

ANZAC Day

Lest we remember?

On the 25th April, I was one of thousands of Australians getting up before the sun, and going down to the war memorial for the Dawn service. What exactly is the point of doing this? Should we really be commemorating or remembering our wars and conflicts? What is the reason so many people wake up early, or take the kids down to watch the parade pass before them?

Perhaps it is to remember the wars we have fought. However this would also mean commemorating the Boer War. The Boer War is often glorified in Australia as the war that brought Australia together, since the soldiers left under six separate colonies and returned to one nation. The war itself though, was essentially a British invasion to steal South African gold mines from their rightful Boer owners, so its morals were questionable. Add to this the scorched-earth tactics employed by British soldiers, which destroyed houses, crops, supplies and wells to hinder the Boer guerrillas, then I believe this war is certainly not one to remember. So while some of the wars Australia has participated in were honourable and worthy causes, not all of them were.

VOLUME 13	ISSUE 2	MAY 2008
ANZAC Day	B Schoof	1
From the EiC	E Terpstra	2
Prove God Exists	T vanderJagt	3
Bill of Rights	B Schoof	4
'Sorry' - must we be?	E Terpstra	7
Congress Review	B Pitlo	11

ANZAC Day (continued)

What then do we remember and commemorate on Anzac day? The people who fought? Yes, there were certainly many soldiers who are heroes, and conducted themselves honourably on the battlefields. Many of them received medals for bravery and probably there are thousands of others who should have. But when we remember the soldiers on Anzac day we are remembering fallible people, including some who have been convicted of war crimes. We are also remembering many others who were rough, crude, immoral, and certainly did not live the holy lives that God required of them. The famous Australian war movie *Gallipoli* paints an ugly picture of what Australian soldiers were sometimes really like, mistreating and disrespecting the locals and their property, and certainly not the fair and honest soldiers that we tend to think of.

So what then is the point of commemorating and remembering Anzac day? There is no point if the focus is on the deeds of men, because men, whether they are leaders who send soldiers off to war or soldiers who fight in it, are always going to let us down. However God blessed the efforts of our soldiers as they fought for freedom that we enjoy today. It is God who has kept this country safe and free during the centuries, and it's thanks to Him that we have not more times been under the imminent threat of invasion.

We all have very busy lives. The fast paced consumerist society in which we live, does not leave the Church untouched. Especially as youth with so much technology and money available to us, it's easy to forget Who has blessed us with our freedom our time and our possessions. Some of the articles in this edition of the *Contender* make it very clear why it is so important to remember God and serve Him in everything we do. The youth Congress' focus on legalism vs. antinomianism brought the dangers home to us of forgetting God, or serving Him in our own manner. And the recent SPYSC meeting covering the Bill of Rights (also reviewed in this edition) was quite scary. The freedom to serve God, which we so easily take for granted, is not likely to be there forever. The new Rudd Labor government, along with the Labor governments in every state have very strong anti-God social agendas. Therefore Anzac day is an opportunity to pause and reflect. It is a chance to get out of bed early, to stand with others at the war memorial, and remember those who gave the ultimate price for the freedom in this country. As Reformed people we take this one step further and thank God for the peace which they won and which we continue to enjoy. This makes Anzac day truly worth remembering.

Ben Schoof

FROM THE EIC

It struck me as this Contender was being put together, how distinctly sometimes you can see the progress of Gods work in this world, but also the progress of Satan. This is evident in this magazine as well.

On the one hand we see the marvellous work of the Lord evident in young people who gather together to study the Word of the Lord with the help and guidance of two ministers from our churches. In this way the next generation of parents is equipped with knowledge to be used in the service of their Maker. And this is done in the context of friendship and fellowship over a long weekend in which the focus remains on service and obedience to the Lord.

At the same time we see the work of Satan. Evidence of his work is in secular colleges, which promote the idea that there is no God. It is evident also in the law making chambers, where legislation is enacted that is unscriptural. This can be seen from the past, but it is also evident even in today's Parliaments. A couple of articles in this edition give focus to this.

Many thanks to all those who submitted articles for publication. Not all of them have been published this time, but they have been kept for future publications.

Hope you enjoy this edition,

On behalf of all the editors, **Eric Terpstra**

“PROVE THAT GOD EXISTS!”

During my philosophy class at university I was given the topic ‘God does not exist. Argue either for or against this statement.’ I had to convince a class full of adult learners that God does really exist, as well as write a paper on the same topic. A topic which I thought would be quite easy actually turned out to be quite challenging. We all believe that God exists but where do we actually find proof of His existence? Writing an argument for philosophy means that you are not allowed to base it on your faith, you need to be able to argue with concrete proof. We all know that God exists because of what we read in the Bible. It is through the working of the Holy Spirit that we receive this faith in our hearts. We can therefore clearly see that God’s existence is a faith issue, but where is the proof?

Philosopher Kant said that, ‘it is impossible to prove the existence of God’, but at the same time he argues that we need to believe in God (Teichman 1991, p.28). In accordance with this Horner (2003) said, “*you can’t prove God exists and you can’t prove God doesn’t exist.*” Using ‘prove’ in the sense of absolute certainty it is true that God’s existence cannot be proved or disproved. With this in mind it does not mean however that there is no good evidence or arguments for the existence of God. This paper will look at three arguments for the existence of God using scientific evidence. Argument one, the world had a beginning. Argument two, the beginning was caused. Argument three, the cause of the beginning was God.

Looking at it from a scientific perspective, it is evident that the world had a beginning. As humans we can assume that we exist, that there is reality and that the matter of

which we are made is real. We exist, so we either had a beginning or we did not have a beginning. Christians argue that God created the heavens and the earth, while atheists argue that matter is self-existing and is not created. Both Christians and atheists look at the beginning from opposite ends. Therefore it is important to argue from a scientific perspective. To be able to do this we will take a look at the galaxies in our cosmos (Oakes 1999). All these galaxies move relative to each other. The distance between these galaxies gets bigger by each passing day. This brings us to the conclusion that our universe is expanding. Now let us reverse the cycle and go back in time. The distance between the galaxies gets smaller and smaller concluding that all the galaxies must have met at a point – the beginning. This scientifically shows that the earth had a beginning.

Seeing now that creation had a beginning, we need to work out how this beginning came into being. Was this creation caused or not caused? According to Christians there was a cause and the cause was God. According to atheists however, something came into existence out of nothing. Looking at it from a scientific perspective we come to the realization that with empty space, no force, no matter, no energy and no intelligence,

matter would have had to come into existence out of nothing. This however defeats all the scientific laws of the conservation of matter and energy (Oakes 1999). Consequently it invalidates all of chemistry, physics and electronics. As humans living in this world we can not discard these laws. This brings us to the conclusion that creation had a beginning and was caused. Through this we can see that the Atheists assertion that



“PROVE THAT GOD EXISTS!” (CONTINUED)

matter is eternal is incorrect. Also their assertion that the universe is uncaused and self-existing is incorrect.

Now that we have argued that there is a beginning and a cause for creation, we need to look at what the cause was. Christians believe that God was the cause. Atheists, on the other hand, say that we are a product of chance. Atheist Huxley once said ‘we are as much a product of blind forces as is the falling of a stone to earth or the ebb and flow of the tides. We have just happened, and man was made flesh by a long series of singular beneficial accidents’ (Oakes 1999). He says that we have just happened but without an explained reason. According to Huxley we happened by chance. Modern day scientists like Davies and Hoyle raise objections against the use of chance in explaining the natural phenomena. They argue that new principles have come into the world. These new principals can all be seen in the natural world. Three of these principles are the anthropic principle, irreducible complexity and architectural design. Having a closer look at the anthropic principle we can see that it argues, on the basis of physics, that the universe gives the appearance that it was designed to support life on earth. For example, “The nuclear weak force is 1028 times the strength of gravity. Had the weak force been slightly weaker, all the hydrogen in the universe would have been turned to helium (making water impossible)” (DeChardin). This nuclear force is something which has always been there and so is

part of natural phenomena. It is therefore possible to conclude with these principles that chance is simply not a valid method to explain life. Therefore if chance is not valid, we are forced to reject Huxley’s claim.

In conclusion to this it is clear that God’s existence cannot be proven or denied. Looking at the different arguments it is however obvious that with scientific evidence it is possible to argue for the existence of God. This paper did this through finding some of the many scientific evidences for the beginning, the cause and the source of the cause. It is therefore possible to come to the realization that we are indeed the product of an intelligent God.

Tineke VanderJagt

DeChardin, P.T., located at <http://www.proofgodexists.org/index.htm>, accessed 19 August 2007.

Horner, M. 2003, located at <http://www.michaelhorner.com/articles/doesGodexist.index.html>, accessed 19 August 2007.

Oakes, J.M. 1999, *Is There a God? Questions about Science and the Bible*, 2nd ed., Great Commission Illustrated, America.

Teichman, J., Evans, C.E. 1991, *Philosophy: A Beginner’s Guide*, 2nd ed., Blackwell, Oxford, pp28.

Image:

<http://www.cehwiedel.com/blogs/traces-pix/2006/07/LordGodOfAllCreation-web.png>

BILL OF RIGHTS

... or Bill of Wrongs?

If someone told *you* the government was looking to pass a Bill detailing the rights each and every citizen had, what would you think? My first thought was “that’s not such a bad thing. At least then our freedom to serve God and run our schools would be protected.” Right? Well on the 11th March the Social and Political Youth Club (SPYSC) held their first meeting of the year on this topic, and Mr Tim Houweling showed me how wrong I really was.

Mr Houweling started by reiterating a few Christian principles: there is a war being fought in this world, between the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God. And we as members of God’s kingdom live very different lives to those in the world: we put God in the centre of our lives, whereas modern man puts himself in the very centre. As if by some chance men are demigods who know everything and can run their own lives. And somewhere this becomes obvious in the Bill of Rights that was put before parliament late last year.



Should we have Human Rights? Well, many of the rights in the Bill pertain to matters we would agree are very important. However the ultimate focus is different. We say that in our lives we have *obligations* and *responsibilities* to God and to our neighbour. Humanists on the other hand say that we, people, have *rights*. It is a subtle but important difference. This sort of thinking began in the aftermath of the terrible crimes of Nazi Germany. International laws were enacted giving all people basic rights, in an effort to stop such crimes from ever happening again. Since the beginning of the post-modernism movement, men have regarded themselves as sufficiently important to 'create' everything themselves including their own laws and morals. And their main message is absolute tolerance, so that the only thing modern society does not tolerate is intolerance. The Christian principles with God at the centre, which have formed the basis for society and its laws for centuries, have been thrown off, and man has been placed at the centre. In WA this has been obvious since the current Labour government and particularly Jim McGinty came into power. He has

brought with him a massive social agenda, to enshrine in law post-modernism and humanism, and root out the Christianity that he describes as having taken hold of society.

So in 2006 he commissioned an investigation into the need for a Bill of Rights. Why? It intends to enshrine in law basic freedoms for all people. But the Bill fails to articulate what human rights mean, despite the fact it is intended to prescribe the way every other piece of law is read. Here are some examples:

- *Every person after he or she is born has the right to life and the right to be not arbitrarily deprived of life.* The effect of prescribing this as law means the opposite can also be argued, so the unborn have no right to life. I can argue for euthanasia, because it is not arbitrarily depriving me of life. I can argue against fighting a war, because it is arbitrarily depriving a citizen of life.

BILL OF RIGHTS (CONTINUED)

- *Only natural persons have right to life.* Who is a natural person? The most generous explanation is a living, breathing person, as opposed to corporations. But this can be argued.

What is the point of saying all this? It is to show that the Bill is so vague it doesn't prescribe anything; it is so ambiguous it can be used to argue for nearly everything. Many of the judges and lawmakers in our society have come out of liberal, anti-Christian law schools that preach tolerance. So they can and will interpret the Bill in ways which limit our freedom to live as Christians serving God.

- Section 12: *Every person has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and belief. We include the right for him or her to adopt a religion of his or her own choice...a person must not be coerced into adopting a religion or practice against their will.* Although this section sounds like it is protecting our right to freedom of religion, it is in fact more dangerous. It could be used to argue that parents cannot force their unwilling children to go to church, because they have freedom of religion. In fact, no one in the Free Reformed churches has freedom of religion. As children of God we do not have these 'rights,' God demands us to live our lives in service of Him. And for a church and a school that teaches within its curriculum that you are required to live according to God's will and word, this is very dangerous.

The Bill is intended as a backdrop, so that every Act of legislation, every court ruling, has to comply with it. It is to be interpreted by looking at international law, international treaties, the general comments and views of United Nations bodies, and more. What this is saying, is that a Bill so vague that almost anything can be argued from it, is allowed to interpret the rights of individuals by looking at the laws of countries such as for example Russia and China! And to top it all off, judges are allowed to interpret the Bill in accordance with its *intentions*, and not just its words.

Other recommendations given by Mr McGinty concerning the Bill include that we can achieve a human rights culture in WA by:

- *encouraging the community to weave a culture of human rights into their daily life, and*
- *enforcing human rights education as part of the core curriculum in schools and adult education in Western Australia, applied with the same frequency of anti-smoking and road safety campaigns.* What is behind it all is the same old argument that the only thing not tolerated is intolerance. We are being forced to believe in a human rights culture that states that we can believe what we want. We are told under the Bill that we have to treat every human being with respect. As if 50 years ago in a God-centred culture we didn't treat humans with respect!

Currently the Bill has been dropped by the Western Australian parliament. What then was the point of the meeting and reading this article? Mr Houweling stressed that the danger is certainly not over. It is Mr. McGinty's publicly stated intention to implement this Bill federally, instead of only in WA. With the Rudd government busily trying to implement its own social change agenda, it is quite possible he will succeed. Secondly, and to my mind, more importantly, the underlying philosophies behind this Bill are not going to go away. There is a spirit of antichrist in the world, of which this Bill is only a small part. As Christians we need to be aware of it, so that we can equip ourselves to resist and fight against these threats. The final question of the meeting was an especially poignant one: What are some concrete things we can do? Mr Houweling's answer was basic but at the same time very fundamental: The most important thing is that I am faithful in everything I do. Then God will bless my efforts, and I will be a true light to the world, able to resist the attacks of Satan.

Ben Schoof

“SORRY” ~ *BUT DO WE NEED TO BE?*

Next month, on the 26th of May, Sorry Day will be celebrated across our nation. It is a day that commemorates the history of the removal of Aboriginal children from their families by force, and acknowledges the pain and suffering that many Aboriginal people still struggle with as a result of this forced removal. Recently, in the Federal Parliament, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd made it priority to apologise to the Aboriginal people. He apologised for laws and policies made by previous governments which inflicted grief, suffering and loss to many Aboriginal children. He also apologised for the removal of Aboriginal (and Torres Strait Islander) children from their families, their community and their country.

On the days that led up to this historical apology, I wondered why Mr Rudd was making this verbal apology a priority, and why the media was making such a big deal about it. Recently the media had also highlighted the problems of alcohol and sexual abuse in many Aboriginal communities together with the poverty conditions that these people live in. I wondered what the significance of a verbal apology would mean to such people. As it turns out, some terrible events have occurred in recent Australian history, events that can only evoke feelings of guilt and shame because of what has occurred.

In this article I'd like to share with you the background to the historical apology that Mr Kevin Rudd offered to the Aboriginal people. Along the way there are some interesting moral questions to tackle and some interesting observations to make. Hopefully, by the end of the article, when national Sorry Day is celebrated next month, you will appreciate its importance to Aboriginal people.

Australia's History – what happened.

Between about 1900 and as late as 1970 many Aboriginal people suffered some terrible abuse at the hands of Australia's white settlers. It is hard to know exactly how many people were affected, but it is estimated that between one in three and one in ten Aboriginal people were forcibly removed from their family and their community during this

time¹. The abuse occurred all over Australia in various forms, and was not limited to certain states or certain parts. Much of it came about as a result of officers upholding laws and acts, which were passed in the different state parliaments.

It is worth highlighting some of the different acts:

In 1836, in South Australia, the Protector of Aborigines is appointed to provide 'protection in the undisturbed possession of their property rights to such lands as maybe occupied in any special manner.' The Protector was 'to make Aborigines friendly to the settlers, induce them to labour, and lead them to civilization and religion.' In this way they become British subjects, however they may not give any evidence in court².

In 1905 the WA parliament passed the Aborigines Act. It was an Act that was set up to provide control over Aboriginal families and children. It included controls over marriage, where families could camp, matters relating to employment, and guardianship of children. The chief protector of Aborigines had legal guardianship over Aboriginal children born outside of marriages right from birth. Police officers could remove children as young as 8 years old from their families, on their own initiative³.

In 1909, in New South Wales the Aborigines Protection Act was passed. This Act gave power for police officers to force children to attend school, to withhold rations to coerce Aboriginal people to move, as well as to remove whole communities from certain localities. On top of this, the policy in the Act also enabled police to decide if an Aboriginal person needed to see a doctor and more seriously to remove neglected

¹ <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/Pubs/BN/2007-08/BringingThemHomeReport.htm#wa>

²

www.aboriginaleducation.sa.edu.au/files/links/Timeline_of_Legislation_af

³

http://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/ReadingRoom/CRCC/fe_lows/haebich/stolen.html

“SORRY” (CONTINUED)

children from their parents and send them to training homes⁴.

So as a result of these different Acts which were passed in the Parliaments across the country, and also as a result of the social thinking that was prevalent at the time, (which I would like to deal with a little bit further on) many Aboriginal people suffered some terrible injustices. Many of these injustices are reported in the ‘Bringing Them Home Report’ which was researched and presented to Parliament by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission. (HREOC)

Most common was the removal of children from their parents. Some children were removed from their mothers already at birth. This is where the term stolen generation originates from. The true impact of this action has left huge emotional scarring on many Aboriginals. Mothers suffered terribly when children were literally ripped out of their arms and taken away to another place. However the children too also became emotionally scarred for life. In the first instance they are snatched from their parents. But secondly due to poor record keeping, many children never even get to know who their parents are. Much of their heritage, their family connections and relations are lost, and they grew up not having a basic understanding of where they came from and to whom they belong. They have no identity. It is recognised that to have an identity is a basic need of any person; in fact it is a right. Many of us grow up taking our identity for granted, but if you remove the knowledge of identity for any person, they become totally lost. It is hard to fully appreciate the emotional trauma (which is also ongoing trauma) of child removal. The documentary/movie *Rabbit Proof Fence* greatly assists to fully appreciate this concept, and if you haven’t seen it, I would recommend it for viewing.

After children were removed from their parents, different methods of care were employed by the government of the day to care for these children. Institutional care was very common for quite some time. It involved communal sleeping

arrangements, communal washing facilities, communal meals, and generally some form of formal education. Generally institutional care was rigid and formal, authoritarian, and lacking in real love and care for the individual. In Western Australia, institutions existed in Moore River, Sister Kate’s Home (Victoria Park), New Norcia, Beagle Bay (Near Broome) and Wandering. Some of these institutions were operated by the state, others were operated by mission groups or some other religious group. The other option that was used, more frequently in latter years, was fostering children into different families. Whilst this would be a preferred option for the development of a child, this option too was not without its problems. Children were always fostered into the family of white skinned people, which in itself is an issue. However there are also reports of physical abuse, sexual abuse and emotional trauma that some children were subjected to. It should not be overlooked that there is also reports of people who were looked after very well by their foster family.

It is worth reading some excerpts from evidence which was included in the ‘Bringing Them Home Report.’⁵ There are comments relating to all sorts of aspects of life, from children in institutional care, as well as fostered care, from different parts of Australia. The treatment of Aboriginals is particularly shameful, and what is especially disturbing is the abuse of religion.

Y’know, I can remember we used to just talk lingo. [In the Home] they used to tell us not to talk that language, that it’s devil’s language. And they’d wash our mouths with soap. We sorta had to sit down with Bible language all the time. So it sorta wiped out all our language that we knew.

Confidential evidence 170, South Australia: woman taken from her parents with her 3 sisters when the family, who worked and resided on a pastoral station, came into town to collect stores; placed at Umewarra Mission.

Contact with family members was at best limited and strictly controlled.

4

http://www.aboriginaleducation.sa.edu.au/files/links/Time_line_of_legislation_af.pdf

5

<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/hreoc/stolen/stolen18.html>

My mum had written letters to us that were never forwarded to us. Early when we were taken she used to go into the State Children's Department in Townsville with cards and things like that. They were never forwarded onto us.

Confidential evidence 401, Queensland: woman removed and fostered at 6 years in the 1950s.

There was a big poster at the end of the dining room and it used to be pointed out to us all the time when religious instruction was going on in the afternoon. They had these Aborigine people sitting at the end of this big wide road and they were playing cards, gambling and drinking. And it had this slogan which they used to read to us and point to us while they're saving us from ourselves and giving our souls to the Lord. It had, 'Wide is the road that leads us into destruction, which lead up into hell.' The other side they had these white people, all nicely dressed, leading on this narrow road, and 'Narrow is the road that leads us into the kingdom of life or the Kingdom of God.'

Confidential evidence 613, New South Wales: woman removed to Bomaderry Children's Home as a baby in the 1940s; foster placement organised from Cootamundra broke down after 17 months and she was then placed in various work situations

There was no food, nothing. We was all huddled up in a room ... like a little puppy-dog ... on the floor ... Sometimes at night time we'd cry with hunger, no food ... We had to scrounge in the town dump, eating old bread, smashing tomato sauce bottles, licking them. Half of the time the food we got was from the rubbish dump.

Confidential evidence 549, Northern Territory: man removed to Kablin Compound at 3 years in the 1930s; subsequently placed at The Bungalow.

I've seen girls naked, strapped to chairs and whipped. We've all been through the locking up period, locked in dark rooms. I had a problem of fainting when I was growing up and I got belted every time I fainted and this is belted, not just on the hands or nothing. I've seen my sister dragged by the hair into those block rooms and belted because she's trying to protect me ... How could this be for my own good? Please tell me.

Confidential evidence 8, New South Wales: woman removed to Cootamundra Girls' Home in the 1940s.

From what has been quoted from the report, it becomes evident that many Aboriginals have suffered, and some of them quite badly even, under the rule of a white British government. Perhaps the most compelling and disturbing evidence of Australia's attitude towards the Aboriginal people, is recognised in their attempt to breed out the Aboriginal race.

In 1934 Dr Cecil Bryan, a Perth Medical practitioner made this statement to the Moseley Royal Commission:

The mating of half-castes with half-castes means nothing more than the perpetuation of the black and coloured element against which we are all of us so set. If we want to do the fair and just thing by these half-castes and their progeny, and if we have any desire to save our own children from the terrible problem presented in the United States today, and growing worse with the minutes as they tick by, we will do all in our power to prevent the mating of a half-caste with a half-caste, and especially with a black. We will on the other hand do all in our power to displace the black strain by an infiltration of white blood. I am not advocating the marriage of white with half-caste. I am dumb on that aspect. What I am advocating is the mating of half-caste with a coloured person who has more white blood in him or her, with one who, as a quadroon or an octeroon, is higher up on the white scale. (*Moseley Royal Commission: Minutes and Evidence of the Royal Commission, 1934, section 1032.*)

As a result of this the government responded by adopting the policy of biological absorption. The effect of this policy would ensure children would be born with progressively less Aboriginal features. Over time, the Aboriginal physical characteristics and cultural practices would completely disappear⁶.

On this matter the 'Bringing Them Home' report, correctly identifies this as genocide. The attempt

⁶

<http://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/ReadingRoom/CRCC/fellows/haebich/stolen.html>

“SORRY” (CONTINUED)

to breed out the Aboriginal is right up there with atrocities such as Hitler’s attempt to kill all the Jews and Pol Pots genocide of approximately 2 million Cambodians. Whilst the attempted genocide of Aboriginals was much less violent, the thoughts and reasons behind it were along very similar lines as the other two atrocities mentioned⁷.

Some Questions and Answers:

Before I start on this section, I want to make it clear, that I do not know all the answers. I am not a historian by profession, nor am I a skilled political analyst. But it is nice to have some answers as to why the Stolen Generation was high on Kevin Rudd’s agenda and why the Stolen Generation were looking for an apology.

Why was the apology to the Aboriginal people high on Kevin Rudd’s agenda, and not on (former prime minister) John Howard’s agenda?

Kevin Rudd made an election promise in 2007, that if he would become prime minister he would apologise to Aboriginal people on behalf of the national Parliament. He made this promise because he was canvassing for votes prior to an election. Whilst all the state Parliaments had apologised a long time ago already, (as recommended by the HREOC report) John Howard indicated several times that whilst he was prime minister he would not apologise. He argued that the current generations should not be required to accept guilt and blame for past actions and policies over which they had no control⁸. He was of the opinion that in offering a formal apology, automatically there is an accepting of responsibility in the matter as well. There is a difference in expressing sorrow over what occurred and accepting responsibility for what occurred.

⁷

http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/hreoc/stolen_summary/stolen09.html

⁸

<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/car/arc/speeches/opening/howard.htm>

Did Australia really act in antagonism towards Aboriginal People or did they act in ignorance?

Elements of both of these thoughts are prevalent. White society up to a certain point, regarded their culture as superior, and probably more enlightened than the Aboriginal culture. Aboriginal culture was typified by hunters and gatherers, whilst white culture had embraced the technology of the industrial revolution and was clearing land for farming. Aboriginal culture was also steeped in myths and legends, pagan beliefs as well as ceremonial rituals. White society though new of the gospel, and whilst it may have been somewhat distorted, it was based on Scripture.

Antagonism is also certainly seen in the push from white people to insist on Aboriginal segregation in towns and communities, and their protests when Aboriginal children were enrolled at the school. Aboriginals were typically seen as lazy, trouble makers, dirty, and therefore employment wise they were good for labourers (see for example, the 1836 legislation in South Australia quoted at the beginning).

In removing children from their parents, I believe a lot of that was done in ignorance with no idea of the enormous social and emotional ramifications this would lead to. In general I think institutions meant well for the children, and I am sure that in most cases foster families in general had the interests and wellbeing of the child close to their heart. It cannot be denied though, that removing children from their parents at such a young age leaves huge emotional wounds and unless these are treated carefully, children grow into scarred adults.

It is interesting to note, that the documentation always refers to the protection of Aborigines, and that WA and some other states even had a chief protector of Aborigines. The aim of the legislation (in the written form) was for their wellbeing.

What is the benefit of this verbal apology?

There is something soothing to the soul, when a person who has suffered emotional grief and pain is confronted by the instigator who genuinely

apologises for the wrongs that were committed. Even if the wrongs cannot be undone, some healing can occur when there is a real and meaningful effort by the instigator, to restore that which has been taken away. In this way too, Aboriginal people who have been deprived of a parent child relationship, Aboriginals who have suffered abuse in various forms may find some comfort, some closure if you like, in that the Federal parliament and all the state parliaments have publicly acknowledged and apologised for what has occurred.

On the other hand, there are still many Aboriginal populations, who live in near poverty conditions and surroundings. Certain communities have been the subject of further investigation into alcohol abuse, and child sex abuse. For such Aboriginal populations a verbal apology does nothing, unless it is followed up by additional work. This will be along the lines of injecting money into communities, providing teachers (missionaries?), councillors and others, to assist the leaders of the communities in bringing families together. It is interesting to note how religion (Christianity), has been criticised by (some) Aboriginals in

destroying their culture, but really isn't the fact that Jesus Christ is missing from their lives tied into the other problems that plague their community? It goes to show how carefully mission workers would need to tread when going into new communities.

Conclusion:

After doing the research for this article, it became obvious that it was a very sad situation that is being dealt with. It is a story that is plagued with sin, and not just one sin, but sin over many years. What is also sad is that even despite apologies, there is still so much emotional trauma for individuals to bear, as well as rotteness in communities. I don't have all the answers for all those problems, and for most of us, it is most likely outside the circle of our control. But it is said, that with knowledge you become armed. May it be that the apology that has been given by the government find expression in the people.

Eric Terpstra

“UNDER LAW OR UNDER GRACE?”

KELMSCOTT EASTER CONGRESS 2008 REVIEW

“Under law or under grace?” This was the question with which guest speaker Rev Retief launched his introductory speech to the Kelmscott Easter Congress (March 21-24, 2008). After an afternoon of socialising and sports activities, with a barbeque dinner at the Kelmscott School Oval, an audience of about 150 Free Reformed youth from all churches as far as Albany, West Albany and even Tasmania were given a glimpse of why the theme of KEC08 was titled as above.

Rev Retief began by pointing out that if we were given a choice between being under the law or being under grace, we would all

pick grace. Grace without any obligation from our part sounds like just the sort of Get-Into-Heaven-Free ticket that we would all gladly accept. But why does this not work? Because when law and grace are contrasted in this way, the law becomes something negative, something to despise. Similarly a person who lives under the law is also to be despised, to be reproached for restricting Christian liberty and freedom; for being a religious bigot, a legalist, a real party pooper. Meanwhile the person living under grace can simply enjoy

life, take it easy, safe in the knowledge that they've always got their Get-Into-Heaven-Free ticket to wave once they die.

***“For sin shall not have
dominion over you, for you are
not under law but under grace.”***

(Romans 6:14)

UNDER LAW OR UNDER GRACE? (CONTINUED)

This, says Rev Retief, is a total misinterpretation of Scripture, and a dangerous one at that. True, there are texts which, severed from their Scriptural context, do appear to support the idea of a choice between being under the law or under grace. For example, Paul writes: "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace." (Romans 6:14) Supporters of the 'choice' movement wave this text around like a team flag at a football game, yet simply by comparing Scripture with Scripture, the true meaning is quite different.

So Rev Retief brought us through Scripture and showed us that there are a number of different 'law' categories, and it is simply a lack of discernment to just apply a single meaning to each mentioning of the word 'law,' especially amongst Paul's letters. In Romans 7:22 Paul speaks about the law of his members warring against the law of his mind. In 1 Corinthians 9 he speaks about the ceremonial law, the Mosaic laws. Other times he refers to God's moral law. When we carelessly try to shift the meanings of these different 'laws' around, we take Scripture out of context. There is no contrast between law and grace in the Bible concluded Rev Retief, except when we speak about the cause of our salvation. In no other context can the law of God and the grace of God be contrasted. Anyone who says so is taking Scripture out of context.

To tackle this topic, Rev Retief proposed two main headings, or 'extremes' if you like: legalism and antinomianism (although later we would learn that in essence, both heresies are the same). To explain them he jumped back to the days of the Reformation. During the Dark Ages, while the Roman Catholic Church was at its zenith, the prevailing heresy was legalism in its most darkest, Phariseeistic sense. But with the Great Reformation, Luther rediscovered the glorious doctrine of justification by faith alone. Unfortunately, as sometimes happens when a radical new theory emerges in response to one that has existed for ages, Luther went too far the other way: the antinomianist's way. Luther had a largely negative view of the law, a not fully Reformed or even Scriptural view. He focussed so

much on Christ's saving grace that to him the law was hardly good for anything except to condemn us. As his own understanding of the purpose and meaning of the law came in conflict with Scripture itself, he even doubted whether the book of James should be in the Bible, and called it the epistle of straw! But as Rev Retief explained, although Luther was right in singing praises about grace, he was wrong in not appreciating that life in God's law is the only way to have true communion with Him. It was John Calvin, especially with his Institutes, who would rectify this error. But the damage was done, and Luther's ideas about grace prevail today, indeed may have gained momentum on the crest of the evangelical movement. And it is slowly creeping into our churches as well.

With that, Rev Retief concluded the evening and after a good night's rest, and a breakfast on the footy field at Roleystone Hall, we began our workshops. Saturday morning was the workshop morning, and Congress had the luxury of a second esteemed guest speaker, Rev C Vermeulen, to lead the first one on legalism. After asking what we thought legalism was, he explained to us the dictionary definition:

"1. Strict, often too strict and literal, adherence to the law.

2. In theology, the doctrine of salvation by works."

He warned us not to confuse the two, as if everyone who stresses the law of God is a legalist. 'Salvation by works' is the key phrase when discussing legalism, and Rev Vermeulen defined it as "trying to attain or maintain righteousness with God by human effort."

Rev Vermeulen drew our attention at this point to LD 24: "But why can our good works not be our righteousness before God, or at least a part of it?" The answer? Because we can't. Our actions must be "absolutely perfect...whereas even our best works in this life are all imperfect and defiled with sin." This is what Paul is pointing out in Romans 3. We cannot use the law to prove our righteousness, instead, the law proves our sinfulness: "by the deeds of the law, no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). Rev Vermeulen then directed us to Romans 10 where it says that

“Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to anyone who believes” (Romans 10:4). This doesn’t mean that with Christ the law ended. It just means that the righteousness God expects is bestowed on us from Christ, not from us. In fact, Paul tackles the topic throughout the book of Galatians, condemning those who thought that circumcising themselves and following other Pentateuch laws would grant them salvation: “And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” (Galatians 3:4-5).

Jesus himself battled with legalists on a daily basis, namely, the Pharisees. In Matthew 23 He preached an entire sermon against them, telling His disciples and followers: “...whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders...but all their works they do to be seen by men...” (Matthew 23:3-5). And Christ’s judgment on them is sharp and condemning: “Woe to you Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness...Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?” (Matt 23:27,33). Rev Vermeulen then made us read Luke 18:9-14 about the Pharisee who prayed openly about his own good works at the temple, and points out that the Pharisee, for all his knowledge of the law, did not understand its depth. He was so preoccupied with how he looked in everybody else’s eyes that he lost sight of his own rank sinfulness under the holy and righteous gaze of the Most High and His infallible law.

This self-righteousness, stressed Rev Vermeulen, is what sets a legalist apart from a dutiful, humble Free Reformed believer. Legalists focus on the externals, and judge themselves only in comparison to others rather than to the law of God. Most of all, they miss the entire point of the first and the second greatest commandments of all: the commands to love the Lord our God with all our soul and love our neighbour as our self

(Mark 12:30-31). So, concludes Rev Vermeulen, while we tend to think of legalists as being people who follow the law too closely, in actual fact, they do not take the law of God seriously enough.

After a vigorous group discussion and a coffee break, it was Rev Retief who took the stand, this time to focus on the topic of our second workshop: Antinomianism. Antinomianism literally comes from the Greek words *anti* (against) and *nomos* (law), meaning lawlessness or wickedness. Antinomianism, Rev. Retief stressed, is anti-Covenant. His definition of antinomianism

**“You have become estranged
from Christ, you who attempt
to be justified by law; you have
fallen from grace.”**
(Galatians 3:4-5)

is as follows: “Antinomianism is the error to think that Christ came either to abolish the law of God, or to change it.” It is the idea that we can live our lives without the law of God, safe in the knowledge that Christ’s grace will be sufficient to save us - which of course it is. Yet we would then be missing the point. A true beneficiary of Christ’s grace cannot *but* obey the law. At the knowledge of Christ’s grace, our thankfulness must kick in. This is the stuff that any catechism student knows, as LD 32 spells it out crystal clear: receiving grace prompts us to respond in thankfulness by living according to the law of God.

Yet the issue is not so simple. Antinomianism often takes no notice of the creeds and confessions. After all, if the law is not important, why would the creeds and confessions, themselves summaries of the law, be important? The problem with antinomianism, Rev Retief said, is the fact that it is a direct result of dispensationalism, the theory that Christ has either abolished or changed the law of the Old Testament. It is the idea that the old Covenant is characterised by a strict subservience to the law, while the new Covenant is about Christian liberty and freedom. Hence, it divides the Covenant

UNDER LAW OR UNDER GRACE? (CONTINUED)

thereby dividing Scripture, and in essence suggests that God Himself changes. And it makes this doctrine one of the most dangerous heresies creeping into our churches today.

Therefore it is crucial to remember that God doesn't change, and therefore nor does His law. All of Scripture is the Covenant. The only dispensationalist difference is that the same gospel that was previously veiled in shadows and ceremonies, has now come to its full reality in

“Do not think I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”

(Matthew 5:17)

Christ. Christ Himself said: “Do not think I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” (Matt 5:17) The distinction that should be made is not whether we are under law or under grace. Instead, the distinction is between grace in the Old Testament and the same grace *more fully revealed* in the New Testament. It is a contrast of shadow and reality. If that is the case, said Rev Retief, then to say that the law is now much more relaxed is completely wrong. If anything, God has given us all the more reason to raise the bar, to live as fully and completely as Christ did during His ministry on earth. If we remove God's law, we leave behind a vacuum where ideas like antinomianism and legalism flourish.

All in all, as we were reminded by Rev Retief, we must remember that what we believe about God's law is not in tune with our time. We live in a postmodern time; a time when the law is now relative. There is no right or wrong, no moral absolutes. Antinomianism is in fact a postmodern form of Christianity. A mystical experience is sought, an experience where Christ is separated from His own law. Yet as Paul urged all those centuries ago to the Galatians and the Romans, and to us today: in Christ we receive everything, the fullness of God's righteousness and grace. In

Christ we enter into full communion with God. Therefore, let us study His law not to gain merit, but in diligence and subservience to Him alone.

This decisive speech by Rev Retief was discussed in greater detail amongst the groups in the subsequent workshops, and much engaging and rewarding discussion followed. It was past noon before lunch was served and the Congress workshops were at a close. A special presentation was made to Rev Retief and Rev Vermeulen for their laborious work in preparing and delivering their speeches, and after lunch, Congress Rally 2008 commenced. It was at this point that the controversy really erupted, as some individuals' competitiveness got the better of them and certain

clues were tampered with! But all's well ends well, and the top four cars of the KECO8 Car Rally are:

Car #1

ASHLEY SCHOOF
Sharene Terpstra
Melinda Terprstra
Ronald Van Dijk
John VanderWal

Car #2

NIC KLEYN
Ruurd Offringa
Thomas Brown
Nathan Terpstra

Car #3

DAVE BROERE
Bradley Van Dyke
Dallas Slobe
Renier DeJager

Car # 4

GAVIN HORDYK
Ashley Mulder
Chris Bruning
Jono Visser

Sunday night proved to be a relative success with the only bad side being that we were unable to fit our promised Quiz into the schedule. Seeing as we still have the quiz, and certain people worked hard to make it, we decided we would schedule a Quiz Night after the Congress. The morning, Easter Monday, was spent at Fremantle on a fox-hunt, which not-so-coincidentally happened to be when the Fremantle Street Arts Festival was in full swing. This made it a bit more difficult for those who thought they knew what the KECO8 Committee members looked like, but found out instead how true the old adage about 'you are what you wear' really is. The top three winning groups of the Fremantle Festival Fox-Hunt are as follows:

#1: BLUE CLUES:

Jeremy VanderWal
Elvira Van Dijk
Marcel VanderVeen
Jessica DeJonge
Malcolm VanDelden
Monica Bosveld
Eleisha Pleiter
Damien Visser
Aiden Dekker
Kelly Mostert

#2: GORILLAZ:

Ashley Mulder
Jono Visser
Edwin Visser
Gavin Hordyk
Ben Schoof
Richard Siegers
Ruurd Offringa

#3: SADDLE CLUB:

Ali Byl
Roslin Mol
Joelene Bergsma
Jacinta Pleiter
Melanie VanderWal
Kelly Spaanderman
Annette VanderVeen
Annike Borst.

Special Acknowledgements

On behalf of the KECO8 Committee I would like to extend a number of thankyou.

To the ladies of the Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott we offer many thanks for the big pans of soup and the cakes that you were able to concoct for 150 ravenous youth on Sunday.

To Mrs Trudy Hart, Mr Jim VanderPlas and Mr Tim DeVos and family who served as extras for the Car Rally, thankyou for your perseverance on what was probably quite a few tedious hours, on a Saturday afternoon no less! Thanks also to Mr Jack Hart, Mr Peter and Mrs Janine Vandyk. Your assistance was much appreciated.

To the many volunteers we received over the course of the weekend, we extend a big thankyou for all your contributions. With a group of over 150 youth, we had many concerns that we wouldn't have enough hands to hold the dishtowels, but it was not the case!

To Rev Vermeulen we once again offer our thanks in your willingness to deliver your speech on legalism and engage with the groups during the Workshop sessions on Saturday.

To Rev Retief we especially extend our gratitude for the hours and hours of time you put into making two speeches and a special Congress sermon. The result was fantastic, and we know it will be a valuable reminder to all of us as Free Reformed youth to strive to engage with the law of God with the same zeal and dedication that Christ Himself displayed during His time on earth. A copy of Rev Retief's speeches are available online on the Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott webpage. Just follow the link: 'Youth Congress 2008':
<http://members.iinet.net.au/~jvd/>

Finally thanks be to the Most High for His grace in allowing us the freedom to be able to socialise and study God's law, to learn what it is to be Free Reformed youth in an increasingly postmodern and materialistic world. To Him be all the glory forever and ever.

Aim:

Romans 12:2 teaches all of God's people:

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

This magazine will encourage its readers to earnestly contend for the faith, and to think and act biblically, in the good traditions of the Church of all ages. Its basis is God's word, as the Church confesses in the Three Forms of Unity. It is intended for the younger members of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, and is produced in co-operation with the Una Sancta. Subscription to the Contender is automatic with subscription to the Una Sancta.

It is not meant to be exclusively for unmarried members who still attend the Youth Bible Study Clubs, but for all those who fit within the loose parameters of 16 to 30 years of age.

Editorial Board:	Eric Terpstra (EIC)
Colette Groenewold	Adrian Hordyk
Brendan Pitlo	Ben Schoof
Julian Slobe	Rita VanderWal

Layout: Rosanne Torenvliet

Editorial Address:
eherpstra@westnet.com.au

Article Deadline for Next Issue: 8/05/08
Next Issue Distributed: 1/06/08