

# David –

a man after God's  
own heart.

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# Editorial

If David, King of Israel were alive today in New Zealand, I suspect he would be regarded as one of our heroes – the ultimate man! The people of Israel thought very highly of the young shepherd-cum-warrior, when they sang “Saul has killed his thousands and David his ten-thousands”. It was a time of excitement for Israel when their enemies were subjugated and David became the people’s hero.

In the Scriptures David was referred to as the “sweet psalmist of Israel” and “a man after God’s own heart”. He was recognised for his prowess as a military man and leader of the nation. During his reign as king, he achieved peace on every border and brought prosperity to the land. Some surrounding nations were friendly, even to the point of opening up their borders and trading with Israel.

As a man after God’s own heart, David had a strong desire to build a house for the LORD in which He could dwell among His people. This would open the way to establish God’s worship in Jerusalem, where He could meet with His people and the nation could worship their covenant God. David’s psalms would become an integral element in the worship of the LORD God of Israel.

As we look at the biblical record, it is evident that David had some serious flaws. He had many wives and concubines, he wasn’t a particularly good father, he failed to rein in and punish the bloodthirsty Joab, he committed adultery and then premeditated murder.

It seems that there was a dichotomy in David’s character. On the one hand he was a man of God and deeply devoted to Him. On the other hand he was guilty of heinous sin.

Our contributors look at this man after God’s own heart and investigate his life and times.

Mr David Waldron provides an overview of David’s life and an introduction to Israel in his lifetime.

Mr Peter Moelker looks at David the man of war, song and God.

Mr Michael Flinn reflects on David’s uneven character.

Mrs Sally Davey explores the tensions between “safety” and compassion.

Mrs Jenny Waldron explains the value of suffering well.

Mr John van Dyk, (editor of *Christian Renewal*) tells us about a project to provide the Scriptures for Armenia.

Mr David Waldron updates the readers on building developments.

We continue to enjoy items from *World in focus* and *Focus on home*.

Mr Ben Westerveld reviews *The Theology of the French Reformed Churches: From Henri IV to the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes*, edited by Martin I. Klauber; Mr Peter Moelker reviews *Poko the Pukeko*, by Leigh Dell, published by Christ in Education Ltd.

Cover image: [www.childrenstorytales.com/david-fights-the-giant-goliath/](http://www.childrenstorytales.com/david-fights-the-giant-goliath/)

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# David – a man after God’s own heart

## David Waldron

Today in the United Kingdom, ‘Mohammed’ is the most popular boys name, indicating a significant shift in ethnic composition in Europe which has taken place over the past few decades since I grew up there.

When I was a child in England, ‘David’ was the name most often given to boys. This reflected the long Christian heritage of my fatherland. I certainly didn’t mind having such a popular name, which was easy to pronounce and straightforward to spell! It was, however, confusing in school classes when ‘David’ was called out and 3 or 4 others put their hands up too! This article focusses on one ‘David’ – the historical biblical character after whom all us other Davids are named.

There are many people whose names are recorded in Scripture, but about whom we know little or nothing, for example, Riphath, Nympha, and

Quartus. However, we have a very extensive biography of the life of David from his childhood through to his death. His life is recorded in two long narrative sections in the Bible: 1 Samuel 16 through to 1 Kings 2:12 and 1 Chronicles 10-29. We also have windows into the inner thoughts of David revealed in many of the psalms (e.g. Psalm 34, 54, 56, 57, 59, 63, 142). David as a historical character is uniquely summarised in Scripture as being ‘a man after God’s heart’ (1 Sam 13:14, Acts 13:22).

David was greatly gifted by God. He was a skilled harpist, singer and song writer. He demonstrated his expert marksmanship with a slingshot. He was a courageous military warrior, a masterful diplomat and a shrewd political strategist. Yet, of greater significance in redemptive history, David was man of faith and trust in the Lord, who loved to worship the covenant God of Israel. He was the Lord’s anointed, upon whom the Spirit of the Lord came in power.

David was also deeply flawed. The Scriptures testify that he was a liar, an adulterer, a murderer, a polygamist and a man who brought great grief upon his own family, and his nation, as a result of his transgressions. He was a man whose sin pointed to the need for a saviour, whose regional victories pointed to a greater global kingdom and whose leadership pointed to a greater King. He was a historical individual who foreshadowed the future, perfect rule and reign of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is ‘the son of David, the son of Abraham’ (Matt 1.1).

The purpose of this article is to give a brief overview of some of the key events in the life of David against the backdrop of the military, political, geographic and religious situation in Israel from about 1035BC to 961BC. It will not be possible in this brief summary, to include many of the events of David’s triumphant, tragic and turbulent life, therefore much information has necessarily been omitted. Please see the



King David Playing the Harp, by Gerard Von Honthorst. <http://bit.ly/1cq3h0s>

“When he became king, his greatest joy, and his most memorable contribution, was enhancing and promoting the worship of the Lord”

Bible for the missing details!

We first encounter the name David in the book of Ruth as the great-grandson of Boaz and his Moabite wife (Ruth 4:17). David was born into the period following that of the Judges, when God's people had strayed far from their Lord (Judges 21:25). Worship at Shiloh was corrupted by Eli's wicked sons and the Philistines had captured the Ark of the Covenant.

When Samuel had grown old, he desired to appoint his own sons as judges for Israel, but they were not faithful to the Lord. The people then demanded a king, thus rejecting their covenant Lord. By the Lord's command, Samuel then anoints Saul, Israel's first human king, who does not keep the command the Lord gave him and is therefore told that his kingdom would not endure. In light of Saul's apostasy, the scene is set for David to lead God's people as 'a man after the Lord's own heart'.

We meet the person of David as a boy, the youngest of Jesse's sons, when he is anointed by Samuel. David is later brought into Saul's service as a skilled harpist whose music relieved the king, who was tormented by an evil spirit. Saul's heart was far from tranquil and his kingdom far from secure. The Philistines to the west continued to make war against Israel, selecting a nine-foot giant called Goliath to intimidate and ridicule the Israelite army, challenging them to put forward one warrior who would represent their nation. The result of a single one-to-one combat would then determine the outcome of the war. On behalf of Israel, David surpris-

ingly and spectacularly defeats Goliath. In this pivotal event, he foreshadows the Lord Jesus's conquest of Satan and death at the cross of Calvary on behalf of God's people.

As the women shout "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands", Saul becomes jealous of David's wide popularity and military prowess. David and Jonathan, the eldest son of King Saul, become one in spirit, making a covenant of friendship with one another. Saul intends to kill David who is then forced to become a fugitive. After Ahimelech the priest gives consecrated bread to David and his men at Nob, Saul murders all the priests there with the exception of Abiathar, who escapes to join David. By this time 400 men join forces with him. As Saul seeks to hunt David and take his life, the fugitive has opportunity to kill Saul, firstly in a cave and then in Saul's camp at Hakilah, where David carries off his spear. David's love for God is evident in that he would not raise his hand against the Lord's anointed. The Scriptures are careful to demonstrate that David did not usurp power from Saul.

Saul had become so preoccupied with the perceived threat of David that he paid insufficient attention to the real enemies of Israel at that time; the Philistines, who had gained in military strength and virtually encircled his kingdom. At the battle of Gilboa, Saul's army was greatly outnumbered and outclassed by the enemy's chariot technology. God had abandoned Saul, who commits suicide on the battlefield and Jonathan dies in battle with two of Saul's other sons. David laments the death of the king and of his son Jonathan.

David then assumes control of Judah, marrying Maacah the daughter of the king of Gershur, in addition to having earlier married Michal, Saul's daughter, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail. He also marries Haggith, Abital and Eglah. There is war between the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. Judah grows stronger, whilst Israel becomes weaker. David attacks the Jebusites in Jerusalem and with the help of Joab gains entry through a water shaft into the city. Having captured the stronghold, he subsequently brings the Ark of the Covenant within the walls of the city, thereby merging the political and religious capitals.

Ishbosheth, the eldest of Saul's surviving sons, who had been declared king over the northern Kingdom is murdered and David is then anointed king over all Israel. After seven years as king over

Judah, his 33 year reign over the united northern and southern kingdoms begins.

King David continues to conquer enemy territory as the armies of Israel fight against the Philistines, Arameans, Edomites, Moabites and the Ammonites. David's empire grows to stretch from the brook of Egypt in the south to the region of Tadmor to the north of Damascus. David consolidates his empire and the conquest of the land, begun by Joshua but left unfinished by the Judges, is almost completed (Tyre and Sidon were never included in David's empire). The Bible clearly identifies David's source of power, revealing that he "became greater and greater, for the LORD, the God of hosts, was with him".

Through the prophet Nathan, the Lord promises a perpetual throne to the offspring of David, making the everlasting 'Davidic covenant' with him. Whilst this covenant is an eternal guarantee from the Lord (2 Sam 23:5; Ps 89:33-37), it is also conditional upon the obedience of individuals (1 Kings 2:4; 8:25; 9:4-5; Ps 89:29-32; 132:120). The covenant promise of an eternal rule finds fulfilment through Christ. He is the perfect Davidic king who is unlike David and his naturally conceived offspring; who, like you and me, prove themselves less than faithful to the Lord.

Whilst David's generals are at war, he remains at home where he falls into temptation, committing adultery with Bathsheba and ensuring the death of her faithful husband Uriah. Nathan confronts David, he repents, but his child with Uriah's wife dies. David's experience, firstly of unconfessed sin and then of God's gracious forgiveness, is beautifully and poignantly penned in Psalms 32 and 51. We see the reality that, as a forgiven sinner, David yet remains 'a man after God's own heart'. However there are serious consequences for his family and for the kingdom which stem from his time of rebellion against the Lord.

David's son, Amnon, rapes his half-sister Tamar. Absalom, Tamar's brother, then murders Amnon and he is banished from the king's presence for 5 years. After Absalom seeks to usurp his father's throne, he lies with David's concubines as Abner had done earlier with Saul's and he is then killed by Joab, against David's wishes.

Before his sin with Bathsheba, David has shown consistent maturity, good judgement, courage and wisdom; afterwards he fails to grasp vital moral issues. He unjustly allows one of his sons to get

away with rape and another with murder.

David then ignores the warning of Joab and takes a census. David repents, but God demanded a price; 70,000 people die of pestilence. Forbidden by God from building the temple, David accumulates a large amount of building materials so that his son, Solomon, could undertake the project, according to the pattern God shows him.

David's health begins to fail him and Adonijah, fourth born son of David, attempts a coup with Joab. At Nathan's insistence, Bathsheba convinces David to

declare her son, Solomon, king. David dies a natural death at age 70-75 and Solomon inherits a kingdom that was extensive and so secure that he never needed to fight another war.

In summary, despite his failings, David's life-long love was for the LORD. When he became king, his greatest joy, and his most memorable contribution, was enhancing and promoting the worship of the Lord. As king of Israel, David inspired and instructed the people to be faithful to the Lord. As a 'man after God's own heart', David points forward

to Jesus Christ, the eternal Davidic King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the truly great conqueror and absolutely faithful shepherd.

David's name may no longer be the most popular one given to baby boys, but his life and work are worthy of study as they illuminate the greater life and work of his greater 'son', Jesus, who has been given the Name above all names.

*Mr David Waldron is the minister of the Reformed Church of Christchurch (Cornwall Street).*

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## David – a man after God's own heart (2)

# David the Man

### Peter Moelker

*"So Saul said to his attendants, 'Find someone who plays well and bring him to me.' One of the servants answered, 'I have seen a son of Jesse of Bethlehem who knows how to play the harp. He is a brave man and a warrior. He speaks well and is a fine-looking man. And the Lord is with him.'" (1 Samuel 16:17-18)*

What makes a man? What image of manliness comes to mind when you think of what a man really looks like? Perhaps a young Sylvester Stallone or the pre-political Arnold Schwarzenegger – the kind of man who carries a bazooka in one hand while rescuing a lady in distress with the other? Or perhaps the image that comes to mind is the man who writes poetry and composes hymns with one hand while changing nappies and preparing a gourmet meal with the other? There is no shortage of books on what it means to be a man or books seeking to define manhood. A quick Amazon search reveals the latest titles: *The Manual to Manhood: How to Cook the Perfect Steak, Change a Tire, Impress a Girl & 97 Other Skills You Need to Survive*; or *The Dude's Guide to Manhood: Finding True Manliness in*

*a World of Counterfeits* which includes a foreword by Duck Dynasty television personality Willie Robertson. Other books include titles which speak of *the new manhood, courageous manhood, the lost art of manhood, uncommon manhood, and maximized manhood*. It seems men (and women) today are searching for what a man really looks like. It is in this contemporary context of an apparent confusion over the very nature of manhood itself, that a look at the strikingly diverse characteristics of the life of David will be helpful for us. What kind of man was David?

### David the Man of war

First of all, the Bible makes clear that David was a *man of war*. In fact, the reason given for why David would not be the one to build the Temple is based upon this truth. As David is speaking to all the officials of Israel assembled at Jerusalem, he explains to them that his plans for building the temple were subject to divine intervention: *"but God said to me, 'You are not to build a house for my Name, because you are a warrior and have shed blood.'" (1 Chron.28:3)* It is true that David shed blood sinfully in his devilish planning and execution of



David and Goliath, Guillaume Courtois, 1650-1660, Musei Capitolini. [commons.wikimedia.org](https://commons.wikimedia.org)

“There is no contradiction in a man being trained for war against the enemies of God and trained to sing the praises of God ....”

the death of Uriah, but David also shed blood in the righteous cause of God. One need only think of this warrior, young as he was, proclaiming that he had killed both lion and bear and that God would deliver him from the hand of the Philistine Goliath who was defying the armies of the living God (1 Samuel 17:26,36-37). It was David's son Solomon who would speak of sons being "like arrows in the hands of a warrior," no doubt calling to mind memories of his warrior father David.

In the late 80s and early 90s, one of the most popular professional wrestlers around the world went by the name of *The Ultimate Warrior*. His fame reached its height when he defeated the perennial World Wrestling Federation champion *Hulk Hogan* in 1990 in Toronto, Canada. I can remember watching television clips of the Ultimate Warrior encouraging all the "little warriors" around the world. I imagine that encouraging such an image for our children today would be seen as rather offensive by some. And yet, the Bible is filled with warrior imagery as it describes the people of God. Paul leaves us in no doubt with regard to the warrior nature of the people of God – "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heav-

enly realms" (Eph.6:11-12). We learn from David the man of war that there is a battle to be fought against the enemies of God. In this day of grace, we also learn from the apostle Paul that the weapons we fight with are not the missile, bomb, sword, or sling, but rather we "demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor.10:5). The Christian man today must take up the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, and be a man who fights the good fight of the faith (1 Tim.1:18; 6:12; 2 Tim.4:7).

#### **David the Man of song**

There are many T-shirts that I used to wear when I was younger that I am glad are gone and have no doubt found their way on to thrift store shelves or have been sent out with the rubbish. There is one T-shirt however that I wish I had back. On the front it read: *REAL MEN SING REAL LOUD*. I loved that shirt. What if I were to personally fund a reproduction of that T-shirt and market it to the men of the Reformed Churches? Would I make a profit? Break even? Suffer a financial loss? Perhaps a T-shirt that would have better hopes of sales would be something like – *MOST MEN SING REAL SOFT*. There does seem to be a tendency among men to be somewhat hesitant when it comes to song. It does seem to be true that there is a lurking perception that singing is wonderful for Sunday School children, fitting for women who like to express their emotions, but somehow unmanly for men. Just think for a moment of when was the last time you heard of a church choir (or any choir, for that matter) that had to turn away male applicants! I remember when I strolled by the choir room of the Christian university I attended years ago and decided to try out for the choir even though I knew next to nothing about music. To my surprise (and perhaps to the consternation of the music major I was placed beside for the next two years), I made it – the qualifications at the time I think were that you had to be male and ... uh, I can't remember anything else. Well, you get the idea.

David the man of war was also David the man of song. Can you picture David mumbling through Psalm 8 – "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"? Can you imagine David thinking about how many sheep he would need to shear in the following

week as he sings Psalm 9 – "I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart"? Is it possible that David was off in dreamland thinking about what he was going to eat after worship when he sang Psalm 42 – "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God"? Is it conceivable that his mind was filled with thoughts of his next conquests over lion and bear or Goliath wannabes when he penned Psalm 63 – "O God, you are my God, earnest I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water"? Such language would certainly make Stallone or Arnie blush, so why not David? Clearly, though David was a warrior, David was also a man of emotion, a man of poetry, a man of song. In the Psalms, David sighs, pants, cries out, weeps, sings, praises, loves, hates, and pours out his heart to God. Commenting on Hebrews 2:12, where it is said of Jesus that "in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises," John Owen writes "it was a joy of heart unto him to be engaged in this work. Singing is the frame of them that are in a glad, free, rejoicing condition. So was the Lord Christ in this work"<sup>1</sup>. And so the Christian man today – glad, free, and rejoicing in the salvation that is ours in Jesus Christ, is happy to shout praises to God (Psalm 20:5, 27:6, 33:3, 42:4, 47:1, 66:1, 71:23, 81:1, 95:1... and many more!), along with David the man of song.

#### **David the Man of God**

What do David "the man of war" and David "the man of song" have in common? Whether in war or song, David gave his whole heart and all his strength to the task at hand. Alexander Whyte, in his classic study of Old Testament Bible characters, draws this helpful application of what we can learn from the passion of David – "How much half-finished work is gathering dust in all our houses! How many books, bought or borrowed, and let fall out of sight unread [Ouch! As a pastor, who has, truth be told, purchased books that I had forgotten I already owned, that one really hurts!]! How many costly instruments of music that nobody can play! How many languages smattered over! What heaps of sluggard's litter lying all around us! How few of our children can translate a page to perfection, or polish a sentence, or play a tune, or patch a garment, or prepare or eat a meal so that you can say, 'The Lord is with them!' In His

name, what your hand finds to do, do it with all your might to Him who slumbers not nor sleeps. Whether it is learning a language, or preparing a speech, or singing a song, or composing a sermon or a prayer, or visiting, or teaching and training up a class, or ploughing a furrow, or sweeping a house, lay it not down till you can say, 'It is finished.'"<sup>2</sup> In other words, in giving all his might to the task at hand, David was foreshadowing an application of the words of Colossians 3:23,24 "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men .... It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

There is no contradiction in a man being both a warrior and a musician – in being both trained for war against the enemies of God and trained to sing the praises of the God who wins the ultimate victory. David himself brings these two images wonderfully together in Psalm 144 where he sings "praise be to the

Lord my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle .... I will sing a new song to you, O God; on the ten-stringed lyre I will make music to you" (vss.1,9). The same hands that do battle with the enemy offer skillful praise to God. The same mind that is set on the defeat of sin and evil is set on the exaltation of what is pure and right. The same heart that hates sin and all that detracts from the glory of God is full to overflowing with love to the Saviour and thankfulness for grace. As is true of the greater David, the Lord Jesus, warfare and praise belong together for the man of God. The One who gently embraces children in His arms and sings the praises of His Father in the presence of the congregation (Heb.2:12) is the same One from whom comes forth a sharp double-edged sword (Rev.1:16), who rules with an iron scepter, and who treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty (Rev.19:15). As

is true of the greater David, the Lord Jesus, the undergirding foundation of both warfare against the enemy and praise of the ultimate victor is zeal for the cause, triumph, and glory of God. And so, as followers of Christ, we need not choose between the warrior and the poet, the man of war and the man of song, for that is to make enemies of friends. Rather, as followers of Christ, a consuming passion for God's glory will make us both more fearsome warriors against sin and more joy-filled singers expressing adoration for the Saviour.

#### Notes

- 1 (John Owen, *Exposition of Hebrews: Volume 3*, pg.427)
- 2 *Bible Characters: Volume I*" Alexander Whyte, 1956, Oliphants Ltd., London, pg.237.

*Mr Peter Moelker is the minister of the Reformed Church of Avondale.*

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## David – a man after God's own heart (3)

# A man after God's own heart?

### Michael Flinn

This is what Samuel says of David in 1 Samuel 13:14 when speaking to Saul. Because of Saul's disobedience, the kingdom will be taken away from him and given to another: "The Lord has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you." This assessment of David is confirmed in Acts 13:22, again in the context of the Lord removing Saul as king and replacing him with another. Here in this passage it is the Lord himself who says this of his servant: "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my heart, who will do all my will."

And yet we know that throughout his

life, David did *not* do all of the Lord's will. On the contrary, he himself testifies that he was a sinner from the time of conception (Psalm 51:5). His heinous sin of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah were not aberrations in an otherwise faultless life. They merely showed the capacity that he had to sin in extremely grievous ways, a capacity that at other times was graciously restrained by the Lord. So why does the Scripture, in both Old and New Testaments, say that David was a man after God's own heart? In the remainder of this article, we'll explore some reasons for this.

### Saul vs David

Let's start with the contrast that Scripture presents between these two kings.

Saul's coming to power must be understood against the background of Israel's demand for a king in 1 Samuel 8. This demand stemmed from a lack of faith and trust in God. Instead of looking to their Lord to rule them and to protect them from harm, they wanted a king "like all the nations" (1Sam. 8:5). This was displeasing to the Lord, but Samuel, in spite of laying out clearly the disadvantages of appointing a king, was not able to persuade the people to change their minds: "Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel and they said, 'No, but there shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles'" (1Sam. 8:19,20).

Because the people wanted a king

for these reasons, the Lord gave them a king after their own hearts. Physically impressive, he stood head and shoulders above everyone else, but before being presented as king, he was found hiding among the baggage (1Sam. 10:20-24). In many ways, Saul is a sad and tragic figure. Thrust into leadership for all the wrong reasons, he was never able to overcome his own insecurities. When faced with the people's praise of David in 1 Samuel 18, Saul looked upon him with suspicion and dread. Instead of thanking God for providing this capable commander and making use of him to advance the Lord's purposes, Saul saw the young David as a threat to his own position. His solution: Hurl a spear at him in order to remove this threat once and for all (1Sam. 18:11). The more it was clear that the Lord was with David and was blessing him, the more Saul feared him: "Thus Saul was David's enemy continually" (1Sam. 18:29).

When Saul disobeys a direct command of God in 1 Samuel 15, again for reasons of self-interest, Samuel tells him that the Lord is more interested in obedience than sacrifice. Rebellion, he says, is as the sin of divination and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Consequently, the kingdom will be taken from

him. This is Saul's worst nightmare. He reaches out and tears Samuel's robe, but Samuel says: "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to your neighbour, who is better than you" (1Sam. 15:28).

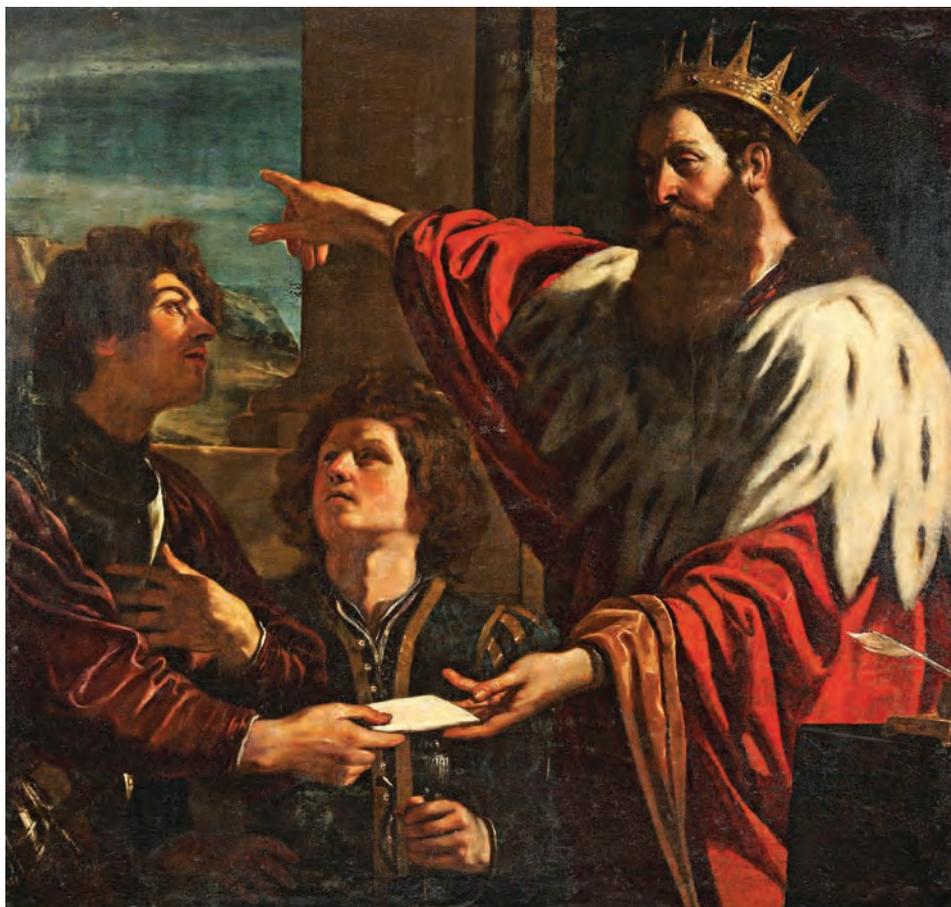
Significantly, it is after these events that the Scripture then turns to David, describing how he defeated Goliath of the Philistines when still a young man. Repeatedly, when speaking to Saul, David humbly describes himself as "your servant" (1Sam. 17:34ff). He asks for the privilege of going up against the Philistine champion, trusting all the while to the Lord for the outcome: "The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine" (1Sam. 17:37). And it was because this Philistine was taunting the armies of the living God (vs. 36) that David was motivated to volunteer. He was more concerned about the name and reputation of the Lord than he was about himself or his own safety.

Later, when Saul is pursuing him in the wilderness, he had the opportunity of doing to Saul what Saul was seeking to do to him. His men see this as providential: "Behold this is the day of which the Lord said to you, 'Behold; I am about

to give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you'" (1Sam. 24:4). But David refuses to raise his hand against the Lord's anointed (vs. 6). Instead, in a poignant echo of the incident with Samuel, David secretly reaches out and cuts the edge of Saul's robe. He then appeals to the king, showing the cloth as evidence that he could have harmed him but refused to do so (vs. 8-11).

Later, in 2 Samuel 1, when David learns of Saul's death from and at the hand of an Amalekite, his judgement is swift: "How is it that you were not afraid to stretch out your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?" "Your blood is on your own head, for your mouth has testified against you, saying, 'I have killed the Lord's anointed'" (2Sam. 1:14,16).

In summary, David was "better than Saul" because Saul was more interested in himself and his own position than he was in the Lord and in obeying the voice of the Lord. By contrast, David was a man of faith, trusting in God to deliver him from his and the Lord's enemies. He refused to take the kingdom by force. He refused to rebel against the Lord's anointed. And he was driven by the Lord's interests and purposes rather than his own.



*King David Presents a Letter to Uriah. Giovanni Francesco Barbieri (Il Guercino), 17<sup>th</sup> century.*

“When confronted with his sin, there was no denial, no self-justification or excuse making, and there was no discernible pride and arrogance in David.”

## Worship and the House of God

Because of his love for God (Ps. 18:2), David constantly expressed thankfulness to God for his gifts and praise of his wonders (Ps. 26:6,7). More than any other king of Israel, David loved to worship God and to encourage the worship of God. He sponsored many court musicians to compose music for the house of God (1Chronicles 25), and himself wrote many of the psalms that have been taken up into the collection. Since this will be dealt with more fully in another article, I'll leave this aspect of David's life here. Suffice it to say that even at the end of his life, David was more concerned about the house of God than his own house (2Sam. 7:1-7), and left to his son Solomon many of the blueprints and materials that would later be used to construct the temple. In fact, zeal for the house of God consumed him, and this was something that Jesus' disciples remembered when they saw first-hand evidence of the Lord's own zeal for the house of God (Ps. 69:9, John 2:17).

## Repentance

Finally, we return to David's sins, which at times were grievous and terrible. When Nathan the prophet confronted him, David freely confessed what he has

done (2Sam. 12:13). Moreover, he went on to write some of the most beautiful and profound expressions of sorrow and repentance that we have in the entire Bible (cf. Pss. 51, 32, 130). We see in David a broken and a contrite heart (Ps. 51:17) and the confidence that the Lord will not despise such a person. When confronted with his sin, there was no denial, no self-justification or excuse making, and there was no discernible pride and arrogance in David. There was only godly sorrow and a turning to God for his mercy and grace. David's words have been a blessing to countless generations of believers who, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, come to grieve over their own sin and who find comfort in the Lord and in his mercy. Where would we be without the psalms of David?

In this connection, John Owen writes of David, in his wonderful exposition of Psalm 130 –

*Under the Old Testament none loved God more than he; none was loved of God more than he. The paths of faith and love wherein he walked are unto the most of us like the way of an eagle in the air, – too high and hard for us. Yet to this very day do the cries of this*

*man after God's own heart sound in our ears. Sometimes he complains of broken bones, sometimes of drowning depths, sometimes of waves and water-spouts, sometimes of wounds and diseases, sometimes of wrath and the sorrows of hell; everywhere of his sins, the burden and trouble of them. Some of the occasions of his depths, darkness, we all know. As no man had more grace than he, so none is a greater instance of the power of sin, and the affects of its guilt upon the conscience, than he.<sup>1</sup>*

Again, it is because David knew and loved God so much (Ps. 139) and because he had such a profound respect and appreciation of God's commandments, that he also knew and expressed so poignantly the horror of his sin and guilt after transgressing his Lord's commandments. He saw his sin as disloyalty, a terrible betrayal of the God who loved him and whom he loved. Only a man after God's own heart could do this.

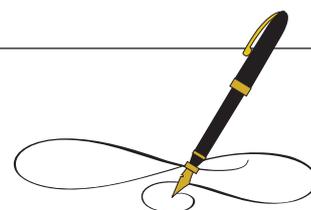
<sup>1</sup> *Collected Works of John Owen, Banner of Truth Trust, Vol. 6, p. 333*

*Mr Michael Flinn is an emeritus minister and a member of the Reformed Church of Palmerston North.*

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## Outward focus

Sally Davey



# “Safe” or compassionate?

New Zealand is a wonderfully secure little place, or so it seems... Here we are, tucked away at the bottom of the world, sea all around us and with friendly neighbours to boot. We're too small and too unimportant to annoy anybody else; and with too few valuable resources to attract hostile attention. We do not make significant contributions to the military campaigns of our western allies, so there is little to put us on the radars of the world's rogue powers. It's

this that makes us, at times, the envy of those living in the world's hot spots. As one friend living on the frontline of the conflict in eastern Ukraine wrote to me shortly after the terrorist attacks in Paris: “At the moment I feel as safe as anywhere in the world – except maybe New Zealand...”

We seem to have the luxury of deciding whether or not to withdraw from the dangerous situations that life in the modern world presents. For some

people, withdrawal is not an option – their geographical location means they are in a hot spot whether they like it or not. Central Europeans have refugees from Syria and Iraq clamouring on their doorstep; western Europeans and Americans face pressure to accept more migrants into their prosperous economies. This has ultimately made their large cities vulnerable to terrorist attacks. They face pressure from worried citizens demanding a halt to immigration.

“Ultimately, nowhere is “safe”, so we should stop idolising safety in this world.”

There is something pricking at the consciences of westerners, though. Despite the impulse to put up the barricades and keep all those “potential terrorists” [ie Muslim immigrants] out, the desire to be compassionate to the poor and obviously needy is there. In fact, most westerners find themselves hard-pressed to decide what to do. Should we pull up the drawbridge and keep ourselves safe, or should we reach out and help, even though we are exposing ourselves to risk?

Christians of all people have reason to face this question squarely. Jesus Christ

has commanded us to go out into all nations – including the most hostile and dangerous ones – and to reach out, even to the most despised and violent in our midst. Christ himself modelled a ministry of mercy to the needy; and countless faithful Christians have followed his lead. Throughout the history of the church hospitals, schools, orphanages and the like have been a very important means of bringing the gospel to those who do not yet believe.

But the tension between safety and compassion is something that Christians inevitably have to face. Missionaries who have followed Christ into dangerous situations have sometimes paid the ultimate price with their own lives. Jim Elliot, Nate Saint and their three friends who sought to bring the gospel to the fierce Auca Indians in Ecuador met their deaths in 1956 at the hands of those same Indians. They left young wives and small children behind. One of those wives, Elisabeth Elliot, together with the sister of Nate Saint, later went into Auca territory to live – with Valerie, Jim and Elisabeth’s small daughter. Elisabeth faced quite some criticism from American Christians for exposing her daughter to the obvious dangers. God

used their courageous witness, however, and Auca Indians eventually came to embrace Christ and Auca churches were established.

Ever since the days of the apostles Christians have risked their lives and all they own for the gospel’s sake. Sometimes violent people have presented the dangers; at other times it has been the rigours of a tropical climate, or disease, or a hostile and repressive government. To us, in our safe place, these Christians surely number among those “of whom the world was not worthy” (Hebrews 11:38). But as Jim Elliot famously said: “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”

All of us are faced with choices when we see some great need in the world, and meeting it would expose us and our families to physical danger. Christian compassion or personal safety – which should win out? On the safety side comes the need to protect young children or more vulnerable women. If we head off overseas, are we neglecting elderly parents? There are many things to consider. They are probably what the apostle Paul had in mind when he wrote to the Corinthians that unmarried men, like him, were in the blessed position



of being able to serve Christ without the burdens of earthly considerations.<sup>1</sup>

Recent Christian responses to the Syrian refugee crisis and the recent Paris terrorist attacks have dwelled on the tension we all feel. Kevin DeYoung, whose insights are usually very helpful, urged caution on the subject of immigration. Policy, he thinks, must be based on more than an appeal to compassion. The issue of immigration, he wrote in a recent blog post, is complex. It is likely to be a pressing concern for years to come, and to pit security against appeals to humanity is overly simplistic. He suggests that we need to pay more than a quick nod to the issue of security. Is it unchristian, he asks, to not want jihadists shooting people in our neighbourhoods? Would Christian mercy in some cases take a more appropriate form as humanitarian aid to refugee camps, or protecting safe havens in war-torn countries?<sup>2</sup> These are good questions.

Russell Moore, President of the Ethics and Religious Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, comes down squarely on the side of compassion, for gospel reasons. He warns in *The Washington Post* that while “it is completely right to ensure that the United States have a strong process to discern who are truly refugees and who are trying to take advantage of refugees”, American Christians cannot “be the people who turn our back on the mission field”. He notes that it is “one thing to have disagreement about whether the vetting process is adequate. It is quite another to seek to permanently turn our backs on Syrian refugees altogether... We cannot love our neighbours at the same time as we’re standing aside and watching them being slaughtered... We cannot forget our brothers and sisters in peril. And we cannot seal ourselves off from our mission field. An entire generation of those fleeing genocide will be asking whether there is an alternative to the toxic religion they’ve seen.”<sup>3</sup>

Caleb Greggson, a member of Third Avenue Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, writes that fear, even the fear inspired by terrorism, may be the very thing God uses to strip away our confidence in this world. In reminding us that terrorism – shooting in restaurants, shopping malls and concerts – are an attack on normal life, he stresses that we are not in fact “safe” anywhere in the world. Physical safety is “so illusory, so fleeting.” It is true: Ecclesiastes tells us again and again that our lives are

brief. The apostle James instructs us to plan our lives on the basis that none of it will happen unless God wills it (James 4:13-14). Greggson urges us to remember that our only safety is in Christ; and that we need to place our hope in the heavenly city – not in this world. “Brothers and sisters, we’ve always lived in a dangerous world... Even if you could flee the places that seem most dangerous, death and tragedy could still overtake you there. That’s why Jesus exhorts us not to fear those who can destroy the body, but only him who can destroy both body and soul.” (Matthew 10:28)<sup>4</sup>

All of these words, posted within the space of four days in late November, are helpful. They offer warnings and encouragement, but do suggest that we should count the cost without letting the cost deter us.

What are some considerations for evangelical believers in New Zealand, at the present time? It’s true that we seem to face fewer dangers here than many Christians do in other parts of the world; though we are often warned that terrorists could endanger our cinemas and shopping malls, too. There again, we are keen travellers, and arrive at and depart from international airports like the rest of the world. But ultimately, nowhere is “safe”, so we should stop idolising safety in this world.

It would also be good to find ways to bring the gospel to those refugees who will arrive on our shores. They will need to see that Christians really do care about their situation, and the horrors they have seen. Many will have noticed that the Muslim world is not offering them much – what will we offer? What is our alternative world view – and how does it apply to their situation? Are we ready and willing to explain it and to demonstrate its truth by showing them kindness?

At the very least, we can be generous in giving to those suffering from war and homelessness in the hot spots of the world. In the time of the early church, Christians gave help to believers in need in other cities – even in faraway places. The needs, and the opportunities, are the same today. Churches exist even in some of the most dangerous places in the world, and courageous missionaries and pastors of local churches are often very encouraged by the help and concern and prayers of believers in distant places. It tells them they are not forgotten; and that the Lord’s arm is long. And in the end, you will always find that those who give generously will speak of the

joy they find in doing good to others, and thereby striving to bring honour to God. I’m reminded of Paul’s well-known words to the Corinthian Christians, who collected gifts for the needy in the church in Jerusalem:

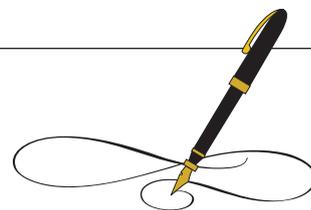
...whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. (2 Corinthians 9:6)

## Notes

- 1 See 1 Corinthians 7:25ff.
- 2 Kevin DeYoung, “Immigration Policy Must Be Based on More than an Appeal to Compassion,” <http://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/kevin-deyoung/2015/11/17/immigration-policy-mus...> Accessed 23/11/2015
- 3 Russell Moore, “Stop Pitting Security and Compassion against Each Other in the Syrian Refugee Crisis”, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/11/19/stop-pitting-security...> Accessed 23/11/2015
- 4 Caleb Greggson, “When Terrorism Works,” [www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/when-terrorism-works](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/when-terrorism-works) Accessed 23/11/2015

## The Thought of God – Maurice Roberts – Pgs.134-136

We must not only watch our weaknesses, but our strengths as well. The vices of our virtues are more generally harmful to the cause of Christ than our observed vices ... . It goes without saying also that wise leadership should always realise that it is capable of carrying a good thing too far and giving a handle unwittingly to the common adversary of our souls. Our universal folly as sinners is to become too much like ourselves, to the point where we love ourselves even for our own extremes. But this is an infirmity, and one which Satan will assuredly exploit to hurt the general cause of Christ. A paraffin lamp gives a tolerably good light if the wick is adjusted correctly. But if the wick is turned up too far it sends forth only smoke. Even so do our strong points help our brothers and sisters greatly. But, if strained and stretched too far, our helpful emphases only darken the fellowship and offend the believers. Happy are we if we distrust our own hearts enough to accept correction from those who love us in the Lord.



# Suffering well

Several years ago, my mother received the news we all dreaded – that the tests she had taken revealed cervical cancer. She completed a course of radiation and this stemmed her illness for 2 more years. Throughout her ordeal, my mum firmly placed her trust in the Lord. She hoped she would live many years and yet she also looked forward to being with her Lord and Saviour. Sadly, for us, the cancer returned but she suffered “well” until the day the Lord took her home.

The Bible has a lot to say about suffering after the Fall, but very importantly, God shows us how we are to suffer, from His point of view, and how to suffer “well”. Suffering *will* happen to us but God, who never leaves us nor forsakes us, gives us the Holy Spirit to guide and

assist us through trials and troubles, by pointing us to Christ and His Word.

A missionary in Argentina for many years said “We need to teach [Christians] to suffer.”<sup>1</sup> In today’s world, many people believe that their lives should not contain suffering and they do everything they can to eliminate any possibility of discomfort and pain. However, no one can escape suffering in this fallen world, whether it is through sickness, a difficult birth, losing employment, death of a loved one, childlessness, broken relationships, war and sexual abuse, to name a few of the severe trials that may come our way. As Christians we also come under attack for our faith, yet we can learn how to deal with suffering and trials from Scripture.

## **Example of Christ**

Jesus Christ, whilst here on earth, lived a life that was filled with difficulty, struggle, physical and spiritual pain. He came in humility and was willing to do His Father’s will, to the point of death. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus asked for the cup [a symbol of God’s judgement] to be taken from Him but ... only if that was His Father’s will.<sup>2</sup> Jesus Christ suffered, but He was obedient to his father. He trusted that His Father knew what needed to be done, for you and me, and He was willing to do whatever He was asked to do. “In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from



death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.”<sup>3</sup> Jesus cried out to His Heavenly Father in prayer, whom He knew was able to save Him from death, but He was determined to be totally obedient to His Father’s will.

### **Purpose in Christ**

We, too, learn obedience, through suffering. James says we are to “count it all joy, brothers [sisters, fellow believers] when we meet trials of various kinds.”<sup>4</sup> I have to admit that this is something I need to work on. In hindsight, I can see that the various trials I have been through have strengthened my faith, given me hope to take me through other trials (because other trials have and will come!) and helped me to trust in my Lord Jesus more and more. But joy? Isn’t that a bit much? Because some of those trials have been really difficult. James goes on to say, “for the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” As we become steadfast in our faith because of the trials of various kinds that come our way, we know the joy of acknowledging God’s work in our lives. The Apostle Paul puts it this way, “we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”<sup>5</sup> Suffering will happen, however, but we may rejoice and count it all joy because we know that God is working His good purposes out in our lives.

When we look at suffering from the vantage point of confidence in God’s sovereignty we can be sure that what has befallen us is for a purpose. Sometimes we do not see the reason for the trial until many years later. Recently, I was counselling a young woman and she said that I seemed so understanding. I said to her, “Honey, it’s because I have walked in your boots!” I did not know that when I went through a very traumatic period in my life that I would be used by God to help someone else, but I remember thinking at the time, “There has to be a reason for this!” There are many good reasons for all our trials and suffering including endurance, character, hope!

Bethany Hamilton, who lost her arm

to a shark whilst surfing, wrote about when her mother was told what had happened to her. “My mom was crushed. All the work and effort we were putting into my future as a pro [surfer] seemed to her, at that moment, to be washed away. Still, in spite of her tears and heartbreak, she had the presence of mind to turn on a worship CD [as she drove to the hospital] and sing along with it. Through her tears and pain, she praised God and told him that in spite of everything, He was in control. I was in His hands.”<sup>6</sup>

Bethany has been able to share her Christian faith with thousands of people with whom she may never have had contact without her accident.

David wrote many psalms about his suffering and trials, calling on God for help in his hour of need. In 1 Samuel, from chapter 18 onwards, David was pursued by King Saul for around 10 years. During that time of being on the run for his life, David suffered tremendous hardship but was ever trusting God to rescue him, because God was his rock and salvation. On two occasions, David had the opportunity to kill Saul and yet, each time, he acted in a godly manner and refused to destroy God’s anointed one or put his hand out against him. In these actions, we see that David restrained himself so that he acted in a way that pleased God. Later on, David returned to Ziklag to find the Amalekites had made a raid against the town, burnt it and carried off all the women and children. The men who were with him wept until they could weep no more. “And David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in soul, each for his sons and daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.”<sup>7</sup> This is one of the reasons David is called a “man after God’s own heart.” He “strengthened himself in the Lord his God” at a time of great distress. Though he was suffering greatly, rather than becoming bitter in soul like the rest of the men, he put his trust in the Lord.

As we go through trials and times of trouble, we too can strengthen ourselves in the Lord our God, through prayer and continuing to do good so that we suffer in a godly manner.

### **Prayer**

Spend time in prayer, just as Jesus did throughout his life here on earth, gaining strength from God our Father. In the Psalms, the writers poured out their hearts honestly and earnestly. They didn’t

“Despite the trials and troubles we go through, we need to continue to do good according to God’s will, and to give glory to him.”

put on a veneer of joy and happiness when their souls were being torn apart. They asked the hard questions. “Why?” and “How long?” On many a long night, my mother also asked these questions. At times, she would wake up, anxious and full of trouble. She poured out her heart to God and received his peace and comfort, knowing that the God of her salvation was ever present, and that he had a good purpose(s) for the trial she was going through. (One of them being that she comes to mind when I think of someone suffering well.) As we see in Hebrews 5:7, “Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears”. Jesus knew His Father was able to lift the heavy burden from Him, but He chose to do His Father’s will even when His Father’s plan was for Him to die. Prayer helps us to see things from God’s perspective rather than from our small, narrow point of view. Prayer allows the Holy Spirit’s comfort and peace to pervade our spirits. We are able to move from looking at our circumstances to focusing on the Lord, the Creator and Sustainer of life. It also helps us to cherish Christ, and the life he has given us through his suffering, and to look forward to the day where there will be no more mourning or crying nor pain.<sup>8</sup>

### **Continue to do good**

Paul Grimmond writes, “God’s purpose in Christ was not just to forgive us (as wonderful as that is) but also to trans-

form us into new people who love the deeds of light rather than the deeds of darkness. ... God grants us the incredible privilege of living in such a way that we bring glory to him. That's why, when Peter writes to those suffering persecution, he encourages them to keep doing good. 'Therefore, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.'"<sup>9</sup>

Despite the trials and troubles we go through, we need to continue to do good according to God's will, and to give glory to him. This "doing good" includes both our attitude toward suffering and our actions; doing good to and for others. Our attitude is to be one of recognition that God is sovereign and is working out His plan for us, for His good purpose.<sup>10</sup> Our actions may encompass testifying to God's good work in our lives through these times of trials, and praying for others who are also struggling (and they may be struggling with the "why" of your suffering). We may also be able to help others by pointing them to Christ

and His suffering for them.

So how can we help someone who is going through a difficult time? Visit them, phone them, listen to them and pray for them. God can and does heal/relieve the suffering, so it is good and right to pray for this. His timing may be instantaneous, or it may take a while, or the burden may not be lifted until the day the Lord calls them home. Also pray *with* them. A suffering Christian is comforted when others share their burden of suffering through prayer. Encourage them to wait on the Lord. Read Scripture to them and offer them the solace of the word of God. The church is also built up as they gather together to pray to uphold a fellow brother or sister. Look for practical ways to help, like meals. Don't forget other needs of the person/family if the trial is prolonged, like shopping for toiletries and other non-food items, laundry, housecleaning, being a taxi service, or a mediator or an advocate for them.

Our God accomplishes his good pur-

poses in so many ways through one persons' suffering. Like Bethany Hamilton, through whom many lives have been touched as a result of one shark bite. Like my mum, who has touched many people's lives by her godly suffering.

God's ways are not like our ways. We may never see, this side of the new heavens and the new earth, the effect that our suffering in a godly manner has; and yet His way for our lives is for our good, for others' good and, most importantly, for His glory.

1 *Suffering Well*, by Paul Grimmond (Matthias Media), p153

2 Matthew 26:36-46

3 Hebrews 5:7-8

4 James 1:2-4

5 Romans 5:3-5

6 *Soul Surfer*, by Bethany Hamilton (Pocket Books), p91

7 1 Samuel 30:6

8 Revelation 21:4

9 1 Peter 4:12-19

10 2 Timothy 1:10

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## Missions in focus

# Africa, Armenia and France: Via radio through Word and witness

### John van Dyk

His roots are in Armenia; his homeland is in France and he spent the last 26 years living in South Africa. Now Rev. Eric Kayayan and his wife, both of whose citizenship is in heaven, have returned to France, yet his voice can be heard in a number of countries throughout the continent of Africa, France as well as Quebec, via the technology of radio and internet.

Travelling to Canada at the end of September to meet with the Board that oversees his work, the 55 year old minister, whose affiliation is with the Reformed Churches of South Africa, sat down over coffee with Christian Renewal to discuss

his ministry (two distinct ministries, actually), and to share an initiative that he hopes will eventually provide the complete Bible in the Armenian language, for the general population.

Rev. Kayayan's two outreach ministries include his radio ministry to French speaking lands, called Reformed Faith and Life, and a ministry begun by his father, the late Rev. Aaron Kayayan (who was born in Greece, the son of refugees from the 1915 genocide perpetrated against Christian Armenians by the Ottoman Turks). His father's heart orientation was toward the people of this struggling and war torn land, and this is shared by the son. Although Rev. Eric Kayayan does not speak the

Armenian language (his strengths are both French and English), his father's voice continues to resound, seven years after his death, on Armenian radio via recorded broadcasts. Still, Rev. Eric Kayayan is involved via Christians for Armenia in promoting and preparing Reformed materials in the common parlance of his father's native land, and he also has a special project to promote – the publication of the New Testament in the Eastern Armenian language. Rev. Kayayan explains, "We are comparing it carefully to the Greek sources for the New Testament as far as the old 5th century Armenian version is concerned, the whole of the Old Testament was translated from the

Greek Septuagint, therefore not from the original Hebrew.”

It’s an ambitious task, yet Rev. Kayayan and those involved in the work, seem up to the challenge. But they do need help. The cost in any work such as this, must be borne by many hands, and churches that may be looking for a cause to embrace and support are welcome to sign up.

Eastern Armenian is spoken in Armenia while Western Armenia is the language of the dispersion, Kayayan explained.

Armenia is a country in flux. According to Kayayan, there may be less than 3 million people left in a land that is struggling financially and economically. The result is that many of its citizens move to Russia – enticed by the Russian government – to find gainful employment.

Whatever the exact numbers, for Kayayan, it is about getting the Word in Armenian that is as close to the original as possible.

“We are moved by a vision to bring the Word to the people,” he says. His father Aaron had prepared a translation of Scripture and that is being used as a resource, and “the fifth century Armenian Bible is no longer functional,” says Kayayan. It was a version of the New Testament in the Syriac language, and only the Septuagint portion of the Bible had been translated.

By next year he hopes to have three Bible books ready – John, Acts and Romans – along with a collection of Psalms. He has also received permission

to use the “notes from the RC Sproul Reformation Bible. “We have permission. We want a source translation, not a paraphrase,” he explains, since many paraphrases already are available.

This means that the translation team will be drawing from the original languages in their effort to produce a Bible in Armenian that will reach most Armenians.

“We want them to read the Bible in their own language,” but they need financial backing from churches and individuals to do it.

In Armenia, “there is a lot of money to build large temples and nice robes for the priests and bishops, but not for this,” he said. “We need to secure funding. After two years of struggle, we have a small team to carry on with this work.”

He said that \$3,750 (U.S.) is the quarterly cost estimate, which is a separate budget from the other ministry work Rev. Kayayan is engaged in.

Translation work is not new to Reformed Faith and Life. It goes hand in hand with their other work of spreading the Gospel. The team in place has translated a number of Reformed books including a work on Apologetics in Armenian as well as a book published by the RCUS (Reformed Church in the United States) on human sexuality. Also in the works is a book being written by Rev. Mark Vander Hart on Genesis 1-11 that is scheduled to come out this year. The books are freely distributed by the ministry.

### New location

His other ministry work continues apace, but now with his headquarters in France instead of South Africa, the Kayayans are adjusting to their renewed situation in this highly secularised country.

Pastor Kayayan says that the move back to France was made possible with an initiative in place that would see African ministers begin to write scripts for the radio ministry that he was once solely responsible for.

“We want Reformed pastors in the Congo to begin writing scripts so that Africans begin to speak to Africans. We’re beginning to train African ministers to take over this work,” he told CR.

“We are into a program of coaching pastors, but we are in the very initial phases. It is a way to empower African Reformed pastors to take over and take responsibility for radio ministry,” said Kayayan, even though he will continue for the time being to read the material



after it is vetted and approved for use.

Back in France for a year now, Rev. Kayayan says he “can devote more of my time in France for the French people.

“The goal of returning to France, which I did last year, is in order to have a media ministry with internet, with Facebook, with Twitter, with all the social media, also radio and videos, to teach so that tenets of our Reformed faith will be made known as they are in the midst of great secularism” in France.

While evangelicals in the country are in the minority, he does see a shifting at work among evangelicals toward the doctrines of grace.

“I believe there is a movement to understand what total depravity is, to understand what is God’s sovereignty, perhaps a moving away from dispensationalism and a realisation that Pentecostalism is not the answer to the question of evangelization in France.”

Along with the overwhelming wave of secularism in France, the ever-spreading advance of Islam and a rising interest in the Reformed faith among evangelicals, perhaps the country is ripe for reformation. And perhaps in God’s sovereign and gracious providence, Pastor Kayayan and wife Olga are in the right place at the right time.

*Mr John van Dyk is the Editor of Christian Renewal.*

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*Editor’s Note: Since this article was published a church in Michigan has agreed to fund the Armenian Bible translation project for four years. Yet the need for funding for other translation work along with the radio ministry is ongoing.*



Eric Kayayan

# By faith the walls of the church went up!

The building of the church is a work of God in which we participate by faith. Faith looks to the future for God to fulfil his certain promises<sup>1</sup>. By faith, we see our Lord at work in the spiritual growth of grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ within the church<sup>2</sup>. We may be blessed at times to see the ingathering of God's people<sup>3</sup> and to observe the construction of church buildings which facilitate the worship of our Lord and which also support the ministries of word and deed into the world around us.

Whilst we know that our Lord has promised to build His Church<sup>4</sup>, God has not revealed the details of his will for our local churches. Following the February 2011 earthquake, which rendered the church building of the Reformed Church of Christchurch at Cornwall Street unusable, the congregation wrestled with the question of whether this local church was viable. After much prayer, consultation and meetings, the decision was made to rebuild at the original site. This was an exercise of faith, hoping for the Lord's blessing, not

being sure about how the process would unfold, but trusting that our God is fully in control and knowing that Christ gives good gifts to his church<sup>5</sup>.

Demolition of the old building took place in August 2015 and the site was cleared in preparation for the rebuild. In September, 162 wooden piles were driven down through the softer ground to rest on an underlying bed of gravel in order to provide the new building with a firm footing. After boxing and careful positioning of reinforcing rods and mesh, in November a thick 642sq meter pad was then poured using a total of 280 cubic meters of concrete. Pre-fabricated tilt-slab technology enabled the walls of the new octagonal auditorium at Cornwall Street to be craned into place onsite in less than a day!

As the Christchurch congregation continues to live by faith, and not by sight, please pray that the rebuild work would continue to completion and that worship would once again resume at the original church site in Cornwall Street. We hope



to be back there by springtime next year, God willing. The Lord has been blessing us mightily in recent times as we have witnessed seven young people profess their faith, a number of new members and regular visitors and a visibly growing love for the Lord and His people within the congregation. The Lord is building His church! It is our privilege and joy to be blessed to join him in his work.

For more information about the rebuild of the church at Cornwall Street, visit our website: <http://rcnz.org.nz/christchurch/rebuild/>

*Pastor David Waldron  
Reformed Church of Christchurch  
63 Cornwall Street  
St Albans*

### Notes

- 1 Hebrews 11:1
- 2 2 Peter 3:18
- 3 e.g. Zechariah 8:23
- 4 e.g. Matthew 16:18
- 5 Ephesians 4:18

*On Lord's Day 13th December in Reformed Church of Christchurch seven young people professed their faith. (From left to right) Jacob Dirkze, Beth Chapman, Jessica Posthuma, Vashiti Waldron, Renee Posthuma, Jono Reinders and Aaron de Vries.*



## **Short report of the Auckland presbytery – 13<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

The Auckland Presbytery met on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> of November at the Reformed Church of Pukekohe and all the churches were represented by at least two delegates. The Rev John Rogers opened the meeting by reading John 15:1-11, explaining it and leading in prayer. The Rev Leo de Vos led the meeting as the designated chairman.

The Rev Michael Willemse gave a positive report about the Men's Presbytery Day held in Hamilton in July 2015. The meeting was attended by about 90 men and went very well. The Reformed Church of Avondale was appointed to host the Men's Presbytery Day in 2016 and a suggestion was made regarding a speaker.

Two vicars were present at the meeting: Mr Ryan Sparks serving in Bucklands Beach and Mr Albert Couperus serving in Hamilton. The preliminary Presbytery exam for Ryan Sparks will take place DV on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> of February 2016 in the evening in Bucklands Beach, and that of Albert Couperus on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2016 in Hamilton.

All the church visitations for 2015 had been conducted and positive written reports had been circulated on each of these. There was some discussion on two points arising out of these.

It was noted that most of the home visits in most of the churches were being conducted by one elder rather than two and some delegates pointed out that historically home visits have been conducted by two elders. The benefits of this practice include encouraging each other to conduct visits, accountability in visiting and reporting, learning from other elders as well as mentoring young and new elders, getting to know your fellow elders as you drive to and from a home visit, and that two heads are better than one in dealing with questions or problems that may arise. These points were received for information.

The other matter concerned sourcing

sermons for reading services. In the past elders generally read sermons from the *Word of Salvation* but this is no longer published. Now elders use back issues of *Word of Salvation* or they download sermons from various Reformed websites including the RCNZ, the CRCA, the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the Seed, the GKSA (requiring translation), and others. One delegate said their elders selected sermons from men who in principle would be eligible to preach on our pulpits, ie., confessional, but also urged caution as some sermons can be very exegetical, technical and long! All this was received for information.

Mr John Kaijser has served as the presbytery liaison for the Auckland Regional Youth Work Committee (ARYC) for past six years and had asked to be relieved of his position. The Pukekohe session nominated Mr Jeremy Posthuma to replace him and this was approved.

The Rev Dirk van Garderen reported on National Diaconate matters and was reappointed as the presbytery liaison for 2016. Mr Don Petchell was appointed as the liaison to the OMB subject to his consent.

Presbytery adjourned for another delicious supper provided by Mrs Ally Kloeg, a highlight of every presbytery meeting held in Pukekohe!

Upon reconvening the Pukekohe session raised a question about investigating a church planting work in Tauranga as they now have a few country members in that city. Various suggestions were made about this including gathering a list of contacts of those who may be interested, beginning with a Bible study, beginning with worship services, conducting a feasibility study, and/or having a person in the city for a month to explore this possibility. The Pukekohe session will consider all these suggestions, begin to gather contacts, and come back to the presbytery about this matter at a subsequent meeting.

The chairman noted that Rev Peter Moelker had accepted a call to an OPC church in California but anticipated that he will still be present at our next meeting in February as immigration procedures into the USA can take some

months. Formal farewells and documentation were left till then. The meeting was closed with prayer at 10.15 pm.

**Reporter: Rev John Haverland**

## **Short Report of the South Island Presbytery – November 2015**

Br Paul Bakker opened with a reading from Colossians 1:1-14 and highlighted God's great and gracious work in the church at Colossae together with the faithful and devoted work of Epaphras. It is evident that the blessings spoken of were as a result of the centrality of Christ in the life of the church.

Presbytery decided to ratify an earlier letter sent to the churches proposing the appointment of new members to the Overseas Mission Board. The board is in transition from the Wellington Presbytery to a national board centred in Christchurch. The South Island Presbytery had been charged by the 2014 synod to appoint new members in consultation with the other presbyteries and the OMB. The expanded board draws from brethren with a wide range of skills and experience. Churches represented include North Shore, Avondale, Hamilton, Masterton, Hastings, Bishopdale and Dovedale, with a potential complement of 15 members. It was recognised that there would be value in streamlining the board and a desire was expressed to eventually reduce the board's size to 10-12 members. The OMB representative also reported on progress towards the appointment of a compound manager and fundraising for a required house.

In response to a report from the Rev Bruce Hoyt, counsellor for the Reformed Church of Oamaru, that church was given encouragement and specific advice regarding their calling process.

Church visitation reports in respect of the Reformed Churches of Dovedale, Christchurch and Nelson were received with thankfulness. All showed evidence of the Lord's blessing in the respective churches.

Reports of a very profitable Labour Weekend Youth Camp were heard with gladness.

A discussion was held on the possibil-

ity of churches assisting Syrian refugees.

Delegates were informed of a planned visit on 4-6 December from Dr Murray Capill to inform of planned structural

changes at the Reformed Theological College.

**John van Dyk**

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## World in focus

### Population up, number of undernourished down

by Jon Dykstra

Even as the population of the world continues to grow, the number of hungry people is dropping. According to the United Nations' report *State of Food Insecurity*, over the last 25 years the number of undernourished has dropped 216 million, from over a billion people, down to 795 million. During this same period the world population has increased 1.9 billion.

The greatest drops occurred in East Asia and Latin America where, over the last quarter century, the number of undernourished people has been cut in half.

But in Africa the number of hungry people went up, from 182 million in 1990-1992 to an estimated 232 million today.

The report notes that the countries in Africa where advances are being made are primarily those that have "enjoyed stable political conditions" even though many of these same countries "have experienced high population growth rates."

This shows that hunger reduction can be achieved even where populations are increasing rapidly, if adequate policy and institutional conditions are put in place.

While 795 million undernourished people represents progress it is still a huge number and more needs to be done. But if continued progress is going to be made, the problem has to be properly understood. Too often poverty is blamed on overpopulation. But as we learn from the Bible, and as this report echoes, the having of children is not the cause of poverty – poverty can go down even as population goes up if there are stable political conditions in a country. Instead of targeting pregnancy in our fight against poverty our attention would be better

spent fighting governmental corruption and incompetence, and taking in refugees from countries destroyed by war.

### Swedish court says Christian midwife 'must do abortions'

A court in Sweden has ruled against a Christian midwife who was denied employment because she would not perform abortions.

In its ruling, the District Court of Jönköping reportedly stated that the issue of freedom of conscience should only be looked at when a person is not religious.

Ellinor Grimmark took legal action after three separate medical clinics refused her work because of her conscientious objection to carrying out abortions.

### Public stand

In November 2013, a job offer from a women's clinic was withdrawn after she told them her views, and the head of the maternity ward questioned "whether a person with such views actually can become a midwife".

A few months later a similar incident occurred at a different clinic, and in 2014 a job offer at another hospital was withdrawn because Grimmark had filed a complaint against the first clinic.

The head of this hospital said that no employee was allowed to publicly stand against abortion.

### 'Fundamental human right'

Grimmark was represented in court by Scandinavian Human Rights Lawyers, which said the ruling is likely to be appealed.

Senior Legal Counsel Ruth Nordström pointed out that the court had not taken on board the European Convention on Human Rights with regard to freedom of conscience.

And fellow attorney Jörgen Olson

commented: "Freedom of conscience is a fundamental human right."

### 'Democratic society'

"To deny freedom of conscience to all health care workers in Sweden cannot be considered a measure necessary in a democratic society.

"Sweden has not shown in what way the country's health care system is so unique compared to the rest of Europe and neighbouring countries that it is impossible to grant Ellinor Grimmark a right to conscience", he added.

Religious liberty organisation *Alliance Defending Freedom* filed a brief in support of Grimmark, highlighting the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe which affirms that no one should be forced to carry out abortions.

### 'Desire to protect life'

Responding to the ruling, ADF lawyer Robert Clarke said: "The desire to protect life is what leads many midwives and nurses to enter the medical profession in the first place. Medical centers should respect that desire and conviction."

In the UK, the Abortion Act 1967 includes a conscientious objection clause allowing doctors and nurses to refuse to participate in abortions.

But last year, the UK Supreme Court ruled that two Roman Catholic midwives in Scotland did not have the right to avoid supervising staff involved in abortions.

The Court of Session in Edinburgh had ruled in favour of Mary Doogan and Connie Wood in 2013, but NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde appealed the decision.

[mychristiandaily.com.au](http://mychristiandaily.com.au)

### Tim Keller's infatuation with Catholic authors and practices

Many of America's most popular "evangelical" preachers are infatuated with Catholicism, as we have frequently doc-

umented. Consider Tim Keller, pastor of the Redeemer megachurch in New York City, head of the Redeemer City to City church planting network, and co-founder with D.A. Carson of The Gospel Coalition (council members include John Piper, Alistair Begg, Mark Dever, Moody Church pastor Erwin Lutzer, and Southern Baptists Russell Moore and Al Mohler). Keller has a huge influence by his writings via books and blogs, his books reaching the top ten of the New York Times bestseller list even in an apostate age. His love for Catholicism is evident in his book *The Reason for God* (2012), in which he quotes and refers to Catholic theologians and philosophers frequently, passionately, and non-critically. He includes Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox within

his definition of true Christians. Referring to the Apostles, Nicene, Chalcedonian, and Athanasian creeds, he says, "For our purposes, I'll define Christianity as the body of believers who assent to these great ecumenical creeds" (p117). In *The Reason for God*, Keller quotes Catholic philosopher Peter Kreeft, Catholic writer Mary Flannery O'Conner, Catholic mystic Simone Weil, Polish Catholic poet Czeslaw Milosz, and Catholic Archbishop Oscar Romero, whose doctrine Keller calls "orthodox" (p. 66). He also quotes from Malcolm Muggeridge, J.R.R. Tolkien, and G.K. Chesterton. Not one of these people hold to the one true gospel of grace alone without works. All of them trust in baptism and Rome's sacraments for salvation. Not surprisingly,

Keller promotes Catholic contemplative prayer. In 2009, his church taught "The Way of the Monk," encouraging Catholic monastic practices such as lectio divina, centering prayer, "silence," the "prayer rope," and the spiritual exercises of Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuits. In his lecture series *What Is Meditation?* Keller promotes the contemplative prayer techniques of four Catholic "saints": Loyola, Francis de Sales, John of the Cross, and Teresa of Avila. He says, "The best things that have been written are by Catholics during the Counter Reformation. Great stuff!" This lecture series was promoted on The Gospel Coalition website.  
+ *Way of Life Literature*

## Japan continues to shrink

by Jon Dykstra

For the fourth year in a row Japan's population has shrunk – down this last year by 215,000 – bringing it to levels it was last at in the year 2000. The government has warned that, at this rate, by 2060 the population will have shrunk from 127 million to just 87 million.

The biggest challenge concerns the proportion of youth to seniors. When we look at the numbers we find that Japanese citizens over 65 increased by 1 million, to a total of 33 million. But in just the last year the under 65 population shrunk by roughly 1.2 million.

For decades, the United Nations and other groups have warned against overpopulation, saying the planet couldn't handle more people and worldwide poverty and famine would occur. But this was an ideological, rather than empirical, position. It wasn't based on facts – poverty isn't caused by overpopulation but is more closely linked to wars, governmental corruption, and tyranny. This ideological position viewed children as more mouths to feed. Meanwhile God speaks of children as a blessing, and his cultural mandate (Genesis 1:28) directs us to see children as not just mouths that consume, but hands that produce and minds that create.

It is no coincidence that when the world spurns the blessing of children, as Japan has, a curse results: Japan is facing the problem of no longer having enough young people to care for parents and grandparents as they age.

SOURCE: Marcus Roberts' "Japanese Population: Welcome back to the year 2000!" posted to [www.mercatornet.com](http://www.mercatornet.com) May 6, 2015

First appeared in the June 2015 issue of *Reformed Perspective*, of which the author is Editor. Reproduced with permission.

## Letter to the editor

Dear Sir,

I find the back to back publication of the issues 'Singleness' and 'Wanted: Mature Young Men' problematic. While they each contained enlightening articles, publishing them serially was a mistake. The problem is that too often single women believe that all the good guys are either taken or fictional. So following an issue about singleness with one about the lack of mature young men inadvertently sends a message that it's the young men's fault. Assigning blame is not conducive to contentment which was a main message of the previous issue on singleness. As well as this, the message of the latter issue was severely undermined by the attempt at humour with the wanted poster on the front cover. The title also lacked sensitivity as it discourages those young men who are striving for maturity, and is easily laughed off by those young men who should read the articles.

A lack of maturity is a problem compounded by today's culture. Feminism tells us that women can do just as well as men, thank you very much. Feminists fight for power for women, to the point where in some cases women are 'outperforming, outearning and out-learning their male counterparts.'<sup>1</sup> If

we buy into the myth that women are somehow better or more mature than men, it does the opposite of building men up. 'There is something of a crisis in masculine identity out there. Blend that with mixed messages about what a man is supposed to do and be, and the result can be confusion and passivity.'<sup>2</sup> The negative focus on the lack of mature young men perpetuates the myth that our culture upholds.

We need to constantly remember that 'life isn't a competition, a cosmic matchup of boys versus girls. We need each other.'<sup>3</sup> As human beings we have all been created in God's image, with roles that complement each other, not compete.<sup>4</sup> Thus there should be a focus on teaching both girls and boys about biblical character leading to maturity, not just singling out the young men (no pun intended).

Sincerely,

**Jessica Kloosterman**

1 Candice Watters *The Trouble with Men is the Same Trouble With Women* March, 4, 2012 <[www.boundless.org](http://www.boundless.org)>.

2 Adam Holz *Where Have All the Good Men Gone – Young-Adult Fiction Edition #2*, November 12, 2012 <[www.boundless.org](http://www.boundless.org)>.

3 Candice Watters, above note 1.

4 Genesis 1&2.

## NZ flag referendum less credible than smacking referendum

Dec 14, 2015 | MCD EDITOR

Family First NZ, one of the promoters of the anti-smacking law referendum, says that the low turnout on the flag referendum shows that it has less relevance and credibility than the 2009 Citizens Initiated Referendum on smacking, and is calling for CIR's to be binding.

"Almost 1.7 million voters (56%) participated in a citizens initiated referendum on the anti-smacking law which was non-binding and which the government could ignore, but only 48% turned up for a government initiated referendum – which is automatically binding. The anti-smacking CIR also had to gain almost 300,000 signatures to even be

considered for a vote. This is a flaw with democracy in New Zealand when a stronger and more credible vote can be ignored simply because the government didn't initiate it," says Bob McCoskrie, National Director of Family First NZ.

"Labour and the Greens were frustrated when their asset sales referendum could also so easily be ignored. They should first be seeking to change the law so that referendums are binding on Governments. Doing this would also save millions of dollars of taxpayer money on pointless referendums with low public interest."

"Ironically, the Greens and Labour were treated the way they treated opponents of the anti-smacking law. And their protests sounded hypocritical. But John Key also sounds hypocritical because he ignored a people's referendum but his referendum is binding,"

says Mr McCoskrie.

"If important issues can pass the very high threshold of almost 300,000 valid signatures and then, for example, a greater-than-2/3'rds majority after a rigorous public debate, then Parliament should be bound by the result. Unfortunately politicians have been able to simply ignore the views of NZ'ers on issues such as law and order, parenting, and the number of MP's," says Mr McCoskrie.

"Government accountability should be able to happen regularly and on individual issues where there is high voter interest – not just once every three years."

(An independent poll of 1,000 people in 2011 found 2:1 support in favour of binding referenda. 53% favoured making CIR binding on Parliament, with 28% against and 19% unsure or refusing to say.)

+ *My Christian Daily*

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## Books in focus

### ***The Theology of the French Reformed Churches: From Henri IV to the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes***

edited by Martin I. Klauber

**Reformation Heritage Books,  
\$25.00. Reviewed by pastor and  
missionary Ben Westerveld**

Even Francophiles like me often suppose that French Reformed pastors, past and present, have little if anything to offer to Reformed theological reflection. How refreshing it is to read a collection of essays that place French-speaking theologians in the historical spotlight.

In this eleventh volume of the series Reformed Historical-Theological Studies, Martin I. Klauber has gathered together a variety of stimulating articles in an attempt to resurrect some of the vitality and richness of seventeenth-century French Reformed theology. "The period was an unusual one," notes Klauber, "in which France boasted two state religions, Roman Catholic and Protestant, due to the protections afforded the latter by the Edict of Nantes" (p.1).

The historical background of this nearly century-long period is explored in the first part of the book, while the second part develops various, and even

opposing, streams of Reformed theology and their theologians. The reader will find helpful appendixes providing excerpts of the Edict of Nantes (1598) and Edict of Fontainebleau (1685), revoking the freedom of Protestants in France, as well as a list of contributors, many of whom will be unknown to readers unfamiliar with French Reformed historical research. The selected biography of primary and secondary sources will permit the English reader to further his research. While the primary sources include many French titles that have not been translated into English, it would have been helpful to include the French bibliographical information of works already translated into English.

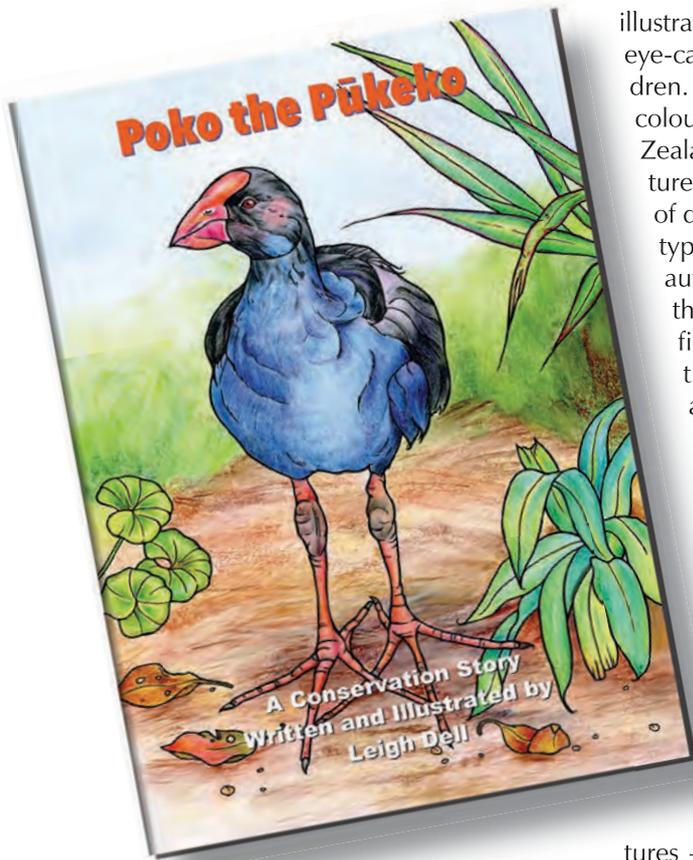
Anyone at all familiar with the seventeenth-century French Reformed Church will likely recall the theological controversies surrounding Amyraldianism and the persecution of the Huguenots. This collection of articles gives a fuller picture of the historical, theological, ecclesiastical, and even personal issues involved.

For instance, while the hypothetical universalism espoused by Moïse Amyraut is often condemned as heretical, Richard Muller demonstrates that his views were controversial, and even vigorously opposed by his Reformed colleagues,

but never condemned by the Reformed Church synod (pp. 197-216). Amyraut also made significant contributions to the apologetics of faith and science, as well as Christian morality.

With respect to the Huguenot persecution, several articles add personal touches to the often dry perception of the men of God who pastored churches during these years. On the one hand, many pastors like Andreas Rivetus had vivid memories of the bloody persecution and other dramatic events affecting the Huguenots, which "profoundly colored his identify and personality" (p. 254) as he sought the unity and peace of the church. Other pastors, such as Pierre Jurieu, who fled the increasing persecution just before the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, wrote a much-read treatise on Christian devotion "in the heart and closet – in places where the gaze of the king could not find it" (p. 346).

Pastors and teachers would benefit richly from reading even a selection of these articles. The discovery of Reformed theology put into practice in an unfamiliar historical context may open up new perspectives on how to teach and live the Reformed faith today.



illustrated this well-written and eye-catching story for young children. Using beautifully painted colour pictures of some of New Zealand's native animals, pictures which provide a quality of detail that goes beyond any typical children's book, the author invites us to join Poko the Pukeko on a mission to find out why so many of the animals of the forest are dying and what can be done about it. Along the way, Poko hears from various creatures including a hihi, tui, penguins, weta, snail, skink, and bush cricket.

The book points to human indifference and carelessness as one reason for concern that we are neglecting the care of God's creatures

– from leaving rubbish on the beach that is harmful to animals who may mistake it for food to lack of oversight of traditional pets like cats and dogs who can do much harm when unattended. However, the book is not simply concerned with pointing out areas of human neglect, but also helpfully puts forward ideas for how the young reader can be a faithful steward of God's creation and demonstrate care for all God's

creatures. From planting shrubs and trees that provide year-round fruit for native birds to encouraging the pulling out of weeds rather than the spraying of them with poison, the book gently points out ways that the reader can make a difference. One of the more intriguing aspects of this small book is the convening of a bird council which results in the birds expressing their concerns to God. In that the Psalmist reminds us that all creatures are dependent on God's care and that "these all look to you to give them their food at the proper time" (Ps.104:27), this book provides a helpful encouragement that if God Himself cares for and feeds the birds of the air (Matt.5:26), it would be most fitting for His people to evidence a similar concern.

**Pastor Peter Moelker, Reformed Church of Avondale.**

Are you looking for a children's book that encourages careful concern for how our choices impact God's amazing creatures? A new book published in 2015 by Christ in Education, based in Carterton, NZ, will provide some helpful food for thought. Leigh Dell, a member of the Reformed Church of Masterton has authored and

**The Thought of God – Maurice Roberts – Pg.175**

Friendship is good and necessary for us just as, in most cases, marriage is necessary. It corrects our angularity and rubs off our corners. The recluse is the first to fall into eccentricities. The more we are with ourselves the more we become like ourselves. It is only when we come back into the circle of our godly friends once again that we realize how awkward, or else opinionated, we have become as Christians. We all go astray 'like sheep', but we go astray less if we keep within the flock and refuse the temptation to wander off into solitary pastures where we are all on our own. This fact alone should have been enough to warn the early Christian ascetics against the monastic cell. But history shows that it was not. The monk's cell was the ideal situation for the development of quirks and crankish habits of spiritual character. Healthy Christian character, which is full-orbed, well-rounded and rich in good fruits can best be formed within the circle of sanctified friendships.



**Christ in Education Ltd**

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