

A CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
TO ENCOURAGE, EDUCATE, ENGAGE, AND UNITE

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Clarion

Watch Your Language
Sir, we Would Like to See Jesus
In the Fruit of the Spirit is Kindness



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

Dear reader, do you enjoy reading *Clarion*? Does a particular article ever strike a chord with you? Are their regular columns you appreciate? We'd love to know about it! Would you consider sending in a short letter to the editor to that effect? Or if you don't want your words published, how about a private note to the author or to myself as editor (or both!). We thrive on feedback. Also the critical kind. Is there a change you'd like to see? Or problems you observe? Let me know. We seek to be useful and of good value to our readers in line with *Clarion's* purpose, so your thoughts about what we write are important. Truly, we'd love to hear from you!

In this issue you'll find an insightful editorial by Rev. Jim Witteveen on how language is a battlefield in today's spiritual warfare and so we need to choose our words carefully. Rev. Arjen Vreugdenhil feeds our souls with an apt meditation on "eating dinner" with God. Rev. Jake Torenvliet stresses that whatever the shape or size of our pulpits the key thing is that Christ is clearly preached from them in every sermon. We also may taste

another "bite" of the fruit of the Spirit in Rev. Tyler VanderGaag's series, with kindness being the focus. Comfort and instruction are skillfully woven throughout these pieces.

Mission work is continuing all across our federation, also in the French language. We think you'll find encouraging the report on the mission work in Quebec (and beyond!) sponsored by Owen Sound CanRC and conducted by Rev. Paul Bédard. Let's continue to pray for this and all such efforts. We are also happy to present a couple of reviews. The first is on a book, a commentary in fact, by Rev. R. Dean Anderson from our sister churches in Australia. The second is on a compilation of organ music related to the Genevan Psalms written by the late Mr. Christiaan Nobels and played (and published) by Mr. Arie den Hollander. Both look to be very edifying! *Clarion Kids* rounds out this issue with a lesson on Christ's ascension as we confess it on Lord's Day 18. May your reading be a blessing to you!

Peter Holtvlüwer

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EDITORIAL

Watch Your Language

“Control language and you control thought; control thought and you control action; control action and you control the world.” These are the words of philosopher Peter Kreeft, but the sentiment expressed is not his alone. The words that we use shape our attitudes, often in subtle ways. As terms change in meaning, as words are repurposed to mean something different than originally intended, and as expressions come into favour and go out of favour, the way in which we think can be seriously impacted.

Sex and gender

Take, for example, the word “gender,” and its modern-day usage. For previous generations, this word was strictly a grammatical term that described whether a particular noun is masculine, feminine, or neuter. But over time, the meaning of “gender” has shifted to include what used to be called “sex.” Now, in place of “Sex (M/F)” on the various forms one has to fill out, we most often read “Gender” (along with an ever-increasing number of options).

Such a change is not accidental, nor is it inconsequential. As we have been encouraged to think of people’s “gender” rather than their “sex,” the doors have been opened to the possibility that gender exists on a continuum (varying between masculine and feminine), and to the idea that one’s gender can be self-defined rather than determined at birth. This is the power of language.

But the importance of language is not limited to the vocabulary that we use. We have seen over recent years that even our grammar is being shaped with definite ends in mind. Instead of using third-person singular personal pronouns (“he” or “she”), we are now encouraged to use the third-person plural (“they”) to describe individuals without referring to their sex. Such grammatical inconsistency is now commonplace, and the results of such usage are not only an offence to obsessive grammarians, but also to the God-ordained reality that is being denied by such usage, however subtle that denial may be.

We need to watch our language. When I say this, I am not referring only to the kind of coarse talk that Scripture teaches us to avoid (Eph 4:29; 5:4; Col 3:8). We need to remember James’s warning about the power of the tongue, which he describes as “a fire, a world of unrighteousness,” and “a restless evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:6, 8), and seek to use our God-given ability to communicate to encourage one another and to glorify

the One who gave the gift of language. But at the same time, we also need to guard against using forms of speech that play into the hands of those who seek to promote a worldview that runs directly counter to that of Scripture.

Language evolves, but . . .

In the first place, we must recognize the cultural trends that are shaping our language and understand their significance. Having recognized the ways in which cultural forces are seeking to shape the way that we communicate, we must evaluate those trends according to the truth of God’s Word. And having done such an evaluation, we must deliberately choose to reject the kinds of language and grammar that are being used as tools to promote the denial of created reality that our language is meant to describe. We must do this not because of stubbornness or blind traditionalism, nor out of a misplaced loyalty to antiquated forms of speech. Language changes over time, as anyone who reads the King James Version of the Bible and struggles with some of its forms and vocabulary knows. Many of those changes are the result of natural developments that may not have any moral implications. But when we see language and grammar being shaped by our society’s cultural and intellectual elites in order to lead us to think differently about issues like sexuality, the beautifully created distinction between male and female, and the very nature of humanity, we must make the deliberate choice to not “go with the flow.”

The language that we use must reflect reality. Recent trends in the English language reveal that many are living in denial of that reality, and are seeking to influence the thinking, and the actions, of us all. That influence may be subtle, but it is very real. The language we use influences the way that we think, and the way that we think informs the way that we live. In faithful service to the God of truth, in loving submission to the One who proclaimed himself to *be* the truth (John 14:6), we must seek to use language to promote the truth. When we watch our language, we’ll do just that—not just by what we say (and don’t say), but also by the way that we say it. 🗨️



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Dinner Time

“It is from the people of Israel as a covenant forever.” LEVITICUS 24:5–9

Dinner is not just about food. It is a time when the family sits around the table, sharing stories of the day. We celebrate friendship and honour guests by eating together. And a banquet is usually a key part of a wedding or other ceremony.

The LORD does not eat; yet in his tabernacle and temple there was a table with food. Twelve loaves of bread, baked fresh every week. The priests not only had to put the bread there, but also ate it as a religious ceremony. They shared a meal at the table in the house of God.

Obviously, this was not just about the food. The table in the holy place spoke of fellowship and friendship, of an intimate relationship to be celebrated. The heavenly Host invited his people to dinner. The twelve loaves symbolize the twelve tribes of Israel; the priests were there as representatives of all God’s people.

In the time of the Old Testament, when people made a covenant, they celebrated with a meal. This also happened when the LORD made a covenant with Israel on Mount Sinai. After proclaiming his law, he invited representatives of the people for such a meal: “They beheld God, and ate and drank” (Exod 24:11). The Sabbath ceremony of bread in the tabernacle and the temple was, as it were, a repetition of that event, a celebration of God’s grace and covenant.


On behalf of all God’s people, the priests ate a meal with the LORD on a weekly basis. What a privilege! At the same time, it was only a beginning, only “a shadow of the things to come” (Col 2:17; Heb 8:5; 10:1). The Old Testament already hinted that God’s relationship with his people would grow to greater glory.

The LORD extends his fellowship to all nations. Isaiah prophesied: “On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine” (Isa 25:6). Dinner with God is no longer limited to the twelve tribes of Israel; the whole world is invited.

And the fellowship with the Lord has become more direct. We no longer rely on priests to represent us before God, but we are all invited to approach. When Jesus confirmed the new covenant, he had dinner with his twelve apostles as representatives

of the church—but after that, the church broke bread together. In the Lord’s Supper, each believer is invited to table fellowship with the Lord. Not just the priest, but all God’s people eat and drink in his presence.

The New Testament also gives a deeper meaning to the eating of the bread. We do not just celebrate fellowship with God; we eat the Son of God himself. He is our spiritual food. He is in us and we are in him. When the church breaks the bread in the name of Christ, it is a more profound celebration and a more sacred event than when the priests ate the Bread of Presence.

Dinner time is a time for intimate fellowship and celebration. That is what we look forward to, when we expect the return of the Lord Jesus. Then he will eat and drink with us in the kingdom of his Father (Matt 26:49). History will end with the wedding of the Lord and his Bride. Then all God’s children will sit around the table for the best banquet yet. 

For Further Study

1. Read Exodus 24:9–11 in its context.
2. Find some examples in the Bible where people eat together to celebrate.
3. Why were only the priests allowed to eat the Bread of Presence?
4. What was so shocking about David’s eating of the Bread of Presence in the tabernacle? (1 Sam 21:1–6)
5. Identify similarities and differences between the eating of the bread in the Old Testament sanctuary and the Lord’s Supper today.
6. In light of this meditation, how central should the Lord’s Supper be in our worship?



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Sir, We Would Like to See Jesus

BY JAKE TORENVLIET

Pulpits of all shapes and sizes

Pulpits come in a vast spectrum of different shapes and sizes. Some have spiraling staircases that lead to a turret-like box towering over the front corner of a church auditorium. Others are located front and centre, stationed like a prow or a bulwark before the pews. Some pulpits are ornate, fashioned with meticulous care and exquisite detail. Others are simple. Plain. Some are constructed out of glass or metal, others of wood. And then, some pulpits are minimalistic in size, looking more like a lectern or a music stand than a traditional pulpit.

Recently I had the privilege of participating in the design discussions for a pulpit in our newly constructed worship facilities. My preferences were a little like the Goldilocks approach to porridge, chairs, and beds: not too tall, not too short; not

too big, not too small; not too simple, not too ostentatious; not too progressive, not too traditional. A just right pulpit. In my opinion anyway.

The task from the pulpit

Beyond my diplomatic, middle-of-the-road preferences, I was sure about two things. First, I asked that a cross be displayed on the front of the pulpit. Second, I asked that the desktop of the pulpit would display a prominent reminder for me and any other guest preacher. A reminder for every Sunday; every worship service. I wanted the words of John 12:21 to be inscribed on a metal plaque and affixed to the top of the pulpit: "Sir, we would like to see Jesus." Upon this second request, the dear brother who constructed the pulpit said to me, "I'm not going to make a



In the history of the church, too many Christ-less sermons have been delivered

metal plaque. These words should be engraved into the wood. This is a pulpit, and if someone wants to remove those words, they shouldn't be able to pry them off. They'll have to burn the pulpit to the ground." I couldn't have agreed more.

Now, we can quibble about this particular exegetical application of John 12:21, but it doesn't change the fact that inscribing John 12:21 onto pulpits is a wonderfully rich pulpit tradition in many Protestant churches. Furthermore, it is beyond dispute that a preacher's task each Sunday is to show the congregation Jesus. Preaching is not a performance intended to elicit accolades of

"What a preacher!" No, a preacher has faithfully completed his task when his preaching elicits the corporate doxology of, "What a Christ! What a God! What a Saviour of sinners!"

Christ-less sermons

Preachers need this reminder more than you might think. I need this reminder frequently. In the history of the church, too many Christ-less sermons have been delivered—sermons that would have fit better in a synagogue setting, or a university lecture hall. Too many Christ-less sermons have proclaimed earthly political ideologies as the way of the kingdom rather than the servant-hearted humility of Jesus. Too many Christ-less sermons have conflated opinions and "isms" with the Word of life. Too many Christ-less sermons have forgotten grace—costly grace—and substituted it for the heavy yoke of legalism and its ugly twin, moralism. Too many Christ-less sermons have even preached the wrong Jesus (2 Cor 11:4): a Christ who is merely an example to follow; an ATM Christ who only exists to provide "your best life now;" a Christ who is a Saviour, but not Lord of all.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the "Prince of Preachers," had no patience for Christ-less sermons. He famously quipped, "No Christ in your sermon, sir? Then go home, and never preach again until you have something worth preaching." Strong words, but true.

The apostolic testimony

Centuries earlier, the apostle Peter, filled with the Spirit, also showed that he understood the importance of proclaiming Christ—presenting Jesus. In Acts 4:11-12, Peter addressed the Jewish religious council: “This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Jesus is the only name by which we must be saved. This is the same Jesus who said of himself, “I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

Similarly, the apostle Paul recognized the requisite foundation of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ in every circumstance. In his first letter he characterizes his preaching among the Galatians with a striking phrase, “It was before your very eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified” (Gal 3:1). Later, in writing to the Corinthian church, Paul states, “We preach Christ crucified” (1 Cor 1:23), and “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (2:2). And finally, shortly before his martyrdom in Rome, Paul gives concluding instructions to a young preacher named Timothy,

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry (2 Tim 4:1-5).

High expectations

“Sir, we would like to see Jesus.” To paraphrase the late Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, “This is the business of all faithful preaching.”

So, what does this mean when you come to church each Sunday to hear preaching? You should expect to see Jesus. You should expect to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd calling you to repentance and faith. In fact, you should expect


What kind of pulpit do you need?

nothing less. Pulpits that don’t show Jesus are the epitome of the famous refrain in Ecclesiastes, “meaningless.”

Preaching Jesus as the crucified, resurrected, and ascended Christ opens and closes the kingdom of God. Preaching Jesus is balm for broken and weary souls. Preaching Jesus does not beat its audience down, but it convicts sinners of their sin, and directs them to the foot of the old rugged cross. Preaching Jesus does not make you comfortable where you’re at but comforts you in your troubles (2 Cor 1:3-7). Preaching Jesus fills you with hope and equips you to follow him into another week.

The pulpits we need

What kind of pulpit do you prefer? Well, truth be told, that’s not a terribly important question. Here’s a better one. What kind of pulpit do you need? I need one that shows me Jesus every single Sunday. And you do, too!

Lately I’ve noticed a saying floating around online. Maybe you’ve seen it, too. It goes like this: “If you eat today, thank a farmer. If it’s on your table, thank a trucker. If you eat in peace, thank a veteran.” No doubt, this is a posture of gratitude becoming of a Christian. We should add, “Thank God.” Well, if you are privileged to have a preacher who faithfully shows Jesus in season and out of season, then be sure to thank God for him. And it wouldn’t be inappropriate to thank the preacher too for faithfully showing you Jesus every time he stands in the pulpit, whatever it happens to look like. 



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An illustration of several leaves in shades of orange and brown, with detailed line work showing veins and textures. The leaves are positioned on the left side of the page, overlapping the orange background.

In the Fruit of the Spirit is Kindness

TYLER VANDERGAAG

“The kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared” (TITUS 3:4)

When we think of kindness, some might think of random acts of kindness that are sometimes promoted in our society—like paying for the meal of a person behind you in the drive-thru. Who wouldn't be happy about a free Big-Mac or Blizzard? I know I would. But as nice as it is, this is not the kind of kindness that appeared to us in the Lord Jesus or the kindness we find in the fruit of the Spirit. Biblical kindness is far deeper and richer than these random acts of kindness.

Note: Bible quotations in this article are taken from the NIV84.

The kindness and love of God that appeared in Jesus Christ did more than just save us from sin and death.

Jesus's kindness

The same word for kindness in the fruit of the Spirit is used in Titus 3:4-5, "But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us." Kindness here has everything to do with helping a person in need or in distress. In ancient times, when a king heard the plight of the oppressed and enacted justice, he was showing kindness. He was also showing the love that Paul pairs together with kindness. This love in Titus 3:4 comes from the Greek word "philanthropy." A philanthropist is one who promotes human welfare, a humanitarian who provides aid and assistance for those in need. The only other time that word is used in the New Testament, it's translated as "unusual kindness" (Acts 28:2).

Now, just like a king shows kindness and unusual kindness to those in distress, so does God our Saviour. God is the kind lover of people. The ultimate philanthropist! You need only to look at the history of God's dealings with his people to know this. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word most closely associated with kindness in the fruit of the Spirit is *hesed*. It's a wonderfully rich word. It is sometimes translated as covenant loyalty, faithfulness, goodness, mercy, love, or loving-kindness, and sometimes it's just translated as kindness. Kindness is what God showed to Joseph when he was in prison (Gen 39:21), to the midwives who lied to Pharaoh and let the Hebrew boys live (Exod 1:20).

As much as God's care of creation and acts of redemption in the Old Covenant reveal the enduring kindness of the Lord, Titus 3 points us to the one act of kindness that surpasses them all. Titus 3:3 is painfully honest about our past: "At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another." Foolish. Disobedient. Deceivers. Slaves to sinful passions and pleasure. This is the T of TULIP. This is total depravity.

Yet, these are the kinds of people God shows kindness and love to: "But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy" (v. 4-5). What an act of kindness! Instead of leaving sinners like us in our foolishness, disobedience, deceitfulness, slavery to sinful passions and pleasures, in our malice, envy, and hatred, God shows us his enduring loving-kindness by setting us free from slavery to sin, by granting us salvation.

This isn't because we've earned it. Verse 5: "He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy." You don't deserve God's kindness; I don't deserve to have a Saviour like Jesus who humbled himself to death for me, despite my own sinful pride and lack of kindness and compassion towards others. I don't deserve even a speck of God's kindness to land upon me. None of us do. But in his mercy God blessed us with an abundance of his kindness. What an incredible God we have! A God who is full of kindness, who reaches down to totally depraved sinners!

Kindness without bottom

Now, the way Paul talks about God's kindness is striking. He says that "the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared" (v. 4). He didn't just show us kindness. It appeared. And what could possibly be the kindness and love of God that appeared? Commentators agree. The kindness and love that appeared is Jesus Christ himself. When he appeared on earth, God's kindness, his unusual kindness, appeared in the flesh. Jesus is God's *hesed* in human form, on two legs! He's God's loving-kindness made visible, the ultimate philanthropist, the kind lover of people! This is who the Lord Jesus is!

His unusual kindness is also what led him to the cross—so not just his love, joy, peace, and patience, but his kindness too. He

saw how totally lost and depraved we were and like the good King that he is, his kindness moved him toward us, to appear on earth, to walk among and suffer for sinners, to save us from the muck and mire of sin and hell itself. What unusual kindness! This is unlimited and perfect kindness. This is kindness without bottom or shores! The Lord Jesus is the true king of kindness, the ultimate philanthropist, and the kind lover of his people.

The kindness and love of God that appeared in Jesus Christ did more than just save us from sin and death. The kindness of God in Christ led God to regenerate and renew our hearts and lives, and make our hearts beat again for the Lord by giving us his Spirit. Not in a scrooge-like manner. The LORD isn't stingy when he pours out his Spirit upon us. He poured the Spirit on us "generously" (Titus 3:6). That's our God! That's our Saviour. In his unusual kindness, he generously pours his Spirit upon us! His Spirit will renew, lead, guide, protect, give wisdom, and encourage us! He does so even—especially!—when his church struggles with how to respond to a crisis or controversy of one kind or another. Don't think for a minute that Jesus is unmoved and unwilling to extend his kindness. He extended unusual kindness to us while we were still his enemies; do you really think that now that we are his friends, his bride, that his kindness will stop or run dry?

Our kindness

The unusual kindness of God leads us to be led by the Spirit and so do what is good, excellent, and profitable. This is the conclusion Paul draws in Titus 3:8, "Stress these things so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone." Paul doesn't leave us in the dark here about what doing good looks like. He lists seven good things in verses 1 and 2. "Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men." And then he mentions more in verses 9 and 10. "But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless."

That last one is worth reflecting on. Associated with the idea of "foolish controversies" is the idea of zeal. Zeal is good, but foolish zeal is dangerous and destructive. Elsewhere, Paul says,

"Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels" (2 Tim 2:23). These are wise words for the church in every age and place. We must be careful to guard ourselves against stupid and foolish controversies. They only serve to distract our hearts and take our eyes off the unusual kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

All these are the good, excellent, and profitable things that flow from stressing the kindness of God our Saviour and the kindness of the Lord Jesus himself. It's the result of the Spirit's renewing work in our lives as well. And we can say that the good works that Paul speaks of in Titus 3 all fall broadly under the kindness that is found in the fruit of the Spirit. In fact, goodness is also another word that is used for God's *hesed*—his loving-kindness.

Look for Mephibosheths

Kindness in the fruit of the Spirit is not limited to the good works mentioned in Titus 3, however. Scripture has other examples of Spirit-filled kindness. One moving example is found in 2 Samuel 9. There King David takes in and cares for Jonathon's son Mephibosheth, a vulnerable cripple in great need. Mephibosheth is overwhelmed: "What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?" (2 Sam 9:8) This was a deliberate act of kindness on the part of David to a man in need (9:1), but this wasn't just David's kindness. David was showing "the kindness of God" to this cripple (9:3).

That's the privilege we have when we show kindness to others in their distress. We're not just showing them our kindness, but God's! What a reason to embrace the fruit of the Spirit. There are many Mephibosheths who need to receive God's kindness from us. There are people whose hearts are anxious and troubled, full of worry, who just need a kind word to cheer them (Prov 12:25). In this world there are people who are poverty stricken, persecuted, or who are lost and struggling. All of them need God's kindness. It's our privilege to show it. By doing so we're giving them a small picture of God's kindness to us in Christ. May the Spirit truly cultivate this kind of kindness in our hearts today and always! 📖



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Spring 2022

Meeting of the Owen Sound Mission Board

Opening

On Friday, May 13, 2022, we were once again privileged to host Rev. Paulin Bédard at an in-person meeting in the Owen Sound church building. He was joined by his beloved wife, Claire. Claire is also beloved by the congregation in Owen Sound, and it was such a pleasure to have her in our midst again! Accompanying them was a special young man, Christian Cruchet, whom we shall introduce presently.

Ken Hutten opened the meeting with reading from Psalm 105 and Romans 10:13. In both passages we are reminded of God's goodness and mercy, as well as the calling to proclaim his glorious, saving name.

Thanks were also expressed in the chairman's opening address for the Bédards making such a long drive to be with us, for the wonderful work of our Ladies' Aid, but mostly for the Lord's provisional care and guidance of his people's labours.

After the chairman's prayer, Rev. Bédard began his presentation. He expressed his great joy in being in our midst following a three-year absence due to COVID. We can be thankful for Zoom, but there is no better way to commune than by being together in person. He then outlined his presentation which follows in its three parts.

St. Georges de Beauce

We know and confess that God gathers, defends, and preserves his church by his Spirit and Word. Clinging to this truth, we can also confess that the Lord has used the past two years for the good of his church. From a human perspective, we have difficulty looking past the visibly shaken and weakened churches. As with most, if not all, church communities, this was also true of St. Georges.

During the times of restrictions and lockdowns, the St. Georges consistory asked Rev. Bédard to keep a healthy communication open between congregants and the consistory. This also involved the administration of a rotation system, laying out who could attend the worship service in person at any given time. Rev. Bédard had to remain sensitive to the needs of individuals as he practically laid this out. He confessed that pastors are not trained to tell some of their flock not to attend a public worship service. It goes against the grain. And yet, Rev. Bédard's focus rested on helping his flock walk with the Lord throughout all of these fluctuating restrictions.

With thankfulness, Rev. Bédard was able to relate how well the St. Georges congregation followed the lead of consistory in humble submission. No member sought to break away from the fold, whereas this was not the case in all ERQ churches.



Reverend Paulin Bédard



Christian Cruchet



Alexandre Grondin

This whole period was a heavy burden on Rev. Bédard, but worse was yet to come. On December 16, 2021, the Quebec government imposed a COVID vaccine mandate on all churches. This required anyone attending a public worship service to be vaccinated and turned away at the door if they were not. This lasted for ten weeks. It is significant to remember that when it began, no one could foresee its end. Our worst fear was that it would not end at all and lay the groundwork for future similar decisions. This was now an extremely heavy burden on pastors, consistories, and the flock of God.

After fervent prayer, the consistory of St. Georges came to the unanimous decision that they could not impose the vaccine mandate on the congregation. In their prayerful deliberations, James 2 on the sin of discrimination came to bear. There was deemed to be a big difference between the vaccine mandate and the previous government restrictions.

A letter to this effect was written to the congregation. The reaction of the members was not as unified as it had been before. Some members reacted very strongly in favour of following the government regulations. Although this mandate is now over, the consequences of those feelings are still evident today.

Psalms 42 was brought to mind as a calling to put our hope in God, who is the only one who can restore the brokenness of this life. Jesus Christ is the one who gathers and defends in the unity of the true faith.

Rev. Bédard then cited numerous examples of God's gathering work that became evident during all of these dark days. The powerful spreading of the Word, the miracle of newborn faith, and continued deepening Bible study were but some of the reasons for great joy!

Christian Cruchet

We were also privileged to have a special guest accompany the Bédards. He spoke to us directly in his native lyrical language while Rev. Bédard took on the task of translator for our benefit.

Christian is a twenty-four-year-old man, born in Switzerland, raised in France, and who is now working under the supervision of Rev. Bédard on a one-year internship as a ministerial candidate for the ERQ churches. He is also currently working on a Master's degree of theology.

His parents were missionaries amongst the poor Muslim communities in France. His father has an Evangelical background, whereas his mother's background is Reformed.

As he grew up in France, his family attended Evangelical churches as they moved quite frequently to various regions. His memories of youth have a sense of loneliness as his parents focused their attention on their work and a sibling of Christian's who had special needs. It was in the midst of this difficulty that he became keenly aware of some aspects of the Evangelical church that did not ring true. In his deepening Bible study, he began being attracted to the Reformed faith.

After three years interning at an Evangelical church in France, and at the invitation of a friend from the seminary in France which he attended, who himself had come to an ERQ church, Christian came to Quebec last September to see what the nature of the ERQ churches was about. Two months ago, he received permission to work in Canada for one year. After being examined at the ERQ synod, Christian now has a contract to intern under Rev. Bédard's supervision at the church in St. Georges for one year. The ERQ synod provided the funds for this to take place.

Christian fervently trusts in the Lord's wise guidance. At the same time, if God permits, he would like to stay in Quebec. He



Up until recent years, the majority of Christians resided in the northern hemisphere where relative affluence gave them easy access to solid Reformed printed material. Now there is a significant growth of Christians in the southern hemisphere. Numerous daily conversions are taking place due to God's providential grace. As a result, there is a great need and hunger for Reformed confessions, faithful commentaries, and supportive material. The easiest and most cost-efficient way to make this available is through online resources. This is the task of the RSC.

The RSC produces and posts all of its material in English at the present time. Much of the original target audience, both in the Caribbean and Africa, understand French better than English. This is where the labours of Rev. Bédard come into play. In 2014 the RC was launched. The RC website itself has a growing number of Reformed articles translated into French. In the past two years, over 1300 articles have been added, for a total of around 6500 articles at the present time. Also in this time frame, there has been a huge increase in users. Currently, there are 5900 users, 6800 visits, and 9800 pages seen on the site per week. The need is so great, and for that all praise belongs to our Heavenly Father!

regularly visits the other ERQ churches and participates in a variety of capacities including the giving of an edifying word from the pulpit, and participating in Bible studies.

In describing the comparison between Reformed churches in France and Switzerland, he noted the following. There are similarities in both countries. The churches have few members, the membership is predominantly aged, and there is minimal attendance of whole families. France's Reformed churches are mostly in the country where there is not much likelihood of young families joining. But more disturbing is that the faithful preaching is lacking. Heresies have infiltrated the preaching. A visible fruit of this is the acceptance of women in office. The pastoral task of elders is also misaligned, falling solely on the shoulders of the pastor. Christian expressed his desire that we pray for the Reformed faith in France while remembering God's covenant faithfulness that extends throughout the generations.

Ressources Chrétiennes

Rev. Bédard's work on *Ressources Chrétiennes* (RC) has very close ties to the Reformational Study Centre (RSC) in Pretoria, South Africa. Rev. Ryan Kampen of the Dunnville CanRC also works for the RSC. Briefly, the RSC produces online Reformed resources primarily geared to the needs of the African and Caribbean nations. The resources include courses to be taken online, explanatory notes on the Bible for preachers, and a growing library of theological material (see it for yourself at www.refstudycentre.com).

Tasks and responses

Rev. Bédard's work has many facets as he oversees the development of RC. Some of these are outlined below.

- Along with his wife Claire, he revised the language of the Belgic Confession as it was originally written in the French language. Yes! We were put in our places lest we thought that this Reformed document was written in English or Dutch! The newly revised French Belgic Confession is now available on the RC website and as a booklet format.
- Rev. Bédard also published on RC one of Rev. Stam's books, *Covenant of Love*, that has been translated into French by an Evangelical publishing house. A second book by the same author *Everything in Christ* is being translated by a volunteer.
- Rev. Bédard also shares material with *Foi et Vie Réformées* (FEVR) in France that produces Reformed webinars. Rev. Bédard taught one of these on the role of office bearers in the church last November.
- Rev. Bédard also shares with FEVR a number of materials that he produces and has published on RC, including a handbook for elders and a handbook for deacons.
- Rev. Bédard has extensive contact with church leaders in numerous African countries. At the meeting, he read from several emails received from these African Christians relating their use of RC material. In each of these letters there is expressed great thankfulness for the availability of this biblical material in the French language. To think that there are RC clubs in the Congo! How wonderful!

The following are several examples of the frequent correspondence received in the past couple of years:

- From a pastor in Burkino Faso, Rev. Bédard received thanks for the rich teachings being published. This pastor has been helped by the church planting material. He writes, "Times and circumstances change, but there is One who does not change. He knows the end of all things before it begins. He is the God of accomplishments."
- From a pastor of the Evangelical Baptist Church in Niger, thanks were received for the posted online sermons. They give much comfort to a people suffering under great persecution from the Muslims. They always gather under the real threat of having homes, schools, and churches ransacked and burned to the ground. This threat has come to reality too many times.
- From a house congregation in the north of Cameroon comes a hunger for Reformed material. The Christians in this very poor village do their best with limited internet access, and they are asking for any worn-out Bibles to be sent their way.

There are also two more additional projects that fall under the RC. Their content is developed by the RSC, with their translation into the French language falling under the supervision of Rev. Bédard. They are called VoxViva and Grow in Grace respectively.

VoxViva

This program, formerly known as Living Word, aims to provide Reformed commentary online on all Scripture passages. These explanatory notes will be most useful especially to pastors and teachers in Africa who are not much trained and who don't have resources at their disposal. This is a long-term project, where explanatory notes are continually being added. The notes are organised into seven categories, and they are produced for different levels of biblical understanding.

Alexandre Grondin is the paid translator for this material. Not only is he an excellent translator, but he also has a well-grounded understanding of Reformed theology. His work is under the direct supervision of Rev. Bédard.

Grow in Grace

This program consists of online courses having to do with the Christian faith. These courses will help build the faith and biblical knowledge of young Christians living in developing countries and prepare future church leaders in these young churches. For each course there are readings and questions to be answered. There will be an autocorrect feature to some of the questions, but a few will require an online marker. Once this program starts, Rev. Bédard anticipates a flood of students registering for the courses, and before that point online markers will already need to be in place.

Fellowship

After a formal closing of the meeting, we made our way to the gym where the Ladies' Aid had a beautifully set up ice cream bar. A great way to end a wonderful evening! 🍦

The Owen Sound Mission Board

CLARION KIDS

AMANDA DEBOER

LORD'S DAY 18

After the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, he spoke with his disciples. Then he started to rise up from the earth. His disciples watched until a cloud covered him. Jesus *ascended* into heaven. And that is good for us. But how? Well, Jesus is sitting at God's right hand. When you pray, the Lord Jesus asks the Father to listen to your prayer. Jesus can do this because he died for you. That is one good reason why Jesus ascended into heaven. It is also good for God's people to know that there is a human in heaven. Then we can be sure that we will go to heaven as well. And Jesus's ascension is good for us in another way, too. He sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts. The Holy Spirit changes us. He makes us love God more than we love our homes or our toys.

Figure out which letters go where to see how the disciples felt about the Lord Jesus ascending into heaven.

They were _____!
 6 9 12 12 5 4 23 9 20 8 10 15 25

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

See if you know what we confess in the Apostles' Creed about the Lord Jesus's work.

He was _____ of the virgin Mary; _____ under

Pontias Pilate, was _____, dead and buried;

He _____ into hell. On the third day He _____

from the dead; He _____ into heaven.

New Reformed Commentary on 1 Corinthians

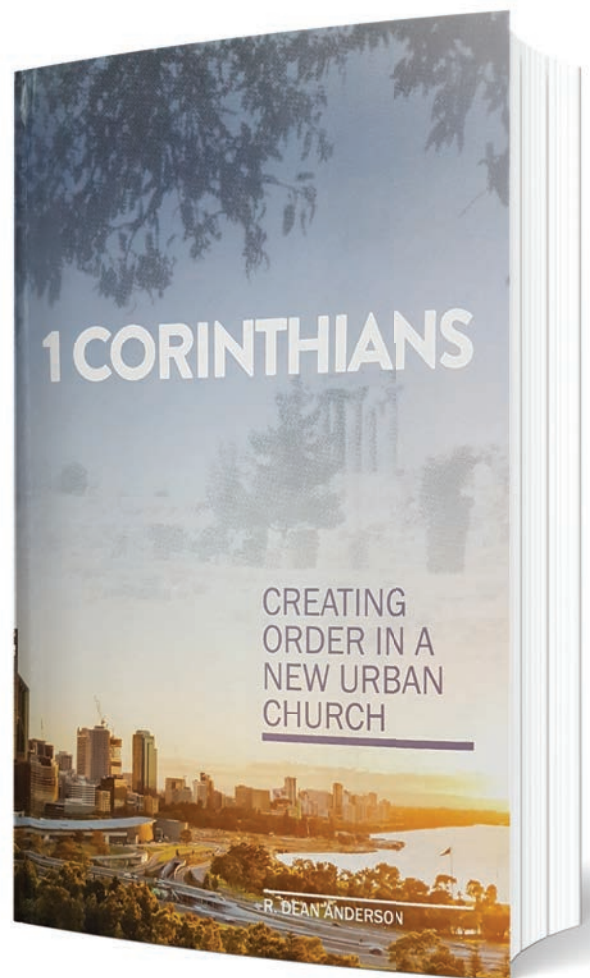
1 Corinthians: Creating Order in a New Urban Church R. Dean Anderson,
Western Australia: Pro Ecclesia Christian Publishers, 2022.
233 pages. \$29.95 CDN

New Reformed Commentary on 1 Corinthians

Bible commentaries deserve special attention when written competently by Reformed scholars and ministers. Such is the case with *1 Corinthians: Creating Order in a New Urban Church*, by the Rev. Dr. Dean Anderson, minister of the Free Reformed Church at Rockingham, Western Australia.

A fresh approach

Much attention has been focused lately on connections between the books of the New Testament and the context of the time and culture in which they were written. Dr. Anderson's academic background qualifies him well for integrating fruits of contemporary scholarship into this new commentary on one of Paul's letters.



There are significant parallels between Paul's letters and correspondence written around that time. There are also profound differences that reflect the transformative impact of the Christian faith. It is interesting to contemplate possible missiological implications of such parallels and contrasts.

Some highlights

Anderson's explanation of 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 has bearing on discussions concerning the speed at which excommunication could or should take place in certain cases.

Interpreting 1 Corinthians 6:1-11 in relation to what Paul writes in Romans 13:1-5, Anderson makes a very helpful distinction between civil jurisprudence and criminal law. This shows why it can be proper to let brothers in the church deal with a relatively trivial disagreement between fellow Christians but choosing to involve the authorities when dealing with crimes.

The explanation of 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 focuses on sexual sins that were prevalent in the surrounding culture and considered as "normal." Anderson's approach gives rise to reflection on missiological implications of how Paul defines sin and spells out God's law. This is helpful for understanding the demands of Scripture clearly and for learning to resist the pressures of today's culture.

The material on head-coverings (1 Cor 11) is interesting, since questions continue to arise as to how to apply Paul's remarks to our present time. The "Excursus: one or two worship services in Corinth?" (p. 147-149) provides convincing grounds for concluding that the church there met twice on Sundays.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit receive extensive attention in chapter seven of this book. Comparing 1 Corinthians with what Paul later writes in his letters to the Romans and the Ephesians, Anderson concludes "that Paul, when writing Ephesians, did not consider prophecy, speaking in foreign languages and miracles (including the casting out of demons) to be of any importance


in the battle which congregational members wage against the devil and his angels" (p. 162). The emphasis has clearly shifted in the direction of a proper understanding and application of "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph 6:17).

Examining the famous passage on love in 1 Corinthians 13 against the background of the rhetorical textbooks of Paul's day gives some fascinating insight into its content and structure. The subsequent section on "Regulations for the worship services" includes a clear and well-argued discussion of the command in 1 Corinthians 14:34 that "the women should keep silent in the churches" (p. 191-194).

Not just for scholars

Anderson's commentary will interest ministers and others who appreciate detailed exegesis. Scholarly discussions of certain points in various passages are printed in smaller letters. He consistently explains why he comes to certain conclusions, and he refrains from taking a firm stance where the evidence is insufficient.

Readers who are more interested in the general picture can skip the fine print and still enjoy this valuable resource, which includes helpful overviews of what will be dealt with and summaries of what has been covered.

Those living in Australia who are interested in purchasing this commentary can do so through Pro Ecclesia Bookshop (proecclesia.com.au). Canadians can order the book through Heritage Resources (heritageresources.ca) 



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MUSIC REVIEW

A Treasure Trove of Genevan Psalmody



I would like to introduce and recommend to you some newly published music pertaining to our Genevan Psalter. The producer is Arie den Hollander, who is an organist at Trinity Canadian Reformed Church in Glanbrook, Ontario. Arie has gifted us with an album on which is collected the organ compositions of the late Christiaan J. (Chris) Nobels.

Christiaan Nobels

Chris was born in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, in 1938, and immigrated to Canada in 1953. For many years Chris was an organist at Grace Canadian Reformed Church in Brampton, Ontario. Over the years he composed various preludes and chorales for all 150 Genevan Psalm tunes. As well, he created some new arrangements for various canticles, hymns, and other pieces.

Arie, who owns and operates his own IT company, created a web presence with links to all of Chris's arrangements (christiaannobels.com). This page is a treasure trove for accompanists and choir directors. All the music may be freely downloaded as PDFs. Chris wanted freely to share the gifts God gave him, and so does Arie. The only stipulation is that they not be reproduced for re-sale. Arie may be reached at adenhollander@fortesolutions.ca.

Widely Available

Arie's album is now available on many music-streaming platforms (please see below). Listen to your soul's comfort, to your heart's content, and to your ear's delight. I am no musician, let alone organist, but I can hear that Arie's playing of the various pieces is beautiful, disciplined, artistic, and musical.

Chris lived, served, composed, and accompanied to the glory of God alone. Arie's purpose is to preserve the musical legacy of a dear brother who was a gifted musician and a gift to the church. Arie writes, "On April 18, 2015 the LORD called Christiaan to his heavenly home where he has joined in making music with the heavenly choirs." May the LORD God be enthroned on the praises of Israel (Psalm 22:3).

Twenty of Chris's preludes, chorales, meditations, and a fantasia, are included in the playlist on Spotify, YouTube, YouTube Music, and Amazon Music. Coming soon to Apple Music. Searching "Christiaan Nobels" should bring you to his music. Enjoy! 🎵



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