

# faith in focus

Magazine of the  
Reformed Churches  
of New Zealand

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*“You answer us with awesome deeds of righteousness, O God our Saviour, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas, who formed the mountains by your power, having armed yourself with strength, who stilled the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, and the turmoil of the nations.”*

Psalm 65:5-7

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**Editorial**

The first reading of the Civil Union Bill brought out concerns from many Christian groups. There is a strong view against devaluing marriage by this kind of relationship.

But there are also so-called Christians who support it. Amongst the plethora of emails I received there was one entitled: "Love doesn't discriminate so neither should the law." This was advocating that wherever possible we should get people behind the bill because it was finally giving a group of people in our society the rights others already had.

Well, the whole issue of rights aside, I couldn't resist the opportunity to enter into debate with this writer.

I responded to him using the 'Lloyd-Jones technique'. This is a form of debate the good Doctor used to show someone the direction they were going by bringing out other examples further along the same line. So, for this debate concerning same-sex relationship legalisation, I asked him what was to stop incestuous, paedophilic, and bigamist relationships, using his criteria. I ended urging him to read his Bible.

He got back to me, all right. But not to acknowledge what he really believed — which is, as the journalist Kerry Woodham said, that "truth is public opinion" — but to pull out the Bible verse regarding David's love for Jonathan being much more than his love for a woman. Perhaps it showed how sex-saturated this society has become that he couldn't take the text as it simply states. I replied by saying that no reputable commentator took that view and instead scripture in Genesis 19, Leviticus 20:13, and Romans 1:26f, was quite clear on God's view towards the detestable sin of homosexuality.

I asked him again to answer my questions regarding what stood in the way of all the other alternative relationships. And that's really where the rub lay. What is their bottom line? What standard do they apply to judge whether a relationship is right or not? They may well say they know homosexuals who have been together for 20 or more years. There are bigamists who can say the same. And no doubt incestuous relationships also. You see, if there is no definite moral code, if we have no framework against which to draw the line, there is no line!

To put it clearly to my much misguided "Christian" friend, I reworked his title to read on my reply, "Love does discriminate and so should the law."

\* \* \*

In this issue there is a submission from our Political Contacts Committee to the government. Next month we hope to have their submissions regarding the Civil Union and Relationship bills.

This government is certainly keeping to its socialist ideology as it brings back the 1950's 'Nanny State' in a whole raft of legislation. We have seen that in its changes to the field of education. And then there's that which they tried to get away with, but public pressure intervened. Yes, it would be great to have a change of government soon. But that doesn't mean we don't have to honour the government we have now. The Christians in the first century would have detested the immoral excesses and injustice of the Roman Emperor and his government, but they obeyed the law. They gave to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. That is what we should still do today.

*"In the long run,  
the public interest depends on private virtue."*

**James Q. Wilson**

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

# A crisis of conscience?

## *Christian lawyers defending guilty criminals*

**Daniel Flinn**

Lawyers today often must contend with a deal of stigma, much like used car salesmen. People mistrust or disapprove of lawyers, because their job is to argue on behalf of their clients, even if their clients are wrong or corrupt. Lawyers can be seen as a type of legal prostitute, selling their advocacy skills to whoever will pay for them. All the while, it seems these lawyers are required to maintain a kind of moral neutrality, never allowing their own opinions to inhibit their professional responsibilities.

Christians in particular have very strong views on the role of lawyers. This is because Christians must live their lives according to the highest ethical and moral standards. Thus it might seem there is little (if any) scope for a Christian to take up law as a profession, where this requires the adoption of so-called moral neutrality.

Accordingly, the following objection is often put to lawyers: 'What if you have to defend someone when you **know** they are guilty?' The classic situation often involves a rapist or murderer, who has confessed to the lawyer in private, but who nevertheless expects to 'get off', or in a really bad case 'get off on a technicality'. Any lawyer who contemplates defending such a criminal risks earning the revulsion of his or her peers, and will likely be viewed with a kind of horror and disgust by members of the Christian and non-Christian communities alike.

Christians might consider it more acceptable to work in a less controversial area like contract law, which seemingly doesn't involve such heated moral issues. But certainly, one might argue, a Christian should not seek employment in disreputable areas like criminal law or family law. This article seeks to address those concerns, and hopefully dispel some misconceptions.

### **The exception rather than the rule**

The first point to make in response is that the question as posed really is a worst-case scenario, because lawyers work in many areas that pose very few ethical dilemmas. By and large, people don't object to this. Their concern is much more limited, because it involves criminal lawyers facing a very specific issue in a unique set of circumstances.

The abundant focus given to this issue is largely due to the media's influence. No blockbuster movie is going to bore a viewer with details of a particular conveyancing transaction, or the finer points of limited liability. Yet nothing grabs the attention more than a contentious moral issue, which strikes

at the heart of justice itself. Scriptwriters and novelists tease out these issues time and again, to put their viewers and readers on the edge of their seats. So it is important to put this issue in perspective: most lawyers will not have to deal with this situation.

### **Not unique in this**

The second point to make is that law as a profession is not unique in having problems and ethical difficulties. It seems any profession can face similar questions. For example, what of the engineer who must decide how safe to make a building? A more expensive project will make the building safer, so that there is less risk of people being killed or injured in the event of an earthquake. But that consideration is weighed against the engineer's desire to make a profit. How safe is safe enough? An engineer must face ethical dilemmas, alongside many other professions.

That said however, the ethical problems faced by lawyers seem to be of a special kind. Few other professions require the individual to ignore or bypass his or her own personal opinions, in advocating a view that might be flagrantly offensive. So is there scope for a Christian lawyer to defend a guilty murderer?

### **Biblical precedence**

In examining this question, it is important to examine a third point: a murderer is not the only example of a guilty person in this world. Christians, of all people, can understand these concepts of guilt and punishment. By God's standards, we are all guilty, 'for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23). Not only this, but justice demands punishment, 'for the wages of sin is death' (Romans 6:23).

Biblical language actually goes further though, to explicitly use legal terminology, since Jesus himself acts as 'lawyer' in 1 John 2:1, 'We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous'. Jesus advocates before God, who is referred to in Hebrews 12:23 as, 'God the Judge of all'. On the cross, Jesus provides a defence for those crucifying Him, saying, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do' (Luke 23:34). Stephen, while being stoned, pleads similarly, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them' (Acts 7:60).

There are many other Biblical examples of those who defend guilty persons. One such example involves Moses' defence of the Israelites, who were guilty of making a golden calf (Exodus 32:9-14). God's original judgment was 'they are an obstinate people. Now let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them, and that I may destroy them' (32:10). But

because of Moses' advocacy, 'the Lord changed His mind about the harm which He had said He would do to His people' (32:14).

The interesting point here is that neither Moses nor Jesus simply make a flat plea of 'not guilty'. Instead, they actually provide arguments in favour of the guilty parties. Moses argues, 'Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, "With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth"? Turn from Thy burning anger and change Thy mind about doing harm to Thy people'. Again, Moses argues, 'Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants to whom Thou didst swear by Thyself, and didst say to them, "I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens"'. No-one can doubt the Israelites' guilt, but Moses nevertheless acts as their defence lawyer.

There are numerous other scriptural examples of similar advocacy being used in prayer to God. It follows that it is not necessarily wrong to defend or plead on behalf of, a guilty person. In fact, every time we ask God for forgiveness, we are pleading on behalf of a guilty person.

Even so, one might argue that it is not always **right** to argue the case of a guilty person either. A lawyer might present an overly-favourable perspective to the judge, which might result in an unfairly-lenient sentence. Surely, you might say, the object a lawyer is aiming for, is not consistent with what a Christian should aim for.

### **One small part to a whole mechanism**

But consider the fourth point: a lawyer is merely one small part of the entire legal structure, and there are many parts to that structure. For example, each criminal case has two sides: the Crown and the accused. And each side has legal representation: the prosecution and the defense. Also in every case, judges and juries make decisions on questions of law and fact. And every court has an appeal process, from the High Court to the Court of Appeal to the Supreme Court.

Now if any part of that structure does not perform its task correctly, there is scope for injustice to occur. A lawyer's role is to argue the client's case. If this is done poorly, the client might not get a fair hearing. If a judge's task is performed poorly, or a jury's, a person might be wrongfully convicted, or wrongfully found not guilty. The same issues apply to every Court in the appeal process.

On the other hand, if every part of the legal system functions correctly, this will assist in the pursuit of justice. If a lawyer provides a proper

defense for the accused, and if the prosecution puts a proper case against the accused, a judge and jury will have all the relevant facts, and can make the best decision possible.

### The right to a trial

Well and good, you might say, but a judge or jury's role is to discern right from wrong, which seems acceptable, whereas a lawyer's job is to disguise a criminal's guilt, which does not seem acceptable.

Here, it is necessary to make a fifth, and very important point: no single individual should decide the guilt (or lack thereof) of another. History clearly demonstrates the danger of dictatorships. Dictators typically make decisions that conform to their own individual desires and opinions, not to 'objective' notions of right and wrong. As a result, millions have died in ways that few would regard as just.

Of course, there is no fear that a single lawyer will perpetuate genocide if he or she exercises individual judgements about right and wrong. But there is a trap that many people fall into when they ask the question 'How can you defend a guilty person?'

In labelling the individual 'guilty,' one has assumed the role of judge and jury, and arrived at a guilty verdict before a trial has even taken place. The question is not 'whether you as a single human being consider this person guilty.' The issue is whether or not this person is **proven** guilty in the eyes of the law, beyond all reasonable doubt.

This is something that lawyers must understand when they act in their professional capacity.

They cannot reserve for themselves the luxury of deciding who should be punished and who should be discharged. It is necessary to leave those judgments to the greater system that exists around them.

But remember, this notion of 'shared responsibility' is not unique to the legal profession. All throughout life there are structures designed to spread responsibility. For example, in the church, the session does not (or should not) make decisions solely on the basis of the minister's opinion, or any particular elder's opinion. If a decision is made to excommunicate a congregational member, responsibility for that decision rests with the session collectively, not with any one person individually. Similarly, if a person is convicted of a crime, responsibility for that conviction rests with the legal system collectively, not with any one lawyer individually.

That's fine, you might say, no single person should decide if another is guilty, but what if the criminal **tells** you up front that they are guilty? You don't have to make a decision if the criminal just tells you.

Well, it might seem the obvious reaction is simply to march over to the court room and tell the judge what you just heard. The question

though, is whether the judge will believe you, or whether he **should** believe you.

### Beyond reasonable doubt

This is where it's very important that charges are **proved** and not just asserted. Any person can accuse someone else of a crime, and have any number of different reasons for doing so. Many accusations of guilt have been made against many innocent people. But if the penalty is life imprisonment, those people should have the right to remain innocent until **proven** guilty.

A mere accusation should not be enough to convict someone, and if an ordinary accusation is not enough to convict, how much less should the accusation of a **lawyer** be enough to convict! Convictions should be determined by the wider justice system as a whole.

This is important to remember when asking the question, 'what about someone getting off on a technicality'? A criminal might go free because of a technicality, but it is not right to first point the finger at a lawyer for having raised the technicality.

A much better port of call might be the legal system itself. Perhaps the law was deficient in that area, and this is the reason for the injustice. But this very injustice can and should be eliminated by common law evolution. That is, lawyers raise technicalities, and the law evolves to a more acceptable position, where the criminals are not 'let off'. But the legal system could not tighten like this without constant testing and prodding of the boundaries.

Aha, you say, but doesn't that mean that the legal system is flawed? How can Christians accept a flawed system?

### No perfect system

A sixth point replies to this question: no earthly system is flawless. We live in a flawed, sinful world, where every structure we meet contains problems, errors, and inconsistencies. As Christians, we cannot avoid all institutions that contain such flaws. The challenge that every Christian faces, is to work in God's Kingdom, notwithstanding the ramifications of sin. The existence of difficulties in the legal system is not reason enough for Christians to completely avoid criminal law as a profession.

But, the reply goes, wouldn't we actually **improve** our legal system by removing lawyers? Are lawyers really necessary?

### The right to a defence

A seventh point would say, yes, lawyers are very necessary in order to present each case in a clear fashion, uninhibited by a lack of legal understanding or eloquence. Without lawyers, many people would be disadvantaged: some people do not understand the law; some cannot express themselves clearly; indeed, some people are mentally handicapped. Yet it is important that none of these people are

prevented from expressing their case properly. That is the importance of having a trained professional to articulate any given side of a debate.

All right, you might continue, but it still seems unpleasant or wrong for a Christian lawyer to abandon his or her principles, in favour of the client's position.

### The lawyer is acting for the defendant

But consider an eighth point: the lawyer does not abandon his or her principles in advocating the client's position. The lawyer might disagree with the client, just as almost any professional might have a different opinion from the person employing his or her services. A doctor might advise his patient to have an operation, against the client's wishes. Or a patient might seek an operation that the doctor considers unnecessary. The doctor is not sacrificing his own principles in going ahead with the operation, nor is the lawyer agreeing with the client in providing a defense.

In that sense, there is no 'moral neutrality,' because the lawyer is not claiming to have a moral opinion on these issues. The lawyer's moral opinions might be very well-formed, but it is not a lawyer's role to provide the Court with his or her very well-formed moral opinions. Nor is it a doctor's role to usurp the patient's right to refuse medical treatment.

### Christ belongs in the court

All of these points have been made in support of our legal system and the job that lawyers must perform. However, after mentioning all of these, it is necessary to concede that there are still outstanding problems with the legal system, which the media is very good at dramatising. Christians in criminal law can potentially face these problems, and might have significant difficulty doing so. But Christians should not avoid the legal profession simply because these problems exist.

On the contrary, if we need Christians to work in areas that provoke comparatively few moral objections, like farming, teaching, the ministry, etc, how much more do we need Christians to work in areas of considerable moral contention? To leave criminal law to non-Christian lawyers, is to abandon some of the most important and pivotal areas of justice, to those who know nothing of what God says about justice.

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# The Charities Bill

## *A letter sent by our Political Contacts Committee*

June 1, 2004

To the Social Services Select Committee.

Dear honourable Members of Parliament,  
We represent the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, a Christian denomination with twenty one congregations. Our committee is a standing committee of the Synod of the Reformed Churches. We would like to present this submission in person.

The proposed Charities bill seeks to proscribe the work of the Christian church in ways hitherto unknown in New Zealand. Our primary concern is that this bill introduces a new intrusiveness by the state into the business and prerogative of the church. We will argue that the church should be distinguished from other charities and should not be subject to these proposed regulations. Several key themes need highlighting in an analysis of this proposed legislation.

The state has a responsibility to encourage the well-being of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The proposed bill endorses the state's unlawful interference in the role of the church.

Church funds spent on overseas missions may be reassessed for taxation purposes.

Churches are unique and should not be lumped in with other charities.

Other miscellaneous factors.

### **The State's care for the Church**

Firstly, the state has a responsibility to encourage the wellbeing of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Biblically, the church has no right to govern the state or rule over it in the manner the Roman Catholic Church endeavoured to do for centuries prior to the sixteenth-century Reformation. The Lord Jesus put it like this: "Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm (John 18:36)'. It is equally clear that the state has a role, nonetheless, in supporting true religion. The state is indeed to be a "minister for good" to "all", including the church (Rom. 13: 4) and therefore has a benevolent role to play with respect to the church. Christians base this responsibility on prophecies like that found in Isa. 49:23: "Kings will be your guardians, And their princesses your nurses". Most politicians believe that it is the state's responsibility to have laws in place that encourage the improvement and advancement of arts, education and various other cultural endeavours. This belief is founded on the idea that these endeavours are beneficial for society,

and it is unlikely that our government would deny that they do have an obligation to promote such institutions and endeavours. Since Christianity is a major contributor to the well-being, peace and security of society, civil rulers should likewise seek to support the prosperity of the church, a responsibility long recognised in our culture. While it is true that recent New Zealand governments have increasingly overlooked their obligations in this area (for example, the liberalising of Sunday trading and the like), this does not mean that the obligation has disappeared. We argue that government continues to have a responsibility to see the church prosper in its task of bringing the message of eternal salvation and of Christian ethics to New Zealanders. And it is for this reason that we believe that the state should continue to provide taxation exemption to the entire work of the church. However, we note with some real dismay that this bill may have the opposite effect and lead to government interference in the lawful mandate of the church.

### **Unlawful interference**

Secondly, therefore, the proposed bill endorses the state's unlawful interference in the role of the church. The Charities bill seems to operate on a false principle that governments know best and so can impose socialist values on God's ordained institution, the church. Whereas the church has been required by God to collect offerings as a part of the worship of God (1 Cor. 16:1-2), this bill wants to judge the church's use of these gifts to God and impose taxation on those gifts and therefore redistribute those freewill offerings of the Lord's money in ways not envisaged by Him or His church. It is one of the first principles of Scripture that the state has a responsibility towards the church *circa sacra*, but not *in sacra*. It is to the church that God has committed the oracles of God and it is to His appointed office bearers that Christ gives the mandate: "'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age' (Matt. 28:19-20)". Ephesians 4:11 is another text that affirms that Christ has committed the teaching function and government of the church to church officials and not the state. Only the church can define its role and how it goes about fulfilling its responsibilities towards God and society. No other body can, therefore, usurp the role of the church in its function in the world, because, quite simply, no other body or individual is competent to decide the mission of the church. This the church herself must decide on the basis of

revelation. It is precisely at this juncture where we see the danger of this Charities bill. Clause 15 gives authority to the state to decide who will be an officer of a charitable entity. It is not the state's proper function to appoint or dismiss official functionaries within the church. While the intent of the legislation is to exclude convicted criminals and the like from operating a charity, the church may conceivably want to appoint someone who has repented of past sin and been restored in the church to a position of responsibility. The authority to appoint officers in the church is delegated to the church by Christ and not to the state, therefore this Erastian idea should have no place in the relationship between church and state in New Zealand. The state will also interfere with the work of the church in other ways if this bill is passed in its present form, for the state is allowed to decide what the role of the church should be in promoting religion. This is obvious from the powers given the commission in clause 26, where the commission can decide what constitutes a charitable purpose. The "general policy statement" in the bill includes in the definition of a charity that it provide a clear public benefit. The state, however, can easily be blinded by prejudice and the tenets of the prevailing religion of secular humanism and decide that the church, on some issue, is not providing a public benefit at all. A church might, for example, consider the promotion of religion to involve the public criticism and denunciation of certain life-styles, such as homosexuality or prostitution, and it is not inconceivable in the present climate that a commission appointed by our current liberal government will take exception to this and thus remove such a church from the register. Furthermore, the commission reserves for itself



the right to publish details concerning the charitable entity and therefore potentially release aspects of the work of the church to the public which may compromise that work. The state also reserves the power to punish the church for non-compliance in clauses such as 24 and 58-61. While there is an appeal process, the commission will potentially involve a church in massive and prohibitive legal costs when she is called upon to defend her calling, teaching and function. However, the courts and the state have no lawful authority to proscribe or define the church's function, especially in the church's role in criticising sin or moral evil. The church must always reserve the right to proclaim the whole counsel of God (which will often offend those who reject the teaching of the Word of God) or cease to be a faithful church (Acts 20:27).

### Not only in New Zealand

Thirdly, church funds spent on overseas missions may be reassessed for taxation purposes. We are pleased that the bill does define a charitable purpose which "includes every charitable purpose, whether it relates to the relief of poverty, the advancement of education or religion, or any other matter

beneficial to society (clause 4:2)". The implication of this clause is that the advancement of religion is beneficial to society. However, the clause begins with the caveat that "unless the context requires", "charitable purposes" refer to the above mentioned activities. The context in clause 31 appears to limit the definition of "charitable purposes" to exclude the "advancement of religion" in certain circumstances. A donee can receive funds for "any charitable, benevolent, philanthropic, or cultural purposes within New Zealand", which could admittedly cover the advancement of religion. However, it is only in New Zealand. This means that a substantial part of the work of the church, the support of overseas mission organisations and individual missionaries, would be compromised financially, for overseas' recipients would not be able to qualify as donees. Presumably this would also mean that such monies would be reassessed for taxation purposes and the churches taxed on income used to support overseas' missions.

### Uniqueness of churches

Fourthly, churches are unique and should not be lumped in with other charities. Gifts to churches are not gifts to men or merely human institutions and organisations as is the case with other charitable agencies. Gifts to churches are rather gifts consecrated immediately to God Himself and are, therefore, His property. To tax the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is effectively to tax God Himself. The church, like the state and the family, is directly instituted by God. The church is also unique by virtue of her task. She is set apart by God to be faithful to Him and to call the world to repent and believe the message of the gospel God has committed to her. Her efforts, therefore, will not be measurable in the way other charities might be evaluated. Often her efforts will produce no obvious fruit and may even invite opposition and persecution. And yet in all of this she is faithful to her unique calling if the Word of God is proclaimed. Her role is not to be limited to giving material help to the poor, but includes giving spiritual help to the spiritually poor, with the far more profound eternal consequences such help implies.

### Other factors

Fifthly, there are other miscellaneous factors that add weight to our contention that this new bill is bad law which will add further distress to the churches of this land.

The bill allows the state to decide what sort of name a charity can use and can deny the privileges of a registered charity to an entity whose name the commission does not like. However, it is not the government's task to decide beforehand the worth of a Christian ministry or organisation. For example, the government could decide that a title such as the Society against the Promotion of Homosexuality is offensive and so exclude a charity on that basis. This is surely not the

government's prerogative. After all, the name may be important for advertising the function of the charity and fundamental to its purpose.

The bill does not protect the names of unregistered charities from being hijacked by other charities that might even seek to register their charity using the name of a church (this problem would be similar to the internet domain-name debacle).

The use of registration numbers is also a frightening way of manipulating charitable societies, for the state would be guilty of arbitrary discrimination if it approved a charity on the ground that the charitable entity displayed a registration number, while another did not.

There is also an inherent inequity in the bill which allows the commission to indemnify itself against potential liabilities while the officers of the charity are prevented from doing so (clause 66).

The bill also allows for the misuse of information collected from charities. In the Explanatory Note at the beginning of the bill, we read: "Information collected from the registration and annual return forms will also be used to help inform the development of social policy and help the sector to develop a deeper understanding of funding sources and trends. As a consequence, the Government will be in a better position to target policy interventions to areas of the charitable sector where a need for further Government assistance is identified". State interference and the gleaning of confidential information from charities should not be used by a government to set a policy agenda.

The suggestion by the bill, that registration is "voluntary", is at the least misleading, because a charity is forced to register if it is to enjoy the tax free status it enjoyed prior to the introduction of this proposed law.

We would add that there are sufficient laws in place to cover fraud and misappropriation of monies and that there is no need for new laws to regulate the function of the church.

### Our request

We therefore advocate and request that the select committee recommend to Parliament that Christian churches continue to retain their tax-free status we have always enjoyed and thus be exempt from the jurisdiction of this proposed legislation, reserving the scope of the bill to other charities external to the church. This we believe would ensure that the state does not stray into an unlawful domination of the church, her mandate and mission.

Sincerely,

G. Milne (Convenor)  
Members: G. H. de Jonge; J. Haakma;  
M. Munroe; Rev. E. Rademaker.  
(Political Contact Committee, Reformed Churches of New Zealand)

On 1 July 2004,  
our Lord took to Himself

## Teunis (Tony) DE REUS

beloved husband of Adriana (Anne);  
and dearly loved father, father-in-law,  
grandfather and Opa of:

Marieke and Brent Schmidt: Richard and  
Jasmijn, Renate, Olivia, Thomas, Petra;  
Peter and Jocelyn: Alexia, Seth, Rebekah,  
Hadleigh, Helena, Gabrielle, Kamryn;  
Winfred and Peter Balchin: Katrina,  
Andrew and Adriana Miller, Melanie and  
James Ure, Nadia, Annabel, Marcus;  
Anthony and Nicki: Isaac, Hannah,  
Joshua, Meghan;  
Judith-Ann and Gerard Perniskie:  
Mieneke, William, Anna-Sophia,  
Emmaleigh, Patrick;  
Kristina and Winston Posthuma: James,  
Jeremy, Timothy, Christopher;  
Jacqueline and Peter de Ruiter: Julia,  
Annaliese, Jacob, Samuel, Laura.  
Also dearly loved brother of Jacob  
(Holland), Nel (Holland), and Cobi  
(Rotorua).

Psalms 91:1,2.

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## The past in focus

# Happy 40th Anniversary Cadets and Calvinettes 1964-2004

It is with thankfulness to the Lord that we can mark this milestone in the life of the Cadet and Calvinette Movement in New Zealand.



Opening 1st camp. Gretna Green – Henderson Valley, June 1965, Queen's Birthday Weekend

According to "Trust and Obey" the Movement in New Zealand arose out of a growing concern to find spiritual, recreational and character-building activities for the growing number of children and young people in the churches during the early sixties. Much of the incentive and enthusiasm in the establishment of this ministry revolved around the Rev Frederick Channing.

### *First Club*

The first Club to start was Mangere (combined with Avondale) in 1964 although the first official club meeting was in February 1965.



13 February 1965 – 1st initiation



13 February 1965 – 1st initiation

### *First Executive*

The first Executive was held in Silverstream from 21-24 October 1966 and one of the main items on the Agenda was the uniform and whether or not we should have affiliation with the CCC Movement in America. The names of those present were Mr D Bouman (Christchurch), Mr J Kleinjan (Silverstream), Mr J

Brinkman (Mangere), Mr C Den Hartog (Hamilton), Mr Wilemaker (Avondale), Rev H.L. Hoving, Mr J Zeeland, Mr P Heeringa (Silverstream) and the Chairman was Rev F Channing. From then on Executives were held every two years.

**First Magazine**

When the Movement was in existence for nearly ten years an introduction issue of "Crusader-Touch" was published in June 1974. In it there was an invitation to Counsellors, Cadets and Calvinettes to send in articles for boys/girls stories, talent page, puzzle page, animal and pets page, nature study and bushcraft, games page, club news etc.



The first magazine was printed in August 1974. The cost was set at \$4.50 for 10 issues. It included all the above and Bible lessons by Rev B Gillard and Rev GI Williamson.

**Looking Back**

Cadets and Calvinettes remain an active Movement within our churches. In 1989 the Movement celebrated 25 years and following are some anecdotes from reports sent at the time.

\* **Silverstream** – Our first camp in the Moonshine Valley where on the very first night we had our flag stolen, and we thought we were miles away from civilisation! For many it was their first experience of a hangi style meal and was it good. We had wild pork that was donated and cooked by Morris Kleinjan. We all went to church at the end of camp smelling of wood-smoke as there were no showers at that camp site, only a very cold river!

\* **Christchurch** – One of the high points of the Movement in Christchurch was the fantastic camp held in Woodend in 1975. The turn-out was tremendous, from the whole of New Zealand, the weather was good except for a bit of flooding, and so it was an event to be remembered.

\* **Nelson** – Meeting together as young people and having real fellowship was one of the highlights. The cadets also had overnight campings in the Wairoa Gorge, this under the excellent leadership of the Rev Channing who also turned out to be a good cook. There were so many sandflies that every night the battle "Cadets versus sandflies" was fought and won by the Cadets after heavy fighting before everybody went to sleep.

\* **Hastings** – Fundraising early 70's style



Fundraising efforts in the early days

\* **Memories of An Avondale Calvinette** – "When I think back over my years as a Calvinette I have a lot of happy memories and wonderful moments to remember. So much of what I learnt I've been able to put into practice - not only in my role as a Councillor but my everyday life, e.g. babysitting, nappy changing, camping, swimming, cooking, Charm Course lessons - whenever I'm about to have my photo taken I think about those before/after photos! and above all my walk with the Lord has been greatly enriched."



**First National Camp**

This was held in Wainuiomata in January 1972 with over 112 Cadets and Calvinettes attending. At the time of this camp the girls were Cadets as well.



## World in focus

### Urban outfitters drop blasphemous product

After receiving complaints from American Family Association supporters, major clothing retailer Urban Outfitters has decided not to carry what One pro-family activist called the most blasphemous product he has ever seen. According to AFA Journal, Urban Outfitters had begun selling a refrigerator magnet set called "Jesus Dress Up." The set included a magnetic Jesus on the cross and a variety of clothing and accessories that could be added to the magnet to depict Jesus wearing a variety of costumes. Within 48 hours of an AFA action alert, Urban Outfitters received more than a quarter of a million e-mail complaints from supporters of OneMillionMoms.com and OneMillionDads.com, activist groups sponsored by AFA.

+ *American Family Association Journal, PO Drawer, 2440, Tupelo, MS 38803*

### Missing class pictures

Westminster Seminary is trying to complete a wall of each graduating class's "class picture." They are missing 1985, 2000, and 2001. If you have one of the "official" 8x10 photos with just the graduates or of the graduates with the faculty, please get in touch to arrange getting a copy made.

+ *Karen A. Steiner, Registrar, Westminster Seminary California (760) 480-8474 ksteiner@wscal.edu*

### German store's campaign to open on Sunday fails

German churches have welcomed a decision by the country's highest court reaffirming the law on shopping hours that does not allow Sunday trading.

The law limits opening hours on weekdays from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. and bans almost all shops from opening on Sundays. Exceptions are made on request for shops at airports, railways stations, gas stations and some tourist areas.

+ *Compass Direct, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana, CA 92799-7250*

### Employees refuse to distribute "Morning-After Pill"

A controversy is brewing in Alabama over employees at a state medical clinic who, for religious and moral reasons refused to distribute emergency contraception commonly known as the 'morning-after pill.' At least two of those who refused claim they left with no alternative but to resign their positions. The Christian Coalition of Alabama (CCA) reported it had been contacted by "at least a half-dozen" employees of the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) who claimed they were forced to distribute the pills or face disciplinary action.

+ *The Alabama Department of Public Health, 201 Monroe St., RSA Tower, Montgomery, AL 36104 (334) 206-5300*

### Greeks distribute Scriptures during Olympic Games

The Greek Bible Society plans to distribute thousands of Scriptures during the Olympic Games taking place 13-20 August in Greece.

The booklet "The Apostle Paul in Greece" contains five chapters from the book of Acts illustrated by the Greek artist Stamatis Skliris. The booklet is published in Greek, English, French, German, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian, Korean, Chinese, Japanese and Arabic.

50,000 copies are waiting to be distributed by Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant volunteers.

In addition, 20,000 New Testaments in modern English are to be handed out to athletes. There is also a New Testament in Modern Greek. It is meant to encourage Greeks to read the Bible.

Greece has eleven million inhabitants. 97.6 per cent belong to the Greek Orthodox Church. 1.3 per cent are Muslims, 0.4 per cent Catholics and 0.1 per cent Protestants.

+ *Greek Bible Society, 50 Em. Benaki St., 106 81 Athens, Greece*

### The 50 oldest PCA Churches

The Presbyterian Church of America was organized as a denomination in 1973, but one-

third of the congregations predate that year.

The 50 oldest churches in the PCA were all formed before 1827, and 18 of them were organized in the 1700s.

The oldest PCA church is Fairfield Presbyterian Church in Fairton, New Jersey, which was formed in 1680, 50 years before church number 2 which is Manor Presbyterian in Cochranville, Pennsylvania, which was formed in 1730. Numbers 3 and 4 are First Presbyterian, Waynesboro, Georgia, 1760, and First

Presbyterian, Schenectady, New York, 1760. Nine of these church buildings, and the parsonage of a tenth, are also on the National Register of Historic Places.

+ *PCA, 1700 N Brown Rd. Suite 105, Lawrenceville, GA 30043 (678) 825-1000*

### "The Tape Room" new catalogue

A new 86-page tape catalogue that includes sermons of Rev. Beeke, Elshout, Fintelman, Greendyk, Kelderman, Lipsy, Neels, and VanderZwaag is now available. Tapes may be borrowed or purchased for US\$2.00 each. For a free copy write to address below.

+ *The Tape Room, 540 Crescent NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503*

## Stamps For Mission

There was a great response to the advertisement in *Faith in Focus* for someone to take on the work of collecting and presenting for sale used postage stamps for the work of mission. Brother John de Vries, of the Reformed Church of Foxton, has taken on this work for the OMB.

This is what to do when collecting those used stamps for mission:

Cut (do not tear) the stamps from the envelope. Leave 5 – 10 millimetres margin of envelope around each stamp. Then either send them yourself to John, or give them to someone in the congregation who will act as a representative, to get them to him. He will sort them and present them to the dealer in Otaki, and the proceeds will be passed on to the OMB treasurer. You might like to volunteer to you session to be the representative for you congregation to collect the stamps and pass them on.

It is most important that you cut the stamps from the envelopes with a 5-10 mm margin before sending them to John. Imagine the work involved for John and Janneke if they had to cut tens of thousands of stamps themselves! Tearing the stamps is likely to damage them, and does not leave a neat appearance.

The address to send them to is:

**Mr John de Vries,  
110 McLeavey Road  
RD 20, LEVIN.**

Thanks again to everyone who volunteered for this work, may the Lord add his blessing to it.

*Chris Kavanagh – for the OMB.*

## Korean beheaded in Iraq wanted to become a Presbyterian minister

"Kim went to Iraq to work for Gana General Trading Co., a South Korean military supplier, last June to pay for seminary studies. He wanted to become a Presbyterian minister, Agence France-Presse said.

The unmarried Kim last spoke with his parents in April and was planning to return home next week to celebrate his father's 70th birthday."

+ *The Statesman Ltd., Rgd Office: Statesman House, Chowringhee Square, Kolkata, 700 001.*

## Wanted: Pre-1850 Dutch books

Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary would like to expand its collection of old, rare Dutch books for the Puritan Resource Center to be established in the new building. If you have Dutch books of Reformed persuasion printed prior to 1850 which you wish to donate or sell to the seminary, please call (616) 977-0599.

+ *Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, 2919 Leonard NE, Grand Rapids, MI 48525 (616) 977-0599*

## Unborn victims bill now law

On 4 April, 2004, President George W. Bush signed the Unborn Victims of Violence Act, making it a separate crime to harm or kill an unborn child during an assault on the mother.

+ *National Right to Life Committee, 512 10th St. NW, Washington, DC 20004 (202) 626-8820*

## Difference between Allah & Jesus

by Rick Mathes

Last month I attended my annual training session that's required for maintaining my state prison security clearance. During the training session there was a presentation by three speakers representing the Roman Catholic, Protestant and Muslim faiths, who explained each of their belief systems.

I was particularly interested in what the Islamic Imam had to say. The Imam gave a great presentation of the basics of Islam, complete with a video. After the presentations, time was provided for questions and answers.

When it was my turn, I directed my question to the Imam and asked: "Please, correct me if I'm wrong, but I understand that most Imams and clerics of Islam have declared a holy jihad [Holy war] against the infidels of the world. And, that by killing an infidel, which is a command to all Muslims, they are assured of a place in heaven. If that's the case, can you give me the definition of an infidel?"

There was no disagreement with my statements and, without hesitation, he replied, "Non-believers!"

I responded, "So, let me make sure I have this straight. All followers of Allah have been

commanded to kill everyone who is not of your faith so they can go to Heaven. Is that correct?"

The expression on his face changed from one of authority and command to that of a little boy who had just gotten caught with his hand in the cookie jar. He sheepishly replied, "Yes."

I then stated, "Well, sir, I have a real problem trying to imagine Pope John Paul commanding all Catholics to kill those of your faith or Dr. Stanley ordering Protestants to do the same in order to go to Heaven!" The Imam was speechless.

I continued, "I also have problem with being your friend when you and your brother clerics are telling your followers to kill me. Let me ask you a question. Would you rather have your Allah who tells you to kill me in order to go to Heaven or my Jesus/Y'shua who tells me to love you because I am going to Heaven and He wants you to be with me?"

You could have heard a pin drop as the Imam hung his head in shame.

Needless to say, the organizers and/or promoters of the 'Diversification' training seminar were not happy with Rick's way of dealing with the Islamic Imam and exposing the truth about the Muslim's beliefs.

[In Prisons Ministry]

## New Life La Mesa votes to withdraw from OPC and join PCA

In a vote of 134 to 63 (68 percent), New Life OPC voted on 20 July to withdraw from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. New Life had been an OP congregation for 40 years, and is the largest congregation of the OP in Southern California.

The reasons cited were differences over the work of the Holy Spirit, (their minister, Rev. George Miladin had been tried and convicted for error on this subject) and complaints regarding the Presbytery of Southern California being too narrow and litigious (particularly on worship issues).

+ *New Life Presbyterian Church, 5333 Lake Murray Blvd., 91942 (619) 667-5999*

## Police arrest Nguyen Hong Quang in Vietnam

Rev. Nguyen Hong Quang, a religious liberty activist and Mennonite church leader, was arrested on 8 June.

His home at the Mennonite church and office in Ho Chi Minh City's District 2 was ransacked, and officers seized personal papers, legal documents, money, computers and human rights files. Leaders of the Vietnam Evangelical Fellowship believe one or more of the four Mennonite church workers arrested on 2 March may have cracked under torture and provided "evidence" to arrest Quang. Quang has called attention to the illegal detention and abuse of the church workers still being held without formal charges more than three months after their arrest. Quang's legal training and ceaseless confrontations of injustice have led Vietnamese officials to identify him as a particularly tenacious adversary.

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

## Democrats back church IRS probe

The local Democratic Party is supporting an Internal Revenue Service investigation of an Arkansas pastor who is accused of delivering a pro-Bush sermon 4 July.

The Washington County Democratic Committee issued a statement affirming a complaint filed by Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, against Ronnie Floyd, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Springdale.

The Democrats say the sermon should be "investigated thoroughly."

The party, the statement said, "looks forward to the day when all citizens may vote their conscience without their political beliefs being dictated to them by politically involved religious leaders, regardless of denomination."

+ *Washington County Democratic Central Committee, PO Box 23243, Tigard, OR 97281 (503) 972-1201*  
+ *First Baptist Church, 709 Johnson Road, Springdale, Arkansas (479) 751-4523*

# The saints of ancient British history

## St Columba

### Patricia van Laar

How important in the church of ancient Britain was this man? Columba (521 – 597) is counted by many as the most important missionary to Great Britain. He was yet another Christian who was active before the arrival of Augustine in Britain in 597. An Irishman, he owed a debt,

through his ancestry, to the work and witness of St Patrick. Known as the Apostle of Scotland, founder of the great Celtic mission of Iona, Columba was the first British Christian apart from Patrick whom we know as a person. Most of our information comes from the '*Life of Columba*' by Adamnan, Abbott of Iona 679-704. This date was, of course, too late for the

testimony of eyewitnesses, but soon enough for reliable reports to be still available from the second generation. Adamnan obtained information from individuals and from records committed to writing by, he said, "our elders." But again, as is characteristic of medieval hagiography, it is sometimes necessary to dig beneath the marvels to uncover the historical facts.

### The royal family of Columba

Columba's father had the grand name of Phelim Mac Fergus, of the Royal O'Neill family. Fergus was descended from Niall, who had been chosen at Tara as High King of Ireland at the time of Patrick's slavery. Columba's grandfather, Conall, was baptised by St Patrick himself. His mother, Ethne, was also of noble blood, a descendant of a king of the Irish province of Leinster. History tells us that with this blood in his veins and his great intellect and physical attractiveness, the High Kingship would be within Columba's grasp, but he gave it up for a Greater King.

His birth is recorded as December 521, near Lough Gartan, County Donegal (Ulster). He is the first of the British saints to have a confirmed birth date. Ethne is purported to have dreamt, during pregnancy, of an angel telling her that her son would lead many to the Lord. In the custom of Irish royalty, this 'prince' was fostered out for upbringing, in his case to a priest named Cruithnechan. The priest's name means 'little Pict.' Did this indicate his origin, and have any bearing on Columba's later sphere of service?

Columba was a studious boy with great gifts, physical strength and attraction (tall and robust), and with a strong, pleasing voice, who developed acknowledged wisdom and speaking eloquence. He had a zeal for learning and a great sense of humour. Industrious with high moral ideals, from childhood he was interested in the faith, observing times of fasting and daily prayers even as a boy. He was "cheerful and joyful in the Holy Spirit," at first perhaps somewhat imperious, but eventually developing into an appealing and popular character.

Doubtless the priest who baptised and reared him had a profound influence on his life. Later as a youth he joined the Venerable Finnian of Moville, who taught him the Scriptures. Systematic study of Scripture led to a monastic life. It was apparently about this time he could have been chosen to reign, with a political future, but under Finnian he made a meaningful commitment to Christ. So began his monastic life at Moville, a link with Candada Casa and Ninian. In 556 he left this Finnian and joined another of the same name, Finnian at Clonard. Columba was ordained, and began to take an interest in missions.

### The place of monasteries

Here something should be said, briefly, about the development of monasteries. Monasticism

protest in support of the refugee, but the truth behind this battle is obscure. It is said that Columba was deeply involved, three thousand were slain, and that a remorseful Columba left Ireland voluntarily forever, vowing to win 3000 souls for Christ.

### An adequate motive

This Battle of Culdrebene in 563 is well known in Irish history as marking the time of Columba's departure, but not for being the cause of it. Unless further facts come to light by research, the truth of Columba's involvement, if any, will never be known. Adamnan mentions the excommunication, but does not record the reason, and only records in regard to his departure, that it was "a pilgrimage for the sake of Christ." This is a perfectly adequate motive and probability—



especially as he took twelve others with him. For this reason, it would be looked upon as a mission of evangelism. He did, in fact, return to Ireland several times on visits.

So in 563 Columba, aged 42, sailed for the sake of Christ on a 'pilgrimage' from Ireland to Britain. He landed at Whithorn (see account of St Ninian) but proceeded to Iona, where he established his own monastery. Iona, an island only five kms long north to south and 2 kms wide, lies off the coast of the southwestern tip of the Isle of Mull. To construct the monastery he towed oak there in coracles (little round, wickerwork, water-proofed boats like baskets in appearance, covered with hide, common in the use of the Celts of Ireland and Wales). The monastery grounds contained a wooden church with side chapel for private prayer, huts for the monks, an Abbot's lodge, farm buildings and a guest house, all enclosed within an earthen

rose at a period of peace, first in Egypt, 263 – 303, and grew rapidly, especially after 313, when the church's struggle with the Roman world was over. Like the general clergy, celibacy was common for a monk, but not obligatory. [So we still find today, surnames such as Monk, Bishop, Priestley, MacTaggart (son of the priest), Macpherson (son of the parson), Macnab (son of the abbot), etc.] It is important to realise that the early monasteries were not the hotbeds of corruption, immorality and wealth of later reputation, which were necessarily dismantled during the Reformation.

The monastic movement then was, if anything, the opposite—it was developed to escape the moral laxity which the fall of Rome induced. Under the Emperor Constantine (313 - 337) worldliness had come into the Church, and the easy acceptance of nominal Christianity. The monk stood in protest against this decline. "The world had accepted Christianity, but Christianity must reject the world." So the monasteries were founded to enable sincere believers to practise chastity, charity and poverty, to remove the distractions of the world, to give a haven, a refuge where the pen was wielded not the sword, and a place of quiet preparation for a Christian future. The monk of the earliest days represented the devoted minority upon which Christian expansion depended—he was the medieval missionary. The monasteries became centres where training was obtained and from which the missionaries ventured into the pagan world. They were increasingly important for their contribution to Scripture translation, keeping historical records, preservation of Christian manuscripts and literature, charity, education and the establishment of hospitals. Celtic monasteries, especially in the British islands, were independent of the Latin ones, developing their own customs and observances, but with the same Trinitarian doctrine. In the Celtic Church, the abbot was above a bishop. We should appreciate the contribution the monks made in the spreading and stabilising of the faith in the hearts of the ordinary people. It is a pity that the later centuries of corruption have also besmirched the name of the earliest monasticism.

Columba was shaken from his position at the monastic school by a dispute with the first Finnian (of Moville.) While on a visit, Columba copied, without permission, a Psalter owned by Finnian, who on finding out, demanded to be given the copy. Columba was ordered by the High King to return it to Finnian. About this time, Columba was excommunicated, unjustifiably it is thought, but was quickly restored. The reason for the excommunication is a subject of conjecture. It is sometimes laid to the above event, together with a second dispute of Columba with the authorities, caused by the arrest and execution of a fugitive to whom Columba had given sanctuary. A serious battle occurred at Culdrebene, reportedly as a

wall. Excavations on Iona between 1956 & 1959 confirmed the accuracy of this description.

The monks were active in fishing and farming, and in evangelising. There are also traces of medical work and education undertaken by Columba and his monks. A Cycle of Worship in the church, typical of monastic life, was begun. Occasional extra instinctive calls to prayer were made, some in the middle of the night, such as when a monk in Ireland was in danger and the Holy Spirit intuitively placed prayer for him in the mind of Columba. This is plausible, even though it is clear Adamnan in the construction of his books wished to paint him as a saint with marvels that are sometimes questionable. It has been attested in modern times, within the experience of Christians, that urgent prayer has been raised in a similar manner for God's saints, especially missionaries, in times of grave danger.

### Expansion from Iona

The monks founded branch monasteries (mission stations) on Tiree and in other islands, and at Loch Awe on the mainland. Prayer was made regularly for the dangers of boat travel, from wild animals and sea creatures (one at Loch Ness, the earliest reference to a Loch Ness monster!) and from men. The monks faced adventurous sea journeys whenever they left their island base, danger from coracle travel, including at least once by Columba himself, and an authentic encounter of one of his men with the strange creature at Loch Ness.

Columba's own first journey was to King Brude, whose fortress was where Inverness now stands. This took him with his coracles, which being light could easily be carried overland, through the lochs that form inland waterways across the country. He gained entry and made a favourable impression on the king, whose attendants were Druids. Brude had gained power through battle over large areas of the land, including 'I' (the Gaelic name of Iona), so his approval was important to Columba's being able to remain at Iona.

Although Patrick in Ireland had found that in its tribal society you could not approach individuals one by one, the approach there being made through the chief or headman, there was no suggestion of mass tribal movements in the spread of the gospel in the same way here, but of lone individual or family conversions. Some were recorded by Adamnan as 'marvels', yet many of them are also quite plausible. Columba, Admanan tells us, used his marvellous voice, both speaking and singing, which could be heard at a great distance, to tremendous advantage in the furtherance of the gospel. The great appeal of the faith was the message of life beyond death.

Amongst the monks were Saxons and a Briton, as well as those who came with him from Ireland. Columba had to preach using two Irish Picts as interpreters. For thirty-four years

he lived and worked at Iona, while the monks and he spread the news of the Saviour in the northern regions. It is fair to say that although the men of Iona were by no means the only evangelists working in Scotland, they were by far the most influential. Several times Columba visited Brude, and also established relations with Brude's successor. The mission introduced by Ninian amongst the southern Picts welcomed the strengthening brought by the contact with Iona. The Celtic mission of Iona from the time of Aidan (635) on, was agent for converting parts of England too.

Columba died at Iona on June 9, 597, at the age of 76. Admanan tells us that in May he knew death was approaching and asked to be taken to see his monks once more at work

in the fields, so they drove him round in an ox cart. He looked forward to his "Sabbath rest".

Columba left behind a legacy, not only in the results of evangelisation, but much that is credited to him with good reason: literature of his own, manuscripts, beautiful copies of others' works. (Some believed to be his are still existing in libraries today.) Poetry is of doubtful authorship, but one at least is accepted with reasonable certainty as his. This is a Latin acrostic, "High Creator." A talented man, with somewhat imperious political style as a result of his aristocratic background, subdued by the Holy Spirit to a beloved, kindly, compassionate man of God, a true Christian leader. We may stand in awe of such a man.

The awe rightly belongs to his God.

## A feminine focus

### "All things bright and beautiful..."

#### The life and hymns of Mrs Cecil Frances Alexander

#### Sally Davey

This lady, one of the most famous woman hymn-writers of the nineteenth century, is also one of the best exponents of the art of hymn-writing for the edification of believers. As a lover of small children and a Sunday School teacher, she wrote hymns so that, by singing, they might learn the great truths of Christianity. Her motivation is outlined by the words of Colossians 3:16: "*Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*"

Yes, teaching through song was Mrs Alexander's aim in penning the famous children's hymns that bear her name. We have all sung "There is a green hill far away", "All things bright and beautiful" and "Once in royal David's city" – her three best-known hymns—but it is only when we understand something about their author's life and thinking, and the desires which gave rise to them, that we can truly appreciate their value. Let us begin.

#### Her upbringing

Cecil Frances Alexander (known to her friends and family always as Fanny, an abbreviation for Frances) was born and spent all her life in Ireland, a part of what we might call Anglo-Irish society, the descendants of Englishmen and Scotsmen who had settled there over the centuries and who owned large estates throughout the island. Her family, the

Humphreys, were keen and active members of the Church of Ireland (the Anglican church in Ireland), and this is the church she and her husband served through their long ministry. Her father had connections with the family of the Marquis of Abercorn; and Fanny's unusual name is that of the sister of the Marquis at the time she was born. In her childhood the Humphreys had close friendships with a number of aristocratic families in their neighbourhood, and Fanny became the lifelong close friend of Lady Harriet Howard. Harriet was an intelligent, well-read girl who also, like Fanny, became deeply interested in the gospel. Both lived lives of active, persevering Christian service.

Probably most important among the influences leading Fanny to saving faith as a girl was the evangelical movement that swept through Ireland in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. This had a strong effect on the Church of Ireland, and particularly on the five aristocratic families with whom she grew up. They also had influences from the Church of Scotland, and this was seen notably in such things as care in observing the Lord's Day. These families took the trouble to free the day for their servants as much as possible, and for this reason seldom invited guests home for lunch. They also walked to church rather than have their coachmen and stable boys put to extra work.

#### Her commitment

While she was still young, a number of Fanny's

friends died of tuberculosis—painful, lingering deaths—and this gave her a solemn, almost melancholy fear of losing those close to her. It also deepened and strengthened her love of Christ, and her trust in Him as her closest friend in time of need. Her growing knowledge of biblical truth was also beginning to give her a more solid foundation with which to meet, and learn from, the painful trials of life. From her teenage years she also taught Sunday School classes for poor children, many of whom had little other opportunity to learn even the basics of reading and writing. She also taught classes in the Prayer Book catechism to boys and girls in the local weekday schools. (It is an interesting fact repeated by the author of Fanny's biography that until the 1970s Anglican young people preparing for confirmation memorized this Catechism, and also the Ten Commandments). A few years later, she hit upon the idea of writing simple poetry which could be recited aloud, or sung as hymns, to help explain Christian truths and fix them in her pupils' minds.

She arrived at this idea in part through her intimate knowledge of John Keble's immensely famous and popular book of poetry (many used as hymns), *The Christian Year*. It was written to provide a meditation, in poetic form, for every Sunday and church feast of the year. Some have, through their merit, made their way into most well-known denominational hymnals: in our *Psalter Hymnal* we have "Sun of my soul" (No. 472). Other much-loved examples are "New every morning is the love" and "Bless'd are the pure in heart". *The Christian Year* was in print throughout the nineteenth century, and became a household word. Keble, an Anglican vicar, one of the founders of the Oxford, of the High Church movement, was also a distinguished poet who had for a time been Professor of Poetry at Oxford University. Fanny and her friend, Harriet, loved this work so much, and knew it so thoroughly, that in their teens they knew nearly all its 300 pages by heart. So when she was in her mid-20s, and looking for ways to instill the truths contained in the Catechism into her children's hearts, she seized upon the idea of producing a junior version of *The Christian Year*. Her collection of hymns was entitled *Verses for Holy Seasons*, and she dedicated it to John Keble: "To the author of *The Christian Year*, this attempt to adopt the principles of his immortal work to the exigencies of the schoolroom, is inscribed with feelings of reverence and respect, by one of the many thousands who have profited by his labours."

### Her publishing

This children's hymnal, which was published in Fanny's 30<sup>th</sup> year, included her three most famous hymns, "There is a green hill far away", "All things bright and beautiful" and "Once in royal David's city". It is an interesting exercise to see how this poetess fashioned verse to



Mrs Cecil Frances Alexander

explain the articles of the Nicene Creed (part of the Catechism) to children.

Firstly, "I believe in God the Father, Maker of heaven and earth", (which the Catechism goes on to teach — "What dost thou chiefly learn in these articles of thy Belief?" Answer: "First, I learn to believe in God the Father, who hath made me, and all the world.")

Here is Fanny's hymn, so evocative of the rural beauties of the Ireland in which she lived:

*All things bright and beautiful  
All creatures great and small,  
All things wise and wonderful,  
The Lord God made them all.*

*Each little flower that opens,  
Each little bird that sings,  
He made their glowing colours,  
He made their tiny wings.*

*The rich man in his castle,  
The poor man at his gate,  
God made them high or lowly,  
And order'd their estate.*

*The purple-headed mountain,  
The river running by,  
The sunset and the morning,  
That brightens up the sky.*

*The cold wind in the winter,  
The peasant summer sun,  
The ripe fruits in the garden –  
He made them every one.*

*The tall trees in the greenwood,  
The meadows where we play,  
The rushes by the water,  
We gather every day;*

*He gave us eyes to see them,  
And lips that we might tell  
How great is GOD Almighty,  
Who has made all things well.*

And this is how the words "Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary" - which teaches about "God the Son, who hath redeemed me, and all mankind" - are explained, in verse:

*"Once in royal David's city  
Stood a lowly cattle shed'  
Where a mother laid her baby  
In a manger for His bed;  
Mary was that mother mild,  
Jesus Christ her little child.*

*He came down to earth from heaven  
Who is God a LORD of all,  
And His shelter was a stable,  
And His cradle was a stall;  
With the poor, and mean and lowly,  
Lived on earth our Saviour holy.*

*And, through all His wondrous childhood,  
He would honour and obey,  
Love and watch the lowly maiden,  
In whose gentle arms He lay;*

*Christian children all must be  
Mild, obedient, good as He.*

*For He is our childhood's pattern,  
Day by day like us He grew,  
He was little, weak and helpless,  
Tears and smiles like us He knew;  
And He feeleth for our sadness,  
And He shareth in our gladness.*

*And our eyes at last shall see Him,  
Through His own redeeming love,  
For that child so dear and gentle  
Is our LORD in heav'n above;  
And He leads His children on  
To the place where He is gone.*

*Not in that poor lowly stable,  
With the oxen standing by,  
We shall see Him; but in heaven,  
Set at God's right hand on high;  
When like stars His children crown'd  
All in white shall wait around.*

### The doctrine

Notice the depth of truth about Christ packed into these verses. It is certainly not the case that small children are unable to take in much doctrine! (It is easy for them – especially when it is put to verse, and sung). We find here the facts about the circumstances of Jesus' birth; His divinity; all the humility and giving-up of self that the incarnation encompassed; His sinlessness as a child and man; His empathy because He was fully man (see Hebrews 4:14-15); the redemption He won as "the first-fruits" of those who would follow Him to their rest in heaven; and His reign in heaven. This hymn is generally sung at Christmas; and indeed became exceptionally famous worldwide as a Christmas hymn since its adoption as the opening (processional) hymn at the service of 9 lessons and carols held every year at King's College, Cambridge University. (Millions, perhaps including you, listen to it every year on the radio).

The third of these hymns, "There is a green hill far away", explains the words "*Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried*". Here are the words in full:

*There is a green hill far away,  
Without a city wall,  
Where the dear LORD was crucified,  
Who died to save us all.*

*We may not know, we cannot tell  
What pains He had to bear,  
But we believe it was for us  
He hung and suffer'd there.*

*He died that we might be forgiven,  
He died to make us good,  
That we might go at last to heav'n,  
Saved by His precious blood.*

*There was no other good enough  
To pay the price of sin,*

*He only could unlock the gate  
Of heav'n and let us in.*

*Oh, dearly, dearly has he loved,  
And we must love Him too,  
And trust in His redeeming blood,  
And try His works to do.*

Here, too, there is much truth. Fanny writes of the place the Lord was crucified—outside the city walls of Jerusalem—and of the fact that it was to save us from our sins. She writes that His suffering was beyond our full comprehension (after all, the worst suffering was the separation from God). He died that we might be made right with God, and that we might enter heaven. Notice the emphasis in verse 4 on His being the *only* sufficient sacrifice (the only one "good enough to pay the price of sin"). And notice the theme that He died to save us "for good works" – or, to put it in the categories of the Heidelberg Catechism, we are saved to do works of "gratitude" (see verse 5). There is a lot there—a lesson that we should never underestimate the ability of even small children to absorb important truths. And Fanny was writing these hymns for even the poor, almost uneducated in any way, children of rural Ireland in the days of the potato famine! If they can learn doctrine from singing hymns like these, surely ours, who have vastly superior privileges of education in comparison, can as well.

### Her marriage

Fanny wrote all this even before she was 30; and in fact, the age of 30 was somewhat of a turning point in her life. Soon afterward, she met William Alexander, the young Church of Ireland clergyman whom she was to marry at the age of 32. Fanny had long been a natural friend of clergymen and their wives. She was intelligent (self-educated, but well-read); and clergy tended to respond gratefully to the mixture of intelligence and piety which young women like Fanny and her friend Harriet possessed. As her biographer, Valerie Wallace, comments, "She seems to have had some quality which ensured a respectful hearing for her opinions, serious answers to questions she might pose, and encouragement and blessing on every charitable effort or teaching project that she undertook. The list of rectors, vicars, canons, deans and eventually bishops and archbishops who were pleased to count themselves as her friends is astonishingly large."

### Her work

Fanny was certainly busy in the church. In addition to teaching Sunday School and catechism she was involved in a wide range of works of mercy. Among other projects, she founded a local committee of the Church Missionary Society. She had many relatives in England, and visited her aunt and uncle in Winchester often. While there, she became

enamoured of the quiet and tranquility of the cathedral community. Visiting her aunt in Scotland, who had married an eminent Edinburgh lawyer, she was introduced to the literary circle that had included Sir Walter Scott before his death. Like many, many other women of her background and interests, she became captivated by the writings of the leaders of the Oxford movement (like John Henry Newman); and it is not surprising that the man she married, William Alexander, had become so captivated as well, while a student at Oxford University. William was 6 years younger than Fanny; a gentle, affectionate, very likeable man, whose parents were certainly somewhat alarmed at the thought that their son had been "ensnared" by a strong-willed older woman.

### Her family

Fanny was clearly a woman of strong character. It is possible she dominated William a little at first. Certainly, she was very active in organising his parish work for him. She recorded all the households, including particulars about Sunday School attendance, confirmation and the taking of Communion. She herself seemed tireless in visiting—in good weather and bad, usually on foot—and she even visited sick and impoverished Roman Catholic neighbours. Apparently, the local priest did not mind this. But as her own children were born, she was more often confined to home; and her greatest pleasure was in reading, writing, and discussing poetry and other literature with William, who was also a poet. At this time Fanny began to write hymns for adults – "Jesus calls us o'er the tumult" (No. 459 in the *Psalter Hymnal*) is one of these.

### Her particularism

Fanny took enormous pains over the choice and arrangement of words in her hymns. She was strongly opposed to other people changing the original words of the writers of hymns. As William reported of her after her death:

*"She was impatient generally of a supposed verbal improvement suggested from without. 'You see what I want to say is just so-and-so, not something else. But your suggestion does say something else.' Partly for this reason, she disliked, with amusing intensity, changes made in hymns to suit a fitful fancy or to humour party spirit. She looked upon the thing as literary sacrilege—sacrilege against the dead in that which was best and noblest of them."*

Sadly, even Fanny's words have suffered at the hands of amenders since the time of her death.

### An impoverished society

Rural Ireland at this time (the 1850s and 60s) was not only a beautiful place. It was also a

terribly poor and sad place. It was the time of the potato famine—caused by a disease causing potatoes to rot in the ground. Being the staple food of the rural Irish, there was famine; and consequently millions either died or emigrated to the United States and England. Many a mother was left longing for her children. William, though well-educated and from a comfortable family background, was not a proud man, and these years found him caring unstintingly for the poor, taking comfort to the dying, and visiting the sick and bereaved, usually accompanied by practical gifts from his wife. William was a much-loved pastor.

### A blessed marriage

He also had a wide circle of friends, many of them in high places ecclesiastically; and as a consequence was made Bishop of Derry and Raphoe at the unusually young age of 43. He was considered to be a fine preacher; and was

in demand to speak in different churches in England—even in Westminster Abbey. This began a new phase in Fanny's life, with William's frequent absences from home. A solicitous mother, she was anxious about her children's health (perhaps dating from the early death from TB of some of her childhood friends); and usually stayed at home herself. She was also fond, very fond, of settled routines, and peace and quiet. Perhaps it drew them apart a little, and they may have shared more of William's life as a churchman had she travelled with him; but their marriage was a happy one, even though their times of enjoying poetry together were almost gone.

Together, they were good parents. William was particularly good at teaching the faith to his children in family prayers. Each morning before breakfast family prayers were held. As soon as each child was old enough he or she joined in, and afterwards received a short

lesson/discussion on the bible passage from William. This practice continued even after the children were grown up. When their friends visited, they were included in the discussion. Fanny herself was a resourceful teacher, and she used every opportunity to teach the children lessons about Christian behaviour as they came up in daily life. Some of them she committed to verse, such as one poem on kindness to animals:

*"God loves the heart where kindness  
And pitying love have place;  
From them who wantonly oppress  
His creatures in their helplessness,  
He turns away His face..."*

William and Fanny could certainly be said to have taken the teaching of Deuteronomy 6 to heart in their daily dealings with their children.

Mrs Alexander certainly believed in the ability of children to learn important truths through song. Here is a report of a church today which also does; and is teaching their children to understand, and love, the great hymns of the faith.

### Hymn singing goes Junior

In contemporary evangelical Christianity, hymn singing is fast becoming one of those things you do at funerals and at the occasional traditional wedding. A church group in America, aware of this trend, decided that they would do something to keep the hymn tradition alive and well in their congregation.

Tenth Presbyterian in centre city Philadelphia has an attendance of about 1500 people every Sunday morning. The congregation is mixed both racially and economically. The church is renowned both for its fine preaching (presently pastored by Dr Phil Ryken, previously pastored by Dr James Montgomery Boice), and its great music tradition. In order to keep the latter alive and well, a group of highly trained musicians in the congregation decided to start up a programme called "Tenth Schola Cantorum" (Tenth Singing School).

Tenth Schola Cantorum was advertised as a programme designed to develop children's musical literacy for the purpose of participating in individual and corporate worship through music. This was to involve the development of children's singing through training in correct vocal production, and an appreciation of the roles of music in worship. The programme was specifically targeted at deepening the children's comprehension and love of hymnody. It was advertised as being available for children aged 3-10, with training taking place on Sunday mornings and evenings.

The organisers expected that the idea would catch on, but were most surprised when over a hundred children turned up on the first day! Over the next weeks and months these numbers continued to attend and the progress the children made was beyond expectation.

### Memorisation

Aside from teaching music theory, sight singing and vocal production, the programme organiser (Dr Kris Kuhlman) included

hymn memorisation. The idea was that the children would be taught a hymn a month. A compact disc of the accompaniment for these hymns was handed out free of charge to each child, along with a booklet of the music and words. The children could listen to the disc at home or in the car and practise singing along. If at the end of the month they could sing the set verses of the hymn from memory (the number of verses required varied according to age) they would receive a small prize. Well, the hymns were indeed learnt and the prizes flowed!

And did they enjoy singing hymns? Of course they did. Our hymn tradition is rich with beautiful words and melodies. These can be enjoyed by one and all, including the children who will be deciding what is to be sung in tomorrow's church.

### At a local Sunday School

Perhaps aspects of this concept can be introduced into our churches too. At our local Sunday school, for instance, we have introduced the concept of a 'hymn of the month'. We focus on singing a particular hymn for about a month, teaching the children what the words mean and a little about the background of the hymn writer.

If you are privileged to have a Christian school in your area, how about suggesting that they include education about the hymn tradition into their music programme? After all, one writer has commented that the history of Western music properly begins with the music of the Christian church. Hymnody relates to the areas of music, church history, general history, language, and other areas of study.

### At your home?

On a smaller scale, how about including the singing of a hymn at family devotion time. Ask your children what they think the words of the hymn mean, and give them explanations when they are a little off track. And of course, you can always sing hymns together when you're travelling in the car or working in the garden, even without a CD to sing to.

Such moves to educate our young may help to keep the good theology of our Reformed faith alive and well for the generations to come.

**Andy Vosslander**

**St Patrick's Breastplate**

During the years William was Bishop of Derry and Raphoe she wrote one more hymn of particular note. This is known as "St Patrick's Breastplate". Patrick, as you may know, was the Celtic Christian who first took the gospel to Ireland in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. This "breastplate" was his statement of the Christian faith which, according to tradition, he chanted as he walked the distance between his camp and the angry pagan court at Tara. He had offended the King, and while he was determined to see the people believe, he knew that they could just as easily fall on him and kill him before a word was spoken. Perhaps they heard him chanting this creed as he approached—and perhaps curiosity stayed their hands long enough for the great preacher to capture their attention. Here are a few of his words (there are many more verses):

*I bind unto myself today  
The strong name of the Trinity,  
By invocation of the same,  
The Three in One, and One in Three.*

*I bind this day to me for ever,  
By power of faith, Christ's incarnation;  
His baptism in the Jordan river;  
His death on Cross for my salvation.  
His bursting from the spiced tomb;  
His riding up the heavenly way;  
His coming at the day of doom:  
I bind unto myself today.*

*I bind unto myself today  
The power of God to hold and lead,  
His eye to watch, his might to stay,  
His ear to hearken to my need;  
The wisdom of my God to teach,  
His hand to guide, His shield to ward,  
The Word of God to give me speech,  
His heavenly host to be my guard.*

*Against the demon snares of sin,  
The vice that gives temptation force,  
The natural lusts that war within,  
The hostile men that mar my course –  
Or few or many, far or nigh,  
In ev'ry place, and in all hours,  
Against their fierce hostility,  
I bind to me these holy powers.*

*Against all Satan's spells and wiles,  
Against false words of heresy,  
Against the knowledge that defiles,  
Against the heart's idolatry,  
Against the wizard's evil craft,  
Against the death-wound and the burning,  
The choking wave, the poison'd shaft,  
Protect me, Christ, till Thy returning.*

*Christ be with me, Christ behind me,  
Christ before me, Christ beside me,  
Christ to win me, Christ to comfort and  
restore me,  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,  
Christ in hearts of all that love me,  
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.*

*I bind unto myself the name,  
The strong name of the Trinity,  
By invocation of the same,  
The three in One, and One in three,  
Of whom all nature hath creation,  
Eternal Father, Spirit, Word,  
Praise to the Lord of my salvation:  
Salvation is of Christ the Lord. Amen.*

This, as I'm sure you will agree, is quite a dramatic and stirring account of the faith, shaped to steady the courageous missionary as he approached to court of the pagans. It is also a tribute to the long history of the Christian church in Ireland; to which Fanny was so passionately devoted.

**Her passing into glory**

Fanny lived until she was 73, when she died suddenly of a massive stroke in her home. The same year, William was made Archbishop of Ireland. She is partly remembered for being the wife of a very influential figure in the Anglican church in Ireland. But far greater even than that is the ongoing recognition the Christian church throughout the world has given her for the fine hymns she wrote, throughout her life, for children—and for adults. Her clear purpose, and the successful execution of it, has given us a remarkably apt model for teaching the faith through song.

**Books in focus****Debating the Federal Vision**

A review of *The Auburn Avenue Theology, Pros and Cons: Debating the Federal Vision*. The Knox Theological Seminary Colloquium on the Federal Vision. Edited by E. Calvin Beisner. Fort Lauderdale, Florida: Knox Theological Seminary, 2004. 331 pp. \$16.00.

The talks given at the 2002 Auburn Avenue Pastors' Conference (AAPC) at the Auburn Avenue Presbyterian Church in Monroe, Louisiana, raising questions about the orthodox Reformed doctrines of justification by faith alone, the covenants, election, perseverance, and the sacraments, have become well-known subsequently throughout the Reformed community. The book we are reviewing here consists of the papers given on these and other related subjects, delivered at a specially called colloquium (hosted by the editor, Dr. F. Calvin Beisner) in Southern Florida during August 2003. The papers were exchanged and discussed by seven of the Auburn Avenue Theology/Federal Vision proponents, and by seven of its critics. The former are John Barach, Peter J. Leithart, Rick Lusk, Steve M. Schlissel, Tom Trouwborst, Steve Wilkins, and Douglas Wilson. The critics of the Federal Vision are Christopher A. Hutchinson, George W. Knight, III, Richard D. Phillips, Joseph A. Pipa, Jr., Carl D. Robbins, Morton H.

Smith; and R. Fowler White.

In a short review of this publication, it is impossible to go into a detailed analysis and criticism of the views expressed by the Federal Visionists on the vital doctrinal matters of the Trinity, the covenants, justification, election, the sacraments, perseverance, and the distinction between the visible and the invisible church. But the conviction of this reviewer is that the "Cons" have won the argument overwhelmingly against the Federal Visionists' position and that the latter are in the most serious danger of departing from Reformed orthodoxy into sacramentalism and even a form of works-righteousness, if indeed this has not already happened despite all their arguments to the contrary.

**A reaction that goes too far?**

The Federal Visionists are reacting to problems in the contemporary American evangelical and Reformed churches, such as the rampant individualism, the neglect of the covenantal objectivity of salvation, an over-emphasized subjectivity in seeking



assurance of salvation, the tendency towards antinomianism in some circles, and an inadequate view of the role of the sacraments as signs and seals of salvation.

Their pastoral concern in these matters is doubtless commendable, but the re-casting of the normal orthodox understanding of certain vital aspects of Biblical and Reformed theology (cf. the Westminster Standards) raises far more serious problems, in the end, than the ones which the Federal Visionists claim to have solved.

For instance, there is an attempt to reformulate the doctrine of the Trinity, to move away from the Reformation commitment to “forensic” justification (by assuming an over-reaction by the Reformers to Rome), to allege that Hellenism and the Enlightenment led to the “scholastic” propositional statements of Reformed doctrine in the Westminster Standards, to read Biblical history as “The Story” involving primarily personal relationships between God and His people (rather than a depository for doctrinal propositions), to deprecate the value of systematic theology, and finally to introduce different views of covenant, faith, baptism, the Lord’s Supper, election, regeneration, apostasy, and sacramental efficacy. While it is claimed that all these re-formulations are within the parameters of the orthodox Reformed Faith, this reviewer has been left in no doubt that the Federal Vision is, in the end, contrary to the Westminster Standards. One of the critics, Dr. Joseph Pipa, in his response to Steve Wilkins’ paper on “Covenant, Baptism, and Salvation,” puts this point concisely in these words: “If I have understood Wilkins in this paper, the Federal Vision is a deviant, unbiblical view of salvation...the proponents of the Federal Vision hold to a deviant view of the covenant, the active obedience of Christ, the way one receives salvation-justification, the role of baptism in conversion, the relation of the reprobate to Christ and the means of assurance” (p.281).

### Major causes for concern

There are at least three major causes for concern with regard to the Federal Visionists’ presentations.

1] The first is methodological errors. As one of the critics has pointed out (p.10), there is a tendency towards faulty hermeneutics and exegesis, implying that all Scriptural terms are always used in the same way (e.g., “baptism” always meaning water baptism), thus abandoning the Reformation principle of the analogy of faith. This same tendency leads to the redefining or ambiguously stating of the doctrine of election, regeneration, justification, and adoption, and to a general low regard for any attempt to “systematise” theology.

2] The second is a loss of Biblical balance

in regard to covenant theology. Union with the (visible) church automatically implies union with Christ in the Federal Vision teaching, thus over-objectifying the covenant and failing to distinguish between covenantal union in the visible church from the saving union of the invisible church; and in emphasising covenantal election, atonement, justification, and adoption at the expense of soteriological election, atonement, justification, and adoption

(p. 12). There is an

attempt to down-play the confessional distinction between the visible and invisible church and to propose another distinction in its place, the historical and eschatological church!

3] The third major cause for concern is the unquestionable incipient sacramentalism in the Federalist position. In reading paper after paper in this colloquium, the

reader is left with the conviction that the Federalists impute the efficacy of the thing signified to the sign itself, whether in regard to baptism or the Lord’s Supper. The sacraments can communicate blessings apart from faith, and baptism appears to be a converting ordinance. The Federal Vision states that the unbelieving feed upon Christ when they partake of the Lord’s Supper, and that a person is given new life by virtue of baptismal union with Christ.

### Works righteousness?

There appears to be an erroneous view of the doctrine of justification held by the Federalists, with the claim that one cannot understand Paul’s teaching on justification apart from dealing with the Gentile problem and that in the Old Testament the instrument of justification was covenant faithfulness rather than simply trusting in the promises of God.. There also appears to be a denial of the role of merit in Christ’s work and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness in justification.

### Federal fog

In conclusion, this reviewer is convinced that the carefully articulated presentations of the great doctrines of the Reformed and Biblical faith in the Westminster Standards (on election, faith, good works, perseverance, assurance of salvation, the sacraments, etc.) still provide today the effective and truly adequate answer to the problems of the contemporary situation in the Reformed churches. Sadly, the so-called “Federal Vision” is no vision at all in the end, but a “Federal Fog,” of a most serious nature. One can only agree with the editor of this volume which is being reviewed here, Cal Beisner, when he writes: “Extensive study of their [the Federalists’] oral and written

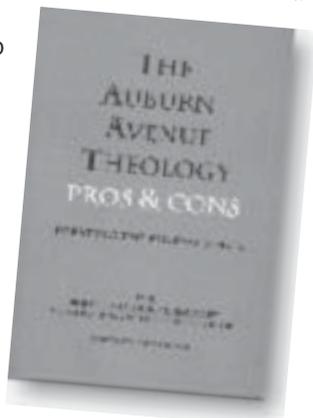
teachings on the special concerns of the Federal Vision convinces me that they have taught, alongside some wonderful truths, some serious errors about covenant theology and its implications for salvation, personal and corporate spirituality and piety, the use and understanding of the sacraments and the conduct of theology and biblical studies in general. Sadly, their mistakes undermine their very laudable goals. Their attempt to assure tender souls who doubt their salvation while they trust in Christ collapses and the poor souls are left more confused than before, because the objectivity of the covenant is inadequate to the task—while the presumptuous who hear that aspect of their message may be led, inadvertently, to the false assurance of formalism. At the same time, their attempt to destroy the complacency of the presumptuous is in profound danger of promoting a false legalistic notion of works righteousness” (p.306).

While we recognise that the Westminster Standards should never become an “icon” and that the ecclesia reformata is also subject to the semper reformanda principle (“always being reformed” according to Scripture), the Federal Vision teaching implies a wholesale denial of the Westminster soteriology.

**Anthony R. Dallison**

*This has been taken from the Banner of Truth website*

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## Focus on home

# Gleanings from our bulletins...

**Andrew Reinders**

## Avondale

Wedding Bells are ringing!!!: Stephen Boler and Christine Vos are pleased to announce that we will be married on Saturday 24th July at 11am here at the Reformed Church of Avondale. Everyone is welcome to attend the service and join us for our reception in the hall afterwards.

Family Devotional Thought: Our annual Holiday Club is over for another year. And what a fantastic blessing it was for all involved. God is so good! The material was very much of an evangelical nature, so it was natural to share the Gospel with the children who attended. This was reinforced on our Friday evening get together with many parents. The BBQ was well attended, as was the presentation of the skit, and singing by the children. To everyone who helped, we thank you. You are the people who made it happen, from the early planning stages to the cleaning up on Friday evening. Above all we give thanks to our heavenly Father, without His blessing it would have just been an exercise in busyness. Praise indeed to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Rev. John Ter Horst – Pastor.

We congratulate Mr John & Mrs Tiny Gjaltema who this week celebrated their 50th. Wedding Anniversary. We thank God for this wonderful blessing.

## Bishopdale

"It is with joy and thankfulness to the Lord that we, Maria van der Meer and David Vander Reyden, announce our intention to marry before God and His people. The wedding will take place Lord willing on Saturday 3rd of July 2004 in the Reformed Church of Christchurch, 63 Cornwall St Christchurch, at 1.30 in the afternoon. Afterwards you are warmly invited to join us for afternoon tea in the Church Hall. We have reserved 3 rows of seats in the front left-hand side of the Cornwall street church for children, who can then follow the proceedings from close up.

Barndance: Are you ready for some good old fashioned toe tapping. It is time to crack the whip and dust of those old boots and spurs.

It's time for a good old fashioned barn dance. Keep Saturday August the 7th free. Bishopdale Cadets and Calvinettes are inviting you, your family and friends to this fundraising event. Held at the Bishopdale Community Centre. Be prepared for an evening of fun and fellowship. Tickets are now available from Martin & Rebekah de Ruiter - \$25 a family, \$15 per couple, \$10 per single adult.

## Christchurch

Congratulations to Ed & Liana Havelaar on the birth of a daughter, Cosette Adèle, born last Thursday.

We continue to pray for brother Ids Dijkstra, and the rest of the family of sister Annigje Dijkstra, who passed away early last Monday morning, and whose funeral was held this past Thursday. We join with them in mourning because of the separation caused by death, but we also give thanks with them that we can know she has received a glorious inheritance and will be praising God for all eternity!

## Dovedale

Mission Evening. On Wednesday 23 June, at 7.30 pm, at the Reformed Church of Dovedale there will be a Missions Evening where:

Jared Berends of the Bishopdale congregation will talk about his missionary work as a language teacher in Mongolia.

Marielle Vannoort and Melinda Watson will present some of their experiences when they went with Middleton Grange School on a trip along villages and churches in Thailand last year.

Franci Voges will tell us about the life and conditions in Sudan where she intends to spend 4 months as "a voluntary worker in all jobs" at a Christian school.

And last but not least Heidi Posthuma will tell us about the missionary purpose, expectation of life and conditions that she is facing as an English teacher in the high lands of Tibet.

It will be a very informative evening where we hear from overseas missionary work by brothers and sisters that are near to us. It will be an informative evening also for the older youngsters of our families.

Purchase of Property: As a result of the very clear vote at the Special General Meeting this past week, Session will now proceed with the purchase of 28 Shands Road according to the terms set out in the information paper.

## Dunedin

Anniversary: 1955–2005. On 26 June 2005 our church will, DV, remember the day of its institution on 26 June 1955. A Jubilee Committee has been formed to prepare for

the celebration of that day, to express our thanks to the King of the Church. The members of the committee are Sr Phyl Kenyon and Brs Henk Geerlofs, John van Dyk (who will be the master of ceremonies) and Peter Braam. Previous ministers who have served our church, as well as former members living elsewhere, will be invited. We are working on a programme which will include a congregational dinner on a Saturday afternoon and evening, with a thanksgiving service the following Sunday morning. At present we are investigating possible venues for the celebration. If you know of somewhere that might be suitable please let us know. Further news to keep you up to date will follow. On behalf of the committee.

Hearty congratulations to Phyl and Rob Kenyon who are celebrating their fiftieth wedding anniversary this weekend. We rejoice with you on this wonderful occasion. The Lord bless you and keep you.

This has been a solemn time for us, with the passing away of Tony de Reus, who was instrumental in beginning the Reformed Church in Oamaru, and well known in the local community as a Christian businessman. He will be sorely missed, as a cheerful and constant Christian brother and as a reader and church treasurer, but most of all as a very dear husband, father and grandfather. Anne and the family will be very much in our thoughts and prayers. We can be thankful for Tony's example and that he and Anne were able to celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary last year with their seven children, thirty-five grandchildren and one great-granddaughter. As Tony often said, "The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places" (Psalm 16:6).

## Hamilton

Pastoral. This morning we are privileged to witness the baptism of Marcel Eric van Eijk, son of Gerrit and Wanda.

## Hukanui

At the Session meeting held this past Thursday, the building extension was discussed. A Building Committee is being formed to manage all the aspects of the new Church. An information board will be set-up in the foyer regarding the building and items of interest. We welcome the Zandman family this Sunday from the Reformed Church of Pukehoke as we have received their membership papers.

## Mangere

As a church we are doing a letter-box drop in the 'golden circle' area of Papatoetoe. To best do this it was thought that those of our

## Student News from Geelong

### *The Waldron family*



David Waldron is currently studying for the ministry at the Reformed Theological College in Geelong, and is a member of the Reformed Church of Palmerston North. David has been greatly blessed with his wife Jenny and their seven children, Naomi (15), Zipporah (13), Elijah (12), Josiah (10), Vashti (5), Isaac (3) and Solomon (21months).

David grew up in Yorkshire, England, and received his M.A. degree at Cambridge University in physics and mathematics before completing an M.Sc. degree in geophysics at the University of British Columbia, Canada. He has travelled and worked in Europe, North and South America, Africa, Scandinavia and Antarctica. He settled in New Zealand in 1987, when he met Jenny. He has a professional background in the physical sciences, adult education, business computing, and horticulture. David has been self-employed for the past 16 years; operating a number of small businesses in the forestry logistics, farming, floricultural export (tulips!) and international student accommodation sectors.

David was part of a Church of England congregation for most of his childhood, was confirmed by the church and received many years of Biblical instruction without ever understanding the need for personal saving faith. David largely drifted away from Christian fellowship through his university

years, and was thoroughly secular in his thinking by his early 20s. As he travelled to many parts of the world over the next few years, he was always looking for The Truth, but without success. Three years after meeting Jenny, David was relatively content with his lot and had stopped searching. It was then that the Lord found him and convicted him of the authority of Scripture through a Creation Science meeting he attended. Having been convinced of the inerrancy of Scripture, God's plan of redemption became clear in David's mind and his heart was convicted of his sin. He turned to God in repentance and sought forgiveness. The Lord has richly blessed David with his family and in his work. *'For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required.'* (Luke 12:48).

David has experienced a call to the ministry for many years, and testifies to the Lord's guidance and provision as he is now able to respond to the call by undertaking full-time theological study. He undertook some theological studies by correspondence with Greenville Presbyterian Seminary in the United States before moving to Australia to continue his studies at the Reformed Theological College in Geelong. The Waldron family plan to return to New Zealand in 2006 when David's studies at the RTC are completed.

members who are able to spare any time during the week could pick up a bundle of brochures with the highlighted map of a street in that area. So it can be done in your own time. These are available in the foyer. As we get more brochures we will make more bundles available. Please pray for this venture and also the advertisements in the local paper.

It is our annual Cadet & Calvinette Sunday show today. An opportunity for our boys and girls to show us some of what they have been doing over the year. A time also we can see the faithful work the Counsellors do with the boys and girls. We thank the Lord for the time, talent and resources they put into this. May He bless it to produce a harvest – also within us!

### Wainuiomata

Mid-Winter Dinner. Just a reminder to everyone about the Mid-Winter Ice Feast on Friday night. Please be there at 7.00 pm sharp with your hat for the hat competition, your pockets full for the auction, your mouth ready to do a lot of laughing and eating, and don't forget to bring along some drink for yourself to enjoy with the dinner. We look forward to seeing you all there and having a great night of food, fellowship and entertainment. Ymmie, Wendy, Judy & Wynne.

Vacancy - Great opportunity. Are you feeling bored? Do you want to get some physical exercise? Do you want to be challenged mentally? Do you want to learn about regulatory compliance issues? Need up skilling in local and regional authority procedures? Do you want know more about the Health & Safety Act? Wanting to work with a great bunch of people, and have some fun at the same time? All of this is now possible! Come work for the Lord. The work is hard, the hours are long and the pay is low. But the retirement benefits are out of this world. Please take up this opportunity and join the Church's Board of Management. For further information, or to express your interest in joining, please contact Rian in person, or by ringing 586 1957

### Wellington

Mid Winter Music Evening. We'll be holding this on the 7th or 14th of August at 7pm (exact date to be confirmed) so get practising! We'd love to hear from all those talented people out there young and old! Looking forward to a fun evening of music, puppets and more (and will be a cuppa after too!) Please have a chat to or email me if you're keen to do something ([\\_ HYPERLINK "mailto:boudaville@paradise.net.nz" \\_\\_boudaville@paradise.net.nz](mailto:boudaville@paradise.net.nz)) so I can start putting together the programme. Thanks, Liz

## Mission in focus

Janice Reid

# So how do you know if you're adapting...?

Doug Lucas, who writes the missionary e-bulletin *Brigada Today*, once published a list his 12-year-old son developed to help people know if they're truly adapting to missionary life. Our denomination has an increasing number of missionaries serving overseas: I wonder how they would answer these questions. In fact, how would you?

1. You can't answer the question, "Where are you from?"
2. You read *National Geographic* and recognise someone.
3. You have a time zone map next to your telephone.
4. You consider a city 500 km away to be "very close."
5. You watch nature documentaries, and think about how good that animal would taste if it were fried.
6. You can cut grass with a machete, but can't start a lawnmower.
7. You speak with authority on the subject of airline travel.
8. You read the international section before the comics.
9. You have friends from or in 29 different countries.
10. You sort your friends by continent.
11. Fitting 15 or more people into a car seems normal to you.
12. You refer to gravel roads as highways.
13. You haggle with the checkout clerk for a lower price.
14. You don't think that two hours is a long sermon.
15. You marvel at the cleanliness of gas station bathrooms.
16. You think a foreign grocery store is a foretaste of heaven.
17. You think a "foreign school" conducts classes in English.

### The OPC in Japan

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the United States is a fellow-member of the International Conference of Reformed Churches. OPC Missionary Cal Cummings writes from Sendai, Japan: God has been answering your prayers

## Country profile: Wallis and Futuna Islands<sup>1</sup>

Ever heard of the Territory of the Wallis and Futuna Islands? I hadn't—until today. "Wallis and Futuna," as the territory is commonly known, consists of three groups of coral islands, 300km west of Samoa. The population is tiny, with only some 15,800 residents. But each person is a soul made by our Creator, and just as much in need of salvation through Christ as any of the millions who live in the world's mega-cities.

The islands were originally discovered by the Tongans, and archeological excavations in Wallis have uncovered sites dating back to 1400 BC. The Tongans arrived around a century later, and took possession of the island after waging war on the original inhabitants.

On 16 August, 1767, the English navigator, Samuel Wallis, discovered the island of Uvea. In true British fashion, he renamed it after himself. The first missionaries, Roman Catholics, arrived in 1837. On 5 April 1842, the authorities in Wallis requested French protection.

A regiment of U. S. Marines arrived in May 1942, to protect the island from the Japanese during the Second World War. Some months later, a small number of Free French forces followed them. In 1958 the French constitution was adopted, and Wallis and Futuna official became an Overseas Territory of France.

### Pray for Wallis and Futuna:

1. The economy is small, with most people scratching a living from the soil using traditional methods. About 80% of the labour force earn their living from agriculture, livestock, and fishing. Pray that residents would earn enough to provide for the basic needs of their families.
2. Approximately 17,000 Wallisians live in New Caledonia—more than live on Wallis itself. Pray for families who are separated for economic reasons, as parents earn a living away from their children.
3. Pray for the growth of the church in Wallis and Futuna. Almost



the entire population is Roman Catholic, with only 0.5% being Protestant (and most of these Pentecostal). Pray that the Lord would work in the lives of people to bring them to true and living faith, rather than an outward, social conformity that many mistakenly believe will assure them of salvation.

4. The OT and NT is being translated into Wallisian, but only portions exist in Futunan. Pray for the ongoing work of Bible translation, and for extensive distribution, reading, and understanding of God's Word as work on each book is completed.

<sup>1</sup> Information sources for this article: Operation World CD-ROM, Copyright ©2001 Patrick Johnstone. Used with permission. CIA World Factbook. Wallis Futuna tourist website: <http://wallis-islands.com/index.gb.htm>

for our community outreach meetings. The numbers have increased as friends are inviting friends so that in March we had twenty-three attending (nine mothers, eight children, and six staff). When we include the numbers from both centres, we have more than thirty each week. Mrs. Yamada, whose husband is a member of a pro-active Buddhist sect (Sokogakkai), said recently, "When I first came three years ago, I did not understand anything about what we read in the Bible. But now I understand and believe it to be the Word of God and I believe God is true." Our hearts leaped. She went on to say, "My husband has not been going to the Sokogakkai meetings recently. Things are going much better at home. Please keep praying." We are, and I hope you will too. Among the three most recent new participants, two had never read the Bible before. They have come back for more. May their voices one day be joined in praise to God. Pray that our efforts to reach the whole family with the gospel will bear much fruit. Pray that the series of messages on "Women who met the Saviour" will be used to call these ladies to hear the call to repentance and faith.

## MIF prayer notes

Jared Berends appreciates our prayers for himself and his co-worker, Marvin, as they settle into the town where they have been assigned to teach English. Pray that they will quickly settle into the community of the small church in that town, especially as the church has recently had to cope with a split.

Hayden Bosgra seems to be enjoying his time in Ecuador, and has reported his adventures with language learning, and travelling around Quito, in regular emails to friends and family. He asks special prayer for language acquisition, so that he can quickly begin to communicate with local people. Hayden expects to move to his assigned town soon; please pray for safety in travelling, and the ability to settle in quickly and develop good friendships that will uplift him before the throne of Grace.

also needs our prayers as she moves to the country in which she will be working, and has to familiarise herself with the people and the culture before moving to her assigned region to begin teaching English. Please pray for safety in travel, and for comfort and strength from the Lord as homesickness strikes during the early stages of isolation and strangeness.

Janice Reid is grateful for the prayers of the saints as she and Jean-Luc plan, Lord willing, to travel to Indonesia this month and deliver a brand-new course they have developed for managers of the small, new Christian stations whose staff they taught back in May. Janice

expects to return to New Zealand at the end of this month.

Walter and Jeannette Hagoort are grateful for your prayers over the past busy months. Please pray for them as they settle into a more familiar routine of work and ministry; as they develop relationships with church members from 9 Mile, and especially as they get to know the Van der Heide family, who joined them recently from Australia. Pray also for the 't Hart family as they return to Papua New Guinea and settle

into their ministry again—with a larger family than before!

Kevin and Machi Rietveld give thanks for good opportunities to continue their work with the Church of Melanesia in training their clergy, particularly with provision of much-needed Christ-centred preaching. They ask prayer for the Vissers who are in Australia for a few weeks for holidays, deputation and to welcome a new grandchild. Pray for Machi, who will be leading some women's studies in Honiara this month.

# Just passing through?

## Possibility thinking's fixation on this world

### Sjirk Bajema

Isaiah's 40th chapter has some of the most beautiful words about salvation. After the coming gloom so darkly prophesied in chapter 39, there's the promise of release and peace! God is bringing it all together! And look how He's doing that! For He is so gracious in the face of His people's hardness.

It's out of this tremendously redemptive language that certain images have really gripped believers over the years. And none more so than that found at the end of this 40th chapter. It is said of those who hope in the Lord that, "*They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint*" (verse 31).

Here there are three clear metaphors. Metaphors that picture overcoming one natural impossibility and two natural weaknesses. There is no doubting this kind of progress. This is knowing where you're going.

So it's no surprise that this verse has become such an encouragement to Christians in every age, and particularly in our time. It has, in fact, become a key passage for one of the most powerful theological influences in the western church today

### One of today's magical mantras

A well-known preacher brought this out, speaking of three aspects to this verse.<sup>1</sup> He said these words are about how overcomers fly into the wind, how overcomers soar above life's problems, and how overcomers are lifted by positive updrafts of faith and hope. We have to take that 'eagle' imagery to heart, because eagles, like all birds, fly into the wind to get the help they need to get up into the air, and

then find updrafts which keep them there.

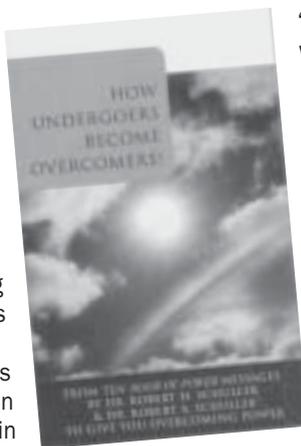
He says that it's by facing the problems we have in life that we can soar higher than we ever thought possible. You can even turn things right around altogether! The preacher informs us that Jesus Christ shared this principle when He challenged His followers in Matthew 16 verse 24 to "*Take up your cross and follow me.*"

So when life is tough and we're up against the odds, that's the time to "take up our cross." That's the time to fly into the wind so that we will rise above our problems.

The preacher describes the 'inspirational' example of a woman who is an overcomer. She was a lady he met once. A woman whom he called "a standing miracle." You see, he says, five years before that she had been in a wheelchair without even the ability to dress herself. She was not even able to hold a glass of water. And there she was standing, holding a plate of food—a vibrant, exciting person! She even danced with her husband. Thirty-five years earlier, she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. After thirty years of doing everything she could to fight this debilitating disease she found herself confined to a wheel-chair, unable to hold even a glass of water.

It was at that point, he says, that she made a decision to go against the odds, to fly against the wind, and to really make a difference in her physical condition. She went and hired a physical trainer and worked on every muscle in her body as hard as she could for an hour and a half for four days a week. After three or four years she was up walking. "She," he said, "is an overcomer."

It certainly makes for an inspirational story.



But you can see what's happening, can't you? It's that attitude of overcoming that's the real message here. In fact, the focus is so much of what you have to do that the Lord really hasn't got much to do with it. It's how much you put yourself into it that matters.

That's why that preacher used the example of an aeroplane. Because when you start to stand up to the problems in your life you have to use extreme energy to get going. It will take full throttle and all jets upon as it becomes airborne and reaches its desired altitude.

You can see how Isaiah 40:31 has become one of today's magical mantras. When you believe it's going to happen, look what happens! And while this preacher hasn't gone to the extreme of saying that believers shouldn't be sick in the first place at all, he is saying, like many today, that you have to believe you can get better.

But none of what he's saying is what the text is actually about. Neither verse 31, or any other verse he uses, is meant to 'inspire' us this way. This is not a word or phrase that you keep saying until you really believe that that's what you are doing.

These are not words, though, that the Lord has preserved in His Word so that we have the resources within ourselves to be what we really want to be. In fact, it's not about 'me' at all—quite the contrary!

### Divine comfort in trouble

There is a saying, which goes, "A text without a context is a pretext." This means you use a text in the way that suits you. You don't worry about what it really means. Sadly, that's what has happened with this text.

In chapters 1 till 39, Isaiah is prophesying about Israel's situation. That's the world where King Hezekiah was given that prophetic word in the verses 5 till 8 of chapter 39 about impending disaster. Because of his pride about all he had, openly showing off his riches to the visiting Babylonians, Isaiah tells him how it will be that very country which will take all everything away—and take God's people into captivity as well.

But chapter 40 doesn't leave that future situation there. There is hope. A hope which they will attain 150 years later because of Who the Lord God is.

This is why we have those great Messianic words in verses 1 till 11 of chapter 40. God Himself will save them! And then, from verse 12 on, God's character itself is described. He is pictured as **the** Creator, **the** Disposer, and as **the** Carer.

Verse 27 tells us that it is wrong to see God as someone who is too great to care. Actually, as verse 28 goes on, God is too great to fail. There's no time at which you can say things get on top of Him. **He** is the Overcomer!

Our human frailty proves this. It's exactly when we realise our weakness that we have His strength. In that 'waiting' for the Lord, we are being changed into what **He** wants us to be.

It's at this point we must take issue with Robert Schuller Jr. He's the preacher I quoted earlier. A man with a huge world-wide audience.

For we must ask him where Scripture tells us that being changed by the Lord means all our human wants will be met. Especially in a way that discriminates between believers.

Mind you, Schuller doesn't actually say that the woman who apparently had M.S. was a Christian. One would assume that, because he talks about receiving God's strength to overcome, which starts with the decision to believe in God's power. But there's nothing in that lady's story to say that the so-called 'miracle' in her life couldn't be had by non-believers.

That's why this text has become a mantra. The way they use it doesn't mean getting to know who the Lord is, and what He's done and is going to do. All you have to do is repeat ad infinitum these peppy little formulas. It's about positive thinking!

You can go into many New Zealand churches and know that when they talk about having a time of worship you'll be singing that constant round of feel-good, one-line praise choruses. Positive thinking! You're not getting to know who the Lord is and what He's done. Oh, they have Scripture in their songs. But not much of it. And always the same words! In fact, in many Kiwi churches the Bible will hardly be opened. Meeting with the all-holy, almighty, and ever-present God has become nothing but a time of sharing! There's no one leading the service with a B.D. (a Bachelor of Divinity, a qualification for being a minister)—everyone get a chance to be the M.C. (Master of Ceremonies)!

If this text was used as it was originally meant, God's people would recognise it as a promise of divine comfort in trouble. For then the hope of what **God** will do is laid before us!

The true meaning of Jesus' words lies here. When He said to us in Matthew 16 verse 24 to take up our crosses and follow Him, He wasn't talking about those times when the going gets tough and the tough get going! He never meant this as a motivational statement. He said it so that we would always look to Him!

This is what the writer to the Hebrews sets clearly before us in that great chapter (Hebrews 11) about the faith of the saints of the past. He sums up that passage in chapter 12, verses 1 to 3, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

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We have to keep looking to the Lord through everything. That's what those Jews had to do in the time that Isaiah prophesied about. They would be in captivity, and he knew they wouldn't be coping there. They had to see themselves as pilgrims in a foreign country—pilgrims looking for the promised land.

It's that faith which makes the difference. Not the faith which says we can have what we want now if we believe in it enough, but the faith which believes in what God has done and is doing in His Son. That faith makes us truly well!

### **The believer's eternal delight in Christ**

Here we turn again to the example that Schuller used. He is clearly implying that even medical conditions as severe as M.S. can be healed, simply by the right attitude. You just have to believe that you can overcome, as the lady he describes did!

Now, I don't want to take away from what has happened to that woman. It is well-known that a suitable exercise regime can help M.S. sufferers. But M.S. itself is, as yet, incurable. And unless Schuller is saying he believes in healing today for Christians, he is making a terrible indictment of Christians with this condition or any of the other legion of debilitating diseases. Because they would then have the distinct message that they're sick because they're not thinking positively enough!

I can tell you from personal experience that this is untrue. But rather than me or someone else we know saying it, let's hear it from the apostle Paul. He was an apostle of God afflicted by a severe disability. In 2nd Corinthians 12 verse 6 we read how he pleaded with the Lord to take it away.

According to Schuller's teaching, the kind of faith Paul had definitely meant healing! He, of all believers, would have been an overcomer. But that's not what God had in mind for him. In fact, the Lord said that His power was made perfect in weakness. The apostle develops this in chapter 4 of 2nd Corinthians. There Paul tells us in vivid imagery just how we are meant to hope in the Lord and so renew our strength in this life, using the picture of believers as treasures in jars of clay.

That's why we shouldn't lose heart, he says. As verse 16 says, "*Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.*" That's what soaring on wings like eagles, and not growing weary, and not being faint, is all about! Even in that captivity far away, God's people looked to Him. We have to focus on where we're going to spiritually—not where we are physically. We cannot forget that we're pilgrims here below.

Like those pessimists around Isaiah, we sometimes think God is giving us a bit of a raw deal. That's why the Lord addresses them as He does in verse 27—they have to see the bigger picture. With the writer of Psalm 77, they have to see their captivity against the background of God's great redemptive history.

An incident from Elisabeth Elliot's life helps us here.<sup>2</sup> There was an occasion when a Christian began to tell her something along the same lines as these joyless believers in Isaiah's day. The speaker had just discovered that she was suffering from a progressive illness which would lead to paralysis, and was annoyed and angry. It wasn't fair!

On the other end of the telephone, Elisabeth Elliot was thinking about how modern Christians consider it their right to be happy and free from trouble. But she didn't throw that back on the upset girl. She tried to help her see that as a Christian, she could look at things from a different angle. "*She needed to start from the love of God and understand that love, revealed on the cross, does not exclude but must always include suffering. 'But what good will I be flat on my back?'*" asked the girl.

So they talked about God's idea of "good," which is very different from what the world thinks it to be. She talked about how God wanted her to trust and obey. And the only way she could learn trust and obedience was to have things happen that she couldn't understand.

This is where her faith began—in the wilderness, when you're alone and afraid, when

things don't make sense. She was told to hang on to the message of the cross: "God loves you. He loved you enough to die for you. Will you trust him?"

There was a pause. Then she heard a timid little voice say, "Oh." She had thought she was going to be out there all alone. She was afraid. And so Elisabeth Elliot prayed that God would go with her every step of the way and let her know that everything was under control.

This is the difference between the citizens of this world and the next. This is why Jesus calls His followers to take up their crosses and so deny themselves, because then, in the words of 1st Peter 2 verse 21, we're following the example of Christ.

It is not what we feel we have to have but what is His will for us. Then you will know. Then you have heard. And then the world will see Him, too.

<sup>1</sup> Message 3, 'Strength for the Soaring Spirit', in "How Undergoers Become Overcomers," By Drs Robert H. Schuller & Robert A. Schuller, Crystal Cathedral Ministries. n.d.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted on page 261 of "God Delivers: Isaiah Simply Explained," by Derek Thomas, Evangelical Press, 1991, Welwyn Commentary Series, Darlington, England

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