

# the presbyterian banner

July 2010



*So God created the great creatures of the sea  
and every living and moving thing with which the water teems,  
according to their kind,  
and every winged bird according to its kind.”*

Genesis 1:21

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## Editorial

It is half through the year already. We are well into the year for Sunday School classes, Bible study/fellowship groups, and Youth groups. So how's it going? Are you going?

And, could I ask, if you're not going to the worship services twice each Lord's Day and attending your local fellowship, does that reflect where you are personally with the Lord?

In my experience, if it is a choice that you personally make, it also shows the low priority the Lord has in your life personally. A low commitment to the church has consequences.

David Feddes compares this with baseball. He points out that attending baseball games "used to be a favourite pastime for many Americans, but these days fewer kids are eager to watch a baseball game. Why? Because they don't play the game themselves. More kids play soccer or some other sport instead, so they have less interest in baseball than their parents had. Once kids stop playing the game in their own day-to-day lives, it's only a matter of time until fewer of them show up for the big events at the stadiums.

And then he goes on: "Likewise, as fewer people worship God in their homes and their day-to-day lives, it's only a matter of time before their children lose interest in the big public gatherings in church on Sundays.

"Now, if kids don't play baseball and stadium attendance's decline, it's no great tragedy. But if daily worship declines and Sunday services eventually go down, it is an enormous tragedy. We deprive ourselves of a rich relationship with God, and we deprive God of the worship He deserves.

"Some parents and churches are alarmed that their children might lose interest in the church. Churches may respond by fine-tuning their Sunday school programs, hiring youth pastors, and redesigning worship to appeal to the next generation. But, for the most part, this doomed to fail. If those young people are not involved in daily worship at home, they simply won't have a daily, meaningful walk with Christ. Their religion will be hollow or they will eventually drop out of church entirely, no matter what the church does. But if their parents and their church teach them the practice of daily worship, these young people will focus on the living God, not on finding church events that pander to adolescent tastes.

"When Jesus called his first disciples, He said simply, "Follow me." He invited them to get to know Him by spending time with Him, talking and listening to Him. That's what Jesus is calling you to do right now. Follow Him. Walk with Him. Spend time with Him each day. Make the Lord the number one priority in your schedule. Nothing else can match the impact of a daily walk with Christ, and nothing is more basic to building a relationship with Him and honouring Him. So get started today!"

*If the parent be not visibly in earnest,  
 it cannot be expected  
 that the child will be so.*

John Angell James

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# “This kind...”

## Understanding Mark 9:29 for Today

This passage (Mark 9.14-32) holds out great and challenging principles for the Church today. Also, it may help us to understand why the churches, in our day especially, are so ineffective.

### The Question

Why is it the Church seems powerless to effect any change in the society in which we live today? There has never been so much Bible study, so much evangelistic activity, so much work, so many conferences — and yet societies and communities, locally, nationally and internationally, grow worse. It is acknowledged by many, if not all, that we are the most educated generation that ever lived: the most wealthy, the most sophisticated, the most aware of our needs health-wise, and blessed with so much scientific knowledge. Yet in the midst of all this we are the most miserable and unhappy generation that has ever been on this planet. We have more problems: a shamefully high suicide rate, broken families, corruption in government institutions, bigger prisons. The Evangelical Church has never been so committed and yet is unable to make any impact on society. Why? We need to look at the principles taught in the above text.

### The Context

The disciples had been unable to cast out from a young boy a mute spirit, even though they had been given power and authority to do so (Luke 9.1). It then fell to the Lord to command the deaf and dumb spirit to come out of the boy and enter him no more (Mark 9.25). The disciples later enquired of Jesus the reason for their failure and it was then that Jesus said, ‘This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.’

### Today’s Setting

I see the young boy as representative of the world in which we live. On the other hand you have the disciples as representatives of the Church. And just as Jesus told them that ‘this kind’ can come out by nothing but prayer

and fasting, He says the same to the Church today.

The first thing we need to do is to assess the real problem. Let me put it this way. Suppose you’re walking down the street and you see a man lying there, motionless. There are various reasons why he could be lying there and you will need to assess the situation before you can assist him. He may be asleep from sheer exhaustion. If that is the reason, you merely need to wake him up. Or he may have some serious injury that you need to assess before helping him. Or maybe he is on drugs. Here’s another way of putting it. We are dealing with societies today that are not the same as 200, 100, 60, or even 50 years ago. When peo-

*“Jesus said to them,  
‘This kind can come out by nothing  
but prayer and fasting!’”*

Mark 9.29

ple prayed last century, the Lord poured out the blessing of revival. But we’re not dealing with the same situation now. In those days people knew there was a God; that this God was the Creator; that He is the sovereign God. They may not have been believers, but even though they were not practising Christians at least they knew there was a God and that the Bible was the Word of God. But today there is no knowledge of God. The people in the streets have no conception of Him. Science has taken that idea away. ‘We have our evolutionary theory. God is finished. There’s no such place as heaven,’ they say. We need to grasp their thinking. If we do not, our evangelistic campaigns will fail over and over again, because we are still thinking in the last century.

Added to this, there are many churches around us who no longer believe that the Bible is the Word of God. They will tell you the Bible contains God’s Word; but because of the

## Sam R. Tamata

philosophy of Karl Barth and others in the past, it only becomes God’s Word if it is meaningful to you. If that’s the case you could pick up any newspaper and read it. If it is meaningful to you, it is God’s Word! If we deny the authority of Scripture, who else is there to speak to the world? If we lose God’s Word, we lose everything. This is the channel through which God is pleased to make His mind known to man. Without this we are lost, we have nothing, no foundation, no truth, no hope. We are lost, doomed. The world today treats the Bible like any other book, denying its inspiration. This has a tremendous effect on society. Removing the authority of Scripture affects our government institution so that legislation is passed which makes wicked good. The gay movement is acceptable by every government department. Every government in the western world is bending over backwards to accommodate this wicked practice, legislating for it: the western world which was established on the principle of the truth of God!

### Today’s Church

Let’s look closer at the Church. What is happening in the Church today? Another gospel is being preached: the Charismatic gospel, the Arminian gospel where God is stripped of His power and of His sovereignty. ‘Christ died and now it’s up to you. If you can’t believe that, you’re lost. God can do no more.’ Now what kind of God is that? It is certainly not the God who speaks in Scripture. You see what we’re dealing with? Churches are bending over backwards to make the gospel user-friendly.

The gospel is the most radical news the world has ever heard, and it is only by the grace of God that you and I have come to believe the truth. I remember, and I’m sure you do too, the first time we heard the gospel. How I hated the theme, ‘You

must be born again.' Get away from me, I said! I didn't want to hear the gospel. I hated it. And it is only by the grace of God — His goodness, mercy and kindness — that I've come now to acknowledge and to receive it with joy.

You see what's happening today? Our popular evangelism has become entertainment. The preaching and exhortation of the Word is neglected. We want entertainment. We want to be shouting and dancing and making animal noises (*preached about the time of the Toronto Blessing and the Laughing Revival!*) and all the rest of it. And we think that will impress the world!

That is the problem today. That is why Jesus said, 'This kind.' We need to assess accurately what is happening both in society and in the church.

### The Solution to the Problem

The Lord reminds us that the solution is by prayer and by fasting. It is not enough for you and me simply to be sitting here acknowledging the problem. We must feel before God our utter helplessness and emptiness. We must feel desperate about it. Until the Church realises how desperate the situation is, nothing will happen. We will just all sit back and say, 'Well that was a good word tonight' and then we go back home, and that's the end of it. No! The Lord is reminding us here that this kind can come out by nothing but by prayer. The Lord is saying this kind *can* come out. Yes, it *can* be broken. That is the great promise. It can come out, but not by sleek sales-

manship; not by making it user-friendly. No. This kind can come out by nothing but prayer. This is what we need to do. We need to pray. We need to pray that the Lord will pour out His power.

Do you ever pray that the church or the people of God may be filled with the power of God? You see, these things that are happening in the world have taken away our sensitivity. We ourselves are guilty of coming to church for entertainment. We should be wrestling with God! When the Word is preached let us pray that the Lord will come in power, that His power will fill the Church of God, that He will bless His Word and that the people of God may be filled with power. But before that comes, we must recognise how futile and weak and helpless we are. God's power and our weakness are not to be regarded as mere theological propositions. They are realities that relate to us and to twentieth-century men and women facing and confronting the reality of the world today. They are real in my own being. Do I have a longing and a desire that God may yet work and move and act within me? To this end, I must recognise I am helpless and plead that God will fill me with His power and His grace. This kind can come out by nothing but prayer.

Sometimes we come to prayer and we think, 'Oh well, that's not important. Maybe the Lord will answer it.' But prayer is the acknowledgement of our need, of our dependence upon God, and we come pleading God's mercy; pleading that God's grace and riches will supply the need of the

Church.

Fasting, as a word, can be taken either literally or metaphorically. In fasting you have the implication of the concentration of mind. You seek something and your mind concentrates — is focussed upon the thing that you desire. This is what the Lord is saying to us. The Church, you and I, must acknowledge our own helplessness and pray. We must focus our mind on the reality of the society in which we live, and the need of men and women to be touched by the gospel of the living God.

May the Lord grant you the desire and the passion to pray until there is nothing else coming out in your voice, in your pleading with God. The Lord will hear the cry of His people. The cry must come from our desperate desire and need, the longing that He may yet be magnified in the world today. Pray that God in His mercy and love and power will come to us and fill us: fill this church and this ministry, fill His ministers with the Word, and with the power of God that will affect all of His Church and the society we live in. Pray and fast, that He may yet in our day visit us.

*The Rev. Sam. R. Tamata is the minister of the Word & Sacraments in the PCEA congregation of the Hunter-Barrington. This was preached at Newcastle on 1/11/1998.*

## The Past for Today

### What about the last things? (1)

Rowland S. Ward

In Justin Martyr (103-165) about AD 150 we see belief in Christians as the true Israel, and while Jews are to be evangelised it is not evident that large-scale conversion is envisaged. Justin advocates a form of pre-millennial teaching in which antichrist proper was equivalent to the man of sin and was an individual - possibly a Jew - destined to overthrow the Roman Empire and establish a wicked

and tyrannical rule for three and a half years based on a rebuilt Jerusalem. He would quickly be overthrown by the return of Christ, and an earthly millennial (1000 year) reign would follow. Justin states many held this millennial or *chilastic* view, but also admits that many true Christians believed otherwise. The Alexandrian school, for example, took a more allegorical approach. The literalist ap-

proach of Justin and others probably owes a great deal to Jewish attitudes to biblical interpretation which looked for a restored Jewish kingdom. The eloquent Lactantius (ca 240-320) in Asia Minor was another who taught a future literal 1000 years of the reign of Christ. At any rate, in these men we see what is essentially the **futurist** view of unfulfilled Bible prophecy.

### The Historicist view

As time went on without Christ's return the **historicist** view developed which saw the Book of Revelation as an unfolding of history in advance so that each symbol could be identified with a specific historical event, usually taking it in chronological sequence, but sometimes recognising a structure involving recapitulation. Lactantius was neglected in the Middle Ages until his literal millennium was taken up by others influenced by Joachim of Fiore (1135-1202), such as the Franciscan Alexander Minorita who wrote a commentary on the Revelation around 1240. Alexander regarded the millennium as running from 326 (the time of Constantine) to 1326 or soon after. Another Franciscan Nicholas of Lyra was influenced by Alexander, as well as by Jewish exegetes such as Rashi, and issued his lectures on Revelation in 1329. Nicholas in turn influenced Luther and Protestant approaches to interpreting Revelation in an historicist way.

### The Idealist view

The **idealist** view regards Revelation as giving the history behind history using symbolic language to describe the spiritual factors operating in every age. Augustine (354-430) at one time accepted the chiliastic futurist position. However, in his *City of God* (ca 420) he sufficiently confuted it for it to gradually die away, although, contrary to some recent claims, it was never condemned by any of the early councils of the Church. Tyconius, the dissident Donatist (fl. 375), and Augustine, later followed by such as the Venerable Bede (673-735), viewed the visions of the Book of Revelation as a kind of recapitulative treatment of the basic problems faced by the church in every age. The millennium was generally seen as the whole period of church history until Christ returned. It was not a literal 1000 years. Belief in the conversion of the Jews near the end of history was common, based on Romans 11, but the idea that 'the first resurrection' of Revelation was literal rather than spiritual, was firmly rejected. Interestingly, it is Augustine who develops a more positive attitude to the Jews than had previously existed. He considered that they should not be persecuted for they were a wit-

ness to the truth of Scripture.

### The Praeterist view

The final viewpoint is the **praeterist**. It sees Revelation as fulfilled in the early period either in the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 or in the collapse of the Roman Empire in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. This view had little currency beyond these events. The Jesuit scholar Luis Alcazar (1554-1613) revived it and of course it was a useful counter to the general Protestant historicist interpretation which saw the Papacy as the antichrist.



Justin Martyr

### Protestant interpretation

'The more or less universal conviction of the Protestants of the 16th and 17th centuries was that the Book of Revelation should be interpreted after the historicist model. They considered that the predicted antichrist or man of sin was most fully and clearly expressed in the papal system as represented in the Pope, and most thought this tyranny had existed since about the time of Hildebrand who became Pope Gregory VII in 1073. They believed the Reformation to be a decisive blow against 'the man of sin', and in general did not think the end of the world and the return of Christ was far away. In common with much of the church of earlier ages they thought that Romans 11 indicated conversion of the Jews would occur near the end of history.

A few radicals in Luther's time thought of a future millennium, usually in the

near future, involving the earthly reign of the saints, and date setting was not infrequent among them. The first creedal condemnation of this chiliasm in its more extravagant form, as in Thomas Müntzer (1488-1525), occurs in the Lutheran *Augsburg Confession* of 1530, Article 17.

### Calvin's view

Although Calvin did not comment on the Book of Revelation as such, he viewed the millennium as referring to the trials of the church as she toiled on earth, and he dismisses futurism. In other words the theology of the cross is not eclipsed in his thinking, and it looks as if he is basically Augustinian. He does recognise the Papacy as the predicted Antichrist. He does not tie the millennium of Revelation 20 to a past or future age, but he does write in a very positive vein of the *present* kingly reign of Christ. Thus, in the Preface to the *Institutes* written in 1536 he states:

"We, indeed, are perfectly conscious how poor and abject we are: in the presence of God we are miserable sinners, and in the sight of men most despised... But our doctrine must stand sublime above all the glory of the world, and invincible by all its power, because it is not ours, but that of the living God and his Anointed, whom the Father has appointed King, that he may rule from sea to sea, and from the rivers even to the ends of the earth; and so rule as to smite the whole earth and its strength of iron and brass, its splendour of gold and silver, with the mere rod of his mouth, and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel; according to the magnificent predictions of the prophets respecting his kingdom (Dan. 2:34; Isaiah 11:4; Psalm 2:9)."

Calvin also thought 'all Israel' in Romans 11:26 referred to all believers from Jew or Gentile gathered throughout history as the one true final Israel of God (cf. Romans 9:6). Not all agree, but personally I think Calvin is exactly right.

# Give careful thoughts to your ways

## Moderator's Opening Address on Haggai 1

George D. Ball

This little book of Haggai has been a blessing to me this past year. I would like to share with you some of its challenges and encouragements.

Note that it's very carefully dated: it's like four pages out of the prophet's diary covering the period August - December 520 BC – see 1: 1, 2: 1, 2: 10 and 2: 20.

The first date is 29<sup>th</sup> August 520 BC (according to Joyce Baldwin's dating). This was when the people had been back from Babylon for about 16 years, and it was to be a red-letter day. You can read about it in Ezra 1: 1-4. Ezra 3 records how the returnees made a start on the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, and Ezra 4 tells us how it stalled because of various threats and hindrances and opposition. So for about 15 years the Temple site lay unfinished with rubble, weeds and litter covering the site. (Like 'McCaig's Folly', that dominates the skyline of Oban). That's how things were. A kind of spiritual apathy and complacency prevailed until Haggai and his fellow prophet Zechariah (Ezra 5: 1) broke the prophetic silence on 29<sup>th</sup> August and stirred the people into action.

### 1. The People's Complacency (Haggai 1:2)

No one disputed the necessity of rebuilding the Temple – one day – some day. They simply believed that now was not the time. Rebuilding the temple for them was like trying to get out of bed on a cold, dark, wet morning. You know you should – but 'not just now'! Besides, there were other pressing demands:

It was harvest time and everyone was busy.

These were difficult economic times. There was ongoing drought. Harvests were bad. Income was down. Money was scarce. Things were tight. The economy was in recession. Inflation was rampant. Not the time for building!

There was still danger from the Samaritans. They hadn't gone away!

Perhaps some of the theologians were saying that the 70 years of exile foretold by Jeremiah (Jer. 25: 11-12) had not yet been completed and therefore the time was 'not yet'. (If they counted the captivity from 586 BC – and added 70 – the result was 516!) But that was just Pharisaic hair splitting.

Perhaps there were some pious souls who said, 'We only want the best for God! Until we can do the job right, 'the time is not yet.' So for 15 years, Temple rebuilding was at a standstill.

### 2. The Prophet's Complaint (Haggai 1:3-4)

The prophet rejects these excuses! (v.4) That's what they were. His challenge was inescapable and laced with sarcasm. He points to a glaring inconsistency in their lives. 'If now was such a bad time to build God's house, why was it time for them to dwell in their luxury wood panelled houses? There was time and money for them to make nice houses with luxury trimmings to live in – but God had no house to live in.' Yes, there's always time for what is important. They can build what they want to build. Now, there's nothing

wrong with settling down and building a nice house. But if it is a substitute for what we are supposed to be doing – then trouble begins. These people had been brought back from exile not in order to have a comfortable life living in chic homes, but so that they might be committed first and foremost to God and His worship. It seemed OK for them to have a modern house to live in – but there was no house for God. This was a case of double standards: 'one for me, and a lower one for God'!

To understand the force of the prophet's challenge we need to understand a bit about the Temple. The Temple was not just a grand building – an iconic piece of architecture. Of course it was that – just as the Opera House and the Harbour Bridge are to Sydney. But the Temple was more than that. The Lord promised that He would live in His House – and live at the heart of His people. The 'House' was a pledge of the indwelling of the Lord. (See 2 Samuel 7: 1-11). The Temple was a visible sign of God's presence in the midst of His people. To leave the House unbuilt implied that it was a matter of indifference to them whether the Lord was among them or not. It implied that they could manage just as well without His indwelling presence. The Prophet reminds them of the consequence of their spiritual indifference and neglect (See verses 5-6, 9-11). For all their busyness, they had not been achieving the goals they had hoped for. The rewards never seemed to match the effort. They planted much but harvested little.

It seemed as if they were on a treadmill going nowhere. Just like running up the escalator that was coming down faster than they were climbing. They never seemed to have enough! The economy was stagnant, inflation was rampant and there never seemed to be enough money.

Why was this happening? They should have known! The economic stringencies had a moral and spiritual cause. This was nothing more than the judgement of God upon them for their covenant breaking (v.10-11). The drought was a result of God's house lying in ruins. They had put their own interests before God's and were now reaping the consequences – a life of futility, frustration, disappointment, disillusionment and dissatisfaction. What's the answer to this predicament? (See v.7-8). The solution was straightforward. Change your ways! (Repent). Abandon your excuses. Get your lives sorted. Get up into the mountains – and instead of gathering wood to panel your own houses, gather wood for God's house. 'Build the House!' Don't delay. Instead of your pleasure, seek God's pleasure. Until you change, you can hardly expect to see better harvests! As the Saviour said, 'Seek first the kingdom of Heaven and His righteousness.' (Matt. 6:33).

### 3. The People's Change (v.12-15).

A wonderful response! It was immediate. How encouraging! They received Haggai's word not as the word of man but as the very word of God. They recognised that God had sent this man. He was the Lord's messenger with the Lord's message. The Word struck home to their hearts! They feared the Lord (12c). They recognised God's justice in judging them. This was real repentance – with

fruit following. 'They came together and began work on the House of the Lord...' (v.14c). The work began on the 24<sup>th</sup> day - a mere 3 weeks after Haggai preached. That's how quickly situations can change when the Spirit of God is present and when He chooses to bless. This is a measure of the power of God at work. It's encouragement in our own day. What our world needs is an authentic and authoritative word spoken from the Church to our day and generation.



### 4. The Challenge for Us

We don't have a Temple to rebuild. The Temple has been destroyed and need never be built again. Does this mean Haggai has no relevance for us today? Not at all.

Can we not identify with the analysis (v.5-6)? 'Give careful thought to your ways.' Examine yourselves. Take a good hard look at yourselves. Conduct a spiritual stock-take. Is there not a drought in the Church? Is there not a drought in many of our lives? There is much effort and energy expended. But where is the harvest? Is not God withholding His blessing from our church? Are we seeing growth in our own lives? Are we seeing victory over besetting sins? Are we seeing fruit for the seed sown? Are we seeing growth in grace and holiness? Do we see

men growing and maturing in the faith? Are we seeing women becoming better wives and mothers and examples? Are we seeing fruit in our evangelism? Are we seeing people converted? Do we experience a sense of God's presence when we meet for worship on the Lord's Day?

If not, we must ask ourselves – why not? We really should make some time this week to examine our lives and see if (and why) God's blessing is being withheld. Can we not identify with Haggai's answer? (v.7-8). Change your ways! Get up into the mountains and start rebuilding. God's house is to have priority over everything! He is to be central. We must be prepared to put first things first – in our lives, in our homes and in our families. The Temple for us today is not a building in Jerusalem – but a Person in heaven. Our priority today is the worship and service of God through Christ. Our aim and goal is the honour and pleasure of God. This should be at the heart of the Church's programme. This is what we should be known for. We should plead like Jacob, 'I will not let you go unless you bless me.'

I conclude with an old illustration made famous by the Navigators. It's a picture of a wheel. Christ is at the centre – the hub. The spokes connecting the hub to the rim are – **the Word; Prayer; Witnessing and Fellowship**. The power of the Christian life is from the hub, transmitted through the spokes to the rim. Christ must be central and pre-eminent. He must have the supremacy. If He has, then today can be a red-letter day for us.

*The Rev. G. D. Ball is the minister of the Word and Sacraments in the Manning River congregation of the PCEA. Presently he is also serving as the Moderator of our denomination and this sermon was delivered during his moderatorial address.*

# The Book of Mormon: Fact or Fiction?

*Norman De Jong*

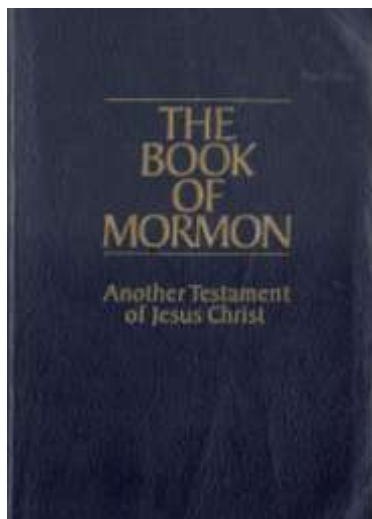
Ah! The majestic music of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir! We love their music. We are almost ready to embrace them. We are almost ready to remove the Mormons from our list of cults and welcome them into the Christian camp. But first, we ought to examine the issues. We ought to take this whole religious endeavor, with all its writings and moral trappings, before the throne of God. We need to be on guard, for there are many false prophets afoot and many religions that distort the truth of God.

## The Claim

On September 21, 1823, outside the village of Manchester, New York, Joseph Smith lay in his bed, praying, musing, and meditating. Allegedly, an angel named Moroni, the son of Mormon, appeared in his room in a bright light and instructed him to wait four years and then dig up, on the highest hill in the region, "a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent." He would also find "two stones in silver bows ... fastened to a breastplate ... called the Urim and Thummin ... that God had prepared for the purpose of translating this book" (Book of Mormon, introduction, page 3).

These plates contained "the fullness of the everlasting gospel, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants" of North America. These ancestors of the American Indians, called the Lamanites, supposedly were Israelites who had left Jerusalem in 600 B.C. and come to America. Their sacred record was sealed in A.D. 421 and hidden, to be brought forth in 1827 by Joseph Smith (Book of Mormon, "A Brief Explanation," page 6). Smith was permitted, he says, to show the golden plates only to eleven men (most of whom were related to him or to his associate, David Whitmer). These men testi-

fied that the plates were real and were actually buried on that hillside. Joseph Smith, however, was the only one able to read and translate them, for he held the Urim and Thummin. His rendition of their contents was published in 1830. Smith asserted that his role in history had been prophesied by Joseph in Egypt. He also claimed that he was in the line of Moses and that he was commissioned by God to reveal the modern law and divine decrees to the "latter day saints," that is, the American Indians (Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 3:1, 4, 7, 9).



Joseph Smith and his followers were harassed and driven from place to place. Their weird religious views, and especially their practice of polygamy, were offensive to most Americans. Smith himself was killed by a mob, and his followers, led by Brigham Young, finally found peace in what later became the state of Utah. Their population grew rapidly, and they have spread their message around the globe. Today, they claim 5.8 million members in the U.S. and 12.9 million worldwide. What is of concern to us here is their claim for the Book of Mormon. The opening line of its introduction will tell you, "The Book of Mormon is a volume of holy scripture com-

parable to the Bible." It contains the words of "many ancient prophets," which were "quoted and abridged by a prophet-historian named Mormon" and later enlarged by his son Moroni. It "puts forth the doctrines of the gospel, outlines the plan of salvation, and tells men what they must do to gain peace in this life and eternal salvation in the life to come." It is "the keystone to our religion."

As one reads through the Book of Mormon, one is struck by the way in which fictitious narrative passed off as historical fact (lacking any corroboration from history or archaeology) is interspersed with lengthy quotations from the biblical book of Isaiah. In 1 and 2 Nephi, there is much which is fanciful fabrication, clothed in theological garb. Then suddenly, in 2 Nephi 7 and 8, Isaiah is quoted extensively—from the King James Version! After a collection of fanciful prophecies in 2 Nephi 9–12, chapters 12–24 quote verbatim from Isaiah 2–14. Just as abruptly, ancient Israel is then linked to Smith and to the "latter-day saints" in America. Where does fiction end and fact begin? What is original musing and what is blatant plagiarism?

## Questions for Mormons

If we are to confront this religion, it is wise to be prepared with good questions—pointed questions that get at their underlying assumptions. Here are some questions that we should all be asking:

1. If the Book of Mormon is "a companion to the Bible," do you encourage your members to read and study the Bible? Do your ministers ever preach from the Bible? Is the Bible a reliable source, or is it flawed in some way? Is the Book of Mormon su-



perior to the Bible? What grounds do you offer for your answers?

2. If Mormon compiled and wrote the ancient records on the golden plates, does he take the place of Jehovah? Is he superior to the God of Israel? Why is he nowhere mentioned in the Bible, which is supposedly a "companion piece"? Is there anywhere in history, outside of Joseph Smith's dreams, where he is mentioned?

3. Isn't it contrary to the first commandment to set someone up in place of God? Isn't that precisely what God warned against? Have you considered the implications of God's own claims that he is a jealous God (Ex. 20:5; 34:14)? Do you fear him?

4. Why was God silent from 421 to 1823, when he suddenly revealed himself to Joseph Smith? Why did Moroni insist that the golden plates be kept hidden by Joseph Smith? What sense does it make to hide and disguise divine revelation? Would it not have been wiser to display these plates, if real, as much as possible, so as to satisfy questions of authenticity?

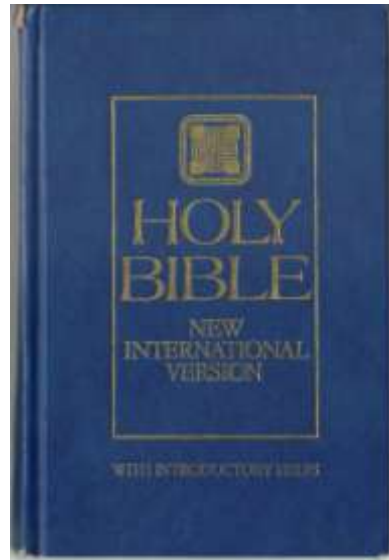
5. What is the key to the salvation of souls? Is it obedience to the rules and commands of Mormon? Are people saved by good works and obedience to the law, or by grace, as the Bible declares? What do you do with Ephesians 2:8–9?

6. What does the Book of Mormon do with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ? Why does the Book of Mormon give so little attention to that focal point of Christian theology? Christ's death and resurrection are absolutely essential to orthodox Christianity. Is it also for Mormons? Why not?

7. Is Joseph Smith guilty of plagiarism when he quotes numerous chapters from the book of Isaiah and then claims that they are some new revelation from God given only to him? Do the brief editorial statements ("Compare with Isaiah 2," etc.) deter charges of plagiarism or call attention to them?

8. The Bible tells us that it is a serious offense to God if we either add

to his Word or take things away from it (Rev. 22:18–19; Deut. 4:2; 12:32). What gives Joseph Smith and his followers the right to ignore this command?



### Joseph Smith & James Fennimore Cooper

There are numerous similarities between the writings of James Fennimore Cooper, the first popular American novelist, and the Book of Mormon. Cooper's first popular novel, *The Spy*, was published in New York in December, 1821; *The Pioneers* came out in February 1823. Both novels are set in the hills near Otsego, not far from Smith's hometown of Manchester. Approximately seven months later, on September 21, Joseph Smith's "vision" occurred.

Cooper's primary theme is that of the noble savage. He defends the righteousness and cultural superiority of the American Indians. Indian John, his first hero, is the last of his proud race, but is old and broken, having been corrupted by the white settlers. His more familiar hero is Natty Bumppo, an Indian of noble birth and noble purpose who resists the encroachment of white civilization and its evil tendencies. In a similar vein, the Book of Mormon purports to be a divine revelation to the latter-day saints of North America, who happen to be Indians descended from the mythical people called "the Lamanites."

Did Smith read *The Spy*? Did he share Cooper's hostility to the Puritans and their commitment to orthodox Christianity? Did he share Cooper's disdain for women and reduce them to the baby-producers necessary to a polygamist society? Are the "noble savages" of Cooper's novels the "latter-day saints" of Smith's vision? Such questions need to be asked. The similarities are too numerous to be mere coincidence.

### Conclusion

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, aka the Mormon Church or the LDS Church, is not willing to give first place to the Word of God. They have, in their estimation, a better, more complete, and more accurate account of what Jesus wants us to believe and how he wants us to live. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is really forced to play second fiddle to the prophet-priest Mormon. Mormon, like Mohammed in the Muslim religion, is superior to Jesus Christ. In Mormonism, the Book of Mormon takes precedence over the Bible. Although the Book of Mormon contains numerous quotes from Scripture, they are highly selective and seem to support the vision that Joseph Smith wanted to embrace. The book, in summary, is fascinating fiction, interspersed with enough quotations from Holy Writ to give it the appearance of divine origin. But closer examination reveals highly speculative theology that takes extreme liberties with the truth and can only be described as a false religion.

*The author is pastor of Fremont OPC, meeting in Fremont, Michigan, USA. Reprinted from New Horizons, June 2010.*

# The World in the Banner

## Ninth Commandment Issues from within Liberty University

A 3 May 2010 article by John W. Kennedy in Christianity Today titled "Bloggers Target Seminary President" reports that Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary President Ergun Caner is under fire from several sources for embellishing the details of Caner's biography and qualifications for being a Christian apologist on Islam. The alleged embellishments include:

- Claiming to have grown up in Turkey when he actually grew up in Ohio;
- Claiming to have been raised in a devout Muslim home instead of in a nominally Muslim home;
- Claiming to have been involved in Islamic jihad; and,
- Claiming to have debated dozens of Muslims about Islam, when there is no audio or video evidence of said debates.

Dr. James R. White, director of the Phoenix, Arizona-based Alpha & Omega Ministries, a Reformed Baptist Christian apologetics ministry, said of Caner: "The president of a large theological seminary has created a myth concerning his background that is incredibly self-contradictory."

Liberty's Board of Directors so far has taken no action against Caner. Dr. Elmer Towns, Liberty co-founder and dean of the School of Religion said that a Board inquiry had found Caner to have done nothing theologically inappropriate, and said: "It's not an ethical issue, it's not a moral issue. We give faculty a certain amount of theological leverage. The arguments of the bloggers would not stand up in court."

Dr. Towns attributes the level of attack against Caner to his well-known anti-Calvinist positions. Dr. White, in a 16 April 2007 blog arti-

cle titled "Jerry Falwell Identifies Calvinism as Heresy" said that Caner had refused to apologize for saying that Calvinists are worse than Muslims.

Another 3 May 2010 article by Trevin Wax on Crosswalk.com titled "Undercover at Thomas Road: An Interview with Gina Welch" transcribes a question and answer session by Wax of Welch, who is the author of *In the Land of Believers: An Outsider's Extraordinary Journey into the Heart of the Evangelical Church*, that Wax says "tells the story of how Welch faked a conversion experience, got baptized, and spent two years at Thomas Road Baptist Church.... [Welch] even participated in evangelism on a mission trip. During this time, she kept a detailed journal of her experience, which she has now turned into a book that chronicles her journey into evangelical America."

Liberty University is an associated ministry of Thomas Road Baptist Church.

+ *Christianity Today International*, [mwhite@christianitytoday.com](mailto:mwhite@christianitytoday.com)

## New, Free iPhone App Gives Access to Ligonier Ministries Resources

In addition to the thousands of Apps (applications) available for the iPhone from Apple Inc., including the built-in Maps and Compass App and Safari Browser App, to an under US\$10 Savannah, Georgia, Walking Tour App, comes a free Ligonier Ministries App (LMA), available on the Apple iTunes website.

The LMA offers the following capabilities:

- Listen to or watch the Renewing Your Mind daily broadcast.
- Read a daily Bible devotional.
- Enjoy thousands of free messages, articles, and devotions in

the Learn section.

- View learning resources grouped by Topic, Teacher, Scripture, or Type. You'll find great teaching from leading pastors and theologians such as Alastair Begg, Sinclair Ferguson, Albert Mohler, John MacArthur, John Piper, Ravi Zacharias, and many more.

- Stay-up-to-date with more articles, devotions, and Ligonier Ministries news and events from our blog.

- Share anything you find with your friends

on Facebook, Twitter or email.

+ *Ligonier Ministries, 400 Technology Park, Lake Mary, Florida*

## It's About People

If we are asked about the ministries of our church, we usually answer in terms of structures and programmes: men's fellowship, Sunday School, Youth Club, women's Bible study, and so on. If our pastors ask us to be involved in ministry, they usually mean taking on a particular task to keep the programme running. These kinds of programmes are often good—some may be essential—but our thinking is back to front. The reason we run ministry activities is for people—their salvation and maturity in Christ. After a while, the programme attains a validity in itself; the means becomes the end.

If, instead, we start with people and ask how we can win them for Christ and establish them in the faith, we might end up spending our ministry time differently. We might cancel some programmes, and start meeting with individuals for Bible reading and prayer. Or we might build this one-to-one ministry into our existing programmes.

*Colin Marshall*

**Real Issue is Porn – Not Jones**

Family First NZ says that the real issue surrounding the use of credit cards by former Labour Minister Shane Jones is the justified concern that taxpayers are indirectly funding pornography. "The media and the public are right to be concerned about a former Cabinet minister accessing porn in hotel rooms but the real issue is far wider than that. It's time that we acknowledged the harm that pornography does to families, men and marriages," says Bob McCoskrie, National Director of Family First NZ. "The indignation being shown towards Shane Jones needs to be redirected towards the increased availability and exposure of pornography – not just in hotel rooms but on free to air television, radio, billboards, in print, and when and where children can be exposed to it. It's everywhere, and that must change." + *Family First Media Release 10 June 2010 feed-back@familyfirst.org.nz*

**FPCS Condemns Visit**

A 10 June 2010 article by John Ross in *The Scotsman* titled "Pope's Scots Visit Condemned as 'Offensive'" reports that the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland (FPCS), in a statement arising out of the official protest lodged at the 2010 FPCS Synod meeting, has characterized the state visit status given to the upcoming tour of Great Britain by the Roman pontiff Pope Benedict XVI as "particularly offensive" because it gives "...that recognition and pretended legitimacy which [the Roman Pope] claims in opposition to the principles of the Reformation." The statement continues: "We deny that [the Pope] is the head of the Christian Church or that he has any civil power which should receive recognition by any State, particularly one which has renounced his pretended jurisdiction."

The FPCS describes the Papacy as "deceitful and unrighteous," in light of the recent global exposure of child abuse by Roman Catholic clergy, and suggests that the Pope has connived in a cover-up of the widespread sexual abuse of minors by Roman Catholic clergy. The FPCS concludes: "We find it particularly offensive that this visit will commence in Edinburgh [Scotland] where, 450 years ago, under the brave and godly leadership of John Knox and our other Reformers, the jurisdiction of the pope was forever abolished." + *The Scotsman*

**FCS Missionary Blogs from Bible Seminary of Colombia**

Free Church of Scotland (FCS) missionary David Ford, who teaches New Testament and Church History at the Bible Seminary of Colombia (BSC) in Medellín, Colombia, has written a 2 June 2010 article on the FCS website titled "Executioner's Steps," where he expresses concern about the future of the BSC due to current due bills of UK£40,000 with only UK£2,000 in the bank. Ford writes that the thirty staff members of BSC are currently without salaries, that all financial reserves have evaporated, and says, "the Seminary's just not sustainable in its present form. Generous donations this month will simply waylay the executioner." Ford additionally writes that some of the normal seminary business goes on as usual, and that God is God and so seemingly impossible problems can be solved "in unthought-of ways." Ford concludes that the entirety of the problems "leaves me shaken, nervous, and in a fog. Jesus' "of little faith" disciples perhaps felt the same." The editor asks each Presbyterian Week reader to consider bringing Professor Ford and the BSC before the Throne of Grace.

+ *Free Church of Scotland cath-erine@freechurchofscotland.org.uk*  
+ *Bible Seminary of Colombia, Medellín, Antioquia, Colombia*

**Calum Ferguson's assessment of the Medellín Seminary issue**

Our Board (IMB) met with Manuel Reano a few days ago and we were able to get more details from him of the difficulties facing the Seminary. I think the main points that arose from our meeting with Manuel are the following:

1. The Seminary's income has been falling for a few years now - largely a drop in grants coming from US churches.
2. Manuel had alerted the Medellín Board to this matter on a few occasions but no decisive action had been taken.
3. They were urgently needing \$60,000 to meet outstanding bills and salaries. They have secured a loan for this amount.
4. They are now running with an annual overspend of around \$150,000 and to maintain the Seminary at its current level they would need to be sure of finding this additional amount each year. It is still possible that they may try to put together a funding package.
5. However the alternative is to downsize and this appears to be the way they are going. One problem with downsizing is that they would be likely to lose their university status when that comes up for renewal.

+ *Friday, 18 June 2010 Calum@freechurchofscotland.org.uk*

# Books in the Banner

## 'Let's Study 1 Timothy' by W. John Cook

Reviewed by Sjirk Bajema

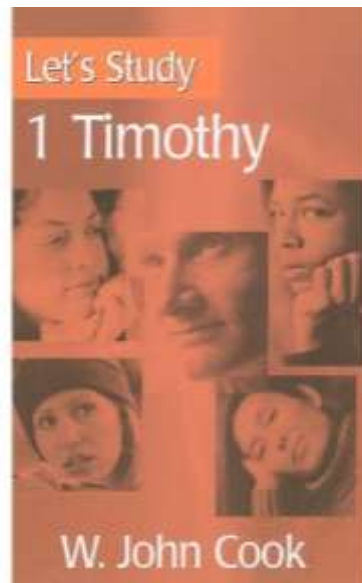
Reviewing a commentary is a very different proposition from any other book. With a novel one may consider the plot, style, characters, and so on. Looking at books on counselling one may study their methodology and application of biblical principles – or non-application of them! Then there are the personal memoirs, which are quickly read and usually warmly encouraging.

But a commentary is a book you cannot just take up and read through in one sitting (well — at least not most of us, anyway!). I know that there is encouragement to use commentaries in one's own personal devotional time alongside an open Bible and with prayer. Some may even be adapted for use with a Bible Study group. Yet doing all that still gives us few pointers on what a review of the commentary should tell us. And why should we be concerned about a commentary review, anyway? Why not just be pleased that it helps give illuminating background and exposition of Scripture passages?

### How to evaluate

Here we come to the question as to how 'good' a particular commentary is. And this is a judgment that must be made. For now, more than ever before, there are many commentaries flooding the market. They are cheaper to produce than they have ever been and the Christian bookshops offer some amazing deals on them. Even being published by a company with a name like 'Banner of Truth' gives us no guarantee that the commentary is the very best value for money.

The best way to thoroughly test a commentary is to use it in the process of sermon construction. This is what, in God's providence, I have been able to do with W. John Cook's commentary on 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy. I had begun a series on 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy just before I got this book, so I continued on using the commentaries I had been using on 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy. I made just one difference: after I had finished the rough draft of each sermon, I would compare what I had written on the passage containing the sermon's text with Cook's exposition.



### How to use

Naturally this has taken a while, especially as I will have preached some 25 sermons on 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy by the time I finish. But it has been well worth it. Used this way Cook's book was a great encouragement because it usually confirmed the way I had understood and developed the text, and helpful because sometimes he elucidated certain parts of the text — raising a point

neither I nor the other commentaries I used had noted. I have only some three or four sermons to go before I complete this most blessed series and Cook's book has been a reliable friend throughout.

What I particularly liked about Cook is that he does not follow certain commentary lines. For example, one commentary I used followed William Hendriksen closely but not as thoroughly, while another was very good at drawing in other scriptural data and background. Cook does the work of comparing scripture with scripture and dipping into the background, but ties this in with a distinctly English evangelical flavour which includes a healthy dose of the doctrine drawn out in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy as well (and doesn't this letter to Timothy abound in such precious doctrine in this letter).

I may add, too, that the rear of the book contains helpful Group Study guidance and questions. There are no indexes, however, for individual subjects and scriptural references.

I'm not sure how it would go if used in a Study Group situation. It almost seems as if any possible discussion or debate would be nipped in the bud because the author states his case so clearly. But I would warmly recommend this book as an added commentary to use alongside others in a minister's library.

*This book is published by Banner of Truth and can be obtained from local Christian book sellers*

## Worshipping your way?

A minister was visiting a parishioner in hospital. After he had read the Bible and prayed, he also spoke with some of the neighbouring patients.

One of them responded to his greeting. In a friendly way he said, "I believe too, Reverend, but not the same way as you do. You, of course, go to church, and you have to, otherwise you won't get paid. I don't go to church, but I worship God my own way."

The minister replied with a question: "And you think, of course, that I then also do that my own way?" "Certainly," he said, "everyone does that his own way, doesn't he?" "Still, there's a problem," continued the minister, "and that is the question of whether God is really pleased with it."

That man looked a bit puzzled. So the minister gave him an example to explain what he had stated. He said, "I think that you're a nice man, and imagine that I wanted to show that by doing something nice for you. One day you happen to be away from home, so I get my spade out of the shed and go and completely dig up your garden, from back to front. That evening you come home and you have a fit. 'Who ruined my garden?' you shout. 'All my plants have been chopped up and turned over. My bulbs have been split and my tubers hacked to pieces!'"

"I did that, and I thought I was doing a good thing for you. What did I do wrong?"

The minister didn't get a reply, so he answered the question himself.

"I should have asked you first what you would really like and after that I would have done a nice thing by doing what you wanted. You need to give someone what he would really like to receive. I should have asked you what you wanted very much before doing something nice for you."

That man already understood where the conversation was going. And so the minister continued, "That's also how it is with God. We shouldn't try to worship Him our own way. That doesn't please Him. We need to do it His way. And you read that in His Word, in the Bible. That counts for me and for all people."

## Prescribed Search / Youth Work

### JULY 2010

**SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE** (Intermediate omit questions 4 and 5)

#### MATTHEW 13

1. In the parable of the sower, what happened to the seeds that fell by the wayside?
2. What was produced by the seed in good ground?
3. What is the spiritual explanation of the seed sown among the thorns?
4. In the parable of the tares, why were the servants not to gather up the tares? (2 verses)
5. In the parable of the tares, what do the sower, the field, the seed etc., represent? (3 verses)
6. What did the merchant do when he had found the pearl of great price?

#### Chapter 14:13—36

7. How much food was used to feed the five thousand? How many baskets of fragments remained? (2 verses)
8. How did the disciples feel when they saw Jesus walking on the sea? What did Jesus say to them? (2 verses)

**JUNIOR**

MATTHEW 14:13—36

1. How many people did Jesus feed with five loaves and two fish? How many baskets of fragments were left? (2 verses)
2. What did the disciples say when they saw Jesus walking on the sea? What did he say to them? (2 verses)
3. What did Peter cry out when he began to sink? What did Jesus do immediately? (2 verses)
4. What happened to those who touched only the hem of Jesus' garment?

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

**Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia**

# **FAMILY CAMP**

at

**The Tops Conference Centre,  
 Stanwell Tops, NSW**

**5 pm Monday 3rd January to  
 2 pm Friday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2011 (DV)**

***Theme: The Holy Spirit in Biblical Christianity***

**Main Speaker: Rev. Iain Smith, (SPC, Hobart)**

**Enjoy Fellowship with other Christian families**

**Be seriously challenged in your thinking and lifestyle**

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

**Missions night    Psalmody    Good food    Peaceful surrounds**

**Children's programme**

**Registration forms available August DV**

**Please pray for guidance and blessing from the Lord as we plan for this event.**

(Youth & Fellowship Committee)

# Children under the Banner

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

## A Wonderful Promise



In Zephaniah 3:17 there is a wonderful promise from God. Use the code to read the promise below.

Code:  

1	3	5	7	9	11	13	15	17	19	21	23	25
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
27	29	31	33	35	37	39	41	43	45	47	49	51
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

39	15	9	23	29	35	7	49	29	41	35	
13	29	7	17	37	45	17	39	15			
49	29	41	15	9	17	37					
25	17	13	15	39	49	39	29	37	1	43	9

# Churches in the Banner

## Obituaries for Mrs Barbara Lee & Mrs Winnie Pateman

The wives of two retired PCEA ministers with Scottish connections died recently – Mrs Barbara Lee and Mrs Winnie Pateman.

### Mrs Barbara Lee

Barbara Lee (nee Sinclair) was born in Edinburgh in 1919 and met Edwin during the War when she was a fitter and turner in the Royal Naval Dockyard in Rosyth and Edwin was serving in the Navy (the Fleet Air Arm). They married in 1949. In 1952 Edwin began studies for the ministry and served St Kilda PCEA 1959-66, Dundee FCS 1966-70, and Manning River PCEA 1970-90. After a period in Armidale (1990-97) they moved to Geelong. Towards the end of 2008 Barbara had to go into special care as both physically and mentally she was slipping. Edwin attended on her every day. She passed away peacefully on Sunday 30 May at 7.30am, aged 90. Edwin (age 87) is quite frail but well cared for. His mind is still active and he is in the final stages of his PhD on John Buchan. The funeral was conducted by Rev Dr Allan Harman on Friday following with the three children and other relatives present. It was good to see a number of those who knew Barbara from old PCEA days -

Rev and Mrs Graeme Weber and Rev Graham Bradbeer - among those at the service. Mrs Lee's was the first Free Kirk voice I heard when I rang the St Kilda manse to ask about services early in 1966.



Mrs Barbara Lee

### Mrs Winnie Pateman

Jemima Howitt Pateman (nee Shannon) always known as "Winnie" was born at Bellshill near Glasgow in 1924 and married John in 1957. John was a ship's engineer and met Winnie, a secretary, through a mutual friend. They both belonged to the Brethren and

came to a Reformed position through studying the Scriptures. John worked with the Fisherman's Mission 1966-68. After studies at Dundee University and the Free Church of Scotland College he served East Kilbride Free Church 1973-86 and Hamilton PCEA 1986-92 when he retired. He was stated supply at Hamilton from June 1994 to July 2001. Winnie had not enjoyed robust health and had to enter The Birches (nursing facility) at Hamilton nearly 5 years ago. John visited every day sitting with and reading to his wife. She was always polite and cheerful to the staff who became like family (John and Winnie had no children). Winnie passed away peacefully in her sleep towards midnight on Monday 1 June at age 85. The funeral at the Lawn Cemetery graveside was faithfully conducted on Thursday by Rev David Schulz of St Andrews PCV. John thanked those who attended and quoted Shorter Catechism 37, 38. He is looking his age (80) but still characterised by quiet trust in the Lord. -  
*Rowland S. Ward*

Was this space for your church news and photographs?

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

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

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