



1959-2009

Lawyers' Christian Fellowship Newsletter

www.lawyerschristianfellowship.org

fifty years serving God in the legal profession

AUGUST 2009



Lawyers' Christian Fellowship

is celebrating its
50th year

You are invited

to attend a service at St Swithun's
Anglican Church, Pymble
on
Sat 19 September 2009 at 6pm

The sermon will be conducted by Stuart Coulton
(Vice-principal (pastoral) of SMBC, former lawyer)

Dinner will follow

During dinner, a panel of lawyers will share about
the life of LCF and the role of faith in legal practice.

Cost of dinner: \$50 (students \$25)



50 years young 1959-2009

Some may have thought that the LCF has been around forever but that is not the case.

The LCF had its genesis after the 1959 Billy Graham Crusade where so many lawyers made a commitment to Christ that there was a need to disciple them and to provide an opportunity for fellowship.

This year we celebrate 50 years of God's faithfulness to the LCF. The LCF has in that period had its highs and some lows. In both it has tried to serve Christ faithfully in the legal profession.

Join our fiftieth anniversary celebration. An invitation is included with this newsletter.

If you are still in touch with someone who used to be involved with the LCF please forward an invitation to them.

WHAT PLEASURE DOES GOD FIND IN PUBLIC JUSTICE?



***"A false balance is an abomination to the LORD,
but a just weight is his delight"***

Proverbs 11:1

Opening of Law Term Address delivered Parramatta January 2009 by Peter Kells, CEO Anglicare

I want to address today the extent to which God finds pleasure in public justice.

The section of Proverbs we are looking at today is at first blush rather prosaic – scales which are accurate and used fairly.

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But it is a metaphor for a much deeper thought – God's love for justice and fair dealing; for the quality of being just; conformity to the principles of righteousness and rectitude in all things; strict performance of moral obligations; practical conformity to human and divine law; integrity in the dealings of man with each other; rectitude, equity, uprightness.

So we are looking at the pleasure God might derive from the way in which we conduct the secular aspects of our lives – the ordinary dealings we have with the world – as opposed to the purely spiritual dimension of our lives.

The overarching narrative of the entire bible (compiled from multiple authors inspired over thousands of years) relates the way in which God interacts with his creation, always pointing towards the fulfilment of that creation in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the point at some time in the future when the old creation, tainted by sin and its effects, will be replaced with a new creation in which sin no longer has any dominion.

For Christians, saved by God's unmerited grace and living by faith in anticipation of Christ's return, the great question is not "how will I be saved?", but instead, "how will I live in light of the fact that my salvation is assured in Jesus Christ?"

In scripture, we find assurance, encouragement, guidance, challenge, rebuke and exhortation that apply to every aspect of our lives, and specifically about how we live, behave and act in the world.

The law and the prophets of the Old Testament are respectively filled with direction and remonstrance about the moral and ethical behaviour of the people chosen by God. Scales appear also in the book of Leviticus.

So what sort of acts in 2009 might be implied in the phrase, "false balances", in Proverbs 11:1? Well, let me suggest four.

Acts of Selling. It includes acts of selling when the seller does not give the goods or services worth the price or fee that he is charging. The petrol pump that is out by a few cents or the real estate agent who avoids telling you about the termite infestation in the property he is trying to sell you.

Acts of Buying. It includes acts of buying when the buyer schemes to pay less than the goods or services are really worth. Using a friend's discount card to buy something at a reduced cost to which you are not entitled or backdating cheques to avoid fees for late payment.

Acts of Deceit. It includes acts that involve deceit in transactions with other people. And so the act expresses a lie. Claiming expenses on your tax return that you did not incur or lying about the extent of the damage in an insurance claim in order to get a better settlement.

Acts of Injustice. And the other side of this is that such acts always do an injustice to another person. A person does not get what is his due. A person works eight hours for you, but you only pay them for six or someone alters the log books for a vehicle they are selling to disguise the fact that it has been seriously damaged in an accident in the past.

You can be a deceitful seller or a deceitful buyer. And you can do an injustice to a buyer and you can do injustice to a seller.

One lesson to be learned from this already is that God has an interest in all our non-religious life.

All our business transactions are his concern.

God is much more secular than we often think.

The nineteenth century Church of England minister Charles Bridges asked this searching question:

"Is it not a solemn thought, that the eye of God marks all our common dealings of life, either as an abomination or a delight?"

And this is God's plan not just to bring Him pleasure and delight.

He has an interest in public justice because it is his plan for how society is to behave and prosper.

Vs 10 and 11 of our reading in Proverbs 11 this morning echo this thought.

"10. When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices. When the wicked perish there are shouts of joy.

11. Through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is destroyed."

It is there too in the first reading from Proverbs 28 "Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand it fully"

Test yourself. Are you being shaped more by the secular spirit of the world or by the spirit of God? The test is this: do you feel that minor business misrepresentations are just part of the game rules of the day or are they an abomination to God?

I mentioned earlier, that the verse doesn't say whether only believers or unbelievers are in view.

So what difference is there, if any, between the pleasure that God might derive from just weights in the hands of believers and just weights in the hands of unbelievers?

God delights in just and honest dealings from believers because these dealings make their God-honouring faith visible.

If you really know that God is the absolute, independent, free and sovereign Lord of the universe;

And if you trust him as your God – that he is for you with all his power;

And if your faith is established and encouraged by the

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great demonstration of God's love in the substitutionary death and victorious resurrection of Jesus;

Then you will not feel the need to use 'false balances' to derive benefit or get the most happiness.

When a Christian acts with integrity instead of trying to get ahead with deceit, he demonstrates the power and love of God.

It is so clear we could well ask how can the Christian lie or deceive as though they were like those who trust only in themselves and use their deceitful ingenuity to make a better life for themselves rather than the life God can make for them through the obedience of faith?

But what about unbelievers?

There are unbelievers who order their business lives in honest and just ways. Is this a delight to God?

The answer is a mixed one, and perhaps one that makes us uncomfortable – it is a no and a yes, because God looks at the honesty of unbelievers in two different ways.

No, in as much as they express the inner life of unbe-

lief.

When God looks at their honesty and justice as an out-working of their inner life of unbelief, he does not delight in it because it is sin.

Romans 14:23 says, "Whatever is not from faith is sin."

Acts done without any trust in his grace or any love for God's glory are not a delight to God.

And yes, inasmuch as their honesty and justice reflect God's character and work.

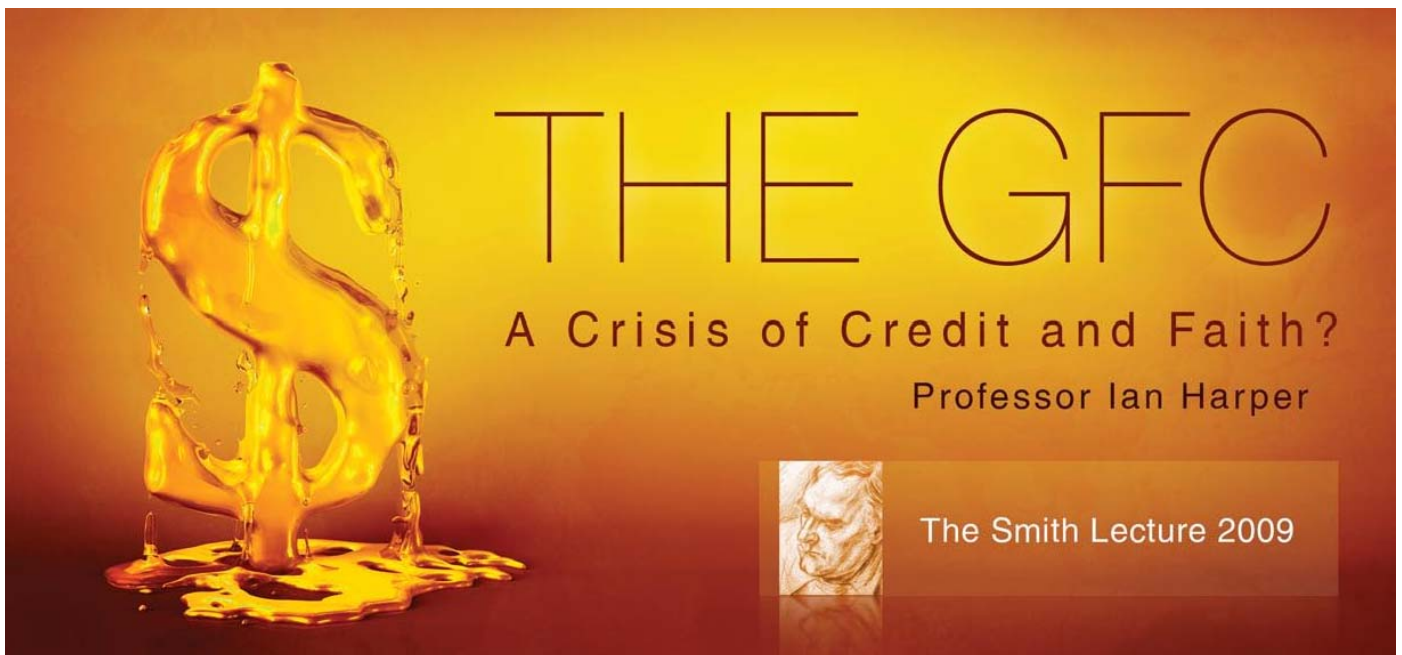
Namely, he looks at the honesty and justice of unbelievers as fragments of his own divine work.

Scales appear later again in the book of Proverbs in Chapter 16:11 where it says, "A just balance and scales are the Lord's; all the weights in his bag are his work."

Wherever you find just scales and a bag of honest weights, you find the work of God.

God is concerned for conformity to truth and reality in expressing opinions or conduct; in fair representations

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THE GFC

A Crisis of Credit and Faith?

Professor Ian Harper

The Smith Lecture 2009

Professor Ian Harper, one of the country's leading economist will deliver this year's Smith Lecture. The Smith Lecture is a by invitation lecture that will be held in Sydney on 3 September 2009. It is an opportunity to hear a leading Christian speak on a matter of public importance. Invitees are encouraged to attend with a group of non-Christian friends as part of an evening out that might include a meal after the lecture.

If you are interested in attending and need an invitation please contact the editor and he will forward an invitation and information sheet. You will then need to contact Peter Kaldor 0409 457 259. see www.smithlecture.org.au for more information.

of facts respecting merit or demerit; in honesty, fidelity and impartiality.

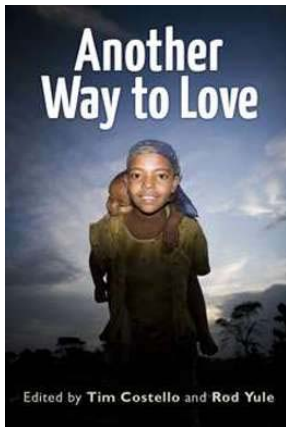
Justice is God's creation.

Honesty is God's design.

Integrity is the work of God – even in unbelievers.

Justice, honesty and integrity are from God. Let us use them to his glory and his delight.

Peter Kells is the CEO of Anglicare in the Sydney Diocese. Prior to this he was the managing partner of Kells Lawyers.



Another Way to Love

Edited by Tim Costello and Rod Yule, published by Acorn Press and World Vision Australia 2009. Price \$24.95.

Most of the readers of this review will know that our national treasure Tim Costello is the CEO of World Vision Australia. In this book Tim and fellow editor Rod Yule bring together a range of writers (most Australian) addressing

issues of poverty, justice and advocacy. Many of them come from the ranks of World Vision and at times you wonder whether you are reading a World Vision newsletter.

The short essays/interviews range from the role of Christians historically in social reform, to the nature of poverty and development, the role of Christians in advocating for the poor, to a theological framework for reform and advocacy, to recent out workings of these roles with Make Poverty History, the Micah Challenge, fair trade and climate change. Surprisingly there was no particular attention given to issues surrounding our own indigenous population.

The strength of the book is that, for those unfamiliar with the issues, it provides a good introduction that will introduce a range of issues which the interested reader can pursue in more detail elsewhere. While there are three questions at the end of each chapter for further reflection a list of books or articles for further reading would have been a helpful inclusion. Even readers familiar with one or two of the issues will find themselves challenged by issues to which they have probably given little attention.

The highlight for this reviewer was the interview with Jayakumar Christian a thirty year veteran of World Vision India. His interview highlights the relational nature of poverty when he states "The causes of poverty are flawed relationships" and later comments "I be-

lieve that the marring of the identity of the poor is a precursor to oppressive relationships" and "I believe that it is only the Christian faith that addresses the issue of identity at a belief level and not simply at an organisational or strategic level".

Andrew Cameron, Moore College lecturer helpfully deals with some of the practical difficulties that often prevent our engagement with issues of poverty, justice and advocacy such as – I do not know enough and it's all too big. Reminding us that just because we cannot do everything does not mean we cannot do anything.

From the writer's perspective it is a pity that there is not a lawyer's perspective on the role Christian lawyers can play in advocating law reform as a means of reforming our structures and relationships. It would also have been good to include an essay on relational/restorative justice and its role in loving the disenfranchised within our society. No doubt every reviewer could suggest additional chapters but the reality often is that there is always some limitation on what can be included in a book.

This book attempts to present a balance of theory, theology and experience to give poverty and advocacy a human face. From a human perspective the issues are large and overwhelming. This book helps remind us that we worship a big God who is close to the poor and marginalised and who weeps with them and who calls on each of us to be engaged with them.

"On the Move"

Philip Gerber, a former barrister and until recently the professional standards officer with the Sydney Diocese of the Anglican Church, is moving to the Northern Territory to take up a senior administrative position with the Anglican Church. Before taking up his appointment Phil and his wife will be attending St Andrews Hall, the CMS training facility in Victoria. Phil is a regular attendee at our Christmas function.

LCF President the Hon Justice Peter Young QC was sworn in on 6 March as judge of the New South Wales Court of Appeal. Justice Young has served for 24 years on the Supreme Court and was Chief Judge in Equity from 2001 till 2009.

The Hon Keith Mason QC, former President of the NSW Court of Appeal, has taken up a position as Professorial Visiting Fellow at the University of New South Wales where he will be teaching a course on the Conceptual Framework of the Common Law.

The newsletter's editor is Steven Nicholson who can be contacted at steven@mcpheelshaw.com.au or on 47511055 or PO Box 4 Springwood, NSW, 2777 or DX 26729 Springwood.