



MOORE
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SOCIETAS

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guest editorial

A PLEA FOR FREEDOM

The following are some notes of a sermon preached by Dr Robert Withycombe in Moore College Chapel, 12th March, 1975, based on part of the Epistle for Mid-Lent Sunday (IV), Galatians 4:25-26.

As Dean of Students, Robert Withycombe has for a number of years been associated with the production of "Societas". At the end of this year he leaves Moore College to take up the position of Warden of St Mark's Library, Canberra.

"NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM" ... A PLEA FOR FREEDOM

"Next year in Jerusalem!" is still a toast or hope of Jews at Passover time. It is a hope preserved amidst pressures and persecutions over the centuries. Its current degree of realisation brings its own added frustrations. It is also part of the difficulty in any future settlement of that city.

It is an expression of HOPE: of future fulfilment both of the individual and of corporate worship.

There is no need to remind you at length (and with multiple references!) that the concept of the "new Jerusalem" stems from the Old Testament, especially when the old city was being ravaged (Zech 8:1-8). "A new Jerusalem" is often contrasted with the miserable situation of the present city and the human polluters and destroyers of its life.

Other passages, however, focus on an ideal city, one which is in God's mind and plan for man and one day to be established on earth (eg, Ezekiel 48; Isaiah 62). This ideal is presented again, in allegorical terms, in Rev 3:21 and 21:2: "the city of my God, that new Jerusalem which is coming down out of heaven from my God".

In Galatians 4:25-26 their present Jerusalem and the heavenly Jerusalem are contrasted; and in both "Jerusalem" represents the people of God, Jews or Christians.

For Paul's rabbinical argument, one point is vital: THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM ("THE JERUSALEM WHICH IS ABOVE") IS FREE, the free woman, the true mother of us all, our motherland! She is the true object of the alien sojourners' deep, homesick yearning.



"But the Jerusalem which is above is FREE!" It is characterised by freedom in its citizenship basis AND in the expression of its life, freedom to worship the sovereign Lord of that City inwardly, in spirit and truth. There is no temple there, according to Revelation 21, and therefore, presumably no cultic ritual.

Those in the Kingdom of Christ look to the realisation of the heavenly Jerusalem begun in their midst: "if Christ shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" ... But today, in religion, "freedom" is feared; yet it need not be "anarchy" or license, not if it is freedom to serve Christ according as He has created, called, accepted and equipped us. Therefore, the alternative to license ought not to be oligarchy or monarchy, however benevolent our local supreme authority (or supreme pontiff) may be!

The Apostle Paul should have known the dangers of freedom! But he did not therefore leave it out, not even with the Galatians, who were sliding back into Judaism. Rather, he commanded, "Christ set us free, to be free men. STAND FIRM, then, and refuse to be tied to the yoke of slavery again." (Gal 5:1)

IT IS A VERY SERIOUS THING IF WE ROB EACH OTHER OF OUR BIRTHRIGHT — OUR FREEDOM — ON THE GROUNDS THAT WE ARE NOT MATURE ENOUGH TO ENJOY AND USE IT PROPERLY!

"The Jerusalem which is above is free".

Meanwhile ... "The Jerusalem which now is ('the Jerusalem of today' — NEB), she and her children are in slavery ..."

What is this slavery? THEN it was slavery to the fulfilment of the Divine law (and its human overlays?) for salvation ... NOW? (As then too?) this slavery occurs

when an authority structure imposes a pattern of life with a supposedly divine basis, which leads men and women to believe they would earn or justify their salvation by conforming to it. That is, they put their faith in "the system" and conformed to its demands, hoping that in this they would find their Ultimate Security.

What characterises the slavery of the present Jerusalem? To seek righteousness by satisfying or fulfilling their obligations to an Authority which becomes an end in itself, even though it is itself a creature. This is especially dangerous when that authority identifies its own interests with that of the institution which he, she or it is "to serve".

Or is their motive "to rule"? That inner shift from "serve" to "rule" may be the source of the disease.

All this distorts God's plan. He does not demand such "sacrificial conformity" but rather mercy, concern for justice even to one's own loss of power or "face", and thus for humility. For example in Micah 6:8 "And what does the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God ..."

Failure to prize these qualities above others is a sign that men are in bondage to "law" — and to the petty, legalistic, advantage-taking that this breeds. In fact, as in Jesus time, men may keep the letter of the law and yet be unjust; they may even use the letter of the law to cover up their injustice. Jesus had to rebuke this Phariseism, even in high places.

Today a similar Phariseism is just as great a danger. Furthermore, "Just as in those days the earthly Jerusalem in bondage persecuted the sons of the heavenly (in their freedom), so it is today ..."

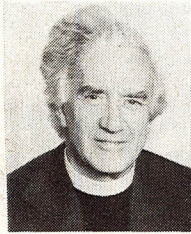
We must beware salvation by conformity to human elaborations to God's law or to human systems (even those seemingly justified by being garnished with Biblical tests) if, by so doing, we jeopardise the precious freedom which we are given as our birthright in Christ. Examine yourself by asking how you test maturity in others: is it by meticulous obedience to law and by conformity — OR IS IT BY THEIR CREATIVE AND CHRIST-HONOURING USE OF FREEDOM?

The Communion Service proclaims our full freedom (by Christ) from slavery and looks forward to our full release (through Christ) from sin; it directs us to the need for that mutual love without which all freedom is license to sin. Let us pray for a responsible use of our own and of others' freedom. AMEN.

"Christ set us free, to be free men. Stand firm, then, and refuse to be tied to the yoke of slavery again".

R. S. M. Withycombe.

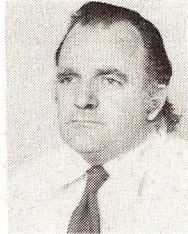
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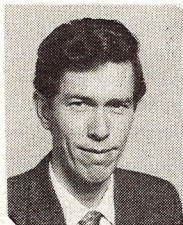
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EDITOR'S COMMENT

"The first demand which is made of those who belong to God's Church is ... that they shall be witnesses of Jesus Christ before the world."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Ethics.

Apart from the Guest Editorial by Robert Withycombe, and the article on the Moore College playgroup, the contributions to this year's *Societas* explore various aspects of Christian witness. It is hoped that they will stimulate concerned Christians to think about the implications of the demand that is made of them to be witnesses of Jesus Christ before the world and to translate their conclusions into action. What have we got to say to the world? How urgent is our task? How important is social concern? How do we witness at home, at school, at university, at work? These are just some of the questions explored (in this magazine) by staff, students and student's wives of Moore College and Deaconess House.

The opinions expressed in the various articles are those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect those of the Editorial Committee or the College staff. The diversity of ideas expressed in the articles reflect something of the hopes and fears which the Christian faces today when he tries to translate his faith into action and language relevant to his world.

John Squires.

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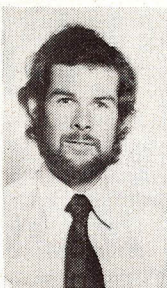
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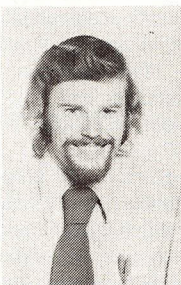
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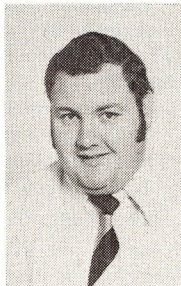
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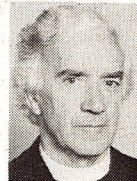
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JESUS JESUS JESUS



by Dr D. B. Knox

What is the message that the Christian brings to the non-christian whether he is his neighbour or whether he lives in countries across the sea? A surprising number of competing messages are being advocated. Messages of liberation and messages of wholeness jostle with messages of judgement, of new life, of friendship and so on. What is the authentic message? In a word our message is Jesus. We have no other message. But salutary though it is to remember the centrality of Jesus in our message, it does not bring us to the goal of our enquiry. We need to ask the further question, what it is we are to say about Jesus? That he was born of a virgin? that he lived in Nazareth? that he went around doing good? that he died at Jerusalem? that he rose on the third day? and so on. These things are true but if our message is to break the incrustations of worldliness, it must be relevant.

The future is the most relevant thing that anyone can be told about. We shape our present with our eyes on the future, so we

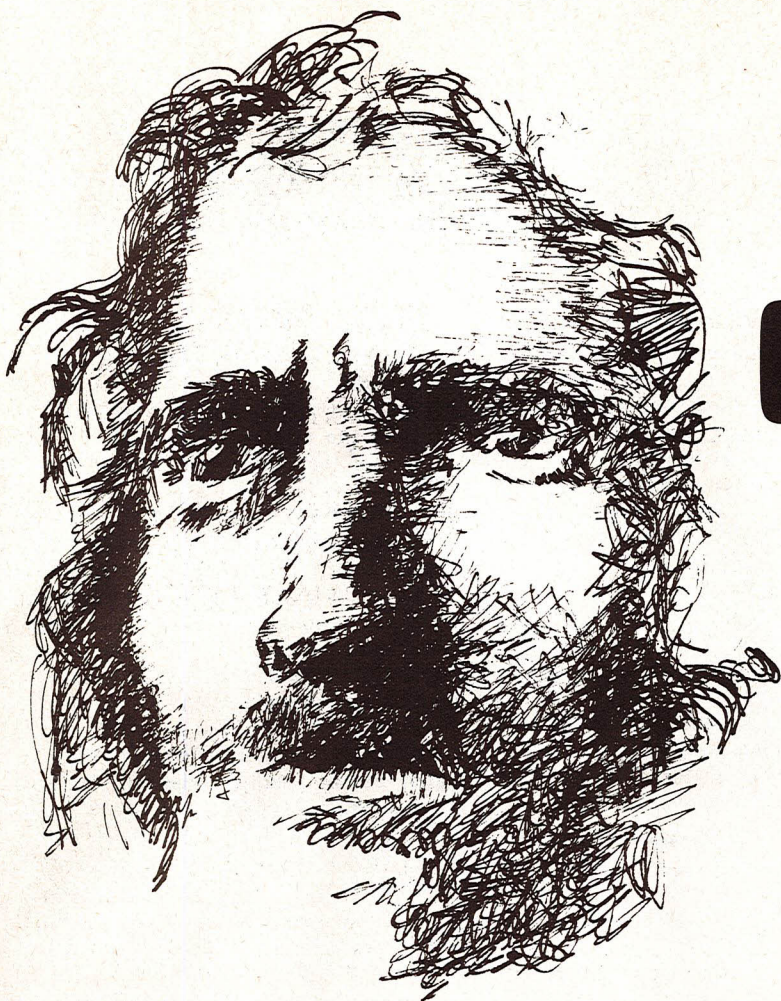
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THE CHRISTIAN'S MESSAGE

may conclude that Jesus and the future is the cutting edge of the Christian message. As Paul put it at Athens, God commands everybody to change their mind because he has appointed a day in the future when he will judge the world by Jesus. The message of future judgement by Jesus, God's appointed judge, leaps over every culture barrier. No matter how rich or how poor, how westernised or how primitive, each human heart that hears that message knows that it is right that he should be judged and knows moreover that he deserves to be condemned however much he hopes that the palliative that he offers may appease that judgement. At the point of guilt and conscience we are all on a level, and the message of God's judgement in Jesus, true message as it is, is very relevant to the hearer, no matter whether he is superior or inferior culturally to the preacher. Since it is equally relevant to the preacher, he stands alongside the hearer as a fellow man with him, equally deserving the just judgement of God.

But the Christian message is not only

about the future. It is also about the past as it effects the future. Jesus is the Saviour of the world who has overcome our supreme antagonist and torn up the accusations that Satan brings against us at God's judgement bar. That means that through faith in Jesus the Lord we can face that future judgement with the assurance that we will be acquitted through Jesus. The cross of Jesus is the victory of Jesus, a victory sealed as utterly successful by the resurrection and triumph over death. Death is the incontestable sign of our sinfulness. But Jesus has plainly triumphed over sin and death and has opened the way to salvation and restoration to the presence and fellowship of God for all sinners who turn and pray to him as Victor, so that it is a very different future that they look forward to, no longer a future of fear of the judgement and eternal condemnation, but a future of enjoying God's inheritance sharing with our Lord Jesus in the eternity of heaven, through what he did at Calvary when he bore our sins in his own body on the cross. The death and resurrection of Jesus must be in the very centre of the message.

But the past effects the present as well as the future so that the message of Jesus is also a message about the present, about Jesus the divine King, exalted to the place of power, crowned with glory and honour, ruling the world. He is the one in whom we may put our complete trust day by day, for he loved us and gave himself for us. He has become our example; The example on the one hand of absolute trust in God leading to complete obedience even to the accepting of death by crucifixion and of the curse of God on sin; and the example, on the other hand, of how we should relate ourselves to people; "I am among you as he who serves".

Jesus exemplifies the character of God. In him we see the holiness, the righteousness and the love of God. Jesus, whose name is Emanuel, "God with us", Jesus "who rescues us from the wrath to come" is our message. This message, this news, this Gospel will prove to be the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.

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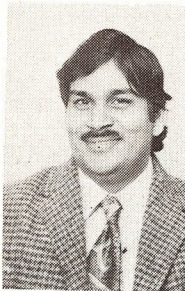
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A MUSICAL

by Michael Robinson

Most of the examples of music in the Bible are related to its use within the Church to praise God and edify the congregation. However, our use of music today is much more extensive than that. It is used, for example, as a means of getting the Christian message across to people who might never enter our Churches, never listen to a sermon, never read the Bible. Therefore it is imperative that we use it well.

Naturally, the sort of music and song that is used in Christian outreach must vary according to the audience. Some people may hear the message when it is communicated by "serious" choral music, others if it is communicated by folk or rock music. It is probably in the area of rock music that most controversy has arisen.

providing an undesirable atmosphere akin to secular presentation. They should be careful also to make sure the volume of music is not so loud that it distorts the words of the message, physically damage the ears of the listeners or disturb nearby residents.

THE WORDS

There is no reason why the Christian singer should limit himself to songs which are distinctively Christian in word content. He may wish to use "ordinary" love songs, for example, as part of his programme. However his total presentation must be balanced by songs which are explicitly Christian.

Some songs may have popular musical appeal but be totally misleading in their message. For example, the song "I Wish We'd All Been Ready" by Larry Norman, an American Christian rock singer, is a beautiful song with a forceful message about being ready for the last day. However, it appears that it is based on a misunderstanding of Luke 17:34f:

"Two men walking up a hill,
One disappears,
And one's left standing still,
I wish we'd all been ready"

The Bible does not speak of a "secret rapture" as this song seems to imply.

Songs about God should reflect the theological perspective of the Bible. They should also be true to common experience. For instance, the following song from **Youth Praise, Book One**, misrepresents the reality of the Christian life:

"Life is wonderful, Yes, it's wonderful,
Life is wonderful now to me!
I let Jesus in, **he changed everything**
Life is wonderful now!
Since His blessings came into my heart,
Joy unspeakable fills every part,
And I want to live for my Lord,
Life is wonderful now!"

For the Christian it is not true that Jesus "changed everything" at his conversion; it is not true that "Joy unspeakable fills every part", for Christians still sometimes behave in the same old way, still sometimes feel sad. Christians have a full variety of human experiences and their songs should be

ROCK MUSIC

To most teenagers, Rock Music has become the staple diet of their everyday musical experience. It is desirable, indeed almost necessary, that the Christian message be communicated to them by this medium, otherwise it is basically foreign and inappropriate. However, secular rock, when it is presented live, is usually accompanied by highly suggestive and often explicit sexual overtones. These overtones are communicated not only by spoken and sung words, but also by dancing and various "loaded" gestures. This has even led some people to believe rock music itself to be inspired by Satan, since it provides a suitable atmosphere for immoral thoughts. However, this issue has not been resolved since others argue that music itself is neutral, the difficulty being merely in its associations.

Christians using rock music should be careful not to undermine their message by

EXPERIENCE

honest, and true to these. For example:

"Lord, I'm feeling low,
And Lord, I can't make this feeling go.
Dear God, I'm feeling blue,
And I know now Lord,
I just cannot do without you."

© Michael Robinson.

THE CHOICE OF SONGS

Original songs are the best. In choosing other peoples' songs there are two dangers to avoid. Don't think that a song has a Christian message just because it mentions "Jesus" or "God" or "My Sweet Lord". For example, ex-Beatle George Harrison writes "religious" songs, but they praise the false god Krishna, not Christ.

Don't take a good song and change some or all, of its words to make it agree with your Christian viewpoint. For example, the words of the Beatle song "Let It Be",

"Mother Mary comes to me,
Whispers words of wisdom,
Let it be, let it be..."

are sometimes changed to:

"My Lord Jesus comes to me..."

Such alterations display a general lack of understanding and respect for the composer's originality. Such abuse is unworthy of the message that is being communicated.

THE PRESENTATION

There are many ways in which a Christian singer may present his music. Apart from live performances, there is radio, television and records. These means reach a wider audience and, in the case of records, have a repeated impact. However, since most will perform their music live in coffee houses and at concerts, the presentation must be carefully planned and rehearsed.

Generally speaking only a few ideas from the songs lodge in the minds of the audience. Therefore it is often necessary to enrich the meaning conveyed by the words of a song with a spoken introduction. In fact, the best presentation can often be rather like a short talk illustrated by song. Only in this way will the dynamic of the gospel message, couched in music reach the ears and minds of the hearers.

TIME

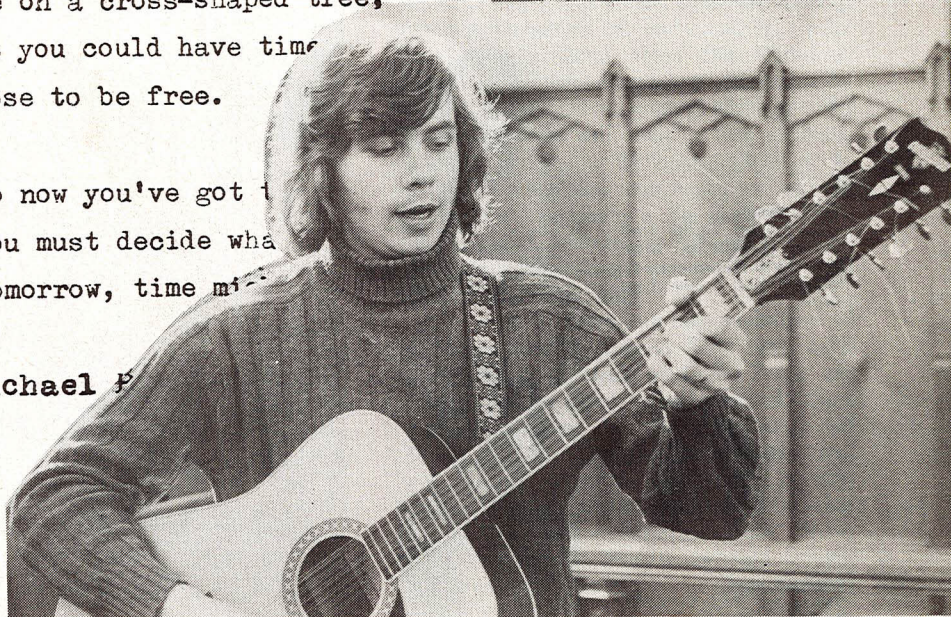
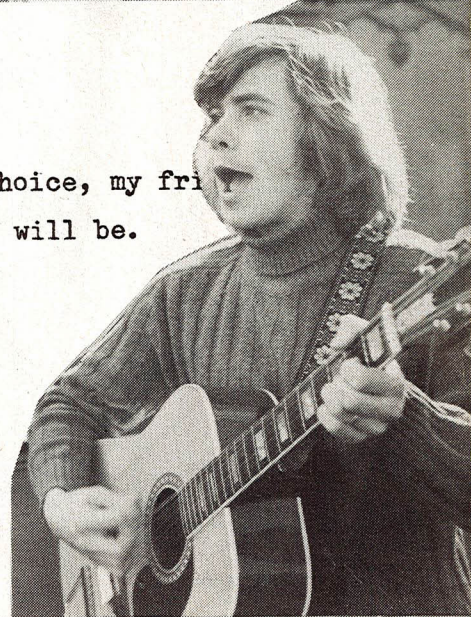
You haven't got time
To be wondering why
A God of love
Should let immo
You haven't got
To be wondering w
People on earth
Are gonna see peace again.

You've only got time to make a choice, my fri
You must decide what your future will be.
Tomorrow, time might be gone.

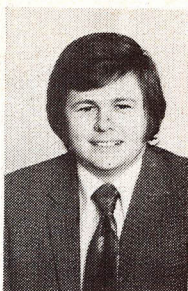
Long ago in time
Lived a man, and he was "God-man"
And he had time to choose
What his future would be.
He chose to suffer
And die on a cross-shaped tree,
So that you could have time
To choose to be free.

So now you've got t
You must decide wha
Tomorrow, time mi

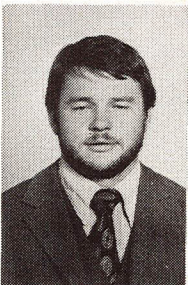
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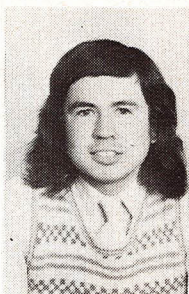
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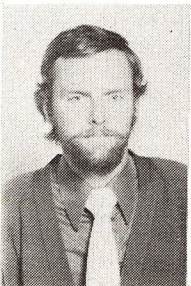
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TOTAL CONCERN



People today underestimate the influence that the Christian Faith has had in building up what is wholesome in our society. It is fashionable to decry christian standards, and acceptable to drop any facade of christian belief that would once have been considered proper.

But, there has been no corresponding weakness in man's determination to improve his lot even in Western civilisation. People increasingly seek new ways, apart from the Christian Faith, and often contrary to it, by which moral and social change might occur.

Perhaps most christians have also tended to take the past role of their Faith in shaping society for granted. If this is so, it would be because we have failed to grasp the 'all of life' impact of our own message. So, whilst God's mind speaks to every situation of life and every endeavour and concern of men, Christians have become content to let it speak on one subject only: personal salvation. Thus, while the world moves "forward" on several fronts, the Christian who lacks God's perspectives, is left standing with a message that pushes only on one front.

Of course this is a generalisation to which numerous exceptions can fortunately be found. However, like a useful generalisation should, it strikes at the weakness of the majority. Some Christians might respond to the challenge of a changing world by abandoning the gospel message in its Biblical form, or altering its priority in their order of activities. But that would make all else they might do of no real effect. To rush off half-cocked, for example, with a 'social' gospel of some kind is to succumb to just another even more limited approach. Such a message may generate interest, but can never have the power to save.

The right Christian response to the challenge of our age of various social, moral, ecological, etc movements ought to be that of our forefathers in other ages: involvement, not withdrawal. In this secular generation Christians must earn the right to be heard, their voices will not automatically



command respect. As always, God's purposes for the extension of His Kingly rule move forward on all fronts. God's purposes cover the whole of His creation, and not just men's "souls". It is through His people that God extends these purposes and fulfils them.

This means that the Christian must seek to learn what it is to live for Christ in the total situation of life, and cease to compartmentalise it in ways Jesus himself did not. We must preach and witness, like Jesus, to His Lordship, whilst at the same time showing by our attitudes and concerns to life as it now is, the relevance of this Lordship.

The fulfilment of all the noble aspirations of all the movements of men will come only in God's way, and ultimately only at the personal return of Christ. But this remaking of the whole of God's creation has begun already in the personalities of God's people (2 Cor 5:17). And it has begun in other ways too: For Jesus did not wait for his death to show, among other things, that Satan's rule

was at an end, rather he demonstrated the impending defeat of Satan by casting out demons from those he met during his ministry. And he did many other things, not only out of compassion, but also to point forward to the nature of his Kingdom. If there was a sense in which Christ's Kingdom was present in His own ministry, then in the ministry of his disciples also the benefits of its future consummation should be demonstrated.

Christians ought to continue Christ's work (John 14:12), as he demonstrated, by expressing the character of his Kingdom, not just in their own characters and words, but in their deeds. In this way the proclamation of the gospel could never lose its absolute priority, but would only gain in relevance as Christians work out the principles of the Kingdom, to which that gospel points, in every area of human life.

So care for people's physical, mental and spiritual welfare, responsibility towards the environment, concern for economic,

political and social issues, these are among the many areas of life embraced by God's purposes. In these areas the Christian should be involved because of obedience to God as Creator, and because these are the very areas that will share in the ultimate fruits of Christ the Redeemer (Rom 8:19-23). Feed a starving man bread and he will understand that Jesus is the Bread of Life all the more, because he can see that this same Jesus has taught you well. You ring true, so Jesus rings true.

There are concerns and responsibilities all Christians share because they are both human, and children of God. There are other concerns which some have and others don't, according to the distribution of Christ's gifts: But all have gifts and concerns for which to use them. Let each Christian pray that God will show him what he can do in his own situation of life. This is living for Christ: That we witness for the whole of God's Truth.

David Gilmour

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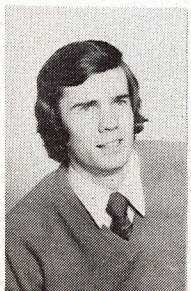
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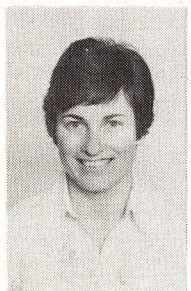
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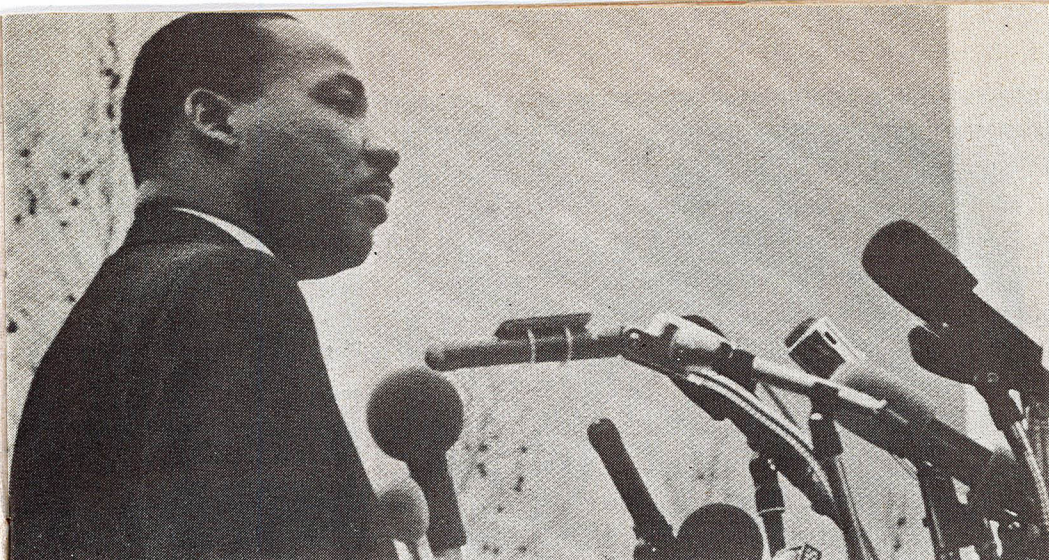
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JAMIESON, Mrs Lyn
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In New York Dr. King addresses a peace rally in front of the U.N. building.

SOCIAL JUSTICE OR SOCIAL WITNESS

by Paul Perini

Throughout history God's people have expressed concern for social justice; that the socially and economically satisfied share what they have with the deprived, and that they promote the latter's cause. Amos, in the eighth century BC, condemned the selfish and oppressive rich of Israel (Amos 8:4-7). James wrote to the New Testament church about the need for Christians to assist in practical ways those who lacked essential material goods (James 2:15-16).

In the middle ages religious orders cared for those in need, notably the Hospitaler Order which ran hostels for travellers and developed places for the sick. During the nineteenth century, prominent Christians, like Wilberforce and Shaftesbury of England, fought for social reform; in their cases the abolition of slavery and improved factory conditions respectively. Our own time has produced men such as Martin Luther King who, until his death, fought for an end to racial discrimination in the USA.

The New Testament strongly implies that the Christian's prime responsibility is toward his fellow Christians (1 Cor 16:1-4; Gal 2:10, 6:6; James 2:15, 16). However, this responsibility does not do away with that due to non-Christians. Assisting those in need, and promoting social justice, are essential characteristics of our faith.

It is the working out of our love for our neighbour. Jesus' answer to the lawyer of Luke 10, who asked who his neighbour was, that he might love him, was the parable of the Good Samaritan. A parable that cuts across all bounds of religious conviction and demonstrates the nature of Christian love.

As a part of witness the Christian's quest for social justice is crucial. In witnessing, we endeavour to represent our God, and demonstrate that he is sovereign, loving and just. Our concern for peoples' socio-economic needs, our willingness to share what we have, is essential to this demon-

stration as it implies the concern of our God. However the most important aspect of witness is the proclamation of the Gospel, which is concerned with man's spiritual condition as a sinner before his sovereign God, and God's provision of salvation through Christ. World-wide social injustice reflects the universal occurrence of personal sin. The Gospel seeks primarily to deal with this sin and not its reflections. A call for social justice is not intrinsic to it, however such a call should accompany its proclamation wherever possible. The implementation of social justice may enhance this proclamation, for the preachers and the gospel message will become more credible to the hearers if it is seen that their physical as well as spiritual needs are of vital concern and interest. Most importantly, whenever Christians are gathered there are opportunities for the enactment of simple Christian love. These opportunities must be taken.

In the industrialised welfare state of Australia the modes of implementing social justice for the Christian are changing. The state is assuming a far greater role by providing hospital care, aiding those bereft of family, assisting the hard-core poor, and redistributing wealth. The Christian community must also continue its work in these areas, but be prepared to meet new and subtle ills produced by big industries and the bureaucracy of the government. For example, the family may suffer severe tension due to the breadwinner's lack of job satisfaction or the migrant may only receive token compensation for his home which is now a "free-way".

The magnitude of social injustice outside of Australia, and the other wealthy nations, makes some of our complaints of the incidents of it within our own country appear to be the whims of a spoilt child. Our minds cannot absorb all the figures and percentages, the photos and drawings, that the media present to us of this famished and war-stricken world. Yet somehow we must

absorb them and act to ameliorate their conditions. The congregation member must be provoked to thought and action by his minister. The minister and other elders must provide a way in which the congregation can act. We must realise that the reality of suffering should not depend on how close it is to us, but on its intrinsic nature and magnitude. The famine of Ethiopia is infinitely more tragic than the hardship of the welfare family next door.

To implement social justice inside and outside this country, and to prevent any loss of emphasis on proclaiming the Gospel, a restructuring of traditional church institutions is necessary. At the suburban level, team ministers based in community centres must preach the Gospel and organise social action. At the centralised level greater specialisation and departmentalisation, for planning and research, will have to take place. Non-earning capital must be pruned and an example set for action.

A number of third-world theologians today see Christ as a socio-economic liberator as well as the spiritual saviour. The poor that Jesus had in mind though were the spiritually humbled and religiously alienated, not necessarily the poverty stricken. For the precision of the gospel to be preserved, so as people may continue to be brought to a point of decision about their eternal relationship with God, the pureness of Christ's role as saviour of sinners and not as a socio-economic liberator must likewise be preserved. The social predicament, however, which has helped produce this type of theology is very real and its proponents are very committed. Our Christian community must respond to the challenge, to call out for and implement social justice, which they and their suffering world present. Our motive must be Christian love. If we fail to respond, the true nature of the gospel will suffer and the concept of Christ as the socio-economic liberator will grow.

Sponsored anonymously

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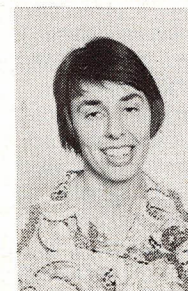
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MAY, Daphne
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A scene from The Clockwork Orange



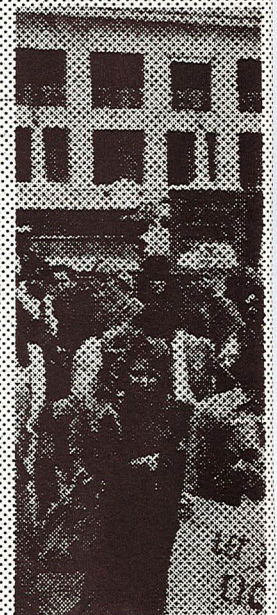
Family Law Bill

NY SPEAKERS WANT LT GROUNDS KEPT

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tungency motion which
would mean that if his
amendment was carried,
any minister could then
move that debate on the
bill be continued as Gov-
ernment business. Sup-
porters of Mr Stewart said
that if Mr Enderby did
not act on the contingency
motion, Mr Stewart would.
Almost every speaker
yesterday spoke on the
need for amendments,
with the Queensland Lib-
eral front-benchers, Mr D.
J. Killen, strongly oppos-
ing the exclusion of fault
grounds from the present
bill.
The Senate has already
passed the bill, on which

completed in the present
parliamentary session.
At least 100 amend-
ments are expected to be
moved during the final
stages of the debate.
While yesterday's debate
was proceeding, supporters
and opponents of the bill
demonstrated simultane-
ously outside Parliament
House. Minor scuffles
occurred when opponents
heckled speakers at the
supporters' meeting.
Among the major
amendments fore-
shadowed yesterday were
those by Mr Killen who
said he could not support
the no-fault provisions of
the bill.



Demonstrators after
Law Bill vote

My Dear Fellow,

It seems to me that you were right in raising the issue of Christian insularity in our modern world. For the most part we do tend to stay within the confines of our own little Christian club. After all the Christian cannot opt out of society, can he?

All of us are born into, live and die within a given social context. In our society Christianity is not considered a serious life-long option. Christians represent a minority. Their view is one of many competing for the allegiance of men's minds. Outside of the church-going circle stands a vast number of people whose thinking and living leave God out of serious consideration.

We Christians need to be concerned for our fellow men at a number of levels as they pursue life in their 'godlessness'. This concern encompasses the whole spectrum of men's lives including both spiritual and physical welfare.

Christians believe that men were made for everlasting fellowship with God. However, the basic concepts that we use to describe this relationship many modern men find quite incomprehensible. For example, "faith" for him means credulity, or "redemption" is only a pawnbroker's term. We need to be sensitive to this problem of esoteric language when we try to communicate our faith to others.

The challenge we have is that of building conversational bridges into the lives of others. On the practical level this means the avoidance of distracting jargon and a genuine interest in the interests of others. This may also involve widening the scope of our reading material to include book and film reviews, current affairs magazines and popular literature. It may mean being familiar with important films and plays; being aware of the economy and the political situation; and being aware of the various social issues which confront our society, for example, abortion, family law and prison reform.

A broad knowledge of what is happening in our society — how people are thinking and living — can be invaluable for building communication bridges to our contemporaries. A discussion of a controversial film such as 'Clockwork Orange' may give an opportunity for sharing a Christian view of man and his predicament. Or again a casual conversation in the office on the Family Law Bill may lead to an opportunity to share a Christian view of family life and God's purposes for men.

The New Testament record of early apostolic preaching reveals that Paul and others were sensitive to the culture of their audience. With the Jew, Paul argued from the Old Testament scriptures (eg, Acts 17:1-4). But with the Greeks Paul began his argument much further back with the Creator and the creation. Paul quoted some of their own poets (eg, Acts 17:22-24). It has been said that witness is like rowing around an island looking for the right spot to land. Finalising the right landing spot takes awareness and sensitivity.

Modern man desperately needs to know that life has value. Is there life after death? This is a key question of our age. Contemporary books, films and plays often convey the message that man is alone in the universe. But the Christian knows that man has value as a being created by God and died for by Christ. Man's present sense of alienation, cosmic estrangement and his inability to live at peace with others is symptomatic of a severed relationship vis-a-vis his metaphysical roots: God.

The Christian who is aware of the world in which he lives should be able to find in the constant stream of films, books and plays etc, numerous links between himself and the man without God. The contemporary debates about abortion, euthanasia etc, will find the Christian able to bring to bear the great themes of his faith — creation, fall, rescue in Christ, judgment — upon the discussion. Above all the witness needs to be personally convinced that the incarnation of God in Christ is that central piece of the jigsaw puzzle that makes sense of human aspirations.

Well, here are the thoughts I promised. You can see how important it is to me, that Christians recapture the art of intelligent conversation so that bridges can be built between the man with God and the man without.

GRAHAM COLE.

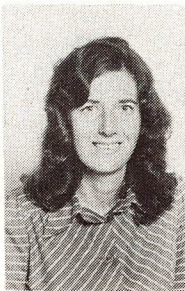
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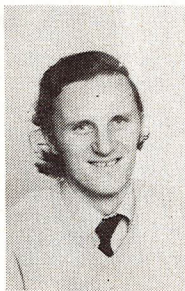
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MOCK, Joe (Tzo Hsien), BSc, PhD
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NOTHING BUT

"... and nothing but the truth, so help me God."

A study of witness in the New Testament
by John Woodhouse

Many Christians are confused when it comes to "witnessing". Who is meant to be a Christian "witness"? Indeed, what is a Christian "witness"? A look at the New Testament will help us to sort out the confusion.

To begin with, notice that "witness" is not a special Christian idea. For example, we commonly speak of "witnesses" in a criminal court. A person who tells the court what he saw, is a witness. Fingerprints found on a bloodstained knife may be said to "witness" to something that has happened. A "witness" may be described as a "connecting link" between the court and something that has happened.

It is an ordinary concept which always involves these three elements:

- something that has happened or is true (eg, a murder)
- the "witness" to that (eg, fingerprints on the knife)
- someone who is addressed by the witness (eg, the court)

The ordinary meaning of the word must

be kept in mind as we go on to consider the Christian witness.

The Christian witness in the New Testament is to something that has happened:

"That which ... we have heard, which we have seen ... looked upon ... touched ... and we saw it, and witness to it."

(1 John 1:1-2)

"This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are witnesses."

(Acts 2:32)

More than that, the Christian witness is to the significance of these events. In Luke 24:46-48, Jesus tells the disciples that they are witnesses both to his suffering and resurrection, and to the forgiveness of sins. In other words, a Christian witness is a connecting link, so to speak, between someone and Jesus Christ.

We will see what that means now by looking at the different Christian witnesses in the New Testament, and how each one witnesses to Jesus Christ.

God as a witness

The first is God himself. In the Gospel of John, Jesus says "The Father who sent me bears witness to me" (8:18; also 5:32, 37). According to Acts 14:3 and Heb 2:4, as the

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THE TRUTH!



Christian message was first proclaimed, God "witnessed" by granting "signs and wonders".

The Old Testament as a witness

A second Christian witness in the New Testament is the Old Testament scriptures. The New Testament writers all accept the authority of the Old Testament. Its witness to Christ is therefore presented as conclusive, and as a sufficient ground for Christian faith. Both John and Paul express this:

"... the Scriptures ... bear witness to me."

(John 5:39)

"... the law and the prophets bear witness to ... the righteousness of God."

(Rom 3:21)

(also Heb 7:17; 10:15; of Luke 24:44)

Christian witnessing, then, is firstly to a **divine** activity. Both God and the Scriptures are witnesses to Jesus Christ.

The Apostles as witnesses

Luke, in his gospel, and in the Acts of the Apostles, speaks of a third kind of Christian witness. Luke is especially concerned to show that the events of the Christian message are historical (see Luke 1:1-4; 2:1-2; 3:1-2). Those who are called "witnesses" by Luke (eg, Luke 24:45-48; Acts 1:8) are those who can provide a first hand witness to the historical events. This is what Peter means in this speech:

"And we are **witnesses** to all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death ... but God raised him ... and made him

manifest not to all the people, but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach to the people and to **witness** that he is the one ordained by God to be judge ..."

(Acts 10:39-42)

In this sense Paul, although he calls himself an evangelist, distinguishes himself from the "witnesses" in Acts 13:31-32, because he did not know Jesus in the flesh. Elsewhere, however, when Paul's first hand experience of seeing and hearing Christ on the Damascus road is emphasised, he is called a "witness" (Acts 22:15, 26:16).

What did being a Christian witness in this sense involve?

It involved speaking about Jesus from first hand experience. This is the implication of Luke 24:46-48, and the obvious sense of Ananias' words to Paul:

"... you will be a witness for him to all men of what you have seen and heard."

(Acts 22:15)

and Jesus words to Paul:

"... as you have testified about me at Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also at Rome."

(Acts 23:11)

In the book of Acts, being a Christian witness always involves speaking about Jesus.

The Holy Spirit as a witness

The first hand witness to Jesus in the book of Acts is more than a mere human activity. Luke tells us of a fourth kind of

Christian witness that accompanies the witness of the apostles (see Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). Peter says:

"We are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him."

(Acts 5:32)

John writes similarly:

"When the Counsellor comes ... even the Spirit of truth ... he will bear witness to me; and you also bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning."

(John 15:26-27)

The Holy Spirit is a witness to Jesus Christ. We may well ask what "witness" in this sense means. Luke indicates that the Holy Spirit was a witness to the Gentiles by "cleansing their hearts by **faith**" (Acts 15:8-9). John says something similar:

"He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself".

(1 John 5:10)

The Holy Spirit is a witness to Jesus Christ, by giving people faith in Jesus Christ. This thought is expressed by Paul: "When we cry 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God."

(Rom 8:15-16)

Christians as witnesses

We have seen four important witnesses to Jesus Christ in the New Testament. We have not yet considered the ordinary Christian people who, like us, have not seen Jesus Christ in the flesh. Is the ordinary Christian a witness?

The book of Revelation answers that question. An ordinary Christian named Antipas is called by Christ, "my faithful witness" (Rev 2:3). Ordinary Christians are called "those who bear witness to Jesus" (Rev 12:17). The ordinary Christian person is in a position to be a witness to Jesus Christ.

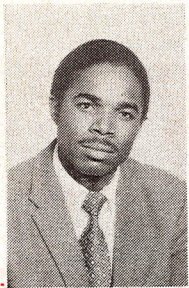
What does being a Christian in this sense involve? It involves speaking. "Witness" and "prophecy" are associated in the book of Revelation (11:3; 19:10). Witness to Jesus is associated with the word of (or about) God (6:9; 20:4). Just as in the book of Acts, as we have seen, someone who does not speak about Jesus would not be called a witness in the book of Revelation.

The New Testament's teaching about Christian witness has two important consequences:

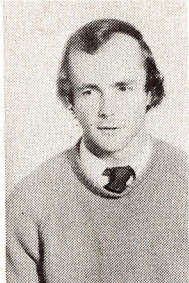
Firstly, all people are addressed by various witnesses to Jesus Christ. The combined testimony is powerful indeed! God, the Scriptures, the Apostles, the Holy Spirit and Christian people are witnesses to Jesus Christ. To disregard such a testimony, would be most serious.

Secondly, Christian people, who have received this testimony in its various forms, are themselves in a position to bear witness to Christ. That will involve, essentially, speaking to people about Him.

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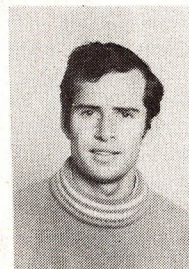
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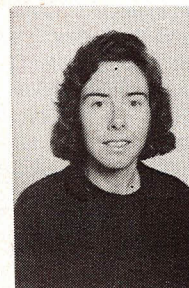
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time Divinity Teacher, Meri-
den School. Independent.
Third Year.



comrade you h

by Miss Mary Andrews
(Head Deaconess)

Miss Andrews will retire from her position as Principal of Deaconess House at the end of the year. She has led a most active and interesting life, graduating from Croydon Bible College in 1936, and Deaconess House in 1938, before travelling to China as a CMS missionary. Miss Andrews remained in China until forced to leave by the Communist government in 1951. On her return to Australia she was appointed Head Deaconess and became Principal of Deaconess House the following year, 1953. Miss Andrews will continue in her position as Head Deaconess.

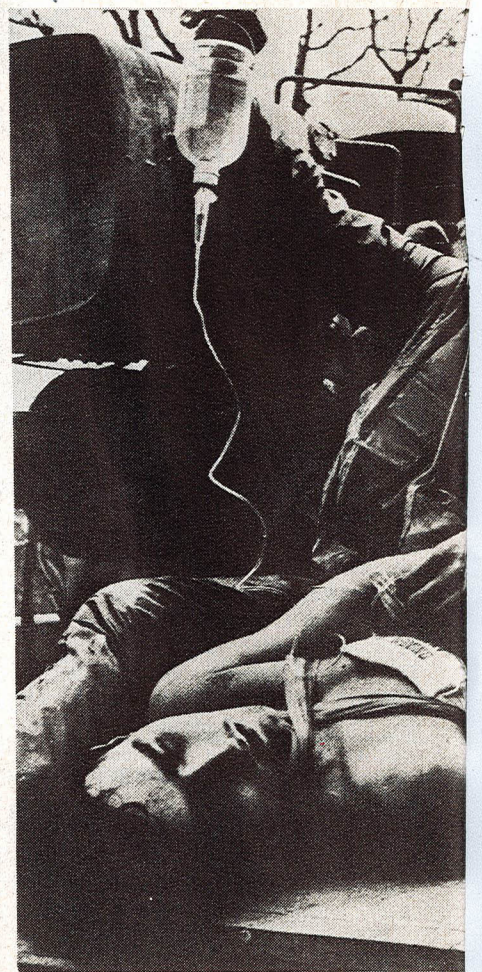
The forces aligned against the Christian church are becoming more and more formidable. Today, people are being destroyed, not in battles to save our country, or for some worthy cause, but because they are being poisoned through lust, drugs, alcohol and lack of purpose in living. They are losing all hope. They are sick in body, soul and spirit, unable to bear responsibility or pursue professions or trades. Sin is enslaving them.

Where are the Christians who care, who ask, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why has the health of the daughter of my people not been restored?" (Jer 8:22). Has this balm lost its healing power? Are Christians' hearts dead and insensitive to those being destroyed by sin? Have they forgotten that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes?

One Sunday morning, some hippies entered a fashionable church on the island of Hawaii. The gifted Chinese pastor invited several of them to share their experiences. Their leader was a university graduate, whose aim in life had been to get rich as quickly as possible. He had been successful in business and possessed a beautiful home and several cars. He had lived for pleasure but found nothing satisfied him and so he turned to drugs. A friend persuaded him to go to a camp in California, where he found people full of life and joy.

He determined to stay with them until he found their secret. He did. He found new life in Christ through repentance and faith.

After his conversion he was burdened for the thousands in similar situations. Many went to Hawaii and so he felt he should share the Gospel with them there. His ministry, and that of Pastor Theodore Yeh, was to preach Christ and Him crucified, as



the One who could meet the needs of these people. The result was that seventy converted hippies formed themselves into a Christian community. They really cared for the lost and straying.

Where are the Christians who believe there is salvation in no other name but that of the Lord Jesus Christ? Do they come together to pray? Where is the love that will not stand by and watch others beaten and robbed by the forces of evil?

have been eating
bitterness!



同志何吃苦

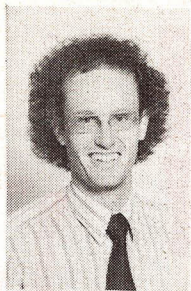
Do we care as much for people as the young Chinese soldier, who, covered with mud and blood, was suffering as a result of war? A missionary looked at him and said, "Comrade, you have been eating bitterness." His eyes flashed as he replied, "I might be eating bitterness now, but the world is going to enjoy peace hereafter." Do Christians have such conviction?

Evangelism is the mission of God in which His word is the power unto salvation.

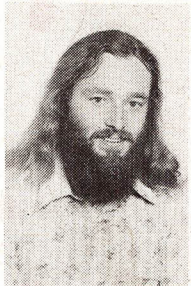
God often chooses the weak as the mouth piece of His living and powerful Word.

St Paul felt compelled to proclaim the Gospel. He said, "Woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel." True evangelism will result when each Christian constantly turns to God the Father, the Lord of the Church, asking that labourers be sent into the harvest. Are Christians today compelled as Paul was to proclaim the Gospel to those who are without God and without hope?

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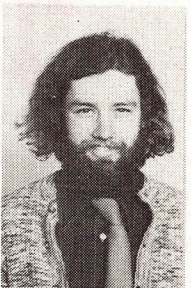
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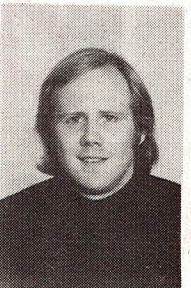
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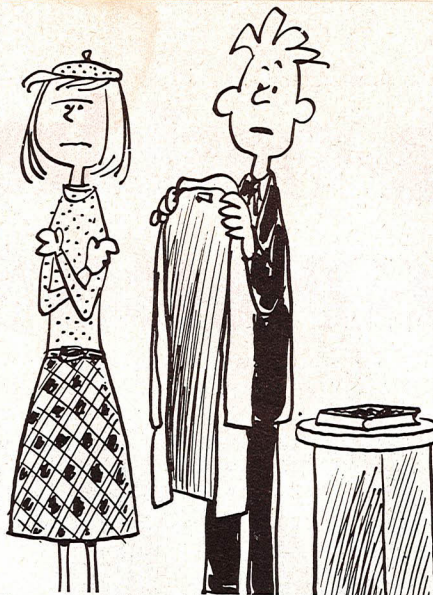
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"I wasn't trying to be insulting . . . All I said
was that I had read the entire book of Jere-
miah while I've been waiting for you."

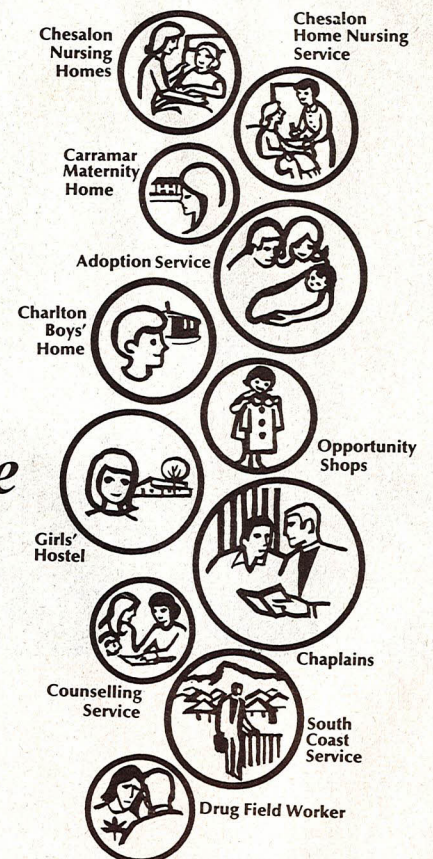


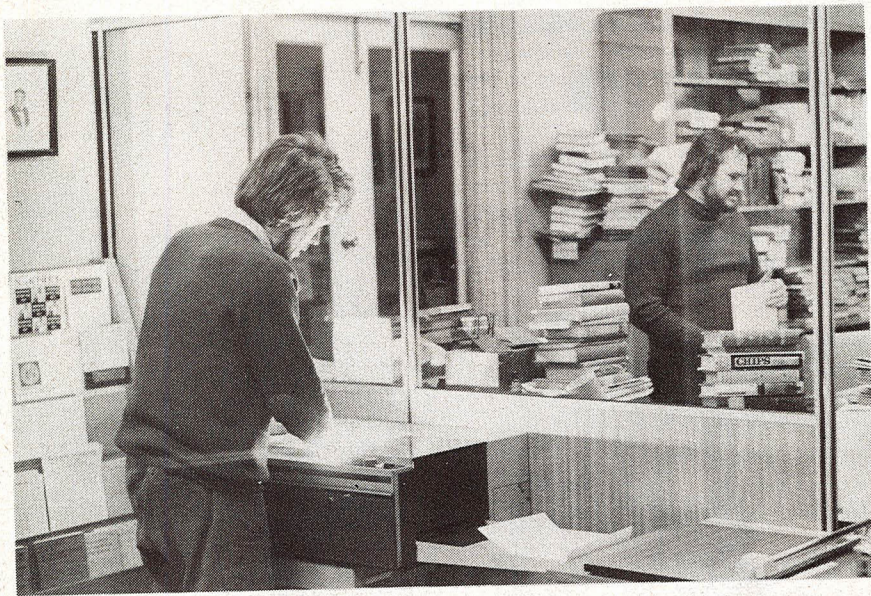
'I find the Gospel very easy to understand
What confuses me is theology!'

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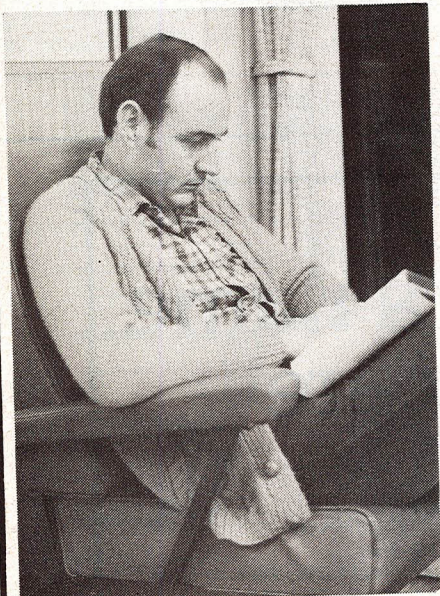
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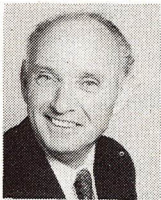
college living



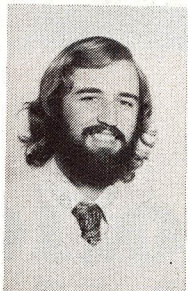
SINDEN, Philip
BCom (Econ)
Marketing Officer, Catechist
Christ Church, St Ives.
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SINGER, Mike
Part-time. Welfare Officer
Sydney City Mission and Staff
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Third Year.



SMYTH-KING, Rich
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Fitter. Catechist St Mary
Magdalene, St Marys, Sydney
Candidate. Second Year.



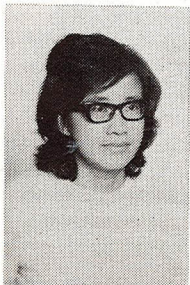
TAYLOR, Peter
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Jonathan and David. Pre-
vious occupation Barrister.
Catechist St Philip's, South
Turramurra. Independent.
Second Year.



THOMASON, Charles Henry
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R.A.N. College. Britannia
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Farming, A.B.C. Clerical
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Church Gordonvale, Qld.
Married with six children.
Independent.



TIO, Ley Na
LTh (MBI)
From Indonesia. BD Student.
First Year. Deaconess House.



PLAYGROUP

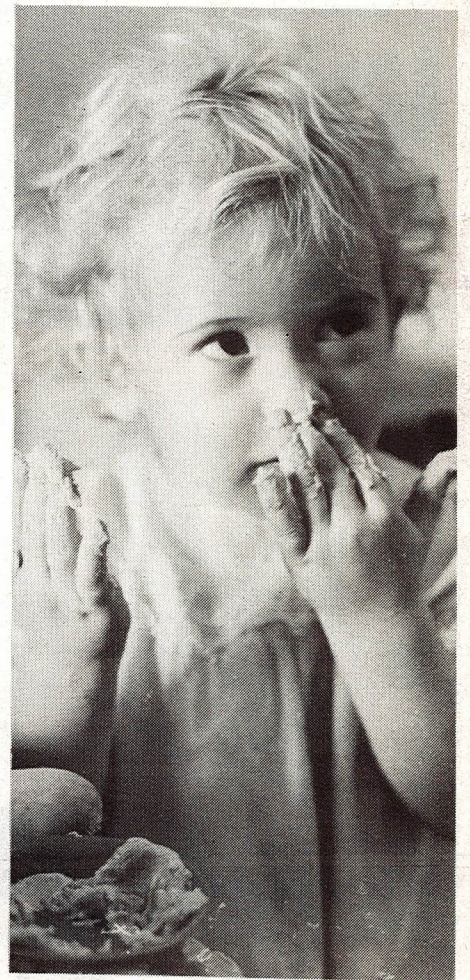
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Lively songs and a story brings each playgroup to a close and hopefully children will fall into bed when they get home. Both mothers and children look forward to playgroup as one of the high points of the week.

Janine Hannaford.



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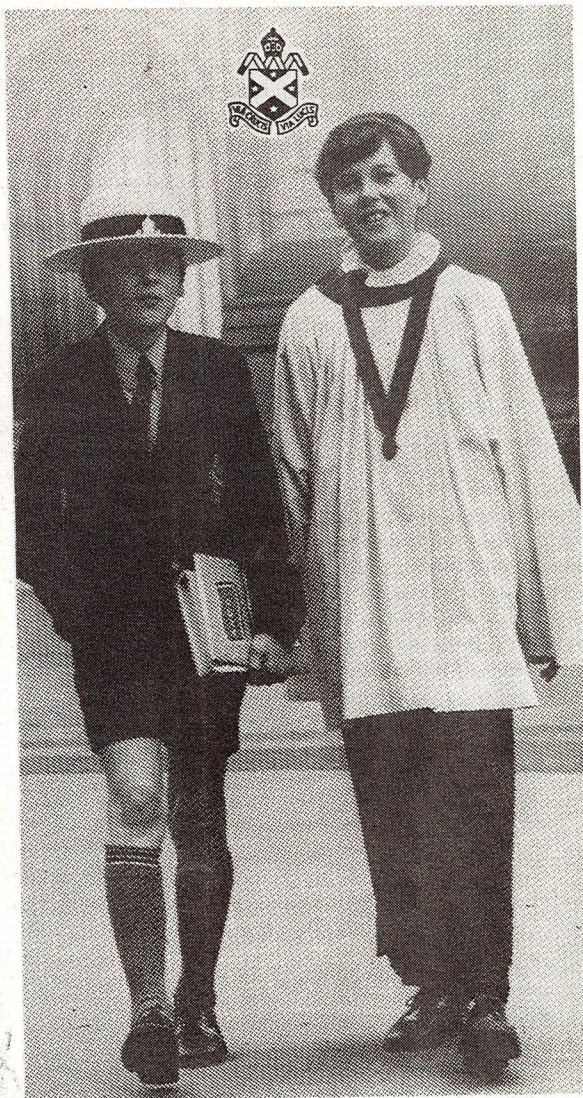


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SCHOOLS

by Marie Gilmour

How often do we think of our Christian responsibility in terms of involvement in the place we work? It is so easy to neglect our roles as Christians by not working out properly what this responsibility implies.

The Christian teacher needs to read and think about issues in Education and about the roles he must play. Then he will take a responsible lead in applying the knowledge and insights gained. More than that he will aim to influence the future of Education. The Teachers' Federation, for example, is one crucial area where Christians need to consider their involvement.

God may call some Christian teachers to an especially difficult or radical role. However the important thing is that Christian teachers set themselves standards of conduct and take an active interest in the affairs of their school.

Two other areas of consideration that require fresh attention are local church involvement and the role of Christian teacher support groups. In the local church a teacher's gifts can be used but he must beware that they are not monopolised to the detriment of his work at school. Support groups often complement the role of the local church in encouraging the teacher to live as a Christian in the school.

Personal relationships with staff and pupils are an important area for a Christian teacher to consider. More than most professions teaching provides ample opportunity for exercising Christian patience as a unique way of showing the claims of Christ.

The Christian pupil has responsibilities towards his peers, his teachers and his work. If a pupil works to the best of his ability he is witnessing to the fact that Christ rules his life. The pious pupil who foregoes work to "witness" may be saying that the end justifies the means. That does not honour Christ.

Bad teachers are hard to respect, but the Christian pupil's behaviour will be important if he wants to point his friends to Christ. He will want to honour Christ and not just go along with the crowd.

The most difficult area to tackle is the peer group.

You can easily hide with friends in the 'God Squad' or give in to the fear of being out of things and go along with the crowd.

Christian groups can encourage personal witness and arrange corporate activities to reap the harvest already sown by the individual. They should complement, not replace the role of the pupil's local church in building up their Christian life and witness.

It is up to each person to reassess before God his involvement in these areas. Christian parents need to consider how they can support their children in meeting these challenges. In fact we all need to be examining new ways to be more effective as a Christian in presenting the gospel and in caring for God's world.

Marie Gilmour.

FAMILY

by Barbara Squires

If our children have become one of Christ's flock through their baptism, and if we are "making our prayers unto Him that (they) may lead the rest of (their) lives according to this beginning", we can treat our children as fellow Christians to be nurtured and not as heathens to be converted. We can nurture them in their faith by helping them to understand that God cares about every part of their lives and that He isn't just for Sunday.

If our Christian faith involves us in an on-going relationship with God and not just an academic exercise, then our children should also learn to know God, and not just learn about Him.

Why wait until a child can "understand" before beginning to pray daily with him? Parents can pray with a baby when putting him to bed from the day he is born. As his understanding grows the prayers will change accordingly. One of our greatest thrills as parents was to hear our toddler's first spontaneous prayer: "Thank you, God, for the slippery dip". Likewise with saying grace before meals. It may be a long time before perfect table manners are learned, but a simple "Thank you God for my food" can be said by the parents from the first messy spoonful of cereal.

As the child grows and becomes more aware of his surroundings there will be many opportunities to point out the wonderful things that God has made and to say "Thank you God" for them. His endless questions about the world he is discovering may be exasperating, but what a sense of wonder he can gain if his parents explain simply that God planned such things as the rain to make flowers and vegetables grow.

We have found Easter and Christmas to be wonderful times of family sharing and learning. The Easter bunny and Santa Claus can be allowed to fade into the background as the story of God's gift to us, the baby Jesus, and later His dying for us and coming back to life are shared with our children.

Maria Von Trapp (of 'Sound of Music' fame) has written a number of books about her family which have given us many ideas for devotional activities which can be shared together. An example is to assemble a creche at Christmas while talking about each of the figures being added.

The way in which each family conducts its devotional life is a very personal thing. Whichever way parents decide to include prayer and Bible reading in the family routine, it would be sad for the children to get the impression that that is all there is to the Christian faith. No matter how ordinary our daily life may seem to us, God is there with us if only we will recognise His presence and encourage our children to do the same.

Barbara Squires.

INSIGHTS



UNIVERSITY

by Rob Haynes

The freedom of the university campus offers exciting prospects for Christians to communicate their faith to others. Why then do we hold back? Why don't we take up these opportunities?

Often the reason is that we lack the reality of a vital relationship with God. We're busy so we organise ourselves out of the habits of daily prayer and meditation on the Scriptures. Urgent matters take the place of important matters. We justify this by rationalising, but we lose our enthusiasm for telling others, our excitement in seeing others converted.

We need to recapture a sense of urgency about our witnessing. We need to re-ignite our failing relationship with God. When two Christian students meet together what do they talk about? It is tragic if they cannot share together from the resources of a vital relationship with their God. Somehow we need to slot into our timetables a regular time for fellowship with our Lord.

And somehow we need to find time for fellowship with our fellow Christians. We watch from a safe distance as our friends rise and fall in their Christian experience. We are afraid to interfere. We are afraid to involve ourselves. When their insecurity threatens our own we hide our fears and all our weakness and put on a bold front. But we can't have fellowship this way. We can't 'bear each others burdens' if we are afraid to share them. And without this deep person-to-person fellowship where we can minister to each others' needs our witness around the campus will become dull and lifeless and soon fail altogether.

The gospel is not just God's Word to secular man. The gospel is God's word to all men. Cell groups become lifeless when the gospel has ceased to be the life-blood. There is something exciting about a group who are keen to witness. The power of God's Spirit is experienced in a new way. The promises of Scripture take on a new meaning. Prayer becomes a joy. Fellowship is vitalised, and by God's grace the gospel bears its own fruit and lives are claimed for Christ's kingdom.

We therefore ought to set goals for ourselves. They ought to be realistic but they must be ambitious. The university campus is strategically the most vital field for evangelism in our community. But who is interested? Who will give students their time? The churches are not interested. Neither are "Missionary Societies". The students themselves must do the work.

If you are a Christian student, then settle on your priorities. Pray for a colleague who will be keen to head in the same way. Set goals together. Pray together. Look for contacts with non-Christian students in your faculty. Try to follow up initial conversations with further meetings. Ask a person if he'd like to join you for lunch. Use every opportunity to reach one person for

the Lord. Then give him all your time. Show him how to have "Quiet times". Pray with him. Be a friend to him and let him be fully exposed to your own vision. Encourage him to make contacts amongst his friends, and show him how he can be used to lead them to Christ.

The freedom we experience at uni makes our few years there of utmost importance. We can fritter away our opportunities, or we can take them up thankfully. Christian students are strategically placed to make an impact on every profession. Graduate teachers will be moving into every school in the State. Overseas students will return to almost every country in the world. When you get involved in the harvest then pray the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into it, for you will surely find that the harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few.

Rob Haynes.



NURSING

by Pat Christison

A hospital is indeed a challenging area for a Christian to work in. There, people come face to face with pain and suffering, fear and death, life and joy. In helping these people, Christian nurses can bring to bear not only practical skills and medical knowledge, but also a personal faith in God. The basis of witness is a desire to work to the best of one's ability and to show genuine concern for the patient.

Today, there is an increasing emphasis for the patient to be seen as a total person. Not only do patients require attention for their fractured limbs, heart attacks or cancerous stomachs, but also for their emotional and spiritual needs. This emphasis gives Christian nurses encouragement to share their faith with patients and staff.

The Christian nurse, although keen to witness at these critical times is often discouraged by the pressure of work, which prevents in depth discussions, and so only meets physical needs. The constant confrontation with suffering can overcome a faith which has not developed a sound theology able to cope with the problem, "If God is a God of love, why does He allow suffering?" Another problem is that church involvement is often irregular because of shift work. However, to have any positive effect, one must be aware of these problems and difficulties.

Christian nurses need to maintain fellowship and receive Christian teaching. Meeting with other Christian nurses is also necessary for sharing common problems and joys. Courses conducted by the Nurses' Christian Fellowship aim to help nurses in their environment. These include the 'Christian Life Course', providing a basic Christian leadership programme, and a 'Persons in Crisis' course, to help nurses develop their awareness of, and caring for, the spiritual needs of patients.

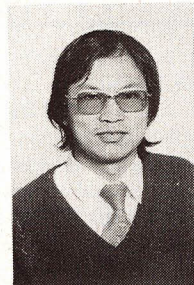
In practice, it is often difficult to care in this way, and so nurses must constantly pray for God's help in overcoming prejudice, personality conflicts and feelings of inadequacy. Therefore, personal prayer and bible study times are vital.

As with Christians in all situations, Christian nurses are assured of God's enabling as they witness for him.

TSAL, Davie, BSc
Student. Presbyterian Can-
didate. Third Year.



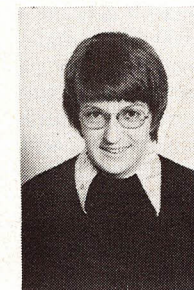
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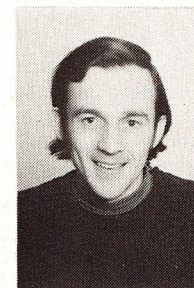
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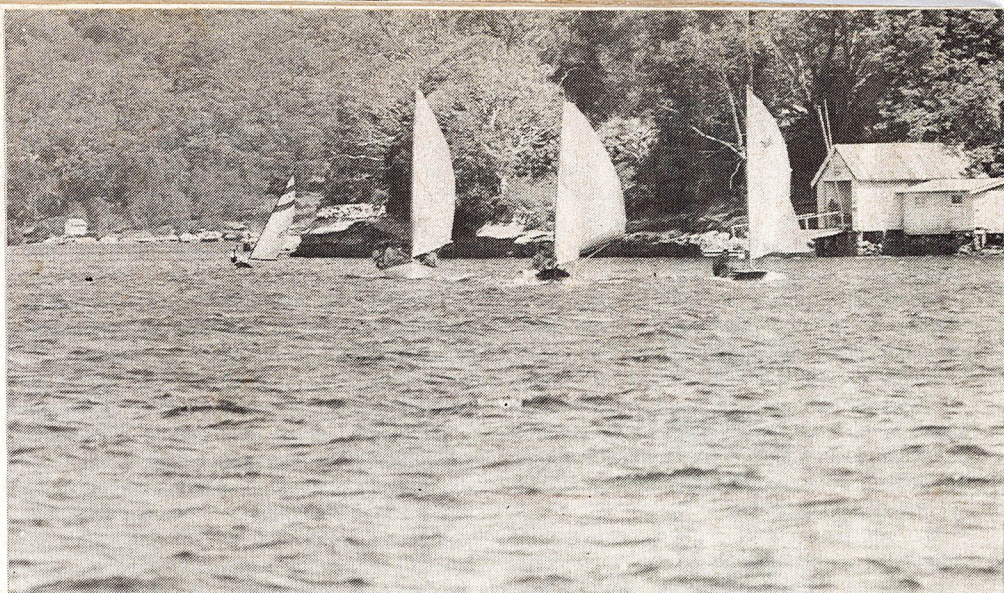
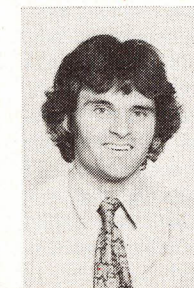
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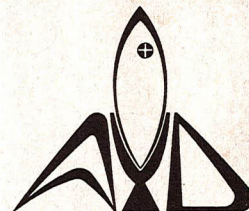
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WORRALL, Chris
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a christian adventure



"It's great!" "When's the next camp on!" "A holiday worth remembering!" These are but a few of the enthusiastic responses made by both primary and secondary students after a week of involvement in a Christian camping programme. Such statements more often than not reflect the positive value of this new and stimulating experience. Many young people find this activity of camping in the bush for a week something more than simply an opportunity to get out of the city "rat race".

But why is this so? Firstly, Christian camping provides an ideal situation for the establishment of new relationships. New skills in outdoor living are acquired and the atmosphere is such that there is potential for increasing in human and spiritual understanding.

However, there is a far more important aspect in relaxation to this type of activity. Camping provides a most suitable context for a very real Christian ministry. Camp Howard is one camping organisation which does this, adopting as its motto the words 'Complete in Christ'. With this aim Camp Howard has grown to the stage where it now caters for some two thousand young people each year in holiday camps.

Such an extensive programme requires a large number of volunteer staff who are prepared to give of themselves in this kind of ministry. The gospel has had a remarkable impact spiritually on the lives of countless young people through the ministry of organisations like Camp

Howard. This has included some with, and others without, church affiliations. Furthermore, one is greatly encouraged by constantly meeting people who became Christians as a result of this ministry.

What makes camping such a suitable context for sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ? The real strength of camping is that it provides not only a place away from modern city life, but also an opportunity when personal relationships can be established. This creates opportunities for sharing of one's faith with others, and also allows for the emergence of counselling situations in quite natural and helpful ways. Over a period of days campers are able to thoughtfully consider the claims of Christ upon their lives. They are also able to observe how Christians live and react under pressure.

The confrontation of campers with a living, relevant faith is one of the most decisive factors which should emerge in Christian camping. Thus, there is the challenge for team members to be flexible enough to meet both the physical and spiritual demands of young people in this situation and to show forth the character of Christ in both word and life.

During recent years, Camp Howard has expanded and varied the type of camps being conducted. Basic camps still cater for those who desire a more general type of camping programme. They meet the needs of young people from 4th grade primary to 4th form secondary school. These camps

are supplemented by 'specialist camps' with the emphasis on advanced training in skills already learnt. They cater for students in 4th to 6th form at secondary school. These camps are varied and include: Ski, Sailing and Advanced Canoe Camps, a special Study Camp and Adventure and Aqua Camps. One of the more important aspects of Camp Howard is the programme of counsellor training which helps to maintain a continual supply of staff in this vital area of Christian ministry.

An integration of all these factors has enabled organisations like Camp Howard to perform a fruitful ministry over the years. It is to be hoped that this may encourage other Christian groups to engage in similar organised camping activities. "Camping" in the broad sense can take place in a variety of places, ranging from tents to a small houseparty in a weekender type of cottage. However, it is the principle behind the activity which is important. This really needs some IMAGINATION, some ENTHUSIASM and the DESIRE to make Christian camping an effective means for the outreach of the gospel. Thus, a small Sunday School class may go away for a few days sleeping in tents. A fellowship group may hire a site from the Youth Department. Or a whole parish may decide to have a houseparty.

Whether it be primarily for evangelism or teaching, a well organised camp will help to meet the need in a unique and rewarding way.

Richard Lewis



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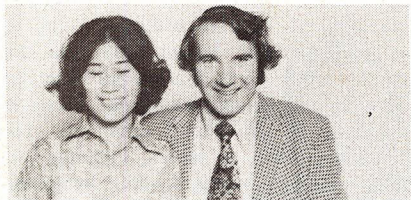
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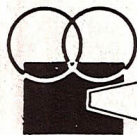
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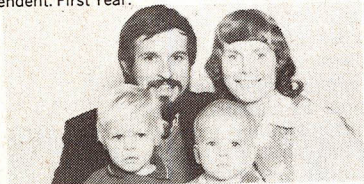
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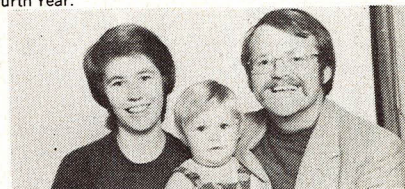
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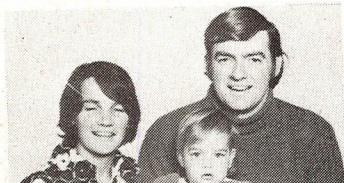
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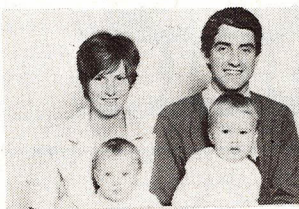
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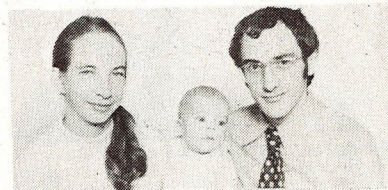
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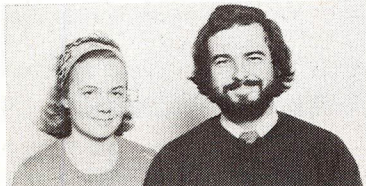
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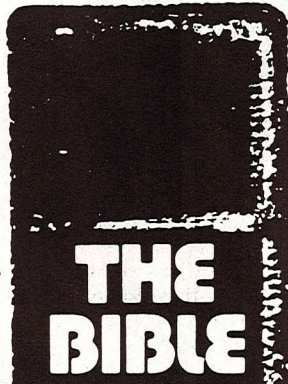
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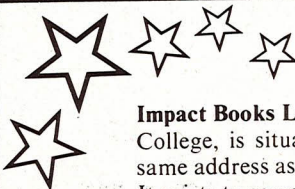
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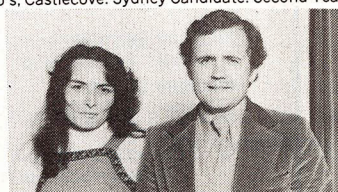
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REVIEW

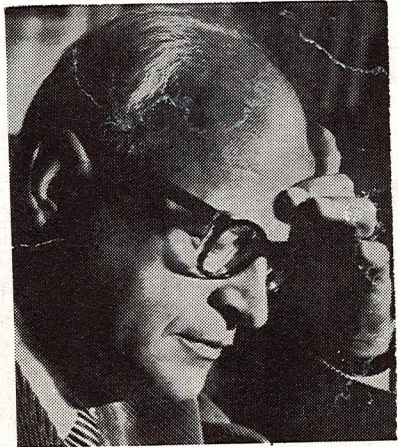
"THE TROUBLE WITH THE CHURCH

— A CALL FOR RENEWAL"

by Helmut Thielicke
(Seabury Press, 1965)

— Reviewed by Stephen Cheng

The Trouble With The Church



HELMUT THIELICKE

"For many people what is written here may be an offence. But believe me, it was a pressing need that compelled me to speak. I could not bear any longer not to say what is said in the following pages."

If someone comes to you with such urgency in his voice, would you slightly push him aside? Would you not stop and listen to see what he has to say to you? It is exactly with these words of urgency that the author addresses us in the very beginning of his book.

Among all the distinguished preachers of our century whose sermons are available in the book market today, Helmut Thielicke stands head and shoulder above others in the poignancy and contemporaneity of his messages and the authenticity and richness of his language. He does not only speak with vitality, insight and beauty, but has actually devoted his whole life to the task of exploring and understanding the essence of Christianity and its answer to the needs of contemporary man. In fact, the massive volumes of his Theological Ethics were written with this very purpose in mind. Therefore, it is hardly surprising, especially for those who have read his sermons, that he has been able to fill the large St Michael's Church in Hamburg with an overflowing

crowd of four thousand people each Sunday for more than a quarter of a century.

In this book, "The Trouble With The Church", this great preacher invites the church, especially those who seek to witness from the pulpit to a ruthless, devastating but repentant self-criticism. He draws to our attention the various symptoms and diagnoses of the diseases of modern day preaching. According to the author, one of

the commonest diseases of the preacher is to jump straight from the commentaries to the pulpit and turn the sermon into a lecture on Biblical criticism or an esoteric theological discourse completely unrelated to man's secular existence. He says as a preacher:

"I must deliver the message of the text to people living today. And therefore I must know these people; I must know at what point they raise questions, so that I can 'latch on' to these questions, and I must know where they do not have these questions, so that I must first stir them up to ask the pertinent questions. I must know whether they feel safe and secure, in order that I may be able to shake them, or whether they are troubled with anxiety, that I may be able to comfort and encourage them". (p 21)

"Thus as a preacher, I am involved in an unending dialogue with those to whom I must deliver my message. Every conversation I engage in becomes at bottom a meditation, a preparation, a gathering of material for my preaching . . . And then I must express it (my message) in such a way that the intellect will be stimulated to think, the will mobilised, the conscience aroused, and the emotions engaged". (p 22)

In his diagnosis of the current trends of homiletics, Mr Thielicke further points out that:

"When a sermon does not 'hit home', the reason need by no means lie in the fact that it contained no examples from life nor that it was too theoretical. On the contrary, despite all its rhetorical and pedagogical excellency it may lie in the fact that the preacher is speaking on the basis of a Docetic anthropology (ie, an abstract view of man), and that the man of whom he is speaking and whom he is addressing does not appear in the sermon at all. Then the very hearers who are troubled by very real situational problems feel that they have been bypassed". (p 76)

In other parts of the book, the author also reminds us of other dangers in being a

preacher, particularly an unproductive one. One may be tempted to console oneself and justify the empty pews by saying that they are evidence of one's faithful teaching of the Word of God and that it is the offence of the Gospel itself, and not one's boring sermons, that drives the people away. Another false way out is "to throw oneself into the hectic business of 'running' a congregation, the busyness that sucks up all one's energy and creates the illusion that one is consuming oneself in the service of the kingdom of God". (p 84)

Another problem that the author calls our attention to is the unrealistic presentation of Christianity by way of dogmas. Admittedly, the first Christian centuries were filled with controversy over the doctrinal or dogmatic comprehension of the person of Christ and the Trinity. 'But, very early, and then more clearly in the age of the Reformation, and then very systematically since the Enlightenment, men began to ask what "Sitz im Leben" (Life Situations) these dogmas had, what relevance they had to our life situation' (p 115). Similarly, according to the author, today, secularised man is unable to understand or find relevance in abstract theorising about the Christian dogma apart from his own immediate situations in life.

To meet this need, the author suggests that the church should gather together a group of people who are really living in the midst of life, through whom the preacher is kept constantly in touch with contemporary realities. Here, with the help of these 'Parents Groups' "one is compelled to deal with the detail, the practical, concrete issues of life, and the Word becomes flesh". (p 119)

Admittedly, the book is primarily about preaching, but it also delves into the meaning of the liturgy in the Church. Mr Thielicke believes that the first and foremost purpose of the liturgy is "that of allowing the assembled congregation to be the acting subject of the service of worship and accordingly to allow it to participate in worship . . . All liturgical forms are to be judged by the criterion of whether and to what extent they are capable of doing this."

However, the book is not without flaws. It raises more questions than it is able to answer, for example, the issue of whether Protestant Christianity should be recatholicised. At times, even the questions themselves are either too brief or too obscure to be fully comprehensible. Moreover, the book, not unlike most continental writings, suffers from its provincialism, say for example, the lengthy treatment of the problems that face the German national church, which is not relevant to the book's English-speaking readers.

In conclusion, despite all these minor criticisms, the book, especially the sections on preaching and the liturgy, should be read and reread by those who dare to witness from the pulpit. It is written with the heart-blood of one who is truly master of this art.



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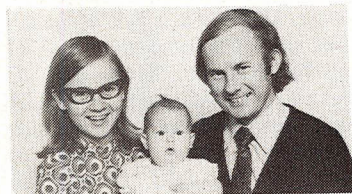
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GOD'S GREAT MISSION

A Biblical Theology of Witness by Graham Cole

At first sight the Old Testament appears to contain little to encourage us in the work of witness. It portrays a world so foreign to our own. It is a world of kings and prophets, temples and priests. Moreover, the Old Testament seems to be concerned only with a select group of people, namely Abraham and his descendants. Gentiles get little mention except in their relation to the people of God.

On the other hand, the New Testament appears to be far more helpful. There is the "Great Commission" of Matthew 28:19,20. The Book of the Acts is crowded with stories of how the gospel was spread. Here we feel more at home. Yet, could it be that the Old Testament is more relevant to the question of witness than first meets the eye? After all, the witness of the New Testament saw Jesus against the backdrop of the Old Testament.

OUR WORLD IS HIS WORLD

The Old Testament presents God as a great Creator-King. He made everything (Gen 1). He sustains all in existence (Ps 104). He is King over the whole earth (2 Kings 19:15). In particular, God is King over His people, Israel (Is 43:15). Our world therefore is His world and at no stage does either the Old Testament or the New Testament suggest that God has lost interest in His world.

Further, the Old Testament presents to us the great purpose of God. God intends to create a people over whom He rules as King. To this end He selects Abraham and enters into a special agreement with Him, ie, a covenant. It is quite clear even at this early stage that God has the wider world on view (Gen 12: 1-3).

By Solomon's reign many of God's promises to Abraham had been fulfilled (1 Kings 10, Ps 72). Yet the people of God failed to live up to their high calling. Disaster followed upon disaster. The Northern Kingdom fell in 722 BC to Assyria. The Southern Kingdom fell in 587 BC to Babylon. God's prophets were not

taken by surprise. Indeed, they looked beyond the failure of God's people to the future. In the future a new age would dawn. God would intervene in history to save His people (for example the new Exodus theme of Isaiah 40-55). In this new age blessings would flow on to the nations. A purged and restored Israel — though only a remnant — would be alight to the nations (Isaiah 49:6). To that light the nations would come seeking the knowledge of God (Isaiah 2:2-4; Zechariah 8:22-23). However, by the close of the Old Testament the new age had failed to arrive.

THE NEW AGE

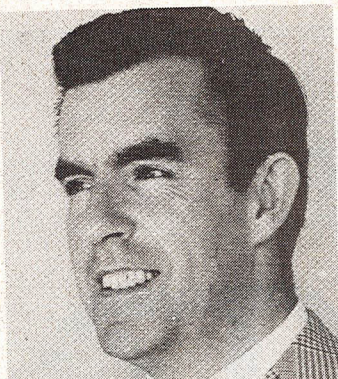
The staggering claim of the New Testament is that in Jesus Christ the new age had dawned. God was in Christ. He had indeed visited and redeemed His people (Luke 1:68). This message was fully inaugurated on the cross. In the victory of the cross Jesus disabled Satan and Death (John 12:31; Colossians 2:14-15). The news of this great accomplishment could now be proclaimed to the nations (Matthew 28:19-20). God continues to work through this same message to establish His Kingship over the lives of people.

Christians today stand in a unique position. The new age has begun in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Yet, its consummation is future. We still pray "Your Kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10). Even so, because of Jesus' triumph at Calvary, the blessings of the new age can be experienced now — forgiveness, the Holy Spirit, joy, eternal life. We have the immense privilege of sharing this message with others. For it is through His people that God intends to proclaim His Kingship throughout the whole world before the End comes (Matthew 24:14).

The End will come when Jesus returns to judge the living and the dead. Then Death, Sin and Satan will be finally overthrown and God's Kingly authority established in a New Heavens and New Earth (Rev 20:22). The challenge before us is to co-operate with this work of God in the world. Witness is one means by which we can share in God's mission.



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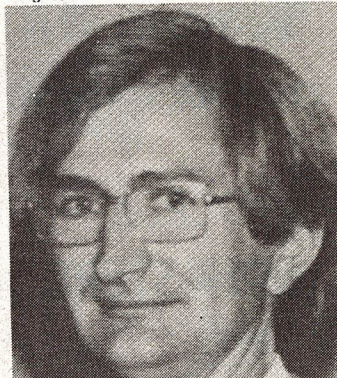
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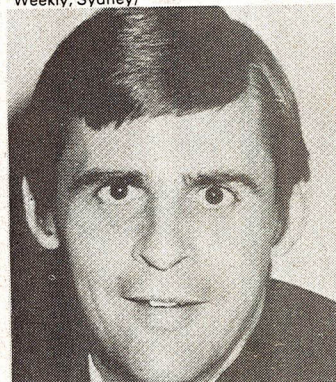
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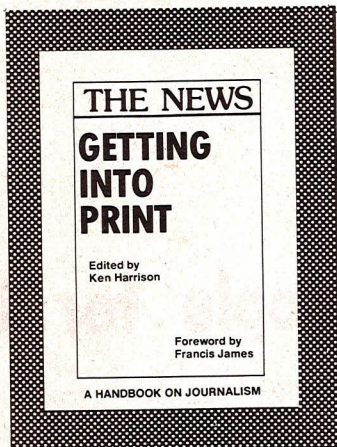
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