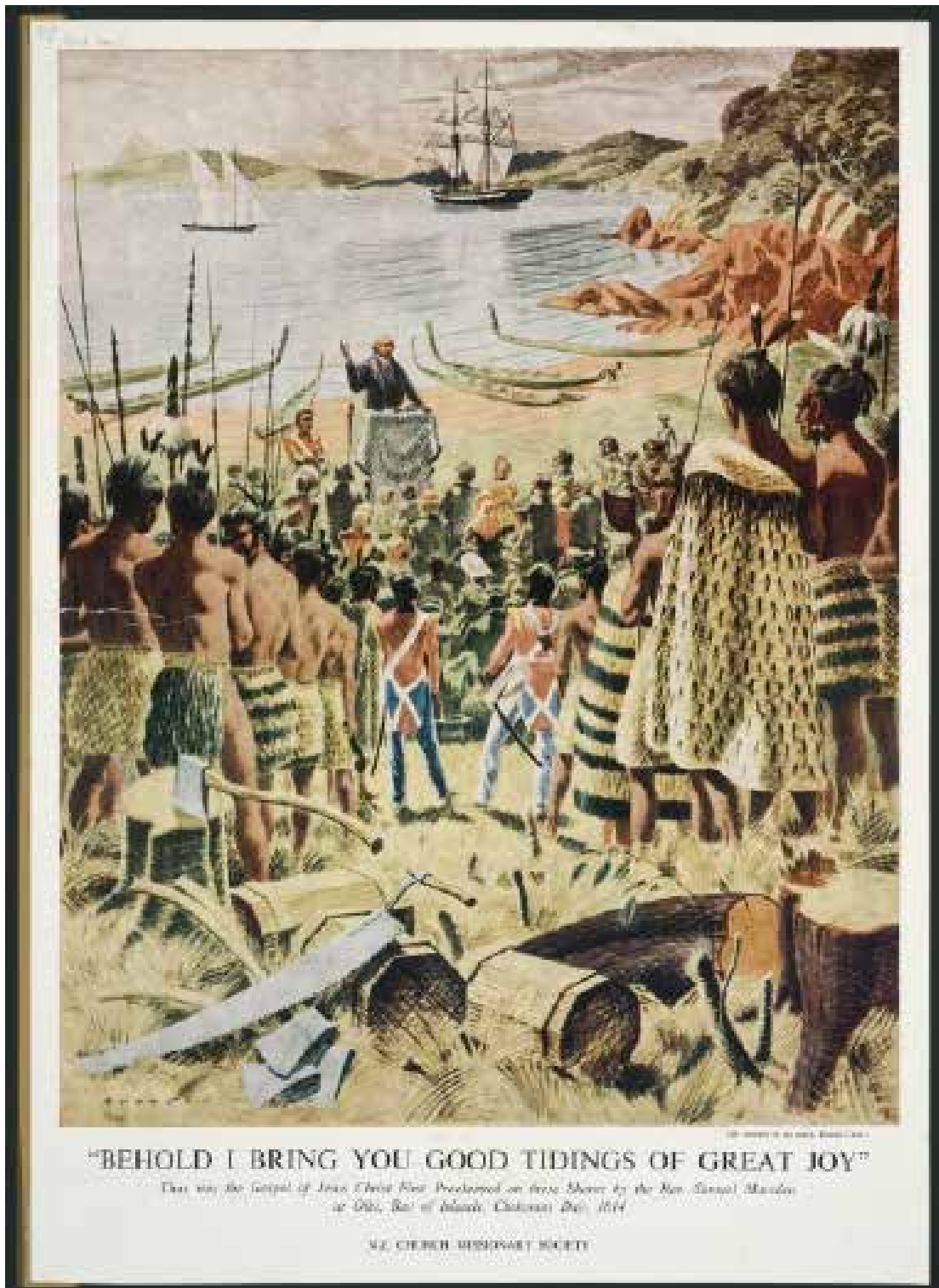


# faith in **focus**

Magazine of the  
Reformed Churches  
of New Zealand

Volume 41/11 December 2014



## Christmas Day 1814

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## Editorial

The name Samuel Marsden is well known in New Zealand for a variety of reasons. One of those could be because there are a number of schools that bear his name. There are sites, plaques, memorials and buildings which are synonymous with the visits by Samuel Marsden. The major reason, however, is the early Christian missions associated with the Church Missionary Society and the preaching of the gospel to Maori in New Zealand.

On Christmas Day in 1814, just 200 years ago, Samuel Marsden preached the gospel in English and led the first Christian worship service for a congregation of 400 Maori, through his translator, Ruatara.

The place where this event took place in the Bay of Islands is marked by a memorial with the engraving "On Christmas Day, 1814, the first Christian service in NZ was held on this spot by the Rev. Samuel Marsden."

Just imagine the scene: "Marsden standing on the shore of Oihi Bay, Rangihoua, Bay of Islands, in a makeshift pulpit, draped with a woven cloth, preaching to a large group of Maori and Pakeha. His translator, Ruatara, can be seen to his right, while Hongi and Korokoro, in their regimental uniforms, are at the heads of their iwi or hapu behind the party of settlers. War canoes are drawn up on the beach behind the preacher, and Marsden's ship, the brig Active, is moored in the stream in the distance". (Alexander Turnbull Library). It could be the scene from any epic book or movie.

For many New Zealanders, this history is either lost or insignificant, mainly because what is Christian is of no interest to them. Yet, the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is of the highest significance in any part of the world. It will have an effect and it will transform people and nations.

While I don't believe we could call New Zealand a Christian nation, nonetheless, it is hugely significant that the gospel had a very positive impact on the settling of this country that we call God's Own.

Let us celebrate 200 years of the gospel in New Zealand and rejoice in the One who is the all-conquering King – Jesus Christ our Lord.

Mrs Sally Davey writes about Samuel Marsden's road to Rangihoua.

Mr John Haverland reflects on the growth of Christianity beyond the Bay of Islands

Mrs Jenny Waldron gives some thought to what contentment is.

In our Christmas meditation, Mr Allen Harris (retired OPC minister) considers the angels in the message of salvation.

Mr Tim Challies reviews *The New Calvinism Considered*, by Jeremy Walker.

Mrs Harriet Haverland reports interesting bits'n pieces from around the churches.

Mr H David Schuringa, of CBI gives a glimpse of what makes a missionary.

Cover image: Clark, Russell Stuart 1905-1966: Samuel Marsden's first service in New Zealand. The Gospel of Jesus Christ first proclaimed on these shores by the Rev. Samuel Marsden at Oihi, Bay of Islands, Christmas Day, 1814 [Christchurch] N.Z. Church Missionary Society [1964]. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. Ref: B-077-006

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.

**NB:** In line with common publishing practice *Faith in Focus* reserves the right to publish the names of all contributors with their articles, unless compelling reasons are given to the editor for not doing so. This applies to both print and online versions.

# Samuel Marsden: The Road to Rangihoua

### Sally Davey

Some particular moments in church history have a special significance; and perhaps few are more significant than the first proclamation of the gospel to a people who have never heard it before. We are remembering such a moment this year, on Christmas Day. Two hundred years ago, on 25<sup>th</sup> December 1814, Church Missionary Society missionary Samuel Marsden preached the very first sermon ever delivered in New Zealand; to Maori people gathered at Rangihoua in the Bay of Islands.

Marsden was very aware of the immensity of the occasion, and equally aware that he was but an ordinary man. We so often assume that the people God calls to do something great must somehow be great themselves – an “extraordinary leader” or some such thing. But Marsden, according to his first biographer, was anything but: “His life ... was not ennobled by birth or rank, nor was he greatly distinguished by splendid talents. Yet he was, in the true sense, a great man; and he was an instance, one of the most striking [of the middle nineteenth century, when the biography was written], of the vast results which may be accomplished when an honest heart, a clear head, and a resolute mind and purpose, are directed, under the influence of the grace of God, to the attainment of a noble object.”<sup>1</sup> This is a good observation, and one bound to encourage the rest of us who are only too conscious of how ordinary we are. How, then, did God so order the life of this man to bring him to the Bay of Islands on Christmas Day, 1814?

Samuel Marsden was born on the 28<sup>th</sup> of July 1764, the son of a Yorkshire tradesman; and his early life was spent among his extended family of weavers, blacksmiths, small farmers and

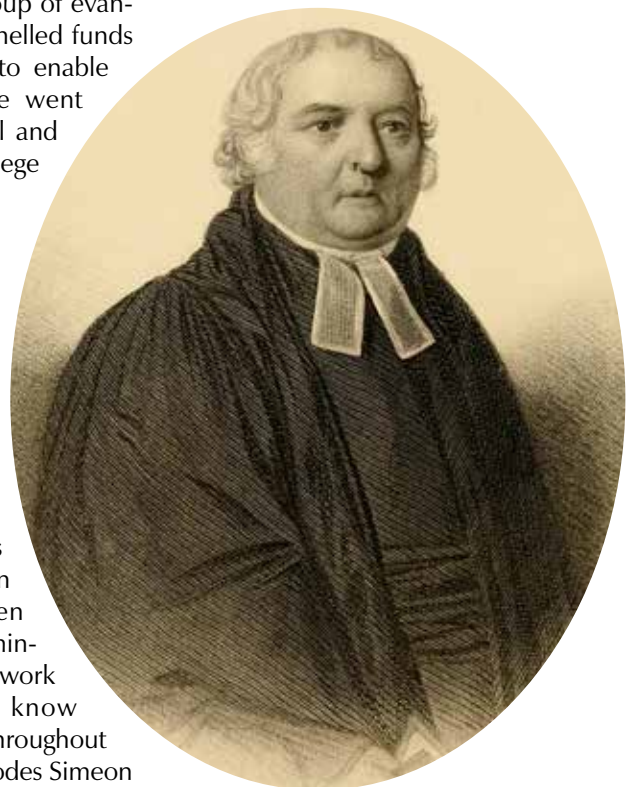
the like. Both his parents were known as people of integrity and godliness; being associated with the ministry of the Wesleyan Methodists. He and his family were simple, honest Yorkshire folk who shared the characteristic Yorkshire bluff frankness and lack of pretension. Later, William Wilberforce, himself a Yorkshireman, was to write that he was “a Man of solid Sense, of great Good temper tho’ not refin’d in his Notions or Manners, & capable of being made eminently useful.”<sup>2</sup> It was as a blacksmith’s labourer, at the age of 21, that Marsden’s own Christian character and desire for learning attracted the attention of Samuel Stone, an evangelical curate in the Church of England. Stone invited him to live in his household, and gave him the beginnings of his formal education. From there, through the help of the Elland Clerical Society (a group of evangelical clergymen who channelled funds to young men of promise to enable their further education) he went on to Hull Grammar School and finally entered St John’s College at Cambridge University.

### Well connected

The sponsorship of the Elland Society connected Marsden with an influential group of fine, evangelical men. One of them, Charles Simeon, was Vicar of Holy Trinity Church in Cambridge, and a fellow of King’s College. Through his long ministry there Simeon disciplined many young men headed for the preaching ministry at home and mission work abroad. Marsden got to know Simeon at Cambridge, and throughout Marsden’s work in the Antipodes Simeon corresponded faithfully with his younger

friend; encouraging him, supporting him in prayer and connecting him with men and funds when most needed. Simeon’s usefulness in Christ’s kingdom in these years cannot be overestimated; and we should be forever grateful that a man trained by him became so instrumental in the establishment of the church in New Zealand.

It was while he was still at Cambridge – even before he finished his degree – that he received an offer from the government to take up an assistant chaplaincy in the territory of New South Wales. This meant he would be serving what was largely a military and penal colony, together with the existing chaplain, Richard Johnson. This offer came through the agency of William Wilberforce and his friends, who were particularly anxious to see that an evangelical



Samuel Marsden. [www.en.wikipedia.org](http://www.en.wikipedia.org)

man was given the post. Marsden at first refused, in humility feeling himself not up to the task, and wanting to complete his degree. However, when asked again, he agreed so long as no one more suited were found. This settled, he was appointed, and being ordained shortly afterward, went back to Yorkshire to prepare for his departure. He married Elizabeth Tristan of Hull a few months later, in April 1793. She was to prove a very faithful and helpful wife. They were to have a large household and many visitors. A practical, well-organised woman, Elizabeth took care of a great many things and left Marsden free to achieve a prodigious amount in his busy, crowded life.

### Opposition

Their passage to Sydney was on a convict ship. It was not a comfortable voyage (Marsden was almost always afflicted with awful sea-sickness); but the most difficult part was the indifference – even opposition – of the captain to Marsden’s desire to encourage spiritual life on board the ship. However, he persevered, and by the third Sunday he was permitted to lead worship. He found encouragement by reading David Brainerd’s accounts of his work among the American Indians. His interactions with the convicts readied him for what he would soon encounter in New South Wales: “I am surrounded,” he wrote in

his journal, “with evil-disposed persons, thieves, adulterers and blasphemers. May God keep me from evil, that I may not be tainted by the evil practices of those amongst whom I live.”

Marsden, however, did not waste a moment in his aim to be a preacher who brought the lost to the Saviour. Immediately placed in his new station – the “barracks” of Parramatta, a few miles inland from Sydney – he preached his first Sunday in the colony on Revelation 6: “Behold the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” As he was returning home, a young man followed him into the woods, and told him how he was distressed about the state of his soul. Marsden believed he was truly convicted of his sin, and repentant. It was a promising beginning.

In his new role, however, he was to face many difficulties, and much opposition. At first the junior of two chaplains, after 6 years he found himself the sole clergyman when Richard Johnson departed for good in 1800. There were many problems in the colony: the convicts were a difficult bunch to administer, and all forms of vice abounded. Many of them were very reluctant to darken the doors of the church; though they were compelled to attend worship. The men were housed in barracks and worked in organised groups on farms or wherever they were needed. The women did not have proper housing, and many “slept

rough” or were enticed into all kinds of immoral situations (women were very scarce in the colony, and military and administrative officials often cohabited with female convicts). Domestic service was almost their only avenue for honest work. Harvests were not always good, and there was sometimes a shortage of food.

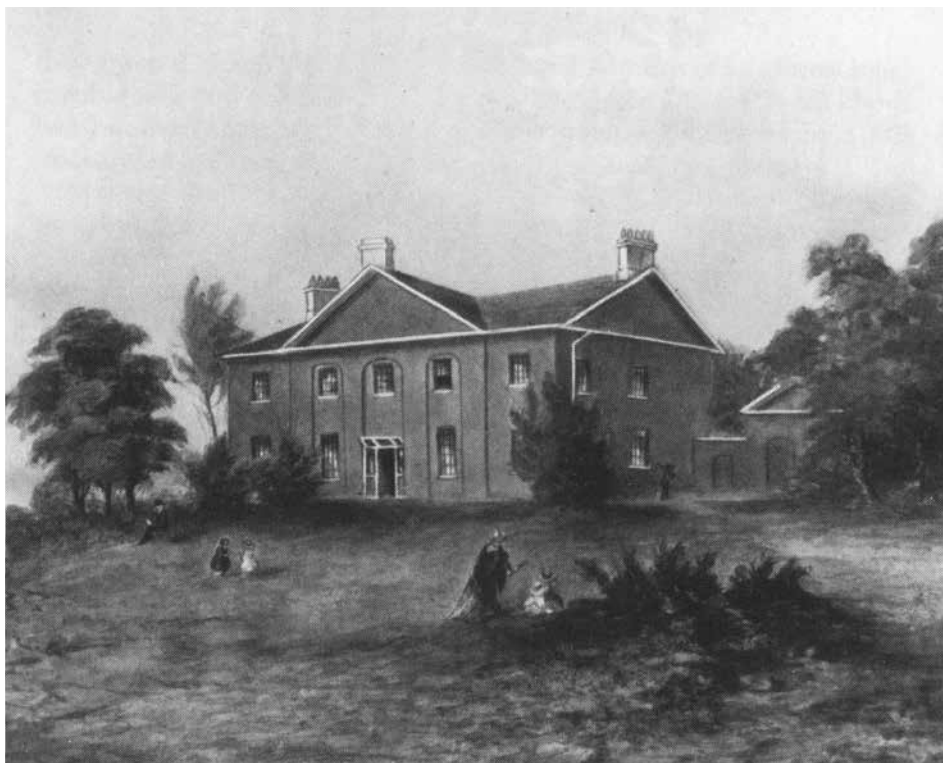
### Lawlessness abounding

In addition to his preaching and pastoral work, Marsden found himself propelled – much against his wishes and the advice of his friends at home – into serving as a magistrate. There was a genuine shortage of men to fill this role, and with lawlessness abounding, there were always criminal cases to be dealt with. In addition, Marsden could see that service as a magistrate was one of the few opportunities he would have apart from preaching the gospel to materially affect the course of society for good. As it turned out, he was to serve for more than 20 years in this role. It often placed him in serious difficulties with autocratic governors; he was misunderstood, blamed for troubles with the aborigines and Irish convicts; and in general, it was a thankless task.

He was altogether a hard-pressed man; but one sphere of his life afforded him immense satisfaction. Granted various packages of land by successive governors, Marsden became a very successful farmer – even pioneering in the breeding of merino sheep and different breeds of cattle. He also grew arable crops, producing excellent harvests. Perhaps it was his rural Yorkshire background, or even his strong constitution which helped, but he loved the farming life. The colony provided him with convict labour; and built him a large and comfortable vicarage in Parramatta. Physically, he and his family were well-provided for, and he was very alive to the future possibilities for agriculture in Australia.

### Attention on New Zealand

The Marsden family always had visitors in their home; sometimes many at one time. Among them were numbers of New Zealand Maori who visited New South Wales from time to time. Marsden came to respect the intelligence and capacity of these people to learn; and began to wonder about the possibility of mission work in New Zealand. He had already had dealings with the London Missionary Society (Methodist) missionaries serving in various Pacific islands; and the Maori thirst for knowledge and their general



Marsden's parsonage.



“Each generation must commit itself anew to the task, and ask: how have we furthered Christ’s kingdom in this land and in this time that he has appointed for us?”

interest in the gospel when compared to the Australian aborigines, turned his thoughts to missionary work in New Zealand. This, coupled with the many difficulties facing gospel work in Sydney, drew his attention across the Tasman.

In 1807 the Marsdens left for England to recruit in person, if possible, clergymen and schoolmasters for New South Wales – efforts by correspondence having been singularly unsuccessful. He also hoped to win the support of the newly-formed Church Missionary Society for a mission to the Maori in New Zealand. The Society was a favourite project of many of Marsden’s evangelical friends, especially Charles Simeon, who was an ardent supporter of efforts to take the gospel to indigenous peoples. They were away for three years; and in that time had many important interactions with their Christian friends that were to bear great fruit for gospel work in New Zealand. (Never let us underestimate the value of like-minded, one-hearted friendship in gospel causes). Marsden met with Wilberforce, and addressed the board of the Colonial Office and various mission societies soon after his arrival in London. He was successful in persuading the CMS to make a mission to New

Zealand their second work.

Marsden was of the view (he was not on his own in this) that civilisation should precede the preaching of the gospel. So, with the help of these evangelical friends he arranged for two tradesmen and their wives, and later a schoolmaster, to go to New Zealand and establish themselves in farming and their own trades. The idea was that they would share the gospel with the local Maori at every opportunity. Later, however, the CMS came to the conclusion that this was not the right policy. In their instructions to John Butler, their first ordained missionary to New Zealand they wrote: “Do not imagine when heathens are raised in intellect, in the knowledge of the arts and outward decencies, above their fellow-countrymen, that they are Christians, and therefore rest content as if your proper work were accomplished.”<sup>3</sup>

#### Maori connection

Marsden and his family set sail back to Australia in August 1809. Providentially, also on board was Ruatara, a young Maori chief who had served on board various ships in search of adventure, but who had been badly treated. Marsden befriended him and took care of him; and in return Ruatara gave him lessons in the Maori language. On arrival in Sydney, Marsden took Ruatara to his home, where he stayed for six months. He was to prove an invaluable help in the establishment of the mission in the Bay of Islands.

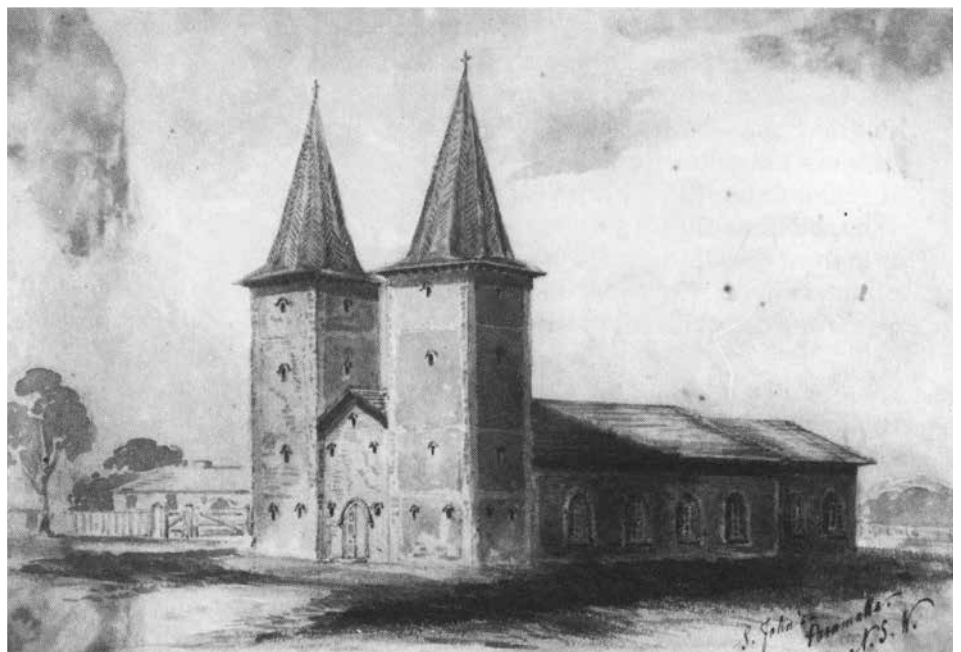
Circumstances, however, made a quick beginning impossible. Sometime

around the end of 1809, the ship *Boyd*, in Whangaroa Harbour to purchase spars, had been burned and most of its occupants killed and eaten in retaliation for ill-treatment of a chief’s son by the captain of the ship. This struck fear into most Europeans; and no one would venture to New Zealand for some years afterward. Consequently, Marsden’s plans to start a New Zealand mission had to be shelved.

In the meantime, Marsden hosted several Maori chiefs in his home, and purchased the brig *Active* (with his own money) as few companies were prepared to risk their own vessels in a trip to New Zealand’s shores. He also foresaw the value of the CMS having its own transport. Finally, in November 1814, after a trial voyage to New Zealand in which Hall, King and Kendall (the three laymen who were to be the first missionaries stationed in New Zealand) returned with three of the Maori chiefs instrumental in the mission’s establishment there, Marsden set off himself.

Governor Macquarie had been generous; providing the chiefs with military uniforms and the nucleus of a herd of cattle to add to the stallion and two mares Marsden himself had provided. The chiefs were much gratified, and were kindly disposed to the whole mission effort. They themselves had helped Marsden learn more of the Maori language; and together the party looked forward to landing again in New Zealand.

By the 16<sup>th</sup> of December they had sighted the Three Kings islands, and on the 17<sup>th</sup> the *Active* moored off North



St John’s Church, Parramatta, where Marsden served.

Cape. Visits were exchanged between the three chiefs and parties of local Maori who came on board; and Marsden assured them of his and the Governor's desire to see Maori receive protection from abuse by visiting European traders. (Macquarie had appointed Kendall as Magistrate in the Bay of Islands). The local Maori agreed to prepare a cargo of flax for the chaplain to buy on his way home.

### Good intentions

On 20<sup>th</sup> December they landed at Matauri Bay, and Marsden, despite there having been some local warfare since the time of the *Boyd* massacre, spent time in discussion about the massacre with the Whangaparoa Maori who came to meet him. It helped a great deal that he had shown hospitality at Parramatta to one of the chiefs, known to the Europeans as George. Both he and John Nicholas, a private gentleman on board the ship, spent the night on shore, completely unprotected by weaponry. Exhibiting considerable faith and personal courage, his desire was to instill confidence in the good intentions of the Europeans, especially the missionaries. Marsden wrote in his journal: "I viewed our present situation with new sensations and feelings that I cannot express. Surrounded by cannibals, who had massacred and devoured our countrymen, I wondered much at the mysteries of Providence, and how these things could be."<sup>4</sup>

The following day the *Active* sailed slowly to the Bay of Islands; and on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> the horses and cattle were

landed, to the amazement of the Maori. Marsden himself rode one of the horses, creating a heroic image in the minds of those who saw him and remembered him for many years after. Ruatara spent the rest of the day preparing for the celebration of the mission station's first ever Lord's Day and Christmas Day. Half an acre of land was fenced, and a pulpit was raised in the centre, six feet above the ground. A reading desk was placed nearby and some upended canoes for the Europeans to sit on. A flag was then raised above the village, which was to be hoisted regularly to mark the Lord's Day as a day of rest and worship.

The next morning, Marsden went ashore to find Ruatara, Korokoro and Hongi Hika dressed in their regimentals, with their people drawn up ready to march into the enclosure for worship. When everyone had taken their places, a solemn silence settled on the scene. Marsden began by singing Psalm 100, the "Old Hundredth", and went on to read the order of service from the Prayer Book; Korokoro indicating with a switch when the people should sit and stand. Since it was Christmas Day, and the first time the news of the gospel had reached these shores, Marsden preached on Luke 2:10, "Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy". Step by step, in his own good time, Jesus Christ had brought his wonderful news of salvation to a pagan people who had never heard it before on their native soil. Fittingly, it was Ruatara, who had assisted this mission work so much, who then explained what Marsden had said in their own language.

As Marsden wrote later in his journal, "In this manner, the gospel has been introduced into New Zealand; and I fervently pray that the glory of it may never depart from its inhabitants till time shall be no more."<sup>5</sup> He was fully aware of the immensity of the occasion, and the possibilities for future expansion of the gospel. But as his words indicate, he was also aware how easily it could all be lost, as Judges 2:10 so hauntingly reminds us.

### Our response?

How, then, should we respond, today? By realising that we have work to do, too. One man and his faithful band of missionaries first brought the gospel to New Zealand; but it is our responsibility to keep building on his foundation and see that the gospel flourishes. Are our hearts and minds as dedicated to the task as Marsden's? Are our lives as committed to the glory of the gospel as his was? Each generation must commit itself anew to the task, and ask: how have we furthered Christ's kingdom in this land and in this time that he has appointed for us<sup>6</sup>?

### Notes

- 1 J.B. Marsden, *memoirs of the Life and Labours of the Rev. Samuel Marsden of Paramatta* (orig. published 1858; reprinted Cambridge University Press, 2011), p.1 (The author was not related to Samuel Marsden).
- 2 A. T. Yarwood, *Samuel Marsden: The Great Survivor* (Melbourne University Press, 1977), p. 195
- 3 Marsden, p. 59
- 4 Marsden, p. 99
- 5 Marsden, p. 103
- 6 Acts 17:26

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## Glad Tidings of Great Joy! (2)

# The Bay of Islands and Beyond

### John Haverland

The Good News about Jesus Christ was first proclaimed in Aotearoa New Zealand on Christmas Day, a Sunday, 1814 when the Rev. Samuel Marsden preached the first Christian sermon in New Zealand. His text was Luke 2:10;

"Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy." He had been learning the Maori language from those who had come to stay with him in Parramatta and may well have preached some of his sermon in Maori.

This was a most appropriate text for the occasion. The message about Jesus

Christ is good news for all peoples and was good news for the large gathering of Maori on that Christmas Day. Without true faith in Christ the people of the world live in darkness and after death face an eternal punishment in hell. That was true of the Maori people in the early 1800s. They worshipped their own gods

(atua), treated their slaves and captives of war cruelly, and practised traditional tribal customs of revenge (utu) and cannibalism. They, like all the peoples of the world, needed to be rescued “from the dominion of darkness and brought into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col 1:13f). They needed to hear the “glad tidings of great joy”.

During the next few decades many Christian missionaries preached and taught the gospel of Christ to the Maori people and witnessed a remarkable harvest! In September of 1814, just prior to heading for New Zealand, Marsden wrote about his desire for this country; “I hope to erect the Standard of Christ’s Kingdom there, and to hear the sacred Trumpet sound the Glad Tidings of Salvation... Faith and prayer will again build the walls of Jerusalem, even if we are obliged to hold the Trowel in one Hand, and the Sword in another.”<sup>1</sup> Those early missionaries had to hold a

aries sowed the seed of God’s word and waited patiently for their work to bear fruit. Their initial work was among the children and the slaves of the Maori. In the first five years there were no converts. William Williams wrote about this time; “Many years of anxious toil were to be passed. The bread was to be cast upon the waters, but it was not to be found until after many days.”<sup>2</sup>

### Strong leadership

In 1823 the Rev. Henry Williams arrived in the Bay of Islands. He replaced John Butler as the Superintendent of the Mission in New Zealand. Marsden had asked Butler to resign his position because all the other missionaries disliked him and because his behaviour and unwise leadership generated many tensions among them; he was regarded as “hasty and injudicious, warm in his temper and unstable.”<sup>3</sup> The strong and decisive leadership of Henry Williams brought stability and a much needed

1825. In addition to his preaching, teaching and travels he became an authority on the Maori language. His brother commented; “He ... appears not to learn it; it seems to flow naturally from him.”<sup>4</sup> In addition to his many other responsibilities he gave himself to the work of translating the Scriptures into the Maori language.

In 1827 a small book was printed containing Genesis 1-3, Exodus 20, Matthew 5 and John 1. Translation work was advanced by the combined efforts of the Wesleyan and CMS missionaries under the leadership of William. By 1833 half the New Testament was completed and in 1837 the entire New Testament was published (Hawenata Hou).<sup>5</sup> “Soon Te Rongopai or the ‘Good News’ was being studied, memorised, copied and shared across the land.”<sup>6</sup>

The first translations were printed in Australia. Later William Colenso arrived with printing equipment and this accelerated the output of portions of Scripture.



*The site of the first Christian worship service at Oihi Bay, Rangihoua, Bay of Islands.*

Trowel in one hand in order to support themselves while holding the Sword of the Word of God in the other as they proclaimed the gospel. This bi-centenary year of that first proclamation gives us an opportunity to reflect on the blessing of God on this early missionary work.

### A slow start

Initially the mission work did not go well. Part of that was due to the European traders already working in the country. Sealers and whalers had left Europe as adventurers and, on the whole, were not particularly pious. They did not respond well to the appeal of the missionaries to set a good example to the Maori people. The missionaries, however, were not always the best examples and were sometimes quarrelling among themselves. The Rev. Thomas Kendal had an affair with his servant girl Tungaroa, and as a result was dismissed from the society.

For the first fifteen years the mission-

sense of direction to the mission work. From 1823 to 1840 he led this mission with energy, courage and ability. God greatly used him to further this work. He also worked hard to reduce inter-tribal warfare among the Maori people. Many times he risked his life, putting himself between forces about to join battle and insisting that he be allowed to act as mediator.

### The Scriptures in Maori

One of the most significant reasons for the success of this mission was the accurate translation of the Scriptures into the Maori language and the widespread distribution of portions of these Scriptures.

William Williams (1800-1876), the brother of Henry, was instrumental in this. He was first educated in medicine and then studied for the ministry. A godly and scholarly man, he was ordained to Church of England ministry and shortly after went to New Zealand, arriving in

As the Good News spread the demand became so great that larger print runs were needed and were handled by the British and Foreign Bible Society presses in London.

These Scriptures were highly sought after and demand far exceeded supply. As a result many literate Maori copied portions of the Scriptures for themselves and passed these on to others. They regarded a portion of the Bible as a precious possession (taonga). The reading and study of the Bible brought many Maori to a saving faith in Jesus.

One of the many moving accounts of the effect of these Scriptures is that of Tarore and her small Gospel of Luke, given to her by the Rev. Alfred and Mrs Charlotte Brown. Tarore wore this in a flax basket (kete) around her neck. One day she was murdered by a raiding party from Te Arawa. One of the warriors took from her the kete with the book, read the Gospel of Luke, and was converted.



He went to Tarore's father, Ngakuku, and asked forgiveness for killing his daughter. Eventually Tarore's little book ended up in Otaki and was instrumental in the conversion of the warrior chief Te Rauparaha.<sup>7</sup>

Another account comes from the Wesleyan minister James Watkin who wrote about the response to the arrival of supplies and Bibles to his mission station in Waikouiti: "It would, I am sure, very much please that blessed British and Foreign Bible Society to see the pleasure that their noble gift of the New Testament affords in this distant place.... The anxiety for

the books is intense. The arrival caused great joy. Already I have had applicants from seven, ten and thirty miles distant and they say, 'Let me have a book! Let me have a book! Let me have one for my wife, my sister, my brother....' Never did such a precious case reach this place before. Cases of clothing, useful and necessary, but this, this good thing, the better, the best thing that any ship has yet, or can possibly bring them – the word of life."<sup>8</sup>

### Preaching

Samuel Marsden preached the first Christian sermon in New Zealand on

Christmas Day 1814. His was the first of thousands of sermons preached by missionaries to Maori, both by the CMS and the Wesleyans. They preached in the open air and in churches they built; they preached in situations of great conflict and danger and in times of peace and calm; they preached to those who were hostile and abusive and to those who were attentive and appreciative.

Henry Williams rejected Marsden's view that Maori should be educated and civilised as a preliminary to conversion. Rather he was convinced that the gospel needed to be preached first and that trades and agriculture would follow after that.

The mission work was concentrated in Northland for some years but then began to spread through the rest of the North Island. Maori tribes became interested in the gospel and requested that mission stations be established on their land. Just as with the Scriptures the demand for missionaries exceeded their supply.

The first minister to preach in the South Island was the Rev. William White in April 1836.<sup>9</sup> In 1840 a Wesleyan minister, the Rev. James Watkin, arrived in Waikouaiti (Karitane) on the east coast of the South Island with his wife Martha and five children, the youngest of whom was only ten months old. He preached his first sermon there on the 17 of May, the day after he arrived. Later he reported to the Wesleyan Mission Board in London; "This day I held a service in English which was pretty well attended by the men from the whaling gang, some of the agriculturalists..., and a considerable number of the natives who, of course, could not understand me. I opened my commission in New Zealand by preaching from the old-fashioned text, 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:15. This is a faithful saying (and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief) etc. The attention was great. May the word spoken not have been in vain."<sup>10</sup>

Prior to this Watkin had been a missionary in Tonga and had shown a great ability in learning the language. After arriving in the South Island he quickly learnt Maori and within four months was able to preach in the southern dialect. He translated the gospel of Matthew in South Island Maori and sent that to Sydney for printing. Through his preaching, teaching and widespread travels, and through the practical love and care of his wife for the Maori women and chil-



Memorial marking the first Christian worship service at Oihi Bay, Rangihoua, Bay of Islands.  
Photo by Rebecca Borger.



“[The missionaries] laboured for ten years before the first convert was baptised and for fifteen years before they saw much fruit from their work. Yet they pressed on and did not give up.”

dren, they had a very effective ministry in that region.<sup>11</sup>

### Maori to Maori

We should not underestimate the effect of the preaching of the gospel by the missionaries, but the good news about Jesus was also passed on by the Maori people themselves, person to person.

For a long time the work had been confined to the Bay of Islands but in the 1830s the missionaries sought to establish mission stations in other parts of the country. A group of them sailed to Thames and went up the Waihou River. There they gathered a group of 150 to 200 natives and began to lead a service. They were astounded when the assembly joined in the singing and made responses to the prayer in unison! Later they discovered that these people have received instruction from three youths who had lived with mission families in Paihia and had then moved away as missionaries

themselves. Similar stories were told of the work of converted slaves who had returned to their own tribes.

In 1838 William Williams went through the Waiapu district and was astonished to find that he was not preaching to unbelievers but to people who already had a basic knowledge of Christianity. He wrote, “A great work has been accomplished in which the hand of God has been signally manifest. It has not been through the labour of your missionaries; for the word has only been preached by Native teachers. We have literally stood still to see the salvation of God.”<sup>12</sup>

In 1839 Henry Williams began travelling back from Waikanae on “his historic 300 mile trek back to the Bay of Islands”. As he went north he “found the gospel message had preceded him just about everywhere he went, although no white man had been there before him.”<sup>13</sup>

During his three and a half years of ministry in Otago, James Watkin had trained 26 Maori pastors and teachers to pass on the Christian faith to their own people.

Today the indigenous people (the tangata whenua) say, “The missionaries brought Christianity to this country, but it was our people who gave it to each other.”<sup>14</sup>

### God’s blessing

A steady stream of missionaries arrived

during the 1820s and 30s. They developed a generally good relationship with the Maori who treated them kindly and with respect and seemed to appreciate having them live among them. They continued to establish schools for Maori children and these were well attended and had a good effect on the people. Teaching centred on learning language through the words of the Bible. As a result children learned to read the Bible, the Anglican Prayer Book and the Catechism.

The first baptism of a Maori convert took place in 1824. An old man, Rangi, was approaching his death and came to a saving faith in Christ. This cheered the drooping spirits of the missionaries who were often discouraged by the lack of response to the gospel.

After 15 years of patient work the missionaries began to see the fruit of their work. The Lord blessed their labour and there were many conversions. In 1831, at the beginning of this spiritual harvest, William Williams wrote; “I trust that our children and grandchildren will behold for years to come, with pleasure and admiration, those exquisite pieces of work which our forefathers accomplished in the infant state of things in this land.”<sup>15</sup> A year later he reported that “the seed which had been scattered was beginning to vegetate.... At Waimate the chapel was far too small for the congregation... At Ohaiawai there was an average attendance of from sixty to seventy....



St James Church in Kerikeri, one of the many churches built with the expansion of the gospel.

“We seem to be in a time of cultivating the ground and sowing the seed rather than of reaping a harvest.”

At Kerikeri the desire on the part of the natives to read the Scriptures was increasing. Those who made a profession of faith discovered great earnestness, and the senior baptised natives rendered much assistance in giving instruction.”<sup>16</sup>

Keith Newman wrote, “From around 1836 the impact of the Christian message was so dramatic that New Zealand was considered one of the most successful mission fields in the world.”<sup>17</sup>

In 1837 Samuel Marsden made his seventh and final visit to New Zealand. At the age of 73 he was still mentally vigorous but could no longer travel far by foot. The Maori people, whether Christians or not, regarded this old man as a father and a friend and insisted on carrying him in a litter from Hokianga to Waimate. He visited all the mission stations in the Bay of Islands. “This veteran soldier of Christ was permitted to see a large body of Christians in every locality he came to, while the New Testament was coming into circulation, and accomplishing that sure and certain work which God had appointed.”<sup>18</sup>

In 1839 William Williams described a time of great harvest; “God had poured out his Holy Spirit, and has inclined great numbers to listen to the invitation given to them. At all the old mission stations in the north there was a great increase in the congregations, and in six months two hundred and twenty nine persons were received into the church.”<sup>19</sup> Those who were converted witnessed to their relatives, seeking to bring them to Christ. By 1840 Williams estimated the total number of attendants at worship to be

more than 30,000, not counting those converted through the Wesleyan mission.

### Final reflections

It is worth noting that the first mission work in New Zealand was focused on the translation, distribution and preaching of the Bible. The CMS and Wesleyan missionaries were convinced of the authority and power of the Bible and put time and money into translating and printing the Scriptures and teaching people to read it. We have already noted the work William Williams did in translating the New Testament into Maori. This is in striking contrast to the Roman Catholic mission strategy which concentrated on printing books of Roman Catholic prayers and writings of the church fathers. The CMS missionaries, however, believed that the Holy Spirit would use the *Scriptures* to convert unbelievers and build new believers in the faith, and the Spirit certainly blessed this work. He also blessed their faithful and courageous preaching of the good news about the Lord Jesus Christ.

The work of these early missionaries brought the gospel to New Zealand but it was the Maori people themselves who passed this on to their own people. This has been the pattern through much of the history of the New Testament church. In the first century the early believers were forced out of Jerusalem by a severe persecution; the apostles remained in the city but those who were scattered spoke about the good news wherever they went (Acts 8:4). Studies conducted over the past few decades have shown that by far the majority of people who are converted come to faith through the witness of someone they know, a family member, friend or workmate.

We should also note the patience and perseverance of these early missionaries. They laboured for ten years before the first convert was baptised and for fifteen years before they saw much fruit from their work. Yet they pressed on and did not give up. They believed they were doing the Lord’s work and that he would prosper their efforts in his time, and so it was. We seem to be in a time of cultivating the ground and sowing the seed rather than of reaping a harvest (John 4:37f). We too need to persevere with this hard work, praying that one day the Lord will bring about a harvest, as he did in the 1830s and 40s.

Today we can look back on this period of mission work as one of the bright spots in the church history of New Zealand. The Holy Spirit used these

dedicated and godly men and women to bring many Maori to a saving faith in Jesus and so turn them away from a lifestyle of fighting and revenge to one of love and peace. We give thanks to God for the pioneering work done by these faithful and godly missionaries and their wives and for his rich blessing on their labour. Let’s pray that God may raise up more workers, both among the Maori people and among all the people of New Zealand, and that we may see a similar great work take place in the future.

### Notes

- 1 Keith Newman, *Bible and Treaty*, Penguin Books, 2010, p. 29
- 2 William Williams, *Christianity Among the New Zealanders*, Banner of Truth, p. 30
- 3 Williams, *Christianity Among the New Zealanders*, p. 33
- 4 Newman, *Bible and Treaty*, p. 67.
- 5 In 1844 William Williams also published a *Dictionary of the New Zealand Language*.
- 6 Keith Newman, *Beyond Betrayal*, Penguin, 2013, p. 17.
- 7 This story has been wonderfully written for children by Joy Cowley and is beautifully illustrated. *Tarore and Her Book* has been published by the Bible Society of New Zealand (2009) and is available on request.
- 8 Newman, *Bible and Treaty*, p168f
- 9 Newman, *Bible and Treaty*, p. 164
- 10 Newman, *Bible and Treaty*, p. 165
- 11 Newman, *Bible and Treaty*, pages 164ff for an encouraging description of their work.
- 12 Williams, *Christianity Among the New Zealanders*, p.290
- 13 Newman, *Bible and Treaty*, p. 132f
- 14 Cowley, *Tarore and Her Book*, p. 13
- 15 Nola Easdale, *Missionary and Maori*, Te Waihora Press, 1991, p. 10.
- 16 Williams, *Christianity Among the New Zealanders*, p.146.
- 17 Newman, *Beyond Betrayal*, p.17
- 18 Williams, *Christianity Among the New Zealanders*, p 251
- 19 Williams, *Christianity Among the New Zealanders*, p. 260



# Contentment or covetousness

### Jenny Waldron

How we think affects the way we live our lives. That is a statement that seems so obvious that it doesn't need saying, and yet it is one we often forget. We can find ourselves in all sorts of strife because of the way we think and perceive things in life. As Christian women we easily find ourselves with wrong thought patterns which manifest themselves in our lives; and one of these is being discontent with our lot.

As a child I could never comprehend

why "Do not covet" was one of the Ten Commandments. To me, it seemed at the time, coveting something wasn't that big a deal, not all that serious and certainly wasn't as bad as killing someone! After all, we have all admired things that our neighbours own (from their dolls and Lego collections to their new BBQ, newly decorated kitchen or their vast craft collection) and wished they were our own. However, as these desires possess our minds to the point where we can barely think of anything else, desire becomes coveting. When we covet something we

create an idol in our hearts and minds, and we become discontented with what we have or who we are.

I have to confess that I am a bit of a petrol head, and recently, on the way to church no less, I spotted a red 1928 Ford Model A coupe hot-rod with a 327 Chev motor (I looked up the details purely as research for this article!). There would have been a time when I would have coveted such a car. I would have dreamed about it and made (very) strong suggestions to my husband (who is not interested in cars at all) to purchase



1928 Ford Model A hotrod. [www.wallpaperhere.com](http://www.wallpaperhere.com)



one. Now, however, I can appreciate the beauty, work and power of such a car without having to own one and I am very thankful for the Toyota car/van thing the church has provided for us.

How does covetousness creep into our lives? We certainly don't walk around looking for it, and yet it steals into our hearts. We compare ourselves and our lives with others. House and garden type magazines, whilst good for ideas, can make us dissatisfied with our own homes and gardens. Junk mail and other advertising are designed to make us discontented with what we have, or look like, and the desire grows to buy whatever it is that they are selling, on special of course. Love stories (even Christian ones) can make us compare our husbands with the "hero" of the book or film and we can find our man lacking. Everywhere we look there are traps we can fall into. Being tempted in and of itself is not a sin, but allowing our desires to entice us and lure us, is. The desire becomes sin as we set an idol in our hearts.<sup>1</sup>

Paul says in 1 Timothy 6:6, "Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment. For we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content." And in Philippians 4:11-12 ... "I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need." And the secret to his learning contentment is? "I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

One of the things I love about Paul's writings is that he is so practical. And he doesn't leave us guessing or wondering how to achieve greater godliness. In this case, Paul learned contentment through depending on Jesus Christ and we, too, can rely on Him to strengthen us today.

We can learn contentment! It is something we can practice and learn, by capturing every thought<sup>2</sup> and relying on Christ for his strength.<sup>3</sup>

Everything we have comes from the hand of God. We are all blessed with many things that we can be thankful to God for.

For many years we lived in a small two-bedroomed wooden cottage. When we moved in, it only had an outside toilet (a long drop), two hopeless open fires and the bath would take about an hour to fill. When we finally moved out

we had five children squeezed into the various rooms, a flushing toilet, a shower and a wood burner. We have many very happy memories of the time we lived there and I am still thankful for flushing toilets and a hot shower!

It isn't always easy being content, for example, when your husband has been laid off and can't find work, or when the pay check doesn't stretch to pay for a visit to the doctor or when you feel too embarrassed to invite people over because the house renovations aren't or can't get finished. But it can also be difficult to be content when you have a spacious house filled with fine furniture, you have a late model car (or a hot-rod) and expensive clothing. None of these things satisfy for long, so we continually look for the next thing that will give us that buzz that feels so good (for such a short time). That buzz is not contentment, it just masks the discontentment until something new comes along. However, we can learn to be content, whether in low circumstances or high, because Christ will strengthen us.

In Linda Dillow's book, *Calm My Anxious Heart*, she tells the story of the mother of a friend:

"Ella [the mother] worked as a missionary with the pygmies in Africa for fifty-two years. She had left her country, her family and all that was familiar. Primitive doesn't even begin to describe her living conditions in the scorching heat and humidity of the African bush. But Ella found no relief because electricity, air conditioning, and other modern conveniences were only a dream. Some days it was so unbearably hot that she had to bring the thermometer inside because it couldn't register past 120 degrees F (48.8 degrees C) without breaking."

In Ella's diary her daughter discovered her mother's prescription for contentment:

- Never allow yourself to complain about anything – not even the weather
- Never picture yourself in any other circumstance or someplace else
- Never compare your lot with another's
- Never allow yourself to wish this or that had been otherwise
- Never dwell on tomorrow – remember that tomorrow is God's, not ours.

How challenging is this? Not even the weather? But as we practice these things, they will help us to learn to be content in whatever situation we find ourselves.

I would add one more thing.

- Be thankful in every circumstance!
- Throughout the Bible, we are exhort-

ed to be thankful<sup>4</sup> in all circumstances and to make God's deeds and goodness known to others. If we are thankful, instead of complaining, about the weather (have to work on that one) or the house we live in or the clothes we wear or our poor health, we will become more and more content.

All things come from God and when we complain, we are complaining about God's provision for us. Instead we should be thankful for God's abundant supply and his many, many blessings to us. This has many ramifications for our lives. Not only will this affect how we live today, but it also will affect how we are in old age when our patterns of living and thinking become more and more obvious. If we have lived a life of thankfulness and contentment, our older years will reflect that but if we have lived a life of complaining and being discontent, we will reap a harvest of bitterness and loneliness in our latter years.

Many years ago I met a lady, Mary, (not her real name). She had been brought up in Zimbabwe and had come to live in NZ with her husband, mother and only son. She was beautiful, intelligent, hard-working and articulate. However, her ungrateful attitude began early in life. She was bitter about the fact that her sister had an English education while, due to financial constraints, she had been educated in Africa. Mary's move to NZ was not her first choice, and her home was never as grand as she would have liked it to be. Nothing seemed to satisfy. When her husband left her when their son was 3, she had to go out to work to support her son and mother and she certainly had not planned on that. As the years passed she became more and more bitter about life. Sadly, to date, Mary doesn't know God and the comfort He could bring. Instead, she has nurtured her hurts and griefs, and now lives a lonely existence craving close relationships with those around her, and yet bewildered as to why her son and his family don't want to spend time with her.

Learn to be content, now, before you find yourself lonely and bitter in your old age.

But, you may ask, how can I be content when... my child turns away from the Lord? Or my husband has died and left me all alone? Or I haven't been able to find a husband or now that I am married we haven't been able to have a baby? And the list goes on. These can be hard providences indeed and yet,

even in the times of great difficulty, we can trust the Lord. There is a place for grief and sadness in these very difficult circumstances and, as Christians, it is often at times like these that our faith is tested to the max – yet our Lord has promised to never leave us nor forsake us. We can be either built up and strengthened in our walk with the Lord or we become discontented and put all sorts of idols (including family, husbands or houses) in our hearts in place of our

God. Perhaps we can ask ourselves these questions; (a) “Do we really believe that God is in control of everything?” (b) “Do all things work together for good to those who believe in Christ Jesus?” and (c) “What is it that I can be thankful for in this particular circumstance?”

As we practice being thankful, telling others of God’s goodness to us, praying that the Lord would strengthen us and help us not to covet, we will become more and more content in every cir-

cumstance and situation, gaining greater godliness.<sup>5</sup>

1 James 1:13-17

2 Romans 12:2

3 Phil 4:12

4 e.g. 1 Chr 16:8, 1 Thes 5:18

5 Recommended Reading:

*Calm My Anxious Heart* by Linda Dillow

*Compared to Her... How To Experience True Contentment* by Sophie de Witt

*Lies Women Believe* by Nancy Leigh de Moss

## Christmas meditation

# Do you see the angels?

### Allen Harris

If you are a genuine believer in Jesus Christ, not simply a religious person who is sympathetic to Christianity, then you live simultaneously in two worlds. You, of course, live in the world you can see and touch, like everyone else. But, unlike unbelievers, you are aware of a world you cannot see, a heavenly reality you know only by faith.

You affirm this, but sometimes it is

hard to distinguish what you cannot see from fantasy. This is true especially in hard times, when God seems to be absent and it feels as if this world is all there is.

The Book of Revelation was written to Christians in hard times to *reveal* what we cannot see: the cosmic battle going on between God and Satan in this world. It portrays what sometimes seems so unlikely to us, that Jesus is Lord of all history, and that he will *win* in the

end. It opens our eyes to the world we cannot see, to give us hope in the suffering of this world.

This dual perspective is nowhere more evident than in the Christmas story. Let us examine that familiar story from these two perspectives. First, we shall consider the world of what Mary and Joseph saw and felt when it seemed that God had abandoned them. Then we shall see how the Bible gives us a glimpse of the heavenly reality and involvement.



The Annunciation by Leonardo da Vinci, c. 1472-75. [en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)

“We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

#### The earthly perspective

Mary got pregnant before her marriage to Joseph. Imagine the awkwardness and humiliation she must have felt. There was no way to convince people that she was innocent. Those must have been very lonely days for her. Joseph seriously considered a private divorce to spare her further shame. Did she think, “Lord, why don’t you vindicate me?”

He did vindicate her, at least to Joseph, but then she heard that the Roman government required them to travel eighty miles to Bethlehem for a census. Did she think, “This does not seem like very good timing, Lord”? Having to walk eighty miles when she was nearly due to deliver her son did not suggest that God was in control, but rather Caesar Augustus. Well, at least she would be spared the shame of family embarrassment at the birth. Small comfort.

So they arrived at Bethlehem. The “inn” that Luke speaks of was a half-open enclosure. It was first come, first served. Were there relatives living there who had heard of Mary’s pregnancy and refused hospitality to such a shameful woman? We are not told. All we know is that no one made room for her when she went into labor. Joseph undoubtedly pleaded her case: “Please, my wife is having a baby!” Response: “Go have it

in the barn.” It was probably a cave in the nearby limestone hills where animals were sheltered.

So “she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn” (Luke 2:7). *She* wrapped him; *she* laid him. She did not receive help from any other woman. All she had was Joseph, and you women can tell us how much help a man is at that point!

Did she wonder, “Where are you, Lord?” Could she comprehend that he was right there – lying in the manger?!

They tried to settle down after the birth. They were dog-tired, and the animals were no help. Suddenly, as they were drifting off to sleep, they heard the rough voices of shepherds outside: “Is there a baby in here?” I can hear Joseph: “You gotta be kidding! Do we have to move?” Remember that Mary and Joseph had not gotten the memo from the angels about shepherds coming to worship.

They decided to stay in Bethlehem and try to make a new life there. It must have been difficult to find a home and start up a carpentry business in a new area. We know at least that before too long they had a house to live in, since Matthew mentions that the magi came to visit them there (Matt. 2:11).

But then Joseph learned that Herod was out to kill his son, so they were uprooted again and took a hasty, long journey as refugees to Egypt. While they were there, they heard that Herod’s soldiers had slaughtered all the baby boys in the environs of Bethlehem two years old and under – probably about twenty infants. That was about the same number of children that were gunned down in Newtown, Connecticut, eleven days before Christmas last year (2012). Remember the horror we felt about that child massacre.

Mary and Joseph certainly knew those families. They probably knew some of them well. Jesus may have played with some who were killed because of him. Surely Mary and Joseph felt deep grief and possibly guilt. “God, what are you doing? This world is so full of pain. Where are you?”

#### The heavenly perspective

Before our hearts are too weighed down, let us look at the same story from the heavenly perspective. God reveals himself again and again – largely through *angels*, those messengers of

heavenly reality.

In Luke 1, we read that Zechariah was an aged priest – ordinary, but faithful. An angel appeared to him to announce that his wife, Elizabeth, would give miraculous birth to a son, John. Then an angel announced the birth of the Messiah to Mary, his mother. So she knew that whatever would happen, God would be with her.

Elizabeth rejoiced when Mary, her relative, came to visit her, because Elizabeth’s baby, John, leapt in her womb at Jesus’ presence.

Mary was given a song, which she sang to Elizabeth. Mary was no doubt smart and spiritual, but what Galilean teenager could have crafted “the Magnificat” extemporaneously? The song must have encouraged Mary as much as it has encouraged countless believers down through the ages.

Then an angel, in a dream, vindicated Mary to Joseph and assured him of her innocence and supernatural pregnancy (Matt. 1:20–25).

An angel announced the birth of the Messiah to some shepherds, and was then joined in a heavenly chorus. (I know the Greek says they “said” [Luke 2:13], but could such a pronouncement have been without melodic crescendo?)

Luke tells us that after the shepherds reported to her what they had seen and heard, “Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:19). Surely she was given a glimpse of the Lord who was indeed with her, and she was comforted.

One or two years later, as they began their life in Bethlehem, some strangers in rich garb came to their door from the east and said a light had led them to this house, where the king of the Jews was living. The visitors then presented extravagant gifts. Mary and Joseph did not know that these were God’s provisions for a long trip that they would soon need to make. This was another evidence that he was with them.

Again an angel appeared to Joseph and warned him of Herod’s nefarious plan. God warned, delivered, and protected them. And in another year or so, this dreadful man was dead.

In the coming years, Mary would see her Son be misunderstood, mistreated, and then crucified. She didn’t see that it would be in his moment of deepest agony, at Gethsemane, that God would again reveal the unseen reality with an angel’s comfort (Luke 22:43).

Jesus’ crucifixion crushed all hope



for his disciples. God seemed to them to be totally absent. Evil appeared to have won the day, and it was hard to imagine going on. But on the third day, Mary, together with other women, would have the resurrection of Jesus announced to them by angels (Matt. 28:2–7; Mark 16:5–7; Luke 24:4–7; John 20:12–13). Again the unseen inhabitants of our world disclosed the reality we so need to perceive in our darkest hours. They announced the power and presence of God in a way that changed everything, transforming the very world that seeks to erase him from our thoughts. No matter how grim your circumstances, the resurrection of Jesus is your window into that reality and hope.

The risen Christ appeared to many over the next forty days. Then he as-

cended to heaven, where he is no longer seen. He is now seated at God's "right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority" (Eph. 1:20–21). And God has even "raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6). Our true life is "hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). You cannot see that any more than you can see the angels, but it is as real as the chair you are sitting in. Ah, but "when Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:4). This is that enduring reality of which this world is only shadows.

Yes, we live in a suffering world. When you feel overwhelmed by your trials and wonder where in the world God is, I ask you, as strange as it sounds, to look at

the Christmas story. Realise that there is always a dual drama unfolding – one that we can see, and one that we cannot.

When you focus on the manger, do not forget to look at the angels and see heaven breaking through. Then, like Paul, you will not lose heart because you know that "this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison." We look "not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:17–18).

*The author is a retired OP minister. He quotes the ESV. New Horizons December, 2012.*

## Books in focus

### ***The New Calvinism Considered***

by Jeremy Walker

reviewed by Tim Challies

They call it the New Calvinism. It is a relatively new movement that has discovered some old theology and brought it into the mainstream. It is a movement titled after its theology, but one formed around its leaders – it can hardly be discussed without reference to John Piper and Al Mohler and Matt Chandler and so many others. It is a fascinating move-

ment that encompasses myself and so many others.

The New Calvinism is the subject of Jeremy Walker's new book *The New Calvinism Considered: A Personal and Pastoral Assessment*. Behind that rather austere title is a very accessible book that does exactly what the title claims: it shines a spotlight on this theological movement and considers where it has come from, what it has accomplished and where it may be going in the future.

While the New Calvinism is primarily an American movement, Walker writes from the far side of the Atlantic where he pastors Maidenbower Baptist Church in Crawley, England. This gives him an interesting perspective and one that may be slightly more objective than if he was based in North America. I found myself eager to read his assessment and eager to hear his inevitable critiques.

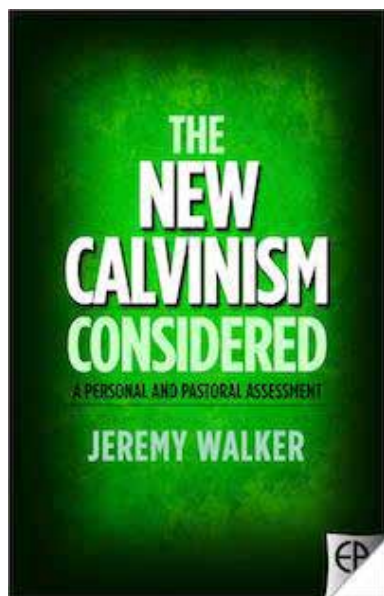
The first chapter is titled "Comprehending the New Calvinism" and here Walker explains what he hopes to accomplish in his book. He explains that he writes from a personal and pastoral perspective, which means his understanding is necessarily subjective and limited. He seeks to provide a balanced and appropriately irenic appreciation which means that while he is not breathless in his praise, neither is he overly harsh in

his criticism. Finally, he wants the reader to know that the New Calvinism is not monolithic and, therefore, he cannot speak to every corner and nuance of the movement.

With those caveats in place, he advances to chapter two, "Characteristics of the New Calvinism." Here he provides a brief primer of the Calvinistic theology that lies at the heart of it and introduces some of the cast of characters – the pastors, theologians and other leaders. He also writes about some of the conferences and associations that make this thing a movement, and closes by suggesting that as a movement the New Calvinism is already beginning to broaden and slow.

Chapter 3 contains his commendations of the movement. He praises the New Calvinism for being Christ-oriented and God-honoring; for being grace-soaked; for its emphasis on missional living; for its focus on complementarian theology; for being willing to take advantage of new opportunities and technologies; and for its deep commitment to expositional preaching. These commendations come across as sincere and not the least bit fake or forced.

With the commendations in place, he dedicates chapter 4 to a series of cautions and concerns. He warns of:



the pragmatism and commercialism that may lie at the root of this movement; an unbalanced view of culture that allows people to Christianise what ought to be rejected outright; a troubling approach to holiness displayed in either antinomianism or unbiblical views of sanctification; a potentially dangerous ecumenism – a pursuit of unity that may eventually come only at the cost of truth and doctrinal minimalism; the unresolved tension surrounding the miraculous spiritual gifts (Note: this was written before John MacArthur's Strange Fire conference and book!); and finally, a triumphalism, a brashness, that may come when a movement is young and seemingly successful. In the same way that Walker's commendations come across as sincere, his criticisms come across as genuine and kind.

The final chapter is given to "Conclusions and Counsels." Here he tosses aside knee-jerk reactions to both the commendations and cautions and urges people to continue to embrace the good but with

a greater awareness for those concerns. He says, "[B]e Calvinists. Do not panic blindly. Do not capitulate foolishly. Do not strike wildly. Live before God and be determined to learn of Christ in dependence on the Holy Spirit. Love and serve the triune God above all, and be ready to love and serve his saints wherever you find them, and however your supreme attachment to the Lord of glory demands it."

Overall, I found Walker's assessment very compelling. If someone had asked me to sketch out my commendations and concerns of the New Calvinism, they would have matched his almost exactly. I would have liked to see a few more words dedicated to the women who have been involved in the movement and those who have been leaders within it. After all, while the New Calvinism is distinctly complementarian, there are women who have played important roles within it. I would have liked to have a little less hedging and qualifying in the section dedicated to commen-

dations. And I would have liked a little more prescription. It is easy enough to identify issues, but far more difficult to propose a compelling alternative.

While I am thankful for this movement and while I am grateful to have been swept up in it, while I do love Reformed theology and while I thank God for all the good he has done, still I hold many of Walker's concerns and believe they are well worth considering.

I believe a book like this is a sign of health for a movement; it is when a movement refuses to examine itself, to admit and respond to weaknesses, that it is destined to fail. A willingness to read and consider such critiques will be an even greater proof of health, and for that reason I commend this book to you. (It is currently just US\$6.79 at Amazon)

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<http://www.challies.com/book-reviews/considering-the-new-calvinism>

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## World in focus

### What's the threat of Islamic State to the Church worldwide?

World leaders feel Islamic State ambitions do not stop in the Middle East.

While Islamic State is wreaking havoc in Iraq and Syria, its ambitions do not stop there. Moreover, several world leaders are saying it is one of the biggest threats they are facing. But exactly how does Islamic State fit into the global picture of Christians under pressure for their faith worldwide?

#### 1. What is Islamic State?

Islamic State (IS) is a group of Sunni militants who have set up a self-pronounced Caliphate at the end of June 2014. The group stems from radical groups formerly affiliated with al-Qaeda and aims at setting up a strict form of Sharia law in its state. According to the UK-based Syrian Observatory of Human Rights, Islamic State has 50,000 fighters in Syria and

30,000 in Iraq. Many of Islamic State's fighters are from the region but, for example, an estimated 11,000 to 12,000 jihadis are said to have come to Syria from abroad, of which about 3,000 are from Western countries, according to New York-based Soufan Group and the London-based International Centre for the Study of Radicalization. Especially after the declaration of the Caliphate, the number of foreign jihadis rose considerably, they say.

#### 2. How does Islamic State fit into a process of global Islamization?

Islamic State is not an isolated 'lonely wolf'. It is an integral part of a well-established Islamist spectrum. This Islamist spectrum bridges into mainstream Islamic groups who cherish the same key concepts, even though they often do not actively wish to push them to their extremes. That is what makes Islamic State so dangerous.

Islamic State is a typical example of 'violent rejectionists', the most radical expression of Islamism. Islamism can be

defined as "forms of political theory and practice that have as their goal the establishment of an Islamic political order in the sense of a state whose governmental principles, institutions and legal system derive directly from the shari'ah."

Violent rejectionists, often referred to as jihadists, are individuals and networks that, often linked to or inspired by al Qaeda, reject participation in the democratic system and use violence to advance their goals.

The other two expressions of Islamism are the 'non-violent rejectionists', such as Salafists, and the 'participationists', such as the Muslim Brotherhood.

According to Lorenzo Vidino, Senior Fellow at the Centre for Security Studies ETH Zurich "Non-violent rejectionists are individuals and groups such as Salafists and Hizb ut-Tahrir which openly reject the legitimacy of any system of government not based on Islamic law, but do not, at least publicly and openly, advocate the use of violence to further their goals."

He sees "at the bottom of the Islam-

ist pyramid the numerically most significant component of political Islam in Europe: the Muslim Brotherhood and other 'participationist' Islamic Movements. Participationists are individuals and groups which adhere to that strand of Islamism that advocates interaction with society at large, both at the micro-level through grassroots activism, and at the macro-level through participation in public life and the democratic process," explains Vidino. "Unlike rejectionists", he says "such organizations have made a conscious decision to avoid unnecessary confrontation and have instead opted for a clever and flexible policy of engagement with the European establishment."

So while we need to recognize that Islamic State, as 'violent rejectionists', are at one end of the Islamist spectrum, that spectrum reaches from there into the more 'participationist' groups which are much more identifiable within European and Western democratic societies.

### 3. How does Islamic State fit into the picture of Christians under pressure for their faith worldwide?

The regime of Islamic State is the strongest possible expression of Islamic extremism, which is the most global 'engine' of persecution. All people under this regime are subjected to an absolute application of shari'ah law. This is done by an excessive use of violence, which adherents believe is sanctioned by the Koran.

The evolution of the persecution pattern driven by IS has been typical for Islamic extremism, although it developed very fast. Typical are the extremely high levels of pressure for Christians (and other non-Muslims) in all spheres of life, and the extremely high level of violence. Once IS has established itself, the high level of violence should, in theory, drop because Christians will either have been killed, have fled or have conformed to a hard-core 'dhimmi' contract, by which they pay a 'protection tax' and are treated as second class citizens.

The contract is an integral part of traditional Islamic sharia law dating back to medieval times and requiring non-Muslims, in this instance Christians, to pay protection money which only allows them to gather for worship in churches.

Under the dhimmi contract, public expressions of Christian faith are not allowed. These prohibitions include: Christian wedding and funeral processions; ringing of church bells; praying

in public and Scripture being read out loud for Muslims to hear; Christian symbols, like crosses, cannot be displayed openly; churches and monasteries cannot be repaired or restored irrespective if damage was collateral or intentional; and Christians are also not allowed to make offensive remarks about Muslims or Islam. The dhimmi contract also enforces an Islamic dress code, like the veiling for women, and commercial and dietary regulations, including a ban on alcohol.

Muslims who convert to Christianity, though, would undoubtedly be killed.

### 4. Why is Islamic State so successful?

Currently, Islamic State holds an area as large as the country of Jordan. The advance of Islamic State through Iraq did not come as a big surprise. It was a time when the parliament was preoccupied with forming a new government after the elections and when the army was demoralized due to low salaries and previous Islamic State attacks. In this vacuum, IS seemingly could march to Baghdad without real opposition.

Lastly, another factor to take into account is the lack of affirmative action from the West until now. In the time it took for Western political leaders to determine a strategy and take action, Islamic State had succeeded in taking over considerable parts of Iraq and Syria and taking root in the region in a nation building project that seems to sketch the outlines of a truly Islamic 'Reign of Peace'.

### 5. How might Islamic State advance in the region?

For the near future, however, it is likely that Islamic State will experience difficulties expanding further south in Iraq, since this area is majority Shi'ite. The Shi'ite population will not accept Sunni Islamic State as have done their Sunni counterparts in the north west of the country. Moreover, Iran will not allow Islamic State to touch Shi'ites and approach Iran. Furthermore, the USA and a number of allies have stepped up their interventions to hamper IS after the beheadings of three Westerners and the threat of the same fate for a British IS captive.

Nevertheless, hindering Islamic State's advancement in Iraq might actually trigger it to open up new horizons in the region, for example in Jordan and Lebanon. Already, Islamic State elements are present in those countries, shown by the IS murders of two Lebanese soldiers and a pro-IS rally held in the Jordanian city of Ma'an at the end of June.

It turns out that Islamic State is not only holding its ground but also has ambitions going beyond the Iraqi and Syrian borders. This was indicated by IS' previous name: ISIL, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, which covers Syria and Iraq but also Jordan, Lebanon and Israel, including the Palestinian Territories. This region seems to be Islamic State's first priority. Nevertheless, Islamic State is also making clear that it wants the caliphate to reign over the entire globe. This is expressed by the name change to IS, meaning 'Islamic State', which exceeds geographical boundaries.



World leaders feel Islamic State ambitions do not stop in the Middle East.



## 6. What does this mean for Christians in the region and worldwide?

Where Islamic State has gained power, their reign of terror is driving all Christians and other minorities out. Before Islamic State began its rampage, about 3000 Christians had been living in Mosul, down from 35,000 after the 2003 war. Now, there are virtually no Christians left. The mainly Christian town of Qarakosh has been abandoned as well, along with other villages; the last Christians have left the northern town of Bartella. Tens of thousands of Christians have become internally displaced, fleeing to the Kurdish region, with cities like Erbil and Dohuk taking in thousands of them. A Christian mother voices the feelings many Christians are sharing: "If we stay, this will happen over and over again. First we wanted to stay in Iraq, it's our home, we love this land, but it's too much. We can't live like this anymore."

But what is perhaps even more worrying is what many of them take with them. While fleeing their homes and leaving behind everything but the clothes on their backs, Christians - adults and children alike - take with them fear. It is a fear that haunts their days and fuels nightmares. Children wake up screaming in the night: "IS is coming, IS is coming!" It is a fear based on reality. In its efforts to set up and maintain a pure Islamic caliphate, Islamic State is using all means necessary, including the use of extreme violence. Affected and targeted are the majority Muslims, but also non-Sunnis, such as Shia Muslims, Yazidis and Christians. Islamic State itself has made no secret of its intentions, as is shown by a statement of IS after conquering regions where large communities of Christians had been living for hundreds of years:

"We offer them three choices: Islam, the dhimmi contract (involving paying a security tax called 'jizya'), and if they refuse this they have nothing but the sword."

Moreover, the IS movement has a strong potential to spread beyond Iraq and Syria through the foreign jihadis. Jihadis are returning to their home countries and there are real fears they'll continue to spread their ideas or actions there. These fears already came true in a shooting attack at the Jewish Museum in Brussels on May 24, leaving four dead. The attack was carried out by a French jihadist who had returned after spending one year in Syria. It is a realistic perspective to expect that more returned jihadis will turn against Christian, Jewish or Western influences in Europe and worldwide. Additionally, in their efforts to curb the travel of jihadis to Iraq and Syria, (as well as their possibly radicalized influence in their home countries), governments could be in danger of overreacting, thus hindering the freedom of religion or expression of Muslims too much. That could create a vicious cycle of frustration and resentment, which may fuel further violence against these Christian, Jewish or Western influences.

In the midst of this chaos, fear and danger, there are sparks of hope. Confronted with a large number of refugees, Christians in northern Iraq have taken on the task of taking in refugees and setting up relief. Church leaders are taking the lead to inspire church members to help. They try to look to the future and see the importance of caring for the children. For example, child-friendly spaces are set up in tents and available rooms to give children a place to play and have fun.

Even though the recent crisis is the latest in decades of fighting and war and people despair, a number of Christians

are rediscovering what it means to hold on to their faith in Christ and to receive God's peace in their hearts and minds. Also, some Muslims have converted because the only people helping them were Christians; others have become disgusted with Islam because of Islamic State's atrocities. And maybe, the small number of completely disillusioned and returning jihadis could be a drop in the ocean, to eventually counterbalance the appeal of Islamic State. For instance, one such man, a Syrian, spoke to the BBC on 16th Sept, and gave insights into how Islamic State operates.

[www.worldwatchmonitor.org](http://www.worldwatchmonitor.org)

Published: September 25, 2014

## Arab churches' key contribution to Iraqi relief

As a coalition of Western and Arab countries continues military action to try to defeat Islamic State (IS), it's timely to hear how the region's largest Christian minority – in Egypt – is helping to provide humanitarian relief in Northern Iraq.

Coptic Christians themselves faced an onslaught from Islamic extremists only a year ago, but are now providing much-needed practical and psychological support to other Arab speakers in ways that Westerners cannot.

One of the biggest churches in the Arab world, Kasr el-Dobara church in Cairo, is delivering aid alongside agencies such as the UNHCR, Caritas and many others, thanks to its relatively well-paid and well-connected membership.

Revd Fawzi Khalil, director of relief ministries, has just returned from Erbil in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, where many of the 1.8 million Iraqis displaced since January, have settled.

His church has sent a delegation to Iraq every 10 days for the past two months, trying to stem the humanitarian tide. Its middle-to-upper class membership, which worships in a street behind the flashpoint Tahrir Square, has so far donated \$180,000 to the effort. A fundraising trip to the United States added an additional \$120,000.

They have distributed 2,500 mattresses, along with pillows and blankets, and also 400 portable gas stoves that serve four families at a time. Most impressively, the church supports a network of 2,200 families that receive

### Persecuted Church

Christians in Iraq and Syria are undergoing persecution of a most terrifying nature at the present time. Please pray for our brothers and sisters in these countries – that their faith may be strengthened through these trials, that they might find a place where they can live in peace, and that those who have lost loved ones might find rich comfort from God. Pray also for their persecutors, that they might be conquered by the gospel of grace. You may like to consider supporting agencies that assist persecuted Christians such as Voice of the Martyrs (<http://www.persecution.co.nz/>) or Barnabas Fund (<http://barnabasfund.org/NZ/>).



Dinner served to refugees at Mar Elia church in Erbil in August.  
World Watch Monitor



Thousands who slept in the church yard in Erbil in August will be more vulnerable when winter temperatures arrive.  
World Watch Monitor

a food basket every two weeks.

This network is run in coordination with churches of Ankawa, a largely Christian neighborhood in Erbil. Around 90 per cent of recipients, however, are non-Christian, either Muslims also fleeing IS militants, or from the Yazidi minority.

Khalil explained that the majority Chaldean Catholic Church of Ankawa has done an excellent job of caring for Christian refugees. Erbil's population includes roughly 160,000 Christians, and many have taken in their religious brethren.

### Churches are packed

As a consequence Erbil's churches are packed. The refugee centre in the Mar Elia church grounds is home to 700 families. World Watch Monitor reported recently that the onsite kindergarten was managing to give schooling to all the camp's infants.

Nearby Mar Yousef camp is in a church itself, and hosts mostly Muslims and Yazidis. Erbil has a permanent population of 1.5 million people. But according to UN-Iraq, the three established UN camps can host only eight per cent of the refugees.

The rest are taken in by local families and churches, but thousands sleep on the streets, under bridges, or in partially completed buildings, said Khalil.

Khalil's team has a wealth of stories collected from their visit. They spoke to dozens of individuals with similar stories, but names and faces begin to blend together.

A 60-year-old blind man from Nineveh told Khalil how he couldn't return to his home. 'I don't want to go back to the same neighbors who betrayed me,' he said. 'They surrendered me to the terrorists.'

Soha is 22. She graduated from university and was looking forward to her new job in Mosul before the IS onslaught. Now she must care for her brother's three children who have been separated from their mother.

### 'The end of my youth.'

'Now, all I have is a mattress, a donated plate of food, and two pairs of clothing,' she told Eva Boutros. 'This is the end of my youth.'

Boutros is the director of volunteer ministry for Kasr el-Dobara, but accompanied a joint churches team organized by the Chaldean Church in Heliopolis, Cairo.

This team brought cash as well as tents, medical supplies, blankets, and children's underwear that were donated by Egyptian companies.

But Boutros recognized many of the refugees needed something more, and took 280 young women, including Soha, shopping at the local mall.

### Moment of happiness

'It was fun for us, and fun for them,' she said, describing a moment of happiness amid a desperate situation.

Perhaps her woman's touch gives her greater memory for personal detail. But she praises a different source.

'I remember each person, their face and their story,' she said. 'The Lord sent us to tell them "we are suffering with you" .

'They need you to hug them, stay with them, and listen, listen, listen.'

Kasr el-Dobara's team included a professional psychiatrist, who spent hours counseling women and children through their trauma. Childcare specialists did their best to entertain the children each evening.

The empathy given to refugees in the churches is just one aspect of the care they receive. According to another member of Kasr el-Dobara in Erbil, Ehab el-Kharrat: 'despite their difficult conditions these refugees have it better than anyone else'.

Kharrat, a former MP in the Egyptian Parliament, thinks the next most fortunate group of refugees are those taken in by Kurdish families, followed by those in unfinished buildings but under the sponsorship of church groups. Kasr el-Dobara's efforts are toward this group, primarily.

### Underfunded UN campsites

But thousands of Iraqis remain on the streets and in underfunded UN campsites in the desert. Kharrat noticed most tents were recycled from an earlier Syrian refugee camp, and of deteriorating quality.

After speaking to Kurdish officials, he related their complaint that under the Maliki government, Baghdad failed to send Erbil its constitutionally guaranteed share of the budget. The new government, formed on 8 September, has promised to do so but not yet delivered, he said.

This has left the Kurdish regional government in a bind, the officials say. The UNHCR is a refugee agency, but those fleeing are technically considered Internally Displaced People (IDPs). With no agency possessing a clear mandate, the UN looks to the local government to lead.

Even so, the UN documents detail over 346,000 people who have been reached to some degree.

According to Boutros, however, the fact that Egyptian Christians have been present has made an impression on many.

'Muslims and Yazidis appreciate very much that they are cared for,' she said. 'They know it is the church that is doing this in Iraq.'

But no one is able to do enough. If by December families are still living on the streets, the already tragic situation will turn catastrophic.

Hundreds of thousands are unprepared for winter,' Kharrat said, anticipating average lows of three degrees Celsius. 'conditions are horrible.'

'They survived the summer – the heat did not kill them – but the freezing snow might.

[www.worldwatchmonitor.org](http://www.worldwatchmonitor.org)

Published: October 01, 2014

# Gleanings

## THE GLEANINGS TEAM:

**Odette De Kock** – Auckland Presbytery

**Yvonne Walraven** – Wellington Presbytery

**Frances Watson** – South Island Presbytery

*Collated and edited by*  
**Harriet Haverland**

## MINISTERS AND CHURCH WORKERS

**The Rev. Andre Holtslag** announced that he has declined the call to Hastings in order to continue to serve in Dovedale (Christchurch)

**The Rev. John Haverland** of Pukekohe received the wonderful news there was no evidence of his kidney cancer having spread and that while he would receive ongoing follow-up, there was no need for any further treatment. He is grateful to God for his steady recovery and for the lessons he had learnt during this time. "It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees" (Ps 119:71).

**Vicar Julian Dykman** of Bishopdale underwent his preliminary examination on Friday evening. The sermon portion of this examination was not sustained. There were many positive elements of the sermon which were noted, but there were some areas of weakness which Presbytery considered needed some further work. A subsequent exam is scheduled for 13 December 2014 at which time Julian will preach again. Please pray for Julian and Melinda as they work through this process. It was a great encouragement to have a large number join us on Friday night. Let us continue to encourage Julian as he prepares for ministry in the church of Jesus Christ.

**The Rev. Bruce Hoyt** and his wife Lois are trying to find a house to purchase in Christchurch. Once this is done the

Rev Bruce Hoyt will retire from fulltime pastoral ministry. Please remember the Oamaru congregation in your prayers as they continue the search for a minister to replace the Rev Hoyt.

**RCNZ Churches.** There are a number of churches in our federation that are presently seeking pastors. Please pray that our Lord would sustain and continue to provide for the Wellington, Foxton, Palmerston North, Hastings and Bucklands Beach Congregations. Oamaru is likely to be added to the list of vacant churches in the near future, as the time of the Rev. Hoyt's 'retirement' from full-time ministry is drawing near. Let us pray that the Lord of the harvest would send out more workers into his field.

## CHURCH BUILDINGS

**North Shore:** We finally received council consent to build and have build-contracts signed (between the builder, the architect and the church). All the rain we had in September has meant it is just too wet to try to dig into. We are looking at a reviewed start date towards the end of October.

## DENOMINATIONAL

**Decisions from the recent synod** – At the recent synod, there was a fair amount of "business as usual" – various committees reporting on their ongoing work – however there were also some decisions worth noting:

- Guidelines for helping sessions to deal with allegations of child sexual abuse were adopted.
- Both the English Standard Version (ESV) and the New King James Version (NKJV) were declared suitable for pulpit use. Synod did not support the overture for a study committee to assess the suitability of the 2011 review of the New International Version (NIV) for pulpit use.
- The Overseas Mission Board was reconstituted as a national board with the executive moving to the South Island Presbytery. Approval was also given, pending finance, to employ a compound manager in PNG.
- Synod supported the overtures to investigate whether ministers' remunera-

tion and retirement provisions could be simplified.

- After a few final tweaks, the revised forms and confessions were approved and will soon be published in a book.
- Thanks were also given to the Hymnody Committee for their unstinting work in producing Sing to the Lord.

## MISSIONS

**Hamilton:** ECM (European Christian Mission) speakers Phil Jolley and Ray Busuttill explained why Europe needs the gospel. For centuries, Europe has been the centre of Christendom, and is today the only continent where Christianity is in decline. However, God con-



"God uses chronic pain and weakness, along with other afflictions, as his chisel for sculpting our lives. Felt weakness deepens dependence on Christ for strength each day. The weaker we feel, the harder we lean. And the harder we lean, the stronger we grow spiritually, even while our bodies waste away. To live with your 'thorn' uncomplainingly – that is, sweet, patient, and free in heart to love and help others, even though every day you feel weak – is true sanctification. It is true healing for the spirit. It is a supreme victory of grace."  
*J.I. Packer*





tinues to shine His light in Europe and build His church.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH and EVANGELISM

**Pukekohe** hosted a Creation Ministries evening with Mr Mark James, who gave a presentation about God the Creator and his amazing creation. The meeting was well attended by members of the Pukekohe congregation, members of other surrounding churches and people from the community.

**Avondale:** Street Evangelism and Discipleship – A fantastic street evangelism opportunity occurs at your house; it's called Halloween. Hundreds of kids across Auckland hit the streets delivering tricks and desiring treats. Many of you may want to avoid involvement in a celebration with dark undertones. We'd like to encourage everyone to treat your door-knocking neighbours to a real treat – your testimony of the grace of God in your life! To help you in this effort, why not be prepared with: – a 'trick' (like a fake dollar note with a gospel answer to the million dollar question: "Are you going to heaven?") and – a 'treat' (a dvd docu-movie on the life of Noah). Halloween could be a real Harvest Festival... for the Lord!

## CLASSES and COURSES

**Avondale's** adult education class for this last term of the year focuses on the

Bible's teaching on the character and attributes of God.

## FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

The **Avondale** Cadets and Gems held a car wash, cake sale and sausage sizzle in October to raise funds to purchase new tents for their camps.

**Hukanui** hosted the **Love is Louder Fundraising Concert and Market** in October. The event was part of *LOUDER NZ Social Justice Arts Week*, so all proceeds went to Hagar International. Hagar restores to wholeness the lives of women and children in Afghanistan, Cambodia and Vietnam that have been torn apart by human rights abuse. The evening of music featured artists Breony Bearman, van der Wel, Hana and Cameron Munroe. An array of arts, crafts and baked goods was also available for purchase.

**Wainuiomata** Cadets and Gems are holding a carwash to raise further funds for their upcoming National Camp in Nelson. Please come along with your car, van or other vehicle for us to wash any time between 9.30am and 12.30pm. Your support is greatly appreciated.

## ACTIVITIES

**Palmerston North:** This is a night to enjoy one another's company. There will be a variety of topics in the quiz and we will have teams of 4-6 people. Feel free to make teams before the night and if you decide to come along to the

evening and are not part of a team, we will make teams on the night also. Our challenge to you is to team up with other congregation members that you do not know so well :) So please do come along for an evening of fun and fellowship!

**Palmerston North:** Please join us for our upcoming English Country Dance! It will be held here at the Reformed Church. The entry fee is \$5 per family or a gold coin donation per individual. The dress code is period costume, semi-formal, or formal attire – dressing up is half the fun! Please also bring a plate of finger food for supper.

## Report of South Island Presbytery

South Island Presbytery gathered on Friday 3 October at 7pm at the Bish-opsdale Reformed Church for the preliminary examination of Vicar Julian Dykman, beginning with the preaching of a sermon based on 1 Samuel 12. While there was much to be thankful for in the presentation and content of the sermon, there were nevertheless a number of areas of concern that were of sufficient weight for the sermon not

## LADIES PRESBYTERIAL

— ADVANCE NOTICE —

### When:

Saturday, 21 March 2015,  
9.30 – 3.00 pm

### Where:

Reformed Church of Wainui-  
omata

### Topic:

**"Bound – Now Free"**  
*New Life in Christ*

*Mark your calendars for a day of fun and fellowship with other ladies of the Wellington Presbytery.*

More details to follow.



*"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge."*  
Prov 1:7

## Teacher Vacancy

Silverstream Christian School is seeking the services of a Reformed Primary/Intermediate School Teacher for the 2015 school year. Silverstream Christian School is a school set up to provide Christian education to our covenant children. Our aim is to develop a biblically consistent world and life view in our students based on the Reformed Faith. Applicants must be committed to the Reformed Faith and Reformed Christian Education. This is an opportunity to be a part of a vibrant covenant community.

If you have any questions or wish to apply please email:

**board@silverstreamchristian.school.nz**  
**or phone Koen van der Werff on (04) 5297 558**

to be sustained. Prayer is requested for Julian as he prepares to resit this examination, on 13 December, DV.

On the Saturday morning, the Rev. Daniel Wilson opened with a reading from Psalm 30, reflecting on how the Lord's anger is but momentary while his favour lasts for a lifetime.

Synodical examiners, the Rev.s Peter Kloosterman and Michael Willemse, who were present for the examination were by now returning home thus bringing to an end, according to some keen ecclesiologists, a reunion of the former synodical moderamen.

Business for the remainder of the meeting was largely routine. The Rev. Erik Stolte presented a pithy review of minutes from the other presbyteries bringing the highlights to the attention of the meeting.

The Rev. Robert van Wichen reported on the prospective changeover of the Overseas Mission Board, now nationally constituted, previously drawn exclusively from the Wellington Presbytery to a new mix of current members and new appointees in our own presbytery.

Church visitation reports were received in respect of the Reformed

Churches of Bishopdale, Dovedale and Dunedin. Bishopdale intends to hold a congregational meeting with a view to placing a fulltime worker in their preaching post at Rangiora. There is much evidence God's blessing and grace to the sessions and congregations of these three churches.

While the business may appear to be a little predictable, churches do very much benefit from their delegates rubbing shoulders at these gatherings, both in working through the formal agenda and in the informal interactions that occur during breaks.

## Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

I write concerning the article in the Oct 2014 issue, concerning the legacy of Herman Bavinck.

My first point is a factual correction. The byline says that Nelson Kloosterman is professor of ethics at Mid-America Reformed Seminary. He was at the time of writing, but he is no longer. He left the post in 2009, I believe. And permit me a personal note - Dr. Kloosterman was one of my professors while I studied at M.A.R.S. and I am thankful to the Lord for the great privilege of learning from him.

More importantly though, while I welcome an introduction to a man who has served the church well in many respects (I have a copy of his Reformed Dogmatics), I was disappointed to see space given to Bavinck's response to attempts to "harmonize the results of modern science and the biblical account of creation" in Faith in Focus. The repeated pattern of "evening and morning" that is found in Genesis 1 and the connection between the ordinary work week of the Lord's people and the creation week (Exodus 20:11), ought to be sufficient for us to understand that the Lord created all things in the space of six, ordinary

days. This is also the only reasonable understanding of Westminster Confession Chapter 4, Article 1's reference to God creating all things "in the space of six days." Thus, in a time when this understanding of creation is being eroded and mocked from all quarters, it is my belief that we are not helped when our denominational magazine gives space to the kind of hermeneutic suggested by Herman Bavinck.

The article concludes with a call to "biblical erudition and courage in our generation." And I concur with this call, wholeheartedly! However, in seeking to defend "the historical reliability of the creation account" by understanding the days as "time periods" or "extraordinary days," Bavinck becomes guilty of what he was arguing against - "attempts to harmonize the results of modern science and the biblical account of creation." In addition, I am not sure that it takes much courage to take the days of creation as "time periods" or "extraordinary days," so as to find more time in Genesis in order to better fit with the popular claims of modern science. It takes courage to say that the Lord created all things in six ordinary days because He has told us that He created all things in six ordinary days. And it takes courage to challenge the popular claims of modern day science with science that accords perfectly with a recent creation. May the Lord give us that courage.

Yours in the name of He by whom all things were created (Col. 1:16), our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Andre Holtslag**

## Tyndale Park Christian School

**Co-educational Y1-Y13 Independent Christian School.**

Our school is growing! We now need two suitably qualified, full time Teachers, for positions in our Primary school [ Years 2-8 ] commencing 2nd February, 2015. As a Christian School we are seeking people with a deep personal commitment to Christ and a passion for Christian education, as a condition of appointment.

Applicants must be committed to the school's special character and to being part of a dedicated team involved in the teaching of our curriculum which emphasises Biblical principles in all aspects of education and school life.

**For further information, or to submit an application supported by suitable references, please contact; admin@tyndale park.school.nz**

# Three ways to know you are a missionary too?

## H David Schuringa

“But how can I get involved in missions?” is a question any serious Christian asks at some point. Christians who love the Lord want to be a part of the mission of the church. However, they’re not always sure exactly how to engage this question.

This month, as we celebrate CBI office volunteers from around the world, I thought it would be a good time to review the three ways to participate in missions and know that you are a missionary too!

### Pray-ers

This way is probably the most obvious, but clearly the most important. Prayer changes things, and this world needs changing. In my first congregation, there was a shut-in I visited on a regular basis. On the desk in her tiny room, there was a list of missionaries. “I pray for each one every day, Pastor,” she would tell me.

Where would missions in prisons around the world be today without the saints praying for the spread of the Gospel? Remember that mission always begins with heartfelt pray-ers!

### Pay-ers

This point may sound crass, but Christ

moves His church forward with the tithes and offerings of His people. It’s just how He set it up for His church to flourish and learn from His example of self-sacrifice. After all, it was Jesus Himself who famously said that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Ah, you say, but I’m on a fixed income! Even so, God can use a widow’s mite to move mountains and He can use you to be a missions pay-er. And, if you are at the other end of the spectrum, consider tithing a double amount and see what God can do. Whether your gift is a few dollar bills in the church plate or a big check to an international ministry, God is always pleased if your heart is one of a cheerful pay-er.

### Play-ers

While it is a thrill to pray, pay and watch others do the work, you’re missing out if you’re not also, in some way, a play-er.

Does being a play-er mean packing up and moving to a foreign country? Sometimes, but not always. The Bible is very clear that the body of Christ is made up of many parts, and being a mission play-er takes on many forms.

Targeted volunteering is one way to take action. Some people correct lessons of prisoners, visit the sick, volunteer in homeless shelters or even raise money

for helping ministries. Other people are able to get involved in full-time missions: serving as a pastor, working for a non-profit or teaching in a school, to name just a few.

As a worldview guy, I think you can be a mission play-er in a wide range of activities. After all, a businessperson provides jobs so people don’t have to go homeless. A farmer provides food to feed the world’s hungry. A doctor or dentist relieves and prevents suffering. If you are a fully committed play-er wherever God has called you, there is no doubt you will find yourself on the mission field every single day.

When I think about missions from this perspective, I am reminded that Crossroad Bible Institute is truly a one-stop mission agency: here you can be a pray-er, a pay-er and a play-er. I’m so thankful for each one of you volunteers who help in the office, you who are Instructor-missionaries from your own homes, you who support with a widow’s mite or out of your bounty, you who pray.

*This article was originally published in the Spring 2014 Crossroad Network News. To learn more about Crossroad Bible Institute’s prison ministry, visit [www.cbi.tv](http://www.cbi.tv).*





# The RTC Distance Education Programme

Have you ever thought about participating in theological education but dismissed the very idea because your life stage or location would make it impossible? Then the RTC distance programme (also known as Refstudy) may be exactly what you are looking for. The RTC was one of the pioneers of online education within the Australian College of Theology (ACT) and over the years our programme has grown from strength to strength.

We currently have 12 units (in Old Testament, New Testament, Theology, Ethics, Worldview, Evangelism and Mission and Church History) available online. This means that prospective students can complete a full Graduate Diploma of Divinity online. Students who would like to progress to an RTC M.Div. or B.Th. are able to complete a signifi-

cant portion of their studies online before transitioning to more traditional modes of delivery. As we believe that certain subjects (especially those involving ministry skills) are better taught face-to-face we do not envision that our full degree programme will be made available for online delivery. It should, however, be clear from the above that we offer a significant number of units through this delivery mode.

So what are some of the possible benefits associated with studying online with the RTC?

You will be able to study at your own pace and at times that suit you. All that is required is an internet connection and access to a theological library.

Since you would not have to relocate to participate in the programme

it will be possible to undertake your studies while maintaining your current work and family commitments. If you are involved in some kind of Christian ministry you will be able to apply what you are learning as you are learning it.

All the units offered through our online programme are fully accredited by the ACT and are pitched at the same level as our on-campus units. Units that are successfully completed can, therefore, be seamlessly included in ACT accredited qualifications offered by the RTC or other ACT colleges.

We make use of a very user friendly system called Moodle to deliver our online units. This does not mean that everything is automated however. Online units are taught by RTC lecturers and you will have the opportunity to regularly interact with them on the online forums or through email. When classes are very large we make use of experienced online assistants to help facilitate discussion. This means that there will always be another human on the other side of the computer screen to help guide your learning.

While you will be physically separated from your fellow students you will not be studying on your own. Online forums, where you will get the chance to discuss what you are learning with other students, form an integral part of all our distance units.

The following units are scheduled to be taught online during the 1<sup>st</sup> semester of 2015: *Jesus and the Gospels* (NT301/501), *The Doctrines of Grace and Eschatology* (TH403/603), *The Church from 1550 to Modern Times* (CH301/501) and *Christian Worldview* (PE301/510)

If you would like to have a look at the RTC distance site please head over to: [www.refstudy.org](http://www.refstudy.org). For any enquiries please contact Phillip Scheepers at [pscheepers@rtc.edu.au](mailto:pscheepers@rtc.edu.au). We are convinced that our online units can be of great benefit to those seeking to be equipped to serve the Lord Jesus, wherever they may be and we hope to 'virtually see' many of those reading this on the Refstudy site soon!

**RTC**  
Reformed Theological College

**ONLINE SUBJECTS**  
**Semester 1 - 2015**

[www.refstudy.org](http://www.refstudy.org)

**Jesus and the Gospels**  
(NT301/501)

**The Doctrines of Grace and Eschatology**  
(TH403/603)

**The Church from 1550 to modern times**  
(CH302/502)

**Christian Worldview**  
(PE310/510)

units are accredited by the Australian College of Theology

FEE-HELP and Austudy may apply

[www.rtc.edu.au](http://www.rtc.edu.au)

**Enrol Now!**

further information:  
[registrar@rtc.edu.au](mailto:registrar@rtc.edu.au)  
(03) 5244 2955