

faith in **focus**

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**“At your rebuke the
waters fled,
at the sound of
your thunder they
took to flight;
they flowed over
the mountains,
they went down
into the valleys,
to the place you
assigned for them.”**

Psalm 104:7-9

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Editorial

Some years ago the senior pastor of South Africa's largest church got married. It was a highly ornate and lavish affair. No expense was spared. After all, the ceremony was going out live via Christian Television channels.

He was a man who had made his mark. Starting with a handful of followers, he now had the nation's biggest congregation. He was looking good! And then there was the bride. A beautiful bride. A woman who had been a beauty queen and was a well-known model. Well, what an advertisement for marriage. And marriage between two Christians! Two of them deeply in love.

There were lots of famous people there. Sportsmen, politicians, and other Christian pastors. They all endorsed this ceremony by their presence, and the wishes they publicly expressed to the couple. Thousands of Christians there and elsewhere did the same.

What was happening, however, was a wicked thing! In fact, you had to honestly wonder how they ever got to that point?

Now you're wondering. What could I be going on about? The scene I've pictured couldn't be more positive and uplifting. Why the harsh reaction?

Well, it was that man's second marriage. His first wife was still very much alive. And she was a Christian. She had been before he married her. She had even been the "senior pastor" in the church with him!

That's why the wedding was a disgraceful thing. It was a display of selfishness. The greed that reveals the corruption of power. But it was made even more sinful because of all those Christians who looked on, praising it. They had been fooled into believing that this was the right thing. Well, how could it be wrong when they were so obviously in love?

Marriage is in grim days in the Christian community. That's why in this issue we deal with it through three articles—one looking at the prevention of divorce, and the others dealing with biblical way to deal with separation and the physical and psychological effect of the results of divorce. In connection with this latter article, "What I'd wish I'd known before I got divorced," please note that it is placed here to show some of the serious physical and mental results of divorce. This is like we might do when we use the point of the physical and mental damage abortion does to a woman, together with the principle of protecting life.

*Marriage should be honoured by all,
and the marriage bed kept pure,
For God will judge the adulterer
and all the sexually immoral.*

Hebrews 13:4

Cover photo: Hunua Falls south of Auckland .

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

Marriage is a life-long calling

A review on 'Until Death Us Do Part'

Sjirk Bajema

David Engelsma leaves you in no doubt as to the theme behind his booklet. In his introduction he states, *one of the main reasons for the churches' acceptance of homosexual relationships is these same churches' prior acceptance of the divorce and remarriages of heterosexuals in the face of the clear prohibition of Scripture.*

In the process of coming to this point in the last chapter of his book, he points to various instances of immorality within the conservative Reformed-Presbyterian circles of North America.

It's clear that for him the thin edge of the wedge is immorality, and that this immorality has arisen because of a deficient view of the life-long bond and calling of marriage. As he says further in his 'Introduction': *One doctrine of marriage, and one only, guards the true church of Jesus Christ against every corruption of marriage and preserves the holy institution among the covenant people of God. Marriage is the intimate bond of love between one man and one woman for life. Only death dissolves the bond. To be more precise, only God dissolves the bond, and He dissolves it only by death.*

The sad case of Bert Zandstra

Having began with such a thesis, Engelsma points out, by a hypothetical case based on a number of actual cases, what happens when a member of a conservative church divorced his wife, married a younger woman, and went to live in a town some sixty miles from his old home. There, after some counselling from the church, he came to confess the wrong that he had done before. He subsequently wrote a letter to his first wife asking for forgiveness, adding to it that one day, when they had grown up, he would also confess to the children. Then he and his new wife were accepted as members of the church.

Engelsma makes it quite clear he believes Bert Zandstra to be an adulterer. Quoting Mark 10:11, Matthew 5:32b, 1 Corinthians 6:9, and Galatians 5:19-21, he points to how

this man proves himself to be "unbelieving and ungodly."

The case of Bert Zandstra was used by a theologian of a conservative denomination, though, not to show how much this is clearly against God's will, but instead to demonstrate that there was a lack of adequate counselling and clear guidelines as to how to work with such folk to bring them back into the life of a local church.

Engelsma is quite grieved about this. He uses it to show how far things have departed from the clear word of the Lord regarding

show genuine repentance. He must go on his hands and knees to his first wife and family and confess to their faces in tears. He must assure them that there's no way he can live with the other woman, for Christ cannot have any other than His Church, and he must plead with his wife to have him back.

That the Church of Jesus Christ has come to this point is because of the modern view of marriage as a contract, that sin and sinners can break. Previously the right of divorce and remarriage was granted only to the "innocent" party—the husband or wife whose spouse committed adultery. But now all-and-sundry can divorce and remarry, for any reason at all. And they do it in some of the apparently most conservative churches. You won't hear it, though, he says.

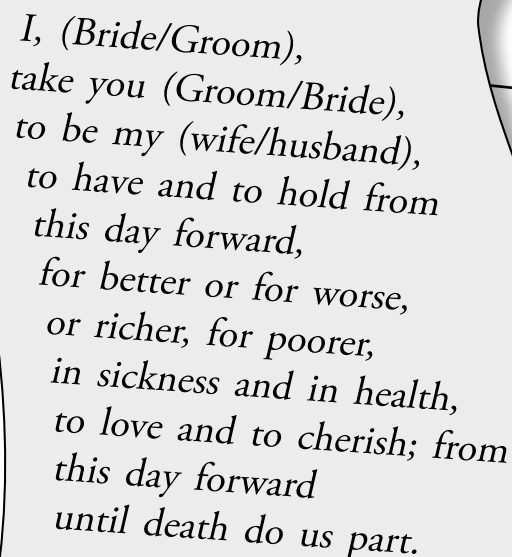
The American scene

Engelsma shows how it is a silent subject, with a reflection in Chapter 2 on his own country. He calls divorce—with remarriage squarely in view—as the main social evil in the United States. The clear biblical standard regarding marriage, the institution of God in creation, has been washed away. The world has captured the Church here. Even the unbelieving teacher and educational critic Allan Bloom, recognised this in his bestseller, *The Closing of the American Mind*. He writes, "Of course, many families are unhappy. But that is irrelevant. The important lesson that the family taught was the existence of the only unbreakable bond, for better or for worse, between human beings.

The decomposition of this bond is surely America's most urgent social problem. But nobody even tries to do anything about it. The tide seems irresistible. Among the many items on the agenda of those promoting America's social regeneration, I never find marriage and divorce."

Engelsma shows how even those loudly advocating 'family values' are weak in this vital area of marriage. It could lose them votes.

While he can see that this would be a logical outcome in liberal churches, he is astounded that those who hold to an inerr-



*I, (Bride/Groom),
take you (Groom/Bride),
to be my (wife/husband),
to have and to hold from
this day forward,
for better or for worse,
or richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish; from
this day forward
until death do us part.*

marriage. This man broke his marriage vow by divorcing his wife, and will make her a sinner if she remarries. He uses Matthew 5:32 to prove that she could perish everlastingly. He says, *The repentance of a man who says, "I am sorry" while living deliberately and contentedly in his sin, is hypocrisy. It is disgusting to God. It meets with no forgiveness from him, regardless what a church may say.*

The only way this sin can be dealt with, Engelsma goes on, is for that man to no longer live with his new wife. That would

ant Word of God fail to make a stand against it. He says, "It was an open secret at the meeting of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy in Chicago in 1986 that the attempt to address the evil of divorce and remarriage with a strong, biblical statement was scuttled in the back rooms of power by prominent pastors whose large evangelical churches are full of divorced (and divorcing!) and remarried (and remarrying!) members. This was the meeting of the ICBI that was to apply inerrancy to life. So much for application! So much for life!"

Going through Scripture, Engelsma brings out the passages which condemn divorce. Malachi chapter 2 is clear about this. The example of the Lord Jesus, who, in a church climate that permitted divorce with remarriage to follow, upheld the divine will and



ordinance that marriage is a one-flesh bond for life, made between the two who marry by the Creator Himself. 1 Corinthians 7 is brought out to support this. He writes, "He commanded Christians not to divorce or leave their mates. He dared to require that a woman who did leave her husband, evidently because of his fornication, must remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband (1 Cor. 7:10,11)."

In concluding he mentions one of the few times this devastating sin and its consequences was mentioned in a Reformed magazine. It was an item which showed that the anguish God's people go through because of this is terrible—worse even than those facing long illness and death.

Chickens coming home to roost

After detailing a prominent example in the United States in chapter 3, Engelsma goes on in chapter 4 to hone in on what he believes is the weak link in the approach

of many Reformed-Presbyterian churches regarding marriage. For many years there was unanimity that remarriage could only be allowed within the church for the 'innocent' party. But, he says, 'Such is the pressure of the world, such is the force of the carnal element in the church, and such is the power of the sinful nature of the saints themselves that a church that opens the door "slightly" to the remarriage of the innocent party will eventually throw it open all the way to the remarriage of the guilty party.'

The case is made that if the innocent party can remarry because the marriage bond is dissolved by the adultery of the guilt party, then doesn't the dissolution of the marriage bond itself mean that the guilty party also has every right to remarry?

This is where Engelsma becomes unstuck. He is defending the stance of his denomination, the Protestant Reformed Churches, to allow no remarriage whatsoever, unless one of the spouses dies. So he disputes the view that many Reformed-Presbyterian churches had for many centuries before the modern age. This is shown in a subsequent chapter, where he deals with the Westminster Confession of Faith's Article XXIV:5 on the remarriage allowed in the instance of adultery by one of the spouses. He says that the Westminster admits its contradiction in allowing this when remarriage should only be permitted after the death of a spouse. (I could not glean this from the Article itself, nor from several commentaries I consulted on the WCF.)

His focus at this point is on Matthew 19:9, which he says 'seems' to approve the remarriage of the 'innocent party.' (Matthew 19:9 has the words of the Lord when he condemns the Mosaic allowance for divorce. There Jesus says, *I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.*) He goes out of his way to isolate this text from those other texts which allow for remarriage only on the basis of death, and then he reinterprets this text to say the same. It is a strained exegesis, and a real pity in the light of the overall flow of his book.

For as he goes on to look at the life-long bond of marriage, comparing the biblical teaching with the notion of marriage as a contract and then considering marriage as a calling, he gives much good counsel. His words on page 42 are good for us, 'When the young people marry, they must enter marriage as a distinct divine calling. Parents and church must have taught them this from childhood. The minister who marries them



"The Jewish Bride", by Rembrandt, 1665

must give them this counsel. In the solemn setting of the Reformed marriage ceremony, the traditional, biblical vow must hold the calling before the couple. It is inexcusable that ministers allow the couple to create their own vows, especially when those vows fail to

reflect the fundamental biblical duties of love on the part of the husband, submission on the part of the wife, and mutual faithfulness until death parts them.'

The book, 'Until Death Us Do Part'(First

Printing, 2005) is published by the South Holland Protestant Reformed Evangelism Committee, 16511 South Park Avenue, South Holland, IL 60473, USA. David J. Engelsma is a professor at the PRCNA seminary, Grandville, Michigan.

Remarriage?

Question:

Thank you for providing this forum which has been extremely helpful to me. My question/concern is as follows: After hitting rock bottom in my life and my marriage, I fell in love and had an affair with another man. Subsequently, I divorced my husband and have continued with this relationship. We plan to be married. I struggle with my guilt though I do not look at turning back as an option as we have all moved forward and come to a place of understanding and friendship. Will the OPC recognize and accept me as a member and will my new marriage be recognized by the church? I look forward to reading your response.

Answer:

Not knowing anything at all about what conditions led to your hitting rock bottom in life and marriage, I can only guess that the path down was pretty painful and confusing. Still, the Word of God gives direction you need, though it will take great grace from God and humbling on your part to receive it at this point. Since your actual question concerns how the OPC will respond to you, I will start there.

The general principle

As a general principle, every true church of Christ should gladly receive into its membership any sinner who repents of his or her sins, trusts in Christ alone for forgiveness and salvation, and desires to live in obedience to Him as Lord. If a serial murderer repented and sought God's forgiving grace in Christ and wanted to be part of our church, I hope we would rejoice with the angels of heaven and receive him. When our Lord Jesus was criticized for eating and drinking with "sinners," He replied that He had not come to call the righteous (He speaks ironically; there are no righteous apart from Him) but sinners to repentance (Mark 2:17). If the holy Son of God saves wretched sinners like me

and receives us into His kingdom, we had better receive them into His churches.

This particular situation

The questions I would have in response to your situation, however, are these: Did your marriage end because of your sin? If so, have you repented of that sin? Is your current relationship based on righteousness and a desire to obey the Lord in obedience to His commands?

As you describe your history, you had an adulterous affair that ended your marriage. I suspect there was more to it than that, but your statement is that you "fell in love

and had an affair with another man," and then after that you sought and obtained a divorce. Whatever mitigating circumstances might have been provided by your husband's behavior, you clearly admit responsibility for bringing your marriage to an end by your own sinful acts.

I can well imagine that you struggle with guilt. In the light of God's Word (7th Commandment, Exodus 20:14, Malachi 2:16, Matthew 19:3-9), unless and until you actually repent of the sins you committed, you are truly guilty in God's sight (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). The good news is God's promise through Jesus Christ His Son, that because



Christ bore on the cross the sins of His people and the punishment they deserve, we may be forgiven and washed completely clean. This is how God states His promise in Isaiah 55:

Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. (vv. 6, 7)

Returning to the Lord to receive His abundant pardon (freely given, paid for by Jesus on the cross, Isaiah 53:5, 6) requires forsaking the way of sin which led away from the Lord. You say that you struggle with your guilt; and I think you will continue to do so as long as you do not face up to the sin of your actions and truly turn from it in repentance. Suffering with guilt feelings has no atoning value; it is not noble, but useless. You could end the struggle with guilt by repenting and seeking the Lord's forgiveness - His way.

Don't continue in sin

Am I being too hard on you? Well, I am bringing your words to the Lord's Word so that you might learn His way of true peace and forgiveness. Why do I so obviously doubt that you have repented of your sin? Because it appears clear that you are continuing in it. "We plan to be married. I struggle with my guilt though I do not look at turning back as an option as we have all moved forward and come to a place of understanding and friendship." I gather that that means your husband "understands" and is being friendly. But the question is, what does God think? Can you say, "I repent of the sin of adultery and ask God's forgiveness and I repent of the sin of unlawfully [God's Law] divorcing my husband and ask God's forgiveness" - and proceed right ahead with the adulterous relationship? What does our Lord say in Matthew 19:9?

In his letter to the Corinthian church the Apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, says, "To the married I say (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife" (1 Cor.7:10,11). If you truly repent of your sins of adultery and lawless divorce, then this is the direction you must seek to go, not continuing in the adulterous relationship. There may be factors you have not shared which make it impossible to go back, and so reconciliation is impossible (maybe your husband has remarried or is himself now living adulterously with another

woman whom he is not willing to leave). If your husband has closed the door to reconciliation, you and your new man still must face up to and repent of your sin.

These issues and questions concern us

Because of the brevity of your account you may have left some things out that would significantly change my understanding of your situation. Perhaps you have truly repented of your sin and are seeking to live in obedience to God's commands as a believer in Christ (but just did not communicate that clearly in your post). With the little I have to go on in your post, I cannot "pass judgment." But, based on what you have said, the issues and questions I raise above would concern me and the elders and pastors of any OP church.

Since you have been attending an OP church, I suggest you go to the pastor and ask him what you have asked me, tell him your story, and not just to know if the church will accept you, but to know the counsel of God's Word to you, so that you might have true peace with God, be confident of His forgiving mercy, and be living in submission to Him (imperfectly and only by His grace, of course).

And let me, in love, caution you: If you and the man you intend to marry turn away from a church which for biblical reasons will not accept your marriage and you go elsewhere looking for a church that will give you "peace" without your having to repent of sin, that church will not be serving your soul's

eternal good. The Lord says, "There is no peace ... for the wicked" (Isaiah 57:21); and to the false prophets who promise peace to those who will not repent, He says, "Because they lead my people astray, saying, 'Peace,' when there is no peace, and because, when a flimsy wall is built they cover it with white-wash, therefore tell those who cover it with whitewash that it is going to fall" (Ezekiel 13:10, 11). "They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious, 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:14).

In contrast, Proverbs 27:6 says, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend", and the Psalmist says (141:5), "Let a righteous man strike me - it is kindness; let him rebuke me - it is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it." So I plead with you to let faithfulness in opening God's Word to you be the test of a church, and not whether or not you will be accepted if you are determined to go a way that is not God's.

Again, I admit that if I were told your whole story, I might see things differently (not things in the Bible, but how they apply in your case). And for that reason I urge you to go directly to the pastor of the OP church you have been attending and seek his counsel from God's Word.

May the Lord guide you in His paths of truth and righteousness. (DK)

"Questions and Answers" is a weekly feature of the OPC website.

What I wish I'd known before I got divorced

Georgia Shaffer

Five friends and I were having a casual breakfast after our single-adult Sunday school class when our conversation focused on our friend Cindy*. She was convinced divorce was the answer to all her problems.

"I wish Cindy would at least listen to us," I said.

"She made it clear she doesn't want to hear *anything* from us divorcees," said Betsy. "She's made up her mind, and she's not changing it."

That morning, in utter frustration, my friends and I compiled a list: what we wish

we had known before we got divorced—the things we wanted Cindy to know *before* she made her final decision. Each of us had experienced the upheaval of divorce and watched 12 of our close friends' *second* marriages end. We'd seen the lives of our children changed forever. Years later, we continue to live with the ongoing pain and complications of a destroyed marriage.

As a licensed psychologist, I've heard many people in counseling consider the possibility of ending their marriage. They look at divorce as a way of solving their marital woes. Ultimately, however, it only creates *different* problems. In a recent study

by Institute for American Values chaired by sociologist Linda Waite of the University of Chicago, researchers asked “Does divorce make people happy?” They found that those who were unhappily married and later divorced weren’t any happier than those who were unhappy and remained married. In fact, two-thirds of those who *stayed married* reported their marriages were happy five years later.

Here’s the list we compiled for Cindy.

1. Your life will change more than you realize.

“I thought I would enjoy being alone,” says Lori, who has no children and has never remarried. “But I’m lonely. Whenever any of my friends complain about how needy their husbands or children are I say, ‘just try living without that.’”

Andy, like Lori has not remarried. He said, “I didn’t expect to miss odd things like the towels folded neatly, shopping for groceries together, or the Saturday routine we had established.” After his divorce, Andy realized how much the familiar everyday things of married life meant to him.

Add children to the equation, and the result is even stickier. Instead of two people parenting your children you have custody, you’re left to do it all—alone. You become the sole provider, winner, spiritual adviser, disciplinarian, housekeeper. The stress levels and responsibility can become staggering.

Then there are the scheduling dramas. Recently, my friend and I were discussing how complicated it can be to see our sons during a short college break. Although we both cooperate with our ex-husbands in issues regarding our sons, we still ache as we watch them carefully dole out their time among the families in an effort not to alienate either parent. “Even though we have it as good as it gets,” I said, “it’s horrible for our children.”

What’s especially disturbing is that I’m not talking about broken families that bitterly battle each other for years—parents who pit their children against their ex or children who relentlessly try to put a wedge in their parents’ new relationships. Most of my divorced friends appear well-adjusted. They have worked hard to rebuild their lives and strive to cooperate with their ex-spouses for the sake of the children.

Although the everyday occurrences can create plenty of challenges after divorce, the

special occasions are worse. Every birthday, holiday, wedding, or funeral is a potential nightmare. “At my future daughter-in-law’s wedding,” says Allison, “she is planning to walk down the aisle by herself because she has multiple fathers and she is torn between her allegiances, my heart breaks for her.” And these problems don’t end when the children grow up and marry. The hassles continue with the grandchildren.

Even if you remarry, the consequences of your divorce continue to impact your life. Jan Coleman, author of *After the Locusts*, was single-again for 12 years before marrying Carl. As good as the marriage is she doesn’t hesitate to say what a dramatic change it made in her life.

“Yes, you can love and trust again,” she says. “But the first marriage is God’s best, his



sign. We were not meant to give up on it, but work through all the struggles to God’s glory and our best. The tearing of the flesh may heal, but the scars are always there. The second marriage can be great in many ways if you marry for the right reasons, but it’s still not the same.”

2. Your life won’t be more carefree.

As a self-confident, independent woman with a fast-moving career and no children, Stephanie couldn’t wait to be free of the pain of her dying marriage. “I would no longer have to put with up *his* problems,” she said.

“With my new freedom I would be able to do what I wanted when I wanted to do it. But

after the divorce, it was my career and my home that began to hold me hostage. I was imprisoned by all of the things in life that I thought made me look good.”

Unfortunately, divorce never brought the carefree lifestyle Stephanie had expected. When she stopped and took a close look in the mirror, she realized the lies she had believed and how the patterns of the world had shaped her character. Because she didn’t like what she saw, she began the hard work of changing who she had become.

In the Institute for American Values study, Waite and the other researchers found that those who ended their marriage simply because they weren’t happy *did not* improve their emotional state. Their lives were not happier or better. “The decision to divorce,” they suggest, “sets in motion a large number of processes and events over which an individual has little control”

and ultimately negatively affects the well-being of the one who divorced.

For example, there are those *seemingly hidden* emotional wounds that can pop open when we least expect or on special anniversaries. Jan Coleman, who is normally bubbly and bright, says, “Every Christmas, I become depressed. After 20 years it still hits me suddenly, without warning. I was married in December, my childhood sweetheart left me for another woman 15 Decembers later, and my dreams were ruined. Every year I have a weepy week.”

Jan’s second husband understands and gives her the space “to grieve again for the loss of that ideal family I spent my life imagining. There are times when it hits him too. You are never free from the effects of that broken first marriage.”

I know this from personal experience. Recently, I began dating someone who’s divorced. Because of our pasts, we have several barriers in our current relationship—one of which is the fear of letting go and loving again.

3. You trade one set of problems for another.

Even the most amiable break-ups bring deep wounds. There are always consequences to divorce.

“What I didn’t anticipate,” said Brad, “was the way my friends perceive me. All of a sudden I became damaged goods. One

“What I wish I would have done to save my marriage”

Worked harder on my marriage: “I wish I’d gone to a reliable Christian counselor and committed to working through the problems. I gave up.” –Jeff*

Made God first in my marriage: “Christ should have been in the center of our relationship. I made a god of my husband, and he began to act like one.” –Margaret*

Kept communication lines open: “I blamed my wife for every problem that arose. I needed to do my own soul searching. I expected my spouse to make me happy.” –John*

Never entertained thoughts of having an affair: “My affair started with one lustful thought that grew and grew until it was out of control. I used to think when I read that the wages of sin are death that it meant physical death. I now know it means emotional and spiritual death. Years later I can tell you the pain doesn’t go away.” –Michael*

Focused on the positive attributes of my spouse: “Both of us brought uplifting qualities to our marriage. But before long I was only focusing on his weaknesses, not his gifts.” –Betsy

Guarded my words and respected my spouse: “How I wish I had followed the example of my parents who always had the utmost respect for each other – there was no sarcasm or negative words. My father always said, ‘Your mother will be my bride until the day I die.’ She was.”

–Nancy

*Names have been changed.

—GS

couple, who had been my close friends for twenty years, became very cool to me after the divorce.”

There’s a ripple effect. Your divorce doesn’t just affect you and your spouse. It affects everyone around you. Friends often feel as if they must pick sides, so they keep their distance. Relationships with those who do remain loyal change abruptly. Church friends may stay away, feeling uncomfortable. And family member who’ve grown to love and care the ex feel forced to “divorce” as well.

Then there are the financial ramifications. Dividing the assets isn’t always done equitably. Vern was left with 31 percent of his retirement account even though his ex-wife worked and they had no children together. At the age of 49, this was a blow to his retirement plans.

And if there’s a remarriage, blending children from previous marriages brings problems that can range from emotional chaos to stoic tolerance. A recently remarried friend said, “My life is more complicated than ever. I’ve put all this effort into a new marriage, but we’re struggling. My new step-son ignores me. His attitude is ‘I’m here to be with my dad and that’s it.’ I feel horrible—like a second class citizen in my own home.”

4. Short-term pleasure can lead to long-term pain.

When my son was six years old, he’d complain about being disciplined for disobeying what he called “my stupid rules.” Over and over I’d repeat, “Kyle, I’m being short-term mean, but long-term nice.” Like little children, we sometimes allow our desire for momentary pleasure to pull us away from God’s best for our marriage. Rather than doing the hard work it takes to invest daily in our marital relationship, we make seemingly innocent decisions thinking they will do no harm.

“She was stunningly beautiful, the kind of beauty that stops traffic,” Michael* said. “She sat next to me at our regional meeting, and throughout the day she leaned close and softly asked one question after another. Immediately my ego was boosted because she found me worthy of attention.”

Certainly divorce wasn’t in Michael’s mind when he was attracted to this woman. He loved his wife and kids. But when this woman called him a week later and asked why he hadn’t called her, that playful, too intimate conversation led to many more. Two months later at an out-of-town training session they began a four-week affair.

Today, five years later, Michael will tell

you that those seemingly innocent flirtations can quickly lead to destruction. “I ended up losing my loving wife and family—everything that was important to me—for a few weeks of craziness,” he said. “The pain of realizing what I’ve done is unbearable.”

Carolyn Kehr, a marriage and family counselor, says, “The divorces of 75 percent of the couples I’ve counseled over the last 10 years have been related to affairs.”

No one starts out to have an affair—but giving in to the short-term pleasure of another person’s attentions—other than your spouse—can cause you to lose everything you *really* wanted.

5. Feelings can be deceiving.

Kathy, who was in her twenties and newly married, learned that following her feelings can have tragic consequences.

“My husband was away a lot and most evenings I was home alone. I felt so lonely and empty. Many nights I cried myself to sleep and wondered why I ever got married.

“Then when I would meet a man who made me feel alive and passionate about life, I concluded these feelings of excitement confirmed that I was no longer in love with my husband.

“Rather than praying and giving my concerns to God, I took the situation in my own hands and moved out. I was convinced I had made a mistake in getting married.”

Still single today, Kathy wishes some wise woman would have come alongside her, prayed with her, and gently reminded her that love is a choice and a commitment, not an emotion.

Leslie Vernick, author of *How to Act Right When Your Spouse Acts Wrong*, warns, “Feelings come and go and change rapidly. Although it is important to know and to understand what we feel, it is very dangerous to base life-long decisions on emotions.”

Our friend Cindy didn’t listen to us. She opted for the divorce. But she didn’t have to. If she’d been willing to uncover the lost treasures that first drew her spouse and her together, with God’s help, her current pain or discontentment could have been transformed into long-term joy and abundant blessings. Like my son learned many years ago, short-term pain can indeed lead to long term gain.

Georgia Shaffer, author of A Gift of Mourning Glories: Restoring Your Life after Loss, is a professional speaker, a life coach, and a licensed psychologist in Pennsylvania. Visit Georgia at www.GeorgiaShaffer.com

World in focus

RCUS Synod adopts plan for Denominational Seminary

The annual Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States, meeting at Grace Reformed Church in Mitchell, South Dakota, from 15-18 May, 2006, took a large step toward putting the denomination back into the business of training its own ministers. It did this by overwhelmingly adopting the report of a Special Committee on "Procedures for a Denominational Seminary." The RCUS had established denominational seminaries beginning in 1824, when its first seminary was founded at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, until 1934, when the present body of RCUS churches separated from these churches entering a modern ecumenical merger. This merger took three denominational seminaries with it into the larger body.

The "Procedures for a Denominational Seminary" adopted by this year's Synod opens the door for either a new seminary or an existing seminary to petition Synod to be put under its oversight. These procedures cover matters that range from a "mission statement" for an RCUS denominational seminary to the qualifications of professors and the curriculum to be taught. Bylaws for the seminary's Board of Trustees and a Board of Visitors from Synod are also included. Professors will have to be approved by Synod, but their ministerial credentials are subject to the Classis (Presbytery) of which they are members. The Board of Trustees is responsible for funding the operation.

+ *Reformed Church in the United States, 927 East Graceway Dr., Napoleon, OH 43545*

Kenyan hosts abandon Bishop for liberal views on gays

The Bishop of Chelmsford, the Rt. Rev. John Gladwin, has been told by the Archbishop of Kenya, the Most Rev. Benjamin Nzimbi, that their official visit has been cancelled because of Gladwin's liberal views on homosexuality.

The bishop, his wife and 20 curates were halfway through a visit to Kenya aimed at strengthening the 20-year links between the dioceses of Embu, Mbeere, Kirinyaga, and Meru in Kenya and Chelmsford.

At first the clergy was warmly welcomed, but the archbishop changed his stance after being informed that Bishop Gladwin last month became one of four patrons of Changing Attitude, a pressure group campaigning for homosexual rights.

The Anglican Church in Kenya is part of the conservative "Global South" group that is opposed to any relaxation of the Anglican Church's traditional teaching about homosexuality.

The Rev. David Peak, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Secretary for International Development, traveled from Sudan for a meeting with

Archbishop Nzimbi in Nairobi to try and smooth out the problems.

+ *The Anglican Church of Kenya, the Most Rev Benjamin M. Nzimbi, PO Box 40502, Nairobi, Kenya*

Regional Council of ICCC meets

The North American Reformed Council of the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) held a two-day conference at the historic Bible Presbyterian Church of Collingswood, New Jersey in May. This church was pastored for many years by the late Dr. Carl McIntire, founder of the ICCC. Dr. John A Decker, President of the regional council, enthusiastically set the tone of the meetings. The purpose of which was to encourage, strengthen, and rebuild the witness of the ICCC in North America. Decker emphasized that "the cause has not changed and Christ has not changed."

+ *Dr. John Barela, President, ICCC in America, 10977 E. 23rd St., Tulsa, OK 74129 (918) 234-0462*

South China church senior leader beaten again in prison

It was reported by The China Aid Association (CAA) that religious leader of the South China Church, Gong Shengliang, has been beaten again

in Hong Shan prison, Wuhan, Hubei Province.

Gong told his two sisters who visited him on 18 Apr., that on 21 Mar., a prisoner named Lei, who was assigned by the prison officer to watch Gong day and night and report to the officer, had beaten him without cause.

The prisoner who beat Gong did not receive any punishment and was praised from the prison officer while Gong was punished by subtracting two merit points he had gained last year.

+ *ASSIST News Service, PO Box 609, Lake Forest, CA 92609-0609*

Carey calls for interfaith coronation

The Rt. Rev. and Rt. Hon. George Carey, former Archbishop of Canterbury, has said that the coronation of Prince Charles must be an "interfaith" event with "very significant changes" so that it is inclusive of other religions now growing in the United Kingdom. Prince Charles, who will ascend to the throne upon the death or abdication of his mother the Queen, has let it be known that he wishes to be "Defender of Faith" rather than "Defender of the Faith."

The oath taken at coronation currently requires the monarch to maintain to the utmost

Secondary Teachers wanted

Wainuiomata Christian College is presently seeking committed, flexible, and enthusiastic Reformed or Calvinistic Christians to help teach Christian youth. Our aim is to develop a biblical world and life view in our students as well as provide an academically sound education so as to equip students to serve the Lord in this world.

We have vacancies for part- or full-time classroom teachers commencing in January 2007. We will negotiate particulars with the individual teacher. We are particularly looking for registered and experienced teachers for (1) Mathematics and Science and (2) English Language and Literature. Experience with Cambridge International Examinations at AS or IGCSE will be considered an advantage.

The closing date for all applications is Friday, September 22, 2006.

The range of levels at Wainuiomata Christian College is presently from Form 1 through to Form 7 (Years 7 - 13). We are presently developing courses aimed at the Cambridge International Examinations Advanced Subsidiary qualification. Our curriculum is Reformed and classical Christian in intent.

Wainuiomata Christian College is located in the Hutt Valley, near Wellington, New Zealand. It is one of two independent private schools owned and operated by the Christian School Association (Wellington District). Our website is viewable at www.wellingtonchristianschools.org.nz. We are happy to answer any questions about the school - either a Board member or the Principal can respond.

Interested people can obtain a Teacher Application form and/or more information by contacting us at:

e-mail: admin@wellingtonchristianschools.org.nz telephone: (04) 564 8552/ fax (04) 564 9305 Postal: PO Box 43-127, Wainuiomata 5014, New Zealand

of their power the Laws of God and the true profession of the gospel and the Protestant Reformed Religion established by law. While Lord Carey's background is evangelical, he has taken a number of controversial stands both during and after his arch-episcopate - perhaps most notably supporting the ordination of women at the categorization of those who did not support the measure as heretics. While the current Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev. and Rt. Hon. Rowan Williams, is generally seen as being more liberal than Lord Carey, Archbishop Williams has opposed changing the

vow. In 2003 he stated, "Unless something really radical happens with the constitution, he is, like it or not, Defender of the Faith and he has a relationship with the Christian Church of a kind which he does not have with other faith communities."

Although Queen Elizabeth II recently turned 80, she is in robust health and is not expected to end her reign in the near future.

+ Rev. Mr. Charles A. Collins Jr., 289 Hastings Dr., Goose Creek, SC 29445

Prison Fellowship program struck down by Federal Judge

US District Judge Robert Pratt of Des Moines, Iowa, has ruled that Prison Fellowship's InnerChange Freedom Initiative violates the First Amendment's clause barring government from the establishment of religion and has ordered the program at an Iowa correctional facility be closed within 60 days and US\$1.5 million in state funds be repaid.

Pratt's ruling came after a trial last fall in which Americans United for Separation of Church and State, on behalf of some Iowa inmates and Iowa taxpayers, alleged that InnerChange represented state funding of religion.

InnerChange is administered by the faith-based Prison Fellowship Ministries founded by Charles Colson to promote good citizenship qualities in prisoners.

The judge said that the program amounts to the establishment of an evangelical Christian church within the walls of a state prison.

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, told Baptist Press that "a federal judge finds a prison rehab program that actually works and has much lower recidivism rates than other programs, and so he declares it unconstitutional because it dares to bring a faith element into the program. It is my

understanding that there were very careful safeguards in place by Prison Fellowship to make certain that there was 'separability' between the services that were paid for by the state and the religious instructional materials that were paid for by private funds."

Land is confident the decision will be reversed.

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

+ Americans United for Separation of Church and State, 518 C St., NE, Washington, DC 20002 (202) 466-3234

Louisiana Governor will not veto abortion ban

Gov. Kathleen Blanco announced 2 Jun. that she would not veto legislation that prohibits abortion with two exceptions - to protect the mother's life when there is a "substantial risk of death" or to deter "serious permanent impairment of a life-sustaining organ," the New Orleans Times-Picayune reported.

Blanco, said she would have preferred the bill include exceptions in cases of rape and incest.

The House voted 66-37 against an amendment that would have permitted abortion in the first 13 weeks of pregnancy in the cases of rape and incest.

This Louisiana version would go into effect only if the Roe v. Wade ruling is overturned or a federal amendment protecting unborn life is ratified.

+ The Louisiana House of Representatives, PO Box 94062 (900 North Third St.), Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Bible links for Recovery movement

Two links are now available for the New Testament and supplemental resources for the recovery movement. The Bible is in the New International Version or Today's New International Version translation, and is supplemented by stories and helps for people that have various types of addictions.

+ <http://www.ibs.org/press_release/index.php>
<<http://www.journeyofrecovery.org/recovery-nt.htm>>

Religious freedom panel disappoints Christians

Christians weary of multifaceted, state-backed assaults were disappointed by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom's failure to include India in its 2006 recommendations as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC). The commission recommended the US State Department keep India off the CPC list despite acknowledging that "concerns about religious freedom in India remain, particularly indications that attacks on Christian churches and individuals persist - in some area at alarmingly high levels - without adequate prosecution."

The commission noted that Rajasthan state, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party, has seen serious attacks on Christian individuals and institutions by members of extremist groups espousing Hindu nationalism.

Dr. John Dayal, secretary general of the All India Christian Council, said, "It is time all of us, in India and abroad, to fully understand the magnitude of the havoc that militant wings of the 'Sangh Parivar' (family of Hindu extremist groups) are inflicting on the federal character of India."

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

Diploma held after graduate speaks about her faith

Erica Corder, a Colorado Springs student had her diploma withheld because of references she made about her faith in her valedictory address.

Erica was escorted to the assistant principal after her address and told she would not be given her diploma until she scheduled an appointment with the principal.

Erica was asked by the principal to draft an e-mail to parents explaining that he had not approved or condoned her words and to include an apology for what she said. Erica did draft a

90th Birthday NELIE DE VRIES

With thanks and praise to our faithful God, we celebrated the 90th birthday of our Mum and Oma and Great-Oma on 24th July 2006. Mum is well, still driving, and leading Bible studies.

Ps 145 – *Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever.*

With much love from her family -
Agnes and Gary (Drury)

Selma & Louis, and Emma-Rose
(Pukekohe)

Krista & Steve, and Noah (Solomon
Islands)

Lloyd (Auckland)

Gus and Carol (Auckland)

Tim

Suzanne

Donald and Joanne

(Sutton NSW, near Canberra)

Nicole & Peter, and Raphael and baby
due July (Sydney)

Russell (Sydney)

Elissa (Canberra)

Roy and Michele (Christchurch)

Jessica & Malcolm (Christchurch)

Kirsten & Peter (Christchurch)

Nadia

Aaron

72/1381 Dominion Rd, Mt Roskill,
Auckland 1041

note that made it clear that the principal did not know what she intended to say but then she was told by the principal to add one more sentence: "I realise that, had I asked ahead of time, I would not have been allowed to say what I did."

Matt Staver, president and general counsel of Liberty Counsel called such a requirement "outrageous," saying Erica was completely within her constitutional rights to say whatever she wanted.

+ Liberty Counsel, PO Box 540774, Orlando, FL 32854 (800) 671-1776

George Barna survey on tithing

According to a George Barna survey in 2000, the more money a family makes, the less likely they are to tithe. Eight percent of people making under US\$20,000 actually tithe. That number goes down to five percent for those families making US\$20,000 to US\$39,999. The number drops again to four percent for those making US\$40,000 to US\$59,999. Then the number drops to two percent for those making US\$60,000 to US\$74,999, and one percent for those making US\$75,000 to US\$99,999. The number jumps back up to five percent for those making above US\$100,000.

+ The Barna Group, Ltd., 1957 Eastman Ave., Ste B, Ventura CA 93003

Church pays separation agreement

The congregation of First Presbyterian Church St. Petersburg, Florida, has agreed to pay almost US\$130,000 as part of a separation agreement with the Rev. Charles A. "Church" Jones, III who has been pastor of the church for just over ten years.

Jones announced his decision to resign in November saying he was searching for a new job because of "unrest and concern" from some members of his congregation.

Jones ended his pastorate at First Presbyterian the end of May.

+ First Presbyterian Church, 701 Beach Dr., N.E., St. Petersburg, FL 33701 (727) 822-2031

Malawi Presbyterians may let Pastors carry guns

For the past few months, 16 pastors of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) in Malawi, have been targeted in armed robberies.

Because of the increase in violence towards pastors, the CCAP has proposed that pastors be allowed to own and carry at least one firearm for protection. Newspapers in the area have reported that "Clergy have been targeted by armed robbers [because] criminals know they are unlikely to own guns." Although prayer meetings have been started, discussion to allow arms is already underway with the general secretary.

+ Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Rev. Y.A. Chienda, PO Box 30398, Capital City, Lilongwe 3 Malawi

World Alliance of Reformed Churches and NHKA meet

A seven member delegation of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) visited the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (NHKA) from 5-8 June, 2006 in Pretoria. The visit was formed from the NHKA's application to have its membership of WARC restored, and the main focus was to gather information and input from various stakeholders.

According to General Secretary of WARC, Dr. Setri Nyomi, the Executive Committee had embarked on a two-year process with the NHKA to restore NHKA's full privileges of membership of WARC. "The outcome of this visit is a report that will be submitted to the WARC Executive Committee at its next meeting in October 2007. A decision regarding the restoration of the NHKA's membership will then be taken."

Both WARC and the NHKA agree that the discussion were fruitful.

+ World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 150 Route de Ferney, PO Box 2100, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland

+ Reformed Ecumenical Council, 2050 Breton Rd. SE, Ste 102, Grand Rapids, MI 49546 (616) 949-2910

"Answers" magazine

June marks the launch of a new flagship/creation/worldview publication of Answers in Genesis: "Answers" magazine.

"Answers" magazine takes a look at the root

of the real issues – the foundation of a person's belief system (or worldview). Throughout its 80 pages, "Answers" magazine addresses those things that shape a person's worldview and poses the questions: is it man's opinion or God's infallible Word? Is it Hollywood or God's Holy Word?

According to the Barna Institute, only five percent of adults and half of all evangelicals have a Biblical worldview. And less than half of all born-again adults and only nine percent of born-again teenagers believe in absolute moral truth.

To browse articles from the first issue go to: < www.AnswersMagazine.com>

+ Answers in Genesis, PO Box 510, Hebron, KY 41048 (859) 727-2222

Disassociation between Church of Puerto Rico and UCC

On 10 Jun., 2006, the United Evangelical Church of Puerto Rico, voted to disaffiliate with the United Church of Christ (UCC). The final vote was 75 percent in favor of the resolution. This disassociation breaks a partnership that goes back more than 40 years.

The churches that voted to disaffiliate did so because of conflict over the UCC's stance on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues.

+ United Church of Christ, 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115 (866) 822-8224

Upper Primary School Teacher Vacancy

Calvin Christian School is seeking a teacher who believes in the vision of Christ-centred education in a school which has a mainly Christian student population from outside the Reformed Church.

We are located in an area of Auckland where our small class-sizes and biblical curriculum has found a warm and growing response.

We are specifically seeking a teacher able to teach Grades 3 – 4 (ages 7 till 8), and or 5/6 till 8 (ages 9 till 12 years approximately), from the forth term of 2006. Experience at this level would be advantageous.

We are a confessionally-based school, a member school of the Independent Fellowship of Christian Schools, and operated under the auspices of the Calvin Christian School Trust Board.

Write to:

The Chairman
Calvin Christian School Trust Board
17 Phoenix Place
Papatoetoe, Auckland
Email: sjirk@xtra.co.nz

Choosing to do God's will.....

Hans Voschezang

Do you know where T U L I P stands for? Total depravity. Unlimited election. Limited... I... ?

I was caught out the other day, unable to name them all. A colleague of mine was describing a film he'd seen about a pioneering family in America, and the children's strict upbringing. I came back in the office from the warehouse and he called out, "Hey Hans, you are a Christian; you know all that stuff. What does T U L I P stand for?" There I stood. I named a few...then he interrupted me and named them all, just like that! I was caught off guard, flabbergasted. Some time later that day, in a quiet moment, I asked him how he, a non-Christian, knew so much about Reformed doctrine. He told me that he was brought up in a strict Presbyterian family. His Dad had taught the kids the Westminster Confession, the Shorter Catechism and more of that 'stuff.' When he grew up he 'flagged it all away;' he couldn't believe all that religious 'nonsense.' But occasionally he will support what I'm saying, or stay It's obvious that he knows and understands exactly what I'm talking about. He deliberately rejects everything religious, and sneers at anything decent or morally just, when he has a mate with him.

It reminds me of a story I read in a book written by the late Peter Eldersveld: A university student heard a sermon preached on campus one Sunday, in which the gospel of God's redeeming grace was presented in a dynamic way which confronted him with the claims of Christ. For a while he considered surrendering himself to Jesus; but as time passed, he decided against it. We went on to become an Honours graduate, and was very successful in one of the highest public offices in his country. But he lived an immoral and corrupt life, and in the end his evil deeds caught up with him. He was arrested and charged with treason, fraud and murder; and spent many years in prison. After his release, he was unable to stay long in one place. He lived like a vagrant, moving on as soon as people realised who he was. Finally he came home, a wasted man, old before his time and in bitter disgrace. It was then that he told an old friend, "Sixty years ago I told God that if He would leave me alone, I would leave Him alone—and God hasn't bothered me since."¹

Why one and not another?

We sometimes wonder why some people are so indifferent to the things of God, and others are genuine followers of Christ. Why are Christians so sure about the gospel of the Lord Jesus, while many others reject it? Why do some hear the Word of God and believe it, while others don't? What we do with the teaching of Jesus has a great deal to do with the state of our minds, our attitude and readiness in the way we respond to God's call. How willing are we? That state of mind can also prevent us from responding positively to the teaching of Jesus Christ, and therefore from becoming a believer. It can be a problem, even in Christian families. Already we notice this with the first family in the Bible. Two sons of Adam and Eve; Abel believed God, and Cain rejected Him. Isaac and Rebecca must have brought up their children, Jacob and Esau, in the fear of the Lord. But as they grew up, Jacob followed the Lord and Esau went his own way. In the New Testament, Timothy worked happily alongside Paul in the mission field spreading the gospel. Paul's other co-worker, Demas, deserted him because he loved the world. When Jesus was teaching during the religious feast in the Temple, many bystanders got angry and dismissed Him outright, saying He was demon-possessed. Others put their faith in Him. Once again, two groups of people with two different responses to what Jesus said.

Obedience shows the right attitude

Why these two different ways of thinking? Jesus explained this way, "*If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.*" (John 7:17) The Lord is talking about our obedience to God's will for our lives. In other words, if we choose to do God's will, we will discover that God, Who speaks to us through His Word with authority, is not speaking merely as a man. Our attitude, and how we respond to God will, displays our obedience to Him or the lack of it. We can figure out God's will from His Word and from His Commandments. We learn what God is like; that He is holy and pure, just but also merciful. What we do with Jesus' teaching will reveal whether we are of God or not. It's not a mere outward conformity—religious routine in servile obedience—but a mindset, a disposition of the heart. Choosing to do

God's will is a commitment for life. If we can't see it this way or don't believe that Jesus' teaching is from God, and if we are disobedient to His will and prefer to do our own thing, we are rejecting God in favour of the world. In 1 John 2 vs 15-17 we read, "*Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the craving of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives for ever.*" We often identify 'the world' with people who openly and deliberately do things contrary to God's will. But does 'the world' not live in our hearts as part of our human nature? In today's materialistic world there is so much on offer: whatever we want is often only a pushbutton away. Who needs God? Who wants to be dependent on God when we can fix things ourselves? We have become so arrogant and self-centred that the only thing we can think about is me...me...me!

As mentioned before, Paul's companion Demas was a fellow believer. He worked alongside Paul for a while spreading the gospel, then left him because he loved the world. He chose not to do God's will, and therefore could no longer be a witness for Christ. As Christians we must live in the world, but not be part of it. That's not always clear-cut and easy. By living and working in this world, we become accustomed to the attractive ways of the world. If we are not careful we too can be swept along in the maelstrom of this world, knowing that it is against God's will. We then become estranged from God. We start interpreting the Word of God differently so that we can hang on to the things of the world we love to do. Time and again we need to go back to basics: back to Jesus' teaching, not only in the gospels, but throughout the whole Bible. And when we believe Jesus' teaching, because it is from God, we want to know Him better and thus love Him and obey Him. It's the best decision we can ever make.

For further reading: 'Don't Waste Your Life' by: John Piper; 'What we do with Jesus' teaching' by: M P Geluk

(Endnotes)

- 1 Page 49 'Nothing but the Gospel' by Peter Eldersveld

A feminine focus

Sally Davey

A review of 'Safely Home,'

by Tom Eldredge, Vision Forum 2003

Tani Newton

For over two thousand years the Western world has been at war. Whether flags have flown and armies have marched to die, or whether flocks have sought the noonday shade in peace, one battle has raged unceasing: the battle for the hearts and minds of men. The contenders in this conflict are the two greatest influences which have shaped our society and culture, namely, the Graeco-Roman worldview and the Judeo-Christian worldview. The Graeco-Roman worldview centres around the autonomous individual and the democratic state and exalts the human mind through reason and the human body through athleticism, while the Judeo-Christian outlook values obedience before God, humility, wisdom and godly relationships. Sometimes one has had the upper hand, sometimes the other - even within the church - but most of the history of the West can be understood in terms of the conflict of these two ideals. Such is the contention of this remarkable book, which is as hard to put down as it is to stop quoting.

A pattern

Historians have noted that the rise and fall of civilizations follows a very uniform pattern. A civilization begins when many strong families or clans unite for their common benefit and protection, and is built up by strong family loyalties, a high birth rate and a strict code of sexual morality. The culture continues to advance and flourish up to a certain point at which prosperity becomes decadence, family bonds give way to individualism and the state begins to take over more and more of the functions of the family. Eventually the family as an institution is virtually obliterated and the state becomes mother and father to all of its citizens. At this point, every form of sexual immorality becomes socially acceptable, art culture disintegrates, the birth rate falls below replacement level and the civilization slides into its decline and fall.

Of course, it doesn't take a genius to see where that places us, nor is this the first time it has been pointed out. But Tom Eldredge has a message he wants us to hear: We still have time to save ourselves from this

corrupt generation; we still have time to get our families safely home.

The Hebrew philosophy of education

I seized on this book when I first saw it because it deals with a question which has perplexed me for years: What ever happened to the Hebrew philosophy of education, and why is it that our society's entire concept of education, even in the Christian schools, seems to be derived from the Greek gymnasium? The beginning of the answer to this question, apparently, lies way back in the intertestamental period. Following the return from the Babylonian exile, the Jewish nation became absorbed into the Greek empire of Alexander the Great, subsequently divided into ten rival kingdoms. For about 150 years the Jews were able to preserve their national identity and religious freedom, but in this time of relative peace - as so often happens - danger arose from another quarter. To quote the First Book of Maccabees:

It was then that there emerged from Israel a set of renegades who led many people astray. 'Come,' they said 'let us reach an understanding with the pagans surrounding us, for since we separated ourselves from them many misfortunes have overtaken us.' This proposal proved acceptable, and a number of people eagerly approached the king, who authorized them to practise the pagan observances. So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, such as the pagans have, disguised their circumcision, and abandoned the

holy covenant, submitting to the pagan rule as willing slaves of impiety.

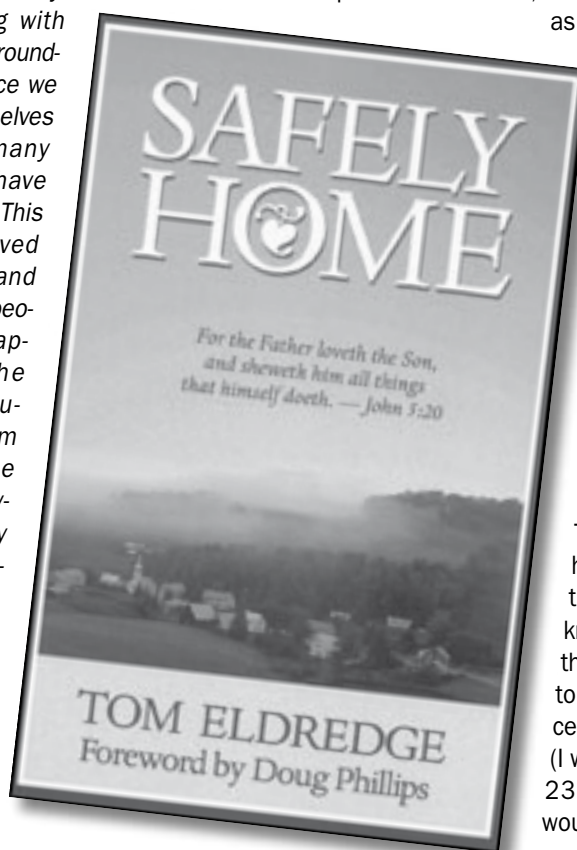
'Gymnasium', of course, is the Greek word for what we call a 'school'. "They built a school in Jerusalem, such as the pagans have...as willing slaves of impiety." Ha! I've never read the apocrypha before; I wish I had.

The influence of the Greek philosophy of education

Not long after this, the evil king Antiochus Epiphanes ordered the forced Hellenization of his entire kingdom, inflicting horrible tortures on the Jews who refused to offer sacrifice to Zeus. At this time the family who became known as the Maccabees emerged as leaders of the faithful and led a successful revolt, and the two worldviews literally met on the battlefield, with the Greeks suffering embarrassing defeats and eventually granting the Jews religious freedom. In peacetime, however, the subtle process of Hellenization continued once more.

During the exile, the Jews had established synagogues, where knowledge of the Law was taught by a group of scholars known as the 'scribes'. In performing this function, the scribes had usurped the place of the priests and Levites, whom God had ordained as teachers of the Law,

and they now went on to usurp the God-ordained role of fathers, demanding that all Jewish boys be brought to their Greek-styled schools to be taught the Law according to the scribes' interpretation, which divided the Law in the manner of Greek logic. These schools were highly effective in transmitting head knowledge, but left out the heart relationship to God which is at the centre of the Covenant. (I won't quote Matthew 23, because people would say I wasn't be-



ing nice.) It was into this context that John the Baptist was sent to "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers". Evidently there were many faithful Jews who ignored the scribes' dictates and continued to bring up their own children, as the Law itself demanded. But the important point for us

is that both systems - Hebrew education in the home and Greek education in the school - passed into the culture whose dying form we inhabit, and both have continued to be employed as the war of the worldviews has raged on down the ages.

The effect of the Industrial revolution

The Greek side won a signal victory in the second half of the nineteenth century, when, in the wake of the devastation wreaked on rural and family life by the Industrial Revolution, virtually the entire Western world instituted universal state schooling - and the churches, beset within and without by higher criticism, Darwinism, revivalism, egalitarianism, feminism, socialism, and foes beyond number, put up little resistance. Only as the state schools began to shed their facade of moral respectability and show themselves as mighty engines of humanism did the other side think to counter with 'Christian schools'. Tom Eldredge makes the fascinating observation that Christian schools are one third right. They teach the right content, but with the wrong methodology and in the wrong context. God's design for education is discipleship - a relationship - in the context of the family. After all, God Himself is a Trinity of Persons in a perfect relationship - "God is love." He created us for relationships, with Himself and with one another. Adam enjoyed deep fellowship with God and an ever-deepening understanding of Him as they walked together in the Garden. But alas, there was another 'educator' there who offered a quick route to having one's eyes opened. "You will not surely die!" Ever since that day, Tom Eldredge observes, we have been willing to sacrifice relationships for a quick route to knowledge.

The place of fathers

That is why the revival of interest in Hebrew education is one of the most exciting developments taking place in our society today. When the modern 'home schooling' movement began, it still tended to be Greek-patterned, and it also tended to be seen as a mother's concern - just one more thing for Mum to fit in with the cooking and sewing and washing. But in these perilous times for the family, it seems that God is once again turning the hearts of the fathers to the children. Tom Eldredge is one of the not-so-ordinary dads whose hearts and lives have returned to the home, and his book - for a fairly small and inexpensive publication - contains a wealth of encouragement for fathers, mothers, grandparents, pastors, and all the 'singles', widows and other left-out

people whose vital ministry in the church has been eroded by the decline in home and family life. He says,

Rebuilding the family

If we want our churches filled with godly women like Sarah and men qualified to be elders (1 Timothy 3:3-7; Titus 1:6-9), we must commit ourselves to rebuilding the family. If we want to see "a people made ready for the Lord" (Luke 1:17), we must commit ourselves to establishing home education under the local church.

And, when parents become successful, the church will reap the benefits: men who are apt to teach, women who know how to love their children, and older women who will teach the younger women to love their husbands and children. The church will consist of people who have opened their hearts and lives to children and have allowed God to increase their capacity to love through the stretching process of learning to love at home.

And, mere ideas can be found in books; such knowledge can be transmitted and then tested, like the multiplication tables...For the task He had in mind, however, Jesus knew He had to spend countless hours with His disciples, even to the point of weariness. Do we have such a vision for what we want our children to do with their lives? We should. And if we do, we should devote enormous amounts of time to them, even to the point of weariness.

And, the stronger the family, the stronger the church; the stronger the church, the more blessed the nation.

Of course, this is an American book, and its contemporary references are to the situation in the United States. But it seems to me that its message is, if anything, even more urgent in Kiwiland, where change can take place at a bewildering speed and where civil liberty is disappearing before our eyes. It is high time we remembered Lot's wife. We don't need to get our children home so we can wrap them up in bales of cotton wool. We need our children at home so that we can bring them up in blazing faith and lead them out as champions of justice and liberty and truth. No human institution or programme is ever going to do that for us. May God Himself raise up an army of Maccabees in this generation.

Mrs. Tani Newton is a member of the Reformed Church of Oamaru.

50th Wedding Anniversary

of

Joe & Margaret (Gré) Wielemaker



on 24th of August 2006, D.V.

Frans & Janet Wielemaker
Alicia, Jesse, Andre, Caleb
(British Columbia, Canada)

Antoinette & Alan Armstrong
Hayley, Joshua
(Auckland)

Elaine & Jim Bergshoef
Jenny, Chris, Johnny
(Ontario, Canada)

John & Deana Wielemaker
(Auckland)

Annemarie & Phil Caffyn
Brandon, Jackson, Rebecca
(Hamilton)

*Blessed are all who fear the LORD,
who walk in his ways.*
Psalm 128:1

11/66 Avonleigh Road,
Green Bay 0604, Auckland

The Gates of Jerusalem

The Dung Gate (Refuse Gate)

Patricia van Laar

Mark 7: 20-23 “*What comes out of a man makes him unclean. For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside, and make a man unclean.*”

A Gate of Shame

What a horrible name for a gate—yet how essential it was to the city of Jerusalem. This was the gate through which was carried out the filth of the city. God’s city must be undefiled. He required the Jews to be fastidious about cleanliness. During their sojourn in the wilderness, He gave the Israelites, in the laws of Leviticus, precise details for the practice of cleanliness—disease preventative regulations, remarkably modern in outlook and practice. Some of the principles behind these laws are looked upon by the medical profession today as knowledge that results from *modern discovery and research*—another confirmation of the inspiration of the Scriptures!

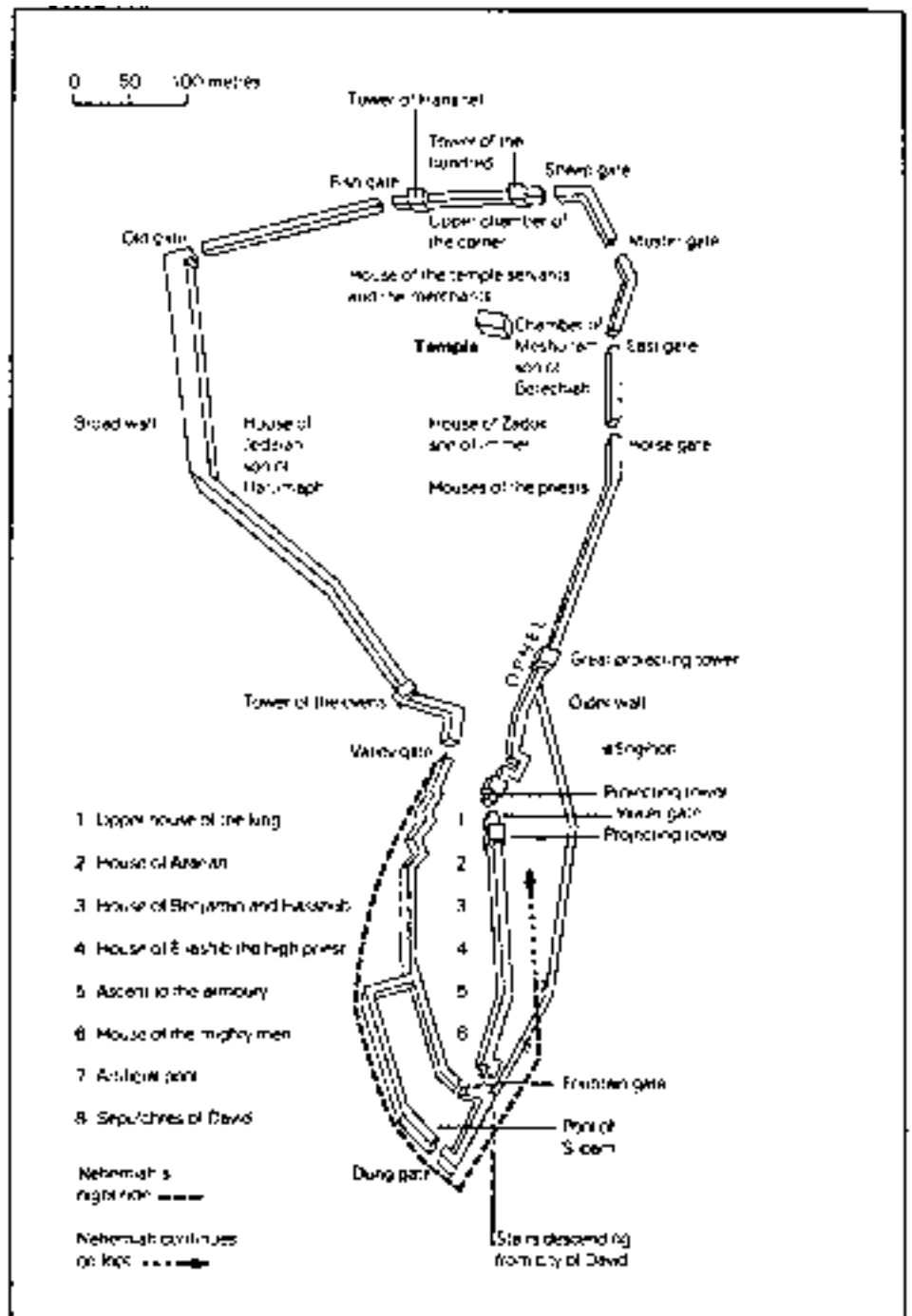
The Dung Gate may have been the Potsherd Gate of Jer. 19:2. This makes sense, for what use to a city are broken pieces of ceramic material, molded from clay and fired into cups, plates and other useful objects? Broken, their usefulness is lost. It was near this gate that the Lord commanded Jeremiah to stand while he denounced the city, foretelling the disaster to befall those who had defiled it, by forsaking Him for foreign gods - Baal with filthy worship; and worse, following the practice of Molech-worshippers by sacrificing their children to Baal in fire. Broken pieces, useless to God and man.

Two closely tied gates

There is a close connection between the Valley and the Dung Gates. Nehemiah 3:14 notes that the latter was joined to the Valley Gate by only five hundred yards (about 450 metres) of wall. Both gates in ancient Jerusalem led to the Valley of Hinnon, which in Jeremiah’s time was associated with the worship of Molech. The child sacrifice mentioned above involved a brass idol of the god, arms outstretched to receive the babies placed literally into its fire-heated brazen hands. Later, because of the desecration of Molech,

the valley was used as the place of refuse, and for burning the corpses of criminals and animals. Like the Valley Gate, the Dung Gate receives only one verse in the sacred record. The men who laboured on the Valley Gate were the same ones who extended their work along the wall to the Dung Gate.

No record is made in the Bible of the workers along the wall on the other side of the Dung Gate, which linked with the Fountain Gate. Why? This will be considered when we arrive at the Fountain Gate. Again we read of the worker who rebuilt; setting doors, bars and bolts in place. Who was responsible for the



Nehemiah's Jerusalem (after Aharoni and Avi-Yonah). The site names are derived from Ne. 3:1-32, proceeding anti-clockwise from the Sheep Gate at the NE Corner. Taken from Derek Kidner's Commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah, IVP.

Dung Gate? Malchiah son of Rechab, ruler of part of Beth-Haccerem. (NIV: Melkijah son of Recab ruler of the district of Beth-Haccerem). Humble work, undertaken willingly by a prominent man of authority.

A cleansing gate

Symbolically, too, the Dung Gate is near the Valley Gate, which in our picture is the place of humility and confession of sin; for are not these two tied up together—sin in general and actual sins committed? The Dung Gate was a very practical gate, with a specific purpose—that of cleansing. From the Dung Gate we may learn that the general acknowledgement and confession of sin, which we pictured in the lowly humility of the Valley Gate, must lead on to holiness of life. The Christian is expected, by the grace of God, to cleanse himself as saint and servant; sweeping out what is unclean and useless. Jesus Himself spelt these things out in the verse quoted at the beginning of this article. ‘Evil thoughts’ is put first by the Lord, for from these spring the actions and attitudes that follow. Evil actions are more objectionable in the eyes of men; for they can be seen, reported in the news (sometimes sensationally or even, I suspect, gloatingly), and they may become the subject of gossip. God sees differently. He sees the heart. Sins of the spirit, sins of attitude, may be less obvious, but are more subtle; for they are easier to hide from the eyes of others. Jesus emphasised this when he spoke of murder and adultery ‘in the heart.’ Paul sets out specific sins of both kinds in Romans 1–3, 1 and 2 Corinthians 1–3, and Colossians 3. Do not harbour envy, arrogance, malice, deceit. These must be taken out of the gate as much as the physical sins. Who but God can truly read the heart of a man?

These lists in the Scripture make sorry reading. The culture of Rome during the early days of Christianity became more and more decadent, especially with Emperor worship and the foul behaviour of evil emperors like Caligula. The culture of Asia Minor, too, was evil, based on matriarchal goddess worship. This is obviously the background to the epistles to the churches of this area, including the letters to the Seven Churches in Revelation, and the letters to Timothy and Titus. Cultic worship at the Temple of Diana (Greek Artemis), a most influential centre, encouraged the use of temple prostitutes.

Don’t we see the same downward steps in our own society, with the gradual wearing away of moral values? Scenes depicted on TV that would have been unthinkable twenty or even ten years ago? A reminder came on

TV a few days ago: the advertisement of a programme highlighting the seductiveness of ancient Rome. May we watch such programmes? As Christians we are told to think on the lovely things of God, things of good repute. Blatant sexual scenes, adultery, homosexuality (portrayed as funny), violence and lust, only cause us to think evil thoughts. Turn the set off quickly when you sense what is coming, or when you are informed that this programme contains violence or worse, and language that may offend ‘some people.’ Such things are a danger to us, God’s people. Our gate today reminds us that such things must be kept ‘outside the city.’

We are repulsed at the thought of babies being placed in the burning hands of Molech. Imagine the outcry if there were such a statue and such a practice in the middle of your town square! Today’s Molech is Selfishness. Where is the outcry about the Molech abortion clinic in the street next to the square?

In 1 Corinthians 2, Paul lists some of these sins and says to the Corinthians, “*and such were some of you, but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*” Thank God this gate is not the last one!

A practical gate

So the Dung Gate, unpleasant though it is, remains a necessity in the life of the Christian. We must all use it, bringing greed, lewdness (doubtful jokes included), slander, folly, out through the gate to the valley of smouldering fire. The Gate may also, by the change it brings in a new Christian, be a means of witness.

Henk discovered this. Henk was a new Christian—joyful, excited. The morning after his experience of the saving grace of the Lord Jesus, and rejoicing in his new-found Saviour, he was driving to work and thinking how wonderful it would be to share his experience with his colleagues. But how to do this in a natural way, without “pushing piety?” As he drove along praying about it (but not forgetting to watch the traffic), the thought popped into his mind: “Stop smoking.”

He didn’t expect this. He knew that smoking was folly. He’d read enough about its being bad for his health and knew that it was addictive, but he shrugged off such an idea. Surely it was not too bad! What would that have to do with speaking for the Lord? However, the thought would not go—stop smoking, stop smoking. So when he arrived at work, he did it. Just like that! Not saying a word about his experience, he got on with

his work without his ‘fags,’ and waited.

About a week later, in the hearing of others, one of his work-mates said to him, “Henk, what has happened to you?” “What do you mean?” asked Henk.

“Well, you’re different. You’re changed. You’ve stopped smoking, and you don’t swear any more.”

And so Henk, without pushing piety, was quietly able to tell his colleagues, who listened respectfully to his words, of how the Lord had come into his life, and was changing him.

Our shame

We all have our areas of difficulty. We all have our arrogance, our pride, our evil thoughts. None of us finds it easy to acknowledge before the Lord our guilt, and especially to use the word ‘filth’ with respect to our own folly. Yet Isaiah does not tell us that all our sins are like filthy rags. No, he tells us that all our *righteousness* is. This shows us that everything we touch is tainted. How awe-ful, then are the words in Isaiah, “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” [I write that word deliberately, as awe-ful in the old sense: ‘full of awe’ (reverential fear and wonder.)] He who knew no sin was made sin for us. Incomprehensible. Unfathomable. Peter puts it before us, “*He committed no sin, and no deceit was in his mouth... He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness.*” He, Jesus, became for us the Dung Gate.

Our cleansing

No, I do not like that last sentence any more than you do. But only through this Holy Gate can we be cleansed. Like the scapegoat, He carried away our iniquity into the wilderness, “where,” to use Pilgrim’s words again, “I saw it no more.”

How blessed the gates God planned for the City of Jerusalem

Each one in position. Each one ready for us to pass through. Each one showing the Lord Jesus in His humility and in His glory. And there are still more to come! Hallelujah!

*That He should leave His throne on high,
And come for sinful man to die:
You count it strange?
So once did I –
Before I knew my Saviour.*

Your Works of Mercy

Through the National Diaconate

We are referring to the corporate work of the Church channelled through the National Diaconate Committee.

2005 was a busy year, if we begin with Boxing Day 2004. The world was shocked by the massive impact of the Tsunami that originated from a quake near the Indonesian islands of Aceh and Nias. Nations bordering the Indian Ocean and Sri Lanka had villages decimated and families mercilessly torn apart. Midyear witnessed the hurricanes Katrina and Rita in the USA. The Pakistan-Kashmir region was rocked by a massive quake in September. These, to mention only a few of the disasters, have stirred the local diaconates to organise offerings for relief and reparation to which congregations have responded magnificently.

A generous response

The churches have spontaneously provided the NDC with funds in the expectation that it would find ways to employ these in expressions of Christian compassion. Other Churches have directed their efforts through known and reliable agencies.

Some \$62,000 has passed through the books of the NDC in the past year. This includes approximately \$12,000, which is a yearly commitment to the HIV/AIDS programme in Tamil Nadu, India, through the C.A.R.E. organisation. Then there is the \$17,000 resulting from the Christmas 2005 Appeal, sent to Zimbabwe to enable a number of families to have their deaf child or children attend and board at the specialist Henry Murray School for the Deaf. This is a mission school operated under the wing of the Reformed Churches of Zimbabwe. Another \$1,000 was contributed to the NZ branch of TLM (The Leprosy Mission) for the rehabilitation of victims of leprosy through their hospital at Muzaffarpur, India, a hospital fully supported by NZ donors. NDC has contributed to this aspect of TLM work for many years now. \$8,000 raised in the Christchurch region was dedicated to the building of modest cottages in the leper village at Dharmapuri, India. (A further approx \$16,000 was sent from the Christchurch region direct to this cause.)

The Tsunami

Unsolicited contributions rolled in for Tsunami and Katrina/Rita hurricane victims. Then just before Synod the Pakistan quake hit, prompting a Synod delegate, who also serves on NDC, to promise to provide a relief channel.

The \$13,230 Tsunami fund was eventually directed to assist the Church diaconal work in Indonesia and Sri Lanka on the recommendation of Baptist Reformed Pastor Boon Sing Poh of Malaysia who visited Sri Lanka 27th Dec 2004, the day after the tsunami. Half of the fund was sent to their worker, Dr Ham, who was actually on a boat heading toward Nias when the massive earthquake occurred at 11.00pm. He landed at Gunung Sitoli on Nias 7.00am the next morning. He wrote "Thanks for your support which will enable my team to carry on ministry in Nias for His glory" and further, "I am writing to acknowledge that

I received Rp. 44,715,431... By God's grace, I was praying about widows who lost their husbands by tsunami of Banda Aceh. The prayer answer was your fund which I will spread to them as follows:

1. Asni – with 5 children, gets 5 million rupiah for school café business.
2. Jap Sen Pien – with 5 children, gets 6 million rupiahs for knitting/tailor
3. Kwe Lie Lan – with 5 children, gets 5 million for home cakes.
4. Kwuan Pit Cin - with 5 children, gets 5 million for home cakes.
5. Lay Kui Lan - with 5 children, gets 10 million for coffee industry.
6. Wong Lie Kiaw – with 7 children, gets 6 million for household small shop.
7. Yap Siu Kien – with 6 children, gets 5 million for household small shop.
8. Jie Lie Yun - with 3 children, gets 5 million for home cakes.

...Please pray for another 45 widows who need help to start a new life."

The total cost of that action was 47 million, largely covered by your donations.

The other half of the Tsunami fund, LKR460,991.74, went to Grace Fellowship Church, Sri Lanka, for Pastor Jeyakanth and team to dig or clean wells, build humble dwellings and assist widows in establishing small businesses.

Other disasters

The Katrina/Rita fund accumulated \$5,100 which went to the Rev. Jack Sawyer who, with his congregation, was actively engaged in the aftermath cleanup, shelter and provisioning of those left homeless.

The destructive quake in Pakistan attracted \$17,641 to a relief fund. Initially it was thought that the World Witness Sahiwal Christian Hospital would treat victims, but no casualties were referred. Eventually the Rev. Frank van Dalen recommended the Bach Christian Hospital (TEAM), Qalanderabad, where government-appointed prosthetic surgery was being performed. \$16,035 has been sent to that Christian work for quake victim relief.

This does not reflect all that is being done by the diaconate office of our churches, but does give a snapshot of that activity directed through the National Diaconate Committee to the international scene. May God stir the compassionate responses of our hearts, in the light of Jesus' infinite suffering, in such a way that glory and praise is accorded His great Name, and that hearts find peace and rest in His so great salvation.

Carl Larsen

Is the Christian Faith defensible?

The evidentialist method

Garnet Milne

II. Evidentialism/Neutral-Ground Method

Let us consider in more detail the evidentialist position, which we have called the **neutral-ground** method of defending the faith. This title I have given to this approach is not meant to be demeaning or a judgement of this view. It is intended only as a realistic description of what is also known as evidentialism.

Who are the main exponents of this approach to apologetics? They include John W. Montgomery, Clark Pinnock, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Josh McDowell, R. C. Sproul, John Gerstner, Paul Feinberg and C. S. Lewis, and no doubt many others who deserve to be mentioned. Theologically they are also a diverse group.

The role of faith: It might seem odd to talk about faith when we are considering a method which relies on evidence. But a discussion on faith is an important prerequisite to understanding the **neutral-ground** method of apologetics.

Sproul, Gerstner and Lindsley in their book *Classical Apologetics* ('classical' is another term for the **neutral-ground** method) make this point.¹

Describing the Reformation description of faith as *notitia*, *assensus* and *fiducia* (21) they note that just having the first two elements is not to possess true saving faith. *Notitia* refers to the data or content of the faith, while *assensus* describes the assent by the intellect to the object of faith. How-

ever, this faith is no better than the faith of the demons who believe and tremble (James 2:19). The third element, *fiducia* or personal trust, must also be present for a person to possess saving faith. This all Christians would, I trust, agree with.

But don't forget, they argue, that while merely possessing *notitia* and *assensus* cannot constitute saving faith without *fiducia*, they are both nonetheless necessary. Hence, they tell us that we must at least present the **data** of Christian belief and press the unbeliever to **assent** to the data as a prerequisite for *fiducia* or trust as the final element of saving faith.

The authors also agree that **apologetics cannot produce this final element**. This is reserved for the sovereign work of God. Those of you familiar with the debate between Calvinism and Arminianism will recognise that the authors of this book, in asserting that *fiducia* can only come from God the Holy Spirit without any assistance from men, are indeed Calvinists, or Reformed, or those who hold to the sovereignty of God in salvation (They would argue that faith comes from God by referring us to Eph. 2:8). Nevertheless, our **neutral-ground** apologists see the apologetic task as crucial because it at least introduces the non-Christian to the data and the possibility for intellectual assent to the arguments presented by **neutral-ground** method. The Holy Spirit does not produce *fiducia* in a vacuum, but uses the **first two elements** of faith to bring the subject to personal saving faith in Christ.

Evaluation: This seems to be a good argument for the necessity of apologetics, but it does not answer the question of whether the neutral-ground method can achieve even the modest goal of our evidentialists—the goal of presenting the data of Christian Theism and evoking intellectual assent to that data. And as we will see, it is wide open to the criticism that the unbeliever is actually receiving different “**facts**” than those understood by the Christian.

Common ground: The **neutral-ground** apologist does not deny that Christians and non-Christians have a different belief system and view of reality. But in endeavouring to

find common ground, this apologist finds at least common assumptions adhered to by the theist and the non-theist. Three are held up as common to all men and are essentially what the neutral-ground proponents mean by natural theology (perhaps include here a brief digression on the link with Thomas Aquinas). They also rightly see from Romans 1 that all men can know God in some sense from “nature.” This is agreed on all sides, but the neutral-ground folk bring in philosophical presuppositions to explain how a natural theology is possible:

- The law of non-contradiction
- The law of causality
- The reliability of sense perception.

The **law of non-contradiction** states that something cannot be true and not true at the same time and in

the same relationship. All men, Theist and non-Theist, alike can agree with this principle.

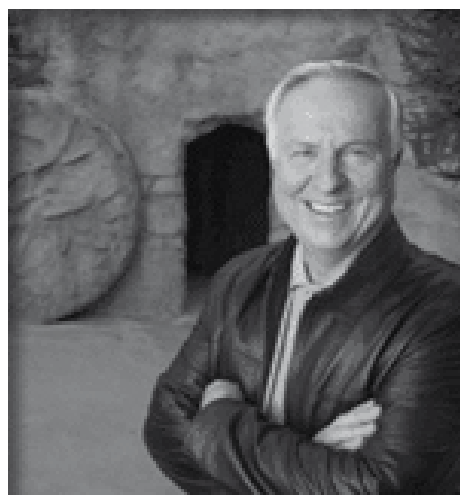
Similarly with the **law of causality**, that every effect has a cause, is said

to be an inviolable principle that all can subscribe to. The **neutral-ground** apologist uses this so-called law of causality to present an argument for the existence of God. Since he perceives the world to be an effect, there must be a cause behind the effect, hence the need for a Creator God. However, logically there is no need to posit God based on this principle alone, because the world could be eternal and therefore an uncaused cause, or god itself.

The third principle, **the reliability of sense perception**, is the final common-ground ability all men possess. With the assumption that these three principles are sufficient to give a natural theology, the apologist tries to prove the existence of God, etc.

The Cosmological argument for the existence of God

It will be best to show how these three principles are used by the **neutral-ground** apologist with another practical example. With these three ideas, the apologist believes



Josh McDowell

that he can prove the existence of God. We will consider the use of “causality” to prove, in their view, the existence of God.

There are several celebrated so-called proofs for the existence of God. One of those is the cosmological argument which is an appeal to the obvious design or order we see about us in the cosmos. This order or design requires us to posit a designer or orderer who is separate from the cosmos—hence God. Sproul and co. present their cosmological argument this way². They argue that the existence of God can be proven from the existence of a molecule.

There are apparently four possible explanations for the existence of a molecule. The molecule could be an illusion; self-created; self-existent; or created ultimately by something which is self-existent.

- They dismiss the first three ideas using argumentation available to the Christian and the non-Christian alike, leaving the final possibility that the molecule must have been “*created ultimately by something which is self-existent*”.
- They add that this being must be God who is not only self-existent, but eternal and transcendent.³
- Since, they contend, the notion of self-creation is irrational, there must be a necessary and self-existent being we call God. Through the use of the law of non-contradiction, the law of causality and the reliability of sense experience, man can prove to a non-Christian that God is necessary, if a single molecule is to exist. While these authors try and give this god, who has been posited through the cosmological argument, the qualities or characteristics of the God of the Bible, they have really only demonstrated that a god of sorts exists, not necessarily the God of Scripture, and therefore, the true God.⁴
- While we agree that God is known through what we call general revelation, or nature, we do not need the cosmological argument to prove this. We will return to this question when we come to consider the **grounded-in-God** apologetics.

What, in summary, is at the heart of the **neutral-ground** or evidentialist approach to apologetics? **Essentially:**

- The **neutral-ground** position holds that **God uses evidence to persuade sinners to receive the Gospel and embrace Christ as their Lord and Saviour.**
- Therefore, not only arguments found in Scripture for proving the truth of Scripture or the existence of God can be appealed

to, but also **arguments based on science, history** and so on.

- The **unbeliever can make much progress** towards accepting a Christian world-view when the Christian apologist persuades him by the use of such evidence.
- Furthermore **the unbeliever does not have to presuppose God's existence and revelation in order to be influenced by the evidence.** He may stand in his non-Christian worldview position and be persuaded as to the truth of Christian Theism.
- **Autonomous reason, therefore, may arrive at a sufficient knowledge of truth** which God can then use to convert the unbeliever.

We have already noticed some of the criticism levelled against the **neutral-ground**

apologist, but their stance becomes far more starkly exposed when we delve into the thinking of the presuppositionalist or the **grounded-in-God** apologist.

We will turn, in our third and final segment, to consider more carefully the **grounded-in-God** apologist.

- 1 R.C. Sproul, John Gerstner, Arthur Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics: A Rational Defense of the Christian Faith and a Critique of Presuppositional Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984)
- 2 Sproul, Gerstner, Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics*, 115.
- 3 Sproul, Gerstner, Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics*, 121.
- 4 There are also challenges to the cosmological argument which makes our **neutral-ground** apologist vulnerable to having his technique turned against him (see Sproul, Gerstner, Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics*, 253 for attacks on the theistic proofs).

Focus on home

Gleanings from our bulletins...

Andrew Reinders

Avondale

Calling all Seniors: A couple of weeks ago quite a few of our senior members enjoyed a pleasant morning of fellowship and games. Several even stayed on for lunch. It was decided to make this a regular happening: Every first Tuesday of the month. Just come when you feel like it. Bring your own lunch if you would like to stay a bit longer. Although this is mainly for seniors [=65+], everyone who feels they would enjoy the company is welcome.

Bishopdale

PNG Missions – Some time ago Mark Vanderpyl advised Session that he was interested in going to Papua New Guinea for 3-4 weeks to assist in the construction of the Leadership Training Centre in Port Moresby. This is the project for which a special collection was held last month. Session

agreed to provide \$3000 from the Missions Trust Account towards Mark's expenses. It is anticipated that Mark will leave in July.

Christian Schools Meeting. A reminder to Christian school parents and supporters of the Christian Education meeting this Tuesday 13 June 7.30pm at Majestic House cnr Lichfield and Manchester Streets. This is an important meeting which will outline plans which will impact the future development of Christian education city wide. Our churches are seen as important contributors to this part of God's kingdom so please ensure that we are well represented on Tuesday and in the subsequent process of community consultation

Bucklands Beach

The ladies in our churches have, for many years, had a little moneybox for small coins. They have been called 'college boxes'. The 'college' being supported in this way is the Reformed Theological College in Geelong, Australia. Joyce Kraak, who is in charge of this ministry, has prepared a little brochure outlining the 'who', 'what' and 'why' of this work. It comes along with today's newsletter.

Welcome to the family! This morning we welcome a number of folks into the life and fellowship of our congregation as new members. 1. Sr Eunice Chuang who has been with

us since her arrival from Taiwan in January of this year. Eunice was a member the Chi-nan Presbyterian Church (Taipei, Taiwan) and was baptised in 1982. She has been studying God's Word in Taiwan (and China) for many years and sees her stay in New Zealand as a time for equipping her for ministry in the future. We welcome you into the life of our fellowship. 2. Simon and Susan Jones - and their two children Megan and Matthew. The Joneses came from Wales where they were members of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales, a denomination which is also part of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), as our churches are. The Rev Chris Kavanagh, formerly of Palmerston North, serves this same denomination just out of London. Welcome into our fellowship! 3. Frank and Jenny Marais - and their three children, David, Abigail and Sarah. The Marais family came to us from Botswana where they had been for seven years. The contrast between ourselves and that country defies description. Previously, while in South Africa, the Marais had been members of the Church of England in South Africa (a conservative denomination which is theologically and in practice very close to ours.) The Marais, like the Joneses, have been worshipping with us for the past 5 months. Welcome! May the Lord bless and make you a blessing in our congregation.

Dovedale

"A Woman after God's own heart": Any woman interested in a day time Bible

Study to look at "Becoming the Woman of Excellence God Designed you to be", as Elisabeth George under titles her most famous book: "A Woman after God's own Heart", is warmly invited to an open morning on Tuesday the 23rd of May at 10am at Margreet Vannoort's place. The only set idea we have is to study this book in a day time study. All other issues like: time, place, frequency etc. are to be decided during this open morning. If you would like to attend but can't come this Tuesday please let any of us know your preferences. We would love to see you and study God's Word together so we can encourage one another to become the women God designed us to be. Joanna, Helen and Jantina.

Warm congratulations to Mr. Henk Vannoort with your 80th birthday this coming Thursday. We thank the Lord for the years you have had and pray for the Lord's blessing on this special day.

Dunedin

Congratulations to Mrs Henny Weegenaar who celebrates her 80th birthday this week. Once again we give thanks to God for his sustaining grace.

Hamilton

Pastoral: This morning we have the privilege to witness the baptism of Luke Ryan Dijkshoorn. We pray for Johan and Gea that they may have the wisdom and perseverance to teach him, together with their

other children, to know the Lord and live for Him.

Presbytery office-bearer training day forward notice : This is planned for Saturday, 22nd July, in the Reformed Church of the North Shore and is open to all men of the Presbytery. Details of the programme and topic are being finalised presently and hopefully will be announced next week but expect it to begin at 9am and conclude with afternoon tea around 3pm. Lunch and morning and afternoon teas will be provided. We look forward to seeing you. Reformed Church of the North Shore.

Hastings

Combined bible studies. I will be speaking on the topic "Baptism: Roman Catholic, Baptist or Reformed". We will meet on Tuesday 20 and 27 of June at 7:30 here at the church. Several members have asked me about our practice of baptism and why we baptise our children. This is the opportunity to find the answer to those questions. If you have specific questions on this topic which you want me to address, please give them to me in writing as soon as possible.

Hukanui

Belated congratulations to Tony and Marian vanderPyl who celebrated 45 years of marriage on the 26th May. Praise be to God for His rich blessing, and may He continue to be your strength and shield for each and every day.



The Congregation of the Reformed Church of Palmerston North

Masterton

Advance Notice. During the second week of the July holidays (10-14 July) we plan to run a Children's Holiday programme at the Cameron Community House, DV. Our aim is to glorify God by sharing the good news of Christ saving sinners, with children in our community. In a couple of weeks we will have a list on the notice board of specific ways you may be able to help during the week of the Holiday Club. In the meantime, you can share in this work by praying for those the Lord may send to hear His word. Jan Erik, Rosalie, Rosalind

Nelson

This morning we will witness the Profession of Faith of Elmien Bezuidenhout and Nicholas van Maanen. These two young people presented themselves to Session last Tuesday evening and allowed us to ask them questions pertaining to why they wished to publicly profess their faith. We were quite impressed with their expressed desire to serve Jesus Christ as Lord of their lives. With this, Session granted their request to profess their faith before the congregation. After they profess their faith this morning, they will then be invited to share in the Lord's supper with other communicant members for the first time.

North Shore

As we all know by now, the Lord took to himself brother Gerhard Strydom about midnight on Tuesday. We thank God that Betty may have the comfort of knowing that while we grieve, we grieve in the hope of the resurrection at the Last Day when "the Lord will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). And with these words, as Paul tells us, may the Lord comfort you Betty, and your children and grandchildren here this morning, A special welcome to all Betty's family members here with us this morning, some visiting from Sydney and Townsville. We pray the Lord be with you and give you safe travel home.

Palmerston North

Baptism. The baptism of Kate Juliet Coupe-rus is planned for June 25.

Pukekohe

This morning Fred and Jolien Grosscurt will profess their faith in the Lord Jesus and join the church as communicant members. We are thankful for the Lord's work in your hearts in bringing you to this step. May He give you strength to keep the promises you make and may you be blessed and be a blessing in the life and fellowship of the church.

Nadine Meyer met with session to discuss her desire to profess her faith. Session rejoiced at God's work in her heart and was happy to agree to her request. A date for Nadine's profession has yet to be set.

Family 'lympics: The Haverlands have had the trophy for 2 years now - that's long enough! So dust off your sneakers and start training for the FAMILY 'LYMPICS. Keep Saturday afternoon on the 15th of July free. More details to follow.

Wainuiomata

This morning we have opportunity to receive the Forsyth family into our congregation as full members. So welcome Bruce, Wendy, Trent and Samantha! We hope that we can continue to show you warm friendship and much encouragement in the years ahead. We also trust that the Lord will bless you all as you continue to settle among us and use your gifts in His Kingdom.

Short report of session meeting. Pastor de Vos opened by reading Acts 20:28-31 and also 1 Peter 5:1-4. We then discussed the role of elders in the Church. Are the elder's executives of a company or are they pastoral shepherds of the flock? The clear Scriptural answer is that they are appointed to shepherd the congregation. Then, in light of this Biblical principle, we discussed how we use our time—does shepherding take the bulk of our time or do meetings and other business? After a fruitful discussion we opened the meeting with prayer.

Auckland Ladies' Presbyterial

On Saturday the 10th June 2006, 75 ladies from Auckland and Hamilton gathered at the North Shore church for the annual meeting together. It was wonderful to have 5 young ladies there to help, and to have Letritia Spies sing for us.

After a delicious morning tea, Martha van Tonder welcomed us. We sang our anthem and many other hymns during the day.

Allie Mooney was our guest speaker, teaching us about 'Personality Plus' and how the church is also made up of four main personality types, with some members having more than one of these types:

The 'Popular/Playful' people like to ask or to be answered with "who?" They are the people's people;

The 'Powerful' people want to know the "what?" and "when?" in life and generally like to lead;

The 'Peaceful' ones are the steady servers and like the answers to "why?" in life;



Auckland Ladies' Presbyterial, North Shore. Morning coffee.

And, lastly, the 'Perfects' want the answers to "how?" They like the facts.

We had many laughs and enjoyed learning about ourselves, and how we can build each other up.

After lunch of soups, fresh buns and salad (the egg was lovely!), Sheryl Rogers led us in the business side of our meeting. The Ladies' Fellowships and Bible Study groups gave us a run-down on what they have done for the past year and what some hope to do this year.

Sue Reeve showed us an easy picture-verse craft that can either be hung, or sat on a shelf. As a farewell gift, the North Shore ladies made one for each of us to take home at afternoon tea.

Thank you especially to the North Shore ladies for such a nice day and we hope to meet next year, D.V., in Pukekohe.



Talk: "Personality Plus"



Lunch



2 of the "young" helpers.



Morning coffee



Craft gifts

Missions in focus Janice Reid

Planting seeds in Pakistan

Fred and Tineke Frericks are members of Wanganui congregation. Earlier this year they spent three months in Pakistan, in conjunction with the ARP (Associate Reformed Presbyterian church of the United States) work that is in progress there. Below is a shortened form of the report they sent to Frank van Dalen.

We left Wanganui for Pakistan 22 Feb, stopping in Bangkok for a day to minimize the culture shock of sudden arrival in Pakistan. This was Frank van Dalen's recommendation, and it certainly helped.

Before we left Wanganui, we got a nice E mail from Ron Brunsen (Sahiwal Hospital) that they where looking forward to seeing us and that an English speaking, 5.6ft bearded

Pakistani man would be waiting for us. This was a great comfort for us and yes at midnight we arrived and saw him immediately. As I spotted him I put my thumb in the air to indicate "I have seen you." Later I heard that was not polite: in Pakistan it means something like our own '2 fingers up'! But they were nice about it—they knew we did not understand.

From the airport it was about 3 hours' driving to our destination, Sahiwal. The compound is a group of houses and garden surrounded by big high walls with broken glass or barbed wire on top and a big steel gate. There is a guard at the gate day and night; sometimes they have a shotgun, but mostly a whistle that they blow every so often, to show that they are alert.

Mr M showed us our accommodation (upstairs). There was a bunch of flowers on the table to welcome us, and a dining suite and a couch and a bed. M told us to sleep and when we were ready we could come downstairs where we would have our meals with Gerry and Joyce, retired missionaries. They would help us to settle in.

At 5 am we heard the call to prayer from mosques all around the compound, but we were too tired and slept some more.

When we finally went downstairs there was a warm welcome, and a Pakistani lunch made by the cook, Mr. S, who does not speak English but understands much.

Gerry showed us around (dusty but otherwise beautiful surroundings) and we met Ron in the office at the Hospital there where also David and Sue from America who were there for 2 more weeks as friends of Ron and Pam and help where they could.

With them and Gerry we went to many villages to see the needs and to encourage them and lay foundation stones for some new churches. We learned a lot and saw even more: the hospitality was outstanding. People here are in real need of help: they are very poor. We learned once again how blessed we are in our part of the world, with the freedoms we have.

Two days after our arrival, two doctors arrived from America. They were to stay for two weeks, and with so many extra foreigners on the compound, it was decided we needed the extra security of a police with gun as guard. He escorted us when we wanted to go to another compound or to the hospital, just in case there were some extremists sassing us out.

We had in that time our 1st party, escorted by police to the Girls Hostel, where we farewelled several girls who had finished school and were going back home some to the villages. Presents were given to all who were leaving, and there was lovely food.

Eventually the American doctors, as well as Gerry and Joyce, left, and then we moved to the other compound where Ron and Pam were living. This was more economical, together we had one cook and cleaning lady so we could be busy with other things. Also, less foreigners meant the police man was not necessary anymore—but we kept the gatekeeper (normal there).

Here we spent time in the evenings, editing pictures and testimonies of the nurses which will be used in a sponsorship campaign in America. This was a big job because there are 100 nurses. But we learned a lot from reading their testimonies: we saw what a sacrifice the families have to make, and what a great opportunity the mission is giving them. We also learned how little money there is to go around, and how much sorrow there is. Yes, the Lord opened our eyes.

Repair work

We spoke with one of the doctors and learned that he would have liked to have done more operations, but the sterilization equipment was not up to standard. After some inquiries we found that there were 2 brand new sterilizers in the store room, and soon Fred was putting one in the theatre. In order to wire it up, the workman wanted to put the whole hospital out of electricity for a half day, but Fred said "No, 5 minutes only, so get everything ready" So they did, and at 5pm the electricity was turned off so we could connect the sterilizer. The operating theatre was not in use at that time, so no problem.

The next challenge was turning it on. We could not decide who should do this, so the man from the technical department said "Let's pray about it," and we did. He was just scared: he expected a fire or some other electrical problem, I think! But when everything worked right, the technical man was very impressed, and now Fred has a reputation for getting things done right.

Fred tried to fix a theatre table which was stuck in one position: the hydraulic controls were not working. He had no success in repairing the table, even after a manual came by special courier from America. But two weeks later, when Fred came into the workshop, he found the bed had been fixed by a maintenance man. The man's name is...wait for it..."Hope not"! This man cannot read or write, and he does not speak English; but he has a technical brain and he said he prayed about the table before working on it.

One day Fred walked in the passageway of the Hospital and a nurse asked him if he was Mr Fred. "Yes," he said, and she said "Dr Michel said that you are in charge." "Of

what?" Fred asked. "Of making a playground for the Pediatric ward." And so it started. A few artistic nurses were given the time to paint some pictures on the wall with fabric paint, and some man cleaned the inner courtyard, and Fred and I went on a shopping spree. We got a double swing, a slide, a rocking swing, a horse on a spring, a double chair swing for outside and a table and two chairs for inside. We also bought other equipment for inside: 4 more colorful chairs, better floor mats, books, toys, coloring books and pencils (this was financed by our family, the hospital didn't have money for that). It was a great success.

Need of schooling

While we were doing this we saw the need of schooling also for boys, especially in trades such as computer, electrician, mechanics for cars and more for motorbikes, and welding! We talked to Dr Ron about this and he thought it a great idea. He suggested that we use a building which had once been a bank, and it sounded excellent for our needs. But to set something up properly takes time, so after some thought and lots of prayer Fred suggested to see if we could set up a Mother-Daughter relationship with a good Christian school but how and who, so we all prayed and suggested to look around and ask around.

The following Sunday we had a student Missionary from Gujranwala who spoke in the Girls hostel. She told us that the school where she works also has a technical side, and that they were looking for a satellite relationship with some one in the south. They have already one in the north (Murray) with great success. The school is already 106 years old so it's well established. What an answer to prayer!

So we made contact and they invited us up to see and talk, we were very impressed and they were very supportive and promised to help wherever they can, advise and even train somebody to be a teacher at our new 'technical school.' The only thing that they stipulated is that they want their name somewhere on the school, and they want the same standard of teaching. That sounds very good because we have already heard that the school has a very good name but they cannot expand. They had a lot of support in the early days from the Ref. Church in the Netherlands.

When we got back to Sahiwal, the board met and started discussing the financial and teaching requirements for the school. With this they also saw the need for teaching conversational English, but we decided to do this separate from the technical school



so that we have more freedom. However, the English classes will be held in the same building. These courses will be three months in duration, and they can also act as a kind of Hobby School, offering subjects such as western cooking, health, and help for illiterate people who need to improve their Urdu. And of course there will also be Bible lessons.

The classroom has to be ready to use before the government will give the O.K. for the course. We would like to go back to be a part of this.

Still work to be done

But in the meantime there were other things to be doing there. There was a need of new hospital beds those old ones are tattered and torn, and the mattresses are worn and too hot for the climate. Putting our thinking cap on and a lot of talking we found a solution: one man was repairing a seat from a chair in the hostel when Fred passed. Fred asked the man if he could do this also to a hospital bed who has a few movable parts. The man said that he could give it a try but he would need 2000R for material. Within a week he made a beautiful bed and not as hot nice and smooth, very comfortable. It was OK'd by Dr. Ron, so now this man has one year's guaranteed work, to fill an order for 50 more beds.



The long overdue nurses hostel rules list has been revised. We suggested they should have a matron who has nothing to do with the hospital or the nursing school, and that there should be no censoring of mail or overhearing telephone conversation etc.

On the last week Fred and Mr. M went to Chichawatni, some 45km from Sahiwal, to inspect an unused mission post on 5 acres of land. This is in the heart of the Sahiwal presbytery; 4,000 Christian families live in this area, and a further 1,000 families in the close vicinity. These people desperately need electricians, welders and metal workers, for there is another great opportunity for expanding the technical school. The estimated cost is between \$25 -30,000 (NZ) to do this in that area. The course can be started in one year's time. We pray and hope that we as a church in N.Z. can do this with them. Let us start. Any other person who likes to be in this team for long or short time let us know. Praise God for this opportunity. With love, Fred and Tineke.

Outreach in Torres Strait

Our sister church, the **Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia**, reports in their prayer notes: "The audio CD of Mark in Torres Strait Creole was successfully distributed [on Thursday Island] with the local newspaper. Please pray earnestly that **Torres Strait Islanders** might see the value of having the scriptures in the language they use every day and would be willing to take ownership of the translation project."

MIF prayer notes

Please pray for the work of **Wally & Jeannette Hagoort** in PNG. Thank the Lord for the progress at the leadership training centre so far, and ask for God's wisdom and direction for the future of the work. Pray also for strength for both Wally and Jeannette after a prolonged 'high season' at the Guest House, which is full almost every night.

Janice Reid has completed a workshop with announcers from all parts of the country where she is based. This month she hopes to spend concentrated time with one new station, helping them to get their initial programmes on air and train a core of volunteer announcers. Pray for strength while travelling, and ability to learn more of the language—which is vitally important for effective training.