

Thomas Cranmer's clear vision

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Four hundred and fifty years ago this year, Thomas Cranmer, the 67-year-old Archbishop of Canterbury, was taken through the north gate of the city of Oxford, tied to a pile of wood and burnt to death. It was one of those moments of horror for which that violent period is well known.

For the two hours prior to this, he had been forced to endure a mock trial in the church of St Mary the Virgin. The sentence had already been determined, after all the wood had been gathered and the time of execution had been announced throughout the city. The crowds were already building in anticipation. The trial itself was

merely meant to be a piece of theatre. It would be used to show the congregation that even the old Archbishop recognised that his ideas had been heretical and in his last moments he was willing to renounce them all.

Yet the stage-managed trial had not quite gone as planned. It was true that in a moment of weakness Cranmer had signed a document recanting everything he had taught and written and had agreed to read the speech that had been given to him. But at the critical moment, when he was to tell the world that he and his friends had departed from the truth, the old Archbishop changed the words:

And now I come to the great thing that troubleth my conscience more than any other thing that ever I said or did in my life, and that is the setting abroad of writings contrary to the truth: which here now I renounce and refuse as things written with my hand contrary to the truth which I thought in my heart, and written for fear of death and to save my life if it might be; and that is, all such bills which I have written or signed with mine own hand since my degradation: wherein I have written many things untrue. And forasmuch as my hand offended in writing contrary to my heart, therefore my hand shall first be punished; for if I may come to the fire, it shall be first burned. And as for the Pope, I refuse **Continued page 6**

Diversity and electing archbishops

In the Diocese of Melbourne “diversity”—in churchmanship, belief, and opinion—is something of a buzz word; it’s celebrated. The rhetoric of diversity promises unity and mutual understanding—that if we say “diversity is a wonderful thing” enough times, it will generate a unity of sorts; we’ll start to believe that diversity is a wonderful thing, and perhaps overlook points of difference—like the word “multiculturalism” in wider society. Take the recent Archbishop’s Election Synod in Melbourne. A panel of nominators were given the charge of providing Synod with



Jason is keen to see lives changed by the gospel of Christ in Melbourne's south-east.

candidates for election—consisting of a spectrum from evangelicals right through to liberal Catholics. Numerous times the panel was congratulated for operating with a spirit of concord. And the hope was Synod would likewise **Continued page 3**

The Australian CHURCH RECORD

April, 2006 Issue 1889

“Read [Scripture] humbly, with a meek a lowly heart, to the intent you may glorify God, and not yourself, with the knowledge of it.”

Thomas Cranmer, Homily on Scripture

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The Gospel is for living

John C Chapman



John Chapman told people about Jesus for many years as the Sydney Diocesan evangelist, and continues to do so now in his retirement.

How often have I hear the exhortation “Don’t come to the dinner if you don’t have someone to invite”.

I am sure this is done with the best of intentions. It is to underline the importance of the fact that people need to hear the gospel and that the dinner is primarily meant for unbelievers. But it sends an unfortunate secondary message: ‘the gospel is for unbelievers and not for Christians’. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Look at the way the importance of the gospel is told to us in 1 Corinthians 15:1-2

¹Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ²By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

That gospel of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins is at the heart of that gospel. Notice what God says to us through the Apostle:

1. We received it and have taken our stand on it

We repented of any idea we may have had that we could get right with God by any other means. We believed that the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus had caused the wrath of God to be averted from us. The fear of the judgment day had been for all times removed. What a joy it was: Sins forgiven! Right with God! A place in heaven!

2. By this gospel you are being saved

Not only did it do the above but it sustains us in the Christian life. Their salvation was progressive in as much as they were being saved from the power of sin in the day to day situation.

This was wonderfully illustrated for me from a letter which I received from friends who had just had their first child, a baby boy.

He was born with a heart problem. Some of the valves in his heart were not closed as they should be, and the doctor was worried that it would result in worse things in future. Of course, you could have imagined our anxieties and wild imagination causing us great distress. After much discussion with my wife and much wrestling, one of the few things we clung on tightly to was the fact that God himself has lost a Son, so He knows what that is about. And it was great assurance to know that God, who is in control of all things, also knows the great anxieties we were feeling. Romans 8:28, was also a great reminder of how God does not operate on a narrow cause-and-effect chain, but rather has larger purposes for things happening.

The gospel saved them from despair in the light of this terrible tragedy. It not only did its work in the past but it continues to do its work in the present and will in the future unless we have believed in vain. Cling onto it! Try not to forget it! It will do you a power of good.

It is so good it must not be kept to us. It must be shared with the world. ●

Animal families

Alison Blake

He British author and naturalist Gerald Durrell wrote of his family and love of all things furry under the title “My Family and other Animals”. Is that how you feel about some of your relatives?

When family and relatives come up in conversation, what emotions swirl around your mind? Pain, embarrassment, anxiety, disappointment, frustration, anger?

In so many conversations, Bible studies and prayer times recently I’ve been startled by the pain people are experiencing in their families—the frustration of seeing an unsaved sister, faithfully prayed for over years, seemingly impervious to the gospel. The daughter whose mother relates to her with lies and manipulation, and drags the rest of the family into the

web of deceit. The son whose father struggles to accept his choices in life, and so refuses contact with him and his family. The parents who watch their child reject all their faithful, prayerful modelling and turn to a life of crime and self abuse.

Our sinful nature is the root cause.

Sadly we need to expect our families to be characterised by fraught and fragile relationships. The ripple effect of Adam and Eve’s rejection of God is seen and experienced when families struggle to love and care for each other—starting with Cain and Abel, moving on to Joseph



Alison serves Christ in Sydney’s south-west.

and his brothers, King David’s family, moving on to our families and beyond to our grandchildren. Scripture asserts our sinful nature is the root cause, rather than culture, education, parenting or economics.

So how do we respond to the pain of our biological family? It’s appropriate for us to be distressed by it, not minimizing the pain, or excusing what is sinful. Where

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Editorial

Dispensing with old archepiscopal elections

Since Melbourne is in the midst of the latest Australian archepiscopal election, our thoughts could turn to future elections elsewhere. Conventional wisdom is a strange thing. It often continues because it is conventional, long beyond the time it has ceased to have the remnants of wisdom.

Take the tried and true axiom (but of relatively recent days), that a man with too many years until retirement should not be elected as archbishop. The fear is obvious: if he is a failure, we want his oversight to be short. So make him old, and we can outlive his malfunction.

Now, that is a bit of thorough gospel-centred, mission-minded argument!

Instead of allowing a person's age to be the protective strategy, synods should bring in other ways of dealing with failure and protecting the future. Define what an archbishop should believe; define how their accountability to synod is to be a

reality; define the kind of commitments and practices that are acceptable, and those that are not; and come to some agreement between the elected and the electing about any circumstances that would, should they arise, initiate the Chief Servant's resignation. With the right kind of restraints to check breakdown, we may dare to look for a good man with an adequate amount of energy and years to give for the advancement of the gospel. But it is up to synod to decide on the restraints and how to implement them, for it is within synod's trust that an archbishop works.

But a practical first step is needed. Each of the assistant bishops to the current archbishop should be asked for and give assurances that they will *not* stand in the next archepiscopal election! If they have something to offer from their years of service, they can give it by way of support and advice for the incoming archbishop. They can remain assistants.

For to draw upon the pool of existing bishops is just that: to draw from an established and limited pool. That has often been the traditional way election synods have acted, but it is short-term thinking. Mission mindedness needs clear permission to think widely and radically and so avoid falling into comfortable old habits.

Dare to look for a good man with an adequate amount of energy and years.

As the assistant bishops take themselves out of the running, and as the Synod articulates a clear vision of expectations and restraints beyond just counting birthday candles it can begin to look to a different generation. It is that generation to whom the future properly belongs. ●

Diversity and electing archbishops [CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1]

follow suit, in speeches about the candidates, and in voting, so that the elected Archbishop would have an overwhelming majority and a clear mandate to lead the Diocese. However, when it came to voting, it was not the unity of a diverse Diocese that came through, but the divisions in a diverse Diocese. Rather predictably, clergy and laity voted in their "camps"—the evangelicals and some conservative anglo-catholics voted for Bishop John Harrower, and the anglo-catholics and liberals voted for either of the other two anglo-catholic candidates at various points. Bishop John Harrower was by far the outstanding candidate, with his track record of creating a mission-focused and prayer-dependent Diocese in Tasmania.

However, when the opportunity arose to elect him as Archbishop, the vote fell well short of the two-thirds majority needed in both houses of clergy and laity—no doubt because he bore the tag 'evangelical.'

Diversity had failed us. There were some obvious fundamentals that the anglo-catholic and liberal camp weren't willing to surrender—fundamentals of churchmanship, the place of social action, the relationship of Christianity to other religions, and the nature of the pastoral response to the gay community in and outside the church, in which they differed from evangelicals.

It was a rather stark reminder that God himself creates unity in his church by his Spirit through the gospel of Christ

(cf., Ephesians 2:11-3:13; 4:1-13), but where the fundamental understanding of the gospel of Christ and the fundamentals flowing from that gospel are different, there will be no unity. It is not simply a matter of differing *ideologies* between evangelical (and some conservative anglo-catholics) and liberal/anglo-catholic, but a matter of differing *theologies*.

It is highly probably, however, that the next election Synod in a few months time will be driven less by fundamentals, and more by pragmatism—the desire to avoid a third election Synod. Either way, Australian Christians need to pray that a man after God's own heart will be elected to serve the Melbourne Diocese in this important role. ●

The Australian Church Record

The Australian Church Record is an evangelical newspaper in the Reformed Anglican tradition of the historic creeds and the 39 Articles of Faith, and the standard of teaching and practice in the Book of Common Prayer. We accept the Scriptures as God's word written, and as containing all things necessary for salvation and the final authority in all matters of faith and behaviour.

Publisher: Robert C. Doyle, Chairperson, Australian Church Record ACN 000 071 438

Executive Editor: Peter G. Bolt
All enquiries: PO Box 218, Camperdown NSW 1450

Donations towards the publication of the ACR can be sent to the Treasurer, at the above address.

From 2004 The Australian Church Record is only published in electronic form which can be subscribed to through our website, www.australianchurchrecord.net

Readers can also subscribe on behalf of other people, who will be able to unsubscribe later should they wish to do so.

The Australian Church Record is designed and typeset by Lankshear Design Pty Ltd. Telephone: 02 9868 7044

A journey through the waters of baptism

Barry Newman



Barry Newman thinks watery thoughts— or does he?

I was baptised in an Anglican church when three months old, though my parents would have said I was christened. I recognised the grace of God through the Lord Jesus Christ when eight years of age. At 14 years, upon being confirmed, I began to attend my local Anglican church. In my middle teenage years I also attended a Baptist church on Sunday evenings. In my late teens and early twenties I occasionally attended Brethren Assemblies as well. In my late twenties while living overseas I attended a Church of Christ. Thereafter whenever I lived overseas I attended Baptist churches—the evangelical lights in their localities. Since I can remember, however, I have always been an Anglican.

Was my baptism valid however? I know that some of the churches I attended thought otherwise, though they were happy to have me participate in the Lord's Supper and even to preach. At one stage I seriously considered having someone baptise me as an adult to solve the problems of others, that were not mine.

Certainly baptism seemed to be important. Had not our Lord commanded the making of disciples, baptising them in the name of the triune God (Matthew 28:19)? Recently I suddenly recognised the obvious, mentioned in a paper by Knox only published in 2003¹. There is no evidence in the New Testament that anyone was ever baptised in the three names. They were baptised in the name of Jesus, Jesus Christ or the Lord Jesus. Robinson in a paper published in 1975², appeals to some evidence suggesting that that part of the text may not be original. Perhaps baptism wasn't as important as many seemed to think. I am indebted to



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Perhaps baptism wasn't as important as many seemed to think.

both Robinson and Knox for stimulating my thinking in this area. Surely the most important question is: what does the New Testament itself have to say?

In the New Testament there are approximately 75 references to the verb *baptizw* and 20 and three to the nouns *baptisma* and *baptismos* respectively. At least two thirds (66) of all such references fairly clearly relate to literal water baptism conducted either by John the Baptist, the disciples or other early christians. John obtains the lion's share. On a number of occasions, John's baptism is designated as a baptism of repentance, the designation also applying to the baptism offered by Peter in Acts 2:38. Arguably, all such baptisms were baptisms of repentance in association with the forgiveness of sins. But what of the one third (32)?

There are four if not five instances, in four passages, relating to ceremonial

washings (Mark 7:4; Luke 11:38; Heb 6:2 and 9:10). In Acts 18: 25 there is one reference to Apollos and in Acts 19:3 there are two references to 12 Ephesians, each group being familiar with John's baptism. While the two passages may well refer to literal water baptism, the context suggests that the teaching surrounding John's baptism is more to the fore. The text in 1 Cor 10:2, with its reference to the baptism unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, seems semi-metaphorical in character. Knox believes that the Matthew 28:19 passage is metaphorical and relates to being taught about the triune God rather than any ceremonial instruction. 14 References to baptism are clearly metaphorical—six relate to baptism with the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5 and 11:16) and eight refer to the sufferings of Jesus and his disciples, albeit in only two separate passages (Mark 10: 38, 39; Luke 12:50)³. For Robinson and Knox these passages are important for our understanding of some baptismal passages in the epistles. Not an unreasonable proposal, given the attention given to the death of Christ and the work of the

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Holy Spirit in the New Testament.

The eight remaining occurrences are found in the epistles in six different passages. The construction and context of 1 Peter 3:21 with its appeal to the Flood suggests that the baptism referred to is metaphorical in nature being a reference to the suffering of God's people. Knox and Robinson argue the same. Baptism, if it is a reference to the water rite in the text "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" of Ephesians 4:5, seems to be unduly elevated, being placed alongside "Lord" and "faith", with the wider context referring to "one body", "one Spirit", "one hope" and "one God and Father". However, as a metaphor referring to either the baptism of the Spirit or the baptism of the death of Jesus or both, its position alongside the other realities is not unexpected. Knox and Robinson argue for its metaphorical character. The texts, Rom 6:3, 4—"as many of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death" and "we were buried with him by baptism into his death", 1 Cor 12:13—"by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body", Gal 3:27—"For as many of you who were baptised into Christ have put on Christ" and Col 2:12 "having been buried with him in baptism in whom you were

also raised" may be understood by many to have the water rite as their fundamental reference point. However, while there may be overtones of such, perhaps the funda-

absolutely essential water rite has seemed to me to be contrary to the tenor of the grace of the gospel. Such an insistence appears to me to stand in stark contrast to

Perhaps the fundamental connotation is the death of Jesus.

mental connotation is the death of Jesus—his baptism so poignantly referred to in Matthew and Luke.

If the metaphorical character of baptism in the relevant passages is recognised, the question of the importance of such baptism has to be answered in the most superlative of affirmatives. Water baptism pales by comparison. The fact that between Acts 10:48 and 16:15, a section which covers Paul's first missionary journey and the famed Jerusalem council, there is no reference to post-ascension baptism is not insignificant. Paul, in his denial of being sent by God to baptise in 1 Corinthians 1:17, and in declaring his minimal association with baptisms in Corinth is arguing that the rite is of limited importance. For many years the idea that baptism was an

the reality of the gift of eternal life purchased through the shed blood of Christ and essentially an appeal to fleshly rules.

The rite of water baptism, even if it reflects the New Testament baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, no matter how important, valuable and cherished it might be, is relegated to a poor second place, alongside of the suffering baptism of Jesus and the baptismal work of the Spirit. ●

NOTES

1. Knox, D.B., "New Testament baptism", in D. Broughton Knox Selected Works, Volume II Church and Ministry, ed. Birkett, K., Matthias Media: Kingsford, 2003, 263-309
2. Robinson, D.W.B., "Towards a definition of baptism", *The Reformed Theological Review*, 34.1 (1975), 1-15.
3. Both Robinson and Knox refer to a metaphorical baptism in the Greek Septuagint, quoting Isaiah 21:4 and Knox cites a number of examples of metaphorical baptism in various Greek writings of antiquity.

Questions about baptism

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Hunt in packs

Colette Read



his was Mark Ashton's advice years ago when visiting our university campus. He was talking about student evangelism. "It seems to me" he argued "that in Australia you do your evangelism individually and your discipleship in groups—bible study groups. At Cambridge we do things the other way around. We evangelise as groups, targeting an indi-

vidual, and conduct our discipleship one on one".

His advice made sense. Why is it that we do the scary things alone? Surely it would be easier to have several people at different times sharing parts of the gospel with a mutual friend.

Why is it that we do the scary things alone?

Every time I recall Mark Ashton's words I picture Chihuahuas. When I think of my elderly neighbour's pet I see a small, frightened little dog. In the wild however, Chihuahuas are said to hunt in packs of fifty or even one hundred. Imagine hearing from afar a pack of one

hundred yapping dogs coming your way. Now I don't want to draw the analogy between yapping dogs and evangelism too far. The point is that alone the Chihuahua is a timid, nervous wreck. In a pack it is a force to be reckoned with.

Lately I have wondered whether the hunt in packs principle applies to contexts



other than university.

So I tried this strategy within my local preschool community. I tracked down some like-minded Christians at the school. We gathered together to pray for our non-Christian friends and to talk about what we could do or what events we could run to help these friends find out about Christ. Then we spread out amongst the

community and made the most of any opportunities to socialise.

The result was very encouraging. Where one person shared a truth about Jesus, another could reinforce it at some later stage. Where, one person was discouraged, another could bolster their spirits and when one of us stuffed it up, another could smooth it over. Evangelism

was no longer a scary looming Mt Everest but exciting and do-able.

No doubt there are plenty of lone wolves out there, bold evangelists who are able to explain the gospel and its implications in one sitting. But for the evangelist who is more of the Chihuahua variety I say "Gather your pack and happy hunting". ●

Thomas Cranmer's clear vision [CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6]

him as Christ's enemy and anti-Christ, with all his false doctrine. And as for the Sacrament ...

It is said that the church erupted in pan-demonium at this point. What he said next could hardly be heard. The authorities had certainly already decided that he must die but there was certainly no way back now. He had used the opportunity they had unwittingly given him to turn his back on the documents he had signed and declare that he was committed to the very truths they were trying so desperately to stamp out, even if it sealed his fate.

Why? Why was it so important to that old man to make that stand and die like that? Why did he, as eyewitnesses testified, hold his right hand into the flames until he passed out from the pain? Why hadn't he, years before, left the country, like so many of his friends had done, in order that they might live and fight another day? Because, as far as Thomas Cranmer was concerned, his testimony to Jesus was worth dying for. The truth of the gospel was worth dying for.

Cranmer's story doesn't make much sense. What did his death achieve? Why push the point that far? Sure he might have been convinced of the things he was saying, but were they really worth dying for? Is anything really worth dying for?

Our world prefers its religion to be luke-warm. It's safer that way. It's less intrusive, less demanding. And so stories like that of Cranmer need to be explained away; respectfully, with as great a show of objectivity as possible, but explained away nevertheless. His stand made sense four hundred and fifty years ago. It makes little sense today. In the narrow-minded world just coming out of the middle ages, everything seemed so certain. But we now know nothing is that certain. Religious zeal like that of Cranmer is just superstition in respectable dress. He and his contemporaries did not know it; but now, thanks to modern science and the great advances of technology, we can't be fooled anymore.

Blind and arrogant though that assessment is, it is even more concerning that many in our churches find a stand like



Why was it so important to that old man to make that stand and die like that?

People react in a variety of ways to the story of Thomas Cranmer. For some he is one of the great Reformation martyrs. His is the story of a hero—courageous, tenacious, and dripping with integrity—even if, under extreme pressure, there were those moments of weakness. They just make his final act of heroism all the more tangible, all the more human. But to others,

that of Cranmer's a little weird as well. They can't imagine ever pushing the envelope that far. They see the wisdom in a longer term strategy, compromising a little now for the sake of a hearing later on. They distance themselves, just a little, from those the press loves to paint as extremists. Their advice to the controversialists amongst us would be, 'tone it down

a little'. This not the time or the place to make a last ditch stand.

Yet because Cranmer did not 'tone it down a little', because he was prepared to die testifying that there is only one sacrifice that is effective in dealing with sin, only one priest who made it and only one altar upon which it was made, the light of the gospel was not extinguished in the English speaking world. Because he did not surrender to the pressure to cover up differences by the use of ambiguous language he left us a body of doctrine and a liturgy which sought to honour Christ rather than include 'a range of perspectives'. 450 years later the heirs of Cranmer thank God for him and pray for the courage to follow his example. ●

Questions about Cranmer
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Is commitment an option for generation Y students?

Chris Lindsay



Chris Lindsay thinks ministering the gospel to uni students in Brisbane is a commitment worth pursuing.

18-22 year old university students are part of the options generation or generation Y. What is needed for christian ministry to flourish on campus is a real engagement with the word of God and one another. This takes time; weeks and months, not just a few days. It takes the dreaded C word, commitment.

Michael Grose says, with divorce having boomed in generation Y's time, they are reluctant to commit to permanent relationships (*XYZ—The New Rules of Generational Warfare*, Random House 2005). They consider impermanence a normal state of affairs (p 96). He calls 18-26 age group twixters because they fall betwixt and between adolescence and adulthood (p 15). They want to keep

their options open and defer traditional rites of passage like careers, marriage and kids as long as possible.

It's not as though generation Y never commits to anything. What's different is the way they make commitments. They commit with a STABO proviso in mind. Subject To A Better Offer. 24/7 communication technology puts their friends, the next party or social event only a text message away. To plan your next face to face social encounter in the midst of a current one is not unusual. Peer friends are still very important and form a strong second family in an age where parents work, families are smaller and there is less contact with older adults. Friends can be there at the drop of a hat for support and understanding as long as there is no better offer at the time!

Generation Y are heavily marketed to for their disposable dollar (p 91). Surf shops, juice bars and music are huge businesses that have developed and evolved just for them. The i-Pod was invented to appeal specifically to them. Having the latest technology for these digital natives is more about the social status that it

brings rather than practical necessity.

However, keeping your options open is not always freedom. To fund mobile bills and spending habits, 55% of students hold down part-time jobs of 15 to 30 hours per week (p 15). Freedom comes at a cost. Classes get squeezed into 2-3 days a week (helped by night lectures) allowing zilch time for social interaction of any variety on campus. Relationships on campus don't suffer because they never get off the ground. Students are time-poor now even before they start full-time work.

Commitment to anything on campus is becoming counter-cultural. This year our student union paid christian groups to help run the orientation week BBQ. We could supply students prepared to help out on the day. I'm not advocating commitment for its own sake. But commitment flowing from love, from truth or from any ideal is in short supply at uni. Students don't need more options. They need to know commitment is not a dirty word. Commitment to something, someone, beyond oneself is not always imprisonment. More than that, they need to meet the one whose love to them is non-negotiable, no matter what. ●

The velvet voice of Elvis

Pete Hughes

Imagine *the* picture of Elvis—somewhere between the thin rebel rock star and the fatter Vegas version. It captured the great Elvis, the smooth Elvis, the velvet Elvis. Imagine if someone said this picture of Elvis is the *only* picture of Elvis and no other pictures were necessary. This is what Rob Bell says we are in danger of doing to Jesus in his book *Velvet Elvis* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2005). What we need to do, according to Bell, is keep repainting Jesus.

This book is the evangelistic introduction to the Emerging Church Movement, a movement, that seeks to engage post modern culture and move evangelicalism beyond its 'modernist' perspective.

On one hand Bell is right, we do need

to keep making sure the picture of Jesus is the picture that is true, not made up. We need to keep returning to the Bible to 'paint' Jesus and not be satisfied with any singular picture we have.

Keep returning to the Bible to 'paint' Jesus

While the book is accessible, easy to read, one might even call sexy (in the platonic sense of the word) it is difficult to know exactly what he is saying—a lot like the seductive voice of Elvis! This makes the book easy for people to say whatever they want it to say and cause a lot of



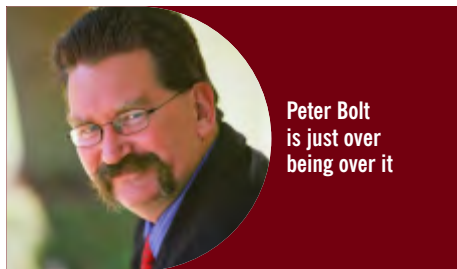
Pete Hughes is involved with AFES in the Sydney Region

confusion in the process.

Secondly, Bell, and the Emerging Church, have a preoccupation with community. It is more important to belong rather believe. Or as Bell puts it don't get caught on right doctrine, just jump on the Jesus trampoline for yourself pp34-35. Perhaps some (me!) have underplayed the role of community in our evangelistic presentations and we need to be reminded that when we believe we *do* belong. However, we need to make it clear, we need to believe to belong. ●

The Rhetoric of just being over it

Peter Bolt



A recent *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist attacked those who still believed homosexual behaviour was not God's ideal for human beings. The usual charge of being 'homophobic' was, of course, a major plank in the rhetoric, as well as the charge of 'discrimination [...] fuelled by hatred, contempt and fear, not logic.'

Not surprisingly, there was no mention of the Christian motivation of love, which seeks to commend God's ways as best for all, and to warn those who flaunt them that this will not do anybody any good.

But more remarkably, while the high-horse rhetoric of the article demands 'logic' from those who endorsed God's 'sex within a one-man, one-woman marriage relationship' position, it felt no obligation

at all to use that same logic to endorse homosexual behaviour. Strange to demand logic from your opponent, but to empty your own 'argument' of that commodity.

The rhetoric was quite simple.

1) Recent statistics show that 65% of Australians no longer see homosexual behaviour as immoral; which shows that, 2) Labelling of homosexual behaviour as 'sin' is odd. 'It's odd because for most of us—particularly those in younger generations—it's an old issue. We have moved on.'

This sounds like standard intellectual 'liberal' rhetoric. The old is always bad, the new is always good. But there is a twist: once we've moved on, we're just over it. It is no longer an issue. Those who think it is (still 35%, it seems!) are just 'odd'!

Now, quite frankly, where is the 'logic' in that? Logic deals with arguments, their validity, their cogency, their legitimacy, their strength or weakness. Only the most naive, would say that democracy *always* leads to the best way, in fact, the checks and balances and pendulum swings of democratic society shows that we simply do not believe this to be so. So truth is not determined by a statistical majority.

That is bean-counting, not logic.

And the 'we're just over it' argument is, quite simply, as childish as it comes. (What was the editor thinking, to let this slip through?) So 'the younger generations' get bored with an issue—but how can this weakness of theirs be counted against those who still seek to discuss the

Boredom is never a substitute for logic.

issue? Boredom may be a psychological problem of the present age. Boredom with ethical discussion is almost certainly inhumane. But boredom is never a substitute for logic, and, whatever it may be, it is most certainly not logic.

For logic, perhaps we need to once again turn to the one in whom are hidden all wisdom and knowledge. And I don't suppose the one who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, needs to read the *Herald* for the latest on immorality. ●

Animal families [CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2]

we have contributed to family fractures, we need to acknowledge and confess to God our part in family disharmony, to seek and accept forgiveness where it's required.

We need to keep maintaining relationships. In Matthew 5 Jesus urges us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us—acknowledging that our

heavenly Father needs to be part of the drama of our family lives! So first and foremost, even when all contact is lost, let's persevere in prayer that God in his sovereign mercy would restore our unsaved relatives' relationship with Him, as well as their relationship with us!

Let's pray that we might rise above the ways of the pagan world, and conduct all our relationships with righteousness, mercy, purity and peace, aiming for the perfection of our heavenly Father.

And let's not just pray *for* each other, but *with* each other. It is an enormous comfort to hear our spiritual siblings caring for us as they bring before our heavenly Father the burden of our earthly family life.

And finally, because of the perfect Son, we are loved, heard and cared for by a perfect heavenly Father, through the good, the bad and the ugly times of family life. This Father, rather than the human family (even when wonderful), needs to be our security and comfort. ●



TFOAD: Understand the Windsor threat intelligently

This collection of essays not only critiques Windsor, but moves beyond critique to offering an evangelical understanding of church, churches, and denominations, and a perspective on the current crisis that seeks to move outwards from the gospel of Christ. Although helpful in the current discussions, these essays therefore have abiding interest in assisting people to think about church life in the context of denominational issues. Printed copies are available for a mere \$10 from Matthias Media.

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Comments on this book? Comment on Windsor Report?
letters@australianchurchrecord.net

Women and the Word



Jane Tooher is engaged in women's ministry in the city of Sydney

How the doctrine of God helps us understand life

Jane Tooher

I was recently involved in interviewing some men and women on their theological understanding. The man I interviewed with put a fascinating question to each of the candidates: "If Allah was real, would he have created male and female?"

You might be thinking at this point in time that you were glad you weren't being interviewed, but how would you answer that question? What are the first things that come to your mind? Maybe you know little of Islam and their understanding of Allah, but what could you say? When we try to answer questions like this we sometimes make a big mistake. We often make the same mistake when we discuss ethical issues. The trouble is that we don't argue from first principles. We argue 'backwards', and by arguing backwards we actually make things harder for us, and the focus also ends up often being on us, rather than God.

We need to argue from first principles. From the doctrine of God.

The true and living God is three persons. His very being is relational. He is relational within himself and so therefore we, who are made in his image, are relational also. The fact that God is three persons, equal but different, explains why this is also true for us as male and female, created in his image.

My interviewing friend was trying to get at the fact that Allah is a monad and therefore does not know relationship within himself. Islam might say that man and woman are created in God's image, but, in the end, in this system, humanity has no personal intimate relationship with Allah, because Allah does not know personal relationship within himself. On the other hand, Father-Son-and Spirit breathe out from the centre of the universe relationship at the core of reality. Humanity, as the image of God, is not an abstract concept, it is male and female.

Ideas for discussion questions:

1. How would you explain the doctrine of God to women in your bible study group?
2. Why is it important to be able to explain the doctrine of God?
3. How does understanding the doctrine of God help you understand all of life?

Prayer idea:

Thank God that he is three persons in one, and because of that, we are in relationship with him, and with each other. ●

Keeping the door open in Richmond

Benny Walter



Benny Walter is a part-time journalist also involved with Crossroads church in Hobart

Richmond is best known as a historic tourist town. There's the oldest standing bridge in Australia, the colonial jail, and a wide range of historical shops, houses and Churches. But one of the Churches was in danger of becoming a little too historical.

David Jones, minister of Cornerstone Presbyterian Church in Hobart, got a call from the pastoral relations officer of the Fellowship of Congregational Churches. "He was contacting me on behalf of the local Church in Richmond," David explains. "Basically, they were about to close down... and were concerned to keep the doors open."

The Richmond Congregational Church, the last congregational Church in Tasmania, was looking for help. David saw a window of opportunity. "For quite a number of years I've only been preaching once on a Sunday, so there was the possibility of me personally being able to lead that work."

Then there was the nature of Richmond. The Church opens on to main street, and especially through summer, the area is

full of local and interstate tourists. "It's a town where you can do things, innovative things." Additionally, a couple from Cornerstone who were interested in doing ministry apprenticeships had moved into the town, providing a home base for a small group.

For around six weeks, a congregation of between forty and fifty has been meeting. The majority of attendees are

from Cornerstone, who are treating it as an evening service. Those remaining from the old Church have welcomed them warmly, and the newcomers are full of enthusiasm. "There's a bit a buzz, a sense that something is happening there, which hopefully the locals will pick up on." So far it seems to be working, with regular newcomers checking out the new group.

Over the coming year, the Richmond Church is looking to make connections with the community, and attempt to tie their calendar into that of the town. There are opportunities for creative ministry at different levels; among the locals, the day visitors from Hobart and the tourists. David hopes, for example, to begin services with jazz musicians on the lawn, leading into meetings with a similar musical flavour.

But there are no plans to take everything over for good. "Our long term aim is to get them up to viability so they can call their own minister," says David. "We don't want to take it over as Presbyterian Church, we're just trying to get them up on their feet so they can function as a Congregational Church." ●

Ladies, used Jane's training ideas?

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Opening ourselves up to feedback via our letters editor revealed an error in our bullet-point round up of Synod. Kel Richards, the Chairman of Anglican Media pointed out that the Synod grant was not \$900 000, but half that amount (over three years); and it wasn't for television work, it was for media evangelism (internet, television, DVD production, podcasting, and other options opened up by today's technology). Our mistakes implied no criticism of media evangelism, but probably just the fact that our 'bullet pointer' loves television! The debate on the floor touched the future of television, and so forth, so it is worth our readers knowing that Anglican Media will be pursuing 'hi tech' evangelism on a number of fronts.