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*I am the way, the truth, and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through me.
John 14:6*

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Editorial

Have you ever made a mistake?

“Of course I have,” you answer. Everyone makes mistakes.

So, how are you affected by your mistakes? I mean, obviously you got something wrong. You may even have had to rectify a few things—whether with what you were working on or the people you brushed up against. But mistakes can get you down. You might even have thought that when you made a particular mistake, it showed you up badly. And perhaps it did.

There is another angle, though. Because you only make a mistake when you are actually doing something. Busy people make lots more mistakes than lazy people.

An elder told me that once. And it’s a precious pearl! So think about that the next time you make a mistake. For if that mistake happened when you were trying to do the right thing in serving the Lord where you believe he wants you to be, then treat it like that: a mistake. It wasn’t deliberate. And if someone has a go at you for it, impugning a wrong motive on your actions, then share with him that lovely jewel.

Mind you, also realise that some people seem to be out to get you anyway. David is quite frank about that in the psalms. And since his responses there are the human emotions that we all share, let’s lay them honestly before the Lord. He knows what’s on your heart. He’s forgiven you. You’ve got a whole new start.

*Listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need;
rescue me from those who pursue me,
for they are too strong for me.*

*Set me free from my prison that I may praise your name.
Then the righteous will gather about me
because of your goodness to me.*

Psalm 142:6-7

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Have you renewed for 2016?
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‘The Lord Has Done Great Things For Us

Psalm 126

Another song for the ascent to Jerusalem sung by the ancient pilgrims. It would seem that they have now arrived. This psalm has two equal (and symmetrical) stanzas: each opens with similar words and both use similar imagery. Slim Dusty has a song title which captures the theme of this psalm – ‘*Looking forward, looking back*’; except this psalm has it the other way round. *Looking back* (verses 1-3). *Looking forward* (verses 4-6).

1. Looking Back with Praise (1-3)

This psalm/song was composed to celebrate a great and dramatic deliverance wrought by the Lord for the restoration of His people. There was a dream like quality about what happened; they could hardly believe it. It seemed too good to be true. They had to pinch themselves. They were overwhelmed with joy and happiness. **‘Our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy’** (2a). ‘Is this real?’ they wondered. It was so surprising and decisive that even the Gentile nations sat up and took notice. They said, **‘The Lord has done great things for them’** (2b).

When was this great restoration? Many of the commentators link it with the return of the exiles from Babylon in 537 BC. One says, ‘It is a psalm of thanksgiving for the return from captivity.’ (Matthew Henry thought that Ezra may have written the psalm). Yes, it does fit neatly with that period in history. Imagine the situation. They had seen their beloved city conquered and destroyed in 586 BC. They left it with the temple and the walls in ruins. They were carried off to Babylon. Psalm 137 captures the mood of the exiles. **‘By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept.’** They could not sing the Lord’s song. They could see no end to their experience. It seemed they were doomed to live in Babylon forever.

A Song of Ascents

They would never see their beloved Jerusalem again. But things changed very suddenly, dramatically and unexpectedly. The Persians defeated the Babylonians. Cyrus, king of Persia, issued a decree – which you can read in Ezra 1: 1-4. The exiles were free to return home. Not only that, but Cyrus committed himself to help rebuild the temple for them. Who would have believed it? It seemed like a dream. Only God could have done it; Cyrus was His instrument. **‘The Lord has done great things for us and we are glad.’**

Psalm 126

A Song of Ascents

*1 When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion,
We were like those who dream.
2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing.
Then they said among the nations,
“The Lord has done great things for them.”
3 The Lord has done great things for us,
And we are glad.
4 Bring back our captivity, O Lord,
As the streams in the South.
5 Those who sow in tears
Shall reap in joy.
6 He who continually goes forth weeping,
Bearing seed for sowing,
Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,
Bringing his sheaves with him.*

Some commentators think (e.g. Kidner) that there is a wider reference than the return from captivity; that the psalm should be taken in general terms for the restoring of

George D. Ball

the fortunes of the people of God at different times. (Note the marginal reading in the NIV). The ESV translates, **‘When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion.’** It’s literally, **‘When the Lord returned those who returned to Zion.’** It’s about a great reversal of fortune that the Lord had caused.

For example, Job’s restoration is described in this way. **‘The Lord restored the fortunes of Job...and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before...and the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning’** (Job 42: 10-12). The Lord did great things when Sennacherib, *‘the Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold’* in 705 BC (2 Kings 19: 35-36) and 185,000 of his soldiers *‘melted like snow in the glance of the Lord’* (Lord Byron). The Lord also did great things for Nehemiah who, despite persistent and increasing hostility, was enabled to complete the rebuilding of the city walls in 52 days. There are many instances in the New Testament when the Lord restored the fortunes of His people. Think of the experience of the disciples. Before the resurrection of Jesus they were like mice; after the resurrection they were like lions. Consider the surprise of the believers in Acts 12 after Peter was miraculously released from prison and delivered from execution. He was in chains, sleeping (amazingly) between two soldiers. An angel awakened him. His chains were broken. He was led past several security guards out of the prison. Peter wondered for a moment if it was real or just a dream. The believers at the prayer meeting could say, **‘The Lord has done great things for us’**. The Lord’s restoration of His people is not confined to the pages of the Bible. Surely

every Christian has a testimony to tell. We can say, **'the Lord has done great things for us'** (3). He has wrought a great deliverance for us, to which we made no contribution. We are able to say, **'When we were without strength Christ died for the ungodly'** (Rom. 5:6). And, **'He has brought us out of a horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my way. He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise to our God.'** Has the Lord not also delivered us from and through many trials and brought us into a safe place? Because the Lord has done great things for us, we can look back with praise – even laughter. C. H. Spurgeon comments, 'Some Christians are sadly prone to look on the dark side of everything, and to dwell more upon what they have gone through than upon what the Lord has done for them. Ask for their impressions of the Christian life, and they will describe their continual conflicts, their deep afflictions, their sad adversities, and the sinfulness of their hearts, yet with scarcely any allusion to the mercy and help which God has afforded them.'

2. Looking Forward with Prayer (4-6)

The psalmist is now looking forward. He has reflected on the past – not to dwell there – but to provide the incentive and the impetus to look forward with hope. As Kidner comments, 'the opening three verses merely set the tone and scope for confident intercession.' He pleads, **'Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like streams in the Negev'** (4). We might paraphrase, 'as the Lord has helped us in the past, do it again, O Lord.' Just as He broke the power of the Babylonians, and defeated the army of Sennacherib, so do it again, **'like streams in the Negev'** (4b). The Negev is the desert in the south of Judah in the Sinai Peninsula. It's a most inhospitable place. Imagine a riverbed baked dry in the blistering heat of the summer. Far away

over the hills there is a storm brewing, a cloud bursts and the rain comes bucketing down; as a result the dry gully suddenly becomes a torrent. The desert is watered; the grass grows and the desert flowers blossom. It's sudden. It's quick. Alec Motyer comments, 'Instantaneous transformation! Who wouldn't want it, long for it, pray for it – a transforming work in a single, divine act which changes all, solves all, does all!' It's worth praying for flash floods like this. That's what the psalmist prays for in Psalm 85: 6, **'Will you not revive us again that your people will rejoice in you?'** Revival is when God comes in a mighty flood of blessing and instantly, as it were, brings new life to old, dry bones. Revival is when God does in five days what He would normally do in fifty years.

But the second picture of sowing is strikingly different (5-6). This time there is no flash flood; no revival; nothing quick; but something slow. Kidner comments, 'If the first picture is all suddenness, a sheer gift from heaven; the second is slow and arduous, with man allotted a crucial part to play in it.' This second picture is of hard and tedious work; ploughing, preparing and planting the seed. If there's anyone who knows the meaning of hard work and perseverance, it's the farmer (cf. James 5: 7). I know, I'm a farmer's son. The psalmist sees both pictures as complementary. Perhaps verses 5-6 is the answer to the prayer of verse 4? How will the transformation of verse 4 happen? Not without hard work, toil and tears. We should pray for flash floods of revival; how much we need it. But we also need to roll up our sleeves and work. We need to be both prayers and plodders. William Carey was both. His famous motto was; *'expect great things from God; attempt great things for God.'* Perhaps it was from this psalm that Carey devised his motto? The picture in verse 4 is about expecting great things. The picture in verses 5-6 is about attempting great things

for God.

The Lord promises a harvest in verses 5-6. It might be translated, **'He that surely goes forth weeping ...will surely come home with shouts of joy.'** The Old Version brings it out most clearly; **'He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.'** God's Word will not return empty but shall accomplish that which He pleases' (Isa. 55: 10-11).

As I think about this psalm, I travel down memory lane. I cannot forget the remarks of my former Professor, Rev. Dr Hugh J. Blair. In class he suggested that a possible reason for tears was that the people who had returned from exile to resettle the land were sowing the only seed they had. If it didn't germinate, they were facing famine and hardship and death. It was therefore crucial that the seed take root. Their very survival depended on it. It was a matter of life or death.

On another occasion he was preaching on this psalm at a commissioning service on 6th August 1986. My brother and his wife were being set aside for missionary work in France. Dr Blair was emphasising from these verses in his inimitable passionate way the certainty of the harvest. That was 30 years ago. What has been the result? Much seed has since been sown. Hundreds of thousands of leaflets have been distributed. Much hard work has been expended. Many, many people have been challenged with the gospel claims of Jesus. There have, no doubt, been tears of disappointment and frustration. But, there has also been a harvest. Many sheaves have been brought in with sheer hard work and with joy. We believe (and pray) that there will yet be many more sheaves brought in (by prayer and work).

I suppose we usually apply this psalm to evangelism. That's not wrong. But the seed sown in

this psalm is primarily among the professing people of God. As it is sown we should expect it to produce a harvest. That should be encouragement for ministers, for Sunday School teachers, for RE teachers and for parents. It's a personal reminder that the Word of God is like a seed. It's not merely to be read and admired. It must be sown. It needs to be buried in the soil of our hearts and minds. It needs to germinate and bring forth fruit. The result will be increasing evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives (Gal. 5: 22-23).

One last thought. The apostle Paul tells us, **'whatever one sows that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life'** (Gal. 6: 7-8). How do we sow to the Spirit? He tells us in the next couple of verses, **'Let us not grow weary of doing good; for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, especially those who are of the**

household of faith' (Gal.6: 9-10). Therefore, let us not give up. Let us continue to sow the seed in our own hearts and encourage others in the ways of the Lord. As the Word is heard and seen in our lives, then even the unbeliever will conclude, 'The Lord has done great things for them.'

The Past for Today

Christianity in Scotland (15): The Disruption Crisis

Rowland S. Ward

In the previous article we saw the development of ideas opposed to the idea of a national church supported by the State, the extension of the right to vote for persons standing for political office, as well as the pressing problem for the Established Church of a State reluctant to provide for new parishes in the light of booming population growth in a newly industrialised economy. There was another problem.

The patronage problem

The patronage Act of 1711 had operated to the detriment of the church in the 18th century. In the early decades of the 19th century there was strong agitation from those who formed the United Secession in 1820 against the privileges of the Established Church, while in 1832 the Representation of the People (Scotland) Act extended the number entitled to vote in Parliamentary elections from 5,000 to 65,000. This intensified pressure for reform of the patronage system in a more popular direction.

The leaders of the church recognised that patronage involved a property right so they did not at first seek to abolish it. Rather, they aimed to curb abuses by declaring that the sincere dissent of a majority of male heads of families would operate to prevent the minister being

installed. What became known as the Veto Act was passed in 1834 by a vote of 184 to 138 embodying this 'non-intrusion' principle. It seemed to work reasonably well at first as only ten presentations out of 150 between 1834 and 1839 were vetoed. However, the case concerning the parish of *Auchterarder*, which began in 1834, concluded in the House of Lords in May 1839 with the finding that the Veto Act was illegal, that parishioners had no voice in the choice of their minister and that the highest civil court in Scotland had jurisdiction in matters of internal spiritual discipline.

Another celebrated case concerned the parish of *Lethendy* where a man proposed by the patron, in this case the Crown, was dissented against by a majority of heads of families. His name was withdrawn and another presented who was acceptable. The first man took legal action to prevent the second man being installed, despite the Assembly directing this installation occur. The Presbytery duly inducted the second man, but the civil court found the Presbytery had breached the law, fined the Presbytery and warned future cases would incur imprisonment.

A third case concerned the parish of *Marnoch* in the Presbytery of Strathbogie where a man (Edwards)

was presented who had previously been assistant in the parish for three years but dismissed at the request of the parishioners. Only one person out of 300 heads of families supported his admission, and the 1838 Assembly directed the Presbytery not to proceed. Another man was presented who was acceptable but Edwards took legal action. The court issued an injunction which the Assembly, in the desire for a truce while discussion with Government went on, accepted, and instructed the Presbytery not to proceed. However, the civil court soon after found in favour of Edwards and ordered the Presbytery to proceed. Seven of the twelve Presbytery members did so, whereupon the Commission of Assembly in December 1839 suspended the seven ministers from office, and arranged to supply the suspended men's pulpits. The civil court immediately issued an injunction to prevent this. The church accepted the civil court's right in respect of buildings so provided services in the open air. The court then issued prohibition orders against any Church of Scotland ministers entering the parishes of the seven ministers without their consent.

There was considerable agitation pro and con in the community,

some wild words by some of the more hot-blooded, much fruitless negotiation with politicians, and on 21 January 1841 the seven ministers carried out the orders of the civil court and ordained and inducted Edwards as minister of Marnoch. On 27 May 1841 the Assembly by a vote of 222 to 125 gave the seven a last opportunity to repent their action. Not doing so the seven were deposed without a vote. The Marnoch parishioners built a new church from donations received and the second presen-tee was duly installed, while Edwards occupied a fine parish church and manse and enjoyed a handsome stipend with no congregation.

The political problem

Although the Evangelical party was generally Whig and not Tory like the Moderates, the Whigs were also supported by dissenters from the Established Church whether in England or Scotland. The dissenters were a significant force of the rising middle class and were loud in pressing for disestablishment, so the necessary additional endowment for the Church of Scotland was not forthcoming when the Whigs were in power in 1834 and 1835-41. On the other hand the Tories led by men like Sir Robert Peel, Prime Minister 1834-35 and 1841-46, were sympathetic to the idea of an Established Church but largely ignorant of the history and tradition of the Scottish church, and certainly not sympathetic with the non-intrusion principle, as their mindset was strongly erastian. In a world undergoing major social change, and with revolutionary undercurrents in Europe, the desire of the church was frustrated by the advance of the idea of a unitary state in which Parliament was supreme.

The Disruption – 18 May 1843

Chalmers could have compromised on non-intrusion but not on the spiritual independence of the church. At the Assembly of May



'Leaving the Manse' by J. M. Corner

1842 representatives of the deposed Strathbogie ministers claiming to represent the Presbytery appeared, but were rejected. The civil court issued an injunction against the representatives of the church-recognised Presbytery of Strathbogie attending. The Assembly ignored it. On the motion of William Cunningham (1805-61), one of the younger men belonging to the so-called 'Wild Party', the total abolition of patronage was now sought. Cunningham had already written *The Defence of the Rights of the Christian People* in 1840. The motion was carried 216 to 147. Then a Claim of Right was adopted 241 to 110, which asserted the spiritual independence of the church, and in effect pledged that if this was not recognised there would be a disruption.

In June 1842 the British government rejected the Claim of Right, while in August the manse the Auchterarder congregation had rejected in 1834 had damages of £16,000 confirmed against the Presbytery by the House of Lords. A Convocation of 465 ministers committed to spiritual independence was held in November and some 75% of those present pledged to resign from the Established Church if their grievances were not met. In January 1843 the Government through 'the Queen's Letter' refused to consider the

Claim of Right. Soon after, Scotland's highest civil court declared the church's *Chapels Act* of 1834 illegal, and so all *quoad sacra* churches created under it were void. There were about 230 *quoad sacra* parishes, and this decision denied them representation in church courts.

Meanwhile steps were made for the formation of the Church of Scotland free of this interference. It would view itself as a national church and bring its ministrations to the whole country. Chalmers' organisational ability and his previous work in church extension ensured there were over 400 local bodies in place by April. Still the Peel Government would not yield. When the Assembly met on 18 May 1843, the retiring Moderator read a Claim, Declaration and Protest against the conditions now required by the church in order for it to enjoy its position as an Established Church. He then bowed to the Royal Commissioner, left the chair and exited the church followed by 123 ministers and 73 elders who were joined in procession outside by hundreds of other ministers not members of the Assembly. They proceeded to the large Tanfield Hall, Chalmers was appointed Moderator and they there constituted the Church of Scotland

free of the encroachment on her liberties.

Over 400 ministers signed an Act of Separation and Deed of Demission by which their rights in the Established Church were signed away – churches, manses, stipends. The total number of ministers who joined the Free Church was 454 (a figure equal to 38% of the 1,195 ministers in the Established Church). In urban areas the proportion which left was around 50%. In rural areas, including the old covenanting districts in the

south-west where the Seceders were strong anyway, under 25% withdrew, but in the Highlands 60% or more did so. Only about 25% of ministers ordained before 1820 withdrew, but some 53% of those ordained 1830-40 did so. In all, about two thirds of the Evangelical party withdrew and these included 169, or 70%, of the *quoad sacra* ministers, and 289, or 42%, of regular parish ministers. In addition 192 probationers joined the Free Church as did all the overseas missionaries and over 90 students for

the ministry.

There were repercussions in the British colonies. In Canada, formal division occurred in 1844. In Australia the division came in 1846 when the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia was formed when the Australian Synod refused to break its legal and moral connection with the Established Church of Scotland.

The World in the Banner

Judge convicts UK evangelist

A judge has convicted and fined a street evangelist for quoting one verse of the Bible that condemns homosexuality on the streets of Taunton, Somerset -- instead of quoting another verse. Judge Shamim Ahmed Qureshi of Bristol Crown Court fined former para-trooper-turned-Christian-evangelist Mike Overd £200 (\$297 U.S.), and ordered him to pay £1,200 (\$1,780) in costs which included £250 (\$371) compensation to the homosexual activist who lodged the complaint.

Judge Qureshi also told Overd that he should not have quoted a passage from the 20th chapter of the Old Testament Book of Leviticus, which calls for the death penalty for Israelites who engage in sodomy. Qureshi said that Overd should instead have used Leviticus 18:22, which merely describes homosexual practice as an "abomination."

"I am amazed that the judge sees it as his role to dictate which parts of the Bible can and can't be preached," the evangelist said. "I did not quote the full text of Leviticus 20 or make reference to the death penalty but the judge is telling me that I should use other parts of the Bible. This is not free speech but censorship. The judge is redacting the Bible," Overd said, according to a report by the Chris-

tian Legal Centre, which represented him in court. "I have been ordered to pay compensation for causing 'emotional pain' to someone who approached me aggressively, demanding to debate the issue. There was no harm, injury, or theft – just a simple disagreement over theology which I have now been fined for," he added.

Christian Legal Centre (CLC) lawyers Paul Diamond and Michael Phillips pointed out a "highly unusual aspect of the case" in that witnesses of Mr. Overd's alleged offensive statements couldn't seem to recall what he said or when he said it. The CLC report noted that "One of the eyewitnesses, Nigel Marley, said in a statement that he was 'unable to recall exactly what phrases he was using, but it was clear to me that it was homophobic.'"

"Mike's boldness and his witness to Jesus is remarkably similar to that of the apostles in the early years of the church," said Andrea Williams, chief executive of the Christian Legal Centre. "They were also hauled before the courts to defend themselves for preaching a message of love and truth. They also faced trumped up accusations in an attempt to portray them as 'disruptive.' Now, as then, the disruptive ones appear to be the people who bring accusations, on the flimsiest of evidence, against a

man who loves Jesus and loves people. This is why Mike gets up and preaches in Taunton town centre.

"There will always be those who disagree with the Bible's teaching. But we should defend to the hilt the freedom to proclaim it in a loving way, which is what Mike Overd always seeks to do," Williams concluded.

"My motivation for preaching the Gospel is my love for Jesus Christ and my deep concern for people who do not know His great love and are heading towards an eternity separated from God," Overd said. Mr. Overd said after the sentencing that he intends to go right back to preaching on the streets of Taunton. "I follow my Lord and leader, so I won't tone down." + TAUNTON, UK, April 2, 2015 (LifeSiteNews.com)

No More Brides and Grooms in Florida

N. T. Wright is one of the most world's foremost New Testament scholars, a sober-minded man not given to extreme rhetoric. Yet when it came to the question of redefining marriage, Wright did not hold back, explaining how dangerous it is to change the fundamental meaning of words: "When anybody — pressure groups, governments, civilizations — suddenly change the

meaning of key words, you really should watch out. If you go to a German dictionary and just open at random, you may well see several German words which have a little square bracket saying 'N.S.,' meaning National Socialist or Nazi. The Nazis gave those words a certain meaning. In post-1917 Russia, there were whole categories of people who were called 'former persons,' because by the Communist diktat they had ceased to be relevant for the state, and once you call them former persons it was extremely easy to ship them off somewhere and have them killed."

He continued, "It's like a government voting that black should be white. Sorry, you can vote that if you like, you can pass it by a total majority, but it isn't actually going to change the reality."

That's why I have often said that once you redefine marriage, you render it meaningless. It would be like saying a couple can now consist of five people, or a pair can refer to one item, or a tricycle can have two wheels.

Redefining those terms doesn't change reality, and when it comes to marriage, if you don't have the two essential components, namely a husband and a wife, you don't have marriage. Consequently, if you change the fundamental meaning of marriage, you change the meaning of husband and wife as well.

As I pointed out last year in an article entitled, "I Now Pronounce You Spouse and Spouse," as England began to move towards redefining marriage, the *Daily Telegraph* reported that, "The word 'husband' will in the future be applied to women and the word 'wife' will refer to men, the Government has decided."

According to John Bingham, "Civil servants have overruled the *Oxford English Dictionary* and hundreds of years of common usage effectively abolishing the traditional meaning of the words for spouses."

In the government's proposed guidelines, "'husband' here will include a man or a woman in a same sex marriage, as well as a man

married to a woman. In a similar way, 'wife' will include a woman married to another woman or a man married to a man." So, a man could be a wife if married to another man (or not), while a woman could be a husband if married to another woman (or not), all of which begs the question: Why use words at all if they have utterly lost their meaning? It's like saying that up is down (or up) and down is up (or down), while north is south (or north) and south is north (or south).

In the same article, I cited the *Huffington Post*, which reported that "California's same-sex couples may now be pronounced spouse and spouse after Gov. Jerry Brown (D) signed a bill [last] Monday eliminating outdated 'husband and wife' references from state laws." Not surprisingly, according to California bill AB 1951, birth certificates will have three options: "mother," "father," or simply "parent," meaning that, in the case of two lesbians, one could be designated "father," while in the case of two gay men, one could be designated "mother." (The bill would also allow for three parents to be listed on the birth certificate, since there's obviously a missing third party in the event of two men or two women "having" a baby.) This means that we've come to a place of semantic insanity, a place where you can have male wives, female husbands, male mothers, and female fathers.

Do people really think you can just turn the world upside down without having any adverse effects?

In keeping with this social madness, the state of Florida recently changed its marriage certificates, removing the terms "bride" and "groom" and replacing them with "spouse." This goes hand in hand with other international trends. As I pointed out in 2011, "In Ontario, Canada, as a result of the legalization of same-sex marriage, all references to terms like *husband*, *wife*, and *widow* were removed from the law books in 2005. In Spain, birth certificates were changed from 'Father' and 'Mother'

to 'Progenitor A' and 'Progenitor B.'"

But of course! That's why principle #4 in my new book is: Refuse to Redefine Marriage, since, to repeat, once you redefine marriage, you render it meaningless. The Supreme Court can give its ruling; laws can be passed; public opinion can shift and turn, but that doesn't mean we have to affirm it, participate in it or, God forbid, celebrate it.

But all is not lost. True marriage — natural marriage, marriage the way God intended it from the beginning (see Jesus' words in Matthew 19:4-6) — will endure, while radically redefined marriage will undo itself.

I was reminded of this as I watched some baby dedications at a church service on Sunday, with the proud moms and dads holding their precious little ones in their arms: There's no substitute for marriage and family the way God set it up, regardless of what Florida or California or England or Spain or Canada might say.

+ Michael Brown at www.christianpost.com/news

Liberal Teacher Takes In Muslim Refugee, His Colleague Finds What's Left Of Him

A leftist professor decided to put into practice his own liberal "open doors" policy, feeding and housing a poor Muslim refugee in his own home. However, when his colleague showed up to find out why he wasn't at work, he found a stomach-churning trail that's enough for anyone to abandon their progressive "multicultural" beliefs.

A high school math teacher from Celle, a city near Hanover, Germany, foolishly bought into the propaganda that Muslim asylum seekers can be won over with Western hospitality and tolerance. Mehdi Hushmand was not only popular with his students, but he had become an active volunteer in the refugee movement.

Mehdi, a 55-year-old migrant

himself from Iran, sympathized with the flood of Muslim asylum seekers flocking across the borders. He began bringing food, aid, and supplies to refugee centers, but he still felt he wasn't doing enough. So, he made friends with the male refugees, even letting a few of them stay with him in his house.

Celle Heut reports that when Mehdi didn't show up for work, one of his co-workers went to check on him. After searching the home in February, he discovered what looked like a trail of blood leading to the basement. It was there that the colleague found Mehdi butchered and lying dead in a pool of his own blood.

Murdered by the very migrant for whom he cared, Mehdi's tolerance for the 58-year-old Afghan refugee came "full swing" when police say they got into an "argument," according to *Bild*. Upset that Mehdi, the man who gave him everything, simply disagreed with him, the unidentified asylum seeker took a rock and a large metal instrument and bashed the teacher's head to a bloody pulp. He then dragged the mutilated body down to the basement in an attempt to cover up his gruesome crime.

Although the migrant suspect was arrested last Thursday, Ger-

man police were hesitant to give out many details, including the man's Afghan origin or his legal status. Throughout Europe, many officials have failed to report key statistics, hoping to protect Muslim migrants' image and their own left-ist agenda.

Mehdi was murdered because his compassion and ignorance met its match with the Islamic ideology inherent in Sharia countries. As a witness to the Islamic brutality in his own home country, the propaganda of the left took advantage of his sympathy.

We are told that refugees have passed up countless safe Muslim countries to head to the West because they are escaping terrorism and tyranny. However, what we're not told is that many of them are supporters of that which they claim to be fleeing.

The first disturbing detail is that this refugee is from Afghanistan — not Syria. This coincides with reports that 4 out of 5 refugees are not from Syria or even a war-torn nation. As such, migrants from North Africa, Asia, and the rest of the Middle East have jumped on the refugee crisis simply to gain benefits in Europe.

Another shocking statistic is that a dangerously large number of Syrian refugees who claim they are fleeing the Islamic State are

actually supporters. Around one-third of Syrian asylum seekers flocking to the West show some support for ISIS, while at least 13 percent openly admit they are fans of the terrorist group and agree with its Islamic views. That means that we are welcoming in refugees who believe that the spread of violent jihad belongs in the West, and they stand in solidarity with a Sharia government in our countries..

Nearly half of all refugees and migrants to the West are men. Although this is a step up from last year's 72 percent, we are still only seeing 35 percent children and 20 percent women. The able-bodied men are abandoning their families to make their way to Europe, leading us to believe that they either aren't in any real danger or we are accepting millions of barbaric Muslim males who hold fast to their misogynist views.

Unfortunately, leftists have managed to endanger countless civilians with their emotional propaganda. However, if we do not act quickly towards self-preservation despite political correctness, many more will end up like the misled liberal teacher.

+ <http://madworldnews.com/liberal-teacher-muslim-refugee/>

Urgent Request from India

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We are very much obliged of PCEA and especially for your team you are doing, especially for the school.

As we face challenges from the newly opened private schools in Chhapara and Seoni as some rich businessmen have started their own schools, we always require to provide something exceptional to the children and parents in order to cope with the challenge and attract parents to send their children to our school.

We always try to give our best to the school, but we have limited resources and funds. But, when rich people start their own schools it attracts people to their schools, because of facilities they provide.

Our staff is well qualified, capable, hard-working, committed, however, one additional thing we can provide much better than other schools, is none other than English spoken teaching in our institution through the volunteer teachers from abroad. No matter how much he or she is trained or qualified, we just need direct interaction for thirty to forty minutes daily in a classroom.

We would like to have someone as a volunteer- teacher for two months or more – up to five months, (if possible in the last week of June 2016 as the new session begins in July.)

The school can provide accommodation (at our home), meals, and travelling within the country.

In His service, yours in Christ, Pradeep — pradeep_kumar667@yahoo.com

If you are interested in this please speak to your minister or one of the Mission's Committee, such as its Convenor, the Rev. Jim Klazinga — jdklaz@gmail.com

Life under the Banner

A Call for Dignity

1 Timothy 2:2 speaks of praying for those in authority, in order that we may be able to “lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.” Consider the word ‘dignified.’ Our desire is to be able to lead a ‘dignified’ life.

Philippians 4:8 says, “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” Think about whatever is true. Think about whatever is honourable.

The word ‘honourable’ here is very closely connected to the word we find in 1 Timothy 2:2, translated: dignified. They come from the same basic word, and there is the same fundamental idea behind these two words.

Perhaps it might be helpful to contrast these words with their opposite: that which is not honourable, dignified, is light-hearted, goofy, jesting, unserious.

We’re not trying to establish a moral contrast here, saying that that which instills dignity is always by definition good; and that which is light-hearted is always by definition bad. There can be a place for things that are unserious. A little bit of goofiness isn’t always wrong.

But when Paul in Philippians 4:8 is telling people to meditate on that which is honourable, and when he talks about leading a peaceful and quiet life that is dignified, then he is speaking about an important attitude that we are to encourage. Life is not always one big joke, and the Christian who is always goofing off, who shows no measure of dignity, is not living in the manner required by God.

Growing Up

Look at it this way: this is about being grown up, mature. The grown-up believer realises that life is not just about having fun. There is a

serious side to life, and being grown up requires a bit of solemnity, and dignity.

This is not always appreciated in our culture. Some think it’s good to put off adulthood as long as possible. It’s fine for those in their teenage years, in their early 20s, maybe even their late 20s, to avoid adult responsibilities. Working hard in your youth is not necessary. Settling down, getting married, starting a family, becoming a responsible member of society, is something that is happening later and later, if at all.

Or how about this: every now and then you’ll see advertisements that depict older people acting like children. This is portrayed as being a good thing. The idea is that elderly people can be just as goofy as younger people, and this is what enjoying life is all about.

There is also the attitude in society that once you retire, you want to be in the position where you’re able to use your savings for personal enjoyment, spending as much of your time as possible in recreational activities. You will finally have time to have more fun, now that you no longer have to be working at your mundane everyday job.

But the Bible does not tell us that the goal of life is to goof off as much as you can in your younger years, and then earn as much as you can during your working years, so that you can let your hair hang down again and go back to goofing off in your later years.

And the Word does not present it as a good thing for older people to act like children, as if somehow that’s the only way that they can enjoy life.

The Bible presents old age as something that is a blessing. But it’s not a blessing that is given to us simply for our own enjoyment and pleasure. It’s a blessing that should make us more worthy of respect, a blessing that should instil in us a measure of wisdom. And the goal is

Jim Klazinga

to be able to share this wisdom with those who are coming afterward, to help them have a sense of what it means to be a responsible adult, to demonstrate to them what mature leadership is all about, to give them a model of what it means to be dignified.

Growing Up Together

1 Timothy 3:8 says, “Deacons likewise must be dignified.” Deacons are to be reverent, they are to be dignified, respectable, honourable. This is a good thing to seek after.

In our congregation, we are hoping to instil this by having discussion groups on spiritual growth after alternate afternoon services. The initial idea was to focus on helping the younger men in our congregation to grow in maturity, to help them grow in their understanding of what it means to become responsible young men. We want them to eventually become leaders, and a big part of what it means for them to become leaders is to understand what it means to be dignified. We want to help them meditate on that which is honourable and to live their lives in a manner that is consistent with that sense of honour, that sense of dignity.

This is important for women as well. The ladies are having their own discussion groups focusing on spiritual growth, and the hope with them as well is to help those who are younger to grow as mature and responsible followers of Christ.

In Titus 2, Paul speaks of how older women can have an important role in helping younger women grow in maturity, just as older men can have that same role in helping younger men.

This is what we do together as a community of believers. This is part of what it means to be the body of Christ, passing on the faith to the next generation and

passing on what it means to live out that faith in our everyday lives, for the glory of God.

Living Honourably Before Others

Titus 2 also makes clear that believers will want to live lives that are reverent, dignified, mature, grown up and responsible, because of what living this kind of life will say to those outside the church. We live lives worthy of respect, so that we can be seen as respectable among unbelievers. We want it to be clear that we believe the Christian life is a life of integrity; it is a life worthy of respect, and we want other people to see this.

And it's not because we want them to think well of us. It's certainly not because we want to give the impression that we believe we're better than them. No. It's because we don't want the word of God to be blasphemed in our lives. We want to present a positive, dignified, noble picture to the world, because we serve a God who is dignified, who is noble, who is holy, who is ultimately worthy of respect.

We do not serve a light-hearted God who tells us that we are here for a good time, not a long time, so we should enjoy ourselves as much as we can. Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you may die.

No, we serve a God who has a much more serious purpose for us. We serve a God who has the long view in mind, and who has made it clear that that perspective requires a measure of responsibility on our part.

God's philosophy is not: in the long run, you are all dead. We serve a God who has made it clear that in the long run, those who belong to him, those who have been set apart to serve him, those whose sins are forgiven through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, those who are recipients of his amazing grace, in the long run, they are alive.

In the long run, we know what true joy is all about. And having the long run in mind, we understand why we are serious, why it's important to be dignified, why we need to have a sense of responsibility and maturity, why we should be living lives of rev-

erence, being honourable, having a serious sense of purpose.

And because this is what God has in store for us, we want to make it clear that we are going to pattern our lives in such a way so that it is clear that we serve this God, we love this God, and we want to take seriously his serious instructions for how we are to live.

We want to present this picture to the world, so that others may see in us who it is that we serve. We want others to have a sense of just how big, how glorious, how majestic, how dignified this God really is. And we want them to see this, so they too will have a sense that this God is their Creator, that this God calls them to serve him, and they too need to humble themselves before him. We want them to know this God, know Jesus Christ, trust in him, and grow in him. We want them to join us in living a life of reverence that gives glory to God.

1 Timothy 2, after speaking of how we want to lead a dignified life, says, "This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time."

Why lead a quiet and peaceable life? Why lead a life of godliness and reverence? Why act in a dignified, honourable manner? Because of our saviour Jesus Christ. Because our God desires to work more and more, so that the dignity, the honour, the glory of his Son may be displayed for all to see.

And our God has made it clear that he is a God of grace. Any kind of person, no matter how irresponsible they may have been in their lives, no matter how disreputable they may have been in the past, can come to know Jesus Christ as mediator. They can be forgiven of their sins, thanks to the perfect sacrifice of the Lord and Saviour. They can be joined to him in true faith, and be one of his people.

Striking, isn't it? Paul talks here

about praying for all men, praying for those who are in authority, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. And his basic intent for why we should be doing this is evangelistic: so that God may be glorified in having others come to a knowledge of the truth.

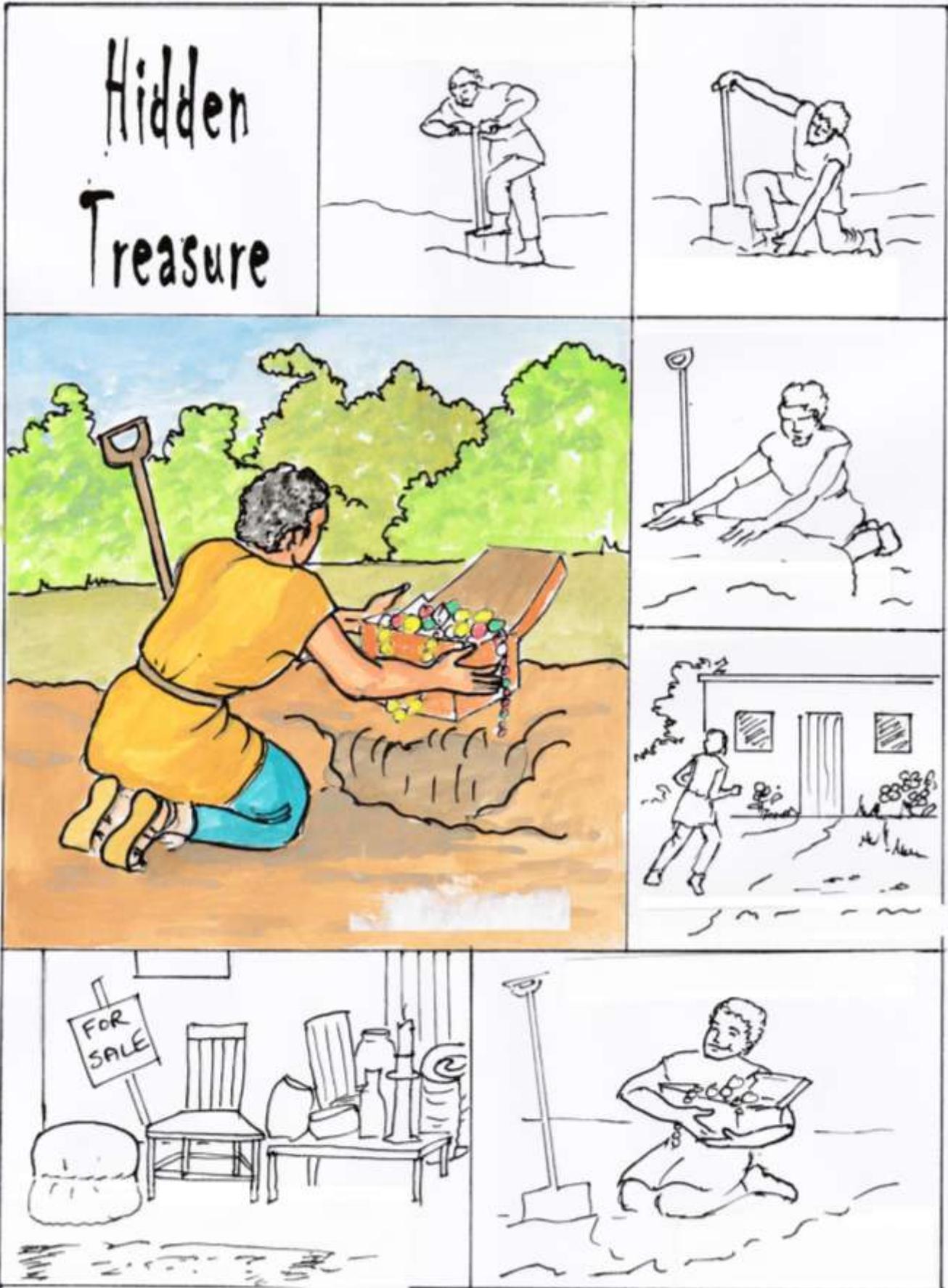
This is not to say: just present a positive, dignified life, and that's the extent of our message to the world. The apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 2:7 speaks of how he is a preacher, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. The word does need to be preached. We must teach very clearly who God is and what he has accomplished in Jesus Christ. That's fundamental to our calling as God's people. We proclaim the truth, and we spell out what that truth is. We do so with words, true words, biblical words.

But we also need to live out that truth. If we don't, if our lives are disruptive, disreputable, ungodly, undignified, if we do not lead a quiet and peaceable life in reverence, then the message that we proclaim loses its impact.

How can we present the truth of the holy God if our lives are characterised by unholiness? How can we maintain the honour of our majestic God, if we can't even live honourable lives? How can we show that the gospel is a very serious thing, if there is no sense of seriousness in our lives?

Meditate on that which is noble, honourable. Live a life of reverence. Say to yourself: "I serve a God of dignity, and I want to show that dignity in my life. I want to become mature and responsible, so that I can be a better witness to the saviour who has loved me so much. I want to understand better the nobility of what he is done for me. I want to be serious about learning more and more about him, because this is a very serious thing. Not because I want to be sombre and miserable, but because true joy is experienced in knowing him, trusting him, living for him."

Children under the Banner — Matthew 13:44-46



Prescribed Search Work

MAY 2016

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

SENIOR AND INTERMEDIATE (Intermediate omit questions 7 and 8)

2 THESSALONIANS chapter 1

1. For what reason did the apostle say he was bound to thank God always for the Thessalonians? (2 verses)
2. When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, what will he do to his enemies? (2 verses only)

chapter 2

3. What must happen first before the day of the Lord [Christ] come? (2 verses)
4. To what end has God from the beginning chosen his people to salvation? (2 verses)
5. From whom have we received everlasting consolation and good hope?

chapter 3

6. Why did the apostle ask the Thessalonians to pray for him and the other apostles? (2 verses)
- x7. How did the apostles behave themselves when they were among the Thessalonians? (2 verses)
- x8. What command was given to those busybodies who would not work?

JUNIOR

DANIEL chapter 5

1. At Belshazzar's feast, what came forth [appeared] and wrote on the wall?
2. Could the king's wise men read the writing?
3. What was Daniel's interpretation of the three words written on the wall? (3 verses)
4. What happened to Belshazzar that night, and who took the kingdom? (2 verses)

Please send the answers to:
Mrs I Steel
PO Box 942
Epping NSW 1710
The questions for the whole year
are available from the above postal
address or by email at:
iesteel@gmail.com

Oh! Really?

Teen Terror

Herm Zandman

The news media are regularly filled with news of young people going on a shooting spree, young people joining terrorist groups, young people being defiant toward authorities, young people generally being disrespectful of their elders. At the same time these media are filled with propaganda to make forms of cohabitation other than the Biblical family model acceptable in today's world, more than acceptable, *normative* even. It is a world defined by confusion with islands of Bible-centred stability (also nicknamed right-wing phobics) sprinkled throughout. In this phantasmagoria (= constantly changing scene composed of numerous elements -- the latest addition being test tube babies, many of them now adults, seeking their parental roots) children continue to be born and grow up and, once in their teens, become the subjects of talk shows, psycho-analyses, and breaking news at times. In the labyrinthine and, in many cases oxymoronic, spider's web called a modern and technologically advanced society, science buffs painstakingly analyse right and left brain functions to explain the good and bad that occurs on account of maladaptation in growing teenagers. However, all I can see on my television screen and on the front page of my newspaper is this indelible and persistent watermark: that question mark screaming, 'Why?'

Where It Begins

Pastor J.B. Buffington (Cloud, D., 2010, *Keeping the Kids*, p.97) says, "I've heard people say, "Everything went all right until my children became teenagers and then something happened." But I beg your pardon, that's not the case. Most of it happened before five years old. In those first five years, attitudes, security, goals, and many other things are already

developed and they will come into full blossom in teenage years. Indeed, many parents do not realize it, but they lose their teenagers before the age of five. The reasons vary, but the essence is that the motives of the heart on the part of the family members involved are not in line with God's imperatives as to how that cornerstone organism of society is to function wholesomely. Basically, the home is to be a theatre of praise to God, a Bible-centred home, with the husband (of the male variety, married to a female spouse) being the spiritual leader in an environment where consistency in following the Lord is practised and where hypocrisy is avoided (or frankly confessed and repented of if it occurs incidentally)."

This tragic lack of realization that teenagers are being lost while still pre-schoolers defines many of the mishaps in our society today, also among members of the Church of Christ. It tempts teenagers to look for consistency and fulfilment away from the paternal home, to kick against authority figures at home and elsewhere (one principal told the parents at the parents' evening that a sure way to train a rebel is to place a child from a lukewarm Christian home in a red-hot Christian school), to seek fulfilment in particular ideologies which appeal to them via targeted internet activity. It can mould teenagers into weapons of mass destruction, as normalisation of sin gets a grip on them and as Biblical stewardship ruination becomes normative. It is not strange at all to see that terror groups the world over manage to lure teenagers into their destructive escapades. It is a logical outflow of homes which are marked by lost Biblical moorings.

The Biblical Precedents

God will not be mocked. He

showed this in the days of Noah when He sent a worldwide flood to destroy all mankind. And why did He destroy it? Because, as recorded in Genesis 6:5, "GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The wholesome script of the Creator was despised by those for whom it was designed and God addressed the flagrant defiance terminally.

This, i.e. that God will not be mocked, was made clear as well in the days of King Josiah, when the Prophet Jeremiah was sent with a message to the people, a message which came entirely from left field (even the Prophet Habakkuk was flabbergasted, as he even questioned God why He would use such a terrible bunch of heathens who were reputedly much worse than God's own at the time – Habakkuk 1:13), at a time when the families of Judah seemed to be doing well, under a righteous king who demolished and killed off all that smacked of idolatry in the nation. However, it was clear that, whereas their king might be full of noble intentions and showed God-pleasing cleaning protocols, the hearts of the people were void of divine allegiance as they went along in mere tokenism. This was evident as all the nation's families plunged back into the overt old ways of sinning habitually against God as soon as Josiah was gone.

In Deuteronomy 28, verses 50 and following, the extremely brutal conquest by the Babylonians was foretold; it was a brutality of conquest which amounted to the very undoing of creation itself (v.51, 59-60)! The desperate victims would even resort to the horror of cannibalizing their own

flesh and blood to survive the trauma imposed by the enemy. More remarkably, it is recorded as God's plan, pre-ordained! As stated by the Apostle Paul in Romans 8, the whole of creation groans while awaiting the liberation of man: "For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now." Man's living apart from God leads to destruction all around, even ecologically. There is nothing accidental about this; it is all under God's control. He raises up the rod of correction (be it in the form of the Babylonians or any other tool) as He makes clear to Moses (in Deuteronomy) and to Jeremiah (chapter 4).

But the question mark does not need to stay as a watermark continually on the television screen or on the newspaper's front page. Along with His judgments, God also reaches out with solutions, with real answers. He gives clear instructions regarding family make-up, raising of children, forming of wholesome societies. Disregarding those instructions is done at the peril of the ones who are indifferent or defiant.

The Antidote

God will not be mocked. But He gives a solution, an antidote, to the ruination of stewardship, to the sys-



Police attempting to control Youth Gang Rioting in Melbourne CBD, March 12 2016

temic creation of those young weapons of mass destruction. The answer is a Person, the One Who took upon Himself the curse of Babylon, the punishment of the Flood, the offence of a fallen humanity against the Creator-God. Jesus Christ paid for all the ugliness mass-produced by man; He settled the account with the Creator-God and restored that which was broken, i.e. that harmonious relationship between God and man which once existed in the Garden of Eden. The following call of God is there for all to read and is preached from pulpits the world over. It can be read and heard by God's people; it can be read and heard by those who are thoroughly alienated from their Creator. Excuses are out. "Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Return to Me," says the LORD of hosts, "and I will return to you," says the LORD of

hosts" (Zechariah 1:3). Very well-known also are the words of Jesus where He says, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by Me" (John 13:6). Only through Him is return possible and only through Him can the phantasmagoria be healed, in coming home to the Creator and Great Physician.

Right-brain and left-brain analyses are interesting and they show, if nothing else, the wonder of God's creation. However, removal of the question mark on the talk shows and newspapers can only be done through the bowels – or the heart, that inner core that is dedicated to the God of the universe. Thank God for teenagers who are being trained as toddlers in Bible-centred homes. May the rest of society wake up to the remedy by His grace!

Missions in the Banner — Mukti Mission (India)

By now, most people who read The Banner should know something about Mukti Mission and the work it seeks to do in Christ's name. The work is multi-faceted and diverse. For 126 years, Mukti has been caring for Indian women and children from its base near Pune, in Maharashtra State, as well as expansion homes and other centres in 18

locations across eight states of India. In Sanskrit, the word 'mukti' means freedom, liberation and salvation.

Mukti was founded in 1889, where it is known as Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission, after its founder Pandita Ramabai. Amongst many other amazing achievements, Pandita Ramabai commenced the

translation of the Bible into Marathi in 1904. The first edition of the New Testament was published in 1913, 103 years ago! In 1922, only days after completing the full translation of God's Word, Ramabai passed away to be with her Lord. Her translation was from the original Hebrew and Greek! In 1924, Ramabai's translation of



One of the first carts bearing the Mission's name

In recognition of Pandita's tireless work in community service, the Indian Government released a postal stamp in 1989 commemorating 100 years of Ramabai's work.

The PCEA have been privileged to have visits from Mukti women both in 2014 and 2015. The dedication and love for Jesus within these young girls was so transparent, deep and wonderful. It really was something beautiful and spoke volumes about their faith and confidence in the Lord Jesus.

We have also been blessed by having Glenda De Jager as the National Director of Mukti Australia. In fact it was through a visit by Pandita's daughter, Manoramabai, in 1902-1903, that a Mukti Council was formed and the first missionary was sent out in 1910. Glenda and her staff have been instrumental in introducing Mukti to the Australian churches, thereby increasing sponsorships and raising much needed financial support for many projects.

In India, like many other places in the world, it's a constant challenge to provide the daily necessities of life. The cost of food, fuel, education and other basic necessities is always rising. With this in mind, the Missions Committee decided to support five Mukti girls about

seven years ago. This support is ongoing and provides a safe home where the girls are part of a family and receive healthy food, clothes, education, shelter and a loving family. The girls need these things to realise their potential, so that they can go back into the community confident, equipped and ready to be the 'salt and light' God intended them to be.

Two girls of the initial five have left Mukti and we have taken on someone else needy on both those occasions. I received some lovely Christmas letters from the girls – two of which are copied below.

'Dear Presbyterian Church of Eastern

*How are you? I hope you will be fine in name of Jesus I always praying for you. Thank you so much you are supporting me. Now I am studying special school. I learn to make a candle also I lots improving to speaking in English. I was so happy here take care at your self. I always remember you in my prayer.
in christ chhaya shendge'*

'Dear Aunty and Uncle,

Hope you are all fine. I wish you all in the name of Lord Jesus Christ. Im so happy to get your sponsorship. Kindly pray for my health. Im doing well in making baskets. I also enjoy playing flute. Im waiting to meet you all some day.

With love, Shital'

There are a number of current projects, such as The Good Harvest. This project focuses on wa-

ter catchment and farming for Mukti's future. You can find details of this and other projects on the Mukti Australia website. Please think seriously about supporting a Mukti pro-

ject or supporting a child. Many people will be helped and blessed, and we can change a child's future as we support such worthwhile projects.

Please pray for more frontline staff. Pray too for the women, children and current staff of Mukti. Uphold Lorraine Francis – Mission Director & Anil Francis – Deputy Director, who are the senior leaders at Mukti, India. Both have a passion to serve the lowest and least in society. They have worked with Mukti for 28 years.

Rev. Peter Smith



Pandita Ramabai, founder of Mukti



Vaishali, Rutika and Glenda de Jager, National Director Mukti Australia