

faith in focus

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"In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun,
which is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion,
like a champion rejoicing to run his course."

Psalm 19:4b-5

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Editorial

This month we remember that time of the church year known as Ascension. As it falls on a Thursday and is not a public holiday it has become somewhat less on our calendar than Christmas, the Easter weekend, and Pentecost. In the Heidelberg Catechism four Question and Answers bring out the teaching of what it means for us (Q & A's 46-49). And the application for us is tremendous - we have Christ now pleading our cause with the father in heaven, we have our own flesh in heaven, in Christ, which guarantees He will take us up there, and from there He sends His Spirit to further assure us and equip us to look to what is above in our lives.

We have a good range of articles from a number of folk in our churches in this issue, together with our regular contributors. I am greatly encouraged by the skills and knowledge amongst us and feel part of a good team, together with our proof reader, typographer, and printer.

May the Lord encourage you through this issue.

An apology

In the April 'World in focus' section, under 'Ministerial Changes in the CRCA' it was wrongly noted that the Rev. Terry Chesterman had resigned from the ministry following a situation of adultery. This was inaccurately reported in a number of Australian Newsletters and following a conversation with Terry it should be noted that he was suspended for two months for inappropriate and unprofessional behaviour. He is presently taking a year off to spend time with his wife and family. May the Lord be with them, and all those involved, in this difficult time.

Worship... the goal of mission

*"Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church;
worship is.*

Mission exists because worship doesn't.

Worship is ultimate, not missions

because God is ultimate, not man...

*Worship, therefore, is the fuel and goal of
missions."*

John Piper

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 King in residence

The ascension message in Ephesians 4:10-13

Sjirk Bajema

The apostle Paul begins at the very top. When he says that Jesus has ascended to be higher than all the heavens, we're not hearing about yet another rising world power which has no enemies left to defeat. Well, at least not at that time!

But there comes a time for all earthly kings and generals and presidents and any other power here below. They won't last forever here below. Because that's exactly it — they are here below! There's only one King up above — the same King who has won the supreme war of all by the power of His love.

What it meant then

It's helpful here to understand what it would have meant to those original hearers of Paul's words. They lived then knowing the might of the Roman Imperial Forces. They heard and saw those generals who so often returned victoriously, bringing behind them, in their triumphant processions, all the captives and the riches of the conquered lands.

From the Scripture they had then, the Old Testament, this would recall the times when Israel's great kings, like David and Solomon, returned from their annual battles. When they had finished conquering those the Lord had set out for them to defeat, they would return. Then they would rule over their kingdom, bringing the law to all that was theirs.

This is what we see in verse 10. A verse which is part of the picture Paul has painted of Christ's ascension from verse 8. The verse which decisively shows where Christ is now.

1 - The King sits on his throne

In a world where so much seems to be going wrong, the churches are in decline, and moral values are at an all-time low, we could almost wonder where it is all going to. No wonder many Christians become taken up with believing that things have to get a lot worse before the Lord returns, because they sure aren't getting better! Reading and hearing some of them, they talk more about the devil than the Lord! If anything goes wrong, the devil gets the cop. Many televangelists show that.

God's Word tells us that this shouldn't be so. Instead of seeing reds under the bed everywhere, and so living in that constant state of fear, Christians, of all people, are to live knowing that Jesus has won.

This is the message of the ascension of Jesus Christ. While we know Pentecost as

the time when Christ gave His Spirit in fullness upon His Church, it was something He could only do because He had taken up His throne. This is where Jesus will be until He returns on those clouds of glory.

But this time, He will sit on His throne with a crucial difference from before. That difference is because of what He has done in between. He who has now ascended, did that because He had descended to this lowly earth. The King of Kings walked on this planet, virtually unrecognised, so that many would come to see and acknowledge Him for who He truly is!

The kings and emperors of this world strut this world's stage for their few years of fame and fortune. You can't hear enough of them while they're here — but then they're gone, and it's as if they never were here! The King of Kings didn't strut, and now it's as if He was always there - because He is! And in Him, so are we.

There are people who play politics so that they can end up on the winning side. Many a time in history has seen the demise and sometimes death of those who 'followed the leader' and lost. How different to the One Whom we follow! Christ Jesus has won. And He won through death! The death that took Him through hell!

2 - The King sends those He has known

Many of the world's powers have been just that — powers. All they did was defeat and destroy. Some of the world's powers, however, brought peace and order after they conquered. Even after those powers become defeated, what they set up has remained because it was useful. We can think of the

Roman Empire and her roads and aqueducts and viaducts. We can think of Napoleon and how through him the Dutch now all have surnames (some interesting ones, too)!

Those empires used much of what they had taken over to benefit everyone. While they may have taken treasures back to Paris or Rome, they believed they had a responsibility to put something back. Something that would benefit everyone.

If that's what an earthly empire can do, how much more can the King of all kings achieve! His reign is the very best — and it's never ever going to stop! He who has all the blessings is the One Who's going to give them all out.

And you know how He does this? He who has thousands upon thousands on the heavenly hosts at His disposal; He who can just say a word and tip the whole world upside down; He who controls the whole universe; how does He do this?

It's through you and I, brother, sister. It's we through whom the most powerful force this world has ever known is even right now — this very moment — ruling this world for Christ.

How? By the Word of the Lord. The Word Jesus quoted to refute the temptations of the devil in the desert is what we are to bring to the wilderness of this world. The Word which goes from the King.

This is where verse 11 comes in: "It was he — Jesus Christ — who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers..." They bring His Word — in a special way.

We know from other scripture that we're all meant to know the Word and put it into

Ephesians 4:10-13

10. *He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.*
 11. *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,*
 12. *to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up*
 13. *until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of God.*
-

practice. But how do we ourselves learn that Word?

Let me illustrate: We hear a lot of talk these days about the value of education. In fact, society has placed so much expectation on education that it can't believe it's not doing what they expected. They thought education was the answer to all our problems. Whether it was job opportunities or promiscuous sexual practices — whatever — education would fix it.

It hasn't though — things have only got worse. That's not because of education per se, but because of the type of education. That's why it has to be a good education to give you the right breaks.

And that's a lot more than words. In fact, you have the ultimate break of all because it's the Lord Himself, by His Word and Spirit, Who taught you. That's what apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastors and teachers do. They are the way through which all the blessings in Christ become lived out in His Body — the Church.

In the New Testament Church, this point was literally true. The apostles were all eye-witnesses to the Lord Jesus Christ. They had known Him in His ministry, or, like Paul, met Him in another way later.

But how about now — two thousand years on? There are no apostles or prophets nowadays, because the foundational work has finished. Just like the twelve sons and grandsons of Jacob were foundational in Israel's history in the Old Testament, so the apostles were for New Testament Israel — the Church.

As the focus in the Old Testament was on God's covenant in working through the twelve tribes, so the focus in the text isn't on the apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastors and teachers either. Our eyes are firmly fixed on God's Word, which comes through them to all in Christ's Body. To quote another apostle, Peter, it is the Word which stands forever (1 Peter 1:25). So it is through the cluster of gifts involved in proclaiming God's Word that God's people are prepared for what they were meant to do all along.

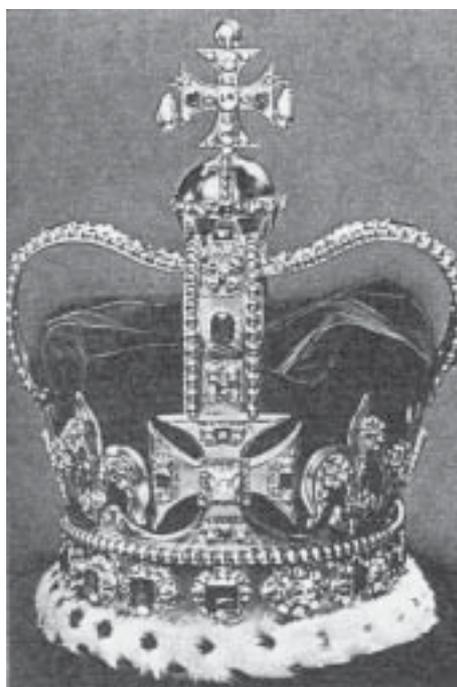
How does the Church of Jesus Christ make sure that the Word is being proclaimed? Isn't it through the ordained offices of the Church? The elders of the Church are not only to supervise the preaching and teaching of the Word, but to teach it too, as Paul says later in his first letter to Timothy chapter 3. The Lord still sends those He has known. It's through His Body, the Church, that certain believers are recognised for their gifts — the gifts which Paul speaks of here, the gifts of pastoring and teaching.

Just as it was the early New Testament church which set apart Matthias in Acts 1 and the seven deacons in Acts 4, so today

the Church must continue putting faithful men in the offices of the Church. We do it according to God's Word and in dependence on God's Spirit.

Fellow believer — think about this. How did you come to have your heart convicted? Was it through reading the Bible — the Bible which is the apostolic and prophetic word preserved for us today? Maybe it was the preaching in a worship service? Or did it strike you at a Bible Study with your fellow believers? Perhaps it happened when Christians showed themselves to be a living Bible?

Didn't it seem as if you had found something precious? Like a diamond set in the finest gold, it sparkled in the depths of your soul.



3 - The King brings His rule to His own

This is what verse 12 brings into focus. As the opening words of the verse says — the pastor-teacher is *“to prepare God's people for works of service.”*

Notice that? What? Who's going to do the work? God's people. Not the minister, not the Session, not the Board of Management, not the Ladies Fellowship — much as they each and others do so much! — but **all** God's people. The work of ministry belongs to every believer!

That's why the word “prepare” is itself so rich here. On the one hand, it speaks of the feeding that the flock of the Lord needs in order to minister. This is the food Peter spoke of to the believers in his letters, *“Like new-born babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.”* (1 Pet.2:2f)

That's why the elder's calling is to make sure that God's Word is consistently and thoroughly proclaimed! Woe betide the minister if he starts on a hobby horse! That's exactly why Paul told Timothy, *“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction.”* (2 Tim.4:2.)

On the other hand, the word “prepare” has the sense of cleansing. The business of preaching is to comfort the disturbed and to disturb the comfortable. The truth is very comforting and enlightening, but it should also really bug us! It gets into our hearts and lives and really upsets us. The elders aren't here because they're popular! They're here to make you hear...God!

It's only the Word of God which can teach a new Christian the difference between the flashy and keen zeal operating in the suave power of our sinful nature, and the quiet commitment of a Spirit-filled life which faithfully does its task, whether someone is watching or not. It's as each of us is hit by the devastating impact of God's Word *“that the body of Christ may be built up.”*

This cannot be shouted loud enough! Unless you are shaped upon the anvil of Scripture, the body of the Church in your place will be stunted. That's why verse 13 goes on to say that the preaching of God's Word must go on *“until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of God.”* In other words, you're going to need preaching until either Christ comes back, or He takes you up in death!

Until that time, we need to be found busy doing the Master's will. Jesus isn't bringing us under His rule if we're busy doing our own selfish thing! That's not keeping in step with His Spirit. And it's a direction which is disastrous.

But you do know when this King is ruling over you. Then your attitude is like these words of Paul, *“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.”* (3:12.)

Believer — **He** is the King! Bow down before Him! Confess what Paul wrote earlier in Ephesians 1, that *“God placed all things under Jesus' feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”* (v22f.)

Believe Him and live in Him by listening to Him. Be there when He speaks. Don't you be found absent when the citizens of His Kingdom cry out, *“Long live the King!”*

The accuracy of Scripture

Historiography and the New Testament

Andre Holtslag

The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and The New Testament in Greek (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations) being immediately inspired by God, **and by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages** [is] therefore authentic.

(Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch. 1, Art. 8)

The New Penguin Compact English Dictionary defines historiography as “the principles of historical writing”; it is the study of whether the claim made by a piece of writing to deal with, or represent, the events of history stands up to academic scrutiny. One of the basic principles of historiography is the bibliographical test: examining the way a text is transmitted, thereby enabling an ancient document to be accessible to us.¹

As members of the Reformed churches of New Zealand, we understand, believe, and affirm that God has preserved the original text of the Bible and guarded it from error. However, I am sure that from time to time, whether in a catechism class or in the privacy of our own minds, we find ourselves asking if the words we read in 1 Corinthians, or the Gospel of John, for example, are exactly what the original authors wrote all those years ago? Is it possible that the Greek New Testament text upon which our English Bible versions are based is still accurate after 2000 years of copying by human hands? As we investigate the bibliographical evidence for the New Testament, we will find that it satisfies the rigorous, academic demands of this aspect of historiography.

The New Testament is made up of 27 individual books or letters. We know that the original documents were probably written on papyrus in ink, and that these autographs (original scrolls) have been long lost since. Most scholars assert that the original authors wrote the books of the New Testament between 50 and 100A.D. Sir Frederick Kenyon, former director and principal librarian of the British Museum, notes that this claim “has been contested without success”.² The professor of New Testament language and literature at Princeton Theological Seminary, Bruce Metzger, explains one example of this lack of success. Responding to the claims of Professor Ferdinand Christian Baur, who argued that the Gospel of John was not composed until the year 160A.D, Metzger cites the discovery, and subsequent dating,

of a small fragmentary manuscript copy of part of the Gospel, as composed no later than 125A.D.³

The reliability of copies

As the original autographs are no longer available to us, the bibliographical test requires an examination of all manuscripts that claim to be copies of the originals. This test is twofold: firstly, we examine the reliability of the copies, and secondly, the time interval between the original and other copies that currently exist. Regarding the reliability of manuscript copies available, there appear to be two aspects that add weight to the claim of reliability: the first is the closeness to the original, and the second is the number of manuscripts available to examine.⁴ F.F. Bruce says, “There is no body



of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament.” He explains further — “the wealth of attestation is such that the true reading is almost invariably bound to be preserved by at least one of the thousands of witnesses”.⁵ Similarly, Kurt and Barbara Aland, in summarising the important points of studying the transmission of the New Testament text explain that “this is what makes it possible to retrace the original text of the New Testament through a broad range of witnesses”.⁶

A common theme noted amongst authors who deal with the subject of the New Testament is the attention given to the number of manuscript copies that still survive. “The number of available manuscripts of the New Testament is overwhelmingly greater than those of any other work of ancient literature.” (Harold Greenlee⁷). In the same vein, John A.T. Robinson states, “the wealth of manuscripts

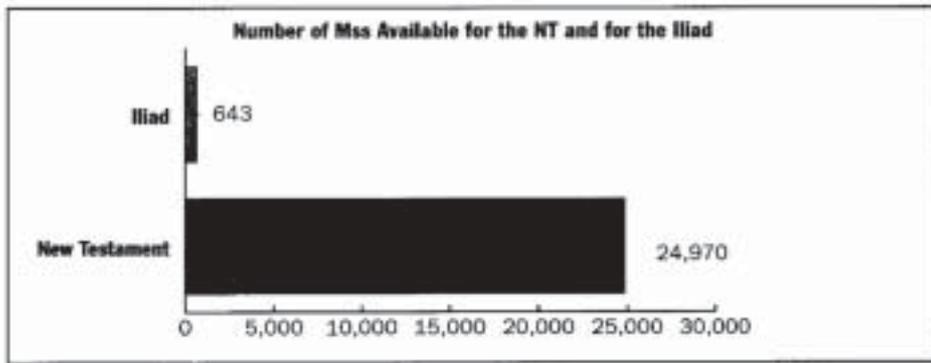
and above all the narrow interval of time between the writing and the earliest extant copies, make it by far the best attested text of any ancient writing in the world”.⁸ The following graph perhaps best indicates the sheer scale of the claim made by these authors. After the New Testament, the next document of antiquity most able to be examined by the number of copied manuscripts available is Homer’s Iliad.

The following quote seems to summarise the strength of the academic claim of the New Testament: “to be sceptical of the resultant text of the New Testament books is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested bibliographically as the New Testament.”¹⁰

The time interval

The second part of this aspect of the bibliographical test is the time interval between the original and the copies that currently exist. The oldest copy of a portion of the New Testament is known as p52. Leading papyrologists have dated this scrap of papyrus, containing a part of five verses of chapter 18 of the Gospel of John, to 125A.D. They say, “p52 must have been copied very soon after the Gospel of John was itself written in the early 90’sA.D”.¹¹ In comparison Homer’s Iliad, written around 800B.C, is known from the earliest copies of around 400B.C, with the first complete manuscript dating from the 13th century A.D.¹² Bruce Metzger indicates that further papyri fragments date from 150-200A.D, parts of a harmony of the four gospels known in Greek as the Diatessaron, and authored by Tatian. The two most significant copies of the New Testament, which exist today, are Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus. They are called codex because they are not in the form of a scroll but in the form of what we would recognise as a book. Metzger explains that they are both virtually complete as New Testaments and are dated around 350A.D.¹³ Norman Geisler notes that the New Testament, as preserved in Greek copies alone, exists in 5,656 partial or complete manuscripts that were hand copied between the second and fifth centuries.¹⁴

Thus far, bibliographically speaking, the New Testament appears to stand up to claims of authenticity. As Sir Frederick Kenyon states in his summary of the ancient versions of New Testament, “We must be content to know that the general authenticity of the New Testament text has been remarkably supported by the modern



discoveries which have so greatly reduced the interval between the original autographs and our earliest extant manuscripts".¹⁵

Accuracy

The final part of the bibliographical test is accuracy. Do extant manuscript versions written in different languages, and at different times, support the New Testament’s claim of authenticity? Bruce Metzger summarizes his view of the evidence by contrasting “the thinnest possible thread of transmission” in which “the works of several ancient authors are preserved to us” with his claim that “the textual critic of the New Testament is embarrassed by the wealth of his material.” Apart from manuscript copies of the New Testament, the existence of lectionaries (a regularised system of written lessons from the New Testament designed to be read out in Christian churches) serves also to aid the textual critic in establishing the New Testament’s claim of authenticity. Added to this are the New Testament quotes contained in the correspondence of early church fathers: “so extensive are these citations that if all the other sources for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, they would be sufficient alone for the reconstruction of practically the entire New Testament.”¹⁶

Completely trustworthy

This veritable mountain of textual evidence leaves little doubt that the New Testament stands at the summit of ancient historical literature. The number of manuscripts, and

the consistency of content despite their wide divergence of ethnicity and style, serves only to endorse the historical veracity of the 27 books that make up the New Testament. The short period of time that exists between the composition of the original books and the copies on display in various libraries and museums around the world adds further weight to the claim of textual trustworthiness.

This article has focused on the New Testament. A similar study of the books of the Old Testament would reveal a similar result. The Bible not only reaches the “required academic standard” — it surpasses it in every measure! This should not come as any surprise to the Christian, for the God we worship is a God of super-abundance. The Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 3:20 “Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think.”(NASB)

The revealed will of God

It would, however, be remiss to end the article here. Academic inquiry is good and necessary, but when we are dealing with the Holy Scriptures we are dealing with the revealed will of God. “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”(2 Tim 3:16, 17 NASB) These familiar words are the words written down by a man — the Apostle Paul. Perhaps he was sitting at a desk writing in the light of a nearby window. He would have had to dip his pen in ink

frequently. I can imagine him pausing momentarily to rest his chin on the hand that holds his ink pen as he considers the letter he is now writing to Timothy, his “beloved son”, prayerfully reflecting on the words he would next set down. These are words inspired by the Holy Spirit Himself.

Timothy is like many of us, who from childhood “have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Tim 3:15 NASB) Someone made a copy of the Apostle’s letter to Timothy. Many more copies have been made since. God by His “singular care and providence” has made the very words of that letter available to us today. Dear Brother or Sister, may these sacred writings, this treasure of treasures, not remain packed in our church book bags till next Sunday, or stacked tidily on our bookshelves, but instead open in front of us daily, as we prayerfully consider the pure and authentic Word of God.

Andre Holtslag

(This article owes much to an excellent resource book entitled *The new evidence that demands a verdict* by Josh McDowell.)

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Endnotes

1. Sanders p.143
2. Bruce p.176
3. Metzger p.39
4. McDowell p.23
5. Bruce p.178
6. Aland p.70
7. Greenlee p.15
8. Robinson p.36
9. McDowell p.34
10. Montgomery p.29
11. Aland p.85
12. McDowell p.38
13. Metzger p.41,89,42
14. Geisler p.385
15. Kenyon p.249
16. Metzger p.34,30,86

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The Sufficiency of Scripture

When evangelicals attack God's Word

John MacArthur

Something in particular has triggered my interest in the study of God's Word as being all sufficient.

As a Church and as people whose lives are built upon the foundation of the Word of God, this is very important today. Let's have a look at the Word of God and see what it says about its own sufficiency. There is a strong, pervasive and subtle strategy developing today among the so called "Evangelical Christians." A strategy against the sufficiency of the Word of God.

Scripture as we have been grown up with is under attack. One of the great statements of traditional Evangelical theology is that Scripture is adequate for all matters of faith and conduct, and that is being attacked today.

A new kind of church leadership style

Let me briefly describe what I mean. Over the last few years the Church has grown accustomed and pre-occupied with what I would call "Worldly Management Techniques." There are many books written about successful Corporate Management and Leadership styles, so the Church has perked up its ears and promptly adopted this kind of Leadership style.

Churches are learning those Management skills as if they were the keys to the Kingdom of God. In a very subtle way this is an attack on the adequacy of Scripture, as if to say, "Knowing the Word of God and understanding its principles and the teachings to Church growth is not enough. We must apply those Management Techniques to achieve the level of success as in the Corporate World."

Many people feel that the diet of Scripture alone is not sufficient — there must be a certain amount of entertainment along with it. We have developed a liking for entertainment in our society, so therefore Churches have developed a taste for "Christian Entertainment" and are prepared to pay huge amounts of the Lord's money for it. It is a concession to those people who do not believe that the teaching, study and application of the Word of God is exciting enough. They get bored with God's revelation in Scripture and are desperate for some entertainment. That, I believe, is an attack on the sufficiency of the Word of God which provides all that is needed to the believers, in their spiritual battles, in their joys and fulfilment in life.

Looking for what is seen

I'm greatly distressed about what we could

call "Mysticism" or "Occult". I believe in Evangelicalism but if you look closely at the Evangelicalism of today you find many people preoccupied with the Occult. They are not aware of it, but in fact that's what it is. They are searching for supernatural signs and wonders, reaching into the world of mediums, demons and the devil himself. There are people saying that we can never reach the world with the Gospel unless we can raise the dead and heal the sick and call fire from heaven.

Peter Wagner at an American Association of Bible Colleges Convention said, "The simple gospel is no longer adequate without signs and wonders. We cannot reach the world with just the Word of God." He is talking about finding the power sources and delving into supernatural powers to perform miracles. There are people today who

authority over the devil, demons and diseases.

How it works out in practice

We see this kind of abandonment of biblical sufficiency in marriage and the family. There was a time when biblical principles were applied, to live life to the fullest as a family in the way that God intended. But today there is family planning, contraceptives. Institutes to deal with family problems, etc. In a subtle way they say that the Bible is inadequate and to a degree insufficient.

When we talk about homosexuality and the role of women in the Church, we hear the comment that the Bible is unsophisticated and inadequate to comment on these contemporary sociological issues.

This way of thinking is applied wholesale in churches worldwide, in particular the more liberal churches where they already have appointed homosexual and lesbian clergy, redefining their role away from biblical teachings.

Psychology today is making inroads into the Church in a really frightening way. In the Evangelical Churches there is a wholesale exodus from the traditional land of biblical theology into the new promised land of Psychology and Psychotherapy. Churches are now hiring psychologists to deal with the deep-seated emotional anxieties of man applying human wisdom to deal with problems of mankind. Theological students at seminaries are more and more learning Psychology instead of studying the Word of God and mastering Scripture. Seminaries are changing their curriculum drastically, putting more and more emphasis on Psychology courses, diminishing the biblical content. This kind of encroaching mysticism and pre-occupation with supernatural powers, science of the mind, hypnosis and the like, is creating a new god in churches that is not The God of the Bible.

The church agreeing with the world

When we talk of biblical principles and try to apply these, we are mocked for being so primitive and naïve as to assume that the Bible could give people help when they have severe problems. The world has been saying the Bible cannot help, and now the Church is chiming in agreement that the Bible is inadequate in dealing with psychological problems. In fact, I would go as far as to say that there are many advocating today a Psychological salvation instead of a new birth in Jesus Christ. This is nothing more than a pseudo-evangelical humanism, advocating



advocate "Christian Mantras" (Mantra chanting is directed to some heathen deity of Hindu origin). There are those offering formulas for confronting Satan, formulas for dealing with demons, positive confessions where you follow techniques to visualise a reality such as your healing, or your new car, or the girl you want, or a new house, or reaching people for Christ in evangelism, or developing a ministry etc. They get in to this kind of self-hypnosis which belong to the realm of the Occult.

They are being practised in order to gain supposed divine power. In fact, they only promote a "new religious science" based on Eastern and Hindu thinking to capture the power of the Eastern world. They are pre-occupied with this kind of mysticism. Psychic powers are cultivated, and they claim



The Hebrews worship the golden calf: by Raphael

and pushing self-esteem, self-love, self-fulfilment and self-actualisation that Psychology has brought into the Church. It knows no biblical counterpart.

The Church fell for it hook, line and sinker. But the most remarkable thing is that the world has noticed, and admits the error of these things more often than we will. New York professor Paul Veets criticised Christian churches for their tendency to do what he called "Buying high and selling low," in regard to social science. He said, "The Church is eager to adopt popular trends of thought at the very time the secular profession are beginning to criticise them. Its a matter of climbing on the bandwagon just about the time it's slowing down".

We jump into movements that are just about dead because they have proved to be a waste of time to the people in the world who started them. But in our contemporary Christian churches, these things make tremendous inroads. It's absolutely amazing! It's a big problem. I believe it is sinful to believe that the Word of God is inadequate. J.I. Packer in his book on the Word of God puts his finger on the problem in a paragraph that says: "*Certainty about the great issues of Christian faith and conduct is lacking all along the line. The outside observer sees us as staggering on from gimmick to gimmick and stunt to stunt like so many drunks in a fog, not knowing at all where we are or which way we should be going. Preaching is hazy. Heads are muddled. Hearts fret. Doubts drain strength. Uncertainty paralyzes action. Unlike the first-century Christians who in*

three centuries won the Roman world and those later Christians who pioneered the Reformation and the Puritan awakening and the Evangelical revival and the great missionary movement of the last century, we lack certainty."

And the reason we lack certainty is because we have a sinful view of Scripture. We no longer seem to believe that the bible is sufficient for the life and conduct of the Church. That is a sin of monstrous proportion, to deny the sufficiency of the Word of God.

Addressing this

How can we answer this? Let's turn to the Bible to find in it that which is sufficient for all of life and conduct. There we find the proof and the testimony of the greatest authority in the Universe, none other than God Himself.

In 2 Cor. 3:5 the apostle Paul says, "*We are not adequate (sufficient) in ourselves to consider anything from ourselves, but our adequacy (sufficiency) is from God*". That means that our capability of living life in God's plan to the full comes from Him.

In other words, because we are Christians, we live in an environment in which the resources for life

are Divine. We live at a level where human wisdom does not feed, because human wisdom cannot provide resources. Now, this does not mean that there is nothing outside the Bible that has any value. There are many things that have value. God's common grace is bestowed on all men. He will create certain things in our environment that are very

helpful. But when it becomes a matter of Spiritual life, that is revealed in the Word of God and ministered to us by the Holy Spirit through that Word. Outside the Word of God we don't have to look for sufficiency that is not already provided in Scripture. For that is sin. Our sufficiency is from God.

We stay with Paul. This time turn to: 1 Cor. 2:12-13, 2:15-16, "*We have received, not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining Spiritual thoughts with Spiritual words.....But he who Spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that He should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.*"

Is there any insufficiency in the mind of Christ? Hardly. The mind of Christ is the consummate mind of God. The mind of Christ is omniscient, is supreme.

Paul says we have a word from God, a word not in the way that man teaches but taught by the Spirit of God. That word from God allows us to judge, evaluate, appraise, understand, comprehend and reason all things because it brings to us the mind of Christ. All we need to understand is: how does God see it, how does God think about it, what does God say about it? That is sufficient.

Luke tells us in the book of Acts of the noble Christians in the little town of Berea in Greece. They received the Word with eagerness and readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily. Spiritual nobility belongs to those who receive the Word of God with readiness of mind, which means they accept the Word of God with faith and eagerness. The Bereans pursued the Word of God — it was for them a daily diet. Noble spirituality is tied to a daily study of the Word of God. That's where the strength comes from to deal with life in all circumstances.

We ought to remember a statement from Paul to the people in Laodicea. Col. 2:3-4, 7, "*In (Christ) are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this in order that no man may delude you with persuasive argument...And we are firmly rooted and now being built up in him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.*" All the treasures and knowledge and wisdom are found in Christ who is revealed in the Word.

And therefore Paul says in Col. 2:8-10, "*See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception according to the traditions of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. For in Him all the fullness of the Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made*

complete, and He is the Head over all rule and authority.”

The bottom line

In conclusion I want to look at Deut. 6:4, “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is One! “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”

That was the bottom line truth of all Theology in the land of Israel and among God’s people. That’s the bottom line for you and me. This is the summary of a simple

way to express a myriad of commands that God laid down. But all the law was reduced and summarised to this. The Word of God then is the key.

You take the Word of God and you teach it to your children and you talk about it at any given time explaining the meaning and you memorise it. This is the key for happy living. It was to occupy all their attention as the source of everything. This is God’s design, given to His people.

The great missionary Robert Moffat went to a African village for a meeting with the

people. Greetings and a welcome were done properly, and he spoke with them. Then an old African stood up and held his Bible high and said in agreement to what Moffat had said, “This is the fountain where I drink and this is the oil that makes my lamp burn”.

May that be true in our lives as well.

Adapted, condensed and summarised from an article by: Dr. John MacArthur (Jnr) titled: The Sufficiency of Scripture Part 1 and 2 by Hans Voschezang

World in focus

Bishop accepts award from pornographic website

Gene Robinson, the open homosexual who caused major division in the Episcopal Church over the past year when he was elected, confirmed, and installed as Bishop of New Hampshire, recently accepted the “Person of the Year” award from “PlanetOut,” a homosexual pornographic website.

Robinson was honored for his “unprecedented achievement and its impact on the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community” and commented that receiving the award was “quite humbling.” The Advocate, the nation’s leading homosexual magazine, also named Robinson as their “Person of the Year.”

Robinson’s receipt of the award drew protests from the Rev. Canon Dr. Kendall Harmon, Canon Theologian of the (ECUSA) Diocese of South Carolina, who noted that in so doing he blurs the line between the sacred and the profane.

Another revisionist ECUSA Bishop, John Shelby Spong, also had a connection to a pornographic website. Following his retirement from the Diocese of Newark, Spong regularly wrote a column for the soft-core website The Position.

+ Rev. Mr. Charles A. Collins, *Christian Observer* Correspondent, 289 Hastings Dr., Goose Creek, SC 29445

President advocates constitutional marriage standard

Tuesday 24 February 2004, President George Bush announced, “Marriage cannot be severed from its cultural, religious and natural roots without weakening the good influence of society. Government, by recognising and protecting marriage, serves the interests of all. Today I call upon the Congress to promptly pass, and to send to the states for ratification, an amendment to

our Constitution defining and protecting marriage as a union of man and woman as husband and wife. The amendment should fully protect marriage, while leaving the state legislatures free to make their own choices in defining legal arrangements other than marriage.”

+ *The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20500* <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/02/20040224-2.html>

Communist Party divided over religious reform

In recent years, the religious policies of the Chinese Communist Party have drifted further away from modern reality, reflecting the dogmatism of the Maoist era rather than the dynamic growth in religion across China. Communist hardliners, such as former President Jiang Zemin, tend towards complete suppression of religion while pragmatists like the new president, Hu Jintao, advocate a softer approach of managing and manipulating religious adherents. This conflict is evident between the United Front Work Department (UFWD), responsible for the overall control of religious policy, and the Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB). The UFWD is willing to allow house churches to register directly with the government rather than the Three Self Patriotic Movement. However, the RAB bitterly opposes this suggestion. It appears any true reform of religious policies will be impossible until these tensions are resolved.

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

Dutch doctors kill 1,000 patients without consent

Doctors in the Netherlands kill approximately 1,000 patients each year without prior consent. These figures were presented by Professor Henk Jochemsen, director of the Dutch Institute for Ethics in Medicine, at a conference organised by the

Christian Democrats for Life and the Konrad Adenauer-Foundation in Berlin.

In April 2002, the Netherlands became the first European country to legalise “physician assisted suicide”. The law requires that the patient suffers from an incurable illness, freely demands the termination of his life, that a second medical opinion is heard, and the death is reported to the authorities.

But reliable sources report physicians often dodge these requirements. An anonymous survey showed that in approximately 25 per cent of the 3,600 annual cases no second medical opinion was sought and that only 45 per cent of all cases were registered.

+ *Wolfgang Polzer, ASSIST News Service, PO Box 2126, Garden Grove, CA 92842-2126*

Dinner and Festschrift to honour Morton Smith

The board and faculty of Greenville Seminary are hosting a special dinner to honour Dr. Morton Smith on Monday, March 8 on the occasion of his 80th birthday (11 Dec.) and 50 years in the gospel ministry. At the dinner a festschrift written in his honour will be presented to Dr. Smith. [PCA News] + *Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, PO Box 690, Taylors, SC 29687*

Black UCC Churches begin to depart

Over the last 15 years the United Church of Christ has gained 293 congregations. The figure would be more impressive if 380 congregations had not disappeared through dissolution, merger, or departure from the denomination.

Add to the spiral the projected departure of the Black Congregational Christian Churches from the United Church of Christ. Charging surrender of the Southern Conference and the Eastern North Carolina Association to the New Age Movement, 18

Black leaders endorsed a ringing indictment of the UCC. The manifesto puts the UCC on notice that the Black churches will not cooperate with a denomination which is open in affirming New Age doctrine. Some Black congregations have already departed.

+ *Biblical Witness Fellowship, 4150 Belden Village St., NW, Suite 601, Canton, Ohio 44718*

Robinson angers faithful blacks with inaccurate comparison

Vickie Gene Robinson, the openly homosexual clergyman who has caused major controversy in the Episcopal Church since his election as Bishop of New Hampshire last summer, recently compared his struggles for acceptance to those of Absalom Jones, the first Black priest ordained in the Episcopal Church, at a service honouring Jones in Chicago. Robinson's comparison angered a number of orthodox clergy and laity.

James Johnson, a Black priest from Philadelphia, commented, "I was saddened to read V. Gene Robinson's "sermon" on Isaiah 61:1-3ff. This passage is one of the great "Jubilee" passages of Scripture... Far from being a rallying cry for homosexual rights, this passage calls for the homosexual to repent of his homosexuality." Johnson also took Robinson to task for comparing skin pigmentation — a part of God's created order — to homosexuality without giving any consideration to the latter as an effect of the Fall. Dr. Michael Howell, a cradle Episcopalian who is of Black Caribbean heritage and currently serves as a professor of marine biology, called Robinson's remarks "...a very dangerous combination of ignorance and deceit."

+ *Rev. Mr. Charles A. Collins, Christian Observer Correspondent, 289 Hastings Dr., Goose Creek, SC 29445*

Baptist leader calls agreement with Muslims "impossible"

A major Christian denomination is concerned over the decision of an evangelical seminary to enter into a federally-funded interfaith program with Muslims.

Fuller Theological Seminary in California is using a federal grant from the Department of Justice to launch a one-million-dollar program designed to ease strained relations with the Muslim community. The program's code of ethics restricts proselytising for two years and affirms a mutual belief in one God. But John Revell of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention says it is impossible for evangelicals to be in agreement with Muslims because the doctrine of Islam denies the deity of Jesus Christ.

+ *Southern Baptist Convention, Baptist Press, 901 Commerce St., Nashville, TN 37203 (615) 244-2355*

Florida plans faith-based prison

Florida Governor Jeb Bush announced in December the creation of what he calls the nation's first entirely faith-based prison at a facility in his state. "For those individuals who are motivated to change their lives, programs like this can make a tremendous difference and create a pathway out of the criminal justice system," Bush said.

Participation by inmates is voluntary and entry into the program will not depend on the inmate's faith preference or lack of faith. Those who choose to be part of the program will be involved in faith-based activities seven days a week. Programs will focus on such issues as family life, personal growth, and life skills.

+ *The Church Herald, 4500 60th St. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49512*

Christians in India respond to charges of "conspiracy"

Christian leaders in India have released a joint statement in response to allegations made by the weekly newspaper *Tehelka* against the Christian community. In its inaugural issue on 30 January and a second issue on 8 February, *Tehelka* claimed Christians were carrying out "the conversion agenda of US President George Bush, "and using the HIV/AIDS problem as "an opportunity for evangelism."

Following publication of the *Tehelka* articles, the Indian government pushed forward plans to amend the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA) of 1976, which restricts foreign contributions to Christian relief agencies.

Two journalists assumed Christian identities in their research for the *Tehelka* articles, interviewing Christian leaders across the country about their strategies for evangelism. Those leaders now say their comments were taken out of context and used to support the conspiracy theory. "The Report seeks to divide the unity of the church in India," Rev. Richard Howell, General Secretary of the Evangelical Fellowship Of India (EFI), told *Compass*. "But they cannot divide the church, as all major Christian denominations in India stand united against the *Tehelka* reports."

+ *Compass Direct, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana, CA 92799-7250 (949) 862-0314*

Racing sparks Sabbath debate in Northern Ireland

The Sabbath Day is being desecrated, say Rev. Dr. Ian Paisley and members of the Free Presbyterian Church. They were outside Ravenhill Rugby Ground in Belfast protesting at the recent Ulster game, and they did so again at Downpatrick race course as Sabbath racing made its debut.

Downpatrick is reputed to be the burial

place of Patrick, Ireland's patron saint, the Englishman credited with bringing Christianity to the Emerald Isle 1,500 years ago. One and a half millennia later, the island is divided, politically as well as spiritually.

Among David Trimble's Ulster Unionists, there seems to be a reluctant acceptance that society is changing. One prominent politician told the BBC off the record, "I come from a strict Presbyterian background but I always remember what my father once told me — 'God made the Sabbath for man — not man for the Sabbath'." There's a bigger crowd in fact than at most other sporting fixtures, so this is a victory for the organisers.

+ *Dr. Ian Paisley, Martyrs Memorial Free Presbyterian Church, 356 Ravenhill Road, BT 5 Belfast, Ulster, United Kingdom, Northern Ireland*

Pentecostals mandate HIV testing for clergy

A small group of Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe has ordered all of its pastors, marriage officers, and couples seeking marriage to be tested for the HIV virus that causes AIDS.

The Pentecostal Assemblies of Zimbabwe, a group of 150 churches in a country where a quarter of the population is infected with AIDS, has already tested most of its clergy and began requiring couples to be tested this year.

+ *The Church Herald, 4500 60th St. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49512*

Mission Leader Rev. Frank van Dalen

Rev. Frank van Dalen was received from Florida Presbytery to become associate pastor at Long Creek Church in Columbia. Mr. van Dalen is on a two-year leave of absence from World Witness in order to complete his doctoral dissertation. His call to Long Creek includes time each day for that work.

+ *Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, One Cleveland St. Ste, 110, Greenville, SC 29601-3696 (864) 232-8297 <<http://www.worldwitness.org/>>*

Net users seeking more religious information

More than a third of all Americans who are connected to the internet have used it to access religious and spiritual information, a recent Pew Research Center study shows. Moreover, there has been a significant increase in the daily use of the internet to access religious information. This compares with 40 percent of American internet users who have searched the web for political information, and 66 percent who have sought health and medical data. But, while the number of these last two search categories increased 57 percent and 59 percent respectively between March 2000

and November 2002, what researchers call “religion surfers” almost doubled in number over the same period, from 18 million to 35 million — an increase of 94 percent. The growth appears to be only slightly linked to the 11 September 2001 attack on the United States. An earlier Pew poll accounted for the “bounce,” or heavy upturn in religious interest following the attack. The most recent research found that not only has the interest in religion held since 11 September, but it increased 25 percent during the subsequent 15 months. The poll found internet users between the ages of

18 and 29 to be the least interested in searching out religious material (24 percent), while those age 30-49 were the most interested (33 percent).

+ Agape Press, PO Drawer 2440, Tupelo, MS 38803
(662)844-5036 x377

Cumberland Presbyterian Church spearheads heifer project

Calico Rock (CPC) spear-headed a project for Heifer International that resulted in the purchase of an entire “Ark” of animals. Their cheque for US\$5,129.30 will help provide

approximately 33 pairs of animals which will be given to people living on subsistence levels in poverty stricken areas throughout the world. Heifer International provides training in caring for the animals and in marketing the by-products such as wool, milk, meat, eggs, and honey. Other churches and organisations of Calico Rock worked with the CPC, and a generous family matched the contributions dollar for dollar up to US\$2500.00.

+ Calico Rock Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Box 315, Calico Rock, Arkansas 72519 (870) 2973931

Faith and the arts

The place of arts in the world and in the church

Don Capill

There is no escaping the influences and attractions of the arts. If you have selected paint colours for your house, matched colours in your furnishings, changed the cut or colour of your hair, chosen a new car or coat or shirt on the basis of its style, had a preference for one eau de toilette over another, and spent money on videos, CDs and magazines, you've made choices in the realm of the arts.



Leonardo da Vinci

Defining works of art

When I refer to the arts, I am referring to the creativity of all kinds of works of art - the things designed to please, arrest, or move us emotionally to certain ends. References to artists are generally not restricted to those who paint. The term applies to all who create works of art - poets, dramatists, novelists, musicians, film directors, choreographers, sculptors, and so on.

Works of art are creations which enlarge our experiences: refresh, enrich, ennoble and delight us. They can affect our seeing, understanding and feelings. They can move us to higher and nobler sentiments such as worship, compassion and patriotism, or they can move us to rebellion and self-indulgence.

In our contemporary world the arts have been dissolving into entertainment and both have been taken captive to commercial interests. Boundaries between principles and practice have disintegrated. Personal preferences are replacing strongly held principles, style frequently discounts content, and political correctness seeks to silence tradition and Biblical judgment.

Setting the stage with a few quotations:

John Calvin has said, “It is bad to live under a prince (a government) who permits nothing, but much worse to live under one that permits everything.” This statement could be a precise description of where we, in the Western world, find ourselves today in the realms of the arts and entertainment. It is echoed by Dostoevsky’s 19th century comment: “If there is no God, everything is possible.”

The impact of God and the Word of God in the life of Westerners has been replaced by immersion in a world of materialism, entertainment and sensuality. “As art

museums become more like churches, so churches in their turn become more like museums.”¹ In Britain, Mervyn Bragg tells us, “more people now work in the arts than in the steel, coal and car industries combined.”

Calvin Seerveld has declared that, though Art has now become both a battlefield and playground, it is still a bona fide calling for Christian activity. Another Christian has put it this way: “That the arts corrupt does not mean that Christians can abandon them. On the contrary, the corruption of the arts means that Christians dare not abandon them any longer.”²

A three-stage agenda

There is no escaping the influences and attractions of the arts. A decade and a half ago, Neil Postman published his best-seller, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, and it is still essential reading for any who wish to understand how the entertainment industry, and television in particular, have changed a generation. His major plea is for the regeneration of thought, deep thought, lest consumerism takes us all captive to frivolity and pleasure. He is right. We need to know how to really think. (Which makes me think of Bertrand Russell’s cynical comment on the failure of people, including Christians, to think. “Think!” he said. “Why people would rather die than think. In fact, they do!”)

Hard thinking, however, is just the first step Two others must follow. We are to *think Christianly*, and we are then to *think Christianly flexibly and discerningly*. This is the bottom line. Until the Christian does this, he/she will not be effective in the current cultural battle.

At the outset, however, we must understand that there is no simple division between the sacred and the secular. As

Calvin has reminded us, "All truth is from God and, consequently, if wicked men have said something that is true and just, we ought not to reject it; for it is from God."³ Furthermore, "The human mind, however fallen and perverted from its original integrity, is still adorned and invested with admirable gifts from its Creator...Men whom the Scriptures term natural are acute and clear-sighted in the investigation of inferior (that is, temporal) things".⁴ This means that Christian and non-Christian artist alike will be involved in similar struggles to master their chosen medium, to learn from others and the past, to avoid the trite, and to scrape together a living.

Classifying the arts

Everyone knows that there is a world of difference between songs by the Beatles and the Last Four Songs of Richard Strauss, and between Shakespeare and *Rap*. The vast differences make it essential to often think in categories, and a number of people have attempted classifying the arts. Nicholas Wolterstorff has suggested a three-fold classification.⁵

1. *Works of high art*: Art associated with a cultural elite with respect to how art-works are produced, distributed, and used in society. Members of a cultural elite never think of themselves as such, for they are not tied by heredity, wealth or occupation, though they may have close ties intellectually.
2. *Works of popular art*: The works of those outside the elite.
3. *Works of the tribe*: Works shared in common between the elite and non-elite, e.g. church groups.

No sharp line divides these groups. One shades into the other. Over time, some works shift from one group to another. Jazz originated as popular art but now, generally, belongs to the art of the tribe. Seldom, though, does a work of high art become a work of popular art or of the tribe. Kenneth A. Myers suggests a slightly different classification:

1. *Works of high culture*: These are rooted in antiquity, and in every age has convictions about absolutes, truth and virtue.

2. *Folk culture*: While simpler in manner and less communicable from one folk to another, folk culture has the virtues of honesty, integrity, commitment to tradition, and perseverance in the face of opposition, e.g. Negro spirituals.
3. *Popular culture*: This has its origins in distinctively secularised movements which is now becoming the consciousness of society as a whole as it establishes its own manners and emotional habits.

Both classifications alert us to the tensions between the more traditional, values-laden works of art and the values-levelling popular works. And, whether we like it or not, all artists and consumers are caught up in this tension. Sound values are always levelled by political correctness and the profit motive.

The trickling, dumbing-down effect

When high art is turned into money-making, a trickling, dumbing-down effect takes place. This has happened widely since the Sixties and, in particular, over the last ten years as all the arts have been affected by the impact of TV and satellite communication. The chief players are now often entertainers themselves and corporate management driven by competition, profit and greed.

The trickling, dumbing-down effect works like this. A work of art is created by an ideas person, the initiator. This initiator, be he artist, film director, choreographer, or whatever, expresses his ideas through a chosen physical form. Next, technicians and developers make this work available to a wider audience through duplication and distribution. Then follow a host of imitators and popularisers who, with little concern for quality as such, alter the original, giving it a spin to boost sales. Finally, there come the vultures - unprincipled opportunists who milk the market for all it's worth with an endless supply of paraphernalia linked with the original, e.g. T-shirts and miscellaneous merchandise, linked foods, special offers, glossy magazines, stickers and labels of all kinds, etc. The vultures feed on mob mentality and the secret longing of people to somehow be linked to the rich and famous, or, at the other end of the scale, to be linked to society's detractors.

The place of the arts in the world

The Greeks, the Egyptians and the people of the Middle Ages had no equivalent word for what we now call art. Their art simply served a function: to draw attention to a subject beyond itself. In the Middle Ages, art, music and architecture were considered spiritual works because they were mostly used in the service of the Church. In the Reformation which followed, Calvinists

demanded of art, simplicity, sobriety and measure, and this was evident in the architecture, church furnishings, congregational music, and even in the Geneva gown worn by the pastor. The end of art was in the service of something beyond and greater than art.

In the Renaissance, for the first time, names of artists began to be associated with particular works of art, though artists were still regarded as servants of patrons, the greatest being the Popes and the Roman Catholic church generally. It was only in the 18th century that writers began to group together painting, sculpture, architecture and music. It was then, also, that the first museums and galleries were built. They were built as *public* halls - public spaces where works of art could be contemplated in quietness. Prior to this, quiet rooms had existed in the homes of the nobility and in cathedrals and chapels. Works of art referred to the refined activities of the leisured classes, and the defining characteristic of the arts was their beauty. Beauty, in its turn, had its own characteristics: order, harmony, unity in diversity, symmetry, proportion and balance. While high art was largely the preserve of the wealthy, skilled craftsmen prided themselves in making commodities that were attractive as well as useful.

By the end of the 18th century, the conception of art was clearly changing. The French Revolution which called for a sweeping away of all traditional power and authority, had opened a Pandora's box for the liberation of everything, including the works of art. Art was becoming *Art* with a capital A, and nature was *Nature* with a capital N. At the same time, 'man' with a small m was being transformed into *Man* with a capital M.

The Romantics of the 19th century brought a new emphasis in the arts and a new meaning to the word *artist*. The new emphasis was that of the sublime - an emotion of awe and veneration "something far more overwhelming and undefined than the measured classical idea of beauty".⁶

The new artist came to celebrate a new self - a creative, free, sensual being unfettered by God, society or family. The words of the mid-19th century poet, Walt Whitman, sum up the spirit of the new man:

I celebrate myself...

I am the poet of the Body;

And I am the poet of the Soul.

Walt Whitman am I, of mighty Manhattan the son,

Turbulent, fleshy and sensual, eating, drinking and breeding;

No sentimentalist - no stander above men and women, or apart from them;

No more modest than immodest.

I believe in the flesh and the appetites;
Seeing, hearing, feeling, are miracles, and

Advertise your Happenings
and Church events in

faith in
focus

*each part and tag of me is a miracle...
If I worship one thing more than another,
it shall be the spread of my own body, or
any part of it.*

Such humanists viewed themselves as virtually a separate race of great souls, with greater sensitivity, insight, enthusiasm and passion. They attacked traditional morality and traditional concepts of art, refusing to be subject to old boundaries. When Wordsworth defined poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings", the flood-gates of subjectivity opened. Artists were no longer satisfied with *imitating* nature; rather, they would liberate and express the "noble savage" *within* them. Artists like Keats, Byron, Shelley and Wagner, to name but a few, began to live lives as dramatic and unfettered as their art. They lived by their own game plan, and for some, like Andy Warhol, their *life* was their main work of art.

Art became many things. No longer was there one defining description, and no longer was art primarily for contemplation and delight. For some, like Oscar Wilde, it was art for art's sake. For some it was anti-art for, as the Dada group was to declare at the time of the First World War, 'Art has no meaning as life has none'. For a number in the 20th century, art was political propaganda. For some, like Andrew Wyeth, art is a striving to overcome odds. For others, art is the new and to be new is to be continuously trying to shock. Now art is also being taken captive to commerce and consumerism.

Matthew Collings' extensive survey of postmodern art entitled *This is Modern Art*, (with an accompanying TV series) reveals contemporary art as a kaleidoscope of styles and opinions. Just one sentence from it sums up six leading aspects of art since the end of the 1980s: 'It was glamorous, mysterious, sexy, soulful, macabre, gloomy, quirky, kinky, and funny - and it wasn't going away.' Postmodernism thrives on paradox, fragmentation, and impossible juxtapositions of styles, techniques and imagery.⁷

The place of the arts in the Church

The church's relationship with the arts has changed over the centuries, and has varied widely not only between denominations but within them. In the Middle Ages, the works of architects, sculptors and artists served the church in highly anonymous ways. They were more akin to the Old Testament craftsmen who considered it an honour to create to the glory of God alone. In the Middle Ages, their works were visual signposts pointing souls to God - and not infrequently paying homage to Mary. The Church called all the tunes and commissioned the craftsmen. In a two hundred year period in France, eighty cathedrals and at least five

hundred sizeable churches were built. They were the art centres of their day - combined places of worship, theatre, art gallery, school and library. But some believed that their emphasis on visuals contributed to a lesser understanding of doctrine.

Calvin and Luther both approved of and appreciated good music. Luther thought so highly of it that he was of the opinion that no man should be admitted to the ministry without marked competency in music. Calvin declared, "Next to God, music deserves the highest praise", but in the church he did not want anything distracting attention from the Word of God. "For music has a secret and incredible power to move our hearts", he said. "When evil words are accompanied by music, they penetrate more deeply, and the poison enters as wine through a funnel into a vat."

Over the history of Protestantism that followed, all too frequently it was the perils of the arts that were emphasised rather than their delights.⁸ The Bible, however, endorses the arts in principle, steering a middle course between over-valuing and under-valuing them. Christians have held both the classical view that art is an imitation of reality and the view that it is the imaginative element in any created object of use.

Aesthetic considerations, however, have always been integral to liturgies in the service of doctrines. Hymn singing played an important part in the Methodist revival. Music was central also to the Salvation Army movement, and Negro spirituals were the life-blood of the American deep South, while choruses have been a characteristic feature of the Charismatic movement.

The Reformed churches generally have displayed a greater wariness in the use of the arts compared to many other churches, being more alert to the dangers of their drawing too much attention to themselves, as well as being capable of introducing undesirable worldly elements into the church. Just how much works of art feature, and should feature in places of worship, rests with denominations and separate congregations. The balance between what is demanded by people and what is acceptable, rests with synods or the local eldership, or a mix of both. There is no doubt that the place of the arts in the life of the church today is increasingly a point of keen debate - and this point of debate is set to continue as schools at all levels are developing programmes and demanding new facilities to accommodate these programmes. Increasingly, too, governments are endorsing and encouraging the arts as never before with substantial inducements and handouts.

Whatever the future, Christians in the past have played a major role in the development of the arts. One cannot imagine a world

without the great works of the likes of J.S.Bach, Vivaldi, Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Bernini, Vermeer, Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, Mozart, Brahms, Mendelssohn, Van Gogh, Dvorak, T.S.Eliot, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Solzhenitsyn, C.S.Lewis and Tolkien, to mention but a few. The list is endless - those who, in one way or another, were concerned to glorify God rather than man.

This is the first of three addresses first given at the Faith and the Arts Seminar organised by the Reformed Theological College in Geelong, Victoria, in August 2002.

Lord willing, the next two will be published over the next two issues.

¹ Hilary Brand & Adrienne Chaplin Solway, *Art & Soul - Signposts for Christians in the Arts* (Paternoster, 1999)

² Gene Veith

³ John Calvin, commenting on Titus 1:12

⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Bk 2, ch. 2.

⁵ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Art in Action*

⁶ Brand & Solway, *Art & Soul*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Subject: Whose party are you going to?

Dear Sir,

I really appreciated your recent editorial Whose party are you going to? It really did put Hillsong in its proper place. Many things - both good and bad can be said about specific Hillsongs and even about the movement. However, you have struck the nail on its head by placing the movement in its "Christian-focused" context. The Christian-focused (man-focused) perspective is the root of Hillsong's false gospel, no matter how many good things they say on the side.

Berwyn Hoyt

Situations Vacant

Hurry-Up Shoe Repairs of Wellington has a vacancy for a young man to learn the trade of shoe repairing. Please phone Dennis Bartlett at (04) 472 8046

The saints of ancient British history

Do you live in St Albans?

Patricia van Laar

Some of us do, or our home church is there, for the Reformed Church of Christchurch is situated in the suburb of St Albans. But who was St Alban?

Saint names are reasonably common in New Zealand. Towns and suburbs, St Margaret's or St Columba's Colleges, St Aidan's and St Oswald churches and so on. We are familiar with them, but have you ever wondered who these men and women were? Many of the names come from somewhat obscure and ancient British history. What is known of these, when stripped of the accumulation of myth and fantasy that has grown up around them, bears witness to the faithful, ordinary Christians who, in the first and following centuries of the Christian era, spread the Word rapidly across the known world.

I use the word 'ordinary' advisedly. Unlike many ancient national churches, there is no apostle in early history or early legend connected to the arrival of Christianity in Britain. Turkey, Greece and Rome itself, as we know from the Bible, were scenes of Paul's activity, and probably Spain too. There is the legend, with every reason and evidence to believe it is based on fact, of Thomas taking the gospel to India. France has records of immediate post-apostolic teachers and preachers. Not so Britain. No history or tradition of any particular apostle or missionary first introducing the story of Christ exists in the early records of this land. Legends of Joseph of Arimathea and a 'holy grail', connected to Glastonbury, are of extremely late origin over a thousand years later, and of no historic value whatever. They may even have been concocted in the first place to compensate for this historical lack!

To understand the true early British saints and to put their stories into context, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the history of early Britain itself. It is surprising how much (yet a pity, paradoxically, how little) is known of those days, and although many stories of the earliest saints' lives may be "encrusted in legend," as one encyclopaedia expresses it, much can be asserted with confidence.

A brief history

From 55 BC to c. 407 AD the Romans occupied most of what is now England. It is uncertain exactly how or when Christianity reached this land, perhaps carried by Roman soldiers or administrators, or perhaps coming from continental Celts, with whom

there was considerable contact. Probably it was a combination of both. By whatever means, evidence is that the faith could have arrived in this far-flung corner of the Roman Empire as early as the end of the first century, and certainly by the second.

The Britons were a Celtic people, as were the Scots, the Irish, and the tribes in some parts of France. Links with continental Celts were strong. As a point of interest, even in the 20th century, as related by my mother, the Welsh people could converse in their own language with Breton fishermen who took shelter in Welsh ports in a storm. I used to wonder about this, but now know that the Bretons (from Brittany in north-west France) were of British/Celtic origin — they were in fact, descendants of Britons who escaped by sea from the invading Anglo Saxons, c. 430 AD. Their form of language is recognised today as Celtic/Cymric. — i.e. Celtic of Welsh derivation. (The Welsh name for Wales is Cymru. Welsh is a completely different language from English.) The fact of these Britons finding a home in Brittany may by inference indicate a ready acceptance from nearby long-established fellow-Celts of Gaul.

Early knowledge of a British church

Much earlier than 430, however, Irenaeus, Bishop (Episcopos or Overseer) of Lyons, a disciple of Polycarp of Smyrna, who was himself a disciple in Ephesus of the apostle John, had Celts in his congregation, and felt at home with them, even if he did term their language barbarous! Writing about 180 to 185 AD, he tells of Celts won to the faith "... a people without writing, but wise in doctrine and manner of life.... Let any, one preach 'made up heresies' and they will stop up their ears and run far away." So before 200 AD, linked to the apostolic days by only two steps, were Celtic Christians — from John to Polycarp (martyred at the age of 86 in 156 AD), and from Polycarp to Irenaeus. As there is no need to doubt historians who assert that there was much association of the Celtic Britons with the Celts of continental Europe in those distant times, Celts known to have had considerable contact across the channel, there is no reason to exclude the Britons from Irenaeus's comment.

Only fifteen to twenty years after Irenaeus, writing between 200 – 207 A.D., Tertullian of Carthage quoted Psalm 19:4, and listing the nations, included "*places of the Britons, unreachd by the Romans, but subject to Christ.*" Origen (184 - 254) also wrote of Christians in the land of Britain, these being, he stated, the

first in that land to believe in One God.

An age old nursery rhyme

The Roman occupation of Britain brought some extraordinary twists to the history of Rome and Britain, which are not well known. One historian, who has done 25 years of research into ancient European history, discovered that the British King Coel, who reigned for only three years, from c.306 - 309 (Old King Cole of the nursery rhyme), had a daughter Helen, who married a Roman Senator named Constantius, a legate to Britain. Constantius and Helen (Helena in Latin records) were the parents of the famous Emperor Constantine, although it is elsewhere claimed that she was born in Bithynia. This raises the question, was Bithynia a mistaken recording of the name Britannia? It seems beyond doubt that her husband did serve in Britain. This surmise regarding the birthplace of Helen becomes even more plausible upon learning that the language of the ancient southern Britons and the Bretons of Brittany (France) is called the 'Brythonic' language. The origin of this word, the Concise Oxford Dictionary states, is the Old Celtic Brython = Britons. (Britain is the country, Britons are the people). It is easy to accept from this that the land itself may have been called Brythonia, from which the Romans may have derived 'Britannia'. This too is surmise on my part, but feasibly Brythonia could then be mistaken for Bythinia in what is now Turkey. Does that solve a mystery?

If so, it is noteworthy that Old King Cole, that merry old soul, who is unknown as an historical character to most of us, was the maternal grandfather of Constantine, who became emperor in 313 AD with such a muddled influence on the development and history of the Christian church.

A firmly established church

A year after Constantine became emperor, three named British bishops attended the Council of Arles in 314 AD — Ebur (or Ivor) of York, Restitutus of London, and Adelfus of either Colchester (founded by King Coel) or Lincoln. Some British churchmen were also present at the Council of Ariminum (Rimini) in 359, three of these being too poor to pay their own expenses. So at that time, although a large part of Britain had been under the thumb of pagan Rome, the Celtic church was well established. While the Romans were in charge, comparative peace reigned, considerably strengthened by the famous Hadrian's Wall, built to keep out

raiding northern Scots and Picts. The tribes were controlled by chiefs or kings, some of them lords over surprisingly large areas.

The Roman withdrawal

Following the withdrawal of Rome in 407 Britain was immediately harried by marauding Picts, Scots and continental sea pirates, who came burning and slaying. So intense and disruptive was this that at last (c. 437) Vortigern of Kent requested help from Hengist and Horsa, rough heathen, fierce sea rovers from the coasts of Germany and Denmark. Vortigern, in gratitude for this aid, presented them with a portion of Kent, where their families settled. The new settlers then turned against the British and brought in their own pagan immigrants, fierce warrior intruders who destroyed cities, slew priests, killed without mercy, butchered and enslaved. They spread over east and south, thrusting the Britons back westwards (eventually into Wales). The Welsh have never quite forgiven Vortigern for this.

The tribes who came at the invitation of Vortigern were Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, who settled in related regions in Britain. By 150 + years later (app. 780+ AD) their descendants occupied from the North Sea to the Severn, from southern shores to the Firth of Forth.

Origin and spread of these Anglo-Saxons:

(1) Angles (Angli)

A Germanic people occupying the Schleswig-Holstein district of Angeln, settled in East Anglia, Mercia, and Northumbria. From them came the name 'Angleland'. East Anglia composed roughly modern Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. Mercia was often acknowledged as supreme, but they also submitted to Wessex.

(2) Saxons

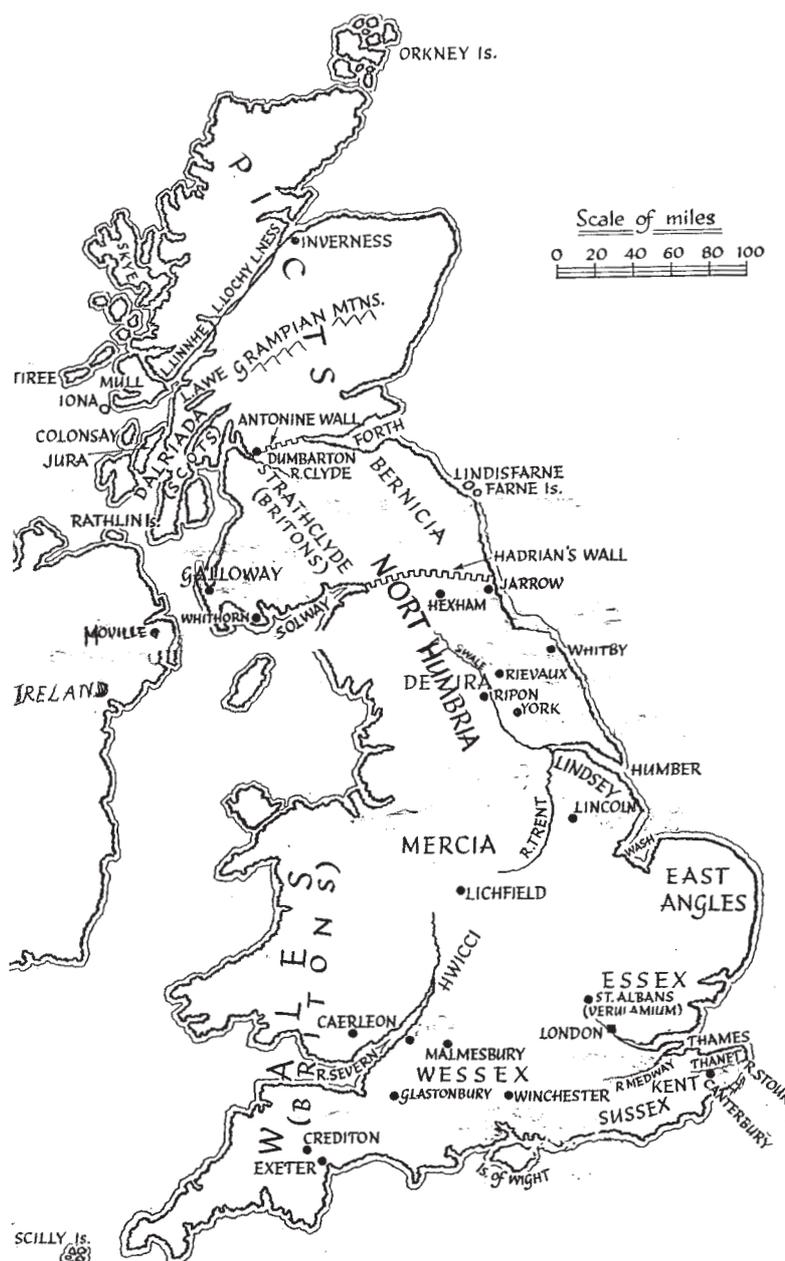
These were one of a confederation of Germanic peoples from the lower Elbe region, getting their name from a short thrusting sword called seax. Many who came to Britain (Anglo -Saxons) came indirectly from Rhineland, and from coastal Holland and Belgium. Bede dated the landings 449, and evidence is that pirate raids ceased by c. 450, to be replaced by land-taking.

(3) Jutes

The Germanic Jutes also invaded Britain in the 5th century, settling chiefly in Kent. They were probably from east Rhine and from modern Jutland (Denmark — northern portion of the Peninsula and part of north Germany).

Rough division of areas

Saxons — from Old Saxony: Essex, Sussex, Wessex; Angles — from Angeln (Schleswig):



East Anglia, Middle Anglia, Mercia, Northumbria; Jutes—from Jutland: Kent, Isle of Wight and Southern Hampshire.

Tribal struggles now eventuated among themselves. Small kingdoms were gradually conquered or were moulded naturally into one. The country became known as Angleland, gradually corrupted into England.

By the end of the 6th century, much of England was in Anglo-Saxon hands, although developed into separate kingdoms — Kent, East Anglia, Wessex, Bernicia, Deira and Mercia. Considerable admixture of these peoples had taken place even before they reached Britain, and this mingling continued as further interchange and development took place. Other tribes (e.g. Friesian) also took part in local development. Isolation, both geographical and cultural, led to the evolution of kingdoms. Settlement and Roman roads were important factors in this. Settlement

was widespread, and much use was made of the roads. This is not all clear cut, but what Bede wrote later is basically correct, that "the tribes who came at the invitation of Vortigern to defend against the Picts and the Irish, that is, Angles, Saxons -and Jutes, were thought to have been settled in related regions in Britain."

A mistaken account of history

So Christianity, which had made considerable inroads into Britain in early times, was driven west. In contrast, these invaders who came to be known as the English were unevangelised heathen. In spite of this early church history, it is often asserted that Christianity was introduced to Britain by, and was unknown until, the arrival of Augustine in 597AD. This impression is false. But if blame is to be laid, it lies partly with the British church itself, in so far as it failed on

the whole to spread the faith amongst the invading Anglo-Saxons. Generally speaking the church seems to have retreated with its unconverted fellow-Britons into the hills of Wales, to lick its wounds. Yet the gospel did pop up again before the arrival of Augustine, from a northern area of what is now West

Scotland, from a Celtic Church of again, unknown origin. It was Celtic churchmen from the Strathclyde region, Ninian and probably Patrick too, who took up the Biblical sword, so that the next phase of church history and development is theirs.

This seems to be a convenient place to

pause in recounting the history of these islands, and to take a look at the earliest of the outstanding Christian churchmen and leaders known to us as the saints of Britain.

But first, the question raised earlier will be answered, "Who was St Alban?"

A feminine focus

Sally Davey

Take my life and let it be... Ever, only, all for Thee – Frances Ridley Havergal and her hymns

"Take my life and let it be, consecrated, Lord, to Thee" (no. 462 in our *Psalter Hymnal*) is probably Frances Ridley Havergal's best-known hymn, and it is a fitting summary of her life. It was her whole-hearted devotion to God that characterised everything about her. What we find in her hymns is an expression of her heart's desire: to know Christ better, and to serve Him more devotedly.

Her background

Victorian English vicarages seem to have produced some very interesting and creative, as well as some very mature, Christians. The home of William Henry Havergal, vicar of Astley in Worcestershire, was no exception. He himself was an accomplished musician; and his discussions with Frances on music, composition and hymn-writing were the major encouragement for her own work. William wrote a number of hymn tunes still in use today, including *Baca* (used with Nos. 75 and 422 in our *Psalter Hymnal*). Frances was affectionately devoted to both her family and her church. She loved her middle name, Ridley, that of the faithful martyr Nicholas Ridley, who died during the reign of Catholic Mary, and to whom the family was related. She wrote once:

*"But 'what the R. doth represent'
I value and revere,
A diamond clasp it seems to be,
On golden chains, enlinking me
In loyal love to England's hope,
The church I hold so dear."*

Her family

The Havergals were an ordinary, happy, faithful Christian family. Frances had three sisters (one of them, Maria, later wrote her biography) and two brothers, both of whom entered the preaching ministry. She was an attractive, cheerful and intelligent child, full of fun. By the age of four she could read the Bible, and had learned to write. The family

would gather on Sunday evenings to sing hymns, and little Frances keenly joined in. During these years her father was unwell. His great solace was composing music for cathedral services, many hundreds of chants (for singing the Psalms), and hymn tunes. He always gave the income from these to the work of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), a missionary society of the Church of England. Both parents were very keen to teach their children to love the Saviour, and in one letter written to Frances when she was staying with her grandparents her mother Jane wrote, "May my Fanny know and love



Frances Ridley Havergal, 1836-1879

Jesus Christ! Then she will be sure to go to heaven whether she dies young or old." Sadly, Jane herself died when Frances was only eleven. When she became ill, something she said to Frances was forever etched in her memory: "Fanny dear, pray to God to prepare you for all that He is preparing you." Frances had not expected her mother's death, and it was a deep shock to her.

However, her interest in the gospel had been increasing for some time. Frances wrote in her twenties that one of the turning points in that direction was a sermon she heard when about nine years old, which aroused an uneasiness about the state of her soul. "At this time," she later wrote, "I don't think I had any clear ideas about believing on the Lord Jesus, and so getting rid of the burden which had pressed so long upon my little soul. My general notion was that I didn't love God at all, and was very bad and wicked altogether; and that if I went on praying very much, something would come to me and change me all at once, and make me like many whom I read about and a few whom I saw. As for *trying* to be good, that seemed of next to no use; it was like struggling in a quicksand, the more you struggle the deeper you sink."

Those who helped her

Frances was very sure, when she came to believe, that salvation was entirely a work of God. In the years after her mother's death she read the Bible a great deal, and used to pray often for real faith — as she was becoming increasingly conscious that she didn't have it, and that this was, above all, what she needed. Her older sisters, Ellen and Maria, would talk often with her about Christ, and how "sweet and pleasant a thing it was to love Him who first loved us." But it was not until she went — to her "great delight" — to boarding school that she really came to know the Saviour. It seems that the instrument God used was a delightful Christian mistress, Mrs Teed. Mrs Teed spoke and prayed with the girls often, with an "intense yearning" which reminded Frances of the apostle Paul. "The result was," she later wrote, "what might really be called a revival among her young charge. There may have been, and probably was, some excitement [she means over-emotionalism]; but that the Holy Spirit was, even then and there, sent down into many a

young heart, and that many dated from that time their real conversion to God, and went home that Christmas rejoicing in a newly and truly found Saviour, I have no doubt whatever."

Another person used to help Frances was Miss Caroline Cooke, a lady who later married her father and became, as Frances called her, "my loved mother." She was visiting Frances's married sister Miriam at the same time as she was, a few months after the Christmas referred to above. One evening, sitting on the sofa, as they were talking, Frances told her there was nothing she longed for more than to be forgiven. Miss Cooke asked Frances a question which led to the hearty answer that she would be willing to lose everything — even her best-loved papa, her brothers and sisters and all she loved — if she could gain this. Miss Cooke encouraged her that if that was the case, she was sure it would not be very long before her desire was granted. And then she asked, "Why cannot you trust yourself to your Saviour at once? Supposing that now, at this moment, Christ were to come...could you not trust Him?" That was enough for Frances. As soon as she could, she raced upstairs to her room, flung herself on her knees and committed herself, in real faith, to Jesus. The change in her heart was unmistakable. The Bible was, for the first time, a delight to her, and she understood it with new eyes. The Holy Spirit had truly changed her heart.

Her physical life

The rest of her life, while quiet and, perhaps to our eyes, rather unremarkable, was spiritually very fruitful. She lived until her death with her parents or her sisters, simply taking every opportunity to talk about the gospel with whose lives brushed hers, to tell them of the Saviour's love. She was a warm, cheerful Christian who loved to share the truth in a natural and friendly, though earnest, way.

But she was also an intelligent woman, with unusually developed gifts, and she used these very much to God's glory. Languages were a special talent. At one time she studied Hebrew with one of her brothers in law, and made a particular study of the Psalms (no doubt helpful to her in hymn writing). She had earlier learned Greek with her father, so that she could study the New Testament in the original. She was also fluent in German and French; and in her late teens spent a number of months at school in Germany (delighting herself by coming first in German in a class of German-speaking girls!) But her greatest study was Scripture. She made it her business to read it morning and night; reflecting on the daily, practical ways she should be changed by it "into the likeness of Christ." Together with one of her lifelong friends, Elizabeth Clay (whom she had met at school), she memorized large portions of

the Bible. By her early adulthood she knew all the gospels, the epistles, Revelation, the Psalms and Isaiah (her favourite book) by heart; and later she memorized the minor prophets. In addition, she would often make important biblical passages, such as the fruits of the Spirit, subjects of her morning meditation and prayer. In her journal she recorded taking each fruit, one per day, and praying for its increase in her life. The year she died, she began writing a "Journal of Mercies"; recording each day God's kindnesses to her. Always, despite sickness or disappointments, there was something. She wrote devotional books for children and for adults, and often wrote down her lessons of spiritual self-discipline. In her memoirs she gave a list of "12 reasons for attending church on a wet Sunday" — which apply equally well as lessons for us, whenever we might find ourselves unwilling to make the effort. They include:

1. God has blessed the Lord's day and hallowed it, making no exceptions for hot or cold or stormy days.
2. I expect my minister to be there. I should be surprised if he were to stay at home on account of the weather.
6. Such weather will show me on what foundation my faith is built; it will prove how much I love Christ. True love rarely fails to meet an appointment.
7. Though my excuses satisfy myself, they still must undergo God's scrutiny, and they must be well grounded to do that.

Her steady meditation

From her youngest years Frances wrote poems to express the spiritual lessons she was learning. Many of these speak of her earnest commitment to Christ, of her desire to be completely consecrated in service to Him. The effect of her steady meditation on Scripture was that biblical ideas and phrases would come naturally to her speech and to her pen, when writing these poems that were later used as hymns. It is not hard to see this at work in the words (No. 404 in the *Psalter Hymnal*):

*"Lord, speak to me that I may speak
In living echoes of Thy tone
As Thou hast sought, so let me seek
Thine erring children lost and lone."*

Musically, she was also very gifted. She was a talented pianist and a good singer. Though never formally taught musical theory, she composed a number of hymn tunes. Once, when on a visit to Germany (she went several times with her parents when her father was consulting an eye doctor) she went to see the German musician, Ferdinand Hiller, in Cologne. Some friends of hers had urged her to show him some of the songs she had written, to get an experienced

opinion of them. He found her melodies "very pleasing and many really very good", but lacking the stamp of genius. But he was astonished at her harmonies... "It is something singular to find such grasp of the subject, such power of harmonization, except where there has been long and thorough study and instruction; here I can give almost unlimited praise." Hiller recommended studying under someone first-rate, and gave her the title of a book on harmony. The study proved impracticable, but Frances purchased the book and learned a lot from it.

Serving the cause of the gospel

Probably the best use she made of her musical talents was in serving the cause of the gospel. She played Handel, Beethoven and Mendelssohn, and sang for friends and acquaintances. On one such occasion, while traveling in Switzerland with her sister Maria, she was staying near Lausanne (where Francis and Edith Schaeffer were to settle 100 years later). One occasion she sang a hymn she had written, "Only for Thee" for a French Catholic audience. They liked the tune so much that she decided to rewrite the hymn in French, emphasizing instead the fact that we can come to the Father "Only by Thee [that is, Christ]". Her aim was to make clear that salvation is by grace alone, to ensure that her Roman Catholic audience would hear the truth plainly. Concerned particularly about the local priest, Maria went to him to borrow his French bible, and used the opportunity to witness to him about Christ. Shortly afterwards, Frances's piano playing attracted the admiration of guests at a hospice run by the Catholic church. They asked her to sing to them, so she told them she would sing from the Scriptures, and so sang "Comfort ye" and "He shall feed His flock" from Handel's *Messiah* in French, repeating the words in German and Italian. She used many occasions to lead travelers, tourists and invalids to Christ through her singing and her warm conversation.

Frances was an active supporter of the Church Missionary Society, and gave singing lessons for them. She also trained choirs, and led hymn meetings during mission weeks for the Young Women's Christian Association in Liverpool. Sometimes, even at London parties, she would be asked to sing for her fellow-guests; and she often found that simply singing her hymns gave her opportunity to speak about Christ. On one such occasion she wrote: "Afterwards I had two really important conversations with strangers; one seemed extremely surprised at finding himself quite easily drifted from the badinage with which he started into a right-down personal talk about his personal danger and his only hope for safety; he took it very well, and thanked me. Perhaps that seed may bear fruit..."

The importance of doctrinal truth

As a deeply devoted Christian in an age that still valued theology, Frances was careful about doctrinal truth. Of her father, she wrote that she honoured his "holy and consistent example, ever holding forth the Word of life and sound doctrine." She was similarly careful about the way emotions and religious "feelings" could easily be mistaken for true devotion to Christ. Visiting the Munster Cathedral in Germany as a 17 year-old girl, she was impressed by its beauty and by the sound of its bells. "Altogether I cannot describe the impressions made upon one, but I can well imagine how the worshippers, kneeling about the cathedral, might mistake the quiet soothing feeling which such a scene induces, for holy devotion. Popery knows well how to lull and deceive, knows well how to entrap the sense; and nothing can be better suited to the natural [as opposed to spiritual] heart than such a religion."

When writing the words to her hymns, Frances prayed carefully about every line, even every rhyme. She described it thus: "Writing is *praying* with me, for I never seem to write even a verse by myself, and feel like a little child writing; you know how a child would look up at every sentence and say 'And what shall I say next?' That is just what I do;

I ask that at every line He would give me, not merely thoughts and power, but also every word, even the very rhymes."

A particular period of consecration

During a period in 1873 Frances became increasingly aware of the seriousness of sin, and wrote that any compromise, any dalliance with it spoils our fellowship with God, even though it be for a moment, till we repent and ask forgiveness. Soon she became increasingly convinced of the need for total consecration of ourselves to God – and this became a constant theme of her conversation and of her hymns. The famous hymn, "Take my life and let it be" comes from this period, and she has recorded the circumstances of it in a letter. She had been making a five-day visit at a household, and characteristically, she saw the visit as an opportunity to speak of Christ:

"There were ten persons in the house, some unconverted and long prayed for, some converted, but not rejoicing Christians. He gave me the prayer, 'Lord, give me all in this house!' And He just did! Before I left the house every one had got a blessing. The last night of my visit I was too happy to sleep, and passed most of the night in praise and renewal of my own consecration, and these

little couplets formed themselves and chimed in my heart one after another, till they finished with, Ever, ONLY, ALL for Thee!"

This desire to share Christ with others was the pattern of all her short life. Energetic in service, she continued her pattern of Sunday school teaching, helping in her own congregation, and visiting her married sisters to help them in their households and to teach their children. Her last illness and death came quite suddenly, while she was on holiday with Maria in Wales in 1879. At the age of only 42, she succumbed (it is thought), to peritonitis, dying with the words "So beautiful to go" on her lips.

Christ-centred

Frances wrote many hymns – for her, poetry was a natural way to express spiritual truths. Those that we still sing today in modern hymnals are only a tiny fraction of those she wrote; but that is always true of hymn-writers. Only the best will stand the test of time. Historians of hymnody generally honour her for the devotional character of her hymns; and there is no doubt that it is the depth of her devotion to Christ that enabled her to write the quality of hymns that she did. However, her devotion is nowhere mushy, sentimental or self-centred. Her focus is all on Christ and His finished work – and on this being the motive for our service. Characteristic of her whole approach to life are the words of another of her hymns (No. 475 in our *Psalter Hymnal*). Perhaps next time we sing it on New Year's Eve we can echo this prayer of Frances, devoting ourselves whole-heartedly to our Master's work, come what may:

*Another year is dawning!
Dear Father, let it be,
In working or in waiting,
Another year with Thee;
Another year of leaning
Upon Thy loving breast,
Another year of trusting,
Of quiet, happy rest.*

*Another year of mercies,
Of faithfulness and grace;
Another year of gladness
In the shining of Thy face;
Another year of progress,
Another year of praise,
Another year of proving
Thy presence all the days.*

*Another year of service,
Of witness for Thy love;
Another year of training
For holier work above.
Another year is dawning!
Dear Father let it be
On earth or else in heaven,
Another year for Thee.*

Calling all country boys and girls to become

NETWORKERS



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

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

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

INTERESTED?

*Then write to me –
Mrs Yvonne Walraven
7 Winchester Avenue, Pinehaven, Upper Hutt*

Focus on home

Gleanings from our bulletins...

Andrew Reinders

Avondale

Going on a Trip...Again. I'm going back to Clearwater forest summer camp in America in June if I can get past the American consulate. I am thrilled to be going back, I really found a home there and I will catch up with the untold friends I made last time. I hope in the near future to get the opportunity to address the congregation on my last trip. I will also be doing a fundraiser for the camp by way of running the Rotorua marathon on May 1st. Watch this space, and me, as I will be coming around shortly asking for sponsors. Keep the faith alive, be a light.

Thom van Wakeren

Bishopdale

From the Pastor: Greetings to the Bishopdale Church! We are happy to be with you the next four months. It has been six years since we left Wellington, where we served the Reformed Church for five years. We are grateful for the opportunity to renew our friendship with the RCNZ, and to get to know all of you at Bishopdale. There are six of us Brentons, but only four of us are making this trip: Bob and Coleen, Hannah (13) and Tom (10). Bobby (23) is now married to Deborah, and lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Don (20) lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Coleen and I enjoy New Zealand's varied landscape and hope to do some sight-seeing and hiking. Hannah and Tom like to play sports, soccer being their favorite. They are also eager to make new friends. Looking forward to our time together with you.

Bob Brenton

Buckland's Beach

After The Morning Service. Everyone - including the visitors! - is invited to come to the hall behind the church immediately after the service. We'll be sharing a 'finger food' lunch. The 'guest of honour' will be our sister Jos Berends. Jos and her family have been very much a part of our family here at Bucklands Beach since 1959! Her departure to Dandenong (Vic) marks the end of an era. Today's gathering is therefore both a thanksgiving and a farewell.

Language-assisted Bible studies are being conducted each Thursday (1.00 - 2.30 - including a cuppa!). Currently there are four folks who meet each week along with the pastor and a few members of the congregation. This is very much a bridge-building endeavour: building a living relationship to the Lord Jesus and to us as a fellowship. There is room for growth as this group is designed for up to 10 participants. Br Jabez Cho has organised for advertisements about this activity to appear in 5 Korean language publications (nationwide!) during this coming week. We await responses with a certain amount of fear and trembling!

Dessert Or Desert? More than 20 sisters of our congregation had a great time on Thursday evening at the 'coffee and dessert' night. I felt a little 'miffed' at being deserted for the night while the ladies were having a most desirable dessert. My final plea to my beloved was, 'please bring some left-over dessert for me.' Know what? It appears that all the sisters were scrupulous in bringing home their leftovers. Why? It was revealed that every husband felt exactly as I did and had also insisted that 'sweetie pie' bring home something for them to have afterwards! It seems absolutely true that the way to a man's heart....

Christchurch

Blessings to John & Coby Lubbers, who leave for Australia this week, and for others traveling there in the near future, in order to attend the 13 March wedding of John Lubbers and Eileen Schaddee van Dooren. Our prayers go out for the family and friends of Sister Catharina Koppier, who was called home suddenly to be with the Lord last Sunday evening. May our hope be found in the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth, our protector and our Shepherd, who watches over his children both now and forevermore.

Dovedale

Dovedale Family Camp 2004. We hope you all have reserved some time and energy to join the stimulating Dovedale family camp. There will be enriching fellowship and challenging studies on the topic of the family. What does the bible have to say about the position and tasks for older people, young adults, children, husband and wives etc.? How does that work out in the home and in the church? For what partner in life should you look? This year there will be an integrated program for young and old. We will have a speaker who is known for his preaching and teaching qualities: Michael Flinn. So we are

assured to be inspired. Be prepared for great fun and excitement with the organised "free time" activities. Arjen is in charge; so be ready for the worst.

Bookshop Stocktake: We have been asked by the ladies at Bennetts book shop at the Polytech if we can help with the stock taking again. It is on Thursday March 18th 5pm. We need at the least 5 ladies. We are being paid a set sum which will go to the Building Fund. Please see Sue van Garderen if you can help, especially those ladies who were involved last year. Thank you.

Dunedin

Lunch and Learn. The first Lunch and Learn for the year will be held in the church hall on Monday 8 March at 12 noon. The video showing will be the first in a series of three by Dr John Piper, the subject, Enjoying God. Tea and coffee will be provided. Everyone welcome.

Hamilton

New member: We congratulate Gea and Johan Dijkshoorn on the birth of Rick John last Sunday morning. After a few days in the Waikato mother and babe were allowed to rest in Morrinsville and return home. May Rick grow up to know and love the Lord and give much joy to his parents.

Hastings

Wat's starts tomorrow night. Tomorrow night will be the first WaT (Women and Theology) meeting for the year. We will start at 7:30pm sharp at the church (not at Vosslamber's - our group's grown a little too large for that!) If you have your name down to attend this group, please check your pigeon holes for a not regarding the format of the evening and what you need to bring. If you are still interested in joining it's not too late. However, you need to see Andy Vosslamber today if you are planning to come. Please don't just turn up tomorrow night without registering your interest, as materials are being provided for each group member. Look forward to seeing you all there.

Cadets and Calvinettes. We have been invited to an over night camp at Linton, Palmerston North by the Palmerston North Club. This is on Friday the 27th February to Saturday evening the 28th February.

90th birthday luncheon. As a church family we have the privilege of celebrating Mr van Kooten's 90th birthday with a shared lunch today. May the Lord continue to be your guide and strength in the year ahead.

North Shore

Afternoon service time: The survey results for the timing of the second service showed a clear preference for 6pm. There were no clear trends (based on size of family or ages of children) for the service times with some families preferring the service at 6pm, while similar families preferred the service slightly later or earlier. In view of these results, the service time for the second service will remain at 6pm.

Girls' Get Together: A fun group for 12 to 14 year old girls, where we'll get together once a month to get to know one another better and have some focus sessions on modesty, being in the world and not of it, and what God wants us to grow into. Please see Hannah Reeve or Beccy Rogers and let us know if you're interested, if you have any friends you would like to bring along, and confirm what time would be suitable - Friday evenings or Saturday afternoons. Look forward to seeing you there!

Palmerston North

Prayer meeting today. The monthly church prayer meeting is today (fourth Sunday of the month), at 3.30 pm, at church. All encouraged to attend.

Student get-together at the Manse The Kavanaghs would like to invite all tertiary students and seventh formers to the Manse at 2 Christian Place, on Monday 22nd March, at 7.45pm. This will be an informal time (coffee, fellowship, and brief devotional from Rev. Kavanagh), to allow new and older students the opportunity to meet each other, and to meet the students from Masterton and Hastings Reformed Churches who are not usually in Palmerston North at the weekends. Please feel free to bring other student friends, too.

Pukekohe

Sermons by Email: Each week the pastor sends out by email a written copy of the sermons to be preached on the Sunday. If you wish to receive these you can subscribe by going to the RCNZ website: [//rcnz.org.nz/mailman/listinfo](http://rcnz.org.nz/mailman/listinfo). You can unsubscribe at any time using the same website address.

Wainuiomata

On the night of 15th/16th February the church was completely flooded due to the rain that fell during the night. We are currently in the process of tidying the entire property inside and out. While the cleaning up continues, the church will be in a state of disarray. The carpet is still being dried, and needs to be cleaned next week, while some carpet has been taken away for cleaning and drying. Items are being stored in the garage, kitchen, bench tops and library until the carpet has been cleaned and dried.

Wellington

Cadets & Calvinettes. The Cadets and Calvinettes are going on a trip to Somes Island on Saturday 6 March. We will take the ferry to the island in the morning, enjoy the day and take the ferry home. For more details please refer to the newsletter sent to you via email. Any questions, phone Rob 3836761 or Hannah 5661278.

CHRISTCHURCH PRESBYTERY REPORT – 13TH MARCH, 2004

Rev. Hans Vaatstra opened with a devotion from 1Tim. 4. He pointed out the need to present the gospel clearly and simply rather than embellish it with material outside Scripture. We then sang hymn 398.

The credentials were found to be in order and the delegates rose to signify their agreement with the confessional standards.

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted by common consent.

Presbytery then held an informal colloquium doctum with Rev. Bob Brenton, who is helping out with pulpit supply in the Reformed Church of Bishopdale. The areas discussed were (Scripture – Rev. Vaatstra; CRC issues – Rev. Klazinga; worship and the Confessions – Rev. Flinn). As a result of this discussion, Presbytery had no hesitation in welcoming Rev. Brenton as a visiting minister in our churches.

CO Article 47 questions were asked of Dunedin and Christchurch. Dunedin reported that interest in mission work has increased of late as a result of Rev. Vaatstra's trip to PNG. The congregation is also involved locally in prison fellowship and makes use of the Living Proof course. A fund has also been established in order to call a minister to Oamaru some time in the future, Lord willing. The congregation is thankful for the good number of university students attending, plus some other regular visiting families. The Session is running a leadership course for future office-bearers. Br. Fred Braam led in prayer for the Dunedin congregation.

Christchurch Session is discussing how they can be more supportive of Christian day schools. The congregation has an outreach programme in regular weekly radio broadcasts. Christchurch requested prayer for this so that DV there would be a greater response. Br. Henk Geerlofs led in prayer for the Christchurch congregation.

Rev. Hans Vaatstra was appointed as the OMB liaison member for the Christchurch presbytery.

In light of Rev. Haverland's departure, Rev. Vaatstra will research the responsibilities of the liaison member for the

National Publications Committee and report back to the next meeting. Rev. Klazinga was appointed as the second synodical examiner.

Nelson reported with appreciation that the Church Extension Committee is seeking financial assistance on their behalf for 2004.

Dunedin sought and received advice on a pastoral matter. Nelson also sought and received advice on a diaconal matter.

Bishopdale reported on their progress to date on their calling of a minister. Rev. Jim Klazinga was approved as the counselor for Bishopdale during their period of vacancy.

Br. Hans Vaatstra closed the meeting in prayer.

Reporter: Rev. M. Flinn

AUCKLAND PRESBYTERY REPORT – 20 FEBRUARY 2004

Rev. Dirk Van Garderen opened the meeting on behalf of the Bucklands Beach Session by inviting us to sing from the Psalter Hymnal, number 317, followed by reading from Colossians 3:1-5a, 12-17 and then led us in prayer seeking God's wisdom in dealing with the issue before us.

Credentials were checked by the Bucklands Beach Session and found to be in order. It was noted that the credentials of Rev. John Haverland had been received from the Christchurch Presbytery, and he was welcomed to the meeting. First-time delegates signed the Presbytery Form of Subscription.

Rev. W. Wiersma was appointed as Moderator, Rev. S. Bajema as Vicemoderator, and Rev. R. Noppers as reporter.

The agenda was accepted as circulated: this being a special meeting to consider the concerns of the North Shore session.

Some questions of procedure were raised relating to the minutes of the previous meeting.

Meeting decided to follow the document as presented by the North Shore session.

Broad and varied theological and exegetical discussion followed on several of the points raised by North Shore.

After this period of discussion, the meeting continued by considering what would be an appropriate way to continue with the issue.

It was suggested that delegates reflect upon the points raised at this discussion, and come back to the next Presbytery meeting, (set for 7th May), with the possibility of presenting a statement which will lay to rest the concerns expressed in the North Shore discussion paper.

Meeting was closed at 10:39 and Rev. S. Bajema closed in prayer.

Mission in focus

BOOK REVIEW:

"To The Golden Shore" – The Life of Adoniram Judson.

By Courtney Anderson

In November of last year Rev. Bruce Hoyt and I had planned to go to Myanmar (Burma) for two weeks of teaching and preaching in the United Reformed Churches. Due to various circumstances in those churches we had to cancel that trip close to the time we were due to depart. However, as part of my preparations for our time in that country I read a biography of the first missionary to Burma — Adoniram Judson. No doubt there are other biographies of Judson, but this one would be hard to beat. It is outstanding! I began reading it while Harriet and I were taking a week's holiday last September and read the first 100 pages out loud to her while she was busy cross-stitching. After that I continued reading on my own and when I finished it Harriet completed reading it for herself — and then our daughter Joanna read it. Each of us were gripped by the remarkable story of Judson's life and the way it was told. Some biographies are interesting but you have to plod your way through them. Others are fascinating and written in a very readable manner. "*To The Golden Shore*" definitely falls in the latter category.

Adoniram Judson (senior) was a minister in a Congregational Church in Malden, Massachusetts, America. On Saturday, August 9, 1788, his wife Abigail presented him with a son. The baby was given the name of his father — Adoniram. Courtney describes his childhood with warmth and insight and records his remarkable conversion including the earnest entreaties of his mother for his salvation.

At that time America teemed with missionary societies but no American had ever thought of going out of North America and no organisation existed in the country to support American foreign missionaries. Judson's character, his remarkable aptitude for foreign languages and all he had experienced in life prepared him for the idea of being the first American foreign missionary. His mother and sisters did their best to dissuade him from this, especially because he had been offered a position as an assistant to Dr Griffin, the minister of the largest church in Boston. His resolve, however, was firm.

Providentially, at least four other students in the seminary were also considering the call to foreign missions. These five found each other. Courtney writes a moving account of how these men presented themselves to the General Association of the church as candidates for overseas mission.

Right at this time Judson fell in love with a young lady, Nancy Hasseltine. After courting her for a time he wrote to her father asking his permission to marry her. He asked "whether you can consent to part with your daughter early next spring, to see her no more in this world; whether you can consent to her departure, and her subjection to the hardships and sufferings of a missionary life...to degradation, insult, persecution, and perhaps a violent death....Can you consent to all this...for the sake of perishing immortal souls; for the sake of Zion, and the glory of God?" Nancy's father had many misgivings but left the decision to his daughter. She too was uncertain, given the hazards and hardships she might face, but in response to his ardent and persuasive letters she consented.

In 1812 two missionary couples sailed for India and Burma. After their journey to India they enjoyed the hospitality of Dr and Mrs Carey — pioneers of the English Baptist Missionaries. Carey told Judson that he might as well put Burma out of his mind as a prospective mission field. The combination of enemy raids, tyrannical government,

frequent rebellions by the people and religious intolerance made it almost impossible to minister there. Despite the massive difficulties and great dangers Adoniram and Nancy Judson decided to pursue the call of God to preach in Burma.

Their work began very slowly with both of them spending much time learning the language. Living conditions were primitive. The Burmese were unreceptive. It took nine years to baptise nineteen native converts. Often Adoniram and Nancy were deeply discouraged. They buried their only three children, each at a young age. Judson himself was imprisoned in appalling conditions for a year and a half. During this time Nancy wore herself out taking care of him and a year after his release she died. They had been married for fourteen years. Adoniram had been away for a month and was not present when she died. He was heartbroken and sank into a deep depression that lasted for about two years. Later he married Sarah Boardman, the widow of another missionary to Burma. They had a number of children whom they sent back to relatives in America. Had the children remained in Burma, they would have died from disease. Sarah herself died from an illness. Later after a visit back to North America Adoniram married for the third time, and once again enjoyed a blessed and fulfilling relationship.

Although there was a slow and small response to their work for the first decade

The Reformed Church of Mangere

NEEDS YOU

We have property, position,
and potential ...
what we don't have is **people!**

This congregation is a mission
field opportunity for committed
believers of all ages.

Will **you** prayerfully consider whether
God may want **you** to join this church in
an area of Auckland's south which is
going through significant growth?

Sjirk Bajema – (09) 277 9360

The RTC Biblical Preaching Workshop for 2004

**Geelong, Thurs 30 September
& Fri 1 October**

“Preaching Christ from the Psalms”

The Reformed Theological College's Biblical Preaching Workshops are becoming widely known, and an appreciated professional development event for ministers and pastors. They provide an equally valuable instruction time for other Christian workers, lay preachers, elders and other Christian leaders. One of the most telling evaluations received was this one **“I learned a lot about everyday ministry, these workshops are for everyone!, not just for ministers**

The Workshops are aimed at supporting preachers who are already established in basic preaching skills and committed to biblical preaching.

They provide two days of teaching and interaction, which will challenge and assist participants spiritually, stimulate their thinking about preaching, help them in their preaching ministry, and encourage them to ongoing faithfulness in Biblical preaching.

The Workshops have proven to be times of expert preaching skills instruction by RTC faculty members and guest lecturers, and joyful fellowship around The Word.

Participants have come from all over Australia, and New Zealand, and from a range of church denominations; evangelical, conservative, pentecostal.

The 3rd annual Workshop, to be held at the RTC, 125 Pigdons Rd Wearn Ponds, Geelong, DV on Thursday 30 September and Friday 1 October 2004, will be on the subject of “Preaching Christ from the Psalms”.

It is currently under preparation. Intending participants should note the dates in their diaries already, and talk about it with their church council. That will help planning to attend having regard to other commitments, and making timely preparations for travelling etc. Some churches enrol a group of delegates, which has proven most helpful in their work.

Intending participants should keep an eye out for the Programme & Enrolment Form, due to be issued around June. Accommodation on the RTC Campus will be at a premium due to the increased number of residents living there, so it is advisable to enrol and book accommodation on Campus at an early date.

RTC Faculty members look forward to again welcoming many participants to the 2004 Preaching Workshop.

Dr Henk DeWaard
PRINCIPAL

Ph 0352442955, Fx 035243 6055
Eml: hquake@rtc.vic.edu.au

they saw much more fruit in the years after that. In 1831 they saw 217 converts in that one year. In his later years there were many men and women working in Burma in various fields of endeavour. One of Judson's lasting legacies to later generations of missionaries was a complete translation of the Bible in Burmese which he constantly revised until his death. He also produced a Burmese-English dictionary.

Here is a compelling story of a remarkable man — a man of energy, vision and ability — a man with a driving ambition to preach the gospel of Christ to those who had never heard. Reading this inspired me in the work of proclaiming the good news. Comparing his immense suffering and willingness to forfeit all for the sake of Christ has helped me keep my minor sacrifices in a better perspective.

This is a book I heartily recommend.

Rev. John A. Haverland.

Reformed Church of Pukekohe.

The conversion of Kau Kesa

Rev. Peter Baas hails from the Netherlands, and has served in Papua (the Indonesian side of the island on which Papua New Guinea is situated) for many years on behalf of the mission organisation, De Verre Naaste. Discussions with the Canadian Reformed Churches and our own OMB have made it possible for Rev. Baas to spend three months in Papua New Guinea, working with Rev. Stephen 't Hart. After that, Rev. Baas will, Lord willing, return to Papua for another term of service. During his time in PNG, Rev. Baas is concentrating on teaching elders who serve in the Reformed Church of Papua New Guinea. More information about his ministry in PNG will follow in a future edition of MIF; but here is an article he wrote for us about his earlier work in Papua.

In the year 1982 we, my wife, three children and I, settled in the village Amazu at the Black Ndeiram River. There was already a small congregation in the village. The oldest member of the congregation was Kau Kesa. He was a former witchdoctor and knew very much about the culture and customs of his people. I learned a lot from him about the traditional culture and religion, so that I could preach properly to them the Word of God and could instruct the pastors and evangelists in the area, which I was overseeing. Kau Kesa told me many legends and other folktales of his people. I recorded them in their own language and later on we translated them in Indonesian with the help of a younger person, who knew the Indonesian language better than Kau Kesa did. Songs were also recorded and translated.

Once Kau Kesa told me his lifestory:

“I was a witchdoctor and a wicked man. I used to go to feasts of my people and planned with a friend to murder there. I loved to murder. It gave me a kick to falsely accuse someone at feasts, who stood up to go outside for a leak, that he had bad plans. With my eye I gave a signal to my friend and we stood up, got our bows and arrows and immediately shot the accused person. Most times he was instantly dead and the row became bigger and bigger. Shooting, running, hiding, screaming, yelling and so on were the results.

“As a witchdoctor I never used my witchcraft against my own people. I used it only against our enemies and against foreigners. I used my witchcraft to heal only for my own people.

“Since the day that the missionary came into our village and an evangelist had moved in, I went, if possible, to the services. I heard the Word of God but it did not change my heart. I did not understand the message of grace.

“One day I was very mad at my first wife. At that time I had two wives. My first wife was jealous and did not want to do what I asked her to. I got my bow and arrows and shot her dead. At that time the government had already come into our area and I was very afraid that they would come and put me in prison, far away from my own village. So out of fear I ran into the jungle and hid there for several months.

“During those months I was thinking a lot about my position. I was

a proud and independent man. I was in charge in my village, because they feared my witchcraft. But my power was very small in comparison with the power of the government. I feared them as the people of my village had feared me before. I was thinking a lot also about the preaching I had heard. The God of the Bible did not allow to kill, and the government was his instrument to punish me. If the government was already so powerful, how much power should their God have? He could punish me more than the government. He could punish me forever. I almost panicked out of fear.

"Then I remembered the strange story of Jesus Christ. He died for the sins of mankind. He freed them. Should he want to give me salvation also? I feared not.

"That is why I went to the evangelist. I asked and asked and he answered and answered. At the end he could not tell me any more and so he sent me to the missionary. I had a lot of talkings with him. Finally I understood the promise of the Gospel. He told me that, even for murderers and witchdoctors, there is salvation. Does not Jesus tell to the murderer who was being crucified next to Him: Today you will be with me in Paradise!

"Since that day I believed that the Lord had forgiven also my sins. I gave myself to the Lord and wanted to serve Him every day. I was so thankful for his love and grace that I promised to the Lord: I will never use witchcraft any more and no one will ever hear the secrets of it. When I die, the secrets of that wicked witchcraft will go with me into the grave. The devil has power, but his power is very limited. God's power is unlimited. He is the Almighty. After a time of instruction I was baptised in the Ndeiram-river.

"My life as a Christian was not unchallenged. Many times people came to me to ask whether I could try to heal them with witchcraft. I never did what they asked me to do. I said that they had to go to the poly-clinic, ask for medicine and treatment and pray God for blessing. God is the only one with real power, I said.

"Years after my conversion, my wife and I lost our youngest daughter. She was six years old: the sunshine in our life. We hoped that she and our much older daughter could look after us, when we were old. And now the Lord took her. We believe that she is in paradise, in heaven with the Lord Jesus. But we grieved a lot. Every night we were weeping about our loss. That is a normal custom of our people. We sang remembering-songs. Because all the houses in the village are very close the whole village witnessed our grief and sorrow.

"During that time it was raining extraordinarily much. Every day it was raining cats and dogs. All the rivers were so swollen, that only the higher places were dry. The people were afraid. They said: This is not normal. Someone must have used witchcraft. I was known before as a rain-maker by witchcraft. So the people of my village, also the Christians, suspected me of rain-witchcraft. Secretly they gathered gifts: arrows, bows, nets and so on. And they gave it to me with the request to stop the rain-witchcraft.

"I was very sad and became also a bit angry. I broke all the arrows and bows; tore the other things up and threw them back into their faces. And I asked the consistory of the church whether I could speak to the congregation before the service on Sunday morning. They allowed it. I told them that I never used witchcraft after my conversion and baptism. I told them that my grief was big, but that I believed that our daughter was in heaven. I told them that my former power was very little. Only God reigns over the world and the powers of nature.

"I asked them to give up their means of witchcraft and sorcery, because I knew that they were still using it. I asked them to repent and to do the will of the Lord.

"It was very quiet after my speech. The people were embarrassed. I hoped that the Lord would use my speech to change their hearts."

This is the story Kau Kesa told me. His testimony gave me fresh encouragement about the power of the Lord. After a few years Kau Kesa died. I was not there at the moment. But I know that God always finishes what he starts. Therefore I believe that Kau Kesa is in heaven.

Rev. Peter R. Baas

MIF prayer notes

Please pray for the team in Papua New Guinea. **Rev Stephen and Mrs Dorinda 't Hart** need our continued prayers, as they coordinate the work and continue through exhausting weeks of teaching, preaching, and church involvement that is split between Port Moresby and their home-village of Ekorovo. Pray also for **Wayne and Cheronne VanderHeide**, and for **Rev. Peter Baas**.

Pray for **Walter and Jeannette Hagoort** as they continue the Pacific Orientation Course in Papua New Guinea. Their five-week "village living" experience (complete with too many bugs and very strange food) is likely to be unusual, and possibly stressful. Pray for good health and the Lord's protection and joy for both of them; and give thanks for God's healing and deliverance from recent health problems.

Janice Reid has recently completed the second workshop in which the new training materials have been tested. Pray for wisdom as Janice and Jean-Luc evaluate these materials and establish what further changes are necessary, to make the training into a powerful tool that will help radio announcers spread the word of Life effectively. May is officially the start of the rainy season in Cambodia: please pray for safety as Janice travels around town on the local public transport: small motorcycles. There are very many motodop accidents in Cambodia, and wet roads will make conditions even more unsafe.

The team from the Reformed Churches of Australia serving in the **Solomon Islands** includes **Kevin and Machi Rietveld**, along with **Jack and Trudy Visser** (who arrived in late February), and **Jenny Van Wyk** from Queensland, who is in the Solomons to teach in a Christian school in Honiara for one year. Please pray for the work of these missionaries, for their influence in the community, for the training of pastors and church leaders, and for the spread of the Word of Truth through their ministry.

Stamps For Mission

The OMB wishes to thank Mrs Gill Goodin of the Reformed Church of Masterton on behalf of the churches for her work in processing stamps for mission. Many of you have saved postage stamps from envelopes, and sent them on to Gill for processing to raise money for missions. Each year a few hundred dollars is raised this way and donated to the OMB.

Gill has asked the OMB if we could find someone who would be willing to take over the task of processing the stamps. If you would like to do this, please contact me and I'll arrange for you to take it up. The task would involve receiving stamps from the churches, and taking them or sending them to a dealer, at present in Otaki. The stamps come from ordinary envelopes. Each one is worth very little by itself (even special editions and overseas stamps) and we are paid by the kilo.

Careful preparation of the stamps is needed before sending them to the collection person. They should not be soaked off the envelope, but trimmed to leave 10mm of envelope all round, before you send them to the collection person, who then takes them to the dealer. This is essential, as the dealer will only accept them this way. Many hands make light work.

Thanks again to Gill for the work done, and to everyone for the stamps collected. Please hang on to those stamps for now, till we can find someone who is ready to take over. Let me know if you would like to take over.

Chris Kavanagh (OMB member)

**Contact details: Phone 06 354 5678,
e mail: kavanagh@xtra.co.nz**

This letter was received by the National Diaconate Committee



In recent years 'The Leprosy Mission New Zealand' has adopted the TLM work at the Muzaffarpur Leprosy Hospital in India funding it 100%. Over a long period we have supported the 'Care after Cure' work of TLM from funds provided by our Churches but now direct our \$1,000.00 p.a. gift to the work of the totally Kiwi funded Muzaffarpur Hospital.

In an accompanying note the NZ Executive Director, David Hall, writes –



“Life is very different for five year old Chitrinjan in India. He can't go to school – the school won't have him. He is going to find it hard to hold a pencil as there is no feeling in his fingers. He's in a leprosy hospital and scared about his future.

“This is no life for a kid.

“Thank you for your commitment to changing lives like Chitrinjan's. Did you know that the vital health care he is receiving from the leprosy hospital is made possible solely thanks to the generosity of Kiwis like you? In Muzaffarpur the prejudice towards people with leprosy means that they are often unwelcome at general hospitals – even five year old children like Chitrinjan. The leprosy hospital is his only hope.

“Your gift is urgently needed to ensure that Chitrinjan and other children like him continue to receive the care they need. More importantly, your continued support will help to ensure the unfair cycle of injustice and social exclusion is broken, so that in the future kids like Chitrinjan are treated fairly and with dignity. His hands are in your hands.”