

Salt Shakers

Helping Christians make a difference



April 2009 AD

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Editorial

Firstly, we want to say a personal thank you to all those who responded to Barney's letter regarding our financial situation. We give praise and thanks to God for all of you, not just for the finances that have come through but for the encouragement to continue that came with them.

More and more we read, even from Christians, that 'fundamentalist' Christianity is dying or dead, that evangelicalism needs to move to the middle ground and be more inclusive. Yet we continually hear you saying to us that traditional Christian values are important and that we need to maintain not only the fundamentals of our faith but also of our values.

True evangelicalism is dying in the face of growing 'secularism' in the West. But what we loosely call 'secularism' is, in reality, many other 'worldviews' that Christians are finding it increasingly hard to contend with.

One reason for this dilemma would seem to be that older Christians have been seduced by the rhetoric of 'being nice', or "we must not judge others" or the deception that compromise is the way forward - whether that be in the realm of politics or interfaithism, or even how we raise our families and accept alternative lifestyles.

Yet we are exhorted to "hold on to what you have until I come" by Jesus Himself in Rev 2:25. Young Christians are not being trained to "Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.", as told to do by Paul in Thess 5, and they are not taught how to, "contend earnestly for the faith" against other worldviews (Jude 1:5).

This is why we became involved in Biblical and other worldview training 5 years ago, both at a local church/city level

and at a national level in conjunction with Summit Ministries.



The going has not been easy - there is a reluctance to grasp the idea that most Christians do not have a sound Biblical Christian worldview. We acknowledge we are losing ground and don't think we can compete, but don't really want to ask why.

Yet we also need to understand that it is not enough today to just understand our own worldview - we also need to understand our competition. No football or cricket team goes on the field without studying their opposition, understanding their technique and strategy - their game plan.

Unfortunately most Christians know far too little of the competition. We so easily swallow ideas such as, 'humanism is not a religion', 'Islam is a religion of peace', 'homosexuals are born that way' and 'Buddhists are tolerant'. If you think any of those are true, you need to do some serious study to find out the real truth!

Last year we promoted the **Truth Project**, produced and distributed by Focus On The Family. We said that every Christian should do this excellent 12 part DVD study on the Christian worldview - have you?

We had around 100 full time and another 100 part time participants at our week long **Summit** worldview school in Melbourne, but that is a very small proportion of even the Melbourne Christian community.

We are available to run weekend or one day worldview schools, family or youth camps or evening meetings to speak at church services. We are still hoping to run a week long Worldview school again in Melbourne next January.

We want to help you make a difference!

Yours in Christ Jesus
Peter & Jenny Stokes

An interesting dilemma

by Peter Stokes

As research continues to provide no evidence that there is a homosexual gene, in other words, no evidence anyone is actually 'born' a homosexual or lesbian who has no choice about their so-called sexuality, homosexual activists like Peter Tatchell of the UK are starting to change their strategy.

They are now effectively saying, 'No, we are not born this way but we ought to be able to be this way and the rest of society should accept that we have a 'human right' to make that choice'.

Hence the Australian Human Rights Commission's recent report pressuring government to legislate to force society to accept the 'choices' people make about their 'gender'. [That report is mentioned on Page 17, and will be dealt with in a future Journal.]

Yet this new thinking is causing those who call themselves "homosexual Christians" a growing dilemma; a situation they can't accept because it totally undermines their self-justification of their sin.

It also creates a dilemma for others who have promoted the acceptance of homosexuality and claimed the 'born' theory as justification for Biblical revisionism.

Once-prominent Christians who have surrendered to homosexuality, like Anthony Venn-Brown and Michael Kirby in Australia, Mel White in the USA and Roy Clements in the UK, have all castigated Bible-believing Christians who stand in the way of what they would call church 'reformation' - the acceptance of homosexuality as an involuntary, natural part of who they are.

Venn-Brown states that "of course homosexuality is unnatural ... if you are

heterosexual ... but it's totally natural for me to be attracted and want to partner with a person of the same sex as it's natural for you to be attracted and want to partner with the opposite." [Freedom2Be forum, 15/12/2006]

He, and others like him, would call this 'progressive' thinking. We should understand it as 'regressive' thinking - a product of the fall and sin.

There are other planks in the 'Christian homosexual' argument which we need to debunk, but let's put this one to bed first (excuse the pun).

Peter Tatchell:
"Ignore those researchers who claim to have discovered a 'gay gene'"

What did Peter Tatchell say? "Ignore those researchers who claim to have discovered a 'gay gene', gay desire is not genetically determined ... an influence is not the same as a cause ... Predisposition and determination are two different things."

"There is a major problem with gay gene theory, and with all theories

that posit the biological programming of sexual orientation. If heterosexuality and homosexuality are, indeed, genetically predetermined (and therefore mutually exclusive and unchangeable), how do we explain bisexuality or people who, suddenly in mid-life, switch from heterosexuality to homosexuality (or vice versa)? We can't."

We also need to understand that what Peter Tatchell is now saying is not new.

Prominent homosexuals like Graham Willett (Melb Uni) and Dennis Altman (La Trobe Uni) have admitted it for years. Altman wrote in his 1986 book *AIDS and the new puritanism* "to be a Haitian or a hemophiliac is determined at birth, but being gay is an identity that is socially determined and involves personal choice".

Willett stated in 2000, "I think the idea that sexuality is genetic is crap. There is absolutely no evidence for it at the moment, and I think it is unhealthy that people want to embrace this idea." [Capital Q, Nov 2000]

But for those like Venn-Brown and Kirby, who need to justify their homosexuality, this is not good news. If they have to admit it is a choice, all be it one they do not always directly choose to make, they have to find another argument.

The only fall-back position left is theological revisionism - but current thinking is not good news there either.

Most of those engaged in theological revisionism have based their 'theology' on the 'born gay' theory.

How does this work?

Most theological revisionists engaged in homosexual justification say that Bible translators have not understood that homosexuality is normal and that this led to mistakes in interpreting words that are not the original intent of the writer. In other words they try to shift the meanings of words.

They will also use 'illicit transfer' to try to prove their point.

A year ago, Anthony Venn-Brown was heralding a book titled *Christianity and Homosexuality Reconciled - New thinking for a new millennium!* by a Dr Joseph Pearson. He claimed it was changing the thinking of many Christians across America. It was available in electronic form so I wrote and asked him for a copy because I like to evaluate the latest thinking on this issue.

I do not claim to be an intellectual, yet in every case of theological revisionism I have seen it is not hard to find the flaw. In this case, it was indeed a classic case of 'illicit transfer'. I was almost disappointed because I thought he might have actually come up

with something new. Of course, there is nothing new under the sun. No matter how hard people try to justify their sin, God has spoken.

'Illicit transfer' says the church has made mistakes in the past, like the discrimination against Jews, women and black people - now its homosexuals. They say there was once an acceptance of slavery, colour prejudice and sexism against women and now that has changed, so it is time for the church to change its' position on homosexuality.

The mistake here is that there was never a Biblical mandate to own slaves or reject women or discriminate against people of any colour, whereas there are clear and unequivocal verses about God making them male and female and many verses against homosexuality. There are even verses like 2 Cor 6: 9 that specifically list homosexuals, along with many other types of people, who will not go to heaven if they do not repent of their sin.

There are a few other common deceptions used in so much of today's theological revisionism regarding homosexuality. The most prominent one is what I will call 'the 'assumption paragraph', and it brings us back to the 'born that way' theory.

This error is not hard to find because it usually occurs very near the beginning of a paper or book. The author makes an unsubstantiated comment and everything else in the paper relies on that assumption.

Keith Dyer, Professor of New Testament and Assistant Dean at Whitley College, the Baptist Theological College in Victoria, wrote a paper called *A Consistent Biblical approach to '(homo)sexuality*.

In the paper, Dyer likened the 'rethinking' on homosexuality to the struggle of the early Christians "to come to terms with

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revisionism**

the presence of the Spirit in uncircumcised Gentiles, against all their Biblical expectations”.

Strange isn't it, that a theological college lecturer would liken a change of thinking about homosexuality to a change in thinking about the Holy Spirit. I can't think of two things that are more diametrically opposed to each other than sexual immorality and the Holy Spirit!

But we also get this gem from Dyer, “The attitudes of people are changed not by arguments or exegesis, but by personal encounters with a friend or a family member who is found to be ‘homosexual’ and Christian.” Dyer also says we need to understand a “new reality in the light of our traditions...”

You see it is by getting to know the sinner that we start to accept the sin. They are nice people, they claim to be Christians, so we have to change our thinking.

Clearly it is not about what the Bible says! Because he goes on “after that comes the need for exegesis and reinterpretation”.

Yes, we need to reinterpret the facts to suit the sinner?

Should we also do this about the ‘nice’ young man that sleeps around or the ‘nice’ married man who sleeps with another woman occasionally?

Interestingly, with the exception of Michael Kirby, the people I mentioned at the start were all married with children when they decided to surrender to the temptations of homosexuality. They left their family to commit adultery - but with a man, not a woman.

But to get back to Mr Dyer - where does he find his confidence to say that homosexual acceptance is consistent with Scripture? He contends that it is “natural” - another version of ‘born that way’!

Although he couches it in a nice way. He says, “Whereas it is possible and desirable, therefore, to affirm ‘heterosexuality’ as the created ‘norm’, it should be done so without denying the natural existence of other realities along the spectrum between maleness and femaleness. By their nature, ‘norms’ can never be absolutes since they exist only in relation to other minorities.”

Pardon? Norms can never be ABSOLUTES? The spectrum between maleness and femaleness?

If you take the bait of these phrases you engage in postmodernism and accept what I described in our January Journal as ‘gender mainstreaming’ - that there are no absolutes

and so gender is whatever you want it to be - male or female and any variant in between or outside them!

Once you accept that, it is impossible to say homosexuality is wrong and so the Bible must be re-interpreted. If you don't hold to that, you simply have not met enough nice homosexuals to change your mind. . .

Now I am not denying that some homosexuals are nice, but the Bible tells us that there are lots of nice people who are going to Hell because they have not surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ.

Neither self-justification, illicit transfer nor Biblical revisionism will save a single soul from eternal separation from God - only repentance and forgiveness, through faith in Jesus Christ will do that.

People like Anthony Venn-Brown, Mel White, Roy Clements, Michael Kirby and Keith Dyer have an enormous weight on their shoulders. The Bible talks about those who lead others astray. Please pray for them.

Also pray that the church will see the light and not be led further into the darkness.

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Prayer Update

Abortion and overseas aid

Last month the Rudd government overturned the ban on government-funded overseas aid being spent on abortions and abortion advice. The ban was put in place by the Howard government in 1996. The decision followed heavy lobbying by pro-abortion groups and Labor MPs in Emily's List.

The decision was announced by Stephen Smith, the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Mr Rudd said he did not support the decision - it seems that more Labor MPs did support it!

This decision is a travesty - the real "maternal health" need in the developing world is for midwives who can assist women during and after the safe delivery of their babies.

ACTION: We need to ask the Coalition, when they are re-elected to government, to re-instate the ban on giving overseas aid for abortions. Write to Malcolm Turnbull (Liberal) and Warren Truss (Nationals) - Parliament House, Canberra, ACT 2600.

Vic: Gambling revenue

For the first time, Victoria will allow the TAB to operate gambling shops on Good Friday. Unfortunately, that shows the direction our society is going in! The Victorian government wants to get MORE revenue from gaming - they are upset that Intralot, the Greek gaming company that gained a licence to run Keno, bingo, scratchies and other gaming products in Victoria, has failed to earn the amount of money they estimated they would earn.

No-one is worried that Intralot has earned less money than they expected - \$67 million compared to an 'expected' revenue of \$293 million - but a *Herald Sun* editorial noted

that, because the Victorian government gets 36 cents in each dollar spent on lotteries/scratchies, they would take in \$79 million LESS in TAXES! They went on to complain that this non-existent \$79 million should have been spent on hospitals!

Of course no-one thought to mention that this \$79 million would have come from gamblers losing money! And that often means people who can't afford to lose it!

Alcopops tax

In mid-March the Senate rejected the 'alcopops tax' that was imposed in April 2008 by the Rudd government in an effort to curb binge drinking. The government now says it will pay back the \$300 million in tax already collected under the scheme.

The vote hinged on the vote of Family First Senator Steve Fielding, who wanted the government to ban the sponsorship of sport by alcohol companies, as well as alcohol advertising during sports programs.

Although sales of pre-mixed alcopops initially fell, according to a study by the National Drug Research Institute at Curtin University, it is commonly thought that young people started to mix their own drinks to avoid the extra tax.

Baby bonus

The *Medical Journal of Australia* (2/3/2009) reports that there has been an increase in the number of teenage mothers in New South Wales since the introduction of the baby bonus in 2004. About 40 additional teenagers have given birth each year since 2004. The rate had been declining.

Could there be other factors? Such as increased services for teenage mothers, provision of school programs and child care (and a TV program highlighting these)? Or changing attitudes of society towards teenage mothers or perhaps an increased unwillingness to have an abortion?



The travail of His soul

by *Andrew Lansdown*

Concerning the Lord Jesus, the prophet Isaiah foretold: “He shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied” (Is. 53:11, RSV). Easter is a good time to meditate on this strange, sweet prophecy.

Isaiah uses the word “travail” to describe Jesus’ anguish and suffering. In Gethsemane and at Golgotha, He endured indescribable pain to atone for, to make amends for, our sins.

While Jesus’ physical suffering was horrendous, it is not Isaiah’s primary focus. Rather, he speaks of “the travail of his soul”. This reminds us that Jesus’ suffering was much more than physical. It was spiritual as well. He suffered spiritual torment when he was polluted by our sins and abandoned by his Father. In the garden and on the cross, he experienced anguish in his soul, agony in the depths of his being.

And yet Jesus’ spiritual torment was not without purpose. Something resulted from it. Something grew out of it. His travail produced fruit. And that fruit is each and every Christian. We - all of us who trust in the Lord Jesus for the forgiveness of sins - we are the fruit of the travail of his soul!

Isaiah’s language has overtones of pregnancy and birth. Elsewhere in the Bible, an unborn child is called the “fruit” of the womb and the pain of childbirth is called “travail”. The Lord Jesus suffered for a reason, a joyful reason. Just as our mothers suffered to give birth to us physically, so Jesus suffered to give birth to us spiritually. It is by virtue of His suffering that we have been born anew. It is by virtue of His suffering that we have become the children of God.

As a husband and father, I have witnessed the births of five children. And on the

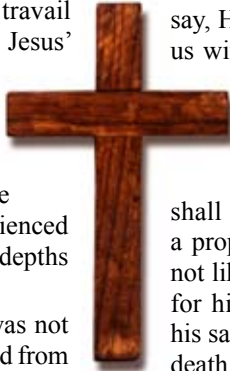
basis of my experience, I have come to appreciate one thing in particular about a mother when her travail is over. After the pain of childbirth, a mother looks upon her child and is satisfied. The instant she sees her infant, her anguish is replaced by contentment and gladness.

And so it is with the Lord Jesus. Isaiah says, “he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied”. Jesus is satisfied with the fruits of his suffering - that is to say, He is satisfied with us! He looks on us without regret. He considers that we were worth the price.

Jesus’ satisfaction arises not only from the fruit itself but also from the sight of that fruit: “He shall see ... and be satisfied”. Here is a prophecy of the resurrection. Jesus is not like a soldier who lays down his life for his country and yet never knows if his sacrifice is worthwhile. The soldier’s death may have helped save his people, but he cannot see that from the grave. Jesus, however, rose from the grave and is alive forever more. He can and does see the results of His atoning sacrifice. And what He sees satisfies him.

Isaiah’s prophecy brings to light the true nature of our Saviour’s feelings about us. He feels happy and content with us.

When we understand this extraordinary fact, we are heartened in two practical ways. Firstly, we are stimulated to live in a manner that is pleasing to Jesus. Knowing He is satisfied with us, we want to do all we can to bolster His satisfaction. Secondly, we are encouraged to set our affections on Jesus. Knowing He is satisfied with us, we want to show that we in turn are satisfied with Him.



Ongoing Inquiries

Submissions needed

Surrogacy

The state and federal attorneys-general and state Health and Disability Ministers are conducting a national Inquiry into surrogacy Laws.

ACTION: Please make a submission - **closing date 16 April 2009**. Write to Executive Officer of the Secretariat of the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General, NSW Attorney General's Department, GPO Box 6, Sydney NSW 2001. Or email to natalie_marsic@agd.nsw.gov.au

Victoria - Sentencing

The Victorian Attorney-General has asked the **Sentencing Advisory Council** to investigate the adequacy of the maximum penalties that currently apply for the offence of "sexual penetration with a child under the age of 16". This follows community anger, in late 2008, over a case where a maximum nine-year prison term was given to a man who attacked a girl two weeks after her 10th birthday.

There are three maximum penalties:

- * child aged under 10, maximum penalty is 25 years' imprisonment.
- * child between 10 and under 16 and is under the care, supervision or authority of the offender - 15 years.
- * Child between 10 and under 16 and not under such care - 10 years.

ACTION: Submissions are invited. The closing date is **1st May 2009**. We suggest asking for tougher penalties.

A 16 page Consultation Paper has been released - it has case studies and a series of questions to help you make a submission.

Send by Mail: Sentencing Advisory Council,

Level 4, 436 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, Vic 3000. Or by email: contact@sentencingcouncil.vic.gov.au

See our website for Consultation Paper and info to include in submission: <http://www.saltshakers.org.au/html/P/302/B/591/>

Vic - Exemptions in EO Act

The Victorian Parliament's *Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee* is investigating the exemptions in the state's Equal Opportunity Act. Their Report is due 30 April. **Write to SARC NOW**- ask them to keep the religious exemptions in the EO Act. Parliament House, Melbourne, Vic 3002.

Federal Bill of Rights

Submissions close 16 June - see Page 14.

Submissions closed

Freedom of Religion

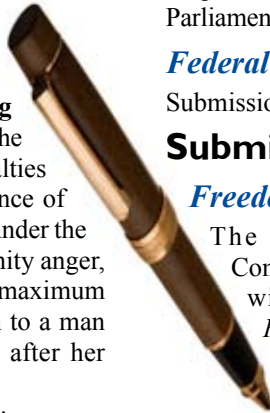
The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) is continuing with its' inquiry - *Freedom of Religion and Belief in the 21st century* is continuing. An estimated 1500 submissions were received - a BIG **Thank You** to everyone who sent a submission!

The report is due by early 2010.

AHRC Racial Discrimination Commissioner Tom Calma accused Christian groups of "spreading fear and innuendo" by opposing the project. He told *The Age* (2/3/2009) that the Commission was not trying to stifle or direct the debate, and that many mainstream churches supported the project!

Gambling

The **Productivity Commission** is continuing its inquiry into gambling. Submissions CLOSED on 31 March 2009. Thank you to everyone who sent a submission.



Parliament of the World's Religions

by Jenny Stokes

The Parliament of the World's Religions is a major interfaith gathering held every five years since 1993. Religions are encouraged to 'meet' together to talk and interact.

We are concerned at this sort of interfaith event as they tend to create a 'level playing field' for all religions – Christians who proclaim the uniqueness and superiority of Jesus Christ and Christianity are sidelined as being intolerant or unloving.

The Parliament of the World's Religions will be held in Melbourne from 3 - 9 December 2009. The official launch was held in December 2007.

Funding

The federal and Victorian governments have each given \$2 million to the Parliament of the World's Religions and the City of Melbourne has given \$500,000 to help run the event.

Events

Organisers say they expect the Melbourne Parliament to bring 10,000 visitors to Melbourne from around the world. There will be an expected 450 activities over 7 days. The main venue will be the Melbourne Convention Exhibition Centre.

Patrons and Board

Some prominent Christians are involved in this event as Patrons or Board members. These include the Catholic Archbishop Denis Hart, the Anglican Archbishop Philip Freier, Tim Costello, Maureen Postma (VCC) and James Haire.

The Board members include Muslims, Jews and an 'Interfaith' minister. Similarly there are Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist patrons. The Patron-in-Chief is

Professor David de Kretser AC, Governor of Victoria.

Organisers

The Melbourne meetings are being co-ordinated by Gary Bouma and Des Cahill, two of the authors of the Discussion paper for the AHRC Freedom of Religion and Belief Inquiry.

Gary Bouma was also an expert witness for the Islamic Council of Victoria in their religious vilification case against Pastor Daniel Scot and Pastor Danny Nalliah.

The same two men were the authors, along with Hass Dellal from the Australian Multicultural Foundation (who is on the Board of the Parliament), of the

book *Religion, Cultural Diversity and Safeguarding Australia* and a companion book promoting the establishment of local Interfaith Networks, in 2004.

History

In 1993, the Parliament of the World's Religions, was held in Chicago. This was held to celebrate the centenary of the World's Congress of Religions in Chicago in 1893.

Since then a 'Parliament of the World's Religions' has been held every five years: in Cape Town, South Africa in 1999 and in Barcelona, Spain in 2004.

Preliminary events are being held during 2009 in the lead-up to the 'Parliament'. A seminar and concert was held at the Melbourne Town Hall on 8 February 2009.

See our website page on PWR: <http://www.saltshakers.org.au/html/P/578/B/579/>



At last a use for the pipeline

The north-south pipeline finally found a purpose, at least temporarily.

The pipe's construction placed workers with heavy equipment and water tankers in the Glenburn area where they helped save people's homes and property.

A future benefit would be to reverse the water flow and take Melbourne waste water and pump it up to the Goulburn River where it could assist drought ridden farmers.

Lennyce Westaway, Navigators, 3352
The Courier, Ballarat 03/03/2009

Alcohol, Drugs and Sport

What does it take for athletes, swimmers, divers and footballers to be educated and understand that alcohol, drugs and immoral living does not promote healthy sportsmanship and role models for our nation?

Judith Bond, Glen Alpine, NSW
The Australian 10/3/2009

Unemployment and jobs

Horrors, our nation importing unemployment!

We don't have enough jobs to keep our own people in work.

Please don't import immigrants to take the work from our dinkum Aussies who do want to work.

Judith Bond, Glen Alpine, NSW
The Australian 17/3/2009



Text Talk

KEVIN "Obama clone" Rudd copies the US President's damaging action and backs the use of our overseas aid to fund abortions. A real killer move, Kevin.

David Westaway, Navigators.
Herald Sun 12/03/2009

Deviancy glorified

It is with deep sadness I learn that what is basically a children's TV program, Home and Away, in the 7 pm timeslot, is to feature a lesbian relationship, the excuse being that these exist in society, so why not show them? Will Josef Fritzl's vile incestuous behaviour be lionised next?

The homosexual community, from an initial tiny base, has waged a relentless campaign for acceptance of their relationships as normal. Of course they are not, but an incessant flow of propaganda is intended to show otherwise. God clearly condemns all sexual relationships outside heterosexual marriage, but the widely publicised Sydney flesh-fest, the Mardi Gras, with deliberately overstated attendance figures, continues to be a gigantic promotion of a lifestyle seen by Christians as immoral, and by the medical profession as the major source of new HIV infections.

Does it really matter? Absolutely, I believe. The continuing promotion of an unhealthy lifestyle, by relentless pressure from a small minority, has already brought about significant changes to Federal and State laws in Australia. Pressure is mounting for homosexual marriage and, I believe, more and more young people are being seduced by the false glamour of a lifestyle God hates, though He continues to love the sinners.

Arthur Comer, Sebastopol
The Courier, Ballarat 17/03/2009

Christian nation

I appeal to MPs to change the law so that gambling and trading does on happen on Easter Friday, nor Easter Sunday.

Australia is a Christian nation, we need and must stay that way.

Lets keep these days sacred and respect our Christian heritage.

Judith Bond, Glen Alpine, NSW
Illawarra Mercury 20/3/2009

Don't forget our letter writing competition.

Judith, Lennyce and David are leading well but there is still plenty of time to catch up.

When you have a letter printed in the newspaper let us know. we require the text as printed, the name of the newspaper and the date printed - preferably by email so we do not have to re-type the letter for the Journal.

Abortion - around the states

With the passing of the **Abortion Law Reform Bill** in Victoria in October 2008, we expect that NSW, and perhaps Queensland, may soon face similar proposals to legalise abortion. In these states, abortion is in the Crimes Act, but can be done if the mother's life or health is at risk.

Meanwhile some Victorian groups are considering challenging Victoria's law.

Victoria - legal challenge

Many people are concerned about Clause 8 in the *Abortion Law Reform Act*, which requires doctors who oppose abortion to refer patients who want an abortion to a doctor or abortionist who they know will actually perform an abortion.

We believe doctors must be able to obey their conscience - they must be able to refuse to do abortions AND must NOT be compelled to refer a patient to an abortionist.

Two barristers who examined the legislation on behalf of Catholic Health Australia, say that Australia will fail to meet its international obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, a treaty ratified by Australia, unless the clause is removed. Catholic Health say the 15 Catholic hospitals in Victoria will not participate in abortions. They say they will challenge the law in court if a doctor is prosecuted for not referring a woman to an abortionist. [The Age, 8/3/2009]

Along with some conservative Labor MPs, they are putting pressure on the federal Attorney-General to remove this clause.

ACTION: Please write to the federal Attorney General Robert McClelland. Ask him to use his constitutional powers to remove Clause 8 from Victoria's Abortion Law Reform Act because it doesn't allow freedom of conscience for doctors.

Queensland

In October 2007, Labor MP Bonny Barry announced that she planned to introduce a private member's bill to decriminalise abortion within the next 18 months. The *Courier Mail* reported that Labor Premier Anna Bligh said she would support such a bill, but had "no plans" to introduce such a bill herself. Both Anna Bligh and Bonny Barry are members of **Emily's List**, the Labor group that assists women in their election campaigns - but they must support abortion!

Before the Queensland election, held on 21 March, Labor said they had "no plans" to decriminalise abortion. Now that Labor has been re-elected, we will have to wait and see if they move on this issue. After all, in Victoria the government didn't have 'plans' to decriminalise abortion!

New South Wales

Greens MP Lee Rhiannon used International Women's Day on March 8, 2009 to launch a campaign calling for NSW to remove abortion from the Crimes Act and make it a "health issue". [SMH, 8/3/2009.]

She noted that Victoria and the ACT had already done this and urged NSW Labor Premier Nathan Rees to follow suit and decriminalise abortion.

A spokesman for Attorney-General John Hatzistergos told the paper "The current law provides an appropriate balance."

Ms Rhiannon said that if the government did not introduce a bill to decriminalise abortion, she would introduce a private member's bill.

ACTION: If you live in NSW, please contact your MPs - ask them to oppose the decriminalisation of abortion.



Ten Wrongs with a Bill of Rights

by *Bill Muehlenberg*

The Rudd Government has established a panel to conduct an Inquiry into whether Australia should have a Bill of Rights. The panel will be chaired by Fr Frank Brennan. The recently passed Victorian Bill of Rights seems to serve as a model of the proposed Federal version. The question is, do we need such a Charter or Bill of Rights (BoR)? I believe the answer is no. Here are ten reasons why.

One. All major rights are already fully protected in Australia. The right to vote, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and so on are already carefully protected rights. Australia has, through common law, various institutions and customs, and the three arms of government, a wide variety of rights already securely in place. The burden of proof must lie with those seeking change to show that major rights violations and shortcomings are currently taking place.

Two. Australian democracy already has a good safeguard of human rights in the form of its system of checks and balances. Indeed, given the merits of the existing system, there is very little public demand for a BoR, except by judicial and social activists and certain vocal minority groups. The old dictum, “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” applies here.

Three. Rights enshrined in a BoR become fixed and very difficult to remove. It may well be that ‘rights’ and values promoted by society today may be rejected in the future. To set in stone certain rights ignores the changing nature of societies, and overlooks the evolving nature of political culture.

In one sense no right is absolute, although rights can be arranged in an hierarchical

fashion. And rights can and do conflict. Thus perceptions and opinions about rights do change over time, and a fossilised encasement of rights may in fact be a bar to the realisation of other rights.

Four. A BoR will bring major changes to how legislation and policy are made. Parliaments are meant to perform these functions, not the courts. In a BoR, major policy and legislative issues are wrested

from the legislature and given to the judiciary. But important and controversial social issues deserve to be properly debated by the people via their Parliamentary representatives, not by unelected judges and bureaucrats.

The legislature is further undermined as more and more laws are seen to conflict with these chosen rights, and/or are

reinterpreted in the light of this list of rights. Thus judges end up becoming legislators and policy makers, while the parliamentary process is eroded. Law is meant to be made by Parliaments, not judges. Unelected and unaccountable judges take the place of elected and accountable politicians under this arrangement. Thus the democratic process itself comes under threat.

Five. The courts become politicised and activist minority groups and special interest groups can use the courts to promote an agenda at odds with the majority. People who are willing to use the mechanism of law will increasingly determine the political landscape, instead of a duly elected Parliament.

As more tribunals and commissions are set up to enforce these rights, those found to

All major rights are already fully protected in Australia

have violated the law will not be assured of trial by an impartial body (eg., trial by peers), but by activists and those with an agenda. Those sitting on our Equal Opportunities Commissions, and other quasi-judicial administrative tribunals, are often far from representative of mainstream opinion.

Six. A BoR will lead to even further litigation and frivolous court cases. Our already litigious society does not need to become more so. A culture of litigation in the end leads to the diminution of democracy, not its enhancement.

Indeed, we are already way too prone to threaten a lawsuit at the drop of a hat. We are too inclined to blame someone else instead of shouldering some of the responsibility ourselves. A BoR will simply compound the problem. And that has been exactly the case where countries have recently adopted a BoR, such as Canada and New Zealand.

Seven. The enactment of a BoR will further add to the “rights culture” that is so characteristic of modern Western societies, along with a further erosion of responsibility. Everyone is demanding rights these days, but few are advocating duties and responsibilities, without which rights talk becomes empty blather.

This explosion of rights claims undermines the moral habits and virtues necessary to sustain free institutions and democratic governance. No society can long last that emphasises rights over against corresponding duties and moral responsibilities.

A BoR will certainly encourage people to demand rights, but will not be likely to enjoin them to uphold obligation and responsibility. Indeed, rights claims can

be used to cover almost anything, with a never ending stream of new rights being discovered and demanded. And if the courts become inundated with rights cases, the wheels of justice may well grind to a halt. Individual responsibility, virtue and self-control are the means by which a democracy flourishes and rights are respected. A BoR cannot replace individual responsibility.

Eight. A BoR has not prevented human rights abuses in nations that have adopted them. Some of the most oppressive societies on earth, including the former Soviet Union, have had elaborate and exquisite

BoRs. On paper these superb constitutions have covered every imaginable right, but reality has been a different story. Thus a BoR is no panacea, and can certainly offer no guarantees of a genuine promotion of rights.

Nine. It would appear that whatever can be achieved by a BoR can be achieved by existing means, or other less intrusive and unwelcome means. Thus if there are any glaring deficiencies in

human rights in Australia (a questionable assumption for most, except for some activist minority groups), they can best be dealt with by existing mechanisms, and not by means of a new bureaucratic sledgehammer. And we must insist that any claims of such glaring deficiencies must first be demonstrated.

Ten. Lastly, it must be remembered that rights just do not – or should not – spring from anywhere. For the Western world at least, rights claims have been based on two fundamental sources: the Judeo-Christian worldview, and natural law. While both sources can be debated and discussed, they have provided a firm foundation on which to

**Rights
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natural law**

work for fundamental rights and justice. We dare not so readily remove the base of our Western system of law before we are sure that what we are replacing it with a system that will make for a better foundation. And we dare not entrust such a process to social engineers, activists and those with a political agenda motivating them.

In sum, the case for a Bill of Rights contains a number of fundamental weaknesses.

Prudence would dictate that we avoid radical and rapid social and political change unless it can first be proven that such change is necessary. That case has yet to be made.

Bill Muehlenberg is a writer, teacher and commentator on society and Christianity. Bill has a masters degree in theology and runs the Culture Watch ministry. Check out his website at www.billmuehlenberg.com

Bill of Rights - Submissions/Meetings

The Consultation Committee, appointed by the Rudd government to investigate a Bill of Rights for Australia, has to provide a Report to the government by 31 July 2009.

Submission

Submissions are now **due by 16 June 2009** - an extension from the previous date set.

Check our Campaign Page - <http://www.saltshakers.org.au/html/P/302/B/567/>

Consultation Website: <http://www.humanrightsconsultation.gov.au/>

The Campaign Page has articles and information to help you write your submission. You could use some of the points Bill Muehlenberg made in his article - PLEASE write in your OWN words!

You can make your submission **online** on the Consultation website or **post** to National Human Rights Consultation Secretariat, Attorney-General's Department, Central Office, Robert Garran Offices, National Circuit, BARTON ACT 2600.

Community Roundtables

Public meetings, 'Community Roundtables', are being held around Australia. The meetings started in Broken Hill on 10 March 2008. Most NSW meetings have already been held. If there is one in your city/town please go and give your ideas! Take some

like-minded friends with you.

The dates/venues for many towns/cities are not finalised yet. Full details: Consultation website's calendar - or phone the Secretariat on 1800 086 134. You need to **register** (online or phone) if you plan to attend!

NSW: Newcastle (8 April), Tweed Heads (Week beginning (WB) 3 May)

NT: Darwin, Katherine, Wadeye (WB 31 May); Tennant Creek, Alice Springs, Nhulunbuy, Maningrida (WB 7 June).

QLD: Mount Isa, Thursday Island, Weipa (WB 17 May) ; Great Palm Island, Charleville, Townsville (WB 24 May) No date given: Atherton, Horn Island, Yarrabah, Caloundra.

SA: Adelaide, Mintabie, Coober Pedy, Whyalla, Mount Gambier (WB 19 April)

TAS: Strahan, Launceston (WB 26 April); Hobart (WB 3 May).

VIC: Melbourne (14 April 2009: 10am, 2pm, 6pm - Windsor Hotel); Geelong (15 April); Dandenong, Bendigo, Wodonga (WB 12 April); Mildura (WB 26 April); Ballarat (WB 24 May)

WA: Perth, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Busselton, Paraburdoo (WB 10 May); Broome (WB 31 May).



Prayer Update

Fires & Floods

Please continue to pray for the people who are still trying to work through so many issues relating to getting their lives back together from both the fires in Victoria and the floods in Queensland.

- Pray for the people who have lost loved ones, homes and businesses in the bushfires and floods.
- Pray for Christian ministries and churches as they re-establish after these fires.
- Pray for all those who are counselling people who are trying to put their shattered lives back together.

Federal 'Freedom of Religion' Inquiry

The Australian Human Rights Commission

is now reviewing the overwhelming number of submissions they received. Thank you to all those who responded to this call to action.

- Pray that the Commission will conclude that 'Freedom of Religion' laws are not required in Australia.

National Bill/Charter of Rights

This inquiry, into whether Australia should have a federal Charter of Rights or Bill of Rights, is still taking submissions. The date has been extended to 16 June 2009.

- Pray that the panel will have an open mind on this issue.
- Pray that Christians will oppose a man-made 'Bill of Rights'.



Pray for persecuted Christians

Please pray for Christians who are being persecuted around the world.

Barnabas Fund, led by Patrick Sookhdeo, gives practical assistance to persecuted Christians. Pray for Barnabas Fund staff as they highlight the plight of persecuted Christians to governments, in relation to the apostasy laws, where converts from Islam face death under such Islamic laws.

Apostasy: Barnabas Fund is running a 2009 petition for the abolition of the Islamic apostasy law, called '**Why should they be secret?**' **Please sign this petition.**

If you have the internet, please print out the petition, collect lots of signatures and post to Barnabas Fund, Postal Suite, 107, 236 Hyperdome, Loganholme QLD,

4129. Petition at <http://barnabasfund.org/?a=590&m=230%23245%23243>

OR phone BF for a copy: 1300 365 799

Immigration: The apostasy laws cause real problems in immigration. Barnabas Fund asks us to write to the Minister for Immigration - ask him to "train the staff to know the different security situations of Christians from a Christian background and Christians from a Muslim background". Ask him to "make sure that converts from a Muslim background are not given Muslim interpreters or housed with Muslim asylum seekers. Please write very politely. Ask for a response . . . Senator Chris Evans, Minister for Immigration, Parliament House, CANBERRA, ACT 2600.

Join us for Prayer and Breakfast
Pray for our nation, its leaders and Salt Shakers
6.30 am every Thursday morning at SALT SHAKERS Office

TV programs - what can I do?

The latest TV program to stretch the boundaries and show same-sex relationships is **Home and Away** on Channel 7. Once seen as a relatively innocent program aimed at children and teenagers, it has become more questionable in recent years and increasingly depicted sexual relationships between characters.

Now they have gone one step further - depicting a lesbian relationship between a policewoman and a woman who works on a fishing trawler. Apparently the relationship starts with hugs and develops into "love" over several weeks. The episodes were scheduled to start screening in late March. The show is broadcast at 7 pm when many children and teenagers are watching TV.

The show's homepage justifies the story line by saying that there have been two previous instances where characters had same-sex relationships - though in each case the relationship was not explored in depth. The program recently showed a girl kissing another girl on the lips.

The producers claim that these things are happening in society and so should be addressed in the program. But this new relationship will be the first time such a relationship has been explored in depth.

So what can we do about our concern that a program aimed at children and teenagers is depicting homosexual relationships?

1. Write to the TV station

If there is a TV program that you think is offensive, the first thing you need to do is write to the TV station outlining your concern. They have 60 days to respond.

In the case of **Home and Away**, write to

Channel 7, asking them not to show same-sex relationships in **Home and Away** as the program is viewed by children.

Write to Seven Network Limited, PO Box 777 Pyrmont NSW 2009.

2. Write to ACMA

If you are not happy with the response you receive from the TV station, you can then write to ACMA, the **Australian Communications and Media Authority**.

Unfortunately you can't write immediately to ACMA - if you do they will tell you to write to the TV station first. If you write to ACMA and don't want your letter posted online, make sure you tell them your letter is confidential or private.

ACMA is the organisation that monitors and regulates broadcasting standards on TV and

radio. In addition they monitor and receive complaints about telecommunications, internet and spam.

Once they receive a complaint ACMA investigates - they contact the broadcaster and ask for a response.

ACMA analyses the complaint by checking the

Code of Practice. The television stations have different codes of practice - the free-to air channels have a code established by FACTS, the *Federation of Commercial Television Stations*. ABC and SBS have separate codes. The codes cover such things as content (sex, nudity, drug use etc), advertising and time zones for particular programs.

So next time you see a program that disturbs you - or you think is outside the guidelines - check out our webpage that has links to the TV stations, ACMA and the Codes of Practice - and put your concerns in



Intolerant tolerance

Whilst proclaiming tolerance as a virtue, there is an increasing incidence of intolerance by groups and people wanting to silence the views of Bible-believing Christians.

In the United Kingdom, in February, community nurse Caroline Petrie was suspended as a result of offering to pray for a patient's recovery. The following week Jennie Cain, a primary school receptionist, was facing disciplinary action as a consequence of sending out an email asking friends to pray for her daughter.

Fortunately the nurse was re-instated and her employer acknowledged that she had been acting in the 'best interests of her patients' and that nurses did not have to 'set aside their faith' in the workplace.

The Bishop of York, John Sentamu, who grew up in Uganda, recently wrote in the *Daily Mail* [13/2/2009] about the

intolerance being shown to Christianity. He said "Those who display intolerance and ignorance, and would relegate the Christian faith to just another disposable lifestyle choice, argue that they operate in pursuit of policies based on the twin aims of 'diversity and equality'.

"Yet in the minds of those charged with implementing such policies, 'diversity' apparently means every colour and creed except Christianity, the nominal religion of the white majority; and 'equality' seemingly excludes anyone, black or white, with a Christian belief in God."

We often find such intolerance in conversation with others - even with Christians. You're told you're 'intolerant' or accused of 'judging'. They seem oblivious to the fact that they are being intolerant, or are judging you!

AHRC: Sex and gender

Last year the Australian Human Rights Commission "sought the views of the sex and gender diverse community about the most pressing human rights issues facing their community"

They didn't ask us what we thought! They only asked the "sex and gender diverse community"!

An Issues Paper was produced and submissions received. In July 2008, AHRC released its report of the initial consultation. They say "The report found that the most pressing human rights issue for people who are sex and gender diverse was the **legal recognition of sex on their official documents and in government records.**"

A Concluding Report, called *Sex Files* was released on 17 March 2009. The first two recommendations are:

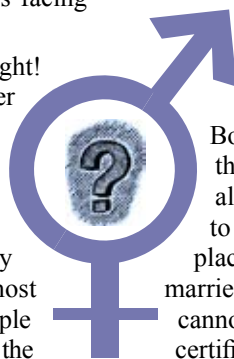
1. "Marital status should not be a relevant consideration as to whether or not a person can request a change in legal sex."

2. "The definition of sex affirmation treatment should be broadened so that surgery is not the only criteria for a change in legal sex."

Both of these would drastically alter the current situation. Most states only allow the gender on a birth certificate to be changed if surgery has taken place - and currently people who are married and have a sex change operation cannot change the 'gender' on their birth certificate.

We will be reporting further on this in our next Journal.

Read the full report at http://www.hreoc.gov.au/genderdiversity/sex_files2009.html



Stem Cells - new developments

New developments continue to occur in the field of adult stem cells. They provide real treatments and real cures - currently 73 of them!. See www.stemcellresearch.org On the other hand, stem cells taken from embryos and aborted babies continue to cause problems.

Pluripotent adult stem cells

Scientists Kathrin Plath and William Lowry, from the University of California in Los Angeles have reprogrammed human adult skin cells to operate in a very similar way to embryonic stem cells. They used four regulator genes to create the cells, called induced pluripotent stem cells or iPS cells. The research was published in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of the Sciences* on 11 February 2009.

Plath said “Our findings are an important step towards manipulating differentiated human cells to generate an unlimited supply of patient specific pluripotent stem cells. We are very excited about the potential implications.”

This research confirms the research by Shinya Yamanaka at Kyoto University and James Thompson at the University of Wisconsin, reported in November 2008. Using adult cells avoids the ethical problems associated with embryonic stem cells.

Barack Obama allows funding

Unfortunately, Barack Obama has continued to repeal regulations and laws put in place by the previous President, George Bush.

Obama, who promoted his Christian ‘credentials’ during the election, has continued to pursue policy initiatives that most evangelicals believe are un-Biblical.

He recently signed an executive order to overturn the ban on providing federal funding for embryo stem cell research.

He said the previous government “has

forced what I believe is a false choice between sound science and moral values. In this case, I believe the two are not inconsistent. As a person of faith, I believe we are called to care for each other and work to ease human suffering. I believe we have been given the capacity and will to pursue this research – and the humanity and conscience to do so responsibly.”

The move was opposed by Christian groups and many Republican Congressmen and comes as GOOD science is showing that embryo’s stem cells are not needed to create usable stem cells.

Read Barack Obama’s speech (9/3/2009): http://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing_room/OfficialStatements/

Stem cells from aborted babies

In a disturbing development, British scientists were given permission in January to treat stroke patients with injections of stem cells obtained from an aborted baby. The two year trial, by biotech company *ReNeuron* will begin in 2010. [HS 20/1/2009]

However, such treatments are already causing problems. In Israel, the parents of a young boy who had a lethal brain disease, desperately wanted to find a cure. They travelled to a clinic in Russia for their son to have injections of stem cells into his brain and spinal cord. The stem cells were obtained from aborted babies.

These treatments were given when the boy was 9 years old, and again when he was 10 and 12. By the age of 13 he was in a wheelchair and doctors discovered benign tumours growing in his brain and spinal cord, which doctors say were caused by the fetal stem cells. [AP, 17/2/2009]

Doctors assessing the case in Tel Aviv warned against using experimental treatments that can have serious consequences.

World News

Canada: Euthanasia

Canadian MP Francine Lalonde has introduced a private member's bill to legalise euthanasia. Her two previous bills, in 2005 and 2008, lapsed when elections were called. [Lifesite, 17/2/2009]

Pray that this bill is not passed.

UK: Islam

In February the UK government refused to allow a Dutch MP, **Geert Wilders**, to enter the UK to speak at the House of Lords and show his film *Fitna* (about Islam). Why? They feared for 'public safety'.

Attacks on Christians are rising in the UK: During March a Christian minister, Rev Noble Samuel, who has a gospel satellite TV program, was physically attacked and warned not to do his TV show again - fortunately the minister was not intimidated. He continued to broadcast his program.

A Christian Facebook group was hacked into by Muslims who posted pro-Islamic material and changed the title of the page.

Europe: Same sex 'marriage'

In June 2008, Norway became the sixth nation to allow same sex 'marriages'. The law passed by a two-thirds majority. Norway introduced a 'Registered Partner' law in 1993.

The Swedish parliament is considering a Bill for "gender neutral marriage". The Bill was introduced in January 2009 - if passed it will become law by May 2009. Six of the seven political parties are said to support the Bill. Three of the four parties in the ruling government Coalition support it - all except the small Christian Democratic Party.

Sweden was the third nation to introduce

'registered partnerships' in 1995. Now they are moving from these 'partnerships' to 'marriage' - since both forms of relationship now have basically the same rights!

UK: Girls cancer vaccine

More than 1300 schoolgirls in the UK have suffered adverse reactions from the vaccine **Cervarix**. This vaccine is similar to *Gardasil*, the drug chosen in Australia to give to girls to try and prevent some forms of the sexually transmitted disease HPV which can lead to cervical cancer.

The British girls had reactions ranging from rashes, swelling and allergic reactions to convulsions, seizures, blurred vision and paralysis. [Daily Mail, UK, 10/3/2009]

European Union: 'marriage'

Nigeria: The Nigerian government recently voted unanimously to protect traditional marriage between a man and a woman and to refuse to allow homosexuals to marry.

A section of the European Union that deals with homosexual rights, the *Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transsexual Intergroup*, then demanded that all foreign aid from the EU to Nigeria be suspended unless the 'state homophobia' in the country is terminated!

Europe: The European Parliament has adopted a report calling for a **standardised legal recognition of homosexual unions** across all member states. [Lifesite, 21/1/2009]

USA: TransAction Day

The *Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network* (GLSEN) recently sponsored **TransAction Day** in schools across the USA to promote transgenderism and "gender non-conforming" behaviour.

They offered curriculum ideas (eg: gender neutral language, sexual reassignment surgery, what it means to be a drag queen). Students were encouraged to advocate for transgender issues in their schools and communities. [Citizen Link, 27/2/2009]



Ministry News

Dear Friends,

Please let me express my deep gratitude on behalf of us all at Salt Shakers to those who have given so generously in such tough times!

Kerrie, our faithful receptionist, put it well, "The response to your appeal in the Journal has been great. It has confirmed this ministry and encouraged us to continue. We could have been tempted to think that God had decided time was up!"

As the times get tougher and darker, we firmly believe that the work of Salt Shakers

in "Helping Christians make a difference" becomes more critical.

If you have yet to send your donation, it is not too late and would be gratefully received. If you are able to commit to a regular monthly donation that would be even better. We understand that any donation in these times is a sacrifice and pray God's richest blessing on you for making it.

If you are unable to give at this time, we understand and would value your prayer support. Please particularly pray for Peter and Jenny Stokes who are on the battle front and need wisdom and protection as they come under continuous attack.

Yours faithfully,
Barney Tomasich
Chairman of Salt Shakers Board

ACTION checklist: Tick the box as you complete the task

Page	Topic	Action / People to write to	Done
6	Abortion & Overseas Aid	Malcolm Turnbull (Lib), Warren Truss (Nat).	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Surrogacy - Inquiry	Submission - by 16 April 2009.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Vic - Sentencing Review	Submission - by 1 May 2009.	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Abortion	Vic (Att-Gen R McClelland); NSW: MPs	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	Federal Bill of Rights	Submission and Community meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	Home and Away - lesbians	Channel 7	<input type="checkbox"/>

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For further information about SALT SHAKERS or issues in this Journal contact;

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A Biblical Perspective On Homosexuality - CD

\$12

This is, without doubt, the clearest Biblically-based message we have heard on this issue. It is vitally important that we understand God's perspective from His Word and teach it to our children and young people BEFORE they are indoctrinated by other people.
Produced by **Focus on the Family**

NEW



CD 3. Islam, the Challenge to the Church by Patrick Sookhdeo

\$7

How will the Church respond to Islam?
How will we deal with calls for Sharia law, Islamic finance, Islamic education?



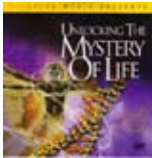
CD 1. How Multiculturalism & the spread of Islam is Affecting the West

CD 2. Are Christianity & Islam Compatible by Patrick Sookhdeo

These excellent CD recordings of Patrick, an ex-Muslim, speaking in Australia, give a very clear and well-presented insight into how Islam is penetrating the West and why Christians should not fall for the lie that Islam and Christianity are compatible. **Highly recommended**

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Tom Woodward - ID explained - DVD

SPECIAL \$5

Tom Woodward came to Melbourne in August 2007 to help us understand the importance of the Intelligent Design message.
This DVD contains his presentation and a more informal interview session that followed.
Produced By **Salt Shakers**. **HURRY** limited stocks available

All prices include GST - Prices as at April 2009 Prices may change without notification - ****ALL prices include postage****

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Use Bank Direct Debit, the form below or phone (03 9800 2855) to pay using your credit card.

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