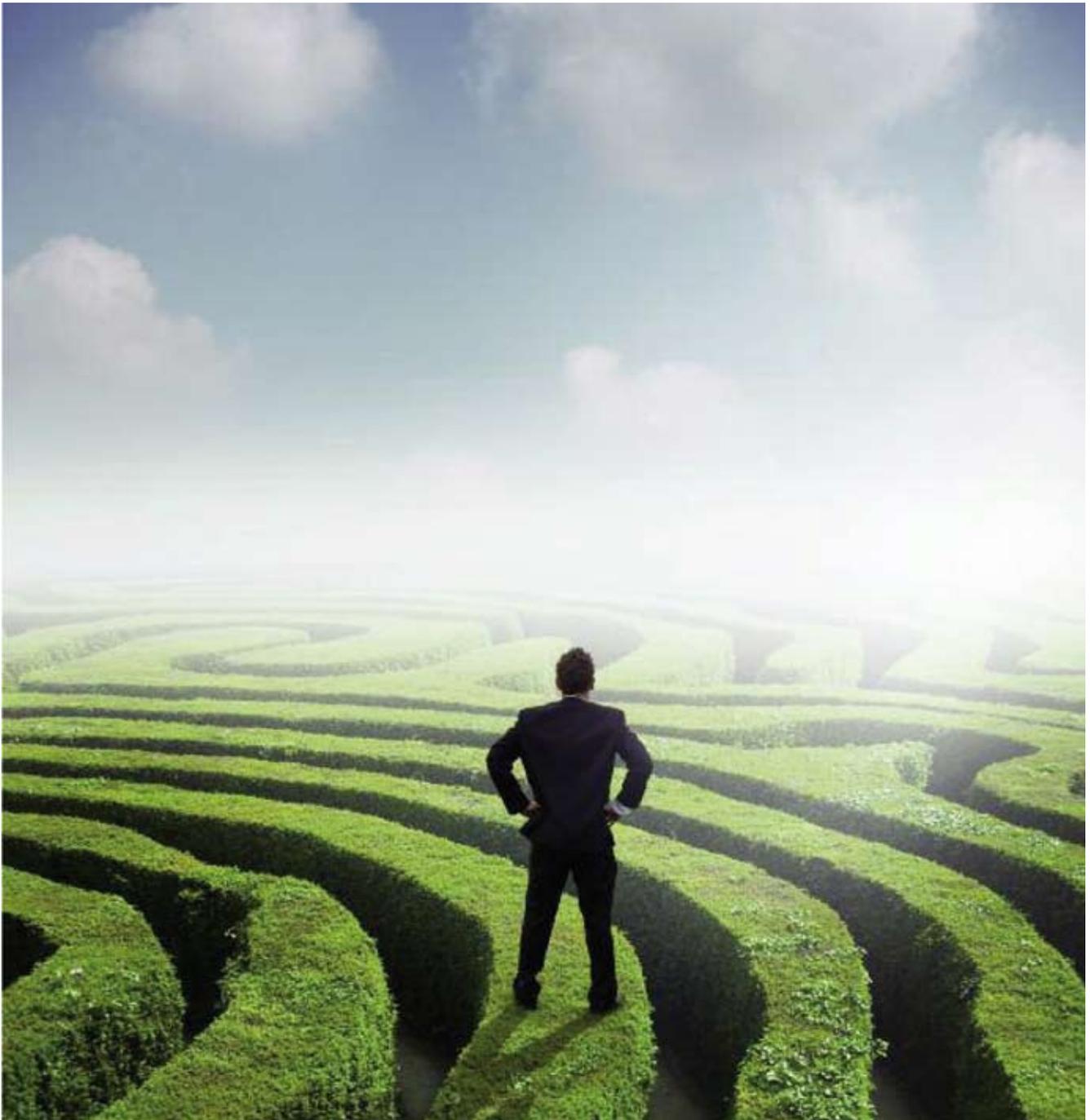


faith in  
**focus**

Magazine of the  
Reformed Churches  
of New Zealand

VOLUME 38/4 MAY 2011



Ethics – the moral maze

## Contents

<b>Ethics (1)</b>	
Brave new world	3
<b>Ethics (2)</b>	
Purity matters	6
<b>World in focus</b>	8
<b>Summer School of Theology</b>	
Part one	12
<b>Is the Mass really a “cursed idolatry”?</b>	13
<b>Focus on home</b>	
Gleanings	
Auckland Presbytery report	14
<b>Ministers in focus</b>	17
<b>Book in focus</b>	18
<b>Letter to the editor</b>	19
<b>Ordinary people, extraordinary times: what the earthquake revealed about the heart of our city</b>	20
<b>‘Big wriggles’</b>	23

All correspondence regarding editorial content and advertising should be sent to:

### The Editor:

Walter Walraven  
7 Winchester Avenue, Pinehaven  
Upper Hutt 5019  
Ph: +64 4 527 4379  
Email: [fnf@rcnz.org.nz](mailto:fnf@rcnz.org.nz)  
Reformed Churches Home Page  
<http://www.rcnz.org.nz>

### Copy Deadline:

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

All correspondence regarding distribution and payment of subscriptions to:

### The Secretary:

Mrs Nicola Wharekawa  
79 McLeod Street  
Upper Hutt  
Email: [ricwhare@paradise.net.nz](mailto:ricwhare@paradise.net.nz)

### Subscription per volume:

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

### Production Staff:

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

## Editorial

Ethics? What thoughts are conjured up in your mind by that word? Too hard basket etc? People around us usually think of ethics as being something deep, complicated, out of the ordinary and difficult to deal with. Something that only great minds can come to some conclusions on. As Christians, we deal with ethics every day. Our daily Bible reading reveals the issues of life in black and white terms so that we may negotiate all the areas of our lives in faith and obedience and to the honour and praise of our God and Saviour.

For us who believe, ethics is a matter of right and wrong. However, the world that we live in has created some real ethical problems over the years because it has rejected what God has to say to mankind.

These problems can be seen in the way we care for the elderly, dying, unborn, impaired and mentally ill. Society has coarsened our view of life, to the point where it comes down to the mighty dollar, and the unborn have no legal status because they are not viewed as human until outside the womb.

It would be fair to say that “we face new challenges that only a Christian worldview can truly negotiate”.

Our guest writers, Mr Peter Hastie, editor of *Australian Presbyterian*, and Mr Richard D. Phillips deal with some ethical issues that many of us have concerns about. Mr Peter Hastie interviews Mr Scott Rae about the “Brave new world”. Mr Richard D. Phillips tells us that “Purity matters” when it comes to relationships between young men and women in our churches. The organising committee of the Summer School of Theology gives a report on how things went in January when it held its first conference. Mr Klaas Stam, minister emeritus of the Canadian Reformed Churches, asks the question “Is the Mass really a cursed idolatry?”. Mr Leo de Vos writes a review of *Christians Get Depressed Too: Hope and Help for Depressed People* by David P. Murray. Mr Andre Scheepers writes a letter to the editor on Federal Vision. Mr Andrew de Vries (Bishopdale) tells us about himself and family in “Ministers in focus”. Dr Sally Davey and Mr Graeme Zuidema write about the February earthquake in Christchurch, telling us about their experiences and the ways their churches have risen to the challenges that such a disaster creates. Mrs Harriet Haverland again provides us with an easy-to-read summary of what has been happening in our churches.

## Donate to Japan Relief

The Diaconal Committee of the OPC has set up a disaster response fund to help with the needs in Japan, and other nations as they arise!

You can use your credit card to send in your donation through PayPal by going onto the OPC website <http://www.opc.org>

The OPC have missionaries in the disaster area in Japan and are able to distribute aid with the Gospel. I wholeheartedly recommend this to our readers.

Cover image: Australian Presbyterian

Photo/image credits: p3 Australian Presbyterian; p20-21 Mrs Sally Davey; p22 Mr Gary Haverland; p23-24 Mr Graeme Zuidema

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.

# Ethics (1)

## Brave new world

We face new challenges that only a Christian worldview can truly negotiate.

### Scott Rae talks to Peter Hastie

Recently, Peter Hastie spoke with Dr Scott Rae, Professor of Philosophy of Religion and Ethics at Talbot Theological Seminary, Biola University, Los Angeles, on the subject of bioethics. Dr Rae holds an MA and PhD in Social Ethics from the University of Southern California, and a ThM from Dallas Theological Seminary. His major interest is in how Scripture applies to current social issues. He specialises in the subjects of medical and bioethics and business ethics.

He is the author of a number of books, *The Ethics of Commercial Surrogate Motherhood: Brave New Families?* 1994, *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics* 2000, *Brave New Families: Biblical Ethics and Reproductive Technologies* 1996, *Beyond Integrity: A Judeo-Christian Approach to Business Ethics* with Kenman L. Wong 2004, *Embryo Research and Experimentation* 1997, *Bioethics: A Christian Approach in a Pluralistic Age* co-authored with Paul M. Cox, 1999, *Body and Soul: Human Nature and the Crisis in Ethics* co-authored with JP Moreland, 2000, and *Biotechnology and the Human Good*, 2007.

He is also a consultant ethicist for a number of hospitals in Southern California.

Dr Rae is married and has three boys. He lives in Irvine, California, and when he is not teaching ethics and philosophy, he is coaching his boys' sports teams in soccer, basketball and athletics.

### Scott, do you agree with Francis Schaeffer's claim that every culture will be judged ultimately on the basis of how it treats its people?

Yes, I think Schaeffer is essentially correct. However, I would go a little bit further and say that every culture will be judged on the way that it treats its most *vulnerable* people. The 'vulnerable'

are not just the sick and disabled; it includes them, of course, but I am thinking particularly of children and the elderly. Although the elderly have always been vulnerable, they are becoming more vulnerable than before.

I think that there is also a case to be made that newborns are becoming more vulnerable too. While we don't have laws that would allow broad scale infanticide, there has been some discussion in the United States about overturning the 'born alive' rule that would allow physicians to finish off botched abortions. Currently this is illegal in America. If a child survives an abortion, then you have to support it; the child cannot be abandoned.

### Why are you so worried about the elderly at the moment?

I'm worried about the care of the elderly because of the escalating cost of healthcare. I have a friend who is a physician who said to me some time ago that 'there is nothing cheaper than dead' when it comes to caring for people. There was a case just recently in Oregon where a woman with terminal cancer

was denied treatment but was offered the funding to pay for suicide. I think there's no doubt, at least in the United States, that there will be record numbers of the elderly in the next twenty years as the baby boomers hit retirement and then have to face old age.

### Do you think that this is going to become the main ethical crisis facing us over the next few decades?

I'm not so sure about that. It's certainly one of the major issues which we will need to deal with. However, there's another one lurking in the not-too-distant future that's already setting off alarm bells.

### What's that?

A growing number of scientists are talking about the remaking of humanity through biotechnology. I believe this is going to be the most pressing issue for some time. Nevertheless, we can't duck the problem that caring for a rapidly growing number of elderly people is a demographic challenge that we are completely unprepared for.



### **What's going on in biotechnology at the moment that's causing you such concern?**

As you know, there have been some rather amazing developments in biotechnology which have enabled researchers to discover new ways to treat diseases. Some of these developments are now being considered, not simply as a form of treatment for disease, but as a means enhance a person's natural traits and gifts. We are now on the verge of altering a person's genes to prolong life or to create some form of artificial intelligence that will possibly expand mental function. There are all sorts of possibilities just over the horizon.

“There is nothing cheaper than dead when it comes to caring for people.”

### **So are you talking about enhancement of a person's natural characteristics?**

Yes, that's the ultimate goal for some of these scientists. Some of them want to experiment with drugs and genetic engineering with the aim of re-making a human being. The people who are working to this end are called trans-humanists. I know that what I am talking about probably sounds like science-fiction, but some of these enhancements are now becoming more mainstream.

### **Does this enhancement include boosting physical performance and improving intelligence?**

Yes, we are talking about both. Everything is on the table. There are all kinds of possibilities – physiological and mental. Theoretically, it should be possible to develop better athletes and give people sharper minds. Recent scientific discoveries are opening the door to longer lives, happier souls, and more balanced emotions. All the science is there – the biggest problem we face is a moral one. Our culture is so driven by the idea of personal autonomy that, for the most part, we don't even think about the moral and philosophical issues involved. The average person says, “Well, if it's going to improve someone's life and prospects, then let's go for it!” It is all about the individual. Naturally, as Christians, we approach the issue from an entirely different world view. We are

principally concerned with God's will rather than human preferences.

### **Once we believe, as some scientists do, that our lives are genetically determined, do we have any meaningful basis for ascribing value to things like love, friendship, sacrifice and moral values?**

Amongst evolutionists there is an attempt to establish a naturalistic basis for morality. Personally, I don't believe that their attempts to construct a system of ethics will explain a lot of the values that we hold dear. For example, I don't think naturalism offers a plausible explanation for self-sacrifice or compassion, and it

certainly doesn't explain why we should forgive. So, while they may be well-intentioned, I think they are going to come up short on a system that has a strong foundation for providing moral values.

### **Where do we get the notion of the sanctity of life? Is it the result of a Christian worldview or can it be grounded on naturalistic assumptions?**

I don't think that you can explain the 'sanctity of life' successfully on purely naturalistic assumptions. The only reason that the notion is widely accepted today is that it enjoys widespread cultural acceptance. I don't believe that such an idea can be sustained properly if it is isolated from our Christian intellectual and cultural heritage. For instance, I don't think you can argue that life is intrinsically valuable on evolutionary assumptions. It's hard to see how you could justify that there is something about human life that is particularly valuable over against other life forms. At best, I think that we can only say that human life is valuable on a utilitarian basis. Of course, grounding it on such a basis doesn't get us very far because it then depends on whether it serves a useful purpose to save the person concerned. That could be very bad news at the moment if you happened to be an unborn child or an elderly person with chronic illness. You see, it's possible to make a good utilitarian argument that

keeping the elderly alive as long as we do is a bad idea. Certainly, there is no reason to keep an unborn child alive on utilitarian grounds if he or she is not going to be loved.

### **Can you help us understand why there has been such a dramatic shift in attitudes away from the sanctity of human life in the last fifty years or so? What has led our society to accept things like abortion, embryo experimentation and euthanasia?**

These issues have been forced upon us by new developments in science and technology. Ever since the early 1960s when it became relatively safe to perform abortions, we have been forced to ask questions about the moral status of the unborn. Before the 1950's no one really doubted that unborn children were valuable. It was just a common sense view.

Again, from the 1970s onwards, a number of medical advances have made it possible to keep people alive who ordinarily would have died. Again, this has forced us to confront questions about when life really ends. It has also put us in a position where we are forced to define personhood. For example, does the fact that someone has advanced dementia and is perpetually curled up in the foetal position in a nursing home still mean that they are human? Is it possible through sickness or disability to forfeit our humanity? The unusual circumstances today in which we sometimes find ourselves have forced us to re-examine our definition of a human being. And what has happened is that we have moved from an 'essential' view of a person to a more 'functional' one. We are seeing a disturbing trend developing where it's becoming more normal to consider someone as a person by virtue of what they can do rather than by what they are. This is a major shift.

### **To what extent are these changes being driven by ideology?**

People's outlook on life is certainly changing. As secular views of life such as naturalism have become more influential, we find that people tend to think in these newer categories. Now for naturalists, there are no real categories for things like 'essences', 'natures' and 'souls'. The typical naturalist really doesn't have much else besides a functional view of human beings. I think this is a big shift from the traditional view in the West that has always seen a spiritual dimension to human identity. However, naturalists tend

to reduce our humanity to an ability to perform certain critical functions. It is a very thin and one-dimensional approach to human existence.

**What part does the new discipline of socio-biology play in this change of values, and what have been its underlying assumptions about humanity?**

This is a huge area. But in a nutshell, socio-biology and the neurosciences are an extension of a naturalistic worldview into areas which traditionally have been the domain of theology. Scientists who work in these areas commonly ascribe to the brain the sorts of things that Christians would normally ascribe to the soul. Obviously, you don't have to go very far down this route to challenge the biblical and theistic view of a person. I have noticed in recent times that some Christian scholars are arguing that you can be a Christian and yet have a naturalistic view of the person. They don't see any real incompatibility between the two positions because they are teaching that the Bible doesn't demand souls.

**Are these scholars evangelicals?**

Some of them would probably claim to be. Some of the top folks at Fuller Seminary would fall into this category. People like Nancy Murphy and Joel Green come to mind. In fact, Joel Green has just written a new book, *Body, Soul and Human Life*. He is just one of many theologians who are trying to make a serious attempt at integrating the sciences into their view of theology. Personally, I think they have sacrificed too many of the essentials in their drive to integrate science with theology. I mean, does it follow logically that we can discount the existence of the soul simply because neuroscientists can explain through brain function what happens when people pray, or how religious services lift someone's mood? I don't see how it follows that their observations on brain function capture the whole transaction that's taking place between God and man. They can't rule out the spiritual presence of God in a person anymore than religious sociologists can explain the prevalence of religious belief in a community by certain social factors.

**Why do many of today's scientists feel that they are free to manipulate human nature?**

Well, many of them are obviously imbued with the idea of Francis Bacon that man is the master of nature. Then

again, there is there is the strong cultural drive towards personal autonomy. The combination of these ideas has led people to think that we have the capability to master not only the world but also our own nature and destiny.

I would also add that genetic technologies have encouraged the idea that the core of human identity is to be found in our genome. This is clearly a naturalistic manipulation of genetic formation. Nothing of the sort follows from our observation of the genome. Ultimately we are not reducible to anything that is physical.

So I would be very careful about anyone who thinks that he can put all your genetic information on a CD and say, "Hey, this is you!" That's ludicrous.

“Is it possible through sickness or disability to forfeit our humanity?”

**How is this new approach to human life affecting our approach to death and sickness?**

Now that people are starting to look at our humanity in a utilitarian or functional way, this has a serious effect on the way they approach the end of life. Many people now believe that they have the right to determine when and how they shall end their lives. It is the ultimate act of self-autonomy. Some states in the USA are making it possible for people to make these choices. For example, the State of Washington passed an assisted suicide initiative last November. The State of Oregon has one too. Florida is likely to follow because it has a large population of elderly people. A lot of people seem to think that assisted suicide is a win-win situation. Patients think that they are put out of their suffering while society believes that it has saved itself some money on useless medical care. What is there not to love about that?

Well, what is not to love about this is that there is a steady trend from voluntary to non-voluntary assistance for suicide. This is now well-documented in places in Europe where euthanasia has been legalised for some time. What really worries me about this type of legislation is that once it gets enacted, it is very difficult to police. I mean, how

will you know that the procedures were followed if there is some collusion in bringing about a person's death?

**The pressure to introduce euthanasia shows no sign of abating. What do you think is going to happen in the future?**

I think that there are likely to be increasing calls for its legalisation. There are enormous demographic pressures building as a result of a significant increase of elderly people. The one encouraging sign as the push to legalise euthanasia gains ground is that we are finding that the better we are at treating pain, the less the incidence of requests for euthanasia or assisted suicide. It is a self-evident thing. If we control people's pain, then they want to live. What a surprise

that turns out to be! The reason people want assisted suicide is that they are afraid of dying in pain. The good news is that we are capable today of controlling virtually everyone's pain. It is interesting that the proponents of euthanasia never claim that suicide is the more merciful or compassionate approach to suffering. They always argue from the right to die and autonomy. They have to do this because, apart from a very small number of cases, it is possible to control most people's pain. So, there is just no need for euthanasia. In one sense it is a case of 'burning down the barn to roast the pig', as we would say in Texas. Euthanasia is a draconian solution for a real problem. There is no doubt that many people who are facing death are in real pain. That is a major problem. However, the answer is to control people's pain, not to put them to death.

*To be continued next issue.*

*Mr Peter Hastie is issues editor of Australian Presbyterian and minister of Ashfield Presbyterian Church, New South Wales.*

*This article originally appeared in Australian Presbyterian (June 2009), with whom we have a reciprocal agreement.*

---

# Ethics (2)

## Purity matters

### Richard D. Phillips

Writing to the church in Ephesus, the apostle Paul gives one of my favorite expressions for Christian holiness: “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph. 5:1-2). A little further down, Paul gives another priceless calling to Christian sanctification: “Walk as children of light” (Eph. 5:9). Here, in beautiful apostolic eloquence, we read both the *why* and the *how* of Christian holiness. First, and most important, is the *why*: as beloved children of God and in light of Christ’s sacrificial love for us.” In other words, we are to live pure and holy lives because of who we are to God, “children of light,” and in light of what God has done for us. Second, there is the *how*: by imitating God and by walking in love.

### The urgency of sexual purity

I consider Paul’s teaching in Ephesians 5 to be a natural place to consider the topic of sexual chastity in general, and among Christian singles in particular. My reason will be plain to anyone who simply reads the chapter. For, in contrast to his call to holiness, Paul cites a litany of examples of the lifestyles that should be unthinkable to God’s people, and at the head of the list Paul cites sexual impurity: “But sexual impurity and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints” (Eph. 5:3).

Why, many will wonder, does Paul rank sexual impurity so highly on his list of unthinkable sins? Some may argue that this must have been a special problem among the Ephesian church. The problem with such an answer is that in other lists of deadly sins Paul also places sexual sin first (see 1 Cor. 6:9-11, Gal. 5:19-21, and 1 Thess. 4:3). Likewise, Paul speaks with a passion against sexual sin in many of his letters, going so far as to urge the Corinthians not even to associate with professing Chris-

tians who were sexually immoral (1 Cor. 5:9-11). In his opinion – more than that, in God’s eyes as revealed to us through the apostle – sexual immorality is so antithetical to a Christian profession of faith that the two simply may not be considered together: “You may be sure of this,” he writes, “that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure... has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God” (Eph. 5:5).

Isn’t this a little over the top? Some may wonder. Isn’t greed a more harmful sin? Isn’t pride, as C.S. Lewis said, “the anti-God state of mind”? “We know it’s wrong to have sex out of marriage,” they say, “but is it so evil to share physical

among Christians of all kinds – especially singles – and a vital one for our witness to the gospel.

### Sex and dating

It is my experience, both as a Christian who married at age 32 and as a pastor to single Christians for several years, that very few Christian singles are engaged in the kind of rampant sexual immorality common to the broader culture. (If you are, then please read 1 Corinthians chapters 5-6, turn to our Savior for forgiveness, and seek the grace to repent, which he will surely give.) Instead, most sexual sin among Christians takes place in the context of dating.

“One typical mistake made by Christian singles is to ask “how far can we go?” The very question reveals a problem.”

love with another lonely soul?” In answering this, I want to steer clear of the idea that virginity is the sum and substance of all holiness. Most of us have known prideful, mean-spirited virgins who were anything but holy. Nor would I want to downplay the deadliness of sins of malice, on a personal or societal level. But if the Bible is to be our guide, we need to take note of the precedence given to sexual sin in the concern of the New Testament. According to the Bible, sexual immorality is a very grave sin that strikes at the core of the Christian spirit of holiness. Moreover, since sinful sensuality happens to be at the very heart of popular Western idolatry, our witness as followers of Christ amounts to little if we are unable to keep our lips from the poisonous trough from which the pagans are drinking. Therefore, the issue of sexual purity is a very grave one

There are a number of reasons why Christians fall into sexual sin during dating. First, many of us were converted as young adults, and the habits of sexual sin were long formed before we turned to Christ. Therefore, our ideas of dating simply involve a fair amount of sexual contact. I remember being this way when I was first converted: I somehow thought it was my duty to make out with my date! Second, single adults have sex drives just like everyone else. Therefore, as a dating relationship becomes more emotionally close the combination of sexual desires and emotional intimacy lead into sexual sin all too naturally (and quickly).

But a Christian approach to dating differs from the society’s approach most directly when it comes to sexuality. For most people today, intimacy means little more than having sex. Couples meet and

immediately begin enjoying sexual intercourse. To do otherwise is to go against nature, people widely assume. Moreover, they believe that sex will serve as a foundation for love. This goes a long way towards explaining why so many marriages, built on no stronger foundation than sexual thrills, end in divorce soon after the flames of passion have died down.

Similar thoughts influence Christian singles. They desire a love relationship, and it was God who gave this desire. Perhaps, they are tempted to think, this good cause will be advanced by cutting the corners on obedience to God's Word. Moreover, their sexual desires are screaming at them, especially in opportune settings. But while it may be understandable that people with no relationship to God fall into the trap of sexual sin, for Christians to dishonor their love relationship and to offend God's holy nature by falling into sexual sin should be unthinkable. God gave sex to be the servant of love and never its master. Therefore, sexual intimacy must always flow from the love commitment of marriage and from the holy love of our heavenly Father.

Christian singles fall into sexual sin for a number of reasons. They let their guard down. They toy with temptation. Some think it really isn't so great a sin. Others don't understand that their sinful sexual experiences will come with them into marriage. Still others – many others, I am afraid – enter into sexual sin in dating for the simple reason that they have not taken the disciplined steps needed for their relationship to remain sexually pure.

#### How far is too far?

One typical mistake made by Christian singles is to ask "How far can we go?" The very question reveals a problem (and the likelihood that the person asking it has already gone too far!). But since so many wonder, the most honest response to the Bible's teaching is "Not very far at all." Too many Christians believe that so long as full-scale sexual intercourse is resisted, other forms of sexual interaction are acceptable. But this is neither wise nor consistent with the Bible's teaching.

Consider 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, which says, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor; not in the passion of

lust like the Gentiles who do not know God." Does that sound like we should be asking, "How far can we go?" At the heart of such teaching is that Christians should cultivate, not undermine, bodily self-control. Christians are to treat their bodies as object of honor before the holy God who sees sexual intimacy as a high and holy gift. Should we toy with sex? Or would it not be much better to treat our own body – and the body of our dating partner – as a holy and honored object, not to be used for unconsecrated pleasure?

The message to Christian singles is clear: God calls you to abstain from sex, not to toy with it. In doing so, you cultivate a holy relationship that is focused on pleasing God – a characteristic that is essential to a godly marriage – and you give honor to yourself and your partner. If you find it necessary to engage in sex – and you may think that you do – then you should get married

(see 1 Cor. 7:9, which makes this very statement). Not that you should "just get married in order to have sex," but that you should devote yourself to the committed love that God desires to result in marriage, one of the benefits of which is the privilege of sexual union.

#### Calling Christian men!

Just as God calls the man to lead the marital relationship, God calls men to take the lead in the sexual purity of a dating relationship. In this way, a man begins love his potential bride as Christ loved the church, presenting her undefiled to the Lord (Eph. 5:25-27).

Lust is a major problem for single men, and many Christian men struggle with the temptations of pornography and other sexual sins. In this way, they dishonor God, grieve the Holy Spirit, and largely ruin their witness of the gospel before the world. According to the Bible, such men need to pursue

“The problem is that many single Christian men are simply too selfish, spiritually immature, or emotionally wounded to step forward into marriage.”



marriage with a godly woman (see again 1 Cor. 7:9). This is God's provision for a healthy sex drive.

The problem is that many single Christian men are simply too selfish, spiritually immature, or emotionally wounded to step forward into marriage. This is why huge numbers of godly women struggle with an unfulfilled, God-given desire for marriage. What God wants is for our sexual needs to motivate us toward marriage. So the answer for a great many single Christian men (not all, to be sure) is to move past their selfishness, immaturity, and pain, to trust God and seek his grace to offer committed male love and enter into the covenant relationship of marriage. Marriage is never a cure-all to our problems, but it happens to be God's particular provision for a man's need of companionship and sexual fulfillment. As God said back at the begin-

ning, "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18).

Godly male leadership is also essential during the dating process. A Christian man should be up-front about his commitment to sexual purity and should actively take steps to avoid sin. This means that he should take the lead in ensuring the couple is never in a situation that is calculated towards sexual sin. For instance, a Christian dating couple should never be alone for an extended period of time in one another's home. They should not go on over-night trips alone. A Christian man should always look upon his dating partner as his potential wife and mother of his children (or else the wife of another Christian brother, who may well be dating his potential wife at that very moment). He should put her spiritual well-being ahead of his own desires at all times. In other words, he should

love her. He should love his future marriage. He should love his future children. And, above all, he should love God and the witness of his gospel in our sexually-depraved world.

But how will a woman feel about this? She will feel cherished! She will feel safe. She will feel pure before God. And she will feel love for such a Christian man.

*Mr Richard D. Phillips is the Minister of Second Presbyterian Church, Greenville, South Carolina.*

*This article was first published in Reformation 21 and appeared in Australian Presbyterian (June 2009), with whom we have a reciprocal agreement.*

---

## World in focus

### 'Bring back catechisms'

Influential theologian J.I. Packer wants evangelical churches to recover catechesis, or systematic instruction in the essentials of the Christian faith. Packer believes the idea is an alien concept to most evangelicals.

"We are drifting back into paganism, that's the truth," he said in a lecture last month at St Matthew's Cathedral in Dallas, according to *The Living Church News Service*.

The 83-year-old Anglican priest has co-authored a new book, *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way*, in which he makes the case that catechesis is a non-negotiable practice of churches and is of no less value than Bible study and expository preaching.

In 2008, Packer and 10 other clergy left the Anglican Church of Canada over its liberal direction on scriptural authority and homosexuality. He joined the more conservative and orthodox Province of the Southern Cone in South America.

### The ungluing of multiculturalism?

After decades of popularity, "multiculturalism" seems to be becoming unstuck in various parts of the world. Recently, British Prime Minister David Cameron suggested that "state multiculturalism"

with its aim of uniting different groups under one banner, has actually created social enclaves. He said that with a lack of courage to demand adherence to shared values, societies are not uniting but rather fragmenting. He is not the first leader to say it. Last year, Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel similarly declared her country's version of "multiculturalism" was dead. Are they right? And if so, what vision will replace it?

The questions multiculturalism seeks to answer – questions of community and distinction, commonality and difference – are questions that will only thicken and amplify in the coming years. Diversity is a reality. What is a nation's identity made up by? What does it mean to be unified yet with such vastly different views of the world?

If only there were easy answers to this. Social enclaves can be very destructive, but forcing shared values can also be extremely bitter. Just days before David Cameron beckoned for shared values, a gay man in Uganda was beaten to death by a hammer. His name was David Kato Kisule. He was a campaigner for the presence and rights of gays in his country and was a despised figure. This dark side of "common values" – the side that endorses horrendous behaviour and squashes life and distinction – needs to

be equally strongly rejected.

What emerges from here will be extremely important and will shape the sort of societies our grandchildren live in. New Zealand's questions will not be the same as Britain's, but the threads of unity and diversity will play out here too. Common ground is needed to share a common life – the law is not enough to pull us together into a community – yet at the same time we need to be willing to let go of some of our preferences and wants for the sake of others. Australia's Immigration Minister has tipped his hat to both the "rights" and "responsibilities" that come with being a member of a society, in a speech defending his country's version of multiculturalism. Perhaps this dual notion will be a helpful starting point as we think about being New Zealanders in the coming years. The challenge ahead is a big one.

*Maxim Institute, No. 370, 4 March*

### British High Court upholds disqualification of Christian foster parent applicants that refused to promote homosexual practice to foster child

A 28 February 2011 article in *Christian Concern* titled "Breaking News: High Court Judgment Suggests Christian Beliefs Harmful to Children. Fostering Christians

Now in Doubt” announced that The High Court of the United Kingdom’s Royal Court of Justice on 28 February 2011 ruled that a Christian couple whose application to become foster parents was rejected by the Derby [England] City Council because the couple was not willing to promote homosexual practice to a young child. The High Court ruled that Christian beliefs on sexual ethics may be ‘inimical’ to children, and they implicitly upheld an Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) submission that children risk being ‘infected’ by Christian moral beliefs.

Christian Concern commented: “The nature of the judgment means that Christians who hold orthodox Christian views on the family, marriage and sexuality will continue to face difficulties in the fostering and adoption process and the Courts will not intervene to stop this from happening. In fact, the summary contained in the judgment sends out the clear message that orthodox Christian ethical beliefs are potentially harmful to children and that Christian parents with mainstream Christian views are not suitable to be considered as potential foster parents.”

Ekklesia, in a 1 March 2011 press release titled “Misleading Claims about Discrimination against Christians” countered: “The argument of the socially conservative Christians who are pursuing these cases to seek to demonstrate ‘discrimination’ or ‘persecution’ against Christians in the UK appears to rest on two false premises. The first is that theirs is the only Christian view and should be backed up by law, irrespective of the dignity and rights of others. The second is that discriminatory actions justified on religious grounds should provide immunity from fulfilling legal requirements over equality and justice towards others in the public sphere. That cannot be right. However, it does further confirm what we at Ekklesia have been arguing for many years – which is that the era of Christendom, when Christian institutions and beliefs might be given special privilege, regard and exemption denied to others, is now over. For many – including Christians who wish to recover the levelling core of the Gospel message – that is good news, not a threat.”

Colin Hart, director of The Christian Institute, in a 1 March 2011 press release titled “Christian Institute Responds to Foster Carer Court Case” commented: “The media has reported the case of Mr. and Mrs. Johns, a Christian couple

who faced difficulties in fostering children because of their views on homosexuality.

“Much media reporting on this issue, and even some comments by Christians, have, in our view, been wide of the mark.

“The impression has been given that the High Court has ruled that Christians who believe that homosexuality is morally wrong cannot foster children. This is not true. No such ruling has been made.

“Christians are deeply concerned about the dramatic comments by the High Court judges in this case. It is no surprise that national newspapers are drawing attention to what has been said. Derby City Council seems to want a gay rights test to assess any potential foster parent. If so, this Council will be encouraged by the High Court, but thankfully other councils are free to take a different view.

“Equality laws have closed down adoption agencies and are now being used against pillars of the community, such as Mr. and Mrs. Johns in this case and Mr. and Mrs. Bull, the Christian B&B owners from Cornwall.

“The last government created a conflict of laws. It is for Parliament to unscramble this conflict. That is what we want to see.

“Let us pray for those in authority that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. (1 Tim 2:1-4).

“Let us also pray that those in authority will defend vulnerable children and give them the opportunity to be raised in a loving home.”

+ *Christian Concern*

#### **Afghan Christian convert released after foreign intervention while another Afghan Christian convert remains jailed**

A 24 February 2011 Compass Direct News Service article titled “Afghan Convert Musa Released; Another Christian Still in Prison” reports that Afghan Christian Said Musa was released after nine months in prison and a pending death sentence for apostasy for the Muslim crime of leaving Islam. Musa left Afghanistan 21 February 2011 an unnamed country after visits from several Kabul embassy representatives offering asylum. Musa was heavily pressured by Afghan officials to renounce his Christian faith, but remained faithful. Musa wrote in a letter: “I told them I cannot [follow]

Islam. “I am Jesus Christ’s servant. They pushed me much and much. I refused their demands.”

Another Afghan Christian convert from Islam, Shoib Assadullah, has been in a holding jail in a district of Mazar-e-Sharif, in northern Afghanistan, since October 2010, after he was arrested for giving a New Testament to a man who reportedly turned him in to authorities. Assadullah wrote of his upcoming trial: “The court’s decision is most definitely going to be the death penalty for me, because the prosecutor has accused me under the Clause 139 of the criminal code which says, ‘If the crime is not cited in the criminal code, then the case has to be referred to the Islamic [S]haria law.’”

As of 27 February 2011, 1485 U.S. soldiers have been killed in the Afghanistan war officially called “Operation Enduring Freedom”.

+ *Compass Direct News Service*

#### **U.S. troops to receive battlefield homosexual sensitivity training**

A 24 February 2011 article by Rowan Scarborough in The Washington Times titled “Combat Troops to Get Gay Sensitivity Training: New Policy OK’d for Battlefield” reports that Sgt. Maj. Marvin Hill, the top enlisted U.S. soldier in Afghanistan, announced 24 February 2011 that sensitivity training on respect for homosexual rights will be brought to all 100,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan including those at forward bases fighting Taliban militants.

+ *The Washington Times*

#### **India to deport six Afghan Christian converts from Islam denied refugee status**

A 24 February 2011 Barnabas Aid report titled “Christians Facing Death in Afghanistan Denied Refuge” reports that six Afghan converts to Christianity from Islam who fled to India and applied for refugee status have been denied said status by India and now face deportation to Afghanistan, where they risk arrest and possible execution for apostasy under the country’s Sharia-based law.

Four of the six Afghan Christians had their 2008 baptisms shown on Afghan television in May 2010, which was followed by angry responses from Muslims and the Afghan government, including Deputy Secretary of the Afghan Lower House of Parliament Abdul Sattar Khawasi calling in parliament for the public execution of the Afghan Chris-

tians shown in the television program.

As of 27 February 2011, 1485 U.S. soldiers have been killed in the Afghanistan war officially called "Operation Enduring Freedom".

+ *Barnabas Aid*

### **Useful idiocy at the University of Central Florida**

A 24 February 2011 article by Ben Howe of RedState titled "University of Central Florida Hosts Terrorists & Forcibly Removes Their Detractors" reports that in November 2010, Randy McDaniels, a chapter leader of ACT! for America, attended a panel discussion at the University of Central Florida (UCF) where members of the Muslim Public Affairs Council were invited to speak.

Mr. McDaniels politely asked Jamal Badawi, a member of the Fiqh Council of North America (FCNA), about the Islamic law book "Reliance of the Traveler: The Classic Manual of Islamic Sacred Law Umdat Al-Salik," which contains the FCNA stamp of approval, whether Badawi endorses the laws in the book which call for the stoning and execution of apostates who leave Islam as well as all non-Muslims.

Mr. McDaniels then sat down and proceeded to listen to Badawi answer the question. Mr. McDaniels was then asked to leave, and then forcibly removed from the event by uniformed policemen.

On 25 February 2011, the UCF hosted a visit by Sirhaj Wahajj, an unindicted co-conspirator in the 1993 World Trade Center bombings.

Badawi, the November 2010 speaker, was a member of the Board of Directors of the Muslim Brotherhood in the United States, a Hamas front group, and was listed as a co-conspirator in the Holy Land Foundation Trial, otherwise known as the largest terrorism fundraising trial in American History

+ *RedState*

### **European court could rule traditional marriage benefits are discriminatory**

LUXEMBOURG, March 3 (C-FAM) Legal experts warn that a European court is on the verge of deciding that Germany's privileged legal status for traditional marriage violates European Union law.

An Advocate General for the European Court of Justice, which is the highest court in matters of European Union law, issued an opinion to the court which states that same-sex couples must have access to the same employment benefits as married couples in every EU

state, regardless of a state's constitutional laws. While the opinion of the Advocate General, one of eight that assist the court, is not binding on the court, the opinions are almost always followed.

*Terrence McKeegan, J.D.*

### **Sexual orientation" battle returns to Human Rights Council**

GENEVA, March 10 (C-FAM) The international movement to include homosexual behavior and identity within a new, specially protected class of rights is once more setting its sights on the UN Human Rights Council.

The EU plans on introducing a joint statement here similar to a 2008 EU-led declaration calling for "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" as protected non-discrimination categories that was submitted to the UN General Assembly and signed by 66 countries. That 2008 declaration was met with a counter statement that was introduced the same day and signed by nearly 60 countries, as well as separate statements critical of the EU declaration that were issued by Russia, Belarus, and the Pope.

*Terrence McKeegan, J.D.*

### **Chile and Pope call on UN Commission to protect the unborn child**

NEW YORK, March 10 (C-FAM) A stunned UN audience listened as a Chilean diplomat told them "Respecting human life is the key to reducing maternal mortality," and rebuked those who would promote legalised abortion as a solution to preventing maternal mortality.

The Chilean spoke at the UN Commission on the Status of Women, an annual two-week conference that draws scores of abortion advocates. Even though the theme of this year's Commission was education, science and technology, abortion still dominated much of the debate.

*By Lauren Funk*

### **Hate in Jerusalem**

A Christian of Jewish origin who has been attacked on the streets in Jerusalem four times because of his faith in Christ is seeking police protection. Jerusalem resident Yossi Yomtov said police have been slow to investigate hate crimes against him by youths wearing skullcaps. In two of the attacks a youth employed pepper spray and stun gun shocks, he said.

"This young man cursed me for my belief in Christ," Yomtov told *Compass*. "He used ugly curses and spoke in highly

abusive language." He complained that although police said they would investigate there has been no progress. Police in Jerusalem declined to comment.

*Compass Direct*

### **Scot appeals to Europe**

A Christian preacher in Scotland has won the right to have his case referred to the European Court of Justice following an accusation that a state-supported radio station aimed at the Asian community discriminated against him because of his Christian beliefs and views.

According to the UK-based Christian Legal Centre, Church of Scotland minister Mahboob Masih was a volunteer presenter on radio station Awaz FM. His services were terminated after six years behind the microphone following a debate on air about the uniqueness of Christianity. This led to a phone-in discussion that angered the Muslim management of the community radio station.

The station argued he could not appeal to an employment tribunal because he was not an employee. CLC stated: "In a ground-breaking decision, the Reverend Masih's case will be referred for a preliminary ruling to the European Court of Justice [in Luxembourg] to decide if volunteers are protected by anti-discrimination legislation. If upheld, the consequences for employers in their dealings with volunteers who are open about their faith could be very significant."

In its media release, CLC said: "In the radio show, Rev. Masih had spoken about the Christian view on the uniqueness of Christ and this was the first time that many Muslims in Glasgow would have heard about the Christian faith. Rev. Masih simply responded to questions raised by listeners, in response to a Muslim speaker, Zakir Naik. Rev. Masih discussed the religious difference between Christianity and Islam. It was a religious debate under free speech principles and no intemperate language was used."

Management made him apologise on air, and also demanded he apologise at a mosque, but Mr Masih refused the second demand.

Employment Judge Raymond Williamson ruled on August 26 that the case should be referred to the European Court of Justice. He said: "I ask myself the question, 'can it be right that the (radio station), a creature of statute, partly funded out of public funds and set up with the aim of promoting social cohe-

sion, should be able to discriminate on religious grounds against the volunteer staff it is obliged to engage as a condition of its licence?"

*Assist*

### **Florida judge uses sharia law to determine ruling in a civil suit by former mosque trustees**

A 21 March 2011 article by William R. Levesque in the St. Petersburg Times titled "Judge Orders Use of Islamic Law in Tampa [Florida] Lawsuit over Mosque Leadership" reports that a 3 March 2011 ruling by Hillsborough, Florida Circuit Judge Richard Nielsen, in a civil suit by two former mosque trustees concerning the disposition of US\$2.2 million paid to the mosque by Florida for mosque property used in a road project, says that the judge's decision about one crucial issue in the lawsuit "will proceed under Ecclesiastical Islamic Law," i.e. Sharia Law. The judge said that he wants to determine whether the litigants properly followed Koranic teachings by obtaining an arbitration decision from an Islamic scholar.

The attorney for the mosque has appealed the judge's decision, saying: "The mosque believes wholeheartedly in the Koran and its teachings. They certainly follow Islamic law in connection with their spiritual endeavours. But with respect to secular endeavours, they believe Florida law should apply in Florida courts."

+ *St. Petersburg Times*

### **UK judge overturns Advertising Standards Authority ruling against Sandown Free Presbyterian Church in Ireland newspaper ad deemed "homophobic"**

A 22 March 2011 BBC article titled "Judge Overturns ASA Sodomy Ad Ban Decision" reports that a United Kingdom High Court judge has ruled against an Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) 2008 decision that a full page ad titled "The Word of God against Sodomy" placed in the *News Letter* by the Sandown Free Presbyterian Church in Ireland (FPCI) in the summer of 2008 was "homophobic" and could not again be published in the same manner. The ad was placed by the Sandown FPCI ahead of an August 2008 "Gay Pride" parade in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

The ruling said: "The applicant's religious views and the Biblical scripture which underpins those views no doubt cause offence, even serious offence,

to those of a certain sexual orientation. Likewise, the practice of homosexuality may have a similar effect on those of a particular religious faith. But Article 10 (of the European Convention on Human Rights) protects expressive rights which offend, shock or disturb. Moreover, Article 10 protects not only the content and substance of information but also the means of dissemination since any restriction on the means necessarily interferes with the right to receive and impart information. The fact that the advertisement did not condone

and was not likely to provoke violence, (it) contained no exhortation to other improper or illegal activity, (and) constituted a genuine attempt to stand up for their religious beliefs and to encourage others to similarly bear witness. Whilst such views and scriptural references may be strongly disdained and considered seriously offensive by some, this does not justify the full scope of the restrictions contained in the impugned determination."

+ *BBC*

## **A Young Earth?**

If you ask most people the question: "How old is the earth?", they will most likely reply "billions of years". However, this idea is a relatively new one. Until a few hundred years ago, the earth was thought to be thousands, not billions of years old.

In the late 18th century, geologist James Hutton wrote that the history of our globe must be explained by what can be seen to be happening now. His starting point was that "no powers are to be employed that are not natural to the globe". Following Hutton, scientists like William Thomson (Lord Kelvin) calculated the age of the earth to be many millions of years. The development of radiometric dating methods (e.g. carbon-14, potassium-argon) later pushed the estimated age of the earth out to about 4.5 billion years.

So doesn't that prove that the earth is old? No, not necessarily. There are some major problems with radiometric dating; an analysis technique based on the physical process whereby a 'parent' isotope decays to form a 'daughter' element. A number of untestable assumptions are made to date rocks (e.g. a constant rate of decay, an isolated system in which no parent or daughter element can be added or lost, and a known amount of the daughter element present initially). By adjusting these assumptions, radiometric dating may be used to simulate 'proof' for a wide range of ages.

There is an old idea that the earth is actually relatively young; probably less than 10,000 years. Before dismissing this notion as utterly ridiculous (along with a flat earth, or flying unicorns), pause for a moment to consider the sense in this theory.

Current earth processes and rock formations can be accurately and reasonably explained by a young earth which underwent a global cataclysmic flooding. This major tectonic and climatic event would account for a radical change in the structure of all land masses and ocean basins and in the composition of the atmosphere.

The biggest problem many scientists have with the young-earth theory is not that it doesn't explain what we observe today, but that it simply doesn't give enough time. Time for billions of years of chance evolution to produce men and women from microbes. The theory of evolution and the theory of a young earth cannot both be true.

Wouldn't it be helpful in deciding between these two ideas if we could hear from a person who was actually there when the earth was first formed? Well, we can. His name is God and He has written down in the Bible exactly what happened at the beginning.

### **David Waldron**

*Reformed Church of Hastings*

*This article appeared in the Hawke's Bay Today, Saturday, 11th December, 2010*

# Summer School of Theology

## Part one

What a marvellous time of fellowship, learning and singing! The Summer School of Theology held in Palmerston North over Wellington Anniversary Weekend of 20 to 24 January was a great success on several levels.

The line-up of speakers was truly impressive: the Rev. Dr Michael Flinn of the Reformed Church of Palmerston North; the Rev. Dr Paul Archbald of the Reformed Church of Silverstream; Dr Sally

Davey from Rakaia (Reformed Church of Dovedale); the Rev. David Waldron of the Reformed Church of Hastings; the Rev. Hans Vaatstra of the Reformed Congregation meeting in Wanganui; and Iwan Baaman, the recent vicar of Silverstream.

These dear saints delivered a total of 21 lectures over 3½ days (reserving the Lord's Day for worship). The Reformed Churches of New Zealand clearly have

an abundance of qualified people to edify the Christian community, not just by way of the ministry of the Word of God through preaching, but also in lecturing on a range of theologically-related topics with a very strong practical application.

Attendees as well as speakers all benefited, and commented on the benefits, of such an extended time of fellowship together. This included not just the ordained but members from Reformed Churches from as far away as Christchurch and the North Shore as well as a number of people from outside our denomination. **The cross-section of ages was also impressive: from little children to young adults to newly marrieds, parents, middle aged and retired ... all groups were represented.** Many recognise that the Reformed faith is a veritable gold mine of theology, and this School is one way of opening this treasure chest and sharing some of this incredible spiritual wealth around. Each one of the speakers also expressed great enthusiasm for the opportunity to speak on their assigned topics, and for their hope that the School of Theology would be repeated next year.

Another vein of this gold mine is the Psalter Hymnals we have. Before and after each session and between lectures we sang from either the old blue Psalter or the new Provisional Psalter. It was delightful and uplifting every time, and the Christ-honouring singing was very refreshing indeed.

The lecture contents were excellent and are described elsewhere. They are available on DVD and MP3 format, and you must get them. But to get the benefit of the fellowship and interaction, you need actually to be there. Lord willing, we will see the School of Theology repeated in Palmerston North in 2012. See you there!



*Dr Sally Davey at the Summer School of Theology.*



*Silverstream's vicar, Mr Iwan Baaman at the Summer School of*

# Is the Mass really a “cursed idolatry”?

## Klaas Stam

From the time of our youth, we have become accustomed to the Heidelberg Catechism’s rather crass statement that the mass is an “*accursed idolatry*” (LD 30). Is this kind of terminology still correct in a kinder, gentler society?

Let’s face it, idolatry is a grievous sin. Idolatry is what finally sent the people of Israel in exile and captivity. But that was in a different era and circumstance. Should we still today dismiss the entire Roman Catholic Church? Is it fair to judge the Pope? Have we properly understood what it is exactly that this church teaches? Has the Reformation gone too far and outlived its usefulness?

In case you think I am simply imagining things, please note the following. Our sister church in Barneveld-Voorhuizen has sent a letter to the next synod of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (to be convened in 2011). The church at Barneveld will ask the synod to appoint a study committee to determine whether Question and Answer 80 of the Heidelberg should be revised.

There is a precedent, of course. In 2006 the Christian Reformed Church in North America placed the statement about a cursed idolatry in brackets with a footnote that the catechism’s position does not truly represent what Rome really teaches and therefore is wrong. I found all this information in *Nederlands Dagblad*, Thursday, March 25, 2010.

It looks like some Reformed churches are back on the road to Rome. Gone are the days when the Pope was considered to be the *anti-Christ*. This is the position of the Westminster Standards. But the current Pope is really a nice fellow, says the pastor of the church at Barneveld. The Pope states many things nowadays that Protestants can wholeheartedly agree with.

## The Council of Trent is to blame?

Where in the world did this harsh kind of language come from? There are those who explain that the language of the catechism in Lord’s Day 30 is not original. The first edition of the Heidelberg published in 1563 did not call the mass

an accursed idolatry. It was inserted only after the Roman Council of Trent cursed the protestant heretics. Rome first used the word “*anathema*” (the Greek word for “cursed,” Galatians 1:9).

It was kind of like a knee-jerk reaction. Anathema, eh? You call *us* idolaters? Well, we will do the same and call *you* idolaters. It’s like tit for tat, typical sixteenth century radicalism. But the Reformed churches are now beyond the stage of name-calling. This is a tolerant era. We should take the high road and revise the dear old Heidelberg. It’s like removing warts from a loved one.

I mention this so that you will not be caught unawares by this so-called gentle spirit that is again wafting through some churches. The Apostle Paul was not so gentle in his time when he wrote, “You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?” When the very heart of the gospel is at stake it is not a time to soft-peddle the truth of Scripture.

as the real body of Christ, while in fact it is only bread. Since the bread, in Romanists eyes, has become God, it must be accorded worship. But bread is a created entity and therefore the creature is “adored” above the Creator who alone is to be worshipped. *Worship of created things is precisely what idolatry is all about.*

The Lord writes the following about this process, “They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and *worshipped and served created things* rather than the Creator – who is forever praised. Amen” (Romans 1:26). Idolatry is always a serving of creature rather than the Creator!

## The fox and the henhouse

Roman Catholic leaders soon answered that the host is not worshiped, but only *adored*. In reality, however, this is untrue. Adoration is practiced and becomes evident in worship of the host, which is

“When the very heart of the gospel is at stake it is not a time to soft-peddle the truth of Scripture.”

## Is the catechism wrong?

In our subscription form we declare that the Three Forms of Unity fully agree with the Word of God. Still, if the catechism is wrong, it must be revised. There is not one creedal document that is infallible. Brackets and footnotes have been used before, for example with respect to Article 36 of the Belgic Confession. That article was said to go too far and therefore the offensive phrase was sidelined.

But is the catechism correct in expressing “anathema” at the Popish mass? Through the process of transubstantiation (the changing of bread and wine into the actual physical the body and blood of Christ) the bread and wine become godly and merit worship. Parishioners therefore worship the host

the physical body of Christ. The church at Barneveld asked the Roman Catholic bishop from Friesland and Groningen to advise them as to how these things are experienced today among Romanists.

The bishop explained that in the mass the sacrifice is not *repeated*, as Reformed people wrongly think, but it is *re-presented*. The host makes visible what Christ’s sacrifice means, just as Reformed churches do in their Lord’s Supper celebration. I find the bishop’s contribution very diplomatic but also extremely dangerous.

Asking the Frisian bishop for advice in this matter is like asking the fox to guard the henhouse. While we may be positive about some developments in the Roman Catholic Church, the basic doctrine that leads to an accursed idolatry



Altar, St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City

“Worship of created things is precisely what idolatry is all about.”

is still fully in place: is Christ physically present in bread and wine, or not? Rome and Reformation continue to be miles apart and the two churches have principally great differences in doctrine that lead to difference in liturgy and worship. Rome does not preach the gospel of full redemption by faith in Jesus Christ through his one sacrifice made once for all on the cross.

The catechism may be somewhat crass in Lord's Day 30, but it is also accurate. Rome teaches a false doctrine like the Judaists in the Apostle Paul's time. The exact terms and particular emphases may be different, but it's the same old story. We worship what we have in our hands and not what is in heaven above.

I find all this a distressing development in our sister churches. Sometimes it goes as follows: a church rejects orthodoxy and becomes a prey of false ecumenism. Before you know it, you are back in the suffocating bosom of the old mother church of Rome.

Fortunately the Classis Harderwijk

where the church of Barneveld is located has not (yet) put the item on its agenda. Classis first wants to see what the ramifications of the Barneveld proposal are and how a possible decision affects the manner in which the confessions function in the churches. It is commendable that the regional churches have raised some red flags.

Personally I hope that this proposal never gets farther than the consistory itself. I fully believe that the consistory of Barneveld has the best of intentions. But that is not good enough, when it comes to the heart of what it means to be Reformed.

*Mr Klaas Stam is minister emeritus of the Canadian Reformed Church at Hamilton, Ontario [cstam@sourcecable.net](mailto:cstam@sourcecable.net)*

*This article first appeared as an editorial in the Clarion, The Canadian Reformed Magazine, with whom we have a reciprocal agreement.*

## Focus on home

Harriet Haverland

# Gleanings from our bulletins...

## CANTERBURY EARTHQUAKE

### PRAYER

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” Philippians 4:6

### FROM THE PASTOR

**Bishopdale: Andrew de Vries and Robert van Wichen** – Many people

are asking whether the ground underneath our feet in Christchurch can still be trusted; another earthquake occurs; a new fault line is discovered. Another tragedy has unfolded in our city. What can you trust in at a time like this; the ground under your feet; the buildings in which you take refuge? The precautions you've taken to prepare since the last earthquake? There is only one sure place we can put our trust, and that is in the Lord God Almighty. He alone is our refuge and our strength, an ever present help in times of trouble. We can trust in Him, because He is a gracious and compassionate God who watches over us through this trial. We can trust in Him because He is the all wise God who is working out His purposes even though we can't fathom what they are. We can trust in Him, because He is the God who holds us in His ever loving

grip. The earth can shake and roll and rattle, but be assured, nothing will shake us from His grip.

**Christchurch: Tim Rott** – The evening before we were to leave to come to you, we learned of the horrific tragedy in Christchurch. The news reports, videos and photos showed the devastating damage throughout the city. I was now faced with a decision – do we leave or do we stay? After prayer and consideration, we knew that our home was with you... In our modern age, we have come to believe that we can control everything around us to our advantage. We do not have the power to control what man calls the “forces of nature.” Earthquakes come unexpectedly. Hurricanes or tropical cyclones come with regularity. Volcanoes erupt and spew out molten lava. We understand the science of these events, but we cannot change

them. These “disasters” affect the righteous and the unrighteous. God’s people are not immune to these events. What is our response when they happen? What should be our response? As sinful human beings, we naturally flee from danger. Feel pain, grieve and weep. But in the end, we know that God is sovereign and in control of all things. His purpose is accomplished in the hurricane, flood, volcanic eruption, and the earthquake. While these things may be God’s judgment upon a sinful world, God’s people have assurances from His Word that these things are for His glory and our good (Rom. 8:28-30).

**Dovedale: André Holtslag** – Once again, the Lord has graciously spared our lives! In every respect, God has again ‘passed over’ us in terms of death, injury, and serious damage to property. What a joy and privilege that we can gather together to worship our God and Father. But even as we do, we are very conscious of the many who have lost loved ones or who are anxiously awaiting news of those unaccounted for. Many of us will know some of those who have died. Our prayer is that the Lord will add His blessing to the work of rescue teams and keep them safe in their work. We also give thanks for all those who are tirelessly working in search and rescue, civil defence, welfare and support, and all areas of government. We are also conscious of the fact that many angry fingers are pointing to heaven, while the hands of many others are busy trying to demonstrate the love of Christ. Hopefully, each of us has been making good use of our safety and well-being to help out with others. The need for able-bodied helpers to render physical help in the tidy up is obvious, and the need for comfort and counsel is also clear. If you are not sure how you can help, please talk to our deacons. May the Lord cause the gospel of peace to shine through the cloud of dust and grief.

## RELIEF EFFORTS

As the weeks pass and things settle back to ‘normal,’ needs will become more apparent and fewer people may be available to meet those needs. We wish to start thinking now about ways we can help and bring hope to people who are struggling.

**Need a break?** The past weeks have been challenging for many in Christchurch. If you need to have a break and get away from it all for a bit, we have had a number of offers of free accom-

modation from around the country. If needed, there may also be funds available to cover the cost of travel.

### Hot Drinks Run to Army/Police Cordons:

We have been delivering coffee, milo, tea and soup to the police and army personal around the cordons in town. The nights can be very long and cold when they have been doing 12 hour shifts for the last couple of weeks so the delivery of the hot drinks has been very well received. It would be great to carry this on as long as we can.

**Silt Digging:** With most of the university students and school students back into full time study, silt digging has stopped during the week. We are planning a Saturday morning silt clearing team to continue this work.

## CHURCH BUILDING

**Christchurch:** The church building complex has been “yellow stickered”, meaning that access is limited to “only for essential reasons”. The Northern apex above the pulpit, parts of the back wall, side entrance and floor in the hall need attention. Engineers have described the damage as “low danger”. It may be months before the work can be executed. The building was built in the sixties and as such does not conform to the more stringent 1976 building code. Session believes that it would be prudent to upgrade the building to conform to this code, and engineers will be instructed to include this option in their report. After worshipping in the Bishopdale Church at 1pm Dovedale and Bishopdale congregations for the evening we are now able to worship in the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Papanui with services at 11am and 5pm.

## CHURCHES HELP EACH OTHER

**World Development and Relief Committee Australia:** We resolved to approach the Bishopdale congregation to suggest that the QLD flood money be retained for distribution in Christchurch. The reason for doing this is because we have had a good response to the flood situation from the CRCA churches. The gift from Bishopdale was very encouraging for us. We really appreciate that you expressed your love across the Tasman in this way. We now feel that the needs in your community are even greater. We would be delighted that the money intended for Qld be now used in Christchurch. We are sure the origi-

nal donors will concur with this course of action.

## QUOTABLE “QUOTES”

“Sin is not only an offence which needs forgiving; it is a pollution which needs cleansing.” *Eric Alexander*

“Our Lord had only one desire, and that was to do the will of His Father, and to have this desire is characteristic of a disciple.” *Oswald Chambers*

“I am sure I have derived more real benefit and permanent strength and growth in grace, and every precious thing, from the furnace of affliction, than I have ever derived from prosperity.” *C.H. Spurgeon*

## BIRTHS

**De Vries, Elias Frederick Hezekiah** – a son born to Wietse and Helen – 7 March (Wanganui)

**Jochem, Jack Derek** – a son born to Dave and Simone – 21 February (Bishopdale)

**Newton, James Edward** – a son born to Ron and Tani – 3 March (Oamaru)

**Nugteren, Inge Andrea** – a daughter born to Ryan and Ineke – 1 March (Hastings)

**Steenkamp, Analeen** – a daughter born to Albert and Janet – 15th March (North Shore)

## PROFESSION OF FAITH

**Christchurch:** Ashleigh Alberts

**Dovedale:** William Maffey

## DEATHS

**Allers, Dennis** was called home to be with the Lord on Thursday 3rd March. Our heart felt sympathy and condolences are with Louise and her family. (Hukanui)

**Vanderpyl, Dick** – On 4 March the Lord took home our brother Dick Vanderpyl at the age of 84. Dick lived in Christchurch for the last 10 years or so. He had many gifts and used them unstintingly in the service of the Lord. He served for many years as stated clerk of the RCNZ and as elder in churches where he was a member. He wrote “Trust and Obey”, a history of the RCNZ and various other books. Our sympathy goes out to his children and grandchildren as well as other extended family and his friends, both here in Hamilton and elsewhere. We pray that the Lord may comfort them in their grief. We do rejoice however, with

them, that he is now in glory with our Lord. Praise be to Him. (Bishopdale)

## MINISTERS AND CHURCH WORKERS

**Jan-Erik Stolte:** The Deputies for Students for the Ministry are requesting applications for a Vicariate for Jan-Erik Stolte beginning around July of this year.

**Buckland's Beach:** The Session believes that there is room for another full-time worker in our fellowship alongside of those already engaged in part-time (paid) ministry. It was unanimously concluded we need someone who is a fully trained and ordained pastor (minister of the Word and Sacraments). One of the factors to take into consideration is that, in just over two year's time, our pastor is eligible for retirement.

**Palmerston North:** A warm welcome to Rev. Nathan Ketchen who is being considered by session for the position of second minister at Palmerston North.

**Pukekohe:** This morning we welcome Rev. Arthur Palmer who will be leading the service and preaching God's Word. Rev. and Mrs. Palmer have been worshipping with us regularly for a while. Rev Palmer trained for the ministry at the RTC in Geelong and served as the minister of the Reformed Church of Mangere from 1969 to 1980; after which he served as the minister of St Marks Presbyterian Church in Mangere until his retirement. He still teaches courses at Grace Theological College and is on the board of GTC.

**Oamaru:** We welcome Rev. Dick and Mrs. Mary Wynja to Oamaru. Dick is a retired minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. He was born in the Netherlands and emigrated from there in 1951 to the US. After graduating from Calvin College, he taught in a Christian School for ten years and then studied at Westminster Seminary. He served as pastor of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Thornton, Colorado, for 28 years and then officially retired. Since then he has been able to serve part time in many congregations both here in New Zealand and in the States.

## EVANGELISM

**Wellington:** The session is looking for a group of volunteers interested in outreach and evangelism to help facilitate and encourage the congregation in reaching out to those in need of the

gospel. No previous experience required, just enthusiasm, a desire to spread God's word and love to those who need it, or to support those who are engaged in the great commission Christ gave to His church.

## MISSIONS

**Silverstream:** The Missions Steering Committee, together with the Session, remain committed to trying to send someone to teach full-time in Mbale. Please remember both the committee in their work, and the mission run by the OPC in Mbale.

## AUCKLAND WOMEN'S PRESBYTERIAL

A fantastic day was enjoyed by everyone who attended last Saturday. We had great weather and a wonderful atmosphere. The morning began at 9.30am where we were welcomed with a hot cuppa, and a delicious morning tea. Judith Popping was the guest speaker. Her topic was 'Soul Food' and based on John 6:25-59, was a great blessing and encouraged us spiritually to continue in our walk with our Lord and daily feed on His word and talk with Him through prayer. Judith reminded us of the importance of our personal relationship with Christ, the importance of relying on Him moment by moment in our daily walk with Him. We were encouraged to spend much time in His presence, being still, and feeding on Him and His Word. The minutes from 2010 were read and we heard the reports from all the local churches about what is happening in their ladies' fellowship groups. We raised \$900.00 for the Tabitha Charitable Foundation which has been established by Marjorie VanderPyl and will assist the poor and needy in Christchurch who are struggling after the earthquake. After a delicious lunch, we participated in a craft; covering notebooks, and decorating pens. Afternoon tea was available to close the day together. 98 ladies attended. A big thank-you to all involved.

## ACTIVITIES

**Dovedale:** We were scheduled to be together for our annual camp at Glenroy. However, because the venue is being used for earthquake response and support staff for the foreseeable future, as are most other venues around about, Session has decided that there will be no camp this year. However, we would still like to have a camp-type weekend

of events to enable us to fellowship together and talk about evangelism. We are working on securing a marquee, probably out West at the home of one of our rural members, that could host us for a Friday evening and Saturday for activities, meals, games, and devotions/talks.

**Dunedin:** For the first time in 30 years the Reformed Church of Dunedin has a Cadet group.

**Hamilton:** The Youth Group would like to host a dinner event for the older generation along with the younger generation of our churches. To make it more fun we would like all those from the older generation to dress-up as young people, and all the youngies to dress up as oldies! Use your imagination, be creative, go over-board if you wish!

**Hukanui:** We are going to start an Office Bearers Training Course that is open for all the youth and men in the church. If the wives want to attend and support their husbands then you too are welcome. The aim is to train and equip potential future elders and deacons for Hukanui Church.

## Short Report of the Auckland Presbytery Meeting held 25 February 2011 in Pukekohe

The meeting was opened by the Rev. Michael Willemse on behalf of the calling church, Hamilton, whereupon the Rev. John Haverland took the chair.

A special welcome was extended to the Rev. Dr Tim Rott of Christchurch. Dr Rott was en route to Christchurch but due to the earthquake in the past week, he was staying in Pukekohe until suitable accommodation could be found in Christchurch.

The Church Order, Article 47 questions were asked of the Bucklands Beach and Hamilton congregations. A few points of interest: Bucklands Beach reported 12 professions of faith and 4 baptisms arising largely from the LABS (Language Assisted Bible Studies) groups ministry. They also reported on discussions about the possibility of calling a second minister to work particularly amongst the Asian portion of the congregation. Hamilton reported with thanks that a number of younger couples have

settled in the church and that a few of these women were expecting babies. They also gave thanks for a number of young people professing their faith; but also noted that there are quite a number of non-attending baptised members with whom they are seeking to deal pastorally.

Since, in God's providence, Dr. Tim Rott was present, the chairman invited him to introduce himself and tell the delegates a little about his background.

Avondale requested approval for five songs for use in worship. After some discussion, these were approved.

Bucklands Beach has decided to extend Craig van Echten's vicariate for three months. The Presbytery set a date

for his preliminary examination of 13 May 2011, at RPC Bucklands Beach.

The Rev. D van Garderen reported on behalf of the National Diaconate Committee. He gave a brief outline of the situation in Christchurch following the earthquake. It was noted with thanks that there had been no injury or loss of life amongst our churches there. The churches in Christchurch have been active in seeking to minister to their community, and at this stage, do not believe they need outside financial assistance. The Rev. van Garderen also advised that the triennial deacons' conference will be hosted by Avondale on 6 & 7 May.

There was a positive report from the youth liaison and of the arrangements

being made for the Easter camp and the National Camp in 2012. Br John Kaijser from Pukekohe was reappointed as youth liaison. The Rev. D van Garderen reported that the Overseas Mission Board will be having its AGM shortly, and that he will attend on behalf of the Auckland Presbytery. The Revs Dirk van Garderen and John Rogers were reappointed as synodical examiners for the Auckland Presbytery.

The Presbytery went into closed session to discuss some pastoral matters.

The meeting closed with a time of open prayer.

**Reporter: Rev. Michael Willemse**

---

## Ministers in focus

### Mr Andrew de Vries



I have had the privilege of serving in the Reformed Church of Bishoptdale since September 2009. My Aussie accent doesn't come through that clearly on paper, but I hail from that great continent to your west. I used to call Brisbane home, where I was a member of the Reformed Church of Inala. It was there that I met my wife, Christina, and we have now been married for nearly 10yrs. Following my studies at University where I completed a BSc (Hons), I worked in the field of workplace rehabili-

tation. During this time I started studying part-time at the Reformed Consortium of Colleges (RCC).

With the encouragement of my Session, and in order to test my gifts, I commenced full time studies at the RCC where I completed a Bachelor of Theology from 2005-2007. I then went to the Reformed Theological College in Geelong where I studied for a year completing the subjects that make up the 'Reformed Distinctives'. This was a very profitable time in terms of develop-

ing my preaching, fostering friendships with 'reformed' brothers and sisters, and being able to participate in other local reformed churches. My Vicariate year was spent in the CRC of Langwarrin, in the outer south east of Melbourne. When I left college I was quite aware of my limitations, but upon commencing work in a congregation it became even clearer how much I needed the wisdom and strength of the Lord.

Following the completion of my vicariate, I accepted a call to serve in Bishoptdale. It has been a great blessing to minister alongside Rev Robert van Wichen and to be received so lovingly by the congregation here. There have been many firsts during this time (weddings, baptisms, professions of faith, earthquakes!) and it has been a great privilege to minister to and with God's people here.

The Lord has graciously given us three children, Josie (nearly 5), Miriam (2.5), and Jeremy. Jeremy was born four weeks ago, so we are really starting to feel like we are 'kiwis'. Our family enjoys going to the beach (especially beaches where the water temp is 19deg plus), sampling food from different cultures, and I am trying to cultivate in our family an enjoyment of cricket (i.e. real cricket – test matches). We also enjoy reading. We look forward to continuing to serve the Lord in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand with all His people here.

## Book in focus

### ***Christians Get Depressed Too: Hope and Help for Depressed People***

by David P. Murray. Reformation Heritage Books, 2010.

**Leo de Vos**

Busy pastors are often on the lookout for books that will give straightforward help to hurting people. So when I read a long interview with the author of this book in *Christian Renewal*, I ordered the book. David Murray, former pastor in the Continuing Presbyterian Church of Scotland and current professor of Puritan Reformed Seminary in Grand Rapids, by writing this little book, has provided the church with a gem. Murray writes as an experienced pastor who served churches in the Hebrides, an area with high rates of depression and suicide. His findings from other researchers indicate that one in five people experience depression, and one in ten experiences a panic attack; suicide is the leading cause of violent deaths world-wide. Recently, I heard of a godly, reformed minister who suffers from a bi-polar disorder.

The value of this book lies in that Murray treats depression as a complex condition, because sin has affected our minds, bodies and souls. He rejects the causes of depression as all physical or all spiritual but brings a Biblically balanced approach to its treatment. He spends some time critiquing the nouthetic counselling approach pioneered by Jay Adams assessing both strengths and weaknesses. Murray states:

*My main concern with the nouthetic counseling movement is its assumption that behind almost every episode of depression is personal sin .... We would never take this view (sinful cause/spiritual solution) when counselling people with cancer, strokes, broken legs, diabetes, or Alzheimer's. As Reformed Christians, our default position is that these physical problems are most likely the result of living as fallen creatures in a fallen world. Why should our default position with brain problems be any different?*

*Are we saying that the brain, the most complex organ in our body is somehow exempt from the effects of the Fall? .... Why should we always have to conclude that brain disorders are always the result of personal sin?*

In looking at the condition of depression the author well understands how our distorted thinking patterns can easily bring us down. He gives practical examples to which most Christians can easily relate. Below is just a sample; the first he calls false extremes, a kind of all or nothing thinking:

**Life example: You make one mistake in cooking a meal and conclude that you are a total disaster.**

**Spiritual example: You have**

**a sinful thought and conclude that you are an apostate.**

**Biblical example: Despite most of his life being characterised by God's blessing and prosperity, when Job passed through a time of suffering, he decided he must be an enemy of God (Job 13:24; 33:10).**

Here is another example the author calls false filter, where a person filters out all positives and dwells on the negatives:

**Life example: You get ninety percent on an exam, but all you can think about is the ten percent you got wrong.**

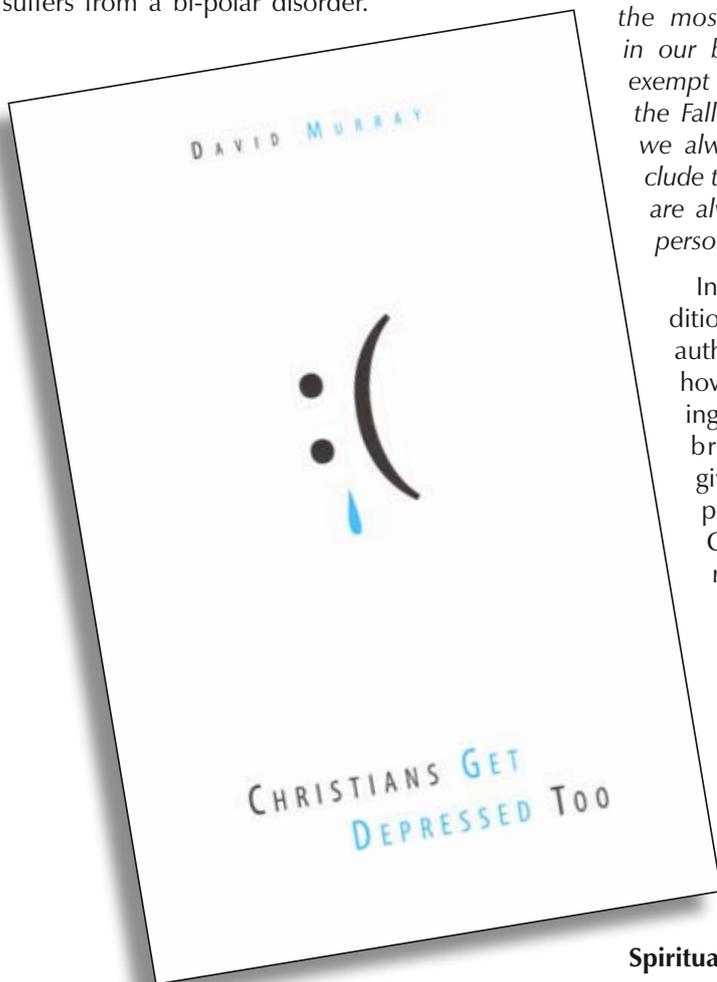
**Spiritual Example: You heard something in a sermon you did not like or agree with and went home thinking and talking only about that part of the service.**

**Biblical Example: Despite having just seen God's mighty and miraculous intervention on Mount Carmel, Elijah filtered out all the positives and focused only on the continued opposition of Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 19:10).**

Just as the brain is complex, and just as we are complex human beings (body, mind and spirit), so the causes of depression are complex including heredity, chemical imbalances in the brain, our own (at times sinful) responses to life experiences and even God's sovereignty.

And just as the causes of depression are complex, the cures are also complex. Some cures are straightforward such as our need for a balance of routine, relaxation, recreation and rest. Murray writes; "A Christian psychologist recently said to me that he starts most depressed people on three pills, 'Good exercise, good diet, and good sleep!'" The reader is treated to a close look at how Asaph examined and corrected his depressive thinking patterns in Psalm 77. The reader is certainly reassured that many of God's children including Bible characters have not only suffered from depression but slowly worked their way through by finding a firm foothold again on the promises of God's Word. When a deeper problem persists Murray urges sufferers to seek medical treatment before "things have gotten so bad that you 'crash' to halt."

David Murray expresses grief that



sometimes due to our wrong perspectives about depression some of God's people have been deeply hurt by the help they were supposedly receiving. He urges caregivers to be sympathetic and patient in their approach. "It will greatly help you to sympathise if you always remember that you could just as easily be in the same position, suffering the same sorrow (1 Cor. 4:7). If you treat depressed people with impatient contempt, you may, like many others

before you, have to learn sympathy the hard way." To Murray, many of the Puritan pastors including Charles Spurgeon, are examples of this wise, patient approach. Charles Spurgeon's counsel is richly pastoral since he also suffered extreme bouts of depression.

**It is important to realise that there are no easy answers and there are no quick fixes in dealing with depression. It usually takes many months, and in some cases even years, to recover. You**

**should, therefore, take a long-term view and patiently wait for improvement. Don't get frustrated over lack of progress, and be aware that temporary relapses may occur.**

This book is highly recommended by Maurice Roberts, Joel Beeke and other prominent, reformed leaders. Get a few copies so that you can reach out to afflicted believers with much wisdom and care.

---

## Letter to the editor

Dear Editor,

Your editorial remark, "it is not the editors' intention that these give rise to any controversy within the RCNZ," is unnecessary. I think that it is a mistake to see FV only as a North American problem. Its roots lie in Socinianism and Romanism and its subterfuge nature must not be underestimated. The issue of FV is not a matter of us 'importing' it into NZ Reformed Churches. Rather, like any other heresy, its 'infiltration' is spiritual and demonic and its sentiments are already present in NZ. Forget controversy, it must be stamped on the head and confronted from the pulpit.

To see FV as something that could cause unrest here misses the real issue. Identifying a heresy and checking its insidious nature go together. Most modern heresies have already, in essence, been dealt with in the early church councils and FV is simply Socinianism rearing its head again, facilitated by the twin sisters of Liberalism and Arminianism. The first council of Nicea has already dealt with Socinianism and its related problems. Central to its beliefs is a denial of Christ's active obedience. As stated, labels can be divisive, but if the brand is fake then the label must be investigated.

I don't believe the FV writers are able to understand 'the need to more fully draw out the implications of the covenant of grace,' as stated by Rev Flinn because they can't accurately draw out the implications apart from the covenant of works. The covenant of works does lend itself to a highly developed soteriology whether we like it or not. Without it we won't understand why we are all sinners and why some of us are saints in the second Adam. John Murray might

be correct in seeing the term 'covenant of works' as not being felicitous towards grace, but as Cornelis Venema says, "the language helps to emphasise what was integral to the first covenant, namely, the obligation and probation of obedience on condition of which man could remain in covenant communion with God."

The conditions for the covenant of works are seen in the fact that God issued Adam with a command, a penalty and a promise. The word 'works' is perhaps still the best one because the WCF (7:1) doesn't exclude God's graciousness; it speaks of 'God's condescending' favor in the covenant of works.

The basic positions of FV are easy to identify – FV says there is no covenant of works, meaning that Jesus Christ did not come to actively keep the law on our behalf. Therefore justification is not by faith alone but by faith and works. God takes into account our faith and our works and upon that basis we are acquitted. This is plain Popery or Romanism.

FV claims that the righteousness of the believer is our covenantal faithfulness. This simply means that our works are necessary for justification. If you don't keep working you are going to lose your salvation. So justification is not a declarative act but a process. They posit that Paul and James are both saying the same thing.

FV denies the historic position of an antithesis between faith and works and justification; the antithesis between law and gospel. To make the two unifiable, they feel that the starting point should be to get rid of the covenant of works. But this is a betrayal of the Gospel. To help demolish this antithesis, FV see

the Scriptures as an unfolding drama. Narrative supposedly removes all these propositional distinctions. It's sad that the apostle Paul didn't have the hindsight that FV claim to espouse. These old doctrines of satisfaction, imputation and the active obedience of Christ in their propositional forms, they say, are debilitating to the Gospel.

But as we know, Paul and James are not saying the same thing. Paul is dealing with our justification before God, and James is dealing with our justification before man. Covenantal faithfulness is really a synergism based on a conditional covenant of Arminianism.

Ultimately what is at stake is the doctrine of justification alone. Luther called this doctrine the standing or falling of the church. Given the history of this doctrine we need to be alert to any modifications of the doctrine. In Ezek 18:14 Calvin aptly explains the relationship of justification and works in his proposition, "that, faith without works justifies by itself," is both true and false, depending upon how we understand it. The proposition, "that faith without works justifies by itself," is false, because faith produces works. But, if the clause 'without works' is joined with the word 'justifies,' then the proposition is true because works play no part in justification. Faith alone justifies."

FV instead say that God justifies us on the basis of our faith and our works because the Bible says, *do and live*. But the material point is that we are sinners. How can we do and live? Only in an alien righteousness. Only Jesus Christ's works can save, not ours.

**Andre Scheepers**

# Ordinary people, extraordinary times: what the earthquake revealed about the heart of our city

*It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...* wrote Charles Dickens as he opened *A Tale of Two Cities*, his famous novel set in the French Revolution. The same could be said of our city, post-February 22. It has been a terrible time; it has been a wonderful time. I'd like to reflect on the ways this has been so.

All of us will remember (probably for the rest of our lives) what we were doing and where we were at 12:51pm on that day. The great shake that lasted a mere 30 seconds did enormous damage. It was close to the earth's surface and very near the city – that was what did it. Over 180 lives were lost. But that was not all: homes were destroyed, businesses, jobs and livelihoods – gone. Those in the centre city who fled the cracked high rises and crumbling malls did not know that it would be weeks – or months – before they would see their old workplaces again. Some will never see them again. Many of us have only seen the ruin of our city through television screens. Our lives have been changed for a very, very long time. In some cases, forever.

What has unfolded in the past four weeks has revealed a lot about the fabric of our society, our culture, and the way our lives are organised. It has been both good and bad, heartening and somewhat disheartening. I have found it very interesting, both as a participant who loves my city, and, as a rural resident who lives just outside it, to observe what has been happening. For the Christian in the midst of these events it has been a time of important lessons.

## Snapshot one

I am simply one observer; and my observations are based on snapshots, but two distinct experiences I had recently told me much. The first was a day I spent – one small person among thousands – shovelling liquefaction in the suburb of Bexley, the week after the quake. Paul and I went to an area he had already spent a day working in with his loader, digging the stuff out of people's driveways. He had met some of the people, and heard their stories. We arrived around 8:30 and called on a solo mother Paul had helped the

day before. Her plight was evident: no water, no electricity, no sewage; and four children, the youngest of whom was two years old. Her husband had left her two weeks before the quake. We chatted, gave her some baking and fresh water, and offered a home in the country for respite if she wanted. But her cousin had died in the quake with a five-week old baby, and she wanted to stay in town for the funeral ... Around the corner was the street we spent the day in. I met three families out of the forty who used to live there – the rest had left. They were a slice of NZ these days: a solo father, a retired couple who had immigrated from Yorkshire 20 years ago, and a young couple. The retired couple's house, only three and a half years old, was wrecked – part of it had sunk irreparably, and water had been right through it. All they were thinking about was would their insurance cover another home – they did not have time to save for another. The young couple had moved out of town temporarily, as the Scottish wife had been really scared by the quake: she had been unable to



Some images from the memorial service in Christchurch.



get out the door with her young baby because the house had moved, and the door jammed. She had escaped through a window and run screaming into the empty street. The husband, a town planner with the city council, has an interesting future ahead of him – he was already full of ideas for a new city centre. Helping all these people, and talking to them, caused me to reflect that while the earthquake has had a terrible physical effect on people’s homes and livelihood, that is nothing in comparison to the disruption of broken marriages. Those who were “together” were more able to cope.

I began my day digging the liquefaction (thick sticky, wet silt – it is VERY heavy) between a lady’s house and back fence. The wheelbarrow, when full, was beyond my capacity to lift. Help arrived around 10am in the form of the “Farmy Army”, who were a well-organised and interesting bunch. This army consisted of typical Kiwi blokes with a can-do attitude. There was the cheery fellow who made everyone laugh. There was the bossy-boots who made it his business to tell everyone else what to do – and how to do it. And there was the police-woman (a Kiwi) who’d come over from her beat in King’s Cross in Sydney to help her farmer mates for a few days. She was tough ... But even she admitted it was blokes’ business wheeling the barrows. And it was great to find that chivalry is far from dead – the guys happily did the barrowing. These farmers genuinely wanted to help, and some of them had even come from the North Island. But there was just a tad of hoping their very visible efforts would help get them better press than the “dirty dairying” image they were struggling to shed.

The helpers who really moved me were the students. They have been round the city in their thousands, and were everywhere to be seen. They were a great team of cheerful, hardworking young men and women. Some of the girls were quite slight and not very strong, but that didn’t deter them. They did what they could, and kept at it. What impressed me was that they just wanted to help – there was nothing in it for them. It has all been a simple volunteer effort, organised via Facebook, to help others in time they had to spare. No fuss, no self-promotion, just grab a shovel and start digging. Kiwi style. Of course they had some fun; but as my niece said, after the first couple of hours the novelty wears off. Of course there



*Prince William, speaking at the memorial service in Christchurch.*

were some jokes: “Do you think they’ll let us have the Undie 500 now?” one asked. Nice try.

#### **Snapshot two**

The second experience was the memorial service on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> March. I knew it was going to be an important occasion – maybe the kind of thing that only happens once in your lifetime. Leaving early, I parked the car some distance out and walked down Riccarton Rd. I saw Americans (earthquake experts of some kind?) getting into cars outside their motels, Australian policemen (so cheering that all these people from overseas had come to help us) and entered Hagley Park, whose large trees had been beribboned in red and black. The crowd, when it arrived, was vast. I have never been part of such a large crowd: ABC (the American one), put it at 100,000, other channels at less. But it was quiet, and much moved. It was an interesting thing that the government should have organised a civic occasion called a “service”; and that religious items were included. Perhaps it was because they all seem very worried about our psychological state (a bit cloying, really) – and it was obvious all religions were to have their say. (I was sitting next to a group of Buddhist monks who stood up and chanted prayers). Despite the fact that the Dean and the Bishop of Christchurch had probably more input than anyone else, it was decidedly *not* a Christian affair. The Bishop assured us God did

not cause the earthquake; that everyone is a child of God; and that true holiness consists in deeds of kindness to others. (I was reminded of J. Gresham Machen’s point that liberalism is not Christianity)<sup>1</sup>. Bible texts were read, but without a clear presentation of the gospel they were false comfort to those hearing, who were left misapplying them.

But there were several very good things about this memorial service. First, it revealed (yet again) that we have a mayor capable of speaking clearly and showing decisive, very human leadership in a time of crisis. That is a Romans 13 blessing. Secondly, we have a monarch’s representative who cared enough to make a special trip from England to visit us – and others – in an hour of need. Prince William paid tribute to our national spirit. He told us we are famous for our courage and understated determination. That was heartening: those are the qualities needed if a community is going to rebuild after destruction. But the best items of all, I thought, were the videos played at the beginning and the end of the service. The first was a series of clips of the centre city – scenes that most of us had not yet seen. It was shocking – the stark reality facing us of what, architecturally, we have lost. It also indicated the ways some had died. Piles of rubble tell their own story. The video at the end was stunning. It showed scene upon scene of Christchurchians helping their neighbours in dozens of cheerful, open-hearted and

imaginative ways. It was the thing I shall never forget. Because tales of crime and family breakdown more often colour our view of our community, such scenes were all the more moving.

### Who's in charge?

And now we face the aftermath. The dust is settling on the reality that much of our city is not going to be functioning for a long time. The east and the CBD are out of action; and the streets and the malls of the western suburbs are packed with cars and people. Five weeks on, we are still in a state of national emergency.

And that has its downsides.

The Central Business District is still in lockdown, and Civil Defence will not allow many business owners to collect any stock or vital equipment from their buildings. Buildings are being demolished without their owners' or tenants' knowledge. And yet visiting foreign dignitaries are being shown around to "gawk at our rubble"<sup>2</sup>, as one *Press* writer put it. Many are going to go out of business: no sales for a month or two is obviously unsustainable.

The government is certainly wanting to act decisively; but we have to ask

ourselves how long emergency powers should be wielded. Anyone who has studied history knows that totalitarian regimes have often arisen out of the lengthy assumption of emergency powers. And not all of the generous government actions have been generosity to all: a provincial holiday on the day of the memorial service cost many small businesses dearly. It was great for those who headed out of town with their boat for the weekend (we saw quite a few), but not so great for their employers who had to pay for their totally unproductive day off.

It was astonishing to me (and doubtless to others) how many people the government can call up in an emergency. The numbers of high-viz-vested, hard-hat-wearing, clipboard-wielding officials who poured out of the woodwork and into our town was remarkable. In the first few days it was reassuring: after that a bit concerning. We cannot remain in the hands of officials for too long without at least some of us losing our independence and our initiative.

We need to remember who's in charge in such situations. It's God, not the government – either central or local. That fact is a key part of our Christian witness to the fearful, the homeless, the jobless and the bereaved. We should be unashamed about this when we remind people it was God – and not "nature" who was responsible for the earthquake. And it is God – and not WINZ – who is there to solve our greatest problems. It grieves me to hear Christians talk of referring people to counsellors for help. What is wrong with us? WE are supposed to be the help! We may not have the physical resources to rebuild their houses or their businesses, but we certainly have the resources to deal with their broken hearts or their fears. This is an extraordinary time, with extraordinary opportunities. Ordinary people like us should take them – with every confidence God will use our efforts. Christ came to heal the broken-hearted – and we are his ambassadors.

### Notes

- 1 J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Banner of Truth, 1992 – first published in 1923), p.160
- 2 Vicki Anderson, "Christchurch is grumpy", *The Press*, 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2011.

Sally Davey



Images of the destruction in Christchurch.

# 'Big wriggles'

It was a wet and drizzly morning in Christchurch, but Tuesday the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 2011 was a day of excitement. Our daughter Sarah was turning three; my parents had already arrived from Australia to celebrate her birthday and our anniversary on Friday. We had a full day of work (window cleaning) for Dad and I planned, but because it was a drizzly morning one of my customers in Taylors Mistake (near Sumner) had re-scheduled. However, we had other work to complete – one job being a shop in Merivale. Nevertheless, it was going to be nice finishing early because would give us an unhurried time to have a celebratory lunch with the rest of the family.

## The event

As we were enjoying our lunch, at 12:51pm we were jolted with a sizeable 6.3 magnitude earthquake. As we clambered under the table, Dad was able to hold up a glass cabinet which was falling towards us. The CD stand flung into the TV, the ornaments fell off the shelves, the items in the pantry fell crumbling to the floor. We knew this 'aftershock' was big! As we gained some composure and made sure we were ok, 13minutes later we were struck with a 5.7 magnitude aftershock. The CD stand which had been stood up straight flung once again into the TV and we looked to find cover under the table. As this was going on, I was thinking, can this be happening again? Nearly six months earlier to the date we were struck with a 7.1 magnitude earthquake (Mum and Dad Zuidema were visiting then as well!) and the aftershocks from that sizeable event had reduced dramatically in number and in size in the last month.

Anyhow, back to the story... unfortunately by this time Sarah, who had coped so well with the September earthquake, was becoming frightened. She was saying "Scary Big Wriggles" and we also feared the worst for those who were in the CBD. We were however, fortunate to keep all our amenities. Therefore, we turned on the TV and radio and we presume, like most of you, were horrified and terrified with what we saw. People were crushed, people instantly killed,

people were trapped; and the vision of massive infrastructure issues, such as roads, power, water problems... the city of Christchurch was on its knees.

While the events were unfolding, the whereabouts of our family, friends and members of our church community needed to be ascertained. Many of them worked within the CBD. Communications were at a minimum, traffic was gridlocked and as the search for these loved ones commenced there was many a tense moment for all as they waited for them to return home or to receive some communication from them.

As the day continued on, we saw footage of the Port Hills and the entrance roads to Taylors Mistake and we also saw footage of a shop frontage collapsing in Merivale. At this Dad and I paused and wondered at how the Lord had kept us from harm. Many people as the weeks have gone passed have also shared their close calls, and in some cases their near-death experiences.

As nightfall came upon us, Sarah indeed had an eventful birthday. Joshua (our young son) didn't know what all the fuss was about and was completely oblivious to the whole turn of events as he was asleep when the earthquake struck. It was time for all of us to try and get some sleep. We tried to get some

sleep, but the night was going to be a long one. The jet-like roar of the aftershocks was at times unbearable and kept waking Sarah up – and to be honest all of us – through the evening. Nevertheless, we did get some rest and we were eager to see how we as a church body would respond to such an event.

## The Diaconal response

The deacons and our ministers in our congregation swung straight into action and a command centre was set up at Bishopdale Reformed Church. The communication from the command centre was via e-mail, text, phone or facebook. The deacons and their helpers sought and were made aware of many opportunities where we as a church could serve. Such as silt removal (as a result of liquefaction), food for those in need, visiting and praying with those who were alone and frightened, organising children's activities for welfare centres, helping with feeding at retirement homes, early morning soup and hot drinks deliveries to police and army officers patrolling the central cordon and many other individual acts of mercy and kindness.

These opportunities gave us as a church great exposure to the wider community and openings for the Word to accompany the deed. The work still



*A damaged character home in Christchurch, located in Merivale.*

continues and may do for months, but we earnestly pray that our acts of mercy will give us more opportunities to speak about our glorious Saviour and Lord.

### The aftermath

The aftermath of this event is quite far reaching. We have those who have lost loved ones, those who have lost their homes, those who have lost their employment or have work complications and those (most of us) who are struggling with the stress of ongoing aftershocks. We also have had unhelpful visitors from European countries who just came to bring the news of judgment on Christchurch, instead of understanding *Luke 13* biblically, that we are all sinful and are in need of a Saviour and that we all need to repent and believe in Christ Jesus for our salvation, not just

Christchurch. Fortunately, when they arrived and interrupted our worship service many were able to suggest that they grab a shovel and a wheelbarrow and show mercy to those in need and pray that an opportunity will arise where we can share the good news of the Gospel of Christ Jesus!

Normality is slowly returning, most schools have reopened and some work practices are up and ready for business again. So it was good to take a moment before the busyness of life resumes again on Tuesday evening the 8<sup>th</sup> of March to have a Thanksgiving Service with the three Reformed Churches in Christchurch and to hear of the comfort from God's Word through these times.

In light of the comfort of Scripture, I have noticed we who are Christians are sometimes knocked in our faith when

calamity comes. Therefore, I am convinced it is imperative that you carefully study God's Word prior to these events happening and return to it when you are going through them; be they Big Wiggles, deaths, sickness or family breakups. So, when you are 'shaken' in your faith, comforting, helpful texts are flooded over your weak tender soul. We personally found texts such as Psalm 121, Psalm 46, Romans 8 and the God of all comfort passage in 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 wonderful for all shaken souls as we struggled to come to terms with the vastness of the event.

### God's in control

As the recent events unfolded both here and in other parts of the world, we do have the great comfort that our God is completely in control. We are ever comforted by the summary of Scripture in Lord's Day 9, Q&A 26 in the Heidelberg Catechism ***"What do you believe when you say, "I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth"?*** *That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who out of nothing created heaven and earth and everything in them, who still upholds and rules them by his eternal counsel and providence, is my God and Father because of Christ his Son. I trust him so much that I do not doubt he will provide whatever I need for body and soul, and he will turn to my good whatever adversity he sends me in this sad world. He is able to do this because he is almighty God; he desires to do this because he is a faithful Father.*

Nevertheless, I am mindful that the words "The Lord is in control" are very easy to say when you are a Christian who is not suffering. So, in conclusion may I continue to encourage you to mediate on all Scripture daily, soaked in prayer and to embrace and perhaps memorise solid backbone passages such as Psalm 46. Therefore, when trials come (and they will) we fix our eyes on Christ alone and not on our own faith and let us not rely on ourselves, but on the God who is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble.

### Graeme Zuidema

Member of Bishopdale Reformed Church

14<sup>th</sup> of March 2011



This is the damaged frontage of the Merivale Shops in Christchurch. We (used to) clean the Flight Centre in the distance.



This is the main route to Taylors Mistake in Christchurch. Both here and in the distance you can see the rock faces that have collapsed.