

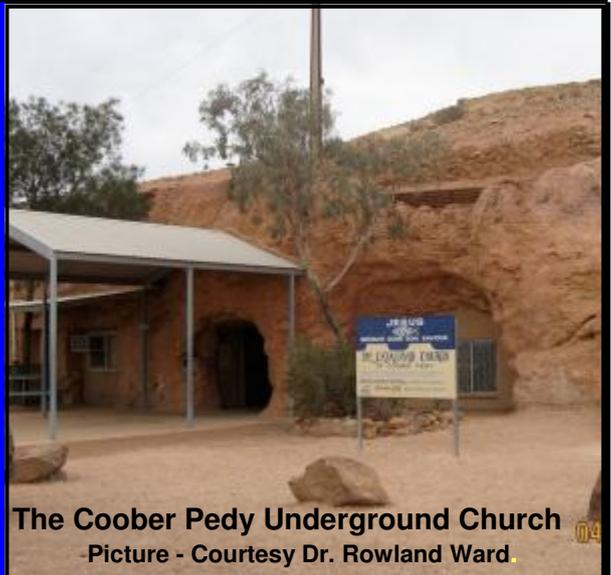
# THE PRESBYTERIAN BANNER

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*Devotion: "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Ephesians 4:1-5:2*



The Coober Pedy Underground Church  
Picture - Courtesy Dr. Rowland Ward

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**DON'T FORGET**  
September, 1541  
Calvin returns in triumph to Geneva.

## IMITATING GOD

In the first two verses of Ephesians 5 the Apostle gives an amazing direction. He tells Christians that they're to be - not just followers - but imitators of God. The actual Greek word is the word from which we get the word "*mimic*". We're to mimic or imitate God.

Two questions immediately come to mind. [1] *First, is it not presumptuous even to suggest it?* After all the distance between God and ourselves is so great that it would seem almost irreverent to suggest such a thing. [2] *Second, How could we possible do it?* After all, we're so weak and poor that that even our best efforts come nowhere near what is suggested here! And yet, this is *not as unusual as it seems*. God originally created us to be like him. He made us in his image to image him in his creation. This is also why Jesus has redeemed us: To be conformed to that true image of God - the Lord Jesus Himself. The idea of our being like God is a very basic idea of Scripture. So what seems at first almost irreverent and impossible is really what God originally intended for us, and what we will become by God's Grace - imitators - images of God on a creaturely scale.

It's a noble calling that's set before the Christian here and we should seek to give it expression in our lives. To help us do it we'll consider three things: [1] Why we Should Imitate God; [2] How we can imitate God; and finally [3] The Incentive we have to Imitate God.

### WHY WE SHOULD IMITATE GOD.

The answer to why we should imitate God is found in the words immediately following: "*As dearly loved children*". We're not only "dear children"; we're "*dearly loved children*". I suppose you could argue that the idea of being a child of God carries with it the idea of being dearly loved. But how much more expressive it is for God, through his Apostle here, to remind us that we are not just children - but his dearly loved children. All ideas of remoteness, or aloofness are swept away by those words. We're transported into the Father's House and into a Family atmosphere - and into the Presence of a Loving Heavenly Father who cares for us more deeply and fully than we can ever imagine.

### Appreciating Our Status.

And when we do that, are we not amazed that God should speak about us - us, mind you - like that! You and I - dearly loved children indeed! We might be able to say that we are Christians, or "his children". But to hear God saying that we are His "dearly loved children" is something that takes our breath away. But that's how it is if we're Christians - dearly loved children, not only in time, but before time began. And this is why we're called upon to imitate God. Children naturally imitate their parents even when they're not treated very well. But children who are loved by their parents - and know they are loved by their parents - respond by imitating them in their lives. This means that its all - important that we think of ourselves as dearly loved children. We may try to do it because he tells us to do. We may try to do it because we feel that we should. But we will only truly imitate God when we think of ourselves as his dearly beloved children. Then our hearts will go out to our Father. Then we'll want to become like him - as much like him as it's possible for a pardoned sinner to become.

## HOW WE ARE TO IMITATE GOD.

The second thing here is *How We're To Imitate God*. Every possible way, you say - and that's perfectly true. But the Apostle indicates here at least two very definite ways we're to imitate God.

### Forgiveness

For example, we're to imitate God in the area of *Forgiveness*. Notice how the "therefore" of verse 1 takes us back to verse 32 of chapter 4 where the subject is forgiveness. Just as God in Christ has shown forgiveness to us, we are to imitate Him in showing forgiveness to others. With the same sort of bounty, and freedom with which God has forgiven us, so we ought to forgive others. Think of the way God has forgiven you! Now, says the Apostle, imitate him!

Forgiveness is a wonderful thing. We talk a lot about it but I wonder whether we really know what we're talking about! Sometimes we give mental assent to the idea that God forgives us but don't really believe it in our hearts. We continue to go over our mistakes and let them haunt us and destroy our peace. We just can't believe that God will - and does - "*hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea*" and remember them no more [Micah 7:19]. Or we allow that God will forgive us - but we'll not forgive ourselves and so become full of self - pity and self-torment. If we do either of these things we haven't really entered into what forgiveness is all about. Our sins have been dealt with. They're gone and gone forever. They will never be raised against us ever again. Our Forgiveness is as real and as wonderful as being freed from a huge debt we have not been able to pay.

That's one side of forgiveness. Forgiveness is great when we're thinking about being forgiven. It's not so easy when we have to do it! Like the man in the story Jesus told, we can take a great deal of forgiveness when it's going our way. But when we have to forgive even paltry, trifling things we find it almost impossible. If someone betrays us, snubs us, insults us, or causes trouble for us, we are ready to demand the last cent. But it must not be. We must have the same spirit that God has: A readiness to forgive; a willingness to create the conditions of forgiveness; and when someone asks for forgiveness from us, to forgive them just as God forgives us. And that means putting the matter away from us and seeking not to remember it or bring it up ever again. How often people forgive - and then when something else happens it's brought up again and again. Where'd we be if God treated us like that?

It's very important that we live a life of forgiveness. The words of Jesus in Matthew 6:14-15 show us this. He says "*For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*" Jesus says this, not to say that salvation depends on what we do, but to remind us that if we are truly children of God we will seek to be like God in regard to this grace of forgiveness.

### Love

*Another way we are to imitate God is in the way of Love.* After telling us to imitate God, he indicates the way in which we are to do it - to "live a life of love". Just as God is

Love, and demonstrates his love in the gift of his Son to be our Saviour, we're to live a similar sort of life. Indeed we can go further: God's life itself is "a life of love". Before the world began it was a life of love. Jesus could speak of the love that he enjoyed before the world began [John 17:24]. Some people ask, "What was God doing before he created the Universe"? The answer is, living a life of love - a life of perfect harmony, peace and fellowship in Himself as the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Creation itself was an act of love. And after the Creation of the world he went on living the same sort of life - and even in the face of the greatest disappointment, he still went on living a life of love, and demonstrating his love in a world in rebellion against himself. And he wants his children to live the kind of life he lives - "To walk in love".

What is it for us to live a life of love? The Apostle describes it for us in 1 Corinthians 13. *He tells us first of all what it's not.* It's not just the possession of wonderful gifts or a great deal of knowledge and understanding. Nor is it to possess great powers of faith, philanthropy or self-sacrifice. We can have all these things, the Apostle says, and still be totally devoid of love. And yet how often Christian love is thought about in these terms. But Paul says we can have all those things - and yet lack love. Love cannot be reduced to these things.

What is love? The Apostle describes it in verses 4-7. It hasn't got much to do with great gifts, but it has everything to do with such things as patience, kindness, humbleness, self-forgetfulness, longsuffering and forgiveness. It loves the truth and seek to steer clear of evil. And to sum it all up the Apostle says, "*It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*" In other words, when you live a life of love you always hope for the best, and not the worst, and you continue to work for the best for the person irrespective of what he/she does. It's the very opposite of slander and gossip, malice and envy, anger and brawling. You're determined - come what may - to do everybody good.

It would be a great world to live in if that were the spirit of the world. It would be a great Church to belong to if that were the spirit of the Church. And it's a great family to belong to if that's the spirit of the Family. Let us - who have experienced something of God's love in our heart - seek to show that we are the dearly loved children of God by doing precisely what we ought to be doing as Christians: Living a life of Forgiveness and Love.

### THE INCENTIVE TO IMITATE GOD

This brings us to the last thing we should consider, and that's *the Incentive we have to Imitate God*. Here are some: [1] For example to think of ourselves as "*dearly loved children*" - ought to be a tremendous incentive to imitate God. [2] And then to think about the way we're to imitate God in His Forgiveness and Love is another tremendous incentive. Just to think about these qualities of God themselves ought to motivate us. [3] But the Apostle brings to the forefront an additional and more compelling reason - *the example and work of Christ for us*. We're to live a life of love, he says, "*just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice*

**"Forgiveness is great when we're thinking about being forgiven. It's not so easy when we have to do it! Like the man in the story Jesus told, we can take a great deal of forgiveness when it's going our way. But when we have to forgive even paltry, trifling things we find it almost impossible.."**

# BLOGGING ABOUT...

## QUESTIONS – AND ANSWERS.

In this issue quite a bit of space is given to the discussion of the new “Questions and Formula” that was introduced in 2007, and, though defeated, reintroduced in 2008 only to be passed by a very slender majority. This action was the subject of a unanimous Overture from the Northern Presbytery seeking a re-examination of the matter. The precise words were: *“The Northern Presbytery respectfully Overtures the Synod of Eastern Australia to rescind the “Act allowing optional alternative questions and formula while not reducing commitments in terms of the Act of Synod 1952”; delay any attempt to introduce a new form of Subscription until such a time as greater unity of mind can be secured on the matter; and effect the change under Barrier Act procedure, or do otherwise for this object as in its wisdom may seem best.”*

When the matter came before Synod in 2009 it was moved and seconded that the Overture be granted. According to the Synod Minutes, not a contrary motion, but an alternative motion was moved supporting the Overture. The exact terms of the motion were: *“That the prayer of the Overture be granted in the following terms: Synod is satisfied that the position of the church is safeguarded by the terms of the 2008 Act, notes the advantage to the church of the clear statements on church-state principles in it, and, for further assurance of where the ministry stands, directs that where a minister or student for the ministry is to be inducted to office or licensed using the 2008 Questions and Formula, such person shall also subscribe the Formula of 1952.”*

As they say, the result is now history. There was equal support for both motions, and the Moderator refused to exercise a casting vote. And so, two motions, both arguing for change to the existing law regarding the Questions and Formula, fell to the ground. When such a stalemate happened the situation reverted to the original rule that allows the use of two “Questions and Formula” – either as an alternative, or both together.

Now this “decision” where the status quo is maintained is being regarded as a victory for commonsense, and a vindication of the desire for change. But how can the decision of Synod, where the whole Synod - with the possible exception of the Moderator - wanted some sort of revision of the situation, be regarded as a vindication for the status quo? If any reasonable lesson can be drawn from the result of the voting it is this: That the Northern Presbytery was quite right to ask for a recension, so that a revision of the Questions and Formula could be made thoroughly and patiently, and sent down under the Barrier Act for a full and frank discussion by the Presbyteries. And if this was agreed upon, we would have one Questions and Formula

in modern language [hopefully English] acceptable to the whole church.

The whole procedure in this matter bears the marks of undue haste, and inadequate reflection and consultation. And that is sad because we are dealing with one of the most fundamental issues a church can face: The terms and conditions – the vows – that office bearers take when they take office in the Church. We ought to take time to get it right. Nor should this be set over against Evangelism. If we don't pay attention to these things, the day may come, as it has in other churches, when we don't have a gospel to preach, or a church faithful to the Scriptures. True, good “Questions and Formula” will never preserve a Church. The human heart is too deceitful for that! But at least they will help keep honest men faithful, and be a reminder of the vows we have taken before the Lord. And that is no small thing when the clouds of doubt, cynicism, scepticism, and change are all about us. We may look afresh at them and say: “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”. We will remain true to those vows we have solemnly taken before Him come what may.

## TV STANDARDS

The following is a circular that has come to hand. “Free TV Australia is conducting a review of the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice (the Code) and is now seeking comment on the proposed amendments. The Code covers matters prescribed in section 123 of the Broadcasting Services Act and other matters relating to program content that are of concern to the community including:

- ✦ Program classifications;
  - ✦ Accuracy, fairness and respect for privacy in news and current affairs;
  - ✦ Advertising time on television; and
- Placement of commercials and program promotions and complaints handling.

A number of issues have been identified by broadcasters and the Australian Communications and Media Authority for consideration. These include:

- [1] time zones and non program matter on digital multi channels,
- [2] treatment of participants in reality television programs,
- [3] classification criteria,
- [4] non program matter,
- [5] program promotions,
- [6] news and current affairs programs, and
- [6] complaints handling.

The Code is now open for review and Free TV Australia is receiving submissions.

**The closing date for public comment to the review of the Code is 25 September and submissions may be sent to Free TV Australia by:**

- ✦ Post to 44 Avenue Road, Mosman NSW 2088
- ✦ Fax to (02) 9969 3520

Email to [code@freetv.com.au](mailto:code@freetv.com.au)

Yours faithfully, Julie Flynn, CEO

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to God.” Who can measure the love of Christ for his people or plumb the depths of his self-sacrifice on the Cross? That was a love that gave all and held nothing back for our salvation. And that, says the Apostle, is both the pattern and the inspiration of our love for others. Do we know anything about that saving love of Christ for us? Has it become very personal for us so that we can say that *“He loved me and gave himself for me”*? Can we say, in the quietness of our hearts, *“Thank you, Lord Jesus, for dying*

*on the Cross for all my mistakes and sins and taking them all away so that they will never be remembered against me anymore?”* Its when we come to that point of trust and awareness, that we come to true foundation for a life of love and forgiveness. We realize we've been loved with an everlasting love and been forgiven an infinite debt and if we have any spiritual sensitivity at all, we know that we must forgive and that we must love just as we have been loved and forgiven.

# THE BIG PICTURE FOR SMALL CHURCHES - 4

The Rev. Sjirk Bajema, Narrewarren concludes his series on Small Churches

## Are we on our knees?

I think it was Charles Spurgeon who said once that “Every Christian was a Calvinist on bended knee.” He meant by this that when in prayer we are completely humble before God and recognize His completely sovereignty over all things. Then we know He has it all and we are totally dependent upon Him. You see, there is no room for ourselves in true prayer. That means God can then fill us and use us in His way – the way of His Word through His Spirit.

This is what John Benton brings out in his chapter on *Quality Prayer* as being a further hallmark of a faithful church. He particularly shows how this can be more truer in a small church because of two factors. The first of these is that true prayer is not something which depends on the amount of people praying. There are many examples in Scripture of God working His will through the few who were open to being lead by Him. But neither should that become an excuse not to go to the Prayer Meetings, because ‘you only need two or three’.

The second is that in a small church there is generally more unity and agreement. Nothing hinders prayer more than a congregation which harbours sin and in a big church that is harder to bring out and deal with than in the small fellowship. As Benton says, *When there are tensions and offences we tend to try to deal with them in a middle-class ‘English’ kind of way, pretending that nothing has happened. We keep quiet and say nothing, while often the hurts and jealousies continue to boil beneath the surface. This is disastrous with respect to church prayer.*

In our western world today prayer is not in a good way. As can be seen in the Old Testament, riches and a comfortable lifestyle lead us into the temptation to forget God (Deut.8:10-14). We don’t need anything any more. We have it all – and on tap too!

Dear believer, if you don’t ask you don’t get. And to ask you need, in the first place, to acknowledge you are missing something. The true spirit of prayer is a complete dependence on God. Like the maid looks to the hand of her mistress in Psalm 123 so we have to look to the Lord till He shows us His mercy.

It is hard work. Benton is honest about that. But he also gives some practical idea that will help our discipline in this. And he encourages us with how the Lord has blessed such prayer in the past. From the smallest acorn can grow the big oak tree, for this is the God who’s able to *do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.* (Ephesians 3:20).

## For you it’s always full!

It is hard in a small church. We know that personally and

we have read and seen it elsewhere. Despite the great promises of Christ to His own, humanly speaking it causes us despair. It is often quite the opposite to what they sing about in the musical *Oklahoma* – “where seldom is heard a discouraging word and the skies are not cloudy all day.” John Benton doesn’t mince his words on this subject. In fact, He open up God’s Word to show how our situation is nothing new to human history.

Using the example of Isaiah, particularly Isaiah 6, he brings out some specific discouragements. Among these are the frailty and failure of Christian leaders, the despising of God and His name, the awareness of our own sins, the sight of decline in the churches, and the unacceptability of our message. The consequences of this discouragement show through in a decline in Christian service, in a poor personal life – bitterness, depression, adultery, and hypocrisy, and the devil having a field day in the church itself. This is where Satan especially attacks the small church. The New Testament is full of commands to love one another and encourage each other exactly because the Lord sees those fiery darts of discouragement, particularly against the leaders of the church.

**“..... Dear believer, if you don’t ask you don’t get. And to ask you need, in the first place, to acknowledge you are missing something. The true spirit of prayer is a complete dependence on God. Like the maid looks to the hand of her mistress in Psalm 123 so we have to look to the Lord till He shows us His mercy.”**

It is with the leaders that a positive spirit must start and it must stay. Those leaders are the ministers and elders and deacons. But also there are those who are leading figures in the church. You have to pray and encourage each other – and especially do that for the minister. You have to look above your immediate situation as Isaiah was lifted so far above his situation through being brought into the glorious presence of God Himself. This vision of God is the key for there we see the holiness of God, the grace of God, the call of

God, the glory of God, the Son of God, and the sovereignty of God. If you’re filled with all this how could you possibly look down?

It’s true, some people naturally see that the glass is half-empty rather than half-full. Perhaps that might be because of upbringing or circumstance. But it should not be because of choice, for as God has chosen you by faith in His Son so you must constantly choose to look to Him above. A story I heard once illustrated this. An elder in a congregation would always be amazed by how optimistic his new minister was. He would often make remarks to him about how he always saw the upside of possibly quite negative situations. That minister wondered what he was going on about. But some years later he didn’t wonder anymore. He saw it was actually the Lord’s grace to him to minister through what could have been a discouraging time but what turned out to be a most blessed ministry.

## When small is beautiful

John Benton makes a telling comment in his tenth chapter. He says, *It seems to me that many larger churches are*

actually small churches, but with a very large fringe. He goes on to point out that in these large sized congregations it is only a few who do most of the work. In fact, people join that kind of congregation exactly because they know they can get away with doing nothing. As one visitor said to me when I was the minister of a large congregation, *I can sit in the back and no one notices me.* But you can't get away with that in a small church. And that's scary! That means commitment and accountability. It sounds a bit too much like a biblical lifestyle, doesn't it?

Benton goes on to draw out this aspect in writing, *The old question, which many preachers have asked of congregations over the years, is still relevant today, but especially to big churches. 'If Jesus was to withdraw his presence from your church what would change?' For many larger churches the answer is 'Not much.' They have the manpower and the expertise to just keep all the different activities running in their own strength ... But when a church is small there is no one to rely on except the Lord. There is no safety net. This can make faith and trust much more real. This is a blessed condition to be!*

You see this in a faithful small church with the way it prays. The times I would be told of the prayer for me as a minister in a small church far outnumbers the times I was told that when pasturing a large congregation – and that larger congregation was 8 times bigger! Then there is the high proportion of involvement. In a small congregation you get up to 80-90% of attendance at the Bibles studies. In a large congregation it would rare to get even up to 25%, and that even with a high emphasis on small group ministry within the larger church. And then there is the giving. Because those in a small church have to give simply to survive, they tithe. And what a blessing they have! There is a warmth of fellowship in a small church which is out of this world – because it is.

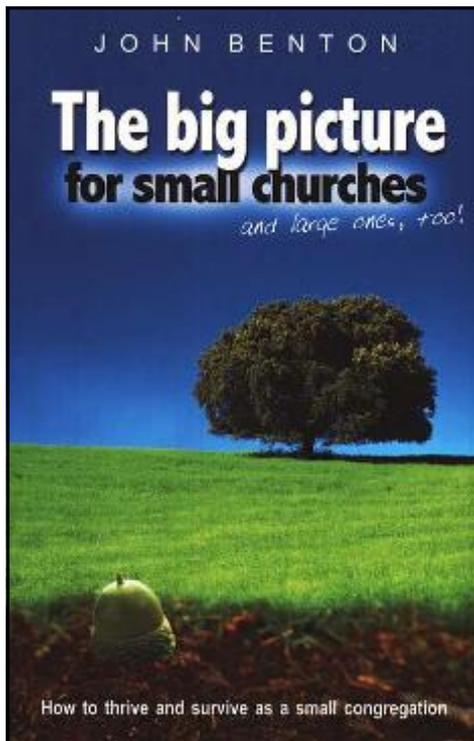
It's at this point that Benton brings in the resources of heaven for the small church through the work of the Holy Spirit. With sections entitled *Recognize, Renounce, Rededicate, and Rely*, he points out fairly and squarely as to Who makes all the difference. These things are what have to constantly be seen in a church of Christ. If we don't see them, or we have slipped away from them, we must humbly ask Him for it.

Are you praying for God's Word and Spirit to be among

us?

### A letter to a small church

John Benton sums up his most helpful book, *The big picture for small churches*, with expositing upon a letter in Scripture written to a small church. This is the letter from the Lord Jesus to the church at Philadelphia. In three sections on Revelation 3:7-13 – Christ's authority, the church's opportunity and the promise of heaven's security – he brings home in a nutshell what he has laid out for us in his book. You see, while the Lord points to their small size in verse 9, already in verse 7 He lays before them that He is the One who is with them. He has "the key of David." It's because Christ is the Head of the Church that it doesn't matter what others say about this congregation. He knows their deeds, as verse 8 states. It is because of what they are in Him that they will be a blessing. But make sure that you do stay in Him and don't turn the church into a personal fiefdom. It's the Lord's church.



This reminds me of a time in one denomination's history when it was being seriously threatened by heresy. In discussing the issue with a conservative minister a lady who had been brought up in the church, as had her parents and grandparents, and so on for many generations, said, "Oh, the Lord will keep the Reformed churches." To this the minister replied, "The Lord will certainly keep His Church – it may not always be called Reformed though!"

There lies the rub, dear friend. If we are not looking up we become soon so very lost.

Benton next brings out how the small church needs to be constantly looking at service for the Lord, also in new opportunities. The life in a church needs to keep coming through in different ways. But our weaknesses, self-doubt, and fear can hold us back. We want to play it safe, like the servant who buried his master's talent in the ground. But it's actually as

we lay ourselves on the line for the Lord that we already now realise the reward we have at the end of the line. Then heaven's security in the verses 11-12 is ours. Of this Benton comments, *It points to the fact that both the best and the safest place to be in the world is right in the middle of the Lord's will.*

Dear friend, is that where you are found? If the Lord were to return right now would you be where He has told you to be?

*"The big picture for small churches – and large ones, too!", by John Benton, is published by Evangelical Press, 2005.*

**"The Church has no store of life apart from Christ being in it; the ordinances of the Church have no deposit of grace apart from Christ present with them; the office - bearers of the Church have no gift of power, no authority, or action, apart from Christ ruling and acting by them.**

**- James Bannerman, The Church of Christ, Vol 1, p 199.**

# THE CITY: ITS SINS AND SORROWS

Rev. Thomas Guthrie, DD.

[Sermon 3 in a series of sermons preached on Luke 19:41 and published in book form in 1859]

THERE is a remarkable phenomenon to be seen on certain parts of our coast. Strange to say, it proves, notwithstanding such expressions as "the stable and solid land," that it is not the land but the sea which is the stable element. On some summer day, when there is not a wave to rock her, nor breath of wind to fill her sail or fan a cheek, you launch your boat upon the waters, and, pulling out beyond lowest tide-mark, you idly lie upon her bows to catch the silvery glance of a passing fish, or watch the movements of the many curious creatures that travel the sea's sandy bed, or creeping out of their rocky homes, wander its tangled mazes. If the traveller is surprised to find a deep-sea shell embedded in the marbles of a mountain peak, how great is your surprise to see beneath you a vegetation foreign to the deep! Below your boat, submerged many feet beneath the surface of the lowest tide, away down in these green crystal depths, you see no rusting anchor, no mouldering remains of some ship-wrecked one, but in the standing stumps of trees the mouldering vestiges of a forest, where once the wild cat prowled, and the birds of heaven, singing their loves, had nestled and nursed their young. In counterpart to those portions of our coast where sea-hollowed eaves, with sides the waves have polished, and floors still strewn with shells and sand, now stand high above the level of strongest stream-tides, there stand these dead, decaying trees—entombed in the deep. A strange phenomenon, which admits of no other explanation than this, that there the coast-line has sunk beneath its ancient level.

Many of our cities present a phenomenon as melancholy to the eye of a philanthropist, as the other is interesting to a philosopher, or geologist. In their economical, educational, moral, and religious aspects, certain parts of this city bear palpable evidence of a corresponding subsidence. Not a single house, nor a block of houses, but whole streets, once from end to end the homes of decency, and industry, and wealth, and rank, and piety, have been engulfed. A flood of ignorance, and misery, and sin, now breaks and roars above the top of their highest tenements.

Nor do the old stumps of a forest, still standing up erect beneath the sea-wave, indicate a greater change, a deeper subsidence, than the relics of ancient grandeur, and the touching memorials of piety which yet linger about these wretched dwellings, like evening twilight on the hills—like some traces of beauty on a corpse. The unfurnished floor, the begrimed and naked walls, the stifling, sickening atmosphere, the patched and dusty window-through which a sunbeam, like hope, is faintly stealing, the ragged, hunger-bitten, and sad-faced children, the ruffian man, the heap of straw where some wretched mother, in muttering dreams, sleeps off last night's debauch, or lies unshrouded and uncoffined in the ghastliness of a hope-

less death, are sad scenes.

We have often looked on them. And they appear all the sadder for the restless play of fancy. Excited by some vestiges of a fresco-painting that still looks out from the foul and broken plaster, the massive marble rising over the cold and cracked hearth-stone, an elaborately carved cornice too high for shivering cold to pull it down for fuel, some stucco flowers or fruit yet pendant on the crumbling ceiling, fancy, kindled by these, calls up the gay scenes and actors of other days – when beauty, elegance, and fashion graced these lonely balls, and plenty smoked on groaning tables, and where these few cinders, gathered from the city dust-heap, are feebly smouldering, hospitable fires roared up the chimney.

But there is that in and about these houses which bears witness of a deeper subsidence, a yet sadder change. Bent on some mission of mercy, you stand at the foot of a dark and filthy stair. It conducts you to the crowded rooms of a tenement, where — with the exception of some old decent widow who has seen better days, and when her family are all dead, and her friends all gone, still clings to God and her faith in the dark hour of adversity and amid the wreck of fortune—from the cellar-dens below to the cold garrets beneath the roof-tree, you shall find none either reading their Bible, or even with a Bible to read. Alas! of prayer, of morning or evening psalms, of earthly or heavenly peace, it may be said the place that once knew them, knows them no more.

But before you enter the doorway, raise your eyes to the lintel-stone. Dumb, it yet speaks of other and better times. Carved in Greek or Latin, or our own mother tongue, you decipher such texts as these

— "Peace be to this house;" "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it;" "We have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." "Fear God;" or this, "Love your neighbour." Like the mouldering remnants of a forest that once resounded with the melody of birds, but hears nought now save the angry dash or melancholy moan of breaking waves, these vestiges of piety furnish a gauge which enables us to measure how low in these dark localities the whole stratum of society has sunk.

Now there are forces in nature which, heaving up the crust of our earth, may convert that sea-bed again into forest or corn land. At this moment these forces are in active operation. Working slowly, yet with prodigious power, they are raising the coasts of Sweden in the old world and of Chili in the new. And who knows but that these subterranean agencies, elevating our own coasts, may yet restore verdure to those deep sea sands giving back to the plough its soil, to waving pines their forest land. And thus

**"But I do know, that there is a force at work in this world - gentle, yet powerful - commonly slow in action, but always sure in its results, which, mightier than volcanic fires, pent-up vapour, or rocking earthquake, is adequate to raise the most sunken masses of society, and restore the lowest and longest neglected districts of our cities to their old level - to set them on the platform even of a higher Christianity."**

on our shores, redeemed from the grasp of the ocean in some future era, golden harvests may fall to the reaper's song, and tall forests to the woodman's axe. We know not whether this shall happen. But I do know, that there is a force at work in this world gentle, yet powerful commonly slow in action, but always sure in its results, which, mightier than volcanic fires, pent-up vapour, or rocking earthquake, is adequate to raise the most sunken masses of society, and restore the lowest and longest neglected districts of our cities to their old level to set them on the platform even of a higher Christianity.

Can these people ever be raised? "Can those dry bones live?" "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" are questions, distressing questions, which, when worn and weary, and disappointed, and cast down, and heart-sick, we have been often tempted to ask. Of such times, we could say with David:—"We had fainted, unless we had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." But this voice of God came sounding down from heaven, saying, "Though ye have lain among the pots, yet ye shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." When ready to sink under a sense of our own feebleness, it said to us: "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place."

To the question, Can these lost ones be recovered? the answer came in these brave, and bold, and cheerful terms: "I will bring again from Bashan; I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea, that thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same." And as he stood on the heights of inspiration, looking far away into distant time, and commanding an extent of prospect hid from common eyes, we have heard the prophet announce the approaching of the promised event, this glorious gospel change: "They have seen thy goings, O God; even the goings of my King in the sanctuary. The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the damsels playing on timbrels. There is little Benjamin with the ruler, the princes of Judah with their council, the princes of Zebulon and the princes of Naphtali. Thy God hath commanded thy strength. Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us. Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth, O sing praises unto the Lord."

Yes. To infuse new vigour into his sinking energies, a man has only to "remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." How does the gospel of Jesus Christ, crowned with triumphs, point her sceptre, not to families, nor hamlets, nor cities, but whole nations, raised from the

lowest barbarism and the basest vices!

We cannot despair so long as we do not forget, that the power of God, and the wisdom of God, and the grace of God, have nothing to do within our shores which they have not done already. Are our lapsed classes rude and uncultivated, ignorant and vicious? So were our forefathers, when Christianity landed on this island. She took possession of it in Jesus' name, and conquered bold savages, whom the Romans could never subdue, by the mild yet mighty power of the gospel. God's "hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor is his ear heavy that it cannot hear." Therefore, whatever length of time may be required to evangelize our city masses, however long we may be living before the period when a "nation shall be born in a day," whatever trials of patience we may have to endure, whatever tears we may have to shed over our cities, our tears are not such as Jesus wept, when he beheld Jerusalem.



No. Jerusalem was sealed to ruin—doomed beyond redemption. Our brethren, our cities are not so. We have not to mourn as those who have no hope. As on a summer day I have seen the sky at once so shine and shower, that every rain-drop was changed by sunbeams into a falling diamond, so hopes mingle here with fears, and the promises of the gospel shed sunlight on pious sorrows. Weep, we may; weep, we should, - weep and work, weep and pray. But ever let our tears be such as were shed by Jesus beside the tomb of Lazarus, when, while groaning, weeping, he bade the bystanders roll away the stone—anticipating the moment when the grave at his command would give up its dead, and Lazarus be folded, a living brother, in the

arms that, four days ago, had swathed his corpse.

Be such our tears. Sustained by such anticipations, we shall work all the better; and all the sooner shall our heavenly Father receive to his embraces the most wretched of these wretched outcasts. Faith may be cast down, but faith cannot be destroyed. There is no reason, because we are "perplexed," ever to "despair." For dark as the cloud looks, it presents one aspect to the world, and another to the Christian. I stand on the side of it that lies next the sun. There, with the sun shining at my back and the black cloud in my eye, I see a radiant bow which spans its darkness, and reveals in heavenly colours mercy to a fallen world. "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." With the eye of faith fixed on that, we resume our work, and proceed still further to lay bare, the state of the city—its sorrows for Christian balm, its sins for Christian cure. **[To be Continued]**

**"Christianity, unlike any other philosophy or ideology, predicates a faith that can integrate disparate peoples because it affirms: All people are created by God and thus possess inherent value. All people are made in His image and thus are worthy of respect. All people possess a fallen nature that causes them to fail and thus stand in need of the redemption provided solely by the Christian Gospel as well as understanding for their foibles. Christianity also provides its recipients a life transforming power and love that transcends the cultural animosities that alienate people."  
- Joseph R. McAuliffe Chalcedon Report, No 337, August, 1993**

# Run For Glory

## OPEN DOORS

The man slowly looked up. This was a woman clearly accustomed to the finer things of life. Her coat was new. She looked like she had never missed a meal in her life. His first thought was that she wanted to make fun of him, like so many others had done before. "Leave me alone," he growled.

To his amazement, the woman continued standing. She was smiling -- her even white teeth displayed in dazzling rows. "Are you hungry?" she asked. "No," he answered sarcastically. "I've just come from dining with the president. Now go away." The woman's smile became even broader. Suddenly the man felt a gentle hand under his arm. "What are you doing, lady?" the man asked angrily. "I said to leave me alone.

Just then a policeman came up. "Is there any problem, ma'am?" he asked.

"No problem here, officer," the woman answered. "I'm just trying to get this man to his feet. Will you help me?" The officer scratched his head. "That's old Jack. He's been a fixture around here for a couple of years. What do you want with him?"

"See that cafeteria over there?" she asked. "I'm going to get him something to eat and get him out of the cold for awhile." "Are you crazy, lady?" the homeless man resisted. "I don't want to go in there!" Then he felt strong hands grab his other arm and lift him up. "Let me go, officer. I didn't do anything." "This is a good deal for you, Jack," the officer answered. "Don't blow it."

Finally, and with some difficulty, the woman and the police officer got Jack into the cafeteria and sat him at a table in a remote corner. It was the middle of the morning, so most of the breakfast crowd had already left and the lunch bunch had not yet arrived.

The manager strode across the cafeteria and stood by his table. "What's going on here, officer?" he asked. "What is all this, is this man in trouble?" "This lady brought this man in here to be fed," the policeman answered. "Not in here!" the manager replied angrily. "Having a person like that here is bad for business."

Old Jack smiled a toothless grin. "See, lady. I told you so. Now if you'll let me go. I didn't want to come here in the first place." The woman turned to the cafeteria manager and smiled. "Sir, are you familiar with Eddy and Associates, the banking firm down the street?" "Of course I am," the manager answered impatiently. "They hold their weekly meetings in one of my banquet rooms." "And do you make a goodly amount of money providing food at these weekly meetings?"

"What business is that of yours?" "I, sir, am Penelope Eddy, president and CEO of the company." "Oh." The woman smiled again. "I thought that might make a

difference." She glanced at the cop who was busy stifling a laugh. "Would you like to join us in a cup of coffee and a meal, officer?" "No thanks, ma'am," the officer replied. "I'm on duty." "Then, perhaps, a cup of coffee to go?" "Yes, ma'am. That would be very nice." The cafeteria manager turned on his heel. "I'll get your coffee for you right away, officer." The officer watched him walk away. "You certainly put him in his place," he said. "That was not my intent.... Believe it or not, I have a reason for all this."

She sat down at the table across from her amazed dinner guest. She stared at him intently. "Jack, do you remember me?" Old Jack searched her face with his old, rheumy eyes. "I think so -- I mean you do look familiar." "I'm a little older perhaps," she said. "Maybe I've even filled out more than in my younger days when you worked here, and I came through that very door, cold and hungry."

"Ma'am?" the officer said questioningly. He couldn't believe that such a magnificently turned out woman could ever have been hungry. "I was just out of college," the woman began. "I had come to the city looking for a job, but I couldn't find anything. Finally I was down to my last few cents and had been kicked out of my apartment. I walked the streets for days. It was February and I was cold and nearly starving. I saw this place and walked in on the off chance that I could get something to eat."

Jack lit up with a smile. "Now I remember," he said. "I was behind the serving counter. You came up and asked me if you could work for something to eat. I said that it was against company policy." "I know," the woman continued. "Then you made me the biggest roast beef sandwich that I had ever seen, gave me a cup of coffee, and told me to go over to a corner table and enjoy it. I was afraid that you would get into trouble. Then, when I looked over and saw you put the price of my food in the cash register, I knew then that everything would be all right."

"So you started your own business?" Old Jack said. "I got a job that very afternoon. I worked my way up. Eventually I started my own business that, with the help of God, prospered." She opened her purse and pulled out a business card. "When you are finished here, I want you to pay a visit to a Mr. Lyons. He's the personnel director of my company. I'll go talk to him now and I'm certain he'll find something for you to do around the office." She smiled. "I think he might even find the funds to give you a little advance so that you can buy some clothes and get a place to live until you get on your feet. If you ever need anything, my door is always open to you."

There were tears in the old man's eyes. "How can I ever thank you?" he asked. "Don't thank me," the woman answered. "To God goes the glory. Thank Jesus.... He led me to you." Outside the cafeteria, the officer and the woman paused at the entrance before going their separate ways.

rate ways. "Thank you for all your help, officer," she said. "On the contrary, Ms. Eddy," he answered. "Thank you... I saw a miracle today, something that I will never forget. And... thank you for the coffee."

The writer says: "If you have missed knowing me, you have missed nothing. But, if you have missed knowing my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, you have missed everything in the world.... And don't forget that when you "cast your bread upon the waters," you never know how it will be returned to you. When God leads you to the edge of the cliff, trust Him fully and let go. Only 1 of 2 things will happen, either He'll catch you when you fall, or He'll teach you how to fly! God closes doors no man can open and God opens doors no man can close."

- Author Unknown

### NO OTHER GOD

I want to love my Saviour,  
and worship Him alone;  
And have no earthly idol  
Upon my spirit's throne.  
I want, with pure devotion,  
To serve Him all my days;  
And, for His countless blessings,  
To yield Him grateful praise.

It is His hand hath made me;  
His power upholds me still;  
And He will always aid me  
To do His holy will.

Dear Saviour, be Thou near me  
and guide my feet aright;  
And make my thoughts and actions  
Both blameless in Thy sight.

There are many heathen children,  
Who yet Thy name have known;  
And many other idols  
Than those of wood and stone.  
Oh! if our hearts were open'd,  
That other eyes might see,  
How like a heathen temple  
Would they be found to be!

And yet, to Him who form'd them,  
Each secret thought is known  
He sees each separate object  
That occupies His throne.  
Lord, in Thy name appearing,  
We come on bended knee:  
Oh ! teach us how to worship  
*No other God but Thee!*

# SEARCH WORK - SEPTEMBER- 2009

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

**SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE** [Intermediate omit questions 6 and 7]

## 2 KINGS 11

1. Who was rescued by Jehosheba from Athaliah's slaughter, and how long was he hidden? (2 verses)
2. Where did the guard stand when Joash was crowned in the temple?
3. What covenant did Jehoiada make on behalf of the people, and what did they do to the house of Baal? (2 verses)

## Chapter 13

4. What happened when Jehoahaz pleaded with the Lord because of the Syrian oppression? (2 verses)
5. Why was Elisha angry with king Joash for only striking the ground three times?
6. (x) What happened to the man's body that was put into Elisha's sepulchre [tomb]?

## Chapter 14:23—15:7

7. (x) How did king Jeroboam fulfil the prophecy of Jonah?
8. Why did Azariah (Uzziah) king of Judah dwell in a separate [isolated] house till his death?

## JUNIOR

## EXODUS 14

1. What did the children of Israel do when they saw the Egyptians marching after them?
2. Why did Moses tell the people not to be afraid, but to stand still? (2 verses)
3. How did the Lord cause the Red Sea to go back?
4. When the waters returned, how many of the army of Pharaoh remained?

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

## Psalm 133

**"How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore."**



# ACTIVITY PAGE.....

## God's World



Psalm  
104 is a song to  
God the Creator. Many  
of its verses talk about  
things God has made. Fill in  
the blanks

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

- v. 12 The \_\_\_\_\_ of the air nest by the waters;  
they sing among their branches.
- v. 14 He makes grass grow for the \_\_\_\_\_,  
and plants for man to cultivate—  
bringing forth food from the earth.
- v. 16 The \_\_\_\_\_ of the LORD are well watered,  
the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.
- v. 17 There the birds make their \_\_\_\_\_;  
the \_\_\_\_\_ has its home in the pine trees.
- v. 18 The high \_\_\_\_\_ belong to the wild goats;  
the crags are a refuge for the coney.
- v. 19 The \_\_\_\_\_ marks off the seasons,  
and the \_\_\_\_\_ knows when to go down.
- v. 21 The \_\_\_\_\_ roar for their prey  
and seek their food from God.

## WEB WATCH ... Peter Carswell

### Online Biographies

A couple of months ago we headed off to a Christian bookstore as they were having a sale. My wife was particularly interested in some "inspirational" stories about Christians. We bought a number of books, some turned out to be not so good. A couple were very good, but I thought I would see whether there was anything free on the Internet to make up for those which disappointed us.

### Awake And Go! Global Prayer Network

([www.watchword.org](http://www.watchword.org))

The sites offers a number of biographies. Navigation is done via a horizontal or vertical menu. At the bottom of each biography you can navigate to the "previous" or "next" biography, rather than having to return to the biography list. The biographies are mostly short (500-1000 words) with one around 3000 words. There are also a number of articles available, sorted into 6 categories - some names I was familiar with (Spurgeon, Murray, Watson and Pink for example), others not so.

### Fire and Ice: History & Biography

([puritansermons.com/hist.htm](http://puritansermons.com/hist.htm))

Has some longer biographies and the like, available in HTML, Word and PDF format. This site was mentioned previously, but for those like me who didn't actually explore the site very much, well there is really a lot of good reading to do.

**Footnote:** If you use Firefox there is an add-on for counting selected words, strangely enough called Word Count Plus (<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/4718>)

### Kidzui ([www.kidzui.com](http://www.kidzui.com))

The last school holidays I stumbled upon this Firefox extension which aims to provide a safe environment for pre-teen kids on the Internet. Once installed you will get a big "K" icon next to your Firefox URL bar, click that to launch Kidzui. I initially had some trouble signing up two kids on the same computer, but eventually got that sorted. The interface seemed easy to use, nice big icons for Home, Back, Forward, Logoff and Exit. I did have some problems with the NoScript Addon and Kidzui and for sanity would probably suggest these two Addons are almost incompatible - the brave can make the two work together.

### A little bit of technology

For those who may be interested (and it might only be a couple) APC Magazine had a really interesting article on how a CPU is made. Thought I would share for those one or two... [apcmag.com/picture-gallery-how-a-chip-is-made.htm?page=1](http://apcmag.com/picture-gallery-how-a-chip-is-made.htm?page=1)

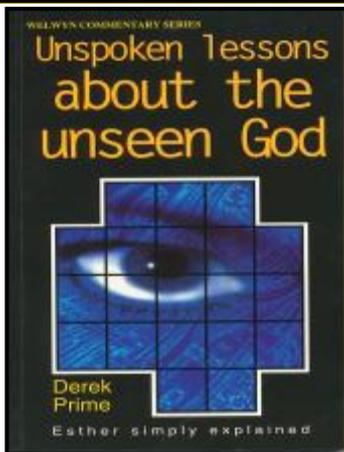
The other article I found was that Nero now offer a free version of the CD/DVD burning software.

[apcmag.com/nero-offers-free-cddvd-burning-app.htm](http://apcmag.com/nero-offers-free-cddvd-burning-app.htm)  
As noted by APC, it offers basic functionality but for most people that would be enough anyway; it is not time limited, you can download and keep.

Once you get to the Nero site it will require an email address (personally I recommend using some sort of disposable address rather than your "real"/"personal" one) and then you will be able to click on the Download button.

The download is 55MB. I've downloaded but haven't actually used this particular version, as I have the complete Nero Suite, but it is my preferred authoring software for DVDs.

## BOOK REVIEW .....



### Unspoken Lessons About the Unseen God

(Esther simply explained), by Derek Prime, Evangelical Press, Welwyn Commentary Series, 2001 (\$24.95).

Commentaries on Esther are not that easy to find, possibly because it is regarded as more of a children's story than a book for

serious study. Some regard the book as legend but its historical detail is accurate. The book 'fits perfectly with other Bible books in the interval between the return of Zerubbabel to Jerusalem (537BC) and that of Ezra (458BC)' says Prime. Esther was not readily accepted into the canon of Scripture because it does not mention the name of God. Prime gives a number a possible reason for this, but goes on to point out how the hand of God is seen right through the book- as his title indicates. Esther is the only OT book not found among the Dead Sea scrolls (second century BC) but has been recognised in the Christian canon since 397BC.

Luther was not at all fond of this book- it is too Jewish. Jews on the other hand love Esther. 'There are more manuscripts of the book of Esther than any other part of the OT' writes Prime. They love it because it records a great deliverance of the Jews. Wicked Haman attempted to exterminate the Jews but Esther and Mordecai acted to save them. The annual feast of Purim reminds them of this deliverance. This feast is still celebrated with the reading of the book of Esther, with giving of gifts and with great joy, as prescribed in the book.

Some read this book at a secular level and see the providences of God as mere coincidences. Prime does not see the king's sleepless night and his calling for the chronicles to be read (6:1) as a coincidence. 'God's providence is alluded to in Esther 4:14' he writes. This verse is the key to understanding both the sovereignty of God and the providence of God. Mordecai believed God would save the people. Why? Because Messiah had not yet come. He believed that God put Esther in the palace *for such a time as this* (4:14). God could use her to save his people at this particular time. On the basis of Luke 24:25-27, Prime writes "that encourages us to ask 'can we see Christ in the book of Esther?'" 'Esther was prepared to lay down her life for her people'. 'The book of Esther' he writes 'is a key chapter in redemption history'.

In addition to the lessons of God's sovereign preservation of his people, and divine providence, Prime points to God's justice and judgment. Haman is the epitome of



Anna and I decided to spend our annual holidays in July travelling in the outback with Trevor and Pamela Leggott. Trevor is National Director of Australian Indigenous Ministries (the newer name for the Aborigines Inland Mission), and has done the trip many times. AIM has workers from a number of Presbyterian and other denominations. Trevor is a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, and Rev Cliff Letcher, sometime minister of Aspendale Presbyterian Church, is AIM's Field Director.

We flew to Sydney to join the Leggotts and drove to Port Augusta. From there we drove 240kms north to Beltana, which was Rev John Flynn's initial base in 1911 as he sought to further his vision of what was to become the Australian Inland Mission of the Presbyterian Church. A Mrs Henrietta Smith of Dunesk on the outskirts of Edinburgh provided the funding. My grandfather, Rev H.E. Carey, was Smith of Dunesk missionary 1916-18 and my mother had her early education in the little school, so there was that additional interest. Beltana is really a ghost town now, long by-passed by the relocation of the railway, but a number of the early stone buildings remain, and some restored buildings are holiday homes.

Back to Port Augusta we headed for Coober Pedy where we had a good time with the Bush Church Aid Society missionary who pastors an underground church in the town. More correctly, it was a church excavated in the side of a hill from old mine workings, and would readily hold 100 people. An opal brooch for my wife, and we were back on track for Alice Springs.

Ularu was quite an experience, particularly the changing colours of the rock as light conditions varied. It was cold and damp at night and after one night we decided sleeping in swags in the open was not for us inexperienced wanderers. We saw the John Flynn Church in Alice Springs. One doubts Flynn would have been happy that so many only want to glorify him rather than God. I was able to attend a session of a conference for aboriginal Christian leaders. We spent time with the local AIM workers who come from the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Western Australia, and, after four nights in tents, moved on to Tennant Creek. We worshipped in the local AIM church which has a number of fine full blood aborigines as its leaders. About

50 attended the morning service when Trevor preached, and there was a larger crowd at night for an open-air ministry.

We moved on through Elliott to Katherine, where the AIM work has virtually outgrown the existing facilities, and from there to Darwin, a bustling and expanding metropolis. Returning south we turned off the main road at Daly Waters and travelled some 390km east to Borroloola, an isolated spot with few Christians but several local leaders who have been helped to manage the AIM work which is the only church. Dennis and Glenys Tranter of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria has ministered here effectively for a number of years. Dennis' ill health has meant they have had to withdraw, but the aboriginal leaders are able to continue.

We visited the cemetery on Elsey Station where Jeannie Gunn of *We of the Never Never* fame lived and where her husband Aeneas died in 1902. Strikingly, Elsey Station was not really the 'Never Never' when you consider other drier parts of the Inland. Back on the main road we continued to Elliott. There are only two strong Christian families here. Harold Dalywaters gives excellent leadership. He used to be a violent drunk but was converted and for a number of years was a policeman in the town. He is active in witness and is gifted with his guitar. We had an evening meal on the shore of the magnificent Lake Woods, which teemed with birdlife – pelicans, ducks and ibis.

And so we headed off east to the small centre of Camooweal just over the border in Queensland where Jonathon and Grace Wright of the Presbyterian Reformed Church are the AIM workers. An evening gathered around a campfire included about a dozen young people from Christian Brethren circles in Tasmania. A moving testimony was given by a young Chinese student who had been converted in China. Later her father, a communist, was also converted, but living in a village in rural NE China they cannot worship openly. We also tried some meat of kangaroos we had shot earlier in the day.

That Saturday night we had little sleep as some white folks had a drunken party outside our room until 2.50am. They proved that it is not the colour of skin that matters but what

is in the heart. We passed the rest of our trip through Longreach, Moree and Armidale without incident and 31 days and 11,800 kms after we started we reached Sydney. I'm glad Trevor did most of the driving!

Some overall impressions include the vastness and relative isolation of much of the outback. Mobile telephones don't give universal coverage. We had more immediate contact with our family in Melbourne when we were in Iceland last year than in parts of Central Australia! The heavy rains in February have produced more vegetation than for many years. The number of 'grey nomads' with their caravans was also higher than previous years, and facilities in the towns were better, presumably because of the tourist dollar.

The intervention seems to have had overall a positive effect, and the restriction on street drinking has meant towns are tidier and problems not so obvious to the tourist. However, there are endemic problems not helped by government bureaucracy, by arbitrary imposition of programmes without adequate consultation, or by some in the indigenous community who seem more interested in power than really addressing the complex issues.

There is probably a greater percentage of non-drinkers in the indigenous population than the European, but when an aborigine drinks he usually becomes noisy and violent. The old hunter/gatherer obligation of sharing the day's food becomes an obligation for relatives to give what they have even if they have drunk or gambled their money away. The obligation remains strong in the communities so a few drunks create major dislocations across families. Sometimes relatives have the care of the children although the Centrelink money goes to the actual parents to be consumed on alcohol. For Christians to live every day with the kind of situation we had at Camooweal, is dreadfully stressful.

Too many view work in the outback as a short-term assignment. Others running businesses sometimes rip off the indigenous people. Still others come with great ideals but are overwhelmed by the difficulties. There are encouragements in the area of education and great opportunities for suitable white Australian Christians to take up good jobs in the outback on a long-term basis to give help and stability. In the end the truth and power of the Gospel is what is needed by black and white.

## CHURCH NEWS.....



### WINNERS ARE GRINNERS - THE ULVERSTONE CAR RALLY 2009

This year's winter car rally course on the 1st August was set by David and Mandy Kerridge and included a series of enjoyable stops searching for designated books at the local Christian book store, then further stops at Devonport and BBQ lunch at Latrobe before concluding at the home of David and Mandy for afternoon tea and results. Pictured with the first prize trophy are Jordan, Mathew and Eric Van Der Neut and Shaun Hamilton.

### NORTHERN PRESBYTERY

- ◆ The Brisbane Congregation meets on Saturday, 29th August to consider calling the Rev. Jim Klazinga from the RCNZ.
- ◆ Armidale has received in excess of \$2,600 in aid. A Committee will meet this month [September] to consider the future of the Congregation.

pride and wickedness, but all his plans come undone. The tables are turned and he gets hung on the gallows he built for his enemy. Prime makes good use of the book of Proverbs in his exegesis of these passages. He goes on to give appropriate examples of application. For example, just as the feast of Purim was given so the Jews would remember this day of deliverance in the fifth century BC, so the Lord's Supper is given to Christians to remember the day of deliverance from sin and death through Jesus Christ in the first century AD. Prime links the Lord's Supper to the Lord's Day, as the day to remember our Creator and Redeemer.

As with other commentaries in this series its strong point is readability and application. Exegesis is very good, with references to other Scriptures, especially the books of

Psalms and Proverbs, and to extra Biblical sources such as the Greek historian Herodotus and the Jewish historian Josephus. But difficult passages, such as 9:13, could have been considered in more detail.

In recommending this excellent outline of the book of Esther I must strongly object to the practice of putting footnotes at the end of the book. It is frustrating turning to the back of the book, then back to front to find the chapter number, getting the reference and then going back to where one was reading. I have written many of the footnotes in the margin myself. On page 135 of this 144 page book a comment reads 'it was necessary to decide whether to put references in the text of the commentary or as an appendix'. The wrong decision was made.

- Dr. Dennis K Muldoon

# THE PRESBYTERIAN AGENDA .....

## THE “QUESTIONS AND FORMULA DEBATE—LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor,  
The Presbyterian Banner

In responding to Dr Hanna's letter in the July issue, a letter likely to alarm those not familiar with the discussions, I note that while he did not attend Synod in 2008 or 2009 to present his case, the arguments Dr Hanna brought forward were in fact considered by Synod both in 2008 and in 2009. They are largely encompassed by the overture from Dr Hanna's own Presbytery in 2009, but were not ultimately persuasive. The voting shows how much desire there is for a more user-friendly version of the Formula.

The cogency of an argument may often be gathered from the fairness with which it is presented. Unhappily, for one reason or another Dr Hanna has not given us a fair representation such as his own correct exposition of the ninth commandment in the October 2008 issue requires.

Dr Hanna argues that he could not sign the 2008 Formula because it makes the commitment to our worship to be not the present form but whatever Synod may decide in the future. However, Dr Hanna has omitted certain words (indicated by ... ) which put an entirely different meaning that what he has assigned. He said he could not commit to 'acknowledge sincerely the Biblical warrant for the worship ... illustrated ... in Acts of Synod from time to time'. But the Act actually says: '(3) Do you sincerely acknowledge the Biblical warrant for the worship authorised by the Confession of Faith, which worship is illustrated in the Directory for Public Worship of 1645 and in Acts of Synod from time to time?' So 'the Acts of Synod from time to time' are subject to what is authorised by the Confession, of which the Directory gives an illustration. The form of worship is prescribed in the Confession, but the detail of, for instance, which version of the psalms is to be used, is a matter for the collective wisdom of the members of Synod from time to time. Does Dr Hanna not use psalm versions in his congregation that are not drawn from the 1650 book? Synod countenanced such years ago but it was not so when he was inducted an elder!

In WCF 31:4 we read that Synods and councils may err. Dr Hanna draws from this the conclusion that to commit ourselves to what Synod may decide from time to time is to subscribe to the 'Dogma of Synod Infallibility'. I agree with him that there is no place for such a dogma, but his argument is confusing. The assumption of the vows in 1952 or 2008 is that Synod decisions are lawful decisions. One has no obligation to submit to clearly unlawful ones. In any event, Dr Hanna's argument is somewhat two-edged, allowing, as it rightly does, for correction of the Confession itself if found unscriptural or deficient.

Second, he slights the new wording that seeks to neatly summarise the complexities of the church-state relationship which otherwise must be gleaned from a correct interpretation of the disputed parts of the Confession, plus the principles in the Claim Declaration and Protest read in the presence of the Royal Commissioner on 18 May 1843, plus the terms of the Act of the Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland of 1846. This is not an easy task for

elders or even ministers at this late date, as anyone who knows the complexities of the debates in the 1830s and '40s would realise. Dr Hanna again omits the full context of the words he cites, and gives quite a wrong impression.

Third, as regards whether the new wording is necessary Dr Hanna is entitled to his opinion. As an immigrant from the United Kingdom one appreciates his background disposes him to a certain viewpoint, but what of those with other backgrounds. In our Presbytery our ministers are a Sudanese, a Scot, a Chilean, a Friesian, and one lone Aussie minister, and our congregations reflect this diversity. Perhaps Brisbane does not have this multi-cultural makeup. If one does it helps you to appreciate the church is Christ's church and that we should use forms of words that reflect our multi-ethnic diversity.

Finally, in regard to who decides when the alternative shall be used, certainly it is not the congregation, an option offered by Dr Hanna, since decisions of this kind are made in a presbyterian way, and thus by the assemblies of elders in session, presbytery or synod as may be appropriate. Love and the desire to edify can find a way. Ideally Synod would prescribe but we are not yet sufficiently united to do that, while one Presbytery is in urgent practical need of a more user-friendly version. In 2007 the Committee was proposing a *compulsory* new formula *and* extensive clarifying statements and so Barrier Act procedure was appropriate. The optional formula proposal of 2008 was thus not 'almost identical' as claimed by Dr Hanna.

There is plenty of room for constructive criticism and improvement to any Synod legislation, but Dr Hanna's presentation is not helpful. The arguments have already been well ventilated in the appropriate forum of Synod, and it is unedifying to readers of our church magazine, who may not have the necessary background information to assess them, and who may be unduly alarmed supposing our solid Biblical position is being weakened rather than strengthened.

Yours sincerely,  
Rowland S. Ward

## DR. HANNA REPLIES

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to respond to these comments of Dr. Ward.

I should say, at the outset, that I take strong objection to Dr. Ward's remarks with respect to myself. In his second paragraph, he accuses me of breaking the Ninth Commandment by not giving a fair representation of the facts. This is a very serious accusation to make against any Christian, whether minister or not. It is also an accusation that comes very strangely from a man who tells us that "The voting shows how much desire there is for a more user-friendly version of the Formula." To someone who did not know the facts, this would imply that Synod voted overwhelmingly in favour of the new Formula. The actual facts are that, at Synod 2008, the new Formula passed by one, solitary, single, vote! Furthermore, when a petition to reverse this was heard at Synod 2009, the voting was even closer! The number of votes for and against were equal, and the Moderator refused to use his casting vote to resolve the matter. Therefore, indeed, it *is* true that the

voting shows how much desire there is for a new version of the Formula – but not in the way that Dr. Ward would have us think! It is also true that I was not present at Synod in either 2008 or 2009, and I regret this. Indeed, I should apologise to the Church at large for this, for, if I had been present, my *single* vote would have reversed the entire result! That is how much desire there is for this new version! It has been thrust upon us by the narrowest of margins.

Once this has been established, your readers will understand how much credence they can place on the rest of Dr. Ward's comments. If, for example, we proceed to his third paragraph, we find that he accuses me of unfairly quoting from the new Formula. He says that I altered the meaning by leaving out certain words. Of course, this is not true. I omitted certain words, not to change the meaning, but in order to make the meaning clearer. The wise (and inspired) writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes tells us that meaning is lost when too many words are used – "Much dreaming and many words are meaningless" (Ecclesiastes 5: 7) This is a feature which is often used by those who want to conceal the real meaning of what they say in a cloak of other words. I tried to avoid this by stripping away the extra words. However, if it will please Dr. Ward better, let us take them all. The quotation from the new Formula is, in full, "I also sincerely acknowledge the Biblical warrant for the worship authorised by the Confession of Faith, which worship is illustrated in the Directory for Public Worship and in Acts of Synod from time to time." Here, if I were to sign this statement, I would be signing, firstly, that I acknowledge that the worship authorised by the Confession of Faith, and illustrated in the Directory for Public Worship, is Biblical. Good! I can do that! I have read the Confession of Faith and also the Directory for Public Worship; they are in the past, I know what they say, and so I can sign that the worship authorised by them is Biblical. However, now we come to another statement which is very different but which has been so tied in with the others that I must sign all or none! This is the statement that whatever Synod may decide to pass as Acts "from time to time", that is, *in the future*, will also illustrate the worship authorised by the Confession of Faith! How can I know that? It is impossible or me to know what may be passed as Acts of Synod *in the future*! I cannot sign that! How could any thinking person sign it? Dr. Ward's comments here about which version of the Psalms we sing are irrelevant. They are just so many more words to cloud and confuse the issue. The fact is that, under the older formula, I do not commit myself, *in advance*, to a particular version. The *new* formula, on the other hand, would make me commit myself, even to singing uninspired hymns, if Synod should decide on this in the future. We should not dismiss this as impossible. Other Churches which once held the Psalms-only position have changed. The new Formula holds the door open for us to do this also!

Dr. Ward's next paragraph is a wonderful example of the statement of Ecclesiastes that "many words are meaningless." Here we have a multitude of words which say very little indeed! He says that the decisions which Synod made in 1952 and in 2008 are lawful decisions. He also says that there is no requirement on an office-bearer to submit to unlawful ones. However, the new Formula re-

quires one to sign that one will agree to *future* decisions, *before* one knows whether they are lawful or not!

Dr. Ward goes on to accuse me of slighting the new wording of the Formula which, he claims summarises neatly "the complexities of the church-state relationship which otherwise must be gleaned from a correct interpretation of the disputed parts of the Confession, plus the principles in the Claim Declaration and Protest read in the presence of the Royal Commissioner on 18 May 1843, plus the terms of the Act of the Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland of 1846." Surely, if these matters were so complex, a summary which, in part, glibly refers to "a mutually helpful relationship" is not going to do them justice? Perhaps the slighting that is being done is a slighting by Dr. Ward of those of our ministers and office-bearers who have come from Sudanese, Scottish, Chilean, Friesian or other, stock, in making the assumption that they are not up to understanding the issues when expressed in plain English? My experience with people from non-English backgrounds (and I have dealt with many such, either as a minister or when a university lecturer) is that they are, usually, much more competent in English than native English speakers are in other languages. We should not judge them by our own foreign-language skills! In any case, I have always found that, if there were the slightest possibility of a misunderstanding, the best course is to use simple straightforward English, without woolly, meaningless expressions such as "the mutually helpful relationship." However, my point was that the new Formula requires all our ministers to know and understand the old one, because the Act of Synod establishing the new Formula says that "if any question of interpretation shall arise the obligations of the said Act [that is, the older Act of 1952] shall be decisive."

As we go on with Dr. Ward's comments, we find that he again accuses me of misrepresenting the facts (or worse). He says, "The optional formula proposal of 2008 was thus not 'almost identical' as claimed by Dr Hanna." Now, it should be noted that I restricted my remarks entirely to the substance of the new Formula itself. I wished to avoid those "many words" that were used in the material accompanying it. I would then maintain that, when I said the new Formula was "almost identical" with the one rejected by Synod in 2007, I was *not* misrepresenting the facts. However, why should your readers believe me? Should they not ask for the Biblical requirement of "two or three witnesses"? I would call, as my witnesses, firstly Dr. Ward himself, and then the other members of the Law and Advisory Committee at that time. As Convener of that Committee, Dr. Ward would have written the Report and he certainly presented it to Synod. Here is what he said in recommending the new Formula to Synod: "the Questions & Formula are almost the same as considered last year." (Synod Reports 2008, page 8). So, I said "almost identical"; Dr. Ward said, "almost the same." Has Dr. Ward now changed his opinion, or does he, simply, have one story for Synod and a different one for your readers?

Dr. Ward says, correctly, that I was not present at Synod in 2008 and 2009. As I have said, if I had been present then, my one single vote would have turned this matter on its head. The new Formula would have been rejected. Would Dr. Ward have accepted this as showing how

much desire there was to retain the old one, or would the Boomerang Procedure then have come into play as it has so often in the past, the procedure whereby, no matter how many times Synod threw the proposal out, it would keep coming back until enough members were worn down and the matter finally scraped through? Then, of course, the decision would be set in stone and anyone who disagreed would be accused of breaking the Ninth Commandment!

I think that I have said enough. I will leave it to your readers to decide whether there is any truth in Dr. Ward's accusation that I have transgressed the Ninth Commandment by not giving a fair representation of the facts. I will just close by saying that Dr. Ward thinks that what I have written may cause some of your readers to be alarmed. Maybe they should be!

## ANOTHER LETTER .....

The Editor,

The Presbyterian Banner.

First, allow me to commend your work with the Banner. Its presentation and content are first rate. Editorial work is often tedious and thankless but be assured that there are many appreciative readers.

Secondly, I read with interest Wes Hanna's incisive analysis (Presbyterian Banner July, 2009) re Synod's endorsement of alterations to the vows taken by office bearers. Wes raises some fundamental questions that demand unequivocal answers.

Not holding a seat on the higher courts of the church has precluded me from taking part in the debates and decision making of Synod, but when a decision is enacted which appears to involve unnecessary and highly questionable change, then mere commoners such as I require a plain answer from those responsible.

Whilst I do not intend to cover the points raised by Wes, I

## BETWEEN YOU AND ME .....

I hope you are still enjoying Thomas Guthrie's Sermons on "The City: Its Sins and Sorrows" as much I am! He may be a bit hard to follow sometimes [!], but his fine balance in displaying man's misery, and the power of the Gospel is an example of good preaching. And as you can see from the excerpt this month, he was well aware of climate change as well!

But not only should we admire his eloquent preaching. We should also learn from his vivid portrayal of life in nineteenth century Scotland, and his confident hope that the Gospel was the answer to the wretchedness that existed in the cities of his day. Sometimes we look back at those years with rose - coloured glasses. We think of the stand taken by the Free Church of Scotland in 1843, the

galaxy of theological giants that taught in the Free Church College, and the revivals that took place. And perhaps we might think that that is how it was. But Guthrie brings a different view. Indeed he brings the nineteenth century into the twenty first century. In our day we bemoan the state we're in, and look for the "good old days". But were they so good after all? Surely we must admit that the wretchedness that Guthrie and others had to witness has not reached us yet.

And herein lies the lesson for us. Guthrie and others went forth with the Gospel - the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes - built Churches and influenced national life. We can do nothing less - and we have their success to encourage us.

make a couple of further observations. I note that the Preamble to the new Act gives two reasons for the alternative wording. (i) "...the changing ethnic mix within the church.. and (ii) ..for the better edification of congregations..."

Synod is apparently pointing to an alarming decline amongst our people (since 1952) in the ability to comprehend the English language. The wording of the 1952 Act was deemed comprehensible then. Has the English language undergone such radical change since then?

And it seems to be inferred that today's ministers no longer have the capacity (or the will) to explain the meaning and significance of the 1952 wording to any who may seek clarification.

Is it also inferred that some particular nationalities have limited capacities as well? What does a "changing ethnic mix" have to do with a new set of vows? Isn't it a fundamental work of a minister or elder to teach...to explain...to expound? This surely is part and parcel of our calling. And am I therefore right in assuming that all ministers, elders and congregations in South Africa, India, Peru and elsewhere where the Free Church has worked have not been able to comprehend the vows that are taken? What official rewording has occurred for their sakes?

A case could be made for translating our vows into another language if required, but I fail to see the present need to alter the English wording. Such a change rarely captures accurately the intentions of the framers of the original document and sadly leads to unnecessary suspicion and dissension. It's a pity that our church courts spend so much time on these matters and so little on evangelism and church extension.

Sincerely in Christ,  
John Cromarty.  
Laurieton.

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### **Editor:**

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

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