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A man wearing a tan cap, a black t-shirt, a dark leather jacket, and dark trousers is walking through a dry, rocky, and hilly landscape. He is carrying a small, brown and white lamb on his shoulders. The background shows a vast, open field with other sheep grazing in the distance. The overall tone is warm and natural.

Shepherding THE FLOCK

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Editorial

"It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer [elder], it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer [elder], then, must be ..." (1Tim 3:1-2ff). Read on ...

The office of elder or overseer, apart from that of the minister, might just be one of the most taxing, challenging and blessed tasks that a man can be called to in the church. Why? Because the elder is called to be a shepherd of God's people with all that entails. It is a high and lofty calling issued by the King of kings through the local congregation, and it is not to be entered into lightly! He must be qualified and not a new convert, who might become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.

Elders are called to rule over the church as representatives of the Lord Jesus who, as the Chief Shepherd, has appointed overseers and shepherds to keep watch over all the flock. He is called to love, care, pray for, lead and defend those under his charge. He needs to know his sheep and they need to know him, and have confidence that their elder is capable of shepherding and ruling, of defending, comforting, being sympathetic, biblical and prepared to safeguard the church against the wolves and false teaching.

He will guide and direct them with the use of the Scriptures, encouraging them to walk in faith and godliness before God. He will admonish those who live in disobedience to the Lord and, lovingly and patiently, call the stubborn and rebellious to repentance.

To fulfill such a sacred office the elder must not do so under compulsion (coerced or forced) but he must do so willingly or freely, with a true heart to serve the Lord and His church. The emphasis is on a willing spirit and not a grudging one. Nor is one to serve for dishonest gain, such as prestige and pride, or power or ego or anything else that is unbecoming, but to do so eagerly and enthusiastically for the Lord's sake. Not as lords or masters over the people or the church, not domineering over those under his care. His agenda is to serve the Lord and His church faithfully according to God's word.

The Lord has entrusted the church into the care of elders, which means that they will be held to account for the way in which they serve (Heb 13:7b,17). As a faithful steward, he is to be a trustworthy example to the flock, watching over his own conduct which is to be above reproach, both in and outside of the church, so that no one may bring an accusation against the Lord or His bride.

This is to be an encouragement to every man who is an elder and to those who aspire to the office. Let every elder, whether old or young, keep his eyes looking to Jesus the author and finisher (perfecter) of faith. Let him serve with endurance and when the Chief Shepherd appears, may he receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

Many thanks to our contributors for their articles relating to this topic. Many, many thanks to Br Dirk van Garderen for taking up the challenge to write two articles in one, when a contributor had to pull out last minute.

Featured in this issue:

Mr Dirk van Garderen writes about those who oversight in our churches.
Mr Sjirk Bajema considers a church father down under.

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.

DIRK VAN GARDEREN

Oversight and Overseers in our Churches

The brief I received from the editor was to address the question, 'What sort of man should an elder be?' He added, 'Apart from the qualifications, does he know Scripture and equip himself (by reading/research) to deal with relevant issues? Is he a man of the Word and prayer? Does he love those under his care and comfort them with the Word? Is he a man of character, integrity, courage?'

A serving elder in one of our churches asked me if today's elders are less qualified and able than they used to be. The implication was, having served as a (teaching) elder for half a century, I should have some thoughts on that. That question set me thinking and led to many more. How should we evaluate the quality and effectiveness of our elders? Who should be doing that? What makes an elder effective in the outworking of his office? What kind of man must he be? What should he be competent to do? How important is his ability to be a good team member? Are there elders who really shouldn't be? What qualifies or disqualifies them? Is it wise to speak of 'junior' and 'senior' elders as often happens in our churches? Can and do some elders misuse, indeed, abuse their office? How to assess that? Who does the assessing?

These are real questions that all of us face continually as members of Christ's church. A young man wanting to serve the Lord will, sooner or later, be faced with the question of becoming an office-bearer. He will need to examine himself by asking, 'What do I need to be and do to be able to serve in this holy office? Am I up to it? Who would do the assessing?' Every serving

elder and deacon will be acutely aware of being under the continuing scrutiny of his own family and fellow session members, as well as the congregation as a whole. Above all, he will know all too well that he labours as someone who must give an account to the head of the church, Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the sheep. The question he and his fellow elders face is, 'Am I [are we] up to this demanding task? Does the Lord approve of my [our] work?' Ultimately *all of us* as members of our churches will interact with the eldership in our churches and at times query their decisions and directions. We ask searching, often critical questions about our leaders. In fact, there will often be occasions when we will mutter, 'I don't like the directions the elders are taking.' Adding fuel to the critical fire, you will hear someone say, 'We haven't had a proper home visit for three years. Slack!' It's so easy to become critical and cynical about those who are called to lead, isn't it? Being an office-bearer, especially an elder, is hard and often spiritually discouraging.

Indispensable?

It is striking that when and wherever Paul preached and made disciples during his

missionary journeys he called them to begin to worship together as a church ruled by a body of elders (Acts 14.21-23). When there were serious issues undermining the church groups on the island of Crete, Paul sent Titus to appoint properly qualified elders in every town to restore them (Titus 1.5-9). The meeting with the Ephesian elders at Miletus highlights the responsibility of the eldership in that and every church then and now (Acts 20 17-38).

Why this insistence on appointing elders in every church? True, in structuring the churches in this manner Paul was simply replicating the practice of the Jewish synagogues. But it goes deeper than that. Becoming and being a disciple of Jesus is much more than securing our own salvation. It is about establishing God's kingdom (kingship) and making it visible and audible here on earth. Therefore discipleship necessarily involves being and becoming a member of Christ's church, being the visible presence of God's kingdom. In and through Christ we become his brothers and sisters, his visible family here on earth and ultimately in heaven. That necessarily demands structure which includes leadership.

The fifth commandment, 'Honour your father and your mother that your days may be long *and that it may go well with you...*' (Exodus 20.12, Deuteronomy 5.16) says it all. Family life is structured life. Children, precisely because they are children, need the oversight and discipline of their parents. When Christ calls us into membership of his Church, we become his household or family. The family of Christ, his church, needs its spiritual fathers and mothers, those called to the responsibility of spiritual guidance and oversight.



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Necessary?

Every parent knows that children need discipline for their own good. They also know that their children's first response to discipline is almost always resentment and anger. Children don't want to be corrected, rebuked or prevented from having or getting what they are demanding. Some threaten to run away from home. Others hold their hands over their ears to show their rejection of what they are being told. Usually it isn't until much later, sometimes years later, that it dawns on them that parental discipline, no matter how much it was initially resented at the time, was really an act intended to show love. The fact is that as children we were disciplined for our own good.

It isn't that different in the family or household of God, the church of which we are members (Hebrews 12.7-11). Forgiven, Holy Spirit powered and Christ serving as we may be, we never stop struggling with sin. After all, as John tells us, 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' (1 John 1.8.) We continue to need teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness. (1 Timothy 3.16.) Those who have oversight in our lives, teaching and ruling elders, are appointed by the Lord of the Church to do all this in his name and on his behalf.

Ours is not an age that takes kindly to any form of oversight, especially that which is spiritual. Just as in childhood we question and challenge the rule of our parents, so in church life that same tendency is very much evident. We just don't like the necessity of being under the church's oversight and reject it in different ways. One way is to shut the eldership out of our lives and ignore them. 'No home visits, thank you very much. Don't tell me what I should or should not do. Mind your own business.' Another 'solution' is to resign and find another more congenial, more relaxed fellowship where discipline, such as it exists, is purely self-discipline. Through the years I have lost count of dear brothers and sisters who have felt driven to take that route. A third strategy, even more drastic is to opt out of church life in any church altogether. It seems much easier to be a Christian without having to interact with and be subject to others, no matter how well intentioned they may be.

Ours is an age that very much needs to come to grips with the fact that being a disciple of Jesus, that is, a redeemed, forgiven sinner, necessarily involves active membership of Christ's body, the visible church. An essential aspect of membership involves subjection to the church's

overseers. A refusal to accept the oversight of our eldership isn't an option.

The letter to the Hebrews addresses a community struggling to survive in the face of great opposition. These folks are exhorted, 'Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.' He adds, 'Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.' (Hebrews 13.7,17.)

Overseers and their oversight.

But isn't the Bible filled with stories and reports of leaders who were corrupt, self-serving and anything but good shepherds of God's people? Ezekiel's prophecy against the 'shepherds' [religious leaders] of Israel makes for chilling reading. (See Ezekiel 34.1-24.) The Lord Jesus exposed the religious leaders of his day – Teachers of the Law or Scribes, many of whom were Pharisees – as pious hypocrites and worse. (e.g. Matthew 23). This chapter begins, 'The Scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so practice and observe what they tell you – but do not do what they do. For they preach but do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens hard to bear, and lay them upon people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their fingers....' (Matthew 23.2-4). The list grows increasingly grim as it proceeds.

Time and again Paul speaks of conflict within the churches of the New Testament, much of it due to the failures of the leaders themselves in dealing with both doctrinal and moral sins even within their own ranks. Recall for example his warning to the Ephesian elders. 'I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.' (Acts 20.29f.) That prediction and warning has been seen and experienced throughout the history of the church. Overseers, be they called bishops, elders, pastors, deacons, teachers or whatever, are especially prone to misuse and abuse of their roles for self-serving prestige or gain.

Why? Because even the holiest and most diligent among us who have or are serving as elders in our churches have, in the words of the Heidelberg Catechism, 'a small beginning of obedience.' (Lord's Day 44.114). I have often heard it said that

the best and most effective strategy Satan uses to attack, undermine and destroy God's people is by striking its leaders. They are prime targets. Only recently I heard a tragic story of a denomination's leaders being exposed as misusers of church finance. Soon after this was exposed, especially via social media, their church attendance had halved. Our churches are not immune from similar attacks, far from it. The moment we strive to be and maintain being salt and light Satan has a target and the 'bullseye' are our teaching and ruling elders.

Fighting the good fight.

Becoming and being an overseer or elder is a huge task and responsibility. They labour as those who must give an account to Christ, the head of his body the church (Hebrews 13.17) and, because they stand out, they become obvious targets. James points out, 'Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For we all stumble and fall...' (James 3.1,2). Whatever else, having served the Lord and his church as a teaching elder for half a century, has taught me how hard, testing and overwhelming it is.

Therefore, the greatest challenge is, just how must elders keep watch over themselves and be watched over to be able to serve faithfully? How can they grow and become better equipped for this holy task? To do so they must, under the headship and scrutiny of Christ their head, continually subject themselves to self-examination, to the scrutiny and oversight of their fellow elders and thirdly, to all the flock or congregation in and over which they serve.

Self-examination.

First and foremost an elder must continue to examine the nature and quality of his own commitment to following Jesus as his disciple. True, all of God's children must do that, but this is doubly necessary for those who are called to serve as overseers. Self-examination is not simply about asking yourself, 'Am I doing a good job?' or aiming to gain the approval of others. It is about examining and facing up to what is really going on in your heart, what motivates you to do what you do, before an all-seeing and all-knowing God. How to do this? It's all about looking at yourself in the mirror of God's Word. I recently (re)read Donald A. Carson's *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount*.¹ In his discussion on the Beatitudes (Matthew 5.3-10) he points out that a careful study of them will speak to

us very personally and deeply (p.17). I am brought to face up to who am I before the God who does not look just at the outward appearance, but at my heart. Who am I before God? What does he see? Who am I serving? God, others or me? Whose approval am I really seeking?

Reflect for a moment on each of the eight Beatitudes:

- Do I see that, before God, I really am 'poor in spirit', having absolutely nothing to be proud of or rely on and offer him in and of myself? Do I see myself as a destitute beggar utterly reliant on God's grace and mercy? Is pride a stumbling block that undermines my relation to the Lord and his people whom I serve?
- Do I mourn over my own poverty in spirit, confessing it and trusting for help and hope in Christ alone? Do I also mourn as I see the result of my neighbour's sinfulness and its consequences? How does that control what I say and do to him or her?
- Am I genuinely meek – someone who has a controlled desire see my neighbour's own wellbeing advance ahead of my own? Is my discipleship self-centred or about seeking the well-being of others?
- Do I genuinely hunger and thirst for righteousness, that is, God's righteousness to drive and control me and my brothers and sisters? God's will be done!
- Am I merciful as God in Christ has been and is forever merciful with me?
- Pure in heart? Is it indeed the love of and for Christ that controls what I say and how I interact with others?

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Priscilla du Preez on Unsplash

- Am I committed to being a peace maker, someone who *makes* peace rather than just longs for it? How do I go about doing this in the outworking of my calling? Is the desire for true peace what drives and controls who I am and what I do?
- Am I prepared to be persecuted because of God's righteousness? What am I prepared to pay to remain faithful and true to my Lord?

If you are going to grow in effectiveness as an overseer/elder in Christ's church, I urge you to spend time studying and on your knees in prayer as you carefully and honestly reflect on these words of Jesus.² You will not be effective or grow spiritually unless you keep on examining your heart and your motives as an office-bearer.³

Scrutiny of fellow overseers.

As noted earlier, Scripture speaks of elders (plural) being appointed in each congregation. (Acts 14.23, 20, I Timothy 5.17, Titus 1.5.) One obvious reason is that not all elders have the same gifts, but by serving together they can be and do what they could not do on their own.⁴ Another reason for the plurality of elders is that an elder necessarily needs his ministry to be scrutinized, tested and critiqued by his fellow elders. This mutual censure or oversight is intended to spur us on to great diligence, spiritual growth and effectiveness in the service of the Lord of the church.

How should this be done? The suitability, work and competence of elders needs to be continually tested against the list provided in I Timothy 3.1-8 and Titus 1.5-9.⁵ Whereas the Beatitudes focus primarily on self-examination, those listed in Timothy and Titus can be tested and strengthened as they are regularly observed and evaluated by fellow elders⁶.

In I Tim 3.1ff Paul speaks of the trustworthy saying that anyone who aspires to the office of overseer (elder, whether teaching or ruling) desires a noble task. Note the frequent use of the word 'must' in our English versions. The overseer *must* be above reproach, etc. That *must* be tested not just by the elder himself, but by his fellow office-bearers using the list provided in this passage.⁷

- The elder's **marriage** must demonstrate faithfulness to and true love for his wife. How could he be faithful to Christ's bride, the church, unless he demonstrates that he is faithful to and loves his wife? Is he clearly diligent in his calling as a husband?

- He must demonstrate what John Stott calls '**self-mastery**' by being sober-minded, self-controlled and respectable. That must be clearly seen by his fellow elders and those among whom he ministers and serves.
- **Hospitable.** A generous open home must be seen and expressed by those among whom the elder serves. Closed doors expose a closed heart. Again, this must continually be seen and, as is often the case, worked on with greater diligence.
- **Able (apt) to teach.** This applies not just to an ability to do so, but also implies that he is able to teach and defend the basic, fundamental truths of God's Word. That too can and must be monitored continually.⁸
- **Drinking habits.** Moderation is the key word here. Not addicted. That goes beyond a reference to alcohol to say the least.
- **Temper and temperament.** Not violent (a bully) but gentle (gracious), not quarrelsome in the sense of being argumentative and, as a result, domineering.
- **Attitude to money.** Money often becomes a source of pride, and being tight-fisted a god in its own right. The ability to control the role money plays in life is a mirror exposing what really matters in the elder's life.
- **Discipline in the family.** Being able to manage and care for his family as a disciple of Christ will indicate how competent an elder will be to provide well for the church family.
- **Not a recent convert,** think spiritual maturity. Following Jesus needs to be tested in and through a variety of situations experienced by the congregation in which an elder will serve. He needs to be able to demonstrate a degree of spiritual maturity to his fellow office-bearers. It can only be developed slowly through the tests and trials of life.
- **Reputation in the wider community.** If someone is known for their 'sharp' or dodgy business practices, or for marginal behaviour in public places, his reputation will damage Christ's church in which he is serving. His reputation needs to be examined.

Whatever else, any elder who is scrutinized and tested in the light of the qualifications of this list in I Timothy 3 will need to acknowledge and confess that there is both a need and much room for growth. There

will always be glaring ‘blind spots’ which can and should be pointed out to him in a gracious and caring manner by his fellow-office bearers. He must listen and learn.

A warning and a reminder here. John Stott points out that these qualifications are sometimes regarded and treated as ‘pedestrian’, being suited for secular as much as for church leadership.⁹ In other words, they do not necessarily address or expose the state of a man’s heart. Think for example of the pious Jewish leaders who loved to demonstrate their spirituality and high standards in public to be seen by men (Matthew 6.1-4). The parable of proud Pharisee and the penitent Tax Collector comes to mind. (Luke 18.9-14.) Pharisees would, without a doubt, have scored high marks against Paul’s list when measured by each other. It is for this reason that the ‘self-examination’ described in the previous section must be considered before and always alongside of the qualifications in I Timothy 3. Continuous, honest self-examination before the face of God and the scrutiny, counsel, correction and encouragement of fellow office-bearers are the means which enable the elder to grow and be equipped for his task.

The role of the congregation.

But there is still more. It is forever a great temptation for the leadership in any organisation to isolate and elevate itself from those who they are serving. ‘Listen to us and do what we say’ easily becomes leadership’s default position and invariably expresses itself in pride, self-reliance and the real possibility of the abuse of their office.

Elders need to listen to and heed the voice of the congregation and, at the very least to some of the senior saints in their districts. Speaking for myself, I know that my work as an elder was often challenged by brothers and sisters who were no longer or never had been elders themselves. One of the best mentors during my ministry was a very wise, Spirit-filled sister whose counsel was invaluable. I felt free to test my pastoral concerns with her. She was often able to raise concerns and insights that my fellow office-bearers and I lacked. When members speak of leaving our churches it needs elders to examine their own rules and rulings at least as much as the supposed motives of such members. Learn to listen as a way of growing as elders.

In Jesus’ day the Scribes and Pharisees became a group that very consciously saw itself as spiritually superior to the rest of

God’s people, the *hoi polloi*. They believed that their knowledge of and insight into God’s will, the Law and the Traditions, were greater than that of those under their care. They were convinced they knew best. Jesus chastises them as blind guides and blind fools (Matthew 23.16-22). The trap those leaders fell into is no less a trap for today’s church leaders. Elders must learn to acknowledge their own smallness, imperfect knowledge and need to grow. They must open their ears and heart to listen not just to their own conscience before God, and the counsel of their fellow elders. They need to listen diligently to the voices and counsel of all the saints who they serve, especially those who have learned much or are hurting. Closed ears and eyes to the needs and counsel of the flock stunt the growth and development of eldership.

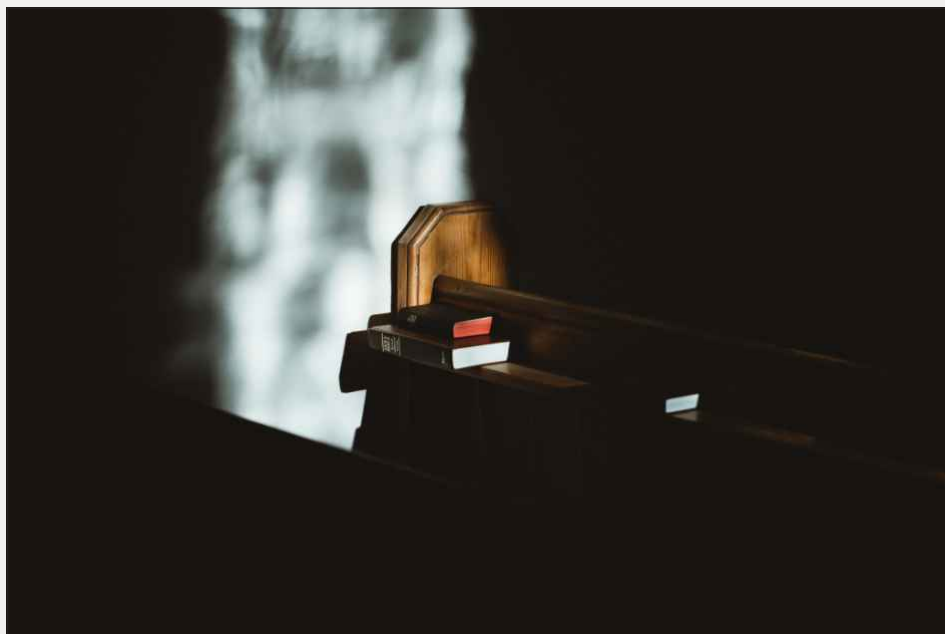
Finally.

Anyone who aspires to be, is, has been or submits to the eldership in our churches must acknowledge that there are many failures. Much instruction, correction, training and maturing is sorely needed. This has always been true in Christ’s church. Examining the elders and their work is a humbling business. It exposes their weaknesses and limitations as Christ’s under-shepherds. Indeed, if there is going to be any spiritual growth and effectiveness in their work it is not a matter of striving for more and better expertise, knowledge of Scripture and reformed theology, useful as that may be. What is needed more than anything else is a willingness to be informed, led, encouraged, corrected and, as necessary, rebuked by

oneself, one another as fellow office-bearers, and all the saints in God’s household.

- 1 D.A. Carson, *Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount* Baker Books, Grand Rapids (1987)
- 2 As mentioned, Don Carson’s book is an excellent resource in helping you to face up to the cost and nature of discipleship to Jesus. I also recommend John R.W. Stott’s *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount* in the Bible Speaks today series (IVP 1978).
- 3 Another passage to consider is I Corinthians 13, the chapter on love. Try reading it by substituting your name whenever the word ‘love’ appears. It will humble you!
- 4 Think in the wider sense of Paul’s description of the church being like a body in I Corinthians 12.12-28
- 5 The qualities and qualifications listed in Titus 1 are very much a response to the crisis Titus is called to address in Crete. Clearly the churches’ leadership on the island had failed and new, qualified elders who meet the criteria listed by Paul must replace them.
- 6 This is done formally in our sessions before the celebration of the Lord’s Supper by means of what is called ‘censura morum’ – mutual censure that examines an elder’s lifestyle and the effectiveness of his work as an elder.
- 7 I found John Stott in the BST series *The Message of I Timothy and Titus* (IVP, 1996) helpful and concise. When reflecting on this passage, as elders must, reading a commentary such as Stott’s is indispensable.
- 8 I note that not every elder is able to speak well or even pray effectively in public. Some are not able to read sermons, or even do a ‘call to worship’ because their voice, demeanour or whatever prevents this. That does not disqualify them as ‘able to teach’ in a more intimate setting like a home visit.
- 9 Ibid p. 99

Mr Dirk J van Garderen is a an emeritus minister and member of the Bishopdale Reformed Church.



Annie Spratt on Unsplash

SJIRK BAJEMA

A Church Father Down Under

Edward Musgrave Blaiklock – 1903-1983

We had many guest speakers addressing Nelson College assemblies in the five years that I was there. I cannot remember any of them but one. He was not a famous sportsman, or politician, or businessman. But the words he spoke were riveting. They were words which brought to life for me the College's motto – four seemingly obscure Latin words – *Pietas Probitas et Sapientia*. As this emeritus Classics Professor from Auckland University expounded upon what is translated

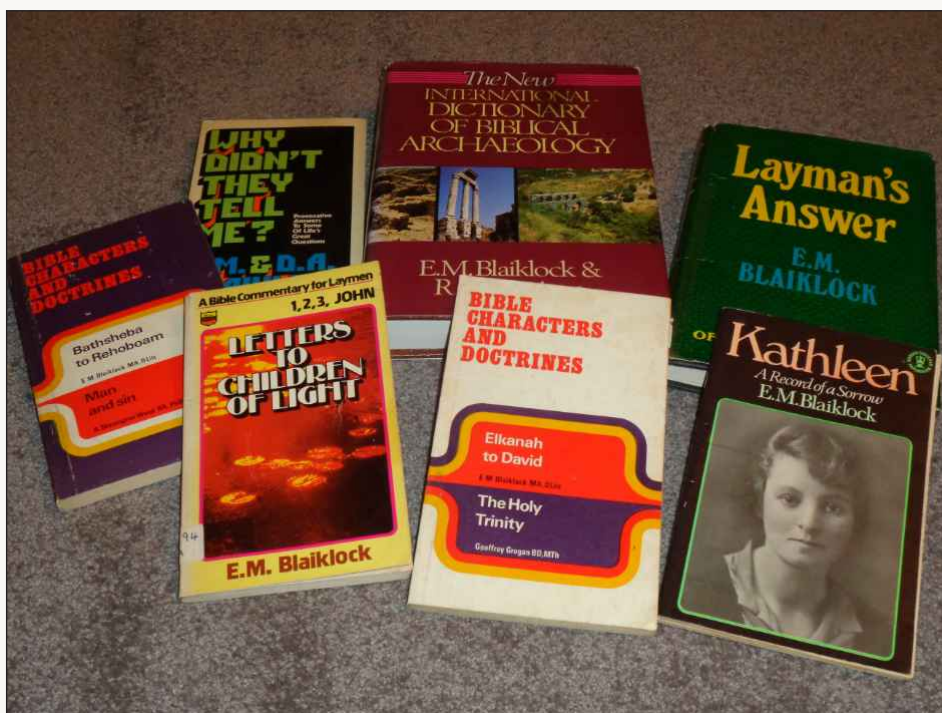
Loyalty, Honesty and Wisdom it came alive. That motto was completely different for me from that day on.

And it was particularly with the opening word of this motto – *Pietas* – that he rang a bell with me. How it brought out its spiritual depth and thus what the founders of Nelson College had in mind in setting up what was originally a church school.

Defender of the Faith

Aside from this encounter with E.M. Blaiklock it wasn't until some years later that I met him again, though this time not personally but by his writings. It was specifically when I came across his book, *Layman's Answer: An Examination of the New Theology*, written in response to Professor Lloyd-Geering's very public liberal views in 1968, notably those found in his book, *God in the New World*.

After an 'Introduction' which lays out the scene for what follows, Blaiklock opens up Lloyd-Geering's 'New World' to be anything but that, and then turns to the heart of Christianity, for which he delivers the supporting documents in the case, following which he deals with the great question 'Myth or History?' After this, he details the resurrection in history. Then he goes to what faith in God means, for the liberal view as espoused in Lloyd-Geering's book and others of like-mind, and contrasting that with the biblical view of what faith is, particularly as it is found in the classic eleventh chapter of the



Epistle to the Hebrews. Following on from this he brings out faith in Christ and the vital truth this must be. This is followed by chapters on 'The Practice of Prayer,' 'Man and His Destiny,' 'The Question of Death,' and, in conclusion, 'What of the Future?' He ends his book stating, "...unless Christ be risen there is no Christianity, all hope is cut at the root, the foundation of all goodness sapped... "My Lord," said Thomas, "and my God." It echoes down the years, and with passion in the affirmation let us join him in making it at the other end of history." ¹

Naturally I wasn't an observer to what was happening in the mainline Presbyterian denomination at the time, but my interest was raised because I had heard about that ferment and its ongoing ramifications through Lloyd-Geering's trial for heresy in November, 1967. Sadly, a key teacher of future ministers who believed that the bones of Jesus lay somewhere in Palestine, had those charges against him dismissed. Thankfully, because of that liberalism, the Grace Presbyterian Churches have come out of the PCANZ, and helped continue biblical preaching and teaching in Presbyterian circles.

Truly, E.M. Blaiklock was a Christian Apologist, one who took up the cudgel for the faith, and who is sorely missed. Already soon after he was converted he took the choice to go with the newly instituted Inter-Varsity Fellowship (IVF), which arose out of the increasingly liberal Student Christian Movement (SCM). As Trevor Shaw comments, "An intellect and a scholar, Blaiklock was able, in a period of scepticism and liberalism, to reaffirm the authenticity of the earliest of the New Testament documents and the authority of the Bible. In effect, he gave Christians an intellectual and historical defence for their faith." ²

Teacher of the Faith

Further interaction with his writing came about through his prodigious publications, including Bible Commentaries on many parts of the Bible, histories, an Atlas, books on doctrine, theology, archaeology, and translations of classical works by Thomas à Kempis, Brother Lawrence, Augustine of Hippo, and Francis of Assisi. For several decades from 1941 onwards, he wrote a regular weekly column in one or other of the Auckland newspapers, using the pen name *Grammaticus*. Several times those columns were collated into books which were also popular.

Blaiklock further held positions such as the president of the Bible College of New Zealand (now Laidlaw College), and Public Orator of the University of Auckland. Indeed, as one who heard him (as confirmed above), he was a gifted public speaker.

Perhaps you too can remember hearing Professor Blaiklock speak? It is recorded that he spoke on one occasion about Christian education to Middleton Grange School. There he declared: "The Bible – that marvellous compendium of human experience – which has shaped everything worthwhile in the modern world, is the book society will lose at its peril."

Then, further on he said, "Discipline is necessary to learning and a Christian should include discipline, instead of the prevalent idea that a child should not be compelled to do anything he did not want to." Here he spoke quite prophetically, as secular legislation has shown. And what has the death of discipline done for our children? Indeed, aren't they actually done for by not being firmly guided during the most impressionable time of their lives?

Practitioner of the Faith

In 1921, together with two friends, Blaiklock attended an evangelical meeting for young men being held in the Auckland Baptist Tabernacle in Queen Street. There he was strongly stirred by the message the Rev. J.W. Kemp gave. As he wrote later, 'I went home and thought. The next morning I was a Christian.' ³ And he never stopped from continuing upon this pathway. This personal faith was dominant in his life from that time on.

E.M. Blaiklock was married to his beloved Kathleen for nearly fifty years, with her death in 1978 causing him much sorrow and from which the book *Kathleen: A Record of Sorrow* emanated. This was an unexpected book as it was very raw in the anguish and depression he went through. Trevor Shaw noted, "Criticism of the book *Kathleen* was instant. It came from those who knew him as the Professor of Classics, the master of the apt phrase, the expert par excellence in the use of the English language. They were disappointed they could no longer find the free-flowing pen backed by the brilliant mind in any page of *Kathleen*. Instead, the book revealed the pen of an old man in the slough of dependency and the grip of grieving despair." ⁴

Yet, how much did it not impact the hearts and lives of many Christians? This



Edward Musgrave Blaiklock
www.laidlaw100.ac.nz

was a book which resonated with the experience of believers throughout the nation and throughout the world. I too am blessed to have the book in my own library. While it may not have been the kind of writing some expected from Blaiklock, it is yet so touching. There is a deep knowledge of faith and life that shines through. Here he truly brings out the special gift with which God has blessed him, while in the most despairing of human situations. It is a most valuable tool to use with grieving brethren. It certainly helped change my attitude to those going through such a valley in their lives.

In addition to this, he was also warmly pastoral in his approach to all, as evidenced in his deep friendships and wise counsel. Books such as *Why Didn't They Tell Me: Provocative Answers To Some of Life's Great Questions*, written together with his son, a medical doctor, demonstrate these personal qualities.

Father of the Faith

Blaiklock described himself as an 'informed conservative.' He wrote regarding this, "Informed conservatism welcomes all the light which learned research can throw on Scripture. It is no devotee of literalism, nor committed to Ussher's dates, a 'futurist' view of the Apocalypse, or to the text of the King

James Version. Its view of Scripture can absorb all genuine discovery, although it has sometimes failed to demonstrate that confidence, and opposed where it should have adapted."⁵

This is seen in the way he responded to Lloyd-Geering's liberalism and it marked his manner throughout his life. He did not waver on matters of principle.

In his writings Blaiklock lives on, and if you are ever able to pick up any of his seventy or so commentaries and other publications please do so. He is clear and concise. His knowledge was phenomenal.

Right at the end of his life, as the bowel cancer weakened and distorted his life, he continued on with the completion of a six-part television series, *A Mind Behind It All*. In this series he is introduced by the Dean of St Mary's Cathedral, Auckland, with the Dean speaking of Blaiklock's faith and his scholarship. Then in Part 2, using illustrations from nature, Blaiklock expounds the belief that there is a mind behind creation. The filming of Part 3 was at the time when he's told he only has a few weeks to live, and so he affirms, as an historian as well as a Christian, his belief in the resurrection of Christ, testing the gospel story by academic investigation. With Part 4 he brings out the way we may make contact with the vast intelligence around us as he explains the special revelation in Jesus Christ his Son.

Christ was and is and will ever be God, the Word, translating himself into a language that we could understand. This is followed in Part 5 with the effect the very presence of Jesus has on mankind – one way or another. And Part 6 brings out that, while there is evidence of a mind at work in creation, we can only truly meet Jesus and see him as true God.

Conclusion

We thank the Lord for this man of faith – a servant and a leader. He looked to his Lord and Saviour and in so doing left a blessed legacy. And let's note the spirit with which he did this. He gave himself, as much as he was able, to help the wider cause of Christ. He had a listening ear and wise words of wisdom for what were at times difficult situations. He had the spirit of the Reformers always looking to guide the saints back to the Word. He was a gracious believer, thankful for what he had done and could continue to do. May not only our ministers and elders do the same but, indeed, all of us.

Footnotes:

- 1 p.148, *Layman's Answer: An Examination of the New Theology*, by E.M. Blaiklock, Hodder & Stoughton, 1968
- 2 p.178, *E.M. Blaiklock: A Christian Scholar*, by Trevor Shaw, Hodder & Stoughton, 1986
- 3 W.F. Richardson. 'Blaiklock, Edward Musgrave', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, first published in 2000. Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/5b28/blaiklock-edward-musgrave> (accessed 26 November 2022)
- 4 pp10-11, *Ibid*
- 5 pp28-29, *The Bible and I*, by E.M. Blaiklock, Bethany House Publishing, 1983
- 6 The Rev. J. Graham Miller noted Blaiklock's unhappiness about Calvinistic views but that did not lessen his admiration for the professor and his evangelical influence. He wrote in his autobiography about Blaiklock: 'He was unashamed of the Gospel and freely made himself available for Evangelical Union meetings and public gatherings, which identified him as a rare academic. At that time I do not think there was a single professor in any of the four University Colleges who would have taken that stand, though there were many that made a Christian profession.' (p.168, 'A Day's March Nearer Home', Banner of Truth, 2010.)

Mr Sjirk Bajema is the minister of the Oamaru Reformed Church.

Faith in Christ

A passage of Galsworthy comes to mind. In the Saga's careful dating the year of conversation would be about 1900 ... Jolyon and his son were burying the old dog Balthasar, whose shaggy presence at Robin Hill bridged three generations.

"The boy looked at his father, 'Do you believe in God, Dad? I've never known.'

At so searching a question from one to whom it was impossible to make a light reply, Jolyon stood for a moment, feeling his back, tired by the digging. 'What do you mean by God?' he said, 'there are two irreconcilable ideas of God. There's the Unknown Creative Principle – one believes in That. And there's the Sum of Altruism in man – naturally one believes in That.'

'I see. That leaves out Christ, doesn't it?'

Jolyon stared. Christ, the link between those two ideas! Out of the mouth of babes..."

p105, Layman's Answer: An Examination of the New Theology

Shepherding the flock

BARRY J. YORK

Shepherding is a Trinitarian work

When it comes to shepherding the church, elders do well to realize that their calling is a practical, Trinitarian work.

The Apostle Paul made this clear to the elders of Ephesus. His final instructions to the leaders of that congregation were: “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). Looking carefully at this directive, we see that elders can properly care for the church only by honoring their triune God as they do so. In essence, Paul gave the elders a Trinitarian formulation for their work.

Shepherd the church that God the Father owns. Set apart by the Father to receive His adoptive love before the world was made (Eph. 1:3–7), the church belongs solely to Him. Paul called it the “church of God.” One of my spiritual mentors used to regularly remind me of this truth. Whenever I said “my church” in reference to the congregation I pastored, he would raise his eyebrows and ask, “Whose church?” His point was clear. The church belongs to God, not me.

Elders in a congregation must never act as if the church belongs to them, is there for their own benefit, or is under their lordship (1 Peter 5:1–3). Rather, they are to treat people in the church as children of God. How? By showing them the Father’s tender love. By protecting them from evil influences. By helping them grow up to be like their heavenly Father.

Shepherd the church that God the Son obtained. Paul told the Ephesian elders that Christ obtained, or purchased, the church with His own blood. As he urged them to “pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock,” they had to make sure that everyone in the congregation – leader and layperson alike – remained in the gospel.

As Richard Baxter said about this verse, “It is a fearful thing to be an unsanctified professor, but much more to be an unsanctified preacher.” Pastors and elders must live the holy lives expected of those blood-bought by Jesus. In turn, they have the sacred duty to shepherd God’s flock to believe and obey the gospel of His Son.

Shepherd the church that God the Spirit oversees. The Spirit of God formed the church through His regenerating power (Titus 3:5), dwells in the church with His baptizing presence (1 Cor. 12:13), and blesses the church with His generous gifts (vv. 4–6). Elders are gifts to the church to fulfill the Spirit’s work of oversight.

Elders, then, are to bear the Spirit’s fruit in their character as they shepherd. They are to preach the Spirit’s truth to God’s people. They should guide the church in the Spirit’s wisdom. The church father Gregory of Nazianzus taught that spiritual leaders are to prepare their congregation to spend eternity with the triune God.

Shepherding God’s flock is indeed a Trinitarian work.

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The Free Reformed School Association (Tas) Inc. invites applications for the following positions:

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For application forms, see the school website (www.jcs.tas.edu.au/employment).

Forward completed applications to the Business Manager:

- E-mail: wielstrak@jcs.tas.edu.au
- Address: PO Box 89, Launceston 7250, Tasmania, Australia.

For more information, contact the Principal, Mr Daniel Coote

- E-mail: cooted@jcs.tas.edu.au

Covenant Theologian: Heinrich Bullinger

STEVEN LAWSON



Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575) is regarded as the most influential second-generation Reformer. As the heir to Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich, Switzerland, he consolidated and continued the Swiss Reformation that his predecessor had started. Philip Schaff writes that Bullinger

was “a man of firm faith, courage, moderation, patience, and endurance ... [who was] providentially equipped” to preserve and advance the truth in a difficult time in history. During his forty-four years as the chief minister in Zurich, Bullinger’s literary output exceeded that

of Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Zwingli combined. He was of monumental importance in the spread of Reformed teaching throughout the Reformation. So far-reaching was Bullinger’s influence throughout continental Europe and England that Theodore Beza called him “the common shepherd of all Christian churches.”

Bullinger was born on July 18, 1504, in the tiny Swiss town of Bremgarten, ten miles west of Zurich. His father, also named Heinrich, was the local parish priest, who lived in a common law marriage with Anna Wiederkehr. This practice was officially forbidden by the Roman Catholic hierarchy, but Bullinger’s father had received permission to enter into such a relationship by agreeing to pay his bishop a yearly tribute. The younger Heinrich was the fifth child born of this illegitimate wedlock. The marriage between Bullinger’s parents was eventually formalized in 1529, when the elder Bullinger joined the Reformed movement.

Young Heinrich’s father groomed him for the priesthood from a very early age. At age twelve, he was sent to the monastic school at Emmerich, known as the School of the Brethren of the Common Life. This school was a citadel of the *via antiqua*, the “old way” of learning that was stressed by the theologians of the High Middle Ages, such as Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) and John Duns Scotus (ca. 1265–1308). There, Bullinger received an advanced education in humanistic principles, especially Latin. At the same time, he

came under the influence of the *devotio moderna*, the “modern devotion,” a medieval emphasis on the Eucharist and the deep spiritual life. Augustine and Bernard were among the earlier leaders of this pietistic movement, and it had been revived by Thomas á Kempis in his book *The Imitation of Christ*. Bullinger was attracted to this movement’s stress on meditation and the search for a personal spiritual experience with God. Also at this time, Bullinger began displaying a remarkable aptitude for scholarship.

The University of Cologne

Three years later, in 1519, Bullinger proceeded to the University of Cologne, where he began studying traditional Scholastic theology. Cologne was the largest city in Germany, and Roman Catholicism was deeply entrenched there – papal superstitions ran high in the city and German mystics gathered there in large numbers. Aquinas and Scotus had taught there earlier, and their Scholastic influence remained firmly embedded in Cologne. But Bullinger was convinced of the humanist approach. In his studies, he pursued the writings of the Church Fathers, especially Ambrose, Chrysostom, and Augustine. Their insistence on the priority of Scripture moved him to study the Bible for himself. Such a pursuit, he later admitted, was unknown to most of his fellow students.

While at Cologne, Bullinger was exposed to the teaching of the leading humanist of the day, Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam (ca. 1466–1536). Erasmus had elevated the Scriptures over Aristotelian logic and sought to reform the church through humanistic scholarship and the moral teachings of Christ. But it was Luther’s works that most challenged Bullinger’s thinking. Luther’s books were being burned in Cologne, which only piqued Bullinger’s interest in their content. Soon his mind was captured by Luther’s ideas. He also studied Philip Melancthon’s *Loci communes* (1521), the first systematic treatment of Lutheran theology. In it, Melancthon treated the Reformed hallmark doctrines of the bondage of the will and justification by faith alone. This work further impacted Bullinger. Seeds of reform were being sown in his mind. At age seventeen, he embraced the pivotal truth that justification is by faith alone in Christ alone. Amid this personal transformation, Bullinger gained his master’s degree.

In 1522, Bullinger returned home to

Bremgarten a new man. He continued his persistent study of Scripture along with his reading of the Church Fathers, Luther, and Melancthon. The next year, he became the head teacher of the school at the Cistercian convent at Kappel. From 1523 to 1529, he instructed the monks from the New Testament and introduced Reformed teaching. Under his influence, Protestant worship replaced the Mass. Further, many monks became Reformed ministers.

Bullinger took a five-month leave of absence in 1527 and made a trip to Zurich. This journey proved to be life changing for him. He attended lectures by Zwingli and met the Swiss Reformer, starting a relationship that would have a profound effect on him and the future of the Swiss Reformation. He was appointed to accompany Zwingli to the Disputation in Berne, which opened on January 7, 1528. On this occasion, the Ten Theses of Berne was presented and subscribed. Through all this, Bullinger was given a privileged inside look at Reformation workings. Subsequently, Bullinger made an annual journey to Zurich to discuss theology with Zwingli. Through this close association, Zwingli became aware of Bullinger’s abilities in the Scriptures. Though neither knew it at the time, Bullinger was being prepared to become Zwingli’s successor.

Pastoring at Hausen and Bremgarten

Later in 1528, Bullinger became the part-time pastor of the village church at Hausen, near Kappel. He preached his first sermon on June 21, beginning an appointment that would allow him to develop his pulpit gifts. The following year, Heinrich Sr. publicly declared his commitment to Reformed teaching and started to reform his parish at Bremgarten. However, the elder Bullinger was forced to resign his position because of the resistance of his parishioners. In an unusual turn of events, the younger Bullinger succeeded his father as pastor of the church. He continued the biblical reform his father had begun and became known as the Reformer of Bremgarten.

Yearning for a wife, Bullinger traveled to the former Dominican convent at Oetenbach in 1529, having heard that the nuns had become Reformed. The nunnery had disbanded, but two women had stayed to establish a Protestant witness. One was Anna Adischwyler, a devoted believer. Bullinger asked her to become

his wife and she accepted. Through the years, they had eleven children of their own and adopted others. Remarkably, all six of their sons became Protestant ministers.

For the next two years, Bullinger helped spread Reformed teaching through his pulpit and the beginning of his prolific writing ministry. At this time, he began his long series of commentaries on the books of the New Testament.

With the growing entrenchment of Protestant beliefs in Switzerland, Roman Catholic resistance soon arose. Five Catholic cantons (states), alarmed at the rise of Protestantism in Zurich, declared war on this Reformed stronghold in October 1531. No Protestant canton offered Zurich any support. On October 11, at the Battle of Kappel, the Protestants were ambushed and Zwingli, serving as a military chaplain, was killed. Zurich was forced to accept unfavorable terms of peace. Some regions of Switzerland, including Bremgarten, reverted to Catholicism.

Bullinger, a recognized Protestant leader, was threatened with the scaffold at Bremgarten. He fled to Zurich, where, three days later, he was prevailed upon to preach in Zwingli’s empty pulpit. So powerful was Bullinger’s preaching that the people exclaimed he must be the second coming of Zwingli. Oswald Myconius, a follower of Zwingli, said, “Like the phoenix, he [Zwingli] has risen from the ashes.” It was vitally important for the Swiss churches that Zwingli be replaced by a man of the same Reformed convictions and abounding energy in the Lord’s work. In Bullinger, they found such a man.

Chief Minister of Zurich

Six weeks later, on December 9, 1531, Bullinger, only twenty-seven years old, was unanimously elected by the Council of Zurich and the citizens to succeed Zwingli. After the council agreed to guarantee the clergy’s freedom to preach on all aspects of life in the city, Bullinger accepted the position. He became the *antistes* – the “chief minister” – of the city. In so doing, he assumed the leadership of the Reformed movement in German-speaking Switzerland. On December 23, he took the pulpit of the Grossmünster, a position he held for forty-four years until his death in 1575. In this role, Bullinger presided over the other churches of the cantonal synod as a sort of “Reformed bishop.” He was also responsible for the reform of the school system.

Bullinger was a tireless preacher. For the first ten years of his ministry in Zurich, he preached six or seven times a week. After 1542, he preached twice a week, on Sundays and Fridays, which allowed him to devote himself to a rigorous writing schedule. Bullinger followed Zwingli in the *lectio continua* method of preaching, moving verse by verse through whole books of Scripture. His expository sermons were biblical, simple, clear, and practical. In all, it is estimated that Bullinger preached in Zurich between seven thousand and seventy-five hundred sermons. These expositions became the basis for his commentaries, which covered much of the Bible.

Bullinger was also a big-hearted pastor. His house was open to widows, orphans, strangers, exiles, and persecuted brethren. He freely bestowed food, clothing, and money on those in need. Bullinger even secured a pension for Zwingli's widow and educated Zwingli's children with his own sons and daughters. He was a devoted pastor who produced one of the first Protestant books for comforting the sick and dying. Many of the persecuted believers of England escaped Mary Tudor's reign of terror in Zurich, finding refuge in Bullinger's open arms. Upon their return home, these refugees became leading English Puritans.

A man of considerable theological

abilities, Bullinger helped co-author the First Helvetic Confession (1536) and played a key role in the *Consensus Tigurinus* (1549). The former was the first national Swiss confession; the latter was an attempt by Calvin and Bullinger to rectify Protestant disagreements over the Lord's Supper. During the discussions over this document, Bullinger invited Calvin to Zurich for face-to-face talks. Calvin accepted the invitation. On May 20, 1549, he and William Farel journeyed to Zurich, where they met with Bullinger. Calvin and Bullinger reached an agreement regarding the sacraments that united the Reformed efforts in Geneva and Zurich. By these confessional documents, Bullinger helped

Focus on faith

JOHN NEWTON



The eye of Divine Providence

"Not even a *sparrow*, worth only half a penny, can fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father! And the very *hairs* on your head are all numbered!" Matthew 10:29-30

Let us learn to see and acknowledge *God's hand* in all we have, and in all we meet with. Such a deep and abiding persuasion of the Most High God, ordering and over-ruling all our concerns, would – like the light, diffuse a luster and a beauty

upon everything around us. To consider every comfort of life, as an effect and proof of God's favor towards us, would, like the *fabled magic stone* – turn all our possessions to gold, and stamp a value upon things which a common eye might judge as insignificant.

The eye of Divine Providence is upon every flitting *sparrow* of the field. Nor can we properly term any circumstance of our lives as *small*, since such things as seem most *trifling* in themselves, do often give birth to things which become most important. On the other hand – to be able to discover the wisdom and goodness of our heavenly Father, through the darkest cloud of *troubles* and *afflictions*; to see all

our *trials* appointed to us – in number, weight, and measure; nothing befalling us by *chance*; nothing without need; nothing without a support; nothing without a designed advantage – what a support must this truth be to the soul!

Take away this truth – and man is the most forlorn, helpless and miserable object in the world! He would be pining for everything he has *not* – and trembling for everything he *has*! He would be equally suffering under the pressure of what *does* happen – and the fear of what *may* happen! He would be liable to thousands of unsuspected dangers – yet unable to guard against those which are most obvious!

Let us learn the secret of being content in any and every situation, "Our heavenly Father knows what we have need of, before we ask Him!" "The earth is His, and the fullness thereof;" and His *goodness* is equal to His *power*.

In Christ, He has already given us more than ten thousand worlds! Are you *poor*? Be satisfied with the Lord's appointment. It were as easy to Him to give you large estates – as to supply you with the bread you eat, or to continue your breath in your nostrils. But He sees that *poverty* is best for you – He sees that *prosperity* might prove your ruin! Therefore He has appointed you the *honor* of being in this respect, conformable to your Lord, who, when on earth, "had nowhere to lay His head!"

galvanize Switzerland during the beginning of its Reformation period. He combated the Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation in the Lord's Supper and refuted Anabaptist teaching on baptism. However, he remained open-minded toward the various radical movements.

Throughout this time, Bullinger was consulted by English royalty, including Edward VI (1550) and Elizabeth I (1566). He viewed the leaders of the Church of England as fellow Reformed churchmen as they struggled against Rome. Portions of his book *Decades* were dedicated to Edward VI and Lady Jane Grey. On a broader scale, he maintained correspondence with Reformed leaders

all over the Protestant world, including Philip of Hesse. His wise and balanced counsel gave much-needed direction to many in the Reformed movement.

In Bullinger's closing years, he suffered the tragic deaths of his wife, Anna, and several of their daughters. Their lives were taken in outbreaks of the plague in 1564 and 1565. Bullinger himself became severely ill during the second outbreak. Though he survived the outbreak, his health remained poor, and he died on September 17, 1575, after four decades of tireless and effective ministry. He left behind a rich legacy in the truths of sovereign grace that helped give theological and ecclesiastical order to the Reformation.

This article is part of the Men of the Reformation collection.

Mr. Steven J. Lawson is founder and president of OnePassion Ministries in Dallas. He is a Ligonier Ministries teaching fellow, professor of preaching and dean of D.Min. studies at The Master's Seminary, and host of the Institute for Expository Preaching. He is author of many books, including The Passionate Preaching of Martyn Lloyd-Jones, John Knox: Fearless Faith, and The Moment of Truth.

Focus on the Christian life

Are Christians Totally Depraved?

John Newton once famously summarized the believer's experience with regard to his sin:

I am not what I ought to be. Ah! How imperfect and deficient! I am not what I wish to be. I abhor what is evil, and I would cleave to what is good. I am not what I hope to be. Soon, soon, I shall put off mortality, and with mortality all sin and imperfection. Yet, though I am not what I ought to be, nor what I wish to be, nor what I hope to be, I can truly say, I am not what I once was – a slave to sin and Satan. And I can heartily join with the apostle, and acknowledge, "By the grace of God, I am what I am."

This is a beautiful sentiment about the way true believers are to view themselves in light of the regenerating grace of God in the gospel. We are no longer what we were (totally depraved), yet we are not what we will one day be (fully delivered from remaining corruption). Understanding these truths is vital if we are to advance in the Christian life.

The Westminster Confession of Faith explains the nature of the total depravity of all mankind: "We are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil" (WCF 6.4). Reflecting on the doctrine of total depravity in the Calvinistic backronym TULIP, John Gerstner stated, "Total depravity is our one original contribution to TULIP. We are the dirty soil in which God plants His flower, and from our filth, produces a thing of divine beauty." To see your need for the redeeming grace of God, you must first come to terms with the teaching of Scripture about what you are by nature – pervasively corrupt and evil.

Isaiah summarized the extent of depravity in an accusation against old covenant Israel: "From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness" (Isa. 1:6). Jeremiah set out the fraudulence of man's sinful heart when he wrote: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:9). Quoting the psalmist, the Apostle Paul testified, "None is righteous, no, not one" (Pss. 14:1; 53:1; Rom. 3:10). All who have descended from Adam by ordinary generation are "dead in . . . trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). Our minds, wills, emotions, affections, and consciences are thoroughly defiled by sin (Eph. 4:17; Titus 1:15–16). By nature, all our faculties are instruments of unrighteousness (Rom. 6:19).

Believers have experienced a radical breach with the power of sin by virtue of their union with Christ.

Since all mankind (our Lord Jesus excepted) is fallen in Adam and pervasively depraved, all people need the last Adam to justify them freely by His death and resurrection (Rom. 5:12–21; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:10–14). In Christ, God has delivered His people from "the domain of darkness and transferred [them] to the kingdom of his beloved Son" (Col. 1:13). He has graciously transformed believers through the working of His Spirit, based on the redemption secured by His Son. In his book *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, Thomas Boston explained the extent of the regenerating work of God:

Original sin infects the whole man; and regenerating grace, which is the cure, goes as far as the disease. . . . He gets not only a new head, to know and understand true religion; or a new tongue, to talk of it; but a

new heart, to love and embrace it, in the whole of his life.

Far from continuing in a state of being “wholly inclined to all evil,” believers have been renewed by the Spirit of God to do what is “pleasing in his sight” (Heb. 13:21). We can now “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord” (Col. 1:10) and can now “please God” (1 Thess. 4:1). In his letter to Titus, the Apostle Paul explained how the grace of God enables those who have been redeemed to live uprightly:

The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. (Titus 2:11–14)

While this is a glorious truth, believers still battle indwelling sin after conversion as part of their sanctification. As the Westminster Confession of Faith states, “This corruption of nature, during this life, does remain in those that are regenerated; and although it be, through Christ, pardoned and mortified, yet both itself and all the motions thereof are truly and properly sin” (6.5).

Romans 6–8 reveals the dynamics of sanctification. In 6:1–23, the Apostle explains that believers have experienced a radical breach with the power of sin through their union with Christ. In 7:13–25, he explains the ongoing battle with indwelling sin. And in 8:1–11, he charges believers to mortify remaining sin by the power of the Holy Spirit. At one and the same time, the Apostle teaches that believers are no longer totally depraved and that the “corruption of nature” remains within them.

When we consider the full-orbed teaching of Scripture about the believer’s relationship with his or her sin, we will have a right understanding of what we were, what we are, and what we one day will be. And we

will be able to say with Newton: I am not what I ought to be. I am not what I wish to be. I am not what I hope to be. Yet, I can heartily join with the Apostle and acknowledge, “By the grace of God, I am what I am.”

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NO WORSHIP, NO
ADORATION, AND NO
OBEDIENCE CAN FLOW
FROM A HEART THAT
HAS NO REGARD FOR
THE NAME OF GOD.

– R. C. SPROUL

Letters from New Zealand

D. G. VANDERPYL

September 1993

I received a letter from Marin Hanskamp, the Australian Denominational Youth Worker, asking me if I could write something about the youth in our New Zealand Churches. Well, I am 67 years old and a bit out of touch with the up and coming generation. At my **age**, reflecting on my years as a teenager, I can't help but think of Psalm 25:7 "Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways." But then I also think of Obadiah when he met up with Elijah who told him to arrange a meeting for him with his arch enemy Ahab. "I have feared the Lord from my youth," he confessed to Elijah as he tried to wriggle out of this assignment.

This will also, I am sure, apply to our young people of today here in New Zealand. In these past forty years as Reformed Churches we have gone through some rough patches at times with our teenagers, some churches more than others. It often peaked at youth and family camps when bikies roared between the tents and camp-fathers and mothers woke up with bleary eyes after "search and rescue" operations in the middle of the night to get some of them back into their own tents or bunks. But these seem to have gone, unless I am not with it any more, but I don't think so.

Now we have another generation of whom a number banded together in 1990 and formed an organisation by the name of "Operation SPROUT." The name stands for *South Pacific Reaching Out Uniting Troops*. It is a mouthful, but has a great impact. So much so that our 1992 Synod decided to recognise them as the denominational youth arm of the church for the promotion of missions among and by the youth of our churches here. The SPROUTs² have now come under the wing of the Overseas Mission Board. Believe me, they are a very enthusiastic group of young people whose first concern is greater awareness and promotion of missions in our midst, especially among the youth. It provides challenges by informing the young people of opportunities in short term mission work both at home and abroad. Regular conventions are being held in various centres to stimulate in-depth studies of God's Word and its practical outworking in reaching out

to the world with the message of *hope*. Among the topics have been *Urban Evangelism and Youth Ministries*. It is, in one word, fantastic! They have stolen my heart and should be remembered in our private and public prayers. By the way, they welcome overseas observers!

When I received the request from our man in Dandenong, little time was left for me to collect the information in time for this issue and the only option left was to contact the three Regional Youth secretaries in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch via fastpost mail. In no time faxes arrived from two of them and these should give you a fair idea as to how they are faring. There used to be a National umbrella organisation which was responsible for reports to Synod and organising nation-wide activities. It did not work and was disbanded by the regionals or dissolved itself due to apathy by the lower echelons.

In turn the Regional (Presbytery) Committees arrange the annual National Youth Camps which are, as a rule, well attended by many of the youth. The 1994 Convention, the 27th of such gatherings, will be held, the Lord willing, in Ararimu (a Maori word indicating that there used to be a path through a Rimu forest there). Ararimu is not far from Auckland, towards the Bombay Hills. Average attendance at such conventions are round the 100 figure, somewhat equal to your state camps, so I believe.

Some clubs are more active than others. On average they divide their interest two ways, Bible study meetings, attractive, and other coming-togethers very attractive. A core will always concentrate on good studies in God's Word and then see their numbers swell when other events are arranged such as outings, picnics, sport, etc. Once upon a time I was a youth elder, and for the life of me I could not get them to learn how to prepare a proper study outline as we were taught in our youth "back home." But let's be thankful for small mercies.

One youth group excels above the others. Approximately 25 of them meet together on a fortnightly basis on four

separate days of that week. On Mondays, they have sports practice as they compete in the local Christian Sports League (volleyball, soccer, netball and touch rugby). On Tuesdays they come together again for a singing and music practice before catechism. Saturday night is for social activities and on the Sunday they meet for their fortnightly Bible Study.

This church group is on the extreme right of activities, while a few are completely on the left doing their own thing in their own time. The majority are somewhere in the middle trying to keep a happy balance to satisfy the serious and the not so serious.

One thing is a pity. As soon as a youth clubber starts courting and gets married, he no longer sees him or herself as a youngster in need of a club to meet with the others. For most of them that seems the time to cross the demarcation line into adulthood. A real pity, as clubs need good leadership which is often lacking at the grass roots level. In my day long ago, one started at the junior level (Knapen vereniging) and when the voice broke (baard in de keel), you moved up to the seniors (jongelingen vereniging) and some went even further and ended in the Men's Society (mannen vereniging). Where I lived meetings were weekly; the first half of the meeting was a Bible study and the second half a topical one, both being introduced by one of the members. The programme of topics was prepared well in advance to give one ample time to prepare one's study. There was study material galore in big cabinets, provided by the church, of course we had our fun with members of the other sex who were meeting in the room next to ours and we arranged outings together.

Well, Martin, I have tried to present a glimpse of the New Zealand scene in general terms, so as not to tread on any young toes and at the same time allow myself a bit of reminiscing, after all that's a privilege of the "not so young".

2 The Dutch equivalent is "spruit" (mum and dad and their "offspring")

<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/>

There are 50 countries which are monitored by World Watch Monitor for being places where Christians around the world are under pressure for their faith.

We will bring you summaries from different countries each issue so that you may be focussed on praying for the needs of Christians' everywhere.

Mexico

Mexico's ongoing struggle against organised crime affects all Mexicans, but especially the most vulnerable groups in rural areas, including minority Christian denominations. Christians who actively engage in transforming society constitute a threat to drug cartels and other criminal groups. In indigenous-heavy regions, those who convert from indigenous traditional beliefs to non-traditional Protestant denominations face persecution. Members of the Catholic Renewal Movement have also been targeted.

Moldova

Moldova is Europe's poorest country, and the former Soviet republic is trying to determine where its future lies. The 2014 parliamentary elections exposed the country's division between embracing the European Union or the Moscow-centric Eurasian Economic Union. The new president, Igor Dodon of the Socialist Party, leans towards the latter. Since 2014 there have been three leadership changes in Moldova, which the International Monetary Fund says is characterised by "extensive and well orchestrated fraud in the banking system". Religious pressure comes not so much from the government itself as from the dominant Moldovan Orthodox Church, which enjoys a preferential position with the government. Minority Christian churches complain of verbal abuse, property destruction, and media discrimination. In one case, a local mayor paid a fine rather than obey a court order to grant a building permit to the Union of Pentecostal Churches.

Morocco

Officially Islamic, Morocco can also be culturally Western in areas such as Casablanca. Its young people are highly educated and underemployed. Freedom of speech and expression is generally respected in practice, as long as Islam, the monarchy and territorial integrity are not criticised. King Mohammed VI has ruled over some attempts at modernisation of Morocco's laws, which have created more space for women in commercial and civic life. The Islamist party, PJD, remains in power after winning the 2016 elections, and an increasingly visible Islamist influence is worrying to many of Morocco's Christians, who are a mix of converts from Islam, members of the small historical Catholic Church, and expatriates.

Myanmar

Majority-Buddhist Myanmar is made up of eight major and eight minor ethnic groups, each of which hoped for autonomy after Burmese independence 70 years ago, and some of the world's longest-running civil wars continue here. Operation World, a Christian missionary organisation, calls Myanmar "a deeply fractured nation on a political and especially ethnic level". The conflict zones along the country's borders are where most of Myanmar's Christians live, including the Kachin and Karen ethnic minorities, which have faced years of government oppression. Meanwhile, the rise in the number of Muslims has provoked the Patriotic Association of Myanmar, locally known as Ma Ba Tha and led by influential Buddhist monks. Ma Ba Tha is not merely anti-Muslim, it is Buddhist nationalist, so Christians are not beyond its focus. Myanmar was thrown into a crisis following a coup on 1 February 2021 which has left ethnic religious minorities even more vulnerable.

Nepal

There was a time when Nepal's communist government was the biggest threat to the country's Christian minority. Today the main source of pressure is the religious

nationalism of Nepal's Hindu majority. The country's new Constitution declares Nepal to be a secular state; at the same time, it also forbids anyone to change their religion, and bans proselytism. Nepal's Christian population, currently at 4 per cent, is one of the fastest-growing in the world, and that has prompted a backlash from nationalists, who themselves are taking encouragement from the nationalist urgings of the Hindu government in neighbouring India. In 2017 two parliamentarians warned that religious freedom in the country was "teetering on the edge".

Niger

Niger has an unusual story to tell: a military overthrow in 2010 that resulted in a new constitution and improving conditions for political and civil groups, and expanding press freedom. However, the government has responded to the Boko Haram insurgency in part with tightening restrictions on the press. The tiny fraction of the population that is Christian has not been subject to the level of violence afflicting other parts of Western Africa. Still, Niger feels Islamist pressures from Boko Haram in southern neighbour Nigeria, and from Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in western neighbour Mali. Arid and bereft of many natural resources, Niger relies on international aid for nearly two-thirds of its economy – conditions that the government fears could cause impoverished citizens to yield to militant Islamist influence. In January 2015, over 70 churches were ransacked and burned down by hundreds of Islamist demonstrators angered by a cartoon published by the French magazine Charlie Hebdo. In October 2016, American missionary Jeff Woodke was kidnapped from the northern town of Abalak. He and French journalist Olivier Dubois were released in March 2023.

Police arrest three pastors in India

Last Tuesday (15 August), police in India's Uttar Pradesh state accused 37 Christians of engaging in conversion activities.

Police then arrested five people, including three pastors.

Pastor Dinesh Kumar told UCA News, "The Christian community was holding a prayer service on the occasion of Independence Day in the Dalit colony of Rajupur when a police force came and arrested five people. We do not bother anyone in the area, and thus far the locals haven't objected. Our people are shocked by the sudden police raid."

Uttar Pradesh is one of many states in India with anti-conversion laws. The laws are often used to target Christians in the Hindu-majority country.
TheWorldview.com.

Court: Alabama's law can protect kids from transgender drugs and surgeries

Meanwhile, in the U.S., a federal appeals court ruled that Alabama can enforce a law to protect children from transgender drugs and surgeries, reports LifeSiteNews.com.

The ruling noted, "States have a compelling interest in protecting children from drugs, particularly those for which there is uncertainty regarding benefits, recent surges in use, and irreversible effects."

Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall said, "The Eleventh Circuit reinforced that the State has the authority to safeguard the physical and psychological wellbeing of minors, even if the United States Attorney General and radical interest groups disapprove. ... This is a significant victory for our country, for children, and for common sense."

TheWorldview.com.

34% of GenZers are agnostics, atheists, or religiously unaffiliated

And finally, the latest installment of the State of the Bible USA 2023 report looked at Generation Z, those born in 1997 or later.

The report found agnostics, atheists, or those who are religiously unaffiliated were the most common in Gen Z at 34%. Still, 58% of the generation identifies as Christian. Although, only 13% of Gen Zers identify as practicing Christians.

The report also found younger Gen Zers, those aged 18-21, were more likely to express high views of Scripture and interest in the Bible than older Gen Zers, those aged 22-26.

TheWorldview.com.

Eritrea, African officials have imprisoned 400 Christians

Christian persecution in Eritrea continues, with at least 400 Christians held under torturous conditions right now, none of whom have received a trial or even been charged with a crime.

Several pastors have spent 7,000 days in prison – that's over 19 years of their lives. One pastor remarked about the persecution to Todd Nettleton, writing for the Christian Post: "Nothing comes to us without the will of God. Through persecution – I don't know why, but the church grows."

International Christian Concern encourages both prayer and letter writing on behalf of our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ. Get your letter writing packet at www.persecution.org/letters/ 2 Corinthians 12:10 reads, "For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

TheWorldview.com.

Justice denied for imprisoned Chinese pastor

A Chinese house church pastor from Yunnan Province has been arrested, and nobody has been able to visit him since April – including his lawyer, reports *China Aid*.

Pastor Chang Hao was known for seeking justice for other persecuted Christians, and supporting churches facing persecution at the hands of the state. He was arrested for the trumped up charge of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble."

Pray for Pastor Hao.
TheWorldview.com

Kenyan terrorists burn down church and kill two people

Matthias Browning | August 25

Suspected al-Shabaab terrorists killed two people in Kenya on Tuesday (August 22) and burned down ten homes and a church. In a separate incident, the terrorists killed two motorists in an ambush on a local road.

At 2:00 a.m., an *International Christian Concern* (ICC) staffer received a distress call from the pastor of the Redeemed Gospel church in Salama village. The pastor said, "We are under attack from terrorists. They have set our church on fire, and they are going about torching other houses."

The Somali based al-Shabaab militants were targeting the church and nearby homes after two earlier attacks on June 25 and July 12. Residents have been camping in a school where they stay overnight and go to their farms in the morning.

After one of the incidents, the commanding officer of Lamu West said, "the attacks were well co-ordinated but the security apparatus was on top of things and repulsed the gunmen before they could claim more deaths."

A security officer said they chased the assailants into the vast Boni forest, which has been a key hiding place for the terrorist group that has claimed a dozen lives in the past two months.

In a separate attack, two motorists were killed when the al-Shabaab group ambushed vehicles traveling the Lamu Garsen road. A police officer told ICC, “The gunmen asked travelers to recite the Islamic shahada if they wanted to spare their lives. Two of the travelers declined, and that’s when they were shot dead.”

This is the second road attack after two people were killed on Aug. 1 at the same spot and in the same manner.

The Al Qaeda allied terrorist group has intensified attacks on Christians in Lamu for the last three months, forcing more than 300 families to leave their homes.

Meanwhile, in June, Kenyan pastor Paul Mackenzie ordered his followers to starve to death in order to meet Jesus.

The number of people starved to death has now surpassed 300 people.

Police went to MacKenzie’s property in April after investigators received a tip that dozens of people were starving to death after their pastor told them it was a way to meet Jesus. The emaciated followers were treated at a Malindi hospital before they were taken to the shelter.

The death toll increased to 303 after 19 more bodies were recovered from mass graves in the vast forested land in Kilifi County of coastal Kenya, where pastor Paul Mackenzie and his followers lived.

Coastal regional commissioner Rhoda Onyancha told local journalists that 613 people tied to the area are missing. mychristiandaily.com

Anniversary of the Gutenberg Bible

August 24, 2023. This day in history is commemorated as the anniversary of the Gutenberg Bible. It is named after Johannes Gutenberg, a German inventor and printer.

The earliest date appearing on a copy of the Gutenberg Bible is August 24, 1456.

This Bible represented the first complete work printed in Europe with moveable type. In God’s providence, this new technology of the printing press would allow the Protestant Reformers to spread the Bible and Biblical teaching far and wide.

German Reformer Martin Luther was

one of the first to leverage the power of the printing press followed by John Calvin and Heinrich Bullinger among others. Their works became bestsellers thanks to the printing press.

TheWorldview.com

Meta begins blocking news access for all Canadians following Trudeau gov’t Bill C-18

Clare Marie Merkowsky

(LifeSiteNews) — All Canadians will soon be blocked from viewing and sharing news on *Facebook* and *Instagram* thanks to the Trudeau government’s internet regulation law Bill C-18.

On August 1, Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, announced it has begun the process of permanently blocking all news for Canadians as the Trudeau government insists platforms pay to publish content under the newly passed Online News Act, also known as Bill C-18.

“In order to comply with the Online News Act, we have begun the process of ending news availability in Canada,” the company said in a statement. “These changes start today and will be implemented for all people accessing Facebook and Instagram in Canada over the course of the next few weeks.”

As of today, the censorship remains seemingly random as some Canadians still have access to news content while others are met with the message, “In response to Canadian government legislation news content can’t be viewed in Canada.”

While many Canadians lost access to *LifeSiteNews* posts on *Instagram* last week, that will become the new normal under the new law.

Under Meta’s new regulations, not only will Canadians be blocked from seeing Canadian news, but content from other countries will also be blocked.

“News publishers and broadcasters outside of Canada will continue to be able to post news links and content, however, that content will not be viewable by people in Canada,” Meta announced.

“People in Canada will no longer be able to view or share news content on *Facebook* and *Instagram*, including news articles and audio-visual content posted by

news outlets,” it continued.

This decision comes as the company refuses to pay the fees set out in Bill C-18, a law which seeks to force internet platforms to pay for Canadian news content shared on their sites.

Canada’s Senate passed the Online News Act in June and it quickly became law. The House of Commons had passed Bill C-18 in December 2022.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his Liberal government have been facing major backlash against Bill C-18 as Canadians become increasingly worried about their future ability to share information.

According to a recent survey by the *Angus Reid Institute*, the majority of Canadians are concerned about losing access to news due to heavy-handed measure.

Before the clashes with Big Tech, Bill C-18 was simply aiming to give the Canadian Radio-television and telecommunications Commission (CRTC) the power to determine which news content qualified for special privileges online, such as financial kick-backs from social media platforms where their content was shared. This engendered fear in many independent media outlets as it would have been under the sole discretion of unelected government bureaucrats to determine which news sources are to be considered “a qualified Canadian journalism organization” and which are not.

Now, however, Canadians are threatened with the possibility that they will lose access to news on popular platforms altogether, as the Trudeau government seems to be unwilling to correct course.

www.lifesitenews.com

Canon J John: How Christians should live by priorities

Canon J. John | August 2, 2023

We have arrived at the heart of the Ten Commandments – the one that underpins all the others; the great rule that we are to have no other gods but the one true and living God.

The God who gave these commandments is not a distant, aloof God. He is a God who, through Jesus, has come down alongside us, to show us who he is and make it as easy as he can for us to enter into relationship with him.

In dying on the cross, the totally

innocent Jesus became one of us and took our place. Through that awful death lies our forgiveness, our freedom and our future. We are redeemed.

None of us can keep the Ten Commandments. The only person who ever has is Jesus. It's because he was able to live a life that pleased God in every way that he was able to pay the price for our lives, which fall short in so many ways.

So what should characterise our relationship with God? As in any

relationship, it's about time, and I'd encourage you to carve out time, every day, just to be with him.

Here's what I try and do during my times with God:

Praise him. One of the best antidotes to this generation's biggest problem, our obsession with ourselves, is worshipping and thanking him for all he has done.

Read the Bible and discover what he's saying to me through it, stopping me

listening constantly either to my own words or the advice and opinions of the world around me.

Lay my life open to him, asking him to show me where I've lived in ways that have harmed our relationship, and asking for his forgiveness.

Bring my needs and concerns to him, helping me to give everything over to God.

These four – praise, reading the Bible, saying sorry, praying for ourselves and others – have been the main elements of time

Giving the miracle of sight in the world's poorest places

Taking the child in his arms, He said to them, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in My name, welcomes Me."– Jesus, in Mark 9:36-37

High up in the steep, perilous ravines that rise towards the highest mountains in Nepal, families live in extreme poverty. The poorest of the poor. People with disabilities there face the double disadvantage of poverty and disability.

This is where a courageous and determined 9-year-old girl called Sabina lives with her mother Devi and grandmother.

Within six months Sabina became almost completely blind because of cataracts. Her impoverished community, fearful of disabilities, shunned the little girl. Her school was unable to help her, so not wanting to give up, she tried to study at home.

"I can't see properly, I can't help my mother." Sabina grieves. "My exams are coming. I am worried I will miss them. I miss my school. I can't see my mother's face."

To help deliver vital support for people with disabilities, **cbm**-funded field workers trek the mountains, identifying adults and children with physical disabilities living in remote areas, and connecting them to

relevant services. These **cbm**-funded services provide vital life-changing corrective surgery, physiotherapy, and locally made assistive devices.

Sadly, cataract blindness affects many adults and children. And restoring a child's sight brings the added necessity of a general anaesthetic to keep them safely still and asleep during delicate eye surgery. Instead of \$35 for a 12-minute Miracle of Sight for an adult, \$230 is needed for a child's cataract surgery.

At the bustling paediatric ophthalmology department of the **cbm**-funded eye hospital – where up to 150 young patients are treated every day – Sabina was warmly welcomed.

This sight-saving hospital was established 40 years ago by Dr Albrecht Hennig from **cbm**, when he opened a 12-bed Eye Care Centre. From these humble beginnings, the **cbm**-funded Biratnagar Eye Hospital now carries out a thousand operations a day!

In her little purple surgical gown, Sabina waited anxiously with her mother Devi, for her turn. Up to ten children at a time receive the Miracle of Sight each day. One by one, **cbm**-funded Ophthalmologist Dr Pawan restores their sight.

The miracle of sight-saving cataract surgery is truly amazing! The eye is so complex, but in the way God has designed

spent with God by Christians for two thousand years.

So at the end of our series on the Ten Commandments, I want to conclude practically, by encouraging you to pray the following prayer. It's a radical prayer of commitment to God, giving him everything and trusting him with all we are and all we have, from this day on. It is not a prayer that can be prayed lightly or flippantly. It is a prayer that transforms our lives.

Holy God, I am no longer my own, but

yours. Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed by you or laid aside for you, exalted for you or brought low for you; let me be full, let me be empty; let me have all things, let me have nothing; I freely and heartily yield all things to your pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified

in heaven. Amen.

To pray this is only possible because we know that the God to whom we pray knows us and loves us. Therefore, we can trust his promises and give ourselves to obeying his commands, relying on his endless forgiveness, grace and strength.

J. John
Revd Canon

it, a simple piece of clear plastic can be slipped in... to provide a lifetime of sight. It truly is miraculous!

Through the generosity of **cbm** supporters, adults are able to better support themselves and their families, and children are able to run and play with their friends, go to school, and plan for a brighter future.

cbm, also known as Christian Blind Mission, is an international Christian development organisation, whose mission includes delivering life-changing medication, support and surgeries to people disadvantaged by poverty and disability.

cbm aspires to follow the teachings of Jesus in Luke 10:27 "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself."

cbm's main focus is to transform the lives of people with disabilities in the world's poorest places. It is also committed to supporting people with disabilities by working alongside New Zealand churches and organisations that are involved with – and give support to – people with disabilities.

In August, **cbm** supported the Auckland Church Network during their Disaster Response Training for Churches. **cbm's** Karen Jack spoke on "Disability Inclusion, equal access for everyone", drawing on disaster management experience in countries where **cbm** supports people with disabilities.

During the New Zealand Christian Leader's Congress in September, **cbm** collaborated with Elevate Christian Disability Trust to reflect on disability inclusion in the church.

cbm supports the vision that people with disabilities should be given the opportunity to use their gifts to serve the church and the

community. That is why **cbm** tells the stories of hope, when people with disabilities in poor communities are empowered to become valuable contributors in their communities.

Register for **cbm's** 4-week Bible study, reflecting on disability inclusion in the local church, or **cbm's** Advent series sharing stories of hope. Please email enquiries@cbmnz.org.nz or visit www.cbmnz.org.nz.



Dr Murray Sheard received his PhD in Ethics and Philosophy from the University of Auckland. He has worked in international development for over 15 years and is the Chief Executive Officer of **cbm** New Zealand.



Sabina is so happy, she is already thinking of her future.

Sabina cannot see.
Cataracts have
blinded her eyes.
Unable to go to
school, her future
has faded as badly
as her vision.



Please help give the Miracle of Sight to children, like Sabina, in the world's poorest places.

Sabina's mother, Devi, was shocked that her beloved 9-year-old daughter had blinding cataracts. Surely not a child!

But in Nepal, at the bustling paediatric ophthalmology department of the **cbm**-funded eye hospital – up to 150 young patients are treated every day.

Sadly, blindness from cataracts affects many children. Restoring a child's sight brings the added necessity of a general anaesthetic to keep them safely still and asleep during delicate eye surgery. Instead of \$35 for a 12-minute Miracle of Sight for an adult, \$230 is needed for a child's cataract surgery.

Devi, widowed 8 years ago, was devastated. "I'm a single woman. There's only me to support my family. I can't afford surgery."

This is often the challenging reality of people living in poverty with disabilities.

Please will you prayerfully consider sending a gift for sight-saving cataract surgery for children in the world's poorest places.

Please help children, like Sabina, so they can go to school, and have a far brighter future.

Give the Miracle of Sight to a child who is blind today. Every day you wait, a child like Sabina is forgetting how to see. Don't let a child lose their sight. Donate now to restore sight before it is lost forever.



Thank you for your caring heart and for being willing to help break the cycle of poverty and disability.

To help children like Sabina, scan the QR code using your mobile phone camera or go to www.cbmnz.org.nz/sabina

"Whoever welcomes one of these little children in My name, welcomes Me." – Mark 9:37

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