

One in Three Campaign Launched: Will Support Come from the Churches?

INTERNATIONAL MEN'S DAY PROBABLY went unnoticed by most people—just like a social problem that has been overlooked, or ignored, or deliberately suppressed for far too long, by both secular and Christian segments of society.

19 November 2009 saw the quiet launch of the 'One in Three Campaign' (www.oneinthree.com.au), which aims to help many silent victims: men who are the victims of domestic abuse.

The founders include Maggie Hamilton, author of *What Men Don't Talk About*, Dr Elizabeth Celi, author of *Regular Joe vs Mr Invincible*, and Steve Biddulph, author of *Manhood*. Biddulph writes, "With family violence, we had to address 'women and children first'; but in 2009, the troubling nub of violence is in families where both partners are violent, as well as those most hidden, where women hit men. Today nobody approves of or accepts wife bashing. Husband bashing needs this same condemnation and action."

The website provides news stories of male victims of domestic abuse, the facility for these victims to tell their story and to find resources for assistance, as well as opportunity for supporters of the campaign to take some action.

Men's rights groups have been trying to make their voices heard for almost two decades to protest misinformation about domestic violence disseminated by the slanted

politics surrounding the issue. This new website has a page documenting those who have propagated such misleading statistics, which includes a disturbing number of Government sources, including the current Prime Minister.

Across the same two decades, scholarly research into male victims of abuse has been steadily growing. Another page on the website is devoted to these resources. A bibliography examining 256 scholarly investigations with an aggregate sample size exceeding 253,500 (<http://www.csulb.edu/~mfiebert/assault.htm>) is impressive enough to make any fair-thinking person ask why this research has struggled to find air in the public arena.

According to those behind the One in Three Campaign, 'we could no longer retain our moral or intellectual integrity by ignoring the authoritative and growing body of data that indicates males are a substantial proportion of victims of family violence and abuse. While welcoming the advances that have taken place over recent decades to support women and children suffering from violence, we acknowledge that there is a complete lack of programs, services and support to help men in the same situation. We feel that it is unjust and inequitable to abhor only that violence done to women and children while ignoring violence done to men.'

On the Supporters page, the only smell of religion is from a Buddhist prison chaplain. ☹

Evangelism Ministries Changeover

FROM 1ST FEBRUARY 2010, EVANGELISM Ministries will be under the direction of Alan Stewart. The present Assistant Bishop of Wollongong has been impressed with what may be a movement of the Spirit of God. He is in touch with a younger group of men who have expressed an interest in



establishing new 'missional churches'. As well as launching 'the Geneva Push', Bp Stewart will also seek to marshal the resources of Evangelism Ministries towards establishing and sustaining evangelistic church planting. According to retiring Director Jim Ramsay, this has always been a focus of EM, but he is looking forward to further initiatives as the new Director takes Evangelism Ministries into the next stage of its contribution towards the evangelisation of Australia. ☹

'Existing religions will be revitalized as men take a greater interest in their inner world'

STEVE BIDDULPH, 'FUTURE DREAMING (1995)',
MANHOOD, P.242

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Future Shock for 21st Century minds

John Chapman



John Chapman
ponders the
future from his
retirement

DO YOU KNOW ANY CHRISTIANS WHO can honestly echo the words of the Apostle Paul in Phil.1:21-24, about departing to be with Christ being so much better? I am hard pressed to think of any. We are well settled in this life. For many we feel that if the New Creation is really better than what we have it can only be marginal! I hope I am mistaken, but these verses are a shock for 21st century minds.

We seem to be not like the New Testament

writers in this matter and therefore not having God's mind.

That brings me to the verse in Romans 8:18. 'I consider that our present suffering is not to be compared with the glory which will be revealed'.

Can I ask you if you ever give time to think about the glory which will be revealed? If you are like me, I suspect you give very little. Do you think the Bible writers are like this? What is the reason for this?

I wonder if we have been conned by the spirit of our age? If it is true, and I suspect it is, that Australians are hedonists we will have little time to think about death. Death laughs in the face of hedonism. Against all the evidence we persist in believing that it won't happen to nice people like us. Trust me it will.

Do you ever think it might be time to get ready for eternity? It is obviously more

important than life here and now.

The first step in preparation would be to see that I was 'right with God'. I am not naturally right with God. If this were the case there would have been no reason for the Lord Jesus to come into the world and to die, taking the punishment our sins deserved. We need to repent of a life lived in independence of God and to trust in the death of the Lord Jesus as our only means of forgiveness and being 'right with God'.

We should contemplate the New Creation where we will be 'Like Jesus'. What a joy that will be. I will be perfectly in God's image. That's a thing to be longed for. 'The glory which will be revealed' will so dwarf our life here that it will take on the significance of our first day at kindergarten.

Trust what God says: It will be glorious. And long for it to come. ●

Tis The Season To Be Rescuing

Alison Blake



Alison Blake
reflects on air
freshener and
Christmas

SUMMER IS HERE—THE SEASON OF dramatic rescues—from the surf, from bushfires, from mountainous waves en route to Hobart.

Simeon was waiting for the greatest rescue of all time and, like the shepherds before him, he finally saw the one sent by God as his Saviour, the Lord's Christ and God's Comfort—the Jesus of Christmas (Luke 2).

By God's Spirit, Simeon was given enormous insight into God's search and rescue mission. He saw salvation first hand, in the person of the baby Jesus, and we "see" salvation in the Luke's account of Jesus life and words.

Since God's salvation has been prepared in the sight of all people, doesn't that imply that each and every person is in danger and needs salvation? Salvation can't be dismissed as a lifestyle option for a few, or something I

don't need just now, but may need at a later date—like air-freshener. Salvation is an urgent and eternal-life-saving necessity for all, more like the oxygen we need to live. My unsaved and struggling friends and neighbours, those who are bruised and battered by living, with a fragile grip on life—they need salvation. But so do my competent, high achieving, "got it together", God-ignoring work colleagues and family.

what the Spirit-filled Simeon said about him!

The opening chapters of Luke's gospel remind us that Jesus, God's salvation for all people has appeared. So now tis the season to be rescuing—during the Christmas season and beyond. God is at work, 24/7, seeking and saving the lost, and he'll continue to do so until Jesus returns in his Kingly glory. In his enormous kindness, God has opened our eyes to see his salvation in Jesus.

When people are drowning they don't need swimming lessons. They need a rescuer.

When people are drowning they don't need swimming lessons. They need a rescuer, a competent life saver. Young people's greatest need is not someone to teach them resilience, self esteem or ethics. Adults greatest need isn't more "me time", a better "work-life" balance or a "seachange". All people's greatest need is salvation—from their lostness from God and from his judgement. God's salvation for all people is Jesus, who saves us by not saving himself. No wonder his parents marvelled at

During the Christmas season and throughout next year, let's be persevering in prayer that God will kindly enable the eyes of many more to recognise they're in real and serious danger; that he will open blind eyes to see that the Jesus of the Bible is their loving and forgiving Rescuer. And will you ask God to help you see, take and make opportunities to share with those in your life, the good news of great joy, that is for all people—that God has sent us his Saviour and he is the Lord Jesus? ●

IT IS ALMOST A COMMONPLACE THAT MEN ARE underrepresented in churches. When this issue is discussed, the tendency is to seek the cause of this absence in the non-attending men, rather than the non-attended churches. Two voices raised in Australia's public domain during 2009 give churches the opportunity to examine themselves: do they, or will they now, speak for men?

The first voice raised is that of noted Australian Sex Therapist, Bettina Arndt. Earlier this year she published *The Sex Diaries*, in which she draws on her study of 98 Australian couples who kept diaries about their sex lives across six to nine months. Her study left her deeply moved by the suffering amongst the men, and with a very clear awareness that the cause of that suffering was amongst the women.

Although there was the rare exceptional couple enjoying a rich and fulfilling sex life, Arndt reports that they were 'sadly outnumbered by the men and women who struggle, day after day, with the corrosive effect on their relationship of women's low libidos' (p.5).

She speaks of the 'immensely sad material' (p.5) she read in the diaries from the men. 'Men aren't happy. Many feel duped, disappointed, in despair at finding themselves spending their lives begging for sex from their loved partners. They are stunned to find their needs so totally ignored. It often poured out in a howl of rage and disappointment' (p.6). To top it off, like so much male suffering, 'for men this is usually a silent misery' (p.7).

Arndt is by no means unaware of the research into this problem from biological, psychological and physiological angles. But she also points to a socio-political, or ideological, cause:

'Women's right to say "no" has been enshrined in our cultural history for nearly fifty years. It was one of the outstanding achievements of the women's movement to outlaw rape in marriage and teach women to resist unwanted advances. But it simply hasn't worked to have a couple's sex life hinge on the fragile, feeble female libido. [...] The notion that it might be in women's best interests to stop rationing sex is sure to raise hackles, but this is an issue that deserves serious attention' (p.12).

Surely this should be different for people who read the Bible, which shows sex to be a wonderful gift from God to be richly enjoyed by married couples, and (to ensure that it is) which strongly and clearly urges: 'the husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband' (1 Cor. 7:3 ESV). But is it different, or are males in our churches also undergoing 'silent misery'?

Rather than properly addressing this issue, it is probably more normal for pulpits to speak of male sexual desire as if it is a problem to be overcome, or endured, or controlled—rather than focused. And if churches aren't even helping their own male constituents with such a significant issue, then why should we expect other males to bring their misery into our midst too?

The second voice is the Campaign launched in November 2009, 'One in Three'. The message is quite simple: male victims of domestic abuse must not be ignored any longer. The numbers in the Campaign's title come from the latest statistics (see Table), but 'One in Three' also draws upon almost two decades of social research, with a combined sample size of about a quarter of a million, to suggest that the real figures may, in fact, be 'one in two'.

And what constitutes abuse? Melbourne psychologist Dr Elizabeth Celi, says, "Unlike physical violence, many of the forms of domestic abuse faced by male victims are difficult to detect and hard for the man himself to defend against. A man's health is wrapped up in his identity. Attacking his self-worth through various forms of criticism, manipulation and intimidation are forms of emotional and verbal violence that we need to learn about as a society and say 'Enough!'".

Will the churches also add their voice to that cry? Rather than blaming the men for not being amongst us, will we begin to speak on their behalf? ●

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey (2006)¹ — the largest and most recent survey of violence in Australia:

- 29.8% (almost one in three) victims of *current partner violence* since the age of 15 were male
- 24.4% (almost one in four) victims of *previous partner violence* since the age of 15 were male
- 29.4% (almost one in three) victims of *sexual assault** during the last 12 months were male

The SA Interpersonal Violence and Abuse Survey (1999) found that: 32.3% (almost one in three) victims of reported *domestic violence by a current or ex-partner* (including both physical and emotional violence and abuse) were male.

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.

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When the Flair brings Failure

Stuart Holman



Stuart Holman looks back to look forwards

ICARRY THE SCARS OF PLANTING TWO congregations and 'repotting' another. As I contemplate planting another, my batting average is 0.666 (2 wins, 1 loss). Reflecting on these experiences I have concluded that the most important leadership quality is not entrepreneurial spunk but instead a commitment to relationship.

Measuring 'success' or 'failure' in any ministry is a dodgy business but I believe my failed congregation plant was attributable to lack of quality relationships. On reflection, I did not take time to properly develop understanding and rapport within the 'core' nor did I give myself in genuine friendship to the people we were trying to reach. After 6 months it was clear that it wasn't working and so we closed it down.

I had embarked eagerly on this 'failed' plant because of the apparent ease with which success came in my first experience of planting a congregation. When we launched 9:45 Church at St Matthews Manly we were just a group of friends with a shared vision for

outreach and 'doing church' in a new way. Our common passion was borne of prayer, many discussions and even some opposition. It was also the product of relationships deepened through suffering, joy and relaxed time together. As the congregation began to grow, each new member was welcomed with genuine hospitality and warmth. Sunday was not complete without the post-church BBQ flooding our home with all sorts of weird and wonderful people. In time, the BBQs multiplied to other homes.

We were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives.

As a leader I was committed to depth and openness in relationship with our leadership core and with each newcomer to our congregation. This meant vulnerability, being prepared to be wrong, experimenting and 'doing life' with this congregation. I found inspiration from Paul's Thessalonian model, "We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us." (1 Thes 2:8). Looking back, leadership of this church plant worked because it was relational in style rather than because I was particularly entrepreneurial, gutsy or hard core.

My positive experience with 'repotting' a congregation stems from a defining moment that occurred in my lounge room one Sunday night after church. All 9 of the congregation were 'hanging out' with their new pastor. Conversation moved to reaching out to an entirely different sub-culture within our community—the kind of people who were supposed to come to this kind of congregation. After a while I said, "OK, but what if we just tried to be ourselves? What if we also tried to reach out to people just like us?"

There was a collective sigh of relief. A leadership core for a 'repotting' was immediately constituted because they felt loved and valued for who they were. Though I have now handed over leadership of this congregation to another pastor, each of these core members has remained committed and passionate. Authenticity and genuine Christian relationship have become defining marks of this renewed and growing congregation.

So, entrepreneurial genius? In my view, it's an overrated leadership criterion for church planters. I say, "Give us leadership that loves people and is passionate for Christ—the rest will follow." ●

1-2-1s Paul Dale



Paul Dale pastors the 'church by the bridge', North Sydney

AFEW WEEKS AFTER MY CONVERSION, someone invited me to 'read' the Bible with him. So in my eagerness to soak up as much of God's word as possible, I hesitantly agreed. What would we do? Would I look stupid? We met in a café, opened up God's word, chatted about what the passage meant and the impact it should have on the way we

live, then we prayed together. It lasted about an hour—but it changed my life and my ministry. Over the past 20 years of following Jesus and pastoring a church, 1-2-1 ministry has been a top priority. I meet with my Bible study leaders, my elders, future leaders, new Christians and non-Christians. It's not a Bible study—so there's no prepared question. It's not preaching—so there's no one way communication. It's not just a social catch up! 1-2-1 is simply two Christians, regularly sitting down with the Bible, working your way through a particular book of Scripture, grappling with the text, being honest about application, sharing your lives, praying together, and 'doing life' with God together! Sure, it's much less obvious than the big church event. It's more time consuming than

preaching to the masses. But the impact of effective 1-2-1 on your local church is huge! I can teach people how to read the Bible, I can encourage leaders, I'm exposed to more pastoral concerns in the gathering, it helps me preach more specifically into the lives people, and I'm always encouraged and challenged by the people I meet with. After a year, I encourage them to meet with others—and I look for new people to meet with. Thanks to all those who have read the Bible with me over the years—God has used every one to shape my relationship with Him. It may not look trendy or cutting edge, but in my humble opinion, 1-2-1 ministry is the bread and butter of ministry. So who are you going to read the Bible with? ●

Keeping in Touch

John Lavender



John and Karen serve Glenmore Park Anglican Church.

WE ALL KNOW THAT PEOPLE MATTER to God, but how do we translate that into a week in, week out care for each person? When Karen and I arrived at Glenmore Park, one of the priorities we had was to make sure we treated people personally, as individuals no matter how large our Church grew. What was easy when there were 40, is more difficult now that we have grown to around 500.

These are two of the ways that we have tried to make sure that we are 'keeping in touch'.

We keep a Roll of who is and who isn't there each Sunday and to each of the groups. It is hard work looking out for around 500 people at each of our 4 Church Services but it

is so valuable and important. It means that if someone hasn't been at Church for a few weeks we will get in touch to see how they're going. Keeping a roll has also been incredibly helpful in getting to know people, being able to pray for them regularly, and learning and remembering their names. Again this is of great value because people need to know that they are noticed, that they matter and that they are cared for. People so often tell us how

personally invite them to events at Church, we make sure that we put in the extra time to write a short note, on something like a "Post it Note" saying "Dear ... How are you" and "Hope that you're able to come". It is amazing the number of responses that we continually get from people who attend the event or reply thanking us because of this "personal" invitation and how affected they were by it and how they felt cared for. We have noticed that people

Remembering their names . . . often comes as a shock because it is something that is so rare in our impersonal world.

much they appreciate this and what a difference it makes that we say "hello" to them by name and that we take the time to give them a call. In fact, it often comes as a shock because it is something that is so rare in our impersonal world today.

Keeping in touch will also mean that when we send out invitations to all our contacts to

respond so much more positively to a short personal note than to a generic printed one. It may take a little more time, but it is so worth it! We've had many people come into God's Kingdom from this simple strategy.

Keeping in touch? It is hard, but it's value and importance to growth and to the gospel is enormous! 

Praying for Growth

Karen Lavender

PRAYER IS SO VITAL TO A GROWING Church. We can have all the best strategies in the world to plant or grow a Church, but if we're not committing it to God in prayer, those strategies are really empty and powerless.

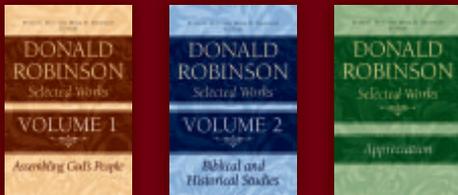
At Glenmore Park Anglican Church, prayer is one of the most important 'behind the scenes' contributors to our growth. It involves our regular weekly Prayer Meetings, monthly Prayer Breakfasts, keeping prayer an essential part of our Sunday services and weekly small groups and having a committed

Prayer Team. But it's more than that.

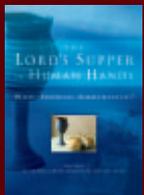
Praying to thank God for the way that he has worked; asking Him for wisdom for our plans; praying for the specific events coming up in our Church; praying before every group that meets, every event we put on; praying for the people who come to our Church by name; for the people in Glenmore Park and the surrounding suburbs; for all those we are ministering to; for those we come into contact with in our community; those who we letterbox-drop; those who are taught Scripture in our Schools; those we make contact with in

our monthly Shopping Centre Outreach; those who read our local Newspaper articles. Asking God to have mercy and pour out his blessing—that he would be pleased to use our stumbling efforts to bring people to himself.

If anything of significance is going to happen, it will only happen because of God in his mercy. That's why prayer is so essential to growing Churches as we humbly call on our great God to open people eyes, to unblock deaf ears, and soften hard hearts to the amazing sound of the gospel. 



Have you bought your copy of Donald Robinson. Selected Works and The Lord's Supper in Human Hands?
For details, see www.australianchurchrecord.net



The Anglican Covenant: A Road to Nowhere

THE *Windsor Report* CALLED FOR A Covenant of the Anglican Communion to which the various Provinces would sign up. Two Australian churchmen are clear that this not the way forward to solve the Communion's problems.

Former General Secretary of the Anglican Church of Australia, Rev Dr Bruce Kaye objects on principle. He has posted on his blog (<http://world.anglicanismforum.blogspot.com>) four reasons why the covenant is a bad idea for Anglicans.

1. It is against the grain of Anglican ecclesiology

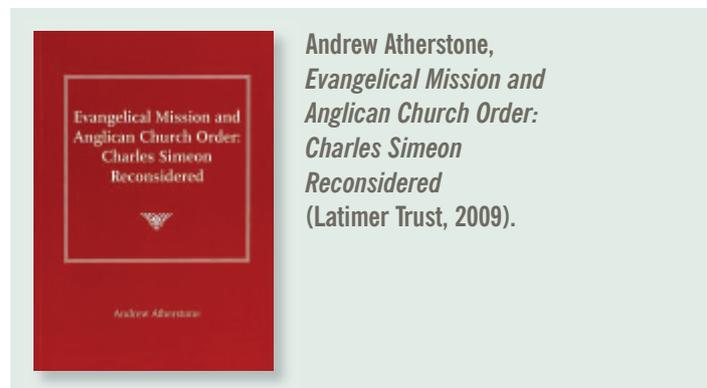
2. It is not an adequate response to the conflict in the Anglican Communion
3. In practical terms it will create immense and complicating confusion about institutional relations and financial obligations
4. It does not address the key fundamental issue in the conflict, how to act in a particular context which is relevant to that context and also faithful to the gospel.

Prominent Sydney layman, Solicitor Robert Tong, has more practical objections. He cannot see how the Covenant could possibly be introduced into Australia, even if desirable to do so (see *The Faith Once for All Delivered*, and *Ecclesiastical Law Journal* 8.39, 2006, pp.464-69).

1. there is no provision in the ACA constitution to enable the Primate to act at large on its behalf
2. the General Synod could adopt the Covenant, but this would be a complicated procedure
3. even if adopted (by Primate or General Synod) it is questionable how binding it would be, or how its authority would be exercised in practice
4. the practical realities in Australia make any move to adopt this Covenant likely to fail. For example, any attempt to enlarge the powers of the Primate or General Synod would be strongly resisted; the Covenant calls for tighter bonds, whereas the call in Australia is for the opposite.

Tong concludes: 'the covenant is a *cul de sac*'.

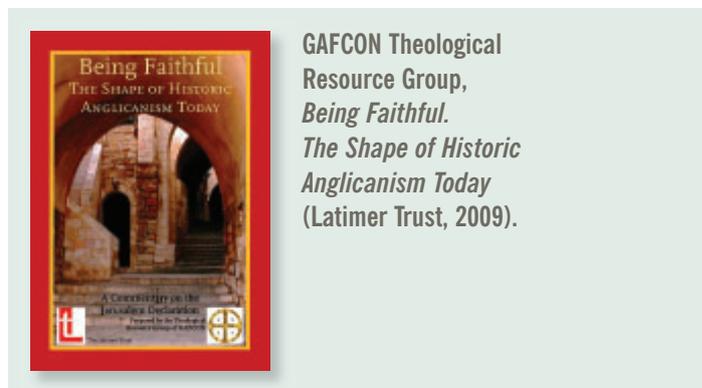
Two New Books from Latimer Trust



Andrew Atherstone, *Evangelical Mission and Anglican Church Order: Charles Simeon Reconsidered* (Latimer Trust, 2009).

IN THIS PUBLISHED VERSION OF THE 2009 ST ANTHOLIN'S Lecture, Andrew Atherstone examines the oft-made claim that Charles Simeon was an ardent upholder of Church Order. This historical study has clear relevance in the contemporary setting of the Anglican Communion, where Simeon has been touted as a model for his evangelical sympathizers to follow. Atherstone's re-examination of the evidence shows that Simeon challenged the Anglican status quo by conducting preaching and prayer in irregular settings, by promoting voluntary associations, and by assuming a quasi-episcopal role in the deployment of clergy. Rather than an unbending commitment to Church Order, Simeon's actions demonstrate that gospel ministry was his fundamental priority.

Besides the excellent content, since Simeon had such an influence in establishing evangelicalism in the early colony of New South Wales, and since our first Chaplain Richard Johnson was for some seventeen years Rector of St Antholin's, there are at least two further reasons why Australians should read this volume.



GAFCON Theological Resource Group, *Being Faithful. The Shape of Historic Anglicanism Today* (Latimer Trust, 2009).

ONE OF THE PRODUCTS OF THE JUNE 2008 JERUSALEM GAFCON was the Statement which summed up the commitments of this gathering of 1200 people from 27 provinces of the Anglican Communion, including 'the Jerusalem Declaration'. The GAFCON Primates' Council commissioned the Theological Resource Group to produce a commentary on the Jerusalem Declaration. The resulting commentary makes up the first part of this volume. The second part is the document *The Way, the Truth, and the Life. Theological Resources for a Pilgrimage to a Global Anglican Future*, first published May 2008.

This is a useful resource for all Anglicans seeking to hold to authentic Anglicanism in the face of the challenges to Historic Anglicanism within the Anglican Communion at the present time. Churches without strong theological foundations are liable to be blown around by every wind of doctrine. This volume seeks to promote further theological discussion and thinking as the way out of the present crisis and on into an orthodox future.  www.latimertrust.org

Scripture Foremost, but read in the Company of Others

Mark Thompson



Mark Thompson is a member of the Theological Resource group advising the GAFCON Primates.

WHILE MANY OF US WOULDN'T think twice about affirming the authority of Scripture, for some it is a little harder to work out just how that authority operates. Does it mean that all other voices are to be silenced, so that each Christian determines the truth about God and living as a disciple of Jesus for themselves, with their Bible open but otherwise alone? Does the Bible only function authoritatively when it is the *only* authority? Must we suspect all other voices are seeking to undermine or subvert the teaching of Scripture?

The simple fact is that we are never quite 'alone with our Bibles'. As we read it, we rely on translators, teachers who have informed our framework of thinking, the 'cloud of witnesses' who make up our theological and

ecclesiastical traditions. Most importantly, we read in the presence of the living God. God's word is never something read behind his back. The same Spirit who brought about the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is as vitally involved in the reception of Scripture as in its inception.

And yet we are rightly concerned to ensure that it is the teaching of Scripture which is shaping our thinking and behaviour, filling our horizons with a picture of God as he really is, of Christ and the salvation he won for us. The commentators might be persuasive, the theologians might cast an awe-inspiring vision, our traditions might be venerable and the current leaders of our churches might be both godly and energetic for the cause, but we know that only Scripture is 'the word of God written'. Only Scripture — therefore Scripture alone.

So do the last two thousand years count for nothing? Is our task as students of the Scriptures to peel back the layers and so locate ourselves alongside the first hearers or readers of this text? There's something attractive about that approach, if it were possible: direct engagement with the voice of God as it was first heard, unsullied by the preoccupa-

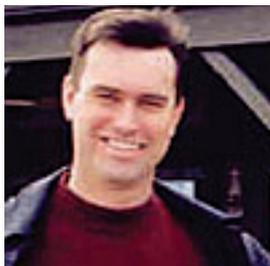
tions of later centuries. If we could only recreate the early church, stand where they stood and do what they did, then surely we would be more faithful to the truth than we are now. Or would we?

It is worth remembering that amongst the strongest advocates of the principle of *sola scriptura* were the mainstream Reformers of the sixteenth century. Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Cranmer — they all insisted that the authority of Scripture needed to be taken seriously and all other authorities must bend before it. Yet none of them were primitivists, seeking simply to recreate the situation and practices of the New Testament church. Neither did they shut out all other voices.

We can learn from others, even from those with whom we might disagree, as long as all ideas are finally tested by the teaching of Scripture. It is not wrong because it has been said before, but it is not right for that reason either. The witness of Christians through the centuries is a matter of consequence and the authority of Scripture is not *necessarily* overturned when we pay attention to it. Yet the judge of all other words is the word which God has spoken. ●

Sydney — the new home of a “Reformed Continuationist” church

Gav Poole



Gav Poole watches the USA from Sydney's North-West.

BY POPULAR DEMAND SOVEREIGN Grace Ministries has recently announced that a new church will be planted in Sydney, (www.sovgraceoz.org). Sovereign Grace Ministries has been described as a movement that stems from Gaithersburg, Maryland, USA. Like other churches associated with Sovereign Grace Ministries it will be a “Reformed Continuationist” church. “Reformed” I understand but what does “continuationist” mean? What theological void in Sydney does this church hope to fill?

I went to that trusty source, the internet,

to find out what a continuationist is. It is someone who believes that the Holy Spirit still gives sign gifts, such as tongues and prophecy, today. It had never occurred to me that the Holy Spirit had stopped giving such gifts. Yet there are some, cessationists, who believe something like this. So let me get this right ... continuationists want to make it clear that though they are reformed, they are not cessationists. Their website goes a little further, “We want to be obedient to Scripture's commands, not simply to acknowledge spiritual gifts, but to earnestly desire them (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:1).”

Aren't labels funny? They clearly define us and leave people in no doubt as to what we believe. A quick search on the internet and you can discover what type of church you are joining.

You probably believe, or don't believe, a lot of things, but if you bother to adopt a label you are expressing that this belief is actually

central to whom you are. This becomes all encompassing and perhaps even distracting. For instance, you may find your pastors reading a lot of books on the Holy Spirit but few on the cross.

Theological education is best done from first principles. We learn from the Bible and find that our beliefs may match a certain framework. To start with the framework is the wrong way around. The Bible easily ends up submitting to the framework.

Sovereign Grace Ministries is nailing its colours to the mast. You know what you are getting and what you're not. This is popular. Is this a sign that we are in post-post-modern times? Are people rejecting the fuzzy and demanding sharper details? There may be a lesson in this that all churches can learn. The focus however can be on the wrong subject. This is the concern I have with cessationists, continuationists, creationists, covenantalists, and ... why isn't my spell check working? ●

Women and the Word



Michelle Philp is the Women's Ministry Coordinator at Crossroads Christian Church and part-time staffworker at the University of Canberra.

What does a woman bring to a ministry team?

Michelle Philp

In Christian ministry, if we accept that the Bible is our authority and not ourselves or our experiences, we are able to teach what the Bible says about any situation in life, even one different to our own. So, for example, as a single woman I can still address topics related to marriage so long as I am saying what the Bible says and not making experience the authority. Likewise, male pastors can and should address topics related to women. They have a responsibility to be caring for the whole flock and helping them listen to the voice of the true Shepherd. So in one sense, a woman doesn't add anything to a ministry team that the men can't do.

The situation is not that simple however, as God has purposefully created men and women differently. In the Bible, Paul uses gender-based relationships as part of his training model with his two protégés Timothy and Titus. We know that understanding people and challenging them in their Christian growth is different according to gender, age and stage of life.

This is because Christianity is relational. Knowing God is not about knowing a set of information, but about being in a relationship with Him and with each other. Our teaching and our learning then, is within the context of various relationships.

So, one of the things a woman brings to a ministry team is an opportunity to access different relationships to the men and to spur and encourage others on within those relationships. While this is primarily with the women, it is not exclusively so.

Finally, a woman on a ministry team is able to model that theology (knowing God better through studying His word) is just as important, rewarding and renewing for women as it is for men. 

They're Playing Our Song

Bill Salier



PHOTO: PHOTOS.COM



Bill Salier is Vice Principal, with a love for teaching New Testament.

Ever heard someone playing your song?

LOTS OF PEOPLE HAVE THEIR SONG OR songs; songs that take them back to a particular time and place. It's often the song they danced to at their wedding. But there are others. Some songs take you back to a time and place—all our songs date us terribly: for example a song called "Boys of Summer" takes me back to a terrific holiday I had with friends many years ago in Queensland.

Every now and then you will hear a song and someone will turn to someone else and say they are playing our song ...

Christmas is a bit like that for Christian people. They are playing our songs and they are playing them everywhere and will be playing them everywhere for the next month or so. They are playing our songs in shops; they are singing and playing our songs in the streets; they are singing and playing our songs on TV; at big public gatherings; even in the elevators; everywhere they are playing our songs ...

And what songs—everyone knows them—"Silent Night"; "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing"; "O Little Town of Bethlehem"; "Once in Royal

David's City"; "While Shepherds watched their flocks by night"; "Joy to the World"; "O Come All Ye Faithful" ... retelling the greatest story ever told.

Christmas can be a confusing time—lots of different messages as to what it is all about; the songs can help us to stay on track and may give us an opportunity to help others get on track.

But so much of the Gospel is right there in the songs—you will hear them; you've already heard them; will we listen?

Christmas can be a confusing time ... the songs can help us to stay on track and may give us an opportunity to help others get on track.

And pause to give thanks again to God for his grace, love, and mercy in sending Jesus to earth to live and die and rise. They are playing our song.

and to pray for the many who will hear only muzak; a backing track to Christmas shopping; a nuisance busker; or a sweet, sentimental contribution to the Christmas spirit—so near and yet so far are many when these songs are sung. Pray and speak so that our song might become their song. 