

THE PRESBYTERIAN BANNER

July, 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: "As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you." He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.""

Luke 11:27-28

ISSN 0729-3542



HAWKESBURY NEPEAN

FEATURES

Blogging About

Bible Study

Caleb's Club

Church Life

From the Archives

Interaction

Mission Briefs

Presbyterian Agenda

Run For Glory

Sarah's Daughters

Search Work

Web Watch

Media Watch

ARTICLES

Pastoral Visitation 5

Bold Prayer 6

DON'T FORGET
John Calvin's
Birth date -
10th July
1509

THE COVENANT AND COVENANT BREAKERS

Pastor James Cromarty

Today, many godly parents are weeping tears of sorrow because their children have forsaken their God. Young people have walked out on their covenant responsibilities. This is no small matter, for to rebel against Jehovah and his Son is to invite the wrath of God upon themselves, both in this life and in the life to come.

Christian parents always have great spiritual hopes for their offspring, and the hurt is great when those spiritual hopes are dashed. And today, we find so many young people and adults turning their backs upon the God of the covenant. There are those young folk and adults who deliberately neglect the worship of God; they do not attend prayer meetings and they live and act as if there were no God. As the Psalmist writes (10:4), 'God is in none of (their) thoughts.' There are others who 'profess to know God, but in their works they deny him.' (Titus 1:16)

There are aspects of God's covenant made with Abraham that are in force today. When the Lord appeared to Abraham, he established his covenant with him. This covenant did not just apply to Abraham, but was relevant to all of his descendants after him. This is clearly taught in Genesis 17:7, where we read, 'And I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you.' Here we read the great covenant promise: 'I will ... be God to you and your descendants after you.' This promise is found again and again throughout the Old Testament. Even after the sin of God's covenant people and their time in Babylon, God promised that they would return to the Promised Land, and we read: 'They shall be my people, and I will be their God ... for the good of them and their children after them.' (Jer.32:38,39)

The Abrahamic Covenant in the New Testament

We read Peter's great sermon on the Day of Pentecost where he called upon all his hearers to repent of their sins and to believe in the name of Jesus Christ. In Acts 2:39 we read: 'For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.' Here again is the covenant promise made to believers and their seed. This aspect of God's covenant with Abraham remains true to this day.

God does not usually establish his covenant with just one isolated person. He does with some, but so often the covenant is with whole families. Psalm 22:30,31 speaks of this truth: 'A posterity shall serve him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation, they will come and declare his righteousness to a people who will be born, that he has done this.'

One wonderful occasion being established with a family through the faith of the family head is found in Acts 16. Paul and Silas were in prison in Philippi. When, by the power

of God, they were released, the Philippian jailer cried out, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' The reply came loud and clear: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.' (Acts 16:30,31) The faith of the parent brought the covenant blessing upon the family. And faith in Christ makes us spiritual descendants of Abraham, for Paul tells us: 'If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' (Gal. 3:29) And again, the promise spoken of here is that made to Abraham: 'I will be God to you and your descendants after you.' This means that God does not look upon our children as he does the children of unbelieving parents, for Paul tells us that the children of believing parents, or one believing parent, are not 'unclean ... but they are holy.' (1 Cor.7:14). Children born into the family of believers are the special objects of God's love.

Covenant Blessings to Covenant Children

In the Christian family, covenant children experience great privileges. Timothy is one such example, for Paul tells us (2Tim.3:15) that Timothy's godly grandmother, Lois, had taught her daughter Eunice the ways of God. She in turn had taught Timothy 'from childhood' the Scriptures and the way of godliness. The same privilege belongs to covenant children today. They are prayed for by believing parents and other believing relatives and church members. In their families they have been taught the ways of God. Parents have set before their children the ways of godliness and faith, and Christ has been glorified before their eyes. Covenant children have attended worship each Lord's Day. Again and again the Holy Spirit has called them to faith in Christ. These are not the privileges of children in unbelieving families. Who prays for them? Who teaches them the things of God? Who takes them to worship? The truth is that God pours out blessings upon blessings upon our covenant children.

When believing parents stood before the Lord and the congregation on the day of the baptism of their child, they confessed what Joshua once said: 'As for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah!' (Joshua 24:15). The Lord was present on that day and his command to the covenant child was: 'My son (daughter), give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways' (Prov.23:26). The command of God to Abraham again rang out: 'I am Almighty God: walk before me and be blameless!' (Gen.17:11). Thus we observe that special obligations are placed upon covenant children. Promises were made by parents, and covenant children are bound by these promises of parents, and commands of God.

But the cry goes up: 'That's not fair! I didn't ask to be born into a Christian family!' The same cry and reason might be given when an Australian is jailed for breaking a law peculiar to Australia: 'It's not fair! I didn't ask to be born in Australia.' But that is no excuse before the law; nor is it an acceptable excuse before the Lord. All covenant children are bound to the covenant, regardless of their feelings in the matter.

Covenant Children Must Bow Before King Jesus

Believing parents expect and pray that their children will walk in the ways of the covenant. They pray that God's covenant promise will be realized as their children come to faith in Christ. Parents long to see their children living to the glory of God—living the life of faith. And the life of all covenant people is one of separation from the world. As John wrote: 'Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides for ever' (1John 2:15-17).

Covenant people are not to conform to the ways of the world. The world glitters before the Christian and its attraction is so great to unconverted covenant folk; but all must be aware of misusing the world, for to do so is to dwell in the land of sin. Covenant folk need to be reminded of the words of Ps.1:1 - 'Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful...' The ungodly of this world can and do drag covenant young people and professing Christians of all ages, down into hell.

Covenant children must be taught of their unique position before God. They must understand that Jehovah is their God and that they are called to faith in Christ and a life of holiness. They must be taught that out of place are 'evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, an evil eye, pride (and) foolishness' (Mark 7:21,22). Covenant children must be taught that these words of Christ must be obeyed. Paul adds to the list of sins to be avoided: 'disobedient to parents, uncaring, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, merciful...' (2Tim.3:2,3).

Covenant folk are called to give themselves wholeheartedly to God. There must be true conversion and they must serve God faithfully, from the heart and according to the truth. Covenant folk must confess their sin in true repentance and follow Christ, avoiding evil, and the very appearance of evil.

Grace is not hereditary - passed down from generation to generation, like the colour of the eyes. Covenant folk must bow before God and believe the gospel. All covenant people must fight the forces of evil in every department of life. We are all to live the life of faith, which is to the glory of God. We are to promote his glory in the home, at church, at work, at school, at play, and in our relationships with others.

Parents must pray fervently that the Holy Spirit might change the heart of our covenant seed, that they might find Christ - that they might become new creatures in Christ. **[To be Continued]**

“Covenant children must be taught of their unique position before God. They must understand that Jehovah is their God and that they are called to faith in Christ and a life of holiness..”

BLOGGING ABOUT...

CHASING SHADOWS

There is any number of issues available for comment. Looking at the national scene, we have the power crisis in Western Australia, the alleged Police Corruption in Victoria, "Iguana Gate" in New South Wales, cases of Child Neglect in Queensland and South Australia that have shocked the nation; and the success or failure of the Federal Government intervention in Aboriginal Communities.

On the social level we have rising fuel prices, the housing crisis, rising interest rates, and the alleged supermarket monopolies of Woolworths and Coles, dominating the market and dictating prices. Religiously, we have the hype surrounding the World Youth Day sponsored by the Roman Catholic Church and supported by Government, with the consequent disruption caused by the visit of the Pope to Sydney. On the International level we have the disasters in Myanmar and the Sichuan Province in China, the human suffering in the Sudan and Zimbabwe, and the riots in South Africa. And we haven't even mentioned Iraq, Afghanistan, or the Beijing Olympics!

Along with the issues, there is plenty of comment and discussion on each of them and no want of proposals to deal with them. It always seems to those who can't do much about them that those who are in a position to do something are "obviously" not doing the right thing! Our Lord's analysis of ourselves is always true. We are always saying: let me take the splinter out of your own eye, instead of first attending to the beam in our own. For example, the so called "junta" in Burma has been roundly criticised for not allowing foreign aid workers into their country. But when you consider the track record of those offering "aid", the political price that's often attached to aid, and the corruption that can be involved in it, you can understand their reserve. I don't say they are right; I simply say: we can understand it.

But not only can being issue orientated promote self righteousness. It can be self defeating. To chase the issues is to chase the shadows. And we all know it's very difficult to catch the shadow! Shadows are constantly changing. The feeding frenzy of the media is soon over, and today's headline is forgotten tomorrow – or at least by next week. What we need to do is to concentrate on the underlying causes, and the underlying issues. Many today regard the Church and the preaching of the Gospel as irrelevant. But it's the most relevant thing of all because it deals, not with the shadows, but the underlying cause of all problems – sin and the need for salvation, and that by God. The Good news of the Kingdom of God has been, and will be, the yeast that leavens the whole of life.

Let's not get so taken up with chasing our shadows that we forget about the real thing, and the real remedy. That which appeals the most "irrelevant" in the eyes of many will, in the end, be the most relevant of all. And when it's all said and done, it's what we are in ourselves, and in our local church and community, that is most important – not our view on national or international issues. And who

knows, what we are there may have an effect far beyond those immediate boundaries.

CHRISTIAN FAITH VITAL TO THE FUTURE OF OUR NATION

Each month I receive an e-mail Newsletter entitled, "Transforming Melbourne". The Newsletter is designed to provide information on what is being done by Churches to further the Gospel in the Melbourne area, and beyond. In an issue dated 2nd June it carried an article with the title above: "Christian Faith Vital to the Future of our Nation".

The article begins by saying: "We have sadly come to believe the lies of the secularists that the Christian faith does not have a place in modern society. Professor Stuart Piggin of Macquarie University and others reveal the opposite: Modern society exists only because of Christian Faith and will collapse without it."

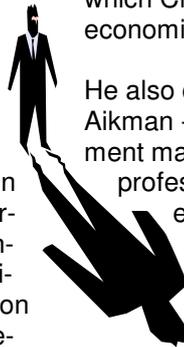
The writer then goes on to refer to a book by American sociologist, Rodney Stark, published in 2005, called "*The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success.*" He points out that Starkey argues that the modern world "arose only in Christian societies" thanks to Christianity's commitment to "reason, progress, and moral equality." The capacity which Christianity has to contribute to social, cultural and economic progress has been long observed."

He also draws our attention to a book by journalist David Aikman - "Jesus in Beijing." He quotes the following comment made at a lecture he attended in China in 2002. "A professor from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences had this to say to a group of American visitors about his years of study in the West: "One of the things we were asked to look into was what accounted for the success, in fact, the pre-eminence of the West over all the world. We studied everything we could from the historical, political, economic, and cultural perspective. At first, we thought it was because you had more powerful guns than we had. Then we thought it was because you had the best political system. Next we focused on your economic system. But in the past twenty years, we have realized that the heart of your culture is your religion: Christianity. The moral foundation of social and cultural life was what made possible the emergence of capitalism and then the successful transition to democratic politics. We don't have any doubt about this.""

It's a sad day when those who are opposed to Christianity recognize its value for the social and economic development of a nation, and those who enjoy its benefits do not.

The writer of this article goes on to say that "Stuart Piggin says it is way past time for the Church to know and boldly take up its crucial role in our nation, before the nation collapses!" He also says that a full copy of Professor Stuart Piggin's recent presentation at the Kingston Mayoral Prayer Breakfast is available at the following website: www.transformingmelbourne.org

The newsletter itself is also available from the same source.



THE CHURCH AND EDUCATION

In a Press Release put out by Well-Being Australia, an organization headed by Baptist Pastor, M.V Tronson, attention is drawn to the fact that a recently ordained Anglican minister will take up the reigns as the Vice-Chancellor of Sydney University next month. He writes: "The Reverend Dr Michael Spence is himself a graduate from Sydney University with first class honours in Italian, English and Law. His specialty is intellectual property law and has been at Oxford University, UK, for the past 20 years, most recently serving as an academic administrator."

Mr. Tronson points out that Christian leaders have always played a critical role in Education. He says:

"Christianity continues to be an integral part of our Australian educational community, and any reference to historical events will show that each of the colonies' education systems was initiated by the Christian Churches."

He then goes on to describe the present situation with regard to Religious Education in schools. He writes: "Quite apart from the private schools run by church or independent community religious groups, 'Religious Education' as a legitimate subject is mandated in every State and Territory Education platform. Of course, this is not necessarily entirely Christian religious teaching, as elements of comparative religion and other accredited religious persuasions are catered for in some states (for example, Victoria).

In all States, children have opportunities to be taught about their own faith within the State School system or to opt out of the classes if this cannot be catered for in their local school.

"The New South Wales Education Department for example, mandates 'Special Religious Education' (SRE) for its high schools. Salaries are met by community groups that raise funds for that purpose, and it works very well as it is an integral part of the school program. ...In Queensland a different system is in operation, where 'school chaplains' are the norm, generally administered by Scripture Union. They are similarly funded through community efforts. Each State and Territory has its own mechanism which

ensures religious education is covered."

We appreciate this reminder of the Christian roots of Education, the appointment of Dr. Spence as Vice Chancellor, and the ongoing opportunities that exist in the State School Systems for "Religious Education" and especially for Special Religious Education. However the benefits of this recognition and these opportunities depend very much on the faith that's held and the faith that's taught. Unfortunately Humanism has invaded not only the State and Society, but also the Church as well. It can give an uncertain sound. And if that happens, more harm than good will be done in this recognition of "religion". The opportunity given for the appointment of "Chaplains" by the Federal Government may be a very mixed blessing indeed. And the teaching of Special Religious Education in schools is a matter that demands vigilance on the part of individuals and Churches. With privilege comes responsibility. Let us pray that when the opportunity is given to make a difference, those seeking to make the difference are committed to the historic Christian Faith based on the Bible, and not a "faith" that has gone through the humanistic sieve.

On a lighter note, we conclude with a story by Mr. Tronson about a businessman who was addressing university graduates. The businessman said:

"This is your big day, the day when you leave university, prepared by your professors to go out into the real world. The first thing you'll notice is that your professors are not going out there with you. They're not stupid; that's why they are professors. They've figured out that this seat of learning is a carefree place where the most serious real problem is finding a legal parking space. So your professors are going to stay in college until they die. Even then, they'll go right on teaching classes. This is called 'tenure' "

The web address for "Well-Being" where you can find the full text of the Press Release is:

<http://www.bushorchestra.com/>

[Mark Tronson is chairman of Well-Being Australia, which encompasses respite centres for AIS athletes, coaches and the cricket fraternity. A Baptist minister since 1977 and involved in Australian cricket since 1984, Mark is also an accomplished artist specialising in abstract art]

On Cultural Conformity.

"There is one fact connected with the introduction of organs into those of our churches which have adopted them, which is exceedingly distressful. It is the reason which we always hear assigned, among other reasons, for their introduction, and which we believe has been in every case the most operative one. It is always urged: "we must have an organ to keep pace with other churches in attracting a congregation, and in retaining the young and thoughtless." Has it come then to this, that the chaste spouse of Christ is reduced to borrow the meretricious adornment of the "scarlet whore," in order to catch the unholy admiration of the ungodly? Not thus did the Apostles devise to bring sinners to the church. They were taught to go after them, into the highways and hedges, with the wooings of mercy and love; to allure them by the beauty of holiness; to urge them by the terrors of the law. If we are authorized to add to God's worship, forms purely of human device, in order to make it more palatable to sinners, to what corruptions shall we not give entrance?...We believe that all such artifices, of human device, to catch popularity, are inconsistent with the genius of the Presbyterian Church, derogatory of her honor, and blasting to her interests. It was her glory and her strength, that she aimed to commend herself by her firm devotion to truth, by the purity of her discipline, the pre-eminence of her ministry, and the justice of her polity. If she will cleave to these traits and rest upon them in humble faith in her divine Head, she will prosper. But when once she descends from the high vantage ground of intellectual, theological, and moral superiority, to chaffer for popularity by human devices, and doubtful arts, her prestige will be gone. Other churches are better adapted to win in that race, and will surely outrun her."

- From the Works of R.L Dabney. Quoted by Chris Ortiz, Chalcedon Blog – Friday, 6/6/2008.

PASTORAL VISITATION

The Rev. George Ball continues his study in “Ministry Matters” from 2 Corinthians 12:29-13:4

The late Rev. W.R. McEwen used to say that a minister who is always in his study will have plenty to say but no one to say it to, and one who visits all the time will have a full congregation but nothing to say! The secret is, as in all things, getting the balance right. But when things get a little unbalanced in the congregation, when the water gets a little choppy, when the sheep are bleating, when everything just seems to be falling apart, (to mix up our metaphors) it's very tempting for the pastor to retreat to the study. That's a temptation to be resisted.

The apostle Paul might well have thrown his hands up in despair over the situation in the church in Corinth and vowed never again to go near the place. He says however, “Now for the third time I am ready to come to you.” (His first visit had been for the purpose of planting a church there – Acts 18:1-18; 1 Cor. 4:15; 9:1. His second visit was so painful both to him and to his converts that he resolved not to visit them again for a while – 2 Cor. 1: 23, 2:1. Now he contemplates his third trip.) How does he approach a delicate, daunting and difficult visit?

FEARFULLY (12:20,21).

I don't know if the apostle experienced knots in the tummy, or a pounding heart, or a racing pulse - but he does indicate that he experienced fear and apprehension on the eve of his visit. Fearful that he will find the unwanted – contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbiting, uncleanness, fornication etc. Fearful that they might be mutually disappointed and embarrassed. Fearful that the visit would end up like the last one – in utter humiliation and grief for Paul. Instead of experiencing legitimate pride in the progress of his converts and rejoicing over them in the Lord, he fears he may have cause to be humbled and to mourn their failures.

Being a pastor in a small congregation is humbling enough, and more so when there are problems. John E. Marshall preaching at the Leicester Ministers' Conference in April 2003 (before his death in August), said, “I have been minister in the same church for nearly forty five years. Sometimes people ask me, “How have you got on?” Well, I have survived. I am still here. But often people come in and look around at the small congregation and say, “What has this incompetent idiot been doing here for the last forty four years? Where is everybody? Where are all his converts? And I feel humiliated. Have you ever felt humiliated because of the paucity of the fruit that God has been pleased to give you? I am not denying that God has helped us and blessed us, but it has all been on a very small scale.” Most pastors reading this are in small congregations – and if you haven't had your problems you will have them. The Lord has His ways of humbling us.

But why does the apostle put himself through such spiritual, mental and physical torture? If he were thinking merely of himself he would do well to avoid the stress. But that's precisely the point – he wasn't thinking of himself. He writes, “we do all things for your edification.” When we think only about how to protect ourselves we cease think-

ing about others and caring for them. When we think only of ourselves we will keep putting off that difficult but necessary phone call, or making that visit, or arranging that meeting. “The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe.” (Prov. 29:25). When we free ourselves from the fear of man we also free ourselves to become a blessing to others.

FAIRLY (13:1).

“By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.” There's not consensus among the commentators what exactly the apostle has in mind here. He's quoting Deuteronomy 19:15. Perhaps he's indicating that when he comes judgements will not be based on rumours but must be substantiated by witnesses (see also Matt. 16:18). Or he could be referring to the fact that as this will be his third visit they have in effect received two warnings already and this letter constitutes a third. So there has been ample warning and opportunity given to put things right. Whatever the intended meaning the apostle surely wants them to understand that the pastoral visit will be full, frank, and fair.

Sometimes our Presbyterian system of government is not always the most successful instrument in dealing with disputes and problems in the congregation. We are infamous for procedure (and of course we need such). We have rules to follow in eg. a Presbytery visitation. Set questions are put to the minister, elders, deacons and congregation. All very good. But do we agree these visitations are effective? If a pastor is having struggles with the congregation, if a session is having frustrations with the minister, if there are tensions in the congregation does this formal and legal approach always prove helpful? Perhaps it might be better to allow ministers and elders to probe using their own wisdom and experience? Whatever we do should have the aim of being helpful, pastorally sensitive and scripturally fair.

FIRMLY (13:2).

“...If I come again I will not spare.” These stern words remind us, as Hodge comments, that “the apostolic churches were not independent democratic communities, vested with supreme authority over their own members. Paul could cast out of them whom he would.” This needs to be clearly understood in our age of excessive individualism where every man judges that which is right in his own eyes and believes that the church should be run as a democracy. There is little concept of the church as the people of God guided and governed by the elders of the church. Who are the elders and what authority have they to make decisions in a closed enclave without consulting every member? Certainly if the elders do exercise discipline they must (like Paul) communicate clearly the reasons for their actions and remind the congregation of their required response.

Calvin warned the church of the importance of church discipline: “If no society or even a moderate family can be kept in a right state without discipline, much more necessary is it in the church whose state ought to be the

BOLD PRAYER

Luke 11:5-10 teaches us about Bold Prayer. Sometimes these verses are regarded as teaching us about *importunity* – or *persistence* – in prayer. That thought is here, but what comes to the forefront is “boldness.” In fact the Greek word conveys the idea of “shamelessness.”

A Careful Balance

Notice how balanced our Lord's teaching on prayer is in Luke 11:1-13. He's just given us a form of prayer. He says: when you feel your spiritual poverty here is a prayer that you can use. But he knows that because we're sinners, even the best form can degenerate into *saying* our prayers. To counterbalance that, he teaches us that there should be life, and enthusiasm – “boldness” – in our prayers. Our dealing with Our Father is not a business transaction – it's a matter of seeking Him, and waiting on Him - with all our hearts. True, there should be a godly reserve in our prayer. We're not to babble like pagans or forget that God is our Father [Matthew 6]. And there should be sensitivity in prayer. We must be prepared to take no for an answer. Paul sought the Lord three times for the removal of the thorn in the flesh, but God refused. But at the same time, there must be boldness and earnestness in coming before the Lord. How does our Lord emphasise that, and still maintain the dignity of prayer?

A Stretched Friendship

He tells a story about two friends! One friend strains the bounds of “friendship”. The operative word here is “Midnight”! When your friend comes calling at midnight it really puts a strain on the best friendship! And when he comes over a trivial matter – a matter of social etiquette – it only adds to it – “*a friend of mine on his journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him*”. Couldn't he just wait a few hours till morning! And besides, he only wants three little bread rolls! If his wife was dying, or his child was desperately ill you could understand it. But entertaining an unexpected guest at midnight

– forget it! [2] And then his “friend” in the house isn't too “friendly” either. The door is locked, he's in bed, and any excuse is good enough: “I don't want to wake the kids!” “Don't bother me”, he calls out! Indeed, Jesus says quite plainly here that this man in the house isn't motivated by “friendship”! He says “*although he will not get up and give him bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs*.” The man outside is absolutely shameless! He doesn't know when to stop; and the man inside is quite selfish. He gives - but just to keep the other person quiet.

A Wonderful Father

Now the question we need to ask is whether God is like this man's friend – or is he better than his friend? The answer is self evident! He's far better than the man's friend in the House. He only acts out of self interest. But God acts in our best interests. And if we're bold enough - shameless enough - to come to him with any and all our needs, he will provide for us. Matthew Henry hits the nail on the head when he says: “*If importunity could prevail thus with a man who was angry at it, much more with a God who is infinitely more kind and ready to do good to us than we are to one another...*”. And when you think about it, that's the way it is with children isn't it? They're shameless - in asking questions, asking for things; asking again and again, and asking for little things and impossible things. And that's the sort of relationship that God wants us to have with him – a shameless relationship where we can come at any time, at any place, and about anything that concerns us. And, Jesus goes on to say, “*If we ask, we shall receive; if we seek, we shall find, and if we knock it will be opened to us*.” If this grumpy, selfish friend with wrong motives gave as much as his shameless friend needed, our heavenly Father will do far better than that if we're shameless enough to ask him!

[Continued from page 5] best order possible. Hence as the saving doctrine of Christ is the life of the church so discipline is as it were its sinews; for to it is owing that the members of the body adhere together each in its own place. Wherefore all who either wish that discipline were abolished or who impede the restoration of it, whether they do this of design or thoughtlessness, certainly aim at the completed devastation of the church.” (Institutes, Bk.4, Chap12, Sec.1).

To maintain the purity of the church, to promote the welfare of the church and to protect the honour of Christ, Paul then warns, “I will not spare.”

FAITHFULLY (13:3,4).

There were some in the church in Corinth who were saying to Paul, “Give us proof that Christ speaks through you.” So he gives them proof. Whether it satisfied them or not we don't know – but his reply is the only reply. A driving conviction of Paul's ministry was the fact that Christ lives – “He lives by the power of God”. The resurrection for him was no mere historical appendage to the cross. It was a living reality. After all, a dead saviour cannot save. “If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His LIFE.”

(Romans 5:10).

The risen life of Christ is indestructible, sovereign and glorious. It is a risen Christ that authenticates the gospel message. But how did Christ achieve Glory? By weakness, humiliation, suffering and death! For Paul this was not only the message he preached, but also his model of ministry. “We are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you.” Like his Saviour, rods and stones scarred his body. He bore the scar of all the churches. Paul was weak, but that weakness drove him to find help in Christ. “My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” This was the spirit of Paul, and this is the spirit we should cherish. This was the spirit in which Paul was coming to visit Corinth for the third time, seeking to faithfully perform the ministry of the risen Lord Jesus Christ. Coming as a weak man seeking to carry out the work of Christ by the strength of Christ.

Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission also knew this. He was being complimented once by a friend on the impact of his society on China, but Hudson Taylor answered, “It seemed to me that God looked over the whole world to find a man who was weak enough to do this work, and when He at last found me, said, “Hudson Taylor is weak enough – he'll do.”

OUR VISIT TO AUSTRALIA

Alistair and Jenny Wilson

Since we last wrote we have been on nine planes, slept in fifteen different beds spoken at 18 different meetings and enjoyed every minute of our experience in Australia. It is hard at this point not to sound like an advert for the Australian tourist industry, but it is a great continent full of great people. Once again, I marveled at how God's family does not recognize our human boundaries – but no matter where you fly in the world, there is a bond with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

The main purpose of our trip to Australia was to attend the synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA) and to visit many of its congregations. Alistair addressed the Synod giving them an overview of current New Testament literature and a talk on reading the parables. He also conveyed greetings from the Free Church in Scotland as a delegate from the FCOS. On other occasions, both at synod and around the churches, together we talked about the work of Dumisani – with its challenges and rewards.

The PCEA is a fairly small denomination – a sister church to the Free Church of Scotland - but the enthusiasm, commitment and generosity was great. They have supported the work in South Africa for many years. Two of their own people played a very significant role in the work here during the 1950s, 60s and 70s, prior to the establishment of Dumisani. Firstly there was Dr Campbell Andrews, who served as both medical doctor and preacher. He worked in one of the districts preaching and also doing medical work in the area. The second was a lady called Mrs Colville. She is still spoken about today and was known for her generosity and kindness to the people here. She apparently used to cycle out into the villages carrying baskets of oranges which she distributed free of charge so that the villagers would get some vitamin C in their diet.

The PCEA church has donated a large sum of money to the work in South Africa, most of which will go towards developing the library. It should make a huge impact on the library resources and for that we are truly grateful. If anyone else is interested in buying a book for the library, please contact us and we will give you details of a South African bookshop which we have a connection with and a list of books at a range of prices.

We are now coming up to a series of lasts – the last bible women's meeting with Morag Christie, the last missionary meeting with Ronnie and Morag and so on. Please pray for them as they prepare to return to the UK. It will be a big adjustment for them and for us. We will miss their guidance and advice based on their years of experience here. Please also continue to pray for the Rosses. [See Dumisani Update for the most recent developments] The new semester at Dumisani starts in July and it would be good to have them here for then. We know that God is in control and his ways are not our ways so we look forward to seeing how he works this out.

The next two weeks are exam weeks for the students, and then they have a couple of weeks holiday before the new semester begins.

Last month we told you about Mhlali, the girl that we were putting through school. School in South Africa is an expensive business. Most schools, even though they are government schools charge fees, which means that for many Africans they can only afford poor schooling. If anyone is able to help with Mhlali's school fees or uniform costs, please let us know. By doing so, you will be helping her and her family immensely.

Our children coped quite well with our absence while we were in Australia – in fact I don't think that they even noticed that we weren't there. And Deon and Shelley seemed to cope quite well with having our three added to their family! The children weren't impressed, however, that the only kangaroos and koalas that we brought home weren't alive and kicking.
- June 2008 Newsletter.



DUMISANI UPDATE

It is with great thankfulness to God that I can inform you that Dr John Ross and his wife, Elizabeth, have been granted the necessary work permit and visa to enable them to join us in South Africa as part of the Dumisani staff team. It is anticipated that they will arrive in South Africa in early August 2008.

For those of you who do not know John and Elizabeth, the following information is available online. It was posted at the time of John's appointment as Moderator Designate of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland for 2007. Over a year later, while most of the information is still accurate, the number of their grandchildren has increased somewhat!

<http://www.freechurch.org/news/assembly/07moderator.htm>

Both John and Elizabeth are gracious and gifted individuals who will make a significant difference to our ministry here. We are thankful to the Lord for opening the way for them to join us and we would like to thank all our praying friends across the world for sharing with us in seeking the Lord's will in this matter.

Please continue to pray for John and Elizabeth and their family as they prepare to make this significant move. Please pray also for their present congregation which will doubtless miss them sorely. We would also value your continued prayer and support for Dumisani Theological Institute at this exciting moment in its development.

Run For Glory

JOSIAH - THE BOY KING

Josiah was only eight when he became King – and at that stage it seems there was no indication that he was going to follow the Lord. And you might say: “You’d hardly expect there to be!” But one of the Kings of England, Edward VI became king when he was only 9 years old. At the age of 11 he produced “*A Small Treatise Against the Primacy of the Pope*” [small being 20 pages]! And at the age of 16 – the same age as Josiah when he was converted - he produced a Catechism of some 24 pages. A little bit of history helps us to get these things in perspective. Wisdom will not die with us! Edward became a Christian when he was very young. But Josiah was sixteen years old when “*he began to seek the God of his father David.*” And what a wonderful way that is to describe his conversion experience!

It's Focused on the Best Past

For one thing, it was *focused on the best past*. At 16 most young men not only want to be different from their parents, but to get away from every association with the past – to do their thing, think their own thoughts, and make their own way. Parents often say about their children: “You can’t tell them anything!” But Josiah didn’t just want to be different from his parents for the sake of being different. He wanted to “*seek the God of his father David.*” He wanted to go back – not to the immediate past, not even to the oldest past, but the best in the history of the Kingdom – not to Saul who proved unfaithful, nor to the glories

of Solomon and his mistakes, but to David – a man after God’s own heart. And he goes back, not to the glorious victories, or the great exploits, or to the national or cultural achievements of the David’s time, but to the “God of his father David”.

It's God Centred

And that means that Josiah’s Conversion Experience was *God Centred*. He “sought the God of his Father David”. Many people today want to go back to the past – to their “fathers” But they don’t want to have anything to do with the God of their Fathers! Is it not so everywhere today: People want to preserve the past, with no consideration of the Faith that made the past worth preserving! Josiah wasn’t like that: He seeks what made David and the nation what it was and ought to be – “the God of his Father David”. And who was “the God of his father David”? We can learn about the God of his Father David from the Psalms he wrote. The God of David is the Creator of the Universe and the Redeemer of his People – the eternal, covenant keeping God, who humbles himself to look upon people, to hear their cries, to forgive their sins, and to bless them abundantly. Indeed, he’s the one who has promised to set David’s seed on His throne, save his people, extend his dominion, conquer all his enemies, and establish his Kingdom and forever.

It's Earnest and Ongoing

And last but not least, *his conversion experience is an* →



“Where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell? It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing, concealed even from the birds of the air. Destruction and Death say, “Only a rumour of it has reached our ears.” God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells, for he views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens. And he said to man, “The fear of the Lord — that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.”

Job 28:20-23; 28.

SEARCH WORK - JULY

[Continued from page 8]

earnest and ongoing experience. He "began to seek the God of his Father David". How often that word "seek" comes up in the OT in connection with our relationship with God. We can think of any number of them! "Seek the Lord and live" [Amos 5:6]; "Seek the Lord while he may be found" [Isaiah 55:6]; "Those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good!" [Psalm 34:10]. What do you do if you seek something? You're proactive! You not only do something; you do something earnestly. You keep your eyes open; you search; you research; you leave no stone unturned. If you think what you're looking for is at a certain place, you go there as quick as you can! Josiah sought the Lord God of his Father David. He looked to Him, he prayed to Him, and he went to where he could be found. It underlay all he did.

And if we seek the Lord with our whole heart, he will allow himself to be found. He will reveal himself to us. And this will only make us seek more! And this is brought out here. Notice it says he "began" to seek the Lord. His search was ongoing. When he was 16, he embarked on the search of a life time that ends in the presence of God. And this is shown by what follows. In his eighth year he began to seek the Lord. In his twelfth year "he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of high places"; in the eighteenth year he began to purify the land and the temple. This was no flash in the pan spiritual experience. It was real and it continued with the same focus, and the same commitment with which it was begun.

And this is the case with every true Christian today. They seek the Lord! They are God Seekers! Some can say exactly when that search began; for others, it's a bit indefinite. But all seek the Lord! They seek him in his Word; seek him in his works; seek him in prayer; seek him at church; seek him among his people; and especially seek him in his Son. And their seeking underlies and inspires everything they do, just as it did in the case of Josiah.

Are we God Seekers? Can we say with David: "O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you..." [Psalm 63:1] They say, "Winners are grinders!" We say: Seekers are finders! And if we're in earnest about seeking after God today, we will certainly find him – as Josiah did.

And this is what the Lord said about him in the Bible: "Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the Lord as he did - with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses." [2 Kings 23:25]

SENIOR 12+ yrs; INTERMEDIATE 10-11 yrs; JUNIOR 9 and under.

July, 2008

SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE

Intermediate omit questions 3 and 4 [Marked with an x]

2 SAMUEL 20

1. Who followed Sheba when he rebelled against David?
2. What was Joab's answer to the wise woman of Abel when she asked why he was going to swallow up the inheritance of the Lord? (2 verses)

Chapter 21

3. (x) What was the cause of the three-year famine in Israel? Find a verse in Joshua 9 where Israel made a league with the Gibeonites.

Chapter 23

4. (x) When David was in the hold and longed for a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem, what did the three mighty men do? Why would David not drink the water? (2 verses)

Chapter 24

5. What was Joab's answer when David asked him to number the people?
6. What did David say to the Lord after his heart smote condemned him for numbering the people?
7. What was David's answer to Gad when asked to choose his punishment?
8. What did Gad tell David to do at the threshing floor of Aruanah? What happened after David had offered sacrifices on the altar? (2 separate verses)

JUNIOR

GENESIS 37

1. In what way did Joseph's father show his love for him? How did his brothers feel about it?
2. What did Joseph's brothers say to each other in Dothan when they saw Joseph afar off? (2 verses)
3. To whom did Joseph's brothers sell him, and where was he brought?
4. What did Jacob do when he thought his son was dead? What did he say when his sons and daughters tried to comfort him?

SEARCH WORK TO: MRS I. STEEL, PO Box 942, EPPING 1710.

E-mail: iesteel@gmail.com



Aslan's Return to Narnia

*Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight,
At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more,
When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death,
And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again.*

ACTIVITY PAGE.....

A Wonderful Promise

In Zephaniah 3:17 there is a wonderful promise from God. Use the code to read the promise below.

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

Code:

1	3	5	7	9	11	13	15	17	19	21	23	25
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M

27	29	31	33	35	37	39	41	43	45	47	49	51
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

39	15	9	23	29	35	7	49	29	41	35	
13	29	7	17	37	45	17	39	15			
49	29	41	15	9	17	37					
25	17	13	15	39	49	39	29	37	1	43	9

SAFE!

"A vessel was at sea in a terrible storm some time ago. The captain gave up all hope of being able to save the ship, and told the passengers to prepare for the worst. Some were crying aloud and wringing their hands ; others were calling upon God to save them. Among these was a Christian man who remained perfectly calm.

'How can you be so quiet in the midst of this fearful storm?' asked one of his fellow-passengers. My Father in heaven is ruling the storm," said the Christian. He can keep the vessel from sinking if he sees best. If I sink I shall still be in my Father's hand. I know I am safe there. Why should I be afraid?" - Richard Newton.



Review Sites

For those who like to watch a movie, rent a video or play computer games there are some useful resources on the net where Christians write-up reviews to help determine what is and what might not be appropriate for Christian families. I suppose depending on whether you like spoilers or not, will probably dictate whether you even head off to any of these sites.

www.christianitytoday.com/movies/ gives a good overview of the movie. I like the two sections at the bottom of each page "Talk About It" where there are some discussion questions and "The Family Corner", which is the bit I am more interested in, where they discuss the amount and/or level of bad language, sexual and/or suggestive elements of the movie and level of violence. The site reviews both movies at the theatre and on video.

The second site preview.gospelcom.net/index.html has a great main page where you can see movies currently reviewed with preview ratings. I think this gives a good overview indicator for each movie. Click on the link for a movie to get to a synopsis and review - sometimes they also include some alternative suggestions. On the right is column with a more detailed overview of the movie's specific elements such a bad language, violence, etc. The site also contains some interesting interviews. As with the first site, and I suppose logically, there is also a DVD review section.

The final site is a game review site guide2games.org/ . I'm not sure how many people enjoy playing video games. I admit that I love the old shoot the alien/monster/ enemy soldier games as well as the more sedate mah-jongg and free cell. There are many types of computer games including FPS (First Person Shooter), RTS (Real Time Strategy) and MMOFPS (Massively multiplayer online first person shooter) – isn't that a mouthful - to name just three. This site's purpose is "to assist gamers and parents in making wise decisions in their choice of electronic games."

The games I checked out included a useful summary which included the following information:

- * Overall Rating
- * Genre
- * Christian Rating
- * Gameplay
- * Violence, and
- * Adult Content

If you decided to "read more" then you would get a more indepth review. The site reviews games on many platforms from PC, to console (e.g. Xbox360, PS3, Wii), to handheld.

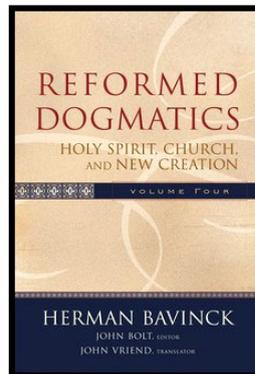
A last note: christiananswers.net/spotlight/home.html is a sub-section of a site mentioned in a previous issue and a parent-page of the "Guide to Games" website. It also contains reviews of movies and videos.

For more information on Game Genre you could check out: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Video_game_genres

Sketches from Church History: Student Workbook *Rebecca Frawley (Banner of Truth 2007) £8.50*

The late S.M.Houghton wrote *Sketches from Church History* as a popular illustrated account of the history of the church. It was published by the Banner of Truth in 1980 and remains in print. The Student Workbook is an approximately A4 size 122 page spiral-bound publication designed for Christian schools and home schoolers using Houghton's volume, although the age range intended is not clear. There are a few maps and time lines but the layout is basic and mainly consists of questions with provision to write in the answers. It assumes 3 classes a week for 18 weeks, does not encourage analysis, and includes an answer key. It has a European and American orientation and does not particularly appeal as very suitable in an Australian context.

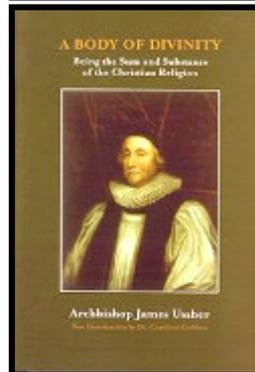
While at my time of life I'm tending to reduce my library somewhat, I still make some purchases. The latest lot of hardbacks arrived from Reformation Heritage Books after their 3 week trip from Grand Rapids, and cost the grand sum (courtesy the weak US\$) of \$115.54 post paid.



First must be the fourth and final volume of Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics* - 944 pages inclusive of over 200 pages of indices covering the four volumes. The main subjects are Holy Spirit, Church and New Creation. Bavinck (1854-1921) was the finest Reformed systematic theologian of his era, a widely read, thoughtful, eirenic and spiritual writer.



The second is Joel Beeke's and Randall Pederson's *Meet the Puritans*(xxxvi + 896pp). In a very readable way it provides brief lives of about 150 Puritans and their counterparts in Scotland and the Netherlands and introduces their writings, particularly modern reprints.



My final two purchases were both by James Ussher (1581-1656), the famous Archbishop of Armagh and came as a package . #1 was a volume in the Puritan Pulpit series and contains 19 sermons by the Archbishop nicely reset in readable type and modern spelling. #2 was a modern reprint of *A Body of Divinity*, which was a compilation of material made by Ussher around 1615. Ussher was the chief writer of the Irish Articles of that year which strongly influenced the framing of the Westminster Confession 1645/46. A [Continued, page 16]

SARUNY

Michael Alley writes about his Experiences in his Work in Kenya

We arrived mid morning, the sun beat down, not a single tree, no escape from the heat of the day. Saruny, smile beaming, greeted us, so proud that we had come to his home to meet his family. We exchanged greetings with his Mamma, Grandmamma, sister, and his Babba's second wife & children. They seemed so delighted to have us there, and despite the rays of the burning sun, I beamed also - Saruny meant a lot to me.

A fence of dried thorn bushes surrounding three chest high stick huts that was their home. Dry dusty brown earth surrounded them with just a dry thorn bush here or there fighting to get their heads above the height of meandering goats.

Weekly, Saruny and I meet to read the Bible and pray in the classroom where I teach him Year 10 English. His Babba works twenty hours from home and spends just four weeks a year with his family. When Saruny was just ten his Babba's drinking binges led to quarrelling in the home, fights would break out, and at times he beat his wife. It seemed there was nothing Saruny's mamma could do right, and so it wasn't long before his Babba took a second much younger wife and another hut was built next to his Mamma's in the same Boma. Polygamy is common in the Samburu tribe; some of the older men have up to five wives. One of my students has 27 brothers and sisters, the wives sharing responsibilities of children and home.

Saruny's Mamma ushered us inside, I crouched to a squatting position, shuffled in the small low opening, and skirted the small cooking fire billowing smoke into the dark, poorly ventilated space. The sweat just poured off as I choked back a feeling of suffocation. Mamma Saruny was cooking Chai for us, customary of Samburu even in the semi desert regions. Saruny pointed out his Mamma's small green cupboard, so proud that she had acquired an item so costly and rare amongst her peers. Just a few

small drawers and cups and plates piled on top. "Its because she works so hard" he said chest sticking out, serious and delightedly happy at the same time. Barely the size of most bedsides in the western world, yet for Mamma Saruny this little cupboard gave her a sense of achievement and made living that bit easier. Most of her peers didn't have the privilege of furniture - in fact, it's unheard of living in Manyattas.

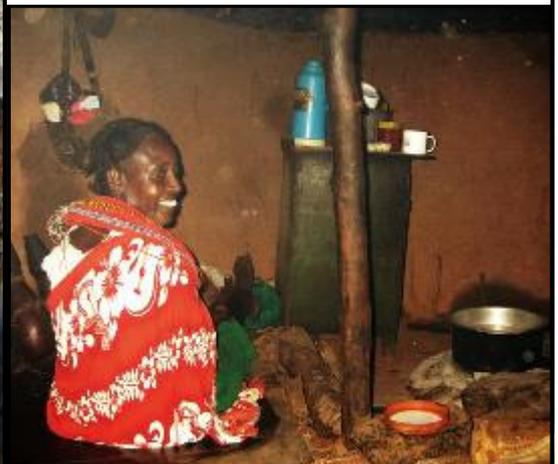
Just a week later Saruny dropped by to see me "Mick, I want you to share some words of God with me". I fumbled the pages of my NIV feeling totally unprepared, uninspired. A time of deliberation passed and so I just chose what was before me "O God, please use this some way". I read the passage and spoke something about it, nothing impacting me. But Saruny - he was hanging onto every word, his whole body utterly rapt, his face glowing brightly.

"Do you have something to share with me?" I asked, finishing. It was a daring question to a student that I had not asked to prepare. But he replied "Yes, Luke 5:27-31" We turned and read about Levi, a tax collector, a dirty thief, a great sinner, a man despised. Upon meeting Levi, Jesus said 'Follow me'. Levi left everything, followed Jesus and then shared a meal with Him. But the people were indignant that Jesus would eat with such a man. But Jesus said "It is not the healthy that need a doctor, but the sick".

I scratched my head looking at the excitement on his face. "Yes, that's a good passage" I said... "Jesus came to save the people that needed him the most, sinners..." but it was plain as day that he was in on something I wasn't - I didn't understand what it was that had him sitting on the edge of his seat. "Saruny, why do you like this passage so much?" I could see he felt the message was plain as day, but he told me anyway "Jesus said to Levi 'Follow me' and yet Levi was a tax collector, and then Levi just follows him, just like that". Yep, he was getting something I wasn't. But



← **Samburu Manyatta - Hut**
Next Page - Saruny [in green shirt] on
School Excursion →
↓ **Mamma Saruny and her Small Green**
Cupboard.





explaining it some more I then saw it so clearly. Only a few months before, Saruny was just like Levi. He had told me before a number of times, "Mick, I had evil things in my heart, I wanted to do bad things," but God, in his Sovereign power and perfect timing, had used the moment I first asked Saruny to meet with me to read the Bible and pray, to bring Saruny to the feet of Jesus and give his life to the Lord.

His excitement had been evident ever since. He knew that he had been so far from God; he knew that he had so

[Continued from page 15] measures to preserve life. This means that we should take care that we do not put ourselves in situations where our own life is endangered unnecessarily, and we do not indulge in activities which will endanger the lives of others. I am not here going to enter the debate about who should be allowed access to guns, for there are plenty of other activities which are life endangering. In all that we do we should be conscious of the need to act safely – in the home, in the workplace and in our leisure activities. Surely, every employer ought to be striving to make the workplace safe for those who work in it – and all employees ought to be endeavouring to carry out the work without endangering either their own lives or those of their colleagues.

Life of the Soul

I would like to finish this discussion by taking us back to where we started. The first breaking of this commandment occurred in the Garden of Eden when our first parents disobeyed God and ate the fruit which He had forbidden. God had said that, "... in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Genesis 2: 17) Adam and Eve ate that fruit and so they murdered not only themselves but also all their descendants – and we should remember that they brought on themselves and us not only the death of the body, but also that of the soul – so the requirement that we endeavour to preserve our own life and the lives of others applies to soul as well as to body. We are self-

much to be forgiven for; and yet months later he was still marvelling and praising God. Praising the Lord that the power of Jesus could forgive a man like Levi 'just like that', and then straight after, not a year, not even a month, just on the same day, Levi could be a follower of Jesus - clean, new, and son of the most High God. Saruny was just like Levi. Jesus came to save sinners, and Saruny was amazed and so joyful that it had also happened to him.

At the time I didn't realise it happened as it did. I had prayed earnestly; I had poured out my heart to the Lord for Him to show Himself, and I did believe that God would answer my prayer. But it was so humbling. All I did was ask the lad to meet with me, and God's Spirit did the rest. But what a lesson of the power of God to me, I now realize! I thought I would have much more to say, much more to do, for Saruny to come to know Jesus. But that the Lord would just do it reminds me it is He who changes lives. It is He who reveals the truth, and it is he who provides true understanding of a man's spiritual needs.

I sometimes don't know what I am doing here or how to do it well. All my techniques honed through experience and good Bible knowledge seem to come to nothing the way I want them to. But it has brought me to the feet of Jesus in earnest prayer and faith in him - and I believe God has been moving mountains. And when I see that the great answers I provide just haven't been understood, but something so simplistic my student gets for himself - and it brightens his face by the power of God's spirit in his heart - that's when I know, it's God, not me. He has made the difference, and it will always be Him that has changed a life. "Not to us O' Lord, Not to us – But to your name be the Glory." [Psalm 115:1]

murderers if we neglect our soul's eternal security – and we are guilty of a sin against others if we stand by and watch them going to eternal damnation without warning them. We cannot force them to be saved – but we must warn them!

However, we can only do that if we have already secured the life of our own souls! God has provided a Way of life for all those who will receive it by faith. That Way is His own Son, Jesus Christ, who so valued the lives of His people that He willingly laid down His own to save theirs. If we refuse that salvation, we have no one to blame but ourselves – and we have murdered our own souls. I have gone into some detail on the ramifications of the sixth commandment in our daily lives, but this final point is the most important point of all, for it concerns eternity.

I hope that what I have said will force us to think about the life of the soul as well as that of the body. I would like to drive the point home as I finish by laying before us all the same challenge that Moses laid before the Israelites in his day – "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; ..." (Deuteronomy 30: 19) May the Lord enable each one who reads this to respond to that challenge in the correct way – by placing his or her faith in Jesus Christ! Amen

The Sixth Commandment

Dr. W.J.W. Hanna, Brisbane, continues a study on the Ten Commandments. He deals now with the Sixth Commandment: Exodus 20:13 - "You shall not murder."

Introduction

We have now progressed through this series of studies on the Ten Commandments as far as the Sixth Commandment. It deals with what is probably the most serious crime that one human being can commit against another, the crime of murder. It deals with the sanctity of human life, a sanctity that comes, not from any man-made code of principles, but from the decree of God Himself. We need only to look at the history of the world – as well as at our own age, to see how much we have always stood in need of such a command. Education does not teach this principle – it only teaches more refined ways of destroying life. Culture does not produce it – some of the most cultured nations of the world have held human life in very light esteem.

The ancient philosophers, to whom so many look with reverence, did not see anything strange or reprehensible in recommending that weak or handicapped children should be eliminated. The Roman civilisation was great, but delighted in the sickening bloodshed of its exhibitions in the arena. One ancient monarch, we are told, found that a particularly good quality of steel was obtained when some slaves fell into the smelting furnace (the carbon content of their bodies produced a fine grade of carbon-steel) and thereafter all steel to be used for weapon-making had a certain number of live slaves added to it in the smelting stage. This is how little human life was valued!

However, we do not need to go to the ancient world for examples of this sort of attitude. We can look to the elimination of the unfit and those considered of subordinate races in Hitler's Germany and to the many other examples of genocide in countries around the world, some of which are still going on. We can also look to our own country, where many thousands of babies are murdered each year, and where laws permitting the taking of the lives of the ill and the elderly are being advocated and even introduced in some areas.

We can see from these facts that this is a very necessary ordinance, and always has been since the Fall of mankind into sin. That Fall itself was the first instance of the breaking of this law, for in the act of disobeying God, Adam and Eve not only took their own lives but also murdered every one of their descendants. For many, that act not only murdered their bodies but also their souls. Indeed, we can also say that in that act our first parents murdered the Son of God, for His death would not have been necessary had they not disobeyed! That initial act was soon followed by others – their first son Cain mur-

dered his brother in a fit of jealousy – and so the cycle continued. The fact that this, too, was known to be wrong shows us that this commandment, like all the others, was a *creation ordinance*. It was not something that was only enacted when the Israelites came out of Egypt, though undoubtedly it needed to be repeated to them. In their days of slavery they would have seen much violence and death, and had probably become hardened even to such atrocities as the killing of their own children at the command of Pharaoh.

Not Forbidden

When starting to discuss this commandment, it is probably as well to clear the ground first by looking at what it does *not* forbid. The older translation which simply says, "Thou shalt not kill," has led to a number of misinterpretations. Pacifists have sometimes used it as an excuse for their beliefs, and it has even been made a peg on which to hang an animal liberationist aversion to the killing of animals. Even vegetarians have used it, though why it should be considered that a command "You shall not kill" would be wide enough to forbid the killing of animals but not wide enough to include the killing of vegetables is difficult to see!

The fact of the matter is that the commandment definitely means "You shall not murder" and applies only to the killing, in certain circumstances, of other human beings. We can only understand the true limitations and extent of the sixth commandment when we realise that it is based on the fact that mankind was made in the image of God in the spiritual sense. It is because God made mankind in His image that we may not murder mankind – to do so would be to insult the One in whose image they are made! Killing of animals is *not* an offence against this commandment.

We cannot be sure whether men and women ate animals before the Flood, but we can be sure that they killed them – and were taught by God to do so! When sin first entered their lives, love turned to lust, and they were embarrassed by their nakedness. They made for themselves flimsy coverings of leaves, but God provided something more durable – the skins of animals. Now, we surely do not suppose that God created those skins without animals. Clearly the animals were killed, and God was teaching Adam and Eve that it was right to do so when the need arose. Furthermore, we find that Abel, their son, brought lambs from his flock to offer to the LORD. Were these animals not killed and sacrificed? We might even ask what became of them after they were killed? In later times, part of the offering was often eaten by the person making the offering as a "meal of peace" between God and the offerer. We cannot tell whether this was so then, but the animals were certainly killed, so God did not forbid the killing of animals by this command.

So much for the killing of animals, but what do we say to

the argument that this commandment makes it unlawful to take any human life in any circumstances? The commandments, and particularly this one and the couple following it, are very short and compressed and we need to look at the rest of Scripture to find the inspired explanations of what is meant. We can look to the case-law which God gave to Moses to see how the commandment was to be applied in particular circumstances, and we see from it that there were many circumstances where breaches of the law were punishable by death. So we see that the proper use of the power of the sword by the civil authorities is *not* murder. We find this same principle stated earlier – in Genesis 9: 6 – “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man.” You will notice that the very reason given here for the punishment of murderers by death is the same reason given for not committing murder in the first place – mankind was made in the image of God. The appropriate punishment for those who destroyed that image was death!

This covers the execution of criminals by the properly constituted authorities acting lawfully, but are there no circumstances where the *individual* may kill without breaking this commandment? By no means! If we examine, once again, the case-laws given by God through Moses we find this, “If the thief is found breaking in, and he is struck so that he dies, there shall be no guilt for his bloodshed.” (Exodus 22: 2) This means that when someone breaks into my house I have a duty to protect myself and my family from him or her. It may be doubtful whether I have the right to protect my material goods at the expense of the life of the thief, but when the lives of those who live in the house are threatened there *is* a duty to defend them – and if the assailant is killed as a result then there is no guilt of murder incurred.

Another situation exists in the case of war, but then again, it may not be *such* a different situation. Is the case of an attack on my country by an enemy not similar to the case of an attack on my house? Is it not another example of a need to protect my family, and not only it but also all the families of my country? It must, in such circumstances, be the positive duty of the government of the country to defend that country and it must be the duty of all those who are able, to comply with the legal requirements to assist in that defence. The soldier who does this – and who does not step outside that duty – bears no guilt!

Forbidden

I have spent quite a time on explaining what this commandment does not forbid. It is time to speak of what *is* forbidden. When we remember that the reason why it is wrong to murder is that mankind was made in the image of God and that murder is an insult to that image, we can see that we need to be quite clear about what *is* forbidden. Basically, we can say that this commandment forbids the taking of any human life where there was no necessity to do so. We must not kill any person except in self-

defence or as a penalty for taking life. This means that we are forbidden to take any human life to suit our own purposes. The commandment forbids the murder of the thousand upon thousand human babies which are killed each year in this country without a single governmental body lifting a finger in their defence. Surely we, as a nation, will suffer the just anger of God for this dreadful act. We lift up our hands in horror about killings in the former Yugoslavia region or in Rwanda or in Darfur – but nothing is done to stop the murders going on in our own land! In fact the situation is even worse! Not content with the murder of innocent children who cannot defend themselves, our pressure groups and our legislators are now turning to the other end of the scale – to the murder of the sick and the elderly, to those whose minds have been so weakened by pain or by senile decay that they can be persuaded to give consent to that which they would never allow if they were able to think clearly. We should be quite clear that the arguments being put forward in favour of euthanasia in our country are almost identical to those which were once put forward in Germany and which enabled Hitler to introduce his various regulations aimed at the elimination of those whom he decreed to be unfit! We

“Not content with the murder of innocent children who cannot defend themselves, our pressure groups and our legislators are now turning to the other end of the scale – to the murder of the sick and the elderly, to those whose minds have been so weakened by pain or by senile decay that they can be persuaded to give consent to that which they would never allow if they were able to think clearly ”

are starting on that same road! Are the voices of Christians being heard as loudly as they should?

Before I leave speaking about the things which this commandment forbids, I should mention some things which we can easily forget. Our Lord Himself pointed out that this commandment extends to those things which might *give rise to killing*. He said, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgement.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgement.” (Matthew 5: 21,22) Those who allow themselves to hate other people unjustly are bringing themselves within the scope of the commandment, for that hatred is exactly

what leads to the crime of murder!

Then, can we not also include under the scope of the commandments those who take part in activities which are likely to endanger life, either of themselves or of others? The sorts of things of which I am thinking are things like drinking and driving, or taking part in dare-devil stunts and encouraging others to do so. When we consider this, even smoking would come under a the prohibition of this commandment. There may not be an intention to take life in the doing of any of these things, but surely the commandment covers any unnecessary taking of life.

Required

Christian interpretation of this commandment has usually gone further than this, for the Scriptural teaching with regard to all these commandments is to see positive principles in them rather than purely negative ones. So we should see in this commandment, not simply a necessity to avoid taking life unnecessarily, but also a positive requirement to take all reasonable **[Continued p13]**

BETWEEN YOU AND ME

I am just completing a series of sermons on the Kings of Judah. I have only one more to do - Zedekiah, "The Shepherd Who Ran Away". I must say that I've found the study very rewarding - especially those kings who presided over the final days of Judah. I am convinced that without an understanding of the historical background of this period, our understanding of the prophetic books from this period - Habakkuk, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel for example - must be seriously impoverished. By the same token, the Prophetic books also illuminate the historical background. My only regret is that I didn't pursue this study more vigorously years ago.

Another thing that has been impressed on me is that Middle Eastern Politics haven't changed that much over the intervening 2600 years! Between 609BC and 562 BC there were two main powers - Egypt, under Neco II, and Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar. In 612BC the Assyrian capital, Nineveh fell - and with it the Assyrian Empire - which had been the main threat to Israel and Judah for almost a century. With Assyria gone, a vacuum was created in the Middle East. Both Egypt and Babylon wanted to control the area. In 2 Chronicles 35 we read about the start of this struggle. In 609 Neco marched north to help the Assyrians, told Josiah to mind his own business, and when he didn't, won a decisive victory at the Battle of Megiddo in 609. Neco continued north apparently to help the Assyrians fight the Babylonians [2 Kings 23:29 -NIV note]

but they were otherwise occupied. By default, Neco now controlled the area from Egypt to the Orontes.

Four years later, though, at the Battle of Carchemesh, 605BC - said to be one of the most significant battles in the ancient world [NIV notes. See Jeremiah 46] Nebuchadnezzar defeated Neco - and he controlled the area until his death in 562. Egypt never recovered, and Nebuchadnezzar's rule was unchallenged. From then on, the only hope for Judah was to submit to the overlordship of Nebuchadnezzar. It all has a familiar ring to it, doesn't it! And yet, just as God's hand was in all these international events then, preserving His People and accomplishing His Purpose, so his hand is in all the national and international events of our own times too.

And this leads me to another thing that has been impressed on me: The wisdom, grace and power of our God. In the face of their continued idolatry until "there was no remedy" He sent his Anointed King, and the People of Judah into Captivity. But even there He was with them - restoring Jehoiachin after 37 years to a place of honour at the King's Table in Babylon, and finally bringing His People back to their homeland. "Can these dry bones live?" Ezekiel was asked. He didn't know. But he prophesied, and they did! And because of that we have a wonderful resurrection hope in Christ today. He has come, the kingdom is here, and we await his return in glory.

[Book Reviews - From p.10] Body of Divinity was first published in 1645 (not 1648 as stated in the title verso page), although manuscript copies had circulated earlier, and it impacted the Assembly in its own right. It is in a catechetical structure under 52 broad headings. It could have done with an improved arrangement such as putting the words of the 52 heads of doctrine in their place in the text and not just in the table of contents. It is good to see the volume in print again as the last reprint (in which the catechetical form of the original was reduced to continuous narrative) was in 1841 (this edition can be downloaded from Google books). Some modernization of spelling has occurred although the old verbal forms are retained.[RSW]

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.

Literary contributions are welcome. Submission by email is preferred. The opinions expressed in signed articles are those of the authors - not necessarily of the editor or the PCEA and may not be reproduced without permission.

Unsigned articles are from the Editor, and may be reproduced without asking for permission.

Editor:

Rev. Ray Murray,
33 Tallowood Street,
South Grafton,
NSW, 2460.
Tel/Fax 02 6643 4272.
Email: raymurray @ aapt.net.au.

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

Direct Credit:

Westpac 032-587 75 0105

Upcoming Event - 2009

FAMILY CAMP - Naamaroo Conference Centre, Lane Cove National Park, SYDNEY.

5pm Monday, 5th January - 3pm Friday 9th January, 2009 [DV]

Theme: Love and Obedience: Our Response to God's Grace

Main Speaker: Rev. George Ball, Manning River Congregation.

PCEA HANDBOOK AVAILABLE

The PCEA Handbook of Practice and Procedure first published in 1992 was last issued in 1999. It has now been updated to take account of decisions 1999-2008, and is available bound with the Decision Book of the Synod. The Decision Book includes decisions of on-going significance classified according to the Committee or body to which they relate. The total publication runs to 110 A4 pages, and the cost is \$20 postpaid per copy from the Convener, Rev Rowland S. Ward, 26 Roxburgh Road, Wantirna 3152. Cheques should be made payable to the PCEA.

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