



the presbyterian banner

August 2012

*I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

Psalm 139:14

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Editorial

One thing I can say about the ministry after over twenty-five years of being privileged to serve the Lord in ordained ministry is this: It is certainly not boring! There is always something that is happening and I have been enabled to be fruitfully employed. This is something which I am thankful for as it keeps me on my toes. Indeed, isn't it true that our active involvement in the things of God gives us the assurance of God?

But I know there is still a lot more happening out there – yet sadly it's not reflected in the church news section of *The Banner*. Please, pass on your news to me! Don't let the 'Church News' just be predominantly about what's happening in some churches in Southern Presbytery. This is your magazine! Whether it is a baptism, profession of faith, wedding, ordination, death, or whatever, pass the news on! This includes also that visiting minister you may have had, or the mission's speaker – even simply what's happening every week in your congregation.

How about what the Bible Study/Prayer meeting is studying? Which of your folk got a mention in the Queen's Birthday Honour's List? I could go on and on. But what I do pray is that you get the message. If you haven't seen your church's news in *The Banner* in the last few years – or even in the last year – have a word to your minister or elder.

Remember that this is not just about 'news' as many in our society would regard it. There is a vitally important aspect to knowing what's going on elsewhere in our churches – because then we can pray for each other. And how much more then can't we be encouraged by each other?

*We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers.
We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced
by faith,
your labour prompted by love,
and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

1st Thessalonians 1:2-3

Cover Photo Credit: From an Ulverstone garden, Tasmania

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'No Condemnation!'

Considering Romans 8:1—14

George Ball

We have reached the halfway mark of this great letter. It's time for a little revision. That's what the apostle does here in this section before us. The word *Therefore* with which the chapter begins, indicates that the apostle is summing up or expressing a conclusion. He steps back and surveys the whole Christian landscape that he has covered thus far and draws up this clear gospel summary. We're not going to learn anything new here; it's a case of recapping, repeating and restating in order to reaffirm. Remember the theme of Romans: 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel, it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes... for in the Gospel righteousness from God is revealed' (1: 16-17). That's the message that we need and it's the message the apostle has been expounding. It's the message we need to hear every Lord's Day. It's the message we need to hear every day. We need to preach the gospel to ourselves every day, that we might be reminded of its promises. The chapter begins with:-

1. A Glorious Declaration (v.1)

'There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.' That's music to our ears. It's what I need to hear. It's what you need to hear. Take time for that statement to sink in. Read it again. It's almost too good to be true. The fact is, there are a lot of people and things that could condemn me. There are many people (including my own family) who could point the finger of accusation and condemn me! They know I'm not perfect. And I know that they are not perfect either. Mark Ashton (Vicar of the Round Church in Cambridge – whom I had the privilege of hearing) wrote before His death in 2010 while he was suffering from cancer; "In dying, I want to say to those I have loved and to those who have loved me: Don't magnify me – remember the reality: I was someone who sometimes got cross, and irritated you, and let you down, and disappointed you, and hurt you. So please don't remember an imaginary relationship with me... I loved

you – but I could have loved you better – just as you loved me, but you could have loved me better." That's the testimony of an honest man! If we are honest with ourselves we would have to say the same – would we not?

Even more seriously – I'm not only condemned by myself and others, but the law of God condemns me. My life is indefensible when measured against His righteous standards.

8 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,[a] who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. 8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. 10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors— not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

That's the point that Paul is making in Romans 7:7-13. The law reveals my sin – but cannot remedy it. It diagnoses my sin – but can't deliver me from it. It even stirs up my sin – but it can't save me. It proves to me that I'm not the kind of person I would like to be or should be. **If perchance having travelled with me over the 'Roman Road' you still see yourself as a relatively good, moral, conscientious, church-going person, ask God to open the eyes of your understanding that you might see the real depravity of your heart.** Think, for example, about the following list of sins and give yourself a score. How many of these things are you guilty of? Be ready for a surprise – or even a shock.

Pride, selfishness, judgmentalism, lust, anxiety, greed; unthankfulness, unforgiveness, prayerlessness, covetousness; lack of self control, insistence on having control; impatience, irritability, frustration, anger, resentment, jealousy, gossip, discontentment, bitterness, impure thoughts; failure to love God, failure to love your neighbour, disregarding God, failure to trust God.

How did you score? The fact is, we have broken every law in the book. We have not loved God, nor have we loved our neighbour as ourselves. We ought to conclude as did Peter, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.' We are condemned. We are guilty. We deserve to be banished from the presence of God forever. Instead we read, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.' How can we explain this amazing turnaround?

2. A Gracious Explanation (see vs2 - 4a)

The answer is in the Gospel that God has revealed. The gospel explains the reason for this great declaration. The gospel explains the reason for this great turn around in fortune. The gospel explains how the guilty can be declared righteous. Read again Romans 1: vs16

-17; 3: vs21-22; 5:1; 6:11,;and our text, 8:1.

It's not something we have done. Nor is it something the law was able to do – 'it was powerless'. **It's rather something that God has done. Hallelujah!** God is the originator and architect of our salvation. It was His plan, His project, and His achievement. It is something that He did: He sent His Son. 'He did not spare His Son.' He sent Him in real flesh that was not sinful flesh. In Him, He condemned sin in sinful man. The Cross of Christ is where God poured out His judgement upon human sin. That is why there is no condemnation for anyone who is in Christ Jesus. The condemnation has already taken place on the cross. The punishment of sin has been dealt once and for all. God will not punish our sin twice. That's why there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

Not only did Jesus provide a perfect sacrifice as payment for the wages of our sins; He provided perfect obedience and fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law – that the righteous requirement of the law might be met IN us! This means (I believe), that this righteousness of Christ belongs to us and is applied to us by virtue of our union with Christ. It is fulfilled in us, just as if we had done it all ourselves. All the righteousness of Christ is made over to the believer – so that I am righteous with all the righteousness that God requires. This was the discovery that Martin Luther made in 1515 when he wrestled with the meaning of the phrase in Romans 1: 17, 'the righteousness of God was revealed in the gospel.' He writes, 'I grasped the truth that the righteousness of God is that righteousness whereby, through grace and sheer mercy, he justifies us by faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. Before 'the righteousness of God' had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love.' **Jehovah Tsidkenu** – The Lord (is) our Righteousness.

The Heidelberg Catechism (which I like to quote) asks in Q. 60: - **'How are you made right with God?' Answer:- 'By faith in Jesus Christ... God grants and credits to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ, as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner, as**

if I had been perfectly obedient as Christ was obedient for me... All I need to do is to accept this gift of God with a believing heart.'

What does it mean when it says that God justifies? It means that God in Christ forgives all our sins; that He completely cancels all the guilt that stands against us. He completely eradicates and erases all that stands as debt against us. But there's more. It means that I can be as righteous as Christ – even as righteous as God Himself - when I believe in Christ Jesus. That's what it means to be justified by faith. That's why there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

Think of it this way. You employ a man to clean your roof. He will hose off all the grime, the soot, dirt, the moss and the pollution which has settled over the years. He might fill a few cracks and replace a few tiles. Then he will spray it so that it looks like new – at least for a little while. What have you got? An old roof spruced up to look like new. What God does for us in Christ is, however, more than a spruce up. He gives us a new roof. A new covering. So that if you were riding in 'a chopper' overhead and looking down you would say, 'That's a new house.' That's how God sees us in Christ.

This means that I know now what God's verdict is upon me. I don't have to wait until the last day. I will appear before His judgement seat – as we all will. But I don't have to worry about being condemned and going to hell. He will never say to me, 'Depart from Me.' There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

Are you as sure of your salvation as this? If you are IN Christ Jesus you can be and should be.

Jerry Bridges wrote a little book, *The Bookends of the Christian Life*. In it he says, "When we become united to Christ by faith, God places a set of bookends on the bookshelf of our lives. One bookend is the righteousness of Christ; the other is the power of the Holy Spirit. Though they are both provided by God it is our responsibility to lean our books on them to support, stabilise and secure all our books.' Staying dependent on the first bookend (the righteousness of Christ) is a continual process. Every day we need to remind ourselves of

the basis of our salvation. It's not my works, nor my faith, nor my feelings nor my fervour. But it is HIS work upon which I rest. 'On Christ the solid rock I stand.'

3. A Couple of Applications

First: **This doctrine is designed to bring us assurance** and a sense of confidence. One writer states, '**I believe that a real, tenacious and clear grasp of this mighty truth will provide a stable foundation for a sense of peace with God and for joy and contentment in the citadel of our own souls'**.

You are familiar with the Toyota ad: 'Oh, what a feeling!' Owning a new Toyota apparently makes you want to jump for joy! I would suggest, however, that knowing Christ and being assured of justification by faith in Christ is better than owning a new Toyota! I can waken up in the morning with the knowledge that there is not a cloud between me and the Lord -- that's a wonderful reassuring truth. I suspect that not every Toyota owner feels like jumping for joy every day. Perhaps occasionally even a Toyota might break down and the usually happy owner might feel like kicking the old car. As Christians, we don't always feel like jumping for joy. There are days when we don't have 'the feeling'. There are days when we feel spiritually flat, cold and numb. However, when we grasp the meaning of this essential doctrine of justification, it gives us real buoyancy during times of spiritual despondency. It gives us great peace and contentment even in the dull days of winter. **Remember this: if you are a Christian you are as righteous before God on the bad days as you are on the good days, because your salvation depends not on you but on Christ --the Rock – who never changes.** When the minister or celebrant pronounces the couple husband and wife it is a legal declaration. The couple may not yet feel like a husband and wife. But it is a fact. The Lord declares there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ. That's a fact!

Second: **This doctrine** (as John Piper reminds us) is **the basis of forgiving other fellow Christians**

(and non Christians) when they sin against us. How come? We believe that Romans 8:1 is true for every believer – not just me – but for you too. We believe that all the wrongs that have been done against us by Christians were avenged in the death of Jesus. All the sins of all God's people were laid on Him. (Isa. 53:6; 1 Cor. 15: 3; etc.). The suffering of Christ was the recompense of God on every hurt I have ever received from a fellow Christian. Christianity is not making light of sin. On the contrary, it takes the sins against us so seriously

that in order to make them right God gave His own Son; to suffer more than we could ever make anyone suffer for what they have done to us. "What this means is that we have no need or right to harbour bitterness or resentment toward believers (or even unbelievers!) who have injured us. 'Vengeance is mine! I will repay,' says the Lord. If we believe that, we will not presume to take vengeance into our own hands. Rather we will glorify the all sufficiency of the cross and the terrible justice of hell by living in the assurance that God, and not

we, will set all wrongs right. Ours is to love. God's is to settle accounts justly. Trusting Him brings us freedom from bitterness and forgiveness from our hearts." (Piper: Future Grace, page 267)

How did this revision of Romans go for you? Perhaps there are still some things that we need to get to grips with and do?

The Past for Today

Smith of Dunesk Mission

In previous articles we have noted that Mrs Henrietta Smith (1782-1881) was a widow living at Dunesk in the parish of Lasswade near Edinburgh. Although blind from the mid 1850s, she was a clear-sighted evangelical supporter of the Free Church of Scotland. Before the Disruption of the Established Church in 1843 she had given a significant gift to help establish work among the Jews, and she had also applied for six 80 acre parcels of land in the Barossa Valley of South Australia with a view to furthering Christian work among the aborigines. Her interest reflects a concern for the deprived and marginalised, and was doubtless stimulated by relatives living in at Broadmarsh north of Hobart from 1824. She must have known what had happened to aborigines in that colony. We have also seen that to some degree her intention was by-passed by the church authorities in Scotland so that she was persuaded to make over the gift to the Free Church in terms which allowed a wider Christian use.

For some time monies were applied to the Port Macleay Mission, but for a period prior to 1890 the gift was lost sight of by the South Australian Presbyterian Church. Its existence was brought to light and it was arranged to employ the funds, which had accumulated to some £2,900, for a mission to outback settlers based on Beltana, then a town of a several hundred people with a rail service.

The Requirement for being a Missioner

A Smith of Dunesk missioner was required to be an ordained minister, but several who acted as missioner were not in this category. The normal period of service was two years but Mitchell (two periods) and Gray, both



Rev. John Flynn

excellent Bible-believing men, did nearly five each. Bryson and Plowman completed Flynn's period as Flynn had gone further north to Oodnadatta, while Casboul was a Home Missionary.

The normal period of service was two years but Mitchell (two periods) and

Rowland S. Ward

Gray did nearly 5 each. Patterson continued on as patrol padre when Smith of Dunesk was absorbed into AIM as the Southern Patrol in 1933.

The most significant impact was made by Mitchell and Rolland. Flynn was influential but Smith of Dunesk was a step on the way to realizing his larger dream. Rolland helped in that, because he introduced a resident nursing sister/ deaconess, Alice Main, to Oodnadatta. Early missioners, such as my grandfather Carey, undertook long trips of a month or more from the base in Beltana in a buggy drawn by two horses. Some rudimentary medical equipment, cooking utensils, a magic lantern operated by carbide and a sheet for a screen, coloured pictures of Bible events for those unable to read, a camera and chaff for the horses were among the load carried. The missioner's visit was generally welcomed, and a short service would be held at each station, and practical help given. In the 1920s a car was provided although the roads were pretty basic still.

Accommodation

Initially a house was rented by Mitchell but in 1898 it was purchased by the mission for £90. In 1902 John James Doig offered the Mission the portion of his carriage works which had been used for a Sunday School, and this is the Smith of Dunesk building of today. The cost was £60. There were dou-



Carols at Smith of Dunesk Mission—1917

went to aboriginal work. The Mission Church was bought back from the Uniting Church by the Presbyterians and some restoration has occurred. Recently, the Presbyterian Inland Mission has arranged the purchase of the building from the South Australian Assembly. The centenary of the Australian Inland Mission will be remembered at Bel-tana later this year.



Smith of Dunesk Church in 2003

ble doors on the NE side towards the rear which facilitated a lean-to addition during Carey's time, but this was later removed.

A weatherboard house of four rooms was purchased in 1912 to replace the previous manse which became the nursing hostel in 1919. From the late 1930s, at the instigation of Dr Charles

Duguid, the Smith of Dunesk monies were largely employed for aboriginal work at Ernabella. The Scottish authorities received approach to buy the lands and sold them for about £4,000 in 1939.

After Church union in 1977 what little remained monies remained

Smith of Dunesk Missioners

Those who served with age at commencement indicated where known were as follows:

Rev Robert Mitchell [1851-1929] (October 1894-December 1898) 43

Rev James B. Smellie [1854-1911] (November 1898-September 1901) 44

Mr D.Nicol (October 1901-May 1902, temporary)

Rev John Bentley Reid [1842-1910] (June 1902-May 1905) 60

Rev F.W.Rolland, MA [1878-1965] (August 1905-August 1908) 27

Rev Ernest E. Baldwin [1875-1938] (September 1908-November 1910) 33

Rev John Flynn [1880-1951] (January 1911-May 1912) 31

Mr A.H.Bryson (1912: 3 months, temporary)

Mr R. Bruce Plowman [1886-1966] (November 1912-December 1913) 26

Rev J.A.Pawson [1885-1961] (February 1914-December 1915) 29

Rev H.E.Carey [1881-1955] (February 1916-December 1918) 35

Rev John Armour [1889-1954] (January 1919-January 1920) 30

Mr D.E.Sprigg (June 1920-November 1920)

Rev M.S.Campbell [1890-1968] (December 1920-December 1921) 30

Rev William Gray [1854-1937] (July 1923-February 1928) 69

Rev Robert Mitchell [1851-1929] (April 1928-December 1928) 77

Mr Robert Walter Casboul [1863-1932] (April 1929-January 1932) 66

Rev Fred H. Patterson [1888-1944] (February 1932-December 1932) 44

The World in the Banner

India: Living 'in a Climate of Terror'

Christians account for only 3 percent of the population of India's north-eastern state of Assam; about one third of them are indigenous tribals. According to the president of the Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC), Sajan George, the situation for tribal Christians in Assam is 'intolerable', for they are living 'in a climate of terror'. On Friday 8 June a group of Hindus met Bhageswar Rabha, a Christian from the village of Deuphaniin, Assam, and forced him to convert to Hinduism. Then around midnight a mob of about 40 militant Hindu nationalists burst into the home of another Christian, Manesor Rabha, and dragged him outside with his wife Mala and two other believers, Michael and Prashanto Rabha. Though they were threatened, intimidated, beaten and ordered to convert to Hinduism, the believers stood firm and refused to renounce their Lord. On the Sunday morning Mala, Michael and Prashanto were taken to Satribari Christian Hospital to receive treatment for their injuries. Two other Christian families subsequently fled the village. Such violent persecution is commonplace across India. It is a very serious situation, inspired by unchallenged Hindu nationalism and fuelled by impunity. Pray for the Church in India.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin* | RLPB 165 | Wed 27 Jun 2012

The Vatican, a Nest of Crows?

Every institution has its problems and conflicts. It is part of the fallen human condition to create on-going clashes between people, offices, and services that should work together. Sin is also able to create evil structures that manipulate and maneuver colleague against colleague, friend against friend, etc. The Church is no exception. Since its inception and until the Lord Jesus's second coming, the Church will also be a place of on-going inner conflicts. Martin Luther's definition of the Christian as simul iustus et peccator (i.e. righteous and sinner at the same time) also applies to the church as the body of Christ. The problem is that when the Church becomes something else other than what is supposed to be, its operations are often affected for the worse.

Having said that, it is proper to ask: what on earth is happening at the Vatican? In the last few weeks and months, the Vatican has come out more than ever as a place of nasty power games between cardinals, wars between ecclesiastical groups, and mounting tensions around the Pope himself. The (lack of) spirituality of the Vatican's governance has become evident and many observers have easily pointed out to the ultimate showdown that is happening there. Leaving aside the moralistic tendency to judge out of ethical purism (if any organization is without sin, let it be the first to throw a stone, John 8:7), what can be said about this last outbreak of opaque Vatican affairs?

1. The Secretary of State in Question

The recent facts touched on a variety of people and issues. The President of the Vatican Bank (i.e. The Institute for Works of Religion) was unexpectedly fired in a very hurried procedure. As an aside, the Vatican Bank has been historically involved in many financial scandals and dirty affairs owing to its "secret" policies. The fired president had been given the task of putting the bank on the 'white list' but apparently he wanted more transparency that other officials were comfortable with.

Then, various correspondence was leaked from Vatican offices – even the papal apartment! --- and given to the press. An instant book was published in Italy containing all these letters and is now the top best seller. An intriguing spy story emerged which could have been written by a professional novelist on the level of a Dan Brown. The Pope's butler was arrested but it is evident that he did not act alone nor on his own. Police investigations are taking place concerning just how many 'crows' are hidden in the Vatican. In other words, the police are trying to discern how many people are skillfully maneuvering the leaking of documents for the purpose of attacking others. An atmosphere of suspicion reigns in and outside the Vatican. Historically Vatican policy has been that of secrecy, not of transparency. The inner movements and operations have been hidden and covered under the interests of the system. Now some of the schemes are being re-

vealed to the public and Jesus's words serve as a helpful reminder: "There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known" (Luke 12:2). Various commentators have suggested interpretative keys for what is happening. For some, this is an entirely 'Italian' scandal within the Vatican, i.e. a political game that resembles the dirty politics of the nearby state. Others think that all these moves are most likely related to the next conclave, i.e. the future election of the new Pope. Since Benedict XVI (now 85 years old) is about to nominate other cardinal-electors, various people in the curia are positioning themselves and fighting against opposing parties in order to influence the Pope in his decisions.

However, the most plausible and over-arching explanation has to do with the present Secretary of State, cardinal Tarcisio Bertone. His role is like that of the Prime Minister. Although he has been a long-time friend of Ratzinger, he does not come from the 'diplomatic' school and his methods of leadership are seen as very unusual for a Vatican Secretary of State. The curial opposition to Bertone has become more and more vocal and forms the background of the various conspiracy-type of actions that are taking place. Apparently Benedict XVI has no intention of removing Bertone from office, so nobody knows what will happen in the near future. The overall picture is decadent and opaque and will have the probable effect of nurturing people's skepticism and cynicism.

2. A More Radical Question

All these political explanations are plausible and should be taken seriously into account. However, this is not the full story. There is yet another set of radical questions that is necessary to ask in order to grasp these events spiritually.

These latest sad events taking place within the Vatican are all related to its being a state. It is a Church-State with a government, departments, a bank, diplomats, etc. The crucial question is: does the Church need to own a bank in order to operate its charities? Does the Church need to be a state in

order to fulfill its biblical mission? Does the Church need an empire-like apparatus to be faithful to its missionary calling?

These features lie at the heart of the Vatican, but are unnecessary add-ons to the Church. The Church is not a state nor needs to parrot states that have banks, soldiers and diplomats. Most commentators, even the most astute and intelligent ones, read and interpret the recent Vatican news without asking these basic questions that are spiritual in nature. Christians should instead try to assess reality with the 'mind of Christ'. Without a hint of moralistic superiority, everyone concerned with growing in Christ should take the following exhortation as his program: "Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles" (Hebrews 12:1). Since the time of the Roman Empire, the Vatican has been accumulating many imperial features that have transformed their church into something different. Will it be willing to throw them off for the sake of the Gospel?

The real issue is not about crows or leaks or conspiracies. The bottom line question is: where is the Church of Jesus Christ in all this?

+ *Leonardo De Chirico*,
www.reformation21.org

Syria: Christians' Plight Lost Under Mountain of Propaganda

Without a doubt, the greatest lie being told about the Syrian conflict is that it is being waged by President Assad against 'the Syrian people'. This is pure propaganda. In December 2011, just three months into the crisis, the Qatar Foundation conducted a major poll inside Syria to assess the level of support for Assad. (This was before al-Qaeda and other international Salafi jihadists started flooding in, making the crisis worse.) As an advocate of regime change in Syria, Qatar was embarrassed by the results and so buried them. When eventually leaked, the results revealed that 55 percent of Syrians supported President Assad and 68 percent of Syrians disapproved of Arab League sanctions. This makes perfect sense, considering that religious minorities make up 25 percent of

Syria's population (Christians are 10 percent) and at least one-third of all Sunni Muslims would be nominal or secular urbanites who likewise do not want to live in an Islamic State. So

the main division in Syria is not between Assad and the rest, but between Sunni fundamentalists (including foreign Salafi jihadists) and the rest, i.e. the majority of Syrians. This is asymmetric warfare: a battle between two unequal forces. The jihadists who quickly hijacked the original protest movement are no match for the Syrian military. Consequently, this battle would have been over long ago except that forces keen to counter the Iranian-Shi'ite ascendancy by means of regime change in Syria are arming, training and funding the jihadists. These forces are the US - Saudi Arabia - Gulf Arab axis plus neo-Ottoman Turkey. As noted by Robert D. Kaplan and Kamran Bokhari (Stratfor Intelligence), Assad's removal will doubtless hasten Syria's (and Lebanon's) slide into chaos, not slow it. Despite what the US - Saudi - Gulf Arab axis says, this is exactly what it intends; with the aim of crippling or at least tying up Iran's allies - the Syrian Army and Hezbollah - ahead of a military strike on Iran. The US seems to have no long-term perspective and nobody seems to care about the plight of millions of Middle Eastern Christians.

Propaganda is critical in asymmetric warfare. The weaker force (the jihadists) cannot win on their own and need to have a power stronger than the other side intervene on their behalf. To secure a 'humanitarian intervention' the weaker force will inflate and falsify civilian casualty figures and even create civilian casualties through the use of human shields and 'false flag' operations. ['False flag' operations are those in which the terrorists are disguised as elements of the other side.] The Houla massacre has since been proved to be a 'false flag' operation, committed by Free Syrian Army forces claiming to be pro-government 'thugs'. The dead families were pro-government, mostly non-Sunni, civilians. US-NATO will not intervene militarily as they did when they bombed Belgrade in 1999 and Tripoli in 2011 -- two cities full of civilians -- unless and until they can make a military intervention palatable to voters back home. Hence the US administration's peddling of jihadist propaganda! But the US must find another way to contain or engage Iran, for their present strategy necessitates the totally unacceptable sacrifice of millions of Middle Eastern Christians.

According to church sources inside Syria, Christians are increasingly being targeted and driven out of their homes and districts. Some 138,000 Christians have fled Homs, where Christians have been terrorised and churches have been looted and occupied by rebel forces. At least 9,000 Christians fled the neighbouring western city of Qusayr after the leaders of a rebel faction issued an ultimatum that was repeated from mosque minarets. In areas under rebel control, intolerant, hard-line Sunni fundamentalism is making Muslim-Christian coexistence impossible. For the jihadists, neutrality is not an option, and Christians (and Muslims) refusing to support the jihad are being tortured, expelled and murdered. In a fatwa, Sunni cleric Adnan Arour warned Syrian loyalists: 'We will chop you up and feed you to the dogs.'

+ *Elizabeth Kendal*, *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin* | RLPB 167 |
Wed 11 Jul 2012

Complaint Against The New Zealand Government for Crimes Against Humanity

Right to Life is pleased that the International Criminal Court [ICC] in The Hague has initiated a formal legal preliminary examination into a complaint against the New Zealand government for crimes against humanity. Right to Life welcomes the preliminary examination by the Prosecutor of the ICC and expects that it will encourage the government to comply with its obligations under international law and United Nations Conventions. This complaint was lodged with the Court by SavingDowns and Right to Life New Zealand. SavingDowns is an organised group of parents with children with Down syndrome. Their children are greatly loved and valued as members of their families and communities.

The complaint is in respect to the government's controversial antenatal screening programme, introduced nationally in February 2010. The Ministry of Health directed that doctors and midwives were obligated to offer screening to all pregnant women in New Zealand. One of the declared objectives of this programme was to prevent the births of babies born in New Zealand with Down syndrome and other

conditions such as Spina Bifida. It was expected that the screening programme would result in up to 90 per cent of babies diagnosed in the womb with Down syndrome being killed before birth. This is eugenics that decrees that only the perfect may be born. It is a crime against humanity. Unborn children diagnosed as having Down syndrome are members of the human family and do not forfeit their right to life because of a genetic condition. Right to Life calls upon the government to cease discrimination against the unborn with Down syndrome or other conditions.

+ Ken Orr
(Spokesperson,
Right to Life,
Phone +64 3
3856111)

The future of marriage: latest developments

Before federal parliament adjourned for the winter recess, the long-anticipated reports of both the Senate and House of Representative committees into proposed amendments to the Marriage Act were tabled.

There are two bills in the House of Representatives

— one moved by Labor MP Steven Jones and the other by the Greens' Adam Bandt — and one bill before the Senate, moved by the Greens' Senator Sarah Hanson-Young. All three propose to legalise same-sex unions.

The reports are important, in that they give an indication of how parliamentarians are thinking in the run-up to

the votes on the bills, which will take place in August or possibly later.

The House of Representatives standing committee on social policy and legal affairs inquiry into the marriage

What was more interesting was that two Labor MPs, Shayne Newman and Mike Symon, very strongly rejected the proposed amendments to the Marriage Act. They wrote, "We

do not believe there is anything like sufficient community consensus which would justify changes to such a fundamental societal institution as marriage. Marriage, as the union between one man and one woman, has been steeped in history, law, culture and religion for millennia. This is a fact which cannot be denied. We believe that marriage should remain 'the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life', which incorporates the traditional and historic English and Australian case law definition" (p.67). After discussing what they described as exaggerated comment by people on both sides of the debate, they pointed out that the existing Marriage Act contained provisions which restrict access to marriage on the basis of blood relation-

ships and minimum age of marriage, which make sense only in relation to children.

They added, "Both bills propose to remove the terms of 'husband' and 'wife' from the Marriage Act, but there is nothing in the draft report that examines the effect of that provision on the status of the many millions of people in Australia who are married already as husband

Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

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at

**The Tops Conference Centre,
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**3 pm Tuesday 8th January to
1 pm Friday 11th January 2013 (DV)**

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**Afternoons free to relax – games, bushwalks
and pool**

**Missions night Psalmody Good food
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(Youth & Fellowship Committee)

bills had eight members, four from the ALP, the Greens' Adam Bandt, and three from the opposition.

In light of the fact that the chairman of the committee, ALP MP Graham Perrett, and several other committee members, had publicly supported same-sex marriage before the inquiry began, it was not surprising that they repeated these views in the committee's report.

and wife. We consider that there should be no change made to the Marriage Act in the terms of these two bills without the clearest and most widespread community support” (p.68).

Two Coalition members said they would not support the legislation, indicating that at least four of the eight committee members will oppose the legislation in the House of Representatives. In light of the fact that the coalition parties have decided to vote against the legislation, it is probable that neither bill will pass the House of Representatives.

In the Senate, an inquiry was conducted into the Greens’ Senator Sarah Hanson-Young’s Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2010. Significantly, seven Labor senators oppose the Hanson-Young bill and the rest of the Senate committee’s recommendations. Their dissenting statement said, in part: “The main claim in favour of changing the law is that the current law unfairly singles out people with same-sex attraction by not allowing them to have the same status as

people who are married. It is important to note that Australian law has already been changed to give same-sex partners the same legal rights as those who are married and in an increasing number of states to register their unions. The remaining issue therefore is the definition of marriage. It is our view that the issue is one of definition, not discrimination. The federal parliament removed all inequalities in law and provided appropriate protections regarding property issues for all relationships in 2008 when more than eighty pieces of legislation were amended, with bipartisan support.

In our view, changing the law so that marriage includes same-sex unions would be a change to what marriage means. Currently marriage involves a comprehensive union between a man and a woman. Marriage has a place in the law because a relationship between a man and a woman is the kind of relationship that may produce children. Marriage is linked to children, for the sake of children, protecting their identity.

It is worthy to note that in California, after their legislature experimented with same-sex marriage, the people of California voted against the revisionist concept of marriage.”

There is clearly a strong body of opinion against amending the law on marriage in the Labor Party, as well as in the Liberal and National parties. In light of this, it is extremely important in the weeks ahead that voters continue to make known to MPs and senators their views on this important issue, to protect the institution of marriage. This is a battle that can be won.

+ *Peter Westmore, News Weekly (Peter Westmore is national president of the National Civic Council)*

Synod Treasurer

“There is one area in particular of Synod Finances that needs to be brought to readers’ attention:

Synod Missions Funds

While it is estimated there will be sufficient funds to make payments detailed in the budget to 31/12/12 approved by last Synod, and also to provide support (Stipend and Superannuation) of Rev TI Leggott, General Director of Australian Indigenous Ministries, until Synod 2013, beyond that current levels of donations made by Synod and support given to Rev Leggott will not be possible. This will be the case if a similar level of income from donations and investments is maintained.

The position as at 30/6/12 was:

\$ 9,449 - Missions General
\$27,260 – Missions (DA Anderson Bequest)

\$36,709
(15,985) - Missionary Support (TI Leggott/AIM)

\$20,724 – Net Balance
=====

It is estimated that this Net Balance will reduce to \$16,100 by 30/12/12 and to \$4,300 by 30/4/13 (Next Synod) if the same level of income continues.

Your prayerful and financial support is therefore sought to help fill this need.

“Fear not to lose by laying out” - Thomas Gouge.”

Letter to the Banner

Rev Sjirk Bajema
Editor
The Presbyterian Banner

Dear Sjirk

I read with great disappointment and sadness the Synod report that "the Armidale Congregation of the PCEA disbanded. While most of the members there still meet together and hope to continue as some sort of church body, they will no longer do so as a PCEA congregation."

How different the tone of the Synod report from what Rev R Ward recorded in his *The Bush Still Burns* (1989) p492: "Armidale is a University town of some 25,000 people...number of PCEA young people studying in Armidale...awakening of interest in the Reformed doctrines among some former PCA members and some members of the Evangelical Union at the university..."

That book recorded that the second minister who served the church in Armidale had a "background well suited for a work which has a high involvement with students... the membership fluctuates as there are constant changes as students complete their courses, but a very strategic work is being conducted."

We live in times when it is difficult to place missionaries in most overseas countries. But a large number of students from overseas come to study in Australian universities. Some are Christians, but have had little teaching and training in the Scriptures and doctrines of faith. Some come to faith in Christ while they are here, in God's providence and often through the witness of Christian students. Churches have 2,3, 4 years until they complete their courses, to equip those students with a sound knowledge, to return home as "missionaries". Many of these graduates take on positions of significant influence in the years after

they return home. Likewise, Australian graduates usually move on to positions of some influence within the communities in which they live and work – in education, science, industry, public service, ministry.

The University in Armidale, with its several residential colleges, provides an environment for Christian students to show in a real way to those around them "whose they are, and whom they serve", to build up relationships with non-Christian students, to enjoy fellowship with other Christians.

Armidale also has an Indigenous community; perhaps the PCEA church and the AIM could have been more active together there, given the significant contribution of the PCEA as a whole to AIM work.

Two couples deserve particular mention when the history of the church in Armidale is written.

Rev J A Harman and Mrs Harman travelled the winding Oxley highway from Port Macquarie many times, in their retirement years, so he could lead services, and visit and encourage the folk there pastorally. He saw that strategic potential of a congregation there, and viewed it as a mission field, as much as India, South Africa or Peru.

Keith and Jeannie Dawson provided stability from the earliest times, as students and others came and went. Keith was officially installed as an Elder in 1973, but was certainly providing leadership in the earlier years. Their home was open to the church. They had seen and felt the tragic impacts of liberalism and church politics, and longed for a solid Christian reformed witness in the city, and for a congregation which they could be a part of, and contribute to. They are still there, but it seems the church has walked away.

Synod hopes for the Lord's leading in the direction those remaining (former)

members should go. We would hope that Synod, the Presbyteries, and the various congregations would also seek the Lord's leading and consider seriously the strategic opportunities; how they might take up the challenge to minister to both international students attending universities in their area, and the Indigenous communities close to the various cities and towns where PCEA is present, as well as their communities at large.

Yours in Christ's service
Alan Mackay
Canberra

Editor: I asked the Rev Ward to reply, both as he is mentioned in this letter and as he has been involved in the Armidale situation. He replies as follows:

Alan's comments about strategic opportunities are very much to the point. Sometimes circumstances arise that make it very difficult to maintain a work. In Armidale's case, a process was followed to provide the oversight of the Tamworth Reformed Church for the continuing group.

There are at least two lessons from the Armidale situation:

1 - The PCEA needs to renew its commitment to real missionary outreach, with prayer, work and finance, and this starts locally.

2 - Extension work for preference should be pioneered in such a manner that ready support from a neighbouring congregation can be provided, as well as more frequent opportunities for fellowship with the wider Church. In our cities, this means a travel time of about 30 minutes, perhaps a bit more in country areas.

Was this space for your church news and photographs?

Ask your minister or elder how your congregation can be part of this positive promotion of the denomination, as well as keeping the rest of us up with what's happening!

Camps, special events, youth news, seniors, engagements, marriages,
births, anniversaries, obituaries... the list goes on and on!

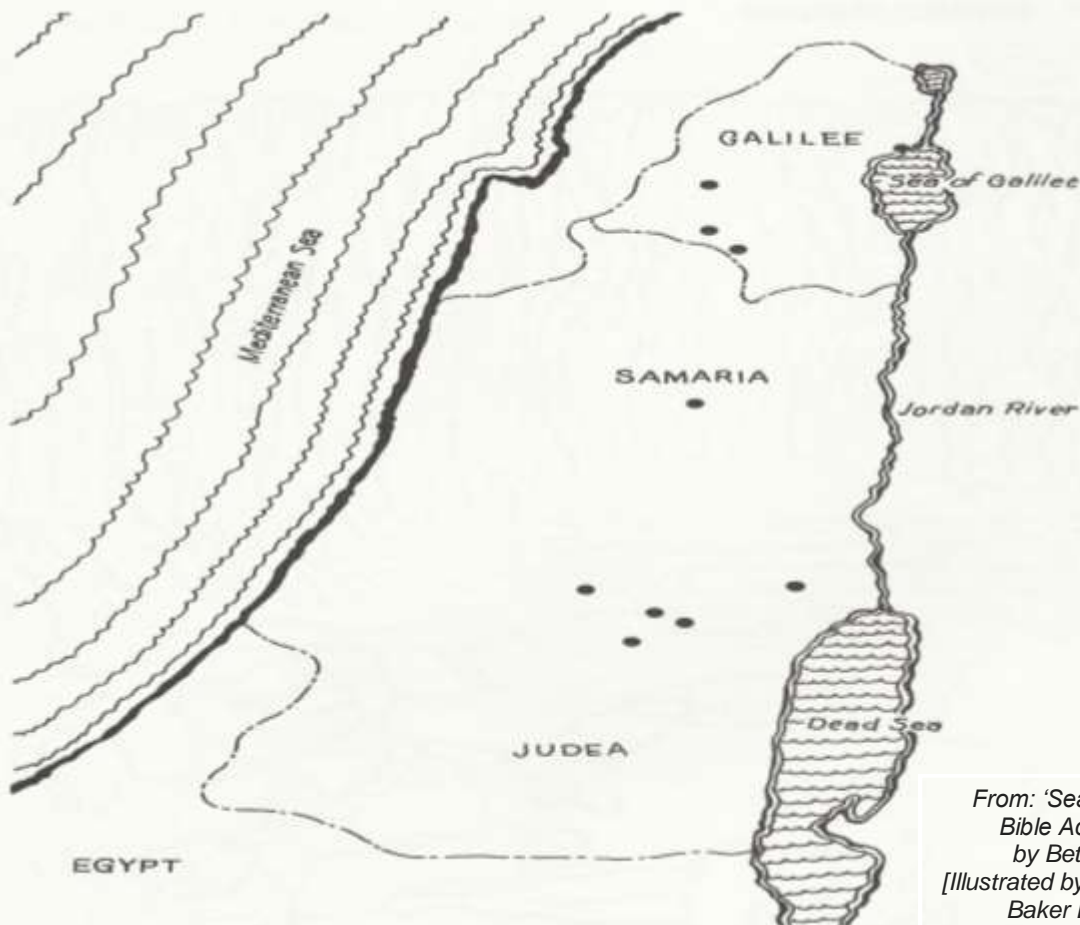
Perhaps you could volunteer to send in some news and photos?

Children under the Banner

Cities Jesus Visited



Unscramble the names of some of the cities Jesus visited while he was on earth. Then use a map in the back of a Bible to help you put the names of the cities in the correct location on the next page.



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

Prescribed Search / Youth Work

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

AUGUST 2012

SENIOR & INTERMEDIATE (Intermediate omit questions 1 and 5)

HEBREWS chapter 5

1. For what work was every high priest taken from among men? (2 verses)
2. Which verses, one from Psalm 2 and the other from Psalm 110, prove that Christ did not glorify himself to be made high priest? (2 verses)
3. What was the result of Christ's being made perfect through his obedience?
4. What is the description of (a) those who need milk and (b) those who eat strong meat [solid food]? (2 verses)

chapter 6

5. Why is it impossible for those who were once enlightened, if they fall away, to renew them to repentance? (3 verses)
6. What did the Hebrew's work and labour of love consist of?
7. Write out the verse in Genesis 22 where God swears by himself in making a promise to Abraham.
8. What did God do to show the immutability [unchangeableness] of his counsel [purpose]?

JUNIOR

LUKE chapter 9

1. After the feeding of the five thousand, how many baskets of fragments were left?
2. Of whom shall the Son of man be ashamed when he comes in his glory?
3. What did the voice out of the cloud say?
4. For what purpose did Jesus say the Son of man had come?

Please send the answers to:
 Mrs I Steel
 PO Box 942
 Epping NSW 1710
 Or email to: iesteel@gmail.com

Life under the Banner

The Third Commandment — Honouring God's Name

Jim Klazinga

It is a terrible thing to insult the Almighty God. Insulting other human beings who are made in God's images like ourselves, this in itself is bad enough. But when you insult your Creator, your Redeemer, the heavenly Father who has loved you since eternity and set you apart to be His child, the God is who infinitely greater than you are, then that is a far more serious matter.

Sometimes we might insult other people in a jesting manner, without really intending any harm. "You're ugly and your mother dresses you funny!" But insulting God is never a laughing matter.

But how is God insulted? Let's consider a few examples.

God is Not Like Other Gods

In 2 Chronicles 32 we read of God being insulted. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, and his officers were threatening the city of Jerusalem. And then in verse 17 we read, "And he wrote letters to cast contempt on the Lord, the God of Israel, and to speak against him, saying, 'Like the gods of the nations of the lands who have not delivered their people from my hands, so the God of Hezekiah will not deliver his people from my hand.'"

This king of Assyria questioned the ability of Yahweh to deliver His people. He considered the Lord to be just like any other tribal deity, powerless against his might. We read in verse 19 of this same chapter - "And they spoke of the God of Jerusalem as they spoke of the gods of the peoples of the earth, which are the work of men's hands."

This king obviously did not understand how the Lord God is almighty, infinitely great, maker of all the heavens and the earth. The Creator can hardly be compared to a god invented by one of His creatures.

In this particular instance, the Lord decided He would immediately respond to this abuse. He caused havoc in the ranks of His enemies. And so Sennacherib, who had been so bold in his insulting of the Lord, was put to shame, a shame from which he never recovered.

How often does this not happen in our world today, that the Christian God is insulted by being compared to the false gods of this world, as if He were no better, no more effective, than any other god? The Christian faith is considered to be just another religion among many, just another faith option. Hey, we have

to make sure that we give equal credit to other gods! And so Christianity is considered to be no better than, say, Hinduism. This is like saying that the Almighty God is no better than any one of the multitude of false Hindu gods, no more powerful, no more legitimate. Whatever works for you. Christianity is considered to be no better than Islam. This is like saying that the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is no better than the false conception of God worshipped by the Muslims.

You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

Exodus 20:7

It is simply amazing that God would be insulted in this way. That the world has the audacity to treat the God of Scripture so lightly! As if God will not judge the wickedness of those who insult Him in such a blatant fashion. God alone is worthy of all praise and glory, and He will not share His glory with another. He is a jealous God, and rightfully so, because it is terribly sinful to give to some false god the honour and worship that belong to His name alone. He alone is uncreated, infinite, all-powerful, and we insult Him when we do not fully appreciate His exclusive claims to being worthy of worship.

Attacking God's People Is Attacking God

Another example of how God is insulted: In Psalm 74:18-19 we read, "Remember this, O Lord, how the enemy scoffs, and a foolish people reviles your name. Do not deliver the soul of your dove to the wild beasts; do not forget the life of your poor forever." Here, the defeat of the people of God at the hands of their enemies is mentioned in the same breath as God being mocked. The thing is, when God's people are attacked, it is an attack upon God.

Consider Isaiah 52:4,5 - "For thus says the Lord God: 'My people went down at the first into Egypt to sojourn there, and the Assyrian oppressed them for nothing. Now therefore what have I here,' declares the Lord, 'seeing that my people are taken away for nothing? Their

rulers wail,' declares the Lord, 'and continually all the day my name is despised.'" When God's people are mocked, He is mocked, His name is blasphemed.

Now why should attacks upon the people of God be the same as insulting God? It's quite simple: God has promised to be the God of His people. He binds Himself to His people, so that their problems become His problems. And so an attack on them is like an attack on Him.

Of course, the people of God are still being attacked today. These days Christians are attacked as extremists if they speak out on such issues as homosexuality and abortion. They are told to keep their faith to themselves. And who can forget our brothers and sisters living in countries where exercising the Christian faith could cause them to be killed? Ultimately these attacks are attacks upon God Himself. They are insults to Him.

Christians Also Insult God

Mind you, it is not only enemies of Christianity who insult God. Christians themselves can also easily do so. They insult God when they do not live as God wants them to live. When those who are supposed to be God's people do not show it in the way they act, then God is dishonoured.

To illustrate, say I owned a business: Klazinga Kitchens. Now, I go away for a while and leave my employees in charge. And then I come back and find out that everything is a disaster. Customers are leaving left and right, the finances are in disarray, cheques are bouncing, and everything is going downhill. That is not going to reflect very well on me, is it? The negligent employees will have dishonoured my name. How much more is it not the case that God's people dishonour Him when they do things that are contrary to God's Word?

Sinful Swearing Insults God

Another obvious way to insult God: cursing. There is no doubt that using God's name in our swearing, our profanity, is certainly insulting to God. Using the name of God as a profanity is a totally inappropriate use of such a holy name. In fact, it is a detestable and heinous sin that makes one worthy of death. Sounds pretty drastic, doesn't it? But as we read in Leviticus 24:16 - "Whoever blasphemes

the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him. The sojourner as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death."

Now, I am certainly not advocating that we personally go out and kill people when we hear them swearing. I'm not even suggesting that the government institute the death penalty for swearing. But the point is this: those who insult God in this way do in fact deserve death, and this certainly shows just how seriously God takes being insulted. You know, it's important to be reminded of how wrong it is to swear using God's name. It's striking that there are some profane words that are considered more offensive than swearing that invokes God's name. But what can be worse than using God's name lightly and flip-pantly without giving Him the honour that is due Him?

And notice something important here: this is not just a matter of offending other people, it is a matter of offending God. Some people feel personally offended when they hear swearing, as well they should. But swearing is not first of all a sin against other people who happen to have more sensitive ears to that sort of thing. Rather, it is a sin against God. And it certainly is a far more serious matter to offend God than it is to offend other people.

Honour God Instead of Insulting Him

In summary, any time we do not treat God with the respect that is due to Him as the Holy Majestic God, then we are insulting Him. When He is considered to be just another god, then He does not get the respect He deserves. When His people are attacked, the ones doing the attacking do not respect the power of the Almighty God who has promised to watch over His people. When His people live unholy lives, they are not showing respect to His will for their lives. When people swear, they are not respecting God's name.

Now obviously, if we are not to insult God, if we are not to show disrespect to God, then it is important for us to do the opposite and positively show respect to God. We must have a proper attitude of reverence for God.

And what is involved in having this attitude? Well, for one thing, it means that we will be very careful in referring to God. Every time we call upon God, it should be with a proper attitude of humility. God is not some buddy that we can have a nickname for like, 'the big guy upstairs' or 'the boss', or other such flippant references to God. God is holy, and He should be treated as such; and every time we call upon Him, it should be with a sense of awe.

Plus, showing respect to God means living as He would have us to live, according to His Word. And so, honouring

the Lord means honouring the Bible. It means humbling ourselves to it, it means seeking to be guided by it in all things, it means treating Scripture with respect.

Also, honouring the Lord means worshipping the Lord and joining with others who also love the Lord.

Honouring God means praying to Him in a submissive and trusting way, and it means being grateful to God in all things. And there are so many other things that can be said as well.

My friends, I would ask you, do you treat God with respect? Do you respect God as the only God? Do you seek to honour Him?

Remember, we all deserve death because of the many different ways in which we ourselves have dishonoured God. But thanks be to God, there can be forgiveness because of Christ dying on the cross to pay the price for the sins of His people. Instead of eternal death, we can know eternal life. And so, may we repent of our sin and guilt. May we turn to Him for our salvation. And may we truly seek to show proper respect and honour and worship to Him, the Almighty God.

Churches in the Banner

The Ward's Retirement Function

It was an enjoyable time of fellowship at Rowland & Anna Ward's retirement function at the Knox church on Friday the 29th of June, 2012, after over 36 years of active service, more than 32 of which were served in the one charge of Melbourne – St. Kilda – Knox, Wantirna. The first part of the evening was a fellowship meal for the Wards, their family, and the Knox congregation in the hall. Following this the church was full with family, friends, and folk from Knox and neighbouring PCEA churches for the presentation of several items and speeches and gifts. The Sunday School children sang several songs, Elder Emeritus John Loudon gave a timeline of the Ward's ministry, Elder Jurien & Connie Dekter made a presentation of a historical photo collage in a suitable frame, the ladies of the congregation made a presentation to

Anna, the Rev. Sjirk Bajema made a presentation on behalf of Southern Presbytery, many greetings were read out from our sister churches throughout Australia, and others spoke also, including the Director of the Mukti Mission in Australia, with whom Rowland has had much involvement. Many thanks could be expressed to the Lord for the many years of service they have been enabled to do. May the Lord now guide them as they enter this new phase in their lives.

In response to this evening Rowland & Anna Ward penned the following thank you in the Knox Newsletter:

We would like to express our deep appreciation to all for the wonderful function on Friday evening - the lovely sit-down meal, the presentation and the supper. We were delighted with the lovely gifts, the speeches that

were made, the warm greetings received and the love that was shown to us. Thank to you all who participated and to those who worked so hard in the preparation and during the evening. It was a pleasure too, to have people present from All Nations', Narre Warren, Carrum Downs and Geelong and to enjoy fellowship in Christ.

We are also very grateful for your love, support and prayers over the years, which have been a great encouragement and have heartened us many times and enabled us to undertake the Lord's work. Serving the Lord is a great privilege and joy.

Churches in the Banner

The Ward's Retirement Function—Knox, 29 June 2012



Photos: Clockwise from above—two of the fellowship meal; presenting an historical photo collage; the children of the congregation singing; two photos of those at the presentation; 'Senior' elder John Louden give a time-line of the Ward's ministry; and centre is the Rev. Dr. Rowland & Mrs Anna Ward.

