



Clarion

291 OUR EARTH(LY) HOPE 297 GETTING UNLOST

304 THE REFORMATIONAL STUDY CENTRE

WHAT'S INSIDE

In Issue 8 we bring you a newsletter and an update on several international mission works: one among Portuguese speaking people world-wide (by IRTC), and a second throughout Africa (and beyond by RSC). While secular outlets bring us so much discouraging news of sin's destructiveness in this world (though they never call it sin), these pieces bring us so much encouraging news about our King's constructiveness in establishing his kingdom on earth! Take it all in with thanksgiving and pray regularly for all such faithful mission endeavours.

Two meditative pieces on the tremendous importance and benefit of Scripture study are healthy reminders for us to stay immersed in the Word even as beautiful summer weather begins to grace the Great White North. Jeff Morris gives us a helping hand in explaining to our unbelieving neighbours why the Bible is unique and so vitally important to Christians. John van Popta analyzes an aspect of the recent coronation of Canada's new king, Charles III, in an occasional column, Ecumena. Will den Hollander treats us to a guest editorial on the great "earthy" heritage that awaits us and how that should help us keep our focus on both soul and body in the here and now. Since livestreaming has become a regular thing in many of our churches, I offer some analysis on how such a practice compares with what the Lord asks of us in the fourth commandment.

Our issue finishes off with a couple of book reviews by Wes Bredenhof, one in the area of counselling and the other in biography. Rachel Vis introduces us to Charlie Beintema and other birthday celebrants in *Ray of Sunshine* while Amanda DeBoer introduces the children to the keys of the kingdom in *Clarion Kids*. Bill Helder is penning new song lyrics these days and the latest we present here is a rendition of key thoughts from our confession in Lord's Days 9 & 10 on the much-loved doctrines of creation and providence. Lots to ponder and enjoy as spring turns to summer!

Peter Holtvliuwer

contents

- 291** GUEST EDITORIAL
William den Hollander
- 292** TREASURES, NEW & OLD
Calvin Vanderlinde
- 293** Live Streaming and Worship
Peter Holtvliuwer
- 297** Getting Unlost *Wes Bredenhof*
- 299** Explaining The Bible In A Secular Age
Jeff Morris
- 302** Ecumena *John Van Popta*
- 304** The Reformational Study Centre
Ryan Kampen
- 306** IRTC Newsletter
- 308** God By His Creative Word
William Helder
- 309** RAY OF SUNSHINE *Rachel Vis*
- 310** CLARION KIDS *Amanda Deboer*
- BOOK REVIEW(S)
- 311** A Still And Quiet Mind
Wes Bredenhof
- 313** I Remember it Well
Wes Bredenhof

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:

- C**onfessionally Reformed
- L**oving in manner
- A**ttuned to current issues
- R**eadable and Reliable
- I**n Submission to Scripture
- O**pen to constructive criticism
- N**urturing Christian living

CLARION (ISSN 0383-0438) is published 16 times per year (tri-weekly) by Premier Printing Ltd., 1 Beghin Ave, Winnipeg MB R2J 3X5.

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor in Chief: Peter Holtvliuwer
E: pholtvliuwer@clarionmagazine.ca
Managing Editor: Laura Veenendaal
Contributing Editors: Eric Kampen, Jason Van Vliet, Matthew VanLuik, Jim Witteveen

CONTENT INQUIRIES

E: editor@clarionmagazine.ca

ADMINISTRATIVE INQUIRIES

W: clarionmagazine.ca
E: publisher@clarionmagazine.ca
T: 204-663-9000

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

E: letters@clarionmagazine.ca
Letters to the Editor must not exceed 300 words and are to be written in a Christian manner. See clarionmagazine.ca for guidelines.

SUBMIT AN ARTICLE

E: submissions@clarionmagazine.ca
Only articles which agree with Clarion's guidelines will be considered for publication. See clarionmagazine.ca for guidelines.

SUBMIT A BOOK REVIEW

E: bookreview@clarionmagazine.ca
Reviews should be 600-700 words and concern books which fit with Clarion's purpose. See clarionmagazine.ca for more.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

clarionmagazine.ca/subscriptions

2023 SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	Regular Mail	Air Mail	
Canada	\$ 59*	\$ 104*	*plus tax
USA (USD)	\$ 74	\$ 134	
International	\$ 104	\$ 178	
Digital	\$ 40*		

Digital can be added to print subscription at no cost.

Subscription renewals will be invoiced unless written subscription cancellation is received.

ADVERTISEMENTS

clarionmagazine.ca/advertisements
ads@clarionmagazine.ca

Full page \$434 | ½ \$234 | ¼ \$119 | ⅙ \$64
We reserve the right to refuse ads.

OUR EARTH(L)Y HOPE

In 1969 a singer-songwriter named Norman Greenbaum released the song “Spirit in the Sky,” identified by readers of *Rolling Stone* magazine as one of the top ten one-hit wonders of all time. If you’ve been alive for any length of time you may have heard it on the radio, in a movie (sixty appearances), or on a television commercial (thirty and counting). The refrain is catchy: “When you die and they lay you to rest / You’re gonna go to the place that’s the best.” It’s just the kind of sentiment that resonates with people’s vague (wishful) notions about what happens when you die, still expressed on gravestones too, despite our post-Christian culture. That’s why “Spirit in the Sky” is the second most requested song for memorial services, after “Danny Boy.”


Why am I dredging up obscure music trivia? Because as Christians with “a living hope” (1 Pet 1:3), we sometimes forget that when we die, we *don’t* go to the place that’s the best. Yes, we recognize with the apostle Paul that “to depart and be with Christ . . . is far better” (Phil 1:23), and yet going on up to the Spirit in the sky is not the *best*. While we sometimes speak of our loved ones who have died as “going home,” the reality is much more glorious. They (and we) are awaiting the return of Christ, the resurrection and glorification of our bodies, and the renewal of all things. Home is the new earth. Home is not disembodied and spiritual, but earthy, earthly, and concrete.

This truth is worth recommitting to our hearts, because we are living in a time where the physical and material are downplayed and the emotional and intangible are all important. We are living in a neo-Gnostic age, as Nancy Pearcey argues in her important book *Love Thy Body* (2018) and Carl Trueman recently outlined in his *Strange New World* (2022). Neo-Gnosticism separates the mind from the body, elevating feelings over (biological) facts. It lies at the heart of abortion and euthanasia militancy, and at the soul of gender confusion. But, contrary to popular belief, bodies matter.

Then it’s increasingly important for us as Christians to advocate for not only a right understanding of the beginning of all things (creation), but also a right understanding of the end of all things (consummation). Both of these, and everything in between, drive home the glorious reality that God creates, redeems, sanctifies, and glorifies souls *and* bodies, and that his glorious purpose is not

the destruction but the renewal of the whole *cosmos*, the entire created universe.

This much should be abundantly clear from the centre of redemptive history, the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his Gospel John writes, “The Word became *flesh* and dwelt among us” (1:14). The scandal and wonder of the incarnation are that, far from rejecting the material world, the eternal Son of God entered his creation and took on a physical body. What’s more, he didn’t adopt this body temporarily and then abandon it when it had served its purpose. Rather, the central reality of the Christian faith is that he rose again *physically*. After defeating death, he appeared to his disciples with his own body, a body that bore the evidence of his crucifixion in his hands and feet and side, a body that could eat fish and bread, a body that could be held and touched. When he ascended into heaven to reign at his Father’s side, he did so bodily, his physical arms outstretched in blessing over his church. And he will continue to reign from heaven as a fully human being until he returns bodily on the clouds of heaven to restore and renew all things.

In him, then, we have a living hope, not only for our souls, but also our bodies, not only for heaven, but also earth. That’s why, in Christ’s earthly ministry, the blind received sight, the lame walked, the deaf heard, the mute spoke, the demon-possessed were liberated, and the dead came to life. These were signposts that the renewal of all things was beginning; the King(om) was at hand. And they were a foretaste and foreshadowing of the world that is to come, the city where “no longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever” (Rev 22:3–5). This is our earthly hope. There is our earthly home. Come, Lord Jesus! 



William den Hollander
Professor of New Testament studies
Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary
wdenhollander@crtcs.ca

SOAK IN THE SCRIPTURES

“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

ROMANS 15:4

There is no shortage of ways in which to approach and absorb the summertime. Some prefer to make many plans (relaxation by addition) while others prefer to have no plans (relaxation by negation). Some simply want to enjoy the warmer weather and reduced pace of life parked on a beach or perched in a hammock while others set a busier schedule of vacations, camping trips, or other special outings. For most, variation between activity and inactivity is the sweet sauce.

But for all of its desirable qualities, summertime also presents some spiritual dangers. One is the temptation to chase after comfort and fulfilment where it cannot be found, leaving us worn out and weary, discouraged and unsatisfied. Another danger with less structure and routine is the temptation to waste away valuable time and opportunities God has afforded us to focus on what is eternal.

So how might we steer clear of these threats and ensure our time is spent, whatever time of year, in a truly fulfilling way? Given what he says in Romans 15:4, Paul’s answer to that question would certainly include concentrated time in Scripture so that it shapes everything we do with purpose. While verse 4 is a digression from Paul’s broader argument, it is helpful in teaching the value of God’s Word. It outlines three truths we ought to keep in mind whenever we read or listen or give thought to Scripture.

The first is that Scripture was written for us! Though it is the powerful infallible Word of God written for particular people in particular historic contexts, it is equally relevant for us in our day. How astounding that the great God of the universe was mindful even of you and me when he gave his Word!

Second, Scripture is for our instruction, in every part. “Whatever was written” is an all-inclusive statement. It applies fundamentally to the Old Testament but the principle extends to the New. Not a page in the Bible should be neglected or thought unprofitable. As Paul wrote to Timothy, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for

training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” The Bible, no matter where we turn, teaches us what is good and right and profitable for gospel learning and godly living.

Then third, Scripture is for our encouragement. It is not simply informational but transformational. Think of how Scripture contains God’s promises to be with you, to provide for you, to give you strength for every day and grace for every need. All this gives us hope in a world without it. As we treasure up Scripture in our hearts so that we are ruled by these convictions we grow in spiritual wisdom and endurance. This is the benefit of the Scriptures. If we need these things—and we always do—then we need the Scriptures. Each day we need what God has to say to us; that holds true for today, and whatever truths we may squirrel away for a later time.

Among the most popular tourist destinations in the world ranks the “Holy Land” in Palestine. In a sense this term has been misappropriated, for there is no land that is holier than another. However, as believers we have something even better in the Holy Scriptures where the Holy Spirit has stepped verbally into our world and we may trace his footsteps. Visiting this Holy Land is not only our privilege but ought to be our daily priority as well.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Read 1 Corinthians 10:1–13 and note the similarities with this text.
2. Read 2 Timothy 3:16–17 and do a word study on each keyword.
3. What in your life might hinder you from God’s Word and how could you correct this?



Calvin Vanderlinde

Minister

Nooksack Valley American Reformed Church

calvinvanderlinde@gmail.com



LIVESTREAMING AND

Worship

PETER HOLTVLÜWER

Over the last few years, during a time when churches faced restrictions on gathering for Sunday worship, many congregations quickly turned to the technology of livestreaming for help. Video cameras were installed and the internet connection was beefed up so that now on any given Sunday you can find countless churches broadcasting their services live over YouTube or the like. This has given rise to various questions and concerns: is livestreaming the worship service at home (or elsewhere) just as valid as attending in person? If it is, should we bother maintaining church buildings? Buildings are expensive and the money saved could go toward mission work, Christian education, or helping the needy. On the other hand, if livestreaming isn't acceptable as a way for the church to worship, should we continue to offer it?

GOD'S CALL

No doubt everyone will have their own opinion on livestreaming but hopefully we can all agree that the standard for judging its acceptability is not our feelings but God's Word. After all, the church is not our invention but God's creation. The church is the bride of Christ, and he is our Lord. So, if as individual believers we are to order our lives in obedience to our Lord, how much more as the church of Christ (1 John 2:3-4; 1 Peter 1:14; Eph 2:18-22)!

When it comes to the worship of the church, one of the first things Scripture makes clear is that God calls his people to come together in person for weekly worship. Israel was to gather together for a "holy convocation" or "sacred assembly" (NIV) on the Sabbath and at the appointed feasts (Lev 23:1-3; 35-36). Assembling for

Should we continue to offer livestreaming?

worship was part and parcel of the rest from daily work on the Sabbath day which God required in the fourth commandment (Exod 20:8–11; Deut 5:12–15). Congregational worship was to be a delightful occasion of seeking the LORD together in worship while fellowshiping as his covenant people. The Psalms speak highly of this privileged blessing. For example, David was eager to meet with his brethren to speak about the LORD to them, exclaiming, “In the midst of the congregation I will praise you!” (Ps 22:22). Ahead of every such gathering David would joyfully anticipate the worship of the church, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the LORD!’” (Ps 122:1). The various synonyms for church such as *congregation*, *assembly*, and *convocation* all refer to the in-person gathering of God’s people for the purpose of worshipping him.

This pattern continues uninterrupted in the New Testament. In Acts 2 we find the newly baptized members of the church devoting themselves “to the apostles’ teaching and the *fellowship*, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” In addressing the Corinthian church, Paul describes their regular habit, “For, in the first place, when you *come together* as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you.” It is true that the day for gathering switched from Saturday to Sunday in light of Christ’s resurrection on that day, but still the church gathered weekly as Luke relates it, “On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread” (Act 20:7; cf. 1 Cor 16:2 & Rev 1:10). The importance of coming together for worship and fellowship is underlined by the exhortation in Hebrews 10:24–25, “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, *not neglecting to meet together*, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” From Old Testament to New Testament, the Lord makes it clear that his people are to come together weekly in holy assembly to worship him.

THE CHURCH’S CONFESSION

Echoing Scripture’s teaching, the church has long confessed that we “believe and profess one catholic or universal church, which is a holy *congregation* and *assembly* of the true Christian believers” (BC Art 27). We further confess our obligation as believers to join ourselves to “this holy assembly” as members, to “unite with it”

and to “submit [ourselves] to its instruction and discipline” (BC Art 28). We also acknowledge that God commands us to “especially on the day of rest . . . diligently *attend the church of God* to hear God’s Word, to use the sacraments, to call publicly upon the Lord, and to give Christian offerings for the poor” (LD 38). These obligations necessitate the in-person gathering of the local body of Christ on at least a weekly basis. For this reason alone it is clear that livestreaming a worship service from a remote location is not equivalent to what the Lord requires in the fourth commandment.

COMMUNION OF THE SAINTS

Yet there is more to church than in-person gathering. When God calls his people to gather in person to worship him, he is at the same time calling them to do this as a specific kind of *fellowship*. To fellowship is to share together and what church members share is union with Christ. The church gathered for worship is not a loose collection of individuals who are merely there for a common purpose like happens at a sporting event, a movie theatre, or a lecture hall. Church is not a random crowd but a gathering of God’s family where each is a brother or sister of one another in Christ (1 Tim 3:15; 1 Pet 4:17). All members have a relationship together as children of our heavenly Father, purchased by the blood of Christ (1 John 3:1; 1 Pet 1:18–19). We are God’s covenant community. We share in Christ together and so in worship we together adore our Lord. To be sure, God certainly wants individual believers to worship him on their own (and households too) and maintain a personal relationship with him every day (Ps 1:2; 63:6; cf. Josh 24:15). But when he calls his church together for worship then the personal becomes *communal*. While each heart is certainly devoting itself to God, each heart does so in unity and harmony with the whole congregation.

*By God’s design, in all these ways
we both fellowship with Christ
and with one another*

Consider how a worship service goes. We confess our trust in God *in unison*. We sing with *one voice*. We pray as *one body*. When God speaks in Scripture and in the preaching, we listen *collectively*. We offer our alms for the needy as *congregation*. We participate in the Lord’s Supper as the *body of Christ*. By God’s design, in all these ways we both fellowship with Christ and with



one another. If you are livestreaming the service at home, then at best you can observe these things from afar and worship in your heart, but you are not participating in the *communal* worship of the church. Your presence is not felt or noticed by the assembly. Your voice is missing from the singing. You are absent from the Lord's Table. You may pray along in your heart, but the congregation is unaware that you do. No one in church knows whether you are watching at home or not or giving of your alms or not—there simply is no connection between the congregation and yourself. Livestreaming leaves a person cut off from the very essence of the communion of the saints that takes place during a worship service and for that reason too is not an equal or acceptable substitute for in-person worship.

MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITIES

And what about exercising our further responsibilities toward one another as a communion of saints? If we refrain from gathering and only tune in remotely to the services, how can we use our gifts “readily and cheerfully for the benefit and well-being of the other members” (LD 21)? The Holy Spirit has given certain gifts to each one of us for the purpose of helping fellow members and

building up the church (1 Cor 12, esp. v. 7)—how can we do that over livestream? To obey this command implies that we must first get to know our fellow members and their needs, but we can only do that if we regularly gather together for worship and fellowship.

Do we not have the same problem when it comes to Christ's command to admonish one another for sin and otherwise discipline one another in a spirit of love (Matt 18:15–18; 2 Thess 3:14–15)? How can we be aware of each other's lifestyles if we don't regularly meet together and spend time conversing? How can the elders, who are charged with overseeing our confession and life, properly supervise us when we livestream church? The simple fact is that God has designed church life to be *relational*, the same as a household or family. In the same way that you cannot genuinely participate in family life and be a blessing to your family members unless you are present in the same space and time as the other members, so we cannot participate in God's family unless we show up, take part, and stay involved.

LIVESTREAM BLESSINGS

None of the above means that livestreaming is forbidden or even ill-advised. On the one hand, live-streaming a worship service is a

good gift for those who are legitimately unable to gather for in-person worship. Until recently, persons who were ill or injured or even more permanently shut-in because of failing health and who thus sadly were *prevented* (against their will) from attending the gathering of the church, could at best only listen or watch recordings of a past worship service. Livestreaming for such individuals is a huge improvement. They can hear their own pastor preach and keep up with congregational needs mentioned in prayer in real time. While fellowship with the saints is not possible over livestream, tuning in over the internet does afford a person more of a sense of worshipping alongside of the congregation than ever was possible in the past. It is fitting to express thanks to God for this blessing.

Let's asks ourselves what is drawing us to stay home

Livestreaming also allows other Christians from who-knows-where in the world to hear the faithful preaching of the gospel. This only increases when the livestream is left up as a publicly available recording on a platform like YouTube. Here we can think of persecuted Christians in places where public worship is forbidden. Or consider believers in unfaithful churches who hunger for the pure preaching of the God's Word but have little or no opportunity in their area. Recorded services can also benefit Christians looking to grow in faith. Any such people who know English well enough can benefit a great deal from the countless faithful sermons that are livestreamed from our pulpits and left posted online. It's one little way we as churches can shine the light of the gospel.


LIVESTREAM PITFALLS

On the other hand, we need to use this good gift wisely and with care. During the time when governments forbade us to gather for in-person worship, wasn't there a part of us that liked the convenience of having church in our living rooms with a cup of coffee in hand? That enjoyed a lower-stress environment where we didn't have to interact with anyone outside of our household? If we wanted to, we could even sleep in and watch the service later

on. It's not hard to see the attraction, and some Sundays we might just feel like going back to that. Yet we also know that obedience to Christ must trump our creature comforts. Let's asks ourselves what is drawing us to stay home in our easy chairs: is it truly a desire to obey God and serve the upbuilding of his church or is it a desire to serve ourselves? The fight against sin starts in our own hearts.

Similar temptations can arise easily enough on other occasions such as being away on holiday and defaulting to livestream. Why get up early and drive forty-five minutes to the local church when you can sleep in and "do church" right where you are? Why bother planning ahead to choose a campground or a cottage close to a faithful church when we can go anywhere and just livestream? And if we are feeling unwell and stay home, another temptation is to tune in to a service of our choice—to our favourite preacher perhaps—instead of our home church. Every other day of the week we flip through channels to choose the program we like to watch, so why not on a Sunday when we happen to be home sick? With livestream as an option, it would not be hard to treat a worship service like a product to be consumed at our whim rather than an act of obedience to God that is to be done according to his will alone.

NORMS

It is important to maintain that livestreaming is not the equivalent of gathering for in-person worship and is not the norm commanded of us by God. All those not prevented from attending for some legitimate reason are called to diligently attend in-person worship and ought not to consider the use of livestream an acceptable substitute. This technology, which a few gratefully use out of necessity when they are truthfully unable to attend in person, ought not become an excuse for others to use as a matter of their own convenience. The norm of Scripture is that obedience to the fourth commandment requires in-person gathering with the church for weekly worship. 



Peter Holtvlüwer

Minister

Ancaster Canadian Reformed Church

pholtvluer@gmail.com



GETTING *Unlost*

WES BREDEHOF

I got lost last year. With a couple of friends, I was hiking Tasmania's epic South Coast Track. Most of this eighty-four-kilometre trail is really easy to follow. But there was a certain point at which we lost the track. It just disappeared. We continued on in the general direction, but before long we were bush-bashing. We did that for about twenty minutes. Then we stopped and had to admit that we were getting ourselves deeper into trouble.

It was time to break out the map and compass. Looking at the map, we knew where we'd started and we knew where we were going. There was a general direction of travel. Using the compass, we could follow that heading. So that's what we did. As it turns out, though we didn't plan it that way, our heading was offset enough to intersect with a place where we could pick up the track again. Thankfully, we were only off the track for about forty-five minutes.

When you get lost like that, it's like a navigational puzzle. There are certain key ingredients which help you solve the puzzle. The starting point is one of them. If you don't know where you started from, you might not be able to establish a general direction of travel to your destination. I know, I know, if you have a GPS, that changes everything. And if you're able to shoot headings on landmarks, you can also triangulate your position. But if you're in thick bush just on map and compass as we were that day, you need some fixed starting point from which to plot your direction of travel.

When you walk, you have a lot of time to think and, as we carried on with the South Coast Track, I thought about our experience of having been briefly lost. It reminded me of how important it is to have a good starting point when you or someone else is lost. That's true of being physically lost, but it's equally true of being spiritually lost. Having a good fixed starting point makes all the difference.

FINDING SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

In fact, in spiritual terms it's essential. To point the spiritually lost in the right direction, we want ultimately to point them to Christ. That's the "destination," if you will. Any other endpoint besides Christ means certain death. The only way to be pointed in the direction of life in Christ is by having the right starting point.

That point must be God's written revelation in Scripture. It's a fixed point—it never moves. When you do life's journey taking the Bible as your starting point, you're provided with a 100% reliable direction of travel.

This has implications for how we share and promote the gospel with unbelievers. They're lost and they need a reliable starting point to get unlost. The only reliable starting point is in what God has said in his Word. No, I'm not saying that evangelism and apologetics ought to be a stream of Bible verses. What I'm saying is that we ought to present biblical truth. We have to speak biblical

truth about humanity, about God, about sin and its irrationality, about salvation in Christ, and much else besides.

Psalm 119:89 says, "Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens." God's Word, like God himself, is immutable. It doesn't move all over the place or change from day to day. God's Word is also uniquely trustworthy: "Every word of God proves true" (Prov 30:8a). Therefore, it's the only reliable starting point, not only for our lives in general, but also when we seek to help people we love get unlost. 🇨



Wes Bredenhof

Minister

Free Reformed Church of Launceston

wes.bredenhof@gmail.com



Explaining the
BIBLE
in a Secular Age

JEFF MORRIS

When you read Scripture, it gets into the marrow of your spirit and convicts you that what it teaches is true. This is because Scripture is God's special communication to humanity and, when you read it with a believing heart, it transforms you. In the twenty-first century, it may be that your secular neighbour has never read Scripture. So how do you explain to her that Scripture is the Word of God, and how it originated? In this article we will consider these questions.

GOD'S GENERAL COMMUNICATION

God is a spirit, which means that he does not have hands or feet or a mouth (John 4:24). Yet, God is a personal being who loves humans and desires for us to be in a relationship with him. In fact, God communicates aspects of his nature to us through creation (Rom 1:19–20). Earth is located in a solar system that is part of a galaxy which contains 100 billion stars. The Milky Way galaxy is one of between 100 and 200 billion galaxies which

makes approximately 200 billion trillion stars in the universe. According to Albert Einstein, the mass of each star bends space such that the planets are in just the right sequence so that earth is locked in its orbit around the sun. The dramatic precision of the location of the celestial bodies allows the conditions for tulips to bloom in the spring—tulips whose shape, size, colour, and smell reflect the creativity of the One who made them. God communicates through creation.

God also communicates through our conscience (Rom 2:15–16). God designed humans after his image, which means he gave humans special capacities and responsibilities (Gen 1:27–28). These capacities include the ability to think rationally, relate to others, and make decisions. Such capacities make it possible for us to recognize our existence so we can thank and glorify God for his gracious work of creation. They also make it possible for us to create culture by partnering with others, building things, organizing, and executing plans. With these special capacities

How does God communicate his redemptive plan through Jesus Christ so that we might believe?

come special responsibility. God expects us to live according to the moral standards of his perfection. This means an uncompromising love for both him, as the supreme being, and for our neighbour, as beings created after his image. When we fail to live according to God's purpose for humanity, our consciences are weighed by guilt. God communicates through our conscience.

THE NECESSITY OF SCRIPTURE

While God communicates aspects of his nature through creation and consciences, our sin has alienated us from God so that we ignore what can be known about God through these means (Rom 1:18–19, 21). Since God is perfectly holy, he cannot tolerate sin. And since God is perfectly just, our sin cannot go unpunished. Still, God is a gracious and merciful Father, and he demonstrated that mercy through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus took the punishment that our sins deserved so that God's perfect justice is satisfied. And because Jesus obeyed God, God's justice raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus Christ reconciled us to God when he took the punishment for our sin on the cross, and God wants us to know this. Of course, we know that God is a spirit, so how does God communicate his redemptive plan through Jesus Christ so that we might believe? The answer—Scripture.

WHERE DID SCRIPTURE COME FROM?

Now your neighbour understands that because of sin God sent Jesus to the world to save us, and he communicates this redemptive work through the Bible. But what exactly is the Bible, and where did it come from? An important means of human communication is written language. If you have a thought in your mind that you want to share with someone else, you can communicate that thought by writing it down. Similarly, God wants to share his redemptive plan of salvation in Jesus Christ, so he communicates this plan by inspiring human authors to communicate his message through language. In fact, over several centuries God inspired many writers from various strata of society including shepherds, rulers, doctors, fisherman, and religious leaders to record his message through language. These writings were eventually compiled into the Old and New Testaments that make up the Bible.

OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament is comprised of thirty-nine books written by dozens of authors. It records God's interactions with his covenant people, the Israelites, from approximately 2,000 to 400 BC. The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew. There is some mystery around how the Old Testament developed but the contents do offer some hints.¹ For example, the Book of Exodus explains that the Israelites were slaves in Egypt when God raised up Moses who led them to freedom. As the Israelites travelled from Egypt toward Canaan, God gave them the ten commandments and other laws. The text explains that once Moses gave the laws to the people, "Moses wrote down all of the words of Yahweh" (Exod 24:4). The text also states that the laws were carefully stored in the ark (Exod 25:16, 21; Deut 10:2–5; 1 Kgs 8:9), and that they were recited to the people on occasion (Josh 8:35). And we learn from the book of Kings that centuries later, when Israel had become a kingdom with a monarch, King Josiah rediscovered the books of the law in Solomon's magnificent temple (2 Kgs 22:8).

Unfortunately, the Israelites refused to live according to God's perfect will. As a punishment, ten of the twelve Israelite tribes were exiled into Assyria in the eighth century BC, and the remaining two were exiled into Babylon in the sixth century BC. Eventually, by the hand of God's mercy, some tribes returned to Jerusalem and several more Old Testament books were written including Ezra, Nehemiah, Malachi, and Chronicles. Then, according to the first century Jewish historian Josephus, prophecy ceased so that no more Old Testament books were written since the time of Artaxerxes I (d. 424 BC).² Four hundred years later Jesus was born, whose ministry, death and resurrection initiated the writing of the New Testament.

NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament is comprised of twenty-seven books, and these were all written during the first century AD.³ The New Testament is written in Greek. The first four books, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, are known as the Gospels. These were written by eyewitnesses, or associates of eyewitness, who recall the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Most of the remaining books of

¹ For an interesting overview of the formation of the Old Testament canon see Wegner, Paul D. Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible.*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1999), 104-108.

² Josephus, *Against Apion*, Book I. Sec. 8.

³ Wenger, *From Text to Translations*, 135-136.




the New Testament are letters from apostles, such as Paul, Peter, and John, sent to the burgeoning Christian congregations that were sprouting all around the Roman Empire. The letters contain doctrinal insights, offer words of hope to persecuted congregations, encourage holy and righteousness living, and include practical matters such as the process for appointing church leaders known as elders and deacons. New Testament writers quote from the Old Testament extensively, seeing that Jesus Christ was the Messiah predicted by the Israelite prophets centuries before.

SCRIPTURE IS ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

Taken together, the Old and New Testaments tell a grand redemptive story of creation, the fall into sin, and God's work of salvation through Jesus Christ. Thus, while the Old and New Testaments contain many literary genres such as wisdom literature, poetry, and much historical narrative, the overarching theme that runs through the Bible is redemption through Jesus Christ. This is the remarkable reality of Scripture. God inspired writers centuries before the incarnation who predicted that a saviour would be born into the world to remove the barrier of sin that stood between us and God. That Saviour was born, and his death and resurrection transformed the world so that there are now over 2.4 billion

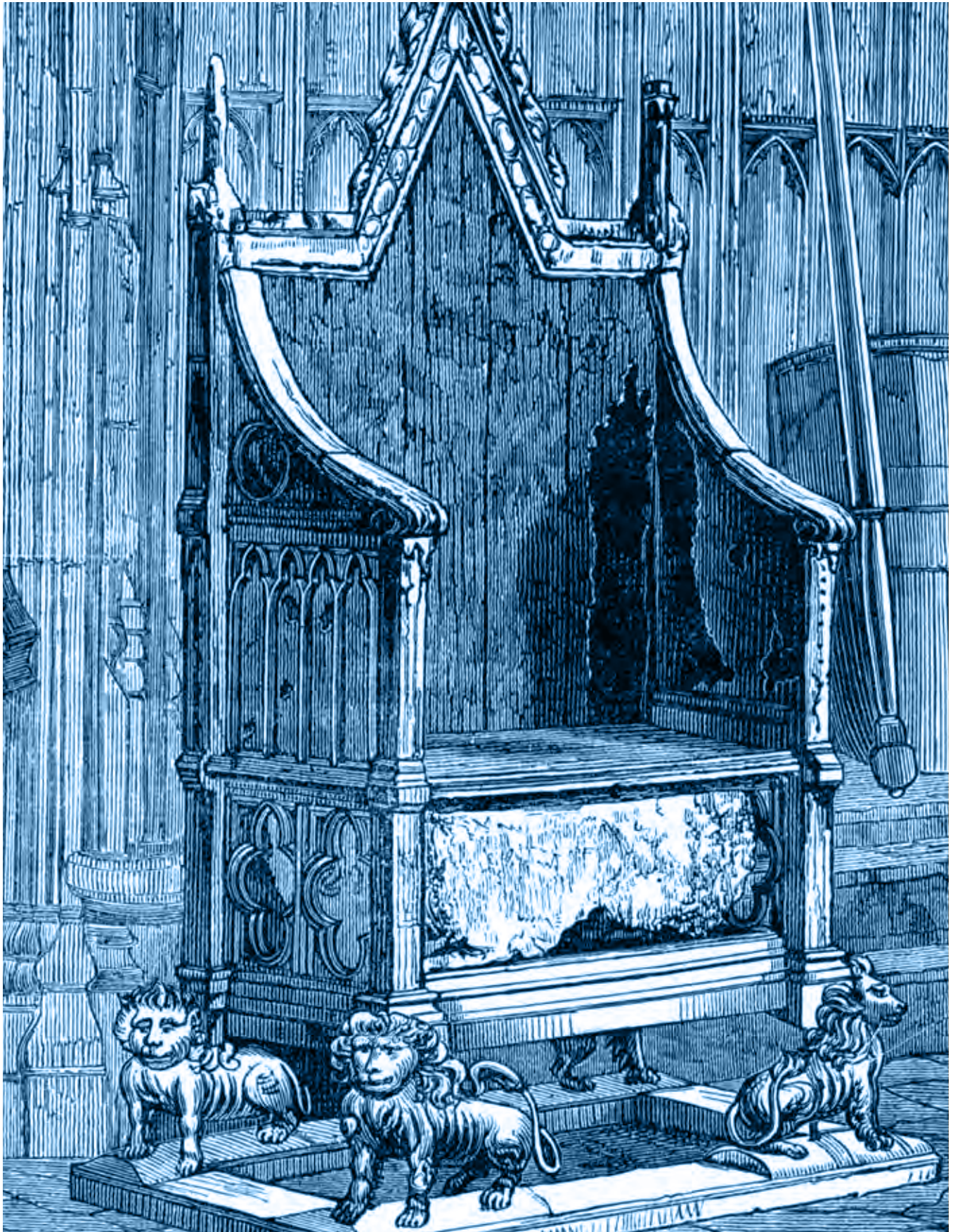
Christians around the globe. Not only that, but he promised to prepare a place for us with the Father (John 14:3). And because the form of this world is passing away (1 Cor 7:31), we patiently hope for a glorious future in the presence of almighty God, thanks to Jesus Christ our Saviour.

TELL YOUR NEIGHBOUR

God communicates to us through creation and our conscience, but because of sin, and by his grace, he communicates to us specially through human language. He also communicates through people who take up the content of Scripture and tell it to their neighbours (Rom 10:14). So, if your neighbour wonders what it means that Scripture is the Word of God, or where it came from, tell them. For when we do these things, we act as God's servants, who joyfully communicate on behalf of our master. 



Jeff Morris
Streetlight Christian Church
jeffbmorris@hotmail.com



The Coronation Chair in St George's Chapel is one of the most precious and famous pieces of furniture in the world. It has been the centrepiece of coronations for over 700 years when it is placed in the centre of the Abbey, in front of the High Altar.

A RETURN TO *Relics*


Martin Luther, the great Protestant reformer, rejected the veneration of relics as a legitimate religious practice for Christians. Biographers record Luther on the futility of this veneration. They report that he once quipped, “There are enough fragments of *the True Cross of Christ* to build Noah’s Ark!” A commentator in the *National Post* on all things social, political, and religious, Father Raymond de Souza, wrote an enthusiastic response to Pope Francis’s gift of two fragments of *the True Cross of Christ* to King Charles III.¹ I understand Father de Souza’s reaction and his reflections; he is a devout leader in the Church of Rome. What is inexplicable however, is King Charles’s veneration of these—so-called—*fragments of the True Cross of Christ*.

In September 2010, the Bishop of Rome Benedict XVI came to London to visit the Queen, the head of the Church of England.² Some 500 years earlier, the King of England, Henry VIII, had broken with Rome and declared himself head of the new Church of England. Since then, each British monarch has been titular head of the Anglican Church. In the years that followed Henry’s break with Rome, the Anglican Church joined the Reformation. Under the direction of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer and with the accession of Elizabeth I to the throne of England, Calvinism came to London and Westminster. Since then, the Anglican Church has been part of the Protestant world and, more specifically, the Church of England has been counted among the Reformed churches.

Benedict addressed the combined houses of Westminster, the “Mother of all Parliaments.” (It used to be a beheading crime to vow allegiance to Rome in Westminster Hall!) Later that same day, Benedict, Bishop of Rome, joined Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, in Westminster Abbey. Until that day, no Pope had ever set foot in this abbey during its 1000-year history. The leaders of the Anglican Church had invited many to this historic occasion and in the congregation were official representatives of the many branches of British Protestantism: Methodists, Baptists, Reformed, and Presbyterian. And thus it was that in Westminster

Abbey, *the Coronation Church* of the British monarchy, Archbishop Williams the Protestant and Pope Benedict of Rome greeted each other with the right hand of fellowship and with a kiss at the passing of the peace. At that, the congregation broke out in spontaneous applause and Pope Benedict’s wry smile betrayed his pleasure! During his discourses that day, at both Westminster Hall—to the Parliament—and Westminster Abbey—to the Church—the Pope did not shy away from reminding the audience that he was the successor of Peter. He was the Bishop of Rome, heir to the bishopric of Peter. In other words, “I am head of the church, not Rowan Williams and not Elizabeth II.” He insisted to those gathered that day that Rome remains (and always has been, and always will be) “Mother Church.”

Pope Benedict’s visit to London was a remarkable moment in the history of England, Britain, the Commonwealth, and the world. But it seems the present pope, Francis, has outdone his predecessor, Benedict.

On May 6, 2023, King Charles III will have entered Westminster Abbey for his coronation, led in procession by representatives of the Church of England of which he is head. Leading off will have been an ornate processional cross. Among the jewels encrusting the ceremonial cross will have been Pope Francis’s gift of two small fragments of the *so-called* True Cross of Christ. At his coronation, King Charles III, the Head of the Church of England, will have denied his heritage and his patrimony and returned the Anglican Church to religious practices its leaders had rejected since the reign of the first Elizabeth. 



John van Popta
Minister Emeritus
Fellowship Canadian Reformed Church
j.vanpopta@gmail.com

¹ Raymond de Souza. “Coronation gift is rich in significance.” *The National Post* (Vol 25, No 147, Apr 22, 2023).

² I wrote of Benedict’s visit to London in “Mother Church.” *Clarion* (Vol 59, No 22, Oct 22, 2010).

The Reformational Study Centre



Since its beginnings in 2008, the Reformational Study Centre has been busy with providing ministers in the Majority World with digital resources for sermon preparation and for growing in their ministries. It has been our joy and privilege to gather, translate, transcribe, and otherwise create theological content for the young church, especially in Africa and Asia. In his wonderful providence, the Lord has established the work of our hands upon us such that we are currently helping over 13,600 ministers in over ninety developing countries. Praise the Lord! And may he continue to bring our way so many more (in the millions!) who stand in need of help in their ministries.

LAMAD

Allow me to share with you a recent development at the Study Centre: a new project!

For a large part of our existence, we have mainly worked with ministers who had either some sort of theological education or a reasonable general education. The materials that we have gathered and provided have been ideal for this (large) group of pastors given their aptitude to study well (in general). But among our targeted users, there has always been a group of ministers for whom this kind of material was too difficult. As Study Centre we have had



extensive contact with this group through the years and, unfortunately, we could find little to no material suited to their level. So, we started writing our own material, at a very basic level, so that they could also study in their ministry.

This has resulted in our developing “courses” over the past few years for these lay pastors, as well as for office-bearers and regular church members in the young church. We have given the name “Lamad” to this project. The word is an ancient one, a verb from the Hebrew language. It can mean “to learn” or “to teach,” and is even used for a type of discipleship. These courses do not hold any official education status, but their primary purpose is to help the users read and study God’s Word and its teachings.




The front offices of the Reformational Study Centre, near Pretoria, South Africa.

As Study Centre we see this as a very big need in the young church, and thus the project will be an important one in the coming years. Courses so far consist of subjects such as the Trinity, the church, marriage, the office of deacon, and overcoming sin. Lots more to do! You can check out the project at www.lamad.app.

To give you a sense of the value of this project, I may share with you a note we received some months ago from a Reformed pastor in Johannesburg, South Africa. He had heard about this new project we were launching and enquired thereof. We showed him what we had so far, and he became very excited! He is currently mentoring and guiding eleven pastors with their studies at a seminary. Although this seminary does not have high standards, none of the eleven students passed their year. It was still too difficult for them. He was convinced that Lamad would be ideal for these pastors, since they really do want to study. So excited was he about this new project that he asked permission from his church council to take three weeks off from his congregational responsibilities every year to use them for teaching lay pastors in the greater Johannesburg area how to use Lamad. We were so thankful to hear about this! We ask you to join us in our prayers that our Lord would multiply the reach and value of this project in his ongoing, worldwide church-building work.

YOUR ROLE

There is another way that we would like to ask for your help. Among those who would be the primary beneficiaries of this project, there are many who have difficulty reading, or cannot really read at all. Therefore, one of the big ways in which we would like to further also this work is by making videos of the course contents. So, do you have a knack for making video content? If you have abilities in this area, please do prayerfully consider reaching out to us so that we can see how the Lord can use us together to further this work.

May the Lord of the church exalt himself by adding to his kingdom of glory through the ministry of the gospel! 



Ryan Kampen

Missionary

Called by Dunnville East Canadian Reformed Church
for work with the Reformational Study Centre (South Africa)
rjkampen@gmail.com

Studying Reformed Theology on the High Seas!

Introductory note: The International Reformed Theological College (IRTC), an online college that teaches worldwide in Portuguese, was founded in 2000 and has 181 students enrolled in the first term of 2023. There are three former Canadian Reformed missionaries on its Board of Directors and much of its financial support comes from Canadian Reformed churches and individuals. We are pleased to share an article from one of our Brazilian students. It appeared in our January newsletter. *Ralph Boersema*

I got to know the IRTC through my pastor, Rev. David Bezerra da Costa, who always encouraged his flock to dig deeper into the study of theology. My job as captain of a merchant marine vessel does not allow me to attend classes in person, which is why Pastor David recommended distance learning through the IRTC. His suggestion came at just the right time, so in 2014 I applied to the College, enrolling in the Bachelor of Biblical Studies program. I received that degree in 2022, and now I'm in the final stages of completing a Master's degree in Biblical Studies.

The greatest gift the IRTC is giving me is the opportunity to deepen my theological studies while maintaining my professional activities. I learn from accomplished, competent professors who know the Word of God, and I also maintain relationships with brothers throughout the world. However, there are still difficulties to be overcome. Internet speed on board is very slow and this

becomes a problem when I need to download my course materials. Currently, the only workaround is to do this using my cell phone's 4G network when we dock at the port.

My workday is twelve hours long and full of technical and administrative duties, leaving little time for studies. However, I have a motivated team that helps me in different ways, allowing me to study during my free time. At present, I am concentrating on my Master's thesis, "Weather Events Considered as God's Judgment." I explore the idea of how great events in the fields of meteorology, oceanography, geology, geophysics, and other areas are a mere foreshadowing of the profound transformations that the cosmos has yet to suffer and endure. Such changes are coming because men of all times have rejected the love, justice, and goodness of Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son.




IRTC BENEFITS

I've been incredibly blessed since joining the IRTC. God has used his valiant servants in the arduous challenge of teaching the Word of God to people of all ages who make up the student body of this beloved Reformed teaching institution. The profound life lessons I've learned have helped me to share the Word of God with the men and women under my command. Geologists, geophysicists, and oceanographers, among others with whom I had the opportunity to work and who called themselves atheists, will never be able to say that they were not confronted with the truth of Scripture.

Classmates and new IRTC students, I urge you to take advantage of every opportunity to tap into your instructors' knowledge. Read the books listed in the recommended bibliographies. Actively engage today with the saints who will enjoy heavenly glory with

you in eternity. Spread the word about the College in your circles of friends. People need to know that there are centres of excellence like the IRTC where it is possible to learn Reformed, biblical theology.

IRTC supporters, please continue investing in the Kingdom of God. The College will continue to expand its boundaries and more chosen men and women will be reached from afar, even on the high seas, to learn God's Word.

I will always be thankful for my time at the IRTC. I pray that the Lord will continue to bless each one of those who dedicate themselves to making this college known as a centre for excellent Reformed education, for the glory of God. 

Walker Calvet Ozório Correa

For more information about the IRTC and to make donations, Canadians can visit <https://irtcsociety.ca/>. Outside of Canada, visit www.irtc.online.

God by His Creative Word



1. God by his cre - a - tive word made the heav - ens and the earth.



He shaped all things found in them, out of noth - ing called them forth,



showed his might and maj - es - ty. God om - nip - o - tent is he!

2. By his pow'r he still upholds
all his creatures everywhere.
He for Christ our Saviour's sake
tends them with paternal care,
holds the whole world in his hands
in his loving providence.
3. Leaf and blade, and rain or drought,
times of sickness and of health,
bounteous crops and barren years,
and both poverty and wealth
come from God our Father's hands.
Nothing comes to us by chance.

4. We can put our trust in God
and be free from anxious fears,
for whatever trials he
sends us in this vale of tears,
in his loving Fatherhood
he will turn them to our good.
5. Yes, no creatures ever can
separate us from God's love,
for without our Father's will
they cannot so much as move.
We can with full confidence
trust in his good providence.

Text: William Helder, 2023

Tune: J. S. Bach, BWV 384: *Nicht so traurig, nicht so sehr*, 1736

Based on Lord's Days 9 and 10 of the *Heidelberg Catechism*

Charlie Beintema



Charlie lives in a group home setting with five other gentlemen. He loves going on outings and interacting with the staff. He goes out with his dad every Saturday morning for coffee, and then to the train station to watch the VIA rail train come in. Sunday afternoon is spent with his dad and his three sisters. Charlie lost his mom in October 2021, but in his childlike faith still sees her whenever the sun peaks through the clouds. Charlie loves getting cards in the mail; his address is 64 Llydican Ave, Chatham, ON, N7L 2A9. Charlie will be going to Toronto in August by train to watch the Blue Jays, courtesy of the Make a Wish foundation; he is very excited about that!

July Birthday

Happy birthday to James, Jeffrey, Sarah, Charlie, Derrick, and Joel! We wish you the Lord's blessing in the year to come. May you have a wonderful day celebrating with family and friends.

4 James Buikema will be **62**
c/o R. Jager
627 Maple Ave
Burlington, ON
L7R 1M7

11 Jeffrey Jansema will be **26**
158 Lane Road
Dunnville, ON
N1A 2W1

14 Sarah Vandergugten will be **28**
23 Jane Street
Smithville, ON
L0R 2A0

20 Charlie Beintema will be **48**
64 Llydican Ave
Chatham, ON
N7L 2A9

20 Derrick VanderHorst will be **36**
c/o Twin Oaks
3217 Twin Oaks Cres
Burlington, ON
L7M 3A8
Email: derrickvanderhorst@gmail.com

25 Joel Slomp will be **38**
316 Church Rd
Apartment 102
Spruce Grove, AB
T7X 0G2
Email: joelrslomp@gmail.com

25 Julie Ostermeier will be **35**
484 Millen Rd, Unit 5
Stoney Creek, ON
L8E 6G4

CLARION KIDS LORD'S DAY 31

What do you need to lock or unlock a door? A key! Well, in church we sometimes talk about the keys of the kingdom of heaven. These keys open and close the kingdom of heaven. They are not small objects you can hold in your hand. Instead, they are actions done in church. One of the keys of the kingdom of heaven is the sermon. Do you hear the minister preach two sermons each Sunday again? I hope you try hard to listen! The Holy Spirit uses the sermons to open or close the kingdom of heaven. When heaven is open, it means that God's covenant blessings are given to those who believe. Yes, to you! God is your Father. Your sins are forgiven. The Holy Spirit lives in your heart. But when heaven is closed, it means that the covenant curses are given to those who do not believe. May God help you to understand the sermons more and more!

Read Lord's Day 31, Question and Answer 83.
Then you will be able to fill in the blanks listing
the two keys of the kingdom of heaven.

The _____ of the kingdom
of _____ are:

The _____
of the holy _____

And church _____

K E I Z Y E M N
I H E A V E N C
N S C U K J K L
G C B I G D S O
D M S Z M Y X S
O Y O P E N G E
M Q O K T V C D
Z Y Q H P I Y M

Word Search keys

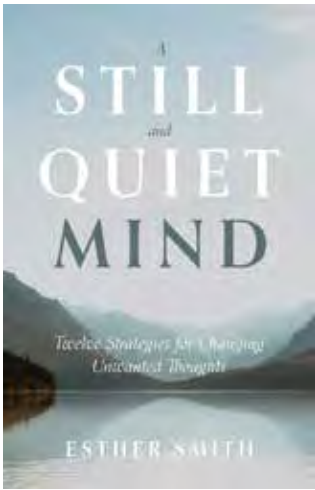
kingdom • heaven • open • closed



HEY KIDS!

Do you have questions about something you have read in the Bible or heard in a sermon? Maybe you are wondering about something you have read in a Lord's Day. We have a new column coming called KIDS' QUESTIONS. We warmly invite you to ask Mrs. DeBoer your question! With your parent's permission, email deboerca@gmail.com and find your question and an answer in Clarion!

AMANDA DEBOER



WHEN HOPES GO ASTRAY

A Still and Quiet Mind: Twelve Strategies for Changing Unwanted Thoughts, by Esther Smith. (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2022). Paperback. 175 pages. \$21.80 CDN.

This book looked promising. After all, everybody has to deal with unwanted thoughts—so it’s relevant. And it’s published by P & R, a firm with a long track record of publishing reliable books. Now, I wasn’t familiar with the author, but I was willing to give her book a go.

Esther Smith is a professional counsellor, specializing in helping people with trauma, anxiety, and physical illness. She has an MA in Counselling from Liberty University and a certificate from the Christian Counselling and Educational Foundation (CCEF). The qualification from CCEF got my attention as another positive sign. I have a lot of appreciation for CCEF and the people associated with it.

Well, as you already guessed, *A Still and Quiet Mind* didn’t meet my expectations. I wish I could recommend it because it does have some good insights and helpful suggestions. Unfortunately, there are three significant problems preventing a positive review. I’ll briefly outline them. There will be endnotes referring to sources with more details for those who need them.

PVT

The first problem has to do with something called polyvagal theory (PVT). This is a neuroscientific theory developed by Dr. Stephen

Porges. PVT speculates that evolutionary development of the nervous system has affected how we respond to stress. As the name suggests, this theory particularly focuses on the vagus nerve and its branches. The dorsal vagus is said to be the oldest branch and it is responsible for immobilizing us when faced with a threat. The sympathetic nervous system evolved more recently, and it is responsible for our “fight or flight” response. The youngest branch is the ventral vagus. This is active when we’re in a relaxed state. PVT calls this the “ventral vagal state.” One of the ways we can find the desirable ventral vagal state, according to the theory, is through body awareness techniques including mindfulness and controlled breathing.

PVT is controversial even in secular scientific circles. Some regard it as pseudo-science. According to an article from *Psychology Today*:

The notion that different parts of the vagal nerve and the nervous system reflect different levels of evolutionary development is strongly contested. Structures and functions that Porges identifies as more evolved are notably present in the physiology of animals such as lungfish, which show little evolutionary sophistication. There’s also quite a bit of hypothesizing going on, such as the speculation that certain reactions (freezing) are more evolutionarily primitive.¹

¹ “Polyvagal Theory: Useful Narrative But Still Just a Theory,” by David J. Ley. Online at: <https://tinyurl.com/ype5h6m2> (accessed April 28, 2023).

Additionally, there is little empirical evidence supporting any positive outcome from applications of PVT.

From a Christian perspective, this theory is based on assumptions that are based on the assumption that Darwinian macro-evolution is a fact.² That should be an immediate red flag for any Christian who takes God at his Word when it comes to creation. Unfortunately, the endnotes of *A Still and Quiet Mind* indicate that Esther Smith has incorporated PVT into her strategies for changing unwanted thoughts. For example, she cites Deb Dana's *The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy*. Moreover, her strategies for dealing with unwanted thoughts centre on mindfulness techniques and breathing—exactly what PVT proposes. I don't think PVT can be disentangled from Darwin, but if Smith thinks it can, it would have been helpful to have an explanation of how, at least in the endnotes.


CONTEMPLATIVE SPIRITUALITY

A second significant problem has to do with contemplative spirituality.³ Smith favourably refers to contemplative authors Richard Foster (*Celebration of Discipline*) and Brother Lawrence (*The Practice of the Presence of God*). She sometimes adopts their language of inviting God to be present with us—as if he needs our permission! But she also encourages mystical, contemplative practices, particularly breath prayers. Breath prayers incorporate the repetition of short biblical phrases—half the phrase as you inhale, and the other half as you exhale. Smith calls this “meditation,” and she has “guided meditations” at the end of almost every chapter. Throughout these meditations, she often asks: “What do you feel?” or words to that effect. Instead, we ought to be asking, “Is it right?” Do we find breath prayers in the Bible? The answer, combined with Christ's warning against repetition in prayer (Matt 6:7), should

make us wary. When contemplative spirituality is combined with polyvagal theory, we ought to be even more wary.

WORD & SACRAMENT

The last problem is a failure to recognize the importance of Word and Sacrament ministry in helping people change. Smith's approach doesn't involve the church and her worship. Instead, it's what you do experiencing the presence of God in your own private setting, or maybe with a counsellor. However, there is only one place on earth that God promises to be present to bless his people and that's where the Word and sacraments are administered. Can the preaching of God's Word on Sunday help someone to deal with unwanted thoughts? It absolutely has the power to do that. Can the celebration of the Lord's Supper help someone in dealing with unwanted thoughts? Yes, because its multisensory approach is powerful to focus our thoughts on Christ the crucified. The more our thoughts are trained on Christ, the less we'll struggle with those other thoughts. Esther Smith acknowledges that in *A Still and Quiet Mind*, but she disconnects it from the means of grace administered by the church.

Combining evolutionary pseudo-neuroscience with mysticism and omitting the means of grace leads me to say, “It's a ‘no’ from me.” Perhaps some discerning readers might nonetheless be helped by some of what's in *A Still and Quiet Mind*. But I can't in good conscience recommend it. 



Wes Bredenhof

Minister

Free Reformed Church of Launceston

bookreview@clarionmagazine.ca

² For a more detailed Christian critique of PVT, see “Counseling Theory Matters: Understanding and Evaluating Polyvagal Theory,” by Kyle Gangel. Online at: <https://tinyurl.com/yc4nm2w3> (accessed April 28, 2023).

³ For more information, see *A Time of Departing: How Ancient Mystical Practices are Uniting Christians with the World's Religions*, Ray Yungen (Silverton: Lighthouse Trails Publishing Company, 2006).



A GRITTY AND COMPELLING IMMIGRATION MEMOIR

I Remember It Well, by Betty Kampen, van Ommen.
(Meadville: Christian Faith Publishing, 2022).
Paperback. 140 pages. \$26.19 CDN.

I've had the pleasure of reading several memoirs of Dutch immigrants to Canada and Australia. You might think they all start to sound the same after a while. They don't. Sure, there are some similarities. For all these immigrants, there were enormous challenges and those immigrating to Canada generally had a tougher time than those going to Australia. But, despite that, every immigration story is unique.


Betty Kampen has written an honest and captivating account of her family's immigration to Canada in 1954. She relates her childhood memories of life in the Netherlands prior to immigration. We learn about rural life near the village of Zalk, in the province of Overijssel. When she was 10 years old, the family set out for a new life across the ocean. One of the unique aspects of her story is that it was a large extended family that migrated—a family that included three generations. Betty's parents also had a unique reason for wanting to move to Canada—but to find out, you'll have to read it for yourself.

Upon arriving in Canada, the van Ommen family settled in the Orangeville area. Being farmers in the Netherlands, it was natural that Betty's family would want to farm in their new home too. Of course, there were many hurdles to overcome, not the least of which was the long, cold Canadian winter. Once the snow

disappeared, then there was the spring mud clogging the roads. Nothing was easy.

From the Netherlands to Canada, Betty also richly describes church life. What was worship like in the Reformed Church in Zalk in the early 1950s? How did these immigrants adjust to things like Canadian funeral customs?

The last few chapters bring us closer to the present. Betty tells the story of how she met and married Rudy Kampen in 1964. Eventually they also settled back in Orangeville, where they raised their four sons. Sadly, one of those sons passed away in 2010 and the author is candid about her struggle with that and how her faith was tried.

I really enjoyed reading *I Remember It Well*. It's not only well-remembered by the author, it's also well-recounted. She's included many family pictures throughout too. If you appreciate immigration memoirs like I do, this one is a must-read. 



Wes Bredenhof

Minister

Free Reformed Church of Launceston

bookreview@clarionmagazine.ca

