

the presbyterian banner

July 2015



*The LORD is exalted over all the nations, his glory above the heavens.
Who is like the LORD our God,
the One who sits enthroned on high,
who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth?
Psalm 113:4—6*

CONTENTS

Editorial	2
Synod Moderator's Devotion <i>Haggai 2:1-9</i>	3
The Past For Today <i>Christianity in Scotland (6)</i>	6
The World In The Banner <i>News & Views</i>	8
Oh, Really? <i>Money</i>	10
Children in the Banner <i>An Audience with Rulers</i>	12
Prescribed Search Work	13
Film under the Banner <i>Kingsman: The Secret Service</i>	14
Churches in the Banner <i>Ulverstone Ladies Craft & Camp</i>	15

ISSN 0729-3542

Editor:
Rev. Sjirk Bajema
44 Prospect Hill Road,
Narre Warren, VIC
AUSTRALIA 3805
Ph. (03) 9705 1505
Email: sjirkb@gmail.com

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

Editorial

Germaine Greer has been known for some time as a controversial feminist speaker and author. Her philosophy has been directly opposed to much of what we believe God says in his Word. But this week, for once, she did get it a little bit right. You see, she hit out at Elton John and his 'husband' David Furnish, after they chose to name David as their sons' mother on their birth certificates. Speaking at a public event she claimed the concept of motherhood had "emptied out", and went on to launch an attack on the process of IVF. It was through IVF that people like Elton John and David Furnish are able to have their children. They used donor eggs and a surrogate mother.

As Greer went on to say, "We now have a 'genetic' mother, who supplies eggs. It depends entirely on where she is if she is going to be allowed to know what happens to the eggs. And women tend to care," she said. "An egg is not a sperm, we do not produce 400 million of them in one go. One miserable little egg pops every month." She added: "I'm sorry. Did we talk about this? Did we sit down and talk about what eggs mean to women?"

Here we must also add what this all means to the Creator himself. He instituted marriage to be between a man and a woman. And while he blesses us with the modern technology to help couples and families, any deviation from his way for us will produce severe consequences. We only need to see this in the vicious moral vortex our society is in. When what is so wrong becomes increasingly right those trying to live the right way will find themselves increasingly in the wrong. And how quickly hasn't this morass sucked our community in? You wonder whatever will happen next!

One only needs to note what happened when the openly homosexual fashion designers Dolce & Gabbana criticised Elton John about his 'creating' his family. They said, "You are born and you have a father and a mother. Or at least it should be like this, that's why I am not convinced by chemical children, synthetic babies, wombs for rent." In response to this Elton John called for fans and supporters of LGBT rights to boycott the brand. That quickly led to a 'clarifying' of their comments.

Dear reader, while there might have been a previous historical age called 'The Dark Ages' it has got nothing on what is happening in our world right now. In the words of Paul this belongs "to the night or to the darkness" (1 Thessalonians 5:5).

That much we don't exactly know. God does, though. And since we belong to the day, those living in the light, we must put on the faith and love and hope of the gospel. We need to show we are those being saved through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's encourage each other in this.

*For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath
but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.
He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep,
we may live together with him.
1 Thessalonians 5:9-10*

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. The opinions expressed in signed articles are those of the authors - not necessarily of the editor or the PCEA and may not be reproduced without permission. Articles written by the Editor may be reproduced without asking for permission, although with appropriate acknowledgement. This magazine is available as a pdf file on the Church Website: www.pcea.org.au

Synod 2015, 6 May—Moderator's Devotion

Haggai 2:1—9

Jim Klazinga

Brothers, I've got to confess, going over the agenda and reports, there were a few times when I had a real hard time trying to understand what I was reading. Maybe it was the way these particular reports were written. More likely it's my lack of experience in the ways of our denomination. Or maybe it's just that I'm not very bright.

Whatever the reason, it was rather frustrating at times.

We can all get frustrated every now and then, right, when a task seems too difficult for us. Maybe after a while we can't be bothered to try any more. We just give up, even when we know we shouldn't.

Well, as we began to consider last night, God's people in the time of the Prophet Haggai, they had an important task they were called to do: rebuilding the temple. But it looked to be extremely difficult at times, hopeless even.

And so, for over sixteen years, work on the temple stopped.

But then, along came Haggai. He encourages the people. He reminds them of their responsibility and urges them to press on.

Now, let's consider further why this work was of utmost significance. The thing is, failure to rebuild the temple would be a violation of the covenant God had established with them. God had made a promise to his people, he had promised to be their God. But by letting the temple remain in ruins, the people were not fulfilling their side of the covenant.

After all, remember, the temple was where God dwelled among his people.

Oh, not that the people lived over here and God lived over there in the temple. The temple was not his home address. No finite, weak, created building could ever contain the infinite, Almighty

Creator.

Rather, the temple represented how he lived with his people. It pointed to God's fellowship with his people. Because of that relationship, God would, as verse 8 of chapter 1 says, "take pleasure in it", and appear in his glory in it.

But now, that brings up a question: why did God allow the house that represented his fellowship with his people, why did He even allow it to be destroyed in the first place?

Haggai 2:1-9

1 In the seventh month, on the twenty-first of the month, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying: 2 "Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying: 3 'Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing? 4 Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel,' says the Lord; 'and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land,' says the Lord, 'and work; for I am with you,' says the Lord of hosts. 5 'According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!'

6 "For thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; 7 and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the Lord of hosts. 8 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the Lord of hosts. 9 'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the Lord of hosts.

Well, again, God was not confined to the temple. And the thing is, his presence there was not necessarily guaranteed. God's presence among his people in the temple presupposed, shall we

say, a good relationship with his people. And a good relationship with them would be defined thus: he would be their God and they would be his people.

Now, God being their God, that was a given. He was the God who would always be faithful to his promises. That was not the issue. But what about the other side of the relationship? How would the people of Judah show that they were his people? By keeping their promise to be obedient. By doing what God required of them. If the people were not obedient, then they were breaking the relationship, which meant that they could not then automatically expect that God would dwell among them in the temple. Only in the context of the obedience of the people would the temple be the continuing focal point of his divine and gracious presence.

Oh, not that they could force God to dwell among them by their obedience. No, that was all of grace. It's always been ultimately about grace. But in His wisdom He had sovereignly chosen to historically work out that grace in the context of this covenant that He had established.

So, when they got back home after being in exile, the exile brought on by their own wickedness, they needed to show that re-establishing their relationship with God was important. They needed to demonstrate obedience. And an important part of that obedience was rebuilding the Temple that would point to God's presence among them.

The people seemed to understand this. God worked through the prophetic ministry of Haggai to stir their spirits and bring about a renewed vigour for the

work of the Lord.

Sadly though, it would seem that not everything was quite yet hunky-dory. They still had issues.

For one thing, the temple being built, it wasn't going to compare in glory to the old temple that had been destroyed. We read in verse 3 of chapter 2, "Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing?"

There were still some people who remembered what the old temple looked like. Some speculate that Haggai was one of them. Oh, these folks would have been quite old, well over seventy years old, and even at that age they would have had to have been quite young when it was destroyed. There wouldn't have been too many of them. Yet, there were enough, able to reminisce about what the former temple was like.

And when comparing the former temple to what the new temple was shaping up to be, it didn't hold all that much promise. And they let the rest of the people know it.

Mind you, it's not that the new revised temple would be so much smaller. In fact, comparing the dimensions, it seems the new temple would be bigger. But the thing is, much of what was sacred in the old temple was lost, stolen by their enemies. In addition, much of the precious metal that had helped make the old temple so spectacular, it had been lost. Plus, the people wouldn't have been able to afford to hire skilled craftsmen like Solomon could. It just wouldn't be the same.

And that wasn't the only cause of frustration. Think about how difficult this work would have been for them. You know, walk-

ing down town Sydney on Sunday and Monday, all the buildings, all the towers, very impressive. Imagine all the work that goes into building just one of them. But at least today we have all the advantages of modern technology. Imagine what it must have been like back then for a group of impoverished, hungry, people without much to work with. The task must have been staggering.

And so, it would appear that about a month after the people started work on the temple again, they needed more motivation. They needed another reminder to keep on the task before them.

Thus, once again, Haggai reminds the people of their responsibility. He does this in the message we read this morning. Haggai tells them to keep on it. Verse 4 of Haggai chapter 2 - "Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel," says the Lord; "and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land," says the Lord, "and work." Be strong, and work. Don't let up.

You might think Haggai was being a bit hard on them. Get to work, you lazy so-and-so's.

And yet, Haggai in the message we read from chapter 2, he does so much more than just tell the people to get back to work. In fact, Haggai proclaims to them incredibly encouraging truths.

Yeah, right, very encouraging reminding them of how the new temple wasn't matching up very well with the old temple in splendour.

But look at the end of verse 4 and verse 5: "'work; for I am with you,' says the Lord of hosts. 'According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!'" This was the reason why they were able to get on with the reconstruction of the temple. God

was with them. His Spirit was among them, enabling them to do what had to be done.

Notice here also how the Lord reminds them again of what he had done for their ancestors in the past. He was with them when they came out of Egypt. He brought them out of the land of slavery. And he took the initiative of establishing a covenant with them. God reminds them of his covenant faithfulness. And thus, being reminded, the people could be assured of his continued covenant faithfulness. They could know that the God who remained faithful in the past would continue to be faithful. And so, they do not need to fear, for God will be with his people.

And God continues to give them assurance in verses 6 through 9 of chapter 2. I just have to read this again; "For thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the Lord of hosts. 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the Lord of hosts. 'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the Lord of hosts. 'And in this place I will give peace,' says the Lord of hosts."

All the resources of the world belong to God. He is the Lord Almighty, creator of everything. He conquers over all of his enemies, and the spoils belong to Him. He would maintain his victory. He would see to it that the plunder of the nations would brought in to fill his glorious temple. The precious things would come, and the temple would be restored to glory.

And in fact, the physical tem-

ple was restored to glory. Four years after the message of Haggai to the people of Judah, the temple was completed. As we read in Ezra 6:15-16 - "Now the temple was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius. Then the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites and the rest of the descendants of the captivity, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy." Joy indeed. Unspeakable joy. They did it, because God was with them, and God promised to help them.

But you know something, this prophecy, initially fulfilled in the rebuilding of the physical temple, it points to something, someone, even more glorious. Infinitely more glorious. In the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, the glory of the temple was way more fully realised. He is the ultimate desire of all nations. Christ fulfilled the purpose of the Old Testament temple, because in Christ, all the fullness of God dwells. John 1:14 - "And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory."

And that glory continues. As we also considered last night, in the present age, Christ lives in his people through his Spirit, so that we, the church of Christ, have actually become the temple. The glory of the temple is realised in us. Christ brings the desired of the Gentile nations into his church, His glorious body. Not that we're so inherently desirable. But we are the plunder God has chosen to manifest His glory in.

Can it get any better? Indeed, when Jesus Christ comes again. Verse nine of Haggai 2 talks about how the Lord will give peace. The Hebrew word is a familiar one: 'shalom.' The Lord will bring shalom. Perfect shalom, perfect peace, perfect fulfilment, completion, this awaits the coming of

Christ, and God will dwell among his people in rich and deep ways that we can't even begin to imagine. Listen to the glorious words of Revelation 21:3 - "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them." The ultimate temple. That, brothers and sisters, that is when we will be granted ultimate splendour, the greatest glory we could ever hope to have.

This is what we hunger for, we long for. And it's something that can encourage us on to complete the tasks that are set before us



Model of the Second Temple

today and tomorrow. Just as the Jewish people of the time of Haggai received encouragement to complete the task of rebuilding the temple, so we too can receive encouragement as we seek to be the living temples of the Lord, doing the work of the church at this synod meeting. God has been with us, he is with us right here, right now, and he will continue to be with us, right up until the time Christ returns again. God is the faithful covenant God. He has established, and He will continue to establish the glory of His temple.

Now we might not think of working through reports and voting on deliverances, we might not see this as being especially glorious. But it can be, it is, remembering that God is here with us, enabling the splendour of Christ to be re-

flected in the work we do as His people.

Oh, it would be so easy to let problems overwhelm us. It is so easy to look at our own sinfulness, and how sinful others in the church are, it's so easy to look at how sinful the world around us is, and think, "What's the point?" The forces of darkness are everywhere; they seem to be winning so many battles. And here we are, dealing with motions and budgets.

But these things need to be done, not for their own sake, but because of what all of this points to. We get to talk about helping our children grow in the Lord. We get to hear about the work of God in other churches and other parts of the world, focussing on the unity we share together in Christ. We get to reflect on what it means to be the church of God living in a nation that so desperately needs the truth. We even get to talk about the financial resources God has given us for use in His service. This is not nothing. It is, in fact, glorious.

So brothers, the Word of God calls us to action. Be Strong. Take Courage. And work. Put aside frustrations, and do the work of the Lord. Do it here at synod. Do it with your brothers and sisters in your home congregations.

When troubles surround you, when the task of being a Christian appears to be too overwhelming, be strong and work. Not because you are so strong, you are so capable, you have all that you need to be successful leaders and build a successful church. No, but because God is the faithful covenant God. He strengthens. He dwells among his people. And he will return to take his people to glory, where they will be His glorious temple, forever. Praise his holy name. Amen.

The Past for Today

Christianity in Scotland (6): Crown and Conflict, 1567-1663

Rowland S. Ward

1: Introduction

For more than a century from 1567 there was a struggle between two conceptions of the church – the one an episcopal system in which royal control could be exercised through the appointment of the higher clergy, and the other a presbyterian system in which the church was to be free to follow Christ according to his word without interference in her spiritual functions from the state. The question of the right ordering of the relationship of church and state is deeply involved, and remains a relevant issue in societies today. What should be the relationship of church and state in a professedly Christian country? Under what circumstances does obedience to Christ mean resistance to the state?

For 16th and 17th century Scotland it was even more complicated because the idea of tolerating alternative visions was some way off, while the fear of the return of the Church of Rome was never far away in the politics of the period. While the Scottish Reformation had been achieved without the support of the king, there was inadequate financial support for the church. Much of the old church structure remained and provided an opportunity for episcopacy to be restored, as will be shown. There were alternating episcopal and presbyterian periods with key presbyterian dates in 1592 and 1638 and episcopal high points in 1618 and 1661. Much that has been written from both sides has been partisan and an endeavour has been made to reflect the complexities fairly in what follows.

2: The problem of property

Although the Book of Discipline had envisaged a complete revision of the system of benefices, the old financial system continued alongside the new order. While much

church property had been appropriated by lay persons prior to 1560, in 90% of parishes the right of patronage, that is, the right to appoint the minister, was not in the hands of lay persons; and the existing holders of benefices retained their livings and titles regardless of religious persuasion, provided they did not say mass. This meant that clergy in receipt of a benefice who conformed to the reformed church also held a title belonging to the episcopal order, such as archdeacon or dean. Similarly, clergy who did not conform continued to draw revenues and hold the title while providing no service. In February 1562, a temporary measure to provide for the reformed ministry was adopted by which one third of the revenue of the lesser benefices was appropriated and divided between the church and the Crown. This was confirmed by Parliament in December 1567, together with the provision that ministers could succeed to benefices worth less than £200 Scots (then equal to some £66 English) when they became vacant.

The greater benefices, such as the bishoprics, were in danger of being secularized since the Crown, which succeeded to their revenues during vacancies, frequently bestowed revenues from them on the nobility in order to secure their support. For example, in 1566 Mary, Queen of Scots, appointed a man to the vacant see of Brechin who, although he was never consecrated and rarely visited Brechin, appropriated the revenues for himself and his kinsmen. This was not a situation which was satisfactory to the church. At the Convention of Leith in January 1572 an imprudent compromise was agreed between certain delegated ministers and the then regent, the Earl of Mar, under which the bishoprics would not be dissolved but held by ministers of the reformed

church, whose powers would be no greater than the superintendents. In this way the revenues needed to carry out the schemes envisaged in the Book of Discipline would be secured to the church. Importantly, these nominal 'bishops' would be subject to the General Assembly in things spiritual and to the king in things temporal. The agreement was accepted by the General Assembly in August 1572 only as an interim measure and subject to a unanimously agreed protest on several matters. A year later a provision was added that all holders of a benefice must subscribe to the Confession of Faith. While those who refused were liable to be deprived, those who subscribed but did not serve in the reformed ministry were not.

Despite these measures the situation was not improved, and under the wily Morton it deteriorated further. The new bishops were considered by ordinary people to be a sham, since the revenues of the bishoprics were diverted to the rapacious among the nobility. Like the tulchan (calf-skin stuffed with straw) sometimes placed next to a cow to induce it to give her milk, 'the bishop got the title, but my lord



Andrew Melville

received the milk.' Further, Morton manipulated the third of the benefices intended to be shared between church and state to the disadvantage of the church, endeavouring to bend it to his will. He basically sought increased conformity to the English Episcopal pattern maintained under Elizabeth I.

After an absence of ten years in July 1574 Andrew Melville (1545-1622), a particularly able scholar, preacher and poet, returned to Scotland. He was soon appointed principal of Glasgow University, which was then in a decayed state, and built it up wonderfully. In 1580 he was transferred to St Andrews as principal of the theological college there. The last five of his years in Europe had been spent in Geneva, where Theodore Beza had succeeded Calvin as leading minister. Melville soon gave leadership in the church despite attempts by the regent to bribe him, including offering him the archbishopric of St Andrews. Morton resigned as regent in 1578, and shortly afterward the General Assembly approved what is known as the Second Book of Discipline. It had been several years in the making by a large Assembly committee, most of whose members belonged to those leading the church in 1560. Melville was not the single author of the Second Book, but he did encourage the harassed church to continue its stand, and his energy, tenacity, courage and ability was influential on many younger ministers.

The Second Book

The Second Book is, at some 9,000 words, only about 40% the length of the First Book. In thirteen well-arranged chapters it affirms that both church and state derive their authority from God. Neither may intrude into the other's province, but there are mutual rights and duties. The civil authority is not to 'usurp dominion' in the church, but 'spiritually and in ecclesiastical government' the ruler is not the lord of the church, which he should maintain and defend, but is

subject to the jurisdiction in spiritual matters of the ministers and elders. The threefold division of office embraces:

(1) ministers or preachers, all of one order whether styled pastor, bishop or minister, who administer the sacraments and are also elders;

(2) elders or governors, who now have life tenure rather than being subject to annual election (though it had been common since 1560 for annual re-election of the same men, an implicit recognition that an elder's calling was enduring as long as his gifts were evident); and

(3) deacons, who have the care of the patrimony of the church, which they are to apply according to 'the judgment and appointment' of the elders, although they are no longer to sit with the elders.

Superintendents are abolished by implication since they are not mentioned, and the distinctive episcopal names (such as archdeacon, dean &c.) are forbidden. There is no reference to presbyteries as an assembly between the 'elderships' (that is, the elders of one congregation or, especially in rural areas, several adjoining congregations) and the synod and General Assembly.

The true presbytery seemingly arose from the 'exercise' – the weekly gathering of ministers and elders established in the First Book as a means of developing leadership and recruiting new leaders. The exercise had not been widespread at first but became more general and took on business and administrative aspects in the 1570s. It was a natural evolution and, at the Assembly of April 1581, not only was the Second Book inscribed in the registers of the church, but an Act was passed for forming 50 presbyteries of which 13 were immediately instituted. (In the modern church one may often consider that discussion and assessment of ministers' study and preparation methods, and the content and delivery of their sermons, is largely overlooked by presbyter-

ies to the detriment of an effective and mature ministry.)

The reign of James VI

James VI (1566-1625), baptized as a Roman Catholic, was brought up in the Protestant faith with the eminent George Buchanan one of his tutors. After the abdication of his mother in 1567, four regents acted for him in turn, the first two dying violent deaths. The fourth, James Douglas, Earl of Morton, was appointed in November 1572 coincident with the death of John Knox, and followed a pro-English policy. Civil war occupied much of the time from 1570 until 1573, when the king's party triumphed. Mary, Queen of Scots, who had fled to England in 1568, was in protective custody there until her execution in 1587. The Pope backed Mary's claim to be the legitimate queen of England since he regarded Elizabeth as the child of an unlawful marriage by Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn. The massacre of thousands of French Protestants on St Bartholomew's Day, 24 August 1572, added to Protestant fears of a return to Rome.

In 1579 James VI came under the influence of Esmé Stewart, whom he created Earl of Lennox. Lennox was working secretly with James Stewart to restore Mary and the Roman faith, despite subscribing to the strictly Protestant 'King's Confession' in 1581 (see below). Morton was executed in June of that year. James reigned in his own right from 1581 until his death and succeeded also to the crown of England in 1603 on the death of Elizabeth I. He was thus James VI of Scotland, but also James I of England. A man of considerable education and ability he early showed strength of purpose, a high sense of his own kingship, and a penchant for extravagance in a relatively poor nation. He married the fifteen-year-old daughter of the Danish king in 1589. His outlook was

Calvinistic in a middle-of-the-road kind of way, but with a strong assertion of royal authority over the church. Although somewhat vacillating in his early years, the conflict with the church was to be the dominant religious and political issue of his reign.

There was a great deal of intrigue. Protestant Lords seized the king (the Ruthven raid) and held him for 10 months until he escaped in June 1583, leading many church leaders to flee, as James Stewart, now Earl of Arran, came to power as Lord Chancellor of Scotland. The King retaliated against the church through the 'Black Acts' of May 1584 which asserted the authority of the king, parliament and council over both spiritual and temporal matters, with bishops and commissioners responsible to the king and not, as previously, to the General Assembly. Convocations of ministers, other than at congregational level, were forbidden, except with the king's consent. The presbytery was the particular target. Arran was dismissed in 1585, and Melville and other ministers



James VI & I

returned. A fresh compromise was agreed the following year by which bishops, nominated by the king and admitted by the General Assembly, would be moderators of presbyteries but also have their own congregation and a committee of ministers to keep a check on their day-to-day administration. In 1587 much of the temporal wealth of the bishops passed to the Crown, while the compromise of 1586 had little effect: Presbyterianism spread stead-

ily.

Mary was eventually implicated in a Catholic plot against Elizabeth and was executed in 1587, owing to the conviction that Mary had declared Philip of Spain her successor. This was the year before the Spanish Armada was sent against England. In 1592 the Scottish Parliament, as a sop to the church, annulled the Act of 1584 in favour of bishops, and, although not approving the Second Book, approved the Presbyterian government of the church by a system of graded courts including the presbytery. This 'Golden Act' was not entirely golden, since one of its major purposes was to bring the law into line with the actual practice of the time. Furthermore the king was given certain rights over the calling of Assemblies, the office of bishop was still not abolished, holders of bishoprics had a right to a place in parliament, and the matter of proper support for parish ministers was not addressed. *(to be continued)*

The World in the Banner

Biblical Balance In Preaching

There are churches that are emotionally driven, and there are churches that are educationally driven. In the former, sermons are designed to inspire. In the latter they are designed to inform. Could anyone object to congregants being inspired? Who would suggest that the church of Jesus Christ is better off when the sheep of the Great Shepherd are emotionally flat? Or, could anyone argue that being informed is straight from the pit of hell? Should our battle cry be "Onward Ignorant Soldiers?" All of us, of course, are in favour of both of these things, leaving us no longer disagreeing about whether we ought to head east or west, but disagreeing about matters of degrees. Where then is the safe balance, and how can we hit it? Simple

enough—as the Scripture commands we preach Christ, and Him crucified. Our sermons ought to inform because every text in the whole of the Word tells us something about Jesus. Our sermons ought to inspire because every text in the whole Word tells us something about Jesus. Our sermons ought always to inform us more and more about the depth of our own sin. And such ought to inspire us to greater gratitude for the provision of His crucifixion. Sermons, rightly understood then, ought to be gospel sermons. Their purpose is to encourage everyone, whether they are already believers or not, to repent and believe. We are to believe in the depth of our sins. We are to believe the riches of His grace. And we are to believe the scope of His promise—we are forgiven, justified, sons and

heirs. Sermons show us our need, Christ's provision, and then call us to be like Him. Sermons are inspirational lessons unpacking the goodness, truth and beauty of this simple truth—if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).
+ R.C. Sproul Jr (<http://tinyurl.com/l49v15r>)

The Christian Kachin Terrorised In Burma

It would not be unreasonable to think of Burma as the Sudan of Asia. In Sudan, an Arab-supremacist Islamist regime rules from the centre, marginalising the state's peripheral ethnic nations and persecuting them on racial and religious grounds. In Burma, a Burman-supremacist

Buddhist regime rules from the centre, marginalising the state's peripheral ethnic nations and persecuting them on racial and religious grounds. When the oppressed and persecuted resist and demand their rights, these regimes spare no effort to crush them with extreme violence fuelled by deep-seated racial and religious hatred. Western silence is dictated by Realpolitik - politics based on 'interests' rather than on morals and ethics. It is simply not in the West's interests to advocate for the victims of genocide in Darfur or the Nuba Mountains. Likewise, it is not in the West's economic or geo-strategic interests to advocate for the victims of violent persecution and ethnic cleansing in Burma when it has just opened its resources and markets to the West. To ensure Burma does not drift back into China's sphere of influence the West turns a blind eye to the persecution. However, nothing is hidden from God for our God is 'el Roi' - the God who sees (Genesis 16:13).

The Kachin are a Christian people living in Burma's mountainous far north where the Irrawaddy River has its source. Not only does the regime covet Kachin State's jade, gold and timber, it also wants to dam the Irrawaddy. If it is ever completed, the Myitsone Dam Project will be managed by the state-owned Chinese Power Investment Corporation (CPI) and will be generating hydroelectric power for China. Whilst the dam will cause the Kachin to lose vast swathes of land and more than 60 villages, the Burmese regime stands to make a great deal of money from it. Therefore what the regime really wants is Kachin State without the Kachin. In its war against the Christian Kachin, the Burmese army (officially known as the Tatmadaw) routinely targets harmless, defenceless Kachin civilians. Gross insecurity has driven more than 100,000 traumatised Kachin

from their homes into IDP (internally displaced persons) camps sustained mostly by the Church. Peace is illusive. 'When the Burmese army talks about a cease-fire, they mean stopping shooting for a short while,' says Manam Tu Shan, a 67-year-old Kachin church deacon in Laiza. 'But what we mean by a cease-fire is living peacefully and being able to practise our traditions without the Burmese interfering.' Humanitarian aid group, the Free Burma Rangers [<http://www.freeburmarangers.org/>], reports that on 19 January in Kawng Hka Village in Northern Shan State, two Kachin girls - Maran Lu Ra (20) and Tangbau Hkawn Nan Tsin (21) - were savagely raped and then clubbed to death by Burmese soldiers. The girls, missionaries sent out by the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC), had been asleep in the KBC church compound when they were attacked. Church members reported the crime but no action was taken. On 21 March Burmese soldiers shot and killed civilians Dau Ma La (52) and his 103-year-old mother, Da Shi Hka, in Mansi Township and looted their property. On 9 May Burmese soldiers shot Min Htet (40), a civilian farmer and father of two from the Mung Hkawng IDP Camp. Min, who had been outside the camp tending to his pigs, survived the shooting only to be knifed repeatedly by soldiers in the eyes and face before beating him to death. Though Hpaure Htu (30) was also shot she managed to escape. On 6 May the Kachin Army clashed with Burmese troops near Mansi Township. A 'little bit of fighting' continued into the next day. Then on 8 May, while President Thein Sein was meeting with ethnic leaders to negotiate a national ceasefire, two fighter jets were bombing the Kachin into submission. Please pray for the Church in Burma.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin* | RLPB 310 | Wed 20 May 2015

Bill Shorten Calls For A New Stolen Generation

"Bill Shorten's proposed redefinition of marriage will abolish a mother or a father from the life of future children, by a deliberate act of parliament" said Dr David van Gend, President of the Australian Marriage Forum.

"The hypocrisy is breathtaking. His Labor predecessors have wrung their hands and apologised for past policies that broke the primal bond between the generations, but Bill Shorten is ready to do it to children all over again. In 2013 the then Labor Prime Minister Julia Gillard made a national apology for the abusive policy of forced adoption, lamenting how it violated "the most primal and sacred bond there is: the bond between a mother and her baby. In 2008 the then Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd made a national apology for the abusive policy of forced separation of aboriginal children from their parents, saying "the act of physically separating a mother from her children is a deep assault on our senses and on our most elemental humanity".

"Now, in 2015, our alternative Labor Prime Minister wants a whole new abusive policy that would forcibly separate children from their biological mother by allowing two men the right to marry and start a family. At present, it is not possible for two men to obtain a child by adoption or surrogacy in all states, but a law for gay marriage would guarantee gay parenting and any state laws would fall. That means same-sex marriage is more than symbolic: it is the definitive violation of a child's birthright to have, where possible, both a mother and a father. "It is not just aboriginal people who value the bonds of kinship and ancestry; it is the birthright of every child to be linked to and loved by the man and woman

who together gave her existence. "No politician has the authority to destroy these fundamental relationships of human life. Our marriage laws must reflect the reality of nature: that every child is born with a mother and a father, every child needs the love of a mother

and a father, and marriage exists primarily to help keep mother father and child together. "Has this generation learned nothing from the past suffering of children?" said Dr van Gend, a family doctor. "We on the brink of a new abusive

law that will once again cut children off from their own flesh and blood. A new stolen generation who will, after much suffering, require their own national apology".
+ www.AustralianMarriage.org

Oh, Really?

Money: The Oil of Social Conscience

Herm Zandman

Professor Paul Piff of Berkeley University has immersed himself, along with others of his team, in social psychology experiments related to the power of money and the influence it has on people's character and demeanour. After more than seven years of study, he has produced some eyebrow-raising conclusions (San Rafael, California, October 2013). His findings have been extensively reported and discussed in the BBC series *Does Money Make You Mean?* The findings show not only that people's behaviour changed when coming into a lot of money, but that even *thinking* about money or playing with fake money, as in the game Monopoly, invokes startling changes.

One hundred people were gathered in a room. They were going to play a game of Monopoly in one on one situations. What they did not know was that the game was rigged, causing one player to have a huge advantage over the other. The observers noted that those who ran ahead in the games showed extrovert signs of dominance, diminished tolerance toward an opponent's fumbblings, more aggression in language use, and they would be crowing about invincibility. The bowl of pretzels which was made available to each couple of players was enthusiastically (aggressively) consumed by the advantaged player in the main.

When interviewed after the game the victors would remain blissfully unaware of the fact that their advantage was suspect; rather, they would boast of their supreme skills and tactics.

In California the law requires that cars stop when pedestrians wish to cross the street. The test team placed a pedestrian at a busy street with fairly slow-

given ten dollars worth of coins with the instruction that they could either share the money with a stranger or keep it, 44% more of the low-earners would part with (some of) their money to help someone who would walk up to them and ask for some coinage for a parking slot machine. These same people were put in a waiting room with



moving, steady traffic and observed which drivers would most readily stop to enable the pedestrian to cross. It was observed that drivers in modest cars would obey the law well, but that drivers in expensive model cars would as a rule break the law and leave the pedestrian stranded.

When two test groups were divided according to annual income (one group earning over \$200,000, the other below \$25,000) and all individuals were

large bowls full of candy. The note next to the bowls indicated that the candy was supplied for children. From among the adults the rich people consumed double the number of lollies compared to their poorer counterparts.

These and other tests demonstrated a general trend that where wealth (real or imagined) went up, compassion and empathy went down. Furthermore, the rich would readily moralize

that greed was a good thing, although they would not use the word 'greed,' but better-sounding euphemisms, like 'being upwardly mobile.'

The BBC reporter in charge of the series mentioned above gathered anecdotal information from people working the pit at Wall Street-like institutions and other money centered occupations what working with money did to the psyche. The responses were clear: the work caused a myopic obsession with money, shares, wealth accumulation, and such like, to the detriment of cooperation, community, and compassion.

We tend to think about money as a tool of exchange, a way of doing business. Yet people's commitment to building wealth and their obsession with money seems to suggest something more is happening here (Faase, K., Olive Tree Media, Daily Nudge, May 2015). UK University professors Stephen Lea and Paul Webley argue that human behaviour towards money can't solely be explained by its usefulness. They write: "Money isn't just a tool but it also acts as a drug on the mind, changing how we feel. Part of the benefit people derive from acquiring money (is) feeling good... So we chase money partly just for the sake of having it." Money can work on people as a drug resulting in enslavement. This extends not just to having money, but even to looking at money pictures or thinking about it!

The Lord Jesus Christ issues a solemn warning regarding the pull of the world, notably the lure of money in Luke 16:13: *No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one, and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.*

Matthew Henry comments, "If a man will love the world, and hold to that, it cannot be but he will

hate God and despise him. He will make all his pretensions of religion truckle to his secular interests and designs, and the things of God shall be made to help him in serving and seeking the world. But, on the other hand, if a man will love God, and adhere to him, he will comparatively hate the world (whenever God and the world come in competition) and will despise it, and make all his business and success in the world some way or other conducive to his furtherance in the business of religion; **and the things of the world shall be made to help him in serving God and working out his salvation.**"

Much good has been done by Christian businessmen in helping the needy and furthering the Kingdom of God as they saw money as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. Many of them partake in some grass root movements such as *We Are the One Percent*, *Resource Generation*, and *Wealth for the Common Good*. But, as the saying goes, they are strong legs which can carry much wealth. Abraham Kuyper writes (*To be Near Unto God*, Christian Ethereal Library), "When the Dutch had to fight hard and long for spiritual liberty, religion and public morals stood high. But when in the 18th century gold streamed in from every side, and wealth became the law of life, the nation became decadent. The mighty world-empire of Rome fared the same way. There have been persons, families, and whole generations, which from gratitude for material

blessings became more tenderly united to God. But this was only because grace preceded and accompanied prosperity. Solomon remains the historic type of how even with God's children prosperity can work a spiritual decline." Indeed, they are strong legs that can carry wealth.

Proverbs 11:28 declares, *Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.* The righteous, those who make the blessings received subservient to God, whether they be rich or poor, will flourish. The drugging entrapment of money is real, as shown in the research and as warned about by the Lord of creation. Nevertheless, understanding and application of God-oriented stewardship is the antidote which surely will engender blessing rather than curse, to God's glory and the benefit of all those under the sphere of influence of the strong-legged among the Lord's people.

"A wise man should have money in his head, not in his heart." (Jonathan Swift, 1667-1745, British author)



GEELONG BIBLE CONFERENCE
3-5 July, 2015

Organised by the Reformed Presbyterian Church Geelong

Will You not revive us again?
Revival in Scripture and the life of the Church

KEYNOTE SPEAKER
Rev Kenneth Stewart
Glasgow Reformed
Presbyterian Church

REGISTER NOW

ONLINE: GIELONGBIBLECONFERENCE.ORG.AU
PHONE: LISA (0245 7317) SARAH (0245 8945)

Children under the Banner Acts 22:22—26:32

An Audience with Felix, Festus and King Agrippa!

Paul was kept under guard in Herod's palace.

Five days later Paul appeared before Felix.

Paul was in prison until Felix left two years later.

Festus planned to send Paul back to the Jews.

Paul appealed to Caesar.

King Agrippa and Queen Bernice came to visit Festus.

"Do you think you can make me a Christian?" said Agrippa.

"Paul has done nothing wrong." they said.

Prescribed Search Work

JULY 2015

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

SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE (Intermediate omit questions 6 and 8)

ACTS chapter 11

1. When Peter had related the matter concerning Cornelius to the disciples at Jerusalem, what was their response?
2. Write out the verse that describes Barnabas' character.

chapter 12

3. What was done by the church while Peter was in prison?
4. Why did the angel of the Lord smite [strike] Herod?

chapter 13

5. What did Paul say to Elymas the sorcerer, and what then happened to him? (2 verses)
- 6(x). In his sermon at Antioch, Paul quotes from Psalms 2 and 16, and Isaiah 55, to prove Jesus' resurrection. Write out the three verses he quotes.
7. What did Paul tell the Jews in Antioch was preached to them through this man Jesus? (2 verses)
- 8(x). Why did Paul and Barnabas say they would turn to the Gentiles? Write out the verse found in Isaiah 49 that they quote. (2 verses)

JUNIOR

JOHN chapter 8:12--20

1. Who is the light of the world? Who shall not walk in darkness?

chapter 8:51--59

2. Who shall never see death?
3. Who rejoiced to see Jesus' day?
4. What did Jesus say when the Jews asked, "Have you seen Abraham?" What did the Jews do then? (2 verses)

**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**

Film under the Banner

Kingsman: The not-so-secret agenda

This is an initial column that will look at current film culture, themes and messages to help open up modern secular attitudes. Contrasts and comparisons are made with aspects of other films but these films are not specifically endorsed.

Attempting to be a spy-thriller-homage, or a parody, *Kingsman: The Secret Service* (2014) never quite pulls either off. Matthew Vaughn, the director, is the latest line up of newcomers to relish in nihilism and pointless violence, as seen in his *Kick-Ass* (2010) and the contemptuously ahistorical *X-Men: First Class* (2011); confirming that he should have stuck to producing for *Snatch* (2000) director Guy Ritchie, who at least could add a moral core to his over-the-top crime flicks.

Young actor Taron Egerton plays "Eggsy" an unconvincing chav (British subculture of street and football youths). Lacking any relatable qualities, he sets out to add new life to old-white-male-aristocratic dominated 'Kingsman' agency in the shadow of Agent Harry Hart (Colin Firth) and his superior Arthur (Michael Caine). Firth for all his star appeal is not quite Carey Grant and definitely not Bond; he tries to act the staunch emotionless spy with a heart but lacks the personality and spunk to really pull off subtleties of such a feat. Samuel Jackson is perhaps the film's sole, albeit only slightly, redeeming performance as he plays to the strengths of his stereotypical comic-book-esque eccentric villain.

To create characters of depth is not the aim in *Kingsman*, Vaughn's sole ambition is to make and sell manufactured pop culture via botched mishmash of older era James Bond tropes. Heavily but badly scripted, full of motifs that try and fail to be clever, worse yet, then attempts to show-off about it.

Eggsy, in an ill-suited subplot, has to pass a series of trials to become a special agent against rich privileged kids; undoubtedly these negatively portrayed snobs are the real-life counterparts with most of the well-off cast and crew. These things only go to stretch the screen time of this already exhausting and unnecessarily over drawn-out film. When action pops up, Vaughn shows his lack of aesthetic skill, and is far too dependent on the CGI team (Computer Generated Imagery). Much like his other films, the violence is vile and cartoon in nature without any real purpose; even though many may believe otherwise, this does not a good action movie make.

For all this, the carnage does manage to turn into something insultingly meaningful. "Yes!" is



heard from a woman in the theatre (true event) as her most hated enemies are killed by Firth in a gloriously over-done CGI scene. These enemies are of course Christians, bad caricatures of the sign-wielding Westboro Baptists, who have now turned racist as well (Fred Phelps the former head of Westboro, was a lawyer who fought for civil rights). At this point *Kingsman* ceases to be about escapist entertainment, instead about justifying hatred by creating a self-created straw man. Imagine if Firth was killing in this much detail a bunch of Muslims who were calling for the end of America. Protests would be inevitable from both Muslims and the

media, but they can pick on peaceful Christians due to a lack of consequences. At what point will the fiction become the reality, and youths be mumbling "Yes!" when this does come to pass? The invention of cinema was birthed in Christendom, now it is evident cinema has gone full circle and wishes to destroy it.

Grudgingly moving towards its climax, *Kingsman* runs out of ideas of its own and just rips off the *Moonraker* (1979) plot wholesale, yet does away with *Bond's* ability to capture contemporary fears; Nuclear warfare in the case of *Moonraker* or international terrorism with the latest *Bond Skyfall* (2012). In one final tasteless attempt to legitimise itself, *Kingsman* supersedes *Bond's* sexualisation by grotesquely advocating sodomy, in doing so subverting all romantic and heroic ideals within the film and outside of it. But like the film in its entirety, with all its over-produced grandeur, the joke just falls flat rather awkwardly. Taking the insubstantial elements of *Bond*, the innuendo and the gimmicky gadgets, *Kingsman* amplifies these *ad maximus* while being completely ignorant of *Bond's* true continued importance: capturing the climate of the times and creating some closure for the viewer through the adversary Bond must overcome. By choosing edgy shock value, *Kingsman* shows it has no respect for the power of cinema and its ability to reveal the implications of human nature, and only justifies the idea of the continual drop in moral and filmic standards.

Kingsman is available and consequently forgotten when released on DVD & Blu-ray in July.

Reviewed by Andrew Wibe Bajema, M.A.(Film)



From the cold delights of Tasmania through to warm fellowship with fellow countrymen in Narre Warren, and so many other places besides, Samit Mishra and Pradeep Kumar from our sister church in India (PFC-CI) certainly got around!

Churches in the Banner



Ulverstone ladies craft day
In April Sue showed us how to



make a baby feeler cloth. Others made cards with Denise, and Rita continued sewing up squares for the blankets that will be sent to the Canteen Creek ladies. We were pleased to have Jean Hearps join us, and little Millie, now walking, continued to delight us all. In May we learnt how to construct a child's pouffe' from tin cans. Several are now being finished and we intend to sell them to friends and the money will go towards helping put an Indian child through school. Ladies then went on to decorate notebooks, with Denise helping us all.

Ulverstone Camp

Our first athletes camp for the year was held from 2-4th April at the West Kentish council park at Lake Barrington. Ben and Briony O'Neill ran this camp with great skill and success. While these camps are excellent occasions to enjoy fellowship in an outdoor setting, the greatest highlight of this camp were the devotions led by four of our young men. Cameron led a devotion on Psalm 8 focussing on



the greatness of God's creation. Niklavs spoke on Ephesians 6 emphasising the whole armour of God. Shaun selected 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 highlighting running with patience and Josh read and spoke from Luke 10:25-37 - the parable of the Good Samaritan - reminding us of the importance of practical love to our neighbour.



Some of the other highlights were the team and quiz competitions, campfire discussions, mascots Penny and Jane, moonlit nights and day visitors from Ulverstone and Sheffield. Mathew Ryan very kindly brought his ski boat along for us to try out on the lake, however some engine trouble intervened, so we look forward to trying that on another occasion. It was also great having Briony's brother and sister (Paul and Tarnya) visiting from Canberra.



Photos from top left: Camp scene with Belinda in front; Josh with Penny; another camp scene; Niklavs setting up; Millie taking steps; Shaun & Niklavs; group scene