

# THE PRESBYTERIAN BANNER

February, 2008

Produced by the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia as a contribution to the Kingdom of God in Australia, and the World. This magazine is available as a pdf file on the Church Website - <http://pcea.org.au>.

*Devotion: "But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:13-15*

ISSN 0729-3542



Wingham - Manning River

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## TRUE AND FALSE

*The Rev. George Ball continues his studies on "Ministry Matters," and deals with 2 Corinthians 11:1-15*

Did you know that the word "gullible" is not in the dictionary? Check it out. (I hope you're not that gullible!). There are a lot of gullible people around and you'll even find them in the church. It seems sometimes that people are more ready to believe a lie from a stranger than accept the truth from someone they know. That's what happened in Corinth. It seems that after Paul's second visit (when Paul's credit points were low), certain men entered the city and exploited the poor Corinthian opinion of Paul at that time. That was a pretty mean thing to do.

Who were these newly arrived ministers in town and why had they come? The scholars have spilled a lot of ink on this very question. There are a number of theories and explanations but we don't have the space to elaborate here. What we do know is that they came with letters of commendation (from Jerusalem? 3:1); they claimed to be Hebrews, Israelites, Abraham's seed (11:22); and they came commending themselves (10:12) contrasting their strengths with Paul's perceived weaknesses. They were powerful in public speaking and polished performers (11:5-6); they came as ministers and apostles of Christ (10:13&23). But all that glistens is not gold. Jesus warned, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves. You will know them by their fruits." (Matt. 7:15). Paul here exposes these men for what they were – counterfeits and deceivers. He warns his readers: -

### Don't be Deceived by Their Arguments (vs.3-4).

Paul fears that the Corinthians have been deceived and have been much too tolerant of these "super apostles". Just as the serpent by his craftiness deceived Eve in the garden and led her away from simple trust and obedience to God – so now in Corinth its déjà vu. Of course they came preaching Jesus and the benefits that he brings. Of course they came preaching the gospel – isn't that what every preacher does? Yet as D.A.Carson reminds us, "As soon as Jesus Christ is not the sole basis for our salvation, as soon as our acceptability before God depends on something more than his sacrifice on the Cross, we have denied the sufficiency of his person and work. At that point the Jesus being preached is no longer the biblical Jesus, but an unreal product of human imagination." Their message was not the same as that of the apostle's (see 5:18-19).

It would appear that these "super apostles," while using all the right lingo were nevertheless promoting a message of condemnation which imposed "Moses" (3:6-7) upon the gospel of grace – as though righteousness comes through tablets of stone rather than through the cross. Their gospel therefore was a Jesus plus gospel. And a Jesus plus gospel equals a Jesus minus gospel. Tertullian warns us of the two thieves of the gospel. "Just as Christ was crucified between two thieves – so this doctrine of justification is ever crucified between two opposite errors." One of these thieves is legalism, which stresses truth without grace. The other is antinomianism, which stresses grace

without truth. It would appear that the thief of the gospel being peddled in Corinth was some form of legalism.

Don't therefore be shocked when Jehovah Witnesses or Mormons (or anyone else for that matter) describe themselves as Christians who believe in God, in the Bible, in Jesus, in the gospel, etc. Don't be gullible. You don't need to know all the ins and outs of other religions. The best way to avoid being deceived is to know the real gospel of grace. Bank managers don't give their trainees monopoly money or counterfeit money to train with. They learn by handling the real stuff. They get to know the feel of it so they can spot the phoney. So we need to know for ourselves what the Bible teaches.

#### **Don't be Deceived by Their Eloquence (vs. 5-6).**

It's quite conceivable that these intruders had attained a high level of classical education, spoke polished Greek (there were a number of Greek speaking Jews in Jerusalem at this time) and possessed skills in public speaking. These of course were things, which the Corinthians admired, applauded and valued in their ministers. In other words marks were given for style and appearance. Perhaps Paul is being a little self deprecatory about himself here and aware of what the rumours were about him ("his speech is contemptible" 10:10). Nevertheless he says, "I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles," (ie. referring to these self styled super apostles), "even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not in knowledge." That is, he had knowledge of the true gospel. In other words a man must be judged not by his impressive delivery, his fluency, his self-confidence, but by his content – does it square with the Biblical gospel? Don't judge a man by his manner but by his matter.

***“Bank managers don't give their trainees monopoly money or counterfeit money to train with. They learn by handling the real stuff. They get to know the feel of it so they can spot the phoney. So we need to know for ourselves what the Bible teaches.”***

Sometimes a preacher is described as having a good pulpit manner. But what do we mean by that? C.H. Spurgeon decried preachers, "who had a holy tone for Sundays. They have one voice for the parlour and the bedroom, and quite another tone for the pulpit...when that gown is on how often does it prove to be a shroud of the man's true self." Every preacher must beware of "playing to the gallery". The gallery might be impressed but the Lord is not impressed. James S. Stewart states, "You do not need to be eloquent, or clever, or sensational, or skilled in dialectic: you must be real. To fail there is to fail abysmally and tragically." God has given to each man his own individuality. There is no such thing as a standardised preacher. The church would be dull if every preacher was cut to the same pattern.

#### **Don't be Deceived by Their Appearance (vs.13-15).**

The identity of these men is now exposed. Such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ and servants of righteousness but who are Satan's servants. Strong words. These men are deceitful and dangerous to the cause of Christ. In 1936 during the Spanish Civil War, Emilio Mola gave a radio address as four of his army columns moved on Madrid intent on undermining the Republic government. The

General referred to his supporters within the capital as his "fifth column". Satan's most effective attack on the church is not his open opposition from outside but his fifth column inside. These people may feign piety, may use the language of the Bible, and may seem credible and convincing but it's all a camouflage. This is not a mandate to go on a heresy hunt, but it is a wake up call to be discerning. "Beware of wolves in sheep's clothing". Evil does not become good by labelling it good. Don't trust the label, test the contents. Carson remarks, "the sad truth about the Christians in Corinth is that they thought themselves sophisticated believers, but in reality they were so immature that they became easy dupes." Solomon prayed, "Give to your servant an understanding heart to judge your people that I may discern between good and evil." (1 Kings 3:9). Discernment should be our first line of defence against error.

This great deception has been exceedingly painful for the apostle Paul to witness. He's not some kind of disinterested observer. No, he clearly indicates his passionate interest and involvement. He declares his love and concern for the church in Corinth. In so doing he reveals to us the signs of a true apostle, preacher and pastor.

#### **He Describes Himself as the Jealous Father of the Bride (vs.2).**

Paul reminds his readers of the very special relationship they had. He cannot hide his feelings of love, hurt, concern, grief and anger. He says in effect, "I became your spiritual father and you became my precious daughter. Through the gospel I proclaimed to you I arranged your engagement to Christ to whom you are to be married when He returns. It is my duty to keep you in a state of purity and innocence

toward Christ until the day of your marriage. But my concern is that you are losing your purity and devotion to Christ and you are flirting with a new lover – and you don't even seem to be aware of it! So as your father I can't stand idly by and say nothing."

He is a father who is jealously protective of "his little girl". Can he see his children begin to go astray and remain coolly indifferent? Does he see them in danger and give them no warning? Carson comments, "Paul's jealousy reflects the heart of God, so much so that it is difficult to conceive of valid Christian leadership that does not in some measure manifest the same jealousy. How concerned is an elder, for example, for the spiritual well being of the believers he serves if he is not jealous for them with a godly jealousy? Christian ministry can never merely be professional."

#### **He Describes Himself as a Caring Father Who Sacrifices for His Children (vs.7-12).**

With some people you can't win. When Paul was in Corinth he accepted no payment. He preached the gospel free of charge. He was a free Presbyterian minister! He didn't want to be a burden on the church so presumably he maintained his tentmaking activities and also received →

# BLOGGING ABOUT...

## Alan ....

This month we feature the ministry of the Rev. Alan Trivovich who, on the 23rd February reaches forty years of ordained and inducted service in the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, and forty years of service in the Hastings River Congregation. We thank God for his goodness to Alan, and his wife Sybil, and their family, for their faithful service in the Church over so many years, and the friendship and fellowship we've been able to enjoy over so many years. We pray that God would continue to bless them, and that the Word of God preached over those years may continue to bear fruit in the lives of those who have heard it from the mouth of his servant.

I first met Alan in St. Kilda in 1964. He was in his second year of study at the John Knox Theological College, and I had just finished University, en route to Scotland to train at the Free Church of Scotland College in Edinburgh. I had been sent to Melbourne to prepare for Hebrew and Greek exams, and to do some essays on Church Principles. I was a young "fella" - and Alan was a married man with three children. To me, then, he seemed an older, mature man, but in looking back, the age difference was the same then as it is today - 12 years! But 12 years when you're 21 seems like a generation; 12 years when you're 60+ doesn't seem so much at all! And if today he doesn't seem much older, he is certainly much more mature!

It was in St. Kilda that I first heard Alan preach - and I still remember the text - from Jeremiah 50:4-5. Over our years together in the Church I haven't had the opportunity to hear him a great deal, but on those occasions that I have, his preaching has been solid, thorough, well thought out, and delivered distinctly and clearly. And the same applies to his contributions in the Church Courts. He has always expressed himself with dignity and grace, even when deeply opposed to other views being expressed. And his commitment to the principles of the Church, and his tenacity in holding to them has been second to none. And he hasn't been afraid to take a contrary view, even when he's been alone. I remember when everyone was rejoicing in the invasion of Iraq, and the downfall of Saddam Hussein, Alan opposed the war, and the invasion. Since then, many have come round to

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**[Continued from page 2]** gifts from other churches. He was like a father not wanting to be a burden on his children. He was there to enrich them - not to rob them.

One would have thought the church should have been happy with that. They were getting a good deal. Did they appreciate it? No! He was bagged and criticised, eg. "You get what you pay for! Pay peanuts and you get monkeys! What kind of amateur is this who charges nothing? What kind of apostle is this who has to work with his hands and keep up a day job?"

Paul could, of course, have legitimately claimed expenses

his way of thinking.

I haven't always agreed with Alan! In latter years, when his hearing was deteriorating a little, I said to him in Presbytery: "Don't worry. Alan. I'll tell you when to vote." I'll never forget the look he gave me! But though I haven't always agreed with him, I've always admired his integrity, and his graciousness. I remember when I was "called" by Maclean - and it seemed to some that I was wanting two charges, he dissented against the decision in Presbytery. And yet he came to the induction and participated in it and did not join in the opposition to it in the following Synod. I deeply appreciated that. And of course I always love to remind him that he was the first minister in our church to sell me a different version of the Bible to the AV!

I've deeply appreciated his friendship and fellowship over the years. And the same applies to our family. Roberta is always arguing with him, and our children still refer to him as "Uncle Alan" and we appreciate how he always enquires after them.

Alan is really a strange mixture of a man! He's deeply immersed in Scottish Church History, and Church Principles, and has read widely about it, and loves the Scottish tradition deeply. And yet at the same time he still retains a healthy "Australian" skepticism, and the willingness to question many things that are part and parcel of that history. I recall very vividly the arguments that Roberta and Alan used to have about the "footprints" in the soil in Glenmoriston in Scotland. The story is that a preacher was being interrupted by some young skeptics, and he said that if his words weren't true his footprints would disappear. If his words were true, though, they would remain as a testimony to the truth of his words. At a place on the right hand side of the road going west from Glenurquhart to Kyle of Lochalsh, the "footprints" can still be seen. Even though Roberta had seen the footprints [Glenmoriston is now part of the Glenurquhart Congregation], Alan refused to be convinced and produced many arguments to the contrary! At the moment I think they've declared a truce on this, and other issues!

To our dear friend and colleague, and his wife, we say thank you for all those years of faithful service in preaching the Gospel, in pastoring the Hasting River Congregation, and contributing to the life of the Church of God.

- **Ray Murray.**

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as he wrote in 1 Corinthians 9. But for reasons that were unique to Corinth he declined any remuneration. He probably wanted to draw a clear demarcation between himself and the money grubbing, greedy intruders who knew how to charge.

Here is a man who is in the work not for personal gain but for their well being. Paul was a true father to his children who loved and cared for them, "God knows I do!" (vs.11). "Such love, utterly un-self regarding, preoccupied only with the good of others even at a cost to ourselves, will make us care for our people, as a father cares for his children." (Stott).

# FORTY YEARS OF MINISTRY ON THE HASTINGS

The Ministry of the Rev. Alan Leslie Tripovich.



**The Reverend Alan Tripovich and his wife, Sybil, December 2007.**

*[Extracted from the 1979 centenary book. [Other personal details can be found in "Bush Still Burns" -DH]*

Mr. A.L. Tripovich (the present minister) was educated and brought up within the Roman Catholic Church. Completing a five-year apprenticeship as a carpenter and joiner, he became established in the building trade. After losing contact with the Roman Catholic Church, he continued in an irreligious state for some years until his conversion in 1958.

In the amazing providence of God he had purchased land and built a home for his family right next-door to a family, the wife of which had taught his wife in Sunday School in earlier days. Through the instruction and encouragement of the husband of that Christian family, Mr. Tripovich was converted to the Saviour Jesus Christ by the grace of a sovereign God.

He and his family began attending the local Baptist Church at East Ringwood in Victoria, where he began teaching in the Sunday School and later became a Deacon. In 1960, he became convinced of a divine call to the ministry and enrolled to study at the W.E.C. missionary college, Tasmania. However, during that year, the

W.E.C. College was divided as a result of the Reformed Faith entering in, and at the same time, Mr. Tripovich was brought into contact with that Reformed Faith and began worshipping with his family at the Free Church St.Kilda. The minister of that charge, Rev. E.R.Lee encouraged Mr. Tripovich to study for the ministry of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. This he did and began academic studies in 1961 in Melbourne.

In 1963, Mr. Tripovich began theological studies in the 'John Knox Theological College', formed by our Church at that time as a means of training our own students, and those of the Reformed Evangelical Church in Tasmania. Some of the ministers of our Church were appointed as tutors, but due to a theological dispute which arose in the College between students and some of the tutors, the Tasmanian students withdrew, leaving Mr. Tripovich alone to finish the three year course, and to become the one and only student of the P.C.E.A. to study at that College, for it was discontinued shortly after. The College was held in the hall adjoining the Free Church, St.Kilda, which Mr. Tripovich had built during part-time work while studying.

After completing his studies, he was licensed by the

[Continued on page 5]

## THE ORDINATION AND INDUCTION OF THE REV. ALAN TRIPOVICH FEBRUARY, 1968

On February 23, 1968, in the church at Wauchope, the Northern Presbytery met with the, Hastings River congregation for the very solemn purpose of ordaining and inducting Rev. A. L. Tripovich to the pastoral office as Colleague and Successor to, Rev. J. A. Harman, who retired from the active pastorate on May 3, 1967.

The Moderator of the Presbytery, Rev. J. A., Webster, presided and preached from 1 Corinthians I v. 22. He spoke of the life of Saul, who, exemplified the words of the text, and the life of Paul, who, found that the former stumbling block was indeed "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." The change in him was apparent to all. The Jews always expressed the desire to see something, a sign of some kind a miracle perhaps; but the Greeks demanded that all things be explained on their principles of philosophy. As it was in those days, so it is today with multitudes. The crucified Saviour is ignored, and where not ignored, is denied. But modern man cannot account for sin. He knows not, or does not wish to know, how the sinner may be pardoned. After giving a faithful representation of modern religious thought, Mr. Webster spoke feelingly and at length of the benefits of an attachment to Christ.

At the conclusion of the sermon, the Moderator called on the Rev. A. D. Campbell, Clerk of Presbytery, to narrate the steps followed by the Presbytery leading to the induction. The statutory questions were then put to Mr. Tripovich, and he, having returned satisfactory answers, signed the formula in the presence of the Presbytery and Congregation.

With the Ordinand kneeling, the Congregation standing, by laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, the Moderator did solemnly by prayer ordain Mr. Tripovich to the office of the holy ministry, and induct him to the pastoral charge of the Hastings River Congregation; after which all members of Presbytery gladly gave him the right hand of fellowship.

The Rev. A. D. McIntosh suitably addressed Mr. Tripovich, basing his remarks on Acts 20 v. 28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers," while the Rev. A. D. Campbell followed with an exhortation to the Congregation from 1 Thessalonians. 5 vs. 12-13, "Know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord." At the conclusion of this very solemn and heart-searching service, the newly inducted minister was introduced to the Congregation as they retired.

At a reception held in the Fellowship Hall, the ladies of the Congregation served a sumptuous tea. Under the chairmanship of Mr. McIntosh (Interim Moderator) the welcome to Mr. and Mrs. Tripovich and family commenced with the reading of messages of greeting from those unable to be present, including one from the Rev. J. A. and Mrs. Harman, the senior colleague, and the Rev. M. C. and Mrs. Ramsay, a former minister of the congregation. Words of greeting were addressed to the newly inducted minister and his family by ministers of our own Church present, by the representative of the Ministers' Fraternal, and by selected persons of the congregation. A presentation was made on behalf of the congregation by Mrs. Kennedy and Mrs. Hollis.

Mr. Tripovich impressively responded, thanking the Presbytery and Kirk Session for the way they had watched over the Congregation since Mr. Harman's retirement, and sought the prayers of the people as he entered upon his ministry among them.

The singing of Psalm 133 brought the happy occasion to a close. [Our Banner, April, 1968.]

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***"Now while the church must attend to the great commission given by the great Head of the church, to reach out to the world and gather in to the fold, we must not attempt this at the expense of caring for, and feeding the flock which the Saviour has purchased with his own blood. With such a 'Home-care Program' prayerfully and patiently persisted in, a much more efficient and far-reaching witness may be effected under the blessing of God, through a congregation of Spirit-filled 'office-bearers and people.'"***

***- Alan Tripovich, Moderatorial Address to Synod, 1984 [Our Banner, September, 1984]***

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Victorian Presbytery in November, 1966 at the age of 37 years, and gave supply full-time in the Geelong congregation, living with his family in the manse.

In response to an invitation from the Hastings River Congregation, Mr. Tripovich gave three weeks supply there in Oct.-Nov. 1967, and in December, received a call to become the minister of the Hastings River Congregation. This he accepted as a call from God to serve in that area, and after moving with his family to Wauchope, was ordained and inducted into that charge on the evening of Friday 23rd, February 1968. This was a very happy occasion for the congregation as it meant that the charge had been vacant for less than a year. Mr. Tripovich presided

over his first meeting of Session on March 2nd, 1968 and has continued as the fourth settled minister of the Hastings River Congregation, to the present time.

On the occasion of his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, a special function and presentation was held in the Wauchope church hall on 26/6/1999 to pay tribute to his long and faithful ministry to The Hastings River district. This was a large gathering. This was reported in the Banner about August 1999, and also the local paper, in which photographs and story were printed. He is a staunch advocate to the reformed faith and the inerrancy of scripture, and he has continued to be a valuable member of Presbytery and Synod. [Doug Hamilton, December 2007]

# LOVE - AND IT'S RELATIONS

## A Study on the First Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5

In our last study on the first fruit of the Spirit, Love, we noticed that many of our problems with understanding "love" comes because we divorce love from its relations. And then we went on to see how love is related to God, and to Jesus. In this article we consider two other relations of Love - Law and Action.

### LOVE IS RELATED TO LAW

Love is Related to law – and especially to the Ten Commandments.

#### Division

Up to this point all Christians will be agreed about Love and it's Relations. They wouldn't divorce Love from God, or from Jesus, or from the Gospel – at least not in their words. *But many part company when it comes to the Law of God.* They see these things as opposites. "Love has nothing to do with Law" they say. Indeed some have gone so far as to set Law and Gospel over against each other. The OT is the Book of Law; the NT is the Book of Love. They don't go quite as far as a heretic in the ancient Church, Marcion, did - who said there was the OT "god" – and the NT God, but they get very close to it.

#### Definition

But what are the facts? When Jesus summarizes the OT Law, he reduces it to its essence – and he shows us that the essence of the Law is Love! "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your souls, mind and strength, - and your neighbour as yourself." Love summarizes the Law. But Love also fills it up! Later on, Paul, following Jesus, tells us that: *"love is the fulfilling of the Law."* If we truly conform ourselves to God's Holy law, we show true love to God and true love to our neighbour.

And then, coming at it all from a slightly different angle, Love is expressed through the Law. Jesus says: *"If you love me, keep my commandments."* Love flows in the direction of his commandments, and fulfils them. We are freed from the Law as a way of acceptance with God. But we're freed in order that the Law might be fulfilled in our lives. Jesus has fulfilled the Law for us so that the law might be fulfilled in us. And if we're going to walk in Love, we need to follow His commandments. They show us the way of love. Without Jesus' Commandments, Love is an indefinable thing – a wispy, empty idea. But when we see a person, out of gratitude, seeking to serve God and his neighbour, we can say: There's Love!

#### Disaster

Many people agree that love is central for the Christian. But then they turn around and say that to be loving you don't have to worry about rules and regulations. And as a result you have so many talking about love, and yet paying no attention to God's Holy law, and ridiculing anybody who says we have to listen to it. Some even go so far as to say that to show love you might have to break the law – that every situation must be dealt with on its own merits. When we adopt that attitude we've divorced Love from Law – and in the process, we lose the meaning of Love.

### LOVE IN ACTION

And then, Love is related to Action. There are three words for "love" in the NT. [1] first, there's the word, "eros." That's often used to refer to "love" on the ordinary level between two people - and especially sexual love. It's a love that's directed inward towards self. It wants to possess and enjoy the object loved. [2] And then there's the word "phileo". It refers to intimate affection, like friendship, and liking things that are pleasant. We would have this sort of love for a friend, or something we enjoyed doing. [3] But the most important word – and the word that's used here to describe Christian Love - is the word, "agape". It means deep feeling. But unlike "eros", it's deep feeling plus self - giving. It's outward looking and outgoing. It doesn't consider the benefits that might come to oneself, but the benefits the other would receive. It's defined as "a warm affectionate devotion to, and desire for, its object, issuing in a genuine concern for the interests and activities of the beloved." Or, as some one else has put it, it's "the absolute giving of oneself unto death for the sake of others." It's not self – centred, but "other" centred. It's a love that acts for the benefit of the one loved.

#### Love and Talk.

But once again people divorce love from its relation. They separate Love from practical care and concern for the other person. They say, "I love you," But they do nothing. It's like the young man who says to his girlfriend, "I'd go through fire and water to see you," and then says as he leaves: "See you tomorrow night if it's not raining!" A love divorced from action is no love at all!

#### Love and Feeling

And following on from that, not only do some people reduce love to talk. They reduce it to feeling. They think love is a beautiful warm feeling inside – and they have to wait for the "feeling" before they do anything, and if they don't have the feeling they don't have love. But love is more than just feeling. It's feeling plus action. God loved the world - and gave his only Son to be our Saviour. Jesus loved His people – and laid down his life for them. And if we have true agape Love, Christian Love, there will be feeling plus action. Indeed there will be action despite our feelings!

Feelings are strange things! They're variable. Sometimes they go before an action. But sometimes they come after what we do! Sometimes we don't feel very much like doing something – and the more we put it off the worse we feel. But then, when we do what we have to do, we "feel" good. If we don't "feel" love, perhaps it's because we're not practicing love. And this goes to show that we can't afford to divorce love from action, because it's in doing and giving, and caring, that the "feelings" will come.

#### CONCLUSION.

It's said that we can choose our friends, but we can't choose our relations. That applies here. True Christian Love has its Relations – and if you try to divorce it from its relations you'll end up with something inferior - or even grotesque. And let us remember this:[Continued, page 16]



# THE STORY OF A PAINTING - A REVIEW

## “Assertion of Liberty of Conscience by the Independents in the Westminster Assembly of Divines, 1644” painted by John Rogers Herbert RA.

This is a well-known picture just republished by permission of the Palace of Westminster Collection in a high quality full-colour format measuring 24” x 36” by Rev Andrew Moody of <[www.ReformationArt.com](http://www.ReformationArt.com)>. It comes complete with the key identifying the 67 persons pictured. A colour reproduction made in 1993 for the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the commencement of the Assembly is of lesser quality.

The story of the picture is little known and is as follows. A Congregational minister, Rev Dr James W. Massie (1799-1869), who had been a missionary in India 1822-39, and was Secretary to the Home Missionary Society of the Congregational Union, suggested the picture and drew the outline.[1] J.R. Herbert (1810-90) was a well regarded painter who had converted to Roman Catholicism about 1840 through the influence of the up-and-coming architect

-designer of Gothic revival, A.W.N. Pugin (1812-52). Pugin was involved with the design of the new Palace of Westminster (Houses of Parliament) following the disastrous fire of 1834. From about this time Herbert's pictures are largely of religious subjects. Perhaps the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1844 event pictured was in Massie's mind.

Certainly the Westminster Assembly picture belongs to about this period, and was exhibited by Massie in connection with his lecture series in various British cities on Liberty of Conscience from at least February 1846. The artist was permitted to view the Jerusalem Chamber by the Dean of Westminster 1842-45, Thomas Turton, and provides a faithful representation [2] of the main meeting place of the Assembly, as he also does with most of the individuals pictured.

The picture was issued as an engraved print by Thomas Agnew, Printseller to the Queen and Prince Albert, Exchange Street, Manchester on 16 December 1648. An interesting review appeared in *The Baptist Magazine* for August 1849.[3]

According to *The Baptist Magazine*,[4] the printed prospectus of 1848 describes the scene in which Philip Nye, one of the five Independents in a largely Presbyterian Assembly, asserts 'that, by God's command, the magistrate is discharged to put the least discourtesy on any man, Turk, Papist, Socinian, or whatsoever, for his religion. They were for union in things necessary, for liberty in things unnecessary, and for charity in all.' In other words, the claim is made that the Independents affirmed full toleration of all religious groups. The looks of surprise/horror on various faces is intended to reflect reaction to this bold affirmation. Accordingly, the original print under the 1848 title gives a reference to Robert Baillie's letters Vol 2. p.

146 - "We were all highly offended at him – all cried him down".

However, if one looks up the Baillie reference, one finds Nye was opposing the Presbyterian desire for uniformity and therefore he urged toleration of all whose errors were not fundamental, as for instance the difference in church government between the Independents and the Presbyterians. But as to the toleration of those not orthodox in fundamentals, Baillie is a witness that the Independents at the Assembly were of the same mind as the Presbyterians, and opposed those – not members of the Assembly – such as John Goodwin, who favoured toleration of the various religions mentioned.[5]

Massie, as the one behind the commissioning of the picture, represented Nye and his fellow Independents as advocates of complete toleration in his lectures,[6] but cites Baillie in a completely inaccurate fashion. The careful Baptist historian, E.B. Underhill, pointed out Massie's erroneous claim in *The Baptist Magazine* for October 1847. His critique, slightly extended, was subsequently published.[7]



*Baptist Magazine* for October 1847. His critique, slightly extended, was subsequently published.[7]

The picture is an impressive one. There is a certain artistic licence in that men who were not actual members are included, such as Baxter, Owen, Cromwell and Milton.[8]

It might seem strange that this picture of an

Assembly dear to Presbyterians should have been conceived by an Independent who claimed too much for his party, be painted by a Roman Catholic convert, and represent that which Presbyterians of the time opposed as inimical to the reformation of the British church. But that's how it is in God's providence. But it is a picture capable of providing a useful talking point. I like *The Baptist Magazine's* suggested alternative title: "The Westminster Assembly receiving Philip Nye's development of the tendencies of Presbyterianism." [9]

- Dr. Rowland Ward, Melbourne.

## Endnotes.

1. Extract from the *Liverpool Albion* 21 February 1846 as cited in J.W. Massie, *Liberty of Conscience Illustrated*. (London: John Snow, 1847) viii.
2. *Liberty of Conscience*, 138.
3. *The Baptist Magazine* for 1849 (London: Houlston & Stoner, 1849) 494-498.
4. Page 495.
5. Baillie, Vol 2, 145-146; note also Vol 2, 122.
6. *Liberty of Conscience*, 112.
7. *The Independents not the first assertors of the principle of full liberty of conscience: with especial reference to the views of the five dissenting brethren in the Westminster Assembly of Divines* (1849) 18pp.
8. See the justification for the presence of these spectators in *Liberty of Conscience*, 98-99.
9. P. 498.

# Run For Glory

## KYLE

One day, when I was a freshman in high school, I saw a kid from my class was walking home from school. His name was Kyle. It looked like he was carrying all of his books.

I thought to myself, "Why would anyone bring home all his books on a Friday? He must really be a nerd." I had quite a weekend planned (parties and a football game with my friends tomorrow afternoon), so I shrugged my shoulders and went on.

As I was walking, I saw a bunch of kids running toward him. They ran at him, knocking all his books out of his arms and tripping him so he landed in the dirt. His glasses went flying, and I saw them land in the grass about ten feet from him.

He looked up and I saw this terrible sadness in his eyes. My heart went out to him. So, I jogged over to him as he crawled around looking for his glasses, and I saw a tear in his eye.

As I handed him his glasses, I said, "Those guys are jerks." There was a big smile on his face. It was one of those smiles that showed real gratitude. I helped him pick up his books, and asked him where he lived. As it turned out, he lived near me, so I asked him why I had never seen him before.

He said he had gone to private school before now. I would have never hung out with a private school kid before. We talked all the way home, and I carried some of his books. He turned out to be a pretty cool kid. I asked him if he wanted to play a little football with my friends. He said yes.

We hung out all weekend and the more I got to know Kyle, the more I liked him, and my friends thought the same of him. Monday morning came, and there was Kyle with the huge stack of books again. I stopped him and said, "Boy, you are gonna really build some serious muscles with this pile of books everyday! He just laughed and handed me half the books.

Over the next four years, Kyle and I became best friends. When we were seniors we began to think about college. Kyle decided on Georgetown and I was going to Duke. I knew that we would always be friends, that the miles would never be a problem. He was going to be a doctor

and I was going for business on a football scholarship.

Kyle was valedictorian of our class. I teased him all the time about being a nerd. He had to prepare a speech for graduation. I was so glad it wasn't me having to get up there and speak.

Graduation day, I saw Kyle. He looked great. He was one of those guys that really found himself during high school. He filled out and actually looked good in glasses. He had more dates than I had and all the girls loved him. Boy, sometimes I was jealous! Today was one of those days.

I could see that he was nervous about his speech. So, I smacked him on the back and said, "Hey, big guy, you'll be great!" He looked at me with one of those looks (the really grateful one) and smiled. "Thanks," he said.

As he started his speech, he cleared his throat, and began "Graduation is a time to thank those who helped you make it through those tough years. Your parents, your teachers, your siblings, maybe a coach...but mostly your friends...

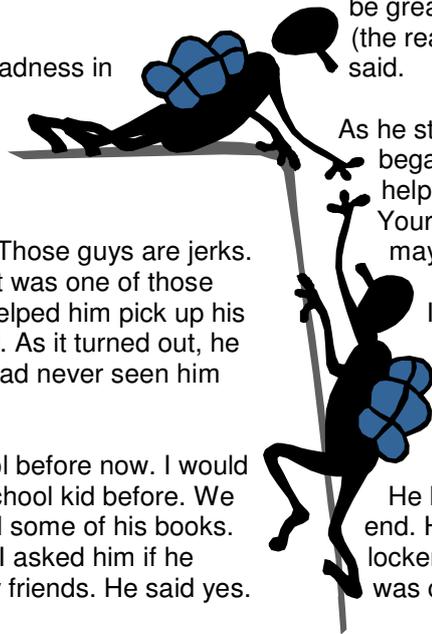
I am here to tell all of you that being a friend to someone is the best gift you can give them. I am going to tell you a story." I just looked at my friend with disbelief as he told the story of the first day we met.

He had planned to kill himself over the weekend. He talked of how he had cleaned out his locker so his Mom wouldn't have to do it later and was carrying his stuff home.

He looked hard at me and gave me a little smile. "Thankfully, I was saved. My friend saved me from doing the unspeakable."

I heard the gasp go through the crowd as this handsome, popular boy told us all about his weakest moment. I saw his Mom and dad looking at me and smiling that same grateful smile. Not until that moment did I realize it's depth.

Never underestimate the power of your actions. With one small gesture you can change a person's life. For better or for worse.



**“Dear children, let us not love with words and tongue but with actions and in truth.” 1 John 3:18**

## SCRIPTURE MEMORY

### METRICAL PSALMS

Infants Psalm 23/121  
Psalm 67/100

Junior Psalm 84  
Psalm 8

Senior Psalm 19  
Psalm 146

### SCRIPTURE

Junior Ephesians 6: 10-20  
Senior Ephesians 2:1-10  
John 1:1-14

## ESSAYS

### INFANTS

(<7) 50 words and a picture  
What promises are given to those who "ASK", "SEEK" and "KNOCK"? Comment on what each means. Matthew 7:7-11.

### JUNIOR

(8-12) 400 words  
What do the events of Mount Carmel teach us about following God? 1 Kings 18: 20-40.

### SENIOR

(13-17) 1000 words  
In Numbers 21: 4-9 what was the sin of the children of Israel and how were they saved? What is this event likened to in the New Testament? What do we learn from these passages and how do they apply to us? John 3: 14-16

*Send your completed essays to the Minister, PO Box 3007 Mt Druitt Village 2770 and you will receive a reward for your effort.*

## PSALM TUNES

### JUNIOR

Belmont  
Westminster  
Carlisle  
Holley

### SENIOR

Ladywell  
Serenity  
Melcombe  
Torwood

### CALLING SEARCH WORKERS ...

Mrs Steele writes: "I have not added the names of the children who completed the questions last year. So far only 5 have finished the whole year's work, so I will wait a few weeks to hear from the others. Sadly, I don't have high expectations; many seem to start well, but peter out after a few months."

Please encourage Mrs Steele by doing the Search Work - and sending it in.

**SECTIONS: SENIOR 12 years and over;  
INTERMEDIATE 10-11 years; JUNIOR - 9 years and under.**

### JANUARY 2008

#### SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE

Intermediate omit questions 7 and 8

#### 2 SAMUEL chapter 1

- Who came to David the third day after the death of Saul?
- What did the young man say he had done to Saul's crown and bracelet after he had slain him?
- Why did David tell the young man that his blood would be on his own head?
- Why was David distressed for his brother Jonathan?

#### Chapter 2

- Where was David dwelling when he was anointed king over Judah?
- Whom did Abner make king over all Israel? (2 verses)
- (x) What words of Abner caused Joab and his men to pursue after Israel no more?
- (x) In the battle between Abner's men and the servants of David, how many were killed on each side? (2 verses)

#### JUNIOR

#### GENESIS 25

- Where was Abraham buried?
- What did the Lord say to Rebekah about her children?
- When the boys grew, what kind of man did each become?
- What did Jacob give Esau in exchange for his birthright?
- 

### FEBRUARY 2008

#### SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE

Intermediate omit questions 5 and 8

#### 2 SAMUEL chapter 3:17—39

- What did Abner say when he had communicated with the elders of Israel? (2 verses)
- How did Joab kill Abner?
- With what words did David lament over Abner at his burial? (2 verses)

#### Chapter 4

- How did Mephibosheth become lame?
- (x) What was David's answer when the sons of Rimmon brought him the head of Ish-bosheth?

#### Chapter 5.

- How old was David when he began to reign and how long did he reign over Judah and Israel? (2 verses)
- What did Hiram king of Tyre send to David?
- (x) When the Philistines spread [deployed] themselves the second time in the valley of Rephaim, how did the Lord direct David? (2 verses)

#### JUNIOR

#### GENESIS 27

- When Isaac was old, what did he ask Esau to do? (2 verses)
- What clothes did Rebekah put on Jacob in order to deceive Isaac? (2 verses)
- What was the blessing that Isaac gave to Jacob? (2 verses)
- What did Isaac say when he realised what Jacob had done?

**SEARCH WORK TO: MRS I. STEEL, PO Box 942, EPPING 1710.**  
E-mail: iesteel@gmail.com

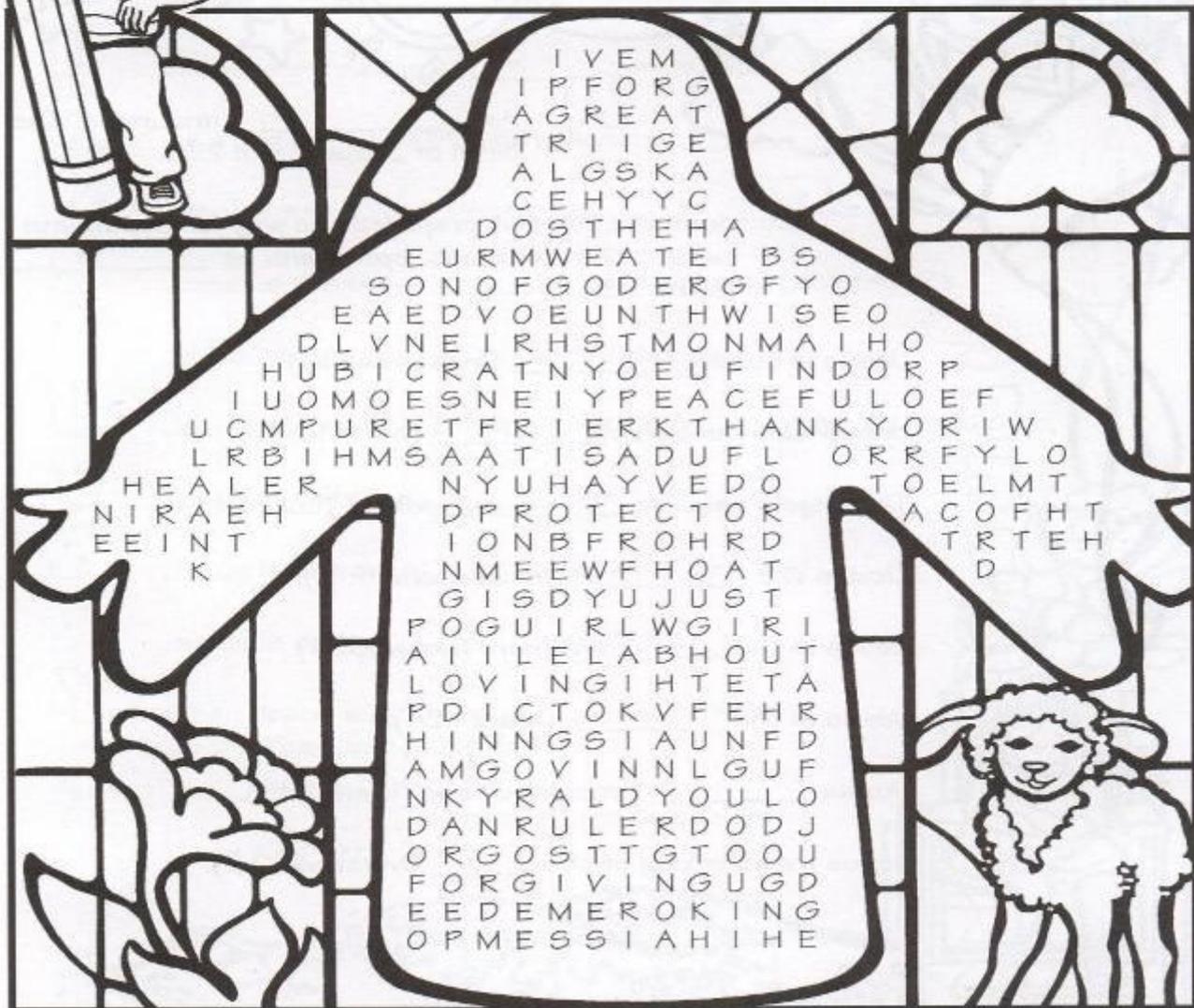
# ACTIVITY PAGE.....

## 3. Tell Me about Jesus

In the puzzle find the words that tell about Jesus.

From: *Search and Solve: Bible Activity Sheets* by Betty De Vries [Illustrated by Donna Greenlee] Baker Books, 1998.

humble	Son of God	truthful	loving	thoughtful
protector	perfect	forgiving	mEEK	comforter
giving	peaceful	judge	Lord	Savior
wise	righteous	just	King	healer
great	teacher	holy	ruler	understanding
obedient	Messiah	pure	kind	prayerful



## THE LIGHTHOUSE

"What if this light were to go out?" asked a visitor one dark night of the watchman of the lighthouse off Calais. 'Why,' replied the man, 'if for one brief hour that light were to go out, many vessels would be wrecked and precious lives lost, and from all parts of the world for months to come the news would return that at such an hour the light off Calais was not burning. Sir, lives and property, the character of this light-house and my character are all at stake : as long as I am here that light shall burn.'

May that be our resolution throughout life, God helping us."

[David Dames, *Talks with Men, Women, and Children*, p113.

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

While watching TV one night we found ourselves watching a show called Sensing Murder. Admittedly, we didn't have any idea about the show, though perhaps we should have. Anyways, after introducing an unsolved murder, suddenly two psychics were introduced and began to "solve" the murder.

It was an extremely disturbing show because they did seem to be piecing together real clues. After the show I wanted to see what some Christian websites might say about Christianity and psychics. Two of the first I found confirmed what I believed previously to the show (and even more so by actually watching it).

Psychics fall into a number of categories, frauds, good at prior research, good at reading body language etc., genuinely able to speak to something they believe to be the dead.

In the show it was extremely disturbing watching the psychics talking to something and getting answers. I have to admit that since it was a TV show everything could have been faked, but I have to say, that it seemed real and unstaged.

The first site CHRISTIAN INFORMATION MINISTRIES [ <http://christianinformation.org> ] has some good information about psychics and other topics such as astrology, witchcraft and such from a Christian perspective. They have a detailed doctrinal statement, but I have to say there was also some information I didn't particularly agree with. A lot of information on the site is a few years old, but I was thankful for the review (<http://christianinformation.org/article.asp?artID=117>) of "The Golden Compass", a movie I was thinking about going to see.

The second site GOT QUESTIONS [ <http://www.gotquestions.org> ] also contained good, brief information about psychics, but much more extensive general information about Christian topics. A number of sections exist, including: Crucial Questions, FAQ1, FAQ2. Some of the questions covered include:

- \* How do you explain the Trinity?
- \* Why does God allow bad things to happen?
- \* Does God hear the prayers of unbelievers?
- \* Is salvation by faith alone, or faith plus works?
- \* Who was Cain's wife?

Importantly, there is also a statement of faith which is clear and detailed and lets you know exactly where people running the site stand. There is, without doubt, some information which might not meet your/our "statement of beliefs" - but much of the information is excellent.

**Note:** If any of our readers are having difficulties with the electronic delivery of The Presbyterian Banner, or comments to share, please send them to the Editor.

**TEN TOP STORIES OF 2007**

From *Crosswalk.com* comes a summary of what one writer considers the *Ten Top Stories of 2007*:

- ❑ Mother Teresa's Letters Published, Indicating Possible Crisis Of Faith [10]
- ❑ Atheism Is In [9]
- ❑ Herod's Tomb Discovered [8]
- ❑ Creation Museum Opens, Exceeds Attendance Expectations [7]
- ❑ Politicians Show Their Religious Sides [6]
- ❑ Persecution In India At All-Time Levels; Anti-Conversion Laws Established [5]
- ❑ Christian Population Disappearing In Iraq, Gaza [4]
- ❑ Colorado Shootings At Two Christian Locations [3]
- ❑ Notable Deaths (Jerry Falwell, D. James Kennedy, Ruth Bell Graham) [2]
- ❑ 23 South Korean Missionaries Held Hostage In Afghanistan; Two Killed [1]

While we may wonder at some of the items selected, and wish others might have been, there are certainly matters here for concern and prayer in terms of the progress of the Kingdom of God.

**India.** Speaking about the persecution of Christians in India, the report points out that "India is the world's second-most populous country (behind China), with 3.75 times more people than the United States packed into a geographical area a third the size. The country is mostly Hindu religiously, but with so many people, even a small percentage of Christians make up quite a substantial group.

Lately, those Christians are not only being persecuted for their beliefs like never before, but are being restricted from sharing the gospel, with many Indian states adopting "anti-conversion" laws." And it goes on to pose the question: "Are things going to get better or worse for Indian Christians in 2008? Have human laws ever been ultimately successful at preventing the spread of the good news?"

**Notable Christians.** On the issue of the deaths of notable Christians in 2007, it raises the very existential question: "Will your legacy be as lasting as these departed believers? What is the cost of taking an unpopular stand for Christ? How much longer do we have with Billy Graham and other Christian leaders? Which evangelists, pastors, and laypeople will step in and fill the void?"

**South Korean Missionaries.** And finally, in drawing attention to the death of South Korean Missionaries in Afghanistan it asks this question: "What will it mean for the spread of the Gospel if one of the world's primary senders of missionaries curtails their efforts? Is Afghanistan unreachable? For how long? How are those who survived the ordeal recovering?"

## Reformed Presbyterian Work and Witness Down Under Rev. Andrew Stewart, Geelong

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia is approaching some important historical milestones. In December 2007 we will celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the first Reformed Presbyterian minister on Australian soil, the Rev Alexander M. Moore; and in June 2008 we will celebrate the anniversary of the organization of the first Reformed Presbyterian congregation in Australia. These anniversaries give us an opportunity to reflect on the work and witness of the RPC in Australia over the past century and a half.

Reformed Presbyterian Churches trace their historical origins to those Scottish Covenanters who refused to enter the Church of Scotland after the Revolution Settlement in 1690. Over the years that followed they bore a vigorous testimony to the kingship of Jesus Christ over Church and nation, as well as to the broader principles of the historic Reformed faith. As other denominations modified their worship practices the Reformed Presbyterian Church maintained, and defended from scripture, the once widespread practice of singing Psalms unaccompanied in worship.

For many years there was only one Reformed Presbyterian congregation in Australia – that established under the ministry of A. M. Moore in Geelong. Scattered communities of Reformed Presbyterians were to be found in many rural areas. Occasionally a minister was able to visit them to preach and administer the sacraments. Frequent appeals went out to the Churches in Ireland and Scotland to send ministers to labour in Australia. However the shortage of ministers in the churches there meant that little was done to consolidate the Church's ministry down under.

The arrival of the Rev W.R. McEwen in Australia in 1929 allowed a second work to commence in Melbourne. That work was based in the, then outer, suburb of McKinnon. From this congregation work was initiated in Frankston (1977) and Sunbury (1981). Both of these works showed early promise, but then struggled and subsequently closed.

The McKinnon congregation saw the great value of Christian camps for building the body life of the Church and pioneered the establishment of a campsite at Dixon's Creek during the 1970's. This campsite, situated in the picturesque Yarra Valley to the north-east of Melbourne, is still being used for a range of camps by our own denomination. Annual camps for families, children, youth and young adults are hosted at this venue.

Reformed Presbyterians have worked with Christians from other denominations in many gospel enterprises. For

many years W.R. McEwen edited the *Evangelical Action* magazine and lent his support to many worthy causes. The Reformed Theological College in Geelong held its first classes in the schoolrooms of the Geelong congregation and the first principal of the College was the Rev Alexander Barkley, then minister of the Geelong congregation. The connection with the work of the RTC continues to this day, with the Rev Alastair McEwen lecturing in Old Testament Studies.

As we look back over the past century and a half we rejoice in God's blessing. In particular we rejoice that God has preserved within the RPCA a commitment to the authority of the Bible and the value of expository preaching; we rejoice in a commitment to Biblical worship; we rejoice in the fellowship that exists within our congregations; we rejoice in strong covenant families where the gospel has been passed from one generation to the next so that we see several generations of the same families worshipping together in the same congregation; and more recently we rejoice to see conversion growth in our congregations.



Our witness is located in three centres (all in Victoria) – Geelong, McKinnon and Frankston (re-established in 2004). We have two ministers in full time charges - Andrew Stewart in Geelong and Ed Blackwood in McKinnon/Frankston. One theological student, Graeme Hart, has almost completed his training and we anticipate that he will commence work in an associate capacity in one of these centres in 2008. In August 2006 we commissioned a member of our Geelong congregation to go overseas to work, alongside missionaries from our sister Church in North America, as a missionary teacher in the Middle East. It was a cause of sadness to send out one we love, but it was a great joy to send one from our ranks to the mission field.

It would be irresponsible and inaccurate to suggest that there are not sins and failures to be acknowledged. Evangelism and mission have not been given the priority which they ought to have had over the years. We have had to challenge ourselves about our commitment to corporate prayer and our ability to welcome and care for those whom God has brought into our bounds. We are working to grow in our ability to edify one another in small group fellowship. As we acknowledge our weaknesses before God and each other we pray that God will make our work and witness more effective in seeking the advance of his kingdom.

*[The Rev. Andrew Stewart is the minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Geelong. We are grateful for this article on the work and witness of a Church with which we have had warm and close contact over the years. A Video of an interview with the late W.R. McEwen, covering his life and work, is available from the Editor].*

## THE CHURCH ...

### James Greaves Simpson 1930 – 2007



The Narre Warren congregation sustained a great loss through the death of Jim Simpson on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2007. He was a highly respected elder, Clerk of Session, and had also been congregational treasurer for a number of years.

As an elder he carried out his duties in the congregation as well as in the courts of the church, cheerfully and conscientiously - often despite indifferent health. He demonstrated a pastoral care for everyone in the congregation that included the young. He regularly filled the pulpit in the minister's absence, as well as conducting a home study group.

He was a great support and encouragement to the Minister. He had a great love of the history and doctrines of the church. In his latter days when the prognoses was not encouraging he recalled the words of the dying Hugh Latimer to Nicholas Ridley, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out." This expressed not only his own faith and

#### [Continued from page 15]

worse than that of the Israelites in Egypt. God has redeemed us for Himself, to be His special possession. We have no right to put anything in His place, or even alongside Him. He has established His Covenant with us – the Covenant of Grace.

There is only one covenant of Grace. Just as the ancient Israelites were bound to Him by covenant, so we also are bound to Him by the same covenant, and we are therefore bound to keep the covenant regulations – not so as to bring us under the covenant – but because we are under the covenant.

This is not merely a point of theology, nor is it an argument to do only with the proper form of worship. To us the world is an alien environment. We live and work alongside people who do not worship the LORD; it is tempting

confidence in the face of death as well as his longings for the future of the church.

The memory of the just is blessed. We thank God for every memory of Jim and pray that the Lord will raise up men like him who will take the place of leadership in the church and congregation. Our sympathy is expressed to his family, especially to Betty his wife and helper of 55 years. We sorrow but not as those who have no hope. "All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." (Psalm 139:16). [GDB]

### Sunday School Conference

A half-day Sunday School workshop was held in Knox PCEA on Sat 12<sup>th</sup> January. Representatives from Geelong, Narre Warren and Knox were present. Some areas discussed were: -

Theories of learning  
Bible story telling  
Place of prayer  
Place of memory work  
Useful materials.

There was a lot of useful discussion, sharing of experiences and tips. Some of the conclusions that emerged were: -

- The importance of the congregation embracing the Sunday School in a prayerful and practical way.
  - The value of communicating with parents in order to gain their cooperation in consolidating the lessons and encouraging regular attendance.
  - The importance of preparation well before Saturday night
  - The benefit of networking with one another for ideas as well as mutual support and encouragement
  - The need for a Bible memory plan to reflect the plan of salvation.
  - The benefit of continuing to use the catechism.
- Special thanks to Fiona Visser who organised the day and contributed in a major way. Also to Simone Turnbull for her tuition in Bible storytelling. The day was complimented by a delicious lunch - Rhoda Ball.

to adopt their methods for success and their values. It is so easy to allow our lives to be ruled by their gods of financial security, business success, power and "the good life", and to forget that God alone is the only One who has a claim upon us, that His claim is absolute and irrefutable, and that the only "good life" is the one that is spent in the service of our covenant God.

Let us take a new fresh look at this commandment and how it applies in our lives! We might remember the words of the poet, William Cowper: -

*"The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,  
And worship only Thee".*

Or, perhaps, we should just remember God's own words, "YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME"

## The First Commandment

Dr. W.J.W. Hanna, Brisbane, continues a study on the Ten Commandments. He deals with the first one: Exodus 20: 3 - *You shall have no other gods before Me.*

The Ten Commandments (or "The Ten Words") have always been seen as a very central part of God's moral law, though there have been very different estimates made of their importance. Sometimes they have been referred as "the Golden Rule", and, at times, this sort of thinking has down-graded them to the status of a sort of yard-stick, a nice sort of measure to have around to see what sort of life we are living! On the other hand, there have been those who have seen them as a set of rules which would ensure our acceptance with God, if we could follow them completely. To see them in this way is to miss the point completely!

### The Treaty Form of the Commandments

In the previous article, we looked at the second verse of this Chapter – the words which the Catechisms call "the Preface to the Ten Commandments." We saw, then, that, when God made a covenant with His people at Mount Sinai, He condescended to frame that covenant in a form that they would all understand. He framed it in a form which was well known at the time – the form that is known to modern scholars as a Suzerainty Treaty. This was a Covenant imposed on a subject people by a King who ruled over them and their land.

We saw that a covenant such as this usually started with a statement of who the person was who was imposing the covenant. This was followed by a description of the claim which that King had on the loyalty of the people – what he had done to deserve that they should obey his laws. After this came a schedule of the laws themselves – those things which he required from them, such as taxes, military service, and so on. God's covenant with Israel, we saw, followed the same form. We have already dealt with the first two sections of the covenant which God made with His people – the name and character of the Person making the covenant and the claim which he had to their loyal service – "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

### A Response to Salvation Already Given

Today we move on to look at the first of the requirements which He places on His people – "You shall have no other gods before Me." As we do this I want us to look at it in the light of what I have been saying. This command is not something that we do to establish a relationship with God, it is something that we must do because of the relationship that He has already established with us. It is the only reasonable response that we can have to the facts concerning *Who He is* and concerning the great salvation which He has accomplished for us! This, surely, should put to rest any thought that the fact that we are Christians, saved by His grace, should, somehow, free us from the

requirement to keep any or all of God's moral law. The correct way to look at it is to see that the understanding that He has done so much for us is the very reason why we should keep that law! He has brought us "out of the house of bondage" to Satan, and brought us into His Covenant of Grace, therefore we are bound to keep the requirements of that covenant! The nation of Israel, God's people in Old Testament times, did not become His people by keeping His law – they were under an obligation to keep His law because He had extended His grace to them in making them His people! If we, then, are Christians – if we claim that we are partakers of that salvation which God has purchased for his people, we must take these commandments very seriously indeed. God takes them seriously – He takes them seriously enough not to leave them to be inferred indirectly from Scripture. Instead He has set them out clearly, in short terse sentences for easy understanding, and He has included them in this basic covenant statement. The Ten Commandments are not an optional "add-on" to our Christian faith – they are a basic part of our relationship with Him!

### Who the Commands Apply to

But, then, this brings us to another question. If the Ten Commandments are part of the Covenant which God has established between Himself and His people, do they not apply to the general population? Can we agree that non-Christians are not bound to keep the moral law?

Some people would say that these commandments apply only to those who recognise God as their Lord – they have no relevance to the general population of unbelievers. Very often, of course, the point at issue is that of keeping the Fourth Commandment.

However, we cannot isolate that one commandment from the others! If we think in this way we are doing a lot more than saying that non-Christians are not bound to keep the Lord's Day holy. We are saying that they are under no requirement to respect human life, for example. If they are not bound by the moral

law, then they are not bound to keep the commandment, "You shall not murder," and so we open the flood-gates to abortion, euthanasia, and to every sort of killing – even to genocide! Are non-Christians not to be held to account for these things? Of course they are! Are we to say that there is no obligation on non-Christians to respect the marriage bond, or the authority of parents? Are we to say that there is no obligation to speak the truth? Some, at least, of our politicians think that this is so! To say that the Ten Commandments are only for Christians is not a tenable position! It is a position that would lead to anarchy!

### All Under the Original Covenant with Adam

I think that we can see some of the answer to this, also, if we look at the first group of the Commandments, and particularly if we think about the first one. If these commandments do not apply to non-Christians, then there can be no guilt accruing to them for rejecting God – for they are under no obligation to recognise Him! It is clear that there

must be a fallacy here. And the fallacy lies in the assumption that such people are not bound by Covenant to God. It may appear that they do not come under the Mosaic covenant – but they are certainly bound by the original covenant – the covenant made with Adam – the covenant that God made with Him when He created mankind and placed him and her in the Garden. By His grace He made them sinless, and laid upon them the covenant responsibility to keep His commandments. The moral law must have been part of those commands. The penalty for failure to keep covenant was death – and this they incurred by their disobedience. But that does not annul the covenant or its requirements – so all men and women everywhere are bound to keep the Commandments – some under the first Covenant and some under the new Covenant of Grace.

### **A Complete and Absolute Prohibition**

There is much more that could be said on this subject, but we pass on to consider the first Commandment of this summary of God's moral requirements upon mankind – “You shall have no other gods before Me”? Literally it says “There shall not be to you other gods... etc.” This is the strongest form of prohibition that we could get in Hebrew. It expresses a permanent, complete, absolute prohibition. There is no limit on it. It is not at all the same form of words as when God says to someone “Do not be afraid”. When this expression is used a different word is used for “not” – it implies “Do not be afraid on this occasion”. What we have here is a word for “not” which implies “There shall not ever be to you any other gods...”

### **Polytheism Forbidden**

The Israelites were setting out on their journey to a new land. They had been slaves in Egypt, and were used to seeing many gods worshipped; there is a strong probability that many of them would have picked up the heathen attitudes towards polytheism. They may have worshipped the LORD (Jehovah) as their God, as the God of the Israelites, but they may have felt that there were other gods for other people and other places. So this commandment calls them to absolute faithfulness to the One who has been faithful to them. They had already experienced that faithfulness, and this experience called for a response of faithfulness. They were never to commit themselves in any fashion to foreign gods (idols), whether the idols of Egypt or the idols of the land of Canaan to which they were going. They were to be totally faithful to the LORD; they were bound to Him by covenant.

### **No Other ‘god’ to be in Our Lives**

The words “before Me” need to be looked at a little more closely. Literally the Hebrew says “upon my face”, that is, “in My presence”. I think that we sometimes take the words “before Me” as indicating an order of precedence: we might say that we are breaking this commandment if we have anything that we treasure ahead of our relationship with God. This is very true; we could not argue with

that idea for a second, but, surely, *before my face* or *in my presence* has other implications. Some have suggested that it is a command that they shall never introduce another idol into Jehovah's sanctuary, but this is to take too narrow and restricted view of this complete prohibition of other gods. It has also been said that this expression “upon the face” is a technical expression used of a man who marries another wife while his first is still alive, who introduces a new wife “into the presence” of his first and true wife. In this way he betrays that special relationship set up in his marriage vows. Maybe, if we were to think about this, it would give us some sense of the hurt and outrage felt by God when His people, for whom He has done so much, for whom He has given so much, turn from Him and insult Him, by bringing another god into their hearts! We are not to have any other god alongside Him!

### **Cultural Pressure**

Yet this temptation to entertain other gods is a very real one, no less today than it was then. When the Israelites settled in the Promised Land they would have to assume a way of life which was different from their previous experience. They had been slaves in Egypt, they would be homeless nomads in the deserts for forty years – and then they would have to become farmers. They would have to sow and reap; they would have to learn the peculiarities of the soil and the rainfall pattern. The easiest way to manage this land so as to make a living would be to see what the natives did. And for the native, seeking the favour of the Baals and Ashtoreth, the fertility gods, would be at least as important as tilling the soil and planting the seed! Agriculture was a religious activity, as was all of their life. The Israelites would have to learn how to farm in Canaan – but without the fertility idols! It would be a temptation to believe that every failure, every bad crop, was due to the fact that they had not propitiated the idols of the land.

They had to learn that the LORD was the only true God. They had to learn that He was not only the God who had brought them out of Egypt; He was Lord over all creation. Would not the God who increased their numbers so marvelously in Egypt also increase their crops and their herds in this new land? Surely Jehovah would give them the produce of the fields and vineyards. But the temptation to seek success through the more visible, sensual worship of the fertility cults would be hard to resist. It would be easy to persuade them that there were local gods, which also had to be propitiated (as well as Yahweh) if success were to be obtained. They had to realize that they were bound by covenant to Yahweh. He had already proved His faithfulness by His delivering them from Egypt – they could expect His faithfulness in the future, but they had a covenant duty to recognise that He, and He alone, had a right to their worship.

### **Conclusion**

The implications of this first commandment for modern Christians are far reaching in their significance. We have been rescued from a slavery **[Continued on page 13]**

**“...this commandment calls them to absolute faithfulness to the One who has been faithful to them. They had already experienced that faithfulness, and this experience called for a response of faithfulness.”**

# BETWEEN YOU AND ME .....

Over the years I've discovered that people are fairly resourceful, especially if it's something they really want! I've been pleasantly surprised with the effort people will put into finding names and addresses, family details, where to purchase items that they really want, and how to get to places they really want to visit. It also applies to functions and meetings. If people really want to go, nothing stands in the way. Meals will be rearranged, transport secured, and babysitters lined up. In fact, for things we really want to do, there's no limit to the effort, ingenuity and enterprise that people will show!

I'm reminded of a story someone told me years ago about a lady who complained about the answering service a local Council had installed. She said she couldn't "understand" all the options offered when she phoned up and refused to contact the Council by phone. She wanted a return to the "good old days" when someone personally took the call. A few weeks later the person she complained to [a Council worker] met her in the street driving her gopher! He expressed surprise that she should be driving one of them. Whereupon he was treated not only to it's praise, but a demonstration of how everything worked on the gopher!

The same thing happens in the home. My wife dismisses

the use of the Computer with a "I can't understand how it works" but then manages the Microwave, and the Washing machine, and the overlocker with no bother at all. To me, a Computer is far easier to work than the microwave. If there's one appliance that I think doesn't like me, it's the microwave. I think it can sense my fear - and just does things to frustrate me! I suppose if I really wanted to, I could be its master.



The principle, that we get what we really want - or make a great effort to do so - has many applications. We can apply it not only to appliances, new technology, and new procedures; we can apply it to meetings and Church Services. If we really want to get there, I'm sure we could come up with some ingenious ways of making sure we do so. All those excuses we make would no longer be needed. The problem is not so much with the way, but with the will and the want.

This can also be applied to our spiritual life as well. Jesus himself says, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened." If we're really serious about things, we shall receive them.

## FAMILY CONFERENCE - 2009

**5-9 January 2009**

**At Naamaroo Conference Centre, Sydney**

Many enjoyed the church-wide family camp in Sydney last year. This is the first notice for our camp next year (2009) - same place, same time, and we hope for the same blessings in Christ. Watch this space for further details. Contact Mr Tom Reeve 02 46268212

**URGENT ATTENTION NEEDED.** Margaret Kinder Reports that a number of Birthday Cards have been returned due to incorrect addresses. Would Ministers / Session Clerks kindly update addresses, and send them to: Mrs Margaret Kinder, 84 Eastland Dr., Ulverstone, 7315, asap.

[Continued from Page 6]

The Kingdom of God is a Kingdom of Love. And there it lives happily with all its relations: with God, with Jesus, with the Law and with Action. God is its author, Jesus is its Expositor and King, the Law is its Expression, and godly Action according to God's Word is its Practical Demonstration.

And if we would come to know about this love that's the fruit of the Spirit, we need to come to know it in all its relations. And that means we must come to know an-

other relation: The Gospel! Some people can't see any love in the Gospel! They hate it. Others think they can have this love without the Gospel. But it's not possible. The Apostle John says quite simply and very clearly: "We love, because he first loved us." [1 John 4:19]

Unless we see Love in the Gospel - the Love of God, and the Love of Christ, we'll never possess this fruit of the Spirit. And that will be a pity, because then we'll never possess the Kingdom.

**The Presbyterian Banner** is the official magazine of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. The PCEA was established in 1846 and adheres to the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) as its doctrinal standard.

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Subscriptions [11 Issues per year]  
Within Australia, \$25 [Bulk \$20]  
Overseas : Aud \$40 Airmail.

**Direct Credit:**

Westpac 032-587 75 0105

**CLOSING DATE FOR MATERIAL: 15th of Each Month. WEB PAGE ISSUE AVAILABLE: 1st of Each Month.**