

Clarion

True Religion: Living in God's Grace
Context, Context, Context
In the Fruit of the Spirit is Patience



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

This nineteenth issue of the year comes to you as fall begins and we find ourselves back in many familiar routines. Life has become busy again. Pastor Van Luik's editorial will help us see that our busyness (even for kingdom work) is not what saves but it's Christ work for us, by grace—a healthy reminder. Pastor Vreugdenhil presents what I believe is his first meditation on these pages (and not, I hope, his last), showing the tremendous grace at work in our baptism. Pastor VanderGaag continues to mine Scripture to unfold for us the meaning of the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit and this time it's patience. Who doesn't need more of that? These things are excellent to ponder (Phil 4:8).

Pastor Eric Kampen follows up last issue's article urging us to turn more to Scripture and less to Google with some helpful instruction on how to properly understand the Bible. It's easy to misinterpret Scripture, so care needs to be taken to understand what it says—and context is everything. We are happy

to have two reports on different sorts of mission work in our *Discipling the Nations* column. Pastor Bram DeGraaf (Hamilton Cornerstone's missionary) explains the kind of work he does in northern Brazil (in the first of two articles) and by way of an interview with Pastor Dick Wynia, Pastor Eric Kayayan introduces us to the specialized mission work he is busy with in the organizations Reformed Faith and Life as well as Christians for Armenia. The Lord is busy in many places spreading his Word and gathering in his sheep!

Amanda DeBoer teaches the children a lesson about Christ's resurrection in *Clarion Kids* while in *Ray of Sunshine* Rachel Vis introduces us to Nancy Schipper who is about to turn sixty-six. Happy birthday Nancy and all those October-born! We round the issue off with a letter that responds to a previous letter with a word that gives reason for pause. May the Lord bless your reading!

Peter Holtvlüwer

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EDITORIAL

True Religion: Living in God's Grace

Every Sunday the congregation hears the message of God's grace, yet we often struggle to apply it in our lives. This is not new, for Paul pleads with the Galatians to live out of God's grace and not fall back into the slavery of the law. In some recent conversations, three themes emerged that show how easily we undermine our freedom to live out of God's grace.

Criticism and activism

In one case, someone recalled growing up in a home where the talk was very critical of the church. After a worship service, the sermon came up for severe criticism rather than an uplifting conversation on applying the message to one's life. The minister and elders were criticized for decisions of the council. A litany of grievances was heard against members of the church, and there was no grace for those who did not live up to father's ideals.

Churches can also become judgmental communities. When some members do not live up to the standards set by the community, they are no longer welcome to take part in the activities of the community. There is subtle or not-so-subtle pressure for everyone to act in the same way. This does not just happen in Reformed communities but is common within many different Christian traditions. Religion is so easily twisted into becoming performance-based. The Pharisees are the classic example of this, for they demanded that the Jewish community live according to their rules; those who did not became outcasts from the community. It is amazing how often Jesus condemns them, for they do not perform the very things that they insist on in the lives of others.

Another danger is to consider true religion to be a matter of religious activity. A good Christian must be active in the church; they serve as elders, are involved in the Bible Study, sit on the local Christian school board; they are active in evangelism, busy with pro-life, etc. Those who are active in their church community are held up as an example for every Christian. But true religion is not just about religious activity.


What is common to all three scenarios is that they all want to do what is right and pleasing to the Lord. The father wants to defend the truth and keep the church pure; the community uses subtle pressure to make sure that the church is a place where people live according to God's will, and others want to be active for the kingdom of God. It is difficult to argue against

those who believe they are doing the will of God. And yet none of these ways reflect the true religion of God.

Trust in God's work

So, what is the issue if, in all these situations, people want to do what is right? Think about the reaction of Jesus to the Pharisees. The Pharisees in their own minds wanted to do what is right and please God. Paul talks about his own zeal for the Lord when he was a Pharisee. He speaks about a genuine desire in his heart to do what he thought was pleasing to God. The issue in all these scenarios is that we do not look at ourselves through the lens of God's grace but through the lens of our own legalistic framework. That is the challenge for us. It is in our human nature to put on the wrong glasses. We seem to have trouble seeing clearly through the lens of God's grace.

At this point of writing I slipped away to teach a couple about the Christian faith, and they made an astute observation. In a funeral message I had recently given, they observed that the message did not focus on the wonderful things this man had done, but on the man's walk of faith with the Lord. "I hope," she said, "that the minister at my funeral will not talk about how good I was, but about my relationship with the Lord. I am beginning to understand what a relationship with Christ really is."

True religion is not about insisting I am right but seeking to understand each other and encourage one another in the truths of God's Word. It does not condemn those who have fallen, but graciously walks beside one another and encourages each other to seek the grace of Christ as we together confront the weaknesses of our sinful hearts. It is not about how busy I am doing kingdom work, but that I do this work joyfully and with a grateful heart to the Lord. True religion is not about what I do, but about my joyful walk with the Lord. He walks with me not because I am perfect but because of his wonderful grace in Christ Jesus. 



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TREASURES NEW & OLD :: MATTHEW 13:52

First Wash Up!

“When they go into the tent of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn a food offering to the Lord, they shall wash with water, so that they may not die.” (EXODUS 30:17–21)

“Employees must wash their hands before returning to work,” reads a sign in a restaurant. The reason is hygiene: we quickly pick up visible dirt and invisible germs, and they must be kept out of the kitchen. We are used to the idea; we recognize that we are all dirty.

In Old Testament worship, a priest had to wash before he entered the sanctuary every time. For this purpose, in the temple (or tabernacle) courtyard stood a large washbasin between the altar and the entrance to the holy place. But the reason was not hygiene. The washing symbolized a spiritual reality. You might call it a sacrament of the Old Testament. Indeed, the washing of the Old Testament priests is reminiscent of our Christian baptism.

A priest is someone who “approaches,” who comes close to God. The Israelites knew this well: only priests were allowed into the sanctuary. No one else could pass through the curtain, on the penalty of death. Nothing unholy may come into the presence of the holiness of the LORD. The Bible teaches clearly that fallen human beings are unholy. Our sin disqualifies us: impure thoughts, blasphemous words, immoral deeds—on top of the fact that we inherited the guilt of Adam’s sin. We can only approach God’s holy presence if he cleanses us first.

That is why there was the washbasin for the priest, on his way to the altar or to the sanctuary. It said: you need cleansing; you cannot approach as you are. But it also proclaimed: I cleanse you; I declare you fit to be in my presence. The LORD provided a simple rinsing of hands and feet to clear the priest to come near to him.

In the same way, your baptism shows your clearance to live close to God. You don’t qualify on your own, but he cleanses you. The sprinkled water itself doesn’t do it. But it symbolizes the sprinkled blood of the Lord Jesus, which removes all that is unholy and qualifies you to approach.

The priests had to wash every time they entered the sanctuary. A repetitive task! Having been anointed once was not enough. Anointed priests were still sinners, who brought sacrifices that could not wash away sin. They washed and washed, throughout their careers, “a statute forever throughout their generations,” with no end in sight.

But we get baptized only once. Not because we stop sinning after our baptism. But because baptism shows that we belong

to Jesus Christ, who cleansed and cleared us once for all (Heb 10:11–14).

In the Old Testament, only the priests served in the temple. The family of Aaron had been chosen to serve on behalf of the rest of people. A special privilege! But, as their washing showed, they didn’t serve because they were better. Rather, they had a special calling.

But today, all who believe in Christ may enter the sanctuary of heaven (Heb 10:19). The church of Jesus Christ is a whole nation of priests. If we are washed in the name of the Lord, we can freely enjoy his presence and loving care. Our baptism shows that we are cleared to approach. It also shows that we have a special calling to do priestly work. Worship. Pray for others. Serve others in the name of the Lord.

Have you been baptized? Then you, like the Old Testament priests, are cleansed, cleared, and called to come. Enter through the curtain, into the presence of your Lord, to serve him all your life. 🙏

For further study

1. Read Hebrews 10.
2. What were some typical duties of the Old Testament priests? What corresponding priestly tasks do we have as baptized Christians? (A good starting point is HC, Q&A 32.)
3. It is easy to live on autopilot, without thinking of the priestly privilege and task the Lord has given us. What can we do to remind us and to do our work before God with a holy attitude?
4. Jesus, our only High Priest, received his anointment at his baptism. Is there a connection between Jesus’s baptism and the washing of the Old Testament priests?
5. In this meditation we draw the line from the priestly washings to Christian baptism. But we more often connect baptism to circumcision. Do these two contradict each other? Why, or why not?
6. Having read Hebrews 10, explore the meaning of Christ’s priesthood and our sharing in it.



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Context Context Context

ERIC KAMPEN

Challenging task

In a previous article, I encouraged the readers of *Clarion* to search God's Word rather than immediately turning to Google and the Web when it comes to the issues of the day and the issues of life. This is easier said than done. As was suggested, it is not as simple as typing in some key words in the search bar on an electronic version of the Bible. Typing in a particular word will only give you a long list of Bible references that can easily run into the hundreds. Finding where a word is found, though, is only the beginning. To understand what the Spirit is saying to us today, we must pay attention to the literary, historical, and cultural contexts.

We have to ask ourselves where we are in the flow of Scripture as it unfolds for us God's plan of salvation in Jesus Christ

Literary context

As to literary context, we must work with the fact God's Word is literature, and the normal way of handling literature applies. This is not denying the ultimate divine authorship, but simply acknowledging the way God has decided to speak to us. We can't just take a word or two to prove our point by saying, "But I am quoting the Bible." Words are found in sentences, sentences in paragraphs, paragraphs in larger sections, sections in books, and books within the whole collection of books making up the holy library. With this in mind, we are to ask questions about the purpose and structure of a Bible book, just like you would do for any book. At times the author may state his purpose somewhere in the book (e.g., John 20:31). Usually, with some thought, you can figure out the structure of a book (e.g., the way Genesis is arranged around "these are the generations of. . .").

Literary context also means one has to pay attention to different genres. Scripture contains narrative, prophecy, poetry, and letters. You shouldn't read a psalm like you read the gospels. You shouldn't read narrative like it is an allegory, nor should you read allegorical or prophetic passages as if they are narrative.

Context also means that we must keep in mind the place of what is being studied within the whole scope of the Bible. Scripture relates the unfolding history of redemption. It moves from life in a garden to restored life in the garden city. In that unfolding history, there is an age that lives under the shadow of the coming cross and an age that lives under the shadow of the accomplished cross. We have to ask ourselves where we are in the flow of Scripture as it unfolds for us God's plan of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Lastly, with respect to literary context, we must ask if the passages we are bringing forward are relevant. The nature of words means that they will be used in different settings with different nuances. Just because we find the same word in different places, that doesn't mean both places are relevant. That is

determined by the broader context. If we do exegesis by sound association, that will not be sound exegesis.

Historical & cultural contexts

We also must keep in mind that the Bible was written at a particular time in history, with people living in a different culture. Again, this is not to diminish what it says, but it is a reality to contend with. There are many similarities because human nature is the same, but the words of Scripture must first be understood within their original context in order to speak to us in our context. In terms of historical and cultural contexts, the main points to note are how so much of the Bible reflects an agricultural economy and ancient near eastern culture. The impact on the literature of Scripture also is evident in the way it is not always as focused on chronology as we are accustomed to. This is evident in the way the Greek translation of the Old Testament rearranged the order of the books in a more chronological order.

It will be helpful to illustrate what has been said by applying it to some of the issues of the day and the issues of life.

Creation & commandments

First, we think of the issue of creation and evolution. We know of the attempts to make evolution fit with the account of Genesis 1. Some do this by describing Genesis 1-11 as myth, prehistory. Others describe Genesis 1 as a poetic account of creation. Yet others describe Genesis 1 by referring to a framework, calling it an artificial composition to communicate God is Creator. In all these, we see a literary approach denying the obvious literary character of Genesis. The opening chapters come across as historical narrative. One denies its truth by calling it myth, that is, simply a story with meaning. The other calls it poetry. The last one calls it an artificial construction, neither narrative nor poetry. The plain reading of Scripture, however, presents it as historical narrative, showing God as the Creator.

Second, we consider the use of God's commandments today. Should we work toward the establishing of God's commandments as the laws of our nations, like it was in Israel? If we read Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, it appears that state and church were basically synonymous. Plus, there were laws for sacrifices and ceremonies. For some crimes the death penalty had to be applied. Should we advocate unceasingly until the nation in which we live is governed by those laws? Do we have to work for a theocratic state?

Again, we need an eye for redemptive history. With respect to the sacrificial dimension, we know it was fulfilled in Christ. With respect to the civil laws, we need to see the gradual separation of the church from involvement in applying civil law. From the exile on, Israel lost its independence in civil affairs. We think of how the Jewish leaders could not put Jesus to death without the permission of Pilate, the Roman governor. In God's unfolding revelation, there was indeed a time and place when church and state functioned under one set of rules, and severe punishments had to be applied for spiritual disobedience, but the New Testament church is shown to be a spiritual community, not a national community, with spiritual and not physical discipline. In short, having an eye for redemptive history keeps us from such directions as theonomy (the idea that the Old Testament laws of God should rule today's nations).

Worship & Pentecost

Third, we consider the matter of liturgy. The LORD gave detailed instructions for worship at the tabernacle, which was later transferred to the temple. David added the ministry of music. Some of the Psalms exhort the singers to sing a new song. Does this set the pattern for the worship of the New Testament church?

Again, context is important. The worship at the tabernacle/temple was the worship that took place under the shadow of the coming cross. That worship was an indication of the heavenly worship. What happened at the temple was not duplicated at the local level. The function of the temple ended upon the death of our Lord Jesus. To base liturgical practices today simply by saying it was done at the temple does not do justice to the context within the history of revelation.

Moving to some New Testament examples, I mention Pentecost. There is a tendency to see the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as an event to be experienced in the lives of believers, as a confirmation of being a child of God. This overlooks the

fact that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is a unique event in the history of redemption. The Spirit came in fulfillment of the Lord's promise, to empower the disciples to fulfill their calling to be his witnesses to the end of the world (Acts 1:8).

Can I do all things?

One other example, because it is heard so often, is worthy of mention. You may have seen the words of Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." This is taken as a general slogan to encourage people to go take on the world for Christ, or even to go tackle the tough math problems before them. Some students must feel like Christ is not helping them or they don't have enough faith as they try and yet fail their math. If you look at the context, however, Paul very specifically speaks about his being able to face his suffering and hardship as a Christian.

A final example is how to read the book of Revelation. There is a tendency to read this book as if it contained a chronological narrative of future events. To be sure, there is a future dimension in its prophecies. The key point to remember is that this is a book filled with signs and symbols, and it should be read as such. Here is a case of recognizing its genre.

Encouragement

This talk about context may seem a bit intimidating, but it should not be. If we have learned to read, not simply in terms of reading words, but also in terms of how to handle anything we read, we can handle the Bible. If anything, it is more the case that in our reading of the Bible, we should not toss aside the basic rules we have learned for reading.

It is good to reflect on this as another season of communal Bible study will be getting underway. Paying attention to context will enrich the study of God's Word as it will help us get to the message of Scripture. It will also help us when discussing issues to come to solid scriptural conclusions.

Paying attention to the context of Scripture will bring home its message to us in our context, and we will discover that God's Word is a living Word, through which he speaks to us today. 📖



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In the Fruit of the Spirit is Patience

TYLER VANDERGAAG

“I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ might display his unlimited patience.” (1 TIMOTHY 1:16, NIV)

How long is your nose? That might sound like an odd or even rude question to ask, especially to a Dutchman. If you know the story of Pinocchio, you might think a long nose has to do with lying. At one point Pinocchio had a nose so long that he couldn't get out of his bedroom! But in the Bible to have a long nose is a good thing and has everything to do with the patience in the fruit of the Spirit, which we also find in perfect measure in the life of the Lord Jesus. This article is a little longer than the previous ones. So, please, patiently “bear with my word of exhortation” (Heb 13:22).

Jesus's patience

In the previous article, we learned that we are to pursue peace with the same determination Saul persecuted the church. He

was ruthless. He gave approval to the stoning of Stephan in Acts 7. He initiated a “great persecution” on the church of Jerusalem in Acts 8. Acts 8:3 captures Paul's persecuting hatred well; “Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.” In Acts 9, he was “still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples.” He had received letters from the high priest to go to every synagogue in Damascus and, if he found any followers of the Way, he had permission to “take them as prisoners.” What deep hatred lived in Paul's heart! What trouble he caused the church. What grief he caused the Lord Jesus. Paul wasn't just persecuting the church. When the Lord Jesus confronts him on the road to Damascus, he says, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” The church is the body of Christ. To persecute



her, to breath murderous threats against her, to drag off her members was to persecute, breathe hatred, and drag off the Lord Jesus himself!

If we didn't know the story so well, we'd think—Finally! Paul's going to get what's coming to him. If God struck down Ananias and Sapphira back in Acts 5 for lying, surely Saul will feel the full brunt, anger, and wrath of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what he deserves. But that's not what happens. Saul is sent to Ananias, leader of the church. The Lord Jesus tells Ananias in a vision that "This man"—this horrible persecutor of the church—"is my

chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15). Now, what has the Lord Jesus displayed in all this, if not Spirit-filled patience!? More specifically, he has revealed his long-suffering patience. Long-suffering is an old word that really ought to be kept alive (Wright, *Cultivating the Fruit*, 69). It's the ability to put up with suffering, hardship, sickness, pain, and even people for a long time without losing your cool or seeking revenge. That's what Jesus did here with Saul. He patiently endured the relentless persecution of Paul and then instead of seeking revenge,

Jesus's patient forbearance is as unlimited as it is immense

Jesus gives Paul the privilege of proclaiming the good news of the gospel. That's longsuffering patience! That's our Lord Jesus for you! He patiently endures the suffering of his enemies and then shows them grace in return!

Forbearance

There's another kind of patience that Jesus also has. It's best captured in another word we don't often use: forbearance. Forbearance is the ability to endure or carry or bear with the sins and weaknesses of others. Saul experienced this patience of the Lord Jesus too. He was—by his own admission—"a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man . . . the worst of sinners" (1 Tim 1:13, 16). Here Paul doesn't sugar coat his sinful past—like we might be tempted to do. It's because he knows that Jesus's patient forbearance is as unlimited as it is immense! "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life" (1 Tim 1:15-16). Unlimited patience—that's what Jesus had for Saul. An immense, perfect, endless, amazing, and inexhaustible patience. That is to say, the patience of the Lord Jesus is as infinite as his love. Just like his love is like an ocean without shores or bottom (J. Edwards), so is his patience. It surpasses knowledge, it's beyond all telling.

This unlimited patience of the Lord Jesus didn't just extend to Paul—that worst and foremost of sinners. What does Paul say? "I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an *example* for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life" (v. 16). An example, that is, this is the typical way that the Lord Jesus deals with all those who will believe in him. Displaying unlimited patience to Paul is the model, the prototype, the pattern, the norm for how the Lord Jesus deals with all his people, with you, with me! No matter how checkered your past, don't think for a minute that Jesus can't patiently bear with your sin. He did so with Paul, he'll do so with us too! Even though our past sin hurt him, and our present sin wearies him, and our future sin will test

his patience, if you belong to him by faith, if your name is written in the book of life, he will never say of your sin and weakness, "I can't bear it anymore." He bore it all already on the cross. All your sin—and mine—has been paid in full!

So don't ever think his patient forbearance is like ours—limited, easily lost, and fickle. Our patience has limits and runs out far too easily and quickly. Full of the Holy Spirit, his patience—like his love, joy, and peace—is "pent up and ready to gush forth" (Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly*, 148). It's as immense as it is unlimited! It's who he is!

Long of nostrils

The patience of the Lord Jesus is the way the LORD God has always dealt with his people. Here we are getting to that stuff about a long nose. When the Lord passed by Moses in Exodus 34, he said about himself, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (v. 6). Slow to anger in the Old Testament is the equivalent to patience in the fruit of the Spirit. The phrase literally means, "long of nostrils." That's what God has. He's not like an angry bull whose nostrils are flared and whose anger is ready to burst at any moment (Ortlund, 148). He's long-nosed. He's slow to anger.

There's a beautiful example of this in Jeremiah 25. Before God sentenced his people to seventy years in Babylonian exile, the prophet says, "For twenty-three years . . . to this day, the word of the LORD has come to me, and I have spoken persistently to you, but you have not listened" (v. 3). Twenty-three years and more—that's how long God put up with the sins of his people. That's how long he pursued them, called them to repentance. And he didn't just send Jeremiah, but Isaiah and Ezekiel too! I couldn't possibly dream of having patience for that long with the same people! Yet that's our God. He's long-nosed! He's slow to anger! So it is with the Lord Jesus. He's long-nosed. His anger is slow in rising. What a wonderful reality! If the LORD God can exercise patience for twenty-three years with his hard-nosed people, if the Lord Jesus can display unlimited, long suffering, and long-nosed patience to such a sinful man as Paul, the great persecutor of Christ himself, what reason do

you have, what reason do I have to doubt that his patience will also extend to us?

So, what are you waiting for? Beloved in Christ, fear the Lord, come to him with sin and shortcomings, come in faith. You have no reason to doubt. For not only is Jesus full of love for us, not only does his heart burst with joy for sinners, but his patience is also unlimited and ready to come gushing out.

Our patience

As Spirit filled and led believers, we must embrace the same long-suffering and forbearing patience of the Lord Jesus himself. Our patient noses must be as long as Pinocchio's lying nose. Our long-suffering patience is illustrated in 1 Peter 4:12-19. The believers he addresses were experiencing a time of persecution and hardship. Nero was the emperor. He's the one who punished the "depraved Christians" by dressing them up in animal skins, only to be torn to pieces by dogs, crucified, or made into torches to serve as lights to shine in the darkness (Goodman, *Rome*, 535). That's persecution we—in the West—haven't experienced, but which many Christians in this world do. Long-suffering is something they need to exercise daily. It's not theory for them, it's reality.

In the face of such suffering, what does Peter call the believers to do? Rise up? Resist? Fight? He does no such thing. Peter tells the believers three things. First, don't be surprised by suffering. It's not a strange thing. Second, don't retaliate; instead rejoice, be overjoyed. In doing so, he says, you're participating in the suffering of Christ. And third, don't give up. God is faithful. In time, long, patient suffering will be over and God's justice will prevail. This is something we ought to pray that the Spirit will give our persecuted brothers and sisters in this world.

We must add, though, it's not just persecuted Christians who need long-suffering patience now. We need it too. "And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone" (1 Thess 5:14). Everyone here means everyone: weak parents, hard kids, feeble church leaders, difficult civil authorities, fragile friends, frustrating employees, you name it.

Now, we might think it's not a big deal if we lack a bit of patience in the small areas of our life, but it matters a great deal. The small moments when our patience is tested are the Spirit's means of producing and cultivating long-suffering patience in our hearts and so preparing us for greater trials, suffering, and yes, even persecution. If you've never learned long-suffering patience in the small things of life, if you can't put up with the weaknesses of your parents, peers, or pupils, how will you

ever expect to have long-suffering patience in the face of real suffering and persecution?

Patient, not push-overs

Patience with everyone, mind you, doesn't mean we have to be push overs. When Jesus turned over the tables of the money changers, he was angry, but he never lost it. It was a righteous anger; it was also a patient anger. So, you can protest against the government, you can raise your voice at your children, but it must all be done with a long, patient nose. Maybe you think that's impossible—sometimes I do too; have I ever raised my voice at one of my children patiently?—but by God's grace and Spirit, it's possible and something we must cultivate more and more. Patience! Long-suffering! It's the Spirit's way. It's in the Spirit's fruit!

There's also that patient forbearance—we need to cultivate that too. Colossians 3:12-13 says, "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." That's patient forbearance: refusing to hold grudges and forgiving others. Notice the reason: "Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Jesus didn't just patiently bear our sin so that we might be forgiven. He patiently bore our sin so that we might also be patient forbearers, patient forgivers (Wright, *Cultivating the Fruit*, 81). Patience! Forbearance! It's the Spirit's way. It's the Spirit's fruit!

The patience we're called to embrace is hard in the best of times and it's even harder in the middle of a lockdown, in the face of suffering, or if you've been misunderstood, falsely accused, or gossiped about. Yet it's not impossible, at least not with God's Spirit. If you try to cultivate patience—of any kind—on your own, don't even bother. It's a waste of time. You can't produce patience anymore than you can produce love, joy, and peace without the gracious work of God in your life. So, remember whose fruit it is: it's the fruit of the Spirit. It's his fruit to give! Rely on him. Ask for him. Trust that he will cultivate patience in your heart and cause it to grow and blossom and bear much fruit! "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find" (Matt 7:7). God is faithful. He will give the Spirit; he will give patience. You only need to ask! 🙏



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DISCIPLING THE NATIONS



Gospel Action Brazil (Part 1)

Missionary and Church Planter

BRAM DEGRAAF

Before I can explain the specific mission work I'm involved with, I need to paint for you the bigger picture of mission work generally. There are missionaries and there are missionaries. I don't mean to say that each missionary is different, because I think that is obvious. I'm talking about the different kinds of mission work required at various moments along the way. There are several stages in a mission project. The first stage is spreading the gospel by preaching the Word of God; the second stage is planting a church by gathering a flock of believers; the third stage is strengthening the church by training young men to become the pillars of the congregation. When the congregation gets to a stage that it can be autonomous, it will be instituted. Then the missionary can step back to an advisory role and look for new mission opportunities.

Approaching institution

Normally I observe four aspects that need to be in place when we want to institute a church. These aspects are: self-governance, self-discipline, self-support, and self-propagation (i.e. that they themselves begin to proclaim the gospel to others).

Self-governance means that there should be enough capable men who can govern the congregation. That is not as simple as it seems to be. We are talking about young congregations with young men who have no experience. Many evangelical congregations have no elders. They are "lucky" if they have a minister and some deacons. Almost all the congregations that have come into contact with our Reformed confederation here in Brazil have only a minister who has to do all the work by himself. He has to govern the church, take care of the



A meeting with the Provisional Council of the Reformed Church in Olho de Água. At my right hand sits Pastor Ezequiel, who will be working for one year in Olho de Água.

financial administration, visit the members, resolve conflicts in the congregation, discipline those members who start living an unholy life, teach doctrine to new members, preach one or two sermons every Sunday, and supervise evangelism activities. I probably don't need to explain that such a situation is very unhealthy, because it is a lot of work, and causes a lot of stress. It also has a negative effect on the marriage of the minister because the only person he can talk to is his own wife.

I also experienced this kind of situation in the beginning of my mission work in Maceió; that is why I started as soon as possible to work with a small group of young men. I shared the workload with them and delegated some tasks. That's how they became more and more involved in the work. At a certain moment, we started a provisional council and I started to teach them the work of a council and train them to become responsible for the congregation. Self-governance is an important condition for the institution of the church and linked with that is self-discipline.

In the first years of my mission work, I had a conversation about that topic with Rev. Hendrik Versteeg, who had his experiences on the mission field in Papua New Guinea. He also worked in a culture where it is very difficult to confront people with their errors. People don't easily speak directly about a problem, but indirectly: they reveal their sentiment to somebody else who is more intimate to the sinner in the hope that he/she will communicate it to the offender. I experienced the same thing here in Brazil and noticed that it was not so easy to train the

men on that point. Therefore, it takes time to train the young men to practice the work of an elder.

A new church forming

Why do I offer this introduction? Well, in the first place to explain to you that I'm a missionary who has been working and still works in the third stage of the mission work (training young men). Now I'm working with a Provisional Council in Olho de Agua das Flores, a small congregation in the interior of Alagoas that is on their way to become part of our Reformed confederation.

Each month, I go to that place together with my wife Celia. We stay there for one weekend. I will meet with the Provisional Council on Friday evening, help them with a visit on Saturday afternoon, and preach twice on Sunday. Celia meets with the Women's Society that was almost not functioning when we came there in the beginning of 2021. She managed to resolve some internal problems and to strengthen the spirit of these young mothers in such a way that it is now a flourishing society with a good communion of saints.

In the next article I will give more details about this and other mission projects we are connected with. 📍

Bram DeGraaf *Missionary*
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Reformed Faith and Life

An Interview with Rev. Eric Kayayan

DICK WYNIA

Reformed Faith and Life (Canada) was established about twenty years ago to help provide financial support for the radio broadcasting of the gospel and the production of Reformed literature in Armenian and French. There are significant areas of the world where one or the other of these two languages is read and spoken. This work is headed-up by Rev. Eric Kayayan, who is a minister of the Rietvallei Reformed Church in Pretoria, South Africa. He lives with his wife Olga in the Loire Valley in France. To help us understand this work better, Rev. Dick Wynia recently sat down to interview Pastor Kayayan and we share the results below.

Could you provide our readers with a short bio of yourself and your wife, Olga?

Olga and I were married in 2005 in Pretoria, South Africa, where we lived until 2014. She is Russian and was born and raised in the former Soviet republic of Uzbekistan. As for me, I was born in France to Christian parents (Rev. Aaron and Mrs. Carmen Kayayan) and grew up in Paris. I moved to South Africa in 1988, completing my theological studies at the University of Potchefstroom in 1998. We have been living in France (Loire Valley) since 2014. I serve in the ministry of Reformed Faith and Life-French (RFL) and also supervise the operations of Christians for Armenia (CFA, the “sister” ministry of RFL-French), while Olga is developing her professional career in the region where we live.

Could you give a short history of RFL/CFA, and a summary of the various aspects of the work they do? How has the work evolved since they were established?

Reformed Faith and Life is the continuation of the radio and literature ministry initiated by Rev. Aaron Kayayan in the mid-seventies with the support of the CRCNA (*Back To God Hour*). After his official retirement in 1992, Rev. Aaron initiated a similar ministry directed towards the people of the newly independent republic of Armenia, a tiny country situated between Turkey, Iran, and Russia (the Kayayans being from Armenian descent from his side). Today RFL uses not only radio broadcasts and the publication of books, but also a variety of social media to spread the gospel and the Reformed faith.

Where does support for the work of RFL/CFA come from?

Our support comes mainly from US and Canadian churches (URCNA, RCUS, CanRC). South African churches (RCSA and individual donors) support the operations of the ministry towards French speaking countries in Africa more specifically.

You moved from South Africa to France in 2014. How would you characterize the spiritual condition of France? Isn't French culture (secularism, Islam . . .) fairly hostile to the Christian faith, particularly to the Reformed faith? What motivated you to move there? What sorts of opportunities do you have to bring the Reformed faith in France? Do you think that you're making any progress in that respect?

The general spiritual condition of people in France could be described as very secularized and materialistic, with growing neo-pagan trends and the rapid rise of Islam. The gradual rejection of historical Christianity has marked the history of France since the time of the Enlightenment (eighteenth century), with a strong naturalistic worldview based on Darwinian evolution. Despite the famous French *joie de vivre*, disillusionments and fears about the future of the country worry and embitter people, but do not make them more open to the gospel. At the same time, it must be said that Evangelicals are growing in number (about 600,000 today, roughly one percent of the total population of France). However, this is mainly due to the increasing presence of African immigrants with a Christian background.

After twenty-six years of absence, I returned to France to address these spiritual needs to the best of my abilities, knowing and understanding the language, the history, and the culture of my country of birth. The challenges are real, and the progress made concerns mainly the various outreaches RFL has made

towards Evangelical communities, to help them deepen their understanding of God's revelation in Scripture and so help reforming from within. There have been significant openings for RFL in this respect. We regularly organize webinars on a variety of topics. They are then posted on our YouTube channel, Facebook page, website, and other social media, where they garner more viewers.

How much of your ministry is still aimed at French-speaking colonies in Africa (and elsewhere)? RFL has made something of a transition to the use of the internet in recent years. Does the average citizen in the "target" countries have access to internet? Are you finding it effective?

The African mission field still remains a focus of RFL-French activities. Radio broadcasts are aired in countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali (Timbuktu), West Africa, and also to a large French speaking community living in the Cape province of South Africa (people coming from the Congo and Burundi). With the disintegration of postal services in Africa, we have turned towards the internet to spread the message. We promote our articles or videos via our Facebook page, generating at times a few hundred thousand interactions in countries such as Morocco, Mali, Cameroon, or the Republic of Central Africa. It really is a very effective way to generate interest in Africa.

Many of our readers will be familiar with the work of Rev. Paulin Bédard who labours among the French speaking people of Quebec and beyond—are there opportunities for cooperation between your ministries?

We have a great collaboration with Rev. Paulin Bédard: he takes all the articles or videos which I produce and posts them on his excellent web site of Christian resources (which aims at providing French-speaking African pastors with solid Christian material). Another good collaboration with Quebec Christians concerns the forthcoming publication of a book made of thirty short meditations (one for each day of a month) on the meaning of true worship, the title being: *In Spirit and in Truth*. It is based on a selection of radio podcasts I have produced over the last years. More such books could be produced for evangelistic purposes in future. A bilingual edition of this devotional is also in preparation in South Africa.





Switching now to the work of Christians For Armenia (CFA), can you give us a brief spiritual history of Armenia? What sorts of challenges do evangelical or Reformed believers face in modern Armenia?

The spiritual condition of Armenians differs from that of the French. Armenia was the first nation in the world to have adopted Christianity as its official religion (AD 301). However, today people suffer from a severe lack of knowledge of God's Word. Traditionalist and ritualistic Christianity is unable to provide the spiritual and moral resources necessary for this tiny nation to survive amidst a plethora of social evils typical of post-Soviet countries. For many people, crude materialism seems the only ideal to aim for. Hostile neighbours (Turkey and Azerbaijan) threaten the existence of a nation that can trace its existence back to Old Testament times.

CFA has been working on a very ambitious Bible translation project. How far you have gotten, and why is this project such a high priority?

Under the ministry of Rev. Aaron Kayayan, a translation of the New Testament in modern Armenian was initiated to provide the public with an understandable text directly translated from the original Hebrew and Greek (current versions lack both accuracy and clarity of expression). In time, the book of Psalms was

added to this project. It eventually saw the light of day earlier this year: 6000 copies were printed to be distributed widely. Christians For Armenia aims at completing the translation of the whole Bible in a few years' time, provided adequate funding can be generated.

In the meantime, we use the material produced by RFL-French translated and recorded in Armenian to bring to the public new messages via our weekly radio broadcasts (mostly sponsored by Canadian donors). Books are translated from English or from French by a competent team of linguists. The traditional "Apostolic Armenian" clergy and laity as well as Evangelical pastors and church goers benefit from our publications and encourage us to produce new material.

Do you and your fellow workers in Armenia have a sense, or indeed evidence, that the work of CFA is making progress there?

The following letter recently received from a listener of our radio broadcasts says it better than many explanations:

Before starting my letter, I would like to express my entire gratitude to you for the work you have been doing so far. In my opinion, your radio messages create a wonderful opportunity for the audience to get rid of their evil thoughts and eventually value the infinite love that our Father gives every single person, regardless of his or her material and social status, profession or political views.

Do you have any concluding remarks?

Both French and Armenian mission fields have their own challenges and opportunities. What we must keep obeying at all times, regardless of any obstacle, is the command of the Lord in Isaiah 12:4, "Give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the peoples, proclaim that his name is exalted." 📖



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Would you like to donate or learn more? You can do both at the website of Reformed Faith and Life-Canada (www.reformedfaithandlife.ca).

CLARION KIDS

AMANDA DEBOER

LORD'S DAY 17

Let's say you were playing baseball. You hit the ball and it broke your neighbour's window. Your parents would pay for the window. Then your neighbour would not be upset at you any longer. Was it your money that paid for the window? No, it was your parent's money. But your neighbour would still forgive you. Now, Jesus rose from the dead. Another way to say this is Jesus *resurrected*. And God blesses us because Jesus resurrected. One way God blesses us is that now he looks at us as if we are perfect. But we are not! The Lord Jesus was perfect for us. Another blessing is that we have the Holy Spirit in our hearts. And he changes us to live for God more and more. Also, because Jesus rose, we can be sure that, if we die, we will rise one day too. Isn't our God so good?

Wordsearch

rose	V	I	V	R	D	X	P	S
perfect	D	J	Q	N	Z	Z	E	P
Spirit	J	N	X	D	J	J	R	I
change	Z	W	O	S	M	T	F	R
	F	R	O	S	E	A	E	I
	C	H	A	N	G	E	C	T
	V	G	D	S	M	R	T	H
	H	A	E	V	P	P	U	C

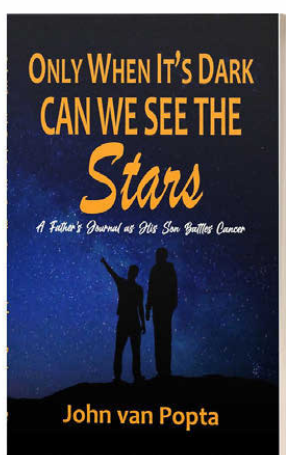
Add the following words along the word resurrected: died, rose, perfect, change

R
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D

BOOK REVIEW

Only When It's Dark Can We See the Stars:

A Father's Journal as His Son Battles Cancer by John van Popta



North Star Ministry Press

193 pages \$17.00 Canadian Paperback

Available in Kindle version

REVIEW BY PETER BUIST

Family friend from Ottawa, Ontario

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In a scene reminiscent of the beginning of a *Reader's Digest* story, some children are playing near the beach on a warm August day at the annual church picnic. Suddenly a piercing wail goes up and I see a young lad clutching his face in agony. It's Julian. Something is not right, I thought to myself. Julian doesn't cry that easily. Little did we know that only a few days later, Julian would receive a diagnosis of acute lymphocytic leukemia (ALL). The arduous journey that Julian and his family travel over the ensuing days, months, and years are described in this account written by his father. Based on a journal written some twenty-five years ago, this is a compelling story in seven episodes that is guaranteed to move the reader to tears.

This book is not an easy read. Any family who has been touched by a cancer diagnosis knows how the "C" word can strike terror into the hearts of all concerned. As we walk alongside father and son on their path of struggle and triumph, several motifs emerge: the suffering of a child as he stoically endures the pain and tedium of treatment, the skill and relentless optimism of the oncologists, the comfort of God's promises, and the utter dependence on God's faithfulness by Pastor John, his wife Bonita, and their children.

When I was informed about the course of chemotherapy that Julian initially had to endure at Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO), I could only shudder. As a bio-organic chemist,

I know how deadly these molecules can be and how brute-force this therapeutic approach is. Patients can easily succumb to their body's reaction to the attempted cure. Many precautions have to be taken. In addition, we read of Julian's isolation from his family in order to protect his weakened immune system. This strikes a chord in us all. As survivors of the COVID era, we remember all too well how hard it was not to be able to visit vulnerable loved ones. Solitary confinement is perhaps the greatest suffering of all.


Some lessons

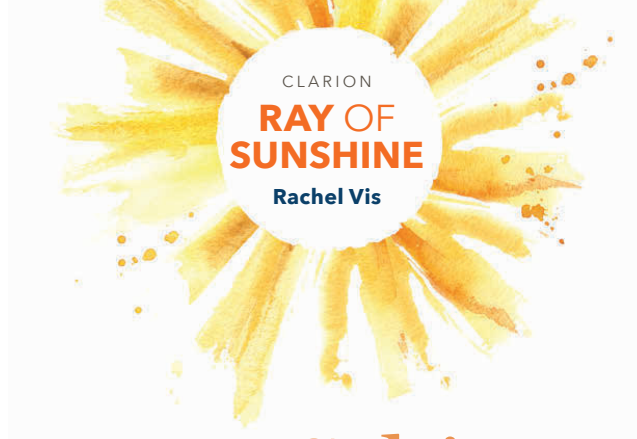
What are the take-home lessons from this book? Firstly, we have to admire frontline workers in our beleaguered health care system. How wonderfully thorough and compassionate the specialized health care for Julian was at institutions like CHEO and Alberta Children's Hospital. The details of Julian's case would have been documented as a successful clinical outcome, leading to the finetuning of treatments for other patients. And so, the annals of medical science expand in knowledge and sophistication, step by step.

Secondly, family is everything. Every moment we spend with them is truly something not to be taken for granted. The greatest pain we feel is when a wall goes up between those sharing flesh and blood. The account you are about to read could not

have been written without the unfailing and unconditional love of parents for their child. In addition, had not an older brother bravely donated vital stem cells as a last resort, Julian may very well not be with us today. The success of this procedure is a wonderful highlight.

Thirdly, church family is critically important in times of trouble. Support of the communion of saints is so sweet. We sing about this in church every Sunday. At some point, we have all felt the friend's embrace in good times and bad. When you visit someone who is very ill, there is little that can be said but they feel your presence and that speaks volumes. When Julian suffered, we all suffered. When we now read about his suffering, we suffer in retrospect and we think of others facing similar difficulties. It is good to do so.

Finally, it takes a lot of courage to bare your soul. This account is being published at a time when the author himself is facing significant health challenges. Pastor John chooses as the title for his book: "Only When It's Dark Can We See the Stars." The title says it all and recalls so many passages in Scripture that give us hope in our darkest hour. Indeed, we look forward to the day when the dream turns into reality. God shall wipe away every tear from our eyes. Then we shall be free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, we are free at last. 



CLARION
**RAY OF
SUNSHINE**
Rachel Vis

Nancy Schipper



I am going to be sixty-six! I have lived at the Beacon Home since it opened and I am a member at Grace Reformed Church. I love Sundays and I don't like to be late for church!! I also love having coffee social after church. Sunday is absolutely my favourite day of the week!

I also enjoy visiting my mother every other Wednesday at her apartment at Shalom. Two of my sisters usually come to visit me at the Beacon Home every other week as well.

It was great to go to Anchor camp again this year.

I also enjoy going to Friendship during the year.

One of my other favourite things is when people come to visit us for coffee because you know that coffee is the best drink ever!

I enjoy getting cards for my birthday from people all over and can't wait for them to start arriving.

October Birthdays

Happy Birthday to all of you celebrating a birthday in October! We wish you the Lord's blessing in the year ahead and a wonderful day with family and friends.

- 3 Janell DeBoer** will be **32**
6311 Silver Street RR #2
St. Ann's, ON LOR 1YO
Email: janell.db90@gmail.com
- 8 Lindsay Kottelenberg** will be **32**
c/o Lighthouse
6528 1st Line
RR 3 Fergus, ON N1M 2W4
- 21 Cameron Dantuma** will be **30**
c/o Lighthouse
6528 1st Line
RR 3 Fergus, ON N1M 2W4
- 3 Jeanette Wieringa** will be **28**
6674 Wellington Rd 7
Elora, ON N0B 1S0
- 13 Nancy Schipper** will be **66**
c/o Beacon Home
653 Broad Street West
Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8
- 22 Nelena Hofsink** will be **62**
Bethesda Clearbrook Home
32553- Willingdon Cr.
Clearbrook, BC V2T 1S2
- 6 Henry Vander Vliet** will be **55**
c/o Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road RR 2
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
- 17 Alan Breukelman** will be **56**
2225, 19th Street
Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4
- 28 Mary Ann De Wit** will be **66**
#4 6560 Vedder Road
Chilliwack, BC V2T 5K4

A NOTE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS If there are any address changes that I need to be aware of please let me know as soon as possible.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A response to Christina VanderZyl letter in *Clarion*, July 22, 2022

To the Editor,

A scientific response to this letter may give clarity. Specifically, her opinion of “how a fetus is used in (COVID-19) vaccine manufacturing.” What is most distressing to me is her statement, “Often this healthy baby would be live when cut up for culturing.” These statements are misleading.

Scientific information on the use of fetal cells for the development of mRNA vaccines (exclusively from Pfizer and Moderna) is readily available with a “web” search. For example, a simple question (with Google) such as, “Are fetus cells used in the development of COVID-19 vaccines?” will result in good information. Use of a recognized institution is essential. The one of interest at the moment for mRNA vaccines is from North Dakota Health, as follows: “The fetal cell lines being used to test or manufacture the COVID-19 vaccines are from two sources:

HEK-293: A kidney cell line that was isolated from a fetus in 1973 (undisclosed origin, from either a spontaneous miscarriage or an elective abortion)

PER.C6: A retinal cell line that was isolated from an aborted fetus in 1985

Any vaccine that relies on these historic cell lines will not require nor solicit new abortions.”

I wish to briefly bring forward an important issue. Many of our CanRC members look to *Clarion* for guidance in faith and life. It’s our official publication. Question: does *Clarion* uphold valid health (science) concerns as given by a medical authority such as Dr. H. Scholtens? Or, do you wish to further inaccurate, emotional opinion? Dear editor, your choice.

As for me I am grateful and thankful to the Lord for the great gift of vaccines. Where would we and our children be without them?

Harry Alkema
Mount Hope, ON

