

# the presbyterian banner

September 2013

*They will still bear fruit in old age,  
they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming,  
“The LORD is upright, he is my Rock,  
and there is no wickedness in him.”*

**Psalm 92:14-15**

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## Editorial

I saw an interesting picture a few weeks ago. It was of a whole plane load of journalists, TV cameramen, and other media personnel in an air force aeroplane unable to take off because of an electrical malfunction. They were somewhat anxious because they were those assigned to follow the Prime Minister around on his election campaign, and there was an important announcement being made at his next stop. Given that there were that many on that aeroplane, I have no doubt that there would also be many of the same kind following around the Opposition Leader and the various other present or potential politicians scattered around the country.

And I wondered – is that what our world has come down to: A Media Bite? Is that thirty to sixty second spot on the prime time news all that so many are spending their days and nights doing, and so much money is being spent on in travel, accommodation, and all the rest of it?

It seems with the constant 24 hours news cycle, the internet, and all kinds of other communication avenues we end up getting so much more of... what? It is all just more spin. Promises that will be broken; recycled political figures; focus groups; opinion polls; breaking news; and meanwhile they are all blind to the most serious crisis our country has ever faced tearing us apart.

It all reminds me of the old children's story about the Emperor's New Clothes. In that story the people were deceived into believing that only the foolish and ignorant were unable to see that the Emperor was wearing the very latest in the most expensive and finest clothing. In fact, he was wearing nothing at all (apart from his underwear). I always wondered in that story how could it be that people could be so fooled that it would take a little boy to tell them the truth. But, of course, he wasn't a party to the lie – he spoke with childlike honesty. Well, look around us today and there are a lot of people being fooled. They are being sold a dummy on all kinds of things – from the state of the economy right through to their freedom to do anything they want to do personally.

So what is it we are missing in our society today? Why is it that anyone telling the truth is blocked out? They still adamantly believe the Emperor's clothes are the very best – and they're buying the same design!

Why – it is because we do not have morals any more. Morals are the clothes that dress up our hearts. Indeed they are what show us we have hearts because it's only as we have morals that we have hearts. It is because of the love in our hearts – the Christian faith – that our society has been properly clothed before.

This is not to say that our nation in the past was completely made up of Christians. True believers have always been a minority. But in God's providence the biblical framework was the glue that kept our society together. God's Word laid out the guidelines for our laws, families, and the worth of every individual.

Now that this has gone, the clothes have been ripped off our community. And what we are shown to be wearing now is nothing at all. And we believe lies. Is it no wonder that there is much despair and violence and addiction out there? If all that I am is what I am at this point in time, what is there? If my looking back is all black and looking forward only shows more of the same, is it any surprise the suicide rates are so high?

As God's people we must be those little boys declaring the truth. But we must also be those who are showing the truth in what we say and do. We must shine out the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. There is no hope in anyone or anything else than Jesus Christ. He alone gives true meaning to life – he alone gives you a life!

*Salvation is found in no one else,  
for there is no other name under heaven given to men  
by which we must be saved.*

Acts 4:12

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

Literary contributions are welcome. Submission by email is preferred.

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## A Work In Progress

### Considering Romans 12:9–21

This passage presents me with a couple of problems. First: how do I tackle it? There's just so much in it. One approach might be to entitle the message – '24 Things God Wants You to Do!' That might be useful. However, I fear that before I finish you might have lost count – and I would be exhausted – or vice versa – or both! Our approach then will have to be more general; taking a helicopter view.

My second problem with this passage is that I fail in all these areas myself. It's not as though I come to you to say that I have climbed this Everest and exhort you to come up and join me. I preach these exhortations as one who is standing at the base of the mountain and can see the great distance I have yet to travel. But this is the way I want to go. I know them to be true; I know them to be for my benefit; I know them to be for God's glory. I want to do them. What I am therefore saying is this; 'Come and let us encourage one another as we seek to climb together the mountain of godliness.'

Let's remind ourselves that Paul is writing to Christians; to people who have received mercy from God (12:1). Don't think for a moment that by doing these instructions you are working for your salvation. No! Rather, if you obey these instructions you are working out your salvation. It's often been said that while we are saved by faith alone – it's by a faith that is not alone. These instructions are marks of the 'new life' in all who have been born again.

We could treat this list as a spiritual check up; a spiritual thermometer: a yardstick to show us how we are going. 'How are you going?' 'What is your Christian life like?' This list will challenge each of us differently. We all perform differently. We all have strengths and weaknesses. But none of us I'm sure can 'tick all the boxes.' These instructions seem to be from a scatter – gun, and in rapid fire. They appear to be random in character with little or no connection with each other. But a number of commentators suggest that there is a coherence of subject: the theme appears to be 'love', as stated in verse 9. If we compare this section to a necklace, love is the string and the exhortations are the beads. If we compare this section to

a cake, the cake is love and the exhortations are the ingredients of love. Love is the queen of Christian graces. Jesus illustrated and emphasised it. He said, '**A new commandment I give you, that you love one another, just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.**' (John 13: 34-35). John said, '**this is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers**' (1 John 3: 16). The apostle Paul reminds us that love is the greatest thing (1 Cor. 13). We are exhorted more than 50 times in the epistles to love. Let's see what genuine love does – and doesn't do.

#### Romans 12: 9-21

*9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. 10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; 11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. 17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. 20 Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

#### 1. True Love is Genuine and Discerning (9)

Love must be genuine. It must be sincere. It must be without hypocrisy. It must not be a 'put on.' It's not like face paint. It's not about being polite

### George Ball

and courteous and smiling kindly at each other. It's not about superficial niceties. Inviting people to drop in any time, then being horrified if they do. Love must be real; it must be true. True love is not sentimental. It discriminates. It knows the difference between right and wrong. '**It must hate what is evil and cling to what is good**'. You cannot love if you do not hate. The psalmist says, '**O you, who love the Lord, hate evil!**' (Ps. 97: 10). **Love is like a battery.** It has a positive and a negative terminal for the current to flow. In Biblical thinking love cannot be separated from hate. We see this demonstrated clearly and often in the life of our Lord. He was the friend of sinners. No one loved as He did. But no one hated as He did. He hated hypocrisy, falsehood, deceit and evil more than anyone (cf. Matt. 23 and John 2: 13f). Jesus love blends tenderness and sternness. Tenderness alone, with no indignation, would be falsely tolerant and make His love weak and spineless. Sternness alone, without tenderness, would make His attitude harsh and cruel, and give it a false intolerance.

There are those today who urge us to emphasise the love of God – without judging. But the love of God cannot and does not overlook sin or the judgement that it deserves. God's love is discerning and discriminating. '**There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers**' (Prov. 6: 16 -19). Love knows the difference between right and wrong; it clings like glue to the good and hates evil.

#### 2. Love Means having a Brotherly Affection (10)

'Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.' The word for love used here is 'philephilia.' It's the kind of love and affection that binds families together. It's a lovely thing to see siblings loving one another. It's refreshing to see families that

love being together. It's a lovely thing, too, to see it in the church. Though we are not blood related, yet the church is a family of brothers and sisters and fathers and mothers, united in Christ. The church is the one place where we should feel comfortable and find acceptance and find friends without fear of hurt. There ought to be many Davids and Jonathans in the church. Paul is calling on us to show family love; and to respect and heap honour on one another, 'esteeming others more highly than yourself.' Love envies not. We sometimes sadly hear (and hear of) believers bad mouthing others. We wouldn't tolerate it in our own family. It's no less acceptable in the church.

### 3. Love is not Slack in Serving the Lord (11)

Paul was no slacker. He hadn't a lazy bone in his body. He served the Lord with eagerness. He exhorts us to serve the Lord with similar zeal, diligence, eagerness, and fervency. Unfortunately being described nowadays as zealous is a dubious description. It has connotations of being a religious fanatic or a terrorist!

'Fervent in spirit' might be translated, 'keep on the boil.' 'Keep bubbling.' (Fervent = boil or burn). The church at Laodicea is a warning. It was lukewarm. God was going to spit them out (Rev. 3: 14-17). The problem was that the love of the world had overtaken their love for God (cf. 1 John 2: 15). They had gone off the boil in their service for God. They had lost their fizz. Perhaps you have lost some of yours?

**Richard Baxter in his book 'The Reformed Pastor'** (1656) wrote (especially to elders) as an antidote to lethargy, these words; 'whenever we feel ourselves grow dull and careless, hear these arguments of Christ. *"Did I die for them, and wilt thou not look after them? Were they worth my blood and are they not worth thy labour? Did I come down from heaven to earth to seek and to save that which was lost; and wilt thou not go to the next door or street or village to seek them? How small is thy labour and condescension as to mine? I debased myself to this, but it is thy honour to be so employed. Have I done and suffered so much for their salvation; and was I willing to make thee a co-worker with me, and wilt thou refuse that little that lieth upon thy*

*hands?"*

### 4. Love is Joyful in Hope (12a)

Christians should be joyful people. What is the secret of our joy? Our circumstances? Our feelings? Our health? No. **'We rejoice in hope of the glory of God'** (5: 2). We have a great hope that enables us to rejoice in every circumstance. We are confident of our Lord's return and the glory that will follow. We are confident that the Lord Jesus is working all things after the counsel of His own will. Any present sadness that has entered our lives is not because God had a lapse of concentration, allowing the devil to jump in and mess things up. No! **'We know that for those who love God all things work together for good'** (Rom.8: 28). This knowledge is to shape our affections. Think of the 'F' family; Mr Fact; Mr Faith and Mr Feeling. Imagine they are walking in line along a ledge. As long as Mr Faith keeps looking ahead at Mr Fact he will be steady. If Mr Faith looks behind at Mr Feeling he will fall. The moral of the story is; keep your head screwed on and your eyes fixed on Mr Fact – the Lord Jesus, who never changes.

### 5. Love is Patient in Affliction (12b)

We all need patience! Teachers, drivers, shoppers, parents, husbands, wives, and so on. Nothing is as certain as trouble or affliction if we follow Jesus. We need to endure it patiently. Paul did. Jesus did – especially on the cross. Without that patience we will be fruitless and frustrated Christians who will have squandered the gift of suffering.

### 6. Love is Faithful in Prayer (12c)

Paul calls us to faithful and persistent prayer (cf. Luke 18: 1). Devote yourself to it. Be constant in it. Pray without ceasing. Spurgeon said, 'a prayer-less soul is a Christ-less soul.' Matthew Henry said that, 'those who live without prayer live without God in the world.'

### 7. Love is Generous to God's People (13)

'Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality' (ESV). Many fellow believers suffer and are in need. Do what you can about it. Be generous. Support organisations like the Barnabas Fund. Search for opportunities to use your home. Show hospitality; constantly have ex-

tra folk in the house (cf. Heb. 13: 1-3).

### 8. Love is not Selfish (15 – 16a) **'Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.'**

Empathise. Sit where they sit. Don't be a Doc Martin! Love is not aloof from other people's joys or pains. Love identifies with them, sings with them and suffers with them. Love enters into their laughter and tears and feels solidarity with them whatever their circumstance. Part of our perversity means that we find it easier to weep with those who weep, than to rejoice with those who rejoice. **'Live in harmony with one another,'** reads literally, **'think the same things towards one another.'** Have the same concern for all. Guard against the spirit of favouritism.

### 9. Love is not Snobbish or Conceited (16b)

Paul exhorts us not to be snobs. Don't think too highly of yourself. **'Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.'** Don't think that you are always right! Take an interest in ordinary people – make them your friends. Don't be a hob-nobber. Don't be a social climber. Never get to the point where you think you are 'too good' for certain sorts of people. Remember Jesus was the friend of sinners.

### 10. Love is Willing to Sacrifice Rights (17-21)

Verses 14, 17-21 deal especially with our relationship to those who hate us. (We will always have them). We are as far as possible to live peaceably with all. A Christian must be a peace initiator and peacemaker. Our attitude to others must not be dictated by their attitude to us, but by the command of Christ who said, 'love your enemy'. Retaliation and revenge is no part of our vocabulary (17, 19, and 21). We should never say, 'they hurt me so I can hurt them back.' To be sure there is a place for the punishment of evildoers – but that is in the law courts (as we see in the next chapter). Retaliation is natural – it may even seem just – but leave it to God. Here Paul reminds us that our lives are cross-shaped. We take up the cross daily and deny self (Luke 9:

23). We sacrifice our 'right' of revenge. We do not conform to the world. **'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord'** (19). Will not people walk over us? Maybe. Showing such love to our enemies will result in heaping burning coals on their heads. It will bring a burning sense of shame (20). It may even result in their conversion? This is the way of

the cross. 'Such is the masterpiece of love.' **'What a comprehensive picture of Christian love. Love is sincere, discerning, affectionate, and respectful. It is both enthusiastic and patient, both generous and hospitable, both benevolent and sympathetic. It is marked by both harmony and humility. Christian**

**churches would be happier communities if we all loved one another like that.'** (Stott).

So, how are you going? Perhaps the best thing we can do is to take time and read this passage again – slowly and thoughtfully.

## The Past for Today

### The PCEA (5) Rebuilding & Renewal 1900-1963—Part 1

Rowland Ward

As one reviews the period to 1900 a number of points stand out which were addressed in subsequent years.

#### (1) Ministers

The Australian Church had been repudiated by the Free Church of Scotland and thus had no regular source of ministers. Nevertheless, she did not do too badly until the dispute erupted in 1880. Given the difficulties, perhaps it was understandable that in 1890 George Sutherland formally proposed that the PCEA seek to participate in the federal union of the union Presbyterian churches then being discussed, on the basis that the PCEA positions be preserved within that structure. The proposal was soundly defeated and it is doubtful if it would have provided a source of orthodox ministers even if a suitable basis could have been agreed.

The Scottish churches were rapidly shifting with the mood of the times from around 1875. In 1893, the FCS purported to modify what was required of office-bearers and a separation of a minority of constitutionalists known as the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland [FPCS] occurred. In 1900 the Free Church of Scotland and the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland united, but 26 of the more than 1000 Free Church ministers protested that fundamental doctrinal issues were compromised by those who entered the United Free Church (as it was called). They were ultimately successful in their legal claim because there was no power in the trust deed to vary the doctrine in the way that was done to enable the union.

The famous Free Church Case decided by the House of Lords in 1904 was not new law, but the application of old law. It was a vindication of the minority FPCV position in 1858 and the PCEA position in 1864. By 1907 the continuing FCS soon had more than 70 ministers, although some were from unsuitable backgrounds and caused difficulties for some years. Overtures to the FPCS to unite were rebuffed more than once, but some ministers did rejoin.

The Australian Church, while having some sympathy for the FPCS, renewed correspondence with the continuing Free Church of Scotland. In 1908 S. P. Stewart visited the Free Church of Scotland Assembly on behalf of the PCEA. In 1910 Rev Donald Maclean visited Australia on behalf of the Free Church, and the facilities of the Free Church of Scotland College in Edinburgh were made available to Australian students for the ministry. There was spiritual life in the church and from her own midst suitable men were raised up in due time. Isaac Graham (later at Hamilton) and J. Campbell Robinson (later at St Kilda) were the first students to train in Scotland and left for Scotland in 1911. Relations prospered. Particularly significant was the visit from March to July 1928 of Rev Dr John Macleod (1872-1948), Principal of the Free Church of Scotland College. He authored the classic volume *Scottish Theology in Relation to Church History Since the Reformation* (originally lectures in 1939 at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.

A total of 20 men entered the ministry 1900-1963. In order of admission they were J. P. Lewis, J. D. Ramsay, H. W. Ramsay, T. M. McClean\*, I. L. Graham, J. C. Robinson, M. C. Ramsay, N. MacLeod\*, M. M. Macdonald\*, J. A. Webster, J. A. Harman, D. G. C. Trotter, A. Allen, J. C. Andrews, A. D. McIntosh, S. N. Ramsay, A. R. Beaton, E. R. Lee\* and A. M. Harman and A. D. Campbell. Lewis came from the PCNSW in



Principal John Macleod

1907, was ordained at Hamilton but resigned from the PCEA in 1910. Apparent mental instability characterised his subsequent career.

With the exception of the four men marked \*, each of whom came from the Free Church of Scotland,

the rest came from within the church in New South Wales. All these, except J. A. Webster, were born in New South Wales, and all except J. D. Ramsay and S. N. Ramsay trained at the FCS College in Edinburgh. Only one (Trotter) returned to everyday pursuits. Tom McClean (1876-1960) was of Northern Irish stock and was a vigorous and practical preacher. Arthur Allen (1902-58) was the effective founder of the *Reformed Theological Review* in 1942 and a man with a great vision of Reformed ecumenicity. J. Campbell Andrews (1909-94) was a remarkable medical missionary, preacher and church builder, and the first missionary sent out by the PCEA (1948). Angus Beaton (b. 1930) was another able missionary in Peru. Allan Harman (b. 1936, son of Rev J. A.), was to become a major influence in Australian Presbyterianism.

## (2) Identity

The principle of state recognition or establishment, while something to adhere to and aspire to, was not in practice going to be of immediate relevance at the grass roots in the Australian context. Thus the PCEA and the union church were outwardly very similar, even in worship, until the 1880s, or even later in some conservative rural places. The distinct identity of the PCEA was therefore not always obvious. There was a certain tension between the early national church ideal in Scotland and the gathered church reality on the ground in Australia.

The tendency was to find identity in the church's simple scriptural worship, something evident in the church magazines of the time and in J. Campbell Robinson's church history (1948), but this was not the leading distinctive in the view of the PCEA leaders of 1864. Rather, it

was the wholehearted attachment to the full-orbed Gospel and clear adherence on the part of office-bearers to the doctrines of the Confession of Faith as a summary of Scripture teaching which was the real distinctive.

The alarming doctrinal shifts in the churches in Scotland were showing up in Australia by the 1880s.

The case of Charles Strong of Scots' Church, Melbourne, is a notable example. Within a few years the orthodox doctrine of Scripture was scorned even by Moderators of union Assemblies, such as Rev George MacInnes' infamous address to the PCNSW in 1894. The fortress mentality increased in the PCEA even as the importance of the church's distinctive testimony as a confessional church grew.

This became very clear from 1901 and the federation of the mainstream Presbyterian churches.



*The Conference on Union, 1911. Front row (L to R): Samuel McKay (Geelong elder), Rev W. R. Buttrose, Rev W. Grant, Rev S. P. Stewart, Rev W. McDonald, Rev John Sinclair. Back row (L to R): Rev J. D. Ramsay, James Robinson (Manning elder), Rev James Henry, Duncan McLachlan (Maclean elder), Rev W. N. Wilson.*

The doctrinal position of the Presbyterian Church of Australia was the Westminster Confession read in the light of a Declaratory Statement, much of which was derived from Scottish examples in 1879 and 1892. It used ambiguous language and also allowed liberty of opinion on matters not essential to the doctrine taught in the Confession without indicating what the matters not essential were. It was intended to preserve supernaturalism but at the same time to allow a view of Scripture lacking full inspiration, as well as Arminian and similar views of the atonement, openness on the virgin birth, etc., but of course soon was understood to allow far more. A candidate might not need or want the Declaratory Statement, but the church had chained itself to it. If taken in good conscience the vows required other views allowed by the Declaratory Statement to be tolerated. It also reflected a 'fundamentalist' attitude (in the bad sense of the term) because it allowed Scripture teaching to be ignored or relegated to insignificance.

### (3) Federation

The six Australian colonies federated as the Commonwealth of Australia on 1 January 1901 and on 24 July 1901 the six union Presbyterian churches likewise federated, yielding certain powers, particularly on doctrine, to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia (GAA).

The Australian remnant of the PCEA/FPCV/FPSA also saw the need to draw closer together. Organic union was considered impractical when it was discussed in 1877, but federation of the colonies was thought to pave the way for the federation of the three churches. The visit of Rev (later Professor) Donald Maclean (1870-1943) of St Columba's FCS, Edinburgh, furthered this. A Conference was held in Sydney on 18/19 September 1911 at which all ministers were present except Rev J. S. Macpherson of Morphett Vale. Rev James Henry from the FCS, who was supplying at Maclean, was also present as well as Rev John D. Ramsay,

who had been ordained and inducted at Hamilton a few months before. A proposal to become part of the Free Church of Scotland was rejected.

A basis upon which the three churches would federate under one supreme ecclesiastical court having the jurisdiction and powers proper to a Presbyterian Assembly in all spiritual matters, without touching the property rights of each church, was agreed. It was largely drawn from the FPCV 1876 Basis, but without the explanatory section about the Confession of Faith. It was put to the church courts and congregations, and unanimously approved in New South Wales and Victoria. The death of Mr Buttrose (who was married to a daughter of Rev James Benny) meant South Australia was not represented. The union was duly consummated on 9 April 1913 under the name Free Presbyterian Church of Australia.

## Life under the Banner

### *No Other Name*

We live in a society characterized by a multitude of religious beliefs. Pluralism seems to be the order of the day. Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus. And of course, don't forget the atheists. You meet them out on the street. Some of them might even be your neighbors. All the various religions out there each have their own view of truth and reality, their own perspective on life. But the question is, what attitude do we take to these other views of reality? This is one of the most important questions facing the church in our times. Mind you, this issue has been around since the beginning of the church, when the early Christians had to consider their relationship to the pagan religions that surrounded them. And in fact, the issue goes further back than that. The Old Testament nation of Israel was also confronted with the issue of how to

deal with the religions of the peoples around them. Still, it seems to be a particularly live issue these days, thanks to global communications and increasing immigration from non-Western cultures. Even the clothes some people wear tell us that that they hold beliefs completely foreign to our own. And this awareness of other religions raises the question: what attitude should we have toward them?

### **Relativism and Syncretism**

Some opt for relativism. They say it really doesn't matter what you believe. You can believe whatever you want to believe. No one is right. No one is wrong. If you want to believe that beings from outer space put us here on this earth, and they are watching us from the other side of the moon, then that's entirely up to you. If you want to say that the creator of the earth sent his Son to die on a cross

### *Jim Klazinga*

and pay the price for your sins, well, that's your privilege. Just don't try to tell me what I should believe. You don't have to think too hard to see that relativism doesn't make sense. To say that there is no truth is making a statement that attempts to say something about truth. But even more importantly, the Bible leaves no room for relativism. It claims to be the truth. To advocate relativism is to deny everything the Bible stands for. Another response to the existence of other beliefs is syncretism. This approach says that we can find elements of truth in all religions. There is such a thing as truth, it's just that no religion can claim exclusive rights to it. There's nothing new about this approach. Looking back to the time of the Old Testament, the people of Israel were often warned against syncretism.

Deuteronomy 12:1-4, "These are the statutes and rules that you shall be careful to do in the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth. You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. You shall tear down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and burn their Asherim with fire. You shall chop down the carved images of their gods and destroy their name out of that place. You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way." It would seem that God was not too keen on the idea of syncretism.

### A Third Response

So, relativism and syncretism, both of these approaches are lacking and unbiblical. However, there is a third response to the question of what approach to take toward other religions. I should warn you, though: this third response is not very popular. It is not respected by the world. It is often considered to be ignorant and close-minded. This is the response of the Apostle Peter when confronted by the Jewish leaders Acts 4:11-12, "This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

You want salvation? You want to get close to God? You want truth? Look to

Jesus. Look to the one who is God and rules in heaven. Look to the one who came to earth as a man, the one who died on a hill outside of Jerusalem, the one who rose victorious from the grave. Look to the one who will return again in glory and will take his people to live with him forever. If you want to know God, if you want to experience the presence of the divine, if you want true

religion, then you must look to Jesus.

### Intolerance Challenged

But wait a minute! That sounds pretty intolerant and close-minded. All this talk about Jesus being the only way to God, well, this doesn't seem to leave much room for other points of view. If Jesus is the only way to God, then all those other religions that say they have access to God, they must be wrong. If Jesus is the only way, then there can't be any other ways.

This intolerance is something the world cannot tolerate. They will ask us: "Do you think that you can say that you are right and that others are wrong?" And we must reply: "Absolutely!"

But the world will not let the matter rest. The world will challenge us.



The devil will challenge us. The devil will say: what gives you the right to say that your way of thinking is correct? What makes you think that you have the truth while others are mistaken?

Well, we have to admit that we are no better than anyone else. We do not say that our way of thinking is correct because we think we are so smart. If it were a matter of us rely-

ing on our own worth and our own intelligence to prove that we are right, then we would not have a leg to stand on.

Rather, we can say with assurance that Jesus is the only way to salvation because the Bible tells us so. It is the witness of Jesus to himself found in the Word of God that lets us know that our way of thinking is correct and other religions are wrong. Quoting Acts 4:12 again: "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

### Spirit-filled Conviction

No one else. No other name. No other way. No other chance. Notice, Peter did not here say to the leaders of the Jews, "You can believe whatever you like. You can have your own way of thinking. Just let us believe what we want to believe, and we can live together peacefully." Peter did not say, "Hey, your religion has some validity to it. You have a legitimate way of reaching God. We know that your religion is just as true as ours. Why don't we work together?" He said no such thing. Instead, he confronted the false religion of the Jewish leaders. He told the Jewish leaders that they were wrong. He told them that their way of thinking was wrong. He told them that he knew the only truth and the only truth is Jesus Christ.

Peter did say these things because he felt he was so smart. Nor did he say what he said because he was an arrogant jerk. He told them the truth because, as verse 8 of Acts 4 says, he was filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was giving Peter the knowledge, the faith, the conviction to say the truth. The Holy Spirit was working in the heart of Peter, giving him the wisdom to recognize the significance of Son of God.



Jesus himself is quoted in John 14:6, "I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Jesus is the only way, the only truth, the only life. No one can truly know God unless he knows Jesus. You won't find God through the Muslim religion. You won't find God through the Buddhist religion. You absolutely will not find the Father unless you look through the Son. That's just the way it is. It's futile to look for salvation elsewhere.

### **Learning From Other Religions?**

But now, you might ask yourselves, is it not possible that there might be something in some of the religions around us that might be worthwhile, something we can learn from? Well, we have to remember that because Jesus is the perfect savior, we have in him all the truth that we need. Because Jesus is the perfect Savior, we can have in him all that we need for a true, complete, sufficient faith. Because Jesus is the perfect Savior, we do not need to look to other religions to find out whether they can teach us some aspect of the truth. This is not to say that we cannot learn anything from people who have a different religion than ours. For instance, a non-Christian driving instructor will be able to teach you how to drive a car. But he will not

be able to teach you how to use your driving ability for the glory of God.

A non-Christian biology professor will be able to teach you about how life operates. But he will not be able to teach you about how God is the giver of life.

A non-Christian musician will be able to teach you about how to play a musical instrument. But he will not be able to teach you about how we are called to use our musical gifts for the glory of God.

Of course there will be times in life when we learn something from non-Christians. But if we want to know God, if we want to know what it means to be saved, and if we want to know what it means to serve our Lord in every area of our lives, then we need to look to Christ, and we need to look to the true religion recorded for us in the Holy Scriptures.

### **Subtle Syncretism**

But now, you might be saying to yourself, "I don't try to mix my beliefs with the beliefs of other religions. I do not add to my Christianity pagan ideas like reincarnation. Syncretism is not a problem for me." If you think along these lines, you better be careful, because syncretism can sometimes be very subtle. For instance, do you try to mix materialism with your Christianity? Do you try to serve both Jesus and the

god of money at the same time? Do you worship Jesus on Sunday and then during the rest of the week try and get as many possessions as you possibly can for your own benefit?

Or how about the god of self. One of the religions of the people around us is individualism. Do you try to trust in Jesus and trust in yourself at the same time? Do you rely on your own strength? You can't serve two gods at once. One will take over. If you try to place your loyalty to some idol alongside your loyalty to Christ, then it doesn't take much for that idol to take over. We must reject all the false gods, all the idols. We must turn to Jesus Christ alone.

Ask yourself: "Do I look only to Jesus Christ for truth? Do I trust in him alone?" May we recognize that salvation cannot be found in anyone else. Jesus Christ is the only truth.

To proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ will not be easy. Many will say that the truth we proclaim is intolerant. Many will hate us. But we must return hatred with love. We must demonstrate the truth of God's love in Jesus Christ. And above all, we must obey God rather than man and hold fast to the one true faith.

## **"Synod Missions Funds"**

The main call on Synod funds continues to be in Missions. While the position has been helped greatly by Synod 2013 in agreeing that superannuation contributions for the Rev TI Leggott, General Director of the Australian Indigenous Ministries come from the Superannuation Support Fund and also some most generous donations being received from a number of congregations, including one for \$10,000 to the Missions General Funds there is still an on going need to be filled in this area.

The net balance of the three Missions Funds (Missions General, Missions DA Anderson Bequest and Missions Support of TI Leggott) as at 31st July was \$25,975 (\$20,600 as at 31/12/12).

Income for the three funds for seven months to 31st July totalled \$31,455 and it is estimated that \$13,700 will be needed to provide stipend payments to Rev Leggott at the current level as well as other budgeted outgoings (Synod donations etc) until next Synod (May 2014).

Congregations are therefore encouraged to give this matter their prayerful support and contribute to this ministry of taking the gospel to Australia's indigenous people.

"Let your acts of benevolence proceed from the heart, with a prayer that they may tend to the glory of God in the temporal and spiritual good of those who are the objects of it." - Thomas Gouge."

Alex Steel, Synodical Treasurer

# The World in the Banner

## **Pope Francis Says Atheists Can Do Good and Go to Heaven Too**

A 30 May 2013 Catholic Online article titled "Pope Francis Says Atheists Can Do Good and Go to Heaven Too!" reports that on 29 May 2013, Roman Catholic Pope Francis declared to atheists that Jesus died and was raised for them as well, that Jesus' redemptive embrace was for all, not just a chosen few, and that the choice to accept its reach is our own.

Pope Francis added that people must still do good, and that in doing good that they are led to Jesus, the source of all that is good. He continued:

"The Lord created us in His image and likeness, and we are the image of the Lord, and He does good and all of us have this commandment at heart, do good and do not do evil. All of us. 'But, Father, this is not Catholic! He cannot do good.' Yes, he can... 'The Lord has redeemed all of us, all of us, with the Blood of Christ, all of us, not just Catholics. Everyone! 'Father, the atheists?' Even the atheists. Everyone!' We must meet one another doing good. 'But I don't believe, Father, I am an atheist!' But do good: we will meet one another there."

+ *Catholic Online, customerservice@catholic.org*

## **Warning To Oz: Smacking Ban More Harm Than Good**

A family group in New Zealand is warning Australian parents to reject any proposed ban on smacking, saying that from experience, it will do more harm than good, will have no effect on child abuse rates, but will criminalise good parents raising great kids.

"The rates of child abuse deaths in New Zealand have stayed at the same rate as they were before the anti-smacking law was passed. The ban has targeted good parents, rather than the rotten parents who are abusing their children, and has wasted valuable time and resources of the police and social agencies," says Bob McCoskrie, National Director of Family First NZ. "Any

claims that a ban on smacking will lower child abuse rates are simply 'hot air'."

A recent survey of 1,000 NZ'ers found that only 12% of respondents think the law change has had any effect on the rate of child abuse. The survey also found that three out of four people back a law change to allow "correctional" smacking of children. And two out of three respondents said they would flout the law and smack their child to correct their behaviour if they thought it was reasonable to do so. Another survey in 2011 found that almost a third of parents of younger children say that their children have threatened to report them if they were smacked. And almost one in four of parents of younger children say that they have less confidence when dealing with unacceptable behaviour from their children since the anti-smacking law was passed. "The latest review of police activity related to the anti-smacking law continues to show disturbing trends, and reveals that almost 600 Kiwi families have had a police investigation for allegations of smacking or minor acts of physical discipline since the anti-smacking law was passed yet only 9% of them have been serious enough to warrant charges being laid."

"In the meantime, cases of actual child abuse have increased by a third in the past 5 years," says Mr McCoskrie.

"We must take pro-active action and tackle head-on the difficult issues of family breakdown, drug and alcohol abuse, violence in our media, mental illness, and other key factors identified by the various UNICEF, CYF and Children's Commissioner's reports." says Mr McCoskrie.

"Children will never be safe until we are honest enough as a country to identify and tackle the real causes of child abuse, rather than pass 'feel-good' but ineffectual laws."

Six years on from the ban on smacking in NZ, opposition remains as strong as ever. A referendum in 2009 found 87% opposition to the smacking ban, but the results were

ignored by the National-led government.

See

[www.protectgoodparents.org.nz](http://www.protectgoodparents.org.nz)  
and [www.voteno.org.nz](http://www.voteno.org.nz)  
+ *Family First Media Release 26 July 2013*

## **India: Afghan Church Grows Amidst Struggles**

Christian converts started fleeing Afghanistan around 2005 as the Taliban gained strength. In May 2009 a Kabul-based television network, Noorin TV, broadcast images taken of a worship and baptismal service in a Kabul secret house church. A member of the Afghan parliament subsequently called for apostates to be executed. An estimated 100 Afghan Christian converts fled to India in the following months. Afghan converts are still arriving in India, with some 40 up to July this year. The Afghan Church of New Delhi has from 200 to 250 Afghan converts, refugees who have fled religious persecution in Afghanistan. Whilst they are relatively safe now, as Afghans they suffer discrimination in Indian society and hostility from Afghan Muslims who despise them as apostates. Pray that God will bless, protect, provide for and build his Afghan Church in India.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin | RLPB 221 | Wed 31 Jul 2013*

## **Tutu Endorses Hell over 'A Homophobic Heaven'**

Retired South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu has provocatively declared that he would not worship a God who is homophobic, adding that "I would refuse to go to a homophobic heaven... I mean, I would much rather go to the other place [hell]."

The Anglican archbishop was speaking at a United Nations' Gay Rights Campaign function in Cape Town, South Africa.

Tutu is not the first South African Anglican bishop to make statements that are not in accord with more traditional Christians. In a 2008 Christmas message,

Archbishop of Southern Africa Thabo Makgoba infamously declared that "Jesus is like a 'bucketful of God' – a statement seemingly at odds with church teaching about Christ being the exact imprint of God's character in whom "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily." In a rare move, another Anglican archbishop – Archbishop Yinkah Sarfo of Ghana – strongly condemned Tutu over his comments. "Archbishop Tutu is respected in the Anglican Church and around the world but this time he has misfired and all Anglican Bishops from Africa, Asia and South America condemn his statement in no uncertain terms," Sarfo told Ghana's Adom News.

Sarfo said Tutu's comments were not the stand of the entire Anglican Communion, which is increasingly led by traditionalist voices from the Global South that adhere to a more

conservative theological perspective.

"We [other African bishops] suspect that retired Archbishop Tutu may have collected some moneys from some of the western governments or from gay rights activists to do their bidding but the Anglican Church condemns gay practice," Sarfo concluded.

IRD Anglican Program Director Jeff Walton commented: "Tutu's declaration demands that God operate on his terms. Tutu's god is one that many will recognize – an idealized version of ourselves times 2 or 3. God operates on a whole different standard of holiness beyond this self-constructed deity.

"Tutu never speaks for the majority of Anglicans in Africa. The center of Anglican leadership on the continent has moved to countries like Nigeria and Kenya.

"Apart from Tutu's dismissiveness, African Anglicans are very inter-

ested in spending eternity with God and want their neighbors to share in that, too.

"African Anglicans have quickly become the majority voice in the Anglican Communion. They focus on evangelism and discipleship, seeking to win souls for Christ rather than prioritize earthly political ambitions."

+ *Christian News*,  
news-  
desk@christiannewswire.com  
+ Institute on Religion and Democracy, info@theird.org  
+ Anglican Church of South Africa, publish@anglicanchurchsa.org.za  
+ Anglican Communion, aco@anglicancommunion.org

### CAN YOU HELP OUR MAGAZINE DIGITISATION PROJECT?

I am pleased to tell you that a major project to digitise copies of our early magazines is underway. Robert Hingston, a deacon in Ulverstone, is doing the scanning, and Rev David Kerridge, PCEA Webmaster will upload the material progressively.

My initial aim is to cover the period until 1913 when a single magazine was issued in lieu of state-based publications. We can then move on from there. So far *The Voice in the Wilderness* ed by Wm McIntyre (1846-52), and *The Port Phillip Christian Herald* ed by James Forbes (1846-51). These are images of the pages in these rare volumes that are readable but not searchable.

The *Free Church Quarterly* is partly done. This was edited by John Sinclair of Geelong and ran from 1889 to January 1913. These are searchable and include the original indices.

I am missing 5 copies of the *Free Church Quarterly* [FCQ] and appeal for help in locating copies to scan. The missing copies are all in Vol 7. They are #1 (1909) and numbers 13, 14, 15 & 16 (1912/13) I'm also trying to get a complete set of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*, the NSW equivalent of the FCQ, which ran from 1905 to 1912 edited by Wm McDonald of St George's Church. (From 1911 it was called *The Australian Free Presbyterian Magazine*, not to be confused with the similarly named magazine edited by John Sinclair which began in 1913). I am missing nine copies of this rare magazine as follows:

*Free Presbyterian Magazine*, ed. Wm McDonald

Vol 1 (all 4 issues are needed - I think there may have been 2 or 3 in 1905, and one in 1906)

Vol 2 #2, #3, #4 (1907-08) [I have #1 (Dec 1906)]

Vol 3 [have all 4 issues, Dec 1908 to April 1910]

*Australian Free Presbyterian Magazine*, ed. Wm McDonald

Vol 4 #1, #3 (1911-12) [I have #2 (Sept 1911) & #4 (Aug 1912)]

Material can be sent as original or photocopies to me at 26 Roxburgh Road, Wantirna 3152 and will be returned

Thank you for any help you can give.

(Rev Dr) Rowland S. Ward, PCEA Archivist

# Children under the Banner

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

## Word Search

Some of the words hidden in the puzzle below are from Revelation 5:11-12. Find the words hidden up, down, backward, forward, and diagonally.



- |          |       |            |          |
|----------|-------|------------|----------|
| BLESSING | HONOR | POWER      | SLAIN    |
| CROSS    | JESUS | RECEIVE    | STRENGTH |
| GLORY    | LAMB  | REVELATION | VOICE    |
| GOD      | LOUD  | RICHES     | WISDOM   |

R	E	W	O	P	H	R	E	A	N
I	E	C	I	P	V	W	A	T	O
C	S	V	J	O	S	U	S	E	I
H	R	T	E	B	M	A	L	V	T
E	O	O	R	L	E	T	A	I	A
S	N	L	S	E	A	L	I	E	L
G	O	O	T	S	N	T	N	C	E
T	H	U	P	S	U	G	I	E	V
M	O	D	S	I	W	E	T	R	E
A	N	G	E	N	I	G	H	H	R
Y	R	O	L	G	O	D	L	Y	O

# Prescribed Search / Youth Work

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

## SEPTEMBER

SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE (Intermediate omit questions 4 and 8)

2 CORINTHIANS chapter 2

1. Why did Paul write to the Corinthians with many tears?

2. To whom are the preachers of the gospel a savour [aroma] of life, and to whom are they the aroma of death? (2 verses)

chapter 3

3. Why are Christians called the epistles of Christ? (2 verses)

4. Find the chapter in Exodus where we read that Moses' face shone. When did he put a veil over his face?

5. What happens when we behold as in a glass [mirror] the glory of the Lord?

chapter 4

6. What has the god of this world [age] done to the minds of unbelievers?

7. What has God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, done for us?

8. Why do we believers not faint [lose heart] though our outward man is perishing? What is our light affliction working? (2 verses)

## JUNIOR

LUKE chapter 22

1. What did Jesus say when he took bread, gave thanks and broke it?

2. What would Peter do three times before the cock [rooster] crowed?

3. What words did Jesus use when he prayed to his Father in the garden?

4. What did Peter do when he remembered the Lord's words? (2 verses)

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

## En Route To Restoration

### *Some Thoughts on Psalm 51*

*David Kumnick*

In its heading Psalm 51 gives the occasion for this penitential prayer. This was that awful moment when a saintly King David failed to keep on his spiritual armour, saw an opening for carnal pleasure and went right through. He got into an affair with another man's wife. Then he covered his tracks when she fell pregnant by arranging her husband's death and marrying her. Several months passed by. And from David came no sign of repentance. What could have gone on in this great saint of God's mind? We can only surmise he was tight in Satan's grip, in a downward spiral of self-deception. If he could get through till the baby's birth, time would take care of the rest. Meanwhile in heaven, a grieving covenant God sees the imminent wreckage of His covenant designs in David His king. He comes to the rescue. And since there's no way forward but through repentance, He sends His man Nathan to David's palace.

#### **God's convicting work**

Most of us know how Nathan did it. The heart-rending story he told. David's anger roused at a cruel man's selfish abuse of a poor innocent victim. Only to realise when Nathan says "You are the man!" that the story's about him. At last from David's mouth comes admission of his terrible sin. It's at this point that Psalm 51 picks up David's thoughts. as he starts once again to pray genuinely. In contrast to the self-deceiving prayers that must have been there the last several months. Before Nathan David has said, "I have sinned against the Lord." At a later time now evidently, he looks back and traces his struggle out of the mire of his sin, through confession, toward restoration. And he deals with himself we notice, along the lines of where he began there with Nathan. Owning up to his wrongdoing as sin against his God. Yes he's sinned against Bathsheba, and her husband, and all those people he lied to for so long, but above all the sin was against his God. So the Spirit has told him. So he must treat this. With God he must talk. Compare this with an incident that transpired in a church. A member got into an adulterous relationship. Despite the urging of her church's leaders she refused to repent. Eventually, in accordance with the process our Lord laid out in Matthew 18, they announced her sin to the congregation and excommu-

nicated her. The woman sued for invasion of privacy and defamation of character. She said her private life was none of the church's business!

What a contrast to David's response. A full and frank "I have sinned against the Lord." One professing child of God won't admit her sin but takes her accusers to court. The other not only makes confession but puts it right out there in this Psalm, destined for exposure to the whole people of God for all ages to come. Taking its place in their worship songs.

Now if anyone had the clout to silence a critic, it was David the king. He could have had Nathan jailed for life, or exiled or put to death. But we do observe how the moment Nathan opened David's eyes, he knew he had first and foremost to settle with his God. He realised, like every truly repentant person ever, that the issue was not with his human accuser but his divine accuser in heaven.

#### **The gap between one who knows God and one who doesn't**

Right here, a fundamental gap appears between one who knows God and one who doesn't. Our Bible is clear, that without the fear of God in your heart you haven't been converted. If you reckon you're a child of God but don't have the fear of God, you're a hypocrite and rank deceiver. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," our Bible says. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of the wisdom that saves, it means. To fear God, isn't something we learn as we grow in knowledge of Him. The fear of God is the beginning. It has to be there from the start, conditioning our responses, especially to an accurate accusation of sin.

To reject that accusation is simply to declare that we don't fear God. Which means in turn we don't know Him, in that essential attitude of submission, from an earthly child to his or her Father in heaven. The hallmark of a true faith, and so an authentic salvation from the wrath that's to come – fear of God. It's fear of God that makes a conscience able to answer rightly to a convicting Holy Spirit.

Here in Psalm 51, David beholds himself a sinner under God's judgment. But because he's a child of God by grace and has a Spirit-given awareness of this, he knows his God is merciful, unailing in love, great in longsuf-

fering and compassion to His own. On this basis, this permanent demeanour of God toward His dear ones by grace, David asks boldly for pardon and restoration. He doesn't say look at me Lord, see how thoroughly I've repented. He says Lord, look at Yourself. See Your own nature Lord, that You're a God the desire of whose being is ever to forgive any who repent!

While it's a fact that God only forgives those who repent, His pardon is not conditional on our repenting enough. If that's the foundation for our plea – that we've repented deeply enough or long enough, we'll always be left wondering have I repented enough? No, what's required is that there be repentance, that there is repentance.

#### **Let there be simply faith**

At this point there's a sameness about faith. We hear from our Pentecostal-type friends how you've got to have enough faith if you want to be healed. If you prayed for healing and weren't healed, it's because you didn't have enough faith. You didn't believe strongly enough that God would heal you. The true necessity however, is not that there be enough faith but that there be faith. Some faith, as small as can be, it doesn't matter. And not that God will heal but that He can heal, if it's His will in your particular case.

After all, didn't our Lord say it only takes a faith the size of a mustard seed, and you can say to a mountain move from here to there and it will? He meant of course, if that impossible thing was in God's will, then without a doubt it would be done in answer to your prayer. Yes, with a faith as small as a mustard seed!

Faith, is one of two things God requires for salvation, the other being repentance. And the two of them are just the same in this respect – how much God requires. How much faith --the size of the faith cuts no ice – the one thing needed is that there be faith. Well it's exactly so with faith's counterpart, repentance. The size of the repentance cuts no ice – the one thing needed is that there be repentance.

For the rest of this then, it's over to God. Over to His will. If it's His will to grant some prayer of faith, He'll grant it however small the faith. And if it's

His will to grant some prayer of repentance, He'll grant it however small the repentance. But the one thing wanting still, is to be sure God does will to grant repentance. Will God grant a prayer for repentance without fail? Perhaps the most reassuring of all our Bible's pronouncements on this is 1 John 1:9 – "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Blessed assurance!

What's requisite then, is that there be repentance when sin becomes known. The rest is God's. You can never repent enough. You can't merit God's forgiveness. All you can do is appeal to God's nature as a God full of mercy to repentant sinners.

### David's view of sin

The next thing we notice about Psalm 51 – David's view of sin. His view of sin, as portrayed here, shows why he knows he can put no confidence in himself. At first he refers to his transgressions. He mentions sins as separate entities. But then instantly he gets down to the root cause. He speaks of his iniquity and his sin – singular, not plural, now.

What David's saying is that sins aren't the occasional slip-ups of a basically good person. Sins manifest sin. They're surface outbreaks of a submerged, corrupt nature. And while his individual sins are enough to separate him from God, his essential sin is an abomination to God. It's this that needs the utmost attention – always. If you can't be sure you've got forgiveness for this – your underlying sin nature, ultimately you've got nowhere! Nor does David explain that society has taught him to have such a nature. This isn't something he's picked up from his environment. No, he was born with it. It was there from his conception in his mother's womb. When David's life began his sinfulness began. He was corrupt to the core from that moment on.

Fellow Christian, you need to believe this. That it's so for you and for everyone. You'll never have a right concept of the bad in this world as long as you think like humanists, and Christians we tag theologically as liberals. Humanists and liberals – they think sins are just people failing to act out of their inherent goodness. Worst of all though, if this is what you think, you'll never understand yourself. And never get spiritually off the ground. Because you'll never see yourself as God sees you. And you'll never comprehend His command to repent – what it encom-

passes. Because you haven't accepted your Bible's teaching that we call Original Sin.

Original Sin. It says each of us inherits from the first man Adam a twisted, perverted soul. I came into this world a creature of iniquity, disordered, misshapen, warped, wholly inclined to stand against the true God, to oppose His Law, to reject His right to rule over me, and to keep on rejecting all the way to my grave, and beyond that into an everlasting hell – my just desert for being like that and doing that.

So Psalm 51 is telling how horrible sin is – and how a right concept of it cannot do other than cause deep anguish of heart. True repentance must involve recognition that our sins emanate from the original sin that continues to inhabit our soul. Yes, still so for every child of God in Christ – just as an ultra-saintly David's dreadful descent into adultery and murder ought to prove to us once and for all!

### Have you lost all trust in yourself?

How humbled should this make me? How needy of God's grace? I have to be someone who's lost all trust in me. I don't need a bit of grace now and then, to patch up the odd aberration. I need God's grace for the aberration I am, underneath this exterior I present – that which I was born to be, and condemned to be all my living days – apart from God's grace to me. I need His grace to deal with my original sin, of which my actual sins are mere symptoms, surface manifestations. My friends, I pray this Psalm makes us see the horror of sin. But I pray too it makes us see the wonder of grace. David sees etched before him the wretchedness of his state. Yet he's not driven to despair. Emptied of all trust in himself, yes, but filled with trust in his God.

So he calls on this God to blot out his transgressions, to wash him thoroughly from his iniquity, to cleanse him from his sin. He needs his individual sins struck from his record. Yet that, as we've noted, is by no means sufficient. Not my sins but sin itself, stains the warp and woof of my person. With David I must plead for cleansing from this. For God to make me clean in His sight, so He won't look down on me with repugnance and rejection after all. This washing that David asks for, is much more than a rinsing down. It's washing by wringing and beating. Before detergents and washing machines, they washed their clothes by wringing them in their hands and dashing them on the rocks by the river. Still

the method in many countries today. So take me in Your hands Lord. Wring me out, Lord. Dash me against the rocks, Lord. Force Your purifying waters through my filthy soul, Lord!

### The need for cleansing

Furthermore, David asks for cleansing. Now he's talking about a priestly declaration of cleanness. He saw his sinfulness excluding him from fellowship with God and God's people. Until declared clean, he'd have to be shut out from that. Just as in those times a leper was not allowed inside the Israelite camp. And if he received healing, he still had a cleansing to go through before coming into the camp. The priest would dip some hyssop in water mixed with the blood of a slain bird. Then sprinkle it on the healed leper, to symbolise the healing that had taken place. Then he'd pronounce the former leper clean, and release a living bird to fly up into the sky. In this ritual, a picture of the freedom God grants a pardoned sinner. So he's free not only from the guilt of actual sins, but also the leprosy of original sin. And so David comes immediately to his prayer, "Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice." He says Lord, it's I who was that leper, banned from Your worshipping congregation. But You've healed me Lord, and I ask now that You complete this by declaring me fit and able to enter in. To fellowship with You and Your people. And he goes on. Lord, not merely that I can worship among Your people, but that I'm reinstated for service, service to You and to them. "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation," he cries, "and uphold me with Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You. Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed O God, the God of my salvation, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise..."

*The Rev. David Kumnick is a PCEA minister presently serving as supply minister to the Carrum Downs mission post. He has previously served as a minister in the Presbyterian Church of Victoria and as the minister of the Reformed Fellowship of Frankston congregation, which has now become the Carrum Downs mission post.*

# Churches in the Banner

## Ordination of Mr Robin Tso, Hunter Barrington

The ordination and induction of Mr Robin Tso took place in the Raymond Terrace Church on Friday 12th July 2013. It was pleasing to see visitors from other PCEA congregations as well as some friends and local pastors from the Newcastle area. The service was conducted by Rev John McCallum, Moderator of the Central Presbytery. He preached a very appropriate message from Mark 3: 14 challenging (at least) every minister present. He emphasised the fact that the disciples were men whom Christ made and moulded. Before Christ sent them out to 'herald' the gospel it



Above: The Rev's D. Muldoon, J. MacCullum; J. (Jim) Cromarty; R. Tso; Elders J. Reeve, A. Steel; Rev. G. Ball  
Below Left: The congregation at the ordination  
Below right: A presentation to Mrs Vanessa Tso

flowers. The final speech of the evening was, of course, from Mr Tso, who thanked the congregation for their call and gave thanks to God for all the people who had been instrumental in his Christian life. He brought a very happy evening to a close with prayer. The joy of the congregation was however soon turned to sadness with the news of the death of one of its deacons, Mr Donald Berry, the following Lord's Day 14th July. Don had the pleasure and satisfaction of witnessing the induction of his new



was important that they had time with Christ, listening, talking, and watching him. The interim Moderator, Rev George Ball, brought a charge to the new minister, asking, 'What does God require of a young pastor?' basing his remarks on 1 Tim. 4: 11-6. Former minister of the congregation, Rev Jim Cromarty, brought a charge to the

congregation, exhorting the need for mutual and practical love and support, and the importance of maintaining vows which had been made. Having answered the prescribed questions Mr Tso was ordained with prayer and the laying on of hands by Presbytery. After a delicious supper, there was a short reception, chaired by Mr Ball. Greetings from other PCEA congregations had been received and were read. Personal speeches of welcome were brought from Pastor Ken Callan (Warners Bay Reformed Church); Rev Bruce Perry (Anglican and fellow university chaplain with Mr Tso); and Pastor Don McMurray (Grace Evangelical Church). In the unavoidable absence of the two local elders because of sickness, Mr Alex Steel, assessor elder, on behalf of session and congregation welcomed Robin as their new minister. He also thanked the interim moderator for his help and presented him with a small token of appreciation. Mrs Grace Hindmarsh welcomed Vanessa Tso to the manse and presented her with a beautiful bouquet of



minister before the Lord chose to call him into his nearer presence. Our thoughts and sympathy are with Irene, his devoted wife, and the family. 'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever' (Psalm 23: 6).