

faith in
focus

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Government, law and order

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All correspondence regarding editorial content and advertising should be sent to:

The Editor:

Walter Walraven
7 Winchester Avenue, Pinehaven
Upper Hutt 5019
Ph/Fax: +64 4 527 4379
Email: fnf@rcnz.org.nz
Reformed Churches Home Page
<http://www.rcnz.org.nz>

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Email: ricwhare@paradise.net.nz

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Editorial

When Christians look at the subjects of government, law and order, I think that most understand what the Lord requires of His people is revealed in the Scriptures. One doesn't need a university degree to understand the instruction in Romans 13 in respect of our obedience.

For the Christian, it is true piety to obey the "governing authorities" which are appointed by God. There are numerous examples of this in Scripture, and one case in point is Daniel. In all things lawful, he obeyed the governing authorities of his day. In his service of worship to the LORD, he was faithful in everything.

For the Christian, to obey the governing authorities is to obey God, providing that authority does not run contrary to God's word and force us to sin.

Paul the Apostle, in Romans 13:1-7 says through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

"¹Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. ²Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. ³For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; ⁴for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. ⁵Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. ⁶For because of this you also pay taxes, for {rulers} are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. ⁷Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax {is due; } custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor."

Mr Andre Holtslag writes on "Obeying both God and Caesar", and looks at what Scripture has to say on the matter. Mr David Brattston (see below) investigates "The Price of Civilisation, then and now" – the issue of tax evasion - and "Christianity and copyright in New Zealand", a sometimes vexing question for the Kiwi Christian. Mrs Sally Davey broaches the subject of "Home, sweet gleaming, gorgeous home" – an interesting look at keeping your home in the modern era. Mr Michael Willemse writes a book review on Diana West's book, *The Death of the Grown-Up: How America's Arrested Development Is Bringing Down Western Civilization*. Mr Peter Kloosterman reports on the recent 2010 Synod of the United Reformed Churches of North America. Messrs Michael Flinn and Hans Vaatstra fill us in on the home mission work in Wanganui.

This is a ground-breaking issue in respect of "Letters to the editor". There are four in this issue. Many thanks to our writers .

[**Mr David Brattston** is a retired lawyer and judge on minor tribunals residing in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, Canada. His articles on early and contemporary Christianity have been published by a wide variety of denominations in Canada, the United States, Great Britain, the Philippines, India, Japan, Australia, Ghana, and South Africa. He is a member of the oldest Lutheran congregation in Canada, founded 1772.]

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

Government, law and order (1)

Obeying both God and Caesar

Andre Holtslag

In France, new legislation was recently passed making the wearing of burka-style Islamic veils illegal.

Now, while there will be universal agreement on laws banning murder, for instance, it is likely that opinion will be divided on the validity of a law like this one. May or should a government pass legislation on something like this? And we could get even more complex. Not that long ago, one of our M.P.s was believed to smoke marijuana as a sacramental element of his Rastafarian faith; the equivalent of our Lord's Supper. Should this be allowed? Some people refuse medical treatment for themselves or their children because of religious beliefs. May the government overrule these beliefs and order treatment? Should a government make smacking illegal? Are calling "the faithful" to wage "holy war" on the "infidel," and calling homosexuality a sin both an exercising of free speech that should be protected by law? Or should both be banned?

Well, we raise these questions not as our chief concern, but to introduce the subject that we wish to address in this article: Government, law, and order. For if we are even to begin answering important and potentially thorny questions like these, an even more basic principle needs to be understood. This has to do with the nature of government. What does the Bible say about government? What is a government to do? Where does the government sit in relation to the church? And how ought we as Christians to view the government?

Since this topic is one worthy of a whole seminary or university course, we will restrict ourselves to a brief survey of the biblical, confessional, and historical data.

The Old Testament order

The Bible reveals that as early as Genesis 14 and the time of Abraham, there were those who were recognised as kings. Abimelech is a common Old Testament

name for rulers. Literally, it means, "My father is king," and was likely to be as much a title as a name. Genesis 14:4 reveals that some kings were subject to others depending on regional supremacy. Around this time (c. 1750 B.C.), Hammurabi, a king of Babylon, composed a law code which was written on a stone tablet measuring about 2.4 m tall. It was discovered in 1901 and has provided us with some fascinating insights into the concepts of government and law at that time.

A little later on, in the time of Moses, Israel was constituted as a nation. And what distinguished Israel from the surrounding nations was that she had no king. Even though Deuteronomy 17 made provision for a king, Israel functioned initially as a theocracy with God as her government and the Torah (the first five books of the O.T.) as her law. People like Moses, Aaron, Joshua, the Judges, and the elders (Exod. 18) served God as those anointed by Him to administer the law, lead in battle, judge disputes, and guide civil life in Israel. And

even when kings arrived, they too were to rule as undershepherds of Yahweh, as Deut. 17 spelled out.

Life under foreign powers

Eventually though, life in Israel changed with the arrival of King Nebuchadnezzar and the subsequent exile. From then on, Israel lived with the daily tension of having God as her ruler and in addition a foreign king of one sort or another. Later came the Greeks, the Ptolomies, and the Seleucids. For a time, with the Maccabbees, the Israelites threw off the yoke of foreign rule; but with the emergence of the Roman empire, any hint of Israel's independence was ended. In law, in art, in education, in worship, and in entertainment, one thing was clear for the Jews: Rome rules!

It is in this climate of a daily reality that was almost universally despised by the Jews that we must consider a crucial encounter that Jesus had with the Pharisees (Mark 12:13-17). We must do so because this passage provides us with important words that guide our



The new Supreme Court of New Zealand, located in Wellington.

“Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour.”

consideration of this subject. Politically, the situation was this: Every Jew had to pay an imperial tribute tax to Caesar. The Pharisees accepted Roman rule as God’s divine judgment on faithless Israel and paid the tribute, begrudgingly. The Herodians accepted Roman rule because it gave them political advantage, and paid the tribute, gladly. Against them both stood the Zealots (not mentioned in this Mark passage) who hated Roman rule and flat out refused to pay the tribute. Each party despised the other, but their hatred for Jesus united them in this diabolical ploy to catch Jesus out. Their question was, “Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn’t we?” It was the perfect set-up. Surely, whatever answer He gave to this question would trap Him in one direction or the other?

Jesus, however, exposed the hearts of His questioners with His astonishing response. He asked them to furnish a denarius; a common Roman coin. We can imagine any of them digging into

their pockets or money belts and proffering the requested coin. After all, they used them every day for purchasing. And that is precisely Jesus’ point. In handing over the coin, they answered their own question. If they used Caesar’s coins; if they enjoyed the benefits of the Roman Empire, then in so doing they tacitly acknowledged Caesar’s authority and should be prepared to pay for it. And we see this in that while they used a Greek word that suggested “a voluntary choice to give,” Jesus used a Greek word that suggested “repaying a debt owed.”

In establishing the legitimacy of Caesar’s claim, then, Jesus hinted at something that is more fully explained elsewhere in the NT, and to which we shall turn below. Essentially though, what He said is that because Caesar is an authority established by God, he has a legitimate claim, as does God. To each must be given what is demanded. However, the claims of each are not equal. And this Jesus made clear by pointing to the image on the coin. Mankind has been made in the image

of God. He alone is to be worshipped. Caesar may not demand the worship of himself as his coin calls for. Instead, “Though the obligation to pay to Caesar some of his own coinage in return for the amenities his rule provided is affirmed, the idolatrous claims expressed on the coins are rejected. God’s rights are to be honoured. Here Jesus is not saying that there are two quite separate independent spheres, that of Caesar and that of God (for Caesar and all that is his belongs to God); but He is indicating that there are obligations to Caesar which do not infringe the rights of God but are indeed ordained by God.” (Cranfield, *Gospel of Mark*, p. 372).

Nevertheless, in Jesus’ words, we are introduced to what would be the ongoing reality for NT Christians; life lived under a civil government.

And, as we mentioned a moment ago, what this means is more fully developed elsewhere in the NT. In Romans 13:1-7, for example, we read, “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves ... He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour.” And also, 1 Peter 2:13-17 says, “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by Him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right ... Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honour the king.”

And what these words, together with Jesus’ words, reveal to us is that the new political reality that God’s people live under is as much by God’s design as was the OT theocracy.

Initially then, as far as the early NT church was concerned, civil government became the instigator of intense persecution of believers. The challenge, as



Romans 13, 1 Peter 2, and 1 Timothy 2:1-2 reveal, was to submit to the government in the face of such persecution; to render to “Caesar” those things that were his. With the dramatic “conversion” to Christianity of the Emperor Constantine, however, and the legal establishment of Christianity as the religion of the state under Emperor Theodosius in A.D. 380, another challenge was introduced. Since it was now “fashionable” to be a Christian, a competing struggle was to render to God the things that were His. Would individuals be faithful in the things of God now that the threat of persecution was gone? How could the things of God be preserved and protected from government interference?

Church and state

Hence, from that point on, a key question of the day in “Western” society would be the relationship between the church and the state. Did the Pope, for example, as head of the church, rule civil society as well; or was the Emperor, or King, also to be considered the head of the church? Who should call synods? Who should appoint bishops? To whom was a pope or king accountable?

Well, seeking to answer these types of questions and recognising that the Bible does not prescribe a particular form of government (ie. king vs dictator vs democratic republic), we are helped by the way in which our confessions address this subject.

Concerning the nature and function of civil government, we read, “God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, has ordained civil authorities to be, under Him, over the people for His own glory and the public good. For this purpose He has armed them with the power of the sword for the defense and encouragement of those who are good, and for the punishment of those who do evil” (Westminster Confession of Faith. Art. 23.1; Modern English Study Version). The Belgic Confession of Faith says similar, noting also that civil government is needed to restrain the sinfulness of man, and to ensure that everything is done with good order and decency (Art. 36). In addition, the Westminster also notes the right of the civil government to wage a just war (Art. 2).

In terms of the relationship between the church and the state, both confessions also make the following helpful comments: “The civil government is also to protect the sacred ministry, that the kingdom of Christ may thus be pro-

moted. They must therefore countenance the preaching of the Word of the gospel everywhere, that God may be honoured and worshipped by every one, as He commands in His Word (Belgic 36). And, “as caring fathers, it is the duty of civil authorities to protect the church of our common Lord without giving preference to any denomination of Christians above the rest – doing so in such a way that all church authorities shall enjoy the full, free, and unquestioned liberty of carrying out every part of their sacred functions without violence or danger.”

What conclusions may we draw, then, from these statements as summaries of biblical truth?

Well, to begin with, the church and the civil government are addressed sepa-

more and more likely to enact legislation that increasingly intrudes on and hinders the work of the church.

However, *our* responsibility towards the government is where we must end. It is our calling “to pray for those in authority, to honour them, to pay them taxes or other revenue, to obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority for the sake of conscience (Westminster 23.4).” And in these things there is every likelihood that we will be increasingly and sorely tested. Nevertheless, we must also recognise that civil government is a gift of God’s gracious providence, and be thankful.

May our God give us a humble faithfulness in all that He calls us to with respect to civil government. May He also

“Because civil government is ordained by God, it is to do all it can to encourage the preaching of the Christian gospel and to protect the church.”

rately, recognising from God’s Word that they are both separate, God-ordained institutions. Those who hold office in the church are not called to set public policy and administer justice (unless they hold elected office or work in those areas, as individuals). But neither ought the civil government to involve itself in the affairs of the church.

Secondly, the function of civil government is the promotion of good, the punishment of evil, the maintenance of public order (which can also be seen to fit under the former two headings), and national defence.

And thirdly, because civil government is ordained by God, it is to do all it can to encourage the preaching of the Christian gospel and to protect the church.

It would seem, then, that we live in a society where each of these aspects is becoming more and more blurry and undefined, especially the last. It should come as no surprise that rather than encourage and protect the church, because God is not recognised as the author of civil government, civil governments are

help us to work wisely, as individuals, within the civil realm as we are able. And may He give us continued trust in Jesus Christ, the King of the Church, who is “head over *everything* (including civil government) for the church (Eph. 1:22).”

Mr Andre Holtslag is a Minister of the Word and Sacraments in the Reformed Church of Dovedale.

The Thought of God – Maurice Roberts, p107

A Slothful, unfeeling religion is not the faith we read of in the Bible. There is such a thing as following the Lord *fully*. There is such a thing as fearing the Lord *greatly*. There is such a thing as the wish to see God glorified here and now *on earth*. Then let all right-hearted men pray for grace to cast off the mantle of complacency and gird up their loins with fresh zeal for the task.

Government, law and order (2)

The Price of Civilisation, *then* and *NOW*



David Brattston

"Taxes are what we pay for civilized society" said Judge Oliver Wendell Holmes of the United States Supreme Court. It is also what we pay for being disciples of Jesus Christ. Starting with Jesus Himself, the Christian faith commands us to pay all taxes levied by secular governments and to not evade them by such tricks as underreporting the value of a commercial transaction or of property, accepting cash in order to report a lesser monetary amount that would change hands, or inventing fictitious deductions from income.

Biblical to pay taxes

The first injunction to pay secular taxes appears in Matthew 22:17-21, Mark 12:14-17 and Luke 20:22-25, where the Pharisees asked Jesus "Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" Christ pointed to a coin which bore the portrait and inscription of Caesar, the Roman head of state, and replied with "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's". In other words, give back to the creator of secular money their due portion of it, whether that person is the Roman emperor or Queen

Elizabeth as represented by the New Zealand authorities. In Matthew 17:27 Jesus instructed Peter to pay the Jewish Temple poll tax as well.

A little later, but still in Bible times, the Apostle Paul commanded:

"Pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: if you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another." (Romans 13:6-8)

The earliest generations of Christians interpreted this literally, not "spiritually". Their witness is valuable to us today because they lived in an era when the oral teachings and Bible interpretations of Jesus and the apostles were still fresh in Christian memories and they remembered the sense and nuances in which the above words were written. These ancient post-biblical authors also operated in the same context and culture as the New Testament authors and their first hearers and readers, and shared their presuppositions and mental world, and

thus more fully disclose the interpretations and lessons that the Biblical authors intended their first audience to draw from the New Testament.

Justin, a martyr for the Faith at government hands around AD 165, composed a description of Christian teachings for the Roman emperor. Where "we" means Christians, Justin wrote: "everywhere we, more readily than all men, endeavour to pay to those appointed by you the taxes both ordinary and extraordinary, as we have been taught by Him". Justin then summarised Matthew 22:17-21, and continued: "to God alone we render worship, but in other things we gladly serve you, acknowledging you as kings and rulers of men" (*1 Apology* 17).

In AD 180 another Christian martyr also described Christian practices and attitudes towards the state. He said Christians honour Caesar as Caesar and, when they buy anything they always pay the sales tax out of a religious duty. (*Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs*)

Theophilus was pastor of Antioch in Syria in the third quarter of the second century. Writing of Christians' relations with secular government, he narrated that "the divine word" instructs Christians to "lead a quiet and peaceable life. And it teaches us to render all things to all, honour to whom honour, fear to whom fear, tribute to whom tribute; to owe no one anything but to love all." (*To Autolytus* 3.14)

Origen was the most influential Bible scholar, teacher, and preacher of his own day and for centuries to come, so much so that he was consulted by pastors throughout the eastern Mediterranean. In his Sermons on Luke 23.6 (about AD 233) he told his audience "to pay what is due to other people: tribute to whom tribute is due, taxes to whom taxes, and

honour to whom honour". At 39.4 he indicated that no Christian of his day disagreed that Christians must pay taxes to the Roman government.

A year or two later, in discussing "forgive us our debts" in the Lord's Prayer, Origen repeated Romans 13:7-8 and added that taxes to whom taxes, revenue to whom revenue, etc. are debts due to other people because Christians have a responsibility to render them, just as we are also to render "gentle speech" and other kinds of Christian deeds and dispositions (*On Prayer 28:1*).

Origen preached that taxes as taxes, revenue as revenue, etc., are among duties that Christians must render to the other people, just like duties to parents as parents, sons as sons, siblings as siblings, clergy as clergy, church elders as church elders, deacons as deacons, and laypeople as laypeople (*Sermons on Jeremiah 14.4.1*). To Origen, payment of government levies was on a par with other conduct we associate with the Christian life, and just as binding and integral to it.

Taxes a debt

Ancient Christian sources give five reasons for paying taxes:

First, to avoid giving offence. When Peter in Matthew 17:24 asked Jesus about paying the Temple poll tax, there followed a discussion to the effect that rulers collect taxes from people in general but never from their own sons, i.e. "the sons are exempt". However, Christ instructed Peter to pay it anyway, "so that we may not offend them" (the collectors of the religious tax).

Second, taxes are a debt rather than one's own property which a Christian can give or withhold at will. Origen considered taxes, revenues, etc., to constitute an account payable that Christians have no choice but to discharge. If we do not follow this commandment of the divine law to pay the tax in full, we despise the Word of God and remain in debt (*On Prayer 28:1*).

Third, remember Theophilus' and Origen's categorising payment of government taxes with other Christian traits and behaviours: payment allows us to "lead a quiet and peaceable life". Origen's *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 9.29 (between AD 239 and 245) considered it part of Christians' "living a quiet and tranquil life" and practising justice and piety.

The *Commentary on Romans* brings us to a fourth and purely practi-

cal reason to pay. Writing at a time when the church was intermittently persecuted by the state and when many Christians urged tolerance of it because Christians conscientiously obeyed the state except on the sole matter of worship, Origen in an exegesis of Romans 13:5-6 wrote Christian non-payment of taxes and revenues would "deservedly" bring the government's forces against them. Refusal to pay levies would constitute rebellion against the Roman Empire, depriving it of finances essential for its administration. Government officials would then be "justified persecutors" of Christians who would be plainly guilty of breaking a law that applied to all Roman subjects and which had nothing to do with religion.

you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience."

Then follow verses 6 to 8, quoted near the beginning of this article.

This concept is summarised in concise, systematic order by bringing together Romans 13:1-5 and other Biblical passages in the subordinate standards of the Christian Reformed Churches. According to the *Belgic Confession* 36, "it is the bounden duty of every one, of whatever

“The Reformed view is not just one possible interpretation of the Bible among many but was shared by the earliest church.”

Instead of persecution for their beliefs, the government would attack Christians for pure rebelliousness.

The fifth reason is that Christians are bound in conscience to obey their government in all things; the only exception is when it commands them to violate their religion, and then only to the extent that the governmental command infringes on it. The favourite proof-text is Romans 13:1-5:

"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do

state, quality or condition he may be, to subject himself to the magistrates; to pay tribute, to show due honor and respect to them, and to obey them in all things which are not repugnant to the word of God", while Lord's Day 39 of the *Heidelberg Catechism* extends a Christian's duties to his/her parents under the Fifth Commandment "to all in authority over me [and] to submit myself with due obedience,...and also bear patiently with their weaknesses and shortcomings".

The Christian Reformed view is not just one possible interpretation of the Bible among many but was shared by the earliest church. For example, sometime between AD 198 and 220 the church father Tertullian in exegesis of Matthew 22:17-21 wrote this about Christians:

"as to what relates to the honours due to kings or emperors, we have a prescript sufficient, that it behoves us to be in all obedience, according to the apostle's precept, "subject to magistrates, and princes and powers." (On Idolatry 15)

A former lawyer, Tertullian was a minister in what is now Tunisia.

Dishonest tax avoidance hurts others

A further reason against dishonest tax avoidance is that it cheats honest taxpayers. When the total tax revenues of a government decline, the rates go up to raise the same amount of money, with a disproportionately higher burden thrust onto honest taxpayers who report the full value of a transaction, benefit or property, and without dishonestly padding deductions. Because the dishonest paying less causes the honest to give up more of their money, such chicanery is well within “all wicked tricks and devices whereby we aim to appropriate our neighbour’s goods, whether by force or show of right...or any other means forbidden by God” (*Heidelberg Catechism* Lord’s Day 42).

Another reason for Christians to pay the full amount of taxes is more relevant to twenty-first-century New Zealand than when Christians in ancient times were disenfranchised and persecuted by governments. In those days taxes were collected for despots who either had inherited the government or imposed it by force of arms, with taxpayers having no say in the matter. These despots often spent tax money to more efficiently oppress their people or on building

projects that glorified themselves, again with taxpayers having no say in the matter. In New Zealand today it is the people, mostly taxpayers, who have the right to elect representatives to levy and spend taxes, and to vote them out of office if they think taxes too high or misspent. Because tax money is used how the people’s choices decide – and therefore usually for the voters’ good – the obligation to pay is logically and morally more binding now than in early Christian times.

On the other hand, a Christian need not comply with exaggerated demands from an overzealous tax collector that are not authorised by the taxing statutes or a court of law, nor need we forgo legitimate deductions. We are to give to Caesar only what is rightfully Caesar’s. This was put another way by Tertullian in discussing “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s” when Tertullian rhetorically asked “what will be God’s, if all things are Caesar’s?” (*On Idolatry* 15). In Australia, excessive use of power by tax collectors can be appealed, and no tax is valid unless authorised by a parliament or legislature.

It is well known that Christ associated with tax collectors, but he also did so with prostitutes. His purpose was to seek and save the lost, not approve of their ways. Jesus was on a soul-saving mission like John the Baptist, who when asked by tax

collectors what they should do as part of their repentance, replied “Don’t collect any more than you are required to” (Luke 3:13). Similarly, Jesus befriended the chief collector Zacchaeus, but pronounced salvation on him only when Zacchaeus said he amply reimbursed any taxpayers he overcharged (Luke 19:2-10).

In *Sermons on Luke* 23.5, Origen also taught that tax collectors must take no more than the law allows. The Didascalia, a church manual of the first third of the third century, classes “dishonest tax-gatherers” in the same category as thieves, forgers, usurers, extortionists, cheaters of the poor, “hypocritical lawyers”, and other reprobates.

Paraphrasing John the Baptist, Jesus and Tertullian, pay only what you owe but pay all you owe.

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David W T Brattston
103 Montague Street
Post Office Box 1599
Lunenburg, Nova Scotia,
Canada, B0 J 2C0
E-mail: dwtbrattston@hotmail.com
Telephone: (902) 634-8473

Government, law and order (3)

Christianity and copyright in New Zealand

David Brattston

When thinking of copying music, movies, computer software, television programmes or other copyrighted material, do not let your conscience be your guide. Go by the strict letter of your country’s secular law. I say this because the rights of copyright holders do not come from any universal or natural law, still less directly from the Bible or other divine law,

but are pure creatures of parliamentary statutes, which allow a certain amount of copying, to which copyright holders have consented or are deemed by secular law to have consented.

Copyright in music, computer software, etc does not proceed from the nature of human beings or inherent logic as to the rights of an author, songwriter or computer programmer. If it did, the laws of all countries would

confer identical rights and would allow the same proportion of copying without permission. Yet, even within the countries of the English-speaking world, all of which derive their laws ultimately from England, there is a maze of conflicting rules. What may be reproduced and under what conditions greatly varies: it appears that “time-shifting” (recording a television broadcast for watching later at the copyist’s convenience) has long

been allowed in New Zealand, while “format-shifting” (e.g. copying a sound recording to an iPod for private use) was illegal until recently but is now permitted. The former exception applies to copying from radio or television while the latter is restricted to music.

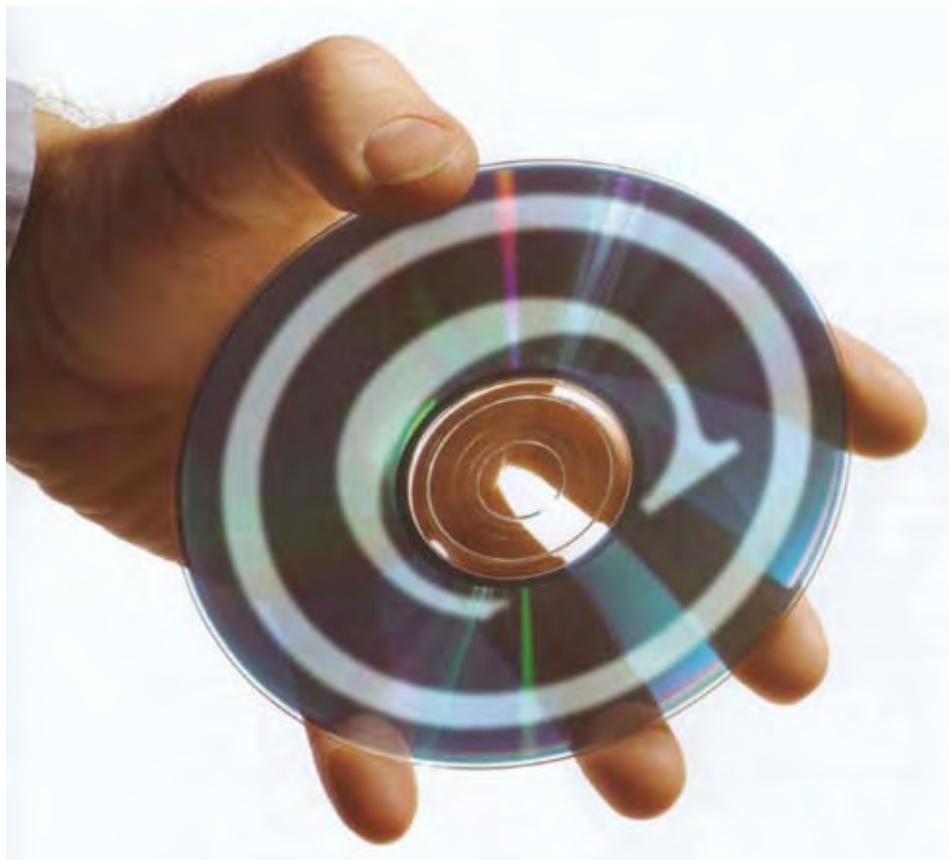
Even the length of time a copyright is in force varies from country to country. It is ninety-five years in the USA, seventy in Australia, but only fifty in Canada and New Zealand for literary works. Even within New Zealand different genres of material enjoy different lengths of protection. In addition, national parliaments amend their copyright legislation frequently, conferring or extending some rights and reducing others.

Even the criteria as to what entitles a composer, author or other creator to copyright his/her product differ from nation to nation. The law of the New Zealand grants copyright on the basis of the amount of work that went into creating a new product of the mind in tangible form, but US law stresses originality and creativity.

What may be copied without permission, called “fair use” in the USA and “fair dealing” in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Britain, varies according to national criteria. Thus, you cannot rely for permitted copying in your own country what was legally copied in another. The New Zealand *Copyright Act* allows limited exceptions for research, universities, private study, institutes for the deaf and the blind, and schools for teaching a language. There is no specific or blanket exception for churches or other non-profit organisations. Like many countries, Kiwi law provides a mechanism whereby a person can copy another’s work by paying a fee set by the government whether the copyright holder has consented or not.

Copyright and the Christian

Given the inconsistencies as to exceptions and kinds and extents of rights and the ease with which copies can be made, should a Christian even consider copyright or copyright laws when they wish to copy music or a computer programme? Why cannot a Kiwi make copies for his friends as well as himself, or even sell them to strangers? The answer is twofold: doing so is harmful to society and the economy (which is why secular law prohibits it) and it is contrary to the law which protects all citizens and their property, both copyists and copyright holders.



First, illegal copying or infringement of copyright confers an unmerited windfall on infringers at the expense of the author, composer, lyric-writer, publishing house, record company and other people whose labour and monetary investment make the product possible. If they went substantially unrewarded for their efforts or could not recoup their expenses, there would be little incentive to create new productions besides vanity or a desire to present one’s point of view. Still less would they make them available to the public.

Second, Christians are bound in conscience to obey their governments in all things; the only exception is when it commands them to violate their religion, and then only to the extent that the governmental command infringes on it. The proof texts are Romans 13.1-5, Titus 3.1, 1 Peter 2.13f and 1 Peter 2.17.

The early church fathers

Second-century Christians, who enjoyed the benefit of fresh memories of the apostles and other early disciples and of oral interpretations of what they had written, shared the same attitude toward civil authorities as do Reformed churches today. Justin, a martyr for the faith at government hands around AD 165, told the Roman emperors that: “to God alone we render worship, but in other things

we gladly serve you, acknowledging you as kings and rulers of men” (1 Apology 17). Pastor of Antioch in Syria in the third quarter of the second century, Theophilus said that

“concerning subjection to authorities and powers, and prayer for them, the divine word gives us instructions, in order that ‘we may lead a quiet and peaceable life.’ And it teaches us to render all things to all, ‘honour to whom honour, fear to whom fear, tribute to whom tribute; to owe no many anything but to love all.’” (To Autolycus 3.14)

A former lawyer and later a minister in what is now Tunisia, the church father Tertullian in exegeting Matthew 22.17-21 wrote this about Christians:

as to what relates to the honours due to kings or emperors, we have a prescript sufficient, that it behoves us to be in all obedience, according to the apostle’s precept, “subject to magistrates, and princes and powers;” but within the limits of discipline, so long as we keep ourselves separate from idolatry. (On Idolatry 15)

He cited as examples the three Hebrews who refused to worship the idol

in Daniel 3, but who were “in other respects obedient toward King Nebuchadnezzar”, and Daniel himself who refused to obey King Darius’s law against prayer (Daniel 6) although “in all other points submissive to Darius, remained in his duty so long as it was free from danger to his religion”.

The view of the Confessions

This concept is summarised in concise, systematic order by bringing together the substance of biblical passages in the subordinate standards of the Reformed churches. According to the *Belgic Confession* 36, “it is the bounden duty of every one, of whatever state, quality or condition he may be, to subject himself to the magistrates; to pay tribute, to show due honor and respect to them,

criteria such as the purpose, character and nature of the copied work, the possibility of obtaining a non-infringing copy at an ordinary commercial price, the effect of the copying on the market for legitimate copies, and the proportion and substantiality copied. Often the extent of permitted copying is found not in statutes (which can be easily accessed from the internet) but in court decisions (which are not, and are subject to being overruled).

Does our conscience require more of us?

But should not the Christian go the extra mile and refrain from copying even what their national law permits, in accordance with what such Christian considers the “spirit” of the legislation? Not as regards

copied and new ways of copying existing items reaching the market, legislatures must again strike a new balance between producers and consumers on the basis of the changed situation. As new technology comes along, the balance becomes uneven and Parliament hears again from the parties and strikes a new balance, with new protections and exceptions. The Australian federal government has a Copyright Law Review Committee just for this purpose. The strengths of the competing groups and their (temporary) influence on government are different from country to country, which is why the law of New Zealand differs from that of Australia. Producers give up some rights in their intellectual creations in return for new protections over their remaining ones, while potential copyists allow some restrictions on copying in exchange for others, with Parliament arbitrating differences in desires or legitimate interests.

Do not be bothered by pangs of conscience if you are copying something you think your nation’s law should protect but does not in fact protect, or allows exceptions. You are not robbing the composer, lyric-writer, author, etc when you abide by the letter of your country’s copyright law. They have already given up the relevant right, often voluntarily, in return for considerations such as protection of works they create using new technology. They have consented to your copying. With proper consent, a person may copy anything. If they consider such copying to be unfair, they can try to persuade the government when it is next amending the *Copyright Act*. Until then, both parties are bound by their bargain. Copiers have already paid the price for legal copying.

Please do not regard the present article as a lawyer’s professional advice or as a definitive statement of the law. There are frequent changes to the rules as to what can be copied and what cannot. For instance, there was a major legislative change in New Zealand between the date I began to research this article and the date I revised it. The rules may well change again between the time I wrote the present version and the time when *Faith in Focus* publishes it. To be sure as to what you can copy, consult a solicitor. At second best, but no defence in a copyright infringement lawsuit, are public legal information services, such as the Copyright Council of New Zealand website at www.copyright.org.nz. See also the Ministry of Economic Development website at www.med.govt.nz. For

“God ... also brands as theft all wicked tricks and devices whereby we aim to appropriate our neighbor’s goods, whether by force or with show of right.”

and to obey them in all things which are not repugnant to the word of God’, while Lord’s Day 39 of the *Heidelberg Catechism* extends a Christian’s duties towards his/her parents under the Fifth Commandment “to all in authority over me [and] to submit myself with due obedience, ... and also bear patiently with their weaknesses and shortcomings”. Neither Scripture nor the Three Forms of Unity make exceptions for copyright statutes. In fact, *Heidelberg Catechism* Lord’s Day 42 Answer 110 is very applicable to copyright and unauthorised copying: “God forbids not only such theft and robbery as are punished by the magistrate, but He also brands as theft all wicked tricks and devices whereby we aim to appropriate our neighbor’s goods, whether by force or with show of right”.

In the countries I studied (Canada, New Zealand, Australia, United Kingdom and USA), in all but Australia the amount of what is a reasonable portion that may be copied is phrased in vague, inexact

copyright. Copyright protection does not exist apart from statute, which also creates the “fair dealing” and other exceptions. There was no copyright statute at all, even in England, until after the Three Forms of Unity and Westminster standards were already adopted. Protection and exceptions exist only as Parliament allows after hearing both creators and producers (present and future copyright holders) and consumers (potential copiers). National governments strike the balance they consider to best provide incentives for authors, composers and computer programmers and other potential producers to create new works while at the same time enabling the public/consumers access to and freedom to utilise these products and to employ them in creating new works of their own. Every decade, or sometimes every year, national legislatures adjust their country’s copyright laws or are parties to renegotiating international copyright treaties. Because technology is always progressing, with new forms of items that can be

a rough idea whether your contemplated copying abides by the law, go to www.legislation.govt.nz, find “copyright” and find the statute and amendments.

Remember, however, that just because you can make an argument from looking at New Zealand’s *Copyright Act* that particular copying is permitted does not mean that it really is. All statutes can be authoritatively interpreted only by Her Majesty’s judges. Nor are court decisions relating to copying one genre (e.g. prose) necessarily applicable to another (e.g. poetry). Nor can anyone draw analogies from a court decision or other practice in one area of the law to another area, still less from the law of

one country to another. For this article, I have consulted only statutes, not the all-important judicial decisions.

Law applies to all

Due submission to the laws of one’s country applies to both copyright holders and consumers who wish to copy (part of) their works. Just as users are not to appropriate the holder’s rights by electronic and other tricks and devices, so also the Reformed faith forbids copyright owners to allege infringement and demand payment under show of right by alleging that a use or copying infringes their copyrights when the relevant law provides otherwise.

First New Zealand serial rights.

This article was first published in Trowel & Sword (February 2009), and has recently been revised to suit current New Zealand copyright legislation.

David W T Brattston
103 Montague Street
Post Office Box 1599
Lunenburg, Nova Scotia,
Canada, B0 J 2C0
E-mail: dwtbrattston@hotmail.com
Telephone: (902) 634-8473

World in focus

URCNA Synod 2010 strongly rejects Federal Vision theology

The United Reformed Churches in North America Synod 2010, meeting in London, Ontario, Canada, 26-30 July 2010, on 30 July 2010 adopted the report of the Justification/Federal Vision Study Committee, with strengthening language added by the report’s advisory committee, “rejecting Federal Vision and all of its associated points as error.”

+ *United Reformed Churches in North America*

United Church of Christ “Stillspeaking” daily devotional for 21 July 2010 denies divinity of Jesus Christ

The United Church of Christ (UCC) Daily Devotional Stillspeaking for 21 July 2010 titled “Is Jesus God?” by UCC minister William C. Green begins “Jesus is not God, but God is like Jesus.”

Green continues: “While the church has debated the doctrine of Jesus’ divinity, the New Testament is not doctrine. And the Bible is not theology: it’s an anthology of stories about God often culminating in twist endings that bring O’Henry to mind. In these narratives we see God imperfectly, ‘as in a mirror dimly.’ But we still see.”

The devotional continues with a mention of Moses meeting God in the Burning Bush, another of the Prodigal Son, another of the Good Samaritan, then a brief application before concluding with prayer: “God, may I find your love in the common bushes of my life and in other strange places. Amen.”

In addition to his being a UCC minister, William C. Green is the Director of Long Looking, a consultancy service specializing in fundraising and education for congregations. His new book, *52 Ways to Ignite Your Congregation: Generous Giving*, has just been published.

+ *United Church of Christ*

200 Women per year killed in India after being accused of witchcraft

A 26 July 2010 article in the *Herald Sun* titled “200 ‘Witches’ Killed in India Each Year – Report” reports that 200 women in India each year, usually single or widowed with money or land wanted by someone else, in poverty-stricken villages in the states of Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, and Orissa, are accused of witchcraft and then killed. Many more women commit suicide out of shame after being accused, then humiliated by being forced to ingest human excrement and paraded naked through their village.

The charity Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra estimates that in India, 2500 women since 1995 have been killed after being accused of witchcraft.

+ *Herald Sun*

Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa Moderator takes stand against evolution

An August 2010 article in *Infobytes*, a publication of Creation Ministries International, titled “Church Leader Takes Stand against Evolution!” reports:

“Church leaders tend to avoid publicly participating in the creation-evolution debate. Reasons for this reluctance may be that they consider the debate to be a topic for specialists, or perhaps they simply wish to avoid controversy or criticism. Hence it is of some encouragement when a church leader does speak out in opposition to evolution, and in favor of biblical creation.”

“Prof. Piet Strauss, moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church (NG Kerk) in South Africa, was recently interviewed by JUIG! (Joy! – English), a leading Afrikaans Christian magazine. He had the opportunity to state the church’s viewpoint on evolution and its official position on the Bible as the infallible Word of God. The moderator made comments on evolution which drew considerable criticism directed at him, both in the electronic and printed media. These were that evolution is essentially a religion, even a superstition; that his ancestors were not apes; and that no authentic transitions exist between different kinds (types) of organisms.”

In response to Professor Strauss’ statement of faith in the Genesis account of creation, the NG Kerk periodical *Die Kerkbode*, in a 12 August 2010 article titled “NG Kerk sê nie ja óf nee vir evolusie [DR Church is not for or against evolution – English],” repudiated Professor Strauss’ statements, forthrightly halting the NG Kerk between two opinions: “In the relationship (interface) between church and science, the NG Kerk supports the faith position that God is the

Creator of heaven and earth, but is not competent to speak authoritatively on a scientific theory such as evolution. The NG Kerk feels that there is no need for conflict between theology and science and that both are particular expressions of God's indescribable greatness and power. Teaching and education lie at the heart of the Reformed tradition. Part of the church's calling is to additionally guide church members through awareness of the sciences to help them to stand even more in awe of God. The NG Kerk does not regard the Bible as a textbook making all sorts of scientific statements. How exactly creation came about and how it is sustained and functions within certain laws and parameters, believers can only stand in awe, recognizing that various scientific disciplines (and scientists) progressively unfold more and more of this to us."

+ *Creation Ministries International*

"Onward Christian Soldiers" banned from funeral by Church of Scotland minister for politically incorrect war theme

A 2 August 2010 Argyll News article titled "No Soldiers Marching Onwards in Kirn" reports that brother-in-law of the deceased William Thomas said that the Rev. Sarah Nicol, Minister at Kirn Parish Church near Dunoon in the Cowal peninsula of Scotland, at the funeral of Mrs. Agnes Thomas at the Greenock Crematorium in Greencock, Scotland,



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refused to allow the singing of the hymn "Onward Christian Soldiers" because of the politically incorrect war theme of the hymn.

Mrs. Thomas had requested that the hymn, her favorite, be sung at her funeral – as it had been sung at her late husband's funeral.

Ms. Nicol denies that she banned the singing of the hymn.

+ *ForArgyll.com*

Latin American Economic Summit promotes abortion, condemns "lesbophobia"

NEW YORK, July 29 (C-FAM) A recent gathering of Latin America's top economic commission issued a document praising secularism, condemning "lesbophobia," calling for redistributive social systems, and liberally promoting sexual and reproductive rights. Delegates from more than 30 Latin American and Caribbean countries attended the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean's (ECLAC) Eleventh Session of the Regional Conference on Women in Brazil. The purpose of the conference was to address gender equality and women's empowerment in economic terms. The delegates were mainly "gender" advisors, representing the government of member states.

+ *Amanda Pawloski and Susan Yoshihara, Ph.D.*

African Union submits to pressure for abortion as cure for maternal deaths

KAMPALA, UGANDA, August 5 (C-FAM) The African Union (AU) finished its annual summit last week with governments agreeing to make maternal and child mortality a continent-wide priority. The summit ended with Member States extending the controversial, non-binding Maputo Plan of Action (PoA) for an additional five years and expanding a new initiative called the Campaign on Accelerated Reduction on Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA). Pressure was placed on the AU from UN agencies and foreign non-governmental organizations (NGO).

+ *Samantha Singson*

Christian pastor assassinated in Dagestan, Russia

Compass Direct News Service report that Artur Suleimanov, 49, pastor of Hosanna Christian Church in Makhachkala, the capital of Dagestan, Russia, was shot on the evening of 15th July 2010 while leaving his church building. Pastor

Suleimanov's church was known as the biggest Protestant church in the region, successfully reaching out to Muslims and comprised mostly by former Muslims. As an ethnic Avar, Suleimanov was considered by many Muslims to be an apostate and therefore deserving of death.

WEA Religious Liberty – August 2010

Christian in solitary confinement in Iran

Ali Golchin, 29, was arrested in his hometown of Varamin on 29th April 2010 and held in solitary confinement in Tehran's Evin prison since then. No charges have been filed against him by the Iranian authorities yet and services of a lawyer has not been made available to him. Farsi Christian News Network sources have reported that Ali's wife has been warned not to attend church and told that she will only be able to negotiate with the authorities about Ali's release if she converts to Islam. Ali's father was finally allowed to see his son for 10 minutes on 17th June 2010. Ali's health situation is reported to be critical, as sources believe Ali has been ill treated during interrogation sessions.

WEA Religious Liberty – August 2010

Continuous attacks against Christians in Nigeria

Christian Solidarity Worldwide, UK reports about renewed latest violence in Jos North, Nigeria, where on the 16th July 2010 Mazah village came under attack by armed Fulani Muslims, leaving at least eight people dead, including children, many injured and homes burnt to the ground. It is further reported that the attackers targeted key members of the community, the village head and a pastor. Although security forces were called and arrived in time, they did nothing to prevent the violence. Plateau State is reported to be tensed following the burial of the victims. Christians have continued to come under attack in 2010 as tensions and violence continue in Jos, northern Nigeria. Outbursts of violence against Christians in Nigeria in July 2010 were reported by other sources as well.

WEA Religious Liberty – August 2010

Please pray for the Christians in troubled parts of the world who are suffering for Christ. Pray that the Lord would bring to naught the efforts of the enemies of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Report on the Synod of the United Reformed Church of North America, 2010

Peter Kloosterman

The Synod of the United Reformed Churches of North America met from 26-30 August, 2010 in London, Ontario, in Canada. They had a large agenda (500+ pages) and many weighty issues to discuss. The delegates were welcomed on 26 August by the Rev. Dennis Royall, who is the pastor of the convening church, London URC. His devotion from Psalm 87 reminded us of the diversity of the Lord's work in His church and called us to acknowledge and appreciate those differences.

No small synod

On Tuesday morning the work began in earnest with the seating of 180 delegates representing 98 URCNA churches throughout North America. Fraternal delegates and observers were also welcomed to the assembly and were granted the privilege of the floor. Following the welcome, the pre-advice committees were commissioned with their respective tasks. There were 12 pre-advice committees assigned to deal with the matters arising from the agenda. The Synod went into recess so that the pre-advice committees could discuss their assigned portions and later return to the Synod with advice for the body on how to deal with the overtures, appeals and reports. The body reconvened on Tuesday evening to receive advice from several committees. This was followed by an hour's discussion with two representatives from the Canadian Reformed Church (CanRC). The URCNA and CanRC are currently sister churches and recognise each other as true and faithful churches. The representatives of the CanRC were asked to discuss pre-submitted questions from individual churches of the URCNA. This discussion was beneficial in calming troubled waters within the URCNA regarding the relationship between the two denominations.

Tension with the way forward

It seemed to this observer that there was heightened tension at this Synod over the way forward in their relationship with the CanRC. The URCNA has a 3-step

process for working toward church unity with churches that are on the same continent. The ultimate goal of this process is a merger of the churches. This ideal of a merger with the CanRC has caused considerable anxiety among some of the churches of the URCNA. And this was further delayed by the decisions of the URCNA Synod. Some delegates suggested that rather than a merger, the *status quo* of remaining committed sister churches should be sufficient. This matter will be cause for ongoing struggle within the URCNA and will need some time and attention paid to - it particularly by the American churches.

RCNZ as a sister church

The purpose of my attendance at the Synod was not only to observe the proceedings but also to bring greetings from the RCNZ and to encourage a further development of their relationship with us. I was granted the floor to address the body and to extend greetings from the RCNZ. In the URCNA, the relationship with churches abroad is different from their relationship with those on the same continent. With churches abroad the ideal of merger is not possible, so the relationship culminates with the recognition of the churches abroad as sister churches. Later, the URCNA over-

whelmingly decided to extend their relationship with the RCNZ to the greatest extent possible as sister churches. They responded to that decision with singing the doxology: "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow." What a thrill it was to hear the men sing with gusto, praise to the Almighty God who has granted us unity in the faith. We rejoice in this recognition and trust that the Lord will bless our relationship together for years to come.

Study committee on membership

In further business the Synod re-commissioned a study committee dealing with the level of doctrinal commitment for those who seek membership in a UR Church. There were two positions presented: one stating that only those who can fully subscribe to the confessions (including infant baptism) may be members. The other position suggested that there should be allowance for those who might have reservations about particular points of the confessions if there are specific stipulations determined by the local church. The delicate care required in taking a position on this was evident on the floor of the Synod. Some from the study committee acknowledged that after three years of study there were still misunderstandings and confusion about



A view of the URCNA Synod from the back row.



the terminology and the boundaries established by the two positions presented to the Synod. This was borne out in the discussions of the pre-advice committee. The study committee will report back to the next Synod.

Federal Vision

The Synod further refined their statement

regarding Federal Vision in accord with the report of a committee that investigated this error during the inter-Synodical period. While the report was resoundingly approved, there were reservations demonstrated regarding the implications of such statements. An overture was presented to the denomination asking for a clearer delineation of the role of rulings

such as: doctrinal affirmations, pastoral advice, study committee reports, and synodical judgment regarding appeals. The appropriate definition and application of these terms was not readily agreed on and because of the time that would be consumed trying to iron out the implications of such statements, this was committed to the synodical rules committee.

In reflection on the agenda and the discussion that took place on the floor of Synod it seems to me that the way forward for the denomination is less than clear. The churches are reticent to commit themselves to the CanRC until the URCNA has developed more internal unity and its own identity. This will be a significant challenge for the denomination. This is an important opportunity for the RCNZ to encourage them to work through this struggle both inwardly, not striving for uniformity but unity, and also externally in furthering their relationships with other denominations. To further address some of these pressing issues, the URCNA has wisely decided to meet again in two years. This will help the fellowship between the churches and hopefully reduce the amount of material that will be weighted on the agenda.

Feminine focus

Sally Davey

Home, sweet gleaming, gorgeous home

Few of us are as tidy as we'd like to think – and I'm no exception. Clean, orderly and beautiful are every woman's ideal when it comes to home; but turning dream into reality is not as simple as it might seem in today's make-it-happen world. It's not just women who are busy away from home who have this problem. Those at home have it too. In fact, it may even be worse for us, because it takes more discipline to organise time well when there are fewer external

constraints forcing the issue. I know that it's the tyranny of the urgent rather than the important that dominates me too often. Whatever screams to be done is generally what wins; and housework frequently loses. Except, that is, when visitors are imminent

It really does seem as if we have a problem organising ourselves these days. As one modern-day manual on housekeeping puts it, "many of us don't know where to begin. There are people out there with top-of-the-range kitchens who have no idea how to cook a Sunday roast; there are others who spend hundreds of pounds on cashmere yet have no hope of washing it properly. There are others who cannot sew on a button, iron a shirt or unblock a drain. Shocking, isn't it?"¹ The point being that there are clever women out there making important decisions, organising offices and

staff – who cannot organise their own homes. Perhaps you think I'm exaggerating – but let me offer some evidence. Over the past few years I've called in at some rural addresses to pass on a message or drop something off. Quite often there's no one at home (many rural women have hands-on involvement in farm management these days) – but the view through the ranch slider is quite a shock. Benches covered in dirty dishes and half-eaten meals, toys scattered all over the floor, damp washing on clothes horses and spread all over the lounge furniture, newspapers and business papers scattered everywhere, and half the curtains still closed – at mid-morning I'm sure you've walked down suburban streets on winters' mornings and seen houses all closed up, curtains pulled and condensation covering the windows. You can imagine the damp,

and the smell (and the multiplication of dust mites) inside Then there are teenagers' bedrooms, aptly described as bomb sites, tips and the like. Beds unmade, drawers spilling out underwear, jewellery, teeshirts. There are so many clothes on the floor that you wonder if there's anything left in the wardrobe. What's happening? Why are so many homes looking like this?

Perhaps a little summary of the social history of housework would answer the question. I enjoy reading books on household management. Perhaps the classic of the classics is Isabella Beeton's *Book of Household Management*, which set the standard for many decades after it first appeared in 1861. It was written to advise ordinary middle-class Englishwomen on how to clean, decorate and manage their homes; and how to cook and serve meals for family and guests in a wholesome, cost-effective and attractive way. Perhaps the best part of this book is the detailed chapter on the way a housemaid should clean bedrooms, drawing rooms and dining rooms. Beeton-run homes would indeed have been clean, tidy, well-polished – lovely homes to live in and visit. Beeton was the ideal to which pre-World War One homemakers aspired.

Comparing Isabella's instructions for housemaids with the cleaning methods of own life and times, it would seem that we have lost something our grandmothers or great-grandmothers knew, doesn't it? As Clare Coulson notes, "The knowledge gap when it comes to household management is a widely acknowledged fact. I have countless friends who, through little fault of their own, have a patchy knowledge of how their home works and invariably have to call their mother or a friend when they are faced with a domestic problem. But what happens to the people who don't have anyone to call on ...?"² It's worth asking what happened, post-Isabella, and try to figure out why we're – literally – in this mess.

Household history

We tend to think back nostalgically to "the time of our grandmothers" – who kept home so beautifully and fastidiously. Women's magazines sometimes run articles romanticising "grandmother's" – baking or cleaning methods and the like. They allude to weekly routines for washing, ironing, baking; and daily dusting and polishing routines. But that, if I examine the historical facts, was

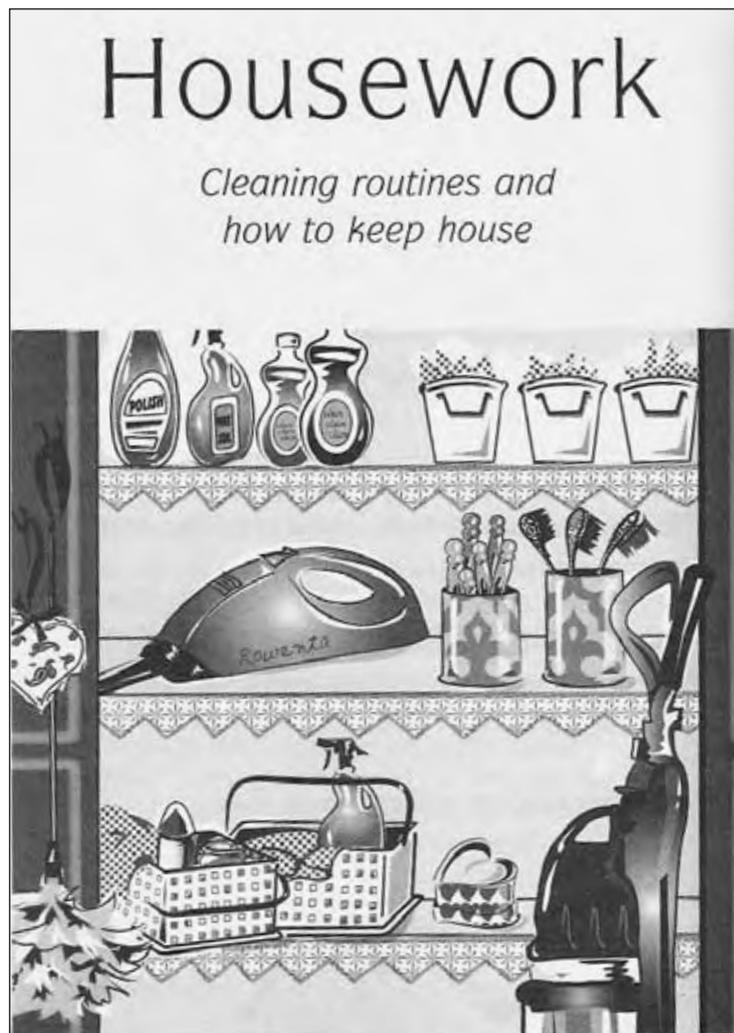
more a feature of my great-grandmothers' household management. Their era, going back to the 1890s and stretching forward to the 1920s and 1930s, was a time when what we regard as simple household jobs were much more major affairs, requiring whole days to complete. While we throw a load into our washing machines then go on with another task, they spent a whole morning lighting coppers, boiling water and starching linens. It should be added that ordinary middle-class housewives were able to employ maids to help them. All my great-grandmothers had maids, whom they had to train and oversee – but who provided them with freedom to go out and leave the children, or to have friends in for a stylish afternoon tea. This involved a certain loss of privacy, of course. But their homes were definitely tidy, well-ordered, and clean.

This state of affairs continued into my grandmothers' first decade or two of marriage – but then came the War, and the consequent loss of maids to wartime employment in factories or on farms. The maids never returned, but new, labour-saving household machines

became available and my grandmothers became dab hands at turning on switches and washing, sewing, ironing and cooking with much greater ease and speed. Their houses were still very tidy and clean. They had grown up with certain values and standards, and wanted to maintain them. They did not work outside the home, and could still achieve their standards, on their own, with the help of their new machines.

But it was all beginning to break up, in their lifetimes. Their daughters (my mother and aunts) were married in the 1950s and 60s, and by then routines were relaxing. Certainly, there was no "washing on Monday, ironing on Tuesday, baking on Friday" kind of regime. My mother's habit was normally to whiz around the house first thing in the morning, and have all the necessities – kitchen, bathroom, living room all cleaned and the household tidied, beds made etc, by morning tea time. After that – sewing projects, gardening, teaching Bible in Schools – and being there when we came home from school.

But what happened to my generation? Well, I was a primary school child in the



Clare's Chapter Heading

1960s, and it seems to me that as TV began to hold sway, as teenagers began to rebel and go out and about more; as telephone conversations and cars provided more opportunity to communicate with friends, family life became more mobile and fluid, and household routines broke down. Couple this with many mothers beginning to work in part time, paid employment outside the home, and soon housework was something relegated to “whenever” anyone had the time or felt so inclined. This was the beginning of the era of teenage bedroom bomb-sites and parental rows over how and when the

have messy and disorderly homes, and neither we nor our children know what to do about it. Now, I know full well that I am writing to many who are not this way. Our churches are full of model housewives. But it seems to me that most of western culture has this problem to a greater or lesser extent, and if we’re not careful we’ll lose it as well, if we succumb to certain of these trends.

However, we have to ask – does it really matter? Were our great-grandmothers right, or were they house-proud and just far, far too fastidious? Did their fetish lead to judgmentalism and hyper-criti-

problem today is more one of disorder than of excessive order. The Proverbs 31 lady’s home was clearly one where order reigned. We do bring shame on our husbands, our children (think of their friends visiting) – and on Christ – when we preside over a pig pen! But everybody in the home has a responsibility to keep it tidy – I know that. Perhaps all of us would do well to reflect on Psalm 90:17. God wants homemakers to be able to see the fruit of their labours last a while. Please, husbands and children, don’t spoil it!

Are you too busy to keep up a good tidying and cleaning programme? Perhaps it is time to reduce some of your work hours, or ministry activities? There are things as important and as basic than income; and service to Christ begins at home, after all Are you one of those who, for whatever reason, never learned how to manage a home? Would you like to learn? I often wonder whether a class in household management routines might be a useful thing for the experienced ladies in our churches to run. Given the dearth of knowledge in this area, it may well be a blessing to younger women – if they requested it. Consider new converts, perhaps those from sadly-messed-up homes where mother was absent, or incapable of teaching these things. Perhaps you could help here, as part of some training in the Christian way of life? It could be made part of spiritual discipleship of a younger woman. I remember Elizabeth George telling how, as a new Christian, she asked two more mature friends from church to teach her how to organise her life better. They taught her about Bible reading and prayer and how to care for her husband and children; but they also showed her how they kept their houses clean and tidy. It was all part of one, complete spiritual package.³

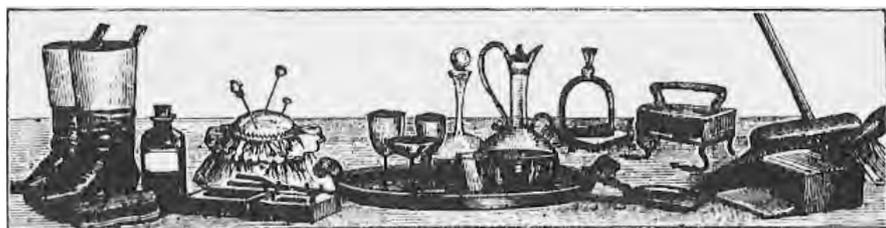
Housework should never be seen as mindless drudgery or a boring chore. Cleaning, tidying and re-arranging the home are more a skill or an art form, and their results a genuine pleasure. Let’s take delight in doing them well.

Notes

1 Clare Coulson, *House Rules: The Stylish Guide to Running a Home and Having a Life* (Bantam Press, London, 2005), p.7

2 *Ibid.*, p. 9

3 Elizabeth George, *A Woman After God’s Own Heart* (Harvest House, Eugene, Oregon, 1979), see esp. pp. 164-6. (This whole book is really about being a Christian homemaker.)



Isabella’s Illustration

tidying-up should occur. Student flats, to which these teenagers graduated, were habitually messy – and regarded by the older generation as dens of dubious activity better not inquired into.

Modern-day madness

By the time I and my friends married and set up house (in the 1980s) it was the received wisdom that housework was unskilled labour any fool could do – and that it took so little time there was no excuse for anyone to stay home doing it during valuable employment hours. Yes, get out and make some money! Wealthy professional baby-boomers living by this philosophy also hired cleaning ladies, nannies and the like; and did their best to stimulate their children by cramming in thousands of extra-curricular activities to add to sports and homework. Small wonder that nobody, least of all their worn-out professional parents, had the time or the motivation to insist these children learn how to clean toilets, showers, kitchens – or bedrooms. And what the wealthier do, the less wealthy aim for. So many couples both work outside the home; and so few take the time to train their children in the skills of homemaking.

Well, the end result is that few people know how to keep a home clean and tidy any more. We have lost the valuable knowledge, routines and discipline our great-grandmothers held dear. We

cism of others? (Sometimes I do wonder about the occasional comments I hear about someone else’s house being “so dirty”. Was it really unhygienic, or just a bit untidy??) I do think hyper-criticism is wrong, but I also think, based on my reading of the Bible, that a clean and orderly (and attractive) house is a God-given blessing. And something we should work hard to create.

Order and beauty at home

God is a God of order and beauty, and we should reflect these aspects of his character as we carry out our housework. Homes ought to be places of peace, not chaos. They should rest the eye and heart of all who live there, not distract or irritate them. I also think it is impossible to sit down to work of any kind, or to enjoy a focused conversation, amidst domestic clutter or chaos. Our homes should be places where visitors are refreshed and encouraged, not made to feel embarrassed by excessive untidiness. (Walking into someone else’s bomb site feels like intruding on an embarrassing family argument). Obviously, guests can also be made to feel embarrassed by the tenseness of an over-zealous homemaker, too – but I feel a mess is even worse.

A lovely, tidy house is part of our witness to Christ’s love of order and calm, too. I know that we need to be relaxed and unworldly in our attitudes – but order is a bottom line. And our

Focus on home

Andrew Reinders

Gleanings from our bulletins...

Avondale

Evangelism Team – We hope to get into town again next Saturday 14 Aug, to proclaim the gospel. We have members of the Redeemed Riders Motorcycle Club joining us in our lounge (basement) at 7:30pm for some training and prayer before heading into Queen Street. Come along to help out or just to see how it can be done.

Ladies Get Together, Friday 27 August at 7.30pm in the Lounge – We would like to spend the evening chatting & enjoying each others company & talking about what we would like to do in the future. Also we are hosting the Women's Presbytery Day next year in the 1st Term and need to form a group of ladies who would like to organise this day and we need great ideas on what we could do on this day. Look forward to seeing you there.

Bishopdale

Pastoral Notices. Anton and Michelle Posthuma had the pleasure of bringing little Austin Blake home from hospital last week. May the Lord grant you His grace and strength as you seek to raise this child for the glory of the King.

Pastoral Notices. The de Vries family rejoices in a new addition to the family, Jeremy Andrew de Vries. Our little 'kiwi' arrived on 14 August at 8.24pm. Jeremy and Mum are both doing well at home. I have taken most of the week off to enjoy (and help out a little!) family life with our newborn. I will be back in the office this week.

Buckland's Beach

Next Sunday 29th August. Please read this notice carefully! During the morning service baby MARIESA DUINKERKE will receive the sign and seal of God's covenant promise and officially be received into his church by means of holy baptism. Much reason for thanksgiving and celebration. It has been suggested that there be a special SHARED LUNCH

after the service. Everyone is welcome and asked to bring a plate for this. The afternoon service will also be very special. It is another LABS SERVICE with a special focus on folks for whom English is a second language. May we encourage you to make a special effort to be there and use it as an opportunity to meet with and spend time with the visitors. A very special part of this service will be the receiving into membership of our congregation Mrs FENG Jihong (we know her best as Sophie Feng) and her son Yi Gu (Kelvin). Sophie attended the pre-membership class late last year, but had to return to China before she could be baptised and received into membership. She has come to know Jesus as her Lord and saviour through the LABS ministry of our churches and now seeks to be baptised. The elders have consented to her baptism and also that of her son Kelvin. Sophie and Kelvin will return to China for 2 years in September but wish to do so as members of our congregation. God is good!

Christchurch

Pastoral. Congratulations to Esther and Titus Smith with the safe arrival of Levi David, born this past Tuesday. All are doing well. We thank the Lord for His gift of new life, may He grant you wisdom as you raise Levi, Nathan and Tamara in His ways.

Last Sunday we were informed of session's recommendation that we extend a call to Dr Tim Rott. Voting for this will take place next Sunday 1 August during a short congregational meeting after the morning service. May the Lord grant us all wisdom in this matter.

Pastoral: On Tuesday morning our Br. Tjibbe Tolsma was called home to glory. He had desired this day for some time now and we can rejoice with him in this. We are reminded of the effects of brokenness, the decay of our bodies and the separation of loved ones through death. It is because of this we long for the return of our Lord; then all will be made new. May the Lord grant comfort to his family during this time and may he comfort each of us as death often reminds us of loss of loved ones. May we fix our eyes on the author and perfecter of our faith, finding our rest in Him.

Dunedin

Pastoral notes: Hearty congratulations to Tony Tromop who celebrated his eightieth birthday on Tuesday. We gave thanks to God for the extra measure of strength necessary to attain such a goodly age.

Devotional thought. Here is a suggestion for a Reformed daily devotional meditation. You can subscribe to an email list at Reformation21 from which you can receive a daily meditation on passages in the Murray M'Cheyne. Just visit the following link: <http://www.reformation21.org/subscribe.php> and then go to the bottom of the page and enter your email address under the "Reading with M'Cheyne" heading. Or if you prefer you can just read online by going to the following link: <http://www.reformation21.org/reading/> – Bruce Hoyt

Hamilton

From the Pastor: Last week we voted in favour of applying to host Jason Housewright and his wife, Sara, for a twelve month vicariate. The Deputies for Students for Ministry have advised that North Shore is also considering applying but will not vote till 29 August. It is also not yet known whether Jason will receive a call from the church he visited in Northern Ireland. For these reasons, it will be a little while yet till we know the outcome of our application.

Hastings

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

Hukanui

Baptism of Deacon Farmer on Sunday 8 August. A reminder to the congregation that next Sunday, the Lord willing, we will have the privilege of witnessing the baptism of Deacon Farmer here at Hukanui in the morning service. It is our prayer that as Deacon grows up under covenant instruction that the Lord make

him a blessing to his family and to the church of Jesus Christ. Gen 18:19, for I have chosen him (Abraham) so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what He has promised him.

Congratulations. Congratulations to Jonathan and Renee on the birth of their son Finn Nathaniel Termaat on the 4th of August.

FUEL: INHERITED SALVATION (JUST BORN LUCKY?). Saturday 28th August 6:30-9pm Hukanui Church. Have you ever been asked the question, "How long have you been a Christian?" A lot of people out there believe they are just born into faith, they have grown up in a Christian home and don't really know what it means not to be a Christian. This idea of 'spiritual privilege' is very dangerous however, and it keeps them from seeing their need for Jesus. The Bible clearly teaches that ALL people fall short of the glory of God, and we're all admitted on the same terms to salvation. The Bible says that no one can be born into salvation; salvation can only come from a personal choice to put one's faith in Jesus and follow God's will. Bring along your bible and come find out more about what the Bible says about salvation, as we dispel the myth of spiritual privilege.

Nelson

Congregational dinner. On DV Saturday 21st Aug, starting at 5.30 pm, we like to celebrate the 80th birthday of Sr Siepke Bajema with a congregational dinner in the church. Also we like to mark the occasion of giving 50 years of service as our church organist. We hope to see all of you there!

Palmerston North

Pastoral Notes from Rev Hans Vaatstra. Albert Couperus has requested to relinquish his duties as an elder due to increasing study commitments with a view to further full-time theological study. Please remember Albert and his family in prayer as he prepares to have his personal sense of call to enter seminary confirmed by February 2011.

Pukekohe

From the Pastor. We extend a warm welcome to Dr Peter Reynolds and his wife Margaret. Dr Reynolds is the principal of Grace Theological College and associate pastor of Covenant Presbyterian

Church, and will be preaching here this morning. For the first half of this year he has taught a course on Pastoral Care and Counselling to about 25 members of our church. These lectures were interesting and informative and prompted plenty of discussion and learning. Our thanks to you for giving that course. Also our congratulations on your recent graduation from Westminster Theological Seminary with a Doctor of Ministry degree.

Attention Men: A leadership training course will be held at 7:30pm, fortnightly on Thursday evenings, beginning this Thursday, the 5th of August, and will run through till November. These will seek to equip men to serve as leaders in the church, especially as elders and deacons. All are welcome to attend, both men and women.

From the Pastor. This morning Abel Leenders will publicly profess his faith in the Lord Jesus and join the church as a communicant member. We rejoice with you and your family Abel, as you take this important step, and are thankful for God's work of grace in your life. May the Lord guide and strengthen you as you live out the promises you will make today. A warm welcome to family members and friends who are here for this glad occasion.

Louise Posthuma gave birth to a baby boy named Jackson last Friday morning, weighing 4lbs 11ozs. We rejoice with Jeremy and Louise and the wider family in this wonderful gift from God.

From the Pastor. It also gives us joy to announce that on Sunday 12 September Mrs Louise Loef will profess her faith in the Lord, be baptised and be welcomed as a communicant member of the church.

Silverstream

Counselling Course: A group is being organized from Palmerston North to participate in a correspondence course on counselling. The course is run by the Institute for Nouthetic Studies, of which Dr. Jay Adams is the dean. The course seeks to give training in applying the Scriptures to various counselling situations. There is a cost involved. Anyone who is interested can contact John de Vries: consult@maxnet.co.nz

Wainuiomata

Church Family. Last week Saturday, Sylvia Gavin died peacefully in the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. The Dutch word for dying is called *overlijden* which

literally means to be beyond, or past suffering. For Sylvia this is certainly true as all her sufferings are now over and she is with her Saviour forever. Revelation 14:13 Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them." Let us pray that the Lord may minister comfort to Engeltje, the other family members, as well as to our congregation.

Report of the Auckland Presbytery Meeting held on Friday 23rd July 2010

This meeting was convened in Avondale to conduct a *Colloquium Doctum* with the Rev Peter Moelker, who had been called by the Reformed Church of Avondale. A good number of visitors were present from the Avondale congregation and from the other churches of the presbytery.

The chairman of the Avondale session, Jacob Ploeg, opened the meeting by reading from 1 Thessalonians 5:12-24 and reflecting very helpfully on verse 12; "Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you."

As the moderator of this meeting the Rev John Rogers welcomed all those present, especially Peter and Lisa Moelker, and the Revs Leo de Vos and Andre Holtslag, synodical examiners from the Wellington and Christchurch Presbyteries respectively. He then explained, from the Church Order and synodical decisions, that a *Colloquium Doctum* is a learned discussion to examine a minister's soundness in the Reformed faith, exemplariness of life, and motives for seeking the ministry in our denomination. As it is not the equivalent of a final examination it was conducted as a discussion, with the ministers of the presbytery asking questions on various subjects, including current theological issues, the confessions and church polity.

The Rev Peter Moelker explained that he had trained at the Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando for a

term, then at Mid America Seminary for two years, and then at Calvin Seminary for another year, graduating in 2000. He was ordained at First Christian Reformed Church, Thunder Bay Ontario, as Assistant Pastor and served there for one year before being called as the sole pastor of Wyoming CRC for the next 2 years, before withdrawing from that church and denomination because of decisions made by the CRC Synod. For the next year he supplied an OPC mission church in Ontario and then served a small OPC church in Lisbon, New York for four years, after which he and his family returned to Canada.

After the examination and questioning the Presbytery retired for a brief discussion, expressing their satisfaction with the clear and sound responses given by Br Moelker and voting to sustain the *Colloquium Doctum*. The Rev John Rogers announced this decision to all those assembled and this was greeted with enthusiastic applause. Supper was then served. Following this the Presbytery continued with a few more items of business.

Avondale's counselor, the Rev Dirk van Garderen, installed the Rev Peter

Moelker as the minister of the Reformed Church of Avondale on Sunday 25th July.

Reporter: Rev John A Haverland

Short report of the Wellington Presbytery, July 2010

On July 10, 2010, the Wellington Presbytery met in Wanganui. The meeting was called to order by the Rev. Andrew Nugteren, who opened with a devotion on Ps.124, and with prayer. Once the meeting was duly constituted the delegates got underway with the main task of the day: a *Colloquium Doctum* for the Rev. Hans Vaatstra. The Synodical deputies, the Reverends Andre Holtslag and John Rogers, were present and gave their concurrence with the Presbytery's decision that Mr Vaatstra had sustained his *CD*. We are thankful that the Lord has brought Mr Vaatstra to the Wellington Presbytery and look forward to His ministry in Wanganui.

The delegates from Wainuiomata and Silverstream answered the questions from Church Order article 47, and both congregations were prayed for regarding their respective blessings and struggles that the Lord has been bringing them through. Church visitation reports were received and discussed for the Reformed Churches of Masterton, Wainuiomata, Silverstream and Foxton. No report was received from the Youth Liaison, but a report from the Overseas Mission Board was offered by the Rev. Peter Kloosterman. He outlined the work and needs of the OMB missionaries and the current status of Mr Andrew Dickson. The Rev. van Huyssteen tendered a report on Foxton's scrutiny of minutes from different presbyteries in NZ and Australia. The need for a Presbytery clerk was addressed and the churches were admonished for not proposing nominations to replace Mr Leen Vandenberg after his 12 years of faithful service. This concluded the business for the day. The Presbytery is grateful for the warm hospitality of the Wanganui congregation and the Lord's goodness to His churches.

Peter Kloosterman

Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir,

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

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

We all know we are not an exclusive Psalm-singing denomination, we read, preach from the Old and New Testament Scriptures, teach from our confessions and sing our psalms, hymns and spiritual

songs (the latter extended somewhat lately by requests from young people, sanctioned by sessions and presbyteries ("In Christ alone" – "How deep the Father's love").

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

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

At present our churches not only have these psalms and the Old and New Testament inspired hymns/songs written

by Christian authors/composers from the 3rd century until the 20th century; we are encouraged to sing all these synodically-approved-songs (respectively from "*Psalms & Hymns 1966*" – *Book of Worship* – Blue and Grey and *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* – our provisional *Sing to the Lord* Psalter.)

Labeling these hymns "sentimental Jesus songs" is just not right, it is untenable and should be challenged. The irony is that Br. Gary's letter was printed right under an old (1675) beautiful German hymn "What God ordains is always right" (*Book of Worship* 365) based on Deut. 31:6 & 32:4, Rm 8:38,39, Hebr 13:5, John 8:12, 14:18, Eph 2:20 and Luke 1:79 – a truly biblical sermon – moreover the very first psalm in *Book of Worship* and *Grey Psalter Hymnal* – Psalm 1 – is from the hand of Charles Wesley Jr.!

We also know that neither hymns – "sentimental Jesus songs", nor the metrical psalms of Calvin, Bourgeois, Marot, Greiter, Goudimel or Maitre

Dear Sir,

May we marry someone from another denomination? Rev. van Wichen said in the August issue that it might be unwise, but that it is not wrong. But why would it be unwise? He didn't say, and I think it is necessary to add some reasons.

Firstly, some from other denominations are simply not believers. For example, I have met some named 'Christian' who did not believe in the resurrection of Christ. According to the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 15 such people are without hope and are not believers. Rev. van Wichen would rightly conclude that it is sinful and offensive to God to marry such a person.

Secondly, I think it *would* in fact be wrong to marry if you were to remain in separate denominations. This may seem obvious, but it is not obvious enough because I know several married couples who attend separate churches – usually because they desire a certain style of worship above the unity of marriage. This causes tension and disunity in the very act of worshiping Christ whose marriage to the Church is supposed to be pictured by our marriages. It breaks apart in worship what God has joined together. And the children reap the pain that results.

Thirdly, if someone is from another denomination, it often means there are different views that may seem irrelevant now but will come back to bite you very hard in the future. Will your spouse consider your children to be part of God's people or unbelievers? Will you baptise your children? Will you have tension over Lord's day observance? Will one of you be hungry for substantial teaching after a year or two? Does the Bible feature in the preaching? Will you look for different emotional results from Sunday worship?

Do you know your own church's essential distinctives? If not, you'll find out too late that you've just married someone who, for example, worships the Mother of God. I kid you not. If you seriously inquire and there are no *essential* differences between your denominations, then you are very blessed indeed, and the path forward may be easier.

Finally, will you always be arguing over what is the Truth? Truth is a powerful motivator, lasts longer than romance, and is absolutely unswerving. Our first love must be to Christ, and without him our love will perish. If we are not agreed on his Truth, then it will be a difficult battle to submit to it.

In short, there are probably reasons that your denominations are distinct. Deal with those first, and work out biblically which denomination you should be in – ideally, before the love question gets in the way.

Berwyn Hoyt

Dear Sir,

I am writing to question the wisdom and the necessity of including the report by the Rev. Sjirk Bajema and the Rev. Martin Geluk regarding a conference about the state and future of the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA) in the August edition of our denominational magazine.

In expressing my concerns I do not wish to comment on the rights and wrongs of the issues that the article raises regarding the CRCA, given that there is ongoing pastoral discussion of these matters.

However, my initial question is whether this is the best forum for discussing the issues facing the CRCA. There are always two sides or even correct procedures to consider. So far we have been presented with a very one-sided view of the issues from a minority in the CRCA, based on a report written by a minister who belongs to neither the Reformed Church of New Zealand (RCNZ) or the CRCA. The publication of the article implies that we should take a sympathetic view of the issues in the article; however, before we can form a balanced view of the issues we need to hear from the majority side in the CRCA. With no indication that this will be forthcoming we are left with more questions than answers.

It would be sad if we were faced with overtures at the 2011 Synod to continue our strained relationship or even to cut our sister church relationship with the CRCA, based on this article alone.

The introduction to the article states that this is a report about what took place at the conference. The article is in fact part reporting and part a personal opinion piece. This is particularly highlighted in two instances:

First, the article states that essentially Dr T Campolo is not a Christian. We have no right to say that about anyone without talking to them first. In an article such as this we have the right to question someone's theology, but not his faith.

Second, the article also criticises the absence of representatives from the Reformed Theological College (RTC). Are

the professors no longer the "brightest and best" because they did not attend? The article implies that the RTC is partly at fault for letting these issues get away. We need to remember that the RTC is independent from the CRCA and would have compromised this by attending. The RTC is no longer considered by some to be our "go to" institute for theological training and comments like this will not help improve our view of the RTC.

My final concern is what impact this will have on our sister church relationship. We need to be able to develop a level of trust between the RCNZ, the CRCA and the RTC if we are to understand each other better. As we trust each other then we are in a better position to counsel each other. The printing of this article does absolutely nothing to promote an increased level of trust. Formal channels have been created to handle any concerns and issues between the RCNZ, the CRCA and the RTC. This is where we need to deal with the issues raised in the article in the first instance. I am sure that the RCNZ Inter Church Relations Committee and the CRCA equivalent would have appreciated the opportunity to discuss these issues before going into print rather than afterwards.

If we truly value our relationship with the CRCA then let us deal with our sister in a more gracious way.

Yours in His Service,

Fred Braam

Dear Sir,

Greetings. As someone who loves both the CRCA and the RCNZ, I wish to express my disappointment that you allowed an article about the state and future of the CRCA to be published in the August *Faith in Focus* magazine when it is far from the total picture of the CRCA.

There were many things discussed at the Boxhill / Macarthur conference with which many Sessions in Australia sympathize. No one suggests that the issues connected with the previous SIC Pastoral letter and the previous proposed National Youth Convention speaker are unimportant. However, there are marked differences over how delegates understood the decisions that were made at Synod 09 concerning these matters and how they have now been reported.

I am disappointed for the article reports on a conference where only 20% of the total churches in the CRCA were represented and no positive con-

sideration was given as to why 80% of the denomination was not represented. Many of us are concerned about the weighty matters raised at the Conference but firmly believe these matters need to first go through the Church courts by way of appeals and overtures.

I am also disappointed the report singled out the RTC faculty for not attending. There was no obligation on the RTC faculty to attend, for this conference wasn't sanctioned by the CRCA.

I am disappointed, for the report fails to mention the appeals and overtures that are currently being drafted to address some of these weighty issues for the CRCA Synod 2012 and we are praying that a positive outcome will result from these proceedings.

I am disappointed that there is continual criticism of the CRCA's "Four Fold Task." It was clearly said at CRCA Synod 2009 that the restructure and particular focus on missions in the Four Fold Task were going to be adopted for a three year

trial period. It was also clearly stated at Synod 2009, that preaching and pastoral care are foundational to the Four Fold Task and primary in any mission and church planting work. No doubt Synod 2012 will review the Four Fold Task and may need to make necessary changes if that is determined.

I am disappointed then that there is no positive mention of the genuine struggle within the CRCA to be faithful to the Great Commission which in part has been emphasized by the Four Fold Task. No positive mention that several new churches that have been 'planted' in the CRCA over the last four or so years.

May I remind you, the CRCA is one of your closest sisters, not only geographically, but also theologically, and so I am disappointed why you allowed this article in your magazine when it is obvious that it wasn't the total picture and contains slurs that are not warranted. It's fair enough when a loved brother

or sister from the RCNZ shows concern for what is happening in the CRCA, but may I encourage you to refrain from including articles that do not give the total picture, and especially so when they are primarily written by someone who has 0% involvement in either denomination. To allow such articles does nothing to enhance trust and good relations between the RCNZ & CRCA, nor the RCNZ & RTC. In fact, it fuels further mistrust and distance.

In closing, may I encourage you to have articles included that focus on the positives so that *Faith in Focus* can be a tool to 'build up' and foster loving relationships between us. In this way we may learn something from each other, and the Lord's name will be honoured amongst us. Please remember us in your prayers as we do here for you.

Blessings,

Rev John Zuidema

Book in focus

The Death of the Grown-Up: How America's Arrested Development Is Bringing Down Western Civilization

by Diana West, New York: (St Martins Press, 2007)

Reviewed by Rev. Michael Willemse (Hamilton)

From time to time a book which enables us to see things through fresh eyes comes along. It pulls together seemingly random threads of thought and weaves them into a compelling and cohesive whole. This is such a book. Let me state this up front – this book is a "must-read" for anyone who wants to understand our culture and is interested in how and why the West has lost its way in the last fifty or so years. It is stirring reading, and will cause you to examine both the society in which we live and the assumptions which underpin your own thinking.

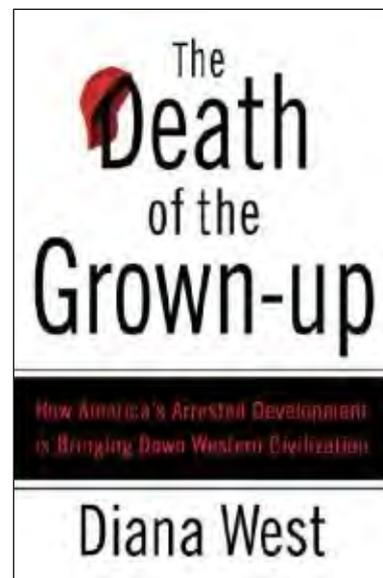
In 1969, when she was 8 years old, Diana West's family spent a year in a quaint village in Ireland, isolated from mainstream news and entertainment. This year proved to be so transformative that, when the family returned to the U.S., West found herself able to

view American culture from a distance; now observing and questioning rather than simply accepting what she saw. In *The Death of the Grown-Up* she gives an incisive critique of that culture. Yet most of what she has to say is applicable not only to America but to Western Civilization in general, as her sub-title indicates.

According to West, the word "teenager" and the modern conception of adolescence did not exist until around 1941. Prior to that there were simply adults and children. Children in their teen years aspired to adulthood. West wryly observes that these days adults are more likely to aspire to adolescence with grown men, industry leaders and even U.S. presidents dressing in a way which is indistinguishable from teenagers. She states "But there is something jarring in the everyday, ordinary sight of adults, full-grown men and women both, outfitted in crop tops and flip-flops, spandex and fanny packs, T-shirts, hip-huggers, sweatpants, and running shoes."

West notes a number of factors which have contributed to this: a media culture including the entertainment and advertising industries; marketers who have

created and exploited an ever-voracious teen market; a rebellious convention-bucking culture which ironically has now become conventional; age-banding of children in public schools and the consequential age-banding of children in society in general; and a world war against a fiercely nationalistic Nazi Germany which left a distrust of nationalism in any form in its wake.



But West notes that the problem is not just an increasing focus on teenagers and their appetites. In a stable society, such teenagers would eventually emerge into adulthood. However, the adult “mainstream” had all but dried up. Where previously adults could be relied on to maintain standards of morality and decency, adults had en-masse abandoned such standards and embraced the mores of a younger generation. As West asks, “Where have all the grown-ups gone?” A little later on she writes: “Worth noting is that the first generation to lose its collective nerve in this way and to cede control of the mainstream to up-and-coming ‘youth culture’ was the so-called Greatest Generation, the one that had just won World War II.” In a strange twist, instead of children growing up, adults are sliding down.

The Death of the Grown-Up goes on to show that not only have most adults abdicated their positions, but they also side with their children against those who have not. West cites a number of examples of teens involved in incredibly destructive and anti-authoritarian behaviour being defended by their parents; but goes on to show that these are not isolated incidents – society as whole has endorsed and accepted once-were-rebels. Such parents, rather than protecting and nurturing their children, need to be parented themselves. “There

if they need us’ they sit, the virtue-free, values optional, no-confidence, no-content, caretaker parents offering nothing resembling parental guidelines.”

West goes on to plot the course of a civilisation in which children are exposed to behaviours and tastes once relegated to the adult world (often to its darkest corners!) yet without any moral compass and without the benefit of adult wisdom. She puts this in a context of a society without boundaries where Rotarians – once the pillars of society – undress for a fund-raising calendar and where the First Lady tells over-the-line jokes about her husband, the US president, at a media dinner. This leads her to observe “... a culture without boundaries – a society without grownups and a middle class without guidelines – can be a dangerous place to live.”

All of this leads West to the broader observation that Western culture has lost its identity, even showing public shame for the very things which once defined it. We have forgotten who we are. “Openness and acceptance on every and any level ... are the highest possible virtues of the postmodern Westerner. This makes boundaries, taboos, limits and definition – anything that closes the door on anything else – the lowest possible sins. ... The overall effect has been to sap the culture’s confidence in its own traditions, even – especially – in the classical liberal

tradition that stiffened our spines against Hitler in the first place.”

This, West says, is what makes the Western world so weak in what she calls “The Real Culture War” – the clash between a strident Islam and an apologetic West. She points out evidence of Western capitulation at all levels – from media reporting to an ostrichlike belief in “universal values.” The loss of grown-ups within our culture has resulted in a culture which itself can no longer be described as grownup – which indulges its childish fantasies and insulates itself from the harsh realities of the advancing Muslim world. The book concludes that it is time for us to shed the fantasy of eternal youth and grow up.

This is a book for our time. It is not easy reading – West will stretch your mind – and at times it is quite confronting in its bare recounting of events, song lyrics etc, though never gratuitously so. This is a book for grownups, a book of vital importance for our time. It is all the more compelling because its author is not Christian, yet her analysis of our culture should drive us to stand up and be counted as Christians – to grow up and embrace our calling to be salt and light in a dying culture. Get it. Read it!

(The Death of the Grown Up is available from Amazon)

Introducing: The Wanganui home mission work

Messrs Michael Flinn and Hans Vaatstra

Wanganui is located 200 kilometres north of Wellington and about 75 kilometres northwest of Palmerston North. Most of the town lies on the northwest bank of the Whanganui River, which is one of the major features of Wanganui. The city has a population of just over 43,000. The climate is temperate, with the locals enjoying slightly above the national average of sunshine and about 900mm of annual rainfall (these details courtesy of a Wikipedia article).

All things considered, Wanganui is

a great place to live and if you would like to visit us for Sunday worship, or better yet, come and help us with our Reformed church planting work, you would be warmly welcomed.

For a number of years now, worship services have been held every Lord’s Day in the St John’s Lutheran Church, cnr. of Liverpool and Harrison Streets at 11.00 a.m. and 2.00 p.m. One of the features of Sunday worship in Wanganui is a shared congregational lunch held in a hall, on site, in between the services, which is a great time of fellowship for young and older alike.

The Wanganui home mission work is

overseen by the session of the Reformed Church of Palmerston North, with all members of the work being members of that congregation. The Wanganui session members consist of two elders and a deacon. Pulpit supply, apart from reading services, has come largely from Palmerston North, but we have also been blessed with able assistance from the churches in the Wellington Presbytery.

Last year, the Session was keen to move ahead with the development of a mission strategy for both Palmerston North and Wanganui, and as one of the first steps in implementing this, a number of meetings were held in Wanganui with

a view to discussing the mandate of Matthew 28:18-20 with the folk there. It soon became clear that although there had been some disappointments (declined calls, some members leaving to help establish a work for Grace Presbyterian Church, etc.) our members in Wanganui were very keen to move ahead and establish a congregation there with the help and guidance of the Session.

Accordingly, earlier this year, a Macdonian call was extended to the Rev. Hans Vaatstra to come and help us with

the home mission work, and we were delighted when he accepted this call. It was a great joy for us to welcome the Vaatstras back into the country and for us to see Rev. Vaatstra pass his colloquium doctum unanimously on Saturday 3rd July. Hospitality in Wanganui is second to none, as all delegates and visitors to that Presbytery meeting will testify. The installation service on Sunday 18th July was also a great joy, with most of the churches sending letters of greeting and encouragement.

Although we are very much aware that a home mission work does not revolve around one man, it is certainly a great blessing for a church plant to have a home missionary serving among the people and preaching God's word each Lord's Day. I'll now "hand over" to Rev. Vaatstra for his thoughts and impressions on coming to the Wanganui church planting work...

Michael Flinn

We are glad to be back in New Zealand after a working in a team ministry in Gosnells Western Australia. Whilst I love the work of pastoral ministry wherever I am, various circumstances and the needs over here helped me decide to make the move quickly. The call was duly accepted and we moved east. Our family was warmly greeted at Wanganui airport on the evening of May 13th where we all sang "O Bless our God with one accord" in the airport foyer. God is good indeed.

For the first four weeks we enjoyed the generous hospitality of Peter and Elizabeth Mulholland whilst waiting for our container to arrive. During that time we managed to secure accommodation on a farm 10 minutes north of Wanganui. On a clear day it has views of Mt Ruapehu and Mt Taranaki! In the meantime we were able to buy a house in town at 92 Campbell Street; nice and central and close to church. While Wanganui is a beautiful place the main attraction is of course the Reformed Church; friendly, hospitable, and armed with a mission, as follows.

It is evident in our churches that the Creation Mandate "be fruitful and multiply" still inspires God's covenant people today. There are families with quite a few children in church. This is in contrast to national trends with the average birthrate in New Zealand having fallen from 3.5 children per family unit in 1960 to about 2 children today. Church attendance overall in New Zealand has declined at a similar rate which means that worldly attitudes towards having and training up covenant children have 'rubbed off' onto the wider church. We consider ourselves to be blessed with so many 'olive shoots'. There begins our mission.

Christ summarised both tables of the law with the word love in Matthew

22:36-40. His summary of the law was the answer to the question "which is the greatest commandment?" The apostle Paul wrote, "If I speak in the tongues of men and angels but have not love I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1) To love is another aspect of the church's mission but who of us can meet the standard of 1 Corinthians 13 or Matthew 22?

Our love is but a poor reflection and response to God's love. How can we best love God and our neighbor? Is our worship of God a faithful application of the first table of the law? Are we motivated by the love of Christ in our own loving? If there is a need, are we ready to bear one another's burdens in love? Are we ready and able to love newcomers? These are just a few



The banner in the top picture says it all: "Welcome Vaatstra's".

questions we must examine our heads and hearts over constantly, always looking to the Lord Jesus Christ who is the embodiment of love. Learning to love is an important part of our mission.

Thirdly we are compelled by the Great Commission to be Christ's witnesses "unto the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). What strategy works best? Foremost is the task of preaching. How can anyone believe without someone preaching to them? (Romans 10:14) Every effort must be made to preach Christ and Him crucified as the God ordained means of calling sinners to repentance and faith in Christ. But the task of preaching may not be confined to the Sunday sermon so we are looking at other ways to proclaim Christ. Print media has and will continue to be used. Counseling may provide opportunities to introduce Christ and there are several good tools available to help bring that message across succinctly. *Christianity Explained* remains a favorite with me. Whatever the method, the imperative is that the Word must be proclaimed from the pulpit, in the streets, to our family members and to our friends and neighbours.

There, broadly speaking, lies our mission. Pray for us that the Lord might strengthen us, equip us and make our group a blessing in Wanganui, within our denomination and above all to the glory of God. Better still, come over and help us.

Hans Vaatstra



Rev Hans Vaatstra (end of table) being examined by the Wellington Presbytery.



Time for some light refreshments after the morning service.



The congregation of the Reformed Church in Wanganui.