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of New Zealand

# faith in focus

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# Editorial

Who are we? I can well imagine that if we were to ask that question of the average man on the street, he might have some difficulty answering it. How he would respond would depend on his philosophical outlook. And the reason I say that is because all men everywhere have some view about their origins and who they are.

Man's understanding of his origins and who he is deeply affects how he lives in this world. A good example of this is the person who believes that the origin of the universe is accounted for by evolutionary processes. In his view there is no God and there is no room for any deity to whom he must give an account. One staggering implication of this type of thinking is that man is really only an animal; and that the overarching law is the law of the jungle or survival of the fittest. This means that life has no intrinsic value, and the most vulnerable are then at risk. Does this explain the world-wide moral decay, especially in regard to sexuality and gender-neutering, the constant attack on the value of life of the unborn and the aged? These are just a few areas where the world, especially the Western world, is experiencing a paradigm shift from where it used to be.

The West used to believe that God, the I AM of the Bible, was the creator of the universe, and that life based on Him had order and security. Man used to believe that he was created in God's image in truth, knowledge, righteousness and holiness, and that life in fellowship with God, in His Son Jesus Christ made sense of his existence upon the earth. Life had value and was protected – especially in the case of the vulnerable. Statutes of most nations protected their citizens and punished evildoers for their crimes.

Political correctness has pretty much turned our world on its head. What is evil is called good, and what was good is called evil.

Our contributors look at what man is, and the implications of that.

Mr John Haverland looks at our image.

Mr Michael Willemse considers the rebellion of homosexuality.

Mr Albert Mohler issues a challenge to stand firm.

Mrs Sally Davey recommends a summary of complementarianism by Richard Phillips.

Orthodox Presbyterian pastor Mark A. Winder reviews *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary*, by G. K. Beale with David H. Campbell; OP minister and counselor John W. Mallin reviews *Developments in Biblical Counseling*, by J. Cameron Fraser

Mr Albert Mohler analyses our cultural crisis in his fourth and last instalment.

*Focus on home*, presents us with some news from our churches.

Mr John Steenhof reports on helping Christian school teachers in Mbale, Uganda, to improve their teaching skills.

The opinions expressed in this magazine are not to be considered the official position of the Reformed Churches of NZ unless they expound the Biblical system of doctrine contained in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, or the Westminster Confession of Faith, or reflect the successive Acts of Synod of the Reformed Churches of NZ. On the other hand, care is taken to ensure that articles and opinions do not directly contradict the official position of the Reformed Churches as contained in the above sources without attention being called to that fact.

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# Made in God's image

**John A. Haverland**

It is no news to you that human society in New Zealand and across the world is in a sad and sorry state. Back in the first century the apostle Paul described the “terrible times in the last days”. His catalogue of sin and evil is an accurate description of our world today: people are “lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.”<sup>1</sup>

In Romans chapter 1 Paul examined the outworking of these human sins.

He wrote that mankind had become so futile in their thinking and so darkened in their hearts that “God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.”<sup>2</sup> He described the unnatural relations women had with one another and the indecent acts men committed with other men. These sinful acts are evident in our own society and they, along with the sin of abortion, are the subject for this issue of *Faith in Focus*.

These sins are the outworking of a moral and theological rebellion against God. In this opening article I want to provide some biblical and theological background for the following articles. The rest of this issue will describe what

is wrong, so it is necessary to begin with what is right, and examine how God first created us as male and female and in his image.

The Bible begins with an account of how God created the world over a period of six days. On the sixth day he created the first man, Adam, and then, later in the day, the first woman, Eve. As he prepared to create them he said; “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.”<sup>3</sup>

The words “image” and “likeness” are synonyms and there is no distinction of meaning between these words. The meaning of God's image in mankind



*“We need to be clear in our own minds about a biblical view of man and woman so that we are not swept away by the strong outgoing tide of humanistic and pagan thinking”.*

has been the subject of much biblical and theological discussion and debate. The Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) summarises the Presbyterian and Reformed view on this: “After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after his own image.”<sup>4</sup> The WCF follows a classic Reformed distinction here between what is known as the “Natural Image” of God in man and the “Moral Image”.

The “Natural Image” points out that God created us like himself in that we are spiritual, rational and volitional. Let’s take these one by one.

*Spiritual* means that we are like God because “God is spirit”<sup>5</sup>. As spiritual beings we have the capacity to know God and relate to him; we can fellowship with him, pray to him and worship him.

*Rational* means that we were created like God with a mind. We can think and reason. Adam and Eve needed this ability to exercise the responsibility God gave them of subduing and ruling over the fish, birds, livestock and over all the earth. Later, God appealed to this ability to think when he spoke to his people, “Come now let us reason together...”<sup>6</sup> The apostle Paul could write to the Christians in Corinth, “But we have the mind of Christ.”<sup>7</sup>

*Volitional* means that we have the ability to exercise our will, we can make decisions, we can choose between alternatives. God put a choice before Adam and Eve when he commanded them not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of

Good and Evil that was in the centre of the Garden of Eden. They could choose to eat, or not to eat. Genesis 3 records how they sinned against God’s command. Since then, all the people of the world have chosen, by nature, to turn away from God. Later Joshua put a choice before the people of Israel when he said, “choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve”, whether that be the pagan gods or the LORD. Centuries later the prophet Elijah gathered the people of Israel to Mount Carmel and asked them, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.”<sup>8</sup> The people had to choose.<sup>9</sup>

The “Moral Image” of God in mankind describes how God made us righteous, holy and with a knowledge of him.<sup>10</sup> When Adam disobeyed God’s command and sinned against him he lost this righteousness and became a sinner; and through the disobedience of that one man all mankind were made sinners, because Adam functioned as the representative head of humanity. What was lost through the sin of Adam can be regained through the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>11</sup> The writer of Ecclesiastes summed up the loss of our original righteousness when he wrote; “This only have I found: God made mankind upright, but men have gone in search of many schemes.”<sup>12</sup>

God also created us male and female. This was, and is, essential to life. God blessed Adam and Eve, and all of us, saying, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.”<sup>13</sup> God created Adam and Eve with the remarkable capacity to reproduce themselves; through sexual intercourse with a man, a woman may conceive and bear a child. The book of Genesis lays out the biblical pattern with these words: “a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.”<sup>14</sup> It was God’s design and plan that children would be conceived within the union of a marriage between a husband and a wife and brought up by a father and a mother. Such conception is only possible through God’s creation of a male and a female. Any sexual relationship outside of marriage is contrary to the way God created us and is a sin against God’s law. Sadly, sin has corrupted and perverted this God ordained pattern for sexual relationships. This brings with it many social, physical and psychological consequences that are destructive to the

human person, to human relationships and to human society. The devastating effects of these sins are seen in the evils of abortion and homosexuality, which will be described in the following articles.

Many of the ethical issues being debated in New Zealand today have to do with our view of humanity. The great changes in marriage, the family, sexual orientation and in abortion all stem from an unbiblical view of mankind. Our only basis for a sound and solid argument against the many changes that have already taken place, and those being proposed, is a well thought out biblical doctrine of man. People will either have an ethical view that is based firmly on God’s revelation of his will in the Bible, or they will come up with their own ideas, which leave them completely adrift in moral relativism. The only answer to a faulty and deficient view of men and woman is the biblical perspective that we are created male and female in the image of God.

The sexual revolution represents a rebellion against the way God made men and women, as revealed in his Word. As Christians we need to be clear in our own minds about a biblical view of man and woman so that we are not swept away by the strong outgoing tide of humanistic and pagan thinking. We need to teach our children and grandchildren this biblical perspective, to continue to hold fast to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to earnestly pray that God may grant repentance and faith to many in our society.

## Notes

1 2 Timothy 3:1-4

2 Romans 1:21-24

3 Genesis 1:26-27

4 WCF Chapter 4, Article 2

5 John 4:24

6 Isaiah 1:18

7 1 Corinthians 2:16

8 Joshua 24:15; 1 Kings 18:21

9 Adam and Eve had a perfectly free will and could choose to obey God or disobey him. Since the fall into sin we may still make choices but, by ourselves, we do not have the ability to choose to love and obey God because our wills are bound by sin. We are “totally depraved”, which means sin has affected every part of us, including our wills. See *Canons of Dort*, Heads 3 and 4

10 Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10

11 Romans 5:12-19

12 Ecclesiastes 7:29

13 Genesis 1:28

14 Genesis 2:24

*Mr John Haverland is the minister in the Reformed Church of Pukekohe.*

# Homosexuality in the light of God's purposes

**Michael Willemse**

Few of us can doubt the determination, prominence and success of the LGBT lobby. Although those actively involved in the LGBT lifestyle probably only represent two to three percent of the population, they have so successfully turned the tide of public opinion that traditional boundaries have been swept away in a tsunami of support for their cause. Albert Mohler, quoting British theologian Theo Hobson in his article in the April edition of *Faith in Focus*, describes the LGBT lobby as having “ousted traditionalist sexual morality from the moral

high ground” and “turned the tables on Christianity in Western civilization.”

Almost all of the rhetoric of the LGBT lobby is couched in terms of personal experience and centres on an individual's rights to express who they are without fear of prejudice or persecution. Responding to the Anglican Church's decision at the 2016 General Synod not to bless gay marriages at this time, liberal Anglican priest Dr Helen Jacobi says “The synod has allowed the views of ‘conservatives’ to rule, rather than working for *the just inclusion of all faithful people in the life of the church.*” She went on to say “We have chosen rules over love,

and doctrine over gospel.”<sup>1</sup>

In this article I do want to look at the people caught up in this lifestyle, what drives them and how we can respond to them; but I want to begin by thinking about this issue in relation to God. For simplicity's sake, I am going to use the term homosexuality to encompass lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender people. So when I say “homosexual” please remember that I'm including all of these groups.

It is also important to note as we begin that when I use the term homosexual, I am speaking of those who actively pursue same sex intimacy – not



DANISH SIDDIQUI/REUTERS

those who fight against unwanted same sex desires. There are sincere Christians who struggle with unwanted same sex attraction and who fight a life-long battle to resist this. It is important that they and we understand that temptation is not in itself sin. It is only when we give into sinful desires and pursue them that we enter into sin (James 1:15).

### **Homosexuality as an act of rebellion**

Rather than beginning by considering homosexuality at a personal level – “I know lots of gays and they are nice people” – it is important to begin by looking at homosexuality in relation to the God who created us and His purposes. As we do so, we can see that homosexuality is directly opposed to God at a number of levels.

*Homosexuality opposes our physical design.* Genesis 2:27 tells us “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” God specifically designed all human beings in one of two genders – either male or female – and men and women were designed to physically complement and complete one another. By design, two male bodies or two female bodies do not fit together. Especially in the case of two males, there are direct physical consequences of violating this design as well as a host of sexually transmitted diseases and infections. In the U.S. it is estimated that 30% of all 20-year-old males engaged in homosexual behaviour will contract or die from AIDS by age 30.<sup>2</sup> These things are part of what Romans 1:27b means when it says they “received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.”

*Homosexuality opposes our emotion-*

*“When we begin by suppressing the truth about God, we end up suppressing the truth about ourselves and reaping terrible consequences.”*

*al design.* When God says in Genesis 2:18 “I will make a helper suitable for him,” the underlying language contains the idea of “someone corresponding to him” or “someone to complete him.” It is significant that, in Genesis 1:27, the designation “male and female” is part of the explanation of what it means to be made in God’s image. It is when both are present and in proper relationship that God’s image is more clearly seen and God judges that “it [is] very good”. (This was after he had said “it is not good for man to be alone.”) Gender is more than just physical. God designed men and women to be emotionally complementary as well. Men and women perceive things differently – each has their strengths and their blind spots. Together, each will benefit from the strengths of the other and mitigate the other’s weaknesses. In same sex relationships, both partners share the same biological and emotional makeup and so cannot complement each other in the way God designed. It is significant that in same sex relationships there is almost always one partner who takes a more male role, and one who adopts a more submissive, female role. It is also significant that alcohol and drug abuse, depression and suicidal tendencies are all much more prevalent in homosexuals. For example, only 3% of heterosexual men typically struggle with depression while 35-40% of male and female homosexuals have a history of major depression and roughly 40% of both male and female homosexuals have seriously contemplated or attempted suicide.<sup>3</sup>

*Homosexuality opposes our procreative design.* Fruitfulness is central to God’s purposes in Genesis 1. Part of God’s purpose in creating gender was to allow all of his creatures, especially mankind, to reproduce; and he then commands them to do so (Genesis 1:22,28.) By nature, two males or two females cannot produce offspring. Even with the aid of biotechnology, they can only reproduce with the help of a third party. But God’s design goes further. It is his intention that a husband and a wife, living in a lifelong committed relationship to each other, with their complementary natures, provide a stable environment within which children can dwell securely and be raised to mature adulthood. It is his intention that a husband and wife produce godly offspring. Same sex couples cannot provide such an environment. As already stated above, they cannot find the emotional stability they

need themselves, let alone provide it for a child of which one or both of them is not the biological parent. Stable homes where a mum and a dad are both present are the bedrock of any stable society. Homosexuality constitutes an attack on God’s design for society itself.

*Homosexuality opposes our spiritual design.* God designed mankind for relationship with himself. Even marriage, the closest of all possible human relationships, is simply a picture of an earlier and longer-lasting (eternal!) relationship – Christ’s relationship with his church. Part of God’s design in marriage is that we love someone *other*, someone not like us. It is part of his shaping us to love one who is completely *other* – himself! Same sex relationships are by nature somewhat narcissistic – people love someone who is just like them. You might even say that same sex love is a form of self-love. Additionally, by nature, same sex relationships involve suppressing that part of ourselves that longs for what only someone of the opposite sex can provide. Rather than leading to total vulnerability, honesty and self-giving, they involve denying certain truths about ourselves and avoiding openness and vulnerability. God’s intention is that, within marriage, we would experience something of what it means to be known completely and loved unconditionally. Homosexual relationships militate against this and therefore distance people from God rather than leading them towards that far greater intimacy with him for which we were made.

In all of these ways, homosexuality frustrates God’s design and short circuits his purposes. When we begin by suppressing the truth about God (Romans 1:18), we end up suppressing the truth about ourselves (Romans 1:27-28) and reaping terrible consequences.

### **Homosexuality and our sin**

As we’ve seen from point 1 above, homosexuality is diametrically opposed to God’s purposes. But it is vitally important that we do not stop here because the LGBT agenda also exposes something very ugly about us and, if we are to accurately represent Christ and present the Gospel in the current environment and especially to homosexuals, we need to face some uncomfortable truths.

*Homosexuality exposes our hypocrisy about sins against marriage.* One of the reasons that the LGBT lobby has so successfully stolen the moral high ground is because of the hypocrisy of the Chris-

*“People go to hell because they are estranged from God and reject Christ. A homosexual’s biggest problem is not that he is a homosexual. It is the fact that he has not been reconciled to God by the blood of Jesus Christ.”*

tian church. In many ways, we as Christians in NZ responded to the Marriage Amendment Bill as though it were the first attack on marriage. We lobbied against and opposed the bill with righteous spiritual zeal. Yet the attack on marriage had already been underway for decades and Christians have not spoken with equal fervour against cohabitation, recreational sex, adulterous affairs, and easy divorce. Our failure to do so has left the church open to accusations of an anti-gay agenda. We need to repent of our hypocrisy in this regard and speak with equal clarity and fervour against any practice which undermines marriage, rather than focusing in on homosexuality alone. Had we, as God’s people, been faithful in this regard, we would have found ourselves on the opposite side of popular public opinion for some time now!

*Homosexuality exposes our hypocrisy about sin in general.* In 2013, Carl Trueman wrote a blog entitled “The Yuck Factor”<sup>4</sup> in which he identified the tendency of many Christians to tolerate all sorts of sins, even allowing men who deny the resurrection into the pulpit, yet railing against homosexuality. He argued that the reason for this was “the yuck factor.” He said “Homosexuality is, or perhaps better was, revolting to a certain generation. It disgusted them in

a way that polite, educated men denying the faith did not.” There is a great deal of truth in this. As Christians, there are many sins we tolerate and even wink at (e.g. drinking a bit much, gluttony, greed etc) while there are others which repulse us and we reserve our righteous anger and spiritual zeal for those ones. We need to repent of such a two-faced way of looking at sin.<sup>5</sup>

*Homosexuality exposes our hypocrisy about our own sins.* Our response to homosexuality reveals our tendency to hate the sins which we could never imagine ourselves committing while tolerating our own pet sins. Homosexuality is not the unforgiveable sin! Homosexual behaviour is sinful – but it is not worse than my sins or yours. My tendency to be tight-fisted towards God, to accept glory that belongs to him, to gossip about my neighbour and to justify my angry outbursts and selfishness are equally hideous in God’s sight, and equally worthy of judgement. We need to repent of the pride which tolerates my sin while condemning theirs; and we need to remember that Christ’s blood is sufficient to cover not only my sins but theirs also.

*Homosexuality is not the problem.* Part of our struggle as Christians can be that we define people by their sins. We need to repent of this too. No one will go to hell because they are a homosexual. People go to hell because they are estranged from God and reject Christ. A homosexual’s biggest problem is not that he is a homosexual. It is the fact that he has not been reconciled to God by the blood of Jesus Christ. Homosexuality is a symptom, sin is the disease, Christ is the cure.

### **Homosexuality as an opportunity**

Let’s go a step further and consider how the ground already covered can illuminate opportunities for Gospel interactions with people living in a homosexual lifestyle.

*Gay marriage exposes a desire for legitimacy.* It is intriguing that the push for same sex marriage has come at a time when marriage is in decline: less people are marrying, more people are opting for casual sexual relationships, divorce is on the increase and, to top it all off, few homosexual couples want to marry. So why does the LGBT lobby make such a big deal of same sex couples being able to marry? I believe it exposes a sense that something is not right (in Romans 1 terms, a sense of God’s judgement) and a desperate attempt

to legitimise homosexual behaviour. They hope that, by forcing their agenda and achieving legal recognition and equality with traditional marriage, they will finally dispel that nagging sense of doubt, fear and condemnation. This is encouraging for us as Christians – their very stridency testifies to a horrible sense of God’s judgement. While we must speak publicly to oppose their agenda and proclaim God’s good design, we also have an opportunity at a personal level to probe their already active conscience.

*Homosexuality exposes a cry for acceptance.* Many times, those living a homosexual lifestyle have troubled hearts that are scarred with relational disappointments, misunderstandings and emotional or physical abuse. Ironically, their homosexual behaviour often springs from problems in relating normally to those of their own sex. Many struggle to have a normal friendship with those of their own gender. Others struggle deeply with despair, disappointment, depression and shame. As Christians, we need to learn to see them first of all as people – people made in the image of God, people whose deepest need is to know him, people doomed to an endless cycle of frustration and emptiness without him. Perhaps the greatest opportunity we have is to meet them humbly as fellow sinners in need of grace and to befriend them and show them what a normal man to man or woman to woman friendship looks and feels like.

*Homosexuality presents an opportunity to show what the Gospel is really like.* Sadly, there is often a great deal of truth to the LGBT lobby’s accusation that Christians are judgemental bigots. All too often we or our fellow Christians present a very ugly side of Christianity to homosexuals – a side which reeks of self-righteousness, fear, hatred and condemnation. But, if we realise that our own sins are equally repugnant in God’s sight and that those caught up in homosexuality need God’s grace every bit as much as we do, then we have an opportunity to show them what the Gospel is really like – we have an opportunity to show others the compassion, the love and the grace which we have received. C. Everett Koop, when he was Surgeon General in the U.S., was very clear about the Bible’s condemnation of the homosexual lifestyle. Yet he lobbied on behalf of homosexuals suffering from AIDS and worked tirelessly to care for them. Despite his clear stance on what he called “sodomy”, when he

addressed a crowd of twelve thousand gay people in Boston, they chanted his name repeatedly out of gratitude for his untiring efforts on their behalf. When Christians care without compromise for those engaged in homosexuality, we have a tremendous opportunity to show what the Gospel is really like and to be agents of grace to sinners like us.

In conclusion, it is clear that the homosexual lifestyle is a rejection of God's design and purpose. The LGBT agenda is a direct attack on what it means to be human and created in God's image. It is also an attack on the very foundations of society. If the Anglican Church

chooses to bless gay marriages when they meet again in two years' time, they will be blessing what God condemns. Yet our response to this issue also exposes our own sinful hearts, especially our tendency to judge the sins of others while justifying our own. Even as we condemn what the LGBT lobby seeks to normalise, we must repent of our own sins and seek to respond to them not as homosexuals but as sinners in need of God's grace. Who knows? Perhaps this will prove to be an opportunity for the Gospel to make great inroads into the lives of the very people who seem most antagonistic towards it.

## Notes

- 1 As quoted in the NZ Herald on May 12 2016.
- 2 The Gay Report by K. Jay and A. Young, p.728
- 3 Archives Of General Psychiatry 48, Feb. 1991, p.127; Comprehensive Psychiatry 34, May/June 1993, p.154
- 4 <http://www.virtueonline.org/yuck-factor>
- 5 Although homosexual behaviour is called detestable (NIV84) or abominable (ESV) in places like Lev 18:22, this word is also used to describe idolatry (Ezk 8:6), gluttony and neglect of the poor (Ezk 16:50), wickedness in general (Pro 8:7) and the prayers of one who turns a deaf ear to the law (Pro 28:9).

*Mr Michael Willemse is the minister in the Reformed Church of Hamilton.*

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## Who are we? (3)

# Strengthen the things that remain: human dignity, human rights, and human flourishing in a dangerous age

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*An address delivered as a Forum Lecture in the Marriott Center Arena at Brigham Young University by R. Albert Mohler, Jr., February 25, 2014. (abridged)*

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### Albert Mohler

I come in what can only be described as a dangerous moment for us all and for the culture and civilization we commonly love. The most fundamental values of civilization itself are threatened, and we are witnesses to one of the

most comprehensive and fast-paced moral revolutions ever experienced by humanity. The velocity and breadth of this revolution are breathtaking, and the consequences are yet incalculable. This society is dismantling the very structures that have allowed for the enjoyment and preservation of human liberty and respect for life. We are engaged in a head-long effort to replace the convictions that gave birth to democracy and ordered liberty with a new set of convictions that will lead to the emergence of a very different culture, society, and civilization. We cannot pretend that this is not happening. We cannot delude ourselves into believing that it will not matter.

Writing in a very different revolutionary era, Karl Marx declared that the

modern age would sweep all conventional morality and political structures aside in a complete transformation of values. In his memorable words, "all that is solid melts into air." We are in the age of the advanced meltdown of those values. What Marx promised is now happening before our eyes.

What can explain it? A witness to the collapse of Marx's revolution, that great Russian prophet Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, explained it with four simple words: "Men have forgotten God." And so they have. Nothing else can explain the great shift in worldview we are witnessing.

The word for the process that is driving this shift of worldview in the West is secularization. In the context of the late modern age, secularization is fully evident even where we thought it was absent – in the United States of America. For decades, the conventional wisdom held that Europe was becoming thoroughly secularized as religious belief melted in the face of modern culture, the rise of technology, the dominance of science, and the moral reorientation of the twentieth century. But that conventional wisdom also held that America was the great exception – a society that was simultaneously hyper-modern and highly religious, predominantly Christian. That conventional wisdom held until it began to fall apart, and it fell apart as it was recognized that there is more than one route to the secular. In Europe, that route was largely paved with open antipathy

to theism and to organized religion. But there is another route to the secular, and that road is paved with the redefinition of religious beliefs, the eclipse of binding authority, and the open embrace of pluralism. There is more than one way to turn solids into air.

The average American does not claim to be an atheist, but a theist, and most

*“The new secular vision of human dignity holds only that we are more developed than other animals, but some humans are surely more developed than others”.*

often a theist of some specific sort, at least by family tradition. But there is often very little connection between the convictions of the faith that is named and the worldview of the one who claims it. Thanks to the media and messaging of modernity, millions of Americans have allowed themselves to be secularized without any antipathy to theism. They just think and emote and analyze and reflect as if they are secular people, for their worldview increasingly is secularized.

Among the elites the pattern is a bit different. As Peter Berger, one of the leading intellectuals on matters of secularization explains it, the elites are far more classically secularized than the masses. As he has explained, secularization theory worked right according to plan in Europe and on the American university campus. The elites who control the cultural content that emerges from Hollywood, New York, and the most prestigious academic campuses are, by any standard of measurement, far more thoroughly secularized and ideologically opposed to theism and its implications than the general public. These elites are, as elites almost always are, the dominant forces in the development of cultural messag-

ing, public policy, and moral influence. And those among the intellectual elites tend to see those who hold to traditional religious forms and beliefs as suspect and potentially dangerous – those who would hold back what they believe is the necessary project of moral liberation.

The secular worldview relativizes morality, and our society has progressively compromised the moral system upon which it depends. A living body that has a compromised immune system will soon fail. A society that subverts its own moral immunities sows the seeds of its own destruction.

In other words, the secular worldview actually undermines the very values that the prophets of the secular age claim to cherish and preserve – human dignity, human rights, and human flourishing.

### **Human Dignity**

Human dignity can survive only if we commonly believe and commonly affirm that every single human being, at every stage of development, is a person made in God’s image and bearing the dignity that is the mark of God’s personal possession. The only adequate conception of human dignity rests upon the biblical teaching that such dignity is not a human



achievement, but a gift. Human beings do not achieve the status of dignity by their abilities or performance or development. Human dignity and the worth of the human individual is predicated only upon the fact that every human being is made in the image of God, and therefore is to be respected, protected, and cherished as a member of the human community.

We are now attempting to create a new vision of human dignity that is based in a secular vision of humanity. But what is that vision? If we are not made in God's image, and if this is not the defining fact of our human existence, then who are we? The secular answer is not reassuring. We are, this vision holds, the highly developed primate that has invented the use of language and learned to cook food. If we are not created, then we are accidents. And if we are accidents, there is no essential dignity due us.

Back in 2005 the London Zoo featured an exhibit of humans. "Warning: Humans in Their Natural Environment" read the sign over an exhibit of scantily clad human beings, placed on display among the animals in the more familiar cages and enclosures. Polly Wills, a spokesperson for the zoo, told the press: "Seeing people in a different environment, among other animals ... teaches members of the public that the human is just another primate."

Well, if we are "just another primate," there is no essential dignity due us. Perhaps that helps to explain the twentieth century, with the horrors of the Holocaust and the specter of eugenics, the intention to enhance human breeding. The eugenic temptation, we should note, was not something far off across the sea, but something supported and endorsed by many American intellectuals.

Perhaps this reduced and secular vision of human dignity explains the killing fields of Cambodia, the forced starvation of millions in China's Cultural Revolution, and the horrors of the Soviet gulags.

Perhaps it also explains the over 50 million American babies aborted in American wombs since the legalization of abortion on demand by *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. Perhaps it explains the virtual disappearance of babies now born with Down syndrome, aborted after genetic testing, and the demand for designer babies. Perhaps it explains the cult of abortion in this country and the refusal of so many in the elites to oppose even

partial birth abortion. Perhaps it explains how one vocal advocate of abortion could recently declare that abortion is indeed a killing, but the killing of "a life worth sacrificing."

Perhaps this new secular vision of human dignity explains the rise of sex-selection abortions in both the United States and Britain. Perhaps it explains the demand for euthanasia and the so-called "good death" that the government of Belgium in recent days has extended even to young children.

If we are not – if every one of us is not – made in God's image and created for God's glory, then why is a human infant of greater worth than a pig? Peter Singer, a professor of bioethics at Princeton University, has gone so far as to argue that the pig might well have more substantial claim to a right to live. He has also stated that infanticide, the killing of young children after their birth, might well be justified under some circumstances.

If every one of us is not made in God's image, how are we to reject his argument? I fear that our culture is losing the ability to answer such arguments with a candid and urgent and convincing counter-argument. The new secular vision of human dignity holds only that we are more developed than other animals, but some humans are surely more developed than others. Participation in the medal events at the recent Winter Olympic Games was not open to all, nor is admission to the universities where this new secular vision of human dignity is promulgated and promoted.

### **Human Rights**

The affirmation of human rights is claimed to be the great moral achievement of the modern age. But this affirmation was based in the belief that those rights belong to every human being by virtue of divine creation. How can those rights survive when the foundation is destroyed?

The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948, fresh after the horrors of World War II. It was adopted in a spirit of hope and desperation. The French intellectual Jacques Maritain, one of the leading Roman Catholic philosophers of the century, was one of the drafters of the statement. That Declaration is now cited as the definitive statement of the modern affirmation of human rights. The Declaration affirms that all humans possess "inherent dignity" and states: "All human beings

*"Marriage has rightly been understood by every preceding culture as pre-political – before and beyond the reach of politics. Until now."*

are born free and equal in dignity and in rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

That is an eloquent statement indeed, but upon what does it rest? Maritain saw the problem. In his words, "We agree upon these rights, providing we are not asked why. With the 'why' the dispute begins."

And the dispute has never ended. Furthermore, the United Nations has proved to be a most inept protector of the very rights it claims to defend – just ask the bleeding and dying citizens of Syria.

If we are biological accidents – just another primate – why should any individual human life matter? And why should we respect an abstraction called human rights?

An interesting witness to the force of this question comes from the late philosopher Ronald Dworkin. In his last book, *Religion without God*, posthumously published, the unbelieving philosopher made an awkward admission – philosophical naturalism cannot bear the freight of establishing human rights. Dworkin did not become a theist, but he argued that the only defense of human rights had to come from some spiritual argument, even if it took the form of what he called a "religious atheism." This book was not his strongest work, but it revealed something really important. As one secular reviewer stated boldly, the old philosopher had become, against all his intentions, a theologian.

There is no secular ground that can support and defend human rights. Furthermore, there is no secular system that can adequately rank the claims to various rights that human beings present. Just look at our current situation.

Demands for erotic liberty – the unrestrained right to full individual sexual expression, fulfillment, and legitimacy – now routinely trumps religious liberty.

Professor Mary Ann Glendon of the Harvard Law School has warned of the collapse of all human rights when everything is transformed into secular “rights talk.” Right and wrong collapse as meaningful categories when everything is a matter of competing “rights.” But without right and wrong, there is no way to say that the denial of basic human rights is wrong.

Interestingly, the very enterprise of modern human rights was an attempt to replace the Christian understanding of related rights and responsibilities with a thoroughly secular alternative. In his recent book, *The Endtimes of Human Rights*, Stephen Hopgood of the University of London makes this very argument, and he makes it convincingly. In his words: “My argument is simple: humanism (the cultural precondition for Human Rights) was a secular replacement for the Christian god.” The modern international enterprise of human rights is “a secular church,” he explains. The problem is clear – the members of this secular church are not even singing from the same hymnal. They do not share even a common set of convictions.

The modern confidence that human rights could be grounded in a secular worldview was a cruel delusion. The project of grounding human rights in secular human hopes was a spectacular failure. Without theism, there is no ground upon which to stand, and no ground upon which to defend the defenseless.

### **Human Flourishing**

Our common hope is to see humanity flourish, and every system of government promises that it will lead, eventually, to greater human flourishing – to human development and liberty and enterprise and happiness and fulfillment. Such flourishing requires an adequate level of both security and stability, and, even more importantly, the necessary structures that allow human beings to flourish.

At the center of human society stands the most important of those structures – the human family. At the center of the family stands marriage. Every other structure, from government to schools to corporations to volunteer organizations stands upon the foundation of marriage and the family, and no structure can fully replace what is absent if the family fails

or if marriage is not fully respected.

At the center of marriage is the promise of children and the investment of the responsibility to nurture the next generation of the human family.

Twenty years ago, not one nation on earth had legal same-sex marriage. Now, we are told that 40 percent of Americans live where same-sex marriage is legal. A sense of inevitability now hangs over the entire nation. We simply cannot exaggerate the consequence to human flourishing if marriage is subverted and transformed so that it is no longer directed, as a human institution, toward procreation and the nurture of children. Human flourishing will be inevitably harmed and permanently debilitated by its redefinition.

And yet, as a society we have lost the ability to rank liberties and claims of rights. We lack the fortitude to state clearly that erotic aspiration and romantic legitimacy must be directed toward marriage and made accountable to it. We sowed the seeds for this lack of fortitude by our acquiescence to so called “no-fault” divorce and the idea of unfettered personal autonomy.

But what did we expect? Marriage has rightly been understood by every preceding culture as pre-political – before and beyond the reach of politics. Every culture in every century before us has understood that its task is to respect what comes before it and makes human culture possible – marriage as the lasting monogamous union of a man and a woman. Until now.

Our secular neighbors and friends also hope for human flourishing and they work out of a vision of what will lead to human flourishing. But while we understand their hopes, we also understand that such hopes are false and harmful if based on a secular foundation.

If marriage is simply a human development, we can rightly redevelop it. If it is evidence of the evolution of human relationships and romantic attachments, we can evolve further. If it is a laboratory for experimentation in hopes of greater human fulfillment, we can experiment with abandon. But if it is the gift of a loving Creator who made us in his image and gave us marriage and the family as among the most precious of his good gifts, our experiments will lead to disaster.

### **Strengthen the Things that Remain**

In the Book of Revelation [3:2] we find the letter from the Lord Jesus Christ to

*“As a Christian, my ultimate confidence does not rest in marriage, or the family, or civil society, or human rights, or any human affirmation of human dignity, no matter how robust. My confidence is in the Lord . . .”*

the Church at Sardis. He commands that church to “strengthen the things that remain,” and those words certainly fit the challenges of our own culture and our own times. Without hesitation, we do our best to strengthen the things that allow and provide for human flourishing, that bear witness to human dignity, and that undergird human rights. We bear witness to the truth that these good things are not our own achievement or the result of our social experimentation, but are instead gifts of a sovereign and loving God, who brings himself glory and blesses his human creatures with these good gifts.

The task of those now living is to defend these truths in a time of danger – and defend them we must and we will. But we are not called merely to defend them, but to fulfill them and to receive them and to find our joy in them. This means that our task is not only to defend marriage, but to live that commitment before the watching world. Our task is not only to point to the dignity due every member of the human family at every stage of development, but to defend the defenseless and to work for the affirmation of this dignity in everyone – from the elderly to the infirm to the child with Down syndrome. We are

not only called to defend human rights but to contend for them, and to insist that these rights are non-negotiable only because our Creator endowed us with these rights, and allows no negotiation.

When I was with you last October, I said something that got picked up by media around the world. I said that I believe that we will not go to heaven together, but we might well go to jail together. That was last October. That was four months and a few days ago. Since then, federal courts in your own state have ruled that your legal prohibitions of both same-sex marriage and polygamy are unconstitutional. Since that time, the President of your church has been summoned to appear in a secular court in London. Since that time, just over one hundred days ago, so much has changed.

Civil and criminal penalties have recently been leveled against bakers, photographers, and florists who could not in good conscience participate in a same-sex wedding ceremony. Erotic liberty is in the ascent and religious liberty is in peril.

We may go to jail sooner even than we thought.

This is why our conversation is really important, and why we need to stand together on so many urgent concerns. Most importantly, we are now called to defend religious liberty for each other, so that when they come for you, we are there, and so that when they come for us, you are there. We are learning anew what the affirmation of religious liberty will demand of us in this dangerous age.

As a Christian, my ultimate confidence does not rest in marriage, or the family, or civil society, or human rights, or any human affirmation of human dignity, no matter how robust.

My confidence is in the Lord, the unchanging God of the Bible, who revealed himself in the Bible and who redeems sinners through the atonement accomplished by his Son, Jesus Christ, who was both fully human and fully divine. My confidence is in the Gospel revealed by Christ and preached by the Apostles – the Gospel of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone. I believe in the saving acts of Christ in his death, burial, and bodily resurrection from the grave. I believe that the Bible is our sufficient

written revelation, inerrant and infallible and unchanging. I believe that God's promise of salvation will be fulfilled and that all he has promised in Christ will be given. I believe in the truth unchanged and unchanging, because I believe in the God who tells us in the Bible that he never changes.

I can close my eyes at night and I can open them to face each day because I know that my Redeemer lives, and that history is in the hands of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I know that I, along with all who come to him by faith, are safe in Christ. I can trust that he, as the Apostle Paul stated so famously, will be faithful to the end.

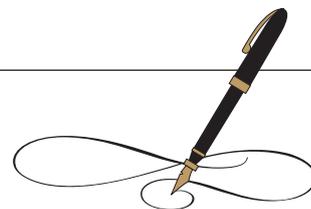
These are dangerous times, but also days of hope. In these times, it is vital that we bear witness with each other of matters that matter so much to our nation, our culture, and civilization itself. But, as we bear witness with each other about these things of such importance, we also bear witness to each other about what is even more important – eternally important.

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## Outward focus

Sally Davey



# Complementarianism: a helpful summary

I've sometimes noticed that, after a few decades of controversy/discussion in the church, a particular issue ends up being resolved. Those on the extreme fringes have had their say, the relevant biblical passages have been thoroughly reviewed, and a reasonably clear understanding of what the Bible teaches takes hold in the majority of Bible-honouring churches.

Hopefully, we've pretty much reached that stage regarding the respective roles of men and women – something that has exercised many Christians for most of my adult life. Just the other day, I came across what I thought was a very

helpful summary of this subject, written by an experienced pastor who has observed the to-ings and fro-ings of the past few decades. I thought you may find it helpful, too, so I share here the words of Richard Phillips as they appeared on the Reformation 21 website on 4<sup>th</sup> May, 2016. In part, he is responding to a recent internet discussion, which you can follow by referring to the full text at: <http://www.reformation21.org/blog/2016/05/4-approaches-to-a-balanced-com.php>

(By way of introduction, Richard Phillips is Senior Minister at Second Presbyte-

rian Church, Greenville, South Carolina).

Phillips offers four approaches to complementarianism in the hope that "they will help us practice the Bible's gender teaching while avoiding harmful and un-biblical excesses". They are:

**1. Practice male ordained leadership and fully empower female church membership.**

*1 Timothy 2:11-15 is not a problem that needs to be solved or an embarrassment that needs to be explained away. Rather, it is apostolic teaching that reflects the creation order of God and the intention of Christ for his*

church. To this end, Bible-believers should ordain only men to the offices of elder and deacon, in keeping with 1 Timothy 3:1-13. (Yes, I am aware of those who argue that this passage does not restrict women from the diaconate, but in my view these are exceedingly weak arguments). Moreover, the public duties in the church associated with these offices should also be performed only by men. I refer to the public reading of Scripture, prayer, and the administration of the sacraments, which functions have long been understood to be tied to the office of minister (i.e., the office has functions and those functions are for the officers). Churches that toe-the-line by ordaining only men, but who then highlight women performing the functions of those offices in the worship service, are not in my view embracing the apostolic mandate.

At the same time, Galatians 3:27-29 clearly grants the full privileges of church membership to women. Therefore, women should not be disenfranchised as church members. This takes place in churches that practice “household membership,” so that only heads of families participate fully in congregational meetings. I realize that unmarried adult women get to be the head of their household, but why should wives and young women in the home be excluded from the privileges and obligations of church membership – voting on a pastor, electing officers, approving budgets, etc? Moreover, women should be fully integrated into ministries like evangelism, worship and music, missions, and Christian education, as well as ministry support bodies like the nursery and kitchen (where we should also encourage men to serve). In the church I serve, women participate on every committee under the leadership of an elder or deacon (depending on the committee). My wife is deeply involved in the missions committee of our church and I am not bothered at all to say that she provides important leadership to our missions program. Women provide leadership and service in most aspects of a healthy and balanced church, and like non-ordained men they do so under the ordained headship of male officers.

**2. Teach wives to submit to husbands but not all women to all men.** Complementarianism emphasizes the clear biblical mandate to male headship in the home, as in the church (Eph. 5:22-24; 1 Peter 3:1-6). It is not easy submitting to the knuckle-heads that many wives have married, but it is their duty to do so as Christian women. Proper feminine

submission is (as my wife often puts it) “kinetic.” It is not servile, which is why Paul and Peter employ a different word for wives than Paul uses for slaves in their relationship to masters (Eph. 5:22; 6:5). Being a biblical helper requires wisdom, creativity, and godliness. So we should put the most positive biblical angle on feminine submission and then unashamedly teach it.

But notice that Paul writes, “Wives, submit to your own husband, as to the Lord” (Eph. 5:22). Two things stand out. First, submit to “your own” husband. Wives do not submit to husbands in general. Girls do not submit to boys in general. On a date, the woman is not to obey the guy (And if he demands this, she should jump out of the moving car and change her phone number!). It is true that the biblical principle of male headship will urge women to a general responsiveness to men. But “submit” is a very pointed command and it is reserved for marriage (wives to husbands) and the church (members to ordained leaders – Heb. 13:17). Second, notice that wives submit to their own husbands “as to the Lord.” The husband is not her god and she should not submit with an awed trembling appropriate for oriental semi-divine potentates. Rather, she wisely and proactively submits to her husband as an act of worship to the Lord Jesus Christ, seeking for his blessing and glory above all other things.

**3. Train husbands to love rather than dominate their wives.** The point of male headship in both the church and the home is not the glory of small-egged men but rather the glory of God and the well-being of those under this covenant care. In both the church and the home, male leaders must be called upon to provide nurturing and protecting love that stimulates growth and health for those under our care (see the Masculine Mandate in Gen. 2:15). Pastors and elders should frown upon and in some cases discipline men who misuse their God-given authority in the home to oppress or otherwise harm their wives and children. In the church that I serve, the elders have many times summoned a husband to give an explanation for his failure or abuse of leadership in the home. To be sure, this is the exception – we do not regularly intrude into home affairs – but as needed we think our duty to provide this pastoral oversight. The women in our church should feel cared for by the ordained leadership, even as they are likewise challenged and exhorted to live up

*“Rather than a celebration of the privileges of male headship in marriage, Christian husbands should be taught and encouraged to love their wives actively and sacrificially, as the Bible teaches.”*

to their own callings as Christians. In a healthy church, a wife does not have to dominate her husband because she can be confident in the spiritual leadership that is provided to her husband by the elders of the church.

Meanwhile, rather than a celebration of the privileges of male headship in marriage, Christian husbands should be taught and encouraged to love their wives actively and sacrificially, as the Bible teaches (Eph. 5:25-33; 1 Pet. 3:7). Jokes that demean wives should be strongly frowned upon and a culture of male servanthood should permeate our complementarianism. Does this mean that male heads should do the dishes at home? He certainly does in my home, since my wife daily expends herself in wearying service to me and our five children. (Plus, my way of loading the dishwasher is the right way... ) While it is true that a godly and submissive wife should do her best if her husband is harsh and evaluative, she should also have the privilege of pastoral care from the church that urges her husband to provide a more nurturing and caring headship.

**4. Raise daughters to be snowflakes, not ice cubes.** It doesn’t take a brilliant cultural observer to realize that our society is waging a massive assault against God and his creation when it comes to gender. In response to the pagan an-

drogyny all around Christians today. Christians should cultivate clear gender identity. Without massively expanding this post by giving the details, girls are different from boys and vice versa. There is such a thing as femininity and another thing called masculinity. Therefore, a girl growing up in a godly church should not be confused about what it means to be a woman, and a boy should pick up on godly manhood by the examples and influences in his Christian environment. Both boys and girls should learn from

clear Bible teaching about their distinctive identities and callings. At the same time, as I once heard Don Carson state, “God makes snowflakes rather than ice cubes.” Ice cubes all look exactly the same – they are forced into a rigid mold. Snowflakes are each unique – not one exactly like another – but at the same time they fit a God-designed pattern. In like manner, girls should be raised to cultivate feminine principles and follow female examples from the Bible and in the church, while urged to cultivate her

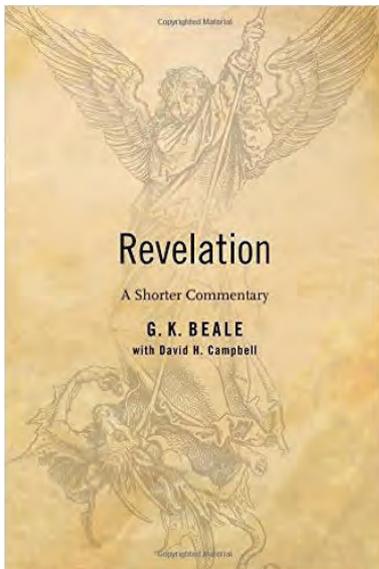
own God-given uniqueness and calling. Ditto for the boys.

There is much more to be said about a balanced complementarianism, but I will submit just these four approaches in the hope that they will encourage and clarify. In general, our complementarianism should not be reactive but biblically pro-active, seeking to attain not to man-glorifying ends but a God-glorifying blessing in the church and in the home.”

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## Books in focus

***Revelation: A Shorter Commentary***  
by G. K. Beale with David H. Campbell. Eerdmans, 2015.  
**Reviewed by OP pastor Mark A. Winder.**



G. K. Beale’s shorter commentary on Revelation compresses all the treasures of the parent volume in the NIGTC series into a more accessible package. Minus the small font detail, Greek words, and some supporting arguments of the larger commentary, this tightly packed work demonstrates the potency of brevity.

Beale employs an “eclectic redemptive-historical idealist” approach (p. 9), seeing in various portions of the text symbolic presentations of the battle between good and evil throughout the church age, historical events as patterns for the ages,

and anticipations of the final judgment and new creation. The pastoral goal of Revelation is to encourage God’s people to faithfulness in every age, while the theological theme “is that God should receive worship and glory as a result of accomplishing consummate salvation and final judgment” (p. 507).

A model of covenantal exposition, this commentary relentlessly applies the infallible rule of interpretation: Scripture interprets itself. Beale diligently investigates literary, historical, and theological contexts. He masterfully unfolds John’s use of the Old Testament by applying careful exegesis of the Old Testament to appreciate its fullness in light of the New Testament’s conclusion. The resulting interpretation is not only true to grammatical and historical analysis, but harmonious to the flow and climax of redemptive history. Along the way, he offers discussions of the visionary, symbolic, and historical levels of interpretation (p. 421) and nuggets of exegetical wisdom, such as “Christ’s work is now the dominant interpretive lens through which to understand Old Testament expectations” (p. 216).

Throughout, Beale is an able tutor on significant themes, such as the church as true Israel encompassing all peoples, the distinction between chronological sequence and sequence of revelatory visions, the coming of Christ as an “inaugurated end-time process” (p. 79), the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament, cautions against inappropriate interpretive methods, the primacy of

Christ, and the recognition, significance, and types of patterns and parallels.

Beale concisely interacts with opposing views, but critiques and defends thoroughly where warranted (e.g., the millennium, the resurrection, the measuring of the temple, the seal, bowl, and trumpet judgments, and Babylon). Where multiple options exist, he offers legitimate interpretive possibilities with a summary of the evidence and rationale for his choice.

Introductory material is brief. Discussion on date is slim (though addressed later), and the “four ways of interpreting” would benefit from greater detail. Yet the discussions of symbolic interpretation and the use of the Old Testament are succinctly thorough and convincing. Beale’s focus on Revelation 1:19 as an interpretive key establishes a crucial trajectory for understanding that what was anticipated by the prophets begins to be fulfilled in Revelation.

The full Scripture text (NASB) is included. A brief summary paragraph begins each major section, followed by sentence summaries for smaller units. The words of the Scripture text are then interspersed in bold with the comments, with verse divisions clearly marked. The addition of substantial “Suggestions for Reflection” provides hundreds of pastoral ideas for practical application, response, and doctrinal reflection. These reflections alone make this an indispensable companion to the larger commentary, offering vital aids for teachers and students alike.

## ***Developments in Biblical Counseling,***

by J. Cameron Fraser. Reformation Heritage Books, 2015.

**Reviewed by OP minister and counselor John W. Mallin.**

J. Cameron Fraser is a minister in the Christian Reformed Church in western Canada.

While almost the size of a pocket handbook (5x7.5 inches), *Developments in Biblical Counseling* is not a handbook. It reviews the history of the developments in Nouthetic and Biblical Counseling and the issues involved in those developments. Fraser's purpose may be described in the blurb by J. I. Packer on the front cover, which refers to a "sympathetic unpacking of this internal debate in Christian counseling." Although Fraser notes that his style is that of "journalistic reporting," not scholarly analysis, he does offer analysis and comments that reflect his views.

The contents include a foreword by

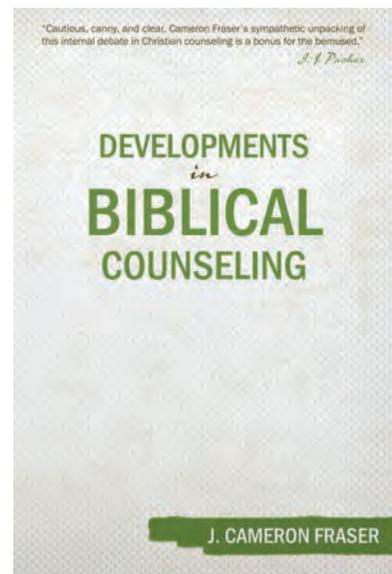
Ron Harris and a comprehensive bibliography.

The first three chapters highlight five recurring themes in Nouthetic or Biblical Counseling: the sufficiency of Scripture; the definition of Biblical Counseling; its relationship to psychology and psychiatry; the means and methods of change; and sin, suffering, and Satan. The final chapter pursues parallel themes.

The introduction briefly summarizes the history of the Nouthetic Counseling movement and its heirs, drawing from David Powlison's *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context*, and bringing it up to date.

Chapter 1 reviews the fundamental views of Jay Adams, which comprise Nouthetic Counseling, considering the five themes noted above.

Chapter 2 reviews criticisms that have been offered of Adams, including questions regarding the use of the Bible as the sole textbook for counseling, objections to the use of *noutheo* to define counseling, criticisms of Adams's sup-



posed psychological naïveté, the criticism of inadequate attention to the impact of the Fall, and opposition to Adams's denial of demonic activity with respect to sickness.

Chapter 3 reviews the developments in Biblical Counseling that led some within the movement to drop the term "nouthetic." Biblical Counseling seeks to distinguish between heart issues and circumstances to which the heart must respond. Making substantial use of "idols of the heart" and the related insight that people both sin and are sinned against, change is sought, not only in behavior, but also in motives and desires of the heart.

Chapter 4 compares Biblical Counseling with Puritan counseling, noting the Puritans' emphasis on idolatry of the heart in their approach to counseling.

The postscript includes a discussion of Adams's emphasis on external behavior versus the "idols of the heart" concept as a key issue of difference.

The footnotes are helpful, especially when they provide substantive qualifying or balancing comments or remarks that further elucidate a point. Page 90 is missing footnotes 64 and 65.

The book will be helpful to counselors, students of counseling, and those looking for a counselor. I highly recommend the book to its target audience.

## **"Let's be careful" – a clarification**

In the May edition of *Faith in Focus* (vol 43/4), Brian O'Neill penned a Letter to the Editor, which I changed into an article entitled 'Let's be careful', critiquing the theological views of Tim Keller. The author pointed out some serious concerns with Keller's theology. He drew our attention to an interview in which Keller equivocated on whether Christ is the only way to heaven. O'Neill was not aware that Tim Keller had apologized for the unhelpful and misleading way he responded to the question in that interview. Keller has since stated that his response in that interview did not actually represent his teaching on the subject over the years and we believe that in fair-mindedness we should make that known (see <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/keller-on-salvation-outside-of-christ>). O'Neill also drew our attention to Keller's views on inerrancy, questioning whether he taught the Scriptures were inerrant. The quote that was used as evidence that Keller believed in an errant Bible may have been imprecise, but in it Keller does not deny the Scriptures are inerrant and, even with some searching, we are not aware that Keller denies the inerrancy of Scripture. We make these qualifications in the interests of honesty and fair dealing. Nevertheless, we do concur that Keller must be read with great discernment and it is disappointing that a man of his stature in the evangelical world does not speak more clearly and straightforwardly affirm the clear truths of Scripture.

The article concludes by lamenting that Keller's teachings are currently being promoted rather than refuted by the application of sound doctrine. The final two sentences could give the impression that Keller's unconfessional views were being promoted rather than refuted in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. To our knowledge, this is certainly not the case.

**Ed.**

# The withering of vice and the Sexual Revolution

## How did we get here?

### Albert Mohler

The question remains, how did all this happen? As already noted, the sexual revolution did not emerge in a vacuum. Modern societies created a context for moral revolution that had never been available in intellectual terms before. In other words, certain cultural conditions had to prevail in order for the revolution to get the traction it needed to succeed. One of the things we need to note is that we are looking at an explicitly cosmopolitan revolution.

#### *Urbanization, Technology, and the Weakening of the Family*

Modernity and modernization brought urbanization such that increased numbers of people were now living in cities, and the cities shaped the culture. As odd as it may seem, even as the city is a concentration of human beings, it actually offers an unprecedented opportunity for anonymity. Many observers of the sexual revolution point to the fact that, from the very beginning, this was a *cosmopolitan* revolution – emerging first in cities and then spreading out to the rest of the culture.

This same period also saw the weakening of the family unit, as new moral voices emerged as both attractive and authoritative in the lives of modern people. For some younger Americans, this meant that arrival on the college campus would present the professor in the classroom as a clear alternative to the morality that had been taught by parents in the home. This was true as early as the 1930s and the 1940s and is now understood to be

the expectation on American college and university campuses. At the same time, the secularization of these societies and institutions meant that Christianity and its authorities, including the Bible and its teachers, would be relegated to voices with less and less authority and cultural traction as secularization worked its way through the larger culture.

Technological advances also fueled the sexual revolution. Pornographers, for example, have taken advantage of every new technology from the printing press to the latest digital advances. Of course, the most technological achievement for the new sexual morality was the arrival of contraceptives and antibiotics. Put bluntly, so long as sex between a man and a woman implied the likelihood of pregnancy, there was a certain check on extramarital sexual activity. Once the Pill arrived, with all of its promises of reproductive control, a biological check on sexual immorality that had shaped human existence from Adam and Eve forward was almost instantaneously removed. The sexual revolution could not have taken place without the arrival of effective, cheap, and available contraceptives.

Whereas many scholars recognize the importance of new contraceptive technology in the sexual revolution, fewer scholars have noted that the sexual revolution would not have progressed at the same speed without the emergence of antibiotics. This is due to the fact that one major check on sexual immorality throughout human history has been disease. As Emory University economist Andrew Francis has observed: "It's a common assumption that the sexual revolution began with the permissive attitudes of the 1960s and the development of contraceptives like the birth control pill. The evidence, however, strongly indicates that the widespread use of penicillin, leading to a rapid decline of syphilis during the 1950s, is what launched the modern sexual era."<sup>1</sup> That is a very important observation. As a review of medical literature will reveal, the vast reduction in the cases of syphilis

*"The modern or postmodern quest for sexual emancipation cannot be neutral when it comes to the teachings of the Bible and the moral witness of historic Christianity."*

that were recorded in the 1950s indicate, not that Americans were engaged in less sexual immorality, but that they now were aided and abetted by penicillin, removing the horrifying effects of syphilis from the moral equation. Clearly we do not want to go back to an age without antibiotics. We are thankful for lifesaving drugs and medical technologies. We certainly do not reject all that modernity has brought. At the same time, Christians must recognize that every new technology brings new ethical and moral challenges – and often unintended consequences as well.

#### *Science and The Sexual Revolution*

The sexual revolution could also not have taken place without the fundamental intellectual change that would lead Americans to believe that a revolution in sexual morality was inevitable and right. One of the major assists in making this argument was the arrival of "experts" on sexuality who argued that science would prove the need for a revolution in morality. The most important figure in this aspect of the revolution was Alfred C. Kinsey. In two books, *Sexual Behavior In The Human Male* and

*Sexual Behavior in The Human Female*, published in 1948 and 1953 respectively, Kinsey became one of the major agents of moral revolution.<sup>2</sup>

As we now know, Kinsey's research was fraudulent from the start. For one thing, he drew his research sample from those who eagerly volunteered for his studies, including a sizable percentage of men in prisons. No credible researcher would give any credence whatsoever to the statistical claims Kinsey made concerning sexual behavior, but the media does. Nevertheless, the actual text of Kinsey's book was far less important to the sexual revolutionaries than its cultural effect. Those who read the book carefully would have come to the horrifying recognition that Kinsey was tilting his research towards the population most likely to be living outside of what both Christianity and the larger society understood to be proper sexuality. Even worse, his book actually included data that could only have been drawn from the sexual abuse of children.<sup>3</sup>

#### Among the Theologians

Yet, even as many Christian churches continued to maintain the clear teachings of Scripture, and even as many pastors and theologians defended the Christian moral tradition and biblical authority, there were those within institutional Christianity who did everything possible to join the sexual revolution. The sexual revolutionaries found great assistance in the form of Joseph Fletcher and his book, *Situation Ethics*, published in 1966. Fletcher, who at one time was professor of Christian Social Ethics at the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, Massachusetts and the dean of St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral in Cincinnati, argued for a new understanding of Christian ethics that he called "situation ethics." According to Fletcher, "The situationist enters into every deci-

sion-making situation fully armed with the ethical maxims of his community and its heritage, and he treats them with respect as illuminators of his problems. Just the same he is prepared in any situation to compromise them or set them aside *in the situation* if love seems better served by doing so."<sup>4</sup>

Thus, Fletcher argued that the Bible and Christian sexual morality could serve as a guide to decision-making, but that all of the Bible's teachings should be set aside if, in his words, "love seems better served by doing so." In 1970, Fletcher told a group of Christian ethicists, "I am prepared to argue in the utmost seriousness that Christian obligation calls for lies and adultery and fornication and theft and promise breaking and killing – sometimes, depending on the situation. Fletcher clearly left his own indelible mark in liberal protestant theology. But so did others such as Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr.

John A.T. Robinson, an unbelieving bishop of the Church of England, in his book *Honest to God* similarly continued this revolution. Harvey Cox of the Harvard Divinity School, famous for his book, *The Secular City*. Cox said simply, "We must avoid giving a simple yes or no answer to the question of premarital chastity."<sup>5</sup> Well, as any parent or pastor well understands, if you can't give a simple yes or no answer, the answer is yes.

#### The Withering of Vice

Philosopher Philip Kitcher makes the very important observation that the sexual revolution could not have happened without what he calls "the withering of vice."<sup>6</sup> What Kitcher also understands is that the withering of vice could not have happened without the withering of theism that came before.

The modern or postmodern quest for

sexual emancipation cannot be neutral when it comes to the teachings of the Bible and the moral witness of historic Christianity. It must not only be revised, as was the claim at the midpoint of the twentieth century and even into the 1960's, it must be supplanted.

In terms of understanding the challenge we now face I began my most recent book, *We Must Not Be Silent* with a quotation from Flannery O' Conner who says, "push back against the age as hard as it pushes against you." To understand what we are up against is at least part of the problem, part of the challenge. To understand the roots of the moral revolution requires some very careful thinking and the acknowledgment that the sexual revolution could not have happened without secularization and that secularization could not have progressed without producing the sexual revolution.

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[www.albertmohler.com](http://www.albertmohler.com)

## CREATION WITHOUT COMPROMISE

are Reformed Christians concerned about the issue of origins in our midst. Through this resource site and blog, they aim to provide support to those who share their concerns. They are committed to the historic Reformed understanding of Genesis and believe that a failure to maintain the



orthodox position not only attacks biblical truth in general, but the gospel of Jesus Christ in particular.

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[creationwithoutcompromise.com](http://creationwithoutcompromise.com)

# The Huguenot Cross

## Engelina van Essen

Quite a few people have asked me lately, "Do you know the meaning of the Huguenot Cross? I have one and when I'm asked, what it means, I'm not sure." Yes, I do know something about it and am happy to share it with you, because this cross is a wonderful means of witnessing for Christ.

Huguenots were a group of Protestants who became the centre of political and religious quarrels in France in the 1500's and 1600's. The Huguenots believed the teachings of the great Reformer John Calvin and were members of the Reformed Church. The French Roman Catholics mockingly gave them the name Huguenots. Resources do not tell where this name found its origin, but there is a possibility that these people were called after Besancon Hugues, a Swiss religious leader. Through persecution the name Huguenot became a name of honour. The cross is not a sign of Huguenot descent, as some people may think, and thus it is not limited to be worn by descendants of the French Huguenots only; but those who do wear it, do this as a sign of Reformed persuasion. (Reformed in a wider sense of the word.) The French Protestants have known very hard times before they found freedom of religion. After the Edict of Nantes in 1685, when they were deprived from gained grants, thousands of Huguenots fled France to settle in England, Prussia, The Netherlands, and America. As a result of this, many Walloon congregations came about in The Netherlands.

## THE MEANING OF THE CROSS

Since its origin is so old, it is very hard to be exact. Certain is, that the main part is a cross – OUR ONLY HOPE!

The reason that the Maltese cross, with the four even arms was chosen is, that the Protestants – the Huguenots – wanted to be marked by the cross, but NOT by the "Roman" cross. The Maltese cross is the symbol of re-birth: the new birth.

The split arms form eight points representing the Beatitudes from Matthew 5:3-10.

## BLESSED ARE:

The poor in spirit poor in spirit refers to humility and acknowledging personal unworthiness. Humble citizens of God's Kingdom will be blessed.

They that mourn – those mourning over personal sin and the sin of this world. "For godly grief produces repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death." II Cor. 7:10. They will be comforted by God who revealed himself in Jesus Christ.

The meek – Those who do not bear a grudge: – who have no resentment; – who do not kick back. Those shall inherit the earth; – the new earth; – the new creation.

Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness – who do hunger with a strong desire and thirst for righteous living will be satisfied; – will be filled. For they "will not walk in the flesh but according to the Spirit" Rom. 8:4.

The merciful – those who have compassion in forgiving and helping others, for Christ's sake. This is the qualification for receiving mercy.

The pure in heart – the heart is the seat of our will; – our emotions; – our intellect. Purification means, confessing and resisting sin. Those who are pure in heart, shall see God; – shall live in a right relationship with their heavenly Father.

The peacemakers – those who bring the message of peace and salvation; – who will restore the right relationship between God and people through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Being peacemakers does not make us children of God. "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are." 1 John 3:1.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

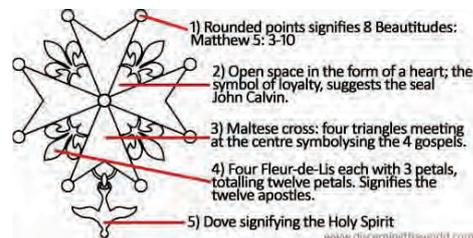
Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

These two beatitudes go together and are different than the first seven, for the last two teach of experience, and not what people are.

"Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven."

Other sources will tell us that the points of the cross remind us of the

fruit of the Spirit as we read it in Galatians 5:22: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, selfcontrol".



Between the arms of the cross is a crown of four lilies and four hearts, representing the loyalty to the French Crown, but more so to the cross of Christ. The white lilies reminding us of being pure; – the four hearts symbolizing the unity we have in Jesus Christ.

The ornament at the lower arm of the cross had in origin a different form. Some people saw in it a tear, reminding them of persecution; – others say it used to be a replica of the pear shaped pitcher in which the anointing oil for the French kings was kept. Around 1688 this ornament disappeared definitely and was replaced by the dove with spread wings and the head down, symbol of the Holy Spirit.

The Huguenot Cross is a very meaningful symbol. Those who wear it, wear it as a recognition of their Reformed (Protestant) persuasion and as a witness of their evangelical faith – as a reminder of their high calling and of God's promises given to them.

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### Auckland Ladies Presbyterial

The Ladies of the Auckland Presbytery were invited to meet on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2016 at the Reformed Church of Hamilton, Aberdeen Drive. The morning began with registration and morning tea. The theme for the day was 'Do not worry'.

We were officially welcomed by Janice van den Engel, who led the proceedings for the day, in a very lovely manner. There were a total of 97 ladies present. We sang the traditional Presbyterial Anthem – 'Sing with Jubilation', followed by 'What God ordains is right', after the speaker; 'Consider the Lillies' and in the afternoon; 'There is a wide-ness in God's mercy'.

Our Guest Speaker, Sjannette Hagoort and her husband, Wally, went to PNG as missionaries to upgrade and develop

Mapang House and other gospel work in Port Moresby and after 11 years there, they have now returned to NZ.

Sjannette's topic, 'Do not worry' is something we all need to be reminded of, something very easy to say, but hard to do. We can learn not to worry as we learn to depend and trust on our God; "Ladies your God is a gracious, kind and lovely heavenly Father who loves us very much". We were encouraged to bring all our concerns to our heavenly Father in prayer, sharing with him and being honest. Sjannette skilfully, humorously and in a very real way wove the stories of her life into practical examples of the things that we as women can be very 'good' at stewing over. Sjannette shared some of the many challenges with going to PNG with Wally as missionaries and the different cares and major concerns which were ongoing both in PNG and back in New Zealand with family members. Another unsettling time was

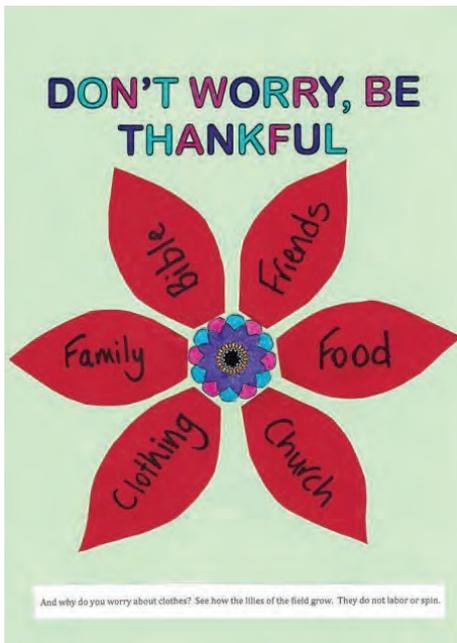
on their return to NZ with no job, no income and unsure where to live, and being reminded again to trust in God's provision, as a child trusts their parents to provide.

We were reminded that our problems are a refining fire, but to let God heal our pain. We need to go through the process with God and He will refresh us. Our situations are never 'desperate' to God.

Many good scriptures were used to encourage us. Habakkuk 3:17-19 "...The Sovereign Lord is my strength..."; Isaiah 43:1-3a "I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour...", Proverbs 3:5-6 "Trust in the Lord with all your heart...", Philippians 4:6 "Do not be anxious about anything...", Psalm 23 "...I will fear no evil, for you are with me..." Psalm 34:18, 1 Peter 5:7 and Matthew 10:29-31.

As women, we could relate to many of the challenges and concerns, which





Sjannette mentioned, and we were greatly encouraged by the reminder that we indeed do serve a gracious, kind and lovely heavenly Father who is 100% totally trustworthy, therefore we do not need to worry.

An offering was taken for the ladies in the Reformed Church of PNG to go towards airfares to enable them to travel to the National Women's conference in Lae in 2016. \$1315.00 was collected.

We all enjoyed a wonderful lunch, which was served in the hall. We came together again for the 'business' side of the day. The minutes from the last Ladies Presbyterian in Pukekohe 2015 were read. Reports from the other ladies groups were read and received and it is great to hear what the women of the different churches do to serve in their

home churches. Avondale were officially asked to host the next Presbyterian day in 2017 and Helen Wassenaar accepted on their behalf.

Rosalie Welch and Patricia Nagel presented a light-hearted skit to illustrate the theme of 'Do not worry' – very well done ladies.

In our craft session in the afternoon we created a 'Be Thankful' flower as a reminder not to worry but be thankful, which was followed by afternoon tea.

Thank you to the team at Aberdeen for the lovely day.

**Mary van den Engel**

*Reformed Church of Hamilton Ladies@ Eight*

*(Adapted from the Minutes written by Jackie Hemmes)*



## Short Report Auckland Presbytery

Auckland Presbytery met on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April at the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Bucklands Beach.

The Rev. Dirk van Garderen, for the convening church of Bucklands Beach, read from John 10:7-18. After reflecting on our role as under shepherds of the flock and on the marvellous grace of our Chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, he opened the meeting in prayer.

The Rev. de Vos welcomed the many members of the congregation who were present and also the synodical examiners, the Rev. Hans Vaatstra from Wellington Presbytery and the Rev. Daniel Wilson from South Island Presbytery.

Vicar Ryan Sparks was then invited to preach his sermon on Psalm 36 – "Protected from sin's deception". After a discussion on the sermon in closed session, Presbytery decided to sustain Ryan's sermon and the Synodical Examiners concurred with this decision. Those present at the meeting were then called in and informed of this decision. We then had a time of coffee and fellowship.

The Rev. John Rogers then proceeded to examine Ryan on the areas of Knowledge of Holy Scripture and Church Polity. The Rev. John Haverland then examined him on the areas of Church History and Symbolics (Creeds and Confessions). Finally the Leo de

Vos examined Ryan on Ethics. At this point the moderator gave opportunity for delegates to ask questions. Again, after some discussion in closed session, the delegates also sustained this part of Ryan's exam. Presbytery then, with the concurrence of the Synodical Examiners, unanimously sustained Ryan's exam as a whole so he can now be ordained as a Minister of the Word and Sacraments in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

At this point members of the Buck-

lands Beach congregation and others attending Presbytery were called back into the assembly and informed that Ryan had sustained his final exam. This news was received with rejoicing and applause. Leo de Vos led the assembly in a prayer of thanksgiving and committed the Sparks family to the Lord's care. At this point, congregational members and non-delegates left the meeting.

Presbytery then discussed the proposed preaching roster for Avondale

now that the Rev. Peter Moelker has departed these shores for his new work in California. Presbytery committed to provide Avondale with one day's preaching supply approximately every three weeks while they are without a minister.

John Haverland then closed in prayer and the meeting was adjourned at 11.25pm.

**Reporter: Rev. Michael Willemse**

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## Missions in focus

# Vision for Christian schooling is renewed!

*In July 2015, John and Alice Steenhof travelled to Mbale, Uganda with the aim of ascertaining the needs of the Christian schools in that area. The concept of helping the schools to raise their standards of education was something that was suggested by the OPC missionary the Rev. Eric Tuininga, who believes that in the long term, it will be beneficial for the dissemination of the gospel in Uganda.*

*In April of this year, br John and sr Alice were jointly sent by Southern River Free Reformed Church in Perth and the Reformed Church of Silverstream for a period of six months to educate the teachers of the Christians schools in Mbale. One matter that causes difficulty for the teachers, is adequate income. One way we can promote Christian Education in Mbale is to support the teachers financially. If you would like to give financial assistance to the Christian school teachers in this area, please send your enquiry to the Rev. Eric Tuininga at: [ericdianna@hotmail.com](mailto:ericdianna@hotmail.com)*

*Following is John and Alice's first report.*

### John Steenhof

Connie, our fellow worker, was driving a fancy four-wheeled drive to propel us on our way to our first school visit! The six schools we are helping are all mud huts tucked up in the hills, very hard to find and, especially in rainy conditions, very difficult to get to. Our guide for our first trip, local pastor Charles, was providing directions as we went. At times he was a bit unsure, which meant we had to turn around on the clay roads of the back hills.

Being a poor backseat driver, especially with women drivers, alarm bells went off on every difficult stretch of the road. All the green fields and trading posts looked alike to us. We lost count of the turns. Finally, after many hills, gullies, and surrounded by fields and dotted with huts we reached our first school, Kachonga! There it was, a mere lowly mud hut, also used for church as well as school. But no school in the west grabbed my heart like this vision. Yet...things were suspiciously quiet around the school. As we neared the door of the building, a lady with a hoe slung over her shoulder slowly approached us and told us in halting English that the children were away! What a disappointment. Somehow the person who had made arrangements for us to visit

had miscommunicated. Misunderstanding is very common with arrangements made by phone, because the person on the other end usually can't speak English very well. Nevertheless, we took pictures of the empty school. We found out that this sweating, yet sweet and elegant lady was the caretaker of the school and was watching all the village children (up to 17) as she worked out in the fields. Western rules about oversight in our minds had to be thrown away. Seeing the sweat on her brow and contemplating the breadth of her job of overseeing the school, working out in the field and overseeing all the village children, told us much about the hardiness and initiative of these Ugandans we were helping. So this was a very informative visit even though we missed the children this time. She was obviously so delighted to see us that we were gratified as we left. Our existence was justified!

So we were off to our second school, Kaiti. Again there were stops and starts as the navigator was not always sure where we were going. Finally we arrived at Kaiti with our hearts pumping. This school burned in our memories because the delightful students there had sung a touching song of greeting and farewell to us in our week-long visit in July, 2015. As we turned in the drive, we were scanning for

some changes in the buildings from last year. There had been some progress on the half-finished new brick church. But still no roof! Our eyes turned to the skeletal log building that had no cover only 9 months before. (The students had to forego lunch on some days because of this.) Now they had roofing iron on three quarters of the roof of this building, albeit rusty, and at least the windward side of the building was covered by tin. The tin looked to be about the thinnest gauge possible without turning into tinfoil.

We discovered that again the school was off! Well, that turned out once more for the best. It gave us a chance to see

and talk at length to three teachers who “happened to be there”. We looked to the tree that had served as an office last year. There was the “new” “brick” office. The teachers were able to share with us some of their work, and they showed us the dusty old books in the office. It was claustrophobic and about the size of a very small hut. But it was an office. And they were as proud of it as a king of his palace.

All these small gradual changes were wrought by blood, sweat and tears in the face of very few resources. The small changes in the buildings were a picture of the patience we would have to rally in order to work along with them. Teach-

ers make from \$250–\$450 US dollars per year (supported by NZ churches, though not all are supported). How do these teachers get by with so little? We really don't know. We had thought formerly they made \$1000 per year and that shocked us. But even less than half of that! But this is Uganda.

We asked four of the children to read from a book, which we brought along. They managed to decode the book, haltingly, but surprisingly well, considering their disadvantage. We must realise that English is not the language of the villages. They often have no radios, no English language at home, no reading books to take home, no textbooks and no teachers who speak English well. No sight bytes or sound bytes. So...their reading amazed us. Yet we could see there was so much to do.

We gathered them around and read them an English story with Pastor Charles acting as interpreter. For them this was such a treat. All activity halted in the village and they all gathered around listening quietly. Wow!

A large group of students had joined in listening with enraptured silence. I always make it a challenge to get the children laughing hilariously and this was no exception. They were hooting and absolutely delighted. But then came the time for us to leave. As we waved goodbye with smiles, we reassured them that we would come back.

I could tell you so much more about our experiences but will leave that for later...

And so we have our work cut out for us. There are many challenges, and we are very excited about them, though we will need much patience to teach and re-teach many times over. This can only be done in Christ by His help, day by day. We daily pray for His help and wisdom in our reflection and plans and He gives it. We reflect on His word and are driven to prayer for daily wisdom and strength.



1



2

1. Phil Groenewold and René Dorgelo, shed builders in Perth, bought books, pencil cases, erasers, sharpeners, coloured pencils and pencils for the children. They raised funds to pay for the suitcases on the plane. Thank you blessed donors for these and the RAV which keeps us safe and dry.
2. Team in front of empty Kachonga school with noble caretaker.
3. Connie examining books in office at Kaiti.
4. Team with Kachonga caretaker, ready to return to her work in the fields.
5. New palatial office in Kaiti.

Since it is the break between the first and second term we have organised a teachers' conference for all the teachers and principals at these schools. (about 25 of them) They have to come many kilometres from the hill country and they almost always travel by Bodaboda (taxi – motorbike).

The ladies drive sidesaddle on these motorbikes and most with no helmets,

which is a little scary. Alice and I both rode the 'boda-boda' from our farm where we stay, into town. We stressed to the drivers, "Not fast but safe." Most of them are very careful, especially navigating around the potholes.

The mission pays for the transportation and the food for this conference, otherwise these poor teachers could not afford to come. Many of them would

come to the conference for a decent meal alone. We plan to deal with lesson planning (called scheming here), phonics and teaching for service rather than success under the umbrella of Christ's words. Our hope is to make this a treat for them as well as an encouragement to their service. Printers abound in town, so we can get our material printed rather cheaply. With music, decorations (African



style) and good teaching we intend to make this an event to remember.

In the second term we will have two teams visiting three schools per week. For these schools it is an unbelievable joy, for some of them have only had

one or two visits in the last two years. We intend to have a checklist of items, which will encourage them towards certain goals “mpulempule”(little by little). We also intend to train teachers in the schools. Our hope is to equip

them to fish rather than give them the fish. **But we will have to raise funds for fishing rods and ponds to help match their good efforts.**

They now have a greater vision. One head of school told us that before our visit, his wife, a teacher, had thought about giving up on Christian schools. Then we came in July 2015. She was totally encouraged by our visit, and stated with tears in her eyes, “Jesus has brought you. Now I know that I can and must keep on with Christian schooling.” Her husband too stated with a gleam in his eye, “We had a biblical vision which kept me going, but your visit helped my wife to see this vision anew!”

And so now, by God’s grace and in His strength, Alice and I with other mission personnel may continue to give direction to this vision. Praise the Lord! And please pray for us.



6

6. Teachers and kids listening intently to story at Kaiti.

7. Connie tells story with Pastor Charles interpreting to Kaiti village students.



7