

faith in focus

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“Each tree is recognised by its own fruit.
People do not pick figs from thornbushes,
or grapes from briers.

The good man brings good things
out of the good stored up in his heart,
and the evil man brings evil things
out of the evil stored up in his heart.
For out of the overflow of his heart his
mouth speaks.”

Luke 6:44-45

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All correspondence regarding editorial content and advertising should be sent to:	
The Editor:	
Sjirk Bajema	
17 Phoenix Place, Papatoetoe,	
Manukau 2025.	
Ph/Fax: +64 9 277 9360	
Email: sjirk@xtra.co.nz	
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Editorial

As a minister I have conducted all kinds of services. Services where the church was packed. Services that were very joyful, and services that were very deeply mournful. Of these none can compare with the public worship services of the church. The Sunday by Sunday assembling of God's people is the greatest responsibility that has been entrusted to me.

The bigger one of the two Sunday services is invariably the morning service. That seems almost unnecessary to say. The most people are there, the service is longer, and afterwards there's the fellowship over refreshments. As the one leading you can see why this is the service which can make me quite nervous.

The P.M. service in comparison has less attendance – sometimes much less – and is shorter and straight afterward, it seems, the people have gone home.

But I want to put in a plug for the afternoon service – or evening service if that's the time you have it. Because there are some special things that come through in that service. Things that you won't readily notice with the morning service.

The first of these is seeing who is there. For some years now our family has taken the view that we should not look at who are not at the worship service but rather thank God for those who are there. And those who are there are usually the faithful, committed members. This is aside from those who for reasons of frailty or ill-health cannot come.

Those at the PM service are the ones you'll also meet at the Bible study and other activities of church life. They're there at the working bees and the AGM's. You can say that those who are there have a certain quality. To them the whole day is the Lord's day. They see that spiritually this is family.

When I was a child in Nelson, I used to count the number of those who were in church. The morning services were sometimes quite a challenge – especially during the summer holidays! But the evening service wasn't that hard. In fact, one night it was very easy – there were only seven of us, including the elder reading!

I remember at the time raising that with my Dad. To me then it was hardly any! He replied with words to the effect that, regardless of the number, it was still the Lord's church doing what He had told her to do. I think he reminded me of the words of the Lord that where two or three are gathered in His Name He is there with them. They are words that have encouraged many believers in similar situations. The Lord has continued to be with the Nelson church and so many others.

And in the afternoon service we usually hear preaching based on one of our confessional standards. So this service uniquely reminds us of God's sovereignty and what a great comfort and encouragement our reformed faith is. It especially puts you in your place. And that's exactly where you need to be when you go into a new week.

But let's also think of the witness this is in the community. The church is open twice on Sunday. Your neighbours see you turn again to worship with God's people. Besides, you get double the blessing!

And lastly, and definitely most least of all, I'm a lot less nervous!

*For where your treasure is,
there your heart will be also.*

Matthew 6:21

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

The Redemptive-Historical approach

Part II – Seeing Christ in the Scriptures

Paul Archbald

In the previous article, I argued for a 'textual' redemptive-historic approach to interpreting the Scripture. In other words, we take our cues from the text, see how it holds Christ forth in its unique way, and derive our application in a way that serves that focus upon Christ. In order to do that, however, we need to be able to recognise the way in which Christ is being presented in each text. I would suggest that one of the big reasons many struggle with this kind of approach is that while they know plenty about Jesus Christ, they haven't learned how to apply that knowledge to the analysis of a text.

For that reason, I want to outline some of the different ways in which Christ may be held forth in the Scriptures. This is such a rich area of Bible-knowledge. I cannot claim to have done more than scratch the surface. No doubt the reader can think of some aspects I have left out. But perhaps these 'scratches' may whet your appetite for the subject – the revelation of Christ in the Scriptures.

The Person of Jesus Christ

Firstly, as to His Person, Christ is revealed in the Scriptures as *both God and man*. In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus Christ often referred to Himself in the 'I AM' language familiar from the OT – such as in Jn. 14:6. In doing so, He was identifying Himself with God, 'Yahweh.' He referred to God as His father in a special sense. He also showed His divine power in His miracles. Accordingly, men worshipped Him (Mt. 2:11, 14:33, 28:9, Jn. 9:38). He was and is the Lord, the Son of God, the eternal, Second Person of the Trinity.

The Old Testament also indicates this about the Christ. In Is. 9:6 He is called 'Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.' These, and the other attributes of God, apply to Jesus Christ. They apply to all three Persons of the Trinity. Thus, when we read in the OT about Yahweh's might and majesty, His holiness and His righteousness, His love and wrath and justice, the Lord Jesus Christ is also being revealed to us.

We find something similar when we consider Christ as the Word and the Wisdom

of God. God's Word goes forth from His mouth. It therefore partakes of His character – holy, mighty, righteous, powerful, and so on. In the New Testament we find that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Word made flesh (Jn. 1:14), and the Wisdom of God incarnate (1 Cor. 1:24). The written Word is ultimately from Him, about Him and fulfilled in Him. It should be no surprise to us that He displays the same attributes as God, since He is the Word and Wisdom of God.

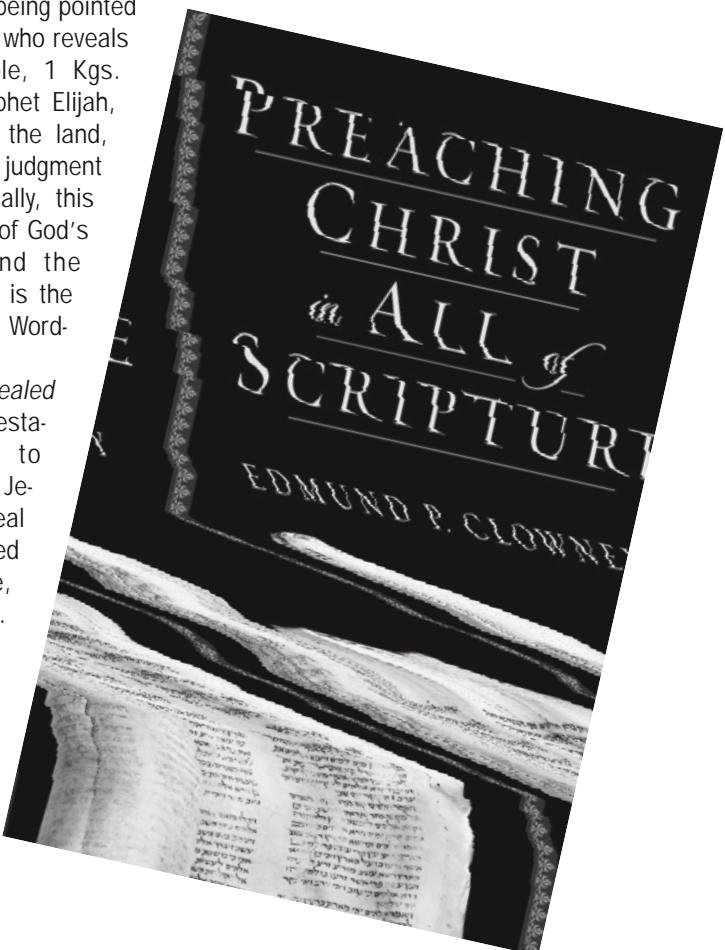
The connection between the written Word and the Word-made-flesh opens up another aspect of the revelation of Christ in the Bible. When we read Wisdom Literature, we are essentially reading about Christ, the Wisdom of God. In the Book of Proverbs, for example, Wisdom is portrayed as a woman who should be desired by a young man, sought, embraced and settled down with. This analogy is telling us to desire, seek, embrace and settle down with *Christ*.

Similarly, when we read of the words and works of the prophets, who tell forth God's Word, we are being pointed to the Great Prophet who reveals Himself. For example, 1 Kgs. 17f tells of the prophet Elijah, his withdrawal from the land, His return to bring judgment and rescue. Essentially, this is about the activity of God's Word in Israel. And the activity of the Word, is the activity of Christ, the Word-made-flesh.

Christ is also revealed as man. The New Testament takes pains to make it clear that Jesus Christ was a real man, Who experienced what we experience, yet without sin (Heb. 2:17-18, 4:15). The NT shows Him weary at times, it shows Him weeping, it shows Him being assailed by the devil and it shows Him suffering and dying. The com-

mon term, 'Son of Man,' also indicates His human nature.

The Old Testament points to this truth already in Gen. 3:15, the first statement of the Gospel. He is the 'Seed of the woman.' He is alluded to when we read of the covenant promise to Abraham and his 'seed' (Gal. 3:16). His human nature is evident in the sacrificial system, since it points to His suffering, which can only take place if he is truly man. It is evident in His descent from David – He is the 'Son of David' (Mt. 1:1). It is foreshadowed in the covenant God made with David and his seed (2 Sam. 7). The OT also prophesies the coming of the 'Son of Man' (Dan. 7:13-14), His birth (Is. 7:14, 9:6) and His suffering (Ps. 22; Is. 53). He is the perfect 'Israelite' and our Great Example, keeping the obligations of the covenant in every respect, fulfilling all righteousness for us, being 'perfected' (Heb. 5:9). He is the 'last Adam/second man' (1 Cor. 15:45f), tested in our place like Adam, only with complete success. All of these things have particular reference



to His human nature.

The Offices of Jesus Christ

The ‘three-fold’ office of Christ is a well-known doctrine in our circles. It is set forth in the Heidelberg Catechism, as an explanation of the title, ‘Christ,’ meaning ‘Anointed One’ or ‘Messiah’ (Lord’s Day 12). Christ has been anointed our great Prophet, Priest and King.

The Old Testament points to His Messianic office when it tells us about Adam’s original calling, especially his calling to rule the earth. It foreshadows His offices through Melchizedek and Moses, through the Judges, and through all the prophets, priests and kings who served God. Along with Moses, David is especially singled out as a ‘type’ of Christ. Solomon and Elijah also play a prominent role.

The Lord Jesus Christ is even foreshadowed in the failures of these office-bearers, for there we see the need of a better Prophet, Priest and King than the Old Testament could provide. The activities of false prophets, priests and kings show Christ by contrast. He is foreshadowed in the stipulations about the ideal King of Israel (Dt. 17) and prophesied in the promise of a Great Prophet (Dt. 18). When the superiority of Moses over the other prophets is set forth (Num. 12:6-8), we are being pointed to Christ’s greater superiority. Passages that talk about the nature of true prophecy (Dt. 18:19-22, Jer. 23:25f) tell us about the nature of His prophetic office. And when the people reject the ministry of true prophets, priests and kings, and are punished by God – as in Korah’s rebellion, or Absalom’s – we have a foretaste of the consequences of rejecting the Great Prophet, Priest and King.

The Work of Jesus Christ

Calvin once wrote that the Three Persons of the Trinity ‘do all things together.’ We are used to thinking of one Person or other of the Trinity coming to the fore in God’s dealings with His creatures: the Father predetermines, creates, and governs; the Son redeems; and the Spirit applies the work of Christ to the elect. While this emphasis is Biblical, let us not forget that Jesus Christ is also involved in election (Eph. 1:4), creation (Col. 1:16), ruling the world (Eph. 1:19-23)

and sending the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:16, 26; 16:7). When the Scripture speaks of the works of the Father and the Spirit, Christ is also in view.

However, He comes to the fore in the accomplishment of the work of redemption. This work entails His incarnation; His life of perfect obedience, both the active pursuing of righteousness and the enduring of the suffering we deserved because of our sin; His struggle against Satan; His Death and resurrection; the Ascension; His present heavenly Session and Intercession; His sending of Holy Spirit at Pentecost; and His final Return and Judgment.

The OT points to these works in various

ways – prophecies, types, laws, historical developments within Israel, and so on. Consider, for example, Is. 7:14 on the incarnation; David’s frequent rejection on His humiliation; Is. 53 or the ritual of the scapegoat (Lev. 16) – for that matter, the sacrificial system in general - on His death; Ps. 16:10 on the resurrection; the intercessions of Moses, Aaron and the high priests on Christ’s heavenly intercession; and Ps. 2 on Christ’s heavenly rule and final judgment.

The Christ of the Covenant

The covenant of grace, which God established with Abram and fitted to Israel under Moses, has been fulfilled by Christ in the New Covenant. He is the Mediator of that covenant, like Moses and the High Priests, only better – as the Epistle to the Hebrews reminds us. As Mediator, the Lord Jesus reconciles the two estranged parties – God and sinful man – and secures for the elect the fulness of covenant-blessing. He does this by taking the covenant curse upon Himself and also perfectly obeying God’s covenant-law in our place. Moreover, He makes known to us the truth about God and our relation to Him. He reveals the way of salvation and the life of grateful service that the covenant involves.

Thus, whenever we read in the OT about the covenant – its gracious promises, its conditions, its blessings upon obedience and curses upon covenant-breaking — we are reading about our Better Mediator.

Christ and the Church

Obviously, the Lord Jesus Christ has a very special relationship with the church. He is her Redeemer. In a sense, he is also her Creator (Eph. 5:25-27; and 2 Pet. 2:1, which uses language that suggests the ownership of a Creator rather than an atoning sacrifice). He is the church’s Great Prophet, Priest and King. He is the Great Shepherd of the flock, Head of the Body and Bridegroom of the Bride.

The Church is not only found in the New Testament. The nation Israel, from Exodus on, is the Church of the Old Testament. Prior to that, the Church is seen in patriarchal family-groups. As we read about her ups and downs, we are seeing Christ call her and build her and rescue her. In her failures, we

see her need of Him. The Lord Jesus is never far from view in the history of His body and flock and bride.

'Types' of Christ

'Types' are foreshadowings of New Testament fulfillment in the Old Testament. The light that was poured out with the coming of Christ reaches back into the Old Testament, leaving its mark there. There are many such 'types': Melchizedek (Gen. 14/Heb. 7); Moses as mediator; the Rock in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:4); the Bronze Serpent (Num. 21); the Tabernacle/Temple, with its structure, sacrificial system & priesthood; and David, to mention a few.

Typology should not be confused with allegory. Allegorising was a problem in the medieval church. Allegory involves the arbitrary invention of symbolic references in the text, according to man's imagination. Types, on the other hand, are indicated by cues within the text, or by later revelation from God. Types occur because God, the Lord of history, fulfills in history the spiritual realities to which the type looks forward. There is a danger that the exemplarist will allegorically invent references to the modern believer's faith-experience. There is also a danger that the proponent of the redemptive-historic approach will invent references to Christ. To avoid these dangers, it is important for the interpreter of Scripture to look carefully and prayerfully at both the immediate text and the rest of Scripture.

Prophecies of Christ

The Old Testament contains a mixture of predictive prophecy concerning the future,

and prophetic revelation of past events. Regarding the future, the Old Testament tends to view Christ's coming as one event, without separating the various components. This is sometimes called 'prophetic foreshortening.' Thus elements from the First and Second Coming are often 'mixed' together in Old Testament prophecy. Consider, for example, Gen. 3:15, 49:10, Is. 7:14, 9:6-7, 53:1-12, 65:17-25; 66:10-24; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezk. 36:22ff, Micah 5:1-5a, and Mal. 4. The Messianic Psalms – for example, Ps. 22 - also foretell the Christ, building on David's typological role.

The New Testament makes clear the distinct elements in Christ's coming. However, some major events were still future from the perspective of the New Testament authors. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit was still future from the point of view of the Gospels, as was the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Of course, the Second Coming and final judgment still lie in the future. The New Testament therefore also contains predictive prophecies concerning Christ's activities in the near and distant future – for example, Mt. 24, 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11, 2 Thess. 2, 1 Pet. 3, and the Book of Revelation.

We have considered some of the various ways in which the Lord Jesus Christ is revealed in the pages of the Bible – in the history, the Law and the promises, the covenants, the types and prophecies, the Wisdom Literature. He is revealed as God and man, as Word and Wisdom, as Prophet, Priest and King, Mediator, Substitutionary Sacrifice and as our great example. We have only scratched the surface. But even from this it should be clear how extensively

we find Him in the Scriptures. There is no part of the Bible where we cannot see Him revealed.

Nor should we want to see Him omitted. There is nothing better in this life than to see Christ in the Scriptures, and to hold Him forth for others to see there. Important as it is to call on men to live according to the covenant-obligations, as a rule of gratitude, there is something even more important – the Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we are forgiven when we fail to live this life as we should, and Who provides the motive and basis for godly living.

It is therefore vitally important that interpreters of the Bible – and especially preachers – examine each text before them with these questions in mind:

Is Christ revealed here as God or man?

Is He seen in His three-fold office?

Is some aspect of His redemptive work in view?

Is Christ being revealed through the setting forth of the covenant?

Are we being told about the nature or activities of the covenant community (Old Testament Israel or New Testament church) so that we can learn about the nature and activities of her Head and Bridegroom?

Is there some type or prophecy of Christ involved?

Once we have answered these questions, we will be in a position to apply the text properly to ourselves and others and – Lord willing – to have our hearts and minds fixed above all else on the Author and Perfecter of our faith. In fact, I hope to give some worked examples of this approach in a third and final article.

World in focus

Turkey jails four street evangelists

Police jailed four Christian street evangelists in Istanbul for 'missionary activity' this week, even as government officials openly defended the right of all religious groups to carry out evangelistic work in Turkey. Officials released U.S. citizen David Byle this evening, more than 48 hours after he was arrested along with a Korean and two Turkish Christians, his wife said.

Christian sources maintained that Turkey plans to deport the Korean believer, though further details remain unknown. The four men were detained Wednesday afternoon (April 25)

while sharing their faith with passers-by at a park in Istanbul's Taksim district. The arrests occurred in the midst of tense national debate over the legitimacy of Christian missionary activity, sparked by the gruesome killing of three Christian men in southeastern Turkey last week. 'Missionaries are more dangerous than terror organisations,' Niyazi Guney, Ministry of Justice director general of laws, reportedly commented only a day after the murders. [CD]

Hindu extremists in India target Christian State official
Hindu extremists in the southern state of

Andhra Pradesh have brought the incidence of Christian persecution to an unprecedented high, including a slander campaign against the state's chief minister, Dr Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, a Christian. Sam Paul, public affairs secretary of the All India Christian Council, said at least one anti-Christian incident occurs per day.

Paul believes that the rising number of attacks on Christians is linked to a campaign against Chief Minister Reddy by Hindu extremist groups. 'Hindu extremists are accusing the chief minister and the state government ruled by the Congress Party of having a 'Christian' agenda,' Paul told Compass. They are trying

to ensure that 'the chief minister is branded as a supporter of Christian missionaries trying to convert Hindus by the use of force and allurement.' [CD]

Pact spares Evangelicals in Chiapas, Mexico, from expulsion

Local political bosses in San Cristobal de Las Casas, Mexico, who had voted to expel 65 Christians from a small town near here, grudgingly signed an agreement yesterday to let the evangelicals stay. Evangelical attorney Esdras Alonso Gonzalez told Compass the town bosses (caciques) of Los Pozos and other 'traditionalist Catholics,' who practice a mixture of Tzotzil Maya ritual and Roman Catholicism, showed up armed with a plan for the Christians to pay for religious festivals, plus fines for past refusal to contribute.

The evangelicals' refusal to help pay for and participate in the festivals, which include drunken revelry and what they regard as idolatrous adoration of saints, was the original reason the town officials voted to expel them last December 23. 'The caciques' attitude was that they wanted the brothers to sign another document obligating them to contribute funds for past festivals and the fines they had supposedly accumulated,' Alonso said. 'But the state government did not allow it.' [CD]

Northern Nigerian Christians wary of new Muslim President
 Christians fear that persecution especially in predominantly Islamic northern Nigeria will increase following the election on Saturday of Muslim Umaru Musa Yar'Adua as president. As governor of Katsina state in northern Nigeria, Yar'Adua imposed sharia (Islamic law) and presided over a system of deliberate denial of land for building churches, as well as government agencies that arbitrarily closed some churches, Christian leaders told Compass. Major political parties in Nigeria nominated only Muslims from the north as part of an unwritten agreement among leaders that the presidency would alternate between north and south. The Rev. Bulus Polit, of the Evangelical Church of West Africa in Jos, told Compass that between the two Muslim presidential candidates, Yar'Adua's opponent was the more hard-line Muslim who would have presented greater problems to Christians in the country. [CD]

Christian lawyers in Vietnam could get harsh sentences

Following the March 29 sentencing of Father Nguyen Van Ly to eight years in prison for distributing 'material harmful to the state,' two Protestant lawyers charged with the same 'crime' are expected to face equally harsh sentences in what Human Rights Watch has

called the harshest crackdown in 20 years. Attorney Nguyen Van Dai, a 38-year-old member of the main Hanoi congregation of the legally-recognised Evangelical Church of Vietnam (North) since 2000, was arrested on March 2. According to Pastor Au Quang Vinh of the Hanoi church, a second lawyer, 27-year-old Le This Cong Nhan, was also arrested in early March. She had just completed a doctrine course for new believers at the same church in preparation for baptism. Authorities have prohibited Dai's wife, Khanh, from visiting him, and her home phone and cell phone services have been cut. A Christian source also said that police have been trying to incite neighbours against her. [CD]

+ *Compass Direct News, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana CA 92799-7250*

Religious discrimination in sports is out-of-bounds

On 11 June the North Oldham County School District in Buckner, Kentucky reversed a decision that discriminated against junior Kim Osborne because of her religion, after receiving a demand letter from Liberty Counsel.

Kim had attempted to get approval from Coach Brian Jones in January to miss practice, a full six months before a national church youth event. Coach Jones told the Kim that summer practice was absolutely mandatory but allowed two other players to miss a week of summer practice to attend the Governor's Scholars Programme.

After receiving the letter from Liberty Counsel, the school district agreed to allow Kim to attend the Christian event without losing her place on the volleyball team.

+ *Liberty Counsel, Suite 1100 - 1015 Fifteenth St NW - Washington, DC 20005*

Bible verses in Veggie Tales offensive, but not Madonna's mockery

NBC anti-Christian bigotry continues. This time NBC censored Bible verses and expressions of Christian love from the children's cartoon Veggie Tales being shown on Saturday mornings on NBC. NBC says comments such as 'God made you special and He loves you very much' were offensive and censored them from the show.

In response to the outrage over the allegations that NBC was ordering the removal of any references to God and the Bible from the animated series, the network at first issued a flat denial. As reported in Broadcasting & Cable, NBC said they had to 'clip off the beginning and ending tags, which are Bible verses, but they were also arguably the easiest cut to make.'

The creator of Veggie Tales, Phil Vischer, said NBC's excuse for censoring the Bible verses was not true. Vischer said, 'Well, that's kinda funny, because as the guy required to

do all the editing, I know that statement is false...The show wasn't too long, it was too Christian. The show was already cut down to the proper length, so timing had nothing to do with it.'

NBC then backpedaled: 'NBC is committed to the positive messages and universal values of Veggie Tales. Our goal is to reach as broad an audience as possible with these positive messages while being careful not to advocate any one religious point of view.' Evidently NBC considers not being truthful as one of their 'universal values.'

Vischer said had he known how much censorship NBC would exercise, he would not have signed on for the network deal.

Censored were comments such as: 'Calm down. The Bible says we should love our enemies.' And 'the Bible says Samson got his strength from God. And God can give us strength, too.'

NBC says using Bible verses or referring to God is offensive to some non-Christians. But NBC doesn't hesitate to offend Christians by showing Madonna mocking the crucifixion of Christ. Neither does it mind offending Christians in their new program Studio 60 with a segment called 'Crazy Christians.'

+ *American Family Association, PO Drawer 2440, Tupelo, MS 38803 (662)844-5036*

Religious discrimination in school employment condemned

The right of the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland to select teachers in denominational schools on the basis of their religion was criticised on 31 May by John Quigley, the outgoing president of the Educational Institute of Scotland.

Quigley described the powers as 'iniquitous' and said, 'How do you measure somebody's religious commitment and moral standing with a view to establishing whether a skilled and qualified teacher should be denied employment on these grounds alone? Yet we have a law which says you can make such judgments and on these grounds alone deny jobs to people in schools which they are funding through their own rates and taxes.'

Under the 1980 Education (Scotland) Act, the Roman Catholic Church has the right to veto teachers on grounds of faith. But there are concerns the law conflicts with the European Convention on Human Rights, which protects people from discrimination on religious grounds.

+ *National Secular Society, 25 Red Lion Square, London, England WC1R 4RL*

New CRC President favours Women's Ordination

In a signal they may be ready to approve historic changes from female ministers, delegates to the Christian Reformed Church Synod elected a president who favours full

clergy rights for women.

The Rev. Joel Boot of Jenison, Michigan, said he hopes this week's Synod removes all restrictions from female clergy.

Women are allowed to serve as ministers in some churches but not serve as delegates as Synod, the CRC ruling body.

'I hope and pray the occasion of our 150th anniversary will be the time we courageously step forward and say, 'It's time to settle it. Now we're going to move into the future together and concentrate on the mission of the church,' Boot said as the Synod opened on Saturday.

Boot said he favours allowing any church to hire a female pastor, as proposed by the 2006 Synod. But he opposes other stipulations that prohibit women from serving as delegates to Synod.

'I understand the desire to keep the peace,' said Boot, following the morning session at Calvin College. 'But I don't think we have the luxury of keeping the peace at the expense of other's rights.'

In electing Boot and the Rev. Cecil Van Niejenhuis of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, as vice president, delegates voted down a women's ordination opponent, the Rev. Joel Nederhood, former director of the Back to God Hour.

+ Grand Rapids, Mich. Religious News Service

Regime change in Iraq

Elizabeth Kendal, researcher for the World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission, says al Qaeda is purging the Baghdad and Basra areas of Christians.

On the weekend of 18 April Christians in one neighbourhood were given 24 hours to convert to Islam or die. Six Christian families fled but were not permitted to take any of their belongings. Others have been required to yield up their daughters.

A fatwa has been issued forbidding Christians to wear the cross or make any religious gesture. In al-Durah (Dora), the ancient Christian quarter of Baghdad, churches have been ordered to remove their crosses or be burned. St John the Baptist Chaldean Church and the Church of St George were resistant so militants climbed up and ripped off the crosses themselves.

The Church of St George was later burned anyway. According to Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty, 27 churches have been destroyed since 2003 and dozens of other churches and monasteries have been abandoned due to threats and terrorism.

Most of Iraq's displaced Christians — at least those who haven't fled to Lebanon, Syria, Sweden or the United States — are now in the Kurdish areas of northern Iraq. Some international Christian organisations have joined them there, rather than leave Iraq entirely. However, a major conflagration between Turkey, Kurdish separatists and Arab

factions may be imminent, and opportunistic Kurds require allegiance from Christians seeking refuge there.

Further, Islamic militants operate even in the northern cities. An Assyrian priest, Gas-san Isam Bidawed, and three deacons of his church were killed by gunmen on Sunday, 3 June in Mosul.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletins*, <www.ea.org.au/rpc>

+ *Assyrian International News Agency*, www.aina.org

+ *Assist News Service*, <www.assistnews.net>

Pittsburgh PC(USA) congregation departs to EPC

In a move emblematic of mainline Protestant divisions over sexuality, members of the largest church in the Pittsburgh Presbytery voted to leave the Presbyterian Church (USA) and join a smaller, more conservative denomination. There were 951 members of Memorial Park Presbyterian Church in McCandless Township who voted to be affiliated with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. Fifty-two percent of the 1,450-member congregation needed to approve the plan.

+ *Memorial Park Community Presbyterian Church*,
8800 Peebles Road Allison Park, PA 15101 (412) 364-9492

Gaza as a microcosm of the Middle East

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, of the Fatah party, dismantled the Hamas-Fatah coalition government on 14 June under a state of emergency. This came after five days of fighting in which Hamas, the popular Islamic paramilitary group, took over the Gaza strip.

Gaza, a small enclave — yet with 1.4 million people — of the Palestinian Authority lands around Israel, is located in part of the coastal territory of Old Testament Philistia. The Hamas victory in Gaza splits Palestinian territory into two, with the Islamic extremists controlling the coastal strip and Western-backed Fatah ruling the West Bank.

The takeover heightens the severe pressure Christians in Gaza were under already. Hanna Massad, pastor of Gaza Baptist Church, wrote last month of the deteriorating conditions for all of the residents in the Gaza Strip, and said no one was able to check on their church building because of the danger. 'Even the guard wasn't able to go. It's in God's hands,' he said.

The factions represent the forces at work across the Arab world, writ small in a confined space. Democratic elections tend to produce winners among the most radical Islamic groups — Hamas in Palestine, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and so on. More centrists groups such as Fatah in Palestine may be better able to govern, but have no way to bring stability when they lack a substantial popular majority.

In March 2007 Islamist Hamas entered into a government of national unity with Fatah and agreed to respect international agreements. Al Qaeda deputy leader Ayman al-Zawahiri responded by slamming Hamas, accusing it of falling 'into the swamp of surrender' by abandoning its ideology and selling out to Israel and the US.

Since then, Wahhabist jihadis linked to al Qaeda have dramatically escalated their effort in purging and Islamizing Gaza. They

Mathemat & s a d Sc & ce: Years 7-11.

Pr mary Teacher: Years 4-6 comb ?ed class.

have assassinated three Hamas leaders (no doubt the ones they viewed as treacherous moderates) and are targeting everything they deem 'un-Islamic.'

On the night of 15 April, Gaza's only Christian bookshop was bombed. On Saturday night, 21 April, the American International School was bombed. On Sunday, May 6, the UN-administered Omariya School in Rafah was attacked in broad daylight by some 70 white-robed Wahhabi militants, or Salafiyen. They tried to prevent the school's sports carnival, deeming it un-Islamic, and fought the security forces with machine guns and grenades, killing one and wounding six.

+ Tom Doyle, e3 Partners, <www.e3partners.org>

+ Elizabeth Kendal, Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletins, www.ea.org.au/rlc

+ Mission Network News, Cornerstone University, Grand Rapids, Michigan, (800) 284-9361; <mnn@mnonline.org>

Australian elders appeal to Assembly

Some 15 Presbyterian elders identified as the Fellowship have appealed excommunication to the General Assembly of Australia. The appeal will be held at a called meeting in Sydney, the first such meeting in the body's 106-year history.

The struggle has extended for more than a decade. Opponents say the movement began under the direction of Bruce Teele, a former stockbroker, in the Anglican Church. After decades of controversy, the group allegedly moved into three Presbyterian congregations.

The Victoria Assembly excommunicated Fellowship leaders for exercising presumed authority over the lives of members contrary to traditional practice at the expense of family relationships.

+ Presbyterian Church of Australia, 168 Chalmers St, Surry Hills, NSW, 2010 PO Box 2196, Strawberry Hills, NSW, Australia 2012 (02) 9690 9333

William David Silver, 1947-2007

William David Silver, whose 1975 application for ordination in the United Presbyterian Church — the first by an openly gay man — set off a continuing debate in the church over admitting homosexuals into the ministry, died on 26 May, according to *The New York Times*. He was 59 and lived in New York City. The cause of death was complications of AIDS, Dan Jennings, a friend, told the newspaper.

A grandson of Presbyterian missionaries in China, Silver hoped to follow them into the ministry when he entered Union Theological Seminary in Manhattan in 1969. It was in his final year there, in 1973, that he came to terms with his homosexuality, according to *The New York Times*. Two years later, when applying to the Presbytery of New York for ordination as an assistant pastor at Central Presbyterian Church on Park Avenue and

64th Street, he shocked committee members interviewing him by saying he was gay.

The local body then asked the church's national leadership for definitive guidance. The answer came in 1978, when the church's general assembly voted to prohibit ordination of 'unrepentant' homosexuals as ministers, elders or deacons, the newspaper reported. It cited the church's constitution, or Book of Order, which requires that its married officers remain faithful to their spouses and that its unmarried officers live chastely.

Silver was born in Pittsburgh in 1947 and grew up in Carnegie, PA. He received a bachelor's degree in fine arts from Ohio Wesleyan University and a master of divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary. Silver worked as a graphic and fine artist, as an organiser of art shows and street fairs, and as advertising research director at Architectural Digest, Bon Appétit and other magazines.

Silver remained involved in the church for a number of years after the general assembly vote. He left the church in the mid-1980s, disillusioned, he said, by its refusal to ordain gay ministers, *The New York Times* reported.

+ Presbyterian Church (USA), 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202 (888) 728-7228

Romania proposes French solution

The Roman Orthodox Church has condemned a court ruling that endorsed calls for a French-style ban on religious symbols in schools. 'It isn't the church who has placed crosses and icons in classrooms but children, parents and teachers,' said the Rev. Costas Stoica, spokesman for the Bucharest Patriarchate of the Romanian Orthodox Church, on 26 June. 'They aren't institutional emblems of any particular church. They symbolise universal religious and cultural values,' Stoica explained.

+ Ecumenical News International, PO Box 2100, CH - 1211 Geneva 2 Switzerland

Theologian sentenced for comparison between abortion and holocaust

A court in Erlangen near Nuremberg found Johannes Lerle, 55, guilty of 'incitement of the people' by denying the Holocaust. Lerle has launched an appeal against the verdict. The Lutheran theologian and anti-abortionist claims that the 'infanticide' in the womb is comparable to the Nazis' systematic mass murder of Jews in concentration camps, for instance Auschwitz.

Lerle has six previous convictions for slander because he labelled physicians, who perform abortions, as 'professional killers'. He has already spent eight months in jail.

The current case concerned a pamphlet published on the Internet. Lerle called the

murder of Jews by the Nazis as 'supposed injustice'. As a consequence, he was accused of disturbing the public peace by denying the Holocaust.

Lerle rejected the accusation on the grounds that he had only quoted the Federal Constitutional Court. The court had refused to accept Lerle's application for a verdict against the abortion practice in Germany. The court used the term 'supposed injustice' with regard to the killing of unborn children.

In judicial terms all abortions are illegal in Germany. But they will not be punished if they are performed within the first three months of pregnancy and if the mother has undergone a certified consultation. These abortions are often falsely referred to as legal. Approximately 120,000 non-punishable abortions are officially recorded in Germany each year. But Pro Life advocates estimate that up to 200,000 babies are killed in their mother's womb, if one takes the unregistered cases into account.

+ ASSIST News Service, PO Box 609, Lake Forest, CA 92609-0609

Iraqi Presbyterian Pastor seeks Michigan asylum

The tiny Presbyterian Church in Iraq recently lost one of its pastors to murder. Now another is seeking asylum. Jonah Salim, 31, has been in America since November working in various churches as an intern. A product of Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo, Egypt, Salim came to the attention of hostile Moslems when he led a Moslem inmate to Christ while serving as a prison chaplain. The civil authorities then revoked Salim's student visa and forced him out of Egypt.

While preparing to return to Iraq, news arrived of the murder of the pastor at his home church and warnings from relatives not to return. The US Embassy in Cairo suggested a religious-worker visa.

+ First Presbyterian Church, 200 W. Mansion St., Marshall, MI 49068 (269) 781-5161

Work on our new Psalter Hymnal

The hymnal committee is looking for an additional transcriber to work in with our main transcriber in getting all the hymns entered into the computer ready for publication. You must be musically literate, able to use a computer and able to learn other computer tools such as the Sibelius music notation software. You must also be prepared to work in detail and with accuracy. This will be voluntary work of 5-10 hours per week and is for the long-term benefit of the Lord's people. Please email ber...@hymnal.ws if you are interested, or if you know someone else who might be able to contribute.

A feminine focus

William Cowper *God moves in a mysterious way*

Sally Davey

Are you one of those sensitive Christians who struggle with mental instability? Do you experience prolonged periods of melancholy? Maybe you find it difficult to stir your heart to respond to biblical truths that encourage other souls. Perhaps you sometimes doubt that you could ever have belonged to Christ. Possibly you share these kinds of trials with others in your family. Some families do seem to experience a rather pronounced pattern of these difficulties.

Sometimes Christians whose lives are greatly affected by these struggles begin to wonder whether they can ever be useful to Christ. After all, the fact that they might be out of work, not earning an income, may cause huge discouragement. They feel as if they are a great burden on others. Likewise, their doubts and fears seem to quench their joy, and they are convinced their lives are a shameful reflection on the Christian gospel. What can such a Christian do?

Well, here is encouragement in the life of one who has gone before us! William Cowper was a man who experienced deep melancholy and terrifying doubts for much of his adult life. Yet because of several great gifts that God had given him, he was able to bear witness to Christ in a way that has strengthened the faith of thousands in the two hundred years since his death.

It is an oft-noted fact that many poets and writers have sensitive, rather introspective natures. There is an obvious link: the sensitivity provides the insight into human difficulties, and the gift communicates it. Cowper was certainly such a man. As a great poet who also wrote hymns (some of them still sung and appreciated today), he was a writer who conveyed the private struggles of many a Christian with simplicity and clarity. Many, both in his own lifetime and even now, have loved him for his understanding of their own troubles. He has plumbed the depths of others' despair, and lifted them to hope as he sought to lift his own stricken soul. Like many of the Psalms,

Cowper's hymns begin with the Christian in discouragement but end with the trouble eased by biblical truth. That, of course, is the biblical way to solve troubles.

Cowper's background

William Cowper was an eighteenth-century man. Born in 1731 and living until the end of the century, Cowper's lifetime encompassed the astonishing evangelical revival that came in the wake of John Wesley and George Whitefield's preaching. It was also the age of Handel's *Messiah*. Towards the end of his life the Romantic movement in poetry and prose was beginning – a development that literary critics believe Cowper's poetry, which praised the beauties of nature, helped begin.

Cowper came from a well-to-do country family, many of whom were distinguished as politicians and writers. But it was also a family marked by mental and emotional instability, and a number of Cowpers shared the melancholy that William experienced for much of his life. His father was a Church of England clergyman, and his mother, Ann Donne, was of a distinguished family that had included the famous poet, John Donne. William was their fourth child, and very devoted to his loving mother.

However, Ann died shortly after giving birth to her seventh child, John. William was only six at the time; and it can only be imagined how this sensitive child suffered. As a small boy he also had a troubling eye condition,

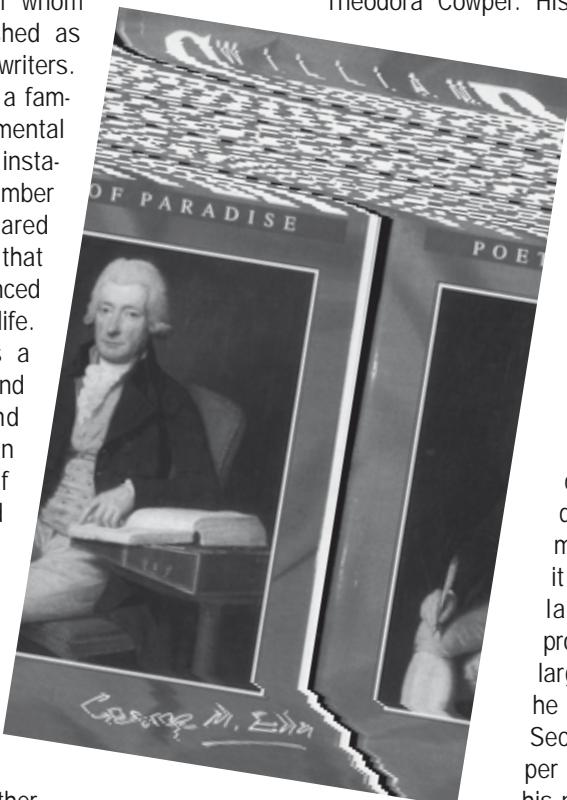
and went to live with a leading oculist so that he could receive treatment for it. This worked, and at around ten years of age he went off as a boarder to Westminster School. He excelled both in his studies and at sports (cricket and football); and when he was eighteen he was articled (apprenticed) to a London solicitor for three years before being admitted to the Middle Temple when he was 21.

Cowper's collapse

Cowper was an attractive, fun-loving young man – quite carefree, and with an obviously good sense of humour. However, a number of stresses in his life in the late 1750s and early 1760s combined to drive him to the brink of mental collapse. First, he had fallen in love and become engaged to his cousin, Theodora Cowper. His uncle, Theodora's father Ashley,

opposed the match, however, seeing only trouble ahead given that it was evident both William and Theodora shared the family's depressive tendencies. The young people were grief-stricken, and though Theodora accepted her father's decision, neither ever married. Many believe it was Theodora who later (anonymously) provided William with a large part of the funds he needed to live on.

Secondly, Ashley Cowper tried to provide for his nephew by procuring him a position as clerk to the committee of the House of Lords. This was later publicly criticized as nepotism, and added to William's anxiety as the time for a required examination drew



near. He was intensely shy and lacking in confidence: the examination meant he had to endure interviews, make speeches and appear before the Bar of the House. His alarm mounted, and he finally had a nervous collapse, making several attempts to take his life.

Cowper's collapse (probably today we would call it a nervous breakdown) meant a prolonged period of complete dependence on his brother, John, and his friends (and he was blessed with many). Eventually he was placed in the care of an evangelical doctor, Nathaniel Cotton, who specialized in the treatment of the mentally ill. Cowper remained more than a year there, and it

was during this time that he came to faith in Christ. This was through the witness of a cousin, Martin Madan, who had been converted under John Wesley's preaching. God also especially used Romans 3:25, which Cowper was reading at the very moment the spiritual scales fell from his eyes.

Evangelical fellowship

About a year after his conversion Cowper left Cotton's care, now much better in every way. He decided to move as near his brother John, who lived in Cambridge, as possible. In the event it was Huntingdon that became his home, and there he met the Unwin family, with whom he became great friends – so much so that they asked him to move in with them. This Cowper did, and it was the beginning of a lifelong association. Cowper was vulnerable in a number of ways: he was newly recovered from a mental breakdown; he had no source of personal income; and he had no clear occupation, since he had given up his legal practice. But now, in Huntingdon, he had evangelical Christian friends with whom he could read the Scriptures, pray, and discuss Christian books and sermons. It was a wonderful time. But this was cut short in 1767 by the sudden death of Mr Morley Unwin in a riding accident. The family, who had for a time been less than satisfied with the preaching ministry at Huntingdon, decided to move to Olney so that they could enjoy the ministry of John Newton, the former slave trader.

At Olney they lived in a house named Orchard Side, since behind it lay an orchard – which was the only space separating their house from that of John and Mary Newton. Soon Newton and Cowper were fast friends, and spent a great deal of time in each other's company. Cowper assisted Newton in his parish work, often visiting the families in the church together with him. They also began writing hymns together, which were used in the Tuesday evening prayer meetings. Cowper had long been writing poetry – he had been accustomed to conveying his thoughts and feelings in poetic form for years. It had been a family gift that many of Cowper's relatives exercised. The remarkable thing about Cowper's gift is that he could write poetry no matter what his mental or emotional state was. Even when prostrated by melancholy he was able to write – and that is no mean feat when one considers the mental discipline required to choose and order one's words, and to maintain consistency of poetic meter and rhythm!

Hymn publishing

In 1770 William's brother John died – a serious blow to this sensitive man, since John was the last remaining member of his immediate family. Slowly the clouds of trouble were gathering around Cowper's head. Perhaps aware of this, Newton suggested they publish some of their hymns. This they did, and the *Olney Hymns* was born. Hymn writing had been a feature of the Methodist revival, and the singing of hymns generally accompanied the evangelical faith as the gospel spread far and wide all over England in these decades of the mid and late eighteenth century. Newton and Cowper were adding to this growing repertoire of lively hymns of faith. The *Olney Hymns* had three sections: hymns on the Scriptures, hymns on various doctrinal subjects (these largely written by Newton), and hymns on the trials, sorrows and encouragements of the Christian life (mostly written by Cowper). These hymns of Cowper's, though dealing with personal spiritual struggles and joys, were thoroughly permeated with Scripture – they reverberate with biblical images and biblical truth. In style they are quite like Isaac Watts's hymns – using short meter, long meter or common meter, and with short, four-line verses. They have a brisk, concise sound, but a gentle and sometimes whimsical mood. Cowper's gentle humour is often turned on himself. He is ever conscious of his sin, but not morosely so: he is a forgiven sinner.

The most well-known hymn

But as 1772 came to a close it was becoming clear to his friends that Cowper was in trouble. It is to these months that 'Sometimes a light surprises' belongs. The final verse, an extended reflection on Habakkuk 3:17, however, points to the fact that while Cowper was at times discouraged, his joy was restored in prayer to God. At the turn of the year, though, he found himself in morbid remembrance of his collapse ten years earlier. On New Year's Day, while walking alone in the fields near Olney, he had a strange premonition that spiritual darkness was about to engulf him. The clouds were gathering (metaphorically as well as literally) as he hurried home. Arrived there, he wrote one last hymn, and his most famous: 'God moves in a mysterious way.' This is one of the best-loved in the English language. The *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* includes every line except two; and some of Cowper's phrases have become common expressions in everyday English. (Think especially of the first line).

*God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.*

*Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs
And works His sovereign will.*

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.*

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.*

*His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.*

*Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.*

When we consider this hymn in the context that Cowper wrote it, it is clearly the work of a courageous Christian recording his testimony of faith in a moment of extreme duress. Each verse speaks of the perplexing nature of every Christian's trials: why, God, are You doing this? What is Your purpose? Why must I suffer? Yet each verse also contains gently encouraging truth, biblical reminders that God is sovereign and powerful. He has goodness waiting for us in each trial, and in the end, He will make His purposes plain. This is a hymn written by a very gifted poet, a sensitive, anxious soul, but a Christian committed to Calvin's glorious view of God.

Cowper sunk into a long period of depression at this point, and did not emerge from it until more than a year later. It was made far worse by a dream he had about a month after it began – a dream in which he was convinced God told him he had utterly perished; that he was cast off from Him forever. This dreadful dream recurred at intervals throughout the rest of Cowper's life, and while he regained much of his steadiness concerning Christian truth he never again believed that he himself could be certain of salvation.

Nursed back to a cheerful state in Newton's house, Cowper recovered his natural sense of humour and was able to return to Orchard Side with Mrs Unwin. Some years later, after the Newtons had moved to London to a new parish, Cowper began to sense that he had been called to serve God as a professional poet. He would use his gift as a means of calling

his unbelieving and nominal Christian contemporaries back to God and to service in His kingdom. Around 1780 Cowper began on what became a prodigious output of poetry – including a number of very long (1000-2000 line) poems.

A much loved poet

Over the next twenty years William Cowper became famous. His poetry was loved, read, and admired. Jane Austen's family enjoyed nothing more than an evening reading Cowper together by the fire. He anticipated many of the themes of the Romantic poets – Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley – but without their Pantheistic leanings. Nature was his delight, but to Cowper it was the work of a personal, loving Creator, to whom everything that had breath was responsible. With his gentle, whimsical manner he wrote about ordinary, everyday pleasures – cups of tea, reclining on a sofa, and walks in the countryside. Cowper loved country life, and frequently praised its merits in comparison, say, to life in London. He wrote poetry on religious and biblical themes, inspired by the wide-ranging reading with which he occupied himself – in theology and in practical religion, including the Puritan ministers of the previous century. He used his gift of poetry in much the same way that Hannah More used her gift of writing a generation later – to awake his contemporaries to the need to serve Christ with all their hearts. Cowper also translated poetry from the Classical period: Homer, Virgil and Horace. One motive for taking on this task was to educate girls

and women who, not being taught Greek and Latin, could not enjoy the Classics as could men. Cowper became so respected that he was even offered the post of Poet Laureate of England. When he died in 1800, his was a loved household name.

The peace in death

There is, in addition, a hopeful spiritual note attending his death. When his relative, John Johnson, entered his room and saw that he was dead, Cowper's face had altered dramatically. The terror and anxiety had gone, and instead he wore a relaxed smile and, according to Johnson, a 'look of holy surprise.' Perhaps he had discovered in death that he was, after all, received by God as his child? Certainly it is possible for one plagued by doubts and fears, who nevertheless believes God's Word and longs to serve Him, to be found a true and faithful servant. While God alone knows the heart, it would seem that Cowper had been sure in his faith earlier in his life, and passages such as Romans 8:31-9 may have a bearing in cases such as his. Cowper's, consider, was the pen that wrote 'Blind unbelief is sure to err, and scan his work in vain. God is his own interpreter, and he will make it plain.' Amen.

Sources:

- George M. Ella, *William Cowper: Poet of Paradise* (Durham, Evangelical Press, 1993)
Faith Cook, *Our Hymn Writers and Their Hymns* (Durham, Evangelical Press, 2005), pp.215-42

Focus on home

Andrew Reinders

Gleanings from our bulletins...

Avondale

Men's breakfast. The next men's breakfast will be held this coming Sat (10 June) at 8am in the church basement. After the breakfast there will be a study from the book of James. We usually finish up around 9:30am. The purpose of these breakfasts is to strengthen our relationships with each other, so we can

encourage one another to live as men of God in all we do. Please bring \$5 to cover food. Lord willing see you there.

Bishopdale

Youth Group News. **Wild Foods Night:** This coming Friday the 15th of June at 6:30pm there will be a Wild Foods Night at Peter and Joyce's. Everyone needs to bring a plate so if you've always wanted to try pickled ardvark snout with garlic sauce, now's your opportunity to prepare and bring it along to share. Get those wild imaginations going you wild people! Focus is on fun!!

Pastoral: Congratulations to Tony and Diane Mulholland on the birth of James William

last Sunday. He weighed in at a healthy 8 pound 9 ounces.

A reminder about the special congregational meeting on Wednesday, 18 July at 7:30pm to discuss the proposed building extensions. Session expects to be in a position to distribute an agenda and discussion paper on Sunday, 8 July. Please pray that God would give us wisdom to discern what the best way is for us as a congregation. If you have any questions about the meeting, please speak to one of the Session.

Please pray earnestly for the church in Bayan Honger, Mongolia. This was the church Jared Berends attended while there. As it grows in influence and maturity, it is meeting with increasing opposition. The Buddhist head

monk in Mongolia has come to the town and has been inciting trouble. Church leaders have been subjected to police questioning. There have been physical attacks and persistent threats of violence. The pressure is so intense that two young people in the church committed suicide recently.

By the grace of God we wish to announce the

50th Wedding ANNIVERSARY

of

Willem & Hendrika STEENHUIS

31.8.57 – 31.8.07

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith."

Hebrews 12:2a

Congratulations and love from your children and grandchildren:

Nora & Mark Gibson
Ivan & Irma Steenhuis
Barry & Janine Steenhuis

Kirsty; Hannah; Joel; Kimberly & Alessandra

C.B. 316, 66 Avonleigh Rd,
Green Bay 0604
Auckland

Bucklands Beach

Pastoral. This Thursday our brother Ruud Storm will, God willing, celebrate his 80th birthday. We join in congratulating you and your family - and also in giving thanks. Praise God for his bounty and grace - and also for the way he has used you in so many ways - husband, father, grandfather, friend and brother in Christ. As a fellowship at Bucklands Beach we are and remain thankful for a lifetime of faithful service! Truly you have been and continue to be a blessing.

Christchurch

Milestones to give thanks to our Lord for... congratulations Mr. Peter Mulder who celebrates his 80th birthday today (Sunday).

Prayer box. Next to the telephone there is now a little box into which prayer requests can be "posted", using the little forms beside it. The elders will be clearing this box each week, and praying for the matters raised - in private, or if that is appropriate, in our worship services. You are invited to make use of this facility. It is not intended as a replacement for talking to the elders face-to-face; rather it is an additional medium to help us to know who and what to pray for. In making use of this, please bear in mind that we do need to be careful about bringing up sensitive issues in public worship services; if you request prayer on behalf of someone else you are encouraged to seek that person's agreement before posting your request.

Dovedale

Pastoral. The congregational prayer meeting held bimonthly before the Lord's supper, this coming Friday evening (8th June). Please incorporate that into your busy schedules. The prayer meeting is the occasion where we may together praise and petition our God, together, for an extended period of time. Many God-fearing elders testify that experience, and the Word of God, confirm the necessity and blessing of a well-supported prayer meeting in the life of any church.

Dunedin

Pastoral Notes. We officially welcome Timothy and Zara Woo as new members of our church. They have already been a blessing in our midst for some time as regular attenders. It is with joy that we now welcome Timothy and Zara to the privileges and responsibilities of communicant membership.

In Memoriam. We have received news from the USA that Mrs Ina Boorsma, known to many of our older folks, passed away on 27 May 2007. She was born on 24 December 1918. In 1995 she visited Dunedin with her husband, John, who was called home some years ago. This was when we celebrated the Church's fortieth anniversary. Ina and John were founding members. In later years

they returned to the Netherlands with their two adopted children, Ineke and Olaf, and from there they moved to the USA. After a few years in Utah they moved to Denver, Colorado. She was a real mother in "Israel". Ineke's address is as follows: Mrs Ineke Cadora, 1427 Cannon Mtn Drive, Longmont, CO 80503, USA. Peter Braam

News From Other Places. Grace Presbyterian Churches. Your pastor had the privilege of attending the Sixth General Assembly of the Grace Presbyterian Churches of New Zealand (GPCNZ) last week at Waihola. These churches would be our closest neighbours in the church scene in this country given that we both share the same commitment to the Word of God and the Reformed confessions. The Grace Presbyterian Churches are a new denomination, just six years old, and are currently made up of 15 congregations around the country with membership of around 700 souls. They have connections with the Presbyterian Church in America, the Presbyterian Church of Australia and the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ). The assembly agreed to approve the constitution of a Fellowship of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches in New Zealand with the RCNZ and GPCNZ as founding members.

A notable event during the assembly was the examination of Peter Reynolds as teaching elder in the GPCNZ. Mr Reynolds is a former pastor of a Reformed Baptist church in Auckland but now a lecturer in practical theology at Grace Theological College (GTC). His examination was conducted in the presence of the entire assembly with Pastors David Bayne and Barry Swann the appointed examiners. Questions were confined to specific areas, chiefly systematic theology, Westminster Confession of Faith and the sacraments. The examination was sustained.

Their Home Missions Committee provided an extensive report on student ministry, biblical principles for a previously adopted church planting strategy and the development of a "faith-promise scheme" to facilitate offerings for church planting. A presentation was also heard from Travis Scott, a member of Briarwood Presbyterian Church in the US. Travis plans to work as an evangelist in central Auckland from 2008 to do church planting work for the GPCNZ and to lecture part-time in practical apologetics at GTC.

Their Overseas Missions Committee had been given the task of developing a missions policy handbook which the assembly adopted at this meeting. The reporter acknowledged that the RCNZ's Missions Policy Handbook provided a good basis for theirs. The assembly agreed that, where missionaries are sent from Grace Presbyterian Churches, there needs to be involvement in selection and approval of such missionaries by the presbytery. Cur-

rently GPCNZ are in the process of sending two medical mission workers, Andrew Ure and Martin Secombe, both of whom are working through an international mission agency.

The assembly also heard a Christian Education and Publications Committee report. This committee oversees publications, youth work, a women's subcommittee, the denominational newsletter Growing in Grace, and the Grace Theological College. On behalf of GTC, Andrew Young reported a quieter period of activity with only one ministry student preparing for ordination at present. He also advised the assembly of his preparations to go to the US for a six-month sabbatical from July this year.

In conclusion the assembly was a pleasure to attend. Your RCNZ representative was graciously and warmly received, given the opportunity to address the assembly and given speaking rights during sessions. GPCNZ are a small denomination but have a great vision, namely that every New Zealander have access to a vital, Bible-believing Presbyterian or Reformed church ministry. Hans Vaatstra

Foxton

Family night at the movies:

Another family night at the movies has been booked.

The movie is entitled 'Amazing Grace' and is the true story of one man's fight to abolish slavery.

When: 7.30pm Wednesday 25th July.

Cost: \$6.50 per person.

Extra pamphlets about the film are available in the foyer.

To get an idea of how many people might be interested in attending this movie please fill in the form below and return it to Jolanda Nugteren as soon as possible. Money will be collected closer to the date.

Letter from Craig: Dear Brothers and Sisters in Foxton, Greetings from Geelong where the cold has set in! We are having temperatures of about 14-15deg. It would be nice to do some study where John is in Sydney (20deg). Anyway, it's the time of the semester when we have exams. This semester I only have two exams as opposed to normally having four. This takes the pressure off a bit. However, during the semester it meant I had to do many more assignments. The subjects for this semester have all been challenging in different ways. There are the languages which require a bit of memory. Also there is theology-dealing with Salvation and the end times which all requires hours and hours of reading. Then there is the preaching in which I am still learning how to write a sermon which is taking about 30-40 hours (far too

long). And finally there is the leadership and management course which looks at how the church is led and ways it could be led. As well as the theory there have been some good practical components to the course. Of course, time goes really fast with being so busy but I feel I am progressing well. And the lecturers are doing a really good job. I wish you all, God's blessings and a fruitful time with your new Pastor. Kind regards, Craig van Echten

Hamilton

MEN'S BREAKFAST: Saturday 16 June, 7.30am. The topic is "Save our boys" introduced by pastor Michael. If you weren't there last month, don't let this opportunity slip by. All men welcome, and bring your teenage sons or grandsons.

Pastoral: This morning we have the privilege of witnessing the baptism of Luan du Plessis. In doing so, we remember that God's gracious promises are held out to Luan in this sign and seal of his covenant. Please pray that, as he grows, Luan will respond to these promises and come to saving faith.

Hastings

Attention hoarders! Hastings Youth Group are hosting a Wellington Presbytery Shindig in August. One of our activities will be a go Kart competition. We need material to build them. So if you have anything in the following list that you no longer need, dig them out of your shed, call Jair on 021 454 430 or 879 8155 and he can pick them up. Thanks.

From the Vicar. The desire, which has been expressed by six of our covenant youth, to profess their faith is a sign of God's bountiful blessing in our congregation. Matthew Donk, Astrid Gulliksen, Angelina Landkroon, Bianca Saathof, Elke Van Beek and Zipporah Waldron have the approval of session to publicly profess their faith. It is expected that the majority of these young people will do so on 8th July. Praise God for His covenant faithfulness!

Hukanui

This morning we welcome Frank van Dalen as you bring God's Word to us and lead us in worship. Frank, together with his wife Emily, Emily's mother Dorothy Wilder, and children Chris, Andrew and Laura are here for a family holiday. We welcome you in our midst this morning and pray that the rest of your holiday goes well! Frank will also speak to us after the service about his work in missions, and particularly as it pertains to Pakistan.

The Amazing Race is On!!!! Keep the 28th July free for a great family day of fun for kids and adults. More info to come - watch this space!

It is with joy and real sense of God's blessing that we are able to celebrate the

50th Wedding ANNIVERSARY

of our parents and grandparents

Jaap and Netty SAATHOF

*married in Enkhuizen,
the Netherlands,
on the 3rd of August 1957.*

"The LORD is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made. The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them."

Psalm 145:17-19

Tauranga – Alice & Andy Warren
Marcus, Bruno, Lucy, Hannah

Daniel Saathof – born 30.3.60
– died 12.4.60

Hastings – Helen & Willem
van der Werff
Saskia, Anouska, Hilly
Ingrid & Jono Wierenga

Hastings – Ed & Maureen
Saathof
Jacob, Rachel, Matthew, David

Hastings – Bruno & Alice
Saathof
Reuben, Bianca, Hugo, Toby, Max

Hastings – Nicola & Gerald
Feyter
Olivia, Penny, Alice

475 St. Georges Road,
South Hastings
Ph. (06) 877 4721

Mangere

Session Notes – 6/6/07. The Dovedale Session asked if our minister could visit with them for several days as soon as possible. Session decided to allow several days during a week in the July school holidays for this (they have already heard our minister's preaching). Session also approved of our minister taking the studies for the Family Camp at the end of the year and having three weeks leave following the 27/8/07.

Auckland Presbytery Men's Day 2007. This year the date is Saturday the 11th of August. Mangere Reformed Church are our hosts and they hope to particularly challenge our young men personally. We begin at 10.00am that day with coffee and cake, with the first talk at 10:30am. We hope to conclude at 2.30pm with afternoon coffee. There will be a lunch of soup and buns provided.

Masterton

Pastoral notes. This morning we have the privilege of witnessing the baptism of Simona Erica De Leeuw. We rejoice with her parents Andre and Annelies in God's gift of another covenant child. We are encouraged in God's covenant promises for all generations as we seek to train our children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

North Shore

At present the Rev. Bruce Hoyt of the Hastings congregation is in the US and Canada. Having been present at André Holtsga's graduation, he went on to Canada to the Synod of the Canadian-American Reformed Churches (ecclesiastical descendants of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands-Liberated [1944 and all that]). He took with him an offer from our last Synod of a sister-Church relationship and just last week they accepted that. So you don't need to feel ecclesiastically lonely

IN MEMORIAM

Jocelyn Sylvia Reid

We remember our dear and lovely member, Joyce Reid, who passed away on the 12th May 2007.

Joyce was the mother of our missionary Janice and she was a blessing to have as our friend.

She never missed out on our gatherings; only when she was sick or had a birthday in the family.

We hope that she is with the Lord and that we will meet again in glory.

On behalf of the Singles' group from Hamilton Aberdeen Reformed Church,

Ria Rengelink

when you go to Canada anymore! The Rev. Stephen 't Hart, missionary to PNG, who visited us a couple of years ago, serves on behalf of the CanRC.

Profession of faith. Peter Shin has requested to profess his faith. The Session is, naturally, thrilled to receive this request and, unless any lawful objection is received within the next two weeks, this will take place in the morning Service on 1st July.

The Milford Track. Last year Don Petchell walked the Milford Track and is very keen to do it again with any who would like to come along – at the end of 2007 or early 2008. If you are interested in knowing more, please meet with Don in the downstairs foyer right after this morning's service – bookings need to be made early in July.

Palmerston North

Congratulations to Josh and Monique on the arrival of little (big!) Ryan Josh, born on Tuesday evening, and weighing 10 pounds 11oz (4.850kg). We wish you every blessing from our gracious Father as you raise both of your boys for His glory.

From the Pastor...Next Lord's Day also, we rejoice with Daniel Dykstra, as he professes his faith during the morning worship service.

Seminars at church – Everyone welcome! The Wednesday Night Bible Study has asked Rev Flinn to run a series of lectures to which he kindly agreed. The lectures will be on "Understanding the Psalms" which is a modification of a series Rev Flinn gave at the RTC last year, and will run for about 5 or 6 sessions. The first of the series will start on the 4th of July at 7.30 at the church, everyone is welcome.

Pukekohe

Pastoral: Congratulations to Wayne and Sarah Kingham on the birth of James Andrew last week Friday 1 June, weighing 7lb 15oz. May God grant you wisdom and guidance as you seek to raise your children to walk in His ways.

Soccer Match: There will be another "Oldies versus Youngies" soccer match on Saturday 7 July beginning at 3pm. After that, at 5:30pm we will have a pot-luck dinner at the church to welcome the Holtsga family.

From the Pastor: In our life in the Church community we often come across matters about which there is no direct command in the Bible and about which there may be a variety of views. We might have a different opinion about something than someone else in the Church. How should we approach this? How should we see the other person? What Biblical principles apply to such disagreements? This afternoon in the sermon we will consider these questions as we go on to

chapter 14 of Romans in this very practical part of this letter.

Silverstream

Marriage Banns. Derek van der Werff and Tracey Lambers have signified their desire to be united in marriage at the Reformed Church of Silverstream on 7 July 2007, at 1.00pm. If there are no lawful objections, the ceremony will take place on that date, the Lord willing.

Wellington

Fundraising for our building upgrade. As discussed at the AGM, one way to raise money for our building upgrade project is by fundraising. One fundraising idea mentioned was that its donation rebate time and there may be some of you who would like to donate their rebate (or part of it) to the building project. If you would like to do this, please feel free to put your donation in the collection bag in a marked envelope saying "building project". This money will be put aside specifically to go towards the building project. If you have any questions regarding this, please just ask either David or Jonathan, the deacons.

Church Family. Congratulations again to Richard & Jasmyne on the birth of a son, Elijah Schmidt. Elijah's baptism is planned for July 1st in the morning service.

AUCKLAND PRESBYTERY REPORT (22/6/07)

On behalf of the convening church of Pukekohe, John Kaiser led in the opening devotion, reading from Psalm 98 and connecting that with the joy a Christian ought to show, using the example of William Wilberforce, the English anti-slavery and social justice campaigning MP 200 years ago, as one who had this joy in his life.

The order of the day was set with the Rev. John Haverland as chairman, Rev. Reinier Noppers as vice-chairman, Rev. Sjirk Bajema as Reporter, and Peter van der Wel as Stated Clerk.

In matters arising from the previous meeting, Mangere noted their preparations thus far for the Men's Training Day, and the Reverends John Rogers and Dirk van Garderen were re-confirmed as the Synodical Examiners.

Amongst the correspondence, Reinier Noppers reported on matters of interest gleaned from the Australian Classes. A letter was tabled from the Family Camp Committee regarding the dates and place for the Family Camp at the end of the year,

and the information that the Rev. Sjirk Bajema was leading the morning studies with various speakers being sought for the evening meetings. It was noted that Br Pieter van Huysteen was already in Foxton and was scheduled to sit his final examination on the 4th of August in the Wellington Presbytery.

The Church Order Article 47 questions were asked of the Mangere, North Shore and Pukekohe sessions. Mangere noted the blessing of having Daniel (& Raewyn) Wilson, a ministry student intern, with them for three months, together with a supportive spirit within the congregation. North Shore noted the increasing attendance in the morning services, especially with Korean visitors and also South African folk, and a tripling of the number of Bible study groups with an overall doubling in attendance. Pukekohe spoke of looking forward to having André Holtsga as a vicar, also given the blessed way the vicariate went with Michael Willemse.

The Avondale delegates are pleased with how the pulpit supply is working out and look forward to being further assisted in this when Pukekohe's new vicar begins his work under the Rev. John Haverland.

Hamilton noted that they are looking at setting up a rest home and received encouragement from the other churches in this.

As the meeting finished early, a time of discussion was had with Daniel Wilson regarding his motives in serving an internship in New Zealand, his experience thus far, his training at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary (where Dr Joey Pipa

is the Principal), and his background in the Presbyterian Church of America (a sister-church to the OPC).

S.B.

LETTER TO EDITOR

Dear Sir,

Sally Davey's June article about John Keble was most interesting; and I am glad to note that, while giving due praise to him and to Charlotte M. Yonge for their writing talents, Mrs Davey has no time for their odious school of churchmanship in the C. of E. Tractarianism!

I think she may be unaware of the history of the descriptions High Church, Low Church and Broad Church, and how they have had their meanings changed in popular usage over more than 300 years. Since Victorian times, Low Church has come to mean much the same as Evangelical, while High Church has come to mean the same as Ritualist, Tractarian, or so-called Anglo-Catholic. Broad Church is a term which used to mean Latitudinarian — not much committed to any doctrines, and steering a middle course in styles of worship. It was once the preference of most Anglicans, alas!

About the time of Charles II, the High Church party did indeed stress the importance of bishops and of observing the two sacraments, while the Low Church played those things down, and believed in not giving too much power to the bishops — in keeping the bishops and clergy low.

It was largely a political stance, with the High Church party being Tories, and the Low Church and Latitudinarians Whigs. There was little or no difference in styles of worship, except for the sermons; and things stayed much the same for a long time, except that the Evangelical Revival made Low Church a term mostly meaning Evangelical. Most old-fashioned High Churchmen were firm Protestants, so generally disliked the Oxford Movement (Tractarianism).

Queen Victoria herself was raised as an old-fashioned High Churchwoman: she wasn't keen on Evangelicals, but also detested Ritualists. However, she inadvertently appointed a few of the latter as bishops, and in time became willing to do the same for Evangelicals such as Bishop Ryle. Actually, it was the doing of Disraeli, just before he went out of office as Gladstone (loathed by the Queen) was coming into it. Gladstone was a Ritualist and a Liverpool resident; so it seems Disraeli and the Queen were delighted to make a strong Evangelical like Ryle the first Bishop of Liverpool, just for spite! The Queen in fact disliked all bishops, and was a Presbyterian by inclination. At any rate, it was in the 1860s that the Ritualists became commonly called High Church, while the old-fashioned High Church Protestants were called High and Dry! Definitions keep changing; and the old Evangelicals of the era from about 1750-1960 would simply disown most of today's self-styled Evangelicals!

H. Westfold, Wellington.

Pornography, our purity and our posterity

Part 2 - Putting on the armour

Ian Wildeboer

In the previous article we considered the following question: if so-called 'faithful' men are living with the secret sin of pornography, what can we expect of the next generation, specifically our sons and theirs?

Now we need to address further questions: How are we, as fathers (and mothers), preparing our sons for this battle for purity? Are we carefully fitting — by the

grace given us — their armour? How can we help them so that they too can stand up under Satan's barrage of arrows filled with the sin of pornography and licentiousness?

We all know that we desperately need strong, faithful, spiritual men — men of integrity — to serve in Christ's church now and in the future. This work of preparing for the future begins, as it were, in our homes. The work of equipping our children for the

battle for purity is our homework. The home is, of course, more than just a roof and four walls. As someone once wrote, 'it is an objective and visible kingdom.'¹ That is, it is a kingdom that must be a safe haven, with the object of serving Christ — a place where He can dwell richly in the hearts of all that dwell therein.

The 'Global Village'

Arguably this may have been easier some

thirty or forty years ago. It seems the once safe haven from the vileness of the devil, has become his battlefield today. It is more and more difficult to find a home that remains a spiritual bastion where Christ dwells richly. The home is constantly under attack by a growing perverse and global community (or global village) that seeks to replace all that is pure and holy with the impure and the profane. So, the statistic mentioned in the previous article: 47% of Christians admit that pornography is a major problem in their homes.² Satan's domain is global.

Permit me to share a bit of an anecdote to this end. Recently I was standing near the open grave of one of our elderly church members here in Lae, Papua New Guinea. And in front of me I noticed a young boy wearing a black shirt with bright pink lettering. My eyes immediately gravitated to the bold disparity in colour. The shirt read: '**Sexpo 2005, Brisbane, Australia**' and then a host of licentious activities and attractions were listed below the title. Two things struck me as I looked at this young boy, who of course was most oblivious to the sins he was ostensibly supporting. First, there was a metaphor at work: before him stood an open grave, which as Scripture puts it, is the only end to the path of sin so proudly sponsored on the shirt. Secondly, he was living proof that we live in a global village and this village is proudly and shamelessly sponsoring its fornication. It is full of adultery, fornication, sodomy and a host of other sins in such events as Sexpos, Gay pride marches, and Mardi Gras. This so-called village, you could say, is run on the fuel of lust — scantily dressed women sell everything from beer to a bar of soap. Moreover, this village is at our doorsteps. And for the one lacking wisdom and unable to discern what is right and wrong, pure and profane, holy and impure, this village of licentiousness seems so captivating. The image of the young man in Proverbs 7 who being weak-willed fell prey to the prowess of the harlot down his street and enjoyed a banquet in the grave with her is lived out in many, many lives.

The 'Global Village' and Television

The sad reality is, however, that the village is alive and well in many homes. Its sensual wares, promiscuity, licentious prowess and diabolic lies have fitted themselves into the newspapers, magazines, books, TV sets, and websites that appear in our homes. Obviously this makes the battle for the purity of our children and the maturity of their

faith that much more difficult. Satan knows where to go to captivate the minds of God's children; where they're most vulnerable, in the security of their homes. His first modus operandi was the television. Arguably the TV became his tool of choice during the 70s and to the present. It captivates millions. Already in 1976 the voice of the late Malcolm Muggeridge, the English journalist and broadcaster, could be heard saying: 'The media (he was particularly speaking of TV) have indeed, provided the Devil with perhaps the greatest opportunity accorded him since Adam and Eve were turned out of the Garden of Eden.'³ However, since that day some 30 years ago, what is aired on television has grown in crudeness, has lowered the threshold for profanity and sexual impurity, has adopted homosexuality as near normal, adultery as a favoured pastime and premarital sex as a healthy part of a teen life. So, everyday countless

seventies, writes: 'Future historians will... marvel that we should have so meekly subjected ourselves to its destructive and often malign influence.'⁵ Sadly, many are subjecting not only themselves, but their children, to its profane influence without counting the cost to their souls!

The 'Global Village' and the Internet
But if television is not a powerful enough tool in the hands of the Enemy — and again one wonders if we really understand its power — the Internet has equally unprecedented power, it seems. The devil has found another way to enter the home and wreak untold havoc. The global proliferation of pornographic material in the new global village is now available for constant viewing on the Internet. This may be good news for the kingdom of Satan, but as heirs of the Kingdom of Light, this is a battle cry. According to one study in 2002, by the London School of Economics, 9 out of 10 children between the ages of 8 and 16 had viewed internet pornography. Even if the majority was unintentional, the reality is, it is accessible to them and their consciences are opened to it.⁶ To add to this, many families are broadening their bandwidth to high speed connection and access is near instantaneous. According to one study in 2005, there are some 4.2 million porn websites and attached to that some 372 million pornographic pages which is amply serving some 68 million daily pornographic search engine requests.⁷ This is a global pandemic and the cost is borne in the hearts of young men, boys, and sadly older men as well — both fathers and sons.

Another story.

"My parents put a computer in my room. They thought it was a good idea as this would allow me to do my homework in a quiet place and if need be — because I have Internet access — to communicate with my friends. Little did they know that it became the devil's playground and I became one of the players! I would often come home from school and surf the web and feast my eyes. I hated it, but too ashamed to tell my parents, I just kept going back for more. My heart and my mind are bursting with disgust. Images haunt me now that I am a bit older."

These parents allowed their child to run amuck in the kingdom of darkness and he became entangled. It was ignorance at its best, and maybe a few years ago one might understand this shortsightedness. No longer. The battle lines are drawn; there

followers of Christ 'watch people undress, peek on people committing fornication and adultery, which our God calls an abomination. We've become voyeurs...entertained by sin.'⁴

Allow me to share one story I heard on this point recently.

'Before we had Internet in the home, we had cable television. I don't think my parents knew how much pornography was on at night, or maybe they did, but thought that I wouldn't feed on it. Often, I would sneak down at night, maybe two or three in the morning and feast my eyes on the devils wares and my lust for more continued to grow. I was engrossed, and addicted. Full of shame, I would crawl back to bed, only to repeat the shameful act the next night.'

And to this Malcolm Muggeridge, who notably threw out his box in the early

is absolutely no excuse for your child to have that kind of access. None!

Satan knows that he doesn't need to serve hard-core porn to our children — though sadly he is quite willing to serve them that — he knows that he can slowly break down their defenses, allow sexual impurity to incubate in their young minds, periodically feed it with another pop-up on the Internet, another seductive prime-time show, another movie, another X-box game with sensually dressed 'players', another commercial, another questionable blog, and the list goes on. And he, of course, is patient. He just waits, oh so patiently, until this insatiable sin begins to rear its ugly head in their minds and the itch for more begins. The future is bleak if our youth are taking the path of the young man in Proverbs 7. Very bleak.

The Power of the Gospel

In all of this Scripture does not give us reason to despair. There might be reason for lament, and even great concern, but not despair. In Christ we are called not to despair but to be alert, be aware! So the Spirit of Christ through Paul writes in Ephesians 6:10-11: '*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.*' And he continues, '*Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.*' That means a few things to us, who are in Christ. First, it means that we do not need to run and hide in the corner of the world where there is no access, no media, just you and the vegetation. For the record, those corners do not really exist. The global village is everywhere, it seems. We, therefore, must fight, or better, 'stand firm.' Second, it means as Calvin writes in his commentary on Ephesians, 'If the Lord aids us by *his mighty power* we have no reason to shrink from the combat.'⁸ We have been given the arms, the armor, 'for repelling every kind of attack.'⁹ We need to know the enemy, and then fight. It is up to us to begin suiting up and strive to help our children suit up as well. We can't leave the armor collecting dust in the closet by the front door.¹⁰ Thirdly, we need to realize the force against us. Satan is far too crafty and has thousands of years of practice; therefore no human power can withstand him. We need to be armed with all that belongs from above — righteousness, truth, faith, the Word and the Spirit! And in that armour, as Calvin states it aptly, 'there will be no danger which may not be successfully met by the power of God; nor will any who, with

this assistance, fight against Satan, fail in the day of battle.'¹¹ We serve a risen Christ. He is the King of Kings who has broken the power of the devil, of sin and the world. Therefore in Christ we are said to be '¹²more than conquerors through him who loves us.'

And in that strength and knowledge we must fight. We must be engaged. The foremost work that Christ calls us to is the raising of our children, God's children, if we are so blessed. This begins in the home. Where else are we given unlimited access to their development, maturity of the faith and growth in knowledge, save the home? Our homes are gifts to us from God to protect and foster spiritual development in our children. Our homes must be a spiritual safe haven for the offspring of the promise. Yes, the world is at our doorsteps and the winds of perversity waft through the walls, but there is still much we can do to protect, nurture and raise our children in this place. This is our calling: to engage this battle of perversity and fornication for our sake and for the sake of our children's hearts and their salvation...and we begin in the home.

The Home as a Spiritual Safe Haven

The question that we need to address before signing off is this: how? How can we make our homes a spiritual bastion, an abode of love and purity and holiness? What are we doing to make sure our children are prepared for the global village into which they have been born?

King David, by the grace given him, addressed this question in Psalm 101:2-3. He writes, '*I will walk in my house with blameless heart. I will set before my eyes no vile things. The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me;*' David is contrasting his life in the public square with his life at home. There are things you can't change in the global village — though we must let our light shine before all men — but there are things you can secure in your home. This text touches on two elements that I wish to explore. First, David, as father and king, is taking the lead here. Like Joshua who stated in full confidence of grace, 'but as for me and my household we will serve the Lord,'¹³ so too David in Psalm 101 is saying the same thing. Charles Spurgeon elucidates on this text in his commentary on the Psalms and states the following: 'piety must begin at home. Our first duties are those within our own abode. We must have a perfect heart at home, or we cannot keep a perfect way

abroad. Reader, how fares it with your family? Do you sing in the choir and sin in the chamber? Are you a saint abroad and a devil at home? For shame! What we are at home, that we are indeed.'¹⁴ That piety must begin with the spiritual head of the home, the father, and equally lived out by the mother.

There is another element addressed here to assist us in preparing our homes for Christ. That is this: we have to protect our eyes. So David states, 'I will set no vile thing before my eyes.' That is, no evil, based or worthless thing whatsoever will be established in my home. David is not merely commenting on his own life; no, he speaks for all who dwell in his home, or more likely, his palace. As the head of the home, he will ensure it is holy before the Lord. And so his son, Solomon, would later write, 'the righteous man leads a blameless life; blessed are his children after him.'¹⁵ The result of living a blameless life before God and our children and protecting our eyes and theirs from the fornication that abounds around us is this: 'blessed are his children after him.'

In this battle for the purity and preparedness of our children we need not only to have the words of Joshua etched on some plaque in our home, we need to embody them in our life. He said, '...as for me and my household we will serve the Lord.'¹⁶ Those are bold words in a morally depraved world. But they must be ours and they must be lived for God's glory, our children's salvation.

Have we done what we can?

In the end, the question we as parents will have to answer is this: have we done what we have been called to do for God's children? Have we taken strides to secure our homes from the devils attack? This may mean: having passwords on the computer, keeping the computer in high traffic areas, downloading accountability software (K9, X3 Watch, Covenant Promise, etc) or software to screen websites, keeping the TV locked up and used on special occasions, or getting rid of cable, refusing certain magazines, books, in the home, even newspapers, etc., etc. And at the heart of all is this question: Do we really care about our children's hearts? Are we thinking, or even better, praying for them and then passing the baton of purity and integrity to them so they can pass it on to the next? Are we willing to bar no cost or convenience to ensure that their hearts are kept pure — that is, not being fed a

diet of sensuality but a diet of salvation, the enduring promises of God? That is the radical call of the Gospel and it begins in the home, so that we can say with Joshua of old: 'as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.'

Only then will our children and grandchildren be ready to meet the barrage of arrows filled with the sin of fornication that will be shot at them, even unaware. Yes, the global village is growing in perversity, but where sin abounds Christ's grace abounds even more. In that grace we can sing with the saints of old: '*Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing; were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing. And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us, we will not fear, for God has*

willed His truth to triumph through us' So wrote Luther, so sing God's children today, and may our children continue to sing this until Christ returns!

This article originally appeared in 'Una Sancta', a publication for the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, with whom we have a reciprocal arrangement. The artwork is taken from "Porn Again" in World Magazine, April 23, 2005

(Endnotes)

- 1 G.K. Chesterton, *What is Wrong with this World?* (Ignatius Press, 1994) 49.
- 2 Mark Bergin, "Porn Again" in *World Magazine*, April 23, 2005, <http://worldmag.com/articles/10555>.
- 3 Malcolm Muggeridge, *Christ and the Media*

- 4 Randy Alcorn, "Radical Path to Purity," at <http://afajournal.org/2003/september/903purity.asp>
- 5 Muggeridge, *Christ and the Media*, 23
- 6 Bergin, "Porn Again" in *World Magazine*, (April 23, 2005)
- 7 Ibid
- 8 *Calvin's Commentaries Volume XXI, "Epistle to the Ephesians,"* (Baker Books, 2003) 334.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Calvin shares this idea but he speaks of leaving the armour on the wall, where we might find it in our closets. (334).
- 11 Ibid, 337.
- 12 Romans 8:37
- 13 Joshua 24:15
- 14 Charles Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, Vol. II. Ps LVIII to CX. (Hendrickson) 240
- 15 Proverbs 20:7
- 16 Joshua 24:15

Missions in focus

Janice Reid

Mission opportunities...

by Rev. John Goris

It is heart-warming to hear time and again about our young people's interest in missions, even though most of that interest may be focused on short-term overseas involvements.

Most likely one reason for that short-term aspect is that young people are still 'feeling their way around' as to a big commitment. Yet exposure to the real thing

may be a good way to start, utilising their particular skills in certain areas. There are two important things to take note of here: Coming with God-given skills and using them in a God-honouring way. Great! One could add, they have a biblical heritage to share as well.

Now suppose they have gone and have come back with an appetite for more. Perhaps they have worked as English language teachers in China. Hopefully they have not

only learnt something of the culture, but also come to love the people they served on the Lord's behalf. But then they had to leave those folk who began to take an interest in Christ, perhaps without the necessary Christian 'after-care'.

Back in their own local church: Was all that overseas experience 'wasted'? Will anything gained overseas benefit them in their home church? Much in every way! To start with, they can build bridges into the Chinese community in New Zealand, close to home. They now have a home-base to which to invite their new contacts for fellowship, worship and learning Scriptural

Hindu family from Bali in formal dress for temple ceremonies

Planning a mission trip? Let us pray for you! If you or somebody you know is planning a mission trip—short or long—please let us know. We want to pray for those on mission trips overseas, but we cannot pray if we don't know that you're going! Deadline for submission of articles to Faith in Focus is 6 weeks before the month of publication. If you would like our congregations to pray for you on your mission trip, send details to Janice at reid4radio@gmail.com

truth. Not only that, they can enthuse other members in the congregation to participate in this. They can also be useful in applying the Great Commission to local evangelism. A fresh inflow into church-life is normally needed to prevent the waters from becoming stagnant (John 7:37-39).

'Sounds good,' you say, 'but how do I start?' If you have an interest in short-term missions, where can you go? Where are the openings?

I suggest you talk to your elders/deacons about your interest in missions. Don't just bypass them and then confront them with the fact that you have already chosen to go to such and such a place.

Your session can get hold of a booklet published by the International Conference on Reformed Churches, that lists a good range overseas contacts*. Some of these are sister churches, others are part of the wider Reformed family of churches. Even the national Diaconate has contacts. And don't forget, we have a mission field in PNG, and a missionary in radio ministry! They may have many ideas for short- or long-term service!

Masks of the Balinese god who is reputed to chase away evil spirits – Barong

Making an offering at a spirit house in Bali

Rev Goris is the Missions Convenor for the ICRC and he is happy to send a copy of this booklet to any session that is interested. Please write to 9 Tralee Place, Johnsonville, Wellington, 6037; or e-mail JohnGoris@xtra.co.nz.

The challenge to create

Unity within diversity

Dirk van Garderen

Church life at Bucklands Beach is becoming increasingly diverse in a cultural sense. Over the past few years we have very consciously focused on a ministry directed towards the increasing number of 'Asian' neighbours who live in our streets and near our church.

It all began about four years ago, when, in response to a special plea, we started a special Bible studies for folks who were struggling with the English language. Rather than develop ministry or worship services in Korean or Mandarin and maintaining the cultural divide, why not communicate in English at their level? Things began rather tentatively by advertising 'ESOL Bible Studies'. With many hiccups along the way, we eventually developed what we now call our 'LABS' ministry. **LABS:** Language Assisted Bible Studies.

At first we had one class on Thursday afternoons during the school term. Lessons in what we called *Basic Bible Studies* were

written on a week-by-week basis under the following headings:

- **God:** Introducing God, his nature, work and attributes.
- **Seeing ourselves as God's creation:** Who am I? Sin and me.
- **Deliverance:** God's Son our Saviour: meeting and learning about Jesus.
- **Living the new life:** Being a Christian. A look at the Ten Commandments and Prayer

The main thrust of the course was its focus on reading, translating and interpreting the Bible – if only because students had the Bible available in their own language as well!

The tremendous growth

Classes were structured on a 10:1 ratio (something that's been hard to maintain as they have grown in popularity). Besides the instructor we always had at least one other English speaker (a member of the congregation) and someone from our own Church who was Korean as well.

Small beginnings, but wonderful results have been achieved. At present we have five '**LABS**' classes held each week. There is one class on Wednesday afternoon, another that evening and three on Thursday afternoons. The three classes on Thursday operate at three different levels (with new courses being developed for them). We refer to them as offering studies at 'beginners', 'intermediate' and 'advanced' levels. Classes are oversubscribed; enthusiasm runs high and the work is a real blessing.

The real challenge has been in meeting Chinese folks whose English is absolute zero to start with. However, in his wisdom, we have Karen Fietje (nee Oppelaar) who, because she was born in Taiwan when her parents were our denominational missionaries there, has always retained a good smattering of the Mandarin language! What a blessing this is! Furthermore, some of our students have been a part of the programme from the beginning. We now use them as mentors and instructors in the classes with increasing effectiveness.

Their origins

Those who attend the lessons typically come from three countries: Mainland China, Taiwan and Korea. The classes are structured in such a way that the different cultures mixed together, thus forcing the use of English. The focus is on reading the Bible aloud, understanding the meaning and, ultimately, interpreting what God is saying. It's hard work demanding constant use of a whiteboard, agility in finding synonyms (and antonyms) and learning how to translate idiom. Proverbs are a special challenge (as is the poetry

of the Psalms!). After 70 minutes we're all more than ready for a refreshing cuppa and some relaxation.

The impact of this ministry never ceases to amaze. Many of our students come from a 'kind of' Buddhist background, liberally interspersed with a generous dollop of materialism absolutely saturated with superstition. Introducing **God** as he reveals himself in his word is, especially in the beginning, a great challenge. In cultures where there is no real understanding of a transcendent, yet personal God; no understanding of the nature and extent of sin; much teaching and patience is needed. However, the testimonies shared and the conversions seen in this work have demonstrated over and over again that there is a great hunger for the Gospel among the Asian folks who have come to New Zealand. In that sense the overseas mission field has come to us, rather than the more traditional model of us coming to them.

Further development

This year (2007) saw a new stage in the development of this ministry at Bucklands Beach. From March 1, one of our members, Mr Jabez Cho, efficiently helped by his wife Ruth, was asked to set aside 20 hours per week in order to develop this ministry. This ministry is supported by church funds. His brief is to develop the ministry through publicity; to prepare the facilities for the meetings; to meet with and, if necessary, provide counsel to those who come and, ultimately, to help integrate these folks into the life of our congregation. Jabez and Ruth are doing more than their share and the impact is being felt in every other area of our church's life.

- Typically, more than 50 students attend the five classes currently being offered.
- One Korean woman, a former teacher of English grammar in Korea, also conducts two weekly classes teaching English grammar to about 40 students.
- We are at present developing a similar option for Mandarin speakers and there are plans for a student intern (who is also a member of our fellowship) to

provide 20 hours of ministry per week during 2008.

- Worship services increasingly involve Mandarin/Korean speakers. The sermon manuscript is available on Saturday mornings for those who want to study it. Our liturgical forms (especially Lord's Supper and explanation of our requirements) are now available in Mandarin and Korean.
- With an increasing interest in membership and a need to explain our doctrinal stance, we are in the process of making available Korean and Mandarin copies of the Heidelberg Catechism.
- Social events increasing cater for the cultural diversity by taking advantage of the differences.
- Sunday School classes are catering for the children, as are Cadets and Gems, Catechism classes and home groups.

Socialising

No, it is not easy. Great patience is needed by all – especially the visitors themselves. They feel *they* suffer from shyness and, to be honest, I think we are often even more shy and reticent!

Our **Women's Fellowship** recently organised a 'Cook and Wear Asian' evening. The idea was to come to the evening wearing 'something Asian' and to bring some culinary delicacy for everyone else to sample. Several of our Indian and Korean sisters brought spare saris and dresses along for others to wear as well. It was a wonderful evening. (See photos.) The annual Women's retreat at Waiwera YMCA saw some 28 women join – cultural diversity is becoming the norm.

Our vision at Bucklands Beach is to be a fellowship that reflects the kind of society in which the Lord has placed our church. A growing percentage of our neighbours are migrants who have come to 'Asia' (Korea, China and India in particular). Who is better to address the cultural isolation and alienation many of these folks experience than Christ's people? What better news or better way is there than Christ himself?

Susan Jones being dressed in a sari by Hachila Prekumar.

Posing at the Women's Fellowship evening.