

faith in
focus

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Writers who have helped shape my
thinking

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Editorial

When I first joined the Reformed Churches some 28 years ago, a senior minister told me that when his father was a boy even the men who dug peat for a living knew their Bibles and confessions. Why? Because they were readers! They were people who loved the Lord and His Word, and they understood the doctrines of the Reformed Faith – even the simplest of them.

Not only were they hard workers, but they were also students of the Word and spent evenings at home reading either their Bibles or related materials, as well as good quality books. By comparison with us today, they may have been quite poor and lived frugal lives. Maybe in some instances their education was not as good as ours. I could probably make so many more comparisons.

One thing they did not have was our distractions. Since 1956 our lounges have been invaded by the one-eyed monster, commonly known as the Television or TV. This particular distraction has captivated us with all sorts of programming. The time that we spend in front of the TV is time we could have been doing something more worthwhile, like reading a good [Christian] book and improving our minds.

Don't get me wrong. I am not saying that you can't watch the TV and have to devote your whole life to reading. However, I do think we need to prioritise our time wisely, and reading good [Christian] books is a really good way to achieve that.

Reading good books has many benefits and our contributors write about those who have helped shape their thinking and who have had an influence over their lives. Others write more generally about the benefits of reading good [Christian] books.

Mr John Haverland writes on "John Charles Ryle – a writer who has shaped my thinking", giving a bit of insight into the man J C Ryle. Mr Leo de Vos tells us about "The influence of Martyn Lloyd Jones on my life and ministry". Mrs Andrea Vosslander gives us good reasons "Why women should be readers of good books". "Why men should be readers of good books" has many contributors, giving some really great insight into this matter. Mr Jeff Dykstra ponders on "Why so serious? Reasons to read weighty books". Mrs Sally Davey selects the subject of "Cooking is an act of love" – an interesting look at food for all you food lovers. "Ministers in focus" gives a brief profile about some of our "newer" ministers. Finally, Graeme Zuidema reports on the RCNZ South Island Deacons' Conference.

Farewell and welcome

After some eight or nine years of compiling the "Gleanings" column, Mr Andrew Reinders hands over the reins to Mrs Harriet Haverland. We thank the Lord for your diligent service over these years. We welcome Mrs Haverland and pray that you will enjoy providing us with news from our churches.

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Writers who have helped shape my thinking (1)

John Charles Ryle

John A. Haverland

When I was in my late teens a friend of mine, Don Capill, introduced me to the sermons of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones and to JC Ryle's book, *Holiness*. Since then I have been collecting and reading the works of both of these men. Pastor Leo de Vos will tell you something about Lloyd-Jones; I want to tell you about John Charles Ryle, a bishop in the Church of England in the nineteenth century.

My desire is that you too will read some of his books. That is a realistic expectation because Ryle is easy to read. His words and sentences are short. His style is plain. His meaning is clear. His applications are pointed. These are the reasons I like him so much!

Let me first tell you a little about his life and influence, and then direct you to some of his books.

His life¹

Ryle lived in England from 1816 to 1900, about the same span of years as Queen Victoria. His life was to stretch from the year after Waterloo to the dawn of the twentieth century. It would witness the rise of the Oxford Movement and the spread of Higher Criticism; it saw the birth of the Kewswick Movement and the growth of missionary effort.²

He came to a saving faith in the Lord when he was a young man of 21. When he was 25 years of age his father, who was very wealthy, suddenly lost all his money and his estate in the collapse of his banking business. This event was used to turn John Charles Ryle to the Christian ministry. He was ordained on the 12th of December 1841 and then served in the parish of Helmingham in Suffolk from 1844 to 1861, and then in the village of Stradbroke, nearby in Suffolk, where he ministered happily and fruitfully for twenty years.

During this time he married three times. His first wife bore him a daughter but died after less than three years of marriage from illness. Two years later he

married again and his second wife bore him a daughter and three sons. However, she was also very unwell and died after ten years of marriage leaving him "more disconsolate and helpless than ever, with five children between two and fourteen years old."³ 18 months later he married once again, this time to Henrietta Leigh Clowes who was an ideal helper to him and a very understanding mother for his children. These experiences of sadness and grief helped him to relate to others who were sick and mourning and made him a kind and compassionate pastor.

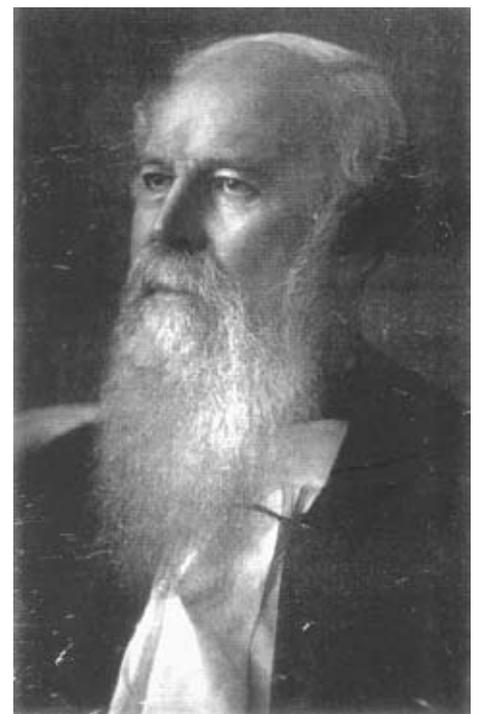
Ryle's preaching was simple and sincere. As a country vicar he ministered to people who could not understand polished oratory or literary finesse. He was not out to make a fine impression, rather to preach so that his listeners would understand his meaning and purpose. He spoke to them in clear and straightforward language, seeking to impress God's Word on their hearts and reinforcing it with familiar and memorable illustrations.⁴ While in Stradbroke he traveled widely through the parish preaching in many of the country churches where he was heard gladly. Often this meant driving in an open carriage in the middle of winter up to 30 miles to preach in lonely places. He kept this up consistently throughout his time in Suffolk.

During his long ministry there he read widely and deeply in the masters of the English Reformation and in the Puritans. Lloyd-Jones comments; "... his works are a distillation of true Puritan theology presented in a highly readable and modern form."⁵

From this village and rural setting of Stradbroke he was, in 1880, appointed Bishop of the large industrial city of Liverpool. As he preached his final sermon to his village congregation he recalled the scenes he was reluctant to leave; "... the fields over which I have so often walked, the road with every yard of which I was so thoroughly acquainted, my own little garden in which I had

meditation and prayer ... all these things I am about to leave and leave forever. I go, called by God, to the noise, bustle, smoke and confusion of a great sea-port town Pray for me, name me before the throne of grace and say, Lord God, bless Bishop Ryle."⁶

He was appointed as the Bishop of Liverpool through the influence of evangelical politicians and churchmen who wanted to see a man of strong Protestant convictions in that city. Ryle was the man. He strongly opposed the growing influence of Ritualism in the Church of England and the move towards Roman Catholicism. "When I go down to the valley of the shadow of death", he wrote, 'and my feet touch the cold waters, I want something better than vague high-sounding words or the painted play-things and gilded trifles of man made ceremonial. Give me no stone altars and would be confessors Put no man or form between me and Christ."⁷ He spoke plainly for what he believed to be true from the Scriptures



John Charles Ryle

“Let us steadfastly resolve to stand fast in the old paths, the good way of our Protestant Reformers. The nearer we draw to the great realities of death, judgement and eternity, the more excellent will that way appear. When I go down the valley of the shadow of death, and my feet touch the cold waters, put no man or form between me and Christ. I must know distinctly whom I believe, what I believe, and why I believe. Nothing, nothing will answer these questions satisfactorily, but thorough, downright Evangelical Religion. Let us make sure that this religion is our own.”

Knots Untied, J.C. Ryle

and the Thirty Nine Articles, and firmly opposed all that was contrary to these. His strong position won him many loyal followers but also stirred up many bitter opponents, one of whom declared that the Bishop of Liverpool was “obnoxious to all High Churchmen”!

During his time as bishop many wanted to build a large cathedral in the city. Ryle was sympathetic to this goal but he focused his attention and funds on providing 136 more clergy and 90 other places of worship.

His writing

Ryle has been dead for more than 100 years. As powerful and direct as his

sermons were we cannot hear them any more. But we can read his books. Back in the 1950’s Lloyd-Jones wrote; “One of the most encouraging and hopeful signs I have observed ... in evangelical circles has been a renewed and increasing interest in the writings of Bishop JC Ryle.” He went on to describe Ryle’s method and style as “always scriptural and expository ... He always starts with the Word and expounds it It is always clear and logical and invariably leads to a clear enunciation of doctrine.”⁸

His writing first arose out of the time he spent reading. He wanted to be practical and relevant for the people of his country parish. While in Helm-

ingham he began writing out some of his sermons, distributing them far and wide. He continued this practice of writing these *tracts*, writing three hundred in all, which were widely circulated in England and in the colonies and were translated into many other languages. They were direct and pointed, written in plain English, with crisp titles; *I have somewhat to say unto thee. Is your heart right? Are you free? Do you pray?*

At this time he also began writing his *Expository Thoughts of the Gospels* with the intention that these be read aloud by Christian families at home. They are clear, practical and devotional. He wrote a volume on Mathew (1856), another on Mark (1857), two volumes on the gospel of Luke (1858 and 1859) and then a larger work on the gospel of John that was published in three volumes (1873). I can heartily commend these to you. We have used them in our family devotions, reading through his two volumes on Luke. Extracts from these volumes have been arranged as a book of *Daily Readings From all Four Gospels*. My wife and I are reading this book as part of our devotions together as a couple.⁹

An influential work published in the 1870s was *Knots Untied*, nineteen papers on matters of dispute and points of theological controversy at that time. He knew that his views would not be popular in the wider Church of England but he stated his views with clarity and honesty. The book includes chapters on the Thirty Nine Articles, Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, the Church and Worship.¹⁰

In 1878 this was followed by a companion volume entitled, *Old Paths*. In the preface he explained that these dealt with the “leading truths of Christianity which are necessary for salvation The name which I have selected will prepare the reader to expect no new doctrines in this volume. It is simple, unadulterated, old-fashioned Evangelical theology. It contains nothing but the ‘Old Paths’ From these ‘paths’ I see no reason to depart They are the doctrines, I firmly believe, of the Bible and the Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England. They are doctrines which, I find, wear well, and in the faith of them I hope to live and die.”¹¹

The 1870s was a fruitful decade of writing, for in 1878 he also published *Practical Religion*. In the preface he explained that this was a companion to the previous two volumes “and treats of the daily duties, dangers, experience,

and privilege of all who profess and call themselves true Christians.”¹² Chapters include Prayer, Bible Reading, Going to the Table, Zeal, Riches and Poverty, Sickness, and Eternity. In the foreword JI Packer describes this as “a manual on the practice of Christianity. It seems to me to be one of the best there is.” I am currently reading this volume with a young man in the Pukekohe congregation; we each read a chapter at home and then meet once a fortnight to discuss what we have read. Others of you who have been Christians a long time might consider doing this with those who are younger in the faith. A practice like this would encourage you and another young man or woman in valuable systematic Christian reading. You could do this with many of Ryle’s books.

Ryle regarded his book *Holiness* as a further companion work alongside the three listed above. It is his best-known book and “came out of his concern at the misleading teaching of the ‘Higher Life’ or ‘Holiness’ movement in England. Popular (but often biblically ignorant) teachers told people that sanctification – ‘holiness’ – could be achieved perfectly and in an instant, if they would only surrender themselves entirely to God (the “let go and let God” idea). Instead, Ryle wanted to emphasise the biblical teaching that putting sin to death in our lives, and making progress toward Christlikeness is a whole-of-life, gradual labour, requiring earnest effort on the part of Christians.”¹³ This is a fine book, one I have often recommended to people, and all have read it with interest and spiritual profit. In the foreword of my edition of this book Lloyd-Jones wrote; “I shall never forget the satisfaction – mental and spiritual – with which I read it some twenty years ago after having stumbled across it in a second-hand book shop.”

A little book written by Ryle was addressed specifically to young men. *Thoughts for Young Men* outlines some of the dangers facing this group and offers clear and wise counsel on how to deal with these temptations. JI Packer described it as “magnificent!” Buy it for your sons and/or read it with them.

The last book Ryle published was *The Upper Room* (1887). In the preface he wrote; “I have reached an age when I cannot reasonably expect to write much more. There are many thoughts in this volume which I do not wish to leave behind me in the precarious form of separate single sermons, addresses, lec-

tures and tracts.” This volume preserved all these.¹⁴

The books listed above do not exhaust the writings of this prolific author. Out of his concern to preserve the biblical doctrines of the English Reformation against Roman Catholicism he wrote about the martyrs of that period of English history in a book called, *Light From Old Times*. In keeping with his desire that we learn the lessons of history he wrote about eleven *Christian Leaders of the 18th Century*.

Conclusion

John Charles Ryle was a tall man with good looks, fine bearing and great natural dignity. He had a full beard, which added to his impressive appearance, and a strong voice. He “was a man of untiring industry in the cure of souls: his voice was never silent; his pen was never idle.”¹⁵ He was a master of debate; courteous but never afraid to speak his mind, to declare what he believed to be true and oppose what he believed to be false.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the well known reformed Baptist preacher in London in the nineteenth century considered Ryle “the best man in the Church of England”.¹⁶

My hope and prayer in writing this article is that you will be prompted to buy or borrow some of his books and read them – for yourself, with others, or as a family. I am confident that you

will find them clear, direct, biblical and of much spiritual benefit.¹⁷

(Endnotes)

- 1 Sally Davey has also written an article on Ryle; “Live Godly in Christ Jesus: The Bishop’s Life and Advice”; *Faith in Focus*.
- 2 Marcus L Loane, John Charles Ryle, 1816-1900, (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1983), p. 17.
- 3 M Loane, p.48.
- 4 His views on preaching can be found in an address entitled, “Simplicity in Preaching” found in chapter 3 in “*The Upper Room*”.
- 5 From the Foreword to “*Holiness*”, p. iii.
- 6 M Loane, p. 80.
- 7 M Loane, p. 59, quoted from JC Ryle, “*Knots Untied*”.
- 8 From the Foreword to “*Holiness*”, p. iii.
- 9 *Daily Readings From all Four Gospels*, Compiled by Robert Sheenan, (Evangelical Press, 1998).
- 10 JC Ryle, *Knots Untied*, (London, James Clarke & Co., 1954).
- 11 JC Ryle, *Old Paths*, (Edinburgh, Banner of Truth, 1999).
- 12 JC Ryle, *Practical Religion*, (London, James Clarke & Co., 1959).
- 13 Sally Davey, “Live Godly in Christ Jesus: The Bishop’s Life and Advice”; *Faith in Focus*.
- 14 JC Ryle, *The Upper Room*.
- 15 M Loane, p. 65, 74.
- 16 Foreword of JC Ryle, *Practical Religion*.
- 17 I have bought a number of my books by Ryle from the Christian second hand bookshops in Auckland and Christchurch. If you are Dutch or Scottish and want to save a few dollars you could inquire there!

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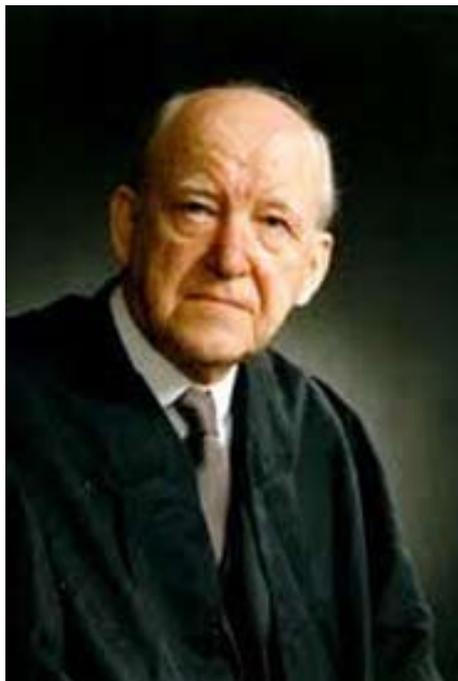
Writers who have helped shape my thinking (2)

The influence of Martyn Lloyd Jones on my life and ministry

Leo de Vos

I could write about many writers which have influenced my life and ministry. I have a few favourite books which I would love to write about one day. But I have chosen to introduce you to someone you already know and may have read or even heard – Dr. David, Martyn Lloyd-Jones (abbreviated MLJ from now on).

Every century seems to have men who have risen above others, especially blessed with the power of the Holy Spirit in their ministry. I think of George Whitfield as a great preacher of the 18th century, Spurgeon a remarkable preacher of the 19th century and Martyn Lloyd Jones as a powerful preacher of the 20th century. As MLJ regarded himself primarily as a preacher, his writings are mainly sermons, many of which he edited after his retirement. What made this man so useful?



Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones

I. His preaching came from a new creation

MLJ was born in Wales in 1899; at twenty one years of age he had graduated from medical school; a short time later he became an assistant to Lord Horder, the physician of the Royal family. Here was a young man with the promise to be a world, renowned doctor, who was not happy. MLJ has been raised in the tradition of the Calvinistic Welsh Methodist churches. A century before MLJ was born, these churches had gifted leaders and hymn-writers. William Williams wrote “Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah”; these believers had indeed experienced the power of Jehovah’s guidance. But by the 20th century MLJ’s family attended this church out of tradition; this denomination had lost its earlier fire.

As a young doctor MLJ was unhappy because he saw that, although medicine could heal the body, it could not heal the soul. He experienced the pride of life at the pinnacle of his profession, but could find no peace. The Lord used these experiences to bring MLJ under the authority of His Word where he came to experience his sin and inability to save himself. He experienced personally that salvation is what God does by a supernatural work. The medical establishment was shocked when he announced that he was going off to serve as a home missionary in a small Welsh port named Aberavon.

When MLJ died in 1981, he left his legacy as a powerful preacher. We are thankful that many of his sermons have been edited and published; many recordings are also available on CDs or on the Internet. I can well remember in my first church, coming home from preaching, sometimes feeling rather defeated and spiritually down, picking up MLJ’s first volume on Ephesians and always being strengthened. Since this time, I have read many of his sermons

and also heard a few recordings. How has his preaching influenced me?

II. His preaching exalted Jesus Christ

Recently, after preparing a sermon on Colossians 1:18-20, I read a sermon by MLJ on the same text called “The Pre-eminence”. He arrests attention by quoting the line from Christina Rossetti’s poem, “In the Bleak Midwinter”; the line is ‘What shall I give him?’

He then continues: “... the words of our text provide the answer: Give him the pre-eminence, because, as I am hoping to show you, it is his by right, and it is his and his alone”. To me this sets the theme for all of MLJ’s preaching. The preacher and the people are not really that important, but he preaches to glorify Christ and to make him known as a mighty Saviour. In the same sermon he speaks of the false teachers who “were detracting and derogating from the pre-eminence and the glory and the majesty and the wonder of the Son of God, our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”.

MLJ then concludes the sermon by emphasising the sufficiency of Christ. “We must also give him the pre-eminence because of his all-sufficiency. Paul says: Do not put anybody near him. Do not add anybody to him. He has done it all Mary his mother cannot add what to what he has done. She is no co-redeemer, he needs no co-redeemer; he and he alone is the Redeemer. You need not pray to Mary; go to him, he is all and all in himself. By going to Mary you are taking from his pre-eminence. Do not add the saints to him; do not pray to them; pray to him. He is everything; he is all-sufficient. He is the beginning, he is the end – the Alpha, the Omega – the all and in all”.

Note how MLJ applies the truth to the heart: “So are you giving him the

pre-eminence? 'What can I give him? Says Christina Rossetti. What have I got to offer? All he wants is that you and I give him the pre-eminence in all things; that we look at him and say, 'My Lord and my God'; that we say, 'Yes, you are the eternal Son of God, the image of the invisible God and you were born miraculously of a virgin – "the Word was made flesh'."

So go him, fall at his feet and say, 'I do not regard you as a man only, as only a great teacher or great exemplar. You are God who left the courts of heaven and came on earth, into this sinful, evil world for me.' Give him the pre-eminence in his Godhead; give him the pre-eminence by saying you are a hopeless sinner and that you believe that he came into the world to save you. Say to him, 'I cannot save myself. I thought I could, but now I see that it is impossible. I thought my good works would do it, but they cannot.

*Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to Thy cross I cling.*

Notice in the above quotation that when Christ is truly exalted, then man is put in his place as a sinner who must be reconciled to God. MLJ turned a lot of today's evangelical preaching upside down – the gospel is never what man can do, but what God had done in Christ.

III. His preaching was logic on fire

MLJ influenced me to work harder at making every point I preach flow logically. If my sermon does not flow logically to me, then how can I ever expect the listener to hear it without getting lost somewhere? I believe MLJ said in his outstanding volume, *Preaching and Preachers*, that preaching is logic on fire. When I read a sermon by MLJ I can always follow the argument. He begins with a main thesis, and then supports this argument with his points. Often the points are logically developed rather than exegetically (directly from the flow of the text). His sermons are organised to get across a particular truth, like an arrow shot straight from the bow, always hitting the bull's eye.

The logical method MLJ was taught to diagnose illness is applied to preaching. His logic diagnoses the central problem with men and then brings the powerful healing gospel. I cringe if I hear preaching without a clear outline. This is like using a wrongly programmed Navman which is bound to get me lost. I urge fellow preachers to study MLJ's logical method;

learn to be crystal clear in your method. I would also caution my colleagues with a bit of advice an old minister once gave to me. He told me never to read MLJ until I had already written my sermon. Otherwise, I would be tempted to copy MLJ's method and divisions. I confess that I have not always stuck to that advice, but I can certainly vouch for the soundness of this advice!

IV. His preaching applied to spiritual needs

I do not recall ever reading an MLJ sermon without being helped spiritually. One of MLJ's repeated themes is that people often lack assurance and Christian joy because they do not fully grasp the truth of the gospel. For MLJ the truth of the gospel must form all Christian experience. An understanding of doctrine is paramount to Christian growth and joy. One of the most helpful series of sermons was his volume called *Spiritual Depression*. The doctor is honest in his diagnosis; he deals with doubt, discouragement, anxiety and all the spiritual illnesses common to Christians; and the balm of gospel healing is applied. I have often picked up this volume when discouraged in ministry, sometimes wondering how I could go on, only to be greatly encouraged.

Another series of sermons was his splendid exposition of Ephesians 6 on the armour of God. I have often reached

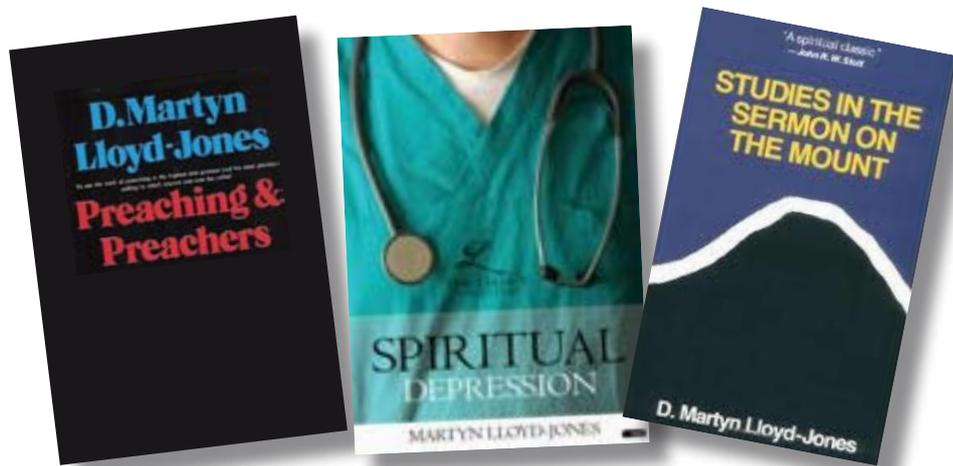
for one of those volumes when feeling attacked by Satan. For the tempted believer there is no better help that I know of, than Ephesians 6 expounded by MLJ.

For practical Christian living in the Kingdom the volume *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* is without equal. These sermons would serve as edifying private devotions and also as excellent material for a husband a wife to read together.

V. His preaching was in truth and love

In our reformed tradition we might think that those who are soundest in doctrine are also somewhat cold and distant in character. Sadly, this caricature has some truth to it. MLJ was a man whose character was molded by the doctrines of grace which he loved and preached. He was humble and kind. People could hear compassion in his preaching which appealed to them. I think this is the key – how can we preach the love of God without showing compassion or the grace of God without acting graciously? People knew Lloyd-Jones cared deeply about them and their salvation. He was ... affectionate in look, and tender in address, as well becomes a messenger of grace to guilty men. In his writing, one always hears the truth clearly taught but taught in a winsome, loving way. Surely, we can all learn from his example.

“In his writing, one always hears the truth clearly taught, but taught in a winsome, loving way.”



Conclusion

I have told the congregation that they have to taste what I am preaching about for themselves. I use the illustration of Canadian maple syrup. I could write a great deal about what pure, Canadian

maple syrup looks and tastes like. But you are going to have to taste it for yourself. If I have described anything about Lloyd-Jones that has whetted your taste buds, please go to your church library and borrow or buy some of the

recommended volumes. You will not be disappointed.

Mr Leo de Vos is a Minister of the Word and Sacraments in the Reformed Church of Wainuiomata.

Why women should be readers of good books

Andrea Vosslander

One of the wonderful things about being a teacher is school holidays. I always look forward to holiday time and write myself a long list of jobs that I want to get done, people I want to visit, and books I want to read.

In the latter category I generally set myself some kind of educational-type reading, and some kind of theological reading. I have to confess that I'm not always particularly motivated to do either – I guess that's why I deliberately write it on a list.

So, why should I, a woman, bother to

push myself to read theological books? After all, isn't my husband the head of our home and therefore the one who has the responsibility to be theologically educated? Shouldn't my job be to swot up cook books and gardening manuals? Over the years I have become increasingly convinced of many reasons why cook books and gardening manuals are not where my sole reading interest should lie.

Why

For starters, married women soon work out that they are going to be their husbands' chief counsellors and consolers. If the husband happens to be a leader in his local church, the counsel given him by his wife becomes an important part of his work. She can make or break his Christian service. The wife who has gained in wisdom by reading godly literature is far more likely to give good

counsel than the wife who has fed herself on a steady diet of women's magazines and television soaps.

Secondly, women are often the people on hand when children and teenagers are facing difficulties. I well remember speaking to my mother on many occasions about difficulties I was having getting on with other girls. I also remember her wise and godly counsel. She was a lady who was at a busy stage of life, caring for her three teenage children, having a husband on session, and also having her elderly mother living in our home. Despite this, she saw her theological education as a necessary part of her day. She set aside the half hour immediately after she had made the bed and used it to sit on the floor and read. During those daily half hour snippets she got through many good books, books that helped her have the wisdom she needed to cope with the many pressures she was facing.

Thirdly, women need theology for themselves. While living in Boston, I had the privilege of getting to know a woman who headed the women's ministries in the church we attended. I was drawn to her when I heard her address a group. She had a calm and gentle warmth which was completely disarming, yet she also bore the signs of illness. Her skin was a greyish colour and she walked with a painful gait. Her hands were deformed and gnarled, yet she exuded a quiet inner beauty. After hearing her speak I emailed her to see if we could meet at some stage and she immediately emailed back to invite me to see her. It turns out that Chris suffered from a debilitating disease which had painful arthritis as one of its side effects. At the end of our meeting I learned that her mother had died two days earlier and she was in the midst of funeral preparations for her – yet here she was, spending time

Grandmothers need to read good books.



Girls need to read good books.

with a complete stranger from New Zealand. What gave her the strength to carry on with women's ministries in the face of such obstacles?

It became obvious that Chris was a woman of deep faith, faith born out of a lifetime of Bible study and theological reading. Having stayed at home to homeschool her two children, Chris then decided she needed to know more about God. With her husband's blessing she enrolled at a local seminary and completed a doctorate in women's ministries. Two of her great loves were New Testament Greek and the Canons of Dort. Her deep knowledge of the Scriptures and trust in God enabled her to joyfully serve Him in the midst of suffering. I went away from that interview with Chris greatly challenged as to my own knowledge and trust.

What and how

Well, you might argue, that's okay for some, but I don't know where to start. Join the club: I have that problem too. Let me suggest a few things to get you going.

Decide on a genre that appeals to you and ask someone who does a lot of reading to recommend theological books in that genre. Biography is a good place to start if you're not used to reading heavy material. I have read wonderful biographies of Christians such as – George Whitefield, Hudson Taylor, and Jonathan Edwards. The lives of these saints are a great encouragement to persevere in the face of difficulties.

Once you've read a little in your preferred genre, move on to something more challenging. To get yourself convinced that you need to do this, I suggest you read *When Life and Beliefs Collide* by Carolyn Custis James. It's a book written by a woman to encourage women to read good theological literature, and is not a difficult read. At the end of the book she gives a list of suggested further reading. You could use this as a springboard to get you into some other books.

To help you discipline yourself to read more challenging books, build in some accountability. Find out if there



are other Christian women around you who would also like to read theological material. Decide which books you would like to read and then get together to discuss the things you benefitted from, or found challenging to understand. I have been a member of this type of group in the past and found it most beneficial for keeping me on track with my reading. If you have trouble finding other women to be accountable to and are married, you could ask your husband to spend time talking to you about what you have read. That way you can both benefit by the new insights you gain as you read.

As for my holiday reading – John Piper's *Desiring God* is what I'm tackling.

Busy ladies need to read good books.

Why did I choose it? because I heard him speak in the States and was interested to know more about his ideas. How am I staying accountable? Rob's keeping an eye on me and will be wanting to talk to me about what I've read. Perhaps, once I've got through it, I can publish it as a book review for Faith in Focus. Now, there's another good reason to read...

Why men should be readers of good books

Men should read
to exercise their minds.
Men should read books
to grapple with complex ideas.
Men should read good books
as a matter of discernment.
Men should read good Christian books
as a response to God's grace.

John van Dyk

Men should read good books, for the very same reason they should listen to good preaching – there is wisdom to be had.

Jon Dykstra

It is important to sharpen iron when wanting to make a good cut. Proverbs 27:17 "Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. My point is this; that if we read a good Christian book on a subject of interest we can cut deeper into the depths of God's Word. The iron that sharpens us is the wisdom and knowledge and a greater understanding of God's Word that He has given to some men. These have given of their lives to minister to others by passing on what they have learned to the reader. The Bible is inerrant yet God in His wisdom has given man the ability to write topi-

cal, educational, up-building literature to build on the foundation of God's Word. One key to assess if a book is good is to flick through and count how many times the author refers to scripture. Proverbs 18:15 "The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge."

Steffen Akkerman

Men shouldn't read good Christian books, they should read excellent Christian books.

Here are 3 reasons why:

1. *In response to God's grace, we are to love Him with all our mind! Reading can be a wonderful expression of our love for God with our minds. Through reading, are minds are stretched to a greater appreciation of God's greatness and graciousness. Through reading, we become better able to discern error and truth. Through reading we become better equipped to fulfill our various callings in life.*

2. *Men are the resident theologians in their respective households. If a man is not reading, he is not going to be able to shepherd his family properly. A steady diet of TV and boating/home improvement/rugby/(insert here your particular*

special interest) magazines is not going to make a husband particularly useful to his family. But a steady diet of Christian literature will make a man a blessing to his family and the church of God.

3. *Men should read for their own personal growth in the faith. Biographies can spur you on to greater faithfulness to our Lord. Theology can help you to better grasp the incomparable greatness of the Lord. History can help you avoid the errors of the past. Good fiction [this doesn't necessarily equate to Christian fiction] can stimulate your imagination and creativity. Reading helps you to see beyond your own time and circumstances. There is much for us to learn from other ages and cultures, and if we don't read we will end up making our own age the measure of all things. How impoverishing. Rather, reading excellent books will make you spiritually rich!*

Andrew de Vries

Why men should read good (Christian) books? It can be a good reason to get out of washing and drying the dishes!! There are those who know me and know that in the past I have not been a great book reader. Yet I know I should have read more – why? – because the times that I have grown most spiritually have been when I have read Christian books. Just after I professed my faith I was given the 2 volumes of Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones' sermons on Christ's sermon on the mount. Reading these really helped me as a young Christian to grow in faith, to hunger and thirst after righteousness. A few years later I bought Matthew Henry's commentaries. Reading these alongside the Bible gave me a much clearer understanding of what the Scriptures taught and how I should live as a Christian. In the last few years, since I have retired, I have had more time to read Christian books and grow in grace. I now regret that I



Men of all ages
need to read
good books.

didn't make more effort to read in past years – I still have many books that I bought and have not yet read.

It is often easy to see those who read a lot – they have a greater understanding of the Bible and a Christian view of the world around them. With continued technical advancements, opportunity now exists to download sermons and addresses off the internet and to play them on MP3 players etc. I recommend this as another great tool to learn and grow more Christlike.

May I exhort everyone who reads this to make time both to read Christian books and to listen to sermons on audio players, so that not only will you grow in sanctification, but you will also be able to witness to and encourage those around you.

Don Petchell

Reading allows you the opportunity to have conversations with great minds from the present and the past. Why allow your thinking to be shaped only by the few people you'll ever meet in person? So pick up a good book, and begin to open your horizons.

Andrew Nugteren

Romans 12:2 says, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." All of us are subject to the flavours and aromas of the world. We are born in a given culture and as we mature we absorb much of what floats around in the 'airwaves' of education, the media, and the cultural milieu. The biblical remedy against this conformity is transformation of the mind. To the Ephesians, Paul said, "You must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking." These verses together show us just how much mind 're-programming' we constantly need if our thinking is to be aligned towards the things of God rather than the things of the devil or this world. And after the reading of God's Word, nothing else better aids us in this mind 're-programming' than the reading of good Christian books. Not even good DVDs have the effect on the mind that reading books does. Reading takes application and involves the senses in ways that video broadcast cannot.

Romans 12:2 continues, "Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will." Our calling as believers is to do God's will. By and large, we do

not discover His will on TV or in the newspaper or much of what is online. But in His Word and in books that grow out of the richness of the explanation and application of all that God's word contains, we will become more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the WORD made Flesh.

Andre Holtslag

By the term "good (Christian) books" I would understand books that enable men to know God better, and that contribute to the equipping of Christian men to be godly leaders in the home, church, and society. Husbands and fathers have been given great responsibilities by the Lord in leading and serving their families. They are responsible for the sanctification of their wives (Eph.5:25-29), and for the discipling of their children (Deut.6:6-7; Prov.4:1-2; Eph.6:4). The men are to be the leaders and teachers in the church, a responsibility and function to which all men are encouraged to aspire (1 Tim.3:1). What will equip men for these roles? The Word of God is the means God has given (2 Tim.3:16-17). The better a man understands the Bible, what it teaches and how to apply it to all of life, the closer he will draw to God and the better he will accomplish what God has given him to do. You might think: well, then, I will just read my Bible. Certainly read the Bible, but you must remember that God has also given us preachers and teachers to help us benefit from the Word (Eph.4:11b-12). They equip all God's people, but especially the heads of households, to do their divinely-allotted work of service.

This is where "good (Christian) books" come in. By reading such books we multiply good teachers to sit under and learn from, by whom we may be further equipped. The man who wants to know the Lord better (which is the primary goal), and to be a more godly and effective servant, will want to be taught the Word, and more frequently than just on one day each week. Even if his week is so busy that he hardly has time to read such books, he will nevertheless desire to read more, and grieve that he can do no more. For he will feel his inadequacy, especially when it comes to pastoring his own family, and when called upon to pastor and serve the flock as an office-bearer. Any man who takes these responsibilities seriously will be a serious student of God's Word, and a keen reader of "good (Christian) books."

Ed Rademaker

Men should read good Christian books because good Christian books actually read men. Through literature that is based upon and soaked in Scripture we meet the Lord Himself and so are challenged to the depth of our souls as to where we stand before Him and how we are to live in order to please Him. In those books Christ is set before us as the only way of salvation and the continual source of sanctification. Thus it is that if you don't go away from reading a book marvelling at the might and mercy of the triune God you have not read a good book. Indeed, aren't good books are by their very definition 'godly' books?

Sjirk Bajema

Someone once commented that anyone who says they have only one life to live must not know how to read a book!

Books expose us to the past; short of our own very limited experience, books provide our main entrance to the past, and link us with our predecessors. Books inform us for the present; teaching us by example, and informing our minds. Books also point us to the future by enlivening our imaginations, informing us of predictions and prophecies, and elaborating our hopes and fears. Books help to make us fully human; they focus our minds and teach us discernment and tolerance.

Why read good books? If we wish to be fed and grow, we must read: not only the Good Book, but good books. Buy, beg or borrow books, but be sure to read them!

Robert Vosslamber

Many of us, especially men, struggle to read good Christian material. All too often the 'daily' newspaper trumps our own personal devotions in God's Word and any Christian material that is available to us. However, may I suggest we should strive to read good practical Christian books / material, as they can be challenging and edifying for the individual and the wider church.

First, practical Christian books can be challenging because the author(s)' insights on Scripture, and the practical implications of living the Scriptures out, can confront us in our daily life. They can challenge us in our doctrine, the ways we are to be servants in the church, the ways we are to treat others, the ways men sometimes fail to lead, the ways we must evangelise and most importantly on – whether we eat, drink or whatever we do we do it all for the glory of God.

Second, practical Christian books can be edifying, because the author(s)' insights can encourage us in our daily walk with the Lord. They can hold you in good stead for what lies ahead in the day in front of us and they can remind you of the amazing grace through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Additionally, if you still find it a real struggle to read good Christian books, there are also many reliable topical Christian blogs, one being www.thegospelcoalition.org. In these blogs, the authors also provide us with their ongoing insights in a short concise manner, usually in a very practical, challenging and uplifting manner.

Here are but a few helpful thoughts, which have made someone like me, a 'non reader', into a 'reader'! The challenge is to make time: firstly to get into God's Word daily (smothered with

we cannot afford to miss the delight that the Maker of the life of the mind has prepared for those who are willing just to spend some time with a good book.

Iwan Baumann

Men are called to be leaders in the home, in the church and in society. Effective ongoing leadership is only possible with growing knowledge and insight specific to the area of responsibility. The Word of God alone provides the essential framework of the only worldview which completely matches reality. However the God-breathed principles of Scripture do need to be clearly understood and then wisely applied to the myriad of particular situations in life.

God has gifted many Christian authors with the ability to write clearly on a wide range of topics. Good Christian books convey the considered thoughts of

tirelessly with their strength for the Lord's glory. This has been a real blessing to the churches. We have a can-do attitude: with enough strength and effort we can work through our problems.

We also need to direct our energies toward strengthening our minds. As one who has entered the ministry after several years of labour in a blue collar job, this was a significant challenge. Like the muscles of our bodies, our minds need training and strengthening. This is why men should read. If you find some books too hard to get through, start with something smaller. Faith in Focus is well-edited and has articles that will help you learn some of the ideas of God's Word and the teaching of our churches. Force yourself to read the articles even if you don't understand everything that is being written. Your mind is like a sponge: at first the water might run off, but then it will start to dampen and eventually it will be saturated.

Secondly, men should be reading Christian books to have their minds engaged in the discernment of the truth. Scripture speaks of being transformed by the renewing of your mind (Rms. 12:2). This exhortation follows God's call for the consecration of our minds. We are to love Him with our minds (Mt. 22:37). Similarly, we are to bring every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). This sanctification of our minds is going to take training and practice – especially in a day and age when our idols are ideas and images. All of our churches have libraries that are waiting to be used. Don't just read for enjoyment (that is a good thing to do too) but also train yourself to read for development. This means you will have to read some books that stretch your mind. This will bring strength to your mind which will help you serve the Lord with the love of truth.

Lastly, men should read good books. With God's word as the standard, we are equipped for engaging our minds in the ideas that shape our culture. We are enabled to understand the idols of image and ideas that have captured and frequently entangle our minds. Our way of thinking affects our manner of serving. This is why the Lord summons us to love Him with our mind. This is why I think men should read good (Christian) books. Want to know more? I would suggest Os Guinness's book Fit Bodies Fat Minds: Why Evangelicals Don't Think and What to Do About It.

Peter Kloosterman

“Reading good [Christian] books is reviving, regenerating, revitalising, restoring, rekindling, renewing renovating, the mind.”

prayer), but also to read the helpful insights of others, which can encourage and challenge you until we see the day approaching.

Graeme Zuidema

Men should read good [Christian] books because we cannot afford not to. We cannot afford to ignore the wisdom of Christians who have set good before us and have prayerfully wrestled with God's Word, gaining insights into God's glorious truth that only come from serious meditation and reflection. As C. S. Lewis so persuasively pointed out once, we cannot afford to be limited by our own blind spots; blind spots that people living in different circumstances or in ages past did not have. They may have had other blind spots, but those are likely different from ours. Nor can we afford not to learn more about God's magnificent yet fallen creation; the study of which, when approached thoughtfully, will invariably proclaim, "Look at the Glorious, Un-created One who made all things!" And

mature believers on subjects as diverse as children and career choices, ethics and eschatology or marriage and missiology. The wise man of God reads everything with the mindset of the Bereans (Acts 17:11); checking everything against the Scripture. He will be constantly immersed in the Word of God through his private and family devotions. Good books will then assist him in understanding what God has said and in effectively applying that knowledge to life. It has been said that "readers may not be leaders, but leaders must be readers". All men should therefore read good Christian books.

David Waldron

*Allow me to address this question incrementally. First of all **why men should read**. Developing reading skills is not a discipline reserved for the classroom. It is something vital to our life in the world. If we don't read well, we will struggle to love the Lord our God fully, as we are called. Many men love the Lord with their strength. They are willing to serve*

Why so serious?

Reasons to read weighty books

Jeff Dykstra

Why read “literature” at all? Why not just read books with exciting action and happy endings, or watch movies or TV shows with plenty of explosions and romance? If culture is just entertainment, why not *enjoy* it, instead of having to *work* at it? Those are the kinds of questions that come to mind when we see an article that deals with obscure and often difficult authors.

To answer these questions let’s look at some biblical passages that begin to show why thoughtful fiction is valuable.

Stories that reach us

In Matthew 7:1-5 Jesus warns us to avoid hypocritical judgement of others, telling us instead to pay more attention to “the plank in your own eye” – I need to know “how great *my* sin and misery are” (Lord’s Day 1, emphasis mine).

Now one way that Jesus promoted His people’s understanding of their own sinfulness and salvation was through stories – parable after parable. We may often wonder why those Pharisees just didn’t get it, but the problem is that we often do exactly what Jesus warns us against. We self-righteously apply God’s Word to others, rather than ourselves, just as the Pharisees did.

So what do we need when we refuse to see the truth about ourselves that is revealed by the double-edged sword of God’s living and active Word? Perhaps we need someone to tell us a story about someone else, just as Nathan told a story to David after David’s dual sin of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah. Nathan’s story got David into a lather of pious rage and judgement against the cruel rich man who stole his poor neighbour’s lamb. That’s when Nathan sprang the trap:

David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, “As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die!... ” Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master’s house to you, and

your master’s wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? ...” Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” (2 Samuel 12:5, 7-9, 13; emphasis mine)

David is brought to repentance when he sees that he is no better than the fictional character he condemns. Good literature promotes that same humbling self-awareness.

An addition, not a substitution

So, you might be thinking, why not just read the Bible? You might have asked a similar question of David after the sins that made Nathan’s visit necessary. David knew the law, and even suffered due to his conscience-stricken knowledge of the sinfulness of what he had done. He still needed to be confronted with his sin and condemn it himself, first indirectly – through a story – and then directly – through an accusation – before he could be forgiven:

Great literature can also confront even sinners like us with our sin by illustrating a situation that takes Biblical truth and applies it to a concrete situation that reminds us – sometimes only gradually – of our own.

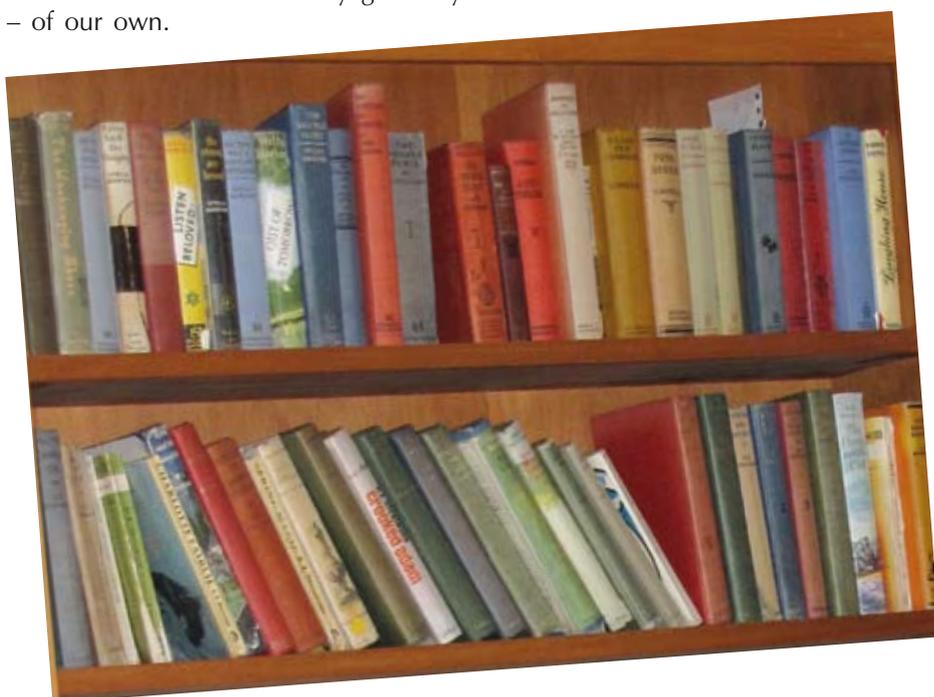
Inspiring, but not inspired

At the same time, even great literature does not come to us from the mouth of a prophet, and particularly not from the mouth of the great Prophet Jesus Christ. In other words, great literature may be inspiring, but it is not inspired.

For this reason, while literature can promote valuable self-evaluation, literature itself also needs to be critically evaluated. So Christians can gain self-understanding from serious fiction, but also need to guard against false understanding of human nature and God’s world by imperfect and merely human authors – even Christian ones.

For more on this topic I highly recommend Mary DeMuth’s article “Why Should Christ-Followers Read Fiction?” at www.WhyFiction.notlong.com. For more on serious books (and not so serious ones) check out my book blog at www.ReallyGoodReads.com.

This article first appeared in the July/August issue of Reformed Perspective (www.reformedperspective.ca) with whom we have a reciprocal agreement.



Presbyterian Church of Wales General Assembly votes to raise awareness of upcoming devolution referendum and to encourage voting in favour of increasing Welsh legislative power

A 7 September 2010 *Ekklesia* article titled "Presbyterian Church of Wales Backs Further Assembly Powers" reports that delegates to the 2010 Presbyterian Church of Wales General Assembly voted to raise awareness among church members of the upcoming devolution referendum, and to encourage church members to vote in favour of giving increased legislative powers to the Welsh Assembly.

+ *Ekklesia*

Great Britain's Presbyterian and Reformed denominations react to Pope's visit

Several of Great Britain's Presbyterian and Reformed denominations have reacted in various ways to the upcoming visit of Roman Catholic (RC) pontiff Pope Benedict XVI.

A 13 September 2010 article by Jenna Lyle in *Christian Today* titled "Churches Welcome Pope's Visit to Britain" reports that the United Reformed Church (URC) said the lead taken by RC bishops in moral and spiritual reflection was "of benefit to all", and URC General Secretary the Rev. Roberta Rominger said she hoped the visit would "energise" and "inspire" the church.

A 14 September 2010 *BBC* article titled "Presbyterian Moderator Refuses to Shake the Pope's Hand" reports that Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) Moderator Dr. Norman Hamilton plans to attend a 17 September 2010 service in Westminster that will be attended by Pope Benedict XVI and the Archbishop of Canterbury, but that Dr. Hamilton turned down the opportunity to be presented to the Pope after the service because of "troubling issues" which needed to be addressed, mainly the sexual abuse scandals in the RC church.

A 12 September 2010 *BBC* article by William Crawley titled "Free Presbyterian Leader Challenges Moderator over Service with Pope" reports that Free Presbyterian Church in Ireland (FPCI) Moderator the Rev. Ron Johnstone strongly criticises PCI Moderator Hamilton for attending the upcoming 17

September 2010 service, saying:

"I was going to say it shocks me, but I suppose it doesn't. I think it is very sad that he would go to such a thing. The Pope claims that the Presbyterian Church in Ireland is a false church. He claims that we should recognise him as the head of all Christians. And surely the Westminster Confession that Mr. Hamilton signed is totally opposed to the teachings of Rome. Both can't be right: either Romanism is right or the New Testament is right. And I'm sure a lot of Irish Presbyterians will be shocked that they are represented at a meeting with the Pope."

A 14 September 2010 article by Claire Smith in *The Scotsman* titled "Ian Paisley Coming to Edinburgh in Protest over Pope's Visit" reports that the Rev. Ian Paisley and sixty other FPCI ministers from Northern Ireland are travelling to Edinburgh, Scotland, to protest against the state visit of the Roman pontiff, first congregating at Magdalen Chapel in Cowgate, Edinburgh, Scotland, in a church where John Knox once preached, then staging a public protest in the Grassmarket where they will unfurl a banner objecting to the papal visit.

A 14 September 2010 by Dan Keenan in *The Irish Times* titled "Paisley to be 'Champion' for Child Sex Abuse Victims" reports that Paisley is putting himself forward as "a champion" for the victims of child sex abuse by RC priests, commenting: "[The Pope] is coming to this country at a time when his own church is very deeply divided, and rightly so, because of the behaviour of many priests within the church and his evident desire not to enter into this matter and deal with it. I think that I have a right – everybody has a right – to make their presence felt on this issue."

In a related matter, a 9 September 2010 *Belfast Telegraph* article titled "Tony Blair Advised Not to Become a Catholic by Ian Paisley" reports that Paisley met with former Prime Minister of Great Britain Tony Blair the day that Blair converted to Roman Catholicism, and tried to dissuade Blair from doing so. Paisley said of his unsuccessful attempt: "Well, I said I was going to say a few things and I said them – as a real Christian – because this was a matter of eternity."

+ *Christian Today*

Threatened Koran burning evokes various responses

Threats by Pastor Terry Jones of the Dove World Outreach Center in Gainesville, Florida, to burn a copy of the Koran has evoked outrage and threatenings by Muslims worldwide, and has wrought varying reactions among U.S. Christians.

Pleas made by the Rev. Patrick Mahoney of the Christian Defense Coalition and the Rev. Rob Schenck of the National Clergy Council and Faith and Action in the Nation's Capital to Pastor Jones to cancel plans to burn the Koran were at first successful, but remain questionable, as Pastor Jones claims that he was misled by a Muslim Imam who told Jones plans to build a thirteen-story mosque at Ground Zero in New York City, New York, had been cancelled.

In his 9 September 2010 Internet audio broadcast, Randall Terry said, that in the efforts to convince Pastor Jones to cancel the Koran burning, the Rev. Rob Schenck was mistaken in his portrayal of Christ and Christianity. Terry asked: "Is burning a Quran just? And next, is it prudent?"; then reviewed Old Testament judgments of God by fire and the Apostle Paul's burning of "sacred" books on witchcraft, the destruction of pagan worship sites by the church throughout history, and the building of Roman Catholic cathedrals using the ruins of these pagan temples; and concluded by asking: "Should we condemn our spiritual forebears because they did not 'show respect' to false religions?..."

The founder and President of BOND Action Inc., the Rev. Jesse Lee Peterson, described Pastor Jones' threat to burn the Koran "foolish and unnecessary," then blasted U.S. President Barack Hussein Obama and senior members of his cabinet for their hypocrisy and selective outrage over the incident, saying: "For Barack Obama to condemn the Florida pastor, yet endorse the radical Muslim cleric's plan to erect a victory Muslim mosque near hallowed grounds is dangerous and hypocritical. Eric Holder and Hillary Clinton have reportedly condemned the proposed Quran burning as 'idiotic' and 'disgraceful.' If it weren't for Obama and his administration ripping this pastor, this issue would not have been elevated to an international crisis."

On 11 September 2010, in front of

the White House, Andrew Beacham asked: "Why should we respect a book that denies Christ, denies the Trinity, calls us infidels, and declares that God wants Christians and Jews banished, imprisoned, crucified, or murdered?", then Beacham tore the following passages from a Koran:

Chapter 5:17-19; States Christians are infidels for believing Christ is the Son of God.

Chapter 5:33; Cut off hands and feet, crucify, and banish those who stand against Islam.

Chapter 5:51; Muslims forbidden to take Christians and Jews for friends.

Chapter 5:72-75; Christians are infidels; for believing in Deity of Christ; Passage denies Holy Trinity.

Chapter 8:12-15; Decapitate infidels; i.e., those who stand against Mohammad.

Chapter 9:5,6; Slay Idolaters.

Chapter 33:26,27; Passage justifies the beheading of hundreds of Jewish men, enslavement of their wives and children, and the spoiling of their property.

Chapter 33:61-62; God wants the murder of those who stand against Islam.

Chapter 47:1-4; Kill those who do not believe in Mohammad.

+ *Christian News Wire*

Wellesley, Massachusetts, sixth-graders taken on field trip to Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center mosque where they joined Muslims in prostrated prayer

Sixth-grade social studies students from Wellesley Middle School in Wellesley, Massachusetts, on 25 May 2010, were taken on a field trip to the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center's mosque, where they were told by mosque officials that in Mohammed's seventh-century Arabia women were allowed to vote, while in America women only gained that right a hundred years ago, that the only meaning of Jihad in Islam is a personal spiritual struggle, and that Jihad has historically had no relationship with holy war. Additionally, the students prostrated themselves alongside Muslim men in a prayer to Allah. Teachers did not intervene, neither were parents told about the details of the field trip.

Americans for Peace and Tolerance on 15 September 2010 reported that: "The Islamic Society of Boston was founded by Abdulrahman Alamoudi, who is currently serving twenty-three years in jail on terror charges. For years,

its board of trustees included Yusuf al Qaradawi, the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood who was banned by Bill Clinton from the United States in 1999. Qaradawi now chairs the Muslim American Society's university, which offers classes inside the mosque. Over half the mosque's [US]\$15.5 million price tag was funded by wealthy Saudis and since it opened, several of its leaders, donors and members have been implicated in Islamic extremism.

"Oussama Ziade, a big donor to the mosque, is now a fugitive in Lebanon after being indicted in 2009 for dealing in the assets of an Al Qaeda financier. Ahmad Abousamra, the son of the Boston Muslim American Society's former vice-president Abdulbadi Abousamra, is now a fugitive in Syria, fleeing the country before being indicted in 2009 on charges of aiding Al Qaeda. One of the mosque's imams, Abdullah Faaruq, was captured on tape in 2010 telling followers to "pick up the gun and the sword" and to defend another local terrorist Aafia Siddiqui from the U.S. government. Siddiqui, who was one of the imam's congregants, is an MIT graduate and Al Qaeda member awaiting sentencing for attempting to murder FBI agents in Afghanistan while shouting "death to America." "

+ *Americans for Peace and Tolerance*

United Nations considers international tax to support MDG's

NEW YORK, September 16 (C-FAM) Sixty nations will present a declaration to implement an international currency transaction tax during the UN Millennium Development Goal (MDG) summit that begins next week at United Nations headquarters in New York. As members of the Leading Group on Innovative Financing for Development, these nations will propose a tax they contend is necessary to bridge alleged funding gaps for the MDGs. Estimates judge the gap in development financing to fall between \$324-336 billion a year from 2012 to 2017.

+ *Amanda Pawloski*

Arrests and discrimination against Christians in Tanzania

Compass Direct News Service reports about the arrest of the evangelist Peter Masanja from Zanzibar's southeastern town of Paje, Tanzania, because of holding religious activities in his home and being suspected by local Muslims in planning to establish a church on his land. Peter Masanja was arrested and imprisoned in

Kilimani. Local pastors have several times unsuccessfully tried to meet with prison authorities about Peter's arrest.

Additional disturbing news from Tanzania is in regard to Christian university students on the island of Zanzibar, a predominantly Muslim area off the coast of East Africa, who have been denied the right to worship inside the campus premises, which violates the rights granted by the constitution of Zanzibar. Compass Direct News Service has also reported about growing discrimination against Christian students at universities in Tanzania.

WEA Religious Liberty - September 2010.

Many Muslims turning to Christ in Iran

VOM Canada sends an encouraging report that despite increased persecution, record numbers of Muslims are turning to Christ all over Iran. The Voice of the Martyrs additionally shares about several reports received by them of opposition faced by the Iranian Christians, including the arrest of 15 newly converted Christians in the city of Mashhad Razavi Khorasan in July 2010. In spite of that, Christians in Iran are continuing to share Christ courageously and boldly, giving us inspiration and a great example.

WEA Religious Liberty - September 2010.

UNFPA Uses International Year of Youth to exploit children

NEW YORK, August 19 (C-FAM) Last Thursday, the United Nations (UN) officially launched the "International Year of Youth" (IYY) in the UN General Assembly Hall. The theme for the year is "Dialogue and Mutual Understanding," with a focus on health and development, particularly the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). But some observers fear that the IYY agenda has been taken over by the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and its allies who are using it to promote new "rights" to sexual and reproductive health education and services for young people.

The UN has devoted considerable resources for the IYY, including for a new cutting-edge website, and has incorporated the youth agenda into the work of all of the major UN agencies. At the UN launch, the Joint Statement of the Heads of UN Entities was delivered by the head of UNFPA, Thoraya Obaid.

+ *By Terrence McKeegan, J.D.*

Feminine focus

Sally Davey

Cooking is an act of love

Food, as we all know, is one of the great pleasures in life. Happy? Celebrate with a piece of chocolate cake. Sad? Reach for a piece of chocolate cake. Yes, yes, I know – a moment on the lips, a lifetime on the hips and all that – but the fact is, there are few things that give us such a deep-down, satisfying sense of well-being like food does. Do you want to make your friends happy? Cook for them. Take them out to eat. Food? We love it.

Food is also, as we all know, necessary to life. We'd perish without it. It's as basic as the roof over our heads and the clothes on our back. We wouldn't last very long at all without something to give us energy. Some of the greatest human tragedies have involved people dying through lack of it. Famine has threatened from earliest biblical times: (Why did the patriarchs go down to Egypt? Why did Naomi end up in Moab?) It is with us still. What did Jesus tell us? Whenever you have fed the least of his people, you have done

it for him. Christians love to feed the hungry.

Creative and skilful

It follows that cooking good food – food that looks, smells and tastes good – is a good thing to do for those we love. Whoever prepares the food for a family, or a group of flatmates, is doing something really kind for them. It will be enjoyed. It is an act of love. And it's worth doing extremely well, with all our creativity and skill. It's worth spending years learning how to do it; it's worth asking the experts for their tips; it's worth spending money on books and courses in order to do it very, very well. Why? Let's explore some of the reasons, because it's one of the homemaker's key tasks.

The first thing is to learn how to **eat**. Food should be good for us. It should help keep us healthy. Food is more than simply fuel; and it needs to provide much more than mere calories. We need to understand the basic components of a balanced diet – how much carbohydrate, how much protein, how much fat and what kinds of vitamins and minerals are necessary if we and our families or flatmates are to keep fit and healthy. Isaiah asked (though I reinterpret his question) "Why spend your money for that which is not bread?"¹ Don't throw away your

valuable income on expensive ... junk! And there is much on the shelves of the supermarket that comes into that category, as we well know. So I believe it is important, if you are responsible for the cooking in your home, to learn as much as you can about the choosing and preparation of good food.

A dying art

How do you learn? Well, girls used to learn this from their mothers – but these days many mothers don't know how. They are busy, and work full-time, and buy fast food or processed food because they're tired and don't have time to cook. Many children are fat, and unhealthy – and doctors worry about the looming diabetes epidemic. It's true some teenagers learn about a healthy diet from home economics classes at school – though I know not all teenagers take home economics. But we can also learn by other means. There are good books. It's easy to make gathering food knowledge a fun project by reading some of the wonderful cookbooks and food books available – and there are literally dozens on the shelf in the public libraries of our country. If you didn't learn about good food as a child, there are many ways to get this knowledge as an adult.

An art to be learned

The next thing is to learn how to **prepare** good food. Cooking is a skill, one to cultivate all your life. In my experience, many girls (and probably boys too) start cooking at home with their mothers. Because their mothers are usually the ones cooking the dinner-time basics (the meat dish and salad or vegetables), children start with desserts or baking cakes and biscuits. These are easy, loved by children (they are sweet, after all) and they don't necessarily have to be done on time for the family meal. Often it is only when children leave home that they begin taking full responsibility for entire meals. But in whatever order it happens, the important thing is that you learn to mess around in the kitchen, trying out recipes, learning what happens when you put something in too hot an oven, leave it in too long, or fail to add the baking powder. A good chemist always learns from his or her mistakes! But sometimes young people don't learn from their mothers: mother



Treasure your family's heritage of recipes.

may have been such a perfectionist she couldn't leave her children to experiment. She may have been impatient, tired, unwilling to do the hard yards of teaching. Perhaps the children lost their mother through death or divorce. Perhaps they came from another culture, and had maids. In all these circumstances there may be a place for someone else to teach young women (or men) to cook. It can be a lot of fun, and help build wonderful bonds of friendship in the process. We have a young veterinarian from Brazil working on our farm, and she really wants to learn how to cook. Lorena loves food, and so every Tuesday evening we cook dinner together, and try out a new cake or cookies or dessert as well. How about you? Perhaps your congregation has a few young people who'd love to learn how to cook some basics – or some special things – and as an experienced older cook you could run an informal class in your home? Think of the fun It seems to me there is a genuine need. A lot of people don't really know how to cook delicious, family-type meals that are attractive and wholesome at the same time.

Cooking reflects your culture

Did you realise that cooking is an important part of your culture? It is. Historians and anthropologists can learn a lot about a society from the ways it cooks. They can trace its relationships with other cultures by following the record of its borrowings of recipes and cooking techniques. For instance, curries came into English cooking through its Indian colonial past. Tomatoes and potatoes were native to South America, and so they only entered the European diet post-Columbus. (Tomato-based Italian dishes do not have an ancient history). I've found it an absolutely fascinating pastime tracing my own social history through recipe books. My family's tattered and doughy cookbooks tell a story. My mother recently gave me a cookbook I enjoyed using as a child. It's entitled *The Patriotic Cookbook*, and was prepared during World War two as a fundraiser for the war effort by a committee in Invercargill. (My grandparents were members). It's interesting to compare the contents of a war-era cookbook with those of the last twenty years. *The Patriotic Cookbook* has many chapters on hot puddings, cold puddings, pastry, cakes, small cakes, biscuits, scones, etc – and only one on vegetables (with a tiny one on salads). These days you would expect many chapters on salads, soups and hot vegetable dishes – with perhaps

only one on cakes and desserts combined. The reason? These days we are more interested in healthy, fruit-and vegetable-rich diets; and women also spend less time baking. We eat fewer desserts; we have less of a habit of "having the cake tins full". It's probably good for us; yet it does have its sad side. The comfortable, welcoming tradition of afternoon tea and time to chat with a friend or neighbour or the neighbour's children is well-nigh gone. We are too busy; we've lost something. But why not cultivate your family's culture of cookery? Treat your recipes as

“The comfortable, welcoming tradition of afternoon tea and time to chat ... is well-nigh gone. We are too busy; we've lost something.”

a personal treasure to collect and pass on. Put together a family cookbook, complete with photos of all those who contribute recipes. My mother did this as a surprise for the women of our extended family a few years ago – and we loved it.

For our comfort

Finally, *cooking is an art to cultivate*. This is especially important to remember if you have to do a lot of cooking, for a lot of people, and often. It is easy in such circumstances to get tired of it. It becomes drudgery, and you lose motivation to make food look nice; to vary the menu so that each day is different; to make it interesting and enticing to the eaters. It is easy to lose sight of the value beautiful food may have in cheering the hearts of those to whom it is given. The term "comfort food" is not an idle one. Good food really does comfort the soul as well as the body. Nigella Lawson knew this when she entitled her book on baking *How to Be a Domestic Goddess: Baking and the Art of Comfort Cooking*. There is a place for rich, sweet, gorgeous-looking treats: sometimes they do us a power of good. Not *all* the time, of course! This is cookery for when we need reminding we have someone who loves us. It includes dessert for dinner guests, cakes for special afternoon teas, and extra-glamorous yummy treats for wrapping up and

giving to friends in the slough of despond. We need to do this kind of cooking – it is TLC for loved ones when they specially need it. This is the department of pretty cupcakes, elaborate gateaux, and rich chocolate mousse cake.

Not just refuelling

But never forget the context of food. The gentle art of cookery exists so that we can care for our loved ones. It is not an end in itself; we do not cook in order to impress, prove a point, or simply to refuel. A family gathered to eat around a table

is not a row of cars hooked up to pumps at a gas station. No, we are gathered to share a meal and to practise togetherness, cultivate warmth and communication, and to care for one another. Food is only one part. Conversation is the other, even more important part. We begin the day with breakfast – and encourage one another to meet the challenges of the day ahead. At dinner we meet and reflect together on the day we've had. Challenges are evaluated, unexpected blessings shared, uncertainties and worries cleared away by encouraging family discussion and prayer. Edith Schaeffer², my personal culinary heroine, knew this well. She often talked of being the one moving "around the edges" of family or evangelistic conversations. She'd be the one preparing the delicious food that so aided discussion. She was not the centre of the main activity; but she knew her work enabled it to happen. It's like that, you know – cooking is an act of love.

Notes

1 Isaiah 55:2

2 Wife of Francis Schaeffer, well-known evangelist, apologist and author of many books. Edith herself wrote a number of good books on Christian womanhood. Her book, *The Hidden Arts of Homemaking*, is a classic on the subject. I've found it very helpful, and highly recommend it. Her chapter on food is especially pertinent here.



CBI NZ Newsletter – July 2010

Looking back over the last few months it is very reassuring to see, in so many ways, the Lord's hand at work in guiding the ministry of CBI in NZ.

During April and May more than 20 people were trained as CBI instructors, with more now waiting to be trained. Thank you to all those who have already sent in their application forms, we very much appreciate your support as we reach out to prisoners with the Word of God.

In May we went to the South Island. I was very thankful to catch up with the chaplains in Christchurch and Dunedin who were able to attend the instructor meetings and then listen to Andrew (a former CBI student) share about his life and his time in prison. It was a blessing to meet, for the first time, with the Chaplain at Invercargill Prison. He was very impressed with the CBI material. And, I'm happy to share, some of the men there are now doing the studies.

Instructor training sessions were held in Christchurch and Oamaru. It is very encouraging to see interest in this ministry grow and take root. Thank you to those folk who hosted these sessions and to the people who so graciously accommodated us both in the South Island and in Tokoroa.

It was a pleasure to visit Radio Southland in Invercargill and meet with the manager – a believer! A great opportunity to share the work of CBI with him and leave some brochures with him. Both Radio Southland (Invercargill) and Radio Kidnappers (Hastings) air the CBI FM programs. These are 15-minute programs produced in the U.S. and focus on many

aspects of prison ministry.

It is such a blessing to see the Lord at work with individual students as they strive to apply what they learn. But what is even more amazing is how, in turn, these students share this with other prisoners, either at Bible study groups at their Church or even in their cells. I received a letter where a long time CBI student shares: "Enclosed is another enrolment form for you. This man has just come into the unit from another part of the prison. He is very keen and joined the group straight away. He was full of questions about the Lord Jesus, the Scriptures, and even asking meanings of words. I am happy and blessed to be able to help him with his walk with the Lord. Praise God."

Another student shares: "I am helping a guy who can't read or write. He visits me secretly to have me read the Bible to him. His reading is now improving. Praise the Lord for turning his heart as he was one who persecuted me before."

Yet another student has asked us to send enrolment forms to his family. He is to be released in a few months and very keen to continue the lessons.

A student sent in a copy of a letter from his daughter. He shares that as the Lord has worked in his life, growing in faith and understanding, he has been able to have a powerful impact on his family. "Although I am in prison we are now all stronger and more united in the faith than ever before."

As the Lord changes the heart of a prisoner it has a rippling effect where that prisoner is used by the Lord to reach out to someone else - whether that is a fellow prisoner, family member or a Corrections Officer. It is a privilege to see the Lord at work in this way.

A Chaplain recently asked for some statistics regarding the CBI students at his prison. He replied in an email: "The statistics are such a minor part of what you do. It's just great being able to offer Crossroads to the men. There is so little in their lives which is really positive and to be able to offer them something which has the potential to really change their lives and at no monetary cost is just wonderful. Thank you."

A few weeks ago I received a number of enrolment forms from a man I met and spoke with at Spring Hill prison last year. He was there as a volunteer doing Bible studies with a group of men in a unit and asked for some CBI enrolment forms. Praise the Lord for this wonderful support and encouragement.

My sincere thanks and appreciation to the people who have supported CBI with donations either individually or in special collections at church. It is very encouraging to receive this support as it reflects your willingness to be part of this ministry, which reaches out to prisoners, people who are often regarded as the least worthy of our Christian love and support. Thank you.

I would like to share the following responses from students showing you but a glimpse of the power of the Lord at work in the lives of prisoners.

"Dear CBI Staff. Well what an exciting thrill it was for me to receive my new certificate of achievement. I have it proudly displayed on my wall. Thank you very much for the lessons that I have received so far. I am proud to confess that your lessons have made me become more thoughtful and to recognise the fact that my relationship with Jesus Christ has only become more closer after completing these lessons. It has become an exciting privilege to learn what I have to do and become in my relationship with Jesus Christ. I promise to continue diligently in pursuing after Jesus Christ. I don't want to go back to the old sin filled man that I had been. What an exciting future Jesus holds for me! God bless you wonderful brothers/sisters in Christ Jesus."

"I declared Jesus as my Saviour to a group of gang members. They were about to test my faith and I said in Jesus name I do not fear you, nor do I fear death. Jesus said 'He who hates Me will hate you.' Then I said I will not return evil with evil but instead I will love you. Things ended on a happy note."

"I believed that I wasn't worth saving because of my mistakes, my sins. I caused a lot of hurt and pain But I cried out to God, and confessed and repented. I am saved only by God's grace. Thank you very much for your letters. I look forward to them. It really encourages me and it brings comfort to know that you care. So thank you and I look forward to more. God bless you."

"I feel gradually, day by day, I have become closer to God. I have accepted that He has a plan for me. I have stopped worrying, hating and remaining in misery. Instead I have been praying more and more. I have noticed a change in my personality. Although I'm in prison I can still feel God is working in my life. I don't know exactly how to put it in words but I somehow feel at peace. Thank you for your guidance."

"Thank you kindly to all my Instructors for your love and kindness. I love soaking in the Word of God. You really lift my spirits and warm my heart with all your inspiring letters. Words cannot express my gratitude. I send my love to you all. God bless"

"I pray for and thank all the Instructors at CBI that they will continue their awesome work in teaching the Word of God to the prisoners all around the world. May God bless you all!"

"I was a drug and alcohol addict and heavily connected to gangs. I should have died many times but know now that God has a plan for me."

"Thank you so much for giving me this opportunity CBI. I've always been looking/searching around for answers to help me in my journey and now that I have you, I thank you with all my heart. Thank you so much CBI."

"I have times when my mind struggles because everything I have been taught

on earth is opposite to how my God asks me to be. I know the mind needs renewing but it is easier said than done. I have lived a life already and realise I know nothing about the God that created me. Any help would be appreciated please."

"The amount of things I have learnt in a short time from reading the Bible is incredible and has affected my life in all new ways. My attitude towards life has now changed and I'm developing a more positive outlook knowing that God will guide me if I trust in Him."

"My problem is that I feel guilty for not being the way God has wanted for me and that it has taken for me to come back to jail to come back to God. I was brought up to love God and His Word but my life ended up a long way from God's ways. I have always believed but just ignored it. So now I am sorry and pray to God for love and forgiveness. Let me forgive too!"

"Before doing these studies I was a gang member. So hurting with violence and words I was 100% into. Doing real damage to other people was normal growing up in South Auckland and a violent house. But now these studies have taught me that we are made in the image of God and I regret and am sorry for my past actions. Now I am educated from the Holy Spirit why it is wrong."

"Praise God for the wonderful things CBI is doing in reaching the hearts of brothers in prison. It is a blessing to be receiving encouragement from CBI. God bless."

Please continue to pray for the ministry of CBI in the prisons and for those involved with the work of CBI in NZ.

If you would like further information about the CBI ministry you can contact us on cbi.nz@xtra.co.nz or write to Crossroad Bible Institute, P.O. Box 11005 HASTINGS 4258.

Focus on home

Andrew Reinders

Gleanings from our bulletins...

Avondale

Pastoral – It's a boy! Early on Wednesday morning Chris and Madeleine Ploeg received the gift of new life with the birth of Stanley Nathan, a brother for Kate, Cassandra and Scarlett. We thank God with them for His continued faithfulness and pray that this little boy too, may grow in the knowledge of His heavenly Father with each passing day.

Public Profession of Faith: Having met with Te Puna Ihimaera-James and having heard her testimony and profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as her Saviour and Lord, the elders would like to announce to the congregation that her public profession of faith will take place on the Lord's Day, October 3, during the morning worship service. We give thanks to God for his work of

opening hearts to receive the message of the gospel!

Bishopdale

Office Bearer Training Course: What do the Elders and Deacons actually do? Come and find out on Thursday at 7.30pm at the Church as we continue the Office Bearers Training course. If you would like the workbooks or MP3s of previous sessions please see Marguerite Braam.

Pastoral Matters. Next week we have the privilege of witnessing the baptism of another covenant child. Daniel and Monique Havelaar have asked that Jodie be baptised. As we see the water of baptism applied outwardly, let us pray that God by His spirit will begin to work inwardly on this child of the covenant.

Buckland's Beach

Pastoral. On Monday, 24 Aug, at about 6.20 pm, the Lord called home Miss Doris Clare Church at the age of 78. Doris was one of the original founding members of our congregation. Her funeral took place on Thursday. We extend our deepest sympathy to her

family and friends. Although we grieve, we did not grieve as those who had no hope, for Doris knew, loved and served Jesus as her Lord and Saviour. Sr Joyce Larsen spoke at the funeral and recalled those early days when she and Doris were part of our group of young people encouraged and strengthened by the ministry of the Rev J A (Alex) Scarrow. Br Brian Bartlett also spoke of these later years when Doris worshipped at Mangere – and more lately as he and his wife Anne picked up Doris from the Kenderdine Rest Home to come to church. We grieved – but because of Christ – we also celebrated.

Profession of Faith and Lords Supper. This morning Mr Jason van Garderen will acknowledge and confess his love for Jesus as the Lord and saviour of his life. Jason loves Jesus and thanks him for saving him. He now wants the world to know this and wants to serve him as a member of the body of Christ here in Buckland's Beach. We welcome him as a dear brother.

Christchurch

Pastoral. Thomas Littlejohn is prepar-

ing to travel to Indonesia on Friday 10 September. He will be assisting at the Mission School where Megan van Leeuwen assisted also. He plans to be there for six weeks. May the Lord guide you in your preparations and may He use you in His service there.

Dunedin

From Pastor Hoyt. Do you want to read a good, Reformed daily devotional? You can do so on the internet. Two that I recommend are 1) by Dr. D. A. Carson, called "For the Love of God" and 2) by "Reformation 21". Links to both can be found on our own church web site: oamaru.rcnz.org.nz. I believe you will find one of these very helpful in your own daily devotions.

Hamilton

From the Pastor: Congratulations to Cor Bouter who, Lord willing, will reach his 80th birthday this Friday. Pray that the Lord would continue to be near to both Cor and Ge and give them the strength they need for each day.

From the Pastor: On Monday morning, the Lord suddenly took Heather Bycroft home to Himself. The funeral service and committal will be held here from 11am tomorrow morning and will be followed by light refreshments in the church hall. Please remember John Bycroft and the Rose family in your prayers as they grieve their loss. Yet we also rejoice in the hope that Heather is now with the Lord which is "better by far."

From the Pastor: Congratulations to Theo and Ellen Grul who celebrate 50 years of marriage this coming Friday. May the Lord continue to bless you and enable you, together, to bear testimony to His faithfulness and goodness.

From the Pastor: On Thursday morning Marian van der Pyl's body was committed to the ground in the confidence that one day she will be raised to life never again to die. Pray that the Lord would comfort Tony, his and Marian's extended family and friends as they remember her life and as they go on without her.

Hastings

Wedding invitation – this Saturday. The Session are pleased to announce that Sander de Vries and Miriam Donk have signified their desire to be united in marriage in this Church on 4th September 2010 at 2p.m. If there are no lawful objections, the ceremony will take place on that date. Everyone is warmly invited to attend the marriage ceremony and to celebrate with the, de Vries/Majoor and Donk families during an afternoon tea in the fellowship hall following the service.

Palmerston North

Prayer Meeting. A prayer meeting will be held straight after the afternoon service each Lord's Day in the Sunday School room. It is held under the auspices of the Session. It is envisaged that it will normally last for 20-30 minutes, and all who are able are encouraged to come and to pray.

Pastoral Notes from Rev. Hans Vaatstra. On Friday the 15th of October our church will participate in a Safety, Security and Wellbeing expo at the War Memorial in Wanganui. We've been allocated a space with a table on which we plan to have a display of Bibles, Christian literature (on appro from Geneva books), evangelistic material and a little promotional material for our church. The purpose in being there is of course to promote Christ and Christianity, if you'd like to help out on the day let me know.

Pastoral Notes from Rev. Michael Flinn. Warm congratulations to Jason and San-



2011 WELLINGTON LADIES PRESBYTERIAL

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

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

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

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

Mark your calendar now and be sure to be there.

When: 19th March 2011

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

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

Back issues of *Faith in Focus*

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RCNZ Home Page

<http://www.rcnz.org.nz>

dra Elliott and the children on the safe arrival of Charlotte Joy this past Wednesday. Mum and baby are doing well.

Silverstream

Pastoral Notes. We rejoice with Derek and Tracey van der Werff on the birth of their daughter Lucy Mae last Monday. We are thankful that Tracey and Lucy are doing well. Praise God from Whom all blessings flow.

Wainuiomata

Church Family. We extend our Christian sympathy to the Zandman family as the Lord called Jan Zandman to Himself this week. His heart stopped when he was on a train on the way to work. As we can understand Mrs. Zandman and the family has found this a hard shock to cope with. Let us pray that the Lord may grant this family the rich and full comfort that His Spirit ministers to be-

lievers. The Zandmans immigrated to NZ in the 1980's, were active members of the Wainui congregation for many years and then returned to the Netherlands again.

Wellington

Profession of Faith. As announced last week, Danielle van Dalen recently requested the opportunity to make a public profession of her faith. Unless there are any lawful objections, this will take place, Lord willing, in our morning service next Sunday.

From the Pastor. Congratulations to Richie & Marit Flinn on the safe arrival of a baby daughter, Penelope Ada, born on Wednesday morning.

Brooklyn Market and our church. A service and mission opportunity! We'd like to set up a monthly stall at the Brooklyn Market to be manned by church people.

The market is run on the last Saturday of every month, and the next one is on Saturday 25th September. It would be a good project to raise our visibility within the Brooklyn community as a group of people who love God, and an opportunity to build relationships and offer our help to anyone in need. Last year Emma, Marit and Lydia worked on this project by setting up a stall for ezeemeals and they ran free face painting for children. It would be great to build on this idea with a bunch of volunteers. We will need helpers to organise, to man the stall on Saturday mornings and to prepare materials for the day (eg face painting stuff). It would be great if there could be at least 7 or 8 people working on this project to share the responsibility. Please contact Sarah-K or Lydia if you'd like to help.

Letters to the Editor

This letter first appeared in the October issue, but not in its entirety, for which I unreservedly apologise to the writer. Ed.

Dear Sir,

Allow me to reply to the letter (July *Faith in Focus*) by bother Heersping – a committed exclusive Psalm-singer – who was responding to the article by the Rev Rogers (April *Faith in Focus*) informing the New Zealand Churches on the progress made with the new hymnal. (To refresh memories, all churches had been advised by the Psalter Hymnal Committee about proposed deletions and inclusions from the Blue *Psalter Hymnal* and more recently from the Australian *Book of Worship* for our new S.t.t.L.-Hymnbook (*Sing to the Lord*).

Brother Heersping's remarks on the "sentimental Jesus songs" of Charles Wesley, Watts, Cowper, Newton etc. upset me and others; they are incorrect, even insulting remarks.

We all know we are not an exclusive Psalm-singing denomination, we read, preach from the Old and New Testament Scriptures, teach from our confessions and sing our psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (the latter extended somewhat lately by requests from young people,

sanctioned by sessions and presbyteries ("In Christ alone" – "How deep the Father's love").

Brother Heersping – calling on Scripture and the confessions for his defence – also mentioned that the Lord Jesus, Paul and Silas, did not sing Hymns, only Psalms. Obviously, of course, they only had the Psalms, no hymns yet in their day, apart from the Old and New Testament canticles, songs and prayers by Moses, Hannah, Habakkuk, Jonah, Isaiah, Hezekiah, Mary, Zechariah, Simeon and the angel-hosts (refer Ex15, 1Sam2, Isa26&38, etc. etc, Luke 1&2.)

Neither did they sing metrical psalm-snippets (ex our psalters, set to ditties, or to wrongly harmonised and metered Genevan tunes, or to poor American-English doggerel poetry.

At present our churches not only have these psalms and the Old and New Testament inspired hymns/songs written by Christian authors/composers from the 3rd century until the 20th century; we are encouraged to sing all these synodically-approved-songs (respectively from "*Psalms & Hymns 1966*" – *Book of Worship* – Blue and Grey and *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* – our provisional *Sing to the Lord* Psalter.)

Labeling these hymns "sentimental Jesus songs" is just not right, it is

untenable and should be challenged. The irony is that Br. Gary's letter was printed right under an old (1675) beautiful German hymn "What God ordains is always right" (*Book of Worship* 365) based on Deut. 31:6 & 32:4, Rm 8:38,39, Hebr 13:5, John 8:12, 14:18, Eph 2:20 and Luke 1:79 – a truly biblical sermon – moreover the very first psalm in *Book of Worship* and *Grey Psalter Hymnal* – Psalm 1 – is from the hand of Charles Wesley Jr.!

We also know that neither hymns – "sentimental Jesus songs", nor the metrical psalms of Calvin, Bourgeois, Marot, Greiter, Goudimel or Maitre Pierre, nor any of the psalm-versions from our current psalters were sung by the Lord Jesus. David, Jesus and His disciples would have sung the Psalms in carefully "crafted" Hebrew parallel-rhymed poetry. We have lost that rhyme and poetical language, but, thanks to the Reformers, translating the Scriptures in the vernacular, we now have our Psalms, to sing in versified, metrical rhymes.

Our Psalters re-translated these French and Dutch psalms into English and American-English forms, sometimes producing beautiful, sometimes crooked rhymes, less solid tunes, only saving some Genevan melodies (40 in the Blue and *Grey Psalter Hymnal* many in the *Book*

of *Worship*, in "Psalms & Hymns 1966", a mere 12 in our new provisional Psalter Sing to the Lord.

In this process, already in the *Blue Psalter Hymnal* we lost most of our Reformed, Continental heritage in Psalmody, by having the Genevan psalms in iso-rhythmic settings (=all notes equal length, choral-like), losing the unique characteristic of Genevan psalmody, not only having "weight and majesty" (Calvin's insistence), the Church-Modality (no major or minor keys), but also the carefully worked relationship between Hebrew poetry and Calvin's original French metrical settings.

Not only have we lost all this Continental Reformed Psalmody, it was unfortunately replaced by psalms set to unmelodious, unharmonious, boringly un-solid tunes, borrowed from the United Presbyterian Church of America's repertoire of Sunday-School, Evangelical Revival and Temperance songs by Bradbury, Doane, Gabriel, Stebbins and the like; a repertoire, in my humble opinion marking a very low point in church music since the very beginning of the early church.

Unfortunately, again, it is this musical and ecclesiastical climate that our American and N.Z. Reformed churches grew up in and got accustomed to – all of us, pastors, elders, members and may be even some of our musicians. However, we were warned, long ago by the very Publication Committee of the first brown 1934 *Psalter Hymnal* of the Christian Reformed Church of North America in its preface to this *Psalter Hymnal*:

"Psalms and Hymns, like Bible should be studied diligently by those who lead in worship in order that our congregations may receive the largest possible benefit from its use; song services are often unnecessarily confined to a comparatively small number of selections. Many fine tunes remain undiscovered because they are not tried, while others are sung too often and at last suffer the contempt bred of excessive familiarity; the latter is true in particular of the less solid tunes, which often appeal at once to the ear. Furthermore, the preface stressed in its Statement of Principle for Music in the Church: "1/ The Music should be Liturgical 2/ the Music should be Beautiful".

In our new provisional psalter, *Sing to the Lord*, we have many new psalms

(texts and tunes), a discomfort to many, from the 2003 psalter of the Free Church of Scotland and recent Australian Presbyterian psalters; also giving many psalms to famous HYMN-tunes or to well known OTHER psalm-tunes, a concern to me and others.

Although we can understand Br. Gary's worry and fear about possible introduction of "unsound" hymns, it ill behoves him to be so judgmental at this early stage, before the hymn book, in consultation with all the RCNZ (Reformed Churches of New Zealand), is published, even if he thinks he should ring the alarm bells.

Humbly submitted.

Yours truly,

A Snoek

Dear Sir,

Some thoughts prompted by the Sep. 2010 articles by Sally Davey on family treasures, and by John Holtslag on the famed Victorian ballad, "The Lost Chord": The photograph of Mrs Davey's grandmother in her 1929 wedding-gown sparked off a memory from Nancy Mitford's very entertaining 1946 novel "The Pursuit of Love" – a tragicomedy bestseller which made her fortune. The heroine Linda's two bridesmaids, talking of how some women kept their wedding-gowns lifelong to be buried in, get the giggles at the mental picture of their sister's being laid out as an old lady in her short, hideous, but meanwhile modish 1929 gown. But poor Linda is still a beautiful young woman when, in

1940, after divorcing her first husband, marrying a second, and leaving him, dies in childbirth; though the baby son sired by her French lover survives.

Linda's life is a fine example for Christian wives NOT to emulate, should any of your readers care to read that book largely based on the doings of the Mitford Girls so notorious in the 1930s and later – a lot of proper heathens. For all I know the lastborn and last survivor of them, Deborah (born 1920), may still be alive as the Dowager Duchess of Devonshire; her sister Diana, Lady Mosley was aged 99 when she died some six years ago, at about the same time as Andrew, the 12th Duke of Devonshire. Anyway, Deborah wrote me a very nice little personal message on her thank-you card for what she termed my "delightful letter" of sympathy I'd sent her as the last of the Mitford Girls rather than as a bereaved peeress!

Re the poem set to music by Sir Arthur Sullivan, I wonder whether Adelaide Proctor may possibly have written two versions of the last verse. The Wellington Central Library checked, at my request, and said your printed text is correct by writing "... death's BRIGHT angel."; but I'm almost certain I've heard recordings such as Dame Clara Butt's impressive rendition, where, instead, "...death's DARK angel ..." was sung. The latter term does sound more likely for the whole melancholy ballad; but can anyone else elucidate?

H. Westfold, Reformed Church of Wellington

Ministers in focus



Pastor Andre Holtslag has served the Reformed Church of Dovedale since August, 2008.

After serving as a deacon and elder at the Reformed Church of Silverstream, he studied for the ministry at Mid-America Reformed Seminary, Chicago, from 2004-7, graduating with a Master of Divinity. He returned to New Zealand and served a one year vicariate with Rev. John Haverland in the Reformed Church of Pukekohe. He is married to Anita and they have five children.

RCNZ South Island Deacons' Conference, August 2010

The arrival

They came from all over -, Queenstown, Dunedin, Hamilton and all parts of Christchurch. What was the attraction to Bishopdale Reformed Church (BRC)? It was the inaugural RCNZ South Island Deacons' conference, August 2010!

The attendees arrived to a warm welcome from the Bishopdale deacons and were greeted with an arrival pack full of goodies and the smell of a wonderful meal being prepared for them by some fantastic helpers in the kitchen. Their taste buds were watering for what the conference had to offer: great fellowship, great speakers and great food! All to the glory of God!

As we sat down in a somewhat unusual table setup, Deacon John van Garderen led us in a devotion from Acts and Timothy and in a prayer for the meal. We sang a song from our Deacons' Conference song book, which would be one of the many songs that we would sing over the weekend. The organisers of the conference loved to sing!

The meal was upon us, and the food that was offered was one of the many great meals over the weekend to be enjoyed. After the meal we funneled into the auditorium of BRC, where we met others who were going to join with us in a thanksgiving service for the role of the deacon in our churches.

The thanksgiving service

We started the thanksgiving service appropriately in prayer and then in song. There was a thanksgiving prayer and an offering taken up for the work of the National Diaconate Committee. Then there was more singing and the reading of God's word. Pastor Andre Holtslag led us in a riveting message on the Good Samaritan and we were blessed by his proclamation of God's Word to us. We sang once again, and then the thanksgiving service came to a close. We were all looking forward to what tomorrow would bring.

The main day

It was very early for a Saturday, the attendees were asked to be at BRC at 8.00am. For some this was no problem,

and they even had time to comb their hair. However, for others, Saturdays are made for sleep-in's this was very 'visible' by their outward appearance! Nevertheless, we were greeted this time with the smell of a men's breakfast, that being, bacon, eggs, hash browns, toast, coffee, sausages and tomato sauce, fried up by some diligent men from within the church. There were, of course, some continental breakfast options available too, for those who dared to eat that in front of the others. Deacon Peter Heeringa led us in a morning devotion and we sang 'Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah' which was quite appropriate given what lay before us in the day ahead.

Drug-ARM

Before we headed into the auditorium for the main sessions, Jacob Couprie spent some time with us talking about his valuable work in Drug-ARM, which is a local mission here in Christchurch. This was informative, yet somewhat heart-breaking with what is going on in our city here in Christchurch and beyond. There is a desperate need for the freeing message of the gospel to go forth.

The first session

As we made our way through into the auditorium, we found our seats and

we were enthusiastic about the day in front of us. We began the first session with some songs and a time of prayer. The first session was led by Pastor Andre Holtslag, and during his session he gave us, firstly, an in-depth overview of the role of the deacon in our churches. Secondly, he informed us on serving the congregation. Thirdly, he addressed us on serving the congregational needy and finally, he instructed us on serving the neighbourhood. Overall the first session was a very challenging yet encouraging session, which ended, naturally, with some singing.

The second session

We reconvened for the second session after morning tea, and David Capill, a member of BRC and also a Funeral Director, was able to have an open discussion with us about his role. This was an energetic, but short session which involved many questions from the attendees, which made this period quite informative. In the short time David had to address us, he managed to cover most things about his role, but also answer some questions you have always wanted to ask a Funeral Director. David's dry sense of humour and his engaging openness to a subject that was generally not that 'lively' was appreciated by all.



Pastor Andre Holtslag leading the first session on Saturday Morning.



Deacons' from Bishopdale, Christchurch and Dunedin enjoying the dinner on the Friday evening before the Thanksgiving Service.



Br Arie Geerlofs leading the final session on specific case studies.

The Maranatha Homes Association

In between the second and third sessions, we had the privilege to be addressed by Hans Lebbink a representative of the Maranatha Homes Association. Mr Lebbink gave a short, informative address about the association and emphasised their mission statement 'to provide good quality retirement accommodation in a positive Christian environment.' We were thankful to hear of the faithful work of this association and we upheld them in prayer as they continue to serve in this important mission.

The third session

The third session was on Church

Administration. Arie Geerlofs, also a member from BRC, was able to speak on this subject with his 30+ years experience in this industry. Although this topic may be a somewhat laborious one, it proved to be a dynamic and vigorous discussion with many questions from the floor. This session ended up going over time, however the discussion was fruitful and more dialogue was continued over lunch.

The final session

We began the final session in song and prayer, as we had with every other session. The final session was somewhat of a mystery to the attendees as the organisers hadn't given much information on it. Therefore, the attendees

were on the edge of their seats with anticipation. This session once again saw Arie Geerlofs as scribe and moderator of our time together. Arie first outlined the deacons' mandate and then proceeded to present seven fictional 'case studies' that needed to be solved by the attendees. After each case study a suggested solution was given, which usually aligned with what generally was agreed to from the floor. This session proved to be helpful to all, especially those who were not in the diaconate, but aspired to be in the future.

Conclusion

As we finished up the final session we had some open question time for our speakers, and then we concluded the day with prayer and song. The attendees throughout the Deacons' Conference were able to mingle with each other and form new friendships and firm up old ones. We would encourage all the *Faith in Focus* readers, men and women, if there is a deacons' conference near you that you attend, as you will find this a most rewarding and informative experience.

May we all be encouraged and challenged by the words from our Saviour and Lord in **Matthew 25:37-40** "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Some of the audio from the conference is available on the following link <http://www.bishopdale.org.nz/?page=audio>

Graeme Zuidema

Deacon from the Reformed Church of Bishopdale