW, church. His favourite recreations are swimming and body surfing.

The Bible

The Church

JUDITH KUNKEL

You are there, the theatre lights dim, the curtain goes up and there before you is a dimly lit room where thirteen men are lounging around a table, sparsely spread, only some bread, the remainder of some meat and a jug of wine. The "man in the centre" begins to speak. He tells them he is going away and they are upset. He calms them by telling them he is going to prepare a place for them to come and join him. They relax a little, he then talks about the bread and the wine and what they have just shared together and says that when they get together they should share the bread

His death is different from the other two. Those who knew him begin to understand; the man in the centre has died for a purpose.

and the wine to remember him. When he had shared the wine with one of the twelve, he looked at him and said, "Go and do what you must do," and that man left.

They finish their discussion, leave the room and walk to a garden where the man in the centre asks eight of the men to wait. He goes on into the garden with the three who are left and asks them to pray as he goes on a little further and prays alone. Time passes, and when he goes back the three are asleep. "Couldn't you pray with me for a little while?" And just as he is about to wake them there is a noise behind them. Towards them come what sounds like sol-

diers and a crowd of angry people. They come, ask for him, arrest him and take him away. The eleven men scatter. The scene changes.

Several trials occur where the man in the centre is falsely accused, beaten, mocked, convicted and condemned to die by crucifixion. He is led through the streets with the crowds jeering and shouting, some watch in horror; some weep, but all focus on the man in the centre.

The sentence is carried out and again all focus on the man in the centre. His death is different from the other two. Those who knew him begin to understand; the man in the centre has died for a purpose.

Three days later the purpose is revealed. The man in the centre is not in the tomb. The man in the centre meets with his followers on various occasions; again he tells them he is going away but would come again, at a time that no one knows. He gives them his charge: "God authorised and commanded me to commission you. Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the

Again the scene changes, a new day dawns! His promises came true.

threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age." (Matt 28:19-20; *The Message*) And then he is gone!

Again the scene changes, a new day dawns! His promises came true. Those



who believed knew he was with them—to the end of the age. What age? I believe he meant the church "age". Nearly 2,000 years have passed, even today we as the followers of his way of life, the church, the Body of Christ, are charged to be involved in the same way, going out to our generation, marking them the same way.

We, the church are to be involved in going out and training everyone we meet, far and near.

The charge is being kept around the world. Some of the largest churches in the world are in Asia, Africa and Latin America. As people of the world are confronted by the man in the centre and he becomes the centre of their lives, our world begins to change as they "live in this way of life" and share in working toward the end of the age. There is coming a time never before experienced, when all his followers go to the place prepared for us, evermore to be with the man in the centre. We, the church, must continue to focus on the man in the centre.

Judith Kunkel is the minister of the Warwick Church of Christ, Qld.

The Bible

Consummation

WAYNE BETTS

Part of the attraction of mystery novels is the desire on the part of the reader to know how everything is going to finish up. Whodunnit? And how? Some people even read the last page first, because they can't bear the suspense!

Whatever your preference in the area of fiction, in the realm of human existence and ultimate reality, similar desires are at work. Will justice prevail? Will there be an end to suffering? Is it all going to be OK?

The Scriptures answer all such questions with a resounding "Yes!", in the person of Jesus! But the New Testa-

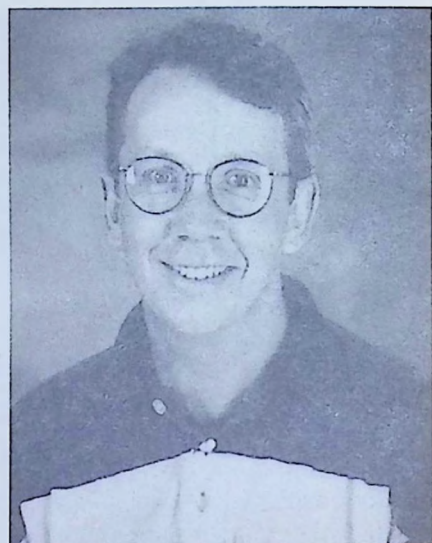
at the end of the canon, points to "last things". And so Revelation taps into our desire to have those loose ends of human existence tied up. How does the story finish up?

Sadly, the varied interpretations of a hope shared by all Christians, have added to the means by which we judge one another. How you interpret Revelation is often used as a benchmark for orthodoxy! The longer I study Revelation, the less concerned I am with the details of the End, and the more convinced I am of the reality of God's final summing up of history. So what is the big picture behind Revelation? Where can we find agreement, even if we differ over the details of interpretation?

Revelation affirms that human history is the forum in which God works out his purposes. Life is not a series of unending cycles—there is a sense of destiny and purpose for humanity. God is involved in our experiences. We are heading somewhere. As God's people, our responsibility is to be faithful as God's plans are brought to fruition.

Evil is real and also manifests itself in human history—both on an individual and corporate level. Part of God's agenda in the wrapping up of history will be to bring justice to an unjust world. The martyrs in Revelation are the focus of God's special care—those who have suffered for their faith are singled out for attention, honour and comfort. The purpose of the millennium, for instance, is the vindication of the martyrs. (Read Rev 20:4 carefully.)

But perhaps the most triumphant theme of Revelation (shared by the rest of the NT) is that the last word in human history belongs to God alone. When it comes to the final showdown, there is no contest. It is not a neck-and-



neck struggle—the victory has already been won on the cross. This is not a "second go" at redemption. The lamb who was slain is the one who wraps things up. Evil is real and powerful, to be sure, but no match for the rider on the white horse. Those following him are not dressed for battle—they're ready for a wedding celebration (19:14)!

Fittingly, the closing chapters of the Christian Scriptures pick up some of the Bible's opening themes—garden images and the presence of God himself among his people. And though the picture of the new Jerusalem is somewhat more city-oriented than the image of Eden in Genesis 1–3, the idea of paradise is still uppermost.

What does such a hope do for us? Perspective, perspective, perspective. Yes, there are still battles to be fought, but it makes all the difference when you know you're on the winning side. We know how the story is going to turn out! We've already read the last page!

Wayne Betts is a Churches of Christ minister working with the WA Ministry Training Centre. He is a member of the Whitford church.

Yes, there are still battles to be fought, but it makes all the difference when you know you're on the winning side.

ment writers are well aware of the tension between God's decisive victory in Jesus, and the continuing reality of sin and death in human experience. So, like us, they long for the day when the loose ends of life will be finally tied up. Paul talks about the anticipation of creation (Rom 8:19) and of the future perfect revelation (1 Cor 13:12). John knows that the consummate revelation of Jesus will cause us to become like him (1 John 3:2). Even the heroes of the Hebrews 11 Hall of Fame are qualified for entry because of their diligent trust in a "better country" not yet revealed.

But the obvious focus for any consideration of the Consummation of God's purposes is the book of Revelation. That work, by its nature and its place

Pharoah's Heart and the Plagues

NIGEL PEGRAM

When I first read the account of Pharoah's conflict with Moses, I can remember thinking that Pharoah had been rather hard done by. Sure he was pictured as the "baddie" in the story, but it seemed like he had little choice in the matter. It seemed that again and again "God hardened Pharoah's heart". If this was the case, then it wasn't simply just that he wouldn't let the people go, he couldn't because God wouldn't let him. (I don't want to get into

tioned, half have Pharoah hardening his own heart and the other half have God hardening Pharoah's heart.)

In March this year, I heard a lecture by an archaeologist, Dr John Currid, (sponsored by the Australian Institute of Archaeology) where this issue was addressed in the light of some archaeological evidence. As I will describe below, he argues that the problem outlined above is simply caused by a misunderstanding of Egyptian beliefs concerning the afterlife and the terminology used.

For the Egyptians, the heart was the essence of the person, sort of a combination of what we speak of as a person's heart and mind. It was the most important part of them, their inner spiritual core. In the Egyptian understanding of the afterlife, in the hall of judgement, the heart is weighed on the balances of truth against the feather of truth and righteousness. The question was, is their heart heavy with the "weight" of misdeeds? Why is this relevant, you might ask? Well, to say that Pharoah's heart became "hard" is one possible translation. However, three words are used interchangeably in Exodus, and one of those may equally be translated as "be heavy". So, if this translation option is chosen, then to say that Pharoah's heart became heavy or that God made it heavy is the same as saying that he was unrighteous or that God was judging him to be unrighteous.

In light of Egyptian beliefs concerning their Pharoah, this was quite a statement, because they believed that Pharoah was sinless. Not only that, but they believed he was a god and as the heart was the seat of his mind or will, that his heart was the

controlling power or controlling factor in the events of history. Therefore, to say his heart was heavy was to attack the very centre of their beliefs. Not only does this tie in nicely with the plagues being an attack or polemic against Egyptian beliefs (see below), but this understanding also removes the theological problem with which we started.

In a second lecture, Dr Currid argued that the plagues need to be examined in the light of Egyptian mythology—they are a polemic against Egyptian beliefs. Exodus 12:12 indicates clearly that conflict is not just with the people, but their deities. The attributes seen in Pharoah and the other gods are either attributed to God himself, or God defeats the Egyptian gods "on their own turf".

For example, it is said that Pharoah has a strong hand or arm. In Exodus, these qualities are applied to God as he destroys Pharoah. Similarly, the Westcar papyrus has one of the Pharoah's priests lifting one half of a lake on the other half so that a lost ring may be found. Exodus has Moses separating the Red Sea and drowning the pursuing Egyptians when they seek to cross. Also, the role of the Pharoah was to maintain harmony and order in the universe. Yet, we see in the plagues that Pharoah is powerless to maintain order before God, he is the true God of order.

The rising of the Nile was deified by the Egyptians as the god Hapi, a god of fertility. Turning the

Nile to blood, he argued, was an attack on the god Hapi, who would have been unable to bring fertility and life to Egypt if the Nile's water was blood. Although frogs were also regarded as a symbol of fertility, the goddess Hekhet was to guard Egypt from too many frogs by protecting the crocodile population who ate the frogs. During the plague of frogs, therefore, it would be assumed that Hekhet was unable to stop God from producing frogs, that is, God was more powerful than Hekhet. Bull or cow cults flourished in the ancient world, with bulls often seen as a symbol of fertility (we even find the Israelites worshipping the golden calf a little later in Exodus). Thus, the fifth plague, where all the livestock die, declares them as impostors. They are not the source of life and fertility, only Israel's God is.

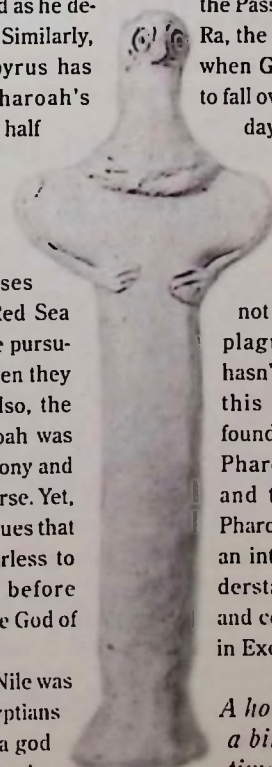
Just before things culminate in the Passover, the chief deity, Ra, the sun god, is attacked when God causes darkness to fall over the land for three days. Ra is powerless to bring light in the face of God's might.

While Dr Currid admitted that he did not have links for all the plagues (he certainly hasn't stopped exploring this theme though), I found the idea of making Pharoah's heart heavy and the humiliation of Pharoah and Egypt's gods an interesting way of understanding the plagues and conflict with Pharoah in Exodus.

A household god with a bird head from the time of Abraham.

We see in the plagues that Pharoah is powerless to maintain order before God

the argument concerning free will here, but suffice it to say that if God was the one causing Pharoah's heart to become hard so that he wouldn't release the people, it seems a little unfair that this same God was at the same time telling him to let them go. See Exod 4:21. Of the fourteen times where the hardening of Pharoah's heart is men-



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PITT Keith and Frances Pitt, together with Belinda, Matthew and Mitchell, Raeleen, Graeme and Alyssa Cross, Alison and Rohan Carr, Rebecca and Ian Mason sincerely thank all their friends in Churches of Christ who have supported and encouraged them with messages of comfort in the tragic death of their son, husband, father, brother & uncle—Adrian. The prayers, letters, floral tributes, phone calls and visits have meant so much to them. God gave him to us for such a short time. In that short time he gave us all so much.

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Coffee Break Parenting Puzzles

CAROL PRESTON



It's said, "Scratch most parents and they bleed guilt". Why? Probably because most kids are not perfect, nor perfectly happy, which reminds us that we didn't do a perfect job. We can all look back on things we wish we hadn't said or done. Parenting is a huge job, one for which we have little training. And it keeps changing. Each new child is a new chal-

Children are not like passionfruit.

lenge. And how do you know when you've succeeded anyway?

It would be great if growing children was like growing passionfruit; cultivating the soil, planting in the right environment, watering, feeding, trimming and shaping, and ending up with a finished product we could enjoy and be proud of. But we cannot control the outcomes of our parenting nearly as much as we'd like to. Children are not like passionfruit. Each is unique, most often different from what we expected or even imagined. They need to be loved and guided into adulthood, into the unique person God made each of them to be. I believe our greatest challenge as parents is to guide children responsibly while giving them enough room to experiment, to struggle with their growing up, to learn from the consequences of their choices, so they discover who they were made to be.

What might helps us do this is to change the way we judge our success as parents. If our feelings of success come from see-

ing our children fulfil our expectations and hopes for them, we put pressure on them to perform, rather than allow them to grow. The father of the prodigal son wasn't presented as a failure, even though his son left home prematurely, partied, and lost everything. He was presented as the wise and loving parent, who allowed his child to take initiative and learn from it, even though it was costly for both of them. This is how God is with us. He does not do for us what we need to do for ourselves. He allows us to grow, sometimes painfully, into all that he longs to see in us. We can't hold our kids accountable for making us feel like successful parents.

We need to judge the success of our parenting by the quality of our love for our children, the role model we set for them and the appropriateness of our actions and reactions to them. We need to allow experience, time and God to continue the work we began. We need to trust and wait to see what fruit our parenting bears as their lives unfold. If we can do this, I suspect both we and our children can enjoy the growing-up years more, and end up liking each other and ourselves more as well!

Thinking Allowed

VINEY LONGTHORP

Earlier this year the death occurred of Mr B.A. Santamaria. The high esteem in which he was held by many Australians may be seen in the fact that the government accorded him a state funeral. Bob Santamaria was rightly regarded as one of our leading intellectuals who for more than sixty years addressed the main social, political, and economic issues of our time. Of course, many disagreed with him. But all held that his views could not be ignored.

Of course, many disagreed with him. But all held that his views could not be ignored.

His regular column in the *Weekend Australian* was widely read and during the past ten years especially, became something of a rallying point for those who opposed the policies and the social impact of all that is called economic rationalism. Also, Santamaria consistently argued for public and private morality. He always upheld the importance of government caring for the poor and the needy. He was a committed Christian—a loyal member of the Catholic Church.

In the April issue of *The Melbourne Anglican*, part of an interview he gave with Father James Murray was published. This interview took place not long before his final illness. The following brief excerpts help us appreciate something of the mind of this remarkable man. Murray writes when he put to Bob Santamaria that he had shown a "tenacity of purpose about the Catholic Faith", he wished to have the phrase reworded. "I have a certain tenacity of purpose about an entire view of life, of which the Catholic Faith is part. But there is more than that. My view of the centrality of the family, the sanctity of individual life from the moment of conception to that of death, my view of the necessity for the widespread ownership of productive property if the family is to flourish, my view of the indispensability of limiting the power of the state—all of these things are important in my life."

What surprises some is Santamaria's refusal to offer religious panaceas. "My nature is somewhat sceptical." He is a prophet in the original biblical sense, when he insists that, "(I am not) by nature a religious person. I find the difficulties of religious belief very great. For instance, I don't think its conceivable that the universe could exist without a creator. But that tells you nothing about his nature.

It certainly offers no solution to the problem of human suffering, especially of undeserved human suffering. The Book of Job doesn't solve the problem for me. Job himself doesn't give you any explanation. He simply says, 'Take it: because in God's plan it will be best in the end.' But that is simply a declaration, not a solution."

He points out that these are not merely intellectual conjectures for him.

"They are very real problems of faith. (And these) if you think about them seriously have to be solved. I am not saying that thinking about them improves the quality of faith ... but if you are trained to think about problems, I don't see how you can exclude thinking about the most important.

"The only thing that makes sense of suffering is that it was also part of the life and experience of Christ, especially in the crucifixion. I think what (Christ) was trying to tell us was: 'This is the way life is, and you are meant to triumph over the suffering.'"

These days he admits that, at times, his "sense of identification" as a Catholic is somewhat weakened when some voices in the Church employ language which toadies to the mood of the moment. "If the Catholic Church in the nineties wants the whole-hearted support of its believing community, its got to be true to itself, its doctrines, its history and its social teaching. It will gain nothing by espousing trendy causes."

Santamaria has espoused some unpopular causes, has been vilified politically, and at the time of the Labor Party split, faced personal threats. "I have always tried to keep passion against opposition out of my mind, for



two reasons. The enemy is, in general, in good faith. You yourself must act in good faith. And therefore, if we don't see things in the same way, we must hold fast to what we each believe, without holding it against each other."

But such sincerity is no proof against criticism. It never has been. So it is only fair to conclude by making reference to the publication *Zadok Perspectives* (No. 60 Autumn 1998), wherein Alan Patience of the Victoria University of Technology, examines some of Santamaria's political and social philosophies and finds them wanting. The core argument of this paper appears to be: "Catholicism reveals at once its greatest strength and its most terrible weakness in the face of modernity. On the one hand it has steadfastly refused to surrender to materialism and capitalist ideologies; on the other it has failed dismally to forge an effective alternative." However, with respect to this good academic, one feels that the profound love that Santamaria has for people, together with his capacity for faith, has, in the long run, more to offer humanity. These are the more likely to forge working solutions to our manifold problems, than will the more limited visions of our sundry "econocrats".

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BAPTISMS

•Brenda Tree, Sam Hill, Wayne Hill, Bathurst, NSW •Steven Pearson, Jenny Crawford, Anna Furness, Hume St, Toowoomba, Qld •Pam Whitfield, Chelsea, Vic •Lorraine Price, Julian Price, Veronica Haynes, Naracoorte, SA •Coral Warner, Tumby Bay, SA •Anne Lay, Frankston, Vic

MARRIAGES

•Leanne Higglett and Carl Kruk, Hume St, Toowoomba, Qld •Sue Telfer and Robert Lawrie, Tumby Bay, SA •Rachelle Timmerly and Jason Potter, Frankston, Vic

DEATHS

•Jean Brens, North Essendon, Vic •Robert Porter, Edna Boland, Hume St, Toowoomba, Qld •George Ferguson, Chelsea, Vic •Lil Sheppard, Ballarat Central, Vic •Harold Auld Muntadgin,

Merridin, WA •Roy Reimers, Ormond, Vic •Win Hine, Frankston, Vic

OBITUARIES

Obituaries are limited to 100 words
BOLAND, Edna May

(16.6.98) Edna May Mackie was born 7.4.21 in Inverell, NSW, a daughter to Hugh and Lucy, members of Inverell Church of Christ. She was baptised as a teenager. Edna married Bill Boland at Inverell church in 1944 and later had three children—Pamela, Jennifer and Geoffrey. Edna and Bill moved to Toowoomba, Qld, in 1981, joining the Crown Street (Rangeville) Church of Christ, and more recently the Hume Street church. Over the years, Edna had taught Sunday School, sang in choirs, served others, played the organ, washed and ironed the communion cloth and much more. With her husband by her side, Edna slipped away peacefully to the presence of her Saviour. —Dale White

TAS

LAUNCESTON (C. Spaulding, W. Kerrison, T. Gray, S. Fitzallen) In spite of three-hour power blackout 21 June, evening service a bright affair! ... "Beyond the Bookcase" by Wycliffe translators had big attendance 28 June ... John Poxon left with a party of 32 to help building of primary school at foothills of Himalayas in western China ... 15 young people attending Hillsong Conference ... Barry & Ann Cutchie (Promise Keepers) spoke at services 5 July.

QLD

TOOWOOMBA, HUME ST (D. White, R. Savill) Sunday Night Coffee Shop event attracted many non-church people ... Preparations under way for 3rd annual Seniors Christian Convention to be held 16–18 September ... 80 involved in Prayer & Praise night 17 June ... Guscott family attended National Prayer Gathering & March for Jesus in Canberra ... Christianity Explained Courses led by Bob & Denise Hogarth have seen a number of people commit their lives to Christ.

NSW

BATHURST (Glenn Cumbers) JR & B Gospel Band 11 May ... Brenda Tree, Wayne & Sam Hill baptised & welcomed into membership ... Damien & Suzanne Parks renewed wedding vows during worship ... Church conducted first Annual Red Nose Day remembrance service held in Bathurst. Well attended ... Unity among churches increasing ... Brian Willersdorf to teach "Christ Empowered Living" course 17–26 July ... Attendances increasing ... MOPS program reaching new mothers.

WA

MERRIDIN (Ray Hockley) 40th anniversary celebrated. Reminiscence Saturday evening, first minister's wife Mrs

Fitch, Tom Morrison, Don Sonsee & Ray Hockley. Alma West told of wonderful ministry of late Doug Good 1972–1985. Letter from David Jolly read, on Sunday wheat belt churches attended. Past ministers participated. Tom Morrison, Conference President, speaker. Don Tonkin concluding speaker... Congratulations to Gloria & Joe Banks, 40th wedding anniversary coincided with church opening.

VIC

MONTROSE (Harvey Clark) Prayer evening held after dessert & coffee ... \$2,000 given as a sacrificial offering at Easter ... 23 attended State Youth Games ... Special service of farewell held as Chris & Trudi Brand leave to work with MAF on Elcho Island ... Garage sale & art show raised \$1,600, providing contact with community ... Tennis team won for second time beating top team!

NORTH ESSENDON (Mike Esbensen) Merryl Blair guest speaker 26 April ... Church saddened by death of Jean Brens on 27 April after short illness ... Dedication service for four great-grandchildren of Fred Walters 14 June ... Board members & spouses had informal restaurant meeting 17 June ... Thelma Rowles hospitalised ... Stuart Peterson guest speaker 28 June in relation to our opportunity shops.

CHELSEA (Martin Goldup) Well attended combined churches service in park Good Friday ... Luncheon for CWF President's visit ... Successful fundraising & CWF street stall ... Thanks Blackburn work party for repairs & painting church annexe ... Weekly Bible study & KYB ... Several newcomers in congregation ... Enjoyable Fishing Fellowship outings and home meetings ... Regular combined evening service with Parkdale.

SURREY HILLS (Jonathan Moore, Julie Adam) New format for morning service used twice this year. First, groups either discuss the Scripture reading or share personally. Second, congregational worship & communion.

Short-Term Staff, Coolamatong

A camp of Scripture Union (Vic).

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Wednesday

1.15–1.45 p.m.

Lunchtime Service

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Church News

Aim is communication between members before worshipping as one, effective education, active participation by children in worship & greater sense of community ... People's Pulpit speakers Ray Brough & Diane Johns ... 80% attendance at family camp at Marysville. **ESSENDON (Ken Stothard)** Cool Yule Dinner 26 June realised \$700. Proceeds to help indigenous person to attend World Convention in Brisbane. Essendon, North Essendon & Strathmore participated ... Alice Buttress & Alf Musgrove, 90 years, both died recently ... Don Ferguson now home after time in hospital.

BALLARAT CENTRAL (Jack White) 21 young people attended State Youth Games, won a number of individual & doubles trophies & perpetual shield for 12 months ... Rob & Lyn Hamilton "Swordworks" took morning service 14 June ... Tim Clark, State Youth Director for SA who grew up in church, guest speaker 28 June ... Church saddened by death of Lil Sheppard, aged 92 years. **SWAN HILL (Alan Fletcher)** 12 hour prayer vigil held during June ... Church family dinner at "Carriages" restaurant on 9 July ... Jeff Weston (COCOA) guest speaker at services 12 July ... Following morning service, church luncheon held in hall to farewell Alan & Margaret Fletcher at the conclusion of their much-appreciated interim ministry.

ORMOND (All Thistlethwaite, Cathy English) 74 people celebrated 73rd anniversary & enjoyed a challenging message from Conference President Chek Chia, followed by a luncheon ... 2 Alpha groups have commenced ... Monthly hymn services continue ... Large attendances enjoy fellowship at fortnightly drop-in ... Preparations under way to celebrate Christmas in July with a 3-course dinner & entertainment. **FRANKSTON (Tom Ede, Jason Potter)** Young people in youth events at Red Hill & State Youth Games ... Phillip Plumridge, Lucy Milner recovered from surgery ... Fred Combridge retired from voluntary hospital chaplaincy ... Hey Hey It's Sunday youth collected for Red

Shield ... Good Companions & Hey Hey children combined for worship night. Cathy Bradley speaker ... Cheryl Stevenson moved to WA ... Linda St Guillaume appointed cradle roll coordinator ... Richard Vidaic welcomed into membership.

SA

NARACORTE (Steve Killo) 11 members welcomed during Membership

Sunday ... 20 involved in marriage enrichment experience with Grant & Helen Spangenberg ... Lorraine & Julian Price & Veronica Haynes baptised ... We hosted South East Conference. Barry Francis President ... Ruth Perkins from Niger visited, also Morrie Tabi & Keith Wilson from Vanuatu ... Monthly dinner well attended ... 17 studying Bethel Series ... Youth groups functioning well ... Friendship Centre numbers increasing.

TUMBY BAY Jolly family moved interstate ... John & Shirley Saunders welcomed from Noarlunga ... EP Conference Red Cliff camp site. Hugh Holmes speaker ... EP Women's Conference Tumby Bay. Ruth Perkins, SIM speaker ... Men's Camp, Red Cliff, Ron Bassett study leader ... Visiting speakers S. Rogers, R. Bassett, Jim Moore ... Morrie Tabi, Secretary Vanuatu Conference & Keith Wilson, Treasurer visited ... Congratulations to Roy Lawrie aged 97.

COCOA brings HOPE



To the isolated people of Orissa State in INDIA, COCOA brings HOPE via medical treatment.

Dr Iris Paul and her assistants travel for many days to reach these people. She brings much-needed medical treatment and supplies. Without our support many of these people would die.

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Protests

GORDON STIRLING

Protests are not new. We had them in Churches of Christ way back.

These days, if some one walks out during a service it is usually done inconspicuously and for one of a number of reasons.

One of the major forms of protest in earlier days was to walk out as conspicuously as possible to show public disagreement with something said or done in the service.

In a New Zealand church in 1940 a Sunday morning reader decided to read from the Moffatt Translation.

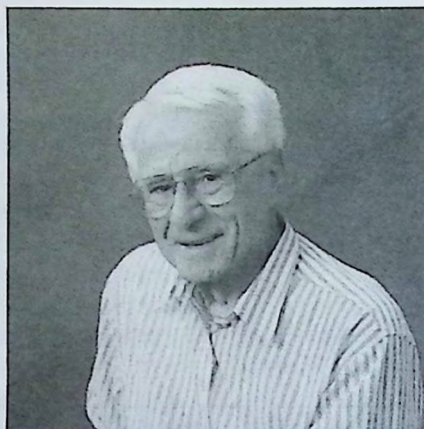
He had hardly started when a brother rose in his seat saying, "I protest against the reading of that lying book," and walked out.

Round about 1920 an elderly gentleman with an impressive beard used to attend a Western Australian church, entering impressively, taking his seat in the front of the building and dramatically putting his hat under the pew.

If during the sermon the preacher said something that the elderly gentleman disagreed with, he would dramatically reach for his hat, rise up, slam it on his head and walk out slowly and deliberately.

There was no more said about it. The matter was closed. He was back in his seat the next Sunday ready to go again if necessary.

The late G.T. Fitzgerald, one of our great pulpit orators, had occasion to cut some verses from a hymn.



After the service an angry elder confronted him.

He said, "Don't you ever take it upon yourself to remove a verse from a hymn again. If you do I shall get up and walk out of the service."

A week or two later, in the interests of time G.T. cut down another hymn.

As good as his word the elder protested.

I never heard any sequel to this omission-protest series of events, but knowing G.T. he would not tire of it first.

In one church an indignant brother said to the minister, "If the church goes ahead with this project, I will walk out, and my wife will walk out, and my son will walk out."

The church went ahead with the project but the protest didn't take place because the wife and the son were in favour of it.

At least the protesters took their convictions seriously!

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The Last Word

The best way to predict the future is to invent it.

—Alan Kay

What did Daddy Hedgehog say to his son as he was about to spank him? "This is going to hurt me far more than it will you."

Who drives all his customers away? A taxi driver.

It's a matter of give and take, but so far I haven't been able to find anybody who'll take what I have to give.

Why Don't They Invent:

- A camera that only takes good pictures of people.
- A fork that bends if you put too much food on it—for people who are on diets.
- Reusable bubble gum that never has to be thrown away.
- A television set that automatically shuts itself off and on before and after commercials.
- Gift-wrapped empty boxes—to give as presents to people who say, "I don't need anything."
- A bed with a built-in catapult that shoots you out of bed if you don't get up when the alarm goes off.

Terry: Aren't you coming out to play?

Jerry: No, I have to stay in and help my father with my homework.

The 90s Woman (4)

