

faith in focus

Magazine of the
Reformed Churches
of New Zealand

VOLUME 35/1 FEBRUARY 2008



*“But as for me and my household,
we will serve the LORD.”* **Joshua 24:15c**

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| The 'smacking debate' <i>What are we talking about?</i> | 3 |
| Christian foundations of the rule of law <i>The legitimate place of law</i> | 6 |
| Nazareth <i>A study in a town</i> | 8 |
| World in focus <i>News from around the world</i> | |
| A feminine focus <i>The feminine virtue of cheerfulness</i> | 12 |
| Book in focus <i>Point Man – How a man can lead his family</i> | 15 |
| Focus on home <i>Gleanings in focus</i> <i>Christchurch Presbytery</i> | 17 |
| Missions in focus <i>The testimony of Sadik</i> | 23 |

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: fnf@rcnz.org.nz
Reformed Churches Home Page
<http://www.rcnz.org.nz>

Copy Deadline:

Six weeks preceding the month of publication.
Church and family notices are free, subject to
sufficient space and editorial acceptance.

All correspondence regarding distribution and
payment of subscriptions to:

The Secretary:

Mrs Nicola Wharekawa
79 McLeod Street
Upper Hutt
Email: ricwhare@paradise.net.nz

Subscription per volume:

\$40.00 (eleven issues)
Bulk Rate: \$35.00
Overseas: \$60.00
Electronically Mailed (overseas only): \$40

Production Staff:

Distribution: M. & D. van der Zwaag
Design & Layout: Matrix Typography
Printed by: Flying Colours

Editorial

Close to home! Politics is one of these things that seems to be coming closer to home every passing day. How many of us haven't been involved in protesting recent government legislation, or at the very least signing the petition for a referendum about certain government legislation? But this is not really a recent thing. For a long time already Reformed folk have been involved in this sphere of life. The descendants of Abraham Kuyper believe they have continued his vision through such organisations as the Christian Heritage Party and overtly political pressure groups. We have had our members stand for political office. In Australia there is the Christian Democrat Party. Over the ditch, also, one of the members of our sister churches is a senator in the Federal Parliament for a conservative party. And on the other side of things I saw that for the Federal Elections a local Labour party headquarters were in a CRCA church.

Having the world-view that we do means that being involved in politics is a natural consequence. At some point we may question, though, how we could in good conscience support parties with an overtly anti-Christian stance. While we must oppose ungodly legislation, there is a danger. And that is that we become so involved in politics we pin our flag to one particular mast to the detriment of the gospel.

Now, Christians may be doing that to be salt and light to the world. But I don't think our Lord meant those words in Matthew 5:13-16 to be an endorsement of any particular political position – especially one that has distinctly secular roots.

Relatives of Rauschenbusch? Looking back through history shows us this. For there has arisen in the past the type of belief Christians have had in an "applied Christianity" (Christian socialism), as opposed to *laissez faire* (the capitalist view). This is called the 'social gospel'. It became particularly developed by certain American churches at the end of the prosperous 19th century where there was a leaning toward political and social activism rather than the specifically preaching and teaching ministries earlier that century. Walter Rauschenbusch was a leading advocate in this – a "dynamic, gracious, winsome, and vividly humorous" minister and then theological lecturer.

Mind you, not that those earlier Word-centred ministries hadn't had a social concern – Charles Spurgeon and many of his evangelical brethren were heavily involved in orphanages and the like – but the Social Gospel men began to make the Deed itself central. Sadly this was tied in with increasing liberalism in those churches, and in a way this is no wonder, for where man becomes more and more central to solving the world's problems God gets shoved to this side. For example, Unitarians in America (those who specifically denied the Trinity) were amongst the leading proponents of this new lifestyle.

Whenever I go into a liberal mainline church I can't but be taken back by their involvement in the community – but not to bring the gospel into that local community, rather through improving the social and physical wellbeing of their community to bring them into an enlightened state. With the increasing State welfare budget that community groups have access to, a number of evangelical churches are also having extensive social work departments. But I wonder what cost that is to what those churches were originally founded to be, as more and more the State spells out how they monies are to be channelled. In New Zealand mainline church names are seen quite obviously in the name of welfare service providers – but the gospel has long gone from what is done through them.

It seems, though, that amongst even evangelical churches nowadays the concern for social justice is a dominant theme. Their heroes are John Smith and Tony Campolo and Bono who, while less than completely orthodox in their theology, propagate the social concern message in a popular way, somewhat akin to Rauschenbusch. They often preach from certain parables of the Lord, the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son being favourites, they mention about the Lord's interaction with the down-and-outs of His society, and also refer often to the Old Testament prophets in their preaching regarding social (in)justices. Other passages, however, particularly the apostle Paul's words regarding the place of women in the church and the sin of homosexuality become down-played, if not ignored altogether.

For them the major sin is what man does to man – not what man does against God.

*"Give to Caesar what is Caesar's
and to God what is God's".*

Mark 12:17

Cover photo: An art deco style house in Kawakawa, Northland.

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 ‘smacking debate’

Tani Newton

Sue Bradford’s bill to repeal Section 59 of the Crimes Act has occupied a major place in the news over the last two years, and occasioned a national uproar known as ‘the smacking debate.’ I would like to ask the question, though: Why are we talking about a ‘smacking debate’? I ask this for two reasons: firstly, because ‘debate’ doesn’t seem quite the right word for an exchange in which one side has nothing intelligent to say, no evidence to support its conclusions and absolute power to decide the outcome; secondly, and more importantly, because ‘smacking’ has never been the point at issue. The new Section 59 has illegalised *all* use of force by parents for the purpose of correction, which is as good as to say, all correction whatsoever. The police have made explicitly clear that using ‘time out’, restraint or grounding for the purpose of correction is every bit as illegal now as smacking, and other laws already in place include even the threat of force in the definition of force. So why are we still talking about ‘smacking’?

Now of course I don’t think I am the first person to have raised the points in this article. Many people have worked long and hard to try to make them public, and have been deliberately and consistently ignored by politicians and the media. My purpose in writing this is to plead that we, whenever and wherever we have the opportunity, continue to urge them, and resolutely refuse to take up the red herrings constantly being waggled in our faces. Larry Baldock’s petition looks set to make Section 59 an issue at the next election — a good reason to continue gathering signatures on both petitions, however badly worded they may be — but whatever we do, we need to figure out what we’re talking about, because if we don’t debate the actual question, we lose the argument by default.

Sue Bradford pretended to be angry that the media had renamed her bill ‘the anti-smacking bill,’ but it seems to me that the media have done their job superbly — transforming eighteen months of public outrage over the rise of state totalitarianism into a polite exchange between socially conscious liberals and blinkered, self-serving

conservatives over ‘smacking.’ That isn’t the issue. It never was.

Some of the real issues

The old Section 59, which we presumably all know by heart by this time, stated that parents were justified in using reasonable force for the purpose of correction, and that provision has now been entirely abolished. I don’t think it is overstating the case to say that this effectively makes the family an illegal institution. Biological and adoptive parents still have legal responsibility for their children, of course, but they now have no legal authority. Every institution and organisation has the right to take some form of disciplinary action against its offending members, except the family. Of course discipline is not the purpose of any organisation, or even one of its main objectives, but without it no organisation is able to maintain its distinctives. If sports organisations, for instance, were unable to enforce the rules of the game, there would soon be no such thing as rugby or soccer or cricket, only a lot of people running after a ball, with no way of knowing for certain who had won or why. Again, if the church were not able — however sadly and reluctantly — to withdraw privileges from erring members, there would be no real

What are we talking about?

standard of Christian doctrine and life, only personal feelings and preferences. So with the family — if Mr. & Mrs. Brown or Green or Gray cannot make the rules for their own children, then the family is no more than what New Zealand law has already called it — ‘a group of persons living together.’ And New Zealand law does not debar the Embroiderers’ Guild from expelling offending members, or night clubs from hiring bouncers to remove unruly patrons. Only families have no legal right to maintain order.

Secondly, the new Section 59 is inherently meaningless and self-contradictory. It states that parents are justified in using force to prevent a child from engaging in, or continuing to engage in, disruptive or offensive behaviour, and to carry out the tasks that are incidental to ordinary good care and parenting, *but* that nothing in this or any other law can justify using force for the purpose of correction. Now to prevent a child from *continuing* to do something is, by necessary implication, to *correct* him over having done it in the first place; so the law takes away with one hand what it gives with the other. And correction is, of course, one of the tasks that are incidental to ordinary care and good parenting, and is necessary to the accomplishment of the others; so they are all ruled out too. The



Signing the petition against the “anti-smacking” Bill

only thing that would appear to be legal now is to use force to prevent a child from *beginning* to engage in disruptive or offensive behaviour, which, as anyone who has spent more than five minutes looking after a child must surely know, would mean putting him in a straitjacket in a padded cell. And of course that would be illegal too. Without using some kind of force, no one can keep a child safe and provided for, and not to do so is criminal neglect. This isn't just silly. It is fundamentally, murderously wrong. If laws contradict each other, and people can't obey them, then we no longer live under the rule of law. Alexander Solzhenitsyn once said that the criminal code of the former Soviet Union criminalised 'all human existence.' Our lawmakers have been a little more creative than that: they have drafted a law which criminalises the entire existence only of people who are at some time responsible for children, that is, most people except radical feminists and committed homosexuals. No comment.

Principles of law

This raises another question: Section 59 is part of New Zealand law, not a statement of people's personal beliefs and preferences, so why do we keep talking about our inclinations and experiences? Surely it is legal principles that should guide lawmakers in making a law. We could do worse than to iterate the Biblical principles of law — that all law and government derive from God and are defined by Him; that

all human authority is strictly limited; that our government's task is to execute God's wrath on gross evildoers and to mend the Queen's roads; that the only foundation of civil liberty is the rule of law; and (by the ancient law of habeas corpus, recognised by believers and pagans alike) that no one may be punished for a crime without being brought to fair trial. We have been taken in by the idea that the state can and should take children into custody to protect them from harm, an idea which is not only spurious in practice but monstrously wrong in principle. Kidnapping of anybody by anybody is a crime which merited the death penalty under the Law of Moses, and when carried out by state powers it is not a preventative measure but the most horrible punishment that can ever be devised — and it can be executed without trial and *before* the supposed offence has taken place! No one has the right to do that. God Himself does not sentence people without trial.

The menace of 'rights'

Now the anti-family forces are not about to let their enemies get away with appearing to be more principled than they are. While we may base our views on 'personal experience,' 'family traditions' or 'religious convictions,' they claim a far more exalted inspiration, namely, 'human rights.' It has been their constant refrain that their actions are the inevitable outworking of their belief in 'children's rights,' and that they alone regard children as fully human and therefore as deserving the same legal

rights and protection as adults. We need to recognise this for what it is — a collection of malicious and malevolent lies. First of all, not one of these people is advocating giving children the same rights as adults when it comes to voting, drinking, driving, or anything else that they can monitor and control. Nor are they suggesting for a moment that there is anything wrong with using force against children *per se*. The government reserves to itself the right to use force — in some cases, not even reasonable force — against men, women and children; to break up homes and tear babies screaming from their mothers' arms; to compel children to attend schools where they may be abused, molested, injured or killed; and themselves to perpetrate the brutal murder of over 17,000 children a year. The question is not whether or not children should be protected, but who will protect them from whom.

But even more importantly, the claim that laws can and should be derived from 'rights' is absolutely false. Rights are granted by laws, not the other way round. If the law says that I can have a picnic in a public reserve, then I have a right to do so. If it says I can't, then I don't. Whatever the American Declaration of Independence may have to say, Scripture informs us of no self-evident and inalienable human rights. Jesus Christ is the One 'whose right it is.' So when people tell us that we must have such-and-such a law *because* people have such-and-such a right, what is happening is that they have already decided what our laws are going to be and are merely presenting them to us in the back-to-front guise of 'rights.' The United Nations is prospering in its crusade for world domination by this elegant form of auto-suggestion. Rights as a basis for laws are, of course, hopelessly inadequate, for the fairly obvious reason that one person's rights invariably conflict with another's. Do I have a right to smoke or do you have a right to breathe? Do I have a right to party or do you have a right to sleep? The only way such dilemmas can be solved is by giving a higher authority the power to decide arbitrarily whose rights will prevail over whose. 'Rights' are therefore the best friend of aspiring tyrants, since absolutely anything can be justified on the basis of championing somebody or other's 'rights.' And what could be more appealing to our sinful nature than being told that we are the ones whose right it is?

A Christian response

How should we as Christians respond to all



of this? Let me make a few suggestions for starters:

Firstly, I think we might as well give up trying to be nice and pretending that what is going on is *not* a war against justice and liberty, against children and their innocence, against the LORD and His Anointed, and against husbands and fathers as the heads of their families. There is nothing to be gained by deliberate naivety. Whether there is a literal conspiracy going on or not, the fact is that where all of this is heading is to a world where children will be effectively 'protected' from the only people who ever can and will protect them, a world that will be a safe place for paedophiles. People need to hear this.

Then, on a more personal level, we who are parents must have the courage to be honest with each other about just how bad things can be in our families at times. I don't mean that we should be ungracious, or put down our children in their hearing, and we certainly shouldn't expose ourselves to danger by mentioning these things in the wrong company; but in the right time and place, with friends we trust, we do need to discuss the harsh realities. Two sinners trying to reform another sinner — or a dozen other sinners — is not a pretty sight, and it's never going to be. Or am I just the worst mother in the world, with the most shocking children in the world? Am I the only one who ever feels this way? I am grateful for Christian friends I can talk about it with — because if we don't talk about it, we leave each other to conclude that we must be somehow 'unfit parents,' which is exactly what our enemies want us to conclude.

This is an idea which I think we should be tackling head-on — the fiction of the 'fit parent.' Nobody is equal to the task of raising a human being with an immortal soul. *Nobody* is a fit parent. God doesn't require us to be 'fit' for the tasks He gives us. That is not the issue. And while we're at it, it would be super if somebody with access to the source materials could debunk the absurd claim that 'Maori were taught smacking by the missionaries,' preferably before it becomes dogma.

At the same time, though, I think we Christians should give up imagining that we are representative of any real kind of majority. Granted, most New Zealanders strongly opposed the repeal of Section 59, and most New Zealanders say they smack their children. But the Bible doesn't talk about 'smacking.' No doubt we all know the relevant proverbs: 'Discipline your son

while there is hope,' 'You shall beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from hell,' 'Blows that hurt cleanse away evil, as do stripes the inner depths of the soul,' and so on. These verses are simply not speaking about giving a toddler a smack on the hand to teach him not to touch a hot stove. Hebrew scholars inform us that the words used here refer to *beating, bruises, wounds, weals, etc.*, and the 'son' in question is not a baby or toddler but a youth of some years. I point this out, not because it gives me some kind of sadistic pleasure, but because I don't believe that we will get anywhere until we face the facts. If there is such a thing as a majority view in our society, it would appear to be that 'smacking' is OK and 'beating' isn't. And the majority view is *not* that of the Bible. The fact is that Scripture enjoins fathers to belabour their sons to the point of lasting hurt to teach them to turn from wickedness and folly, but we have allowed ourselves to be watered down and watered down and watered down to the point where we can seriously discuss whether or not a light-smack-with-an-open-hand-on-a-clothed-bottom is useful in training children — and given what Scripture says about the seriousness of sin, 'no' or 'hardly at all' is probably the correct answer. The repeal lobby, for all their mendacity and equivocation, have stood resolutely and consistently against three things - *beating a child, using an implement and leaving a lasting red mark* - in other words, exactly what Scripture calls for. If we succeed in persuading the incoming government to legalise some version of the light-smack-with-an-open-hand-on-a-clothed-bottom, we may have served our own convenience and even our neighbours', but we will not have proclaimed the sovereign rights of Jesus Christ. We are just not declaring the whole counsel of God when we say, 'Of course we would never advocate *beating* a child; we're just saying that, as a last resort, a light-smack-with-an-open-hand-on-a-cloth...' Look, we're already as good as dead. Can't we stand and die like good soldiers?

But what will we do, and how should we live in what is possibly the most liberal society that has ever existed? It goes without question that we must break the law, for not only is it a Biblical principle that we must disobey an authority commanding us to sin, but because the law cannot be obeyed in any case, and our only choice is how and when to break it. But what shall we say, to our children and to other people? What should we do if we fall foul

of the law? Should we fight or flee, unite or stand alone? Should we hope to be acquitted, when that is only possible by a technical injustice? What things should we plan, and on what promises of God may we rest? Here is where we need godly wisdom!

So let me plead with those who have such wisdom to share it with the rest of us. We urgently need to discuss these things. And we need to keep on declaring the whole counsel of God to this corrupt generation. But please, let's make up our minds what we are trying to do; and let's begin by figuring out what it is that we are talking about.

With thanks to our faithful God, we rejoice in the celebration of the

50th Wedding Anniversary

of

Harry and Annie HOVING



28th February 1958

*"And surely I am with you
always, to the very end of the age."
Matthew 28:20b*

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*Congratulations and love from
your brothers and sisters, nephews
and nieces in the Netherlands and
New Zealand.*

Christian foundations of the rule of law

The legitimate place of law

Augusto Zimmermann

The modern roots of our individual rights and freedoms in the Western world are found in Christianity. The recognition by law of the intrinsic value of each human being did not exist in ancient times.

Among the Romans, law protected social institutions such as the patriarchal family, but it did not safeguard the basic rights of the individual, such as personal security, freedom of conscience, of speech, of assembly, of association, and so forth. For them, the individual was of value "only if he was a part of the political fabric and able to contribute to its uses as though it were the end of his being to aggrandise the state".

According to Benjamin Constant, a great French political philosopher, it is wrong to believe that people enjoyed individual rights prior to Christianity. In fact, as Fustel de Coulanges put it, the ancients had no idea of what such rights meant.

No one above the law

In 390, Bishop Ambrose, who was located in Milan, forced Emperor Theodosius to repent of his vindictive massacre of 7,000 people. This indicates that under the influence of Christianity nobody, not even the Roman emperor, could be above the law.

And in the 13th-century, Franciscan nominalists were the first to elaborate legal theories of God-given rights, such as individual rights derived from a natural order sustained by God's immutable laws of 'right reason.' For these medieval thinkers, not even the king himself could violate certain rights of the subject, because the idea of law was attached to the Bible-based conception of Christian justice.

The notion that law and liberty are inseparable from one another is another legacy of Christianity. Accordingly, God's revealed will is regarded as the 'higher law' and therefore, placed above human law. If so, people have the moral duty to disobey a human law that perverts God's law, for the purpose of civil government is to establish all societies in a godly order of freedom and justice.

St Augustine once wrote that an unjust law is a contradiction in terms. For him, human laws cannot be out of harmony with God's higher laws, and rulers who

enact unjust laws are wicked and unlawful authorities. In *The City of God*, St Augustine explains that a civil authority that has no regard for justice cannot be distinguished from a band of robbers. 'Justice being taken away, then, what are kingdoms but great robberies? For what are robberies themselves, but little kingdoms?'

In the same way, St Thomas Aquinas considered an unjust law a 'crooked law,' and as such, nobody would have to obey it. For St Aquinas, since God's justice is the basic foundation for the rule-of-law system, a 'law' that permits murder or perjury is not really law, for people have the moral

of the British Isles to decency.'

At the time of Magna Carta (1215), a royal judge called Henry de Bracton (d.1268) wrote a massive treatise on principles of law and justice. Bracton is broadly regarded as 'the father of the common law,' because his book *De legibus et consuetudinibus Angliais* is one of the most important works on the constitution of medieval England.

For Bracton, the application of law implies 'a just sanction ordering virtue and prohibiting its opposite,' which means that the state law can never depart from God's higher laws.

As Bracton explains, jurisprudence was 'the science of the just and unjust.' And he also declared that the state is under God and the law, 'because the law makes the king. For there is no king where will rules rather than the law.'

The Christian faith provided for the people of England a *status libertatis* (status of liberty) which rested on the Christian presumption that God's law always works for the good of society. With their conversion to Christianity, the kings of England would no longer possess an arbitrary power over the life and property of individuals, with changing the basic laws of the kingdom at pleasure.

Ensuring freedom

In explaining why the citizens of England had much more freedom than their French counterparts, the famous English preacher Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) declared: 'There is no land beneath the sun where there is an open Bible and a preached gospel, where a tyrant long can hold his place ... Let the Bible be opened to be read by all men, and no tyrant can long rule in peace. England owes her freedom to the Bible; and France will never possess liberty, lasting and well-established, till she comes to reverence the gospel, which too long she has rejected ... The religion of Jesus makes men think, and to make men think is always dangerous to a despot's power.'

The state is a 'necessary evil' that has to be subject to God's higher laws. After sin entered in the world, it became necessary to establish the civil government in order to curb violence (Gen 6:11-13).



Moses with the Ten Commandments, by Rembrandt

right to disobey unjust commands. Rulers who enact unjust 'law' cease to be authorities in the rightful sense, becoming mere tyrants. The word tyranny comes from the Greek 'secular rule,' which means rule by men instead of the rule of law.

In declaring the equality of all human souls in the sight of God, Christianity compelled the kings of England to recognise the supremacy of the divine law over the kings' arbitrary will. 'The absolutist monarch inherited from Roman law was thereby counteracted and transformed into a monarch explicitly under law.' The Christian religion worked there as a civilising force and a stranger to despotism. As one may say, 'The Bible's message elevated the blood-drinking 'barbarians'

Limitation of state powers

The understanding that civil government is a result of our sinful condition justifies the doctrine of limitation of the state powers. It inspired in both Britain and America the establishment of a constitutional order based on checks and balances between the branches of government — namely legislative, executive, and judicial. Such division obeys the biblical revelation of God as our supreme Judge, Lawgiver, and King (Isaiah 33: 32).

Since all human beings are born with a sinful nature, the functions of the state ought to be legally checked, because no human being can be trusted with too much power. Because God instilled in each of us a sense of freedom, political tyranny, as Lord Fortescue (1394-1479) explained, is the attempt on the part of civil authorities to replace natural freedom by a condition of servitude that only satisfies the 'vicious purposes' of wicked rulers.

As Fortescue put it, the law of England provided freedom to the people only because it was fully indebted to the Holy Scriptures. Thus he quoted from Mark 2:27 to proclaim that the kings are called to govern for the sake of the kingdom, not the opposite. In this sense, he also remarked: 'A law is necessarily adjudged cruel if it increases servitude and diminishes freedom, for which human nature always craves. For servitude was introduced by men for vicious purposes. But freedom was instilled into human nature by God. Hence freedom taken away from men always desires to return, as is always the case when natural liberty is denied. So he who does not favour liberty is to be deemed impious and cruel.'

By placing God's higher laws above human law, Sir Edward Coke (1552-1634) considered that the basic laws of England were not designed by the state, but 'written with the finger of God in the human heart.' Coke described the constitution of England as a 'harmonious system' sustained primarily by God's higher laws. Then he went on to declare that no statute enacted by the Parliament is valid if it does not respect God and the law.

The notion that human law is always subject to God's higher laws started to be more deeply challenged in the 19th century. Many people interpreted Charles Darwin's theory of evolution as proving the nonexistence of God's natural moral order, to be a primary source of positive law.

Thus legal positivists decided to regard the positive law of the state as a mere result of sheer force and social struggle

— in brief, a product of human will.

But if laws were caught up in the faith of 'evolution,' they can no longer be regarded as possessing a transcendental dignity. Then the very idea of government under law loses its philosophical foundations, and, as a result, societies start to lack a moral condition of legal culture that allows them to effectively restrain the emergence of an all-powerful state.

As J.R. Rushdoony pointed out, 'When man is made controller of his own evolution by means of the state, the state is made into the new absolute. Hegel, in accepting social evolution, made the state the new god of being. The followers of Hegel in absolutising the state are Marxists, Fabians, and other socialists.'

Whenever the law of the state is regarded as the only source of legality, civil rulers become all-powerful authorities over the life and liberties of the individual. For no legal protection can be reasonably afforded against tyranny, if the supremacy of God's higher laws do not prevail.

The complexity of things that are held together in the universe indicates the existence of a Supreme Lawmaker. When we see the world as it really is, we must concede that its motions are directed by invariable and fixed rules of law. If there are laws sustaining the world, our question is: who has created these laws?

In this regard, as Montesquieu commented: 'Those who assert that a blind fatality might have produced the various effects we behold in this world are guilty of a very great absurdity; for can anything be more absurd than to pretend that a blind fatality could be productive of intelligent beings?'

The human intellect, however, should not be our basic reference in terms of legality, because everyone is affected by a sinful nature.

To avoid tyranny, William Blackstone (1723-1780) once declared that no human law could be valid if it contradicted God's higher laws which maintain and regulate natural human rights to life, liberty, and property. According to Blackstone's biblical understanding of the rule of law, 'No human laws should be suffered to contradict [God's] laws ... Nay, if any human law should allow or enjoin us to commit it, we are bound to transgress that human law, or else we must offend both the natural and the divine.'

When God delegates His supreme authority to human rulers, they have no liberty to use it in order to justify tyranny.

God has established the state as delegated authority, not an autonomous power above the law. When we obey the state it is not that we obey individuals who are in charge of the state machinery, but it is rather in obedience to a God-given authority who is commanded by God to promote natural principles of liberty and justice.

Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661), a Scottish Presbyterian, developed in *Lex Rex* a consistent doctrine of lawful resistance against political tyranny. According to Rutherford, if people wish to effectively stay free from such tyranny, then they will have to preserve their inalienable right to eventually disobey unjust legislation.

Power to oppress

For him, 'A power ethical, politic, or moral, to oppress, is not from God, and is not a [lawful] power, but a licentious deviation of a [lawful] power.' And in answering to the royalists who liked to use St Paul's *Letter to the Romans* (ch 13) in order to condemn any form of resistance against the government, as a resistance against God Himself, Rutherford boldly proclaimed: 'It is a blasphemy to think or say that when a king is drinking the blood of innocents and wasting the Church of God, that God, if he were personally present, would commit these same acts of tyranny.' John Locke (1634-1704), whose legal and political ideas provided legal justification for the 1688 'Glorious Revolution' in Britain, argued that lawmakers put themselves into a 'state of war' against society whenever they endeavour to destroy our God-given 'natural' rights to life, liberty and property. Locke wrote that no government has the right to reduce these basic rights of the individual citizen.

The American Founding Fathers fully acknowledged the principle of lawful resistance against tyranny, and drew heavily from this in order to justify their revolutionary actions against the British government in 1776.

Of course any revolutionary uprising, as Pope Paul VI comments in his encyclical *Popularum Progressio*, can only be justified in extraordinary situations 'where there is a manifest, long-standing tyranny which would do great damage to fundamental personal rights and dangerous harm to the common good of the country.' However, the recourse to violence as a means to right the wrongs of the state against the rule of law, brings with it the risk of producing new forms of injustice. Therefore, Paul VI also states that revolutionary uprising can only

be carried out as the last remedy against long-standing tyranny, because, as he put it, 'a real evil should not be fought against at the cost of greater misery.'

In declaring that we all stand on equal ground before God, Christianity gives the best moral foundations for social and political equality. If Christianity is found to be true, the individual, male or female, is not only more important but incomparably more important than the social body.

A visible fact in these days of moral relativism is the gradual abandonment of the Christian faith and culture in the Western world. As a result, the moral foundations for the rule of law have been seriously undermined.

Any honest analysis of contemporary Western history would have to recognise that no effective legal protection against tyranny can in the long run be sustained without the higher standards of justice and

morality brought into the texture of Western societies by Christianity.

Dr Augusto Zimmermann is an Associate Lecturer in the School of Law at Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia. This article is reproduced with the kind permission of 'Life News,'
www.lifeministries.org.au

Nazareth

Patricia van Laar

'Shall Any Good Thing come out of Nazareth?'

This town in Galilee lay in a high valley, the base of which was 1200 ft (around 400 metres) above sea level. With steep hills rising to 1600 ft (over 500 m.) to the north and west, a sharp drop to the south gave an impressive view overlooking the Plain of Esdraelon. William Hendriksen in his commentary on Luke, describes it as being in a 'picturesque setting.' A late-19th century commentator (Fausset) writes of it as having in his day about 4000 inhabitants, and being blessed with a mild climate, the valleys and hillsides growing abundant bright wild flowers such as hollyhock, as well as fig trees, olives, oranges, and gardens of cornfields. He also comments about pouring rains, necessitating stone

houses founded, after digging down, on rock. (Luke 6: 47.) From the high points of the hilltops above, sweeping views in all directions may be viewed; snowy Hermon in all its glory, Mt Carmel and the Mediterranean Sea, the region of Gilead (Transjordan), Mt Tabor and the Samaritan hills, villages on every side – sights to delight the eyes of the young man growing up in the town below. One can imagine Him in this spot of beauty, forming his habit of withdrawing to a quiet place to commune with His heavenly Father.

Situated on the southernmost slopes of the limestone hills of the Lebanon range, which reached from Lebanon to the northern edge of the fertile Esdraelon Plain in Israel, Nazareth was a frontier town on the southern border of Zebulun. Today, like much of Israel, it is an exploited 'pilgrimage' site, although some archaeologists think that the early town was probably higher up

The second 'city' of Jesus

the western hill than the present Nazareth. The town is 24 kms west of the southern tip of the Sea of Galilee and 35 kms east of the Mediterranean.

Close by are several main trade routes, one leading eastward from the seaport Ptolemais on the Mediterranean coast 5km north of the Carmel headland, (Acts 21: 7), to the ten cities of Galilee (the Decapolis). One route led to a ford over the Jordan, and yet others to Jerusalem and Egypt. All gave easy contact with the outside world. In the days of Jesus, Roman legions passed along these routes only a few miles away from Nazareth.

Galilee it was surrounded by non-Jewish nations, and many Gentile settlers influenced the Jewish culture. Galileans had a distinct, rather rough accent, and Nazareth itself was a town whose people were independent in outlook with the reputation of standing rather aloof from the outside world. All these factors combined to make the town despised by the strict Jews of the southern regions, a subject of scorn. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" they asked.

The Frontier Town

Nazareth is not mentioned in the OT. Geographically it lay outside the main areas of Israel's life and activity. Two suggestions have been made for the origin of its name. Was it derived from an Aramaic word *naserat*, meaning watchtower? Perhaps its strategic position is what gave it this name. This is highly possible, for the frontier town was well able to keep a watch on travel and troop movement below. What an appropriate name for the town where Jesus grew up that would be. On



Nazareth as painted by David Roberts in 1833



Nazareth today

the other hand, it may have come from a Hebrew word, meaning 'shoot', the opinion of both Eusebius and Jerome.

In either case, Nazareth lived up to its name. It was a 'watchtower' of protection for the young Jesus from the danger of the house of Herod, protection of the child whose parents had had to flee into Egypt to save his life. Recall King Herod the Great, who when he heard of the birth of a newborn king in Bethlehem, tried to kill Jesus. Joseph and Mary fled from Bethlehem to Egypt, and remained there, probably for some one to three years (we do not know exactly how long), until after the death of Herod (4 B.C.) They were then able to return to Israel with the boy in their care. But they did not come back to Bethlehem. Instead, by-passing Jerusalem, they went straight back to the second town in Jesus' life, their own former home of Nazareth, in the north. By this time Jesus could have been up to five years old or perhaps even more. He may even by then have had brothers or sisters.

By its position high above the road, any army of the Herod family, if it still searched for this child, could be observed, giving time to hide him from the enemy. But also, the very aloofness of its people from strangers would in itself afford some protection for Jesus, for rumours of his presence would be less likely to be gossiped outside the town itself. But we must not forget above all, that God was his Watchtower, ensur-

ing protection over His son by the angels guarding Him, in dreams warning his foster father of danger, removing by death his enemy Herod. Truly, as God's son grew into manhood, the protection afforded Him by a town named Nazareth was symbolic of the protection of His heavenly Father.

Or 'shoot', the alternative meaning, is also appropriate. God had promised a shoot from Jesse in the book of Isaiah, in the 8th century BC. This child was the 'shoot' from Jesse, as foretold in the prophecy, the promised descendant of Jesse's son David. His was to be an everlasting Kingdom. Nazareth was the town that housed this 'Shoot' as he grew to manhood in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man. He needed an environment of peace, obscurity and security while maturing into manhood, without the winds and storms of political opponents. He was destined indeed, to be King of His own heavenly Kingdom, the One whom Satan could not destroy, the One in whom we rejoice two thousand years later, as our own dear Saviour and Lord. How blessed we are to know Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.

He shall be called a Nazarene.

Shall any good thing come out of Nazareth? Yes, from this despised, insignificant town came the One who was nothing but good, in whom was no evil, and the One who was THE ONLY Good One, the unique Jesus,

like us in every way, except without sin. Despised as it was, this Nazareth was the home of Jesus for more than twenty years. What an honour for the town, and a blessing. Dare I say what an encouragement for us, too? Symbolically, it reminds us that God despises none of us, no matter what our origin, what our past, what our place in society. We are counted as Children of God when we are found 'in Him.'

*'And through all that wondrous childhood
He would honour and obey,*

*Love and watch the lowly maiden in
whose gentle arms He lay....*

*And our eyes at last shall see Him,
through His own redeeming love;*

*For that child, so dear and gentle, is
our Lord in heaven above,*

*And He leads His children on to the
place where he is gone...*

*We shall see Him, but in heaven, Set
at God's right hand on high;*

*When like stars His children crowned,
All in white shall wait around.'*

He is the Glory of Nazareth. Allelujah!

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Faith in Focus by visiting the
Reformed Churches Home Page
<http://www.rcnz.org.nz>

World in focus

Belhar Confession remains obstacle to DRC Unification

A large majority of the delegates to three regional synods of the Dutch Reformed Church are in favor of unification with the other three denominations in the Dutch Reformed family in South Africa. However, the synods meeting in October also heard survey reports that fewer than half of the ministers in the DRC are prepared to accept the Belhar Confession as a condition of unity. Those percentages have fallen from 52 percent willing to accept it in 2004 to 48 percent in the 2006 survey.

There is wide regional variation. In the Capetown Synod, about 66 percent of the ministers are ready to accept the Belhar Confession, and 77 percent of the ministers want more visible unity among the four denominations in the family. On the other hand, the synods of the West Transvaal and the East Transvaal, in the center of South Africa, have frankly stated that they want to be under no obligation to accept the Belhar Confession as part of a new church order.

Nelus Niemandt, the Assessor for the DRC, suggested that views seemed to be hardening about the Belhar Confession. He said he did not think there was much objection to the content of the Belhar Confession, but rather to the political context in which it arose.

The Belhar Confession was first crafted by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, one of the partners in the formation of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa in 1994. At the West Cape Synod, Allan Boesak addressed the delegates, telling them they were no longer guilty of heresy. Boesak, who was instrumental in getting the DRC suspended from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in 1982 and was Moderator of the Mission Church when it adopted the Belhar Confession, praised the West Cape Synod for its declarations on apartheid. It was his first appearance at any DRC synod since 1982.

+ *Reformed Ecumenical Council, 2050 Breton Rd, SE, Suite 102, Grand Rapids, Mississippi 49546*

Library retracts decision and allows posting of pro-life flyer

After Liberty Counsel intervened on behalf of a local resident, a library director agreed to allow a flyer announcing a pro-life event to be posted on the West Bend Community

Memorial Library bulletin board, West Bend, Wisconsin.

Mary Weigand wanted to inform residents about an annual Life Chain event, so she took an informational flyer to her local public library. A library employee in charge of the display accepted the flyer and indicated that it would be posted with the other community announcements. Later that day Library Director Michael Tyre called Weigand to inform her that library bulletin boards were reserved for educational purposes and the library policy prohibited religious items like her flyer.

Mathew D. Staver, Founder of Liberty Counsel and Dean of Liberty University School of Law, commented, 'When libraries or other government facilities create an open forum such as a community bulletin board, it is impermissible to discriminate against religious viewpoints.'

+ *Liberty Counsel, PO Box 540774, Orlando, FL 32954 (800) 671-1776*

Egypt frees Christian human rights activists

Egyptian police this week released two Christian rights activists detained for three months. A host of journalists, lawyers, clergyman, family, and friends gathered at the Cairo home of Adel Fawzy Faltas last night to celebrate the acquittal and release on 5 November 5 of the Egyptian head of the Middle East Christian Association and an associate. Faltas, 61, and colleague Peter Ezzat, 25, had been held on unsubstantiated charges of insulting Islam and tarnishing Egypt's reputation abroad. Faltas had conducted an online interview with a controversial convert from Islam to Christianity only days before his arrest on 8 August. Sporting a wide grin, shorts and tennis shoes as well-wishers pressed around him at his 8th floor flat, Faltas said, 'I was always a free man. When you respect yourself and what you are doing, then you are free.'

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

India: Recent incidents of persecution Jammu and Kashmir

At least four Hindu extremists attacked two Christians from the Believers Church in India (BCI) on 4 November in Jammu, the winter capital of the northern state of Jammu and Kashmir. A representative of

the Christian Legal Association (CLA) told Compass that four extremists came in a vehicle, which carried the name of *Shiv Sena*, a Hindu nationalistic party, and beat two Christians identified only as Rinku and Santosh. The two Christians were on their way to meet a pastor in Arnia area of Jammu. A local leader of the BCI told CLA that the victims were brutally beaten, though they were not hospitalised. Although police refused to register a complaint against the attackers, they helped the Christians and the Shiv Sena extremists reach a compromise, which included a written apology by the Hindu radicals. About 6.7 million people in the Himalayan state are Muslim out of the total population of more than 10 million, while only about 3 million are Hindu, mainly concentrated in and around the Jammu city.

Karnataka

Four Hindu extremists on 4 November beat an independent pastor and filed 'prostitution' charges against him near Karnataka state's Gundelpet town. Dr Sajjan K. George, national president of the Global Council of Indian Christians, told Compass that the 50-year-old independent pastor, M. Thankaraj, received injuries on his head, right hand and chest. He was attacked at about 1pm on Sunday in Hosalli Colony area while he had gone to see off a 33-year-old woman of his church, identified only as Thulasiamma, who had visited him for prayer and counseling. Thulasiamma was facing opposition from her family due to her conversion to Christianity, George said. The extremists held the pastor hostage till about 8pm, and then dragged him to the police station, where they filed the complaint against him for 'prostitution.' Police readily registered the complaint against the pastor, but refused to file his complaint against the attackers, George added. The pastor was recovering in the Gundelpet Government Hospital, while police were investigating the allegations against him at press time.

Rajasthan

Local villagers filed a police complaint against two Christian workers for 'forcibly converting' people to Christianity on 30 October in Rajasthan state's Jhunjhunu district. Panna Lal and Dhan Raj from the Believers Church in India (BCI) were arrested by police in Udaipur Vati area and kept

in police lock-up for a night. The following day, police took them to a district official who granted them bail, a representative of the Christian Legal Association (CLA) told Compass. When CLA spoke to police, an officer said the Christians were arrested 'under suspicion,' as they failed to prove their identities. The Christians were arrested while they were visiting one of the families that had recently received Christ. A few families in the area had become Christian by listening to a radio program aired by the BCI. The complaint was allegedly filed by the members of the village court who were opposed to the families' conversion to Christianity.

+ Compass Direct News Service, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana CA 92799

Rifts deepen between Hungarian Churches and Government

As the school year in Hungary begins, the country's church-owned schools are facing renewed difficulties due to cuts in state supports, leading to a growing number of closures and mergers, writes privatbankar.hu. Meanwhile, some religious leaders are accusing the Socialist-led government of deliberately trying to create the impression among the Hungarian people that the church is the 'enemy.'

The Country's leading Protestant denomination (*Református*) runs 109 educational institutions with 30,400 students, and employs 2,500 teachers. It says it has been forced to close down two art schools and lay off 50-100 employees due to financial hardships as a result of declining state support.

Despite this, the pinch is not being felt by all church-run schools. The Evangelical Church (*Evangélikus* or *Lutheran*) has not yet had to close or consolidate any schools, and recently opened a kindergarten in Hódmez vásárhely and a primary school in Szombathely. The church employs approximately 1,000 teachers and educates 11,000 students, said Zoltán Mihályné, head of the church's educational department.

Leaders of the Hungarian Reformed (*Református*) Church are accusing the Socialist-led government of launching a political and PR campaign to demonise Hungary's leading churches, and even to create unrest similar to that which rocked Hungary in October of last year, according to inforadio.hu.

'It is most disturbing that in the last five days there has been an institutional

misdirection from the real problems, in particular the last year's affairs,' wrote Bishop Gusztáv Bölcskei, president of the Reformed Church's synod, in a communiqué. The church has said it is willing to cooperate with the government to solve the 'real problems' of society, such as shortcomings in the healthcare and education systems.

+ Magyarországi Református Egyház, Abonyi u. 21, PO Box 5, 1146 Budapest Hungary

Pakistan: The battle for the country has begun

The Taliban-al-Qaeda alliance has had sanctuary in Waziristan, north-west Pakistan, since September 2006 when the Pakistan government signed a peace agreement and withdrew. After the government crushed a rebellion at the radical Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) in Islamabad in July 2007, the Taliban-al-Qaeda alliance ended the peace agreement and launched terrorism against the government, army and police. After at least 138 civilians died in a terror attack against Benazir Bhutto's convoy on 18 October, the government declared all-out war on the militants. In north-west

Pakistan a fierce battle is presently raging in Taliban-controlled Swat district, home to some 1000 Christians who are facing violent, unprecedented persecution and deadly peril. There have been two suicide bombings in Punjab province in recent days. The President has complicated the whole situation now by suspending the

Constitution and effectively declaring martial law.

+ Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin

The demise of Youth churches

In *Nederlands Dagblad* of December 21, 2006, I read a report on the rapid demise of youth 'churches' in Holland. For a while these youth churches were mushrooming. ND writes that these churches can be characterised as follows: a strong evangelising character, contemporary music, young (!) speakers, and massive attendance. In various places these movements only organised alternative church services for the youth, but these services, too, are being terminated.

You may have heard of these services. What struck me is that these movements like to use *English* names, e.g. 'Potter's



Subscriptions to the IN TOUCH magazine are available. This is an opportunity for those interested who do not have access to or have joined a Cadet and Calvinette Club (Cadets and Calvinettes will continue to be supplied through their clubs). The costs is \$15 per year for four issues.

This is a Reformed Churches of New Zealand children's magazine especially written for 8 - 15 year olds.

It is filled with stories, photographs, puzzles, Bibles studies, Cadet & Calvinette Club news, competitions, poetry, crafts, cooking and Camp News.

If you would like to receive IN TOUCH please forward your \$NZ15 (or \$AU15), with your details, to the **National Board Secretary N.Z.C.C. & C., 4 Phoenix Lane, Papanui, Christchurch.** (Make cheques out to N.Z.C.C. & C.)



Hand' (Barneveld), *'God Fashion'* (Zwolle), *'Heartbeat'* (Amersfoort), and *'Dimension 7'* (Groningen). Who ever said the Dutch can't speak English? Nice names.

For a while these churches attracted thousands of adolescents and post-teens. They even had a national umbrella society called *'Society (of) Youth Churches.'* But, alas, now the society has shut down and the movement appears to be dying out. So much for liturgical and worship-style adaptations. The attention span of the youth of the church does not appear to be very long, no matter how much you dress up services. There is now a trend among youth to seek again the sincere simplicity of the traditional church service.

+ *'Clarion: The Canadian Reformed Magazine,'*
Sep 14, 2007

True Russian Orthodox Church prepares for Rapture

The True Russian Orthodox Church went underground some two weeks ago in order to 'save themselves during the time of the apocalypse,' which they say will come in May 2008.

The True Russian Orthodox Church, was formed by Father Pyotr, a 43-year-old diagnosed schizophrenic currently in custody. Pyotr is believed to have ordered his followers underground last week. The group of 29 people, including four children, has threatened to set fire to themselves if any attempt is made to force them to come to the surface.

Orthodox priests have pitched a tent near the shelter and are praying for the sect members and trying to engage them in 'peaceful dialogue,' a source in the Penza diocese told the Russian News and Information Agency, adding that Archbishop Philaret of Penza had written to them.

Religion was tightly controlled in the U.S.S.R. and the collapse of the Soviet Union saw an explosion in sects and cults, as well as interest in New Age philosophies and beliefs. The back pages of many Russian tabloid newspapers are full of advertisements for 'healers' and 'magicians' who promise to bring happiness in love, success in business, as well as a range of other services.

Alexander Dvorkin, a Russian expert on religions and sects, earlier said that totalitarian sects were common in Russia, and that 'control over their members is absolute, and anything that comes into the heads of their leaders has a direct impact on the entire group.' Dvorkin also said the group in the Penza Region was

similar in outlook to the pseudo-Russian Orthodox groups calling for the canonisation of Stalin and Ivan the Terrible, adding that the actions of the Penza group could 'act as a detonator,' provoking other sects to 'announce the end of the world.'

+ *Institute on Religion and Public Policy » 1620 I Street, NW, Suite LL10, Washington, D.C. 20006 (202) 835-8760 irpp@religionandpolicy.org*

Sudanese President recruits Mujahideen

Tensions have escalated dramatically in Sudan over recent months because the Comprehensive Peace Agreement protocols have not been implemented. Then on 17 November President al-Bashir made a belligerent speech in which he ordered the opening of mujahideen training camps to ready 'Islamic holy warriors' for war. Leaders in Darfur and in predominantly Christian Southern Sudan have now put their forces on high alert. President al-Bashir also railed against American, British and European states. He accused them of being hypocrites and blasphemers, and has vowed to wage jihad against them if they set foot in Sudan. (Peacekeepers from these states are to be part of a joint UN-AU peacekeeping force due in Darfur in January.) Please pray for all Christians in Sudan, for wise leadership and peace, and for an end to Arab-Islamic repression,

persecution and belligerence.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin* | No. 456 | Wed 28 Nov 2007

Baptist pastor sentenced in Turkmenistan

Baptist pastor Vyacheslav Kalataevsky was arrested on 12 March 2007 and on 14 May was sentenced to three years in a labour camp. Kalataevsky, who was born in Ukraine but raised in Turkmenistan, had previously been deported for 'establishing a prayer house and organising meetings of Christian Baptists'. Police allege he then crossed the border illegally in 2001. His family maintain that he is innocent of that and the Ministry of State Security secret police are punishing him for his religious activity. Kalataevsky was released on 6 November after eight months in prison. Forum 18 reports that he and his wife Valentina were summonsed to a meeting on 13 November where they were ordered to sign a prepared statement agreeing to stop meeting with fellow believers. They refused. At the end of the meeting, a Muslim imam promised Kalataevsky that if he continued his religious activity he would meet an 'unpleasant fate'. The local ancient Armenian Apostolic community has also been intensively persecuted. Please pray.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin* | No. 456 | Wed 28 Nov 2007

Feminine focus

The feminine virtue of cheerfulness

Sally Davey

Whose company do you really enjoy? To whom are you drawn? Who always leaves you feeling better, with more enthusiasm and with a better outlook on life? Who is the one that adds zest and sparkle to almost any social occasion? I'm almost certain you've thought of a cheerful person. Why? Because it's the quality of cheerfulness that provides all these blessings. A cheerful woman is an asset to everyone she knows, but perhaps especially to those of a more serious, earnest nature, who

have to struggle with pessimism, doubt or excessive introspection. The sunny-natured, cheerful friend is certainly one to lift drooping spirits, comfort the broken-hearted and encourage the worrier absorbed in her troubles to look beyond herself.

A natural quality?

Some women seem naturally cheerful. It simply appears to be their personality trait — they were born like that, you might say. It comes easily to them. They always have a positive outlook. Well, if that is so you could assume that such characters tend to be a bit shallow at times. It is true, there are such people in the world. They do not think too deeply about life, and tend to coast over the waves rather than be submerged by them.

Being cheerful doesn't seem to cost them any effort. One is tempted to ask

whether such cheerfulness (pleasant company though it may be at times) is worth much. Is it?

We can answer this by asking what it really means to be cheerful. It seems to me that cheerfulness consists of two things: being truly content, and taking genuine delight in life. These things are impossible if one is simply floating mindlessly through life. True contentment and delight depend on a conscious weighing-up of the situation; and being contented and delighted for reasons beyond its mere circumstances. To be truly cheerful means having your thinking cemented in certain truths that are genuine reasons for contentment and delight.

Let me begin my explanation by looking backwards and sideways, culturally, for a minute or two. Two or three generations ago girls were trained to be outwardly cheerful as a social grace. A bright, positive manner was courtesy, parents told their daughters. You are not good company if you are moody, complaining or excessively quiet. Or if you are simply overly serious. Girls learned to make light, bright conversation; to sparkle, in other words. This was good as far as it went: it is good manners to be cheerful in company, and to be in the habit of making good conversation such as will put others at ease. But the problem is, if this is only a veneer masking boredom, resentment or even catty contempt (which it did at times – read the novels of the 1940s and 50s and you will see what I mean) it is not real cheerfulness. It simply is not genuine to purr benignly to your neighbour one minute, then as soon as she is gone, dissect her cruelly over the phone to somebody else. And women did this. (And still do.)

The development of bad manners

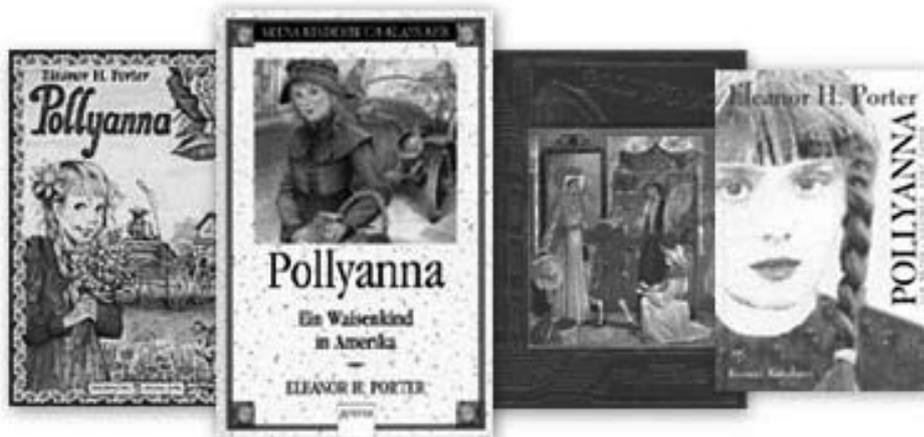
Yes, cheerfulness must be honest, transparent, and thoroughly from the heart. However, neither is it any good to lurch to the other extreme; and be so thoroughly 'honest' about our feelings that we let all manner of sin express itself in our demeanour, speech and behaviour. This is not good manners, and it is simply sin. I believe this is what we have had develop around us for the past few decades in western culture. Save for a few situations – such as work (where it is our best interests to behave politely) – most of us are capable of behaving with anything but cheerfulness. We are prone to sulking, petulance, temper tantrums, moody discontent, self-pity, pessimism, gloom and even despair such as will lead to the bottle, mood-altering drugs or worse.

We blame our moods and our anger on such excuses as our circumstances, other people, or even our hormones. We feel the urge to express our feelings (however bad they may be) rather than curb them. We let it all hang out... And others suffer – our spouses, our children, our employers and their customers, our teachers, siblings – and anyone else who happens to be in the wrong place (around us) at the wrong time. Our culture excuses us, telling us... it is better to be honest about what you feel... and it is not your fault.

Neither of these two approaches is the right one. Yes, we need to be cheerful, but we need to be genuinely, honestly cheerful, and from the heart. Yes, we must be

adversity, long-term, in the adult world. Not enough, that is, unless they are backed by rock-solid biblical certainties (and they don't appear to be, in these stories).

But let's get down to the nitty-gritty: what are the biblical facts, and how do we make the applicatory connections between them and our lives? How do they translate into real cheerfulness? The first fact is that God is in command of all that he has made. This world is not spinning out of control. Our lives are not random flashes in a meaningless pan. He created us, and every detail in our lives is part of his great plan. He will accomplish everything he wants to in and through us, if we love him and serve him. For those who believe this,



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cheerful; but for the right reasons, and for the right motives. How can we manage this?

An attribute of godliness

Cheerfulness, like all the other virtues, is an attribute of godliness. To be rightly understood and rightly practiced there needs to be more than a 'positive attitude' or even a desire to make other people happy, comfortable, or feel good. We need to have grasped the true, deep-down genuine reasons God's people have for being contented and delighted with their life here in this life. It is not enough, for instance, to be cheerful in the sense that two nineteenth-century girl's books portrayed it. No matter how attractive Eleanor H. Porter's *Pollyanna* and L. M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* are (and they are!), *Pollyanna*'s 'glad game' and *Anne*'s naturally sunny character are not enough to stand the real test of

pessimism and despair are banished. We can rest calmly and optimistically on this solid truth. Secondly, God is just. The evil that we see, and experience in this world, has already been dealt to. It is finite, and will come to an end. God will judge the world, and wicked men and women will be punished. He does not overlook injustice, cruelty or dishonesty. The bad people we live with may seem to prosper – but it is only for a short while. This truth should steady us when we are tempted to fume in our frustration, or sink in discouragement at the way the world – or the church – is going. We can be cheerful because God has already seen it, and will soon do something about it. Thirdly, God is love. He cares, intimately, about sinners like you and me, and he has provided a way of salvation for us. Christ has come; he lived, suffered and died to free us from the futile treadmill of our sinful natures. We are heading for a

glorious eternity which will be completely and utterly free of all the wicked and painful things we experience in this life.

It comes from who is in us

Furthermore, the outlook for those who belong to Christ is extremely hopeful – even while we live in our mortal bodies. The Holy Spirit is here, living in us, giving us encouragement every day that we can withstand the temptation to sin. There is hope that we can improve! The rotten bad habits that caused you despair yesterday can be broken. The destructive way of thinking, the nasty instinctive reactions, the tactless way you spoke, can all be dealt with through his help. And not only this, our lives are going somewhere. They have purpose, and direction. What we can do for Christ today counts for eternity, and our little, faithful actions for one little other person may be used by him in his great, eternal work of redemption. It's exciting! I'm a useful part of something infinitely bigger and more important than myself.

And even more: God has promised that he will take care of us in an intimate,

wonderful way, dealing with needs of which we aren't even aware. Not even a hair on our heads can be touched without his allowing it. He has shown, time and again in Scripture, that he will feed us, clothe us, give us shelter, provide us with families (even when we don't have them in the normal way), and unwaveringly be with us, right until the very end of our lives. Who can argue with Romans 8? Nothing, not a single thing we can experience in this life is capable of separating us from the love of God. We are assured of this. It is certain, beyond doubt. It is our inheritance in Christ. No evil can snatch it from us. We are safe. So – gone is all cause for nagging fear, self-pity, or hopelessness of any kind. We, in this world, are of all women to be envied. We are the ones who can be completely, genuinely, unabashedly cheerful. We have every reason, in Christ, to be so.

Two examples

I have two Christian friends I'd like to tell you about. They are my illustrations of cheerfulness, and they shine with it. They

warm my heart and do me good – which is what cheerful people do, don't they? Cycliciah is from Zimbabwe. She came to Christchurch a few years ago, at a time when life was very hard at home. Our church is down the street from where she used to live, and she began attending – at Sunday services, and then our ladies' Bible study. Now she is a member of our congregation. Cycliciah's life has often been very hard. Even now, she has no family in the city. But she has made the church her family; and her beaming face, totally uncomplaining heart, and great eagerness to learn from the Scriptures do all the rest of us in the Bible study group a power of good – every week! She is also a living lesson in resourcefulness. In so many ways she has trusted God to help her - with learning the intricacies of our immigration system, with finding employment, with learning to drive in a strange city, and acquiring all sorts of new skills – even though she is already a grandmother. Cycliciah is a lady who is cheerful – and who knows the reasons why.

Maureen lives in America. She is a native of the Boston area. Her life is (geographically!) a world away from Cycliciah's, but so are the circumstances in which God has placed her. We met at university, when she was nearly finished a good degree and heading for a useful career (if she had needed it). But she was already engaged to Dave, a fine young Christian accountant, and they married soon after. Maureen and Dave have three grown children, all of whom are progressing well in their work and study. They are active in their church, and Maureen serves faithfully in many ways. She has no temporal worries – Dave has a great job, and she does not need to work outside the home. But Maureen's cheerfulness is not based on her comfortable life. Her delight in so many things is much deeper than that. You can tell that if God removed all these things – as he did from Job – Maureen would still praise him. Just being in her company is a tonic to the soul because she is so cheerfully at peace with God that she is outward-focused. She delights in what is going on around her. She is excited about other people, and what interests and concerns them. Even the little details of others' lives delight her – and she remembers them. You don't often hear her talking about herself. This is Christian cheerfulness.

Another story

But there's someone else I'd like to tell

Calling all country boys and girls to become

NETWORKERS



If you have always wanted to be a Cadet or Calvinette but live too far away from a club, we would love to hear from you!

NETWORKERS is for children aged 9-15 years old, and you would be a correspondence member with the closest club, able to attend camps and any club functions that you could make.

Your counsellor and cadre would be your correspondent friends and leader.

INTERESTED?

Then write to me –
Eddie van Leeuwen, 40 Victors Road
Hoon Hay, CHRISTCHURCH

you about, partly because her story could be yours and mine one day. Betty is my mother's first cousin, and an unremarkable – yet quite remarkable — person. She is a single lady, now in her late eighties, and lives in a secure dementia unit in a retirement home. She is probably in the last months of her life on this earth, and I love her dearly. Betty was very kind to me when I was a young student, newly-arrived in Christchurch. In those years she was a senior nurse – not that far from retirement. In her earlier years she had been a missionary in India, serving in a maternity hospital which also helped rescue abandoned babies. (She was very familiar with Amy Carmichael's work.) Betty's father was an Anglican vicar who served all over the Christchurch diocese; and she herself has

been a faithful Anglican all her life. Above all, Betty is a lady, and was brought up with the best of sweet and gracious manners. It really shows, now she is frail and failing, unclear in her thinking. Seeing someone with this condition makes me realise how the important things, the things that really stick if you've been brought up well, stay with you even when almost everything else has gone. Betty is cheerful. She is still a lady. She was brought up in a generation that learned the habits of thankfulness, contentment, selfless commitment to the good of others, and kindness. Even now, she smiles sweetly and says "thank you" to the caregivers who feed and dress her. She helps make their work a pleasure because of that. I can see it every time I visit. One of the other women who lives in

her unit is much younger, and she spends all day (it seems) walking round and round and round the building, clutching a teddy bear and moaning softly. Betty could get irritated by her (as doubtless I would.) Instead, she smiles and asks "How's Teddy today, Darling?" My heart smites me whenever I see this, and it reminds me of many important truths about faith, kindness and cheerfulness. Betty is my hero of old age. Yes, we can be faithful, and do good, even unto death.

Have you ever thought that cheerfulness is wishful thinking? Or for the empty-headed? Be assured, it is for the faithful, true and strong of heart. It is built on the solid rock of God's Word; and it is the mark of the steadfast in Christ.

Book in focus

Steve Farrar, Point Man – How a Man Can Lead His Family, Oregon: Multnomah, 2003 (Updated edition with study guide.)

When the critical eye of history is cast over the failure of our current generation in the west, I wonder whether any feature will stand out as strongly as the failure of men to lead in the home. Men have become apologetic and passive. All too many young people grow up in fatherless homes – many even have no idea who their father is. Just this past week, I read the following quote from Tuhoe 'Bruno' Isaac, ex-leader of the Mongrel Mob who became a Christian: 'We were just plain, lonely guys **without fathers or role models**, floundering through a lack of encouragement or any vision for the future.' (emphasis mine). Sadly, even in Christian homes, many fathers abdicate their responsibilities – although they are present physically, they play no real part in their children's lives.

The background to this book

Steve Farrar, who heads up Men's Leadership Ministries, has written this book out of a passion for men to take up their God-given role as husbands and fathers – to be spiritual leaders in their homes. The journey towards the book began when in 1990, as a 'rookie pastor,' Farrar came

to the conclusion that around 90% of the counselling issues he encountered were because of men's failure to be spiritual leaders in the family. Sensibly, Farrar began to focus on the men in his church. Some years later he did his doctoral dissertation on men and this in turn led to this book and a speaking ministry to men.

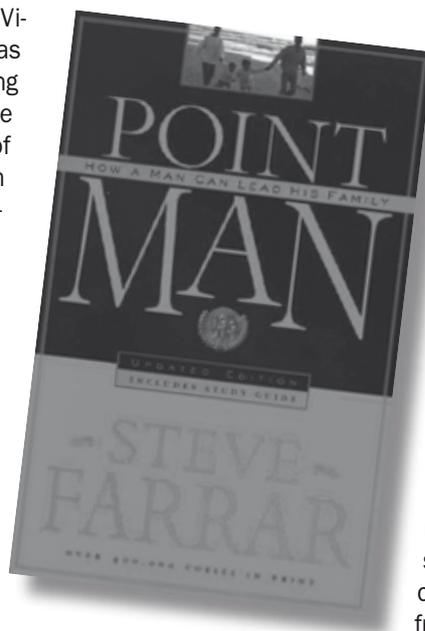
Farrar's book opens with a scene from Vietnam in which you as the reader are leading a patrol – you are the Point Man. The lives of the other seven men hang on your judgement and leadership. But then the image changes and it is not seven soldiers you are leading through the bush but your family. Farrar tells us that 'Leading a family through the chaos of American culture is like leading a small patrol through enemy-occupied territory.' And don't we know the reality of this in our own society! 'War has been declared on the biblical family.'

Farrar tells us that, in this war, Satan has two prime strategies: To effectively

alienate and sever a husband's relationship from his wife and to effectively alienate and sever a father's relationship with his children. In both cases, his goal is to neutralise the man. If he can neutralise the God-appointed leader of the home, he can neutralise the home. Tellingly, Farrar says, 'We need some men who have a passion to be better fathers than they are

accountants. We need some men who have a passion to be better dads than they are attorneys, salesmen, foremen, pastors or doctors.'

A particular responsibility of fathers, Farrar tells us, is to save their sons – to raise men who will raise other men. Quoting Dave Simmons, he says that God's plan for training 'family shepherds ... is a decentralised program with an instructor / student ratio of 1:2; 1:3 or 1:4 and takes anywhere from sixteen to twenty two years. It is the father / son training programme. Fathers are supposed to equip boys to become effective family shepherds. The task of a father is not to raise children: it is to equip child raisers.' The way that men raise their sons is in



spending time with them. But Farrar helpfully points out the effect of the industrial revolution in greatly reducing the amount of time fathers spend with their sons. He urges on us the importance of men being *physically* and *emotionally* present in their children's, but especially their son's lives and reinforces this with the example of the great legacy Jonathan Edwards left in descendants committed to the Lord who also made a significant contribution to society.

The epidemic

In his third chapter, Farrar takes time to speak directly against what he calls an epidemic of staggering proportions – adultery. His response? 'Real men don't!' Farrar candidly cuts through all the double speak of our age and calls a spade a spade – 'adultery is treason.' He speaks compellingly of the devil's strategy to sideline men by leading them to seek 'greener pastures' and clearly illustrates the steps by which many men fall. But he also offers great encouragement that those, even in loveless marriages, who honour God will, in turn, be honoured by him. 'I believe that your misery can be replaced by joy as you remain faithful and trust God to honour your faithfulness.' Farrar is uncompromising in seeking God's standard of holiness in men's lives. 'The moral compromises in our churches and homes have got to stop. We have given ourselves permission to seek the company of other women if our wives aren't meeting our needs. We have lowered the biblical standards of holiness because we have been inappropriately influenced by our culture. We are the salt and we have lost our saltiness. If we ever hope to raise moral standards outside the church, then we had better begin by raising them within the church.'

In the fourth chapter, 'A One-Woman Kind of Man,' Farrar offers helpful principles for men on how to remain faithful to their wives: A One-Woman Kind of Man is committed with his eyes, his mind, his lips, his hands and his feet. Each of these is fleshed out with frankness and honesty and helpful advice. This chapter is a must-read for men in a culture saturated with sexual temptation and innuendo.

The leader

With the fifth and sixth chapters, Farrar moves to the heart of what it means to be a spiritual leader in the home. These two chapters deal with the need for men to regularly read the scriptures and to spend

time in prayer. Farrar states simply, 'The reason the next two chapters are so critical is that without the biblical principles they contain, you can *never* be a spiritual leader in your home. Never.' In saying this, I believe that Farrar gets to the heart of the failure of so many Christian men in our day. If men are not serious in spending time in God's presence, allowing his Spirit to shape them, they can never withstand the attacks of the evil one. If their children grow up to be spiritually strong it will not be because of their father but in spite of him – but most will simply follow the example of their father, whatever he might say, in neglecting the wellbeing of their soul.

Research by George Bana shows that where a child is the first member of a family to attend church, the whole family will follow in only 3.5% of cases. Where a mother is the first to attend, the whole family will follow in 17% of cases. But where a father is the first to attend, the whole family will follow in 93% of cases. Men were made by God to lead their families and where they lead, the family will follow. If a family is not going in the right direction, the first thing we should look at is the fathers' leadership. The same principles will hold true to the father's spiritual discipline or lack of it. Chances are if kids see their dads in the Word and on their knees in prayer, that this will flow through into their lives too.

In introducing these chapters, Farrar outlines a third strategy of the evil one for sidelining men: To effectively sever and alienate a man from the spiritual disciplines that will keep him fit and effective for the spiritual battle. Farrar deals realistically with the difficulties of keeping up a good devotional life, offers strong incentives to doing so and also provides much helpful practical advice for men in this area.

In chapter 7, Farrar likens husbands and wives to pilot and co-pilot on a 747. Using this example, he unfolds the need for teamwork 'in the marriage cockpit' in order to avoid the family 'crashing and burning.' Farrar unfolds the scriptural principles from Ephesians 5 in a helpful way and refuses to compromise what the Bible has to say in this area. He concludes with the chapter referring (as Paul does!) to Christ's example as the pattern for husbands to follow.

The blessing of service

In chapter 8, Farrar takes a brief aside to deal with a phenomenon of our times

– couples who choose not to have children. In a direct way he challenges the error of this way of thinking as well as pointing out the very real blessings in having children – not least the growth in humility and wisdom of their parents!

The next chapter lays out a number of principles for raising 'Masculine Sons and Feminine Daughters.' Farrar insightfully exposes the spirit of our age which is aggressively seeking to destroy the biblical roles of men and women. He then applies the principles of Ephesians 6:4 in very helpful and practical ways and reinforces the need for parental guidance and role modelling.

In the second to last chapter of the book, Farrar deals candidly with the importance of parents shaping their children's attitudes towards sex – 'It's your responsibility to teach them the fundamentals of sexuality and how everything 'works.' It is essential, especially in our culture, that children get their information about sex from their parents. The reason it is so essential is that there are quite a few others who want the job.' Many children, even from Christian homes, will grow up with warped views of sex because this important part of a parent's task was left to the school, the television or their peer group. Again Farrar gives good practical principles on how to go about this task as well as some useful examples on how to approach what can be an uncomfortable task for parents.

Point Man concludes with a twofold exhortation to men: they are called to 'rock and role!' Men are to be a rock 'characterised by an unwavering commitment to their wives, a willingness to get involved in the lives of their children, and a gut-level desire to follow hard after Jesus Christ.' And they are to be a role model – someone their son(s) will seek to emulate. This is a high calling and one that Farrar is quick to point out is based on imitation of Christ and only possible through the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

Farrar has written a book for our time. It challenges and confronts us as men and calls us to God's standard for Christian fatherhood. But this is not just a book for fathers – it is for all men. Men who take seriously the challenges of this book, particularly the first six and the last chapters, will grow in Christian maturity and leadership qualities. Young men, too, can learn much about how to be a Christian man from this book.

Point Man is easy to read and written

in a down-to-earth style. It has a useful appendix on Christian headship, references to numerous books and articles for those who want to dig deeper and a study guide at the back so that it can be used as a Bible study for a men's group. Although

it has a distinctly American flavour, it addresses problems which are endemic all through the western world. I believe that it is a must read for all those who desire to be Christian men – whether aged 18 or 80!

(Point Man is used as the basis for monthly men's breakfasts in the Hamilton and Pukekohe Reformed Churches.)

*Reviewed by Rev. Michael Willemse,
Pastor, Reformed Church of Hamilton.*

Focus on home

Andrew Reinders

Gleanings from our bulletins...

Avondale

Junior Youth Group: Dear Congregation, I would like to tell you a little bit about junior youth group and what's been happening. Every Friday night we meet in the basement and usually have a Bible study, then maybe a craft or play some games. We have turns as leaders sharing the Bible study duty, and this seems to be quite an enjoyable and stimulating time for all. We have introduced the basics about the Christian faith so far and we now ask for your prayers to guide the children's hearts with the work of the Holy Spirit. We have also made an attempt at introducing the Bible books. The games we play to encourage learning seem to work well, especially our 'find the books in the Bible' game, as do the interactive reading times and reflection points. At first we tried singstar and movies as activities, but have found that the interactive games work the best. With the move to daylight saving we've jumped at the opportunity to play some sports outside and everyone has had a good dose of exercise!! Our numbers in the group vary greatly, some evenings we've had one, sometimes six or seven come, and it's always a bit uncertain knowing how many people will turn up. However we have a few regulars to rely on as contacts, and regardless of child numbers, each week we have three to four leaders/helpers present. The children seem to enjoy the consistency of the group's presence, and we would ask for your prayers in order to keep the children coming and willing to learn. - Kind regards, Sandra and the junior youth group team!!

An important notice Are you interested in

better health and greater energy? Would you like to eat your food close to God's design as we find it in Scripture? Karin Puttner is a Christian and a certified Health and Nutrition Consultant. She invites you to attend her lecture: Health or Sickness - Make the Right Choice. 17 November, 7.00 pm. Avondale Community Centre, 99 Rosebank Road. For more information see Ticia Reitsma.

Family Prayer & Praise items: Last Tuesday evening, the Lord took to Himself, Ali Westendorp, wife of Rev. John Westendorp who recently took early retirement to look after her. Please remember Rev. Westendorp and his family in your prayers.

Visit to Queen Street - It was nice to go out with a team of 7 on Saturday evening despite several people being away at YAC camp and on holiday. There was a good time of prayer after the DVD and we got a car park straight away! Everyone got involved. Sharon, Marja, Joel and Henry did a walk around the block and found it a nice change from standing in the same spot. Sharon had some good conversations and one Maori guy who, (I think, was homeless) had a good rant about the 'spirit of racism' in the churches. His schizophrenic paranoid friend asked me for bus money so I gave him \$2. Josiah had a long listen to an elderly woman who was Jehovah Witness. He was starting to get somewhere but later Henry and I looked up some passages for her in her New World translation and found that every time it should say Jesus is the "son" of God, they've translated it as "a son". However, it was still positive. Molly got into the tract handing out business too, finding her courage after only a couple of outings. The evangelist I've mentioned before from the church of the Nazerene came over to talk and he recognized Henry – they both used to study at Fowie Lodge. I met an Indian man called Shri who was in his 50-60s. He was Hindu and had seen angels and wanted to go to a church. He had just come out of St. Patricks where someone let him in so he could pray and

light some candles, then walked up the street and bumped into me. We had a great and positive talk, with me trying to answer his questions but not getting too side-tracked from the message we are trying to deliver. Eventually, I brought it to the crux of the matter and he wanted to know where it said in the Bible that God is angry at all sin and all sinners. I left him with Rom 3:23-25 because "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". I know he will look it up too. Reuben

Bishopdale

Pastoral: Congratulations to Marcel and Alice Vlaanderen on the birth of Elsie Marie on Thursday this week. She weighed in at just under 7 pounds. God is good!

Notices: Reformation places: Travelling through Germany? Check out Lutherstadt Wittenberg, the home town of Martin Luther and worship in English at a Lutheran service held during most of the year. Check out details at <http://www.wittenberg-english-ministry.com/>. Alf & Shirley Schinkelshoek

Pastoral. This week, the elders met with Brad McConshie and Jeremy Bangma, both having expressed a strong desire to profess their faith in Jesus Christ. The dates on which they will profess their faith have yet to be decided.

Bucklands Beach

Pastoral. One comment that I heard this week set me thinking. Someone pointed out that he/she felt isolated from the rest of the fellowship. 'Apart from you and one other person, no one in this church talks with me.' Whatever the facts of the matter, it does raise a point that we should be reminded of over and over again. Fellowship with the Lord necessarily demands fellowship with one another. How much more important this becomes in a fellowship such as ours where there have been quite a number of new folks come into the life of the church and where there

is a mixture of cultures and backgrounds as never before. What are your responsibilities here? Might I make a few suggestions with respect to Sunday services?

Be there! Regular worship is where it all begins.

Stay there! What happens after the services - whether in the hall as we drink coffee/tea or in the foyer - informal greeting, chatting, etc. - is a vital bridge in creating true fellowship with each other.

Give of yourself. If you wait for someone to come to you, the chances are that you'll be disappointed.

Go to someone you don't know! How else can you possibly create a bridge?

Be approachable.

If English is a problem, start with a handshake and a warm, welcoming smile. That's international talk everyone understands and appreciates.

GO ON, TRY IT.

Session report. A vicar for 2008? The session has been exploring the possibility/feasibility of applying for a vicar to be placed here at Bucklands Beach during 2008. We have been advised that there will, DV., be one vicar available during the year. He is Mr Daniel Wilson who did a summer vicariate in Mangere a few months ago. He is studying in the USA and would become available in Sept/October 2008. His work among us would be mutually beneficial. We also been looking at the cost. We note that there is a considerable subsidy available via denominational channels. On top of that, we would to provide somewhere between \$25,000 to \$30,000 for the 12 month period. We note also that there may well be other churches applying for a vicar. Last night the session has agreed in principle to proceed with the idea. The next step therefore is to inform the congregation, provide whatever information we can, and call for a congregational meeting to discuss and decide on this. Our plan is to call for such a meeting during February of next year.

Pastoral. It is our great joy and privilege to witness the baptism of Daniel Robertson today. Welcome to any family or friends who have come especially for the occasion.

From Session. As announced last Sunday, the session has nominated br Andre Scheepers as for eldership in our congregation. His is a single nomination and will therefore need a two-thirds majority vote in order to be ratified. The voting will

take place during a brief meeting of the congregation on Sunday, 2nd of December immediately after the morning service. The reason for departing from the usual procedure of nominating a duo (two names) is because br Scheepers has indicated that he is seeking the Lord's guidance with respect to his future. Our brother has previously served as a pastor in the (South African) Church of England and is preparing himself to be available for ministry in our denomination if this should be the Lord's will. To that end the Session believes that he should be given an opportunity to serve as an elder in order to prepare himself and to test his calling.

Pastoral. The 'madness' of this season of the year is in full swing. One wonders if there is a limit to the extent this season can be commercialised and exploited. It is also very difficult not to get caught up in the swirling current that confronts and entices us everywhere. What about Christmas? Is it really the big deal and, more especially, the kind of deal the world makes it out to be? We all know that it is not. However, knowing that is only the beginning. What can you do about it? May I remind you of a passage I preached on about 6 weeks ago? May I ask you to pause to reflect and act on these words? Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. (Col 3.1,2)

Christchurch

Birthdays to give thanks to our Lord for... congratulations to the following...Mrs. Atty Reinders who celebrates her (80th) birthday this Saturday

Pastoral. We give thanks to the Lord for the birth of Elias Timothy Havelaar, born last Sunday to Ed & Liana, and for the safe arrival of Tamara Esther Smith, born this past Tuesday to Titus & Esther.

Pastoral. Our congratulations to Pieter Havelaar and Jasmine Plug who will be united in marriage this coming Saturday, 24th of November, in the Free Reformed Church of Albany, Western Australia. Our congratulations also to the wider family. May the Lord grant safe travelling to those that attend this wedding and bring you safely back. We do hope you will have a wonderful time.

Church picnic. Saturday 8 December at 2.30 pm. Please put this date on the calendar and join with the whole congregation for a fun afternoon of activities and BBQ dinner.

We have booked the South Brighton Reserve which has both a large open space and lovely trees for shade. There is a great children's play area and the estuary to launch canoes, or walk along. Lord willing, it is intended that this will be the break-up for most of the church's ministries including Sunday School, various bible studies and Youth group. Hope to see you all there.

Mission fundraiser. Catherine Littlejohn is going to live like a Burmese child to raise money for an orphanage in Myanmar. She is looking for sponsors so if you would be able to sponsor her please contact her by email (FaihtCross@gmail.com) or telephone (352 9722). Thank you.

Dovedale

Pastoral Notes. Congratulations to the Couperus family on the arrival of Caleb. We thank the Lord with you for him.

Session Report. The combined leadership group, representing the three churches in Christchurch, continue to uphold the protocols established between us in regard to church membership and there is a willingness to exchange and share ministerial and reading elder resources in the periods of vacancy.

Pastoral Notes. With the passing of our loved brother, Mr Jeremy Bosma, at home on Wednesday, we are deeply saddened. Our love and sympathy abound toward Claire and the family. There are many blessings to count as we remember the generous way in which Jeremy served our congregation as a member and as an elder. The session members treasure the quiet, thoughtful and ways in which he worked with us.

Pastoral Notes. We are grateful to the Lord that Mr Martin Geluk, a retired minister in the CRCA has undertaken (dv) to help supply our pulpit from February. Mr Geluk has been the minister of a number of congregations, most recently in West Australia. They now live in Melbourne. He and his wife Corry plan to come 14 Feb in anticipation of his first Lord's Day with us, being 17 Feb. The elders are very grateful for this provision. Please pray for Mr and Mrs Geluk, that it would be profitable, and a joy, for them (and us).

Dunedin

General Notices. St Andrews Chapel Service. It's our turn to conduct a service in the St Andrews Rest Home chapel today as a ministry to the residents. The service will run from about 2-2:40 pm. Do come along and help out with the singing if you can.

Session Notes. Short report of the meeting held on Friday 19 October. Br J D van Dyk opened the meeting with a reading from 2 Corinthians 13:11–14 and a devotion emphasising the importance of the handshake in promoting brotherly love and unity. This was followed by prayer.

Call. Last Sunday the Reformed Church of Gosnells in Perth voted to call me as their second pastor to work alongside Rev John de Jonge. Pray that the Lord may make His will clear as we consider this call over the next few weeks. Hans Vaatstra

General Notices. Visiting Preacher. Next Sunday, DV, we will have the privilege of hearing Vicar David Waldron preach. David's visit will mark the beginning of our calling process. Although we have barely had time to react to the news of our own pastor's approaching departure, your Session felt it would nevertheless be sensible to take this opportunity to consider a potential candidate while he is still available for call. A personal profile is included overleaf. Session plans to meet with David Waldron early in the evening of Saturday 8 December. Then, at 7:45 pm in the church hall, he will give a presentation for the congregation about his time with the Australian Indigenous Mission. There will be an opportunity to meet David and his wife, Jenny, informally afterwards over supper. David will preach in Dunedin on Sunday morning after which there will be a shared luncheon. In the afternoon the Waldrons will be taken to Oamaru to preach and meet the congregation there. If you have any particular views about the calling process or possible candidates please discuss these with your elder.

Foxton

Warm welcome: A hearty welcome to Eildert and Ineke Boekholt (Parents of Karen Dykstra – Colin's Karen) who, after 55 years of living in the Wellington area, have moved to Foxton! Although our brother & sister's hearts are still very much with the many friends they have made over the years in Silverstream, they have chosen to make the Reformed Church of Foxton their new spiritual home. Our prayers are with you, El & Ineke, as you are settling into your "new" house and environment.

Profession of Faith: Session announces with great joy that the following three young people will, DV, profess their faith next Sunday morning: Jody van Echten. David van der Burg (examined by the Wellington session, and now a baptismal member of

Foxton). Katrina van Echten (examined by the Pukekohe session)

Session meeting report: Br Ricky Dykstra and Sr Cindy Harwood requested to be united in Christian Marriage on Saturday 22nd December in our church, which session wholeheartedly endorsed. Rev Pieter van Huyssteen will be the officiating minister.

Hamilton

Pastoral: On Thursday evening, Catherine Bos, Breony van der Wel, Yvette Willemse and Kimberley Williams met with some of the elders. We were greatly encouraged to hear each of them testify to the work of the Lord in their lives and to their desire to take up the privileges and responsibilities of full membership. We rejoice in God's goodness and look forward to hearing these young women profess their faith in the morning service on 18 November.

Report from Elders' meeting. Votum – Presently, following God's calling of his people to worship, the minister responds, on behalf of the congregation, using the words of Psalm 121:2 to express our dependence on God. The Elders agreed unanimously to change this so that the congregation respond using these words (which will be on the screen). This change reinforces the fact that worship is a dialogue between God and his people and is in line with the practice of a number of other churches in the RCNZ. We will begin this practice next week (11 November).

Hastings

The body of Christ – an amazing gift. As I lay here in bed many thoughts come to mind. One I would like to share with you is: the body of Christ, His church, what an amazing gift. As I give thanks for the loads

of visitors in hospital, the phone calls of encouragement, the prayers prayed, I see God's grace and goodness at work here in His church. It is easy for a congregation to claim in words that they are the body of Christ, but where do we see that come to life in the congregation? One way is in the care we offer, the prayers we speak for those in the Church. The life of the congregation reflects Christ living and working in our midst. 1 Cor 12:14 "For the body is not one member, but many." As we continue serving the Lord in the weeks & months ahead, let us all continue as active members of the body, seeing, hearing, hands and feet eagerly ready to serve, take the time to read and mediate on 1 Cor 12. Thanks again for your encouragement. In Christ's service, David Kaijser.

RTC – Murray Capill's visit. RTC Membership. After the meeting on the evening of Tuesday 27th November many of you who attended may feel that you would like to contribute financially to the running of the RTC. By taking up membership you pledge to contribute a certain amount each year to help provide funds for the operation of the ministry training programmes. If you would like to take up membership please see Mike Pudney the Hastings RTC rep.

Some of the issues facing the RTC. Murray Capill gave an excellent delivery outlining the Biblical imperative for the training of men for the ministry, then moved on to outline the way the RTC carries out training today. He also indicated that there are more vacancies for ministers in NZ and Australian churches than there are men in training. It was also clear that finances are always a struggle and if we want to maintain a Reformed ministry training facility in this part of the world it needs both funds and candidates to train for



Astrid Johanna Gulliksen

25 March 1990 – 17 October 2007

It is a great comfort to us that our beloved Astrid loved the Lord and, though we mourn her loss, we know that we will be reunited with her when the Lord calls us home.

Thank you for all your prayers, cards and support.

Steve, Angela, Jake, Marc, Hakan, Erik and Daejahn Gulliksen

the ministry. He certainly left us with the strong impression that the training given to students at the college was thoroughly Reformed in its orientation. At this point issues that had caused concerns back in the 1990s are no longer part of the teaching approach taken by the faculty. Another issue of some concern is the fact that several of the teaching staff will retire in the next five years. The needs of

the college are great and we as churches in the Reformed denomination need to be in prayer for the future of the college. In practical terms the more applications they receive from men and women wishing to train the more viable the running of the college will become. In addition any financial assistance is always welcome.

Attention Cadets and Calvinettes! Our very last club night will be at the Kaijsers to make our MOVIE! So please practise your lines and bring your costumes. Let's make this a brilliant movie so we can show it to your parents at the Church Christmas function. Be at the Church at 5:45 on Thursday the 6th. We'll start with some sausages on the BBQ, do the Movie and be back at the Church at 9:30. Please let your counsellor know if you can't be there.

Hukanui

As was announced last Sunday, Jonny and Glynis Watson were blessed with the birth of healthy daughter, Katie Ruth, on Friday 26th October at 4:24 p.m. The gift of life is a rich blessing and responsibility from the Lord, so let us pray that He may grant them wisdom as they venture into the new roles of parenthood. Lord willing, Katie will receive the covenant sign and seal of baptism in the morning service on Sunday the 25th November.

Pastoral: Aiden Roux has also spent this past week in Starship Hospital, with the doctors expressing serious concern about his deteriorating health and lack of weight gain. They are continuing to experiment with different formulas to help him gain weight, with the possibility of needing to be fed through a nasal tube; but the necessity of a liver transplant is becoming more urgent. Please continue to pray for Aiden for healing, and Paul and Sharon that they may know God's presence and peace through this difficult and draining time. Aiden Roux has in recent weeks been diagnosed with Alagille syndrome, a rare, inherited disorder in which bile flow from the liver is decreased and there are fewer than normal bile ducts. This syndrome often affects the liver and other organs. This disorder is usually present at birth.

Mangere

Pastoral. Two weeks ago we hosted the Reformation Conference in our church, with Dr Joey Pipa as the guest speaker. We hope to have these talks available soon through MP3 files on one of our Reformed Church website. The actual event of the reformation itself, however, is remembered

on the 31st of October, the day Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses on the door of the castle church at Wittenberg. The surprising thing about Luther's posting these 95 Theses is not that he did it, because it was a normal way to debate issues of the time, but, rather, the reaction it had. It really struck a cord amongst many people. The Lord used this event to initiate a great reform in the Church – the reform which our congregation and denomination bears the name of today. Let's thank the Lord for such a heritage and let's pray for His ongoing reforming in and through us and all His people in our day.

Pastoral. This coming Thursday evening there is the 20th Reunion of our Calvin Christian School. It comes at a sad time as the school is also closing at the end of this year having served our church families and other Christian and community families for two decades. We must be thankful, however, for what has been achieved through Calvin, and continue to pray for Christian education, also as it grows through the surrounding Christians schools in South Auckland. There is also another reunion about to take place but this time to celebrate an 80th birthday! We warmly welcome the children and grandchild of Br Tom Posthuma. Already Simon & Jacqueline Baines with Brooke and Joel have arrived and this coming week Yvonne & Tony Stolk come over and Sharon & Graham Woods come up with their family. The Stolk grandchildren are coming over a bit later. May you all have a blessed time during this special time. We thank the Lord for keeping our brother and blessing his work in the physical and spiritual families.

Masterton

Pastoral Notes. We thank the Lord for the healthy birth of Christiaan Wil Martin, son of Chris and Sunny. He was born on Monday morning. Both mother and son are home and doing well.

On Thursday, 8 November at 7:30 we will be hosting a conference by Creation Ministries International here at Homeleigh. Adrian Bates will be speaking on Time, Science and Genesis. This should be an informative evening and is an opportunity to invite others to hear about God's sovereign work in creation. There is a need for billeting the speaker and his assistant for the night of the 8th. There is also someone needed to run the sound system. If you can help with this please see one of the deacons.

*With joy and thankfulness to God
we wish to announce the*

50th Wedding Anniversary

of our parents and grandparents

Maarten & Sonia HEESTERMAN



**married in St. Matthew's Church,
Hastings,
on the 8th of February, 1958**

***Congratulations and love
from your children and
grandchildren***

Nick and Tina

Willem, Anneliese, James

Rex and Helen

Rodney, Luke, Daniel, Chloe

Mandy and Dave

Hanna, Amy, Sam

**4 Waikonini Place,
Havelock North**

North Shore

News & Announcements. As was announced verbally, a healthy baby girl was born to Michael and Hester Bell two weeks ago. Along with them, we thank our God for this child and pray for both the parents and daughter that this will bring joy to the family and glory to our God.

Ladies Fellowship: A small group of ladies met on a very mild Tuesday evening to walk Orewa Beach. Afterwards we enjoyed a time together listening to Christmas scripture and poems and singing Christmas hymns. It was a lovely couple of hours - thank-you to Alies for her preparation of the evening & Mary for her musical accompaniment. :)

Palmerston North

Session Report (1st November): Session reviewed our procedure for replacing of office-bearers, and decided to make some changes to this. In the past, having received nominations from the congregation, and having decided on men whom we believe are suitably qualified, we have gone to those men and asked them whether they are willing to stand. Often this has led to a negative response because of providential circumstances or because the men approached are very busy with legitimate and necessary tasks in God's kingdom. However, a calling to serve in office in the congregation is from the Lord (Acts 20:28) and it is a great blessing and privilege to serve. Session has therefore decided on the following procedure:

1. From nominations submitted by the congregation, the elders will make a shortlist, and from this the full Session will vote on names to be presented to the congregation.
2. The men chosen by this process will be informed that their names will be placed before the congregation at the first available Lord's Day. They will have 1 week to lodge with the Session a lawful objection should they wish to do this.
3. Once the names are publicly announced for two weeks, allowing time for lawful objections, the congregation will then vote. The Session will strive, wherever possible, to present more candidates than positions required.

At this stage, we intend to go through this process twice per year, and if possible, move to an annual election of office-bearers in October/November of each year.

Pukekohe

Family and Friends Service: Another Evangelistic Service will be held here on Sunday 11th November in the morning service. The service will follow our usual format, because worship is primarily for the people of God, but the sermon will be evangelistic and directed to believers and those who do not believe in Christ. I plan to preach on the parable of the sower. Please pray for this service, and for me, and for those who will come. Please consider whom you could invite. The apostle Paul anticipated that some unbelievers would attend the worship services of the church and would hear God's Word and be convicted by that: "...he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!" (1 Corinthians 14:24-25). May that take place in our worship services. JH

Session Report: Sam Voschezang met with the Session and expressed his desire to profess his faith before the Lord and His people. Sam communicated his love for the Lord Jesus Christ and his desire to commit himself to the responsibilities and privileges of communicant membership. We enjoyed a time of mutual blessing with Sam as we discussed the joy of faith in God, and look forward to his profession of faith on a date yet to be decided. (Romans 10:9)

From the Pastor: This Tuesday Mrs Joke van Breda will celebrate her 80th birthday! We thank the Lord for His care over you during these many years and we are glad you can be part of the fellowship of this congregation. May the Lord give you a blessed day and continue to watch over you in the years to come.

Introducing God: If you are visiting here this morning and would like to know more about the Bible and about God, we invite you to attend a video based course of Bible studies that introduces you to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ. These evenings present a video message based on the Bible and then provide opportunity for an open and free discussion. If you are interested in coming to these please see the pastor.

Topical Memory System: A few of us are planning to begin using the Navigators Topical Memory System that guides you in memorising 60 key verses of the Scriptures on certain topics. This works best if you partner up with someone else - a member

With thankfulness to the Lord we rejoice in the celebration of the

50th Wedding Anniversary

of our loving parents and grandparents

Gerard and Janny MINNEE



*Married on 8 February 1958
Hamilton, New Zealand*

Psalm 127:1

*Unless the Lord builds the house
They labour in vain who build it*

With love from:

Gerald & Diana Minnee
*Samuel, Natasha & Simon Steenhof,
Casey,
Tom*

Carolyn Minnee
Annastasia, Daniel

Martin & Wilma Minnee
*Ben Gordon, Freddy, Maria, Benjamin,
Ryan, Anna Holly, William, Sean, Kelia*

Benjamin and Henriëtte Minnee
William, Daniël

**110 Ruapehu Drive
Palmerston North
Phone 06 3579560**

of your family, or another person in the church – so you can encourage and help each other. A sample copy can be seen on the bookstall table. If you would like to order a copy (\$15) please see George Voschezang. We will make a bulk order in a couple of weeks.

Wainuiomata

This week Thursday, Maarten Schuitema is turning 80 years of age. We do not know what the Lord has in store for us as Maarten has suffered a great deal for the last couple years. You will have an opportunity to sign a birthday card today in the fellowship hall.

Salt Recipe. (By Gene Edward Veith) Christians worried about the state of our culture often look for political and legal solutions. Others hope to turn things around by getting involved with the media and the entertainment industry. But culture begins at home. Studies have long shown that the chances of a child growing up to become a criminal plummet to almost

zero if he is raised by two loving parents. Two-parent families are also the most effective anti-poverty program. One factor in the development of male homosexuality, according to Christian psychologists, is the absence of a father figure. The boy so yearns for a father's love that he becomes attracted to men. The effect of absent or emotionally distant fathers on daughters is that they so yearn for a father's love that they often become promiscuous. I hasten to reassure single moms that none of these dire consequences necessarily come to pass. Christians, especially, have God's promise to the fatherless that "I will be a father to you" (2 Corinthians 6:18). But Christians who want to strike a mighty blow in the culture wars would do well to build up their own families. Spouses must spend quantity time with each other. When they are both busy in their own separate spheres, they tend to become isolated. Married couples work to counter these effects by building time in their lives to spend with each other. Parents must spend quantity time with their children. Many children spend more time with their peers than with their parents, which means they are essentially raised by their friends. If the statistic is true that the average father spends seven minutes a day with his children, he is not doing his job. Often churches are part of the problem, with so many activities that add to the busyness of the week rather than encouraging members to devote time to their families. Christians also need to recover the joy of family life, not a spirit of harshness, with the father trying to rule with an iron fist and the mother controlling her children with rigid rules and severe punishments. Ironically, this approach can spark the opposite of what is intended, breeding marital discord and turning children into rebels. A revival of the Christian family would have far-reaching cultural ramifications. A network of strong and happy families would help stabilize American culture. They would also provide a powerful Christian witness to the cultural casualties who, on the deepest level, yearn for a family like that.

Wellington

Church family. Congratulations to Jonathan and Kelly Marinus on the safe arrival on Sunday night of a baby boy.

Profession of Faith. Next Sunday afternoon we look forward to witnessing the Profession of Faith of Anthony Dobbelaar, Timothy Haakma and Joshua van der Burg.

Christchurch Presbytery 10th November 2007

Rev Ralph Adams opened the meeting with a devotional on 2 Corinthians 2:12-17 followed by prayer. Some time was spent on article 47 questions pertaining to the life and spiritual health of the congregations to which delegates from Reformed Churches of Dovedale, Nelson and Bishopdale responded. On the whole the responses were encouraging, with Nelson expressing thankfulness for some new families joining the church and the church budget being met. With the impending retirement of Rev Ralph Adams in March 2008, the Nelson Session is in the process of finding a new minister. Dovedale delegates expressed appreciation for Mr Wayne Brauning's three month ministry to the congregation and good attendances at district fellowship meetings. Prayer was asked for wisdom as their search for a new pastor continues. Bishopdale delegates were thankful for harmony at session level, most families committed to Christian education, good attendances at home groups and a Thursday afternoon evangelistic outreach for young people which attracts about 25 attendees every week. Delegates reported that Bishopdale were still hoping to find a second pastor.

A number of songs were approved by Presbytery for congregational use in the Reformed Church of Bishopdale. Dunedin delegates were able to report that Mr Jim Klazinga has obtained employment and purchased a house in Timaru, where he and his family will live from 19th November. Jim is keen to be of service to the church by assisting with preaching, a Bible Study and evangelism in the local community.

Bishopdale delegates requested clarification of article 57 of the church order relating to the question "who may administer the sacraments?" Presbytery was referred to earlier minutes (11/2004) which state that there is 'no contradiction' between WCF27/4 and CO Art 57. Therefore, the word 'ordinarily' in the church order should be taken to mean that wherever possible a minister of the word is to dispense the sacraments but in exceptional circumstances an ordained elder may need to do so.

Hans Vaatstra Reporter

Missions in focus

Janice Reid

The Testimony of Sadik, a Muslim Man Found by Jesus

As related by him at the Bible League Middle East Conference, March 2006

Written by Alex Munro

'Would I cease seeking knowledge about Jesus and escape probable death or would I decide to leave my country, job, possessions, family, wife and children in order to pursue that knowledge?'



I was lost. I have my own story and I am happy to be here to share it with you. The Lord rescued me and brought me into the light.

I come from a Muslim background. I am a young businessman. My extended family were fanatical Muslims. We knew about Isa (Jesus) the prophet mentioned in the Koran, but it was impossible to say that he was the son of God. To us God could not have a son. We knew nothing of the whole Gospel. To ordinary Muslims Jesus is a prophet who ascended to heaven, but he was not crucified or killed in any way. I lived in an Arab nation with no known Arab churches and where having a Bible can bring death to you.

In our home we were forbidden to shave, wear jeans, or watch TV. I loved sports but we had no TV in our home. I would go a long way from home to find a place to watch TV. One day I wanted to know the

result of a soccer match. I tuned in the radio but got no results. What I did find was a short-wave Christian radio station and I began listening to Arabic broadcasts from Monaco about Jesus. I listened secretly at first. The speaker spoke about 'love and forgiveness.' Later I listened to a message, 'You are a Sinner – But God Loves You.' I heard that Jesus died for me! I loved this 'Good News' from the first time I heard it. I continued listening for 6 consecutive days to this program. I listened secretly at first. Then I became very interested and shared this new experience with my family. They warned me to stop listening or suffer the consequences. I continued listening and was completely overcome by the desire to find out more about Jesus Christ. I was alone in this situation. There were no people I could share my passion with. I knew that to share my knowledge and desire with others could mean death. I was faced with a dilemma.

One day my brother came to the place where I was working and heard me listening to the Christian radio station. 'That is blasphemy,' he said to me with anger in his voice. I replied, 'It is some good news for us.' He resisted me strongly with harsh words then slapped me across the face. He took the radio from me and went to inform my father. Looking back now, I see that in the battle between Satan and me, the Lord was the stronger. I resisted the persecution of my family against me. However, I was in a big battle for my soul. Would I cease seeking knowledge about Jesus and escape probable death or would I decide to leave my country, job, possessions, family, wife and children in order to pursue that knowledge? Can you in any way imagine or feel what this would be like?

More problems came into my life. I had obtained addresses of Muslims who had become Christians and were now living in other lands. I wrote to them to get some information about Christianity. No one answered me. I had to get a Bible to find out more for myself, especially about Jesus. I had a Muslim friend who knew of a Christian who had a Bible. I asked my friend to plead on my behalf for a loan of this Bible. I wanted to see firsthand what was written in the Bible. He replied, 'How can I do that? If people find out that I have a friend who wants a Bible, what will happen? They will burn you and the Bible!'

He adamantly refused. This just made me more eager to obtain a Bible. I wanted to meet someone who could tell me the answer to, 'Who is Jesus?'

I pleaded more with my brother and father. They were violently opposed to me. However, in my heart, there was such a strong force driving me to find out about Jesus Christ. My family said to me, 'If you once speak to us again about Christianity, you will be killed.' This was more than a threat. I knew they would do it, or have done by someone else exactly what they warned me of. I was 29 years old, married with one child, and my wife was expecting another child. What could I do? It was now a battle between me and my family — my pursuit of knowing Jesus. and my family's vicious opposition. Jesus said, '*I have not come to bring peace but a sword. I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. Your enemies will be right in your own household!*'

I decided that I must leave my family and in some way, unknown to me, find out about Jesus. Of course, I deeply loved my family but I loved the Lord deeper. Jesus said: '*If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give it up for me, you will find it.*' I did not know these verses were in the Bible when I made this decision, but the force of the words was in my heart. I found out later that the Bible said, '*It has been given in the cause of Christ not only to have faith in him, but to undergo pain on his account.*' It was joyful to suffer in order to find the Lord. Jesus lived in places where dogs would not want to live.

I had the postal address of a Christian radio station in a far off country. Maybe I could try to find that radio station, and they could tell me about Jesus? I prepared to leave my country, but I had no passport. The Lord was my passport. I did not know what to do, or where to go? I came to the border of Saudi Arabia. People told me to go there and get work. I was able to cross the border without a passport. I prayed for God to guide me. In Saudi Arabia I prayed,



'I want to leave this nation, God.' I thought about the far off country and the radio station. Some people told me I could not get to that place. Others told me of a way I could be smuggled in. I found a driver of a truck with a small box in the rear that was used to transport contraband alcohol. The box was empty and the driver said to me, 'Do you really want to travel this way? The journey is long and difficult and you may be caught and imprisoned by the border authorities.' I consented and began the long journey hidden in a box that was not even a good place for animals. From time to time the driver let me out of the box to drink and rest.

The driver was able to smuggle me across the border of the nation I was seeking. I asked myself, 'Now what do I do?' I found a bus that took me to the capital. Things had developed so fast and so differently from any experience I had ever had. It seemed just like a dream and I would soon wake up back in my home environment! When I arrived in the capital, I searched for a Christian church. I asked a man, 'Can you tell me where there are some churches?'

'No,' he replied. No one welcomed me. I felt so alone. I slept in the street. It was November and very cold at night. Satan whispered to me, 'Why are you here lying down in the street humiliated?' God strengthened me.

I did find a church building but each day it was closed and nobody was around. I prayed as best I knew for God to guide me. On the fifth day as I was walking the streets, I passed by a Christian Bookstore. On the window I read the verse from Revelation, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with me. - Jesus.' I stood at the door of the Bookstore. I saw a picture of a Bible and a Cross in the window. I built up my courage and walked in the door. Inside I asked a man if could give me a Bible and if he could tell me about Jesus. The man welcomed me. He shared the Good News. I liked so much what he shared that I decided right there on that day to trust Jesus as my Saviour. I had found the One that my heart had been seeking. The words were beautiful. They were like honey to me. I heard again that I was a sinner but that

God is Love. My joy overflowed. The man, Nabeel, was such a blessing to me. Nabeel has since become my best guide, helper and counsellor. I know God guided me that day because sometimes 'Christian' churches will send Muslim seekers away in fear of reprisals and have nothing to do with them. So finding the right Christians is important for Muslim seekers like me.

Still, I realized my wife and child were not with me. In my search for Jesus I had separated myself far away from them. Yet God compensated that with his presence. I felt the Holy Spirit saying, 'You and your family will be saved.' I confessed my sin to God. He forgave me. I thank God every day for His love to me. I have learned the verse, 'Look unto me all the nations.'

My new friend Nabeel taught me each day from the Bible and he prayed with me for my family.

I was concerned for some weeks about my family finding out where I was. I knew that they would send someone to kill me if they knew my whereabouts. I prayed for my wife. I needed to get her out of the



country to come to meet me. Then, at the right time, I decided to contact her.

When I finally contacted my wife she told me, 'We are living in hell, because of your family. They want me separated from your family. Your father wants to take my son from me. Your father said that, 'Sadik is nothing to us now.' Your father wants you found and killed. He said, 'We will kill Sadik and then take your son.' Knowing this I prayed for my family. 'O Lord, I put my wife and son into your hands. I dedicate my son to you. You, God, have taken me as your child, but my human father has disowned me! You have given me life, but my human father wants to kill me! Before I met you, God, I did not have love for others. Now I have a love for all God's people. I have love for Nabeel as a spiritual father to me and a love for all of the people in his congregation that cared for me so much – they are my new family. I pray for others that you will save them as you saved me. Give them the joy that you gave me. I came here not as a tourist or a trader just to remain a short while, but to find you. I came here not for a few days but to gain everlasting life.'

My wife had no passport to travel. In my



country, women cannot obtain a without a passport without the permission of a male relative. Nor can a woman travel without an escort who is a close relative. I prayed every day for my wife for 14 months. The church prayed for her. The church helped us with all our needs. She was able to get a passport and her very own brother escorted her out of the country and brought her to me. By now she had our second child. So it was a mixed reunion. My wife and her brother began to verbally attack me, 'They have a right to kill you.' (According to the Koran if a Muslim leaves Islam for another religion and does not recant, he/she should be killed. This explains why many Muslims who come to Jesus are killed, often by their own parents or siblings). I shared with them the Good News. After some time God touched my bother-in-law's heart. Nabeel explained to him more clearly the way of salvation and he repented. He cried and cried. Then he came to me and hugged me and asked for forgiveness for his opposition to me. Of course, I forgave him with much joy in my heart.

My wife is not yet a believer because she has not seen the Light. I continue to ask Jesus to enlighten her. Please pray for my wife. Please pray for the bookstore. Many have found Jesus through this bookstore. Nabeel is like a tree under which many have found shade. My principle is, 'If I live, I live unto the Lord. If I die, I die unto the Lord.'

All our suffering for Jesus sake is not to be compared with one strike on the body of Jesus.

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 the magazine comes to your church. If you would like our congregations to pray for you on your mission trip, send details to Janice at reid4radio@gmail.com