G.R. Stirling’s

Purple Patches

A compilation of Page 13 selections from the
Australian Christian 1979–1987

Digital version

Edited by Sarah Bacaller
G.R. Stirling’s Purple Patches

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Introduction

This book follows the initial republication of twenty-two of Gordon Stirling’s original *Page 13* articles.¹ It was felt that another book—one that gave a sprinkling of pithy selections from throughout the whole collection—would help to communicate effectively, the flavour and tonalities distinctive of Stirling’s writing.

These writings belong to the Churches of Christ community; they are made available here for the purpose of refreshed engagement in a new time. There is some repetition with the previous book, but the juxtaposition of various small sections alongside one another will change how these are read. The full version of any *Page 13* article can be accessed in the bound volumes of the *Australian Christian* in the Hindmarsh Archive centre at Stirling Theological College (and probably in many people’s sheds!). It is hoped that this presentation, in aphoristic form, communicates Stirling’s message with maximum effect in a time when distinctive Churches of Christ ethos is, as always, being developed and discovered.

Since the publication of the first book, several unlisted *Page 13* articles have emerged. There are indeed 194 articles, not 188 as previously suggested. Furthermore, there is one article that is mysteriously missing from both archive copies of the *Australian

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¹ *Page 13: A selection of the writings of Gordon Stirling*, published 2018. That publication was generously funded in its initial printing by Churches of Christ Vic/Tas and in its later publication and printing by the Australian Research Theology Foundation Inc.
Christian (titled ‘Jesus and Politics’ from 1982, volume 85, no. 13). If you find a copy, let me know!

A similar editing practice has been undertaken here as with the last book: God and a couple of other nouns have been made gender inclusive, and a very small number of grammatical tweaks (for readability) have been made.

We are grateful to Hery Susanto and Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Jemaat Kristus Indonesia (Churches of Christ Theological College) for the publication of this text, and to the Stirling family, for their affirmation of the various reincarnations of the Page 13 project.

Sarah Bacaller
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2019
I love peace. I hate arguments. I dislike violence, both physical and verbal. But I rejoice in free unhampered discussion of controversial issues in a generous spirit, with a view to discovering with open minds what is the truth of the matter. So no doubt from time to time I will prod and stir a little and throw a cat or two amongst the pigeons with a view to encouraging the honest facing of issues and the discovery of truth. (Introducing ourselves)

They [TV advertisements] are inviting our children to consume a varied concoction of ‘gut-rot’ designed to spoil their teeth, ruin their digestions, impoverish their parents and produce a generation suffering from obesity and malnutrition at the same time. (TV and public accountability)

We believe that God is more than equal to the task of coping with our contemporary world. We believe that Jesus Christ is alive and well and is dramatically changing the lives of those who are continuously open to him. We believe that the Holy Spirit has not lost any power since the great ‘breakthrough’ in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. (Introducing ourselves)

We are going to have to do something about the problem of words. Either we can print glossaries to hand to people on the way into church, that explain the words of hymns, prayers and sermons or we can learn Australian and settle down to translating the gospel words, so familiar to us, into the vernacular. (Billy Graham and words)
This book collates various ‘purple patches’ from Gordon Stirling’s *Page 13* series.* These aphoristic segments offer insight into the informing tonalities and thematic elements of Stirling’s writing, presented here for engagement in a new time and way. Stirling’s insights remain pertinent to current Churches of Christ culture and self-understanding. He offers apertures into the movement’s identity and distinct witness by considering the nature and values of Christian faith, with a firm but generous grounding in Churches of Christ heritage. This is communicated with Stirling’s characteristic down-to-earth manner, bold in confronting the complexities of human life, faith and relationality.

*Page 13* was published fortnightly in the *Australian Christian*, the Churches of Christ national publication, from 1979–1987.