

# the presbyterian banner

March 2012



*How many are your works, O LORD!  
In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.  
Psalm 104:24*

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## Editorial

It was some years ago that a minister was overhearing several colleagues at a minister's conference speaking about several high-powered revival meetings they had experienced. They spoke in glowing terms of how warmly they felt and how much everyone there shared a wonderful spiritual unity.

This minister shared with them his own experience of a meeting he had come from the night before he flew over. He detailed the feelings he had when over 40,000 sang the same songs, held hands, and came away with a truly unforgettable event.

His colleagues now were completely captivated by his story. This was something extraordinary. And to hear all this from this man who otherwise you would think was the last to be open to such a move of the Spirit! Indeed, this man was one of the most openly conservative ministers in their denomination. They had to ask him who was the cause for this incredible time. Which special person's meeting was it?

"Oh," the minister replied, "it was a Paul McCartney concert."

Naturally, those ministers felt somewhat taken in. And, indeed, they and many like them have been taken in, because it has been the world that has stepped right in with such a theology of worship. It is a theology and practice that is quite clearly taken from a different basis than Scripture.

It's this increasingly dangerous attack of the subtle serpent that you'll find addressed further on in this issue. The 'worship wars' are becoming fiercer. And as those very much in this battle for the Bible - because that is what it is all about - let's make sure we're fully equipped. The sword of Spirit is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17).

It is through God's Word that we can understand the position of the Church in the world today. And as we do that we will find what faces us today is a situation more like the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD than the 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries AD. Much as we value reformational and puritan history those struggles they faced are not primarily the ones we face today. We must realise that the Corinthian church battle is more predominant than the Ephesian church situation (Rev.2:1-7).

A colleague compared what we are going through today with the Israel of the Old Testament and the many times the gods of the nations around took over her, even though God's Word was quite clear about what His people should do. It didn't take long for the golden calf to become the favoured deity as they thought Moses a little long in coming down from Sinai. And right throughout the following centuries that paganism kept up its constant attack.

So why should we be so surprised today? It is the same sensuousness shown in the Israelites' eating and drinking and getting up to indulge in revelry that is so common in the Church today. It may not be exactly in the same way but its form is quite clear. Many churches have left the clearly spelt out way of pleasing God in His Word to become like the world around them.

*A church fed on entertainment is no New Testament church at all. The desire for surface stimulation is a sure mark of the fallen nature, the very thing Christ died to deliver us from. A curious crowd of baptized worldlings waiting each Sunday for the quasi-religious needle to give them a lift bears no relation whatsoever to a true assembly of Christian believers. And that its members protest their undying faith in the Bible does not change things any. "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."*

A. W. Tozer, *The Next Chapter after the Last*, p.14

*Photo Credit: Dandelion, by Andrew Hamilton*

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## We Died To Sin

### Considering Romans 6:1-14

The apostle has been telling us in these opening chapters of Romans that we need to get right with God because 'there is none righteous, not even one.' He tells us how God has devised a way by which guilty unrighteous sinners might be made right with God.

'This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe' (Rom. 3: 22). This is the gift of being justified by faith in Christ. In the words of the Heidelberg Catechism Q. 60; '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.'

That was the experience of the thief on the Cross, who at the eleventh hour turned to Jesus with the request: 'Remember me when you come into your kingdom'. Jesus said to him, 'Today you will be with me in paradise.' What a day it was for that man! At 9 am he was out of Christ. At 12 noon he was in Christ. At 12 midnight he was with Christ.

Though the man had never been baptised, had never been a church member, had never done a good deed in his life— yet the Lord showed great grace to a great sinner. The man was justified by faith alone, in Christ alone, not because of anything he did. It was all of grace. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones has written: 'There is a sense in which the doctrine of justification by faith only is a dangerous doctrine; dangerous, I mean, in the sense that it can be misunderstood... True preaching of the gospel of salvation by grace alone always leads to the possibility of this charge being brought against it. There is no better test as to whether a man is really preaching the NT gospel of salvation than this.' He's absolutely right. When the doctrine of grace is preached, it is wide open to misunderstanding. It may seem unfair; it may seem we've gone soft on sin; it may seem we ignore the value of good works; it may seem we've gone soft on God's law.

It appears there were some in Rome who were abusing this doctrine. They said, 'Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase?' (Rom. 6:1). They reasoned something like this: 'This doc-

trine of grace is a wonderful thing; it's a license to do whatever we want. It's a win/win situation: the more we sin, the more grace we get; the more fun we have, the more glory God gets. We can do whatever we like because we are a justified people'...It may seem logical and natural—but it was wrong! It was an abuse of grace.

This is no mere ancient heresy. It's still

#### *Romans 6*

*<sup>1</sup>What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup>Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? <sup>3</sup>Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? <sup>4</sup>Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

*<sup>5</sup>For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, <sup>6</sup>knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. <sup>7</sup>For he who has died has been freed from sin. <sup>8</sup>Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, <sup>9</sup>knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. <sup>10</sup>For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. <sup>11</sup>Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

*<sup>12</sup>Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. <sup>13</sup>And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. <sup>14</sup>For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.*

### George Ball

a live issue—especially in the evangelical churches. There is a carelessness and indifference about holiness of life. There is a wilful disregard for the laws and commands of God. The motto is an abuse of verse 14: 'you are not under law but under grace,' which they code as 'if you are under grace, you can live any way you like'. This results in professing Christians who are practically no different to unbelievers except by being a little bit more religious.

Is this acceptable? The apostle replies, 'By no means! God forbid! It is unthinkable. It should not even be suggested! May it never be!' (v.2). The subject then that Paul addresses in this chapter is sin in the life of the believer. What should a believer's relationship to sin be? This is a subject which should be of great concern to every Christian, as we learn what it means to be in Christ and as we long to be more like Christ.

Sinclair Ferguson writes, 'Romans 6 is one of the most important chapters in the New Testament. A working knowledge of it is essential. Its teaching is as fundamental to the Christian life as it is stretching to the Christian's mind... Becoming a Christian involves nothing less than a radical deliverance from the dominion of sin.'

Let's plot our way through this chapter by asking some basic questions.

#### **Why Does the Christian no Longer Continue in Sin?**

Not because we have turned over a new leaf. Not because we have pulled up our socks. Not because we are trying to follow the example of Jesus. Not because we are trying harder. The real reason is because we died to sin and therefore cannot go on living in it. How can we who are Christians, who have died to sin, still live in it? (v.2).

Martyn Lloyd Jones says, 'this is the key statement; the key phrase' in the chapter.

John Murray calls this, 'the fundamental premise of the apostle's thought in this chapter. Everything that follows is an elaboration of this statement'.

James Boice says of this verse: 'To understand this statement is to understand how to live a holy life. And because it is the key to sanctification, I

would go so far as to say that Romans 6: 2 is the most important verse in the Bible for believers in evangelical churches to understand today.'

Note how in verses 2-8 this thought is repeated no less than six times in seven verses:-

'We died to sin...all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death...We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death...We have been united with Him like this in His death...our old self was crucified with Him...We died with Christ.'

Note that Paul does not say that we ought to die to sin; nor that we are dying to sin; nor that one day we will die to sin – all of which are true.

What he said is this: 'we died to sin.' It's an aorist tense and refers to a completed past action. It's not something that we have done – but something that has been done to us.

Why then does the Christian no longer continue to sin? Because he/she has died to sin. The old relationship with sin is over. Just as death severs relationships; so our relationship with sin has been severed.

John Stott writes, 'A born again Christian should no more think of going back to the old life than an adult to his childhood; a married man to his bachelorhood; or a discharged prisoner to his prison cell.' For the Christian there's no sinful regression; no return to death; no going back. Why? Because we have died to sin.

### **What Does it Mean to Have Died to Sin?**

Paul does not mean that we are sinless. Neither does he mean that we no longer feel the attraction of sin and temptation. He is not saying that we are immune to sin. Romans 6:12-13 and chapter 7 knock that idea on the head. No – we can't (yet) claim sinless perfection. (One man did claim sinless perfection to C. H. Spurgeon on one occasion. Spurgeon said that that man became a perfect pain!)

To understand what it means to have died to sin we need to recall the apostle's teaching in 5: 12ff. Paul presents us with 2 representatives – Adam and Christ. 'These two men have all other men hanging at their girdle strings' – to use Goodwin's illustration. Adam was our failed covenant Head and representative. So long as he represents us we are sinners and alive to sin (5: 12). We are mastered by it, addicted to it and powerless to set ourselves free

from it. Then something happened when we trusted Christ. We were transferred from one giant to another. We became members of a different people. We changed position. We changed parties. We changed leaders. We changed representatives. We moved from one dominion to another. We now have a new King and are now living in a new kingdom. 'Through Jesus Christ we have been delivered from the kingdom of sin and darkness and translated into the kingdom of grace and light' (Col. 1: 13-14). A personal illustration may help. Until 1997 I was a citizen and resident of the UK. Since that time I have been a resident in Australia. I must now live under the rules of my new country. I am under a new government.

Lloyd Jones uses a helpful illustration about the emancipation of slaves in the USA. The Civil War changed the position of slaves. All slaves, young and old, were given their freedom; but many of the older ones who had endured long years of slavery found it hard to understand their new status. They were free; but many couldn't take it in. When they saw their old master coming near them they began to quake and tremble and wonder if they were going to be sold. Though they were legally free it took them a long time to understand and appreciate that they were now free from him.

So it is with the Christian. We have been set free. We are no longer citizens living under the rule of sin. Sin no longer has dominion over us. Sin is not our employer; not our master; not our king; not our owner...We are now living in 'Graceland.' We now obey God; He is now our King and Master and owner and employer. As Christians we do not have two masters. We have one master. Every Christian has died to one and is alive to the other. This doesn't mean that we obey Him perfectly—but it does mean that the old master has no dominion over us.

### **How Have we Died to Sin?**

This is critical. Paul introduces us here to the doctrine of union with Christ. (Stuart Olyott remarks that, 'doctrine is a pretty cold word for something so wonderful!') What does it mean to be united to Christ?

Not only did Christ die for our sins – but we also died with Christ. Not only was Christ raised for our justification—but we were raised with Him. Because of our union with Christ, God considered Christ's life, death; resurrection

and ascension to be ours (see also Eph. 2: 6). Look again at and please read verses 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8 of Romans 6. What does it mean that 'we are baptised into Christ'?

[A little excursus in verses 3-5 may be helpful. Most commentators confidently tell us that baptism here 'undoubtedly means water baptism.' However, not all agree e.g. Lloyd Jones, John Murray and James Boice. I don't believe that water baptism is being described here; and further I believe that it is positively unhelpful, distracting and even misleading to think of water baptism in these verses! Why do I say this? Because these verses are not about baptism—but about union with Christ. Let me try and explain: -

\*The analogy used by 'total immersionists' does not fit the facts. Jesus was not lowered into and covered by the ground, but laid in a tomb. Total immersion has no analogy to crucifixion.

\*If water baptism is here referred to—it proves too much—such a baptism would require us to believe in baptismal regeneration.

\*If this is water baptism—it means that those of us who have never been totally immersed have not been united to Christ in His death or resurrection.

\*If this is water baptism—Paul here assumes that every Christian has been baptised—which is a very big assumption.

\*There is the current assumption that baptism always means immersion. This is wrong. Consult any standard Greek lexicon and you will discover it can mean a variety of things e.g. to dip; to wash; to bathe; to cleanse; to sprinkle.

\*Baptism is also used figuratively—e.g. Mark 10: 38-39 (and parallels) and 1 Cor. 10:1-2. Here it is clear that the baptism has nothing to do with water at all. Indeed the only people who were immersed were the Egyptians—and they were all drowned. So, here baptism has the meaning of being 'identified with' or 'united with.'

The point Paul is making here is this: Every Christian is baptised into Christ. The baptism is figurative. Every Christian (whether fully immersed in water, sprinkled as a child, or not baptised by water at all) is identified with Christ—is united to Christ when he believes in Him. We are united by virtue of the baptism of



the Holy Spirit which EVERY Christian has experienced. That (I believe) is the meaning of baptism being described here.

James Philip writes, 'The terms 'in Adam' and 'in Christ' are statements of fact rather than experience...We do not feel our union with Adam...It is simply a fact that we stand in organic union with Him and it is this fact that explains the sinfulness of our lives. In the same way, it is our participation in Christ that explains our new life. This is the truth about us, if we are believers; it is fact, not feeling. Paul does not ask us to feel any mystical sensation; he asks us to recognise a truth about ourselves as believers.'

How have we died to sin? We have been united to Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection. We have been given new life. We have left the old world and entered a new one united with Christ.

#### **When Did we Die to Sin?**

When did this happen? When did you as a Christian die? When did you rise from the dead? When did all this take place? Some will say, 'at the moment of my conversion, of course'. When we were justified. The moment we became Christians, we died to sin. We moved

out of sin's territory. This was when it became actual in our experience. We could however take it back further. The Scriptures put it like this. If you are a Christian, it is because God was thinking about you in love before the foundation of the world. (Eph. 1: 4). 'In God's thinking, you and Christ are inseparable, and this has been the case for as long as God has been God'. (Olyott).

#### **What are the Implications of this Teaching?**

We are called to believe this teaching and to live in the light of it.

\*\*Count yourselves dead to sin' (v.11).

This is a present continuous imperative; the first imperative (command) in the epistle! This is the first time in the epistle that we are told to do something! We are to, 'reckon; calculate; consider yourselves dead to sin'. If you are a Christian, this is the truth about you. You need to know this. You need to be sure of who you are! We are dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 'None of us will ever be the people we should be until we get hold of this in our heads' (Olyott).

\*\*Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies' (v.12). When Satan tempts we say, 'Get behind me Satan; you are not my

Master! I have left your kingdom. You are not my master. I now live under another King. You have no jurisdiction over me!

\* Present yourselves to God (v.13). What am I going to do with my body? What am I going to listen to? What am I going to look at? What am I going to do with my hands? What am I going to say with my tongue? Where am I going to go? Who am I going to walk with?

Answer: I am going to offer all that I am—my eyes, my ears, my hands, my tongue, and my feet—to my Lord Jesus Christ. For sin shall not have dominion over me.

The believer's response should be: - 'Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee. Take my moments and my days; let them flow in ceaseless praise. Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of Thy love. Take my feet, and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee. Take my voice, and let me sing always, only, for my King. Take my lips, and let them be filled with messages from Thee. Take my love, my Lord, I pour at thy feet its treasure store. Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for Thee'. (Frances R. Havergal, 1874).

## The Past for Today

### **Henrietta Smith of Dunesk**

In mid 2009 I visited Adelaide House adjoining the John Flynn Church in Alice Springs. Beneath the photo display of some of the ministers and nursing sisters was 'S of D', which the staff thought might have been the abbreviation for a degree. In fact it stands for Smith of Dunesk, the mission that was established in outback South Australia in 1894. It was in a sense the precursor of the Australian Inland Mission established 100 years ago this year by Rev John Flynn, out of which came the Royal Flying Doctor Service. The Smith of Dunesk mission was named after a Mrs Smith of Dunesk near Edinburgh whose gift financed the Mission. My grandfather Rev H.E. Carey was a Smith of Dunesk missionary 1916-18. There are many incorrect accounts of the remarkable lady behind the gift, and so in this article I provide background and note her as the instigator of the Church of Scotland Mission to Jews.

#### **I - Scottish family background**

Henry Erskine (1746-1817), the 3rd son of the 10th Earl of Buchan, and his wife Christian Fullerton (1754-1809), daughter of George Fullerton of Broughton Hall, Edinburgh, the collector of customs at Leith, married in 1772. Henry, although from a noble family, was not brought up in prosperous circumstances; but he made a name for himself as an advocate and politician. Christian was a wealthy woman who inherited a considerable fortune. The couple had five children: Elizabeth Frances, who died young; Elizabeth Crompton (1775-1855), who married Colonel George Callender of Craigforth in 1801; Henrietta (1782-1871), who married Dr Peter Smith MD, RN in 1812; Henry David (1783-1857), who became the 12th Earl on the death of his uncle in 1829; and George Francis (ca.1785-1836), who died unmarried but was a Major in the 12th Regiment Royal Lancasters. Henry's wife died in 1804 and the following year he married again, but

*Rowland S. Ward*

there were no children of this marriage.

On 11 May 1812 at Stirrings Hotel in the Church of England parish of St Michael-le-Belfrey in York, Henrietta Erskine married by special licence Dr Peter Smith, Surgeon in the Royal Navy since 1779, initially in Bengal with the Honourable East India Company. He was born in 1755 at Craigs-shaws, Waterbeck in Dumfriesshire, and given the name Patrick like his father and grandfather, but he adopted the name Peter. After naval service Dr Smith purchased Friars' Carse in Dumfriesshire, where he practised as a doctor 1794-1809 until he moved to London, where he and Henrietta lived after their marriage. In 1820 Dr Smith purchased a property of 25 acres with a Georgian square-plan mansion on three levels containing some 22 rooms in Lasswade, near Edinburgh. It had been built in 1795 by a Major Mowat, who had served the Honourable East India Company.

Named Dunesk from 'Dun', a hill or fort, and 'Esk' for the North Esk river which it overlooks, the property in reduced grounds still stands. It was extensively renovated by the late Richard Long, who purchased the property in 1988. Dr Smith died at Dunesk in July 1833. A memorial stone in Kirkconnell graveyard, where his forebears lie, commemorates him.



*Dunesk House, Lasswade  
photographed in 2001*

Although Peter and Henrietta Smith had no children, Peter had three sisters Janet (1746-1821), Jane (1751-1832) and Ann (1748-1835). Janet had married William Graham of Dumfriesshire in 1771, but the other sisters were spinsters. In his 1822 will Peter refers to his two surviving sisters and to his three nephews Robert, William and Peter Graham, the children of Janet and William. They were clearly close and in his will Peter stipulated that one of his nephews would benefit from Dunesk on condition that he added Smith to his name. Robert (1784-1851) was the first in line. He was a wine merchant in Leith. He added Smith to his name and so obtained an interest in Dunesk along with the interest of Henrietta. Peter (ca.1790-1832), one of William's sons, arrived in Van Diemen's Land in May 1824 with his pregnant wife and three daughters. They settled at Broadmarsh about 40kms north of Hobart and called their property Dunesk. They kept up correspondence with family back home. This is doubtless the link that created Henrietta's interest in Australia. The founders of Inglis Smith & Co., notable ship chandlers based in Melbourne for more than a century from 1858, also had links into the Erskine families as there was much intermarriage. Duncan Fraser Smith, who died in 1917, gave the name of Dunesk to his 10 roomed house in Eglinton Street, Moonee Ponds. However, no involve-

ment of this family in the Smith of Dunesk Mission has been located. Duncan did leave a bequest of £100 to Ascot Vale Presbyterian Church, and so it's very likely he was aware of the Smith of Dunesk Mission work centred at Beltana through the publicity it received in the denomination.

## II - Henrietta's life

Henrietta Smith's life is largely unknown to us and no picture of her has been located. The census record for 1861 tells us that she was born in George Square, Edinburgh, and thus not at the family estate at Ammondell near Linlithgow as sometimes stated. It has been said that she refused the request of her brother to adopt the style Lady Henrietta, when he became the 12th Earl of Buchan on the death of her uncle in 1829. Given she was married such a courtesy title is unlikely and the story may be doubted, although George Taplin records it in The South Australian Register for 15 July 1871 (page 7S). On his death in 1833 Dr Smith left an estate (excluding real estate) of some £3,500 in Scotland plus under £9,000 in England. Henrietta had some funds of her own in any event. Her own estate upon her death in 1871 was £7,691 plus thirteen \$100 shares in Bank of America.

After her husband's death Henrietta lived at Dunesk for the rest of her long life. About 1865 she became blind, but from at least the census of 1851 she had a lady companion in the person of Jemima Russell who was born in Crieff, Perthshire, in 1801. We do not know Henrietta's religious history except that we find her an enthusiastic supporter of the evangelical party in the Established Church of Scotland. The majority of this party withdrew in 1843 to form the Free Church of Scotland.

## III - Jewish mission

In 1838 Henrietta gave Rev Dr Alexander Moody Stuart (1809-98) £100 towards the mission to Jews of the Church of Scotland, that had not yet been organised. When it did begin, the concentration was on European Jews. In her will Henrietta left a further £500 to the Free Church of Scotland for the support of a missionary in Palestine itself, and such work began in 1885. Moody Stuart wrote in The Sea of Galilee Mission of the Free Church of Scotland [1895]:

'For many years subsequent to the deputation [of 1839], Palestine lay still unoccupied by us; and a devout and

honourable lady, Mrs. Smith of Dunesk, sister to the Earl of Buchan, and a daughter of the famous Henry Erskine, left £500 for a mission to the Jews in their own land. To her belonged the distinction of having laid the first stone in the Church of Scotland's Mission to Israel. Her love for them was intense; that 'salvation is of the Jews' was with her a firmly-cherished text; and she grieved that the churches were so slow in seeking 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' A year or two before their cause was taken up by the church, she placed £100 in my hands, and said, 'Put that into the bank for the Church of Scotland's Mission for the Conversion of the Jews.' I hesitated to take charge of the generous gift, because not only was there no such mission, but the subject had never been mooted in the Assembly. She replied, 'Let it remain



*Rev Alexander Moody Stuart*

in the bank till the church takes it up.' When I took it to the bank, the banker at first declined to receive it, because they could not open an account for a mission that had no present or prospective existence. But, after talking it over, he took it, with the words, 'Very well; we never refuse money.' However, the tide of evangelical life and of zeal for the salvation of the lost was then rising rapidly amongst us, and in less time than I could have conceived possible the General Assembly founded its Mission for the Conversion of Israel.  
(to be continued)

# Worship in the Banner

## Whose Party Are You Going To?

Sjirk Bajema

*This is an article I wrote some eight years ago in 'Faith in Focus', the Reformed Churches of New Zealand's denominational magazine. It deals with what I believed to be a very serious danger within Reformed churches then. Sadly, it is a danger which has affected even more Reformed and Presbyterian churches, also those right next to us. May it be a help to us as we interact with our fellow Christian brethren.*

We can easily be deceived about how the devil operates. When we think of him being engaged in this ongoing battle against our Lord and us as Christians, we can get the idea that it's quite an obvious thing. Something like in Matthew 4 when Satan was quite up-front about tempting the Lord, and isn't that, after all, how the apostle Peter describes the devil? In his first letter chapter 5, verse 8, he says that he is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

When we hear or read the latest ranting from Bishop John Spong, we think we've seen how Satan's working, because there's a man who obviously doesn't believe the Bible. He's written many books and articles declaring his heretical views. Everyone knows he doesn't believe in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, His resurrection, and personal sin. Yet when a lion attacks, does its victim know he's been coming? Of course not — otherwise he would have got out of there quick-smart!

### Being caught unawares

The testimony of Scripture is that the real danger is not a full-frontal attack by the devil, but something which catches us unawares. In fact, it is so subtle that even after it happens we might not realise.

In the psalms the most hurtful attack David spoke of came from one who was like a brother to him (cf. Ps.35:14). They had once been so close, but now he's suddenly and viciously turned on David! Satan has worked so terribly in his attack against the Body of Christ in the past, and that attack is still with us today — indeed, it's very dangerous right now. That's because we're not seeing it! In fact, as the story of the serpent in Genesis 3 shows us, the attack will most likely be in something we wish for.

You may well be wondering now: What's going on?

### The 'Christian-focused' perspective

There has come into evangelical Christianity a movement which we could term the 'Christian-focused' perspective. To illustrate this, let me tell of how a major Christian leader teaches concerning a parable of our Lord. This senior pastor, Brian Houston, who is also the past leader of his denomination, runs a conference each year in his church, which attracts 18,000 Christians from around the globe. And within that huge attendance there are many from Reformed and Presbyterian churches, including their ministers and other leaders from local churches.[1]

His church — Hillsong Church in Sydney, Australia — is also one of the largest Christian music publishers within Australasia. Their songs are very popular with young people. This includes young adults and not-so-young adults from confessional Calvinistic churches. And then there are his television programmes. Thousands more watch him on Sunday mornings and other times for the worship and teaching of his church. Brian Houston wrote a book called, *You Can Change The Future*. [2] Its back-cover promotes it as suitable for anyone who wants more to life than a mundane, futile existence, and wonders how to achieve it. It says, "You have the capacity to live a powerful, effective life that

goes way beyond yourself. Take up the challenge of going beyond the limitations of the past, the excuses that may hold you back and begin to change the story of your life today." In the section in the book entitled 'Change the Power of your Excuses,' there is a chapter named 'Change your excuses'. In this chapter you find his teaching about the parable of 'The Great Banquet' in Luke 14:15-24. This parable, he notes, is really about being trapped in an excuse mentality. He says that if we want to move on and up in the world we have to learn to come clean about the past. And excuses are the very things that stop us.

He writes, "This parable gives three common excuses and typical defences why so many don't enter God's purpose and destiny for their life." The first excuse is concerning 'possessions' in verse 18. A man had brought some land, and wanted to go and see it.

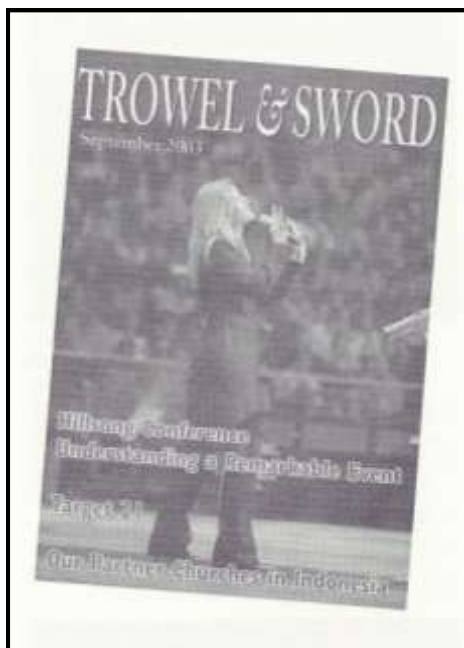
Houston goes on, "If you have brought property, you will know how often you feel compelled to drive by and look at it. I know when I've been involved in building projects (either our own home or the church property) I find myself absorbed with watching the construction process, willing the workers to make faster progress. During the first phase of our church building, no matter where I was going, I always found some reason to drive by the land."

He draws out the meaning and concludes that while there's nothing wrong with purchases and investments, trouble begins when they become the pursuits that draw you away from the things of God. He challenges his audience as to whether or not their possessions are a help or a hindrance to the cause of the Kingdom.

A fair comment. Surely we can't disagree with that?

### Seems to make sense

Next, he deals with the second excuse. This is about 'business,' in verse 19. This man had bought some oxen and wanted to check them out. So the lesson is that your vocation and career can become the excuse you use to miss the mark. This is what





happens when people say, “I can’t come, I have to work.” He points to where the Bible says that we have to work to have the food we need to eat. But we have to check out that our work lines up with the word of God, and unless we’re using our gifts and talents for God we’re doing things to suit ourselves. It all sounds pretty logical, doesn’t it?

And so we come to the third excuse. In verse 20 another man says, “I’ve just got married, so I can’t come.” Ah, Houston says, this is about ‘relationships’. And here is a sad one. This couple have made time for the other important aspects in their lives. In fact, what’s happening, he says, is that one of the spouses here has an unhealthy control over the other. They aren’t allowing time for others, especially the Lord.

### It’s about changing your lifestyle

He concludes that possessions, work and relationships are typical of the reasons that hold people back today. But they are just excuses to stop them receiving God’s blessing. They use excuses because it means they don’t have to change their lifestyle.

All sounds like pretty good sense, doesn’t it? I mean, Christianity is about a positive attitude towards things. Faith makes the most sense! We are drawn into Houston’s up-beat, straight-forward advice.

Then he goes on to the rest of the parable, *“The excuses made by the property owner, the business man and the married man justified why they couldn’t — or wouldn’t — attend. Consequently, those invited to the party were the lame, the maimed and the blind. I’ve noticed that many who succeed in life are not necessarily the most gifted, or talented, or the best at what they do. Instead, it is those who symbolically represent the lame, the maimed and the blind who have refused to live under the grip of an excuse-mentality, who receive the rewards.”*

This is how he uses this parable in his teaching. This is the testimony of many people he’s known who have taken hold of their lives and become incredible success stories — people who’ve turned financial disasters into corporate success, and people who have changed from physical or mental wrecks into healthy, self-confident individuals.

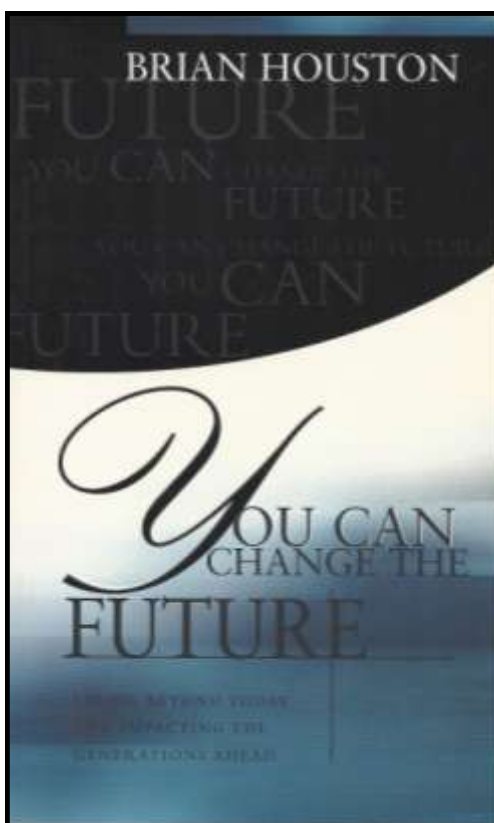
### Noticed anything yet?

Have you begun to pick it up yet? Does it help that the company which published the book is called ‘Maximised

Leadership? How about its Dewey library classification being 158 instead of 248? That puts it in the general self-help category rather than in personal Christian growth.

The reason why this is the ‘Christian-focused perspective’ is because it could, just as easily, be a secular-focused perspective. The purpose revolves around what you can do. His approach to this parable is only one of many different ways it could be used. Indeed these verses have been used in various ways, depending on how people want to use them.

Scripture then becomes the place you go to after you’ve got your idea on what you want to do. Just like this pastor has done with the secular quotes which are used throughout the book to prove his



point. This shows us how the devil is distracting us. It is not treating the Word of God as God’s Word.

You can hear that in many people’s testimonies. That’s another thing that’s become so popular amongst evangelical churches. People ‘share’. You can hear some amazing stories of conversions or sudden blessings these days. And it will be all from Scripture. You’ll be told that those churches are ‘standing on God’s Word,’ but what they mean is shown by their use of the Scriptures. Because what they mean is that you don’t change your mind when you’ve

asked for healing or something. You say, “I’m not going to give in, I believe what God said, and I believe I’m healed (or whatever)”.[3] To them, standing on God’s Word and keeping on standing on it means that God will be sure you have what you say.

This was illustrated by a situation where a woman aged 38 years wondered whether the Lord meant for her to go on the mission field. She was particularly concerned because at that age she felt middle-aged and a little old for missions. Well, in that time the Lord spoke to her. And He spoke to her using the words of the prophet Habakkuk. Habakkuk 3:2 in the King James says, “O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make it known.” There it was! Her clear call to go on the mission field! She was being called out of the midst — the middle — of the years. She, who was middle-aged!

We know she was not wondering at all; it was only just looking for an excuse!

### The ‘textually-related’ perceptive

This is all about taking texts out of context. What sounds okay to begin with is taking us away from what the Bible is really saying. This is what we find when we look properly at our Lord’s parable, because then we see that it isn’t about the process involved in changing our own futures. The excuses in Luke 14 have nothing to do with being examples of those who won’t succeed in life. In fact, if anything, those giving the excuses in this parable represent the most successful people in Jesus’ day, as we observed in the earlier verses of Luke 14. For there, Jesus is dining with the Pharisees.

Now, if anyone was motivated the Pharisees were. They certainly knew how they could change their future! And it was actually through doing the kinds of things that Houston brings out in his book. They accounted for every day and every minute in each day. They were vision-driven, and they certainly had power!

The first verse of our text, verse 15, has one of these men openly stating this. For when that Pharisee says, “Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God,” he’s referring to himself and other ‘respectable’ Jews having a part in the Messianic celebrations. He hasn’t got the point of what Jesus has said so



far. So, Jesus tells this parable. You see, this parable is about the Gospel. It's the warning that if they don't accept His invitation they could miss the blessings of the kingdom of God. Those making excuses in verses 18 to 20 are those who have already heard the Gospel. They represent those who, for thousands of years, have been the recipients of God's special favour — they symbolise the Jewish people. These men have had the Gospel proclaimed to them. The prophets have brought God's Word to them. At the time of this parable they had the Old Testament scriptures, also written in Greek.

The Jewish custom was to have two invitations to important occasions. They had received the first invitation, and now came the second. The venue and time of this great banquet is spelt out clearly. But Israel doesn't want to know. Those who are in the know have got somewhere else to go! They don't want a bar of God's Son and the salvation found in His Name alone! They reject the final invitation given through John the Baptist, and by Jesus Himself.

In accordance with biblical prophecy, then, the invitation now goes out to the least likely — the very ones in society who have no way at all of succeeding. Unlike our time, when the handicapped are able to get out of "the grip of an excuse-mentality," disabled people in first-century Palestine were considered cursed. They or their parents were believed to have done something terribly wrong in their lives. The poor fit in here as well — they're the ones who haven't done anything with their lives!

**One clear meaning**

A parable generally has one clear meaning. If this parable is about the Gospel invitation now going to outside of the 'righteous' Jews — whether economically or ethnically — how does it come to be used in this new and different way?

Well, it's not actually a new way. We saw that when we realised the devil has been pulling this trick for thousands of years already. But it does come with this modern mask. For what could be more contemporary than being part of a motivational package? It's missed the true meaning, though. We have to wonder how the Lord Jesus fits in, because in the book by Brian Houston Christ is really only an add-on. At the most, His

Name is some kind of magical mantra.

**A different testimony**

This was shown through what happened in the life of the person who was formerly the musical director at this mega-church — Geoff Bullock. He was responsible for many of those musical productions and publications. Some of his songs from his time continue to be very popular in evangelical churches. He came to believe that he was caught up in a works-based, music-focused theology. He speaks as someone formerly bound by Old Testament ritual practice who has discovered the cross, the fulfilment of Christ. He says that grace discovered him. He says, *"in discovering the truth, the absolute truth that God had come, God did have grace, God did have mercy, that God's attitude towards me had not changed one iota by my best work or by my worst, I was no more loved, I was no less loved, then suddenly everything I wanted to write was about what God had done, not about what I will or would do."* [4]

**The 'Christ-centred' directive**

This is actually what this parable is about. For the Lord here doesn't teach the 'Christian-focused' perspective, but the 'Christ-centred' directive. Far from being a passage which can be taken any which way you want, these verses say only one thing — the very thing that matters for everything! The teaching of our Lord here is what gripped the apostle Paul in Ephesians chapter 2. There he is absolutely clear that it is what Jesus Christ has done on the cross that has brought the Gentiles into the Church. As he says in verse 13, *"now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near*

*through the blood of Christ."*

Isn't that exactly what Jesus is saying in verse 23? The servant there has brought in people despised in Jewish society. He has fulfilled what Romans 1 verse 16 says about the Gospel being brought first to the Jew. But now the servant tells his Master there's still room. And he is ordered, *"Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full."* After the Jews have rejected the Good News it goes out to the Gentiles.

We can certainly notice this often in Luke's Gospel. He, the Gentile Doctor, shows a deep concern for other gentiles to be healed — eternally! Take note that those coming in are **made** to come in. This is no conscious choice. In fact, if it were left up to us there is no way we would come to faith. But it's what God has done — through Jesus Christ His Son! It's Christ's Spirit who makes His Word spring to life in our hearts and lives. Brian Houston spoke about the need to make your mark on life. But the only mark you can put on your life is when you believe in a blood-stained cross and an empty grave. This demands that we confess our sinfulness. We cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" We condemned Him to die — we left Him hanging there. This humbles us — it leaves us so very, very low. We have absolutely nothing. This is the 'Christ-centred' directive. It makes all the difference to the way we worship and serve God, because Christ's cross hangs right in the middle.

The Pharisees of Jesus' time mistakenly believed that what they did made them right with God. That didn't satisfy God, but only led down a pathway of growing insecurity and ultimate failure. Many churches today are falling into that same trap. Bullock notes, *"They are singing, "I will lift up my voice", "I will worship", "I will bow down", "I will not let go", "I will hold on", "I surrender". But they're only trying to convince themselves that it's up to them to get God there. They have to plead for God's presence as if they haven't got it. They have to plead for God's favour as though they haven't got it. They plead for everything because it's easier to plead, and then when they feel like they've earned the answer everyone wants to lift*



Hillsong Conference 2011

*their hands and sing something and feel God's response."*

They connect what they have done with God's response. This account comes from a member of a Reformed church at that mega-church's Conference:

*"People sung with so much gusto that you could see their faces shine with joy while worshipping the Lord in song. International speakers taught with so much passion we all cheered for them to go on."*[5]

What they don't realise is that God's response is constant. He's going to respond whether you lift your hands and sing or not. But then they're probably trapped. *"Because you think that by singing more and by raising hands more God has to respond more, you're stuck if He doesn't. Then you feel guilty and broken-hearted."*[6]

Sadly, instead of that making them realise how wrong that approach is, many of these mega-church pastors are telling them it's because they're not doing enough. Like a vicious circle it goes on

and on – a circle which is like a vortex, because it takes you down and down and down. So down, in fact, that it can lead you right away from the very Gospel itself.

#### **Whose party?**

Whose party are you going to? Is it your one? You know, the party you get because you have changed your future?

The party that's the celebration of how well you've done in this world?

Or are you going to the party you don't deserve to go to, but a party you simply cannot get away from? The doing and dying of Jesus Christ has had so great an impact on you that there's no way you can stay away! You see, you know He's got it all. Without Him you're convinced you would fall!

Now — who's really standing tall?

#### Footnotes:

1- The Rev. Geoff van Schie, Editor of 'Trowel & Sword' wrote extensively of this Conference, which he attended in

the September 2003 issue - 'Hillsong Conference 2003 - Understanding A remarkable Event' on pp.6-10.

("Trowel & Sword" was published for The Reformed Churches Publishing House, Willetton, Western Australia.)

2- "You Can Change The Future: Living Beyond Today and Impacting the Generations Ahead," by Brian Houston, Maximised Leadership Inc., Sydney, Australia, 2000

3- Quote from RHEMA LIFE, the Church Newsletter of the Rhema Church, Perth, Western Australia, 1989

4- 'Geoff Bullock changes his mind on worship', pp.-12 in "The Briefing", April 29, 1999 ("The Briefing" is published by Matthias Media, P.O. Box 225, Kingsford, NSW, Australia)

5- 'Hillsong Conference - A Vocalist's Perspective', p11 in "Trowel & Sword", September 2003 op.cit.

6- Bullock, *ibid*

## The World in the Banner

### **A New Crime Wave at American Universities**

(CHARLOTTE, NC) - Feb. 7, 2012 – A sinister wave of crime is sweeping American university campuses. Even the most prestigious universities like Vanderbilt University in Nashville are not exempt. Indeed, these types of criminal activity have spread like a hideous contagion to state universities, SUNY Buffalo being the most recent site. And the most alarming part of it all? The criminals are those who are running the schools. No, I am not talking about white collar crimes. I am not talking about violence. I am talking about what Dr Michael M. Jordan of Hillsdale College has called 'pedagogical crime'—that is educational crime—which can result in his sobering phrase: 'cultural suicide.' Yes, I am talking about the recent and escalating discrimination policies against Christian college campus ministries. If this absolutely sinister and anti-American crack-down on Christians is not stopped then we will commit 'cultural suicide', indeed. All other freedoms are grounded in this fundamental freedom to worship God as we understand it, and to assemble freely to do so. All other religions flourish

(and the 'idea of the university' is allowed to exist) when Christianity's beacon of light shines brightly.

The discrimination against Christian groups is ironically cloaked under the guise of university policies of nondiscrimination. Such 'politically correct' policies demand that student Christian groups, even long-standing ministries such as InterVarsity Fellowship and others, must change their constitutions and allow unbelievers to not only join but be able to lead the groups. In other words those who are atheists, agnostics and those who would oppose Christianity with both their beliefs and their lifestyles, must, according to this new religious police force, be fully accommodated. Or? Or the Christian groups must disband as official campus ministries. These recent anti-Christian actions not only violate the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution, but are textbook cases in 'the worst public relation blunders ever!' After a more than three hour meeting with Vanderbilt's provost, students failed to find any compromise. One report I read cited a Chinese student who recognized the American university's demands to quell free speech and seek to control the faith and prac-

tice of conservative evangelicals and devout Catholics. The Communists in his home country have created an entire movement of underground churches by their similar repression of religious freedom. But his insight may be the final divine disposition of this matter. If we have learned anything from two millennia of church history and from 20th century history, we have learned that whenever any government or any organization or any power structure seeks to stop Christianity it actually ends up promoting a vibrant faith in Christ.

Yes, Christian campus groups may have to go underground at universities like Vanderbilt and SUNY Buffalo and other campuses. But the Gospel pattern is that the very thing which seeks to destroy Christianity becomes the instrument that promotes it. It was this way with the cross which was an instrument of shame and became a symbol of victory.

Could it now be that in seeking to quiet the faith and practice of believers on some of our nation's top campuses those individuals responsible are in fact lighting the fires of a re-

vival that will soon begin to sweep across a nation? And maybe even some university officials who are seeking to stop the faithful will become, Paul-like, converted to that which they oppose? We have every reason to be alarmed at this recent attack of religious liberty and freedom of speech in our nation. But as Christians we also have every reason, biblical and historical, to suspect that God is up to something good. 'You meant it for evil,' Joseph told his criminal brothers, 'but God intended it for good, so that many will be saved.' And that is a faith that overcomes and transforms antagonists into saints. Let our voices be heard by those who seek to stop the campus ministries who declare that Jesus is Lord. Let's also let our voices be heard by the One we worship: 'Lord, do it again on our college campuses!' Then the lion will lie down with the lamb and the university president will lead in singing 'Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus' at the Wednesday night campus Bible study group. That would be a lesson we would never forget.

+ *Dr Michael A. Milton, Reformed Theological Seminary, 2101 Carmel Road, Charlotte, North Carolina 28226*

### **You Are Only As Strong As Your Weakest Link**

This phrase about any group or organization being only as strong as its weakest link became popular with a certain television program. It had its origin a long time before that appeared on our screens, however. Its history as a figurative phrase was established in the English language by the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Thomas Reid's *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785), included this line, 'In every chain of reasoning, the evidence of the last conclusion can be no greater than that of the weakest link of the chain, whatever may be the strength of the rest.' Naturally this phrase itself came out of the literal fact that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link.

We can certainly see this principle at work when a Christian denomination becomes influenced by liberalism. While at first the denomination may seem orthodox and continue to affirm its subscription to God's Word and its confessions, what you see in the 'progressives' of that denomination is

the way the rest of that denomination will soon go. The cutting edge congregations, which play footloose and fancy free with the agreed church order, are those who have assistant female deacons when the denomination has not yet agreed upon ordaining women into that office – they may even call them deaconesses. They are those who push the envelope when it comes to innovative worship styles and what is sung in public worship services. They add for cultural meaningfulness gum leaves and red dirt to a baptism ceremony. And on a Sunday when they don't have an 'official' worship service, they will have a woman sharing from God's Word to a general fellowship gathering. It is no surprise, then, to hear about what one of those 'radical' congregations has been involved in within the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA). The 'Hope in the Hills' (Tecoma CRCA) congregation has had a Rev Anne Spoelder preaching in its public worship service. The evidence is all there on their website (<http://www.hopeinthehills.org.au/sermons.html>), where she is noted as preaching on Sunday, October 23, 2011, and listening to that MP3 file another date in November is indicated as well. But even more disconcerting, as if anything could be after this blatant breaking of Synodical decisions, is not only that the Rev Anne Spoelder is a female Church of Christ minister, but also an active supporter of, and participant within, the Metropolitan Community Church in Melbourne, an openly homosexual church (see [http://www.mccmelbourne.com.au/events/upcoming-events/img\\_5773/](http://www.mccmelbourne.com.au/events/upcoming-events/img_5773/)). Naturally, one would anticipate the most rigorous and efficient discipline in such a situation. The denomination has told us they strongly affirm the Scriptural teaching of men only in the office of teaching and ruling eldership. The track record in the CRCA of late will tell you quite a different message, however. There may be regrets, misunderstandings, and mutual tear-shedding and hug-sharing, perhaps a slap with a wet bus ticket, but no person or church will be actually disciplined for such a devastating tear in the fabric of Christ's Bride (unless you are one who points out what is actually happening!).

The equally terrible tragedy, however,

is that this shows up in a bad light the 'conservatives' in the CRCA. Much as there may be hand-wringing, newsletter concerns, and yet more overtures to the next Synod, they continue to be part of the same fellowship which countenances such aberrations, rather than quite definitively telling those liberals to go.

What was it the Lord said to such a situation in his letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2–3? He openly rebukes and condemns those who allow such heretical teachings, even if those believers themselves aren't a part of it. You see, they don't clearly deal with it, and because of that they too will be judged along with it.

We must pray for our brethren in the CRCA. Pray that they will be united together alone on God's Word. And let's pray that they may have God's guidance and strength to keep to that Word alone. Otherwise they will continue to be no different than any other denomination who have lost the way.

+ [www.hopeinthehills.org.au/sermons.html](http://www.hopeinthehills.org.au/sermons.html)  
+ [www.mccmelbourne.com.au/events/upcoming-events/img\\_5773/](http://www.mccmelbourne.com.au/events/upcoming-events/img_5773/)  
+ [www.one.org.au](http://www.one.org.au)

### **Crystal Cathedral**

**USA** – In our November snippets we mentioned Robert Schuller's Crystal Cathedral Ministries needing to sell up to meet bankruptcy requirements to pay creditors.

We mentioned Chapman University making an offer for the buildings: however the [Roman] Catholic Diocese of Orange has paid \$57.5 million for the buildings. It's been something of a tangled process, with Schuller's Crystal Cathedral Ministries involved in stalling tactics and confusion between that organization and the church congregation it served.

Schuller's church congregation will be able to continue to use the buildings for the next couple of years and then are expected to move to a smaller ex-Catholic Church building. Once the Crystal Cathedral is occupied by the Catholics and the Catholic Bishop is officially installed there, in the Roman Catholic sense, it will become a 'real' Cathedral. It has



been approved to become such by the Popel

Whether the Schuller ministries will continue in a new environment in strength, or at all, every one will have to wait and see.

As family conflict contributed to the bankruptcy, perhaps now things are more settled, family reconciliation can become a reality.

+ *Lookout Update, Jan-Feb 2012, www.lookout.org.au*

### Only One Way Through The Way

Some people think they can know God by their own human reason. But reason is a blind ally spiritually. It has always been the great minds exercising their powers apart from the Word of God who have produced the great heresies.

Some think they can discover God by listening to a so-called 'inner voice.'

But the voice is often nothing more than an expression of their own inner desires.

Quite a few think that spiritual truths can be verified by supernatural events or miracles. But the Bible everywhere teaches that even miracles will not lead men and women to understand and receive God's truth unless they themselves are illuminated by the Bible (see Luke 16:31).

I believe that we can state categorically that there is no knowledge apart from Jesus Christ and that there is no knowledge of Jesus Christ apart from a knowledge of the Bible.

+ *James Montgomery Boice*

### Middle Eastern Christians Face Bleak Future

The so-called 'Arab Spring' opened the door for long-repressed Islamist forces to rise up and seize power locally and

challenge the balance of power regionally. In Egypt, Iraq and Syria -- homes to some of the region's largest and most ancient Christian communities -- persecution is escalating and the threat of genocide is real. Furthermore, the conflict in Syria has the potential to inflame sectarian tensions in neighbouring Lebanon, which is also home to several large and ancient Christian communities. Whilst poor socio-economic conditions and escalating discrimination and persecution have been driving Christians to emigrate from the Middle East for decades, the deteriorating security situation is giving rise to effectively a Christian exodus. There is much fear. Please pray for the Church in the Middle East.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin | RLPB 146 | Wed 15 Feb 2012*

## Books in the Banner

Cornelius Van Til: Reformed Apologist and Churchman, by John R. Muether

*Reviewed by L. Anthony Curto*

John Muether has done a real service to the cause of Reformed presuppositional apologetics. Many who hear the name of Cornelius Van Til think immediately of a philosopher—a Christian philosopher, to be sure—but a philosopher nonetheless. Muether points us in a different direction to help us understand this "prince of apologists." As the title of this biography suggests, it was Van Til's theology (Reformed) and ecclesiology (Presbyterian) that set the course for his labor in the cause of God and truth.

Muether traces the providence of God in Cornelius Van Til's life from the Netherlands, where he grew up in a pious family influenced by the secessionist Afscheiding movement of the Dutch Reformed Church, to the "fields of Northern Indiana," to Princeton, New Jersey, and finally to Erdenheim, Pennsylvania, where he died in 1987. Muether opens up the life of Van Til for us against the background of his early pastoral ministry, the controversies that occupied his attention, the formation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, his involvement in establishing Westminster Theological Seminary, and his labors as professor of apologetics at that

institution. In each of these circumstances, it was not Van Til's philosophical bent that drove him, but his love for Christ and Christ's church, and his desire to bring glory to God. For those who have read Van Til's writings, this biography will give new insight into the teaching of a Reformed apologist, especially his tract *Why I Believe in God*. For Presbyterian minis-

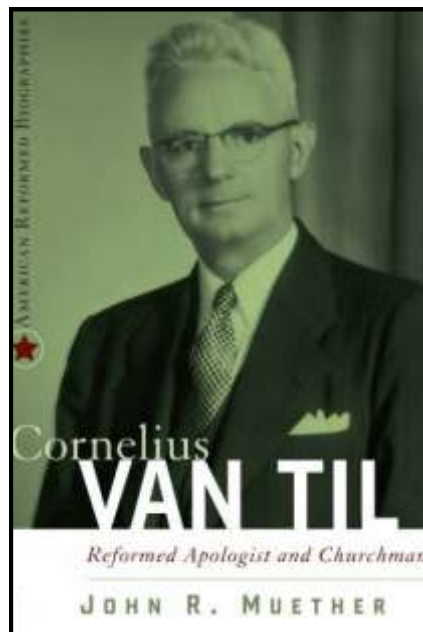
ters and elders, it will give a heightened sense of what it means to be a churchman. For those who are unfamiliar with presuppositional apologetics, it will create a desire to explore more of this field of study.

When I first heard about this book, I was excited. I knew of Muether's love for Van Til and presuppositional apologetics. Also, Muether is the historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, in which Van Til was a minister. Finally, Muether is a serious and qualified scholar. So I expected the book to be well worth the read, and I was not disappointed.

This biography of Cornelius Van Til is enlightening, thoughtful, soul searching, and compelling. You may not agree with every point that Muether makes, but you will be glad you read his book.

*Published by P&R Publishing, 2008. Hardback, 288 pages, list price \$US24.99.*

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# Prescribed Search / Youth Work

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

## MARCH 2012

Senior and Intermediate (Intermediate omit questions 2 and 8)

### EPHESIANS chapter 5

1. Paul tells the Ephesians that once they had been darkness. What are they now and how are they to walk?

2. What should believers be filled with rather than with wine? (2 verses)

3. What did Christ do because he loved the church? (2 verses)

### chapter 6

4. What is the first commandment with promise? (2 verses)

5. How are servants to obey their masters? (2 verses only)

6. How are masters to act towards their servants?

7. What is the reason for taking up the whole armour of God?

8. What is the function of the shield of faith? What part of the armour represents the word of God? (2 verses)

## JUNIOR

### LUKE chapter 4

1. What was Jesus' answer when the devil said, "Command this stone to be made bread"?

2. When he came to Nazareth, what words from the book of the prophet Isaiah did Jesus read? (2 verses)

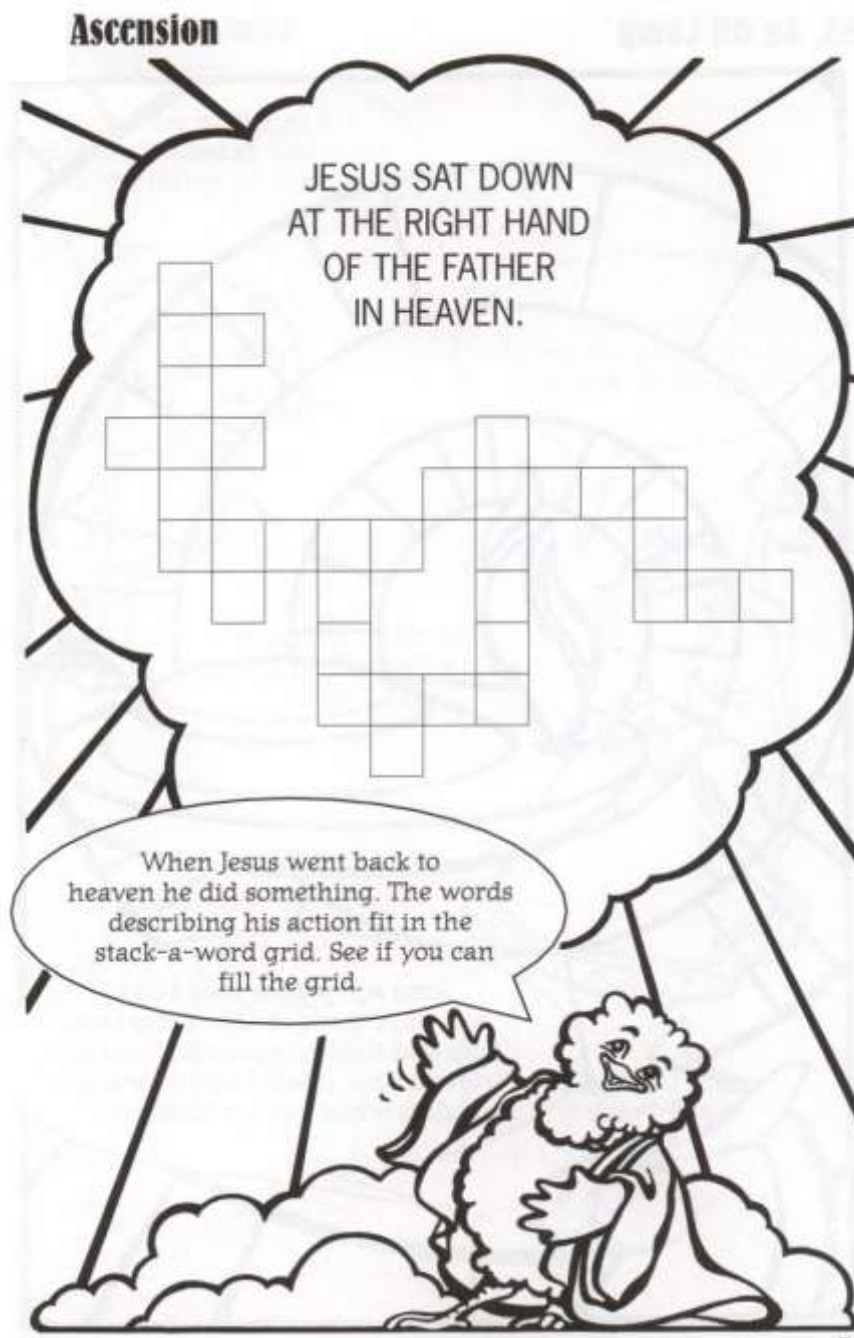
3. When Jesus had healed the man with the unclean devil [demon], what did the people say among themselves?

4. What happened when Jesus rebuked the fever of Simon's wife's mother?

Please send the answers to:  
**Mrs I Steel**  
**PO Box 942**  
**Epping NSW 1710**  
 Or email to: [iesteel@gmail.com](mailto:iesteel@gmail.com)

# Children under the Banner

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



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# Churches in the Banner

## Family Camp 2012—Naamaroo Conference Centre

It's that time again to report on the wonderful time had by all at the family camp this year in Sydney. Everyone arrived at camp safely and after a time of meet and greet we settled into our accommodation. Food and accommodation were excellent this time and all would agree that not one person should have gone hungry. We had lovely weather for the duration with just a shower one day to cool the temperature down. Our main speaker was Rev. Dr. Rowland Ward and the theme was God's Glory-A New People and a New World. Studies were from the book of Ezekiel. Studies were titled-God the Communicator, God the Lover, God the Life-Giver and God the Builder. Ezekiel is a book that can be hard to understand but Rowland certainly gave us a real taste of what it consists of and to encourage us to delve into it ourselves. Our mornings were set aside for the Studies followed by morning tea and then we broke up into our study groups where it was good to share our thoughts with those in our groups. Whilst we were in our study groups the children were given a fun time of craft and storytelling activities. At the final session one of the campers summed up the teaching in these words; "The LORD is

building His perfect church despite the continual sins and backslidings if His people and His many judgments upon them." Wednesday night our speaker was Rev. Jim Klazinga from Brisbane who spoke to us on the "Generation Gap". Quite a lot to think about after that talk but timely in our current fast paced world with some sort of new gadget seeming to materialise every day.



Thursday night Rev. Dennis Muldoon and his wife Elizabeth brought us up to date with the most recent news of the work in India. There were slides of the work in some of the newer areas which was very enlightening. During the course of the camp we had Psalmody at regular intervals very capably led by Sonja Hamilton. As well as practicing old favourites Sonja taught us a new tune that we sang to Psalm 145 (2<sup>nd</sup>). A lovely DLM called Guidance. During our free afternoons the children and adults made great use of the pool and other amenities. Mark Hamilton and Cameron Smith were the sports coordinators. One highlight of the leisure time has always been the table tennis competition and this year was no exception. It was decided to make the senior section a doubles comp and Mark Hamilton and Cameron Smith defeated David Kerridge and Glen Hamilton in the final round. In the junior section Matt Southwell defeated Rebecca Hamilton in the singles final. Some other people made their leisure time into an educational walk with Tom Reeve and Ian Conley ably guiding us and helping us to better understand aspects of the bush and names of trees etc.



Thursday afternoon we had our concert which is always a lot of fun and there was a lot of talent in our midst. The event was very ably compared for the first time by Amy Ball. Well done Amy. There were sixty six people booked in and we had up to six day visitors each day. Once again we had visitors from almost all of our centres and a large number of Ministers (6 staying and 1 visiting). It was lovely to see Dr. Helen Ramsay there for the first study on the Wednesday morning. Congratulations must go to the organising committee and to Glen Hamilton for the very efficient way in which



every aspect of the camp functioned. I think that everyone would agree with me that it was a great camp and especially noticeable was the way the children, young and older interacted with one another and helped to "look out" for each other. The camp was a credit to all and all Praise to our Heavenly Father who guided us each day and helped us to learn and absorb all aspects of teaching that we were given. *Thanks to Kay Hilberts for providing this report*



# Churches in the Banner



*Pictures clockwise, beginning from top left:  
Keynote Speaker, Rev Rowland Ward; A Study Group; The Whole Camp!;  
Lunch Time; The Organisers & Speakers—from left to right: Rev. Jim Klazinga,  
Mr Tom Reeve, Rev. Andres Miranda, Rev. Rowland Ward, Mr Glenn Hamilton*

