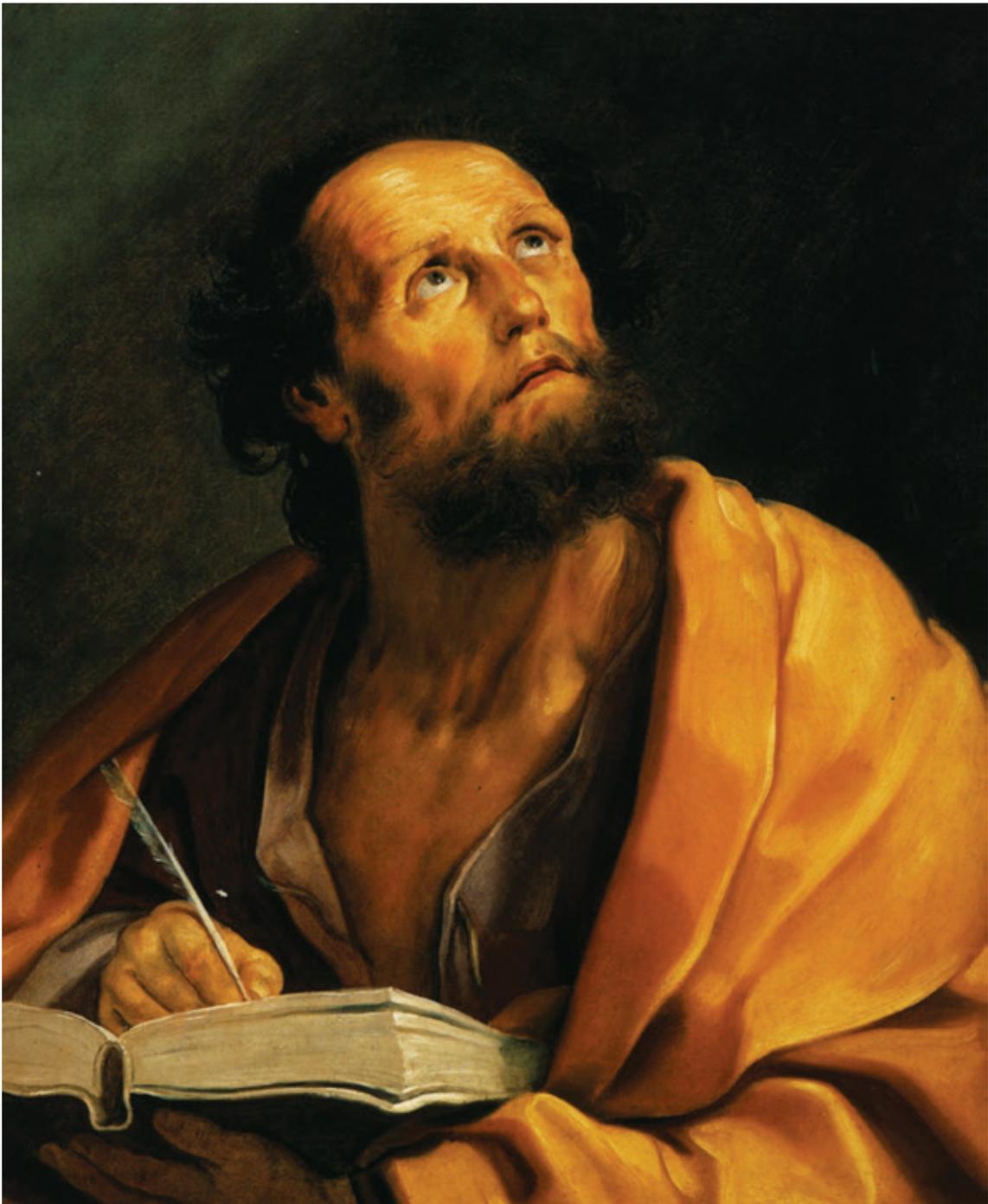


faith in
focus

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Luke the Physician

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Editorial

In this issue, we are taking a glimpse of Luke, the “beloved physician”, reputed to be the author of the Gospel of Luke and The Acts of the Apostles. Our focus will include Luke the person, the doctor, his writings, the culture of the day, and his faith.

In neither Luke’s gospel nor the book of Acts does he identify himself as the author. This, of course, is opportunity for the scholars to argue the point about the book’s authorship, and they offer lots of technical reasons for their scepticism etc. However, I am confident that there is an abundance of good evidence to support Luke’s authorship of both these biblical books; one good example of that being the pronoun “we” which occurs in Acts frequently. After all, as a student of the Scriptures, I put my trust in the LORD who preserves His word for His people, and I see that Scripture is self-attesting.

According to tradition, Luke came from Antioch and was a physician, a constant companion of Paul the Apostle, writing much of the book of Acts as an eye-witness, giving much detail about the missionary journeys of Paul and his eventual arrest, incarceration and journey to Rome. In his account to the most excellent Theophilus, concerning the life and times of Jesus the Messiah, he was not an eyewitness. However, being a well-educated, intelligent man, he investigated the facts about Jesus of Nazareth, and presented them in a well-ordered and detailed manner, in some cases presenting important facts that were not recorded in either Matthew or Mark.

Another fact that someone commented on is that Luke and Acts account for 27.5% of the New Testament, which is a significant contribution to its makeup.

Our contributors have presented helpful articles to deal with our theme, Luke the Physician.

Mr Josh Rogers looks at Luke the Physician and his cultural background.

Mr Joshua Flinn considers Luke’s writings.

Mr Andre Holtslag writes about the person, facts and faith.

Mrs Sally Davey writes about the response of visitors to our hymn-singing.

Letters from New Zealand considers the continuing process of building churches.

Mrs Jenny Waldron meditates on when children leave the nest.

Euthanasia-Free NZ provides background on the popularity of the bill currently being debated .

Mr John Haverland reviews *Evangelicalism Divided: A Record of Crucial Change in the Years, 1950 to 2000* by Iain H Murray; *Letters from New Zealand* considers the continuing process of church building.

The Reformed Church of Silverstream celebrates 50 years since institution.

Cover image: alchetron.com/Luke-the-Evangelist-946949-W

The opinions expressed in this magazine are not to be considered the official position of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand 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 New Zealand. 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.

NB: In line with common publishing practice *Faith in Focus* reserves the right to publish the names of all contributors with their articles, unless compelling reasons are given to the editor for not doing so. This applies to both print and online versions.

Luke the Physician (1)

Luke the Physician and his culture

Josh Rogers

In Colossians 4:14, the apostle Luke is referred to as the 'beloved physician' (NASB). What does this mean? What effect would this have had on Luke's writing, and how was he trained? What influence did the culture of the day have on Luke and the early church? How does answering these questions help us, two millennia later?

It may help our broad topic to consider first the description given of Luke. The Greek word used in Col. 4:14 means healer, doctor, or physician. The ancient world made no formal distinc-

tion between different kinds of healers, whether they used drugs, surgery, diet, prayers, or magic. Many healers used different combinations of these.

In the ancient world, Greeks were considered to have been the best doctors. Somewhere between 450 and 350 BC lived the doctor Hippocrates, famed for his oath. He formulated the conception of health as a balance between the four humours,¹ which idea was not done away with until around the 17th century. Medicine as a science was greatly accelerated by the Ptolemies, the successors of Alexander the Great, who ruled Egypt and were generous patrons

of the arts and sciences.

As early as 400 BC there was in circulation a large amount of observational data on such widely varying fields as physiology and surgery. Two Egypt-based Greek doctors greatly advanced knowledge of anatomy and physiology. One of these doctors, Erasistratus of Ceos, was able to work out how the heart functions and tell motor and sensory nerves apart.

The use of drugs was known in the ancient world. Indeed, our word pharmacy comes from the Greek word for drug. Having said that, most drugs were concoctions of plants, parts of animals, and various minerals in comparatively unrefined forms. The philosopher Socrates was famously executed by drinking hemlock, as well-known then as now for its poison, or 'pharmakon' in Greek.

As far as surgery went, 'the basic principles of orthopaedics were well known



“The ancient Near East was as varied linguistically as it is today. Common languages were Syriac, Aramaic, and Egyptian, with a host of parochial languages and dialects, but Greek was the only language that was spoken nearly everywhere.”

[Conrad, p. 57]'. The use of tourniquets, sutures and opiates was known and the medical writer Galen (119 to ca. 216 AD) was able to perform invasive surgery with positive results. It should be noted, though, that medical misadventure was very common, often with deadly consequences. In spite of his knowledge of surgery and the skill of his colleagues, Galen stressed that everything else should be attempted before surgery was tried.

Medicine could be taught as an apprenticeship or by an individual accompanying a doctor friend on his rounds. There was nothing like a standardised course of study required to qualify to practise medicine. Passing speakers of any background would give lectures in the marketplace and both philosophers and doctors were known to speak on the subject of medicine. Indeed, the distinction between those whom we would think of as doctors and those who healed by other means was usually pretty vague and was often not made by the population as a whole. The world was one full of gods, who would do as asked if the right offering were made to the right god at the right time in the right way, which, understandably, was often impossible to figure out. This was frequently accounted for by attributing human emotions and motives to the gods.

It was usually the local authorities who distinguished between who was a doctor and who was not and that had little to do with medical proficiency; it was usually for purposes of taxation or to determine how useful a given individual was in forensic science. In many cases doctors were exempt from certain taxes. Doctors could not be prosecuted for professional ineptitude, although they could be if they intended to do harm.

After the conquest of Israel by the Babylonians, Jews had been dispersed around the ancient world, especially Asia Minor, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Egypt. Wherever they went and there were at least ten Jewish men, a synagogue was established as a place of worship. Jews are reckoned to have been one of the most literate cultures in the ancient world because they had a holy book². When the apostle Paul went to a new town, he would go to the synagogue and preach there first.

We know from Acts that a persecution broke out after the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 8).³ This spread Christians throughout Judea and Syria. It appears that this persecution was largely Jewish in origin as the Roman govern-

ment was unlikely to intervene in such affairs unless it threatened public order or involved abuse of Roman citizens, and not everyone by a long way was a Roman citizen. Prior to Nero's persecution around 65 AD, most of the perpetrators were Jews. Rome did not care if people worshipped Jesus as long they worshipped Caesar as well.

The ancient Near East was as varied linguistically as it is today. Common languages were Syriac, Aramaic, and Egyptian, with a host of parochial languages and dialects, but Greek was the only language that was spoken nearly everywhere. As far as getting along in the commercial world went, Latin was probably not particularly useful, at least in the eastern Mediterranean. Quite a few of the cities Paul visited were large and cultured, Tarsus, Syrian Antioch, Corinth, and Athens especially.

In 67 BC, Pompey the Great was commissioned by the Roman Senate to clear the Mediterranean Sea of pirates, which had become a plague in the wake of the decline of Alexander the Great's successors. He did this so thoroughly that maritime transport had only the elements to fear in travelling around two of the world's largest seas (the Black Sea is the other). There has been some doubt as to the extent of goods traded over the Mediterranean, but there are records of British tin, Egyptian grain, Sicilian corn, and Tunisian olives, to name a few examples, being transported by sea in large quantities. The city of Rome herself was fed to a great extent by grain from Sicily and Egypt. The importance of sea travel lies in its much greater efficiency than travel overland. The trade in spices from Asia was revolutionised more by the discovery of a sea route from Europe than it was by mere competition with overland transport.

Daily Greek culture was largely unchanged since the days of classical Greece. To be sure, the Greek cities were no longer independent and had limited legislative power, but Roman policy was to allow social, legal, and judicial continuity where it did not conflict with what was viewed as good civil order, including worship of the emperor. Although Greece had been conquered by Rome, 'captive Greece conquered her conqueror'⁴. Greek culture had a great influence upon Rome, although the extent to which that is so has been hotly disputed. Certainly, in the eastern half of the Roman empire, Greek was much more commonly spoken than Latin and

existing Greek systems of civil administration were allowed to continue. Local religion was a mix of Greek deities and the local gods. The cult of the emperor was added as that became stronger. Asia Minor, particularly, had a strong native religious culture which continued for centuries into the Christian era.

Religiously, the ancient world was diverse but largely pagan. Zoroastrianism had arisen in the 6th century BC in Persia and had similar moral concepts to Judaism and the conflict between right and wrong, but it is from this faith that we get the term dualist. However, all the other religions were interchangeable. None of them demanded exclusive adherence and many, if not most, people offered sacrifices to several gods. Janus was the god of turning, both of doors and metaphorically of the turning of the year, hence our January. There were the gods of the household - of the ancestors, the well-known ones like Zeus and Aphrodite, and gods of cities, rivers, and mountains. Any of these could be sacrificed to in order to secure a successful voyage, a good harvest, or a healthy child.

An ancient pagan went to the local temple like a modern man goes to the library. He had use of the temple and its sacrifices and priests, whom he paid for their services, but there was no personal connection to anyone else who attended the temple, much less any intimate discussion with a fellow sacrificer of how his relationship was with Hercules or Isis.

Not counting miracles involving casting out of demons (which had physiological effects on their hosts), Luke records thirteen medical miracles, the most of any of the Gospels. Acts records a further eleven, not counting instances such as Jesus' ascension and the death of Ananias and Sapphira. The references he makes to Elizabeth's and Mary's pregnancies shows that he knew pregnancy usually lasts around nine months (Lk 1, scattered references). On quite a few occasions both in the gospel and in

Acts we get before and after glimpses of people suffering various conditions, in most cases where there were numerous witnesses to contradict any tall tales (leper cleansed, Lk 5:12 – 13; paralytic healed, Lk 5:18 – 25; dead man resurrected, Lk 7:12 – 15). In some cases, the healings were performed on sufferers related to people whom one would think less prone to gullibility than others – soldiers (Lk 7:2, 10), a synagogue leader (Lk 8:42 – 55), and a governor (Acts 28:8). In this last case the miracle had such an effect that the governor believed Paul's message. In the modern world, only a doctor may pronounce someone dead. For someone who has such knowledge then to record that same individual to have been revived is powerful testimony indeed to the accuracy of Luke's account.⁵

This is especially so when virtually all cases were widely known to the public and such an account would have been rejected if it were false. This is encouraging to remember when liberal theologians deny the supernatural, which has the effect of denying the truth of Scripture. The God of truth needs no independent verification of having told the truth, but Luke's training and demonstrated accuracy can help to give us confidence in the Bible, even though we may not be able to give an immediate answer to those who deny its truth. Accounts of people suffering and their healing help to demonstrate that God is a loving creator who has done extraordinary things for ordinary people, not only spiritually but materially and personally as well.

So we have seen, then, that the ancient world was varied culturally, but Alexander the Great's conquests and the earlier foundation of Greek colonies had spread the Greek language far and wide, thus giving the world a common language. Rome's conquests provided a political unity and peace, which greatly facilitated the advance of the Gospel throughout the Mediterra-

nean basin. Medical knowledge in the ancient world was advanced enough for the medical aspects of Luke's gospel and Acts to have been recorded intelligently and accurately. His precise use of political titles, which have been frequently verified by archaeology, encourages us to trust his accounts in those parts of his gospel and Acts for which there are no independent records. We need not take this as independent confirmation that God has told the truth, but it is a helpful accommodation to the weakness of our human nature, and helps us to remember that Christianity is an historical faith grounded in real events that happened to real people.

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- The Western medical tradition, 800 BC to AD 1800*, Lawrence I. Conrad, Michael Nee, Vivian Nutton, Roy Porter, Andrew Wear, Cambridge UP, 1995
- The First Christian Centuries*, Paul McKechnie, InterVarsity Press, 2001
- The Triumph of Christianity*, Rodney Stark, HarperCollins, 2011

Notes

- 1 This was the idea that four different humours, or fluids, black bile, yellow bile, phlegm, and blood, needed to be in balance for the body to be healthy. If they became unbalanced, disease would result.
- 2 Stark, *The Triumph of Christianity*, p.98.
- 3 For Acts as well as Luke having been written by the apostle Luke, see Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p.3, and fn 1.
- 4 Horace, *Epistles*, book 2.
- 5 Stark *The Triumph of Christianity*, p.55, quoting F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*, p.82. A number of archaeological discoveries have verified Luke's references to political figures (eg, Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p.372). Although Bruce and Stark refer to Luke's accuracy with political titles and their holders, Luke's accuracy being upheld when he can be proven should give us confidence that he is right in instances when there is no evidence to the contrary.

Mr Josh Rogers is a member of the Reformed Church of Palmerston North.

Luke the Physician (2)



Luke the Physician and his writings

Joshua Flinn

Background

Eusebius (260-340 AD), often considered to be the Father of early Church History, described Luke's letters as 'medicine for the soul.' Indeed, his writing displays both the personal empathy you would expect from a modern doctor as well as a careful attention to detail.

Strikingly, Luke is the only gospel author who had no first-hand experience with Jesus Christ. In fact, he wasn't even a Jew: he has the peculiar honour of being the only non-Jewish writer of a book in the New Testament.

Unlike the other three authors, Luke became a Christian only after Jesus died on the cross. He implies at the beginning of his first book that he had never seen the Lord but instead heard of him from other eyewitnesses and ministers of

the Word (Luke 1:2).

He had access to the gospels of both Matthew and Mark as he was writing, and also had the opportunity to talk to many of the apostles as well as other eyewitnesses to special events in the Lord's life. One commentator suggested that Luke may have even received his information about the birth of Jesus from Mary herself.

Luke also spent considerable time travelling with the Apostle Paul and Timothy. Three times he recounts the travels of Paul and himself by using the word 'we' (Acts 16:10-40; 20:5-21; 27:1-28:14). He went to Rome with Paul and Aristarchus (27:2) and appears to have lived there for two years while Paul was in prison. It's likely that during this time he not only ministered to Paul (2 Tim 4:11) but also gathered material for his gospel account.

Perhaps because of this studied approach, Luke is the only gospel author who covers from the very beginning of Christ's life (including the birth of John the Baptist) through to its end, when Jesus ascended into heaven.

We are not told exactly how he became a Christian. Some suggest that he was converted through the ministry of Paul. This seems less likely, though, because Paul never calls him a son in the faith. Instead, Paul calls him a 'close friend' or 'beloved' in Colossians 4:14.

Nevertheless, after his conversion he left his job as a physician and began to pour efforts not only into the spread of the gospel, but also into the accurate recording of Christ's life and ministry, both before and after his ascension.

His gospel account is written to Theophilus, whose name means 'lover of God' in Greek. Theophilus was most likely a man of rank, because Luke also calls him 'most excellent'. He also seems to be a recent convert to Christianity because he had 'been taught' certain things which Luke sought to confirm through the letter he provided. We can't be sure exactly who this was, although some have suggested that Theophilus was actually King Agrippa, who had asked Paul in Acts 26:28 'In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?'

Luke's research brought him into

contact with huge numbers of Christians and he bore witness to the powerful work of the Holy Spirit. But he also had to see brothers and sisters tortured and die for the faith. Sadly, he was to meet a similar end.

One church tradition suggests that a mob arrested Luke in Thebes at the age of 84, flayed him alive and crucified him to an olive tree. Some 300 years later his remains were taken to Constantinople and then later to Italy. This was his final resting place for many years until 1364, when the Emperor Charles IV requested that his skull be moved to Prague.

Themes

There are a number of major themes which run through Luke's work and distinguish it from the other gospels (at least in strength of emphasis). In the context of this article though, I would like to mention three.

Gospel to the Gentiles

Perhaps not surprisingly given his Gentile background, Luke's emphasis on the gospel is not restricted to the Jews. Christ's coming has resounding consequences not only for the nation of Israel but for *all* nations. The prominence of this message appears early on in his writing.

Luke chooses to trace our Lord's ancestry back to Adam (Luke 3:23-38) rather than Abraham (as Matthew does), highlighting the universality of his saving work for all men. But he also regularly underscores how Christ valued Gentile believers. Perhaps the most famous of these examples would be the parable where a Samaritan rather than a Jew ended up being the hero of the story (10:30-37).

Where in his gospel there are hints of this gospel inclusiveness, it comes to a head in Luke 24. Just prior to the ascension Jesus opened the minds of his disciples to understand the Scriptures and he said: *'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.'*

Now note that the first two of these written things (Christ's suffering and resurrection) have already been recorded. But the proclamation of 'repentance for the forgiveness of sins ... in his name to all nations' has yet to occur in the gospel account.

This is why the opening verses of Acts are so poignant. Luke explains to Theophilus that the previous book was written regarding Christ's ministry while he was on earth: *'I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen'* (Acts 1:1-2).

So, where the first book was focused on Christ's earthly ministry as he walked and talked with his disciples and went to the cross, the second book (Acts) is Christ's ministry *by* the Holy Spirit, *through* the apostles whom he had chosen.

This ministry is the proclamation of Christ and his saving work to *all nations* beginning in Jerusalem. When Pentecost occurs, the Apostles immediately begin ministering in Jerusalem and Peter preaches that amazing sermon about Christ.

By the end of Acts, this powerful testimony has spread through the ministry of Paul even to the non-Jewish enemies of God, to Rome itself: *'He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance'* (Acts 28:31).

Fulfillment of prophecy

Because of Luke's background, the songs of Mary and Zechariah in Luke 1-2 are particularly notable. The story of Jesus is immediately placed in the context of God's promises in the Old Testament to his people Israel. Both these opening prophecies set the tone for the book.

Mary celebrates that God 'has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever' (Luke 1:54-55).

Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, also blessed God for keeping his promises: namely, to save the Israelites from their enemies (1:71), to show mercy, and to remember his holy covenant that he made with Abraham (1:72-73).

Another way Luke displays this theme is his frequent use of the words 'it is necessary'. It was necessary that Jesus be in his Father's house (2:49), that he preach the good news of the kingdom (4:43), that he perish in Jerusalem (13:33), that he stay in Zacchaeus' house (19:5) and that he die on the cross (9:22; 17:25; 22:37; 24:7). And this all came to a head

"As a physician, Luke would have understood the divine irony God displayed; he chose to send someone who would be killed by the very ones he came to save."

at the end of the gospel when Jesus says: 'that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled' (24:44).

But, although these fulfilled promises were cause for celebration for the Jews, as Simeon noted, Christ's coming was also relevant to nations who were not Jewish: 'my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel' (2:30-32). The promise God made to Abraham was that all the nations of the world would be blessed (Gen 12:3).

Carson and Moo summarize this theme nicely: 'In the events of Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection, God is pursuing a plan, a plan revealed in the Old Testament, brought to its decisive point in Jesus' death and resurrection, but only finally fulfilled in the proclamation of the gospel to all nations.'

Salvation

Luke uses the verb 'to save' more than any other book in the New Testament. Given his prior vocation as a physician, some of these references highlight Christ's work to overturn the effects of sin on the body through miracles and

feeding the hungry and so on. But Luke's primary emphasis is that Christ came to save people from a spiritual illness: death. Our Lord himself said in Luke 19:10, 'the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.'

Many of the references to Christ as a saving figure in Luke occur around his birth. Even his name (Jesus) means 'Yahweh shall save'. According to Matthew 1:21, God had a particular reason in mind for this: 'you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.'

Perhaps this note of hope in the beginning of Luke's work is why his treatment of Christ's death on the cross is so painful. He was the saviour of the world and yet three times his adversaries twisted the knife as they killed him: 'The people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!"' (Luke 23:35); 'The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" (23:36-37)'; 'One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!"' (23:39).

And yet in an incredible twist, after the anointing of the Holy Spirit, Peter stood up with the other eleven apostles and began his sermon by referring to the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved' (Acts 2:21). It was from the death of the one who came to save them that we, his enemies, gained life and salvation.

As a physician, Luke would have understood the divine irony God displayed; he chose to send someone who would be killed by the very ones he came to save.

And yet it was only Christ's blood which would ensure the success of the spiritual surgeon in supplanting the heart of stone. Only Christ's blood would soothe a sin-sickened soul and provide a balm for bitterness and guilt. Only Christ's blood would purify and sanctify a sinner, enabling him to be presented spotless and blameless before God.

Mr Joshua Flinn is currently a vicar in the Reformed Church of Nelson and has been called by the Reformed Church of Palmerston North to be a church planter in New Plymouth.

Luke the Physician (3)

The Physician, the Facts, and Faith!

Andre Holtslag

Mention the writing of doctors to most people and they will probably think of an illegible scrawl. In fact, there are all sorts of jokes and memes about this on the internet. One showed a doctor getting his eyes tested by another doctor using a chart with illegible letters on it and the doctor passing with flying colours! You can even get a computer font called 'Doctor's Scrawl'! It is described as "a

very thin, textured, faint, scratchy font." And all this has come about because it seems that the writing of many doctors, perhaps because they have to write out a lot of prescriptions every day, as well as patient notes, is very hard to read.

But look up any description about the writing of Luke the Physician, and you will find adjectives like stylistically beautiful, detailed, accurate, careful, and elegant. Renan's summary of Luke's Gospel, referred to by some commen-

tators, says that the third Gospel is "the most beautiful book that was ever written." And in what was intended as a significant compliment, another commentator has said, "Of all the Gospels, Luke's literary style comes closest to the style of ancient Greek classical writers."¹

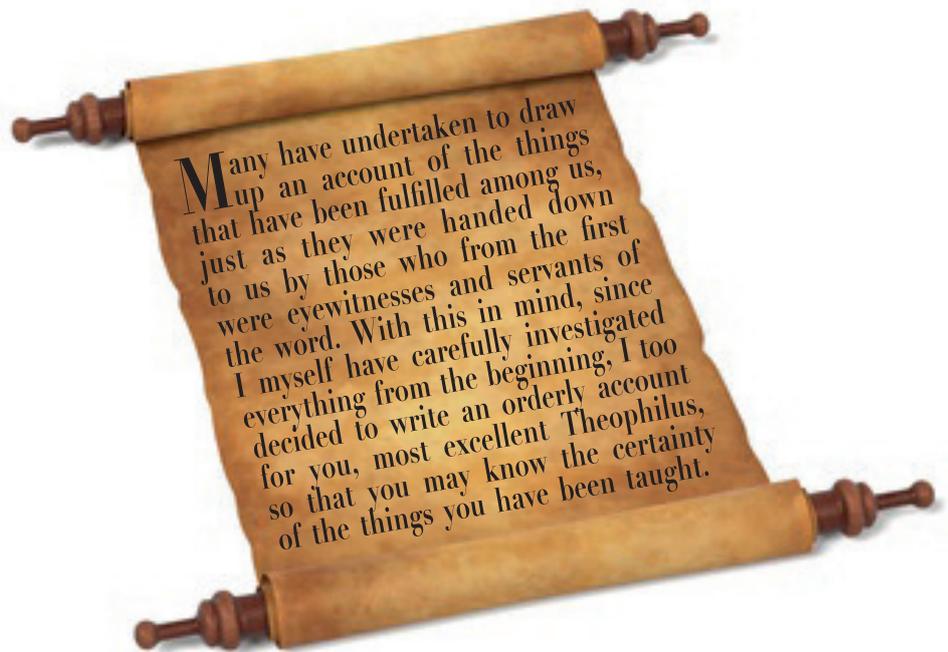
The sorts of things that have made Luke's writing worthy of this high praise include the **close attention that he gives to the accuracy of details**. Luke himself reveals that he saw this as a very

important aspect of what he wrote. In the prologue to his Gospel, he says, "It seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an *orderly account* for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught (Luke 1:3-4 emphasis added)." And so, for example, Luke includes **dates**: "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1)," and when referencing a prophecy about an empire-wide famine by a man named Agabus, Luke notes that the famine "happened during the reign of Claudius (Acts 11:28)." **Names and titles** are also a part of the accuracy of his writing. Luke tells us that the census that brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem came about as a result of a decree by Caesar Augustus, and that Zechariah received the promise of a son (John the Baptist) "in the time of Herod King of Judea (Luke 1:5)." Have a read of Luke 3:1-2 and you will see that Luke mentions no less than *five* rulers and their titles and the areas they governed, and two high priests, to locate the time that John the Baptist began his public ministry. All in all, Luke mentions 21 political or religious leaders in Luke and Acts! And Luke is also very careful to use **correct titles**. One example of this is how he refers to Herod Antipas as "Tetrarch (Luke 3:1)." The Jewish subjects of Herod called him King (Mark 6:14). But Herod was never promoted to royal status by the Emperor and Luke is quite right to refer to him by the lower title of "Tetrarch."

Another example of Luke's accuracy is found in Acts 17:6. There Luke makes reference to the rulers of Thessalonica using the Greek word *politarch*. For a long time, liberal biblical scholars used this as an example of a mistake in the Bible because the word *politarch* was not found in any classical Greek literature. Eventually though, archeologists discovered a marble inscription that demonstrated that this title was only used for local officials in Thessalonica during a certain period in history; the exact period that Luke wrote about! So there is an incredible amount of historical detail in Luke's writing. What this means, of course, is that the accuracy of these details can be checked. And it shouldn't surprise us to learn that many have sought to do exactly that (usually in the hope of discovering a mistake, which would give them an excuse to discredit the Bible and remain in unbelief!). Sir

William Ramsay is a classic example. He said, "I began with a mind unfavourable to it [Acts] ... It did not lie in my line of life to investigate the subject minutely; but more recently I found myself often brought into contact with the Book of Acts as an authority for the topography, antiquities, and society of Asia Minor. It was gradually borne in upon me that in various details the narrative showed marvellous truth."²

Another area of accuracy that we find in Luke has to do with **eyewitness reports**. Luke tells us that it was important to him that he did not rely on guesswork or hearsay but that he got it right 'from the horse's mouth,' as the saying goes (Luke 1:1-4). From the historical ref-



erences in Luke's writing, we can be almost certain that Luke was in Palestine in A.D. 57. Perhaps he had been there before but we know for certain that he was there then. This means he was in the area where Jesus publicly ministered and died and rose again around 27 years after the crucifixion. Many there would have seen and heard Jesus themselves. For example, James, the brother of Jesus, was the leader of the Jerusalem church in A.D. 57.

But let's confine ourselves to one event that Luke experienced himself – his sea voyage to Rome with the Apostle Paul. As you will see from Acts 27, Luke's use of "we" makes it plain that he was with Paul in the ship! Dick Tripp is a

retired Anglican minister from right here in Christchurch, New Zealand. He wrote a booklet entitled *Did the Writers of the New Testament Get their Picture of Jesus Right?* Here is what he wrote:

Another example of Luke's accuracy is his description of his sea voyage with Paul to Rome, and their shipwreck on Malta, in Acts 27, which has been called "one of the most instructive documents for the knowledge of ancient seamanship" that we possess. There is, in fact, only one other document in existence that gives similar detail as to what sailing was like in those days. The eminent Roman historian A. N. Sherwin-White said of Acts: "Any attempt to reject its basic historicity, even in matters of detail, must now appear absurd."³

Well, we have said quite a lot about

the accuracy of Doctor Luke. It needs to be said, though, that Luke did not write his Gospel just to give us historically accurate information about people, places, and events. Those things are all secondary to his primary purpose. Nevertheless, he was very careful to ensure that everything he wrote down was factual and accurate and reliable and true, as has been demonstrated. Luke's primary purpose was to give Theophilus, and all those who would read this Gospel, an orderly account of the life and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that we might have certainty concerning the things we have been taught (Luke 1:1-4). So if Luke was so careful to report all of these secondary details, how much more careful must he have been in regards to those details that were his primary concern.

And let's remind ourselves again that Luke was a *doctor*! We have every reason, then, to trust that what Luke tells us about a man named Jesus, which is that He died *and rose again*, is reliable and trustworthy!

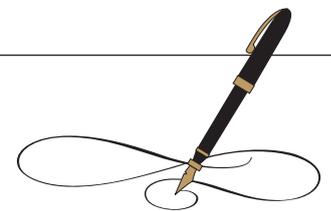
Notes

- 1 Craig Blomberg, *New International Biblical Commentary*, Luke, Hendrickson, 1990, p. 5
- 2 <http://www.ntslibrary.com/PDF%20Books/WM%20Ramsay%20Paul%20the%20Traveler%20&%20Roman%20Citizen.pdf> p. 12
- 3 <http://christianity.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Eyewitness.pdf> p.9

Mr Andre Holtslag is the minister of the Reformed Church of Dovedale (at the time of writing)

Outward focus

Sally Davey



The Effect of the Singing

Sometimes there are more visitors at church than usual; visitors who don't have a church background. It might be a wedding or a funeral – when workmates, neighbours, or unbelieving relatives are present. In these situations, we often wonder what impression the service is making on the people for whom it's unfamiliar. Is it what they will have expected? Does it seem strange, does anything grate on them? Did they understand the sermon? Do they feel welcomed?

And you know what, when I've talked with some of them over the cup of coffee afterward, the one thing they all mention is the singing. Does that surprise you? It's not the sermon, or the formality (or otherwise), or the smiles of welcome (or otherwise), or whether they could find the right places in the Bible (or not). No, it's the hymns. That is what has made

the biggest – and most favourable – impression on them.

Why should this be? I've often wondered, and tried to work it out. Naturally I've gone on and asked the visitors a few more questions¹; but for the most part they can't really say why the singing had such an effect. Aware that answering this question might tell us something about the importance of singing to our witness, I've spent some time thinking about it. By reading between the lines and making a few connections between the thoughts people have offered, I've begun to detect some themes. Here are some things that have occurred to me.

It's hearty

Whenever anyone does something with enthusiasm or intensity, we tend to take notice: what they are doing is clearly im-

portant to them. They think it's urgent, worth the energy they're expending, it's related to something they hold very dear. So when we sing with vigour and volume in church, we are (to the visitors among us) conveying the impression that we are very much in earnest about it.

That gets their attention. They begin to wonder – "Now why is this group of people so enthusiastic?" What are they singing about that is so motivating? Perhaps they start to look at the words. Maybe it comes to them: "These people really believe these words are true." Possibly they notice that some songs end in a burst of praise that the congregation sings with particular volume. Other songs are sung more quietly, and more reflectively, befitting words of repentance. Any suggestion that we are singing with our minds as well as our hearts is always

useful to leave with visitors.

Of course, it's also possible that heartiness has more to do with sheer enjoyment than careful focus on the words. Some hymns have particularly good tunes and they are rousing to sing. Our singing, at this point, might be interpreted as our love of being at church and singing good tunes along with our church family. What's not to love about that? Enjoying the worship of God is a good witness by itself.

It's confident and well-executed

One of the first things I noticed when I first visited a Reformed church was how good the singing was. By that I mean,

noticed, also makes it easy for visitors to join in and enjoy the hymns.

It's corporate

There is something about the *whole* congregation singing together that is very special. It means everyone is of one mind and heart – it's a kind of expression of our togetherness in the body of Christ. (Obviously, things like fights over timing, with one segment of the congregation trying to hurry the rest up if a hymn is being played too slowly are not very edifying! Neither is the sight of surly individuals slouching in their row and refusing to sing.)

For many visitors, the sound of cor-



Grace Free Presbyterian Church. Flickr.com

the congregation was good at singing – they sang in tune, with obvious skill, and some clearly knew enough about music to sing various different parts in harmony. I am guessing that many in our churches have grown up learning music in some form or another, whether it's by piano lessons, music classes at school or through some other sort of training. It is a good thing when Christians enthusiastically use their musical gifts to sing praise to God. The way we sing definitely reflects our view of God. If we sing with skill and care, paying proper attention to the words and the technicalities of the tune, we're saying God deserves the best we can give him. Good singing, I've

porate hymn-singing is a wondrous experience. There are actually very few settings in our world today where corporate singing is heard. Sure enough, if you tune into the Concert Programme on the radio you may hear choirs singing – or if the Vienna Boys' Choir or a Welsh male choir comes to town you could buy some tickets and go hear the concert. But how many do this? It's actually quite rare to hear corporate singing, let alone have the opportunity to be part of it. Even in school music settings, the emphasis seems to be on the individual and their performance. Students are encouraged to form bands of various kinds, featuring lead singers.

“By placing a hymnal in the hands of our visitors, we may be helping them to praise God with their own hearts one day. Singing alongside us in our pew may be the beginning of eternal life for the visitor to our service. Let’s hope so.”

This, in most churches, is how singing is done – as a performance by a band, with a lead singer. The congregation – if it sings at all – murmurs quietly as it tries to keep up with what are often difficult, unpredictable scores. (I am sometimes reminded, when visiting other churches, of pre-Reformation worship where monks did all the singing and the congregation silently observed the spectacle.)

So many people have never experienced the pleasure of being part of a greater corporate whole when singing. One of the pleasures is that your voice can be encouraged and helped by the better singers in the congregation. You could say that this is one way we build one another up in love, which, as the apostle Paul writes, “binds everything together in perfect harmony”. As he notes in the same passage, we even teach and admonish one another (through the words) when we sing “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in [our] hearts to God.” (Colossians 3:14, 16)

It’s audible

An important feature of our singing, simple as it may sound, is that you can actually *hear* it. Discreet accompaniment that stays just that – accompaniment – allows the congregation to hear itself sing. This is very encouraging to the singer since, if loud instruments drown out the voices, there is much less incentive to sing. It’s like being in a conversation with someone that keeps loudly interrupting: in the end, you subside into silence and listen to them talk. On the other hand, if the accompanying instrument is simply playing the tune and setting the timing it will allow you to sing and enjoy it, because your singing is obviously worthwhile, and you can hear it contributing to the sound being generated in praise to God. It seems worth the effort you are making to stay in tune, pronounce the words clearly, and so on. Loud instruments that create a wall of sound drowning out the human voice make it ineffectual. Small wonder, then, that hearty congregational singing is such a pleasure for visitors, and encourages them to join in.

It points them to the gospel

It has often been argued that our worship needs to be more visitor-friendly – that we should be more conscious of newcomers and find ways to make our services more attractive to them. As I’ve tried to show above, our corporate singing is

actually one of the things our visitors often find very attractive. Seen in this way, our singing is one of the ways we actually include them and point them to the gospel of Christ.

The fact that we mean what we sing hopefully conveys that we are enthusiastic about the gospel and take it seriously. The fact that all of us – men, women and children – are entering into it with gusto flags that the gospel applies to every stage of life. (Many visitors find it particularly significant that grown *men* are singing heartily – this is indeed a rarity). The fact that we are singing hymns written over the space of a couple of thousand years, and by people from many different countries, suggests that the hymns have relevance regardless of the historical or cultural situation in which people live their lives.

Finally, by singing good words, words which are truthful and which we articulate with intelligence and musical skill, we are hopefully teaching them the Christian faith as they hear us sing. (Or better still, as they sing along with us.) Who knows – by placing a hymnal in the hands of our visitors, we may be helping them to praise God with their own hearts one day. Singing alongside us in our pew may be the beginning of eternal life for the visitor to our service. Let’s hope so.

Notes

- 1 Most of what follows is drawn from suggestions given in private conversations by various visitors to our congregation over more than 20 years, to whom I extend a general thank you.

Letters from New Zealand

D. G. Vanderpyl

May 1977

There never seems to be an end to planning and building in the church. Last year Mangere completed an extension to their church building, to house the largest ministerial library in the Southern Hemisphere and now Palmerston North plans to build a manse for their future minister.

They bought a piece of land in a street called Christian Place and what an appropriate name for a street for a pastor to live in. To show how keen the Palmerstonians are, they have already purchased the building material while the house is still on the drawing board, and the Local Council's permit still has to be applied for. Isn't this what you may call "faith at work"?

Hamilton also has some great plans. For a number of years a variety of ideas were weighed up and then found wanting. The problem was a local by-law that supposedly stated that the church must have a carpark, which allows one car per church member. Then a member of the church woke up in the middle of the night, saw a vision, got up from his bed and put that vision onto the drawing board, after which he had another hour of sleep. The next morning he went to the Town Planning Depart-

ment and asked if he could read the particular by-law which seemed to be the obstacle to the future planning of the Hamilton church. It then appeared that the building inspectors had been mis-reading their own by-law for many years, and Hamilton had no carpark problem anymore. The session and the congregation unanimously approved the plans. It was decided not to mortgage the building but to ask each income earning church member to share in the total cost of the building. The "aye" of acceptance came through loud and clear, with great enthusiasm according to the church bulletin.

The Hastings and Palmerston North churches have been sharing the Rev. L. Reurich as their pastor for the last five years. Just recently they had a special combined meeting to discuss all the aspects of this relationship for the future. Palmerston North fervently hopes and works and prays for the day that they may have their own shepherd again. The new arrangements curtail the Rev. Reurich's activities in the Palmerston North church and consequently has reduced the amount of their share in the expenses to one-third of the total costs of "keeping" a shepherd of the flock.

The Cadet Movement in Christchurch is in full swing to collect close to a thou-

sand dollars to pay for the fares of the cadets to the bi-annual National Cadet Camp in Wellington soon after Christmas this year. They are holding a fair and I read in the church bulletin that they've got three pool tables to sell but no TV sets. They are also going to sell some special "Dutch" meat, according to the advertisement. I wonder who is going to be slaughtered? They have received a donation of someone's fatted calf; it has already been cut up, labelled and packed as two fore-quarters and two hind-quarters.

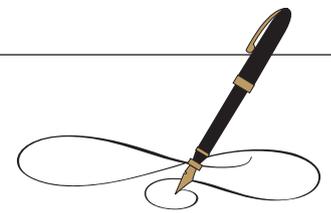
Most of us will have heard of the flood in the Wellington area sometime just before Christmas last year. The Silverstream manse and the basement of the church bore the brunt of this watery onslaught. In the cleaning process, they had a great time sloshing water all through the manse, ripping ruined carpets out and moving everything out of the place. Their pastor, Rev. G. I. Williamson, made a little poem:

*We woke to the sound of a flood,
Soon we stood deep in the mud.
But with your willing aid,
The crisis was stayed,
And the house was freed of the crud.*

Prolife facts

The website of the Abortion Law Reform Association of NZ (ALRANZ) has a section on abortion and breast cancer. It states that many studies with strong research designs conducted throughout the world unanimously conclude that women who have abortions do not have a risk of developing breast cancer. These conclusions are supported by the World Health Organisation, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the U.S. National Cancer Institute. At first glance that is an impressive lineup. But Dr Joel Brind PhD, an epidemiologist from New York, points out that 57 studies since 1957 show a link as opposed to 15 that don't. More recently, 36 studies from mainland China reveal the link between abortion and breast cancer, which is believed to be associated with widespread abortion resulting from the "One-Child" policy. Dr Peter Saunders, CEO of the British Christian Medical Fellowship advises that women should be aware that the link is "biologically plausible", but that the evidence is hotly disputed within the medical profession.

For more information on pro-life issues, phone Voice for Life on (09) 443 0995 or visit www.voiceforlife.org.nz.



When the nest is empty

“A young adult, a fledgling, who is getting ready to leave the nest needs training in some specific skills too: for instance, the importance of regular Bible reading and worship, so that they may continue the practices of their youth. They need to learn to cook, to wash their clothes, to do the dishes, keep a house clean, make and keep to a budget.”

When a mother eagle has young eaglets, she shelters them, she encourages them to strengthen their wings until they are able to fly on their own, and she continues to feed them until they are strong enough to fend for themselves. Always her goal is to have her babies live their own independent lives. Contrary to popular myth, she does not push them out of the nest, but the young eaglets or fledglings leave when they are ready, confident and able to go.

As human mothers and fathers, letting go of, and launching, our adult children is an exciting time – and yet it also brings challenges. The transition from being Mum and Dad, rulers-of-all-things-domestic-and-practical in a child’s life, to being Mum and Dad, advisors and suggesters, can be a bumpy ride and you may discover emotions you never knew you had.

Children leaving the home is normal

If we have been blessed with children, our custodial term, in the normal course of things, was only ever for a limited and relatively short period of time. Our children are given to us, as a gift, for us to nurture and train, so that they, too, may become useful citizens of this world but more importantly, and God willing, citizens of God’s kingdom. It is also normal to feel anxious about how they will fare in the world; and maybe you feel guilty that perhaps you haven’t prepared them as well as you think you should have. Feeling depressed and empty, and feeling a loss of identity and purpose can also come.

The new you: not a full-time Mum, but something else

It takes time to adjust to the new and empty house. No more being a taxi, feeding the hungry masses, washing every

day, helping with homework or negotiating the parental pitfalls. Suddenly you find that you have everything dusted and vacuumed, your windows are sparkling and you haven’t yet adjusted the cooking quite right, so that you keep having to eat leftovers for dinner. Who are you? And what are you going to do with your time? As this stage in life comes, trust in the Lord.

You may suddenly feel that your whole purpose in life has gone. It has not! Rather, it has changed direction. Your identity was never tied up with your children or should not have been. It is who you are as a Christian. The Lord is good and gracious and has some new adventure to lead you on, if you are willing. You may now have time to have one-on-one Bible study with a young mum, or to invest time into troubled teens or to visit the widows who are lonely. Some women return to work, either part-time or full-time. Before making such decisions, seek the Lord. If you have done without the extra income until now, maybe you can do without it now. You may find interests and directions that have been put on the back burner whilst you have had children at home, but that can now be followed up. Pray and talk it over with your husband and listen to him or, if you are widowed, seek wise counsel. Look for opportunities that the Lord is opening up for you to be a “Titus 2 woman”,¹ an older woman who can pass onto younger women all the hard-won wisdom you have accumulated by God’s grace. Take time before jumping into things. Let the dust settle as it were, before taking up new responsibilities. This can be an exciting part of the journey of life. It is also a time of readjustment and refocussing. After my siblings and I left home, my mum led a ladies’ Bible study for many years then,

when she was unable to due to ill health, she committed herself to prayer and reading the Bible and Christian literature.

The new you as a couple

When your child(ren) leave home, there is an emotional hole that is left, and grief that part of you, that you have had so much to do with for over 20-odd years or so, has now gone. This is where, in many marriages, it becomes apparent how much time and effort has been put into the marriage over the years. If the emotional void left by the children leaving is not balanced with love within a marriage, then separation and divorce can happen. Invest in one another, week by week, starting with the day you marry. Don't think, "I'm so busy with the children right now, we'll have loads of time to spend with each other later." You may find yourself married to a stranger who was there for the children and who now decides to pursue another life! Sadly this is happening all too often. Divorce is seen as an easy option and so many choose to take this path once their children are out of the house.

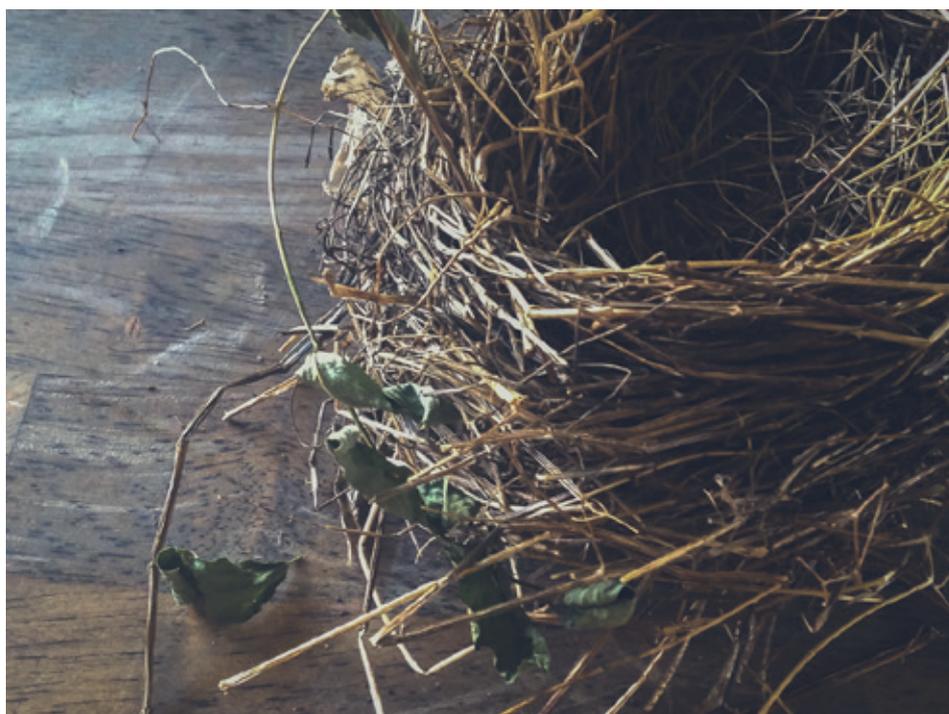
Plan for the time when you will be on your own, as a couple, together. Pray that the Lord would show you opportunities for you both to serve Him together. Work on your marriage throughout your married life, so that when the empty nest happens or some other crisis, you are there to support, comfort and help one another. Take up a hobby together. Spend time together gardening and/or exercising. Plan your future together.

Preparation

Our children are not born ready to be independent. God has wonderfully designed us, so that children spend around 20 years with their parents, until they move on to be independent adults. During those years of having children at home, Christian parents are to train their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord,² through teaching and by setting an example of godly living within the home. Parents also need to train the children to obey those in authority over them, to be respectful, and loving to one another, not to be rude or unkind etc. Young men are to be self-controlled and to have sound speech.³

However, a young adult, a fledgling, who is getting ready to leave the nest needs training in some specific skills too: for instance, the importance of regular Bible reading and worship, so that they may continue the practices

of their youth. They need to learn to cook, to wash their clothes (and bringing them home to Mum each weekend is not acceptable!), to do the dishes, keep a house clean, make and keep to a budget. They also need training on how to work hard, regardless of the job or the people around them, but rather to do it for the Lord.⁴ They also need to learn to accept the consequences for decisions they make. This should start early on in their life, but, sadly, many children are growing up today without feeling the pain of consequences for



<http://mindinmynest.com/life/faith/from-an-empty-nest-to-an-abundant-life/>

choices that they have made, so that when they reach adulthood they look to their parents to bail them out, (because they have always done so in the past) or they do not accept the consequences without argument or distress.

This period of preparation can also be a time when they are learning about relationships and need guidance to handle anger and frustration in a godly manner, to love sacrificially and to trust the Lord in and for all things. Often times we realise there are skills we should have equipped our children with before they left home. Rather than feel guilty, offer practical help (though it may not be accepted) and pray for them.

Too young? Too old?

How old should a young person be when

they leave “the nest”? This can vary from child to child, the reason for moving away and their spiritual and emotional maturity. Sending a child away before they are ready can result in them struggling to adjust to an adult life. On the other hand, an adult that is still living at home past their 30s may fail to accept the responsibilities of an adult.⁵ A young adult may leave for study or work reasons or to be more independent. When a child leaves home to marry it is important to allow them to become a family unit, with their spouse, without interference from their parents. They may still come for advice, which we may give, but we must steer them back to their spouse to work it out. It is a necessary part of the “leaving and cleaving.”⁶

Helping your adult children

Just because your child has left home and married or is single and working or studying, that does not mean we stop worrying about them as parents. This can be particularly so when they make stupid decisions or even just decisions that we wouldn't make. Sometimes they seem incapable of learning from anyone's mistakes other than their own! As parents we can advise them but they are now adults, responsible for their own lives. We need to let them fly on their own, without butting in or rushing in to rescue them when they struggle. As our children transition into adults, so too our relationship transitions from parent to being more of a friend,

wise counsellor and advisor. It is such a blessing to have adult children in the house, discussing theological issues, debating the merits of governmental decisions, talking about their faith, life and dreams. They no longer parrot what we say, necessarily, as they have formed their own beliefs and views; and discussions can be stimulating and encouraging. However, when those beliefs and views are contrary to a Christian world view, it can be heart-breaking. We can and should still be respectful and loving to them, whilst disagreeing with them, and this should also pull us to our knees to pray for them. God is sovereign and even in the difficult situations as when adult children are not walking with the Lord, we can still trust in our God for Him to work His good purposes in your life and theirs.

Adult children who come back home

A circumstance in your child's life may arise when, although they have already left home, they may need to return home for a period. It may be severe depression, a failed marriage, a bankruptcy, a jobless hiatus. This can be a very difficult transition for both the parent and the child. For a parent, it may be difficult not to treat them as they were before they left home (regardless that they were 18 then and are now 28) and for the young adult, not to fall back into being a child and becoming dependent on parents again. The aim for

this period of time is for healing, enabling, encouragement, and for the child to regain the strength and motivation to be an adult again. As parents (it is *your* home) you can specify a period of time in which the situation will be reviewed. You can also set rules and boundaries. Some parents may require their adult child attend church whilst living at home. Other “rules” may include respecting the person preparing the evening meal by letting them know if they won't be home, limiting the time on the internet (switching off the modem at night) or there may need to be rules that minimise any downside of their influence on other children still living at home. It is a fine balance between treating them as an adult, and/or as a closely-related boarder.

Life on this earth involves constant change. For parents, especially mothers, experiencing an ‘empty nest’ involves significant readjustment. However, remember that it is part of God's plan for us, as mothers, and for us as couples blessed with children, to willingly release our offspring. Our prayer is that they will be strong in the Lord as they ‘fly away’ to live for Christ as adults.

Notes

1 Titus 2:3-5

2 Proverbs 22:6

3 Titus 2:6-10

4 Colossians 3:22-23

5 if the child is mentally or physically disabled, this may not be possible.

6 Genesis 2:24

Books in focus

Evangelicalism Divided: A Record of Crucial Change in the Years 1950 to 2000

by Iain H Murray, Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 2000, 342 pages

Reviewed by John Haverland

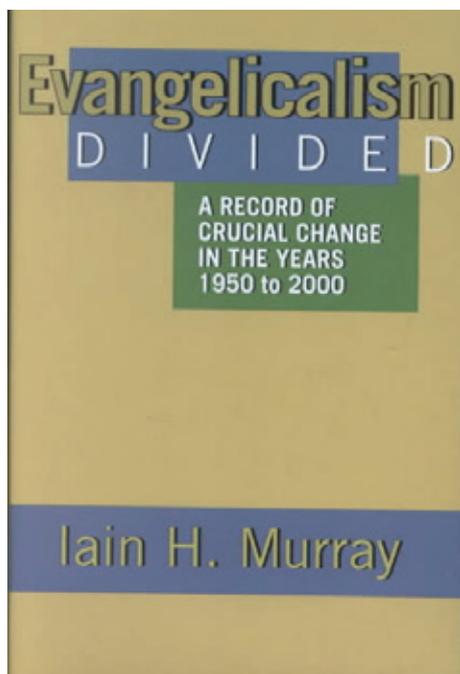
While on holiday earlier this year my wife and I were worshipping in another church. I picked up a magazine lying on a table in the foyer. It was the March 2017 issue of *Touchstone*, which described the induction of the Rev. Andrew Doubleday as the new superintendent of the Evangelical Network of the Methodist Church. Doubleday said he was

thankful that gay and lesbian ministers are now an accepted part of the Methodist Church. At his ordination two gay synod superintendents were among those who laid hands on him. He said that he wanted to “look out for those who identify as evangelical”, and said, “I love the Methodist Church's invitation to be inclusive and its openness to different ideas. I come at this from an evangelical perspective.”

I quote this to show how the terms evangelicalism and evangelicals are used very loosely and are difficult to define. They do not describe a particular denomination but usually refer to Bible-believing

Protestants within various denominations. But even those who are not Bible-believing will claim this title. Evangelicals are often divided over how to respond to changes that have occurred in their own denomination. The history and development of this division is the subject of this book, with a particular focus on the Church of England. It is a fascinating and insightful history. Iain Murray is a well known writer of Christian biographies and church history. This book covers a very recent period of the history of the church. In this review I will give you a brief overview of the contents.

Number 1 enemy for Bible-believing



evangelicals is theological liberalism, which denies the truth, accuracy and authority of the Bible, and questions the reality of the miracles recorded in the Scriptures, including especially the virgin birth of Jesus and his resurrection. Murray begins with a brief overview of liberalism through the 19th and 20th centuries.

He then gives an informative and interesting perspective on the evangelistic crusades of Billy Graham. When Graham began his ministry he held firmly to a fundamentalist understanding of the Bible and to the key biblical doctrines. In his preaching he often stated, "The Bible says", which for him was an authoritative statement of truth. As his crusades drew ever larger crowds, he and his team decided to broaden the scope of participating churches to include non-evangelicals. They believed the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association could have a strong influence in returning the mainline denominations from liberalism to a more biblical Christianity. Over time this led them to minimise theology in order to have an influence in the wider church for the sake of evangelistic success. Their crusade policy welcomed the co-operation of all churches, even liberal denominations and Roman Catholic churches.

Murray critiques this approach and claims that Graham was theologically naive, that he was too enamoured of associations and friendships with high-profile people, and too preoccupied with numbers at the crusades and of those who came forward. "The generosity of spirit which was Graham's strength was

also his weakness." D. M. Lloyd-Jones disagreed with Graham's approach and did not give his support to the crusades in 1954-55. Francis Schaeffer also raised concerns about Graham's preoccupation with numbers and 'success' and wrote, "What is the use of evangelicalism seeming to get larger and larger if sufficient numbers of those under the name evangelical no longer hold to that which makes evangelicalism evangelical?"

Key evangelical leaders in England disagreed over whether they ought to be inclusive or exclusive towards non-evangelicals. John Stott, the well-known and highly respected theologian and author in the Church of England had, along with other evangelicals, remained aloof from the ecumenical movement. Yet he worked closely with Billy Graham and the apparent success and influence of the crusades led him to a closer involvement in ecumenical occasions and in his own denomination. He believed this would extend the influence of evangelicalism in the Church of England. J I Packer had also kept himself separate from the mainstream of the Church of England, but as time went on he believed Anglican evangelicals could influence their denomination towards a more biblical position.

The turning point for Anglican evangelicals came at the National Evangelical Anglican Congress held at Keele University in 1967. At that Congress evangelical Anglicans broke with their policy of isolation and adopted a new approach of "co-operation without compromise" whereby they became more involved in the structures of the church. This gave them positions on the committees of the church and appointments as bishops. In Murray's view this policy of "co-operation without compromise proved an illusion" and evangelicals did not have the influence on the broader church they had hoped for, but rather found themselves increasingly marginalised and isolated.

Lloyd-Jones, the minister of Westminster Chapel in London since 1938, disagreed with the approach of Stott and Packer and did not share their optimism about being a positive influence for change in their denomination. He warned of the danger of becoming "ecclesiastical politicians". He argued that the real question they needed to address is: what is a Christian? Does "Christian" include all who have been baptised and are outwardly connected with a church, or does the term refer to

those who have professed faith in Christ and give evidence of this in their lives? The Church of England went with the first broad view; Lloyd-Jones (and our Reformed Churches) have followed the second more narrow view.

Today the Church of England is a broad, diluted, umbrella church, tolerant of doctrinal diversity, and unwilling to define or discipline heresy. Even J I Packer, back in 1977, wrote: "Tolerance of the intolerable had become the Anglican way". Even the evangelicals in the denomination affirmed that they and Romans Catholics were fellow Christians and committed themselves to "work towards full communion between our two churches" (Nottingham Congress Statement of 1977).

Today we live in a climate of diversity, tolerance and acceptance both in society and in the church. In this situation Murray argues that we ought to seek the unity of the church, but not at the expense of biblical truth. We ought not to take a "minimalist attitude to truth". The so-called "secondary differences among Christians are not of no consequence" (p. 309).

I found this book a helpful explanation of the changes that have taken place in evangelicalism and in the mainline denominations in the 20th century, and commend it to you.

Eulogies

We thankfully evaluate
The lives which we consider great:
And surely what we make of life
Is worth a mention, without strife!

But... greater still life's Giver is
For all our qualities are His!
His is the hand that moulded us...
Uniquely special, worth a plus!

Oh! Do we give our Maker praise,
Who fashioned us in awesome ways?
Do we indeed acknowledge Him,
Who gave us purpose, sure and trim?

Consider now how to aspire
To offer worthy praise entire,
With lips and life, Ah! word and deed,
Adoring Him, Who's great indeed!

*John Goris
Wellington, February 2017*



Cemetery Musings

Stands guard this aging tree
By those who age no more
Whose resting place is sealed
With somewhat worn décor.

Whate'er one's life achieves
In years three score or more
It fades like sunlight fades
And night has naught in store.

And yet, one glorious morn
When youngest day has dawned,
The very graves shall open up
When death new life has spawned:

It is the Risen Christ
who on the youngest day
Shall call the dead to life:
His power to display!

Before the great White Throne*
All those who lived shall stand.
How shall we answer Him?
Shall we in glory stand?

*From Leaves Galore by John Goris
Wellington, 2014*

**Revelation 20:11-15*

Submissions against euthanasia shatter assumptions

77% of submissions to Parliament's Health Select Committee are opposed to changing the law on assisted suicide and euthanasia, an analysis found.

"The Voluntary Euthanasia Society touted that 'the Health Select Committee received a record 21,533 submissions on the issue, indicating intense public interest in a potential law change', says Renée Joubert, executive officer of Euthansia-Free NZ. "By their own logic, the results of this analysis demonstrate an overwhelming opposition to a law change."

"When New Zealanders are given the opportunity to engage with the issue, as opposed to merely responding to a single poll question, most support the current legislation. This is certainly

our experience when interacting with people all over the country.

"The public are understandably concerned that the legalisation of assisted suicide and voluntary euthanasia poses risks to vulnerable people, which is why advocates propose safeguards. However, these safeguards are unenforceable in practice.

"Polls often elicit a knee-jerk reaction, especially when the questions are emotive or leading, such as referring to a painful condition. In reality nowadays, terminally ill Kiwis do not need to die in pain. A poll question about euthanasia for pain is inappropriate.

"As the authors of the January 2017 NZMJ study admitted, "the item in our study included the terms 'painful', 'in-

curable disease' and 'request', which may have influenced participants to express increased support for euthanasia'."

The Care Alliance analysed 21,277 submissions, excluding duplicates and a small number that could not be coded. An independent research company reviewed a sample of the coded submissions and concluded "with at least 95% confidence that the overall classification percentages are accurate within no more than 0.4% variation".

The results of the full analysis shatter assumptions about public attitudes to voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide.

A pictograph showing that 77 per cent of submissions on assisted suicide and euthanasia are opposed to changing the law.

The analysis shatters the assumption that the high number of submissions demonstrates overwhelming support for a law change.

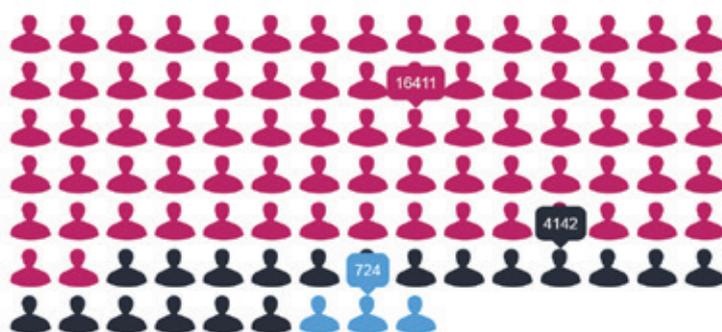
In reality 77.1% of submissions (16,411) were opposed to a law change, 19.5% (4,142) were in favour, and 3.4% (724) were neutral or unclear on this issue.

A common assumption is that support of legalisation is secular and opposition to legalisation is based on religious beliefs.

63.6% of submissions (13,539) oppose a law change and also make no reference to religion. Only 18.5% of submissions (3,934) support a law change and also make no reference to religion.

There are religiously motivated

77% of submissions are OPPOSED to changing the law



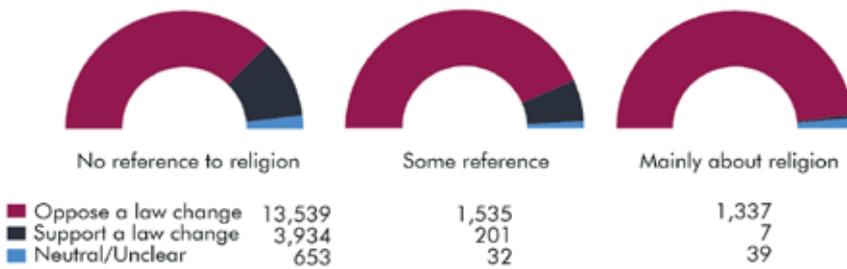
■ Oppose a law change (77.13%) ■ Support a law change (19.47%) ■ Neutral/Unclear (3.4%)

<http://carealliance.org.nz/health-select-committee-77-of-submissions-oppose-euthanasia/>

“In August 2016 Dr Jane Silloway Smith analysed a random sample of these submissions and found that 78% were opposed to changing the law while 22% were in favour.”

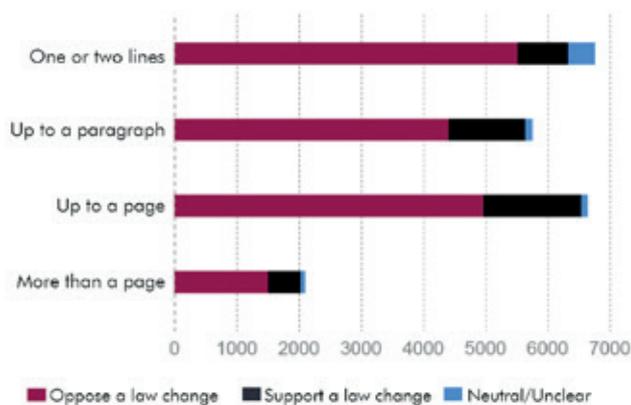
Reference to Religious Arguments

Most submissions make no reference to religion



<http://carealliance.org.nz/health-select-committee-77-of-submissions-oppose-euthanasia/>

Submission Length



<http://carealliance.org.nz/health-select-committee-77-of-submissions-oppose-euthanasia/>

people on both sides of the debate. 14.8% of submissions included religious arguments. The majority of these (13.5% of the total) oppose a law change, and 208 submissions (0.93% of the total) support a law change.

Graphs showing that most submissions opposing ‘assisted dying’ make no reference to religion. There are more non-religious submissions opposing a law change than non-religious submissions supporting a law change. Both sides of the debate have advocates who are religiously motivated. However, only 7 submissions support assisted suicide and euthanasia based on religious arguments, while 1,337 oppose these based on religious arguments.

A graph showing that all submission length categories consist of mostly submissions opposing the legalisation of euthanasia and assisted suicide.

Some advocates assumed that submissions opposing a law change are mostly one-liners.

About 44% of submissions in opposition are between two lines and a page. Even if submissions of a certain length were to be discounted, the submissions opposing a law change would still outnumber those supporting a law change in other length categories.

The Health Select Committee conducted an investigation into ending one’s life in New Zealand, in response to a petition by former MP Hon Maryan Street and 8,974 others in June 2015 requesting Parliament to “investigate fully public attitudes towards the introduction of legislation which would permit medically-assisted dying in the event of a terminal illness or an irreversible condition which makes life unbearable”.

After extensive media coverage about the investigation, especially during January 2016, the Committee processed 21,435 written submissions, a record number of unique submissions received on any issue to date. These, and subsequent supplementary submissions, are published on Parliament’s website.

In August 2016 Dr Jane Silloway Smith analysed a random sample of these submissions and found that 78% were opposed to changing the law while 22% were in favour. The 16000voices.org.nz campaign was launched to highlight some submissions in video and written form.

Used with permission

Cults and Soft Targets (1)

Herm Zandman

There have been times of Christian revival during which people avidly turned to the Bible, eagerly learning what God had to say to them, eagerly learning the Bible's teachings, eagerly and systematically instructing the next generation regarding the Bible's content. Christians would make it their priority to put on the full armour of God, as instructed in Ephesians 6:11-17.

The exhortation still stands today, but many Christians have no idea that these words are actually in the Bible. Research has provided disturbing evidence that those who say that they love the Lord have really not much of an idea what this Lord Whom they profess to love is really all about. It sounds strange, doesn't it? I mean, if you profess to love someone, wouldn't you want to get to know that person as thoroughly as possible? That was certainly the case with me when I met my future wife. I wanted to know her likes and dislikes, I wanted to know what pleased her, I wanted to know what she believed in, I wanted to know what she was looking for in a prospective husband. I wanted to know her, and I was in many a conversation with her, seeking her company as often as possible. In short, I spent much time and effort to become as much as possible in tune with her. When it comes to being a Christian – the word actually means "follower of Christ" – and when it comes to confessing that you love Jesus, then it would logically follow that you would want to know Him as deeply as possible. You would also know where to get this knowledge, namely in the Bible, and therefore you would study that Bible to bits, eagerly striving to know all and everything about the One Whom you seek to please.

Not so, apparently in or present-day culture. United States researchers George Gallup and Jim Castelli found: "Americans – and it is a phenomenon



throughout the Western world – revere the Bible, but by and large, they don't read it. And because they don't read it, they have become a nation of biblical illiterates." How bad is it? Researchers tell us that it's worse than most could imagine.

Fewer than half of all adults can name the four gospels. Many Christians cannot identify more than two or three of the disciples. According to data from the Barna Research Group, sixty percent of Americans can't name even five of the Ten Commandments. "No wonder people break the Ten Commandments all the time. They don't know what they are," said George Barna, president of the firm. The bottom line? "Increasingly, America is biblically illiterate."

Multiple surveys reveal the problem in stark terms. According to eighty-two percent of Americans, the expression "God helps those who help themselves" is a Bible verse. Those identified as born-again Christians did better – by a whole one percent! A majority of adults think the Bible teaches that the most important purpose in life is taking care of

one's family.

Some of the statistics are enough to perplex even those aware of the problem. A Barna poll indicated that at least twelve percent of adults believe that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife. Another survey of graduating high school seniors revealed that over fifty percent thought that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife! A considerable number of respondents to one poll indicated that the Sermon on the Mount was preached by Billy Graham. We are in big trouble.

Secularized Westerners should not be expected to be knowledgeable about the Bible. As a nation's civic conversation is stripped of all biblical references and content, people increasingly live in a Scripture-free public space. Confusion and ignorance of the Bible's content should be assumed in the post-Christian West. Even the secular textbooks in schools have done away with the familiar expression B.C. (before Christ) and A.D. (*anno Domini*, or "the year of our Lord") and have replaced these expressions with BCE (Before Common Era) and CE (Common Era).

The larger scandal is biblical ignorance among *Christians*. Choose whichever statistic or survey you like, the general pattern is the same. Christians in the West know less and less about the Bible. It shows. It is actually a problem when dealing with the Muslim world, as a Danish journalist very perceptively remarked when she stated, and I paraphrase, "Muslims will increasingly dominate, the West will increasingly become disenfranchised, because there is no basis on which to communicate regarding matters of right and wrong, about democratic ideas, even about secular ideas, because the West has lost its Christian framework from which to reason ethical principles, and has therefore lost the only means by which credibility and lucidity could be presented in dialogue."

How can a generation be biblically shaped in its understanding of human sexuality when it believes Sodom and Gomorrah to be a married couple? No wonder Christians show a growing tendency to compromise on the issue of homosexuality. Many who identify themselves as Christians are similarly confused about the gospel itself. An individual who believes that "God helps those who help themselves" will find salvation by grace and justification by faith to be alien concepts.

In Australia, despite an interest in religion, ethics, and justice, over seventy

percent of young people never read the Bible, research has found. These findings were published in the Bible Society Australia report "The Bible According to Gen Z." Young people, so the report says, struggle to engage and connect with the Bible. "Generation Z doubts the authenticity and the relevance of the Bible, struggles with its language, and is baffled by its stories of strange rituals, bizarre laws, and violence," the editor reports. Generally, there appears to be a disconnect between the postmodern engagement of today's youth and Bible instruction which fails to express relevance in to that societal environment. Essentially, the generational problem today is the same as the one which faced Joshua's generation after entering Canaan, a generation which failed to instruct the next generation about the knowledge and importance of intimate connection with God. Thus we can read in Judges 2, "When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD, nor the work which He had done for Israel. Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. They forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtoreths."

Human beings are created with a spiritual bent, whether they acknowledge this or not. No one is a-spiritual, everyone believes in something, even if this something is reduced to the creaturely and physical, rather than the metaphysical, i.e., someone or something outside and beyond the physical universe. Man will always try to anchor his existence to something outside of himself in order to have a reference point for identification and meaning in life. In search for such a reference point and meaning, man is vulnerable to many influences that prey on him in this world of brokenness and sin. From the Biblical perspective such people are easy prey for Satan, the father of lies, as he is depicted by Jesus in John 8. They are gullible because they have no way of assessing what comes at them; they have no plumb line by which to discern between counterfeit and real. They are tricked easily, as the Apostle Paul puts it aptly in Ephesians 4:14 where he exhorts believers to get

to full knowledge of Christ so that they "should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting."

And this leads us to one particular danger in our world today, the danger of cultism. Cultwatch defines cults as follows: "A cult is any group which employs mind control and deceptive recruiting techniques." In other words, cults trick people into joining and coerce them into staying.

More in depth we will consider this particular danger in Part II. Cults are rampant in our society and they come in many guises and move into every home via the multiple media now available. The ploys used are very subtle and well crafted. Consequently, many innocent (gullible?) people are captured and end up encapsulated by the siren song that is sounded. The Lorelei ("Luring Rock") is a siren, according to German folklore, who would lure unsuspecting sailors to their death as they navigated a particular section of the Rhine. Well, we have our own Lorelei in many apparitions around us today. Cults are ruinous and they have caused misery in many a household, resulting in financial, emotional, and relational stress unimaginable.

The idea that man is a tabula rasa, or Mao's sheet of blank paper upon which the most beautiful characters can be written, is an old one with disastrous implications. I do not think though that the cults you mention could survive honest thought about human nature.

Theodore Dalrymple, English writer and retired prison doctor (1949-)

Mr Herm Zandman, teacher at the John Calvin Christian College publishes regularly on Scribd.

Una Sancta 3 June 2017. Used with permission.



50 years a witness

April 1 of this year was an opportunity to celebrate the institution of the Reformed Church in Silverstream 50 years ago, in 1967. Members came to the Pinehaven Primary School hall to celebrate the Lord's goodness and mercies to us over that time.

Our celebration was kicked off with reading from the Scriptures and a short devotion, in which we were reminded that we were not celebrating the achievements of men, but those of the Lord, Who is pleased to have His witness present in the Upper Hutt area.

We celebrated further with a meal, dessert, coffee and cake, a cake decorating competition, singing of psalms and hymns and a little light-hearted fun that was organised by the MC, Mr Ian van der Meulen.

There was a pictorial story projected onto the wall, reminding us of those who were instrumental by the Lord's grace in establishing this congregation in the early days. Those who have passed middle age were treated to pictures of themselves from bygone days.

(top) No celebration of the Lord's goodness is complete without singing His praises.

(bottom left) There were also copious amounts of food and desert.

(bottom right) Entries in the cake decorating competition.



The 50th Anniversary cake – large enough for everyone.

There were a couple of video messages from a previous pastor, the Rev. GI Williamson and his wife Doris, who sent their greetings and recounted some of the good years spent ministering in Silverstream. The Rev. Jack Sawyer, also a previous pastor, who became the minister in Silverstream after Mr Williamson, sent his greetings also by video. Finally, a letter was sent by the Rev. Barry James, who spent some eight to nine years in Silverstream as our Minister. The ministries of these three men spans 26 years from 1972-1998.

On such occasions, we are reminded that this congregation as well as all the others in our federation, are here because of the grace of the Lord. It has pleased Him to establish a church and to bear witness to His Name. – Soli Deo Gloria.

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