

the presbyterian

*Eat honey, my son, for it is good;
honey from the comb is sweet to your taste.*

Proverbs 24:13

October 2012

banner

CONTENTS

Editorial	2
The Life Changing Spirit <i>Considering Romans 8:14—17</i>	3
Giving under the Banner <i>10 Principles of Christian Giving</i>	5
Books in the Banner <i>Not the Daily Mail</i>	6
<i>Under the Word!</i>	8
The World in the Banner <i>News & Views</i>	9
Giving under the Banner <i>The place of Bequests</i>	11
Children under the Banner	12
Youth & Search Work	13
Life under the Banner <i>The Fifth Commandment</i>	14
Churches in the Banner <i>An induction, a call, a 'visit'</i>	15

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Editorial

The only comment a minister received following the worship service was regarding the beard he had grown while away for some three weeks. Imagine that! He is a man who is a faithful and gifted preacher. The Lord has used him in a richly blessed way through a number of previous pastorates. In his marriage and family he models the Lord Jesus. But four Sundays after he was away, that is still the only topic of conversation being raised with him after each worship service!

What? You think it couldn't be like that in your own congregation? Okay, when was the last time you made a comment regarding your minister's preaching – whether in thankfulness or wanting to know more? And if you haven't done it could it be that very few, if any at all, have done it lately?

On Tuesday, or whenever your minister starts his week, he will be into worship preparation again. He will be working at the next text, struggling through an outline and points, translating the original language, comparing commentaries. Come Saturday and he'll still be busy with it, together with all the other parts that go into the worship service, and that's as well as any Bibles Studies he has led during the week and visits he has made. Then there will be his presbytery and denominational duties as well.

Perhaps sometime you could invite your minister to your Bible Study or home, with the request to ask him what's involved in his week? You will find the ministry is a vocation that involves much self-discipline. You can't leave it to just a couple of hours on a Saturday night (and the few ministers I knew like that got themselves into all sorts of trouble!).

Even after many years of service, most ministers still need twelve to fifteen hours preparation per sermon (and when they began they needed thirty to forty!). So if your minister leads two worship services in the one pulpit on the Lord's Day that's already a 40-hour week, when everything associated with the worship services is taken into account. True, if he is an experienced minister he will have his previous material; but much of that will need reworking as well. If he's a true student of the Word, he will be continually changing.

All in all, your minister is very much in need of the Lord's guidance and strength in his calling. So are you praying that for him? When he steps before you on Sunday, does he do that knowing here is an eagerly listening and involved congregation?

These are good questions. I pray you have the right answer.

*The elders who direct the affairs of the church well
are worthy of double honour,
especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.
For the Scripture says,
"Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,"
and "The worker deserves his wages."
1st Timothy 5:17—18*

Erratum

In Dr Rowland Ward's article in the September issue, there were additional words inserted by error. If you look to the second column on page 5, 13 lines down there is a full stop after East Africa. That full stop should not be there and neither should the next 8 lines so that "East Africa" should join in the same sentence as "Revival that washes away..."

My apologies for this oversight.

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.

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The Queen of Blessings: Adoption

Considering Romans 8: 14–17

George Ball

Romans 8 is the chapter on the Holy Spirit. From hardly rating a mention up until now in the letter – Paul here in this chapter refers to the Holy Spirit no less than 19 or 20 times. The theme of the chapter, then, is the work of the Spirit in the life of the believer.

We have seen so far His multiple activities: -

***The Holy Spirit brings us life** and has set us free from the penalty of sin and death (v.2).

***The Holy Spirit empowers us** to fulfil the righteous requirements of the law (v.4).

***We now live each day according to the Spirit** and set our mind on His desires (v.5).

***The Holy Spirit now permanently indwells the believer;** so that ‘our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit’ (v.9).

***The Holy Spirit will give life to our mortal bodies** – assuring us of our physical resurrection (v.11).

***We are debtors to the Holy Spirit** – we owe a debt of gratitude by living Holy Spirit controlled lives (vs 12-13).

***The Spirit leads us** (v.14). There’s nothing mystical or ecstatic about being led by the Spirit – despite the way some ‘Christians’ would have us believe. Being led by the Spirit is not the preserve of ‘the highly spiritual’, but of all who are the sons of God. The Holy Spirit leads us into the truth of Scripture. The Holy Spirit leads us by way of the fruit of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit leads us so that we might be conformed to the likeness of His Son. The Holy Spirit leads us to ‘mortify the deeds of the body’ (v.13). **Then Paul says something very remarkable** (v.15). ‘For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, Abba, Father!’... The apostle is telling us that the Spirit of God has led us through the experience of conviction of sin when we feared, when we were brought to see ourselves ‘naked’ before God, helpless and hopeless. But He didn’t abandon us there. The Spirit led us to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who gave us the Spirit of adop-

tion.

The Spirit of adoption (or sonship) is one of the richest titles in the New Testament.

J. Packer in an excellent chapter ‘Sons of God’ in his book *Knowing God* states: **‘The revelation to the believer that God is his Father is in a sense the climax of the Bible.’**

Romans 8

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.”

16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

17 and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together.

J. Murray agrees. **Adoption, he says, ‘is surely the apex of grace and privilege . . . it staggers imagination because of its amazing condescension and love.’** (*Redemption Accomplished and Applied*. Page 134.) Adoption is then the summit of God’s gospel blessings for the believer, and the highest privilege that the gospel has to offer.

We, however, have not been conditioned to think like this. **Surely, we think, justification is higher if not the highest blessing?** Yes: justification is a wonderful blessing. It is fundamental; primary; foundational; vital. It meets our primary need as sinners. It is the declaration of God the judge declaring that we leave His court NOT guilty of any of the charges laid against us – all because of the righteousness of Christ credited to us. But justification is a legal term. It does not imply any personal or intimate relationship with God the judge. By contrast, adoption is a family idea, conceived in terms of love, and views God as Father. In adoption, God takes us into His family and fellowship and establishes us as His children

and heirs. It’s richer than justification. It’s as though the judge leaves the bench to embrace the guilty sinner and presents him with adoption papers and says to him, ‘I now want you to come home with me to be part of my family. My home is your home!’ Such a thing is unheard of and unthinkable. Yet this is what God the Father does with the justified!

Jim Packer says, ‘To be right with God is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the Father is greater.’ He states that the richest definition of a Christian is: ‘one who has God for his Father’. He further suggests; ‘If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God’s child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all...Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption.’ Let that statement instruct our approach to this passage:

1. Adoption Determines How we Relate to God (v.15)

Is everyone a child of God? No! It’s true that we are all His creatures; it is in Him that we live and move and have our being. But not all are the redeemed children of God. By nature we are children of disobedience and children of wrath. It is only because of God’s sovereign saving electing love that we are His children (see Eph. 1: 5 and John 1: 12).

When the aged apostle John thought of his adoption he was still filled with sheer wonder, amazement and joy. He exclaimed, **‘Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called the children of God’** (1 John 3: 1). It’s not that there was any beauty in us that He should have desired us! It’s not that the Lord was lonely and ‘wanted a family.’ No! There was

never any deficit in God.

The old Dutch theologian Wilhelmus a Brekel put it this way:

‘From being a child of the devil to becoming a child of God, from being a child of wrath to becoming the object of God’s favour, from a child of condemnation to becoming an heir of all the promises and a possessor of all blessings, and to be exalted from the greatest misery to the highest felicity – this is something which exceeds all comprehension and all adoration.’

Many things might be said about the privileges of being a child of God.

The one thing that Paul here emphasises in verse 15 is our remarkable, intimate relationship with God; so that we can now cry, ‘Abba Father.’ ‘Abba’ is child-like language; a personal form of address; a family word for Father/Daddy. It is Aramaic and even sounds like ‘Da, Da’ in English.

But the key to interpreting this phrase (the noun) in verse 15 is in understanding the verb ‘cry.’ (Greek = krazein which means: a loud cry; a scream; a loud call.) E.g. Jesus cried out twice with a loud cry on the cross: **‘My God, my God why have you forsaken me?’** and **‘He cried out again with a loud voice and gave up His Spirit’** (Matt. 27: 45-49). Bar-timaeus cried out, **‘Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.’** The crowd cried out, **‘Crucify him, crucify him’**).

In other words, the verb here indicates that the atmosphere envisaged is not the tranquillity of the nursery, but the crisis of the schoolyard. It’s not that of a little baby cooing and babbling while learning to say, ‘Da-Da.’ Rather, it’s when our adoption (our sonship) seems threatened and we lose that assurance and we feel overwhelmed that we can cry, ‘Abba, Father.’

‘What Paul is saying here is that even at the darkest hour... although we are broken and bruised, tossed about with fears and doubts, the child of God nevertheless in his need cries out ‘Father!’ as instinctively as a child who has fallen and been hurt calls out in similar language, ‘Daddy, help me.’ (See Ferguson: *The Holy Spirit*. Page 184). Let me illustrate. I read about a Christian girl who had received word that her fiancé had been killed suddenly in an accident. She was obviously

shocked and distraught and in great distress. She rushed to her bedroom and closed the door. Her mother heard her sobbing, and after a bit said to her father, ‘I think you had better go up and see her. She needs a father right now.’ So the father went upstairs and opened the door a fraction. He saw his daughter kneeling beside the bed with her head buried in her hands crying out, **‘Oh, Father, Oh, Father, Father.’** The man quietly shut the door, came back downstairs and said to his wife, **‘She is in better hands than mine, for she is with her Heavenly Father.’** That young girl knew God as her Father!... Even when we don’t know what to pray for; just to cry, ‘Father’ and mean it is real prayer. (See also verse 26). When our world is turned upside down; when we feel threatened and isolated; when others blaspheme the name of God and shake their fist in the face of God; the child of God can but cry, ‘Abba Father.’

As God’s adopted children we have this special privilege that we can come with confidence to Him in prayer. ‘What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and grief’s to bear! What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer.’

2. Adoption Determines How we Understand Ourselves (v.16)

‘The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.’

For many people it’s important to know the family tree. There seems to be a felt need to know where we ‘fit in’. There are a couple of popular T.V. programmes which focus on this very theme – **‘Who do you think you are’** (SBS); and, **‘Can We Help’** (ABC). Both seek to trace, connect and reunite lost members of the family.

This is what the Holy Spirit does in the life of the believer: **‘He testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.’** God the Father wants us to know that He is our Father and that He loves us. He has proven His love in giving us His Son. He confirms that love by the witness of the Holy Spirit with our spirit.

Exactly how He does this is very hard to explain. It’s been well said, ‘There are some things better felt than tell’t!’ This is one of them! This verse

has caused endless debate among theologians. I can scarcely add anything by way of enlightenment!

Nonetheless, it is clear that God wants us to be sure of our position as children of God. This is not merely a truth to believe, but a relationship to experience. How then can we be sure of being a child of God? Is there some kind of buzz? Is there a tingling sensation? Is it the ‘Toyota’ feeling? No! Feelings are fleeting – and subject to circumstance. There are days when I feel like a Christian and there are days when I don’t. Or perhaps Paul is referring here to such things as visions, voices from God or special revelations from the Spirit? No!! We have no need of that. He has given us His complete word in the scriptures. How then does the Spirit bear witness to (or with) our spirit? Let me suggest some evidences.

The Holy Spirit has opened the eyes of our understanding that now we ‘behold wondrous things out of God’s law.’ (See WCF 1: 5).

The Holy Spirit has opened our eyes to Scripture enabling us to recognise it as truly God’s Word. We were like a blind man, being told about the beauty of a flower. Then he received his sight and could see the flower with his own eyes. The Spirit who inspired the Scriptures enables us to receive: to recognise and resonate with the Scriptures so that we are able to say ‘Amen’ to the promises of God.

The Holy Spirit enables us to keep on believing on and trusting in Christ so that I can testify with the Heidelberg Catechism **‘that I am not my own, but belong body and soul, in life and in death – to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with His precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven: in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I belong to Him, Christ by His Holy Spirit assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.’**

The Holy Spirit gives us the lan-

guage of prayer. Do we realise that prayer is one of the highest privileges we have as children of God? Is it not incredible that God who is in heaven should hear the voice of a man? (Verses 15 and 26).

The Holy Spirit leads us in the ways of holiness and obedience (13-14). 'We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin' (1 Jn. 5: 18). If we are children of God, then we must live like His children (Matt. 5: 45 and 48).

The Holy Spirit will be producing fruit in our lives: 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control;' 'so that we might be conformed to the image of his Son' (Gal. 5: 22-23 and Rom. 8: 29).

The Holy Spirit will enable me to love my new family who are brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers in Christ. It's a hard thing to do sometimes! It's often said, 'You can choose your friends – but you can't choose your family.' This is true

even in our church family. The Lord gets to choose the members. Just be thankful that you can be a part. 'We know we have passed from death to life because we love the brothers' (1 Jn. 3: 14).

3. Adoption Determines How we Understand our Future (v.17)

'And if children, then heirs – heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may be glorified with him.'

We are heirs of God. He is our inheritance! In the 1st century Roman world, the reason for adopting a son was specifically to have an heir to bequeath one's goods and estate. Is that the reason the Father has adopted us? He wants us to share His heavenly riches. He wants to share Himself. Murray says, 'It is difficult to suppress the richer and deeper thought that God himself is the inheritance of his children.' The psalmist says; 'Whom have I in heaven but

you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and heart may fail, **but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever'** (Ps. 73: 25-26).

We are fellow-heirs with Christ. Though Christ is the first born and thus the natural heir of all things – yet He will share with us all that He receives. Psalm 2 tells us that the nations are His inheritance. Jesus says, 'the meek shall inherit the earth.' I frankly don't know nor can I imagine all that is in store for us, but I do know that Jesus prayed, 'that we might be with Him where He is and see His glory' (Jn. 17: 24). We may have to suffer a little now; but for the child of God the best is yet to come. Though we are the adopted children of God, He treats us and receives us as His natural sons! That's love! It was Richard Baxter who said: **'My knowledge of that life is small; the eye of faith is dim: but it's enough that Christ knows all; and I shall be with Him.'**

Giving under the Banner

Ten Principles of Christian Giving

J. Ligon Duncan II

1. The Lord Jesus expects and requires us to give. Jesus said to His disciples, "when you give" not "if you give" (Matthew 6:2)! Hence, Christian giving is not optional, but rather essential. We often hear folks say: "in the Old Testament they *had* to give, but not in the New -- now we only give if we want to." This is clearly not Jesus' teaching. He expected all His followers to be givers. Christians *will* give. *Are you giving?*

2. The Lord Jesus wants us to give for the right reasons. Jesus warned His disciples not to give for the sake of being admired by men. "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them," He said (Matthew 6:1). When we give, we must be careful to examine our motives. We ought to give for the glory of God and the good of His people. We must desire His approval of our giving, rather than the praise and admiration of people. *Are you giving for God's praise or man's?*

3. The Lord Jesus wants us to practice benevolent or charitable giving. Jesus said "When you give to the poor .

. . ." (Matthew 6:2,3). Jesus is specifically teaching about "alms" in this passage: aid, charity, or benevolent offerings for the needy. *Do you give amply enough to the Church that she can be generous in benevolent giving?*



4. The Lord Jesus reminds us that our giving is ultimately to the all-seeing heavenly Father. Jesus said "When you give . . . ; your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you" (Matthew 6:3-4). When we give, we are not simply adding to the Church budget, we are giving up a thank offering to the Father Himself. Thus, we must all give "as unto the Lord." Our ultimate goal in giving is to please Him. *Are you conscious of the fact that your giving is to the Lord and seen by the*

Lord?

5. The Bible teaches that Christian giving is an act of worship. In connection with the previous point, we see this truth stressed in another way in Paul's word's "On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save" (1 Corinthians 16:2). Paul here teaches the Corinthians that their taking up of the collection is an act of worship which is to be a part of their regular Lord's Day worship. When we put our money in the plate, we are worshiping Almighty God in accordance with His Word. Note well, Paul is speaking here of a "collection for the saints" – this is giving by the Church to the Church for the Church. *Did you realize that giving is a part of worship? Is your worship in this area abundant or inhibited? Is giving to the Church a priority with you?*

6. The Bible teaches that Christian giving should be done in light of the incarnation. Many Christians argue about whether the tithe (10% of our income) is still the standard for our giving to the Church (disputants

usually want to show that less than 10% is fine). Paul scuttles the whole debate in one verse. He says: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). Christ's self-giving is now the standard for our giving! We begin from the base of the tithe and aim for emulation of His self-sacrifice. Our giving is to be inspired and instructed by Christ's inexpressible gift. In light of such a challenge, who could possibly satisfy himself with asking "how little a percentage is acceptable for me to give?" *Do you try to get by with giving as little as possible to the Lord, or do you give in view of the Lord's costly sacrifice?*

7. The Bible teaches that Christian giving should be done in accordance with our means. Paul is quite clear on this: "For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have" (2 Corinthians 8:12). Put another way Paul is saying that you should give in proportion to what God has given you. He said it this way in 1 Corinthians 16:2, "each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper." This means at least two things: (1) since we are all supposed to give proportionately, those who have more money are expected to give more [we who are par-

ticularly blessed materially must remember this], and (2) the Lord never asks us to give what we do not have, or contribute beyond our means. *Are you really giving in proportion to the material blessings that the Lord has given you?*

8. The Bible teaches that the liberality of God's blessings to us is connected to the liberality of our Christian giving. Though it may seem strange, both Jesus and Paul emphasize that there is a relation between our giving to the Lord and the Lord's giving to us. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 9:6 "Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." About this matter J.A. Beet once said: "They who in giving think, not how little they can give, as they would if self-enrichment were the aim, but of benefits to be conferred, will receive back on the same principle. As they do to others, so God will act to them." Jesus reminds us of this in Matthew 6:4, where He teaches that our reward in giving comes from our heavenly Father. As someone once said: "The desire to be generous and the means to be generous both come from God." *Do you realize that the Lord has given you much, so that you can give much?*

9. The Bible teaches that Christian giving must be willing giving, free giving. We learn this in 2 Corinthians

9:7 "Each one *must do* just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion." But doesn't this contradict what we learned under the first principle, that Christian giving is *not* optional? The answer is, of course, no. True Christian giving is both mandatory and voluntary. It is required by God, but always willingly given by the believer. *Is your giving to the Church something you do wholeheartedly, or indifferently, or grudgingly?*

10. The Bible teaches that Christian giving ought to be cheerful giving. As Paul says "God loves a cheerful giver." This is a truly amazing assertion. Paul assures us here that the Lord takes a special delight in those who are joyful, energetic, merry givers. *Is there joy in your heart as you give? Can you truly be characterized as a "cheerful giver?"*

We have not come close to reaching our potential for giving. Won't you pray that we will give as we ought? That we will give for the right motives? That we will give joyously? And that we will give extravagantly?

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Books in the Banner

Much Better Than the Daily Mail

Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert (Crown & Covenant, 2012)

With the exception of Augustine's *Confessions*, I am not a big fan of Christian testimonies and autobiographies. Generally, they exhibit one of two problems (sometimes both). The first is the tendency towards a simplistic formula as shaped by the expectations of the specific Christian community to which the author belongs. So experiential Calvinist autobiographers tend to suffer long periods of conviction of sin followed by blessed, if sometimes mystical, assurance. I imagine the current trendy manifestations of reformed hipster theology will probably produce its fair share of people who found that conversion liberated them to watch exactly the same derivative and crass movies they did before, but now with an uncanny, Spirit-filled capacity to spot the redeemer figure in *The Dark Knight Rises*

or *The Expendables II*.

The second problem is what I call 'The Daily Mail protocol.' For those who live in blissful ignorance of Britain's newspaper, The Daily Mail, it is an absurdly right wing production which covers exactly the same kind of bedhopping kiss-and-tell scandals as the other, more notorious tabloids, but it always does so with an air of moral outrage and spleenic indignation. Thus, the reader has access to all of the prurient details of the latest activities of some ghastly boy band without feeling that they have dirtied themselves in finding out the information. Such, it seems to me, are many of the Christian memoirs that become popular with plotlines such as "I was a murderous biker/a porn star/a drug addict/a politician but then I found Jesus." If we are honest, most of us read such books for the salacious details of the preconversion life of the author, not the testimony to God's grace.

Book review by Carl Trueman

Indeed, I have often thought of writing my own Christian autobiography: "I was a basically well-behaved studious teenager from a good home and then I found Jesus and continued to be basically well-behaved and studious." Unlikely to make it to the Barnes and Noble Top Ten, I suspect.

Yet now I find there is another book of Christian autobiography that is well worth reading: *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*. The book is unusual for a variety of reasons, not least because of the identity of the author: Rosaria Champagne Butterfield. Dr Butterfield is now married to a pastor in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, a small denomination which is perhaps most distinctive for its practice of singing only unaccompanied metrical psalms in worship. What makes her so interesting, however, is her career before marriage: she was a success-

ful English literature professor at Syracuse University who specialized in Queer Theory and was herself a committed lesbian. This book is the story of how she came to be who and where she now is.

To give details of all that she writes in this book would be to spoil it. So here instead are a number of reasons I would give as to why every Christian should buy this book and read it:

First, it gives painful insights into how gays and lesbians perceive Christians. Sadly, as she herself points out, the perceptions of hatred, intolerance and ignorance are too often rooted in reality. There is nothing here to give us comfort or grounds for complacency as we face the great social and political challenge to Christians of our day. Most of us are probably guilty as charged. But thanks to Butterfield, we have a former insider's precious insights to help us think through our attitudes and behaviour.

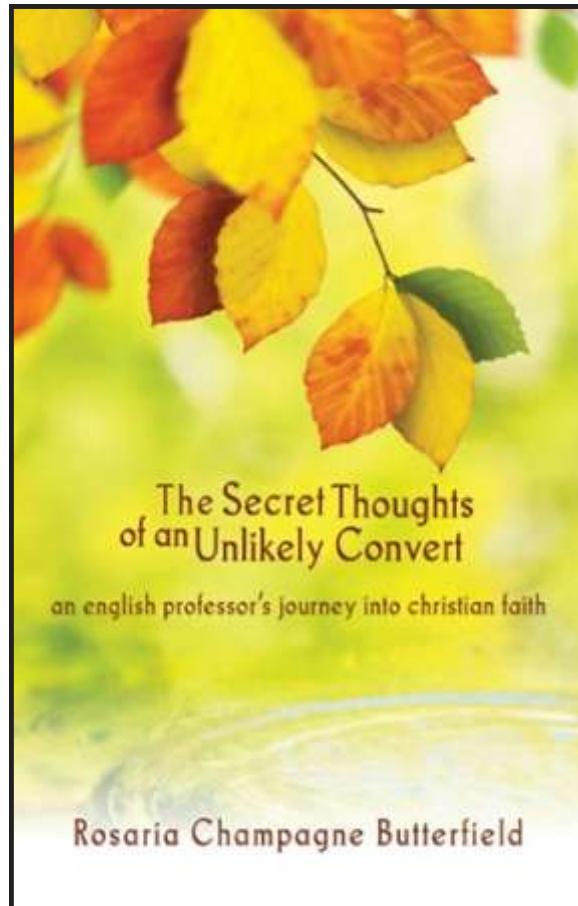
Second, the book brings out beautifully how the gentle vulnerability of a humble RPCNA pastor and his wife over many months were used by God to bring her into the kingdom. As others either scream and shout from the barricades and the trenches of the culture war or else so water down their Christian testimony as to remove all offence from it, a quiet RPCNA pastor did neither; but rather took the very citadel of the enemy by storm through nothing more than opening his house to a radical feminist lesbian English professor.

Third, it shows how conversion often does not immediately solve problems. Butterfield's description of the impact of her conversion is 'comprehensive chaos'. It shattered her career, her network of friends, her reputation with those she loved. It left her confused and at times lonely and depressed. This is no Hallmark Channel production: it is raw and real, chaotic and messy.

Fourth, for those satisfied with the broad evangelical type of reformed evangelicalism, it is a paean to the delights of deeply rooted, confessional Reformed Christianity. For instance, Butterfield's knowledge of social and critical theory means that she understands at a profound level how worldview communities are formed, how the intricate network of ideas, social conventions and narratives combine to forge identity and outlook. It reminded me of why I am myself a 'sectarian' as some have said, and happy to operate in a small, culturally irrelevant denomi-

nation. I need roots, I need stable, biblically based, historically tested and ecclesiastically responsible theology. That is what confessional churches provide. And only such provide.

In this context, I found myself saying 'Amen!' out loud when I read her declaring that there is no such thing as the Christian worldview (singular). Biblical Christianity is confessional Christianity; and confessional Christianity does not actually exist as some centre-bounded set of pious generalities. It is specific,



concrete, detailed and definite; it exists in the real particular, not the general ideal; and it makes its greatest impact not on the blogs or at the mega-conferences, still less through endless tweeting and other similarly docetic activities. It makes its impact at the local level, where real people interact with other real people.

Fifth, her treatment of sexual sin and gender politics is fascinating and so much more sophisticated than the kind of simplistic drivel which passes for discussion in evangelical circles. Chapter Two, 'Repentance and the Sin of Sodom', along with her accounts in Chapter Three of talking to students at Geneva College about sexuality, are worth the price of the book. Every pastor should read these chapters and take her analysis to heart. Two things struck

me here.

First, she makes it clear that sexual dysfunction in society is symptomatic of much deeper ills. This seemed to me entirely consistent with Romans 1, where many of the things Christians most decry in society are themselves constitutive of God's judgment on sin, not so much provocations to judgment.

Second, her observation that sexual sin is not solved by a change of context seems to me to be a most relevant and apposite point. I remember reading a few years ago a minister's account of counselling a man with a pornography problem. The advice amounted to 'Get married and have sex with your wife.' The advice may have been ironic; but if not, it is surely dangerous. The use of pornography is not simply a result of overactive glands than need some relief; it is a form of sin which is complex in origin and manifestation. Simply finding an outlet for legitimate physical relief of sexual urges does not begin to address the deeper problems. To quote Butterfield (p. 83): "What good Christians don't realize is that sexual sin is not recreational sin gone overboard. Sexual sin is predatory. It won't be 'healed' by redeeming the context or the genders. Sexual sin must simply be killed. What is left of your sexuality after this annihilation is up to God. But healing, to the sexual sinner, is death: nothing more and nothing less." That has profound pastoral implications, one of which is not seeing marriage as the cure for sexual incontinence.

This autobiography is the launchpad for numerous sophisticated reflections on the nature of life, faith, sexuality, worship, education and other matters. As one would expect from a lover of nineteenth century literature, the book is also beautifully written with many a well-turned sentence; and as one would expect from someone schooled at the highest levels in critical theory, it eschews simplistic pieties for stimulating analyses of both Christian and non-Christian culture.

I cannot recommend this book highly enough. I do not agree with everything she says; but I did learn from everything she wrote. It deserves the widest possible readership.

+ www.Reformation21.org

Under the Word!

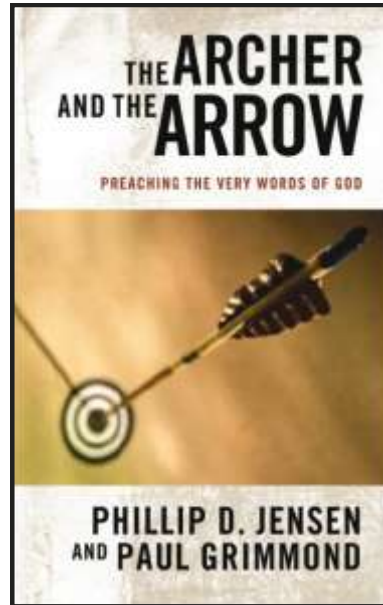
"The Archer and the Arrow: Preaching the Very Words of God"

By Phillip D. Jensen and Paul Grimmond, Matthias Media, 2010

I picked this book up on a very good special. Some may say that is clearly the Dutch in me – and I think there's a little truth in that! But in relation to yet another book on preaching, perhaps it's also the sense that spending too much on something I have read and heard so often before, or conversely spending too much to read something I have disagreed with so much before, is always a thought in the back of my mind.

With this book not only was I pleased with the price, but also with what I read. Yes, it was essentially nothing new; but it was put in a way that made me think about how I had been doing things, confirming them, and sharpening them even more. The title of the book, *The Archer and the Arrow*, is worked out in a helpful analogy through much of the book, and here

you can see the systematic help that Paul Grimmond brings to the book. While Phillip is the artist, Paul is the administrator.



This is not a classic book on preaching, despite the nice reviews at the front, but it is a helpful insight into the way Phillip Jensen works in his study. I

Book review by Sjirk Bajema

was particularly encouraged to see how long he works on his text and the way he works on it. It is all his own work and it is long, hard work. Sydney Anglicans have always struck me as a strange hybrid, but here we were very much on common ground.

It is clear Phillip is committed to expository preaching, and expository preaching in a way that balances out different parts of the Bible. That's how it should be. If the Word is not the central and complete focus in public worship, we are missing the dialogue that true worship should be. If God doesn't speak, what do you hear?

There are also three very helpful appendices, which originally appeared as articles elsewhere. The difference between strategy and tactics in the first was perceptive, the challenge to preach the negative in our very positive age is a good encouragement in the second, and the 'Tips for Young Preachers' in the third is helpful for older preachers too!

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The World in the Banner

Pussy Riot are mere magnets for West's hypocrisy

Pussy Riot have provoked an outpouring of hypocrisy across the western world. The very media outlets that praise the band loudest are studiously careful to censor certain facts about their newly anointed heroes for free speech.

For example, few report that previous protests by members of the group include staging an orgy in a Moscow museum and publicly masturbating with a chicken leg in a supermarket. Nor are the lyrics of their songs – deeply offensive to many Christians – usually printed.

Instead, we are presented with an air-brushed picture of pretty, idealistic heroines making a brave stand against tyranny. The truth is more complex than this.

"Freedom of speech" has been on the outraged lips of legions of western celebrities since three members of Pussy Riot were sentenced to two years in jail for hooliganism last week.

But just how committed are the western chattering classes to freedom of speech?

Imagine if four white men from an English punk band called "Mickey Riot", with strong links to the English Defence League, gatecrashed Friday prayers in the East London Mosque.

They push aside the imam, make offensive gestures at those present, mock Islamic religious beliefs and perform a bad punk song that is grossly offensive to Muslims everywhere.

Would Amnesty, Madonna, Bjork, Alicia Silverstone and their ilk be queuing up to lend their support during the band's subsequent trial for incitement to religious hatred?

Or how about if four men from a radically conservative Russian religious group disrupted a feminist conference in Moscow, barging on stage, shouting and mocking the deeply held feminist beliefs of the women present?

Before security can intervene, they perform a brief pro-Putin polka, with lyrics that are crude and derogatory to women. The police prosecute the protesters for hooliganism and they are sentenced to two years' imprisonment. Would Amnesty International weep at the injustice? Would celebrities line up

to decry this violation of freedom of speech?

We know the answer. In both these scenarios, Amnesty and Madonna would probably applaud the police and public prosecutors for taking such robust action against hate speech. Two years of imprisonment, they might argue, is somewhat harsh – but an appropriate deterrent.

Therein lies the hypocrisy of the West's self-appointed advocates of free speech. They discriminate on the basis of gender, race, religion, ethnicity and political ideology.

Change the gender and the politics of the protesters and you get a completely different result. The western bien pensant's belief in freedom of speech extends only to those they agree with.

Pussy Riot are hardly poster girls for serious political protest. Their behaviour would likely get them arrested even in London, Stockholm or Amsterdam.

Do they really deserve to be suddenly elevated to the status of political martyrs for freedom and democracy, alongside Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King?

The Australian government has a useful document offering advice on the conduct of protests. It says "conducting a protest... is accepted as a right provided it is conducted peacefully and does not impinge on the rights of others".

Surely people of all faiths should be entitled to gather peacefully in their places of worship? This human right is, after all, guaranteed by article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Putin regime is undoubtedly reprehensible, and the Orthodox Church is disturbingly closely allied with it. However, it is possible to protest against these associations without disturbing ordinary Russian people in their place of worship.

Pussy Riot shouldn't have been jailed for their antics. I sincerely hope they are released. However, their western supporters should ask themselves whether they truly believe in freedom of speech, or just in a shallow version of it that can be defined as: "I will defend your right to say something, provided that I agree with you."

For that is also Vladimir Putin's definition of freedom of speech.

While the West fawns over Pussy Riot,

it largely ignores the tens of thousands of ordinary unglamorous Russians who have protested in recent years – without invading churches or insulting people's religion.

These vastly more important protest movements have been sidelined by a western media drawn inexorably to pretty faces and celebrity-led news. The end result is that we are given a distorted picture of the tragic demise of Russian democracy.

+ *Rory Fitzgerald, Irish Times, 23 August 2012*

Thousands Displaced in Renewed Terror in Ivory Coast

In March 2011 tens of thousands of predominantly Christian Guere were ethnically cleansed from their lands in western Ivory Coast by Muslim rebels loyal to presidential aspirant Alassane Ouattara. The Guere have never been able to return because their homes have been occupied by Muslims. Some 5000 Guere who remain displaced have been living in the Nahibly camp in Duekoue, which is protected by UN peacekeepers. A massive Muslim mob stormed the camp on 19 July 2012.. Armed with clubs, machetes and rifles, they killed at least eleven refugees, wounded 60 and burnt the camp to the ground, leaving the 5000 mostly Christian ethnic Guere displaced yet again. The UN has condemned the attack that it says was 'clearly ethnically motivated'. Please pray for Christians in Ivory Coast.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin | RLPB 172 | Wed 15 Aug 2012*

Using Semantics to Take Down US Conservative Representative

Liberal pundits are declaring they have no idea what Rep. Todd Akin (R-MO) meant when he referred to "legitimate rape" in an interview this past week. Akin stated, "In cases of legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down." It was an awkward, inarticulate statement, but the substance of it was correct. Explaining what he meant since then would be a bit crude, so he has not been able to adequately defend himself. His attackers have used the awkwardness to pounce on him and pretend they

don't know what he meant, or make up even worse explanations.

Does anyone actually believe his critics? It may have been a poor choice of words, but everyone knows Akin was referring to the distinction between what we traditionally consider rape - forcible rape - versus statutory rape and what some claim is also rape, having sex while drunk. Some women will have a one night stand while drunk, admit it to their friends afterwards, then change their mind and declare that it was rape. The FBI updated its definition of rape this year to include the inability to give consent due to intoxication. Any woman who has been drinking can now claim afterwards that she was raped. This may have opened a Pandora's Box, considering how many people drink alcohol before sex. The cliché "rape is rape" no longer means what it says. The definition has now been broadened to include any woman alleging rape after she has been drinking.

As for women's bodies shutting down, you don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out that Akin meant that a woman is not going to get aroused if she is forcibly raped, making it difficult to become pregnant. Akin brought this up in order to explain why abortion in case of rape is not necessary. It is very rare that a forcible rape results in a pregnancy, so the issue of whether to permit abortion in the case of rape is mostly a red herring, used for fear mongering. Last week, GOP officials drafting the abortion ban for the party platform, declined to put in an exception for rape or incest. Tellingly, Akin's critics haven't bothered disputing Akin's real message, which is that less than one percent of rapes result in a pregnancy.

Akin immediately apologized for his remarks, clarifying later that he meant "forcible rape." He has been running 30-second TV ads around the state apologizing. David Roney of Pro-Life Arizona notes that Akin's point was unborn babies shouldn't be sacrificed to punish rapists. Aborting children because they were a product of a rape would have taken the lives of gospel singers Mahalia Jackson and Ethel Waters. Ryan Bomberger, also born of a rape, wrote about Akin for Life News, "I'm glad such a pro-family, pro-life stalwart, despite a few bumps and lots of scrapes, is not quitting under pressure from hypocritical pro-abortion radicals and spineless Republicans." Bomberger listed several crude jokes that liberal celebrities have made about rape, and asks, "Where was the condemnation of Whoopi Goldberg who, on The View,

defended film director Roman Polanski's 1977 drugging and rape of a 13 year old as not "rape rape"?"

It is troubling to see Mitt Romney, Paul Ryan, the chairman of the RNC, Sen. Scott Brown (R-MA) and conservative stalwarts like Rush Limbaugh demand the resignation of Akin. Limbaugh himself has been accused of comments that have made him vulnerable to intense criticism. It is reported that high-level GOP officials have told Akin they will no longer help him with fundraising. Many in the GOP have developed a herd mentality and are piling on Akin, asserting that no one can win without establishment support. Sadly, they are shooting their wounded to react so quickly and demand that Akin jump out of the race.

Fortunately, not all conservatives have deserted Akin. Because of the injustice of what has happened to him, Mike Huckabee has come to his defense, assisting with fundraising. It's notable that Akin exceeded his goal of raising \$125,000 within a few days. Susan B. Anthony List, a pro-life group, has put out a statement defending Akin.

Prior to Akin's misworded comment, he was leading in the polls over the Democrat incumbent, Sen. Claire McCaskill, who is considered to be the most vulnerable Democrat in the Senate. If his chances are now so dismal, why is Moveon.org calling for Akin to resign? Or why is the liberal super PAC American Bridge 21st Century demanding that Romney drop Huckabee from the GOP convention for supporting Akin? The left is well aware that to put in a substitute candidate now would risk losing the seat, due to the lack of time left to set up a ground game and garner name recognition.

Akin is a solid conservative who voted against No Child Left Behind, despite being pressured in a phone call by President Bush. He has a 97% lifetime rating from the American Conservative Union. A favorite of social conservatives, he obtained a Master of Divinity degree from seminary and has co-chaired the House Prayer Breakfast. No doubt his background is why many are targeting him so viciously.

Most voters will forget about this in a week. Three days after the story broke, McCaskill pulled ahead of Akin in the polls but could not break 50%, according to a Rasmussen poll. Akin can still win, unless Republicans continue to turn on him. "A house divided against itself cannot stand." The Republican Party could still try to force Akin out up

until September 25, by challenging his candidacy in the courts.

When people can't freely express their opinions, it is a serious matter. Why isn't an apology sufficient? Why make this into a career-ruining incident? Akin didn't say "rape is ok," and everyone knows exactly what he meant. Akin told Huckabee that he "misspoke one word, in one sentence, in one day." Wait until it happens to you.

+ Rachel Alexander, *Townhall Magazine*, 1901 North Moore Street, Suite 701, Arlington, Virginia 22209

The Religion of True Peace

Hallam, Officer, Springvale South, Noble Park, Craigieburn, and Narre Warren South. What are they to you? Why, you say, they're local suburbs. They're where we live, or our family and friends live. But as we heard this past week it's also where radical Muslims, actively plotting the destruction of our country, also live. Those who have been blessed to come in and enjoy our freedom and material wealth in reality want to turn us back to some kind of a barbaric backwater where Sharia law is supreme, and thus where women and religious minorities are severely oppressed, even to the point of persecution and death.

Let's take as an example something else that showed us this 'religion of peace' this past week ('Religion of Peace' is the way many western leaders have described the Islamic faith, including former US President George W. Bush). If the Muslims so enraged with the movie, *Innocence of Muslims*, were to focus on who actually produced the movie, they would not be expressing their hatred and violence and bloodshed against American embassies around the world but against Egyptian Coptic Christians. It was one of them living in the United States who produced it.

'Oh, what am I saying, they already are doing that!' How many new reports don't we get of violence against Egyptian Copts, or their churches and homes being stolen from them, of their young women being kidnapped and forced into Islam, and the deaths of so many of them by crowd-incited violence in Egypt? Those signs in Sydney calling for people to be beheaded for insulting their precious prophet are the harsh reality of what is being carried out on a daily basis in Islamic countries for people falsely

accused of insulting Muhammed, or the Quran, or of having the temerity to convert to Christianity. Ask the pastor in Iran or the Down Syndrome 14 year old girl in Pakistan!

What was shown around the world a week ago in Hyde Park, Sydney, was the true face of a major world-view on planet earth at this time. And it is not a nice looking face.

But what do we honestly expect? Whether it is the atheist comedian on Q & A, the openly homosexual journalist-activist, or the hate-preaching Muslim cleric, this is all part of what the Lord told us would happen to those bearing His name (Matt.10:34-39). Even close family and friends will despise and reject us because of our faith in Him. That we have had relative peace for so long in this country and throughout the western world is the exception rather than the norm for believers through the

ages.

By all means, we must protest this open disparagement of Christianity. How often doesn't the Lord Jesus get blasphemed in our society? And doesn't the Holy Bible get a real bashing? Which country in the world has had its embassies stormed and ransacked and its ambassadors killed by Christians lately? The Christians are too busy in those countries caring for the poor, the orphaned, the despised, the ill, and the injured. They are those providing the highest standard of education.

But let us also realise we are only pilgrims here. This world is not our friend. While we must be in this world, we should not be of this world. Rather, in all we do, we must be looking to the world that is to come. And as we live looking to the Lord this way, may it be that others too are taken away from this world's way to join us on the path to

glory through faith in Jesus Christ. That is true peace.

Thus there is another aspect to this. As Elizabeth Kendal comments, "If the terror attacks of 11 September 2001 left many nominal Muslims profoundly confused and conflicted, the Cartoon Intifada of February 2006 (protests against the Danish Cartoons regarding Mohammed) compounded those feelings into deep disillusionment. So revolted and embarrassed were most nominal Muslims by the sanctimonious hysteria, barbarity and uncivilised behaviour of hundreds of thousands of Muslims around the world that the trend of apostasy increased markedly through 2007." Let's pray that even more may apostatise to the religion of true peace through the reaction against this movie.

+ SB in the Narre Warren Newsletter

Giving under the Banner

Funding the Future — Thinking of Bequests

Elsewhere in this issue Dr J. Ligon Duncan has set out principles of Christian giving. Perhaps there are a couple of other points that could be made:

1. For the church herself

The church must be a faithful steward of what is committed to her care, making sure that funds are wisely used for the extension of the Gospel. Each congregation needs to take stock of its assets to see that are effectively used in line with maximizing their value to the cause of the Gospel. Perhaps each congregation should aim to give at least a tenth of its income to the funds of Synod for Home and Overseas mission. We need to support both limbs of the Mission tree! Over the next decade or two church extension in our cities will be a priority, but will require significant sums. For example, in Melbourne we have utilized all our old property turning one church into three over the last 25 years, but have further opportunities we will not be able to overtake without significant gifts for capital and to provide initial stipend support. In overseas missions there are strategic needs on the various fields that if met under God will bring transformation through the Gospel to many lives. Work in Greater Sydney and Brisbane needs to be expanded, but it will take God's blessing, hard work, prayer,

money.

2. Individual estate planning

Every Christian should have a will indicate how they wish their estate to be dealt with upon their death. Otherwise the estate passes in line with State or Territory law. Of course one must make provision for actual dependents, but is it good stewardship to leave large amounts to individuals who are not in particular need and who have no concern for the interests and values of Christ's kingdom?



While there is a great deal to be said for giving particular gifts while you are able to do so personally, one should also consider furthering Christ's work

Rowland Ward

by a bequest. Sometimes giving by bequest is the only way a person can contribute in a lasting way that was not possible during their lifetime. Don't make a bequest unduly specific without good reason, although feel free to express a preference. For example, you might say: 'After payment of all debts (secured and unsecured) and all duties (whether federal or state) payable in respect of my estate, I GIVE 20% of my estate to the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia for the extension of the activities of the church as the Synod shall in its absolute discretion decide, but expressing my own preference that the funds be used in the overseas mission work of the church and for the establishment of new congregations in Australia particularly in our major cities, and I DECLARE that a receipt of the Treasurer for the time being of the said Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia shall be a full and sufficient discharge of this bequest to my executor(s).

Here are some of the different kinds of bequests:

Residual Bequests

Residual Bequests are a gift of whatever is left of your estate, or a percentage of such, after all other

gifts, taxes and debts have been satisfied.

Percentage Bequests

You can provide a percentage of your estate – for example 50%, 20% or 10%. This ensures that your family and friends are not disadvantaged by changes to the size of your estate or by inflation.

Specific Bequests

The simplest form of bequest when you specify the particular gift - for example, a specific amount of money, number of shares, piece of property (paintings, jewellery, a car) or specific

life assurance policy. While a specific amount of cash is a common form of bequest it does not allow for inflation. The real value of the gift can prove to be substantially less than intended due to the effects of inflation between the time of making the will and the allocation of the assets. It is preferable to allocate your estate by one of the above methods.

The Whole of your Estate

This usually occurs when there are no surviving relatives and the benefactor wishes to achieve something significant with their bequest.

Taxation aspects of an estate of any complexity should be considered with your accountant. Drawing a will is a relatively simple matter in most cases but it is desirable to have it checked by a solicitor. It is easy to add an amendment to an existing will (a codicil).

I commend consideration of bequest giving. I've made such provision myself and I encourage you to do so also.

Rowland Ward is the Convener of Synod's Law & Advisory Committee

Children under the Banner



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

OCTOBER 2012

SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE (Intermediate omit questions 7 and 8)

HEBREWS chapter 9

1. In which compartment of the tabernacle were the candlestick [lampstand] and table of show-bread?
2. What two articles of furniture were in the Holiest of all? (2 verses)
3. How many times in the year did the high priest go into the Holiest of all?
4. Instead of the blood of goats and calves, what did Christ take into the holy place?
5. What cannot happen without shedding of blood?
6. What is appointed unto men once? What did Christ do once? (2 verses)

chapter 10:1—18

7. Write out from Psalm 40 the words spoken by Christ when he came into the world? (3 verses)
8. Who are perfected by Christ's one offering?

JUNIOR

LUKE chapter 11

1. What prayer did the Lord teach his disciples? (3 verses)
2. What is promised to everyone who asks, seeks and knocks?
3. When Jesus 'by the finger of God' cast out devils [demons], what had come to the Jews?

4. Whom shall the queen of the south rise up in the judgment and condemn?

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 Fifth Commandment — Submitting to Authority

Jim Klazinga

Authority is not a very popular word today. Yet nevertheless, it is a subject dealt with extensively in the Bible, which makes it an important topic.

Different Realms of Authority

There are a number of different areas of life where lines of authority are established. For one, there is the home. The Bible speaks clearly about how husbands are to have a certain measure of authority over their wives. "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:22). Also, parents have authority over their children. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (Ephesians 6:1). The Bible also talks about authority in the church. We read in Hebrews 13:17, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you."

The elders are the spiritual overseers in the congregation. As those given this authority by God, they have the responsibility to oversee the spiritual condition of the congregation, and they have been entrusted with the responsibility to serve in a governing capacity and exercise church discipline when necessary, in order to maintain purity, and for the building up of the church.

Then there is the authority of the state. Romans 13:1 states very clearly – "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities." And as 1 Peter 2:17 tells us – "Honor the emperor."

The government has the responsibility to protect its citizens by punishing crime. It is given a certain function to fulfil and has been given the authority it needs to fulfil that function. It has the right to expect the citizens in its land to submit to its authority in those matters where it has lawful authority.

There is also a measure of authority that employers have over employees. As Ephesians 6:5 states:

"Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ." Employers have the right to expect that those in their hire will submit to their appropriate authority on the job.

All right then, the husband has authority over the wife, the parent has authority over the children, the elder has authority over the congregation member, the government has authority over the citizen, and the employer has authority

over the employee. There are more examples we could give, although most of them would probably be delegated subsets of the various realms of authority listed above. For instance, a teacher has authority over a student delegated to him by the child's parents.

Limited Authority

It is important to recognize the fact that having authority in one area of life might not mean that you have authority in other areas. For instance, the employer has authority over the employee and

Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

Exodus 20:12

can tell him what to do, within reason, when it comes to doing his job. But he normally doesn't have the right to go into his employee's home and tell him how to raise his children. That's not his area of authority.

Another example: the government has the authority to call on you to pay a reasonable amount of taxes, and it also has the authority to punish you if you commit crimes against society. But the government does not have the authority to come into the church and tell the church what it is going to believe, or who it's going to call to ministry. That's not its function. Having authority in one area does not give you authority in all other areas of life.

Mind you, sometimes the lines can become a bit blurred. If, for example, a husband beats his wife, does not the state have the authority to arrest him? Would not the church have the authority to place him under ecclesiastical discipline?

Authority Comes From God

The primary principle undergirding different areas of human authority is that all authority comes first of all from God. God is the sovereign Lord. He rules over all, and has supreme authority in everything. But the thing is, He confers authority onto others on his behalf. You might say that He delegates His authority to human beings and entrusts them with a measure of the authority which first of all belongs to Him.

This is crucial to remember. We have to keep in mind the ultimate source of authority if we are to have any sort of

proper understanding of this subject. Sadly though, many have little understanding as to what authority is or what it is based on.

For example, it would be easy for parents to think that any authority they have over their children is based on the fact that they brought those children into being, or because they are bigger than their children, or smarter. Or even worse, their authority over their children is granted to them by the state. But parental authority does not find its basis in accidents of birth, or on the child's level of development, or any other factor. Rather, it is the great heavenly Father who gives authority to parents.

Physical power is not an adequate basis for authority. Might does not automatically make right. A wife's ability to bench press more than her husband would not then automatically make her head of their home.

Intelligence does not give people the inherent right to have authority. Even wisdom is not a sufficient basis. Of course, we want our leaders to be wise. We may recognize a man's God-given wisdom, and so call him to a position of leadership. But his authority does not flow from his wisdom. Having all sorts of money is not a basis for authority. Employers are likely to have more money than their employees. But that is not why their workers are called to submit to them. Put simply, authority can never come from within ourselves, in who we are, or in what we have. Authority can only come from God.

As we read in Romans 13:1,2 – "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment."

Think about this: there is no authority except which comes from God. When you rebel against authority, you are rebelling against God. This is not an easy truth to submit to, is it? Those who rebel against the authority of the governmental authority are rebelling against God. Those who rebel against the authority of the office-bearers in their church are rebelling against God. Those who rebel against their parents are rebelling against God.

Human Authority Always Conditional

Now mind you, an important qualification must be added here. No human authority over us is ever unconditional. Only the authority of Jesus Christ is unconditional. Only the authority of Christ working through His Spirit and through His Word can be said to be a total and absolute authority.

The authority that is given by Christ to human beings does not give them the right to do whatever they like. Those who are in authority can, in a sense, give up their right to be in authority over us.

When those in charge try to use their authority over us to make us do that which is contrary to the will of God, then we cannot obey them. The leaders of the Jews at the time of the early church had a position of authority given to them by God. But the disciples could not obey them when instructed to stop preaching. Acts 4:19,20 – "But Peter and John answered them, 'Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.'"

Submit Where Possible

Children, if your parents try to make you do things that God has told you not to do, then you must obey God rather than them. Mind you, do not think that you now have an easy excuse to disobey your parents whenever you want. They have still been placed over you by God. Respecting them as parents means taking that authority very seriously and

not just rejecting it whenever it is convenient for you. Your default position should be to obey them where possible, and only disobey them when it's clear from the Bible that you have no other choice.

The issues involved in all of this become especially difficult when it comes to the matter of how we view the government of the land, particularly when that government is blatantly anti-Christian, as is becoming more and more the case in Western nations. But consider this: Paul told his readers in Rome to be subject to the civil authorities. The authorities who held positions of power at that time, well, they were far from Christian.

This does not mean we stand idly by and do nothing as governments continue along an ungodly path. Christians privileged to be living in a democracy are called to be good citizens in a responsible, God-glorifying way. This means considering biblical principles when deciding who to vote for. And it may mean confronting the government when its laws conflict with God's laws by such means as writing letters, being involved in politics, or peaceful demonstrations, etc.

And yet, we must still be very careful to remember that God is the one who has set up the government in its position of authority. We must still submit to that authority as far as biblically possible, because this is what the Bible itself demands of us.

How about submitting to authority in the workplace? This also is not very easy,

especially in a society where the management/worker relationship is assumed to require conflict. The thinking is that if you don't like what management is doing, you just go on strike.

Is that the biblical option? Most of the time, it's probably not. Does this give the employer the right to do whatever they like, pay their employees as little as they want, put them in hazardous jobs, sexually harass them, and other nasty things? Of course not. But the boss still has a measure of authority, and that has to be recognized.

Submit to God by Submitting to Proper Authority

How do You View Authority? As we said, authority is not looked upon very highly these days. Leaders are often blamed more than followed. Sometimes they deserve it. But let us never use the failings of our leaders as an excuse to ignore the command of God. Remember, so often our rejection of authority is in fact a rejection of God who chooses to rule us using sinful human authorities. Submit to God, and to those in authority over you, in so far as possible according to the Word of God. Recognize that authority comes from Him. Show by legitimate submission to others that you serve Him as Lord and master. Don't do so on my authority. Do so on the authority of the Word of God.

Churches in the Banner

All Nations' (Mulgrave, Melbourne)

All Nations' marked a milestone in its life as a PCEA congregation with the induction to the eldership of Isaac John Jock at a joyful Nuer service on the afternoon of 26th August 2012. The service was in Nuer and English, and was led by Rev Tut Yoa with Rev Rowland Ward preaching on the character, calling and commitment of the elder.

The service was attended by 171 including children and there were 50 children in Sunday School. There were visitors from All Nations' morning (English) service, Knox congregation and other Nuer Sudanese Christian groups. Isaac John Jock is the son of a well known South Sudanese Presbyterian minister and has studied at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo (as did Tut Yoa). Isaac is married to Nyawal Lam and they have four young children.

The All Nations' church building was first used for PCEA worship on New

Year's Day 2009, then after renovations the morning English services began on 7th June 2009. Nuer Sudanese services, which began elsewhere in 2005, moved there on 3rd June 2010.

From 31st March 2011, All Nations' became a separate work and today has 44 communicant members, with the Session comprised of Rev Tut Yoa, Rev Rowland Ward, Mr Denver Boehret and Mr Isaac John Jock. Dr Ward is supplying the morning (English) service and Mr Yoa the afternoon (Nuer) service.

The congregation covets the prayers of God's people: for spiritual and numerical growth at both Nuer and English services; for the older Sudanese, who are all traumatised by their experiences; for the young Sudanese, some of whom struggle to fit in, though give thanks that many are doing well at work and studies—pray that they will know the transforming power of the Gospel and become a great blessing to our society.

- for the labours of the ministers and elders on the Lord's Day, in mid week meetings and in pastoral care and outreach.

Ulverstone News

A highlight in the life of the Ulverstone congregation occurred on Friday 7th September, when a Commission of Southern Presbytery met with the congregation to moderate in a Call to Rev Andre Scheepers. The Commission moderator was Rev Sjirk Bajema, assisted by Rev Andres Miranda and Mr Denver Boehret. After conducting public worship and preaching on the text of Proverbs 4:20-27 the Call was signed with a total of 30 names. The Presbytery Commission sustained the Call and placed it in Mr Scheepers hands for prayerful consideration. Andre has been ministering at Ulverstone since February this year.

Churches in the Banner

All Nations, Maclean, & Ulverstone



Left: Isaac John and his wife, Nyawal Lam, upon the occasion of his induction into the office of elder.

Right: All Nations' Session—Tut Yoa, Denver Boehret, Isaac John & Rowland Ward — at the induction.



Below: The call from Ulverstone being extended to the Rev. Andre Scheepers by the Interim Moderator, the Rev. Sjirk Bajema.

Below that: The members of the Ulverstone congregation signing the call.

Below right: Those of the Ulverstone congregation present at the meeting which formalised the call to the Rev. Andre Scheepers.



Above: The Northern Rivers congregation enjoyed the time of fellowship with Andre and Sue Scheepers from the 29th August to the 4th September. The above photo was taken at our congregational lunch, following the service at Maclean, which was conducted by Andre.

