

faith in  
**focus**

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New Zealand's early Christian heritage

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## Editorial

This month we take a look at some of the high points of our church history in New Zealand. We are all aware of the weakness of the evangelical church in New Zealand today; and it can be discouraging. What we are usually seeing is a decline from former faithfulness – or it could be due to serious weaknesses from the beginning. Certainly, many immigrants to these shores were not much interested in the Christian church – and were far less inclined to attend church than were those they left behind in Britain. However, there are some bright spots of faithful, committed Christian service in our history; and here we present two of them. Mr John Haverland focuses on the Church Missionary Society missionaries who laboured in the Bay of Islands, and Mrs Sally Davey takes us through the first fifty years of the Free Church (Presbyterian) settlement in Otago. We will find that evangelical Anglicans and Presbyterians – both faithful to God's Word – laid a foundation of which we can rightly be proud. May you be encouraged by what you read – especially if you were not aware of these stories before.

Mr Maurice Roberts, writes on 'Entertaining devils unawares' – a compelling read. Mr Robert Vosslander writes a review on *Bioethics and the Christian Life: A Guide to Making Difficult Decisions*, by David Vandrunen. If you're interested in Christian ethics then read the review. Mr Dirk van Garderen gives us more news about a NDC Meeting with the C.A.R.E team at Madurai, India.

There is another healthy diet of news articles in World in Focus, Focus on Home with the Gleanings column, a Presbytery report, a report on the Family Camp of 2009/10 and a letter to the editor.

Many thanks to all the contributors. I hope you enjoy this issue.

Cover Photos – The Te Waimate Mission House, in Waimate North; Kerikeri Mission Station. Mission House/Kemp House 1822.  
First Church in Dunedin, by Blair Posthuma.



### Special Request

Did you immigrate to New Zealand in the 1950's? Have you got a story to tell about why you came to NZ and what you found, and the life you experienced? Then why don't you let the rest of the readers hear about your story. I am sure that there are many anecdotes, humorous or serious, which would be interesting for the readership. I look forward to hearing from you. Just remember to try to keep your story to about 1400 words.

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.

# New Zealand's early Christian heritage (1)

## Mission to the Maori (1814-1840)

### John A Haverland

In January 2005 my wife and I went on a holiday from Pukekohe to the Bay of Islands. We had two purposes in going there. The first was to have a good look at an area of New Zealand that was renowned for its beauty, and we were not disappointed! We enjoyed beautiful sunny weather and wonderful views over the lovely bays, islands, coastline and waters of the region. Our second purpose was to follow the footsteps of the early missionaries who taught and preached the gospel to the Maori tribes of Northland. I had read William Williams' fascinating book, *Christianity Among the New Zealanders*,<sup>1</sup> and we were keen to see where those missionaries had lived, worked, preached and been buried. We went armed with a detailed map of the Bay of Islands showing the location of the various mission houses, churches and historic sites and we spent a couple of weeks exploring many of these places.

Since then we have been back there twice, most recently in February this year with Harriet's parents to show them this lovely part of the country. We stayed in Kerikeri and while there I read another account of that early mission work titled *Missionary and Maori*<sup>2</sup> – I took it with me in further preparation for writing this article! As you keep reading I will tell you more about the places we have visited, but first a little historical background.

### The Church Missionary Society

New Zealand's Christian history began in 1814 with the arrival of the first missionaries from the Church Missionary Society of the Church of England. Samuel Marsden arrived in the Bay of Islands from Parramatta, Australia, a few days before Christmas. On Christmas Day he led the first service for the Maori inhabitants preaching on Luke 2:10; "Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy." One of the boat cruises taking passengers around the Bay of Islands took us to

the very site where Marsden preached that Christmas Day, now marked with a stone memorial.

The Church Missionary Society (CMS) had been established in 1799. Although its members were Anglican it remained a voluntary society with no official standing in the Church of England. Those belonging to the Society were from the Low Church wing of Anglicanism and were evangelical in outlook. They emphasised the necessity of individual conversion and were very interested in missions. That interest took them to the other side of the world, to New Zealand.

### A slow start

Initially the mission work did not go well. Part of that was due to the European traders already working in the country. Sealers and whalers had left Europe as adventurers and, on the whole, were not particularly pious. They did not respond well to the appeal of the missionaries to set a good example for the Maori people. However, the missionaries themselves

were not always the best examples. The families were isolated and at times quarrels and jealousy arose among them.

Yet the primary reason for the slow beginning was the will of God. The first fifteen years were a time of sowing the seed and the missionaries had to be patient and trust in the Lord. Their initial work was among the children and the slaves of the Maori. In the first five years there were no converts. William Williams wrote about this time; "Many years of anxious toil were to be passed. The bread was to be cast upon the waters, but it was not to be found until after many days."<sup>3</sup> The Maori followed their old ways and were not ready to exchange their atua (god) for the God of the missionaries. They continued with traditional tribal customs of utu (revenge) and cannibalism, as well as their cruel treatment of slaves and captives of war.

### The Williams brothers

In 1823 Rev Henry Williams arrived in the Bay of Islands and, two years later,



Kerikeri Mission Station. Mission House/Kemp House 1822.

his younger brother, William, joined him. Henry replaced John Butler as the Superintendent of the Mission in New Zealand. Marsden had asked Butler to resign his position because all the other missionaries disliked him and because his behaviour and unwise leadership generated many tensions among them; he was regarded as “hasty and injudicious, warm in his temper and unstable.”<sup>4</sup>

Henry Williams (1782–1867) was born in Nottingham, England. In 1806 he entered the Navy as a midshipman and served until 1815 when he retired. Three years later he married Marianne Coldham, sister-in-law of Edward Marsh, an influential member of the Church Missionary Society, who inspired him to become a missionary. From 1823 to 1840 he led the mission work in New Zealand with energy, courage and ability. He also worked hard to reduce intertribal warfare among the Maori people. Many a time he risked his life, putting himself between forces about to join battle and insisting that he be allowed to act as mediator. Rejecting Marsden’s view that the Maoris should be educated and civilised as a preliminary to conversion he held that conversion should come first. He always refused, however, to accept converts for baptism until fully convinced that they were genuine.<sup>5</sup> He retired in Pakaraka. Harriet and I visited his white weatherboard retirement home, which

is now a private dwelling. The owner kindly allowed us to tour the grounds and the house and told us what he knew of Henry and his home.

William Williams (1800-1876) was first educated for medicine before he turned to study for the ministry. He was ordained to Church of England ministry in 1824 and shortly after went to New Zealand. In addition to his preaching,

(Gisborne) in 1840 and laboured there for 25 years.

### Fruit from the work

A steady stream of missionaries arrived during the 1820s and 30s. They developed a generally good relationship with the Maori who treated them kindly and with respect and seemed to appreciate having them live among them. They

“The CMS missionaries were cautious in admitting persons into the church and gave converts a long period of instruction before baptism.”

teaching and travels he became an authority on the Maori language. In 1827 a small book was printed containing Genesis 1-3, Exodus 20, Matthew 5 and John 1. Williams’ work of translation continued and the book was expanded in 1830. By 1833 half the New Testament was completed and in 1837 he published a translation of the entire New Testament.<sup>6</sup> He moved to Turanga

continued to establish schools for Maori children and these were well attended and had a good effect on the people. The children learned to read and later on were able to read the Bible and the Anglican Prayer Book and Catechism.

The first baptism of a Maori convert took place in 1824. An old man, Rangī, was approaching his death and came to a saving faith in Christ. This cheered the drooping spirits of the missionaries who were often discouraged by the lack of response to the gospel.

After 15 years of patient work the missionaries began to see the fruit of their work. The Lord blessed their labour and there were many conversions. In 1831, at the beginning of this spiritual harvest, William Williams wrote; “I trust that our children and grandchildren will behold for years to come, with pleasure and admiration, those exquisite pieces of work which our forefathers accomplished in the infant state of things in this land.”<sup>7</sup> A year later he reported that “the seed which had been scattered was beginning to vegetate .... At Waimate the chapel was far too small for the congregation .... At Ohaiawai there was an average attendance of from sixty to seventy .... At Kerikeri the desire on the part of the natives to read the Scriptures was increasing. Those who made a profession of faith discovered great earnestness, and the senior baptised natives rendered much assistance in giving instruction.”<sup>8</sup>

The CMS missionaries were cautious in admitting persons into the church and



Henry and Marianne Williams’s grave stones. The two last lines on Henry’s stone state that the stone is a replacement for the original, which became severely weathered, and is currently lying in the grave immediately below the “new” stone.

Photo: The Henry and William Williams Memorial Museum Trust.

gave converts a long period of instruction before baptism. After nearly 20 years of labour less than 50 native Christians had been baptised. The result of this careful teaching was that very few fell away.

For a long time the work had been confined to the Bay of Islands but in the 1830 the missionaries sought to establish mission stations in other parts of the country. A group of them sailed to Thames and went up the Waihou River. There they gathered a group of 150 to 200 natives and began to lead a service. They were astounded when the assembly joined in the singing and made responses to the prayer in unison! Later they discovered that these people have received instruction from three youths who had lived with mission families in Paihia and had then moved away as missionaries themselves. Similar stories were told of the work of converted slaves who had returned to their own tribes.<sup>9</sup>

In 1837 Samuel Marsden made his seventh and final visit to New Zealand. At the age of 73 he was still mentally vigorous but could no longer travel far by foot. The Maori people, whether Christians or not, regarded this old man as a father and a friend and insisted on carrying him in a litter from Hokianga to Waimate. He visited all the mission stations in the Bay of Islands. "This veteran soldier of Christ was permitted to see a large body of Christians in every locality he came to, while the New Testament was coming into circulation, and accomplishing that sure and certain work which God had appointed."<sup>10</sup>

In 1839 William Williams described a time of great harvest. "God had poured out his Holy Spirit, and has inclined great numbers to listen to the invitation given to them. At all the old mission stations in the north there was a great increase in the congregations, and in six months two hundred and twenty nine persons were received into the church."<sup>11</sup> Those who were converted witnessed to their relatives, seeking to bring them to Christ. By 1840 Williams estimated the total number of attendants at worship to be more than 30,000, not counting those converted through the Wesleyan mission.

Today we can look back on this period of mission work as one of the bright spots in the church history of New Zealand. The Holy Spirit used these dedicated and godly men and women to bring many Maori to a saving faith in Jesus and so turn them away from a lifestyle of fighting and revenge to one of love and peace.

### A few reflections

Reviewing this period of history has prompted me to reflect on some of the lessons we could draw from this for our own mission work today.

It is worth noting that the first mission work in New Zealand was done through preaching, and that the first subject was the good news about the Lord Jesus Christ from the Scriptures. The CMS missionaries were convinced

of the authority and power of the Bible and put time and money into translating and printing the Scriptures, and teaching people to read it. I have already noted the work William Williams did in translating the New Testament into Maori. This is in striking contrast to the Roman Catholic mission work in Russel. If you visit that township I can recommend the interesting guided tour through Pompallier House, the printing house of the



*The Te Waimate Mission House. The first Anglican Bishop of New Zealand, Rt. Rev. George Selwyn, bought the redundant Te Waimate Mission to establish St John's Theological College in 1842. But his library was in the Stone Store in Kerikeri. St John's College didn't last long, and Selwyn moved it to Auckland in 1844.*



*Kerikeri Mission Station, Stone Store 1835.*



Kerikeri Mission Station. Mission House/Kemp House 1822, and the Stone Store 1835.

Roman Catholic Mission. On our tour through those premises I asked if the Roman Catholic missionaries had printed copies of the Bible and was informed they had not; rather they concentrated on books of Roman Catholic prayers and writings of the church fathers. The CMS missionaries, however, believed that the Holy Spirit would use *the Scriptures* to convert unbelievers and teach new believers sound doctrine, and the Spirit certainly blessed their work of translating, printing and distributing the Bible.

The early CMS missionaries struggled to survive in a new country far from England. Marsden followed a policy of “sow or starve” and did not send adequate supplies from New South Wales. The missionaries often felt that he ignored their real difficulties. The Kerikeri mission was continually short of food. Even five years after the work had begun the missionaries were struggling to survive after a poor wheat crop. Richard David lamented in a letter to a friend; “Mr Marsden is so very neglectful in supplying the mission.”<sup>12</sup> The mission to New Zealand was an expensive work financially, as are many mission works today. In their assessment of the work the CMS said that the New Zealand mission had cost more than any other.<sup>13</sup> However, as sending churches we must provide our missionaries with sufficient

supplies, resources, and suitable accommodation so they can concentrate on the work they have been sent to do.

Having said this, money directed to the mission must be well used. In the CMS New Zealand work funds were sometimes used on buildings that were unnecessary to the mission’s task. One example of this is the Old Stone Store in Kerikeri, proposed by some of the missionaries to house mission supplies. Right from the start Henry Williams opposed this as a waste of time and money. Yet he was outvoted and the project went ahead at considerable expense. By the time it was completed in 1836 the focus of the mission had moved away from Kerikeri and the store became a white elephant. It now has the honour of being New Zealand’s oldest stone building. If you visit there and go to the first floor you can read a collection of diaries and reports written by the missionaries, who had to send back a monthly report of their activities. A collection of letters written by Marianne Williams, the wife of Henry, have been published and make for very interesting reading.<sup>14</sup>

Having the wrong people on the field caused much damage and heartache to the CMS work. I have already mentioned the ungodly character and instability of John Butler, the Superintendent of the mission until Henry Williams replaced

him. In the early stages of the work Rev Thomas Kendal had an affair with his servant girl Tungaroa, and as a result was dismissed from the society. The Rev William Yates was removed as a missionary and also dismissed from the society in 1837 on charges of homosexuality. William Williams wrote that Yates had brought “much dishonour on the holy cause of Christ in this land.”<sup>15</sup> In mission work it is vital that churches send men and women who have a good reputation and have been tested and approved, especially because they are often working in isolated situations away from the support of their church, family and friends.

One more lesson is worth noting is the patience and perseverance of these men and women. They laboured for ten years before the first convert was baptised and for fifteen years before they saw much fruit from their work. Yet they continued on and did not give up. They believed they were doing the Lord’s work and that he would bless their efforts in his time, and so it was. Today we give thanks to God for the pioneering work done by these faithful and godly men and women of the CMS and for his rich blessing on their labour. May God raise up more workers among the Maori people and may we see a similar great work take place in the future.

## Notes

- 1 William Williams, *Christianity Among the New Zealanders* (First published in 1867; first Banner of Truth edition published in 1989 in Edinburgh)
- 2 Nola Easdale, *Missionary and Maori, Kerikeri 1819-1860* (Lincoln, Te Waihora Press, 1991)
- 3 *Christianity Among the New Zealanders*, p. 30
- 4 *ibid.*, p. 33.
- 5 R M Burdon, from the *Te Ara Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, ed by A H McLintock (1966)
- 6 In 1844 William Williams also published a *Dictionary of the New Zealand Language*.
- 7 *Missionary and Maori*, p. 10.
- 8 *Christianity Among the New Zealanders*, p.146
- 9 *ibid.* p. 171
- 10 *ibid.* p. 251
- 11 *ibid.* p. 260
- 12 *Missionary and Maori*, p. 42, 60.
- 13 *ibid.*, p. 78
- 14 **Letters From the Bay of Islands: The Story of Marianne Williams**, edited by Caroline Fitzgerald; (Sutton Publishing, 2004)
- 15 *ibid.*, p. 77

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# New Zealand's early Christian heritage (2)

## The Otago Free Church settlement – the first fifty years

**Sally Davey**

You probably know that Otago was settled by some faithful Presbyterians from Scotland. To my mind, these people were our spiritual trailblazers. They were every bit as much the descendants of John Calvin as we in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand are. It was these Scottish church-planters who brought fully-fledged church life as we know it to these shores.

They were brave, they were resolute; they were pioneers. They were people of conviction born of some tough, self-sacrificing decisions. Aware of church history, they recognised their kinship with those earlier British and Calvinistic pilgrims, the New England Puritans. Two centuries earlier those brave souls had set off to the New World to plant churches where they might worship free from persecution. In 1848 the Free Church Scots set off for Otago as migrants from a church that had recently separated, over an issue of principle, from the established Church of Scotland.

During the early 1840s the Church of Scotland was engaged in a fierce struggle with the law courts and government of Scotland. It concerned the right of land-owners – and in some cases the state – to nominate ministers to local congregations (called “lay patronage”). This was resented by evangelical Presbyterians when a theologically wayward minister was thrust upon them. There had been considerable evangelical awakenings in Scotland over the previous century, quickening the souls of many Scottish Presbyterians and rendering church life more faithful, more vibrant, and more theologically sound than it had been in many places. Such Christians were more prepared to take a principled stand against the deadening hand of lay patronage. This they finally did in 1843, during the so-called “Disruption”, when two-fifths of all Church of

Scotland ministers, including all of the Church's missionaries, walked out of their churches and manses, sacrificing their stipends and all of their former status as local ministers. New congregations were established by the faithful who joined them, of course; but they lacked church buildings and were often quite financially needy.

### **Beginnings**

Nevertheless, they were a committed group; eager to establish their new church upon biblical principle. Given these circumstances, settlement in the colonies of the New World was proving increasingly attractive. Free Church leaders found it even more so when they heard of the opportunity provided by the

provision of money for educational and religious purposes (provided from sales of land) especially appealed to the Church; and in 1848 the Edinburgh Presbytery moved to “strongly recommend Otago as a most eligible place to which those proposing to leave their own country may emigrate”.<sup>1</sup> A major boost to the plans was the decision of minister Thomas Burns, who had taken considerable interest in Presbyterians in Canada and Nova Scotia, to go out to Otago as minister. Other key players were John McGlashan, an Edinburgh solicitor, and Captain William Cargill, who had served in the British Army in the Peninsula War against Napoleon. Both were to serve as future Dunedin elders, and both were to be of enormous importance in civil

“They were brave, they were resolute; they were pioneers. They were people of conviction born of some tough, self-sacrificing decisions.”

New Zealand Company. The Company had already established settlements in Wellington, New Plymouth and Nelson. However, by the middle 1840s its leaders were of the opinion that settlements would work even better if they had some cohesive element binding the settlers together – such as church affiliation. The Company was encouraged by the interest of the Free Church of Scotland; and worked closely with its Colonial Committee. In 1845 a lay association was established in Glasgow, to promote the idea of emigration to Otago among Free Church members. The NZ Company

and church life in the new settlement. As McGlashan put it:

‘The surest foundations of a people's lasting prosperity are those which are laid in the profound reverence of God and devout observance of his public worship – being persuaded likewise that it is incumbent upon them to prefer God's honour before their ease and satisfaction’.<sup>2</sup>

Two ships set sail from Britain in 1848, bound for Otago with Free Church settlers on board. The *John Wickliffe* carried 70 of these settlers, including Captain Cargill; while the *Philip Laing* carried a



Left: The first Session of First Church (mentioned in the article).

Above: First Church, illustrates the progress made in building and the size of the congregation. (See cover pic)

contingent of 234, including 87 children under 14 years of age, and the Rev. Thomas Burns and the settlement's first schoolteacher, James Blackie. At the farewell service – the last occasion many of these settlers were to see their home country – they sang “O God of Bethel” – the same Philip Doddridge hymn we still sing in our churches today. It was fitting choice for such an occasion.

On board during the four months' voyage the settlers established solid patterns of community life. During the week there were two worship services daily, and the children had school lessons with Mr Blackie. On Sundays there were three worship services. Arriving on a Saturday afternoon in March, 1848, the passengers of the *Philip Laing* surveyed their new home. The only housing there was built by the passengers of the *John Wickliffe*, and there was none as yet for the new arrivals. Thus the women and children had to remain on board ship for several weeks while their men built a rough shelter for them. (It was rather

wretched, autumn weather; and rained almost continuously until they were all able to move into the large, communal grass hut, 60 feet by 20 feet, on 1 June). Nevertheless, they all met for worship the next morning as a new church community. Thomas Burns's text was Psalm 130:4, “But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared.” Burns was a serious, scholarly man, immensely kind and courteous, but deeply aware of his own sin, cherishing Christ's saving work as precious beyond measure.

Over the next two decades church life was established on a solid, biblical footing. By March 1849 steps were taken to elect the first session; and four ruling elders, Henry Clarke, a carpenter; Captain Cargill, resident agent of the New Zealand Company; James Blackie, schoolmaster; and Alexander Chalmers, a landowner, were duly appointed. As more settlers arrived, as farms were taken up in outlying areas such as Taieri, and as fishing and port communities prospered, church planting continued unabated.

New ministers were requested from the Free Church at home; and its Colonial Committee worked hard to find suitable men for Otago. From the 1850s on churches were established all over South Otago, through Central Otago, and in Southland. Country churches ranged in size from 100 to 400 or so members by the end of the century. Larger churches, such as First Church in Invercargill, had up to 500. Dunedin itself established 11 more churches, in addition to the original First Church, by 1890. The largest was Knox Church (with its imposing stone building, still to be seen on the corner of George and Pitt streets.) For 34 years they had enjoyed the ministry of the much-loved Dr Donald Stuart, and by the turn of the century had a membership of around 1100.<sup>3</sup>

#### Features of church life

What were some of the features of this church life? For one thing, great care was taken to instruct the children in the faith. This was done through Sabbath Schools,

usually conducted by the minister; and there was instruction in the Westminster Shorter Catechism, and also Bible classes for both boys and girls. Especial care was taken in the administration of the sacraments. It was Scottish practice to observe the Lord's Supper once every quarter; and in Scotland a special "communion season", usually lasting a week, was observed to prepare for the Supper. This entailed special preaching meetings, and time for reflection and prayer. However, in the more scattered settlements of the New World this was not practicable, and so in Otago generally a long weekend of Friday-Monday sufficed. Church discipline was also practised, addressing both immorality in behaviour and looseness of doctrine.

Worship was central to church life; with preaching of the Word being its high point. The Free Church was an exclusive-Psalms church; and singing was always unaccompanied until later in the century, when a serious controversy arose over the introduction of pipe organs into some churches. However, there was concern that the singing be of a good

standard; and on a number of occasions precentors<sup>4</sup> were specially brought out from Scotland to assist. James Adam, the First Church precentor, held classes to encourage good psalm singing, and did all he could in other ways to enhance church members' knowledge of and appreciation for good church music.

As with so many pioneering denominations, a great debt of gratitude is owed by the Free Church in Otago to its dedicated early ministers. Not all of them were young, sprightly men who found days of riding over the countryside in inclement weather easy. Thomas Burns, for instance, was in his early fifties when he arrived in 1848; and he served during the next two decades with steady commitment, dying in 1871. He and the other ministers were tireless visitors of their flocks, going to isolated homes despite dangerous river crossings and the need to doss down in rough accommodation *en route*. They certainly earned the great respect they enjoyed. At first almost all the Otago ministers came from Scotland; but after the theological hall was begun in Dunedin in 1876 (three

students were actually being prepared as early as 1868, and Otago University had begun in 1869), a small but steady local supply of ministers was on hand.

### Missions

We have already noticed that the Free Church was mission-minded from its first beginnings in Scotland. Did this continue in New Zealand? Yes, it did. There was great interest in the work in the New Hebrides (Vanuatu), made so famous by Scottish missionary, John Paton. The Otago and Southland Synod supported the work of Free Church (Scottish) missionaries Peter and Mary Jane Milne there. The 1869 Synod meeting heard addresses from four missionaries – from John Inglis, working in the New Hebrides; from a Mr McDonald of Victoria, working on a missionary ship, the *Dayspring*; a Mr Blade working in India; and from Abraham Honore, a German Lutheran the Otago churches had appointed to work with the Riverton Maori in Southland.

When gold was discovered near Lawrence in 1861 a great opportunity



Left: Knox Church Session, 1884. Minister and 22 ruling elders.

Below: Old and new Knox Church (in use to the present day) and manse.



presented itself. Gold-diggers were soon pouring into Otago in enormous numbers. A tent city mushroomed at Tuapeka, site of the gold discovery by Gabriel Read. The Church responded right away, and apparently not one Sabbath passed without a worship service being held where the diggers had congregated. The first two Sundays, a Tokomairiro elder held the services, and on the third, the nearest minister, Mr Todd, led worship. Within a few months the Tokomairiro

Deacons' Court had looked into what could be done in the way of financing a proper church building; and within six months of the discovery of gold, the Otago ministers had worked out a roster whereby most of them would provide pulpit supply. They would spend two Sundays at the gold field, and in the intervening week provided what pastoral help they could to the folk on the diggings. People of a huge variety of church backgrounds came to them; and some came to a saving knowledge of the gospel. Others were "reclaimed from a life of backsliding, and not a few Christians were quickened and helped in their Christian course."<sup>5</sup> A missionary was appointed to do this work in the following year; and as time went by there was also a special outreach to the Chinese miners who arrived on the goldfields of Otago.

serious signs of decline. Perhaps I can illustrate this by a personal family sketch. My grandfather spent his childhood and teenage years growing up in the First Church congregation in Dunedin. He died when I was twelve years old, but I never remember him speaking to me of personal faith in Christ; and he was not a regular churchgoer. To this day I do not know whether he believed. His parents, my great-grandparents – Ralph and Annie Stephenson – were married in 1896 at First Church, and were lifetime members there. Ralph, an Edinburgh-educated doctor, had grown up in Tasmania, the son of an evangelical Methodist minister. He had met Annie upon arriving in Dunedin to practise medicine. Annie was the daughter of William and Mary Ewing, a Dunedin business family who had emigrated (as young single people) from Stirling in Scotland in the early years of



Top: Mission activity in the New Hebrides (Vanuatu).  
Below: Missionary appointed to Chinese mission and building for the work in Dunedin.

“The Otago Free Church drew most of its early ministers from the home church; and as went the home church, so did the daughter church.”

Ministers were members of the local Presbyteries, and the entire body met together in the Synod of Otago and Southland. There were Presbyterian churches established in many other places in New Zealand: those in Auckland and Port Nicholson (Wellington) preceded those in Otago. However, these churches were of mixed stock, being formed from the more liberal Church of Scotland, and many members and ministers had Irish Presbyterian roots as well. Anxious to retain their sound doctrine and more evangelical, distinctive stance on matters such as Sabbath observance, the Otago churches resisted many overtures to join with these other churches to form a New Zealand-wide Presbyterian body.

#### Theological decline

These, by any reckoning, were faithful beginnings. And yet there are important questions to be answered. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were some

the settlement. They had been married by Thomas Burns in 1862, and were also lifelong members of First Church. What, spiritually speaking, had happened to a family who had experienced so much of church life?

It is an interesting question. The answer, I fear, is common to most such situations. The Otago Free Church drew most of its early ministers from the home church; and as went the home church, so did the daughter church. In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, the effects of German Higher Criticism were felt in the New College at Edinburgh, the theological school of the Free Church of Scotland. Those trained there were less biblically sound as the years went by; and as theological training began in Dunedin, professors sent there from the Home Country were bringing the new – more suspect – theology with them. By the 1880s this was definitely being felt at the theological hall (Knox College)

in Dunedin. Soon there were questions about the nature of the Atonement; and pressures for a Declaratory Act, as had recently been adopted by the Free Church of Scotland. This was the result of significant doubts entertained by a number of ministers about the teaching of the Westminster Confession; and an attempt by the church to allow them to hold private reservations while still subscribing publicly to the Westminster standards. Such an Act was adopted by the Otago churches in 1893. The minister of First Church, the man who married my great-grandparents, Ralph and Annie, in 1896, openly spoke of his disquiet with the Westminster Confession. He was also taken to task in the Presbytery by one of his ruling elders

over an issue of shaky doctrine in his preaching. And he was an influential man. Not only was he the minister of a church of 700-odd members, but when the Otago and Southland Synod finally joined the rest of the New Zealand Presbyterians in 1901, James Gibb was elected first Moderator of the General Assembly. My grandfather was two years old at the time.

*“And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel.”*

So sad a story, yet so oft-repeated. Let us rejoice in its beginnings – but heed the warning of its latter years.

## Notes

- 1 Quoted in Dennis McEldowney, ed., *Presbyterians in Aotearoa 1840-1990* (The Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, 1990), p. 24 I am indebted to this book, and to James Chisholm's, for the background to this article.
- 2 Breward, Ian. 'McClashan, John 1802 – 1864'. *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 22 June 2007 (web version)
- 3 These membership figures are taken from James Chisholm, *Fifty Years Syne: A Jubilee Memorial of the Presbyterian Church of Otago* (Dunedin, J. Wilkie & Co., 1898). The author does not indicate whether they are for communicant members only; or include baptized members as well.
- 4 In Presbyterian churches that sang the Psalms in the historical fashion (ie. *A Capella*) a precentor was a man who led the singing, often by means of conducting techniques, but sometimes just by singing from amongst the congregation.
- 5 James Chisholm, p.176

## World in focus

### **Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary makes available online puritan electronic research tool**

Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary (PRTS) is in the process of scanning all 65,000 library volumes for use with the Puritan Electronic Research Tool (PERT), a tool designed at PRTS for use by pastors, students, and laypeople to help find Scripture references and related commentary that may be buried within a book.

PERT is available for use, entirely free, at:  
<http://pert.puritanseminary.org/index.aspx>.

+ *Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary*

### **Family Research Institute asks why “don’t ask, don’t tell” regulation is being relaxed when ten percent of military-on-military assaults are committed by homosexuals**

A 25 March 2010 news release by the Family Research Institute (FRI) titled “Relax Enforcement When Gays Commit Ten Percent of Military-on-Military Assaults?” references U.S. Department of Defense reports showing that ten percent of military-on-military assaults are committed by homosexuals, meaning that in 2009, a homosexual male was eight times more likely to assault a serviceman than was a heterosexual serviceman likely to assault a servicewoman, and

a homosexual woman was thirty times more likely to assault a servicewoman than was a heterosexual servicewoman likely to assault a serviceman.

The FRI concludes that “[m]aking military service easier for those most apt to assault doesn’t demonstrate ‘common decency’ or ‘common sense.’”

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), which describes itself as “dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry,” lists the FRI among Colorado-based “hate groups” including the Aryan Nations Revival, the Nation of Islam, the National Socialist Movement [Nazis], and the United Northern and Southern Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

The SPLC additionally designates as hate groups Americans for Truth About Homosexuality, the Massachusetts citizen’s group Mass Resistance, the Illinois Family Institute, and the Traditional Values Coalition.

+ *Family Research Institute*

### **Former Church of Scotland in Rutherglen becoming Hindu Temple**

A 7 April 2010 article in the *Rutherglen Reformer* by Will Henshaw titled “Rutherglen Church to be Transformed into Hindu Temple” reports that after UK£10,000 of renovations, former Church of Scotland Wardlawhill Church in Rutherglen, Scotland, is reopening at the end of April 2010 as the Hindu Sri

Sundara Ganapathi Temple.

The church building was purchased by the Hindus from the Church of Scotland in November 2009, and was mortgaged by the South Indian Cultural Centre of Scotland.

+ *Rutherglen Reformer*

### **Christian Beijing Olympics demonstrators arrested twice and deported from china to protest visit to U.S. of Chinese President**

Two of the three protestors at the 2008 Beijing Olympics who were twice arrested, then deported from China for unfurling in Tiananmen Square a banner reading “Jesus Christ is King,” on 12 April 2010 demonstrated in front of the White House in Washington DC on the occasion of the visit of Chinese President Hu Jintao to the United States.

Christian Defense Coalition Director and Reformed Presbyterian pastor the Rev. Pat Mahoney and Michael McMonagle prayed and spoke out against China’s repression of human rights and religious liberty, calling attention to the “moral and national disgrace” that President Barack Hussein Obama has not been a more vocal and outspoken critic of the human rights abuses by the Chinese government while at the same time the Obama Administration is giving billions of dollars to the Chinese government to pay off the U.S. debt while China continues

to brutalize their own people.

For background information, please see article “[10] Missionary Team Arrested in China Back in USA” in the 13 August 2008 Presbyterians Week, <http://presweek.blogspot.com/2008/08/13-august-2008.html>

+ *Christian News Wire*

### **Western nations continue to pressure Nicaragua on abortion laws**

(NEW YORK – C-FAM) At the recently concluded session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, Nicaragua came up against intense and concerted international pressure from fellow United Nations (UN) member states over the abortion ban the Latin American country’s National Assembly adopted unanimously into law four years ago.

Despite promising initial evidence that the prohibition on abortion has helped lower maternal mortality rates, Nicaragua has been the target of international pressure and scrutiny from UN agencies, donor governments and non-governmental organizations.

Last month, Nicaragua underwent the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), which is an opportunity for the UN Human Rights Council – an inter-governmental UN body made up of 47 States responsible for addressing situations of human rights violations and making recommendations on them – to examine the human rights record of all member states. Each country is reviewed every four years with the aim of ensuring compliance with international human rights obligations.

+ *Samantha Singson*

### **New report by American law firm pushes for abortion in Kenya**

(NEW YORK – C-FAM) The Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR), a New York-based public interest law firm that seeks to expand abortion access globally, released a report titled, “In Harm’s Way: The Impact of Kenya’s Restrictive Abortion Law.” The report and a related video (which was highlighted on CNN this week) were first made public at a CRR side event at the Beijing +15 UN Commission on the Status of Women.

+ *Terrence McKeegan, J.D.*

### **RTS Orlando, Florida, OT Professor resigns after video surfaces showing endorsement of theistic evolution**

A video of Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS) Orlando, Florida, Old Testament professor Bruce K. Waltke was

recently posted on The BioLogos Foundation website showing the professor defending theistic evolution, saying:

“If the data is overwhelmingly in favor of evolution, to deny that reality will make us a cult ... some odd group that is not really interacting with the world. And rightly so, because we are not using our gifts and trusting God’s Providence that brought us to this point of our awareness.”

After the video generated an uproar among the RTS administration, Waltke subsequently asked The BioLogos Foundation to remove the video from its website, and Waltke submitted his resignation, which was accepted by the seminary.

Justin Taylor, Editorial Director at Crossway Books, reported 9 April 2010 on his *Between Two Worlds* blog that Waltke has been hired to teach the upcoming winter and spring terms at Knox Theological Seminary.

+ *Reformed Theological Seminary Orlando*

### **Australia rescinds special status for “non-specific” sex**

(NEW YORK – C-FAM) Last month, the Australian government made international headlines for being the first to officially recognize a third gender on a state-issued document. Just days after conferring the new “sex not specified” status, the government rescinded the certificate, leaving a raging controversy over the definition of “gender” in its wake.

The “sex not specified” status legally recognized Norrie May-Welby as neither male nor female. May-Welby was born in Scotland and registered as male at birth, but underwent sex change surgery 20 years ago. The government of Australia then issued May-Welby a female recognition certificate. May-Welby subsequently ceased lifelong hormone treatment and adopted a “neuter identity” which is neither male nor female. According to news reports, doctors recently said because Norrie had stopped taking female hormones several years ago, they were unable to determine gender.

+ *Samantha Singson*

### **UN report calls for doubling investment on “modern family planning” including abortion**

(NEW YORK – C-FAM) A just-released United Nations (UN) report backed by the world’s top population organizations argues that nations should double their investment in family planning and abortion in poor countries for a total of

\$24 billion a year, claiming this would dramatically reduce maternal and child deaths and solve a host of social ills.

+ *Susan Yoshihara, Ph.D.*

### **New global study shows maternal morality significantly lower than previously thought/policy implications worry abortion advocates**

(NEW YORK – C-FAM) A new study out this week by the leading British medical journal shows maternal mortality rates have been significantly overestimated by United Nations (UN) agencies. The *Lancet* reports that maternal deaths worldwide in 2008 totalled 342,900 rather than the 500,000+ used by the World Bank, World Health Organization (WHO) and the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in recent years.

+ *Austin Ruse and Susan Yoshihara, Ph.D.*

### **PCA Standing Judicial Commission issues final ruling against Pacific Northwest Presbytery’s conclusions about the theological views of Teaching Elder Peter Leithart**

The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) Standing Judicial Commission (SJC) on 11 March 2010 issued its final decision in the complaint against the PCA’s Pacific Northwest Presbytery (PNW) for its earlier majority decision that Teaching Elder Peter Leithart’s theological views were not out of accord with the PCA system of doctrine.

The SJC found that “the views of TE Leithart touching fundamentals of the system of doctrine (for example on baptism, the bi-covenantal nature of Scripture, and imputation) set out in the Record (in PNW’s own Reports) suggest a strong presumption of guilt that these views represent offenses that could properly be the subject of a judicial process. ([Book of Church Order] BCO 31-2, 29-1&2)”

The SJC decision says “the PNW may counsel TE Leithart that [Leithart’s Federal Vision-type theological views] constitute error that is injurious to peace and purity of the church and offer him pastoral advice on how he might recant and make reparations for those views, or if he is unwilling or unable in conscience to do so, that he is free to take timely steps to affiliate with some other branch that is consistent with his views;” or else the PNW at its fall meeting is to take action against Leithart under the provisions of BCO 31-2.

On a Presbyterian and Reformed-oriented Internet email discussion group, a

PCA ruling elder responded to the SJC decision by asking: "Would someone, please, explain to me where in Scripture they get the idea that "transfer his ministerial credentials" is part of church discipline? .... If Leithart fails to recant, he should be removed from office and excommunicated. He should not be allowed to change membership to escape the judgment of the court."

+ *Presbyterian Church in America*

### **Murder and persecutions against Christians in Somalia**

Report of the VOM alarms about increasing persecution against Christians in Somalia and growing number of murdered Christians by Islamic militias. Madobe Abdi, an underground church leader, was tracked down and killed by Islamic al-Shabaab rebels on 15th March 2010 in Mahaday village after kidnapping attempt against him on March 2. The VOM report points out with disturbance that he was not a convert from Islam, as he was an orphan

raised as a Christian. Last month the house of another underground church member was set on fire by members of another Islamic group in the outskirts of Mogadishu.

*WEA Religious Liberty – April 2010*

### **Pro-democratic advocate released in Vietnam**

Attorney Le Thi Cong Nhan, the so called "protestant prisoner of conscience" was released on 6th March 2010 after serving a three-year sentence for "propagandizing to destroy the Socialist Republic of Vietnam." Attorney Le's sentence has been reduced as a result of an international outcry and expressed concern. While in prison the 31-year-old Cong Nhan received a Vietnamese Bible from a visiting US delegation, which helped her faith and trust in God be confirmed, as she herself confesses: "In prison the Lord became my closest friend, my teacher, and the one who carried my burdens with me."

Unfortunately, Attorney Le's colleague,

the Christian lawyer Nguyen Van Dai, still remains in prison.

*WEA Religious Liberty – April 2010*

### **More than 500 Christians murdered in Nigeria**

The process of mobilization of the nations for the Global Day of Prayer 2010 has helped to realize that during the last year or so the persecution against Christians has increased worldwide, due to continuous coming disturbing reports. One of these reports come from Nigeria, Jos, Northern province, where in the early hours of Sunday, 7th March 2010, Muslim herdsmen slaughtered hundred of Christians. The WIN (Window International Network) reports that currently estimated death toll exceeds 500. WIN quotes an aid worker, who witnessed the devastation saying, "We saw mainly those who are helpless, like small children and then the older men, who cannot run, these were the ones that were slaughtered."

*WEA Religious Liberty – April 2010*

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## **'Entertaining devils unawares'**

### **Maurice Roberts**

No Christian must ever allow himself to affirm what is true without also denying what is false. To say that a thing is true is to imply that its opposite is not true. It is an evasion to affirm a thing to be true but to hold it an open question as to whether the opposite is false. This is to play games with truth and to trivialise it. The claims of truth are of the highest possible order. They ought to bind our minds and our consciences. Truth belongs to God and is therefore a sacred thing. This is all the more so when the truths in question are the great and central facts of divine revelation.

A kind of criminal courtesy or politeness has gripped large parts of the Christian church today. Professed evangelical preachers and scholars, among others, are ready to affirm the doctrines and practices of the Bible, but they are hesitant about condemning what clearly contradicts them. The result is widespread uncertainty and confusion among God's people. The reason for this confusion needs to be addressed. It appears to arise very largely from an unwillingness to be negative about anything in matters

of faith and religion. We are allowed in the current climate to say what things are true and right but not to condemn anything at all as false. The end result of this process will be that everything must be held true and nothing false. Or rather, that we must not be so discourteous as to call anything false.

It is refreshing in this postmodernist climate to turn again to the positiveness of the New Testament and to ponder again the clear-cut attitude to error which marks the preaching of Christ and the writings of the apostles.

As early as the Sermon on the Mount, Christ announced what must have grated on all unregenerate ears at the time: 'Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven' (Matt. 5:20). Why was it necessary for Christ to single out the Pharisees in this way? He could have made the point without mentioning and offending *them*. But our Lord deliberately sets up the Pharisees as examples of a flawed religious character.

He affirms what is true and, with equal force, exposes what is false. The whole Pharisaic religion was hollow, and our

Lord holds it up to the light so that all may learn to abhor and shun it.

This same denunciation of error comes to the fore in a passage where our Lord challenges head-on the question of tradition v. Scripture in Matthew 15: 'Ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you . . .' (15:6-7). It was open to Christ to have praised the Pharisees up to a point. They *did* have a respect for Scripture and were diligent students of it. But they also added tradition to the Word of God and so ruined religion in the process. Our Lord gives them no praise, either here or elsewhere. Their false principle of determining truth by appeal to tradition was so vicious that he deemed it necessary to condemn it and them in the strongest terms. To do less, he clearly indicates, would be to confuse God's people.

The disciples of Christ were over-sensitive to the reaction of the Pharisees. The disciples had watched the faces of these learned and revered scholars of the Bible. It was plain to them that they had taken Christ's rebuke badly when he had branded them as 'hypocrites' (Matt. 17:7). Peter, John and the others clustered round

Christ and said to him: 'Knowest thou not that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?' (Matt. 15:12). The disciples would not have spoken so forthrightly of those devout Jewish teachers. It troubled them to think that the feelings of the Pharisees were upset by Christ's bold exposure of them.

Christ's reply is of the utmost significance. He corrects the wrong reaction of the disciples with the words: 'Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not Planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch' (Matt. 15:13-14). By these words our Lord shows that teachers of error are like weeds in God's garden. They are not planted by the heavenly

hearers, into hell at last.

All this is strong doctrine today. We are so acclimatised to the religious conventions of 'courtesy' and 'charity' that we find it hard to believe in forthright denunciation altogether. 'Such-and-such a minister cannot accept the virgin birth of Christ or the physical resurrection of our Saviour, but he is a fine man for all that.' 'He is a bit of a liberal in his view of the Bible, but he has some helpful insights.' 'He is a convert to Catholicism, but his books on theology are refreshingly edifying.' 'He cannot accept the doctrine of Christ's atonement, but we can learn a lot from his scholarly insights.'

All such 'charitable' comments need to be judged in the full light of the practice of Jesus Christ. Did our Saviour ever praise

that nation whose religious leaders are no better than the scribes and Pharisees whom Christ describes in this chapter! Woe to that generation whose preachers, whatever their scholarship or their high office, are really only aiming at their own benefit and their own comfort and who play about with the souls of men! Woe to those church-goers who hear no other preaching but what the scribes and Pharisees of Christ's day could have given them! Not without cause did Christ say that their 'house would be left desolate' (v.38). The best way to drive God from any nation is to give honour to false religious teachers. It draws down God's wrath as with a cart-rope on society as a whole. The Jewish people found it so in A.D. 70, and many other nations have found it so since that fateful year.

The attitude of Christ to error and errorists is found equally in his apostles. The Apostle Paul does not scruple to denounce some preachers as 'false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ' (2 Cor. 11:13). This apostle clearly knew nothing of the 'charity' that speaks well of all religious leaders. He goes so far as to expose and denounce them as Satan's ministers, whose 'end shall be according to their works' (v.15). This dark phrase means that they will be cast into hell-fire for their false teaching. Paul actually rebukes the Corinthian Christians for their soft and tolerant attitude to such men: 'Ye suffer fools gladly' (v.19). Bad preachers are 'fools', and those who listen to them are guilty of a foolish failure and criminal lack of discernment. It is amazing how flabby people's attitude to false teachers can be: 'Ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face' (v.20).

Could any 'charity' be more uncharitable than a 'charity' which welcomes the influence into our churches of men who treat us as the apostle here describes? What do they do? They 'bring us into bondage' to human traditions, man-made doctrines, spurious sacraments. They 'devour' us by obliging us to pay for their good offices when they hear our confessions, say masses for us at a price and lay claim to our souls even after death in purgatory. They 'exalt themselves' into mediators with God himself, claiming to be God's agents on earth and authorised by Christ to change laws and interpret the Bible by their own tradition. They 'smite us on the face' when they insult our God-given right to search the Scrip-

“By entertaining of strange doctrines, many have entertained devils unawares.”

Father's hand and shall all be rooted out in the end. Again, he compares them to would-be leaders of blind persons who offer their services to escort them on a journey. But their offer of help is worthless. Both they and those whom they escort fall into the ditch.

False teachers, whoever they are and however learned they seem to be, can only do harm to men's souls. It is a false and foolish sentimentality that spares their feelings. They ought rather to be treated as outsiders: 'Let them alone' (v.14). They do not belong to God. They are not shepherds of Christ's flock. They have no business to be teaching in God's name since they are false to the Scriptures and darken their true meaning by reference to human tradition.

This episode is full of instruction for us as the people of God. Let us give full honour to those preachers who preach the truth. Let us show respect to those who may have only modest talent. If they preach the truth and are faithful to God's Word, they are to be given their due meed of honour. But if they preach error, or mix tradition with Scripture, or deny what the Bible clearly teaches, our duty is to treat them as outsiders: 'Let them alone.' They are not sent by God. They cannot lead men's souls to heaven but will fall, both they and their

those who, however learned, taught serious error? If a religious teacher or scholar holds a false view of Scripture, or of the virgin birth, or of the resurrection of Christ, or of tradition, or of some other cardinal truth, dare we speak approvingly of his ministry? Ought we not rather to treat him as a 'blind leader of the blind?'

There is one passage which, above all others perhaps in the Gospels, reveals Christ's passion for truth and his bold exposure of falsehood. It is Matthew 23. Here is a chapter which all ministerial students, preachers and scholars ought to study, memorise and attempt to exemplify in this confused age. Let every allowance be made for the fact that our Saviour is uniquely able to read men's hearts and that he alone can judge men's secret thoughts. Even so, the impression remains that Christ is in this chapter setting us an example of how we all should abhor religious falsehood and seek to expose it to the view of others.

What is it that calls forth such strong denunciation from the lips of Christ in this too-little studied chapter? The great faults are insincerity, pretence, hair-splitting, play-acting in the things of God, fishing for man's admiration, self-interest, double-mindedness, hatred of true heart-religion and persecution of the genuine people of God. Woe to

tures for ourselves and when they deny us freedom of conscience to obey God only. Instead of protesting vehemently against such impostures many do nothing. They 'suffer' it with scarcely a whimper of protestation!

This apostolic forthrightness in calling evil men by their proper name is found throughout the whole New Testament. Those who bring a different gospel are to be deemed 'accursed'. (Gal. 1:8-9). It is not just that we are to regard their falsehoods as 'accursed'. We are to regard their very persons as accursed: 'Let him be accursed' (twice over, in case we were not paying due attention the first time!). Evil and corrupt teachings do not come to us on the wings of the wind or on telegraph wires. They come to us out of the corrupt hearts and mouths of men. The promoters of them may bear the elegant titles of 'Reverend', 'Pastor', 'Bishop' or 'Professor'. But if they bring another gospel, we are not at liberty to praise them. Our duty is to call them accursed', unless we wish to contradict the Apostle Paul.

Our example in this too is Christ himself, who put erring Peter in his place on one occasion with the warning words: 'Get thee behind me, Satan' (Matt. 16:23). To turn Christ from the cross, as Peter sought to do, is to destroy the gospel and to damn mankind. No lighter language would do to put Peter's error in its proper light. O true and faithful Jesus, whose love of our souls stirred him to such holy vehemence – even against his own disciple Peter!

The lesson was not lost on Peter. Later in life his own holy soul burned fiercely against all doctrinal and moral corruption. Let anyone who has picked up the modern habit of speaking well of false teachers go back to the second chapter of his Second Epistle. The chapter is devoted to the theme of 'false prophets' and 'false teachers' (v.1). They bring, not 'alternative insights' or 'legitimate scholarly interpretations' but 'damnable heresies' (v.1). They follow 'pernicious ways' (v.2), speak 'feigned words' (v.3) and 'make merchandise' of men's souls. 'Their judgement now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not' (v.3). 'Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings' (v.13). They 'beguile unstable souls' (v.14), are 'cursed children' (v.14) and are no better than Balaam.

Words cannot adequately express their wickedness or their doom: 'Wells without water, clouds that are carried with a

tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever' (v.17). Such errorists may be eloquent, but their words are poisonous: 'They speak great swelling words' but the content of these wonderful sermons is 'vanity' (v.18). All the while 'they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness' (v.18).

Such bold speaking should not be confined to the first century of the Christian era. It is language put into the Bible by the Holy Spirit to forewarn and forearm the people of God in all ages, whenever they are confronted with corruption in doctrine or practice. The absence of such plain speaking about error and errorists today is either because our age is quite free from such influences(!), or else for a reason which reflects discredit on our love of truth.

The great revival which occurred at the Reformation brought back to the church the same passion for truth which the apostles of Christ had had. Luther's 'offence' for which he was excommunicated by the pope in 1520 was just this, if we may believe Erasmus: 'He had hit the pope on his crown, and the monks in the belly.' 'A thrill went through all Germany', wrote a biographer of Luther, 'when it learned that an obscure monk ... had burned a papal bull.' The Reformation began, says the same writer, 'on this very day: 10 December 1520 – at nine o'clock that morning' (*Martin Luther and*

*the Birth of Protestantism*, James Atkinson, pp.196-7).

Luther's forthrightness was seen in all the Reformers. We may take John Calvin as representative of them all: 'To assert the truth is only one-half of the office of teaching ... except all the fallacies of the devil be also dissipated' (*Jeremiah*, vol 111, p.423). 'Errors arise ... when a loose rein is given to false teachers' (*Zechariah-Malachi*, p.380). 'When one [scholar] has gone astray, others, lacking judgement, follow in droves' (*Thessalonians*, p.399).

The Word of God does not call on men to use strong language for its own sake. Still less does it exhort us to be discourteous. But it everywhere obliges us to praise truth and to abhor error. It is not enough to commend what is true. We have the duty also to be 'negative'. Falsehood in doctrine or practice is damnable and devilish. John Flavel, the Puritan, puts it well: 'By entertaining of strange doctrines, many have entertained devils unawares.'

There is today far too much of this practice of 'entertaining devils unawares.'

*Mr Maurice Roberts was the editor of the monthly magazine The Banner of Truth. Reprinted with permission The Banner of Truth, Issue 448 (January, 2001), pp.1-6*

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## Focus on home

Andrew Reinders

# Gleanings from our bulletins...

## Avondale

Pastoral. On Wednesday, Br. Stan Utatao died peacefully, in the knowledge he would meet his Saviour. The funeral service was held yesterday (Saturday). Earlier this week, Mrs Cynthia O'Gorman, mother and mother-in-law of Sandra & Robert Heeringa passed away after a time of illness. She gave her heart to the Lord just a few months ago, for which we can praise God. May God grant comfort and

strength to both families.

Wedding Bells. Marc Bylsma and Marike Breytenbach are proud to announce their wedding, which will take place on Saturday 10th of April at 1.30pm, at the St James Presbyterian Church 30 West Street Pukekohe. All are invited to attend, with an afternoon tea after the service.

## Bishopdale

Pastoral Notices. It has been a traumatic week for Dave and Simone Jochem and their families. Last Sunday, Ella Michelle Jochem died in the womb, and yesterday we laid her little body to rest. We grieve, yet not without hope, because we believe that death is not the end. Ella's death makes this Easter Sunday more poignant. Having tasted the bitterness of

death, we long for eternal life! We are all the more thankful that Jesus died for us so that we might live forever!

**Pastoral Notes.** Robert van Wichen is preaching in Oamaru this weekend. Once a year, the ministers in Christchurch go to Dunedin, Nelson and Oamaru; this has been a longstanding arrangement in the Presbytery and helps promote unity and good working relationships

### Bucklands Beach

A call to attend to attending to one another. God's word calls and encourages us to keep on keeping on (persevere) as his people. True, that isn't always easy. All kinds of things within and around us distract and make us lose heart. One of the important ways to strengthen each other and be strengthened is by continually encouraging one another. Nothing does that more effectively than doing exactly what God commands us to – worshipping together faithfully and regularly. It is striking that when the believing community addressed by the writer to the Hebrews was feeling down, weak and vulnerable, he writes "Let us hold unwaveringly to the faith we profess, for he who promised is faithful. Let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together ... but let us encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10.23-25)" Sunday worship is fundamental to your personal and our corporate well-being. It is and remains a priority. Once only? Well, if we elders believed that, we would call for only one service on the Lord's Day! But, we, the elders, as those who, with your blessing and encouragement, have spiritual oversight, are calling us to worship twice on the Lord's Day! Shouldn't we all be heeding this as much as is possible?

**Membership.** On behalf of the eldership, it is my privilege to introduce a number of new members to our fellowship. In welcoming you we promise to embrace you as our brothers and sisters, our family in Christ. We would also ask you to embrace us so that together we may serve and honour Jesus for the praise of his glory. Welcome to br and sr Brian and Anne Bartlett. The Bartletts are well known to us and were previously very much involved in the life and fellowship of the Reformed Church of Mangere. We also welcome br and sr Paul (Young Ju) and Seria Park and their two sons Michael and James. They too have been

worshipping with us for some months. In Korea they were members of the Presbyterian church. Welcome to sr Tinda Sentono and her two children Sophia and Gavin. Tinda was previously a member of the Reformed Baptist church here in East Auckland. It's wonderful and a privilege to welcome and embrace you as part of Christ's body here in Bucklands Beach.

**Session Report.** We would like to announce that Mrs Sheila Hunter, who has been worshipping with us for quite some time, has requested membership of our fellowship. She was formerly a member of the Otahuhu Baptist church and comes to us with their blessing and warm commendation. Welcome sister – and also thank you for the great work you have been doing in the church's garden!

**Pastoral.** This morning we delight and share in the baptism of Tinda Sentono's two children Sophia Lin and Gavin Lin. These children too will receive the special sign and seal of God's gospel promises. They too, with their mum, belong to the kingdom of God. Therefore they too are heirs of promises of the triune God: adoption, forgiveness and new, Holy Spirit powered life. May God's faithfulness and mercy forever be great in the lives of this family.

### Christchurch

**Pastoral.** At the time of writing, I am looking forward to celebrating with Sr. Corrie Prins her 80th birthday. I am sure a good time was had yesterday with all those present. We are thankful to the Lord for His continued care for our sister, despite the difficulties over the past year. She continues to bear testimony of His love and care for her.

### Dovedale

**Youth Club.** Perambulate peacefully around while pertinently popping pamphlets in postboxes. Parley at precisely 10:00am on 1st May at 8 Athelstan St, Spreydon. We presume personal presence so please plan on participating! The Committee.

### Hamilton

**From the Pastor:** We note with thanks that Simon and Janny van Woerden (who have recently transferred their membership to Hukanui) will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary this Tuesday.

**Marriage Bible Study** – We are considering starting a new fortnightly study group considering the Bible's teaching on marriage and how we may grow as

husbands and wives. We plan to start with the studies from the Fireproof movie and then to continue from there. If you are interested in being a part of this group, please let me know. Michael Willemse.

### Hastings

**Profession of Faith.** Session is pleased to announce Cees Majoor's desire to publicly profess his faith on the 11th April 2010, if there are no lawful objections.

**Wedding Invitation.** The congregation is warmly invited to witness the wedding of Cees Majoor and Anneke de Vries on Saturday 17th of April, 11am at the Reformed Church of Hastings (D.V.), followed by refreshments in the fellowship hall.

### Hukanui

**Congratulations.** The church family rejoices with the Van Woerden family in acknowledging God's grace and mercy, with Simon and Janny's 50th Wedding Anniversary on 30th March 2010 D.V.

**Ten for Ten.** Prayer meeting at 10am for 10 minutes before the morning church service. I encourage all members to come as often as you can for a time of intercession for our church. Let us make true what Jesus said at the temple "My house will be a house of prayer". (Luke 19:46). Also, let us not forget the words of Charles H. Spurgeon: "It is no statement of mine, suggested by unreasonable zeal, but it is the result of long-continued observation when I assert that the condition of a Church may be very accurately gauged by its Prayer Meetings."

**Professions of Faith.** Session is grateful to our Lord to advise the congregation that Nicolas Willemse and Willeke Wisse have requested to publicly profess their faith. If no lawful objection is received, this will take place D.V. on Sunday 18th April during the morning service and will be led by Rev. Andre Scheepers.

### Nelson

**From Session:** Today we will witness the baptism of Alita Huyser, this is a wonderful and momentous occasion and it is a blessing that both Grandmothers from South Africa are able to be here for the baptism.

### North Shore

**News & Announcements.** This morning we have the privilege of placing the sign and seal of God's covenant

on Sarah-Anne Borger, daughter of Bert & Rebecca. May the Lord give you both much wisdom Bert & Rebecca, as you seek to bring up your children in "the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). And as all parents seek to do this, let us never forget that, be we ever so diligent, wise and faithful, salvation is a gift of God effected by the new birth by the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer. So never cease to pray for the salvation of our children; per the old motto, ora et labora, pray and work. A special welcome to all members of the Borger family who are with us this morning. They have been together this weekend celebrating Alies' 70th birthday. That is a milestone, so our congratulations also, but especially thankfulness to God for His grace and goodness over all those years.

Congratulations to Jackson & Frieda Flinn. On Wednesday evening little Madeline Elizabeth was born, all 7lb of her, and all are well, including Jack.

### Palmerston North

From the Pastor. Congratulations to Henk and Maria van de Waardt on your 55th wedding anniversary today! We had a scare with Maria being admitted to hospital this past week with severe internal bleeding, but thankfully, her condition has stabilised and she is improving.

### Pukekohe

Wedding: It is with joy that we announce the wedding of Marike Breytenbach and Marc Bylsma. If there are no lawful objections their wedding will take place at 1:30pm on Saturday 10 April at the St James Presbyterian Church, 30 West Street, Pukekohe. An afternoon tea will be served after the wedding service. All are welcome to attend.

### Wellington

From the Pastor ... As many of you have already heard, the Lord blessed Lydia and I with another son, Dominic John Nugteren, born early on Wednesday morning weighing a few healthy 5.3kg! Thank you for your prayers for us during this time.

Our sister Nel Boere passed away early on Saturday morning, trusting in the Lord and in the hope of His resurrection. You are invited to join with the family tomorrow, Wednesday, at 1pm for the interment at the Akatarawa Cemetery, and to the service which will be held at 2.30pm at the Silverstream Reformed Church.

## Short Report of the Wellington Presbytery Meeting held in Foxton on 27th March 2010

The Rev. Peter Kloosterman opened the meeting by reading from Psalm 67 and leading in prayer. The Rev. Paul Archbald was elected as Moderator to substitute for the Rev. Peter Kloosterman in matters relating to a series of special presbytery meetings which were held at the end of last year. Good reports were heard from both the Hastings and the Masterton congregations in response to questions from Church Order article 47.

A number of items of individual correspondence had been emailed from various church members directly to the Clerk of Presbytery. It was unanimously decided that these items would not be received as incoming correspondence as they had not been received or considered first by the respective local sessions.

Encouraging church visitation reports were heard regarding the Silverstream and Wellington congregations. Points of interest from other presbyteries and CRCA classes were heard.

A discussion was held to consider the appointment of an evangelist/church planter by the Presbytery, in response to a request from Foxton. Reservations were expressed regarding potential compromising of the authority of the local sessions and it was decided not to pursue the appointment of an evangelist who would be semi-mobile and serve a number of congregations in the Presbytery. It was noted that elders have a responsibility for local evangelism as per the church order.

A discussion regarding the church visitation roster was held and an amended version was approved. It was agreed that planning would commence for a Presbytery Diaconal Conference in Palmerston North.

The role of the Presbytery in an ongoing dispute between parties in one of the congregations was discussed. It was decided that the Presbytery would appoint two Ministers (the Revs. Nugteren and Waldron) to meet with the local session and the parties involved in order to strive for reconciliation. It was accepted that if such reconciliation were not forthcoming, an appeal to the

Presbytery from one of the parties was likely to be forthcoming.

Discussion was held regarding the intention of the Palmerston North Session to appeal some of the rulings made at the Special Presbytery meeting held last year.

The Rev Paul. Archbald read from Psalm 89, and the Rev A Nugteren closed the meeting in prayer at 4:30p.m.

## 16th Hamilton Easter Convention

Mr Simon Manchester, Rector of St Thomas Church (Anglican) in North Sydney very helpfully opened II Cor 2:-7:4 to us in a series of four addresses. Between the third and fourth we were honoured with the remembrance of Charles Simeon (1759-1834), the late rector of Holy Trinity Church, Cambridge.

The Lord uses means. Deep workers in a Shallow World (the conference theme) will be found when God works in His labourers' souls. Simeon, a man from a privileged background with many personal challenges, and converted in his late teens through reading the Word, used his education and calling quite prodigiously in the face of persecution, discouraging circumstances and he was considerably self-sacrificial. For the first 10-14 years of his ministry the church wardens locked the pews. They didn't want Simeon and they exhibited their rude distaste in rather cruel and ugly ways. For worship, parishioners had to stand in the aisles for the first few years. Though often met with students' missiles in the form of eggs and flour as he came out of the church, Simeon laboured on. He learned and cultivated the practice of expository preaching; and after many years his toil began to yield wonderful fruit. Manchester engagingly outlined Simeon's life and retold interesting stories to illustrate the manifold ways in which the Lord used him for profound good. In depth Simeon was as the ocean.

Paul loved the church in Corinth, as you know, even though it was plagued with all sorts of sins. Some had faltered from loving Christ as they ought through the influence of false teachers. Mr Manchester took us to the passage he expounded as a sort of parenthetical rabbit trail between the message of Chapter 2:12 and that of Chapter 7:4 and following. Paul found the necessity, in this

second letter to the church that has been recorded in the Canon of Scripture, to defend his ministry and restore their understanding of his apostolic task, so that they would hear properly the rest of his instruction to them. In Mr Manchester's four addresses we were instructed on how and where one can be sidetracked; the consequences; some causes for discouragement and their remedies; and among other things, the reasons why we ought to walk with Christ contentedly and fruitfully – this side of heaven, and in the face of quite some challenges. It is, after all, the Saviour's desire and His work in and through us.

This privileged conferee commends

the DVD or CD recordings to you – whether you are an office bearer or a church member. There is plenty of interest and profit for you in them. Mr Manchester did a fine job. (Mr Pieter van der Wel of the Hamilton congregation is sure to handle any recording requests that you have). I'm also grateful to the churches which organised the conference, and suggest that you should consider attending subsequent ones – they're held on Good Friday and Easter Saturday annually. Lest anyone think that my commendation of this conference are without qualification, please allow me to add in the briefest of terms that there were occasional times when our different ec-

clesiastical/theological "traditions" were evident. Because our traditions, (like the Sydney Anglicans' ones!), are able to be improved, we need these challenges. Manchester's exhortation for expository preachers, in the Dick Lucas/Charles Simeon mould addressed the means to improvement when he rightly asserted that "The system [of doctrine – and thus practise] must not drive the text [of Scripture]". Scripture alone is the infallible Word of God to us – sufficient and full. Appreciatively, I say, Mr Manchester expounded the Bible for us.

**Paul Davey**  
**Member, Reformed Church of**  
**Dovedale**

## Report on Family Camp 2009-2010

This year at family camp there were 170 people. There was even one family from the South Island and one man all the way from Canada. I liked meeting lots of new people that were at camp for the first time. I made a lot of new friends, Emma, Riva, Aidene and Kelsey.

There were a lot of activities. The most fun activities were the water slide and the blow up in the water. The water slide was fun but it hurt a bit when you skid along in the water. It was very fast and when I slide down I am speechless. Some people scream or say 'weeee', but I can't, it's too fast!

The blow up was an enormous air bag

in the lake. The person having a turn had to wear a helmet and life jacket. They would sit at the end of the blow up and two or three people would jump on the other end and the person would go flying high up into the air and into the water. At each activity there were people watching or supervising.

The dairy is cool and quite cheap. There is a swimming pool which was open every day. There were also kayaks to hire and two glow worm trips.

Every year we have a banquet. This year the theme was 'Running the Race – the Olympics' (from the studies). It was held in the hall where we eat. Everyone looked so cool. People were mostly swimmers and runners. I dressed up as a fencer with my sister Sophie. Mr Kamphuis looked really funny, he dressed up as a Gladiator.

The Kids Club were the decorators for the Banquet. Everyone had to make a poster for the hall. At the end of the evening all the kids got a bag of lollies and a balloon.

**Holly van Seventer**

Mr Neal and Mr van der Werff organised five sports at Family camp. Some friends and I made a volleyball team and won a trophy for being the only girl team even though we were the worst team. There was also soccer, T ball, table tennis and a fishing competition. There were a lot of people playing sport because they enjoyed it so much. The winning teams would get a trophy.

There was also a basketball fund raiser for Papua New Guinea and two teams had to shoot hoops. When they missed the other team would squirt them with



a water gun. The two ministers got really wet.

The Kids Club theme was 'The Race is On – The Hare and the Tortoise'. Mrs de Vries was the leader and there were also helpers, Mrs Hemmes, Mrs de Ruiter and Mrs de Vos. They had groups called ducks, beavers, ants, and foxes. Mrs de Ruiter was the craft teacher. There were different crafts every time, photos frames, cards, and other cool things. We had morning tea time with a drink and a biscuit. Then we would play sport; pop the balloon, bull rush or soccer and other games. The little kids, the ducks and ants, would play games for their age.

Mrs de Vries led us in singing and I learned a lot of new songs and more about God. The Kids Club sang two songs at the concert evening, they sounded really good.

The morning studies were led by Rev Haverland on Ephesians chapters 4-6. The evening devotions were led by Rev de Vos on Noah – Walking with God. The adults really enjoyed it. During Kids Club, the morning studies were on, and the evening devotions were for the adults and older kids.

I went to a few evening devotions and I loved the singing, it was really beautiful.

**Grace van Seventer**

This year the cooks were Mr Saunders and Mr Wharekawa and they had two helpers Shane and Isaac and Mrs Saunders helped with desserts. One of my favourite meals was macaroni cheese and I also liked the porridge.

For lunch we had buns, sausages, macaroni cheese, and much more. There were apricots and plums as well. Dinner was shepherds pie, roast with



potatoes, peas and carrots, a BBQ and salads, beef casserole. Breakfast was porridge, peaches, cornflakes, ricies, toast, weetbix, and yoghurt. Some desserts were apple crumble, jelly and icecream, milk tart pudding, ambrosia. It all tasted really good!

Every year at Family camp we have a concert. Mr Leenders was the MC and

pretended to be my Dad and it was funny. People did jokes, singing, skits, etc and the Choir sung. We did a funny skit with our friends Grace, Holly, Aidene, Riva, Bronwyn, Samantha, and Helena and I. Mrs van der Werff taught it to us. The funniest skit was Mr de Ruiter's one with Goldilocks and the Three bears.

On New Years eve we had a coun-

try dance in the big open hall outside. Charmagne led us in country dancing, it was really cool! A country dance is when you have to dress like an old fashioned person and dance in a big group or lines. Some people dressed so well with big hoop skirts and beautiful dresses.

**Sophie van Seventer**

## Book focus

### ***Bioethics and the Christian Life: A Guide to Making Difficult Decisions***

David Vandrunen (2009)

(Wheaton, IL: Crossway), 256pp.

**Reviewed by Rob Vosslander, Christchurch**

The *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us that the term “bioethics” was coined in 1971; however ethical questions relating to life issues have been with us since death began. In his book entitled *Bioethics and the Christian* David Vandrunen, professor of systematic theology and ethics at Westminster Seminary in California ably addresses such issues. He focuses particularly on those issues that are the bread and butter of bioethical concern: questions relating to the beginning and to the end of life.

Vandrunen divides his book into three sections. In Part 1 he discusses the foundations of bioethics, and commences by asking what the relationship is between Christian bioethics and secular bioethics. He argues that the most theologically sound and balanced approach is not a divorce between the two, but rather to regard both secular bioethics and Christian bioethics as distinct but legitimate. Since the practice of medicine and the protection of human life is a common cultural task given to all human beings to pursue together, Christians may participate freely in the secular healthcare system. Indeed, we all do: to my knowledge there is no “Christian” healthcare system in New Zealand. However, this common cultural task is not morally neutral; Christians have a distinct voice to add to bioethical discussions. While secular bioethics concerns all people (including Christians) in their common life, as Christians must also shape our individual and communal views of

bioethics in accord with our distinctive theological convictions.

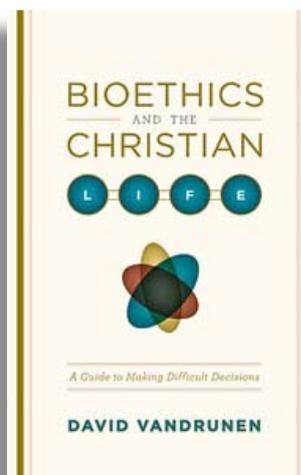
Vandrunen grounds his discussion in the context of certain key theological doctrines, which he discusses in the second chapter. The sovereignty of God and divine providence provide the greatest encouragement to believers facing death or illness. God’s faithfulness may not eliminate our responsibility to make moral decisions, but it significantly alters the context within which we must make those decisions. Further, our being created in the image of God suggests that we were destined for life, both in body and soul; but sin introduced death. A Christian can never consider death apart from resurrection: since Christ has both died and risen, death has lost its sting; this life is not all there is. While we live life on earth we face not only our own suffering but also that of others, and at times must make difficult and painful life and death decisions.

Theology offers a basis for Christian bioethical thought; but it does not answer specific bioethical cases. Although we may agree that Scripture teaches many things that are relevant to bioethics, we cannot find specific injunctions in the Bible about such matters as IVF, stem-cells, ventilators, and feeding tubes. One Christian facing a terminal disease might choose to forego treatment, resting in the providence of God and content to be with him. Another might expend all her

efforts and resources in seeking a cure, motivated by love for her children and a desire to keep serving God here on earth. While one childless couple might choose to remain so, another might adopt, and a third might attempt to conceive using assisted reproductive techniques, each basing their decision on good Biblical grounds. When facing ethical problems for which there is no clear Biblical rule, how then should Christians evaluate their options? How can it be that similar situations evoke a variety of responses from Christians with similar theological commitments? The third chapter provides a helpful discussion of the role of Christian virtues.

Vandrunen argues that if Christians are lacking in Christian virtues when a particular bioethical dilemma confronts them, they are much less likely to respond well to the situation. After all it is people that perform moral actions, and what kind of person an individual is has a great bearing upon what sort of actions he or she will perform. Vandrunen proceeds to discuss several Christian virtues which affect our ethical decision making: faith, hope, and love, but also courage, contentment, and wisdom. This discussion bridges the gap between our theology and our practice: Christian virtue should guide our moral decision-making.

The remaining two parts of the book apply the foundations laid in Part 1 to issues concerning the beginning of life and the end of life respectively. The three chapters of Part 2 address matters pertaining to the beginning of life. Vandrunen firmly roots the bioethics of the start of life within marriage, but aptly notes that while Christians should promote the good of marriage, they should



also be most eager to uphold the good of not marrying and having children. He then goes on to discuss how many children to have, including whether it might be acceptable to decide not to have children at all, before discussing birth control in principle.

The next chapter shifts focus from those considering how many children to have, to those unable to have any. Again the discussion proceeds on the basis laid in Part 1, and pleasingly avoids overly simplistic solutions to the painful and fraught issues of childlessness and assisted reproductive techniques while clearly addressing a range of these issues. Chapter 6 considers the human embryo, and discusses not only abortion and the question of when life begins, but also the topical matter of embryonic stem-cell research.

Part 3 considers bioethical issues related to the end of life. Chapter 7 sets the scene by asking what the proper Christian attitude to death is. While we

recognise that death is the last great enemy, death has also been overcome by Christ. Drawing on the tradition of the literature on the 'art of dying' (*ars moriendi*), Vandrunen draws out the implications of Psalm 90 which counsels us to number our days so that we might get a heart of wisdom. As we grow in the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love, we may not only prepare for death but allow our inevitable death to be a source of growth in grace. Besides this, he also recommends making temporal preparations for death by means of wills, including living wills for the event that we are incapacitated, and discusses the question of organ donation.

Chapter 8 discusses suicide and euthanasia, before drawing out the helpful distinction between killing and letting die. The final chapter continues by considering the difficult matter of whether to accept or forego treatment. Here Vandrunen draws on the basis outlined at the start of the book, and does not

shrink from discussing such tragic scenarios as the otherwise terminal illness that is curable with a long-shot treatment (is a Christian obliged to undergo that treatment?); the chronic illness with a burdensome treatment; and whether treatment may be withdrawn from a person in a persistent vegetative state.

I would recommend this book highly. Although written by an expert in ethics and theology, it is far from difficult to read. Indeed, it reflects a pastor's heart (Vandrunen is an ordained minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church), and does not shrink from applying Biblical teaching to tough real-life questions. God calls us to walk wisely, and to seek wisdom in the abundance of counselors. Vandrunen provides helpful counsel that can prepare us as Christians to make such decisions, or to negotiate our way through troublous life and death issues. This counsel can also assist us as believers who, while being citizens of the kingdom of God, seek to be salt and light in this world.

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## Letter to the Editor

*Dear Sir*

Thank you for the work you and your team do in putting together *Faith in Focus* every month. It is appreciated.

Given the recent views expressed about the use of the data projector in worship services, satirical or otherwise, perhaps it's time to add an alternative view.

Although I am sympathetic to some of the concerns that have been expressed, I am not convinced that the points made are equally valid across all worship services.

I for one have found the data projector helpful for singing, also for when the leader in worship uses a geographical map or some other graphic to highlight a location or particular structure, also for sermon notes and confessions on the screen, particularly in the teaching service at night.

The analogy used by one writer to suggest that things will be 'sneakily' included on the data projector as various musical instruments have sneaked into our services, is really without foundation. A quick search in my NIV Bible concordance makes no mention of an organ, so I am left wondering where that

snuck into our services.

I am not suggesting for a moment that the church has to use the latest gadgetry in its worship services. But let's not put our head in the sand and say it is all bad. There are some good things.

Furthermore, the data projector can be a helpful tool for reaching out to the lost. Whether we like it or not, the world, and even our own children are growing up in an environment where this technology is normal. Iphones, Bluetooth, E-mail, Wi-Fi, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, TXTing, it's all out there.

Perhaps it's time that the church, rather than always finding things to criticise, explores ways to reach out to a world now in darkness, using these modern means to bring the message of salvation to the masses. Thankfully, some churches are already doing so.

So my point is rather simple – there are many good things that can become part of our worship service. There are also some things we need to be wary of, but not necessarily paranoid about. The data projector can be and has been a useful aid / tool.

We need to be discerning and ask ourselves, "How does the use of the data-

projector, organ, additional instruments, the colour of the minister's tie enhance the worship of our risen, victorious Lord? And then how does the use of these modern aids benefit, encourage, challenge, edify and convict those who worship with us, believers and unbelievers alike." For me, these are the weighty matters that deserve careful and prayerful consideration. 1 Corinthians 10:23 states "**Everything is permissible—but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible—but not everything is constructive.**" And it shouldn't just be confined to the worship service (1 Corinthians 10:31), so perhaps that is the real and deeper challenge to be acknowledged.

Blessings,

**Graeme Zuidema**

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Letters to the editor are most welcome. They should refer to an issue the magazine has recently published. Their language should be temperate, and they may not charge anyone with an offence. They should be brief, and they may be condensed by the editor. The opinions expressed are those of the writer, and not necessarily of the editorial team of *Faith in Focus*.

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# Meeting with the C.A.R.E team at Madurai on March 5th 2010

For some years our denomination's National Diaconate Committee has been involved in a special ministry to HIV(+) and AIDS sufferers and their families in various parts of Tamil Nadu (South India). In March 2010, the Rev Dirk van Garderen (NDC), along with the Rev Bert Kuipers of the World Diaconate Relief (CRCA) and his brother Klaas, revisited the work in Madurai, went on a number of home visits and then met with 23 of the staff members, including the founder, Mr Paulus Samuel.

The C.A.R.E. (Centre for AIDS Rehabilitation and Education) facilities are adjacent to the huge public hospital in Madurai. For many years people who are diagnosed as being HIV(+) are told by the hospital that they can receive additional medication, nutritional support and, above all, counselling at the C.A.R.E. centre, next door.

HIV is and remains a condition for which no cure is in sight. There are regular reports of *new directions* that medical researchers are exploring, but no more. Nowadays, with proper medication, the disease rarely leads to a quick death. Those infected often live for quite a number of years. However, tiredness, stiffness, sore joints, headaches, nausea and, viral infections etc., are frequent and many of the victims cannot find

regular work because of weakness and regular bouts of illness that confine them to bed.

The C.A.R.E. programme has responded accordingly. In Madurai (one of three regional centres operated by this programme), nutritional supplements are still supplied, as is medication for many of the frequent illnesses their 2,000 clients present when they come to the clinic or are visited in their homes. However, above all else, the focus is on ongoing counselling and support. Most of the counsellors are themselves HIV (+) and widows. Moreover, although many have a Hindu background, they are now firmly committed Christians and counsel accordingly. The message of salvation, spiritual wholeness and hope in Christ is the heart of the counsel they share.

## Two home visits

After braving the chaotic road and traffic conditions, we arrived at the house of a 35-year-old widow, her school-aged daughter and an elderly, dependent father. House? Well, yes, at least in that part of the world where one (windowless) room (2.5m square) with a lean-to and a 'yard' is just that! Three of us went inside and were seated on a bed-base. When a large rat suddenly scurried between my feet to find safer haven, I

felt decidedly shaky. We were given an opportunity to ask questions and see how C.A.R.E.'s ministry works.

The programme helps this young widow in a number of significant ways. First and foremost, there is the spiritual, emotional and physical support that her counsellor offers in the monthly visits. The comfort of the gospel, prayer and friendship is the very heart of this work. Secondly, C.A.R.E. is providing for the education of this widow's 15-year-old daughter. The daughter proudly described her academic achievements and plans to enrol in a nursing course as soon as she graduates from high school. C.A.R.E.'s commitment to paying for her education will continue until she graduates. Thirdly, care has provided a (rice) flour making machine. This becomes a 'cottage industry' that generates a small income of about 350 rupees in a good week (\$ (NZ)11.00). After sharing the hope that even the hopeless receive in and through Christ, we prayed and moved on to the next visit.

Imagine, at 16, marrying a truck-driver, and finding yourself pregnant almost immediately. A visit to the doctor to confirm this great news included a test for HIV. "I'm afraid you're HIV(+)", she was told. Within a year your truck-driver husband, who had the disease before he married you and never told you, is dead. Later on you will hear that his brother has full-blown AIDS as well, and will die soon after. Your in-laws hate you because they blame you for the death of their son. After all, didn't the doctors diagnose *you* when you were pregnant? No support there. It must come from your own family – your parents and, above all, a young brother whose chances of marriage will become extremely slim because of your condition. Your 'reputation' has seen to that! *If* he does marry, you're on your own. He is the breadwinner of the family. No ACC or State support is available.

We met this 24 year old widow and her little son who, praise God, is not HIV(+)! Many such children are. This widow, who looked more like a girl, invited us into her home where we met her mother and brother. Her dad



This is a picture of the mother and daughter we visited. Mother is a HIV(+). She receives monthly visits from the C.A.R.E. counsellor. Her daughter is completing her education and expects to be able to follow a nursing course. C.A.R.E. funds provide both secondary and tertiary education.

was minding the 'shop' – in front of the house selling sweets.

C.A.R.E. again has brought hope into this family. Christ now reigns in their hearts. They have become part of a small church community in that mostly Hindu village. What really struck me was the genuine *friendship* between the counsellor and this family. C.A.R.E. has and continues to provide a real life-line that is first and foremost spiritual and then practical. This is 'Word and Deed' ministry in action.

### Meeting with the staff at the clinic

It seems that whatever we did in India, we were always rushing around in top gear and invariably late! Not surprisingly the staff in Madurai waited a good hour and a half before we finally got there. (We had been on a visit to see a remote village where Mr Paulus Samuel is seeking to develop a nucleus of 'Tuition Centres'. More on that in another article!)

Most of the 23 staff members we met that morning were counsellors. Most of these counsellors are themselves HIV(+) widows and converts from Hinduism. Watching them, listening to their testimonies and discovering what they are doing was deeply moving.

After introducing ourselves to each other, it was suggested that we might like to ask some questions. A great opportunity! The three of us were able to ask whatever we wanted about this ministry. This turned out to be a real eye-opener.

Here is a sample:

1. *What are some of the changes you have observed in your ministry over the years?*

- Those who are diagnosed HIV(+) live a lot longer than they used to.
- There is a greater awareness of this disease and its causes among young people.
- Truck drivers – the most 'at risk' population a decade ago – are more cautious nowadays.
- Nowadays the focus is on the development of a real, caring relationship/friendship between the counsellor and the clients and their families. This has become increasingly central to this ministry.
- Families being visited are increasingly open to the gospel.

2. *Is there is a real or even a growing need for this kind of ministry today?*

- Counsellors were adamant that the need to maintain their monthly visiting schedules is vital. HIV victims and their families continue to need support, encouragement and an opportunity to share their ongoing battles and concerns. HIV and the problems associated with it, do not go away over time.
  - With the children in these families growing up, new kinds of issues arise for them. Their own situation or condition needs to be addressed, although by no means all children of HIV(+) parents are themselves infected. However, the social stigma is real and lasting. It needs to be addressed.
3. *Has the 'peak' passed as far as this disease is concerned?*
- New patients continue to come to the centres. (Some 222 new cases presented themselves at Madurai in 2009.)
  - The counsellors did not believe that the need to counsel those suffering from this disease has decreased at all.
4. *What role does counselling have in this ministry?*
- The C.A.R.E. centre provides free nutritional supplements to help sufferers in a physical sense. They also provide free medical advice for the many sicknesses and periods of illness those with HIV(+) suffer again and again. Headaches, fatigue, joint pains, etc., are some of the more common problems.

- However, counsellors asserted that counselling is 'absolutely' at the heart of this ministry. As one said, 'God alone can do what we cannot do.' The necessary focus is on forgiveness, repentance and the refocusing of life in and with the Lord Jesus.
  - Counsellors report the increasingly close relationship with local churches and strive to connect their patients with them. Once a local church becomes involved with the family, things start to happen.
5. *Is there a greater acceptance of this condition today?*
- This question provoked some very animated discussion and examples. Generally speaking, it is still the women who are blamed. After all, in many instances, women are first diagnosed as being HIV(+) via pregnancy tests. In-laws tend to blame daughter-in-law (or the other way round) with all kinds of repercussions. There were many stories of the subsequent, often long-lasting, tensions. The desire to lay the blame on another's doorstep remains real and can, ultimately, only be addressed in and through Jesus.
  - The support of local churches as an indicator of greater acceptance was also raised. Yes, as indicated previously, there is increasing understanding and support, but this remains a slow process.
6. *How are you counsellors coping, especially since many of you are yourselves HIV(+)?*
- Supervision, the need to maintain

MADURAI CARE	
FEB - 2010	
+ve Male	1283
+ve Female	1414
+ve Children	210
Married Men	1006
Married Women	652
Unmarried	132
Divorced/Separated	173
Widow	646
Widower	87
Children	210
Death	2
Migrated/Long distance	2
TOTAL	2907

PRISMA ACTIVITIES	
23.10 - Club Meeting - Madurai	
4.3.10 - Club Meeting - Madurai College	
5.3.10 - Life Skill Training - Sivakasi	
7.3.10 - Life Skill Training - Achampatti	
8.3.10 - Rights meeting	
10.3.10 - Club Meeting - Madurai college	
12.3.10 - Advocacy Meeting - Kattankulathur	
13.3.10 - Life Skill Training - Sivakasi	
15.3.10 - Club Meeting - Madurai College	
17.3.10 - Club Meeting - 372 Thiruvallur	
18.3.10 - Life Skill Training - AC School	
20.3.10 - Club Meeting - 372 Thiruvallur	
24.3.10 - National Medicine Distribution	
27.3.10 - National Medicine Distribution	
28.3.10 - Club Meeting - Madurai college	
30.3.10 - Printing Paper/Account closing	
All Thursday - weekly Prayer meeting	

The whiteboard shows some of the current statistics of the C.A.R.E. centre monthly programme.

schedules, do the follow-up work is always important.

- Most of the counsellors, when first diagnosed, were Hindu (at least nominally!) but, as part of the process, came to know, find forgiveness, salvation, new life and

hope in Jesus as their Lord. This commitment needs to be reinforced continually. Therefore the counsellors get together at least monthly for a time of prayer, fasting and sharing together. As one expressed it, 'Knowing and walking with the

Lord is what has kept us going.'

7. *Is your counsel and advice often rejected?*

- There are some villages/communities that still have the attitude 'don't need you!' but that is not common.
- Initial rejection and even hostility breaks down after a while and people change their minds.
- Hostility, helplessness, anger, etc., is real when a person is first diagnosed. But it is here that the counsellors are most able to step in. Given that they themselves are HIV(+) they understand and are able to address these powerful feelings very well indeed.

8. *Why are most of you female rather than male counsellors?*

- Women, being at home, were at first more available to do counselling and, as mentioned, were often informed of their (and their husband's) condition via pregnancy tests. In Hindu culture, men addressing this with women is, to say the least, difficult!
- Furthermore, generally speaking, at first men were less able/willing to face the facts than were women!
- There is an increasing role for male counsellors as the focus shifts towards couples.



One of the counsellors working with a client at the C.A.R.E. clinic in Madurai.



Centre: The young widow with her mother and brother (right). Two counsellor on the left.



Some of the counsellors at the C.A.R.E. clinic at Madurai. Most are widows who are themselves HIV(+). They uniformly love the Lord and see the Gospel as being at the very heart of their work.

**Summing up**

At present there is no need for financial support for C.A.R.E. by our churches. The work continues, but sufficient funding for this project is available without our input. That's great news.

Nevertheless C.A.R.E. has been and remains very important both in India and for us here in New Zealand. The ongoing need for this ministry is real. Above all, this work demonstrates and proves that Word and Deed ministry go hand-in-hand. C.A.R.E. began in the wards of the Madurai public hospital when Paulus Samuel, a psychologist, and a doctor friend saw that no real help or aftercare was available for AIDS victims and their families at that time. As C.A.R.E.'s work and vision developed, the gospel as the good news of the ultimate healer and healing became increasingly central. Through C.A.R.E. many came to know Christ and those new converts became the counsellors who now minister to others.

That is the lesson and challenge of C.A.R.E. also for us in New Zealand. Thank God for it.

**Dirk J van Garderen**