

SAVE THE DATE
Alumni Homecoming 2005
September 29-October 2, 2005

ture has its strengths and weaknesses, mine especially. I can remember some American friends saying to me during those years, "What is it about you Australians? You're like a bunch of wild Irishmen having a brawl in a pub all the time." So forgive me if this letter seems to be tainted with that characteristic.

The USA is an enigma to me. The strengths of your culture from my perspective in the late 70's and early 80's were your great generosity and your willingness to grant each individual the dignity of fulfilling his or her true potential. The weaknesses seemed to be a naive narcissism and something that felt like isolationism from the rest of the world. There was a deeply ingrained political spirit that permeated not just the government of your nation but all of life.

Great wealth, great privileges and a great spiritual heritage always bring great responsibility and the need for great sensitivity to the poor, the underprivileged and those with a different spiritual heritage. There is a very fine line between blessing the rest of the world with who you are and what you have on the one hand, and yet on the other, assuming the role of a self-appointed vigilante for the rest of the world as the reference point to all that is valid or not valid.

The anti-Bush article in *Focus* only said only half of what most people outside the USA feel at the moment because of what seems to be a rapidly developing scary manifestation of the latter, while the pro-Bush article was a classic example of simplistic sentimentalism without any content. The power of the

fundamental religious right in U.S. politics at the moment is the closest thing to our traditional understanding of Revelation 13 that history has ever seen.

It seems to me that the same issues flow over into the way our church functions at the moment. The beginning of the Christian church in the book of Acts starts in Jerusalem, but in the second half of Acts it becomes evident that God had to move the centre of Christianity to the multicultural city of Antioch because the parochialism of Jerusalem and its inability to discern that the irrelevance of its cultural aspects of faith was stifling the spread of the Gospel to the rest of the world. The parallels with the church I love and serve as a pastor are frightening.

I attended Homecoming at Andrews this year and was staggered by the cultural time warp the Michigan Conference applied to the criteria of its recent appointment of ministers, viz wedding rings, drums in church, and vegetarianism.

Ogden Tours

Highlights of China and the Yangtze River
September 21–October 3, 2005

South American Cruise on the *Norwegian Crown*
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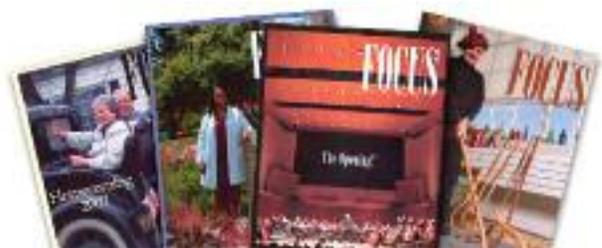
Space for both tours is limited, so make your decision as early as possible.

Contact:

Dr. Merlene Ogden
4683 Timberland
Berrien Springs, MI 49103
Phone: (269) 471-3781
Fax: (269) 471-6246
E-mail: ogden@andrews.edu

It seems a tragedy that the country which God used to launch something so important in the world faces the danger of being left behind in what He is doing spiritually in the rest of the world at the moment.

Graeme Loftus (MDiv '79; DMin '81)



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