



F.A.C.S. REPORT

FOUNDATION for the ADVANCEMENT of CHRISTIAN STUDIES
P.O. Box 547, Ferny Hills QLD 4055

Vol. 14, No. 8

©Copyright, 1995

August, 1995

Worship

by John Terpstra

Nineteen ninety-four has come and gone. The time is over to realise new resolutions for 1994, we can not change the past, and are again faced with a new year. This is a new year of opportunity to serve our God, our King, our Redeemer and our Sustainer in life.

Today is the first day of the new year.¹ Ever since the first day of mankind, the first of everything has had a very special significance in the lives of the faithful of God. God requires our first-fruits, since the first issue throughout life, in all spheres, is symbolic of the whole. Setting aside the first of our labours, our produce, our families, our time, is the symbolic equivalent of giving up the lot.

It is therefore entirely appropriate that we should consider how we have lived the year that has been. We ought to take stock, and to weigh up the affairs of the year gone by. We should measure our own conduct against the duties that are bestowed on us from above. We should measure the manifold grace with which God has providentially blessed us through another year in His keeping.

What we do, how we act, how we live, what we think — not just in private but also corporately in each area of life — these are the means by which we worship our God. The word worship comes from the old English term worth-ship, it describes the esteem / value / worth with which we regard our God. The Psalmist does not say without cause that we are to ascribe glory and honour and praise to God on high.

We have been created as spiritual beings. Everybody has a god. Either we will ascribe the appropriate level of great-

ness to the true God of all of history, or else we will misapply that to a fellow creature. Actions in obedience to God or in rebellion have their consequences.

Thus, in setting our priorities for 1995, we ought to start the new year in contemplation of true and acceptable worship. As we delve into the word of our God, we must be aware of Him whose presence we are in.

Perspectives of Worship

Today we shall consider perspectives of worship from our texts.

Revelation chapters 4 through 7 deal with the Covenantal Treaty which God declares are the only acceptable way of life. This portion of God's inspired word affirms the whole of scriptures' claims upon vassals (conquered individuals) — it declares afresh the laws of citizenship in the Kingdom. As Paul says in Acts 17:28 — all men live and move and exist in God. God is the foundation of our very being. This means that our relationship to Him is at the very centre of our being. Central to our relationship to God is His sanctuary — where we come to worship Him before His Throne.

The covenant treaty that God has made with His people specifically prohibits any vassal subject from all forms of engagement in independent diplomacy with a foreign power. We are set aside for exclusive service in His kingdom — subject to His laws. As we shall see, the law of God chains us and fetters us to His grace and mercy alone. We must be thankful for His justice and His mercy in that Christ Jesus was sent to fully make right every charge that stands against us. Jesus came to pay the full price of our transgressions. We are therefore truly

indebted to Him. We owe Him all so that there is nothing left over that is still ours — we must therefore use our time wisely.

Every Sunday, when we gather for worship, we are symbolically called to take our place in the heavenly courtroom. Just as of old the trumpet was sounded to announce the arrival of a king, we hear the trumpet call every day when we gather for worship. We hear the call to "Come up here!". Every time we worship together we are raptured above to witness the proceedings of the highest court that exists.

Just as God calls us upward before His throne, we are called to be with the saints of all ages past to repeat the heavenly anthem: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." This has been the basis upon which Anglican worship services used to commence with the Sursum Corda in which the officiant would say, "Lift up your hearts!", to which the congregation would reply, "We lift them up to the Lord!"

St Germanus, an early patriarch once said, "the Church is an earthly heaven, ... *in which* ... the souls of Christians are called together to assemble with the prophets, apostles, and hierarchs in order to recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the mystical banquet of the Kingdom of Christ. Thereby having come into the unity of faith and communion of the Spirit through the dispensation of the One who died for us and is sitting at the right hand of the Father, we are no longer on earth but standing by the royal Throne of God in heaven, where Christ is, just as he Himself says: 'Righteous Father, sanctify in your name those whom you gave me, so that where I am, they may be with Me' (cf. John 17)."

¹This essay is taken from two sermons preached on January 1 and 15, 1995.

F.A.C.S. REPORT is published monthly by the **FOUNDATION for the ADVANCEMENT of CHRISTIAN STUDIES**, a non-denominational educational organization. A free six month subscription is available upon request. Donations are invited, and those who send a donation of \$15 or more will receive a full year's subscription. Foreign subscriptions: a minimum donation of \$30, payable in Australian currency, is required for a year's subscription. Cheques should be made payable to **F.A.C.S.**

FOUNDATION for the ADVANCEMENT of CHRISTIAN STUDIES
P.O. Box 547
Ferny Hills, QLD 4055

©Copyright, 1995. All material published in **F.A.C.S. REPORT** remains the property of its author.

Permission to reprint material from **F.A.C.S. REPORT** in any format, apart from short quotations for review purposes, must be obtained in writing from the copyright owner.

In apparently similar manner, St John is caught up before the great tribunal of the heavens. He witnesses the coming events from the only true vantage point, the Chariot-Throne of God in the Glory-Cloud. God is the determiner of all things, and a right understanding of the centrality of the world must begin with an understanding of the centrality of His Throne.

From the infinite wisdom of the Lord of all the earth, each little event falls sublimely into place as with total precision His eternal plan unfolds in time. Nothing, however small, however strange, occurs without His ordering, or without fitness for its place in the working out of God's purposes. The end of all things is, and shall be, the manifestation of His eternal glory, to the acclamation of His total praise.

Symbolism

In considering the symbolism of the twenty-four elders we are reminded of a double portion of the twelve tribes of Israel. Additionally, in the Old Covenant there were twenty-four divisions of leaders of worship (1 Chron. 25) and it had been a feature of the worship service for over a thousand years when St John wrote the book of Revelation. St John thus brings two concepts together here — *firstly*, The elders sit on thrones and thus they are kings, *secondly*, The elders are twenty-four in number and thus they are priests. St John is thus describing the Presbytery of Heaven: the representative

assembly of the Royal Priesthood which presides over the Church victorious.

St John's text thus demonstrates that since the elders are both priests and kings, the Aaronic priesthood of the Old Covenant has been superseded and transcended. The New Covenant priesthood, with Jesus Christ as High Priest, is a Melchizedekal priesthood. That the priest-elders are seen wearing the royal gown of white (representing purity) and crowns of gold is indicative that the crown of the high priest has been given to all.

We are here confronted with a practice that is being done away with in our time, the wearing of the clerical gown (not of black, but of white!). The church of old has regarded the clothing of office as a significant visual standard for all to see.

The description of the assembly and the events portrayed are again reinforcements that the God who revealed himself to man in old testament times is still the same God today. The saints of the early church would have had no difficulty in relating St John's vision to the following significant events:-

a. The lightning and thunder — Mt Sinai and the giving of the Law by Moses

b. The sea of glass (or crystal) — Ezekiel's vision in Ezekiel 1 — Moses' description of Exodus 30.

The number seven is representative of the fullness of the activity of the Holy Spirit. The vision of the four living creatures parallels Psalm 18:10 which tells us that the Lord travels both on a cherub and on the wings of the wind. Here we are instructed to observe the fullness of the ceaseless activity of God. We need to recognise that the whole creation throbs with the ceaseless works and acts of God throughout history. Some have claimed that these four living creatures represent God's majesty, his strength, his wisdom, and his ever watchful eye over every part of creation. It would seem entirely appropriate then that God's elder-kings and his four living creatures correspond with the four points of the compass signifying God's complete rule over his world wide church.

The church has until recent times always held that *all creation is animated by angelic motion*. Such a concept seems strange to our ears because of the extent to which Baalism (the new humanism) has permeated our thinking. We have an urgent need to learn to think

Constructive Education

by Ian Hodge

The growth of the Christian school and home school markets is indicative of the dilemma many parents face when choosing where to educate their children. Increasingly, educational standards in public schools do not inspire confidence.

For example, a recent (June 14, 1995) article from *The Dominion*, a Wellington (New Zealand) newspaper, reported that a survey of students at the Auckland College of Education for teacher training discovered that 41 percent of first year students could not calculate 12½% of \$62. Twenty-seven percent could not work out the length of a pencil when it was placed against the 2cm mark on a ruler.

These are the teachers of the future, and if the survey is indicative of other colleges, New Zealand has a dark future.

A major part of the problem in its current form is the adoption of educational methods described as "constructivism." According to Beverley Bell, director of Waikato University's science and mathematics education research centre, constructivism is where "knowledge is the personal construction of the individual and does not exist externally to be transmitted."

The criticisms of constructivism in the article have been levelled by Professor Michael Matthews, now at the University of New South Wales, in a recent book, *Challenging NZ Science Education*. According to him, "there is a literacy problem and a science problem, and in both cases the officially preferred cure is faulty."

If constructivism is the way to discover truth, then Professor Matthews says it is not clear why teachers should go through the hard business of acquiring knowledge. He's right, of course, and the problem highlighted here indicates underlying tensions in other subjects.

According to journalist Murray Williams, who wrote the article to which I refer, "in the international debate between adherents of phonics

and supporters of whole-language instruction, New Zealand has endorsed the latter, constructivist approach and phonics "is just about outlawed." This does not indicate a healthy future for children who enter the public school system in New Zealand.

Things are not much better in Australia. Only two years ago (1993), the government sponsored Economic Planning Advisory Commission (EPAC) claimed that "there is evidence that many individuals leave school without achieving what are regarded as basic levels of education." Earlier, a House of Representatives Standing Committee estimated that about 25% of children beginning secondary school are not able to read and write properly.

In an interesting experiment, the New Zealand government is attempting to establish standards throughout the country by controlling all education. Private schools are encouraged to become a part of the government school system as the government offers to finance private education. This means private schools that remain outside "the system" will be unable to compete financially, as some are finding out the hard way.

By "integrating," as the New Zealanders call it, a private school is prohibited from charging tuition fees, since it receives full tuition fees from the government. It may charge for capital items, such as land and buildings. This system effectively makes private school providers no more than landlords to the public school system.

At the moment, integrated schools do not need to comply with the government school curriculum. However, there is encouragement for all schools to join in on a uniform curriculum determined by the government. By controlling university and college entrance, however, the government can make it difficult for private educators who do not comply with the state curriculum to gain access to further education.

Meanwhile, in Australia, there seems to be a loosening of the system in some areas. In Queensland, for example, the Wiltshire Report of 1994, has radically changed the Queensland government's approach

biblically.

We should note that when the four living creatures recant the Sanctus which declares the holiness of God, the elder-kings fall down before the throne and worship the Ancient of Days. This emphasises that their authority is derived from God alone. The ceremony we have thus witnessed — since we too are raptured to appear before the throne of grace every Sunday, establishes three key points of worship.

I. It must be corporate

II. It ought to be responsorial — that is: each involvement of the congregation as a whole is a response to God's word being made known or to speaking with Him.

III. It must be orderly.

Thus the Sunday worship service is radically different from private or family worship.

The Sunday worship service is qualitatively unique: It is the one time of each week when God's people are called to a formal ceremony before the Throne, for an official audience with the King of Kings. We come together to confess our faith and sovereign allegiance, to take solemn oaths, to receive forgiveness, to offer prayers, to be instructed by God's officers, to render thanksgiving; and we are to respond to all of this with music and singing.

As befits a royal occasion, so it befits our attendance at Church, to be properly attired for the occasion. As befits a royal procession, so our conduct and attitude ought to reflect the majestic magnitude of the occasion. As befits an invitation from the Queen or from the highest officer of the land, so are we privileged to be invited to attend the courts above.

The Sunday church service is a corporate act, which is inherently liturgical. Ought we then to modernise our church music? Ought we to modernise the language with attendant loss of the richness of the expression of the old? Ought we to pander after any particular interest group? Ought we not to get our concepts, actions and praise right before contemplating these? An old proverb says, "The more things change, the more they stay the same!"

As we reflect on our reading from Deuteronomy 12, we should take note. The God of the Old Covenant is the same God of the New Covenant. He is still holy, righteous and sovereign. He still requires His people to completely destroy

all the high places of ungodliness. He likewise, still demands that we must *not* worship Him in the manner of the ungodly. We are not under any circumstances to enquire how His enemies serve their gods, so that we may follow their inventiveness! We are still expressly commanded to obey Him to whom our first fruits are due, in a manner as He will have us attend before His Throne.

The Heavenly Court

Recently we looked at Revelation Chapter 4 from the perspective of worship. The setting of this chapter is the throne room on high, the heavenly court.

Not so long ago, a court was considered a place one went to to obtain justice. This perception has changed in recent decades. In order to gain a clearer perspective on the nature of the true court, where alone comprehensive justice may be found, we shall look at some aspects of the public justice system that God prescribes. My purpose is not to deviate from our walk through the book of Revelation, but rather to clarify the texts of the book of Revelation that have become obscure, either because we have lost the older concepts and preceptions, or else because of the many heretical expositions and speculations that have emerged over the past few years.

We live in an age that despises the legal system of the land. The media, radio and television, frequently depict the injustice of the courts of America, as well as Australia. Since the justice system of Australia has been derived from so called Christian practices, in many ways the church is tarred with the brush of injustice. Public hatred against the church because of its wealth and possessions grows out of envy and is not the least surprising, particularly when the church is seen as condoning injustice. Whether or not such criticism of our Australian history is correct we cannot address today. We must recognise, however, that these claims exist and are a basis for the hatred of the justice system of our land.

Many Christians have joined to fill the wells of hatred towards the legal system and anything that carries with it any notion of involvement therein, its workings and its agents. Couple this with a defective view of the Law of God and it is no wonder that so many churches rally out against God's Law. One of the foremost signs of this distorted view of God's Law is the catchcry that we are saved by

grace and therefore the Law is *not* applicable to us.

Let us be clear. Let there be no doubt. We are saved by faith that is given by God. God saves us by His grace. We are not saved by our act of obeying God's Law. But this does *not* mean that we have license to disobey His Law. Jesus met the full requirement of God's Law on our behalf. Since He has done this for us, we have an obligation to willingly do our utmost to obey His commandments.

God's Law sets limits to our actions. It establishes boundaries to behaviour — personally, in the family, in church, in the community and within our nation. By the grace of God we receive faith to accept these boundaries and to promote them through all the earth.

The cities of refuge described in our text have been a source of much confusion in our time. Some christian writers have made a case that the Law of Moses is not just in our time and therefore not applicable. Why, they ask, should we have cities of refuge to harbour known criminals? This they say would be unjust. Well now, this notion is indeed a paper tiger. It suggests that the cities of refuge were designed to harbour criminals.

We must note from our text three things: 1) The harbouring of any criminal is a crime that God despises, and 2) The cities of refuge were courts of justice — not sanctuaries for the criminal element! 3) God commands his people to love him and to walk always in his ways.

Moses warned time after time that the people were to actively avoid blood-guiltiness! We too are to avoid spilling innocent blood. Any involvement in the spilling of innocent blood stains mankind with guilt. Life is God's property and He gives and takes life at His sole determination. On the other hand, where mankind fails to execute the death sentence where it is mandated by God, man likewise assumes blood-guiltiness. Crime must be held in check, God requires restitution to be made. The criminal, like every transgressor of God's Law, must make restitution for his wrong doings. The due penalty for murder is death. In this regard, the state is God's minister of justice. I believe it is not the role of the church to perform the execution of a man's life, since the mission of the church is to protect life.

The Bible makes no provision for internment in a jail, except so as to hold

the accused until a fair trial can be held. Our modern system of internment does *not* make restitution to the plaintiff. The state justifies internment as a means of making restitution to the state. Is the state God that it can demand this? Has the victim no right of restitution?

Since the fall of man his desire has been to be a man-god. Man's desire is to be free from all constraint and to have no master but himself. To be free from any rules and laws, except his momentary whims. Unregenerate man wants to be like the unregenerate Nebuchadnezzar of Daniel 4, who declared, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as my royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?"

The Kingdom of God

God's goal in history is the establishment of His Kingdom and the total destruction of the kingdom of sinful man. God out of his grace adopts some of the sons of man to be members of his household, His Kingdom. Those to whom He has given faith become heirs of His promises. John the Baptist said (John 3:27), "A man can receive only what is given him from heaven". Likewise the apostle Paul said (1 Cor 4:7), "For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? So we are heirs of promise by grace and our sonship is by way of God's predestination and providence. This we can not understand — we can accept it as a fact or we can multiply our struggle in life by rejecting it.

We can struggle with all our might — but God will win and we must lose this fight. God is stronger than you and I. God is stronger than the whole of the house of mankind throughout all ages — past, present and future put together. God can not lose — He has won. Jesus sealed that victory when He died on the cross and rose again from the curse that he carried in our place. This demonstrates God's justice — He sent His Son, who could meet His just requirements to do so in our place, mankind could not.

Modern humanistic man practices the Baalism of the past. Modern man pursues his own divinity. This divinity is entirely hostile to heirship. Estate taxes and death duties are antagonistic to heirship because they take away from heirs the hard earned gain of their forefa-

to education. Private schools do not need to comply with the government curriculum. Freedom to adopt other standards, even for university entrance, is evident. For example, students who score well on the American SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) from Princeton, can gain, and have gained, admittance to Australian universities.

Both Australia and New Zealand have a major economic dilemma on their hands. According to historian Paul Johnson, by the 1870s Australia had one of the highest per capita incomes anywhere in the world. The past century has seen that dwindle. Now, for example, Australia has one of the lowest productivity rates of any Western country. This is why imported products are on the increase.

Declining education standards and lower productivity standards mean Australians are finding it difficult to compete in the world market. The market, no doubt, will continue to have its way, and those who are smart will find ways to improve productivity and their educational levels.

That education is in disarray is evidenced by articles such as that referred to above. The solution to declining education standards is not "constructivism" but a system that teaches facts and truth. This, however, is a system that is peculiar to the Christian faith, and without it education will continue along its constructivist route with obvious results.

Countries like New Zealand and Australia need more Christian schools and home schools.

* * * * *

The Culture of Belief

Christianity is alive and well in the United States, it seems. We have no less authority than *The Economist*. The rescue of Captain Scott O'Grady from Bosnia after his F-16 was shot down by a Serb missile, displayed for the world a man who wanted to thank God for his escape. "Right off the bat," Captain Scott told the world media, "the first thing I want to do is to thank God. If it wasn't for

God's love for me and my love for God, I wouldn't have gotten through it. He's the one that delivered me here, and I know that in my heart."

The issue here is not Captian Scott's theological understanding of predestination, or why God does the things that He does. What is relevant here is that a public recognition was given to God for the events that transpired. And it was done publicly and through the media.

According to *the Economist*, only such a statement from an American is not surprising. "Almost all Americans (the figure typically hovers around 95%) say they believe in God. Four out of five believe in miracles, in life after death and the virgin birth. Belief in the devil has risen sharply, to 65% says a recent poll, and 72% of Americans believe in angels. A survey by the American Bible Society reports that nine out of ten own a bible and 27% own more than four copies.

"Quite how often or attentively Americans actually read their bibles may be another story (many cannot name any of the four gospels). Nevertheless, their religiosity stands in marked contrast to the rest of the developed world, on the evidence of a World Values Survey conducted in 1990-93. In America, 82% of respondents said they considered themselves 'a religious person', compared with 55% in Britain, 54% in western Germany, and 48% in France. In the same survey, 44% of Americans said they attended a religious service at least once a week, against 18% in western Germany, 14% in Britain, 10% in France and a mere 4% in non-worshipping Sweden. There are more places of worship per head in America than anywhere in the world, with new ones constantly being built."

While it is easy to see many weaknesses in the faith of Americans, it is recognised that to some extent this is "a culture of belief." This makes America unique in the affairs of the world.

The article tells of stadiums across America being "filled with Christian men gathering in their thousands to hear how individual virtue can be the starting point for the transformation of home, community, and, ultimately, the country they belong to. The men pray, bond in small groups and listen

thers. Estate taxes and death duties are confiscatory in nature. Man insists on levelling all things so that there is nothing left for the heir. The destruction of man's estate — his house, is synonymous with the destruction of the family, past present and future.

The house of God has been given covenant law: it proclaims that law to men and nations. God's law-word is the standard, and God is the Judge, accuser and the prosecutor. What has been the outworking of this principle from early church times to the present?

From the fall of Rome the Christian church of the west worked at establishing God's justice. Church courts emerged across the length and breadth of western civilization. Anyone could seek the judgement of God's representatives — the elders of the church. When a state court failed to bring about justice, the victim could always appear before the church court — the elders — and appeal to the highest authority. His conscience could at the very least be cleared. The state either imitated the church, or else christians would transform the legal systems of the state. True, much barbarian practice remained. The state is NOT God! The state will never be perfect. Perfect justice is God's sole precinct. But in the very least, the once christianised courts of the land demanded that without a plaintiff (or victim) a criminal could not be prosecuted. Without an accuser there could be no case and therefore no judgement. The charge or accusation had to be brought in terms of God's law, and the plaintiff had to be an aggrieved or damaged person.

Frederick II changed all this — he revolutionised imperial law. The state now became the plaintiff of its own initiative, and high treason became a major offense. The bible recognises treason only to God. Crown prosecution was instituted and state law became its foundation. Every western country has since that time practiced the deification of the state. The state has become god while the church has remained silent! So silent in fact that few churches today recognise a church court. We Presbyterians still talk of the courts of the church. Thank God for the reminders that we still have.

The history of the Reformation is littered with unjust trials and executions and bloodshed, all in an attempt to control the minds of the people and of the church. We live in a contradictory age. Our age condones abortion while claim-

ing to stand against murder. It supports euthanasia while claiming to value life. It is appropriate that we remember the extreme price that was paid to secure the freedom of worship, and of living, that we can still enjoy today. We must protect this freedom or we shall lose it.

Crown prosecutions are entirely contrary to the most basic premise of biblical justice. Since the state claims ownership of all that exists, the state is now the family of man. The state has become the House of Man. This is a replay of the Pharaoh of Egypt in Moses day. The word Pharaoh means — the House of the great one. God-State rule is the very essence from which God, through Moses, delivered His people.

To many people today reference to our father means the one who sired us, fed us and paid our bills. When scripture relates us to God as our father it means much, much more. Scripturally, our father is the one who rules over his household, whose word is authoritative, he is the source of life, love, rule, justice, learning, and could not in any way be deified without striking out at his very nature. To know God as our father means to know Him in a most awe-inspiring manner. To be chosen as a member of His household means to be a part of the royal family, protected from all harm, always subject to the Law, grace, justice and love which He has made known to the world.

Thus in specifying cities of refuge God was declaring something very special. Roads were to be made to these cities. This infers a right of safe conduct to the nearest city of refuge so that a just trial may be held. Only he who without malice and forethought had taken another life would be protected in the city of refuge. It is clear then that the city of refuge was not a harbour for criminals — it was a place at which the accuser could present his charges against another man and have the matter heard in court. If the accuser could substantiate his charges then the elders of the town from which he came must send for the murderer, bring him back and hand him over to the avenger (the plaintiff) to face the due penalty of his crime.

Note however, that one witness is not enough to convict a man of any crime. A matter could be established only by the testimony of two or three witnesses. This requirement is a recognition that man at his best is sinful, and basically unreliable.

This premise was embodied in English Common Law.

It is important that we take note that God's institution of Law provides safeguards against the miscarriage of justice. When we do away with these safeguards, we expose ourselves to the tyranny of sinful man and his system of law — his means of preservation of his state of rebellion. In every society, there will be situations in which the legal system will fail. God's Law makes provision for the protection of the innocent, to preserve life. The church court is an appropriate court of appeal even today. How much we need this court. We ought to remember our elders in prayer, and to uphold them before the throne of grace that they may continue to receive strength, wisdom and discernment in their sacred offices.

If ever there was a need for the church to rise in strength and be relevant to the public it is today. Everyone knows that the state legal system grants full right of representation to the most obnoxious criminal at state expense, while the innocent and plaintiff must finance their own presentation at court. There are claims that our society is riddled with injustices. Petty fraud goes on unchecked. Divorce rulings are stacked against the innocent. The unwed are supported in their exploits by the state. Many who approach the small claims tribunal, complain they received no justice or satisfaction. Clearly then, there is ample scope for the church court to be a relevant instrument of justice in the local community.

When people complain that it does not pay to seek justice from our legal system, or that they can not afford to pursue justice, what they are in effect saying is this, the legal system is corrupt with evil and is beyond redemption. If the land is so corrupt, who will save it? If the court is moved in terms of technicalities rather than justice, who can a person turn to for appeal?

God establishes safeguards of justice. He sets boundaries to our behaviour. He sets limits to human authority. He insists that all property must be protected. Hence it is entirely within context that the same passage that makes provision for cities of refuge, to ensure that a just trial takes place to hear any case, should also mention that property boundary markers, or fences, must not be moved.

When we see all private property as a stewardship for which we are

accountable to God, then it makes sense that our private property must be protected. Theft of property and murder are acts that come out of contempt for God. Our private property must be protected, because to do otherwise is to violate God's claims over His Kingdom. When we violate God's standards we must ultimately face the consequences.

Conclusion

What then must our priority be? How do we gain comfort out of all this?

Firstly, if we do what is right in God's eyes we will have a clear conscience and will remain unashamed before our maker. We then have nothing to fear in appearing before His throne, neither in our weekly worship service, nor at our life's end. Secondly, we may take note that God has lavished His love upon us. He gave us His only Son so that we could become His privileged children. And we are! We know that we are being sanctified and made perfect and that when He appears we shall be like Him.

We can thus rest and live in comfort, knowing that our heavenly father cares for his sons and daughters. He provides all we need to match the purpose for which we are called to serve. It is thus within our grasp to live in hope, to strive after purity and to put away sinful behaviour. Jesus our saviour is pure. He is the shining morning star and the rock of our confidence. We may thus know with certainty that in His time, we will receive perfect justice. His law sets the standard of our hope and continues to demonstrate the greatness of God's mercy.

=====

Almighty God, Our heavenly Father, we come before your holy throne mindful of your mercy and grace, and your protecting care. Thank you, that in a crowded world, the light of your grace continues to shine upon us. That in a world of evil your justice, mercy and goodness still prevail. Teach us to be continuously mindful of your word, your spirit and of your providential care.

Endow us with the willingness to stand for justice, give us determination that we, your people will not be instruments of injustice. Make us vigilant in our pursuit of righteousness. Whatever the price of vigilance may be make us strong in your service, faithful to your word, and joyful in your spirit. Amen.

en masse as preachers tell them what it means to be 'real men' in today's confusing world. Many return to their churches having pledged to keep a series of promises, such as following Christ, practising sexual purity, building a strong marriage and forming 'vital relationships' with other Christian men."

This rise in religion is changing the face of American politics, according to the article. In a country where voting is optional, more Christians are choosing to vote. Tele-evangelist Pat Robertson founded the Christian Coalition, boasting 1.6 million members, and a dominant force in American Republican politics. (A similar organisation has been founded in Australia. Keep an eye out for it.)

"The culture of belief, so vividly on display at Aviano air base last [June], is thriving in America without the help of school prayer. The people who worry aloud about the country's shortage of moral values are part of the process that will probably ensure that the culture continues to thrive."

The tension between belief and freedom is expected to increase. The modern idea of freedom is essentially freedom from God. But the revival in America of the evangelical faith. "the culture of belief", is set for a head-on clash with the culture of unbelief.