

faith in **focus**

Magazine of the
Reformed Churches
of New Zealand

VOLUME 34/6 JULY 2007

“Every
plant
that my
heavenly
Father
has not
planted
will be
pulled
up by
the
roots.”

Matthew 15:12

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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:

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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

I was interested by a verse of poetry I read recently, particularly because of the way part of that verse has been subsequently used. That modern use of that part actually portrays the opposite philosophy to the one originally intended by the poet. Those words are 'like a candle in the wind.'

The phrase became popular in the English language. It also became the title and key lyrics for a song co-written by Bernie Taupin & Elton John, using the life of Marilyn Monroe as its subject. A song which became an instant world best-seller when it was adapted to sing of the life of Diana, Princess of Wales, at her funeral service.

The philosophy behind the popular phrase and the song is that our lives are just like candles in the wind. Soon enough they'll be blown out – in the same way as our lives, which are so short. And that's it! Beyond this life there is nothing. So you just have to live the moment and grasp what you can now, because who knows what will happen tomorrow?

The original verse by George Meredith says, though,

*The light of every soul burns upward;
But most of them are candles in the wind.*

Quite a difference, isn't it? Instead of a futile hope-less future, everything is placed in God's picture. Because that's what our souls tell us. Believer or unbeliever, there is a sense of the divine in each one of us. When God works in us to acknowledge that, we are enabled to be what we should truly be – candles which keep burning because of the God Who now takes us out of the wind.

The same misinterpretation occurs with Scripture. I have heard Christians use the expression, 'No rest for the wicked,' as a way of speaking of all the work they need to do. It's said as though that's what goes along with being on this earth! The verse in Isaiah 57:21 which this comes from is quite clearly, however, in reference to those set against the covenant God of Israel and against His people.

The difference in interpretations becomes even more evident when it is noted that the word 'rest' does not appear in Isaiah 57:12. It is actually the word 'peace.' So it is dealing with what the wicked don't have, because they are not the Lord's. Yet the Christian does have it because of what Jesus Christ has done. So we truly are at 'rest!' We have a clear conscience because we stand righteous before the Lord.

So let's be careful with our expressions. And when others do use them, let's ask them if they know the full verse or the right translation. It could be a blessed opportunity to preach the Gospel!

*"Every word of God is flawless;
he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.
Do not add to his words,
or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar."*

Proverbs 30:5-6

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 Dort, or the Westminster Confession of Faith, or reflect the successive Acts of Synod of the Reformed Churches of NZ. On the other hand, care is taken to ensure that articles and opinions do not directly contradict the official position of the Reformed Churches as contained in the above sources without attention being called to that fact.

The Redemptive-Historical approach to interpreting the Bible

Part I – Basic Principles

Rev. Dr. P.N. Archbald

1. Introduction

Throughout history there have been many debates about how we should interpret the Bible. In the Middle Ages, it was common to look for four different levels of meaning in every passage: a literal meaning; a hidden, allegorical meaning; a moral lesson for daily life; and an indication of our hope for the future, heavenly life.

The Reformation challenged the arbitrariness of this four-fold approach. Reformers, like Calvin, emphasized the importance of the grammar of the text and its historical context – including the wider, whole-Bible context. At the end of the day, Scripture itself must dictate the interpretation of Scripture, not man and his imagination.

However, that was not the end of the debate. The Reformers themselves argued about the extent to which Christ should be seen in every text. More recently, there have been arguments about whether the doctrines of systematic theology should be allowed to colour the interpretation of a text. Around the time of World War II, there was also a debate in Holland about how a proper appreciation of the redemptive-historical situation must govern the preaching. The nature of Christ-centred preaching was a part of this debate. One side warned of the dangers of using Biblical descriptions of the behaviour of various characters – especially in OT narrative passages – primarily as moral examples for us to follow (*exemplarism*). The other side felt that an undue emphasis on the redemptive-historical context resulted in a history “lecture” lacking in practical application – rather than a sermon.

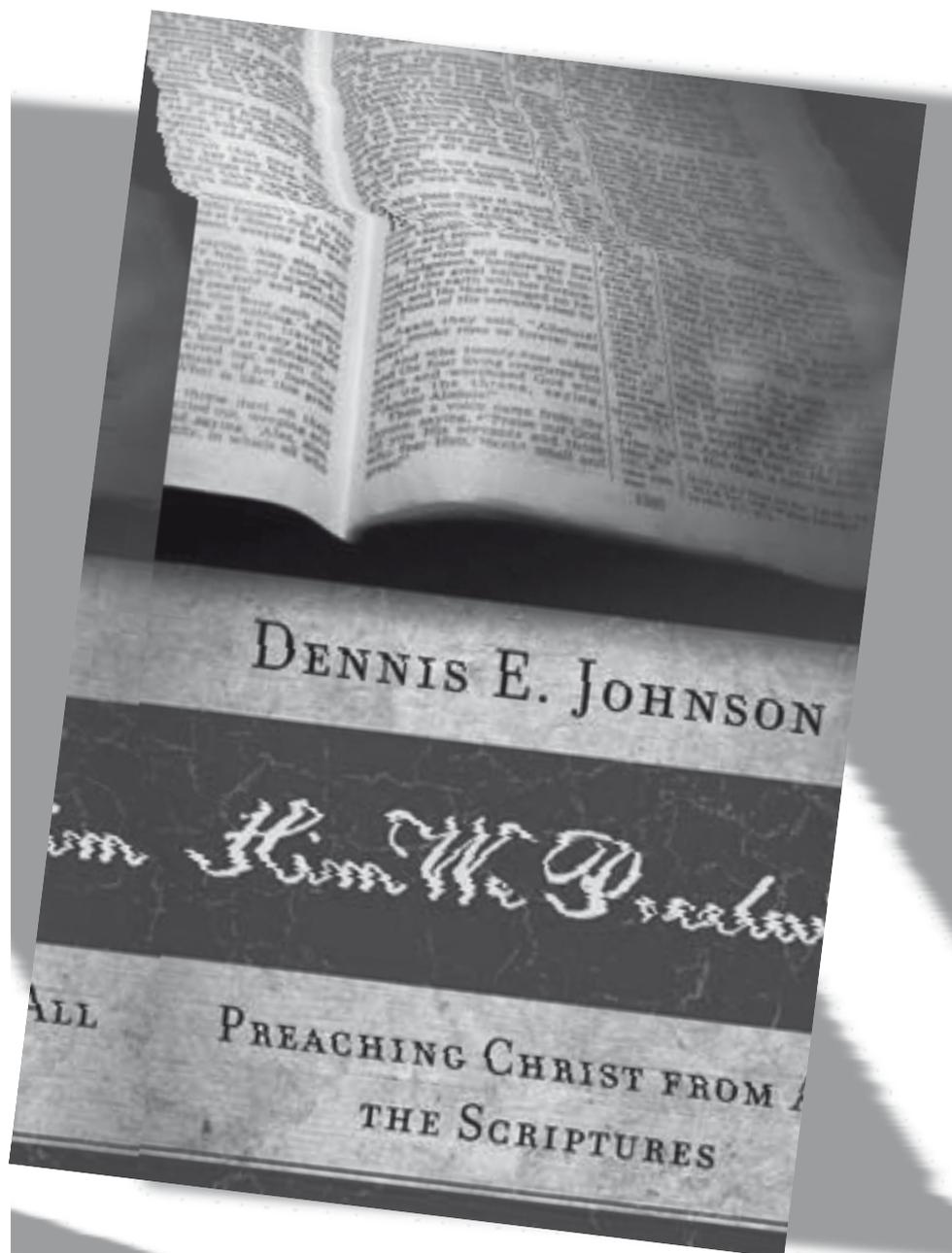
2. Abuses of the Redemptive-Historic Approach

Sometimes devotees of the redemptive-historic approach did go to extremes. Some do indeed appear to argue that a preacher must make *no* application. He simply unfolds the text, and leaves the application to the Holy Spirit. This, it is argued, prevents the preacher from focusing on his own favoured applications in a

“hobby-horse” manner. It is also pointed out that if a particular application becomes the focus of attention, those who need to make other applications of the same text may be hindered from doing so. Different people in the same congregation will need to make different applications to themselves, according to their particular needs. Leave that work to the Holy Spirit, we are told.

While these dangers are real, I believe

it goes too far to rule out application altogether. I suppose every time a preacher does anything more than read a text, he risks focusing too much on one thing and not enough on another. Why not leave out all explanation of the historical background, all explanation of the language of the text and all use of illustrations, on the same argument? Couldn't it all be left to the Holy Spirit, lest the preacher intrude his own thoughts?



Certainly we depend entirely upon the Holy Spirit for inward illumination and application. But the Spirit uses *means*. In Col. 3:16 the apostle urges, "Let the Word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching *and admonishing* one another...." Wisdom, taking our definition from the OT (e.g., Proverbs 1:1-7), is a matter of instruction, insight, discernment and *application*. Admonishing is also a matter of application. The reproof, correction and training in righteousness of which Paul speaks in 2 Timothy 3:16 is also a matter of application of the Word. Many of the NT Epistles – consider, for example, Romans – provide the instruction in principles first, then follow with practical application. Moreover, samples of addresses and/or sermons from the apostles contain specific application (e.g., Acts 20:28-35).

The best approach, I would suggest,

is to *let the text speak* by taking its own "cues" (hints as to the main point(s) of the text). If the text dwells on a specific application, then the interpreter and the preacher should not ignore that application. It should be his focus. If the focus of the text is on our *understanding* of some aspect, say, of the doctrine of God, then the focus of the sermon should be on our understanding of that truth. Bringing our understanding in line with the Word of God would then be the main application. Let the text itself speak!

In that connection, note that the Scripture does sometimes use the behaviour as men as either positive or negative examples. In 3 John, the ungodly Diotrophes is contrasted with Demetrius, a man of good testimony. In 1 Corinthians 10, Israel's history is seen as an "example (or "type")...for our instruction." That history

includes the "types" or foreshadowings of Christ, such as the rock from which they drank, which represents Christ (v.4). But is also includes the immorality of the people, with the application, "let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall" (v. 12).

There is a big difference, however, between letting the text speak with its use of examples, and the interpreter adding applications of his own making, irrespective of the context.

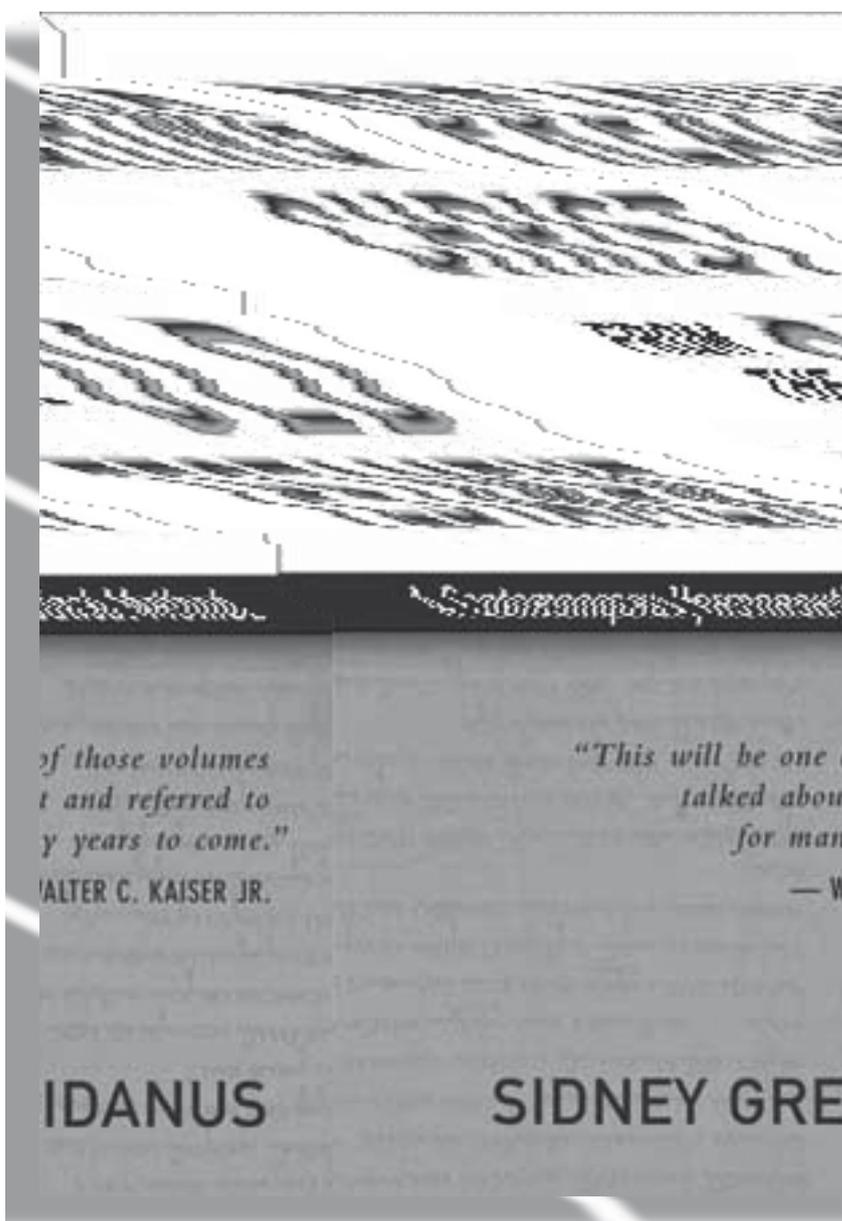
3. Problems with the Exemplarist Approach

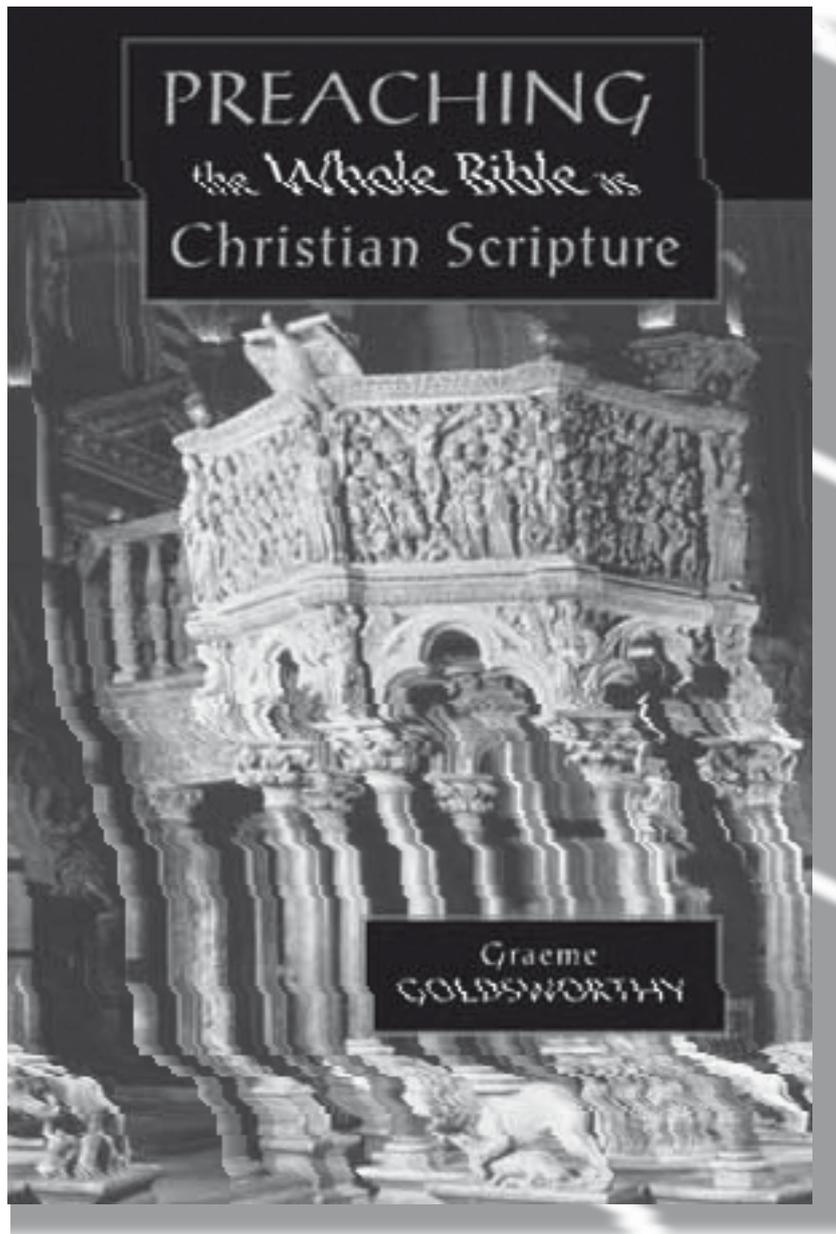
Generally speaking, the exemplarist approach tries to be "both-and." Neither the text nor the wider redemptive-historical context are completely ignored. They might even be given considerable attention in the sermon. But then the application is added, along with the use of human examples from the narrative, to make the text "relevant" to today.

On the surface this might sound quite reasonable, a good balance between historical context and practical application. There is no doubt it can be edifying, if the examples are being used to make some point that is taught somewhere in the Scriptures. There are, however, a number of problems with this approach.

Perhaps the chief danger is the desire to "make" the text relevant. Our task is not to *make* a text relevant. It is to *see* how the text already *is* relevant. Each text is relevant in its own, unique way. That is what we must seek to bring out. So the problem is not the adding of application, it is adding the *wrong* application – that which does not flow out of the text.

It is also our primary task to hold forth the Lord Jesus Christ. Application should serve the proclamation of Christ, not overshadow it. When sermons are application-driven there is a danger that the application becomes the main thing. People go home remembering what they should/should not do, more than they remember Christ. In some ways, application is like illustration. Illustrations are important for shedding light on the meaning of the text. But they should not overshadow the text. If they become too central, people will remember the illustration, but not the point of it. Application, too, can have the same effect. If it becomes more central than it is in the text, people will remember the application more than the main point of the text. They will remember the application more than the *reason* for the application – the grace of





Some teachings will have more immediate impact on the mind. That is still a matter of the heart. Other teachings will have more immediate impact on our behaviour – as well as the reason for our behaviour. That also involves the heart. For example, the doctrine of the Trinity will affect how we think about God, what we believe about Him. In one sense we could say that the doctrine of the Trinity comes into every aspect of the Christian's behaviour – every deed should be to the glory of the Triune God; exemplified, made possible and acceptable by Christ; motivated by the working of the Holy Spirit. We could also talk about how this doctrine governs how we pray and *what* we pray when seeking God's help to behave rightly. But a text that focuses on the doctrine of the Trinity may not have in view any particular application of that kind. We may mention some of these other applications, but we should not give the impression that these are the main point or intended application of the text, unless that is so.

Similarly, a text might focus on believing true doctrine in contrast to false doctrine – for example, 1 John. 4:2-3. If the emphasis is not placed on our inward belief and confession of Christ – a matter of the heart – how are we going to be able to apply it to “testing the spirits” and rejecting false teachers (v. 1)? The application-driven preacher might want to focus on how we show whether we *really* confess Christ from the heart, and talk about our personal devotions, our walk of obedience, or whatever other fruits he likes to emphasize. However

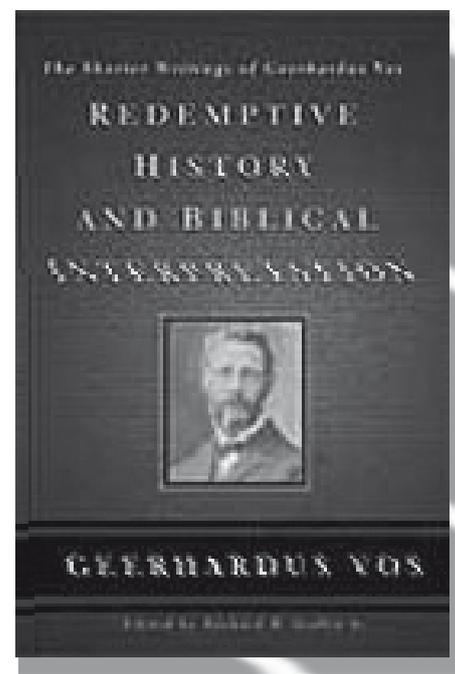
Jesus Christ. Illustrations should therefore be sufficient to shed light on the text, but not so dominant that they take the spot-light. I would suggest a similar approach to application: enough to shed light on how each person should apply the text to his own situation, but not so dominant that the spot-light is moved away from Christ and onto the application.

I would also suggest that application-driven sermons tend to sound much the same after a while. Preachers tend to focus on certain rather well-worn applications – perhaps their own hobby-horses – which are then tacked on to texts that come from a variety of contexts. The congregation might hear, for example, many sermons where the main point appears to be that we should love and forgive one another – irrespective of whether this application is in view in the text. When we ignore the

cues the Holy Spirit has placed in each text, we tend to lose sight of the uniqueness of each text.

There is another potential problem in seeking to *make* a text relevant. It is often coupled with a feeling that doctrine is mere “head knowledge,” while “application” lies in the realm of the heart. This is a dubious distinction. It is more accurate to say that there is only one kind of true knowledge, and that is knowledge that affects the *whole person*. Doctrine that is truly accepted *will* affect the whole person. Practical application that is truly held *will* affect the whole person. It is true that we are capable of paying lip-service to doctrine. It is also true that we are capable of *behaving* outwardly in a formally correct way, while lacking the proper inward motivation.

The “heart” is the whole inner person, including the inner activities of the mind.



the focus of the application here should be on the rejection of error. And for that action to follow, we must have a right understanding of the truth.

In conclusion, then, the redemptive-historic approach involves listening to the text in its context – rather than artificially “making” it relevant by some remotely connected behavioural application. The interpreter must look carefully for the Holy Spirit’s indications of the main thrust. He must consider how, precisely, this thrust points to the Lord Jesus Christ. And his application should then flow from these considerations. In this way, Christ will be held forth clearly in a unique way for every text. And the proclamation of Christ will not be overshadowed by any exhortation to behave in a particular way. At the same time, there will be relevance, application, and wherever necessary, exhortation to “be” what Christ has made us.

Next month Part II will consider “Seeing Christ in the Text of Scripture”

Work on our new Psalter Hymnal

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

World in focus

Church of Scotland and Free Church issue joint statement of support

In its report to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the Committee on Ecumenical Relations will present the findings of the recent Local Ecumenical Audit, which was jointly commissioned by both the Committee and Action of Churches Together in Scotland. The Audit was carried out with respondents from three areas of Scotland - Paisley, Inverness, and St Andrews.

Following a successful placement of a newly-ordained minister in Dundee, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bavaria has suggested the possibility of a partnership at institutional level. In September 2006, a unique and historic covenant was signed between the Church and the United Free Church of Scotland. Talks continue with the Free Church of Scotland, which have resulted in a joint statement of mutual recognition and understanding and a mutual commitment to cooperate in the advancement of the kingdom of God.

+ Rev Bill Brown, Convener of the Ecumenical Relations Committee, Church of Scotland, 121 George St., Edinburgh EH2 4YN Scotland

+ A copy of the full report is available from Gussy Alamein <galamein@cofscotland.org.uk>

Wikipedia, Theopedia, Conservadepia and Wickedpedia!

Browsing around in the Internet – actually looking for a digital copy of Patrick Fairbairn’s commentary on Ezekiel – I came across another “pedia” – Theopedia. It looks like an interesting addition to Wikipedia, which has come under some criticism in recent days. Some educational institutions are frowning on the use of Wikepedia by their students, maintaining that it’s too subjective and unreliable as an information source.

Another critic, and another alternative to Wikipedia, has emerged – Conservapedia. This headline appeared recently [March 2] in *The Guardian*: “Wikipedia – or Wicedpedia: Conservadepia – the US religious right’s answer to Wikipedia.” Bobbie Johnson, technology correspondent writes: The only reference site, Wikipedi, has a new foe: evangelical Christians. A website founded by US religious activist aims to counter what they claim is ‘liberal bias’ on Wikipedia, the open encyclopedia which has become one

of the most popular sites on the web. The founders of Conservapedia.com say their site offers a ‘much-needed alternative’ to Wikipedia, which they say is ‘increasingly anti-Christian and anti-American.’

The founder of Conservapedia, Andy Schlafly, tells how he’s tried to edit the material on Wikipedia, but, he says, ‘in one case one factual edits were removed within 60 seconds – so editing Wikipedia is no longer a viable approach.’

The general direction on Conservapedia is seen in the following comment: ‘Among his many criticisms listed on Conservapedia, Mr Schlafly explains how many Wikipedia articles often use British spelling instead of American English and says it ‘refuses’ to give enough credit to Christianity for the Renaissance. Facts against the theory of evolution are almost immediately censored.’ Further, it is stated that ‘Conservapedia was created as a project for home-schooled children,’ and Mr Schlafly ‘believes it could eventually become a reference for teachers in the US.’

+ *The Presbyterian Banner*, May 2007, raymurray@aapt.net.au

Hate campaign adds fuel to persecution in India

The Supreme Court of India has admitted a petition seeking action against the distribution of compact discs (CDs) by Hindu extremists that allegedly suggested in 2006 that Christians in Gujarat state should be beheaded.

Admitting the petition filed by non-profit organisation Anhad, the High Court on 5 April gave four weeks to the federal government to reply concerning the circulation of the CD as preparation for the Shabri Kumbh, a ‘reawakening’ event organised by Hindu extremists in Dangs district, Gujarat,

from 11 to 13 February 2006, according to **The Hindu**, a national daily. In the petition, Anhad sought an inquiry by the Central Bureau of Investigation, as the Gujarat government has not taken any action against the makers and distributors of the CD.

The CD, made by the Shabri Kumbh Samorah Ayojan Samiti (Organising Committee) and titled *Shri Shabri Kumbh 2006: Spirituality along with the Wave of Patriotism*, ‘incites Hindus against the Christian community and suggests that Christians

be attacked and beheaded,' said the petitioner, alleging that the CDs were widely circulated, distributed and openly sold in the states of Gujarat and Maharashtra and in the north-eastern states.

'In the CD, the narrator, while talking about Hindu tradition and culture, makes constant references to the evil forces and foreign powers that are out to destroy the Hindu religion whilst simultaneously flashing pictures of churches and Cross on the screen as if to insinuate that the Christian

community is the evil force and the foreign power that the Hindu community has to reckon with,' the daily quoted the petitioner as saying.

+ Compass Direct News, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana CA 92799-7250 (949) 862-0304 <info@compassdirect.org> <www.compassdirect.org>

The Federal Vision and the PCA

The Presbyterian Church in America appointed a committee to study the soteriology of the 'New Perspective' and the 'Federal Vision.' The 'New Perspective on Paul' (NPP) is an academic movement associated since

the 1960s with scholars such as Krister Stendahl, E.P. Sanders, James D.G. Dunn, and N. T. Wright.

The committee recognised that there were a variety of viewpoints associated with the NPP; therefore, it sought to be cautious in analysis of the movement as a whole. Because N.T. Wright had a significant influence in recent years on the broader evangelical and Reformed communities, the PCA study concentrates on his writings.

The committee acknowledged that a major concern of the General Assembly has been called Federal Vision (FV) or Auburn Avenue Theology (AAT). These are one and the same, different names designating the same theological movement.

The name 'Auburn Avenue Theology' comes from its association with the Auburn Avenue Presbyterian Church in Monroe, Louisiana, which has hosted conferences where their ideas have been promoted. In addition, a symposium book was entitled *The Auburn Avenue Theology, Pros & Cons: Debating the Federal Vision*.

The name 'Federal Vision' appears to be the name preferred by proponents,

who together authored a book entitled *The Federal Vision*. Since both names refer to the same theological movement, and since proponents prefer the label Federal Vision, the committee chose to use the name Federal Vision (FV) when referring to the movement.

The membership of the committee reflected intellectual and cultural influences in the PCA, representing a majority of the denomination: Paul Fowler (Chairman), Grover Gunn (Secretary), Dr. Ligon Duncan, Sean Lucas, Robert Mattes, William Mueller, and John White.

The full report is available on the Internet:

<http://www.byfaithonline.com/partner/Article_Display_Page/0,,PTID323422%7CC HID664014%7CCIID2326076,00.html>

+ Dr. Dominic Aquila, Presbyterian Church in America, ByFaith Magazine, 1700 North Brown Road, Suite 105, Lawrenceville, GA 30043 <daquila@byfaithonline.com>

CRC Myanmar holds General Assembly

The Myanmar government first denied a request for a General Assembly meeting of the Christian Reformed Church of My-

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| <p>Gospel preachers don't only preach the good news of individual salvation</p> <p>They preach the good news of the Kingdom</p> <p>This year's conference will explore the rich themes of the Kingdom and will show preachers how they can strengthen their ministry of the Word by preaching the Kingdom.</p> <p>When Jesus first came his Kingdom came in power; when he comes again, his Kingdom will come in glory</p> | <p>Thurs 27 & Fri 28 September</p> <p>Reformed Theological College 125 Pigdons Road Waurnd Ponds Victoria 3216</p> <p>T: 03 5244 2955 E: admin@rtc.vic.edu.au</p> |
| <p>Reformed Theological College Preaching Workshop 2007</p> | |

anmar, but later relented when the church officers supplied a 1996 government letter recognizing the CRCM as an official church. So the church held a General Assembly 7-11 March, and was able to hear reports and make management decisions about theological education, health care, and several other ministries. The assembly also ordained ten new pastors. The church's leadership group thus expands, even though the government forbids new church construction. The CRCM currently has 50 congregations and 5,000 members.

Most of the membership of the CRCM is in Matupi, an area within Chin state on the western border of Myanmar. The government stations soldiers there, and the people living there are pressed into forced labour to equip and house the soldiers. The soldiers also take local food production for their own use.

The military government has also been building Buddhist monasteries in the villages, even where there are no Buddhist believers. The construction is part of a plan to make the population Buddhist. Teachers must bring schoolchildren to these monasteries, where they are taught Buddhism. In spite of this strategy, the church members are keeping their Bibles and remaining faithful.

The CRCM was also able to begin construction on an orphanage. The government refused permission at first, but the church argued that the purpose was not for preaching or worship, and the government eventually allowed construction to begin. The CRCM currently operates the orphanage in a smaller building, where they care for 50 children.

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Evolutionary theories questioned

A report in the ABC News on Thursday, April 26, tells us that the study of the genetic complexity of the Coral Reef has raised serious questions for the theory of evolution. According to the report, after identifying about 10,000 genes, some scientists believe coral could contain more genes than humans, who possess about 20,000. Hitherto, coral has been considered to be a simple animal.

Now, Professor David Miller says that its genetic complexity challenges the notion that life started out simple then evolved to become more sophisticated. He says, 'There's this intrinsic tendency to think

about a slow accumulation of complexity and a slow accommodation of genes which have allowed an increased morphological complexity in higher animals and what the coral genomes tell us is that's completely wrong and that most genes were invented very early in animal evolution.' He also pointed out that coral shares many genes with humans. [ABC News]

We look forward to reports on further studies in this area.

+ *The Presbyterian Banner*, May 2007, raymurray@aapt.net.au

Polish Reformed urge action on Darfur

Reformed Christians in Poland have urged their government to do more to halt mass killings in Sudan's Darfur region by playing a stronger role in humanitarian affairs. 'As citizens of a country on whose territory a terrible genocide was perpetrated by invaders more than half a century ago, we feel an even greater responsibility to do everything in our power to prevent a similar nightmare in other parts of the world,' the Evangelical Reformed Church in Poland said.

The pastoral situation of the Reformed Church has greatly improved in the last few years. With ten widely-scattered parishes and seven preaching stations, known as the 'Diaspora,' the church had in the former Communist years an aging clergy, empty pulpits, and difficulty encouraging a sufficient number of young men to answer the call to ministry and fill all its charges. It currently has eight pastors and five seminarians.

One of the major pastoral difficulties, however, is the geographical dispersion of the church. Of the ten parishes one is in Warsaw, six are at a distance of less than 90 miles west and southwest of Warsaw, and three are spread out over Silesia — from 180 to 300 miles southwest of Warsaw. Yet most of the preaching stations are scattered throughout northwestern Poland. The pastor of the small parish in Zychlin, about 70 miles west of Warsaw, has a circuit of preaching stations which include Poznan, Szczecin, and Gdansk — a round trip of roughly 750 miles.

+ *Evangelical Reformed Church in Poland*,
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Belchatów, Poland

School District ordered to pay damages

The Anderson School District in Greenville, South Carolina, has been ordered by a fed-

eral appeals court to pay US\$99,776.74 in attorney's fees and costs for censoring Child Evangelism Fellowship. The court ruled in a unanimous 3-0 opinion, in *Child Evangelism Fellowship v. Anderson School District Five*, that the South Carolina school district violated CEF's constitutional rights by charging the group a fee while allowing other groups to use district facilities at no cost. Liberty Counsel represents CEF of South Carolina, which sponsors after-school 'Good News Clubs' in elementary schools.

CEF was charged a fee to use school facilities, although the district waived fees whenever deemed 'in the best interest of the district.' Fees were waived for the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, YMCA, Students Against Destructive Decisions, the local Democratic Party, and a host of other groups, but no waiver was extended to the Good News Clubs. After filing suit, the district changed its policy and sought to 'grandfather' free use to the previously authorised groups.

This case represents a significant legal precedent, because it requires speech-restrictive policies to contain clear standards to prevent government officials from engaging in viewpoint discrimination, much like the case law that has developed to govern prior restraints on speech.

+ *Liberty Counsel*, PO Box 540774, Orlando, FL
32854 (800) 671-1776 Liberty@LC.org

New believer jailed in Mexico for becoming a Christian

Juan Mendez Mendez became a Christian in a village near San Cristobal De Las Casas, in the Mexican state of Chiapas, on 7 April. Two days later local authorities put him in jail — for leaving their religious blend of Roman Catholicism and native custom. A catechist in a 'traditionalist Catholic' church in the village of Pasté, the 25-year-old Mendez was released on 10 April 10 after spending the night in jail.

The previous Easter Sunday, political bosses in the Tzotzil Maya village noticed him missing from a church festival involving what Mendez considered to be idolatrous rites. They summoned him that evening. 'They said, 'What do you mean that you've accepted Christ — you mean you don't believe in our gods [Catholic saints]?' Mendez told Compass. 'And I said, 'Well, those were just apostles, and now I belong to Christ.' Town leaders threatened to beat him. Mendez said he replied, 'If you're going to beat me, then here I am.'

+ *Compass Direct News*, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana CA 92799-7250 (949) 862-0304

First the United and now the Free talk to Church of Scotland

The Church of Scotland and the Free Church of Scotland are talking, some 164 years after they split from each other. In what is being billed as 'A small step for a Christian, but a giant step for the Church,' the General Assemblies of both churches will be asked to agree to a joint statement which recognises 'the scandal of the divisions in our Presbyterian church family' and pledges to work towards greater recognition and co-operation.

Rev. Iver Martin of Stornoway Free Church of Scotland is quoted in the Scottish press as saying, 'My understanding is that when the Disruption took place, there was the hope that one day there would be unity again and there always is that hope.'

+ Church of Scotland, 121 George St., Edinburgh EH2 4YN Scotland

The Pelosi Problem

Faith and Action President Rob Schenck reported on his weekly Internet broadcast that House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi, on the National Day of Prayer 3 May 2007, scheduled a vote on HR 1592, the Hate Crime Prevention Act, to coincide with a nearby National Day of Prayer meeting normally attended by several House members and thus keeping them from being able to attend this celebration. Schenck remarked upon the cynical nature of scheduling the vote for a Bill that will effectively criminalise the preaching and teaching of Biblical prohibitions of homosexuality and other sexual sins because of its purportedly inciting violence against those who practice these behaviours.

+ Faith and Action in the Nation's Capital <<http://www.faithandaction.org>>

Pro-life groups ask for partial-birth abortion ban enforcement

Life advocates went to Capitol Hill on Wednesday to make it clear that the U.S. Supreme Court decision last month to uphold the federal law banning partial-birth abortion will mean nothing if it isn't enforced. Without follow-up, they contend the gruesome procedure will continue. In a letter to Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, Paul Schenk, director of the National Pro-Life Action Center, along with other advocates for the preborn, warned that "without aggressive federal enforcement, partial-birth abortions will continue."

"While, today, partial-birth abortions are

illegal in the United States, they continue in places like New Jersey and Kansas," Schenck told Family News in Focus. "The question is, 'How will the law be enforced and when will the penalties apply?' "

Pat Mahoney, director of the Christian Defense Coalition, said the Justice Department needs to enforce the ban, because lives hang in the balance.

"It could be months, maybe over a year," he said, "if there is not an aggressive move by the people of faith, the American public, to see that this ban is actually enforced."

+ Christian Defense Coalition, 4019 Duke of Gloucester St., Fredericksburg, Virginia 22407

Bagdad Christians flee forced conversion in Iraq

Iraqi Christians fled their homes over the weekend after armed Sunni extremists

threatened to kill them if they did not convert to Islam within 24 hours, Christian sources said. Six Christian families from the Mualimien neighborhood of Baghdad's Dora district have relocated to a church elsewhere in the city, said a Baghdad source who requested that the families' location and identity remain anonymous. Armed Sunnis told the families on Saturday (April 14) that an amir (independent Muslim prince or ruler) had issued a fatwa against Dora's Christians, the source said. "They called the Christians infidels and told them, 'If you don't convert to Islam or leave your homes in 24 hours, we will kill you,'" the source told Compass after speaking with a member of the church helping the displaced Christians.

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

Calling all country boys and girls to become

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.

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**Eddie van Leeuwen, 40 Victors Road
Hoon Hay, CHRISTCHURCH**

A feminine focus

The Church's One Foundation –

Samuel Stone

Sally Davey

Many of our great hymns have been written to teach the church the truths of the Scriptures. There have been times in church history when serious threats to the faith have resulted in a more intensive burst of such hymn-writing to help counter error. This was the case in the third and fourth centuries when the Arian heresy denied the deity of Christ. A number of explicitly Trinitarian hymns resulted, including "Of the Father's love begotten" and the habit of singing the "Gloria" – which honours all three Persons of the Godhead. Again, at the time of the Reformation truth was put into song. Paraphrasers worked to provide easily-singable versions of the Psalms in metrical form. (This was necessary because for centuries up till then congregations had been merely audiences for the singing of priests and choirs. The Reformers thus restored singing in worship to ordinary people). Later, in the nineteenth century, there was another intensive period of didactic hymn writing. Mrs Cecil Frances Alexander began writing hymns to teach important biblical truth to her Sunday School children in Ireland. Horatius Bonar, the Scottish Presbyterian minister, did likewise. Samuel Stone, the writer of "The Church's one foundation" is just such another. Stone was an Anglican vicar who wanted to teach his parishioners – but he also had in mind the destructive forces of false teaching which were alive in his day.

We often sing "The Church's one foundation" when the subject of the church is the topic of a sermon, or perhaps when a new congregation is instituted or a minister ordained or installed. We know this hymn well. We also know it by its tune, "Aurelia", which was composed (originally for "Jerusalem the Golden") by Samuel Sebastian Wesley, the grandson of Charles and the most distinguished church musician of his day. But what do we know of its hymn writer? Probably you have never

heard of Samuel Stone. But I believe that once you know his story, and the reasons he wrote this hymn, you will sing it with greater appreciation and enthusiasm than you probably do already. It is a good hymn, in every sense.

Samuel Stone's life

Samuel John Stone's life spans the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901) almost exactly. He was born in 1839, and died as the twentieth century was beginning. The son of an Anglican clergyman in Staffordshire, he went to school at the Charterhouse, and then on to Pembroke College, Oxford, graduating B.A. in 1862. It was a very typical education for an Anglican clergyman of his day. He was ordained shortly after his graduation by Samuel Wilberforce (son of William), and soon after became curate of the poor parish of New Windsor in Berkshire. Throughout his ministry Stone took a deep interest in young people and in the poor. He was a devoted visitor in their homes, and did all he could to improve their understanding of the Christian faith. Shortly after he arrived at New Windsor he found that his people didn't really understand the articles of the Apostles' Creed that they so often used in their prayers. So, to help their understanding, he set about writing a series of twelve hymns, one on each article of the Creed. "The Church's one foundation" is the hymn he wrote on the ninth article: "I believe in one holy, catholic and apostolic church, the communion of saints". We will return to this shortly.

In 1870 Stone became his father's curate at St Paul's, Haggerston, in East London; and in 1874 he succeeded his father as vicar. Again, he was a keen teacher and friend of the young people, and a firm supporter of Christian education as provided by the schools of the parish. He was against state-funded education being the main provider of education. Before long, his church was full of eager young people all being taught the faith. He was also a frequent visitor of

the sick, and was instrumental in starting a nursing home to care for them.

In 1890 he moved again, to become Rector of All-Hallows-on-the-Wall, a run-down city church. He did much to restore the church building, but also continued to work with the poor, who needed so much teaching. One way he did this (he was a lateral thinker who looked for opportunities!) was to open the church doors from 6:30 to 9am each day. This enabled young women who traveled into London on public transport to have somewhere to go in rest and safety before their workplaces opened. He led those who gathered in hymn singing and prayers at 7:30, and often there were 160 young women there in his congregation.

Stone never married, but this vigorous man devoted his many gifts and energies to serving his various churches. However, in 1899 he was diagnosed with cancer, and spent the last year of his life at the Charterhouse, his old school. After a long sickness in which he suffered much pain, he died in November, 1900, and was buried near London after a funeral service in All Hallows, his last church. It is true that Samuel Stone was not a prominent or a famous man. He was what you might call a typical, hard-working Church of England clergyman of his day. References to him in history books are scarce. No one has written a biography of consequence. In truth, we would probably know nothing about him were it not for "The Church's one foundation."

Looking at the hymn

Let us look more closely at this hymn, the ninth of *Lyra Fidelium* (Songs of the Faithful) that Stone wrote on the Apostles' Creed. When we look at this hymn, we can see that it is permeated with Scripture. It is obviously written by someone who knew the Bible through and through. It does not merely contain fragments of texts taken out of context. Instead, it takes important biblical teachings and develops their themes

for the edification of the singer, in good poetry. In other words, it is a hymn that teaches. (Colossians 3:16). Chief among the biblical passages that stand behind this hymn is 1 Corinthians 3:11: "For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." This verse, and Ephesians 5:25.... "just as Christ loved the church, and gave himself up for her" are the biblical ideas behind verse one of the hymn. Stone is teaching that Christ is the foundation of the body of the church. We are His ongoing creation through the water of baptism and the preaching of His Word. We are also His bride; and He bought our life through His death on the cross. That is how much He loved us.

Verses two, four and five view the church through the lens of the whole of history. We are part of the people of God who must labour and battle here on earth for our faith, and sometimes suffer. But we will one day be part of that great company of all the believers who have ever lived (the "communion of saints"). We will be with them around the throne in heaven; we will see "the vision glorious" (the Lamb on His throne); we will enjoy with the church of all ages the rest, the victory and the peace that Christ has won for us. The entire book of Revelation is clearly behind all Stone has written here for the encouragement of his congregation. In addition, the ninth article of the Apostles' Creed speaks of the "catholic" church, and as we all know this means "universal" (not *Roman Catholic*). Thus in verse two Stone reminds us that the church contains those who are elect "from every nation" – yet "one" over all the earth. (Remember, the nineteenth century was the great age of British and American missionary work, and Stone's parishioners would have been very aware of the advance of the Christian church all over the world in this period).

But perhaps it is verse three that is of most interest in this hymn. Certainly, the controversy he alludes to ("by heresies distressed") was a major motivation for Stone in writing "The Church's one foundation". And in addition, the theme of the world's opposition to the church is relevant to God's people of all ages. It is of particular interest to His people today. We are beginning to see some of the most obvious "scornful wonder" of powerful unbelievers in high places since the early days of the church in the Roman empire. You have heard the tone in which our members of Parliament refer to "fundamentalists", I am sure.

The specific controversy

However, let us return to the specific controversy Stone had in mind in the early 1860s, when he wrote this hymn as a young curate. The trouble was doctrinal, and it concerned the attack of an Anglican bishop in South Africa on the authenticity of the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua. John Colenso, Bishop of Natal (interestingly a cousin of William Colenso, missionary printer in the Bay of Islands in New Zealand!) had in the early 1860s begun publishing a series of treatises expressing doubts about these books of the Bible from a German Higher Critical point of view. According to Colenso, difficult questions about the Old Testament put to him by native Africans unsettled him into adopting these opinions. He seems to have been greatly influenced by and sympathetic to native African culture and beliefs. Later on he even became sympathetic to polygamy). The Church of England attempted to deal decisively with Colenso's teachings. The South African bishops met in conclave and announced his deposition in December 1863. However, Colenso, who had refused to attend and answer the charges of heresy, appealed to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. This Committee ruled that the Bishop of Cape Town (heading the South African bishops) had no authority to do this. What happened then? Bishop Gray of Cape Town defended the faith strongly in opposition to Colenso, excommunicated him and appointed a rival bishop for the diocese of Natal. Missionary societies withdrew their support of Colenso, and he was effectually prevented from preaching in England when he was there at the first Lambeth Conference, called in 1868 largely to deal with his heretical teaching. The Church of England, internationally, had been deeply disturbed by Colenso's teaching. Stone was right to draw attention to the danger to the church from within: heresy is a blow from the enemy in her midst, so often warned against by Paul and Peter in their New Testament epistles. Schism does indeed tear churches apart, and heresy does distress God's people greatly. But so often, as has been seen in the history of the church, a return to God's Word to search out the error and answer it has ended up strengthening her. And there is, and will be, an end to such internal bleeding. God's people stay at their watching-posts, remaining faithful and asking their Lord "How long?" In the light of eternity, the wait is not long. The "night of weeping" will soon be replaced by "the morn of song" and the church will

*The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord,
She is His new creation
By water and the Word:
From heaven He came and sought her
To be His holy bride,
With His own blood He bought her
And for her life He died.*

*Elect from every nation
Yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation
One Lord, one faith, one birth,
One Holy Name she blesses,
Partakes one Holy Food,
And to one Hope she presses
With every grace endued.*

*Though with a scornful wonder
Men see her sore oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder
By heresies distressed:
Yet saints their watch are keeping,
Their cry goes up "How long?"
And soon the night of weeping
shall be the morn of song!*

*'Mid toil and tribulation
And tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation
Of peace forevermore;
Till, with the vision glorious,
Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great Church victorious
Shall be the Church at rest!*

*Yet she on earth hath union
With God the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion
With those whose rest is won,
O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we
Like them, the meek and lowly,
On high may dwell with Thee.*

be vindicated. Another verse, often omitted in modern hymn books, states even more clearly the certainties that keep God's church going:

*The Church shall never perish!
Her dear Lord to defend,
To guide, sustain, and cherish,
Is with her to the end:
Though there be those who hate
her,
And false sons in her pale,
Against or foe or traitor
She ever shall prevail.*

Stone, reviewing the heresy of his day, found his encouragement in the right places. Do we?

A model for us today

Stone's hymn is a model for what gifted people may write for us to sing today. So what are some of the issues face the church in the twenty-first century? What truths need defending? One such is the teaching of justification by faith alone. (Think of the New Perspective on Paul, or the Federal Vision teachings that "distress" churches of like mind to ours, and maybe us too, one day). Perhaps we should be singing about the inerrancy of Scripture, or the sanctity of marriage? But most of all we need to be singing about Christ who died for His church, who keeps His people secure, and who will welcome His saints to heaven when their labours and sufferings are over.

Amen.

Sources:

Norman Mable, *Popular Hymns and their Writers* (London, Independent Press, 1957)

Valerie Bonham, "Samuel John Stone", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol.52 (Oxford, 2004), p.910

Nigel Day, "The Church's One Foundation", www.stpetersnottingham.org/hymns/foundation.htm This web site will take you to another, giving the full texts of all the *Lyra Fidelium* hymns, if you are interested.

"John William Colenso", wikipedia.org/wiki/John_William_Colenso

Focus on home

Andrew Reinders

Gleanings from our bulletins...

Bishopdale

Lord willing, Aalt Verkerk and Emma Bramley will marry on 5 May 2007 at 1pm at Millwood Chapel, Ohoka (unless there are lawful objections). While they would love you to attend please note that the chapel is not very big and will only seat a limited number of people.

Again Lord willing, John Murnane will profess his faith on 13 May 2007 and Sam Geerlofs will be baptised on 20 May 2007. Both the profession of faith and baptism will take place in the evening service.

Pastoral: Congratulations to Tim & Leanne Kuipers on the birth of a son on Monday. His name is Gideon Bert and he weighed in at a healthy 4.16 kgs (9lb 3oz) We can give thanks to God that all went well.

Pastoral: Congratulations to Chris and Laura Giddy on the birth of Joshua on Wednesday 16th of May. He weighed in at a healthy 9 pounds, 9 ounces. Once again we are

reminded of the goodness of God and have cause to give thanks.

Pastoral: We officially welcome David Capill (Graham and Judy's son) as a communicant member of our congregation. David professed faith at St Johns Anglican Church, Latimer Square, and has been worshipping with us now for quite some time.

Bucklands Beach

Pastoral. There have been some special, milestone birthdays this past week among our senior members. Today (May 6th) our sr Nel de Jong celebrates her 85th and last Thursday (May 3rd) sr Joke Kant her 80th! We join with you and your families in giving God special praise and thanks for all that he has been, is and will be, forever. Warmest congratulations.

Weddings banns: Albert Ruban, from Tirunelveli (Tamil Nadu, India) and Rachel Rajkumar, a member of our fellowship, have indicated their desire to be united in marriage. They want to begin their life together as husband and wife in the name of the Lord and in the presence of His people, and continue it to His glory. If there are no lawful objections, the ceremony will take place here in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Bucklands Beach on Monday, June 4th during a service which commences at 10.30am. You are all encouraged to attend this service.

Christchurch

Pastoral. Next week during the morning worship service we hope to witness the baptism of Amelia de Vries, infant daughter of Jason and Rachel de Vries.

Prayer Meeting. This week Thursday at 7.00 pm, there will be an opportunity to meet and join with other members in offering up prayers for our families, our church, and our world. Please consider this as a good way to be in service for the church.
- Pastor Jim

Ascension Day Service. There will be a service on Thursday 17 May to celebrate Jesus' ascension into heaven. The service will be held at the Reformed Church of Christchurch and will begin at 7.00 pm. Please make an effort to come. Ascension Day clearly reminds us that one day Jesus will return in glory.

Milestones to give thanks to our Lord for... congratulations to the following...Mrs. Marijke Visser who celebrates her 80th birthday this Wednesday.

Dunedin

Pastoral Notes. We rejoice with Bernie and Vanessa Vaatstra at the safe arrival of Tobias Emerson born on Tuesday morning at 6 am. Both mother and son are doing fine, thanks be to God.

Dovedale

Harvest Sunday: The deacons receive regular requests for food or money to assist needy persons either from within our congregation or from individuals in the Hornby area. To enable us to meet the needy in our society when they come to us, we have put in place a Deacon's Cupboard in which we hope to store non-perishable food items as well as some household goods. To keep this cupboard stocked we hope to have a "Harvest Sunday" twice yearly, where members of the congregation are asked to donate non-perishable goods. Sunday 13 May (Mother's Day) has been set aside for this purpose, where we will have a table in the foyer of the church. Please give generously so we can meet the needs in our community.

Pastoral: We're delighted that Mr John Goris, RCNZ emeritus minister from Wellington, will be leading us in worship on May 27, *dv.* Mr Goris is scheduled to arrive Saturday, mid-afternoon, and depart midday Monday.

There is a lot to thank the Lord for as we look back on the congregational camp. Whilst we are thinking of, and giving thanks for the Bajemas, their work and their visit let's think a little about the work of their congregation in Mangere. Even though it is a relatively small congregation it is vibrant. They have undertaken to have Mr and Mrs Daniel Wilson for a few months during our winter. Daniel is a student at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and Raewyn, his wife, is our brother Louis Couperus' sister. Daniel plans to serve a [northern] summer internship in Mangere under the tutorage of Mr Bajema, May through August. The Wilsons also expect their first baby to be born during this period. We commit all these plans to the Lord, pleading for His grace.

District meetings have been a blessing this year. One of the ways the Lord has prospered us is by more people coming to the meetings. The session is encouraged in this. We have enjoyed some very edifying discussions, and good times of fellowship in the word. Please keep coming. It is God honouring.

Pastoral. Mr John Rogers, minister of the Reformed Church of the North Shore, has agreed to come and spend the weekend 15-18 June, so that we may conduct some (as it were) "due diligence" with each other. We need help from the Lord in this as we try to determine who to call, and that He would influence all inclinations according to His own good purposes.

Foxton

Meditation: In today's world, there is a tremendous emphasis on leadership. Big companies pay their CEO's exorbitant salaries and bonuses, especially if they can make the company perform and do well. And should a company not do well, perhaps even for reasons outside the CEO's immediate control, they are soon disposed and replaced. Now I don't wish to minimise the importance of good leadership, or the need to be better equipped for ministry. However, I am concerned that the secular mentality of good leadership is not only creeping into the church, but is portrayed as solving all our problems, especially the one about church growth. We are constantly bombarded with articles, DVD's, seminars, conferences, and guest speakers emphasizing the need to train our elders and ministers to be good leaders if we want to see the church grow and if a church doesn't grow numerically and flourish it is because of poor leadership. On this Pentecost Sunday, I don't find that pattern in Scripture. Sure, Jesus trained and taught his disciples, but even as little as a week before His death and resurrection, the disciples didn't understand His mission. In fact, the Apostle Peter denied his Lord three times on the very night Jesus was sentenced to die! Yet, the Lord

of the church, not only restored him, He used this often 'foot in mouth' Apostle on Pentecost Sunday to preach a sermon that would probably be regarded as a 'no no' in many churches today. Peter preached about Christ crucified and risen, and to cut a long story short, told his listeners that they were guilty of murdering God's own Son. In other words, his listeners were told that they were the worst of sinners and if they wished to be forgiven they needed to repent and be baptized. And we read, "that those who accepted the message were baptised and about three thousand were added to the church." Wow, wouldn't we be pleased if in this city of 4.2 million people, 3000 people would repent and be baptised! Perhaps on this Pentecost Sunday, it may be good to remind ourselves, that no matter how good the leadership of the church may be, or how well trained they are, or even how well they may understand the 'reformed' faith, it is the Lord who converts people through the gracious work of His Word and Spirit, and not sinful man, no matter what their leadership qualities may or may not be. So before we take on the world's philosophy and apply it to church growth, let's spend much time in prayer, asking the Lord to build his church through the gracious operation of His Word and Spirit, and that we may be His willing instruments, no matter what our leadership skills are like. If the Lord could use Apostle Peter, He can use us! Let's be honest, "God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong."

Hamilton

Pastoral: Roelf & Ria Hagoort celebrate their emerald anniversary this coming Tuesday. We praise the Lord for giving you 55 years together – a real testimony to God's sustaining grace in today's society!

Meditation – The book of Jonah, like many of the Old Testament prophets, is set in a time when things appear to be going well for God's people. Their enemies have withdrawn, their territory has expanded and they control the wealthy trade routes. Because of this, they assume that God is pleased with them and their future is secure. But the nation is not following God and judgement is coming. There is great similarity between their situation and ours – we live in a time of great prosperity and peace and it is easy to assume that these things are a sign of God's blessing on us. But the book of

Jonah is a challenge to measure our lives differently. Rather than looking at our outward situation, we are challenged to examine our hearts. Do we love what God loves? Is our desire for His glory, not our comfort? Are we willing to follow His plans when we don't understand or like them? Do we live by the truths that we profess? Or is there a gap between what we say we believe and how we live? The book of Jonah challenges us to mirror God's compassion for the lost and to live for His glory. May God make us open to the challenges of this book and enable us to respond in humble obedience.

Hearty congratulations. Praise be to God! We rejoice with John and Melva Versteeg on their Golden Wedding anniversary D.V. Friday 18May

Thank you so much to everybody who expressed kind thoughts, sent flowers, visited, provided food for the family or for the funeral reception during my mother's illness and after her death. I am truly humbled by the extent of your concern, and grateful for the witness your love has been to my family members. One sister exclaimed that people who so kindly offered help at such times "should be sainted!" I was tempted to point out that...they already are! The Lord bless you for your generosity. I know mum would be overwhelmed; I am, too. All glory to His name. Thanks much, Janice

Hastings

From the Vicar. This week I began taking bible studies with inmates at the Hawkes Bay Regional Prison. The students attend voluntarily and are keen to learn more about the Lord. Their bible knowledge ranges from virtually nothing to an impressive grasp of theology and biblical history; gained from many hours of study. There is a genuine, open, and refreshing desire to grow in personal faith and relationship with the living God. The Lord has clearly opened the way to minister to these men who are held captive behind locked doors. Please be in prayer for these studies and for the ongoing work of prison ministry teams who hold services there on the Lord's Day.

Congregational property survey. A reminder that the Management Committee would like to receive your completed Congregational Property Survey form by Sunday 27th May in order to assess feedback regarding the different options presented. If you have

any queries regarding the form, please contact either David Kaijser, Lance Neal, Alice Saathof or Craig Treacher.

Hukanui

Regarding Calls: Last Sunday the Wameral church voted on a proposal to call me as their pastor: this vote however, did not receive the required majority. I have also informed the Reformed Church of Avondale that, after prayer and consideration, I have declined the call serve there. This means we will be around here a little longer.

Pastoral: Aiden Roux had approximately four hours of surgery this past week in which the damaged ducts outside the liver were removed and replaced with/connected to the small intestine. The doctors were pleased with the way the surgery went, but the full result of this surgery will not be known for another month. We continue to pray that God will provide healing to Aiden, that the liver may begin to work properly, and that Aiden will be kept free from infection. Paul and Sharon have also greatly appreciated our prayers and support, and have remarked on what a blessing it is to be part of a church family that takes such good care of each other. Let us continue to pray for the family also, that God will continue to uphold them and strengthen them.

Mangere

Pastoral: We rejoice with Sr Joyce Kant upon her 80th birthday this past Thursday and which she also shares with us today. Also having a notable birthday is Sr Nel de Jong who has her 85th birthday today. We thank the Lord for His many blessings to them and through them.

Physical discipline over the ditch. The recent change to New Zealand law regarding physical discipline has sparked debate in Australia, with the Leader of the Australian Democrats Party (a small and fading political party), Senator Andrew Bartlett, calling for a "public inquiry" into smacking. Dubious arguments linking the issue to child abuse have again been used. And while the issue has made headline news, the major parties in Australia have largely ignored the call, instead displaying a refreshing confidence that Australian parents understand the difference between child abuse and child discipline. It looks as if, for the time being at least, Australia will be reluctant to follow in New Zealand's footsteps. *Maxim Newsletter*

A quick conversation!

A lady was sitting in a plane reading her Bible, when the man sitting next to her said, "You don't believe everything in there do you?"

"I most certainly do, it's the Bible!" replied the lady.

"Well what about that guy who was swallowed by a fish?"

"You mean Jonah, yes I believe that too," replied the lady.

"How can anyone survive 3 days in a fish?"

"I don't know, I guess when I get to heaven I'll ask him."

"What if he's not in heaven?" asked the man.

"Well then you'll have to ask him!" replied the lady.

North Shore

Profession of faith. With thankfulness to the Lord, the Session recommends Ivan & May Turner be accepted as members. Ivan has been worshipping with us for many years and we were talking about him professing his faith about three years ago. But then he met May! And he wanted to profess his faith together with his wife and they have been working towards that over the past year or so. Unless anyone has any objections to them professing their faith in this Church, they will do so next Sunday, in the morning Service (Lord willing).

Wynja's accomodation. Rev Dick Wynja and his wife will be coming to minister to us when John and Sheryl Rogers go to Uganda. We require accommodation for them. The preference would be where they can be self-contained with their own facilities. The dates are not yet set but it would be approximately the months of Sept through Nov. If you know of any location please contact one of the deacons.

Technical help needed. Calling all you techos' ... if you know anything about mp3 recording and setting up such a device that is capable of recording sermons for example, please have a korerau (conversation) with Frank den Hartigh, as he is only experienced in the bush telegraph system, which is out of date. Looking forward to your help.

Palmerston North

From the Pastor...Congratulations to Ben Meinders who celebrated his 80th birthday last week!

Pukekohe

From the Pastor: Last Wednesday I took a small part in leading the ANZAC service in the Pukekohe Town Hall. The hall was almost full. It is good to see a growing interest in our history as a nation and an appreciation of the sacrifices many have made for the freedoms we now enjoy. We can't take these religious or political freedoms for granted. Continue to pray for those who rule over us that we may live quiet and peaceful lives in all godliness.

Silverstream

Session Notes. Combined Bible Study: A combined Bible Study is planned for 9 May, 7.45 at the church. The topic will be: "Administering the Rod in a Hostile Environment." We hope to discuss the manner and means of discipline in the home, in light of the direction things seem to be moving in our society. This is an opportunity for the older members to share their wisdom with the younger families, so we hope that both young and old will attend. Could families L-P please bring a plate, serve supper and clean up afterwards. Thank you.

Pastoral Notes. We give thanks for the birth of Brooke Fransen, daughter of Tim and Rachel, on Tuesday morning. Brooke was born at a healthy 8ib, 8oz.

Session Notes. Profession of Faith: Session is pleased to announce that Lisa

Lambers has successfully completed her examination for profession of faith. The profession of faith is to take place, Lord willing, in the morning service on June 10. Should there be any lawful objections, these should be conveyed as soon as possible to one of the elders. Let us give thanks to the Lord that another of His covenant children has taken to heart the promises & commands of the covenant.

Uganda: 'Teeing up' for the 6th.! Dear brothers & sisters, It is now less than 3 weeks before we are due (DV) to once again fly out of Sydney for yet another - our sixth! - stint of service, together, in Mbale, Uganda. Thus far, it has amounted to close on 2 years there, and it is still a cause of wonder to us that you have seen fit to allow us to represent you (as a congregation) in this way on the overseas mission field! We remain most grateful to the Lord for your confidence in us, and for your continued prayerful and practical support. On this occasion, for the first time (as to more than diaconal support) our Canberra brethren have 'locked in' to the costs of sending us...and supporting us...in Mbale to the 'tune' of A\$5,000. This has not only somewhat lightened the financial burden on Silverstream, but it indicates a growing commitment here to the work of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Uganda. Now, more than one Australasian congregation has become distinctly 'mis-

The price of a cup of coffee

"How can we help?" This is the question we were asking ourselves.

About fifteen months ago, a report from the Help a Child Foundation included a request for sponsors for specific children. Our Bible Study group discussed this. Some members of the group, usually attended by up to eight persons, were already sponsoring a child in their families. Several retired members felt they could not answer the request because of their limited income and other commitments. However, considering the worthiness of this cause, we decided that there was a way of contributing regularly.

Dinie produced a small, bright yellow box into which we could put a gold coin each time we met. Just about the price of a cup of coffee! So we started our collection.

Every three months or so, this box is emptied, coins counted, and a cheque for the amount put in an envelope into the Sunday collection for dedication, with directions for the treasurer to acknowledge it (for accountability) and hand it on to the church HAC representative. She then dispatches it to the national representative in Masterton. So far, we have been able to forward the sum of \$375 for this cause, all for the approximate price of a café cup of coffee!

Perhaps the little yellow box is an idea that could spread? It has been a regular, painless way to increase our giving to the Lord, and supports such a worthy cause. What about your study group? Talk it over, and see what your group members think.

Tuesday Morning Bible Study Group, Palmerston North

sion-minded' in this endeavour, and such brings much thankfulness to the Lord! We remain, of course, under the direction of the Silverstream session, and greatly appreciate the overall provision made for us. We also want to thank you for your fellowship-in-service over these years, and for the many expressions of your care and support. With our love in the Lord, Barry & Anne (James)

Auckland Women's Presbyterial, Pukekohe, Saturday 5th May

On a lovely sunny day approximately 90 ladies of the Auckland Presbytery got together for a day of fellowship. The day began with morning tea, prayer, Bible reading and singing and then we had Sue Bracefield speak to us on the 'Righteous Bad girls of Genesis'. This was obviously a title to get everyone interested and we looked at the behaviour of Lot's daughters and Tamar; what made them act the way they did and is there anything we can learn from them. Sue taught us about their culture - the importance of heirs and the position of women in that society? We then delved into their limited knowledge of God and the way the men in their lives had failed to protect them and teach them about God. After that we went into groups and discussed the influence of our culture on our society and the church. We concluded that we need to know God so that He shapes our lives, not our culture. It was certainly a thought provoking study that prompted lots of discussion.

After a delicious lunch and the business part of the meeting we had 'Fun With Flax', learning to make flax flowers. Lots of laughter and chatter ensued. A collection was held for an orphanage in Pakistan that raised a little over \$500.00. With afternoon tea we farewelled our guests.

It was a privilege to host this group of ladies.

Harriet Haverland on behalf of the Ladies of the Pukekohe Reformed Church

Wellington

Session Notes. At the beginning of our services, we are accustomed to hear the familiar words from Psalm 124 that "our help is in the name of the Lord, who made the heavens and the earth". This is not a prayer; rather, it is a statement of our total dependence upon God. It was sung by the Israelites as they went up to the temple for the regular festivals to present themselves before the Lord God, to worship Him, and to call upon His name. Thousands of years later, as we come to worship with God's people, we too acknowledge the same dependence on God for all that is good and all that we need. Since all of us depend on the Lord in this way, as elders we think it would be helpful for us to make this a corporate confession of faith that we make together at the opening of our services. So after our silent personal prayers, we will recite these words together. To help familiarise yourself with these words, you will find them printed on the front page of our bulletin.

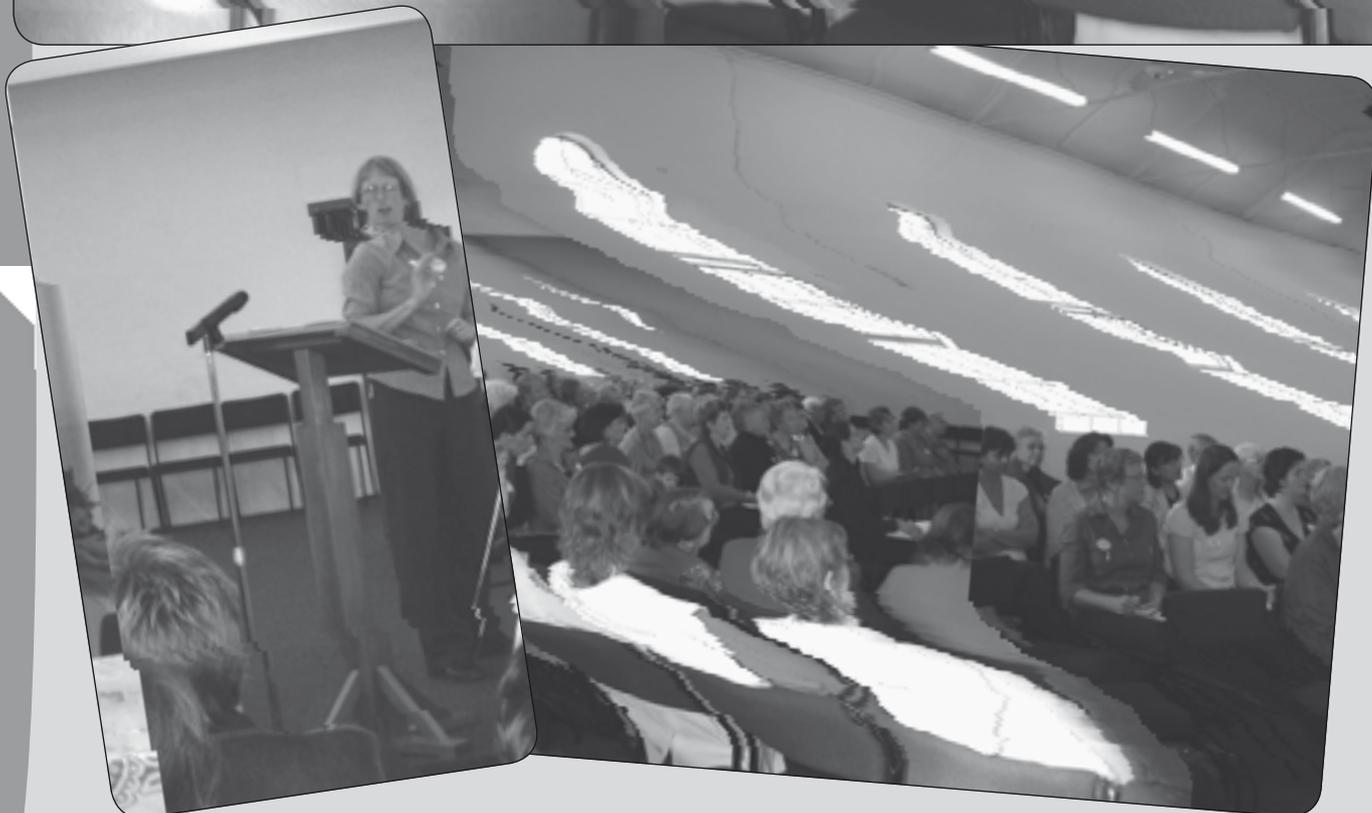
News from the Churches. We have a new overseas sister church! The Canadian

and American Reformed Churches (CanRC - www.canrc.org) voted at their Synod last week to accept our offer of a sister-church relationship.

Christianity Explored. Starting in three weeks time on June 10, I hope to start a fortnightly Christianity Explored course on Sunday evenings for anyone who is interested in finding out more about the Christian faith. We'll begin with dinner together at the manse following the afternoon service. As we study the gospel of Mark together, we will explore three questions that cut right to the heart of Christianity: Who was Jesus? Why did he come? What is involved in following him?

If you would be interested in joining us on Sunday evenings, please speak to Pastor Andrew to find out more. Or perhaps you have a work colleague, neighbour, or friend you've been speaking to who might like to know more about Christianity in a relaxed environment. This is a great opportunity for you to invite them to join us - and you'd be most welcome to come along as well.







**WELLINGTON
PRESBYTERY,
23 & 24 MARCH 2007
SHORT REPORT**

Presbytery commenced on Friday evening at the Reformed Church of Wellington for the examination of Vicar Andrew Nugteren. The synodical examiners were Rev Michael Flinn and Rev John Rogers. The moderator, Richard Schmidt, welcomed all those in attendance and read from Job 38: 1-36 and Proverbs 3: 5-6 reflecting on the purpose of Presbytery at this time and acknowledging that we serve God and put our trust and reliance on him.

Vicar Andrew Nugteren began his final examination by preaching a sermon based upon Psalm 20 entitled "Preparing for Battle". Presbytery went into closed session to discuss and critique the sermon. Presbytery voted in favour of sustaining the examination of the sermon. We rejoiced with the audience from Wellington that Andrew also sustained the rest of his examination.

Presbytery reconvened the following morning at 9.30am. Moderator Rev Leo de Vos opened the meeting and read from Matthew 12: 14-21 and reflected on Christ's role as a servant, humbly serving in a quiet and peaceful ministry. The Church Order Article 47 questions were answered affirmatively by elder delegates from the Hastings and Masterton churches. The reports for church visitations to Silverstream and Wainuiomata were received.

Rev Gary Milne was unable to be at the meeting to present his complaint against elders and church visitors. The motion to have his complaint removed from the agenda was carried. In addition Rev Milne had a number of preconditions to presenting his appeal to which the majority of churches could not agree.

Rev John Zuidema reported as Youth Liaison and noted the National Camp had been successful. Rev Peter Kloosterman had agreed to be the speaker for the Easter Camp. The WRYC had requested that Andrew Nugteren take over the role of Youth Liaison with the John's departure. A motion to this effect was passed.

Rev Kloosterman gave a report on the recent meeting of the OMB noting the Hargoorts work in Papua New Guinea and their recent furlough. The OMB had also requested that Hastings be the sending church for Rev and Mrs Douma as mission-

aries to Papua New Guinea. The Douma's were working through this decision.

Presbytery gave approval for Rev Zuidema's credentials to be sent to the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia as he has accepted a call to DeeWhy. Rev de Vos farewelled John and expressed his appreciation for his work in the Foxton congregation and in the Wellington Presbytery. Silverstream and Palmerston North delegates also expressed their appreciation for John's diligent work.

The overture by Foxton that the regular meetings for Presbytery be held on Saturdays (rather than Friday evening) was discussed and the motion passed. It was agreed to meet regularly in the central location of Palmerston North to make travel more convenient for the delegates.

The WRYC request for funds for youth camps to be increased from \$600 to \$1,200 was discussed and approved.

The formal complaint by John Haakema was heard. The main matter under consideration was whether the Palmerston North session bound Gary Milne's conscience by requiring that he read the Bible version approved by the Session in the worship service. John Haakema, the Palmerston North session and the Church Visitors presented their position and after discussion, the complaint by John Haakema was not upheld by Presbytery. Rev Rogers prayed for healing for all involved in the situation in Wanganui.

The meeting concluded at 4.40pm.



**National Board
Secretary N.Z.C.C.C. & C.,
4 Phoenix Lane, Papanui, Christchurch.**

Pornography, our purity and our posterity

Part 1 – The situation

Ian Wildeboer

The topic of pornography¹ and sexual purity is a topic that one would rather leave untouched. Most find it far too sensitive a subject to address, or like me, feel unqualified to deal with the whole matter effectively. However, the burden that is placed on my heart with the burgeoning problem that pornography is becoming in many Christian homes, compels me to draw 'again' our attention to this subject.

The fact remains, no one is immune to the power of this sin; not pastors or professors and teachers, missionaries and the like and so too all other members of Christ's church: the elders, the deacons, the board members, the fathers and their sons. It should be mentioned here that women are purposely excluded in this discussion, not because some have not fallen in this area of sexual impurity, but because the problem of pornography is seemingly a bigger evil in the lives of men than woman.² Although I should quickly add that women have a role to play in this raging battle with respect to their husbands and sons who are fighting or not fighting against this sin.

Still, I want to approach the sin of pornography and the call for purity from the angle of fathers, though not excluding their sons. That is, if so-called 'faithful' men are living with this secret sin, and committing the shameful acts associated with it, what can we expect of the next generation, specifically our sons and theirs? And inseparably connected to that: how are we, as fathers, preparing our sons for this battle for purity, and can we, if this sin is captivating us? Finally, are we carefully fitting—by the grace given us—their armour so that they too can stand up under Satan's barrage of arrows filled with the sin of pornography and licentiousness?

How are you faring?

In order to address these questions, we need to begin with this question: how are you faring in this battle for purity? If statistics account for anything, many Christian men may not be faring that well. In a 2003 survey from the Internet Filter Review,

they found that 47 percent of Christians admit pornography is a major problem in their homes.³ Another equally alarming statistic showed that of several thousand Christian men interviewed, over 50 percent confessed to having "used pornography" in the previous seven days.⁴ This means that in many Christian churches every other man sitting in the pew has used pornography since the last time he's been in church. These surveys were taken in America but one would not be hard pressed to find such findings in Australia or Canada and in our churches no less. Further, these statistics support the following stories of people in our churches struggling with this sin. Here are just three stories that serve as representatives for sadly, many more.

"I am 20 years old, and I am addicted to pornography. Even when I say I won't do it again, I do. Again and again. I worship this god, that I hate but not enough, I guess. I can't seem to pray, I am too ashamed to; I feel I am lost in this sin and it is affecting my relationships and also the way I look at girls and putting disgusting thoughts into my mind..." My parents don't know, of course, and I am far too ashamed to tell them or my friends.

Or, says one wife, *"... I just found out my husband has been visiting pornographic sites on the Internet. He has been doing this for years. Many years, secretly setting his eyes on another woman or women and all along I never knew. I thought he was faithful, true to me and to our children. I mean, he has held office a number of times in the church. One probably couldn't have seen it, though now as I look back, I can account for many chinks in his armor. But now...but now, what do I do? I am deeply hurt. I am betrayed. I am angry..."*

One more. Another wife comments: *"I thought he had it beat, he said he did...and I thought we worked through the problem together, and this was hard. But now my husband has just told me he is enslaved again... I hate it. I want to leave him, but I know this is not what the Lord wants. I hurt and I feel so deeply betrayed. What do I do?"*

These are only a few stories and many of you could account for many more – may-

be you are living one of these stories right now. Though I sincerely hope you aren't. Sadly there are stories that aren't told and some are much more deadly in their magnitude. The path of sin is a relentless movement to more shameful, abominable and even hellish acts until death. So in James 1:15 we read: *"sin, when it is full-grown gives birth to death."* This path of sin has led some men to adultery, rape, incest, participation in orgies, sodomy and homosexuality. Some of these men may have merely begun by entertaining themselves with illicit images not realizing the journey, the road to the 'grave' that they were beginning.

I don't think I need to inform anyone that this sin of pornography is wrong. We all know or should know that it is sin. It is evil. It is a vile, repugnant, repulsive, repellent, loathsome act that fills the heart with all that is impure and immoral. It pollutes the well spring of life, your heart, where God through His Spirit wishes to make His home. It destroys relationships, causing detachment, shame, distance, and tension to mount where peace and joy and love should flourish. It corrupts, defiles and cheapens the beautiful sexual union that God has ordained to exist between a husband and a wife. Finally, it is seeking satisfaction outside of Christ and replacing the worship of God, with an idol, a woman who is but a mere object of shameful activity feasted upon by millions of eyes.

Rationalizing the sin away

Sadly, in the research and discussions I have had on the matter, some men work hard to rationalize or normalize this sin away. This is not surprising as the heart of man is naturally prone to sin and sin is above all deceitful. So we read in Psalm 64:6 *"Surely the mind and heart are cunning."* Therefore comments like the following ones might be heard or thought. "I can't help it anyway, God made me like this." Or, "at least I am not addicted." Or, "I am not engaged in hard porn, only sunshine girls, sensual TV shows and the like...that's all." Or, "who will ever know?" Or, "I just need to know what is out there so I can warn my family." To the most

brazen comment of all: "it is my right: my TV, my computer...my voyeurism.' Others may not be in that camp, and may find pornography as a means to escape the pressures and burdens and even pains of this life. This is a form of escapism into the world of erotic fantasy. Although the reasons for engaging in this sin may be manifold and I do not have the time nor the ability to deal with the physiological or emotional reasons that may have led some men to go down this road, the fact remains it is practiced or continued through some form of rationalization. Excuses are made and the journey continues.

However there is a cost to rationalization. Rationalization makes the covering up of this sin like a game of charades. One lives one way in public and another way in the secrecy of his room, office or wherever. He is merely striving for people's praise and recognition while barring the door to the hideous activities of his heart. As one author put it, "such men are satisfied with a form of excellence, without obedience."⁵ The evil of pornography lurks so close to the surface, but it is suppressed by the actor who just plays his religious part scrupulously. However, you and I know that integrity is not marked by how we perform in the consistory room, in the school board room, on the committee you've been placed, or at work, or even in front of our children and wife—even if they will notice our possible 'double' standards. Integrity is marked by how we perform by ourselves under the ever-present reality of a Holy, Awesome God. The philosopher Blaise Pascal writes: "I try to be...faithful to all men; and whether I am alone or seen of men, I do all my actions in the sight of God, who must judge of them and to whom I have consecrated them all...[and] who has implanted these sentiments in me."⁶ For He alone holds the measuring rod on integrity. He knows what captures our heart, our mind, the idolatry that feeds it and the lust that captivates it. He knows (c.f. Heb 4:13).

We need to understand that rationalization is merely the devil buying time, waiting, baiting, and luring us into more and more despicable acts, to our shame and degradation of His Holy name. It is for good reason that God sends forth this clarion call to his children: "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality."⁷ Although we serve a gracious God who "does not treat us as our sins deserve,"⁸ He also says, "not...even a hint of sexual immorality." We serve a Holy

God who desires one thing of us: a pure heart. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God," Christ says so simply in Matthew 5:8. In Philippians 4:8 the Lord calls us to fill our hearts with whatever is true, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy. We are to meditate upon those things. Indeed if our mind, our heart, our spirit is enraptured by God and all that is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy in Him, there is no place for idolatry, false worship, and therefore the vile, secret sin of pornography.

Counting the cost

Need we be reminded of the cost of living in disobedience in this sin? David felt that cost when he allowed the lust of his flesh



to reign. His family felt the consequence of this sin until his death. Read 2 Samuel 12-20 to see the burdens borne by David for the sin with Bathsheba. The truth is that without obedience to Christ in this battle we open our homes and our families to the consequence or burden of this sin. And in the same breath, we become inept in serving our wives, our families and leading them down the path of righteousness. Indeed Satan and his hosts have a sure foothold in your home if you constantly bathe yourself in fornication. Someone captured it this way: "every time you retreat into your world of lust, you shut the door in God's face. You are dangling your soul and the souls of your children over the

fire of eternal damnation."⁹ We may say that is a bit too strong, but Scripture gives us no more latitude with this sin and the consequence of this sin. It is a banquet in the grave, the consequence of which is death. However, the opposite is also true as we learn in Proverbs 20:7, "the righteous man leads a blameless life; blessed are his children after him."

Grace and obedience

Yes, when it comes to sexual sins, like every other sin, Christ does not treat us as our sin deserves. We deserve hell, but He, by His sanctifying grace, through faith, gives us heaven with Him. His grace is abundant and His Spirit works with great tenacity to cleanse us from all ungodliness. Peter states in 2 Peter 1:3 that "His divine power has given us everything that we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness." In Christ this sin has no more power over you than it does Him. Paul confirms this reality in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is IN you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own. You were bought with a price."

However, Paul through the Spirit of Christ does not end there. No, he applies it to our redeemed will and states: "Therefore honour God with your body." Or in Romans 13:14 "Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ and do not think how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature." The Lord is saying to every man who is lured by the devils schemes, enticed by the vileness of this sin: 'Be obedient. Be engaged—fight!' He is saying: "you can and in the grace God provides, you must!" You must see past the fleeting and sordid fantasy to the living and true reality of Christ; and reset your gaze. Indeed, you must. You must for your sake, for your wife's sake, for your children's sake and their children's sake, for the Church's sake and ultimately then, for Christ's sake and the Glory of His Name. Yes, the grace of Christ should spur us on; and it is His grace which says: "Go and leave your life of sin!"¹⁰ And by God's grace we can.

Exposing the sin to the LIGHT

It is known that deeds of the darkness will stay with increasing tenacity, until exposed. Some will say, I have confessed this sin to God, countless times, and still I am ensnared. Possibly such people have not truly brought it to the Light, then. If

you are living in this sin, have you made others aware of it, especially your wife, and faithful men in the church? Have you opened the doors of your heart to Christ and those Christ has put in your life, so they too can spur you on and keep you accountable! Here obedience to Christ must settle the fear of being humbled and dealing with the fleeting emotion of 'shame.' It must be stated that the shame that is felt in exposing this sin is nothing compared to the burden of a dysfunctional marriage, a break up, children who have an 'absentee' father who lacks integrity and the journey to more gross sins at the cost of God's Holy and Glorious name. Have you counted the costs?

The three stories I mentioned above are success stories, in some way; because the sin has been brought to the Light. And only the light of God's grace with much patience and love can bring the necessary change that is needed to purify the heart. Each one has to be brought into the Light and God will be merciful.

Some men, I have realized, need help to take this step. They would rather try to believe they can go it alone. They can't. Others, so deeply engulfed in this sin may need professional help in dealing with it and must not delay in receiving it. Notwithstanding, I challenge each wife and mother reading this article to ask their husband and their sons: have you been faithful with your eyes? How are you faring? Have you visited pornographic sites or are you viewing erotic TV shows or worse...? Straight up: yes or no? You say, "No, I can't do that, I trust my husband wouldn't." Good. Then he will say, "No" with all the confidence of heaven to back him up! But this question may be the only way he may be called to account; it may be exactly what he needs to bring this evil to the Light! And by the power of God's grace and enjoy the FREEDOM that Christ has won for him. Your question is an act of love, to save him from the bondage of this sin.

Indeed, before men can serve effectively in their homes and then in Christ's church as fathers, as ambassadors for Christ, this sin has to be dealt with radically. And the grace of God must be brought to bear on each and every sexual sin that enticed the heart. Then the road to recovery, which I don't have the time to deal with in this article, can begin. Recovering lost ground in your marriage, friendships and most importantly in Christ may be a slow and arduous journey. Like in every sin, much hurt and pain is involved. I realize that

in some cases professional help will be needed immediately also for the wife.¹¹ And yet, it remains the road and journey to hope, grace, joy, purity and freedom. It is a journey that will bring glory to Christ for what He accomplished for us all! It is a journey that will enable you to sing with an enraptured and pure heart the beautiful doxology written for us in Jude 24-25: *"to Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen."*

This article originally appeared in 'Una Sancta', a publication for the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, with whom we have a reciprocal arrangement.

Endnotes

1 According to the Oxford English Dictionary the word is said to describe all various mediums, including pictures, writing or films or photos that are intended to stimulate sexual excitement. See, "Pornography" *Oxford English Dictionary*, (Oxford University Press, 2002). However, this may seem to lessen the weight of the sin or judgment that we know of in Scripture. Therefore it is better to

understand it from the Greek word *pornō*, which simply means: 'to prostitute or practice sexual immorality.' See Walter Bauer's, *"A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament"* (University of Chicago Press, 1979).

- 2 According to one survey 1 out of 7 women, both Christian and non-Christian alike are said to engage in pornography. However, they are said to be involved in sexual chat rooms or sexual explicit stories over viewing illicit images. See story by Mark Bergin, "Porn Again" in "World Magazine" April 23, 2005. <http://worldmag.com/articles/10555>.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Michael Pearl, "Pornography—Road to Hell," January 01, 2005, <http://www.lifeandlibertyministries.com/archives/000148.php>.
- 5 Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker with Mike Yorkey, have a whole chapter on this matter of obedience over excellence in their book *Every Man's Battle: Every Man's Guide to...Winning the war on Sexual Temptation One Victory at a Time*. (Waterbook Press, 2000) 49.
- 6 Blaise Pascal, "Pensees," 549, in "A Flame With Love: Selections from the Writings of Blaise Pascal." (World Wide Publications, 1992) 37.
- 7 Ephesians 5:3
- 8 Psalm 103:10
- 9 Pearl, "Pornography—Road to Hell" Jan 2005.
- 10 John 8:11
- 11 There are websites and resources available for women who have come to learn that their husbands are living in this sin. One such website that has links to other resources is: <http://erlc.com/article/what-is-a-woman-to-do-if-her-husband-is-using-pornography>

Missions in focus

Janice Reid

My 'scouting' trip to the Orthodox Presbyterian Uganda Mission

In last month's MIF, we heard from Andrew Dickson, member of the Hamilton congregation, who spent some time in Uganda last October to learn more about the work of the OPC mission team who minister to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Uganda. This is the second part of Andrew's article, describing what he learned from his trip, and outlining some of the needs on this particular mission-field.

What did I find?...cont'd

4) OPCU Leaders

Most of the students at Knox Theological College are members of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Uganda. Many are already elders or deacons and I found them to be friendly and welcoming.

I had only four Sundays in Uganda. The first was with Rev Phil Proctor at Mbale OPC and the 3rd was in Nakale leaving only two to visit 'normal' OPCU village congregations.

I visited Kachonga and Buchele churches, and also Kagoli church mid-week. Kagoli's Pastor is the very capable and committed Stephen Hamya (who is also KTC administrator). He helps Rev Proctor critique students' sermons, and the two men work well together. Stephen is convinced of the need to teach Reformed Theology in the African church, combined with soundly-based practical assistance.

As in much of East Africa there is a lot of emphasis on evangelism crusades in the local church scene, but so very often its not of lasting value. Foundational biblical truths are not taught, false teaching abounds and the many supposed converts soon relapse into sinful living. Many Pastors mentioned to me how they are praying for mass revival that they may see church members increase by five or tenfold. It is good to pray for such revival, but I question them about whether they think it likely that God would want to bring more true converts to their church if the leaders there are failing

to provide basic pastoral/spiritual food, guidance and care for those already in the flock? Evangelistic zeal is not so lacking in Africa but zeal for the hard graft of holiness and obedience is less common. People are the same the world over!

5) Conditions in Uganda

Ugandans are generally very friendly—and a surprising number of them speak English. Most Ugandans in the south-east speak Luganda. After their own tribal mother tongue its their first choice, then English, then Swahili depending on what mix of tribes/nationalities turn up in any social situation. So most folk are multi-lingual. There are also many Indian, Middle-Eastern and Mediterranean heritage people in most urban areas making for an interesting mix of cultures and languages in places like town markets.

Uganda was GREEN! There are large commercial farms of sugarcane and tea, as well as the myriad traditional smallholder

farms, and I saw some huge natural papyrus swamps. Being wet mosquitoes abound, so sleeping under nets or behind screened doors/windows is mandatory to avoid catching malaria. Thankfully I dodged the thrills of the 'chills and spills' this trip.

Surprisingly way less livestock than I expected to see, despite the extra green around. Those fantastic long-horned Zebu cattle are more common but other natural flora and fauna are same or similar to Tanzania. Beaut bird spotting...shimmering sunbirds, snappy bee-eaters, morbid vultures, stately eagles, proud cranes, scungebucket storks, shy barbets, raucous hornbills, cute chats, bright kingfishers, nosey weavers, elusive coucals etc...God must have enjoyed designing East African birds. There are >500 species and spotting 200 different types in mere days is said to be possible if you look for 'em.

Big surprise was the sheer number of bicycles, scooters and small motorcycles that Ugandans zip by on. 99% are Chinese

or Indian blingcycles (they love chrome accessories). But, on the plus, a boda-boda (bicycle taxi) or a piki-piki (motorcycle taxi) is a cheap and easy way about cf. squishing into a dala-dala (van) already chocked fuller than full with bodies. Traffic dances a crazed chaotic ritual in Kampala. But despite acute helmet shortages, the vehicle maintenance drought and non-observance of the non-existent road rules, you'll seldom see major accidents. Courteous mayhem – if that makes sense?

As for the horrible drive to Karamoja I'd heard much about, I thought it was ok for a rural road compared to what I've endured in Tanzania in the past. I was pleasantly surprised at how rare Police roadblocks are. They don't try forcing drivers for 'chai' much, unlike elsewhere in East Africa.

Most folk keep off the roads after dark as emergency services are non-existent—just like street lighting. Shonky roads, unlit bicycles and cars, and wandering drunks make night driving a somewhat hazardous pastime. But if you understand the risks

and avoid making predictable routine trips you'll most likely arrive ok.

Mbale is a larger town than I had imagined. The main attractions are Mt Elgon and Sipi Falls, about 60km from Mbale. But the town of Mbale itself does not offer much by way of modern shops and facilities. No malls, supermarkets, no Village 7. The basics can be found but for things like computer spares, etc., Kampala is the place to go. Communications are good with about 3 cell-phone companies covering Mbale and fairly reliable broadband internet access is available at what is a fair price for Africa although its way out of the league of affordability for most of the population.

6) Christian missions, NGO's and Aid agencies in Mbale

The largest overseas church mission in Mbale is Church of Christ. Rev Proctor took me to their Messiah Theological Institute (MTI) and it was obvious that he has good relations with them. MTI does both theo-

logical and practical skills training as well as providing medical care via a day clinic. The Americans that head up this mission are long-termers with many years of experience. They are open to sharing ideas and developing practical training courses etc with OPUM as it may suit.

Other organisations range from International Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) like World Vision, Oxfam, SNP (Dutch Govt) and GTZ (German Govt), a Christian children's hospital, a Christian Hospice, etc., down to a few very small private charities.

As for a missionary deacon working in well with these organizations? Discernment is needed, but this is entirely possible depending on the relationship and the need. The challenge is to i) know about, and then ii) best match, the different training offered to the individuals being assisted.

What would a missionary deacon contribute to OPUM's ministry?

- 1) Organise and direct diaconal assistance

- Manage and grow the work of the micro-finance fund by direct supervision and practical assistance
 - Network with other NGO's and aid agencies. Learn from others' success and failure. Design and run practical comparison trials and experiments in cropping/gardening and livestock husbandry, etc. Supervise appropriate technology transfer in ways that suit the individuals being assisted
 - Regular farm and micro-project advisory visits to church members' homes and farms
- 2) Develop a training/succession program so that local churchmen will be trained up to help in this diaconal work and who would eventually take it over completely
 - 3) Teach/mentor/encourage KTC staff/students as/if requested by Rev Phil Proctor
 - 4) Advise the Nakale deacons with their farming projects if requested
 - 5) Join with other Mbale Christians in proclaiming the gospel to unbelieving ex-pats
 - 6) Do any other tasks that can help Rev Proctor and leave him free for the weightier matters of his ministry.

Conclusions

I liked Uganda and its people; I wish there had been time to see more. Overall, though, here are my conclusions from the trip....

The OPUM and OPCU people gave me good fellowship and I was really encouraged by the time I spent with them. I consider Rev Proctor's work in Mbale very important for ensuring that God's people in Uganda gain the theological understanding needed for a strong local church.

Such men also need practical assistance and training to help them better manage the physical and financial resources, not

Karamojong kids

just the gospel truths, that God has entrusted them with. It is not enough that they know theology abstractly: such knowledge of God must be lived relationally and practically applied into all of life. Without a balanced approach to applying what the OPC mission is offering to invest into their church leadership, Ugandan believers will fail to build a vital, engaging Christianity that impacts and ultimately changes their churches, and then greater society, to the glory of God. The need to correct the current imbalance is what Rev Proctor hopes to address through the services of a suitable missionary deacon.

In closing I thank the Lord for His protection during my travels. I am also keen to ask you to pray often for the OPC Uganda missionaries and local leaders—that God would lead and bless them and their work.

As for deciding who else God is calling/will call to join in this ministry, do be in prayer that all involved will seek the Lord and clearly hear and obey His perfect will.

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

A day at the C.A.R.E. Clinic at Chennai

My last day in India was to be spent visiting the C.A.R.E. Clinic in Chennai run by Dr Chanthi and her assistant, Mrs Arthi. Daniel Prem Kumar and I arrived there at 10.00am after a long night on the 'sleeper' train spent travelling from Vijayawada. We were there before anyone else and looked around. The sign on the building read:

Rapha Medical and Counselling Services: Towards Healing and Hope.

Dr Chanthi soon turned up and opened up the clinic – a small, compact two-storey house typical of the area that has been transformed into a spotlessly clean facility. Reception is downstairs. This open area also includes a meeting room, which

doubles as a chapel. The counselling/counselling rooms are upstairs. We found out that Dr Chanthi owns the building. She purchased it a few years ago and had it completely renovated. She rents it out to C.A.R.E. at a very low cost! Our contribution from New Zealand (currently about NZ\$12,000 p.a.) pays for the running of

Mrs Arthi shares her testimony with the sisters.

the facility including the rental, and the salaries for those who work there.

Intrigued by the name '**Rapha**,' I asked about its meaning. Maybe I should be a better linguist, or have taken more accurate notes, as what I have is rather jumbled. The first reference I jotted down was '**Ultimate Deliverance**' (Matthew 6.33 ... *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness...*). A second entry about this name explains it as '**the Lord Heals**.' I noted in my diary,

The fundamental idea, turning (psycholo-

gist) Abraham Maslow on his head, is that real healing begins at the spiritual level and from there it flows into the rest of life. It is this principle that seems to drive the Chennai initiative.

To explain:

For many years, the prevailing view among those in counselling services was that first formulated by psychologist Dr Abraham Maslow in the 1940s. Maslow spoke about a 'hierarchy of needs.' At the bottom of the

pyramid were basic physical needs such as food, shelter and warmth. At the apex were the spiritual needs. Maslow theorised that before a person's spiritual needs could be addressed, the other, more 'basic' ones must be met first. This is still regarded as an axiomatic or self-evident 'fact' today in counselling circles. Dr Chanthi, as a Christian psychiatrist, has rejected the current orthodoxy by turning it upside down. First the heart – repentance, reconciliation and new life in Christ – and the other needs can be addressed subsequently. **Ultimate deliverance** – God's divine **healing** through the blood of Christ – and then the other issues (and for these prostitutes there are *many*) will be addressed as well.

The Chennai Clinic in action

Soon after 10.00am, women began to arrive. It was only much later that I realised that many of them would have been on the road for several hours to do so. When there were about 15, Dr Chanthi called them into the reception area, where they were seated on the concrete floor, and began to lead the weekly worship hour. Chanthi played the keyboard. The singing was whole-hearted and enthusiastic. After reading from **Matthew 6.25-34** (*Do not worry!*) she presented a devotional based on Matthew 6.33 (*Seek ye first His kingdom...*). That brought home to me that unless there is first and foremost a healing of the sin-saturated heart through Christ's saving blood (ultimate deliverance!) the multitude of other real physical, mental and spiritual needs will not be healed or addressed either.

After the service, Chanthi invited Daniel and me into her office and 'opened the books.' Records were once again kept immaculately. Every rupee spent there is recorded. More importantly, we found her completely committed to and enthusiastic about this ministry. I refer to it as 'ministry' because there was little if any evidence of serving herself. Working in a position that is virtually unpaid (with a government hospital and private practice wooing her continually) she is committed to helping a section of the community that most of us would find morally 'untouchable.' I felt this all the more keenly when worshipping with these women, knowing that most of them are still actively involved in their 'trade.' Chanthi and Arthi love these women in a completely self-sacrificial manner.

The 'clients' come to the C.A.R.E. clinic via networking among the prostitute populations of Chennai. It's all 'word of mouth.'

MIF prayer notes

Wally & Jeannette Hagoort will be visiting Vanimo (close to the Indonesian border) this month on a fact finding trip to see how the Reformed Churches of PNG can be of aid to our Christian brothers and sisters of the Reformed faith in this region. These Christians have asked for help and W&J will meet with them for 3 days this month. Please pray for their safety and for a good understanding of these peoples needs.

At time of writing, **Janice Reid** plans, DV, to return to Asia in June. This month her schedule is full, with a week-long HCJB conference in Singapore, followed by three back-to-back training courses (two in Bali, co-facilitated with an American engineer she has never met before). Please pray for these workshops, as well as for strength as Janice continues to adjust to the recent loss of her mother.

Rev Barry & Mrs Anne James hoped to return to Uganda in mid-June, DV. Please pray for them as they get settled into life in Mbale once again. Pray also for the new 1st year class at Knox Theological College, that it will have a good number of enrolments, and that these men will be able to allocate sufficient time from their ordinary duties to attend a full complement of lectures

They turn up for all kinds of reasons. Their case histories point to all kinds of deep-rooted medical and, above all, psychotic problems and issues. These in turn are complicated by a mish-mash of other issues involving broken families, homes and hearts. You see and feel first-hand that evil breeds evil. It is only when Christ enters into the hearts and lives of those Chanthi and Arthi minister to that these other issues can begin to be addressed.

Does it work?

If the opposition of Satan is anything to go by, the answer is most emphatically, 'yes!' Let me explain. The clinic's vision is to rehabilitate and deliver prostitutes from their bondage. That's the first step. The second is to use these women to minister to their sisters still in the 'business.' As you can imagine, this is a long and difficult process beset with all manner of setbacks. The testimonies I heard reminded me very much of the John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Satan clearly hates what is happening. In the past few years there were two women whose lives had been completely turned around as a result of this C.A.R.E. ministry. They had subsequently been nurtured and trained as vibrant Christians to become counsellors over a considerable period of time. Finally, they were ready to start work. Tragedy struck!

Both of them, in different circumstances, died under terrible circumstances. Word of this soon spread among the prostitute community in Chennai! The response was predictable: *Don't go near Rapha Medical Counselling Services. You will die if you do!* In a country like India, these kinds of fears are extremely real and powerful.

Satan seemed to triumph. The work was set back to a point where some doubted its future viability. Yet, by God's grace, the clinic survived and began a slow, difficult journey back to credibility. This is something Daniel and I were to experience first-hand that afternoon.

Let me begin by pointing out that I have never knowingly spent time with a prostitute. It was therefore quite something to be

The youth worker who works with Mrs Vanasithi (l), Mr Daniel Prem Kumar (c), Mrs Vanasithi (r).

invited to her home and see first-hand what has been happening to and through her. Her name was Vanasithi — a vibrant woman in her 30s. Her story was complex and tragic. She did not know who her birth family was, and as a young girl had run away and married a man who used her to provide his income. Tragedy followed tragedy. Her

involvement in prostitution became total. God stepped in. *'I thank God for that day when I was introduced to Doctor Shanthi!'* she enthused. From that moment her life began to change — slowly at first but with gathering momentum. She came to know

Jesus and in so doing became His servant and a leading figure among her former colleagues and friends.

She wanted us to see her home and what she was doing there. The journey there, by means of private transport, took well over an hour. Vanasithi herself had come to the Clinic by public transport — a journey of something like 2.5 hours! When we arrived, she showed us an extra room

that had been attached to her modest dwelling. Its purpose? 'A drop-in centre.' She has established a youth ministry and Sunday School classes as well as weekly worship services for prostitutes. (These women are very difficult to integrate into local churches, for any number of reasons!) The room, which has access to kitchen facilities as well, is also used as a refuge for women who find themselves in need to emergency care. Vanasithi is a shining light in her community and hopes to develop her 'drop-in centre' into a branch of the main clinic — a strategic spot, if only because it is right in the heart of a 'red-light' district!

Does this kind of ministry work? Having seen it with my own eyes, the answer is a very positive, 'Yes indeed!' The work might not be especially visible or spectacular. The help needed and the changes that must be implemented are difficult and painfully slow. In fact, some of the changes might only be made in the children (daughters) of these women of the street.

Yet one thing became absolutely clear: Christ is at work in and through the C.A.R.E. clinic in Chennai. Thank God for the ministry of women like Dr Chanthi and Mrs Arthi! Their ministry deserves and needs your support and prayers.

Dirk J van Garderen.

Focus on home