

the presbyterian banner

April 2015

*One day Jesus said to his disciples,
“Let’s go over to the other side of the lake.”
So they got into a boat and set out.*

Luke 8:22

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ISSN 0729-3542

Editorial

In the petrol bowser next to where I was filling up the car there was a tall, lean, and heavily tattooed man. He was filling up his car – a powerful, high performance vehicle. It certainly made its fair share of noise later!

As I started chatting with him about the price of petrol I noticed a particular decal sticker in his rear passenger window. In quite distinctive type it said, 'lamb of god'. I asked him if it was a Christian sticker. He replied that it was a heavy metal band, and they were actually quite big.

I couldn't resist that comment and followed it with, "The original was quite big too – he still is!"

It was surprising to see such a religious title used by a heavy metal group. But, then again, it really isn't such a surprise. So much of our English language and culture is full of Christian references and symbolism. To not know the Bible is to deprive oneself of so much of our literary heritage. There are a number of academics calling for more teaching of the Bible for this reason.

I looked up 'lamb of god' and, sure enough, they are a popular heavy metal band. And they certainly love the religious symbolism! With albums titles such as *New American Gospel*, *Laid To Rest* and *Sacrament*, they definitely bring out distinct Christian references.

How much that man at the petrol bowser knew of where the name of the band or the titles of their albums came from, I wouldn't know. He did indicate that he knew where the name originally came from. I didn't gain the impression, however, that he was happy I brought it up!

But who knows? As 1st Peter 3:15 says, we must be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. And while we might not be directly asked, it shouldn't stop us using such opportunities to gently make the point. The apostle Paul used such an opportunity in Athens.

Let's also be ready.

*"Now what you worship as something unknown
I am going to proclaim to you."*

Acts 17:23

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Subscriptions for 2014

11 Issues per year
Within Australia: \$35 [Bulk \$30]
Overseas: AU \$50 Airmail.

Direct Credit :

Bendigo (BSB) 633000
A/C No. 140124082

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

Literary contributions are welcome. Submission by email is preferred.

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This magazine is available as a pdf file on the Church Website: www.pcea.org.au

A Tale Of Two Pastors

Sjirk Bajema

We had been there some decades ago for a much appreciated break. So, for our holidays this time around, we thought to visit there again. Part of a road trip through this nearby State. And we thought what would be a nice connection with the last time around would be to go to the same church that we went to then. That was when we were there with Betty-Ann's parents and our young children. Then we were impressed with the solemnity of the services and the biblical depth in the preaching.

Now we had come back. I wondered how the church had fared over the intervening years. It was a bit of a struggle getting there at the right time, though. There was a difference over the times for the services in the local paper and community, and they no longer had the two services. But on the church Notice Board it said 9.00am.

Well, we were there a little early just to make sure. If it was 9.00am we were on time. And the congregation came in also on time. But we had to wait a little while. The minister was late. He joked later on that it was due to his particular need for caffeine. That comment kind of indicated what else happened during that service. There was a thorough lack of organization shown throughout; the reader was not aware of what he was to read (it took him a while to find the passage), a choice of songs that the organist and the congregation had trouble with, and then there was the preaching. Being this denomination's particular type of worship service the minister would have been following the regular *pericope* (the scheduled readings for the Sundays in a church year). On this Sunday the gospel reading was Matthew 6:19-34 – the well-known passage from the Lord's Sermon on the Mount about either worshipping God or money. In his message, though, he didn't call it 'money', or 'mammon' as some ver-

sions translate it – he called it 'stuff'. That word described the flippancy which permeated the service. Not a flippancy that was over the top, but which kept popping up. I mean, he even started his sermon



by saying that his message was simply "Don't worry" – in other words, "That's it, folks!" He quickly followed that by saying that this comment, of course, wasn't all he was meant to say – the message had to be ten minutes long after all!

Then he continued with his message, but the first half had nothing to do with the scripture that he had just read. At best it was a purely personal definition of 'worry.' There was some tie-up towards the end in terms of encouragement to read the Bible as the antidote to worry and that if you gave up your concerns to the Lord, you wouldn't be bothered by worry. But what about the seeking after God's kingdom and his righteousness? To say simply hand it over to the Lord and it would be all right wasn't really helping the listener to look at where his worry was coming from – and there was no reference to the anxieties that affected the Lord in the lead up to

his suffering and death, and how he yet continued to look to his Heavenly Father despite all that. How about what the rest of scripture said on this topic – the psalms touch every part of our emotions, don't they?

I have to admit, though, I had a lot of difficulty focusing on his message. And it wasn't because I was tired or distracted. It was because of some very loud young children in the pew behind us. Mind you, it would not have been easy for the young mother on her own with five young children. Still, the screams emitting from one child in particular would have been quite trying to at least half of those there who had hearing aids – and of that number, there would have been more than a few! I really felt like turning around and asking her to take the child out of the service. But I was only a visitor – it was not my place to make that kind of comment in a place I did not normally belong. After some more ear-shattering screams she did take the child out – mind you, we could still hear the child crying out in the hall behind the worship area. Later the young mother was back; and along with her children she, the minister and the children received their own distribution of the communion elements or a blessing (given to those young children who were not communicant members). So she was the minister's wife and those were his children! Again, I could not help but notice a distinct casualness towards the worship of the Almighty and all-holy God coming from the very one and his family of whom one would have expected something quite different.

After the 'message' there was Holy Communion. This in itself took up more time in the service than the 'message'. There was the long train of members up to

the front, the elements then being taken to the frail who stayed in their pews, and the minister and his family being separately served.

I don't get to go often to worship services from other denominations, especially those which are not connected in a direct way to us. Yet, it is helpful to see how things are out there in the broader Christian World, particularly in amongst those which we have always seen to hold similar standards. And I have to wonder about what is being taught and demonstrated at the key institutions in those churches – the theological colleges. What is it that dumbs down the preaching of God's Word and turns divine worship into some sort of entertainment?

You see, this is a trend that has spread itself right across Christendom. What I remember as what used to happen in evangelical youth clubs in the 1980's is now what takes place in church. The clothes, the casualness, the various forms of participation – it has all spread across the board! Even from a sister-denomination I heard that a candidate for ministry would only seriously consider a call to a church if it accepted his freedom to dress more casually. That was certainly how the minister that Sunday was dressed. You see, while he wore the usual liturgical gown for his denomination, when he later mixed with the congregation he was wearing a t-shirt, casual shorts and sandals. That is what he had been wearing underneath. Not a good look. But it seems no one has noticed there. Or perhaps the change has gradually slipped in. That's how it normally happens, isn't it?

Then there was the next Sunday on our road trip. A different denomination in a completely different part of the same State. Actually, it wasn't a church part of a denomination at all – it was an independent church.

That, too, was a service that began a little late. As was explained to us, it was due to a Bible class taking somewhat longer be-

fore the service. So no caffeine break here! In fact, this minister doesn't drink coffee or anything stronger. And his dress code was quite different too, as was what was worn by the members of the church. He was very neatly presented in a suit and tie. Being a hot day he did take his jacket off, but throughout he showed a very serious regard for all the aspects of the worship service.



The liturgy was different than the week before. But it was a liturgy none-the-less – a liturgy many of us would recognize as classically Baptist. There was the singing of several hymns together at a time – hymns of the American revivalist type sung wholeheartedly to music played by accomplished pianists. There was prayer and an offering taken up. But the clear focus was on the Word. Using Luke 15 this pastor spent some time laying before the folk there the need to come to faith in Jesus Christ and the eternal consequences if one did not make that decision. While it was very much framed in the well-known Arminian style of the Southern Baptists, it was spoken with an Australian accent. There were certainly Australians in the church, as well as people of other ethnicities. And there could be no doubting the sincere Christian profession made by a number of them with me afterward. They had been saved and, in the

case of some, from quite criminal and broken backgrounds. How zealous they were, too! They had had their lives changed right around. And while they continued to struggle in the Christian walk, sometimes sliding back in their personal devotions and church commitment, they knew where they ought to be.

The call to faith with repentance was a much appreciated one. The minister was quite clear there could be no compromise with the world or softening down of what being converted meant. But I did wonder with some folk there as to whether the need for salvation was matched with an equal call for sanctification. Indeed, the whole way he expounded Luke 15 was narrowly focused on the need for making a decision for Christ and of those who were saved going out and laying that need before unbelievers. "Go ye," he proclaimed, using Matthew 28:19 to advocate strongly the need to go out and witness. But is that what it actually says? The Greek tells us it says, "As you go..." and so in the course of wherever it is the Lord leads us, we are to live lives testifying to Christ. It does not directly tell every Christian to go out and door knock every week, although that might well be a regular part of a church's program or individual gifting. (This particular church community actually does go door knocking every alternate week and does 'letter-boxing' in between. The members also hold a day of fasting and prayer once a week for the lost in the community and for mission abroad).

It became evident that there was no underlying exegetical work in the sermon aside from using it to further the particular theology of the pastor and the church.

This was shown in the 'altar call' he laid before the people as he concluded the sermon. They were words I had heard in similar form before from my days going

to a Church of Christ Youth Club in the 1970's and other evangelistic meetings of that time. He used the form of doing it in a prayer asking people to raise their hands if they felt convicted to faith, acknowledging them generally and inviting them and others to counsel afterward.

I asked if the Ten Commandments or the Lord's Prayer were ever preached on. Apparently neither they nor any texts which would be part of a series to facilitate growing in the Christian faith were used. It was a congregation being fed on milk, so to speak.

Thus, while there had been those

who had come to faith through the active ministry of this congregation, they were not brought into the deeper things of the faith. Was this because of the pastor's limited training? Or could it have been his particular doctrinal disposition?

Whatever it was, it meant that after some twenty-five or so years it still remained a mission church, with no office bearers other than the minister himself. And over that time many had come into the church, and many had gone out of the church.

So, here are two men who go by the title of pastor. They are two pastors who know their congrega-

tions by name, and yet they don't shepherd them. Two pastors who no doubt have helped to bring men and women to a public profession of faith in Christ. But by either their example or their teaching, they lead them astray or don't guide them further on the way. Their sheep could well be taken away because of this.

It's only symptomatic of what's going on in a vast numbers of churches throughout Australia and the world. Well might they invoke the power of the Spirit, but without the Word it cannot be the Holy Spirit!

Religions under the Banner

Christianity in Scotland (3)

Towards Reformation (1400-1528)

The Scottish Reformation is generally dated at 1560 as if it was a sudden dateable event, and in a sense it was. But there had been a significant build up to what took place in 1560, hence an earlier commencement will help understanding of the Reformation.

Western Schism

Arising out of disputes between the French Crown and the Papacy, from 1309-1377 the Papacy had been based in Avignon in France rather than in Rome. Seven successive popes, all French, ruled from Avignon until Gregory XI returned to Rome in 1377, where he died the following year. Scotland supported the Avignon popes. Following the election of a native of Naples as Pope Urban VI, his relationship with the cardinals was such that the majority of the French cardinals elected Clement VII, who resided at Avignon, as a rival pope, thus beginning the Western Schism 1378-1417. France, Spain, Naples and Scotland were the chief supporters of the Avignon papacy. The Schism gave impetus to the conciliar movement which argued for the supremacy of a council above the Pope. However the Council of Pisa in 1409 was not able to resolve the schism,

and a third line of popes resulted. The schism was only settled in 1417. Conciliarism was short-lived, and the infamous Pope Julius II (1503-13) re-asserted the authority of the Pope above a Council at the Lateran Council in 1512.

Claims to the Papacy during the Great Schism of the Popes, 1378-1417.	
Roman line	Urban VI, 1378-1389 Boniface IX, 1389-1404 Innocent VII, 1404-1406 Gregory XII, 1406-1415
Avignon line	Clement VII, 1378-1394 Benedict XIII, 1394-1415
Pisa line	Alexander V, 1409-1410 John XXIII, 1410-1417

The 14th and 15th centuries were a time of struggle between the Papacy and the Crown over the wealth of the Church. Quite apart from doctrine, the Scottish church was seriously corrupt, given to buying and selling ecclesiastical office, not well educated and characterized by a great deal of immorality among the clergy.

Universities

The founding of universities from the

Rowland S. Ward

11th century onwards was significant for reform, for scholars could debate and discuss with greater freedom, and ideas could be discussed throughout Europe in the common language of Latin. Bologna was the first (1088), while Oxford (1167) and Cambridge (1209) were also early. The first Scottish University was St Andrews (1410), founded under the Avignon papacy with Lawrence of Lindores (c.1373-1437), the papal inquisitor, a significant teacher, followed by Glasgow (1451) and Aberdeen (1495). Early reformers were not poor peasants seeking economic betterment under the guise of religion, but people from the higher ranks in society who had access to education.

Although Scotland was a relatively poor country, a degree of renaissance culture had a hold on a number of the nobility and higher clergy as well as rulers like James IV (reigned 1488-1513). Bishop William Elphinstone (431-1513), the founder of Aberdeen University, and partially responsible for the introduction of printing into Scotland in 1508, is rightly described by the firmly Protestant David Hay Fleming as a munificent patron of learning, and one of the best men who ever exercised

the episcopal office either in Scotland or out of it.

James IV declared war on England in 1513 in terms of the treaty with France. This was at the point when England was defending the Pope and Italy against the French. James was excommunicated, but the Scots were roundly defeated by Henry VIII's army at Flodden [pictured]. There were 10,000 dead Scots including the King, 9 earls, 13 barons, 5 heirs to titles, 3 bishops and 2 abbots. Subsequently a pro-English body of opinion was to develop in Scotland.



Scots defeated by Henry VIII

Wycliffe and the Lollards

The influence of the Lollards, followers of John Wycliffe (1330-84), a Professor at Oxford University, must be noticed. Wycliffe held that the Bible was the supreme authority for Christians and he was responsible for the first translation of the New Testament into Middle English (1380) with the Old Testament produced a few years later. This was a rather slavishly literal version made from the Latin Vulgate and had no doctrinal innovations. Wycliffe believed that clergy should not hold property, and that the doctrine of transubstantiation, declared as binding doctrine in 1215, was without basis in Scripture. From 1357 to 1389 there were Scottish students studying at Oxford who likely carried Wycliffe's ideas back



John Wycliffe (1330-84)

home. In 1407 an English priest, James Resby, was executed at Perth in Scotland for teaching Lollard doctrines, while in 1410 a gentleman named Quinton Fokhyrde issued calls for reform and copies of his letters reached Pra-

gue. In 1416 graduates of the University of St Andrews had to take an oath to defend the church against the Lollards and their followers. Clearly there was Lollard influence.

In Bohemia (now part of the Czech Republic) Jan Hus (1369-1415) and Jerome of Prague (1379-1416) had been burned by order of the Council of Constance. Both had been influenced by John Wycliffe's teachings, and Hus had been outspoken against the lives of many of the clergy and the church's shameless extracting of money from the poor. Their deaths contributed to a significant Hussite movement with a basic platform of:

- (1) freedom to preach the word of God;
- (2) communion in both kinds;
- (3) a clergy committed to a godly life-style, and the property of the church to be confiscated (it owned half the land in Bohemia);
- (4) notorious offenders against public morality (such as prostitutes) to be punished according to law.

In 1428 the Pope implemented a decision of the same Council of Constance, and ordered Wycliffe's bones dug up, crushed and thrown into a river. Paul Craw [Pavel

Kravar] (c.1391-1433), a scholar from Bohemia, and some-time physician to the King of Poland, came to St Andrews in 1433, possibly to garner support for the Hussite cause. He was arrested and sentenced to death. His

beliefs are unclear but he would have held to at least the Four Articles of Prague noted above. Although records are somewhat scanty, Ayrshire, which was to be a hotbed for the Reformation, had prominent Lollard families in the 1490s, and there must have been others of whom we know nothing.

Lutheran teaching

Lutheran teaching seems to have first come to Scotland in the early 1520s through a Monsieur de la Tour who was a gentleman among the men-at-arms of the regent, the very French Scotsman, John Stewart, Duke of Albany. Albany's mother was Anne de la Tour and his wife, the Countess of Auvergne and Lauraguais in south-west France, was a cousin of the same name. M. de la Tour was in Scotland during one or other of Albany's visits (December 1520 to October 1522; September 1523 to May 1524). He returned to France where he was burned to death for Lutheran



Jan Hus

beliefs on 26 October 1527.

A great-grandson of James II of Scotland, Patrick Hamilton (1500-1528), who had studied in France 1517-23, was thinking on the new teachings as he continued studies at St Andrews, which was also the seat of the Archbishop, James Beaton. Early in 1527 the Archbishop resolved to summon Hamilton to deal with claims of heresy, but Hamilton fled to Germany where, according to John Knox, he heard Luther preach in Wittenberg and met Melancthon and others in the movement of reform. He enrolled in the new University of Marburg, the first Protestant university in the world, on its opening on 30 May 1527. Hamilton set forth some theses to be defended that were later published as Patrick's Places. They focus on a few central ideas, especially justification, and do not mention the sacraments. His distinction between the Law and the Gospel is clear and forceful. Here is an extract:

He who does not believe the Gospel, does not believe God. And consequently, those who believe to be saved by their works, or to get remission of sins by their own deeds, do not believe God, but account him a liar, and so utterly deny him to be God. You will say, Shall we then do no good works? I do not say that, but I say, We should do no good works with the intention of getting into the kingdom of heaven, or remission of sins. For if we believe to get the inheritance of heaven through good works, then we do not believe to get it through the promise of God. Or, if we think to get remission of our sins, in the manner said, we do not believe that they are forgiven us by Christ, and so we count God a liar. For God says, You shall have the inheritance of heaven for my Son's sake. You say, It is not so; but I will win it through my own works. So, I condemn not good works; but I condemn the false trust in any works; for all the works that a man puts confidence in, are thereby tainted or smeared with poison, and be-

come evil.

In 1526 the first complete translation of the New Testament from Greek into Early Modern English was published in Germany by the English scholar, William Tyndale. It was a fine production and has been influential in all major English versions since. Copies soon found their way to Britain. Hamilton returned to Scotland near the close of 1527. He preached among rela-



William Tyndale (c.1494-1536)

tives at Linlithgow and found a significant following including his brother, Sir James, and sister Katherine. The Archbishop had him in his sights and invited him to an informal discussion over several days at St Andrews. It was conciliatory enough and Hamilton was given freedom to teach in the university. He did this for several weeks with significant impact, including on the notable Canon of St Andrews, Alexander Alane (Alesius), who was to become his biographer. The Archbishop presumably thought it best that such a well-connected person as Hamilton be condemned for teaching heard widely rather than in private. Hamilton was duly summoned and charged with heresy. He immediately admitted 7 of the 13 charges brought:

1. That the corruption of sin remains in children after their baptism.
2. That no man by the power of his free will can do any good.
3. That no man is without sin as long as he lives.

4. That every true Christian may know himself to be in the state of grace.

5. That a man is not justified by works but by faith only.

6. That good works do not make a good man, but that a good man does good works, and that an evil man does evil works; yet the same evil works truly repented make not an evil man.

7. That faith, hope, and charity are so linked together, that he who has one of them has all, and he that lacks one lacks all.

After interrogation he was released, but two days later he was brought in for the judgment, and was condemned to death by burning. Since the wood was not dry, Hamilton was actually roasted alive that afternoon in the grounds of St Salvator's College, as the ordeal continued for six hours. Acknowledging the pain he was to suffer, he said "Though it be bitter to the flesh, and fearful before man, yet it is the entrance to eternal life, which none shall possess that denies Jesus Christ before this wicked generation." Patrick Hamilton's last words were, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." The spot where he was martyred is nowadays marked in the cobblestones with the initials PH.

The way in which this well regarded young man died impressed many. As his death became known people asked, "Why was Hamilton burned?" A friend of the Archbishop sagely advised:

My Lord, if you burn any more except you follow my counsel, you will utterly destroy yourselves. If you will burn them, let them be burned in deep cellars; for the smoke of Master Patrick Hamilton has infected as many as it blew upon.

That may be an exaggeration, but Hamilton's death marks a significant point.

The World in the Banner

Suspended And Sent For 'Equality Training'

A Christian magistrate has been disciplined by a Tory Cabinet Minister for expressing the belief that children should be raised by both a mother and a father. Richard Page told colleagues behind closed doors during an adoption case that he thought it would be better for a child to be brought up in a traditional family rather than by a gay couple. He was shocked a week later when he found he had been reported to the judges' watchdog for alleged prejudice, and was suspended from sitting on family court cases.

Mr Page, an experienced NHS manager, has now been found guilty of serious misconduct by Lord Chancellor Chris Grayling – who previously spoke in support of a Christian couple who turned away a gay couple from their B&B. He has also been ordered to go on an equality course before he is allowed back in the courtroom. The married 68-year-old was told he had broken the oath sworn by all Justices of the Peace (JPs) as well as Labour's controversial Equality Act, by being guided by his religious views and discriminating against the same-sex adoptive parents.

Last night, critics said the case was another example of how people who hold traditional Christian views feel they have no freedom of speech and find it difficult to hold public office in modern Britain.

+ *MailOnline 18 January 2015*

Let Me Explain Hate To You

Words matter, and as the radicals of the secular left know full well, when you change words you can change a culture. They have understood that verbal engineering always precedes social engineering, so they are happy to be as revolutionary about words and their meaning as they are about the culture they are seeking to change.

You know the drill, you know how it works: take a perfectly acceptable word such as 'gay,' strip it of its original meaning and content, and hijack it by redefining it to promote your own radical agenda. This happens all the time. The revolutionaries of the left are experts at this.

They have managed to destroy plenty of perfectly good words by redefining them out of existence. In the homosexual marriage debate for example, words like equality, love, family and even marriage itself have been radically redefined to fit in with the agenda of the coercive utopians.

And of course the mainstream media goes along with all this, doing the dirty work for the activists, and so society is easily changed, because words have been so radically changed. Consider just one more example of this verbal engineering.

I refer to the word 'hate'. Now we all know what this word means – or at least we should. But the radicals have once again managed to totally destroy the word, and they now use it to refer to anyone and anything which dares to resist its agenda. And never mind how hateful and full of rage they are – this has nothing to do with hate, they insist.

So let me remind folks out there who have lost their ability to think clearly and to define words rightly as to what is really going on here. First, let me explain to you what hate is not. The following list of items is not hateful, and has nothing to do with associated vices such as bigotry, true intolerance and prejudice:

- standing up for marriage and family as always conceived
- standing up for the unborn, and working against their wholesale slaughter
- affirming democracy and freedom, and warning against those who seek to destroy these social goods
- working to keep the West free and

- prosperous, and not be taken over by sharia law
- championing religious freedom and freedom of expression
- resisting the moves to restrict the public expression of Christianity
- promoting a culture of respect for life at every stage of development
- preferring a free West to a closed Muslim majority culture
- upholding the sanctity of marriage, and resisting the pornification of society
- resisting the attack on human sexuality by the radical social engineers
- affirming the importance of hard work and personal responsibility
- taking on the culture of death
- raising the flag for genuine tolerance and pluralism
- opposing dead-end political and economic policies which enslave instead of liberate

None of these activities and concerns have anything to do with hatred and bigotry. They are all perfectly legitimate and long-standing values which most people throughout human history have championed and preferred. They have nothing to do with hate, and I refuse to allow the activists to twist these social goods into social evils.

OK, so if those are not examples of what hatred looks like, what does? Well, I am glad you asked that question. I happen to have many hundreds of prime examples of what real hatred and intolerance looks like. I should know all about this, since I am on the receiving end of this on almost a daily basis.

Hardly a day goes by without hateful, diabolical and vitriolic attacks coming my way from the peace and love brigade. The side which shouts the most about tolerance has proven to be the least tolerant group around. The radicals of the secular left who always scream about love and acceptance are the most unloving and unaccepting guys out there...

Not only are these examples of genuine hate and demonic rage, but they also demonstrate how the other side “argues”. Seldom are facts, rational thoughts, and cogent arguments used. Instead, mud-slinging, name-calling and non-stop abuse are hurled my way. And all this as an example of the love and tolerance of the secular left activists!

So we must start standing up for truth in all areas of life. That includes the area of language. For too long we have allowed the other side to dictate the agenda by redefining language. We must reclaim words and terminology and use them to speak truth.

And the truth is, standing up for faith, family and freedom is not hateful. But viciously abusing us as we seek to do so is. Also, we can pray for these haters that they do indeed find truth.

+ *Bill Muehlenberg, Culture-Watch*

Copts Imperilled In Libya & Egypt

On Sunday 15 February, Islamic State (IS) released footage of the mass beheading of 21 Copts in Libya by soldiers of the Caliphate in IS's Wilayat Tarabulus (province of Tripoli). Referred to as 'Coptic crusaders' and 'people of the cross', they are executed it is stated in revenge for 'Camilia', a Coptic woman who Islamists falsely claim converted to Islam, only to be captured by the Coptic Church and forcibly re-converted. The story is a fabrication, much like the blood libel lie used to incite violence against Jews. In a call that is doubtless aimed at inciting jihad against the Copts, IS has called for Copts to be killed 'wherever they may be found'. Another 35 Copts have been kidnapped in Libya. Please pray for Egypt, her Church and for Copts everywhere.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin | RLPB 297 | Wed 18 Feb 2015*

Suicide Rate For Women Having Abortions Six Times Women Giving Birth

Voluntary guidelines for post-abortion mental health evaluations during the month following an abortion have failed to significantly decrease the rate of suicide after abortion in Finland, according to a new study.

Finland adopted the guidelines after a large-scale study of women's health records, published in 1997, found that the suicide rate among women who had undergone abortions in the prior year was three times higher compared to women in the general population and six times higher compared to women who gave birth.

Mika Gissler of the National Institute for Health and Welfare, who was the lead author of the 1997 study, led a team of researchers who examined health records to see if the suicide rate went down after the new guidelines were published. They found that the decrease in the suicide rate was not statistically significant. “Women with a recent induced abortion still have a two-fold suicide risk,” they wrote. “A mandatory check-up may decrease this risk.”

The increased risk of suicide following abortion has been recognized in Australia as well. The 2013 Queensland Maternal and Perinatal Quality Council report noted: “Suicide is the leading cause of death in women within 42 days after their pregnancy and between 43 days and 365 days after their pregnancy. There appears to be a significant worldwide risk of maternal suicide following termination of pregnancy and, in fact, a higher risk than that following term delivery.

The potential for depression and other mental health issues at this time needs to be better appreciated. Active follow-up of these women needs to happen. Practitioners referring women for termination of pregnancy or undertaking termination of pregnancy should en-

sure adequate follow-up for such women, especially if the procedure is undertaken for mental health concerns.”

Council chairman Professor Michael Humphrey said that “the number of suicides was a key concern,” according to a report in the *Queensland Courier-Mail*. “It’s pretty scary,” Prof. Humphrey said. “But this is not just happening in Queensland or Australia. The incidence of suicide in relation to maternal deaths is also seen very clearly in reports coming out of New Zealand and the UK. It’s a major phenomenon.”

He said some women had taken their own lives within a year of having an abortion.

“There’s a lot of evidence that a significant proportion of women who have termination of pregnancies do have mental health issues subsequently,” Prof. Humphrey said. “Whether they are mental health issues related to the reason why the woman had the termination or whether they’re related to regret afterwards, we don’t know.”

Besides the Finland study, large record-based studies from the United States and Denmark have found that overall death rates were higher among women following abortion compared to those among women who had given birth.

+ *LifeNews 19 December 2014*



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Life under the Banner

The Wonder of Eternal Life

Jim Klazinga

What will happen to us after we die? Fascinating question, don't you think?

Popular culture deals with this matter extensively. Ghosts and spirits are common in popular movies and best-selling books.

But is there a consensus about what life after death will be like? Not at all.

Part of this might be due to the fact that we don't have anyone with us today who has gone beyond the grave and come back. At least, not after an extended period of time. Oh, there are those who have had near-death experiences. Some claim to have seen what the afterlife is like. You wonder whether such experiences are induced by the trauma of almost dying, resulting in unusual brain activity. But you never know.

Of course, if we had someone who had not been alive for, say, a year or so, and then came back, we might be able to take what he has to say about the afterlife a bit more seriously. But there's no one like that around.

The Source for Answers

There is one we can turn to for answers. While we may not have any people alive who can accurately tell us from personal experience what it is like to be dead, we do have the word of one who knows exactly what life after death is all about. We have the Word of God, the word of the one who has complete control over life and death. He who holds the keys to death can give us a true picture of what life after death will actually be like.

Be warned though, the Bible's understanding of the afterlife is different than what the unbelieving world imagines it is. The world likes to focus on pitch-forks and harps. It likes to think of floating on clouds. It likes to imagine St Peter standing at the gate going over whether you've been naughty or nice.

We are not interested in what the

world thinks about the Christian conception of the afterlife. We are interested in what the Bible actually says.

More Questions Than Answers

Believe it or not, though, there really is not all that much the Bible tells us about what life after death will be like. At least, not as much as you might think.

Some imagine the Bible is all about how to get to heaven when you die. So, it should have a lot to say regarding what heaven is like, right?

But for every question the Bible answers about the afterlife, you could probably come up with at least fifty questions the Bible does not answer. How will we keep busy for eternity? How will we perceive things? What will our bodies look like? Will we have bodies that are all about the same age?

We know we won't be given in marriage, but will we be able to recognize our friends and family? Are we going to want to spend most of our time with them? What about our jobs, our gifts, our hobbies? Will anything of that be relevant? Will we eat? Will we drink? There are so many questions, most of which simply cannot be answered, at least not conclusively.

What We Need to Know

Still, the Bible does not leave us high and dry. As I said before, the Bible is where we go to get real answers about what happens to us after we die.

It still is of great importance to at least know something about all of this. After all, the time we spend in this life is nothing compared to eternity. And, as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15, "If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied."

But remember this: the Bible deals with this material not for the benefit of the dead but for the living. In other words, our doctrine of the

afterlife makes a difference in the here and now.

We do not learn what the Bible teaches us about life after death in order to be able to pass a quiz once we get to the other side. God is not going to sit there asking us questions, making sure we know enough about what heaven will be like.

If we are not washed clean by the blood of Jesus Christ, no amount of studying the afterlife will make a difference. And if we are saved, we will get along just fine with God taking us by the hand and enabling us to discover what we need to know.

No, it's not about being mentally prepared for what will happen after we die. Rather, we learn about what the Bible says about life after death to strengthen us now, to comfort us now, to help us live now.

What Happens When We Die

So, to help us live now, to give us a measure of comfort now, let us consider briefly what the Bible teaches us about what is going to happen to us after we die.

Perhaps it would be best to look at this in stages. The first stage being: what happens to us immediately after we die. Our soul will be taken immediately after this life to Christ. When we die, we will consciously go to be with the Lord.

Paul indicates this when in Philippians 1 he talks about his desire to go to be with Christ. Also, in 2 Corinthians 5:8, he says, "We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord."

Jesus, on the cross, said to the penitent thief, "Today, you will be with me in paradise." Such texts make it clear that after we die, we go to be with the Lord immediately. We go consciously, and in fact joyfully, because in such a state we will finally be free from

suffering and sin.

As great as this will be, though, it will be incomplete. This state following death is a state of being away from the body. And this is an unnatural thing.

We are physical creatures. We are beings made up of both body and soul, and there is something that is not right about having one without the other.

Many imagine that life without a body is somehow a higher state of being. It's a life free from material concerns. We'll be able to concentrate on purely intellectual matters, floating along without a physical care.

But we are not meant to be souls without bodies. Yet, this is a state we will have to exist in, at least for a time.

Body and Soul Reunited

This state will not last forever. When Christ returns to judge the living and the dead, our bodies and souls will be reunited.

Mind you, our bodies will be changed, made like Christ's glorious resurrected body. As Paul says in chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians, "Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" We will receive bodies that will last forever.

It's not that these bodies in and of themselves will be so strong. There is nothing inherent in the human soul that makes it immortal, and there will be nothing inherent in these new bodies that will make them indestructible. Rather, we will receive bodies in which we will experience perfectly the grace of God, a grace that will never end, a grace that will supply all our needs. This grace will last forever. This grace will wipe out sin and death. This grace will enable

our bodies to last forever.

What will these bodies be like? Will we all be super athletes? Will we all be beautiful? Will we all be able to do anything we could possibly imagine? We don't know. The Bible doesn't spell out all the details, which means we don't need to know.

But we do know this much about those bodies: they won't get sick. They won't deteriorate in any way, shape or form. They will not be infected by sin. But most of all, they will never die. Death will be swallowed up in victory.

Eternal Blessedness

This brings us to the final stage: everlasting life. As the Heidelberg Catechism puts it in Q & A 58 - "so after this life I will have perfect blessedness such as no eye has seen no ear has heard, no man has ever imagined: a blessedness in which to praise God eternally."

This is something that cannot even be imagined. It is perfect blessedness, something that we who are still affected by sin can not possibly fully grasp.

One thing we do know: we will be praising God forever. And when you think about how good it is to praise God already in this life, well, praising God for an eternity will be infinitely better. That is what we look forward to.

Strength for Today

What good does it do us to know all of this?

One obvious benefit: we can be at peace concerning our loved ones who have gone to be with the Lord. We can have comfort in the fact that they are with Jesus.

And we can take comfort in how our Lord by his power will raise his children to be with him, that they may experience perfect blessedness forever.

This truth is of great benefit. While we are here on this earth, we are bound to suffer. Many of us have seen our loved ones suffer. Suffer through disease, suffer through pain, or suffer because of some sin that keeps working its way into the heart.

Perhaps we have experienced this suffering ourselves. Yet, we can

take comfort. We can know that those who have suffered while living on this earth as one of God's people, will afterward have rest. They will have peace.

We read in 2 Corinthians 5:1-5 – "Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but clothed with our spiritual dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come."

We have the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come, guaranteeing the future imperishable body that will be ours in the age to come. The Spirit assures us that we belong to God, and he will take us to himself to enjoy perfect fellowship with him and all his people for all eternity. What a joy, to look forward to our eternal house in heaven!

Concluding Questions

Do these truths strengthen you? Does the future resurrection of the body comfort you? Does the knowledge of life everlasting strengthen you? Are you assured that Jesus Christ is Lord and that eventually he will take you to himself? These are important questions to ask.

If you are not destined for eternal life, then you are destined for the eternal damnation reserved for the enemies of God. There is no other destination. It's one or the other.

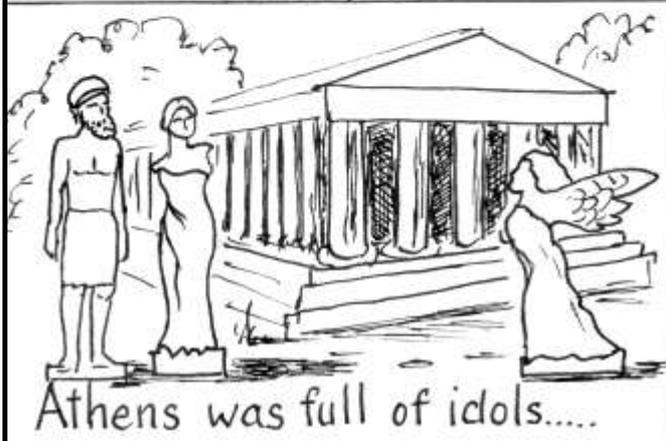
May God send his Spirit into our hearts, that we may know where we are going. May he grant us the comfort of knowing of our eternal salvation, that we may be strengthened to serve him as we await his final coming.

Children under the Banner — Acts 17:10-34

Altars and Idols in Athens

Paul, Silas and Timothy preached in Thessalonica and Berea.

Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea. Paul left for Athens.



Athens was full of idols.....



Even one to the unknown god!



Paul told them about God, who made everything, and about Jesus.



Some people believed,



but some people mocked

Prescribed Search Work

APRIL 2015

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

SENIOR AND INTERMEDIATE (Intermediate omit questions 5 and 6)

STEPHEN'S DEFENCE— ACTS chapter 7

1. What inheritance did God give to Abraham in 'this land' [Canaan]?
2. How was God with Joseph when he was sold into Egypt? (2 verses)
3. What did Moses suppose that his brethren would have understood?
4. At the burning bush, what did God tell Moses that he would do for his people in Egypt?
- 5(x). Write out the 3 consecutive verses in the book of Amos chapter 5, that describe Israel's idolatry in the wilderness.
- 6(x). To which 2 verses in Isaiah 66 does Stephen refer to show that God does not dwell in temples made with hands?
7. What was the reaction of Stephen's accusers when they heard these things?
8. What were Stephen's dying words? (2 verses)

JUNIOR

JOHN chapter 5:1--9

1. How long had the man at the pool of Bethesda been suffering from his infirmity?
2. When Jesus told him to take up his bed, what did he do?

chapter 5:24--47

3. What will happen when those in their graves hear the voice of the Son of God? (2 verses)
4. Why were the Jews to search the Scriptures?

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

Books in the Banner

'Can We Rock the Gospel?' by J. Blanchard & D. Lucarini

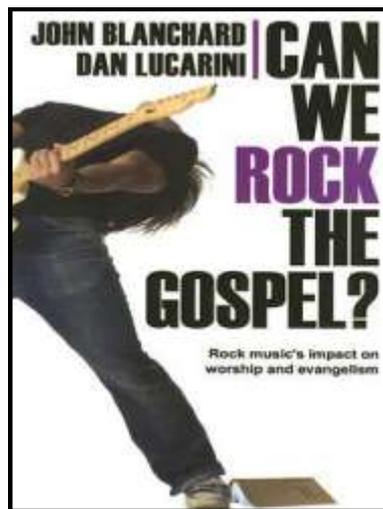
Reviewed by Herm Zandman

In a thorough effort to evaluate the modern-day influence of so called Christian Rock or Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) the authors, one of whom (D.L.) was once deeply involved in CCM, consider the historical origin of rock music, its secular manifestations, its concomitant lifestyles, its overflow into the Christian scene and the motives behind this. Furthermore, the book is laced with Biblical directives and thought points. In its concluding chapters CCM is found damaging to the Christian life and outreach based on Biblical principles. "The authors make no secret of the fact that they count themselves among those who are truly offended by rock music in God's service and are truly perplexed that so many other Christians go to such great lengths to defend their use of it in both worship and evangelism" (p.34).

The writers start with illustrating how use of pop music has become a really hot potato in recent years, how it is seen by some as a blessing from heaven and by others as a curse from hell. The first group sees it as a means to keep the Church relevant for the present day, the other sees it as an erosion of fundamental Christianity and reductionism of the Gospel's teaching and application.

The divisions run deeply and Christians need to understand the depth of influence music has on its hearers. Rick Warren author of *The Purpose-Driven Church*, (p.280; <http://www.word.com.au/The-Purpose-Driven-Church/Rick-Warren/>) when asked what he would do if he could start a church over again, comments: "From the first day of the new church I'd put more energy and money into a first-class music ministry..In the first years I made the mistake of underestimating the power of music..I regret that now" (p.37). Yet, in both evangelism and worship, the words are vitally important (cf. Eph.1:13; Phil.2:16; James 1:18), the authors state. They continue to point out, showing abundant evidence throughout, how the words in CCM are often inaudible and even if they were audible the

degree of truth in them is negligible. CCM musicians when defending their usually well-intended pursuits lose credibility according to GQ Online (Upon this Rock by Jeremiah John Sullivan, GQ Online Magazine, February, 2005; <http://www.gq.com/entertainment/music/200401/rock-music-jesus>), "Rock music used to be a safe haven for degenerates and rebels. Until it found Jesus" (p.72). As evidenced at Christian Rock Concerts, David Noebel's words are shown as truth when he states that 'Rock 'n Roll is musical pornography.' "As music affects your body, you intuitively want to put motion to it. The motion that fits rock music is entirely sensual. If the message of rock music produces that kind of response, then it is not good music for a Christian," says Richard Taylor (p.120). "The essence of rock music," says



Kilmister of the rock band Motorhead, "is rebellion." Medical evidence has conclusively shown that rock music (including CCM) leads to deafness, hysteria, and schizophrenia in its hearers. The authors provide ample medical evidence of this, citing authoritative sources such as *The Lancet*.

Of greater spiritual significance is that the authors demonstrate that the music frenzy manipulates people into a false worship experience; this music produces a counterfeit spiritual experience. A.W. Tozer comments, "We secularize God, we secularize

the Gospel of Christ, we secularize worship" (p.150).

A most interesting section, for those who emphasize worship of God with vocals, demonstrates how in the Old Testament only a limited and prescribed number of instruments were used in temple worship, and how in the synagogue and in New Testament worship the dictum was always and without exception on praising God with voice.

The argument is used that outreach is highly effective through this music. The authors' own research (p.218) has shown that only a microscopic fraction of all those millions who damage themselves by exposure to this CCM phenomenon are actually being saved, and those more in spite of the music than because of it.

Two critical notes seem to be warranted regarding the book's content. The first one relates to the exegesis presented regarding Paul's words in Colossians 3:16 pertaining to psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, which are explained as the psalter and songs beyond the psalter (whereas these three types are actually contained within the psalter as presented in Scripture). The second aspect is that the book could have delved more into what constitutes Biblical beauty as over against what is objectionable on the basis of Scriptural indices. The falsity that 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder' is left largely unanswered and would strengthen the argument against CCM considerably.

For anyone who wishes to gain a deeper understanding of this worrisome phenomenon in which Satan presents himself as an angel of light (2 Cor.11:14), the book is highly recommended reading. It also provides the reader with reasoned rather than emotional arguments as to why CCM should be treated as an unclean thing (cf. Job14:4) and strange fire (Lev.10:1).

Evangelical Press

Missions in the Banner

European Missionary Fellowship — Australian Visit February-March 2015

The Director of European Missionary Fellowship (EMF), Martin Leech, together with his wife Penny, visited Australia in the months of February and March. As he said, it was some twenty-one years since the previous Director had visited Australia, and so it was felt a visit was more than overdue.

But now you might well be wondering, what is the European Missionary Fellowship, and how does it hold any relevance for us down under? You have heard of European Christian Mission (ECM) and various others mission organisations based in the United Kingdom and Europe but where and how does EMF fit in?

Background

A bit of background history helps. Here I quote from the EMF website (www.europeanmission.org): "From 1935 to 1940, a young Scots evangelist, James Stewart, laboured for the sake of the gospel in several countries in Eastern Europe. His efforts were attended by exceptional blessing; Christians were revived and large numbers of souls converted to Christ. This led to the formation of the European Evangelistic Crusade (EEC), which within a few years of the end of the Second World War, became an international mission whose aim was to evangelise Europe.

"In 1959, the British branch of the ECC was established as a

Mission in its own right. The name European Missionary Fellowship (EMF) was adopted at the time to express the idea of a fel-



lowship of God's servants working together for the spread of the gospel, rather than of a highly organised society. Initially, the missionaries were from the UK or North America and sent into continental Europe. As time went by a new emphasis developed which was to support indigenous missionaries to work in their own countries.

"Today, EMF continues to serve evangelical churches of Europe as an interdenominational mission committed to the Reformed Faith. The majority of the missionaries are serving in their own countries but EMF remains willing to facilitate cross-cultural missionary work."

Europe Today

Martin began by giving a brief run-down on the situation in Europe today. He spoke of the 740 million people living there, in an area smaller than Australia (almost half the size actually). It is a continent with 269 languages. While 70%

claim to adhere to a nominal Christian grouping – whether Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox or similar, if you are an evangelical in many countries you will find yourself regarded with great suspicion – even heretical and potentially a traitor. It makes things difficult in hiring buildings, running classes, and the like. Coming to a true faith in Christ will often result in conflict with your family and friends and community.

Then in those situations where the traditional churches are declining people aren't found turning to the gospel but rather to everything else – the occult, materialism, spiritualism, atheism. It is said that some areas have more spiritualist practitioners than evangelical believers. It is estimated that over all Europe some 2 – 4 % are genuine believers, with some countries having less than 2%. In Europe Mariology defines much of Roman Catholicism while Orthodox churches worship icons as special stories about the Bible – they are said to help you speak to God! You pay for candles according to the type of prayer – and you pay a bit more for the priest to help you in your prayer.

Mission Work

Martin then went on to speak about how mission is born out of revival. Once part of Europe

Missed Family Camp 2014-15 — or missing it?

Go to www.vimeo.com/119512145 and see the video

This is a promotional clip interviewing participants at the Family Camp and showing aspects of it.

Share it around!

was reformed and so it sent out missionaries. But now it needs missionaries to go back there.

The focus for EMF is building faithful local churches. This can take some 30—40 years before a church becomes self-supporting. So there is much ingoing support, whether financially or through training in various forms. Presently about 80 people in 16 different countries are supported in some way by EMF. Most are indigenous (the favoured option), some are cross-cultural. There is a real need for younger workers as quite a number of those presently serving are elderly.

Their website notes here: "Serving missionaries of EMF are allowed as much freedom as possible in their respective spheres of ministry but as those accountable to the Lord. Nevertheless, as a Mission we continually monitor their situations so that we ourselves are good stewards of the funds donated for our use. We accept responsibility for raising financial support; this enables the missionaries to give themselves fully to their mission of spreading the gospel. They are required to submit regular reports and prayer letters and make deputation visits to the UK at regular intervals, so that interest in the work of the gospel throughout Europe is maintained. We produce a monthly Prayer Diary and publish a magazine 'Vision for Europe' three times a year."

There is a College based at Welwyn, the Home Office for EMF just north of London. This trains evangelical Christians from all over Europe and sometimes from



Scenes from the Scots Church, Cranbourne, Melbourne meeting, with Martin Leech and his wife, Penny, below



toral), Systematic Theology, and World Mission & Evangelism. There is also teaching done by EMF staff in the various congregations throughout Europe.

EMF has a distinctly evangelical basis, shown by its statement on its website and by its support of churches who are largely independent evangelical churches in the United Kingdom. But there are also supporting Presbyterian and Reformed churches. The Reformed Churches of Spain, a fellow member of the ICRC with the PCEA has close links to EMF.

We were thankful to hear of the Lord's work on the continent Paul was originally called to go to in Acts 16:6-10. That call of the 'man from Macedonia' is still echoing today. May the Lord bless EMF and all those seeking to be faithful to his Word in bringing that Word to Europe in our day.

Sjirk Bajema



Locations of the missionaries supported