

Richard Baxter

THE PURITANS AT HOME



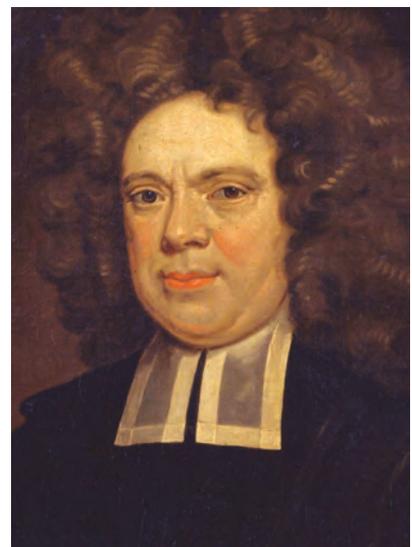
Anne Bradstreet



John Winthrop



The Rev. Thomas Shepard Snr.



Matthew Henry

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Editorial

Last time we ran articles on the Puritans, we were asking who they were, where they came from and what their legacy was. In this issue, we look at the Puritans at home – at the humanity of a group of people who were not only misunderstood, but also vilified in their time, and continue to be derided even in our day.

"Puritanical" is an adjective describing the strict practice of religion and/or morals. Yet a good look at the Puritans and how they lived will certainly show that they were not a dour, joyless, loveless and legalistic bunch of people: they did not deserve such hostility.

However, the times in which they lived were times of reformation and danger, in England and Scotland. Many left for the new world in North America, where they were free from persecution by the established church.

Their love for the LORD and His word was fervent, they were positive in their view of service to GOD and mankind, and they promoted strong marriages and families. They were industrious, patriotic, well educated, cultured and contributed much to the faith once delivered to the saints. They have left a legacy in their writings which has been a tremendous blessing to many of the LORD's people ever since.

Possibly their most significant contribution was made in the formulation of the Westminster Standards during the Westminster Assembly (1643-49). The Westminster Standards is a collective name for the documents which include the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Westminster Shorter Catechism, the Westminster Larger Catechism, the Directory of Public Worship, and the Form of Church Government; and represent the doctrine and church polity of 17th-century English and Scottish Presbyterianism. The Confession and catechisms have been adopted as doctrinal standards by a number of Reformed and Presbyterian Christian denominations throughout the world. In the RCNZ we also have adopted the Confession together with the Three Forms of Unity.

Our contributors look at the heart of the Puritans to give further insight into an often-misunderstood people of lively faith.

Mr John Haverland looks at a people guided by the word of GOD.

Mrs Sally Davey has collected some extracts of the Puritans' writings on marriage and family life.

Mr Richard B. Gaffin, Jr considers the resurrection essential to our salvation.

In *Letters from New Zealand* Mr D.G. Vanderpyl starts off with Malaysia and Islam.

There is an open letter to the RCNZ.

Book reviews are: *John Bunyan and the Grace of Fearing God*, by Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley, reviewed by OP minister Robert J. McKelvey; *Honoring the Elderly: A Christian's Duty to Aging Parent*, by Brian L. De Jong, reviewed by Pastor Paul Mourreale; *Death in Adam, Life in Christ: The Doctrine of Imputation*, by J. V. Fesko, reviewed by OP elder Joseph W. Smith III; *The Drama of Preaching: Participating with God in the History of Redemption*, by Eric Brian Watkins, reviewed by OP pastor Mark Winder.

Mr Madan Rai, a member of the Reformed Church of Palmerston North, reflects on a life's journey for peace.

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.

The Puritans at home

John A Haverland

Most of us are well aware that home and family life in our society is at a low ebb. Most couples live together before marriage and many never marry. Casual sex is commonplace as are short-term sexual relationships. Separation and divorce are frequent and soon after such breakdowns both or either party has moved in with someone else. Homosexual and lesbian relationships are widely accepted and have been made legal in New Zealand, and in many other Western countries. The incidence of child abuse, and even children murdered in their homes, is horrendous. There is growing confusion about gender and a reluctance to make hard and fast distinctions between male and female. New Zealand society is far away from the biblical pattern of marriage and family life.

We could respond to this by going through passages in the Bible about marriage and the family, which we do in sermons and Bible studies. In this article, however, I am writing about the Puritan view on these matters, so this is more of an historical study. JI Packer introduced his book on the Puritans with this statement; "The great Puritans, though dead, still speak to us through their writings and say things to us that we badly need to hear at this present time."¹ It is his view that their teaching and enforcing of their ideal for marriage and family "gave it such strength, substance, and solidity as to warrant the verdict that ... they were creators of the English Christian marriage, the English Christian family, and the English Christian home."²

The Puritans were Reformed and Presbyterian Christians who lived in England and Scotland from 1550 to 1700.³ Between 1630 and 1640 there was a Puritan migration to North America. They were devoted to the Bible and were rigorous in their application of its teaching to marriage and family life. Peter Lewis wrote, "Every area of life came under the influence

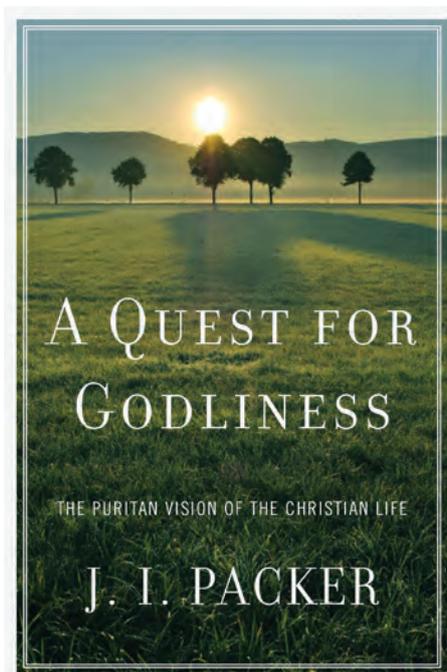
of God and the guidance of the Word. Each day began and ended with searching, unhurried and devout personal and family prayer. Each task, whether professional or manual, was done to the glory of God and with a scrupulous eye to his perfect will."⁴

The Puritans have a reputation for being joyless, gloomy and depressing, but this is completely undeserved. They took delight in God's creation, in their relationship in marriage as husband and wife, in their children and grandchildren, in their fellowship with each other as Christians, and in the worship of God. They sought to obey God in everything and they took his Word seriously. Puritan ministers taught their members thoroughly and faithfully in all these areas.

Marriage

The Puritans had a very positive view of marriage and of the joy and companionship a husband and wife could experience within this closest of all human relationships. Thomas Gataker wrote, "There is no society more near, more

"The great Puritans, though dead, still speak to us through their writings and say things to us that we badly need to hear at this present time."



entire, more needful, more kindly, more delightful, more comfortable, more constant, more continual, than the society of man and wife, the main root, source, and original of all other societies.”⁵ Richard Baxter, in his *Christian Directory* expressed a similar sentiment; “It is a mercy to have a faithful friend that loveth you entirely ... to whom you may open your mind and communicate your affairs ... And it is a mercy to have so near a friend to be a helper to your soul and ... to stir up in you the grace of God.” Thomas Hooker described the Christian husband with these words; “The man whose heart is endeared to the woman he loves, he dreams of her in the night, hath her in his eye and apprehension when he awakes, museth on

which listed the procreation of children as the first purpose of marriage. The Puritans recognised, rightly, that God had ordained marriage first of all for companionship, when he said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him” (Gen 2:18). They affirmed sex in marriage as a blessing from God and not only for the purpose of procreation. Love in marriage was to be enjoyed and celebrated.

They recognised that men and women were equal before God but that he had appointed the husband to be the head of his wife. They believed male leadership in marriage was “biblically prescribed, an exegetical conclusion that nearly everyone held from the second



<http://www.meetthepuritans.com>

her as he sits at table, walks with her when he travels and parlies with her in each place where he comes.”⁶

The English Puritans met in the Westminster Assembly from 1643 to 1649 in 1163 sessions and produced the *Confession of Faith*, a *Directory of Worship*, a *Directory of Family Worship*, a *Larger Catechism* and a *Shorter Catechism*. The Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) states the purposes of marriage as follows: “Marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife, for the increase of mankind with legitimate offspring and of the church with godly children, and for the prevention of sexual immorality” (WCF 24:2). In this statement they altered the order of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer

to the twentieth century.”⁷ This headship must be exercised in love. A wife was not the servant of her husband but rather his helper, counsellor and comforter. Benjamin Wadsworth explained; “A good husband will make his government of his wife as easy and gentle as possible, and strive more to be loved than feared.” Samuel Willard expressed a similar view; “A good husband” will so rule “as that his wife may take delight in his headship and not account it a slavery but a liberty and privilege.”⁸

While emphasising the delight of love in marriage Puritan ministers recognised that this must be subordinate to a love for God. Writing to his wife shortly after their marriage John Winthrop called her “the chiefest of all comforts under

the hope of salvation". John Cotton encouraged his people to look upon their spouses "not for their own ends, but to be better fitted for God's service and bring them nearer to God."⁹

Puritan ministers preached regularly and wrote extensively on Christian marriage, teaching that a Christian should only marry a Christian and that "beauty of mind and character matter more than beauty of face and body". Their business "was to help couples build marriages that would last, and all their efforts were directed to this end; and they did in fact offer a great deal of wisdom on maintaining love and goodwill, honour and respect, peace and contentment, common purposes and shared commitments, in the married state."¹⁰

church and state and if children be not well principled there, all miscarrieth." And Richard Baxter applied this, writing, "keep up the government of God in your families: holy families must be the chief preservers of interest in the world."¹¹

Here is an informative and amusing quote from JI Packer: "The Puritans crusaded for a high view of the family, proclaiming it both the basic unit of society and a little church in itself, with the husband as its pastor and his wife as his assistant ... As head of the family, the husband must be treated with respect before the children and guest. (That was why William Gouge directed that the wife should not call her husband 'ducks', 'chicks', 'sweet', or 'pigsnie', when others were present, but should



"It was the duty of the head of the household, usually the father, to diligently guide and direct his children and other members of his household in the truth of the Bible and in godly living."

Family life

Children were seen as a blessing from the Lord. Puritan families were often large, with seven children or more. Yet the infant mortality rate was high and it was not uncommon for half or more of these children to die at a young age. The Puritans knew and experienced the brevity of life, which Moses described in Psalm 90.

When they wrote about the family they had in mind what we would call the extended rather than the nuclear family. 'Family' included the servants, elderly parents and other relatives, and sometimes extended family members and other residents. They regarded family life as of great importance. Thomas Manton wrote, "a family is the seminary of

address him as 'Master so-and-so').¹²

The Westminster *Directory for Family Worship* urged the head of the family to encourage each member of his family to spend time by themselves in "secret worship" for the purpose of prayer and meditation on the Scriptures, and to convene their families for prayer, praise and "reading of the Scriptures with catechising in a plain way". The ministers in each congregation were urged "to take special care that these Directions be observed and followed" and that if the head of the family was neglecting his duty he be admonished "to amend his fault".

The Puritans believed in the doctrine of original sin, that children were sinful by nature, and that if they were left to

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themselves they would follow their bent to depravity. They recognised that the seeds of godliness needed to be planted early and that biblical instruction needed to be adapted to the age of a child. They knew that their children were influenced both by their instruction and their example; even more by the latter, as expressed by Richard Greenham; “children learn more by countenance, gesture and behaviour than by rule, precept, or instruction.”¹³ Most Puritan parents took their responsibilities seriously and many of these families raised godly believing children. Those parents expected, as we do, that the conversion of covenant children will usually be a process, evident over a period of time, rather than being sudden or dramatic. They believed their children lived under the promises of the covenant but that salvation was not automatic, nor guaranteed, and that each child had to appropriate these promises by faith in Jesus Christ.

It was the duty of the head of the household, usually the father, to diligently guide and direct his children and other members of his household in the truth of the Bible and in godly living. Richard Baxter gave sound advice on how they should go about doing this: “I do therefore desire, that all masters of families would first study well this work (the Westminster standards) themselves, and then teach it their children and servants, according to their several capacities. And, if they once understand these grounds of religion, they will be able to read other books more understandingly, and hear sermons more profitably, and confer more judiciously, and hold fast the doctrine of Christ more firmly, than ever you are like to do by any other course. First, let them read and learn the Shorter Catechism, and then the Larger, and lastly, read the Confession of Faith.”¹⁴ Christian fathers today need to take these words to heart. I am grieved when I see and hear how little men read and when I observe fathers neglecting their responsibility to teach the Scriptures to their children, a task the Puritans took so seriously.

Conclusion

The great decline of Christian truth and values in New Zealand society over the past few decades makes it imperative that we as Christians maintain strong marriages and families in order to pass on our faith to our children and grandchildren. We are to be a light and witness in the darkness of our culture. The trusted

source of truth is the Bible, which is the Word of God, “a lamp for my feet and a light for my path” (Psalm 119:105). The Scriptures must be the basis of all our teaching and instruction. But there is much we can learn from periods of church history where Christians knew the Bible well and applied it to their lives. The 150 years of the Puritans mark one such period of history. J I Packer closes his chapter on “Marriage and Family in Puritan Thought” by quoting from the Puritan John Ceree who wrote, they ‘accounted religion an engagement to duty, that the best Christians should be the best husbands, best wives, best children, best Masters, best servants, best Magistrates, best subjects, that the doctrine of God might be adorned not blasphemed’.¹⁵ This ought to be true in the 21st century as much as in the 17th.

1 *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life*, By J I Packer, Crossway Books 1990, p. 260 (This is a very fine book on the Puritans. JH) p. 16

2 Packer, p. 260

3 The October 2016 issue of *Faith in Focus* was on the Puritans. In that issue I wrote an historical introduction to the time of the Puritans.

4 *The Genius of Puritanism*, by Peter Lewis, Carey Publications 1997, p. 12

5 *Puritan Christianity; The Puritans at Home*, by C Pronk, *The Messenger*, September 1997, p. 4

6 Packer, p. 262, 265

7 Packer, p. 266

8 Pronk. p. 5

9 Pronk. p. 4

10 Packer, p. 270

11 Packer, p. 270

12 J I Packer p. 270. ‘Master’ was a common form of address to the head of the family.

13 The third question in the *Form of the Baptism of the Children of Believers* calls parents to instruct their children and lead them by their example.

14 Packer, p. 271

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

The Puritans at home

The Puritans in their own words

Sally Davey

The Puritans were prolific writers – there are many volumes of their published sermons, of their treatises on various subjects, and even of their letters and poetry. We have available to us a great insight into their thinking on many subjects. They were not shy of admitting their sin, expressing their joys and sorrows, and committing their insights to paper. When a revival of interest in the Puritans occurred in the middle of the twentieth century, many volumes of Puritan writings became available. The Banner of Truth is one of the publishing houses for whom we can be grateful for this development.

In order to illustrate the Puritan ideas about marriage and family life that John Haverland describes in his article, we have collected a number of extracts from the Puritans' own pens. They give an insight into their hearts and minds that shows how earnest they were in trying to serve God in the light of the Bible's teaching. They also show how deeply affectionate they were as husbands, wives and parents. Read these for yourselves, and notice the ways we have an affinity with them, despite the cultural differences between the seventeenth century and the twenty-first. A shared fellowship in Christ, and commitment to the same inspired Word, mean that we can empathise with their thoughts, and learn from them. (**Note:** I have modernised some spelling, and added an explanation in square brackets after some words, to aid the reader).



Anne Bradstreet

This 17th century Puritan poet was one of the first generation of Puritans who emigrated to Massachusetts from England. She was a wife and mother of eight children. Her husband, Simon, was one of the colony's leaders, and because of this, was often away on business. Anne wrote hundreds of poems; and in them revealed her deep love for both her husband and children.

To My Dear and Loving Husband

*If ever two were one, then surely we.
If ever man were lov'd by wife, then thee;
If ever wife was happy in a man,
Compare with me ye women if you can.
I prize thy love more than whole Mines of gold,
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.
My love is such that Rivers cannot quench,
Now ought but love from thee, give recompense.
Thy love is such I can no way repay,
The heavens reward thee manifold I pray.
Then while we live, in love lets so persevere
That when we live no more, may we live ever.*



John Winthrop

Winthrop, a landed gentleman and influential lawyer, was appointed the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and sailed with 700 Puritan emigrants in 1630. He married four times; and each of his wives was a godly woman whom he loved dearly. He too was frequently away on business, and wrote affectionate letters which have been preserved.

John to his wife Margaret: *the largeness and truth of my love to thee makes me always mindful of thy welfare, and sets me on to work to begin to write, before I hear from thee: the very thought of thee affords me many a kind refreshing, what will then the enjoying of thy sweet society, which I prize above all wordly comforts? (8 May 1629)*

Margaret Winthrop to John: *Most loving and good husband, I have received your letters, the true tokens of your love and care of my good, now in your absence as well as when you are present, it makes me think that saying false out of sight out of mind. I am sure my heart and thoughts are always near to do you good and not evil all the days of my life. (May 18, 1629)*

John to Margaret: *My sweet wife, Thy love is such to me, and so great is the bond between us, that I should neglect all others to hold correspondence of letters with thee: but I know thou are willing to dispense with somewhat of your own right, to give me liberty to satisfy my other occasions for the present, which call me to much writing this evening, otherwise I would have returned a larger answer to thy sweet letter. I praise God we are all in good health, and we go on cheerfully in our business: I purpose (if God will) to be with thee upon Thursday come sennight [week], and then I must take my farewell of thee, for a summer's day and a winter's day, the Lord our good God will (I hope) send us a happy meeting again in his good time. Amen. Commend me kindly to my good sister F I would have written to her, but I cannot, having 6 letters to write... The Lord bless thee my sweet wife with all our children: my brother and sister salute you all: my sons remember their love and duty: commend my love to all: farewell thy faithful husband. (February 5, 1630)*



The Rev. Thomas Shepard Sr.

This Thomas Shepard was the son of the first, and famous, Thomas (senior). He wrote a letter (of which the following is an extract) in the 1670s, when his own son Thomas was in his mid-teens and newly arrived as a student at Harvard.

Dear Son, I think meet [appropriate] (partly from the advice of your renowned grandfather to myself at my admission into the College, and partly from some other observations I have had respecting studies in that society) to leave the remembrances and advice following with you, in this great change of your life, rather in writing, than viva voce only; that so they may be the better considered and improved by you, and may abide upon your heart when I shall be (and that may be sooner than you are aware) taken from thee, and speak no more: requiring you frequently to read over, and seriously to ponder, and digest, as also conscientiously to put into practice the same through the Lord's assistance.

Remember the end of your life, which is coming back again to God; for as your great misery is your separation and estrangement from him, so your happiness, or last end, is your return again to him; and because there is no coming to God but by Christ's righteousness, and no Christ to be had but by faith, and no faith without humiliation [being humbled] or sense of your misery, hence therefore let all your prayers and tears be, that God would first humble you, so that you may fly by faith to Christ, and come by Christ to God.

Remember the end of this turn of your life, viz. your coming into the College, it is to fit you for the most glorious work, which God can call you to, viz. the holy ministry; that you may declare the name of God to the conversion and salvation of souls; for this end, your father has set you apart with many tears, and hath given you up to God, that he may accept of you; and that he would delight in you.

Remember therefore that God looks for and calls for much holiness from you: I had rather see you buried in your grave, than grow light, loose, wanton, or profane. God's secrets in the holy Scriptures, which are left to instruct ministers, are never made known to common and profane spirits: and therefore be sure you begin, and end every day wherein you study with earnest prayer to God, lamenting after the favour of God; reading some part of the Scriptures daily; and setting apart some time every day (tho' but one quarter of an hour) for the meditation of the things of God. Remember, therefore, that tho' you have spent your time in the vanity of childhood; sports and mirth, little minding better things, yet that now, when come to this ripeness of admission to the College, that now God and man expect you should put away childish things: now is the time come, wherein you are to be serious, and to learn sobriety [soberness of habits], and wisdom in all your ways which concern God and man... [Shepard Snr. made ten such points altogether.]



Richard Baxter

Baxter was one of the Puritan ministers who lived in the middle years of the 17th century. He was a Church of England clergyman at Kidderminster, near Birmingham, from 1641 until 1662, when he was ejected for refusing to conform to new regulations introduced under Charles II. He had a very fruitful ministry, based on faithful preaching and a regular system of visiting his parishioners in their homes. So renowned was he for his understanding of pastoral issues and solving his parishioners' questions and problems that he was encouraged to write his insights into these in a huge compendium of such topics entitled *A Christian Directory*.

Baxter was very reticent about the subject of marriage, believing that a man could serve Christ with more energy unmarried; and indeed he commended the single state to ministers in particular for this reason. Given that he lived in troubled times, and that many ministers suffered hardships because of their convictions, this is not perhaps surprising. However, after he was ejected, Baxter did indeed marry. His wife was over 25 years younger than he, and a convert to Christ through his preaching ministry. Margaret proved a very steady helpmeet to him. (She even went to live in prison with him on one occasion). Increasingly, as the years went by, he came to rely on her insight into human nature and her biblical wisdom.

When Margaret died, Baxter wrote an account of her life, which was more a depiction of her Christian character than a biography. In it he explained why he put so much trust in her judgement. What he wrote is a remarkable testament to what even a very mature Christian man may owe to the wisdom of his wife. Among various points, he made the following:

"3. As for her (I speak the truth), her apprehension of [spiritual and physical needs] was so much quicker, and more discerning than mine, that though I was naturally somewhat tenacious of my own conceptions, her reasons, and my experience usually told me, that she was in the right, and knew more than I. She would at the first hearing understand the matter better than I could by many and long thoughts.

4. *And the excellency of her reason lay not so much in the speculative, as the prudential, practical part: I must say, that in this I never knew her equal. In very hard cases about what was to be done, she would suddenly open all the way that was to be opened, in things of the family, estate, or any civil business. And to confess the truth, experience acquainted her, that I know less in such things than she; and therefore was willing she should take it all upon her.*

5. *Yea, I will say that, which they that believe me to be no liar, will wonder at; Except in cases that require learning, and skill in theological difficulties, she was better at resolving a case of conscience [i.e. a counselling matter] than most divines that ever I knew in all my life. I often put cases to her, which she so suddenly resolved, as to convince me of some degree of oversight in my own resolution. Insomuch that of late years, I confess, that I was used to put all, save secret [i.e. confidential] cases, to her, and hear what she could say. Abundance of difficulties were brought to me, some about restitution, some about injuries [wrongdoings], some about references, some about vows, some about marriage promises, and many such like; and she would lay all the circumstances presently together, compare them, and give me a more exact resolution than I could do."*



Matthew Henry

Matthew Henry, who lived in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, is famous for his commentary on the whole of the Bible. Many still read and profit from this today. Here are a few extracts from various parts of the commentary:

"That Adam was first formed, then Eve, (1 Tim 2:13) and she was made of the man, and for the man (1 Cor. 9: 8,9) all which are urged there as reasons for the humility, modesty, silence, and submissiveness of that sex in general, and particularly the subjection and reverence which wives owe to their own husbands. Yet man being made last of the creatures, as the best and most excellent of all, Eve's being made after Adam, and out of him, puts an honour upon that sex, as the glory of the man, 1 Cor. 11:7. If man is the head, she is the crown; a crown to her husband, the crown of the visible creation. The man was dust refined, but the woman was dust double-refined, one remove further from the earth."
Commentary on Genesis 2:21-22

"The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved."
Commentary on Genesis 2:21-22

"See how necessary it is that children should take their parents' consent along with them in their marriage; and how unjust they are to their parents, as well as undutiful, if they marry without it, for they rob them of their right to them, and interest in them, and alienate it to another, fraudulently and unnaturally. See what need there is both of prudence and prayer in the choice of this relation, which is so near and so lasting. That had need be well done which is to be done for life."
Commentary on Genesis 2:24

Some Brief Thoughts from Various Puritans:

"There is no society more near, more entire, more needful, more kindly, more delightful, more comfortable, more constant, more continual, than the society of man and wife, the main root, source, and original of all societies." (Thomas Gataker)

"Marriages are made in heaven before they are made on earth" (Thomas Manton)

"It was the Devil that brought in a base esteem of that honourable condition" (Richard Sibbes)

Samuel Sewell in his diary records that the family finances were delegated to his wife for the reason that she had a "better faculty than I for managing affairs."

In regard to disciplining children, Richard Greenham counselled that it be exercised with "the mildest means and with the least rigour."

Mrs Sally Davey is a member of the Reformed Church of Dovedale.

“For us and for our salvation”

Richard B. Gaffin, Jr

In making use of the Nicene Creed in our worship, we confess in part about the Lord Jesus Christ that he “for us and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.” Together with the rest of the “one holy catholic and apostolic” church down through the centuries, we affirm what has achieved and continues to secure our salvation: the death, resurrection, ascension, and heavenly session of the incarnate Son, the eternal Son of God become man.

This confession prompts the question I want to consider here. How specifically is the resurrection “for our salvation”? What in particular is the saving efficacy, or “efficiency,” of the resurrection? Or, to ask the question negatively, without the resurrection, what would become of our salvation?

To the question of how Christ’s death is for our salvation, virtually every Christian will likely have a ready and heartfelt answer: he died that my sins might be forgiven, to bear in my place the eternal punishment my sin deserves. Most if not all believers grasp in some measure the saving truth of penal substitution, of Christ’s “once offering up of himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God” (Shorter Catechism, 25). At the same time, however, it seems fair to say that in general Christians are not as clear about the answer to our

question about the saving efficacy of the resurrection.

No resurrection, no salvation

It should be immediately apparent that the death of a dead Christ, a Christ who remains dead, achieves nothing for our salvation. Paul makes that clear in 1 Corinthians 15: if Christ hasn’t been raised, then our faith is “futile,” or “useless,” and we are “still in [our] sins” – entirely – and our situation all told is “most to be pitied” (vv. 17, 19). Minus the resurrection, death continues with unabated, invincible finality, and it does so as “the wages of sin” we so justly deserve (Rom. 6:23).

Certainly without the death of Christ there is no salvation, but then neither is there any salvation without the resurrection. His resurrection, no less than his death, is at the heart of the gospel (Rom. 1:3–4; 1 Cor. 15:3–4). The resurrection is often viewed primarily as the awesome miracle that validates the truth of Christianity and the gospel. But it is more than such crowning evidence – much more.

Sin, salvation, and the resurrection

Salvation on its negative side is salvation from sin. All too evidently the destructive consequences of sin are virtually incalculable, its misery untold. At the same time, those innumerable consequences are basically twofold. First, sin affects our standing before God; it renders us guilty, liable to his just judgment and condemnation. Second, it affects our condition, in that it leaves us thoroughly corrupt and enslaved to Satan and sin as the power that dominates our lives. The depth of sin’s effects are such that, left to ourselves, apart from God’s saving grace, we are nothing less than “dead in ... trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1, 5). Sin leaves the sinner both inexcusably

“Sin leaves the sinner both inexcusably guilty and helplessly enslaved.”

“Our justification flows from our union with him, by Spirit-worked faith, along with the other benefits of salvation manifested by that union (Larger Catechism, 69). Because of our union with him, then, we share in his justification; his resurrection-approved righteousness is reckoned as ours, imputed to us.”

guilty and helplessly enslaved.

“But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more” (Rom. 5:20, nkjv). As the effects of sin, in its abounding, are either one of two basic kinds, so too, in countering and alleviating these effects, grace – manifold, superabounding in its effects – is basically twofold. Grace is either judicial or renovative, reversing either our guilt-ridden standing before God or our corrupt, sin-enslaved condition. The role of the resurrection in bringing about that reversal can be seen here by focusing on justification and sanctification.

The resurrection and justification

For justification, a key text is Romans 4:25: Jesus “was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.” Earlier in Romans, Paul has said that Christ’s death was a propitiatory sacrifice, so that God might be “just and the justifier” of believers (3:25–26). Later he says that “we have now been justified by his blood” (5:9). In 4:25, however, justification is connected specifically with Christ’s resurrection in distinction from his sacrificial death.

How are we to understand that connection? On the basis of his life of obedience, culminating in his death as the representative sin-bearer and righteous substitute for sinners (Phil. 2:8; Rom. 3:25; 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:21), Christ’s resurrection is his own justification. This is so in the sense that the action of God in raising him from the dead – that enlivening act itself – vindicates him in his obedience and effectively demonstrates his righteousness. The resurrection, then, is a de facto declaration of his righteous standing before God. As an event, Christ’s resurrection “speaks,” and it does so judicially, in a legal manner.

First Timothy 3:16 confirms this. There Christ is described as “manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit” (nkjv). This almost certainly has in view the Holy Spirit’s action in raising Jesus from the dead (Rom. 8:11). This response by the Spirit was justly warranted by the righteousness manifested in Jesus’ obedience “in the flesh,” that is, during his life on earth prior to the resurrection.

But the justification of Christ in his resurrection was not just for his own sake, apart from us; it was also for us, “for our justification.” Our justification flows from our union with him, by Spirit-worked faith, along with the other benefits of salvation manifested by that union (Larger Catechism, 69). Because

of our union with him, then, we share in his justification; his resurrection-approved righteousness is reckoned as ours, imputed to us.

At the same time, this union preserves a key difference – a gospel difference – that is not to be missed. Christ’s justification, unlike ours, does not involve the imputation to him of the righteousness of another. Unlike us, he is declared righteous on the ground of his own lifelong, blood-bought righteousness.

Calvin has beautifully captured this reality:

Therefore, that joining together of Head and members, that indwelling of Christ in our hearts – in short, that mystical union – are accorded by us the highest degree of importance, so that Christ, having been made ours, makes us sharers with him in the gifts with which he has been endowed. We do not, therefore, contemplate him outside ourselves from afar in order that his righteousness may be imputed to us but because we put on Christ and are grafted into his body – in short, because he deigns to make us one with him. For this reason, we glory that we have fellowship of righteousness with him. (Institutes of the Christian Religion, 3.11.10)

The resurrection and sanctification

How then is the resurrection essential for our sanctification – for the renovative side of salvation, for lives pleasing to God and marked by holiness? That question can be answered along a number of lines, including the one we will follow here.

Again, as with justification, union with Christ is crucial. We are united with him in his death and resurrection, signified and sealed to us in baptism, “in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). Here the resurrection of Christ is linked specifically with the newness that marks the Christian life. That newness surely has in view Christ’s life as resurrected, the resurrection life he shares with those who are united to him.

The source and quality of this life are further clarified in Romans 8:11: “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”

What God the Father did in raising Jesus from the dead he will also do for believers. The controlling thought here is the tie or unity that there is between the bodily resurrection of Christ and that of Christians.

The intrinsic nature of that unity is made most explicit in 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23. There Christ is described as “the firstfruits” of the resurrection. To extend the metaphor as Paul surely intends, his resurrection and ours are the beginning and the end of one, single harvest.

Christ’s resurrection is, as is often said, the guarantee of ours, but we should appreciate that this is so because his resurrection is nothing less than “the actual beginning of this general epochal event” (Vos, *Pauline Eschatology*, p. 45).

As believers, we can be sure of our own resurrection, not only because God has decreed it and promised it (which would surely be enough for us!), but because he has done more: that decree has been realized, that promise has already been fulfilled, in history; the resurrection harvest in which believers will share bodily at the end of history, when Christ returns, has already begun. It has entered history and become visible in his resurrection.

The resurrection, the Holy Spirit, and the Christian

Romans 8:11, as it highlights this resurrection unity, brings into view the activity of the Holy Spirit. God will resurrect us bodily, as he did Jesus, through the enlivening action of the Spirit. But more is said here than what will be true in the future. The Spirit of resurrection is the indwelling Spirit; he is already present in believers. This points us to a fundamental truth about the Christian life: life in the Spirit is sharing in the resurrection life of Christ.

That comes out clearly in the verses that immediately precede (vv. 9–10). Four combinations are present there: (1) “you ... in the Spirit,” (2) “the Spirit ... in you,” (3) to “belong to him [Christ]” – equivalent here to “you ... in Christ,” and (4) “Christ ... in you.” These expressions hardly intend to split the believer’s life into four different sectors; together they provide a unified, overall perspective on that life.

In this mutual indwelling, Christ and the Spirit are one. In their presence and activity, the Spirit is “the Spirit of Christ” (v. 9). There is no relationship, no union with Christ, that is not at the same time fellowship with the Spirit. There is no work of the Spirit in our lives that is



Photo by Michal Kmet, Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy, on Unsplash

“Our privilege, great beyond our comprehension, is this: we have been chosen *in Christ* “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4) to the ultimate end that we be *like Christ*.”

not also the presence of Christ at work in us (see Eph. 3:16–17).

This inseparable bond between Christ and the Spirit does not begin with our experience; rather, it rests on what is first of all true in the experience of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 15, we are told that Christ, the last Adam, as the “firstfruits” of the resurrection harvest, became the “life-giving Spirit” (v. 45). At his resurrection, he was not only glorified by being transformed in his human nature by the enlivening power of the Spirit. He also came into a possession of the Spirit that was so climactic, so unprecedented, so overflowing, that it is properly captured by calling him the “life-giving Spirit.”

Note that this in no way compromises the personal distinction between Christ and the Spirit. The eternal, essential distinction and equality between the second and third persons of the Trinity remain unchanged.

But because of who Christ, in his human nature, has become in his state of exaltation, he and the Spirit are now one in their work of giving life. This life is nothing less than resurrection life in the Spirit. As we have seen, this is not only a future hope, but already a present reality for believers.

Of course, the bond between Christ and the Spirit did not begin at the resurrection. Christ was conceived by the Spirit (Luke 1:35), and the Spirit later descended on him at his baptism by John (Luke 3:21–22).

The difference, the momentous difference, is this: At his baptism, Christ received the Spirit as an endowment to carry out the messianic task before him, the task that ultimately led to the cross. But in his exaltation, in his resurrection leading to his ascension (Acts 2:32–33), he received the Spirit as the consummate reward for having completed that assigned kingdom task. And he does not keep this reward for “his own private use” (Calvin); it becomes the consummate gift that he shares permanently with his people at Pentecost.

So, Jesus Christ – the resurrected, life-giving Spirit – has promised us: “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). He is with the church to stay, indwelling believers as he provides every spiritual blessing and resource that we need to carry out our kingdom task of discipling the nations. So, too, as the life-giving Spirit, he is present with us in a special, sacramental way when he invites us to commune with him at his table.

Even more than that

How, then, was Christ resurrected “for us and for our salvation”? I have done little more here than to begin considering the answer. I have not yet taken note of what is as important as anything: Christ, “who died – *more than that*, who was raised,” intercedes for us at God’s right hand (Rom. 8:33–34). And that intercession of Christ, resurrected and ascended, as gracious as it is hardly gratuitous, refutes any and every charge that would call into question the justification of God’s elect. Moreover, it insures, with an infallible efficacy, that “they can never fall from the state of justification” (Confession of Faith, 11.5).

Finally, consider Romans 8:29. God’s predestinating purpose for believers centers ultimately in their being “conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.” This “image” is the Son’s as he is resurrected, specifically in his now-glorified human nature. He is “the firstborn among many brothers” only as he is “the firstborn from the dead” (Col. 1:18).

Our privilege, great beyond our comprehension, is this: we have been chosen *in Christ* “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4) to the ultimate end that we be *like Christ*. This conformity to his image, already being worked in us by the sanctifying power of the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19), will be fully realized when, like him, we are raised bodily.

But there is more to this than what is ultimate for us. Even more ultimate in God’s predestinating purposes is what is at stake for the Son personally in our salvation, what he has invested for himself. This, as much as anything, is why from all eternity the Son willed, together with the Father and the Spirit, to become incarnate, to suffer and die. He did so, so that, having been resurrected triumphant over sin and death, he might have brothers like himself – brothers glorified not because of anything in themselves, but entirely because of his saving mercy. They will share with him in this triumph and magnify forever his own preeminent exaltation glory. And so his “kingdom shall have no end.”

Surely there can be no more ultimate perspective on Christ’s resurrection “for us and for our salvation” than this.

The author, an OP minister, is emeritus professor of systematic theology at Westminster Theological Seminary. New Horizons, April 2017

Letters from New Zealand

D. G. Vanderpyl

May 1979

As I was preparing my little blurb for the next issue, my eldest daughter who had just returned from a three and a half month tour right through Asia, dropped a newspaper cutting on my desk from Johore Baru, Malaya in which I read that the Government there had decided to enforce Islamic administration laws.

Under these new laws any one who fails to attend church (prayers at the mosque) in one's own area for three consecutive weeks without a valid reason, such as illness, will be penalised with a fine not exceeding \$100 or up to 15 days in jail. Drinking alcoholic beverages in public is also taboo. On the matter of polygamy, if you intend to take another wife, you only need the permission from the minister; permission from the first wife is not necessary. I wonder what would happen in New Zealand or Australia if such laws came into force.

In some other countries Islam is making quite dramatic inroads. In Belgium, parliament accepted Islam as one of the official religions to be taught in schools. Britain has become one of the leading Islamic centres, with well over 300 mosques and one million Muslims. 1200 years ago the Muslims tried to invade Europe and got knocked back by the French, fortunately. But the invasion is on again but in a much more subtle way. Immigrants from the African and Arab countries now bring their religion with them. And they really do bring it with them, with all the intolerance that is there. I have an Indonesian brother-in-law who is Islamic and he will never miss out on his prayer time three times a day, on his knees with his face towards Mecca. He is a very nice brother-in-law but religiously absolutely intolerant. He told me, years ago, that our weakness was that we were too tolerant, too accommodating, too undisciplined in our religious practices. I wonder if he's got a point there. As I said, he is a nice fellow but don't come between him, his Allah and his Mohammed.

From Mohammed let's now turn to Rev. Bert Reurich who just recently has been installed as the new pastor for Kerepehi and Tokoroa. He served the Hast-

ings congregation prior to his settling in Tokoroa. Writing his first "Pastoralia" in Tokoroa's newsletter, he discussed the matter of how he would like to be addressed. They seem to have a problem there with pastoral name-calling. "The following may be helpful," he told his congregation:

"There are some who may prefer a more formal address such as Mr Reverend, or even the Dutch word Dominee or Pastor. I know that sometimes ministers do have hang-ups concerning such titles. I am aware of the arguments against their use. But personally, I have no problem with them, since I recognise that through usage and time they have become titles that refer to the office a minister holds. On the other hand I am quite easy and would suggest that you use that form of address (by title or by Christian name) that you feel most comfortable with, for I, for one, will not be offended one way or the other. As far as the children are concerned, in view of the fact that due respect is part of the learning process, Mr or perhaps simply Pastor would be appropriate. Perhaps this is a matter parents can discuss with their children if they are in doubt. Yet again, I will take it as it comes without anyone having to fear that I would be offended in this matter. The important thing is that we build up good and open relationships and yet in such a way that the dignity of the office of the ministry be upheld."

As a footnote, may I, D.G., add that it has struck me on several occasions that youngsters in the congregation whom you had given a clip around the ear for being a bit slow in getting to Sunday school or catechism classes years ago, all of a sudden feel that they are entitled to call you by your first name because they have turned 18 or 20 and started to earn money. It is either a funny world or I must be getting old. My daughter says: "Dad, you're getting old."

June

I am sometimes quite naive to think that my interests are also everyone else's interests. But then you again very quickly

learn that it is not as simple as all that.

Take the work of outreach in the community, with a plateaued membership or even diminishing numbers in some congregations. One would think that the church, and in particular the leadership, would have developed a growing concern for evangelism. Granted, we have our committees and seminars at irregular intervals, but these are only levers to get the members out of their seats. The real work must be done on the congregational level, and not of a spasmodic nature of a meeting here and there, but a continuous working and planning and plodding by all or most of us. Even targets could be set, to reach a certain number of people in your community by a certain time. Of course, not every one is a born evangelist but every born-again believer should be a witness to his faith.

When you witness an accident, you can't help being a witness and you are able to testify what you have seen and heard. You may not be able to argue but you can tell what you know. So we should not be too uptight about this whole thing, but share our faith with others out of the abundance of our heart. And success? Well, as one Institute for Evangelism states: "Success in witnessing is simply sharing Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, and leaving the results to God." The local church is the key. If the elders begin setting an example and then develop proper leadership followed by a training of the church membership for involvement, then we can reach out into the community. And there is no shortage of material, i.e. The World Home Bible League, can fill all your needs.

We don't need to be pragmatic about it. Some time ago I was talking to a Baptist and he said to me: "You know, Dick, why our churches are growing and yours are not; it is because we are pragmatic." "O sure," I said, and I hurried home to look up my dictionary to see what the word pragmatic meant. When I got home I had forgotten what that word was. Not asthmatic, not charismatic, but then I got it and found the exact meaning of the word. It said: "If it works, use it!" Then I mentally disagreed with that brother of mine in the Lord.

An open letter to the Reformed Churches of New Zealand

Dear brothers,

Our beloved forebear Martin Luther said something like, “If the Church isn’t scratching where the devil’s itching, we may as well pack up shop”. In his own day, Satan was itching madly in the church, which was corrupt in doctrine and practice. So he nailed those 95 (95!) theses on the door of that Wittenberg Church, saying, “Let’s talk about this”, and the rest is history. He scratched.

In our day, the devil is madly attacking the image of God. Abortion, homosexual marriage, euthanasia, and gender identity. They all trouble me, but gender ideology is the last straw. Why is the church silent on this? Why has no public declaration been made about what God says about gender, and calling the nation to repentance? In our schools now, vulnerable children are being taught by powerful adults that they can choose their gender – it’s a human right – and anyone, like parents, who speak against this are deemed “haters”, horrible people who must be silenced. And we are silenced.

We in the Reformed Churches should be at the forefront of this battle, simply because we believe in Sola Scriptura. It is a spiritual battle needing spiritual weapons. Paul says “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness in this world”. Satan in his manic hatred of God, since he lost the battle attacking the Son, is naturally now attacking His image-bearers. That is a logical progression. Yes, he will lose this battle too, but God expects us, the church, to take up arms. This is our day, and it is our test. Will we be faithful?

I have looked at the Reformed Church website and there is no statement on what the Word of God says on ANY contemporary issue. But we **do** say the Bible applies to all of life. What do we

mean by this? I sometimes wonder if Luther were to be transported into our century, he would look at the world around, then look at our church, which is among the most faithful to Reformation truth, and shake his head! What are we doing? Sure, every October we take out our *sola scriptura* doctrine, and examine it carefully. But do we as a church spend our time putting out fires in our own backyard, while ignoring the volcano over the fence? And that volcano is getting bigger.

Surely the Church, as an institution should be speaking out against the evils of our day? Or do we really just not care? Our neighbour whom God calls us to love – that boy who is growing up without a father, who has female teachers throughout primary school, who feels more comfortable with girls, is told he can become a girl if he wants to. State funded surgery will follow. Should the church not expose this for the abuse that it is? Or is it not our calling to say anything?

I think the Reformed Churches need to think about spreading the gospel where it is relevant. We have won the battle on sola scriptura and I would expect that that truth will always continue to be preached, like doctrine on the trinity is preached, even though it took a while for the church to sort that out. But it is no longer a central battle for us. We face a different cultural challenge, and different tests to what the church of Luther’s time did.

The Bible says judgement begins with the household of God. Maybe we need to repent, because we have failed to do what God has called us to do. We are no longer salt and light, our city on the hill cannot even be found, and the darkness is deepening. Is it because we *are not applying the gospel to life in our current generation*? In our day, the world is loudly asking the question – What is male and female, and does it matter? Yes, we speak about our Reformed doctrines, and rightly so, but how do we apply them in our day? We have so many fatherless homes, women demand their rights and equality, (what does THAT mean?) marriage is a joke, and Bruce Jenner is an example of courage to follow.

I think we need a public voice from the church as an institution addressing what Satan is attacking. The Church has authority that the individual does not have. Yes, it is hard – we will be persecuted. We might lose everything, like Paul. Even our tax exempt status may be jeopardized! Seriously, we might end up in prison or face massive fines because of “hate speech”. But if we don’t speak up, we are going to lose everything anyway.

I love New Zealand. When the All Blacks do that haka I am so proud! But it breaks my heart to see where we are at as a nation. Endemic child abuse, alcohol and drug addiction, the highest suicide rate in the western world among our young people, burgeoning mental health problems, women’s refuges overflowing, and a rock hardness to spiritual issues. The church is ignored because it is irrelevant to where people are at. We New Zealanders pride ourselves on our sins – our great “tolerance” has allowed homosexual marriage after all! God curses us because we call evil good, and good evil, there is not a whiff of repentance anywhere. “Pass the beer, watch the rugby, she’ll be right mate”. We are going to hell in a handcart and without a wholesale turning back to God; we are finished. But while the world is seeking answers to valid questions, the church at large continues in its bubble; at least it appears so to this sheep. Do we have a strategy? Do we care? When the wicked increase, what can the righteous do?

Spurgeon said of the Word of God, “You don’t defend a lion, you let it loose”. To update the metaphor, the church is sitting on a spiritual nuclear warhead – Sola Scriptura after all. We just need to find some way to publicly detonate it.

In the meantime, I will continue to pray...

**Carol Munroe
Bucklands Beach**

Peace: a life journey



Madan and Maya Rai

Madan Rai
Reformed Church, Palmerston North

Exodus

The late 1980s saw a political upheaval in Bhutan, and as a result around one hundred thousand southern Bhutanese were forced to flee our dear country of birth, where my wife Maya and I had learnt English, and were teachers. The eviction by the king of Bhutan, who belongs to a different race, of Bhutanese citizens living in the southern belt of the country was nothing other than ethnic cleansing under his new draconian policy, 'One Nation One People'. It is sad to say that my family was one of those unfortunate families that fell victim to it.

My life turned upside down the moment I crossed the border to the

neighbouring country of India. My wife and I with two infant sons, found ourselves in dire need of such basics as food, clothing and shelter. We had lost our jobs, our home and our country, so we were in a hopeless situation. The future looked bleak indeed. I was a disturbed soul, who was in desperate need of peace. As I was professing Hinduism as well as Animism at the time, I worshipped all the deities in earnest but could never find a shred of solace in them. Many a time, I thought I would go out of my mind.

Contact with Christianity

While in India, I had the opportunity to hear the gospel. It seemed very foreign to me, for I had never heard anything like that in Bhutan. The Christian who shared his faith with me, as I remember vividly, turned the pages in his Bible

“... at last we were able to seize the opportunity to go to the new country at the end of the world”

back and forth, reading out passages and explaining things with a look on his face that showed he really meant business. He must have used all the techniques of evangelism and his biblical knowledge to explain the gospel. Perhaps he talked about the creation of man, his fall, God's love for the fallen human race and His redemptive plan. He surely explained to me the death of Christ on the cross on behalf of sinful humans. He undoubtedly told me about my sinful state and my need to repent of all my sins and receive Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour in order to get eternal life, but surprisingly not a single word would register with me.

However, at one point he mentioned something about *peace* and it was then my dying interest suddenly revived. As if he read my mind, he said that real peace could be found only in Jesus Christ. At once I asked him how I would be able to have that peace which is in Jesus, and to this he said that I needed to receive Jesus as my Lord and Saviour. I told him I was ready to do so, since I was dying to have peace within me. Then he said that he would take my family to his village. His pastor would explain the gospel and lead us in prayer.

Enrapt by the Prince of Peace

Within a week, my wife and I along with the children were in his village. After preaching the gospel briefly, the pastor led us in prayer. So, on the evening of 24th July 1991 at about 8 pm my wife and I knelt down on the floor and gave our lives to Jesus. The next day, with an absolutely new and deep sense of peace within, we returned to the village where we had been living.

As there were no Christians in the village, the man who had shared the gospel told us that we needed regular fellowship and Bible study in order to grow strong in the faith, and asked us to move to his village. After a week-long careful consideration, we packed up our few belongings and moved there. His pastor was very happy to see us again. He had a little shed with two rooms beside his house. So he offered us one room, where we stayed for some months. During our stay we had Bible classes every evening at the pastor's house. He even gave me some biblically based books to read. One of these was by Oswald J. Smith, titled, 'The Day of Salvation'. This book in particular, together with some others, was a great blessing to me, a young believer, for they enhanced my biblical

knowledge, and most importantly I learnt the fact that it is salvation that we actually receive from Jesus Christ when we receive Him as our Lord and Saviour. Peace, whether psychological or spiritual, is the secondary blessing we receive from Jesus in our lives on earth. The knowledge of my own salvation increased my peace all the more. All regrets of the past and worries about the future had simply vanished within me.

India – a time of growth and service

We had to stay in India for some time, before finally moving to Nepal. It was a Presbyterian Church that we began attending regularly and we soon became members of this church after the pastor baptised all four of us. The church was located beside a school that was run by the pastor himself. As there was a vacant room in one of the buildings in the school compound, he moved us into it. The room was about ten by fifteen feet and it served as our bedroom, lounge and kitchen. We were thankful to God, as the accommodation was free.

Before the Sunday service, a children's Sunday School met, so our two sons Andrew (Arpan, the first, who was only 3 years old then) and Amos (Amrit) received their theology right from an early age. The pastor knew that we both had teaching backgrounds in our home country, so he gave us jobs as teachers in his school with a meagre monthly salary; it was difficult to make ends meet. I used to help the pastor in different church activities outside my school duty. Before long, he appointed me as a church evangelist. I preached the gospel in and around the village for over a year. I also accompanied the pastor during his visits to some parts of eastern Nepal, to preach the gospel. God gave us many souls in some of those areas, so we were able to plant new churches. But I came to realize that the church was not in a position to keep supporting me. I explained the situation to the pastor, and I told him that this required me to go away from the village in search of a job that could sustain my family. Since the pastor did not want me to leave the ministry, he recommended me (without my knowledge) to another government-registered evangelistic organization called Himalayan Evangelical Fellowship.

About a week after my discussion with the pastor, I received a letter from the director of the Himalayan Evangelical Fellowship (HEF). The letter said

that the HEF Board had selected me as the India-Bhutan Border evangelist and they wanted my confirmation within two weeks. I was in a fix, for I could not decide between a secular job and ministry. A friend of mine had already fixed a job for me as a teacher in a private school in Nepal and I was planning to take up this job because it promised me a hefty salary. I prayed for a week asking the Lord for His guidance. The story of Jonah flashed across my mind again and again. Was I running away from Nineveh and heading to Tarshish? And then I made up my mind to work for the Lord in His vineyard. I sent a reply to the director of HEF in the affirmative.

I worked as an evangelist for 16 years under the HEF. For about ten years I worked among my own ethnic group, and spent the remaining six years working among one of the tribes of India. As my work was among the Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and Animists, I had to use various strategies in preaching the gospel, such as house to house visits, personal contacts, gospel tracts distribution, open-air preaching and gospel films. During my work as an evangelist, I frequented

Nepal several times and preached the gospel in a number of remote areas. Once, in one of the remote villages in Nepal, I had to face severe persecution at the hands of locals while preaching. I got beaten up badly, but God saved my life. However, that incident did not deter my evangelistic work.

From Nepal to the end of the world

We had long been trying to register our names in the Bhutanese Refugee Camp in Nepal. Finally in 2007 we were called up for verification, and were allotted a hut in the camp, our home for some years. Then at last we were able to seize the opportunity to go to the new country at the end of the world, New Zealand, under the Third Country Resettlement Programme initiated by the UNHCR.

My family arrived in Auckland on 26th August 2013. After spending six weeks at the Refugee Resettlement Centre in Mangere, Auckland, we came to Palmerston North on 4th October 2013. Even though the Red Cross had already arranged a house for my family here, we stayed for some days with my brother-in-law who had come to New Zealand in 2009.

The author and his family, together with the two other Bhutanese families who are now members of the Palmerston North Reformed Church, as well as some longer-standing members. The author is in the middle of the photo, seated next to Patricia van Laar.



Fruit in Palmeston North

One morning my brother-in-law handed me a piece of paper, which he found in his letter box. It was an invitation to the official opening of the new church building of the Reformed Church of Palmerston North. Although we could not attend the opening, I kept the letter safe. We remained totally disoriented for a number of days in an absolutely new environment. A few days later I took out the invitation leaflet from the Reformed Church of Palmerston North and requested my brother-in-law to go out and look for 541 Ruahine Street. My wife and I got into his car and then in next to no time he reached the exact place. We were standing in front of the main door wondering what to do next when two gentlemen got down from their car and came hurriedly toward us. They stopped and politely asked us if we had something to enquire about and then also told us that they actually did not belong to the Reformed Church of Palmerston North, but were there to attend an important meeting. Telling them that I was new to

Palmerston North and was looking for a church, I asked if Reformed Churches practise sprinkling (or pouring) baptism as well as infant baptism. When they told us that both are their practice, we thanked them for the information and gave them our word that we would attend the same church the next Sunday. They also thanked us and then entered the church building. With a sense of relief, we headed back home.

On 9th November 2013, we attended the Reformed Church for the first time and there has since, been no looking back. Even though we were like aliens, the church members made us feel at home by their love and care. Most importantly, we liked the sermons preached from the pulpit every Sunday. The next wonderful thing we liked about the Reformed Church is that it has two services.

After a couple of months, we asked an elder how we could become church members. Very soon, we started attending new membership classes. Finally it was over, and in the morning service on 30th March 2014, led by the Rev.

Nathan Ketchen, we reaffirmed our faith, and our names were included as new church members.

Later we led the Pradhan family (Tanka, Prem and children) from our community to the Lord. They too joined the Reformed Church of Palmerston North and are growing ever stronger in the Lord. At present, another two families are attending the church. Among them, one family recently became members, and the others are preparing for the reaffirmation of their faith. A Bhutanese/Nepali Christian inter-church fellowship has also been established in Palmerston North. We gather each week in the evening on Saturdays. This fellowship has provided an opportunity for outreach especially within our community of 600 families who have settled in this region.

My family is blessed in the Reformed Church. We are thankful to God for leading us to the right church in Palmerston North. God bless all the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

To God be the Glory.

Books in focus

John Bunyan and the Grace of Fearing God

by Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley.

P&R, 2016. Paperback, 160 pages, \$11.50.

Reviewed by OP minister Robert J. McKelvey.

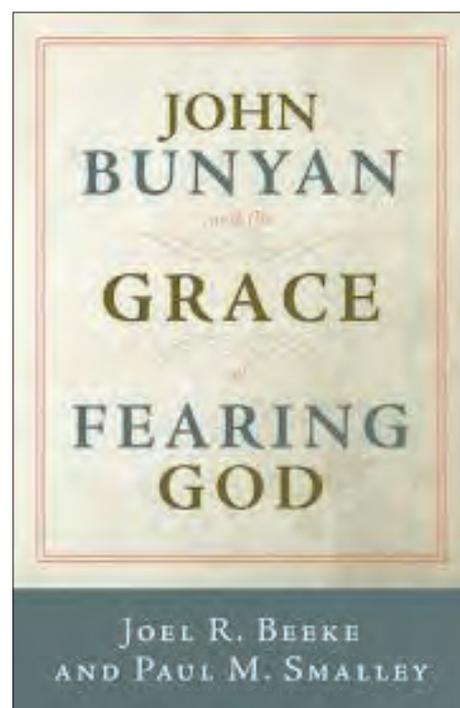
We hear little in the church today on the discomfiting doctrine of the fear of God. In a timely and relevant manner, this historical-devotional work by Joel Beeke and Paul Smalley highlights John Bunyan's focus on this "weighty and great grace" (131) in *A Treatise of the Fear of God* (1679).

The authors emphasize the sweetness of fearing God from Bunyan's "sound advice on how to grow in the fear of God." You can't be a Christian and not fear God, the authors warn, but we must "beware of slavish fear, the fear of rejection by God, for it is inappropriate and unhelpful for the justified child of God." In the end, his covenant promises

in Christ will teach each believer "how to live as a reverent son or daughter of the living God" (137).

The book begins with a thirty-page biographical sketch of Bunyan's life in general, but it does not pertain directly to his treatise on fearing God. The authors should have concentrated more contextually on the fear of God in connection with Bunyan's life and times. Before this focused treatment, they could have directed readers to a standard and more general Bunyan biography or even Beeke's own sketch (along with Randall Pederson) in *Meet the Puritans* (Reformation Heritage, 2006).

The authors never mention the anti-Catholic paranoia arising out of the alleged Popish Plot in England, stirred up in 1678, which provided a context of fear behind Bunyan's *Treatise*. Richard Greaves, in his introduction to the Oxford edition of that work (*The Miscellaneous Works of John Bunyan*, vol. 9, 1981), discusses that supposed plotting at length. He suggests that, at a time



when people lived in fear, Bunyan directed them to live in the fear of God and to do so in a proper manner. Unfortunately, while the authors cite other volumes of the Oxford edition, they do not mention this crucial one.

The authors also favorably explain Bunyan's treatment of "the spirit of bondage" in Romans 8:15. While we should applaud his emphasis on the fear of hell driving us to Christ, we must question Bunyan's exegesis here. He calls this spirit of bondage "godly" and part of a "first conversion" or "awakening." Paul actually treats this spirit as something slavish and experienced in the unregenerate state before one receives "the spirit of adoption."

Please don't let the issues I raise keep you from this otherwise excellent book. The church needs to hear more, not less, on the fear of God. Furthermore, we need to view this fear as Bunyan, Beeke, and Smalley do: as a blessed grace intimately related to our faith in and love for Christ.

New Horizons, February 2018

Honoring the Elderly: A Christian's Duty to Aging Parent

by Brian L. De Jong.

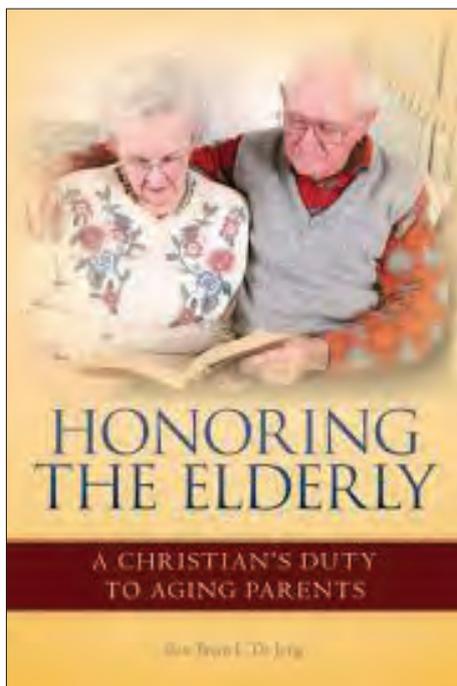
CreateSpace, 2017. Paperback, 136 pages, \$9.99.

Reviewed by Pastor Paul Murreale

A few years ago, during a visit to my parents, I realized they were getting older. My father had just been diagnosed with cancer. I could see that my parents were beginning to look worn out. At that moment, I began to become more aware of the fact that my parents were going to need increasing amounts of help.

This is not, of course, a problem that is unique to my family. There have been, over the years, great advancements in modern medicine. Illnesses that used to be fatal are now often treatable, so as people live longer, children will need to find ways to care for their aging parents.

Families have a duty before God to care for their own (1 Tim. 5:8). We see this principle in the fifth commandment, Exodus 20:12: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you." As followers of Jesus, we have a duty and a privilege to honor and care for our parents as they age.



But how do we fulfill our duty to our parents in this day and age? Many of us, for instance, live quite a distance from our parents. How can we adequately care for them when we live so far away? What about those who need around-the-clock care that we are not equipped to handle? How can the Christian be faithful to God's commandment to honor our parents in a world where it is becoming seemingly more difficult to do so?

It is for us in this modern world, full of these kinds of challenges, that Brian L. De Jong has produced a helpful resource for the church, *Honoring the Elderly: A Christian's Duty to Aging Parents*. This wonderful little book, which began as a series of Sunday school lessons, presents a pastoral tone throughout. De Jong carefully lays out biblical principles and their application in real life. Each chapter contains pastoral advice and applied biblical teaching as De Jong deals with difficult situations that come up. At the end of each chapter, there are a series of questions to ponder, which would make this book ideal for a Sunday school text or a small-group study. Whether your parents are young or old, healthy or sick, you will glean great wisdom from this book.

At some point, all of us will find ourselves faced with caring for our elders – whether our own parents or a dear older saint in the church. How are we going to respond to these challenges and honor our elders as they age? This is a very important topic for us to consider.

New Horizons, February 2018

Death in Adam, Life in Christ: The Doctrine of Imputation

by J. V. Fesko

Mentor, 2017. Paperback, 320 pages, \$10.99.

Reviewed by OP elder Joseph W. Smith III

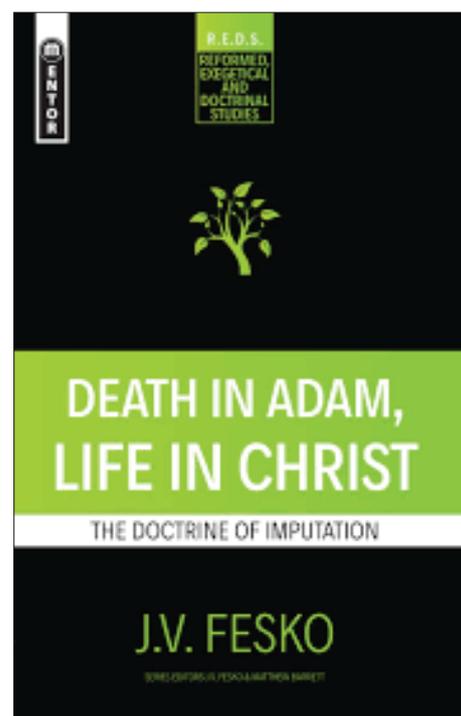
Contemporary evangelicals sometimes complain that the modern church has abandoned older, purer doctrine – and there's no doubt that this has happened. But in the broad sweep of church history, it's also common for theology to move gradually toward orthodoxy – and nowhere is this more apparent than in the oft-neglected doctrine of imputation.

J.V. Fesko's *Death in Adam, Life in Christ* recounts this struggle with meticulous care. It's fascinating to watch church fathers work haltingly toward an accurate understanding of how Adam's sin is imputed to humanity – and how our sin is imputed to Christ, while his righteousness is then ascribed to us.

This helpful historical survey is only one of many merits of Fesko's excellent new volume.

Chief among its other virtues is extraordinary clarity on a topic that can be challengingly recondite – and which in any case has not been widely taught. When was the last time you heard a sermon on imputation? If your answer is something like "never," this book will provide much-needed illumination.

Fesko calls attention to strong work by such lesser-known theologians as



Francis Turretin, Martin Chemnitz, Robert Rollock, and Ambrogio Catharinus. And he grapples with our culture's rampant individualism, which makes the imputation of Adam's sin so counterintuitive. Modern thinkers may feel it's unfair for God to impute someone else's crime to us, yet Fesko shows that such an action is quite common in Scripture. In Joshua 7, for example, Achan's sin is ascribed to Israel; in 2 Samuel 24, punishment for David's wicked census is poured out on the entire nation. Even more significant is Isaiah 53:4–6, where the Suffering Servant bears the sins of God's people – an idea Fesko ties convincingly to the scapegoat in Leviticus 16. Furthermore, he repeatedly shows how the ascription of Adam's sin to us has its corollary in the imputation of our sin to Christ. And, of course, that also applies to the placing of Christ's righteousness upon us, a truth that has always been sadly underemphasized; yet, for Christians struggling to believe that God loves them, this key teaching is absolutely crucial.

Fesko treats these three imputations as a package deal, and in the process he underscores the necessity of a historical Adam as a parallel with a historical redeemer. As the author so pointedly asks, how can God impute to us the nonexistent sin of someone who never actually lived?

On the downside, the book is sometimes repetitive, occasionally bogging down in picayune detail and unwieldy vocabulary (e.g., noetic, reprehensive, traducianism).

But these are quibbles. As Fesko himself concludes, "The doctrine of imputation is of vital importance for a right and robust understanding of the doctrine of justification and ultimately the gospel." His book proves this clearly and firmly; and in doing so it points away from human effort and failure to mankind's only true hope: the righteous death and life of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

New Horizons, February 2018

***The Drama of Preaching:
Participating with God in the
History of Redemption***

by Eric Brian Watkins.

Wipf & Stock, 2017. Paperback, 274 pages, \$26.40.

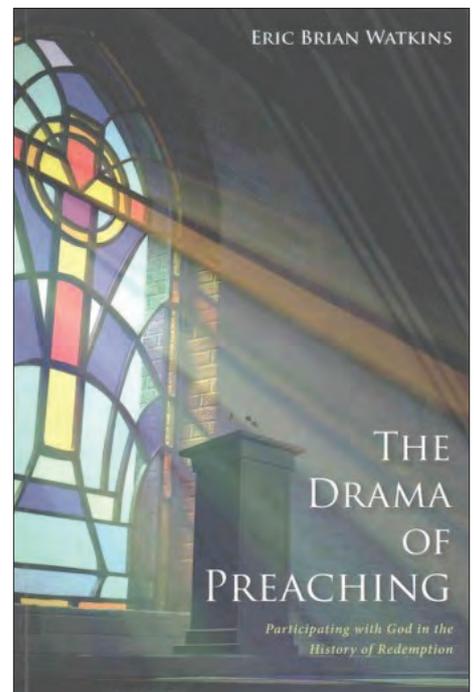
Reviewed by OP pastor Mark Winder

In seven brief but substantial chapters, Eric Watkins provides a historical and exegetical basis for application through redemptive-historical preaching. After opening with an excellent, even gripping, overview of the historical discussion, he advances the work of Kevin Vanhoozer and others by wedding the drama-of-redemption model with that of redemptive-historical preaching. The drama of redemption is a metaphorical idea in which the sermon's audience lives within the drama revealed in Scripture. The triune God is the author of the script as well as its primary actor, who calls people to be faithful participants "in the historically unfolding kingdom of God upon the world stage of God's glory" (25).

God performs his part in the drama of redemption by keeping his covenant promises and drawing his people "into a renewed story of life that repairs their sin-stained, misguided stories of death" (30). As the listener understands himself as part of the drama of redemption, he will not be a passive spectator, but learn to live out the text of Scripture. The sermon is then "much more than a creative display of God's redemption. ... It is also a summons to active participation in the drama of redemption by the life-giving Spirit of God" (58).

The legitimacy of this paradigm is demonstrated in the book's compelling exegetical and practical centerpiece: a treatment of the "Hall of Faith" of Hebrews 11. Each character points to Christ and anticipates his coming. The curtain having closed on their symbolic "stage," they point toward the drama of redemption in which New Testament saints participate as they work out their salvation. Insofar as the Old Testament saints walked by faith in Christ, they provide a pattern for New Testament believers.

Chapter 5 discusses legitimate application, which must be "exegetically derived from the text for the purpose of instructing hearers in their proper response to the redemptive message indicated by the text" (115). Watkins provides a brief



historical discussion of application, but focuses on an exegetical defense of his formulation, concluding that "union with Christ is the necessary, non-negotiable foundation of the New Testament idea of imitating Christ" (132).

The volume concludes on a practical note with a helpful discussion of post-modern culture's historical context, followed by a demonstration of how the "drama of preaching" paradigm provides a platform for interaction. With a redemptive-historical emphasis, the drama-of-redemption paradigm draws the "postmodern hearer into the drama of Scripture, rather than letting her remain at a safe distance as a spectator of the text" (175). The Church's responsibility is to live out her missionary calling and faithfully "perform her script in the 'theater of God's glory'" (185).

This rich, historical, exegetical, and practical resource constitutes an essential advancement in the discussion of redemptive-historical preaching and application.

New Horizons, February 2018

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

