

the presbyterian banner

April 2016



*And the God of grace,
who called you to his eternal glory in Christ,
after you have suffered a little while,
will himself restore you
and make you strong, firm and steadfast.
To him be the power for never and ever.*

Amen.

1 Peter 5:10-11

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Editor:
 Rev. Sjirk Bajema
 44 Prospect Hill Road,
 Narre Warren, VIC
 AUSTRALIA 3805
 Ph. (03) 9705 1505
 Email: sjirkb@gmail.com

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Editorial

Wow – hasn't the world changed! You cannot help but notice that technologically. There are all kinds of new devices. Considering how much computers have changed since I was at Theological College is to realise what has been happening across the board. And what about all those devices around the home, at work, and everywhere else?

But haven't there also been many changes made in the moral standards our society considers acceptable? Sadly, many of those changes haven't been for the better. Unlike technological improvements, they haven't made our lives any easier but instead made our communities much more complex. You cannot simply relate to your own neighbours as you once could, let alone your fellow motorists! In this area, attitudes have virtually changed 180 degrees. What was not so long ago seen as clearly a damaging lifestyle is now loudly celebrated. Well may they speak of 'diversity', but much of it is what was once declared almost universally to be 'perversity'! What was once a cause for shame and kept hidden is now flaunted in our faces on the television screen, the newspaper pages, and openly demonstrated on our streets, in our shopping centres and in school classrooms.

That all this immorality has brought its own judgment is quite clear in the increasing family breakdowns, domestic violence, drug addiction, suicide rates – and one can go on and on! Consider that the greatest cost for the now openly promoted immoral life-styles is to be confronted with an ever-increasing government health budget.

And as for those of us who advocate and support what was once the pre-dominate view in society – we are now being more and more confronted with the possibility of prosecution and persecution for refusing to enable and endorse this 'new morality'.

Of course, all this is nothing new. In the past, there have been other historical eras akin to this – when standing up for what you knew to be right exposed you to danger. One only needs to reflect on the situation Esther found herself in when faced with the power and anger of Haman against Mordecai and the Jews, her own people. Mordecai challenged her to make a stand for God and his people with those immortal words of Esther 4:14, "And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" Indeed, as children of the Heavenly Father and brothers and sisters of the King of all kings, we know that we are placed at this time exactly where we are because the Lord has worked it out in his plan for us. Although we may wish to have been born in a different time or place, each of us is called to be as Christ to the place the Lord has put us. May he help us so to be.

*Jesus said,
 "Father, forgive them,
 for they do not know what they are doing."
 Luke 23:34*

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‘The Lord Surrounds His People’

Psalm 125

This is another psalm sung by the pilgrims on their journey up to Jerusalem. As they did so it didn't escape their attention that the city was ringed by mountains. Jerusalem was strategically situated. Derek Kidner paints the picture for us, 'The hills and the holy city, much in view and much in mind to the pilgrims, make their presence felt again; and once more the thoughts they arouse are searching and fundamental, piercing to the realities behind these impressive sights'.

1. A Picture of Stability and Security (1-2)

There are two metaphors used in the first two verses. First; **'Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion which cannot be moved, but abides forever'** (1). The believer is compared to the unshakable Mount Zion. We're not compared to Jerusalem or the Temple which have been destroyed many times. We are like Mount Zion – the mountain upon which the city and temple stood. Can you think of anything more stable than a mountain? That's what we who trust in the Lord are like. We are as fixed and firm as Mount Zion. Perhaps you think, 'But I don't feel like that. I don't feel strong or stable. I feel weak and fragile and vulnerable'. We don't feel bullet proof. We are caught up in the same bundle of life: subject like everyone to pain, sickness, disease, accident, injury and death. But the psalmist assures us that believers are as secure in their position, as the mountain God had chosen and established as His special habitation (cf. John 10: 28, Romans 8: 31-39 and Phil. 1: 6). We are able to stand – not because we are tough and tenacious, but because He is faithful and able to save us.

Secondly, **'As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds His people, from this**

A Song of Ascents

time forth and forevermore' (2). The Lord forever surrounds His people, as a protective army keeps overwhelming forces from defeating them. 'Mount Zion is not the highest peak in the mountain range around Jerusalem. To its east lies the Mount of Olives, to its north Mount Scopus, to the west and south are other hills, all of which are higher than Mount Zion. Surrounded by mountains, Mount Zion

George D. Ball

promises that, **'the eternal God is your dwelling place and underneath are the everlasting arms'** (Deut. 33: 27). And, **'He will tend His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs in His arms; He will carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those that are with young'** (Isaiah 40: 11). And, **'I will be to her a wall of fire all around'** (Zech. 2: 5). We rightly believe in the eternal security of the saints.

The psalmist is *not* saying that our life is one of uninterrupted calm and peace and tranquillity. He is not saying that there will be no difficulties or griefs in our way. He is however saying that He **'is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in time of need'**.

We need to be assured of this great truth before the day of trouble comes: before the knock comes on the door, or the telephone rings in the middle of the night, or the doctor delivers unwanted news. We are called to trust what God says. We must believe His promises. If we were surrounded by a wall of concrete or steel we could see the protection. But faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Though we don't see it, we have an enduring defence (cf. 2 Kings 6: 16 and Psalm 91: 1-6). In a world in which seemingly everything changes and nothing lasts, we need to be convinced of this.

2. A Promise of Success and Support (3)

'For the sceptre of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous, lest the righteous stretch out their hands to do wrong' (3). Dark shadows begin to appear. 'Now

Psalm 125

A Song of Ascents

*1 Those who trust in the Lord
Are like Mount Zion,
Which cannot be moved, but abides
forever.*

*2 As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
So the Lord surrounds His people
From this time forth and forever.*

*3 For the scepter of wickedness shall
not rest
On the land allotted to the righteous,
Lest the righteous reach out their
hands to iniquity.*

*4 Do good, O Lord, to those who
are good,
And to those who are upright in their
hearts.*

*5 As for such as turn aside to their
crooked ways,
The Lord shall lead them away
With the workers of iniquity.
Peace be upon Israel!*

was secure by its natural defensibility. So the psalmist compares the Lord to the hills around Jerusalem and the people to Mount Zion' (Van Gemeren).

Just as Jerusalem is ringed by natural defences, so the Lord promises to surround His people. He

emerges the bleak situation in which these words have been spoken; one in which evil has apparently the upper hand and the righteous are wavering' (Kidner).

The sceptre of wickedness is expressive of the rule of the wicked. The promise is that the Lord will not permit evil ultimately to prevail. When was wickedness exercising its sceptre over the land allotted to the righteous? It may well refer to the period of the exile when Babylon was waving its sceptre. Many identify the period as post exilic (e.g. Nehemiah 5-6) when there were still much antagonism and opposition to cope with. It could refer to a much earlier period: David, for example, had to endure the wicked sceptre of Absalom.

'But the situation envisaged is wider than any specific period...The sceptre of wickedness is always in evidence; constantly in operation; it is the world in which we live' (Motyer).

The lesson of the psalm is therefore timeless. Its spiritual values are the possession of God's people in every generation. It was a popular psalm during the struggle of the Covenanters in Scotland; and in France when the Huguenots were being hunted by Louis XIV. It's especially relevant today for believers in Syria, in Afghanistan, in Iraq, Iran and in N. Korea. It's more relevant to us than we perhaps realise. The sceptre of wickedness is more subtle today. We would be naive to think we have a government of ministers who are influenced by our Christian past. Far from it. We live in a society where there is real animosity toward Christianity. We will see it manifested more blatantly in the run up to the same sex marriage plebiscite. There will be difficult days

ahead. **'They will utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account'** (Matt. 5: 11). Be assured however that the sceptre of the wicked will remain only for as long as the Lord appoints – and no longer. When the right time comes He will smash their sceptre. NB: In using 'sceptre' language the psalmist is holding on to an ancient promise, **'The sceptre shall not depart from Judah . . . and to Him shall be the obedience of the people'** (Gen. 49: 10). Wickedness will ultimately bow to the One (Christ) whom God has promised.

The second part of verse 3 is not so easy to understand. **'For then the godly might be tempted to do wrong'** (NLT). Perhaps it's a description of the corrupting and corroding influence that persistent evil can exercise upon the people of God. Long and constant trial can be wearying. As water eventually erodes the rock, so Christians can be worn down and tempted to compromise so that, **'many will be lead astray...and the love of many will grow cold'** (Matt. 24: 12). Perhaps the situation envisaged is described in Psalm 73. The psalmist (Asaph) was so envious of the peaceful and prosperous lives of the wicked; and so overwhelmed by his own trials, that he almost lost his foothold of faith. He, however, happily concludes,

'Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterwards you will receive me to glory' (Ps. 73: 23). The life of faith is not easy, but the life of unbelief is much harder – in this life and in the life to come. **'God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it'** (1 Cor. 10: 13).

3. A Prayer for Blessing and Banishment (4-5)

'Do good, O LORD, to those who are good, and to those who are upright in their hearts!' (4). Notice how the believer is variously described in this psalm: **'the good'**, **'the upright in heart'** and **'the righteous'**. This is not what we are by nature – but by grace. Goodness comes by being in a right relationship with God who alone is good. 'The upright and the righteous' is not describing perfect people – but is shorthand to describe those who trust in God's covenant promises to us in Christ – we become righteous by believing on Him.

Note the context of the prayer: it asks the LORD to 'do good to those who are good' while the

sceptre of wickedness was

still prevalent. But would God ever intentionally not do us good? Of course not. See Romans 8: 28-29. This is the perspective we need to maintain.

Even when the sceptre of evil prevails the Lord will still do good to those who love Him. 'He surrounds His people from this time forth and forevermore'. This prayer requires that we continue to trust and love Him.

There is a Part B to the prayer, **'But those who turn aside to their wicked ways the LORD**



John Welsh leading the Covenanters in prayer by the banks of the Whitadder during the persecution under Charles II

will lead away with evil doers!' (5)

This is a Romans 12: 19 prayer, **'vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord'**. **'He has fixed a day when He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed'**. He will say to those who have turned aside to crookedness, **'Depart from me,**

you who are cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels' (Matt. 25: 41).

There is also Part C to the prayer (which also appears at the end of Psalm 128), **'Peace be upon Israel'** (5c). It appears to be a condensed version of the Aaronic blessing, **'The Lord bless you and keep**

you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace' (Num. 6: 24-26). This is the peace pictured in verses 1-2. The Lord surrounds His people – and gives us peace.

The Past for Today

The Church in Scotland (14): The Road to the Disruption 1800-1843 *Rowland S. Ward*

1: Introduction

The early 19th century in Scotland was characterised by a rising evangelical sentiment which for convenience we can date from Thomas McCrie's *Life of John Knox* published in 1811, a book which rehabilitated Knox in the eyes of a public that had almost forgotten his contribution to Scottish life. Sir Henry Moncrieff Wellwood (1750-1827), minister of St Cuthbert's Edinburgh from 1775, was leader of the Popular party. The year 1811 also marked the conversion of a Moderate minister named Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847) to the Evangelical side. Rev. Andrew Thomson (1779-1831) began the *Edinburgh Christian Instructor* in 1810, which similarly contributed to the growth of the Evangelical party in the Church of Scotland along orthodox lines.

From the interesting book by James McCosh, *The Wheat and the Chaff Gathered into Bundles; A Statistical Contribution Towards the History of the Recent Disruption of the Scottish Ecclesiastical Establishment* (Perth: James Dewar, 1843), one can deduce Evangelical ministerial strength in the Established Church of Scotland before 1800 was about 25% rising to 33% around 1810, 40% by 1820, 50% by 1830 and 60% by 1840. Thomson and Chalmers were to succeed Sir Henry in the leadership role in 1827. The 1830s show a greater sensitivity to orthodoxy. John McLeod Campbell (1800-72) was deposed from his parish in 1831 for his novel position on Christ's atonement on the motion, carried 119 to 6, of the

Moderate Dr Cook. Edward Irving (1792-1834), that strange forerunner of Pentecostalism, was deposed in 1833 for his teaching that Christ's human nature was fallen and sinful even though, he said, Christ had been kept from actual sin through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Scotland also experienced a great increase in population despite the many who migrated to North America, Australia and New Zealand. In 1801 the population was 1,608,000 but in 1851 it was 2,889,000. Urbanisation and industrialisation proceeded rapidly, and the cities housed many in squalid tenements in unsanitary conditions. In 1801 only 17% of people lived in towns of more than 10,000 people but in 1850 the figure was 32%. The population of Glasgow, the largest city, rose from 77,000 in 1801 to about 370,000 in 1850.

On a more positive note, Thomas Telford (1757-1834), the civil engineering genius, between 1803 and 1828 provided 1,500kms of roads and 1,117 bridges. This greatly improved transport in the Highlands. The Highland economy underwent massive change with overpopulation, crop failures and more clearances, particularly in the 1830s and 1840s. Roman Catholic Emancipation in 1829 furthered already significant increase through Irish migration in the Glasgow region. A high proportion of these migrants were illiterate. In 1832 the Reform Act extended voting in parliamentary elections from about 5,000 men to 65,000 reflecting significant social change.

Universal voting for men was to come in 1868.

2: The Seceders and the Relief

The churches that had broken with the Church of Scotland over patronage in the 18th century did well. As they required voluntary giving they hardly ventured into the relatively poor Highlands, but were strong in the towns, and were more effective in reaching the working-man than the Established Church.

'New light' on the church-state connection affected both Burgher and Anti-burgher synods in the 1790s.

- In 1799 the Burgher Synod adopted a statement disavowing compulsory measures in religion and recommending avoidance of debate on the precise nature of the binding obligations of the Covenants. Some took exception to this 'new light', which seemed to be a denial of any obligation of the civil power in religious matters. Accordingly, twenty-six 'old light' congregations withdrew and formed the Original Associate Presbytery.
- In 1804, a revised Narrative and Testimony was adopted by the Anti-burghers. This led four ministers, including the notable historian Dr Thomas McCrie, Snr., to withdraw and form the Constitutional Associate Presbytery to maintain the earlier position.

The two new light synods joined in 1820 under the name *United Secession Church*, the Burghers contributing 154 congregations and the Anti-burghers 129 for a total of 283. By 1847, when there were 400 congregations, a union was formed with 118 of the 136 Relief Church congregations. It was called the United Presbyterian Church and about 450,000 people (15% of the total population) identified with it.

As regards the minorities of old lights arising from the moves just mentioned, ten Old Light Anti-burgher ministers who declined the union of 1820 formed a Synod of Protestors the following year. In 1827 this body joined with the eleven ministers of the Constitutional Associate Presbytery to form the Original Secession Synod with twenty ministers. Thirty of the forty Old Light Burgher congregations existing in Scotland in 1839 joined the Church of Scotland in that year. The rest, after explanations given, joined their Anti-Burgher brethren in 1842 to form the *United Original Secession Church*. In 1852 some 23 of the 39 ministers of this body joined the Free Church of Scotland. [The remaining Seceders continued until this body was wound up in 1956 with most of its 1,600 members joining the Church of Scotland.] The minority of the Relief which did not join the union of 1847 dispersed or joined other bodies.

Voluntaryism

The new light that impacted the Seceders, was not unrelated to the current of thought which had contributed to the American Revolutionary War (1775-83) and the French Revolution (from 1789). It was the belief that a church connection with the state was undesirable, that the state should keep out of religion and that the church should rely on voluntary support. The financial support of the government enabled the Gospel to be brought to isolated and impoverished parts of the country by the endowed Church of Scotland. This

was particularly important for the Highlands, but the Secession was scarcely represented there. Seceders were generally trades and business people in good financial circumstances, and could afford their 'voluntarist' position. They were products of an individualist approach and advocates of minimal government interference in the economy. Old Light and Established Church people were more likely to think in terms of responsibility for the whole community. In more extreme forms the voluntarist argument was that the state connection with one denomination necessarily involved intolerant and persecuting principles. It was commonly maintained that the church should have nothing to do with the state, a position that seemed to lead directly to the secular model of the latter half of the 20th century, and horrified more orthodox Calvinists. Given that the Secession and Relief were very significant and growing bodies, their voluntarist views were influential politically.

3: The Established Church of Scotland

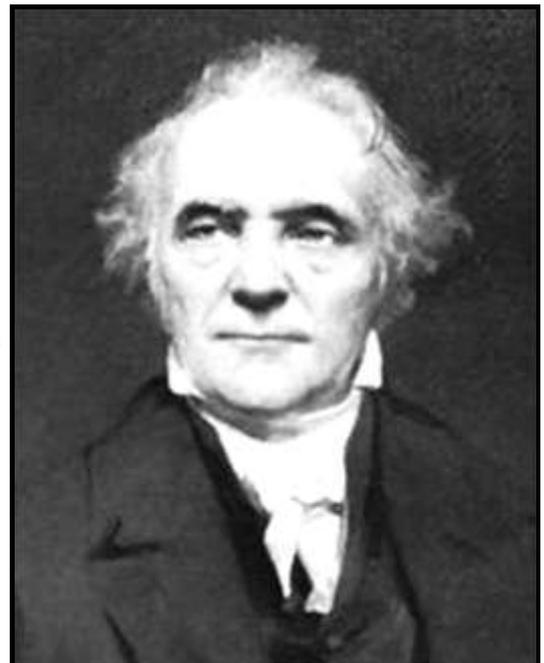
The parish problem

By the early 1800s many Church of Scotland parishes contained far too many people to be cared for by one minister. The minister was responsible for education and poor relief, but much of this was neglected, while rapid industrialisation was often associated with exploitative working conditions. The creation of new endowed Scottish parishes was frustrated by the requirement, in the Act of Parliament about the Planting of Kirks &c. of February 1707, for the consent of landowners representing at least 75% of the valuation of the parish. This consent was hard to obtain.

In the 1820s Telford was commissioned to provide churches and manses in the Highlands from a £50,000

grant by Parliament (a miserly amount compared to the £1.5 million provided in England). Some 32 'parliamentary' churches and 41 manses were the result, nowhere near enough, and the Lowlands received nothing. There were various restrictions on the ministers of these new churches, and in particular, they did not have seats on church courts, although a partial state stipend was provided. In 1833 the 'parliamentary' churches were given quoad sacra status following a positive report by the Moderate leader, Dr Cook. Parishes recognized and endowed by the state with civil functions, such as education and poor relief, were variously called quoad omnia [=all matters] or quoad civilia et sacra [=matters civil and ecclesiastical] parishes. Quoad sacra [=matters ecclesiastical] parishes were recognized only by the church. This meant that they became new parishes and the ministers had all the rights and privileges of a normal parish, but they were not recognised by the state as were ordinary parishes.

Thomas Chalmers [pictured] had a vision to revive the parish system and help the poor, whose situation he saw as es-



Thomas Chalmers

entially a spiritual problem. He wanted to see smaller, more manageable parishes, and the church truly ministering to the whole community. Evangelicals were anxious to bring the Gospel to the growing population, and they were mindful of the increasing influence of the advocates of voluntary support in the dissenting churches. The desperate need for additional churches in existing parishes was evident. If formal division of existing parishes could not be secured from the civil authorities, the church would do so by establishing 'chapels of ease' – a church built by local funds and with a minister paid for locally, and regulated by an Act of Assembly passed in 1798. However, these chapels, of which there were some 67 built before 1834, were not assigned a distinct territory, did not have an eldership and their minis-

ter had no seat in church courts.

In 1834 the Evangelical party attained a majority in the Assembly and converted the chapels into *quoad sacra* parishes. Parliamentary approval for this step was given two months later. There was a potential sting in the tail since the drafting of the Parliamentary Act gave the option to suppress these parishes if they infringed on the rights of any with a vested interest in the old parish arrangements. Given the education and poor relief obligations of a normal parish did not apply to *quoad sacra* parishes, there was plenty of potential for difficulty. Nevertheless, for the moment there was a very positive effort for extension and dozens of new churches were built by voluntary giving in the absence of state assistance, Thomas Chalmers giving vigorous leadership.

However, in 1839, the year thirty Old Light Burgher congregations joined the Established Church, a legal decision involving the *Stewarton* parish held that the heritors of the old parish had the right to all church-door collections at the new church, and could prevent a new church being made *quoad sacra*. The effect was that the heritors got the new churches' door-collections for poor relief purposes, and the new church became a preaching station under the local landowners who generally had contributed nothing to its erection. In the absence of church-door collections, seat rents in the new church had to be raised beyond what the poor could pay, so the work of church extension was mocked.

The World in the Banner

Legal advice says "Safe Schools" could be a legal minefield for schools & government

Schools that promote and instruct students on chest binding, penis tucking and gender dysphoria could be sued decades into the future by students who suffer harm from the advice, according to legal advice obtained by the Australian Christian Lobby.

Around 500 schools with 330,000 students are signed up to the so-called Safe Schools Coalition Australia which says children must have access to this extreme material.

Australian Christian Lobby spokesperson Wendy Francis said the \$8 million federally-funded government program could create a legal minefield for the government, schools and teachers who may be vulnerable to litigation.

She welcomed the opposition to SSCA that was voiced today by Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce, who joined coalition colleagues in expressing concerns commonly held by many federal

and state parliamentarians.

"It is irresponsible for the Government to be funding this ideologically-driven program when government-run schools could be hit by potential litigation claims," Ms Francis said. "The program, through its Minus 18 affiliate and the cobranded resource "OMG I'm Trans", teaches young girls seven ways to bind their chests and boys to tuck their penises, which by Safe Schools' own admission is dangerous and can cause long term physical damage.

"Legal advice to ACL has warned that State Government's face potential liability for endorsing and promoting material distributed by the Safe Schools Coalition Australia. As with liability of school authorities for cyber bullying we may well see litigation occur in the future."

The legal brief obtained by ACL states: "The school authority owes a duty of care to its students. The duty is a non-delegable duty. That is, it is not sufficient for a school authority to say that it employed

competent teachers. The authority has the legal duty to ensure that reasonable care is taken of the students."

It goes on to state: "Further the liability of the school is not dependent on whether the relevant incident occurred in school hours or on school premises."

Ms Francis said SSCA had a duty of care and must explain to schools that are taking on the program that it carried a litigation risk.

"There is enough to indicate that school authorities which run the SSCA program should be aware of, and take steps to protect themselves from, the risk of claims being made against them. Perhaps more importantly, they should consider whether their pupils are protected from possible harm. As with child sexual abuse claims, the school authority may only be notified of claims many years after the relevant events."

Ms Francis said it was time for Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull

to heed the advice of his colleagues and ensure the government is protected from a potential legal minefield, but more importantly that children are not damaged by following the advice contained in the program.

"We call on State Parliaments and the Federal Parliament to hold an urgent review into Safe Schools and to remove this harmful material immediately," Ms Francis said. "The Commonwealth Government should cancel its contracts funding Safe Schools because it is not safe. Who is liable if a child damages themselves or later has surgery they regret? A thorough investigation must be undertaken to see how this has slipped into our school system."

+ ACL Media Release, 22 February 2016

Oh for an Australian of the Year who unites us!

"The Australian of the Year award ought to reflect and unite this great nation," FamilyVoice Australia national director Dr David Phillips said today. "Yet it seems to have become a platform for social engineers!"

Dr Phillips said the latest appointee, former Army Chief David Morrison, has used his new position to promote his divisive political views on marriage and our constitutional system.

"There was a good reason why a majority of Australians in all states defeated the 1999 republic referendum," he said. "They didn't want the kind of republic that the politicians were offering. They still don't. Our constitutional system is one of the most stable in the world. As the saying goes, If it ain't broke, don't fix it!"

And there are good reasons for continuing to define marriage as a lifelong, exclusive voluntary union of one man and one woman – the basis of the natural family since the beginning of history.

Children have a deep longing to know where they come from, but legalising same-sex 'marriage' says their rights are not important," Dr Phillips said. "And if marriage is only about 'love', there is no logical

reason why paedophiles cannot marry children, brothers marry sisters, or men marry many women and vice versa.

David Morrison's idea that we should redefine marriage and rewrite our national leadership framework is not as simple as he seems to think," Dr Phillips said. "I urge him to listen respectfully to all points of view."

+ FamilyVoice Australia, Media Release, 28 January 2016

177 Cases of Christian Persecution In India Reported Last Year

According to a report by the Evangelical Fellowship, 177 cases of Christian persecution have been recorded in India last year. However, it is believed that the number of actual cases may be higher since some incidents may not have been reported to authorities.

As reported by CBN News, some of these cases include about 68 incidents where victims experience physical violence. About 36 of them involved vandalism on religious buildings and refusal of services. There were also incidents of rape, including a nun who was sexually abused while inside the convent.

The report also noted that many of these cases happened in central India. These include about six states which prohibit Hindus from converting to Christianity. Those who convert will then be forcibly converted back to Hinduism. There are also cases when Hindu priests shave the heads of Christian converts and parade them around villages to humiliate them.

Christians in the country take up about 2.3 percent of India's entire population, which is about 25 million. Many of them belong to the social class known as the Untouchables or Dalits, which is the poorest group in the country, according to Premier.

Aside from persecution, Christians in the country also experience information manipulation regarding their religion. In February, a group of Indian Christians in the state of Maharashtra carried out a protest against the right-wing na-

tionalist party Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh or RSS.

According to *Christian Today*, one of the leaders of the party published a book claiming that Jesus was a Hindu. In the book, titled *Christ Priachay*, it states that Jesus's real name was Keshao Krishna and he was a Brahmin. It also says that Christianity was formed as a sect of Hinduism. Then, referring to the biblical account of the resurrection, the book also claims that after he was crucified, he was rescued from the cross by the Essenes who then cured his wounds using herbs. He then spent the remaining years of his life in the Himalayas. Nigel Barrett of the Archdiocese of Bombay criticized the book for attempting to change the history of Christianity. "There is an attempt to re-write history and draw us into controversy," he said according to *Christian Today*. "Christianity is well grounded and based on the person of Jesus who without a doubt is a real person in history."

+ Carlo Monzon, news@gospelherald.com, Mar 4, 2016

Questioning your gender at the age of six?

The local media have all been wildly shouting about the latest example of gender confusion – a case of a boy who said he always knew he identified with the female gender. You have to have compassion for the level of angst and confusion in this very young boy and also the unhelpfulness of his parents and school. He is facing a long course of testosterone blockers and oestrogen, which will drastically change his body and also the way his mind works. Then there comes the whole extensive process of breast augmentation and the gender reassignment surgery.

Professor of Psychiatry Paul McHugh, whose studies of transgender surgery brought the procedures to an end at Johns Hopkins University said: "Treating these children with hormones does considerable harm and it

compounds their confusion. Trying to delay puberty or change someone's gender is a rejection of the lawfulness of nature... Children transformed from their male constitution into female roles suffered prolonged distress and misery as they sensed their natural attitudes. Their parents usually lived with guilt over their decisions, second-guessing themselves and somewhat ashamed of the fabrication, both surgical and social, they had

imposed on their sons...We psychiatrists would do better to concentrate on trying to fix their minds and not their genitalia."

The majority of children treated by those with expertise in this area are able to embrace the goodness of being male or female. Walt Heyer, author of *Paper Genders*, felt he should have been a girl at the age of 5 years old, had gender change surgery as an adult, and lived as a female for eight years

until he realised that surgery doesn't change your DNA birth gender. You are either born with an XX chromosome or an XY chromosome. He says, "The struggle with gender issues evolve out of psychological issues. The gender issue is only a symptom of something of a much deeper problem within children, as it was in me."

+ Sources: *The Leader Newspaper* and *FamilyFirst NZ*

Film in the Banner

Self/less or self-served?

Reviewed by Andrew Wibe Bajema

For a filmmaker whose first breakthrough was directing a music clip on *Losing My Religion* (performed by R.E.M., 1991), *Self/less* (2015) director, Tarsem Singh, seems to have spent every effort since then in finding it again. *Self/less* is an action film with sci-fi elements which initially stars Ben Kingsley, who looks and acts the part of dying businessman Damien wanting another life through the scientific endeavours of obsessive genius Albright (Matthew Goode). This is a prerogative which is summed up when Albright asks, "What you built will be immortal; don't you want to feel immortal?" Damien takes up the irresistible 'deal with the devil' and assumes his new body. Yet the new younger version of Damien, now the everyman Ryan Reynolds [pictured], comes at a high cost as he is forced to realise that living again cannot account for his past mistakes, and so the film questions the principles behind human disposability and the meaning of earthly achievements.

Much like Singh's previous work, *Immortals* (2011), *Self/less* can best be described as a 'thematic narrative', and while somewhat rough-around-the-edges, Singh's strength comes from his ability to insert deep moral themes into his narratives and his excellent ability at pacing

such narratives; a fact that goes over the heads of most critics, who claim his films are dumb-action when they are the exact opposite. As the film follows Damien from one plot revelation to the next, issues of the inherent cost in much of modern human progress contribute to the core message of sacrifice and family. While Christian morality isn't directly referenced, it isn't accidental that Albright, a splitting image of a young Stephen Hawking, claims that the bodies they use are 'just a bunch of cells / balls of flesh', which recalls the moral relativism behind abortion



and euthanasia. Singh manages to slip religious principles into the film by showing in a fictional yet eerily real way how science and the pride of humanity tries but fails to stop man from his ultimate destination.

In contrast, the previous years'

Lucy (2014), of the same contemporary action sci-fi mould, typifies this humanistic scientism and reveals how boring and disconnected a film can get when people do try to make gods out of humanity. By focusing on Damien's selfishness and his realisation and rectifying of this, *Self/less* demonstrates the true human condition in the much bigger picture. Instead of celebrating the fast-paced hedonistic lifestyle of today, *Self/less* in an early montage imitating a modern rap video, manages to capture how truly empty a life of living for one's self is. Like the late Paul Walker's *Hours* (2013), *Self/less* reaffirms the fulfilment of being a father and their importance as self-sacrificing patriarchs, as well as the emotional and physical stability male role-models bring. As the flawed hero attempts to redeem these mistakes of his egocentricity, so too does *Self/less* look to redeem compassion towards others and the vital worth of fatherhood in an industry that constantly trivialises their significance.

Self/less has some violence, some language and allusion to sexual behaviour; however, many of these aspects go towards supporting the underlying the message.

Life under the Banner

Loving in Truth

Christians love the truth. At least, they should.

Truth is a beautiful thing. It is so lovely, so worthy of being loved. In contrast to a world that resists the notion of objective, absolute truth, the Christian says, "Oh, we know that there is such a truth, and we love it."

Jesus Christ is the truth, and we love him. "I am the way, the truth, and the life," he proclaims to us, and we love him for it.

Meditate on Truth

Philippians 4:8 instructs us to meditate on "whatever things are true." Think about what is true. Think about truth.

This is something we should be happy to do. When a man loves his wife, it's not a chore to think about her. It puts a smile on his face, to think about how wonderful it is to be married to her, how blessed he is to be able to spend his life with her, how privileged he is to be loved by her.

How privileged we are to be able to know the truth of Jesus Christ. And what an honour it is to know the truth that the Creator God has made us in his image, and He enables us to know him as our heavenly Father.

"Meditate on whatever things are true! Lord, telling me to do this is better than commanding me to eat ice cream."

Love the Truth, Love in Truth

But now, here's the thing: not only are we as Christians called to love *the* truth, we are also called to love *in* truth. 1 John 3:18, tells us, "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

Love in truth. The word 'truth' here is pretty much the same as the word 'truth' in Philippians 4:8, which tells us to meditate on whatever things are true. Truth must shape our thinking. And truth must shape our love.

When we speak about truth, we're talking about something that is

real, something that is consistent with the way things actually are. We're talking about something that has certainty, validity. "Truly, truly, I say to you. I say to you something you can rely on, something you can take to the bank. I say to you something that you can know without a doubt, something that God, the source of truth, has verified to be true."

And so when we are called to love in truth, we are talking about a love that is real, a love that cannot be denied. It's a love that gets to the core, the essence of who we are, and flows out from that essence.

And here's the thing: it is so crucial that the love we demonstrate be real, be genuine, that if we aren't loving in truth, then it cannot really be said that we love the truth.

You can be spending all your time meditating on the great truths of the Christian faith. But if you don't love in truth, then no matter how much you love the truth, it becomes irrelevant.

1 Corinthians 13:1-2, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have *the gift of prophecy*, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing."

I could know everything there is to know doctrinally. But without a genuine love, without love that is real, I am nothing.

What Loving in Truth is All About

But then the question becomes: what does it mean to love in truth?

Is it a matter of having a deep emotional sensation? The stronger I feel my love, the more real it is?

A love that is real is a love that is felt. But that's not the most reliable guide as to what it means to love in truth. A young man wanting to have his way with the girl he is dating tells her, "I love you." He feels it very

strongly, he may even genuinely believe that he really does love this girl. But the real truth behind his feeling is this: "I love myself, and I want you for my own personal satisfaction." What he is strongly feeling has nothing to do with loving in truth.

To love in truth goes much deeper than that.

Perhaps it would be helpful to have an example here of what loving in truth is really all about. Thankfully, the Bible gives us a perfect example. We read in 1 John 3:16, "By this we know love, because he laid down his life for us."

You want to see love in truth? Look to the cross. Look to what Jesus Christ did, laying down his life for you. Look at how he took upon himself the anger of God against sin, an anger that should have been inflicted upon you. He bore the full weight of that anger, so that you would not have to. Now there is love in truth, in action.

James Montgomery Boice writes about the connection between the love of God and the cross. "It is interesting to notice in this connection that there is hardly a verse in the New Testament that speaks of God's love that does not also speak (or the context does not also speak) of the cross. For instance, there is John 3:16: "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." Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Romans 5:8: "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." 1 John 4:10: "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." In each of

Jim Klazinga

these verses the cross of Christ is made the measure of God's love as well as the primary means by which we become aware of it.

There on the cross, the ultimate example of loving in truth: Jesus sacrificing himself.

We can hardly imagine a more beautiful expression of this love than that which is laid out for us in Ephesians 5:25-27: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish."

The true love that a husband should have for his wife, we can hardly imagine anything more beautiful, anything more worthy to be meditated on. God takes that tangible example and says, "Let me point you to something that's even greater, infinitely greater: the love of Christ for his bride, the church."

Ephesians 5:30-32, "For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. *'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.'*

This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

Christ loves his bride. He gave himself for his church, to give her a beauty beyond imagination. A beauty unstained by the filth of sin. A beauty that she will be able to show off for her husband, Christ, forever.

This kind of self-sacrificial love that Christ demonstrated, and that we are called to emulate, it's not an easy love. The self-serving love, which is no love at all, is far easier. That's the default position we are inclined to. We want to look out for ourselves, satisfy our own cravings, do things that we believe will benefit us. But what will truly benefit us is a kind of love that first asks the question: how will this benefit the one I am called to love?

Concrete Loving in Truth

So how do we demonstrate this kind of love, a love that looks outward? Well, it does involve being willing to

give up our lives for others. But that's not all there is to it.

To love in truth means living for the good of others, rather than ourselves. It will involve having a generous spirit.

1 John 3:17-18: "But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

James 2:14-17: "What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." Faith without works is dead. Love without concrete demonstrations of generosity, is dead.

This is something we need to take on board. And it's not something that we can look to others to do for us. This is something we need to demand of ourselves before we demand it of others.

Some people seem to think that this sort of self-sacrificial love is why we have the government. They believe that the essence of concern for the poor is to make sure that the government takes care of them. They cheer on the Robin Hood approach, where you steal from the rich to give to the poor. And they think that cheering this on means that they've done what they needed to do for the poor.

Now, I'm certainly not trying to say that the government must never have any role to play in any of this. But paraphrasing James 2:15-16, "If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you merely says to them, 'Go in peace to Centrelink and they will make sure that you are warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?" Loving in truth means doing what you personally can do.

Here's one way that you can love in deed. The PCEA Missions Com-

mittee, along with our treasurer and webpage manager, have cooperated together to set up a scheme for helping to support needy students at the Mission School in Chhapara. Please seriously consider whether this is something that can help you to demonstrate what it means to love in deed.

Mind you, self-sacrificial love is not just about giving money. Loving in truth also means defending those who are not able to defend themselves. Quoting Peter Barnes, "A Christian cannot remain silent when terrible things are happening—whether it be the consigning of Jews to gas ovens in Nazi Germany or the wanton destruction of unborn life today. Modern secular man is becoming increasingly callous."

In a culture where love is defined as gratifying lusts, it's no surprise that there is a callous disregard for those human beings that result from the act of gratifying lusts. The wanton destruction of unborn life today is perhaps the most visible demonstration of how contemporary man has no idea what it really means to love in truth. If we are to love in truth, we need to do what we can to fight against this terrible injustice.

But again, it's not just simply about doing the deeds for their own sake. We could be generous, we could fight for justice, simply for the self-satisfaction that it gives us. That's not the point. The point is that we demonstrate love to others, because of our love for the God who has so richly demonstrated his love to us. It's about giving glory to him. It's about doing everything we can so that he may be praised and worshipped.

Is this your goal? Meditate on what it means to love the Lord your God. And meditate on how it is that you can show this love to God by concrete demonstrations of love to those around you.

Children under the Banner — Matthew 18:21-35



Prescribed Search Work

APRIL 2016

Senior Section 12 years and over; Intermediate 10—11 years; Junior 9 years and under

SENIOR AND INTERMEDIATE (Intermediate omit questions 1 and 4)

I THESSALONIANS chapter 1

x1. Why were the Thessalonians an example to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia? (2 verses)

chapter 2

2. Why did the way they received the word of God cause Paul to thank God?

3. Who would be Paul's hope, glory and joy at the Lord's coming? (2 verses)

chapter 3

x4. When Timothy came with good tidings [good news] of their faith and love, what effect did it have on the apostle? (2 verses)

chapter 4

5. Who had taught the Thessalonians to love one another?

6. What will happen when the Lord descends from heaven? (2 verses)

chapter 5

7. What has God appointed us to receive instead of wrath? (2 verses)

JUNIOR

DANIEL chapter 3

1. What would happen to those who did not fall down and worship Nebuchadnezzar's golden image? (1 verse only)

2. What was the answer of Shadrach, Meshech and Abed-nego when they were brought before the king? (3 verses)

3. How many men did the king see in the midst of the fire?

4. Had the three young men been touched by the fire?

Please send the answers to:
Mrs I Steel
PO Box 942
Epping NSW 1710
The questions for the whole year
are available from the above postal
address or by email at:
iesteel@gmail.com

Sacraments under the Banner

Baptism — It's Not Just An Individual Thing

John Caldwell

We are grateful to John Caldwell for sharing the following thoughts on baptism. His sons Ethan and Caleb were baptised at Portree Free Church on Sunday, March 2, 2016.

This weekend was a significant weekend for my family. My two sons, Ethan (7) and Caleb (6) were baptised at our local Free Church of Scotland. This was significant for two reasons. It was primarily significant because it was a spiritual act of obedience for me and my wife as we presented our children for baptism. But it was also significant because both of us have always attended credo-baptist churches. In other words, we believed that baptism was something that is reserved for professing believers. For me, presenting our children for baptism on Sunday, felt like the consolidation of our shift from a 'baptist' way of life to a presbyterian way of life. The transition felt complete.

In shifting from a contemporary, charismatic church life to a Highland, presbyterian church life, we have had to make a number of adjustments. There are differences in worship, structure, approaches to singing, gifts of the Spirit, communion and baptism. Some of these adjustments have happened seamlessly, and others have taken a bit of time to process. Baptism, for me, was perhaps one of the most difficult challenges to come to terms with. I'd not only believed in believer's only baptism, I'd also preached believer's only baptism and I'd also administered believers only baptism. So, I was well rooted in baptistic theology and practice.

That being said, doubts about believers only baptism did not begin when I joined the Free Church three years ago. Ironically, doubts began 10 years ago whilst I was a student at the Scottish Baptist College.

Whilst at the college, a fellow student and friend introduced me to John Piper, Mark Driscoll, and J.I Packer. I was hooked. Although I didn't consider myself a Calvinist, as I began to delve into the works of the Calvinists, I discovered that many of them taught things that I already believed, or that resonated deeply with me. Sometime around 2004 I decided to dip into Louis Berkhof's Systematic Theology. It was here I made the fatal decision to read his chapter on Baptism and for the first time my secure 'baptist' foundations were shaken. Up until now, I had assumed that there was very little weight behind the paedobaptist position. Berkhof challenged that notion, and the outcome was that I became less polemical about baptism. Now I at least knew there was a strong theological basis for the practice of infant-baptism, even if I still wasn't persuaded by the arguments.

It was around 2008 that I eventually purchased my first copy of Calvin's Institutes. The New Calvinism was at its height, and an increasing number of people, in independent, baptistic, and charismatic churches were adopting the label 'calvinist' and 'reformed'. I was one of them. Of course, it wasn't long before I noticed that there was more to Calvin's Institutes than teaching on predestination and soteriology. There was a pretty large section on church government and sacraments! Wonder of wonders — Calvin was Presbyterian!

Coinciding with my study of Calvinism, was a growing love for church history. I'd always loved church history, but too much church history within modern evangelicalism starts in the 1800s, or at the reformation. I began to appreciate that the historic church has an essential role in helping the contemporary church discern truth. So I soon discovered Eusebius and

the pre-Nicene Fathers. Church history is not infallible, but it is a great way to root out novel ideas — and 21st century evangelicalism is full of novel beliefs. It was something of a jolt to realise that believers only baptism, in the grand scale of church history, was rather novel. In other words, the majority of the church has historically maintained that the children of believers are to be baptised. Francis Schaeffer illustrates this point when he says, "Those who would teach that the practice of the early Church was not infant baptism should be able to show in Church History when it started. There is no such break recorded."

Further doubts about believers only baptism occurred for me once my own children were born and I began to think through what it means to bring up my children in a Christian household. How should I view my children? Are the children of believers to be treated as unbelievers until such time as they professed faith? Or were they to be brought up as believers? As I observed my 'baptist' friends who were parents, and whose kids were older than my own, I saw an inconsistency. Whilst children were excluded from baptism, they were included in almost every other part of church life and were brought up as believers. They were taught to pray, read scripture and trust in God. In other words, in practice, baptistic believers seem to recognise that there is something different about the children of believers.

But what was that difference?

For me, the clearest answer to that question seemed to be found in covenant theology. God has made a promise to believers *and their children*. This was clear in the Old Testament, God says to

Abraham:

I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. (Gen 17:7)

It is also clear in the New Testament, when Peter says to the people of Israel:

The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” (Acts 2:39)

As a Christian parent, it became clear to me that God’s promises are

includes them in the covenant promises, why should they not receive the covenant sign?

God’s people administered the covenant sign to their children in the Old Testament, why would the covenant sign be withheld from children in the New Testament? Just as children were included in the covenant in the Old Testament, and they received the covenant sign (circumcision) so in the new Testament, children are included, and there is not a shred of New Testament evidence that suggest that children were excluded from receiving the sign and seal of the cove-

come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” (Matt 19:14)

In the end, it is scripture that has persuaded me that my children should be given the covenant sign of baptism.

Sunday was a special day, but it was also a very spiritual day. The presence of the Lord was sweet. There was a real sense that God’s blessing rested upon the service, and also us as a family. It is a joy to know that God’s hand is upon my children, and that His grace is sufficient. We will do our best to teach them about Jesus, and to be an example that reflects the character of Jesus. We rejoice in the early signs of faith that we do see. We look forward to the day when they confirm their faith formally – but right now we rest in the reality that there is something that is stronger than our feeble attempts to teach and lead by example; there is something even stronger than their own expressions of faith. Underpinning it all is the faithfulness of our covenant keeping God – and we rejoice in the sign that points to His faithfulness – covenant baptism.

Taken from the Free Church of Scotland website



not just to me and my wife as individuals, but they are to us as a family, and our children are included in these covenant promises. If God

nant (baptism). In fact Jesus is adamant, that children should not be excluded, but rather included:

Jesus said, “Let the little children

Prescribed Youth Work — 2015 Results

In 2015 prizes were given for the successful completion of essay questions to children and youth from the following congregations:

Ulverstone

Niklavs Bosveld
Simone Hamilton
Joshua Ryan
Belinda Hamilton

St Georges

Matthew Hickey
Jonathan Hickey

Wauchope

William Kerridge
Grace Kerridge

Brisbane

Harrison Carswell
Tahnee Carswell

Missions in the Banner

Urgent Request from India

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We are very much obliged of PCEA and especially for your team you are doing, especially for the school.

As we face challenges from the newly opened private schools in Chhapara and Seoni as some rich businessmen have started their own schools, we always require to provide something exceptional to the children and parents in order to cope with the challenge and attract parents to send their children to our school.

We always try to give our best to the school, but we have limited resources and funds. But, when rich people start their own schools it attracts people to their schools, because of facilities they provide.

Our staff is well qualified, capable, hard-working, committed, however, one additional thing we can provide much better than other schools, is none other than English spoken teaching in our institution through the volunteer teachers from abroad. No matter how much he or she is trained or qualified, we just need direct interaction for thirty to forty minutes daily in a classroom.

We would like to have someone as a volunteer- teacher for two months or more – up to five months, (if possible in the last week of June 2016 as the new session begins in July.)

The school can provide accommodation (at our home), meals, and travelling within the country.

In His service, yours in Christ,
Pradeep — pradeep_kumar667@yahoo.com

*If you are interested in this please speak to your minister or one of the Mission's Committee, such as its Convenor, the Rev. Jim Klazinga — jdklaz@gmail.com
(Ph. 07 3878 6949)*

Churches in the Banner

Ulverstone Ladies

Our ladies craft group met for the first time this year, and made these delightful boxes from folding paper under the instruction of Marilyn Newton. Ten ladies attended and Sue led a lovely devotional on prayer, after which we all enjoyed a lovely cuppa and discussed the plans for the coming months' craft days. We will

bring in other skilled craft people to show us some unusual things, and will run a special day for school children through the holidays. It was a very encouraging meeting. Please pray for this gathering that the Lord will touch those who come that as yet don't know Him.

Loretta Hingston

