

Clarion

In the Fruit of the Spirit is Love

Book of Praise: 1972-2022

Douwwe Johannes VanderWerp Part 4



Clarion

Clarion: a trustworthy and engaging magazine, widely spread and read in Canadian Reformed households and beyond.

To equip God's people for his glory, in faithfulness to Scripture, as summarized in the Reformed confessions, Clarion adheres to the following core values:

Confessionally Reformed
Loving in manner
Attuned to current issues
Readable and Reliable
In Submission to Scripture
Open to constructive criticism
Nurturing Christian living

What's Inside

It is a summer of anniversaries it seems, and as Canadian and American Reformed Churches we may note the fiftieth anniversary of our *Book of Praise*, a commemoration brought to us by the pen of Rev. George van Popta. One faithful song book for the whole federation to use, with all of its added features in the back, is a gift to help keep us singing with "voices united" and to help us remain faithful in our calling as churches and Christians. It's good to give thanks for it. In devotional writing, Rev. Clarence VanderVelde meditates on Christ as the anchor of our soul while Rev. Tyler Vandergaag continues his longer series on the fruit of the Spirit as displayed in Christ. This time the focus is on love.

In other offerings, Mr. Keith Sikkema gives us another chapter in the story of Mr. Douwe Vander Werp and the fight for gospel truth in an age of decline in churches that were called "Reformed." History teaches us that a church's good name doesn't always mean it is filled with good doctrine or preaching. Mr. Mitch Bosveld informs us of the staggering hate and oppression suffered by Christians in Nigeria—it's not easy reading. Over

these two articles we see two of Satan's prized tactics: subtly infiltrate the church with false teachings and viciously attack it with brutality and violence. We surely need to be on guard against the former regardless of where we live and (distressingly) of the latter in more and more places in the world.

Dr. Smith brings us to the conclusion of his twelve theses on the Jewish people and leaves us with a very interesting hypothesis that I would guess some would like to challenge. That's what good scholarship does—thanks Dr. Smith! Dr. Will den Hollander presents us with a timely editorial on whether the church should get into the work of forming "vision" and "mission" statements (or has the church already been doing that?). *Clarion Kids* teaches about the virgin birth and the issue rounds out with a press release from Classis Central Ontario.

Even though it's summertime, Christ's church building work carries on, there's lots on the go, and our pages are full. God bless your reading!

Peter Holtvlüwer

467 GUEST EDITORIAL

The Vision & Mission of the Church

468 TREASURES, NEW & OLD

A Sure Anchor

469 The Jewish People in Biblical Perspective: Twelve Theses (Part 2)

473 In the Fruit of the Spirit is Love

476 A Golden Anniversary

Book of Praise: 1972-2022

479 PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS

Nigeria

481 Douwe Johannes VanderWerp Part 4

484 CLARION KIDS - Lord's Day 14

485 BOOK REVIEW Anglo-Genevan Psalter in Four-Part Harmony

486 PRESS RELEASE - Classis Central Ontario

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GUEST EDITORIAL

The Vision & Mission of the Church

While pastoring in Langley, British Columbia, I was involved in a strategic planning process with Stepping Stones Bible Camp. We prayed, discussed, and wrestled with questions about the vision and mission of the camp. This process, frequently employed in the business world, was effective in leading us to think deeply about what camp is all about, what its ultimate purpose is, and what its future should be, under God's blessing. Relatively soon after I took up my position at the seminary, we also went through a strategic planning session, tackling the same kinds of questions. It was especially helpful for me as a newcomer to catch our vision and mission.

Perhaps no one would question the appropriateness of this process for institutions like a Bible camp or a seminary, but what about the church? Is it appropriate to speak of the vision and mission of the church? And can we speak of each local body of Christ having a particular vision and mission?

I want to suggest that we can, and that the challenging process of determining and articulating the vision and mission of the church can be valuable for focusing our energy and efforts, inspiring our hearts and minds, and mobilizing our hands and feet.

When we speak about vision and mission, we need to define our terms, because they're often used differently or even interchangeably. In this editorial, I'm using "vision" to mean what we see (and desire to see) in the future, and "mission" to refer to the *approach* taken to reach that vision. As we explore this, I hope you'll not only agree that this is a beneficial process for the church, but even wonder if it's not the church that has inspired the world, rather than the reverse.


Goal & strategy

Let's start then with the vision of the church. What do we see? God himself gives us the wonderful vision of the apostle John, "After this I looked, and behold, a *great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'*" (Rev 7:9-10). In fact, this is not a new vision. We could trace it through all of Scripture but see it especially clearly in the promise to Abraham, "In you *all the families of the earth shall be blessed*" (Gen 12:3). When we think of the future of the church, that's the glorious reality we see.

But how will we get there? Or better, how will God accomplish this vision? What is the *mission* of the church? Listen to the parting words of Christ to his disciples, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt 28:18-20). Here the church is *commissioned* by our Lord Jesus Christ to *make disciples of all nations*. Notice how closely the mission is tied to the vision of the church through the words "all nations." God will accomplish his vision through the church's mission.

Local application

To this point we've been speaking broadly about what the Belgic Confession calls "one catholic or universal church . . . spread and dispersed throughout the entire world" (Art 27). Can we also speak about the local church having its own particular vision and mission that serves this broader vision and mission? Here is where we will perhaps have greater disagreement, but I think the answer is yes and flows out of what we confess about the church.

First, each local body of Christ is unique by virtue of its members. The Belgic Confession speaks of these members building up their brothers and sisters, "according to the talents which God has given them as members of the same body" (Art 28), echoed by the Catechism's reference to the "gifts" of each member (LD 21, Q&A 55). Second, each local body of Christ is unique by virtue of its location. Our duty is to join this assembly "wherever God has established it." Scripture too addresses Christians as living members in local contexts with distinctive challenges and opportunities (e.g., in Rome, Corinth, Thessalonica). We should, therefore, expect to see local, faithful expressions of the universal vision and mission of the church that correspond to the opportunities given to each local body of Christ through the particular gifts of the members gathered there and the particular context(s) within which they are called to live and serve. 



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A Sure Anchor

“We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul.” (HEBREWS 6:19A)

Especially in a storm, boats drop anchor to prevent being driven out and smashed to pieces. The imagery in our text of an anchor speaks of stability and security. In life, we all face “storms.” Sometimes we are buffeted by the loss of loved ones, health crises, relationship issues, job concerns, financial problems, or marginalization as Christians in society.

When faced with these things, people look for something to give them a sense of stability and security. Basically, people are looking for hope. As Christians, we have that hope! It’s the hope of Christ the Saviour! We have the gospel promises in Jesus Christ about eternal salvation and the coming of a better world. We have the comfort of knowing that Christ our Saviour leads us through the storms of life to his eternal goal for our lives. The gospel gives us the anchor we need in this broken and uncertain world. Our hope in Christ is our anchor. The writer to the Hebrews speaks about “the hope set before us” (6:18) and then says, “We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul” (6:19).

Maybe we are tempted to give up on Christ when life is hard. It’s a big and scary world, and we face so many issues. Sometimes we think it’s easier to navigate our own way and make our own choices apart from God. The early Christians to whom this letter was originally written felt that way because they were facing trials and opposition as Christians. They were in danger of going back to Judaism and giving up on the gospel of Christ because that was easier for them.

But the author encouraged the first readers to continue in the faith. We need that same encouragement today. To give that encouragement, the author speaks about God’s promise of salvation to Abraham to whom God promised many descendants. This culminated in the birth of the Seed of Abraham, our Lord Jesus Christ. The book of Hebrews presents Christ as the high priest after the order of Melchizedek, and thus the final high priest, as well as the end of all sacrifices because Christ gave himself on the cross to save us from all our sins.

Hebrews 6:13–20 gives two reasons why the Christian hope is a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul. First, God swore an oath to confirm the promise of salvation and the coming of a better

world. God did that at the occasion when Abraham showed he was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac. An oath offers confirmation, and since God had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself to underline his unchangeable purpose. Now there are two unchangeable things: God’s promise and God’s oath.

Second, this hope enters the very presence of God in the heavenly sanctuary where Jesus has gone when he ascended into heaven as the eternal high priest after he said on the cross, “It is finished.” The sins of believers are forgiven, and in heaven Christ intercedes for us by speaking in our defence when we sin. Moreover, from heaven’s throne Christ is preparing a better world for us to be revealed at his return. Christ is in heaven as a forerunner on our behalf, that is, someone who has gone ahead of us to prepare things for us. The Christian hope has a solid basis because of what Christ has done for believers and where Christ is on behalf of believers.

This hope in Christ is the anchor which gives security in the storms of life. People who don’t know Christ cast their anchor on earth—with all its limitations—but Christians cast their anchor in heaven where Christ the Saviour is busy on our behalf.

As Christians, we may live lives anchored in Christ. 📌

For Further Study

1. Read Hebrews 6:13–20.
2. What did God say to Abraham in Genesis 22:15–18?
3. Why is Christ called “a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb 6:20)?
4. Reflect on situations in which the Christian hope has been the sure and steadfast anchor of your soul.



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The Jewish People

in Biblical Perspective: Twelve Theses

(Part 2)

JOHN SMITH

This article continues Dr. Smith's list of twelve thesis statements on the biblical perspective of the Jewish people today; it was originally a presentation given at Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College as part of a "theme week" on the topic of the Holocaust.

8: The bold vision of the New Testament was to have one church where Jews and Gentiles could find unity in Christ

The apostle Paul worked tirelessly to implement this vision, which would be a testimony that Christ had indeed broken down the dividing wall of hostility (Eph 2:11-22). Paul believed that the vision of Jew and Gentile together was worth striving for (Rom 3:29-30; Gal 2:14; Col 2:16), and we should do no less. Still today, it is much easier to divide churches along ethnic lines than to overcome ethnic divides and cling with Jacob-like tenacity to Christ, whose heel was crushed for Jewish and Gentile believer alike. We do well to ask ourselves, "What would we ask a Jew to give up for the sake of his faith in Christ?" But we would do even better to ask ourselves, "What would we be

willing to give up to make it easier for Jews to join the community of Christ?" After all, Christ has one work of salvation, one Spirit, one covenant, one bride, and this oneness should be manifest in the local church (Eph 4:1-6; Phil 2:1-5).

Oneness does not mean that all differences and distinctives disappear. The apostles did not ask Gentiles to become Jews, nor Jews to become Gentiles, but to live and worship together in a spirit of self-sacrificial love. Here the lessons of the apostle Paul about the weak and the strong remain very instructive for the church (Rom 14-15; 1 Cor 8-10). If the Jewish apostles did not compel Gentiles to become like Jews and live under the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament, then Gentile church leaders today should not compel Jews to become like Gentiles and leave all their ceremonial laws and traditions behind at once,

Jews and Gentiles were asked to live and worship together in a spirit of self-sacrificial love

as a precondition for church membership. The fact that Christ declared all foods clean does not yet give the church the right to compel Jews to eat unclean foods (Mark 7:19; Rom 14:14-16).

To be sure, we confess in Article 25 of the Belgic Confession that the use of the ceremonies and symbols of the law “ought to be abolished among Christians,” but does this mean that Jewish Christians are no longer allowed to avoid unclean foods? I don’t believe so. That’s not what “abolish” means here. For example, in Article 34 of the Belgic Confession, it says that Christ “has abolished circumcision, and has instituted in its place the sacrament of baptism,” but this does not mean that circumcised people cannot join the church, nor does it mean that Jewish Christians are no longer allowed to circumcise their baby boys. Rather, it means that circumcision is no longer a sign of the new covenant in Christ: being circumcised no longer signifies that you belong to God’s covenant, just as being uncircumcised no longer means that you have broken God’s covenant (Gen 17:14). As long as it is clear to everyone that living by the ceremonial laws does not contribute to one’s salvation and does not make a person any more holy or pleasing in the sight of the Lord, churches should exercise patience, understanding, and love towards their Jewish members.

Such oneness will not be easy, but it is important, not only because we believe in one holy catholic church, but also because, in times of old, the Israelites were called to show hospitality to strangers and sojourners. And they did so, welcoming a Canaanite woman such as Rahab and a Moabite woman such as Ruth, both of whom joined Israel and even became “foremothers” of the Messiah (Matt 1:5). How much more should we not welcome Jewish believers into the church and make every accommodation for them that we possibly can! After all, when they join our congregations, they do so not as strangers and sojourners, but as those who have the ancient birthright of their forefather Jacob as their heritage.

In some respects, the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles is lower now than it was in New Testament times, because the absence of a temple and a functioning priesthood means that there are many ceremonial laws that Jews simply cannot keep anymore. Nowadays, not all Jewish people live according to their ceremonial traditions. Orthodox Jews certainly do, so for them the obstacles to joining a church will be much greater, but there are also Conservative Jews, Reform Jews, and non-practicing Jews who follow their traditions to a lesser extent, or not at all. There is also variety of practice among the so-called “Messianic Jews,” who believe in Jesus as the Messiah and accept both the Old and the New Testaments as the Word of God. Many Messianic Jews observe the Sabbath on Saturday, commemorate other Jewish feast days, and adhere to at least some of the *kosher* dietary traditions. The point is that when modern Jews come to faith in Christ, those who *do not* observe the ceremonial laws should not be taught to follow them again, and those who *do* observe them should be taught that they are not made righteous in God’s sight by doing so. All must find their entire salvation in Christ alone (1 Cor 9:19-23; Col 1:20). In other respects, the dividing wall between Jews and Christians is higher than ever, because Jews tend to regard Christianity as a western, Gentile religion, with a history that includes anti-Semitism and violence. On the flip side, many Christians who are not Jewish by ethnicity have become Messianic Jews, simply because they like their Jewish traditions and style of worship. These are all challenges that the church of Christ must do its best to overcome, through the power of the Holy Spirit of Christ.¹

9: Anti-Semitism is an abhorrent evil that is to be shunned and opposed by Christians

This is not only because it runs counter to God’s command of love, but also because it is only through self-sacrificial love that the Jews can be won for Christ. Some people have justified anti-Semitism by pointing out that the Jews put Jesus on the

¹ A helpful book on this topic is Michael L. Brown, *What Do Jewish People Think About Jesus? And Other Questions Christians Ask about Jewish Beliefs, Practices & History* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 2007).

cross, saying, “His blood be on us and our children” (Matt 27:25, cf. Acts 5:28, 18:6). However, it is not the church’s task to avenge the blood of Jesus, but to confess that his blood is the price of our redemption and the means of our salvation from the wrath of God (Acts 20:28; Rom 5:9; Eph 1:7). In short, to hate Jews is to hate Jesus, whose Jewish body was put on the cross as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world (Col 1:20; 1 John 2:2). The persistence of anti-Semitism through the centuries should not be regarded as a divine judgment on the Jews, since God’s purposes for the Jewish people are good (Rom 11:1–12). It is better explained as an expression of the age-old hatred of the seed of the serpent towards the people who brought the Messiah into the world and thereby spelled the serpent’s doom (Rev 12:1, 13–17). The answer to Jewish unbelief is not anti-Semitism but the preaching of the gospel, as the apostle Peter also showed when he said to them, “Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus” (Acts 3:17–20).

10: It remains the calling of the church to pray and work for the conversion of the Jews

Let me highlight several words in this thesis. The first is the word *remains*. Scripture makes quite clear that God will preserve the Jewish people to the very end. In the Old Testament, we may think of Jeremiah 31:35–36: “Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—the LORD of hosts is his name: If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the LORD, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever.” In other words, the people of Israel will survive to the end of the world. In the New Testament, we may think of Romans 11:28–29: “As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.”

The second word to highlight is *pray*. The apostle Paul writes in Romans 10:1, “Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God

for them is that they may be saved.” So, the fact that God’s call is irrevocable does not take away the need for prayer, but it makes prayer all the more urgent. We have a prayer in the back of the *Book of Praise* that mentions mission among Jews: one brief line in a long prayer for all the needs of Christendom.² It seems to me that the churches should become much more purposeful and diligent in praying for the conversion and salvation of God’s old covenant people.

The third word to highlight is *work*. Just as the blessings of Israel were always conditional upon obedient faith, so too the ultimate salvation of the Jews can only come through faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 3:23; Rom 11:23). If that is so, then there is much work to be done. The apostle Paul was willing to go to great lengths to save the Jews. He said in Romans 9:2: “I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.” We may not have the same blood bond with the Jews that Paul had, but our debt to them is great, and they need the same undeserving grace for sinners that we do. We may wonder: if Paul couldn’t save them, what chance do we have? But salvation is not our work; mission is, and there we need to be faithful, humble, and sensitive.

11: The reconstitution of Israel as an independent nation is a great blessing for both Jews and Christians

A nation that lived in dispersion for many centuries receives its historic homeland back: that is a rare and beautiful event. For many Jews, it is the fulfillment, at least in part, of Old Testament prophecies of restoration, and it is evidence of God’s good purposes for them. No wonder that they guard their country jealously, surrounded as they are by hostile Muslim nations. The nationhood of Israel is also a blessing for the Christian world. For example, over the course of the last half-century, Israeli scholars have come to the forefront of biblical archaeology. This gives good hope for the preservation and discovery of the material culture of ancient Israel, since the Israelis have a vested interest in preserving their past. Their digs continue to uncover artifacts that increase our understanding of the Scriptures.

² *Book of Praise* (Winnipeg: Premier Printing, 2014), 636.

I hope to travel to Israel one day, since it is the stage on which the story of salvation took place. Traveling to various sites will give opportunity to understand and meditate on the mighty works that God did there. But a trip to Israel is not a pilgrimage: visiting ancient sites is informative and even exciting, but such sites are not any more spiritual than a church building in Canada. Some Christians get very excited about the mass resettlement of Jews in Israel, as though this were a sign of Christ's imminent return as King of the Jews. They point to Romans 11, where the apostle Paul indeed speaks with great hope about the future of his own people, saying that even though the Jews had hardened themselves, the salvation of the Gentiles would make the Jews jealous, that they are still loved by God on account of the patriarchs, and that they can still receive mercy and be grafted into their own olive tree again (Rom 11:11-24). But we should keep two things in mind: the first is that in this passage Paul is speaking to the Gentiles, warning them not to become arrogant, since they too could be broken off and the Jews brought in. The second is that the Jews can only be saved through faith in Jesus Christ: "If they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again" (Rom 11:23). It is the power and love of God that makes Paul so confident that the Israelites will not miss out on salvation. But their migration to Israel is not yet an act of faith in Jesus Christ.

12: From its very beginning, the land of Israel was a *promised* land, in the sense that its boundaries were spiritual, rather than ethnic or geopolitical

When Abraham came to the land of Canaan, it was a loose and diverse collection of local Canaanite peoples, but God pronounced the boundaries of the land that Abraham's descendants would receive (Gen 15:18-19; Num 34:1-12). It was a "country in promise-form," visible only to the eyes of faith (Gen 13:14-17; Deut 34:1-4). And so, it remained. The people could enter, conquer, and keep the land only through obedient faith in God. The tribal and family allotments could only become theirs by displacing the Canaanite peoples, and they were easily lost again in times of apostasy. Thus, the *actual* boundaries fluctuated, expanding to their full, promised extent in times of faithfulness, military victory, and blessing (1 Kgs 4:24-25), but shrinking again in times of unfaithfulness, military invasion, and judgment (2 Kgs 15:27-29). Thus, already in the Old Testament, the coming of the kingdom was a matter for constant prayer (2 Sam 7:24; Ps 72; 145). Because of disobedience and unfaithfulness, the kingdom

of Israel was first divided and then lost all together when the last Davidic king went into captivity (Lam 4:20). A remnant was allowed to return, but the kingship was not restored. The Jews took comfort from the fact that God was still their king and that a Messiah from the line of David would one day come (Ps 93-99; Mic 5:2). Yet when Christ came, he was not the military conqueror that many had hoped for. He declared that his kingdom was not of this world, and he gave the keys of the kingdom to the church (Matt 16:19; 18:17-18; John 18:36). Thus, the kingdom of God is no longer a matter of geographical borders.

While it is true that the land of Israel has been restored to the Jewish people, the extent of Israel's boundaries is no longer a matter of faith but of international politics and diplomacy. Israel today does not have a God-given mandate to expand its borders to the extent promised to Abraham, though it may indeed protect its borders and defend its national security. The kingdom of God can still grow in Israel today, through the preaching of the gospel of Christ, but mixing politics with religion will only do damage to the mission of the church, as it has so often in the past. Preparing for the return of Christ is not a matter of gaining control over Jerusalem but of expecting the New Jerusalem, which will come out of heaven from God (Rev 21:2).

In conclusion

I would like to leave one more thought for your consideration (a hypothesis this time, instead of a thesis): if the land of Israel was the stage on which the saving acts of God took place, the place where Jesus walked, where he died and rose again, and the place from which he ascended, then we may anticipate that Christ, who will return in the same manner in which his disciples saw him go (Acts 1:11), will also return to the same *place* and *there* will welcome us into the new Jerusalem, where we may meet with God. The 144,000 sealed from the twelve tribes of Israel will be there (Rev 7:1-8), and so will the great multitude that no one can count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language (Rev 7:9). It is that vision of the future that should motivate us to share the gospel with the Jews, because it is their gospel too. 📖



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In the Fruit of the Spirit is LOVE

TYLER VANDERGAAG

Isn't it true that, deep within us, what we all long for and desire most is to love and be loved, to know that we're cherished and special, and that someone would do anything out of love for us? Well, as we'll see, love is the first ingredient of the Spirit's fruit and that's exactly what the Lord Jesus has—a deep, unwavering love for us. In turn, his love is the food and fuel the Spirit uses to motivate us to love each other.

At the cross, we can say of Jesus, “See how he loved us!”

Christ’s love

We shouldn’t be surprised that love takes precedence in the fruit of the Spirit. Before it is included in the fruit of the Spirit, love appears three times in Galatians 5—in verses 6, 13, and 14. We’re also not surprised, then, that love takes precedence in the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ. He lived by, was led by, and kept in step with the Spirit and so love—this first ingredient of the fruit of the Spirit—filled his heart. We see his love in John 11. There we find Jesus deeply moved in spirit and weeping at the loss of his dear friend Lazarus (John 11:35). Those who saw this saw his love: “See how he loved him,” they said (v. 36). But his love goes beyond tears. His love moved him to reach down into the grave and pull Lazarus out of death. With words of love and life, he said: “Lazarus, come out!” (v. 43).

Maybe you wish that Jesus’s love would move him to reach down and pull your loved one up from the grave. But that’s exactly the point. What Jesus did for Lazarus was not just a one-off incident. Death is what moves his spirit and troubles his soul, causing him to weep. Death is the ugliest and most horrid thing in his eyes. And what Jesus did for Lazarus that day is what Jesus came to do for all who are his own. He came to pull us out of death and the grave. The only way that he could do that was to enter the grave himself. He had to take Lazarus’s place. He had to go through death. He had to pay the wages of sin, which is death (Rom 6:23). That’s what he came to do. In John 15:13 Jesus says, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”

On the cross, he laid down his life for his friend, Lazarus, and for all his friends who are united to him by faith. His undying love for you led him to endure the cross, to breathe his last, to enter Sheol, the grave, and death itself! His death demonstrates, proves beyond any doubt, the depths of his love. Despite the betrayal and mockery that flowed from our sins, he didn’t walk

away from the cross, but went to it with determined resolution, with love in his heart for you! At the cross, we can say of Jesus, “See how he loved us!”

Sometimes we think that Christ’s love is a bit like ours. Our love has limits. Our love runs dry. If someone betrays you enough times, breaks your trust, mocks and forsakes you, maybe you’d have the grace to put up with them, but you will find it nearly impossible to love them deeply from the heart. Not so with the Lord Jesus. He doesn’t run out of love. Love is not something Jesus has. Love is who he is!

Limitless love

So, if you belong to Christ, if your life is truly hidden with God in Christ, the Lord Jesus will love you to the bitter end. Nothing can separate us from his love (Rom 8:35). If he loved you yesterday, he’ll love you today. He’ll love you forever. That doesn’t mean we don’t have to fight against sin, repent of our sin, or think little of it. His love will lead us to hate sin more and more because it grieves him, as it grieves his Spirit (Eph 4:30). But our ongoing struggle with sin doesn’t diminish his love in any way. Jesus loved you to death—and still does! “Young men and maidens, old men and children . . . praise the name of the LORD” (Ps 148:12-13). We all long to have someone who will love us to death, to have a friend who will not recoil in horror when confronted with our sins and ugliness. Well, that’s what we have in the Lord Jesus. He’s the true friend of Proverbs 17:17 who “loves at all times.”

Realizing the depths of his love, in faith we must reject and fight against the sinful and devilish notion that Christ’s “tender heart for [us] grows a little colder, a little stiffer. He is not flustered by your sinfulness. . . . He loved us in our mess then. He’ll love us in our mess now” (Dane Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly*, 192-3). He loved you while you were still his enemy (Rom 5:10).

Do you really think that now, now that he bled and died for you, that he will love you less? Do you really think that his love for you has run cold, or dry?

This is what Paul prays we will grasp in Ephesians 3:17-18, “And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.” What a beautiful prayer! This is a love so amazing, so divine! It’s also a love that “surpasses knowledge” (Eph 3:19). That’s incredible! Christ’s love is infinitely more than you and I will ever know. Your grasp of his love is but a drop in the limitless ocean of his divine love. His love is higher, deeper, longer, and wider than we’ll ever know, even in eternity!

Our love

When you and I grasp that love of Christ for us—even if it’s just a drop in the limitless ocean of his love—the Spirit produces that first ingredient of his fruit in our hearts and moves us to love each other, especially in the church. Love for others is evidence that we’re living in Christ’s love. It’s impossible to cherish Christ’s undying love and then give your Christian brother or sister the cold shoulder. You can’t embrace the love of Christ and cling to your bitterness. You can’t live in Christ’s love and be filled with hatred or be unmoved by the plight of the poor, the abused, and mistreated. There’s no room for cold hearts when Christ has so warmed ours with his love! “When Christians do not love one another it’s not just tragic, it’s toxic. It is poisonous and deadly” (Christopher Wright, *Cultivating the Fruit*, 34).

Now the love that we’re to have is to mimic and imitate Christ’s. John 15:12, “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.” What a command. What a calling! Our love can’t be superficial. It can’t be cold or calculated. Our love for each other is to be as great, as self-sacrificial, as costly as the love of Christ. We must love like him.

The apostle Paul saw this love in the church of Thessalonica. He says in 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10, “Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been

taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia.” That’s a beautiful thing to see in a congregation. Yet that didn’t stop Paul from urging them to love more: “Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more” (v. 10). There’s always more room for love in our hearts for each other. There are always people whom we need to love more. When a fellow believer is persisting in sin, we don’t always love them enough to challenge, encourage, and pray for them. There are also people that we find hard to love for whatever reason—maybe their personality rubs you the wrong way, maybe they don’t think exactly like you, they’ve made decisions you find hard to accept, or they’ve done things to you that you find hard to get past. God has placed those people in your life so that you will grow in love more and more by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Christ’s love in us

The truth is we all have lots of growing to do in this area of love, yet we don’t despair. Christ doesn’t expect us to produce this fruit all by ourselves. John 15:4 is clear, “No branch can bear fruit by itself.” The only way for us to produce this fruit is to abide in Christ and rest in him. What a sigh of relief! If it was up to us, we’d be lost, full of hate, not love. So, thank God that it’s the Spirit’s fruit, not our fruit! When you recognize the lack of love in your own heart, don’t reach into yourself. Go to the one whose love for you is like an ocean without shores. When you see that your love is running dry or is even empty, look to Jesus Christ. See his love. Rely also on his Spirit to cultivate this main ingredient of the fruit of the Spirit in your heart so that you learn to love those you find hard to love. It’s the only way to grow in true Spirit-filled love. 🍷



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A Golden Anniversary

Book of Praise: 1972–2022

GEORGE VAN POPTA

This year marks the Golden Anniversary of the *Book of Praise: Anglo-Genevan Psalter*, our church song and service book. The first complete version appeared fifty years ago. Its entrance into the life and worship of our congregations, schools, and families was an event of considerable significance and an important moment in the history of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Also, it would not be wrong to say that it was a landmark in the history of psalmody. For the first time all 150 Psalms were published in English metrical versions that could be sung to the authentic Genevan melodies.

The *Book of Praise* is evidence of the desire of the Canadian Reformed Churches to preserve their rich Calvinist heritage in doctrine and worship. John Calvin is well known for having published *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, but it was the same man who, in 1562, published the *Genevan Psalter*, the 150 Psalms in the French language set to what came to be known as the Genevan tunes.

Psalms and hymns

In 1954, only four years after the institution of the first Canadian Reformed Church (Lethbridge, Alberta), the first general synod appointed a committee to investigate the possibility of publishing an English Genevan psalter. In 1956, this committee published a report entitled, "On the way towards an English Reformed Psalter" (translated from "*Op weg naar een Engelse Reformatorische Psalmbundel*"). The next general synod (1958) appointed a new committee with the mandate to produce an

English psalter according to the guidelines suggested in this report. In 1961, a provisional edition of the *Book of Praise* was published, which consisted of eighty-two psalms and fourteen hymns. This was followed in 1967 by a *Supplement* of thirty-four more psalms and nineteen additional hymns.

The synod of 1958 also urged that, in addition to the Psalms, "other hymns of the Scriptures" be included in the proposed song book. Canticles and hymns have always been part of the *Book of Praise*. Scripture enjoins us to sing psalms, but we may also sing hymns. One could say that the writing of hymns is an essential part of the life of the church. The covenant relationship God has with us requires us to respond in faith, word, and deed to the great deeds God has done in the cosmos and for our salvation. In Acts 2:11, at Pentecost, the Spirit-empowered followers of Christ were shown to be a royal priesthood who proclaimed the *Magnalia Dei*, the "mighty works of God." It is proper for our songbook to include songs praising God for his mighty works, especially those done in and through Jesus Christ, in his birth, passion, resurrection, and glory. It is a vital part of a worthy response offered up to our covenant Lord and God for his power, mercy, and grace.

We will never be finished with the creation of new scriptural hymns. "Scriptural hymns" can either be versifications of Scriptures other than psalms, or songs faithful to biblical teaching. We sing "Come Lord Jesus, Maranatha," and we will continue to sing and pray for the coming of our Lord until the end.



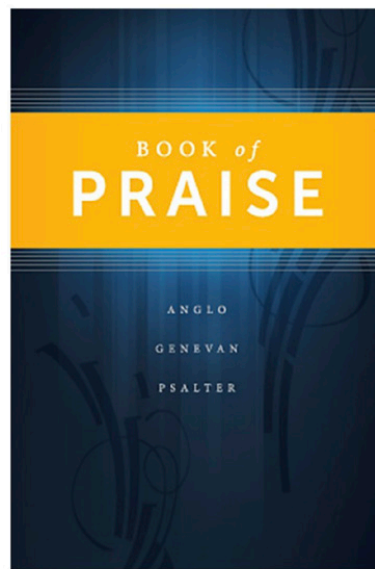
Pictured in back row, left to right 1956: Report to Synod 1958 promoting a complete Reformed Psalter 1969: First (1961) edition of Book of Praise, with 1967 Provisional Supplement *Pictured in front row, left to right* **1972: First complete Book of Praise, with 150 psalms, 62 hymns** 1984: Definitive edition, with revision of Psalter, 65 hymns, updated forms and prayers, Church Order 2008: Revised edition, with prose section updated to NIV text 2010: Authorized Provisional Version, with revision of Psalter, 85 hymns

Hymns & paraphrases

Many of the psalms and some of the hymns in the 1972 version of the *Book of Praise* were new creations. As well, many classic hymns which are in the public domain were borrowed. One new arrangement was commissioned for the *Book of Praise*. Mr. Joop Schouten (1907-1983) of the Netherlands was asked to compose a tune to which the text of the Apostles' Creed could be set. He created the much-loved *Credo* (our Hymn 1). It first appeared in the 1967 *Supplement*.

Paging through the 1972 book is a trip down memory lane, full of nostalgia, as it is the songbook from which I sang from my mid-teens to my mid-twenties. The text is familiar, though the layout often left much to be desired. It may not be quite fair to compare it to the present 2014 version, with its crisp and beautiful typesetting, but it is difficult not to do so. In some songs the text is so densely packed on the page that one wonders how we sang from it. Some hymns have only the melody line, others are in four-part harmony, and some have two or even three lines of text sandwiched between the staves.

The sixty-two hymns of the "Hymns and Paraphrases" section offered a good selection of songs from ancient days to the 1960s;



Book of Praise
2014 standard edition

however, it is difficult to discern an order to the collection. This was vastly improved in 1984, when the hymns were arranged according to the order of the Apostles' Creed, and this has been continued in the current 2014 version. The typesetting was made to be consistent throughout in the 1984 and 2014 editions.

Confessions & forms

In addition to the song section, the 1972 book had two other divisions: our doctrinal standards and the liturgical forms and prayers.

The confessional documents of the Dutch Reformed Churches were first translated into English by sixteenth and seventeenth century English and Scottish refugees fleeing persecution and finding safe harbour in the Netherlands. These translations were used in only slightly revised form by the Reformed Church of America (RCA, founded in 1754) and by the Christian Reformed Church (CRC, 1857). With gratitude, we borrowed these documents in 1961 and 1972. In 1984 they appeared in fresh translation and sharp layout.

The liturgical forms and prayers make up the third main division. These also find their roots in the Dutch Reformed Church of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Here as well SCBP was thankful to borrow from the RCA and the CRC in producing the 1972 version of the *Book of Praise*. These too have since been modernized to what is now familiar.

Audacity

One marvels at the courage of our fathers in 1954 and 1972. In 1954, the Canadian Reformed Churches consisted of fifteen churches sparsely spread across Canada with a total membership of 3,386 members. In 1972, there were twenty-seven congregations with a total membership of 7,656 people.¹ To embark upon the venture of publishing a song and worship book as fine as the *Book of Praise* took courage, perhaps even audacity. At one's Golden Anniversary, a man may remember asking his prospective father-in-law for the hand of his daughter in marriage. Now he thinks, "How did I actually dare?"

In a discourse on marriage the Rev. Thomas De Witt Talmage (1872-1904) considered the sublimity of the impudence manifest in a young man asking a father to give his daughter to him in marriage. The young man is essentially telling the girl's parents that he can do a better job of taking care of their daughter than they can. Life will be better with him than with them. Such is the boldness of a young man who proposes marriage.²

Our fathers had that kind of nerve in the early days, fifty-plus years ago. English may have been their second language, but they confidently forged ahead to produce an English Calvinistic

psalter. They were not content to use for very long the Dutch songbooks they had brought along from the Netherlands. They did not want to established a sectarian Dutch church but a *Canadian* Reformed Church; hence, an English songbook was needed. The resulting book would have a catholic quality to it, as the Genevan Psalter appears in a variety of languages. On every Lord's Day it is used by believers on all continents, now also in English by English-singing churches. They were young men, but they were bold and not afraid of doing hard things.

A great treasure

Most of the men who had the original vision are now with the Lord, singing songs of praise to God together with the ever-growing heavenly choir. We are their heirs. We have been given a great treasure. The *Book of Praise* of 1972 was improved in 1984. The 1984 version was enhanced in 2014. We are eager to see what the next version will look like. The present Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* has done yeoman's work since the last synod, and we will have to wait and see what direction General Synod Guelph meeting this year will give.³ It has been difficult days during the COVID-19 years—for us all, and also for our committees.

Sometimes we can be frustrated by the changes and additions made over the years. We wonder why "they" had to change that old much-loved song, or why "they" haven't added this or that favourite. The *Book of Praise* is far from perfect. Every edition—1961, 1972, 1984, 2014—has had flaws. The next edition will be imperfect. But the *Book of Praise* has been, is, and will be an excellent vehicle for us to use in the churches, schools, and homes to sing to God our songs of praise.

Let us ever remember the admonition of Hebrews 13:15, "Through Jesus then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name." 🗣️



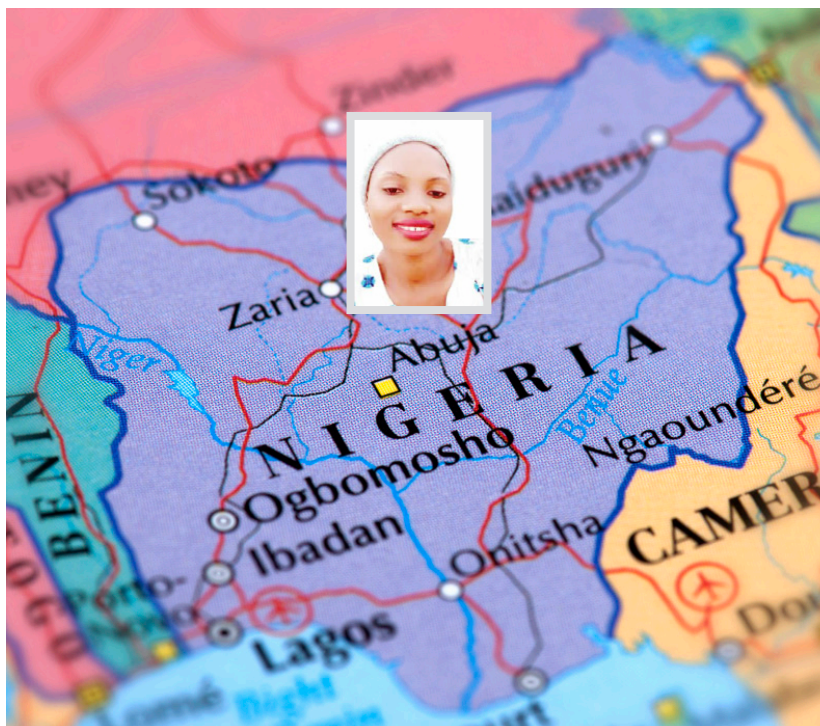
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¹ I thank Rev. John van Popta for these statistics.

² Tim Challies reflects on this in "The Endearing Conceit of Young Men," www.challies.com, May 2, 2021.

³ At the time of writing this, General Synod Guelph had yet to convene.

PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS



Nigeria

MITCHELL BOSVELD

Over the past few months there have been many stories coming out of Nigeria about the intense persecution of Christians. In May, Deborah Yakubu, a twenty-five-year-old college student, was murdered—why? She posted this simple message on her class WhatsApp group: “Jesus Christ is the greatest, He helped me pass my exams.”

For this expression of her love and faithfulness to Jesus, her Saviour, she was beaten, stoned to death, and her body was burned by extremist Muslim students. This brutal attack and murder was filmed and shared on social media.

Murder capital

Nigeria is considered to be the “Christian murder capital of the world,” and to follow Christ in Nigeria is to risk your life. Last year, almost 6,000 Christians were killed for following Jesus—an average of one Christian murdered every two hours!

The two students deemed responsible for this savage attack on Yakubu were arrested and charged, and the leader of Nigeria’s Muslim community, Sultan of Sokoto, also condemned the murder. However, in the wake of this condemnation of the attack, Muslim militants began to protest, start fires, loot

businesses, and damage church buildings. They also started demonstrations outside of the Sultan of Sokoto's palace because of his stance on the issue.

Take a minute to consider this sort of persecution. A young Christian student is stoned and burned for her faith, some justice is sought, however the perpetrators then violently protest that. And it seems as if this event has heightened tensions throughout Nigeria.

A few days later, an Islamic group released a video of the execution of twenty Christian Nigerian men. It was circulated as a warning to Christians throughout the world.

Following that, on May 25, a Nigerian priest, along with his assistant and two Christian boys, were kidnapped from a church in northwest Nigeria and have not been seen since. It is no coincidence that this took place in the same region that saw a great deal of vandalism following the arrest of the two students responsible for Yakubu's death. This kidnapping is more than likely an extension of the protests, demonstrating the fury of the Muslims on Christian individuals.

In early June, on Pentecost Sunday, there was a deadly church attack in Owo, in the southwest of Nigeria. Generally, the south of Nigeria experiences less persecution and the north is where the majority of Christian oppression occurs. Yet, during the Pentecost service, the worship of God was met with gunfire. At least fifty Christians were martyred during this violent gun attack, and many more were injured.

Rage & grace

In all of these tragic, terrible events, the people of God are being targeted, oppressed, and persecuted. Humanly speaking things are not looking up either, with no relief on the horizon.

The government continues to remain silent in response to the increased persecution, even as it spreads further south, on the wave of growing radical Islamic influence.

As we reflect on events like these, knowing there are many, many more, our hearts cry out and the burden these brothers and sisters carry weighs on us too. Please pray for these suffering Christians, for peace and comfort for them all. Pray for the families of those who have been martyred for their faith in Jesus, asking God to surround these families with the comfort of resurrection hope. Let us also glorify God with them that he gives comfort to the persecuted, that nothing will separate them from the love of Jesus Christ and that theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Pray also for the kidnapped Christians, that they may stay strong and faithful despite their hardships. More broadly, please also pray for the persecuted church world-wide in all her struggles and fears. At times this may only feel like a small effort for such a huge force of pain, however we may all rest in the comfort that he hears our prayers, knows suffering, and inclines his ear to those who call to him. 🙏

Note: Most of the information in this article comes from the Voice of the Martyrs Canada and Open Doors USA websites. Both organizations have an email list which you can join if you would like to receive updates on the persecuted church worldwide.



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Douwe Johannes VanderWerp

(1811-1876) PART 4

KEITH SIKKEMA

A new school inspector

In 1833, the schools in the province are in need of a new inspector. He must ask questions of the principals to make sure the schools are doing a good job: Does the school follow government rules? Do the children learn how to read and write? Are the children taught to follow Jesus's example of what it means to be a *good and respected* Christian? Do children learn that *scary things* happen when you are not good and respected? Is the school careful not to *offend* people who do not know Jesus? After all, teachers may tell stories *about* the Bible, but not tell students to hope in Jesus.

The government wants a caring, nice, respected, and smart inspector who works hard. Who should they choose for this important job? Mr. VanderWerp or Mr. Pietersen? No. They aren't ministers. *Dominay* DeCock? No, he is a troublemaker! Professor Hofstede DeGroot? He is smart and respected, and just wrote a fine booklet that children should not be taught "unsound religion," like that one needs God's free grace for salvation. He doesn't want to offend anyone and is very tolerant. He will make sure his schools follow the rules! Yes, he is the one!

Mr. Pietersen tells Mr. VanderWerp about it. They are shocked! How can a professor who twists God's Word be the school inspector and tell them how to be good Christians? With all of talk of tolerance, he has ungodly ideas! A few days later, Mr. VanderWerp dons his cap and his *klompen* and goes for another visit to his good friend in Ulrum. What can they do? They will write a booklet to explain why the professor's ideas

are ungodly. Mr. VanderWerp writes it and *Dominay* DeCock prepares an introduction. They publish it.

Prof. Hofstede DeGroot gets a copy. He reads it, and the more he reads, the more upset he gets. What does a young third-class assistant teacher from that hick-town of Houwerzijl know beyond reading, writing, math, fractions, and some grammar? Who is this country-bumpkin to criticize him? He's already dealt with *Dominay* DeCock for preaching nonsense. Now he'll have to deal with Mr. VanderWerp too as he looks for a way to punish him. He doesn't need to be kind and tolerant to people who disagree with him!

"Fire him!"

He tells Mr. Pietersen: "Fire Mr. VanderWerp!" But Mr. Pietersen doesn't like that. He is a good and God-fearing teacher. The children and the parents love him, and besides, where would he find another one? "Well, then," Prof. Hofstede DeGroot threatens, "if you don't fire him, I'll fire you also!"

And so, in May 1834, the same month that *Dominay* DeCock gets deposed, Mr. VanderWerp gets fired. Why? He breaks rules. He teaches lies to the children. He is dangerous! He may not teach anywhere in the province. He must look after himself.

The children are sad: They will miss their good teacher! The parents are unhappy: They loved this teacher! Mr. Pietersen is disappointed: Where does he find another good teacher?

Mr. VanderWerp decides to write a letter to King William I about how unjust it is that he got fired: For three years no one

Reformed Church in Smilde,
built in 1857.



ever told him that there were problems with his teaching, and now he just gets fired! But the King doesn't respond. What else can he do? *Dominay* DeCock invites him to come and live in his house, help him in his work of writing, lead Conventicles¹, and read sermons. Here Mr. VanderWerp finds comfort with his friend and his brothers and sisters. King William I may not respond, but King Jesus will! He will take care of him. The Lord Jesus Christ is stronger than the professor or the king! *Dominay* DeCock may be deposed, and Mr. VanderWerp may be fired, but the Lord will not leave them.

Ulrum secedes

On October 13, 1834, the congregation at Ulrum vows to return to the Word of God and to recognize the Lord Jesus Christ as Head of the true church. The Reformed Church has become false by twisting the truth about salvation and proudly making itself the head. It is not faithfully administering the sacraments. It oppresses people who want to serve the LORD. Ulrum separates itself, or *secedes* from the Reformed Church. They will have *Dominay* DeCock as their minister and good preaching again. They will go by the old church rules again. They will have the confessions again. They will sing psalms again, and only some hymns. They will use the sacraments as the LORD intended. It will be good again!

But their enemies try hard to make it bad. They get persecuted with taunts and fines, jail terms and destruction of property. Rough and godless soldiers commandeer their houses. They

are not allowed to call themselves Reformed. Yet, the LORD gives them courage and companions. Other Conventicles do the same and start small congregations. The Holy Spirit makes people repent and believe and do bold things for the LORD, despite persecution. God sets them free from the manmade lies!

Smilde's new school

An eleven-hour walk to the south of Ulrum, in the village of Smilde, parents must pay a nickel a week for each child to go to public school. This school is just as ungodly as other schools. Teachers may not teach the truth.

Mr. Dijkstra, who sometimes goes to Ulrum, leads a meeting of the parents. He has asked them to come to talk about school. They come. He looks around. They are not rich, and their clothes are simple. They are farmers and labourers and craftsmen. Their houses are small. Some hold a hodgepodge of jobs and the nickel-a-week for the teacher is almost too much to pay. Just like in Ulrum, several don't even know how to read or even write their own name. But they love the LORD, and they are frequently seen in Conventicles.

Mr. Dijkstra reads from Scripture, Psalm 78:4, "We will tell the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done." Then he prays for the LORD's wisdom for this meeting, and has a short speech.

"At baptism, we promised that we would teach our children in the true doctrine of salvation," he says, "but if the minister in church isn't doing it, and the teachers in school aren't doing it either, that's not right before the LORD! We read from Psalm 78, where the Israelites vow to tell their children about the LORD—and we are not doing it! Perhaps at home we do, but not in church and not in the school! But we cannot take our children out of school: How will they learn writing, math and reading? Yet, they must know the LORD from the Bible and serve him. . . . What if they aren't even able to read the Bible?!"

Mr. Dijkstra stops. He has an idea, but he first wants the parents to think about what he just said. Do they have a solution? They look at each other. Some frown and rub their chins. Some puff their pipe. This a serious question. Should they take their children out of school, like during planting and harvest time? That would not be allowed. Should they homeschool them? Who would be able to do that? What else? No one has an idea, but then Mr. Dijkstra lets them know what he heard from *Dominay* DeCock. Mr. VanderWerp is a teacher who got

¹ A "Conventicle" was an unofficial gathering of Reformed believers (usually in private homes) for worship, Bible study, and fellowship. They sprang up in these times when the official preaching in many churches was unfaithful to Scripture and did not satisfy the souls of God's people [Editor].

fired because he did what was good in God's eyes. He broke the bad rules. He needs work.

Now, suddenly, people want to talk. They have ideas.

"Does he have a good reputation?" asks one. "Yes, and he is good friends with *Dominay DeCock*," says Mr. Dijkstra. "His handwriting is beautiful. The children and parents love him. He loves them. He teaches on biblical grounds, and sometimes leads in Conventicles. He sings well, he knows all the Genevan tunes, he tells Bible stories, and he doesn't care for "evangelical" hymns.

People like that. They nod in approval. Only godly people lead Conventicles.

"We should hire him!" says one. "Perhaps," says Mr. Dijkstra, "but we will need a house for him to live in."

"Is he married?" asks someone else. "Not as far as I know," says Mr. Dijkstra.

"Good," says farmer Hendrik Sickens as he puffs his pipe. "Then we don't need to buy a house—that's one less expense. Also, my wife and I were talking about this, and we want to have a boarder. He can board with us!"

People like that. A nickel a week is a lot, and this saves money.

"Now, we don't have a building," someone suggests. Mr. Snippe offers a solution: "The barn attached to the back of my house has space. We can sweep the floor and make it into a school room." Ha! That's another problem solved!

"Does anyone have schoolbooks?" Someone asks. "Good question!" says Mr. Dijkstra, as he looks around the table. Yes, some people have schoolbooks—a math book, some readers. . . .

"Do we have furniture?" the carpenter asks. Well, there are some tables people can bring. The carpenter answers his own question: "I'll make the benches for the children to sit on, and a lectern for the teacher!"

Smilde's new teacher

This is wonderful! This is the communion of saints at work! Together, they thank the LORD for providing all they need. They invite Mr. VanderWerp, they sweep the floor, the carpenter works hard. By Monday, November 10, 1834, they are ready to start school in Mr. Snippe's barn. The tiny windows only let in some light, but there are two rows of tables and four new benches each to work at. There is a teacher's lectern. The floor is swept. There is a pile of peat by the stove to keep the barn warm. There also are pens for the pigs and the calves. There is a rooster with some chickens near the coop. There are hay and straw in the loft. There are cobwebs in the rafters.

Twenty children come that morning. "Come on in children," Mr. VanderWerp says between puffs on his pipe. They step in and leave their *klompen* at the door. They each bring a nickel for the teacher. Some bring schoolbooks. *Oink!* the pigs say in their pen off to the side. *Mooo!* say the calves in their stalls. *Cock-a-doodle-doo!* says the rooster at the coop, not knowing what to think of it.


The children sit down. For some the benches are too big, for some, they are too small. But Mr. VanderWerp knows how to teach: Math and reading, writing and some grammar, and Bible stories! This time, he leaves his Bible on his lectern. This time, they can freely sing the Psalms! This time, they can openly talk about the Lord Jesus! This is their own school, and the government has nothing to say about it!

That night, the children tell their parents. The parents tell their neighbours that the LORD has given them a good teacher. What joy in Smilde among people who want to serve the LORD and train their children in the fear of his Name! This is true to what they promised at their baptism!

Smilde secedes

On Tuesday, Mr. VanderWerp thoughtfully puffs his pipe when the children come to school. They leave their *klompen* inside the door. He counts *forty* children today. Two or three to a seat works, but five? He pulls some straw from the loft so some can work on it, on the floor, while others use the benches. Later, they switch places.

Who cares that there are too few benches to work at, or that it is a little dark in the barn, or that there are animals watching? Who cares, as long as the teacher teaches about the LORD and his creation, as long as he can tell them that we can only be saved because God so loved the world that he gave his only Son to die for all who believe in him, as long as he can sing with them the Psalms from the Psalm book? There is joy in Smilde because the LORD blesses them.

On Wednesday, with help from *Dominay DeCock*, the parents prepare themselves to secede from the Reformed Church, like Ulrum, and to return to the truth. *They rejoice*. That same day, the minister and the mayor of Smilde hear about what is happening in Mr. Snippe's barn. *They are not pleased*. . . . 



Keith Sikkema

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CLARION KIDS

AMANDA DEBOER

LORD'S DAY 14

The Lord Jesus has always been God. He became a man when he was born of the virgin Mary. A virgin is an unmarried lady who has never been with a man like a wife is with a husband. You see, when the angel Gabriel told Mary she was going to have a baby, she was not married to Joseph yet! But that is not too hard for God. It says in the Bible that the Holy Spirit made a baby grow inside Mary. That was Jesus. And when Jesus was born, he was just like any other baby. He needed Mary to feed him and keep him warm. We can be comforted that Jesus was born of the virgin Mary. That means that he paid for *all* our sins, starting from when we were small. Yes, even a tiny baby in our mother's womb.

The Lord Jesus is God and man at the same time. This means he is just like us except...

8 5 4 15 5 19 14 15 20 19 9 14

- 1=A 2=B 3=C 4=D 5=E 6=F
- 7=G 8=H 9=I 10=J 11=K 12=L
- 13=M 14=N 15=O 16=P 17=Q 18=R
- 19=S 20=T 21=U 22=V 23=W 24=X
- 25=Y 26=Z

Crossword Puzzle

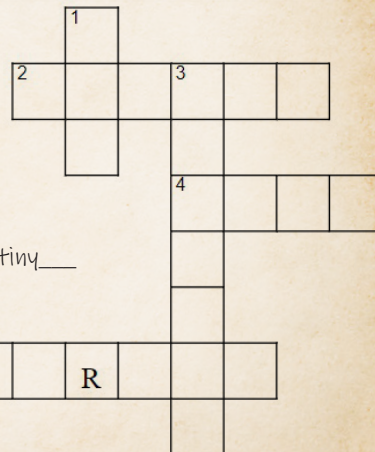
Across:

- 2. He was born of the ____ Mary
- 4. My sins are forgiven, even from when I was a tiny ____
- 5. We can be ____ that Jesus was a baby

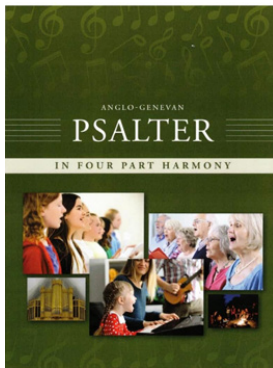
5 [] [] [] [] [] R [] []

Down:

- 1. Something Jesus never did
- 3. The angel who talked to Mary



BOOK REVIEW



Anglo-Genevan Psalter in Four-Part Harmony

Compiled and arranged by Carl Oosterhoff. Coil bound, 2022.

Price: \$35. To order copies, contact monicaosterhoff@gmail.com.

It took fifty years but finally it is here: the Anglo-Genevan Psalter in four-part harmony. Allow me to explain: In 1972 the first complete *Book of Praise* was published. It contained all 150 Psalms on Genevan tunes, and a collection of hymns (some of which used Genevan tunes as well). Over the years the desire was often expressed that the *Book of Praise* should also be available in four-part harmony for the benefit of choirs and church accompanists. However, synods were always hesitant to mandate the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* to embark on such a project as it seemed to be too daunting.

Enter Carl Oosterhoff, organist of the Spring Creek CanRC in Ontario. When some sisters in the congregation asked him if they could sing the Genevan psalms in four-part harmony, he started to compile a few psalm settings and write some arrangements himself. Beginning with only ten or twenty psalms, the project grew to include the entire Psalter. Now, exactly fifty years after the *Book of Praise* was completed, we have a collection that contains all the lyrics and all the melodies in four-part harmony. Wonderful!

Settings

Oosterhoff used an eclectic approach in choosing settings for his collection, all of which are in the public domain. Slightly less than half of the arrangements are from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Claude Goudimel, Johann Crüger, and others); the rest are from the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries (including settings by Oosterhoff himself). In addition to the 150 Psalms, thirteen hymns were included that are also set to Genevan tunes (Song of Mary, Song of Simeon, etc.)

As I played through the book on my piano at home, I enjoyed the variety of composers that was used. I was very happy to find some settings by Claude Le Jeune, one of my favorite composers! The variety of arrangements keeps things interesting. At the same time, the character of the harmonizations does not vary greatly. Although they originate from five different centuries, the


arrangements still sound like they are coming out of the same ballpark. For example, Oosterhoff's own arrangements sound like they could have been written in the nineteenth or twentieth century. Overall, the character of the arrangements goes together very well with the character of the Genevan melodies.

Some interesting aspects of this collection are that for psalms that have many stanzas, some of the verses have been transposed to a higher key. Also, in some cases the melody is in the tenor just to add a different touch (e.g. Psalm 119:43-48). Very nice for choir singing.

Useful resource

Who would benefit from using this book? Obviously, the main beneficiaries are going to be choirs (and families) who would like to sing Psalms in four-part harmony. You have the music and the lyrics all on the same page which makes it easy to sing. If you were wondering about Psalm 119, indeed, it takes up eleven pages in the book (each page containing six stanzas).

This book will be a good resource for church musicians as well, especially organists and pianists. Guitarists will find it more challenging to play through the arrangements because every note has its own harmonization, and you need good technical skill to pull it off.

Several collections of harmonizations of the Genevan psalms are available these days (many of them originating from the Netherlands). Oosterhoff's collection is a valuable addition because it reaches back to classic composers such as Goudimel and Le Jeune—with the unique benefit that you have the English lyrics in front of you as well. 



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PRESS RELEASE

Classis Central Ontario

held at Redemption Canadian Reformed Church, Ontario
Friday June 10, 2022

Opening

On behalf of the convening church, Rev. Jake Torenvliet welcomed the delegates, and called the meeting to order. Rev. Jake Torenvliet led opening devotions. The report on the examination of credentials was received from Rehoboth. The credentials were examined and found to be in good order. All primary delegates were noted to be present, and Rev. Jake Torenvliet declared Classis constituted.

The officers suggested by the previous classis came forward to take their respective places: Rev. Jake Torenvliet as chair, Rev. Clarence Vandervelde as clerk, and elder Niels Heerema as vice-chair. The agenda was adopted with some minor changes. The following matters of memorabilia were noted: The retired ministers in the classis and their spouses. The Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary and the many summer internships. Bethel hired Kwanyoung Park as a part time mission worker.

Rev. Clarence Vandervelde read the Classis Subscription form and Rev. Paul Aasman and Rev. Ian Wildeboer signed the subscription form.

Examination & visitations

Anson VanDelden presented himself for his candidacy exam. All the documents were found to be in good order. Rev. Ian Wildeboer prayed for Anson van Delden before he delivered his sermon. Anson delivered his sermon proposal on 1 Timothy 3:14-16. In closed session, the sermon proposal was deemed sufficient to proceed with the remainder of the examination. In open session, Anson van Delden was informed of this decision. After that, he was examined in Old Testament exegesis, New Testament, doctrine, personal life, and public ministry. In closed session, Classis discussed the examination and deemed it sufficient. In open session, Br. Anson van Delden was informed of the decision that he sustained the exam, and that Classis Central Ontario declared him eligible for a call in the Canadian Reformed Churches.

The reports of the church visitations that have taken place in the congregations of Bethel, Redemption, and Blessings churches were discussed. Rev. Paul Aasman offered a prayer of thanksgiving for harmony within these congregations.

Matters of advice

The delegates from the churches were asked whether the ministry of the office bearers is being continued, whether the

decisions of the major assemblies were being honoured, whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the help of Classis. All churches answered yes, yes, and no, respectively, with the exception that two churches sought advice from Classis.

In closed session, the church of Bethel requested and received advice in a matter of discipline. Blessings Christian Church addressed Classis to seek advice on its proposal to constitute a Consistory at Mercy Christian Church (per CO Art 40). The documents were found to be in good order. Classis is thankful for this wonderful development, endorsed the request, and provided advice to the Blessings delegates. Classis appointed Fellowship to represent Classis Central Ontario at the institution service, which is scheduled to take place on September 11, 2022.

Classis adopted sections of Bethel's overture concerning the Regulations of CCO pertaining to candidacy and ordination examinations. The CCO Treasurer requested to change the mileage remuneration. Classis agreed to tie the mileage remuneration rate to the annual CRA rate.

Retirement & appointments

Classis received a letter from Ebenezer regarding the retirement of br. Klaas Spithoff as the classis archivist, and his replacement, Matt Vandermooren. Classis agreed to submit a letter to Klaas Spithoff expressing gratitude for his many years of faithful service as archivist.

The following appointments were made for next classis:

The convening church for the next classis will be Hamilton Blessings, and hosted at the convening church.

Suggested officers for next classis are:

- a. Chairman: Rev. Clarence VanderVelde
- b. Vice-chair: elder delegate of the convening church
- c. Clerk: Rev. Ian Wildeboer

Next classis scheduled for September 16, 2022. Alternate date December 9, 2022. Question period was not utilized. Christian censure according to Art 34 CO was not deemed necessary.

The Acts will be finalized by the executive team, and a draft of the Press Release was read and will be finalized by the executive.

Rev. Jake Torenvliet led in prayer and declared Classis closed. 🇨🇦

*For Classis Central Ontario,
Niels Heerema (Vice-Chair at the time)*

