

Driven

*Our King,
Majestic in His
Solitude*

*High Notes in
the History of
the Hymns*



*Men of Integrity Conference
held at the new Campfire! property*



Cl. Stam

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Driven

We should not use as study material non-Reformed literature that comes from a non-Reformed source

By now everyone has read the bestseller *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren. You know the book is a real bestseller when it hits the late-night talk shows. One of these suggested that a new book was published about the romance between a man and a dolphin, titled *The Porpoise Driven Life*. Cute. But the book is not to be so easily dismissed.

I understand that the book has functioned as study guide for various Bible study groups and it certainly lends itself for that purpose. The book presents a forty-day odyssey that is designed to get you closer to God. Certainly this is a noble striving, and the book is well-written with many interesting and captivating points.

Warren's book lacks the power of the cross and the grace of God

In the past I have stated my position that we should not use as study material non-Reformed literature that comes from a non-Reformed source. I understand that not everyone agrees with me on this point, but I mention it again just the same. Men like Warren have often established their own churches and have not subscribed to the Three Forms of Unity. While much of what they present is quite acceptable, other things simply are not.

Uneasy

I eagerly set myself to reading this new bestseller that was touted as one of the few books that was guaranteed to change and deepen my faith. And there was a lot to be learned. Warren has a very direct way of writing and he does not hesitate to say things squarely and honestly. He writes many good things.

Yet the more I read, the more I was filled with a sense of unease. This sense of uneasiness began already when I read page 13, requiring me to sign a covenant (co-signed by Warren) committing the next forty days of my life to discovering God's purpose for my life.

Covenant?

I was to make a covenant with God. Since the biblical notion of a covenant is very dear to my heart, I decided to investigate further on this point. The covenant of which the Bible speaks is a covenant of love (grace) between God and man, *always* initiated by God and in faith reciprocated by us. This covenant finds its very heart and core in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the mediator of the covenant.

But Warren meant something quite different. He used the term covenant to underscore my commitment to do something for and with God. In this book a covenant is a human initiative and effort to grow closer to God. I am driven not by God's signed covenant but by *my signed covenant* with God.

When I read this I thought: but I already *have* a covenant with God, signed and sealed in the blood of Jesus Christ. Of this covenant I was assured at my baptism. It is my baptism that drives me; my title for a book like this would have been *The Baptism Driven Life*.

Therefore I was eager to discover what Warren had written about *baptism*. Usually in such bestselling books *infant* baptism is out the door. Maybe Warren would be different on this point. I discovered that Warren requires every new member to sign a covenant agreement; he writes, "In the past seven years the (Saddleback) church has baptized over 9,100 new *believers*." Believer baptism is often meant in contrast to infant baptism.

I decided to follow Warton Willie's method and dig a little deeper. What does Warren say about baptism? He says that baptism is "pregnant with meaning." He writes (p. 120), "Your baptism declares *your* faith, shares Christ's burial and resurrection, symbolizes *your* death to your old life, and announces *your* new life in Christ" (emphasis mine). Nowhere did I read the vital truth that baptism is really a sign and seal of God's *promise* to believers and their children. In Warren's concept, baptism is the crowning touch on our action and not the clear commitment of God to us.

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Grace

The heart of the Reformed faith is that we are saved by grace. Central to our faith is the atoning death of Christ on the cross. I am motivated most by God's redeeming grace, manifest on the cross of Golgotha. Call it *The Cross Driven Life*.

As I was pondering these matters, I read an article written by a Dutch colleague who was also struggling with Warren's book. This man writes that the beauty of our faith is that we may always go to Christ for forgiveness and find our rest and hope at the cross. Then he asks, "But where is that cross is *The Purpose Driven Life*?" It is mostly absent. Warren appears to write more about guilt-feelings that hinder us than our actual *guilt* that is atoned on the cross.

We are called by Warren to discover our true selves. But this is possible only when we acknowledge our sin and guilt and find solace at the cross. Warren's book lacks the power of the cross and the grace of God.

Legalism

What is left if the cross is not central? We fall into the age-old trap of legalism, doing things for God that will ultimately benefit us. It becomes a covenant of works. We are not so much redeemed by grace as felled by legalism.

Legalism always stresses what we must do and devises a program which we must follow to find guaranteed success. Did you ever notice how often Warren tells us what we *must* do? Read chapter 12 or Day 12 again, if you still have the book. You'll catch my drift. I *must* choose to be honest with God. I *must* choose to obey God in faith. I *must* desire friendship with God more than anything else. I *must* do this and that. . . for only then am I purpose driven.

Why do people time and again fall for this ungodly system of legalism? We fall for this because it appeals to our real drive of self-assertion. . . because we like to do it ourselves. The cross is still a folly to many. Paul wrote to the Galatians, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ. . ." (Gal 1:6-9).

I do not deny that we need to be driven. There is much that we can learn from Warren's book. But in the final analysis, I am left standing out in the cold. I know the purpose of my life. I also know I cannot attain it by myself or in this life. 'T is grace will bring me home. My life is grace driven, Christ-centred, and glory bound.



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Our King, Majestic in His Solitude



MATTHEW 13:52

“The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”

Matthew 26:41

The cross on Golgotha was an altar but also a throne. As a priest, Jesus Christ offered his body on the cross to deliver us from our sins; as King, He fought against the enemy of his people in horrible agony on the cross and triumphed. God's people should see his royal dignity exalted on the cross and not just his priestly office.

Though the words of our passage were spoken by the Lord to his three closest disciples, Peter, James, and John, yet they were recorded in order to reveal the glory of Jesus the King.

Many things in the last week of his suffering point to the majesty of his royal office. On Sunday Jesus went up to Jerusalem upon the songs and praise of the people. On Monday and Tuesday He fought against the religious leaders in the temple area and won victory after victory. On Thursday He dealt majestically with his own disciple Judas Iscariot who plotted to betray his Lord. And now He had told the disciples, “I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.” A shepherd is a well-known image in the Bible for Israel's king.

But now, when the Lord arrives at the garden of Gethsemane, we discover the awful humanity of his royal office. Awful not because we recoil at his humanity but because He had to bear such weight upon human shoulders. His suffering as King is beyond comprehension. He did not triumph with divine distain,

untouched by the conflict. He trembled so deeply at the battle He was about to fight that He cried out in prayer, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me.” And He confided to his three closest disciples, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.”

These words show that He really did share our flesh and participated fully in the weakness of our human condition. He was “made like his brothers in every way” (Heb 2:17) and “He truly assumed a real human nature with all its infirmities” (BC Art 18). He knew from personal experience that the body is weak – his body was weak. In his human nature, He dreaded the agony that his royal office would demand of Him.

He had brought his disciples with Him to Gethsemane in order that they might support his weak human nature. They had all promised that they would. “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you,” Peter said. And all the other disciples said the same. The Lord did not doubt their zeal. The spirit was willing. But they could not live up to their promise. The body was weak. After praying to his Father, the Lord came back to his disciples and found them sleeping. They could not keep watch with Him for one hour because the body was weak.

And precisely there we see the awesome love of God in Jesus Christ. His spirit was willing and,

despite the weakness of his body, He went forward. He said to the Father, “Yet, not as I will, but as you will.” He knew that He must fight the enemy alone. He knew that He would confront the horrors of hell itself by Himself. But when He came back and found his disciples asleep, He was confronted by the awful reality: He must fight the battle all alone. And still, He goes forward: “Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!” Though He longed for the support of his disciples, He knew they would fail Him. With majestic dignity He advanced on the foe, into a battle which He knew would bring Him into the torment of hell.

That victory is ours by faith in Jesus Christ. The disciples failed the Lord. We all do. The body is weak. But Christ went forward to bear the punishment our sins deserved nevertheless. He came to save not the strong but the weak. Though his body was weak, yet by the sheer power of his love for us, that is, by the strength of his spirit, He fought for our freedom all alone. Let us meditate on his glory and find in it strength for our spirits. The King triumphed in majestic solitude, but now He reigns with us and through us, strengthening our bodies to serve Him. May our Lord be pleased to use our commemoration of his suffering and death to kindle greater spiritual zeal and bodily strength.

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High Notes in the History of the Hymns: “All Glory, Laud, and Honour”

The hymns that make up the second section of the *Book of Praise* come from such diverse sources that it is not possible to describe them briefly. They range in the date of composition from biblical times until the twentieth century and vary widely in confessional outlook. Written by authors who lived in different countries and who wrote in different languages, the hymns form a varied collection that appears to have been determined not by carefully defined criteria. Whereas some hymns have been adopted in entirety and remain unchanged, others have been abbreviated or altered so much that the original meaning and tone have been lost.

The purpose of this series of brief articles is to give the reader an impression of the historical circumstances in which selected hymns were written and first performed. It seeks to provide some interesting and important information about the authors of the hymns, the composers of the accompanying tunes, and the noteworthy occasions on which the songs have been sung. In so doing I hope to demonstrate the diversity in the theological intent and purpose of the hymns. Perhaps the information will serve also to enhance the meaning of the hymn when it is sung at home, church, or school.

All glory, laud, and honour
To Thee, Redeemer, King,
To whom the lips of children
Made loud hosannas ring.
Thou art the King of Israel,
Thou, David's royal Son,
Who in the Lord's Name comest,
The King and Blessed One.

Hymn 25:1

We begin with some notes on Hymn 25, which is sung commonly on Palm Sunday, one week before Easter.

The original text of this hymn was written in Latin by Theodulph, who lived *circa* 750-821. Theodulph was an abbot in a monastery in Florence until the emperor Charlemagne appointed him bishop of Orleans (France) around 785. Distinguishing himself as a scholar widely read in both secular and religious writings, Theodulph soon was appointed counsellor to the emperor himself. In an effort to increase the learning of the clergy, Theodulph established schools; he also revised the Vulgate, supervised the copying of theological treatises, and promoted the restoration of convents and churches.

In 818 Theodulph was accused of plotting to overthrow Charlemagne's son and successor, Louis the Pious. Although he pleaded innocent, Theodulph was imprisoned, in Angers. According to a legend first recorded in the sixteenth century, King Louis visited Angers on Palm Sunday, 821, in order to view the regular procession of the clergy and laity. Standing by the window of the cell in which he was incarcerated, Theodulph sang the newly composed hymn in the hearing of the passing king. Louis enjoyed the song and promptly released Theodulph. According to another account, it was a small group of choir-boys which sang the hymn and obtained Theodulph's release.

Careful consideration of the evidence, however, has revealed that King Louis did not visit Angers when Theodulph was in prison and that the latter was not released at that time. However, while the stories have been proved false, the authorship of the hymn appears certain, as does the place where it was penned. The text of the hymn is based upon

Zechariah 9:9, Matthew 21:8-15, and John 12:12-13. Longer than the version that appears in the *Book of Praise*, the original hymn consists of seventy-eight lines of couplets and an antiphonal refrain. The length of the hymn reflects its function in the processions common in the Middle Ages.

Hymn 25

Text: Theodulph of Orleans, c. 820
Tune: Melchior Teschner, 1615
Translation: John Mason Neale, 1851
Commonly Performed: Palm Sunday

Several translations of the hymn into English have been produced, but the one most commonly known is by Rev. John Mason Neale, who included it in *Medieval Hymns and Sequences* (1851). Associated with a movement in the Church of England at the beginning of the nineteenth century that sought to restore features of early Christianity, Neale provided

English translations of some early Latin hymns, including Hymn 44 in the *Book of Praise*. According to Neale, another verse of "All Glory, Laud, and Honour" was sung until the seventeenth century, when it was removed:

"Be Thou, O Lord, the Rider,
And we the little ass,
That to God's Holy City
Together we may pass."

While the verse does not appeal to modern tastes, the allegorical interpretation in it is characteristic of medieval hymns and may have corresponded to the sensibilities of the age.

The music of the hymn was composed by Melchior Teschner in 1615. Teschner was a Lutheran schoolmaster and choir leader in Fraustadt, Germany. The tune is very similar to a dance tune found in the keyboard works of William Byrd and may have been inspired by it. J.S. Bach incorporated the tune in his well-known St. John Passion; the most common arrangement, by William Monk, appears in the *Book of Praise*.

Book Review

Reviewed by W.L. Bredenhof

Jonah, God's Prophet: Outlines on the book of Jonah

Dr. H.J. Room (London, ON: Inter-League Publication Board, 2005). Additional Information: Paperback, 76 pages. No price given.

I'll start with a confession. I find it hard to get excited about most Bible study guides. Most of them that are anywhere near engaging are theologically questionable. For instance, they don't approach the Bible on its own terms, in a Reformed way. The ones with a sound theological starting point are hardly ever engaging. Well, I am very excited about this latest study guide from the ILPB. Whoever suggested that this little booklet be translated into English deserves a hearty thank-you!

Dr. Room, pastor of the Reformed Church (GKV) in Harderwijk, The

Netherlands, has combined a readable style, theological soundness, and engaging questions for study groups. The book of Jonah is interpreted for the readers just enough to whet our appetite for more reflection. This is not a commentary, but it comes close. Another positive feature is the manner in which Room allows the reader to see how Jonah points to Christ. This is primarily what I mean when I say that this booklet is characterized by a sound approach.

Let me say a bit more about how Room helps Jonah come alive for study groups. With each section of the book, he has "Comments for Today." This is followed by a "Summary." Next, we find "Tips for Introduction and Study." Those who are going to prepare an essay will find this enormously helpful. Rather than just regurgitating what

Room or other commentators might write, readers are challenged to think through some of the issues raised by the text. Finally, Room gives a number of questions under the heading of "Discussion Aid." These are excellent questions, almost all of them being open-ended. Many of the questions begin with a "How..." or a "Why..."

I realize the 2005/2006 study season has been in full swing for several months already. But let's say you're getting close to finishing up a study on a certain book or topic. Or maybe your group needs to be reinvigorated with some new study material. I think you'll find that *Jonah, God's Prophet* will fit the bill. Let's hope that ILPB keeps giving us more solid and engaging material like this. Keep up the good work!

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Celebrating the Lord's Day

Our sister church in Scotland – the Free Church of Scotland – publishes a monthly magazine, *The Monthly Record*. This magazine is also available online complete, every month, at www.freechurch.org. In the January 2006 issue there was an article entitled "Love not Legalism – Celebrating the Lord's Day in the 21st Century." This article, it is noted, was originally part of the Public Questions Committee Report to the 2005 General Assembly.

The committee does not advocate a return to the kind of legalistic Sabbatarianism as was enforced in the past. Instead, its desire is to "ensure that the Lord's Day is the best day in the week for his people, including their children." To accomplish this they use the Lord's summary of the law in Matthew 22:37-40 – to love the Lord God with all your heart, soul, and mind and to love your neighbour as yourself – as guide to accomplish this. Here follow some quotations from a very instructive article.

Love God

Public worship

In both the Old Testament and the New we see that the day was used for joyful corporate worship ... In the New Testament the early church gathered often before dawn for corporate worship and then later for a fellowship meal... We join together with other believers to worship and adore

Him. We not only want to offer our praises but we want to hear from Him as we sit under the exposition of the Word.

Private worship

In recognising his Lordship and accepting that He would have us keep this day holy we submit the timetable of our lives to Him. We plan our week so that we can spend time in corporate and private worship and fellowship. By God's grace and with his help we can, in the language of Isaiah 58:13, call this day "a delight" and we can honour the Lord's holy day by not going our own way or doing as we please or speaking idle words. In short it is a day which allows time for spiritual refreshment, for seeking communion with the Triune God. . . .

Love our neighbour

As Christian people we easily succumb to the philosophy of "live and let live" which prevails around us. But Jesus did not espouse that principle. He stood up to the traditional and pharisaic methods of Sabbath-keeping, deliberately offending the Pharisees. He asserted in Matthew 12 that it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath. . . .

Evangelism for the purposes of spiritual healing is also a primary task of Christians on the Lord's Day. . . Joseph A. Pipa, writing from a slightly different culture from our own, speaks positively of getting involved in church-planned activities such as "witnessing in public places, rescue missions, prison ministries, nursing home visits, or visiting people who are ill or lonely". . . .

We must do our utmost to ensure that the citizens of this country have the right to a day off and especially the Lord's Day off. . . Increasingly people are under pressure to work on Sundays in shops, restaurants, bars, nightclubs, sports arenas, petrol stations, airports, ferries, and so on. Whilst we recognise that there are exceptional circumstances in everyone's life, Christians using such facilities must recognise that by doing so they encourage these facilities to be kept open and staffed accordingly. We may therefore implicitly be failing to fulfil the command to love our neighbour.

Christians who plan their holidays (or business trips) with flights etc. leaving on the Lord's Day, for instance, encourage a whole plethora of business and entertainment venues to remain open, thereby reducing the possibility of the Lord's Day being a special holy day for many. . . .

Loving our neighbour in the home

It is also important to preserve and pass on good biblical attitudes in the home. Every parent knows how difficult this is, but it is crucially important that our children learn that this is a special day that we dedicate voluntarily to God, in obedience to his law. If the Lord's Day is burdensome to us our children will soon pick up the latent hypocrisy in our lifestyle and act accordingly. But how to use the time wisely is the question. We can only make some suggestions:

Hospitality: Children benefit immensely from observing how Christians outside their own home "operate" in times of fellowship. Also when hospitality is given (and reciprocated, we hope) the children receive an opportunity to develop their own interpersonal skills in conversation and in relating to others. (Experience suggests that fellowship also prevents the development of an excessively legalistic supervision by parents.)

Learning: Sunday afternoons usually allow time for nurturing the children in the key doctrines of the faith and also for exploring the personal application of the truth. Some parents enjoy the singing of

praises with their children, teaching new tunes and hymns/songs including, perhaps, some from other traditions. Often there is time for the children to read Christian books and magazines etc and parents must learn to invest generously, according to their income, in providing such resources. There are also interesting computer packages/internet resources/DVDs/videos with a Christian content for young and older people.

We must do our utmost to ensure that the citizens of this country have the right to a day off

Rest and relaxation: We must let children be children. It is not right to ask children to deny the creation order. Created with the energy of youth there must be a measure of freedom to let off steam without abandoning the principle of seeking the things of God. . . .

Change of atmosphere: It is possible to change the whole atmosphere in the home by discouraging the usual games and methods of passing the time. Hours in front of television or Play station or hi-fi are not good on any day of the week but on the Lord's Day can be seriously detrimental to a sacred atmosphere.

We must use every endeavour to bring blessing to our families, and as parents we need much wisdom to use every opportunity for our children's spiritual advantage. The importance of how we ask our

children to spend one day in seven should be a major concern in a denomination that experienced a near 50% decline in young people over a quarter of a century. It is a key area to get right. We need grace to be obedient. The words of Paul in Galatians 6:7 are surely apt here: "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap."

Love for self

Experience teaches us that observing the Lord's Day is of immense benefit to us physically, psychologically, and spiritually. Far from being a day full of restrictions, it is a day which encourages real freedom, a freedom that is based on union with Christ and the experience of forgiveness of sin. But also freedom from the cares of employment, the worry of finance, the guilt of chores/DIY not completed, etc. etc. In short, freedom from the treadmill that has become the pattern of life in the 21st century. It may take real effort to banish the thoughts of the things that trouble us during the week but it must be done, or this day too will become a day of care and anxiety. . . .

The Lord's Day is a high day for the Christian. A day for worship and reflection on all the blessings that there are in Christ, a day for fellowship with God's family and with our own families, a day for evangelism and acts of compassion. It would be a tragedy to lose this sacred day in our generation. Therefore let us ensure that we ourselves enjoy it and pass on all the benefits of the Lord's Day to a succeeding generation.

Wise and instructive words from the brotherhood in Scotland!

PSALM 119:

A Newly Revised Metrical Version

Aleph

1. How blessèd are those upright in their way,
Who keep the LORD's decrees with dedication
And in their walk of life His law obey.
How blest are those who with determination,
Wholeheartedly, seek Him by night and day
And look to Him for guidance and salvation.
2. How blest are they who shun iniquities,
Your holy law with diligence observing.
You have laid down Your statutes and decrees,
To be obeyed in faithfulness unswerving.
O may I but submit myself to these
And so go forth, a steady course preserving.
3. I know that I shall not be put to shame
If only with attention undivided
I heed Your laws and fix my gaze on them.
I thank You, LORD, for all You have provided
In teaching me the judgments You proclaim.
Do not forsake me, leaving me unguided.

Beth

4. How can a youth preserve his way, O LORD,
And keep it free of evil and transgression?
By living in accordance with Your word.
O let my heart be wholly Your possession.
Help me against all sin to be on guard
Let me not stray, denying my confession.
5. Your words have I laid up within my heart;
I keep Your faithful promise as my treasure,
Lest I should ever from Your ways depart.
O LORD, how blest You are beyond all measure.
Your statutes and decrees to me impart,
For in Your law I find my greatest pleasure.
6. In Your commandments I take great delight;
I turn to them in thoughtful meditation.
The path marked by Your law I keep in sight
To guard myself against all deviation.
Your statutes I will not neglect or slight;
Your word I praise with joy and exultation.

Gimel

7. Do good to me so that my life may be
Devoted to Your words in all their splendour.
Open my eyes that I may clearly see
Your perfect law and gaze upon its wonders.
Do not, O LORD, hide Your commands from me
Who here on earth but as a pilgrim wander.
8. By night and day for Your decrees I long;
My aching heart consumes itself with yearning.
The haughty You rebuke for all their wrongs –
Those cursèd ones: Your laws they keep on spurning.
LORD, set me free from their insulting tongues,
For I have kept Your law, Your will discerning.
9. Though princes may together scheme and plot,
Against me their conspiracies devising,
I contemplate the precepts You have taught;
I study them, Your testimonies prizing.
In Your instruction my delight I've sought,
And in the counsel from Your law arising.

Daleth

10. See how my soul is cleaving to the dust:
Renew my life and grant me restoration.
I told You of my ways, for You I trust;
You in Your mercy heard my supplication.
Teach me Your statutes, excellent and just;
Then shall Your wonders be my meditation.
11. My weary soul in sorrow pines away;
True to Your promise, comfort and restore me.
LORD, let me not in ways of falsehood stray
But through Your precepts of Your love assure me.
Your statutes I have chosen to obey;
Your righteous judgments I have set before me.
12. In Your decrees I place my steadfast hope;
I cling to them, on Your great love depending.
LORD, put me not to shame but lift me up,
To me in grief Your gracious hand extending.
Along the path of truth I run and leap,
For Your commands enlarge my understanding.

He

13. Teach me Your statutes, LORD, and to the end
I will obey them in complete submission.
Grant insight, that with all my heart and mind
I may observe Your laws without transgression.
Direct me in the path of Your commands,
For I delight in them as my possession.
14. To Your decrees and statutes turn my heart,
That all Your words of wisdom I may ponder.
O LORD, let me not from Your laws depart,
Nor to the love of selfish gain surrender.
Restrain me lest I wistful glances dart
At vanities and yearn for earthly splendour.
15. LORD, keep Your word! Come to Your servant's aid.
Then all will stand in fear and awe before You.
Avert from me the taunting that I dread.
Good are Your laws, acclaimed by all who fear You.
I long for them. Your justice makes me glad;
Through it revive me, LORD, for I revere You.

Waw

16. May Your unfailing mercy come to me;
As You have promised, show me Your salvation.
All those who taunt me with their mockery
I then will answer without hesitation.
LORD, I have put my trust in Your decrees,
For You have sworn to grant me liberation.
17. LORD, do not rob me of Your truthful word;
Let nothing me from Your commandments sever.
Your ordinances hope to me afford;
I vow to keep them always and forever.
Then shall I walk in liberty, O LORD:
Your laws I've sought, and they shall fail me never.
18. Undaunted I will kings and princes face
To speak of Your decrees, Your revelation,
And not be put to shame or fear disgrace:
Your laws I love and hold in veneration.
I reach out for Your statutes and rejoice
As I reflect on them in meditation.

Zayin

19. Remember in Your steadfast faithfulness
Your word of hope, once to Your servant spoken.
O LORD, in my affliction and distress
You comfort me with promises unbroken.
Through them have I gained life and happiness,
For of Your love they are a precious token.

20. Although the proud may scorn me utterly,
No path of evil have I ever taken.
When I recall Your laws, they comfort me,
For they from days of old have stood unshaken.
Hot indignation grips me when I see
How wicked men your precepts have forsaken.
21. Your statutes are the theme of all my songs
Wherever here on earth I make my dwelling.
Your name, LORD, I remember all night long;
Your precepts I obey, my vow fulfilling.
I've kept Your laws, resisting sin and wrong;
This proved to be a blessing all-excelling.

Heth

22. You are my portion, LORD whom I adore;
I have resolved to let Your words direct me.
With all my heart Your favour I implore;
O LORD, show mercy and do not reject me.
I've thought about my ways, and all the more
I turn to You to let Your laws instruct me.
23. I will make haste in doing what is right,
By Your commandments guided and instructed.
Though with their ropes the wicked bind me tight,
Your statutes I will never leave neglected.
I praise You in the middle of the night
For all the righteous laws You have enacted.
24. With all who fear You I keep company,
To those who heed Your laws my friendship showing.
Your mercy is poured forth abundantly,
And with Your love the earth is overflowing.
O LORD, reveal Your statutes all to me
And so unfold the knowledge most worth knowing.

Teth

25. To me, Your servant, You have kindness shown,
Your mercy with Your promise underpinning.
Instruct me, LORD, for it is You alone
Who are of all true knowledge the beginning.
I went astray, but as I wandered on,
You humbled me, and now I keep from sinning.
26. LORD, You are good, and what You do is good.
Teach me, and by Your truth let me be guided.
My name is smeared by false men, proud and rude,
Yet wholly with Your precepts I have sided.
They in their godless hearts are dull and crude,
But in Your law I am with joy provided.

to be continued. . . —+

Men of Integrity Conference



On November 18-19, 2005, about sixty young men gathered for the first annual Men of Integrity Conference in Markdale, ON, at the beautiful Campfire! property. This was a new venture for all of us, and as organizers we certainly received a number of questions about it. And so it is appropriate to now give the rationale for holding such a conference, as well as share some of the insights we received.

This conference truly was a grass-roots movement. While the need for such a gathering had been felt for a while, it wasn't until an early September morning over breakfast that the idea took root, as thoughts were scribbled down on a napkin. Being young men ourselves, this came out of a desire to be more fully equipped to better serve in our churches. There are office-bearers conferences and they are excellent. But what about tomorrow's office-bearers? Who is

going to stand up and lead the church of Christ ten or fifteen years from now? And what are we doing to encourage young men to consider this task and desire it (1 Tim 3:1)? Are we as young men called to be men of integrity, men who have accepted the calling of Christ? Furthermore, we need men of integrity not only in the offices of the church, but also in our families and in society at large. Apathy and avoiding responsibility are easy – but they are not the calling of Christ. As young men faced with the challenge to overcome this laxity in our personal lives, we believed our concerns were shared with many others. And indeed, when we went forward with the idea, we seemed to strike a chord with everyone we spoke to. Men our age saw the need we were trying to fill and many jumped on board. Various committees went to work to advertise the conference and make all the necessary preparations.

However, we did not only find support among our own age group. The first speakers we sought, the Revs. Cl. Stam, G.H. Visscher, and A. Bezuyen, all readily agreed to be present and threw their full support behind the conference. In conversation with these experienced ministers, it became clear that they were as excited (or more!) about the task of equipping young men as we were excited about being equipped. This was a tremendously encouraging vote of confidence and so we pressed on with our plans.

The conference itself was a tremendous success, although there were certainly glitches. That weekend was the first snow-storm of the year and it seemed as though Markdale had received more snow than anywhere else! Unfortunately four of our participants were involved in an accident and could not make it to the conference; thankfully, however, they sustained no serious injuries. About sixty others made it to Markdale for our opening speech.

On Friday night Rev. Stam of Hamilton, ON addressed the conference. He spoke on the biblical meaning of the word "integrity." He had heard it said that there are no men of integrity. Thus Rev. Stam pointed out that Jesus Christ is the Man of Integrity and that, formed by Him, we need to become men of integrity. He pointed us to Romans 8:29, where Paul tells us that we were chosen





to be conformed to the likeness of the Son of God. This conforming has to involve every area of our life. The theme text for the conference, 1 Timothy 4:12, reflects that, speaking of setting an example in the areas of speech, life, love, faith, and purity.

Rev. Stam pointed out that integrity involves being properly founded and well balanced. A man of integrity stands on a solid foundation; this is made evident by his godly walk of life. We walked through the scriptural use of this concept together (learning the Hebrew word for integrity, *tam*, and being reminded that this word was not 'Stam') and examined biblical figures such as Jacob, Job, and David. We ended by looking at the life of our Lord Jesus Christ and reflecting on how we are called to follow "in his steps" (1 Pet 2:21). The rest of that evening included a time of singing God's praise together, as well as a chance for refreshments and fellowship.

On Saturday morning Rev. Visscher addressed us after a hearty breakfast. He made full use of today's advanced technology, outlining his message for us with PowerPoint slides. His speech began with a look at Paul, who, when he wrote 2 Timothy, was in prison with little hope of escape, close to death, and alone. But Timothy was a man whom he could trust (Phil 2:19-22). Timothy was called to be a leader in the church

of Christ and thus he was called to be a man of integrity. In the heart of his message Rev. Visscher asked, "What does a man of integrity look like?" There are a number of excellent images in that chapter: a man of integrity is a vessel, teacher, soldier, athlete, farmer, workman, and slave. Reflecting on these images brought out many of the principles of being men of integrity in a vivid and memorable way.

After coffee we took some time to get outside and enjoy our beautiful surroundings. For us this involved some physical competition: a tug-of-war and pulling a car. After these energy-burning feats of strength we went back inside for a time in smaller discussion groups. Here we reflected on the messages so far, going into discussion about how we could apply these things to make concrete changes in our

lives. After lunch we were privileged to hear from Rev. Al Bezuyen. He spoke to us on our theme text, 1 Timothy 4:12. The important thing to remember about Timothy was not that he was young, but that he had an office. Timothy was specifically called to the ministry of the Word; all of us have a calling from Christ. Rev. Bezuyen powerfully exhorted us to take up our calling boldly and do this in every area of our lives.

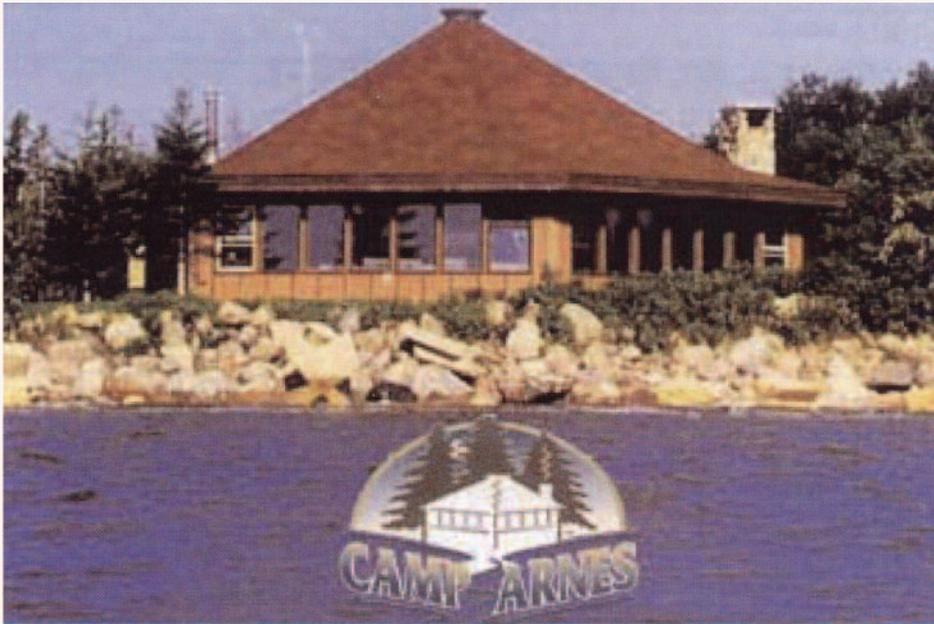
With that, we went into one last time of prayer and small group reflection before the conference drew to a close. The speeches were definitely the highlight of the conference, as the expositors brought the Word of God to bear on our lives. However, other highlights involved the setting – getting away to beautiful Markdale, the singing, and the fellowship, which included praying with one another and spending time in personal discussion, as well as a good old-fashioned snowball fight. All in all, the Word was the focus, making the conference a success. With God's blessing, we hope that the Men of Integrity Conference will become an annual event!



Len Lodder

Len Lodder teaches
first grade at Dufferin
Christian School in
Carman, Manitoba

CRTA-West Convention 2005



The Wigwam

Imagine seventy education professionals sitting in the Wigwam pictured above, looking eastward out onto the lake. Outside, the wind was blustering and the waves rolling in a north-westerly direction were splashing heavily against the rocks, spewing lake water high into the air. Inside the Wigwam a warm fire glowed in the fireplace and the voices of the seventy or so participants raised an expectant din. We were about to begin two days of reflecting on our professional development; listening and participating: a learning experience. The expectations were high.

With the picturesque view outside the windows and the warm collegiality inside the Wigwam, Mr. Peter Veenendaal, principal of Immanuel Christian School, welcomed all the guests who came from Alberta and Manitoba to the CRTA West Convention Fall 2005. He set the stage for Rev. P. Holtvlüwer, who was to lead the opening devotions.

Rev. Holtvlüwer unpacked for us the beautiful Psalm 8: "How majestic is Your Name in all the earth, O Lord!" He chose this Psalm because "everywhere in Psalm 8 we hear the echoes of Genesis 1," and our keynote speaker, Mr. Richard Fangrad from Answers in Genesis, would be speaking on

that very topic: "Defending Genesis in a Scientific Age." It is important in this day to defend the truth found in the first chapters of Genesis. If the first chapters of Genesis are held to be myth then "the whole gospel of Jesus Christ comes crashing down."

Imagine David standing out under the night sky, gazing heavenward and seeing all the stars; the sight leads him to worship our covenant God. David does not stop at this place of wonderment, but he acknowledges that he is puny in comparison to the vastness of the universe and yet God had shown his grace and love toward him. That is a wonder above all wonders: what is the son of man that you are mindful of him and care for him?

Rev. Holtvlüwer encouraged the teachers with these words, "That's something you as teachers need to get across – to yourselves, as well as your students. You need to hold out to your pupils the great wonder of a God who is mighty enough to create the vast universe (the end of which man has never yet reached) and yet filled with so much love for them that He binds Himself to them in his covenant." Teachers need to convey this truth not just in words but also in deeds that show we stand amazed at such a loving, covenant God.

There was one more significant thing: "from out of the mouths of toddlers and infants you have established strength." The Psalmist has in mind here children who have not yet learned to speak or sing and yet they bring praise to God. As teachers we sometimes think that it is up to us to educate the children in our care so that they will bring praise to God, but "their very existence and life brings praise to God!" We merely build on that foundation. "For nothing you do as educators, nothing the children do as learners, nothing we all do in the Lord is vain or meaningless." Teach your students not to live in defeatism but as hopeful and victorious in Jesus Christ. What more can be said? "O Lord our Lord how majestic is your name in all the earth!"

Teachers need to hold out to pupils the great wonder of a God who is mighty enough to create the vast universe and yet filled with so much love for them that He binds Himself to them in his covenant

Mr. Richard Fangrad was introduced as our keynote speaker. In a very fast-paced and energetic presentation, Mr. Fangrad related to us what is summarized in the following abstract, "The Bible says that animals and plants are to be reproduced 'after their kind.' This talk discusses biological change

over time, clarifying that the type of change observed has nothing to do with 'molecules-to-man' evolution; it is actually the very opposite. Natural selection, antibiotic resistance, and genetic mutations are discussed. These topics help us understand how the great variety of animals that we have today could have descended from those on Noah's Ark, adapting to different post-flood climates, and that biological 'molecules-to-man' evolution is an impossibility."

The poodle seemed to be the perfect example of how untenable the evolution theories are, as the theories would expect creatures to gain genetic information for their decree of "survival of the fittest" and their idea that animals "adapt" to their environment. However, the poodle ends up being the perfect example of the exact opposite; there "had to be" loss of genetic information to come to the poodle. Mr. Fangrad humourously suggested poodles are genetically challenged: "you put the poodle out on the front lawn and it cannot find its way back to the front door." He used this example to show the irrationality of the doctrine of evolution. Of course what really convinced us of the absurdity and blasphemy of evolutionary doctrine was the science Mr. Fangrad shared with us. More on that aspect can be gleaned on the Internet at the following site: <http://www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v25/i4/poodles.asp>

In the discussion following Mr. Fangrad's talk, there was a genuine concern that faith was being considered passé and that a very heavy reliance on facts was being put in its place. Some wondered: "Christians in science

cannot find the fact that would satisfactorily answer every objection of the evolutionist against God's creative work. In the big picture, we are certainly not able to answer every question that an unbeliever has regarding the origin of earth or the life that is here. It needs to be a matter of faith."

Nothing you do as educators, nothing the children do as learners, nothing we all do in the Lord is vain or meaningless

Mr. Fangrad assured his audience that he does not see it as a matter of finding an answer to every question – thus leaving faith out – but while believing that Scripture tells the truth, we can find suitable, relevant, and rational answers to the questions presented by evolutionary theory over against the creation model.

As is customary at our Teachers' Conventions there were many workshops to choose from for each of the participants. From the reports that I heard from the participants, these workshops were worth attending and beneficial to teachers in their various teaching assignments.

All in all, God blessed us with a spirit of unity and collegiality that allowed us to enjoy this two-day event on the shores of Lake Winnipeg. The high expectations had been realized.



Letter to the Editor

How to reach out?

Thank you for publishing once again Dr. De Jong's informative article on evangelistic outreach. At a meeting by leaders and volunteers of Streetlight Ministry (Hamilton's urban mission project) only a few weeks ago, we discussed the type of issues Dr. De Jong raises, and it is good to be reminded of the very practical guidelines he has prepared for us. The solutions he and his students propose to difficulties that evangelists frequently encounter are very much to the point. Dr. De Jong's central question is: "How do we become a missionary people?" and he answers that question by showing the need for the entire congregation to be *involved* not only, but also to be *trained* for this essential work of the church. He is equally right in emphasizing the need not only for frontline people but also for backups – "helpers and assistants, receivers and welcomers."

It is tempting to quote further, but there is no need. The article is available to all. I sincerely hope with Dr. De Jong that it will be read and followed by our consistories, by the leaders of our catechism classes, by our study societies, and indeed by all members of our churches. For the command Dr. De Jong quotes applies to each one of us: "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled!" (Luke 14:23)

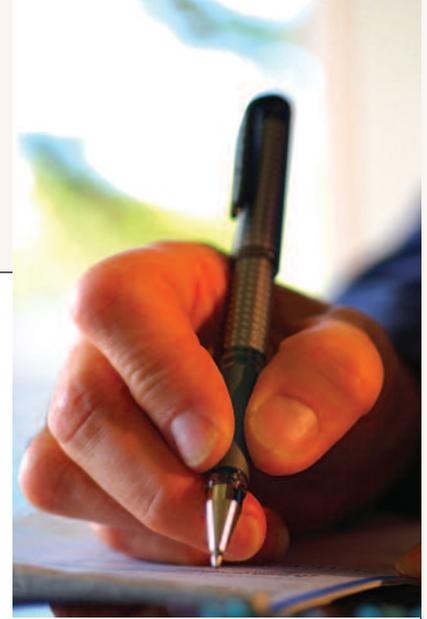
*Freda Oosterhoff,
Hamilton*

Letter to the Editor

Re: Dr. De Jong's article on Congregational Outreach

Kudos to the *Clarion* Editorial team for publishing Dr. De Jong's article on outreach. It is a timely reminder of the many informative writings we have received over the years from the pen of Dr. Jack De Jong. In very clear and practical terms, Dr. De Jong makes three things very clear to me. One, the entire congregational has the obligation to be involved in evangelism activities; two, churches must be mission-minded in their outlook; and three, promotion and leadership must come from the Council of each church. It is hoped articles like this will cause more councils to make outreach in their community a regular agenda item.

*Tom Zietsma,
Hamilton, Ontario*



Letters to the Editor should be written in a brotherly fashion in order to be considered for publication.

Submissions need to be less than one page in length.

