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essentials

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Essentials is the journal of the Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion. Promoting Christ-centred biblical ministry.





In its 2018 report *An Evangelical Episcopate*, the Sydney Diocesan Doctrine Commission helpfully elucidated the core responsibilities of a Bishop in the Anglican Church. The first priority of a Bishop is to be a guardian of ‘the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints’ (Jude 3). This is the priority found in the New Testament and in the Anglican Ordinal. Through public proclamation and defence of the apostolic gospel and by personal example the bishop is to do all in his power to ensure that the teaching of Scripture shapes and directs the life, ministry and mission of his Diocese. Other priorities flow from this. The Bishop must order the ministry of the Diocese towards this gospel witness and ministry, he must exercise pastoral concern and insight, he must represent his Diocese faithfully nationally and internationally, and he must administer the work of the Diocese in line with its mission. This is the vital and onerous task of each Bishop and so we must remain deeply committed to pray for our Bishops, and we rejoice in great thankfulness for those who have and continue to discharge these duties. In this edition of Essentials, it is wonderful then to have three such faithful Bishops represented as contributors. In a global and national Anglican context in which Bishops have often been at the vanguard of heterodoxy rather than orthodoxy, it is a great joy to hear from these

three brothers, Peter, Kanishka, and Paul in this edition.

Alongside these contributions we have our eyes lifted to see the work of ARDEFA amongst some of the most distressed displaced peoples, holding out the love of Christ in the darkness, and we also have our minds stimulated to see with clarity the glory of Jesus’ transfiguration and its purpose for his ministry. I commend our Spring edition to evangelical Anglican friends across Australia.

GAVIN PERKINS, BOWRAL NSW

EDITOR

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What is EFAC?

EFAC is a group of Anglican clergy and lay people who value the evangelical heritage of the Anglican Church, and who endeavour to make a positive, constructive contribution at local, diocesan and national levels. EFAC Australia is part of the world-wide Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion. The purpose of EFAC is to maintain and promote a strong biblical witness in and through the Anglican Church so as to advance the cause of the gospel in Australia. The aims of EFAC are:

1. To promote the ultimate authority, the teaching and the use of God’s written word in matters of both faith and conduct.
2. To promote this biblical obedience particularly in the areas of Christian discipleship, servant leadership, church renewal, and mission in the world.
3. To foster support and collaboration among evangelical Anglicans throughout Australia.
4. To function as a resource group to develop and encourage biblically faithful leadership in all spheres of life.
5. To provide a forum, where appropriate: a) for taking counsel together to develop policies and strategies in matters of common concern b) for articulating gospel distinctives in the area of faith, order, life and mission by consultations and publications.
6. To promote evangelism through the local church and planting new congregations.
7. To coordinate and encourage EFAC branches/groups in provinces or dioceses of the Anglican Church in Australia.

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The Challenge EFAC Exists to Address

(PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS AT THE 2024 EFAC NATIONAL CONFERENCE)

KANISHKA RAFFEL

What a joy it is to be together in this way. As President of EFAC Australia it's my privilege and pleasure to welcome you to Sydney, and to this National EFAC Conference – Recharge Refresh Renew

I have been asked to welcome you, which I am most happy to do, and to speak about something close to my heart. I think the program says something like 'ministry challenges and opportunities in Sydney', which is close to my heart indeed, but I have chosen instead to speak about the challenge that EFAC exists to address. Having served outside of the diocese of Sydney in local church ministry for twenty years, I can testify to the crucial significance of gospel fellowship – or 'Evangelical Fellowship' – in sustaining, encouraging and equipping me for the ministry to which God had called me.

In the early 1960s John Stott was convicted about the necessity of an international fellowship of Evangelical Anglicans because his global travels alerted him to the threat to ministry that was posed by the widespread experience of isolation.

In Australia, this includes geographical isolation which is not inconsiderable - and we have gathered from the four corners of our island continent - but in particular no doubt, Stott had in mind the reality then as now that convictions about the trustworthiness and authority of Scripture, the centrality of the Cross, the urgency of evangelism and the necessity of personal Spirit-empowered growth in godly living were essential and everywhere evident in the Bible, but frequently peripheral or absent from Anglican ministry in some places. Added to this 'theological isolation' was a pattern of excluding or marginalising such perspectives from the institutional structures of diocesan life in ways that discouraged or opposed evangelical ministry.

Faithful Anglican ministry can be found just about anywhere and everywhere, but often those who are preaching the gospel, winning the lost, building up believers, equipping the saints for works of ministry are doing so in circumstances where they have little encouragement from the local leadership and often little fellowship with likeminded others. EFAC was established



Kanishka Raffel

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to connect gospel-minded Anglicans; to provide mutual encouragement and foster gospel partnership. And we ought to see clearly that such evangelical or 'gospel' fellowship is a means of grace. And I think it can be said that it finds its origins in the very beginnings of global, gospel mission.

I've read to you from the end of Colossians because these lists of names and greetings give us a window on the fellowship that is formed by the gospel. The community that is formed around the Jesus whom this letter proclaims: Jesus – the image of the invisible God, firstborn in creation, firstborn from the dead so that he might have the supremacy in everything, the Head of his body which is the church. The gospel that is proclaimed to every creature under heaven, proclaims this Jesus, and as people believe in Him, a fellowship is formed around him.

So I want to consider three aspects of the fellowship formed around Christ that we can glean from these closing, personal greetings.

First, the fellowship of Christ is a fellowship without barriers

In 3:11 Paul had said, 'here - that is, in the church - there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and is in all.'

(As you know, Paul says something similar elsewhere including 'male and female'.) And to this day, this remains the most stunning affirmation of inclusivity the world has ever known.

Those whom Paul mentions in these closing verses are Jews like Aristarchus, Mark and Justus; and there are



gentiles like Tychicus, Onesimus and Epaphras. But Paul regards them all with the same affection. He calls Tychicus 'faithful minister and fellow servant', Onesimus a 'dear brother', Epaphras, a 'fellow servant'; Aristarchus, Mark and Justus he calls 'fellow workers' who 'brought him comfort'.

The gospel has come into the lives of these people with very different backgrounds - ethnic backgrounds, religious backgrounds - and they were not only different, but their backgrounds *required* that they had nothing to do with one another. Whole communities of people who avoided, mistrusted and despised each other. But these are people who have received Christ Jesus as Lord. He is Lord of all and reconciler of all; and as he has reconciled them to himself and God the Father, he has reconciled them to each other as well.

Now there is a new community - there is a community of Christ in which the barriers count for nothing; because Christ has united what was divided. Paul seemingly makes a few casual introductions and conveys some courteous greetings - but he reveals the power of the gospel to break down barriers between people.

Paul sends greetings from Luke the Gentile doctor, and Paul greets a wealthy woman and landholder Nympha who offers hospitality to one of the churches in the area.

These greetings are not just Paul tidying up his letter. He is continuing to minister to this new and immature congregation and he is continuing to minister to us, as God applies these words to our own situation today.

I hope as we draw aside for these few days you will be renewed and refreshed in this powerful truth of the gospel that breaks down barriers and unites people to Christ and to each other.

The church that receives Christ Jesus as Lord is one where ethnic, economic, social and personal barriers take second place to unity in Christ. Christ is all and Christ is in all.

Second, these greetings and personal remarks show us a fellowship of Christ that *serves* Christ.

Paul describes himself at the beginning of the letter as an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. Later, as a servant of the gospel. Apostle and servant. But what we learn from these greetings is that the gospel draws people into a fellowship around Jesus who entrusts and commissions and enlists all those who are his, into his mission.

The work of the gospel is carried on by a great partnership of co-workers who are not seeking to promote themselves but to serve others and proclaim Jesus. Paul says that he is sending Tychicus and Onesimus so that they may 'encourage their hearts' and 'tell them everything that is happening'.

Paul has just said to them that they should pray with devotion and watchfulness and thanksgiving and it's clear that Paul wants the Colossians to be informed about everything happening to him *so that they can pray about it*. He exhorts them to pray, and then he sends them a living prayer letter so that they *can* pray.

Those whom he *sends* serve the mission by taking the letter; those who *receive* the letter serve the mission by praying in response to it. To belong to the fellowship that the gospel of Jesus creates is to serve the mission of that gospel and be enlisted in that work.

Tychicus and Onesimus are going to the Colossians with the letter, but others are remaining with Paul and wrestling in prayer for those who are in Colossae. Epaphras is remaining with Paul and v12 says 'he is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God mature and fully assured. I vouch for him that he is *working hard* for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis.' And I take it, his 'hard work' is the work of prayer.

Archippus is described as Paul's fellow soldier in the letter to Philemon. Possibly, because he is mentioned after the church in Laodicea, he has a ministry in Laodicea. That is all we know about him. Just a name at the end of this part of scripture you might think - but in reality a wonderful work of God. Not an apostle, not an eyewitness of Jesus - just a man who in God's mercy heard of the Lord and his work on the cross, repented and put his faith in him and became a servant in the Lord's mission field. An ordinary believer. But that's so valuable isn't it? Because we're ordinary believers.

Though we are distributed across the full breadth of this amazing country - some in cities, some in remote towns and regional centres, some in universities or prisons or hospitals or schools or universities or military bases - we are in fact a vast fellowship of coworkers in the Lord's harvest field. I think that is both glorious and beautiful. Men and women, lay and ordained, theologically trained and those with a long obedience in the same, Spirit-led direction. Fellow workers and servants of the Lord, at work in the Lord's harvest field.



It's worth seeing, isn't it, what it is like to labour in the Lord's service. It's not without its hardship clearly. Paul is in chains. Remember my chains he says in v 18. And even as Paul speaks of three fellow Jewish countrymen who support him, he makes the point that they are the *only* three - there is for Paul in his service always the sadness that more of his own people have not responded.

So there is physical hardship and emotional hardship in the work. But these greetings are laced with affection aren't they? There is a great spirit of kindness and mutual support and encouragement and common participation in a common cause.

Tychicus, 'fellow servant'; Aristarchus, 'fellow prisoner', fellow workers in the kingdom of God who have proved a comfort to me; he calls Onesimus, who was a slave, his 'dear brother', and the gentile physician Luke, he calls his 'dear friend'. Bonds of affection, sharing in service and suffering, working hard - the fellowship of Christ that serves the mission of Christ.

Third, Christian fellowship is fellowship in the grace of Christ.

Paul ends his letter with this brief farewell – Grace be with you. He began the letter in the same way – 1:2 Grace and peace be with you.

For Paul, there is only one source of grace and peace in the world: 'the true message of the gospel that has come to you is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world – just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace.' (1:5)

They heard and understood and believed the gospel of God's grace – they heard it from Epaphras, and the gospel of grace gave birth to this Christian community in Colossae. What is this gospel of grace? 'God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in Christ and through him to reconcile to himself all things by making peace through his blood shed on the cross' (1:19), and in v23

'This is the gospel that you heard'.

By faith in this gospel they are united with Christ in his death and raised with him in glorious resurrection.

By this gospel of God's grace and peace, they are seated with Christ in heaven and will appear with him when he appears in glory.

By faith in this gospel they are transformed into the likeness of Christ; putting off what is evil; being clothed with compassion, kindness, humility, patience and gentleness.

John Stott said in defending the vision of EFAC, 'Anglicanism is a largely historical phenomenon. Its death in any particular region or nation is not therefore to be regretted, provided that it is followed by a resurrection in a united church which preserves a Biblical Faith ... Evangelicalism on the other hand, is a theological heritage. ... The Evangelical has no wish to be a party man (sic). He desires, if he is true to his own Evangelical principles, to witness to Biblical truth as unchanging divine revelation.'¹

We are a fellowship gripped by the divine revelation of the grace and peace of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ, crucified for sin, raised in victory, ascended to the Father's right hand, and soon returning to judge the living and the dead.

It is a fellowship in Christ; it is a fellowship in the service of Christ, and it is a fellowship in the grace of Christ. Our fellowship is the gospel work of God and our fellowship serves the gospel plan of God; the gospel that all over the world is growing and bearing fruit.

My dear brothers and sisters, as we encourage one another in these short days to persevere with trust and joy in the glorious task which the Lord has entrusted to us – in a world desperate for hope and facing God's just judgement – may the grace and peace of the Lord Jesus be with you, in every way.

Kanishka Raffel
Archbishop of Sydney and President of EFAC
Australia

¹ T Dudley-Smith, John Stott – A Global Ministry, (IVP, London 2001) p 52.





Encouragements from the Familiar (or habit-forming praying brings joy to the mundane)

PETER BRAIN

Some years ago, I remember reading the sage comment from George MacDonald: ‘nothing is so deadening to the minister as the habitual dealing with the outside of things.’ I took it on board as a timely warning and came up with a proposition: ‘that familiar things used rightly can become our best friends’. Let me suggest six familiar Prayer Book prayers, which if prayed regularly with a good heart, can keep us refreshed and joyful in local church ministry. They are not instant cure-alls, but have been one reason why so many pastors have been, and remain, faithful in this noblest of all tasks: the pastoring of men and women, boys and girls, in local churches, small and large, across our nation and beyond.

Habitual work, as with any vocation, be it parenting, spousing, farming, researching, labouring, teaching, administrating, health care, business, governing, policing and the trades require the establishment and practice of healthy habits. Ministry is no different in this regard, since as noted by Logan Pearsall Smith: ‘The test of a vocation is the love of the drudgery it involves’. Without good habits the mundane can easily divert us from our calling. However, habits that bring us into God’s presence can fill us with joy as we remember the big picture enterprise God has called us to. Habits that enable us to attend to the often mundane and unexpected demands, unnoticed and unappreciated, difficult as well as the easy are vital. By drawing us into fellowship with our Chief Shepherd we will have a better chance of avoiding the deadening



Peter Brain

pictured

effects of the ‘outside of things’. We will be kept from being defined by our role, helping us to be defined by our relationship with the Lord Jesus, as adopted children of our heavenly Father. These priceless prayers can keep us from falling into the ministerial hazards of comparing ourselves with other pastor’s, their gifts, churches, prominence or personalities, releasing us to be grateful to God, content to serve where He has called us to, loving and fully committed to the people of our church and quick to encourage our fellow pastors and leaders.

The prayers are all from the 1662 Prayer Book. For clarity I have used the AAPB 1978 version of each text. Some will be better known than others. Each is memorable, and I am very grateful to God and the pastors who led our services, and glad to testify that along with the Bible, have become part of my DNA as a believer since 1964 and a pastor since 1975. I share them with my fellow Anglican pastors and have no hesitation in commending them to fellow pastors from other denominations. They are entirely consistent with the Bible and have stood the test of time in encouraging and shaping pastors and believers through the ages. My only regret is that many of my fellow evangelicals may not have benefitted as much as they might have, given the demise of the full range of prayer book services. Pastors and their congregants may have been unwittingly robbed of this rich source of habitual encouragement at a time when, for various reasons, it has been difficult to stay on track as disciples and when local church ministry has never been harder.

They may help us face John Piper’s challenge: ‘that the first responsibility of the minister each day is to pray him/herself into happiness’. I am not suggesting that they should be prayed every morning (though we could do worse), nor that they are a silver bullet, but by keeping the big picture of ministry before us in prayer, the



mundane and familiar become infused with large doses of God's grace in our dual callings, as disciples and pastors. My own conviction, borne out of experience and observation, is that these prayers, and others like them, refresh our minds, continue to captivate our hearts with love for our Saviour, ensuring our ministries are exercised 'under God', for His glory and for the people under our care (Gal 2:20, 1 Thess 2:8 and 1 Peter 5:1-4).

Habits are clearly commended in Scripture (Eph 6:17-20 with the four traditional means of bible, prayer, church and witnessing noted, 1 Tim 4:7b-8 with its emphasis on training and Gal 6:7-10 with its sowing metaphor outlined thus:

*If you sow a thought, you reap a word.
If you sow a word, you reap an act.
If you sow an act, you reap a habit.
If you sow a habit, you reap a character.
If you sow a character, you reap a destiny.*

1. Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen. (Holy Communion AAPB)

This prayer, like the double-edged sword of Heb 4:12-13 (was it in Thomas Cranmer's mind as he penned this prayer?) has awful consequences for those praying it trying to run from or hide sin from God. However, those who come humbly, find the remarkable assurance of Heb 4:14-16 filling their contrite heart with confidence before His throne of grace. This re-centering has many applications including:

Warnings to be heeded if we are lazy with our use of time, cherishing sin, thankless or cranky with those we are ministering with and to (Col 3:17,23; Psalm 66:18; Eph 4:3; Phil 2:1-5).

Encouragement to the weary pastor that God knows who and where we are (Ps 139, 121), our struggles and weaknesses (2 Cor 4:7-12; 11:28-29; 12:7-10), promising strength in our calling (1 Thess 5:24), and assurance that His Sovereign hand can always be trusted for good (Rom 5:3-5; 8:17 and 26-30).

Comfort to the pastor unsure of the congregation's acceptance. God who knows our, and their hearts fills us with confidence

that irrespective of our feelings or their attitudes toward us we are secure in His acceptance of us, as believers through justification by faith and as pastors, as dearly loved sheep and under-shepherds of His flock (Rom 5:1-2. Jn 10:11-21; 1 Pet 5:4; Rev 2:2,9,13).

Challenge to live for the praise of God alone. His praise is never fickle or mere flattery. Knowing He is in our grandstand cheering for us, come what may, means we can relax, finding our comfort from Him.

2. Almighty and most merciful Father, we have strayed from your ways like lost sheep. We have left undone what we ought to have done, and we have done what we ought not to have done. We have followed our own ways and the desires of our own hearts. We have broken your holy laws. Yet, good Lord, have mercy on us; restore those who are penitent, according to your promises declared to mankind in Jesus Christ our Lord. And grant, merciful Father, for his sake, that we may live a godly and obedient life, to the glory of your holy name. Amen. (AAPB Morning prayer p20)

The general Confession is ever so realistic since it reminds us that we who gather, stand on *unholy* ground, together. We can only come to God through repentance and faith. This hearty reminder not only keeps us in tune with the teaching of the New Testament (1 John 1:8-2:2) but ought to fill our hearts with gratitude for God's gracious pardon through Jesus Christ. Any sense of pride or one-up-man-ship evaporates as we meet together with hearts open, not only for God's nourishment and correction, but ready for any and every opportunity to serve each other, whether we like them or not. The reality is that *there is only one kind of person we are able to church with each week:* and that is a fellow sinner! The same goes for them with us! This unflattering, but joyful truth, is borne out in that all the exhortations in the New Testament to forgive, to be patient, to esteem, to love, to serve, to encourage are written to believers. This prayer will keep our expectations grounded and realistic (church is more like a hospital for sinners than a sanctuary for saints!). To be sure we are treated by God as saints (61/62 times plural in the NT) but we are to earnestly seek to become more and more like our Saviour in obedience. The local church is a crucible where our Lord grows us as we patiently exercise grace laden responsive service to fellow sinners. Every time we meet, this prayer reminds us to thank God for His grace to everyone else who has gathered with us. Grace that reminds us: we stand together on *holy ground* through Christ.



3. Clothe your ministers with righteousness: **and make your chosen people joyful. (Psalm 132:9).** Lord, save your people: **and bless your inheritance. (Psalm 28:9).**

These ‘versicles and responses’ come from Morning and Evening Prayer (AAPB p.27/32) and are two of six prayers from the Psalms that are full of encouragement and challenge for ministers. The minister is prayed for by the congregation, who in turn are reminded that they, along with their ministers, are ‘*God’s chosen people*’ and ‘*inheritance*’. Nothing is as ennobling for believers to be reminded of this high calling, or as challenging to ministers to be Godly and faithful in lifestyle and ministry. God’s chosen people will be (or at least ought to be) joyful when their minister knows they are justified (counted righteous) in God’s sight by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This will keep ministers from relying upon the size of our church, popularity or abilities, which can only cause us to push our congregations to fulfil our own agendas or be impatient with them if they won’t or can’t. It will also mean that the minister, like every other believer, should be seeking to live righteously in every aspect of their life. As pastors we are to be examples to our congregations and communities. Like Paul we want to be able to say to people: *whatever you have ... heard or seen in me-put it into practice* (Phil 4:9). Our chief desire will be *to watch our life and doctrine closely* (1 Tim 4:16). Because we will be watched, we are wise to watch our lifestyle knowing that the God who watches us, welcomes us as justified sinners and adopted children. We therefore covet this prayer of His people. It goes without saying that God’s chosen people will rejoice when their minister preaches the great truth of ‘justification by faith alone, in Christ alone, by grace alone for the glory of God alone’. No doctrine is as full of encouragement to believers as this, nor as humbling to proud and self-reliant sinners. For these reasons here is a prayer for pastors to pray for each other since it will keep us on track, encourage the Lord’s inheritance, issue forth in good works, deliver joy to all who respond and perseverance in faithful preaching when people want to foolishly justify themselves before God.

4. O God, the author and lover of peace, in knowledge of whom stands our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom; defend us your servants in all assaults of our enemies, that, surely trusting in your defence, we may not fear the power of any adversaries, through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (AAPB p.28).

There are many hazards of discipleship for all believers, not least for ministers of the gospel in the front-line ministry of local churches. There are assaults of enemies of the gospel and from the great deceiver himself. The

chief of these is to take back what we once surrendered to Jesus when we were converted and then set apart for ministry. The reminder that the One who saved us for eternal life, did so for the purposes of installing and investing us for a lifetime of consecrated sacrificial service, is timely given post-covid pressures, hedonism and public opposition. The world and Satan conspire to cause us to see our privileged call as either drudgery, joyless duty or too demanding to maintain. My attraction to this prayer has been that simple but wonderful phrase ‘*whose service is perfect freedom*’. It has served to recall me to the heart of my Saviour and Lord whose pattern, in incarnation and atonement was initiative taking, sacrificial and other-person service. This He freely gave on behalf of his people (Acts 20:27-28, Jn 3:16, 10:11, Gal 2:20), calling us to replicate and imitate in our lives (Jn 12:23-26) and find blessing in our emulating obedience (Lk 9:24, 10:20, 11:27-8, 12:32-4,37,17:29-30). The freedom of being justified by faith is a freedom to serve the Saviour. It knows nothing of laziness, self-serving or holding back (as shown by Jesus), and comes with the assurances of (Mt.28:20, 1 Cor 15:58, 2 Tim 4:6-8, 2 Peter 1:10-11, 1 Jn 3:2-3). Freedom, spoken of by Jesus in Jn 8:31-32 comes as we hold to His teaching. Like all good prayers the truths that underpin the *freedom of service* have the power to keep us joyful through every challenge of our calling to be serving children and servants. This prayer has the power to deliver us from the seductive ‘individualised personal Trinity of my Holy Wants, my Holy Needs, and my Holy Feelings’ (Eugene Peterson: Eat This Book page 31) so prevalent in our day in our culture and so easily imbibed by us believers.

5. Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give humble and hearty thanks for all your goodness and loving kindness to us and to all men; we bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your amazing love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace; and for the hope of glory. And, we pray, give us that due sense of all your mercies, that our hearts may be truly thankful and that we may declare your praise not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, now and forever. Amen (AAPB p35).

This prayer reminds us of the two main reasons why we ought to give thanks to God. The common grace gifts enjoyed by all people, summed up by ‘*our creation, preservation and all the blessings of this life*’ and the saving



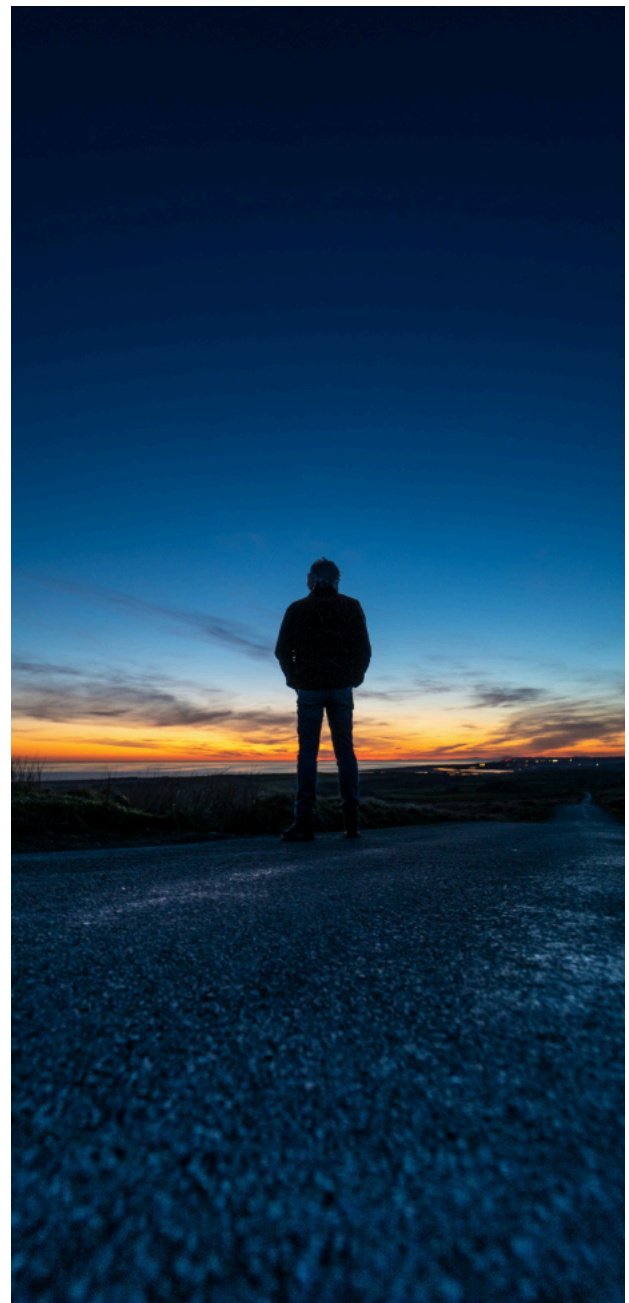
grace gift of *'the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ'* furnish us with unlimited reasons to thank God. Forgetfulness of this *command* to 'thank God' (1 Thess 5:18) is as crippling to the pastor's joy and perseverance as the disobedience of thankless pagans in Rom 1:21-23. Hearty thanks should be the heartbeat of every believer. We who are pastors have further reasons to be thankful since God calls us to be among His people sharing our lives as well as the gospel (1 Thess 2:8). As we do we get to sit and pray with fellow believers who remain faithful in chronic sickness, bereavement, temptations, troubles, trials of every kind, opposition, depression, disappointments and the snares of riches. Seeing people turn up on Sundays for worship and fellowship, give us further evidence of God's grace. Thankfulness does many things for us like: keeping us from the diabolical tendency of allowing our anxiety and disappointment over those who have not turned up to be felt by those who have! Thankfulness keeps us from the idolatry of satisfaction with gifts rather than with our generous Giver, by doubling our blessing as we share them with God. Thankfulness keeps us from the happiness killers of preciousness about money, time and housing. Thankfulness helps us navigate difficulties well, as means of our growth and as opportunities to be living sermons showing that we really do believe the wonderful doctrine of Romans 8:28 and endorse God's purpose of conforming us to the likeness of His Son (Rom 8:29).

6. Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness and put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came among us in great humility; that on the last day, when he comes again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen. Advent (AAPB p.180).

Our Lord's gracious warning that in the last days 'the love of many will grow cold...and that he/she who endures to the end will be saved' (Matt 24:12) has been echoed by fellow ministers: 'when Christ calls a man he bids him come and die' (D Bonhoeffer), 'if Jesus Christ be God and died for me, no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him' (CT Studd) and 'in the Christian life we do not stand still, we use our gifts and make progress or we lose what we have' (Leon Morris). If thankfulness bids us to look up to God, then this prayer summons us to look forward, not to our dream church call, nor to retirement, but to the consummation when: *elect from every nation...the great church victorious, shall be the church at rest*. As we are taught in Scripture, the great Day of our Lord's return in glorious majesty will be the time when the fruits of faithful living, loving preaching, Christlike example, sacrificial service, plodding pastoral care and winsome

witnessing will be displayed before our very eyes gathered around the Throne of grace. We stand in awe that God's great plan will come to fruition by His faithfulness, *and* in our small way, as our efforts play their part. Our Lord's return in glory invests our work with honour and purpose. In this way we will be kept from giving up, seeking earthly recognition, neglecting evangelism or thinking (our) ministry of the gospel futile. This eternal perspective will give texts like 1 Cor 15:58, Matt 6:20, 24:31, 42-43; Eph 5:27 and 1 Tim 6:19 new currency. Riches given to sustain and bless us (Gal 6:9-10).

Peter Brain





From the Border: Powerful Partnerships Bearing Fruit from Burden

JESSICA BOONE

Powerful partnerships between Anglican churches are bringing Christ's love to some of the most vulnerable communities.

Since the military coup in February 2021, fighting has intensified in Myanmar between the military and insurgents. It continues to have widespread, devastating effects across the country, including severe economic hardship, shortage of health services, and people unable to meet their basic needs. These hardships are particularly acute for the Karen minority, a marginalised Christian people group who also face persecution and have few options for earning an income. Karen and Karenni states have seen some of the most intense levels of fighting, displacement, and humanitarian need in the country.

There are tens of thousands of Karen people internally displaced in Myanmar or living as refugees along the Thai-Myanmar border. New waves of refugees are prompted by flare-ups in the fighting and aerial strikes. Many flee into the jungle and then make their way to refugee camps like Mae La for safety. Mae La is the largest of nine refugee camps in Thailand, hosting around 34,000 refugees of all religions.



Jessica Boone

pictured

Through ARDFA, churches from the Melbourne and Bendigo Dioceses, and St. Alban's in WA, have been loving the Karen people in their plight, supporting the Diocese of Hpa-an in partnership with the Mothers Union (MU) and Karen Anglican Ministry at the Border (KAMB), a group of churches established on the Thai-Myanmar border area by Anglican evangelists. KAMB aims to show Christ's love as they help people in need, so as to *"bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ"* (Galatians 6:2).

Though their resources are limited, KAMB has worked tirelessly to bring relief to those displaced along the border, including remote areas of the jungle, who often lack food, clean water, and other essentials. They also play a major role in caring for new refugee arrivals into Thailand, many of whom experience trauma and are left desolate after having to flee their homes so quickly. These new arrivals come with very little yet need to be able to support their families to survive.

These ministries move beyond simply meeting immediate needs. They're also securing more lasting and holistic transformations and building sustainability in the lives of the Karen. In Myanmar, ARDFA's plantation project in the remote village of Htee Ka Haw has provided the local people with the resources they need to generate income. In Thailand, land was purchased for St Luke's Toh Ta Anglican Church with help from the Bendigo Cathedral. ARDFA raised funds to build a kitchen and dining hall that is serving the church and its community. The annual School of Biblical Theology Conference has seen Karen Christians strengthened for ministry with training in preaching, leadership, and teaching, assisted over the years by the Rev Marc Dale and other visiting teachers from Australia.



By helping new arrivals in Thailand to start microenterprises, refugees are empowered to provide for their families, become self-sustaining, and maintain their independence and dignity.

Naw Kyi Kyi Win rejoices that, *“by the grace of God, the project is going well! As we help the people in need, we serve the Lord.”* She is one of the many Christians who are serving the refugee community through the New Arrivals Project.

From his recent visit, the Rev Marc Dale from St. Alban’s Anglican Church, WA, reports that *“when they arrive they get a month of food and capital... People have been set up with animal husbandry; weaving has been successful too. There are many food stalls - the camp is so big, it is its own economy!”*

In this bustling camp, Naw Toe Pwae’s ducks are multiplying. Meanwhile, Naw Mu Phaw received 500 Baht (\$20 AUD) for one shirt that she had woven, which is helping to meet her family’s needs. On the profits of his family’s weaving, Saw John Htoo Say was able to build a house. Saw Poe Law Eh bought a guitar with his start-up capital and now has 20 people attending his music class. Some of his students are now serving in the church worship band. Saw Nu Say is making cement stoves and selling them. Naw Ray Htoo attempted to expand her shop to sell drinks. It worked, and now she is sewing clothes as well, having leased a sewing machine from St. John’s MU for 200 Baht.

Life in a refugee camp is difficult for anyone, but for people with a disability, the challenge is compounded. Tragically, when he was just one month old, Saw Eh K'tu Moo (now 28) became very sick and lost the use of his legs. He walks on his knees and uses both hands to move about. Using the toilet is most difficult, as he has to go downstairs and outside. It is particularly hard for him during the rainy season. Our partners at St. John’s church report that, *“his mother brought him to Mae La for safety as he cannot run when something happens. She went back to Myanmar to bring the other children.”*

The next development in ARDFA’s work is to improve the daily lives of refugees with disabilities. Support includes nutritional food, toiletries, medication, disability aids, accessible toilets suited to their needs, and assistance to attend regular medical appointments.

Yet, amongst the hardship, ministry is fruitful and there is much to praise God for. The vulnerable are being cared for by brothers and sisters they’ve never met. Christians are supporting and serving one another as they rebuild their lives. Churches are being strengthened and evangelism is everywhere. People are coming to faith and are being baptised. Refugees are turning to Christ as they encounter Christians, witness their faith, and receive gospel-motivated love. Please keep Myanmar, its people, and our partners in your prayers.

Jessica Boone, ARDFA





Evidence and Faith

PAUL BARNETT

My aim in this essay is to reflect on Paul as the earliest evidence for the birth of the church. His encyclical to churches in Galatia (central Türkiye) is his earliest written text and the earliest historical reference to Christianity. With less probability some argue for a date a few years later, although this doesn't affect the force of my argument.

In this letter we have detailed accounts from his persecution of the church in c. 34 to the writing of the letter in c. 48 in Antioch in Syria. In between those dates we learn of God's call to the persecutor to become the proclaimer of the Son of God among the Gentiles.

The former Pharisee who had attempted to destroy the church in Jerusalem became the most famous proclaimer of the Christian message, establishing churches "in an arc from Jerusalem to Illyricum." This persecutor-become-proclaimer is a fact of history, scarcely able to be denied. His surviving letters are testament to his radical *volte-face*.

POSTMODERNISM

For many years now western culture, our culture, has been deeply influenced by "Postmodernism." Back in the early 1980s a Professor of English Literature told me that the postmodern way of looking at life was going to change our culture. It will be about subjectivity, she said, how *I* feel, how *I* see things. The notion of objectivity, of what is there, will give way to personal *feelings* as the dominant source of reality. Postmodernism reinforces the self, the "me first" mindset. It runs contrary to the idea of God-given love, a way of life that is *unselfish*, "*others-centred*." These were our culture's (more or less) agreed values before the rise of Postmodernism and its child, Woke.

EVIDENCE

Evidence is fundamental to life — juries and judges determine guilt or innocence based on sworn evidence; doctors base diagnosis and prescription on blood tests and scans; engineers and architects construct buildings based on surveyors' precise measurements; the list goes on. The objective realities of daily life challenge the core assertions of Postmodernism. It is right, however, that evidence is challenged, to bring us closer to the truth. Otherwise, politics and ideology get in the way. Freedom of speech is important.



Paul Barnett

pictured

EVIDENCE IN GALATIANS

Dates are important for evidence. The Galatians letter is informative.

- 33 The year of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.
- 34 Paul persecuted believers in Jerusalem. Outside Damascus God "called" him to preach his Son among the Gentiles.
- 36/7 He returned to Jerusalem now as a believer, lodged with Cephas, "saw" James.

Assisted by dates from Luke 3:1-2, Acts 18:1, and Galatians 2:1 we calculate that Paul launched his persecutions in the year 34, that he was in Damascus-Arabia-Damascus 34-36, that he returned to Jerusalem in 36/7, and moved to Syria-Cilicia in 37.

His Letter to the Galatians is his defence against ultra-conservatively Jewish Christians in Jerusalem who sought to discredit his message of "grace" to Gentiles and overturn his influence among the Galatians.

AD 34 PAUL ATTEMPTED TO DESTROY THE CHURCH

Paul was a distinguished younger scholar in Jerusalem.

I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. Galatians 1:13-14

Paul's parents brought him as a teenager from Tarsus to Jerusalem and enrolled him in the school of Rabbi Gamaliel, the greatest scholar of that generation.

Paul, the young rabbi, was distinguished in and "zealous" for "the traditions" of the great rabbis from earlier generations. He was also a "man of zeal," a zealous



persecutor of the church, which he attempted “violently” to “destroy.”

- He had participated in (possibly led?) the stoning of Stephen for blasphemy.
- He was the high priest’s “hatchet-man” in the flogging of Christians in the synagogues in Jerusalem to drive them from the city, which he did.
- Then he was sent by the high priest to round up and extradite believers from Damascus.

PAUL, CALLED BY GOD TO PROCLAIM HIS SON AMONG THE GENTILES

Paul reminds the Galatians of the astonishing fact of his “calling” from learned young scholar and violent persecutor to an apostle spreading the message about Jesus to the nations of the world:

But when he who had set me apart before I was born and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles...
Galatians 1:15–16

He re-tells his story: the astonishing volte-face of the violent young man. Outside Damascus God intervened to reveal to Paul that Jesus was not a false Messiah but the Son of God, whom Paul was now to “proclaim among the Gentiles,” that is, throughout the Roman world.

AD 34-36/7 PAUL A WANDERING FUGITIVE

He adds

I did not immediately consult with anyone; nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia and returned again to Damascus. Galatians 1:16–17

Note the sequence (covering 3 years):

- Jerusalem
- Damascus
- Arabia (i.e., Nabatea, capital Petra)
- Damascus
- Jerusalem (where he met with those who were “apostles before [him])”

Evidently Paul began proclaiming this message and was constantly on the move to evade capture. By referring to “apostles before me” Paul understood himself also now

to be an apostle, one “sent” by God, bearing the authority of God.

AD 36/7 PAUL IN JERUSALEM

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas [i.e., Peter] and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord’s brother. (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!) Galatians 1:18–20

Chronology is critical regarding evidence. When he says, “after three years I went up to Jerusalem” we are now in the year 36/7 (counting part years as full years, as the Jews did).

So, in the year 36/7 (only 3 to 4 years after Jesus) we learn:

- Cephas (Peter) was the head of the church in Jerusalem
- James the Lord’s brother was there, now a believer, 2nd leader after Cephas
- And that there were “other apostles”

Notice what was in place in the year 36/7, back-to-back with Jesus, 33:

The church of God (an institution)	1:11
Cephas the leader	1:18
James, brother of the Lord, 2nd in charge	1:19
Apostles (a group)	1:19

These are definable entities that were there in 36/7, but most likely going back to Jesus. The historical figure of Jesus was followed immediately by the birth of the church. Not years after, but immediately (50 days) after.

PAUL WITH CEPHAS AND JAMES IN JERUSALEM

Notice that Paul “stayed with” with Cephas in Jerusalem for 15 days. Paul had opportunity to learn extensively about Jesus: his disciples, his teachings, miracles, death, resurrection.

Notice, too, that in Jerusalem he “saw” James, brother of the Lord? From James, younger brother of Jesus, Paul had opportunity to know about the boyhood and early manhood of Jesus.

Thus, from James and Cephas Paul had opportunity the learn about Jesus in continuity, from boyhood, to adulthood, to his baptism, to his call of the twelve, to his miracles, teachings, his trials, the Last Supper, his crucifixion, and his resurrection.

Rudolph Bultmann, possibly the most famous New Testament scholar in the first half of last century, said



that Paul only knew about Jesus as a mythical, heavenly ahistorical figure. Paul's connections with James, brother of the Lord, and Cephas, leading disciple of the Lord tell a different story. Like many, Bultmann was controlled by his existential philosophy, not history-based evidence. It has taken decades to dislodge Bultmann's influence, thanks mainly to his fellow-German, Martin Hengel.

We see how much "raw" history emerges from Paul's defence to his critics? Furthermore, he must be careful since his critics will be quick to fault him.

It is likely that while in Jerusalem Paul "received" the Last Supper "tradition" that he was to "deliver" later to the churches he established.

THE CHURCHES IN JUDEA

There is more:

In 36/7, before Paul left Jerusalem for Tarsus in Syria and Cilicia he observes:

*Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.
And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.
They only were bearing it said,
"He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy."* Galatians 1:21–26

By the year 36/7 there were now churches in the wider province of Judea. This diaspora of believers was the result of Paul's earlier persecutions in Jerusalem. Not only were there disciples in the capital Jerusalem, but they were also scattered outside the capital. These churches had been formed by Christians in Jerusalem who had fled from Paul.

Note their words,

"He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy."

In other words, in that year 34 the church's "faith" was there as an entity to be destroyed.

Paul had attempted to destroy both the church of God and its faith, its doctrine.

It so happens that Paul quotes some words that sound like a faith statement, one that Paul may have learned from Cephas, James, and other apostles in Jerusalem. This is not certain but is at least probable.

*But when the fullness of time had come,
God sent forth his Son,*

*born of woman, born under the law,
to redeem those who were under the law,
so that we might receive adoption as sons,
and because you are sons,
God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying,
"Abba! Father!"* Galatians 4:4–6

In these few words Paul makes a "faith" statement:

- That is Trinitarian: The "Abba Father," his Son, and the Spirit of his Son
- That is fulfilment-focused: "when the fullness of time had come"
- That is "incarnational": God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law
- That is redemptive: to redeem those who were under the law
- That is adoptive: that we might receive adoption as sons
- That is Holy Spirit-centric: God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

It is likely that Paul's words resembled the "faith" of the church in Jerusalem that he had attempted to destroy.

From whom did he learn it? Most likely from Cephas.

EVIDENCE FROM GALATIANS

What we have here in Galatians, this earliest of letters, is evidence.

- Of an institution, the church of God, that Paul had attempted to destroy
- Of that church's faith, likely trinitarian, that Paul had attempted to destroy
- Of believers also in Damascus to be arrested, as inferred
- Of its leaders Cephas with whom he stayed, and James, brother of the Lord
- Of the church's office bearers, the apostles
- Of churches scattered from Jerusalem in Judea





This is evidence that isn't set out to be evidence for us, but for Paul's congregants in Galatia, but which, notwithstanding, proves to be evidence for us.

It is not a "gospel," a narrative to tell the Jesus story. That is another historical-literary genre.

PAUL HAD TO BE METICULOUS

Evidence emerges incidentally from Galatians, even accidentally. Therefore, it is almost certain factually. Paul is appealing to details that would not be open to question.

All evidence is to be tested. Opposing lawyers test evidence before a judge and jury. Scientists publish papers critical of other evidence. Evidence testing is dynamic.

Paul's evidence had to be meticulous. He was painfully aware of having dedicated, informed opponents. His statements about the church of God in Jerusalem, Cephas as leader, James as 2nd leader, the fact of other apostles and, very importantly, his references to "after three years," and later "after fourteen years." His opponents must not be able to fault any detail, otherwise he would have been discredited.

So, those opponents are "out of screen" poised ready to point out any error. Although unseen they were "a testing" of the accuracy and integrity of his evidence. It is Paul's carefully crafted defence of his own apostolic ministry. He dare not make a mistake or exaggerate or his opponents will discredit him.

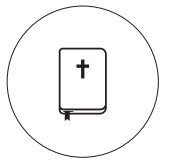
So, this is evidence designed for another purpose: Paul's own defence back then. For us it is "raw" evidence that has the effect of assuring us of the factual basis of the church in Jerusalem, and its Faith.

FINALLY

We need to be aware of the objective in this era of unbelieving Postmodernism. It doesn't matter what various modern-day sceptics say, the evidence for Christian origins is there, evidence that is credible for a reasonable person to accept as the conscientious basis for Christian faith.

Bishop Paul Barnett is the former Bishop of North Sydney and has lectured at Moore College for many decades. He is the author of many books and is married to Anita.





The Transfiguration: Have We Missed the Point?

(MATTHEW 17:1-8; MARK 9:2-8; LUKE 9:28-36)

KYM SMITH

How wonderful was the transfiguration; in view of three of his disciples, Peter, James and John, Jesus was transfigured and met with two, similarly glorified giants of the faith, Moses and Elijah. The two men spoke with Jesus about his ‘exodus’, his departure via crucifixion which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem, to which he had set his face (Lk 9:51). The disciples had the added witness of the Father’s voice confirming that Jesus was, indeed, his beloved Son. That is how we have always understood the transfiguration, but have we missed something? This article suggests that we have missed something, and not just something; if correct, we have missed the main point of that amazing event.¹

The proposition here is that the reason for Moses and Elijah’s appearance was not primarily to encourage Jesus towards the cross. They may have done that but given that darkest of deeds that he was facing, even those great men could not provide the level of encouragement he needed. The task given to Moses and Elijah was to greet Jesus and, perhaps, to open up the topic (of which Jesus was already aware – e.g. Mt 16:21; Mk 8:31; Lk 9:21-22). Without negating all that those men represented in the Law and the Prophets, however, they were, essentially, the welcoming committee; their task was to usher Jesus in to the only One who could encourage him sufficiently, the One who from all eternity planned that he should go to the cross, his heavenly Father.

Jesus invited his inner three disciples to witness what was designed for them to see. What they did see – not only Jesus glorified but Moses and Elijah glorified with him – and what they heard, the voice of the Father, would have buoyed their witness and carried them through much suffering in their lives and ministries (2 Pet 1:16-18).

Being transfigured and tasting something of the glory which he had with the Father before the foundation of the world (cf. Jn 17:5) certainly would have been a help but, again, that was not the primary purpose for Jesus

¹ If what I am suggesting that we have missed is correct, then from the earliest times we have missed what the transfiguration was all about. Because it is such a major matter and makes so much sense of the event, the fact that the commentaries (at least the ones I have looked at) are silent on it can only mean that we have not seen it or, more likely, we have forgotten it for a very, very long time.

being glorified. Rather, he was transfigured to clothe him appropriately to go before his Father ‘...who dwells in unapproachable light’ (1 Tim 6:16).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

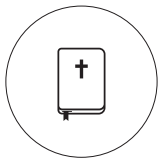
If we understand Eden, the garden of God (Ez 28:13), not just as a productive plot but the sanctuary of the Lord, the place he provided so that those he made in his own image could meet and fellowship with him, then it must have been a holy place, radiating with the glory (i.e., the holiness) of God (cf. the tabernacle [Ex 40:34-38] and Solomon’s temple [1 Ki 8:10-11]). In that case, Adam had to be sanctified before he could dwell in the garden/sanctuary. Made outside of the garden (i.e., to the west of it – Gen 2:8), Adam was clean (in the biblical sense – Lev 10:10) and without sin or fault. However, clean was not sufficient to dwell with the Lord, he needed to be holy, but only God is holy. To enable him to enter Eden, then, the Lord breathed into him the breath of life (Gen 2:7; cf. Jn 20:22). This was not just air, if it was that at all, but the Holy Spirit (Heb. And Gk., Spirit=breath=wind).¹ Receiving the Spirit, Adam was sanctified and the suggestion here is that he was clothed with glory (as per the transfiguration). Only after this was he placed in the garden (Gen 2:8).²

When Moses asked to see the glory of the Lord, the Lord – no doubt the pre-incarnate Son – told Moses that no one could see his face and live (Ex 33:18-20). No one could look on the fullness of his glory, his holiness made visible, and survive it. We know that after Moses was allowed to see the tail end of the Lord’s glory, his skin shone (Ex 34:29). It may be that something of the Lord’s glory flowed over to the prophet; it is more likely, however, that Moses was granted the glory he needed so that he could safely see what he did of the Lord’s glory, receding as it was (Ex 33:21-23).

For the faithful who remain to see the Lord when he returns in glory (Mk 13:26), they will need to be glorified to meet him. To be confronted with the Lord in glory and not share his glory would be terrifying (Rev 6:12-17). In

¹ Humanity was made to be in-dwelt by the Holy Spirit; it is part of what it is to be made in the image of God.

² Eve, having been sanctified in Adam, was also clothed in glory (i.e., our primal parents’ nakedness in the garden/sanctuary was not the nakedness they later experienced, as have all who followed – Gen 2:25; cf. 2 Cor 5:1-5). The truth of this ‘garment’ of glory is reinforced by the fact that when Adam and Eve rejected the holiness given to them, when they listened to another voice and embraced evil (Gen 3:1-6), God withdrew from them his Holy Spirit and, with that, stripped away the glory. Now, in their dread-full nakedness, they tried to cover themselves but fig leaves were no substitute for the glory of God (Gen 3:7). Without that glory, without holiness, they could not remain in the garden/sanctuary and were expelled (Gen 3:22-24).



his first letter, John says that when the Lord appears, those who are children of the Father will see him (the Son) ‘as he is’ (i.e., in glory). How is it that they will be able to do that? They will be able to do that because they ‘shall be like him’ (1 Jn 3:2); they, too, will be glorified, ‘in the twinkling of an eye’ (1 Cor 15:51-53; Phil 3:20-21). They will continue in that glory into eternity as they dwell with the glorified Son (Rev 1:12-16) and ‘the Father of lights’ (Jas 1:17).

The point of this is that to come into the presence of the Holy One, one has to be holy (Heb 12:14) and, as creatures, we need the God who is holy to provide that.¹

If we return to the transfiguration, even the Son of God could not be presented to the Father without being clothed in glory. He may have been without sin but he came ‘in the likeness of sinful flesh’ (Rom 8:3) and the likeness of sinful flesh was not appropriate to go before the Father (cf. the man lacking the wedding garment – Mt 22:11-14).

The transfiguration, then, as wonderful an experience as it was for the disciples to witness, as useful as a reminder of his glory that it was for Jesus and as encouraging as those two giants of the faith may have been, the occasion was not primarily for those purposes. It was to make Jesus presentable so that, facing the horror of the cross, he could go in to the Father and receive the encouragement he needed to face it unflinchingly,² encouragement only the Father could provide.³

EVIDENCE FROM THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

The sequence of events must have been something like the following.

Jesus took Peter, James and John to the top of a hill to witness what he knew was about to take place. Having reached the summit, Jesus was praying alone in anticipation of the imminent encounter and, as he did so, he was transfigured (Mt 17:2; Mk 9:2-3; Lk 9:29). With

¹ By God’s grace, we who are in Christ have already been sanctified but what we are speaking about here is not where we stand by faith but actually standing in the visible presence of the God of glory.

² It is often said that Jesus did ‘flinch’ in Gethsemane, that he was hoping for some way other than the cross when he asked his Father to ‘remove this cup from me’ (Lk 22:42). But not so; in the garden his soul was “...very sorrowful, even to death” (Mk 14:34). With the weight of the sin of the world crushing him, his concern was that he would die in the garden and not reach the cross; it was that ‘cup’ (‘hour’ in Mk 14:35) that Jesus wanted removed. His prayer was answered, the agony was not reduced but an angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him through it (Lk 22:43-44, see also Heb 5:7).

³ Was the Lord’s caution to Moses (Ex 33:20) applicable for the Lord himself appearing un-glorified before the Father?

the disciples watching on, Moses and Elijah ‘appeared to them’ (Mt 17:3; Mk 9:4; Lk 9:30-31). The two men materialised; they stepped from the heavenly realms into this physical world.¹

The disciples were terrified as they were confronted with the radiant holiness of God but, wanting to be useful, Peter offered their services to assemble some makeshift dwellings (Mt 17:4; Mk 9:5-6; Lk 9:33).

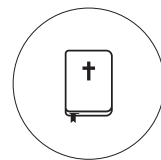
We must note here that it was as Jesus, Moses and Elijah were conversing together that the bright cloud appeared; not until after they had been speaking did it come and overshadow them (Mt 17:3-5; Mk 9:4-7; Lk 9:31-34).

That much was amazing and could have provided some encouragement before the ancient pair stepped back into the unseen spheres and Jesus’ glory faded. But the cloud which was apparently unnecessary for the appearing of Moses and Elijah and, surely, unnecessary for their disappearing (cf. Lk 24:30-31), came and embraced the whole party. The cloud represented the coming of the fourth (or seventh if we include the disciples) and main character, the Father.² The voice from the cloud (Mt 17:5; Mk 9:7; Lk 9:35) did not necessarily mean that the Father

¹ Not that the spiritual/heavenly realms are not substantial for those who dwell there: note in 2 Corinthians 5:1-5 the ‘buildings’ they inhabit compared with the ‘tents’ in which we of this age dwell (see also 2 Cor 12:2-3). Though not yet ascended and glorified, Jesus would also step from the unseen realms into the seen in his post-resurrection appearances (e.g. Jn 20:19, 26).

² The bright cloud must have been hiding the Father or, at least, an open entrance into the realms of glory and so, to the Father. A cloud often revealed as it concealed the glory of the Lord, declaring that the Lord was present (e.g. Ex 34:5; 40:34-38; 1 Ki 8:10-11; Acts 1:9).





was only meters away but it certainly revealed whom Jesus had entered the cloud to see.

Luke indicates that they all entered the cloud (Lk 9:34) but if that were so, the three disciples would have remained at its outer edges. Again, in Luke, just before the cloud arrived, we are told, ‘...the men were parting from him’ (Lk 9:33). Was that the three men parting from Peter (and the others) or Moses and Elijah parting from Jesus? If it was the former, the Old Testament saints were escorting Jesus into the cloud and so, to the Father. If the latter, the two were either preceding Jesus, perhaps to ‘announce’ him to his Father (not that the Father would have needed any introduction) or leaving him as he went before the Father alone.

At that moment, to the disciples at the fringes of the cloud, the Father spoke from the cloud, “This is my Son, my Chosen One, listen to him” (Lk 9:35). From this point, after falling on their faces terrified, the disciples slept (Mt 17:6); no doubt it was a God-induced slumber (cf. the guards of Mt 28:2-4; Acts 5:17-23 and 12:5-19). How long they slept they would not have known. What was happening in the heavenlies was according to a different time scheme but the disciples dozed for as long as it took for Jesus to complete his audience with the Father, to return to the mountain top (possibly escorted), for the cloud to be withdrawn, for Moses and Elijah to exit and for Jesus’ glory to fade.

When it was appropriate (he may have spent more time in prayer), Jesus woke the disciples (Mt 17:7). Because it was a divinely induced sleep it seemed to them to have taken no time at all and so they were surprised when they looked up and all was as it had been before Jesus was transfigured (Mt 17:8; Mk 9:8; Lk 9:36).

SUPPORT FROM EYEWITNESSES (2 PET 1:16-18)

In his second letter, Peter reported that ‘...we were eyewitnesses of this (Jesus’) majesty’ (2 Pet 1:16). The use of ‘we’ here is significant. By the time he wrote (probably mid to late 64), Peter knew his own time was short (2 Pet 1:14) and James was long dead, he was executed by Herod Agrippa in AD44 (Acts 12:1-2). The ‘we’, then, must have meant him (Peter) and John. Were the two apostles working in collaboration at that time? If so, it was known to his readers.

What is particularly significant in Peter’s account is that he did not mention Moses and Elijah. If the main reason for the transfiguration was for Jesus to meet and be encouraged by those two men, the apostle was strangely silent about it. Not mentioning them suggests that their

appearance was not what the event was about. Peter may not have recorded that Jesus was taken in to see the Father but he does – to the exclusion of Moses and Elijah – mention that Jesus ‘...received honour and glory from God the Father’ and that the Father audibly bore witness to his Son. Peter’s silence must be accounted for. Clearly, the transfiguration was primarily about Jesus and his Father.

CONCLUSION

As encouraging as our understanding of the transfiguration has been with Jesus encountering Moses and Elijah, what he required was more than a conversation with those great men. Only the Father could give him the love, the comfort and the resolve that was necessary. Having received all that he needed from the Father, Jesus, laying aside his glory again (cf. Phil 2:5-8), descended from the mountain, strengthened and emboldened to continue to the cross.

Kym Smith has worked in Adelaide as a parish priest and as chaplain in both school and hospital settings. Now retired, he is enjoying more time investigating a variety of biblical and theological issues and publishing his findings.





Spiritual Stress in Ministry

RICHARD HARVEY

I must apologise that it has taken me 2 years to respond to the important issue in Essentials, Summer 2022 on stress in ministry. The emphases on supervision (Preston, Kettleton), a supportive community (Morse) and looking to Jesus (King) were very helpful. However, I was surprised by a glaring omission. No-one noted that we do not minister in a spiritually neutral environment. Comer quotes Willard that ‘Hurry is the great enemy of the spiritual life...’ (p 17). By contrast, the NT would affirm that spiritual evil is. Consider the following.

1. In the OT, there are less than 10 references to spiritual evil such as unclean spirits. By contrast, most books in the NT contain references to evil spirits. The exceptions would appear to be Titus, Philemon and 2 and 3 John.

2. In Mt 6:13, we ask God to deliver us not from some sort of generalised evil but from ‘the evil one’, Satan.

3. In the OT, spiritual evil can still appear in God’s presence in heaven eg. Job 1-2 and Zech 3. In the NT, all recorded interactions between deity and spiritual evil happen on earth; the most obvious being Satan tempting Jesus (Mt 4 etc). Despite Revelation being filled with scenes of heaven, there is nothing similar, most likely because evil has been expelled from heaven (Lk 10:18, Rev 12:9). While the timing of this is heavily disputed, I believe that it happened around the time of the Massacre of the Innocents (Mt 2).

4. While Satan is called ‘the accuser of the brethren’ (Rev 12:10), his accusations in Job and Zechariah are unsuccessful and he makes no recorded accusations in the NT. As though an all-knowing God needs the prince of evil to accuse God’s own people! There may be some irony in calling Satan an accuser: a prosecutor who cannot make a charge stick.

5. While the OT is filled with warnings against idolatry and the NT does warn against idolatry (1 Cor 10, 1 Jn 5:21, etc), the most severe warnings are against evil itself (1 Pet 5:8 ‘Resist him [the devil]...’).

6. In summary, there has been a big change from the OT to the NT. Evil is still very real and malicious but can no longer access heaven so all its fury is directed against God’s people. This is a particular problem for evangelicals as we want to help people move from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light (Col 1:13, 1 Pet 2:9, etc). Evil does not take this at all well and if we are not obedient to what the NT says about resisting evil then our marriage partners, our families and ourselves will be targets.

What should we then do?

1. A necessary first step is to remove our cultural blinkers which say that this sort of thing does not exist in Australia. It most certainly does. Or, that evil was so decisively defeated at the cross that it is no longer a threat. The NT reached its final written form decades after the first Easter and still includes the most graphic warnings about evil. The cross provides the tools for dealing with evil and we have a responsibility to use them.

2. Our theology must be Biblical, in particular our belief in Jesus’ redemptive death and bodily resurrection

and the gift of the Holy Spirit. If you have a face to face confrontation in the early hours of the morning with an unclean spirit, you cannot say to them, 'Liberal theology says that you don't exist.'!

3. Unconfessed sin and unforgiveness weaken our spiritual authority and thus our ability to resist evil. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal these things to us and then deal with them.

4. We must check our obedience to the fourth commandment to honour parents, which is the first one with a promise (Eph 6). This requires honouring parents, repenting of any sin against them and renouncing their sins. I have seen this lead to visible, overnight healing without that healing even being prayed for. This is vital where parents and other ancestors have been involved in activities inconsistent with the gospel.

5. I am also concerned that accounts of defeating evil in Jesus' name are derided as 'war stories' (thankfully not in Essentials). When I started as an aged care chaplain, we had a couple of apparitions which made one

corridor unusable by staff at night. Answering residents' buzzers then required a much longer route, where any delay could have serious even fatal consequences. The other chaplain and I sat in the chapel and said that these things could either come to us and explain their right to be there or go straight to Jesus, never to return. We never saw them again. This was a valuable demonstration of Jesus' authority over evil,

Arranging supervision and supportive communities must never take the place of obeying the NT's clear instructions on resisting evil. We can do both and a good place to start is to write down every NT command about resisting evil and make sure that we are being obedient. It is also vital that we ask God to guide us to someone with experience in this area as mistakes can be costly. CS Lewis warned us many years ago of two equal but opposite dangers – either being obsessed with evil or completely ignoring it. Neither is helpful but if we are willing, God can open our eyes to this whole realm and show us his authority over evil.

Revd Dr Richard Harvey.



Timothy Keller: His Spiritual and Intellectual Formation

COLIN HANSEN

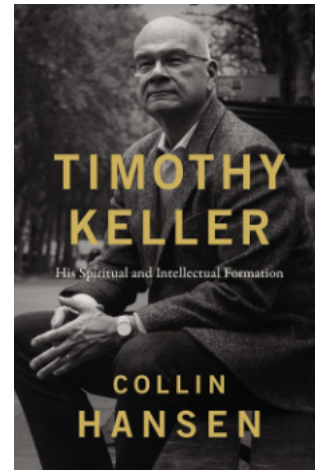
HarperCollins Religious US, 2023

REVIEWED BY RHYS BEZZANT

God in Gotham? It wasn't too long ago that the ideas of thriving Christian ministry and downtown New York City were poles apart. No new church had been built in Manhattan for 40 years, that is until 2012 when Redeemer Presbyterian Church opened a new building. Of course, several of its campuses scattered around the city still rent premises. Indeed, one of their plants meets in the auditorium of the New York Society for Ethical Culture, a 19th century atheist society which is happy to rent out their lecture theatre on Sundays. But today in some circles, New York has become synonymous with refreshed ways of engaging post-Christian culture. If it is possible there, it is possible anywhere. The leadership provided by Tim Keller at Redeemer in NYC has been game changing.

In his recently published biography, Collin Hansen has written a magnificent survey not essentially of Keller's life but of the intellectual and spiritual influences which profoundly shaped him. It was truly absorbing. We learn about his education, mentors, and capacious reading. These took a bookish undergraduate, who grew up in a legalistic Christian home, and made of him a leading apologist, evangelist, and pastor in the later 20th and early 21st century. To be honest, I was sceptical of the project to publish a biography not a year after Keller's death from pancreatic cancer in 2023. But it succeeds brilliantly because of its modest aspirations. A journalist, Hansen's prose was crisp, the chapter and section divisions roughly following Keller's career were helpfully focused, and his conclusions judicious. A full-scale biography awaits.

Keller became a Christian and cut his teeth in student ministry with the Inter-Varsity Fellowship at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania during the late and turbulent 1960s. He trained for the ministry at Gordon-Conwell in Massachusetts, not long after the amalgamation of the two schools (incidentally led by former Ridley principal Stuart Barton Babbage). Perhaps surprisingly, he then took up a Presbyterian pastorate in a working-class town, Hopewell, Virginia, whose claim to fame was advertised on its road sign: "Welcome to Hopewell, chemical capital of the South." His professorial style was successfully matched to a social demographic hungry to know the Scriptures. He learnt how to communicate in new ways. He was subsequently called to teach preaching at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, after which he took up the



reigns of a church plant in Manhattan in 1989, and stayed there for the remainder of his ministry life. His impact in Australia has been significant, for the church-planting organisation City to City was his brainchild.

Hansen does well not just to name the thinkers who have influenced Keller, but also summarises their theological commitments and outlines the story of their intellectual transmission. Keller's legalism was transformed by reading Luther on the nature of grace, and he read the Puritans voraciously to discover how they understood the dynamics of the spiritual life. One of his most significant theological interlocutors has been Jonathan Edwards, 18th century pastor in Massachusetts whose project was to present the Christian faith using the category of beauty and thereby to address the human head, and heart, and hands together. In our fragmented world, this vision of harmony has proved particularly useful in Keller's engagement with culture.

After his wife Kathy introduced him to the writings of the Inklings, Keller lived in the worlds of Narnia and of the Rings. These fuelled his commitment to the imagination as a strategy to renew society, and to refresh the church's engagement with the cities of this world around it. Indeed, Kathy had a correspondence with CS Lewis from when she was a young girl! Many lecturers impacted Keller, for example Ed Clowney, Elisabeth Elliot, Richard Lovelace, and RC Sproul. His early Arminian sentiments were replaced with more self-consciously Reformed commitments during his theological education. In later life, he became friends with sociologist James Davison Hunter at the University of Virginia, with whom he investigated how any social movement might make an impact in the late modern world. The answer: networks. Keller was good at this.

His theological style was irenic and coalition building. No wonder he helped found the Gospel Coalition. His extraordinary church-planting and church health manual, *Center Church*, amply demonstrates his spiritual and ecclesiological vision. He wanted to join doctrinal clarity, personal piety, and cultural engagement, which together



would shape the church's witness and outreach. His theoretical and practical approach to diaconal ministries, in Hopewell or in Manhattan, was a significant element in his missional thinking. Of course, Keller's prodigious output in publications is matched by his homiletical legacy. He did not set out to be a megachurch pastor, but perhaps that is at the heart of his success. He glories in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which "provides a non-oppressive absolute truth, one that provides a norm outside of ourselves as the way to escape relativism and selfish individualism, yet one that cannot be used to

oppress others" (p250). We need the insights Keller gleaned from his reflection.

This was first published in The Melbourne Anglicans

The Reverend Canon Dr Rhys Bezzant is senior lecturer in Church History and dean of the Anglican Institute at Ridley College Melbourne and has recently been announced as the new Principal of Ridley College from 2025.



The Coming of the Holy Spirit

PHILLIP JENSEN

Matthias Media, Australia, 2022

REVIEWED BY MATT JACOBS



Having become a Christian as a teenager in the mid-90's, one of the biggest debates I had to navigate was over the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Some of my Christian friends spoke about the Spirit a lot — the amazing things that happened at their churches, and the experiences they claimed to have. Other Christian friends rarely spoke about the Spirit — their focus was all on Jesus and the Bible. What stood out to me was the tension, and sometimes outright hostility between those two groups. The big questions for me weren't just, "who is right?", but more personally, "what if I don't feel anything particularly 'spiritual' in my life? What if I don't have 'spiritual' experiences... am I missing out on something? Am I not really a Christian?"

How I wish I had a book like Phillip Jensen's *The Coming of the Holy Spirit* to help me at the time. Though at first it felt a little disappointing: where's the controversy? Where are the spicy take-downs of views he disagrees with? Wisely, right in the introduction, Jensen points out that 'these issues may be so important to us, or may loom so large in our vision, that we can't see around them to what God has actually said to us about the Holy Spirit. We may be so intent on solving our current problems and answering our burning questions that we fail to hear what God is saying to us though his word.' (p7). And that's the real highlight of this book.

Jensen begins by carefully walking through Jesus' promise of the Spirit in John 14-16, then explores the arrival and world mission of the Spirit in the book of Acts, then moves on to the work of the Spirit in the Christian life by exploring the New Testament letters. With all of that important information as a foundation, the book then turns to address many of those hot-topics, in short appendices such as 'baptism with the Spirit', 'speaking in tongues', 'guidance', and 'spiritual warfare.' The result is a surprisingly gentle, yet incredibly clear and helpful book that carefully untangles much of the controversy, and settles on the wonderful truths that God has revealed in his word.

Two particular highlights for me were Jensen's insights on the fruit of the Spirit (chapter 21), and the contrast between the 'unspiritual' and the 'spiritual' churches (chapters 23-24).

On the fruit of the Spirit, Jensen acknowledges the temptation we might feel to skip over the things that seem mundane, onto the more 'controversial, exciting or glamorous aspects of the Spirit's work.' But to skip the fruit of the Spirit is to miss the vital, transformative, and truly miraculous work the Spirit produces in every Christian life (p254). The normal Christian life of submitting to the Lord Jesus and growing in Christlikeness is fundamentally and powerfully spiritual. This is what I needed to hear more of in my youth!

In contrasting 'spiritual' and 'unspiritual' churches (Ephesus and Corinth), Jensen points out that, 'strangely to our ears, the most 'charismatic' church in the New Testament is in fact the most unspiritual. The church over whom most has been written on charismatic questions in modern times was in its own time viewed by the apostle not as a beacon of spirituality, but carnality' (p283). That's an insight I'd never noticed before! And again, 'In their unspiritual minds, the Corinthians failed to understand that character is more important than competence, convictions are more important than curiosities, caring for others is more important than consoling oneself, and edification is more important than experimentalism' (p305).

In summary, *The Coming of the Holy Spirit* is a clear, faithful, and gentle book that aims to listen to the wonderful truths that God has revealed about the person and work of the Spirit: that He himself dwells in our hearts forever, and grows us up in the image of Christ, by his Spirit.

The Reverend Matt Jacobs is the youth minister at St Jude's Bowral, NSW.

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