

Will Melbourne be next?



Evangelist Bill Newman in the studios of "Video Image Productions" in Brisbane. The TV series "Bill Newman Speaks Out" was produced by this firm, and is now being shown on several channels around Australia. The latest station to accept the programs is Channel 0, Brisbane, the first major city to do so.

Photo: Ramon Williams

Lord Coggan to speak to parliamentarians, lawyers and businessmen

Lord Coggan of Canterbury and Sissinghurst, former Archbishop of Canterbury, will give major addresses to Members of Parliament, lawyers and businessmen during his ten days of ministry in Melbourne under the auspices of St James' Old Cathedral.



The Incumbent of St. James, the Rev. Alan Nichols, who is also Executive Director of the mission of St. James & St. John, released details of the itinerary of Lord and Lady Coggan for their period in Melbourne from November 4 to 14. This follows Lord Coggan's delivery of the Oliver Begun Lectures for the Bible Society of Australia.

On Monday November 8, Lord Coggan will address Members of Parliament at a luncheon at the Parliament House of Victoria for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Executive. This will be hosted by the Hon. Fred Grimwade, MLC President of the Legislative Council.

On November 6, 9 and 10, Lord and Lady Coggan will be guests at dinners for leading city businessmen and their wives.

On Wednesday November 10, the Chief Justice of Victoria, Sir John Young, will host a lunch for lawyers and judges at which Lord Coggan will speak. For many years he has been, as a Member of the House of Lords, involved in Christian contributions to debates on legislation.

Lord Coggan will speak at four public functions.

Mr. Nichols, explaining the basic purpose of the ministry of Lord and Lady Coggan, said: "The series of special events, luncheons and dinners have been designed to give Lord Coggan maximum opportunity of speaking with leaders of various aspects of Melbourne society about the fundamentals of the Christian Faith and the implications of Christian ethics for business, legislation and justice. At this time when there is much questioning of the ethics and values of community leaders, nothing could be more important or appropriate than a clear exposition of the fundamentals of the Gospel and its implications for integrity, truth and responsible leadership. I hope that Christians throughout the City of Melbourne will be praying for effective opportunities of making this presentation to many community leaders."

Cameron gives parliament compelling evidence of Christian quickening

Leading for the Opposition of the Churches of Christ in the New South Wales Incorporation (Amendment) Bill, 1982 recently, Mr. Cameron said that, regardless of what scoffers said to the contrary, Australia was on the threshold of a great Christian quickening. "At the moment, Christian renewal is least evident in Western-style countries like Australia and the countries of Europe; but coming there and coming surely," he said.

"Already, it has evidenced itself dramatically locally among the Pentecostals — or Charismatics as they're sometimes called. As well, the mainline churches are beginning to gather impetus too.

"In the Third World countries, renewal is spectacular.

"Behind the Iron Curtain, it is positively exciting.

"Throughout the world more than 1500 new Christian churches are being opened every week.

"Each fresh day rises on 70,000 new Christians. These are new Christians being won predominantly by conversion or by new awakening.

"By contrast while Muslims are experiencing enormous natural growth attributable to biblical increase they are enjoying little perceptible growth by conversion.

"Everywhere in the Christian world, it is churches that are themselves conservative in doctrine; centrally focussed on Christ and his word without addition, with minimum accent on denominationalism, which are in the vanguard of dramatic expansion."

Mr. Cameron said he used to believe that our media, who prided themselves on being so up-to-date, would not get round to recognising or reporting renewal until it was at least one or two decades old.

There were now, however, some helpful signs to the contrary, he said. Mr. Cameron cited to Parliament extensive portions of the Sun Herald report of September 12, 1982 head "Religion Makes a Comeback".

Primate calls for justice in housing

The Anglican Primate, Archbishop John Grindrod of Brisbane, has called for new initiatives from the Federal and State Governments to meet the housing needs of people.

He made his call on a day observed as Social Justice Sunday in Anglican churches throughout Australia.

Archbishop Grindrod said that access to good housing, for ownership or rental, is a basic human need and right. High interest rates, high rentals, and long waiting lists for Housing Commission homes, delay such access to many thousands of people for long periods and cause much suffering and hardship. Without Government intervention access to housing would be denied altogether to people on low incomes.

The Archbishop said the Government should take immediate steps to fill the gap in available housing. It should also consider the allocation of subsidies towards rent for people on income below the accepted poverty line.

1983 AFES conference

The 1983 National Conference of the Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students (AFES) will be held at the Convention site Mt. Tamborine, Southern Queensland, from 14-21 January 1983, costs students \$73, graduates \$83. The theme for the Conference is 'God's People — God's Purpose' with the campus, the nation, the world in view.

Major speakers will be Rev. Robert Forsyth who will deliver a series of addresses explaining the vital message of Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Dr. Michael Griffiths Principal of London Bible College and formerly General Director of the Overseas Missionary Fellowship will give six addresses devoted to mission and missions with particular emphasis on student opportunities and involvement in the study environment and further afield. Professor Brian Hill of Murdoch University in Perth is AFES President for 1982 will not only deliver his presidential address but contribute three further talks, developing aspects of the Conference theme.

In addition to a mid conference day's outing, there will be an elective series of small groups to consider particular aspects of campus witness and ministry and opportunities to reflect on the inputs from major sessions.

Conference Director, John Sugars, states 'AFES Conference promotes a great opportunity for tertiary students to hear the Bible expounded by nationally and internationally known speakers; an opportunity not as readily available on their campuses or in their churches. Students are challenged to think through biblical issues and relate them to the tertiary situation providing a good grounding for later professional discipleship. Conference provides a forum for discussion of issues in small group situations within a biblical context and in a atmosphere of supportive fellowship and Christian encouragement.'



Prof. B. V. Hill

Tony McCarthy, AFES General Secretary, says 'National Conference has a significant place in the life of AFES as it provides an opportunity for students from all over Australia to learn what God is doing on over 100 Australian campuses to encourage and be encouraged by reporting witness on their own campus and learning of the challenges and blessings elsewhere. So often, Conference has been the means of giving further stimulus to groups and a significant catalyst in the formation of new groups. Many students have received significant challenges in their discipleship and redirection as wider horizons for ministry are opened up whether through the formal programme or more informally in small group discussion or private reflection.

"I believe", said Archbishop Grindrod, "that unless there is speedy Government intervention to help solve the housing crisis, thousands of Australian individuals and families would suffer permanent deprivation."

The Archbishop also called on Christian people who own property they do not personally need or use, or who are landlords, to consider as a matter of priority the housing needs of people without housing.

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HOMOSEXUAL VICTORY?

"Homosexuals win rights in State schools..." read the heading of the Sydney Morning Herald (Oct. 16). The headline referred to a report of proposed changes to the Anti-Discrimination Act in N.S.W. This follows the release in June of a Report by the Anti Discrimination Board on Homosexuality. Current moves to change the Act have caused alarm amongst Christians. They have also caused concern amongst a variety of community groups and organisations.

The N.S.W. Premier, Mr. Wran, announced three major changes to the Anti-Discrimination Act which were approved by Cabinet. Legislation arising from these changes will:

- Make it illegal to discriminate on the grounds of homosexuality or intellectual impairment in public education, employment, accommodation, provision of goods and services and registered clubs.
- Make it an offence carrying a fine of \$1,000 to lodge or publish discriminatory advertisements.
- Double the limit on damages the Equal Opportunities Tribunal can award to \$40,000, and integrate the Office of the Counsellor for Equal Opportunity with the Anti-Discrimination Board.

The report in the S.M.H. highlighted the fact that non-Government Schools would be exempted from these changes. Many activists including representatives of the Teachers' Federation and the Council for Civil Liberties attacked this exemption as the major issue. They see no reason for the exemption. According to Government sources the major reason for the exemptions is that if they were not made it would prove "electorally unpopular".

State Education

The proposed changes were bitterly attacked by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Dowd. He was particularly concerned about its effect on the State Education system. He said, "Most parents of this State are forced to send their children to the local State school.

"They have a right to have some say over the person who will be the greatest influence in their children's lives, outside the home.

"Obviously there are male and female homosexuals now in the teaching profession as there are right throughout the Public Service and throughout society.

"What parents of this State must be concerned about — and I am concerned about — are those homosexuals who would try to use their own ideas to attempt to influence the children under their care.

"Most homosexuals don't force their ideas on others and that is why they have remained in the Public Service without being discriminated against.

"But the problems that will rise are with activists who push homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle. They try to convert people to their lifestyle and the parents of this State are entitled to have their children protected against that sort of person.

The Church Record understands that Mr. Dowd's concern has been echoed by many educators. At a time when non-government schools are expanding rapidly and when confidence in the State school system is rapidly declining they see this as yet another reason why parents will choose to send their children to private schools. Most parents will not want to run the risk of having their children taught by militant homosexuals. We know of at least one P. & C. which, at the request of the headmaster, has

already discussed this matter and sent a strongly worded letter to their local member condemning the current plans to change the Act. We expect that, as they meet, others will do the same.

General Comments

Mr. Dowd went on to say:

"The other changes to the Act are as cosmetic as the Act itself.

"The Government has gone mad with these measures by interfering with people's right of choice

"The changes make a mockery of existing laws. On one hand, it is a criminal offence in N.S.W. for males to practice homosexuality.

"On the other, it is an offence to discriminate against persons who practice this illegal activity.

"This Government has not, even after three attempts, been able to change the law on homosexuality as is stated in their policy.

"Employment relationships, teacher/pupil and accommodation relationships are all very close personal relationships and people ought to be able to exercise freedom of choice in the type of person they associate with."

Another opposition M.P., Mr. Jim Cameron, said in a Press Release:

"Already before State Parliament is the Education Commission (Amendment) Bill, 1982, which proposes absolute preference in employment to aboriginal teachers over any other equally qualified persons on the waiting list. Now we have heard over the weekend that State Cabinet has approved of new amendments to the Anti-Discrimination Act aimed at making employers defenceless against homosexual intrusions into their workforce."

Mr. Cameron called on the "orthodox community to stage an all-out rebellion" against this latest move by the government. He called for a massive lobbying of members by "the straight" community.

Synod

The Sydney Synod dealt with this matter on its last night of meeting. A motion was passed stating:

That the Synod calls on the members of State Parliament to reject those recommendations of the Anti-Discrimination Board's Report on "Discrimination and Homosexuality", if and when it is tabled in Parliament, which equate or promote homosexual activity as an acceptable and normal life style.

The Synod totally rejects the notion that Homosexual acts are a normal variant of human sexuality and entitled to the same degree of social acceptability as heterosexuality.

The recommendations designed to equate homosexual relationships with marriage relationships, in the opinion of the Synod, pose a serious threat to the family and especially to the young in the formative stage of their development.

In addition, the Synod views the recommendations which propose the removal of the exemption of non-government schools and private education authorities from the provisions of the Anti-Discrimination Act as a threat to the integrity of Christian educational institutions and to the free exercise of religious convictions. Synod also opposes the application of the recommendations in the area of public education.

Further, that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to each member of State Parliament.

The motion was moved by Rev. Bruce Ballantine-Jones. In his speech to Synod, cut short by reductions in time allowed for speeches, Mr. Ballantine stated, "Rarely has an issue come before the

community and the Synod that is so serious in its implications or so deserving of an unequivocal condemnation as the recommendations of the Anti-Discrimination Board's Report on Homosexuality." Claiming that sympathetic Government ministers had allowed people with a strong alignment with radical homosexual groups to have positions of influence within the A.D.B., he said that the report was, "biased... slanted in favour of the radical homosexual movement and against conventionally accepted views of sexuality especially those based on Christian principles."



Bruce Ballantine-Jones

Mr. Ballantine-Jones then highlighted several of the matters that most concerned him. The first was Recommendation 5:71 which states that: "In any future moves to reform criminal law relating to activity between males the N.S.W. Parliament adopt without modification the proposals put before the Parliament by Mr. George Peterson." Mr. Ballantine-Jones pointed out to Synod that those proposals have twice been defeated by Parliament. "They would include repealing all criminal sanctions relating to adults, allow soliciting and legalise homosexual acts with minors," Mr. Ballantine-Jones added.

The second recommendation he highlighted was 5:143(i) which recommends that the Commissioner of Police instruct his officers to cease surveillance of public toilets and other places frequented by homosexuals except on receipt of a substantial complaint. Mr. Ballantine-Jones said that this put at risk our freedom, privacy and safety. "A substantial complaint," he said, "means that if you are alone when an approach is made to you or your child the police will not be permitted to act." He added, "What this recommendation is asking for is a licence to turn public toilets and other public places where homosexuals carry out their acts into a haven and a protected place for them."

Continued Page 2

"Don't hinder a church building's function"

"We want to be able to use our church buildings for the purposes for which they were designed — that is, to preach the gospel. I object to attempts at coercion which will affect the ongoing religious work of the parish," Mr. Len Abbott, rector of St. Matthew's Windsor, told Church Record.

He was commenting on an article in the Sydney Morning Herald on October 9 reporting on the proposed development of the site by the building of a parish centre. The article focuses on the church's architectural magnificence: it was designed by Francis Greenway in 1820 and is classified by the National Trust. It quotes the Trust's director as saying: "The setting of St. Matthew's church and rectory is of such significance that no new building, however sensitive or sympathetic should be permitted to intrude. The open space around the two buildings has been maintained for 160 years and there is no justification for intruding upon it now."

"It was a highly emotive article based on information from a local pressure group. It has the effect of misleading readers because it highlights aspects of the church building which will be unaffected by the project. For example, the article quotes William Hardy-Wilson: 'At St. Matthew's Windsor, Greenway seems to have caught the sunlight of the Hawkesbury Valley on his glowing westward wall.' The proposed project is on the eastern side of the church. The article speaks of the church grounds as being the site for the centre whereas it is in fact the rectory grounds," said Mr. Abbott.

"At no stage has the National Trust made a direct official approach to the church. The first I knew of the objection was through the papers. The local pressure group had sent the letter of complaint and subsequently asked me to discuss the question at their next meeting. The National Trust did not contact me, but pressed the architect for plans which they put up in their offices with a petition they asked passers-by to sign.

"Their objections are at ideas we discussed informally with the Heritage Council. We were proceeding along their initially suggested lines which have since by consent been dropped. The Council has been constructive and sympathetic and we've been glad to co-operate with them. We have now engaged Ridley Smith as architect, as he has received awards for his sensitive designs matching new buildings with old; for example, St. Andrew's House behind the Cathedral. We are willing to co-operate to the limits of our ability and think we now have a more workable plan.

"But we object to attempts at coercion for three reasons. Firstly because of the way in which the local group and the National Trust have registered their complaints.

"Secondly because they are attempting to hinder the purposes for which the buildings were originally built.

"Thirdly, in 1960 people gave money towards the church's restoration. It seems that they now think that they should be consulted on any further development: that they have a veto power on issues affecting the current life of the church. It's like someone rescued from the surf being expected to lick the boots of his rescuer for the rest of his life — it makes the act not a gift but a bribe.

"We have a tumbledown hall in a separate location from the church and rectory. There has to be changes if the life of the congregation is going to function in a way that meets the needs of today's Christians. The church building through history has been adapted for current needs and I can't see why it now can't be done again tastefully," said Mr. Abbott.

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The Sexual Missionaries of the Anti-discrimination Board . . . and the Cabinet

As the ACR goes to press the N.S.W. State Government Cabinet and its A.L.P. Caucus are reported to be in the process of moving legislation which will grant homosexuals, amongst other things, rights in our State Schools. It will be illegal to refuse a teaching job to an active homosexual on the grounds of his or her sexual preference.

Now there is no real surprise in these proposals, for they have been foreshadowed for some time. And especially, the governmental body, the Anti-Discrimination Board which released its report, **Discrimination and Homosexuality** in June, has vigorously argued a case for such legislation. The Report deserves close scrutiny.

It is perhaps too easy to criticise this report as a hotchpotch — cant riding high on the back of civil rights, and no doubt others will take up its contents in detail, but for the present at least two basic methodological errors can be seen running through it. First, although quite rightly it demands that evidence advanced by those opposing homosexual practices meets certain standards of truthfulness and reality, it does not apply those same standards to its own evidence. Again and again the Report accepts uncritically any statement that advances the homosexual cause, whether that statement is true, has a foot in reality, or not. The Report is its own worst enemy in that regard.

Second, much of the evidence advanced by the Report is not open to public verification because it consists of pseudonymous first hand accounts of a homosexual's own experiences and activities. The A-DB is aware of the problem, but in the end dismisses it by questioning the fairness of those who would dare not to trust such data. The ACR made an educated guess as to the possible identity of two of the Report's homosexual subjects in these accounts. On questioning some of the people associated with these reconstructed incidents the ACR received the following range of responses: "true", "but . . .", "not quite so", and "not the case at all". Further, the two accounts appear to have omitted, in a self-serving way, some relevant material.

But for all that, the Report has done us a great service because it clearly shows that the Anti-Discrimination Board aims to actively promote the idea that homosexual practices are both **moral** and **viable** expressions of sexuality. And further, they are going to, by legislative force, teach our children the same.

The grounds for such a strong assertion are plain. Not only does the Report from beginning to end argue the case for the acceptability of homosexuality by the prejudicial citing of the "against" evidence and uncritical acceptance of "for" evidence, but it also makes many explicit value-judgements for the moral status of homosexual practices. For example, "gays" are given credit points for being in the thinking vanguard of the inevitable radical changes that, the Report says, history will bring to the "traditional" family, and its stand on "inter-generational and inter-sexual relationships". The Festival of Light, on the other hand, in defending the moral norms that the "traditional" family reflects, is sarcastically abused by the A-DB Report (section 3.74 & 75).

But two other pieces of specific evidence make the aims of these government sponsored sexual missionaries plain. First, the Report advocates sex education that will actively encourage children to challenge "conventional" sexual morality and to explore and approve all forms of sexual expression, and, to that end, remove books from schools that "contain inaccurate, outdated, or judgemental material on homosexuality". Secondly, in a recent edition of a major Sydney newspaper, a member of the A-DB, over the Board's name, while denying the right of a certain Queensland doctor to publicly espouse her own private (and conventional) beliefs on sexual morality, unblushingly goes on to assert that any (consensual) sexual activity is **moral** — with or without marriage!

This stance by the Anti-Discrimination Board is perfectly logical. The crusading zeal with which these missionaries will bias evidence, enforce the standing of blatant and unacceptable sexual models before our children from primary to high school, deny the public expression of 'private' opinion, and, censor books, can only come near to being justified if what they are striving for is **moral**. What makes acceptable the draconian measure of outlawing racist literature is that racism is itself **immoral**, not just uncomfortable. It is the clear, but sadly, unstated aim of the A-DB to not just remove sometimes unnecessary restrictions on a homosexual's civil rights, or to make a plea for sympathetic toleration, but to actively promote and enforce the notion that homosexual practices between consenting parties are both **moral** and **viable** alternative expressions of sexuality.

What of the Cabinet, the Caucus, and the Parliament? The current proposed legislation does not seek to enfold all the aims of the A-DB Report. But it does stand firmly within those aims, and cannot be divorced from them. On commonsense grounds, to try and do so would express either gross naivety, or, outright deception. Whatever may be the lobbying pressure on members of parliament, and the strengths of the case for a limited review of the civil rights of homosexuals, your consciences will by and large not assent to the immoral aims of these sexual missionaries. Please put your vote where your conscience is. If that is not enough, strengthen your backs with the knowledge that the public will inevitably continue to lose confidence in our public school system which already bears the brunt of this crusade.

Finally, and this should be of comfort to all Christians, the Report makes the mistake of thinking 'whatever is, is right'. Not so, morality is a **given**. Wherever people might be on a scale of lying from 0-6, "lying" still remains bad, and "telling the truth" good. The "givens" of morality are witnessed to by conscience, and plainly revealed in Holy Scripture. This Report, as does so much deliberately outrageously gay behaviour (like the "Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence"), has clearly woven throughout it the theme "guilt . . . guilt . . . guilt". The good news for the gay community, and the A-DB, is that although this guilt will not be removed by forcing the populace to say "not guilty", it is removed, definitely and in a healing way, by the forgiveness of sins and the re-direction of behaviour that comes from the gracious hand of Jesus Christ. Do you want forgiveness?

Continued from Page 1

The third recommendation he highlighted was 7:25 which recommends that courses in sex education be introduced into Primary schools and that such courses include "balanced non-judgmental information on lesbianism and male homosexuality". This means that "they want the right for homosexuals to promote their lifestyle among Primary school children and to challenge conventional sex roles." Mr. Ballantine-Jones continued.

Mr. Ballantine-Jones referred to references to literature in school libraries. He pointed out to Synod that the suggestion that outdated and judgmental literature be withdrawn means that the Bible, which is not outdated but is certainly judgmental in this area, could be challenged as a legitimate book to have in a school library. He added that the Report recommended that books such as "Young, Gay and Proud" should be in school libraries.

Mr. Ballantine-Jones then moved on to the recommendations which attacked the family. He mentioned 8:18 which recommends that in the N.S.W. Public Service Board handbook the terms 'wife', 'widow', etc. be replaced by 'spouse' and 'partner', the terms being defined to mean both homosexual and heterosexual de facto partners. He also mentioned 8:12 which suggests that next of kin be extended to include lesbian or male homosexual partners, and 8:94(ii) which suggests that the Health Commission adopt a policy that whenever sexuality is discussed in health promotion material published by the Commission the context should treat lesbianism and homosexuality together with heterosexuality as part of the normal range of sexual experience.

He spoke of the attempt of the Report to equate homosexual relationships with marriage and then attacked the suggestion that non-government schools should not be given exemption when changes to the Act occurred. He concluded by pointing out to Synod that time had prevented him from dealing with many of the other recommendations and called on Synod to pass the motion and so strengthen the position of those parliamentarians who are still sympathetic to a Christian position.

Debate

There was much debate and numerous amendments were moved. Some were finally incorporated in the motion before it was passed. One notable amendment from Rev. C. Harcourt-Norton would have added to the end of the motion the following words, "but Synod considers that homosexual acts between consenting adults should not be criminal offences punishable by imprisonment". This amendment was overwhelmingly defeated.

The motion was passed by a very large majority.

Action

As we went to Press it was not clear what was to happen to the changes to the Anti-Discrimination Act. It is assumed that they will be brought before the Parliament quickly. There are many both within the Churches and within the State education system who will hope that the consciences of Government members will cause them to reject these changes.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

This story has been put together over the period of a week. We sought information from the Premier's Department and the Anti-Discrimination Board and later we sought comments from both Government and Opposition members.

1. The Leader of the Opposition and his staff and other Liberal members were most helpful and gave us an excess of information.
2. The Anti-Discrimination Board, despite knowing that we were going to be very critical of them, patiently answered all questions put to them and prevented us from including some assertions which would have been untrue.
3. We are still waiting for a return call from all the ALP people and departments we contacted. In one instance we have now despite numerous calls, been waiting a week.

New archdeacon appointed

The appointment of the Rev. Denis Wann as Archdeacon of Wollongong and Camden has been announced by the Archbishop of Sydney.

Archbishop Donald Robinson said that the appointment, to take effect from October 1, 1982, would be for two years and during that time Mr. Wann would combine his new duties with those as Rector of Albion Park.



Denis Wann

Mr. Wann is a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, and was ordained in the Diocese of Down and Dromore in 1956. He served as a Bible Churchman's Missionary Society Missionary in the Diocese of Central Tanganyika for seven years and in the Diocese of Morogoro Tanzania for seven years. He had considerable administrative experience in those years and became a Canon of Morogoro Cathedral. He came to Australia as Rector of Port Kembla in 1973, and became Rector of Albion Park in 1978, and Rural Dean of Shoalhaven in 1979.

Mr. Wann brings to his new position a reputation as a caring pastor.

School appointment

A new Sydney Anglican School, the Peninsular Anglican Boys' School, will begin next year. The school Council has just named the school's first Master-in-Charge. He is Rev. Lloyd Bennett.



Mr. Bennett is currently Chaplain at Trinity Grammar School, Summer Hill, and Co-ordinator of the R.E. Department of the School. Formerly Mr. Bennett has held positions with the Diocesan Youth Department and C.M.S. and has been Rector of Mulgoa and Avalon with Palm Beach.

A VISITOR FROM JERUSALEM

The General Secretary of the Anglican Home Mission Society, the Rev. Allan Whitham, outlines the scope of the Society's work to a visiting dignitary, all the way from Jerusalem. The visitor was Assistant Bishop Samir Kafity of Jerusalem, with right of succession to the See in 1983.

Accompanied by his wife Najat, Bishop Kafity was here at the Primate's invitation on a private visit. His purpose was to learn something of the workings of the Anglican Church in Australia.

By means of a wall chart, maps, brochures and personal discussion, Bishop Kafity was given a 2-hour insight into what the H.M.S. budget of \$10 million in 1982 means in terms of church expansion and help given to the people of Sydney having special needs.

AMERICAN EVANGELICALS

In an attempt to get a better understanding of the evangelical scene in the United States, Church Record interviewed Dr. Norman Geisler during his recent Australian visit. This is our third part of the interview. The previous two sections were in our last two issues.

ACR: What about spiritual gifts and the Charismatic movement in the U.S.?

GEISLER: The charismatic movement is very strong in the U.S. and is growing in terms of churches, missionary outreach and penetration into mainline denominations. It is strong in the Roman Catholic Church and most evangelicals in Lutheran, Episcopalians and Presbyterians have links with the charismatic movement.

However there is now some moderation. There is less and less emphasis on the absolute necessity of tongues as a sign of higher spirituality. I see them reaching out to other groups and de-emphasising to some extent the doctrines that have kept them apart from other evangelicals. But there is still a great danger — their tremendous emphasis on experience has led them to a very weak view on the authority of scripture. We could find many in the major denominations who were strong on the inerrancy of Scripture but it was very difficult to find a charismatic. The reason is that their strong emphasis on experience causes their scholars, when they do their doctorates, to adopt a neo-orthodox approach because this position has an existential background and it fits their position better.

ACR: Australians generally don't understand why American evangelicals get so heated about the second coming and dispensationalism.

GEISLER: In America, unlike England and other Commonwealth countries, most evangelicals are pre-millennialists. This is primarily a hermeneutical debate and most American evangelicals have taken a literal approach to hermeneutics. For example Revelation 20 talks about a first and second resurrection with a millenium which, if taken literally gives a pre-millennial view. A great majority of pre-millennialists are also dispensationalists. Dispensationalism was popularised by C. I. Scofield and the Scofield Bible and then later by the Bible Conference movements and the Plymouth Brethren.

The dispensationalists have moderated their view so that for all practical purposes there is not a great deal of difference on all the central doctrines between evangelicals who hold a dispensationalist view and those who don't. Dispensationalists believe that the prophecies of the Old Testament will be literally fulfilled for Israel. They are therefore very pro-Israel. But this is no longer dividing denominations as it once did.

ACR: There are some major issues for us which seem to be lesser issues amongst evangelicals in the U.S. What is happening in relation to the role of women in the Church?

GEISLER: This is a very hot issue in the U.S. It was given its greatest impetus by Paul Jewett's book, *Male and Female*, but it has begun to abate a little. Fortunately, from my point of view, Jewett's position was weakened because he connected his book with one of the strongest denials of the inerrancy of Scripture ever accepted by evangelicals. What he said was that what the Apostle Paul affirmed about husbands as head of their wives was wrong! He said in that, that the Bible was not the Word of God.

Because the women's liberation movement has been associated with left wing, radical people who have a weak view of inspiration people, it has tended to isolate itself. Along with this the Equal Rights Amendment was lost and that shows that most Americans are still not in favour of the women's lib. position.

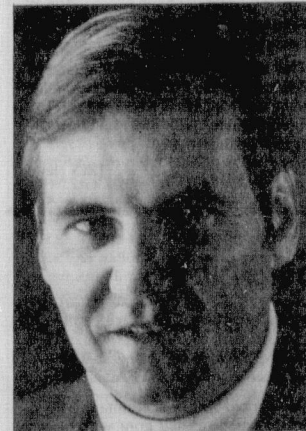
The place the line is being drawn is here — women have the spiritual gifts — there are no sex symbols on the gifts — women's ministry — yes, this is simply exercising the gifts that the Holy Spirit has given them — women in authority — No. The line is being drawn on unlimited ministry but limited authority. This is because elders and bishops in the New Testament were clearly male, the order of creation was men first, and the nature of the Godhead is used as a ground for the headship of men. To alter those things would be to give up our whole hermeneutic — it would be a hopeless position.

ACR: How do American evangelicals contend with the increasing divorce rate?

GEISLER: This continues to be a great problem in the evangelical church. The evangelical church in America is looking on divorce with greater and greater favour. Some of our great evangelical heroes are divorced and are still accepted in their ministry — for example Hal Lindsey and Keith Miller — and the number seems to grow daily.

Divorce is occurring more and more often and it is being accepted more and more as normal in the U.S. And at the present time, although I hear voices in the wilderness, I can't say that there is a significant turnaround likely to occur. I certainly don't see a strong conservative movement saying that God hates divorce (as Malachi did).

The world is squeezing us into its mould and divorce is becoming a Christian phenomenon just as it is a secular phenomenon.



ACR: Has there been an attempt to come to grips with Matthew 19 and the whole position of remarrying divorcees or do American evangelicals just fit in with the norm of society?

GEISLER: By and large we are pragmatically determined on that issue. Our interpretation of those passages seems to be dependent on the exigencies of the situation and I don't see anything but a vast disagreement of interpretation on the passage and the interpretation seems to follow party lines dictated by the particular experiences the people are going through.

I hope evangelicals will start to come to the position where they say that there is no justification for divorce because God intended one man for one woman until death do us part. But it is not the unpardonable sin and should not, if their is proper repentance alienate such people from the grace of God and from the fellowship of the church, any more than any other sin does.

Divorce is always unjustifiable but it is always forgivable.

ACR: What about evangelicals and social action?

GEISLER: There has always been a separation because of the fundamentalist/liberal controversy. The fundamentalists saw the liberals as being involved in social gospel and so they took all the social implications away from evangelism. However this has begun to change and there's been a low grade reversal on a practical level. On a doctrinal level I do not see that we've integrated what it means to have social involvement with a spiritual position.

For example a few years ago I wrote an article showing how the social implications of the gospel are part of the gospel itself. I sent it to the two most respected evangelical magazines in the country and they both turned it down. They didn't think American evangelicals would want an article suggesting that social action was a part of the gospel.

The reason for this problem is that we have a Platonic dualistic view of man. We've come to believe that the soul is more valuable than the body and so we've preached to save the soul and

Part III of an interview with Dr. Norman Geisler

neglected the Biblical wholistic view that the soul and body are united together. Until we get back to that we won't appreciate that Christ died for the physical as well as the spiritual aspects of man and so we won't fully appreciate the social aspects of the gospel — they'll always be secondary and separate.

ABM Board in financial dilemma

Partners ask for 42% increase

Anglican Churches in South-East Asia and the Pacific have asked the Australian Board of Missions for a forty-two per cent increase in their mission grants. On the other hand, Australian dioceses have offered A.B.M. a six per cent increase on their 1982 objectives.

This financial dilemma was faced by the Board of the Australian Board of Missions when it met in Sydney from 25th to 27th October.

New requests for financial assistance include lay evangelist and pastoral care conferences in Sabah (East Malaysia), a lay training programme in Burma, a new Christian Training College for Aborigines in North Queensland, and theological education in Polynesia.

ACR: What is the main issue in the U.S. today amongst evangelical Christians?

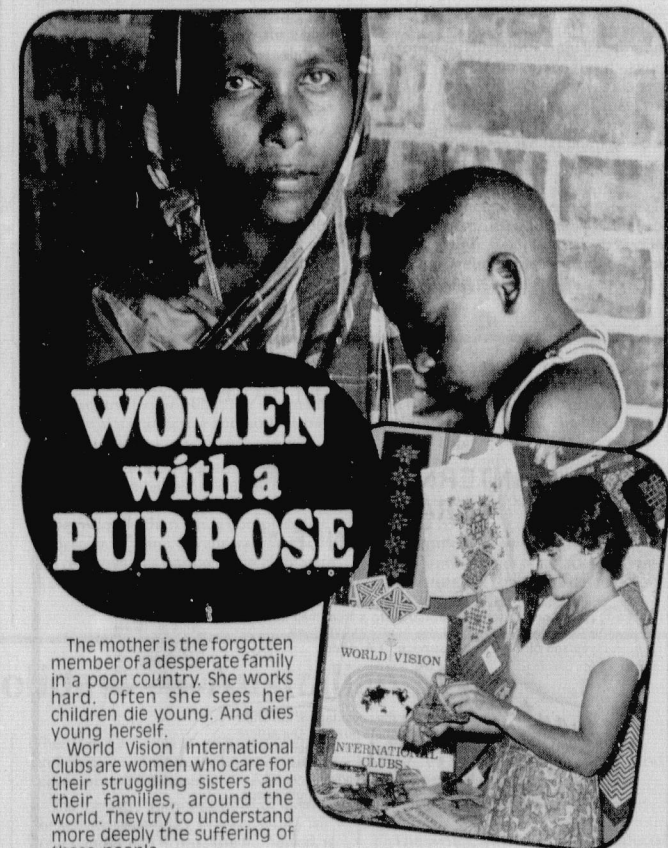
GEISLER: It's the topic of the lectures I'm delivering here — the inroads humanism is making into our society and into the Church even.

This is resulting in Christians who are concerned with the humanist takeover of education turning to private Christian schools to educate their children. Three new schools a day are being started in the U.S. It is predicted that by 1990 51% of all primary and secondary education in the U.S. will be in private schools.

ACR: We trust that your views will help our readers understand the situation in the U.S. and the issues which affect evangelicals there.

A.B.M.'s Secretary for Education and Promotion, Mr. Daniel McDiarmid commented "While some churches in the Pacific and South East Asian region, such as the Church of Melanesia, are all now financially independent of Australia, other churches require massive financial assistance if their evangelistic programmes are to be continued or increased."

"Most of the requests are concerned with training for evangelism," he said. "We can only hope that Australia's Anglican Christians are sufficiently concerned for the spread of the gospel in these areas, to increase their financial support for the missionary work of the church."



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World Alliance suspends white South African churches

(Ottawa, Canada) At its General Council in Ottawa, Ontario (August 17-27), the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) decided by near unanimous vote to suspend the privileges of membership to the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK) and the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk (NHK) of South Africa because of their support of apartheid. The action deprives the two churches of sending delegates to General Councils and holding membership in departmental committees and commissions. An earlier effort to expel the churches was replaced by the decision to suspend, an action which will continue in effect until the two churches give evidence of a change of heart. The larger NGK has been a member of the Alliance since 1876 and belongs to no other ecumenical body except the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. This is the first time in the history of the Alliance that it has suspended a member.

Both the NGK and the NHK not only support the South African policies of separate development (apartheid) but also (except for some racial integration in the NGK) practice segregation in worship, including Holy Communion.

The WARC chose this resolute course as the most forceful condemnation of apartheid. The Alliance had earlier (1964, 1970, and 1977) spoken out against apartheid and now felt that these earlier actions had produced no good effect. At this meeting in Ottawa the Alliance decided to distance itself from those who defend these policies.

The resolution to suspend called separate development a pseudo-religious ideology that (1) is based on a fundamental irreconcilability of human beings, thus rendering ineffective the reconciling and uniting power of our Lord Jesus Christ; (2) has led to exclusive privileges for the whites at the expense of the blacks; and (3) has created a situation of injustice, oppression, and "suffering to millions".

The strong rejection of apartheid and the action of the consensus resolution reached its sharpest focus in describing the situation as a **status confessionis** that

is "an issue on which it is not possible to differ without seriously jeopardizing the integrity of our common confession as Reformed churches". The moral and theological justification of apartheid, the Council said, is "a travesty of the Gospel, and in its persistent disobedience to the Word of God, a theological heresy".

The suspension will be lifted only when

- black Christians are no longer excluded from white church services, especially Holy Communion;
- the two white Afrikaner churches give concrete support in word and deed to those who suffer under apartheid;
- the churches' synods reject apartheid and commit the churches to dismantling the system.

The discussion on apartheid dominated the Council from the beginning until the next to the last day. Behind the action was a well-organized orchestration of anti-apartheid forces. These functioned in the preparatory materials, the opening Communion service, addresses in plenary, Bible studies, and the extensive discussions in the sections. At the opening Communion service, eleven black delegates from South Africa declared that because the blacks are not permitted by custom and church decision to partake of the Lord's Supper in the NGK and NHK, they could not participate with them in Ottawa. "To share communion with those who represent this disobedience to the Gospel would mean eating and drinking judgment upon ourselves," they said. To top it off, the nominating committee nominated as the new President of the Alliance, Dr. Allan Boesak, whose exposure in the Council was striking. He will replace Dr. James McCord who has served as President since 1977. The chairman of the nominating committee stated that what was needed was an action that would be understood as an unequivocal rejection of separate development. Others felt this last action had in it an element of overkill. In the section which spent most time on the

issue, the resolution to suspend was taken by 72 to 2 and the action of the entire assembly was similar.

The response of the delegates of the two suspended churches was to absent themselves from the final day's discussions. Prof. Johan Heyns (NGK) who had pleaded that the assembly not close the door on them, and welcomed the assembly's criticism, said afterwards that the Alliance had yielded to radical forces in its ranks. "This is not a Christian approach but discrimination against a member church that is trying to apply the Gospel to its circumstances." The delegates of the NHK intimated that they would propose that their church withdraw, but the four NGK delegates said they hoped their church would continue in the Alliance, although they doubted that their church would.

In his acceptance speech at the end of the meeting, Dr. Boesak described the action to suspend as an historic and awesome step. As a minister of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, he hoped the two white churches would accept the action in the same spirit in which it was taken. "We refuse to let these churches go and we hope they will seriously reconsider their stand."

The responses of the NGK delegates to this tone of reconciliation gave hope that significant change may occur in their church when the NGK meets in General Synod in October 1982.

(RES News)

SYDNEY FAMILY GO TO EAST AFRICA

A 35 year old Sydney accountant with African experience has gone with his wife and their two young children to Nairobi in Kenya to be financial administrator for African Enterprise in East Africa.

He is Mr. Ken Horsley, who grew up in Mosman and in recent years, has been associated with the Anglican parish of St. Peter's, Cook's River.



Mr. Horsley has been senior accountant in the office of the Amoco Oil Company in North Sydney since March, 1978, and both he and his wife were attracted by the opportunity to return to Africa, which they had come to know so well. And they were not unduly perturbed by the news of the attempted coup in Kenya that surprised the world a few days before they left for Nairobi, early in August. They were accompanied by their daughter, Hannah, aged four, and their son, Silas, aged two. Mr. Horsley's appointment is for three years.

LEBANON

The crisis in Lebanon has been well documented in news reports. Analyses of who was right and who was wrong and of the political implications of the Israeli attack can be found in most newspapers. But no amount of reporting can adequately cover the horror that is faced by those in Lebanon. However, we reprint parts of the report by Douglas Anderson, General Director of Middle East Christian Outreach, after a visit to

Lebanon during the Israeli invasion. We do this because we believe it will give our readers a better insight into the situation in this strife-torn country.

Tyre and Sidon

Dulcie and I had travelled this road together just six months previously when we attended the Christmas celebrations at the Lebanese Evangelical school in Tyre but now the scene was horribly different. Large apartment buildings were ripped apart, shanty towns which had housed refugees from the earlier inter-communal fighting no longer existed except as flattened charred and mangled remains. All along the side of the road as we travelled to Sidon through small towns and villages were the burnt-out chassis of destroyed cars, trucks and buses caught up and passed over by the tide of war. White flags fluttered from houses, road signs in Hebrew stood beside the familiar Arabic ones, large concentrations of Israel's military might were in camps at every strategic point and Israel's blue and white flag was flying.

Sidon, as we approached it in the clear morning light, still looked picturesque beside the Mediterranean sea, until we came closer. It is a wounded city of gaping holes and ugly empty spaces. The Israeli soldiers were still rounding up young men for questioning and we saw them being taken away hand-cuffed to the interrogation centres and we wondered if they would end up along with thousands of their fellows in the concentration camps. We visited the relief team arranged by Youth With A Mission at the Evangelical Girls' school in Sidon. Our daughter Helen and Brenda de Smidt who travelled with us, are members of the team which was busy clearing away rubble from the destroyed Boys' school next door. They are permitted to do relief work and give out copies of the scriptures and so in this way, are one of the first groups into occupied south Lebanon to share, from a truly Christian stand, something of the love and concern felt for these people in need.

Tyre presented another scene of destruction.

The majority of the civilian population had fled before the worst attacks took place and so the death toll had been lighter but houses, offices, shops and schools had all suffered damage. We were encouraged to see the Evangelical church building on the waterfront with almost no damage but then we turned the corner and stopped in front of the wreckage of the house and caretakers' room of the Lebanese Evangelical school in Tyre. This was an evangelical Christian school caring for 900 children where God's Word was faithfully taught and children and parents were loved for Christ's sake. Why had it been a target for bombing? "You were harbouring 50 armed men" was the excuse given by the Israeli military governor now in charge of Tyre. "We were sheltering the evangelical pastor and his wife and four lady teachers," replied Mrs. Abboud the school principal, but the wreckage remains. The school house is destroyed beyond repair as is the caretaker's room and entrance, the school building has suffered some serious structural damage to classroom columns, beams and cantilevers, walls have been blown out, windows and doors including the frames have disappeared but the main school building is already being repaired and the piles of rubble cleared away. Mr. and Mrs. Abboud are there among the charred section directing operations. Both are in their seventies. Working with them were Kamal and Najwa Khoury, teachers in the school. They showed us the remains of their home opposite the school. At 2.00 a.m. one morning they were awakened by the sound of explosions. As they carried out their two young sons their home received direct hits.

They staggered out, their night clothes torn and their home collapsing. Kamal's eighty year old mother was trapped inside and killed. Fire spread quickly through what remained of their home and they stood there in the night with nothing whatsoever left. As a Palestinian married to a Syrian, Kamal, whose Lebanese naturalization papers were burnt along with everything else, has no claim for compensation. What an amazing thing it was to see them working hard, uncomplaining, smiling and enthusiastic as they helped in the repairs of the school. Their attitude contrasted sharply with the bitterness that others are showing.

Billy Graham in England — 1984

A Report on the planning for Billy Graham's Mission to England in 1984 by Nigel Sharp — reprinted from Church of England Newspaper, U.K.

MISSION ENGLAND and the visit to this country, of Dr. Billy Graham in 1984, will undoubtedly provide some excellent source material for many books. Long before the Mission gets under way however, there is already a wealth of fascinating facts in the build-up to Dr. Graham's five-month-long Mission, which make interesting reading.

Not only have four well known Christian personalities been seconded to work on the Mission for the best part of three years — now known affectionately as the "gang of four" — many Church leaders throughout the country are devoting up to half their time for this Mission and many more have resigned other positions to be involved in what is being described as the "spiritual re-awakening of England".

On top of this, in hard economic times, the Mission will be funded on a million-pound shoestring. In the struggle to get the Mission off the ground the CEN, unwittingly perhaps, played a major part.



Study group

Since the mid-50's the Billy Graham organisation had been exploring the possibilities of a large scale mission in this country. At a meeting in the latter part of 1975 it was agreed that although the American evangelist was still warmly thought of and much respected by the British people, somehow it wasn't right for Dr. Graham to hold any more crusades in the same way as the crusades of the fifties and sixties. A study group was then set up under John Stott and chaired mainly by the Bible Society's chief executive, Tom Houston.

With the brief — How do you set about mass evangelism today? — a report entitled "Let my people grow" was produced and in the words of Mission England's National Director, Gavin Reid, "It was given the thumbs down." Then a remarkable chain of events, over a four year period, led to Dr. Graham agreeing to a five month tour in 1984, which was finally settled and sealed in the early part of this year.

The then Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Donald Coggan, presented his "Call to the Nation", the British Council of Churches were discussing some possible ideas and out of this mix came the Nationwide Initiative in Evangelism. While NIE was making a very valuable contribution, working on a country structure throughout the country, it soon became evident that, because of the theological mix, large scale evangelism would provide many difficulties.

On November 17 in the CEN, Gavin Reid's article appeared, asking the question "Have we shut the door on Billy?"

The article sparked off a letter to the Guardian newspaper saying "For heaven's sake keep Billy Graham out!" The newspaper received a colossal postbag on the subject and BBC's radio Sunday religious programme put Peter Mullen and Ian Barclay together arguing the merits of Billy Graham evangelising this country. They then asked the question to listeners "What do you think?" The response was one of the largest ever received by the programme and produced overwhelming support in favour of Dr. Graham's ministry.

Interest revived

This brought about a revival of interest, on both sides of the Atlantic and meetings, discussions, correspondence culminated in Gavin Reid, senior evangelist with the Church Pastoral Aid Society, Eddie Gibbs, church growth specialist with the Bible Society and national Youth for Christ Director, Clive Calver, flying out to Nice in the south of France last year to talk with Dr. Graham who was on vacation with his wife.

The talks were successful. If the British churches really wanted a crusade, then Dr. Graham was agreeable.

Formidable team

Joined by Brian Mills of Evangelical Alliance, Gavin Reid, Eddie Gibbs and Clive Calver visited the proposed four regions, north-east, north-west, south-west and the midlands to find out their reactions. Soon, East Anglia made application to be included. Following successful meetings around these five regions, the Billy Graham organisation agreed to eight days being spent in each region, spread over a period of five months, starting in May 1984.

The Billy Graham organisation then suggested that the four-strong team remained together on a permanent basis to head up the million-pound operation. The four agreed, funded by their respective employees or trusts. They have formed a formidable team preparing for a three year period of emphasis upon prayer, outreach and evangelism under the slogan of "Mission England is you and me as well as Billy Graham beginning now." As national director Gavin Reid commented, "None of us expected this. I was going back to parish work."

Each region will be autonomous. For the next two years they will be preparing in readiness for the evangelist's visit and the vast amount of counselling and integration needed to cope with new converts.

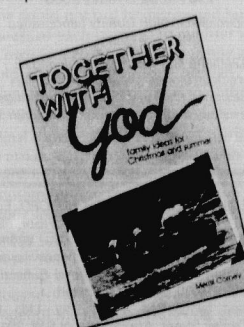
A football ground will be used in each region for the actual crusade and although final agreements have not yet been signed it is proposed that for the Midlands the venue will be Aston Villa's ground, Villa Park. North East's site will be Roker Park, Sunderland. Goodison Park, Everton is wanted for the North West, Ashton Gate the home of Bristol City for the South West. East Anglia's venues will be split between Portman Road, Ipswich Town and Norwich City's, Carrow Road.

Each region will fund their own operation and make a contribution towards the expenses of the national office, staff and costs. This money will be raised by way of local support and it is anticipated that the total cost will exceed one million pounds. As Gavin Reid remarked, "This is a shoestring budget for a mission of this magnitude."

Christmas and Holidays — Australian Style

Two well known Christian agencies have joined forces to publish a new resource for families. The Joint Board of Christian Education and Scripture Union Australia are co-publishing **Together with God** an 80 page book to help Christian families celebrate Christmas and the summer holiday season.

The book has been specially designed for Australian and New Zealand families and may be unique in its southern hemisphere summer Christmas outlook.



WHAT A WORLD

Reading for renewal

Lesley Hicks



There is a danger for Christians who, like myself, are avid readers. We are liable to be, very literally, armchair Christians, whose experience is obtained more from books than from the Book, more from reading than obeying and more second-hand than first-hand.

On the other hand, if we read little Christian literature, whether papers, magazines or books, and we confine our experience to the first-hand alone, we run the risk of being parochial and prejudiced through sheer ignorance of what the Lord is doing in other lives and other places.

In general, however, those who are spiritually hungry will read. Ideally, good Christian books will penetrate our various defences and take powerful effect, just as good sermons will. Writing in "An Unfading Vision — The adventure of books" of his ministry as a publisher of Christian books, Edward England of Hodder & Stoughton stated: "I learned to publish only what fired my own mind and heart. If a book on prayer did not make me pray, if a book on hungry people did not make me give, if a volume on the Holy Spirit did not make me seek his blessing, I turned aside." I feel a similar responsibility as a reviewer. On the whole, I turn aside from books that mean less to me — I don't enjoy slating a book which may be a blessing to someone else — and only review and quote from those which I am most enthusiastic about.

One area of reading which valuably enriches and broadens my experience, though not without its dangers, concerns the renewal movement. "Renew Us by Your Spirit" by Tom Walker (Hodder & Stoughton, 1982, \$4.95) is one such book. Walker's background is I.V.F. and evangelical Anglican, one with which I can identify. A great deal of what he writes is relevant to evangelical Anglicans in Australia. Theologically, he aligns with John Stott more than traditional pentecostalism in his understanding of the terms baptism/filling of the Spirit; but whatever the terminology, the testimony of renewal is impressive and undeniable.

The danger is that in reading of the Holy Spirit's outpouring elsewhere, we become too impatient in our own situation. Yet that is a healthier situation, it seems to me, than smug complacency, or despair. Reading of renewal, we know it is real and does happen. The Holy Spirit is sovereign — we cannot demand that

the wind blow with power — but God does fill the longing individual, and whole churches too if enough barriers come down.

Aboriginal Renewal

It was thrilling to read in a recent issue of On Being (August) of the remarkable impact of renewal/revival/conversion, or call it what you will, amongst Aborigines in Western Australia. The article, by Peter Mickelborough, is headed "It's got the pub owner worried! Aboriginal Christianity sweeps the outbreak."

He writes that in Wiluna, a formerly depressed and depressing town in the very centre of W.A., there was a startling response to the mission led by a group of Aborigines from Warburton and other centres. As a result, "court appearances have dropped 90%, there have been few arrests and so the new gaol is hardly used. Police and hospital staff have little work; rubbish and litter have dramatically decreased . . . the hotel is offering free beer with counter lunches to try and attract customers back . . ."

Stories like these can be repeated about settlements all over outback Australia. Such is the power of the gospel. I have heard too that fringe-dwelling Aborigines in NSW centres — Condobolin and Griffith to name two — are experiencing similar transformations. Mickelborough writes: "If a specific beginning to this movement can be pinpointed it is probably the time of renewal that took place amongst Elcho Islanders, off Arnhem Land, in 1979, when hundreds of Aborigines went forward to commit themselves to Christ at evangelistic meetings conducted by the Rev. Dan Armstrong." Ever since then it has been ministry by Aborigines to Aborigines.

Whereas before they would drink and gamble the days and nights away, now they meet constantly to sing, pray, study the Bible and share testimonies. Children are being properly cared for; couples are getting legally married. The secular world may be cynical, puzzled or scornful, but they cannot ignore the changes. Most feel they will not last — let's pray that for the sake of a lost people, time will prove them wrong.




But unless we white Australians can learn humbly from our black brothers and sisters, we will be the deprived ones.

There's not a sign of snow or reindeers and even the advent candles have gum leaves around the base!

The format is a smorgasbord of ideas for activities, readings, prayers, family talk topics and action notes. The framework is provided by ten 'weekly specials' which focus on Bible readings linked with the many churches. The activities flow from this structure. There is more than enough material for the period from late November to early February. Apart from

holiday, Advent and Christmas ideas, there are suggestions for New Year and the return to school and work. Even Australia Day rates some attention.

The writer, Merril Corney, has specially considered the needs of families who have never before tried this kind of Christian focus in their homes. As well, families who are more experienced in this area will find a wealth of enriching and compelling new ideas.

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Dated 14th October, 1982

D. W. Lewarne
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T UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER

Dr. Alan Craddock

WHY IS THIS HAPPENING TO ME?

HELP FROM PAUL

There are times when the predictable routines of life become interrupted by events which are hard to understand. Not only do we find it hard to find meaning in the midst of the crisis but we can become intensely discouraged as the events frustrate us in various ways. We gain a sense of being thwarted, of having our progress towards the goals we desire blocked by these unexpected circumstances. For a Christian there is the additional problem of having to rethink and re-examine the purposes and goals which God would have us pursue.

As we are faced by these kinds of difficulties, or when we see others confronted by them, we can be unsure of how we should think and act. I believe that Paul provides a most appropriate model. It is clear that when Paul was writing to the Christians at Philippi he was facing at least two areas of possible discouragement. Furthermore, the recipients of his letter were living in a city which generally would have been very hostile to the early Christians and so they too had grounds for discouragement.

Paul had to face up to what could have been seen as an interruption to his ministry. He had been imprisoned and

could have retreated into himself obsessed with the question "why has God let this happen to me?" Not only that, but he also had to contend with the fact that some were preaching Christ for motives which had to do with envy, rivalry and selfish ambition. Whereas in the meantime, Paul was in chains! These men were free and trying to stir up trouble for Paul to question the plans and purposes of God.

In the face of these crises Paul did not waver from his conviction that God was working out His purposes in His way. Paul shifted his perspective from himself and the effects that these events could have upon him, to what God was achieving in the situation. He recognised the advantage his imprisonment gave to the gospel: "What has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel . . . it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly." (Philippians 1:15-18a)

Again, we can perceive the way in which Paul actively sought to gain a

proper perspective on the events taking place. Events have their effects upon many persons and in many different ways. It is a mistake to react to difficult events by narrowing one's view, by retreating into oneself and by becoming solely concerned with the impact of the events upon one person. A better reaction is to broaden one's view, to maintain one's faith in what God is doing, and to look for effects which clarify the situation.

We can learn one more thing from Paul. He was prepared to share his perspective on his situation with other Christians facing difficult circumstances. His intention was to give guidance and encouragement to them in order to aid their search for meaning in the face of their persecution (Philippians 1:18b-30).

What Paul did here is a natural development from his outward-looking perspective. He first looks to God for encouragement and then having gained peace and strength he continues to look beyond himself and helps those who struggle in the same fashion.

The implications of this for us are clear: (1) When we are troubled by discouraging and frustrating circumstances we need to prayerfully seek a proper perspective on what is happening to us. This perspective needs

to be the opposite of the common and unhelpful narrow view of what is happening to me and the effect it is having upon me. The broader perspective does not ignore this aspect, but goes beyond it and in so doing enables the sufferer to cope with his/her personal situation more effectively.

(2) When we gain insight into our situation we should share constructively and sensitively with others. As we rejoice and understand we can help others to gain insight as we teach and share from our experience. This is not merely an emotional sharing but something which includes the intellect as well. We believe and have faith in what God is doing, and so we feel comfort and peace in the midst of discomfort and turmoil.

However, not all people can see what God is doing through them and their circumstances as clearly as Paul. Consider the case of Job. The heavenly dialogue between God and Satan was apparently never revealed to Job and so the exact purpose of his suffering could not be known by him. Such persons now have an added source of frustration — prayer, faith and well-meaning advisers do not appear to help at all! In the face of such extreme difficulty what can be done? This is a topic in its own right and I'll take up some of the issues in the next column.

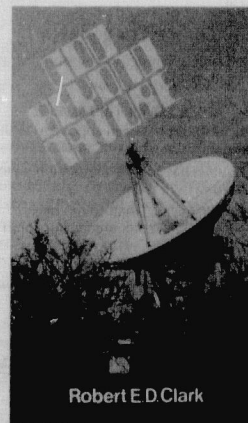
BOOK REVIEWS

God Beyond Nature

Robert E. D. Clark, Paternoster, 112p

£1.95 (UK), 2 (Aus)

This paperback is a revision of Clark's apologetic work 'Creation' first published in 1946, but the material has been updated throughout. It is an argument for theirism directed especially towards the young agnostic.



Robert E. D. Clark

final chapter contains an appeal for decision against arguments for procrastination. There is a careful and thorough treatment of common agnostic arguments in these chapters, although at times the discussion seems to assume God's existence as a hidden premise. This is an indication of the author's commitment to the god revealed in the Bible but also simplified problems that are not so easy for Christians to answer.

This book is a good, little apologetic tool, in an easy to read style. It could be given to agnostic friends who have some scientific awareness but also profitably read by Christians interested in the relationship of science to their faith.

John L. Bales

Jesus — More Than a Prophet

Edited by R. W. F. Wootton. Published by I.V.P. (price £1.25) Paperback 80 pages.

This very readable book contains the testimony of 15 Muslims who became Christians.

Some are young, some are old. They come from different countries and backgrounds. Their experiences differ but the end result is the same.

I was impressed by the way each person wrote. Humility before God and a thankfulness to Him for His grace was very evident. An appreciation of much of the Muslim way of life and discipline is recorded. The need for conversion and the blessings of forgiveness are emphasised by each writer.

One could not but be impressed by the keenness of each convert to minister to their own (sometimes hostile) family and people. The value of loving Christian missionaries and the importance of the Bible was very clear.

A final short statement of the Christian Faith makes this book a helpful tool in ministry. It would be helpful to those who are Muslims and to those who believe all religions are the same.

For any Christian it serves as a reminder of the power of the gospel to change lives and so bears testimony to the graciousness of God. It also was a helpful reminder of the need to be loving, gentle and concerned for those seeking God.

P. R. Brain

Banner of Truth

1 & 2 Thessalonians

by Geoffrey B. Wilson. 1982. 128pp

GBW is hardly the author of this commentary. He is more an editor. The book's subtitle is "A digest of Reformed Comment". It is a bonanza for preachers who want to give the impression they have read every "good" commentary on Paul's letters. Names are dropped with gay abandon, sometimes without even identifying what words or ideas are actually being quoted. By the time the reader has cruised through the 128 pages he feels he has got to know Calvin, Berkhof, Bruce, Findlay, Hendriksen, Morris, Trench Plummer etc. etc.

Geoffrey B. (Bowerbird?) Wilson writes for new Christians. The commentary is certainly easily understandable. However whether new Christians would benefit from or appreciate the host of heaves that are spread before us is open to question. As is the use of the AV.

1&2 Thessalonians



GBW sets out the AV of each verse in bold type. He then discusses that verse phrase by phrase, again in bold type but this time from a different translation. Many translations (no GNB here) are used here including translation made by some of the great commentators of the past.

I appreciated that GBW spent almost no time arguing back and forth about endless critical questions. 1 & 2 Thessalonians are both written by Paul, they are written early in the piece to real people and are now part of God's revelation to us. Hence the main energy of this digest of reformed comment is

spent making the meaning of the text crystal clear.

My sympathies to any commentator who fails to get a mention.

S. Miller

MALAYSIA BANS INDONESIAN BIBLES

The Malaysian government's ban on the importation of Indonesian Bibles has only served to increase interest in the book, according to Dr. David Soesilo, Translation Advisor of the Indonesian Bible Society.

The ban was enforced in February this year because the Government felt that the name Allah, which was used for God, was an exclusively Islamic name and that other expressions in the Bible were also Islamic and should not appear in a Christian book.

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