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***Devotion*: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Hebrews 3:15-16**

HAWKESBURY - NEPEAN

FEATURES

ARTICLES

DON'T FORGET

Subscriptions For 2008 will soon be due!

JOSEPH'S PERSONAL STRUGGLE

The "Christmas Season" will soon be upon us again with all its commercialism and mythology. One of the best ways to take the mythology out of the Nativity story is to study it carefully. This year we focus on a much neglected character - Joseph.

Its good for us to be able to read Joseph's side of the story. Sometimes, all the attention is given to Mary, the Shepherds or the Wise Men and very little to Joseph. But he's equally important – as we can see not only from this passage, but from the genealogies of Jesus themselves. Here we have an "ordinary" couple engaged to be married – and looking forwards to their future and a family. But suddenly they found their everyday lives complicated beyond all expectation. Mary is pregnant; her story is unbelievable; and Joseph doesn't know how to deal with the situation. We'll look at [1] The Dilemma Joseph Faced; [2] The Direction he was Given; and [3] The Decision he Made.

When Mary heard that she was going to have a baby – and that her baby would be the Son of God – she immediately went to visit her cousin Elizabeth who lived in the hill country of Judea, some 80 kms to the South of Nazareth. There were good reasons for this action on the part of Mary. *[1] For one thing they were relatives* – and, according to Gabriel, something wonderful was happening to both of them. It was only natural that Mary would want to see her cousin. *[2] But more than that, seeing Elizabeth would be a confirmation of not only what the Angel said about her, but also what the Angel said about Mary*. If Elizabeth was really expecting a baby, Mary would be sure that she would have a baby too. This is quite natural: Faith desires confirmation and support. Mary believed – and yet sought confirmation of her faith in the words the angel had spoken. *[3] And a third reason is that it would give Mary time to think things through* – and to do so with someone who would understand her situation. Away from Nazareth – and in the company of Elizabeth she would be away from family and neighbours – and gossip – during the early stages of pregnancy. We're told that she stayed with Elizabeth for three months.

The Law's Requirements

It was probably after Mary came back to Nazareth that Joseph became acquainted with her condition – and the incredible explanation she gave. If a girl or a woman came to us, and said, among other things, "*God made me pregnant*" – we would greet such information with great scepticism, if not with open ridicule and derision. Things like that don't happen in real life. There's only one way to become pregnant! Yet this is what Joseph was faced with: Mary's Pregnancy; her extraordinary explanation; the cold hard facts of life; and most important of all – the demands of God's Law, not only in terms of what should be done, but also in terms of love and compassion. In the final analysis, Joseph's character lies at the heart of his dilemma. If he'd been an unprincipled man, or a hard man, there would've been no problem. Either he would have accepted it, or he would have rejected her out of hand. But the Bible tells us he was a "righteous man" – a man who feared God and united together obedience to God, and care and consideration for others. Notice how Joseph's righteousness is connected, not with exacting the full demands of the Law, but with being gentle and compassionate in his dealing

with Mary. Sometimes we connect "righteousness" with cold hard legalism – sticking to the letter of the Law, and applying it with rigour. That's not Biblical "righteousness". The Biblical idea is that of right conduct and attitudes, combining carefulness to obey with love, mercy and forgiveness. Joseph was righteous in the Biblical sense – seeking to obey God's Law in a spirit of love mercy and compassion. After all the very heart of the Law is Love! Indeed we could even go further: Not only was Joseph's righteous in the sense that he wanted to quietly end the betrothal. He was righteous in that he was inclined to give Mary the benefit of the doubt and believe her. This comes out in Matthew 1:20 in the words of the Angel to Joseph: *"Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife .."* This suggests that Joseph wanted to take Mary home as his wife, accepting her explanation – and yet was afraid to do so, because he didn't want to disobey God. Here indeed is love – not jumping to the worse conclusion, but ready to trust and believe.

A Righteous Man.

What a beautiful picture is presented here of Joseph! Wanting to believe the best, wanting to be careful to obey God's Law, and, at the same time, wanting to do so in a way that would cause the least embarrassment to Mary herself. There's no self – righteousness, or vindictiveness, no "*I'll make you pay for this*", no readiness to believe the worst – and yet, at the same time, no inclination at all to escape the demands of God's Law, disobey him, or water down his authority over his life despite the pain, shock and gossip. Its often said we're not told much about Joseph. But what we are told, tells us a great deal. A crisis reveals character in a far deeper way than a multitude of words. And here we see Joseph facing a personal crisis – and coming through with flying colours. Is it any wonder that Gabriel should be sent to Mary, "*pledged to be married to a man named Joseph?*" Such a man would be indeed a proper "adoptive" father for the Son of God.

"It's often said we're not told much about Joseph. But what we are told, tells us a great deal. A crisis reveals character in a far deeper way than a multitude of words. And here we see Joseph facing a personal crisis – and coming through with flying colours."

A Difficult Path

At the same time we're reminded here that *the path of the righteous is not easy*. Indeed we can go further: When God works in our lives, and in others, it's not always easy. And sometimes, when God is doing his greatest work, there are the greatest difficulties – and the greatest possibilities for misunderstanding. God's intervention in the lives of Joseph and Mary brought problems and complications beyond imagine – as it was with Jacob, and Joseph and many others. And it may well be so with us. The difficulties we face may not mean that God doesn't care about us. Rather they may be but the "birth pangs" of some wonderful blessing God has for us.

Perfect Timing

God doesn't leave this godly man to himself or allow him to make a hasty decision. He tells him what he should do. Notice when he was given the direction. It was only after "*he thought on these things*," or *"while he was mulling this over."* Joseph was giving the matter serious thought! And it was while he was doing so direction was given. And this reminds us that Christianity doesn't dispense with thought. God's guidance is to make us holy, not lazy! God has given us minds; he has given us information; and he expects us to use our minds, and the information we have in resolving our problems. And this is emphasized here in the fact that God doesn't immediately reveal to Joseph what he's to do. He has to think about it. God meets us in our thinking, guides our thoughts and directs our paths, just as he directed Joseph while he was thinking hard.

The Method

Notice, too, how the direction came to Joseph. The Angel spoke to him in a dream. [1] God has access to our consciousness all the time. Our consciousness is closed to others. It's even closed to ourselves; we cannot plumb the depths of our own consciousness. But all things are open to the One with whom we have to do. [2] Then again, revelation by way of dream is a recognized Biblical way for communicating God's will on special occasions. God communicated to Abimelech, Jacob, Laban, Daniel – to name a few - in dreams. And we find it later on in the events connected with Jesus' birth [Matthew 2] and in the case of Pilate's wife. But Revelation by way of dreams, however, is comparatively rare in the history of redemption. It's the extraordinary, rather than the ordinary, way - and it only comes at important points in the outworking of redemption. The normal means of direction is the Word of God.

[3] But then, the question immediately arise – isn't this a very subjective way of communication. How, for example, could Joseph be sure that this was the will of God? And how can we be sure our dreams aren't? There are three things to take into account. One is that Joseph dreamed that an Angel spoke to him. One of the things about dreams is that we cannot control them. They're usually quite bizarre – and often grotesque. In Joseph's dream the image is quite clear and precise: An Angel spoke to him. And then the Angel spoke in very definite terms. There was nothing muddled or ambiguous, evil or usual in it. He dealt precisely with the problem at hand, addressed Joseph as he really was, and the matter about which he spoke was of the highest spiritual importance. And further, all that the Angel was saying – and Joseph knew about Mary – could be squared with the Scriptures themselves. It wasn't as if the Angel was saying something that had no connection with Promise or Prophecy. Quite the opposite: The OT had spoken about a Virgin giving Birth – and the One to be born would be the Saviour.

While these considerations don't resolve all the difficulties about the subjective nature of dreams, I think they go a long way in alleviating any fears we might have about "dreams." At any rate our dreams face this insurmountable obstacle: That the day of direct revelation from God is over. God has according to his Word, fully and finally spoken to us in his Son. Beyond him there is no more need of Revelation – and there is no greater. If our dreams have to be tested by this Supreme Revelation, then what value or authority can we place on our dreams?

The Content

What was the direction given to him? We have it in verses 20-21: *"Joseph, Son of David, Do not be afraid to take* →

BLOGGING ABOUT…

NO HORSES, NO POKIES, NO RAFFLES

The lot of the gambler has not been a happy one in recent days. The gaming 'industry' is at a low ebb; even the government is worried that state revenue will be down. A microscopic virus has stopped the horses from racing, leaving gamblers up in the air. Where will they spend their money next weekend?

Even the iconic Melbourne Cup in under a cloud. The horse race that brings our nation to a halt, the horse race for which we get a public holiday, may not go ahead. We are the only nation on earth that has a public holiday for a horse race. We are the greatest gamblers on earth. The majority of our population will gamble on Melbourne Cup day – yes even the 'harmless' office sweep is gambling.

Many who call themselves Christians think nothing of have a bet on the 'big race'. Lack of discernment with regard to gambling is rife in many churches. However, the Anglican Church has recently called for church raffles to cease – a belated but welcome move. Many continue to fund church activities through raffles, bingo and other 'games of chance' or gambling. Gambling often starts with the church or school raffle, or the small slot machine at the supermarket. Many a problem gambler will tell you this.

Those who run the gambling industry are always ready to defend their 'industry'. It is difficult to call gambling an industry for it produces nothing and destroys many lives. Yet some also seek to make prostitution respectable by calling it the 'sex industry'. Trafficking of poor women is part of this industry.

One Sydney sport's club has decided to remove hundreds of poker machines from its club. But how will it survive as a business without these machines? Many think it will not be possible. How shameful it is if a business cannot survive without gambling. Clubs get millions of dollars from poor people through their poker machines and turn around and say that they are helping the community. They give money back to the community because they have to by law. They fund facilities that are often accessed by richer people. Truly gambling is a means of transferring money from the poor to the rich!

What about our government? Gambling is condoned and promoted by the government because we have come to rely on lotteries, scratchies, and the like for state revenue. To cover up the epidemic of personal and family destruction caused by gambling they fund 'help lines' for 'problem' gamblers. When will we stop to consider the immense benefits that would flow to our society if gambling was discouraged and even outlawed? After all it is illegal to play 'two-up' except on one day of the year!

Most societies in the world exist without the level of gambling that we have. Of course there are many that are ravaged by bribery. We vigorously condemn any form of bribery, but the effect of bribery is the same as

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Mary home as your wife." Briefly and directly Joseph was told to do what he really wanted to do – and yet could not because of God's Law [See Deuteronomy 22:23-24] – to fulfil the Engagement, marry Mary – and face any gossip involved. Such was his commitment to the revealed will of God that only a very special revelation from God would allow him to deviate from it. His conscience was captive to the Word of God!

Grace

What grace we see here in God in providing for his people! He doesn't leave Joseph in the dark. And He doesn't leave us in the dark either. He's given us His Word to guide and direct us. We don't have all the answers. But we'd have a lot more if we knew our Bibles better! And how we must take that Word of God with utmost seriousness! Our conscience must be captive to it in doctrine and practice, in what we believe and do.

Joseph's Decision

And the final thing we have here is *the Decision Joseph Made*. Joseph was only too happy to do God's will – To take Mary as his wife. Together they would share the burden of gossip, conscious and content that they were doing God's will – and together they would look forward to the birth of the Saviour. United in the service of God in faith and obedience, they would be united in life together. What a picture of two God fearing people linked together in marriage, conscious it was God's will for them!

Two further pieces of information are added. He didn't have sexual relations with Mary until the baby was born [The marriage had taken place but had not been consummated]; and he named him "Jesus". The first point perhaps *reflects the couple's spiritual sensitivity*: A high regard for what had been conceived, and perhaps a desire to be able to refute any allegation that Joseph might be the child's father. The wording of the verse doesn't necessarily, by itself, mean that after the birth of Jesus, normal relations were resumed; but, taken with the evidence that Jesus had brothers and sisters, we can say that it means exactly what it says – that normal sexual relations were resumed after the birth of Jesus. The idea of Mary's perpetual virginity has no support in the Bible.

The second piece of information here simply draws attention to Joseph's Role, as head of the House, in naming the child. Both were told that his name would be Jesus. Both obeyed – and Joseph assumed his responsibility in it. It was a simple procedure. But what a glorious name: Jesus, Saviour. He shall save his people from their sins!

Conclusion

In this majestic event Joseph displays true nobility: A quietness; a graciousness; a steadfastness, and a love and loyalty that ought to characterize the People of God. And as we face the problems of life – arising just because we're involved in the Lord's plan and purpose of salvation - may we show similar qualities, and a similar integrity, so that we may be truly the sons and daughters of God. Then we'll be useful instruments in his service – just as Joseph and Mary were. ■

gambling. The poor suffer as their money is siphoned off to the rich.

The second commandment that Jesus gave is 'love your neighbour as yourself'. To love your neighbour means you seek to help, not harm, the other person. The money you by chance gain from gambling has come from someone else's loss. You do not know that person and so feel no concern, but it is someone nevertheless. The Bible tells us to work and eat our own bread (2 Thessalonians 3:12). Extortion through bribery is sin (Exodus 23:8), as is extortion through a game of chance.
- Rev. Dr. Dennis K. Muldoon

RELIGION AND HEALTH

This is the title of an article that recently appeared in the Choice Health Reader for October, 2007 [Volume 13, No 8]. In a time when people think they can manipulate everything to secure their own well being and the well being of the Planet, we may soon see a great upsurge in people attending Church! A Revival may soon be upon us!

The information on which the article is based comes from the Medical Journal of Australia which has published research papers presented at the first Australian Conference on Spirituality and Health. Apparently there has been a good deal of research in this area. The article says that "in 2006 for example, there were more than 70 published studies examining the relationships between religion, spirituality and health [most were of Judeo-Christian populations in the US].

What did these studies find? One result is that it may add seven years to you life - and in a day when diet and exercise are carefully watched for this very purpose, that must be regarded as an achievement. The article says "One US study found that life expectancy for people who attended church services more than once a week was, on average, seven and a half years longer than those who never attended."

But just when our theological minds were beginning to work, the article dampened our enthusiasm. It says: "But it wasn't a direct reward from God; it was more to do with the fact that people with religious beliefs tend to look after themselves. Having an attitude that life has meaning and purpose suggests you should look after yourself." According to one study religious students were more likely "to have breakfast, eat green vegetables and fruit, take regular exercise and sleep at least seven hours a night."

Another result was good mental and emotional health. The report says "Religious and spiritual people tended to suffer less depression and anxiety and less alcohol and drug dependence and when they did, they had good social and family networks that helped out." It was also claimed that "particular practices have positive biological effects. Prayer, meditation or yoga tend to slow breathing, and reduce heart rate and blood pressure." Apparently any "spiritual" exercises, and any religion can achieve these beneficial effects.

But then comes what we would expect from a secular and humanistic study: Prayer was ineffectual and "religion" could promote "hatred, aggression and prejudice and a source of stress in personal and family relationships." How was prayer proven ineffectual? "In studies of people with cancer and chronic illness, prayer didn't effect a cure or hasten recovery, though many subjects reported improved psychological states." Another danger that was pointed out is that someone might refuse "orthodox medical help in favour of faith healing, increasing their risk of illness and death."

And what were the final conclusions of these august researchers? Not to encourage people to get religious, but that "doctors and other health workers should be aware of the role that religion and spirituality plays in our lives and take it into account in treatment." In other words, it doesn't really matter what you believe. As long as you sincerely believe it, it will do the job. God doesn't really exist, he hasn't spoken in his word, Jesus is a figment of the imagination, and there is no ultimate justice in the world. But as long as we believe in something, we might live longer!

Thank God that he's not left us in the darkness of this manipulative world. He's given us the truth about life, and the world, and himself and his Son - and if we believe in him we shall have, not just seven years added to our life, but eternal life itself. And not only so. Our life here will be enriched immensely, because as the article itself indicates, most of the research came from the "Judeo - Christian population." Those who put their trust in the Lord, shall never be ashamed.

GREENLAND'S WARMER PAST

An article in the "Evangelical Times" for September 2007 draws attention to the discovery of Greenland's Warmer Past. It reads: "Ice cores taken from southern central Green-land and the summit of Greenland's ice sheet have produced sediments suggesting that the island was indeed once green.

DNA from organic fragments has been used to identify what plants and animals lived there in the past. The results, reported by the BBC, showed `that the area was populated by diverse forests made up of alders, spruce, pine and members of the yew family. Living in the trees and on the forest floor was a wide variety of insect life, including beetle, flies, butterflies and moths'. The regions where the cores were taken from are now covered with 2km of ice."

The article also carries the comments of Creation Research, reported *Evidence News*. It says "A change from a temperate forest alive with butterflies and beetles to a 2km thick layer of ice is quite a substantial alteration or climate change. The discovery fits with other evidence - e.g, dinosaur fossils, coal and red soil in Antarctica - that today's polar regions once had a much milder climate. It also fits with the oral history of the Vikings who explored the North Atlantic and reported they settled in Greenland because it was green. Most of all, it fits with biblical history, which tells us the world started out "very good" but suffered a significant catastrophe when God sent the worldwide flood in Noah's time. At the end of the flood, God told Noah hot and cold, summer and winter, seedtime and harvest would continue to the end of the world'."

ARCHIVAL....

REFORMATION CONNECTIONS

Most are aware that the 31st October is the Anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation, when Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the Church Door at Wittenberg in Germany. What has been unknown among us until recently is the connection one of our distinguished ministers had with the Reformation.

It has been discovered that the late Dr. Campbell Andrews was married to a direct descendant of Carlstadt, a great friend of Martin Luther. Members of the Andrews family have been able to trace the line of descent from Carlstadt to their mother, Ruby Andrews [nee],

Writing to the Rev. Alan Tripovich, Jenni Andrews says this: 'I know Dad would have got great enjoyment from knowing this - I can hear him chuckling and saying, "Is that so, well, well, well!' and of course Mum would no doubt have written a good poem about it to entertain us with! They would both have been tickled pink!"

The line of descent is reproduced below. It will be of interest to all history "buffs", and of particular interest to all who knew and loved Campbell and Ruby Andrews. We thank the family for sharing this information with us.

FROM ANDREAS RUDOLF VON BODENSTEIN TO RUBY ANDREWS!

Andreas Rudolf von Bodenstein [known as Karlstadt/ Carlstadt] German theologian and early supporter of Martin Luther
Son of Peter or Rudolf Bodenstein [cellar master]
b. at Karlstadt am Main, Lower Franconia,
c. 1480
d. from the plague at Basle, 24 December 1541
m.19 January 1522 to Anna von Mochau at Wittenberg
[Note: Anna von Mochau was aged 15 – the daughter of a poor nobleman from Segrena. Two of her sisters also married Reformers - one married George Major/Meier, a Lutherian theologian, and another sister married Gerhard Westerburg, known as the Father of Anabaptism].

Adam von Bodenstein
b. 1528 in Kemberg (near Wittenberg), d. 1577 in Basle
m. 26 Feb 1549 at St Peters, Basle, to Esther Weiss.

Salome von Bodenstein
Christened 15 Jan 1551 Basle, Switzerland
d. 23 Oct 1589, Basle.
m. 17 Aug 1584 to Hans Bernhard Schwartz (b. 20 Sep 1562 Basle, d. 4 Sep 1624 Mulhouse, Alsace.)

Hans Paulus Schwartz
b. abt 1586/1588 Giromagny, Alsace
d. 1634 Mulhouse, Alsace
m. about 1624 Mulhouse to Anna Nuefer (b. 2 Sep 1599 Mulhouse, d. before 1676)

Hans Bernhard Schwartz
b. 14 May 1628 Mulhouse, Alsace
d. before 1675,
m. 1651 Zurich (?), to Anna Maria Kuchenmeister (d.abt 1679 Mulhouse)

Anna Barbara(Barbel) Schwartz
b. 26 Aug 1660 Mulhouse, Alsace
d. 14 Sep 1691 Mulhouse,
m. 18 June 1683 Mulhouse to Johannes Schoen (b.13 Mar 1664 Mulhouse, Alsace, d. 6 Dec 1716 Mulhouse)

Johannes Schoen
b. 13 Feb 1687 Mulhouse, Alsace
d. 29 Mar 1735 Mulhouse,
m. 9 April 1714 at Mulhouse to Elisabeth Koechlin (b.24 Jun 1683 Mulhouse, d. 18 Mar 1736 Mulhouse)

Johannes Heinrich Schoen
b. 2 Jul 1724 Mulhouse, Alsace
m. 9 June 1752 Mortlake, Surrey, England to Dorothy Finch (b.19 Jun 1729 Covent Garden London, England.
d. Sep 1778 St Michael Bassishaw, London.)

Dorothy Anna Maria Schoen
b.11 May 1765 London, England
d. 13 Aug 1846 Bracknell, Berkshire,
m. 18 Oct 1796 Cheshunt, Hertfordshire to Rev. John Davies (christened 29 Aug 1769 at Llangadog, Carmarthenshire, Wales, d. 2 Mar 1861 Bracknell, Berkshire.)

Ebenezer Davies
b. 17 Jul 1808 at Tetbury, Gloucestershire, England
d. 15 May 1886 at Armadale, Melbourne, buried at St Kilda Cemetery.
m. 27 Sep 1831 at St. Clement Danes, London to Ruth Bartlett (b. 2 Mar 1812 at St Andrew, Holborn, London, d. 10 Oct 1853 at Halstead Place, Geelong, buried at Eastern Cemetery)

Maria Louisa Davies
b.3 Sep 1832 London, christened at St Giles (Independent), Cripplegate, Barbican, London d. 24 Apr 1877 at Avonside, Christchurch, New Zealand.
m. 25 Jan 1861at Halstead Place, Villamanta St, Geelong to William Henry Elvery (b.4.Apr 1832 at Queen St, Deal, Kent, d. 27 Sep 1910 at Alstonville, NSW)
(Note: Two of Maria Louisa Davies' brothers were on the Legislative Council of Victoria:
Sir John Mark Davies, President of the Legislative Council of Victoria 1910-1919;
and Sir Matthew Henry Davies, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly 1887-1892. Both were Speculators in the Land Boom).

Alfred Lewis Elvery
b. 2 Jun 1874 at Christchurch, New Zealand
d. 19 Oct 1939 at Alstonville NSW
m. 13 May 1902 at Lindendale, Richmond River NSW to Daisy Evelyn White (b. 28 Dec 1882 at Oakfield, Salt Ash, NSW; d. 30 Apr 1973 at 'Rothbury', Alstonville NSW).

Ruby Daisy Elvery
married 14 May 1941 at 'Lilybank' Wauchope to James Campbell Andrews.

MINISTRY MATTERS

The Rev. George Ball continues his Studies in 2 Corinthians

HANDLING CRITICISM
2 Corinthians 10

At last the perfect pastor has been found! He is a church leader that will please everyone! He preaches exactly 20 minutes and then sits down. He condemns sin but never steps on anybody's toes. He works from 8 in the morning until 10 at night doing everything from preaching sermons to cleaning. He makes $500 a week and gives $100 of that to the church. He drives a late model car, buys lots of books, wears fine clothes and has a very nice family. He's 36 years old and has been preaching for 40 years. He's tall on the short side and heavyset in a thin sort of way. His eyes are either blue or brown – to fit the occasion. He wears his hair parted in the middle – left side dark and straight, right side brown and wavy. He has a burning desire to work with the youth and spends all his time with the senior citizens. He smiles all the time while keeping a straight face because he has a keen sense of humour which finds him keeping seriously dedicated. He makes 15 calls a day on church members, spends all his time evangelising non-members and is always found in his office studying when he's needed. Unfortunately he burned himself out and died at the age of 32!

Someone has said, " you can please some of the people all of the time and all of the people some of the time but you can't please all the people all of the time!" This is the first rule a pastor must learn. Douglas Kelly wryly comments, "along with most ministerial salaries comes the added bonus of free criticism." Some of it may be legitimate and helpful and should therefore be heeded. But much of it may be undeserved and untrue but nevertheless hurtful. It comes in a variety of packages but usually has the same intent. How should we respond to such without becoming touchy or demoralised?

The apostle Paul writes here in prospect of his third visit, but mindful of the "painful" second visit. He's addressing criticisms and complaints about him that are flying around Corinth. The culprits behind these accusations seem to be some bigwigs who have come from Jerusalem boasting spiritual pedigree, who are either jealous or suspicious of Paul, and have gained considerable influence in Corinth. They criticise Paul's appearance – he's weak and unimpressive (vs.1; 10); his voice – is contemptible (vs.10); his manner (he's like a rottweiler on paper but a poodle in person); his spiritual credentials – he's unspiritual (vs.2b); and even his motives (he's in it for the money, chap.11). I'm reminded of a series of cartoons under the caption, "Why I don't go to Church", which the late J.P. Struthers of Greenock included in his "Morning Watch." Many of the excuses had something to do with the irritating mannerisms of the minister! Of course it was all a smoke screen. Fact is there are very few people who will be honest enough to say; "I don't like your message. I don't want to submit to God. What you're saying is in the Bible, but I don't want it because I don't want God's authority over my life." Instead of attacking the message, the messenger is the next best thing!

How does Paul respond? How would you respond? Hand in your resignation on the spot? Go in to a spiritual tantrum? Say nothing? George Whitfield on one occasion received a particularly scathing letter of criticism. He replied, "I thank you heartily for your letter. As for what you and my other enemies are saying against me, I know worse things about myself than you will ever say about me. With Love in Christ, George Whitfield."

It's important for us to notice that Paul's response to criticism here is not motivated by any personal pique – otherwise it could safely be ignored. Spurgeon told his students that it was useful for pastors to have one blind eye, and one deaf ear! But what 'fires' him up (and note how he uses military imagery here) is his concern for the Corinthian church and the very Gospel itself. That's worth defending!

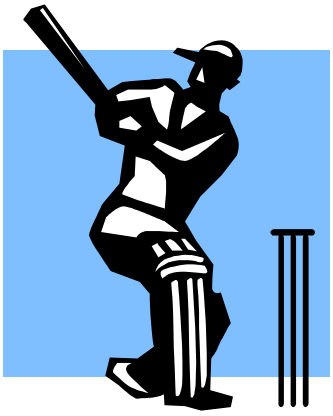
1. He is a Man who is Captive to Christ (vs.1, 5).
WWJD? Or more correctly we should ask, "What would Jesus have me do?" This is the question we should always ask ourselves in every argument and in every attack. That's why he states, " I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." We, like Paul, should want our behaviour to be Christlike. If our behaviour – even how we respond to criticism – is so Christlike, then the criticism will be unbelievable. Our every thought is to be captive to Christ. He is the Captain of our salvation. Meekness and gentleness were typical of Christ. When Isaiah prophesied about the Messiah, he declared that the Servant of the Lord, "will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out." (Isa. 42:2-3). Derek Prime comments, "While always pursuing truth and righteousness, our Lord was never loud, aggressive or threatening, even when wrongly accused or maligned. Meekness and gentleness characterised his earthly life and ministry. As we grow in our knowledge of Him, these characteristics will similarly mark us. They are essential in any pastoral care we exercise."

2. He is a Man who has Confidence in his Spiritual Arsenal (vs. 4-5).
There is a war going on all around us. It's a battle for hearts and minds and souls. We are pitched against the old serpent with his poisonous venom. But with the weapons of the Gospel we have the authority to crush Satan underfoot. We have the Word of God (which is like a rock, a hammer and a sword); we have prayer and faith and the truth of the Gospel, all empowered by the Holy Spirit, which are powerful and effective. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. We can attack the stronghold of the human heart though it is the most fiercely guarded piece of ground in the universe. The message of the Gospel is able to demolish those strongholds, which resist Christ's rule so that every thought is brought captive to Christ. The Gospel applied is able to demolish the twin towers of human opinion and philosophy – just as the tower of Babel was demolished. Goliath

may have sneered at David with his sling. The world may scoff at our message and method. But, "has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world…God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe." We may have to think and alter strategy from time to time, but we never have to change weapons.

He is a Man who has Assurance of his Relationship with Christ (vs.7).

He's assured that he belongs to Christ. He's assured that he has been called and set apart for the work of gospel ministry. Such a conviction is a great asset when criticism and opposition come as they inevitably do. There is great benefit in being able to reflect on the fact that as a minister, you did not take this upon yourself. Rather God called you, and gifted you, and entrusted you with a specific and powerful message, and this call and these gifts have been recognised and endorsed by the church. We believe not only in the perseverance of the saints but of the pastors too!



He is a Man who is not Interested in his Personal Kingdom (vs.8, 12).

One of the distinguishing marks between Paul and his critics is that Paul used his authority to build up the church, while the critics used the church to build up their authority. This is still a useful guide to distinguish the true from the false. The false shepherd is seeking to build a church around himself and make a name for himself. The true shepherd seeks to build a kingdom for God. The false shepherds are in a competition – comparing themselves with themselves and among themselves. They are building little kingdoms that will not last. The true shepherd is building a lasting kingdom. Paul knows the truth of the dictum, "Only one life, 'twill soon be past, only what done for Christ will last." The story is told of one young musician whose concert was being poorly received by the critics. The famous Finnish composer Jean Sibellius consoled him by patting him on the shoulder and saying, "Remember, son, there is no city in the world where they have a statue to a critic."

He is a Man Not Given to Boasting About Himself (vs.13-18).

There is a legitimate boasting – and Paul exercises a little of that here. He rightly takes pleasure in the church plant in Corinth. Corinth was his parish and he wanted to see it consolidated. He wanted to see their faith continue to grow. He saw Corinth also as a stepping stone to take the gospel to regions beyond. These were his twin planks – building up and building out – to the glory of God. These other men however who had crept in were not builders but pests and parasites – who needed to be opposed. They have received their reward – the praise of men. The only reward however that matters is the Lord's commendation. If we should boast, let's not boast in our work for the Lord – but in the Lord of our work.

I write this as Australia in the fifth test of the Ashes has taken a commanding lead (again) due mainly to the lower order of batsmen. Richie Benaud's comment was, "When in trouble or doubt – attack." That's what the Aussie's did – won the match and the series. That's not bad advice when we are under attack in something that is far more important than cricket!

CALVIN – ON OUR CALLING.

"The Lord enjoins every one of us, in all the actions of life, to have respect to our own calling. He knows the boiling restlessness of the human mind, the fickleness with which it is born hither and thither, its eagerness to hold opposites at one time in its grasp, its ambition. Therefore, lest all things should be thrown into confusion by our folly and rashness, he has assigned distinct duties to each in the different modes of life.

And that no one may presume to overstep his proper limits, he has distinguished the different modes of life by the name of callings. Every man's mode of life, therefore, is a kind of station assigned him by the Lord that he may not be always driven about at random. So necessary is this distinction, that all our actions are thereby estimated in his sight, and often in a very different way from that in which human reason or philosophy would estimate them. There is no more illustrious deed even among philosophers than to free one's country from tyranny, and yet the private individual who stabs the tyrant is openly condemned by the voice of the heavenly Judge.

But I am unwilling to dwell on particular examples; it is enough to know that in every thing the call of the Lord is the foundation and beginning of right action. He who does not act with reference to it will never, in the discharge of duty, keep the right path. He will sometimes be able, perhaps, to give the semblance of something laudable, but whatever it may be in the sight of man, it will be rejected before the throne of God; and besides, there will be no harmony in the different parts of his life.

Hence, he only who directs his life to this end will have it properly framed; because free from the impulse of rashness, he will not attempt more than his calling justifies, knowing that it is unlawful to overleap the prescribed bounds. He who is obscure will not decline to cultivate a private life, that he may not desert the post at which God has placed him. Again, in all our cares, toils, annoyances, and other burdens, it will be no small alleviation to know that all these are under the superintendence of God. The magistrate will more willingly perform his office, and the father of a family confine himself to his proper sphere. Every one in his particular mode of life will, without repining, suffer its inconveniences, cares, uneasiness, and anxiety, persuaded that God has laid on the burden. This, too, will afford admirable consolation, that in following your proper calling, no work will be so mean and sordid as not to have a splendor and value in the eye of God."

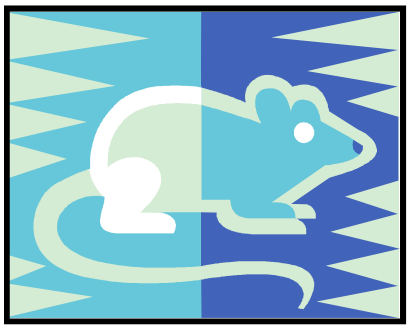
- The Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book 3, Chapter 10, Section 6 [Beveridge's Translation]

Run For Glory

THE MOUSETRAP

A mouse looked through the crack in the wall to see the farmer and his wife open a package. "What food might this contain?" the mouse wondered?

He was devastated to discover it was a mousetrap. Retreating to the farmyard, the mouse proclaimed the warning:
"There is a mousetrap in the house!
"There is a mousetrap in the house!"
The chicken clucked and scratched, raised her head and said, "Mr. Mouse, I can tell this is a grave concern to you, but it is of no consequence to me. I cannot be bothered by it."



The mouse turned to the pig and told him, "There is a mousetrap in the house!" There is a mousetrap in the house!"

The pig sympathized, but said, "I am so sorry, Mr. Mouse, but there is nothing I can do about it but pray. Be assured you are in my prayers."

The mouse turned to the cow and said, "There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!"

The cow said, "Wow, Mr. Mouse, I'm sorry for you, but it's no skin off my nose."
So, the mouse returned to the house, head down, and dejected, to face the farmer's mousetrap alone.

That very night a sound was heard throughout the house – like the sound of a mousetrap catching its prey.

The farmer's wife rushed to see what was caught. In the darkness she did not see it was a venomous snake whose tail the trap had caught.

The snake bit the farmer's wife. The farmer rushed her to the hospital and she returned home with a fever. Everyone knows you treat a fever with fresh chicken soup, so the farmer went into the farmyard to get the main ingredient of chicken soup. But his wife's sickness continued, so friends and neighbours came to sit with her around the clock.

To feed them, the farmer butchered the pig. The farmer's wife did not get well; she died. So many people came for her funeral, the farmer had the cow slaughtered to provide enough meat for all of them. And the mouse looked upon it all from his crack in the wall with great sadness.

And so, the next time you hear someone is facing a problem, and think it doesn't concern you, remember – when one of us is threatened, we are all at risk.

We are all involved in this journey called life. We must keep an eye out for one another and make an extra effort to encourage one another.

Remember: Each of us is a vital thread in another person's tapestry; our lives are woven together for a reason. One of the best things to hold onto in this world is a Friend. And the best Friend is Jesus.

"How good and pleasant it is when brethren live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore."

Psalm 133

PLAYING GAMES

"*They are like unto children sitting in the market-place, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced ; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept."* Luke 7:32.

GOD made boys and girls to play. He made them, of course, that they might do other things too, but He made them to play. Happily for those of us who live in these days we see these things more clearly than some of our forefathers did. The good men of the past did not all look with favour upon play. Even the great and kind John Wesley forbade play at all times. In 1748 when he opened Kingswood School for boarders between the ages of six and twelve, he announced that there would be no holidays, and that no time would be allowed on any day for play. He gave this as his reason that 'he who plays when he is a child will play when he becomes a man'. I don't think we should have liked to go to his school.

Boys and girls have played through all the centuries. In the tombs which have been explored in Egypt there have been found in those of the children the play-things which were theirs. Dolls and models and other toys of which they were doubtless very fond were buried with them. Jeremiah prophesies that in the Jerusalem that is to be, the children shall be seen playing in the streets of the city. Our Saviour watched the children at their games in the market-place, as we can tell from our text, and He saw how their games revealed their character. Some of our most noted men showed by the play of their early years the manner of men they would be.

I. But there are one or two important things to be said about play. In the first place play reveals our character. What we are comes out in our games. It was this fact made our Lord refer to the children playing in the market-place. Possibly He had stood and watched the children as they played. Some of them it would seem had suggested a gladsome game, such as that of the marriage festivities ; but their companions were morose and would not play. Then a suggestion of quite an opposite kind was made-if not at weddings would they play at funerals ? But still their friends were unyielding. So, said Christ, is it with the Pharisees; they would neither accept John the Baptist and his fasting, nor Christ and His rejoicing. The play in the market-place revealed the character of the children. But so it always does ! You can soon tell who is the difficult one to please, and who the selfish one when you join others in their games.

2. Then too our games if rightly entered into are a very fine discipline. We learn to check ourselves. We have to subordinate ourselves to others and to the rules of the game. You have doubtless often heard the expression, 'Let's play the game!' The meaning is, let us do the thing properly; let us keep the rules; don't let us take any undue advantages. To play the game is good discipline. We bring ourselves under control; we work in with others according as the game requires, and that is good for us, for it is their game as well as ours.

3. Our games also encourage the spirit of perseverance in us. There are few games in which we can excel all at once. If at first we don't succeed, as the poem says, we try again. We learn that it is only by putting our best into what we are doing that we can succeed in our games as in other things, and the lesson we thus learn is remembered all through our life. If some boys had not been so persevering on the football and cricket field they would never have been so persevering when they got out into their business and professional life.

4. We also learn a certain considerateness for others in our play. A game is not only to minister to our pleasure but to their pleasure too. If the right spirit is in us we never enjoy a game more than when we see that it is also giving enjoyment to others. A good game teaches us that we have to be partners with one another in producing the happiness of all. One boy alone does not make up a cricket or a foot-ball team ; he must co-operate with many others and they with him.

May our play be such that it shall reveal only those lovable and generous qualities which shall make our character the more attractive. [- John Eames, The Shattered Temple, p. 60.]

SEARCH WORK - NOVEMBER

SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE
Intermediate omit questions 2 and 5

REVELATION - Chapter 15
1. What song did they sing who had the victory over the beast? [2 verses]

Chapter 16
2. What happened when the seventh angel poured his vial [bowl] into the air? [2 verses only]

Chapter 17
3. What was the name written on the forehead of the woman sitting on the scarlet coloured beast?4. Why will the Lamb overcome the ten kings who make war with the Lamb?

Chapter 18
5. What did the angel say when he threw the great millstone into the sea? [1 verse only]

Chapter 19
6. In what clothing was the Lamb's wife to be arrayed?
7. What is the description of him who sat on the white horse? [3 verses]
8. Where were the beast and the false prophet cast?

JUNIOR

GENESIS - Chapter 22
1. What did the Lord command Abraham to do to his son Isaac?
2. What was Abraham's answer when Isaac asked: Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?
3. When Abraham lifted up his eyes, what did he see caught in a thicket?
4. What did the angel of the Lord say when he called to Abraham from heaven the second time? [3 verses]

SEARCH WORK TO: MRS I. STEEL, PO Box 193, EPPING 1710.
E-mail: iesteel@gmail.com

ACTIVITY PAGE.....

60. A Parting Blessing

Paul closed many of his letters in a special way, often called a benediction. One benediction has become so well known that it is called the Apostolic Benediction. It is found in 2 Corinthians 13:14.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

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

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

Find all of the words of this blessing hidden in the word search puzzle. They may be hidden up, down, backward, forward, or diagonally. Words that are repeated in the blessing are found only once in the puzzle.

THE BIBLE.

"Where, then, can a person go that he may see God in this way? The place where God so shines that even the blind can see Him is the Bible. True, it is given in writing - in human language - because it must appeal to our understanding, but God can make that writing a revelation to the sincere seeker. The Bible is thus God's self-revelation, and God, at any moment, can break through the mere language and reveal Himself in such a way that you can sincerely say that you know God But it is only to faith that this revelation is given. It is the eye of the soul, the responsive faculty of the spiritual nature of man, the gateway by which light and all its blessings may come. Let us approach our Scripture reading in this way. First, let us pray to God that His light will break through, and that He will enable us to see Himself there- Then go on to read in a new way with the expectation that we may meet with God."
- Professor R.A. Finlayson, Our Banner, July, 1977.

WEB WATCH... Peter Carswell

APOLOGETICS ON THE WEB

For a few months I had a good discussion with a co-worker about Creation and Evolution and Christianity in general. I think it taught me quite a few things – not all necessary good.

Obviously one is that knowledge is vital. I don't just mean knowledge of Christian things – though obviously it is vital. I think it is also very important to be familiar with the arguments and thinking of non-Christians. I say this with a word of caution from my own experience gaining knowledge of Evolution / Sceptic arguments. While many arguments are merely heated exchanges which really do nothing to convince either side of the other's position, it's important to realise that there are some very smart people who can argue their point very persuasively on both sides. From this flows two issues – keeping yourself firm in your beliefs and being able to counter such arguments.

Forums are a great place to read and become familiar with arguments both for and against Christianity – but without a really solid grounding and ability to argue your point – limiting yourself to reading the commentary is probably a good idea.

Some sites I have found helpful in learning about defending your Christian faith are what we are looking at this month.
http://www.freewebs.com/teenapologetics/ is a site I found recently. I really like the "tone" of the writing – though perhaps not to everyone's tastes - it is very easy to read. I think the author does a commendable job dealing with objections people have.

http://www.christian-thinktank.com/ and http://www.tektonics.org/ are sites I visited quite a bit during my discussions with my workmate. These two website are full of useful material – and I mean lots. If you bailed me up on this point I would have to say I prefer the Christian Think-tank site. I like how some sections are formatted around a question or statement sent to the author, to which he responds. There are many attacks on the authors of these websites by sceptics and other anti-Christian proponents, but I suppose this was what I was talking about in the introduction. Being firmly grounded, and then adventuring into the "other" side of the argument...to gain knowledge of and help understand arguments and reasoning they use. This is not so they persuade you but that when you meet such in your personal life – if you are given the opportunity - you are prepared to give a reason...

I also recently found http://www.reformed.org/creation/index.html It contains many resources, not limited to apologetics and from my quick reading through sections of the site it seems a good source of information.

Followup ...

There was one warning letter passed onto me about the filter software mentioned last month. While I did not have any issues with the software. One person did have some serious problems with the software Optenet Web Filter on a Windows 98 machine. Since I don't run any Windows 98 machine I have not really been able to replicate the problem. If anyone did have troubles and was able to solve it, then I am sure any help would be appreciated.
If you have any problems or comments, send them to the Editor [raymurray@aapt.net.au] and he will pass them onto me.

FILLING OUR NEEDS...

From the General Treasurer

At the close of September 2007 the balances of the main *Working Funds* of the church Synod were:

$ 14,028 Missions (General Funds)
$ 92,018 Missions (DA Anderson Bequest)
$509,824 Missions (Relief Fund – M McSwan Bequest)

$ 25,795 Overdrawn - Missions (TI Leggott Stipend Support)

$ 60,947 Stipend Relief (DA Anderson Bequest)
$ 30,734 Overdrawn - Stipend Relief

$ 92,604 Training of Ministry
$ 10,582 Youth & Fellowship
$ 97,863 Synod General Funds

Two working accounts continue to be overdrawn. As at 30/9/07, *Missions - TI Leggott Stipend Support* ($25,795) and *Stipend Relief* ($30,734).

Receipts for *Missions (General Funds)* for the quarter totalled $2,969 ($793 from congregations and $2,176 from investment income). There were no receipts for *Missions - TI Leggott Stipend Support* for the quarter, but payments of $12,036 have increased the overdrawn balance to $25,795.

The Synod 2007 approved expenditure totaling $8,700 is yet to be drawn from *Missions (General Funds)*. A funding need therefore continues to exist in this area without drawing on the *Missions DA Anderson bequest* balance of $92,018.

Stipend Relief overdrawn balance increased by $11,343 during the quarter.

We are not filling our needs in these areas from offerings/Deacons' Courts donations but continue to rely on bequests and income from Capital Trust investments.

" ... by faith give yourself to Him, and then by charity serve Him with what you have, and then doubt not of a plentiful return" [Thomas Gouge]

CHURCH LIFE..

Beatrice [Trix] Longworth Reports on a Missionary Meeting in Taree, and the Speaker, Mr. Dick McLellan

Mr. Dick McLellan is to speak at a missionary meeting in the Taree Free Presbyterian church (PCEA) on Saturday 3rd November at 7.00 pm. The meeting is being organised by the Taree Ladies Missionary Society who look forward to having a church filled with eager listeners.

Richard (Dick) McLellan trained at the Sydney Missionary & Bible College in 1952/3 where he met Vida Scott. He joined SIM (then Sudan Interior Mission) and went to Ethiopia in 1954. Vida followed several months later and they were married in November 1955 in Addis Ababa and also in Debre Derhan (twice on the same day!) They served with SIM for 23 years, opening up new areas with Ethiopian evangelists in the Omo River area before they had to leave the field with their family.

They continued in missionary service with Gospel Recordings for another 24 years. Dick as the Director of GR Australia. During this time he visited missionaries, evangelists and national church leaders in many countries across Asia, Africa and the Pacific region. This included several three-month visits to Ethiopia during the seventeen year long communist regime which ended in 1991. He held secret teaching seminars for prayer and encouragement of God's people.

There have been eight more such visits for ministry since 1991. Dick and Vida gave three years' service in the Baptist Churches of New South Wales and Dick was President of the Union 2003-2004. He often returns to southern Ethiopia to visit isolated evangelists and to speak at Conventions and training seminars.

Warriors of Ethiopia.

Forward to "Heroes of the Gospel in the Omo River Valley" by Dick McLellan

More than half a century ago God called a young man to leave home in Australia for ministry in Ethiopia. Hardly knowing where it would take him he could not have imagined the journey would bring him into contact with an unusual group of men who would become his companions in the greatest of all enterprises.

Halfway around the globe in Ethiopia, the Lord was calling other men for His purposes. Most of them were farmers from several tribes as culturally and linguistically different from one another as the Irish are from the Italians. One thing they shared in common a love for the Lord Jesus. It was He who had redeemed them from fear of death, from tormenting evil spirits and from the never-satisfied demands of the witchdoctors. Jesus Christ was their Liberator, their Chief. They would serve Him to the ends of the earth, even to death, a resolve that would be tested often in the coming years. Eventually the lives and callings of the young Australian, Dick McLellan, and the intrepid company of farmer-evangelists would intersect. The consequence would be more than cross-cultural companionship, more than mutual encouragement; it would result in taking the gospel into previously inaccessible regions, to people so fierce they would not hesitate to kill an outsider. It was in this way the gospel would penetrate the darkness that had gripped the peoples in and around the Omo Valley for countless centuries.

This little book is about that intersection between the missionary and those Ethiopian evangelists. it is a brief record of some of these chosen men of God who left their fields, the familiarity of their culture, the security of their families and who, with Bible and water bottle in hand and confidence in their Saviour, took the message of Christ Jesus over the mountain ranges and beyong the rivers to those who had never heard of Him. It is about their conviction that people without Christ are truly and eternally lost. It is about their dedication to the One who had said.Go! I'll be with you."

And they went. Today, through the sacrifices and sufferings of men like these, there are thousands of churches throughout the mountains of southern Ethiopia.

No less than the men whose stories he tells Dick McLellan a remarkable man of God. By the time I arrived in Ethiopia in 1967, Dick had already been roaming the hills and valleys with many of Ethiopia's "warriors" for a dozen years. It was principally from him that I, as a young missionary, learned to love these men and to serve alongside several of them. The blessing to me has been priceless.

When we stand before the Lord on that eternal day and He rewards the faithfulness of His servants, I do not doubt that far ahead in the line will be these men receiving a loving "Well done!" from their chief. As for me, hearing these stories again, remind me of how privileged some of us have been in knowing these ordinary men by whom God has been pleased through the "foolishness" of what they preached to save those many who believed their message of new life in Christ. *Bark Fahanestock Tikempt Ishet*, Ethiopia 2006

"***The minister is like a small boat cast loose upon high seas, has become vulnerable to a multitude of perils. Within the church, strong winds are blowing from range of religious consumers who look to the churches and minsters to meet their needs, and who quickly look elsewhere if they feel those needs are not being met. Basically, these consumers are looking for the sort of thing the self-movement is offering; they just want it in evangelical dress. A genuinely biblical and God centered ministry is almost certain to collide head on with the self-absorption and anthropocentric focus, that are now normative in so many evangelical churches***."
- ***DAVID F. WELLS: NO PLACE FOR TRUTH.***

HAMILTON

The two Knox ministers visited Hamilton on 12 September and conducted two meetings at St Andrews Presbyterian Church, whose minister since the beginning of this year has been Rev David Schulz. The first meeting was for the Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union and took the form of an interview of Mr Yoa by Dr Ward. The public meeting in the evening attracting about 28 folk and took a similar format, although with variations to interest some of the children present. For example, how do you cross a river in the Sudan when there are crocs sunning themselves on the bank? Answer: throw a rock into the water; the crocs slither in and look back to see what caused the disturbance. Meantime, you're crossing the river as quick as you can. Our PCEA folk had been encouraged to join with St Andrews and all are finding the preaching and pastoral work of Mr Schulz very good. Mr Pateman is suffering from lymphoma and has had an operation recently. Happily, he is still able to care for his bedridden wife who has a comfortable room in an aged care hostel in Hamilton. Our oldest member at Hamilton is Mrs E. Walter, who is 98 with a clear mind and loving heart. Messrs Yoa and Ward enjoyed the hospitality of St Andrews manse during their stay.

SPRINGVALE (All Nations)

The purchase of the house at Springvale settled on 20 August. Within less than two weeks the inside was professionally painted throughout and much of the fencing renewed. Curtains have also required renewal. The home is currently occupied by the leader of the youth in the Nuer-speaking congregation. Renovation of the brick building at the rear of the corner site involving insertion of a window, two doors, installation of an insulated plaster ceiling and ancilliary work has been completed and provides an office, a kitchenette, and toilet as well as a room about 4 metres by 9 for the ladies mid-week meeting and similar occasions not being public meetings. There is an additional area 8m x 7m attached to the brick building. On Saturday 13 October the first Sunday School was held and was well attended. The building work has been funded by the Hamilton monies with about $27,000 remaining to be held by Synod meantime.

We are still looking for church premises. The premises we currently use in North Dandenong are adequate for the 200 plus congregation, but they do not provide the ancilliary rooms we need to properly conduct Scripture and catechism classes. Your prayers for the solution to this problem and for funding will be appreciated.

The recent negative publicity in regard to the Sudanese community highlights the need for a hand up from governments in the provision of premises for a variety of activities to help offset the consequences of war and trauma. A meeting at Springvale on 12 October of representatives of the Nuer, Dinka, Shilluk, Nuba Mountains and Equatorian peoples keenly supported a proposal by which Dr Ward will approach various authorities to this end.

KNOX

We have been encouraged by an increase in givings which has meant that we have escaped a deficit so far this calendar year. On 14 October it was a joy to baptise young Nathan Joshua, the son of Paul and Leanne Hopkins who have been worshipping with us this year. They will be moving to Singleton Army Base next year as Paul has been transferred in his work.

The three units suited for elderly persons are now almost complete. They are very near the church, shops and medical facilities. Two are similar to those at Maclean while the third is larger. Any reader interested in occupying a unit on a rental basis or by depositing a lump sum on loan or a combination of these is invited to contact Dr Ward on 03 9720 4871.

ARMIDALE

Robert and Sharon Smith are very proud parents of their first child. Nathan Isaac, a big bonny boy, was born into the world on Sunday the 2nd September. We give great thanks to the LORD for his safe arrival.

It was also a joyous time when Samuel Agoi James Marial was baptised during the morning service on the 30th of September. Samuel Agoi is the first born son of James and Mary Marial, a Sudanese family who have worshipped with us since arriving in Armidale in May 2006.

NORTHERN RIVERS.

The Congregation has lost its oldest member. Marie Lawson [See The Presbyterian Banner, September] passed away peacefully on the 4th October.

MUKTI MISSION AUSTRALIA
National Director

Mukti Mission Australia is an interdenominational Christian mission specialising in providing holistic care for disadvantaged women and children in India. Working in close liaison with the Board the Director provides leadership in review, development and implementation of the organization's strategic objectives.

Successful candidates will :-

- ☐ Be able to demonstrate effective management and business skills that will translate into the practical achievement of the organization's objectives including a major focus on fundraising.
- ☐ Be highly motivated and able to personally commit to the organization's vision and values.
- ☐ Have a clear understanding of Christian Missions ethos and values, their role in the community and the importance of volunteer participation.
- ☐ Have excellent written, oral and personal communication skills with expertise to build rapport with all stakeholders.
- ☐ Based in Melbourne interstate and international travel will be required.

For a position description and application details in confidence, contact Stuart Brown stuartgb@optusnet.com.au or mobile 0413 831 463.

Applications close Monday 10 December 2007

Ramabai Mukti Mission Australia Inc.
5 Court Street Box Hill 3128

THE NATIONAL RECOGNITION OF THE TRUE RELIGION

[The National recognition of God, of Christ, and of the Church, commonly called "The Establishment Principle, has fallen on hard times in recent days. It needs to be back on our agenda. As a start we reproduce part of Hugh Matin's address on Jonah 3:6-9. It comes from his book "The Prophet Jonah" reprinted by the Banner of Truth Trust in 1958, pp 276-283]

"*When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust.* [7] *Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink.* [8] *But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence.* [9] *Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish*." Jonah 3:6-9

Certain circumstances connected with the repentance of Nineveh are worthy of particular notice by themselves. We may notice first, the nationality of it; and secondly, the outward indications.

National Repentance

First, then, we may notice the nationality of this repentance. It was a public, general, royal fast. The king himself set the example. "*For word came unto the king, and he arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.*" And he did not merely countenance the proposal of a fast by his example ; or counsel it by his advice. He commanded it by his authority. *"He caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by decree of the king and his nobles."*

There are many such instances in Scripture history of great national fasts called by royal decree, and ob-served by general consent. In our own land, and in our own day, there have been not a few instances of a practice so laudable and impressive-a whole nation at the monarch's call humbling itself before God, confessing provocations, and deprecating His wrath.

Some, indeed, would object to national recognitions of religion, and such royal calls and injunctions to observe its duties. Civil magistracy, they tell us, is a civil, temporal, earthly institution, having under its regulation the affairs of time and the world, and having nothing to do with religion; and the civil magistrate, or chief ruler, they would accordingly prevent from in any way intromitting [letting in] with religious matters - matters belonging, not to time, but eternity, not to this world, but the world to come.

No Neutrality

There are a number of grievous errors wrapt up here in one. It seems to imply that the affairs of this world may and ought to be carried on apart from the affairs and obligations of religious truth and duty; - thus shutting up religion to a territory of its own, beyond which it must not be suffered to trespass. But apart from this, how can religious obligation lie upon the separate individuals of a nation, and yet the nation as a nation be exempt from it? It is certain that nations as a whole may please or provoke God; just as a family may do; just as an individual may do. God deals with a community as a whole, just as He deals with a household as a whole. And as when God is angry with a family, He deals with them in His wrath for their family provocations, so He deals with communities and kingdoms. If a family, therefore, ought to be religious; in the sense that not only are its individuals to be religious, but unitedly, and as in their mutual relations, they are to observe the duties of family religion; it ought to be the same in a kingdom. The father of a family is not only to be a pious man himself, but he is to see that in the united worship of his household, and in religious principles being brought to bear on all its movements, there be a household piety - a family recognition of God.

> ***"… true religion is not a thing to be kept secret between a man's own conscience and God…it will assert and vindicate its influence in all circumstances, and over all the relations in which men stand towards one another."***

No Boundaries

For true religion is not a thing to be kept secret between a man's own conscience and God. No doubt the springs of it are deep seated in the inmost soul and the Christian life is a hidden life. But for that very reason - by reason of the inmost secrecy, and therefore irrepressible power of its principles - it will assert and vindicate its influence in all circumstances, and over all the relations in which men stand towards one another. It will, therefore, guide those in whom it dwells, not merely in their own private relation to God, and in their worship and more immediate duty towards Him, but in the whole in-fluence they can exert over their fellow-creatures,-in all their relations, whether as superiors, inferiors, or equals. But especially as superiors, - where authority belongs to them,- where they have it in their power to " command their households after them," - they will arrange that in all the on-goings of these households God shall be recognised, and His authority and will obeyed. They will say with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord'……..

Personal Responsibility

….Have you any influence, any power, any authority over children and dependants which you may use in your own service and work, but which you would refrain from bringing forth on the side of God? What were this, but selfishly to surround the accomplishment of your own will with securities, which you refuse to adopt to secure observance in your household to God's will? And can it be that in such a case you really honour God? Nay: it is not wholehearted, sincere, thorough-going, and true honouring of God where your government of your household does not call into exercise, when needful, on the side of God, every influence which you can ever rightly use on your own side. If there be a principle of authority - an element of command - vested anywhere in a family at all, religion lays it under contribution to the cause of the Most High- - under call to uphold and promote the observance of His will.

National Obligation

And the same principle holds in a nation. So far forth as a monarch's authority goes, it goes all the length of entitling him to enjoin a fast and a solemn assembly - a public, universal, national recognition of God - the God who is dealing with the nation as a whole, and summoning the nation as a whole to ac-knowledge him. Nature itself teaches this truth. It rises up to view in its own native reasonableness in the hour of solemn thoughtfulness, the hour of sad national calamity. All sophistical objections about the impossibility of making men religious by Act of Parliament then disappear. The truth comes obviously to light, and commends itself to reason and conscience. Well was it for Nineveh that its king was not embued with certain modern notions about magistrates and kings having nothing to do with religion. The city's doom had been sealed by them!

Psalm 2

Can anything be more plain than the duty of kings and all in authority to promote among their subjects the advancement of true religion and the glory of God, as that duty is enjoined in the second Psalm: "*Be wise now therefore, 0 ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way.*" So that it is not merely a dictate and a duty of natural religion, but a revealed command, that monarchs should reign for the glory of God; - yea, that His revealed religion - His holy Word, as it declares the religion of Christ, the Son of God - should be honoured by them; that they should "Kiss the Son." For the Father hath set the Son on the holy hill of Zion - made Him "the Prince of the kings of the earth."

Relation to the Church

This duty does not, of course, permit them to invade the liberties of Christ's Church as a divinely - organised and divinely - ordered society, free to obey Christ as her only Head. On the contrary, it is the doctrine we are now maintaining, - the duty of kings to glorify Christ, to consult His Word, and consult for His honour, - It is this that will alone ever effectually prevent them interfering with the prerogatives of His Headship or the liberties of His people. When we maintain, therefore, as the Church to which I have the honour to belong maintains, that the civil magistrate has no jurisdiction within or over the Church; God forbid we should set it on the ground that he has nothing to do with religion or the Church of Christ at all. Poor foundation, indeed, would that be for the principle maintained! He has so much to do with religion, and is so bound in his public capacity to act under religious obligation and duty to Christ, that he is bound to know and recognise Christ's Church; and then to leave her free to serve Christ in all spiritual things. He is bound to know the truth of Christ; to protect those who maintain the truth of Christ; and to promote by every means in his power their labours to circulate and extend it. He is bound to suppress blasphemy, perjury, Sabbath desecration, and all that necessarily tends to the dishonouring of God and the demoralising of the people.

The Limits of Authority

He cannot command or compel man to be religious. No commandment can make man religious - not even God's commandment can do it. The gospel of the grace of God, rendered effectual by the free and sovereign Spirit of God, can alone renew the heart of man or make him sincerely religious. Spiritual obedience to God neither magistrate nor parent can secure. But is no authority, on that account, to be exercised? Is no obligation, on that account, to be enforced? Does God's own authority cease? Is the obligation to obey God's commandment at an end? His commandment, even, will never make men religious. Is it, therefore, set aside? No, verily. The assertion of law, obligation, and authority, does not rest upon consequences: whether owned or not, the obligation is the same.

Commands as Means

And be it remembered, that while God uses His own authority and gives forth His own commands as means with which He often sends the accompanying grace and power to obey; so a parent or superior may not only use his entreaty, example, persuasion, and exhortation in the hope that God will accompany them with His blessing; but may specially put forth his authority and peremptory command in the same hope that God will bless them likewise, and secure a true obedience - secure the good and righteous end designed. Let parents, masters, and all in authority make the 101st Psalm the rubric of their household or public procedure. "*I will sing, of mercy and judgment: unto thee, 0 Lord, will I sing. I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me. A froward heart shall de*

"It is an evil and a dangerous principle that would exempt the rulers of a kingdom from being in subjection, in their public capacity, to the Word of Christ ...."

part from me: I will not know a wicked person. . . Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight." "*I know Abraham, that he will command his children and his household after him ; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment ; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.*"

Dangers

It is an evil and a dangerous principle that would exempt the rulers of a kingdom from being in subjection, in their public capacity, to the Word of Christ, and from being under obligation in their government to rule for the promotion of His kingdom. It strikes at the root of all family as well as national religion; and while it would confine Christ to the separate consciences of individual men, it would refuse Him the right to govern the households and communities into which, in Providence, they are combined. Its universal and perpetual prevalence would prevent the fulfillment of the promise that "*the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of Jehovah and His anointed One;*" and would subject all nations to the threatening*:"The kingdom and nation that will not serve the Church shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted"* [Isa. 55: 12). Again, we repeat, it was fortunate and good for Nineveh that no such notion prevailed there. Theirs was a national fast, decreed by royal authority.

BETWEEN YOU AND ME .....

Last month I mentioned the prospect of scanning old material, and making it available in digital form. I wondered whether there might be just one person in our Church ready to take part. I'm thankful to be able to report that one person did respond and offer to do some scanning.

That one response makes me bold to ask for more! As I read through the old copies of our church paper, I'm amazed at the amount of Congregational information that found its way into the magazine. And this is all the more remarkable because it's long before the advent of the computer, internet, and e-mail. Difficult as it may be, people made the effort to provide information - and thus, through the magazine, draw the Congregations and the Church closer together.

The Editor would like to report that he's been overwhelmed with information from our Churches. But such is not the case. In fact it's the opposite - mostly silence. Of course information is being transmitted by e-mail, but much of that is of a personal nature - and often doesn't reach everybody. What a difference it would make if someone in each congregation undertook to send regular "news bulletins" to the Editor!

Even a copy of Congregational Newsletters would be of great value. The Editor could then glean a lot of interesting material from them! Unfortunately, it's the old story about that elusive person named "Someone else." It's a job anybody can do, and everybody agrees that somebody should do it, but nobody does it!

On a lighter note, here are two excerpts from the newsletters of other Churches that pass across my desk. The first is from a Presbyterian Congregation in Townsville [Qld].

"The Sunday School Teacher was describing how Lot's Wife looked back and turned into a pillar of salt, when little Jason interrupted.
"My mummy looked back once while she was driving," he announced triumphantly, "and she turned into a telephone pole.""

The second one comes from a Congregation in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand - which clearly demonstrates that the proof is in the pudding!

"Correction. In last week's bulletin the title of the morning's sermon was given as "Just Desserts". It should, in fact, have been "Just Deserts". Apologies for pudding you wrong." [Faith in Focus, October]

It all goes to show that even Presbyterian and Reformed People can have a sense of humour - sometimes! It 's also another reason why we should share!

Coming Event

"CAMP DREWE" @ LENNOX HEAD

Organized by the Brisbane Congregation
[Camp Drewe is approximately 2 ½ hours south of Brisbane and 9 hours north of Sydney.]

Guest Speaker: The Rev. Paul Seiler
Annerley Presbyterian Church, Brisbane

WHEN: Friday, 30th November, to Sunday, 2nd December, 2007, commencing at 7.00 p.m.(EDST) on Friday and concluding on Sunday afternoon.

ACCOMMODATION: Campers in dormitories, with 6 beds per dorm. Accommodation is limited to 112 people.

WHAT TO BRING: Sheets, blankets (or sleeping bag), and pillows; towels and toiletries; hat, sunscreen, swimmers; Bibles!!

COST: Adults, tertiary and secondary students - $60.00
Primary students -$45.00; Pre-school children -$25.00
Children under three years -Free; Family - $200.00
This cost includes all meals from Friday night supper to Sunday lunch

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