

THE PRESBYTERIAN BANNER

July, 2009

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Devotion: "Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous: "The Lord's right hand has done mighty things! The LORD's right hand is lifted high; the Lord's right hand has done mighty things!"

Psalm 118:15-16

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DON'T FORGET
The Birthdate
of John Calvin
10th July,
1509

EARLY VOICES FOR PATIENCE

David W T Brattston, Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, Canada

The good health of faith and the soundness of the Lord's discipline do not accrue easily to any person unless patience sits by his side. Patience is so set over the things of God that a person can obey no precept, fulfil no work well-pleasing to the Lord, if distant from it. The good of it, even they who live outside it honour with the name of highest virtue. (Tertullian On Patience 1)

How can a person train himself/herself to be patient and thus wait for God's perfect timing? How can a Christian produce and increase the virtue of patience in their daily walk with the Lord? Written in the early A.D. 240s, Origen's *Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans* contains many ideas and pointers on how to foster and develop patience. The virtue of patience, he wrote, does not come all at once into a Christian's makeup nor is it acquired just because the Christian wills himself/herself to be a patient person. Although the will to be patient is indeed necessary and must precede actual patience in a person, patience comes only after much effort, watchfulness, training, and practice. There may be lapses during this patience-building endeavour. It is like acquiring wisdom or chastity. Merely willing oneself to be chaste does not make a Christian totally chaste, i.e. free from temptations to lust. We must pick ourselves up after each lapse and must resume working at it to become chaste or patient.

Seeming calamities in one's life, continues the *Commentary on Romans*, help foster patience in one's Christian life. Losses, illnesses, and bodily afflictions in righteous people enable them to build up virtue because misfortunes train them to resist their desires to be impatient or unchaste by harnessing their lust or impatience, keeping in check excesses of Christian liberty, and destroying other desires opposed to self-control.

In interpreting Romans 12:12 ("Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction") the *Commentary* reveals a link between such joyfulness and hope. The Christian who is joyful in hope does not absorb himself/herself in the present world but remembers that "our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18) and is therefore patient in afflictions because s/he knows they will be soon past and rewarded. Indeed, "keep looking to the currently unseen world of heaven rather than the currently seen world here below" is a frequent theme in Origen's writings. Patience, says the *Commentary*, helps conform a soul to the future world.

More specific means of acquiring patience comes from other early Christian authors, such as imitating Christians who are already patient. James 5:10 tells us to take the Old Testament prophets as "an example of patience". Polycarp, a pastor-bishop in Turkey who had associated with the Apostle John and was probably "the angel of the church in Smyrna" addressed in Revelation 2:8, cited as examples both the apostles and the saints of his own time that are not mentioned in the Bible, thus indicating that we can be edified by the examples of Christians of our own day. Another exercise in developing

patience is merely listening with attention while the Bible is being read during a church service, instead of engaging in private conversations in the pews, as Origen noted in a sermon preached at about the same time he wrote the *Commentary on Romans*.

Citing Romans 12:2, Origen prescribed renewing one's mind. He said this is accomplished through training and meditating on the Word of God and proper interpretation of God's commandments. By reading the Scriptures every day a Christian makes daily progress and acquires greater knowledge and understanding and the soul is daily renewed. Because some individuals are mentally deficient, Origen wrote that not all minds are capable of being renewed to the point of understanding all knowledge. However, he wrote, all Christians can be renewed to faith, self-control, and patience.

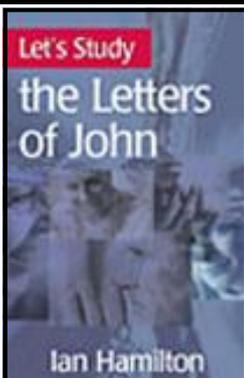
Tertullian wrote that we should develop patience by remembering and living the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12; Luke 6:20-23) in our lives outside church:

For whom but the patient has the Lord called happy, in saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"? No one, assuredly, is "poor in spirit," except the humble. Well, who is humble, unless he is patient? For no one can abase himself without patience, to bear the act of abasement.

"Blessed," says He, "are those who weep and mourn." Who, without patience, is tolerant of such unhappinesses? And so, to such "comfort" and "laughter" are promised. "Blessed are the meek": under this term, surely, the impatient cannot possibly be classed. Again, when He calls peacemakers the "sons of God", we ask whether the impatient have any affinity with "peace". Even a fool may perceive that. When, however, He says, "Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven," of course it is not to the impatience of exultation that He makes that promise; because no one will "be glad" in adversities unless he has first learned to disdain them, no one will disdain them unless he has learned to practice patience. (*On Patience* 11)

Like Origen, Tertullian was a church father, Origen in Egypt, then Palestine, and Tertullian in Tunisia. Tertullian wrote the above quotes around A.D. 200, a generation earlier than Origen, but their message is the same. Origen was particularly well-placed to represent the Christian consensus on the subject of patience because he was dean of the world's foremost Christian educational institution and later of "the first Christian university" and travelled widely throughout the eastern Mediterranean basin in response to requests by pastor-bishops for a theological consultant.

BOOK REVIEW W.J.W. Hanna, Brisbane



Let's Study the Letters of John

- Ian Hamilton, Banner of Truth, Paperback, pp 144.

It is often said that all the heresies that have affected the Christian Church over the millennia since the time of Christ had already appeared in one form or another in the first three hundred years. There is a great

deal of truth in this. Most of the New Testament Letters were written to deal with problems that had arisen, even in the short period covered by the life-times of the apostles. Because these same false teachings surface again and again, even in our own times, it is essential that we should study what the apostles were inspired to write about them and about how we should combat them. It is for this reason that the three Letters of John will reward careful study, for the same issues about which John wrote are present in the Church today.

We are all aware of the many sects and schismatic groups that are present today, calling themselves Christian, but teaching doctrines that have, often, very little resemblance to what is taught in Scripture. Often the leaders of such groups claim to have received some special revelation, or a special insight that sets them apart from the traditional teachings of Christianity. This special insight, or knowledge, makes them superior to other Christians and justifies their separating themselves from the orthodox Churches and their refusal to accept any discipline or correction. This is no new situation! It was present in the

early Churches and John wrote his first Letter to deal with it. When we see what he wrote about those who claimed special insight and who set up their own heretical groups we can see that he was writing about the exact sort of people who still disturb gullible Christians today. For example, he wrote, "They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us." (1 John 2: 19) He also denied their claim to have special insight or knowledge, saying that those who accepted and practised the truths of God's Word as they had been taught by the Apostles were the people who had true knowledge: "... you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth."

Often the fact that these New Testament Letters are so relevant to our own situations is missed when they are being studied, and so we do not get the benefits that we should from them. "Let's Study the Letters of John" tries to avoid this problem. The author, Ian Hamilton, has been careful to try to root everything that he says back into ordinary Christian experience. In this way, he achieves the double goal of increasing our knowledge of Scripture and of strengthening us to stand firmly for the truth as it is given to us in God's Word. The book is set out as a series of studies and has, at the end, a guide to take a church study group or a family Bible study through the three letters in thirteen study sessions. As one who has found the study of John's letters particularly helpful, I can thoroughly recommend this book, and also those on the short list of books "For Further Reading" listed on the last page.

BLOGGING ABOUT...

CALVINISM FLOURISHES IN CHINA

Rarely do we hear good news. But a recent article by Andrew Brown with the heading "Chinese Calvinism flourishes" is just that. He tells how the study of John Calvin's works [and that of Augustine and other Church Fathers] is flourishing in China today. Indeed at the end of his article he makes this comment: *"It would be astonishing if China were to become a great power in the Christian world, as well as in the economic one. But things just as strange have happened in the past. Who could have foreseen, when Augustine was writing those huge books now translated into Chinese, that barbarous Europe would become the centre of Christian civilisation, and his homeland in North Africa would become entirely Muslim?"* How is this resurgence of Calvinism in China taking place?

After briefly telling us about Calvin and his work in Geneva, and that "his followers now form the third-largest Christian grouping in the world," [75 million], he describes a conversation that he had in Singapore with the Rev. May Tan, where the overseas Chinese community has close links with mainland China.

He says: "The story she told of the spread of Calvinist religion as an elite religion in China was quite extraordinary. There may be some parallels with the growth of Calvinism in South Korea, where the biggest Presbyterian churches in the world are to be found, but it's absolutely unlike the pattern in Africa and Latin America. There, the fastest growing forms of Christianity are pentecostal, and they are spreading among the poor. But in China neither of those things are true.... in China, the place where Calvinism is spreading fastest is the elite universities, fuelled by prodigies of learning and translation. Wang Xiaochao, a philosopher at one of the Beijing universities, has translated the two major works of St Augustine, the Confessions and the City of God, into Chinese directly from Latin. Gradually all the major works of the first centuries of the Christian tradition are being translated directly from the original languages into Chinese."

The most interesting thing he notes about the spread of Calvinism is that "All of this is happening outside the control of the official body which is supposed to monitor and supervise the churches in China. Instead, it is the philosophy departments at the universities, or the language departments and the departments of literature and western civilisation that are the channel." He quotes Dr. Tan: "The [officially recognised] churches are not happy with universities, because it is not within their control. And their seminaries are not at the intellectual level of the universities. Chinese Christianity using Chinese to do Christian thinking has become a very interesting movement."

While paying tribute to the work of Presbyterian Missionaries in China, he says that this, in itself, doesn't explain "why Calvinism should be the preferred theology of the house churches and the intellectuals now." He says that "Dr Tan suggests that this is because it is Protestant: that is to say, it can be made much more convincingly native than Roman Catholicism, since presbyterian congregations choose their own pastors. This is, I suspect, enormously important at a time when China is recovering from a century and a half of being the victim of western pow-

ers; the pope's insistence on appointing Catholic bishops is unacceptable to the government and perhaps to the people too."

Quoting from Dr Tan again, she says that if she goes to preach at an official church, "There will be perhaps 1000 people and 95% of them are over 65. So it's a sunset church. But if I went to house church – there would be 1000 people; perhaps 20 of them in their 50s, and all the rest are youngsters. The older ones will all be professors at the universities. So these are the future of the churches. They have registered pastors, and no access to seminaries: But they have youth, and future, and money."

But why the interest in Calvinism? The answer, he thinks, is this: "Calvinism isn't a religion of subservience to any government. The great national myths [!] of Calvinist cultures are all of wars against imperialist oppressors: the Dutch against the Spanish, the Scots against the English; the Americans against the British. So when the Chinese house churches first emerged from the rubble of the Cultural Revolution in the 80s and 90s they began to search what theology will support and inform [them]. They read Luther and said, 'not him'. So they read Calvin, and they said 'him, because he has a theology of resistance.' Luther can't teach them or inform them how to deal with a government that is opposition." The communists, he says, "stigmatised Christianity as a foreign religion". But they "still more thoroughly smashed up the traditional religions of China". Quoting Dr. Tan, he writes "The communist, socialist critique of traditional religion, and of Confucianism has been effective The youngsters think it is very cool to be Christian. Communism has removed all the obstacles for them to come to Christianity."

Here are the statistics: The most conservative estimates of the new converts to Christianity is 500,000; there is a new church built every month. Calvinist Christianity has a culture of phenomenal industry. "In China now", he says, "this kind of Christianity is seen as forward-looking, rational, intellectually serious, and favourable to making money." According to Dr. Tan it's possible that "very soon Christians will become the majority of university students."

Isn't it a marvel of Divine Grace that in the 500th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin his work is seeing a resurgence in one of the most unlikeliest places on earth, humanly speaking. Praise God for this development in this great nation, and pray that this revival of Calvinism may continue. God is able to do great things! And if he can bring about a revival of Calvinism in China, can He not do the same here? - <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/andrewbrown/2009/may/27/china-calvin>

OOPS!

Brigham Young University (BYU) officials on 6 April 2009 pulled 18,000 copies of the student newspaper "The Daily Universe" off the school newsstands after finding the caption under a picture of the Mormon leadership council read "Quorum of the Twelve Apostates" instead of the correct title for the group "Quorum of the Twelve Apostles." A BYU spokesman explained that the problem was caused when an editor using a computer spell-checker chose a wrong replacement word precipitated by a misspelling of "Apostles." [Faith in Focus, May, 2009]. I guess the moral of this story is: Always check your spell checker!

THE BIG PICTURE FOR SMALL CHURCHES - 3

Rev. Sjirk Bajema, Narrewarren

Taking Stock

In his third chapter of *The big picture for small churches* Benton turns to outlining a manifesto for the small local church. After giving examples of different congregations found in Scripture and throughout church history, he turns to one particular kind of church. He says this *is a church which meets in a permanent building in a fixed locality.*

This is not to say that other churches aren't proper churches but he addresses this simply because this is the kind of church situation in which many people are. He acknowledges there are those who declare that the day of a 'building-centred' church is over, yet he is not convinced. In fact, Benton goes on to say that people teaching this don't truly understand why the church is in decline. It's neither sociological or organizational factors influencing the present state of Christianity but rather a spiritual judgment of God. While the church needs to be flexible the problem cannot be solved by simply adopting a new format or style. There can be no real change until God moves by the power of the Holy Spirit. And so Benton moves on to address those having their own church building yet in a situation where they wonder how long they can keep going. They may well be feeling discouraged and perplexed. *But they must not panic. They need to stop and take stock.*

You see, there can be no quick fix. It is not going to be that young keen minister who will save them. He may be blessed in his ministry among them. But even more likely is that after all the initial enthusiasm they cannot cope and so for the sake of his sanity and the family he pulls out. It is only if the vision of the local church is shared and owned by the whole congregation that the work will be to God's glory.

At this point Benton briefly analyses the world we are in. He highlights the prevailing influences as hedonism, consumerism, and relativism. So it's living for one's own pleasure, depending on what you can buy, and the idea that there's no absolute truth, which is all around us and also influencing us. How completely opposite to the gospel! For the true believer must be one who totally sacrifices himself. He has to go beyond his comfort zones, and beyond feeling sorry for the church and mere sentimentality.

An illustration Benton provides makes this clear: *I spoke to a pastor quite recently who pointed up the matter. He said that in his church he does not allow people who 'like' young people to work with young people. He does not allow people who like working with young mothers to work with young mothers. He said that he does this because if he allows those who would like to work with the young or with mothers, to work with them, then very often they are satisfied simply by enjoying their company. They stop there and do not have the desire to actually speak about Christ to them. Thus the work goes so far, but no further.*

So, how about you dear friend? Have you felt awkward for the cause of Christ? That's how you should be feeling everyday!

Society's Weak Points

John Benton goes on to show in his third chapter how those dominant philosophies the world lives by today are also very vulnerable to genuine Christian love. While acknowledging the secular hedonistic – relativistic – consumer outlook is a hard nut to crack, it is weak at three significant points. Those three weak points are its spiritual destitution, moral disintegration, and social isolation. Just think, secular people have an inner emptiness. They have a huge hole in their hearts, for they cannot be truly at peace in themselves and with those around them without Christ.

I remember one occasion when a local fruit and grocery vendor, whom I had befriended, introduced me to one of his friends. Well, you should have seen the shock on that man's face upon hearing that I was a minister. "I'm alright!" he cried, arms flaying in front of him. He took off in a hurry! And that's exactly what this world feels. They might not all react in such a drastic way as that man. But his reaction shows how much they try to hide from what they're like inside. Because they are not right with God – and how much don't they know that!

It's through the love of Christ shown in our lives that they see God. And while many of their reactions will be like that man in trying to get away from the gospel, others might be turned by Christ's Spirit to confess the good news. It's the encounter with God Himself through His loving people that makes the difference.

Then there is the moral turmoil. How much hasn't that come to height with the current economic downturn! For at its heart is greed. 'Greed is good', they preached to us. And what a false gospel that turned out to be. And that comes on top of all the other immorality – the rising crime rate, the corruption in government (just think of the Royal Women's Hospital and its 'extra' patient figures!), and the increasing rate of sexually transmitted diseases (the latest recommended immunization for young women is exactly because of a cancer which comes from sexually transmitted diseases). What a difference when young people honour God's will for marriage, and are kind to their seniors! People coming to our church experience an openness and warmth they don't anywhere else.

And what has selfishness produced in our society but the most desperate loneliness? Suicide rates climb every year – I mean, did you know that there had been at least 18 people per year throwing themselves off the West Gate Bridge for some years before that most depressed father threw his young daughter from it? Benton gives the example of someone who had reached a point when she was going to end it all, following the death of her beloved husband. It was a Christian neighbour, thinking and praying for her, who providentially that very moment visited her. Through the following weeks she was brought by that kindness, and the kindness of other believers, into faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the truth being spoken in love the apostle Paul speaks of in Ephesians 4:15. This is what must be at the heart of the way the local church operates. This has to be

her vision. It is for the purpose of showing this love that Benton gives five practical objectives that small churches should pursue. He devotes a chapter to each of them because of how important they are. They are *Quality presence*, *Quality welcome*, *Quality teaching*, *Quality hospitality*, and *Quality prayer*. Why the adjective 'quality' before each of them? Is it something like what the world means when they use this word? Far from it! It is because it must be the very best – nothing less, in fact, than what receives Christ's commendation! As Benton says, *The quality we must desire is to be such that, if the Lord Jesus himself suddenly arrived at the church, he would say, 'Well done!' That is the only merit that counts.*

Are They Noticing?

Saturday week, Terry and Kylie turned up for our Working Bee. As the first ones there, they had the privilege of opening up the gate. When Terry did so he found a note jammed into the gate where the lock was. It was a bit wet as it had been raining since the note had been left there. But it was still quite clear what was on the note. For that note said: "Change your sign out the front. I like reading it. Ta." People do read that board. Many people, actually. It's located facing a busy highway. And because it displays texts from the Bible it declares God's Word to them. It also lets the community know about our presence here.

John Benton in his chapter on *Quality Presence* calls this 'Communication,' because it shows us the power of the Word of God. The Bible is a living book. It speaks to man's deepest needs. We should never doubt that God is able to do great things through His Word. That's why we must hold out that Word. On the Notice Board, in our brochures, gospel leaflets, and through what we say.

An American ministry intern once impressed this on me. He showed how the way we speak is a powerful witness. Because when we say 'good morning' to our neighbour, or stop for a moment to speak to that familiar face, what do

we say? If it is about how nice the weather is, are we saying, "Isn't it great what God gives us?" Or if it's a difficulty they speak about, "We don't always know what God's got planned out for us. It's good that He's got it in His hands though!"

The second aspect Benton raises in this chapter on *Quality Presence* is 'Incarnation.' This is where we put our words into action. Instead of being those who easily speak piously we should especially be those who 'walk the talk.' As Benton says, *As Christ not only preached the message but also came and lived out the message in the world, so we must not only preach the message but also live out in practical ways in our communities.* This is why it's good to have involvement with at least one secular group. It might be the local bowls club, Rotary, the Op Shop, whatever – as long as it doesn't go against your faith. We need to be those seen as caring. When we live this way the spirit of Acts 2:47 will be seen through us. Because then we also experience 'enjoying the favour of all the people.' Then our community is pleased to have a church here.

There are some useful suggestions given for spreading the gospel's leaven through a local church, no matter where she might be or whatever size she may be. Here much importance is placed on living in the area of the church. A number of positive aspects related to this are highlighted aside from the practical handiness of being close to the church: There is a stronger witness in the area, there is more fellowship together, especially of the informal visiting kind, and our lives don't become compartmentalized with what we do on Sunday not affecting what we do during the rest of the week.

Benton concludes by noting that when people in the neighbourhood feel free to contact the minister about a personal crisis, or to take the funeral of their mother, you know a real link has been formed. Let's pray for such links to develop – and let's do what we pray.



CAN YOU HELP US?

We, at Armidale, would like your help to continue the gospel witness here. In our church we have lots of children, students from around the world studying and doing research at the University, Sudanese and a few Caucasian families. We are very much a multicultural congregation. We greatly rejoice in this diversity which brings real warmth to us as a body of believers in Christ Jesus. But this wonderful situation God has blessed us with also brings with it many challenges. One of these is financing the ministry, because not many of us have a good, regular income.

We have much to be thankful for. Our gracious God has blessed us spiritually as a congregation and has also drawn at least six people into his kingdom in the past six years. One of whom, now returned home to Korea, has 23 relatives attending church with her who had never previously attended any church. God is indeed good! So please join us in earnest prayer that God would build His Church and that the Armidale congregation might grow in grace and increase in numbers with people seeking to know our great God for His glory and praise. The current outlook is that we will need around \$9,000 to \$10,000 to meet all our church expenses this ecclesiastical year.

If you or your congregation can help us maintain the gospel witness here we'll be most grateful, and thankful to God.

Donations may be sent to the General Treasurer, Mr. Alex Steel, to Mr. Andrew Alford, 641 Boorolong Road, Armidale NSW 2350, or by Direct Debit [Phone 02 6772 1360 for details]

THE CITY: ITS SINS AND SORROWS

Rev. Thomas Guthrie, DD.

[Sermon 2 in a series of sermons preached on Luke 19:41 and published in book form in 1859]

So much for taking up the subject. Now let us look-

1. To the extent of this vice.

First, In our country. No good cause has ever but suffered from injudicious zeal and extravagant statements. Regard for truth, and my very anxiety to see this evil arrested, unite in preventing me from indulging in exaggeration—were it possible here to exaggerate : I say possible to exaggerate. For what flight of fancy, what bold strokes of painting, what graphic powers of description, could convey any adequate idea of the evils and sorrows that march in the train of this direful, and most detestable vice? Standing on the surf-beaten shore, when ocean, lashed by the tempest into foaming rage, was up in her angry might, I have seen a spectacle so grand; and where she couched in the valley, arrayed in a gay robe of summer flowers, I have seen nature so beautiful ; and where rattling thunders mingled with the roar of the avalanche, and untrodden peaks of eternal snow rose clear and serene above the dark mysterious gorge, within which the battle of elements was waging, I have looked upon scenes so sublime, as to pass description. Nor colour nor words can convey an adequate idea of them. To be understood they must be visited, to be felt they must be seen.

Incredible as it may appear, this remark is no less true of many regions of sorrow, and starvation, and disease, vice, and devilry, and death, that the smoke -stained walls of these dingy houses hide from common view. These were for years the painful field of my labours. Let no man fancy that we select the worst cases, or present the blackest side of the picture. Believe me it is impossible to exaggerate, impossible even truthfully to paint the effect of this vice either on those who are addicted to it, or on those who suffer from it - crushed husbands, broken-hearted wives, and most of all, those poor innocent children that are dying under cruelty and starvation, that shiver in their rags upon our streets, that walk unshod the winter snows, and with their matted hair and hollow cheeks, and sunken eyes, and sallow countenances, glare out on us, wild and savage-like, from these patched and dusty windows.

Besides, if the extent of this evil has been exaggerated, it is a fault that may be pardoned. It is a failing that "leans to virtue's side." Perhaps she exaggerates his danger, but who quarrels with the mother, whose love for her sailor boy keeps her tossing on a sleepless pillow - praying through the long hours of a stormy night, as her busy imagination fancies that in that wild shriek of the fitful wind she hears his drowning cry. When the nursery only has caught fire, and a faithful domestic, plucking the babe from a burning cradle, rushes into your chamber, and makes you leap to the cry, The house is all on fire; will he, that hurries away to save the rest, challenge the exaggeration? Exaggeration is as natural to earnestness of purpose and depth of feeling, as a blush to shame, or a smile to happiness, or the flash of the eye to anger.

I admit, indeed I assert, that in regard to our own division of the island, the extent of this evil has been exaggerated.

Not many years ago, a distinguished patriot rose in the Commons' House of Parliament, and mourning over his fatherland—for he had drawn his first breath on this side of the Border - declared that Scotland was the most drunken country, and its inhabitants the most drunken people on the face of the earth. I am well aware that with all the superior privileges which are our boast, we cannot hold up an unabashed and unblushing face before France, or Germany, or Switzerland. In the course of last summer, I spent seven weeks in these countries. I saw Paris at a time of national rejoicing, and the population of that gay city all let loose from business to pursue pleasure at their will. If, in that mighty crowd, there were gloomy looks turned on the royal pomp and serried regiments that conducted to his baptism the infant heir of a throne, which -unlike our Queen's, so firmly based on the affections of the people - its unsteadily on the rim of the wheel of fortune, the eye detected no drunkard. If some were sullen, all were sober ; and that feature characterised also those dangerous quarters of the city, where the lowest classes resided, where rebellions had been hatched, and volcanic revolutions had burst forth to bury throne and altars in a common ruin. I was also in Brussels during three days of prolonged public fetes. All its people were abroad in the streets, and the mighty throng was swelled by some fifty thousand who had poured into the Belgian capital from the, various cities of the kingdom. Yet, in these different kingdoms, neither in their mountain hamlets nor crowded cities, were there presented so many cases of intemperance in all these seven weeks, as may be often seen in Edinburgh, or any other large city of our island, in seven short hours.

Yet it is not true that Scotland is the most drunken country in the world. This is a misstatement. As a lover of my country, I am anxious to deny it; and still more anxious to deny it, because I see that men have taken occasion from it to sneer at our religion. They allege, and say, that if we would sanction public amusements, and open our theatres, on the Lord's day, we should check this evil, and nurse our people up in habits of sobriety. Much as I value our Sabbath observances, I would not defend them at the expense of truth. I would not blacken other countries to make my own look fair. But the statement is not consistent with fact. The Lapland mother pours strong brandy over the throat of her sucking child. In the northern parts of Europe, among the nations who inhabit its colder regions, deep drinking is as rife as it is here. Shall we cross the channel? In Ireland, I saw more well-to-do-like men and women leaving a market town on an ordinary market day with unsteady step, than I ever saw upon a similar occasion on this side the Irish channel.

Shall we cross the Border? During occasional visits to London, I have seen drunkenness on a scale far more gigantic than, during a residence of twenty years, I ever saw it in the lowest districts of this city. In the charges of the English judges, who has not read how they attribute almost all the crimes of their country, directly or indirectly, to the baneful influences of drink? I have been present in

England's high courts of justice, and when panel succeeded panel at the bar, the course of the trials brought out the fact, that the beer-shops were in almost every case connected with the crimes.

This false charge, let me remark, has arisen from circumstances, which are rather creditable to us than otherwise. I will explain that. There is a city in England, which contains a larger population than our own; and yet it appeared from the police reports that it presented three times fewer cases of drunkenness. This seemed to crown them with glory, and cover us with shame. But upon further inquiry, we found that they had no right to the laurel. There the police conduct the drunkard home, and thus his case does not appear upon record; here, on the other hand, regarded as a public nuisance, deserving no such gentle treatment, he is conducted to the police office, and so gets his case entered into our statistics of crime. Thus, as you will see, our superior strictness made us, as compared with some other cities, appear worse than we really were. Such also has been the effect of our very efforts boldly to expose this evil; with God's blessing resolutely to arrest its progress. Thanks especially to our temperance societies, they have thrown a flood of daylight upon the subject. And be it remembered, that the chamber of him who has opened the shutters, and let in the sunbeams, and is busy sweeping cobwebs from the wall and dust from the floor, foul as it seems, may be less so than a room more unused to brooms and less fully illuminated with the light of day. We have brought out the evil. We have dragged the monster from his den, for all the world to gaze at him, and hate him, and kill him, if they can.

In standing up for my country, in stating what I believe to be nothing more nor less than the truth, where or when, let me ask, did our Scottish Sabbaths ever present such scenes as those that follow? They appear in evidence given before a committee of the House of Commons. Horrible illustrations of what our religion and country have to suffer from this crime, it is painful, it is loathsome, to read them. Yet he who would cure disease, and save from death, must nerve himself to endure the horrors of the dissecting-room.

A member of the vestry, and a governor of the poor, in the parish of St. Margarets, was asked whether the increase in the number of drinkers had exceeded the increase in the number of inhabitants. He replies, "Yes; and I think the character of the drinkers has deteriorated. Last Sunday morning, I arose about seven o'clock, and looked from my bedroom at the gin-palace opposite to me. I saw it surrounded with customers; amongst them I saw two coal-porters, apparently with women who appeared to be their wives, and a little child, about six or seven years old. These forced their way through the crowd after much struggling; they got to the bar, and came out again in a short time, one of the women so intoxicated as to be unable to walk; she went against the door-post, and then fell flat on the pavement, with her legs partly in the shop. The three who were with her attempted to raise her, but they were so intoxicated as to be unable to perform that task; their efforts to perform that were ludicrous, and the doors

were opened wide into the shop to admit of the ingress and egress of customers, who passed by laughing at that which appeared to them a most comic scene. After a considerable time, they succeeded in raising the woman, but she fell again; they then brought her to the side, and placed her against the door-post, and there she sat, with her head in her bosom, apparently insensible; the little child who was with her came and endeavoured to arouse her, by smacking her on the legs, and on the body, and on the face, but she appeared quite insensible; the little thing appeared to be the most sensible of the party. During this time, a woman almost in a state of nudity, with a fine infant at her breast, the only dress being its night-shirt, followed by another child about eight years old, an interesting little girl, naked, except a night-shirt, and without either shoes or stockings, followed a wretched looking man into the house, and remained there some time. I saw them struggling through the crowd to get to the bar. They all had their gin; the infant had the first share from the woman's glass; they came back to the outside of the door, and there could hardly stand, but appeared ripe for quarrel. The little child in her arms cried, and the wretched woman beat it most unmercifully."

He states also: "Last Sunday morning, I had occasion to walk through the Broadway a few minutes before eleven o'clock. I found the pavement before every gin-shop crowded; just as church time approached, the gin-shops sent forth their multitudes, swearing and fighting, and bawling obscenely; some were stretched on the pavement insensibly drunk, while every few steps the foot-way was taken up by drunken wretches being dragged to the station-house by the police."

The same witness was asked: Has the habit of drinking among women much increased, so far as your observation extends? He answers: "I think it has extended, and the children appear to be initiated to the drinking of spirits from their infancy;" and he calls the special attention of the committee to the fact, "that the poor wretched girls who live by prostitution, and who are the best customers to the gin-shops, die off in about four years."

Now, mark how that brief course of vice and its terrible end stand out in contrast to the unholy gains of those who feed its fires. This witness states, that in three gin-shops close by him, "more than twenty thousand pounds is year by year taken for spirits consumed upon the premises; and that within a circle containing a population of 40,000 people, not less than 50,000 is expended on gin alone. "Oh, if that is a frightful vice which eats, like a cancer, into a woman's breast, that is a frightful trade, which, fungus-like, lives upon the corruption of human nature - the decay of our noblest faculties, the death of our best affections. He is, for himself, a wretched fool, who builds up a fortune out of sin and misery. One blow of death's hand will shatter it, and what will he do when he has to confront all those who accuse him of their ruin - when he stands at the bar of God as ragged and naked as that wretched woman whom first a villain spoiled of her virtue and threw her away, and next he plunders her of her shame and money - casting her forth upon the cold, hard street.

[To be Continued] ■

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."

The first thing the Lord has a right to expect from us is our Highest Love. The second thing He has a right to expect from us is our UNQUESTIONING OBEDIENCE.

These are larger words than I like to use, but I think you can all understand them. You know we are taught to pray that God's "will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This means, that we should obey God as the angels do in heaven.

A Sunday-school teacher once asked his class how the angels obey God. Different answers were given; but the best was that of a little boy, who said, "They obey without asking any questions." That is true. It was a capital answer.

I have sometimes heard a mother call to her daughter, "Mary, come here this minute!" Mary is playing with her doll; and instead of getting right up, and running to her mother, she goes on dressing her doll, and says, in a very ugly tone, "Oh, what do you want?"

"John, here, I want you to go on an errand." says a father to his son. John is making some bobtails for his kite. Instead of minding at once what his father tells him, he keeps on with what he is doing, and says, "Won't it do by and by, when I have finished making my kite?"

This is not the way in which the angels obey. They do everything that God tells them to do; and they do it at once, without stopping to ask any questions. This is what I mean by unquestioning obedience. God has a right to expect this kind of obedience from us. He expects us to do everything that He commands.

And it is proper for us to do this, because we know that everything that God commands is right. Others may command things that are not right, and then we are not to obey. It is right to obey our rulers; but only when their laws are according to the laws of God.

Nebuchadnezzar made a law that all people should worship the graven image which he had set up, or be cast into the fiery furnace. Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego refused to obey, and they did right.

The rulers of Jerusalem forbade the apostles to preach about Jesus. But they went on preaching; and when they were brought to trial, they said, "We must obey God rather than man." And they were right. We must not obey even our teachers, or parents, if they command us to do anything plainly contrary to the will of God.

I knew a Sunday school boy once, who became a Christian when he was about fourteen years old. His father used to keep a grocery shop; and on Sunday mornings he would open his shop for an hour, to supply his customers with

goods.

The father always called his son in the morning to go down and open the shop. The boy never thought there was anything wrong in it, till he became a Christian. Then he thought about God's command to keep the Sabbath holy. He felt that to open the shop, and sell things on Sunday, was breaking God's command.

This thought troubled him very much. He knew not what to do. He was very unwilling to disobey his earthly father; and yet he felt still more unwilling to disobey his heavenly Father. He was afraid his father would turn him out of doors, if he refused to open the shop when he told him to do so; and he had no one to offer him another home.

He was greatly distressed. But he prayed to God to show him what to do; and, at last, he determined to obey God, whatever the consequence might be, and trust that God would take care of him. When he had taken this resolution, he waited very anxiously for the end of the week to come.

It came at last. Then, late on Saturday night, when the shop was closed, and the work all done, just before going to bed, he told his father that he wanted to be an obedient son, and do all that he told him to do, but he felt that opening the shop and selling goods on the Sabbath was breaking God's commandment, and he hoped he would excuse him from that.

Just as he supposed, his father got very angry, and told him if he was too good to do what he did, he must leave his house and seek another home. He told him he might stay till Monday morning, and then go. The poor boy was greatly distressed, and knew not where to go.

But on Monday morning his father called him to open the shop as usual, and said no more to him about going away. In a short time after, his father gave notice to his customers that he wouldn't open his premises any more on Sunday. Then he took to going to church regularly; he soon became a member of the church, and loved that son more than ever.

It may not be always right to obey, without questioning all that others command us; but it is always right to obey without questioning, every thing that God commands. He never does wrong Himself, and never commands others to do wrong. Whatever He tells us to do must be right. And therefore He expects from us - UNQUESTIONING OBEDIENCE.

SINCERE WORSHIP

Then there is a third thing God, expects from us; and that is, Sincere worship. Sincere means that which is true or pure. This word was first used to denote honey that was clear, and had no wax or sediment in it. Think of a glass jar, full of clear, transparent honey, without the least dirt or sediment in it. Now, if a person who spoke Latin was de-

scribing it, he would say it was honey *sine cera*; i.e., honey without wax in it. And this is what we get our English word sincere from. It means that which is clear, pure, or free from imperfection.

Now God expects from us this kind of worship. Sincere *what* does God expect from us? *Worship*. Let us see what this means.

Worship is a word made up of two other words, viz, *worth* and *ship*, or shape. It means, then, that we should put ourselves in the position, or shape, that is worthy of God. Or it means, that we should render to Him the service that is worthy of Him.

And what is the proper shape or position for sinners, such as we are, to put ourselves in before God? David tells us, when he says, "Oh! come, let us worship, and fall down, and *kneel* before the Lord our Maker." Yes, a position of humble reverence is what we should put ourselves in when we would *worship* God. This is the *shape* or condition *worthy* of God for sinful creatures to appear in.

But the shape of a thing denotes its use or service. If you see iron put in the shape of a bright, sharp blade, you know it is designed to cut. If you see it put into a round shape, like a ball, you know it is designed to roll. If you see a pile of wood broken into the shape of kindling, you know it is designed to burn. And if you see a man, in the form of a servant, with an apron on, and his sleeves rolled up, you know he is designed for work. And so when we appear before God, as His worshippers, in the form or shape worthy of Him, we mean to say that we are ready to offer Him our prayers and praises, and that we desire to serve Him. And when we do, this honestly and earnestly, with all our hearts, that is *sincere worship*. This is the service God deserves. He is worthy of it.

And if this is what sincere worship means, in reference to God, what would sincere worship of idols mean? It would mean the service that *they* are worthy of. And what is this? What do they deserve? They deserve to be broken in pieces, and thrown to the moles and bats. This is all that they are fit for; and this is what they must all come to at last. The Bible tells us that "the idols God will utterly abolish."

Sincere worship is what God expects from us. But is it sincere worship if we trifle, or play, when those about us are singing God's praise, or praying to Him? Is it sincere worship if we kneel down to pray to God ourselves, but don't think about, or feel, what we are saying? No, this is mocking God, and that is a dreadful thing to do. →

SEARCH WORK - JULY- 2009

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

[Intermediate omit questions 6 and 7]

2 KINGS 7

1. What did Elisha prophesy would happen to the lord [officer] on whose hand the king leaned because he doubted Elisha's word?
2. What had the Lord made the host [army] of the Syrians to hear?
3. What did the four lepers say to each other after they had been to the camp of the Syrians?
4. How was the lord [officer], on whose hand the king leaned, killed?

Chapter 8:1—19

5. What happened as Gehazi was telling the king how Elisha had restored a dead body to life? What did the king do for the woman? (2 verses)
6. (x) What was Elisha's answer when Hazael asked him if Ben-hadad would recover?
7. (x) How did Hazael kill his master?
8. Why would the Lord not destroy Judah in the reign of Jehoram?

JUNIOR

EXODUS 10

1. What damage did the locusts do when the Lord brought them into all the land of Egypt? (2 verses)
2. When the Lord removed the locusts, what did Pharaoh do?
3. During the three days of darkness, who had light in their dwellings?
4. What was Moses' answer when Pharaoh said the children of Israel could go, but the flocks and herds must stay behind? (2 verses).

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

"Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord." Psalm 34:9-11



For God is present everywhere,
And watches all our thoughts and ways,
He marks who humbly join in prayer,
And sincerely sing his praise.

The triflers, too, His eyes can see,
Who only seem to take a part;
They move the lip, and bend the knee,
But do not seek Him with the heart. ■

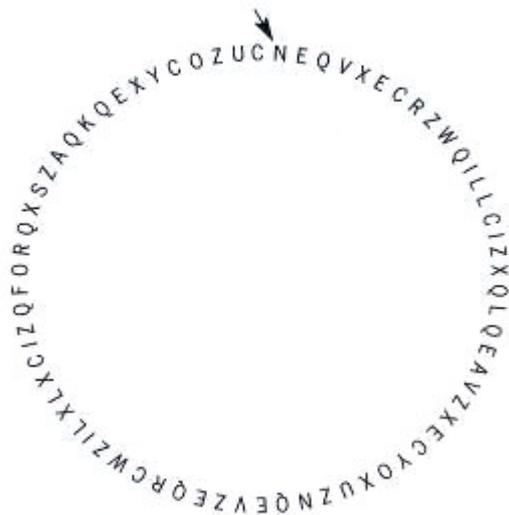
ACTIVITY PAGE.....

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

Two Promises

There are two special promises in Hebrews 13:5-6. Try to discover what they are without looking in your Bible. Start at the arrow and work around each circle, using all of the letters except Z, Q, X, and C.





WEB WATCH ... Peter Carswell

Kids Activities on Rainy Days

In recent months many of us have seen lots of rain and associated flooding, while these floods can cause **damage** and heartache, overall we can be very thankful to God. In Brisbane, for instance, there has been an almost reversal in our water situation in just over 12 months. At the beginning of 2008 things were looking very dire with the total capacity of our dams below 20% (I think it almost got down to 15%). But with good rain, by years end we had reached 40% and now are up to almost 75%. On a not so serious side perhaps, rainy days for extended periods can be very trying for kids and parents (or at least 2 kids and 2 parents that I know).

Board games are great, but I wanted to try something a little bit more creative. And so after some searching found "Make Your Own Bible Game" - (www.mssscrafts.com/games/biblegame.htm). This can be extended to other topics, we have also made a Space Adventure game and a Day at the Zoo game and after having just finished "The Hobbit" as bed-time reading our next game will be our adventure with Bilbo. The main site [www](http://www.mssscrafts.com) is a "Sunday School" resource and includes some other good activities, such as Books of the Bible Memory Game, Memory verse colouring-in, Make a memory verse pencil holder. There were also links to other Sunday School Activity sites (www.mssscrafts.com/games/links.htm) with good ideas for keeping kids busy on Rainy Day (or other times)

John Newton

In doing some research on John Newton (after finally

watching Amazing Grace) and reading a collection of his letters, found a number of sites.

The John Newton Project (www.johnnewton.org) has an extensive collection of Newton's work (sermons, correspondence, hymns and more). Initially I found navigation a bit confusing, but eventually got the idea. The consistent navigation bar across the top of all pages is a good start. Each "button" in the bar relates to the different sections of the site. This is where **is** gets confusing, you can either click on the button and go to that section, but you will also get a pop-out menu it includes the main section again, as well as the associated sub-sections. There is also additional navigation to these sub-sections on the left of each page. Then there are additional links both in this left-hand navigation area and within the body of text as well. Apart from these things, there is some good reading to be had in this collection.

Another site (www.puritansermons.com/newton/newt_b.htm) includes a good collection of Letters.

The final site Grace Gems (gracegems.org), included many letters and sermons (including John Newton - http://gracegems.org/Newton/John_Newton1.htm). About the only peculiarity with the site was some pages included the "www" part of the web address while others didn't. There are many sections, included as links down the left-hand side, with one in particular catching my attention. The "family section" included additional reading some of which very challenging (www.gracegems.org/Miller/christian_husband.htm, and the corresponding (www.gracegems.org/Miller/christian_wife.htm), some highlighting that some things don't change as much as we think (www.gracegems.org/25/youth_warned.htm) and even Pilgrim's Progress audio dramatisation (www.gracegems.org/28/pilgrim.htm) to name just a few.

MANNING CHURCH NEWS

Passing of Mr John Milligan

Our Congregation was saddened by the death of Mr John Milligan on 16 January, 2009. John's death was sudden and unexpected after hospitalisation for several heart attacks. The following is the memorial note recorded in the minutes of the Session:

"John Milligan proved a faithful Elder of the Congregation for over 50 years, he being ordained to office on 15 December, 1957. He was a regular attender at meetings of the Session and there were times when he represented the Congregation at meetings of the higher courts of the Church - both Presbytery and Synod. John also was for many years the Precentor - a work he carried out with considerable skill. He was involved in the visitation of members of the Congregation. When May, his wife, became ill John who was getting on in years, proved to be the faithful husband, but it meant that he was unable to carry out all his duties as Deacon and Elder. The Session decided to show the appreciation of the Congregation for John's faithful spiritual work. He (with Keith Longworth) was presented with an appropriate gift and granted the status of Elder Emeritus following the worship service on 11 November, 2007. We again thank God for the spiritual work of Mr John Milligan, a faithful Elder of the Manning River Congregation."

As well John fulfilled his role as deacon with great zeal. Frequently he carried out repairs to church buildings and often was the one to organise major works - often without payment. His kindness often extended to members of the congregation who needed help or guidance. For many years John was the Congregational treasurer - a job he carried out with great honesty and skill. The present Taree Church building is a monument to John's building skill.

Current Projects of the Deacons' Court

The Court has agreed to install reverse cycle air-conditioning in both the church hall and worship section. The kitchen in the hall is to be refurbished and recently the old speaker system has been replaced with updated equipment. Now sermons are available on CDs. Two of our members are able to hear the worship service per telephone. With more lines, four lines will be available for those unable to attend worship.

Recently Mr Keith Longworth celebrated the 80th anniversary of his birthday. His wife, Trix had a lovely cake which was cut during our monthly Congregational dinner. Keith, who has recently experienced ill health had a smile on his face and thanked God for sustaining grace over the years.

New Members

Recently the Lord was praised when 3 new members were added to the membership role - Miss Velma Kneale; Mr Tony Ledger and Mrs Rhoda Ball.

SARAH'S DAUGHTERS

MORE FROM CATHERINE PARR

Here are some more excerpts from the "Prayers and Meditations" of Catherine Parr, [1546.] - the sixth wife of Henry VIII.

Oh what a life may this be called where no trouble nor misery lacketh! where every place is full of snares of mortal enemies! For one trouble or temptation overpast, another cometh speedily; and the first conflict enduring, a new battle suddenly ariseth. Wherefore, Lord Jesus, I pray thee, give me grace to rest in thee above all things, and to quiet me in thee above all creatures; above all glory and honour, above all dignity and power, above all cunning and policy, above all health and beauty, above all riches and treasure, above all joy and pleasure, above all fame and praise, above all mirth and consolation, that man's heart may take or feel besides thee. For thou, Lord God, art best, most wise, most high, most mighty, most sufficient, and most full of all goodness, most sweet, and most comfortable, most fair, most loving, most noble, most glorious ; in whom all goodness most perfectly is. And therefore, whatsoever I have besides thee, it is nothing to me; for my heart may not rest nor fully be pacified but only in thee.

O Lord Jesus, most loving spouse, who shall give me wings of perfect love, that I may fly up from these worldly miseries, and rest in thee? O when shall I ascend to thee, and see and feel how sweet thou art? When shall I wholly gather myself in thee, so perfectly that I shall not, for thy love, feel myself, but thee only, above myself, and above all worldly things; that thou mayest vouchsafe to visit me in such wise as thou dost visit thy most faithful lovers. Now, I often mourn and complain of the miseries of this life, and with sorrow and great heaviness suffer them. For many things happen daily to me which oftentimes trouble me, make me heavy, and darken mine understanding. They hinder me greatly, and put my mind from thee, and so encumber me many ways, that I cannot freely and clearly desire thee, nor have thy sweet consolations, which with thy blessed saints are always present. I beseech thee, Lord Jesus, that the sighings and inward desires of my heart may move and incline thee to hear me.

O Jesus, King of everlasting glory, the joy and comfort of all Christian people that are wandering as pilgrims in the wilderness of this world, my heart crieth to thee by still desires, and my silence speaketh unto thee, and saith, How long tarrieth my Lord God to come to me ! Come, O Lord, and visit me; for without thee I have no true joy ; without thee my soul is heavy and sad.

I am in prison, and bound with fetters of sorrow, till thou, O Lord, with thy gracious presence, vouchsafe to visit me, and to bring me again to liberty and joy of spirit, and to show thy favourable countenance unto me.

Open my heart, Lord, that I may behold thy laws, and

teach me to walk in thy commandments.

Make me to know and follow thy will, and to have always in my remembrance thy manifold benefits, that I may yield due thanks to thee for them. But I acknowledge and confess for truth, that I am not able to give thee worthy thanks for the least benefit that thou hast given me.

O Lord, all gifts and virtues that any man hath in body or soul, natural or supernatural, are thy gifts and come of thee, and not of ourselves, and they declare the great riches of thy mercy and goodness unto us. And though some have more gifts than others, yet they all proceed from thee, and without thee the least cannot be had.

O Lord, I account it for a great benefit, not to have many worldly gifts, whereby the laud and praise of men might blind my soul, and deceive me. Lord, I know that no man ought to be abashed or dis-content that he is in a low estate in this world, and lacketh the pleasure of this life, but rather to be glad and rejoice thereat.

For so much as thou hast chosen the poor and meek persons, and such as are despised in the world, to be thy servants and familiar friends. Witness thy blessed apostles, whom thou madest chief pastors and spiritual governors of thy flock, who departed from the council of the Jews, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer rebuke for thy name.

Even so, O Lord, grant that I, thy servant, may be as well content to be taken as the least, as others are to be greatest; and that I be as well pleased to be in the lowest place as in the highest; and as glad to be of no reputation in the world, for thy sake, as others are to be noble and famous.

Lord, it is the work of a perfect man never to sequester his mind from thee, and among many worldly cares to go without care; not after the manner of an idle or dissolute person, but by the prerogative of a free mind, always minding heavenly things, and not cleaving by inordinate affection to any creature.

I beseech thee, therefore, my Lord Jesus, keep me from the superfluous care of this world, that I be not disquieted with bodily necessities, and that I be not taken with the voluptuous pleasures of the world, or of the flesh. Preserve me from all things which hinder my soul's health, that I be not overthrown with them. O Lord God, who art sweetness unspeakable, turn into bitterness to me all worldly and fleshly delights, which might draw me from the love of eternal things, to the love of short and vile pleasure.

Let not flesh and blood overcome me, nor yet the world with his vain glory deceive me, nor the fiend with his manifold crafts supplant me ; but give me spiritual strength in resisting them, patience in suffering them, and constancy in persevering to the end.



MISSIONS COMMITTEE REPORT.....



Rev Peter Smith—Armidale

.Mission business at Synod is always a highlight with reports from the various missionaries and mission fields that the PCEA support. As well as this, delegates and members of the hosting church always look forward with anticipation to the Missions Evening. This year we had the privilege of hearing from Glenda de Jager, representing Mukti Australia and Amos Leana, a recent addition to AIM. Let me elaborate on what Glenda had to say so that you can get more of the flavour of the evening.

As the National Director for Mukti Australia, Glenda is very passionate about the desperate plight of women, girls and boys in the slums of India. That passion gripped those at the mission's night as Glenda painted a vivid picture in our minds! She related to us the discovery of a little baby girl, not long born, tossed from a moving train into a field. The back of the baby's head was pushed in due to the impact of hitting the ground; however, her weak cries were heard and they led to her discovery. This little girl is now being cared for at Mukti. She is just one example.

Glenda had recently visited Mukti and spoke about the slums, the faces of poverty, stories of babies, girls and women that had filled her week. I'll let her share with you.

"Is it really like that? It must be an exaggeration? It can't be that bad, can it?" These questions come thick and fast after my friends have seen the movie 'Slum Dog Millionaire' in comfortable movie theatres in Melbourne. Now as the plane taxis to a standstill I can see the largest slum in Mumbai where 'Slum Dog Millionaire' was filmed. I have arrived in this massive city where life is, for many, just as it is portrayed in this film. Poverty, crime, abandonment mark the lives of many. Yes, this is India. It is the India of millions of the poor, the marginalised, the abused and the abandoned. Thank God that some find their way to Mukti.'

Glenda recounted the dilemma some face. 'A distraught young mum with a baby girl, brought in through the care of another agency, is going through the pain of deciding whether she can care for her child, or will she leave her

for adoption? She decides to stay at Mukti with her child for a period of three months while she makes up her mind.' Another story, more joyful is recalled. 'A happy engagement of one of the Mukti girls to a handsome young man from Delhi causes great excitement for the family of sisters she had grown up with at Mukti. The couple look very happy and radiant as they formally meet each other for the first time in this land of arranged marriages.' Another story is retold which the busy Indian society outside of Mukti know nothing of. 'A death and a farewell to one of the long time residents, who reached the end of her earthly life and was buried with dignity in the Mukti graveyard. There is no outside family to farewell her, just those who loved and cared for her at Mukti.'

These sad and dreadful circumstances really ought to confront us. We know very little of this kind of life in our western world which is filled with opulence! The poverty; the crime; the abandonment that is the mark of many lives in India is what Mukti is constantly seeking to change. Glenda counted it a great privilege to 'meet some young women who have grown up at Mukti and now live fulfilled productive lives, serving Jesus in other places. They are truly being salt and light in their communities, wherever God has placed them' she said. 'Women like Jaybala, Vice Principal of the School of Nursing at a large hospital in Pune. Once a little Mukti girl, she now trains and supervises young women who are nursing in this large city hospital. Or Suwarna, once offered as a sacrifice to the Hindu gods, now an older lady teaching young women theology by extension. Or Tara, once a Mukti girl receiving loving care and compassion, now passing this on to 200 deaf and mute children in her care.'

There was much more, but I hope you have captured something of the impact Mukti is achieving amidst the poor, abandoned and marginalised people in India. Please pray and uphold this vital Christian ministry. Perhaps, you may even be led to support the work through child sponsorship, giving a gift to one of the many Mukti projects, or even giving your time for a short term visit to work with Mukti. If you want to learn more about the work and opportunities, visit the Mukti website at www.mukti.org.au.

While we are on the topic of India I would urge you to continue to pray earnestly for Dr Rahmat Hussein and his children as they adjust to life without a wife and mother. The majority of us here in Australia fail to comprehend the spiritual warfare attempting to pull Rahmat's family apart and to destroy, or at least hinder, the Christian outreach in the Taleem Centres. Many of the Presbyterian Banner readers in PCEA congregations would have been alerted to this earlier in the year by their ministers. But for those who were not, I have included below the email that Rahmat wrote to me some weeks after his wife Irshadi had gone to be with the Lord. The need to uphold them is evident in his words.

'dear brother peter. thank you so much for yours and PCEA's empathy with us and our family as we grieve the separation of my wife Irshadi from us though as believers we know that she is at the feet of Lord Jesus Christ but

we miss her very much , please pray for me because it is very difficult for me to show Gods goodness in this to mariam, shakinah and zechariah , secondly many of my muslim relatives use this situation to frighten me and emotionally blackmail me they say allaha is taking his re-venge since we left the true faith and also irshadi was evangelising other muslim women . please pray some-times it is very difficult for me to take these situation , some of irshadis brothers phone mariam, shakinah and zaky they instigate them to leave Jesus and me they will

take care of them , uptill now these things have not had any effect since our children are grounded in faith , thank god that the work at maarifat taleem center at mahrajgunj is progressing well . and they all paid condolences to ir-shadi from my part it is a pain which i will carry all my life until i meet her , but i did learnt a lesson with a very hard price that any of us can die any time are we prepared to meet our lord now . love and regards to all friends in Je-sus your brother rahmat' .
- Peter Smith

Church and Nation, Youth and Fellowship Committee

This Committee reported on activities and developments in youth work within the PCEA. The biennial family camp was held at Lane Cove, Sydney, in January 2009. Youth from various congregations, and from outside the PCEA, attended the camp. All had a good time despite the heat. Some congregations/Presbyteries conducted local camps with the focus once again on the youth. With few young people in some centres it is important that they get fellow-ship in such camps.

The ministry of Search Work continues and the committee encourages parents to introduce this Bible study program to their children. Children in our churches are also encour-aged by getting a birthday card each year. The Committee invites children to write an essay as set out in the Banner each year, for which they receive a monetary prize.

The church magazine, 'The Presbyterian Banner', is wel-come and read by many in the church and beyond. We

noted the editor's unfailing commitment to publishing this quality magazine on, or before, the first day of each month. Its availability on the website is appreciated by many, while others continue to receive it by post.

Synod noted the use by a number of congregations of the not-so-new version of the Psalms for singing "Sing Psalms", and updated the note in the decision book which referred the Synod seeking a new version of the Psalms.

After six years as convener Dennis Muldoon decided to hand over to 'fresh blood'. We welcome Glen Hamilton as the new convener of the Youth and Fellowship committee and pray for him in this ministry. The Church and Nation committee which was lumped with this committee some time ago is now separate (with Dennis Muldoon as con-venor) but linked with a new Media committee with Ray Murray as convener.
- Dennis Muldoon

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee Report and recommendations to Synod mainly focused on the continuing ability of Synod to be able to provide Stipend Relief to those congregations who are not currently able to fully provide for the mainte-nance of the ministry.

As a consequence of a rundown in Synod funds available to make these payments to aid receiving congregations and the effects of the global economic downturn on the values of equity investments and income received to Synod accounts, Synod:

- ◆ Resolved the six monthly reviews of the Minimum Stipend/Non Cash Benefits due on 1/7/09 and 1/1/10 be suspended.
- ◆ Where a congregation has requested Stipend Relief of approximately 50% of the Minimum Stipend for the 2009/10 Synodical year, Presbytery is to con-duct a *Presbyterial Visitation* during 2009, unless one was conducted in 2008, paying particular atten-tion to the ongoing viability of the congregation and its efficient working.
- ◆ Authorised an appeal throughout the Church to help the Armidale Congregation meet its outstanding

and current financial obligations. It also urged Ses-sions and Deacons' Courts to take the lead in en-couraging the regular, sacrificial and cheerful giving to the needy funds of the Church, particularly Sti-pend Relief, and further authorised the Finance Committee to make appeal for this purpose from time to time if and when necessary.

- ◆ Granted Stipend Relief from 1/5/09 to 30/4/10 to four congregations on a strictly needs basis and subject to the availability of funds at the time of the request. These requests totalled \$72,400.
- ◆ Authorised Presbyteries to approve a stipend/non cash benefits level less than the minimum stipend set by Synod from time to time, for the appointment of a minister or settlement of a charge, or its con-tinuation, subject to conditions as detailed in the resolution.

The Trustees for Victoria

Synod resolved to change the members of the Body Cor-porate for the Trustees for Victoria from five named indi-viduals to the persons holding the offices of Synod Mod-erator, Clerk and Treasurer and also thanked those who have served as Trustees for Victoria for many years. This brings the membership of the Victorian Body Corporate into line with the NSW/Qld Body Corporate.

LETTERS

The Editor, The Presbyterian Banner

I would crave your indulgence in allowing me to make some comments on the "Act Allowing Optional Alternative Questions & Formula" passed by Synod 2008 and concerning which Synod 2009 refused the prayer of a petition to reconsider the matter.

One of the first things that one should consider in proposing a new Formula of Subscription is whether all those who have signed the earlier form would be able, with a clear conscience, to sign the new one. The new formula fails this test! I, certainly, would not be able to sign it, and I do not see how any other office-bearer who had signed the older formula would be able to do so. How could I possibly commit myself to "acknowledge sincerely the Biblical warrant for the worship ... illustrated ... in Acts of Synod *from time to time*."? I do not have the gift of prophecy and so I cannot tell what Synod may decide to enact from time to time. In the older Formula, I signed that I accepted "the purity of worship presently authorised and practised in the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia", that is, I accepted the form of worship practised *at that time*, not whatever form Synod might decide upon "from time to time."

To sign that new statement, the prospective office-bearer would need, as I have said, to be able to foresee accurately what Synod might do "from time to time" (something far beyond *my* capabilities) or to have a belief in a Dogma of Synodical Infallibility, that is, to believe that Synod was incapable of being in error "from time to time." Of course, to have this latter belief would bring up another problem, for office-bearers are also required to sign that they "sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647." The Confession of Faith states (Chapter 31, Section 4) that "All synods or councils, since the Apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err; and many have erred." This would seem to dispose of any belief that Synod may not be in error "from time to time." It would also dispose of any possibility that any office-bearer could sign that he "sincerely owned and believed the whole doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647" and also sign that he would accept whatever worship practices Synod might decide upon "from time to time."

I would also have a problem with Section 5, which speaks of "the mutually helpful relationship between Church and State", though this is a section which many people would find easy to sign. Unfortunately, too many people would find it easy to sign! I have no doubt that all shades of opinion on Church/state relationships, whatever extremes those opinions might state, would consider that their particular views represented a "mutually helpful relationship

between Church and State", and would be able to sign this section!

A further difficulty, as I see it, is that the legislation introducing the new Questions and Formula render them (a) unnecessary and (b) dangerous. The Act bringing in the Formula, etc., states that they form "an alternative for the wording for the Questions and Formula in the Act of Synod 1952 on the understanding that no reduction in the commitments required by the Act of Synod 1952 is intended, and that if any question of interpretation shall arise the obligations of the said Act shall be decisive." This makes the new wording unnecessary since those who sign it will need to have read and understood the older versions before they sign. How, otherwise, can they be sure exactly to what it is that they have committed themselves? If, then, they have read and understood the older version of the Formula, why not sign that? The new one is unnecessary! Then, again, the new Formula is dangerous in that some may be persuaded to sign it without having read and understood the Formula prescribed by Act of Synod of 1952, and so may find out later that they have committed themselves to something that they do not believe. They might, even, finish up being charged before the Church courts with having broken their vows, when, in fact, they were not aware that they had made those vows.

Then there is the question of who will decide when and where the new Questions and Formula are to be used. Does the prospective office-bearer decide this? Does the congregation make the decision with regard to the deacons and elders that it ordains? Does the Presbytery decide that they will be used everywhere within its bounds/ Does it decide to use them when ordaining ministers, or does the congregation calling the minister have the final choice in which Formula he will sign? Finally, does the Synod make the decision and prescribe it for the entire Church? None of these questions have been answered, and yet they are of supreme importance. If, for example, we get to a situation where Synod makes the decision, then we are back to the original which was rejected by Synod in 2007. It seems strange, also, does it not, that the Law and Advisory Committee felt that those proposals should be remitted to Presbyteries under Barrier Act Procedure, while maintaining, a year later, that almost identical proposals should not be subjected to this safeguard?

Surely, in light of the problems that I have outlined here (and there are more than these), the wise thing would have been for Synod to have remitted this proposed legislation to presbyteries under Barrier Act procedure, and so have obtained the wider input of the Church at large. In Christ,
W.J.W. Hanna

**"I grow weary of the post-modern discussion. I'm amazed Bible-believing church leaders are that consumed with it. Why dignify with serious discourse the latest "fig leaves as aprons" philosophical convolution that man is using to cover his sin? I guarantee you he's not postmodern when he runs his checkbook."
- Christopher Ortiz**

BETWEEN YOU AND ME

In the May issue of Trowel and Sword, the magazine of the Reformed Churches of Australia, there was a lengthy report of their Synod's decision about the future of the magazine. According to the Report, there were calls at their synod in 2006 "for an online magazine rather than a printed version as well as suggestions of a 'newspaper' style publication or cheaper magazine format." That option was not taken. Instead it was agreed "to maintain the present format and keep or improve the quality of the magazine. The \$20,000 subsidy was provided for T&S to do with as it thought best."

At their Synod in 2009 there was a change of direction. Their decision was "to continue to uphold Trowel and Sword as our denominational magazine, but that the committee be encouraged to move toward an electronic format for the magazine which could be accessed and/ or printed at the local church level. The current level of subsidy for the magazine will be discontinued as from the end of the 2009/2010 financial year." The Editor goes on to report on the discussion that took place. He writes: "At synod there was quite some discussion as to whether this meant the end of the printed version as we know it. One suggestion was that while T&S would move to an online publication, for the pastoral care of older members not online, local churches could print off copies for those who requested it - indeed not a magazine as we now have it but none the less the denominational link would be maintained for these older members."

Another opinion was that there could be both an online version as well as a lower cost printed magazine for those who still wanted something to have on the coffee table to read at leisure in a relaxed way.

A third suggestion was that if enough people subscribed at the end of the 2009 the current full colour format could be retained as well as an online version. Those who really wanted to keep the current format would need to support the magazine with their subscriptions — especially those who borrow it from others and pay no subscription (600 plus according to the survey in 2005). It was also pointed out that if T&S was to survive in its current form without subsidy subscriptions and without an increase in subscription numbers, bulk orders would need to rise to about \$40/yr for each subscription."

We can sympathise with the dilemma faced by T & S. It reflects the crisis affecting Christian publications generally. While older people may feel much more comfortable with a book or magazine in their hands the younger generation—and those still young at heart - are not so bound to the printed page. And we do a disservice to the "older" generation to think they can't adapt too!

I'm thankful that we had the courage to move to a web based production in 2006, and I hear of increasing numbers of elderly people - some in their eighties and nineties - coping very well. We should never underestimate the ability of those renewed in the image of God!

LETTERS [Continued]

Wauchope NSW 2446.
2 June 2009

Dear Editor,

I note the call from the Northern Presbytery & Synod for financial assistance for the Armidale Congregation and the up coming consideration of the viability of the work in Armidale. This work has long been considered and at times has proved to be strategic.

At the Hastings River Congregation meeting the Moderator pointed out the large deficit between the giving and the amount of the stipend in that Charge.

Whilst these two congregations are three hours apart it is conceivable that a Grafton/Maclean arrangement could be made. It worked to a degree in the early years of the Armidale work.

Any review needs to be a bit wider than the Armidale work. The Northern Presbytery is now a shadow of its former self and with the advent of reasonable airfares to Sydney from Brisbane, Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie a logical move would be a NSW/Brisbane Presbytery. Should that occur then the Manning Congregation becomes part of the consideration with Hastings and Armidale.

Given that the numerical strength is now in the Southern Presbytery with the Northern work experiencing decreasing numbers and finances any review should logically include input from the Southern Presbytery.

Yours faithfully
Ian Conley

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

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