

# THE PRESBYTERIAN BANNER

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**Devotion:** "But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." *Philippians 3:13-14.*

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Inside Knox Church, Melbourne

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## STEALING TODAY

Ray Murray, Northern Rivers Congregation

If you think I'm going to give you the most recent crime statistics, or analyse the subtle ways workers steal from their bosses, or people steal from the government, you'll be disappointed! I want to talk about a far more prevalent form of stealing that not only the world, but Christians, engage in: Stealing *Today!* We steal today when we import into it the worries of tomorrow, or bring to it the baggage of yesterday, or fail to utilise our time in the present. Jesus reminds us of this in Matthew 6 when he tells us that we're not to worry about tomorrow [verse 34] and that, rather than worrying, we're to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own...."

### The Baggage of Yesterday

For one thing, we steal today if we bring *Yesterday's Baggage Into It*. This isn't stated directly in this passage, but surely it's implied. If we're not to be anxious about today or tomorrow, it stands to reason that we shouldn't be anxious about yesterday! We have to leave yesterday's baggage behind! What sort of baggage do we bring from yesterday that steals today from us?

One thing we import into it is yesterday's mistakes. Instead of starting of fresh, we burden ourselves with the memories and the sense of guilt from yesterday. We think about the mistakes we've made, and dwell on them. And sometimes "yesterday" can reach a long way back. We think about our "sins and faults of youth." And sometimes these can be so vivid – and oppressive - that we want to run away. But we can also import yesterday's insults. People are not always nice to us – or do what we expect of them! And we can treasure that up, and allow those thoughts to cripple us for the day ahead. And following on from that, we can import yesterday's anger. We can start the day not only angry, but with a determination to get even – and pity help anyone who crosses us. Someone once said, "he who starts off in anger, sets sail in a storm" – and it's true. We become walking time bombs. We all know the joke: "Sometimes I wake up grumpy, but sometimes I let her/him sleep!" But very often it's not the other person that's grumpy. It's ourselves. In our society today there's a lot of unresolved anger.

### The Banishment of Yesterday.

How can we get rid of this sort of baggage? We should get rid of it before we go to sleep! We should come before God and confess our sins, believing that if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin. We should forgive those who have wronged us, and try to get rid of our anger before the sun goes down. In fact the Bible is quite pointed about that. "Don't let the sun go down on your wrath," it says. If we practiced getting rid of yesterday's baggage we'd be in a much better position to deal with today. And we have every reason to endeavour to do so. The kingdom of God is under a wonderful management plan. It's called the New Covenant. And one of the provisions of that Covenant is that God will remember our sins and iniquities no more. If we belong to the Lord Jesus, we enjoy that provision. What a blessing it is to remember that every day and

every night. And what a way to start each new day – to know that the slate has been wiped clean! We ought to resolve here and now, that by the grace of God, we will not steal today by importing yesterday's baggage into it – that we'll seek to deal with it before God ere the day is done, so that when the new day comes we may go forward standing in God's Gracious Covenant. It should be like the sun spreading its light, and love, and the love of God over our new day. And when God's Kingdom finally comes in its glory, there will be no baggage!

### **Importing Tomorrow's Problems.**

The second way we can steal today is by *importing tomorrow's baggage into today*. "Tomorrow" can just as effectively destroy today as "yesterday". This is quite obvious from all that our Lord has been saying in Matthew 6. He's telling us not to worry about tomorrow's problems today! In effect, he says, don't bring all that baggage that belongs to tomorrow into today!

### **A Strange Problem**

Our Lord has put his finger on a very real problem here: Worry about the Future! To listen to the news these days is like hearing that Doomsday is just around the corner. Global Warming is going to destroy everything; and if Global Warming doesn't do it, man will do it himself by cutting down trees, catching whales, and developing the earth! If we're not being made to feel guilty about yesterday, we're constantly being told we've got plenty to worry about tomorrow! But Jesus reminds us that worry about tomorrow steals today from us too! We're so busy concentrating on what *might be* that the blessings and opportunities of the present pass us by! Isn't that a tragedy – to be so worried about tomorrow that we don't enjoy anything today!

### **Specific Problems.**

What are some of the problems of tomorrow we try to deal with today? [1] Survival is one of them! I'm sure many investors are worrying about how far the stock market is going to fall, and businessmen, about how they're going to cope when people are buying and selling on the Internet. I'm sure many home buyers are worried about unemployment – and many parents are worried about their children's future. [2] Retirement and Old Age is another worry. We're all growing older – some of us seem to be doing so quicker than others - and we wonder how we're going to cope with the aging process. How are we going to cope with disabilities, aches and pains, and the deterioration of our sight and hearing? Some people are even trying to solve the problems of tomorrow by wanting to take their life today. [3] And then there's the issue of Death. That casts a shadow over life. Anyone in their right mind must be aware, not only of death, but their own mortality. Some people think they have no future. They say: "*Let's eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die.*" That's certainly not what Jesus meant when he tells us not to worry about the future. He doesn't mean we don't have a future, or that we shouldn't think about and plan for the future. God made us in his image. He made us to work and plan, and develop the Creation. But He didn't mean us to do it without Him, or without Hope. It's because we've separated our life from God that the future has become a problem. And that separation from God adds a new dimension of concern to those who know something about the great issues of life: The fear of meeting with

him. And sometimes that anxiety can press in upon us very deeply. How shall we fare when we come before him on that great Judgement Day? For some, worry about that Day casts a deep shadow over their lives.

### **The Special Antidote**

How can we avoid importing the problems of tomorrow into the present? Jesus provides the answer here: By putting our trust in our Heavenly Father – and recognising He will provide for us. We don't have to worry. He will look after us. And to back this up Jesus gives us two beautiful illustrations: The lilies of the field; and the birds of the air. God provides for them; He will also provide for you. Indeed we can go further: He's given the greatest demonstration that He will provide for us in every way in the gift of His Son to be our Saviour. In Him he has, and will, bless us with every spiritual blessing. And if that's the case we don't have to worry at all about tomorrow. Tomorrow will be as today where God will supply all our needs, according to His riches in glory in Christ, and we can rest under the shadow of his wings. At bottom, our worry about yesterday, and tomorrow, is really a failure of faith – a failure to trust in the wisdom, care, and the grace of our Father in heaven. In God's completed kingdom we will not worry about tomorrow at all. We'll know He will take care of us completely.

### **Focus On The Important Issue**

But the Lord Jesus doesn't leave the matter there. To avoid stealing today is not only a matter of leaving yesterday's baggage behind and refusing to deal with tomorrow's problems today. It's also a matter of focusing today on *the most important issue of all - The Kingdom of God*. Jesus tells us in verse 33: "*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*" If we're going to avoid stealing today, we must fill today with something positive!

### **The Nature of the Kingdom.**

What is the Kingdom of God? For Jesus, the Kingdom of God is the most wonderful thing in the world. He preached it, taught about it, gave signs of it in his miracles, embodied it, brought it in, and is now completing it. It's God's rule in human life, and in the world – the submission of every heart to the true king of the Universe – the Lord our God. And at its heart stands the Lord Jesus himself, who has destroyed the work of the devil, ratified the terms of the New Covenant, poured out the Holy Spirit, and is even now riding forth conquering and to conquer. And that, according to Jesus, ought to be the focus of life in the present: To see and to seek the glory of God and of Christ in every aspect of our own life, the lives of others, and the life of the world.

### **Seeking the Kingdom**

What is it to seek the kingdom of God? It's to keep it before our minds, and in our hearts. It's to believe the Good News about the Lord Jesus, and the Coming of His Kingdom; it's to put our trust in him as our Saviour; it's to serve Him as our King; and it's to seek after His Glory and his rule on earth – to see God honoured and respected in our lives, and the lives of others. In other words, leaving tomorrow's problems in the future doesn't mean we give up thinking, planning, and acting in the present, resigning and saying in the words of that very unchristian song: "Whatever will be, will be." Not at all! It's to focus on the

# BLOGGING ABOUT...

## Charles Darwin Again

When I was a child, my parents did not have a great many books. However, one of the books that I remember in the small set of bookshelves they had was "On the Origin of Species" by Charles Darwin. I have often wondered how it came there, for I never saw them reading it. I, certainly, was not interested in reading it myself: it contained no stories of cowboys and Indians or about Biggles. However, it was a book that brought great change to the world's thinking, and we will be hearing a lot about it and about its author in this, the two hundredth anniversary of his birth and the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of its publication.

Many people think of Darwin as the originator of the theory of evolution, but this is not the case. Numerous people before him had had similar views. The ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle, had expressed the idea of the accidental development of animal types and features more than 2000 years previously, and many others had suggested similar beliefs in the years between Aristotle and Darwin.

Indeed, Darwin lists a large number of these (including his own grandfather, Dr. Erasmus Darwin), in the foreword to the sixth edition of his own book. However this may be, it was Darwin's book which popularised and spread the concept, and it is he who is remembered and lauded for his work, even though almost every one of his original ideas about how evolution is supposed to occur has been disproved and has been abandoned by modern evolutionists.

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most elevating, ennobling, and invigorating reality in the world today - the development of God's Creation and the furtherance of His Work of Redemption in the fear of God. And if our whole life is oriented to God and his Kingdom, we'll not only have the most elevated purpose, and the most glorious goal, but we shall have a most rewarding future. He will give to his children the earth and its fullness. Seek it without the Kingdom - and we'll never get them. Seek the Kingdom, and everything will be ours.

### The Glory of the Kingdom

And isn't this precisely our trouble today too! We not only fail to deal with the past, and leave the future where it is, but get things in present out of focus as well. We focus on all the wrong things - trivial things! So, before God gives us some real things to worry about, let's make the Kingdom of God our focus. If we longed for the glory of Christ, and the return of Christ, many of those things that are problems today would pale into insignificance. Why scratch around for a few dollars more when the earth belongs to us! Why try to make a name for ourselves, when we're the sons and daughters of God! And we can be sure of this: If the kingdom is our focus, we'll not miss out on anything: *"All these things will be given to you."*

### Conclusion

Are you and I stealing today? Let's try not to, because in the future there will be no stealing of today! Eternity for us is never ending time where we'll live in the presence of

Darwin believed that all living creatures were descended from a common ancestor by a process of natural selection, the process which Herbert Spencer, a younger contemporary of Darwin, called "the survival of the fittest." Darwin's half-cousin, Hugh Galton, proposed that the principles of animal breeding could be applied to humans. Darwin, himself, had commented in his book, "The Descent of Man" that aiding weak human beings to survive and to have families could cause the human race to lose the benefits of natural selection. To aid the unfit to survive could impact on the entire race. At the same time, it has to be said that he did not advocate the withholding of help from the weak or their forcible elimination.

However, others did take his comments to their logical conclusion. The eugenics movement, pioneered by Galton, flowed logically from Darwin's theories. We should remember that the full title of Darwin's book is "On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life." That second part tells us a lot about his philosophy!

The eugenics movement led to many dreadful abuses - all based firmly on Darwin's theories. In the United States, Margaret Sanger started "The American Birth Control League" which eventually became "Planned Parenthood." I wonder how many of those who support free "abortion on demand" know what she was really advocating. She was a firm believer in eugenics and was proposing to use birth control to ensure that the "unfit" did not survive. She argued in favour of "a stern and rigid policy of sterilization and segregation to that grade of population whose progeny is already tainted or whose inheritance is such that objectionable traits may be transmitted to offspring." She also wrote, "It is a vicious cycle; ignorance breeds poverty and poverty breeds ignorance. There is

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God, and on his bounty, and seek his glory with a singleness of mind and heart that we don't experience here. There'll be no worry about the past; nor will there be any worry about the future. We'll enjoy the present in all its fullness. Stealing Today will be finished! And that's the sort of life we ought to be seeking to live now.

We scarcely realise how much sin has affected our whole life. And one of the ways that we've been blissfully ignorant of is its effect on our attitude to Time. And some dear souls long to escape from time. But the problem is not with time, but with ourselves as sinners. It's a pagan idea that tries to blame the way we are made for all our problems. It's a subtle attempt to blame God for all our problems. Our problems are not due to the way we are made. They're due to our sin - our trying to be gods ourselves, and control past present and future! Jesus tells us our real problem is not in the time God gives us, but in our attitude to God. If our attitude to God is right, we'll be able to manage our time better. And the great principle of Time Management is found in this last sentence: *"Each day has enough trouble of its own."* In the future Kingdom of God time will not be a burden, not because time no longer exists, but because we're no longer sinful! We'll be able to rest and rejoice in our Father, and in His care and glory - and we'll be so contented in it all, and enjoying ourselves so much that the hours and days, and years will slip by and we won't even notice. We'll have Life - Eternal! ■

only one cure for both, and that is to stop breeding these things. Stop bringing to birth children whose inheritance cannot be one of health or intelligence. Stop bringing into the world children whose parents cannot provide for them. Herein lies the key of civilization.”

The same eugenics movement resulted in compulsory sterilisation of those considered to be “unfit”. There are still women living today in the United States who were sterilised against their will while they were confined in mental hospitals, supposedly undergoing treatment! Mental institutions also used lobotomies, electric shock treatments and other similarly dehumanising treatments. All this was because they had swallowed the eugenics theories which flowed from Darwin’s work.

This trend was taken even further in Nazi Germany. In Germany, Ernst Haeckel had applied and developed Darwin’s ideas. He taught that human beings could be separated into different groups, some higher up the evolutionary ladder than others. The eugenics movement in Germany added Haeckel’s ideas onto those which were prevalent in other countries and developed a “racial hygiene” programme which involved the elimination of all those considered “unfit” from the gene pool. Hitler took up these ideas and made them part of his political programme. In his book, *Mein Kampf*, Hitler wrote, “He who is bodily and mentally not sound and deserving may not perpetuate this misfortune in the bodies of his children.”

On coming to power in Germany, he and his Nazi Party moved to eliminate those whom they designated as being “life unworthy of life” (*Lebensunwertes Leben*). Included among these were habitual criminals, people considered to be degenerate, political dissidents, people who were feeble-minded or insane, homosexuals, and many others, including chronic alcoholics and members of some religious groups. It is estimated that this, and similar, programmes resulted in the forcible sterilisation of about 400,000 people and in the deaths of about 70,000.

The wording of the original decree ordering this is interesting. It was signed on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939 and reads, in part. “Reich Leader Bouhler and Dr. Brandt are charged with the responsibility for expanding the authority of physicians, to be designated by name, to the end that patients considered incurable according to the best available human judgement of their state of health, can be granted a

mercy death.”

It is no wonder that this is often referred to as the “Euthanasia Decree.” Can we not see a very similar wording being advocated by the supporters of euthanasia today? Can we not see it being accepted by the general public as a reasonable statement?

This idea of preserving racial purity and of the survival of the fittest by eliminating the unfit developed until it reached its peak in the Nazi extermination camps, where all those considered lower level races, or, possibly, sub-humans (*Untermenschen*) could be murdered to ensure the supremacy of the master race.

The largest group to suffer in these camps was, of course, the Jews, but we should also be aware that others also suffered, for example, Soviet prisoners of war, gypsies, Poles, Communists and left-wing political prisoners, and various other groups.

Now, of course, it might well be argued that Charles Darwin should not be held responsible for all this evil, and that is certainly true. He, himself, cannot be responsible, but the theories which he popularised were! There is a great need that we, in our generation, should remember this and that we should reject these theories. Any theory that regards human beings as the chance products of an evolutionary fight for survival is bound to end up like this because it is the logical conclusion of that line of thought.

It is when we understand that God made all things, including human beings, that we will have a proper respect for all of His creation. It is when we understand that human beings were made in His image and that we are all descended from our common ancestors Adam and Eve, that we will have a proper respect for the sanctity of human life, regardless of how weak or how disadvantaged a particular person may be. We will understand, indeed, that we are all “unfit” and that it is only by His great mercy that any one of us is permitted to survive. We will understand, also, that we have a duty toward our Maker and Sustainer and that we must be reconciled to Him through the Way that He has provided, through our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

- Dr. W.J.W. Hanna, Brisbane

## THE BIG PICTURE FOR SMALL CHURCHES

Rev. Sjirk Bajema, Narrewarren

During my time ministering in Western Australia a nationwide church survey produced some interesting statistics. One of these concerned the size of the average worshipping community on any given Sunday morning in Australia.

So, let me ask you: How many do you think that would be? You have to add in all the large mega-churches, substantial city congregations, and so on. You are inclined – aren’t you? – to think of the large Pentecostal churches which televise their meetings. Even the very liberal Rev. MacNab at Collins Street Uniting Church gets around 900 turning up. With these sorts of attendances the average church

attendance would have to be in the hundreds. Well, it’s not. It’s not even in the 90’s, or 80’s, or 70’s. And now you’re wondering: How low can it go? Could it be in the 60’s, because the 50’s surely would be far too low!

Dear friend, the figure was 42. So, of all the churches worshipping on a Sunday throughout Australia, the average attendance was 42. Naturally, that means there will have to be a lot more smaller churches to make up for the very big churches. And certainly there are. So how much does that put our congregation’s size in perspective?

This is something John Benton also does in some detail. In his book of the above title, *The big picture for small churches*, he not only exposes many misconceptions about small churches, but especially shows how much closer to biblical principles and life they are, exactly because of their size.

Lord willing, I will bring out what he raises in his book in a series of reflections on this book. Please note, these are not part of a review but rather a spiritual analysis of where we are in the Lord's picture.

In his first chapter, entitled 'The choice for small churches' he doesn't deal with what many think he would be dealing with – whether a small church should close down or not. Rather, he affirms that God definitely can and does use small churches. In fact, he points out that church history decisively shows how God always starts His works small. The important factor he raises in this is our own attitude to the church. As he says, *If you are part of a small church you have a choice. You can choose either to look upon the small size of the congregation as a reason to be discouraged and downhearted; or you can choose to see the church's smallness as a reason why you might be in just the church God can use.*

So, dear friend, which choice will it be?

### The Devil's Deception

In his second chapter of *The big picture for small churches* John Benton makes it clear that the size of a congregation is not the issue. Already in his first chapter he has shown that small churches are

uniquely equipped to bring glory to God. In fact, throughout church history, and in many parts of the world today, the average congregation size has been small; that is, less than 60 per worshipping congregation. What truly matters, however, is seeing the whole picture spiritually. As Benton notes, *if a small church is going to be in a position where God can use it to reveal his glory, then it must take steps to avoid the pitfalls that Satan uses to trap churches.*

You see, Satan does all he can to keep us from looking to the Lord. For example, instead of being thankful that you can worship with God's people on Sunday – and doing it twice on that day – the devil will get you looking at who is not there. But, dear friend, you need to look at who is there. And not only those you can see there but especially the unseen One there – He who is none other than the Lord Jesus Himself, through His Spirit.

### The 1<sup>st</sup> Tactic

The first of five tactics Benton identifies as of the devil he entitles 'Deviation from the truth.' Here he shows how Satan attacks the truth. He is 'the father of lies' after all. And so it is that through false teaching and the very popular notion today that doctrines don't matter, the devil tries to take Christ's church away from contending for the faith (Jude 3). You can see the impact the devil has had with the many churches who don't use God's Word anymore. Forget about bringing your Bible to those assemblies. It's all about the buzz – the pop, fizz, and crackle of a very

temporary man-centred experience.

Dear friend, how many times have you been accused of being a cold and dreary Calvinist? But what joy is theirs on Monday morning? When the rubber meets the road, it is only God's Spirit through His Word who can encourage and comfort us. It's only the knowledge of God's sovereignty and our utter depravity that keeps you on track. Turn away from that and you've walked right into the devil's arms. How he must be delighting with so much of the western church today – for how much of it isn't caught up in either charismatic or liberal error?

### Fractures in fellowship – Satan's 2nd Tactic

What is the almost inevitable comment you get from unbelievers when you are trying to share the faith with them – or even if in some way it comes out that you're a Christian? "Ah, you lot, you can't even get on together and you're trying to save us?"

It's a sad truth that there have been many splits between brethren. Church history is littered with such break-ups and many denominations and independent churches are a result of this. Perhaps you have even come here after such a situation?

As we reflect on such divisions it is very rarely that they happened for the sake of the gospel. In fact, the attitudes and actions of certain groups and individuals within churches then totally denied the gospel! It was the prince of this world who won that battle – not the Prince of Peace. This is what we

need to be very clear about. For this is the second tactic of Satan that John Benton identifies as his strategy against the local church. To break-up a local church through division destroys in a short time what took many years for the Lord to build up. So we must be on our guard.

How do we do that? Well, we must heed the many calls in the New Testament to unity with Christ's body. The apostle Paul, for example, in Philippians 2:1-4, Ephesians 4:3-4, and Colossians 3:12-14, is constantly reminding us of this. This means praying for each other. I will never forget the day a wise deacon spoke with a minister in difficulty with a minority in his congregation. That minister was angry with those who were appealing against him and his session through the wider courts of the church. He spoke so strongly for his case and the evil in those trying to depose him. The deacon, from a neighbouring congregation, simply asked that minister, "But have you prayed for them?" The minister looked shocked. And well he should be. Because he hadn't prayed for them. And it's not unless we do pray for each other, especially those we have the most trouble with, that we can be open to the Lord's leading us.

Don't forget the big picture. Because the devil slips in lots of smaller pictures. Pictures where we're right in the centre. But the Lord wants us looking at the picture where we cannot see ourselves at all – because it is so full of Him! [To be continued] ■

# THE CITY: ITS SINS AND SORROWS

Rev. Thomas Guthrie, DD.

[A series of sermons preached on Luke 19:41 and published in book form in 1859]

## THE ADVANTAGES OF THE CITY

First, *The highest humanity is developed in cities.*

Somehow or other, amid their crowding and confinement, the human mind finds its fullest, freest expansion. Unlike the dwarfed and dusty plants which stand in our city gardens, languishing, like exiles, for the purer air and freer sunshine that kiss their fellows far away in flowery field and green woodland, on sunny banks and breezy hills, man reaches his highest condition amid the social influences of the crowded city. His intellect receives its brightest polish where gold and silver lose theirs - tarnished by the searching smoke and foul vapours of city air. The finest flowers of genius have grown in an atmosphere where those of nature are prone to droop, and difficult to bring to maturity. The mental powers acquire their robustness, where the cheek loses its ruddy hue, and the limbs their elastic step, and pale thought sits on manly brows, and where the watchman, as he walks his rounds, sees the student's lamp burning far into the silent night. And as aerolites - those shooting stars which, like a good man on his path in life, leave a train of glory behind them on the dusky sky - are supposed to catch fire by the rapidity of their motion, as they rush through the higher regions of our atmosphere, so the mind of man fires, burns, shines, acquires its most dazzling brilliancy, by the very rapidity of action into which it is thrown amid the bustle and excitements of city life.

Second, *The highest piety is developed in cities.*

It is well known that the most active tradesmen, the most vigorous labourers, the most intelligent artisans, the most enterprising merchants, are to be found in cities. And if - just as in those countries where tropical suns and the same skies ripen the sweetest fruits and deadliest poisons - you find in the city the most daring and active wickedness, you find there also boldly confronting it the most active, diligent, zealous, warm-hearted, self-denying, and devoted Christians. No blame to the country for that. Christians are like soldiers - it is easier fighting in the regiment, when the men stand shoulder to shoulder, than standing alone to maintain some solitary outpost. Christians, to use a familiar figure, are like coals, or firebrands - they burn brightest when gathered into heaps. Christians are like trees, they grow the tallest where they stand together; running no small chance of becoming dwarfed, stunted, gnarled, and bark-bound, if, like a solitary tree, they grow alone. You never yet saw a tall and tapering mast, which, catching the winds of heaven in its outspread wings, impelled the gallant ship on through the sea and over the rolling billows, but its home had been the forest - there, with its foot planted upon the Norwegian rock, it grew amid neighbours that drew up each other to the skies. So is it with piety. The Christian power that has moved a sluggish world on,

the Christian benevolence and energy that have changed the face of society, the Christian zeal that has gone forth, burning to win nations and kingdoms for Jesus, have, in most instances, been born and nursed in cities. To the active life and constant intercourse which belong peculiarly to them, religion has owed her highest polish, and that freedom from peculiarities and corners, which the stones of the sea-beach acquire by being rolled against each other in the swell and surf of daily tides.

In rural districts, with all their natural and ever fresh charms, a good man often finds a weary loneliness; and where fields, and hills, and long miles separate him from church and Christian neighbours, it needs an extraordinary measure of the grace of God to make his life of comparative isolation "a solitude sweetened." Give me the city with Christian neighbours at my door, and daily intercourse with genial and congenial spirits. If I fall, I have them there that will help me up; if I flag, I have them there that will help me on; if two are better than one, twenty are better than two; and with such opportunities of Christian fellowship as the city only affords, my circumstances there are much more allied to those of the saints in glory, than his, whose lot is cast amid the quiet but scattered homes of rural scenes. He has often to pursue his journey through the desert, so far as human intercourse is concerned, all but alone a solitary pilgrim to Canaan. manifold as are their evils, their temptations, and their snares, it is only in cities that piety enjoys the full benefit of the truth, "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the face of a man his friend."



Thomas Guthrie 1803-1873

Third, *The highest happiness of saints is found in city life.* Man is a social as well as domestic being. His arms may not but his heart can embrace more than a family. His nature is social. His religion is social. And as the earth's loftiest peaks rise not in their snows on some isolated hill that stands like a lonely pyramid on the level plain, but where the mountains, as in the Alps, or Andes, or Himalayan range, are grouped and massed together, so the saint's most heavenly happiness is not attained in solitude, nor even amid domestic scenes, but where religious life exists in its social character. It was for a wider than a family circle Jesus taught us the prayer, "Our Father which art in heaven." How sweetly these words sound, when they rise in morning or evening orisons [prayers] from a loving family! How impressive that prayer appears when, beneath the roof of some noble temple, a great congregation, embracing sovereign and subjects, titled peer and humble peasant, rich and poor, the lowly and the lofty - all on their knees, and with one voice uttering the words - acknowledge in men a common brotherhood, and in God a common Father! And yet that sublime invocation, "Our Father which art in heaven," shall never be offered in its full sublimity till the swarthy Negro, and the roving Indian, and the wandering Tartar, and the homeless Jew, and all the pale and dark-faced tribes of

men, send it up swelling to the ear of God, like the voice of many waters and the voice of mighty thunderings. Then shall a free and glad world know the tenderness, the breadth, and the length of the expression, "Our Father which art in heaven."

In presenting heaven itself to us under the emblem of a city, the Bible bestows the palm, and pronounces the highest possible eulogium on city life. There are many mansions," says our Lord, "in my Father's house." "And I," says John, "saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." Again, he says: "He carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels." "And the twelve gates were twelve

pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the

light thereof." Again he says:—"After these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Halleluiah, salvation and glory and honour and power unto the Lord our God. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of many thunderings, saying, Halleluiah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth; let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

May we all get an invitation to these royal nuptials! Crowned and robed in white, may we all be found in the train of Christ's heavenly bride. By virtue of the new birth may we all be freemen of a city never built with hands, nor hoary with the years of time, a city, whose inhabitants no census has numbered - a city, through whose streets rush no tides of business, nor nodding hearse creeps slowly with its burden to the tomb - a city without sins or sorrows, without births or burials, without marriages or mournings - a city which glories in having Jesus for its King, angels for its guards, saints for its citizens; whose walls are Salvation, and whose gates are Praise.

## A SABBATH IN EDINBURGH

It is said, "Jesus beheld the city." And now, turning our eyes away from Jerusalem, let us behold *this* city. Ere the heat of day has cast a misty veil upon the scene, or ten

thousand household fires have polluted the transparent air, I take a stranger - to whom our city presents its beauties in all the charms of novelty - and conducting his steps to yonder rocky rampart, or some neighbouring summit, I bid him look.

Our ancient capital sits proudly throned upon her romantic hills. Gothic towers and Grecian temples, palace, castle, spires, domes, monuments, and verdant gardens, picturesquely mingled, are spread 'out beneath his eye; and when rising from the waves of the neighbouring ocean, that with amorous arms embraces the land, the sun blazes up to bathe all in golden light, he bursts into admiration, and pronounces the scene, as well he may, "the perfection of beauty." Wherever he turns his eye, he finds a point of view to claim his admiration. There seems nothing here to weep for. What rare variety of hill and hollow! What a happy combination of ancient and modern architecture! Here, two distant ages gaze at each other across the intervening valley; while there, with wild wall-flower and golden furze [gorse] blooming in its rifts, and trees clinging to its crags, a fit ornament of a lone Highland glen - in the very heart of the city, crowned with cannon, and



Edinburgh -1802 [Wikipedia]

reverberating the roar of business, stands a massive rock, proud emblem of our country's strength and independence. What scene so worthy of the enthusiasm with which the Jew exclaimed, as he surveyed Jerusalem from the top of Olivet: "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion."

But let our stranger be a man of piety as well as a man of taste, and he will love the city for its Sabbaths more than for its scenery. No loud street cries, nor wheels of business or of pleasure, harshly grinding on holy ears, disturb the peace of the hallowed morning, or scare thoughts of heaven from his pillow. If music awakes him, it is the song of birds that from neighbouring gardens call the sleeping city to arise, and join with nature in the praises of her God. A serene silence fills the street, and leaves him to hear the footfall of a solitary passenger on the unfrequented pavement. The morning meal and worship over, the chime of Sabbath bells bursts upon his ear - accompanied with the tread of many feet outside. He leaves the house with us to seek the house of God.

An hour ago these streets were empty, but now such throngs are crowding them as neither the six days' business nor pleasure calls forth. Decency sits upon all faces; devoutness upon many. Laughing childhood looks unusually grave, and curbing in its playful spirit, walks with a thoughtful air. No rude manners, no laughter that bespeaks the vacant mind, no gay conversation disturbs the ear, or ill accords with the aspect of a people who look as if they were bent on some lofty purpose - to be engaged in a solemn, yet not unhappy work. Their faces give the lie to a common scandal. They look serious, but not sour, they wear an air of gravity, but not of gloom.

[Continued on page 16]

# Run For Glory

## HAVING THE LORD AS OUR GOD

***"I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt; out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me."***

"This is the first commandment. There are two questions that may be asked about this commandment. One is this : What is it to have a God? The other is this : Why should we have no other gods but the Lord ?

The question we shall first try and answer is - What is it to have a God? I mean by this a true God, such as the Lord Jesus Christ is to us. This is the answer to the question - it is to have one who is able to do three things for us; and one who has a right to expect three things from us.

To have a God is to have one who can do three things for us. The first thing we want our God to be able to do is, ALWAYS TO HELP.

The little child always needs the help of its mother. The blind man always needs the help of some one to guide him. The sick man always needs the help of the physician. We are here, in this world, like children; like persons who are blind or sick. We need to be taken care of like children. We need to be guided, like the blind; and to be watched and tended, like the sick. And who can do this for us? Our parents can help us in some things. Our teachers and friends can help us in some things, but not in all. They can't be always with us; nor can they always help us when

they are with us. At the quiet hour of midnight, when they are fast asleep themselves, what can they do to help us. When we are far from home, what can they do to help us?

We need someone who can always help us. Then it must be someone who is present in every place; whose eye never slumbers, and whose arm never grows weary. Is there such a one to be found? Yes, God our Saviour is just such a one. He is with us by night, as well as by day; abroad, as well as at home. His eye is never closed. His arm is always strong. He is always everywhere.

The Bible tells us He is "a very present help, in every time of trouble." David says, "The Lord is my help, whom then shall I fear?" He didn't fear the lion, or the bear, that came to steal his sheep, because God helped him to kill them. He didn't fear Goliath, the great Philistine giant, because God helped him to fight, and conquer him.

People are needing help in different places, at the same time, all over the earth. And no one can really be a God who is not able to hear and help all these different persons at once.

The heathen have many gods. They think each god has a particular place to attend to; and that he can only help people in the place to which he belongs. But this is very foolish. The truth is, the gods of the heathen can't help those who pray to them in one place any more than an-



**"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"**  
**Matthew 6:28-30**

other. They help nobody. We need a God who can *always* help. And there is only one such God.

"Mother, how many gods are there?" asked a little boy, one day.

A younger brother, who heard him, said, "Why, one to be sure."  
"But how do you know that?" said the one who asked the question.

"Because," said his little brother, "God fills every place, so there is no room for any other."

The first thing we want our God to be able to do is - ALWAYS TO HELP US."

- Richard Newton- The King's Highway.

## CONGRATULATIONS!

The following children were awarded book prizes for Search Work in 2008:

**Senior Section:** Nat Carswell, Andrew Hamilton, Chris Hamilton, Mark Hamilton, Madison Van Praag

**Intermediate Section:** Heather Van Praag, Zoe Van Praag

**Junior Section:** Jessie Carswell, Joanna Daniels, Timothy Daniels, Rebecca Hamilton, Nathan Van Praag

## SICKERFOOT

**Sickerfoot [Sure of foot] was the nickname given James Guthrie, [1612-1661] a Covenanter who was put to death for his faith in 1661. Shortly after the Restoration of Charles II, in 1660, Guthrie, with others, was caught and put in prison. In February of 1661, he was tried, and in April of that year he made a defence before the well-named "Drunken Parliament." He was condemned to be hanged. Here is a report of his execution in Edinburgh. It comes from a book by Jock Purves with the title "Sweet Believing," [pp 10-11]**

"With hands tied together, James Guthrie walked slowly up the High Street to the city cross. Broad-shouldered William Govan kept pace beside him. The one nearly fifty, the other not yet out of his thirties, Greatheart and Valiant for Truth were once more upon the human scene. Soon they were upon scaffold above the serried rows of glittering steel, and Sickerfoot, who had been offered a bishopric, and had refused it, stepped forward with loving zeal to give his last message.

The great crowd stood hushed to hear him say, "I take God to record upon my soul, I would not exchange this

# SEARCH WORK - APRIL- 2009

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

[Intermediate omit questions 3 and 8]

### 2 KINGS 1

1. What message did the Lord send by Elijah to Ahaziah? (2 verses)
2. What did the captain of the third fifty say to Elijah, and what was the answer of the angel of the Lord? (3 verses)

### Chapter 2

3. (x) What was Elisha's reply when Elijah asked what he should do for him before he was taken up [taken away]? What condition would apply? (2 verses)
4. What words did Elisha use when he struck the waters of Jordan? What was the result?
5. How did Elisha heal the waters of Jericho? (2 verses)

### Chapter 3

6. What was the situation after the three kings had been seven days in the wilderness of Edom?
7. What was the only reason Elisha would look towards the king of Israel?
8. (x) What did the Moabites see when they rose the next morning? What did they think it was? What happened when they came to the camp of Israel? (3 verses)

### JUNIOR

### EXODUS 5

1. What was Pharaoh's answer when he was told to let the Lord's people go?
2. What did Pharaoh command the taskmasters to do the same day? (2 verses only)
3. When the officers saw that they were in trouble, what did they say to Moses and Aaron?

### Chapter 6:1-13

4. Into which land did God say he would bring the children of Israel?

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

scaffold with the palace and mitre of the greatest prelate in Britain. Blessed be God who has shown mercy to me such a wretch, and has revealed His Son in me, and made me a minister of the Everlasting Gospel, and that He has deigned, in the midst of much contradiction from Satan, and the world, to seal my ministry upon the hearts of not a few of His people, and especially in the station where I was last, I mean the congregation and presbytery of Stirling. Jesus Christ is my Life and my Light, my Righteousness, my Strength, and my Salvation and all my desire. Him! O Him, I do with all the strength of my soul commend to you. Bless Him, O my soul, from henceforth even forever. Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation."

A copy of his last testimony was handed by him to a friend, for his son William when he should come to years. Then farther up the ladder of death he went, exclaiming, "Art not Thou from everlasting, O Lord my God. I shall not die but live." And in his last second before he was with Christ, Mr. Sickerfoot, as sure of foot, and as full of faith as Joshua, lifted the napkin from his face, crying, "The Covenants! The Covenants! They shall yet be Scotland's reviving."

# ACTIVITY PAGE.....

## 10. Job's Riches



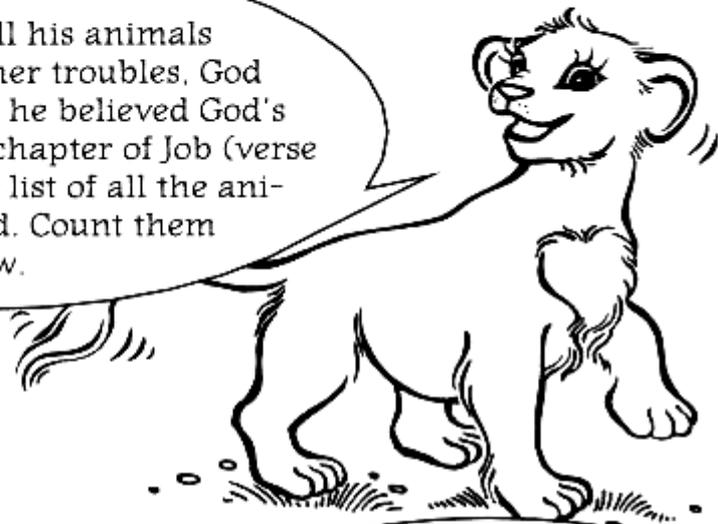
Job, a very rich man, had many animals. In Job 1:3 there is a list of the animals he owned. Count them to see how rich he was.

sheep \_\_\_\_\_  
camels \_\_\_\_\_  
yoke of oxen \_\_\_\_\_  
donkeys \_\_\_\_\_  
total \_\_\_\_\_

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

After Job lost all his animals and had many other troubles, God blessed Job because he believed God's promises. In the last chapter of Job (verse 12) there is another list of all the animals Job owned. Count them now.

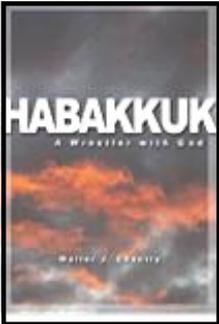
sheep \_\_\_\_\_  
camels \_\_\_\_\_  
yoke of oxen \_\_\_\_\_  
donkeys \_\_\_\_\_  
total \_\_\_\_\_



See how God blessed Job? He gave him twice as many animals as he had in the beginning!



**Habakkuk - A Wrestler with God,**  
**Walter J. Chantry, Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh,**  
**2008. Paperback of 100 pages. (\$17.95 - Koorong).**



Last year I preached through the book of Habakkuk and wish that Chantry's commentary had been available at that time. The fact that this commentary comes from the press of 'The Banner of Truth Trust' is a testimony to its great value to Christians.

Often commentaries are written for theologians and those with some academic training, but this small book should be read by all who profess to be Christians. It is written in a language that the average person can understand and is filled with application that the Church should take to heart. The print is a good size. Also there is an Appendix from Calvin's writings titled 'Calvin on Quietness in Adversity.' This is a good addendum to the work.

Walter Chantry draws many parallels between the society of Habakkuk's age with that presently found in the Western world. We read: 'Christians in the Western world have witnessed massive defections from the truths of the Bible over the last century and a quarter. Although some revival of belief in the truth did come during the last fifty years, moral and spiritual decay continued to exercise their evil effects in our nations' (pp. 81,82).

He compares Habakkuk's prayers for revival to the outworkings of God which were so unexpected and contrary to his hopes for Israel. He writes: 'God's answers are not always seen in the sending of revival' (p. 13). Faithful Christians continue to pray for revival, but need to bow before the truth that God ever rules this world and the hoped for revival will come in His way - a way that is often totally unexpected. Walter Chantry writes: 'When great armies assemble and begin to march, they are under the dominion and direction of our God.... Know that all of them are directed from God's throne' (p. 13). As we listen to the depressing daily news the author reminds us that our God rules history for His own glory.

Chantry looks at the state of the Church in the Western World and calls upon the saints to pray for an arrest to the obvious decay in morality and spiritual truth. He calls upon the saints to humbly approach the throne of grace or complete collapse may not be far off' (p. viii). Recent events in the world point to a possible complete collapse of Christian society.

Chantry also sees another likeness between his own age and that of our own - a likeness which he states is 'one of the most precious gems of all times' (Hab 2:4) (p. x). This verse - 'But the just shall live by his faith' is often quoted in the New Testament. Chantry writes of this truth: 'It is a sentence which summarizes the gospel. It is, in fact, a gemstone of four facets which brilliantly displays the following four qualities: faith, humility, righteousness and eternal life' (p.10). In his commentary on this verse Chantry presses home the way of salvation and the



**BACKUPS**

After the terrible death toll in the bush fires recently and the massive damage caused by flooding I expected at least one person at work to ask, "why does God let these terrible things happen". As it turned out no one did. One of the discussions we did, however, have at work was backing up family photos and other important data in the event of a disaster destroying our homes.

A backup is vital to have and at work we all had some sort, but it was either a backup to another computer at home or else to an external hard drive - usually left at home as well. But with the damage and destruction seen in Victoria and North Queensland we were reminded that if you lose your house - even to just a "normal" house fire - and if both computer and backup are in the same location - you will still lose your data. So the solution was to make sure the backup was a long way from home.

One way to do this was to take the external hard drive either to work or a friend or family member's place. The second was to upload our data to the Internet. There are a number of online backup services. A colleague joined Mozy ([mozy.com](http://mozy.com)) and is very happy with how it's working. The good thing about Mozy is, well a couple of things - [1] they are owned by EMC who specialise in corporate storage and backup so you can be pretty confident they know how to keep your data safe, and [2] they offer a free service for up to 2GB of data.

An old 2007 review of 6 services is available at <http://www.pcauthority.com.au/Feature/83086.online-backup-services.aspx> It gave carbonite ([www.carbonite.com/](http://www.carbonite.com/)) the nod. I have yet to organise this so I can't say either way which is best. It is definitely on my to-do list, hopefully it won't be a case of "I wish I'd organised this sooner".

In looking at mozy's signing up screen I noticed there was a promotional code to get a discount. I did a quick search and found a possibly useful website [www.softwarediscountcodes.com](http://www.softwarediscountcodes.com), Surprisingly the site included a 50% discount on the paid for version of my current backup software SyncBack - I use the free version.

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life of righteousness.

This small commentary is most useful for Christians today. International affairs, wars, economic distress and local events of murder, theft, sexual immorality and anti-Christian diatribes and widespread physical attacks upon the church are the cause of downcast spirits. Yet Chantry writes words of encouragement to the saints who as: 'men and women of faith shine as jewels of mercy amidst the deepest gloom of sin and unbelief. Because they are products of divine mercy, God is greatly glorified in them and by them, even when other types of triumph do not appear' (p. 73).

This is a very fine book and I encourage every Christian to purchase a copy and read is prayerfully. And why not buy a copy for a friend?  
**[J.A. Cromarty]**

# THE CHURCHES .....

## DR. RAHMAT HUSSAIN

A copy of the following letter from Mohan Chacko [dated 16th March] was forwarded to the Missions Committee. "Dear Friends, I have some sad news. Mrs. Irshad Hussain, wife of Dr. Rahmat Hussain (a candidate of our Presbytery and graduate of the Seminary), was killed in an accident at home today (Monday at about 11.30 AM.

## *Filling our needs.....*

At the close of December 2008 the balances of the main Working Funds of the church Synod were:

31/12/08 31/7/08

\$ Nil	\$ 21,076	Missions (General Funds)
\$ 49,117	\$ 81,595	Missions (DA Anderson Bequest)
\$348,838	\$544,883	Missions (Relief Fund – M McSwan Bequest)
\$ Nil	(\$22,773)	Missions (TI Leggott Stipend Support)
\$ Nil	\$28,796	Stipend Relief (DA Anderson Bequest)
\$ Nil	(\$27,798)	Stipend Relief
\$104,424	\$106,720	Training of Ministry
\$ 12,394	\$ 11,911	Youth & Fellowship
\$ 86,226	\$113,697	Synod General Funds

Portion of Working Funds have been invested in equities (Shares/Managed Funds). These investments reduced in value by 30%/44% as at 31/12/08 in line with the market falls generally and therefore impacted on the closing balances of Synod Funds.

There was a shortfall \$11,439 in Stipend Relief funds as at 31/12/08. This had to be met by transfer from Synod General Funds as all of the funds from the DA Anderson Bequest for Stipend Relief, had been utilised. It should be noted, there was \$17,000 undrawn as at 31/12/08, of the assistance approved by Synod 2008 for aid receiving congregations, of which \$13,000 (as at 23/2/09) is expect to be taken up before Synod 2009.

There was also a shortfall of \$34,382 in Missions - TI Leggott Stipend Support as at 31/12/08. This was met by utilising the closing balance of \$26,994 in Mission General account plus \$7,438 transferred from Missions (DA Anderson Bequest).

As can be seen from the above figures there are real needs to be filled in the maintenance of the ministry of some congregations and Synod mission endeavours in 2009 and your prayerful and practical support is needed to fill such.

***"Let your works of charity be done in humility, giving unto God the honour of them, by acknowledging that what you have bestowed on the needy, you first received from the Lord; so it was His goodness to incline your heart to bestow any thing out of your abundance towards their relief." (Thomas Gouge)***

Apparently she put her hand in the water kept for heating without turning off the electric rod. She was taken to a couple of private hospitals which refused to admit her because of fear of legal hassles. By the time she was taken to the government hospitals, she had died.

Needless to say, the family is very broken. The oldest daughter has a board exam tomorrow, which now has to be abandoned.

The funeral is being planned for 9.30 AM Tuesday [17th March] Please pray."

We extend our sympathy and prayerful concern to Dr. Hussain and his family. Please remember the Hussain family in your prayers.

## SOUTHERN PRESBYTERY

The Southern Presbytery met at Mulgrave on 10/3/2009. The principal item of business was the second part of the examination of Mr David Kerridge for licence. After conducting worship, Mr Kerridge was examined in the remaining areas held over from the last meeting. He acquitted himself well. No objection to proceeding had been received from the other Presbyteries and Southern Presbytery resolved unanimously to licence Mr Kerridge and declared him eligible for call. Mr Kerridge answered the questions in Act of Synod 2008 and signed both the formula of 1952 and that of 2008.

A request from Knox to sell the Springvale house was granted. The small meetings that had used the building at the rear of the premises, which was a chief attraction in the purchase in May 2007, had moved to Mulgrave and the house had been vacated on 20/2 by the refugee family that had occupied it. A conditional sale has been secured which will result in a net gain on cost of 7.2%. Although Knox will still be contributing significantly to the costs, the proceeds will assist in funding the extension to the Mulgrave building, provide for a more modern manse in another location, eliminate the need for outside financing and so strengthen Knox's ability to assist the wider church.

Special attention was given to the financial needs of our congregations. There were many causes for thankfulness and a suitable pastoral letter was issued under the signature of the Moderator, Mr Yoa. It was also agreed in principle to have an annual training day for existing and potential elders and deacons. A day conference on theme of 'Building a Truly Christian Home' is scheduled for a Saturday in September.

## KNOX

The annual congregational meeting was held on 19/3. It had been a very positive year with a number of new members at Knox. At Glen Huntly there had been a decline as one family had moved to Narre Warren and another was about to do so. But the work in both centres and among the Sudanese had been well maintained. Giving had increased both at Knox and among the Nuer, and investment income showed a very strong growth as the three units completed at the end of 2007 came on stream.

The purchase of the Mulgrave property for \$150,000 (purchase settled 13/02/2009) and its renovation inside and out (\$28,000) was a wonderful development to which our thanks must go to our Heavenly Father who moved our Baptist friends to deal so generously in offering the



property to us well below market value. A planning permit application has been lodged for the classroom extension and we expect approval by the end of April. Rev Andres Miranda has been elected as an elder of the congregation and will be inducted on 29 March. He has been leading studies on evangelism at the prayer meeting which have

been appreciated as well as Lord's Day evening messages from the book of Habakkuk which exalt our God and challenge his people.

Dr Ward is to give a paper on 'Aspects of the Revival of Calvinism in Australia 1938-78' at the Discendi Studio (Zeal to Learn) Conference on Calvin and theological scholarship at PTC Sydney on 7 April 2009 organised by the three theological colleges of the Presbyterian Church of Australia. It is striking to note the significance of our own Rev Arthur Allen (1902-58) in this revival and the way in which a few people of conviction from different churches prayed and worked for revival of biblical teaching. At the same time there are negative features in that too often Calvinistic teaching was presented without winsomeness and thus did not win some who might otherwise have come to appreciate the grace of God in the Gospel.

## GEELONG

Geelong was still going through some consolidation since Mr Smith had accepted the call signed by 25 members in 2005. At his arrival in mid 2006 attendances were about 40. Numbers are down on that through a variety of circumstances but appear now to have turned the corner with morning attendance back around 30. At Presbytery's direction the Roll was restated and properly purged, something which apparently hadn't occurred properly for a number of years, and is now 27. Sunday School had restarted last August.

**[Continued from page 15]** popish authorities transmitted the sentence they had pronounced against him, and reclaimed him, that they might carry it into execution. It was then put to Servetus, whether he would go back to Vienne or go on with his trial at Geneva. He preferred to remain where he was, and there is good reason to believe that the determination of the civil authorities at Geneva to pronounce and execute upon him a sentence of death, was, in some measure, produced by the fear that the papists would charge them with being indifferent, if not favourable, to heresy, if they spared him.

There is abundant evidence that this consideration operated, to some extent, as a motive, upon the conduct of the Protestant churches at the time of the Reformation. As a specimen of this, we may refer to Bishop Jewel's "Apology of the Church of England," a work which was approved of by the Convocation, and thus clothed with public authority. In the third chapter of the Apology, sect. 2, Jewel boasts, that Protestants not only detested and denounced all the heretics who had been condemned by the ancient church, but also that, when any of these heresies broke out amongst them, "they seriously and severely coerced the broachers of them with lawful and civil punishments."

If this was distinctly set forth and boasted of as an ordinary rule of procedure, in opposition to popish allegations, we cannot doubt that the consideration would operate most powerfully, in so very peculiar, and indeed unexampled, a case as that of Servetus, in which not only had a popish tribunal condemned him to the flames, but had publicly demanded his person that they might put that sentence in execution. In these circumstances, no Protestant tribunal could be expected to do anything else but pronounce a similar sentence, unless either the proof of the charge of

heresy and blasphemy had failed, or they had believed it to be unlawful to put heretics and blasphemers to death.

4. Although Calvin, after having, notwithstanding extreme personal provocation, done everything in his power to convince Servetus of his errors, approved of putting him to death as an incorrigible heretic and blasphemer, he exerted his influence, but without success, to prevent his being burned, and to effect that he might be put to death by some less cruel and offensive process; so that to talk, as is often done, of Calvin burning Servetus, is simply and literally a falsehood.

5. The Reformers generally, and more especially two of the mildest and most moderate of them all, both in their theological views and in their general character, Melancthon, representing the Lutherans, and Bollinger, representing the Zwinglians, gave their full, formal, public approbation to the proceedings which took place in Geneva in the case of Servetus.

6. Archbishop Cranmer exerted all his influence with King Edward, and succeeded thereby, though not without great difficulty, in effecting the burning of two heretics one of them a woman and the other a foreigner whose offences were in every respect, and tried by any standard whatever, far less aggravated than Servetus's.

As all these six positions are notorious and undeniable, it must be quite plain to every one who reflects, for a moment, on what these facts, individually and collectively, involve or imply, that the peculiar frequency and the special virulence with which Calvin's conduct in regard to Servetus has been denounced, indicate, on the part of those who have done so, not only an utter want of anything like impartiality and fairness, but a bitter dislike, to a most able and influential champion of God's truth. ■

## CALVIN AND SERVETUS

*In this issue we take up one of the most common criticisms of John Calvin - his part in the burning of Servetus in Geneva. We reproduce an edited version of an article by William Cunningham found in his work "The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation" reprinted by the Banner of Truth in 1979. The full text will be found on pp 314 - 321.*

Every one knows that the favourite topic of declamation and invective with the enemies of Calvin, is the share which he had in the death of Servetus. All who, from whatever cause, hate Calvin, and are anxious to damage his reputation, are accustomed to dwell upon this transaction, as if it were one of the most disgraceful and atrocious which history records; until, from disgust at the shameless falsehood, injustice, and absurdity of the common misrepresentations regarding it, we are in some danger of being tempted to view it, and other transactions of a similar kind, with less disapprobation than they deserve.

Gibbon said, that he was "more deeply scandalized at the single execution of Servetus, than at the hecatombs which have blazed at the Auto-da-fes of Spain and Portugal." And Hallam has imitated the unprincipled infidel by saying, "The death of Servetus has perhaps as many circumstances of aggravation as any execution for heresy that ever occurred."

The latest writer we have seen upon this subject, Mr. Wallace, we presume a Unitarian minister, in a work of very considerable research, entitled "Anti-Trinitarian Biography," in three vols., published in 1850, writes about it in the following offensive style:- "A bloodier page does not stain the annals of martyrdom than that in which this horrible transaction is recorded;" he describes it as stamping the character of Calvin as that "of a persecutor of the first class, without one humane or redeeming quality to divest it of its criminality or to palliate its enormity," as "one of the foulest murders recorded in the history of persecution;" and he speaks "of the odium which his malignant and cruel treatment of Servetus has so deservedly brought upon him." While men, who are the avowed opponents of almost everything that has been generally reckoned peculiar and distinctive in the Christian revelation, speak on this subject in such terms, other men, whom it would be unfair to rank in this category, deal with this topic in a manner that is far from being satisfactory; and we could point to indications of this both in Dr. Stebbing, the translator of Henry's admirable life of Calvin, and in Principal Tulloch. On these accounts it may be proper to make some observations upon this subject, though we cannot go into much detail.

It is common for those who discuss this subject, under the influence of dislike to Calvin, to allege that those who do not sympathise with them in all their invectives against him, are to be regarded as defending or apologising for his

conduct in the matter. Mr Wallace, in the work just referred to, says: "Among other recent apologists of the stern Genevese reformer, M. Albert Rilliet and the Rev. W. K. Tweedie (now Dr. Tweedie of Edinburgh) stand conspicuous, but their arguments have been ably and triumphantly refuted by a well-known writer in the Christian Reformer for January, 1847."

Now it is not true, in any fair sense of the word, that M. Rilliet and Dr Tweedie are apologists for Calvin in this matter. They both decidedly condemn his conduct; and they merely aim at bringing out fully the whole facts of the case, in order that a fair estimate may be formed of it, and that the amount of condemnation may be, upon a full and impartial examination of all its features and circumstances, duly proportioned to its demerits.

Rilliet has evidently no sympathy with Calvin's theological views, or with his firm and uncompromising zeal for truth.



He has acted only the part of an impartial historian. He has brought out fully and accurately the whole documents connected with the trial of Servetus at Geneva, and he has pointed to some of the inferences which they clearly establish, specially these, that Servetus's whole conduct during the trial was characterised by recklessness and violence, or by cunning and falsehood - that Calvin was at this time at open war with the prevailing party among the civil authorities of Geneva, on the important subject of excommunication - that they took the management of the trial very much into their own hands, without consulting with him - that Calvin's interposition in the matter was much more likely to have brought about the acquittal than the condemnation of Servetus - that Servetus

knew this and acted upon it, and that this was the explanation of the reckless violence with which, during one important stage in the trial, he publicly assailed Calvin. The only fair question is, Are these positions historically true? Have they been sufficiently established? M. Rilliet and Dr. Tweedie answer in the affirmative, and are in consequence set down as apologists of Calvin.

As to Mr Wallace's allegation, that M. Rilliet and Dr Tweedie have been triumphantly refuted in the Christian Reformer for January 1847, this is really little better than blustering. There is nothing in the article referred to, that refutes the above -mentioned positions of Rilliet, which must be regarded as now conclusively established. The article is mainly occupied with an attempt to prove, that the authorities of Geneva had no jurisdiction over Servetus, since the offence for which he was tried was not committed within their territory, and that there was no law then in force in Geneva attaching to heresy the penalty of death. The writer has failed in establishing these two positions; but even if he had succeeded in proving them, this would not materially affect the question, so far as concerns its bearing upon Calvin, or the estimate that ought to be formed of the part he took in it. There is more plausible ground for Mr Wallace's allegation that Dr Henry, in his "Life of Calvin," defends his conduct in this matter, al-

though here, too, there is a great want of fairness manifested by not giving a full view of the biographer's sentiments.

No man in modern times defends Calvin's conduct towards Servetus. No one indeed can defend it, unless he be prepared to defend the lawfulness of putting heretics to death, and this doctrine has been long abandoned by all but papists. There is no other ground on which Calvin can be defended, for he has distinctly and fully assumed the responsibility of the death of Servetus, though he endeavoured, unsuccessfully, to prevent his being burned. Some injudicious admirers of Calvin have attempted to exempt him from the responsibility of Servetus's death; and it is quite true that other causes contributed to bring it about, and that it would, in all probability have been effected, whether Calvin had interfered in the matter or not. But there can be no doubt that Calvin beforehand, at the time, and after the event, explicitly approved and defended the putting him to death, and assumed the responsibility of the transaction. ....

But while the conduct of Calvin, in the case of Servetus, must be judged of mainly and primarily by the truth or falsehood of the doctrine of the lawfulness of putting heretics and blasphemers to death, and while every one now concedes that, tried by this test, it cannot be defended, it is quite possible that there may be other collateral views of the matter, which may materially affect our estimate of the different parties, and tell powerfully in the way either of palliation or of aggravation. Indeed, the only fair and honest question in regard to the case of Servetus, now that the lawfulness of putting heretics to death has been long abandoned, is this - Does Calvin's conduct in the matter furnish evidence that he was a bad or cruel man? Does it prove him to have been in any respect worse than the other Reformers - that is, worse than the best men of his age ?

This is the only question which is now entitled to consideration, and this question, we venture to assert, must be answered in the negative, by every one who is not perverted by hatred of the truth which Calvin taught, by every one who is possessed of impartiality and candour. The leading considerations which prove that this is the only answer that can be given to the question, we shall merely state, without enlarging upon them.

1. The doctrine of the lawfulness and duty of putting heretics and blasphemers to death, was then almost universally held, by Protestants as well as papists, by men of unquestionable piety and benevolence, if there were any such persons, and those who were zealous for God's truth were then not only willing but anxious to act upon this doctrine whenever an opportunity occurred. There is no need to produce evidence of this position; but it may be proper to advert here to a statement which seems to contradict it, made by Dr Stebbing, the translator of Henry's Life of Calvin, and adopted from him by Mr. Wallace in his Anti-Trinitarian Biography. Dr. Stebbing thinks that Henry has gone too far in defending Calvin, and in his anxiety to re-

puciate all concurrence in this, he makes the following statement, in his preface: "Henry has defended Calvin in the case of Servetus with admirable ability; but the translator believes still, as he has ever believed, that when men enjoy so large a share of light and wisdom as Calvin possessed, they cannot be justified, if guilty of persecution, because they lived in times when wicked and vulgar minds warred against the rights of human conscience."

Now this statement obviously and necessarily implies, that in Calvin's time it was only "wicked and vulgar minds" who countenanced persecution, and that Calvin's conduct is indefensible, because he agreed on this point only with the wicked and vulgar, and differed from the better and higher class of minds, among his cotemporaries. This is what Dr Stebbing has said. But of course he could not mean to say this; for he must have known, if he gave any attention to what he was saying, that the statement is unquestionably false. Everyone knows that in Calvin's time the defence of persecuting principles was not confined to the "wicked and vulgar," but was almost universal, even among the best and highest minds. It is to be presumed that Mr. Wallace did not perceive the folly or the false-

hood of this statement of Dr Stebbing's, when he quoted it with so much gusto, and set it forth as a "well-merited censure from the pen of one of Calvin's most ardent admirers.

2. Servetus was not only a heretic and a blasphemer, but one about whom there was everything to provoke and nothing to conciliate. More than twenty years before his death he had put forth views which led Bucer, one of the most moderate of the Reformers, to declare that he ought to be torn in pieces. He continued thereafter to lead a life of deliberate hypocrisy, living for many years in the house of a popish prelate, conforming

outwardly to the Church of Rome, while, at the same time, he embraced every safe opportunity of propagating his offensive heresies and blasphemies against the most sacred and fundamental doctrines of Christianity.

He repeatedly denied, upon oath, all knowledge of the books which he had published, and he conducted himself during his trial with reckless violence and mendacity. We do not mention these things as if they excused or palliated his being put to death, but merely as illustrating the unreasonableness and unfairness of attempting to represent the case as one of peculiar aggravation, or as specially entitled to sympathy. Chaufepi6, whose article on Servetus in the 4th volume of his Continuation of Bayle's Dictionary is, perhaps, upon the whole, the best and fairest view of the subject that exists, says: "Unfortunately for this great man (Calvin) he is more odious to certain people than Servetus is. They cannot resolve to render him the justice, which no impartial person can refuse to him, without doing an injury to his own judgment."

3. Servetus had been convicted of heresy and blasphemy by a popish tribunal at Vienne, and had been condemned to be burned by a slow fire; and he escaped from prison and came to Geneva with that sentence hanging over him. During his trial at Geneva the

***"The only fair and honest question in regard to the case of Servetus, ..... is this—Does Calvin's conduct in the matter furnish evidence that he was a bad or cruel man? Does it prove him to have been in any respect worse than the other Reformers—that is, worse than the best men of his age ?"***

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## BETWEEN YOU AND ME .....

During the last month I've been "dipping" - not in a pool, but into some of the old, but well known, books in my library. I've taken down Andrew Bonar's "Diary and Life", his "Memoirs and Remains" of Murray M'Cheyne, a biography of the "Rev W.H.Hewitson" and copies of the old Free Church Magazine for 1844, 1845, and 1847—as well as books like John Macleod's "Scottish Theology", and Patrick Fairbairn's writings.

I must confess I was provoked to "dip" by an article by Sally Davey in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand magazine, "Faith in Focus". She's been doing a series of articles on Hymn writers, and last month she dealt with the hymns of Horatius Bonar. After telling us how he found his hymns so useful in children's work, she draws this conclusion: "What happened in Scotland is instructive for us. The Scots hung on to exclusive metrical psalmody longer than many churches in the western world, and perhaps they found security in sticking with this fairly rigid external form in order to protect their orthodoxy. However, if Christians – and churches – rely on a form to protect orthodoxy without understanding what makes it faithful, or examining its content, they can quite easily lose their ability to recognise what is unsuitable. Anglicans in England, who introduced hymns much earlier, and who had known Wesley's and Watts's hymns well, had a much better understanding of what made good hymns good. They had been testing them carefully. But the Scottish churches, as

sentimentalism took increasing sway over hymn-writing, fell for it in droves."

These are hard words for us "psalm singers"! But they do make me ask: Am I sticking with this "fairly rigid external form in order to protect my orthodoxy"? Am I losing my ability to recognise what is unsuitable in terms of good or bad hymns and paving the way for capitulation to sentimentalism? Thankfully I can answer both in the negative. The form doesn't protect my orthodoxy; it grows out of it. It comes from my commitment to the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice. And when you use the Psalms, and sing the Psalms, you realise there's no comparison between the Kingdom centred and Christ centred anti - sentimental covenant experience of the Psalms, and even the best hymn. After all, we would never think of replacing the Bible with man made books to be read in Church. Why should we do it with the songs to be sung there?

But as they say, every cloud has a silver lining - and it did make me go back to look at this period of "our" Scottish Church history more closely, and to be challenged afresh by the spirituality and enthusiasm of men like the Bonars, and Murray M'Cheyne. And the challenges were many - especially the emphasis of this group on Premillennialism! In fact I was amazed at the robust discussion of millennial views that took place in the Free Church Magazine at that time. But perhaps we can look at what some called "the Evangelical Light Infantry" another time!

### THE CITY: ITS SINS AND SORROWS — Continued from p 7.

Imagine that our stranger has come from a land - from a city, such as Paris, for instance, where it may be said of the door of the church, as of the strait gate, "few there be that find it;" where Sabbath bells are drowned in the roar of business, where labour only leaves the streets to give place to gaiety, and make room for the dance of pleasure; where the workman lays down his tools, and the merchant locks his door to whirl away the evening in Sunday ballrooms, or, applaud in the crowded theatre.

With what astonishment he gazes on the crowd. Onward it sweeps, by the closed doors and windows of every place of business, to discharge itself by different streams into more than a hundred churches, and leave the thoroughfares to resume the aspect of a deserted city, until the close of holy services again pours forth the living tide - all setting homewards, many, we trust, heavenwards.

These are the holy scenes which our city presents on Sabbath days. Long may they continue! Beholding the city thus, our stranger sees nothing to deplore. On the contrary, as David in his exile envied the swallow which had her nest by the altar, and could fly at all times on joyous wing into the house of God, he envies us our Scottish Sabbaths and land of precious privileges. Of a city where God is so honoured, his day is so hallowed, his temples are so thronged, he is ready to say, "The Lord hath chosen Zion, he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell."

Such is the aspect in which the city may be presented. But, like the far-famed shield, which, because they saw it from opposite sides, one knight asserted to be made of silver, and another of inferior metal, it presents two widely different aspects. Let us turn it round, and look on the other side....

[To be continued]

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