

THE PRESBYTERIAN BANNER

September, 2008

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Devotion: "Your name, O Lord, endures forever, your renown through all generations. For the Lord will vindicate his people, and have compassion on his servants."
- Psalm 135:13-14.

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PASSIONATE FOR THE KING.

In Psalm 45 the Psalmist is thinking about *the true Messianic King*. He may be gathering his thoughts from an actual Royal Marriage Ceremony – perhaps that of Solomon but he's being transported in the Spirit far beyond King Solomon. He thinks about the Ideal Saviour - King whom God has promised, the true descendant of David, and yet one who is also David's Lord. And this is borne out by the application of these words to the Lord Jesus in Hebrews chapter 1. One writer [C.H. Spurgeon] says: "He who sees only Solomon here is blind. He who sees Solomon and Christ is cross-eyed. And he alone sees it correctly who sees Christ and Christ alone."

A Noble Theme

In the opening words, he says: "My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for the King." And that indeed is a noble theme. In the OT as the actual kings of Israel and Judah fell far below the ideal Saviour - King promised by the Lord and sometimes the very reverse of Saviour - Kings, the hope of God's People was directed toward the true King who would reign over his people and over the world in righteousness. Isaiah spoke of him when he said: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his Kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever." [Isaiah 9:6-7] And when this child was born, Simeon took him up in his arms and said with praise in his heart, "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." [Luke 2:29-32] Jesus, the true King of Israel, is the theme of the writer of the Psalm and the noble theme he takes up.

A Bubbling Heart and Ordered Thought

And that being the case, we can understand why he says that his "heart is stirred". Actually, that doesn't quite do justice to the emotion of the Poet. Our metrical version, following the AV, says, "My heart inditing is, good matter in a song". The marginal reading in the AV, though, says that his heart "boils or bubbles up". Just imagine boiling water – "bubbling up" and seeking to break over all its boundaries. That's what I'm like, says the Psalmist. I'm boiling over with enthusiasm for my subject, the King. And surely that indicates something of the joy and delight that the Psalmist has in speaking about the King.

But that's not all! He says: "My tongue is the pen of skilful writer." We all know the difference between speaking, and writing things down. Very often people who only speak become very disjointed especially if they get a bit excited about something. Sometimes we have to calm them down to get any sense out of them! To order our thoughts we often need to go through the discipline of writing them down so that we know what to say and where to say it. The Psalmist tells us here that even though he's speaking, "reciting verses for the King," and even though his heart's bubbling over, what he says is just like the work of very skilful writer giving concise expression to his thoughts

and feelings. He says: "I've got a wonderful subject to speak about; I've thought about it a great deal; and I'm as keen as mustard to communicate these thoughts about the King in the clearest possible way to everybody."

Open Mouths

And as we think about our King – the Lord Jesus – ought not our hearts "bubble up" too? And ought we not want to communicate as clearly as possible the facts about our King? After all he is *our* Saviour. In the ancient world Kings were hailed as the Saviours of their people. They often failed, and failed the people who trusted them. But Christ is entirely different. He's the King who has come to save his people. When they cried out on his entry into Jerusalem, "*Hossana*" – a word that means "Save" – *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord*", the people were expressing a tremendous truth about Jesus: He was the true King coming to save His people. And He did save them. Never was he more a King than in his death on the Cross, marching forward to destroy the works of the Devil. He laid down his life for His people. As the psalmist says: "*He armed himself for battle, and rode forth on behalf of righteousness, truth and humility.*"

Subdued People

And if the Lord Jesus has done that for us should not we,

his subjects, desire to speak of him with love too? Do we not want to marshal all the words at our disposal to express what we feel about him? One of the works of our King, says the Catechism, is in "*subduing us to himself*". Surely the first evidence of that "*subduing*" – the first evidence of being taken out of darkness and brought into the kingdom of God – will be our love and delight in our King? How could it be otherwise if he has truly saved us? Christians should, and some Christians do, "bubble over" with gratitude and love and want to speak about Him – and hate any reflection cast on him.

But in some cases it's not so. Sometimes, some seem to forget their King. We forget what we owe Him; forget that we receive salvation from him, and forget "*whose we are and whom we serve.*" What else can explain that lack of enthusiasm and lethargy that characterises so many? Doesn't it seem strange that we know so much about other things and pay no attention to Him? Is it not strange that we get enthusiastic about people in the past, and yet remain woefully ignorant of Christ? It ought not to be. Our carelessness here is dulling our praise. May we have the attitude of the Psalmist. May our hearts bubble over, and may we speak about the King. Many have no concern for Him. Will we, his subjects, not speak up Him?

MEDIA WATCH

The Kyoto Protocol Farce

"I have come across many (especially prior to the recent federal election) people who felt that Australia should have signed the Kyoto Protocol. When I have asked them whether they were aware of how it worked, most thought it was simply about agreeing to reduce our carbon dioxide emissions. But that is only a very small part of it.

Here is how it works: Countries that ratified the Kyoto Protocol agreed to reduce their CO2 emissions to their pre-1991 levels by 2012. Under the terms of Kyoto, developing countries (including Africa, India, Indonesia, China) can continue to increase emissions without any penalty. For every tonne of CO2 that a country exceeds its target, it must pay \$25 to a country that has reduced its CO2 by more than its target.

So who are the winners? Mainly the former Soviet satellite states whose economies crumbled with the fall of communism, and whose inefficient and polluting industries closed down because they could not compete on world markets. The fact is that these countries are buying their goods from elsewhere now – probably China – where the pollution per item produced is far higher than it would be in a modern western country.

Those western countries whose economies have prospered and expanded will not meet their targets, and so have to pay big dollars in 2012. Kevin Rudd said that Australia looks like it might exceed its target by 1%, or 6 million tonnes, so we would have to pay \$150 million to some of these Balkan or other states who have 'credits' – **Peter Abetz, "Climate Change" in Faith in Focus, the magazine of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, August, 2008.**

Blasphemous Teenager Charged

"A Gold Coast teenager who wore a T-shirt that reads 'Jesus is a ----' has been charged with offensive behavior Senior Sergeant Arron Ottaway said the youth was walking along the road when an officer saw him. Police conducted inquiries at the Australia Fair shopping centre, where the teen said he bought the shirt, to find any shops selling it.

The Rev. Matt Hunt of the Helensvale Baptist Church said it was sad people spoke about the Lord in such a way. Mr Hunt said using the Lord's name in vain was a serious sin. "When someone comes to the point of saying Jesus is the devil or Jesus is 'expletive', the Bible does say to be very careful because you're on thin ice."

- **Australian Presbyterian Life, August, 2008.**

Polling Creationism in Canada

Among Canadians, 58 percent accept evolution, while 22 percent think that God created humans in their present form within the last 10,000 years, and 20 percent are unsure, according to a new poll from Angus Reid Strategies. The poll was conducted among a nationwide random sample of 1007 Canadian adults interviewed on-line on July 29 and 30, 2008, and its margin of error is +/- 3.1%. The results are virtually unchanged from a 2007 poll, in which 59 percent of the respondents accepted evolution, 22 percent preferred the creationist option, and 19 percent were unsure. - **Sermonaudio Newsletter, 16/08/08.**

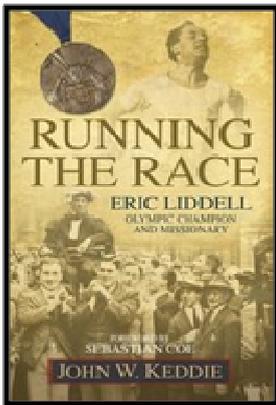
Chronological Bible to be Released

Thomas Nelson plan to release this spring [Fall, USA] a Chronological Bible. It is an attempt to arrange the Bible Chronologically so readers may better appreciate the historical framework of the Bible. – **Sermonaudio, 23/8/08.**

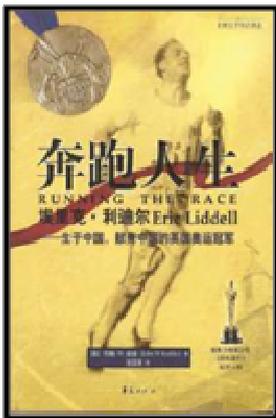
BLOGGING ABOUT...

OLYMPIC EVANGELISM

We have heard a great deal about the hopes, successes, and heartaches of the Olympics. Sometimes, I must confess, as I watched the reports, I thought Australia must be the only nation at the Games! But when the medal tallies were presented, I realised there were other nations and other competitors, and other medal winners there as well. I suppose it just goes to show that despite all the togetherness of the games, we're still very nationalistic and self centred.



But there was another side to the Olympics, and that was the presence of an active Christian witness there. While some Christian publishing organizations, according to a recent Reformation Translation Fellowship newsletter, have suspended printing operations during this period, others have been able to utilise the opportunity.



One such opportunity has been the publication, and distribution in Chinese of a biography of the gold medal winner at the Paris Games in 1924, Eric Liddell. He is best known as the man who wouldn't race on the Lord's Day [100m] but later won a gold medal over a longer distance [400m]. The amazing thing is that this Chinese Translation of the biography has been published in China by a government authorized publishing company and can be freely and openly distributed in China. The author of the book [in English] was John Keddle, a minister in the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing).

From a slightly different angle, M.V. Tronson [Baptist minister and chairman of Well-Being Australia] reports on the many opportunities his team have had in bringing the gospel to the Chinese during this period of time. He writes: "Pastor Wu the Chaplain General of Religious Services within the Olympic Village has quite a handful on his hands, although the host city Religious Services protocol was endorsed. Personnel are thin on the ground with only three Protestant chaplains, all of whom are Chinese. They are handing out bibles, literature and flyers for the 'Evening with the Stars' (Sunday 17 August at 2.30pm at the 21st Century theatre) outside the Village."

Significantly, he adds, "There are fewer restrictions at the Beijing Olympic Village Religious Services than we had in either Barcelona or Sydney, where bibles were restricted from distribution." The same positive note is struck by, Australian Dr. David Smethurst [an assistant to Dr. Ming, who is in charge of an organization named RT2008BM – Right Track, 2008, Beijing] "the freedom I and the team

have to speak of Jesus Christ's Salvation has been astonishingly uninhibited".

Amidst all the hype of the Olympics, it's good to know that there are those who are working and witnessing for the Lord Jesus Christ in a needy land. May the distribution of Liddell's biography, and the work and witness of others bear fruit to God's glory. And may doors be opened for greater opportunities for the distribution of Christian Literature by such organizations as the Reformation Translation Fellowship.

STILL A WEIRD MOB?

All the evidence points in the direction that we're still a "weird mob!" Here are some facts and figures put together by **APN from Media Reports** and forwarded to the Editor by Dr. Rowland Ward.

"Australia is one of the least devout countries in the Western world, although two-thirds of its population identifies itself as Christian, an international survey has found. Religion does not play a central part in the lives of many Australians: 48 per cent of Australians surveyed said they did not partake in personal prayer and 52 per cent said they rarely attended a place of worship. The survey questioned 21,000 adults. It found that levels of religious identity in Australia were on par with Germany and Switzerland, significantly less than the US but greater than Britain.

Forty-four per cent of Australians considered themselves religious but said religion did not play a central role in their lives, a third said they did not believe in a divine power or in life after death. Half the Australians surveyed considered religion the least important when compared with family, partners, work and career, leisure time and politics. Worldwide, the young are more religious than reputed, with only 13 per cent having no appreciation for God or faith in general, so expressions of faith during the recent World Youth Day should have come as no surprise.

Australians had a largely positive perception of God. Most thought of God as a loving, kind-hearted being and there was a strong religious vitality among the nation's youth, with one in five considered to be deeply religious, the survey found. Seventy-two per cent of Australia's young adults believe in God or a divine power and/or a life after death this is even more than in the over 60 age group. Almost half of those under 30 said that they partake in prayer on a more or less regular basis and the same proportion see God as a personal being.

These figures clearly refute the assumption that religious belief is dwindling. On average, Church attenders are older, better educated and more likely to be female, married and born overseas. Catholics represented the largest faith group and Christian denomination in Australia, but were not the most devout. That was left to a small group of Free church and Pentecostal Protestants. "

When Lucy once instructed Charlie Brown on the reality of indwelling sin, he was pictured with a swirling head, holding his tummy, feeling quite ill, and saying, "I can feel it." You get the same sort of feeling reading descriptions of who we are!

MERCY SHIPS

One Cog In The wheel

"I heard about the work being done by Mercy Ships, and thought at the time I would like to be involved. A few months later, after talking it over with my husband, I felt a real need to offer my services as a short-term volunteer on the giant hospital ship in West Africa."

Gail Reid of Ashtonfield in the NSW Hunter Valley spent six weeks in Liberia onboard the *Africa Mercy*, the world's largest non-government hospital ship. "I am a registered nurse, but have not worked for five years," she says, "but I was given a position in the hospital's admissions area, and that was great. There were more than 400 volunteer crew members onboard, all playing an important role in reaching out to the poor. Getting the patients admitted is just a part of that work, and I was just one cog in the wheel. It was a great experience, seeing the patients as they arrived, watching their progress in recovery, and then seeing their happy faces following surgery which in many cases meant a new start in life"

"I had seen pictures of aspects of the range of medical and community development projects being carried out by Mercy Ships volunteers, but they can't tell the real story. That is only possible by being there. There is such a need, not only here in Liberia, but all over Africa. There is such poverty. My perspective on what is important in life has changed."

Gail says there were mixed reactions from those around her when she decided to go. "Some thought I was silly heading to such a dangerous area of the world. Others were amazed that I would go so far away instead of heading to somewhere like central Australia to help the aboriginals. Others thought it would be great to be involved, but it was something they would never do."

There were a number of very memorable times. "One of them I refer to as 'Miracle Monday'. Two days earlier, I was with a group of crew members going to the beach. As we drove through the local market we saw a woman in the crowd. Her face was covered in bandages. I said a little prayer 'God, please help this woman'. I couldn't believe what I saw on Monday. As I was starting work, that woman was waiting onboard the ship to see a doctor. We processed her for admission to have surgery for burn injuries sustained when a kerosene lamp fell on her face as she was reading in bed."

"On the same day, a nine year-old girl arrived to be assessed for orthopaedic surgery to repair bowed legs. It was amazing how she came to be onboard. A volunteer had been on a social trip to a place called Bong Mines,

saw the girl and took a photograph. It was shown to surgeons who believed something could be done for her. The next time a group went to the area, they took the photograph with them and tried to locate the little girl. One person they met knew the grandmother and told her to get the family to bring the girl to the hospital ship. She came and received the surgery required."

"Such seemingly chance incidents convinced me that God is in control of what Mercy Ships is doing. He puts people in places at times when they should not have been there, and how those in real need have received help."

Gail does not know what will come in the future as a result of her six weeks in Liberia. "I would love to go again with my husband. It may take time, but I know in my heart that such an experience cannot be a one-off thing. It was an incredible time. It's hard to know what the future holds."

Mercy Ships is an international Christian charity that has operated hospital ships in developing nations since 1978.

Following the example of Jesus, Mercy Ships brings hope and healing to the poor, mobilizing people and resources worldwide.

Mercy Ships offers a range of health and community development services free of charge. Highly skilled surgeons on board the ships perform thousands of operations each year to correct disability, disfigurement and blindness. Medical and dental teams

travel the countries and establish clinics to provide vaccination programs, dental treatment and basic health care for those with no access to these facilities. Local community health workers receive training in hygiene, nutrition and disease prevention.

Mercy Ships builds hospitals, clinics, training facilities and basic housing where none exist. Agricultural projects help replenish livestock in war-torn areas and boost food production. Working in partnership with local people, Mercy Ships empowers communities to help themselves. The result is a way out of poverty.

The emphasis is on the needs of the world's poorest nations in West Africa, where the hospital ship *Africa Mercy* provides the platform for services extending up to ten months at a time. A permanent land-based program operates in Sierra Leone, while teams also work in several nations of Central America and the Caribbean. Mercy Ships has 14 support offices around the world, including the Australian office at Caloundra, on the Queensland Sunshine Coast. [www.mercyships.org.au]

Gail lives at Ashtonfield, in the NSW Hunter Valley, and worships with Maitland Presbyterian Church.



HELPS TOWARD HARMONY

The Rev. George Ball continues his study in “Ministry Matters” from
2 Corinthians 13:11-13

“Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.”

I have two difficulties in writing. One - how to begin. Two - how to end. I sometimes also have difficulty filling the gap in the middle! However Paul had no such worries. He starts and ends well. He began his letter with a salutation and a benediction. He ends with an exhortation and a benediction. He knows what he wants to say. Isn't that part of the secret of good writing and speaking? Have something worthwhile to say! Paul knows where he wants to leave the Corinthians in their thinking. He doesn't merely sign off by saying, 'may God bless these few thoughts to all of our hearts', but begins his conclusion with a series of “staccato” admonitions (Barnett). There are five pithy admonitions each expressed in the present tense as imperatives (commands). His conclusion therefore is carefully crafted. Every word counts. Every command is aimed toward achieving the goal that Paul never lost sight of - that the church with all its flaws is a community of brothers and sisters who belong to one another and belong to God and in whose lives the love and peace of God must reign. If this is to be achieved certain obligations must be fulfilled.

Be Joyful.

Many of the translations have a different rendering here and all can justify their own. The Greek word is *'chairete'*. NASB and ESV translates “rejoice”. NIV translates “good-bye”. KJV and NKJV translate “farewell”. Why such disparity? The origin of the phrase “Good-bye” is a compression of, “God be with you”. “Farewell” is a compression of, “Fare ye well”. When we say, “Cheerio” it originally meant “Be cheerful” or “Rejoice”. Sadly the origin of many of these now familiar greetings have been long since forgotten. However it seems to me from the context and from Paul's style elsewhere that “Rejoice” is the better translation, or “be full of joy”. He tells the Philippians, “Rejoice in the Lord always: I will say it again, rejoice.” (Phil. 4:4). He tells the Thessalonians, “Be joyful always.” (1 Thess. 5:16). He tells the Romans, “Be joyful in hope.” (Rom. 12:12). The verb is in the present tense, so that Paul is reminding us at this moment that our spirits should know that as the God of peace and love is with us then the only proper response is to rejoice. If God be for us who can be against us? Has God not sent His Son to die for our sakes? Has God not raised His Son to intercede for us and reign over us? Has God not given us His Holy Spirit? Has God not established a kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy? Has He not promised that all things work together for our good? Has He not promised that nothing shall separate us from His love? Are we not people who have a sure and certain hope? Do you agree it is sinful of us not to believe these things? Do you agree therefore that it is sinful of us not to rejoice in the Lord? Do you agree that such an attitude can surely transform the atmosphere in any church? Rejoice in the Lord! This will go

a long way toward harmony in the church.

Be Restored.

Again translations differ. “Be perfect” (KJV). “Be made complete” (NASB). “Aim for perfection” (NIV). “Aim for restoration” (ESV). All are genuine attempts to translate the Greek word *“katartizesthe”*. The word is also used in Mark 1:9 when the disciples were “mending” or “repairing” their nets. The Corinthians need to be mended or restored or repaired in their relationship with God, with each other and with the apostle. It's not just something to pray about which the apostle does in verse 9. It's also something to work at. So often - like here we are a key to answering our own prayers. We are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. This means we may have some church repairs to do. For example, we can't ignore or avoid that person in the church who we fell out with years ago. Just recently I received a phone call from a man who left our church a few years ago wanting to apologise for the damage his words and actions had caused while he was with us. That was good. He was doing some mending - even if it did take a few years to do! It's best though to keep apace with maintenance and not let it accumulate. Perhaps there is a phone call or a visit that you need to make to do some repairs? Be restored. This will be a big help toward harmony in the church.

Be Encouraged.

This is a word that has appeared often in this epistle (11 times) it is the word *“parakaleisthe”*. It's translated, “be of good comfort” (KJV), “listen to my appeal” (NIV), “comfort one another” (ESV). “Be exhorted” or “be encouraged” relates to the various exhortations and encouragements the apostle has laid upon the Corinthians during the course of his letter - indeed letters. He is urging them not to stand in judgement of his word but to be exhorted to heed it. Let them not be stony ground hearers. Let them not receive the grace of God in vain. This is an important exhortation for us all. We are exhorted to receive with meekness the implanted word (James 1:21). In our Reformed tradition where the emphasis is on the preaching of the Word, we have unwittingly spawned a generation who are good at sermon critique but not good at listening to a sermon. Jesus warns, “Take heed how you hear”. It is good for us when we hear a sermon to ask ourselves a few questions like: what has the Word of God taught me today? Has it pointed me to a sin I must confess? Is there a promise I can claim? Is there an example I should follow? Is there a Christian grace to develop in my life? How should I apply the lessons of the sermon to my daily living? At the end of a particular sermon a man in the congregation got up and said to his wife, “Well, the sermon's over.” His wife replied, “No, now is when it begins!” We don't need any more fact filled Christians. If you seek to be a doer of the Word that will go a long way toward harmony in the church.

Be of One Mind.

“Be of one mind” (KJV, NKJV, NIV). “Agree with one →

ARCHIVAL: Why a Free Presbyterian Church in Australia?

The following address was delivered by the Moderator of the Free Presbyterian Church, Rev. J. Campbell Robinson, at the opening of the Assembly on Thursday, March 30th, 1939

The Scripturalness of Free Presbyterian Principles

[In our last issue we printed the first part of J.C. Robinson's address on "Why a Free Presbyterian Church in Australia." We also noted that the title, "Free Presbyterian Church" is the name the present Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia was known by prior to 1953. It should not be confused with the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, nor the Free Presbyterian Church in Northern Ireland. Here is the second part of that address]

The next thing we shall draw your attention to is the Scripturalness of Free Presbyterian Principles. Here we are right at the heart of the Free Presbyterian contention. This is the *raison d'être* of the Free Presbyterian Church, and it is a position I have never known to be challenged. There are those whom we have challenged to meet it, telling them that they owe it to us as a duty, if it is not Scriptural, to inform us wherein it is wrong, but they have never done so. One of our old ministers was wont to remark, "It is something to be able to say that the principles of the Free Presbyterian Church cannot be assailed without assailing the Scriptures. We believe that on the part of our true and loyal people there is a real desire to keep as closely to the revealed will of God as possible, and to do this they are prepared to make great sacrifices.

Four things here come under the scope of our consideration, namely, Scripturalness of Doctrine, Scripturalness of Worship, Scripturalness of Government, and Scripturalness of Practice. In stressing these points we also hold to the historic Reformation principle that what cannot be proved from Scripture should not be required of faith and practice.

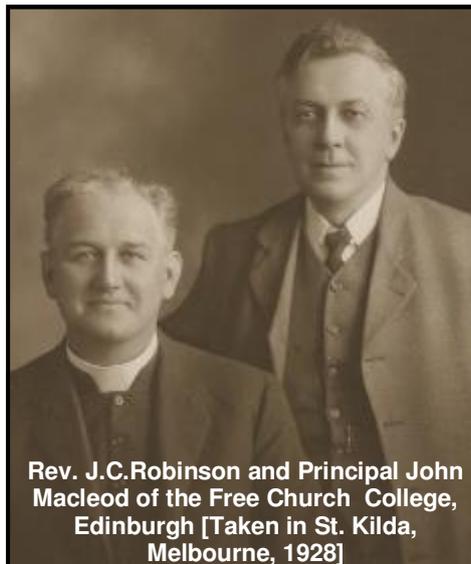
Doctrine

In Doctrine we hold to, and maintain the authenticity, authority, supremacy, sufficiency and inspiration of Holy Scripture in contradistinction to those who claim conscience as the final authority. Conscience can be anything according to the degree of its instruction. We believe in the Trinity of the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three persons in the one God. We hold to the Sovereignty, love, justice and unchangeableness of God as our Heavenly Father. The Deity, Humanity, Headship, Satisfaction, Substitution and Efficacy of Atonement and Intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son. The Personality, agency in regeneration and Sanctification of the Holy Spirit. We believe man to be made in the image of God, fallen by sin, redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ, saved by grace through faith, and will be judged on the

last day.

Worship

We believe as in Doctrine so in Worship, Scripture is the supreme guide, and since the revealed will of God has been given us as a rule of faith and practice, this matter is not an open question, but must be settled by an appeal to the Word. It stands to reason, therefore, if we regard the Word as authoritative, that the nearer we keep to it, and the more loyal we are to it, the more likely we are to win the Lord's approval and to enjoy His favour. The criterion is not what is pleasing to us, but what is pleasing to Him. Two things are important here, Spirituality and Scripturalness. God is a Spirit, and requires our worship in Spirit. There is no connection between wood and Spirit, but there is between Spirit and Spirit. Moreover, it is what has been wrought in us by the Spirit of God is what we give back to God. Worship, too, to be in reality as the Saviour requires, must be produced by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. All other worship is empty and void.



Rev. J.C. Robinson and Principal John Macleod of the Free Church College, Edinburgh [Taken in St. Kilda, Melbourne, 1928]

The question of instrumental music here comes in. We believe that in the Old Testament times instrumental music was common enough, but passed out with the ceremonial law at Christ's death. If we retain instruments of music now, we have as much right to have incense and sacrifice as well. Such a condition leaves the Church open to the charge from Judaism that its worship indicates the Messiah has not come. Chrysostom, one of the earliest fathers, and the greatest preacher of his age, said, "Let no man deceive you, these (instruments) appertain not to be Christian." Many other early fathers agree. Mr. Spurgeon said he could see no connection between the glory of God and sounds produced by ma-

chinery.

We hold also by the Psalms as the only Divinely appointed praise book of the Christian Church, in opposition to those who give greater honour to human composition than to that composed by the Holy Spirit. These notable spiritual songs have this to commend them, that they are inspired and indited by the Spirit of God, are not coloured by denominational differences or human interpretations, but constitute the Divine will in sanctuary song for all peoples in all ages, a sufficiency of grace and instruction that no race has yet exhausted, nor could exhaust. They are part of the Divine inspiration by which we are saved, part by which we are sanctified, and part by which we are judged. The words are word, most pure, pregnant with the best spiritual food, and charged with prophetic fire. They stand, have always stood, and will always stand, as humanity's high water mark of praise to God, and lastly, but not least, they are the songs the Saviour Himself

sang. No wonder Gladstone remarked, "I want a name for that man who thinks he can compose better songs of praise to God than the Holy Spirit."

Church Government

We hold again and believe in the Presbyterian form of Church government as being the teaching of Holy Writ on this subject. If we accept the authenticity and authority of Scripture again, this matter seems to us settled. We believe that, for the edification of the Church, and the perfecting of the saints, a system of offices has been appointed. These were of two kinds, extraordinary or temporary, such as Apostles and Prophets, which having fulfilled the purpose for which they were specially called, and commissioned, ceased, and had no successors. The others were Presbyters or Bishops and Deacons, which were permanent. The former of these had to do with the spiritual affairs of the Church, and the latter the temporal. We hold that Bishop, and Presbyter or Elder, are interchangeable terms for the one and same office, are used in the same sense, and never occur as a prelate or overseer of pastors. They have the same duties and possess the same commission.

There is no Scriptural warrant for a bishop, as a distinct class appointed to exercise power which is in any way superior to a Presbyter or Elder, and it is not surprising that those who adopt the prelatic or episcopal position hesitate to show that they do. We venture to say that the Presbyterian system of church government by a gradation of church courts exhibits the highest form of democratic institution that exists. It not only bears the imprimatur of Divine approval, but is stamped with the evidence of Divine wisdom. Rightly administered, it secures for the humblest member of Christ's flock a channel of appeal to the highest earthly tribunal, and if justice is not there secured, then to the very judgment seat of Christ. It is in a very real sense, and in the truest sense, government of Christ's

people, by Christ's people, for Christ's people.

Practice

The fourth principle is that of Scripturalness of Practice. No matter how orthodox a form may be of Church government, how faithful its doctrinal position, it stands bereft of all pungency and influence if its Christian principles are not put into practice in daily life. There is certainly a need of realism as some claim, but it is that realism which is connected with the application of Christian principles. We believe that the offices of Christ's Church should be solely in the hands of Christ's people. No matter how influential or wealthy a person may be, the qualification for office is suitability of saved people. It is such who commend the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What we require, and I suppose it is what every denomination in our land requires, is faithful and godly members, who are a terror to evil-doers and an encouragement to those who do well, men whose lives radiate the very presence of God's Spirit.

There never was a time when these principles were more needed. We believe that the Free Presbyterian Church has the goods. It is for us to deliver them. We have a heritage enjoyed by few, and it is for us, with all the faithfulness we possess, and the powers at our disposal, to bring the claims and verities of the challenge of Christ in His Holy Word to bear upon a modern world a world mad with war rage and with many sitting bewildered on the dumps of conjecture by a science falsely so called. It is for us to bring to them the news of a better life with the dynamic of all prayer and the powers of a world beyond, of salvation by grace alone.

We owe it to our children and children's children, our young people and rising generation. We owe it to our denominational brethren, and we owe it to humanity at large that whatever else we leave behind, that this heritage should pass untarnished and unsullied from our hands.

[From p5] another" (ESV). "Be like-minded" (NASB). Set your mind on the same thing. He writes to them elsewhere, "I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought." (1 Cor. 1:10). There are many secondary matters where we all have liberty under heaven to hold our individual opinions, but in matters such as our understanding of "the faith" (v. 5) we must be of the same mind. It was Augustine who said, "In essentials unity, in doubtful things liberty, but in all things love." The Corinthians had a lot of sorting out to do but if they accept the Scriptures as God breathed (and therefore endowed with ultimate authority) and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the bond of unity then the goal is realisable. The apostle is not advocating some cheap lowest common denominator agreement but agreement based on what is true and what is good. Doing this will be a great help toward harmony in the church.

Be at Peace.

All the translations agree in translating, "live in peace." The Scriptures place a high priority on unity and peace among God's people (eg. Eph.4: 1-3). Barnett comments, "Believers are caught up in a spiritual warfare, both within their own lives and for the hearts and minds of unbelievers; they are not to be at war with one another." A timely

reminder: remember who the real enemy is. The apostle caps all of these exhortations off with a wonderful promise, "and the God of love and peace will be with you." In other words, as the Corinthians heed these instructions about joy, restoration, submission, unity and peace they will discover the God of love and peace. If these instructions are heeded there will be blessing, but if not, then there will be no blessing.

One very practical way to promote these aims is to "greet one another with a holy kiss" (v. 12). Of course we automatically dismiss this today and say, "but we don't do this in our culture!" We should at least agree that we ought to greet each other warmly and affectionately. Too often we meet each other without so much as a greeting. But what about the "holy kiss"? Barnett makes the point that there is no parallel of the holy kiss in the synagogue. He says, "the holy kiss therefore appears to be an innovation within the churches." Even a dour (like us) Scotsman, John Murray says, "It betrays an unnecessary reserve, if not loss of ardour of the church's first love, when the holy kiss is conspicuous by its absence in the Western Church." Perhaps next time we meet we should greet each other with "a holy kiss"? I've no doubt (in whatever form we do it) greeting one another warmly in the church would be a big help toward harmony. Brothers and sisters let us love not only in word but also in deed and in truth.

Run For Glory

THE KING WHO LOST THE PLOT— JEHOIAKIM

If Jehoahaz [see our last issue] was the King who lost his Crown, Jehoiakim [609-598] was *The King Who Lost the Plot*. When Necho deposed Jehoahaz and carried him back to Egypt, he appointed Jehoahaz's older brother by 2 years, Eliakim, as King and changed his name to Jehoiakim. In those days it was customary for kings to change people's names. They liked to assert their authority, and this was one way of doing it! It meant: "I completely control you. And if I want to give you another name, I'll do it!" But Jehoiakim's new name didn't give him a new nature! And his nature is described in verse 5: "*He did evil in the eyes of the Lord.*" And with that description of his nature and his reign, few people have very much good to say about Jehoiakim. One writer says he was "*a thoroughly spoiled and self indulgent young despot,*" [Thompson, p479] After that summary, what more can be said! It was a negative reign characterised by the rejection of all that would have given him and his nation a glimmer of hope in the darkness. He was the King who lost the Plot!

Rejection of God

For example, he lost the plot when he rejected God. That's what it means when it says: "*He did evil in the eyes of the Lord*". I guess there was only one thing that Jehoiakim was really interested in and that was himself. Jeremiah sums up the attitude of Jehoiakim in Jeremiah 22:13 where, speaking about him, he says this: "*Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness, his upper rooms by injustice, making his countrymen work for noth-*

ing, not paying them for their labour. He says, 'I will build myself a great palace with spacious upper rooms.' So he makes large windows in it, panels it with cedar and decorates it in red. "Does it make you a king to have more and more cedar? "But your eyes and your heart are set only on dishonest gain, on shedding innocent blood and on oppression and extortion." We already noticed that Necho demanded something like 30m a year in tribute from Judah. To meet that he had to raise Taxes. But notice, while a great burden was imposed on the people, Jehoiakim only thought about himself and the accumulation of wealth. He didn't identify with his people, or share their lot. He got rich at their expense. What a contrast that is to the true Messianic King and what the Kings of Judah should have been like. Josiah approached it: "*He defended the cause of the poor and the needy, and so all went well.*" That's what it meant to know the Lord. But Jehoiakim didn't know the Lord and demonstrated it in his selfishness and self - centredness.

Rejection of God's Word

But he also lost the plot when he rejected God's Word. We've all heard the story, from Jeremiah 36, of how Jehoiakim deliberately sliced off parts of the scroll containing the Word of God that Jeremiah had dictated to Baruch. Why did Jehoiakim cut up this Word of God? Because it was a call to repentance in every way! It was written in his fourth year just after he had rebelled against Nebuchad-



"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."
Revelation 22

nezzar. He was being called on to return to the Lord, to give up his pro - Egyptian foreign policy, begin listening to the true prophets of the Lord instead of all the false prophets he was surrounding himself with. Did he gain anything by slicing up this Word of God? Not at all! Not only was the scroll rewritten, but more was added and his punishment rendered all the more certain. [Jeremiah 38:29-31].

Rejection of Nebuchadnezzar

And going on from that, Jehoiakim lost the plot when he rejected God's command to submit to Nebuchadnezzar. That was a fatal blow to himself and to Judah. When Necho went north the first time to fight the Babylonians in 609 nothing happened and Necho was left in charge. Three years later, in 605, he went north again to fight the Babylonians. And this time it was a "ding dong" battle. You can read about it in Jeremiah 46. Necho was soundly defeated and Egypt never really recovered from the thrashing [2 Kings 24:7] It left Nebuchadnezzar in complete control, Judah became subject to him, and had to pay tribute money.

But then Jehoiakim *"changed his mind and rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar."* [2 Kings 24] *That led the Lord to send Babylonian, Aramean, Moabite and Ammonite raiders against him.* And in 2 Chronicles this is filled out further: *"Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon attacked him and bound him with bronze shackles to take him to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also took to Babylon articles from the temple of the LORD and put them in his temple there."* [Notice it says, *"To take him to Babylon."* Apparently he died before this could happen because we're told that *"Jehoiakim rested with his fathers."*] If Jehoiakim had submitted to Nebuchadnezzar as Jeremiah was telling him to do then Jerusalem, and a remnant may have been permitted to remain in the land, and the city and temple might not have been destroyed. But Jehoiakim refused. He listened to the false prophets who advocated rebellion against the Babylonians and brought on the downfall of Judah, and Jerusalem, and the destruction of the Temple.

Jehoiakim truly lost his way: He lost it in his rejection of God, in his rejection of God's Word, and in his rejection of the authority of Nebuchadnezzar. Unfortunately, Jehoiakim has had many followers - people who have lost the plot as regards their lives, and their existence. They've rejected God, rejected His Word, and rejected legitimate authority in family, state and church and made a shipwreck of their lives. The rejection of God is a downward spiral that ends in the separation from all that is good and worthwhile in life. Jehoiakim lost it all.

SEARCH WORK - SEPTEMBER

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

September, 2008

SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE

Intermediate omit questions 5 and 7 [Marked with an x]

1 KINGS Chapter 3

1. What was God's answer to Solomon in Gibeon when he asked for wisdom? (4 verses)
2. What was the reaction of Israel when they heard of the judgment of Solomon concerning the two women?

Chapter 4:20—34

3. How did every man in Judah and Israel dwell all the days of Solomon?
4. How is the wisdom of Solomon compared with that of other men? (2 verses)

Chapter 5.

5. (x) What did Hiram say when he heard the words of Solomon, and what did he agree to do for Solomon? (3 verses)

Chapter 6

6. When did Solomon start to build the temple of the Lord?
7. (x) On what condition did God say he would dwell among the children of Israel? (2 verses)
8. When did Solomon finish the house of the Lord?

JUNIOR

GENESIS 41

1. Could any of the magicians and wise men of Egypt interpret Pharaoh's dream?
2. What did Pharaoh do as soon as the chief butler had told him about Joseph?
3. What did Joseph say would happen after the seven years of plenty? (2 verses)
4. How did Pharaoh dress Joseph when he set him over all the land of Egypt?

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



"Our Christian life is not like ascending a mountain, where, if you sit down to rest, though certainly you are not getting on, neither are you going back. No; it is like a man rowing on a swift stream, and against the stream. If he leans on his oars, he does not make way; but is that all? - no; he is drifting down." - J.M.Neale.

ACTIVITY PAGE.....

Hidden Treasure



Jesus talked about a man who hid a valuable treasure in a field. Follow the maze to find it.

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



USING OUR GIFTS

"A man who was about to take a long journey had two sacks of corn. He gave them into the charge of two friends - one to one, one to the other - requesting these friends to take care of them for him. In due time he came back. Going to the first friend, he said, "Where is my corn?" "All safe," he answers; "I tied up the mouth, and put it in a cellar. Take it again." It was brought out and opened; and there it was, mildewed, rotten, and utterly worthless. He went to the second, "Where is my corn?" "Come out with me, and I will show you." He took the man into a field all waving with golden wheat: "There is your corn". Then said the owner to the first friend, "Take your reward; the sack of mildewed wheat you gave to me". To the second, "Give me back one sack of corn when the grain is thrashed out, and all the rest is your own."

- J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Children*, p. 9.

Dare To Stand Alone.

- Stuart Olyott, Evangelical Press, Welwyn series, 1982 (\$24.95). [Reviewed by Dr. Dennis Muldoon]

The title of this commentary on Daniel reminds us of a well known children's chorus about Daniel. We often think of Daniel as a youth, but when he was thrown to the lions he was about 80. Many people only read Daniel up to the chapter of him being thrown into the lions den by King Darius; but there are six more chapters. Thankfully Olyott's commentary does not stop at chapter six.

Olyott gives an excellent outline of the historical background of Daniel. He was a Jew taken into exile when in his teens. Babylon had become the major world power and had destroyed the holy city of Jerusalem where Daniel lived. In Babylon Daniel was selected for the public service. But he refused to eat food from the king's table. Olyott agrees with most commentators that this was because the food had been sacrificed to idols.

Olyott readily gives his opinion on controversial issues which come up particularly in the interpretation of the later chapters. But even with regard to Nebuchadnezzar and his conversion after he was afflicted with lycanthropy, Olyott does not hesitate to say that Nebuchadnezzar 'goes into eternity in the fellowship of the King of heaven'. Others are not so certain.

For each chapter Olyott writes a clear outline of the content and interprets this in its historical context. He includes an application section in each chapter 'what this means to us'. By way of introduction Olyott writes: Daniel's 'secret was too simple to miss: he read his Bible and said his prayers'.

There are 15 chapters in Olyott's book, three more than the number of chapters in Daniel. He has one chapter of introduction and another explaining the change from historical to apocalyptic genre in chapter seven. He does make it clear what chapter he is looking at in Daniel, but this misalignment of chapters in his book with the chapters in Daniel did make for some confusion when my students were writing a review of this commentary.

The second half of Daniel is where he has dreams and visions of weird animals. These animals represent future kingdoms which Olyott confidently identifies. His identification of the kings and kingdoms revealed to Daniel in a vision in chapter 11 is most interesting. He called this chapter 'History is His story'. 'Whatever happens in history does so because it is written in God's book'. The Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanies is most prominent in chapter 11 because he tried to destroy the Jews. He is the prefigurement of the 'man of sin', the Antichrist. The later chapters of Daniel have links with the book of Revelation both in genre and content.

This commentary of just 170 pages is easy to read but at the same time offers many insights into this amazing book of the Bible.

**Lakhnadon Hospital-
Dr Adarsh Benn**

By the Grace of Almighty God we are doing well here. Schools have started from July onwards after a long summer vacation for staff and kids. This year rainy season started from middle of June and so far we have got good rain. Weather is very pleasant and it is green everywhere.

This is the busy season for Lakhnadon hospital. This time we have epidemics of Malaria, Viral Fever and acute gastroenteritis etc. Our wards are flooded with the patients and even extra beds we have placed. We did not have a junior doctor (MBBS) since last one year and Lata and me are the only doctors, it is very difficult for us to manage everything specially with many night calls. Sometimes we hardly sleep at night.

There is difficulty in getting replacements also so we could not take our annual leave since last three years and are taking short leave only, mostly not as family. Pray that we can get some doctors so that we can have time of refreshment as family. Since our children are growing (Joel - 6yrs, Abel and Jessica - 5yrs) we need to spend adequate time with them also which is mostly not possible. Please pray for God's strength to carry out the work and ministry here.

After Sunil has been transferred to Duncan hospital we haven't had any surgeon for this place and it is one of the great needs here. In fact many of the EHA hospitals are suffering with the shortage of doctors. Since last 3 years we have had fewer patients for surgery because we have no surgeon. It reflects also in our income also and we are not doing well financially. In last one and half years we could do only one free medical camp in the village, just because we are not getting doctors from Jabalpur to help us.

This year in January after one eye camp some patients got severe infection in their eyes. This was a big problem for us to manage people, local authorities and media people. We took all the patients to a higher centre for further treatment and after several follow ups most of them are much better now. But all this has cost us a lot of money.

We are now doing our 5 year plan for hospital and project. Please pray for God's wisdom and guidance.

Our projects Spandana and Chhapara are working well together and a few more people have joined as the project work has extended. We have got a new project manager for Spandana after the resignation of the previous manager. Please pray for him also; very soon his wife also going to join him in project.

Please pray for the people hearing the word of God along with the treatment. Many have also been healed miraculously and many people have shown their interest to know more about Christ and few have shown their trust on Christ as their saviour and healer.

THE CHURCH

SOUTHERN PRESBYTERY

Southern Presbytery met at Ulverstone on 23 July for an ordinary meeting. Rev T.W.Yoa was elected Moderator. The business included approval of a small booklet as part of the preparation of men for office. It includes the text of 1952 and 2008 Synod decisions with historical and explanatory material. The Presbytery had already resolved that its policy for the licence, ordination and induction of ministers would be that the public vows would be taken using the alternative wording approved by Synod 2008, but that the 1952 Formula would be subscribed in addition. It was expected that elders and deacons within the bounds will be installed using the 2008 wording unless the person is training for the ministry in which event the formula of 1952 would also be signed.

Reports were received from each centre. Ulverstone was holding its own despite the loss of several families who had moved away and offerings had increased. Knox reported a number of new members, increased giving and a larger attendance at the mid-week evening meeting. The new website was up and running well. It's found at - <http://www.knoxpcea.org.au>. Glen Huntly was being maintained by Mr. Yoa, with a morning service each Lord's Day and an evening mid-week. He also cared for a congregation of Sudanese (200 on average) and conducted a ladies meeting for 25 on Wednesdays and a Youth Meeting for 17 on Fridays. Offerings had increased of late and steady steps were being taken to progress the work, now three years old, from a mission outreach to a regular congregation. Narre Warren was receiving good supply, chiefly from Rev. Stephen Giles (PCV retired) and Rev. Andres Miranda (PCV now member at Knox), and was looking forward to the arrival of Mr Bajema at the end of the year.

Rev Edwin Lee, who is 86 this year, resigned his seat on

Presbytery granted by Synod in 1998. Appreciation for his involvement in Presbytery until health issues of either himself or his wife precluded it, was recorded, and also conveyed personally to him by the Clerk on a pastoral visit 27 July.

The position of student David Kerridge was reviewed. He had completed extra studies in Australian Church history and church principles set last year. In line with the authority granted by Synod 2008, Presbytery admitted Mr Kerridge to status as a regular student, and resolved to seek certification of satisfaction with his studies from the Training of Ministry Committee. Subject to this, Presbytery anticipate commencing trials for licence at its meeting in February next year. They may be spread over more than one meeting to ensure proper assessment. Meantime further supervision by Presbytery will continue, and further guidance in areas of practice and procedure will be given. This will be aided by Mr. Kerridge's involvement in church courts through his installation as an elder of the Ulverstone congregation scheduled for 3rd August.

Presbytery also drew Deacons' Courts' attention to the importance of using the most suitable banking accounts for efficiency and wise stewardship. The importance of paying accounts promptly and the recommendation that regular accounts be paid electronically were noted, while leave entitlements were to be regularly recorded in minutes on a regular basis to prevent disputes, keep liabilities in mind and to ensure minister's leave does not accumulate unduly.

The Clerk (Dr Ward) and his wife were having a trip overseas for some 5 weeks beginning mid August. This would be the first time since 1981 that Anna has visited the UK, the country of her birth and early years as a nursing sister. The meeting was a very harmonious one and included a tea with the Ulverstone congregation and attendance at the Ulverstone AGM led by Gavin Smith as Interim-Moderator. - RSW

Filling Our Needs

At the close of July the balances of the main *Working Funds* of the church Synod were:

\$ 21,076	Missions (General Funds)
\$ 81,595	Missions (DA Anderson Bequest)
\$544,883	Missions (Relief Fund – M McSwan Bequest)
\$ 22,773	<u>Overdrawn</u> - Missions (TI Leggott Stipend Support)
\$ 28,796	Stipend Relief (DA Anderson Bequest)
\$ 27,789	<u>Overdrawn</u> - Stipend Relief
\$106,720	Training of Ministry
\$ 11,911	Youth & Fellowship
\$113,697	Synod General Funds

No adjustment has been made in account balances where portion of the funds are held in equities. They have not been revalued in the books of account since 31/12/07.

Two working accounts continue to be overdrawn as at 31/7/08:

- *Missions - TI Leggott Stipend Support* (\$22,773). There is sufficient in other Missions accounts to cover this shortfall.
- *Stipend Relief* (\$27,789). The balance of \$28,796 in *Stipend Relief (DA Anderson Bequest)* just covers the present shortfall, however, there is still \$47,000, of the \$52,000 approved by Synod 2008 for Stipend Relief until 30/4/09, which is most likely to be sought.
- Any shortfall existing at year end will need to be provided from Synod General Funds.

Two congregations continue to need help to provide for their ministers.

“Let all your acts of benevolence proceed from the heart, with a prayer that they may tend to the glory of God in the temporal and spiritual good of those who are the objects of it” (Thomas Gouge)

MANNING RIVER

Jan Ahlean Dyson

Tinonee: 31st July 2008. It was anticipated that a very large number of people would congregate at the John Knox Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia to say farewell to Jan, and a large covered annex had been prepared in the grounds of the church building. But the number of mourners was such that many had to stand for the duration of the service.

It was led by Reverend George Ball, who, in his message to the mourners, based on verses 23-28 of Psalm 73, reminded us all of our own mortality and of the need to be right with God. Neil Robinson read a tribute prepared by family and friends, which spoke eloquently of the very full life - a life characterized by service to the community and to the church that Jan had led.

Jan's contribution to the work of the church was motivated by her sincere desire to make Christ known to others. She was a gifted teacher and valuable support to the work among young people, at both the Friday afternoon 'Lighthouse Club' and the Scripture classes at the Tinonee Primary School. The Taree 'Friendship Group', which continues to enjoy good fellowship during monthly sight-seeing trips, was her initiative, reflecting her desire to encourage others, setting an example by her own Christian love.

We thank God for Jan's Christian love and witness, and

for her cheerful and spontaneous contribution to the life of the Church. May God bless her family and friends with his comfort and love, and console us in our loss.

Youth Work.

Work amongst the children of Taree and Tinonee continues in the hands of a team of committed teachers and organizers. Both centres have a regular average attendance of 18 children of primary school age, enjoying physical activities, singing, Bible stories and craft work.

New Arrangements

Service times in Taree have been altered so that the whole family can attend the Worship Services. The Sunday school now begins at 9.30am, concurrent with a Prayer Service for the adult congregation. The morning Worship Service now begins at 10.30am, with an afternoon service in Taree at 4.00pm and an evening service at Tinonee at 7.30pm.

BRISBANE

The Brisbane Congregation continues to search for a minister to look after them. In recent days a number of promising avenues have opened up that lead them to be quietly hopeful for a settlement. The Congregation remain in good heart, and the Rev. Dr. Wes Hanna continues to give supply and act as the Interim Moderator. They plan to have their Annual Congregational Fellowship Meeting at Evans Head in December—details later!

[Continued from p14] this practice can go. Under this category of stealing from an employer we can also include *wasteful use of resources*. It is true that, when we waste someone else's materials, we are not acquiring anything for ourselves, but we are certainly depriving the other person of their property and so this also must be forbidden.

The Duties of the Eighth Commandment

I have tried to finish each of these articles on the Commandments with something positive, and this is probably one of the most straightforward in this respect. It is straightforward because the Bible binds on us a number of duties with respect to diligence in our own acquiring of property, and also binds us to care for others to see that they are not hindered. I have already said enough about the right of the Christian to acquire and own property it also needs to be stressed that such property is given by God as a *trust*. It is not to be acquired or used for merely selfish ends. When Paul tells us, "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labour, working with his hands what is good ...," he also states that the object of this is "that he may have something to give him who has need." (Ephesians 4: 28) We learn from this that we have a duty to use the wealth which God has given us to help others who are in need (Tear Fund, Compassion and other similar organisations come to mind), and for the furtherance of God's Kingdom here on earth.

Our duty under this commandment, however, extends beyond the gaining of wealth for ourselves and then giving some of it to the poor and to the Church. We are also required to ensure that those with whom we come in con-

tact are also enabled to acquire wealth. I have already quoted from Deuteronomy 22; let us now look at verse 4 "If you see your brother's donkey or his ox fallen on the road, do not ignore it Help him get it to its feet." (Deuteronomy 22: 4) To ignore it might not be directly stealing, but it might very well mean significant loss to one's neighbour, and we have a duty to avoid that!

Stealing From God

We have seen that the ramifications of this commandment are wide. Stealing can take many forms. As I close may I put before you the gravest of all those forms that of stealing from God. The Book of Malachi accuses the people of God in stealing from Him in withholding their tithes, but this was only a symptom of what they were really stealing themselves. They claimed to be God's people, yet they denied His rights over them. Let us not do so also! The Lord is the rightful owner of each man, woman and child, for He created them yet they do not acknowledge His ownership and so they steal from God! Those who name the name of Christ have an even greater responsibility for they are His possession twice over. He created them and then He bought them back from sin "Or do you not know that ... you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Corinthians 6: 19, 20) If we belong to Jesus Christ, we are duty bound to give Him the ownership rights which are His due. We are stealing from God if we do not! I trust that we would all try to obey the Eighth Commandment in our dealings with other men and women let us be even more careful to keep it in our dealings with God! Amen.

The Eight Commandment

Dr. W.J.W. Hanna, Brisbane, continues a study on the Ten Commandments. He deals now with the Eight Commandment: Exodus 20:15 - "You shall not steal."

Introduction

This commandment follows on, not only in numerical order but also in subject matter, from the previous ones. One might even suggest that it is a generalisation of the previous laws. To worship another god is to steal the rightful worship of the True God, as is, also, to worship Him in ways He has not commanded or to take His name upon us insincerely or to profane the day which He has set aside for His worship. To break the Fifth Commandment is to steal from parents and from others the respect and the honour which is their due. To break the sixth Commandment is to steal life itself, and to break the seventh is to steal what is even more important someone's moral purity, whether it be our own or that of someone else. In the very narrowest sense it is to steal someone's marriage partner in God's eyes part of that person, for God has said, "therefore the two shall become one flesh."

We can see that, if we were to try to deal with the whole of the ramifications of this commandment we would be involved in many articles not just one! Because of this, I shall be limiting what I say here, as far as possible, to what is normally understood by the term "to steal," that is, to take someone's material property or prosperity unlawfully. However, it would not be out of place to say that the breaking of this commandment by denying the right to hold property is often, possibly usually, accompanied by the denial of the principles of the other commandments, starting with a denial of God's rights to our service, and proceeding on by denying the rights of parents and the sanctity of the marriage bond.

The Right of Property

I have said that this commandment is broken by the denial of the right to hold property. This right is basic to an understanding of the eighth commandment. By property, in this context, I mean something that is wholly and exclusively our own – something that is not shared with the world at large. What we are dealing with here is the right to hold such property. It is a right that, in one form or another, has been generally recognised and acted upon by mankind in all societies, but it is a right which does not depend on human sanction or custom for its validity. It is founded on the will of God for mankind. Ultimately, we recognise that the owner of all creation is God. As the Psalmist puts it, "The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; The world and all its fullness, You have founded them." (Psalm 89: 11) However, God has conferred on humanity the subsidiary right to hold property as a trust from Him. When He created Adam and Eve He said to them, "See, I have given you every herb *that* yields seed

which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; ..." (Genesis 1: 29) This is not a right which lapsed at the Fall, even though mankind had given away to the devil their right to exclusive control of the earth. Actually, they had broken this commandment several times in the process. They stole fruit which God had not given them, and they had stolen from themselves their creation right to rule in the earth and even the immortality which God had given them at creation. However after the Fall we still find it said of God that He gives to individuals or to families or to nations items of property which are to be exclusively theirs. He gives to nations the lands in which they dwell "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings," (Acts 17: 26) Even the parable of the talents, told by our Lord, underlines the fact that God has given to different people different abilities whereby they may acquire wealth and possessions.

In summary, Scripture clearly teaches that the right of the individual or of a group to possess and to hold material property is founded on the will of God. He has created us

with the natural belief that what we acquire by our own efforts is our own and does not belong to someone else. He has so set us up in society, that the health and well-being of that society depend, in some measure, on a recognition and a defence of this right and, certainly from the Fall, we seem to need this right as an incentive to exert ourselves. It may well be that before falling into sin, Adam and Eve tended and cultivated the garden of Eden without thought of personal gain, but afterwards their labour was very much motivated by this – not simply by the need to grow enough for survival, but to possess enough to be comfortable.



The right to hold property, then, is an ordinance of God. If this were not so then we would not have this commandment, for how could anyone steal if no one had the right to ownership of property. It is not possible to steal something from a person if that thing does not rightfully belong to him or her. I am stressing this because there have been those and still are who try to teach that there is no such right. Some would hold that all property ought to be held in common, for the common good. Usually this would be achieved by it all being held by the state, but, in fact, this is not an abolition of ownership, it is merely a transfer of that ownership. It actually means that the state owns everything and that no individual owns or has a right to anything.

Some Christians have been attracted to this system by the example of the early Christians at Jerusalem, who sold their possessions and pooled the proceeds, having "all things in common." Concerning this incident we should notice that the Bible nowhere says that they were right in doing so and it does record that such action was

(1) purely voluntary and (2) that the Jerusalem Church finished up in the situation of being a burden on the rest of the Church. We can also note that wherever such an experiment has been tried it has failed.

Other Christians have sometimes felt that it would be right to put aside personal property completely and to live a life of poverty. There may be several reasons for this. They may have seen the abuses to which the acquiring of property can lead. They may have seen people, like the young man who came to Jesus on one occasion, being held back from commitment to Christ because their first commitment was to their possessions. They may have seen employees exploited by grasping and unscrupulous employers and they do not wish to be involved in this sort of thing. Also, of course, they may think that there is something meritorious in emulating their Master, who had "nowhere to lay his head." Such people, however, are never averse to accepting what other people have earned by their labour, quite forgetting that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

What is Stealing?

We should recognise and accept that the Bible never teaches that there is anything wrong with the acquiring of possessions. On the contrary, it has much to say about exercising diligence in our occupations so that we may provide for ourselves. Proverbs 12; 27, for example, tells us that "diligence is man's precious possession." The "Wisdom" writings of the Old Testament abound in such advice. A few chapters later in Proverbs we find these words, "Be diligent to know the state of your flocks, and attend to your herds ..." (Proverbs 27: 23) In addition, the writer of Ecclesiastes has this to say, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might ..." (Ecclesiastes 9: 10) The New Testament lays it on us as a Christian duty to acquire enough wealth to provide for oneself and one's family, if it is possible to do so. We read in 1 Timothy that "if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." (1 Timothy 5: 8)

"..... there are other more subtle ways in which we may take what does not belong to us. One of these ways is by gambling. This involves the obtaining of money which we did not earn, which we did not inherit and which we did not receive as a free gift"

Having said all this, we must also recognise that there are right ways and wrong ways of obtaining wealth and possessions. That is what this commandment is about. It forbids all wrong ways of acquiring property. What are those wrong ways? It would be difficult to answer this question in detail, for human ingenuity never ceases to find out new ways of breaking the eighth commandment. I will try to point out some major principles that are involved, for whatever the details of the commandment breaking, it usually involves a few basic principles.

Of course, the very first of those basic principles is that we must not take that which rightfully belongs to someone else, by whatever means it might be possible. Very few ordinary people would consider it right to beat an old lady up in the street and to take her purse, nor would they

break into a house to steal, but there are other things which they might well be tempted to do. What is the case if that purse or wallet is simply found in the street? What if we find some object whose ownership is less identifiable? Well, I hope that most of us would look for some identification, and would make every effort to see that it is returned to its owner. However, we have to understand that this is not just an option! Not only do our civil laws count the keeping of what we find as stealing, but, more importantly, it is forbidden by God's Word "If you see your brother's ox or sheep straying, do not ignore it but be sure to take it back to him. If the brother does not live near you or if you do not know who he is, take it home with you and keep it until he comes looking for it. Then give it back to him. Do the same if you find your brother's donkey or his cloak or anything he loses. Do not ignore it." (Deuteronomy 22: 1-3)

Most of us would consider it to be stealing if we can identify the owner of an object that we have found, but there are other more subtle ways in which we may take what does not belong to us. One of these ways is by gambling. This involves the obtaining of money which we did not

earn, which we did not inherit and which we did not receive as a free gift the only three legitimate ways of acquiring wealth. Even when the gambling involves a number of persons agreeing to put in a certain amount of money, with the "winner" taking all or most of it, this element is not removed. The money cannot be considered a gift because each person has had the intent to acquire it all.

Another form of stealing is by failing to provide the work or services for which we have been paid. Here I am not speaking only of the more obvious forms which this might take, such as accepting money for an article and then not supplying the article, or accepting money to do a job and then simply not turning up to do it. We should also be thinking of the worker who is employed at an hourly rate but who lazes around on the job, failing to deliver an hour's reasonable work for an hour's pay. This is stealing the employer's money and it is a very prevalent sin in our society. Please do not say that professing Christians would not do this I have known some who not only would but did!

However, this is not the only way in which employees can steal from their employers. Every year employers lose vast amounts of money due to employees "helping themselves" to their employers goods and resources. Now we need to exercise a little caution here. There are employers who, as a service to those who work for them, permit them to use small amounts of materials, or to use their workshop facilities or their tools to do some tasks for themselves. As long as this is known to the employer and that it is agreed to by him or her, I cannot see that there is anything wrong in it. What I am condemning is the vast amount of other things that go on, and which cannot be called anything else but stealing. Anyone who has been in employment for any length of time has numerous stories to tell of the lengths to which **[Continued, p 13]**

BETWEEN YOU AND ME

Of all the things that float through cyberspace, the following landed on my computer a few days ago. It was the story about a pastor in Kansas who wanted to break the habit of complaining. This is how his programme is described by George Lewis, the writer of the article.

"The one thing we can agree on," said the Reverend Will Bowen of Christ Church Unity, "is there's too much complaining." He said churchgoers were griping mainly about trivial things, such as the choice of hymns at the Sunday service or the informal dress code at the church's Saturday night worship.

And so he asked his flock to take a pledge: to swear off complaining, criticizing, gossiping or using sarcasm for 21 days.... People who join in are issued little purple bracelets as a reminder of their pledge. If they catch themselves complaining, they're supposed to take off the bracelet, switch it to the opposite wrist and start counting the days from scratch."

The programme was written about in "several publications" and the campaign has "mushroomed". "On Saturdays, volunteers crowd the church basement filling orders for the no-complaints bracelets, 126,000 so far," he says. He also adds: "The Rev. Bowen said it took him three and a half months to put together 21 complaint-free days, and that it has taken others up to seven months. Those who get through it can turn in their bracelets in exchange for "certificates of happiness" issued during church services.

"We're going to be the center of no complaining around the world," said the Rev. Bowen, who added that they've gotten requests for bracelets from as far away as South Africa and Australia. Some American troops in Iraq, a place where there are plenty of things to complain about, have even asked for them. The church has set up a Web site, acomplaintfreeworld.org, to facilitate orders for bracelets, offered free of charge."

In the article, Mr. Lewis also reports on his own experience: "I wondered how hard it would be, so I put on one of the bracelets and started counting the days.... It only took two hours ...to catch a complainer — me — when my computer crashed Then, after work that day, I caught myself complaining about a news item I heard on the radio on the drive home. Day one ended with two relapses. Day two, I complained about my shoulder hurting..... I was discovering what everyone who takes the pledge finds out: that going 21 days without complaining isn't as easy as it seems at first blush."

Now I'm not recommending that we rush off to buy a purple bracelet! But we should make a concerted effort to stop complaining. It's entirely Biblical. "Do everything without complaining and arguing" writes the Apostle Paul to the Philippians. Or, to put it another way, "Be thankful in all things". If our bed is hard, be thankful that we have a bed to sleep in; if the petrol is dear, be thankful that we have a car to put petrol in; and if the minister is long winded, be thankful we have a minister to be longwinded.

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.

The camp commences at 6pm Monday 5th of January (arrival after 5pm) and concludes at 3pm on Friday 9th Jan. (God willing). The costs for full time attendance, including dinner on Monday and lunch on Friday, are as follows:

- Adults \$240
- Seniors \$200
- Student/Unemployed \$200
- Primary age children (K-6) \$175
- Preschool children 2 -5 \$60
- Children below the age of 2 free

Family Rate (subsidised) **\$820**

If you are only planning to attend for part of the camp (this is different to a day visitor) please contact the camp organiser on (02) 4626 8212 to check pricing.

Distance Subsidy will be paid by the Youth & Fellowship Committee. Long distance travellers are encouraged to pool vehicles to save costs. The amount of the rebate will be determined at the camp.

Hire of bed linen, blankets and towels is offered. Please indicate your requirements on the registration form.

A Limited Number of Ensuted Rooms are available, with bed linen, towel and blankets provided for an extra cost of \$30 per person for the week.

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