



# Contents

Should we be afraid?	3
Should we be afraid? (2) Begotten by the Father	6
Outward focus Through many dangers, toils and snares... God's Kindness in the life of Jane Deans	9
Letters from New Zealand	12
Books in focus	13
World in focus	15
Cults and Soft Targets (2)	16

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# Editorial

A cursory glance at the news will give the impression that we live in a frightening world. It seems that conflict is never far away, and the potential to contract a disease of some sort seems to increase by the year with all the superbugs floating about and penicillin/antibiotics becoming more ineffective as time goes on. Essentially, if we were to allow ourselves to be frightened by all the negative news, and take the advice of the sage, about how to ensure we have a long, healthy and happy life, we might as well live in a bunker in the backyard and eat grass!

I am of the view that the scaremongering by the media and all those who feed it, work from the basis that there is no God and no hope. This life is all there is and we should do everything we can to hang onto it, because is soon over. There are insurance policies for just about everything, even what they call funeral insurance, which when you look at it closely is nothing more than a way to relieve you of your hard-earned cash.

The most recent news about the large slab of ice breaking off from Antarctica is attributed to climate change, which supposedly is attributed to anthropogenic emissions, rather than the natural processes of weather which have been present since the fall. Then they tell us, if it melts, all low-lying places will be underwater, and so the story goes from bad to worse.

So what are we to make of all this? Are we afraid? Do we wake up anxious in the morning wondering if we will actually make it through the day without coming to grief? Or, will something happen to one of our loved ones?

If you, the reader, are a Christian, and your trust is in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation, then these things should not be the focus of your daily life. Your focus should be on what the Living God has done in Christ, and your confidence should be in His providence, because what He sends us is ultimately for our good (Romans 8:28), "... all things must work together for my salvation". (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 1) So, let us fix "our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith ...", so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:2-3)

Our contributors write encouragingly to help us to focus our eyes and minds on where our true hope lies.

Mr Andrew de Vries focuses on the Triune God.

Mr Michael Flinn writes of the One enthroned as the everlasting King.

Mrs Sally Davey writes on the kindness of God in the life of Jane Deans, a pioneer Cantabrian

*Letters from New Zealand* considers somebody, everybody, anybody and nobody when it comes to doing stuff in the church.

Book reviews: *THE DEACON: Biblical Foundations for Today's Ministry of Mercy* by Cornelis van Dam (Prof Emeritus of Old Testament, Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, Hamilton, Ontario. Reviewed by Dirk van Garderen; *A Clear and Simple Treatise on the Lord's Supper* by Theodore Beza, reviewed by OP pastor Glen J. Clary; *A Christian's Pocket Guide to Loving the Old Testament* by Alec Motyer, reviewed by: William M. Hobbs.

*World in focus* ads provides a variety of news from around the world.

Mr Herm Zandman provides the second instalment of *Cults and Soft Targets*.

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 Dordt, 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.

# Should we be afraid?

**Andrew de Vries**

My favourite Australian postcard contains a photograph of a bush setting. You can see a variety of different gum trees, a beautiful blue sky overhead, and some typical Australian scrub stretching in every direction beneath. It is entitled, 'this is Australia'. As you scan to the subtitle beneath you then read: 'there are 1275 animals that could kill you in this picture.' This is of course an exaggeration, but it does contain some truth: there are significant and serious dangers from the wildlife (and hopefully not the residents) of that country. Should you be afraid to visit that lovely west Island of ours?

If you are afraid to visit Australia, then you should be afraid to set foot outside

your front door! We live in an age where there are significant and serious threats to life and liberty on multiple fronts. Whilst it might be tempting to try and put ourselves in cotton wool and cocoon ourselves from the dangerous world, it is impossible to do so. So how are we to face the threats of the present age with confidence and certainty? What do we teach our children to help them overcome the anxieties endemic to our modern world? What reason do you have to rest in peace at night in a world full of unrest? This article will seek to explore some of the prominent threats we face today, as well as suggest some ways we ought to face them as Christians.

We are all very aware of Islamic extremism. Not a week goes by where there is not another attack somewhere

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*A memorial to the 180 people who died in the Christchurch 2011 earthquake. Such reminders evoke fear in the hearts of many.*



“God doesn’t take away our weaknesses just because we are Christians. He doesn’t make us into super-strong spiritual warriors who never get afraid, who never doubt themselves, who never wonder whether we will be able to cope. But he does give us His Spirit to help us in every situation where our weakness is exposed.”

in the world committed in the name of Islam. As I write, the world has just witnessed the carnage in Britain, the Manchester bombings followed by the London bridge attacks. The mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has said that these kinds of terror threats are now ‘part and parcel’ of living in a big city, and that major cities ‘have got to be prepared for these sorts of things.’ Apparently he believes this is the new norm. We might think we are insulated from such things living here in New Zealand. However, experts have predicted that it is only a matter of time before we see a terrorist attack on our own shores<sup>1</sup>. Maybe we do have some reason to be afraid.

We are also becoming very aware of the increasingly forceful attacks upon freedom of speech. The message that Christians are given is that in a secular society our views are not welcome. For all the talk of being tolerant, the intolerance is overwhelming when a Christian sets forth the biblical view on one way of salvation, or the judgment to come, or the Lordship of Christ. For upholding the biblical view on marriage, Christians in western counties have been sacked from their jobs, forced to make apologies, fined, sent to re-education training<sup>2</sup> and even arrested<sup>3</sup>. Here in New Zealand, Family First was deregistered as a charity for promoting the traditional view of marriage. We also recently had the case of an Anglican bishop being sued for not permitting a practicing homosexual to enter the priesthood<sup>4</sup>. If you are bold enough to speak about this issue, you also could face ridicule, lose friends, or in some cases, you might open yourself to litigation. Is it only a matter of time before the RCNZ loses charity status because we won’t bow to the new orthodoxy? Maybe we do have some reason to be afraid.

Another danger we are aware of is that of our natural environment. It can be stunning one moment, and absolutely terrifying the next. We endure our fair share of floods, bushfires, and last but not least, earthquakes. I will never forget sitting under our kitchen table during the 2010 earthquakes in Christchurch, wondering when the house would eventually start caving in. You could hear the aftershocks coming. There would be a dull roar that sounded like a truck. The adrenaline would automatically start pumping through your body. Then a few seconds later the earth would be rolling and tossing like the ocean<sup>5</sup>. Maybe we do have some reason to be afraid.

I haven’t yet written about the threat of global war, the menace of cyber attacks, the impact of the unprecedented shifts in populations we’ve seen in recent times, the possibility of another global financial meltdown, the increasing crime rates around the western world, the low value now placed on human life, the increasingly debased and ever lowering standards of morality, or even the prospect that the All Blacks might lose a series or two! We live in uncertain and dangerous times. Hopefully you are not too downcast to read on. For although times might be tough, one of the great blessings of being a Christian is that we have every reason to be unafraid in the face of such dangers.

Before we consider some truths that can anchor our souls when we feel afraid, we need to consider whether it is actually wrong to be afraid. If you are a Christian, should you never experience the emotional response of fear? Are you sinning if you get anxious when another earthquake hits? Is the Christian who has been diagnosed with cancer not exercising enough faith if they are fearful about what’s ahead? Perhaps you remember how Jesus rebuked his disciples when they were facing a deadly storm on the Lake of Galilee, saying to them: ‘*you of little faith, why are you so afraid?*’ (Matt 8:26). Is Jesus suggesting that in such fear inducing circumstances that fear is always wrong?

We must bear in mind that often fear is a normal, rational, non-sinful, human response to a variety of dangers we face in life. Fear can actually be healthy at times. I’m afraid sometimes of getting up to preach and saying something that might not honour my Lord. Jesus is not saying, ‘never be afraid – be a tough guy and suck it up’. What he’s addressing is excessive fear. Fear which becomes all consuming. Fear which drives out your consciousness of God. Fear which eclipses the goodness and power of God. Fear which paralyses you from living the Christian faith and serving the Lord as your ought.

The problem with the disciples on the lake of Galilee is that they were focusing on the storm. They should have been focusing on Jesus. When we get distracted by the circumstances of life, the difficult ones, it’s easy to take our eyes off Jesus. Faith needs to be focused on Christ. In his classic work on Psalm 23, F.B. Meyer said: ‘*Unbelief puts circumstances between itself and Christ, so as not to see Him...Faith puts Christ*

between itself and circumstances so that it cannot see them.' If you want to live a life free from the paralyzing fears which threaten to overcome you, you need to fix your eyes upon Christ. This doesn't mean you ignore the dangerous and uncertain circumstances of life, but it means you learn to focus on the right things. Here are three other truths that faith can focus on in order that we might live lives of confidence in the present evil age:

### **The Father's providence**

Our faith should be focussed on the Father's providential ordering of our lives. Our lives are not governed by chance, or genetics or terrorists or political powers. Our lives, the good and the bad, are governed by our gracious heavenly Father. How many times have we confessed the beautiful words of the Heidelberg Catechism that *'...health and sickness, prosperity and poverty, all things in fact, come to us not by chance but from his fatherly hand'*? It's one thing to confess it, it's another to live in the light of those words in the most terrifying and dangerous circumstances.

After a battle in which he fought alongside Stonewall Jackson, Captain John Imboden asked: *'General, How is it that you can keep so cool and appear so utterly insensible to danger in such a storm of shell and bullets as rained about you when your hand was hit?'* Stonewall Jackson answered in a low tone of great earnestness: *'Captain, my religious belief teaches me to feel as safe in battle as in bed. God has fixed the time for my death. I do not concern myself about that, but to be always ready, no matter when it may overtake me. That is the way all men should live, and then all would be equally brave'*. What a way to live. Confident in the Father's providential ruling of every detail of our lives, even the time of our death. Once we grasp this we need not be afraid when the next terrorist incident hits, or when the diagnosis is heart disease, or when we face those hostile to our faith – we can face it with bravery not because we are confident in ourselves, but because we are confident in our Father's providential ordering of our lives.

### **The Son's intercession**

One of the greatest encouragements I receive as a pastor is when one of my church members says: *'I am praying for you every day'*. It always gives me a shot of confidence. I know I'm being brought to the throne of grace. I'm re-

minded that my needs are ever before my faithful Father. I'm hopeful that these prayers for strength and wisdom will give me what I need in my ministry. That's the kind of effect it has when someone is praying for you.

How much more confident ought we to be when we remember that we have a Saviour who ever lives to intercede for his people (Heb 7:25). Jesus' intercession means that our faith will never fail, that we'll never face anything that is too much for us, that ultimately nothing will ever separate us from the love of God. What a shot of confidence this should inject into our lives. Robert Murray M'Cheyne once said that *"if I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room I would not fear a million of enemies..."*. Imagine hearing what Jesus is praying for you when you are scared of speaking up for the cause of Christ. Imagine him praying that you would be given boldness; that you might think only of the Father's glory and not of your own comfort; that you might be that good and faithful servant; that you might be given words to speak; that he might use you as an instrument to draw others to Christ; that you might share in Christ's sufferings and so come to know him better. This is how we live a life free from paralyzing fears – not confident that we can get through anything, but confident that the intercessions of Christ will bear us through anything we face in this life.

### **The Holy Spirit's help**

Our faith should also focus on the Spirit's internal work in our lives. The Scriptures teach us that we have been given the Holy Spirit to help us in our weakness (Rom 8:26). When the Bible talks about weakness, it's referring to the natural condition of human finitude and fallenness. We are limited, finite beings, and weakness pervades every aspect of our lives. We are weak in our intellects, there are so many things we just don't understand. We are weak in our emotions, not being able to control them or channel them in the way we'd like. We are weak in our capacity to cope, we are just not sure how we are going to be able to handle another earthquake, or another relapse of cancer. But we need not be overcome with fear, because God has given us something to help us in our weakness. More specifically, God has given us someone to help us. The Holy Spirit.

The encouragement in all this is very

obvious. God doesn't take away our weaknesses just because we are Christians. He doesn't make us into super-strong spiritual warriors who are never afraid, who never doubt themselves, who never wonder whether we will be able to cope. But he does give us His Spirit to help us in every situation where our weakness is exposed. There is nothing like the threat of pain, or war, or natural disaster to show us our weakness. So when we are timid in our witness, the Spirit helps us in our weakness, emboldening us to speak up. When we don't think we've got anything left in the tank to face another day, the Spirit helps us in our weakness to give us the strength we need. When we worry whether our faith would fail were we to face persecution, the Spirit helps us in our weakness to remember that nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. We have the Spirit to help us in every situation of weakness.

There might be 1275 dangerous situations that give you real reason to be afraid today. But praise God, He has given us all the resources we need to face every single fear we have with confidence and surety. With the eyes of faith we are to be ever looking to Him, so that we can say with the Psalmist: *'I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone O Lord, make me dwell in safety.'* (Psalm 4:8).

### **Notes**

- 1 <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/83717317/Only-a-matter-of-time-before-terrorism-reaches-New-Zealand-expert-warns>. Note also that in 2015 a Kiwi jihadist urged Islamic state followers in New Zealand to commit attacks on Anzac Day. In 2016 our security forces were actively monitoring 40 people considered terrorist risks.
- 2 See *'Dangerous Relations'* by Bill Muehlenberg for over 200 examples of this. Or simply read the world news and you will see weekly examples of this.
- 3 [http://www.breitbart.com/london/2017/02/06/preacher-charged-hate-crime-quoting-bible-gay-teen/?utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_medium=social](http://www.breitbart.com/london/2017/02/06/preacher-charged-hate-crime-quoting-bible-gay-teen/?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social)
- 4 <https://billmuehlenberg.com/2013/05/07/new-zealand-marriage-and-freedom/>
- 5 As an interesting aside, the storm that Jesus calms in Matthew 8:23-27 is called a *'seismos'* in the greek. I hope you can see the similarity with the word seismology. The storm was like an earthquake on the water!

*Mr Andrew de Vries is a minister in the Reformed Church of Bishopdale.*

## Should we be afraid? (2)

# Begotten by the Father



<http://www.onfire-ministries.org/bow-down-and-worship-him-solomon-did/>

### Michael Flinn

We live in a time when Christians are being persecuted all around the world. To be sure, there is nothing new under the sun. Jesus told his disciples that they would be hated by all for his name's sake, but he who endured to the end would be saved (Matt. 10:22). He also taught that it was a blessing to receive insult, persecution and false accusations on his account. We ought to rejoice and be glad for in the same way they persecuted the prophets of an earlier age (Matthew 5:11,12).

Given this clear teaching of our Lord, when Christians are targeted with hatred and violence, we should not be surprised. This is to be expected. But the resistance and the warfare today seem both persistent and ubiquitous. Even societies that have a long Christian history and have enjoyed the benefits of Christian

foundations for generations now seem to be increasingly hostile towards Christians and Christian beliefs. Family, marriage, and now even gender are all up for reassessment and redefinition and in the face of this relentless onslaught, it is easy to become discouraged and fearful.

### Psalm 2 – a prophetic psalm

So let's go back to the teaching of Psalm 2 for some encouragement. Notice that this psalm comes immediately after Psalm 1, which focuses on the individual righteous man who will flourish like a tree firmly planted by streams of water – in contrast to the wicked, who will be blown away like chaff. With the second song in the collection, the focus shifts to the kingdom and the influence of God's wise and righteous King. Wickedness is now embodied in the other kingdoms of the world, whose rulers do their best to get out from under the influence and

role of God's Anointed but their resistance is all to no avail.

We do not know exactly who wrote this psalm. There have been attempts to ascribe it to David or Solomon, but nothing is certain about the authorship.

As regards its subject matter, there have been those who have argued that the song is all about the kingdom of Israel at its height under David or Solomon. They were the Lord's anointed rulers. And the other nations in that part of the world respected them. These men put Israel on the map. Well, this is true. David and Solomon were important kings in Israel and they did advance the cause of God's people politically and economically. But that is as far as it went. They never controlled the kings of the earth at large and, even figuratively, bound them with ropes, as is suggested in verse 3 of the psalm. And neither David nor Solomon received a promise from God that they would possess all the nations of the world and if there was resistance, then they as God's anointed rulers, would crush the kingdoms of the world with a rod of iron. That sounds like something that Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon might have aspired to, or later, Alexander the Great, leader of the Greeks, or maybe the Roman emperors at a still later stage in history. For modern figures we have Napoleon or Hitler. These were people who aspired to expand their influence and to crush the nations if they resisted. But we cannot say the same of David and Solomon. Assyria's power was growing steadily through their reigns, not to mention Babylon. Israel was nothing to these powers – an irritating flea to be sure – but nothing that a good scratch could not cure. No, this psalm is a psalm of prophecy. It speaks of the Son of God and *his* kingdom in the world. It speaks of Jesus and his commission to his disci-

ples to go and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And it speaks of the futile attempt of the kings of the earth to resist his power and his rule.

### **The King's installation**

In verse 6, God speaks of installing his King on Zion, which was one of the Old Testament words for Jerusalem. This is therefore a psalm that speaks about the coronation of a great ruler, whose influence would be far beyond Israel, who would bind and restrain all the nations of the world. And the next verse gives us Yahweh's decree in relation to this King. "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." Please note: The language here is not the language of generation or parenthood. It is not that God is somehow giving birth to this King. Rather, this language applies to the day of the King's coronation. This is the day that the King takes up his rule. This is the day that he begins to reign and on that day, on the day of his coronation, he becomes the Son of God in an important sense.

So what will be given to him, on the day in which he takes up his rule? What is it that belongs to him? The answer is in the next two verses:

*Ask of me, and I will surely give the nations as your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, you shall shatter them like earthenware.*

In the ancient world, it was understood that great kings could give great gifts to those whom they favoured. The greater the king, the greater the gift. But here the giver is none other than the covenant God. He is Yahweh, the Lord of all the world, and the gift that he bestows on this King on the day of his coronation is nothing short of all the nations of the world.

There was a time when the devil showed to Jesus the kingdoms of the world and promised them to him if he would merely acknowledge him and give him a place (Matthew 4:8-11). When Satan did that, he was suggesting that Jesus should receive his inheritance. The devil had no problem with that at all. But the insidious lie was that the devil would be the giver of the gift, or would at least stand aside and let Jesus have the kingdoms of the world – in exchange for a place of honour. But Jesus would

make no deals with the evil one. The kingdoms of the world were his as of right. They were his inheritance, and the giver of them was none other than God the Father. Satan was therefore told to stand aside in no uncertain terms.

### **Resistance is futile**

But what about the resistance of the nations? What of the devil's influence to deceive them? What if the peoples of the world do not want to serve this King? And worse: What if they conspire against him and try to overthrow him? Well, Psalm 2 has already anticipated that. The kings of the earth take their stand against Yahweh and his anointed one but the Lord laughs at their foolishness. How can you resist and overthrow the Creator of the heavens and the earth? How can you throw off the fetters of the King of kings and Lord of lords? This is like a tiny child trying to wrestle his father to the ground, straining with all his muscles and the father laughing at the ridiculous attempt. Resistance and overthrow are futile. The better part of wisdom for the world's kings is service and honour. Better to serve the Lord with fear and to rejoice with trembling.

And verse 12 comes as the stunning conclusion:

*Do homage to the Son, that he not become angry, and you perish in the way. For his wrath may soon be kindled How blessed are all who take refuge in him.*

### **Death and resurrection**

When the Lord Jesus was nailed to a cross, betrayed rejected and ridiculed by the peoples at the instigation of the evil one, there were very few who would have applied Psalm 2 to him. Even his followers, his closest disciples who had been with him for three years, would have struggled to believe that Jesus was about to fulfil this royal psalm of victory. But Jesus rose in triumph from the grave. He ascended into heaven and took up his throne.

In Acts 13, speaking of the resurrection of Jesus, Paul says that this is the reason why he can preach with confidence the good news to the Gentiles:

*And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that he raised up Jesus, as it is also written*

*"The nations belong to Christ. They are his inheritance. New Zealand belongs to Christ. And those who determinedly resist him and his truth are doomed to feel his wrath. God laughs at their futile and foolish resistance. The question for us is do we believe that, or does the devil still hide this truth from us?"*

*in the second Psalm 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you' (Acts 13:32,33).*

Please notice: Paul is applying these words to the *resurrection* of Christ, not his birth. Jesus was begotten by the Father, in this important sense, when he was raised from the grave and took up his rule over the nations. At his resurrection, Jesus received his inheritance and this is precisely why he was then ready to give his disciples a mandate to go and teach all the nations concerning him and to baptise them in the name of the Triune God (Matthew 28:19,20).

What does this mean for the peoples? Is Jesus a dictatorial leader, to be feared and hated? Not at all. In fact, through him is proclaimed forgiveness for sin and freedom from tyranny of the evil one. But take care. Take care that you do not scoff at this King and reject him. Take care that you do not try to throw off his rule. If you do, his wrath will be roused. Like the child you will strain and strain in your attempt to rid yourself of his authority and his influence, but the Lord will laugh at you from the heavens. The

sensible thing to do, the wise thing, is to worship the Lord and to do homage to his Anointed (Psalm 2:11,12).

### **Reason for encouragement**

Do you sometimes feel fearful for the future of the church in the modern period, especially in the west? It is not merely that our political leaders benignly tolerate Christians while disagreeing with the viewpoint of Scripture. Instead there is a more and more overt attempt to marginalise to the outer edges of society those who believe the Bible and take it seriously. The attacks are relentless. We can look at this and easily get discouraged. We can think of our influence as being insignificant and we can almost feel like apologising to those around us for being Christians. But I want to suggest that when we do that, we have lost sight of the truth of this psalm, which is one of the reasons why we need to meditate on it carefully, sing it in private and public worship and not forget it. Paul had no problem. He believed in the truth of this psalm and in the triumph of the resurrection, he saw the fulfilment

of it. He therefore did not hesitate to proclaim the installation of the King and the gospel of forgiveness in spite of the those who opposed.

The nations belong to Christ. They are his inheritance. New Zealand belongs to Christ. And those who are determinedly resisting him and his truth are doomed to feel his wrath. God laughs at their futile and foolish resistance. The question for us is do we believe that, or does the devil still hide this truth from us?

Let's remember that this is the year 2017, A.D. *Anno Domini*. It is the year of our Lord, 2017. This year belongs to him. He is on the throne. He has been crowned as King and we are privileged to know him and serve him. Remember and rejoice in the truth of this psalm. Let us serve the King with joy and proclaim his name and his rule with confidence and boldness.

*Mr Michael Flinn is a member of the Reformed Church of Palmerston North and an emeritus minister who has served in several congregations in the RCNZ.*



## Like a Tree

And he is like a tree  
Planted by streams of water\*  
What splendid sight is he  
With leaf and fruit abounding:  
So promising is he ...  
A sight indeed astounding.

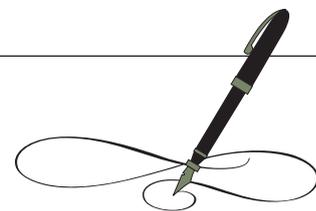
Who is this blessed "he"  
Whose walk is so noteworthy,  
Who flourishes to be  
Outstanding among mortals,  
So focused heavenward,  
Adorning this life's portals?

It is the man of truth  
Who's come to know the Way,  
Retaining vital youth,  
Shunning what leads astray.

God knows him!

*Wellington, May 2014  
\*Psalm 1*

*Leaves Galore, by John Goris (p53)*



# Through many dangers, toils and snares...

## *God's Kindness in the life of Jane Deans*

Because of being involved in farming, and having had opportunity to research the history of agriculture in Canterbury, I've had more than a passing interest in the Deans family of Riccarton, recognised as some of the province's earliest farmers. Adding to the interest, the Deans' Homebush station, a large farm even by 19<sup>th</sup> century standards, is just up the road from our place. Among other things, I knew that Jane Deans, the matriarch of the family, was widowed early and carried on the farm at Riccarton to secure the future for her infant son John.

However, it was not until earlier this year, when my two sisters took me for lunch and a tour of Riccarton House (the Deans family home) that Jane really caught my attention. One of my sisters kindly bought me a published copy of the memoir Jane wrote for her grandchildren in the late 1880s<sup>1</sup>. On reading it through, I could see that she was not only a woman of courage (all the histories will tell you that), but she was also a woman of serious, committed Christian faith (what the histories don't tell you much about). From reading Jane's account and a biography or two, I was able to piece together a remarkable story of courage and perseverance. Perhaps a brief introduction will encourage you to read more about her yourself.

Jane Deans (born Mcraith) was the daughter of an Ayrshire farmer and grew up in the Presbyterian Church in Scotland. She met her future husband, John, at a picnic on her father's farm. She was then only 16, and for two years John worked for Mr Mcraith as a farm cadet. By the time he left for New Zealand in 1842, they had developed a romantic attachment that endured for 10 further years while John and his brother William established themselves as farmers in the new colony. William had already tried farming in the Wellington and Nelson settlements, but was quickly frustrated by the lack of good organisation and the disappointing prospects for agricultural business in both those places. New Zealand Company hype exceeded the reality he experienced. On a visit to the South Island he found the plains of the Port Cooper (later Lyttelton) hinterland much more promising, and he and John arranged to rent land from the local Maori. They were aware of plans for a Church of England settlement there, and believed that if they established a productive farm early enough, they would be in a prime position to sell food to the newly-arrived settlers for a good income.

As soon as the New Zealand Company gained supervision



*A contemporary sketch of John and Jane Deans in the last months of John's life*



(top) Jane with her son John, aged about 10 years, c.1863

(below) Jane, surrounded by her family, around 1900.



of land sales in Canterbury, the Deans brothers bought 400 acres on the edge of an attractive piece of bush, and were granted a run in the Malvern Hills in return for the land they had farmed in Wellington and Nelson. They made an excellent start at the farm they named Riccarton after the family home in Scotland, growing grain and rearing sheep and cattle (which they brought over from Australia); and also established a one-hectare vegetable garden and orchard, which soon proved very productive. William and John worked hard, assisted by a succession of young Scottish couples with useful skills in carpentry, farming and housekeeping. They became renowned for their hospitality to the settlers arriving in large numbers after 1850. Sadly,

in mid-1851 William was drowned while on his way to Wellington. By this time John had decided to return to Scotland and marry Jane.

Their wedding was in September 1852. John spared no expense, either on their honeymoon, or the cabin accommodation for their voyage back (Jane was not a good sailor). They also purchased many lovely furnishings for a house they planned to build at Riccarton after their arrival. Before they arrived in New Zealand they were expecting their first child; but sadly, it seems John was already ill with the tuberculosis that would lead to his death 18 months after their arrival home.

Jane was not a very robust woman, but she entered into farm life at Riccarton with energy and enthusiasm. She continued the pattern of hospitality the brothers had established; and it seems that the evident productivity and orderliness of their farm encouraged newcomers who doubted that the comforts of home could ever be achieved in such a pioneer setting. She oversaw the household, supervised servants, and saw to the growing and preserving of fruit, and all the cooking and cleaning involved with entertaining guests. She visited the Malvern run and made friends around the Canterbury region. But her greatest care was for her dying husband.

Jane and John were both Scottish Presbyterians with sincere faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it was their trust in God which kept them going through the heart-wrenching months of John's illness. They spent many hours sitting together, holding hands and reading the Psalms. Many years later, in the late 1880s, Jane wrote the memoir addressed to her grandchildren to give them her perspective on her early years in Canterbury. Telling of these months nearly 40 years afterward, what strikes one is her intense love for John, and also her abiding trust in Christ. This is stated so clearly, and in such biblical terms, that it sounds very familiar language to a modern Reformed Christian. "He placed all his trust on the merits of our Redeemer's death and resurrection, and looked calmly forward" (p.11). Right throughout her memoir, Jane speaks of John and of looking forward to being reunited in the Saviour's presence one day.

In the winter of 1854, Jane was left a widow with a baby son. She was only 31, and far from friends and family in Scotland. What was she to do? One possibility was to return to Scotland. It

had worried John that she might regret having left Scotland to join him in New Zealand, and he asked her, as they talked about what would happen when he died, if she would prefer to return there. She thought carefully, but decided to remain and bring young John up to receive his inheritance at Riccarton. Her decision was a great comfort to his father as he lay dying. As the years went by Jane never wavered in her commitment, but things were frequently difficult for her. She faced legal troubles, disputes among family members and the ups and downs of climate, markets and staff management. But through it all God provided for her in a great many ways. There are many encouragements for us, too, in reading about them.

Most immediately, the Lord provided company. Jane feared being alone perhaps more than anything else, but she seldom was. There were the women on the farm, wives of the staff who sympathized and gave Jane a great deal of help in the house. They also watched out for baby John whenever she had to be away for short periods. Friends sent company in the form of older children, who stayed with her, sometimes for long periods. Local friends, particularly those of Scottish background, were especially kind and helpful. Perhaps best of all, two of her brothers came out from Scotland to work alongside her at Riccarton. She was never on her own at home for very long at a time.

A most important source of fellowship and encouragement was St Andrew's Presbyterian church, of which Jane remained a faithful member for the rest of her life. When John and Jane arrived from Scotland in 1853 there was no Presbyterian church, and at first they allowed the Anglican community to meet for worship in their small house in the absence of any Anglican church building. But they never felt comfortable with the "formalities" of Anglican liturgy, and preferred to worship alone: "Our own quiet Sabbath service we enjoyed exceedingly. We were of one mind and spirit in our devotion to our Maker and our Saviour, and our Sabbath services were the sincere homage of our hearts." But when more Presbyterian settlers arrived (they were always a minority of the Christchurch community, however) a church was established. Its earliest minister, Charles Fraser, together with his wife, became some of Jane's close friends. When they arrived in April 1856 they were on hand to help Jane through

the fiercest early stages of her grief after John's death. For some months they lived with her at Riccarton. St Andrews church was built in 1857, and Jane was a constant presence at worship.

Secondly, John had been able to settle his affairs wisely before he died. He had been an astute businessman and a good manager; and in his concern to provide for the future of his wife and son, he had made sure she had help going forward. One of Jane's cousins, Douglas Graham, had come out from Scotland with them, and continued on as farm manager after John's death. It was also arranged that two of Jane's half-brothers, Hugh and George, would come out and help her. A third, James, joined them in New Zealand as well. They were wonderful, providing her with good company at home as well as taking turns to manage the day-to-day operations of the Homebush run. John appointed two trustees to assist Jane (the third) to oversee his estate until John came of age. They provided timely advice, and took their duties seriously. She was very grateful for their input, and regarded her management of Riccarton (she was actively involved in various aspects of the running of the farm as well as the household) as a sacred trust until John came of age in 1874. For Jane, the arrival of this moment was a great relief – she had looked forward to it for many years. There was a great celebration at Riccarton, and James Deans (young John's uncle) even came out from Scotland especially for the occasion. Here is how Jane described her response to the coming of John's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday:

"It is of no use trying to describe the feeling of thankfulness I felt to my Heavenly Father for His great kindness to us both, in times of joy and sorrow, for we had both, and for bringing us to such a happy consummation of such a long trusteeship, and giving us health and strength for the duties required. Also, for guiding and protecting your dear father through the helpless years of infancy, the 'slippery paths of youth', and at last to man's estate, so that 'no evil befell him, nor plague came near him'. Also for providing me with kind and considerate co-trustees to help me in directing affairs, and with most kind fellow-workers in Mr D. Graham and Uncle James and others in carrying out the wishes of your grandfather in the management of the estate. For what was I, to undertake such a responsibility? Had not I put my trust in Him, who never fails any who

truly love Him? To Him alone be all the glory and all the praise." (p. 48)

When Jane and John arrived from Scotland in 1853 after their wedding, their plan had been to build a proper farm house fit for a couple of their stature. Even after John died, Jane stuck with the plan, and despite the difficulties building projects entail, she managed it. Probably, it helped her look forward and remain positive. The house, planned and constructed in 1856, was a modest but solid two-storey weatherboard dwelling with four bedrooms, a morning room and parlour. Here she lived with young John and one or other of her brothers when they were at Riccarton. It contained all the furniture and furnishings she and John had brought from Scotland, with doubtless poignant memories of their brief but happy marriage, as well as reminders of home. The house was frequently host to staying guests – and in anticipation of the big coming-of-age celebration in 1874, Jane had it enlarged. Son John made further, more elegant additions to it in 1900, giving it the form it retains to this day, though the original rooms built by Jane in the 1850s remain as part of the house.

Jane lived at Riccarton until she died in 1911, through 55 years of widowhood, and reached the honoured age of 87. Her life in New Zealand had begun in tragedy, but it ended in peace and happiness. In 1879 John married Catherine Parks, a young woman whose family were old friends of the Deans. Together they had 12 children, 9 of whom lived to adulthood. Some of the sons took up parts of the Homebush estate as individual farms; and even into adulthood they and their families came to stay often at Riccarton. Jane found her grandchildren a great delight, and definitely a blessing of God in her older age. Her friends believed they brought light into her life after her many toils and cares in managing Riccarton's affairs were lifted from her by John. As an elderly lady she looked back with great thankfulness for God's many kindnesses to her.

Summing it all up as she neared 70, she told her grandchildren: "Little did I think what I was undertaking when your grandfather gave me my choice of remaining here, or returning to Scotland after his death. He delivered me over to his Heavenly Father's care, and surely goodness and mercy have followed me all my life long. The satisfaction it gave your grandfather when I decided promptly

to remain here was sufficient to inspire me with energy to endeavour to do my best, and I have never regretted the decision I made. I am nearing the promised span of life, and looking forward to meeting him with Christ in glory." (p. 46)

What more could any of us ask?

### Notes

1 Jane Deans, *Letters to My Grandchildren*, (Riccarton House and Bush, Christchurch, NZ). All page numbers in the text of the article refer to this book. It may be purchased at Ricca-

rtion House.

For further information on John and Jane and the Deans family, see Joanna Orwin, *Riccarton and the Deans Family: History and Heritage* (David Bateman, 2015).

All photos are taken from this book.

## Letters from New Zealand

D. G. Vanderpyl

### August 1977

Fred Somebody, Tom Everybody, Peter Anybody and Joe Nobody were neighbours – but not like you or me. They were difficult to understand. All four of them belonged to the same church just down the road from us; yet you would find it hard to worship and fellowship with them.

Everybody went fishing on Sunday or stayed at home to visit friends. Anybody wanted to worship but Somebody wouldn't speak to him; so Nobody went to church. Really, Nobody was the only decent one among them. Why? Because Nobody did all the church visitation. Nobody did all the work on the church building. When they needed a Sunday school teacher, Everybody thought that Anybody would do it and Somebody thought that Everybody would teach; so guess who finally did it? That's right... Nobody!

Now, it so happened that a fifth neighbour came to live among them. Everybody thought that Somebody would befriend him – but guess who finally won him to Christ? That's right. Nobody did. And what is the moral of this little story? If you don't want to do the Lord's work – don't worry – Nobody will do it for you.

Fortunately, these people belonged to the church down the road and not to ours. But we are kidding ourselves if we think so, though. I think it is high time that our churches take that agenda item "Evangelism" a bit more seriously and really get cracking. I wish that the Synodical Committee of Home Missions and Church Extension would give the churches some good leadership in this area.

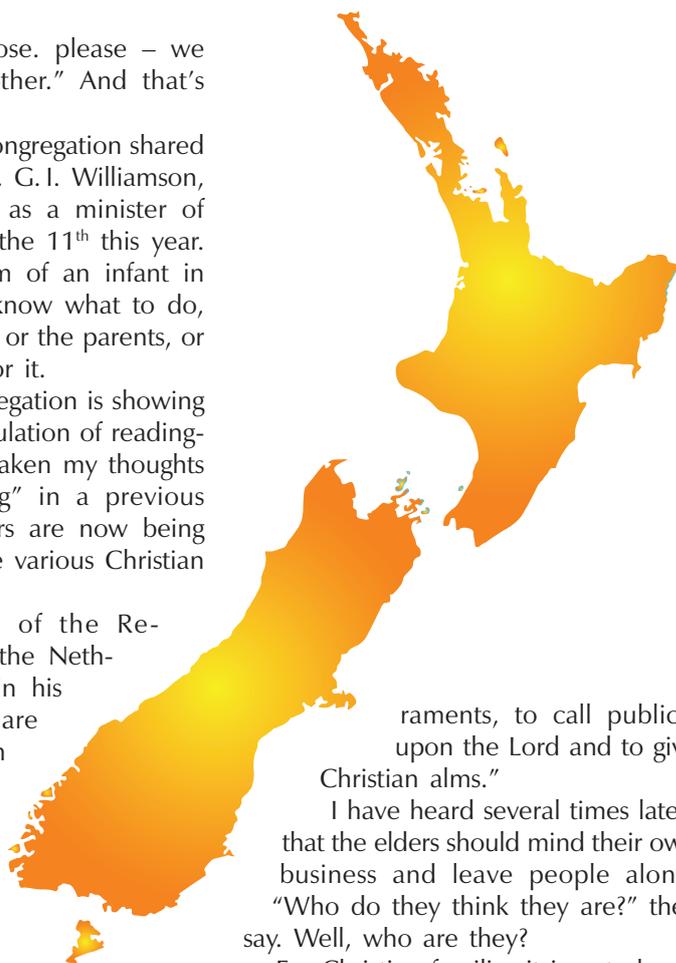
Unfortunately, we are like that family who have a sticker on their car's rear

window: "Not so close. please – we hardly know each other." And that's how we play it safe.

The Silverstream congregation shared with their pastor, Rev. G.I. Williamson, his 25th anniversary as a minister of the Gospel, on June the 11<sup>th</sup> this year. Like with the baptism of an infant in the church, I never know what to do, congratulate the baby or the parents, or just thank the Lord for it.

The Tokoroa congregation is showing an interest in the circulation of reading-material. They have taken my thoughts on "TV and Reading" in a previous issue to heart. Folders are now being circulated with all the various Christian magazines in it.

An elder in one of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, noting that in his church the services are attended by less than half the number of members on the church roll and the evening services by less than a quarter of the membership, made an interesting remark. He wrote, "That it is not that the Church Order states that the session sees to it that there are two worship services on a Sunday; or, in other words, that the session provides for the worship services and that it is up to the congregation whether they make their appearance or not. No," he says, "the Church Order is quite clear in stating that the session calls the congregation to come and worship." The Heidelberg catechism states it quite clearly in answer 103: "It is the Christian's privilege and duty the day of rest to diligently attend the Church of God, to learn God's Word, to use the Sac-



raments, to call publicly upon the Lord and to give Christian alms."

I have heard several times lately that the elders should mind their own business and leave people alone. "Who do they think they are?" they say. Well, who are they?

For Christian families it is not always easy to keep control of their evenings. Monday night father leaves the family to go on a home-visit somewhere in the congregation. Tuesday night mother goes to choir practice, while father looks after the children. Wednesday night the children leave for church to attend catechism classes while Dad has to retire to a spare room to prepare the minutes of a committee meeting which had been held three weeks ago; he had not found the time to write them earlier. Thursday night father leaves for the session meeting at the manse, and Friday night Mum goes out to do the shopping. And then comes Sunday night. The whole

family is together at last and spends the evening watching the television together, no one says a word. The art of communication has been lost.

But in the Hamilton church they are going to do something about this problem. A committee (as usual) has been appointed to study (as usual) how we can change our church life to put more emphasis on the family.

It was noted that family-life is endangered by society and modern living; it is also not being supported by our activity programme that tends to separate members of the family. And in the light of these pressures upon family-life from outside and also from within the church, the question is being asked: "Ought we not to consider the possibility of a new structure?"

I am looking forward to the results of this study and I'm sure that I am not the only one. I know this is true, because the happiest moments of my life have been those which I have spent at home in the bosom of my family as a youngster, and as a parent.

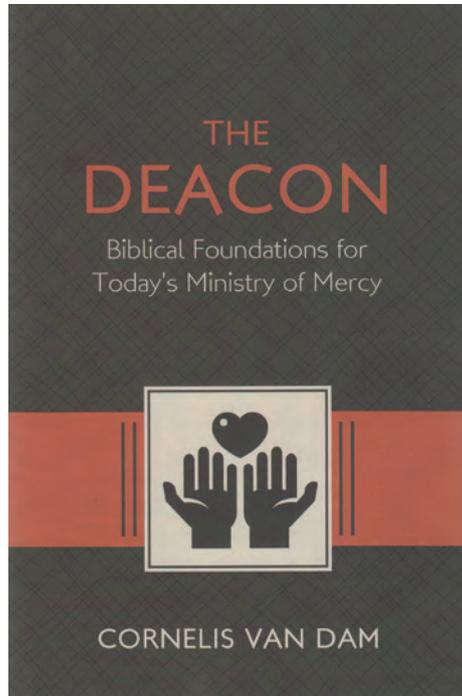
**Abridged**

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## Books in focus

### ***THE DEACON: Biblical Foundations for Today's Ministry of Mercy***

by Cornelis van Dam (Prof Emeritus of Old Testament, Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, Hamilton, Ontario)  
**Reformation Heritage Books (Grand Rapids, Mich) 2016. Pb 256 pages \$(US)18.00**  
**Reviewed by Dirk van Garderen**



In our tradition, we believe that the office of deacon is God's special gift to the church. That's the theory. In many instances our deacons are younger men who have little if any real idea of the special nature, tasks and responsibilities of this office. Their duties, although described in the Church Order and Form

for Ordination, is often little more than counting the money, organising rosters for special offerings and trying to keep an eye on those with financial needs. The truth is that being a deacon is often regarded as a good way of introducing a man into the life of the session (consistory); an apprenticeship for eldership! Even John Calvin acknowledged that 'the diaconate may sometimes be the nursery from which presbyters are chosen,' but hastened to add that the diaconal ministry is 'worthy of no small honour, for it is not a menial task but a highly honourable office.'

Teaching and training deacons (and I may add, the congregation and elders as well!) remains a continuing challenge. For many years Berghoef and de Koster's (*The Deacons Handbook, 1980*) has proved a good resource. It still is.

However, in 2016 Cornelis van Dam's 'The Deacon' was published. It really is a gem! I read it from cover to cover while commuting from Jordan (Ontario) to Columbia (Missouri). Easy to read, up to date, and informative. The author considers the Old Testament background for this calling, the deacon in New Testament times and in church history, and the current function of the office. Van Dam brings to life the high and privileged calling of deacons, encourages, instructs and offers a challenging insight into the task within the local congregation, the wider community and the world.

Recognising the need to encourage his readers to do more than just read, he provides a list of questions for discussion on each chapter.

Deacons, sessions, this book is a MUST HAVE and STUDY! If the office is going to be truly Bible based under-

standing and dignity, this book would be an outstanding, relevant and up to date vehicle for doing so.

Going beyond the boundaries of a book review, I would like to make a few suggestions:

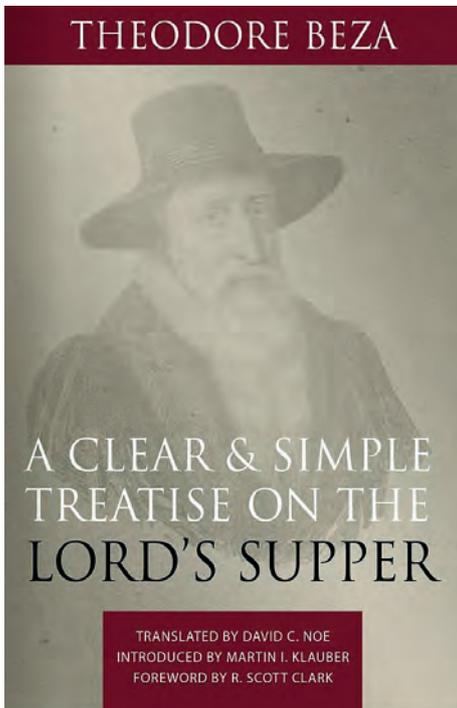
- That this book be placed in every session's library – enough copies for each deacon.
- That deacons be expected to read or at the very least, join in a group to come to a deeper understanding of the office by thinking about and discussing it.
- The National Diaconate Committee has for some time been urging deacons' conferences at presbytery level. This book would be an excellent tool to use here. Deacons thinking the diaconate with fellow deacons!
- Ask the National Diaconate to make a bulk order and have it readily available.

### ***A Clear and Simple Treatise on the Lord's Supper***

by Theodore Beza, translated by David C. Noe

**Reformation Heritage Books, 2016  
Hardback, 248 pages, list price \$40.00. Reviewed by OP pastor  
Glen J. Clary**

At the Last Supper, the Lord Jesus said concerning the bread, "This is my body." Those words have sparked more controversy in the history of the church than any other words in the Bible. The Reformers rejected the Roman Catholic doctrine that the consecrated bread is transubstantiated into the body of



Christ. Unfortunately, however, they were unable to agree with each other on the exact meaning of the words of Jesus. The dispute between Luther and Zwingli at Marburg ultimately led to a rupture within the Protestant movement.

Calvin (like Zwingli) denied the local presence of Christ in the Supper, but he criticized Zwingli's failure to affirm that Christ is present by the agency of the Holy Spirit and that, through the sacrament, Christ's body and blood are truly received by believers. Calvin wrote, Zwingli "labored more to pull down what was evil than to build up what was good" (Tracts, 2:196). According to Calvin, Christ is "given to us in the Supper Spiritually because the secret virtue of the Spirit makes things which are separated by space to be united with each other and, accordingly, causes life from the flesh of Christ to reach us from heaven" (Tracts, 2:578). Even though Bullinger (Zwingli's successor) did not entirely accept Calvin's doctrine, the two Reformers were able to reach a consensus on the Lord's Supper.

Due to the influence of Philip Melancthon, some Lutherans (known as Philippists) became persuaded of Calvin's eucharistic theology. However, another group of Lutherans known as the Gnesio (genuine) Lutherans rejected Calvin's doctrine and defended Luther's teaching that (1) the body and blood of Jesus are locally and substantially present "in, with, and under" the consecrated elements and (2) believers and unbelievers alike receive his body and blood in the sacrament.

One of the leading proponents of the Gnesio-Lutheran position was Joachim Westphal. Beginning in 1552, Westphal published several treatises against Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Calvin answered these attacks with three treatises of his own. Finally, in 1558, Westphal published his Defense of the Lord's Supper against the Errors and Calumnies of John Calvin. By this time, Calvin "had clearly had his fill of Westphal" and chose not to write a response (Beza, p. xxix).

However, in 1559, Beza, who had only recently arrived in Geneva, published *A Clear and Simple Treatise on the Lord's Supper in which the Published Slanders of Joachim Westphal are Finally Refuted*. This treatise is the clearest explanation of Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper I've read. Beza completely demolishes Westphal's doctrine, and with solid exegetical and theological arguments, he clarifies, defends, and advances Calvin's thought. Noe's translation is outstanding, and his editorial remarks are invaluable. This is an essential resource for any serious study of Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper. I highly recommend it.

New Horizons, May 2017

### ***A Christian's Pocket Guide to Loving the Old Testament***

Alec Motyer

**Reviewed by: William M. Hobbs**

Christian Focus publishes a series of "pocket guides" on various subjects, like this one on the Old Testament by retired Irish Old Testament scholar and pastor Alec Motyer. Now over ninety years old, Motyer is a voice worth hearing. His 555-page commentary on Isaiah reflects the thirty years Motyer spent teaching the text. And his *Look to the Rock* (seeing Christ in the Old Testament), *Preaching?* (lobbying for simplicity in exposition), and numerous commentaries (e.g., on Amos, Exodus, Philippians, and Psalms) have established him as a trusted helper to pastor and layman alike. Motyer is that rare scholar who can write plainly, say something quotable in a few words, and write sympathetically to ordinary folk.

In this pocket guide, Motyer begins with this statement of purpose: "Now this Old Testament, above all else we might say about it, is designed to prepare us for the Lord Jesus Christ." In fact, a central thesis for Motyer is that to know Jesus, we must know the Old Testament. As

redemption is its story, he notes several words to watch for like redeemer, covering, and ransom.

Second comes a brief look at the author, God – the creator and moral governor of the universe.

Third, the New Testament warrant for Motyer's view is summarized in four simple texts: Galatians 3:29 and 6:16, Philippians 3:3, and Colossians 2:11–12. As with the whole book, this section is succinct and much more profound than the novice might realize.

The fourth and largest section is a fourfold presentation of the unity of the Bible: one covenant, one God, one way of salvation, and one Messiah.

Fifth, Motyer tackles several prophets to give the untrained reader some clues as to how to proceed. Then there are the Psalms, constituting the "outpouring of the heart and the well-thought-out intention of the mind," all under one heading: "Take It to the Lord."

There is also a little section on prophecy. According to Motyer, prophecy and creation are the Bible's two-part defense that Yahweh (the Lord) is God. Motyer briefly surveys Isaiah 40–48 to demonstrate the point. Then, working a series of interesting angles (e.g., obedience, sacrifices, city of God, circumstances), this thesis is carried into the New Testament, where the Savior is the fulfillment of all the things. The key help Motyer gives here is structure. He presses the reader to read and reread the text, looking for its structure in order to arrive at its meaning.



Who might benefit from this little book? My ninth-grade Bible students last year would have been much helped. This year's kids will thank me. It would make a nice study for a Sunday school class.

Even the minister who has preached and taught through the Old Testament will enjoy the read and learn something, too.  
New Horizons, June 2017

## World in focus

### People with Down Syndrome in “civilized” Denmark almost all exterminated

By Rob Slane

Here's one of those moral dilemmas. There are three people in a room. They all have the same medical condition and are in fact the last people alive who have it. It is by no means life-threatening, nor is it contagious, and its main symptoms are physical growth delays and varying degrees of intellectual disability. There is, however, currently no cure for it. Someone enters the room and tells you that they have found a cure, which they are going to give you. They hand you a gun. All you have to do, they tell you, is pull the trigger three times and you will have completely eradicated the condition from planet Earth. What would you do?

Not hard, is it? Yet imagine someone carrying out the killing and then triumphantly proclaiming that they had indeed eradicated the condition. You'd be appalled at the Hitlerian cruelty. Appalled at the callous disregard for a fellow creature made in the *Imago Dei*. But perhaps even more than that, you'd surely be sick to the stomach to hear them acting like they had found a cure, rather than having simply killed three human beings to achieve their ends. You don't cure disease by killing people, do you?

Apparently you do. A few years back Iceland became the first “civilized Western” country to become a Down Syndrome-free zone, and Denmark is close to becoming the second. Back in 2015, CPH Post (formerly The Copenhagen Post), Denmark's only English-language newspaper, ran a piece with the headline:

*“Down Syndrome heading for extinction in Denmark.”*

This must rank as one of the most misleading headlines in history. If you didn't know better, you'd think that Denmark's doctors had found a cure for Down Syndrome. Except they haven't. What they have in fact done is not made Down Syndrome almost extinct, but rather people with Down Syndrome. The headline should have read: “People with Down Syndrome heading for extinction in Denmark”. Doesn't sound quite as medical, does it, unless you mean in the Josef Mengele sense of the word!

Yet this drive to eradicate Down Syndrome by eradicating people with Down Syndrome is apparently going down rather well in Denmark. According to the article, 98% of pregnant women who were revealed to be carrying an unborn child with Down Syndrome had him or her aborted, and 60% of Danes see it as a “positive development” that there are considerably fewer Down Syndrome children being born. Positive development? Ridding Denmark of Down Syndrome by curing it might be considered a positive development. But ridding Denmark of Down Syndrome by killing those with the condition? That's a positive development???

Here's what Britain's biggest funder of abortions, the NHS, says about people with Down Syndrome:

*“People with Down syndrome can have a good quality of life. With support from their family and others, many people are able to get jobs and live fairly independently.”*

So 60% of Danes believe that the eradication from their country of “people who can have a good quality of life...can get jobs and live fairly independently” by killing them is a good thing? Have they ever seen the joy Down Syndrome people bring to those around them? Do they care? Have they any heart?

Not so long ago, Down Syndrome could not be detected in the womb.

Now that it can, 98% of Down Syndrome children are aborted in Denmark, over 90% in Britain, and – most shockingly – every single Down Syndrome child in Iceland. The real test of the character of any civilization is how it treats its weakest and most helpless members. If it loves them and seeks to help them, it should be praised. If it seeks cures to treat their conditions, great. But if it seeks to extinguish the people who have the condition from its midst, and then pats itself on the back at having eradicated the condition, what grounds do we have for calling it civilized?

*Reformed Perspective, May-June 2017. Used with permission.*

### Good News for Pro-life Movement: 8 States Have Only One Abortion Clinic Left

Eight states are reportedly on their way to being abortion free and each have only one abortion clinic remaining.

*LifeNews.com* reports that the eight states are Kentucky, West Virginia, Wyoming, Mississippi, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Arkansas.

West Virginia and Kentucky were the most recent states to shut down all abortion clinics except one.

Abortion advocates have expressed their concern at the lessening access to abortion.

“In 2002, the Legislature passed the so-called Women's Right To Know Act, which required that a biased counseling script had to be delivered to every patient by a licensed medical professional. So we had to hire somebody. And that's the kind of thing the anti-choice people advocate for, because it costs us additional money,” said Sharon Lewis, executive director of the remaining abortion clinic in West Virginia.

Another pro-abortionist, Brent Blue, a physician and the director at Wyoming's last abortion clinic, complained about the law that mandates a woman seeking an abortion first get an ultrasound.

"[P]atients have to be offered the opportunity to look at the ultrasound, but we do ultrasounds anyway, so if they want to look, all they have to do is turn their head to the right," Blue said. "It's a law that has no teeth, and there's no way to enforce it. It won't change one thing for us."

Despite these complaints, these laws are saving the lives of unborn children, and pro-life advocates believe the movement is only gaining more ground.

Veronica Neffinger | Editor, *ChristianHeadlines.com*

## UN Committee Excludes Unborn From Right to Life, Opens Door to Euthanasia

By Stefano Gennarini, J.D. | July 28, 2017

NEW YORK, July 28 (C-Fam) The Human Rights Committee, one of the oldest and better-known UN committees, is considering excluding the unborn child from the "right to life" in international law.

The change under consideration says, "State parties must provide safe access to abortion to protect the life and health of pregnant women, and in situations when carrying a pregnancy to term would cause a woman substantial pain or suf-

fering, most notably when the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest, or when the fetus suffers from fatal impairment." The draft also considers restrictions on abortion as a form of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment.

Though excluding the unborn child, the committee speaks highly of the right to life, saying it "inheres in every human being" and "should not be interpreted narrowly." It described the right to life as "most precious" and the "supreme right from which no derogation is permitted." But the comments also says euthanasia does not violate the right to life if carried out on terminally ill patients.

A diverse range of pro-life groups from around the world stormed the committee in 2015 when it first became clear it would consider excluding the unborn child from the right to life. The pro-life concern was so overwhelming compared to the response of abortion groups that the UN secretariat extended the comment period to allow Planned Parenthood and other umbrella abortion groups to add further interventions.

International experts on health and law have criticized UN committees before on the issue of abortion including in the San Jose Articles. Fifty scholars pointed out that no UN treaty mentions abortion and no UN treaty can be fairly interpreted to include a right to abortion under any circumstance.

The Articles note that while no UN treaties includes specific positive obliga-

tions of states with regard to protection of children in the womb, international law creates a presumption in favor of protecting life in the womb because it prohibits the application of the death penalty to pregnant women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child explicitly protects children "before birth."

Recent scholarship on the meaning of the treaty when it was negotiated also contradicts the committee's current draft. Writing in the *Tulane Journal of International and Comparative Law*, Thomas Finegan narrates how the framers of the convention rejected attempts both to establish positive obligations in regard to abortion or the protection of life before birth.

The Human Rights Committee reviews reports of state parties on implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, one of the UN human rights treaties to which the United States is a party. The draft comment is a reversal of two comments from the 1980s on the right to life that did not mention abortion at all.

While the committee's comments and recommendations are neither binding nor authoritative, the committee may indirectly influence the interpretation of the treaty through UN agencies and organizations that rely on them, as well as judges. The committee's non-binding views would likely be cited when the U.S. Supreme Court addresses abortion again.

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# Cults and Soft Targets (2)

## Herm Zandman

In the first part of our subject under consideration, we looked at the glaring and awful fact that many people in the world have lost their spiritual moorings, and are easily led into ruinous allurements because the plumbline by which to measure all that is coming their way is absent. We noted that even those who call themselves born-again Christians struggle with ethical discernment, simply because whilst they *revere* the Bible, they hardly use it as a study book for life, and they have disturbingly little

inking of its content, resulting in misguided directions, leading to much pain.

As stated in the previous article, 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. Cults are ruinous and they have caused misery in many a household, resulting in financial, emotional, and relational stress unimaginable. 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. The organisation distinguishes four types of cults in society.

### Cults can be religious

Cults that use a belief system as their base are very common. Their belief system could be standard Christianity, Hinduism, Islam or any other of the world religions, or they may have invented their own belief system. What makes them a cult is the fact that they use mind control, not what they believe.

### Cults can be commercial

Cults that use commercial gain as their base are called “cults of greed.” They will promise you that if you join them and follow their special programme for success, then you will become very rich. Often they will hold up their leader as an example and explain that if you do what he or she says then you will be successful too. Commercial cults use mind control to get you working for them for free, and to make you pay for an endless stream of motivational tapes, videos, books and seminars all of which are supposedly designed to help you succeed, but in reality are designed to enhance the cult’s mind control environment and keep you believing in their almost impossible dream of success. Of course they never mention that the primary way the leaders make money is by selling these motivation materials to their group! Through intense advertising, often pop-ups when you go on a website, they lure people to their particular sites with catchy phrases which are tellingly non-specific regarding the product or service, but will titillate the taste buds of those who are looking for some lucrative way by which attractive amounts of money can supposedly be made by working a mere few hours from home. I myself have looked at those sites at times and have by the grace of God, and the scornful remarks of family members, been saved from getting sucked in.

### Cults can be about self-help & counselling

Cults that use “self-help” or counselling or self-improvement as their base often target business people and corporations. By doing their courses and seminars they claim that you and your staff will become more successful. Business people locked



away in hotel rooms are subjected to quasi-religious indoctrination as they play strange games, join in group activities, and share their innermost thoughts with the group. Once you have completed one course you are told you need to do the more advanced course, which naturally costs more than the last. These cults will sometimes request that you do volunteer work and that you help recruit your friends, family and work mates. These groups specialize in creating powerful emotional experiences which are then used to validate your involvement in the cult. The religious overtones are couched in terms which don't sound religious. They usually come to the surface as you near the end of a seminar. Many people have been bankrupted by involvement with these cults.

### Cults can be political

Cults that use political ideals as their base are well known throughout history. Hitler's Nazi Germany and Stalin's Communist USSR were classic examples of mind control on a very large scale. On a smaller scale, white and black supremacists, terrorists, and rebel groups commonly use forms of mind control to recruit and dominate their members.

Now, mind control is not some magical device which can take away people's free will. In other words, it does not turn people into some sort of remote control robot. Rather, mind control is a dishonest influence placed sneakily on cult members by the cult. So instead of mind control being some sort of irresistible force like the aliens in the movies that take over people's minds, it is more

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like a gun. The cult leader points the mind control “gun” at a member and says, “If you leave us, then you will lose all of your friends and family”, or “If you don’t conform, then you will go to Hell”, or “If you don’t give us money, then you will fail in business.”

Key marks of mind control are:

- Deception: The cult will not reveal its true self until the very last moment.
- Exclusivism: Cult leaders will tell you can only be “saved” (or can only be successful) in their organization. No other organization has the truth, all others miss the mark. So it is not the belief system that decides your future, but it’s the belief system and your membership with that particular group.
- Fear and intimidation: Cult leadership is feared. To disagree with leadership is the same as disagreeing with God.
- Love bombing and relationship control: Cults know that if they can control your relationships, then they can control you. When you first go to a cult they will practice “love bombing,” where they arrange instant friends for you. It will seem wonderful. But you soon learn that if you ever disagree with them, or ever leave the cult, then you will lose all your new “friends.” This unspoken threat influences your actions in the cult. A mind control cult will also seek to manoeuvre your life so as to minimize your contact with people outside the group, especially those who oppose your involvement.
- Information control: Those who control the information control the person. In a mind control cult any information from outside the cult is considered evil, especially if it is opposing the cult. Members are told not to read it or believe it.
- Reporting structure: In a mind control cult like in Nazi Germany or Communist Russia, you must be careful

of what you say and do: “The walls have ears.” Everyone is encouraged to watch out for “struggling” brothers and sisters and report what they see to leadership.

- Time control: The cult will keep its members so busy that no time is left to spend on other ideas or relationships.

The hype, the unrelenting pressure, the charismatic aura, the sophisticated public relations machine are all tools to draw in the unsuspecting and gullible. It is small wonder that a good many folk who have been raised in a Roman Catholic environment, an environment in which members are told that the Bible is too holy to be read by any other than the initiated – the clergy – get sucked in by cults. They get sucked in because they have been deprived by their very leaders to put on the full armour of God.

Cults are bombarding us through any and all media, disguising themselves as benefactors which only have your very best interests at heart. They are handmaidens to the one about which Christians are warned by the Apostle Peter, as he writes in 1 Peter 5:8, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” The Apostle Paul warns against deceivers as he puts a flaming red warning sign in the church of Corinth, where Christians are threatened by deceivers. Some have actually fallen in their trap. So Paul says, “And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.”

King Josiah, when cleaning up the nation, even took away the horses and chariots. And why did he do this? Among the people who anciently worshipped the sun, horses were usually dedicated to that divinity, from the supposed idea that the sun itself was drawn in a chariot by horses. In some cases these horses were sacrificed; but more commonly they were employed either in the sacred processions to carry the images of

the sun, or for the worshippers to ride in every morning to welcome his rise. It seems that the idolatrous kings, Ahaz, Manasseh, and Amon, or their great officers, proceeded on these horses early on each day from the east gate of the temple to salute and worship the sun at his appearing above the horizon. They were instruments of deception and to be removed from the people of God (2 Kgs 23).

King Josiah knew his Bible, he knew the Word of God. It protected him and, through it he extended that protection to the people under his care. He had an Issacharian spirit (1 Chron 12:32), for he had understanding of the times. He was a Berean, the ones about whom we read in Acts 17, “These searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.”

The Lord Jesus Christ watches over His church. He gives her the weaponry to defend against deceit, deception, and malice. He gives her the sword of the Spirit, the Bible. He gives her the Helper to assist His people, as we may read in John 14. It is incumbent on those who wish to avoid the lure of the cults to dust off that sword and wield it with vigour. Once you belong to Jesus, He Himself will ensure that you can lift the arm powerfully enough to wield the sword and lift the protective shield. Seek Him today in prayer and read His Word to bits. It is your salvation and life.

*Now I believe I can hear the philosophers protesting that it can only be misery to live in folly, illusion, deception and ignorance, but it isn't – it's human.*

*Desiderius Erasmus (Dutch classical scholar, ca. 1500 AD)*

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