

SVCC 30 YEAR CELEBRATION

MORPHETT VALE BAPTIST CHURCH SEPTEMBER 12, 2010

INTRODUCTION

"Christian Schools, you started so well but what has happened?" That question thundered from the speaker at a South Australian Christian Schools conference over 25 years ago. He had just returned from the USA where that question had been asked.

The speaker, David McGill, was one of the key people in establishing Christian Community Schools, to which many Christian Schools, including SVCC, owe their origin. David was a good friend to us and I developed a good relationship with him. He gave me crucial advice in relation to Christian Schooling. His untimely death as a result of a car accident robbed the movement of a significant contributor to the cause of Christian Schools.

Obviously I have not forgotten the question he repeated that day. It seemed to have prophetic significance. It brought a challenge for Christian Schools to remain Christian to remain true to their foundation.

I think that in the next 10 years the Christian community in this country is going to face enormous challenges.

We have an increasing secular society.

The number of people who do not believe in a religion is forecast to rise by more than 50 percent to 5.5 million Australians by the year 2020.

IBISWorld senior analyst Edward Butler warns, "There's an ongoing trend of young Australians of Christian families not taking up their parents' faith."

We have a push for multi-faith acceptance.

We have a programme now for progressive politics – which is a denial of traditional values.

We have a powerful insistence on removing privileges for religious institutions.

We face the increasing demand for homosexual marriage and homosexual rights that impinge significantly on those who disagree with this position.

It amazes me that the secularists, left wingers and tree huggers want tolerance of Islam and are very intolerant of genuine Christianity.

Pressure will come increasingly to water down our distinctive beliefs and values. Christian Schools will come under increasing pressure to conform to political and societal agendas to be less Christian, to be "more tolerant" and in so doing to diminish our strong Christian position upon which we were founded.

Australia's school chaplaincy program faces a constitutional challenge in the High Court as opposition grows to having government funding paying for God's representatives in state schools. Labor and the Coalition have said they will make \$220 million available over four years to fund 1000 more chaplains, but the Australian Psychological Society has said the program is dangerous to children's mental health. Under the federally funded program, schools can apply for up to \$20,000 a year to support or initiate chaplaincy.

Ron Williams, a Queensland parent, is organising a High Court constitutional challenge to the chaplaincy program and the Sydney barrister Bret Walker, SC, has taken the case.

How will Christian Schools fare in the days ahead?

Will the pressure to conform to society's demands overtake us?

In years to come at a conference will a prophetic voice ask, "You started well but what happened?"

How can Christian schools remain true to their calling?

Before I attempt an answer I want to say one other thing. It is a given for me that Christian Schools will be fine educational enterprises. We will have good teachers who are creative and capable. We will have good facilities and resources. Those are givens.

I want to present to you three non-negotiable things for Christian Schools, for SVCC, as it moves into the future.

1. A Real COMMITMENT TO THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

A worldview is the basis for our beliefs and actions. It provides the content of how we answer the big life questions.

Why did the chicken cross the road?

DR PHIL: The problem we have here is that this chicken won't realize that he must first deal with the problem on "THIS" side of the road before it goes after the problem on the "OTHER SIDE" of the road. What we need to do is help him realize how stupid he's acting by not taking on his "CURRENT" problems before adding "NEW" problems.

OPRAH: Well I understand that the chicken is having problems, which is why he wants to cross this road so badly. So instead of having the chicken learn from his mistakes and take falls, which is a part of life, I'm going to give this chicken a car so that he can just drive across the road and not live his life like the rest of the chickens.

TONY ABBOTT: We don't really care why the chicken crossed the road. We just want to know if the chicken is on our side of the road, or not. The chicken is either against us, or for us. There is no middle ground here.

JULIA GILLARD: Although I voted to let the chicken cross the road, I am now against it! It was the wrong road to cross, and I was misled about the chicken's intentions. I am for it now, and will remain against it.

BOB BROWN: The chicken didn't cross the road. We have blocked off the roads and are planting trees.

JUDGE JUDY: That chicken crossed the road because he's GUILTY! You can see it in his eyes and the way he walks.

DR SEUSS: Did the chicken cross the road? Did he cross it with a toad? Yes, the chicken crossed the road, but why it crossed I've not been told.

GRANDPA: In my day we didn't ask why the chicken crossed the road. Somebody told us the chicken crossed the road, and that was good enough.

JOHN LENNON: Imagine all the chickens in the world crossing roads together - in peace.

BILL CLINTON: I did not cross the road with THAT chicken. What is your definition of chicken?

COLONEL SANDERS: Did I miss one?

Worldviews determine answers to questions like:

Who are we and how did we get here?

What is evil and how does it work?

What is God doing about evil?

How will it all end?

The basis for the Christian worldview is the Bible. It determines our answer to all of life's deep issues.

It is truth. It is our final authority for what we believe and how we are to live.

2. A Real COMMITMENT TO THE CHRISTIAN'S LORD AND SAVIOUR

Jesus is unique!

The following indicate that he is unique and that of course is the distinctive Christian view of Jesus.

(1) His Claims

The claims of Jesus are really quite amazing! He claimed to be the Truth (John 14:6). He claimed to be the One who satisfies in life (John 6:35). He claimed to be the guide through life (John 8:12). He claimed that he would give abundant life (John 10:10). He claimed to give life that lasts forever (John 11: 25, 26). He claimed to be the only way to God (John 14:6). He claimed to be God (John 8:58; 14:9; 20:28). He claimed that his death would mean the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26: 28 – 32). He claimed that he would rise again from the dead (Matthew 26:61).

What amazing claims! What an amazing person if all that is true! The claims really do set him apart. So let us see what else we can discover about Jesus.

(2) His Character

What was Jesus like? People have all sorts of views of Jesus personality and character, the way he lived his life. Nearly every year someone comes up with a theory of Jesus' life. As we look at the New Testament story this is the picture that we get of Jesus.

- a. There appears to be no contradiction between what he said and what he did. He appears to have practised what he preached. That is very unusual. Most people, great or small, do not always match their actions with their words.
- b. He claimed to be without sin - that is, he did not break God's law nor act in a selfish, deceitful way – and he invited his opponents to point out any wrong that he had done (John 8: 29, 46).
- c. His very close friends found no flaw in his character (1 Peter 1:19; 1 John 3:5).

Someone might say that we would expect a man's friends and followers to speak well of the man but what about other people?

- Pilate, the Roman governor, said, "I find no fault in him." (Matthew 27: 24)
- Pilate's own wife said to her husband, "Have nothing to do with that innocent man." (Matthew 27:19)
- Herod said that he found no fault in him (Luke 23:15).
- Judas, disciple and then betrayer of Jesus, said, "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." (Matthew 27:3, 4)
- The Roman centurion at the cross said, "Certainly this man was innocent." (Luke 23:47)

The witnesses to his character speak with one voice: he was an exemplary person.

(3) His Actions

Jesus was a man of action. In Luke 4:18 Jesus declared,

The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
Because he has anointed me
To preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To release the oppressed,
To proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

That was his program. He spoke words of grace and forgiveness to the broken and lost.

Consider how he treated a woman caught in the act of adultery (see John 8:3-11). The woman was dragged before him and the religious leaders wanted her stoned. I am always puzzled by one aspect of this story: where was the man? It takes two to tango. However, Jesus treated her with love and kindness. He forgave her and told her to live a new life.

That is what Jesus does. That is his basic agenda – he wants to forgive and restore. Then, enable us to live a good life.

Also, he healed the sick, raised the dead and delivered people from demonic problems (Acts 10:48).

(4) His Cross

It is interesting to note that Jesus died at a much younger age than that of other significant world religious leaders. Jesus was executed by means of crucifixion. He was nailed to a cross and died as a result.

Buddha died at the age of eighty in peaceful serenity. Right to the end of his life he was surrounded by a large number of dedicated followers.

Confucius died at the age of seventy-two. In his early life he had his set backs and difficulties. At the end of his life he returned to his hometown of Lu and had many disciples to continue his work.

Mohammed died at the age of sixty-two. He spent the last years of his life very enjoyably as the political ruler of a united Arabia. He died in his harem at Mecca in the arms of his favourite wife.

How different it was for Jesus! He was thirty-three when he died. Rejected by his people, betrayed and abandoned by his disciples - he even sensed that his God abandoned him. Alone and in the prime of his life he died by crucifixion. Crucifixion was an appalling way to die. According to Roman law crucifixion was a punishment for escaped slaves or those who rebelled against the power of Rome. The famous revolt that Spartacus led resulted in 7,000 slaves being crucified on the Appian Way!

The noted ancient Roman writer, Cicero, once wrote, "Let even the name of the cross be kept away not only from the bodies of the citizens of Rome, but also from their thought." Theologian Jurgen Moltmann says, "Roman humanism always felt the 'religion of the Cross' to be unaesthetic, unrespectable and perverse."¹

The Jews were certainly not sympathetic to the idea of crucifixion. In Israelite understanding, someone executed in this way was rejected by his people, cursed among the people of God by the God of the law, and excluded from the covenant of life (Deuteronomy 21:23; Galatians 3:13).

However, Jesus was neither a criminal nor a political rebel, still he was crucified. Why? Well here is the deeper magic – to use C S Lewis' phrase...

- a. In John 3:16 we read, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." The alternative presented here to those who do not believe in Christ is that they perish.

¹ Jurgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (London: SCM, 1874), p. 33.

So it is reasonable to conclude that the death of Christ was necessary if salvation was to be possible.

- b. Hebrews 2:10 says, "It was fitting that God should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering." Here the idea is that it would not have done for God to save humanity by a means, which stopped short of suffering and death. So it was appropriate for Christ to suffer.

Hebrews 9:22 sums it up by saying, "...and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."

The death of Christ was absolutely necessary for salvation to be made possible for sinful humanity. His death means that fellowship with God is restored and that humanity's guilt and shame can be wiped away and inner peace and harmony be restored to people.

(5) His Resurrection

Jesus appeared alive again three days after his death. This is central to the Christian story. His resurrection means that death is conquered and hope is released for the world.

Theologian Ray Anderson says,

Jesus Christ is alive and well! And he continues his ministry in the world through the Holy Spirit which came upon the believers at Pentecost and continues to abide and empower Christians throughout the world.²

I submit to you that every staff member needs a dynamic relationship with the living Christ.

And, should be committed to seeing each of the young people under their care come into a living relationship with Jesus.

3. A Real COMMITMENT TO A CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE

Brennan Manning, in his book *The Signature of Jesus* tells this story,

Several years ago a group of computer salesmen went from Milwaukie to Chicago for a regional sales convention. All were married and each assured his wife he would return in ample time for dinner.

² Ibid., p. 40.

The sales meeting ran late and the 5 scurried out of the building and ran toward the train station. A whistle blew, signalling the imminent departure of the train. As the salesmen raced through the terminal, one of them inadvertently kicked over a slender table on which rested a basket of apples. A ten-year-old boy was selling apples to pay for his books and clothes for school. With a sigh of relief, the 5 clambered aboard the train, but the last felt a twinge of compassion for the boy whose apple stand had been overturned.

He asked one of the group to call his wife and tell her he would be a couple of hours late. He returned to the terminal and later remarked that he was glad he did. The ten-year-old boy was blind. The salesman saw the apples scattered all over the floor. As he gathered them up, he noticed that several were bruised or split. Reaching into his pocket, he said to the boy, "Here's \$20 for the apples we damaged. I hope we didn't spoil your day. God bless you."

As the salesman started to walk away, the blind boy called after him and asked, "Are you Jesus?"

Matthew 5

¹³"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

¹⁴"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

The world is a dark place. There is confusion with many and a sense of meaninglessness and hopelessness. However, there is light and Jesus is that Light. We know him and we know his grace and kindness. He calls us to live in a way that shows his light and love.

We will continue well as we are committed to these things that are essential – the Christian worldview, the Christian's Lord and Saviour and the Christian lifestyle.

May it be so for southern Vales Christian College as it continues to provide Christian Schooling.