

the presbyterian banner

March 2015

*Be exalted, O God,
above the heavens,
and let your glory be over
all the earth.
Psalm 108:5*

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Editorial

Do you have a favourite spot you turn to when opening up a magazine or newspaper? Perhaps it's the 'Letters to the Editor' section, or the sports page. Some older folk go to the Death Notices, younger ones turn to fashion and entertainment, while a number of those in-between head to the Finance section. This can certainly show up what the priorities are in our lives.

What it could also show up about us, however, is that we actually have the wrong priorities. What takes up our time is shown to be not worth the time – though it takes up a lot of our time. And how many people haven't said that, given the chance, they would do things a lot differently the second time round?

When you think about it, how seriously are you involved in those things that really matter – not just for this life but the life to come? How sad it is to know people who are completely consumed by the stock market, a particular sport, or unhelpful forms of literature and media.

I remember well visiting one man, an elder in his church, who was totally fixated on how his shares were managing. He certainly had good financial advice, but was of little other help!

This is why a healthy self-examination must be a vital part of the Christian life. We are certainly encouraged in this during the weekly worship service. But particularly whenever the Lord's Supper is celebrated we are exhorted to examine ourselves.

Well, I hope you are. It would be a terribly sad situation if you weren't challenged to consider where you presently stand before the Lord. Imagine being part of a church community where the overriding motivation was to make sure you always felt good about yourself! How would it be if the Lord's Supper was simply a come-as-you-are affair? No warning using the words of Scripture, no preparatory preaching or teaching, just another meal.

Hey, wasn't that exactly what it had become in the Corinthian church? There people behaved in any way they wished. No wonder a number missed out while others got drunk!

And how much didn't they suffer for that? Many among them were weak and sick, and a number had died as a result of their ungodly behaviour. Maybe that's not the kind of effect we see happening in Christian congregations, but just think of the spiritual weakness and sickness and death that comes about through such a low regard for the things of the Lord!

While we must be a warm, welcoming people, let's also be a serious people. What God says in his Word matters. Obeying that Word is what must be foremost in our lives.

As others read our lives, do they get to meet the only true Saviour and Lord? Indeed, let's ask if we ourselves are pages from Scripture.

*Join with others in following my example, brothers,
and take note of those who live
according to the pattern we gave you.
Philippians 3:17*

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The Greatest Love

A Reflection on 1 Corinthians 13:4—8

Sjirk Bajema

1st Corinthians chapter 13 is one of the most well-known passages in the Bible. It is up there with the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and the 23rd Psalm as one of those pieces of Scripture many people know. This is an incredible piece of prose. You can't help but fall in love with this ode to love.

In fact, shouldn't anyone in this whole world be able to enjoy this great song? Don't all the songs of love share the same theme? Whether it is an ancient Hindu marriage hymn or the Beatles singing "All You Need Is Love" it's all about the same thing, isn't it?

Well, actually, no. What the apostle is describing here is not just 'love'. This is Christian love.

What kind of love is this?

That's what we see in the first word in the passage. You see, today we use the word 'love' very loosely. You can have a love for where you live, you can have a love for flying, you can have a love for a particular type of music, and you can have a love for iced coffee.

In fact, hasn't love today become an emotional, sentimental, passionate, temporary thing? It's wrapped up in glamour and comes with roses – ah, and chocolates!

Christian love, however, is a special love; for the word that we use so loosely, the New Testament Greek described with three or even five words. They had 'eros' for passion, and 'philia' for friendship.

'Philadelphia' meant love for family and 'philanthropia' was charity to all.

But the love Paul speaks of here

is something much, much deeper. This is 'agape' love. He used a word no one else in society then used. It was a word only believers in Jesus used, because it was a love that only Christians could know!

1 Corinthians 13

1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. 4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. 12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. 13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

It's exactly because it is Christian love that really understands this poem of love, that it shows us how little we truly love. Every time this love is used in the Bible we cannot

sit still and enjoy it. It always demands something of us; it always points out something missing in us; it always directs us.

The first three verses of 1st Corinthians 13 show this, because Paul has an issue with the Church at Corinth. In fact, he has a number of issues with them.

And Paul is not into P.C. language. He's doesn't write trying to keep everyone happy by saying words that can't possibly offend any of them. And especially he, as an apostle, is most upset that the good gifts the Lord gave the Corinthian church have been abused.

People were doing what they want to do instead of what Christ wants them to do. In the words of the angel to the Ephesus church in Revelation 2 verse 4, they had forsaken their first love – they weren't loving the Lord!

Now you're wondering, aren't you? How could a church get to the point where it's not Christian any more?

Well, it happens when speaking in the tongues of men and angels becomes everything for them. It happens when they think they know it all. It happens when they depend on their own faith as all they need. It happens because they think they get credit depending on how much they give. And it happens when they believe they're doing something especially holy, like being martyred.

Doesn't that just about describe the different types of Christianity today? Certainly it has pictured

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what many people are like who call themselves Christian. But Paul is saying that doing any of these things-- no matter how fantastic they may be – is not Christian!

He is telling them that true Christianity is shown by bearing spiritual fruit rather than through gifts. This is not about what one may have – it's about what you have to have!

How can you love like this?

So what has to be shown, then? Well, there are some fifteen characteristics of Christian love given in the verses 4 till 8. It is no small list.

Mind you, though it's a big list, you won't find any of these in any worldly list. A list that begins with patience and ends with patience, telling us more about what not to do than what to do, is the last thing the world wants to hear.

Actually, don't modern commercials tell you to get what you want – right now? Don't wait! So what if it's a little bit naughty – does it really matter?

It's terrible, isn't it? That is complete and utter selfishness! That is just taking without any giving – which is exactly what those Corinthians were like!

You can't be serious! They were Christians. Paul was writing just to help them live more godly lives.

Oh, it really was like that, was it?

In fact, what Paul does here is to specify those things the Corinthian Christians should be doing and weren't doing, and the things they were doing which they shouldn't have been doing. So every time the word "not" appears you know that's the way they were. And when the character of love is described positively that's what they weren't like.

Perhaps you cannot imagine that it was that serious. You think Christians – of all people! – are the ones who do the right thing, especially to each other.

If you look earlier in 1st Corinthians at chapter 11, though, you'll find something quite different.

There in verse 30 Paul points out that some in their church have even been struck dead by the Lord because of their evil ways.

Reading carefully through this letter you'll find sin was quite obvious amongst them. There are divisions mentioned, selfish pride, sexual immorality – even a case of incest, abuse by leaders, gluttony, impatience, boasting, and heresy. Not a nice bunch. So they'd be quite at home with us – because don't think that churches and Christians are any different today!

But if this Christian love has these qualities which we don't do very well – that's if we actually do them at all! – then why bother? And here's where we get to the real crunch. For this is where we either make it ourselves or are broken down in ourselves.

In complete contrast to the world, Christian love is the lowest way. This love wins when we lose! And the more we realise how we're not loving this way at all, the more this love shines out in us!

Christian love isn't about you. Living by these fifteen instructions given in Corinthians 13 puts you last!

There is a Christian husband who has this unique response when he gets really upset with his wife, because he is tempted then to really take it out on her. This believing man has the right idea, though. You see, he knows exactly when he's really riled up about it So he stops. Then he turns around and does for his wife the exact opposite of what he feels like doing. He shows her the most charming love.

That's Christian love. That's putting yourself last.

Who can possibly love as this?

It's quite clear there is only one perfect example of love. That is shown by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul speaks of this in his second letter to the Corinthians. There he writes to them, "You know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you

through his poverty might become rich."

Jesus gave himself in the most complete way for us. He didn't hold anything back. He even went to the point of being cut off from the loving care of his Heavenly Father because he loved us.

That's why when Paul in Ephesians 5 describes the closest of all Christian relationships – marriage – he does it by comparing the love of a believing husband to his wife with the relationship Jesus Christ has to His Church.

Thus the old English saying is true that "charity begins at home". For 'charity' is the old English word for this Christian love.

So the way verses 7 and 8 conclude our reflection are a picture of what the family should be. It always protects, it always trusts, it always hopes, it always perseveres, and it never fails. You can match this description up against any working Christian marriage. It fits exactly.

And notice that I didn't say that it was a perfect marriage. I really cringe when someone says just how wonderful their relationship or their spouse is. That just doesn't gel!

It's by looking to Jesus that you put the right perspective on it. In fact, that will bring you through life's storms. Then you are persevering because you see him whom you cannot see!

That's faith. And it's that faith in action which proves Christian love demonstrates the Lord's life. You are really living – when you are dying! And when you do die – that's when you really come alive. Because then you are living with the Lord Jesus himself forever.

The Past for Today

Christianity in Scotland (2)

3: Roman organisation

In the 8th century we hear of people called the Céli Dé or Culdees. The term means 'companions of God' and describes a group of people devoted to Christ and living hermit-like lives although not taking monastic vows. They were not proto-Protestants but presumably they originated as a reaction to increasing worldliness in the monastic system. They came from Ireland and filled the role of the monks of Iona in Pictland, who had left. The Culdees were largely absorbed into other orders in the 12th century.

In 794 the Norsemen began their devastating series of attacks on Britain and laid Iona waste more than once. The Pictish king, Kenneth McAlpin (ca. 841-858), reputedly had a Pictish mother and a Scottish father. At any rate these two communities were drawn together by the common Norse enemy. In 849 a church was built at Dunkeld and diocesan episcopacy was introduced. Gaelic culture impacted Pictland and the Kingdom of Alba is the name in use by about 900. By this time St Andrew's becomes the most important ecclesiastical centre and there is a pact between the Picts and the Scots, attested by both the King and the Bishop. The relationship of the Celtic church to Rome appears to be one of practical disregard, more particularly as there was constant fighting with the English until victory over the Northumbrians was secured by Malcolm II in 1018. Malcolm's grandson Duncan, who was king of Strathclyde, became his successor, so all the four groups were at last united as Scotland, although it would be several centuries before the northern borders of modern Scotland were ceded by Norway. In 1040

Duncan was killed in battle with forces led by his cousin, Macbeth of Moray, and Macbeth, who was nothing like the tragic figure in Shakespeare's play, became king.

Macbeth was an effective ruler, but the last of the truly Gaelic kings, and nearly the last to be buried at Iona. In 1057 Malcolm III Canmore ['Bighead'], who had defeated Macbeth in battle, came to the Scottish throne. He had grown up in exile at the English court. In 1069 he married Princess Margaret (c.1044-93) who had spent her earliest years in the court of the Christian King of Hungary, and latterly at the English court of the pious Edward the Confessor. She was a sincere Christian according to her lights, but they weren't altogether bright with grace. Margaret drove reformation in the church in strict conformity with Rome, and most of her sons continued in this way. Both Malcolm and Margaret died in 1093 and were buried in Dumfermline. Veneration of Margaret was to become a significant cult, ultimately extending well beyond



Rowland S. Ward

Scotland. Her remaining relics and those of her husband were removed to the Escorial in Spain by Philip II, an inveterate collector of such items, probably in the 1570s.

Malcolm and Margaret's 5th son, Alexander I, reigned from 1107 to 1124. He continued a supporter and benefactor of the church but also resisted the rival claims of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York for supremacy over the Scottish Church. His brother, David I (1124-1153), very Norman in his outlook from his childhood in England, added further bishoprics and completed the subdivision of the country into parishes. He introduced many of the monastic orders into Scotland and endowed them generously. He also introduced the feudal system, granting lands to loyal supporters in exchange for armed service. But subsequent decades showed a continued struggle with the claims of English Archbishops, and the political machinations of the Papacy. An Archbishop for Scotland was not appointed until 1472.

Although the norm for Christian ministers in New Testament times was to be married (eg. Peter, 1 Cor. 9:5), by the 4th Century the notion took hold that a priest should be unmarried or, if married, should abstain from conjugal relations once ordained, either permanently or the night before Mass was said. Not only was there a negative view of marital sex, there was also concern that married priests might alienate church property to their wives. But the insistence on celibate priests is not universal, even in the 8th century. The reality was rather different, and certainly there was a great deal

of immorality among the clergy and control of church offices by the nobility. It reached the highest places in the church. In the 10th century there had been the scandal of the 'Rule of the Harlots' in Rome (904-964), when the papacy was the plaything of the powerful Theophylacti family, while the dissolute and vile Benedict IX had been pope three times (1032-44, 1045 & 1047-48), the second time resigning on being paid to do so. The widening division between Eastern and Western Christendom was formalized in the mutual excommunications of 1054, and did not help papal prestige either.

Roman reforms

Reform movements were understandable. To free the church from secular power, the reform movement associated with Hildebrand, the later Pope Gregory VII, took advantage of the youthfulness of the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry IV, designated in 1056 at age six. The election of the Pope was placed in the hands of the College of Cardinals. As pope 1073-85, Gregory asserted papal authority, denied secular rulers the right to fill church offices, insisted on an end to clerical concubinage and trafficking in church offices, and developed canon law. There was opposition from Henry IV, while the German nobility were impacted since there was much wealth associated with the higher church offices. The Germans supported rival popes. However, by 1122 measures against lay control of church property were in operation and the church was seen as superior to the state. This centralized, powerful papacy, superior to the state, de-

clared the First Crusade in 1095 and there were five more significant crusades over the next 200 years.

Cathari & Waldenses

There were other changes reacting to continuing long-standing abuses. In regard to marriage the Church elevated celibacy for the clergy. The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, insisted on the breakup of remaining clerical marriages and this only furthered concubinage. However, in the face of the rise in the 1140s of the dualistic sect of southern France known as Cathari, the Church enjoined

using translations of the Bible in the common language. His followers, many of whom lived in the valleys near the French border with Italy, became known as Waldenses or Vaudois, and ultimately merged into the Protestant Reformation in the 1530s. The Roman church sought to counter such movements and there were those who sought to improve church life even against opposition in high places. The work of St Francis of Assisi (from 1209), and of Dominic (from 1216), both of whom adopted the model of itinerating poor preachers used by Waldo, was significant. Other factors included the military campaign against the Cathari called the Albigensian Crusade (1210-29) (from Albi, the place in southern France where many Cathari were living), intense persecution of the Waldenses which drove them underground, and the Papal Inquisition (from 1231 to the early 14th century) to curb the spread of heresy. The Papal Inquisition is to be distinguished from other inquisitions such as the Spanish Inquisition (1478-1834), which was controlled by the Spanish monarchy, and the Roman Inquisition established by the Pope in 1588 was chiefly to deal with Protestantism, and now known as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

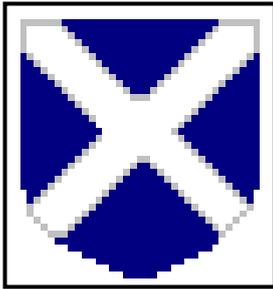
Scottish affairs

In 1188 Pope Clement III declared that the Scottish Church owed immediate subjection to the Pope. This meant that, in resisting Eng-



marriage for the laity and elevated it to be among the sacraments at the Council of Verona in 1184. The Cathari also advocated lay celibacy as the ideal and, while doctrinally askew, were of respectable life. During the same Synod the Pope condemned a layman, Peter Waldo (c.1140-1218), who preached in Lyon 1170-76, but who had been condemned subsequently by the Archbishop of Lyon for preaching

land, Scotland had to depend on the Papacy, although the constant rivalry between the two kingdoms continued, as well as political interference by the Pope. The church became more and more wealthy and worldly, but about 1230



the Dominican and Franciscan orders of friars came to Scotland and were well received by the common people. In 1275 the Scottish Church was taxed by the Pope a tenth of church revenues to aid the funding of another Crusade to the Holy Land. The rent roll then established became the basis of papal taxation until the Reformation.

After the death of Alexander III in 1286 there was a period of instability in Scotland since the only heir was Alexander's granddaughter Margaret, the two-year old child of the King of Norway. Unsure of themselves, the Scots sought advice from Edward I of England who decreed (1) that she should be married to his son, and (2) that Scotland would retain its independence. Margaret died in 1290, and two years later Edward I pronounced in favour of John Balliol rather than Robert the Bruce, the other main claimant. Although Balliol negotiated a treaty with France ('the Auld Alliance') in 1295/96, as both nations were anxious to curb English expansion, Balliol was very much under Edward's thumb. He abdicated in 1296, whereupon William Wallace led a revolt against the English which failed.

The Norman, Robert the Bruce (the Earl of Carrick), who ruled from 1306-29, succeeded in defeating the English decisively at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314. The Declaration of Ar-

broath was a letter addressed to the Pope in 1320 with 'all manner of filial reverence' and 'with de-

Europe. The Scots initially rejoiced at what they considered God's judgment on the hated

For as long as but a hundred of us remain alive, never will we on any conditions be brought under English rule. It is not for glory, nor riches, nor honours that we are fighting, but for freedom — for that alone, which no honest man gives up but with life itself.

From the Declaration of Arbroath (1320)
signed by earls and barons.

vout kisses of his most blessed feet', sometimes quoted as the basis of Scottish democracy. It recounted a mythological history of the Scots, linking them with Greek heroes of the classical period. While purporting to speak on behalf of 'the whole community of Scotland', in effect it was concerned with the property

English. Ironically, it appears the Scots brought back the plague with them after a military incursion into England in 1349, and there was a major outbreak about March 1350. Such accounts as we have suggest a third of the population, then about one million, died, and that death was higher among the



Bank note commemorating Robert the Bruce, 2006.

rights of the Scottish earls and barons who signed it, over against the English barons. It did not mean the end of conflict with the English in subsequent years. Indeed, during the reign of David II (1329-71) much political confusion continued to reign, and David undid much of the work of his father, Robert the Bruce.

The Black Death (bubonic/pneumonic plague) of 1347-50 killed something like a third to a half of the 80 million population of

poor than the nobility. It contributed to a mood of greater religious fervency on the one hand, and a certain uncertainty about the future that created openness to change on the other. The Plague was to return from time to time but died out by the 18th Century.

Life under the Banner

The Wonder of the Communion of Saints (2)

Jim Klazinga

There is a bond that exists between Christians. This bond is not dependent on what we may or may not do. It simply is.

Of course, if this bond truly does exist, then it will show itself. You can't say that this bond simply exists, and then fail to see any proof of it. If the bond that is said to join Christians does not manifest itself in some way, if we do not show love to one another, concern for one another, if we do not use our gifts to help one another out, how can it be said that there is that bond? How can it be said that the communion of saints is real?

One in Christ

In our last article, we considered how the communion of saints demonstrates itself in our diversity. This month we will look at how the communion of the saints is manifested in our unity.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 tells us, "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit."

We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body. One body. That is what we are. That is what the church of Jesus Christ is. There is one church throughout the world.

There is a fundamental unity which is ours as the body of Christ. Without that unity, it cannot be said that there is communion of the saints.

The crucial point becomes, though: what is the basis of this unity? What is it that makes believers one? The Heidelberg Catechism says, in Q & A 55, "believers one and all, as members of this community, share in Christ..."

The phrase, 'share in Christ', that is the key. That is where we

find the foundational basis for our unity in the body of believers. We all share in Christ. We have our bond in the fact that we all share together in our blessed Savior Jesus Christ. That is what we have in common.

We have our unity in our common Savior. We have our unity in our common confession that Jesus Christ is Lord. As Ephesians 4:4-6 says, "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." There is one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, one body, one church.

One Body

If you believe in the one true Lord, if you have the one faith, then you cannot help but be a part of the one body. The fact of the matter is, when you share in the blessings of Christ, then you have to have the unity with other believers that goes along with it. In other words, you cannot be a Christian and not experience the communion of the saints.

This is part of what we mean when we say that there is no salvation outside of the church. Oh, it's not that the church saves us. Rather, it's that if we are saved, then automatically we are a part of the church. Automatically, we are joined with everyone else who believes in Christ. Automatically, we become a part of the people of God.

Remember though, we do not make ourselves one of God's people by believing in Christ. Rather, when God works in us a true faith in Christ, when he saves us, then he makes us a part of the church. He makes us share in the communion of the saints.

One with Believers Only

If believers have their unity in Christ, it follows that this unity, this communion of the saints, can only be shared with fellow Christians.

This is not a very popular notion in our day and age. In our society's attempts to accept all cultures and beliefs, some like to talk about the brotherhood of all humanity. They like to say that humanity as a whole is a single body. They go on to think in relativistic terms, saying that it doesn't really matter what you believe. You can believe anything you want to believe. We are all equal when it comes to the truth. We all have an equal share of it. We are all one.

Now, it is true, there are some things we definitely have in common with all people. We all are basically the same in terms of our physical bodies. We all need to eat. We all need to sleep. We all need to breathe. We all thirst. We all bleed red blood. Whether we are red or yellow, black or white, it doesn't matter, we are all human.

And of course, fundamental to our common human nature is that we all share the common status of being sinful by nature. Each of us, each and every single human being, is equally deserving of the wrath of God.

But no matter what we may have in common with humanity in general, no matter how similar we are to other human beings, no matter what bond we may share with other people, there is a much stronger bond that binds us to those who share with us a participation in the body of Christ. There is a much deeper bond that binds us to those who share with us a participation in the truth.

And that bond is more important than any other bond. We have a deeper bond with Chris-

tians in Africa than we have with Australians who reject Christ. The young male sports fans among us have a deeper bond with elderly ladies who have no use for any sort of athletic competition but who love the Lord; these fans have a closer bond with such women than with other young men who cheer for the same favorite teams, but have no use for the Christian faith. The wealthy factory owner who loves Christ has a deeper bond with the Christian on his assembly line than with the wealthy member of his board of directors who despises the true faith. The communion of the saints means much more than any other kind of commonality we may experience.

Oneness Naturally Desired

As mentioned previously, you cannot be a Christian and not experience the unity of communion of the saints. The implication of this is obvious: if you are a Christian, then you will want to enjoy the fellowship of believers. You will want to join with others with whom you share the common bond of believing in the Lord Jesus.

In other words, to put it simply, if you believe in Jesus Christ, you will join a church.

There are some people who claim to be Christian, but who say that they do not need to belong to any particular church. "The church is full of hypocrites," they say. "I don't need to be preached to," they say. "I can worship God in my own way," they say. Well, sorry, but we have to question the sincerity of a claim to believe in Jesus Christ when there is no desire to experience the unity of the communion of the saints.

In Acts 2:42-44, right after the story of Pentecost, right after the flowing of the Spirit upon the church, we read, "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together

and had all things in common."

Notice, ALL the believers were together. They didn't have some believers join together and other believers go off and do their own thing. They ALL devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching and to fellowship.

Consider also Hebrews 10:24-25 – "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another." Let us not give up meeting together. Let us join with one another. Let us express the unity we share, experiencing the communion of the saints by worshipping together.

Oneness Shown in Love

So, the communion of the saints is expressed in our meeting together. Being someone who experiences the communion of the saints will mean that we will join a church with other saints.

How else is this communion expressed? Well, the Bible has much to say on this matter. For instance, in the first 4 verses of Philippians 2 we read, "So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."

Also instructive is Colossians 3:12-17 – "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thank-

ful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

There are so many virtues listed here. This can be overwhelming. Compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, a forgiving spirit, love, thankfulness, peace. No one can have all those virtues all the time, right? Yet, nevertheless, if we truly share in Christ, these characteristics will define how we will deal with each other. At least, to the best of our abilities.

Oneness in Faith

Let's conclude with remembering a crucial way in which the unity of the communion of the saints is expressed. We've alluded to this already, but it bears repeating. The unity we have is a unity of faith. The only way you can experience true unity is through a common confession. The only way that we can have true unity is through a common understanding of the truth.

In our churches, we teach the truths of God's Word as expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith. This confession should be a unifying document. Not because we hold to it in place of the Bible, but because it articulates our unified understanding of what the Bible teaches.

Wherever you have such a common understanding, the communion of saints is manifested. Given how easily sin can result in error, breaking down this common understanding, where it does exist, you have the grace of God making the communion of saints made real in our lives. Thanks be to God for that grace.

The World in the Banner

Freedom is a joke. Specifically, a satirical joke

The recent terrorist attack in Paris highlights perhaps the great political dilemma of the current age, that of Western freedoms being used to destroy Western freedoms. But perhaps just as importantly, its target was perfectly chosen.

Democracy requires more than the legal right to vote. It requires the freedoms to own property, to travel, to speak one's mind, and to litigate to protect oneself. It thus requires the social institutions and customs which can sustain and support these things and also an underlying sense of community in which these individual rights take shape and have meaning. Indeed, classic liberal freedom assumes the idea of the nation state.

In the nineteenth and the twentieth century, national identity gave an otherwise disparate group of people from different classes and ethnicities a larger common context, history, and purpose which ameliorated the differences. Thus, in Britain one might vote Labour but accept that, when the Conservatives won the election, they had the right to govern until the next election. Something deeper than political ideology bound people together. The nation state was not a sufficient precondition for Western democracy but it was arguably a necessary one. The situation today is different. The nation state is under huge pressure. Mass immigration, the worldwide economy, the rise of militant forms of Islam allied to a deeply anti-Western political imagination, and the availability and speed of communication have all served in different ways to undermine it. The West's self-confidence that it is the meaning of history is gone. More significantly, the shared sense of identity, the communal structures and the traditional processes by which liberal democracy thrives have all gone or are being rapidly redefined or eroded. And, of course, it is the very freedoms of the West which provide the context for their destruction at the hands of its enemies.

Then, there is the ideological quandary in which the Left now finds itself. Militant Islam represents everything the historic Left should despise: a patriarchal feudalism which treats women like chattels and uses the full

force of law against homosexuals. But Islam also represents the repudiation of the West, especially of America. It also draws its strength from being able to play the ethnicity card. Not all Muslims are people of colour but the majority are, making criticism of Islam vulnerable to accusations not only of Western imperialism but also racism. This is why some on the bien pensant Left have taken the view that the French satirical magazine was asking for it, because it had a track record of lampooning Islam and Muslims. That is hate speech, though not as harmful or indeed as hateful, as putting a bullet through somebody's head.

Given all this, it makes perfect sense that the enemies of democracy and classic liberalism would strike at a satirical magazine. Satire has often been the first and most discerning enemy of power and tyranny which is why it is so hated by the powerful and the tyrannical. And it also thrives upon the most basic of liberal freedoms, that of speech. Think of Karl Kraus and his satirizing of the Nazis. Think of those who in the West today are most subversive of politically correct pieties: is it not the great satirists who simply refuse to allow the great and the good to take themselves seriously without challenge?

Those who think the satirists had it coming are correct but not in the way that somebody who keeps crossing a busy road with their eyes closed is headed for an accident. They had it coming because satire – one group poking fun at another – lies at the heart of what it means to be free in a democratic society. And that is what the Islamic militants and, sadly, the illiberal voices on both the Right and, particularly these days the Left, hate more than anything else.

+ *Carl Trueman,*
www.Reformation21.org

Christians Shattered in Niger

Islamic anti-Christian rioting erupted in Niger's second largest city, Zinder, on Friday 16 January, spreading quickly to the capital, Niamey. It continued into the next day as Muslims protested 'blasphemous' Charlie Hebdo (a French satirical magazine). Numerous Christian homes, schools and colleges were burnt, as was the

SIM compound in Gourde, the Good Samaritan Orphanage run by the Assemblies of God, as well as upward of 70 churches. The bodies of at least five Christians were later found in various burnt-out churches. Though the population is 97 percent Muslim and 0.33 percent Christian, Niger is officially a secular state with religious freedom. However, fundamentalist Islam is growing. Such extreme, targeted violence is hitherto atypical and has left the Christian community shattered. Please pray for Niger and its Church.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin | RLPB 293 | Wed 21 Jan 2015*

More Evidence Against Electronics in Kids' Bedrooms

Parents concerned about their children not getting enough sleep may want to remove televisions and other small electronics from the kids' bedrooms, according to a new study. Children who slept with televisions or other small-screened devices in their bedrooms ended up getting less sleep than children without those electronics in the room, researchers found. "While more studies are needed to confirm our results, we know that too much screen time is bad for children's health in multiple ways," said Jennifer Falbe, the study's lead author from the University of California, Berkeley.

Past studies found that having televisions in kids' bedrooms is tied to less sleep. Less sleep is ultimately tied to other issues, including obesity and academic performance. But few studies have looked at the presence of other small electronics in bedrooms, the researchers write in the journal *Pediatrics*.

For the new study, Falbe and colleagues used data from 2,048 fourth- and seventh-graders enrolled in an obesity study in Massachusetts.

They found that kids with TVs in their rooms reported sleeping about 18 minutes less each night than kids without bedroom televisions.

+ *Inforum, 5 January 2015*

Prescribed Youth Work — 2015

Metrical Psalms	1 st Certificate	2 nd Certificate
Infants (7yrs)	Psalms 123/20:7-9	23:1-6/134
Junior (8 to 12 yrs)	Psalms 133	48:9-14
Senior (13 to 17 yrs)	Psalms 54	66:1-7

Scripture Memory

1 st Certificate (Junior)	James 4:7-8
2 nd Certificate (Senior)	Ephesians 6:10-18

The Ten Commandments

Exodus 20:1-17

Psalm Tunes

Please choose appropriate Psalm from preferred book

Junior

St Asaph/St Catherine (Tynemouth) /Truro

Senior

Blaernwern/Abbot's Leigh/Crasselius/Silchester (Malan)

Catechism

Sections 1 1-10

2 11-22

3 23-38

4 39-62

5 63-88

6 89-107

7 1-107 word perfect

Books of the Bible

Correct repetition of the Books of the Bible in order.

Essay Questions:

Infants (7)

Please read 1 John 3:1-5. Can you tell me why Jesus came to the world?

Junior (up to 400 words)

James 4.8 says: "Come near to God and he will come near to you". This is a beautiful promise. James tells us that if we come near to God, he will come near to us. How do we do this? Use other Bible passages if necessary.

Senior (1000 words)

In Ephesians 6:10-18 Paul is talking about the reality of spiritual warfare.

Take a quick glance of chapter 6:12. What is the unavoidable conclusion of this verse?

Paul says that our world is controlled by the destructive rule of spiritual forces. According to verse 10, how are we to fight against these spiritual forces evil?

Since we are fighting against demonic enemies, we need special equipment for offense and defence. Read verses 13 to 17. List all the parts of the Christian armour and their purpose in the spiritual battle.

Finally, what is the advice of verse 18, and why is this important?

Children under the Banner — Acts 16:16-34

<p>Praising in Prison!</p> 	<p>A girl with a fortune-telling spirit followed Paul and Silas.</p> 	 <p>In the name of Jesus, come out of her! The spirit left.</p>
<p>The girl's owner's were angry! Paul and Silas were beaten.....</p> 	 <p>At midnight, in jail they prayed and sang hymns.</p>	<p>Suddenly there was a violent earthquake!</p> 
<p>Sirs, what must I do to be saved?</p> 		<p>Don't harm yourself! We are all here!</p> <p>Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved,</p>  <p>you and your family.</p>

Prescribed Search Work

MARCH 2014

Senior Section 12 years and over; Intermediate 10—11 years; Junior 9 years and under

SENIOR AND INTERMEDIATE (Intermediate omit questions 4 and 8)

ACTS chapter 5

1. When Ananias kept back part of the price of his possession, to whom had he lied?
2. Peter told Sapphira she and Ananias had agreed together to tempt [test] whom?
3. What did the angel of the Lord do by night in the prison, and what did he tell the apostles to do? (2 verses)
- 4(x). What was the apostles' answer when the Jewish council accused them of disobeying its command? (1 verse only)
5. Why did the apostles rejoice when they departed from the presence of the council?

chapter 6

6. What kind of men did the twelve tell the multitude to look for?
7. Write out the verse which describes the character and work of Stephen.
- 8(x). What did the false witnesses say about Stephen? (2 verses)

JUNIOR

JOHN chapter 4:1--26

1. For what did Jesus ask the woman of Samaria when she came to the well?
2. How must we worship God, seeing he is a Spirit?

chapter 4:43--54

3. What words of Jesus about his son did the nobleman believe?
4. What happened when the father was told the exact hour that his son recovered?

Please send the answers to:
Mrs I Steel
PO Box 942
Epping NSW 1710
The questions for the whole year
are available from the above postal
address or by email at:
[**iesteel@gmail.com**](mailto:iesteel@gmail.com)

Books in the Banner

Dressing For The Lord by David Cloud

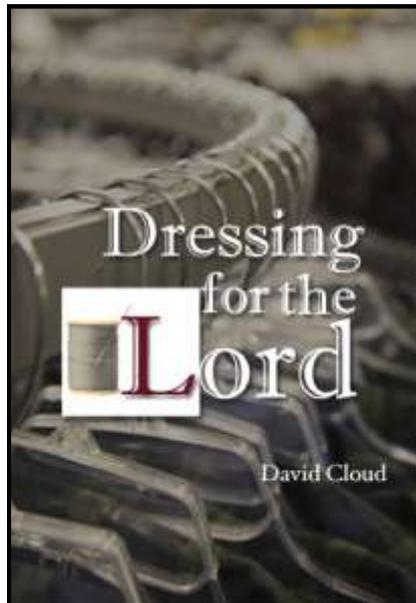
“The same person who would never use the world’s profane speech will wear its equally profane clothes.” In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 the Apostle Paul declares, “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit in you, whom you have of God? And you are not your own, for you are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” This, says the author, is a foundational passage on modesty in Christian dress, because it reveals two of the chief motives for dressing properly, which are to glorify God and to avoid fornication. Notice that the believer is to glorify God both in body and in spirit. The argument that God looks on the heart so it does not matter how we dress ignores this fact.

David Cloud writes a book about how the outward appearance of the Christian reflects his/her innermost being as per the believer’s relationship with the Lord. In a carefully and well-balanced manner he presents at the same time sensitivity and God-centred forthrightness as he deals with the issue of how the child of God presents himself/herself to the world and fellow-believers.

The book addresses the motivation of fashion designers as they develop their creations. It sets forth a solid study on Biblical modesty and how clothing actually is a language which speaks volumes either to the glory of God or the opposite. Careful and deliberate thought is given to situations where believers – espe-

cially those young in the faith – are still very much on a journey of ethical travel.

The second part of the book addresses questions and objections that this pastor has encountered over many years of ministry. Question such as ‘Since God looks on the heart, why be so concerned about appearance?’ or ‘Some pants are more modest than some dresses,’ or ‘I wear pants because there are many things I cannot do in a dress,’



or ‘People don’t go to Church to be told they are not dressing right.’ Any question or objection conceivable is answered on Biblical grounds and with sensitivity as this author is aware of the emotional loading the issue carries with some. Two things are

Reviewed by Herm Zandman

very clear from personal testimonies given, firstly how influential some one’s dress standard is on others and secondly how it is so much easier to go down the slope than to go up.

People notice. Once my wife and I were in Balranald, New South Wales, for the long weekend. On Saturday we checked out where we could go to worship on the Lord’s Day and on Sunday we went to church. As we walked along the town street that Lord’s Day a car pulled up alongside, the driver opened the window and asked, “Are you Christians?” We confirmed that, indeed, we were. “I thought so when I saw how you are dressed.” Also in the book it is made clear that the way you present yourself outwardly is always a testimony regarding Christ, either how important He is to you or how unimportant.

The book is an easy read and holds your attention throughout. It also engenders introspection: How can I improve in certain areas? Being keen on sports activities, I found that I could sharpen my presentation some in that area, being more careful in my choice of sports attire. I would recommend this book as a very worthwhile read for any and all who are serious in their desire to live out the Biblical faith in practice.

Way of Life Literature, 2007
www.wayoflife.org

Churches in the Banner

In memory of Mrs Flora Neil

Flora Joan Stuart Neil (nee McLeod) was born in Glasgow on 26 April 1938. Her father, John, was a chaplain in the British army in WW1, and her mother, Isobel, was daughter of Donald Mclean, principal of the Free Church of Scotland College in Edinburgh. Flora grew up with three sisters and a brother. She trained as a nurse and midwife in hospitals in Edinburgh and Aberdeen. Attending the

Free Church, she heard about mission work in India. She was led to use her skills as a nurse, and share her faith in Christ, in the mission hospital at Chhapara, Central India. At the age of 24 years she set out for India.

Flora joined Dr Helen Ramsay and Sister Heather Beaton at the Chhapara hospital and later at the Lakhnadon hospital. It was a big step from Scotland but Flora quickly

adapted to the culture and language of India. She learned Hindi at Mussoorie and at Allahabad, where she also learnt many things about Hinduism at the huge Hindu festival called the Kumbh Mela. Her later experience of travelling by bullock cart on a dry dusty road to a village each week was not pleasant, but she enjoyed this ministry to poor rural people who were still cutting umbilical cords with their harvesting

sickle and sterilising the wound with cow manure. Flora herself became very sick not long after her arrival in India; in the providence of the Lord she was evacuated back to Scotland for treatment. She was not expected to return but did so after a full recovery from suspected meningitis.

Through her Australian colleagues Flora learnt about Australia. The St George's congregation in Sydney wanted to 'adopt' a missionary, so Flora started writing and their mission representative wrote back to her. Mr Alex Neil was mission representative when, in 1975, the St Georges church invited Flora to visit Australia and share about her work in India. It is reported that Mr Neil was away when she arrived but soon arrived to take responsibility for showing Flora around. In 1976 Alex travelled to Scotland to marry his beloved Flora. And so Flora came to live in Australia, but never gave up her love for Scotland. All her family were in Scotland and she returned at times to visit them.

Alex and Flora went to live in Penrith in 1977 and their only son, John, was born in 1980. He was deeply loved and cherished by Flora. The family attended, and were very active in, the newly established Hawkesbury-Nepean congregation of the PCEA. In November 2013 Flora became ill and despite prolonged chemotherapy was taken by the Lord to her heavenly home on 26 December 2014. Husband Alex writes, 'Flora was a constant source of friendship, kindness and joy to all who knew her. Above all Flora was a loving wife and devoted mother who brought joy, fellowship and love in the lives of Alex and John. She was much loved and will be sorely missed'. We uphold Alex and John in our prayers.
Rev. Dennis Muldoon

Brisvegas Sunday school –we think outside the box!

After the success of last year's dinner to raise money for the desks in the school at Chappara, another dinner and fun-filled evening of entertainment was planned to fill and post boxes for the Samaritan's Purse shoebox appeal. Because a number of lessons this year had focussed on Noah's Ark and the tower of Babel, it was decided that the food for the evening would not only be delicious, but

based on ancient Middle Eastern cuisine. This included date mash, tahini, fruit honey, quail eggs, chicken, (live quail were on display, but no one really wanted to eat them), and Turkish delight ice-cream. Each table was challenged to find the Bible references for as many of the foods as possible. Some tables chose to extend their lead through creative licence by including flowers, Bible names of those at the table and anything else they could think of.

Entertainment followed with musical items by various members of the congregation, before the classes presented the projects they had been working on. The middle school group had helped to construct a scale model (1:150) of Noah's Ark and recounted the Bible story, as well as emphasising how huge it was. Scaled photos of the children had been glued inside the ark to help them grasp this. The high school group talked about the Tower of Babel, and presented a model of Etemenanki, the ziggurat that was the temple in Babylon at the time of Israel's captivity. It is believed that the Tower of Babel was made in a similar fashion with clay bricks and bitumen. Scale model people on the tower again helped to illustrate the size of the structure. This was constructed to the same scale as the ark. The Bible story was summarised, and Caleb Klazinga recounted the history of the ziggurat built by Nebuchadnezzar.

Enough money was raised to 'top up' and send 10 boxes to children in need.

Annual Brisbane Camp - 2014

Nearly 50 people flocked from far and wide to the familiar Camp Drewe site at Lennox Head for the annual Brisbane PCEA church camp (5-8 December). The triple J adventurers (Jim, Jean and Jessie) travelled from Rockhampton, while Barry and Kay Hilberts stopped in on their travels south. The Brisbane folk (PCEA members and friends from other denominations) were joined with the contingent from the Wauchope and Northern Rivers congregations who travelled north. All came in pursuit of fine weather, warm fellowship and biblical messages and they were not disappointed. Denver Boehret (PCEA Melbourne) gave 5 excellent talks from Philipians on reasons to be

encouraged as believers.

Reason 1 - Other believers are partnered with us in the work of the gospel

Reason 2 - Our hardships & sufferings are promoting the gospel

Reason 3 - Christ's example of humility enables us to be lights in the world

Reason 4 - Our righteousness in Christ is better than all the things we have

Reason 5 - God supplies all of the needs of his people in difficult times

Free time was spent at the beach, playing cricket, swimming, building sandcastles and burying small children, while the less energetic talked, played board games and slept the afternoon away.

The Saturday evening concert was again a great example of the various talents within the congregations with singing, instruments, psalm singing and memory verse recital from the Brisbane Sunday School. Peter Carswell then challenged all of us with trivia including a push-up competition. This was followed by a Bible Quiz by Ian Lenane involving lots of tasty treats from the plagues of Egypt; and a walk on the beach by the young and the young at heart, but mostly only the young.

Coffee connoisseurs were delighted that Jim Klazinga again travelled with his coffee machine. He brewed flat whites, cappuccinos, long blacks and lattes with such enthusiasm that at one point he missed lunch. Money raised went to the PCEA missions fund.

As always the catering from Barbara and Keith Schmidt was delicious and abundant.

Quotes: Camper (aged 9) "The best thing about the camp was free time"

Camper (aged 16) complained he was served a "whole" plate of broccoli when he jokingly commented that he liked the green vegetable. The beach was described as sandy, wet, and cold with big waves. Sometimes it's hard to please!

The 2015 camp is scheduled from 4—8 December so put it in your diaries now and avoid disappointment.



*Clockwise from left: Various attendees and scenes at Brisbane Annual Camp
Below: The 'Camp Photo'*

