

THE PRESBYTERIAN BANNER

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Devotion: "Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle." Psalm 24: 7-8

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WHY WE SHOULD USE THE LORD'S PRAYER

Rev. Ray Murray, Northern Rivers

Our topic over this weekend [Camp Drewe] is the Lord's Prayer. There are two main reasons why I've chosen this one: [1] First, prayer has always been difficult – and I thought I would share some of my thoughts about the Lord's Prayer with you. [2] The other reason is that I wanted to talk about my favourite topic – the Kingdom of God. And in the "Lord's Prayer" I found an ingenious way to combine them! The Lord's Prayer deals beautifully with the subject of Prayer – and it's a Prayer that's centred on the Kingdom of God! So, in effect, I've got my cake and I'll eat it too – and I hope you will profit a bit from it all. But don't take what I say. Read the exposition of this prayer in the Shorter and Larger Catechisms and you'll find a summary of what I'll be saying to you!

We have the "The Lord's Prayer" – or, to be more exact the prayer that the Lord Jesus taught his disciples – in two places in the Bible - in Matthew 6:10-13, and Luke 11:1-4. Strictly speaking, of course, we shouldn't call this the "Lord's Prayer" at all, because it's not a prayer that the Lord Jesus could ever pray in its entirety. For example, he couldn't pray the petition we have in verse 12 – "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" because he was sinless. If we really want to see the Lord's Prayer we have to turn to John 17. That truly is the "Lord's Prayer" in all its majesty. Here we have, not the Lord's Prayer, but the prayer he taught his disciples. I suppose we really ought to call it the "Disciples Prayer" – but provided we recognise that it's not the prayer the Lord Jesus prayed or could pray but one he taught his disciples I don't suppose there's any harm in calling it "The Lord's Prayer."

Now instead of going straight into a study of the actual words and Petitions of the Prayer, I want to think with you about "Why We Should Study the Lord's Prayer" – and take it far more seriously than we often do. If we focus our attention on some of these reasons it will keep us from underrating this Prayer – as sometimes happens in Churches where a great deal of emphasis is placed on "free" and "spontaneous" prayer and set forms of prayer are looked down on. As a result, the Lord's Prayer is often neglected. No one uses it; no one teaches it; no one talks about it, and often, it's not even thought about very much. Where the Lord's Prayer is very subtly underrated - very serious consequences can follow. After all, the Lord Jesus had his reasons for giving us this prayer! We can't just put it aside and forget about it in our life. What, then, are some of the reasons why the Lord Jesus gave this prayer to us?

IT KEEPS PAGANISM OUT OF OUR PRAYERS

First of all, one of the reasons why the Lord Jesus gave this prayer to us is that it's *designed to keep paganism out of our own prayers*. It's designed to keep us from babbling like pagans before God. This comes out very clearly here in Matthew 6. Here, the Lord Jesus, among other things, is warning his disciples about praying like the heathens. Heathen prayer, says our Lord, is just "chatter" – the use of many and empty words in the hope that their 'god' or a god would hear them. They thought that if they talked enough their god would be suitably impressed and would answer them. We have a good example of this sort of thing in the prayer of the Prophets of Baal when challenged

by Elijah on Mount Carmel. They cried out from “morning until noon, saying, “O Baal, hear us.” [1 Kings 18:26] In Isaiah’s day the Lord was so fed up with the prayers offered to him, that he said he would hide his eyes from his people [Isaiah 1:15]. And I sometimes wonder whether these all night vigils, and prayer chains come very close to encouraging a pagan attitude to prayer. There’s the danger that we try to manipulate God by our much speaking.

The Dignity of Disciples

The Lord Jesus says to his disciples, “You’re not to pray like Pagans.” And he goes on in verse 9 to show them how he wants them to pray, and gives them a prayer that’s remarkable for its tenderness, its brevity, its order, its simplicity, and yet also its comprehensiveness. There’s no “empty chatter”, no much speaking here, but, as someone has put it, “six short petitions that go arrow like to the unseen world.” [Hunter, p66] Nor is there any thought that we have to tell God all about ourselves, or arouse him to action. It’s simple and reverent. And yet it doesn’t leave out one thing that we should pray for. In fact it’s just the opposite of the pagan with his pagan views about the character of God. And this, says the Lord Jesus, is the way his disciples are to pray. As he puts it in verse 9, “This is how you should pray” - not like pagans but like the children of God. In other words the purpose of the Lord’s Prayer is that his disciples may not pray like heathens, but as God’s children.

The Pattern for Our Prayer.

And just as that was the design of the Lord’s Prayer then, so it’s still today. The Lord has given this prayer to us, so that, by following it as a model and a pattern, paganism can be kept out of our prayers. We don’t have to stick to the exact words. The Lord Jesus is giving us a model – and this is indicated when he tells us to pray “like this”. But we’re to conform to this pattern, and have this prayer always before us, lest we fall into pagan ways of praying. And that’s why it’s so important for us to think about the Lord’s Prayer, and take it with the utmost seriousness. If we don’t, and if it ceases to the pattern of our prayer, there’s always the danger that we’ll slip into pagan attitudes, and pagan ways of praying, thinking that by a great deal of words we’ll be able to convince the Lord about our needs and “move” him to answer our prayers. We’ll forget the fact that God isn’t like that at all – that he’s our Father, and as the Lord indicates in verse 8, knows all the things that we need even before we ask. More than that, there’s the danger that we’ll lose the order and the comprehensiveness of this prayer in our prayers, as well as its brevity. So we can’t afford not to think about this prayer of prayers, lest our prayers degenerate into pagan self-centredness or absurdity—an empty, idle, mumble jumble that’s detested by God.

IT MEETS OUR SPIRITUAL POVERTY

The second reason why we should think about this prayer is that *it’s designed to meet our spiritual poverty.* This comes out very clearly Luke 11:1-4. As the Disciples saw the Lord Jesus at Prayer – and as they knew that John the Baptist had taught his disciples the way to pray – they ap-

proached him – or at least one did [perhaps on behalf of the others] and asked him: “*Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.*” [verse 1] In other words, they felt their spiritual poverty in this matter of prayer. They felt they, too, needed to be taught how to pray, so they asked the Lord to teach them. And how did the Lord meet that felt need of the disciples, who felt so poor that they didn’t even know what or how they should pray? He taught them afresh the Lord’s Prayer. “When you pray,” he said, “say..” or pray like this – and he goes on to give them what is to all intents and purposes the same prayer as we have in Matthew 6. In other words, he met their need of instruction in the matter of prayer by directing them to this prayer. Here, he indicates, was the manner and subject matter of prayer. Indeed here was a prayer itself that they might use in their spiritual poverty. On this occasion, the Lord Jesus doesn’t say, “Pray like this.” He makes it more definite and says: “When you pray, say ...” This doesn’t mean, of course, that they could only say this prayer. The NT teaches us differently. But it does mean that they could say it without any hesitation in their spiritual need.

Our Spiritual Need

When you think about it, it’s strange that people need to be taught how to pray and what to pray for. It’s like having to teach a beggar to ask for food, or children to ask their parents for something! And yet that’s the terrible situation the Lord’s people are in. Like the disciples, we’re so poor spiritually that we don’t even know what to pray about – such is the poverty of our relationship with God. The Apostle Paul indicates this in Romans 8:26 when he says: “for we know not what we should pray for as we ought”. We are so blind and helpless that we don’t even know what to ask God for. But he goes on to tell us that the Holy Spirit helps us: “The Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.” Yes, and we can add in the light of this passage, the Lord Jesus helps us too by giving us a prayer such as this to help us in our spiritual poverty – to help us ask the right things from our heavenly Father.

A Prayer for Our Use

And if this is the case, then we can’t afford not to think deeply and seriously about the Lord’s Prayer. If the Lord has given it to us to help us in our spiritual poverty we need to think about it and use it, not only as a pattern of prayer, but as a prayer itself. We’re not to use it, of course in any superficial, or superstitious, or mechanical way. We’re not just to rattle it off. But we’re permitted to use it really and sincerely. Sometimes words can’t always be found to express what we really want to say. Sometimes thoughts tumble over each other – especially if we’re in distress or danger. And there are some who do not find it easy to frame a prayer. Well, rather than not pray, let us use thoughtfully and carefully the Lord’s Prayer. In doing so we can be sure that nothing will be left out that should be put in, and nothing will be put in that should be left out.

This, then, is our Lord’s Answer to the prayer, “Lord teach us to pray.” It’s no use asking the Lord to teach us to pray, and to help us in our prayer, if we don’t take notice of the instruction he’s already given to us right here.



IT MAKES US PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST

The third reason why we should think about this prayer is that it's designed to make us put First Things First, not only in our Prayer, but in our Life. This comes out in the general structure of this prayer. There is, first, the Invocation – "Our Father, in heaven", and then follows six Petitions, and finally there's what's called the Doxology. But the important thing to notice is the order of the petitions. Notice how the first three deal with the Glory of God – for the hallowing of his name, the coming of his kingdom, and for the doing of his will throughout the earth. It's only after these things are prayed for that the Lord Jesus mentions our own needs – provision of daily needs, forgiveness of sins, and deliverance from evil. Now I don't think for one moment that this arrangement is accidental. It's here because he would have us think first about God and His glory, and then think about ourselves and our needs. The glory of God, and the doing of his will were things uppermost in our Lord's mind, and in his life. So, when he comes to teach his disciples to pray, he puts them first, indicating at the same time that they should put them first in their prayers too.

The Order of Interest

So the Lord's Prayer, then, by its very arrangement is designed to make us put first things first in our prayers – first, things relating to God and his glory, and then things about ourselves. Under normal circumstances, we're not to go to God thinking only about ourselves and our needs. To be sure they have a place – a vital place – in prayer – but they don't have first place because they're not the first things we should be concerned about. We need to have a broader outlook, and broader interests, than ourselves and our well being. Indeed we ought to have the broadest possible interest – being concerned about the glory of God, the Coming of his Kingdom, and the doing of his will throughout the whole Creation. In other words, in our prayers we shouldn't be self – centred, thinking only of ourselves, and our concerns – but God - centred.

The Order of Life.

And yet how often we're self –centred in life, and self centred in prayer. We pray when we need something! How

can we become God - centred in our prayer? We can only become God-centred in our prayers if we become God – centred in our lives! If we're self – centred in our lives and in our outlook on life, we'll be self – centred in our prayers. But if we're concerned about God's glory and His Kingdom in life, this will be reflected in our Prayers and the Petitions we offer to God. And the big test of just what sort of attitude we have is whether our prayers naturally follow the order of the Lord's Prayer or not. If they do – if our interests come last instead of first - then it's a good indication that we're God centred in our lives and getting first things first. But if they don't – if our interests take the key place and we forget about the Glory of God, and His Kingdom, and His will, then it's a good indication that we've become self – centred, and man – centred, in our outlook. And its an indication, too, that we need to get back and have a good hard look at this prayer. If it teaches anything, it teaches us through the order of its petitions that we should put first things first in our prayer. And we can only do that – we can only feel at home in this prayer – if we're doing that in life. Jesus was pre-eminently occupied with God's glory. That's why he teaches his disciples like this. So should we be too – and this prayer reminds us of that fact.

CONCLUSION.

Why then should we study and reflect on the Lord's Prayer? We should study it because its designed to keep paganism out of our prayer; it's designed to meet our spiritual poverty; and, finally, its designed to make us put first things first in our prayers – and in our life. In the light of all this, may we have a deeper appreciation of this prayer and study it carefully so that we'll enter into its spirit, follow its form, and use it when we feel so poor that we don't know what to pray for. I suppose there's only one thing worse than that sort of poverty in prayer – and that's to have no desire to pray at all to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. And if that's the case, then our first prayer must be to cry out to the Lord, saying sincerely and truthfully: "God be merciful to me a sinner". That's a prayer that will certainly be heard, and it will be the beginning, not only of a new life, but a new life of prayer.

Geerhardus Vos - On The Psalms

"[Hence] the lessons and encouragements which we draw from other parts of the Old Testament frequently are to be drawn indirectly by a process of inference for which we are not always in the right frame of mind and the proper spiritual mood. But in the Psalms, whatever our mood, whether we be exultant or downcast, vigorous or weary, penitent or believing, in the Psalms we always can find ourselves back directly. It needs no process of reasoning to make their sentiments our own. Here the language of the Bible comes to meet the very thoughts of our hearts before these can even clothe themselves in language and we recognize that we could not have expressed them better than the Spirit has here expressed them for us. At first sight, this may easily seem strange to us when we remember that the Psalmists lived under the conditions of a typical and preparatory dispensation; that on many points they saw through a glass darkly, whereas we, who live in the full light of the complete gospel, see face to face. But for the very reason that the Psalms reflect that experimental religion of the heart, which is unvarying at all times and under all circumstances, we need not greatly wonder at this. The influx of the divine light whether more or less strong must always produce the identical effect of joy and hope and peace in every soul to which it comes. The well at which we drink may flow more abundantly than that at which the Psalmists drank, but the experience of thirst and of drinking and of satisfaction must still be the same as it was in the time of David."

BLOGGING ABOUT...

JOHN CALVIN'S 500th ANNIVERSARY.

2009 is going to be Calvin's year as far as anniversaries are concerned - and we too will do our bit to see that his name is honoured! Not that we glory in man! Calvin warned us of that very thing: "The honour due to God alone is profaned as soon as men ascribe the smallest portion whatsoever of it to the creature." But as Merle D' Aubigne puts it, "if we refuse to canonize John Calvin, must we then be silent? Must we not give to every man his due?" That's what we want to do. To give the man his due, who, under God, has contributed so much to our personal, social, religious, political, economic, and national life! We rejoice in this man who gloried in Christ, and did so much for His honour and glory in the world! Below we list some of the activities to be held in his honour.

January 7, 2009: "Separation of Church and State - Calvin Style: A 500th Anniversary Celebration"

In this lecture celebrating the 500th anniversary of Calvin's birth, one of the world's leading scholars of law and religion, John Witte, Jr, assesses Calvin's political legacy and its enduring lessons for us still today.

January 16-17, 2009: "Calvin's Legacy: Reforming the Church Today"

Westminster Seminary California - Escondido, CA. Speakers: W. Robert Godfrey, Michael Horton, Hywel R. Jones, Steven M. Baugh, and R. Scott Clark. <http://www.wscal.edu/newsevents/conferences/2009/index.php>

The Calvin Jubilee 2009.

Taking place throughout 2009, Geneva and beyond, "The Calvin Jubilee 2009" is a series of events organized by the Federation of Protestant Churches in Switzerland and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. For further information please visit the Calvin09 website: <http://www.calvin09.org/>

April 16-18, 2009, Grand Rapids: "John Calvin: Myth and Reality"

Calvin Studies Society Conference <http://www.calvin.edu/meeter/calvinconference2009/mainpage.htm>

May 4-9, 2009, Tokyo: "Calvin and the Old Testament: Is Calvin a Jew?"

Institute for Calvin and Reformed Theology, Tokyo Theological Seminary, Tokyo <http://www.calvin.jp>

May 24-27, 2009, Geneva: "Calvin and his influence, 1509-2009"

Institut d'Histoire de la Réformation, Geneva. Further information, an on-line system for proposing papers or panels, and details about conference registration will be put in place soon on this site. Revisit this site for further details as they become available: <http://www.unige.ch/ihr/>

May 28-30, 2009, Geneva

The Sixteenth Century Society and Conference (SCSC) is now accepting proposals for individual papers and complete sessions for its annual conference, to be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel Geneva (Switzerland) from 28-30 May 2009. The 2009 SCSC conference is timed to coincide with the 500th Anniversary of John Calvin's birthday and marks a departure from the Society's usual conference timetable. The conference will take place immedi-

ately following the conference "Calvin and his Influence, 1509-2009" sponsored by University of Geneva's Institut d'histoire de la Réformation and the Faculté autonome de théologie protestante, enabling those who wish to attend both events to do so with a single voyage.

For more information contact: Jeffrey R. Watt, SCSC 2009 Program Chair, University of Mississippi hswatt@olemiss.edu [http://www.sixteenthcentury.org/conf_proposals.shtml]

June 18-21, 2009, Toronto: "Instituting Calvin: Society, Culture & Diaspora"

Victoria College, University of Toronto. The conference will be held at the University of Toronto, and is sponsored by a number of its constituent colleges (Victoria College, Emmanuel College, Knox College) and research institutes (Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies), as well as the Institute for Christian Studies.

For more information on submitting a proposal, please contact: Brian Clarke (bclakre@utoronto.ca) Nicholas Terpstra (nicholas.terpstra@utoronto.ca)

June 25-28, 2009, Mainz: "Calvin and Calvinism – European Perspectives"

Mainz Institute of European History (Department of Religious History), in cooperation with the Institute for Reformation Research (Theological University of Apeldoorn). Leading, international specialists in the field of research on Calvin and Calvinism are needed as presenters for this event. <http://www.reformiert-info.de/2311-0-105-18.html>

July 7-9 and July 9-11, 2009, Geneva: "Calvin Quincentenary"

The Calvin Quincentenary is an international, interdenominational, and interdisciplinary commemoration of the life and work of John Calvin (b. 1509), which left such an indelible impression on the modern world. Climaxing with conferences in multiple locations in 2009, this celebration combines history, spirituality, and culture to recall appropriately the life and work of the Genevan Reformer.

Anniversary Conferences:

Tribute Conference : a 3-day international symposium with leading scholars in Geneva (July 7-9, 2009)

Commemorating Calvin Conference: a 3-day international symposium in Geneva (July 9-11).

Tours: "Calvin to Geneva Tour" (beginning in Paris, July 1-7); add the Tribute Conference (July 7-9) or Commemorating Calvin Conference (July 9-11) "Calvin From Geneva Tour" (July 12-19, ending in Edinburgh); add the Commemorating Calvin Conference (July 9-11)

Contact: David Hall, Calvin 500.org—

David.Hall@calvin500.org Individuals and groups may participate in any or all of the above features. <http://www.calvin500.org/>

July 7-12, 2009, Aix-en-Provence

The International Reformed Theological Institute of the Free University of Amsterdam in partnership with the Reformed Seminary of Aix-en-Provence will hold a colloque in Aix-en-Provence. Visit the following link for further details (in French): <http://www.fltr.net/confcalvin.html>

September 3-5, 2009, Grand Rapids.

Protestant Reformed Seminary will be holding a conference entitled "After 500 Years: John Calvin for the Reformed Churches Today". More information will be forthcoming.

READING CALVIN'S INSTITUTES.

- Rev. Gavin Smith, Geelong.

In 2009 many are planning to mark the five hundredth anniversary of the birth of John Calvin. Conferences are being planned; books are being written; but what better way to mark the occasion than reading some of Calvin's voluminous writings?

That is what the good folk at Reformation 21 are encouraging us to do. And to help, they have prepared a reading plan [for Calvin's Institutes] for each week day of 2009. You can request a copy here. But they are going further, planning to blog on each day's reading.

A sample of one of the books written to mark this anniversary includes the foreword by Dr J I Packer in which he gives a short introduction to the Institutes. He also gives his assessment of the different translations into English of Calvin's original Latin. Three of these four translations are in the public domain and are available to download from the treasures of the Internet Archive.

Thomas Norton, 1532-1584, was the earliest translator. Four editions of his work are available, but the most complete and perhaps easiest to read copy is that of 1587.

There are two editions of the translation of John Allen, 1771-1839, available. A three volume set published in 1816, originally in the library of Professor Samuel Miller (complete with his signature of the title pages!). Volume 1, Volume 2, and Volume 3. There is also a two volume set published in 1813. Volume 1, and Volume 2.

The third translator, and probably the most commonly known one is Henry Beveridge (1799-1863). His work was originally published by the Calvin Translation Society and it is that edition which is available in three volumes. Volume 1, Volume 2, and Volume 3.

For those not familiar with the Internet Archive texts, the following may be helpful:

There are now over a million titles available with new ones being added almost daily. Most are scanned to a high standard and are searchable (to allow you to look for words or phrases in the text). A large number of books originally scanned by Google have recently been added to the archive. In contrast to the originals at Google Books, most of these are now searchable.

Having found a title you would like to download, for example those in the links given above, you then click on the 'HTTP' link towards the bottom of the 'View the book' box on the left of each page. Then choose the format you require: djvu or pdf. I would recommend the djvu format. It is always smaller than the pdf equivalent and that means less download time; less space taken up on your hard drive; and less time taken to open the file for reading.

Viewing software is available for a number of operating systems here, or here.

You may also want to consider using software to manage your download and what better than Free Download Manager?

Be careful, some downloads are large files! You probably should not be considering downloading unless you have a broadband connection.

[This article can also be found on the Church Website. It is reproduced here for those who may not have access to the internet. Used by Permission]

THE TRUTH - AT LAST!

According to a Report on "The Age" news website in December [14/12/08] under the heading "Religion in schools to go God-free," Victorian state primary school students are to have an alternative to the normal "religious" education they receive - "religious education lessons taught by people who do not believe in God and say there is "no evidence of any supernatural power".

This bold initiative is the work of The Humanist Society of Victoria which has developed a curriculum to deliver 30-minute lessons each week of "humanist applied ethics" to primary pupils" Apparently accredited volunteers will be able to teach their "philosophy" in the class time designated for religious instruction. As with lessons delivered by faith groups, parents will be able to request that their children do not participate. This is what the Victorian Humanist Society president Stephen Stuart is reported to have said: "Atheistical parents will be pleased to hear that humanistic courses of ethics will soon be available in some state schools." Further, it is reported that the State Government accreditation body says it intends to approve this course.

But just a minute! I thought it was the contention of the Humanists that they weren't religious, that they held to a "scientific" view of life, and repudiated "religious faith." And yet here they are trying to muscle into the so called "religious" arena and claim equal time with "other religions"! It just goes to show the truth of what Reformed Christians, and Calvinists, have always claimed - that everyone is "religious" - everyone has a religion - and that Humanism is a religion just like any other. The issue is not whether this view of life is religious or not. Obviously the Humanists are as zealous in the promotion of their faith as any other mainstream "religious" group! The question is, whose religion - or whose view of life - or philosophy of life - is the right one.

It's a pity that this tacit admission that the Humanist view of life was in fact a religious one wasn't taken up by those who criticised the initiative! Thus Access Ministries argued that humanism is not a religion and should not be taught in schools. Likewise Salt Shakers argued, "If you go there, where do you stop? What about witchcraft or Satanism? If you accredit humanism, then those things would have an equal claim to be taught in schools." But from the Reformed perspective, we would have to agree with RMIT Professor Desmond Cahill, head of the World Conference of Religions for Peace, when he argued that "humanist studies are a legitimate world view just as Catholicism, Anglicanism or Islam is" - although we would demur when he continues, "that none are any more provable than the rest, just as theism or atheism are no more provable than the other."

What the humanists - and any others who claim to have no religion - ought to do is to come clean, come down from their "holier than thou" attitude, and acknowledge that their view of life is just as much a religion as all those "benighted" people they roundly criticise. Then we could get down to the really important question: Which religion is right?

THE ISSUE OF ANGER

David W T Brattston

Mr. Brattston is a retired lawyer and judge on minor tribunals whose articles on early and contemporary Christianity have been published by a wide variety of Christian denominations in Canada, Britain, Australia, and the United States. He lives in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Anger poses a puzzle for students of the ageless gospel. In some places the New Testament and other early Christian writings oppose it while in others it is allowed, perhaps even considered godly. This article will examine the writings of the earliest Christians on the subject to see if they can be harmonised or whether Jesus' first followers contradicted themselves and each other.

Jesus was against 'every one who is angry with his brother' (Matthew 5:22). Paul's letters especially discountenance anger. In Ephesians 4:31, Colossians 3:8, and 2 Corinthians 12:20 he classifies it with slander. The first two also lump it with malice. The third considers it to be in the same category as jealousy and selfishness. Galatians 5:19-21 includes it in the same class, not only with jealousy and selfishness, but also with sexual immorality, idolatry, drunkenness, orgies and hatred. James 1:20 states 'the anger of a man does not work the righteousness of God.' *The First Letter of Clement* and *The Pastor of Hermas*, very early Christian books that for centuries the church fathers recommended as edifying spiritual reading, contain ten separate negative comments against anger. Including 'wrath' and 'rage', the New Testament and other Christian literature before A.D. 250 contain about one hundred disapprovals of anger.

Yet anger is a naturally-occurring emotion that comes upon a person whether s/he wants it or not, and is usually sudden and unplanned. It is often unavoidable and was experienced by the best and most exemplary of Bible personages. In the Acts of the Apostles, Paul appears to have been angered by some Jews and pagans on his missionary journeys while his epistles indicate a similar feeling towards some of his congregations. Hebrews 3:10, 11 and 17 depict God Himself as angry, as does much of the Old Testament. Mark 3:5 states point-blank that Christ was angry, while some people today believe He was angry when casting the money-changers out of the Temple (Mark 11:15-18 and parallels). The prominent Bible scholar Origen, the leading preacher of the first half of the third century, conceded that even 'the perfect' among us experience anger without forethought on their part. He even saw it as beneficial and necessary when it leads to restraining sin, restoring righteousness, and reproaching, correcting and disciplining sinners. Near the middle period of Origen's labours Tertullian, a prominent north African minister, wrote that being unjustly angry and allowing the sun to set on one's anger were daily and usually unavoidable occurrences.

The New Testament must be interpreted in context, both within its own pages and within the Christian culture that grew up alongside it. I include the earliest non-biblical Christian writings as part of the latter. When taking all these sources as a whole, it appears that what early Christianity taught was that anger should be controlled and dampened down, and that Christians should not allow the involuntary emotion to control their actions or attitudes.

The earliest Christians recognised not so much an outright ban on anger but restrictions and limits so that it would not harm anyone. James 1:19 counsels Christians to be 'slow to anger'; it does not forbid it entirely. The *New International Version* of 1 Corinthians 13:5 states that love 'is not easily angered', not that love is never angered. Ephesians 4:26 is particularly informative: (1) 'Be angry but do not sin' indicates that anger itself is not a sin but merely may bring a person closer towards sin, and (2) 'do not let the sun go down on your anger' called forth comments from early authors. Origen instructed Christians to abandon anger before it causes the sunshine of faith to set upon us and bring spiritual darkness to our souls. A few years earlier his teacher, Clement of Alexandria, praised this verse as a prime example of the apostles' wholesome teaching. Tertullian's comment is stated above.

The ancient use of adjectives also suggests that what was condemned was not the involuntary emotion itself but anger that has become unjust, furious (both Tertullian), boiling, unmanageable (both Clement of Alexandria), uncontrolled, flaming, irrational or brutal (all Origen). Origen also opposed being drunk with anger or enslaved by it. *The Didache*, a church manual dating from the first century, discountenanced 'hot' anger. Titus 1:7 indicates that a bishop in particular is not to be 'quick-tempered'.

The fact that some early authors imposed parameters and limits indicate that while they did not approve of anger, they nevertheless did not regard it as an automatic sin. It is like alcohol and tobacco today: the existence of secular government regulations implies that the government tolerates them, although disapproving of them.

We are to avoid acting under the influence of anger because it may impair our judgment and self-control. Origen counselled Christians to conquer anger in ourselves, chasten ourselves to remove incentives to it, and soften it - say by moderation and meditation. About the same era, a book of testimonies proving that Christianity is better than Judaism instructs people to overcome anger.

The consensus among Christian writers before A.D. 250 appears to be that, while we might be unable to avoid becoming angry, we should make efforts to damp it down and control it. If this does not work, we should avoid acting under its influence. We must not be *prone* to anger or quick-tempered (Titus 1:7, *Didache* and Origen). Still less should we provoke it in other people (Ephesians 6:4, Clement of Alexandria, Origen), pray under its influence (1 Timothy 2:8, Origen), or reprove someone in anger (*Didache*).

As in so many other ways, Jesus' actions in cleansing the Temple are a model of behaviour when angry. His calmness and deliberation show He was not controlled or enslaved by anger. Nor did He prolong the emotion or allow it to interfere with His relationships with other people. In Matthew's account (21:12-14) He immediately returned to His usual healing ministry, while in John 2:13-21 He at →

BOOK REVIEWS

A Handful of Pebbles – Theological Liberalism and the Church. Peter Barnes, Banner of Truth 2008.

The small book of just 80 pages is very readable and excellent introduction to liberal theology and its dangers. Barnes traces the rise of this theology in the 19th century, particularly in Germany. He mentions men like Schleiermacher who 'tried to ground faith in human experience and feeling, and divorces it from reason and history'. Philosophers of this period of 'Enlightenment' had driven a wedge between history and religion. Darwin, who this year is being celebrated by some (150 years since the publication of his Origin of the Species), drove a wedge between science and religion with his theory of evolution. Theologians responded by removing historical and scientific fact from the Bible and calling it myth. At the same time they tried to maintain the faith in God is not dependent upon historical or scientific truth.

Barnes briefly explains what this seemingly positive word 'liberal' means in the theological context. He reminds us of warnings in the Bible itself against such false teachings. After tracing the spread of Liberalism in Europe and North America, Barnes comes to his own church in Australia. He refers to Samuel Angus (1851-1943) who interpreted the Fall of Genesis 3 as 'a fall' upwards for it resulted in moral consciousness'.

Barnes goes on to critique the neo-orthodoxy response of Barth and Bultmann. They were critical of liberalism but still abandoned the infallibility of the Bible as they went in search of the Christ behind the written word. After neo-orthodoxy came Kasemann, Funk and others with the 'quest for the historical Jesus'. Barnes gives a succinct introduction to these men and their theology. The bulk of the book is historical as indicated by an index that lists only the names of people.

To counter the false teaching of the liberals Barnes outlines the key orthodox doctrines which they undermine, namely the infallibility and authority of the Bible, the doctrine of creation and the Trinity, the incarnation and the resurrection of Christ, and the doctrine of heaven and hell.

Barnes comments that liberalism infiltrated the majority of theological colleges in the West. This ensured its rapid spread and made it difficult to counter. He details how J. Gresham Machen dealt with liberalism in the USA and also how Francis Schaeffer wrote against liberalism.

This book is a republication, with minor changes, of a book published by Covenant Press in 2003. It is a shame that the emphasis in the title was changed- 'a handful of pebbles' is rather too subtle for a title. It is unfortunate that a reference to 'Parramatta grass' in the original Australian publication was not removed instead of being explained in a footnote in this international edition. This is not to detract from the great value of this book which I recommend to students, pastors, and every Bible believing Christian so that they may be informed about this dangerous theology that continues to threaten the church.

- Dennis Muldoon

The Book of Revelation. A Commentary on the Greek Text. G. K. Beale. The New International Greek Testament Commentary; Eerdmans, 1999.

Revelation is the only book that promises a blessing to those 'who read and hear the words of this prophecy' (1:3); but it is not easy to read, nor understand. This commentary by Beale will help to understand this book; even if we use it as a reference rather than reading it from cover to cover. The size of this book (1245 pages) and the word 'Greek' in the title will be off putting to many- if the price is not! But this book is a classic evangelical analysis of Revelation, a book that in many respects supersedes Hendriksen's commentary.

Beale outlines the four main interpretive approaches to Revelation before declaring that he interprets it within a 'progressive recapitulation' approach. This is much the same as Henriksen's 'parallelism' and the approach taken by Wilcock and Derek Thomas. Beale gives detailed introductory material regarding date, historical background, genre, symbolism and theology. His analysis is more detailed than most others but with excellent layout and informative subheadings it is easy to navigate this commentary and find what is required. Beale uses a number of graphics which are helpful in getting an overview of the parallelism which he sees between the seals, the trumpets, and the bowls.

In the body of the commentary every verse is dealt with in detail- where Greek is used it is translated. Sections are given informative titles and the comments are conveniently divided between general (large font) and more detailed (smaller font). When words or topics need more detailed explanation this is given in a separate section of the chapter - not in the footnotes which are detailed enough as it is.

For example, the millennium is treated in a separate section when this word comes up in chapter 20. 'There are three predominant views of the millennium, though within each perspective there are wide variations of interpretation that cannot be catalogued here. Some believe the millennium will occur after the second coming of Christ (premillennial)... others that it will occur towards the end of the church age (postmillennial) ... and others that it started at Christ's resurrection and will be concluded at his final coming'(p972-3). Beale prefers to call this 'inaugurated millennialism' rather than 'amillennialism'. Commenting on 20:2 he writes 'the binding and the millennium are best understood as Christ's authority restraining the devil in some manner during the church age' (p985). Beale does not go into the popular premillennial perspective in any greater detail.

Beale's emphasis throughout the commentary is on the use of the OT in the Apocalypse. This is his area of expertise and he details the OT (most often in Daniel or Ezekiel) background to the symbolism wherever appropriate. While such detail is not found in other commentaries it can be somewhat too exhaustive in Beale's writing. Your local bookstore may not stock this commentary but it is available at Amazon.com - or in a good college library.

- Dennis Muldoon

once engaged in teaching and a peaceful conversation.

[Except in the one instance indicated, all Scripture quotations are from

the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright 1946, 1952, 1971 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission.]

Run For Glory

SET WORK FOR YOUTH - 2009

Metrical Psalms

Infants (< 7 yrs)	Psalm 23/121 Psalm 67/100
Junior (8-12 yrs)	Psalm 37:1-11 Psalm 96
Senior (13-17yrs)	Psalm 92 Psalm 111

Scripture Memory

Junior	Hebrews 12:22-29
Senior	Hebrews 10:12-25 Revelation 21:1-8

Psalm Tunes

Please choose appropriate Psalm from preferred book (sol fa copies available from convener)

Junior

St Thomas (SM)
Winchester
Main
Rest

Senior

St Cecilia
Dominus Regit Me /Shepherd
Dennis
Love Unknown

Catechism

Section 1	1-10
Section 2	11-22
Section 3	23-38
Section 4	39-62
Section 5	63-68
Section 6	89-107
Section 7	1-107 word perfect

Essays

Infants(<7)

Q. Describe or draw the Ark of the Covenant and the things that were in it (Heb9:4).

Junior (8-12) (400 words)

Q. Describe or draw the plan of the temple built by King Solomon, together with the furnishings (Heb 9). What happened to the curtain when Jesus died on the Cross (Matthew 27:51)?

Senior (13-17) (1000 words)

Q. Describe the Ark of the Covenant and explain its significance in Old Testament worship. Why is the Ark of the Covenant not part of our worship today?

CAMP DREWE - LENNOX HEAD, DECEMBER, 2008



SEARCH WORK - January/February - 2009

SENIOR 12+ yrs; INTERMEDIATE 10-11 yrs; JUNIOR 9 and under.

January, 2009

SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE

Intermediate omit questions 5 and 7

1 KINGS 17

1. How was Elijah fed when he dwelt by the brook Cherith?
2. What was the word of the Lord by Elijah to the widow woman about the barrel of meal [bin of flour] and the cruse [jar] of oil?
3. What was the woman's response when Elijah had given her son back to her alive?

Chapter 18

4. In what way had Obadiah showed that he feared the Lord greatly?
5. (x) What were Elijah's first words when he had gathered the people on mount Carmel?
6. Was there an answer when the prophets of Baal cried to their god and cut themselves?
7. (x) What was Elijah's prayer at the time of the evening sacrifice, and how was it answered? (3 verses)
8. What did Elijah's servant see the seventh time he was sent to look towards the sea.

JUNIOR

EXODUS chapter 1

1. What happened to the children of Israel the more they were afflicted?
2. What did Pharaoh command his people to do to every son born to the Hebrews?

Chapter 2:1—10

3. Who saw the ark among the reeds? Why did Pharaoh's daughter call the child Moses?

SENIOR 12+ yrs; INTERMEDIATE 10-11 yrs; JUNIOR 9 and under.

February, 2009

SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE

Intermediate omit questions 6 and 8

1 KINGS 19

1. What did Elijah do after he had gone a day's journey into the wilderness?
2. For how long did Elijah travel on the meal prepared by the angel?
3. What was Elijah's reaction to the 'still small voice'?
4. How many did the Lord say he had left in Israel that had not bowed the knee to Baal?
5. What was Elisha's response when Elijah cast his mantle on him? (2 verses)

Chapter 20

6. (x) What was the reply of the king of Israel to Ben-hadad's insulting remark about the dust of Samaria?
7. What would the Lord do because the Syrians had said, The Lord is God of the hills and not of the valleys?
8. (x) What did the prophet say would happen because Ahab had let Ben-hadad go?

JUNIOR

EXODUS 2:11—25

1. What did Moses do to the Egyptian whom he saw beating one of his brethren?
2. Where did Moses go when he fled from the face of Pharaoh?

Chapter 3

3. Who appeared to Moses in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush?
4. Which people was Moses to bring out of Egypt?

SEARCH WORK TO: MRS I. STEEL, PO Box 942, EPPING 1710.

E-mail: iesteel@gmail.com

REPORTING ON CAMP DREWE

As 2008 drew to a close we motored to Lennox Head for the annual Brisbane congregation camp at Camp Drew. This site has been used for the past couple of years and is very suitable as it is central and allows folk from the North and South to meet for the few days without too many hours of travel.

Barbara & Keith Schmidt move into the kitchen with the help of a team forming a human train to unload the eats from their trailer for the weekend. What a mammoth task this is for them to cater for all the campers. By self catering this keeps the cost to a minimum.

With the physical needs more than adequately attended to, the Rev. Ray Murray then provided for our spiritual appetite. He presented us with a well set out series of 4 studies on "The Lord's Prayer" along with questions for the groups to discuss that met after each address. The subject stimulated a lot of interesting discussion, even if it may appear basic. Perhaps that is why we can tend to

neglect something that has a lot to nourish us as individuals and a church.

Stewart and Christina Carswell organised, compered and steered us through the very enjoyable and profitable weekend. As usual the Saturday night concert allowed the audience to see what the Sunday school children had learned through out the year as well as over the weekend. The children also entertained us with musical, and other talents. Ross Campbell also joined in and displayed his newly acquired retirement talent along with his ventriloquist boy Eric. This captivated the attention of the children with Eric holding up alphabet letters to which the children needed to give Bible character names. Once again this proved to be a popular evening.

The time to pack up and depart comes too quickly. The weekend provides an opportunity for people to meet up with old friends, enjoy fellowship and good teaching from God's word.

We look forward to meeting again at the 2009 camp, DV.
- John Greensill.

ACTIVITY PAGE.....

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



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

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

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

DOCUMENTARIES

There are some interesting religious documentaries on ABC and SBS, but as one would expect these are rarely pro-God. Or they may attempt to show both sides of the debate, with the anti-Christian view being the most "rational". The "Riddles of the Bible" series produced by National Geographic seem to fall into this latter category. The most recent one I saw dealt with the plagues of Egypt. While it's not necessary to explain everything in terms of scientifically-acceptable occurrences it was really interesting to see some explanation of natural events (needless to say, God-controlled) which followed a progression from one plague to the next.

They also covered the parting of the Red Sea and then the usual - which route did the Israelites take and exactly how many people actually left Egypt. While it is good to be aware of the arguments used by atheists and the like, there is more than enough good reading to waste too much time reading the bad stuff. With that said, while looking for information about the Exodus and especially the supposed contradictions it contained I found some interesting websites/articles.

www.bringyou.to/apologetics/bible.htm
www.answering-islam.org/Bible/Contra/index.html
skepticsannotatedbible.com/ex/contra_list.html
with some Christian responses listed at the bottom of each page with many coming from www.lookinguntojesus.net/answering.htm and even Wikipedia has interesting articles, for example en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Exodus

I don't know whether these particular documentaries were ever on ABC's iView (www.abc.net.au/iview/) but it is worth mentioning because, if you miss a show, chances are that you might be able to watch it online – if you have a high-speed Internet connection. I should probably add this would only be suitable if you have a large download limit or your ISP offers unmetered iView content.

SAFE INTERNET

You may be aware that the previous Federal Government gave families the option to download and install Web Filtering software with the intention of protecting families from the darker underside of the Internet. The current Federal Government is taking this one step further with a plan to set up net filtering at the ISP level.

I'm not entirely certain how many people are aware of the proposed Net Filter. For those that aren't you can find some information on the Family First website (www.familyfirst.org.au) particularly a pdf <http://www.familyfirst.org.au/documents/INTERNETPORNOGRAPHYANDCHILDREN.pdf>

While the idea that the Internet arriving at our home is "clean" is very commendable and the counter-argument about "free speech" is inadequate [and when you read stories like this one www.news.com.au/

[story/0,27574,24961486-421,00.html](http://www.news.com.au/story/0,27574,24961486-421,00.html)] it makes one wish that the bad on the Internet didn't outweigh the good and that it was easy to protect ourselves and our children. However, there are some issues which I believe should not be overlooked when talking about the new government Net Filter plan.

Maintaining the list

Currently the list (a blacklist*) is estimated to be 1300 sites and is expected to have the potential to grow to 10000 sites. While the list may currently block sites we agree should be blocked, there are at least two problems I see:

1) there are still many other additional sites which need to be blocked. So it will still be necessary to have some sort of filter at home.

2) what happens if/when a future Australian Government decides that religious sites should be blocked, or, for example, pro-life information is offensive and should be blocked? [* Blacklist – a list of banned sites, all others are accessible]

Technically

Some trials have shown the filters can slow Internet speeds by between 20% and 85%. Further, because every Australian would access the Internet through these computers, they (the computers) become prime targets for hackers to launch either Denial Of Service or Man in the Middle attacks (see [banthisurl](#) reference below for more information). Even before the trials begin, people are discussing ways to circumvent the filter. And while some technical knowledge would probably help, from my reading it appears not too difficult to do.

One final danger I see with the filter is it will make people unthinking, they will believe the government is protecting them and their children. Whereas the best solution remains:

- [1] having good and open communication with family members;
 - [2] having all computers which access the Internet in open areas of the house - with two additional technical measures -
 - [3] having a whitelist* for children under a certain age to prevent them from inadvertently accessing inappropriate material; and,
 - [4] have some type of filtering to do the best we can to protect our families
- [* Whitelist – a list of approved sites, all others are blocked.]

Late news: It looks as though this trial is about start (www.australianit.news.com.au/story/0,20589,24967191-15306,00.html)

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THE CHURCHES



NARRE WARREN

The Presbytery met at Narre Warren on 17th January 2009. The main business was the induction of Rev Sjirk Bajema, but first we associated ministers Leggott, Ball, Miranda and Geelong elder Bruce Webster. The parish bounds of Narre Warren were slightly adjusted to take account of the new centre at Mulgrave. We received a request from David Kerridge to begin trials for licence as well as a certificate from the Training of Ministry Committee certifying they were satisfied with his course of study. Presbytery agreed to commence these trials on 17 February and continue them at a subsequent meeting, and subjects were prescribed.

Presbytery then proceeded to the induction service, the building being well-filled for the occasion. Mr Yoa as Presbytery Moderator presided, but each of the ministers participated. Mr Yoa preached on the Message of the Cross, Mr Smith gave the charge to the minister and Dr Ward the charge to the congregation. It was particularly good that Mr Leggott and Mr Ball, the two previous ministers participated as well as Mr Miranda, who had given significant supply and endeared himself to the people. Dr Ward remarked that six different ethnicities were represented in the seven participating ministers.

The Questions were addressed to Mr Bajema in terms of the decision of 2008 and the Subscription Formulas of 2008 and 1952 were both signed. At the conclusion of the service, which ran for 65 minutes, greetings were given from almost all of our congregations, and afternoon tea and fellowship was enjoyed by all.

Recent baptisms conducted by the Interim-Moderator (Dr Ward) include Caydence daughter of Amberlee and Justin James on the profession of faith of her mother (14/12), and Ria, daughter of and Minal Vyas, formerly of Glen Huntly (11/1).

Saturday 10/1/09 saw the wedding of two of our members, Luke Martin and Amy Ball, while on 18/1/09 the engage-

ment of two other members John Holmes and Betty Simpson was announced.

Front Cover Picture: L to R (rear): Jurie Dekter, Bruce Webster, Andres Miranda, George Ball, Trevor Leggott, John Loudon, Gavin Smith. Front: Rowland Ward, Tut Yoa, Sjirk Bajema

NEW YEAR SERVICE AT ALL NATIONS

A very representative congregation gathered at the Mulgrave building on New Year's Day for a thanksgiving service. The four men in the front row of the picture are Rowland Ward, Tut Yoa, Sjirk Bajema and Andres Miranda, all united in the faith but of different ethnic background.

Mr Bajema, of Friesian descent and formerly of the Reformed Church of Mangere (Auckland), was inducted as minister of the Narre Warren congregation on 17 January in succession to Irishman George Ball who moved to the Manning River PCEA last May. Mr Miranda is an ordained Presbyterian minister of Chilean background who joined Knox in mid 2008 and works part-time while completing a degree in Social Work.

We are determined that the work will demonstrate Christ's people are called to be the light of the world also in their bridging the gulf that so obviously divides those of different ethnicities in many situations today. Regular English morning services are planned as well as services in other languages at other times as may be appropriate.

- Rowland Ward



Mrs Fay Le Fevre

Mrs Fay Le Fevre of St Helens, Tasmania, passed to be with her Lord on Monday 1 December 2008. Fay was the wife of Claude Le Fevre, who attended several Synod meetings as the representative Elder of the former Winnaleah congregation, in North-East Tasmania. Fay and their younger children often came with him to these meetings, taking the opportunity to visit family on the "Mainland".

Those who went on some of the church tours to Tasmania have enjoyed her hospitality when they visited the North-East. Claude died some twelve years ago. Fay leaves a brother, Ron Lawry; daughters Anne Le Fevre, Beth Mackay, Jane Le Fevre and Penny Rix, and son John Le Fevre; 17 grandchildren and 6 grandchildren. She was 78. Fay asked the family to put Ecclesiastes 3:14a on her headstone: *'I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever.'*

Alistair will represent the Free Church of Scotland at the Synod of the Reformed Churches in South Africa (GKSA) in Potchefstroom in January. Alistair and John Ross will then both attend a conference immediately after the Synod. Then Alistair and I, along with John and Elizabeth Ross, hope to spend about 10 days in Botswana following the Synod.....

Please pray also for Zimbabwe.... Things are really getting desperate there. We have made friends with a young Zimbabwean couple who have come to South Africa to find work so that they can support their families back home. A week's wages of this professional woman in Zimbabwe could only buy a bottle of juice. They are to return by bus this week with as much food as possible for their family. We took large catering sizes of flour, sugar, rice etc to them this week as our contribution towards their efforts. Please pray that the food reaches their family and isn't stolen on the way. I am sure that you will also have heard about the outbreak of Cholera in Zimbabwe. The death toll is in the hundreds and the medical structures are no longer in place to be able to cope with such a large outbreak. Please pray for them and also for the impact that this is having on South Africa.

The book shop and coffee shop continues to bring a steady stream of people into Dumisani. We have had a few church groups coming for coffee, wanting a bible talk or an introduction to the work at Dumisani. It is great to see the local churches becoming more aware of the resource and mission opportunity that is right there on their doorstep. Please continue to pray for Elizabeth, Angela and I as we serve and talk with the people who come in.... Already we dream about how we can knock walls down to make a bigger shop.

The students have all left Dumisani for the summer break. Exams (and re-sits) are over, marks finalized and applications in for next year. It is a bit frustrating this year as North West University set a very early cut-off date for applications to the BTh degree... This has come as a bit of a shock to many students and prospective students and even this week we have had several people wanting to enroll well after the closing date. We will however be able to put them onto our Basic Ministry Studies course or Advanced Ministry studies for this year and credit them with courses when they start the degree next year. It looks like a good number of new students starting next year too. A few months ago, I told you about the daughter of one of

our cleaners – Mhlahli. We have been able to put her in a school for children with learning difficulties and have been amazed at how well she has progressed. It was her new school's closing service last night and she was the most improved student in the school.... She has been accepted by a secondary school in East London for next year. She will learn hairdressing as well as some academic subjects and will stay in the school's hostel during term time. She is very excited about the opportunity that has been given to her.

Since writing the first part of the letter, Rachel, Bethany, Tara, Shelley and I have been to summer camp along with another 1000 young people. The journey to Kimberley - where the camp is - is about 10 hours long. The temperature up there is much hotter than it is here. In fact while we were there the temperature went up to 42°C. Despite the extreme heat, we had a wonderful time. Every morning and evening the young people sat and listened to deep sermons of an hour long with such enthusiasm and little sign of wishing they were elsewhere....

On Tuesday, I helped to take about 100 teenagers into the local township for an outreach day. We were accompanied by a group of police officers and members of a local church so that those of us who didn't have Afrikaans or Sesotho, could have a translator and also for follow up work. The youngsters had been receiving training in evangelism at the camp and this was the climax of that work. What an experience it was... Many of the people that they met had never heard of Jesus. One girl told me that as she spoke to a family, she had asked them if they knew Jesus. 'No', they replied and so she started sharing her faith with them. The man thought for a while and then said, 'I wonder why he was named after a swear word!' The youngsters came back asking that I take them again into the villages.

Prayer Points:

Pray that the students will get a rest but also will begin preparing for next session.

Please pray for the young people whose lives have been touched by Christ at Summer Camp this year.

Pray for all of the members of Dumisani staff - that they might feel rested after a very busy semester and that they are invigorated and full of vision for the next year.

Pray for our children as they prepare for next year at school with all of its stresses and pressures.

Give thanks that our house has now sold.

[Continued from page 15] pre-eminence as the greatest and most influential of all dogmatic treatises."

What Calvin emphasised in his theology was the sovereignty of God. He ascribed glory and majesty to God, and with this first principle stated, proceeded to place in correct perspective men and the events of time. Predestination is a manifestation of sovereignty, and it is Calvin's statement of this doctrine which has been most strongly opposed. Logically, it is necessary, and Scripturally, it is unassailable. But it was not introduced as cold and abstract doctrine. As the Rev. W. J. Grier states, "Predestination was not the foundation on which his theol-

ogy was built . . . it was rather the keystone which strengthens the edifice . . . it was introduced for a practical purpose - to cut at the root of the doctrine of works." It is a doctrine which rebukes the proud, rebellious and self-righteous and ministers comfort to the humble, submissive and God-fearing. Mr. Grier also makes reference to Calvin's important development of the doctrine of the Trinity, his presentation of the work of Christ under the offices of Prophet, Priest and King, and his exposition of the work of the Holy Spirit in the light of Scripture. Albrecht Ritschl describes the "Institutes" as "the masterpiece of Protestant theology." **[To be Continued]**

PRESBYTERIAN AGENDA

CELEBRATING CALVIN – 2009

It's only appropriate that the Celebration of the birth, life and work of John Calvin should be on the Presbyterian Agenda for 2009. Presbyterian and Reformed Christians owe so much to him, under God, not only for his theological influence, but for his influence in Church Organization and Government. We begin our own celebration of the life and work of Calvin with a review of his life, work and influence given by the Rev. Dr. J. Campbell Andrews on the 450th anniversary of his birth. It was his address to the Synod of Eastern Australia in 1959.

Fathers and brethren, I am deeply conscious of the honour you have accorded me, and of my own insufficiency for this high office. I crave your prayers and support that I may be able duly to discharge the duties confronting me.

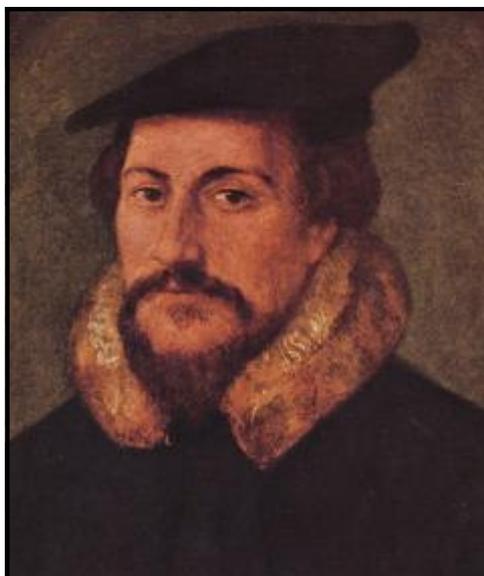
I have no doubt that in honouring me you are honouring that aspect of the ministry in which I am engaged, that is, missionary service. You are thus paying tribute to all the missionaries of our own Church and of the Free Church of Scotland to whom we are linked so closely in spiritual and ecclesiastical fellowship. Nor do I feel I am mistaken in assuming that you are also in this way paying tribute to those, my African fellow-workers, whose hearts cleave steadfastly to the Evangelical doctrines which we hold to be more precious than life.

For our Church, which, in common with some others here in Australia and in other lands, holds loyally to the Reformed Faith, 1959 is a year which calls for special and thankful acknowledgment before God for a man and his work. We mark this year as the 450th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin, and the 400th anniversary of the publication of the final edition of the book by which he is best known, "The Institutes of the Christian Religion." Though not the first of the Reformers, Calvin has a valid claim to be the chief and ablest of those who sought to expound fully and state systematically the Reformed Faith. His Institutes became the text book of the schools of the Reformed Churches, and its doctrines were set forth in their creeds. Consequently, the theology outlined in the Confessions of the Reformed Churches of Europe, and in the Westminster Confession and Thirty-Nine Articles of the English-speaking Reformed Churches bears the name Calvinism.

At the Reformed Oecumenical Synod, which met at Potchefstroom last year, the attention of member Churches was drawn to this interesting anniversary, and suggestion was made that it be celebrated. That is one reason why I have chosen as my subject, "John Calvin, His Work, and His Significance Today."

THE MAN

John Calvin was born on July 10th, 1509, at Noyon, France, the second son of Gerard Calvin, Secretary to the Bishop of Noyon. He was brought up a devout Catholic, acquainted with the rites and ceremonies of the Roman Church of that day. A youth of obvious talent, he was given as good an education as France could provide at her three leading Universities — Orleans, Bourges, and Paris. He entered the University at Paris at the age of 14 years and obtained a degree three years later, in 1527. Originally intended for the Church, he now turned to the study of law, and, from 1528 to 1531, studied law at Orleans and Bourges. On his return to Paris he continued to study Greek and began the study of Hebrew. Then, probably in 1532, as he himself says, "God, by a sudden conversion, subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame." He makes reference to the conviction of sin through which he passed, "Whenever I descended into myself or raised my head to Thee, terror seized me...."



By this time he had had the advantage of the leading teachers of his day. His obvious gifts of learning and leadership brought him to the head of the Evangelical party in less than a year. The inaugural address he prepared for his friend, Nicolas Cop, Rector of the University, Noyon a plea for the Reformation of the Church, in the light of the New Testament, and its delivery, on November 1st, 1533, resulted in persecution of the Protestants. More than a score were put to death, many were imprisoned and tortured, and many more like Calvin and Cop were forced to flee for their lives. For three years Calvin wandered in France, Italy and Switzerland, mostly under an assumed

name, witnessing and teaching. In October, 1534, Francis 1, of France, instituted further persecution against the Protestants in Paris and charged them with being dangerous revolutionaries who, by "perverse railings and false opinions, were overthrowing not only religious but also all civil order." To oppose these false charges Calvin, at the age of 26 years, in March, 1536, published, in Latin, the first edition of the "Institutes of the Christian Religion." That "brief handbook," as he called it, contained all the essential elements of his thought, and was to pass through many revisions, to grow to five times its original size, and to appear finally in French as well as Latin in the year 1559.

In July, 1536, Calvin left France, determined not to return to his native land, but to seek some quiet spot where he "might devote himself to study." But, in passing through Geneva, where some months before the Reformation had been officially accepted but confusion still reigned, the Reformer Farel constrained him by a startling imprecation to re-main to organize further the work of reformation. There followed, in October, the memorable debate with

the Church of Rome, at Lausanne, as a result of which about 200 of the clergy of the Church of Rome accepted the Protestant Faith. During his first brief ministry in Geneva, a period of less than two years, he prepared a Catechism, a Confession, and Articles by which the order and discipline already initiated by Farel were more clearly defined and enforced. But in the face of opposition to these reforms the City Council deposed both Calvin and Farel on April 23rd, 1538.

Once more Calvin sought quiet for study and freedom from "any public charge." But Martin Bucer constrained him to remain and labour in Strasburg, as Pastor of the French Church and professor in the Academy. Here he completed his Commentary on Romans, published a selection of metrical Psalms, seven of them in his own translation, and encouraged their use in public worship, and took a leading part in discussions between Romanists and Protestants at conferences promoted by the Emperor Charles V. And here, in August, 1540, he married Idelette von Bure.

Calvin returned to Geneva in September 1541, having resisted two appeals to return the previous year, appeals enforced with the powerful persuasion of Farel. He returned with "anxiety and distress" to a place which he admitted he dreaded more than any other on earth. Yet he returned with solemn sense of duty, and there entered upon 23 years of unremitting and fruitful labour. Daily he lectured or expounded the Scriptures. He gave attention to a voluminous correspondence. The Consistory met weekly. Discipline and order were restored to the Church, beginning with the ministers. Frequently he addressed the Council of Geneva. For ten years there was an open and constant struggle with the Libertines. He was often threatened with violence and, at times, with death. Expulsion from the city was a constant possibility.

And if there were "fightings without," there was almost constant weakness and pain of body. Medical reports indicate that he suffered from arthritis, haemorrhoids, urinary calculi and pulmonary tuberculosis. Yet he led the kind of life most likely to aggravate these diseases. He laboured incessantly with pen and voice for the union of the different branches of Protestantism. He so sought the purity, peace and unity of the Churches that he said that he would not shrink from crossing "the seas, if need be, for that object." He long planned, continually urged, and finally secured the establishment of a College at Geneva. In June, 1559, in the presence of an overflowing assembly of magistrates, councillors, ministers and scholars, Calvin delivered the opening address of the College. Students from many lands who studied there carried far and wide the Reformed Faith.

For five years longer, during which the Reformed Faith not only triumphed at Geneva, but was widely disseminated abroad, in growing weakness of body, Calvin con-

tinued to labour, studying when he could no longer preach, dictating when he could no longer write. His prayer, "Lord, if it please Thee, let me soon be with Thee," was answered three days later at sunset on May 27th, 1564. He went to be with the Lord and his body, at his own request, was buried without pomp and without grave-stone.

HIS WORK

The widespread and lasting influence of the thought and teaching of John Calvin is indicated by the fact that Calvinism is the name given to that system of theology underlying the Creeds of the Reformed Churches throughout the world, now, unfortunately, modified in many cases by Declaratory Acts. The impress of careful and exact scholarship is on all his works. He was well versed in the original languages of Scripture — Hebrew and Greek — but was a master of Latin and French, the languages by which he conveyed his thought to the world. His principal commentaries were written in both languages. It is stated that Calvin's writings gave form and permanence to the then unstabilized French language. His exact knowledge of Scripture and of Patristic writings, from which he ap-

peared to be able to quote at will, made him so formidable in debate that opponents to the truth could not stand against him.

Throughout his ministry at Strasburg and Geneva he was teacher and professor, as well as pastor, and the voluminous correspondence he carried on shows to what extent he was consulted by leaders of the Reformation in other countries.

The work of Calvin as a theologian has been briefly mentioned. To Melancthon, the accredited theologian of the Lutheran Church, Calvin was "The Theologian." His reputation as a sys-

tematic theologian rests not only on the knowledge, authority and skill which he showed in public debate at conferences with representatives of the Church of Rome as well as leaders of the Reformation, but also, and perhaps more specially, upon his "Institutes of the Christian Religion." Published in 1536, when Calvin was only 26 years of age, "The Institutes" was many times revised during his lifetime, was translated into nine European languages, was enlarged to five times its size without modification of its doctrine. As Dr. Reed says, "It became the common text book of the schools of the Reformed Churches and furnished the material out of which their creeds were made."

Its significance was quickly appreciated by Roman Catholics. One of them wrote, "No writing of the Reformation era was more feared by Roman Catholics, nor zealously fought against, and more bitterly pursued than Calvin's 'Institutes'." In his work, "Calvin and Calvinism," Dr. B. B. Warfield states, "What Thucydides is among Greek historians, what Plato is among philosophers, as Shakespeare among dramatists, that Calvin's 'Institutes' is among theological treatises.. . After three and a half centuries it retains its unquestioned

[Continued on page 13]

" Though not the first of the Reformers, Calvin has a valid claim to be the chief and ablest of those who sought to expound fully and state systematically the Reformed Faith. His Institutes became the text book of the schools of the Reformed Churches, and its doctrines were set forth in their creeds."

BETWEEN YOU AND ME

At the end of last year I received a very pleasant and very unexpected surprise. It was a "Thank You" Card signed by quite a number of people in the Manning River [Taree] Congregation, and it said:

Dear Ray,

Please accept our thanks for the effort to provide us with interesting, helpful and stimulating articles in our Banner during 2008. Thank you very much. Keep up the good work.

Now I know that some of the sceptics will say: "But that's your "home" Congregation, the place of your birth, where you grew up, where all your relatives are, and where you go on holidays each year!" But I would counter that by the well known words of Jesus: "No prophet is accepted in his own country!" The fact that they know me only adds to the kindness they have shown in expressing their thanks!

Now I mention this, not that I want to shame anyone [!] or encourage you to race out and buy a belated thank you card [!] but to express my thanks to the Manning Congregation, and take the opportunity to encourage thoughtfulness, courtesy and good manners for 2009. There are many voices being raised in all walks of life about the demise of these basic qualities. Not long ago, a



Hot Bread Bakery made the news by refusing to serve people while they were speaking on their mobiles. But that's just the tip of the iceberg. Mind you, some people who serve in shops are not without fault either! Behind that bland "thank you", "have a nice day" comment, there often lies a chronic lack of interest and concern too. Superficial, indifferent, perfunctory courtesy is just as objectionable as downright discourtesy! Our thoughtfulness and courtesy must be better than Claytons! It needs to be genuine.

And where, above all else, should this thoughtfulness, and courtesy be found? Of course! In the Church and among Christian People. I recall years ago in the Synod, when the business of a Committee was concluded, someone always expressed the thanks of the Court to the Convener and the Committee for their work. Today, that has become the exception rather than the rule. We're far too busy for such niceties!

Thank you, Manning River for your thoughtfulness—and for the reminder to me of the truth of those words we find in that great book of practical wisdom, Proverbs. It says: "A man finds joy in giving an apt reply—and how good is a timely word!" [Proverbs 15:23] May we give many during 2009.

INSTITUTES - READING SCHEDULE

The Rev. Gavin Smith has drawn our attention to a "Reading Schedule" for Calvin's Institutes for the year. He has given us the web sources for the schedule, and where we might obtain a copy of Calvin's Institutes. The Rev. George Ball [Manning River] has also produced a Pdf of the Readings. If you would like to take part in this reading programme, and don't have access to the web, I'm sure George would be happy to provide you with a printed copy of the readings.

To give you a sample of the Programme we include the readings for February below. For those unfamiliar with the arrangement of the Institutes the numbers refer to the Books, chapters, and sections. For February 2 you read from Book 1, chapter 13, from section 4 to section 7. Happy Reading!

Break Sat and Sun

- Feb 2 - 1.13.4 1.13.7
- Feb 3 - 1.13.8 1.13.12
- Feb 4 - 1.13.18 1.13.22
- Feb 5 - 1.13.18 1.13.22
- Feb 6 - 1.13.23 1.13.25
- Break Sat and Sun
- Feb 9 - 1.13.26 1.13.29
- Feb 10 - 1.14.1 1.14.5
- Feb 11 - 1.14.6 1.14.11
- Feb 12 - 1.14.12 1.14.18
- Feb 13 - 1.14.19 1.14.22

Break Sat and Sun

- Feb 16 - 1.15.1 1.15.3
- Feb 17 - 1.15.4 1.15.7
- Feb 18 - 1.15.8 1.16.3
- Feb 19 - 1.16.4 1.16.8
- Feb 20 - 1.16.9 1.17.2
- Break Sat and Sun
- Feb 23 - 1.17.3 1.17.7
- Feb 24 - 1.17.8 1.17.12
- Feb 25 - 1.17.13 1.18.2
- Feb 26 - 1.18.3 1.18.4
- Feb 27 - 2.1.1 2.1.4

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