



Bathurst Uniting Church

Sharing God's love by connecting people to God;
people to people; and people to community.

Newsletter

July 2023

Reflection

Managerialism, individualism, rationalism and the church of God

St Augustine wrote the book the *City of God*. In sub-section of the *City of God*, in what is referred to as Book 14, Augustine makes a contrast between two cities.

He writes of the two cities constructed by two kinds of love. The love of self that leads to a forgetting of God, and a love of God that leads to a forgetting about self.

To quote:

We see then that the two cities are created by two kinds of love: the earthly city was created by self-love reaching the point of contempt for God, the Heavenly city by the love of God carried as far as contempt of self. The earthly city glories in itself, the heavenly city glories in the Lord. The earthly city looks for glory in people, the heavenly city finds its highest glory in God. . . . the earthly city lifts up its head in its own glory; the heavenly city says to its God: My glory, you lift up my head' Psalm 18:1).

In the earthly city the lust of dominion lords it over its princes as over the nations it subjugates; in the heavenly city both those put in authority and those subject to them serve one another in love, the rulers by their counsel, the subjects by their obedience. The one city loves its own strength shown in its powerful leaders; the other says to its God, 'I will love you, my Lord, my strength (Psalm 118:1).

Today Christians live in the midst of two primary influences: to use the language of Augustine, we live within the City of God. We also live in secular society. These are two competing world views. The Enlightenment project gave us individualism and rationalism. From that arises managerialism. The spirit of the age is perhaps captured by Rene Descartes who said, "I think there for I am." In a world of uncertainty and a non-faith philosophy of scarcity rather than the abundance of God, much is reduced to things, resources to be managed rather than gifts to be cherished. The basis of our existence becomes the self, and self-worth is then determined and measured by what we do, by our actions. "I am what I think and do." Which contrasts with the Christian and Jewish faith that we are cherished children of God, of infinite worth because of our 'being,' regardless of our capacity to act, or do. The Enlightenment project shifted the foundation from our worth based upon whose we are to a worth based upon who am I? We measure our value by what we do and accomplish. The Enlightenment project de-mystified

Worship Services

9.30am in the church.

You can join worship on Zoom by going to <http://www.bathurstunitingchurch.com.au/> and pressing the purple button.

2 July Rev Keith Hamilton
Communion

9 July John

16 July Rev Keith Hamilton

30 July Rev Keith Hamilton

6 August Rev Keith Hamilton
Communion

'Sunday @ 5'

At 5pm – contemporary, informal, all ages worship in the Activities Hall.

the world. Everything had to be measured and had to be explained rationally. Miracles, which do not fit a rationalist framework, are then dismissed as unintelligent and impossible.

The Uniting Church has been particularly prone to secularism. Indeed, there has been a colonising of the church by secularism. For example, instead of asking is our worship, our church faithful, we ask is it relevant. So that instead of doing things for God, we are doing things to meet the expectations of secular people. Instead of communications of the faith, we speak of marketing the church as a product. When we use the language of making things in the church attractive, we are engaging in consumerism. For secularised people it is difficult to see what is wrong with such language, but the language marks the turning of the church from attention towards God to attention towards a human-made product that is sold in the same way any other supermarket product is sold. Church becomes something to be consumed, and if a better product comes along, we shift our allegiance to that new bright and shiny product. People in church become reduced to a resource to be managed.

There is nothing wrong with drawing upon the sciences, but concepts like managerialism express a particular world view. The assumption is that any problem in the church can be resolved with a rational solution. In such a situation there is no need for God, no need for prayer, no need to read the Bible listening for what God might say to us, no need for waiting upon God, no expectation that God's Holy Spirit might act in some spectacular and unexpected, unimagined way.

Rationalism also has no place for history and tradition. The underlying assumption is that there is the need for progress. Progress assumes improvement. I can improve my car; I can improve my writing skills, but can I really improve the Body of Christ that was created by the God who founded the world? In such a time of church seeking improvement, rather than seeking to live faithfully to Jesus Christ, tradition and history are trashed. Managerialism and rationalism lead us to a deliberate devaluing and a forgetting of tradition. A deliberate 'not remembering.' Yet Jesus of Luke's gospel called people to remember, and the central act of worship is re-remembering the death and resurrection of Jesus in a meal of bread and wine, body and blood.

Churches today often have a mission strategy and mission goals. We need to understand that the concept of strategy comes from the military. Having mission goals comes from the world of business management. We need uttermost care when using such concepts in the church, not to then be colonised by such language to look upon congregation members and attenders as resource units, to be managed to achieve a desired outcome.

For example, the language of marketing the church suggests that the church and faith is a product, something to be consumed; we simply need to be better at marketing the product. God is reduced to being a divine resource, rather than a loving Father/Mother who embraces us. However, faith is a relationship in the living God – marketing faith and God is like marketing our most intimate relationships.

Church problems are seen as management issues to find a rational solution, rather than sitting listening to the Spirit of God. But solving disputes between people is not resolved by a rational solution, it is more likely by listening and talking, confessing and forgiving, building a relationship, and even then sometimes they cannot be resolved or 'fixed.'

Even the statement that the church is the only organisation that exists for the purpose of its non-members, is a secularised statement. The church does not exist for its member or non-members. The church is founded by Jesus Christ, who is the head, the foundation, and the one who feeds and nourishes the body. The church is God's gathered Assembly. The church does not have a mission. God has a mission, that includes the church. The church's existence is to give glory and honour to God. The mission of God, in which the church participates, and through which God chooses to use as an instrument, is the ingathering of the entirety of creation into God.

Some things the church does make no business sense. The cost benefit analysis of feeding people who hunger makes no sense. The people who are fed today are hungry tomorrow. But the church does not do these things to achieve the outcome of a business plan, though some churches expect a return on investment will be 'if we feed the people today, they will come to church tomorrow.' But providing food to people who hunger, clothes to people who are at risk of nakedness and hypothermia, water to those who this is for no reason other than we are the people of God and our church's love for God (like Augustine's city of God) constrains (not restrains) us to give with joy, and without the expectation of a return.

It may seem odd for someone with a Master's Degree in Management to make these remarks. The social sciences can be of great assistance for the church. But the risk of the church being colonised is great. The more so when a church is anxious about its place in the world and its future, and a mindset of scarcity. An anxiety to create a secure future and avoid the risks of faithful living can lead us to take up language and concepts that take us away from spiritual practices.

Augustine, writing in the fourth century, still has much to assist us in our faith in the twenty-first century. Often presenting issues in the life of faith do not appear clear cut, but behind every choice we make is a choice of loving God or not. It is here that a working knowledge of the breadth of the Bible, the depth of a prayer life, the traditions of the church, reason, experience and imagination, and the gift of the Holy Spirit can coalesce in us to grow a wisdom of God to discern the difference.

Blessings

Keith Hamilton
29 June 2026



With Love to the World:

If you are not on the subscription list and want to receive a copy of the next edition of With Love to the World, (August-November 2023), can you please let Marion Perry know so that she can order an additional copy for you. The cost is \$6 to be paid to the Treasurer.

NEW BIBLE STUDY STARTS UP

During Lent a new Bible Study group formed, and when Lent finished the group decided to continue. Meeting on Tuesday morning, with a mixture of those brand new to the bible and those with more experience we are looking at bouncing through the Old Testament, focusing on God's relationship with his people. We have just finished some of the wonderful stories in Genesis and will start on Exodus after the holidays. We are all very much enjoying an overview of how God has interacted and blessed not only the Hebrews but the whole of His creation.

Julie Fry

BUSS Update

Our new part-time administrative support position has now been filled by Joanna. Joanna has already begun work and is a most welcome addition to the team. Joanna's Dad is also one of our volunteers.

Welcome



BUSS is holding a Christmas in July lunch on Saturday 22 July 12 - 2pm in the Activities Hall.

All our regular guests and the community are invited.

There will be a fresh hot meal and entertainment by the BUSS Music group.

All the regular programs are going well. The café is seeing numbers increase each week and the demand for warm clothes, sleeping bags and tents continues.

If we had a wish list for donations - at present it would be:

Doonas, men's warm clothing (jumpers, tracksuit pants and tops), men's new underpants and socks, and 3 and 4 man tents.

Sharing some thoughts of our guests

Many people attend our cafe and programs during the week.

To hear them talk so positively about themselves and their lives, touches our heart.

The people are welcomed with kindness, gentleness and without judgement.

'I like to come because I am not judged.'

'I am starting to like myself again.'

'I feel good.'

'My life is better.'

'People talk to me, without wanting anything.'

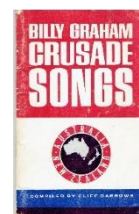
'People listen to me.'

We know we are helping and supporting people when we hear these beautiful thoughts.

A date for your Diary

Sunday 29th October at 2.30 pm Bathurst Uniting Church

A Pleasant Sunday Afternoon featuring A Tribute to Billy Graham.



Staying Connected

For pastoral support, please contact your Pastoral Partner, or one of the Elders, or email BUCCconnect@gmail.com and we'll put you in touch with someone.

You can also contact our minister, Rev Keith Hamilton on 0417487446 or email keith.hamilton.bathurstuc@gmail.com

The newsletter email address is bathurstucanews@gmail.com. Please send items by 9pm on the last Wednesday of the month

Please send news or information for the website to allanwray@hotmail.com

Mowing Roster

July Ian and Allan