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What
is a

Woman?



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Editorial

What is a Woman?

If there was ever an answer that captured the ridicule of many in New Zealand and the rest of the world, it was this question.

During a press conference at Parliament earlier in the year, the Prime Minister, Chris Hipkins was asked the question by radio journalist Sean Plunket. In the initial couple of seconds, it appeared the PM was going to give the answer. Then, he paused and prevaricated – he spoke evasively and quite frankly, made a hash of it. I am not out to ridicule the then PM. The point is, that destructive philosophical doctrines have reached the highest echelons of the land, and that even those who hold the highest offices of this country are not free to express the truth in public. Of even more concern, is that these destructive teachings have permeated many levels of government, the public service, the media and the education system. Young people are being taught that human biology is false and that relativism is what is right – you can be anything you want to be! Truth is what you feel is right.

If you have ever watched the documentary “What is a Woman” by Mike Walsh of *The Daily Wire* fame, what is highlighted in the programme is the absolute absurdity of the philosophy behind the question. It indeed appears that *learned* people involved in the transgender industry make ludicrous assertions such as: men can have babies and breastfeed and that women can become men by taking prescribed medications and undergoing so called reassignment surgery. And, it doesn't stop there, it gets a whole lot worse! Behind all of this is a medical industry making billions of dollars by practising medical mutilations on young males and females who have been indoctrinated to believe something that is clearly fraudulent. Even parents in some cases can be charged with criminality when they try to intervene and save their children from serious physical and mental harm.

Let's get back to the topic. What is a woman? The latest definition that one can find online is adult human female. Perhaps a better question can be asked: Who were women created to be? We get a more complete answer to this than a three word definition. It is written in Genesis 1:27 she (woman) was created in the image of God. “God created man in His own image ... male and female...”. In Genesis 2:22-23, “The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. 23 The man said, “... She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

What is a Woman? She was created in God's image and to be the biological, complementary opposite to the Man and together to be the crown over all creation. That is a better explanation!

Our contributors who are women, write about *What is a Woman*, giving their positive commentary from different perspectives. May the Lord be well served through these articles. S.D.G.

Featured in this issue:

Mrs Sally Davey considers Christians and the sexual revolution.

Mrs Jenny Waldron investigates women of faith in body and soul ...

Mrs Bethany Haverland focuses on women in the workforce.

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.

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What is a Woman?

SALLY DAVEY

Christians and the Sexual Revolution – *Some Reflections*

Sometimes it seems as if the spirit of the age is pressing very hard against God's people, and that resistance is becoming more and more difficult. Christians can feel hemmed in; threatened. At such times, they are tempted to do God's work in the world's way. They become pragmatists looking around for any means to resist the winds of cultural change. Perhaps political parties will win the battles the church seems to be losing? Angry protests, name-calling, vitriol – won't they help weaken the enemy? We want our former cultural dominance back! Well, I guess it's obvious from the way I posed these questions that this is not the way I see it. The Scriptures and church history teach quite another lesson, and it's a particularly hopeful one.

It's no news that the last 60 years have seen a vast change in western morality. What used to be a social order reasonably in line with the Bible on marriage, family life, the relationship between the sexes, and so on, has been overturned. Known as the "sexual revolution", the process has, in stages, made our world an unrecognisable place. Men and women live together without being married and without shame. Divorce is available on

a no-fault basis, and unwanted pregnancies can be disposed of by abortion. Same-sex relationships became legal, then recognized as marriages. Confusion reigns; and no one even seems to know how to answer the question: What is a woman? We wonder how on earth people's thinking could have changed so radically, so quickly.

How are we to respond? The Bible and church history teach us that, above all, we should not despair. Christians have always faced challenges in this world – Jesus promised us that. And he did not leave us without the means to deal with them. The Bible tells us why these things have come about (Romans Chapter 1) and how we are to deal with them (Ephesians 6) – in spiritual armour; and with a gracious spirit (1 Peter 3:15-17), willing to take the inevitable suffering as the consequence of our resistance.

In addition to Scripture, God has given us teachers and role models, some who have gone before us, and others whom He raises up at the time they are needed. Some of them have helped me when I've had questions that I could not answer on my own. We can be sure God will continue to provide the biblical answers we

need as the sexual revolution continues its destructive work. We are not alone in this: back in the 19th century, Anglican Bishop J.C. Ryle confessed that he also felt in need of help. In his day, biblical authority was under attack. He did not have

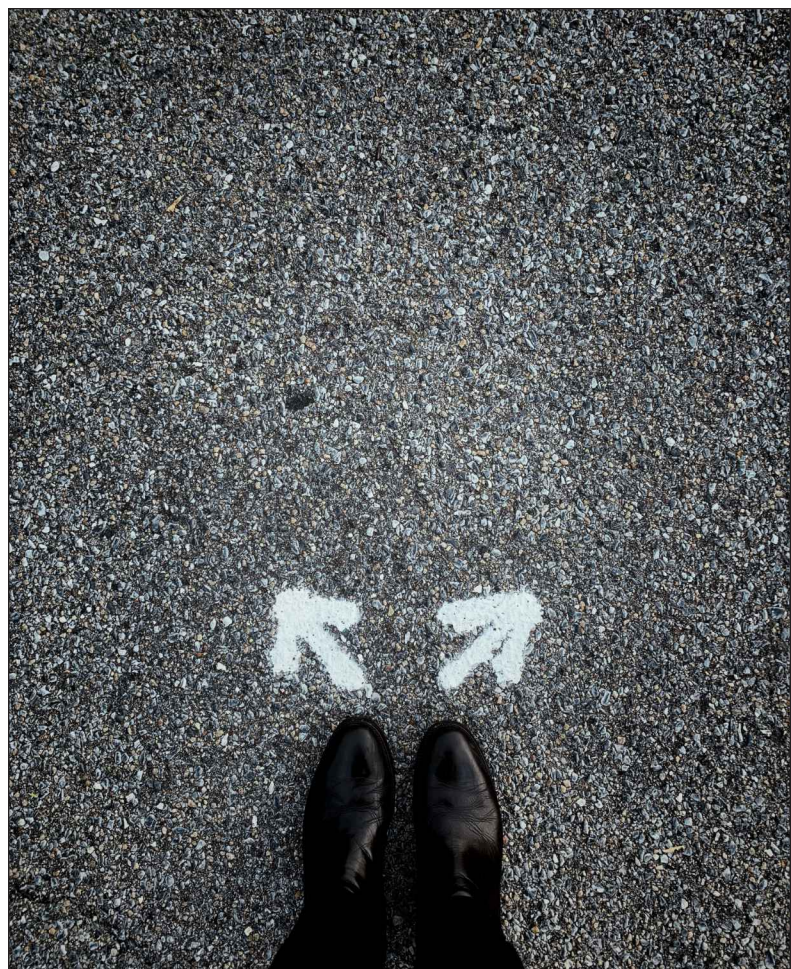


Photo by Jon Tyson on Unsplash

all the answers, but he was sure they would come. Here's what he said:

"Give me the plenary, verbal theory of biblical inspiration with all its difficulties, rather than the doubt. I accept the difficulties and humbly wait for their solution. But while I wait, I am standing on the rock."¹

Many will date the beginning of the sexual revolution in the 1960s, when women began to question male dominance in family and the workplace. These were the years I was at primary school, when TV shows were depicting life in typical American middle-class families as comfortable and happy. Dad went out to work each morning and mother stayed at home with the children. But by the end of the decade this view of a woman's role was being challenged. It came to be seen as a

her as stern), but she believed in femininity, too. She was educated and articulate. On her return to the United States in the 1960s she recognized that the feminist movement was a challenge to biblical teaching on womanhood, and began to write about it. She was convinced that feminism downplayed the important differences between men and women, and presented her thoughts in a series of letters to her daughter Valerie – later published as *Let Me Be a Woman*.²

As the sixties gave way to the 1970s, feminist objections to male leadership in the church had many liberal mainline denominations on the back foot. Not firmly convinced of biblical authority, they did not have a clear answer to the desire of women to take on leadership roles in the church (prompted in part by the increasing reluctance of men to commit to leadership themselves). I could see that this was a serious challenge for Christians, and took an interest in what thoughtful, well-informed, conservative Christians were saying. By the 1980s I was finding a lot of help in books that offered clear biblical answers. Among them was *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, by James Hurley.³ It was my first introduction to serious biblical exegesis of texts like Ephesians 5:21-33 (also 1 Corinthians 11 and 14) that were problematic for feminists. A decade later, Douglas Moo's exposition of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 did the same for me, and for others I shared it with.⁴ They gave me answers to questions I could not answer on my own, and the ability to engage in conversations with those who took issue with texts like these. I could see that the Bible had truth to deal with any challenge, if only we did our homework and dug deeply enough.

One of the most convincing defenders of the biblical case for me was still Elisabeth Elliott, because of her personal modelling of the feminine role – but also as an intelligent, educated woman who could argue her case well. For some years she taught a course at Gordon Conwell Seminary, entitled "Christian Expression in Speech, Writing and Behaviour". She was a stickler for manners, and conveyed her exacting standards to her students, both men and women. Kathy Keller (wife of Tim), who was herself, in her pre-Reformed days, intending to study for the pastoral ministry, remembered Elisabeth arguing that God does not prohibit women from teaching or exercising authority over men in the church because they are incapable or lack the gifts for it. Kathy recalled a class when Elisabeth walked up and down the aisles listing her



Elisabeth Elliott.

Image from a blog by Amy Medina,
www.alifeoverseas.com/dethroning-my-missionary-hero/

boring and unfulfilling existence. The term "suburban neurosis" described the sense of depression many women felt. It wasn't enough for their husbands to provide them with material comforts. They walked out the door each morning, to enjoy a stimulating work environment, leaving their wives at home to cope with small children. What kind of existence was that? As I listened to Christians interact with such criticism by the time I reached high school, I could tell that they saw it as a threat to marriage and family life.

Elisabeth Elliott was one of the first Christian women to react. She was a former missionary whose husband, Jim, had died a martyr's death in Ecuador in 1956. She was a gritty woman who had been brought up strong and self-disciplined (some saw

RIGHT NOW, WE ARE STILL IN THE FAIRLY EARLY STAGES OF THE NEXT CHALLENGE: THAT OF GENDER IDENTITY. THIS IS A VERY RADICAL DEVELOPMENT. IT IS FRIGHTENING.

qualifications to be ordained. “I am better versed in Hebrew and Greek than any of you, as well as multiple other languages. I have more communication skills than do any of you, male or female. I am comfortable speaking in front of large crowds and skillful in one-to-one conversations. I have a depth of understanding of God born of suffering that few of you will match. My giftedness is far beyond most of you. And yet God has not called me to use those gifts in an ordained capacity. Does that mean they are of less worth? I know that not to be true. Calling is different from giftedness or even desire.”⁵ Kathy later said that Elisabeth Elliot was the first person to help her understand that gender roles were a gift from God rather than an embarrassment or a handicap. Elisabeth carried on writing and speaking into her 70s. It is well worth reading her chapter in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem. Entitled “The Essence of Femininity: A Personal Perspective”, she laments the denial of femininity as “a reality of God’s design and God’s making.”⁶ She would have had much to say about gender identity claims today, were she still with us.

By the 1990s homosexuality had become the next stage in the sexual revolution. It differed from the feminist challenge in that it was about sexual orientation and behaviour rather than a revolt against male authority. Nevertheless, it was one more step in a long process of kicking over any form of personal restraint. Carl Trueman⁷ has traced this process back to the period of the French Revolution; and shows it has complicated philosophical roots.

In their responses, evangelical churches have made some mistakes; many Christians believing that expressing revulsion and open hostility to homosexual and lesbian people was their best way to take a stand against

this behaviour. This has led to a backlash against the church; and as social attitudes have become more accepting, and legislation has provided protection for homosexual activity and prohibition of discrimination against it, the church has found itself increasingly embattled. Christians have become more afraid and angrier in response.

Yet again, God has provided us with the help we need to deal with this challenge. There have been good books written identifying what the Bible actually teaches about homosexuality and how we should respond when asked about this subject. You probably have your own personal list – mine is headed by Kevin DeYoung’s *What Does the Bible Really Teach About Homosexuality?*⁸

One book – really, one personal story – stands out above the others. This is partly because her story is so dramatic and so costly to its author, and partly because she is a particularly literate and thoughtful writer. A former English professor and lesbian activist, Rosaria Butterfield was led to believe in the Lord Jesus despite her conviction that Christians hated people like her. Through what she describes as the “train wreck” of her life (she lost her job, her network of close friends, her niche in the academic community) she became a new person – eventually a Reformed Presbyterian pastor’s wife, a home-schooling mother and an advocate of neighbourhood evangelism through hospitality.

When I read her story (which I could not put down), the thing that really stood out was the role of Ken Smith, a Reformed Presbyterian pastor, and his wife Floy. While Ken seems to have done a great job of talking with Rosaria and patiently answering her questions and objections, it was this couple’s kindness and their hospitality which drew her in. Small things, like serving her a vegan meal on her very first visit, helped her trust them and their motives. They were everything she did not expect from Christians. This was a reminder to me: while we tend to think that sceptics, and particularly articulate people, demand academically

respectable answers on their own level, it is more often than not our personal character that captures their attention. And we should never underestimate the effect of hospitality.

Right now, we are still in the fairly early stages of the next challenge: that of gender identity. This is a very radical development. It is frightening. Not only do its proponents argue for an endless number of gender variants that people can choose from, they also claim that anyone, even young children, has the right to reassignment to a different gender should they identify themselves as such. One worries about the effects that surgical and chemical treatments may have on these children in later life, psychologically as well as physically. Christian leaders are still formulating responses, and this may be the challenge that begins to put some of us in prison. But one thing is sure: the issue is not beyond the scope of God’s Word; and God Himself will provide us with the wisdom and the grace we need to meet it. While we wait, let’s stand on the rock together.

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- 1 <https://gracequotes.org/author-quote/j-c-ryle/page/2/> I have not been able to locate the publication this quote came from, but you can find a more extensive expression of Ryle’s views in his tract, “Inspiration” (available online).
- 2 Elisabeth Elliot, *Let Me Be a Woman* (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1979).
- 3 James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Academie Books, Grand Rapids, 1981).
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- 5 Quoted in Collin Hansen, *Timothy Keller* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 2023), p. 77.
- 6 Piper and Grudem, eds, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, p. 394
- 7 Carl Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self* (Crossway, Wheaton, 2020)
- 8 Kevin DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Teach About Homosexuality?* (Crossway, Wheaton, 2015)

Sally and her husband Paul farm near Rakaia, where they attend St Paul’s Church. She is also part of the Friday ladies’ Bible study group at the Reformed Church of Dovedale.

JENNY WALDRON

Women of faith in body and soul ...

A question I am often asked is “What is the role of women in the church?” This is a big topic often filled with agendas, emotions, and “should-be’s”, across a spectrum of ideals, truths and misinterpretations. However, before we look at this question, let us take a step back and ask “what is the role of a Christian woman?” I believe that whatever a Christian woman does or does not do within a church must begin from within herself. As

women, and Christians in general, it is our character, maturity and attitudes that will enable us to fulfil the calling God has for us with the aid of the Holy Spirit.

Let us first look within: “I am not my own, but belong body and soul, in life and death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ... and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for Him”. These words can become so familiar that they lose the potency of their meaning. We can happily read or recite these words on a regular basis, without giving much thought to the intent and purpose of them. If we can truly say these words of sound doctrine from our hearts then we will be willing and able to put aside our own plans, ideas, thoughts and serve our Saviour Jesus Christ.

As we find our identity as a child of God, we look to God to be our provider and refuge. We also become less concerned with our own agenda and more trusting that we are where we are because this is God’s will, for us, right now! This is not to deny that some Christian women (and men) live incredibly difficult lives. The comfort is, that when we look to God and trust in Him, He promises to be there with us, He will never leave us and He is our refuge and the Rock of our Salvation. God gave us brains, our characters and personalities and when we become Christians, we are called to live for him, to turn our hearts and lives over to him. God has created each one of us uniquely and beautifully to reflect His glory. Whether we laugh whole-heartedly or smile softly, prefer to wear bright

colours or natural colours, or if we are good at music, or numbers, or hugging, or baking, God has fearfully and wonderfully made us.

My challenge for the adult women reading this: Are we living as godly women in all areas of our lives for the glory of God? Are we using all that God has blessed us with for His glory? Are we willing to learn, change and grow for His sake?

Serving in the Church: God calls us to a life of service; to Him and to others. How can we serve others, whether it be our husbands, our children, our extended families, our church family, or others in the community? Are we wholeheartedly willing and ready to live for [Christ] and to serve Him in His church? The church is the local community of believers that God has placed us in. The New Testament has numerous verses that describe the church as a body, working together with Christ as the head. There are many, many parts of this body and we can all do “our bit” to keep it functioning well. It is in this context too that we put into practice serving and loving others as we “one another” others in the church.

Seasons: Before we talk about how we may serve in the church we all have seasons in our lives where we are more, or less, involved in various areas of service in the church and community. We may well be very gifted in a particular area but it might not be the season to do it. When I had small children I mentored and disciplined as I was able, contributed to various Bible studies and ministries and showed (a lot of) hospitality. I also worked to provide



Image by cottonbro studio on Pexels

my husband with the support and encouragement he needed. We need to look at “what is my primary calling in this season of my life, and how else can I serve God?” We must also take care of ourselves and put on our own “oxygen mask” so that we have the energy to serve others.

Gifts: God has given each and every one of us gifts to help build up the church. We are to use these giftings wisely for the glory of God. Some women are able to serve as teachers, work the sound and data system, care for babies in the creche, do the flowers, play an instrument, organise events, sit beside a person in hospital, help a young mum with her washing, cook for a camp, speak in front of large crowds, organise and run the library, mow the church lawns, cook meals, clean the toilets, fix the sound system, and on and on it goes. There are many, many ways that God gives us gifts and talents in different areas that we can serve Him.

Although we each have our own giftings, there are some ways of serving others in the church that are common to all Christian women regardless of age, status, or time in life.

Be an encourager: Whether you are single or married, we can encourage others in their faith and walk in the Lord and in whatever their roles are at this season of life. There seems to be a myth going around that if we encourage others they will become proud. However, we are called to encourage one another and build one another up. (1 Thess 5:11 ESV). A special word to wives of office bearers or prospective office bearers: Be encouraging. Encourage your husband in his Christian walk. Be a helper to him as he serves the church in this special way. A man who is loved and encouraged by his wife will flourish in all that God has called him to do.

Hospitality: Romans 12:13 tells us to seek to show hospitality. This is something that everyone can practice in their homes and in church. Biblical hospitality isn't about entertainment but it is serving one another, getting to know another on a deeper level, showing love to others. Tim Challies says “An open home is a sign of an open heart and a loving, sacrificial, serving spirit. A lack of hospitality is a sure sign of selfish, lifeless, loveless Christianity.” Hospitality is a tangible, outward display of godly character.” Hospitality requires sacrifice, preparation, and sometimes rejection, but on the flip side, new relationships are made and deepened and this strengthens the bonds within the church family. It may also be a means that your neighbour comes to

know the Lord, or a long-lasting friendship is begun.

Older women: Who are the “older women” of Titus 2? It's not just the 60+ year olds. There are many ways that women of all ages are the “older woman”: whether it is a young woman able to mentor young girls, a middle-aged woman helping a young mum or an elderly woman grand-parenting younger women. There are opportunities for all ages of women to participate in the life of the church as an “older woman”.

Under this “Titus 2” umbrella, we can disciple and mentor younger women. Both are guiding and leading another; however, one is purposeful and directional whereas the other is suggestive and offering wisdom.

Discipleship is a purposeful way of teaching and guiding a person in their spiritual walk with Christ. It may be going through a book that covers a wide range of topics and issues, all with the aim of helping a person to grow and mature in their faith in Christ so that they too can make disciples. **Mentoring** is very similar; in that it can help a person in their growth and maturity. However, mentoring is focused on a particular area or issue of life. A mentor needs to be an excellent listener, and to offer wisdom without trying to “fix” any particular situation. We can never know all the ins and outs of any issue so we can direct a younger woman to Scripture, suggest what may have worked for us, pray for and with them, and help them to be a godly woman in all that they do and speak.

For example: A woman who is struggling in her marriage may approach an older, wiser woman to mentor her. The mentor will listen and suggest ways that may be helpful. Discipleship on the other hand may discuss marriage but it would be in a broad, general sense rather than a particular situation.

The Elephant in the room

Should/can women be preachers, elders or deacons? There is so much we read in books, hear on podcasts, and strive to gain within ourselves to “wanna be” in leadership. Feminism, women's rights, and questions like “What is a woman?” and women's autonomy are making us question what is the role of women in the church? Why shouldn't they be part of the ruling elders? Why shouldn't a woman preach if she is gifted in this way? There are women who are gifted speakers and researchers and yet are “denied” the opportunity to exercise these skills. Much has been written and said about the Role of Women in the Church from all points of view.

My challenge is this: what does the Bible, in the plainest reading of the Word, say about women in these roles of leadership? (1 Tim 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-5)

I am of the firm belief, based on Scripture, that God has bestowed the roles of preachers, elders and deacons to men for His good purposes. Likewise, God has given women huge roles within His church. Women are in a position, to teach, guide, encourage, love, care and nurture the future generations of babies, children, young people to come to know our Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ. We also have the role to disciple and mentor other women. We can encourage others and show hospitality among many other things we can do to build up the body of Christ (1 Cor 12). Married women have an influence on their husbands to encourage them to be godlier and to help them to serve in the church too.

Are you growing in faith and maturity in Christ? What season are you in? Are you able to serve Christ in the church in some way using your gifts? Are you actively looking for opportunities to show hospitality, encourage, disciple and/or mentor others? May God give you wisdom to find your role and ways to serve as a woman within the church.

Resources

Discipleship Vs. Mentorship: How They Differ & Are Similar

[DISCIPLESHIP](https://justdisciple.com/discipleship-mentorship/) / by JULIA OATES

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/hospitality>

<https://www.challies.com/articles/the-character-of-the-christian-hospitable/>

Mrs Jenny Waldron is a qualified counsellor, currently working for Drug Arm Christchurch. She is also on the executive committee of the New Zealand Christian Counsellors Association, and a member of the Christchurch Reformed Church (Cornwall Street).

What is a Woman?

BETHANY HAVERLAND

A Woman for all seasons

How can Christian women have a positive impact on those around them in the workplace? And how can we balance our work and our home lives, whether married and/or with children, or single?

It might be helpful to start by first looking at what work is. Is the work we do on earth our true purpose, our identity or calling?

We all know our primary purpose – we're taught this from a young age in the church and at home: to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

So that should be our ultimate purpose on earth as Christians, to glorify God through our work, and to enjoy the gifts he's given us now and in heaven.

Work is one of those gifts. In Genesis, we read that God created us to work before sin entered the world. "God said to them [Adam and Eve], 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth' ... And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen 1:28, 31).

It was part of his plan for us, to work and till the soil, to subdue every living thing. After sin entered the world, work became toil. We know this all too well, especially

in our culture today. But it's important to remember that despite being tainted by sin, our work is still a gift and it's still a means to glorify God.

God uses us all, men and women, to fulfil his purposes on earth. He has given us all many abilities, strengths and skills we can use in different ways to grow and to benefit others.

Women are an important part of God's plan and we read in the Bible that he gave women many talents and skills: we read of women working in business, in industry, in the home, for the church. Think of Deborah and Miriam the prophetesses (Judges 4:4, Exodus 15:20) Lydia, a seller of purple goods (Acts 16:11) and Priscilla the tentmaker (Acts 18:2-3). And of course, the Proverbs 31 woman, who most of us probably think of as the ultimate female role model in the Bible: she "works with willing hands ... she rises while it is still night and provides food for her household ... her lamp does not go out at night" (vs 13, 15, 18).

It's important that we neither look down

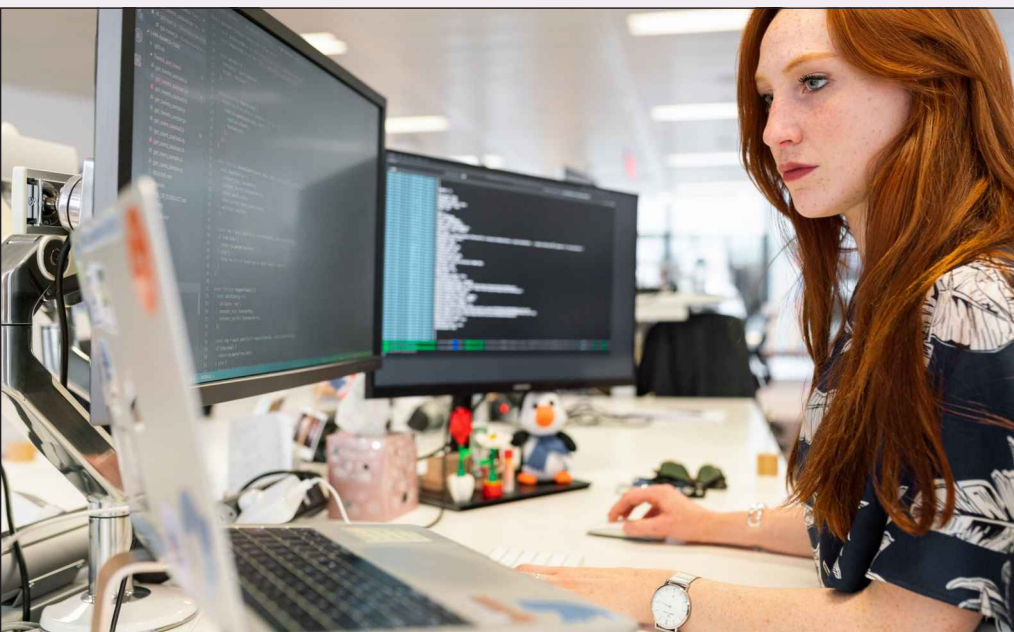


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on another woman's work, or envy another hers – none are “lesser” or “greater” callings than any other.

In his book *Every Good Endeavour*, the late Tim Keller writes, “No task is too small a vessel to hold the immense dignity of work given by God” (chapter 2 pg49) and that “all work has dignity because it reflects God's image in us, and also because the material creation we are called to care for is good ... all jobs – not merely so-called helping professions [my note: often female-dominated] are fundamentally ways of helping your neighbour” (pg51).

So, how can we use our work to bless others around us?

An opportunity to witness

Your workplace might be the home, it might be a daycare centre, it might be in retail, a hospital, a school, an accounting firm ... the list goes on.

Whatever your workplace looks like, you'll come into contact with many people from all walks of life that you might not have met otherwise.

It's a unique opportunity to show love, to nurture, to build others up and to grow connections that go beyond the workplace.

There's the opportunity to invite people over for dinner, to offer them help moving house, to offer childcare so they can go out for dinner, to show even small gestures like paying for their coffee, lending them a book or simply listening to them.

When you spend all day, every day with the same people, you get to learn their different cues, what annoys them, what they're going through. And if you don't know these things about your colleagues, maybe it's time to ask more questions and get to know them better.

I've found that offering to pray for someone never gets a bad reception. However far they might be from Christ, simply hearing that someone cares enough about them to offer up a prayer can really touch people, and may stay with them longer than you realise.

Christians will face questions in the workplace about their beliefs, whether about politics or how you plan to raise your kids, or even simply why you don't work on Sundays, and these are all great opportunities to share about your walk with the Lord.

Your work itself can be a witness. Being diligent and competent at what you do, being open to feedback – even if it's negative – being patient when teaching or training a new colleague, these are all things that your employer and your co-workers will

take note of. It's all part of making Christ and the way you live your life for Him, lovely to others as well.

But if you're a Christian woman in a secular workplace, you'll know there are a few pitfalls. It's easy to become consumed by your work and by things of this world. There's the risk of neglecting God's Word, neglecting your husband, your children, your relationships with your friends, coming home too exhausted for church activities or serving. There's the risk of getting wrapped up in your own achievements and goals.

So, what's the antidote to this?

Finding the balance

We all know that work-life balance is a struggle, and the Christian woman perhaps more than most, because she inevitably looks at her role as a parent and wife differently than the world does.

The idea of submitting to your husband, or prioritising time with your kids over work, or choosing to homeschool, can sound strange to your colleagues.

But ultimately it's a question of priorities. Your first priority and responsibility is to God, then your relationship with your husband, and your children if you have them. And for single women, your first priority is also your relationship with the Lord, then with your family, friends and church family. Then comes work.

There are a few practical things that I've found helpful for maintaining my spiritual life as a priority over work commitments. When I don't open my Bible at the beginning or end of my day, when I'm too exhausted to attend Bible Study or women's fellowship, when I don't take the time to pray alone or with my husband, I quickly notice the impact on my mindset.

I think most, if not all, Christians would admit that they struggle in this area. But we have God's Word within arm's reach. Most of us own many Bibles. So why would we not make the most of the hours we have outside of work to soak up all that we can from the One who made us for that very purpose?

It's also important to remember that you can't “do it all” in your own strength. If you work full-time, you need support. You need time to look after things at home and to rest, you need time with your children if you're a mother, you need time with your husband if you're a wife. As a household, communicate about how you will balance all these things in a way that honours the Lord. You need to be held up by prayer.

Sometimes even in the church we tend to unintentionally put women who work

outside the home and women who work caring for their children or teaching them at home in different boxes. We treat married and single women differently, as if they're in different clubs.

But your primary identity as a woman of God isn't that you're a mother, or that you're a nurse, or that you're a lawyer, that you're single, at university or in a relationship. It's that you're created by a loving God, that you're saved by grace, that you're called to do the work He has for you.

So take interest in each other's daily lives, build each other up as women, and support each other with prayer. That's why we have the church – God brings Christians of all different skills, backgrounds, and talents together to support each other as a community.

Fill your cup with solid Christian friendships and hobbies outside of work, even if your work is your passion. Those hobbies could be simply hospitality, coffee with friends, hosting game nights, exercise, or even rest. Truly resting from our work has never been so difficult, but the Bible emphasises the importance of both physical and mental rest. Like work itself, rest and relaxation is a gift.

Finally, be ready to embrace change in your life as God calls you. You don't have to be in the workplace to feel a sense of purpose or to be successful – that's how the world looks at work. God may call you to a different profession, he may call you out of the workforce completely, he may call you to be a stay-at-home mother or to care for ageing parents.

As Paul writes in Colossians, “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ” (Col 3:23-24 ESV).

And in Philippians, “I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Phil 4:11).

Bethany Haverland is a member of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Bucklands Beach and is a journalist at the NZ Herald.

A conversation with Rosaria Butterfield



This fall, Rosaria Butterfield, the former lesbian, professor, and activist who converted to Christianity and is now an RPCNA member, followed up her popular *the Gospel Comes with a Housekey with Five Lies of an anti-Christian Age* (crossway 2023). She reflects here on what's changed since her prior book, and why she picked up her pen again.

*This fall, Rosaria Butterfield, the former lesbian, professor, and activist who converted to Christianity and is now an RPCNA member, followed up her popular *The Gospel Comes with a Housekey with Five Lies of an Anti-Christian Age* (Crossway 2023). She reflects here on what's changed since her prior book, and why she picked up her pen again.*

New Horizons: How has the conversation surrounding LGBTQ+ issues changed since the publication of *The Gospel Comes with a Housekey*?

Rosaria Butterfield: In the course of watching the rollout from the *Obergefell* decision in 2015, it was very clear very quickly that it was not “just” about domestic partnerships with an official mandate. It was way more than that. The decision has something in it called the dignity harm clause, which is a particular

use of the Fourteenth Amendment. In that clause, it said that you are actually doing harm to an LGBTQ+ person if you do not affirm their identity. That was pretty shocking to me. When I was a lesbian, you would do me harm if you were a pizzeria and I come in for a pizza, and you said, “I’m sorry, we don’t sell pizzas to lesbians.” This was different.

Another rollout was that, in the public schools and government schools, LGBTQ+ education was no longer sex education, which you could actually exempt your kids from. It is a part of anti-bullying legislation, which everybody has to do. All of a sudden, my neighbors are sending their kids to me. “Hey, Mrs. Butterfield,” said thirteen-year-old Julie, “is it true that everyone in my seventh grade is bisexual?”

Similarly, I was at a speaking event in Charlotte, and there was a woman there

who was not a Christian. She raised her hand and said, “Dr. Butterfield, I’m the chair of the counseling center here; I’m not a Christian, I don’t want to hear the gospel, I want to know why one out of four girls who come into my clinic for anxiety and depression leave wanting to get a double mastectomy and a hysterectomy.” I had never heard of anything like that. That was before we talked about rapid onset gender dysphoria, but it was clear that there was something really satanic about this.

NH: You repent publicly for using transgender pronouns both in a viral Reformation 21 article and in your new book, Five Lies. Why?

RB: I came to realize that transgenderism doesn’t mean what it meant when I was in the LGBT community. I knew this person named Jill, and I never knew until I became a Christian that Jill’s name was Matthew. What we all [in the community] knew was that Jill had a very serious mental illness, that we were all participating in a fiction, and that the fiction was helpful in not escalating this mental illness.

First of all, that’s not the right thing to do, that’s not how to treat mental illness. But now that it has become, “let’s treat mental illness with a Pride parade and a sticker,” I guess the actual error of what I was thinking was brought into very clear light. Participating in a fiction is called lying.

I also realized something else – and it sounds really strange: I am actually a public figure. I don’t experience myself as a public figure! I experience myself as a mom and a grandma and a pastor’s wife and a neighbor. But I realized that with how confusing the situation is, I needed to say it as firmly as I possibly could. In the Ref21 article, I did what I should have done years ago: not only repent of it as a sin, but repent of it publicly as a sin, and explain exactly why it’s really a sin.

NH: Your story of Jill/Matthew was about your use of transgender pronouns to step inside a fiction that’s localized. Now that the fiction is so widespread, if we use transgender pronouns, we step into a sort of dystopian world.

RB: Yes. Stepping into the fiction doesn’t allow you to bring somebody out of the fiction. But now surgeries and horrific abuses of the body are pushed, whereas twenty-five years ago that just wasn’t a reality.

It’s not enough to course correct; the little lie is still a lie. This is not just about a mental health issue or the broken-ness of living downside of Genesis 3.No, Satan is

all over the transgender movement. It is a satanic movement. Christians go into a situation like that with a different sense of their responsibility to the people trapped in it. You go in as though to save someone as though in a fire (Jude 23).

You can’t really separate the gospel for too long from these LGBTQ+ issues, because these are issues that are in rebellion against the creation order. . . . Being made in the image of God, male and female, is at the heart of things. The seeds of the gospel are in the garden – you can’t just share the gospel with your transgender friend and leave the rebellion against the creation ordinance intact.

NH: Who was in your mind’s eye as you wrote this book?

RB: This book is written to Christian women, whose daughters and neighbors and sometimes mothers and aunts and friends have become indoctrinated by a false gospel, the cult of LGBTQ+, and are now waging a kind of war against the Christian faith. If that sounds kind of nuts, I can just tell you about some of the letters that come in to my website. These are real people!

I started to realize that many Christians feel that we’re living at ground zero of the tower of Babel. Yesterday we were all friends, today we’re bigots and haters. What changed, and how do we respond? How do we respond to the grandmother who writes to my website and says, “I need to talk to you because my daughter, who used to be a lesbian, has now decided that she is a transgender man and, in an effort to rid the world of toxic masculinity, is raising my three-year-old grandson as a girl?”

NH: So there’s been an acceleration.

RB: I loved the idea of a middle road, a third way, finding a neutral ground where we all can at least have a civil conversation. I do believe we can still have a civil conversation – I have them every day with my unbelieving neighbors. But there is no middle ground anymore. That’s because the *Obergefell* decision launched a war. Sometimes in war, borders close. It doesn’t mean you can’t get out, but it makes it harder to get out. We’re not talking about being a soft presence in a neutral world where a marketplace of ideas allows for a sharing of differences. We’re talking about being a soft presence in Sodom. It didn’t go very well for Lot, it went even more poorly for his family, and it probably won’t go very well for us.

NH: In that account, it’s interesting that it’s Lot’s family that suffers the most.

RB: Yes, think about this child [being raised as a girl]. I cannot even imagine the story that this child will have. But it’s not a good one.

NH: Why is it helpful to conceive of this ideology specifically as a false religion?

RB: You know it’s a religion when people make sacrifices for it and worship it.

Romans 1 gives us a great place to start with this conversation. Paul gives us three exchanges: the exchange of truth for lies; the exchange of a true religion for false religion; and the exchange of heterosexuality for homosexuality.

The death culture that you see in transgenderism – if you start a person on cross-sex hormones, or surgery, that person becomes a medical patient for life – means that there’s some really serious consequences. There are seriously damaged lives.

The question is, why were Christians so duped? And the answer might be, because people like me were using transgender pronouns. Maybe it was because people like me said, “OK, we can normalize this and hunker down in this necessary fiction.” But what critical theorists call necessary fiction, God calls lies.

NH: What about Christians who advise treating the transgender people one encounters, say, at the grocery store, with disgust?

RB: Christian hospitality has to include a place where the gospel has a hearing, which is why I like to do it in my home, because I own this home. The grocery store would be a little different, because I don’t own the grocery store. These public space encounters are really challenging. I do not believe we are called, ever, to a scornful derision of strangers at the local grocery store, nor would I want to teach my children that. When you see someone in drag at the grocery store, you see someone who is deceived and who is in a very dangerous place. I do not recommend acting in hostility. But when you’re there with your children or grandchildren, you need them to know, “That is in defiance of a holy God.”

Butterfield is an author, speaker, and member of First Reformed Presbyterian Church in Durham, North Carolina.

New Horizons, December 2023

Profile - Vicar Peter Yoo



In 1991, my parents emigrated from South Korea to Chicago, Illinois, where I was born on August 19, 1993. And by God's grace, my parents raised me and my sister in a Christian household. My father is a pastor and my mother is a nurse, both of whom (at the time of writing) hope to retire within the next year or so. My sister worked at a Christian private school for many years, both as a teacher and as an administrator, and has been happily married for just over 2 years.

I personally embraced the gospel and Christ's love for me when I was about 12 years old. I was reminded of my many sins and that I was so undeserving of eternal life. But by God's grace, I then remembered that my Lord Jesus Christ loved me and he died on the cross to save an unworthy sinner

like me by faith in him. Ever since then, it's been a deep desire of mine to read Scripture carefully and to devote myself to the Lord, his Word, and his people.

Regarding my church background, I wasn't raised in the Reformed tradition. I attended churches of various denominations which taught a variety of teachings. But it was the Holy Spirit who was reforming me by bringing me back to the Word. And the more I studied God's Word, the more I was convicted of the Reformed faith as a faithful summary of Scripture's teaching.

In terms of the call to ministry, I've had the love for God, his Word, and his people. So, growing up, I talked frequently with pastors and I continued to grow in my understanding of God and his Word. The elders of the church and my peers saw my

desire and asked me if I considered pastoral ministry. Over time, I began to prayerfully consider such a calling. During this time, I also continued to serve the Lord in a variety of ways, both in church and para-church ministries. And he has only caused my desire for pastoral ministry to grow.

Regarding my educational background, I began my studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago, hoping to graduate with a degree in Mathematics. But I later transferred to Moody Bible Institute, where I graduated in 2019 with a Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Studies with an interdisciplinary in Biblical Languages. And I recently graduated from Mid-America Reformed Seminary in 2022 with a Masters of Divinity.

How I came to the RCNZ all began when I was at Mid-America. In my second year of seminary, I met Jae Kim, who came from New Zealand to study at Mid-America. He and his wife Jinny introduced me to my now wife Jane, who was in New Zealand while I was still in the United States. So, we dated long distance for some time, and as we became more certain in our relationship, we began asking the question of who would move where. And by God's providence, Jane's pastor was Pastor Daniel Wilson, one of the Student Deputies. So, after communicating with him, I learned much more about the RCNZ, New Zealand in general, and many other topics. And soon after, the Lord has brought me here to New Zealand, with the prospect of serving in our churches in the RCNZ.

A few of my personal hobbies include music, both listening and playing (especially jazz). I enjoy watching good movies and TV shows, and I enjoy spending time with my lovely wife Jane. We've been happily married since April 2023, and we look forward to what the Lord has in store for us in the RCNZ!

Mr Peter Yoo is the Vicar at North Shore Reformed Church

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to some of the content of the November 2023 *F in F*.

Firstly, thank you for the articles for and against conditional forgiveness. They were a very good read and I appreciated being able to hear both sides of that position. Thank you for the forethought that produced such an excellent discussion.

However, when I reached the “World in Focus” section of the same volume, I was very disappointed by the content of virtually the whole section. Here are the articles with my concerns:

1. The Transformational power of contemporary praise music.

The topic of music in worship, as presented in the article, does not get even close to representing our denominational position on music. For example, to call contemporary worship music satanic is a terrible injustice and needlessly inflammatory.

Further, in the video link promoted in the article, the presenter criticises many godly Christians – such as RC Sproul, John Piper, Alastair Begg and others. He then goes on to warn viewers of the danger of Reformed Theology! (26:35 onwards) His quotes include: “Calvin, why should I possibly follow John Calvin? There is no evidence that he was a saved man”.

The Wayoflife.org website clearly demonstrates that they are dispensationalist, King James only, anti-reformed, radical Baptist conservatives. They are unqualified to guide us on what music we should use in worship and their radical voice does not belong in *F in F*.

Former Christian Clerk fined \$100,000 for not signing sodomite licenses.

The use of the word “sodomite” is inappropriate and inflammatory. Our words and terms matter. Using this term suggests a posture of superiority and is derogatory.

Whilst the Bible clearly teaches that Homosexuality is sin, it also teaches that we should hold to the gospel with gentleness and forbearance.

“But in your hearts revere Christ as

Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”
“1 Peter 3: 15-16 Emphasis added.

The term sodomite lacks both respect and gentleness. I would also question the inclusion of this news item?

2. Analysis: The Bureaucratic threat of a new pandemic Treaty.

This article does not intersect with the Christian faith at all – it is entirely political. Checking the C-fam website, they state:

“C-Fam was founded ... in order to monitor and affect the social policy debate at the United Nations and other international institutions.”

For our denominational magazine to promote political views – especially those which are Covid related- is

dangerous and not necessarily common ground. Political analysis completely devoid of intersection with our faith does not belong.

Taking these concerns together, I would encourage more discernment in including material from external sources. Some of these articles do not seem constructive – in fact counter reformed in one case.

The editorial disclaimer in the *F in F* inside front cover rightly states that the opinions are not the official position of the Reformed Churches. However, the *F in F* does provide a “shop front window” into our denomination and will associate us with its content.

Yours in Christ,
Martin Leenders
12 November 2023

Focus on faith

LETTERS OF JOHN NEWTON

He opened their minds

“He opened their minds – so they could understand the Scriptures.” Luke 24:45

When God opens the eyes of our understanding, we begin to see everything around us to be just as the Scripture has described them. Then, and not until then, we perceive, that what we read in the Bible concerning the horrid evil of sin, the vileness of our fallen nature, the darkness and ignorance of those who know not God, our own emptiness, and the impossibility of finding relief and comfort from creatures – is exactly true. And as we find our *disease* precisely described – so we perceive a suitability in the proposed *remedy*.

We need a SAVIOR, and He must be a mighty one. And though our needs and sins, our fears and enemies, are great and numerous – we are convinced that the character of Jesus is sufficient to answer them all.

We need a REST, a rest which the world cannot give. Inquire where we will among the *creatures*, experience brings in the same answer from all, *“It is not in me!”* This again confirms the Word of God, which has forewarned us that we shall meet nothing but disappointment in such worldly pursuits. But there is a spiritual rest spoken of, which we know to be the very thing we need, and all our remaining solicitude is how to attain it. *“Come to Me, all of you who are weary and heavy burdened – and I will give you rest!”* Matthew 11:28

Jesus' Doctrine of Sin

by Dale Van Dyke

Nearly fifty years ago, Karl Menninger published a book titled *Whatever Became of Sin?* He astutely pointed out that the biblical categories of man's fatal moral disease were disappearing from our cultural consciousness. If that was true then, how much more so is it true in our postmodern, post-Christian present? Radical relativism has eviscerated any idea of universal moral truth. Today the essential moral maxim is to be true to oneself. Whatever moral failures do exist are ascribed to purely external causes (social oppression, lack of education, economic disparity, etc.) and can be overcome by human (increasingly political) activism.

It is critical that Christians grasp the biblical truth. Next to a correct understanding of God Himself, the most necessary doctrine of the Christian faith is a correct comprehension of sin. Without it, the gospel cannot be understood. The "good news" will not be seen as inestimably glorious and desperately necessary. Even if the doctrines of grace are professed, without a grasp of the truth of sin those doctrines will not inspire joy inexpressible. The miracle of Spirit-wrought regeneration will not seem essential. Jesus will be wrongly portrayed as a health-and-wealth teacher, a life-coach therapist, or a social-justice activist rather than the glorious, bloody Redeemer of unrighteous rebels. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said of the doctrine of sin, "Most of our failures and troubles in the Church, as well as in the world, are due to the fact that we have not really understood this doctrine."

There are two key concepts in Jesus' doctrine of sin: its comprehensive nature and its corrupted source.

Sin's comprehensive nature

Jesus' words in Matthew 5:27–28 clearly caught His Jewish audience by surprise. The Pharisees obviously believed in the concept of sin but equated it (and righteousness) with external acts. In the

Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explodes their shallow conception of sin with a stunning remark: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

That's a live grenade dropped into the lap of any sense of self-righteousness. With one brief insight, Jesus destroys any confident assurance of innocence regarding the seventh commandment. The crime that deserves death by stoning. Hell-deserving violations of the sixth and seventh commandments happen far before murderous (Matt. 5:21–22) or adulterous actions. Angry words and lustful looks are also "liable to judgment." And it gets worse.

Sin's corrupted source

Notice how Jesus phrases it: "Everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart." We often interpret this verse as though Jesus were saying that lustful looks cause a person to commit adultery in his mind. But that's not what He says. The look doesn't cause the adultery; the adultery causes the look. In other words, by the time the lustful look happens, the adultery has "already [been] committed" in the heart. The lustful looking is the wicked fruit of a heart that is already immoral and adulterous.

The central, devastating truth is this: acts of sin spring not from external causes but from internal rot. As Jesus says in Matthew 15:19, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander."

Our problem is much, much worse than we imagine. Sin isn't simply what we do; it's what we are at the core of our natural being. Every wicked thought, word, and deed flows from a foul fountain of evil within us. We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners. It is our nature. Jesus' indictment is dreadfully simple: the sin we commit oozes and erupts from an already sinful heart.

In biblical terms, the "heart" includes not only our emotions and desires but our thinking and choosing as well. The heart stands for everything that makes up the internal motor that drives what we do and

say. I recently heard someone describe the workings of the inner man like this: "What the heart desires, the will chooses, and the mind justifies." That's true – but biblically speaking, these are all actions of the heart. The affections of the heart direct the choices of the heart, and the mind of the heart fabricates "reasons." And all of it is bent and warped by sin.

ACTS OF SIN SPRING FROM INTERNAL ROT.

Dr. A. Craig Troxel helpfully talks about the brain as hardware and the heart as software. The hardware is clearly engaged in our speaking and doing (though it doesn't always appear to be). But it's all driven by the software, by the heart. And that is where the problem lies. Every naturally conceived man and woman in human history is infected with this guilt-inducing, death-bearing heart virus (Rom. 3:9–20). We can neither fully understand it (Jer. 17:9) nor fix it (Jer. 13:23). Both the sin within and every single vile word and act it spawns are "liable to the hell of fire" (Matt. 5:22).

The severity of the human sin problem is impossible to overstate. "If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" (Matt. 6:23). If the source of every external transgression is an inner irreparable evil condition, then how can we be saved? How shall we escape the wrath that is to come?

The beauty of a correct understanding of sin is that it destroys every hope of self-salvation. I simply can't fix or atone for the sin that dwells in me. My one and only hope is the atoning blood, imputed merit, and transforming power of Jesus.

Rev. Dale Van Dyke is pastor of Harvest Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Wyoming, Mich. First published in Tabletalk Magazine, an outreach of Ligonier, April 2022 | Vol.46 | No.4



CROSSROADS PRISON MINISTRIES NZ NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2023

All of us, including those in prison, often find ourselves interpreting events in our lives and in the world around us through our human eyes. But we can't seem to make any sense of these events because our focus is wrong. We need to look up to the Lord, the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth and trust in Him and in His plans and purposes. The Lord doesn't ask us to understand His ways. He asks us to trust Him.

We seek to guide those in prison through the study of God's Word to focus on Him, trusting in the truth of His Word. A student shares in his study: "I've only been studying the Bible for a couple of months and since I started I've found that it's helped me a lot. It's given me knowledge and it's slowly starting to make me become wiser in my decision making. It has helped me with my anger and distracted my mind from negative thoughts. It's kept me calm and positive in negative situations. The Bible has changed the way I think and the way I speak. Being in prison you are confronted with sticky situations almost every day but I've found that since I've been reading the Bible it's helped me deal with certain situations in a more positive manner. It's given me hope and continues to make my mind healthy. It's made me appreciate being alive. It makes me want to live my life righteously

and it made me appreciate everything a whole lot more." Doesn't this reflect the words of Romans 12:2a – 'Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.'

Another student writes after completing the Tier 1 studies: "It was a pleasure and a blessing to be able to learn about my Saviour through the Crossroads team. They were amazing in their comments through my Bible studies. Their professional knowledge and insight of God's Word has amazingly opened my own humble heart to knowing Jesus in such a way that I will never want to live any other way but for Him only. He adds 'Surely God is my Saviour and salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord, is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation.' Isaiah 12:2 (This student is now doing the Tier 2 Courses).

As at 30th June 2023 the prison population in NZ was 8513 – 476 of these were female prisoners. Those sentenced were 4722 while those in remand were 3791, which is close to 45% of the prison population waiting to go through the courts. Some responses from Chaplains at different prisons: "With our limited pastoral support and with our volunteers stopped from being able to visit the men your ministry continues to reach the men. I saw one of your students last week. He had forgotten which lesson he was on as he moved prisons but is now back with us. However his lesson has been misplaced. If this can be resent to him it would be much appreciated. Many blessings and thanks again for your ministry." Another Chaplain emailed: "Attached is an enrolment form from a man who seems keen to deepen his faith journey. The Crossroads material will give him some structure and engagement with God's Word. How long is he with us? Not sure but thanks for dealing with the realities we are given." At another prison a Chaplain responds: "Glad to see a few more names on the list. We have been able to start up groups again. I leave the Crossroads forms out on the table for the men."

At the end of our financial year on 31st March 2023 our income was \$45,387 and our expenses were \$20,447, reflecting a surplus of nearly \$25,000. Approximately \$10,000 of this has been spent buying stamps before they increased on 1st July from \$1.70 to \$2.00. Some of this surplus will also cover the 'new' costs of printing/copying of USA newsletters and parts of

the study material.

I am very grateful for the faithful support of so many people. Yet I acknowledge that this is the Lord's ministry and I give thanks to Him for His continued strength and guidance so that His Word will not return empty but will accomplish what He desires and achieve the purposes for which He sent it. I would like to thank all those who review the lessons and encourage the students in their faith. Thank you to the many people who support us financially with their very generous donations. Also thank you so much to all those who faithfully pray for the ministry of Crossroads. Together we work as a team to bring the Word of God to the men and women in prison. On behalf of our students I would like to share their thanks with you.

"Through your studies, kind words and helpful advice my life has changed for the better. Three years ago I was ready to give up. Now I have an amazing relationship with the Lord all thanks to you all."

"I look forward to these studies and going through the booklet. It gives me a bit more insight to the Bible stories (This is from the Tier 2 Course – Ten Men You Should Know). Having to answer questions is opening my eyes more while looking and reading the answers from the Bible. I pray for guidance always beforehand, and feel my prayers are answered. I thank you Crossroads for your help throughout these studies. I'm eternally grateful."

"I thank you for supporting me on this Course (Manga Messiah) I grateful for finding you. Since being in prison this has changed my life and showing me a better path and help me be the true me. I don't know how to thank you so much for supporting me. So thank you and your loving team."

"This lesson (Great Truths Course) has arrived during a part of my journey that I really needed. I'm thankful for the Lord's timing in this part of my Crossroads studies. It's come at a time where I am about to have a very massive change in my life where I need to forgive not just myself but also the others who have caused me hurt during my youth and as I continued to grow up. I have struggled with my demons of my past for so long and now have the help I need. I have for so long cried when told the good old NZ saying 'toughen up'. Thank you Lord for your timing it has caught me unaware and has made me think really hard about what it is in life I want. Praise be the Lord."

"This journey of coming to jail on

remand has allowed me to change and leave behind my sinful and proud ego and review what's important for me to move forward. I thank you all for the continued support and blessings. Thank you for all your kind words and marked course papers. I am thankful for Crossroads. I pray that all those at Crossroads and all of us learning/growing in faith to become one in body and spirit of Christ. I pray for Crossroads

to continue and support all who need the Saviour."

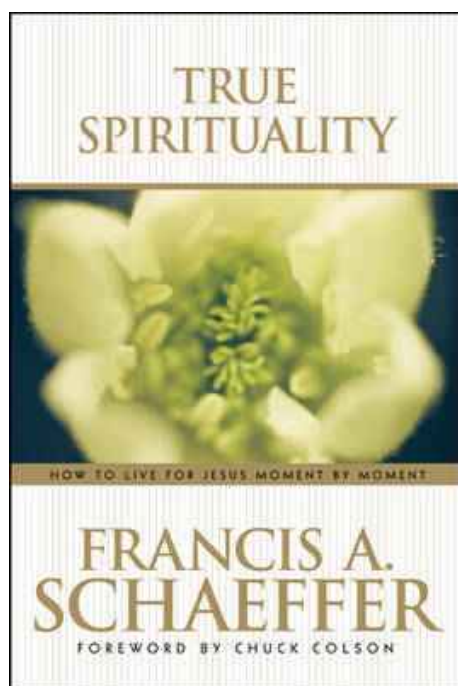
"I do receive study material from various locations but find myself eagerly awaiting the return from Crossroads. The study material together with the letters of encouragement give true credence to the Scripture of 1 Thessalonians 5:11 to comfort and edify each other. Yours always in faith."

Please continue to pray for the

Crossroads students to be strengthened and encouraged in their faith. Pray for more prisoners to come to know the Lord. Pray the Lord will continue to sustain the Chaplains in their calling that they may not grow weary and lose heart.

If you would like further information you can contact us at cbi.nz@xtra.co.nz or write to Crossroads Prison Ministries, PO Box 11005, HASTINGS 4156.

Books in focus



True Spirituality

by Francis Schaeffer

Reviewed by James Hyslop

While on holiday recently I reread the book *True Spirituality* by Francis Schaeffer and found it remarkably helpful and edifying. True spirituality is really a book-long reflection on what it means to live by faith in the gospel moment by moment.

Schaeffer's contention is that many of us begin our Christian lives by being given a short list of things to do and a long list of taboos that we are not supposed to do. The problem with this is that we then come to understand Christian living as a primarily outward thing to do with behavior. We effectively divorce Christian living from faith, the finished work of Christ upon the cross, and meaningful relationship with the Trinity.

Schaeffer rather contends that true biblical spirituality is about exercising faith in the finished work of Christ moment by moment in our lives. It is only as we live in this atmosphere of faith that Christ brings forth his fruit in us through the ministry of the Spirit. The Christian life is about not only intellectually accepting the gospel and trying to work hard on behaviour, but instead appropriating the gospel in everyday life. "To believe God, not just when I accept Christ as saviour, but every moment, one moment at a time: this is the Christian life, and this is true spirituality." (p89)

The first half of the book outlines what this organic life of faith with Christ looks like, while the second half relates it to various aspects of living in a fallen world: conscience, thought-life, psychological struggles, personal relationships, and church life.

I found the book particularly helpful because it addressed areas that we Reformed folk tend to be weak on. "I am not a bible-believing Christian in the fullest sense simply by believing the right doctrines, but as I live in practice in this supernatural world" (p63). "In the last instance it is never doctrine *alone* that is important. It is always doctrine *appropriated* that counts" (p70). The book is a challenge that without organic relationship with the Trinity and moment by moment faith, right doctrine runs the risk of becoming what he calls "sterile orthodoxy."

Schaeffer effectively shows that many of us got salvation right but then got Christian living wrong. We were saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, but then we try to live as Christians without any thought for the cross and the life that flows from it. The gospel is for moment by moment living, not just for 'getting saved.'

Now Schaeffer wrote this book around 50 years ago and was a bit of a philosopher in his own right, as all who have read any of his works will know. As such, some of it is hard going and you do have to work for the nuggets. However, I found the book incredibly helpful and well worth the time and effort.

"The 'how' of the Christian life is the power of the crucified and risen Lord, through the agency of the indwelling Holy Spirit, by faith *moment by moment*" (p79).

<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.

South Sudan

The world's newest country is also among the most fragile and troubled. The jubilation of independence in 2011 quickly soured when a personal feud between President Salva Kiir and Vice President Riek Machar took an ethnic line and pit the two dominant tribes in the country against each other. Machar accuses the president of being a dictator; Kiir accuses Riek of treason. The result has been gross violations of human rights, which some describe as ethnic cleansing. Worse, the conflict is merging with the civil war in Sudan, which has paved the way for the Islamist government of Omar al-Bashir to indiscriminately attack Christians in the border region.

Sri Lanka

Ostensibly a secular state, Sri Lanka's new Constitution emphasises that Buddhism is the state religion, while belief in Buddhist supremacy remains widespread. Buddhist monks, who are influential in the villages, are the main source of pressure on Christians. Church services and prayer meetings have been stopped and church buildings attacked by mobs. Church leaders are most vulnerable. Christians from Buddhist, Muslim or Hindu backgrounds are seen as traitors and subjected to physical and verbal assaults.

Sudan

Sharia (Islamic law) is the foundation of Sudan's legal system, and leaving Islam is punishable by death; Christians who talk about their faith can be accused of an

“act that encourages apostasy”. Christianity is seen as Western, making it a political target. Several Christians have been imprisoned in recent years, charged with “spying”. Sudan's President, Omar al-Bashir, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court for crimes including “genocide”, is believed to want to “rid” Sudan of Christianity. In 2016 the government announced plans to destroy 27 churches, claiming they were in violation of the designated purposes of the land they were built on.

Syria

In the midst of the civil war, churches and Christian-owned businesses have been targets of bombings by the Islamic State and other extremist groups, and there have been many reports of Christians being abducted, harmed and killed. Even so, many of Syria's remaining Christians are committed to staying and rebuilding their country. Others are now returning home following IS's military defeat.

Tajikistan

The Tajikistan government puts intense pressure on all “deviating” groups, which includes Christians. Increasingly restrictive legislation has been imposed in the past few years. A youth law, in particular, has left Christians in legal limbo, as it is not obvious what is allowed. Churches that are active in evangelism endure raids, threats, arrests and fines, especially if they have not registered with the government.

Tanzania

Religiously, Tanzania is split. Mainland Tanzania, historically, has been influenced by Christianity and socialism. The mainly Muslim population of the Zanzibar Archipelago wants recognition from the central government and a proposed Constitution is making provision for courts governed by Sharia (Islamic law). Violence against Christians at the hands of Islamic extremists has been reduced by the new government's weakening of the aggressive “Awakening” movement, but

Christians are still at risk, particularly in Zanzibar, but also in the coastal region of mainland Tanzania and Bukoba in the northwest.

The Gambia

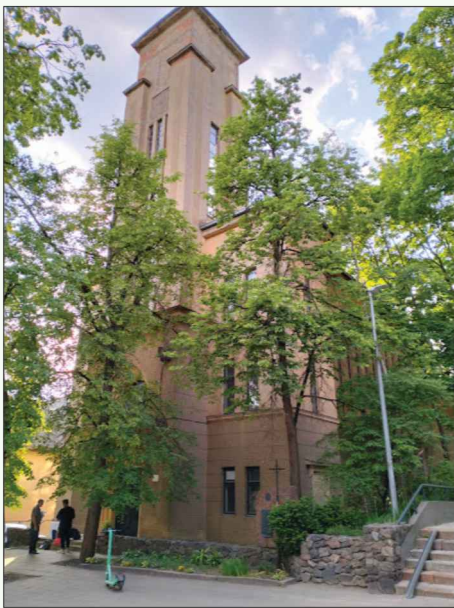
In 2015, then-President Yahya Jammeh declared the West African country an Islamic republic, on the grounds that Islam is the religion of most citizens. Since taking office in January 2017, The Gambia's new president, Adama Barrow, has pledged reforms, including removing laws which violate freedom of religion. The government is fighting the rise of radical Islamic groups, and many Christians live in fear and face societal discrimination. Christian families are rarely free to conduct their family life in a Christian way, and great pressure is put on those who convert to Christianity.

Tunisia

Two groups of Christians live under pressure in Tunisia: expatriate Christians and Christians who have converted from a Muslim background. It is the latter group that bears the brunt, often facing serious, or even violent, opposition from family members who discover their new faith. Society and culture remain anti-Christian, especially in rural areas. Expatriate Christians are relatively free to practise their faith, although public evangelism is not tolerated. Rising militant Islamism is also increasing pressure on Christians. The government is trying to move the country in a positive direction, including recent marriage-law reforms, but returning IS fighters and the influence of radical teaching makes progress difficult.

P. N. ARCHBALD

TWO APPROACHES TO REFORMING



There is a famous saying: “The Reformed church is always reforming.” In other words, no matter how faithful the church, it should always be seeking to conform to God’s Word even more.

There are, however, situations where a local church or denomination gives itself over to deformation. The “Letters to the Seven Churches” in the Book of Revelation warn of this. The two main ways in which deformation comes are: toleration of error and sin; and losing the first love. The consequences can be catastrophic: removing the church’s lampstand (the Holy Spirit); rejection and opposition from the Lord. The Belgic Confession describes the difference between the true church and the false church (Art. 29). The Westminster Confession of Faith, 25:5, also warns that churches may degenerate so as to become no churches of Christ.

Thankfully, there have been cases in history where churches that have degenerated experience reform – as in the 16th century Protestant Reformation. Reform may come in different ways: sometimes, a church that has been in decline is reclaimed; at other times, expulsion of the faithful leads to the formation of a new denomination.

From May to July this year, Jane and I had the opportunity to visit two very different European Reformed churches – one, demonstrating a turn-around after a period of decline; the other resulting from expulsion from an older denomination. The first of these was the Evangelical Reformed Church of Lithuania, where Rev. Frank van Dalen serves. The other was the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe.

The Evangelical Reformed Church of Lithuania

Lithuania is a small Baltic nation – smaller than New Zealand in both area and population. The population is decreasing, currently back to its 1960 level. It also has the highest suicide rate in Europe, which has been put down to lack of employment and a feeling that life is meaningless.

Like many European nations, Lithuania’s history is quite turbulent. Last to hold out against Christianity – until the 11th century – it came under Lutheran and Reformed influences in the 16th century. With support from some of the



(Top) Evangelical Reformed Church in Kaunas

(Left) Birzai Evangelical Reformed Church where the Synod was held.

nobles, most notably the Radvilas, the Reformed became the strongest of the Protestant churches – until the Jesuits spear-headed a counter-reformation. Reformed schools and churches were burned down, or ordered outside city precincts. In order to resist the Roman Catholic persecution, Reformed and Lutheran Churches began a level of co-operation that has left a lasting legacy. This is especially evident in the acceptance of the Sandomierz Confession and the Gdansk Agenda, which have served as the basis for a united front between the Lutheran and Reformed Churches in Poland and Lithuania. This accord was designed to produce a mutually acceptable liturgy; it also enabled free pulpit exchange and Table fellowship between Lutheran and Reformed.

Further weakening of the Reformed Churches took place over the ensuing centuries: war against Russia and Sweden; absorption into the Russian Empire from the 18th to the 20th century, with the accompanying pressure to convert to the Orthodox Church; World War 2; and the Soviet annexation between 1940 and 1989. Church leaders were lost due to arrest or flight. Many churches were shut down. Worship was discouraged and agents infiltrated churches so that they could report on their activities.

Since independence after 1989, the government has returned property to the Evangelical Reformed Church. They are also paying to restore damaged buildings, many of them of historic interest. However, only 0.5% of the population identify as Reformed, and many of those do not regularly attend a Reformed Church. Over 74% identify as Roman Catholic and 3-4% as Orthodox. Lutheran numbers are similar to Reformed, while other Protestant denominations have even lower numbers.

The Evangelical Reformed Church now has seven instituted churches, along with some smaller preaching posts and a mission congregation in Warsaw. Only 3 churches have weekly services. There are 4 ministers and 3 “catechists” (a step on the way to becoming a minister). These churches hold to the Heidelberg Catechism and the Second Helvetic Confession. Members are also expected to accept these Confessions.

Rev. van Dalen serves, with his wife Emily, in a missionary capacity in the Kaunas congregation. Kaunas is a city of around 300,000. It has a beautiful old town and an impressive castle originating in the 14th century. Br. Frank’s apart-

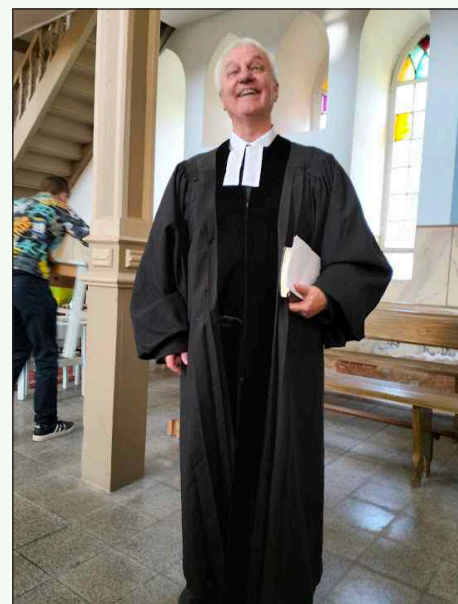
ments are situated on the cobbled streets of the old town.

Rev. van Dalen has been sent by the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, to assist the ERCL. In a way, he really serves two congregations, for the morning services are attended largely by Lithuanians, while the afternoon services attract English speakers. Many of the latter have learned there what it means to be Reformed. Our work there, while Br. Frank was back in the U.S., involved leading the services, Bible studies and hospitality. We also attended the 330th synod(!) of the ERCL and spent a lot of time with 2 North American interns, one from the URC and one from the ARP. We were interested to learn that Rev. Chris Kavanagh, from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales, also preaches in Kaunas occasionally.

There are many challenges facing the Evangelical Reformed Church – some of them due to a combination of their own distinctive customs, along with the long association with Lutherans. German Liberalism contributed to the acceptance of women in office, though the ERCL have now agreed to ordain no more women to the office of minister. They are still working through the role of women in the church. The polity of the church involves parish councils, on which women may serve and be delegated to synods. Church councils there do not have ruling elders and deacons as we do. Ministers wear clerical gowns and are called “kunigas,” which can be translated “priest” – though there are other translations, including “Reverend”. The churches there use this title and the garments for public and State recognition. Kunigai from the historic churches of Lithuania are even invited to some State functions.

Other challenges come from the small size of the congregation, in a population that does not seem especially receptive to the Gospel at this time; and the ability to train and retain ministers. Financial support by congregations for their ministers also often leaves a short-fall that necessitates that the wives need to work to help provide for the family.

In churches where the decline has been significant, reform will often be a slow process. Issues have to be prioritized. Much patience is needed. Rev. van Dalen appears to have a good sense of that, as well as the ability to proceed at a wise pace. As the Lord has been using his labours, and the work of the Lithuanian ministers as well, the church seems to be



(Top) Frank van Dalen at the Synod.

A student from MARS, Bryce, who was doing an Internship there, with some of the English congregation, mostly Uni. students.

moving in a reforming direction. For example, once it was realised that the Gdansk Agenda differed from the Confessions on the doctrine of the sacraments, work began to revise the forms of the church – using RCNZ Forms as a template. We can be very thankful for this movement towards a Confessional, Reformed church life and practice. It is something to encourage, by our prayers and whatever other assistance we have opportunity to render.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe

The other churches we visited were in Central and Eastern Europe – the

Rev. Imre and Kristine Szoke and their family from Miskolc (Archbald's on right), also their congregation (below)



Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe. We spent most of our time with two congregations, one in Miskolc, north-east of Budapest; the other in Almadi, on the shores of Lake Balatov, south-west of Budapest. In addition, we visited the pastors of RP churches in Romania and, in my case, also Ukraine.

Hungary is also smaller in area than NZ, though it has a larger population. Like Lithuania, it has had a turbulent history. Parts of the country were Christianized in the 4th century, though Hungary as a whole around 1,000 AD. The Mongols invaded in the 13th century. First Lutheranism, then Calvinism arrived in the 16th century – though Hus' ideas had come in before that. The Ottomans invaded in the 16th century, though Calvinism spread particularly in the areas they occupied. However, once the Hapsburgs had defeated the Turks, Roman Catholic counter-reformation reduced Protestants to second-class citizens.

Further weakening of the Reformed Church occurred in the two world wars. Hungary was also reduced in size after WWI, with much of its territory given to Romania and Ukraine. As elsewhere, communism and Liberalism did much damage. The result was a smaller and more liberal Reformed Church.

Today, Hungary is over 37% Roman Catholic, and 25% atheist/no religion. On paper, Reformed are 11.6%, though most of these are in the Liberal State-backed church. Despite that theological Liberalism, the nation is socially conservative.

The theological Liberalism was demonstrated after the end of communism, when a faithful Reformed seminary was established with the backing of a Presbyterian church from the U.S. They and their graduates began to oppose women in ecclesiastical office, as well as the Reformed Church's hierarchical polity and its involvement in the World Council of Churches. The church responded by denying credentials from graduates of that seminary. Left with no place in the larger Reformed Church, a new denomination was formed: the RPC of Central and Eastern Europe. RP Churches were established largely in Hungarian-speaking communities in Romania and Ukraine, as well as in Hungary itself. Initially there was also a Group in Slovakia, but they relocated. They now have 16 congregations and 4 church-plants, with 16 pastors, though the war in Ukraine may bring about the end of one of the churches in that region.

Total membership is around 500, though there are about 1,000 people regularly attending their services. Congregations are small, varying from 20-100 in size.

With the opportunity to make a “fresh start,” involving folk committed to the Reformed faith, a denomination has been established that is very similar to the RCNZ. These are Confessional churches – in their case, holding to the Heidelberg Catechism, the Second Helvetic Confession and the Westminster Standards. They are active in evangelism: for example, holding classes to teach English using the Bible; ministry to gypsy communities and helping Ukrainian refugees. They also have similar contacts – with the OPC, URC, and the Canadian Reformed. They have a sister-relationship with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales, in which Rev. Chris Kavanagh serves. They are fellow-members of the ICRC.

My work in Hungary involved leading services, Bible studies and teaching English using the Bible. Jane helped with the last task as well.

The RPCCEE also faces challenges: reaching out to an increasingly secular society – one that is not very positive about Reformed churches; and replacement of ministers. At times, there are material needs when large numbers of Ukrainian refugees are being supported. Finding a

suitable school for the education of their children is also sometimes challenging. We can pray for these churches. Where there is an influx of refugees, we can also consider financial assistance, as some of our churches have already done. There may at times be a place for assisting with the English lessons as well.

Conclusion

I have described two very different denominations, striving for reform in different ways: one in which there is a reform movement from within, as the denomination seeks to turn away from the degree of liberalism into which it had descended; the other that has been able to make a fresh start after expulsion from

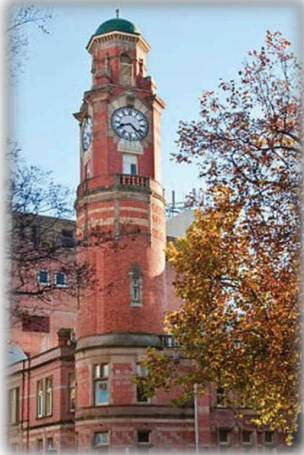
another denomination. One calls for wisdom in knowing which reforms to prioritise. The other faces lack of recognition because it is not a traditional church in that region. Both are small, surrounded by secularism and liberalism. Both need our prayers and whatever other assistance we can render. Not that we offer that help from any higher ground. We, too, need to be constantly reforming. We face similar challenges in our surroundings. We seek to help, where we can, as fellow-workers in God’s Kingdom.

Mr Paul N. Archbald is a member in the Silverstream Reformed Church and is an emeritus minister.

(Top) Rev. Gyula Bagoly and family in the church in Alamadi. Miskolc church buildings.



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