

faith in
focus

Magazine of the
Reformed Churches
of New Zealand

VOLUME 37/8 SEPTEMBER 2010



The
creative
arts –
God's
blessing
to man.

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| The creative arts – God’s blessing to man (1) Music: for God and from God | 3 |
| The creative arts – God’s blessing to man (2) The language of poetry | 5 |
| The creative arts – God’s blessing to man (3) Fiction: “begins in delight and ends in wisdom” | 8 |
| The creative arts – God’s blessing to man (4) Visual arts and the Christian | 10 |
| World in focus | 13 |
| An organist’s lament | 15 |
| Feminine focus Home is where the heart lies | 18 |
| Focus on home Gleanings Auckland Presbytery Report Christchurch Presbytery Report | 20 |
| Letter to the Editor | 25 |
| Introducing the Peniel Rehabilitation Centre, Bangalore | 26 |

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

The Editor:

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

Copy Deadline:

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

All correspondence regarding distribution and
payment of subscriptions to:

The Secretary:

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

Subscription per volume:

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

Production Staff:

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

Editorial

Have you ever thought – “what a dull world it would be without music?” What about the reading of fiction and poetry? What about art, such as painting and drawing, or print making, or any of the other creative things that we do or engage in?

In the Lord’s providence the creative arts are a blessing to His people. They are intended for God’s glory first, and for our enrichment, enjoyment and comfort as we live in this “vale of tears”.

It is legitimate for Christians to engage in the creative arts because God created us in His Image. As a result we seem to have a desire either to create something, or at least to enjoy something that someone else has created. We have an eye for beauty, and an ear for things that sound beautiful and pleasant. There is a desire in us to learn about things we are not familiar with, and fiction is one way to feed that desire. Poetry, music and song are activities that bring enjoyment to our lives and to the lives of others. Painting, drawing, sculpting, printmaking, photography, drama, etc are all legitimate activities that the Christian may engage in, providing he/she does so to glorify God, using the guiding principles of Holy Scripture.

Mrs Cathy Irons writes on “Music: for God and from God”, and presents a synopsis of her life as a professional musician. Mr Michael Flinn looks at “The language of poetry” including the poetry of the Psalms of the Bible. Mrs Veronica Hoyt explores ‘Fiction: “begins in delight and ends in wisdom” – the reading of fiction for the Christian with some useful guidance. Miss Weixin Chong, from Singapore, give us insight into “Visual arts and the Christian”. Weixin is a fourth year student in the BA(Hons) Fine Arts programme at Lasalle College of the Arts, Singapore, majoring in Printmaking. I enjoyed reading these articles and commend them to you for your edification.

Mrs Sally Davey commences a new series with her article “Home is where the heart lies”.

Mr Dirk van Garderen writes for the National Diaconate Committee, “Introducing the Peniel Rehabilitation Centre, Bangalore”.

World in Focus and Focus on Home feature again in this issue, plus a couple of “Letters to the editor”, picking up on some topics in previous issues.

Photo credits:

Cover – Geoffrey Irons. A violin (a Vuillame replica) in the leaves at Christchurch Botanic Gardens.

Images: p3&4 Mrs Cathy Irons. p8&9 <http://en.wikipedia.org> . p16&17 <http://en.wikipedia.org> . p18-20 Mrs Sally Davey.

The Thought of God – Maurice Roberts – p230

The history of the world is like some grand symphony where themes are suspended and discords are heard for a while. But the day of judgement will bring in the last mighty chord in which all clashing conflict is forever resolved and every disharmony is laid to rest.

The opinions expressed in this magazine are not to be considered the official position of the Reformed Churches of NZ unless they expound the Biblical system of doctrine contained in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dordt, or the Westminster Confession of Faith, or reflect the successive Acts of Synod of the Reformed Churches of NZ. On the other hand, care is taken to ensure that articles and opinions do not directly contradict the official position of the Reformed Churches as contained in the above sources without attention being called to that fact.

The creative arts – God’s blessing to man (1)

Music: for God and from God

Cathy Irons

Music is an expression of the human condition. It can fill us with joy and celebration, praise and worship. It wraps us up in a world of emotion bringing forgotten memories to the surface, making us weep. It is deeper than words, exploring our hopes and desires. It reflects our longing for and praise of God. It explores tension, hurt, anxiety or conflict giving way to resolution. Surely it is one of God’s most precious creations.

As a child I was drawn to music. My dad practised piano in the evenings after work and often I would go to sleep to the gentle sounds of Chopin’s nocturnes. It wasn’t long before I took piano lessons (from the age of six), and a few years after that, violin lessons too.

As my skills increased I grew more confident and Dad and I played organ and piano together at our church. I was always encouraged to play for and with others – if Mum and Dad had friends over, somewhere in the conversation they would slip in mention of my music lessons. That would inevitably lead to: “Won’t you play something for us?” and the violin would be taken out of its case. I learnt to play my heart out for three minutes and then pack the instrument away. People loved to hear one or two short pieces and then were left wanting more. Even today, before I play a concert, I pretend it’s my last performance – I should love it and play every note with all my being, and leave the audience with a sense of beautiful sound.

Play for the community

We reached out into the community with our music and played concerts for retirement homes. It gave me good practise performing and I vividly remember singing “Moonlight and Roses” in my high soprano voice. Mum was not a musical performer, her strengths lay in drama. She would speak out a monologue or read from the Psalms while we accompanied her.

When I visited my parents in South

Africa this last December, we put together a concert for the retirement home they have recently moved into. It was in fact the same retirement home that we played for when I was a little girl. This time we had my daughter, Carolyn on clarinet, my son, Geoffrey on trumpet as well as my husband, Stephen on piano and guitar. The hall was packed with enthusiastic residents. We played

all sorts of styles of music – romantic, tranquil, cheerful and brilliant. Some pieces even required the audience to whistle or clap along. They loved it and responded with warm applause at the end and loud shouts of “encore!” But the comments that struck me most were the one’s mentioned to me by my observant mother. She had noticed that a couple sitting in front of her had



Cathy and her family at Doone Village.

reached out and held hands during the one piece. Another person had been moved to weep gently. Music seems to be able to touch and to heal. To allow one to safely feel the deep emotions of love or grief.

Christchurch Symphony Orchestra

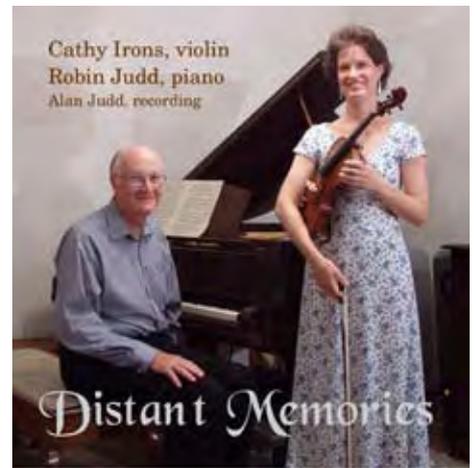
I play in the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra as a violinist. It is a creative job, but involves many hours each day of practice to stay in top form and to cope with the vast quantity of music we get – about a concert a week. But from that stems many smaller jobs. I often play in chamber music concerts, developing friendships through music. For my own concerts which I put on, I choose the music carefully – music which I feel is exciting, interesting to listen to and uplifting. I feel that I can convey the beauty and majesty of God as I praise Him through the music I perform. Music also conveys His healing and peace for life's sorrow.

Teaching is another favourite activity of mine as I pass on the many skills I have learnt to the next generation. It takes many hours of careful practise to learn an instrument. I find it so exciting to

watch the development of each student as they mature musically. I realise that music is a reflection of themselves. When they have had a hard day at school, their music is tinged with tiredness and heaviness; or if they have just won an award, it bounces and breathes. Many of these students have become close friends and continue to stay in touch with me.

Music is one of those things that brings people together. Last year at a December interclub tennis game, it poured with rain before we started. So I dashed home, grabbed the violin and some music. After a few fun solo pieces, we started singing Christmas carols about the birth of Christ.

Another event that remains close to my heart is the CD, "Distant Memories", which I recorded with my father, Robin Judd. I left my parents back in South Africa when we emigrated to New Zealand in 1997. On a recent visit I decided to record all the old favourites that I played as an emerging young violinist, with my dad as the accompanist on piano. What made it even more special was that my dad played on his mother's piano and my brother, Alan, did the recording. So it was a time of bonding for all of us,



placing something precious on disc. I have received comments from many on the closeness that they can hear on this CD.

Being a professional musician means that I often play at big events in people's lives. Sometimes it is for famous or wealthy people – but what gives me more pleasure is playing for a friend's wedding anniversary or even funeral. There I can play to God, expressing the desires of people to God as in a prayer. Music is a pure form of communication, expressing feelings where words fail. Surely our God hears our hearts as we play.

While God has given this gift to me, it comes at a personal cost. I am by nature a quiet person and find performing where I have to give of my deepest emotions a huge challenge. For in order for me to convey a feeling in the music, I must first draw on my own experiences – from despair and grief, to contentment or joy. I cannot walk on stage without praying first; and maybe this is a blessing in disguise, for I need to acknowledge Him as the creator of music before I can play. It brings a dependence and reliance on God in my life. I know that I should not fear man. I remember from Scripture that God has chosen me to play for Him in this prayer from the psalms:

"May the favour (beauty) of the Lord our God rest upon us (me); establish the work of our hands for us – yes, establish the work of our hands." Psalm 90:17

Mrs Cathy Irons is a professional musician and plays in the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra.

“I feel that I can convey the beauty and majesty of God as I praise Him through the music I perform.”



Giving and impromptu violin recital at Bishopdale tennis club.

The creative arts – God’s blessing to man (2)

The language of poetry

Michael Flinn

Poetry and Words

Poetry (and this is true of all literature) makes use of *words*. If there were no words, there would be no poetry. The reason why there are words is because God himself is the Word (John 1:1). To use a title from one of Francis Schaeffer’s books, *He is There and He is not Silent*, God speaks. In Genesis 1:3ff we read that God created the world by speaking words. Of course, God’s ability to create something out of nothing merely by speaking words is something that is unique to him. As human beings, we cannot create in this way. But this is not the only way in which God uses words. As Schaeffer indicates in his book, God reveals both himself and his plan of redemption for the world by speaking to his image bearers in language that can be understood by them.¹

Because we human beings are created in the image of the One who made us, we also possess the ability to communicate with others by means of words. God has made us with the ability to express thoughts in language. We can articulate emotions, instincts, concerns and needs. We can speak of beliefs and aspirations and we can express theories and viewpoints. We can express with words not only what is happening in our lives, or what the world is like, but we can also explore *why* it is happening or why the world is the way that it is and how we feel about the answers we have given to these questions.

In the following article, we’ll explore some of the ways in which poetry uses words.

Poetry and Word Choice

In a novel or even a short story, the author has more time to develop his or her ideas or to “paint a picture” using words. By contrast, in poetry, there is a premium on words. Words are chosen very carefully by the poet. They often evoke or picture something that the reader is expected to think about and “fill in” rather than describe or express something in great detail, leaving nothing at all to the imagination.

As an example, have a look at this well-known sonnet by Percy Shelley, called *Ozymandias* of Egypt:

*I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal those words appear:
“My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty and despair!”
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away.*

Ozymandias is another name for Ramses the Great, Pharaoh of the nineteenth dynasty of ancient Egypt. The central theme of the poem is the inevitable

decline of human empires and dictators no matter how intimidating, perpetual, and enduring they might appear when at the height of their power. Ramses the Great had a monument built to his own greatness. Calling himself “king of kings”, a title reserved for Christ in the Scriptures, he wanted all other great men to look with wonder and awe at his works, knowing with despair that they could never compete with him.

Notice the way in which Shelley describes the scene and the words that he chooses. Egypt is not an ancient land, but an *antique* land. Antiques are ancient things of rarity and value. The “antique” that is presented in the poem is the monument that was constructed in order to perpetuate the memory of this ancient king and his greatness. But this monument, once a thing of splendour and greatness, is now a “shattered visage”, “lifeless”, a “colossal wreck”. It is a thing of death and decay, broken and worthless. Notice also that what remains

“Because we human beings are created in the image of the One who made us, we also possess the ability to communicate with others by means of words.”

upon the statue, etched in the stone itself, is the attitude and demeanor of the king. His “frown and wrinkled lip” and his “sneer of cold command” have been carved in stone by the sculptors who “well those passions read”. These are the things that *survive*, on the “half sunk” and “shattered visage”. In this way, it is not the king’s greatness that is commemorated in the broken statue, but his futile human pride and the disdain he showed for others. Now the king and his empire are no more. And the only “companion” that the statue has is the “lone and level sands” that “stretch far away”, “boundless and bare”. The sand has survived unchanged across the centuries; the monument, however, is a lonely, pathetic and broken relic.

With his careful choice of words and his graphic word pictures Shelley has expressed in 14 lines of poetry what historians, philosophers and theologians might take chapters or even volumes to describe and discuss. His poem asks us to think carefully about the ideas that it expresses and to interact with them.

Words are also carefully chosen in biblical poetry. As an interesting contrast to “Ozymandias of Egypt”, take, for example, Psalm 102:3,10. Here the psalmist writes:

For my days vanish like smoke; my bones burn like glowing embers...

My days are like the evening shadow; I wither like grass.

“In the midst of his sadness and distressing circumstances, the psalmist can still express himself and his feelings in beautiful poetic language.”

The reader is being asked to think about these verbal pictures: smoke vanishing quickly in the breeze of the day; shadows lengthening as the sun goes down in the evening; glowing embers gradually flickering and dying down; grass withering in the hot sun – and then apply these pictures to the psalmist’s awareness of his life and the passage of time. These verbal pictures are much more evocative and beautiful than a simple description using prose, which might go something like this: “I am not happy. I am discouraged and depressed. There is nothing in the day to interest me. I feel old. I am sick. I feel sad, weak and small.”

Interestingly, even in the midst of his sadness and distressing circumstances, the psalmist can still express himself and his feelings in beautiful poetic language, which in itself is a positive and edifying thing. Ultimately, however, the psalmist’s comfort is in God and in his perfect plan for his people. For this reason, the psalm moves away from contemplation of self to focus instead on the Lord (vss. 12ff). This is the biblical answer to the problem posed by Shelley in his poem. Man’s comfort and consolation in the face of his transience and finitude lies not in self-glorification, but in the eternal Lord and in his sovereign purposes.

Poetry and word art

We have already seen how words are carefully chosen in poetry in order to express ideas and evoke (sometimes very beautiful) images in the mind. Further to this, poets often use words, and even carefully place words in a sentence, in order to express their ideas clearly and powerfully. I like to call this word art. For some examples let’s look first at these lines from S.T. Coleridge’s *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

*The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around;
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound!*

These lines are part of a long poem describing the experiences of a sailor after he shot an albatross at sea. Notice how the words have an accent and rhythm that carries the reader along: “The ICE was here, the ICE was there, the ICE was all AROUND ... Notice also the way in which some of the words chosen *sound* like what is being described. “Cracked” and “growled”, “roared” and “howled” all sound, when spoken, like the sounds made by the ice as it shifts. This is a literary device called onomatopoeia. Finally, notice the rhyming scheme. In every stanza the last word of the second line rhymes with the last line of the fourth. This explains in part why the word “swound” was chosen. It’s an archaic word for “swoon” or “faint”.

In Hebrew poems, although there are some examples of word play in which the word is chosen for its sound, much more prominent is the use of parallelisms to express ideas. That is: an idea will be stated in a line of poetry, and then restated in the next line in order to show either a similarity of idea or a contrast. Here are a couple of examples:

*The cords of death entangled me;
The torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.
The cords of the grave coiled around me;
The snares of death confronted me. (Ps. 18:4,5)*

Notice how line 3 expresses a very similar idea to line 1 and the same is true for lines 2 and 4. This is an example of what is called synonymous parallelism.

*The wicked borrow and do not repay,
But the righteous give generously. (Ps. 37:21)*

Here the lines express a contrast. The wicked do one thing; the righteous, by contrast, do the opposite. This is an example of what is called antithetic parallelism.²

Derek Kidner makes the interesting point that this type of poetry is more readily “transposed” into other languages than other types that require an exact

correspondence of rhythm and form in order to retain the poetic element.

It is the striking fact that this type of poetry loses less than perhaps any other in the process of translation. In many literatures the appeal of a poem lies chiefly in verbal felicities and associations, or in metrical subtleties, which tend to fail of their effect even in a related language. The programme notes of any Lieder recital are enough to prove the point! But the poetry of the Psalms has a broad simplicity of rhythm and imagery which survives transplanting into almost any soil. Above all, the fact that its parallelisms are those of sense rather than of sound allows it to reproduce its chief effects with very little loss of either force or beauty. It is well fitted by God's providence to invite 'all the earth' to 'sing the glory of his name'.³

Ultimately, we can understand and appreciate this word art because we are made in the image of God, who is the great Creator and "Artificer" of this world.

Poetry and words of the soul

More than any other form of literature, poetry often puts into words the thoughts and feelings that are experienced at the level of the heart or the soul. Take a look at this typical selective list of categories in this anthology called the *Library of World Poetry* (edited by William Cullen Bryant):

Poems of the Affections

Friendship

Compliment and Admiration

Love

Marriage

Home

Filial and Fraternal Love

Parting

Absence

Disappointment and Estrangement

Bereavement and Death

Poems of Sorrow and Adversity

Poems of Sentiment and Reflection

Poems of Fancy

Personal Poems

Humorous Poems

This anthology runs to nearly 800 pages!

The Hebrew poems in Scripture also depict and express a vast array of emotions including joy, sorrow, fear, longing, anger, reflection, praise, etc. These poems, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, clearly and powerfully express what the poet was thinking and feeling at the time:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?

O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent ... (Ps. 22:1,2)

How many of us, going through some difficult or challenging experience, have found great comfort by turning to the psalms? The psalms put into words exactly what we are thinking and feeling, in both a beautiful and compelling way. Moreover, the psalms take us *through* the challenging experience and help us to refocus our thoughts on the Lord and to find peace and comfort in him:

*All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord,
and all the families of the nations will bow down before him,
for dominion belongs to the Lord
and he rules over the nations (Ps. 22:27,28)*

Precisely for this reason, the psalms are a veritable goldmine for those seeking to offer pastoral comfort and encouragement to others.

“But the poetry of the Psalms has a broad simplicity of rhythm and imagery”

Conclusion:

In good poetry, words are never wasted. The poet thinks long and hard about which word to choose, and even where to place it in the line or sentence in order to express his ideas and the beauty of his art. This is true of poetry in every language, including the Hebrew poems that are found in Scripture. Poetry is also the language of the soul, often expressing in a few words, and in a very telling way, feelings and experiences that others can readily understand and identify with. I hope this article has inspired you to read more poems, especially the poems in Scripture, with a new appreciation, and maybe even have a go at writing some poems for yourself.

Notes

- 1 This last sentence needs an important qualification. Although God's words to man are clear and true, and able to be understood in and of themselves, man has chosen to deny and suppress God's clear revelation of himself (cf. Romans 1:20,21). The sinful mind is hostile to God and does not (in fact: *cannot*) submit to God's laws (Romans 8:7) and it cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God without the Spirit's enlightenment (1Corinthians 2:14).
- 2 Antithetic parallelisms are very common in the Proverbs that express a contrast between the behaviour of the wise person on the one hand and that of the fool on the other, or the righteous on the one hand and the wicked on the other.
- 3 Kidner, Derek. *The Psalms*, Vol. 1, p. 4.

Mr Michael Flinn is a Minister of the Word and Sacraments in the Reformed Church of Palmerston North.

The creative arts – God’s blessing to man (3)

Fiction: “begins in delight and ends in wisdom”

Veronica Hoyt

What is the last fiction book that you read? Not necessarily Leo Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, or Charles Dickens’s *Bleak House*, but simply: a story. Are you scratching your head, finding it difficult to remember? The truth is: many of us don’t read a lot of fiction. Why might this be so?

The reasons are varied. We live in an age where reading fiction is in decline. Our lives are busy and we don’t find time for it. Perhaps reading requires too much effort, or we prefer other leisure pursuits, such as blogging or Facebook, watching television, sweating at the gym, sewing quilts, or scrapbooking with friends. Some have bad memories of studying novels like Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights* in excruciating detail whilst at school. Others may not see literature as being particularly useful; it doesn’t com-

municate facts and information, but is frivolous and time wasting. Still others are wary of literature since it can teach error or immorality. Additionally, our society values rationality and utilitarianism; this is the age of science and engineering, of computer programming, of commerce and the stock markets. We live in a time where facts and statistics are more highly regarded than beauty; facts are seen to be useful, whereas beauty found, for example, in fiction has little fiscal value.

The purpose of this article is not to exaggerate the place of fiction in contrast with the rationality of much of twenty-first century life, since both aspects are necessary in a well-rounded life in the service of our King, but to introduce briefly the validity and importance that literature (including fiction) ought to have in Reformed circles. The early twentieth century poet Robert Frost wrote that a

work of literature “begins in delight and ends in wisdom ... It begins in delight ... and ends in clarification of life.”

An art form

So what is fiction? Fiction is imaginary writing, a literary work invented by its author. It is a form of art, a picture in words with its subject frequently being human experience which is conveyed as vividly as possible. Fiction sits alongside other art forms such as paintings, film, and sculpture, and like these a well crafted story can be a delightful source of beauty. Leland Ryken notes in *Windows to the World* that beauty comes from God; God is the source of beauty, and we have been created to make items of beauty and to delight in them just as God delighted in His creation. When we read fiction, therefore, we can glorify God by appreciating the artistic beauty of what we are reading, and seeing in it the ultimate source of this beauty: God. Furthermore, it follows that if beauty – including that found in a work of fiction – is a gift from God, then we should show our appreciation for it by using it and enjoying it. A missionary to India once stated: “I believe my attitude toward beauty and order ... says much to the people around me about the God I serve. Therefore, I want to reflect ... something of the artistry, the beauty, the order of the one I’m representing, and in whose image I’ve been made.”

Textual images of reality

Fiction is different to expository writing, such as a newspaper article. While the latter gives information *about* something, for example an event, and is written in abstract terminology, fiction not only gives the facts but *also* appeals to our senses; fiction communicates ‘atmosphere’, giving a sense of the actual experience. Writers of fiction use their imagination to portray textual images of reality; it is not the exact

“We have been created with hearts and minds that delight in understanding our world also through stories.”



Winslow Homer, (1877), again reading in a relaxed position. <http://en.wikipedia.org>

representation of what happens (just like a painting isn't exact), but in some way captures human experience. Frequently more general than expository writing, fiction shows what happens, rather than telling what happened. Fiction is a valuable way of conveying human understanding and insight in a subjective, interpretive way. We can read about crime in the newspaper, for example, or about crime statistics in a sociology book, but it is Shakespeare's *Macbeth* that makes us feel the horror and moral evil of crime.

Jesus told stories

The use of stories and metaphor to convey human experience in the context of Biblical truth is frequent in Scripture. When asked "who is my neighbour" by the belligerent young expert in the law, Jesus did not define 'neighbour' by way of rational statements complete with abstract theological propositions. Rather, he told the fictional story of the Good Samaritan. Rather than telling the young man who is his neighbour, Jesus showed it to him in a literary way. Jesus used a similar approach at the end of his Sermon on the Mount, where he gave two similes about house building, in order to help his audience to look through the picture of these two houses at the reality of what it means to live a life based on that which is solid and reliable. Why did Jesus provide this story, rather than simply telling it as it is? Various reasons can be given, but I think that it is, in part, recognition that reality cannot be adequately expressed simply in abstract propositions and facts. Language requires another medium, including that found in fiction, in stories. We have been created with hearts and minds that delight in understanding our world also through stories.

The Bible uses storytelling

Indeed, the Bible itself is a literary book. It is not a theological treatise or a collection of proof texts, but is a book that contains many literary forms including stories, poetry, visions, and letters. It includes powerful word images, speaking, for example, of the Lord being "our Shepherd," of the tongue as a "fire," and of the need to "put on the whole armour of God." Much of the history of the Old Testament is told in narrative form, heart stirring stories about actual events that reveal our powerful, wise, and loving God in heaven, and his plan of salvation. Can the heart of any believer remain untouched at the unfolding pathos, drama, and pageantry of the events

“When we connect with characters in fiction, the story enlarges our understanding of the world, of ourselves as fallen creatures, of our need for redemption and of the ultimate “happy ending” in Jesus our Lord.”

in John's vision of Revelation 5, and not want to step right into that (figurative, fictional) scene and sing with the heavenly chorus, "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise"? The Bible, then, uses the medium of storytelling and fiction to communicate God's truths about himself, this world, and our role in it. No one should thus say that literature, including fiction, is unimportant.

Enrich our appreciation

Further, the writing and reading of literature is an important means to fulfill the cultural mandate given to humankind, to develop and cultivate and, implied in this, to understand, this earth. On one level, we don't need words to tell us about the beauties of God's creation (we can see it); on the other hand, a beautifully crafted description of it can enrich our appreciation of it. Indeed, fiction is a key means in conveying knowledge about God's creation and our role in it, particularly in our relationships with others. In a Christian world view, humanity matters since it was created in the image of God; each person has value. Much of fiction concentrates on reality as perceived and experienced by people – their values, fears, joys, and longings. When we connect with characters in fiction, the story enlarges our understanding of the world, of ourselves as fallen creatures, of our need for redemption and of the ultimate "happy ending" in Jesus our Lord.

Fiction also provides us with a lens (or window) through which we can evaluate our own lives and experiences;

it frequently articulates something in our own psyche. Fiction, then, is an important way in which we grapple with and interpret reality, helping us to understand it and clarifying our vision of life. Furthermore, when we read widely, our understanding of reality is enlarged; fiction shapes us to understand experiences and viewpoints we have not had ourselves. It helps to sort out the chaotic feelings in our subconscious, things we have not yet examined, to articulate them in an understandable way.

Heightens our awareness

Fiction can also make us aware of some aspect of human experience with which we are unfamiliar. For example, reading a story about poverty heightens our



Madame de Pompadour spending her afternoon with a book, 1756. <http://en.wikipedia.org>

“Reading a story about poverty heightens our awareness of the needs of the poor and can/should enlarge our compassion for them.”

awareness of the *needs* of the poor and can/should enlarge our compassion for them. Literature is helpful in this since as middle-class New Zealanders we don't often come across these folk; gaining an understanding of them in fiction can be a very helpful way to provide insights into the lives of those to whom we should be showing the love of Christ. Fiction, then, stimulates us to think about big picture issues and ideas; it gets us out of the confines of our own frequently narrow lives, and makes us think about the world in which we live.

A word of caution

Before concluding I wish to give a word of caution. What I am saying is that reading fiction is of much benefit in our appreciation and understanding of this world, and in prompting our response to it as participants in the cultural mandate. Further, since God is the source of the

beauty and artistry also found in this literary art form, we can appreciate and enjoy fiction. At the same time, I am not advocating an exaggerated defense of literature since that separates literature from its ultimate use (the glory of God), or the undiscerning reading of all fiction. Nor am I saying that the reading of fiction is the *only* way to gain a better understanding of our world. Furthermore, it is possible that we can read too much fiction, just as we can spend too much time on Facebook, or in the gym, cycling, or scrapbooking. Like all of life, our reading of fiction needs balance and wisdom.

A blessing from God

This *is*, however, a case for many of us to read (and write) more fiction. Not only is it fun but it is a valid (and profitable) leisure activity. Just as tramping is for many people both an enjoyable

leisure activity and a means of keeping fit, reading, too, can be both enjoyable and constructive. Reading should not be seen as a last resort, nor as furtive fun, something to do as little as possible and only when everything else is done, but is an honourable pursuit, a blessing from God. Use it, then, to engage your mind, imagination and emotions to *grow* in your love for humanity and, ultimately, for your Lord and Saviour. In doing so, you will glorify the God who created (and redeems) the swarming mass of humanity and the world in which it lives.

There is also a case for us to consider the reading of better fiction and broadening our reading interests. If our reading of fiction is to be of value in the service of our Lord, then it follows that what we read should lead us to a better understanding of that which is wholesome. In doing so, we may also benefit from branching out beyond our favourite genre.

The reading of fiction is a delightful recreation; it has the power to hold “children from their play, and old men from the chimney corner” (Sir Philip Sydney, poet, 1581). Let's foster that delight in the beauty and allure of good literature, in the skills and craftsmanship associated with telling a good story. May we enrich our minds and hearts in this worthwhile recreation. And may we not forget to thank our Lord, the master creator and craftsman, for His gifts of language and storytelling.

The creative arts – God's blessing to man (4)

Visual arts and the Christian

Weixin Chong

From poetry in moss¹, hyper-real wood-carving², and digital print of gigantic proportions³ – to surreal scenarios⁴, oil miniatures⁵, delicate mezzotints⁶ and very much more – there is a lot of diversity in the visual arts that often goes beyond the “visual”. But in a field where God-honouring Christian voices seem to be the exception rather than the norm, is it valid or even worth-

while for a Christian to be interested in the arts?

Visual arts, and creative industries related to them, have been inseparable from the human condition through the ages.

The need to make tangible things that express our perceptions has always been part of human history. I think it is part of our being made “after the image of God”. What artists and designers do is

ultimately modeled on God's creation work. But as His creatures, we do not make things out of “nothing”. Even if one does not acknowledge the Creator, human creativity cannot but draw from God's created world and thus always reflects it in some way. Starting with Adam's first task of coming up with names for the animals, the use of human skill and imagination is acknowledged in the Bible as a God-given part of life. God's directions for building the tabernacle and



Weixin Chong, the author of this article.

the artistic creativity He commanded are recorded in intricate detail in Exodus: (31 vs 3-5) "... and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs ... to work in every craft."

The passage reminds us of the God-ordained validity of craftsmanship. It also states that He is the true source of creative inspiration: artistic talent is bestowed by Him, and so is the calling to exercise it.

Why bother with art?

John Piper verbalised the thought of many Christians when he said "The production of art is not efficient ... Art probably feels more superfluous to us ... there are so many more *urgent* things ..."⁷ This common opinion is worth a response. When we are asked why art is necessary, it is certainly possible to describe the ways art has an important function in human life. Through the ages, works of art have fuelled changes in political or cultural ideology – or served as focal points for them. Examples of creativity are very present in real, everyday life, and fill our lives and thoughts. Art is certainly something that cannot be dismissed as superfluous, for we rely greatly on creative expression to articulate certain things that just can't be conveyed through words alone. It is part of how God made us, and He provides for us and communicates with us accordingly. In His wisdom and power, God created a natural world that expresses His glory not only through functional design, but also through beauty and variety.

In the extensively detailed accounts in Exodus of God's instructions for the tabernacle and items for service, great concern was shown for their external representation. From cherubim of gold to jewels on the high priest's breastplate, the artwork commissioned by God in Exodus 25-28 encompassed a plethora of representational, non-representational and symbolic artwork.

Much expense as well as time would have gone into this making of God's house. 1 Kings 6-8 contains another wealth of material description about the temple. It is a reminder that among God's many glorious attributes, pragmatism and utilitarianism are strikingly absent. As Francis Schaeffer has aptly said, "There can be no question. God is interested in beauty."⁸

Some qualities in art that make it a special part of human life:

Art influences how we experience our lives and how we perceive.

It is **reflective**. Artwork forms a platform for contemplation, as well as being a product of it.

It is **expressive**. It articulates intangible aspects of life and human experience in a tangible form. This is through the use of representation, symbolism; or actual physical material and the associations, suggestions and qualities extracted from it.

make conscious use of our perceptive faculties – indeed encourages us to. In conjunction with sensitivity and lively responsive thought, this is a frame of mind that leads us to:

1. Enjoy God's goodness in life exultantly and worshipfully.

The goodness and beauty of God are displayed in His creation and actions. A well-known line from the Westminster Shorter Catechism describes the purpose of man: "... to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." One important way to do so is through considering His works, in nature and in the world around us. Art considers some aspect of earthly life, and thus can provide a platform for thinking about God and His works. It's the product of reflection that arises from time spent observing both physical or abstract realities. The artist's observations are displayed in his work – and that allows other reflections and emotions to arise in viewers who think about it. In a way, it's much like writing a piece of prose, poetry or music – there's a capturing of insight and emotion into tangible form.

2. Cultivate a sense of God's transcendent greatness – beyond our own logic, reasoning and control.⁹ This goes against the ingrained ethos of humanism, in which we are the centre of the universe – all things must fit within the bounds of our own reasoning, and all should be subject to the control and

“ [Art's] ... much like writing a piece of prose, poetry or music – there's a capturing of insight and emotion into tangible form. ”

It is **communicative**. It conveys something of its maker's thought, whether he/she is conscious of intending to or not.

These qualities make the thoughtful, biblically-based consideration of art conducive to reflective appreciation. It also helps us take more interest in life, to observe it better, and can lead us to glorify God more fervently.

Because it concerns aesthetic and sensory qualities, art also requires us to

demand of our wishes. When utilitarianism rules all, the universe becomes reduced to systems of business and institutions of human construction. Art may remind us of God's glory in nature and providence, make us aware of human constructions by questioning them, or simply stir up compassion and understanding for various conditions of humanity. Whatever its message, it remains separate from the structure of reality in the sense that *it looks upon it*.

Rethink assumptions

In the Fine Arts, as with any other specialized field, one needs to be informed in order to consider the artwork from more points of view than that of purely personal opinion. Though opinions about “what art is” differ, it’s an undeniable fact that contemporary art has made itself a reputation for alienating or shocking the “lay person”. The media is quick to pick up on sensationally disturbing or controversial works, and what’s publicised and enshrined in institutions of art is often antagonistic to Christian values. Much art does indeed depict fallenness.

Despite citing “contemporary” work above, this situation is nothing new – consider the lavish cultures of the Babylonians and Chaldeans, the snare of

whose worldly glory is mentioned by God when He admonishes Israel’s infatuation with foreign gods and cultures. We can be sure that every kind of immorality was already present in the world at the time of the Flood and after, as well as being represented and expressed. However, as those who create art cannot but be products of their society, spiritual chaos and despair in the arts merely reflect a society bereft of the light of God. As John Piper mentioned in an interview about art, “The secularisation of the modern world has meant the co-opting of many art forms by the world for themes and focuses that are abhorrent to the church.”¹⁰

Fine Arts are definitely not the only arena in which this principle applies.

“A Christian artist ... [has] the richness and fullness of a Christ-dependent worldview that forms a secure point from which to explore and consider the scope of the creative arts from both past and present.”



Much of the popular media that infiltrates daily life promotes decidedly unbiblical values. Greater damage may even be caused by them, as these channels of worldly influence are part of “normal” life. It should be no surprise if the art valued by the world promotes or describes fallenness, since every other worldly medium has its share in doing so. Yet all is not lost, as many artworks also demonstrate God’s glory by making people capable and desirous of creating art. Excellence in creative skill consistently evokes wonder and a sense of things larger than self. There are many artists, some of whom are professing Christians, whose carefully crafted work is well worth thoughtful appreciation.

A Christian artist or art-viewer need not confine his thoughts to what is currently lauded in the world at large. We have the richness and fullness of a Christ-dependent worldview that forms a secure point from which to explore and consider the scope of the creative arts from both past and present. As Hans Rookmaaker has written:

“If ... our world began to change in the eighteenth century as its inner direction was set on a humanistic track, where mankind is the master, and pleasure (through money) and power are the ultimate values, where were the Christians? ... In concentrating on saving souls they have often forgotten that God is the God of life and that the Bible teaches people how to live, how to deal with our world, God’s creation. The result is that even though many people became Christians, nevertheless our world became totally secularized with almost no Christian influence.”¹¹

It is very important, then, that Christians called by God to work in the creative industries strive to be diligent and passionate in their work. By developing their God-given abilities and by being strong voices in the creative community, they can provide an alternative culture to that which is mainstream, simply by doing their work *out of* a Christian worldview.

This definitely need not mean an external, kitschy “Christianising”. Consider instead how the richness of salvation and belief in God makes way for much conceptual freedom. An artist’s upholding of different values than the world’s will also show in his or her creative output – one’s choices, opinions, aims, focus and influences, if flowing out of a strong personal relationship with God,

will be expressive of a biblically Christian worldview.

One exhortation above all applies: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." (Deut 6:5)

So long as God remains our first love, art is worthwhile and beautiful to work in and to explore. Christians in the visual arts have every reason to work hard in the field of their calling, and seek with their lives and their work, to "glorify God, and enjoy Him forever."

Notes

- 1 Anna Garforth, Sporeborne/Shakespeare projects.
- 2 Yoshihiro Suda, plant sculptures.
- 3 Gottfried Helnwein, print installation in Waterford city.
- 4 Cai Guo-Qiang, sculptural installation work.
- 5 Shahzia Sikander, miniature oil paintings.
- 6 Vija Celmins, spiderweb mezzotint "Untitled (Web 2)" 2001.
- 7 John Piper, interview with Bob Allen, "What is the Value of Art in the Church?".
- 8 Schaeffer, Francis A. "Art And the Bible", chapter 1, pg 26.
- 9 In various of his writings, Jonathan Edwards describes the beauty of God displayed in His attributes.
- 10 John Piper, in an interview with Bob Allen, "What is the Value of Art in the Church?".
- 11 Hans Rookmaaker in *Art Needs No Justification*, Chapter 2 – "The Church's Response".

References

- Anna Garforth's online portfolio <http://www.cross-hatchling.co.uk/>
- Yoshihiro Suda's work in Victoria & Albert Museum show "Out of the Ordinary: Spectacular Craft" http://www.vam.ac.uk/vastatic/microsites/1637_outoftheordinary/artists_detail.php?artistTag=suda.
- Gottfried Helnwein, large-scale print installation http://www.helnwein.com/werke/aktionen/bild_3141.html
- Cai Guo Qiang, installations. <http://www.db-art-mag.com/en/57/on-view/hanging-out-at-a-museum-cai-guo-qiang-in-taipei/>
- Shahzia Sikander, miniature oil painting in Indian and Persian tradition. <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/sikander/>
- Vija Celmins, mezzotint print. http://www.met-museum.org/special/vija_celmins/celmins_images.htm
- John Piper and Bob Allen: Interview recorded December 19, 2006 http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/TopicIndex/38_Church_Issues/1916_What_is_the_value_of_art_in_the_church/
- Schaeffer, Francis A.. *Art And the Bible: Two Essays (IVP Classics)*. 2 ed. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007. Print.
- Strachan, Owen, and Doug Sweeney. *Jonathan Edwards on Beauty (The Essential Edwards Collection)*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010. Print.
- Excerpt from Hans Rookmaaker's *Art Needs No Justification*, Chapter 2 – The Church's Response, can be accessed via http://www.dickstaub.com/culturewatch.php?record_id=912

A few more books that are helpful for understanding contemporary fine arts:

- Rookmaaker, H. R.. *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture*. Leicester, England: Crossway Books, 1994. Print.
- Veith, Gene Edward. *State of the Arts: From Bezael to Mapplethorpe (Turning Point Christian Worldview Series)*. Leicester, England: Crossway Books, 1991. Print.

Weixin is currently a fourth year student in the BA(Hons) Fine Arts programme at Lasalle College of the Arts, Singapore, majoring in Printmaking.

She is a member of Ebenezer Church, a Reformed Baptist congregation in Singapore.

If you've thoughts or questions about this article, art and faith issues, or would like to share about your own art/ design practice, do feel free to contact her via her website at <http://microchiroptera.moonfruit.com/#/contact/4541918023>.

World in focus

Bishop E.W. Jackson Sr. denounces U.S. Attorney General for ignoring voter intimidation by the New Black Panther Party in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on election day 2008

Bishop E.W. Jackson Sr. of Staying True to America's National Destiny (STAND), a grassroots organisation dedicated to ending the racial divide, on 1 July 2010 denounced U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder for refusing to prosecute members of the New Black Panther Party that stood outside a Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, polling station on Election Day 2008, in black uniforms and carrying nightsticks, physically blocking the voting entrance at times and making racially incendiary statements such as, "Now you are about to be ruled by the black man, cracker." They also called white voters "devils."

The New Black Panther Party emblem, as shown on their website, shows a black panther (cat) in the foreground of the African continent, with the motto

"Freedom or Death" on the bottom border.

+ *Christian News Wire*

Ian Paisley condemns Roman Catholic Pontiff's planned September 2010 visit to Scotland

A 2 July 2010 BBC article titled "Pope Benedict XVI UK visit a 'mistake' says Ian Paisley" reports that former Democratic Unionist Party leader, member of the European Parliament, founding member of the Free Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and soon-to-be United Kingdom House of Lords member, Ian Paisley spoke out against the Roman Pontiff's upcoming September 2010 visit to Scotland.

Paisley said: "I think he should not be invited to the country. We have had a terrible happening in Ireland with the priests and monks and nuns all taking part in acts of disgraceful behaviour with young people, and we haven't seen the [Roman] Catholic Church taking a strong stand on this," he told the BBC World

Service. A person, like some of the priests we've had, destroying the lives of young people and then going out and saying 'I can forgive sins', it's only right that be called what it is. That is anti-Christ in teaching and in doctrine.

+ *BBC*

North Carolina House of Representatives Chaplain relieved of duties after praying in Jesus' name

A 9 July 2010 Fox News article by Todd Starnes titled "Pastor Yanked From Capitol Over 'Jesus' Prayer" reports that Ron Baity, pastor of the Berean Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, was invited to lead the opening prayers for the North Carolina House of Representatives as honorary chaplain for the week of 31 May 2010, until a house clerk asked to read the text of Baity's prayer, saw "Jesus" at the end of the prayer, and told Baity that it was preferred that he didn't pray in Jesus' name because it would offend some of

the people present.

Baity protested, the situation was brought to the attention of House Speaker Joe Hackney, and Baity was relieved of his honorary chaplain duties.

+ *Fox New*

Church of Scotland one of many voices against Assisted Suicide Bill before Scottish Parliament

A 23 June 2010 article on The Christian Institute website titled "Fresh Blow to Scottish Assisted Suicide Bill" reports that eighty-six percent of the 601 individuals and organisations consulted about the Assisted Suicide Bill before the Scottish Parliament are opposed to its intent to legalise assisted suicide for terminally ill and permanently physically incapacitated people.

One of the consulted groups was the Church of Scotland, which cautioned that the bill if passed would allow assisted suicide for sixteen-year-olds, and that sixteen-year-olds that are too young to drink alcohol and drive vehicles are not emotionally mature enough to make decisions to kill themselves.

+ *The Christian Institute*

The Trinity Foundation announces new resources

The Trinity Foundation has published Gordon Clark's book "Good and Evil: The Problem Solved" in audio format, which is available for US\$5.00 as a download in MP3 format or on CD, plus shipping and handling.

Additionally, three articles have been added to the website's "Horror Files" section:

- John Piper Invites Rick Warren to speak at 2010 Desiring God Conference
- Bruce Waltke - Theistic Evolution Controversy
- Presbyterian Evangelistic Fellowship Invites Roman Catholic Speaker

+ *The Trinity Foundation*

U.S. attacks Egypt over homosexual rights at UN

NEW YORK, July 8 (C-FAM) At the United Nations (UN) last month, several U.S. representatives attacked Egypt for asking for further investigation into a homosexual advocacy organisation which has applied for special consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council. These attacks culminated in a sharp rebuke delivered last week by U.S. ambassador Susan Rice. The actions seem to contravene President Obama's

strategy of engaging Egypt and other Muslim societies in key foreign policy aims such as Middle East peace.

+ *Susan Yoshihara, Ph.D.*

PCUSA suffers three percent membership decline in 2009

The Office of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) on 1 July 2010, released a report showing that membership statistics for 2009 reflect a drop of 63,027 members, or three percent from 2008 - from 2,140,165 in 2008 to 2,077,138 in 2009.

UN creates what may become a billion dollar agency for radical feminism

NEW YORK, July 8 (C-FAM) Last Friday the General Assembly voted to consolidate four separate United Nations (UN) bodies dedicated to women's issues into one new gender equality entity called "UN Women." The resolution capped a victory for radical feminists who lobbied for years for the new entity and is the latest in an overall push to bring women's issues even more onto the UN agenda.

+ *Samantha Singson and Amanda Pawloski*

US rams through UN approval of homosexual group that opposes religious freedom

NEW YORK, July 22 (C-FAM) The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) voted this week on a US-led initiative to accredit the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC). The move effectively bypassed a subsidiary committee's decision to defer action on the group until it answered questions about its support of new homosexual 'rights,' which many Member States believe directly conflict with recognised rights to freedom of religion and freedom of expression. The Obama administration has been an active champion of IGLHRC's application to the UN since the June meeting of the committee on non-governmental organisations (NGOs) when US representatives insisted on an immediate vote on IGLHRC even though other committee members still had unanswered questions.

+ *Samantha Singson*

Sealed church in Indonesia

Compass Direct News Service reports that since 11th April, 2010 The Gereja Kristen Indonesia (GKI) Taman Yasmin Church in Bogor, West Java, Indonesia, has held services on the roadside in

front of the sealed church in stifling heat, after the mayor of the Bogor had sealed the church building. The church had received an official building permit from the Bogor City government, but because a Muslim group that objected to the presence of a church, its construction was stopped and later sealed. The church brought a law suit against the sealing of the church premises and in spite that it won the court case, permission has not been granted to use the building for worship. The church has filed a religious discrimination appeal with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief.

WEA Religious Liberty - July 2010

Christian beaten and forcibly reconverted to Hinduism in India

Christians in India suffer similar threats from Hindus as Christians in Pakistan from Muslims. On 8th June 2010 a 19-year-old Christian boy Bhaktat Bivar was beaten and tortured in his home, after which he was forced to undergo a ceremony of conversion to Hinduism in the local Hindu temple in Nuapada district, Orissa, India. Police arrested five of the assailants, who after charges were released. VOM Canada reports that according to the Global Council of Indian Christians the recent new rise of violence against Christians in Orissa State after the 2008 pogroms has some hidden interest behind it.

WEA Religious Liberty - July 2010

Professor beaten for refusing to convert to Islam in Pakistan

On the morning on 14th June 2010, at the University of Peshawar, the psychology Professor Samuel John was attacked and severely beaten by 20-25 Muslim students after he refused their demand to convert to Islam. The wife of the Professor, trying to help him, was beaten as well. The Christian Professor had recently been honoured with an award for best results in psychology at colleges throughout Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province, which according to some Christian sources irritated the Muslim community. The Professor continues to receive threats for him and his family, even in hospital. Police have refused to register the incident. The University officials are also taking no actions, paralyzed by powerful Islamic groups. Compass Direct has reported that other Professors have decided to go on strike on John's behalf, demanding an apology from the students who threatened him. The same

report states that in another Pakistani village in Southern Punjab Province, Muslim administrators have asked three Christian students in the eighth grade to leave the school because they refused to convert to Islam.

WEA Religious Liberty – July 2010

Muslim mob in Jhelum, Pakistan murders wife and four children of recently transferred Christian policeman

An 8 July 2010 ASSIST News article by Dan Wooding titled “Muslim Mob Kills Wife, Children of Christian in Pakistan” reports that the wife and four children of a Christian policeman recently transferred from Gujrat to Jhelumto, Pakistan, on 21 June 2010, were murdered by a Muslim mob led by Muslim religious leader Maulana Mahfooz Khan, who stormed the policeman’s house and killed the policeman’s wife and children after accusing the policeman’s eleven-year old son of blaspheming Muhammad.

Authorities in Jhelumto have filed no charges against the murders because they fear Khan.

Presbyterian clergyman Saleem Mall reported that the Christian policeman said: “I am a poor man, I have a family, and I was pressured by higher authorities not to register the FIR [First Information Report] as Khan is a very influential

man. I am sorry; I don’t have anything in my hands.” The policeman later filed a complaint with the chief minister of the Punjab Province.

The Presbyterian clergyman commented: “We condemn this brutal murder of innocent children in the name of Islam. This has to stop now. We appeal to the government to let us live in peace.”

+ Assist USA

Somali Muslims execute Christian

A 7 July 2010 ASSIST News article by Jeremy Reynolds titled “Somali Islamists Execute Christian Convert” reports that Christian convert from Islam Muhammad Guul Hashim Idiris set out by land from an Ethiopian border town in Somalia to visit his mother in Mogadishu, Somalia, when a fellow passenger recognised the Christian convert, and asked him if he thought the prophet Muhammad was a genuine messenger from God. Idiris answered “If I thought so, I would have believed in him instead of the Messiah.”

Once they reached the Al-Qaeda-linked Al-Shabaab terror network stronghold of the Hudur district of Somalia, the Muslim fellow-traveler reported Idiris to Al-Shabaab. Idiris was charged with blaspheming Mohammad, then executed 1 July 2010 in a makeshift stadium attended by hundreds of people includ-

ing school children forced to watch the grizzly martyrdom of Idiris.

+ Assist USA

Unregistered religious activities considered as extremism in Kazakhstan

Forum 18 News Service has reported on disturbing intentional association of unregistered religious activities with extremism, separatism and terrorism by the State authorities in Kazakhstan. The report states that Muslims and Baptists have been increasingly targeted in 2010 by Kazakhstan’s regional police departments for the fight against extremism, separatism and terrorism in Kazakhstan. Anti-terrorism police in particular has targeted the Council of Churches Baptists – who on principle refuse to seek state registration. Insisting that state registration is compulsory, state authorities are putting intentional pressure on unregistered peaceful religious communities in Kazakhstan, in contradiction to Kazakh law and international human rights standards.

WEA Religious Liberty – July 2010

Please pray for the Christians in troubled parts of the world who are suffering for Christ. Pray that the Lord would bring to naught the efforts of the enemies of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

An organist’s lament

John O Holtslag

Well-known British composer, Arthur Sullivan, had been trying for several years to put music to a poem composed by Adelaide A. Proctor, entitled “The Lost Chord”. It was not until he was faced with the loss of his brother Fred, who died a slow, lingering death, that grief evoked wonderful music from Arthur’s pen as he composed the song tremendously popular around the beginning of the 20th century.

Arthur Sullivan was already well known for hymn tunes such as “Onward Christian Soldiers” (PsH 466) and “Give thanks to God, for good is He” (PsH 284).

He lived in a time when church music was much alive and when many of the songs we still sing today were born.

The song speaks of the organist’s longing to hear again that “chord of music, like the sound of a great Amen”. And then through the weariness, pain and sorrow of discordant life flooded this wondrous sound, “like the close of an angel’s psalm”. It struck him deeply and gave him a peace that only heaven “will speak in again”.

Reading the story of the “Lost Chord” and the pain and grief that brought Sullivan to compose this music, brought to mind emotions I have often felt as an organist in one of the Reformed

Churches of New Zealand.

My earliest experience of accompanying congregational singing goes back to 1962 when, on the ship that brought my family from Holland, the call went out for someone to play the grand piano in the A. Lounge, where a worship service was to be held. My parents, who had encouraged me in organ lessons for some six years, put up their hands, pointed at me, and there I was – never having ever played a piano! It must have worked out all right, for when we arrived in Wellington, it was not long before I joined the veritable duo of Aart Snoek and Corrie van Selm, accompanying the congregation on the two manual pipe organ in

“Should we look to the world to guide us in our singing or the Scripture? As “Sola Scriptura” Christians we need to bring our very best to the Lord”

the Congregational Church, in which the Reformed Church of Wellington was worshipping at that time.

Those early years were magic for an 18 year old. In addition to playing in our own church I received further organ lessons on the 4 manual pipe organ in Wellington’s Old St. Pauls. This organ has since been refurbished and moved to the new St. Pauls Cathedral, while my teacher, Mr Eric Copperwheat, left for Masterton. This ended my lessons – though not without giving me a real taste of what the music of the church can be.

I have continued accompanying the singing in our Reformed Churches since those days on pipe organ, electronic organ, digital organ, piano and even a “honky tonk” pianola.

Highs and lows

Over the years there have been many

highs and lows – the conflicting emotions felt by Sullivan on the organ bench being experienced almost every Sunday with congregational singing that seemed cold and unresponsive, because they have to sing and not because they want to, and where the heart just did not seem to be alive. Other times I have sat on the organ bench with tears in my eyes when the congregation was alive and responsive, aware of the words of the song and singing with hearts aflame and voices raised, aware of the wonderful grace of God that surrounds us, undeserved but also unreserved. All this reminds me of Psalm 51:15-17 and the Lord calling His people to hearts filled with gratitude in response to His marvelous works.

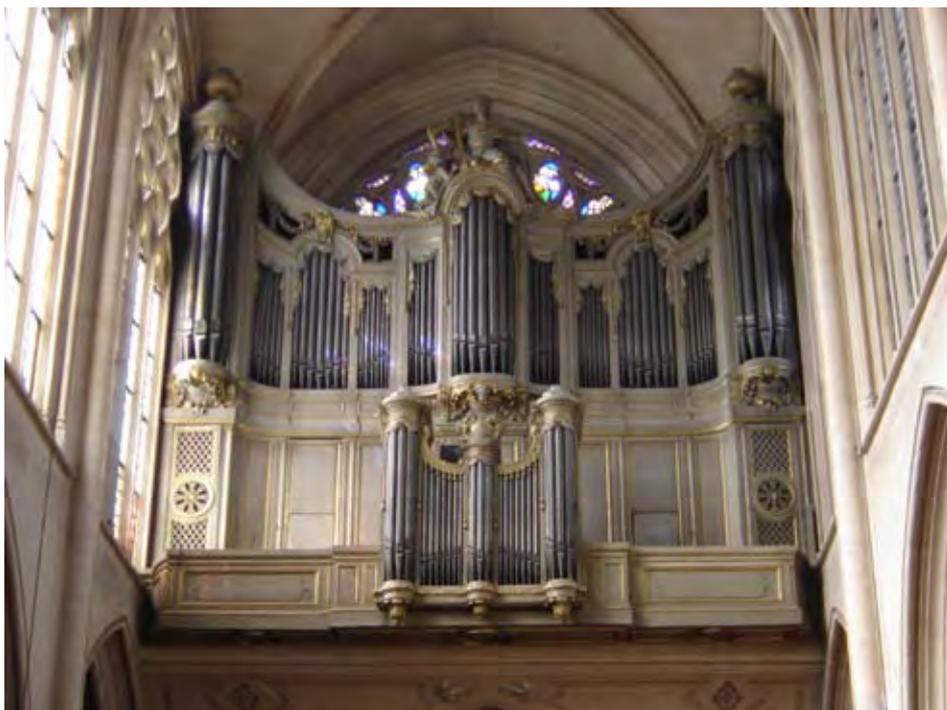
This makes me wonder about the music of our churches. How are we doing? Does it really matter? Or are we only to be concerned about the words? I am sorry to say it, but I do not think that

our churches have done very well when it comes to appreciation and recognition of the music of the Church of Christ. In many congregations any willing member, able to give a starting note on a piano, will be accepted. Little training, if any, takes place. Even in our seminaries and theological colleges, little time is spent on the singing of the congregation with almost total emphasis on the preaching. Now I would not want to undermine or underestimate the importance and centrality of the preaching. It has always been the cornerstone of biblical worship. But the congregational response to that preaching must not be underestimated either. The one response activity in which the congregation is immediately and actively involved appears, sometimes, to be secondary – as long as we have that “sound preaching”. In line with developments in other denominations, song leaders, music groups and contemporary music will find their way into our churches as well. Church music will take on an entity of its own as congregations surrounded by a society permeated with music of all sorts, will want a style of music fitting their society-trained minds. Pressure to succumb to this will come, especially from our younger members, who already now fill their minds with Hillsong and other contemporary sounds. Does that make contemporary music wrong or sinful? Not at all, but, the music of the church at worship as a corporate activity is much more than contemporary sounds, popular in society. It must be balanced, biblical, Christ-centered, harmonious and suitable for the whole congregation to sing.

Biblical principles

The Statement of Principle for music, adopted by our churches at the 2005 Synod, gives four liturgical motifs which should underpin all our worship: It [music] should be biblical, catholic, confessional and pastoral – and these ought to complement one another.

Hence all the preaching, the praying and the singing done in corporate worship should form one unit, fully complementing each other. The singing is not a separate entity. The music not apart from the words, the songs unconnected to the preaching. And whether these songs are contemporary ditties that repeat the same lines over and over, or songs that are (sometimes) poorly paraphrased, ancient, poeticised and metricised so-called “psalms,” unless there is a direct connection between them and



The pipe organ in Saint-Germain l’Auxerrois, Paris. <http://en.wikipedia.org>



Weingarten Basilika, Gabler-Organ.
<http://en.wikipedia.org>

the preached message, we will flounder in the quagmire of confusion and allow for the ever-increasing influence of the sounds of the world into our worship. Whatever ideas they contain they are a poor match for a soundly preached message. By their very nature they are often less than fit for worship, – in worship we should surely only be singing what is of the very best quality?

God ordained

In 1 Chronicles 23 we find the biblical record of David's gathering of the Levites for temple service. 4000 were assigned to be musicians "to offer praises to the Lord with the instruments that David made for giving praise (Verse 5)." Trumpets and cymbals were used to call the people together, and other instruments were also used for the songs of God (1 Chronicles 16:42). Their purpose was the dedication of the Temple. Can we allow a disconnection between the Old and New Testament with regard to the praises of our God? Was music merely an extra, or did it take a genuine and God-ordained place in the worship of God's people? And have we not even more reason to praise Him in even grander ways? We may dwell on the glorious, completed work of Christ and have before us the view of heaven's worship in the Book of Revelation. Should we look to the world to guide us in our singing or the Scripture? As "Sola Scriptura" Christians we need to bring our very best to the Lord and that means we use the best instruments to accompany voices singing with hearts aflame and alive, to the best of our abilities. And this is where my conviction must be displayed. Is a guitar or drums or a violin or piano our best? The piano is a percussion instrument, where

a hammer is made to strike a string, the guitar, is a string instrument with a soft sound and drums have really only one purpose; to give the beat! How well do they blend with the human voice, where air passes the vocal reeds?

Train our people

I firmly hold that there is one instrument still recognised in our culture as an instrument well-suited to the worship of God. And that is the pipe organ. Here too we find air passing through a pipe, past a reed, emulating beautifully the human voice. We live in a time where quality digital organs can reproduce the sound of a pipe organ very well and are readily available at modest prices. What price are we willing to pay to promote and enhance our worship? We need to train our young people with ecclesiastical and liturgical principles so they will grow up both understanding and appreciating what biblical worship is. Perhaps we need to train ourselves and our office bearers. A good test to see how much we appreciate sound Christian music is to check how much we listen to it on any given day and how many CDs or DVDs we keep on our shelves, or how much reading we have done on the subject? And how much singing do we do in our homes or just when we get together? The Scriptures teach us that it is an important means of communicating with each other! (Colossians 3: 16 and Ephesians 5:19)

Feeling and emotion

Arthur Sullivan discovered the wonder of heavenly music in his dream while seated at the organ and perhaps only those who are involved with the making of music, especially the music of the church of Christ, will understand the depths of feeling and emotion involved in its production. Yet, like Sullivan, we all have before us the sound of that great Amen, or with the words of Revelation:

"To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honour and glory and dominion forever and ever".

And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen". And the elders fell down and worshipped".
 (Revelation 5:13, 14).

May our "Amens" resound in preparation for our eternal worship and may we "sing to the Lord a new song and His praises in the congregation of the godly ones". (PsH 149:1).

The Lost Chord

by Arthur Sullivan

Seated one day at the organ,
 I was weary and ill at ease,
 And my fingers wandered idly
 Over the noisy keys;
 I know not what I was playing,
 Or what I was dreaming then,
 But I struck one chord of music,
 Like the sound of a great Amen,
 Like the sound of a great Amen.

It flooded the crimson twilight,
 Like the close of an angel's psalm,
 And it lay on my fevered spirit,
 With a touch of infinite calm,
 It quieted pain and sorrow,
 Like love overcoming strife,
 It seemed the harmonious echo
 From our discordant life,
 It linked all the perplexed
 meanings

Into one perfect peace,
 And trembled away into silence,
 As if it were loth to cease;
 I have sought but I seek it vainly,
 That one lost chord divine,
 Which came from the soul of the
 organ,
 And entered into mine.

It may be that death's bright angel
 Will speak in that chord again;
 It may be that only in Heav'n
 I shall hear that great Amen,
 It may be that death's bright angel
 Will speak in that chord again;
 It may be that only in Heav'n
 I shall hear that great Amen.

Feminine focus

Sally Davey

Home is where the heart lies

I've always enjoyed household activities, and home-related work. That's not really a surprise to me: my mother, her mother and her grandmother were all enthusiastic homemakers – and very good ones. My father's mother was a very artistic lady, and I always admired her ability to make home a beautiful place. All my feminine forebears loved home, and did all they could with their many talents to make home an orderly, beautiful and welcoming place to be.

My mother and her mother were very good at sewing, and taught me a great many ways to make clothes, furnishings for the house, and decorative embroidered items. I still have some pretty gifts my grandmother stitched for me when I was young. They both taught me, through their example and their encouragement, what lovely things a woman working at home could create, both for her own family and for all those whom they loved.

Treasuring little things

They also showed me how to treasure little things – particularly things passed on from earlier generations – and with them, to make home a place reflecting a homemaker's background and personality. My mother has a whole wall in her staircase devoted to framed photographs of our family, going back to my great-great grandparents. I love to look at them as I walk upstairs in her house. One of her favourite books, Elizabeth Goudge's *Bird in the Tree*, tells of a woman named Lucilla Eliot who, weary in the aftermath of the First World War, takes her orphaned grandson, buys a rundown old house in the country, and restores it with love, making it a beautiful home for future generations of her family. Lucilla furnished her home with the best of the old things she loved:

"For it is one of the special mercies of providence, Lucilla was apt to say, that beauty and shabbiness are quite compatible. The great thing, she would tell her grandchildren, is to start well. A thing of beauty is a joy for ever, but it must be costly and strong beauty, purchased at a high price of service or sacrifice, not skin-deep but bone-deep, if it is to be as desirable at the shabby end as it was at the sumptuous beginning." She rejoiced

in her old Sheraton chairs, whose tapestry seats had been worked in lovely, hand-dyed colours by her grandmother. Lucilla, an old lady now, was "securely enthroned in a home where there was enough money for the creation of dignity and beauty but not enough for luxury or ostentation"¹

Now, I am not an expert on handicrafts or home management – and neither is my house a model of beauty or orderliness. But I do love this way of thinking about homes and homemaking, and I am thankful to my forebears for the values they shared with me. What they loved is my ideal. It is a worthy and worthwhile calling to be a lady at home, a homemaker who loves her home and welcomes others to share in its beauty, and in its rest.

A place of belonging

Home is a very biblical idea. The Scriptures speak of home in a number of ways – but they are consistent from beginning to end. Not only is it a place where you and your family live – a shelter warm and secure, and a refuge from the wear and tear of the world. It is also the place where you and your people (your wider family) belong – whence you return from distant places. It is where your identity lies. This is why the people of Judah, exiled in Babylon, lamented as they did in Psalm 137. How they longed to be in Jerusalem, rather than in this "foreign land" (v. 4). It is how I felt at boarding school about the hill and harbour setting of my family farm. How I loved the golden sunset drive home along winding gravel roads whenever we had a weekend holiday from school! That farm is where I *belonged*.

Home, in biblical terms, is also where our work is based – a vocational centre, so to speak. This is exactly the picture we find in Proverbs 31 – a wife and mother busy managing household operations, considering business propositions to be pursued – from home – and finding encouragement in the fruit of her labours.

A place longed for

But there's more to it than this. Home, in the big biblical picture, is heaven. This is the place we are headed; this is



My grandmother's parents' (my great-grandparents') golden wedding celebration, 30th December, 1952. Photo taken on the front doorstep of the home they lived in for their entire married life in Gladstone, Invercargill.

the place where our Lord Jesus reigns; this is where He has gone to prepare a place for us. This is the place we long for. Uncomfortable, burdened by the sin that so easily entangles us, at times ridiculed and persecuted, we are never quite at home in this world. We are homesick for the place where there are no more tears and crying; no more suffering or sin or death.

But there is a very real sense in which our earthly homes may be a little taste of heaven on earth – if they are filled with Christian love, managed in orderliness and decorated with an eye for beauty. This is a task that women (to my mind) are specially suited for. We love to care for others, we have a natural bent for creating lovely surroundings – nest-making, if you will. We are the ones to whom God has given the task of loving our husbands, caring for small children; and welcoming strangers for rest and refreshment. Obviously our husbands have a vital role in these as well; but if we are at home while he is busy in the working world, we have the special blessing of giving more time to them.

A place of activity

But too much can be made of this. And too great an emphasis may lead to certain distortions in the directions given to Christian ladies about their lives at home. It is possible to define homemaking too narrowly, for instance. So often I've heard sermons and read books that convey a heavy-handed insistence on the woman's place being in the home – and then confine this work to examples of housework, child-rearing and cooking! (I am uncomfortably reminded of Hitler's dictum that the place of women is "Kinder, Kirche, Küche" – children, church, kitchen.) Actually, home should be a *base for operations* of many kinds. There are so many operations that are good and worthwhile! There are home-improvement tasks, which include decoration, repainting, repair and re-covering of furniture, the redesigning of a garden. There is the creative work of sewing clothes for yourself or your family. You may be a writer, edifying others with your insight or creativity. You may be the family historian, recording what God has done in your family through the generations. You may be the grandmother who has "special time" for her grandchildren (or other people's children). You may be the beloved church seamstress, making beautiful dresses for the church's brides



My grandmother leaving her family home in Invercargill for her wedding, 6th November, 1929.

and their bridesmaids. You may be a former nurse who specialises in comforting the sick in their fears and suffering. I could go on – but you get the idea ...

The point is, you see, that work at home is also work beyond the home. The influence of what we do while at home can spread far beyond the outside walls of our house or garden. And so it *should*. We cannot confine our work as homemakers to our immediate families only. To be sure, while children are small our time may be wholly taken up with caring for them and our husbands. But even then, our lives will brush with others as they come into our homes (or we go into theirs) and they see how we deal with our children and talk to them. Everything we do and say, really, is an aspect of our witness to Christ in this fallen world. No matter what our stage in life's journey, we should be finding opportunity to talk with others about our Saviour. No Christian is exempt.

Endless possibilities

Then there is the rest of our lives, when we have freedom to work outside the home in many capacities. This does not mean that you need to do it for profit (as did the Proverbs 31 woman) in order for it to be justified. You might be volunteering your time for a community organisation or serving in some capacity in the church. You might be taking a course to learn some new skill, equipping yourself for further useful work of some kind. But many women I know

take on some kind of part-time work to earn "a little extra" to help their children through university or to send funds to a struggling relative overseas – and there is nothing wrong with that. There are also endless possibilities for work from home – either in running a business, working part-time via the internet, or having some home-based wider ministry through which you serve. Doing it at home has many advantages: no travel time or cost; it's easier to get other homemaking tasks done; and there's the pleasure of doing things in one's own home environment.

Of course, there are challenges in being a worker-at-home. It is difficult to manage one's time efficiently. And there are many temptations to waste time. No one (except the baby, perhaps!) will notice if you spend an hour more on Facebook than you should, or half a morning watching TV while the beds are unmade. Choices can be difficult: do I edit my article or finish sewing the jacket? Mow the lawn or prepare a bible study? Visit an elderly friend or have coffee with my unbelieving neighbour? All are necessary – but in which order? It can be hard to be efficient when no one else is watching. But, of course – God, who cares about our stewardship of time – is.

God-honouring

Then there is the temptation to be embarrassed about our calling. The world – and actually, many husbands



Family portrait gallery in my mother's stairwell.

– think women should be out working for pay; and contributing to the household income, the mortgage on the home, or their own pleasure and sense of self-worth. It sounds so, well, *small*, to answer “what do you do?” with “I work at home” or “I’m a stay-at-home

mother”. Part of the problem is that workers-at-home have so many varying tasks that listing them all would take too long. (I actually have trouble remembering all the things I do at home, with the consequence that whoever I’m talking to has reason for thinking I don’t do all that

much!) Another part is that “the world” thinks homemaking is basically unskilled labour, and of little value – aside from the small matter of its being unpaid ... But a lot depends on our own attitude to our work at home. If we really and truly believe that it is worthwhile, God-honouring work that we do, our faces will show our gratitude for that valuable thing that has been entrusted to us. Out of the heart the mouth speaks – and next time you answer the “what do you do?” question – this time with an enthusiastic demeanour – you are speaking volumes for the worthiness of your calling.

So there’s the general idea: home is a good place to be working – barring financial crises or other extraordinary circumstances. How we might approach specific home-based types of work will be the subject of my next few articles.

Notes

- 1 Elizabeth Goudge, *The Bird in the Tree* (Hodder Paperbacks, 1967), p. 56. (First published 1940)

Focus on home

Andrew Reinders

Gleanings from our bulletins...

Avondale

Last Monday, Melissa Caterina Ploeg was born to Phil and Jane (a sister for Charlotte). We praise God for this gift of new life and pray for his strength and wisdom as they bring up their children in the ways of the Lord.

Bishopdale

Pastoral Notes. For those of you with children, particularly younger children, there is a very simple catechism designed to aid the learning of key biblical doctrines (for parents and children!). It is called The Children’s Shorter Catechism and it has quite simple, normally one line, questions and answers, such as, “Who made you? God. Where do you learn how to love and obey God? In the Bible

alone. What is justification? It is God forgiving sinners, and treating them as if they had never sinned.” There is a freely available pdf version on the internet that can be printed off. The link is

<http://karijo.files.wordpress.com/2007/11/catechism.pdf>

Pastoral Notices. The Maths of God’s Grace: Jesus plus nothing equals everything, and everything minus Jesus equals nothing. As we look at Romans again this morning, may this truth delight our hearts and bring all glory to God.

Christchurch

Pastoral. Rev. Barry and Ann James arrive on Tuesday evening from Canberra. We look forward to them arriving and then ministering amongst us for 9 weeks. May the Lord grant them safe travel and strengthen them in His service.

Pastoral. We give thanks to the Lord for the safe arrival of Grace Ruby Alberts, born to Nicholas and Kirsten Alberts last Sunday afternoon. We rejoice in the birth of this covenant child and remember in prayer her physical and

spiritual welfare, and for grace(!) and strength to Nic and Kirsten in her upbringing.

Dovedale

From the Elders – The Lord’s Day. For some months now, the elders have been considering the subject of Lord’s Day observance. As a guide for us as office-bearers, a document of principles and guidelines has been drawn up. We have done this, as the document states, because, “how we use the Lord’s Day is a measure of how we value what God has done for us and given us.” If any of you would like a copy of this document, please speak to your elder.

Dunedin

Billboards and Buses. Evangelistic billboards are soon to be erected by the Atheistic Bus Campaign. The ads – which read “There’s probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life.” – created a storm when they ran on buses in the United Kingdom last year. The spokesman for the campaign, Simon Fisher, said the billboards would get the

atheist message out into the public while the group awaited a decision on whether the Office of Human Rights Proceedings would represent them in a discrimination case against NZ Bus for refusing to run the ads last year. So there you have it! Atheists are becoming zealous for their non-faith! Atheists are claiming they have been discriminated against because a company decides not to run their ad for their non-faith. I wonder what the atheists would do if some theists ran an ad like: "God says people who say they don't believe in God are fools." How should we Christians respond? I believe the first thing to do is ask the atheists why they are not certain of their non-belief in God. Why do they say "There's probably no God? Is a probable non-belief in God solid enough to base life-shaping decisions on? I, for one, want something more substantial on which to base my life-shaping decisions. Of course the contemporary atheist is in a dilemma. On the one hand he doesn't want to be seen as dogmatic (by saying "there is no God") because that has implications for other people's beliefs. And how dare anyone declare that another person's beliefs are wrong? But on the other hand he is after all an atheist, meaning he believes there is no God. And he believes it so strongly that he wants other people to believe it too. That's why he is trying to run an evangelistic ad campaign. So what does he do? He softens his message by saying, "There's probably no God." That is, he waters down his doctrine to make it more palatable. As a result his ad is so convictionless that no one needs to take him seriously! There's probably not a God, but there might be – what's it matter anyway? I'll just believe what I want and enjoy my life. There is a second response we can make. The ad implies that people who believe in God are worrying and not enjoying their life. So I ask, what evidence do you have for that claim? In fact, those who truly believe in the God who reveals Himself in Scripture, those who are absolutely convinced that God is the Creator of all things and upholds and governs all things according to His perfect will, are not worriers. They are the most contented of all people because they have the assurance of eternal life. They are content even in difficult circumstances, even in adversity, even when things appear to go badly for them. Why? Because they know that as surely as Jesus died for them and rose victorious from the grave,

so surely will He keep them. They know that nothing can separate them from the God who loves them. When have you ever seen an atheist who rests content in his non-god when things don't go well for him?

Church Web Site. We now have an Oamaru Reformed Church web site. On it you will find information about our church, the current bulletin, recent audio sermons, the church calendar and a link to a daily devotional with Bible readings that will take you through the Bible in a year. Check it out: <http://oamaru.rcnz.org.nz> ... (this has been changed from previous bulletins)

Hamilton

From the Pastor: On Friday we said farewell to Ria Le Roux as we committed her body to the ground but we also remembered the hope we have in our living Lord. Pray that the Lord would comfort and strengthen Pieter and his family during their time of mourning.

Pastoral: This morning Luke Scheepers from RPC Bucklands Beach will lead us in worship. Luke is currently studying at the RTC (Geelong) and Ridley College (Melbourne) via distance education and at Laidlaw College in Auckland. He is doing practical work in Bucklands Beach under the supervision of Rev. Dirk van Garderen. Next year he hopes to go to the RTC DV, and study there. We warmly welcome Luke and his wife Danae in our midst this morning. May the Lord bless you and us as we worship Him together.

From the Pastor: Early on Thursday morning (8 July), the Lord suddenly called home to Himself Niek van der Wel after a long illness. Niek was 89 years old. We extend our sympathies to Connie and to Paul & Annamarie and their children as they grieve their loss. But we also rejoice with them that Niek is now in the presence of his Saviour. The funeral will be held here on Tuesday morning (13 July) at 10.30am, followed by the committal at Newstead after which refreshments will be served in the hall.

Congratulations to Cor Feyter who turns 80 tomorrow. He and Adri have been celebrating the occasion with their family at the mount this weekend. Praise God for His sustaining grace.

From the Pastor: Congratulations to Peter & Sara Klinkhamer (and to the proud grandparents Henk & Theresa, Eddie & Dickie!) on the wedding yesterday of David Klinkhamer to Charlie Fick. We pray that the Lord will richly bless David and Charlie in the years to come and that He will establish their home as one where Christ is Lord.

Hastings

From the Pastor. Today we rejoice in the Lord to witness the professions of faith of Jared Grant, Hakan Gulliksen and Elijah Waldron, welcoming these three young men into communicant membership in the congregation. Please join with us during morning tea after the service as we celebrate with Jared, Hakan and Elijah's families.

From the Pastor. Next week we expect to



PALMERSTON NORTH
 Summer School
 of
 THEOLOGY

JANUARY
 2011

(more details to follow)

witness the profession of faith of Hester van Beek and to welcome her into full communicant membership in the church. Praise God for the encouragement to His people of seeing the inward work of the Holy Spirit made evident through public profession.

Hukanui

Church visitation. The Bible says that where there is no vision the people perish or cast of restraint. God forbid that this should happen to us! Let us remain tippy-toes as we stretch forward, ever seeking to experience God's blessing for us as a congregation. As session we plan to display on the notice boards our short term (one year), middle term (three years), and long term (5-7 years) vision. This is where we need input from the congregation. Please prayerfully consider the direction that the Lord would have us go and share your burden/thoughts/ideas for the congregation with one of the church elders. 'Church Vision' has now become part of the Session's permanent agenda.

Masterton

Notes from the Session Meeting. Session met with members of the Committee of Administration and CoA's Building Sub-Committee to interact further on their report about the Homeleigh building and other options for a place of worship. Session has appointed the members of CoA's Building Sub-Committee, namely John Arends, Hettie Arends, John Kloeg, Chris Martin and Peter Snoeijer, as a Building Committee for the church. This Building Committee has been mandated to prepare proposals to bring to an extra Congregation Meeting in regard to disposing of the current church properties in order to acquire another church property for worship.

Dinosaurs and the Bible – Most folk believe that dinosaurs lived millions of years ago. This often leads them to refuting the Bible's account of the history of the Earth and the book of Genesis. But, did you know that dinosaurs are mentioned in the Bible? Adrian Bates will present "Science, Scripture & The Quest For Truth" at 7.00pm on Saturday

31 July at the Lighthouse Church, 23 Intermediate Street Masterton.

Nelson

Beware of This Book- Oprah is pushing it If you have children or grandchildren, work with children at church, or you have neighbourhood children whose parents you know, please take note of the information below and pass it along to others. Schools are distributing this Book to children through the Scholastic Book Club. The name of the book is Conversations with God. James Dobson talked about this book twice this week. It is devastating. Parents, churches and Christian schools need to be aware of it. Please pass this information on to Church/e-mail addresses, Parents, Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles, Cousins, friends. Please pay special attention not only to what your kids watch on TV, in movie theatres, on the Internet, and the music they listen to, but also be alert regarding the books they read. Two particular books are, Conversations with God and Conversations with God for Teens, written by Neale D. Walsch. They sound harmless enough by their titles alone. The books have been on the New York Times best sellers list for a number of weeks, and they make truth of the statement, "Don't judge a book by its cover or title." The author purports to answer various questions asked by kids using the "voice of God". However, the "answers" that he gives are not Bible-based and go against the very infallible word of God. For instance (and I paraphrase), When a girl asks the question "Why am I a lesbian?" His answer is that she was 'born that way' because of genetics (just as you were born right-handed, with brown eyes, etc.). Then he tells her to go out and "celebrate" her differences. Another girl poses the question "I am living with my boyfriend. My parents say that I should marry him because I am living in sin. Should I marry him?" His reply is, "Who are you sinning against? Not me, because you have done nothing wrong." Another question asks about God's forgiveness of sin. His reply "I do not forgive anyone because there is nothing to forgive. There is no such thing as right or wrong and that is what I have been trying to tell everyone, do not judge people. People have chosen to judge one another and this is wrong, because the rule is "judge not lest ye be judged."

Not only are these books the false doctrine of the devil, but in some instances



2011 WELLINGTON LADIES PRESBYTERIAL

We've all heard the saying
'Laughter is good for the soul.'

But did you know that laughter is also good for your health.

Laughter unleashes chemical neurotransmitters and hormones
that contribute to an overall sensation of well-being.

Come and join us at the
2011 Wellington Ladies Presbyterial
for a day of fun, fellowship and most of all laughter.

Mark your calendar now and be sure to be there.

When: 19th March 2011

Where: Foxton
(home of New Zealand's only
full size Dutch Windmill)

"Let us not give up meeting together, ...
but let us encourage one another..."
Heb 10:25

quote (in error) the Word of God. And the list goes on. These books (and others like it) are being sold to schoolchildren through (The Scholastic Book Club), and we need to be aware of what is being fed to our children. The children of our nation are under attack. So I pray that you be sober and vigilant about teaching your children the Word of God, and guarding their exposure to worldly mediums, because our adversary, the devil, roams about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). We know that lions usually hunt for the slowest, weakest and YOUNGEST of its prey. Pass this on to every Believer you know. And, if you are in doubt, check out the books yourself.

Why go to church. A church goer wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday.

"I've gone for 30 years now," he wrote, "and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 Sermons. But for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So, I think I'm wasting my time and the pastors are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all." This started a real controversy in the "Letters to the Editor" column, much to the delight of the editor. It went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher: "I've been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this: They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!"

Pukekohe

From the Pastor. Harriet and I had a restful holiday in Rotorua and Tauranga, reading, sightseeing and soaking in the hot pools! On the Sunday in Rotorua we worshipped at the Grace Presbyterian Church in the morning where they have just begun a church planting work with a Maori minister, Steve Panapa. We enjoyed a blessed service with that small group. In the afternoon we attended a Reformed Baptist fellowship, which was also a blessing. If you holiday in Rotorua over a weekend I would point you to those services as your attendance would be a blessing to you and an encouragement to those small groups. In Tauranga

we worshipped at the Calvary Baptist Church where the service was reverent, the preaching biblical and the fellowship warm. Visiting other churches reminds us again of how important it is to look out for visitors and to make them feel welcome. Let's be sure we do this in our church. If you see people you don't recognise don't just walk past them or leave them standing by themselves – go and welcome them.

Profession of Faith. A number of young people attended the last two Session meetings to discuss their desire to profess their faith in Jesus as Lord and to seek to join the church as communicant members. The Session was very happy to grant the request of each of them and we thank the Lord for bringing them to this point. Michael and Larissa Haverland and Jody Kerkhoven will publicly profess their faith on Sunday 25th of July in the morning service. Mrs Louise Loef, Abel Leenders and Luke Voschezang will profess their faith sometime in August.

From the Pastor. Last Wednesday evening Joanna Voschezang gave birth to another son, Ezekiel William, weighing 7lbs 1oz (3210 grams). We give thanks to God with Roley and Joanna for this wonderful gift of the Lord. Joanna and Ezekiel are home and doing very well.

Silverstream

Holiday Bible Club 2010. Lord willing, we will once again hold this evangelism outreach during the second week of the term 3 school holidays 4 October 2010 to 8 October 2010. The programme this year is focussed on the life of Daniel and his consistent obedience to the Lord despite great tribulations. In order for all things to run smoothly, we will again need many willing and enthusiastic helpers! Please let me know of your desire to help and I will arrange a date and time for our first meeting very soon. Please also bring this outreach before our Father's throne of grace. Looking forward to hearing from you!

China's Faith Explosion. The church is growing in China at a phenomenal rate. According to the Asia Times an average of 10,000 people come to faith in Christ every day. For more information please pamphlet on the notice board.

Wainuiomata

Mid Winter dinner. Our annual dinner will be held on 28th August at 6.00 pm. This year's theme is "International". Our cuisine and dress will represent every

nationality within our church plus a few more. Start thinking about entertainment items you would like to share and costumes.

Church Family. Happy birthday to Jeanette on your 80th (last Monday) and Arie on your 84th (this past Saturday). This is a milestone and we thank the Lord for giving you so many healthy years. May you continue to experience his blessing.

Wellington

Session Report. The elders meet on Tuesday evening and, after meeting with Sylvia Stump, were delighted to agree to her request to make public profession of her faith. This will take place, Lord willing, on July 25, in the same service in which Stephen Geuze will also make a profession of faith.

Short Report of the Auckland Presbytery Meeting, held 25th June, 2010

After opening devotions led by the Rev. John Haverland, the previous minutes were adopted. This was a regular meeting, hence of a rather house-keeping nature. The meeting heard four sessions answer the questions of Art.47 of the Church Order. A few highlights;

Bucklands Beach: the Language Assisted Bible Studies ministry goes on apace with approx fifty people attending at present and is a real blessing to the congregation; the brothers report very encouraging growth over the past few years, especially among the youth, both in numbers and in spiritual depth; presently working to support word and deed ministry in India.

Hamilton: the recent AGM set up a fund to provide financial assistance where necessary for parents to send their children to the Hamilton Christian School; elder districts have monthly fellowship lunches to try to foster fellowship and hopefully also greater participation in fellowship Bible Studies.

Hukanui: they are especially thankful at present to have their new pastor, the Rev. Andre Scheepers; home fellowship groups are growing and one has to divide because of numbers;

North Shore; report that they continue to contribute support to two mis-

sions in Botswana, the session is currently working through a review of church life; seven young people professed their faith over the past nine months, two of whom were formerly not believers; presently encouraged with the attendance of a good number of regular visitors, some of whom come from unbelieving backgrounds; Marlene van Tonder is presently teaching in Tanzania in conjunction with Africa Inland Mission.

Among Correspondence In, a letter was received from the Student Deputies noting their support of Luke Scheepers of Bucklands Beach as a student for the ministry. He is presently studying Hebrew at Laidlaw College (formerly BCNZ), having completed Greek last year, and is working on his first year studies for his MDiv with Geelong at home, intending to move to Geelong next year to complete the degree.

The Rev. Dirk van Garderen gave a brief preview of changes taking place in the missions that the National Diaconate Committee supports – see more on this in articles Dirk is presently writing for Faith in Focus. There was some discussion on a paper presented by Hamilton regarding the way we go about home missions/church planting – whether we should more formally do things as a presbytery rather than as local congregations. This may come back on the table at a later date. Hukanui reported on their planning for the annual Presbytery Men's Study Day which this year will be on evangelism, Lord willing.

The next Presbytery meeting is planned for 23rd July for the purpose

of conducting a colloquium doctum with the Rev. Peter Moelker, ex OPC, minister elect of Avondale. We rejoice with the Avondale congregation on this progress after a four year vacancy and trust Peter may be able to be installed in the very near future and give many years faithful service.

Reporter: John Rogers.

Short Report of the Christchurch Presbytery Meeting on 10 July 2010

The Rev. Andre Holtslag, on behalf of the Reformed Church of Dovedale (the convening church), read from Matthew 6:10b, "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," and encouraged the delegates to seek the Lord's will in all their work, and to set aside the will of man. In this, we become more like the Lord Jesus whose "food" was to do His Father's will. He then opened in prayer and hymn 462 was sung by the delegates, before handing over to the Rev. Bruce Hoyt, who chaired the rest of the meeting.

Messrs Graeme Zuidema and Arie Geerlofs reported on the South Island Presbytery deacons' conference planned for later in August. The Rev. Andrew de Vries also reported that no South Island presbytery liaison to the National Publications Committee was required.

A list of 16 songs was submitted by

the Reformed Church of Bishopdale for approval as songs suitable for worship within the Presbytery. After an extended discussion, the Presbytery deferred a decision on these songs until its next meeting.

In answer to Article 47 questions Nelson, Dovedale, and Bishopdale all reported on the Lord's blessing within their congregations. The Rev. Daniel Wilson is travelling to the USA for a month to be with his ailing father, and requested prayer for himself and the congregation. The Rev. Robert van Wichen will also be in the USA until early October.

The Rev. Bruce Hoyt gave an oral report on the work of the Overseas Mission Board, which was discussed by the meeting. He addressed and explained the Board's financial shortfall and the steps being taken to remedy this.

With regard to vacant pulpit reports, and in the absence of the Rev. Robert van Wichen, the Rev. Andrew de Vries read out a summary of the meeting that some of the Presbytery ministers and elders held with the Rev. Tim Rott while he visited with the Cornwall St congregation. This was an *ad hoc* meeting called to help the Presbytery with its considerations regarding whether or not to declare the Rev. Rott available for call, as he comes from a non-sister church. After discussion, it was agreed to declare him eligible for call. The Rev. Bruce Hoyt reported that both Dunedin and Oamaru are taking small steps towards having independently-functioning sessions. Worship services in Timaru have ceased. However, a Bible study group

Christian Managers (Couple) WANTED, for Fiji Resort on Kadavu Island.

Will need a good understanding of Biblical teachings and principles.

Experience in Management, Computers and Marketing required. Outgoing personalities, good people skills and an interest in diving essential. Motor mechanical skills an advantage.

**Position also available for a Christian Dive Instructor.*

Apply to conny@divekadavu.com



continues to meet. Dunedin is hoping to have the Rev. Mark Wheat of the Tyler O.P.C. church visit them soon.

In general business, a new banking system, including provision for internet

banking, was approved, Dovedale reported on some research on standing rules for the Presbytery, and the Rev. Andre Holtslag reported on the recent *colloquium doctum* for the Rev. Hans

Vaatstra in Wanganui. Lastly, the next time a presbytery directory is compiled, privacy matters will be investigated and included in the planning.

Andre Holtslag

Letter to the Editor

Sir,-

Your June 2010 article by John Haverland, about the Church of England missions here, 1814-40, was well researched – Mr Haverland “had done his homework thoroughly” on the Church Missionary Society, an Evangelical body which sent all of the C of E missionaries then.

And he’s right in saying that despite a few “rotten apples in the barrel”, their overall achievements and influence “among the New Zealanders” (i.e. the Maori) were very effective, both spiritually and in imparting practical skills. Charles Darwin, when “HMS Beagle” called at Paihia (about 1833?), had to admire the results of teaching agricultural ones there! But I’d like to enlarge on what followed the arrival of George Augustus Selwyn, first and last Bishop of New Zealand, in 1841, who was definitely not good news for Evangelical Anglicanism (the only genuine kind), and who undid a great deal of that good work.

It’s him we can very largely blame for the stalling of real Christianity among Maori from about 1855, and for Evangelical Anglicanism’s never having got a nationwide foothold or a fair hearing among C of E adherents in New Zealand after British colonisation began in 1840. Yes, he was a man of considerable intellectual gifts as a scholar, administrator, and communicator. He’d learnt the Maori language during the long voyage (it took about six months by sailing-vessel) from England to NZ, so was at once able to talk with them in Maori, and to become very popular among them.

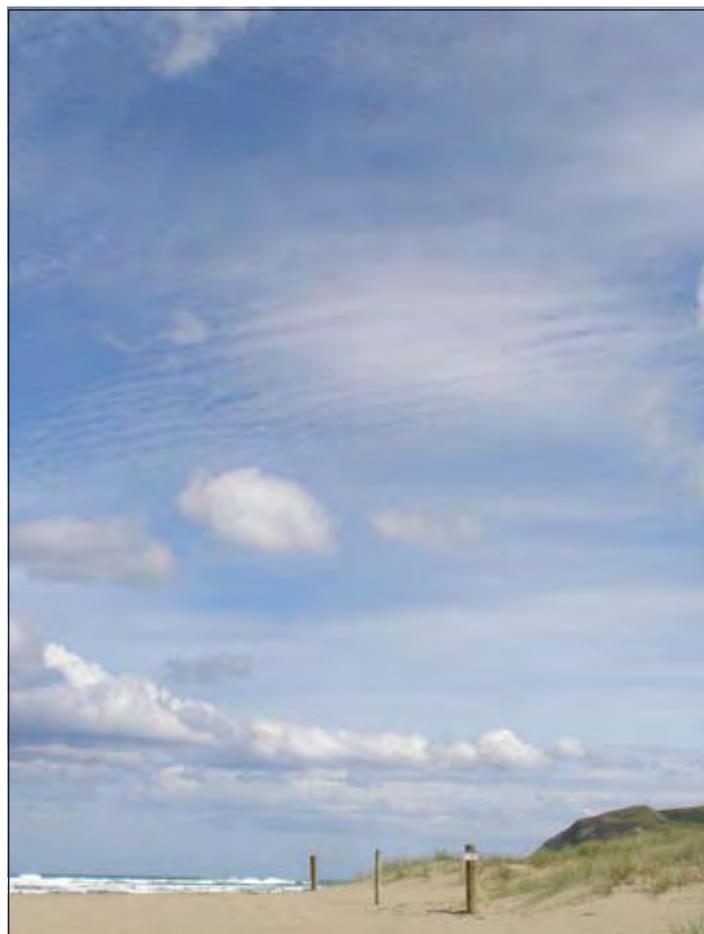
Selwyn hated Evangelicalism and Evangelicals; so he was hostile to those CMS missionaries who had come to NZ long before him, and actually mentioned them as “those odious Evangelicals”! He was very much into the new, pseudo-Anglican cult called the Oxford Movement, or Tractarianism from the tracts it frequently published from 1833 to 1841. It wanted to undo the Reformation, to re-Romanise the Church of England, to remove from the State such power as it had over the C of E. Tractarianism also taught “Apostolic Succession”, a novelty in the C of E since the Elizabethan Reformation Settlement over the years 1559-71. That is, there couldn’t be a true Church unless it had an episcopally consecrated or ordained threefold ministry in an unbroken chain going back to at least one of the Apostles, which the C of E was alleged to have, while non-episcopal churches had not.

The antipathy between Tractarians and Evangelicals had always been mutual; so the CMS missionaries must not have welcomed Selwyn at all; though he was their nearest Bishop, and so able to confirm and ordain if needed for those purposes: all rather strained! Strangely, he did become friendly with Octavius Hadfield: I surmise that, as two educated English gentlemen, and both C of E ministers, in a new, raw, and

rough Colony, they were glad to meet on a social level, with the “odium theologicum” soft-pedalled!

Selwyn founded the St John’s theological college in Auckland, which kept up Tractarian teaching for over a century. He stayed in NZ for many years, and eventually returned to England, ending his days as Bishop of Lichfield – we could wish he’d been appointed there instead of New Zealand in the first place!

H. Westfold, Reformed Church of Wellington.



“... they will see the *Son of Man* coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory”. Matt 24:30

Photo: Simona Landkroon

Introducing the Peniel Rehabilitation Centre, Bangalore

Please note:

In June this year, the National Diaconate Committee, after lengthy consultation with the World Diaconate Relief Committee (CRCA), the Peniel Rehabilitation Centre and other interested parties, decided to support the work described in this article.

Our support will be:

- **One third of the estimated \$(Aus)25,000 needed for a 12 month period.**
- **The support is offered for a 12-month period during which an extensive and intensive evaluation report will be presented.**
- **The decision to continue support and to what extent will depend on the report**

The National Diaconate Committee wholeheartedly commends the work of the Peniel Rehabilitation Centre to you. We ask for your prayers and gifts.

The Peniel Rehabilitation Centre Bangalore, Karnataka, India

When visiting India what hits you with the force of a speeding train are the 1,001 needs that simultaneously scream at your conscience from every angle. You feel like you're visiting a town torn apart by a gigantic storm. Some parts of the town are untouched, but others are devastated. The challenge overwhelms.

Where to start? How to start? When?

Our visit to Bangalore in Karnataka was typical. This city, also known as India's 'Silicon Valley', is wealthy to say the least. The recently built airport is a stunning example of ultra-modern architecture. Everything about it is posh and opulent – even the superhighway connecting it to the city itself, some 60 kilometres away. Is *this* India?

Once *in* the city itself, it became 'normal' again, at least for India. Incredible traffic; incessant noise; overwhelming smells and countless people everywhere!

Our accommodation, a Christian hostel, was reasonable. Amazingly, some of the sections around the hostel were 'vacant', meaning without buildings. These, filled with huts covered with blue tarps, were home to about 50 people per section. Welcome to city life in India.

Our hosts were the Mr Newbegin Pacionathan and his wife Salome (or Levena). The G.O.S.P.E.L. program (Where 30 local Indian evangelists are supported in church planting in Central India) supported by many CRCA churches and individuals employs Mr Newbegin as its director. His wife, Salome, runs a number of Word and Deed ministries under an umbrella organisation called 'Help a Child and Women of India.'

Some 8 years ago Salome established a work called the *Peniel Rehabilitation Centre* in Bangalore. She was keen for us to see it. Even though it was a Saturday morning, all the 60 female students and the staff members were ready and waiting for us. There was a formal welcome, a memorable concert, and an exhibition of some of the work the students had produced. Very impressive, especially on hearing the stories some of these young women had to share.

When called to a formal meeting on site with Salome, she dropped a bombshell. **'We must close this work down. Last month we were told that there would be no more funding from June onwards. We must dismiss our staff, give up our lease on this building.'**

The *reason*, as we understood it, was that in the eyes of the previous sponsors, this centre was not meeting the newly established goals established by them. We were stunned and began asking a whole series of questions – both there and then, and as it turned out, very formally from all parties involved once back in Australia and New Zealand.

What is Peniel Rehabilitation Centre (PRC) doing?

Peniel is a vocational training centre.



Location of Peniel. Bert Kuipers and Dirk van Garderen.

Each year, it takes sixty [60] girls from various slums around Bangalore, a place called Phoebe Women's Home and other 'backward areas'. Some 90% are from a non-Christian background. These girls are mostly from very poor backgrounds, uneducated or dropouts from school.

Peniel offers a year's course that includes the following:

- **Tailoring** (9.30 am to 4.00 pm, Monday to Friday) where they learn embroidery and 'stitching' (sewing or tailoring). Completion of this course enables them to sit an externally organised exam. Those who pass are provided with a Certificate and a Sewing Machine.
- **Literacy.** In this course the girls (most of whom are virtually illiterate) are taught to read and write in the State language: Kannada.
- **Computing skills.** Some of the girls, who have completed their 10th standard, are able to enrol in a free basic computer course. This is in connection with the Phoebe Computer Centre.
- **Counselling.** The girls are being counselled individually every week by a trained counsellor. This is alongside a Christian personality development programme course offered each Friday.
- At the heart of this course are the **daily devotions.** An evangelist as well as members of staff leads these devotions, many of them evangelistic in their thrust.

- **Food.** The programme also offers lunch each day. This is vital for some of these girls who come from very poor homes. The reason in one of the documents I read was 'so that they can have better strength and frame of mind to undertake the training.'
- Other activities include a special emphasis on celebrating births, an annual evangelistic retreat, a Vacation Bible School for siblings of the students, a retreat for the mothers of the students, reunions of past students, the annual picnic, Christmas

celebrations and medical checkups.

Outcomes?

- What is striking is that most of the girls leave the programme as Christians! We were assured that follow-up meetings show that most of them continue in their walk with the Lord.
- Very clearly job prospects for these girls improve considerably.
- As a result of this training the possibility of marriage also increases. In other words, the poverty cycle is breaking down.



Bangalore squatters. Photo taken from the roof of our Hostel.



Some of the girls at Peniel Rehabilitation Centre

What now?

What I saw and heard at the Centre on our visit was deeply moving. The work is a powerful combination of a 'Word and Deed' ministry. It is certainly effective in presenting and demonstrating the Gospel. Given that it has a proven track record, surely the incentive must be to keep it going!

The fact that Bangalore is reasonably accessible also means that forming real links with this work, of sending individuals and teams of young people to go and help and experience it beckons. The impact of such sharing would be huge.

But, before making any decisions, we felt it was necessary to investigate

this ministry as much as possible. This included:

- Making contact with the previous sponsors, obtaining their evaluation of this work and finding why they were withdrawing support.
- Via a lengthy Skype conference we asked many questions and challenged them to reconsider continuing support. A frank discussion resulted. The sponsors also promised to do this, but nothing real came of it.
- We obtained all of PRC's annual reports and the annual balance sheets.
- We asked them to present a new budget (as trimmed down as possible) and if they would consider our offer

of a 12 month support for the work subject to extensive and intensive evaluation.

- The NDC offered to support the programme jointly with our Australian counterpart on a one-third, two-thirds basis.

In June, WDC and NDC made a formal offer of support to the Peniel Rehabilitation Centre on the conditions listed above.

What the NDC asks from you:

- Sessions and deacons, please note this ministry. Speak about it and please include this work in congregational prayer. Special offerings towards it should be considered. Pray for this work at home.
- NDC is interested in forming more contact with this work. If anyone in your church is visiting Bangalore in the near future, let the NDC know. We would love to have our folks visit and see this work first hand.
- If there are some young people interested in seeing and making a practical impact on this work by helping out at the Centre, contact the NDC!

Dirk J van Garderen

Above left: Sewing Machines and Computers

Below: The Rehabilitation Centre – the second floor.

