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A diverse group of seven medical professionals, including men and women of various ethnicities, are shown from the chest up. They are all looking directly at the camera with serious expressions. In the foreground, several black microphones are positioned in front of them, suggesting they are at a press conference or public hearing. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

**Standing together in
the public square**

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Luke's Journal



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Vol 18 No 1	Apr 2013	Complementary Medicine/Dentistry
Vol 18 No 2	Aug 2013	Conscience in Medicine
Vol 19 No 1	Apr 2014	Historytaking and Historymaking
Vol 19 No 2	Sept 2014	Integral Mission or Holistic Transformation
Vol 20 No 1	Feb 2015	"You are What You Eat"

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Other issues may be obtained from your Branch Secretary or from the national office.

editorial

Standing together in the public square

The encounter between Jesus and Pilate as told by the Gospel writers, captures the ambiguity and tensions between political power and the servant power of God's kingdom. We live at a time when an authentic Christian voice in the public arena is greeted with scepticism and underwhelm. This edition seeks to encourage and fire a public imagination for Christian doctors and dentists to speak into the public conversation around health in Australia.

Some of the material here is about the personal struggle to integrate work and faith. Some opens up the spiritual resources that sustain such a presence. Somewhere along the way of my own spiritual journey, I received an aphorism which operates as a 'compass' in the public square "Christians should be radical conservatives and conserving radicals." Our allegiance to Jesus can stir our action in both of these ways. As we are involved we should maintain a discerning stance. There are many Kingdom of God substitutes to attract our attention and absorb our energies.

In his book *Good news and Good works*, Ronald Sider suggests there are three very practical reasons for contributing to the political process. Firstly, we must acknowledge that there are many occasions where political solutions are much more effective than personal acts of charity to social problems. Secondly, political reforms can be developed to sustain human dignity and encourage personal responsibility, while caring interventions run a risk of paternalism. Thirdly, Sider suggests the political process offers an opportunity for planning



and strategy which can limit the haphazard nature of individual solutions. Is there a reliable way to develop skills for public commentary and involvement? Material in this edition will prove useful to some. Can I suggest the simple mnemonic "the six 'I's".

- 1) **Interest** – Follow the twitter feed around political conversations; read books and articles about problems and solutions in the health system. Develop an appreciation of a biblical social/health vision etc.
- 2) **Inquire** – As your knowledge grows and the Spirit prompts, then begin to "ask around" and listen to colleagues who have experience and involvement. Studies at the political, social

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Luke's Journal

Themes for Next Editions:

Family Values

– copy by January 2016

Life before Birth: the ethics of prenatal diagnosis and practice

– copy by April 2016

Living Christianly in a Secular Postmodern Pluralist Society

by A/Prof Alan Gijbers

Alan is a specialist physician in Addiction Medicine, and an Honorary Clinical Associate Professor with the Department of Medicine Royal Melbourne Hospital, University of Melbourne. He is also Medical Director of the Substance Withdrawal Unit at the Melbourne Clinic Richmond. He is a Foundation Fellow in the chapter of Addiction Medicine of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians.

Christians live cross-culturally. We live in the contemporary world which shapes our thoughts and values, often unconsciously. This creates the framework or plausibility structures within which we think, believe and act. As Christians we are also moulded by the Bible which has quite different plausibility structures. For instance in the Bible God is central, whereas in our society God, if present at all, is at best an optional extra.

What do we mean by plausibility structure? This is a term used by Charles Taylor in his epic work *A Secular Age*. He uses it to describe the framework within which our thinking occurs. They are the unconscious assumptions within which we think, feel and imagine. They shape what Taylor describes

as our social imaginaries, the way we see the world. For instance in the West we are shaped by an individualism inherited from the Enlightenment and Descartes' disastrous statement, *cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am) which renders the individual as the final arbiter of what is right and wrong, true and false. This individualism has heavily infiltrated Christian thinking so that we ourselves individually determine what is the right church for me, what is the right sermon for me and so on. Unconsciously we have forgotten that the Bible teaches that Christians by their salvation belong to the church, the body of Christ, and that we are subject to the Lordship of Christ. It is a great challenge then to live and think and imagine christianly rather than to conform to modern plausibility structures.

In this series of essays I want to briefly address seven myths common in our modern secular society.

Myth 1 – The Secular myth

That we cannot speak about our faith in a secular environment.

We need to first define secular. It can simply mean the secular as distinct from sacred. This was well described in medieval times where the clergy pursued a sacred vocation whereas a carpenter for instance pursued a secular vocation. The sacred took place in church and monasteries and the secular took place in the

everyday. This was particularly challenged by the reformation who saw all activity and vocations as unto God.

A second meaning defined secular as where the religious is removed from public discourse, but people still hold private religious beliefs, as for instance Poland during Communism. This leads to the modern myth of public fact and private value, of respecting personal religion as long as it does not impinge on public functions. Thus Christian public figures are expected not to allow their faith commitment to influence public policy. It is easy on this understanding to segue into declaring that people are not allowed to let their personal faith influence their public behaviour and hence that Christian doctors and dentists are not allowed to let their faith commitment affect their clinical practice. Many young Christian medicos seem to have allowed this myth to affect their thinking, and they are afraid of being reported to authority structures like the Medical Board should they bring their faith into their clinical practice.

A third definition of secular claims that religion is removed from public discourse because people no longer believe. This is the subtraction story Taylor challenges in his monumental work. His description outlines a far more nuanced history of the ideas of secularism. However the myth of an abandonment of faith is common.



It is well-illustrated by a surprising statement in a medical journal extolling a “value free ethic”! This is a situation I call empty secularism. It is an impossible situation to maintain because we all bring our beliefs and values into our science and our public policies and service (including our clinical service) and it would be much healthier to be able to articulate and debate our values publicly in a calm and mature way.

The fourth way to understand secularism is the key way described by Taylor. It is a disturbing observation but it reflects the intellectual and imaginary tension in which we as Christians find ourselves in the modern world. Here secularisation is understood as the move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is

“I regularly move from church where God is acknowledged as the source of life, truth, beauty and goodness to the world where God is not mentioned or at best God is acknowledged as an optional extra.”

.....

understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest one to embrace. This resonates with me. I regularly move from church where God is acknowledged as the source of life, truth, beauty and goodness to the world where God is not mentioned or at best God is acknowledged as an optional extra. And even where or when I raise issues about God I have to couch it in terms like ‘the divine’ and ‘the higher power’ and allow for the possibility that others do not see the world in the same way as I do. But at least on

this understanding we are allowing for a plurality of social perception and for the possibility that a faith commitment can be discussed.

The last way of understanding secular is the Indian form of secularism where the different viewpoints of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity (along with Jainism, Parseeism...) are understood, acknowledged and respected as part of daily discourse. This is the only way a multi-faith

continued over page

society which is predominantly Hindu but has a large Muslim population and a significant proportion of other faiths like Sikhism and Christianity can live peaceably. It requires the state to be unbiased in their support of any faith, but those in society openly acknowledge other faith commitments and do not try to hide them in public discourse. On this reading a healthy secular pluralist society lives where “difference is understood and respected and yet commitments are neither hidden or diluted” (Barth). This is far healthier than the situation for instance in France following the revocation of the edict of Nantes (1685) where King Louis XIV outlawed protestant religion in France, or the situation in Victorian England where one had to be a member of the Church of England in order to study at a university.

We can speak about our faith in a secular environment provided we do so in a respectful way and provided we, particularly in a clinical context, do not exploit the power differential between the doctor and the patient. This has been discussed in another *Luke’s Journal* article. We as Christians need to be wise here to ensure we do maintain healthy boundaries in our discussion with our patients, but we are free to explore and express what we believe and how we practice.

Myth 2 – The myth of the Immanent frame

Closely related to the secularisation process is the belief that this world is all there is and that there is no transcendent world beyond the world we perceive. Christians believe the very opposite. We are theists who believe the unseen God actively interacts with the created order, in all sorts of ways, not least through those who pray and act in this world. Taylor argues that the secularisation process started as people discovered the regularities in nature and attributed those to God’s natural laws. Gradually their social imaginary saw the world as an ordered mechanism governed

by divine laws and removed the idea of an ‘interventionist God.’ This led to a deist position in which God started this world going as creator but that the world continues on obeying God’s law but without needing God’s active intervention. A half-way position was a semi-deist in which God only occasionally interacts with the world through a miracle but for the rest of the world goes on autonomously. Gradually in the social

“Are we just the product of impersonal forces, blind chance and a brief tryst between parents or is there something more lasting about us?”

.....
imaginary of the day God becomes less and less necessary, especially for explaining gaps in our understanding of the world and the “God of the gaps” gradually disappears until you accept that God is unnecessary.

Now we as Christian health professionals in our scientific approach to clinical issues by and large work within an immanent frame. We are by nature methodological naturalists. We do not invoke the spirit world as causal factors for our clinical problems although we recognise that sometimes a patient’s beliefs, attitudes and fears may have a profound effect on the clinical course of their illness. But methodological naturalism is a scientific strategy and does not represent our social imaginary. As Christians we believe God rules this world and our prayer is that God’s will might be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Nevertheless we Christians need to work hard to continue to develop a transcendent imagery. This is helped by being in an aware Christian community which shapes our imagination, in our conversation, by immersing ourselves in the

Scriptures, by prayer, by worship, by walking humbly with God in our daily life, and by interpreting events in our own personal history as well as events in world history in the light of the fact of Scripture that God is active in history both at the macro and micro level.

In subsequent articles I will address the following modern secular myths:

- 3. The myth of disengaged reason, and the associated worship of science which triumphs over the Christian faith
- 4. The myth of a mechanistic view of human beings
- 5. The myth of self-referentialism and human autonomy
- 6. The myth of a teleology (that the world is purposeless and directionless).
- 7. The myth of nomology, the worship of rules, regulation policies and procedures as sufficient for ethics.

But further we need to challenge the immanent frame of the world’s imaginaries. We need to continually ask them the question, “Is this [the immanent frame] all there is?” Where do truth, beauty, goodness and love come from? Are we just the product of impersonal forces, blind chance and a brief tryst between parents or is there something more lasting about us? Can we simply move people to conform to the Modern Moral Order by clarifying rules and regulations? How do we cope when we have failed to live up to our own standards? Where is the power to live well?

As followers of the Carpenter of Nazareth we stand in a tradition which witnesses to the Eternal Logos becoming flesh, dwelling among us and overwhelming us with Divine truth and grace. He is the portal to the other world which is the source of life and light, grace and love. ●

O B I T u A r y

Dr Clifford Francis "Cliff" Smith OAM, MBBS

(2/1/1943 - 3/2/2015)

Beloved husband, father, father-in-law, grandfather, brother, uncle, friend and doctor. Sadly missed by all. Aged 72 years. Safe in Jesus arms.

Cliff grew up in Asia. He shared a trusting relationship with his God from his earliest years. In 1951 his family returned to Australia. Initially, he was schooled in the Blue Mountains. Later, he enjoyed schooling at North Sydney Boys High School. He studied medicine at the University of Sydney. Early in his medical career he met a young nurse, Judy, who was to become his wife, a lifelong companion and friend.

He was a loving father of three boys – Stephen, Malcolm, and Jeremy; father-in-law of three daughters-in-law – Lou, Melina, and Maddie; and grandfather to four grandchildren – Caleb, Trixie, Samuel and Oliver.

Cliff made many important contributions during his Missionary Medical Work in Papua New Guinea (1970-1982). He worked at Tinsley Health Centre, Western Highlands Province – serving a population of 40,000, with a training centre for orderlies and maternal-child health workers. He was instrumental in leading, strengthening and developing the PNG Christian Medical group, and of course, this passion was later reflected in his important work for CMDFA.

From 1976-78 he worked as the PNG Church Government Health Liaison Officer. This was a most important time in church government relationships as PNG had gained independence in 1975. Cliff had a key role in negotiating the ongoing important role of church health facilities in the PNG health system. During this time he served on various doctor's and nurse's



education planning committees. From these insights came a passion to write a *Health Care Manual for Community Health Workers*, first edition 1988, second edition 1996. This continues as the current text for PNG Community Health Care workers. While Cliff wrote the text,

"Dr Cliff Smith was a man of kindness and a beaming smile. He had an exemplary commitment to being a Christian friend, seeking to be of eternal encouragement to all."

.....

Judy contributed many important drawings that further strengthened this resource. In many ways, this book had no parallels in the developing world health sector.

While completing this second edition, he returned to Australia in 1983 and commenced work in General Practice in Western Sydney and later the Central Coast, NSW. Ever insightful and committed to serving Christian colleagues, Cliff commenced work as a Staff Worker for CMDFA NSW. He then became instrumental in establishing a CMDFA national office, and became the first National Executive Officer for CMDFA. He served the CMDFA well in this role from 2001-2009. He strongly supported and nurtured the IMPACT movement amongst CMDFA students and recent graduates. He also played a lead role as manager of the 2006 International Christian Medical and Dental Association Conference held in Sydney.

As well as serving CMDFA well, Cliff and other senior CMDFA people formed Health Serve Australia (HSA), a Christian health and development agency in 2004. Cliff also ably led this organisation. HSA continues to serve CMDFA and other Christian health workers in many countries.

His passion for strengthening health services continued. A third edition of the PNG Health Care manual was needed. Cliff has built a team to complete this important task and this is positioned as a key project of HSA.

Dr Cliff Smith was a man of kindness and a beaming smile. He had an exemplary commitment to being a Christian friend, seeking to be of eternal encouragement to all.

Michael Burke
CMDFA NSW Chair

Fighting Goliaths Today

by David Price Fr ACS OAM

Retired General Surgeon Frankston Hospital. Supporter of many apparently unwinnable causes including Essendon's attempts to clear their football reputation.

This Sunday, our lectionary reading included the story of David and Goliath.

I love that story for many reasons including that it gives me a chance to brag about my knowledge of the bony human skull, which I keep carefully in a cupboard from my days of surgical training.

In particular I like to focus on the close relationship of the squamous temporal bone to the underlying middle meningeal artery – which may well (to my surgical mind) have been fatally ruptured by the superbly accurate “smooth stone” young David flung with his sling into the arrogant, gigantic skull of Goliath of Gath, and with what God-based confidence.

It caused me to reflect on the numerous **metaphorical Giants** we meet in our journey, both active and retired, as “doctoring Christians”.

These are certainly no shortage of threatening and gigantic challenges to our faith and Biblical value-system in contemporary, secular Australian society.

The Giants brought up for discussion recently in our local church fellowship included:

1. **Alcohol** and its deep cultural connection with what we need to

do to be a mate, and to lubricate conversation.

2. **Cigarettes** and the gigantic lobby power and finance of the tobacco companies who never take no for an answer and continue to invade the bronchial tubes of millions with their toxic cancer sticks.

3. What about the Giant of the World's **30 million Refugees & IDPs** and the challenges of responding to them with fairness, compassion and welcome. Even Prof Gillian Triggs' alarming and objective Human Rights Commission Report on the trauma inflicted on Children in Nauru, is not only buried as “politically biased”, but used as a basis of vehement abuse. This of course suggests she had found a very effective weapon to expose a deep social evil.

4. The one in 6 of our society with **mental or physical disability** should fire the anger of injustice in the Christian community – but we are frightened and embarrassed by difference and pass by on the other side. Perhaps Prof Patrick McGorin has flung a few pebbles in his time as Australian of the year, but where is the collateral support from the CMDFA?

5. What about the overwhelming Giant of **Aboriginal health** in a country whose ancient people are less healthy than us by every index applicable.

6. And then **Climate Change**, and dependence on **Fossil Fuel** and the denial of alternative energy resources; a global gargantuan

challenge enough, without our pathetic global warming denials. Could Dr Zeus' allegorical *The Lorax* be gifted to a few more “Pollies” in Canberra?

7. And perhaps we could cringe more at the rising rate of 8% more **Domestic Violence** reported this year, despite Rosie Batty's heroic and effective use of the media, she has certainly proved “the Power of One”.

Other Giants that haunt me in the dark recesses of a sleepless night include:

- a. International Tax Avoidance and Havens
- b. Pornography and its influence on our sexual behaviours
- c. Child Sex Abuse and the Churches involvement
- d. Poverty and the widening gap – nationally and internationally
- e. Cyberfraud and Cyberbullying
- f. Islam in all its challenges
- g. The “ICE Epidemic”, that seems to have police and social planners and psychologists struggling when it comes to prevention and behavioural change.

And so the list goes on....

The David and Goliath story to me is certainly one of reality and hope. Reality, in that it firmly places us doctors who try to think and act Christianly in this world full of Giants

We are in it as Salt and Light but only as far as we allow ourselves to read the daily press, and follow the trends in film, drama, TV, and social media. If we choose to join Simon Stylites on his perch in ancient Turkey's desert, or to bury our heads in the sands of the desert with the ostrich, we can do



so – but at the peril of our country, that looks to doctors (even Christian ones) to contribute something of a different paradigm or world view.

The thing that young David did was to select and hone and use “appropriate weapons” – a simple slingshot that when fired accurately, hit the target at its point of known weakness. How often we resort to talking among ourselves, reviewing policies and practice (as in the ongoing Abortion debate) in the cosy bubble of our fellowship meetings – when there are no policy makers listening.

How many of our CMF meetings and conferences have intentionally taught us how to sharpen our political weapons and how to use them: e.g. Relationships and Networks in the Secular community; lobbying and letters in areas of local and national policy on health as it relates to the Giants I have outlined. How many of our Bible studies help us move into the area of “implementation?” I was delighted to find over a breakfast with **Prof Charles Ringma** (after the recent National Conference in Sydney) that the Jesus he saw as an “activist” in his Bible Studies had led him recently to express his passion for the children in the hell-hole of Nauru’s Refugee Camps. He was involved in the “Love Makes a Way” movement in Queensland, a recently formed group of committed

“...our country... looks to doctors (even Christian ones) to contribute something of a different paradigm or world view.”

Christians. They have taken non-violent sit-ins at the offices of Federal Politicians to a new level – that of **Civil Disobedience** in the wonderful tradition of Jesus Christ, Martin Luther King, and Jim Wallace, of the Sojourners’ Community in the USA.

These Christians (and there have been 20 actions around Australia in the past 18 months, of a bipartisan political nature) have been prepared to be **arrested for trespass** and face the Magistrates Courts; a recent Moderator of the Uniting Church in Victoria was involved last year. These actions have been carefully prepared and kept secret to increase their impact. The two I have been involved with on the Mornington Peninsula have achieved dialogue with the elected MP and focussed specifically on the harm being done to the children in detention in Nauru.

During the latest sit-in, the leader (a minister of the local Uniting

Church) achieved conversation with the Minister for the Environment, Mr Greg Hunt MP; the Minister for Immigration, Mr Peter Dutton MP and Minister for Small Business, Mr Bruce Billson MP, outside their offices; many other members of *Love Makes a Way* about 20 in all, including myself and my Church Minister, sang hymns and songs of solidarity. They came, after a couple of months of training sessions together, from ages 18 to 75, and a wide diversity of Church denominations.

The Police commended us for our respectful behaviour over the 7 hour sit-in. The Police asked us not to take photos of them on our iPhones because they feared repercussions. Our group was about 20 strong and included four local church members, especially young Baptists. Our leader was a woman from the Canadian Mennonite tradition.

We felt vulnerable (like young David in a shepherd’s tunic) but empowered because we knew we had prepared our case with information and prayer, we had an appropriate weapon (a sit-in and relationships with the Minister) and we had rapport with the local press – the articles and photos were all sympathetic and we were on the side of justice – which will always be the winning side. ●



Living a life of FAITH in a world of SOCIAL MeDIA

by Grace Leo

Our world is so saturated by social media, whether it is by Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, even personal blogs and sites. It has brought many blessings – through connecting friends and family across distance as well as providing education and the gospel into difficult to reach areas. However, no doubt, if we aren't careful, it can be all too easy to let social media become another idol or stressor in our lives.

To get a better handle on how other Christians are addressing social media in their lives I wrote to a number of Christians whose lives and walks I respect. Here is a bit about them and some of the thoughts they shared...

Segun Olusanya is a British Intensivist who has been very engaged on social media. Along with another colleague, he makes "JICSCast" podcast to summarise important articles of the *Journal of the Intensive Care Society*.

Catherine Hollier is a GP on the Central Coast, mother and new sub-editor of *Luke's Journal*. She has been actively involved in the CMDFA community for many years.

Claire Chung is a GP in Chatswood, mother of three and an active member of her local church.

Andrew Hartshorn is a Psychiatrist at Concord, father of three and an active member of his local church.

How does being a Christian change the way you view and interact with social media?

"I'd like to think that Jesus exists in my social media profile as much as He exists in the rest of me! As a new creature, everything I see, do, touch and say should (I hope) reflect His influence on me. This means sometimes not looking at posts, being kind, being courageous to stand up for beliefs, and remembering that everything you say can affect someone. I don't always succeed – but I'm still trying and learning..." – Segun

Do you think that social media can be self indulgent or dangerous?

"I definitely think that social media can be self-indulgent. Its aim is to draw attention to something you write and something you take pictures of. Since we are fallen people, I think we do tend to talk about ourselves and we tend to make it look/sound better than reality. I think we can try to guard against this by having a close relationship with God through our quiet time and also have other Christian friends who share with us on social media so we can be more accountable... I gave up using Facebook since last year because I find that it takes up too much time and I am kind of just spying on other people's lives or envying/judging other people.

what they are doing is anonymous – whether they are commenting on content, engaging in "cyberbullying" posting things on facebook that they really shouldn't etc. In fact, it is in the public domain, all traceable, and to some extent permanent." – Andrew

In what ways can social media be helpful or encouraging?

"Social media can be a good tool. I often use it the night before going to church if I am on welcoming at the front door so that I can welcome people more personally. It can also be helpful for connecting with people who are in need or in trouble, or for having a quiet word in a teenager's ear where they may be more responsive to another adult than perhaps their parents. It is useful for sharing inspiring links or sermons, or asking for help from a wide audience in a short time. Specific closed forums can generate good discussions. I think it enhances my ministry and relationships for the most part." – Catherine

"I think anytime someone says 'Thanks for sharing that – I've learned something' that's really meaningful and powerful for me. Beyond that, I've had job opportunities, had the opportunity to network, got involved in a podcast... Social media also helped me get through a very dark period in my life. My wife became really ill with severe depression, leading me to take time off work to

care for her. Tweets, podcasts and blogs kept my interest in medicine alive, and supportive messages were never far away." – Segun

Lastly, what are some Bible verses you have found encouraging in how you approach social media?

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."
– 1 Corinthians 10:31

"For we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the glory may be of God and not of us"
– 2 Corinthians 4-7

"And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."
– Romans 12:2

Social media, like many things in this world, is a tool which can be helpful or harmful. Our involvement in social media is a choice which is personal and requires constant prayer and reflection. I think Philippians 4:8 puts it best, "Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things." ●

"Our involvement in social media is a choice which is personal and requires constant prayer and reflection."

So I just stopped "cold turkey" one day. For me it was weakening my faith because I was becoming more unGodly in the way I used my time and the way I look at other people."
– Claire

"Perhaps the most important thing to remember with the internet is that people are often brought unstuck by a perception that somehow



Speaking at the right time

Some reflections on Christians contributing to the public debate

by Dr Paul Mercer

Paul is a GP at Manly, Brisbane and a co-editor of *Luke's Journal*.

“Today people resist understanding themselves as citizens at all; they more easily understand themselves as customers of the state, or as purely private people with no particular civic identity or obligations.”¹

In this opinion piece I want to try to assemble a number of brief insights which may stimulate a more active participation in public life for Christian Doctors and Dentists. In an age of individual freedom we often remain disengaged from public debate and political decisions. We have a hunch, that if we look after “our small corner”, then society as a whole will simply go onward. Our freedom for ourselves has become so consuming that we avoid broad responsibility. We are happy to give opinions on Twitter, Facebook etc. and even at times in older media; but we struggle to engage in serious respectful debate and participation.

Maybe it is the enormous power of the modern state. Maybe it is the class of policy experts or organisation managers. Maybe it is power of the media to set the public conversation agenda. Whatever, it is to be acknowledged, that contributing effectively to the public debate as a Christian professional is low in our priority. Government and public conversation is something we have, and not necessarily something we

do. We have moved from vision to consumption. When we keep our heads down and avoid the passion for encounter, we miss out on what Michael Sandel describes as “a good in common that we cannot know alone.” As Christians we enter the public space best as we come with the love of God and the humility of Christ. Yet even in the cultural context I have described, Christians tend to hold further uncertainties:

- We are uncertain and even cynical that the liberal atmosphere of politics will satanise the Kingdom vision of God’s people.
- Public debate now contains a fear that the role of Religion is to impose itself and so there are regular calls for the suppression of religious voices from the public debate.

My agenda from here is threefold.

- A) I want to insert the thoughts of Miroslav Volf on Christians and culture.
- B) I will assemble a number of practical suggestions towards Christian participation.
- C) I will share a few stories of my own attempts of involvement and reflect on them.

A) Miroslav volf – A Public Faith

Miroslav Volf is a professor of Systematic Theology at Yale University. In his recent book, *A Public Faith*², Volf seeks to articulate a genuine role for the voices of faith

in contemporary discourse. I am inserting his argument summary in the following 6 points.

1. Christ is God’s Word and God’s Lamb, come into the world for the good of all people, who are all God’s creatures and loved by God. Christian faith is therefore a “prophetic” faith that seeks to mend the world. An idle or redundant faith – a faith that does not seek to mend the world – is a seriously malfunctioning faith. Faith should be active in all spheres of life: education and arts, business and politics, communication and entertainment, and more.
2. Christ came to redeem the world by preaching, actively helping people, and dying a criminal’s death on behalf of the ungodly. In all aspects of his work, he was a bringer of grace. A coercive faith – a faith that seeks to impose itself and its way of life on others through any form of coercion – is also a seriously malfunctioning faith.
3. When it comes to life in the world, to follow Christ means to care for others (as well as for oneself) and work toward their flourishing, so that life would go well for all and so that all would learn how to lead their lives well. A vision of human flourishing and the common good is the main thing the Christian faith brings into the public debate.
4. Since the world is God’s creation and since the Word came to

his own even if his own did not accept him (John 1:11), the proper stance of Christians toward the larger culture cannot be that of unmitigated opposition or whole-scale transformation. A much more complex attitude is required – that of accepting, rejecting, learning from, transforming, and subverting or putting to better uses various elements of an internally-differentiated and rapidly changing culture.

5. Jesus Christ is described in the New Testament as a “faithful witness” (Rev 1:5) and his followers understood themselves as witnesses (e.g. Acts 5:32). The way Christians work toward human flourishing is not by imposing on others their vision of human flourishing and the common good but by bearing witness to Christ, who embodies the good life.

6. Christ has not come with a blueprint for political arrangements; many kinds of political arrangements are compatible with the Christian faith, from monarchy to democracy. But in a pluralistic context, Christ’s command “in everything do to others as you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12) entails that Christians grant to other religious communities the same religious and political freedoms that they claim for themselves. Put differently, Christians, even those who in their own religious views are exclusivists, ought to embrace pluralism as a political project.

Volf’s proposals and observations are developed to moderate both secular exclusivism and what he calls “religious totalitarianism”.

B) Christians encountering the public arena

i) Recognising ‘agnostic’ politics.¹

It is common to hear the complaint that politics used to be more honourable. Indeed, liberal political theory and practice envisaged a commitment to debate and rhetorical

challenge in the context of respectful relationships.

On the other hand, after Nietzsche and Schmitt, “agonists” argue that the “first truth of politics is that it is founded not on some set of just principles, but rather the endless struggle for power.” It is asserted this offers two benefits:

- It keeps conflict at the manageable level of “the political” and;
- It allows latent tensions in society to rise to the surface and so allow healthier and fresh solutions to problems.

Politics is seen not so much as the ‘art of the possible’ or maintaining the status quo but working with the energy of conflict to achieve reform and a new future.

“Today, entering into the public space of politics is to join this ‘agonistic’ process.”

Consequently Stanley Fish has noted “if the clash of values is irremediable and if the forms of order (and thus the configurations of ‘us’ against ‘them’) are continually shifting, it is best not to insist too strongly on the values you happen to favour or the forms of order you prefer. If everything is up for grabs, why grab anything with the intent of hanging on to it?”

Today, entering into the public space of politics is to join this “agonistic” process. To be a bearer of the power of love in such an environment is a delicate position to take indeed!

ii) In 1973 Charles Colson wrote,

“In these last twenty years of the twentieth century we are sailing in uncharted waters. Never before in the history of Western civilisation

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has the public space been so devoid of transcendent values”³ (p222 *Kingdoms in Conflict*.) In the 40 years since these comments the growing impact of this reality is firmly established. Voices of Christian authority have been wound down to fit alongside all other voices in a pluralistic society. At times it seems as if political correctness wants to silence the church altogether. This can be painful for good people who invest their lives in serving the community through the church. Conversely, new opportunities can occur as we participate as followers of Jesus rather than spokespeople for the church.

iii) Lesslie Newbigin⁴ advocates that Christian involvement in the public square take the shape of an “undercover agent.” Christians can influence the common good in very positive ways through a gracious and humble presence. This perspective makes sense as we recognise again with Charles Colson that “power can be just as corrupting – or confusing – to the Christian as to the non-Christian.” We do participate with the awareness identified by Jacques Ellul that politics has become “the supreme religion of our age.”

iv) For many Christians being part of the silent majority is enough. It seems sufficient to “be a little light in my corner.” To be a model citizen. It is very comfortable to be asked to ‘speak up’ from this perspective. Politics and the public conversation however may often require courage. To not speak against the rise of a ‘Hitler’ may lead to repression and injustice and at times war. Tweets, blogs etc. may be the public space for some to ‘contribute’ more anonymously.

v) To raise the profile of a public space issue, some people are willing to commit to a “special interest group”. To concentrate effort and energy of a “campaign,” can be effective in changing ‘public opinion.’ When the art of politics calls for compromise and negotiation,

members of a special interest group may feel threatened and push back. All or nothing is always “stinky thinking.” Christians know they are primarily committed to Christ and the Kingdom of God, and not to the rhythm of the world. Hauerwas contends rightly that the church is to be “a body constituted by disciplines that create the capacity to resist the disciplines of the body associated with the modern nation-state.” Beyond Christendom the state must decide how far to tolerate the alternative community of the Church. The more radical in practice, the more “threatening” is the church to a culture.

“Christians can influence the common good in very positive ways through a gracious and humble presence.”

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William Cavanaugh⁵ makes a perceptive observation when he notes, “a gap remains between democrats and those who believe that God rules. The good news, however, is that worshipping the God who rules as the Crucified One can and should make Christians vulnerable to those who don’t.” When we accept this vulnerability we can discern a language to communicate Kingdom of God values in the “global economy” and the “wisdom of evidenced-based data and decision-making.”

vi) The ‘sin’ of the Church is now a prominent component of the rebuttal of the church’s voice. Sexual abuse in institutions, the dividedness of the church, hypocrisy of any sort, silhouette any attempt for the church to speak publicly. The church may contribute major goods to society yet sin is the default memory. It can be argued that if God attracts the world by implanting a community in human history that

shows what salvation is like, then we should acknowledge that the church often repels rather than attracts. There appears to be a constant tug of war between sin and grace both within and without the church. Few theologians try to work through this difficulty. The presence of sin in the church and indeed those who go out to speak in the public space should always caution humility. Hans von Balthasar is well received in attempting to reconcile the meaning of sin in the church. He noted that “for sin to be overcome from within, it had, in some way or another, to be found ‘within Christ’.” So what we see when we see Christ (on the cross) is the entire drama of sin and salvation acted out on the stage of his one person. As we dare to look, we see on the cross the complete self-emptying of God for the sins of the world and the Church/Israel. The gospel is the unconventional love story of God, who will stoop to self-humiliation in order to save us. William Cavanaugh reflects that “the church’s proper response to being taken up into the life of God is not smug assurance of its own purity, but humble repentance for its sin and a constant impulse to reform. As the church is exposed for its sins, repentance is not a strategy we choose, but a cry that comes up from the historical experience of sin.”

C) 3 Short Stories

“Yellow Ribbons”

I started to work in the Wynnum Manly district in 1987. We came as a young family wanting to be immersed in a community where Katrina, my wife, has grown up but left for a while. I had been invited to establish a medical practice in a child welfare facility which had been deinstitutionalised. Alongside this venture I wanted to connect with a community building in this district and I soon encountered an evolving community protest movement. The Bjelke-Petersen State Government at the time was promoting the establishment of a significant Chlorine Production plant to complement an Oil Refinery at the



mouth of the Brisbane River. Health and community safety concerns were emerging about this proposal. A broad-based, cross-political coalition of citizens had formed to champion these concerns.

We became involved as a young family as air pollution and increased risks of asthma were very relevant. Our involvement did facilitate many community connections and allowed us to expose our children to the positive impact of joining with neighbours to solve a problem together. I became aware of a number of other medical practitioners who had joined the protest movement. We focused on understanding air pollution data, health impacts of chlorine, and what a community disaster plan might look like if a catastrophic event took place. Yellow ribbons began to appear all over the district as our community newspaper followed the progress of this action and health concerns became more informed.

Politicians in favour of this "development", began to appear on the back foot. Our protesting became more organised with clearly articulated concerns at rallies etc. I made a cameo appearance on a 6pm TV news edition with my daughter on my shoulders and homemade cardboard signs saying "NO ICI".

"In our democracy, the writing of letters to authorities and political leaders is to be encouraged."

.....

We created a message beyond simple words about health risk concerns. We had "momentum", and our medical "team" prepared a presentation which we were able to take in person to the Health Minister at Parliament House. Within days the Chlorine plant proposal was shelved. I doubt our community has been as united since the "yellow ribbon protest."

"Jubilee 2000"

It is now forty years since I became involved with TEAR Australia. This international Christian aid and development agency has provided a fellowship where Christians have explored the significance of world poverty in the light of the love of God and the challenge of following Jesus in compassion and living justly. My involvement has been formative. I have encountered real joy in the gospel partnerships that developed to respond to the wealth disparity between Australian Christians and Christians immersed with the world's poor.

The turn of the millennium provided an opportunity to imagine real change. For a range of reasons low income countries have been caught in the vice grip of debt for many decades. Countries can't declare bankruptcy and so debts compounded and became unpayable. A coalition of Christian development agencies and many other global citizen organisations was forged to promote a debt Jubilee. This Old Testament proposal envisaged the relief required when hardship and debt comes to a family or community. I started to wear a white wrist band with the words, *Make Poverty History*. With others I wrote letters to Federal Politicians. I approached the AMA and The RACGP because aspirational health outcomes became linked to the debt relief proposal. Both these peak health bodies endorsed the campaign to which over twenty five million people became signatories. I was able to make a presentation about Jubilee 2000 to a RACGP National Conference in Adelaide.

While people with economic hard hats wanted to dismiss this global initiative to ease the burden of poverty; positive outcomes were achieved. One hundred and ten million dollars of debt relief was

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more than a gesture, and confirmed that justice and compassion are necessary components of a global political ethic. Jubilee 2000 was a mass people movement that required good leadership and the genuine commitment of many local community ambassadors. We sensed the blessing of God which has encouraged an ongoing commitment to debt relief in the Make Poverty History campaign.

War No More

In our democracy, the writing of letters to authorities and political leaders is to be encouraged. Over the years I have written many such letters. As I write I am always motivated by a patient’s need or a decision or policy which appears unfair or discriminatory. I could write about hospital waiting lists, care of refugees, better indigenous health environmental policy decisions and so on. I write respectfully and try to provide evidence for my argument. Mostly, thoughtful responses are made. The North American desire to take out Saddam Hussein through an act of War in response to the

“As Christians, any involvement in the public square comes with vulnerability and hope.”

September 11 atrocity was and remains controversial. My experience as a GP is that there are ‘no winners’ in war. Soldiers, their families and the whole community suffer as the horror and trauma of war comes home. I wrote to our Prime Minister who had indicated he desired an Australian involvement in any ‘war on terror.’ I didn’t receive a reply as I suspect many others had also decided to communicate their concern.

Christians are often quite comfortable with Howard government policy. Our conservatism regarding rulers comes from scripture. The same scriptures also call God’s people to roles in peacemaking and reconciliation. All around Australia public rallies were scheduled to call to our politicians to reconsider and not to go to war. My

adolescent son wanted to make his voice heard so in an act of father-son bonding, we joined over 100,000 people making our way through the Brisbane CBD. We were marching for peace. Never before or since have so many people come together in rallies all around Australia to give voice to such a cause. History tells us we collectively failed.

As Christians, any involvement in the public square comes with vulnerability and hope. We have political heroes in Wilberforce, Luther King, Bonhoeffer and Tutu. Our hope is for the now-but-not-yet Kingdom of God, announced by Jesus of Nazareth and won (according to the world foolishly) on the cross. It is a hope to be heard in many stories, when doctors and dentists such as ourselves, cast our crowns before the “Lamb who was slain.” ●

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science, theology interface may be useful.

- 3) **Involvement** – To move from theory to practice always requires a practical exposure. Join a political party, participate in a community movement, start to write letters to politicians or sign up for a campaign etc.
- 4) **Invest** – “putting our money or time where our mouth is”, will further stimulate our involvement and focus.
- 5) **Influence** – Contributing to the public conversation will be most productive where our expertise lies. Our influence will be strongest here.

- 6) **Incarnation** – As Christians we will recognise when God calls us to represent Christ by our immersion and wholehearted involvement. Such involvement will be exercised best when the grace and humility of the cross define us. Christian spirituality recognises it is possible to “hide our light under a bushel.” We have prepared this edition of Luke’s Journal aware of the challenges and difficulties of our time.

Public debate and the political process can be divisive. We urge CMDFA members to maintain the respect of a shared confession of Christ. It has been noted that people we conceive to be more

conservative than ourselves are to be tolerated while those we consider more liberal or ‘left leaning’ should always be treated with suspicion and opposition. Our natural political tendencies can then lead us to be unnecessarily ungracious. No matter what public positions we choose to hold, CMDFA would urge readers to “maintain unity in the bonds of peace.”

Dr Paul Mercer
Editor





Is God the focus of my love?

Living out Deuteronomy 6 as health professionals

by Mary Lewis

**What is the focus of my love?
What difference does it make to
have God as the focus of my love?
Deuteronomy 6: 4-5 – Hear, O Israel:
The Lord our God, the Lord is one.
Love the Lord your God with all your
heart and with all your soul and with
all your strength.**

The context of Deuteronomy 6 reminds the people of Israel that putting God as the key focus of their love and life is in response to God's love for them. It's about remembering.

Deuteronomy 6:20-25

In the future, when your son asks you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the LORD our God has commanded you?" tell him: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Before our eyes the LORD sent signs and wonders – great and terrible – on Egypt and

Pharaoh and his whole household. But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land he promised on oath to our ancestors.

Do you have photo albums in your house? Our household has a few albums, but mostly we have boxes; boxes of previously sorted photos that have many times been tipped out onto the floor and picked over with much laughter and conversation and... remembering. Do you remember when – we went; remember what N did; remember the bus – the mandarins – the mountains – the ice creams – the beach? This mad assortment brings back many memories that extend beyond the lifetimes of some of those present, but it provides connection and story. It recalls us into knowing who we are and to whom we are connected. (One of us plans to have a not very serious illness – like a broken leg – where you don't feel very sick but you have to stay in bed. Then we will sort the photos).

The Jewish faith and the Christian faith are about remembering. Remember when we were brought out of Egypt, rescued by our Lord

and God. Jesus extended this as he celebrated that Passover. As he took bread and wine, he said, "Do this in remembrance of me." A new dimension was given to this remembering feast. The Jews remembered that the Lord God loves and saved us; we are his chosen people in the land he promised. It's his plan that we will prosper and live: ²⁴ *The LORD commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the LORD our God, SO THAT we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today.* ²⁵ *And if we are careful to obey all this law before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us; that will be our righteousness.*"

OR

"It will be a set-right and put-together life for us if we make sure that we do this entire commandment in the Presence of GOD, our God."

The chapter opens with the same SO THAT –

- Verse 2: your children and their children may fear the Lord

continued over page

IS GOD The FOCuS OF My LOVe?

- Verse 3: it may go well with you and that you will increase greatly in the land of milk and honey – JUST AS THE LORD, THE GOD OF YOUR FATHERS, PROMISED YOU.

This chapter is bookended by a reminder of the God who holds all things in his hands – who has chosen his people and has perfect plans for his chosen ones – SO THAT they will prosper and live. And of course God has definitions of PROSPER and LIVE that he will fulfil for his chosen – we among those chosen ones, known and chosen by God before the world began. It's God's plan that we have a "set-right and put-together life".

Let's explore these decrees and commands.

⁴ Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

⁴ Attention, Israel! GOD, our God! GOD the one and only!

⁵ Love the LORD your God, with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

⁵ Love God, your God, with your whole heart: love him with **all that's in you, love him with all you've got!**

⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.

⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

⁶⁻⁹ Write these commandments that I've given you today on your hearts. **Get them inside of you and then get them inside your children. Talk about them wherever you are, sitting at home or walking in the street; talk about them from the time you get up in the morning to when**

you fall into bed at night. Tie them on your hands and foreheads as a reminder; inscribe them on the doorposts of your homes and on your city gates.

Note – always the command is in response to who God is.

The LORD – YHWH – the I AM WHO I AM who met Moses on holy ground. No other is of the order of love and power that can command this of us. This is the love of a subject for their King or of a loyal obedient servant.

"We are to take God's Word and wear it, talk about it, have it in our faces – ordering and directing all that we do."
.....

This is a total – whole of life – love, built on the love God has for his people. God's love requires our love. 1 John 5: "This is love for God that we obey his commands... And his commands are not burdensome for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes in that Jesus is the Son of God."

Bishop Graham Cray writes:

Jesus' identity as God's Son is not just a theological claim – it is a lived relationship that directs, motivates and energises his ministry; His ministry is rooted in his Father's love and through Jesus we too have a living relationship with God; a relationship to be lived out; a relationship that's intended through the power of the Holy Spirit – being in Christ – to direct, motivate and energise our ministry as disciples making disciples; as Jesus followers who are health professionals.

We are to take God's Word and wear it, talk about it, have it in our faces – ordering and directing all that we do. In our professional lives we are to be:

- Directed
 - Motivated
 - Energised
- by God as the focus of our love.

Let's look at four areas of our lives as health professionals and the impact this God focus of our love might have:

- Professional and scientific practice
- Interpersonal relationships
- Lifestyle and money
- Moral behaviour personally

What difference in these areas will it make if I:

- **get them inside of me**
- **get them inside my children**
- **talk about them wherever I am, sitting at home or walking in the street**
- **talk about them from the time I get up in the morning to when I fall into bed at night**

It's a whole of life thing my friends – no areas left out; no part of life hidden or secret; no part of life secular – not part of God's view or plan. Everywhere in everything – God is to be the focus of our life.

Professional and scientific practice

Where are you heading in your career? How strong is your steering hand? To whose advice do you listen? Can you trust God to know best? Do you believe that God only has your best interest at heart – and not just yours, but your family's and your patients' and your practice's. Making God the focus of your love is a bold and brave move and risky. Do you believe God really can bring about the best timing – not just for you but for the bigger picture – the project, the plan, the development of the department, the curriculum, the downsizing, the reshaping? Can we really rely on God's understanding of your research, your therapeutic plan? Does God the Creator and Sustainer really understand cellular

function, DNA, stem cell research, pharmacology and evidence based medicine? What answer do you live out? Do those around you know that you trust God and his understanding with these weighty matters? This is no small matter – this is deadly serious – can I trust God with such weighty and serious decisions; with such deep and rich and complex understanding? Do I work and practice my profession with love of God as my focus or do I rely on the created not the Creator?

Interpersonal relationships – at home

The trauma of juggling family and profession – I don't call it "trauma" lightly. I believe this is one of the areas of life that cause the most heart ache and disturbance and compromise for health care professionals.

Singles may be exploited by partnered or parental colleagues – "you have nothing else to do in your life; will you cover for me? I have to go home to the family." Let those of us who are not single beware of this. If I'm single, let me have strong God-led boundaries.

Balancing time and profession with your spouse: there are particular challenges for those who are both professional, and even more so if both of you are health professionals. Jealousies about who has priority – the children and the birthday picnic or the patient with a heart attack or obstructed labour. Rational thought and argument doesn't really deal with the issues of the heart at these times. However, family and family life is not to be your god; no other relationship is to become before your relationship with God. If God is the focus of your love it cannot; it may not. Can you trust your family to God? Are you ultimately responsible for your partner and your children? How do you understand your partnership with God in these matters. God entrusts us with families to be loved out of the depths of the love he has for us; a love that

draws us to him as the focus of our love. A love that sets a model that we find difficult to understand.

Lifestyle and money

Who owns your money? Do you have the right to make decisions about how your money is invested, saved and spent? Do you think about rights or do you think about responsibility or do you think about partnership with God? How we use our money, our time and our resources is **entirely** a God focussed decision if God is the focus of our love. There is no secular – God split. There is no – "how much will we give to God's work?" question. As a Christian all of life is God's and all our earnings, property, investment, savings and resources are God's. How we use every part of them is under God's command of love. This applies in our professional lives – spending or saving or investment in our practices whether it's our private business or an organisational department and "someone else's money". What does he require of us? A God focus, we are assured, gives us a God understanding. It will incorporate his love for world and the people in it. In all of life decisions we are called to be other focussed – as Jesus is. Decisions in these matters are to be directed, motivated and energised by being the children of God as Jesus is. We want to argue – but God where's the balance? Entirely other focussed? Where does that leave me, my family, my practice? Do you trust him to know best? Do you trust him to lead you into abundant life? Then the living of that out is in putting love of God first. We have to trust him that he knows how to work this out for the best of you and of others – your employees, your colleagues, your practice, your family, your patients. God be at the centre of every decision I make about the money and possessions and resources you have entrusted to me. May I be a partner with you in love?

Moral behaviour personally

Where do you go for reprieve and rest and relaxation? What do you put

in place of God to help you unwind; bring equilibrium; give you space and recharge your energy after long days?

Consulting all day; operating all day; teaching all day – lots of head space and emotional energy used up; much recharging and nourishment needed.

I underline – nourishment – here. Under God, do you always go for the nourishing option - spiritually, emotionally, physically nourishing options - or are you into junk food? We know that health professions – and doctors in particular – are at an increased risk of drug and alcohol misuse, internet misuse whether gaming or pornography or just never getting away from the screen. (The Kanchi Ama.) We have a high risk of suicide, family dysfunction and divorce.

What do you grab for at the end of a long day? What would this look like if God is the focus of your love?

Colossians 3:12-17 re AD

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts and to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Mimi Haddad writes:

God did not create people to just lounge around in a garden, nap in the sun, and pop grapes. We were made to be active agents in creation, God's ambassadors to the world! We are to live purposefully as part of the body of Christ; we are challenged to go "all in," developing our gifts and pursuing God's calling on our life.

May God bring us to living purposefully – living and prospering – as in his love and grace he becomes the centre of our love. ●

hot buttons and Cool reason

have we lost the art of moral argument?

by Dr Catherine hollier

Hot button – “word or issue that ignites anger, fear, enthusiasm, or other passionate response. Such an issue, frequently involving values or morals, serves to lift an audience out of its seats. (Safire’s *New Political Dictionary*, Random House, New York, 1993).

There are a number of such issues within the Christian community today, including the role of women, the nature of hell, and the moral permissibility of same-sex relationships. At the interface between the church and society, abortion, euthanasia, anti-religious vilification law, gay marriage and access to IVF and/or adoption for singles and homosexual couples are all hot button issues. In Parliamentary democracies such as Australia, Christians have both the opportunity and the obligation to attempt to influence public opinion and public policy in relation to such issues. Christians are to bear witness to the biblical revelation of God’s holiness and his plans and purposes for humanity, and promote the biblical vision of human flourishing. But what is the best way to do this? And are there any methods which we ought not to use?

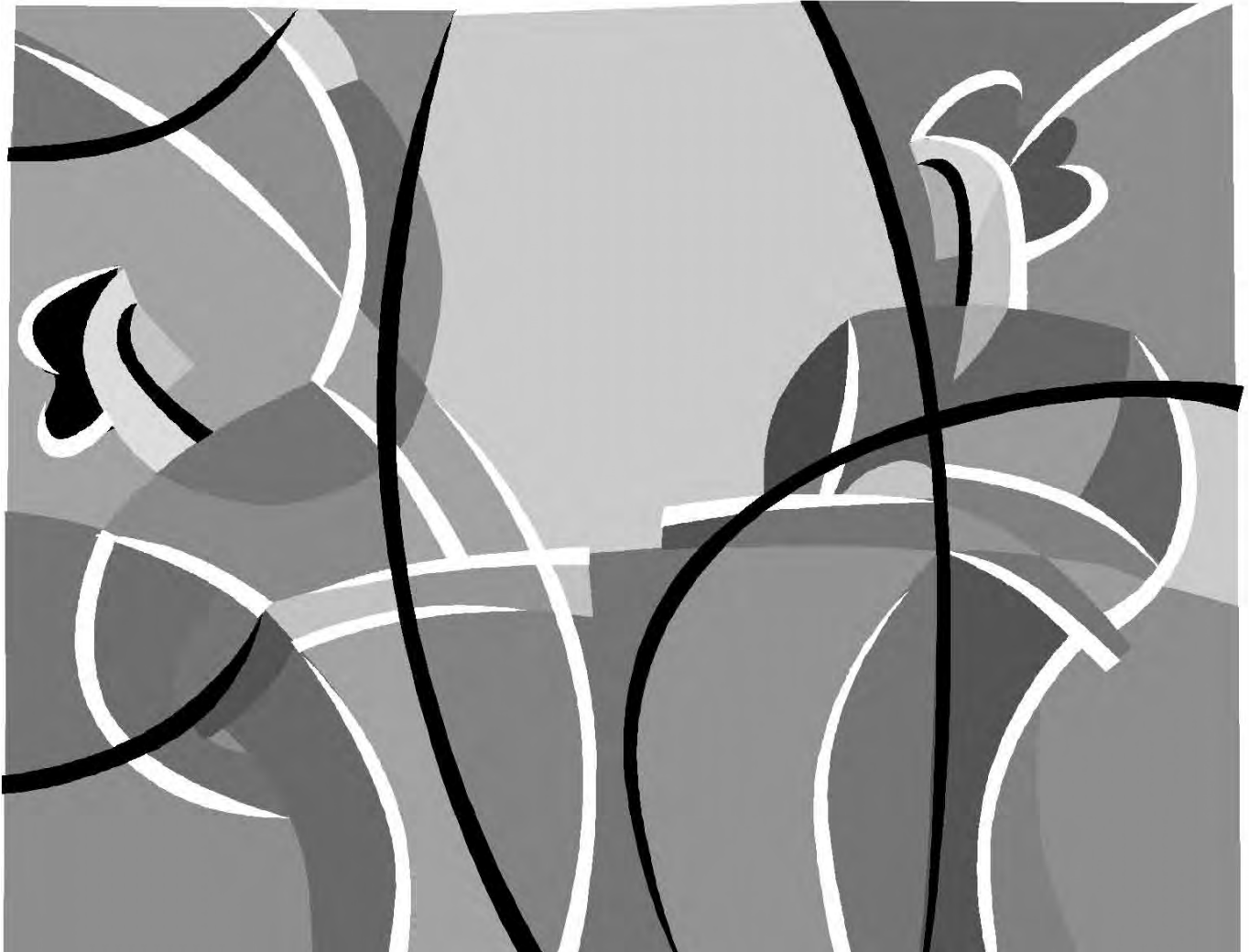
When there is disagreement about an issue and people from both “sides” talk to each other or promote their point of view in the public space promoting their point of view, we

call this an argument. But a look at the two distinct ways we use the word “argument” tells us a lot about the state of public moral discourse. An argument can mean a discussion in which reasons are advanced for and against some proposition, but it can also mean simply a quarrel or a controversy. Public policy debate on “hot button” moral issues is mostly an argument in the second rather than the first sense. Big on anger, fear, enthusiasm and passion, not so big on reasonable persuasion. And this also, sadly, is sometimes true of Christians’ contributions. Why might this be the case?

One explanation might be that we’ve picked up some bad habits from the world, specifically the adversarial practices of the law and of politics. Framing things as absolute dichotomies – guilty/not guilty, black/white, etc. – entails dismissing any argument against your own “case”. One side wins and the other loses. But this method is poorly equipped to deal with complex moral issues. Many moral issues are complex, and even when the moral issue itself is clear (e.g. there’s no support for adultery or injustice in the Bible) the question of if and how this should be reflected in legislation and public policy may be complex. Multiple competing principles and considerations must be weighed against each other, until we arrive at a conclusion “on balance”. Whenever we come to such a conclusion, there will often remain powerful and valid counter-arguments against it, which we ought to acknowledge and take into account of. For example, a

person who is generally opposed to euthanasia needs to recognise the strength of some of the arguments for legalised euthanasia and consider their implications for public policy (such as ensuring adequate palliative care provision including pastoral care for the dying). But we find this difficult. It’s much easier to think that all the right is on our side, and that there can be no doubt or legitimate disagreement about it. To concede the validity of some of our “opponents’” reasoning might be seen as weakening our “case”. Such an attitude often means we don’t really have to listen to arguments against our position, and are not open to being challenged, modifying or even radically changing our view.

People with whom we disagree can become opponents or even enemies. We do not seek to persuade, we simply assert as forcefully as possible that they are wrong, stupid, disgraceful, morally bankrupt and so on. We might impute wrong motives to them, and we might employ rhetorical devices such as the use of hyperbole, e.g. so, anyone who considers there might be some legitimate grounds for legalising abortion becomes a “worshipper of Molech”. We might attempt to discredit a claim made by someone by attacking their character or by describing other claims/views they have (the *ad hominem* fallacy). For example, we might attempt to discredit everything Professor Peter Singer says about the moral argument for vegetarianism by pointing to his views on infanticide and euthanasia. We should not



dismiss any argument out of hand just because it is made by someone with whom we often disagree, even if the disagreement is at a fundamental level.

There are other unfair or fallacious tactics of argumentation. One is the “straw man” tactic: misrepresenting another’s position, making it appear more implausible, so it can more easily be refuted. Other examples include *argumentum ad populum*, which is an appeal to popular opinion to support a conclusion, and *argumentum ad ignorantium*, the claim that because a particular proposition has not been proved to be true (or false) one may conclude that it is false (or true). It is tragic when, in pursuit of so called godly aims, we resort to ungodly strategies. If the medium is even only a part of the message, the way we conduct our arguments speaks as loudly as their content. Might not graciousness, temperance, integrity, humility and respect for those with whom we disagree be more

“We should not dismiss any argument out of hand just because it is made by someone with whom we often disagree.”

persuasive? “Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone” (Colossians 4:6).

I think the underlying explanation for the poor quality of some Christian argument in the public square, and the adoption of ungodly strategies of debate in place of reasoned argument, is a loss of confidence in the ability of Christian moral arguments to persuade a post-Christian, often militantly secular audience. We have adopted the view (most famously put by Alasdair MacIntyre in *After Virtue*) that contemporary moral argument is incoherent, because we have no shared tradition to give meaningful content to a “common morality”.

Even in the secular world there is intractable disagreement about the source of moral authority (if it indeed exists), and how we decide right and wrong (normative ethical theories). If disagreement exists at such a foundational level, is all moral argument doomed to be, as MacIntyre suggests, reduced to emotivism, the attempt to win others to our views by appeal to emotion rather than rationality? Do we have any common ground, any starting point, any agreed premises on which to construct a rational argument about moral questions? Scripture suggests that we do (Romans 2: 14-15), but we need to identify this before we can construct moral arguments in the public square which might be reasonably persuasive. ●

The Future of Democracy in a Post-Christian West

by Peter Corney

from the St Hilary's Annual Lecture series 2013.

More people attend an AFL round over a weekend in Melbourne than the combined membership of all Australian political parties. In the 90's ALP membership was around 50,000, it is now about 30,000 and still falling, and in the last national party elections only 12,000 voted. A similar pattern affects the Liberal party. The late Don Chip's Democrats, that began as a high member participation party is now a tiny shadow of its former self.

Some people say that the greatest threat to democracy today is voter indifference and voter cynicism with politics and politicians.

This year a Lowey Institute survey polled Australian's attitudes to democracy. They found that – 60% preferred democracy to any other form of government. But most disturbing was that of 18-35 year olds only 39% answered yes to that question and 15% said "It doesn't matter what kind of government we have." Currently it is estimated that about 1.4 million young Australians eligible to vote have not registered.

Our English word *democracy* comes from a Greek word meaning "the rule of the people", from *demos* = people and *kratos* = power – "the power of the people". Well, if that is how we

are to define it then we might be in trouble because the people are switched off, or in the case of party members, 'ticked off' by being shut out of the political process by an increasingly professionalised and remote party machine.

Commentators point to other issues like:

- The over influence of the media and the relentless reporting cycle that politicians seem to allow to control them, and the media focus on the internal political conflict rather than policy – politics as entertainment rather than real debate over ideas and vision.
- The obsession with minority issues and special interest groups that affect only a tiny proportion of the electorate.
- The tendency of governments to attempt to intrude further and further into areas like freedom of speech.
- The creeping surveillance and data collection culture that threatens our privacy and freedom.
- Etc.

These are all important issues but I have chosen to focus on what I believe to be three critical threats to modern liberal democracy today.

- The diminishing influence of Christianity in the West and the rise of an aggressive secularism.
- The growth of hyper-individualism and the new understanding of freedom.

- The threat to democracy from religious extremism.

Aggressive secularism

The first threat comes from the diminishing influence of Christianity in the West and the growth of an aggressive secularism that believes that it alone has the right to occupy the public square.

Almost everyone knows Lincoln's description of democracy that was part of his famous Gettysburg speech on November 19th 1863. "*Government of the people, by the people, for the people*".

But where did that phrase come from? Did it originate in Lincoln's mind? Well, No! Thirteen years before Gettysburg it was used in a speech by the Rev Theodore Parker at an anti-slavery convention in Boston. In his speech urging Americans to abolish slavery Parker described democracy and freedom in these words: "*A democracy, that is a government of all the people, by all the people, for all the people... a government after the principles of eternal justice, the unchanging law of God... I will call it the idea of freedom.*"

But where did Parker get it from? Well it turns out that the first occurrence of this phrase is found in, of all places, the preface to the first translation of the Bible into English by John Wycliffe in 1384. Where it says: "*The Bible is for the government of the people, by the people, and for the people.*"

Now I mention this obscure bit of history to illustrate how powerful the influence of Christianity and the Bible has been on the development of Western liberal democracy.

The quote from the preface to Wycliffe's Bible also illustrates the inextricable link between democracy and freedom and the part that the Reformation and Protestant ideas played. Wycliffe is known as "the morning star of the reformation" and, like Martin Luther later who translated the Bible into common German, he was concerned to make the Bible accessible to ordinary people so that they would be free to make their own judgements unfiltered by authoritarian Popes or controlled by priestly mystification. This thread of influence weaves its way through the development of democracy.

In the long struggle for democracy and its evolution in England from Magna Carter on, Christians and biblical ideas played a key role. For example: the key idea that God has established the state as a delegated authority, not as an autonomous power above God's law. Laws made by the State should not contradict God's law. English jurists from Bracton (1210-1268), to Edward Coke (1552-1634) and William Blackstone (1723-1870) repeated and upheld this idea. This concept lies behind

the trial of King Charles I. for "crimes against the people of England" by the English Parliament in 1649. He was the first European monarch to be tried and sentenced in such a way. Even the King is not above the law. This is the principle on which the International court of justice in The Hague now operates in judging crimes like genocide by leaders of states.

"In the long struggle for democracy and its evolution in England from Magna Carter on, Christians and biblical ideas played a key role."
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In the 16th and 17th centuries and the formation of the English Parliament and the Commonwealth, the Puritans were a driving force. They sought to model their ideas about community and government on the Bible. James Harrington a Puritan scholar developed a concept of republican government with popular ownership of land based on Israel's God-given agrarian land laws. They were greatly influenced by the NT ideas that all Christians

are one in Christ and all people are equal before the Cross and God's grace. Radical elements like the "Levellers" challenged the whole aristocratic arrangement of inherited land and privilege. They were heavily persecuted for their ideas. All the Protestant Dissenter's Confessions of faith in the 17th century contain strong statements about freedom of conscience and the moral limits of the state to compel people in matters of faith and belief.

These ideas were then transported to America with the Pilgrim Fathers and the first English settlers who were seeking religious and political freedom and were foundational in the new political experiment in the 'new world.'

Tom Paine who wrote *The Rights of Man* and greatly influenced American democracy and human rights thinking began his public life as a Methodist lay preacher in England in the 1760's.

When we come to the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the beginnings of organised labour, the early union movement and workers' rights were dominated by Methodism and people affected by the Evangelical revival in England.

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The Sealing of the Magna Carter – Christians and biblical ideas played a key role.

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Human rights are intimately connected with democratic values and Christians have been closely involved in their development and codification from the very beginning. Key figures in this process like the anti-slavery campaigners: Thomas Clarkson, William Wilberforce and the French Huguenot and Quaker Anthony Benezet, were all motivated by their Christian faith.

The first country to give women the vote was New Zealand, closely followed by South Australia, in both cases Christian women's organisations like "The Woman's Christian Temperance Union" were a driving force.

So from these few brief highlights we can see the profound influence of Christian and Biblical ideas on freedom and democracy. The key point here is to recognise *that modern democracy has a cultural foundation developed in the Christian West.*

I said earlier that freedom and democracy are intimately connected but as the framers of the American Constitution stressed "*freedom requires virtue and virtue requires faith*". It is striking in their writings and speeches to see how clearly they understood this. While many were Christians, others were Deists and free thinkers, but they all understood the essential connection between freedom, virtue and faith. Let me give you just three quotations from the many I could have quoted:

"Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom" (Benjamin Franklin)

"To suppose that any form of government will secure liberty or happiness without any virtue in the people is a fantasy." (James Madison)

"It is religion and morality alone which can establish the principles upon which freedom can securely stand. The only foundation of a free constitution is pure virtue." (John Adams)

The social and cultural critic Os Guinness has recently published a new book provocatively titled *A Free Peoples Suicide – Sustainable Freedom and the American Future*. He makes the point that while freedom can be a long and tough struggle to achieve; sustaining freedom is an even greater challenge because freedom is its own worst enemy. When freedom becomes unmoored from virtue and faith it tends to become license and undermines liberty. We begin to believe that whatever life style we desire we can choose without any cost. Inevitably we begin to impinge on the freedom of others as we lose our sense of obligation to the common good. He writes

"only those who can govern themselves as individuals can govern themselves as a people. As for an athlete or dancer, freedom for a citizen is the gift of self-control training and discipline not self-indulgence. The laws of the land may provide external restraints on behaviour, but the secret of freedom is what Lord Moulton called 'obedience to the unenforceable', which is a matter of virtue, which in turn is a matter of faith. Faith and virtue are therefore indispensable to freedom."

This is a most perceptive insight.

The Classical virtues are: Temperance, Prudence (Wisdom), Courage and Justice; the Christian virtues are: Faith, Hope and Love.

But these virtues can only be sustained by belief in and a commitment to a source of transcendent values. Hence the formula "*Freedom requires virtue and virtue requires faith.*"

It is no accident therefore that the two outstanding English speaking examples of modern liberal democracy are Great Britain and the United States, both profoundly influenced, as I have shown, by the

Christian faith and world view that also incorporates the classical virtues. In the case of the British example it has now been successfully adopted by Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and a large number of countries in the British Commonwealth of Nations, including the largest democracy in the world, India. (Japanese and Korean democracy were the gifts of America.)

To dismiss this influence on world democracy on the grounds of personal or ideological prejudice towards the Christian faith, as many aggressive secularists do, is to say the least, curious. But to ignore it as a result of historical amnesia is just irresponsible. To fail to ensure that this history is taught in our educational institutions is to fail to nurture and sustain the foundations of our culture and identity and to sustain our democracy. The question people in the West need to ask is, how long can the flower of democracy last once it is cut from its roots?

hyper-individualism

The second threat is from the growth of hyper-individualism and the redefining of freedom.

Democracy like community requires the commitment of its individual members to the common good if it is to flourish. Indeed democracy is a form of community. It can only remain healthy if its members have a sense of obligation and duty to the good of others. Rights must be accompanied by responsibilities.

In Pre-Modern traditional societies the good and the authority of the community is placed above that of the individual and their rights, conformity is required, often in ways that are oppressive of individual freedom.

In Modern societies the rights of the individual are more strongly asserted and a balance or accommodation is sought with the authority and good of the community. This is 'the social contract' struck between the state and

the individual. Many of our current public debates arise from this tension, like the issue of freedom of speech.

In contemporary Post-Modern society the emphasis on the individual's freedom and rights has now overbalanced so far towards personal autonomy that obligation, duty, commitment to the family, the community and the greater common good is falling away. This is 'hyper-individualism.'

In a recent essay in *The Quarterly*, Mark Latham has produced a very insightful essay into not only the future of the ALP but Australian politics in general. He makes the point that liberal democracy with its emphasis on individual rights worked much better in the early 20th century when citizens were tied together morally much more strongly, by tradition, common culture, religion, family and locality. But such a society has now passed. He writes

"This is the price of modernity: instead of being heavily inculcated in traditional social norms, our obligations have become optional. The challenge for progressive government is to maintain the benefits of pluralism and personal freedom while encouraging solidarity among its citizens... Rights alone are not sufficient to create a good society. Having the right to do something does not always make it the right thing to do. More is needed: a collective recognition of right and wrong."

This is not an entirely surprising view from the left for those who know its history. The 'ethical left' in English and Australian politics was heavily influenced by the early English Christian socialists.

In this process of social change another critical shift has taken place: the idea of freedom has been unconsciously redefined.

The new Post Modern view of freedom is located in the idea of

the right of the individual to the unhindered power of spontaneous choice. On this view an act is free when it is in defiance of any restrictions, even of any objective values or duties. The only absolute is "the triumph of the will". Once freedom in this sense becomes an absolute we arrive at the tyranny of the individual – this is 'hyper-individualism'.

"To fail to ensure that this [Christian influence on] history is taught in our educational institutions is to fail to nurture and sustain the foundations of our culture and identity and to sustain our democracy."

.....

This expresses itself trivially in the social media by unpleasant people who feel it is their right to say whatever they like and express however they feel without concern for others' feelings.

At the most serious and destructive end of the spectrum it reveals itself in the desertion of family and community. One writer expressed it:

"This kind of freedom is really just abandonment. You might start by throwing off religion, then your parents, your town, your people and way of life, and when later on, you leave your partner and your child too, it seems like a natural progression."

I argued earlier that freedom requires virtue or it descends into selfish individualism or moral license. But virtue cannot stand alone in its task of guiding freedom. Virtue requires faith if it is to be strong enough to resist our selfishness. It requires a foundation in a transcendent moral source beyond ourselves.

Until recent times the Western idea of freedom was greatly influenced by Christianity. In Christian thought freedom is about becoming free from the negative and selfish aspects of my nature so I might become what

I was created for – to love and serve God and others. The model was the self-giving of Jesus in the sacrificial act of servant-hood; *"I have not come to be served but to serve and to give myself as a ransom for many."*

This idea also drove Christians to work for the social and political freedom of oppressed people so that they also could become and

be what God had made them to be. This is why Christians have so often been at the forefront of human rights movements.

But once this core idea is lost freedom's end becomes fixed on the self, on the individual, on my rights, my choice and my freedom from any restrictions on those choices, including any transcendent or objective values, there is now no limits to my freedom.

So duty to others, to the community, to family, to service, to kindness and respect for others falls away. People are then trapped in a destructive narcissism, imprisoned in the service of the self. As the NT expresses it:

"They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption; for people are slaves to whatever masters them."

Also the positive side of Enlightenment liberal thinking about human rights and freedoms is corrupted into a culture of entitlement, ugly selfishness and hyper individualism.

These attitudes weaken democracy at a fundamental level. The positive

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"power of the people" rests on a virtuous vision and that rests on faith. I believe this can only be renewed in Western culture by a return to its Christian roots.

religious extremism

The third threat comes from religious extremism:

National and cultural identity and forms of government have historically been inextricably bound up with religion. Europe, North America and Australia have been shaped by Protestant and Catholic Christianity. After the collapse of the Christian Byzantine Empire the countries of the Middle East were reshaped by Islam. India has been shaped by Hinduism and Buddhism, and so on.

For centuries these cultures were separated by distance, geography and limited communications but we now live in a very different world. Our world has shrunk through globalisation, large people movements and modern communications. As a result the old cultural boundaries have become porous or weakened and in some cases broken down altogether. Very different cultures, religions and world views now find themselves living together. Almost all the great cities of the world are now multicultural. One of the results of this is a growing sense of confusion and anxiety about our identity. Assumptions about values, beliefs, rights and forms of governance are challenged.

Xenophobia, (the fear of difference), and *racism*, (the sense of racial superiority) have been with us ever since the Fall and the Tower of Babel. But these human weaknesses are exaggerated by the current changes we are experiencing.

One of the most dangerous developments of our current situation is the growth of religious extremism and ultra-Nationalism. Some examples:



- Old Europeans feel threatened by large numbers of Islamic immigrants to their countries. Right wing nationalism joins up with religious extremism and feeds off this anxiety and fear. Add to this economic difficulties and high unemployment and you have a volatile social cocktail.
- In the same way traditional and conservative Islamic countries feel threatened by modernity, by what they perceive to be the West's permissive and morally corrupt life style, and by the West's economic and military power. Fundamentalist and radical Islam grows rapidly in this soil.
- The rapid growth of Hindu nationalism in India represented by the BJP party threatens to distort democratic politics and religious tolerance in India. There are now regular serious attacks on religious minorities in parts of India.

There is a long and depressing history of Nationalism in its extreme form seducing religion to its cause. This is a great danger to modern liberal democracy. In the tragic story of ethnic cleansing in the recent conflict in The Balkans in the 1990's, the ambitions of Serbian nationalism was supported by elements of The Serbian Orthodox Church. This conflict is built on

historical tensions between Islam and Christianity going back to the Islamic invasions of the 7th century. The emergence of fascism in Europe in the 1930's that led to the rise of the extreme nationalism of Hitler and the Nazis, Franco's Spain and Mussolini's Italy was supported by parts of the Christian Church. In Hitler's case he managed to recruit the official German Lutheran Church to bless what was really his Pagan cause. Only the courageous opposition of the minority Confessing Church formed by Martin Niemöller and Dietrich Bonhoeffer stood against Hitler.

Many wars have been fought under the false flag of religion.

A tragic example is The Thirty Years War that devastated Europe from 1618-1648. It is often explained as a Protestant versus Catholic conflict but in fact the underlying force was the emergence in Europe of the ambitions for independence and power of the sovereign Nation State. Catholic France with its messianic pretensions actually made alliances with Protestant armies to defeat and ruin Austria and defeat Spain, both Catholic countries. The Treaty of Westphalia that ended the conflict in 1648 created the idea of independent national sovereignty and what is now the basis of modern Europe. Some historians believe that it also paved the way for the national ambitions and power conflicts of the 19th and 20th centuries, it certainly didn't solve them. Whatever the weaknesses of the current EU it is at least a genuine attempt to create a unity that will diminish these old temptations to national pride and megalomania.

Underlying extreme nationalism is the ancient pagan and tribal marriage of "blood and soil" – the linking of race and land in a kind of exclusive covenant of difference and superiority. Christianity challenged this with its doctrine of all nations and tribes being one in Christ. The great prophetic visions of the Bible speak of a day when every tribe and nation would be united and living in

peace, where, in the words of Isaiah *“they will beat their swords into ploughshares”*. If you visit the United Nations headquarters in New York and go to the courtyard garden you will find a powerful bronze sculpture of a man beating a sword into a ploughshare and on it are inscribed Isaiah’s words (*pictured right*). The Biblical dream is of the *Tower of Babel’s* confusion being transformed into unity and peace on the *Mountain of the Lord*.

The Thirty Years War broke the influence of that unfulfilled Christian dream in Europe, although it did not entirely snuff it out. In a sense the EU and the UN for all their weaknesses are reflections of that dream.

We cannot turn the clock back on globalisation and multiculturalism. To support liberal democracy and to make it work in this context we need to do the following five things:

- We need the commitment and cooperation of faith communities who support liberal democratic values and who understand that it is not necessary to have a state sponsored religion or church to preserve these values. And of course we need religious freedom. (eg: Muslim intellectuals who support a ‘middle way’ – a pluralism that rejects both ‘assertive secularism’ and ‘radical Islam’ – and accept the idea of a ‘secular Muslim democracy’ or what is sometimes called ‘procedural democracy’ are to be encouraged. Although it should be understood that these ideas are not accepted among traditional Muslims. See the recent book by Sydney University academic Lily Z Rahim *Muslim Secular Democracy – Voices from within*, published by Palgrave Macmillan 2013.)
- We need a consensus and acknowledgement from the general community about the importance of religious faith in the sustaining of democratic values

and the virtues that make them work. Aggressive secularists need to understand and accept that the overwhelming majority of people in the world have strong religious attachments and commitments and have a rightful place in the public square. Globally secularists are in fact the minority.



- In my personal experience of working with refugees it has become very clear that democratic governments need to take far more seriously and intentionally the process of integration and the education

“We need the commitment and cooperation of faith communities who support liberal democratic values.”

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of new settlers. People from very different cultures and value systems who have almost no experience of democratic values and governance need special assistance. Education in democratic values and the history of their development should also be a compulsory part of the general school curriculum.

- We also need to begin an open public conversation about our current problems in this area. When new settlers fail to adapt to or embrace democratic values and become isolated cultural islands, or their young people are marginalised by poor education, discrimination and unemployment serious social problems emerge. For example: If the new settlers come from a pre-modern culture, as they engage with modernity in the new culture the gap between young people and their parents’ traditional values grows to a chasm and the parents lose control. The young person’s identity becomes confused; they then become vulnerable to the extreme religious voices as well as petty crime, drugs and street violence. The internet provides all the radical resources they need to forge a new identity that seems empowering. This can also be exacerbated by the xenophobia, fear and right wing extremism they may find in the host culture.

In March this year the UK scholar and member of the UN’s special committee on intercultural engagement Dr Aftab Malik spent a month in Sydney’s Lakemba community which has the highest concentration of Islamic people in Australia. He reported that the identity crisis for young Muslims in Australia is a *“growing disease”*. He urged us to begin a public discussion of these issues.

He said: *“Unfortunately for British Muslims it took a terrorist attack for us to have that discussion... You need to pre-empt this. Don’t wait till something tragic happens.”*

- We need to understand that multiculturalism is an important part of modern democracy but that its definition and limits have sometimes been subject to naïve views and overly influenced by the

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philosophy of 'cultural relativism'. A view that ignores the reality that every culture has some features that are destructive and morally wrong. Our naiveté in Australia is partly due to the success we have had with our post World War Two immigration and the cultural enrichment it has brought. But we forget that the majority of those immigrants were from Europe, including a large group of Jewish refugees; all had a similar Judeo/Christian world view and culture to Australia. The second wave after the Vietnam War was also a success as the Vietnamese immigrants were fleeing communism and enthusiastically embraced our democratic values.

As Christianity continues to make, the sometimes painful journey from the pre-modern to the modern world, it continues to negotiate and adapt its relationship with the state. From its beginning as a persecuted minority, to controlling Europe's Holy Roman Empire, to a separation of Church and state in some western nations, to conflict with totalitarian states like the former Soviet Union, to embracing representative democracy today, the relationship continues to change. Christianity has at times, in disobedience to the clear teaching of Jesus and the New Testament, descended into the use of force to forward its mission and discipline its members. It has at times persecuted minorities. It has at times confused the Kingdom of God with the Church or the Kingdoms of this world. It has had to adapt to scientific and Biblical criticism, to secularism, to philosophical materialism and now to consumerism and aggressive atheism. Therefore Christians, as a result of their sins, mistakes and successes, have much to bring to the conversation that other religions and cultures need to have with the Enlightenment, modernity and liberal democratic values. Indeed there are some sections of the Christian community who are still to make that journey! Extreme Christian fundamentalism is alive and well

in many places and sadly does not cope well with the challenges we are facing. They are unfortunately well represented in many far right causes. Some sections of the Christian community are still hoping for a return of Christendom.

Of course for us all it is a continuing journey as our society continues to change. Maintaining an intelligent and relevant orthodoxy and holding on to the essential core beliefs and values of the Christian faith in a rapidly changing culture is a challenge but we must not shrink from it otherwise we concede the ground to secularism, extremism or authoritarianism.

Conclusion

Christianity has many unique and rich things to bring to the process of sustaining democracy:

(a) As I have mentioned, our past and present experience in responding to the challenges of The Enlightenment and modernity. This should equip us in our conversations with some other faiths who have yet to constructively respond to these challenges.

(b) Our long history of involvement in the struggle for freedom and human rights.

(c) Our theological commitment to the following core ideas that are a great underpinning for democracy:

– The primacy of love. *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart... and your neighbour as yourself”, “Love your enemies”, “Whoever loves God has fulfilled the law.” “God is love. Those who live in love live in God and God in them.”*

– The key doctrines of grace and forgiveness commit us to reconciliation in all our relationships.

– The infinite value of every person because they are made in God's image, and because God in Christ took on human flesh. This value propels us to champion human rights and protect the sacredness of every individual.

– The community of equality. In Christ *“there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you all are one in Christ Jesus.”*

– An international community that embraces all races – we are saved by grace not race. We have no sacred language, everyone prays in their own heart language and we are committed to the provision of the Bible in every person's language.

– Servant hood and following the example of Jesus is our goal.

– The three great Christian virtues of *‘faith, hope and love.’*

These ideas and commitments fit us most aptly to be in the vanguard of actions to forward and sustain democracy's cause.

All of us need to ask ourselves the following questions:

- Is my current engagement with the democratic process sufficient to claim my rights as a citizen?
- How can I be more engaged at a level appropriate to my abilities and stage of life?
- As a Christian how can I apply the core Christian values listed above to the various activities and involvements of my daily life, especially where I might be involved in decisions that affect professional or business standards, public policy and social structures?
- Given that the foundation of my life is my relationship with God in Christ how can I bring prayer to bear on this task? ●



how to influence your politician

by Di Jeffs

Di is the TEAR QLD Assistant State Coordinator.

In the first few minutes, the politician will be forming an opinion about you. They get visits from people for the strangest reasons all the time – a little bit of preparation will enable you to make a good impression of a sane, rational, genuine person who has considered the issues and is sincere about wanting to bring about change.

Politicians need to be a jack-of-all trades – they can't know everything in depth.

If you don't succeed the first time and if you can leave having made a friend not an enemy – then the door will still be open for another opportunity.

Politicians are like any other group – the good, the bad and the ugly – in all parties! It is important to

remember that there are different qualities of politicians in every party. You may find it productive to visit a neighbouring politician – people in my Group live across two or three electorates so it's natural to visit several politicians!

Try not to bring politics into it! It doesn't matter what party they are or who you vote for.

Without a relationship already formed – precious time can be lost while the politician assures himself/herself that you aren't some barmy person with crackpot religious ideas coming to waste his time.

Before the visit

Try to build a relationship with your politician – but how do you build a relationship?

- Politicians want to hear from us when we think they are doing good things as well, not just when we disagree. Make sure that you write and thank them when you are pleased with an action they have taken!

- Some Federal politicians send out letters/questionnaires/surveys asking their Constituents to mark their priorities of importance for issues. Don't just file it in the bin! Use it to make a connection! If you don't agree with his list of priorities – write your own list and send that to him/her.
- Add a compliment/comment that might be as simple as "Glad that you are representing us" – this may provoke a reply and he/she will remember you and the politician may even offer to help you on an issue you have raised.

Making the Appointment

Make an appointment by phone, email or write politely and well in advance. July is known as "Pollies month" because Federal Pollies are generally back in their electorate and more available than normal as parliament is not sitting in Canberra. You can check the website www.aph.gov.au to find out when parliament is sitting so you can plan your visit. This

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also will provide you with details like names, electorates, street addresses, email addresses, portfolios and committees etc.

Save time by providing some information beforehand – it saves precious time. Allows them to do a little research and they can have answers ready for you. They like to look good – giving them information and letting them appear to know what they are talking about makes them feel good – an important part of relationships.

Advise the number coming to the appointment, what groups they represent.

Advise the agenda for the meeting – what do you want to chat about.

Make an appointment time early in morning when everyone is fresh.

Know the politician – know his/her name, party, electorate, what level of government, any committees they are on or positions they hold (www.aph.gov.au). It is surprising how many people don't! This indicates something about you to the politician – how thorough or slack you are; it gives them a first indication about whether you know what you are talking about, what depth of research you have done. Can they trust the figures you are quoting!

Planning the visit

Decide exactly what the meeting is for? What do you hope to achieve? Plan!

You might have a **leader** who does the introductions and co-ordinates, explains what each person will talk about or alternatively have one spokesperson and a notetaker. Plan an outline of a visit and give it a tentative timeframe. Be aware that the politician make want to talk a lot and may even sidetrack you from the issue you want to speak about.

Deal with **one issue at a time** and KNOW the issue thoroughly – know

the facts and some figures. Don't just talk about a general subject like Make Poverty History or just poverty. Be selective and narrow the subject right down. Focus on one area like water or debt cancellation (it also saves on learning a lot of general facts that you may or may not have an opportunity to use).

“[Learn] his/her name, party, electorate, what level of government, any committees they are on or positions they hold.”
.....

Organise your delegation – usually three people is ideal and spreads the burden of speaking. If you can organise representatives from other groups also concerned about your issue, it will show wider support than just one person or group. Put some thought into who should be part of the delegation – make sure at least one person is from the politician's electorate. Fewer rather than more people.

Everyone must **speak with the same voice**. Even a small difference of opinion means that the politician can be put in the position of having to make someone a winner and someone a loser. Differences should have been ironed out in your group before you got to the appointment. It can leave the politician with a feeling that you don't know what you are talking about, that there is no real consensus about the issue even in your group. Remember “united we stand divided we fall” or in this case fail to get the politician to take us seriously.

Organise an Information Sheet – this provides a written record, a briefing on the issue, perhaps counter-arguments, and a list of what you want the politician to do. Keep it as short and polite as possible and include your contact details and leave

it with the politician. Ensure it has your names and contact details.

Rehearse – make sure you can remember the outline of the talk, recall the facts and learn the counter-arguments.

Pray!

During the Meeting

What is the meeting for? Be definite – why are you there? It's okay to say you just need advice, that you need financial assistance for a project, or need to know what direction to take or just who you should go to!

Deal with one issue at a time and KNOW the issue thoroughly – know the facts and figures. Provide some feedback of positive results eg. MDGs.

THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT:

Be clear about your objectives. Be clear about them in your mind, ensure the politician is clear in his/her's mind also about them. **Have a specific action in mind.** Otherwise you are wasting your time and his/her. In order to achieve a practical outcome, the politician needs to know how he/she can help, in order to do what he/she can to help you.

- Set a date by which something specific must happen.
- Know what you want to achieve.
- Get to the point quickly, be succinct, cut to the chase – don't leave the politician wondering where this is going but help him/her to be thinking in the right direction – then he/she will have time to consider and come up with some way to help/advise you.
- Give him/her questions to be answered.
- What is the outcome you want from this meeting – is it another meeting? Talk to a minister(s) on your behalf or forward to them a letter outlining your concerns.
- Lobby parliamentary or party colleagues; raise the issue at party meetings.
- Ask a question in parliament, with or without notice, to obtain

- information about, or draw attention to, your issue.
- Give a speech in parliament about your issue – sure it's nice to have your name or organisation mentioned but what's the point if it doesn't achieve the outcome you desire. NB be aware that a speech in parliament achieves nothing 99% of the time but it might make you feel you've achieved something when in reality you haven't.
 - Promote a motion for debate in parliament to support your issue.
 - Get the issue referred to a Parliamentary Committee.
 - Ask the politician to speak at a public meeting, or a meeting of your group.
 - Make a public statement, perhaps directed to the media.
 - Put an update on the issues in their next electorate newsletter.
 - Don't be afraid to ask what else the politician might be able to do for you.

Be punctual, polite and patient.

Appointments are usually 30 minutes – if you are late then you may miss the opportunity to talk about some of your issues.

Be Confident – politicians need to be jack-of-all-trades. They have to know a bit about a lot but do not have the time to specialise in everything. Sometimes, you will know more about your issue than they will.

Be Honest – if you don't know the answer to a question admit it. Offer to get back to them with the information.

Listen to find out their views and you may gain useful information.

Be nice – take the opportunity to compliment them on their achievements. Ask them how their work is going. Resist just pushing your own concerns.

Don't get sidetracked – sidetracking can come from within the delegation or from the politician. Remember your outline, objectives and politely but firmly bring things back on track. If the

politician starts to sidetrack – get back to your agenda. One politician had a photo of Elvis on his wall and would draw the delegation's attention to it and then waste a considerable amount of the appointment time discussing his hero Elvis!

Don't be emotional – simply stick to the facts and avoid being overly emotional or irrational.

Don't be overly religious – be sensitive to their beliefs/non-beliefs, the chances are that you don't know their belief system – it is okay to be an advocate but NOT a zealot – you can easily move them out of their comfort zone – when that happens they stop listening.

Ask for definite outcomes – tell them you will write to confirm what has been agreed to.

Push the community line rather than the church. It should be your concern that motivates. The church should not be the overriding factor. Zealots spell "DANGER" to a politician

Thank them for the opportunity to meet them and air your concerns – regardless of the outcome.

After you go home – **send a thank you note or email!**

Remember: It is better to make a friend of a politician no matter what party than an enemy – it will leave the door open for opportunities to talk further if your first meeting

A Federal Politician's GOLDen ru LeS are:

1. If you can't help me – tell me! Tell the politician it's alright to tell you if he/she can't help you – don't push them into a corner where they have to lie to you.
2. If you don't ask then you won't receive! So ask!
3. Put yourself in the best position to illicit the best outcome. Use common sense as above in how you approach your politician. Think about how you would want to be treated and spoken to.

hasn't fulfilled expectations/objectives.

After the visit

Debrief – talk it over with your delegation and discuss what worked and what didn't and how you could do it better next time.

Thank God for the Opportunity

– ask that your words be clearly remembered by the MP and thank God for the way your prayers were answered.

Follow Up – quickly organise and send any information you promised to the politician. Write and thank them for the opportunity to meet with them and remind them of any commitments they made to you. Make another appointment if necessary.

Communicate with others about the visit. ●

Other useful hints

- Be careful what issues you address – make sure it is a political matter.
- Make sure you are informed BEFORE you make a statement (they are often attacked by people who are uninformed or ill-informed).
- Be consistent in your approach.
- Approach the politician before going to the media.
- Approach in humility ("Is this what you are saying?" "Do I have all the facts?" etc).
- Break the ice by saying you aren't there to lobby but to listen to them and ask how you might have input on issues that we feel are important.
- Tell them if you intend to pray for them.

Authentic Christians in a secular pluralistic society

by Paul Mercer

Paul is a GP at Manly, Brisbane and a co-editor of *Luke's Journal*.

Hello friends. Alan and I are both presenting at this workshop because we have been challenged, stirred up and excited by the reflective wisdom of Catholic academic, Charles Taylor. I have only 'read' Taylor through the eyes of protestant scholar Jamie Smith. In this presentation I want to point us toward pastoral and spiritual outcomes from this analysis.

Taylor defines our "secular age" as "this pluralised, pressurised moment in which we find ourselves, where believers are beset by doubt and doubters, every once in a while, find themselves tempted by belief." I want to take us into this "pressurised moment" and discern ways forward. I have four subjects for conversation.

A) Stressors for Christian Professionals at work in a secular 3 culture

The music group *Arcade Fire* have written a song about that famous chess game between Deep Blue (a computer) and Russian Chess Champion, Kasparov. In our scientific secular world they call out, "standing under night sky; Tomorrow means nothing" but the song hesitates – "Hey, put the cell phone down for a while, In the night there is something wild. Can you hear it breathing? And, Hey, put the laptop down for a while. In the night sky there is something wild. I feel it, its leaving me." (*Arcade Fire*)

Writer, Ephraim Radner comments, "To lose God is to deny the loss." So my first observation is that today we practice medicine/dentistry in a God-free zone. What motivates universities and health care no longer has any room for God. The old dictum "we treat and God heals" has been erased and consigned to the quirkiness of history. Modern health care is enveloped by the sadness of this loss.

Taylor has a capacity for assisting our understanding with new concepts. He offers "unthought" as presuppositions (usually unspoken) that undergird secularity or indeed any world view. In the world of today the "unthought" of secularity is that religion *must* decline. Taylor identifies four components of secular "unthought."

- Religion must decline because it is false and science demonstrates this.
- Because religion is increasingly irrelevant in an immanent world.
- Religion is based on authority but now we relocate power in "autonomy".
- Some combination of one-three.

While this is a reductionistic account of religion and faith, the telling consequence is the loss of any transformational perspective in life for secularists and indeed our world.

My take on this, is that we now experience a certain oppressiveness in clinical practice. Hope is restricted to the "evidence" of science. Health improvements are predictable on the basis of positive data. The

certainty of evidenced based health care is reassuring, however we as practitioners potentially devolve to become technocrats who have mastered the maths. Heart patients should be humoured or dismissed. We practice with no room outside the square. We practice with a mechanistic health system approach. We practice at the time of the triumph of technique. We have lost the open imagination of healing.

With the loss of a transformational perspective (in our secular 3 pluralised world), we encounter the privileging of autonomy in its place. In one sense this is a corrective for health professionals who 'play God.' But now, Dr Google with a Facebook makeover sustains the myth of personal choice. Such autonomy has multiple spin offs to challenge the wisdom of Hippocratic service and patient centred care.

- Autonomy has allowed us to shift from the spiritual distress of sin to the therapeutic. Sin and its discontents are a disease to be counselled or reskilled from.
- Autonomy brings a suite of rights to the health encounter. These rights intensify the obligations of the professional. Such stressors are only calmed by increased financial rewards.
- Autonomy is inherently linked to what "I love", to "my idolatry." It is also a disintegrating force. Consequently it predisposes people to dissatisfaction and boredom. Drug misuse and

mental health concerns often replace the humanistic vision of autonomous flourishing.

- Autonomy also disqualifies grace, and so risk management replaces relationships. Doctor/Patient relationships are altered to the cost of the value of a doctor as a therapeutic agent. On the other side, patients are expected to care for themselves even if sick and overwhelmed by suffering. I have a patient who dialled 000 from a premier Brisbane hospital.

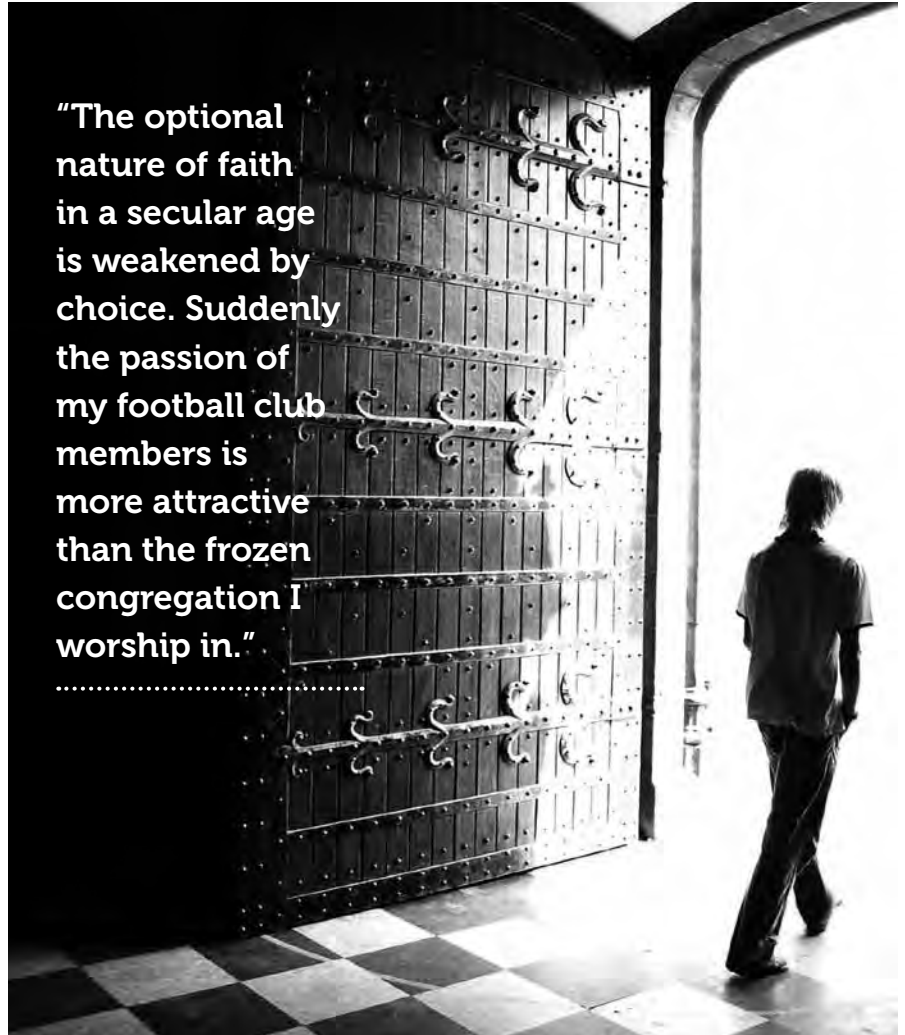
B) Secular 3 – some challenges for Christian spirituality

Charles Taylor is showing us that we have moved from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed unproblematic, to one in which faith is understood to be one option among others and frequently not the easiest to embrace. In this context, secular humanism is the achievement of our time. It has succeeded in displacing religion from broad public acceptance and truth to individual choice.

What does this mean for our faith journey?

- Faith now shares the stage with doubt. The optional nature of faith in a secular age is weakened by choice. Suddenly the passion of my football club members is more attractive than the frozen congregation I worship in. The comprehensive arguments toward evolution seem to easily carry the day against my Sunday School theology of creation. The global power of money in the hands of corporate capitalists seems to make the contentment of enough with God, a whimper. And then power of the scientific method to answer the question, “Why is it so?” with a flourish, deflates my hesitant “God says so” answers. Philosophers gloat over the question of theodicy when war, disaster and brutality deliver unrestrained human misery. Faith shares the stage with doubt.
- Choice forces Christian professionals into a dualistic

“The optional nature of faith in a secular age is weakened by choice. Suddenly the passion of my football club members is more attractive than the frozen congregation I worship in.”



posture. This only adds to doubt. During the week we live in the public square of immanent evidence based care we work hard, ask no questions while on the weekend we struggle to sleek back to the old comfort of Church and Faith. There seems to be an unbridgeable gap between the real demands of work and the pressurised claims of faith.

- Choice the only modern virtue further disables us through the pull of multiple secular liturgies. James Smith develops this idea in another book *Desiring the Kingdom*. Smith's starting point is simple, 'What we love is what motivates us,' Human beings, made in the image of God, are designed to love and worship God. This core pre cognitive state of humanity has been distorted and corrupted by sin. Nevertheless Smith argues, “our loves and desires are aimed and directed by habits that dispose us to be the kind of people aimed at certain visions of the good life, particularly visions of the Kingdom.”

In the secular world, opinion leaders, trend setters, advertisers and so on know this is true. Almost seamlessly they tap into our loves so that we go back again and again to the consuming transcendence of a shopping mall. Indeed we might spend an hour at church then a few hours shopping because our love is also fed by competing liturgies. I shop, therefore I am. But the shopping centre experience is an “intensification of a wider web of practices and rituals associated with consumer capitalism.”

If we are the only Bible people ever see, they will see through us as we participate so willingly in such secular worship experiences. The rise of nationalism which allows the free flow of money in one hand but stops the boats of people in the other is another strong worship icon today.

Academia, learning is no longer a pure pursuit of love. It has also been influenced by the utilitarian desires

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of the economy and the State, toward a materialist outcome focus.

No longer do we enter Medicine or Dentistry to become healers. We learn to celebrate the prestige of outcomes and the materialist benefits of bloated super funds. In many ways secular liturgies strip us of the “love (of God) generated choices.”

Even when we hold our ground when practicing the presence of God as the true source of our life, choice continues to seduce us. The supernova of Christian worship options in this secular age weakens our resolve for community; to the loyalty of the fellowship of the Spirit. As we move from Church to Church the wind blows away the chorus, “They know we are Christians by our love, by our love.” It seems easier to be a movie goer than a church goer today. It seems easier to air condition my church than love my neighbour.

C) Secular 3 – Where is Jesus today?

So I want to ask a serious question. “Where is Jesus today?” It is a question that has echoed down from Dietrich Bonhoeffer as he considered the threat of Hitler to the Church. Where is Jesus in our secular age?

In our pluralised world, Jesus is a ‘choice’. Jesus is on the “dashboard”, because Christianity lingers after Christendom. Taylor suggests Jesus and the Church provide a stable source of rituals for the life cycle. Christening after birth, weddings in a church, funerals and so on. Undoubtedly in our secular 3 age, there will be pressures to remove Jesus from the rituals or privilege other rituals to fill the void. Think of how “Jesus” was used in the recent ANZAC day 100 year celebration. The revelations of child abuse in religious institutions in past decades has precipitated a dramatic fall in church weddings around Australia. Jesus is a choice to be discarded when the going gets tough.

Theologians have noted that Jesus is the one who is most authentically human. He is the new Adam who has faced life’s temptations and endured the penalty that sin attaches to human experience. So today, we may be surprised to encounter Jesus in the lives of those seeking human perfection. Body beautiful, body powerful, body enhanced. Perhaps parents seeking to birth and raise perfect children will be surprised to encounter Jesus. We may expect to flourish with Botox, but God will not be silenced to a one dimensional life perspective. The resurrection life, the gracious transformation of Christ formed in us is the only enduring perfection in this world. Jesus is the firstborn who will lead many sons and daughters to glory.

The zealous commitment to the scientific method; to the “Evidence”, is a weakness that the secular world currently ignores. The success of science driven technique and technology ensures this. However, Science itself is already demonstrating the benefits of spirituality for a flourishing life. Since 2000, around four hundred peer reviewed scientific articles have been published annually. They are overwhelmingly positive about the benefits of the spiritual life. Science is demonstrating the reality of brain changes that represent the transformed life of faith formation. (This information and research is opening a new frontier of neurotheology). In God’s economy, amazing scientists such as Francis Collins – the lead investigator in the human genome project – are a witness to the transforming power of Christ in life. Jesus at work in the world of Science will lead many an atheist home to our father, God.

Jesus entered our world as a despised Galilean who lived in Nazareth, a town not recorded on any known maps at that time. It is not surprising the Gospel has always flourished among the poor, the weak, the marginalised in any society. Hitler despised what he saw as the

inherent weakness of Christianity in this regard. Hitler wanted to change the world through political power and military force. The transforming power of Christ, is the power of the Cross. It is a cruciform presence in our autonomous self-made world. In opposition to our permanent Facebook profile, Jesus takes the penalty of sin, our sin on himself and we are set free. In practical terms, can I suggest we may encounter Jesus in the lives of Medicare only patients; among those we recognise as “others” – a street person, a refugee, a drug addict and so on. Displaced, indigenous people all over the world will discover a respectful transformation in meeting Jesus in their despair. I could go on and reflect about the ‘almost’ experience of transcendence in our immanent world. You will recognise other ‘Jesus’ sightings in our immanent framed humanity. Sightings which re-establish transcendence as a deep longing of our heart.

So in our secular 3 world, Jesus wants to pioneer faith that survives and thrives.

D) Faith that survives and thrives

Our task today is not to provide all the answers but to stimulate reflection and open up God’s good future in our secular 3 world. It is a world that pays lip service to pluralism but is in fact a juggernaut of secularism which rolls on.

A secular 3 vision for life is essentially materialistic. Under the supervision of corporate capitalism, we can secure the ‘good life’ through the scientific method. What we encounter is the shopping centre world, the media world, (the virtual world of IT and so on). These are secular visions of the Kingdom. As health professionals we can recognise an unhappy restlessness in our patients who are ‘in the moment’ of such a life. Taylor speaks of ‘a desire to gather the scattered moments of meaning into some kind of whole.’ He also observes

that “the swelling of immanence (through material abundance) seems unable to make up for the pressure we still feel – from transcendence to enchantment.”

‘To bring’ a sense of the whole to this presentation today I want to initiate four final conversations toward faith that survives and thrives in our secular 3 world.

If we are to regain a transcendent/transformist way of life in our immanent world we need to recognise our own “unthought.” Do we hold a ‘closed’ or ‘open’ take toward the Kingdom of God? Are we so immersed in the excarnated versions of life in our secular age we too have submitted to the excarnated perspective? We settle for talking head biblicalism. We sleep secure with orthodox belief. We exercise the choice of following the presence of the Spirit only to neglect the transforming call to live out the fruit of the Spirit; to know the transforming power of Christ formed in us; and to embrace the resurrection power we say we believe in. Taylor says we can live in an immanent frame by a kind of vibe that trusts science ahead of revelation. This closed ‘take’ on life is regularly replicated in practice by Christian professionals. We live dualistic lives, guaranteeing a spiritual space on Sunday and then living the immanent secular life the remainder of the week. (Taylor describes this as pre-shrunk religion).

As we recognise that our love for God is blunted and limp, the challenge is to repent, to surrender to the genuine possibilities of grace. Grace which continues to demonstrate God’s love for the world in any age.

Our repentance is not a nostalgic call back to the age of unchallenged faith. In our immanent world of “unchallenged common-sense”, our renewal is to return to the daily call of Jesus to “follow me”. To be a Christian is by grace, to live ‘a way of life’ in Christ. The habits and commitment

of such a life, prayer, encountering scripture, fellowship in the spirit and so on become part of the histories of transformation in our lives. Now patient-centeredness is an expression of God-centeredness in our lives. Our repentance is not a return to intensify the knowledge of Christian ideas. Our repentance is a reorientation to the grace through faith which not only saves but transforms us in to the likeness of Christ. The flourishing of human life through the kingdom of God is the consummation of faith, hope and love in our lives. Unlike the one dimensional world of immanence, batted down in the mind this is the thick, three dimensional world of amazing grace and the loving heart of God.

Taylor’s interest in desire, what he calls ‘social imaginaries’ is another platform to encounter hope. We have already discussed the challenges of secular social imaginaries; Jamie Smith calls these social liturgies, such as the shopping centre experience, the culture of nationalism, the virtual worlds of film etc, (popular media and IT platforms). Smith observes that “liturgies- whether “sacred” or “secular” – shape and constitute our identities by forming our most fundamental desires and our most basic attunement to the world.”

In a nutshell, there is a calling today to see past all the spin of secular liturgies and recognise that the love of God is open and gentle, stimulating the formation of recreation. By grace, God reorients our desire. So now in love we seek to imitate Christ. In love we genuinely seek the fruit of the Spirit to share the peace. In love we are one in Christ; slave/free, male/female, with whoever in the pressurised potpourri of pluralised secular life. In love we move in our world as agents of reconciliation, blessed peacemakers. Taylor would recommend a positive Christian presence in the public space. He would advise:

- conversations/debate to level the playing field; where both exclusive

humanists and Christian dilemmas are acknowledged i.e. the problem of evil/disaster or sources of morality. Should morality be so codified and rules based etc?

- Christians can demonstrate the inadequacy (in a generous way) of purely immanent accounts of reality and vice versa.
- Christians need to acknowledge that all positions hold an element of “take”, and that we can show the more valid/nuanced place of a “Christian take.”
- Repentance – a transformed way of life – love fuelled desire in Christ, will re-establish our awareness for what Eugene Petersen calls the “unforced rhythms of Grace” and what Taylor describes as “transcendence”. I appeal to Smith in my last encouragement here. He says “our love is aimed from the fulcrum of our desire – the habits that constitute our character, or core identity. And “the way our love or desire gets aimed in specific directions is through practices that shape, mould and direct our love.” Our love as doctors and dentists whose lives are claimed by Christ are shaped by prayer, worship, scripture and so on. Can I emphasise here the habit of the Catholic fellowship of the cruciform life.

Today, more than ever, our life needs to be formed together. In an age of ex-carnate autonomy we can be the counter cultural people of God by choosing community. The embrace of God, the Father, Son and Spirit, is a gathering embrace. We gather in the power of the Spirit to worship the Lamb who was slain. In such a gathering our love is directed to our plural pressurised world. With all creation, it is a world breathless in expectation. When God’s kingdom comes, don’t you want to be there?! Jesus tells us the Spirit blows where it wills. Can you still feel this wind in the secular world of immanence? ●

Drivers and Sustainers

by Lachlan Dunjey

Significant in my life have been my brother who was the first in the family to become a Christian, my parents, who also became Christians, and my Sunday School teachers. I owe them so much. When my brother suggested to me that I do medicine, previously not even considered a possibility, I jumped at the prospect of being a Christian doctor/healer. Despite a seven year age gap, we went through medicine together. Many of you will know Malcolm's story *To the City of the Great King* (Ark House).

I worked hard in the early years to pay off debt and was very conscious of God's blessing in using the practice for His glory, particularly in the counselling area and in my talks on depression throughout WA.

The role of *healer* became stronger and I was influenced by Michael Balint, Henri Nouwen, and Paul Tournier.

The principle of guidance that has worked for me/us has always been a willingness to follow where God leads. And I am reminded of Lucy following Aslan when the others could not see him but as they followed in obedience Aslan gradually became more visible (*Prince Caspian* by CS Lewis).

I have been "accused" of not being "ambitious" when various opportunities have arisen to be other than "just a GP" but as there has been no conviction for any of these I have said "no". This is in sharp contrast to

when I have been exercised in my mind to explore deeper truths and then the opportunity presenting itself for using this particular learning. Preparation followed by call.

A good example of this was when I was analysing my own counselling strategies, coming to conclusions that were good for me and wrote a paper for myself on counselling in a Christian context. Within weeks I was asked to be part of a steering committee to set up a Baptist Counselling Service in WA to which I agreed and for the next fifteen years I was the chair or acting director of what became Pathways Counselling.

No dilemmas here – it was just willingness to be open to a "call" when the context was right. "Circumstantial guidance"? Yes, I guess so, but knowing it was right at a deeper level.

This was confirmed again when, after presenting a paper at Baptist Assembly on the proposed

"I can see that the role of healer/advocate/village GP seamlessly extended from "comforting the disturbed" to "disturbing the comfortable" to negotiator and eventually to confrontation."

.....

counselling service, I became convinced of a need for more involvement in Baptist activities. A short while later – just weeks – one of our close career missionary friends returned to Australia on leave and sitting behind me in church tapped me on the shoulder and said "Lachlan, what are you doing for the rest of your life?" I thought, with friends like that, who needs

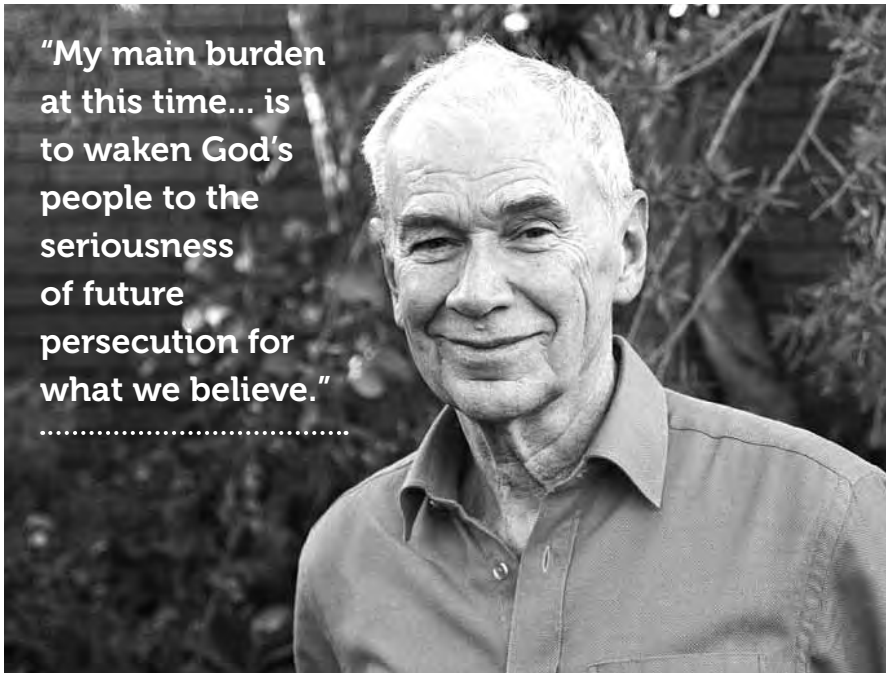
enemies? I laughed and said I was content doing what I was doing until God showed me otherwise. But it forced me to examine, once again, how I believed God had guided me and came to the same conclusion as before, that God would make it plain when I was to change tack.

Within a week or two – once again, preparation before the call – I received an invitation to be the next President of Baptist Union in WA. I showed it to patient and loving Lizzie who laughed with me knowing without any shadow of hesitation that it was right to walk through this next open door.

Part of that role, as the first medical doctor to hold that position, was to be *healer* (once again) in restoring unity in Baptist churches in WA after a divisive doctrinal issue. It also threw me into ethical and moral issues of the time and that kick-started welding together church leaders in WA for combined statements on such matters.

I became aware of the need for a wider Christian "medical" voice and remember writing in 1995 to CMDFA asking for pronouncements on certain issues only to be distressed by the impossibility of welding together such a voice due to widely disparate views within CMDFA.

I was distressed again in 2002 at the same impossibility on the issue



“My main burden at this time... is to waken God’s people to the seriousness of future persecution for what we believe.”

Dr Lachlan Dunjay.

Photo: Marco Ceccarelli, Archdiocese of Perth.

of destructive embryo research. (CMDFA, as you know, now has an ethics committee.)

It was then, I have realised in retrospect, the mode of guidance changed and had been changing for some years. It was a combination of being “burdened” with the, by now, many issues – particularly attacks centred on mankind created in the Image of God and when life begins – and then deliberately asking “what’s next, Lord?”

The sense of burden became very heavy and it became clear we – God’s people – needed a wider voice and that I was to be a part of this. I remember arguing with God – I’m not an ethicist, I’m not a specialist, I’m not a theologian. Useless, I had no choice – to say no would have been an act of sheer disobedience. And so it was then I ran for Senate.

This was a very lonely decision and only discussed on one brief occasion with a significant friend. There’s a lot more to this part of the story and although I wasn’t elected, and only beaten on the postal votes for upper house the following year in WA, it was a significant time for a Christian political voice in WA.

My continuing journey has been the combination of “burden” and

“please show me the way Lord”. And the journey is shown in the websites below. I also saw the need, as did others, for a *Canberra Declaration* and contributed to this.

Amazingly, in recent years, some of the most lucid moments of guidance have come while in the bathroom and I have had to reflect “Lord, is that the only place where I am so completely disconnected that I can hear Your voice?” I have also learnt at such times *not* to seek second opinions but, like Joseph in Bethlehem, to get up in the middle of the night (or out of the bathroom) and proceed.

Also in retrospect I can see that the role of healer/advocate/village GP seamlessly extended from “comforting the disturbed” to “disturbing the comfortable” to negotiator and eventually to confrontation.

*Sometimes you just gently teach
Sometimes you preach with invitation
Sometimes you confront and challenge
Sometimes you have to condemn
Sometimes you have to drive the money-changers out of the temple
Sometimes you have to walk with Christ to Calvary.*

My main burden at this time – shared by many – is to waken God’s people to the seriousness of future persecution for what we believe and to prepare ourselves and our children and grandchildren for when walls have ears and when the “confessing church” will be driven underground. Already “permission has become compulsion” and the “chronicle of shame” gets heavier day by day.

Drivers?

- Initially, simply willingness and obedience. Being open to God’s will and trusting Him to make it plain through the right circumstance. “This is the way, walk in it.” With an underlying sense of call to be healer and advocate.
- Personal ambition? Zero. Yes, I am totally sincere when I say that except that in whatever task God gave me, to do it well. Authoritative? Never, but I still wonder why my friends laugh at me when I say that.
- And then the driver was the need to respond to issues of destruction, a God-given burden for the same, the need for a Christian voice, and that I was to be a part of that voice. Realising more and more the watchman role, waken God’s people, educating, and to be a voice. A united voice for leaders. A united voice for ethics in medicine.

Has the way been smooth? No, but my “sustainer” is and has been my Lord and my God. God IS in charge and Jesus is coming again and every knee will bow before Him. Even so, come Lord Jesus.

How do we live with these tensions and burdens? I believe our formula should be

- Joy for today (praising God for all that He gives us to enjoy).
- Excitement for tomorrow (trusting in knowledge that He is coming again and all will be made right).

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Dr Iver S AnD SuSTAIner S

- Grief for our nation (the moral decline of the West).
- Mourning for the suffering world (our brothers and sisters in the suffering church).

Appendix 1: Family

Lizzie, my wife of 52 years, is still the joy of my life as are our four children and the nine grandchildren God has blessed us with.

Appendix 2: Surgery

For those who know something of the St Luke's GP Medical Group journey it has just been sold after 47 years having been built in 1968 as part house and part surgery. We lived on the premises for 6 years before knocking down a store room wall and converting it all to surgery. Liz and I had decided – under God – that we would have closed or sold by the end of 2015. A week before contacting a broker for medical practices a Christian doctor approached me having heard from a patient who attends the same church as he does that we might be closing – so how's that for an answer to four years of considering and praying. My intention is to cut my working hours

down to ten hours per week by next year. My life as a doctor has been one, by the mercy of God, of huge privilege. I am now employed by the purchaser!

Appendix 3: CSLewis

Back in the 1990s I was a contributor to the "CSLewis List". I loved the literary contributions made to the list but ultimately realised there was for some contributors a disconnect between the esoteric value of Lewis' writings and his prophetic role re *The Abolition of Man* as highlighted in the book of that name and the novel *That Hideous Strength*. I have been pleasantly surprised to discover that many like-minded people have also been influenced in their journey by *The Abolition of Man*.

Appendix 4: The Challenges

The battle for medicine

- Liberty of Conscience in Medicine, linked to Doctors as mere "providers of medical services" vs Doctors with Conscience.
- Informed Consent.
- Law of the State overriding medical ethics. *Permission*

becomes Compulsion.

- Life – it's definition, when does it begin and when does it become of value?

The battle for the church

- Liberty of belief.
- To speak of what we believe.
- To teach what we believe. *Permission becomes Compulsion.*
- Liberty to shield our children from evil influences.
- Liberty to preach the Bible, to speak truth, to even believe "truth".

Have we reached a point of no return for the West? A new dark age? Does a new paganism grip the West? The death of the Western Church? But even if there is no return, no "Great Southland of the Holy Spirit", should we not continue to be a Voice? ●

Websites:

<http://www.chooselifeaustralia.org.au/>
<http://medicinewithmorality.org.au/>
www.conscienceinmedicine.net.au/
<http://chooselifeaustralia.org.au/>
<http://www.repealsection8.net.au/>
<http://www.thebeltoftruth.org.au/>
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Christians should be concerned about abortion...

...but not too concerned. r ight?

by Graham Preston

contact@protect-life.info
www.protect-life.info

It would probably be fair to say that most committed Christians believe that abortion is something that we should be concerned about.

Human life is precious: it is uniquely created in God's image and Jesus gave his life for us. Therefore, since abortion is the deliberate taking of young human life, we recognise that it is not a practice that should simply be ignored. We know we ought to be concerned about it.

But how much concern should we as Christians have about abortion? What is the appropriate response to about one hundred thousand young human lives being deliberately ended each year in Australia?

These are very challenging questions: questions so challenging that it seems that most Christians today would prefer not to address them at all.

That is perhaps understandable. Abortion directly and immediately raises very personal, highly emotional, and deadly serious matters. Nevertheless, we must ask, is it acceptable, is it responsible, is it right, for Christians to relegate it all to the too-hard basket?



Voice for unborn: Graham Preston presenting his pro-life message in Hobart.

Photo: www.catholicleader.com.au

Back in 1985 when my wife, Liz, and I were theology students preparing to be involved in overseas missions, someone gave us a few leaflets on abortion written by Keith and Melody Green. Up until that time I had given little thought to what abortion was about and those leaflets were an absolutely shocking revelation, to the extent that I couldn't even read or look at them.

But neither could I forget them. If abortion was that bad, how could I just try to ignore what was being done? Eventually I took the leaflets down again and read them and wept. How could this be allowed to be going on? Liz and I thought we should at least do something before we headed off to work in Japan.

Well, because of health concerns, we never got to Japan. But we did do

something regarding abortion and have been endeavouring to do so since. Firstly, we imported thousands of those leaflets and distributed them through the churches in Queensland. Perhaps, we thought, most people were as poorly informed on this as we had been. If these leaflets could make such a big impact upon us then surely all that was needed was to educate people and things would surely change for the better.

But no, we soon found it wasn't going to be that easy. We became involved in the wider pro-life movement and organised protests, walks, life chains, speakers, lobbying, educational events, anything that we could think of. In 1996 we opened a crisis pregnancy centre in Brisbane,

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now known as the Priceless Life Centre, to provide counsel and practical support to women and couples.

As the years went by though, things didn't seem to be getting better. When we became involved there were two specialist abortion "clinics" in Queensland – now there are five in Brisbane alone plus others around the State. Perhaps most concerning of all, the tide of public opinion

it became evident that he could be shown in court to be operating illegally.

Sadly at that point, despite this victory of sorts, I lost my nerve. I did have my reasons/excuses – Liz was about to give birth to our fourth child, I was enrolled to go to university part-time, etc., but primarily I got scared. So, *Shattering the Darkness* went back on the shelf and stayed there, for eight years.

of where things would end up. In the years since we have had over sixty sit-ins at Brisbane's four abortion "clinics", been arrested, convicted, fined, and for myself, spent a total of eighteen months in jail across six occasions. We have not had crowds of people join us in the sit-ins as we had hoped, but nevertheless we have not lost our convictions.

Is this being too concerned about abortion?

"There is more open antagonism against those who would continue to dare to speak up and there is also more indifference generally, including it would seem amongst the Christian community, toward the plight of the unborn children."

turned against us in significant ways. There is more open antagonism against those who would continue to dare to speak up and there is also more indifference generally, including it would seem amongst the Christian community, toward the plight of the unborn children.

In 1993 another friend passed on a book to me – and I have to admit that I could not read that document either. The book, *Shattering the Darkness*, written by Presbyterian minister, Joseph Foreman, was completely unlike any other pro-life book I had seen. When I did eventually force myself to read it through I passed it on to Liz and then to another couple, Anne and Jim, and we were all profoundly challenged. *(More from the book later.)*

The outcome was that, over a few days in December of that year, Anne and I engaged in our first non-violent direct action against abortion, i.e. sit-ins in front of the doors of one of Australia's most notorious abortion "clinics". The abortionist unsurprisingly sought a Supreme Court injunction against us but withdrew his complaint when

Once again though I could not forget what I had read and on the completion of my course, I reread the book, became re-enthused, and decided to approach things in a more determined manner. After setting up a small group called Protect Life, the first thing we did was to send out a letter explaining our thinking – in short, can we expect anyone to take us seriously when we say that abortion takes the life of a child if we are not prepared to act like that is true? – along with a copy of "the book" to about thirty Christian leaders whose opinion we respected.

We hoped to gain insights they may have had regarding our intended course of action, i.e. taking repeated non-violent direct action at the doors of the abortion "clinics". It was a mixed result: we heard back from just two people – one who said, "Don't do it", not because he thought it was wrong but because he thought it may cause too many problems for the church, while the other person, a pastor, decided to join us. We decided to press on.

In 2002 a handful of people commenced the actions with no idea

Space precludes being able to address in this article the many questions and concerns that usually arise in people's minds when they hear of our actions. I would point out that there are quite a number of short articles (e.g. Are 'rescues' acts of rebellion? Being in jail – isn't it just a waste of time? Should violence be used to stop abortion?) on the website www.protect-life.info which endeavour to answer such questions. As well, full copies of *Shattering the Darkness*, or alternatively a 22 page condensed version, are available and we are always glad to hear from people at contact@protect-life.info.

Lessons learned

And what lessons do I believe I have learned over the last twenty five years of pro-life involvement, and in particular during the last thirteen years of taking direct action to try and stop abortion?

Firstly, I don't believe that either I, or just a few people, acting on my/our own are likely to see significant changes brought about in our society's attitude toward abortion. When we started the non-violent direct actions we had hoped that over time many would join us. Thus far, that has not happened.

When just a few people take such action it is very easy for the members of our society to tell themselves that this is the behaviour of a handful of fanatics who can be safely ignored. However if hundreds, dare we say thousands, of otherwise apparently responsible citizens



– teachers, bus drivers, doctors, plumbers, pastors, etc. – were willing to risk going to jail for standing up for the unborn children then that would be a lot harder to dismiss.

Certainly it may be the case that simply more jails would just be built. But nevertheless people would be forced to ask themselves, like they have never had to previously, “Are all these people crazy to care so much about the unborn, or could they possibly be right that young human lives truly matter?”

I do not believe that attempts to bring about change from the top down will be successful. It is tempting to think that by changing the law or even just by enforcing the existing law (e.g. in Queensland the law against abortion has never been removed) abortion can be stopped. However, ready access to abortion has become so convenient and so normalised in our sex-soaked society that it would have to be expected that there would be riots if the “clinics” were forcibly closed down. Rather, change needs to be made at the grassroots level as Christian

people simply act consistently with what they say they believe.

Christians and the church must not, cannot, sit on the fence when it comes to abortion; that is because when it comes to abortion, there is no fence. The almost complete silence about abortion from virtually the whole Christian community sends the loud message to the rest of society, whether we like it or not, that the life of the child in the womb does not matter. What a difference it would make if, as a minimum, every church displayed a prominent sign on its property: “Pregnant? Worried? We will help. Ph...”

If abortion is as morally serious as the taking of the lives of innocent born human beings, then it should not surprise us if it costs us everything to make a stand against it. The church in Germany needed to be prepared to lose all in order to stand against Nazism and the persecution, of the Jews and others. But it largely failed. Are we doing any better? The fact that we may have no idea how things will turn out should

not deter us from doing what we believe is right.

To conclude, two quotes from *Shattering the Darkness*:

p. xvii . . . the heart of authentic Christianity is Rescue. Not the act of sitting-in at abortion clinics, not a complex systematic theology, but the heart of utter abandonment to God on behalf of others, regardless of risk and price. It is this heart I want you to see, because it is God’s heart – His Son’s Cross.

When we learn to die to self, then giving ourselves to Rescue others will seem quite normal – neither heroic, nor radical, nor wrong. If reading this book does not get you arrested, that is fine, if only you understand the way of the Cross for what God has called you to do...

p. 165 I do not believe that we will see an end to child-killing until enough people do for the children what Christ did for us – make it a personal matter of life or death to protect them... ●

Doctor contract dispute

An Impasse with the State Government in Queensland

by Anthony Herbert

Anthony is a paediatrician based in Brisbane who specialises in palliative medicine and pain management. He was national secretary of CMDFA from 2006–2011.

In 2013, the Liberal-National Party (LNP) Government in Queensland had significant disagreement with the medical profession in relation to their employment conditions. The LNP government had only come to power in March 2012. At that state election they had jumped from 34 to 78 seats to win the largest majority government in Queensland history. The Australian Labor Party (ALP) which had been in government from 1998 to 2012 was reduced to 7 seats. This was one of the worst defeats of a state government since Federation.

The situation in Queensland from 2012 to 2015 was unique in that the Liberal-National government held an overwhelming majority. They felt they had a mandate to undertake major change. The economic future of the state seemed one of the Liberal National Party government's major and legitimate concerns. Efficiency of health care was therefore important in this context. With only one house of parliament (the legislative assembly) and no senate, it meant that such legislative change could occur more readily.

In late 2013, the government proposed and subsequently legislated a change in the status of

Senior Doctors working in the public health system, from "public servants" to "high paid contracted employees". Doctors' salaries were not changed at this time, but a number of other issues were of concern. These related to issues of unfair dismissal, dispute resolution, having to work to key performance indicators (and who determines these), and fatigue management provisions among others.

In the context of this conflict and disagreement, a medical student had asked me the question:

How can we as Christians respond to contract / policy / legislation issues in the workplace?

He had asked me to do this in the context of Romans 13:1.

Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God.

In the light of this bible verse and recent SMO's contract issues with the government.

(See Dr Andrew Hughes' comments in box on following page.)

My thoughts were as follows:

We need to respect our governing authorities. More importantly we need to pray for them. We are fortunate in Australia, in that we have a democracy, with a variety of political parties with different philosophies and emphasis on how government is done. We need to embrace this diversity, rather than feel frustrated by it.

The senior doctors banded together in their negotiation with government as a profession. At one stage, over 1000 senior doctors (both public specialists and visiting specialists) met in the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre on March 20 and April 16, 2014, to discuss these issues.¹ Doctors also went door knocking, putting flyers in letter boxes, and handing out fliers at the ballot box.

The government moved from a position of no negotiation available on the status of the contracts, to making a number of changes to them that made doctors more comfortable to sign them. Unfortunately, in the process, some very talented doctors have left the public system, and some good will of senior doctors to the system was threatened.

Despite such disagreement, we still need to be respectful of our government in this process.

We do have industrial relation mechanisms which can be lawfully utilised to make sure the environment in which we work leads to the best possible patient outcomes. Ultimately, we have the opportunity to vote for our government every three-four years.

We also need to do what is right by our conscience. Doctors have the option of resigning if their contract doesn't sit right with them or their conscience. At one stage, there was the possibility of a mass resignation, and this certainly forced the government back into negotiation.

It is helpful to think that as Christians,

we enter into a covenant with our patient rather than a business contract. Covenant is a very rich Biblical notion, and I believe can inform significantly on how our patients are treated. Having said that, we will still need to enter into a contract with our employer. The challenge is to not have the contract with the employer being a threat to the covenant with our patients.

Personally, if in the future, if I am faced with a situation that I am not comfortable with (e.g. I cannot offer a patient a treatment that is required due to lack of funding, or managers not approving that funding; or if there is a treatment that I feel is ethically wrong), then I have the option of discussing resignation with my managers at that time.

Dr Chris Davis, former Assistant Health Minister (and a geriatrician himself), made some very eloquent speeches during this time, and they are available on various websites.² In particular, he was concerned about the “unfettered” powers of financial managers in the health system. The risk is that such managers do not heed the advice of clinicians on what is best management clinically for the patient.

He has recently summarised the interaction of the LNP Government with the medical profession as follows:



“The challenge is to not have the contract with the employer being a threat to the covenant with our patients.”

The next unheralded and unwelcome surprise was the introduction of draconian doctor contracts that required doctors to maximise the profitability of public hospitals, and provided for dismissal with minimal right

of review. Tensions were further inflamed by public announcements that (unsubstantiated) doctor fraud necessitated these contracts. Poor political judgement was apparent from statements in parliament that senior Queensland doctors could all be replaced. Public pressure forced the government to back down, after incurring significant political and economic damage.³

The Premier, Campbell Newman, said in parliament on Thursday March 20, 2014, that the government

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How can we as Christians respond to contract / policy / legislation issues in the workplace?

Dr Andrew Hughes

I also asked Consultant Surgeon, Dr Andrew Hughes for his thoughts in relation to the medical student’s question, and his thoughts are as follows:

My answer would be “wisely”. One must not extrapolate that Romans 13:1 to mean that all governments are run by godly principles and thus submitted to like the apostles or elders (think Bible-smuggling behind iron curtain, martyrs, Rome and early church). Balancing the work contracts fairly is difficult and complex and not separate

from Scriptural principles – but provided selfish motives are not in play, meek approaches to argue for fair conditions for all is I believe consistent.

I would not and did not protest. I wanted progress. There are great concessions. But we move forward for our public patients who need us and have no alternative.

I would encourage students to do a Bible study on the issue. Submit to your leaders. Church leaders. That very passage says “would you have no fear... then do what is good”.

Complex also because the scope of change threatened the very system that other governments had set up. So whilst I would have stayed regardless, the care my patients received would have suffered. The irony is that we are the leaders when it comes to health. One could argue the government is trying to influence the ones in authority.

It has been a challenge to accept all the government has done after twenty years in the system.

DOCTOR CONTrACT DISPuTe

was prepared to recruit “interstate or overseas” doctors to replace Queensland doctors who resigned.⁴

Professor Alan Sive, paediatrician at the Royal Children’s Hospital, Brisbane made the following insightful statement:

I believe that the medical profession has a strong moral compass underpinned by age-old values and enshrined in the oaths that we take. The values are written into the constitutions of our professional bodies and enforced by laws, rules and regulations. There are a few who transgress both the spirit and letter of these codes and regulations, but the vast majority of us take them as a code of honour and adhere to them. I have the sense that our government does not believe we have the innate capacity to do right and they believe that without their control, our closely-held values are meaningless.

Professor Stephen Leeder, Professor of public health and community medicine at the University of Sydney and former editor-in-chief of the *Medical Journal of Australia*, writes about the consequences of increasing privatisation of our

health system. Privatisation of health services was something the Liberal National Party was considering through a contestability process. There was concern that individual contracts allowed such change in health service provision to occur.³

The more privatised the system, the less the needs of the poor and the marginal are met.⁵

In the context of such disagreement and conflict, we also need to reflect on how well resourced we are in Australia. A few years ago, I attended a Moore College Weekend Conference in Brisbane, and Dr Andrew Cameron was speaking on ethics. He made the good point in relation to resources. “Where there is scarcity, look for abundance”.


For example, if we choose to become a missionary, we may not have the ability to negotiate for contracts or work conditions as we do in Queensland. In some countries, such as Zimbabwe, the government at times has been unable to pay their doctors. So despite the challenges of recent times, it is also important to remember how blessed we are in Queensland and Australia in terms of resources and skills and expertise available for health care.

Postscript:

1. The ALP returned to a minority government in Queensland on February 14, 2015 after the election was held on January 31.
2. On June 5, 2015, the ALP government voted to reverse much of the legislation that the LNP government introduced in 2013 – 2014. The outcome of this legislative change is that specialists working in the public health system will have access to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission, and there is also provision to negotiate for a new collective agreement for senior doctors. How the individual contracts senior doctors have signed will interact with the collective agreement appears a work in progress. ●

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Luke's Journal

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We are what we eat

by Joshua newington

The idea that we 'are what we eat' might seem like the kind of folksy wisdom that, whilst containing a kernel of truth, shouldn't be taken too seriously in our technologically advanced, scientifically precise, and clinical age. I would like to suggest though, that critical examination of this apparently idiosyncratic notion can raise some issues worthy of consideration.

Think for a moment about the unprecedented level of dietary variety that currently exists in contemporary Australia. At social events that are centred around food, conversation regarding the catering will inevitably cover who is or isn't eating what, and why. The need to supply vegetarian options at a barbecue or dinner party has been common enough for some time, but more recently an expanding number of other considerations have come into play: gluten content, paleo, food miles, organics etc. The eating habits of modern Australians are as fractured and individualised as every other aspect of our lives.

The thing is that people have good reasons for making the various decisions about their diets that they do. For some people, eating habits are determined by allergies or intolerances. Others, like athletes or body builders, consider the nutritional value of their food in relation to specific lifestyle choices. Still other people are concerned with welfare and justice issues for animals. And some eat with a mind to social justice issues more broadly. The trouble is though, the concerns of various groups often involve food production and consumption processes pulling in quite different directions. Take for example the differing approaches to food made

by someone concerned with peak performance nutrition, and someone who chooses a 'whole foods' (that is, relatively unprocessed) orientated vegetarian diet.



“The more time a nation devotes to food preparation at home, the lower the rate of obesity.”

.....

Many people concerned with peak performance nutrition consume relatively large amounts of highly processed food (something that the explosion of the supplement industry in this country is a testament to).¹ Such supplements are designed to produce results in regard to specific physical pursuits. Adherents to such a diet might eat what would generally be considered a healthy diet, with lean meats and fruit and vegetables, but this will be supplemented with regular intake of, and even the

replacement of meals with, products such as protein powders or shakes. This approach to eating stands in contrast to the kind of vegetarianism that might, for example, emphasize the inclusion of whole foods. With a diet such as this there can again be an emphasis on nutritional benefits, even though the food is produced and processed very differently to elements of a 'peak performance' diet. People who eat this way might cook with a lot of legumes, and obviously vegetables, but be averse to highly processed foods. Such a diet may be pursued for reasons to do with animal or social justice, or even to be in keeping with certain philosophies regarding nutrition and health.

So which is the right way to eat, we might ask? Obviously for health professionals there has to be an emphasis on nutrition that is based in solid evidence. However, as anyone with an interest in nutrition can tell you, things are not necessarily straight-forward on this front. Not only is there a never-ending stream of food fads pushing new ideas about what constitutes good nutrition, but further confusion is caused when apparently reputable sources also seem to constantly be issuing conflicting information.

Best-selling investigative journalist and author, Michael Pollan, has written compellingly about food for the best part of a decade. In his latest work, *Cooked*, Pollan draws our attention to research that shows that people who cook are healthier than those who don't.² Pollan (initially referencing study by Cutler et al, see footnotes) outlines some of his thinking and research here as follows:

“Cutler and his colleagues surveyed cooking patterns across several cultures and discovered

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We Are WhAT We eAT

that obesity rates are inversely correlated with the amount of time spent on food preparation.³ The more time a nation devotes to food preparation at home, the lower the rate of obesity. In fact, the amount of time spent cooking predicts obesity rates more reliably than female participation in the labour force or even income. Other research supports the idea that home cooking is a better predictor of a healthful diet than social class. A 1992 study in the *Journal of American Dietetic Association* found that poor women who routinely cooked were likely to eat a more healthful diet than well-to-do women who did not.⁴ A 2012 *Public Health Nutrition* study found a strong correlation between regular cooking and superior health and longevity.⁵



Pollan suggests several reasons for the correlation between home-cooking and health – a comprehensive survey which I don't have scope here for now – but perhaps his most impassioned and convincing espousal of cooking is rooted in a kind of philosophical argument. Cooking, Pollan contends, “implicates us in a whole web of social and ecological relationships: with plants, animals, with the soil, with farmers, with microbes both inside and outside our bodies, and of course, with the people our cooking nourishes and delights.” Most significantly of all, Pollan suggests; cooking ‘connects’: “Cooking – of whatever kind, everyday or extreme – situates us in the world in a very special place, facing the natural world on one side and the social world on the other. The cook stands squarely between nature and culture, conducting a process of translation and negotiation.”⁶

Such a perspective has resonance with a distinctly Christian theological view of the world; one which contends for a ‘sacramental’ understanding of all things created by God. St Augustine speaks to this idea when he suggests that human relations with creation can

“...good nutrition might be considered in broader terms; not simply in terms of what is good for ‘peak performance’, or even for the general health of humans, or welfare of animals, but rather what is good... for the ‘life of the whole world.’ ”

.....

be defined in either one of two ways: “Be always mindful of the end, and be on your guard against the pernicious tendency of means to encroach upon ends. The end of all things, Augustine insists, is God. He alone is to be loved for his own sake – “enjoyed,” in Augustine’s terminology. Whatever else is to be loved should be “used,” that is, loved for the sake of God. Even human beings, including ourselves, should be “used” in this sense – which does not mean ‘exploited.’”⁷

For Augustine then, the human relationship with food (as with all things) should be regarded in terms of the degree to which it participates in the divine life. Orthodox theologian, Alexander Schmemmann frames this idea more directly in terms of food when he says,

“The natural dependence of man

upon the world was intended to be transformed constantly into communion with God in whom is all life. Man was made to be priest of a eucharist, offering the world to God, and in this offering he was to receive the gift of life. But in a fallen world man does not have the priestly power to do this. His dependence on the world becomes a closed circuit, and his love is deviated from its true direction. He still loves, he is still hungry. He knows he is dependent on that which is beyond him. But his love and his dependence refer only to the world itself. He does not know that breathing can be communion with God. He does not realise that to eat can be to receive life from God in more than its physical sense. He forgets that the world, its air or its food cannot by themselves bring life, but only as they are received

and accepted for God's sake, in God and as bearers of the divine gift of life. By themselves they can produce only the appearance of life."

Schmemmann goes on,

"When we see the world as an end in itself, everything becomes itself a value and consequently loses all value, because only in God is found the meaning (value) of everything, and the world is meaningful only when it is the "sacrament" of God's presence. Things treated merely as things in themselves destroy themselves because only in God have they any life. The world of nature, cut off from the source of life, is a dying world. For one who thinks food in itself is the source of life, eating is communion with the dying world, it is communion with death. Food itself is dead, it is life that has died and it must be kept in refrigerators like a corpse."⁸

Such ideas may seem rather abstract from the day to day process of preparing dinners and packing lunches, but what I would suggest these ideas communicate to us is the need to think about food, and indeed everything we do, in terms of more spiritual (or rather eschatological) ends.⁹ If, as expressed by New Testament scholar, N.T. Wright, the basic Christian hope is the belief that history is going somewhere under the guidance of God and that where it is going is towards "God's new world of justice, healing, and hope" then perhaps we need to think of food primarily in relation to it being a part of God's gift to us in creation, as well as its place in the redemptive purposes of God for all creation. According to this way of thinking then, good nutrition might be considered in broader terms; not simply in terms of what is good for 'peak performance', or even for the general health of humans, or welfare of animals, but rather what is good (to borrow a term from Alexander Schmemmann) for the 'life of the whole world.'

In his book of the same name, *For the Life of the World*, Schmemmann notes, "Centuries of secularism have failed to transform eating into something strictly utilitarian. Food is still treated with reverence... To eat is still something more than to maintain bodily functions. People may not understand what that 'something more' is, but they nonetheless desire to celebrate it. They are still hungry and thirsty for sacramental life."¹⁰

"A sacramental perspective on creation is useful here because it understands the value of creation as being rooted in God and God's purposes."

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From its earliest days, Christianity struggled to deal with an internal tension regarding the level of significance attributable to materiality. At times Christians have seemed to place too much emphasis on the physical realm. More common though perhaps, has been the tendency to dismiss the significance of the material in favour of a kind of 'spiritual-mindedness.' Ultimately, orthodox Christianity has walked a line that mediates between these two impulses. A sacramental perspective on creation is useful here because it understands the value of creation as being rooted in God and God's purposes. In this sense it is possible to hold together the significance of food ("give us this day our daily bread" Matthew 6:11) and the deeper purpose of created existence ("I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh,



which I will give for the life of the world." John 6:51).

Despite the ubiquity of terms like 'balanced' and 'holistic' with reference to issues of health and diet, it is perhaps the case that many of us reduce our food related concerns down to issues that matter particularly to us. In this way we take the gift of creation from God, and use it as a tool to serve our own purposes and desires. I would suggest that we are particularly at risk of doing this in the modern world, where it is possible for us to be rather disconnected from how our food is processed. When we see the burger, but never the cow, or the bread, but never the field, we cannot help but begin to assume that these are merely 'things' that come from shops or factories. The closer we get to where our food comes from though, the more likely we are to realise that our food is part of the gift of creation. This could be why, as Michael Pollan has observed, people who cook are healthier—they are more attuned to the world God has created (whether they acknowledge God or not).

I would suggest that, for Christian health practitioners, there is something to be taken from this idea. Though our culture might try and reduce our interactions with creation, and indeed other human beings, to acts of instrumentalist exchange, as Christians we should never lose sight of the bigger picture. When we eat, or advise others what to eat, our purpose should not simply be the achievement of good nutritional outcomes, but rather the very 'life of the world'. ●

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how do I start a local CMDFA group?

by Dr Catherine Hollier

*"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."
(Hebrews 10:24-25 ESV)*

In the busyness of life, it is easy to neglect simply meeting together for the purpose of encouragement. While CMDFA National and State events provide teaching and facilitate connections amongst the broader CMDFA fellowship, local gatherings create the opportunity to get to know others who live and practice nearby. This further facilitates close mentoring relationships in which we can stir up one another to show the love of Christ in our work and study.

Although we are still working out how best to do this in Newcastle, we have had the privilege of seeing God grow a strong fellowship starting with a few people meeting in a home over a meal, to having to cater commercially and find a venue to accommodate over 50 healthcare workers and students. Here is the history of how it started in Newcastle, what it looks like today, and some of the nuts and bolts.

The Why

Early in the 1990s, local Christian doctors who were unable to travel to Sydney for CMDFA meetings began meeting informally in their homes, sharing supper and discussing a topic of interest. Some students also attended, including myself, and the doctors mentored students, inviting them to share a meal and to get to

know their families. These meetings gradually diminished in number and petered out over the course of the decade.

At the same time, a spouses' group was also formed which met regularly for Bible study and fellowship. This concluded in 2003 with the formation of a Bible Study Fellowship (BSF) group as its members felt that they should move out to reach other women. Most of the members assisted in the formation of BSF and some continue to lead weekly as the group has grown over the years.



In 2003, as a GP who had been practising for seven years, I attended the National CMDFA Conference on Phillip Island where one of the early IMPACT conferences (for students and recent graduates) was running concurrently. There, I was inspired by the student enthusiasm for combining medicine and the gospel, and invigorated by their youthful engagement and energy. I remembered how in my own days as a student I was mentored by my current boss, and appreciated how formative that relationship had been for me in practising medicine faithfully as a Christian.

This led me to start a local fellowship for the students in Newcastle. At the time I was a new mum, with another on the way, and so decided to use my home for this ministry.

Together with Drs Peter and Beth Ravenscroft, we made a plan to meet a few times a year in my home with local doctors speaking on various topics. There was already a Med Bible Study on campus, run by the AFES (Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students) so we invited them to come along. I regret to say, that other than at the beginning of the year, I neglected to pray regularly for the ministry.

Nevertheless, God works for our good despite our unfaithfulness, and over the years we have developed many relationships with students through these meetings. What follows outlines how we have developed meetings in Newcastle, but is by no means prescriptive. Essentially, it requires one or two passionate doctors, prayer, and utilising links with existing Christian medical student groups.

The how

At the beginning of each year, we meet with the AFES staff and the Med Bible Study student leadership to plan dates and get a sense of the AFES events through the year. Two students are chosen to attend the CMDFA Vision leadership training conference in January. Since Med Bible Study meets on a Monday, all our meetings (except the O Week meeting) run on a Monday so that the whole Bible Study can come to the meeting without needing to clear another evening in their week. The AFES staff is very supportive and we try and maximise the relationships across the groups.



We look at the dates of the student terms Years 1-5, including holidays and exams. We have found Stuvac to be a good time to meet since a break, with a free meal and prayer, is often welcome, and it doesn't clash with classes. We usually aim for five local meetings about two months apart. Our general year looks something like this:

- O week social in March
- IMPACT in April
- meeting in early June
- meeting in late July
- meeting in early October
- social in November during Stuvac

Our social in O Week is advertised by a student leader from Med Bible Study to each year and at Med Bible Study. We run a BBQ and pool party asking for a gold coin donation (state committees can help fund events if needed). We take down contact details and give a short spiel of what CMDFA is about and the details of our meetings for the year, usually in the form of a business card, which can be cheaply made online by sites such as Vistaprint.com.au.

We encourage students to go to IMPACT, especially when it is nearby

in Sydney and when they are nearing graduation when they will require practical skills in integrating faith and practice. IMPACT is invaluable for exposure to others in the CMDFA family, as well as for solid biblical teaching about keeping Christ at the centre – an essential perspective as medicine has a tendency to claim pre-eminence in the secular world. Conference electives also cover many different areas that are directly relevant to a wide variety of students.

“essentially, it requires one or two passionate doctors, prayer, and utilising links with existing Christian medical student groups.”

For our meetings, we usually start with a home-cooked meal if the group is less than thirty in number. It is simple and relatively inexpensive to make a pasta meal, fried rice, or soup and rolls, with something like ice cream in cones for dessert after the talk. I am not much of a cook so there is plenty of scope for those who are more culinarily gifted! We eat at 6.30pm, and the formal meeting starts at 7.15pm. We aim to finish by

9pm so it is not too late a night. Every meeting we make introductions to facilitate networking for newcomers. This helps students identify doctors and know their interests, and for doctors to get an idea of what stage the students are up to. For the first ten years, there were often only a couple of Christian doctors in attendance. More recently, we have included other Christian health professionals, so introductions facilitate referrals and wider

networking. We also collect contact details from those who wish to join our email list and make our event business card available. Sometimes, we have *Luke's Journal* and useful books on display (most of which are available from <https://cmdfa.worldsecuresystems.com/store>).

In a three year cycle, one of our

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meetings is either on mission, spiritual history-taking (Saline Solution) or Biblical counselling (through CCEF – Christian Counselling & Education Foundation). This gives us the chance to be regularly challenged and have our skills refreshed in integrating faith and practice. For the mission nights, we invite locals who have been involved in mission to present. This can be difficult if they are currently serving overseas! However, we have had students present on electives, as well as doctors involved in both long and short-term mission, including to indigenous Australians. More information on the Saline Solution and Biblical counselling can be found at www.cmf.org.uk/doctors/saline-solution (contact Michael Burke in Australia on mnjburke@bigpond.net.au) and www.ccef.org (contact Kurt Peters in Australia on kurt@biblicalcounselling.org.au).

We also aim to include an event addressing abortion and beginning of life issues every three-four years, which we did this year with a talk from Dr Megan Best, palliative care specialist, ethicist, and author of *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*. This topic is so relevant in today's climate that it drew record attendance.

Other topics are usually chosen by the students themselves during the last social of the year. These have included "Managing Money", "Stress Management", "Work-Life Balance", "How do you choose a specialty?", "Dealing with Death", "Psychiatry from a Christian perspective", "Keeping Your Faith and Family Intact" and "My Sister's Keeper". Each year we choose two topics and try and lock in a couple of local speakers so that we can include them on our events business card. In our final meeting we also break into groups of two-three to pray for each other. At the end of last year, the students had so many questions and suggestions that we incorporated an open panel Q&A with our first social at the beginning of this year. The panel included two GPs and

two specialists, representing a few different generations, and it was immensely encouraging for students and graduates.

In recent years, we have begun a tradition of hosting a graduation dinner at the end of each semester (to ensure we include those graduating mid-year). There, we present each graduate with a book pack, one of the older doctors gives a speech encouraging them to persevere with their faith in the busyness and challenges of internship, we promote ongoing fellowship through Intern Book Camp, IMPACT and the ReGS Retreat, and then pray for the graduates. If they are moving cities, we encourage them to link with their new local CMDFA network.

The Lessons Learnt

Here are some of the things that we have learnt over the years:

*"So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth."
(1 Corinthians 3:7 ESV)*

Pray – Building the Kingdom and equipping the saints is ultimately God's work, not ours. We are dependent on Him.

Have a team – a partnership of at least two key people is immensely encouraging. Work can be divided, backup is available, and prayer is more likely to happen.

Utilise social media – a closed Facebook group is a useful tool for advertising events. ('Closed' because there are many random people who seem to want to join without any connection, and home addresses are public. Also sometimes the group can be hijacked by people who are anti-Christian and want to push their own agendas.) The disadvantage is that people need to be added by an administrator. I usually designate the student leaders to be administrators and try and screen those who are unknown by visiting their pages. It is

not usually too hard to work out who is genuine.

Use emails as well – It is worthwhile having email RSVPs since Facebook RSVPs seem less reliable. Also, older doctors are more likely to be contactable by email than Facebook.

Cater for a few extra on the night.

Peer dinners may be helpful for larger groups – e.g. divide the students into year groups and meet for dinner and devotions in a doctor's home a couple of times a year. These kinds of events can facilitate life-long, encouraging friendships.

Connect with existing groups – For example: The AFES group on campus has been our first point of student contact. Local hospital fellowships developed in partnership with an existing chaplain's prayer group. A local representative of the Nurses Christian Fellowship Australia (NCFA) has started attending our meetings and we are exploring with her how our fellowships may collaborate in Newcastle. Local churches can assist with venues and advertise to their health professional members.

Be creative – we have tried many different things to involve local Christian health professionals and draw them into the network – informal dinners, 'think tank' afternoon teas, emails with the nurses Christian fellowship, formal mentoring, visiting Mercy Mission ships, etc..

The Joys

Involvement with students over the last dozen years has been extremely life-enriching and worthwhile. It is such a joy to see students grow in their faith and to see them progress through life and medicine in many different areas. Think back on your own life and those who influenced you to stay in the faith and to season your medical practice with salt. Determine to do that for others. It is richly rewarding for everyone involved. ●



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Brendan So

One of the main reasons why I chose to study medicine was for the opportunities it would allow for sharing the gospel in a medical missionary context. I was able to take a year off medicine to study at SMBC full-time. It was an immensely enriching and rewarding experience, and one that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. I feel equipped to handle the Bible more effectively, but more than that, I really feel that I have a far greater appreciation and understanding of what cross-cultural missionary work involves. How should a doctor balance life between clinical work and ministry? Is it even legitimate to separate the two? What does it actually mean to contextualize the gospel to another culture? If these are questions you've thought about yourself, I could not recommend SMBC more highly to you.



Hayley Thomas

I wanted to spend dedicated time studying God's word, growing to know him more, and building a foundation for whatever he has for me in the future. During my year at SMBC, I enjoyed consistently hearing God's word taught faithfully, and having dedicated time to delve into it in study. This was complemented by the blessing of building relationships with staff and students - seeing the Christian life modelled and walking alongside others. I also benefited from the chance to reflect on the relevance of theology to a specific area of medicine, as I completed a research project in medical ethics. My time at SMBC has equipped me with knowledge to think more systematically about the Bible and theology, has broadened my exposure to mission, and has challenged me to grow in my own Christian walk.



Steven Naum

My year studying at SMBC was certainly the most significant year of my life. On reflection it equipped me greatly for every endeavour I have undertaken since as I have sought to live as a child of God in his world in all I do. Spending a year completely focused on God, his goodness and sovereignty, and dwelling day after day on his word - what he has said and done throughout history - was the best decision I have made!

Study was rigorous and of a very high standard, and I still say this having completed a PhD and being half way through specialist clinical training. But it wasn't just a thing of the head - my heart and will were continually challenged - both in the classroom and by living in the college community.

