

# ACCatalyst

Volume 2 December 2008

**INNOVATION**  
**Where**  
**does it**  
**come**  
**from?**





**ACCATALYST**

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# Pro-life? Oppose the death penalty



Every killing of an innocent community member increases public fervour for the death penalty. The so-called terrorists who attacked and killed hotel guests in the Indian city of Mumbai in the last week of November provide a probable example, while the now-dead plotters of Indonesia's Bali bombings provide a certain one. I say 'so-called terrorists'

because to call murderers 'terrorists' accords their actions a moral status they do not deserve. The word 'terrorists' implies some beef – an argument with the world and the way it's run – which supposedly justifies extreme actions. But we should not mince words like this. Murder is murder, and rightly abhorred as the greatest sin. The reason is not hard to understand, but does imply a value judgment. The relevant judgment is that human life is uniquely important – indeed, sacred, as the courts still say when passing sentence – and to take life away is unforgivable.

That is why Christians cannot support calls for the death penalty, and must do all they can to turn public support for killing murderers into a confrontation with the fact of the sacredness of life. In every case, the death penalty is cold killing. Some great writers and artists of the 20th century brought home this truth in ways that seemed to convince part of humanity – for example, George Orwell describing a condemned man stepping awkwardly aside to avoid a puddle, while walking to have his neck broken on the gallows. Yet humanity is still not entirely convinced. With the argument in the balance, Christians must argue decisively, or be seen, yet again, as irrelevant fence-sitters whenever the great questions of the human race are being fought out.

The great question today is the sacredness of life. The passage of liberal abortion laws in Victoria, discussed inside, is one example. But abortion is not the only 'live' issue in which life as at stake. Our neighbours are also arguing about the death penalty, and will increasingly do so as more foreign trials are reported in the news. I once heard a churchman argue that abortion can never be justified, while sometimes, when the threat from a killer cannot be removed any other way, the death penalty can. On another occasion, I heard the same churchman say we cannot expect young people to believe in the life-affirming character of a society which kills its prisoners. My reflection on these two statements is that it is far easier – though still no cinch – to convince society of the second argument than the first. Fortunately, this is not an either/or proposition. Churches can oppose abortion and oppose the death penalty, and indeed they should do so in the same breath.

In 1928, the *New York Daily News* published a front-page photo of the murderer Ruth Snyder being electrocuted in Sing-Sing prison for the murder of her husband. The newspaper had been given access to the execution on condition that no photo would be taken, but the journalist strapped a Leica camera to his leg and stole the shot. The edition sold more than 100,000 extra copies. People have always loved an execution, but this is a lust Christians need not feed.



*Paul Gray*



The current financial crisis is causing great concern around the world and governments are spending billions to prop up stricken companies and their banking sectors. Many

Australian families are in financial difficulties. These people need our assistance. Particularly now as we celebrate Jesus' birth, we want to show love and compassion by giving gifts and bringing joy at Christmas time. But this should not be at the expense of aid to the desperately poor overseas who are affected more by this financial meltdown than those in countries that are better off.

In September 2000 the United Nations Development Programme's Millennium Development Goals were adopted by 189 nations. These eight goals were to be achieved by 2015. The goals are:

**Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**

**Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education**

**Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women**

**Goal 4: Reduce child mortality**

**Goal 5: Improve maternal health**

**Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases**

**Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability**

**Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development**

They commit developing countries to boost education, health and environmental outcomes and rich nations to increase aid spending to 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) by 2015. Yet Australia

# As world slouches toward Depression ....

## from ACC Social Responsibility Commission

committed to only 0.5% of GNI. But there has been a shortfall in funding by developed countries of US\$18 billion, with aid levels falling to only 0.28% of the combined GNI of wealthy countries. In 2005 Australia donated aid of 0.25% of GNI, which placed it 19th of 22 donor nations.

Nevertheless there has been significant progress in some areas. In Africa a vaccination programme has led to a fall in measles deaths by 91%. Child mortality rates around the world have fallen below 10 million a year for the first time since record-keeping began in 1960. A fertiliser and seed program in Malawi doubled agricultural productivity. The abolition of school fees, often due to cancelling the countries' debts, has led to a surge in school enrolments. Unfortunately, rising food and energy prices have wiped away much of the progress made so far in improving health and well being.

While the US Government gave loans of nearly \$123 billion to rescue one insurance company (IAG) this is \$18 billion more than the annual aid to poor countries. The financial crisis will mean reduced demands for exports from poor to developed countries and less foreign investment, which will result in less government income and less growth. For millions of the world's poorest citizens this is literally a matter of life and death.

World Bank President Robert Zoellick has warned that 100 million people are at risk of being forced back into extreme poverty and for over a billion poor people food has become significantly more expensive and difficult to obtain. The world's poorest are in Africa, where the financial meltdown has come on top of a spike in global food prices brought on by widespread drought

and high oil costs. Rice is a staple food for half the world's population, but it now costs nearly four times the price it was in 2003. In the US, 25% of corn is being

diverted to produce ethanol for use as a fuel. To fill the tank of a large SUV requires enough corn to feed a man for a year. The US and its allies will spend \$150 billion this year to finance the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

While we are concerned for those who lose incomes and jobs in this country, we must not overlook the millions overseas who could lose their lives through starvation and disease.

Is it all too hard?

How should the Uniting Church respond?

Who is my neighbour?

While governments will come under intense pressure to find savings, foreign aid recipients don't get a vote. As well as contributing individually as far as possible, followers of Jesus Christ must speak up to alert others to the plight of these our neighbours in desperate circumstances overseas.

Instead of giving the latest gadget "to the person who has everything," gifts such as schools supplies, a goat, a fish farm, a vegetable garden, a safe water supply or health care in developing countries can be sent on behalf of your friend through Uniting Church Overseas Aid, Uniting International Mission or TEAR Australia.

**For further information on Uniting Church Overseas Aid and Uniting International Mission see:**

[www.everythingincommon.com.au](http://www.everythingincommon.com.au)

[www.uim.uca.org.au](http://www.uim.uca.org.au)

Phone (02)8267 4267

TEAR Australia

[www.usefulgifts.org](http://www.usefulgifts.org)

Phone (03)9264 7000

□

# ABC radio program dissects Uniting Church divisions

On November 23, the ABC's 'Sunday Nights with John Cleary' radio program – one of the few remaining regular ABC religious broadcasts – featured a discussion about the Assembly of Confessing Congregations and the “culture wars” within Western society and within the Uniting Church in Australia. During the program, host John Cleary interviewed the ACC's Rosalie Hudson, Peter Bentley and Max Champion, and in the course of discussion, took a call from the well-known former ABC religious broadcaster Dr David Millikan. Here is some of the interchange from the November 23 program.

**John Cleary:**

*David, your observations? Now you're someone who has been a member of the Uniting Church for many years and a clergy person in the Uniting Church.*

**David Millikan:**

I am. I find myself in agreement with Rosalie, Peter and Max. I think there is almost a fight to the death within the Uniting Church over this issue of theology.

And I find it almost impossible to imagine a greater loss of faith than the idea that clergy would present themselves as representing a view of Christianity where Jesus ceases to be God, where he doesn't rise from the dead, where those fundamental doctrines that have defined Christianity for the last 2000 years, are suddenly seen as expendable.

So I think this is really significant. But I do think that this whole massive liberal experiment that's been going on is really in its final days.

I think it is becoming very threadbare and a lot of the representatives of that sort of liberal experiment are really thrashing around at the moment because they really don't have a

coherent answer to what is the contemporary dilemma within Western culture.

What's interesting for me is that I find myself in a church here in Sydney which has traditionally been one of the most liberal churches and it's a most fascinating experience for me to be there and find myself in this really, really active dialogue with people.

When I first came to my Church here, I preached what I thought was a fairly traditional sermon, and I had a couple of people come up to me after the service and say: 'David, you believe that Jesus is God?' I said yes. And they said, 'well we don't. We don't, David.' I said 'well what are you doing here?'

Happily we've managed to be really good friends, but that's an extraordinary situation to find yourself in. I find it extremely interesting, and quite challenging. ....

**John Cleary:**

*David, the homosexuality issue, for example. 200 years ago slaves were considered inferior non-persons and if you married or had sexual relations with a slave, that was the equivalent of being cast in the outer darkness.*

*In some churches women are still the issue: women have no right to be representatives of God because God was incarnate as man and therefore man is the appropriate head of the house and everything else. Is the church capable of moving on this area, in your view?*

**David Millikan:**

I think this is probably one of the most divisive issues in the Uniting Church. It really is tearing the church apart, this one. I don't know how it's going to deal with it, actually, because there are two very, very firmly established positions, and the longer it goes on, the less signs there are of any reconciliation between the two.

**John Cleary:**

*I don't want to get into the merits of the issue, but is this an example of a cultural issue that for some reason has become the test of all orthodoxy?*

**David Millikan:**

I don't want to tell the Assembly what to do because the fact that they have arisen within the Uniting Church is a response to a genuine issue. I think it is an issue that is really difficult for a lot of clergy. □

# Innovation: where does it come from?

In 2008 the Rudd Government commissioned a major review of the “national innovation system.” Focused on science research and ‘R & D’ work by business and universities, the report highlights the essential esteem in which modern governments – and indeed, the whole of the modern world – hold the abstract commodity known as innovation.

Like the abolition of slavery, scientific innovation is a Christian achievement. Historical scholars recognize this, but most people do not. The scholarship of the American sociologist of religion, Rodney Stark, reveals the disconnection between historical reality and popular understanding of these issues.

Stark’s 2006 book *The Victory of Reason* sums up many of the great achievements of historical Christianity. These can be classed under two headings, moral and intellectual.

What is usually overlooked in contemporary denunciations of Christianity is the larger picture. In a nutshell, mankind’s moral sense was radically worse before the arrival of the Church than it has been since the onslaught of Christian ideas against the prevailing wisdoms of paganism.

This does not necessarily mean that the world is now a better place. Certainly, the greatest evils of history have occurred in the Christian era. For example, the Holocaust and the Gulag Archipelago are among the worst work ever done by homo sapiens.

Yet there is one essential difference between the totalitarian evils of modern times and ancient history’s careless attitude to killing and human life. The difference is that modern

people, speaking in general terms, know the Holocaust and Gulag were wrong. The gas ovens of Auschwitz and KGB Headquarters in Moscow even now stand as obvious symbols of gross evil.

However the ancient world of Rome, Carthage and classical Greece held no consensus views of what was grossly evil and what was obviously wrong. Foreign peoples could be enslaved, dissenters could be fed to lions and unwanted newborns could be left exposed to die on hillsides so far as the pre-Christian world cared. Such was the general condition of human moral consciousness, until the birth of Christianity.

Stark’s books, since he published *The Rise of Christianity* in 1996, have communicated the startling message that Christian teaching wrought a revolution in the way mankind perceives morality. In a nutshell, this revolution turns on the idea of human equality in the eyes of God. The doctrine of equal human rights for all – presumed more self-evident than the carpet beneath their feet by most Westerners today – was a largely foreign concept until the rise of Christianity.

Consequently, slavery, absolutely a normal institution through classical and early Christian times, disappeared from Europe by the Middle Ages. Stark says the essential change which caused its disappearance was missionary work by the Church amongst slaves themselves. Christian teaching that freeing your slaves was a worthy act increased the moral

pressure against slave-holding.

Stark takes account of some recent scholarly arguments that pre-medieval slavery disappeared because it had become uneconomic to maintain. But he dismisses that argument. “Even as late as the start of the American Civil War, Southern Slavery remained a very profitable ‘mode of production’,” he writes. “The same was true in early medieval Europe.”

In fact, Christianity, not economics, was the cause of slavery’s disappearance. “Slavery ended in medieval Europe only because the Church extended its sacraments to all slaves and then managed to impose a ban on the enslavement of Christians (and of Jews.) Within the context of medieval Europe, that prohibition was effectively a rule of universal abolition.”

The defeat of slavery needed to be repeated in later centuries, and again the defeat was led by Christians like William Wilberforce. Slavery, therefore, is a strong example of the impact of Christianity in the area of human morality. Another area where Christianity has had a major impact is the intellectual sphere of science and innovation.

The facts revealed by Stark in his provocatively titled 2003 volume *For the Glory of God* (Princeton University Press) are that science and innovation are also the direct outcome of the widespread adoption of theological doctrines promoted only by Christianity. Metaphorically speaking, this is the kind of heretical



**Sociologist  
Rodney Stark**

*Continued next page*

proposition to set fagots smoldering in earlier times. In today's society, so ingrained is the idea that religion is fundamentally opposed to science, and always has been, that anyone seriously arguing that Christianity is actually the cause of science is likely to find themselves rapidly borne in the direction of modernity's ideological stake.

The author, Stark, is clearly possessed of a particularly tough hide – probably the result of repeated roasting. He mounts an aggressive yet measured case, based entirely on scholarly sources, that a culture of science and innovation arose for the only time in history in Europe during the early Middle Ages.

Stark's case is that Christian theology, not the learning of the classical world or Islam, was the decisive element which allowed the birth of technological invention. This spirit of medieval innovation emerged in many walks of life, from agriculture (the three fallow field system) to home design (the use of chimneys, allowing the effective closure of homes against the elements for the first time) to saddlery and the harnessing of horses. Each of these, including horse tack, had revolutionary implications. Proper harnessing of horses in ways not

life-threatening to the horse allowed vast improvements in ploughing and agricultural productivity, while the (seemingly) simple European invention of stirrups and pommel led to the first heavy cavalry (knights in armour) which in turn had devastating effects in battle, particularly against lightly armed Muslim warriors. Water mills, eye-glasses, public clocks and mass-produced paper are other revolutionary innovations of these so-called Dark Ages.

Because they were the first serious innovators, medieval Christians laid the foundations of all later western and European innovations across the world, according to Stark's intriguing analysis. But not everything that can be said on the topic is said by Stark. For example, American Islam scholar Timur Kuran proposes a fascinating explanation for the economic backwardness of Islamic societies compared with the West today. Kuran points out that early Muslim cities were at least as wealthy and prosperous as western ones, but shows the West began surpassing Islam in economic terms some time after the year 1000. Kuran's analysis highlights the core role of the Western legal notion of the business corporation. The Islamic world, burdened by complex trust arrangements rooted in

Islamic law, which placed severe limits on enterprise, simply could not match it with the rapidly expanding West. Islam fell behind, and remains behind today (oil wealth notwithstanding.) Kuran's recent scholarly work provides an interesting adjunct to Stark's. (Kuran's ideas can be found in *The Development Economics Reader* edited by Giorgio Secondi, 2008 edition.)

Even more surprising than the evidence of medieval inventiveness is what it says about today's widespread belief that science emerged only when the humanists conquered religion. Breakthroughs like Christopher Columbus's trans-Atlantic journeying finally proved the earth was round and therefore that clergymen, with their Bible-based views of reality, would from now on be relegated to the rear pews of enlightened intellectual enterprise. From Columbus, through Isaac Newton, to the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, Christianity was on the back foot: this is a common view. Stark says it is complete nonsense.

Indeed, he claims every educated Christian, including clerics, knew the earth was round before Columbus set off in 1492. The idea of the Bible being taken as literally true in every scientific detail by the Church had gone out the door in the fourth century because of St Augustine, who argued Scripture must be read in the light of reason. Augustine warned sternly against interpreting the Bible in direct contradiction of science: when Bible statements appear to contradict reason or experience, "either the text is in error, or the commentator is on the wrong track, or you have not understood it," Augustine wrote. If we interpret Scripture in direct contradiction to science, it will bring God's word into disrepute with men. This is "disreputable and dangerous," he argued.

The much-neglected truth is that for many hundreds of years, the best Christian minds have been comfortable with science. Sir Isaac Newton himself believed his own scientific efforts, including the

*Continued on page 23*



**The triumph of science? Fr Pavel Florensky, a brilliant Russian writer imprisoned and executed under Stalin**



## Obama says 'yes we can': votes say 'no they didn't'

The United States of America is more divided than ever before, reveals a voter analysis published by an influential Washington magazine in the wake of Barack Obama's historic Presidential victory.

Despite a dominant liberal illusion that America suddenly grew united around the charismatic figure of America's first black President-elect, 2008 poll analysis shows the division between rural and urban America is increasing while the number of "landslide" districts – where people voted overwhelmingly for one candidate or party over another – has increased greatly.

The Washington-based *Slate* magazine, an online publication linked to the *Washington Post*, published a regular blog throughout the 2008 Presidential campaign by social analyst Bill Bishop. The Bishop feature was called 'The Big Sort' and examined the way American society is increasingly organising itself into similar-minded, insular communities. People in these communities often misunderstand each other.

Bishop's final post 10 days after polling day said that despite Obama's billing of himself as a post-partisan candidate of a unified America, the country is now more divided than it was four or eight years ago.

"Less abstractly, while some danced in the street after Barack Obama's victory, others bought guns," Bishop wrote.

One measure of division is that most counties in the USA have grown either more Republican or more Democratic since the 1970s. While about a quarter of US counties voted

for their candidate by more than 20 percentage points in 1976, nearly 50 per cent did so in 2008.

While 94 million Americans live in "Obama landslide counties," the number of states which are closely contested is shrinking, Bishop found on examining preliminary poll data.

Political scientist Alan Abramowitz commented: "There may be only one United States of America, as Senator Obama says, but the divide between the red states and the blue states is deeper than at any time in the past 60 years.

Part of the divide reflects urban-rural separation. While the average population of Obama landslide counties was 278,601, the average population of McCain landslide counties was 37,475.

But Bishop's analysis also suggests a more disturbing background picture.

In essence, he thinks political campaigns are increasingly working on the principle of appealing to the candidates' own bedrock constituencies while ignoring your opponent's.

This means politicians are becoming less interested in attempting to persuade undecided voters by appealing to reasoned argument in their campaigns, and more obsessed with building excited enthusiasm among their core followers.

The recruitment of the non-intellectual Sarah Palin by the Republicans and the targeting of liberal-voting university cities within otherwise Republican states by the Democrats are two examples of the trend.

**See Clarkson on Obama victory: p23**

## Abortion vote leaves feeling of despair

In October 2008 the Victorian Parliament approved legislation decriminalizing abortion in Victoria.

The substance of the legislation is that in the period up to the 24th week of the pregnancy abortion is a private decision to be made by a woman in consultation with her doctor. Abortion until the end of the 24th week is regarded like all other medical procedures: legally it has the same status as the removal of a wart.

Once the pregnancy has exceeded the 24th week the fetus can be aborted if two doctors agree with the woman that abortion is necessary because of a risk of harm to her if the pregnancy is not terminated. In the Act harm is defined in terms of danger to the mother's life or physical or mental health.

The Act requires doctors, nurses, pharmacists and psychiatrists with a conscientious objection to abortion to directly refer to someone who will provide an abortion.

A number of Church and other groups petitioned Victorian Parliamentarians to vote the bill down. If they would not oppose the bill they were asked to sponsor a number of amendments. I list just some proposed amendments below. These were recommended to MP's by the Bioethics Committee of the Victorian Synod of the Uniting Church.

1. Referral. It is in the best interests of both the woman and the child that a woman should not be permitted within the law to proceed to abortion without due process of referral from her general practitioner. This would guard against abortions

*Continued next page*

being performed by doctors who have no qualifications or training in obstetrics.

2. Counselling. In order that the decision for abortion be taken with utmost seriousness we urge the inclusion of a mandatory information provision, mandatory referral for independent counselling, and a mandatory cooling-off period.

3. Late term abortion. While we are opposed to late term abortion, we urge that the proposed 24 weeks be amended to 20 weeks on the grounds of the viability of the foetus, and the implications for the foetus experiencing pain.

4. Panel decision making. When an abortion is to be considered post twenty weeks, we urge the decision be made by a panel representing expert opinion, rather than based on the opinion of 'two doctors who believe the abortion is appropriate'.

5. Conscientious objection. We urge the inclusion of a conscientious objection clause for health professionals.

In suggesting these amendments the Bioethics Committee made clear its belief that women who have abortions should not be condemned: "We do not condemn women who have abortions. We believe, however, that the church and other agencies should work proactively in offering information and support to vulnerable women and their families in order to reduce the perceived need for abortions; and to offer compassionate support for women after an abortion."

The Victorian Parliament, in approving the Abortion Law Reform Bill 2008, did not pass one amendment.

A great deal of energy has been expended by many people in arguing the case against the abortion bill, and now that it is law one is left with a feeling of frustrated exhaustion. However perhaps one observation does need to be made after the result.

To my knowledge in the debate about the Abortion Bill, no one disputed that what would be aborted was human life. Nor have I heard anyone dispute that each person passes through different stages of development throughout their life;

an embryonic stage, a fetal stage, a neonatal stage, an adolescent stage and so forth. In view of this I simply do not understand how, in a society that cherishes human rights, the most vulnerable and blameless can be left unprotected.

*Ross Carter*

## Letter: Revelation in images and words

Sir,  
I am writing as the priest responsible for the Anglican congregation in Minlaton and a former Uniting Church Minister of the Word in response to some comments by Philip Cook of Minlaton in the September issue of your magazine. I picked up the magazine at Corny Point which is an Anglican and Uniting Church congregation worshipping together and also forms part of my pastoral responsibility. In these comments he made some exaggerated claims regarding this congregation.

We do indeed have stained glass windows in the church depicting the seven signs from the Gospel according to St. John, each one linked with one of the seven stages of grain production on the Yorke Peninsula. And we will soon be dedicating a new window in relation to our congregation at Mt. Rat. The seven windows, which would be those to which Philip Cook refers, do nothing more and nothing less than proclaim the story of Jesus as presented in the Gospel according to St. John. If anyone would be interested in seeing these they are on our website at [www.anglicansonyp.org](http://www.anglicansonyp.org) which also gives a picture of the rest of our life as part of God's people here on the Yorke Peninsula.

Yes, we do have a statue of the Virgin Mary – which has been here

for many years. As a congregation we do not specifically focus on this statue. However, the presence of that statue is an acknowledgement of the special place of Mary as the mother of Jesus in God's saving action. Personally I take quite seriously the idea that God does not do things by accident – and that includes the choice of Mary as the mother of Jesus. A statue such as this is a help for some in focussing their consciousness of the graciousness of God and the humanity of Jesus – both of which are central to our understanding of the gospel in either the Reformed or the Catholic tradition.

As for the candles, I have been in many Uniting Churches which have candles. Candles are used in our baptismal celebrations in both our churches. And I understand that candles have been used in the Minlaton Uniting Church. We have more candles than many Anglican churches, and less than some others. They are a sign of Jesus' presence as the Light of the World.

Philip also referred to people here praying to a plaster statue. I don't know anyone who specifically makes such devotions. However, it is important to remember what is happening when people invoke the saints. They are not praying to a plaster statue, nor raising the saint to the level of God. They are asking someone to pray for them. Now whether or not people believe this to be of value or not, it is insulting to say that prayers are being made to a plaster statue, and false to link it in any sense to idolatry.

I would also very much like to engage Philip Cook on his understanding of Revelation being purely words, but time and space do not permit me to do this.

*The Rev Philip Kissick  
District Priest  
Ministry District of Lower York Peninsula  
Minlaton, South Australia*





# ACC Conference meets for first time in South Australia

'God's Mission in a Post-Christian World' was the theme of the third annual conference attended by nearly 200 people at Coromandel Valley UC, Adelaide from 11-13 September.

Worship, prayer and bible study were integrated with AGM business and presentations by keynote speakers. The Rev Keith Garner, Superintendent Minister of Wesley Mission Sydney preached on 'The Great Commission.'

The Rev Dean Meatheringham, Rural Resource Minister within the SA Synod spoke on 'Regaining our Cutting Edge.' Two ecumenical guests were welcomed. The Very Rev Robert Yule, former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand and minister of Greyfriars in Auckland, spoke on 'The Relevance of the Book of Acts for Christian Mission Today' and Marcia Riordan, Execu-

tive Officer of the Respect Life Office within the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne spoke on 'Respecting Life while Healing the Brokenhearted.'

The presentation and adoption of the ACC Theological Declaration (see p 15) was a highlight of the AGM.

The result of wide consultation and 15 drafts by the Doctrine and Theology Commission it is the basis for the ACC's commitment to teaching, study, mission, ecumenism and confessing movements around the world.

The following people were elected to the National Council: Rev Dr Max Champion (Chair), Rev Stephen Estherby (Deputy Chair), Rev Ivan Kirk (Secretary), Rev Walter Abetz, Pastor Grahame Abrahams, Colin Adam, Rev Dr Ian Breward, Rev Dr Hedley Fihaki, Rev Anne Hibberd, Rev Rod James, Robyn McKay and Rev John Whaley.

*At the ACC conference at Coromandel Valley, clockwise from top: Keynote speaker Keith Garner; Lulu Senituli, convener of the ACC Cross-Cultural Commission; ACC Treasurer Colin Adam. Below: Some serious participation in discussion*

'ACCatalyst' will feature the conference presentation by Keith Garner (below) in its March edition.



# More signs of the times in UCA



## When they say the Lord's Prayer in parliament, does it make any difference at all?

Victoria became an independent colony in 1851. It established a Constitution by 1855 with the first election for the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly held in 1856. An attempt was made that year to have the Lord's Prayer said at each Assembly sitting: this was defeated by two votes. A little later, in 1928, Lt Col (later Sir) George Knox introduced a bill in the Legislative Assembly to have the Lord's prayer said by the Speaker at commencement of each day. In 1927 the then Speaker, Oswald Snowball, had attempted to have such a proposal accepted by regulation but had been denied leave to present it, so Knox introduced a bill in October 1928. His father William had been responsible for the introduction of the Lord's Prayer in the Commonwealth Parliament in 1901. Knox thought it would bring about 'a greater brotherhood and fellowship among honourable members.' George Prendergast (against) pointed out that the Commonwealth principle was that the Speaker 'shall read a prayer' on taking the chair, but it does not prescribe the Lord's prayer.

John Cain (against), an honorary minister, said there have been presiding officers of the Commonwealth parliament who would not approve of the proposal. A 'rationalist' Speaker may not feel able to comply -- they did mention that there was one such in another house. Cain said that politics and religion should not be mixed. "We cannot apply Christian principles to the material things of life. If we were to apply Christian principles to business, modern capitalism would not function."

Frank Keane (against) noted the hypocrisy of the parliament, which had opposed providing 'daily bread' for working men and relief for the unemployed. Concern was felt by some members about having such a prayer and then going back to 'parliamentary behaviour.' James Jewell (against) thought it too sacred to recite in the House, although he said it perhaps twice a day. William McKenzie (in favour) said he repeated it every day. Maurice Blackburn (against) noted "we do not apply Christian remedies to social disorders, nor do we approach the discussion of public questions in a Christian spirit." Some worried about "forgiving those who trespass." What about the police who went on strike in 1923 -- were they forgiven by the parliament? (Six hundred and twenty-five police officers had been dismissed by the government.) Sir William McPherson (in favour) said he had forgiven the former officers, but they could not be re-employed as police.

When in the debate Cain said Knox "may be a pillar of the church," he replied: "I am not." Cain replied that "he should be." Knox thought that the prayer would have a christianising effect upon the House. The problems of parliamentary behaviour (representing the rest of us all too well) remain today. It would be interesting to assess if the ethics of the Assembly were better or worse before 1928 and the subsequent adoption of the Lord's prayer.

In the end, the bill was passed 17 votes (including the Labor Premier Edmon Hogan) to 11. This all took place in what has been described as the most secular country on earth.

*Travis McHarg*



# The untold story of post-abortion trauma

.... and the way of healing

Marcia Riordan

Marcia Riordan is executive officer of Respect Life Office, Melbourne, an agency of the Catholic Church. The article is an edited version of her address at the 2008 conference of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations.

Most people would rather not talk about abortion. Often we know someone who has been involved in an abortion, someone we know and love. We don't wish to further wound them by bringing up the subject. Let me begin by saying that I'm not here to judge or condemn anyone who has been involved in an abortion. Rather, I hope to raise awareness and bring hope.

Too often good people become disheartened and disillusioned about abortion. We might think the debate is too polarised. We might feel we cannot do anything: there is far too much bitterness and despair out there and it is all too hard. And it might be too hard if we were on our own, but as Christians we are not alone. Together we can do great things; we can bring God's love to a broken and hurting world, a world that desperately needs to hear our message.

We should be concerned about abortion because Australia has the third highest rate of surgical abortion after the USA and Turkey in the western world. At least 90,000 abortions occur each year in Australia. One in three Australian women will have an abortion at some stage in their life. Abortion is currently available virtually "on-demand" in Australia and the parliament of Victoria is currently debating its decriminalisation. [A bill

was passed, after the conference, in favor of decriminalisation.] Instead of abortion being a "choice" many women say they felt obliged to choose abortion. Often they were not even offered an alternative and felt

abandoned or coerced into abortion by boyfriends and parents.

We are learning more from women who have experienced an abortion. Canberra journalist Melinda Tankard-Reist has written a book about Australian women who were traumatised by abortion, who suffered lasting emotional shock, who were unprepared for the intense suffering they would experience. Many of the stories are bleak, heart breaking and disturbing. *Giving Sorrow Words* includes the personal accounts of 18 women and draws on the experiences of more than 200 others.

Since writing her book Melinda has heard from hundreds of other women. The book has sold out twice and a documentary is on the way. I encourage you to read this book. It provides many valuable insights. I have met many of the women in it, and others who have suffered an abortion.

This is an excerpt from *Giving Sorrow Words*. Elizabeth had an abortion in 1973. She says



Marcia Riordan at the ACC Conference



“The aftermath was a numbness I hadn’t anticipated. I was numb, hollow, dead and so heavy with sorrow. The feeling didn’t go with time as my delighted mother assured me it would. I grew morose, bitter, very sad, so heavy with sadness that I can’t describe it. I became very different... cheap. I’d sleep with almost anyone. I drank heavily. I didn’t care what happened to me and I tried several times to commit suicide. For ten years this went on. I cried every day, I stayed as drunk as I could for as long as I could and I hated myself and everyone else. I used to dream about the child I’d lost... I wanted my child.

“I love it, cherished it, yearned for its birth, missed it when it was taken from me and to this day, twenty-six years later, feel the tragic heaviness of time. My only consolation is that one day when I die, our souls may re-unite.”

Many women believe they will never be forgiven; they think they have committed the ‘ultimate sin’ :

“I have paid the ultimate price. I have to live with myself. I have to look at myself and know it was my choice. I did it. I hate my husband... The worst part of the pain is there is no one to share it with, I wouldn’t tell anyone and my husband, being a typical man, just shuts down and gets on with things. He doesn’t know why I’m still going on about it. I can’t believe I did it, I wish I could go back... I will never be forgiven for what I did.”

**M**any women who have experienced an abortion find they are unable to share their grief with anyone. The abortion clinics and women’s counselling centres don’t welcome them. They are often made to feel there is something wrong with them, that she is the only one that feels this way. Often too they find it hard to talk to family and friends who may have encouraged them to have an abortion. Often they fear approaching church based communities thinking they will be judged and condemned.

Abortion is not a new problem for Christians. There is evidence that abortion and female infanticide were

widely practised by the pagan Greeks and Romans.

But the Christian sub-culture of the time was radically counter-cultural. It seems that the first Christians changed the attitudes and the prevailing culture of their time. Let us hope we may do it once more.

In December 2000 I was appointed by Archbishop George Pell to establish First Respect Life Office in Australia, under the direction of Fr Anthony Fisher. The Melbourne Respect Life Office was the first of its type in Australia and was modelled on similar offices in the USA. We now have offices in the Catholic archdioceses of Perth, Sydney, Adelaide and Brisbane. Some smaller dioceses like Townsville have Respect Life Committees. In time it is hoped every parish will have a Respect Life contact.

Our work in the Life Offices has been largely inspired by the personal witness of Pope John Paul II and his great encyclical on human life, *Evangelium Vitae*, or the Gospel of Life. If we have a mission statement, this is it.

John Paul II reminds us that the Gospel and the Gospel of Life are not two messages but one. He says Gospel of Life is at the heart of Jesus’ message and is to be preached as the “good news” to people of every age and culture. The source of this great joy is the Birth of the Saviour, but he says Christmas also reveals the full meaning of every human birth. “By his incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every human being.” “This saving event reveals to humanity not only the boundless love of God who ‘so loved the world that he gave his only Son’ (Jn 3:16) but also the incomparable value of every human person.” John Paul writes “the Gospel of God’s love for man, the Gospel of the dignity of the person and the Gospel of life are a single and indivisible Gospel.”

John Paul has given us a much better and deeper understanding of the issues we are facing. He has helped us realise that we are involved in a dramatic battle between two different cultures. One he described as the “culture of death” which tends to reject life, and is evident in

increasing acts of violence, terrorism, euthanasia, abortion, human cloning, and IVF. Importantly he shows how these issues are linked and all attack human life. They lead to alienation and despair. He says the twentieth century was an era of massive attacks on life. The opposite is the ‘culture of life’. In this culture, every human life is welcomed, honoured, and respected: every life has a purpose and is intended for eternity.

**P**ope John Paul II has also given us key pastoral insights into the problem of abortion. He says it is not enough to just say no to abortion—we must offer help. “Jesus, as the ‘physician of the body and spirit,’ was sent by the Father to proclaim the good news to the poor and to heal the broken hearted.” A key passage in John Paul II’s encyclical, written especially to women who have experienced an abortion, is this one :

The Church is aware of the many factors which may have influenced your decision; she does not doubt that in many cases it was a painful and even shattering decision. The wound in your heart may not yet have healed. Certainly what happened remains wrong. But do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope. Try rather to understand what happened and face it honestly. If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance.

The Father of mercies is ready to give you His peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. You will come to understand that nothing is definitively lost and you will also be able to ask for forgiveness from your child who is now living with the Lord. With the friendly and expert help and advice of other people, and (through) ... your own painful experience, you can be among the most eloquent defenders of everyone’s right to life... You will become promoters of a new way of looking at human life.

These words are not words of condemnation but tenderness, compassion and hope. He is not saying abortion is now okay: that it

is not always a grave matter. He is saying the opposite. The experience of many men and women who have experienced an abortion confirms this.

In an interview with an Italian journalist, John Paul II offered some insights into solving the problem of abortion. This series of interviews was later published in 1994 under the title *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. He writes:

“It is necessary to become courageously ‘pro-woman’, promoting a choice that is truly in favour of women. It is precisely the woman who pays the highest price, not only for her motherhood, but even more for its destruction, for the suppression of the life of the child who has been conceived. The only honest stance, in these cases is that of radical solidarity with the woman. It is not right to leave her alone. The experiences of many counselling centres show that the woman does not want to suppress the life of the child she carries within her. If she is supported in this attitude, and if at the same time she is freed from the intimidation of those around her, then she is even capable of heroism.”

A number of key people in the pro-life movement in the United States responded to Pope John Paul II’s call, although it appears they were already heading in a similar direction before *Evangelium Vitae* was published. These included Frederica Mathewes-Green who published *Real Choices: Listening to Women: Looking for Alternatives to Abortion* in 1994. Frederica researched what was driving women to seek abortion in the first place and what it might take to break the cycle of violence. She surveyed pregnancy counsellors and the women who sought help from pregnancy centres and listened to women who had abortions. A new conversion had begun.

David Reardon’s *Making Abortion Rare: A Healing Strategy for a Divided Nation* was another landmark work, published in 1996. He made what was a radical claim at the time that

post-abortion issues were the key to converting hearts—the key to winning the battle for life, that every aspect of the pro-life battle could be transformed and energized by better understanding of post-abortion issues.

Paul Swope’s article in *First Things*, ‘Abortion: A failure to communicate’ was another key work. He analysed the effectiveness of pro-life strategies to date and made a number of suggestions, based on research and experience, about how we could reach those who had so far not heard our message—how we might persuade women to choose life and how we could better take our message to the world.

The 1990s saw a major rethink of the pro-life message, especially in the US. Key leaders started to ask hard questions. For instance they were puzzled – how could women (and the public) be against abortion personally yet in favour of keeping it legal? Many people also saw abortion as a ‘necessary evil.’ We have seen signs of a similar attitude in Australia from the survey evidence.

Key pro-life leaders realised that the pro-life message had convinced many that the fetus was a person, not just a blob of tissues, yet this was still not converting into opposition to abortion or into women choosing life for their child. They also realised that the public debate over abortion also tended to pit women against children, with children often viewed as the enemy. They realised too that, in the past, pro-lifers thought that they just had to convince the public of the humanity of the unborn. Yet it was proving to be much more complicated.

Research done around this time in the US found that many women do not see any good coming from an “unplanned pregnancy.” They do not think the way a pro-life person thinks, especially if they are feeling alone, abandoned, fearful and panicky. Instead the researchers found that such women perceive the unplanned pregnancy as a “death of self” and abortion as the less of three evils, the three ‘evils’ being motherhood, adoption and abortion. They may often weigh up the choice as “either

my life is over or the life of this new child is over.” They may view motherhood as a loss of control over their life and may not be able to think rationally. In such instances abortion may be viewed as the way to self-preservation, as the way to ‘getting on with her life’.

The researchers also found that the emphasis on babies, whether dismembered fetuses or happy newborns, tends to deepen the women’s sense of denial, isolation and despair—the very emotions that will drive her to choose abortion. They found that the pro-life movement’s tendency in the past to focus almost exclusively on the unborn child, not the mother, tended to build resentment, not sympathy, particularly among younger women. This led these women to view the pro-life movement as judgmental and uncaring about them and their situation. (An image, which the media is only too happy to exploit!) For a more detailed explanation see Paul Swope’s article “Abortion: A failure to communicate,” published in *First Things*.

These new strategies have been called ‘women centred’. They aim to reduce the acceptance and incidence of abortion by drawing attention to the harm that abortion does, not to the fetus, but to the woman who aborts. They begin with the claim the most women neither want nor benefit from abortion but are pressured into it by others and then experience a range of negative physical and psychological effects after abortion. They are not a compromise or sell-out to the pro-abortionists. More than anything they are a change in emphasis.

They are being used to try to redefine the abortion debate in terms of the legitimate needs of women rather than an exclusive focus on the unborn. Proponents aim to directly limit the harm that abortion causes women by addressing issues of consent and by minimizing coercion, promoting practical assistance to

*Continued on page 24*

# The ACC Theological Declaration

A trumpet blast  
for Christian faith





On August 12, 2008, the National Council of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations adopted the following landmark theological declaration.



### *Preamble*

**W**e, the members of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations (ACC) within the United Church in Australia (UCA), make this declaration at a time when mainline denominations are declining through their failure to uphold the historic and apostolic faith committed to the church. We believe they have surrendered to our culture's values and the lure of alien gospels.

We pray that the UCA will resist captivity to cultural forces by upholding the apostolic faith defined in its own Basis of Union. We affirm the Basis of Union as the UCA's foundational document. Our constant desire is the reform, renewal and reconciliation of the whole church under the Word of God.

### **1. The gospel as public truth**

The church confesses that in Jesus Christ God has entered into the world. Through the prophets God promised Israel that he would gather all nations to himself, fulfilling this promise by ending the old social order and bringing into being a new order. We confess that, in his incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus Christ embodies the renewed world as a sign of hope for all humanity. Those who follow Christ participate in this newness of life while awaiting its full consummation. We therefore declare God's truth in Jesus Christ as the judgment and renewal of communal life. To this end we believe the church is commissioned to remind the world that it is called to glorify God and embody God's purpose for humankind.

In declaring the public reality of God's new order we reject the following notions:

- that Christianity is merely a system of private values;
- that Christianity is merely one among many forms of spirituality;
- that Christians and Christian communities have the right to determine the nature of truth apart from their relationship to God in Christ;
- that human sexuality can be

determined by individuals in contradiction to the biblical witness of humankind's creation as male and female in the image of God; and

that Christians should desist from public discussion about war and peace, the plight of refugees, euthanasia, abortion, global warming, and other significant issues.

### **2. The One whom we confess**

We confess Jesus Christ as Lord to the glory of God the Father. He is the incarnate Word of God, the second person of the Trinity, attested by the Spirit in prophetic and apostolic witness as Israel's Messiah, and the one Lord and Saviour of the world. He fulfils God's promises to Israel and, as Word and Sacrament, orders the life of the church for the sake of all humankind.

In his life and death Jesus Christ presented to his heavenly Father atonement for sin and the one complete, perfect offering of obedience and worship which the Father had always sought but which humankind had persistently failed to offer. He did this in our flesh and blood, and in our stead and on our behalf. Accordingly for our sake the Father, through the Spirit, raised him from the dead. The gospel is thus the word of new life for all humankind, whom the Son represented in his death and resurrection.

Therefore we rejoice in the triune God of love and confess anew the centrality of the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.

We confess that God's coming in Jesus Christ alone is the answer to human despair and futility. For God, in the risen, crucified One, has judged our human brokenness and alienation and rebellion against God; and has delivered us into the freedom and love of the Holy Trinity. In Christ history is transformed and humankind forgiven.

Therefore, baptized into the life of Christ, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, our lives are transformed.

We believe no human disorder lies outside the inclusive redemption completed in Christ through the sanctifying love of the triune God, who is the



**Theology Commission Chair Dr Rosalie Hudson**

world's future. What we and the creation shall be has already taken place in Christ who is the consummation of all things. Only as people of Christ can we anticipate the future and proclaim the hope of Christ's reconciliation to the world.

Therefore we reject any notion that Jesus Christ is one sage among others in human history, or that the Christian faith is simply one path among others to the 'god behind all gods'.

### **3. The confession of the church:**

The unity of the church is founded on the confession of one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all. As a consequence of the cross of Christ, the Father, through the Son, has poured out the promised Holy Spirit on the church. We are thus enabled, through the Spirit, to participate in the Son's worship of the Father.

Christ has sealed his undying love for the church in the visible signs of baptism and Holy Communion which, with the Word, are the promised means of conveying and sustaining the new life in the Spirit. In her worship and communion with the Trinity the church receives the apostolic commission to make disciples of all nations. The mission of the Trinity is to embrace all things through the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. The salvation of persons takes place within the scope of God's plan for the world.

In adherence to the Basis of Union we confess our collusion with sin individually, and the sins of our fractured and deficient communities of family,

society and nation. We have participated in the church's fall into deeper unfaithfulness. We acknowledge that it is only by God's grace that we are being freed to confess our faith and our sins along with

the whole historic church.

We acknowledge sin to be not merely human inadequacy or immaturity nor a primitive notion unworthy of an enlightened humanity. Sin is rebellion against God and rejection of divine grace.

In acknowledging our sin we are confident not in our confession but in Christ the Lord who confesses our sins on our behalf and bears our guilt on the cross. He is the Intercessor, our great High Priest, who identifies with us, representing us before the Father, calling a transformed community of faith to fulfil its mission. In response to Christ's redeeming love we are set free to confess our sins and to turn anew to our neighbour.

Therefore we reject the notion that life in Christ removes the need to participate in his body, the church; and to repent of sin.

### **4. The witness of Holy Scripture**

The church receives the scriptures of both Old and New Testament as the unique witness of the apostles and prophets to Jesus Christ who is the Word of God by whom the church is constantly reformed. This witness of apostle and prophet is neither deceived nor deceiving, neither confused nor incoherent; in human form it is God's testimony to the divine will and purpose. The same Trinitarian God is present in the witness of both the Old and New Testaments. Accordingly we commit ourselves to read the Holy Scripture in a community of love, trusting in the Holy Spirit to empower the text to penetrate our

lives and create that truth whose form is Jesus Christ among us. We welcome the work of biblical scholars and interpreters throughout history, which makes the witness of scripture contemporary through the same Spirit.

Therefore we reject any suggestion that this unique testimony can be interpreted by any 'authority' other than the biblical witness itself through the work of the Holy Spirit.

### **5. Faith and ethics**

For Christians ethics refers to the way God shapes us and the whole creation through his action in Jesus Christ. Ethics is therefore inseparable from doctrine. When God acted in Jesus Christ he revealed himself as both the life of humanity and the life of God. Consequently, in Christ we know human life to be wonderfully free and deeply sacrificial. Life in Christ takes place within God's purpose for all creation, binding us in solidarity with all others. This freedom is both the future goal of God's redemptive action for the world and his plan already bearing fruit through the proclamation of the gospel.

Therefore we reject the notion that ethics is a matter of personal preference or individual rights.

### **Conclusion**

We make this declaration inviting all who seek to be obedient to Christ to submit again to his authority attested in Holy Scripture and acknowledged by the church in the ecumenical creeds and the historic documents named in the Basis of Union (paragraph 10).

With the Basis of Union of the church (paragraph 4), we confess and acknowledge anew our faith 'that the Church is able to live and endure through the changes of history only because its Lord comes, addresses, and deals with people in and through the news of his completed work. Christ who is present when he is preached among people is the Word of God who acquits the guilty, who gives life to the dead and who brings into being what otherwise could not exist'. Even so, 'Come Lord Jesus' (Rev 22:20).



# THE BOOK OF ACTS

## A handbook for evangelism today

Rob Yule

**T**he Book of Acts is relevant for Christians mission today because it describes the origin and spread of the early Christian movement, in a situation similar to our own, and contains enduring but neglected lessons for us today.

A widely ignored aspect of the book is that it sets out the original meaning of conversion. Peter's Pentecost message was the first time in history that enquirers were counselled to respond to Jesus (2: 37-38).

This should be our benchmark for what constitutes evangelism, conversion and counselling for Christian commitment. Too seldom do we assess contemporary models for evangelism in the light of this passage.

Peter accused the Jewish leaders of murdering their long-awaited Messiah. God accredited Jesus by signs and wonders but they discredited him by having him crucified (2:22). The resurrection was God's reversal of their rejection. Peter's bold preaching produced a conviction of wrongdoing in his hearers. They cried out in words that are every evangelist's dream : Friends, what shall we do? (2:37 CEV)

Peter didn't reply with Bill Bright's four spiritual laws but with the four spiritual doors of David Pawson's approach. They are : repent from sin; believe in Jesus; be baptised in water; receive the Holy Spirit. Pawson calls these the 'normal Christian birth'. This was the foursquare challenge of early evangelism. Today each aspect is emphasised by a different branch of the church : repentance by the Catholic confessional, faith by evangelical churches, baptism by Baptists and the Holy Spirit by

In a comprehensive address to the annual ACC conference in Adelaide, Rob Yule described the pattern of mission found in The Book of Acts. Rob Yule is a minister and former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa in New Zealand. His paper is edited for publication. Citations are from the biblical book of Acts, unless otherwise indicated.

Pentecostals. Each is right in what it affirms but wrong in what it denies, creating needless confusion for new believers.

**A**cts sets out the original dynamic of mission by starting in Jerusalem and ending in Rome. The Christian movement spread in ever-expanding circles of influence from Jewish to gentile lands and finally to the capital. A Jewish and provincial movement reached out to Rome, the centre of the superpower of the day. This remarkable expansion is attributed to the Holy Spirit, and the book could just as well be titled the Acts of the Holy Spirit. Throughout it is the Spirit who initiates mission, orchestrating circumstances, deploying people, changing attitudes, prodding the reluctant.

Special actions of the Spirit are recorded at 2: 1-41; 6: 1-7; 8: 26-40; 10: 1-48 and 13: 1-3 (the start of Paul's first missionary journey).

The most amazing period of mission I've been privileged to be part of was a work of the Holy Spirit in the years 1989-91 in St. Albans, Palmerston North. This saw the closest to a revival I have ever known. There was interest in mission among

university students and young adults that spontaneously went all over the world. It began with a prophecy : 'What I am giving you is for export only ... If you continue to give I will give to you. If you cease giving, I will cease giving to you.' The Spirit drew our attention, enabled us to set up a mission support group, led me to Eastern Europe and initiated outreach in the Czech Republic after the fall of communism. Eighteen St. Albans people have gone overseas to serve God since then. One couple is church-planting among the Uighurs of Central Asia. Another is overseeing a team in the heartland of Islam.

**A**cts describes a situation similar to ours in the western churches. We have seen the waning of Eurocentric Christendom and the secularisation of western countries. No longer dominant, Christians are a minority movement in an increasingly indifferent pluralistic society, vying for a hearing in a competitive market of ideas and beliefs.

We can no longer rely on people to come to church. Every church and every Christian must be active in reaching out to share their faith and bring people to Christ. Like ripples in a pond, Jesus' mission radiates



outwards from the centre to the circumference in widening circles of influence, as Acts states : 'You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth.'

Jesus challenges every church to adopt a seamless mission from the church door to the ends of the earth. Mission is the responsibility of every church and every Christian. A sign should be placed over the exit of every church – You are now entering the mission field.

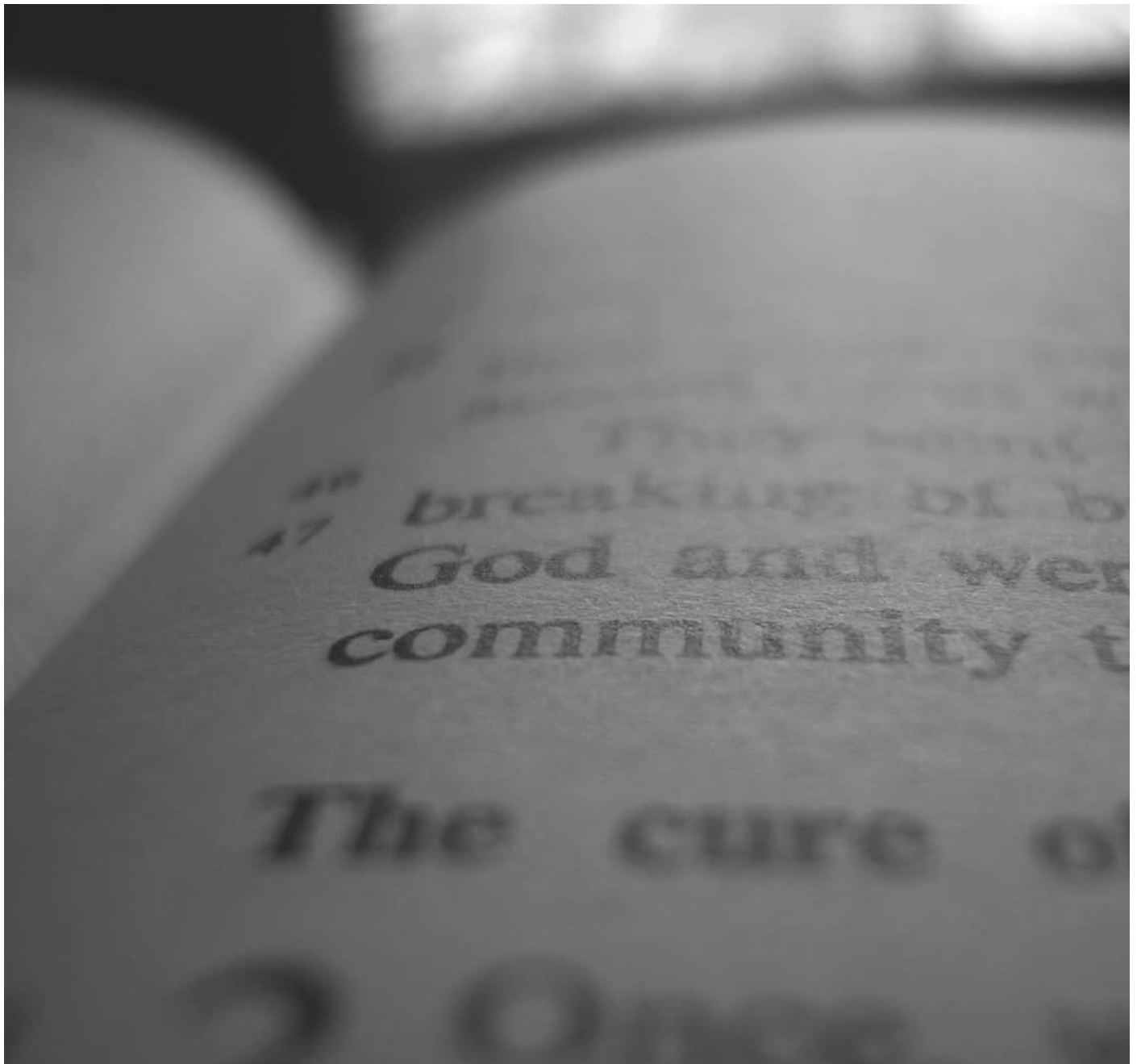
Acts set out an enduring pattern for mission today. Roland Allen, writing early in the 20th century, was far ahead of his time. His brief service with the Anglican Society for

the Propagation of the Gospel's north China mission led him to question many traditional assumptions. When illness forced him to return to England in 1904 he took charge of a parish, but resigned in 1907 in protest against the rule that he must baptise any child presented for the sacrament, whether or not the parents had any Christian commitment.

This experience led Allen to radically assess the theology, practice and missionary methods of western churches from the standpoint of Acts and Paul's letters. He advocated churches that were self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing. Church life should adapt to local

conditions, not merely imitate western Christianity. Missionaries should hand control to local leaders rather than trained and paid professional clergy. He criticised western missionaries for paternalistic and protective attitudes and failure to trust the Holy Spirit to guide the development of new churches.

Allen's radical ideas had little impact in his day, but two of his books *Missionary Methods : St. Paul's or ours?* (1912) and *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church and the Causes which hinder it* (1927) caused them to be rediscovered in the 1960s. His work is exercising a belated but growing influence today.



His books argue that Acts is not just an historical record, but a manual for church mission and growth today. David Pawson distils Allen's insights into a seven-point strategy we can follow today.

**Point one.** The word 'apostle' means 'sent one' or 'messenger'. It is almost equivalent to missionary. The commissioning of Paul and Barnabas (13: 1-3) is a pattern we should follow today. The early church sent out its best people so that the good news would be widely known. Impulse and support for mission should come from the local church. That is, every local church that is open to the Holy Spirit will find its own unique niche in global mission.

**Point two.** Paul was a great strategist. He aimed not just to win individual converts but to plant influential regional churches in the major metropolitan centres of the Empire, like Antioch, Philippi, Corinth, Ephesus and Rome. Cities like Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth or Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, Palmerston North, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin dominate the culture, commerce and politics of their surrounding regions. Establishing churches in them ensures a widespread ripple effect and ongoing influence.

**Point three.** Paul was a wise practitioner also. He was a sensitive communicator who sought to understand the local culture and relate his message accordingly. To Jews he became a Jew; to gentiles he became a gentile, to win them. If we want to win people to Jesus Christ we need to be winsome, full of grace as well as truth, and share our faith in an attractive manner. With the uneducated farmers of Lycaonia Paul spoke about nature and their agricultural way of life (14: 15-17). In Athens he acquainted himself with the Athenians' love of philosophy, art and culture. He used the altar 'to an Unknown God' as a point of contact for his message (17: 22-23).

**Point four.** Paul and his colleagues stayed for months or two years long enough to make a difference. Modern evangelists are

itinerant, typically staying only a few nights or weeks in any one place. Making disciples, personal mentoring, takes time, before new believers are established enough in their faith to fend for themselves.

**Point five.** Paul not only won individuals for Christ, he planted churches and established bridgehead communities of believers. He would stay in one place long enough not only to make converts but to train them as part of a self-replicating regional church, knowing they would continue to evangelise after he left.

**Point six.** Elders were appointed to lead local communities, so that churches could be self-governing and not dependent on their founder. It seems they were appointed by show of hands of the whole congregation after nomination by the apostles.

**Point seven.** Once churches were established with local leadership, the church planters moved on. This is crucial if churches are to be weaned from minister-dependence. Ministerial over-stayers are one of the most crippling factors in church life and growth. The highest sustained attendance reached in my former Palmerston North church occurred during ten weeks when I was released in 1966 to teach at a Bible school in the Czech Republic.

Paul's churches were self-propagating, self-governing and self-supporting. He worked at a trade so as not to be a financial burden on his fledgling churches, and refused to let them become emotionally or spiritually dependent on him as well. This combination of strategic vision and sacrificial life style made Paul the greatest missionary of the early church.

Almost single-handedly he was responsible for Christianity not remaining a messianic sect of Judaism but becoming a world-wide movement. He evangelised the entire Roman empire in the east from Jerusalem to Rome by way of three epic missionary journeys in the space of a mere twenty years. The story occupies the second half of Acts. His example is a challenge and inspiration to us as we grapple with the relevance of Acts for Christian mission today. □

## Rev Macnab commands publicity

The Rev Dr Francis Macnab, minister of St Michael's UC Melbourne, recently caused uproar when he launched a 'new faith for the twenty first century' which denies belief in an interventionist God, the divinity of Christ and the 10 commandments. St Michael's outlaid \$120,000 to promote the new faith.

Two billboards saying 'THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, THE MOST NEGATIVE DOCUMENT EVER WRITTEN' (they were in capitals on signs) were erected above major freeways.

The Synod of Victoria and Tasmania overwhelmingly resolved to request St Michael's to remove the signs and other media related to its campaign and to issue an apology for causing 'deep offence to many Christians, Jews and Muslims.'

The Moderator the Rev Jason Kioa issued a statement reaffirming the central place of the Basis of Union and expressing concern that the views expressed by Dr Macnab seem to 'discard much of what has been accepted for 2,000 years as orthodox Christian belief' and 'be outside the teachings of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.'

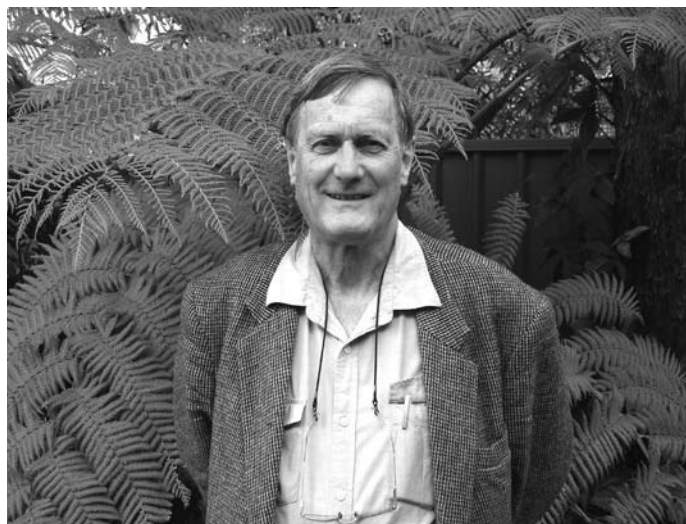
News of the controversy has spread to other Synods. A large number of written complaints have been made by ministers and laypeople, including members of Assembly of Confessing Congregations.

Paragraph 3.2 of the Code of Ethics and Ministerial Practice for Uniting Church ministers requires them 'to uphold the theological and liturgical tradition of the church' and 'live out of the vision of the Basis of Union.' This implies and assumes that Ministers of the Word adhere to the Basis of Union.

# Deep theological differences remain: ACC report

The second consultation was held on 13 October following the first on 3-4 February (as reported in *ACCatalyst*, March edition).

ACC leaders Rev Dr Max Champion, Rev Dr Ian Breward and Dr Rosalie Hudson were among those present to discuss papers by Rev Prof Christiaan Mostert and Rev Dr Bill Loader. The agreed report of the consultation was presented to the Assembly Standing Committee at its



**An ACC representative at the consultation, the church historian Dr Ian Breward**

meeting on 15-16 November 2008 and is published on the website as follows:

‘During the recent meeting of the ACC a report was presented on the second colloquium on sexuality and leadership. It was reported by Rev Dr Wes Campbell, the Convenor of the Doctrine Working Group, that fundamental theological differences of opinion remain with respect to issues concerning same-gender relationships. The Doctrine Working Group will continue with its theological work.’

This brief report suggests that the main differences of opinion concern ‘same-gender’ relationships. Several attempts were made at

the consultation, and in suggested amendments to the report, to emphasise that the dispute is not about homosexual orientation or same-gender relationships per se; it concerns homosexual intercourse and the implications of such practice for the church’s leadership.

The full report of the consultation can be found (after some searching) on the Assembly website.

In the interests of accessibility and transparency the report has also been published on the ACC website together with a submission presented to the consultation by the three members of the ACC (see below.) These documents clearly show the gulf which divided the participants both in theological understanding and on the processes to be followed in trying to resolve

the dispute.

The whole church should be made aware that the issue of sexuality and leadership is far from resolved.

*The documents mentioned above can be viewed at [www.confessingcongregations.com](http://www.confessingcongregations.com)*

## Reforming Alliance winds up

At the AGM of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations on 12 September it was decided to wind up

the Reforming Alliance.

RA was formed in September 2003 at a meeting held at Newtown Mission, Sydney in response to the decision of the Tenth Assembly that incompatible views on sexuality and leadership could co-exist within the UCA.

In 2004 RA sponsored a motion on sexuality and leadership which was sent to RA congregations in the hope that they might make submissions to their Presbyteries ahead of the 2006 Assembly.

Remarkably, seven Presbyteries and the Queensland Synod adopted the motion in its entirety as their recommendation to Assembly.

RA also received legal advice, which was conveyed to Senior Officers of the UCA and the Assembly Standing Committee, that the decisions of the 2003 and 2006 Assemblies were irregular and contrary to the doctrine of the Church.

Despite the ACC’s refusal to provide RA with legal advice or to engage in constructive talks or mediation, the RA Executive continued to seek resolution of the matter in a spirit of conciliation.

Unfortunately, this has not been reciprocated. As a result, RA would have had to spend unacceptably large sums of money at this stage if the matter were to be resolved at court – something it has always regarded as a last resort.

The financial, material and legal assets of RA, so generously provided by members, have been transferred to the ACC, thus ensuring that the resources, income and advice which have enriched the work of RA will be used, as necessary, to pursue similar objectives in the life of the UCA.

Since the formation of the ACC in 2006 it has also been difficult to maintain and explain the separate identities of two closely related evangelical groups within the UCA. Concentrating energies into one body will make for greater effectiveness of the reforming movement within the UCA and eliminate confusion in the minds of members and ecumenical supporters.



# One challenge to a serious Christian out to change today's world is Neither a conservative nor a liberal be ....

Max Champion

Updating a literary classic for modern times, chairman Max Champion told conference-goers at the recent ACC national conference in South Australia that there are a surprising lessons to be learned by looking at the different journeys of John Bunyan's metaphorical characters Christian, Legality and Pliable in *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

These few days we are focusing on God's mission in a world which has largely snubbed God. Not least of the reasons for this is that many people are suspicious of the era of Christian missions. Wrongly, or rightly, they think of missionaries as narrow-minded in their approach to non-Christians.

Our text – the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few (Matthew 7:13-14) – seems to support this view. The 'narrow way' isn't a happy image in a society that prides itself on being open and tolerant of all beliefs and life-styles. It suggests fanaticism and sectarianism.

But what if the image, used in the context of Jesus' ministry and mission, actually draws us to a distinctive way of life that is incomparably rich and full? What if, instead of being life-denying, it points to the fulness of life? The 'narrow way,' as embodied in Christ,

would then be life-affirming – richly blessed, immensely challenging and wonderfully subversive.

A careful consideration of the

context in which the saying occurs in Matthew points us in this direction. The 'narrow way' of Jesus is radical, non-conformist and liberating. The

text comes at the end of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount in which disciples are summoned to 'hunger and thirst after righteousness.'

In response to God's grace in Christ, disciples are called to be 'non conformists' who practice a 'magnificent righteousness' that springs, not from fanaticism, but from sheer gratitude. Being a 'non conformist' in this sense is to follow the 'narrow way of Jesus' and to be bearers of God's missionary love for the world.

Thus Christians are called to serve the world by following Jesus who took the 'narrow way' to the Cross and the Resurrection. This way is hazardous. We are tempted on all sides to turn away. But it is also rewarding. We are privileged to accompany Christ on this narrow path for the sake of the world.



ACC Chair Max Champion

*Continued next page*



The promise and hardship of Christian discipleship is wonderfully expressed in *The Pilgrim's Progress* written by John Bunyan from an English prison cell in 1678 where Bunyan explores the way in which God's grace frees us from sin and puts us on the narrow path of discipleship.

You know the story. 'Christian' decides to leave the City of Destruction, full of ungodly characters, and go to the Eternal City, full of mercy, goodness and joy. Along the way he is ridiculed, tested and challenged by dubious characters and creatures and called back to the 'narrow way' by sympathetic fellows, like Evangelist.

Early on 'Christian' meets two characters, Pliable and Legality. They are typical of folk who walk away from the Gospel. Pliable is attracted by the prospect of eternal happiness but, at the first sign of trouble, gets despondent and goes home. Legality, son of Civility and citizen of Morality (a subtle touch), tries to 'justify himself by doing the works of the law.' His house is built on a hill so steep it can't be climbed.

Pliable wants Christianity to be acceptable but doesn't have the desire or courage to leave his 'comfort zone.' He wants mission to be an adventure, but only if he's swimming in the mainstream, not against the stream. He readily adapts to 'popular culture'

and baulks at opposing the dark forces which dishonor God and threaten our God-given dignity. He is like many liberals.

Legality is committed to the moral life. He is keen on holiness and righteousness and speaks out against immorality and ungodliness. Unlike Pliable, he stands against popular culture, knowing that mission can be hard. So he steels himself to oppose wrong by doing what is decent and righteous. However, putting trust in his own 'righteousness,' he sees no need to believe in God's costly grace and the triumphant defeat of evil in Christ. He is like many conservatives.

In contrast to both of these paths, the 'narrow way' is marked by freedom! In Christ we are set free from the power of sin to bear witness in Church and society to God's costly grace in the 'magnificent righteousness' of Christ.

This is never easy. Certainly not today! False prophets, like Pliable, protest the narrowness of the Cross and Resurrection and promote a more inclusive faith and more flexible approach to what is right.

False prophets, like Legality, are complacent about their faith and goodness.

Both groups – progressives and conservatives – build on shallow foundations of their own making which can't support the life-

affirming faith and counter-cultural righteousness of the 'narrow way' to which Christ calls the Church.

There is something unsettling about reflecting on this text. Despite frequent references in the *Uniting Church* to being a 'pilgrim people,' many Church members don't think of themselves as 'pilgrims' on a perilous mission in a hostile world. That's the risk missionaries take.

**W**e are living in perilous times, made more dangerous because beliefs about what is right, good and faithful are being drastically re-shaped in quiet and underhand ways. The Victorian Government is now introducing laws to approve a relationships register, physician-assisted suicide and abortion – which undermine the Church's faith in God's grace-and-righteousness embodied in Christ, and the ethics which flow from being members of the Body of Christ.

In the circumstances, it is natural, like 'Christian,' to become despondent. Missionary work in a nominally Christian country like Bunyan's and ours can be very hard. But help is at hand.

There is a delightful moment in *Pilgrim's Progress* when Evangelist farewells Christian after another near failure to stand firm. Before he continues on the 'narrow way,' 'Evangelist kissed him, gave him a smile, and bid him Godspeed.'

A kiss, a smile and a blessing: the 'narrow way' of Christ is not without its benefits! 'Mission in Christ's Way,' as Bishop Lesslie Newbigin put it, can be hard, particularly in a society which is nominally 'Christian.'

Therefore, as we consider what it means for us to be missionaries, let us be encouraged by our fellow pilgrims in the Assembly of Confessing Congregations whom God has provided for our life together. And let us, with joy and gratitude, remember that whatever our difficulties, we are accepted by God's grace embodied in Jesus and summoned to 'hunger and thirst after righteousness' in the manner of the 'narrow way' of Christ. □

“

**Progressives and conservatives build on shallow foundations that can't support the counter-cultural 'narrow way'**

*Continued from page 6*

discovery of the law of gravity, were merely part of an ongoing human effort to understand the handiwork of God. Far from opposing faith, Newton engaged in personal theological musings which run to thousands of pages of little-read manuscripts.

As for the 'Christian war against Darwin,' Stark argues the war was begun by the atheists. Indeed, it was a small group of ideological militants, including TH Huxley, who promoted Darwin's insights in the hope of crushing religion.

Huxley eagerly predicted that in future, science would hold its foot against the neck of religion: this he deemed an enticing prospect. (If Huxley had known of them, he might have enjoyed the later persecutions of Christians by militant atheists under Communism in the USSR, but unfortunately he died in 1895.)

Far from starting the war against Darwin, Christians of the 'natural theology' school in fact welcomed the new scientific work contained in *The Origin of Species*. Stark has compiled a "star chart" of famous scientists from the Enlightenment period which shows that most of them, like Newton, were devout believers in God.

The idea of permanent and inevitable war between science and religion is utterly false. Only enthusiasm, particularly from the fringes of science and the fringes of Christianity, keeps this phony war alive.

The moral achievements of Christianity – e.g. ending slavery and creating a doctrine of human rights – might be regarded as its finest. But another perspective is possible – that the really great historical achievement of Christianity is creating a culture of science and innovation in the West. Modernity itself is the product of Christianity, and its blessings, such as they are, are "the blessings of rational theology," to use Stark's phrase. These thoughts are still little-recognised in general public discussion in Australia and elsewhere, but they are revolutionary indeed.

*Paul Gray*

# CLARKSON

The media is still charmed by the Obama victory – the first black President – and understandably so.

People remember the long-running black-white conflict which caused the Civil War and cost a third of a million American lives.

People also remember the assassination of America's first anti-slavery President, Abraham Lincoln, and the monumental human rights crusade.

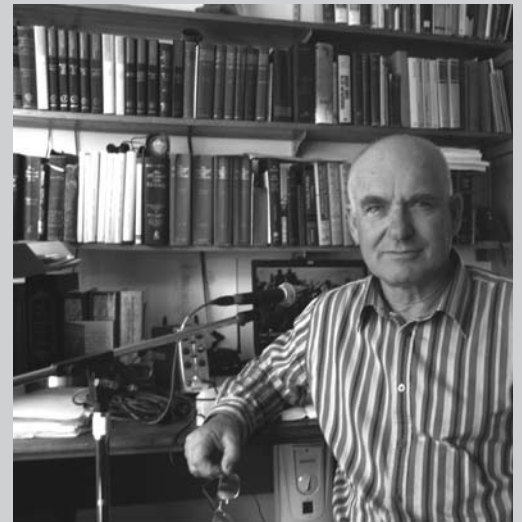
And now we see the election of an Afro-American President.

Someone summed it up brilliantly: Rosa Parks sat, Martin Luther King walked, Barack Obama ran, so our children could fly.

The common factor with these history-makers is that they were gripped by the truth of human dignity.

They were also all either greatly influenced by Christianity, or they were believers themselves, as well.

It is the ideas and values that have flowed from direct relationship with Christ that have done most to humanize individuals, societies and nations.



Christians, finish the race. Stand with your brothers and yours sisters in your churches.

Without knowing it, your simple acts of obedient goodness and truth inspire others. Follow the way.

Your lives are far more effective than you think.

*Ian Clarkson is a Teacher and Evangelist with Branches Community Church in South Australia. This is from his "Think About It" radio segment which is broadcast regularly on Adelaide radio station Life FM.*

*Continued from page 13*

women through better social policy. They are also being used to promote compassion and assistance to post-abortion women.

This all adds up to a new strategy of working to make abortion unthinkable or at least rare. It is a long-term plan. It is not an all or nothing plan, but aims to make realistic change possible. Working to change the culture means taking the message to every walk of life, to every profession, everywhere we go. Every conversation we have must be about building a new culture of life. Working to create such a big cultural change in thinking means more than just marching or lobbying politicians, although there can be a time and a place for that too, but it really means becoming people of life. We need to be transformed.

**G**iven these important new insights into changing hearts and minds, and inspired by Pope John Paul II, the church in Australia is working to develop new pastoral responses to abortion. It is working to become 'the touch of Christ to reduce the high rate of abortion.'

This means we need to reach out to all who have been affected by abortion. Of the one in three women who will have an abortion at some stage, it is hard to know how many may be suffering directly as a result of their abortion. There is some evidence that at least 10-20 per cent of women who have had an abortion may suffer from severe negative psychological complications.

Many women are not prepared for the after-effects of abortion. They are not aware of its potential physical and psychological complications. Symptoms of post-abortion syndrome include depression, frequent weeping, loss of self-esteem, isolation, alienation, sadness, grief and anxiety, anger or rage, difficulty concentrating, self-destructive behaviour, anxiety attacks, relationship problems, sexual dysfunction, sleep disorders, anniversary reactions, the atonement child, sense of hopelessness, emotional numbness, dramatic personality changes, memory loss,

irritability, inability to bond to other children or babies, over protectiveness with other children and flashbacks.

Abortion can also have a dramatic impact on men, but time prevents me from providing more details. There is some evidence that as many as 70-90 per cent of relationships break down after an abortion. Siblings and grandparents can also suffer from a sense that someone is missing.

Fear and misunderstanding keep many people from seeking help after abortion. They think they are the only one that feels this pain, that there is something wrong with them, that no-one will understand them. They fear judgment and condemnation. They may think they have committed the ultimate unforgivable sin. They think God is mean and vengeful, waiting to get them! They may know that church people are against abortion and think we are going to send them directly to hell!

But the church reaches out to them with love and compassion; with the Good News that God is waiting to forgive them and heal them, and bring them home.

Women who have experienced abortion often suffer so deep a wound that they cannot recover on their own. They need to hear of the mercy and love of God. They need to know they have been forgiven. They need the support of other women who have experienced an abortion but also the healing love of God, and have begun the healing journey.

**P**roject Rachel is a ministry of the Catholic Church which cares for people wounded by abortion. It was founded in the USA by Vicky Thorn in 1984 to promote healing and reconciliation. Now most dioceses in the US have some version of Project Rachel. It is one of the fastest growing ministries in the Catholic Church today, and has spread to many countries where abortion is widely practised, including Australia.

Project Rachel has led many women to peace and healing and freed them from shame and guilt. It has helped them to know they have been forgiven

and allowed them to rebuild healthy relationships. Because abortion can cause such a profound wound to the soul, many women seem to need the support and love of others to help them. Programs like Project Rachel are designed to help them recover.

**R**achel's Vineyard Retreat programs are another important development. The program combines both psychological and spiritual elements along with 'living scripture.' There are ecumenical versions of Rachel's Vineyard and they are spreading to many countries.

Spending time with women involved in its ministry was a profound and deeply moving experience for me, and a highlight of my time in the US. Clearly, abortion stops a beating heart and breaks a mother's as well.

The Respect Life Office in Melbourne was the first of its type in Australia and was modelled on similar offices in the US. We promote the church's teachings on issues like abortion and euthanasia, through parishes and schools of the diocese. We are involved in research, policy and educational activities on behalf of the church. We work with like-minded groups.

An ad hoc interfaith committee was formed in Melbourne with the aim of reaching many more people, and beginning a new springtime for the faith. One major objective is to raise awareness of the profound implications of abortion for our society. For too long our nation has been either in denial, apathy and despair. Clearly, greater pregnancy support and post-abortion healing are keys to breaking the present cycle.

Strategies for long-term impact are the best chance we have of transforming our culture into a culture of life. If we are truly to change hearts and find new alternatives to abortion we need to keep in mind the words of John Paul II's "it is love that converts hearts and brings peace"

*Marcia Riordan is executive officer of Respect Life Office, Melbourne. She can be contacted on 03 9412 3373.*

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2) Deane Weatheringham *'Regaining our Cutting Edge'* Thursday Night.

Deane is a teacher evangelist. In the past he has served as a parish minister and Executive Director for New Creation Teaching Ministry. Currently Deane is a Rural Resource Minister working for the SA Synod.

3) Rob Yule *'As at the Beginning: The Book of Acts for Mission Today'*. Friday Morning.

He was a national adviser on the board of Presbyterian Renewal Ministries during a period that saw a dozen charismatic churches emerge as the flagship churches of the Presbyterian movement throughout New Zealand. He was Moderator of the Presbyterian Church (2000-2002), and is now the Senior Minister of Greyfriars Presbyterian Church in Auckland.

4) Marcia Riordan *'Respecting Life while Healing the Broken-hearted'* Saturday Morning.

Marcia is the Executive Officer for Respect Life Office within the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne. The Respect Life Office works to promote a New Culture of Life and Love for the Australian community where every person is welcomed, honoured and revered.

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# How many Christians does it take?

In the first edition of *ACCatalyst*, the editor asked readers how many members of the Uniting Church are needed to change a light bulb.

Disciplined research efforts by the editorial office have still not found a definitive answer, but a considerable amount of global data from other denominations has been compiled. The following are some of the more salient findings:

*How Many Christians Does It Take to Change a Light Bulb?*

*Charismatic:* Only 1 - Hands are already in the air.

*Pentecostal:* 10 - One to change the bulb, and nine to pray against the spirit of darkness.

*Presbyterians:* None - Lights will go on and off at predestined times.

*Baptists:* At least 15 - One to change the light bulb, and three committees to approve the change and decide who brings the potato salad and fried chicken.

*Episcopalians:* 3 - One to call the electrician, one to mix the drinks, and one to talk about how

much better the old one was.

*Mormons:* 5 - One man to change the bulb, and four wives to tell him how to do it.

*Unitarians:* We choose not to make a statement either in favour of or against the need for a light bulb. However, if in your own journey you have found that light bulbs work for you, you are invited to write a poem or compose a modern dance about your light bulb for the next Sunday service, in which we will explore a number of light bulb traditions, including incandescent, fluorescent, 3-way, long-life and tinted, all of which are equally valid paths to luminescence.

*Methodists:* Undetermined - Whether your light is bright, dull, or completely out, you are loved. You can be a light bulb, turnip bulb, or tulip bulb. Bring a bulb of your choice to the Sunday lighting service and a covered dish to pass.

*Nazarene:* 6 - One woman to replace the bulb while five men review church lighting policy.

*Roman Catholic:* None - Catholics don't believe in change.

*Non-Denominational:* Whole congregation. One to make the change and the rest to hold prayer meeting to sanctify the light bulb.

*Amish:* What is a light bulb?

*Editors' note:* The National Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia is rumoured to be considering the 'Unitarians' paragraph above for official adoption as the light bulb position of the Uniting Church in Australia, but inside information reveals the matter will be referred to a sub-committee.

## Be encouraged!

with Robyn McKay

On one occasion I was unwell, and while I was resting I watched one of my favourite movies, a 1980s film called *Jumping Jack Flash*. It's about a woman named Terry (played by Whoopi Goldberg) who works on a computer at an international bank. Her mundane life is interrupted one day when a British spy called Jack hacks into her computer, and tells her he is stuck in eastern Europe and needs help to escape as he is in danger. So, Terry finds herself trying to help her new friend escape, while being pursued by baddies who are trying to find out where Jack is so they can bump him off.

In one scene she is captured by one of the bad guys who injects her with truth serum. Terry escapes and returns to her work, but is still affected by the drugs, and so proceeds to tell her boss and colleagues what she really thinks about them. Truth serum works by making people completely uninhibited in what they say so that whatever is in their mind comes out of their mouth.

I found myself thinking, wouldn't it be interesting to go into a group of people, perhaps a family or a church or workplace, and inject everybody with truth serum and see how long it takes



**This light-bulb was illuminated by flash photography: sometimes, the only way to make it happen**



before they all hate each other as everybody's secret thoughts all come out. It would be mean - but fascinating!

Then I had a more sobering thought: what if somebody injected me with truth serum, then let me loose among my family, friends, and acquaintances. What would come out of my mouth if I told everyone exactly what I thought? Would I be proud of my words, or ashamed?

Of course we all know we are meant to love our neighbours. Most of us manage to be nice to them, but that's not the same thing. Love goes much deeper. Love is choosing not just how we act towards people (although that's part of it), but also how we talk about them in their absence, and how we think of them. We can choose to think about a person in terms of all the things about them that annoy us, or we can choose to accept them as they are and love them despite their faults and shortcomings.

Thinking about all of this made me want to be sure that I'm the same person on the inside and the outside, and caused me to pray in the words of King David in Psalm 139 "Search me O God, and know my heart. Test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting."

*Robyn*

## The Pastor calls

# The misogynist

It would be possible to explain as a pious pastoral intention what was basically impertinent curiosity. The call was outside his normal range, to a place not easily accessible. It was, incidentally, not more than a few chains from the scene of a major Australian tragedy.

The Parson had heard of 'the Hatter'. Once a month or so he walked into what was no more than a wayside store and bought a few supplies without exchanging an unnecessary word. Then he strode back along the road and disappeared into the forest on an almost indiscernible track. Few would have known how to reach his shack had not the timber millers thrust in a tramline which happened to pass close to his fence. No-one seemed to know his name.

When the Parson picked up the tramline on a beautiful summer day he thought of the foolish folk who talk of the monotony of the bush. Everything glowed in green, gold and purple. On the creek the bell birds sang and the whip birds sounded. There was perfume in the air even if there was a compound of Willie Wombat. All that was lacking was a snake, and who wanted him?

The Miner's Right on the creek was fenced with a close-paling six feet high. There was no entrance. The Parson gave a hail. Inside, a voice asked his needs. He explained his call and was invited in. The Parson dismounted, tied his horse and climbed a rough ladder. Outside was beautiful; inside the Parson looked down on paradise.

In a quarter of an acre was a garden with fruit trees – apples and plums. There were flowers and vegetables. On three sides was the stockade, on the fourth a rippling creek and, beyond, the bush. There were two beehives and the bees were busy. The Hatter stood, tall and thin, about mid-life or a little past. He was welcoming. This was contrary to repute or expectation.

The pair stood and talked. They walked around the garden examining plants and trees. The bees were too busy to bother about humans. The men went inside to boil the billy. There was tea, black of course; there was fresh damper and honey. The Parson noticed there were no animals, neither cat nor dog. He commented on it. His host became agitated and disturbed to the point of tears. He said there was no butter, which seemed to have nothing to do with the comment.

The story came out. He had a dog; his only living companion and friend. One morning the dog came, struggling, to his feet; frothing at the mouth; slobbering butter. Even as he knelt to him, the dog died. He had been poisoned by one of the milling gang. The Hatter said, "I will never eat, nor have in my house, butter again."

As the Parson climbed over the fence, mounted, rode down the track, the sun still shone, the birds sang, the bush glowed with colour, but the day had changed. He pondered then, as he has often pondered since, the strange polarity by which he who was made little lower than the angels becomes in insensibility inferior to the beasts he wantonly destroys.

JT

*'The Pastor calls' is by the late Rev John Longthorn who ministered in Methodist circuits around Australia. The stories first appeared in 1974-75 in New Spectator, the official organ of the Victoria-Methodist Conference.*

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### On the Square Observations & Contentions

February 22, 2008  
**The Engines That Run the World**  
By Richard John Neuhaus

The more cynical may say it is a small price to pay for achieving the stature of intellectual celebrity, but Francis Fukuyama took some very hard knocks after the publication of his 1992 book, *The End of History and the Last Man*. Some critics took the "end of history" part of the title altogether too literally and had a field day lampooning Fukuyama's chronological hubris.

The book was an expansion of a 1989 article by Fukuyama, "The End of History?" The question mark should not be overlooked. And the thesis of the book is not without nuance: "What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government." Then came, among other things, September 11, and many could not resist the temptation to ridicule what they depicted as Fukuyama's confidence in the world's inevitable conversion to liberal democracy.

Partly in response to Fukuyama, Samuel Huntington published in 1996 *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. That justly influential book argued that cultural and religious identities, rather than liberal ideology or economic-technological

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