



the presbyterian banner

August 2013

*When you send your Spirit, they are created,
and you renew the face of the earth.*

Psalm 104:30

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Editorial

I am struck time and again by the response I receive when I have been to the public worship service of a formerly conservative Reformed or Presbyterian church where the style of that worship has come to more closely resemble the local charismatic church. I mean, the songs are the same, the casual clothing of the worshippers are the same, the instruments used are the same, and the conversationally engaging style of the pastor is the same. Forget the scriptural psalms, the hymns of the reformation and the revivals, the high standard of dress, the strict accompaniment of one organ or piano, and the serious preaching by the minister of God's Word.

And what is the response that you so often hear as a justification for such a departure? "Oh, but the preaching is good," you will hear from their lips. It is as though through the retention of a certain theology and application of God's Word in the sermon everything else becomes excused. And what is the reason they have for all those other changes? It makes people more comfortable; it uses the different gifts within the congregation; it makes church a welcoming and positive experience; and it takes in the people around us just as they are. And look at how many are coming in! But what if the preaching wasn't good? What if the process of change in the other parts of the worship service also had a bearing on the theology and application in the sermon? What – you don't think it would?

Reflect on the illustration of the frog in the kettle. Because while that frog would have jumped out of a kettle which had boiling water, if it is in that kettle when the water is cold and then slowly heated up it won't be aware of the danger until too late. In the same way these changes into the public worship of the church come in gradually, with the danger not detected until too late.

I remember being in a meeting where there was an open debate about public worship within that particular denomination. Folk from different churches were openly advocating changes in the public worship and elsewhere so as to be more relevant. My question to them was simple. It was also one they were very upset with. The question was this: 'Where do you draw the line?' I even invited them to come up and write down what the principles and practice should be in relation to these things. 'Draw your line in the sand?' I encouraged them. It soon became apparent they would never do this. 'They had to be open to the Lord's leading,' they said. I replied, 'The Lord's leading is clear in his Word.' But then that showed they didn't believe that there was clear leading on these things in God's Word. That definitely showed the danger.

And what is that danger? It is nothing less than the world walking right into the church and taking it completely over. Then everything has become so focused on man there is none of God in it any more. As Martyn Lloyd-Jones noted, when satisfying the "natural" becomes acceptable in churches, the spiritual will not long remain. How else can it be that churches can come to the point of openly accepting homosexual marriage as a natural part of living biblically? It is because at different points along the way they draw the line in the sand in a different place. The tide of human opinion means it needs constant redrawing. And, then, guess what? You run out of sand!

*It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you,
and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans:*

A man has his father's wife.

And you are proud!

1 Corinthians 5:1-2

Cover: *Ferns*, by Alex Steel

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Literary contributions are welcome. Submission by email is preferred.

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How To Be A Good Member In The Church

Considering Romans 12:3—8

Having laid down the foundation for our conduct as Christians ('by the mercies of God'); and the guiding principles for our conduct ('offering our bodies as a living sacrifice; not conforming to the world, but rather being transformed through renewed minds'); the apostle Paul now applies this radical new way of living to our lives together in the church. Paul reminds us of the importance of using our minds in the church. We are not to leave our minds outside the church door. The head, as Tozer reminds us, is not just a place to hang a hat on! As members of the church then, how are we to think – and behave?

1. We are to Think Soberly about Ourselves (3)

In the 16th century something of a scientific 'revolution' occurred. Up until that date it had been assumed that the earth was motionless; that it was at the centre of the universe; and that the sun and the planets circled the earth. Then Nicolas Copernicus dared to challenge that theory and suggested that in fact the earth was not at the centre at all – but the sun is. The earth not only spins on its axis but also circles the sun. This discovery is sometimes known as the Copernican revolution. It radically altered science, astronomy, and the way we view the universe and ourselves.

Paul is teaching here that we have undergone something of a Copernican revolution. Once we thought of ourselves at the centre of the universe. We were number one. We were Mr. Big. Everything rotated around us. Now, by (or because of) the mercies of God, a revolution has occurred; we now have a new outlook where God is now at the centre of our lives, and we are relocated to our rightful place as mere creatures and servants.

'We are not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought' – something we are all prone to do. It can demonstrate itself in different ways. We can be proud of our pedigree, proud of our education – and our children's education and achievements, proud of our doctrines, proud of our morality, and a dozen other things. 'Pride is a sin bred in the bone of all of us.' (Henry). Pride is the mother sin (Augustine). Paul says, 'don't

overestimate yourself; don't be haughty; don't have an inflated view of yourself'. We can be very precious about ourselves. We can be very critical of others. We can be very prickly and oversensitive when it comes to criticism. We think our ideas and opinions are worth listening to. We think everyone should notice what we do. We think that if we are absent that everyone should miss us. We think when we are present everyone should see us. It has been rightly said that, **'many would be scantly**

Romans 12: 3—8

3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

clad if clothed in their humility.'

We are to think of ourselves with sober judgement. We are not to be intoxicated with our own sense of self importance. A drunken man thinks he is stronger than he really is; is more handsome than he really is; is smarter than he really is. We are to think of ourselves soberly, sensibly and realistically, **'according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.'**

Whether we understand faith objectively i.e. as the Christian faith; or subjectively i.e. as our personal faith, the lesson is the same. God has assigned it. He has given it. He has apportioned it. It's His gift to us. We

George Ball

are all sinners saved by grace; and saved to serve. Paul knew that in his own life, when he states, **'for by the grace given to me'** (3). He likewise states to the Corinthians, **'For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?'** (1 Cor. 4:7)

How should we then think of ourselves and any abilities or successes we may have? Isaiah succinctly expressed it when he said; **'Lord...all that we have accomplished you have done for us'** (Isa. 26: 12). Jesus reminds us, **'apart from me you can do nothing'** (John 15: 5). The sober believer will say, **'Not unto us Lord, not to us, but unto your name give glory.'** (Ps. 115: 1). The sober believer will say as with John the Baptist, **'He must increase, I must decrease'**. Paul says, **'Do not be haughty...never be wise in your own sight'** (16). Jeremiah states, **'Thus says the Lord, 'let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice and righteousness in the earth'** (Jer. 9: 23-24).

2. We are to Think Corporately about the Church (4-5)

Paul uses this brilliant analogy of the church as the body of Christ (see also 1 Cor. 12: 12-31, and Eph. 1: 22-23). So far as I know no other writer uses it. He probably got the idea from Jesus' words to him on the Damascus road.: **'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?'** Persecuting the church was tantamount to wounding the living body of Christ.

The body analogy is deceptively simple, yet profound. The church is a body – not a corpse. It's alive! Its life comes from being united to Christ. The body has many parts, its complex; each part having a different and unique function, whether we think of the hand, or foot, or eye, etc. Yet no part is independent. A

foot can't survive on its own. An arm is no good on its own. An ear is useless on its own. Only when joined together in one body can the parts operate as a body with the ability to perform amazing functions. Think of what your body has done today – up to now!

The upshot of all this is: we ought to think of the church as the body of Christ – of which we are a part. It's not merely that we are caught up in the same bundle of life; something we share with all humanity. But we are members of the same body (5). The relationship that believers have with one another can't therefore get much closer! What then are some of the implications of this teaching? It means:-

We will value the church. Too many professing Christians – for whatever reasons – have opted out of the church. But Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. Any true Christian will also love the church and value it. It should be fundamental to us. It should be everything to us. It's the place where our sanctification is to take place as we live with others. Many professing believers see it as an optional extra. They don't think biblically. They think individualistically. They think selfishly. They have privatised their faith. They think church is all about 'me'. They ask, 'What can this church do for me and my family?' It was John F. Kennedy who said at his inauguration, 'ask not what this country can do for me. Ask what can I do for this country.'

We will value the unity and well being of the church. 'The church is one body in Christ and individually members of one another' (5). Christ values the unity of the church and prayed for it. Christ is the secret of our unity. He is the head of the body. A church united in Christ is a healthy church. Sometimes our unity can be threatened and obscured by infection and disease and illness in the body. When members of the body are not submitting to Christ and refuse to do His will, there is sin. This malady must be addressed – either by the individual or by the leaders in the church. If we may change the analogy for a moment we think of a wheel. Think of Christ as the hub and ourselves as the spokes. The closer we are to Christ, the hub; the closer we will be to one another, the spokes.

When there is infection in the body of Christ, you can be sure the problem is not with Christ – but in the life of the individual.

Don't be like Mr and Mrs Jones who fell out with their three boys, who scattered to various parts of the world. One went to Canada, another to Australia and one to South Africa. They are still a family – they are still all 'Jones' - it's just that they do not communicate or see each other. The Jones' are a dysfunctional family. The church if it's not careful can be a dysfunctional family; a sick body. Paul exhorts, '**Live in harmony with one another**' (16). We ought to do all we can to preserve and promote the unity of the body.

We will value the support of the church. I should not be like that foolish member of the body which says to other members, 'I have no need of you' (1 Cor. 12: 21). The Lord has made us part of the body exactly because we need one another. Our motto should be that of the Three Musketeers, 'One for all and all for one.' We all at some stage will be in need; perhaps in need of an ear, a call, a lift, a hug, encouragement, an invitation, prayer, etc. We all will be at some stage able to minister to, or encourage, other members in the body.

We will value diversity in the church. We have different functions (4) and different gifts (6). We are all different. Instead of resenting the fact, we should rejoice in it. God created a world with great variety and colour, e.g. look at the trees, the flowers, the birds, etc. E.g. look at the people! No two are alike. We are unique! We have different interests, lifestyles, humour, background, and experiences, etc. They say, 'Variety is the spice of life.' Imagine a 50 piece orchestra where every instrument was a trumpet! What would you think of that? Great if you like to blow your own trumpet! Not so good for the rest of us. Likewise, the church is not a one man band. But everyone has a significant part to play to express the harmony and diversity in the church. Let us then always think corporately; recognising and valuing the gifts and contributions of others; while we 'in proportion to our faith' exercise our gift.

3. We are to Think Constructively

about Serving (6-8)

Paul here exhorts us to exercise our spiritual gifts. The body needs exercise! (Food, exercise and rest are essential if the body is to grow). Gifts must therefore be exercised if the body is to grow. Paul mentions seven gifts. This is not a complete list of gifts, but mere examples. (See also 1 Cor. 12 where he mentions 13 gifts; Eph. 4: 7-12 where he mentions five; and 1 Peter 4: 10-11 where he mentions two gifts. So there are at least 20 gifts specified in the NT; and we suppose this may not be an exhaustive list). We should see this list as typical ways we can serve one another in the church.

Every Christian has a gift. Some of us may feel we have no gifts of any consequence. We may think, 'if I could preach I would be a pastor. If I were any good at languages I would be a missionary. If I were an academic I would be a teacher. If I were not so shy I would be a witness to others. But God has given me so little it is not worth trying.' However, it needs to be stressed; there are no useless people in the church. There are no spare parts. Every member has a gift to use. Paul says, '**Let us use them!**' (6). We might say, '**use it or lose it!**' Don't wait to be asked. Don't wait to be recognised. Just do it! There are always things needing to be done. Note how many of these gifts are of a practical caring nature. They are not all the flashy, trendy, eye catching gifts! But there are always lonely people to visit. People we might invite to our home. People we might call or write to. There is always need for 'pray-ers' in the church. There is always need for 'givers'. There are always practical, mundane tasks to be done, like cleaning, and catering, or offering a lift in the car, and so on.

These gifts are to be exercised in the church and through the church. Wherever you are, you are a member of the body, and a witness for Christ. We are always on duty. Someone has said that, '**the church is the only club that exists for the benefit of its non members.**'

For some of you your gifts will be used more in your own home; or at work or wherever God has placed you. Wherever you are; you are God's servant. Do you see yourself

a missionary; an ambassador for Christ? 'Let your light shine that you may be blameless and innocent in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation.' For those of us not in the workplace (who are retired or whatever) we need to support and encourage those who are with our prayers. May God bless your witness for Christ.

In conclusion, let us ask ourselves:-
What sort of church would our

church be if every member were just like me?

Better or worse would our church be if every member were just like me?

Were every member of the church to be just such a member as Christ would see;

What changes would come to you and to me, and the gain to our church – what would it be?

The Rev. George Ball is the minister of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia in Taree, New South Wales. He has previously served in the PCEA congregation of Narre Warren, Victoria, and in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland (not Northern Ireland as was incorrectly noted in last month's Banner).

The Past for Today

The PCEA (4) Difficult Decades 1865-1900 – Part 2

Rowland Ward

New South Wales

Five ministers continued in the PCEA in 1864, but one (John L. McSkimming, whose father had taught David Livingstone) had a known drinking problem which had earlier led to resignation of his charge. He subsequently served Singleton but was deposed in 1867 on another matter. Offsetting this was the formal adherence of Rev W. S. Donald (1812-90) in mid 1868. He became missionary in the Clarence Town district. The same year Duncan McInnes (1827-1908) [pictured] was ordained for Maclean, where he was to have a fine ministry for 40 years. John McLeod, a PCV student, came to NSW in 1868, joined the PCEA and after further studies was ordained in November 1869. He was admitted minister of Grafton in 1870 and a new church (still used) was erected in Fry Street. But there was serious loss in 1870 when brothers Allan (b.1798) and Wil-

liam (b.1806) McIntyre died within a short time of each other. These were solid men and their loss was a great blow. It reduced the number of ministers back to five.

In 1872, two ministers left but two were gained. A petition seeking termination of McLeod's pastoral tie was sent in by 40 people and Presbytery accepted his resignation on 22 July, a few days after he married a wealthy widow from St George's PCEA. He joined the PCNSW and headed overseas. His subsequent career was not edifying and his wife justifiably divorced him. Colin Greig (1826-1913) in Bombala did not have a fully supportive congregation and he resigned to join the PCNSW. (In 1890 his application to be readmitted to the Synod was declined.) The additions included the youngest McIntyre brother (b. 1817), Duncan Kennedy, who became minister of the Manning in 1872.

The other addition was George Sutherland (1830-93), a gifted preacher and teacher well suited for a city charge. He came from First Church Dunedin to be minister of St George's PCEA in central Sydney (inducted 4 November 1872). In Dunedin he had had difficulties, being regarded as high-handed by a minority of the congregation, including several influential 'Old Identities' who had their own ways. Undoubtedly Sutherland was not without faults, but overall he was a valuable addition and an able man. A week after his induction he sought and obtained changes to the questions on subscription to the Confession of Faith to specifically require a subscriber to maintain it was not right to hold back truth for the sake of union. Among other literary work he

began and edited a weekly Christian newspaper which was issued 1872-84. It displayed a generous spirit towards other churches while advocating the evangelical Calvinism and simple worship of the PCEA. It soon had 1000 subscribers.



Rev George Sutherland, ca. 1865

The year 1873 saw the death of James McCulloch (1823-73) of the Lower Hunter, the last of those who had stood out of union in 1864, but it also saw the addition of Isaac Mackay (1839-1900), a capable minister with Gaelic who came from the PCQ and was settled at Grafton. Further additions were Peter MacPherson from the FPCV (1874, Lower Hunter), Hugh Livingstone (1875, Parkes, then Richmond River), John Davis (1877, Hastings/Macleay), John S. Macpherson (1878, Lower Hunter), John A. Nicol



Rev. Duncan McInnes

(1878, Aberdeen), S. P. Stewart (1879, Manning), William Grant (1879, Brushgrove). Both D. K. McIntyre and Peter MacPherson resigned their charges in 1878 on account of health and moved to Sydney. MacPherson was appointed Professor of Sacred Languages to the Synod in November 1879, and McIntyre interested himself in extension work in the suburbs – initially in Surry Hills and later in Newtown. So at the close of 1879 there were 12 ministers in all, and there was a very promising outlook. George Sutherland had been instrumental in securing Mackay and Grant, had trained the other newly ordained men, and six more students were in training. Compare this progress with the fact that in the 1870s the vastly larger PCNSW received only 46 ministers. The clear testimony of the PCEA was having an impact.

The 1879 Synod also respectfully responded to an approach for union by the PCNSW, stating that 'we are deeply convinced that there is not that unanimity of sentiment and practice among us as Churches which would warrant our taking action toward union...What God may have in store for us or for our country we know not; but according to our present light, the cause of truth and harmony – and not less, the cause of Presbyterianism, which is dear to us both – will be best served by our remaining in distinct, while common organisations.'

Discord

But Satan likes to sow discord. Peter MacPherson was a very gifted controversialist and of conspicuous ability in several areas. It seems a family trait, as a brother was twice Chief Secretary of Victoria. Peter was quite fearless and uncompromising and too minute in pressing his positions. Did the loss of his wife and child from typhoid in 1875 accentuate this tendency? The adverse changes occurring in the wider Presbyterian world must have been relevant too, putting men into a defensive mode that saw the worst in every move that was not rigidly conformist to earlier models of practice.

Objecting to a reference to him in Sutherland's weekly, MacPherson came out with a pamphlet just prior to the Synod of November 1880 strongly critical of the Church Extension Committee, which was responsible for placing students, and of which Rev George Sutherland was Convener.

The synod by a 10-3 vote regarded the pamphlet, which particularly dealt with the treatment of two or three apparently unsuitable now ex-students, as uncalled for, misleading and not substantiated by the ascertained facts of the case, but MacPherson placed summaries of his pamphlet in the public press after the Synod. Clearly there were weaknesses in the reception and training of students and the Synod of 1881 passed more adequate regulations which included giving the final say on reception to Synod, very much in the way we re-enacted in 1983. But MacPherson's method was very inappropriate, divided the Synod and impacted congregations.

At the Synod in May 1884 a majority of Synod members were prepared to sign a document expelling the three ministers who had opposed the action of the majority over the previous 3 or 4 years. The argument was that they had become an irreconcilable minority who had obstructed the lawful work of the Synod and vilified the majority in the public press, including by the insertion of paid advertisements. Rather than suspend or depose the ministers – MacPherson, Macpherson and Livingstone – they were expelled from the Synod, leaving their connection with their congregations undisturbed. This is not a regular way of action but precedents were produced



Rev Peter MacPherson

from different parts of the Presbyterian world.

The expelled men took legal action to get their seats in Synod back but also

proposed to reconstitute the Synod on the ground the Synod had become defunct, a strange inconsistency. How could you seek to rejoin what you claimed to be defunct? The Primary Judge in Equity (Sir William Manning) ruled against them, as did the full bench on appeal later in the year. The action was doomed to fail and did fail, since there was no substantial right of property involved and such rights as did exist had been protected. Their costs were over £450, say \$75,000 in modern terms. Whatever one thinks of the expulsion, at worst it was an act of improper administration and not an abandonment of the Synod's constitution. People had different views about it and there was a lot of division.

The Reconstituted Synod

A 'Reconstituted Synod' was formed 20 April 1886 by Peter MacPherson and John S. Macpherson and elder Samuel Porter of Maitland together with Rev W. N. Wilson (1856-1922), who had been ordained to the Upper Hunter a few weeks earlier. Peter MacPherson died in July 1886, but Gaelic speaker Rev Farquhar Mackenzie from Scotland served 1888-94 in a number of areas, although not very effectively. In 1895 Rev Water Scott of the FPCV was inducted to a section of the original PCEA at Brushgrove which had adhered to the 'Reconstituted Synod' in 1891. But moves for re-union were well afoot even before Sutherland's death in 1893. In 1904 Wilson took oversight of the Lower Hunter PCEA, and Macpherson moved to South Australia. This left Scott as the lone representative but he left abruptly for Scotland in 1908. Arthur Paul at East St Kilda FPCV was of similar mind but died in 1910.

Sympathisers

Not everyone who sympathised with the expelled men agreed with their action. Hugh Livingstone (Richmond River) did not and went to Victoria to serve the FPCV. Rev Hugh S. Buntine (ordained 1883, Namoi) joined the PCNSW with his Boggabri congregation in 1887. Rev Duncan McInnes (Maclean) and his congregation were effectively independent for a period, and in 1887 engaged Rev John Finlay-

son (1847-90) of Scotland to care for Brushgrove.

The original Synod

The original Synod was left with seven ministers – Sutherland, D. K. McIntyre, W. S. Donald (Clarence Town), S. P. Stewart (Manning), John Davis (Hastings/Macleay) and William Grant (Brushgrove). Grant went to Dunedin early in 1885 and served the newly-formed First Presbyterian Church there for a year before returning. (1) He was inducted to the Upper Hunter PCEA at Aberdeen in 1888. James Marshall was ordained at Casino in 1885 but demitted in 1889 to join the PCNSW. His cousin, W. H. Marshall, served on the Nambucca from 1891 but was not ordained. He and his congregation at Macksville joined the PCNSW in 1900. George Brown Greig from Canada was received in 1887 and gave supply at Wellington and Newtown, but resigned, joined the PCNSW, and soon returned to North America. William

Archibald (1857-1941), ordained 1888, served at Casino for a period to 1891 and later gave supply. Educational standards were maintained: among other subjects Archibald was examined in Latin, Hebrew and Greek. He resigned his ministry, but not his commitment to the church, in 1911.

In 1890 Donald died at age 78, while Dr Sutherland died suddenly in 1893 at age 63. In 1897 the estimable John Davis was killed instantly by a falling tree branch at the rear of the manse at Wauchope, while in 1899 D. K. McIntyre died leaving a significant sum – half his estate – to the church. The PCEA was therefore left with S. P. Stewart, William Grant and William Archibald supplemented by William McDonald, who came to St George's from Hamilton in 1901. The expulsion Act of 1884 was rescinded conditionally in 1898 (conditionally, because a renewal of the quarrel was something to avoid), and unconditionally in 1903 since the earlier qualification ('Synod

declines to agree to any interpretation of the course now adopted as involving a censure upon the Synod') did not give the right impression. W. N. Wilson officially joined the Synod in 1906 and became its Clerk.

After this sad division the new century brought several important developments that led to reorganization and strengthening of the work.

Footnote:

1. For the New Zealand connections with the PCEA see my article in The Presbyterian Banner, May 2012

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Doctrine in the Banner

Our Call to Covenant Obedience

For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. It is not in heaven, that you should say, who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it? Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that you may observe it? But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it (Deut. 30:11-14).

When we consider our faith and God's dealings with us in this life, how are we to interpret what's happening to us? How do we remain focused on our Christian faith as we walk through this life? An important truth is to remember that we live in a covenant relationship with God. God has made a covenant with us in Jesus Christ. We call this the Covenant of Grace, which basically means that God now relates to us in Jesus Christ. As our Mediator, Jesus has obtained salvation for us and earned all the spiritual blessings of the covenant for us by meeting all God's perfect requirements and now freely shares with us all the benefits that He has earned.

What is the heart of the covenant? Obviously it is God sovereignly entering into a bond of fellowship and friendship with His people. As Reformed Christians, the covenant forms the main framework within which we understand our salvation. Sometimes the tendency is for us to theorise covenant at the cost of personal application. But we must be careful here because even though the covenant is unconditionally administered by God, He requires that we be obedient to His word. Closely aligned with God's grace is His law. By law I am referring to God's moral law found in the Ten Commandments and its general application given to us in the Mosaic Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament. The reason why I specifically want to stress the importance of covenant obedience is because it is itself the manifestation of God's grace at work in our lives and is the means through which we experience God's presence in fellowship.

Today's tendency in the church is to display a superficial understanding of the place of the Law in God's revelation of salvation. Many Christians view the Law in contrast to the gospel. Its requirements, we are told,

Andre Scheepers

were quite unattainable. Instead, they think that the Apostle Paul teaches that the law was given to merely highlight the need for a radically different order, for a dispensation of grace. But this understanding does not do justice to Paul's understanding of the law.

A favorite quote to support this faulty view of the law is **Rom. 10:4, for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.** 'End' does not mean that Christ fulfilled the law and therefore terminated the law. This erroneous view makes a sharp contrast between the old dispensation and the new dispensation, claiming that in the former the law was the basis of righteousness and in the latter the basis of righteousness is the gospel. But this is not the meaning of the text. The law was never the basis of righteousness. This verse is simply stating that those who trust in Christ for their righteousness cease trying to use the law to establish their own righteousness. Besides, was not Abraham saved by faith? 'End' here therefore means, what we have in view, the object, the aim. In other words, the

object that the law had in mind was Christ. The ceremonies, the temple, the altar, the priest, and the sacrifices – all had Christ in view. (Herman Hoeksema. *Righteousness By Faith Alone*, 2002:449). In fact, there was never a dispensation of law without the gospel. The law of the Old Testament was also part of the gospel. The law pointed to Christ. That the end was attained means that it found its fulfillment and fullest expression in Jesus Christ. It is in this sense that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness.

The Context of Deuteronomy 30

As we consider the teaching of Deut. 30:11-14, let us start by considering the context of the passage and its place within the structure of the book of Deuteronomy.

Verses 11-20 are what we may describe as the climax of the book of Deuteronomy. This final volume of the five books of the Law of Moses is the document which records the renewal of God's covenant with His chosen people, Israel. Israel is camped on the plains of Moab after 40 years of wandering in the desert and is now finally being prepared to enter the land of Canaan which God had sworn to give her. In its structure the Book of Deuteronomy as a whole is a covenant document that sets out the nature of the binding relationship between God and Israel, and the terms and conditions for the continuation of that relationship. Meredith Kline best explains this in his book, *The Treaty of the Great King*, Eerdmans, 1963.

After a brief preamble on Moses, the covenant mediator (1:1-5), there follows a historical prologue (1:6-4:49), which updates events since the time of the original institution of the covenant at Sinai. The bulk of the document (Chap. 5-26) is then concerned with Israel's obligations, particularly as they relate to the new situation facing them, namely that of entering and possessing their inheritance. Chapters 27-30 give a subsequent account of the blessings and curses that follow, depending on how Israel relates to God's requirements. In Chapter 29 the consequences of unfaithfulness are spelled out in a virtual prophecy of exile from the land Israel is about to possess; while Chap. 30:1-10 is an assurance of God's gracious purpose in what amounts to a prophecy of restoration after exile. The

dominant theme is that of grace; it is about what God intends to do for His people.

He will bring you to the land that belonged to your fathers, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love Him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live (30:5-6).

Correlative with this gracious activity, the requirement of covenant obedience is again mentioned in **v.8, you will again obey the Lord your God and follow all His commands I am giving you today.**

This then is the preceding context to the passage we are considering, wherein Moses gives his final appeal to Israel for a response of loving and faithful commitment to the Lord (30:11-20). The concluding chapters (31-34) relate to the provisions for the continuity of the covenant, after Moses' death, under the mediatorship of Joshua.

Israel's Covenant Requirements

v.11, now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach

In vv.8-10, Moses had spoken of 'commandments' in the plural, referring to Israel's obligations under the covenant, but here he sums up the whole of what is required of Israel as one obligation, speaking literally of 'the commandment I am commanding you.'

This obligation denotes the sum and essence of the law, which is a commitment of love and loyalty to the Lord. The summons to love the Lord is a constant refrain of the book of Deuteronomy. From such love flows obedience to God's other commandments. What is required of Israel is not a super-spiritual understanding, but an understanding of the law given to them or their performance of it.

vv.12-13, it is not in heaven...nor beyond the sea...to get it

The thought of v.11 is now further explained in these verses. A man does not have to engage in an impossible search or struggle to attain a knowledge of God's requirements. For Israel to ask such questions is to try and evade their responsibility to God.

To be sure, there are bounds to human capacity and understanding; and

there is a knowledge that is beyond even the reach of the redeemed, but the knowledge of the law does not fall within this category, for God has revealed it in Deuteronomy.

The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may follow all the words of this law (Deut. 29:29).

Instead we read in v.14, ***no, the word is very near you, it is in your mouth and in your heart so that you may obey it***

The 'word' like the 'commandment' above, sums up the whole law. God's 'word' is His self-expression originally exercised in creation and given through Moses and the rest of Scripture and finally manifested in Jesus Christ (Jn 1:14, Heb. 1:2).

As we can see, v.14 gives us the reason why no difficulty is involved for Israel in knowing God's will. It is because God has graciously revealed Himself in covenant, bringing His covenant word near and placing it not merely on tablets of stone, but in His people's mouth and heart. This truth must serve as a powerful corrective for any tendency to see the Old Testament simply as a demand for conformity to an external code of law. This inward aspect of the law is seen in Deut. 6:6-7 and again in Jer. 31:33. The new covenant is not to be something totally different, but a glorious realisation of all that was promised under the old covenant.

Our Covenant Response

In the light of this, namely, the old covenant's evaluation of itself, how are we to assess the place of the law from our stance under the new covenant? Thankfully, in God's providence we are not left to draw inferences from any normative principle for a New Testament perspective on this passage, because Paul explicitly deals with this subject for us in Rom. 10:6-8.

But the righteousness that is by faith says; do not say in your heart, who will ascend into heaven? (That is, to bring Christ down) or who will descend into the deep? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, that is, the word of

faith we are proclaiming (Rom. 10:6-8).

Paul uses the text from Deuteronomy to demonstrate his point about the 'righteousness of faith.' Incredibly the 'word' of Deut. 30:14 is for Paul **'the word of faith we are proclaiming.'** Commentators have found these verses perplexing because Paul uses a passage that undeniably refers to the **law** in its original context, to demonstrate the accessibility of the righteousness that comes by **faith**. In addition, he has just explicitly contrasted law and faith in v.5 where he says, **Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: 'The man who does these things will live by them.'** The text of this quotation follows the wording of the Greek Septuagint translation fairly closely.

We could paraphrase Paul's threefold use of the words, **'that is...'** by **'this actually refers to...'** By his interspersed comments on the quotation, Paul appears to be relating the passage to Christ. To ask such questions as **'who will ascend...?'** or **'who will descend...?'** is tantamount to denying the incarnation and resurrection of Christ from the dead. It is only because of Christ's incarnation and resurrection that the righteousness of faith is accessible.

This passage, together with Paul's use of Deuteronomy, brings us to the heart of the question of the relationship between the covenant responses in the two Testaments. How does observing the law as the covenant obligation in the Old Testament relate to exercising faith in Christ in the New? As indicated initially, many Christians make a sharp distinction between the two expressions of covenant response. But the fact that Paul freely quotes from an Old Testament law-keeping passage to prove his point about faith ought to cause us to question this assumption.

One could even raise the question as to whether there is any contrast between law and faith intended in Romans 10. The word translated 'but' in v.6 could be rendered as 'and,' the point being that in the context of Paul's discussion on the universality of salvation - for Jew and Gentile alike, both the law and faith speak with one voice. Certainly, the original context of Lev. 18:5, which Paul quotes in v.5, is not one of perfection but of a loyal commitment to God's statutes and judgments with special

reference to sexual purity. (G. E. Howard, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 88:1969, 331-337).

Calvin concurs that in Paul's discussion in Romans 10 we need to see the importance of the unity of the covenant of grace. In the light of what Paul says, Moses cannot be speaking of law in contrast to the gospel or to faith. The law is not to be confused with legalism, something that the Jews annexed to themselves from their understanding of the law. Rather Paul, in countering the views of his proponents, stresses faith over against the works of the law, because he needs to make clear that acceptance with God is wholly of grace. **Therefore the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace (Rom. 4:16).**

Paul is under no such misapprehension as to the place of the law rightly understood. Far from ignoring the context of the quotation from Deuteronomy, Paul has with great insight seen the same principle of grace operating in both the Old and New Testaments. (John Davies, *The Heart of the Covenant*, 1980:39.). It is impossible to attain our salvation by meritorious performance of the law or meritorious faith. It is only by the revelation of God's grace in the redemptive work of Christ that the covenant 'word,' the 'word of faith,' is brought near, 'so that (we) may obey it.'

It is, then, our response to God's grace, not the attainment of it, that is in view in both Deuteronomy and Romans. Yet it remains true that without that response there is no salvation. Paul continues to echo the language of Deuteronomy when he says: **If you confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved (Rom. 10:9-10).**

Both confession with the mouth and belief with the heart are indispensable aspects of a commitment to the Lord, whether for the Old Testament or the New Testament saint. (Ibid., 39-40)

The above evaluation of the law and the identification of the Old Testament with the New Testament response to the Covenant of Grace and the equation of obedience with faith is fully endorsed by the New Testament. Faith as the appropriate New Testament response to the grace of God is

never abstracted from obedience. Believers are those who obey the Gospel (Rom. 1:5, 6:16, 17; 10:16, 15:18; 16:19, 26).

Jesus portrays obedience as a realistic and practical requirement of faith. **For my yoke is easy and my burden is light (Matt. 11:30).** Whether these words have reference to law or to wisdom makes little difference, for wisdom is but the application of law to the individual. John the apostle wrote, **'this is love for God; to obey His commands, and His commands are not burdensome...'** (1 Jn 5:3).

Conclusion

Deuteronomy 30:11 touches the heart of the covenant, which is to say the heart of the gospel, for there is but one Covenant of Grace. God requires a response of love, trust and obedience from His people. This is a response which is not inaccessible, but as Paul explains, has been brought near by the redemptive work of Christ.

Obedience to God flows out of the bond of covenant love and issues in life and blessings, whereas disobedience brings death and God's curse. (O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 1980:136). What was revealed to Israel in the Old Testament endorses the fact that there is no discontinuity between the law and the gospel. In the light of this, the challenge to God's people today, no less to the Israelites on the plains of Moab is: **'choose life.'**

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The World in the Banner

Enemies of the Human Race: When Western Civilization Goes Backwards

In the [26 July 2013 U.S.] Supreme Court ruling on gay marriage reversing the Defense of Marriage Act [DOMA], dissenting judge Antonin Scalia offered the longest opinion as to why this was a misguided and ominous ruling.

Some on the left have tried to present Scalia as a nut case. They talk of his "intemperate dissent." It was passionate, I'll grant you that—all twenty-six pages of it.

He criticizes the verdict as judicial overreach. But most interesting is his statement that Justice Kennedy and his colleagues in the majority have essentially resorted to calling opponents of gay marriage (i.e. those who defend traditional marriage) "enemies of the human race." Scalia does so on the grounds that the ruling itself uses intemperate language, saying those who support DOMA and traditional marriage "disparage," "injure," "degrade," "demean," those who are homosexual. "All that," wrote Scalia, "simply for supporting an Act that did no more than codify an aspect of marriage that had been unquestioned in our society for most of its existence—indeed, had been unquestioned in virtually all societies for virtually all of human history."

Scalia's statements are striking and not overstated. Because since 2010 the Department of Justice (DOJ) has argued that acting to protect traditional morality shows hostility to gays and lesbians as a class. In other words, to the DOJ, and now to the Supreme Court, traditional notions of morality are themselves hostile. So, by implication, Christian morality is not just discriminatory, it is hostile. Most people do not seem to realize where this little phrase "enemies of the human race" comes from. It was used by Tacitus, the first century historian of the Roman Empire. It was used to describe the Neronian persecution against early Christians. Nero accused, arrested and tortured many. He used them as scapegoats for his own troubles. One of his accusations was that Christians hate the human race. Tacitus goes on to say that as a result—Nero mocked them, covered them with skins of beasts, had them torn apart by dogs, nailed to crosses,

or tied to posts and burnt as living torches for a spectacle in his garden parties.

All this because Christians believed in Christ crucified and did not find the self-indulgent life style of many Romans acceptable (including the homosexual life style).

The use of this phrase "enemies of the human" race by Justice Scalia serves as a warning for what may be ahead. Not that Washington is about to burn Christians. But some are putting us in the same category as anti-Semites and the KKK because of our objection to gay marriage.

Scalia's words are a warning that a season of church-state conflict lies ahead—that litigators will start suing groups that are "discriminatory," and that there will be more ostracism of Christians in public leadership. He also said that the ruling is a sign that the majority on the Supreme Court is now ready to declare gay marriage a constitutional right.

What is particularly striking about the timing of this ruling is that it takes place on the 1700th anniversary of Emperor Constantine's Edict of Milan (313 A.D.). That famous edict reversed a 200 year old policy of the Roman Empire against Christians which led to discrimination and persecution. The Edict of Milan decreed that freedom of religion is inherent to each human person. It announced that "all who choose a religion are to be permitted to continue therein, without any hindrance, and are not to be in anyway troubled or molested."

The Western world is not interested in celebrating Milan. Instead it is going backwards. It is embarrassed by Christianity. It refuses to even recognize the contribution Christianity made in shaping our culture. It casually defies the laws of God. It reduces the freedom of religion. And it forgets that all civilizations rise and fall and will be judged by the Supreme Judge of all the earth.

It was the early African Christian apologist Tertullian (160 c-225) who wrote to his pagan accusers, "You choose to call us enemies of the human race, rather than of human error." But then he added, "to tell the truth, we are enemies, not of the human race, but of human error." In light of history, Scalia's words were no rant, but an insightful observation

of the immense clash of vision that this ruling represents. He is historically informed enough to know what has happened before and where we may be headed.

+A 2 July 2013 post from *The Chief End of Man* blog by Dr. Don Sweeting

Dr. Don Sweeting is the president of the Orlando campus of Reformed Theological Seminary and the James Woodrow Hassell professor of church history.

Half-Devil, Half-Child - A Summary

Editors' Note: This is a summary of the documentary, *Half-Devil, Half-Child*.

What is the great deception that has consistently threatened the missionary enterprise? It is the mistaken notion that we have something – anything – to offer other than Christ as revealed in the Scriptures.

Half-Devil, Half-Child reveals how this deception has bewitched the Insider Movements (IM). IM attempt to strip the gospel down in such a way that it can be clothed in the garb of any culture/religion. To IM ideologues this re-clothed Jesus looks more authentic simply because he looks like them. The process of expertly de-culturizing the gospel from its original context and then re-culturizing it in the context of another religion has resulted in an accommodating Jesus who is nowhere to be found in the Scriptures. The experts are for hire or, at the cost of your soul, you may become an expert yourself. The outcome of such hybrid thinking? As the title of the documentary suggests: half devil, half child.

Rudyard Kipling's poem of the same name has become an emblem of "the white man's burden" of colonialism. IM has taken on this burden in its neo-colonial mission of exploitation and subjugation under the guise of an enlightened path to Jesus. Proponents of IM offer to Muslims the Jesus of the Quran, teaching Muslims that they need not leave Islam in order to follow Christ. IM offers to those who have already converted to Christianity the "reward" of returning to Islam as "insiders".

As the documentary explains, the

financial engine of IM runs on a steady stream of anecdotes involving pseudonyms and unverifiable numbers (the IM following is not measurable because adherents identify themselves as Muslims with distinctives that are difficult to identify). Even the Muslims in Bangladesh are astonished by the extravagant claims of thousands upon thousands of Muslim-followers-of-Jesus. "A Muslim can never believe that Jesus is his savior," says one Muslim in the film. Interestingly, this Muslim understands better than many evangelical missionaries the sharp distinctions between Islam and Christianity. IM proponents, he says, are "bluffing themselves and bluffing society." Why? Here we encounter a striking dichotomy of opinion. Evangelicals in the West often respond with something like, "These are good missionaries with noble intentions making great sacrifices in the cause of the gospel." But this Muslim's analysis is quite different: it is all about the media and money.

"Why are you damaging our reputation?" is the anguished cry from Bangladesh, where the realization is dawning that "not all missionaries are angels" and, in fact, may be messengers bearing a different gospel. One national leader, taught by the IM to reside half-clothed in the never-never land between Islam and Christianity, makes a heart-wrenching confession: "I am nowhere."

What is this cancer that is afflicting the body of Christ? Dr Michael Horton of Westminster Seminary California offers a historical/theological answer (1). When generations of Christians in the West have assumed a dichotomy, if not a contradiction, between "getting saved" and joining the church, then it is no surprise that the Christianity they carry with them is individualistic to the core. The concept of believers remaining in the mosque becomes nothing more or less than a benign cultural alternative. The "gospel" preached by such individualistic Christians is simply reworked to suit relativism. Insider Movements are the mission strategy of the postmodern "emergent church." Somewhat more sinister is the fact that such a missionary strategy is unwittingly supported by some of the most ardently confessional churches. The documentary goes on to note that tragically, these "missionaries have not been able to be brothers of na-

tionals in this country." This is according to Rev Edward Ayub, Moderator of Presbyterian Church of Bangladesh. Why? Because, in true colonial fashion, these missionaries attempt to purchase the 'brother' relationship, which has never been for sale. We must listen to Ayub carefully, because if we believe that the church is one commissioned body, then the quality of our familial relationship is of central importance. Regarding our identity as believers, the contrast between how historic Christianity conceives this identity and how proponents of IM conceive it is striking. Throughout history, and even today in Iran for example, people have been willing to die rather than deny their identity in Christ. This is the most vivid testimony both to the global church and to the world of the supreme value of the gospel. On the other hand, in the film Dr Horton observes that no one seems to be called to be martyred in IM. If it is the gospel and nothing else that unites us, then we are one body in Christ, one family.

The tangible evidence of this united familial relationship is sacrifice – limitless sacrifice until the gospel shines ever brighter in its clarity. Are we in the West willing to relinquish the "white man's burden" and take up, under the law of Christ, the burden of unity with our brothers who have come out of Islam, usually at great cost? Therefore, may the words of a familiar old hymn call us back to faithfulness in mission:

*Elect from every nation,
yet one o'er all the earth,
her charter of salvation:
one Lord, one faith, one birth*

Notes:

1. This quote and the others are taken from the documentary.

+ *Philip Mark is a long-time missionary in Muslim lands. Reformation21.org*

President Obama – Egypt is Having a Revolution, Not a Coup

Christian Copts of California released the following statement on 8 July 2013:

President Obama: What has been taking place in Egypt since June 30, 2013 is one of the greatest events in Egypt's modern history. CNN announced the number of protesters at 33 million as seen by Google. BBC said that the number of Egyptians protesting is the largest number of

protesters in a political event in the history of mankind.

The portrayal of this as a military coup is an insult to the Egyptian people and a denial of their constitutional right to remove elected government officials from office when they fail to perform as promised. The armed forces did not initiate the protest nor did it replace the president; they simply did what they are constitutionally bound to do, which is to execute the will of the people. President Morsi won the election by 51.7% which amounted to only 13.2 million votes; only a fraction of the 22 million who signed the "Rebel Form," or the 33 million who took to the streets demanding his ousting. While in office, President Morsi not only failed to deliver on his campaign promises, but he mishandled the economy, leading Egypt to the verge of bankruptcy. He pushed through a constitution written exclusively by Islamists, allowed extremists to openly persecute Coptic Christians with impunity, and primarily concentrated on garnering political power for Islamists by appointing them to key positions throughout Egypt, including the appointment of a member of the terrorist organization Gamaa Islameya to the Luxor governorship.

President Morsi's intentions to become a dictator became clear just a few months after assuming office, when in November 2012 he granted himself unlimited power to legislate without judicial oversight or review of his acts.

President Obama: The United States, as the guardian of democracy in the world, has a responsibility to support and encourage the free will of the Egyptian people, rather than supporting a dictator and his militant Moslem Brotherhood. As Americans of Egyptian heritage, we expect nothing less than that.

+ *Christian News Wire, newsdesk@christiannewswire.com*
+ *Christian Copts of California, 310-641-3387, Calcopts@sbcglobal.net*
+ *Christian Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt*

Prescribed Search / Youth Work

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

AUGUST 2013

SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE (Intermediate omit questions 5 and 6)

1 CORINTHIANS chapter 16

1. What are we to do on the first day of the week?
2. Why was Paul going to tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost?
3. How does Paul describe the household of Stephanas?
4. What does Paul say of the one who does not love the Lord Jesus Christ?

2 CORINTHIANS chapter 1

5. What purpose does God have in comforting his children in all their tribulation?
6. Why did the apostles have the sentence of death in themselves?
7. Who would be Paul's rejoicing [boast] in the day of the Lord?
8. In whom are all the promises of God Yea [Yes], and Amen?

JUNIOR

LUKE chapter 21

1. In what sense did the poor widow put more into the treasury than the rich? (2 verses)
2. What did Jesus tell the disciples about the hairs of their head?
3. In what manner will the Son of man come?
4. Although heaven and earth pass away, what will not pass away?

Please send the answers to:
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PO Box 942
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Or email to: iesteel@gmail.com

Life under the Banner

A Most Practical Doctrine

Jim Klazinga

The doctrine of the Trinity is impossible to completely understand. God consists of three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Yet God is one in essence. There are not three Gods, but one. Easy to say, hard to figure out.

This is not to say that it doesn't make sense, or that it is illogical. Rather, this teaching touches on the incomprehensibility of God. The depth of this truth goes beyond anything we can ever experience in this life. When it comes to our inability to fully grasp this reality, the problem is not with the teaching; the problem is with the limitation of our creaturely minds.

Why Bother with this Doctrine?

It can well be asked: if it's so difficult to get a handle on this doctrine of the Trinity, why should we believe it? Or at least, why should we bother dealing with it? Does it make sense to spend time thinking about something so difficult to comprehend?

The simple answer to all of this is that we believe and study the Trinity because this is who God is. God reveals himself in His Word distinctly as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Yet, He also makes clear that there is only one God, besides whom there is no other. Because this is what God says about Himself, this is what we believe. This is the answer of faith. It's the answer of all who truly know the one true God.

Now, it is true that the actual word Trinity is not found in the Bible. But the teaching that lies behind the word, this is found in the Bible. The fact that Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, is clearly shown in Scripture. So also is the fact that God is one. The word Trinity is merely a helpful word that we use to refer to this biblical teaching.

Reject This Doctrine at Your Peril

Is it really all that important to confess and teach this truth? What if some people were to say that God is only one person, and someone else were to say He is seven persons? Would it really matter? What practical difference would it make?

According to the Athanasian Creed, a long-standing foundational faith statement confessed by churches around the world, this teaching is crucial. Listen to how the creed starts: "Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith, which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity." According to this creed, if you want to be saved, you've got to believe in the Triune God. Not believing in the Trinity demonstrates that you have an unregenerate heart.

Of course, not everyone who confesses this doctrine is necessarily saved. But you can be quite confident that those who reject this teaching are showing that they have not been washed clean by the blood of Christ and renewed in the spirit of their minds.

Doesn't this very fact alone make this a rather practical doctrine? You want to know whether you or someone you love is a believer? Here's a good place to start.

What This Doctrine Shows Us

The question still remains though, what makes this particular doctrine so important? After all, there are many aspects to God that He hasn't bothered to make known. Why did He deem it necessary to teach us this truth about Himself?

Well, we could talk about how this doctrine affects everything we do. How we look at the world around us, how we study science, the way we deal with unbelievers, what we do with our time – the doctrine of

the Trinity impacts all of this and so much more.

But instead of focusing on such matters, let's make it more personal. To know God as Trinity is essential for understanding how God works in our lives. By knowing that the one God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we can have a better understanding of what God has done for us in saving us.

God the Father and Our Salvation

We start off with God the Father. He is the author of everything that exists. In the beginning, God, that is, God the Father, created the heavens and the earth. That's not to say that God the Son and God the Holy Spirit were not involved in the creation of the universe. After all, Genesis 1:2 talks about how the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And John 1:3 talks about how all things were created through the Word, Jesus Christ. Colossians 1:15-17 also teaches us that Christ, the second person in the Trinity, played an important role in the creation of the universe. Still, when we consider the ultimate creator, we look primarily to the person of the Trinity known as God the Father.

At the risk of sounding somewhat trite, it would have been rather hard for us to be saved if we were never created in the first place.

Mind you, not only is the Father the author of creation, He is also the author of the election of His people. When we consider how God's people have been chosen since before time to receive salvation through Jesus Christ, we look to God the Father. As Ephesians 1:3-5 says so clearly, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the

heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will." Without God the Father electing us, the whole process of salvation would never have started.

God the Son and Our Salvation

Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, God the Son, has accomplished our salvation. Because He humbled himself and came to be among us so many years ago; because He assumed a human form, taking upon himself a truly human nature; because He died on the cross as a sacrifice to pay the price for the sins of his people; and because He rose victorious from the grave: we have salvation, if we belong to Him. We are washed clean of our sins, because of the blood of Jesus Christ. As we read in Romans 5:9,10 - "Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life."

The Savior lives. Believers are saved because he sacrificed himself for the forgiveness of sins. Mind you, just as the Son and the Spirit are involved in creation, so too are the Father and the Spirit involved in redemption. The Son did not work all alone in all of this. For one thing, the Father is the one who sends the Son so that we can be redeemed. As the famous verse John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

Plus, we also know that the Father was involved in raising Christ from the dead. We read about the Father's strength in Ephesians 1:19,20 - "...and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according

to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead." And of course, the Spirit is involved in the whole process of redemption as well. We read in Romans 8:11 - "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you."

There is no salvation apart from the Father or the Holy Spirit. And yet, when we consider the forgiveness of sins, our focus is primarily on the Son. When we look to the redeemer, we look to Jesus Christ. When we look to our Savior, we look first of all to Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity.

God the Spirit and Our Salvation

It is the Spirit of God who works in our hearts if we belong to Christ. It is the Holy Spirit of God who enables us to know of our heavenly Father and points us to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is the person of the Trinity who lives in our hearts, cleansing our hearts.

If God the Holy Spirit lives in our hearts, we can know that we are one of God's children. We can know that we are forgiven through the blood of Jesus.

Mind you, we could not have the Spirit in us without the Father or the Son sending Him to us, causing Him to dwell in us. As Jesus says in John 14:16-17, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you."

The Spirit lives in us because Jesus asked his Father and together they sent Him. Still, when we consider how we come to experience our salvation, we look to the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit.

A Living Doctrine

So you see, each person in the Trinity is intimately involved in the

salvation of God's people. God the Father creates and elects the people of God. God the Son redeems the people of God. And God the Spirit lives in the hearts and sanctifies the people of God. Of course, all three are tied to each other. You can never make them into three different gods. And they are all equally eternal, equally infinite, equally majestic, equally sovereign, equally worthy of praise, equally God.

But still, when we consider different aspects of how God works in our lives, we can look to the different persons. And so, if we are to have any understanding of what God does for us, we have to know him as the Triune God. When we realize this, the doctrine of the Trinity becomes more than just abstract concepts that are hard to understand. The doctrine of the Trinity should be a living reality within our hearts and souls.

We should not just recognize with our heads how God is one God with three persons. We should recognize in our hearts the work of this Triune God. The Triune God is the source of strength for God's people. The Triune God is their source of peace. The Triune God is the source of comfort.

You might not know all the complex doctrines regarding the Trinity. You might not know all about the glorious history of this doctrine. These are good things to know, but they are not essential. What is essential is that you know God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as your creator, your redeemer, your sanctifier.

The Rev. J. Klazinga is the minister of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia congregation in Brisbane, Queensland. He has previously served in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand and the United Reformed Churches of North America.

Churches in the Banner

Farewell for the Rev. & Mrs Gavin Smith, Geelong



number of visitors from other PCEA congregations in Melbourne and from elsewhere were also present. The congregation was most thankful for the seven years of faithful service by our brother, ably



Geelong
On Sunday the 16th of June, 2013, the final worship service was conducted by the Rev M. Gavin Smith as the minister of the Geelong congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. He preached most fittingly



Photographs
Top Left: Elder David Manley speaking on behalf of the Geelong congregation;
Left: The Rev. Gavin Smith leading the worship service;
Above and Bottom: Those folk present on this occasion;
Below: Elder Terry Buck making a presentation on behalf of Presbytery;
Below Left: Rev & Mrs Smith perusing the gifts



supported by his wife, Janet. We will miss them greatly as they have now returned to Scotland, and to retirement there. A number of presentations were made – by the local congregation and Presbytery. Several of these reflected aspects of Australia that they will miss back in Scotland. It was a blessed time of fellowship,



filled with thanksgiving to the Lord for his provision of Gavin's faithful ministry, in a situation that has sometimes called for much endurance in the Lord.

from the final chapter in the book of Joshua – the passage that challenges Israel as to where she stands with the Lord, especially in the light of Joshua's soon-coming departure from this life. Following this service a time of fellowship was held, with a luncheon. A



Presbytery has appointed the Rev Sjirk Bajema as the Interim Moderator and while supply in the Geelong area is readily available we look, in the Lord's time, to building up to a point where we can again have our own settled minister.