

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
Volume 64, No. 12 • June 19, 2015

**GOD CREATED SIMPLY
BY THE POWER OF HIS WORD**



Keller On Creation

The Relationship Between Genesis 1 and Genesis 2

Klaas Stam
Minister emeritus of the
Canadian Reformed Church
at Hamilton, Ontario
cstam@sourceable.net

The biblical testimony binds us to a six-day creation week, and does not allow for theories that demand millions of years of evolution

There has been so much published lately, also in *Clarion*, about creation and evolutionism, perhaps ad nauseam. It is still my position that the two are mutually exclusive. You cannot believe in both; it's one or the other. I also realize that there are Christians who do hold to both evolutionism and creationism. I am convinced that these Christians are very upright in their thinking. They wish to uphold the Bible and give a suitable response to what science has discovered. You can be sincere; you can also be sincerely wrong.

I am not a scientist. I am not a historian. I even hesitate to use the term "theologian." I am not much of a blogger. You probably know that. It is perhaps a weakness that I do not blog and am not bloggered. I simply don't have the qualifications. But sometimes a blog can be insightful. Recently I went to the Internet blog "The Biologos Foundation" (F.Y.I. it is www.Biologos.org/projects/scholar-essays). I was advised by a kind soul to take note of what is written there, especially by Tim Keller. Although I did not intend to revisit the matter of evolution, Keller's article gave me reason to think through quite a different aspect of the matter.

Tim Keller is a PCA American pastor and teacher, and apologist. An apologist is someone who defends the Christian faith. He is the founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, a PCA church which grew from humble beginnings to an amazing megachurch with over 5000 members. Keller does not like to be called an "evangelical" but rather "orthodox"

because he believes the Bible to be the true and full word of God. He is the author of the best-selling book *The Reason for God*. Good stuff.

Another important point to know is that Keller is co-founder of the Gospel Coalition, a fellowship of evangelical pastors (established in 2005) which seeks to promote the Reformed faith through publications, conferences, and websites or blogs. More good stuff.

But with respect to creationism, Keller states that his view is not strictly literal and that evolution "is neither ruled in nor ruled out" in his church. For me that is not particularly encouraging. It is like straddling the fence. Aside from the fact that this is a painful position a la derriere, the danger is that you can easily fall one way or the other. I prefer a solid stand on this side or the other of the fence.

I read a comprehensive article on creationism and evolutionism by Keller titled "What's The Problem?" I must confess that even before I read the article I had concluded for myself that the question is probably *rhetorical*. There is no problem, or what is perceived to be a problem will be summarily resolved by the author of the article.

Is Genesis 1 to be taken literally?

The first question that Keller discusses is "If God used evolution to create, then we can't take Genesis 1 literally, and if we can't do that, why take any other part of the Bible literally?" Hmmmm. Keller's answer is: "The way to respect the authority of the Biblical writers is to take them as *they want* to be taken. Sometimes they want to be taken

literally, sometimes they don't. We must listen to them, not impose our thinking and agenda on them." We need to ask: how does this author or that author want to be understood?

I am hanging on to my saddle now for the horse is bucking hard. For me the question is not really how the writer wants his words to be understood. The question is not the writer's intent, but what is *the gospel* here as proclaimed by the Lord God. This demands careful exegesis (explanation): how do we read in Genesis 1 the gospel of salvation? *What is God's intent?* What does he say about himself? What's he saying about me? About us?

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Rev. Klaas Stam begins our issue with an editorial entitled "Keller On Creation: The Relationship Between Genesis 1 and 2." Questions are asked about how literally these chapters should be taken. And are they poetry or prose?

We have an article from Dr. Ted Van Raalte on Matthew Henry's view of innocence and grace. He writes, "You... need to recognize that the nature or terms of God's relationship to man prior to the fall are distinct from those with believers after the fall." This issue also brings readers the second installment of Dr. Cornelis Van Dam's series on developments in the Dutch churches.

Issue 12 contains regular columns Treasures New and Old, Ray of Sunshine, and Education Matters. Elsewhere on these pages we have Clippings on Politics and Religion, a Letter to the Editor, and a question for You Asked. There is also a book review and a press release.

Laura Veenendaal

326 EDITORIAL

Keller On Creation

330 TREASURES NEW & OLD

Bearing Fruit in Every Good Work

331 Developments in our Dutch Sister Churches and Lessons to be Learned (2)

334 The Beloved Matthew Henry on Innocence and Grace

336 CLIPPINGS ON POLITICS AND RELIGION

337 EDUCATION MATTERS

340 LETTER TO THE EDITOR

341 BOOK REVIEW

342 YOU ASKED

344 RAY OF SUNSHINE

345 PRESS RELEASE

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editor: J. Visscher; Copy Manager: Laura Veenendaal
Coeditors: P.H. Holtvlüwer, E. Kampen, K. Stam, C. Van Dam

ADDRESS FOR COPY MANAGER

Clarion
8 Inverness Crescent, St. Albert, AB T8N 5J5
Email: veenendaal@telus.net

ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

CLARION
Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue
Winnipeg, MB Canada R2J 3X5
Phone: 204-663-9000, Fax: 204-663-9202

Subscriptions clarionadmin@premierpublishing.ca
Advertisements clarionads@premierpublishing.ca
Website www.clarionmagazine.ca

2015 SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	Regular Mail	Air Mail
Canada	\$49.00*	\$ 82.00*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds	\$69.00	\$ 92.00
International	\$98.00	\$154.00

*Applicable GST, HST, PRT taxes are extra.
GST/HST no. 890967359RT

Cancellation Agreement

Unless a written subscription cancellation is received we assume you wish to continue to subscribe. You will be invoiced prior to the subscription renewal date.

2015 ADVERTISING RATES

Advertisements: \$19.75 per column inch
Full Colour Display Advertisements: \$21.00 per column inch. We reserve the right to refuse ads.

PUBLISHER

Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd.
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Copyright © Premier Printing Ltd.

All rights reserved. No part may be reproduced in any manner without permission in writing from the publisher, except brief quotations used in connection with a review in a magazine or newspaper.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Agreement No. 40063293; ISSN 0383-0438

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5

The Lord is, as we all know, the supreme author; what secondary authors meant by their words is to me of lesser importance, even though they spoke in their own language and out of their own context. The dogmatical term for this is “organic inspiration.” We do take that into account. But how do we ascertain accurately what the secondary authors meant? Surely Moses did not mean something different than God? What kind of Scripture explanation is this? Must we first have to go to the secondary author, try to find out what he meant, and then see if that is also what God wants? It’s like scaling Mount Everest from the top down.

There are in the daily newspapers puzzles called *sudoku* and they range from medium difficulty to great difficulty. Monday’s *sudoku* is still quite simple, but Friday’s puzzle is a real cryptogram. Is the Bible perhaps also a cryptogram with *sudoku* puzzles that grow in difficulty? Of course, the greater the difficulty of the puzzle the more expertise and desire you develop to solve it. What a schmizzle. As the week progresses, the Bible becomes increasingly difficult to understand.

Okay, Keller’s question is: is Genesis 1 prose or poetry? Or is it strictly speaking neither of the two? Keller then explains that Genesis 1 is seen by some orthodox experts in Hebrew as “exalted semi-poetical language” and by others Genesis 2 as “exalted prose narrative.” Note the word “exalted.” It is both poetry and prose, but then out of the ordinary, even *exalted*. This means that room is created for an explanation that is not simply literal. There are metaphorical, non-historical elements that need to be honoured and discussed. Exalted poetry and prose require a more ingenious interpretation than simply a literalistic one, would you not agree? *Sudoku schmizzle*.

Keller places great importance on the *difference* between Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. Genesis 1 is said to be poetry, while Genesis 2 is prose. Result? We cannot read *both* Genesis 1 and 2 as “straightforward accounts of historical events.” These are two entirely different narratives.

What does this mean practically? Well, it allows Keller to write that “Genesis 1 does not teach that God made the world in six twenty-four hour days.” He adds, “Of course, it doesn’t teach evolution either, because it doesn’t address “the actual processes by which God created human life.” He also adds, “However, it does not preclude the possibility of the earth being extremely old.” We are back to the exalted square 1.

What are processes? It is a learned term, but it means *how something is done*. I do believe that in essence the *process* by which God created is clear in the Bible. John writes in the prologue to his gospel, “In the beginning

was the Word. . . and the Word was God, through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:1, 2). God created simply by the power of his word, which is Christ. We can also refer to Hebrews 11:3, “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible” (Heb 11:3). *Creatio ex nihilo*, said the ancient ones. This is the only actual *process* that God used to create: sovereign, omnipotent, unmitigated, instantaneous, perfect, and complete.

A simple command that shows forth God’s sovereign power cannot be construed as a million years of development and growth with all the normal failures of this process. The Psalmist says. “By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.” Or consider this, “For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded and it, and it stood firm” (Ps 33:6, 9). One word, one command, bang, bang, that’s all it took for everything to be created. Calvin notes in his commentary on Psalm 33: “The world came to be as soon as God spoke and upon his command received an *existing state*” (*The Book of the Psalms Explained*, W.A. de Groot, Goudriaan, 1970, Vol. 1, page 406 ff.). Calvin even writes that God only needed a simple *gesture* to create, did not need help from elsewhere, and did not need a lot of effort or labour for such a beautiful and perfect work. Let there be light, and there was light, instantaneously. Is that so hard to accept? Not easy to explain but easy to believe.

The biblical testimony binds us to a six-day creation week, and does not allow for theories that demand millions of years of evolution. God created the world by the power of his word, and then also by the same power placed that world under his almighty providence so that nothing happens against his will and everything happens according to his will and council.

Let’s go to Genesis 2

If we have understood that Genesis 1 is to be explained as exalted poetry and not necessarily to be taken literally, we are ready for the next logical step. It is equally clear to Keller and others that in Genesis 2 the “natural order is the norm.” Genesis 2 gives us actual history and so we have a natural sequence of events. I find that a rather arbitrary approach. Some have called this “arrogance” (for example Lita Cosner in *Creation Magazine*, September 9, 2010). This explains the perceived differences between Genesis 1 and 2?

Examples? How can there be morning and evening, when the sun and moon have not yet been created? How can there really be light, when there is not yet a source of

light, the sun by day and the moon by night? There are more examples of inaccuracy in Genesis 1, as you would expect in poetry. But there are not such inaccuracies in Genesis 2. So Genesis 2 is where we really have to go for answers, as Keller makes quite clear.

Here's my take on Genesis 1 and 2. Genesis 1 tells us how God created the heavens and the earth. There is an order that the Lord follows and it is completed with the creation of man and woman. That is the climax. Genesis 2 begins with the fact that the heavens and the earth were completed in their entire vast array.

Note the word "completed." Let us lift that word out for moment. What does that word tell us? What is completed, is done, finished. It did not require millions of years before everything was completed, but it was completed then, at that specific time, and therefore God said: now I will rest. "By the seventh day God had finished the work that he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done" (Gen 2:2, 3). You rest and rejoice when the work is done.

But the LORD wants to give us more information, as it were, a closer look at details that were not given in Genesis 1. Let me phrase it this way: Genesis 1 gives us an overall, general birds-eye view of the work of creating. Some events in Genesis 1 are grouped together. But in Genesis 2 we receive a more in-depth account how important things occurred. We read about the creation of man and of woman, not generally as in Genesis 1, but in amazing detail.

God made a beautiful garden, called Eden, and there he placed man and woman. The world was created but not all mechanisms of nature had immediately begun to occur. There had not yet been rain, and Adam had not yet been called to work the ground. That's the function of Genesis 2: not a new conflicting story with Genesis 1 that allows for evolutionistic pipe-dreams, but a further elaboration on Genesis 1. From birds-eye view to close focus, Genesis 1 gives us the majestic overview; Genesis 2 gives us the amazing particulars. This is always how I have always understood the correlation of Genesis 1 and 2. *Sacra Scriptura sui interpres est.* The Bible explains itself, but does not contradict itself.

Conclusion

Reading Keller's article I was touched by his sincerity and his acceptance of the whole Word of God. I believe we have in Keller a kindred spirit as orthodox Christian. I want to pass on a few gems, Keller writes: "The Chris-

tian Gospel is not good advice but good news. It is not directions on what we should do to save ourselves but rather an announcement of what has been done in order to save us."

Good news, eh? Indeed, pure gospel, and I wish that academics would keep that in mind. That is already clear from the first chapters of Genesis. The first Bible book is similar to all the books that follow because they speak to us of God's great work of redemption in Jesus Christ, in which we share by faith and grace, by the love of the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Let me summarize. Genesis 1 gives us the basic facts about creation. It goes beyond our understanding. Genesis 2 gives us more information about creation. It also goes beyond our understanding. Genesis 3 tells us about the fall of man and the corruption of creation. Already there we read about our great Messiah. It still goes beyond our understanding. It is all part of God's glorious and exalted gospel.

A question

Now I am left with a nagging question. How far can we go with the distinction between poetry and prose, both exalted? What does this mean for the explanation of other difficult Scripture parts? Is it not true that sometimes we are faced with poetry or prose and have to explain it accordingly? Keller gives the example of how differently Deborah speaks of victory in her poem of praise than in the account itself. I think I understand what Keller means. Poetry does not take away important facts but places them in a certain light, adding emphasis and showing awe.

Sometimes the Lord allows his children to wax poetic. He makes it quite clear as well. Genesis 1 is not written as poetry but as prose, as a literal account. There's actually more poetry in Genesis 2, "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" than in Genesis 1. The Hebrew in Genesis 1 uses a form of the verbs (waw consecutives) that is used in factual accounts and not in poetry.

There is little or no support to call Genesis 1 "exalted poetry" and Genesis 2 "exalted prose." Please do not be miffed that I do not support Keller's view on Genesis 1 and 2. His oeuvre deserves great respect and thankfulness. But on this point he is terribly mistaken. It's not a minor point. It has to do with hermeneutics, the rules for explaining Scripture.

P.S. I have sent a copy of this article to Tim Keller's website. Hopefully he will receive it and read it with brotherly affection.



*John Louwerse
Minister of the Canadian Reformed
Church at Neerlandia, Alberta
johnlouw@xplornet.com*

Bearing Fruit in Every Good Work

"Bearing fruit in every good work."

(Colossians 1:10)

We all know that spring time is here! Though the time when spring arrives varies across the country, almost everyone looks forward to the green growth it brings. Many trees are bearing new leaves and some are in full blossom. Green grass is starting to carpet our lawns and flowers are brightly blooming. After another cold Canadian winter during which everything outdoors looked dead, who would not look forward to the green growth of spring and the fruit and produce of summer?

But when it comes to our spiritual life, do we also see real growth? What about bearing fruit in every good work? Is this something we regularly pray for? This is what the Apostle Paul thanked God for in prayer, as mentioned in the first chapter of his letter to the Colossians.

As Paul joyfully noted in verse 6: all over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all truths. The gospel of God is bearing fruit. For his Word of grace, the seed, has been sown within us and has taken root in our hearts! So we are filled in the knowledge of God's will (verse 9). This is the seed which is to germinate and continually bear fruit. As it says in Colossians 1:10, we are to be "bearing fruit in every good work." This bearing fruit in every good work does not ultimately come from us, but is the work of the Spirit with the Word. Truly this is the fruit of the Spirit which must show forth in our everyday lives.

And we are to be continually fruitful in every good work. Our

lives as believers must be one of bearing not just a bit of fruit, but an abundance of fruit. And as believers in Christ we have reason to be producing so much fruit in every good work. After all, our Father has rescued us from darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (verse 13). Thanks to Jesus Christ's redeeming work, we must continually bear fruit in every good work. And as we grow in the knowledge of our God in Jesus Christ there will be an ever increasing abundance of fruit.

For it is impossible that those grafted into Christ by true faith should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness: fruits in good works. And remember we are known by our fruits.

C

For Further Study

1. Who must we be united with, to be able to bear fruit in good works?
2. What is the fruit of the Spirit?
3. Are you bearing fruits in every good work, each day again?



Developments in our Dutch Sister Churches and Lessons to be Learned

(Part 2 of 4)

The place of women in the church

Our sister churches in The Netherlands are slowly but surely moving to women in office. Important, supposedly biblical, justification for eventually opening the office to women is the research of Miriam Klinker de Clerk. When she was a doctoral student in Kampen, she was commissioned to research the relationship between men and women in the church. This commission was motivated by the request of General Synod of Zwolle-Zuid (2008) to Kampen for a scholarly reflection on this topic. In her study, she affirms that our context and culture is part of God's general revelation which needs to be factored in. You cannot just go by Scripture in determining the role of women in the church. It is striking that in her analysis of key texts she did not do justice to the place of creation ordinances with respect to the issue at hand.¹ Her study was influential in the committee report that went to Synod Ede. It concluded, among others, that it was legitimate for a woman to serve as deacon, elder, and minister in the church, but in the present situation that does not mean that women should serve everywhere as office-bearers. There was a dissenting minority report which felt that the importance given to "culture" as well as the analysis of the "cultural contexts" were not convincing.² Synod Ede decided on June 5, 2014 not to accept the conclusions of the majority report and to appoint a new committee to investigate the matter further (*Acta*, Art. 3-22).

Just over a week later (on June 14) the synod however made decisions that effectively overturned their decision on the role of women. When Synod discussed their relationship to the Netherlands Reformed Churches, Synod asserted that there was now agreement with these

churches on hermeneutics, that is, on how to interpret the Bible. Synod decided that since this was the case, "the obstacle that existed because of the decision of the Netherlands Reformed Churches to open the offices to the sisters of the congregation is now removed." As ground it was stated that "in spite of the different practical results with respect to women in office, it has appeared that we as churches can trust each other with respect to accepting the authority of holy Scripture" (*Acta*, Art. 7-13). So while the front door to women in office was so to speak closed by Synod not accepting the report of their committee, the back door was opened to women in office. In so doing, the synod did actually accept the proposal of their man/woman committee not to consider the issue of women in office as an obstacle in contacts with the Netherlands Reformed Churches.

And thus, the way of women to the pulpit is basically open; although no positive synodical decision has been made, although the churches are supposed to wait for a new report from their committee on the matter, and although there has been no consultation with any sister church, not even in Holland, on this momentous decision. However, the consequence of Synod's contradictory actions is already becoming evident. As is the case in other areas, such as liturgy and songs sung in worship, also in the issue of women in office, churches do their own thing without waiting for official decisions. The consistory of our sister church in Utrecht North/West announced in their worship service of February 22, 2015, that it has concluded that the position of male and female is the same before God and that the consistory intends to open the offices of elder and deacon to women. Classis Utrecht advised the church not to depart from the

Cornelis Van Dam
Professor emeritus
of Old Testament
at the Canadian Reformed
Theological Seminary in
Hamilton, Ontario
cvandam@canrc.org

decision of Synod Ede, and thus not open these offices to women. The consistory, in consultation with other churches in the area, will now decide how and when they will follow through on their intent to ordain women.³

Another development is that on May 31 of this year, the first female is set to deliver a sermon in our sister church in Haulerwijk. This woman is a member of this congregation and studies preaching at a Baptist seminary in Amsterdam. She is being trained to be a prison chaplain. But she needs to fulfill practical requirements including delivering a sermon. Her consistory obliged to give her this permission so she can fulfill this course requirement and so help spread the gospel in prison. Of course the end does not justify the means. The whole thing is a bit puzzling because she also conducts services from time to time in the Protestant Church of the Netherlands (PKN) and twice a month conducts services in jail.⁴ Could these occasions not have satisfied her course requirements?

The majority of those teaching in Kampen are now in favour of women in office

These developments have not come out of the blue. Prior to this a female theologian, Almatine Leene, a former member of the synodical committee dealing with the issue of male and female in the church, led services in the Titus chapel, a Reformed Church liberated, in Amsterdam. In 2012, the Stroom church in Amsterdam, a mission plant, wanted to be instituted as a full-fledged church in the federation. However, since women have leading roles in the church, the classis to which the request came decided to study the matter further, in part because of the outcry in the churches.⁵

Looking ahead, Synod Ede decided to charge a new committee to investigate how the church offices can be given scriptural content, so that within this framework women can serve God's kingdom (*Acta*, Art. 3-22). When one considers that since Synod Zwolle-Zuid (2008) reports on the place of women in the church have been submitted to synods without ever being able to show that Scripture mandates that women serve in the offices of the church, then it is doubtful that this new committee will be able to do so. Scripture is clear on this point. Only by making the text say what it does not say will the church-

es find reason to open the office to women and many fear that this is precisely what will happen.⁶ New young professors at the Theological University in Kampen, such as Hans Burger and Hans Schaeffer, see no problem with ordaining women. Indeed, the majority of those teaching in Kampen are now in favour of women in office.⁷

Confessional subscription

At Synod Ede a new form of subscription for office bearers was proposed. The main changes are in italics:

We, the undersigned, heartily declare that we agree with the doctrine of the Bible, as it is confessed in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands in the Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism and Canons of Dort. We promise to lead the congregation from out of this one gospel in our talk and life. We promise to openly carry out the truth of God's word and to uphold it over against misleading ideas that arise within the church or from out of the world. *Should we experience a difference between any part of the teaching of the Bible and the contents of these confessions we will raise this in an appropriate way. Should questions arise about our own beliefs or conduct, we are always prepared to give an account of them. In both cases, we will abide by the directives of the responsible ecclesiastical assembly.*

Formerly, one who had difficulties promised

If at any time in the future it should happen that we would disagree with this doctrine or any part of it, we promise that we will not propose, teach, preach or publish our opinion, either publicly or privately; rather, we will first submit this to the church via her assemblies for judgment. We are willing to submit to their decision; if we refuse we will by that very fact be suspended from our office.

There is quite a difference. Whereas before one had to keep silent and submit the matter to the consistory, now one is simply obligated to raise their difficulties "in an appropriate way" or "give an account of them." These vague guidelines leave open the possibility that someone who disputes parts of the confession can write, teach, and propagate his views. For who determines what is "an appropriate way"? Does the one with problems decide, or the church federation, or the consistory? It is vague and therefore open to abuse. Furthermore, the new form says that "we will abide by the directives of the responsible

LICENSURE EXAMINATIONS SUSTAINED

Examined by Classis Ontario West of May 27, 2015 and granted permission to speak an edifying word:

brothers Iwan Borst, Jonathan Chase, Jeremy DeHaan, William DenHollander, Hilmer Jagersma, David Pol, Tim Schouten, and Jake Torenvliet

CHURCH NEWS

ecclesiastical assembly." What does that mean? Is it simply up to the consistory to determine subsequent action? Is suspension from office no longer a given? These type of questions needed answers.⁸

When Synod Ede dealt with the proposed new form for subscription (January 17, 2015), it made amendments so that the crucial part of the revised form reads:

Should we experience a difference between any part of the teaching of the Bible and the contents of these confessions and our difficulty cannot be removed, we will submit our objections for the judgment of the ecclesiastical assemblies. Should questions arise about our own beliefs or conduct, we are likewise prepared to give an account of them to the ecclesiastical assemblies. In both cases, we will abide by the directives of the ecclesiastical assembly.

There is a noteworthy improvement. The vagueness of raising the matter "in an appropriate way" has been replaced with a clear reference to the ecclesiastical assembly. However, it is somewhat disconcerting to see injected the phrase: "and our difficulty cannot be removed." This phrase suggests that there is room to publicly ventilate your difficulty in a sermon or in writing since it is legal to seek to take away the difficulty. In the old form, one had to submit one's difficulty straightaway to the consistory but that is no longer the case. Further, with the old form one promised not to teach, preach, or publish one's disagreements with the confessions. That is also no longer true. So there is more toleration with the new form.⁹

There are reasons for concern. The missional (missionaire) church of Stroom in Amsterdam has a history of trying to push the boundaries as to what is tolerated in our Dutch sister churches. When leaders in the church were appointed, it was not considered necessary to ask them if they agreed with the confessions of the church. Furthermore, women are already in the ruling body of

this church and to have your children baptized is not considered necessary if you and your family wish to become members. Indeed, a minister working in Amsterdam and at one time teaching in Kampen indicated on his blog that in his view the time for maintaining confessions and church order was over. Another reason for concern is that the churches with which our sister churches are seeking union, the Netherlands Reformed Churches, have a reputation for tolerance and not for subscription to confessions.¹⁰

In the next article, more on the drive for union with the Netherlands Reformed Churches are in order, as well as other matters.

¹ Myriam Klinker-de Klerck, *Als Vrouwen Het Woord Doen: Over Schriftgezag, Hermeneutiek en Het Waarom Van de Apostolische Instructie Aan Vrouwen*, TU-Bezinningsreeks (Barneveld: Vuurbaak, 2011), 17, 54–62, 129–33. Also see the discussion in the detailed committee report (i.e. Appendix 5) found at <http://www.canrc.org/?assembly=181>.

² A handy brief English summary of the report is found in J.M. Batteau, "Man/Woman in the Church. A Summary of the Report to the General Synod 2014," *Lux Mundi* 33 (2014): 4–7.

³ See for this information <http://www.gkv.nl/intentie-ambt-open-voor-vrouw-gkv-utrecht-noordwest/>.

⁴ See further <http://www.eeninwaarheid.info/index.php?rub=9&item=1127>.

⁵ Albert-Jan Regterschot, "Vrouw in GKV Gaat Met Voorzichtige Stappen Naar de Kansel," *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 24 March 2015.

⁶ See, e.g., the pessimistic outlook presented, with reasons, in Douma, *Afscheid van de Gereformeerde Kerken (Vrijgemaakt)* (Hardenberg, NL: Heijink, 2014), 27–28.

⁷ As reported in Regterschot, "Vrouw in GKV."

⁸ Douma, *Afscheid*, 38.

⁹ For the new form see "Definitieve tekst nieuw bindingsformulier GKV" at <http://www.werkenaaneenheid.nl>.

¹⁰ Douma, *Afscheid*, 33–40.

C





The Beloved Matthew Henry on Innocence and Grace

Ted Van Raalte
Professor of Ecclesiology at the
Canadian Reformed Theological
Seminary in Hamilton, ON
tvanraalte@crts.ca

We certainly enrich our Bible studies by consulting Matthew Henry's commentaries. Consider his golden description of Eve as crown of creation, created last of all: "If man is head, she is the crown. . . The man was dust refined, but the woman was dust double-refined." He later adds the quaint comments that she was made of Adam's rib, "not made out of his head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved." These sorts of comments have made Matthew Henry's writings beloved to many of us.

Matthew Henry was a Presbyterian brother of ours who lived from 1662–1714. In this article I investigate Henry's commentary on Genesis (1708) for his views on the nature of God's covenants with Adam and Eve before and after the fall. Readers should note that I am using Henry's unabridged commentary set (most people have an abridged version, which may lack some of what follows). Though he also published some sermons on the covenant of grace, I don't have access to these right now, and my concern is more with his exegesis of the pre-fall covenant.

Since Henry comments on the text verse by verse, his views on the covenant are not all gathered into one place. However, his comments are fully in accord with one another and his views are clear and consistent, as we will see.

Grace before the fall

It might surprise us to notice, first of all, that he speaks of grace before the fall into sin. At Genesis 2:8 and 15 he remarks that God supplied all the abundance of the Garden of Eden to Adam, "That he might see that all the comfort of his paradise-state were owing to God's free grace ... all boasting was hereby forever excluded." Similarly, he writes at Genesis 2:18 of God "graciously" pitying Adam's lack of a suitable helper, and at 2:21 he

reminds us that God was gracious in making Adam sleep as he took his rib from him, so that he would not feel pain. Finally, at 2:22, when the woman is brought to the man, Henry writes about her being made "by God's special grace." So there is some sense of grace before the fall in Henry's mind.

We mustn't think, however, that Henry means that God had to show the grace of forgiveness prior to the fall. Rather, by "grace" he means God's gift to an undeserving creature. We did not earn the garden, nor did Adam merit a wife; God gave these things out of his deep love. He writes this way also about our parents noticing their nakedness, "They saw a loving God provoked, his grace and favour forfeited."

Innocence before the fall

God's grace before the fall had nothing to do with forgiveness, for man was in a state of innocence. Indeed, the distinct term Henry uses for God's relationship with us before the fall underlines this: He calls it a "covenant of innocency [=innocence]." This term already occurs in his preface, where he writes about all Scripture being written for our instruction and being universally applicable. Here he states that although believers today are not "under the law as a covenant of innocency," the law continues to be a valid, universal statement of God's will. He argues that if we were under the law as a covenant of innocence, we would be guilty and condemned.

Henry relates the forming of this covenant particularly to Genesis 2:16–17, where he writes of "the command which God gave to man in innocency and the covenant he then took him into." He argues that God's commands about the trees showed that in addition to being a gracious God who had given us many gifts, he was also the lawgiver and ruler. We were to obey freely his every command. But because we rebelled, we would be

completely condemned, or, would surely die, if we still had to live under the terms of that covenant. Another covenant would be needed.

Two covenants

Thus, when Henry discusses the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:9), he introduces a distinction of two kinds of covenants:

As the covenant of grace has in it, not only, *Believe, and be saved*, but also, *Believe not, and be damned* Mark xvi. 16, so the covenant of innocence had in it not only, “Do this, and live,” which was sealed and confirmed by the tree of life, but, “Fail, and die,” which man was assured of by this other tree, “Touch it at your peril:” so that, in these two trees, God set before Adam *good and evil, the blessing and the curse*, Deut. 30:19.

Notice by his way of writing that the covenant of grace is a present reality whereas the covenant of innocence is past. Why is the one in the past? Keep in mind that he is writing for believers, for whom God has opened the new way of relating to him, the way of forgiving grace in Christ. But why is this a new way? Why distinguish a covenant of innocence from a covenant of grace? The answer comes in his comments on Genesis 3:23-4, where God drives man out of the garden and bars him from returning. This indicates, argues Henry, that,

Our first parents were excluded from the privileges of their state of innocence. . . . the way to the tree of life was shut up, namely, that way which, at first, he was put into, the way of spotless innocence. It is not said that the cherubims were set to keep him and his forever from the tree of life. . . . but they were set to keep that way of the tree of life which hitherto they had been in; that is, it was henceforward in vain for him and his to expect righteousness, life, and happiness, by virtue of the first covenant, for it was irreparably broken, and could never be pleaded, nor any benefit taken by it. The command of that covenant being broken, the curse of it is in full force; it leaves no room for repentance, but we are all undone, if we be judged by that covenant. God revealed this to Adam, not to drive him to despair, but to do him a service, by quickening him to look for life and happiness in the promised Seed, by whom the flaming sword is removed.

Henry observes two ways to the tree of life: the first was the way of spotless innocence by our own obedience (but without boasting); the second is the way of forgiveness in the promised Seed, Jesus Christ. Because the first way has been absolutely closed off, the second was opened. He confirms this at 4:6, “We do not stand upon the footing

of the first covenant, which left no room for repentance, but God is come upon new terms with us. Though we have offended, if we repent and return we shall find mercy. See how early the gospel was preached!” The difference between these two is so great that he finds warrant to speak of a first covenant and a second covenant, a covenant of innocence before the fall, and a covenant of grace after the fall. God mercifully closed the first way by driving Adam out of the garden and into the gospel, into the new way, by the promise in Christ.

Why distinguish a covenant of innocence from a covenant of grace?

In Henry’s view this also means that all who are not in Christ remain condemned under the first covenant. Even if they would have some regret for sin’s consequences, so long as they do not relate to God through the promised Seed, they remain under the stipulation of needing to provide their own spotless innocence. Let them instead believe the promise that the Satan-destroying Lamb of God would come and would provide his own spotless innocence in their place!

Conclusion

Henry speaks of love, grace, innocence, and a covenant before the fall. But he sees a sharp disjunction between the covenant situation before the fall and the one after the fall. The first he calls a covenant of innocence. Once broken, it was impossible to be used as a way of blessing. A new covenant was needed, and it receives the special name of “covenant of grace.” This underlines the fact that the grace before the fall is different from that after the fall. Grace after the fall is so much more amazing—forgiveness extended to sinners who, even in the state of innocence, had defied the command and even the threat of their holy God and Father! In grace, God provided a new way, under the terms of a new covenant. What love!

I doubt that Matthew Henry would much quibble over what term you use for the pre-fall covenant. You can use different terms, but you do need to recognize that the nature or terms of God’s relationship to man prior to the fall are distinct from those with believers after the fall. Two covenants need to be posited, not one.

Keeping this perspective helps us praise God for his grace in Jesus Christ, and that’s something that should guide us in every Bible study.



Turkish Christianity Imperilled

It is difficult to imagine today that what is now Turkey was once a landscape dotted with churches. Indeed, it has had a long and glorious Christian history. This area was the birth place of the Apostle Paul and Timothy. The seven churches to whom the letters in Revelation 2 and 3 were addressed were found here. The seven Ecumenical Councils all met in what is now Turkey, including the Council of Nicea (325 AD) and the Council of Constantinople (381 AD) which gave us the Nicene Creed. Indeed, the city now called Istanbul was Byzantium in the days of the Roman emperor Constantine. He made it his capital in 330 AD and called it the New Rome, but it became known as Constantinople. It was here that the famed cathedral, the Hagia Sophia, was built in 537 AD. It was the largest church for almost a thousand years. Who could then have imagined that this centre of Christendom would become a bastion of Islam? But in 1453, Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Turks who converted the Hagia Sophia into a mosque. Although it is currently a museum, there are indications that it will be converted into a mosque once again.

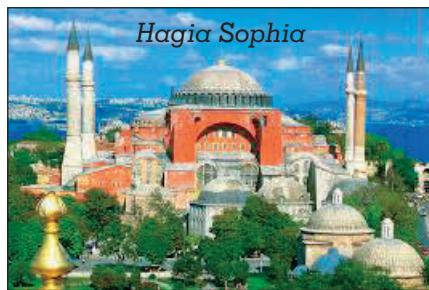
Such a conversion would be part of an ongoing Islamisation of Turkey. Although this country is officially secular, 99.8% of the population is Muslim with Christians now comprising a mere .2% of the population. Part of the decimation of the Christian population is due to the Armenian genocide which happened 100 years ago. Although Turkey's government continues to deny that such a horror actually took place, the evidence is convincing as indicated in Gary C. Gambill, "Backgrounder: The Armenian Genocide" on the Middle East Forum website. Why does the Turkish government so vehemently deny this massacre of mostly Christians and any wrongdoing on the part of the Ottoman Empire? According to Gambill, the denial of the

genocide "contributes to an atmosphere of intolerance to Christians." He also notes that an expert on the issue says that "widely-accepted negative stereotypes of Christians as dangerous, subversive aliens within society" are alive and well.

Christians therefore have a very difficult time in Turkey today. The effects of the genocide are still felt. No wonder when the scope of the killing is seen. According to Uzay Bulut, a freelance Turkish journalist, born a Muslim and based in Ankara, at least 2.5 million indigenous Christians of Asia Minor were killed. In the same article, "Churches in Turkey on the Verge of Extinction" (on the Gatestone Institute website), she notes that the tiny Christian minority, the grandchildren of the genocide survivors, are seen as second-class citizens. If you are not a Muslim you are regarded with suspicion. There are officially only thirty-four Christian church buildings left in Turkey. According to World Watch Monitor, no new churches are allowed. Indeed, not a single new church building has been erected since Turkey became a nation in 1923. Christians meet in whatever facilities are possible but these have no official recognition as religious buildings. The situation is very dire. For example, there are over 17,000 Syriac Christians in Istanbul, but the only church officially available holds only 300.

Uzay Bulut notes in her article that Turkey is a member of NATO. All NATO countries promise "to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law." Sadly, this is not happening in Turkey. Its government and people have "largely succeeded in destroying the entire Christian cultural heritage of Asia Minor. All this is reminiscent of what the Islamic State and other Jihadist armies have been doing in the Middle East."

Who would have dreamt that such a thing could have happened to a part of the world that was at one time so predominantly Christian? And yet the unthinkable has happened. Could it happen again, this time somewhere in the Western world?





Embracing Technology?

*Nick Vanderven
Information Technology
Department Head
at Credo Christian
High School in Langley, BC.*

The educational landscape continues to dramatically change, and technology has opened up numerous doors for individualized learning. Even many adults are teaching themselves new skills “on-the-fly” by watching a You-tube video or two. An “expert” is only a click away. The wealth of learning opportunities is indeed more abundant than ever before. Does that mean that schools need to break down their walls and provide free and unlimited access to this technology? Many schools wrestle with the issue of properly integrating computer technology into the school environment. The latest educational theories insist that the full scale adoption of technology is the only solution to our “broken” educational system. This is not a new idea, since for some reason, our education systems seem to be perpetually “broken” and governments are tasked with the job to fix it. And what better way to do it than through our amazing technologies. Perhaps our modern idolatry of technology makes us reach out to this god to “save us.” Unfortunately, the rush to implement new technology has often resulted in wasted money and failed initiatives. In some instances, the push to embrace technology has resulted in cuts to valuable proven learning activities such as music or art.

Tech-savvy teachers needed!

Improving our educational institutions requires the cultivation of passionate and skilled teachers empowered with whatever tools are appropriate for their classroom. There is no one-size fits all. Installing so-called “smart-boards” in every classroom might look impressive to an outside visitor, but there is no guarantee that the quality of education improves. In fact, there might be a negative impact in certain classrooms as teachers struggle to fit

their lessons to accommodate this or that new technology. A significant pitfall of constant technological innovation is the digital fatigue that it can sometimes generate among teachers as they try to learn this program or that new piece of hardware and then have to start over a few years later. Instead of spending time shaping their lessons to be more effective, they spend hours trying to get the technology to do what they want.

Limit the technology?

One important concept to keep in mind is, “Just because we *can*, doesn’t mean we *should*.” Just because we can stay in constant contact with our devices doesn’t mean we should. Maybe knowing when to turn off our devices is just as important as knowing how to use them. In some situations, declining to use technology might actually benefit us. Instead of trying to have a conversation with those on the other side of the world, perhaps we should shut it off and have real conversations with those in the same room. In all these things we need to strive for balance. God gave us a life-giving directive when he limited us in how much we work. We *could* work seven days a week, but God knew that wouldn’t be healthy for us. Perhaps we should apply the same limits to our technology. A sabbath rest from technology would do us good as well. It would allow us to realize that our devices don’t define us, and it would remind us that we shouldn’t be enslaved to them. If we can’t live without, have they become an idol in our lives? Perhaps this balance can be reinforced and demonstrated by parents at home and encouraged and practised at our schools.

A simple example of how we can promote this balance is for schools to cultivate a disciplined use of cell phones or other personal electronic devices. Some schools allow

limited use of these devices before and after school but expect these devices to remain out-of-sight during lunch hour recess. The idea is that students develop the ability to willingly refrain from using their devices because they want to engage in school community by playing intramural sports, enjoying face-to-face conversation, etc. One of the biggest advantages of a brick-and-mortar school is the opportunity to participate in the community that is created. Where else can our young people experience Christian community if not within the walls of our Christian schools? Developing this Christian community experience includes engaging our young people (and adults) in this conversation about the effects of technology so that school rules about cell phones are not seen as restrictive but liberating. We need to counteract the insular and often self-centered nature of technology by helping young people socialize without relying on their devices.

The perfect student device?

As for devices within the classroom, the perfect student device hasn't arrived yet, although we're getting very close. A laptop is too bulky and heavy, and a standard tablet or smart phone is good for media consumption but not so much for media creation. The Surface Pro is getting close – a device that allows the full capability of a laptop with the ease of a tablet and the use of natural pen tools. The natural pen ability is very important, especially when you consider classes such as math or science where you want to be able to draw and annotate freely. Attempting to use finger touch is not precise enough. Unfortunately at this point, the Surface Pro is too pricey to be used as an elementary or high school student device.

It is quite likely, however, that in a few short years we will have inexpensive, yet powerful, full-fledged computers that can replace all paper note-taking and textbooks. This would certainly usher in wide-spread changes as we finally move into the fully digital realm.



Traditional textbooks would disappear and be replaced with auto-updating, subscription based versions, rich with interactive and visual content. Teachers would need to get busy developing their own digital materials and interactive worksheets, with embedded quizzes, videos, internet-links, etc. This will require a significant investment in professional development to take full advantage of these new capabilities. Despite more time required to develop these new digital materials, a helpful benefit will be that teachers will have less tedious marking to do since many assessment activities can be automated and students and teacher can receive instant feedback. And suddenly, a student's backpack will be surprisingly empty. . . a lunch, gym clothes, and a tablet.

Dominated by distraction

One thing that becomes clear when observing children with technology is that their main mode of technological use is entertainment. Digital devices don't encourage hard work, but distraction. In fact, widespread adoption of laptops often results in test scores dropping for the simple fact that now students have a personal gaming, surfing and chatting device at their disposal. When it comes time to do homework the laptop provides a convenient excuse



to avoid the hard work. One can only imagine the countless times that children have uttered, “Don’t worry Mom, I’m doing my homework!” while hunched over their laptop playing games in their bedroom.

Many schools wrestle with the issue of properly integrating computer technology into the school environment

For this reason strategies need to be developed to help train our students to use devices for productive instead of disruptive purposes. Even in a college setting where students are paying for their own education and presumably want to be in class, the number of professors wanting to ban the devices continues to grow. Therefore the success of a device within a classroom depends largely on our ability as teachers to control the device. For this reason, the successful use of student computers within the classroom would require the implementation of school controlled and configured devices. The last thing you would want is a student’s personal device loaded with all their latest distractions, games, Netflix apps, etc.

Standardization is also very helpful for a teacher or fellow student as they try to assist another student. Preferably, devices should be configurable so that a teacher could block Internet access at will, or launch a text-only application with all other apps restricted so that note taking can happen without any interruption or distraction. An especially helpful tool for managing student use of devices is a program called *LanSchool* which allows a teacher observe and control a classroom full of devices.

Balanced use to God’s glory

Even when these devices become readily available we should not forget that sometimes we might need to leave them in our lockers so that activities such as classroom discussion and debate, drama, art, music, listening, thinking, meditating, etc can take place uninterrupted. Let’s continue to celebrate the heart of the Christian school community and not crowd out the best parts of school life by allowing technology to become our master.

The next five years will certainly usher some dramatic changes into our classroom and school communities. Let’s embrace these new opportunities with a proper sense of balance, teaching our children to put limits on

Digital devices don’t encourage hard work, but distraction

their use of technology and to deploy new technologies in a careful and controlled manner, where appropriate, to the honour of our Heavenly Father.

The Education Matters column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teachers’ Association East. Anyone wishing to respond to an article written or willing to write an article is kindly asked to send materials to Clarion or to Arthur Kingma akingma@echs.ca.

C

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Although not disagreeing with Rev. Holtvlüwer's article entitled, "Twenty-four," it has motivated me to comment on what I believe to be the biggest factor in the shortage of elder nominees for delegate to synod. As an elder who has been to synod, I think the biggest factor in making elders reluctant to serve is *intimidation*. Elders feel ill equipped. It is very difficult for most elders to discuss and debate serious church matters that have far reaching consequences for the federation. Those elders who go to synod rarely go more than once. They are called upon to debate complex and conflicting matters with twelve ministers who have far more training and much greater experience in articulating their views.

Elders have a lot of life experience and may be top-notch plumbers or mechanics but they do not always feel very capable of expressing their convictions. There is also the fact that the elder may have to speak or vote on matters with which he is unfamiliar because they have come to the synod by letter. But the ministers have dealt with such issues for years. This too intimidates the elder for he feels ill prepared in such matters. For example, the issue of women voting has been before our synods for at least forty years. Many of the ministers have dealt with this at multiple synods and have made their views clear. Then you get twelve new elder delegates and you

can imagine how stressful it is for them to debate this issue for the first time with seasoned ministers who have dealt with the issue many times.

Anyone who has observed our synods knows that there are times when dealing with controversial issues that the majority of the elders vote differently than the majority of the ministers. We should stop and ask what that means. As a general rule the elders are the voice of the people in the pew. I think the ministers should stop and consider that.

I think we should be looking at changing our delegation to synod by sending six ministers and eighteen elders. This would give more balance to the debates. It would also reflect the way all of our local congregations are governed with one minister and eight to ten or more elders in a consistory. I believe it would serve our churches better if the synods worked under the same design as our local congregations. Then we might not see so many matters coming back to the synods that have been dealt with in the past.

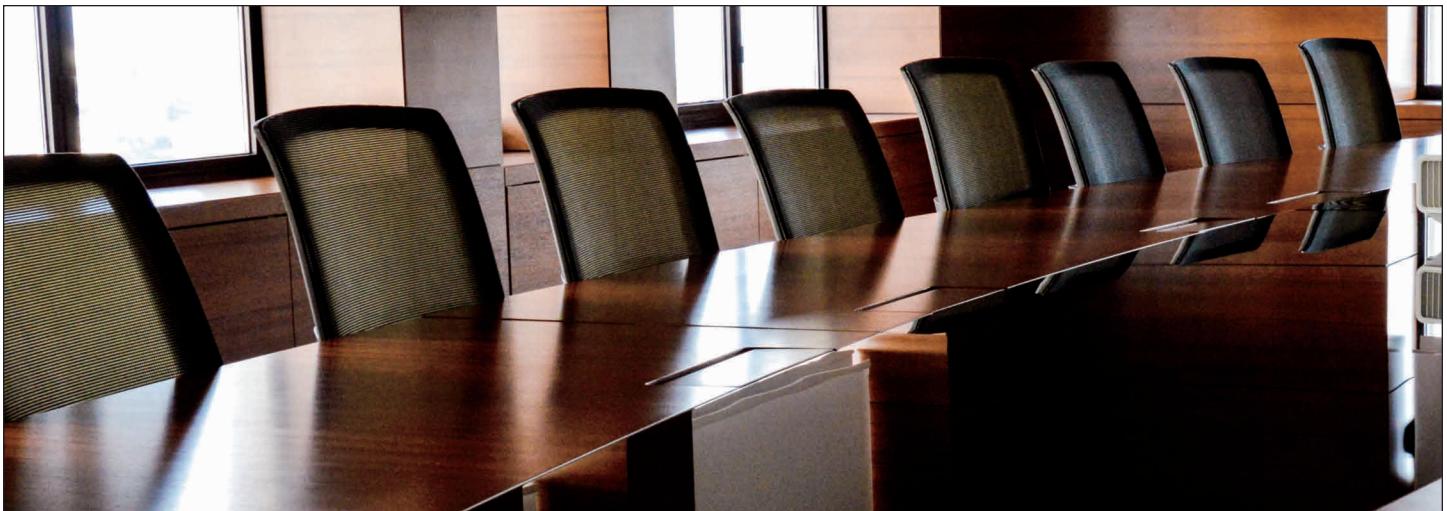
Albert Vanleeuwen
Neerlandia, Alberta



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.

C



BOOK REVIEW

A Well-Ordered Church: Laying a Solid Foundation for a Vibrant Church,
William Boekestein and Daniel R. Hyde,
Holywell, England: Evangelical Press, 2015

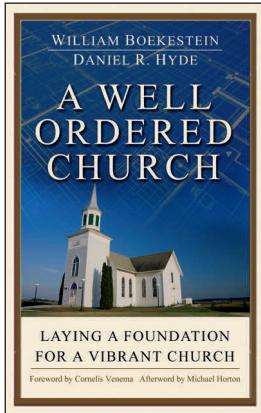


Wes Bredenhof
Pastor of the Providence
Canadian Reformed
Church, Hamilton, Ontario
wbredenhof@bell.net

There is always a need for books dealing with the doctrine of the church. Not only do those who've grown up in a Reformed church need new and timely treatments of this subject, but also those who are just coming on board to the Reformed faith. Both the newly-planted and the long-rooted need to have a solid biblical guide to what it means to be a church of Jesus Christ. This book fills that niche.

The authors are experienced pastors and writers. Rev. Daniel Hyde has been the pastor of Oceanside URC in California for several years. Rev. William Boekestein has been the pastor of Covenant Reformed Church (URCNA) in Carbondale, PA for some years, but has recently accepted a call to Immanuel Fellowship Church in Kalamazoo, MI. Both authors have extensive background in working with people new to the Reformed faith. Both have written several well-received books.

The book looks at the church under four main headings. In Part 1, "Identity," the authors explain who and what the church is, especially in relation to Jesus Christ. In Part 2, "Authority," the notion of office is explained and applied. Do the office bearers in Christ's church bear any authority at all and, if so, are there any limits to their authority? Part 3 discusses "Ecumenicity" and the connections between churches. The final part deals with "Activity." Here Boekestein and Hyde deal with the various callings of the church: teaching, worshipping, witnessing, and discipline. Generally speaking, readers will find faithful Reformed thoughts throughout this volume. The authors respect and work with our Reformed confessional tradition, give due attention to church history and, most importantly of all, they want to tie everything to Scripture.

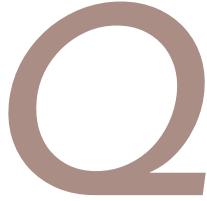


I can certainly recommend this book, but with two caveats or concerns. Chapter 5 has a discussion about the perennial issue of true and false church. The authors seem to argue that the Belgic Confession only knows those two categories. However, there is a third category in the Confession that's often neglected: the sect. When Guido de Brès wrote his massive book on the Anabaptists, he consistently called them sects. He fully recognized the great diversity among the Anabaptists (he identified over a dozen groups), but he does not ever refer to any of them as being church, either true or false. Were he alive today, de Brès would likely refer to many of the groups around us with the same terminology: sects. Perhaps this language is offensive to modern sensibilities, but it is the language of our Confession.

In Chapter 9, the authors use the expression "God is the missionary" a couple of times. There's a kernel of truth in that insofar as God is the one who seeks out that which is lost. However, it is an expression that has been liable to misunderstanding and abuse. All of God's purposes in this world for anything and everything can become "mission." When everything is mission, then nothing is mission. Therefore, I would suggest that it is better and more accurate to say that God is the *author of mission*. Mission originates with God and it is his plan and design for the church to go into the world with the gospel of salvation.

Notwithstanding those concerns, *A Well-Ordered Church* drives home two essential points: First, the church is not optional. Christians united to Christ must be united to Christ's body. Those who love Christ must love his bride too. Second, because she is the body of Christ, Christ must be honoured as her head and Lord. He must be the one who, through his Word, directs and governs her in all his ways. These two points must never be forgotten and this book serves as a helpful reminder for this generation.

C



What does it mean for a Christian to meditate?
What are the goals and the benefits of Christian meditation?
What are some possible ways of going about meditation?
Is this something every Christian can and should be doing regularly?



William den Hollander
Minister emeritus of the
Bethel Canadian Reformed
Church of Toronto, Ontario
denhollanderw@gmail.com

AThe book of Psalms starts out with a benediction for the man whose “delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.” Meditation is “engaging in continuous and contemplative thought, muse,” the dictionary says. It means that when we read something we continue to think about the material we read, contemplate its meaning, reflect on its intent, and think about its application for today, for the reader’s life. This meditation is a continuous activity, the Psalmist says: “day and night,” i.e. permanently! That doesn’t just apply to “the law,” as in Psalm 1, but to the entire Word of God, “a Word that is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it” (Deut 30:14). We often read the Bible thoughtlessly, as a routine, without consciously realizing that we are opening God’s Word, and without praying for the Holy Spirit to enlighten us for the understanding of that Word, and without the hope and expectation that we will be strengthened in our faith through the Word!

The Word of God must be studied seriously and contemplated prayerfully. These are the two main aspects of Christian meditation. “Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law,” the psalmist prays in Psalm 119:18. The Holy Spirit needs to enlighten our mind, remove the darkness and bring light in order that we may see and understand who God is, what he has done, how he saves and redeems, what he is saying to us in our situation today. “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom 15:4). Peter says that “the prophets, who spoke of the grace

that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow” (1Pet 1:9ff). Meditation, therefore, is an intense searching of the Scriptures, to see its coherence, its interconnections, its meanings, etc.

In his second epistle Peter (1:20f.) speaks again about these prophecies and about the inspiration of the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit, and shows: “no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation.” Hence, the reader, too, must seek the meaning of the text he is reading in the Scriptures avoiding his own private interpretation, seeking what the Holy Spirit is saying against the background of the entire Word of God. By meditation, therefore, we think about, reflect, and contemplate what the meaning of the text *per se* is, what it means in its context, and what its truth and message is for us today. In doing so, we ask what does it tell me about God, about the believer, the child of God in the text, about his circumstances, and how does this relate to my situation and relationship with God in Christ. Meditation, then, takes time, rest, prayer, reflection, as well as study, so that the reading becomes a blessing thanks to our understanding, for the strengthening of our faith and the sanctification of our life!

This practice of meditation is something every Christian can and should develop and exercise. It’s what is called having “quiet time” or “being still” with the Lord. It’s best to find a set time in the day for reading a passage, studying it, praying for insight and understanding by the Holy Spirit, contemplating it. Thus seeking to appropriate it and apply it, praying to see the light of God’s Word shine over all of life in all its facets and aspects. How the

Word deals with joy and sorrow, life and death, labour and entertainment, health and sickness, economy and politics, upbringing and education, life in the world and the calling of the government, mission and outreach, etc., i.e. over

everything (not all at the same time, or with the same passage, but) as an approach to the intimacy with the LORD in the covenant with him, as his children who fear him may enjoy according to his promises (Ps 25:14).

Q

In the Apostles Creed, Heidelberg Catechism (LD 21), and in the Belgic Confession (Art. 27-29) we confess the church as “the communion of saints.” Why do we not use the term “church community” in these confessions?

A

The term “church community” is a term that’s used sometimes in our everyday speaking about our congregation or about the people in our federation who together are involved in one project or other (e.g. the “church community” cooperates in the support of the Anchor Association; the “church community” came together in a picnic). We use the term “community” as a regular and general designation for a group sharing a common locale, common conditions, interests, needs, and the like. The term as such does not really have any specific, spiritual, and biblical overtones; neither does it say anything confessional about “the church.”

When the confessions use the term “communion of saints” a much more meaningful and specific expression

is used, denoting something unique and rich about the church. First of all, using the name “saints” shows that we are speaking about people, believers, who are called holy (set apart) by virtue of their unity with Christ, by faith in him. They belong to him, are members of his body (1 Cor 12:4-7), who share their gifts and talents with the other members of the body. Their union with Christ (sharing in all his treasures and gifts) is evident in their “com-union,” their “union together” (literally). The communion of saints, therefore, does not just denote a group of people but a gathering of believers who, as body of Christ, have their whole life in common through faith in him. They “use their gifts readily and cheerfully for the benefit and well-being of the other members,” which is a lot more comprehensive than you will find in a community of people who share one particular point of interest, characteristic, or need.

C

**Is there something you've been wanting to know?
An answer you've been looking for?
Ask us a question!**

Please direct questions to Rev. W. denHollander

denhollanderw@gmail.com

23 Kinsman Drive, Binbrook, ON L0R 1C0

July birthdays

Greetings from the *Ray of Sunshine*!

We have several birthdays to look forward to in the month of July and as I scan the list I see that several people celebrate on the same day. Wow, that is wonderful to share a birthday with someone else! I hope you have a great day celebrating with family and friends. I praise the Lord for you and thank him for giving you a new year to enjoy his creation. May you receive from the Lord all that you need to live for him.

4 JAMES BUIKEMA will be 54

653 Broad Street West
Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8

14 SARAH VANDERGUGTEN will be 20

23 Jane Street
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

20 CHARLIE BEINTEMA will be 40

29 Wilson Avenue
Chatham, ON N7L 1K8

20 DERRICK VANDERHORST will be 28

939 Sanford Drive
Burlington, ON L7T 3GT
derrickvanderhorst@gmail.com

29 JANINE KAMSTRA will be 30

532 Moxley Road N
RR 2, Dundas, ON L9H 5E2

29 TOM VANDERZWAAG will be 62

c/o Anchor Home, 361 Thirty Road
RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2



A NOTE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

If there are any address or other changes that I need to be aware of please let me know as soon as possible.

Patricia Gelms

5080 Airport Road East, Mount Hope, ON L0R 1W0

henri.trish@sympatico.ca

905-692-0084

C

PRESS RELEASE

**ILPB Inter League
Publication Board
April 16, 2015
Fergus, ON**



Present for the board, Dick Nijenhuis (chair), Michelle Helder and Patricia Gelms, representatives of the Women's League. Present for the Administration Committee, Paul DeBoer (Coordinator), Brandie Swaving (Treasurer), Henrietta Lodder (Sales), Cathy Jonker (Administrator).

ILPB Chairman, Dick Nijenhuis, opened our spring meeting with Scripture reading and prayer, and a welcome to all.

From the committee of administration several reports were discussed.

Progress – several books are being edited, typeset, and printed, and some books are being reprinted. We are thankful that sufficient funds are available to make this happen.

Marketing – The website continues to be up to date and has been well received. ILPB seems to be an unfamiliar name to some so discussion proceeded from that comment whether the ILPB needs a last name. New books have been advertised in *Clarion* and previously published books

are also being promoted to ensure our readership remains aware what ILPB has to offer.

The treasurer presented the Financial Statement for the 2014/2015 year. Finances are in good order. Past due accounts have been contacted, and funds have been trickling in. The website now has pay pal up and running and the hope is that this becomes a convenient way to avoid past due accounts. Balance sheet and Income statement were reviewed.

Sales are going well. Henrietta Lodder continues to be the contact for those ordering books. She especially enjoys processing bulk orders and noted that since the launch of the website individual orders have also become more common.

With great thankfulness the board mentioned that several books are being pursued with ministers hopefully to be published over the next several years. The board recognizes that this work of writing is done in addition to the work of pastoring and teaching and is grateful for the on-going contribution.

Jovial, friendly discussions, fine tuning, mutual edification and improving our work was communicated in the on-going work of the ILPB: promoting the study of God's Word.

Press release read and approved.

C

