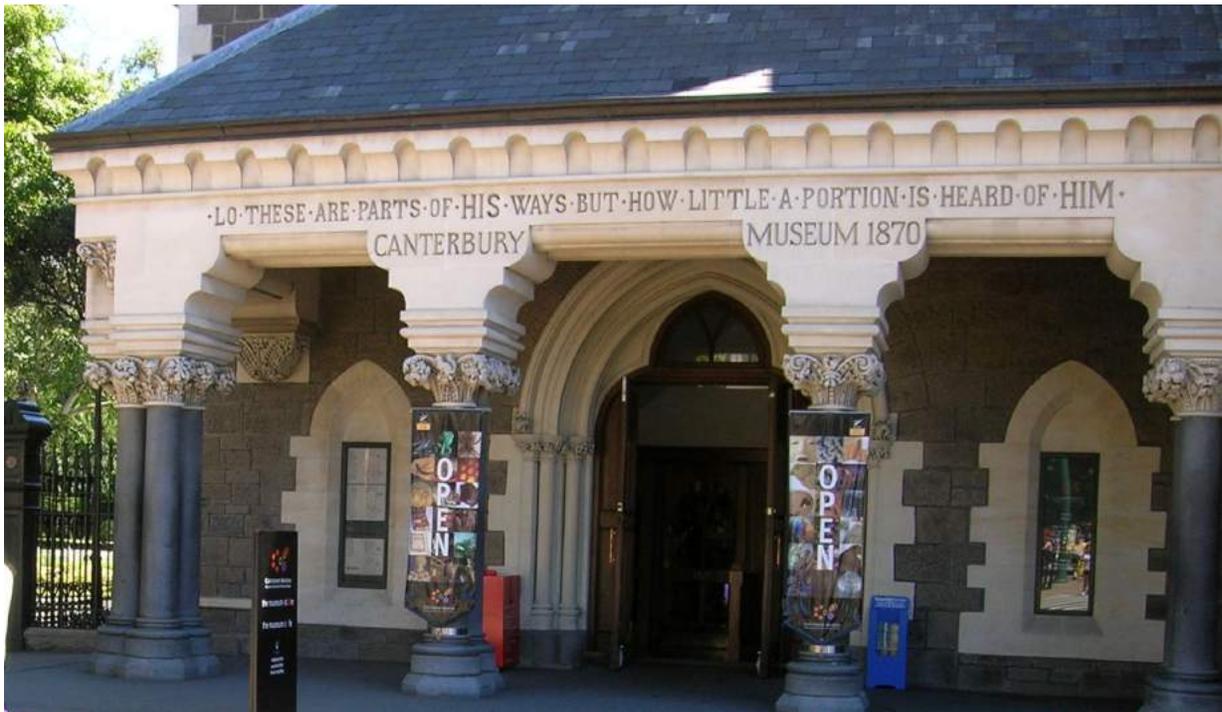


# The Presbyterian Banner

February 2019



## The entrance to Canterbury Museum in Christchurch, NZ

The Biblical text is Job 26:14a (KJV)

In the context in Job it means that in all that we observe around us we have as it were only a faint whisper of the glory and greatness of God compared with the fullness of his glory.

“And these are but the outer fringe of his works; how faint the whisper we hear of him!  
Who then can understand the thunder of his power?” [NIV]

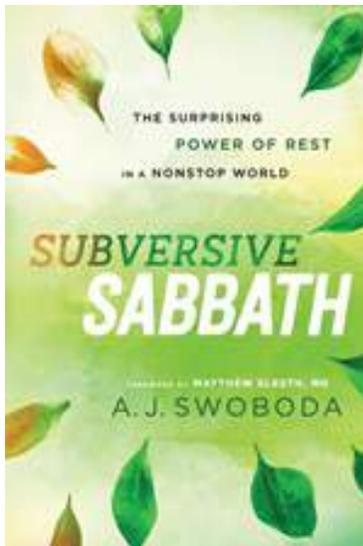
*Contents:* Editorial (Sabbath rest) : Psalm 1: Gateway to the Psalms : Letter to Diognetus : Prescribed Youth Work : Personalia : Family Camp Report : John Calvin on the Psalter : Can Science Explain Everything : Camp Photos : Southern Sudanese Youth Outing : Short Term Mission Trip :

Trevor Leggott, OAM



## FROM THE EDITOR

In its Christian Book of the Year Award for 2019, *Christianity Today* gave an Award of Merit to A. J. Swoboda's, *Subversive Sabbath*.



[Subversive Sabbath: The Surprising Power of Rest in a Nonstop World](#)

A. J. Swoboda (Brazos)

“In an iWorld that measures individual productivity down to the single step, Swoboda reminds readers that the climax of God’s creation was not humanity but rest. Subversive Sabbath is grounded in Scripture but includes observations from the realms of history, health, and community. Like a good physician, Swoboda diagnoses our busyness and offers readers a time-tested cure with equal parts theory and practice. In a Sabbath-kept world, flourishing replaces production as the standard, and one’s very schedule has the trickle-down effect of wholeness and justice.”  
—Sandra Glahn, professor in the Media Arts and Worship department at Dallas Theological Seminary, editor of *Vindicating the Vixens*

It is good to see that Christians are beginning to recover the importance of God’s cycle of worship and rest. Obviously, people vary in regard to their ability to accomplish things. There are also the extremes of laziness - illustrated in Proverbs 26: 13 ‘there’s a lion in the streets, I can’t go out’ - and hyper-busyness and anxiety evidenced in the rebuke of Psalm 127:1-2. Of the ten commandments the fourth – ‘Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy’ – has been ignored or regarded as inapplicable in the modern world driven by commercial interests and an entertainment culture. Individuals and communities pay for neglect of God’s word. Twice a week to the gym is common but what’s the point of physical health if we neglect a right relationship with the Lord, and what’s the point of the church going along with this culture? The early Christians were distinctive by being counter-cultural. At some point in the first Christian century a letter was written to a certain Diognetus which I’ve reproduced in part later in this issue. Romans 12:2 reminds us: ‘Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.’

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## **Psalm 1:** **'The Gateway to the Psalms'**

Rev. George Ball, Taree

Psalms 1 and 2 form the introduction to the Psalter. They are the front door through which we enter. A strange entry? Would Psalm 23 or 95 or 100 or 103 or 150 not be more suitable, more inviting than Psalm 1? So why is Psalm 1 Psalm 1? And why is Psalm 2 Psalm 2? Because Psalm 1 introduces us to a perfect man who listens to the Word of God, who loves the Word of God, and who lives the Word of God. He is a perfect man whose mind and heart is saturated with the Word of God. Such a man would make an ideal king of Israel (Deut.17: 18-19). Psalm 2 identifies this man. He is God's Anointed who has been installed on the throne of the universe. Who is this anointed ruler and perfect man? Even a child in Sunday School could answer that question. It's Jesus – of course! These two psalms are, I believe, the key to unlocking the psalter. They prepare us for all that is to come. I want us to discover, as we proceed through the psalms, that they are filled with Christ. He doesn't have to be 'tacked on' to make them 'Christian', but they truly testify of Him. He is 'the tuning fork' who sets the correct pitch.

Both opening psalms are 'orphan' psalms, in that they lack a title. Psalm 1 begins with a declaration of blessing, while Psalm 2 ends with a promise of blessing. Each psalm shares the same word, '**meditate**,' though you wouldn't see that in our English versions. The word '**meditate**' in Psalm 1: 2 is the same as the word for '**plot**' in Psalm 2:1.

The first psalm contrasts the truly happy man with the wicked, sinners and scoffers. Jesus summed up the contrast in Matt. 7: 13-14, '**Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few**'. As we enter the front door of the Psalter we are forced to ask ourselves the question, '*Which way am I walking? What kind of a person am I?*'

### **1. The Righteous Described (1-3).**

The psalm begins in the same way as Jesus began His Sermon on the Mount – with a beatitude - the pronouncement of blessing (or happiness). Happiness is the common quest, is it not? We all want to be happy. We think we will be happy when we are rich, then we can buy whatever we want. Or we will be happy when we get promotion, or when we find a perfect partner, or a perfect house, or when we see the children all successfully educated and in good jobs. Even if we did experience all these things, we still wouldn't be happy because happiness is not found in

the pursuit of happiness. Happiness is a by-product of something else. This Psalm tells us where to find it.

The psalmist begins with a negative. '**The blessed (or happy) man does not walk by the advice of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the company of scoffers**' (1). This man is in the world but not of the world (Jn. 17: 16). He cannot isolate himself socially, nor can he ignore the needs in the world. But he rejects the world's values and lifestyle. He rejects the man-centred and materialistic way of thinking. He rejects the idols that the world worships.

He is not like the wicked. When we think of the wicked we tend to think of the outrageously immoral and violent: the people who appear nightly in the news. They are included of course. But one writer describes the wicked as, '*those who are self-ruled, self-grounded, self-centred, self-seeking . . . who praise the self instead of God . . . who trust the self instead of God*' (McCann). He is accurately describing the heart of man, and the essence of sin. Pride and self were at the heart of Adam's rebellion. Where do we find the wicked today? It may surprise you. It's not just in the prisons or in the bikie gangs. They may be your neighbours. They may be your colleagues or teachers or friends or family members or siblings or even your spouse. The wicked are those who have no love for the Lord. The wicked are at war with God.

Does this mean we should shun contact with unbelievers? Should we go and live in a monastery, or live like the exclusive brethren? No. We are to dissociate from the world's values, but not from the world's people. We are not to be conformed to the world. We are to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt. 5: 13-16). When Jesus prayed for the church He said, '**I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one**' (John 17: 15).

This blessed (happy) man is then described positively. '**His delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law, he meditates day and night**' (2). Sounds like an oxymoron. Imagine delighting in the law of God! Perhaps when you think of 'law,' you think of, 'rules and regulations; commands and prohibitions'. You think of something that weighs you down and restricts; you think of a burden. But Law ('*torah*') is more than rules. It is fundamentally, 'instruction, teaching, and doctrine.' It's shorthand for the whole Word of God. It could also in this context be the 5 books (or divisions) of the Psalms. David says, '**The precepts of the Lord are right rejoicing the heart . . . They are more desirable than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, from the honeycomb**' (Ps.19: 8 and 10). And, '**O how I love your law, it is my meditation all day long**' (Ps. 119: 97). This happy man is a '**Deuteronomy 6: 4 - 7**' kind of man.

The Word was like a magnet to him. He loved it. He learned it. He lived it.

To meditate on God's Word is not some kind of

mysticism or spiritual yoga. It includes the idea of muttering and musing. It involves talking to yourself. Joshua instructs us, **'This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth; you are to meditate on it day and night, so that you may carefully observe everything written in it'** (Jos.1: 8). David testifies, **'When I think of you as I lie on my bed, I meditate on you during the night watches'** (Ps. 63: 6). Asaph says, **'I will reflect on all you have done and meditate on your actions'** (Ps. 77: 12). Jesus said, **'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God'** (Matt. 4:4). This was His daily practice. Are you getting your recommended daily intake of bread? Are you reading the Bible? As we do we should ask ourselves, what is God saying here about Himself, and what He has done for us? And what is God saying about us and what He requires of us? Are we living in accordance with God's teachings? Are we living for ourselves or for God? Are we open to God's instruction and committed to living under His reign?

Then this blessed (happy) man is described metaphorically. **'He shall be like a tree transplanted by streams of water'** (3). The tree is not planted but more accurately 'transplanted' strategically by the river. It didn't get there by accident. It was transplanted by God. That tree is a picture of Jesus. He spoke of the nourishing streams of water, **'the living water'**. Recall what He said to the Samaritan woman. **'Those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life'** (John 4: 14). (And see John 7: 37-39). Jesus is the ultimate source of this living water. He is the one who can give us this living water. John Stott writes, *'As the tree draws constant nourishment from the water through its roots, so through daily meditation in the law of the Lord the righteous refresh and replenish their soul in God'*.

**'The tree bears fruit in its season'** (3). Notice that this tree doesn't bear fruit all year round, but in its season, when it's time to bear fruit. There are seasons that are more productive than others. C'est la vie! The secret of fruit bearing is abiding in Jesus. He said, **'I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing'** (Jn. 15: 5). Any fruit we bear is not our accomplishment but is only by God's grace.

**'It's leaf doesn't wither'** (3). Even during the dry season and drought conditions it retains its foliage. The roots of faith run deep, especially during tough times.

**'Whatever he does prospers'** (3). This sounds like 'the health and wealth gospel'! But it can't be. Remember this is a metaphor about a tree. What do trees do? They bear fruit – not for themselves but for the benefit and refreshment of others. The promised prosperity therefore is not materialistic or self-centred, but for the sake of others. We see that illustrated

supremely in the life of our Lord. He came for our benefit. He became poor that we might prosper.

## 2. The Wicked Described (4-5).

The wicked are like chaff. Chaff is the husk that the combine harvester removes. The ancient farmer laid his sheaves on the threshing floor and crushed them with a millstone and then tossed the grain into the air. The grain fell to the ground, but the chaff was blown away. The chaff is a picture of the wicked: they are rootless, weightless, worthless and useless. They will not survive the judgement (5a). When weighed in God's balance they are too light. John the Baptist tells us what Jesus will do with them at the final judgement. **'His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will clear His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn. But the chaff He will burn with fire that never goes out'** (Matt. 3:12).

The wicked shall not stand in the assembly of the righteous (5b). They can't because they don't belong to God or to His people. They are cut off forever. They have no hope. They will perish (6b).

## 3. The Pair Compared (6).

**'The Lord knows (or watches over) the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish'** (6). The Lord protects the life of the righteous so that they do not perish. His eye is on them. His ear is open to their cry. His hand is upon them. Their future is secure.

But the wicked have no such future. They will perish. This is also the lesson of Psalm 73. The psalmist began by expressing his bewilderment and envy at 'the prosperity of the wicked.' But when he went into the sanctuary he began to see things in perspective. He understood their end. **'Those who are far from you will perish'** (Ps. 73: 27).

The message of the Psalm is simple. There are two ways – the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked. There are two destinations. We are faced with a choice. It's the choice between life and death; blessing and curses (Deut. 30: 19). Therefore, choose wisely. Choose life. Choose the way of righteousness.

What should we then do? Read our Bible more? Pray more? Meditate more? Pull up our socks and try harder? All of these things might be good things to do. But if it's to achieve salvation and acceptance with God it's the recipe for discouragement and failure.

A man named Joseph Flacks was visiting Palestine in the early twentieth century. He had an opportunity to address a gathering of Jews and Arabs and decided to speak on the first psalm. He read it in Hebrew and discussed the verb tenses. Then he asked the question, 'Who is this blessed man of whom the psalmist speaks? This man never walked in the counsel of the wicked or stood in the way of sinners or sat in the seat of mockers. He was an absolutely sinless man'. Nobody spoke. So, Flacks said, 'Was he our great father Abraham'? One old man said, 'No, it cannot be Abraham. He denied his wife and told a lie about her.'

Well, how about the lawgiver Moses'? 'No' someone said, 'It cannot be Moses. He killed a man and he lost his temper by the waters of Meribah.' Flacks suggested David. It was not David; he committed both murder and adultery. There was a long silence. Then an elderly Jew arose and said, 'My brothers, I have a little book here; it's called the New Testament. I have been reading it, and if I could believe this book, if I could be sure that it is true, I would say that the man of the first psalm was Jesus of Nazareth'.

Only one man in history has lived up to the standards of this Psalm. He was the only truly happy, blessed, contented, prosperous and righteous man. It's only in Christ and because of Him that we can enjoy the blessings described in this psalm. If we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, we have a righteousness apart from the law. That means it has nothing to do with how we kept the law of God. It is a righteousness from God. In fact, it is Christ's righteousness. It is something God gifts us. That is the staggering truth of the gospel. Blessedness, real happiness, and righteousness is found only in Christ.

This psalm is therefore a description of our Saviour who fulfilled all righteousness for us. He came to do the will of God and He did it perfectly. It also sets before us the ideal that we should strive after so that we might show our love and obedience to Him. We will never be sinless, but we can sin-less.

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### *From the Letter to Diognetus, by an unknown Christian, ca. AD 150/250*

"Christians are indistinguishable from other men either by nationality, language or customs. They do not inhabit separate cities of their own, or speak a strange dialect, or follow some outlandish way of life. Their teaching is not based upon reveries inspired by the curiosity of men. Unlike some other people, they champion no purely human doctrine. With regard to dress, food and manner of life in general, they follow the customs of whatever city they happen to be living in, whether it is Greek or foreign.

And yet there is something extraordinary about their lives. They live in their own countries as though they were only passing through. They play their full role as citizens, but labour under all the disabilities of aliens. Any country can be their homeland, but for them their homeland, wherever it may be, is a foreign country. Like others, they marry and have children, but they do not expose

them [by abandoning them to the elements].\* They share their meals, but not their wives.

They live in the flesh, but they are not governed by the desires of the flesh. They pass their days upon earth, but they are citizens of heaven. Obedient to the laws, they yet live on a level that transcends the law. Christians love all men, but all men persecute them. Condemned because they are not understood, they are put to death, but raised to life again. They live in poverty, but enrich many; they are totally destitute, but possess an abundance of everything. They suffer dishonour, but that is their glory. They are defamed, but vindicated. A blessing is their answer to abuse, deference their response to insult. For the good they do they receive the punishment of malefactors, but even then they rejoice, as though receiving the gift of life. They are attacked by the Jews as aliens, they are persecuted by the Greeks, yet no one can explain the reason for this hatred.

To speak in general terms, we may say that the Christian is to the world what the soul is to the body. As the soul is present in every part of the body, while remaining distinct from it, so Christians are found in all the cities of the world, but cannot be identified with the world. As the visible body contains the invisible soul, so Christians are seen living in the world, but their religious life remains unseen. The body hates the soul and wars against it, not because of any injury the soul has done it, but because of the restriction the soul places on its pleasures. Similarly, the world hates the Christians, not because they have done it any wrong, but because they are opposed to its enjoyments.

Christians love those who hate them just as the soul loves the body and all its members despite the body's hatred. It is by the soul, enclosed within the body, that the body is held together, and similarly, it is by the Christians, detained in the world as in a prison, that the world is held together. The soul, though immortal, has a mortal dwelling place; and Christians also live for a time amidst perishable things, while awaiting the freedom from change and decay that will be theirs in heaven. As the soul benefits from the deprivation of food and drink, so Christians flourish under persecution. Such is the Christian's lofty and divinely appointed function, from which he is not permitted to excuse himself. "

\* This was a common practice in Roman society. Indeed, the legendary founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus, had been abandoned in this way as infants.

## Prescribed Youth Work 2019

Metrical Psalms	1 <sup>st</sup> Certificate	2 <sup>nd</sup> Certificate
Infants (to 7 yrs)	23	121
Junior (12 yrs and under)	24:1-7	96:1-7
Senior (17 yrs and under)	92:1-6	102:13-22

### Scripture Memory

1st Certificate: 1 Thessalonians 5:15-24

2<sup>nd</sup> Certificate: James 4:6-17

### 10 Commandments (Exod 20: 1-17)

#### Catechism:

7 Certificates: 1: 1-10; 2: 11-20; 3: 21-28 4:29-38; 5: 39-62; 6: 63-81; 7: 82-107

Voucher: 1-107 Word Perfect

#### Books of the Bible Certificate:

Correct repetition of the books of the Bible in order

#### Essay Questions:

Voucher

#### Infants (to 7 yrs)

Read Exodus 34:6-7. What does Moses say about God and sin?

#### Junior (8 to 12 yrs): Up to 500 words

In Romans 3:23 Paul says "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". Who is Paul talking about? And what does it mean to fall short of God's glory?

#### Senior (up to 1000 words)

Isaiah 45:7 is a difficult text. Out of context, the prophet seems to be saying that God creates disaster (natural evil). But if we read the text in context the meaning is different. Please say something about the background of Isaiah 45:7 and explain what the prophet is teaching us about the relationship between God and disaster?

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## PERSONALIA

We were saddened to read that Mrs **Grace Harris**, passed away on 17 January. She was the wife of Joe Harris, a well-regarded elder of St George's PCEA, Sydney who served from 1951 until his death in 2005. Mrs Harris' sister was married to Harald Nicolson, PCEA elder in Melbourne 1947-55, 61-79, Synod Treasurer 1953-71, sometime editor of the Ringwood Croydon Mail. That generation has now passed from us but the memory of the service for the Lord remains with us. 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.'

Elder Tom Reeve of Mount Druitt has encouraged us to pray for his infant grandson **Harry Tsai** and his parents Jordan and Hannah. Harry has congenital Pulmonary Vein Stenosis. So far surgery has gone well but there will ongoing issues. The Lord is good.

# CHURCH-WIDE FAMILY CAMP REPORT

*Anna F Ward*

As a church we have a long history of holding fellowship camps, and the pressure to hold them does not always come from the young.

A Fellowship movement was established by Synod in 1938 although there may have been informal gatherings before that (*See June Harris's report in the Presbyterian Banner in April 1988*). The church archives have a photograph taken by A. A. Cameron of a Fellowship Rally in Maclean Showgrounds in 1941, but how many others were held is not known. The outbreak of war in 1939 and the subsequent enlistment of men and women into the defence forces meant few were held for a number of years.

In the 1960s, 70s and 80s a number of local or regional camps were held eg. Wauchope in late 1960s, Armidale in 1982 and in Ulverstone, St Kilda, Geelong and Hamilton.

However, church-wide camps (then called Rallies) do not seem to have been held.

I don't know who had the idea for a 50<sup>th</sup> reunion of the 1938 rally, but among those who shared the vision were Duncan McKinnon, Stewart Ramsay, June Harris and Ted Hockett, now all with the Lord. As young people they had enjoyed rallies and saw the need for fellowship for a new generation. The church had been through difficult times and there was a recognition of the need to pull together for there to be a future.

So in 1988 a Reunion Rally was held in Taree on Easter weekend 1988; from Friday 1<sup>st</sup> April to Monday 4<sup>th</sup> April 1988, and was a new beginning. *See The Presbyterian Banner April 1988.*

Praise God for these and other men and women, including some of the older ministers, such as M.C. Ramsay, who were interested in the youth of our church and worked hard to help and encourage them.

Including this Taree Reunion Rally of 1988, there have been 16 church-wide Family camps, sometimes held at New Year, sometimes at Easter. The camp scheduled for December 1999 / January 2000 at Cataract Gorge, south of Sydney, was cancelled for lack of numbers though 29 had booked from Melbourne. Neither was one held in late 2001/ early 2002, I'm not sure why. So there were no Family Camps between January 1988 and Easter 2003. Apart from that interval, they have

## The Presbyterian Banner

been held regularly since 1988, usually every second year, so the 2019 camp was the 16<sup>th</sup>. Since 2007 they have been held in the week around New Year.

[For an overview of youth work in the church see the article in *The Presbyterian Banner of April 2014*, pp 14-16.]

### So, to this year's camp....

This was held at Elanora Conference Centre, in the Sydney suburb of Elanora Heights, 28 kms north of Sydney CBD, from Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> January to Friday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2019. 62 people attended, plus some day visitors, representing congregations from Tasmania, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. Most were from the PCEA but it is always encouraging to have visitors from other churches, some who came with friends, some on their own.

The main addresses were given by Rev Andres Miranda, minister of Knox PCEA, on the theme 'Walking behind Jesus; Reflections on Christian Discipleship'. This was divided into four addresses - Becoming a Disciple (John 8:12-41), Foundations of Discipleship (Matthew 5: 1-20), Undetected Discipleship (Matthew 6:1-14 & 25-34) and Joyful Discipleship (Hebrews 12: 1-12). You can hear the talks given by Rev. Andres Miranda by following this link to the Hunter Barrington PCEA Youtube Channel at <https://bit.ly/2CXyVbt>.

For discussion, we were divided into 5 groups each led by a minister – Andres Miranda, David Kerridge, George Ball, John Forbes and Robin Tso. Andres has previously commented on the difficulty and importance of getting questions in any discussion exactly right; and these questions showed the thought put into the task eg on principles of giving; on the paradox of showing our Christian actions compared to hiding some activities (Matthew 6); on practical responses to the consumerist mentality etc.

There was a time in previous camps when a minister or elder's wife led a women's discussion group, but this seems to have stopped, which I think is a pity.

What better start can there be to the day than beginning with prayer? Tom Reeve led the morning prayer time and following that, and also in the evening we had times of devotion with a short meditation from a minister or elder – Robin Tso, George Ball, John Forbes, Ian Hamilton, David Kerridge and Rowland Ward.

A camp is not a camp without a lot of Psalm singing, and Julie Schmidt led well here. As a qualified music teacher, she has the gift for the task and kept us all in time and in key with skill, tact and humour. It is good to learn new tunes, but concentrating on the words is even more important.

### Other events:

February 2019

*Missions* was held on Wednesday evening, led by PCEA Synod Missions' convenor, Rev Dennis Muldoon, who spoke about the recent ICRC Missions Conference, then gave an update of the work in India of the Presbyterian Free Church of Central India and also the ministry of Taleem Centre and Mariam Hussein. Rowland Ward spoke about the work of Mukti Mission, India and Wings of Hope, Sri Lanka, and Tom Reeve then gave a talk and a power point presentation of his CWI tour of Israel.

On Thursday afternoon we had a *concert*, compered by Christina Carswell, who does a great job in encouraging us to show our talents (or lack of them) in public.

On Thursday evening we had the *Question Panel*, chaired by Stewart Carswell, and with the six ministers present participating – Revs Andres Miranda, David Kerridge, George Ball, John Forbes, Robin Tso and Rowland Ward. Among the questions they were asked were -

How can we create greater cohesion between congregations?

Is the mission field inside the church as important as outside?

What are useful Bible studies for mid-week meetings?

What is your favourite verse?

One item cancelled, due to a mix up in the time, was a talk on *The Bible and Climate Change*. This may have been controversial, but whatever our view, as Christians we have to be good stewards of God's creation.

### The children

As always, the children were well cared for, with group activities led by Mary Forbes, Tom Reeve, Ian Conley, Vanessa Tso, Esther Hamilton and Christina Carswell.

It was encouraging to see so many children and young people present and this bodes well for the future. Though elders have usually been well represented at camp, up to a few years ago many camps had only one minister attending. It is great to see better attendance by the ministers and their families and continued attendance by elders, 4 of whom were there.

This is the third time Elanora has been our venue. To call it a 'camp' is a misnomer; it is a comfortable, purpose-built conference centre, but some buildings are 40 years old and could do with an upgrade. It would be good to see a camp in the south sometime, to benefit those who miss out due to the cost of travel.

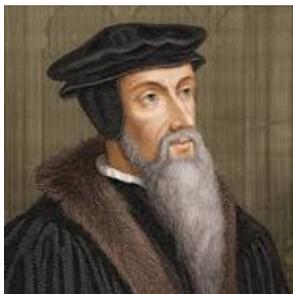
But a camp is really about a different sort of building. It is about building relationships with those within and those without the PCEA, learning from one another, seeking to encourage, help and upbuild one another – all these are vital elements in church get-togethers. I have on occasions gone to

camps and other activities feeling downcast, even depressed, but through the love and care shown to me by friends and sometimes total strangers, have been uplifted and strengthened in my walk with the Lord. I know I am not the only one to feel like this, which is why these opportunities are so precious and so needed. We cannot know the burdens borne by others, but we can help them to carry them. As a church we need each other; we need to build on our shared heritage; we need to help each other to be strong to live for Christ in a pagan world; and those who have been 'in the way' a long time need to take every opportunity to be mentors of the young. This is why camps matter!

Thank you to all who worked so hard to organise the camp, especially the members of Synod's Youth and Fellowship Committee – Stewart Carswell (Convener), Andres Miranda, Mandy Kerridge, Tom Reeve, Cameron Hamilton and Stephen Smith. Thank you to all who assisted in any way. It is much appreciated.#

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## John Calvin on the Psalter



*In his Introduction to his 1557 Commentary on the Book of Psalms, the Genevan Reformer writes:*

*I have been accustomed to call this book, I think not inappropriately, 'An Anatomy of all the Parts*

*of the Soul'*; for there is not an emotion of which anyone can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are accustomed to be agitated. The other parts of Scripture contain the commandments which God enjoined his servants to announce to us. But here the prophets themselves seeing they are exhibited to us speaking to God, and laying open all their inmost thoughts and affections, call or rather draw, each of us to the examination of himself in particular, in order that none of the many infirmities to which we are subject, and of the many vices with which we abound, may remain concealed.

It is certainly a rare and singular advantage, when all lurking places are discovered, and the heart is brought into the light, purged from that most baneful infection, hypocrisy. In short, as calling upon God is one of the principal means of securing our safety, and as a better and more unerring rule for guiding us in

this exercise cannot be found elsewhere than in the Psalms, it follows, that in proportion to the proficiency which a man shall have attained in understanding them, will be his knowledge of the most important part of celestial doctrine.

Genuine and earnest prayer proceeds first from a sense of our need, and next, from faith in the promises of God. It is by perusing these inspired compositions, that men will be most effectually awakened to a sense of their maladies, and, at the same time, instructed in seeking remedies for their cure. In a word, whatever may serve to encourage us when we are about to pray to God, is taught us in this book. And not only are the promises of God presented to us in it, but oftentimes there is exhibited to us one standing, as it were, amidst the invitations of God on the one hand, and the impediments of the flesh on the other, girding and preparing himself for prayer: thus teaching us, if at any time we are agitated with a variety of doubts, to resist and fight against them, until the soul, freed and disentangled from all these impediments, rises up to God; and not only so, but even when in the midst of doubts, fears, and apprehensions, let us put forth our efforts in prayer, until we experience some consolation which may calm and bring contentment to our minds.

*It is by perusing these inspired compositions, that men will be most effectually awakened to a sense of their maladies, and, at the same time, instructed in seeking remedies for their cure.*

Although distrust may shut the gate against our prayers, yet we must not allow ourselves to give way, whenever our hearts waver or are agitated with disquieting thoughts, but must persevere until faith finally come forth victorious from these conflicts. In many places we may perceive the exercise of the servants of God in prayer so fluctuating, that they are almost overwhelmed by the alternate hope of success and apprehension of failure, and gain the prize only by strenuous exertions. We see on the one hand, the flesh manifesting its infirmity; and on the other, faith putting forth its power; and if it is not so valiant and courageous as might be desired, it is at least prepared to fight until by degrees it acquires perfect strength.

But as those things which serve to teach us the true method of praying aright will be found scattered through the whole of this Commentary, I will not now stop to treat of topics which it will be necessary afterwards to repeat, nor detain my readers from proceeding to the work itself. Only it appeared to me to be requisite to show in passing, that this book

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makes known to us this privilege, which is desirable above all others — that not only is there opened up to us familiar access to God, but also that we have permission and freedom granted us to lay open before him our infirmities which we would be ashamed to confess before men. Besides there is also here prescribed to us an infallible rule for directing us with respect to the right manner of offering to God the sacrifice of praise, which he declares to be most precious in his sight, and of the sweetest fragrance. There is no other book in which there is to be found more express and magnificent commendations, both of the unparalleled liberality of God towards his Church, and of all his works; there is no other book in which is recorded so many deliverances nor one in which the evidences and experiences of the fatherly providence and solicitude which God exercises towards us are celebrated with such splendor of diction, and yet with the strictest adherence to truth; in short, there is no other book in which we are more perfectly taught the right manner of praising God, or in which we are more powerfully stirred up to the performance of this religious exercise.

Moreover although the Psalms are replete with all the precepts which serve to frame our life to every part of holiness, piety, and righteousness, yet they will principally teach and train us to bear the cross; and the bearing of the cross is a genuine proof of our obedience, since by doing this, we renounce the guidance of our own affections and submit ourselves entirely to God, leaving him to govern us, and to dispose of our life according to his will, so that the afflictions which are the bitterest and most severe to our nature, become sweet to us, because they proceed from him.

### *The Psalms will principally teach and train us to bear the cross...*

In one word, not only will we here find general commendations of the goodness of God, which may teach men to rest themselves in him alone, and to seek all their happiness solely in him; and which are intended to teach true believers with their whole hearts confidently to look to him for help in all their necessities; but we will also find that the free remission of sins, which alone reconciles God towards us and procures for us settled peace with him, is so set forth and magnified, that here there is nothing wanting which relates to the knowledge of eternal salvation.



This new book by John Lennox (Good Book Company, 2019; \$14.99 <the goodbook.com.au>) is an inspiring new perspective on the science versus religion debate. Oxford Maths Professor and Christian believer John Lennox offers a fresh way of thinking about science and Christianity that dispels the common misconceptions about both. He reveals that not only are they not opposed, but they can and must mix to give us a fuller understanding of the universe and the meaning of our existence.

### *Can science explain everything?*

Many people think so. Science, and the technologies it has spawned, has delivered so much to the world: clean water; more food; better healthcare; longer life. And we live in a time of rapid scientific progress that holds enormous promise for many of the problems we face as humankind. So much so, in fact, that many see no need or use for religion and belief systems that offer us answers to the mysteries of our universe. Science has explained it, they assume. Religion is redundant.

This attitude is not new. Lennox writes: I first met it fifty years ago while studying at Cambridge University. I found myself at a formal college dinner sitting beside another Nobel Prize winner. I had never met a scientist of such distinction before and, in order to gain the most from the conversation, I tried to ask him some questions. For instance, how did his science shape his worldview—his big picture of the status and meaning of the universe? In particular, I was interested in whether his wide-ranging studies had led him to reflect on the existence of God.

**He told me, "If you want a career in science, you must give up this childish faith in God."**

It was clear that he was not comfortable with that question, and I immediately backed off. However, at the end of the meal, he invited me to come to his study. He had also invited two or three other senior academics but no other students. I was invited to sit, and, so far as I recall, they remained standing.

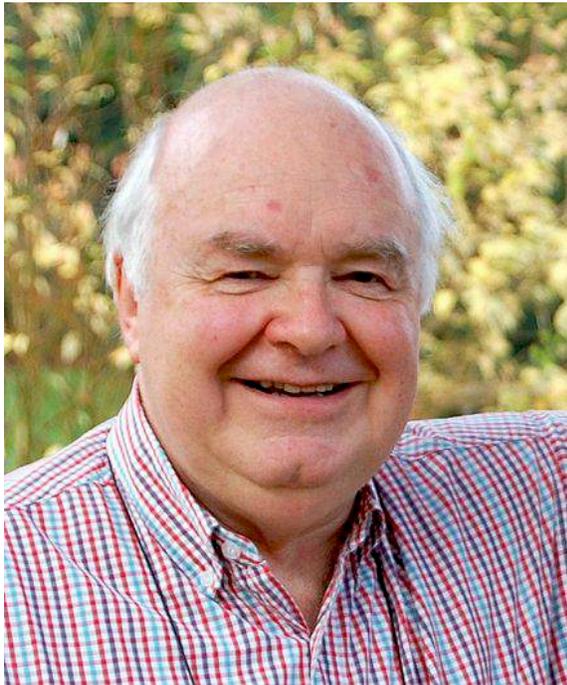
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He said, “Lennox, do you want a career in science?”

“Yes, sir,” I replied.

“Then,” he said, “in front of witnesses, tonight, you must give up this childish faith in God. If you do not, then it will cripple you intellectually and you will suffer by comparison with your peers. You simply will not make it.”

Talk about pressure! I had never experienced anything like it before. I sat in the chair paralysed and shocked by the effrontery and unexpectedness of the onslaught. I didn’t really know what to say, but eventually I managed to blurt out, “Sir, what have you got to offer me that is better than what I have got?” In response, he offered me the concept of “Creative Evolution” put forward in 1907 by French philosopher Henri Bergson.



*John Lennox*

In fact, thanks to C.S. Lewis, I knew a little about Bergson and replied that I could not see how Bergson’s philosophy was enough to base an entire worldview upon and provide a foundation for meaning, morality and life. With a shaking voice, and as respectfully as I could, I told the group standing around me that I found the biblical worldview vastly more enriching and the evidence for its truth compelling, and so, with all due respect, I would take the risk and stick with it.

It was a remarkable situation. Here was a brilliant scientist trying to bully me into giving up Christianity. I have thought many times since that, if it had been the other way around, and I had been an atheist in the chair surrounded by Christian academics pressuring

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me to give up my atheism, it would have caused reverberations around the university, and probably have ended with disciplinary proceedings against the professors involved.

But that rather scary incident put steel into my heart and mind. I resolved to do my best to be as good a scientist as I could and, if ever I had the opportunity, to encourage people to think about the big questions of God and science and make up their own minds without being bullied or pressured. It has been my privilege in the years that have followed to engage thoughtfully with many people, both young and old, in a spirit of friendship and open enquiry on these questions.

The idea that if you wish to be scientifically respectable you have to be an atheist is false

### **The dark side of academia**

I learned another valuable lesson that day: about the existence of a dark side to academia. There are some scientists who set out with preconceived ideas, do not really wish to discuss evidence, and appear to be fixated not on the pursuit of truth but on propagating the notions that science and God do not mix and that those who believe in God are simply ignorant.

This is simply not true. What’s more, you don’t need to have a great deal of insight to see that it is false. Think of the Nobel Prize in Physics, for example. It was won in 2013 by Peter Higgs, a Scotsman who is an atheist, for his ground-breaking work on subatomic particles, and his prediction, later proved, of the existence of the Higgs boson. Some years before that, it was won by William Phillips, an American who is a Christian.

If science and God do not mix, there would be no Christian Nobel Prize winners. In fact, between 1901 and 2000 over 60% of Nobel Laureates were Christians. I want to suggest that what divides Professors Higgs and Phillips is not their physics or their standing as scientists—they’ve both won the Nobel Prize. What divides them is their worldview.

Higgs is an atheist and Phillips is a Christian. It follows that the claim of those academics who tried to intimidate me in Cambridge so many years ago—that if you wish to be scientifically respectable you have to be an atheist—is obviously false. There cannot be an essential conflict between being a scientist and having faith in God.

*This is an extract from [Can Science Explain Everything?](#) Oxford Maths Professor and Christian believer Prof. John Lennox is a well known Christian apologist who has written widely on the subject. His writings are warmly recommended. See also [johnlennox.org](http://johnlennox.org)*

**SOUTHERN SUDANESE YOUTH OUTING 12 JANUARY 2019**



**Outing to Sorrento Back Beach with 22 teenagers' boys and girls from South Sudanese accompanied by four south Sudanese leaders.**

**Purpose:** To provide opportunities or interaction and unburdening of concerns among youth with view to addressing them more fully in subsequent workshops.

A bus with driver was hired and we travelled to Sorrento Back Beach enjoyed walks, games and food and had time to discuss with issues affecting them.

**The particular issues affecting them in the feedback:** They are concerned for their future for all the negatives around them in the media. We the Sudanese young people need special support to facilitate our activities in our community. Our community lack of resources to support practices which can link us to the multicultural system of Australia such as outdoor & indoor activities, camping and the like. Group outing like this are essential to discuss things affecting them and find the solutions. Particular thanks to Isaac John for driving the bus and Jonah Gatluak who supplied a report from which this summary is taken.



**SHORT TERM MISSION TRIP**

A small group of students of St Andrew's Christian College, Wantirna South, including Alexander Visser (17), of Knox PCEA visited Cambodia in December in conjunction with Samaritan's Purse. It was a challenging but worthwhile time for them all.



**PCEA minister the Rev. Trevor Leggott received the Medal of the Order of Australia [OAM] in the Australia Day Honours for services to the ingenious community arising from his some 20 years serice with Australian Indigenous Ministries which was rejuvenated under his leadership.**



**FAMILY  
CAMP  
2019**



**Andrea and  
Andres Miranda**

