

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

V 66 N 22 NOVEMBER 3 2017



**Remember
the victory
that never fades**

**BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING
CLARION KIDS
YOU ASKED**

Big Brother is Watching

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Does this not sound like Big Brother?

In his classic 1949 novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, George Orwell pictured the horror of living in a society controlled by an elite headed by Big Brother. The state decides what is true and, through its Thought Police, attempts to squash any individualism and tries to manipulate the very thinking processes of its citizens. It is intriguing that this novel was written before the age of television, computers, and other electronic marvels we are familiar with today. In several ways, this story was prophetic. North Korea and China come to mind as examples of the Big Brother state seeking to control everything, even people's thoughts and minds.

The Chinese Big Brother

The pressure on Chinese Christians continues to grow. A few years ago, the state demanded the removal of crosses from the top of churches and force was used to ensure that this happened. Last year the state decreed that churches display the Chinese flag inside their place of worship. And now the pressure has escalated even more. June Cheng reported in *World* magazine ("Under Big Brother's Eye," May 13, 2017), an article I'll be quoting from, that the Chinese authorities are forcibly installing video cameras in churches in spite of the fact that the state has officially recognized these churches. Some of this intrusion into the churches has been documented. For example, one video shows Chinese police in riot gear using the cover of darkness to climb over a Wenzhou church wall to install the surveillance devices inside the church building. The worshippers are inside and scuffles break out and Christians try to resist the invaders.

"To add insult to injury," Cheng reported, "the churches must pay more than a \$1,000 to cover the cost of the cameras." If they don't do so, the state will shut down the church.

The government rationalizes such an invasive measure as "an extension of China's goal to cover the nation with a network of surveillance cameras by 2020 to 'maintain national security' and 'prevent acts of terrorism.'" Apparently Beijing "is considered 100 percent covered, according to the official Xinhua News Agency, with cameras peering in to 'every corner' of the capital." These cameras are highly sophisticated. They "have hightech facial recognition technology that can track who is showing up at a church and giving tithes. The church's every move will now be subject to monitoring by the Public Security Bureau." In a typical installation, four surveillance cameras are installed in a church: "One outside pointed at the door, one facing the pulpit, one facing the congregation, and one directly over the tithe box." Does this not sound like Big Brother?

The government is very determined to watch every move Christians make. "Some churches said government officials installed cameras in their meeting rooms and offices, which would allow the government to spy on private discussions and view private documents." It has been estimated that China has about twenty to thirty million surveillance cameras tracking its citizens. The Chinese state is clearly determined to control any citizen who thinks differently from the official Communist Party line. Since Christians acknowledge Christ's authority above that of the state, they are considered a security risk even though there is no evidence of any Christian being involved in terrorist activity.

As a result of these state intrusions, more and more Christians are leaving the churches recognized by the state and going underground to house churches which are not registered with the government. Since these churches meet as small groups in homes, it will be more difficult for the

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Issue 22 begins with Dr. Cornelis Van Dam's editorial, "Big Brother is Watching." Referring to the image of a government watching, controlling, and manipulating, he brings to our attention what Christians in some of the world are going through.

Next we have a report of the Sub-committee Relations Churches in the Netherlands regarding their visit to Synod Meppel 2017. The report details the context, their visit, and some concluding remarks.

In federation news we have an article from Denver Family Camp, on their tenth annual camp.

There are a number of regular columns: Treasures New and Old, Clippings on Politics and Religion, *Clarion Kids*, and You Asked. There is also a Readers Forum article, press releases, and a book review.

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government to monitor and control them. But while the Chinese Big Brother can't see them everywhere, these Christians are comforted by the fact that their own Big Brother, Jesus Christ, can see them. He watches over them. And not only that, he can also continue to renew and encourage them by his Word and Spirit. Although we in the free West do not experience anything like the Chinese Christians do, Christ's being our Big Brother is also our comfort as efforts are ongoing to curtail our religious liberties as well.

Our Big Brother

Our Saviour identifies us as his brothers and therefore also sisters (Hebr 2:11; also Matt 28:10). This is an amazing truth that we can scarcely truly comprehend. He has made it possible for us to call his Father our Father as well and so he is our brother, our Big Brother, "the first born among many brothers" (Rom 8:29). The term "firstborn" underlines Christ's preeminence and supremacy. As firstborn he is the

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our lives to see if
we are really on
fire for his cause***

ated" and "he is before all things and in him all things hold together" (Col 1:15-17). And he, as our Big Brother, as firstborn of creation, is "the head of the body, the church" (Col 1:18) who watches over his brothers and sisters, his church. The comfort that Chinese Christians have is ours as well.

In our rapidly changing world, where tremendous anti-Christian cultural changes are occurring, we may know that our Saviour is "the ruler of the kings of the earth" (Rev

"highest of the kings of the earth" (Ps 89:27). But the term "firstborn" also indicates that he is much more than human. He is the "firstborn of all creation," that is, "by him all things were cre-

1:5). He is sovereign King, seated at the right hand of God, the Father, "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he [the Father] put all things under his feet" (Eph 1:20-22; also see 1 Pet 3:22). Christ keeps a close eye on the goings on in this world, especially with a view to the welfare of his people. The letters our Saviour sent to the seven churches are a clear reminder of that reality. To the suffering church of Smyrna he wrote: "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. . . . Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev 2:10).

While he encourages, he also reminds his churches that he is Big Brother who also watches to see if we are faithful. For us living in the relative comfort of Western society, which can easily lead to putting down our guard, he warns us to be alert and not to fall asleep (Rev 3:2). Our Saviour also tests our lives to see if we are really on fire for his cause. He hates a less than wholehearted commitment and condemns lukewarmness (Rev 3:15-16). So our Big Brother communicates to us through his Word that he watches us because he loves his church and wants his people to be ready for his coming.

And so the dominant note of our Big Brother's watching is comfort. He watches the church so closely because they are precious to him, purchased with his blood. Obedience is rewarded. "Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown" (Rev 3:10-11).

May the reality of our Big Brother watching us be a source of constant encouragement and strength as we seek to keep the faith in a faithless world and strive to shine the light of the Good News in the darkness that surrounds us.



Beijing, China

The Mighty Men

"These were the chiefs of David's mighty men – they. . . gave his kingship strong support to extend it over the whole land, as the Lord had promised." 1 Chronicles 11:10

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Each year on November 11 we remember those soldiers who fought to defend our freedom. Even though some of the battles were contested seventy or even one hundred years ago by numerous battalions and squadrons, individual acts of heroism still stand out. A lowly private who stormed a machine gun nest with only a rifle. A pilot shot down behind enemy lines who crawled all the way back to safety with a broken leg.

Each year such stories are retold as shining examples of dedication, bravery, and patriotism. Hearing these true tales of victory, and seeing all those white crosses that mark the resting place of many whose stories are now forgotten, we are moved to say thanks to those ever-dwindling veterans with medal-covered chests.

The remembrance of war heroes is found in Scripture, too. In 1 Chronicles 11:10-47 we can read of King David's mighty men. We find here numerous names, but some of these stand out because of the greatness of their deeds. Jashobeam, who killed 300 men single-handedly (v. 11). "The Three," who broke through Philistine lines in order to get David a drink of water (vv. 17-18). Or Benaiah, who "struck down an Egyptian who was seven and half feet tall" (v. 23).

Like the military heroes of our nation, these mighty men of Israel carried out such exploits with purpose. It wasn't mindless bravado; it was intentional combat. For the Chronicler says

this about the great Israelite warriors and their chiefs: "They. . . gave [David's] kingship strong support to extend it over the whole land, as the Lord had promised" (v. 10).

These men fought to help David in his rule as king. The nation Israel faced a host of external enemies and internal challenges, yet in these mighty men God provided David with strong and necessary military support. With them lined up behind him, David was able to defeat the Philistines, the Moabites, the Arameans, and many others. What's more, the whole nation could now be united under one stable and godly king.

In the grand scheme of things, the individual acts of these mighty men were very small: 300 enemies killed here, a tall foe there. Yet it was on the backs of these war heroes that the Lord built for himself a mighty kingdom. Just as God had promised, David would be king over all Israel!

And God's promise extended way past the modest gains made in David's time. The Lord also swore to David that one of his offspring would be set over God's house and kingdom forever (cf. 1 Chron 17:14). David, and all Israel with him, looked forward to an eternal Messiah, who would be a great king – as great as David, or even Solomon, and then so much greater.

The mighty men of David fought for a king who was but a shadow of coming greatness. One day King David would die, one day Israel would fall,

yet the brave deeds of the mighty men were not in vain. Yes, they are *remembered*, for by God's grace and with his power these men had their part in preparing the way for the coming King. With spear and sword they defended the house from which the Messiah would come!

It was God who ensured the enduring impact of David's mighty men – let us pray to God that also the past deeds of our nation's military are not in vain. Though their stories are recorded in the history books, the names and deeds of our nation's brave soldiers are now slowly fading from relevance. For today the tyrant of unchecked lawlessness is advancing and our free country is being willingly enslaved.

May we pray and work fervently for our nation, but at the same time let us work for our other country, the one not of this earth. Remember the victory of our great King, the son of David, who single-handedly vanquished his enemies. Remember the victory of Christ – and heed his call to join his army as kings and as queens. Mighty in the power of the Spirit, let us fight the devil and fight all those who are on his side! For though our deeds be small and our hearts fearful, it's God "who leads us in triumphal procession in Christ" (2 Cor 2:14). In Christ God gives us the victory that never fades.

This meditation was originally published in this magazine in 2005.



Visit to Synod Meppel 2017 of the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in The Netherlands

If you read the Acts of the last number of synods of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC), you'll notice that there has been a growing concern in the CanRC about the direction the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (RCN) have been taking since around the year 2000. This eventually led to Synod Burlington 2010 appointing a sub-committee for the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA), called the Sub-committee Relations Churches in the Netherlands (SRCN). This sub-committee has reported to the last two synods of the CanRC with growing concern about the developments in the RCN. The main concern has been how the Bible is being interpreted in the RCN. This concern has become focussed on the place of women in the RCN. The past three synods in RCN have received reports of their Deputies Male/Female in the church which have shown a Bible interpretation which has tried to show that the Bible is not as clear about excluding women from church offices as has historically been accepted in Reformed churches world-wide. The Deputies M/F released another such report at the end of October 2016 for their upcoming Synod Meppel in 2017.

The SRCN met a number of times in 2016 and 2017 to review our mandate and to prepare for the report of the RCN M/F. The deputies were late with their report, so the SRCN was unable to go into the full report in detail. However, a response to the biblical section of the report was prepared, which we believe was the most important part. This response was sent to the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the RCN (BBK) and they forwarded it to Synod Meppel to be included in their considerations concerning the report at Synod.

Foreign Delegates Week at Synod Meppel 2017

All four members of the SRCN attended the "Foreign Delegates Week" at Synod Meppel 2017 from April 3 to 8, a week organized by the RCN synods to receive and regale delegates from their numerous foreign sister churches throughout the world. We were warmly welcomed on April 3rd at a beautiful meeting facility (Mennoorde) in the forests of the Veluwe near Elspeet. As usual for the RCN synods, the eating and sleeping and meeting arrangements were superb. Over time there were approximately thirty-five foreign delegates from various continents. On Tuesday, April 4, the foreign delegates were taken to downtown Amsterdam and given a tour of evangelistic efforts among drug addicts and prostitutes there. The following day we were transported to Kampen to view some of the city and to listen to some presentations by lecturers at the Theological University Kampen about "Reformed Witness in a Multi-Religious Word." That evening we met with the delegates of the Reformed Church in the United States, the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) to discuss common concerns and our approach to the report of the Deputies M/F entitled "Serving Together." Members of the SRCN also engaged in private discussions with other foreign as well as Dutch delegates. Almost all foreign delegates expressed concern about the report.

On Thursday April 6, after breakfast, the Dutch synod delegates and the foreign delegates gathered together in the main hall of the Mennoorde facility, and after devotions and introductions, three foreign delegates were in-

vited to make presentations – Rev. R.D. Anderson of the FRCA, Prof. Dr. H.M. Yoo of the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea, Rev. D. K. Kithongo of the Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church. They spoke about their churches and also of the views of their churches concerning women in office. All three, while acknowledging the significant role of women in the church, urged the RCN not to adopt the report and open the offices for women. These presentations were followed by a defense of the report “Serving Together” by one of the Deputies M/F, Dr. Erik de Boer.

Organizers at Synod had prearranged four groups each composed of some synod delegates, Deputies Men/Women, and foreign delegates. These four groups met for an exchange of thoughts following lunch. The meetings were respectful and along with the other delegates of sister churches we had opportunity to critique the report “Serving Together” and to listen to the defense of the report. A few of the concerns raised in the meetings we attended were:

1. The report has come with a new interpretation of passages such as 1 Timothy 2 which historically have always been plainly read as forbidding women to have authority of office and to preach. The reply was that these passages were interpreted from the point of view of a male-oriented culture, and in our more egalitarian age eyes have been opened to other ways of interpreting those passages.
2. Who determines what the culture was at the time the New Testament letters in particular were written? The response was that this is a matter of ongoing research.
3. The report was selective in the passages it interpreted, for instance not dealing with some Scripture passages which obviously deal with the matter of offices. For instance, 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 outline the qualifications for office and both speak of the need for elders and deacons to be the husband of one wife. There was no substantive reply to this.
4. The four layers of meaning which the deputies applied to the Bible in their report is a self-made system which they have imposed on Scripture and various passages in the Bible can arbitrarily be assigned to one or other layer, depending on how one wishes to see such passages. The response was that the Bible lends itself to such a system of four layers and the (cultural) context determines which layer is suitable for each passage.
5. Could the same contextual approach to Scripture when applied to other contemporary ethical matters (e.g. homosexual relations) not end up emptying the Bible of

its normative quality? The reply was that each ethical issue needs to be examined in the light of Scripture on its own.

Many of the foreign delegates had questions, but it became apparent over time that the deputies and most of the synod delegates had made up their minds that Scripture does not forbid women in office, even if it does not recommend women to serve in the church offices. Unfortunately, these meetings were held behind closed doors and we were not given opportunity to address Synod in session as a whole about our concerns. This means that the concerns expressed in those meetings remained “off the record.”

That afternoon we were bussed to the Meppel RCN (“Kruiskerk”) and treated to supper by the congregation. Afterwards there was a worship service in which the Lord’s Supper was also celebrated. We had discussed the matter of attending the sacrament with some of the other foreign delegates, and decided that we would take part. We are still officially sister churches and the Lord’s Supper should not be used as a form of protest. After the service, there was opportunity for fellowship.

On Friday April 7, we were invited to the main Menorode hall to observe a plenary session of Synod 2017. After the welcome and opening Synod discussed the “Report Deputies BBK: Relations Churches Abroad” to Synod. This report only mentioned that there had been contacts with the CanRC and that “discussions and correspondence have not been successful in preventing a critical report from being submitted to the General Synod of Dunnville in May 2016.” The recommendations of the main report were adopted, including the decision to continue the relationship with the CanRC.

After the synod sessions, there was once again opportunity for networking and for discussions with delegates and deputies of the RCN Synod. Another closed meeting with a number of synod delegates was held, but it became apparent that our concerns and the concerns of the other foreign delegates were not having any serious impact. The momentum propelled by the prevailing culture and the practices common in many churches appeared to be too great, and we sensed no real groundswell of disagreement with the report of deputies M/W “Serving Together” and how it handled and interpreted Scripture.

On the morning of Saturday, April 8, the RCN welcomed the Christian Reformed Churches of the Philippines to sister church relationship and the delegate of that church gave a presentation about those churches. A hearty farewell was

organized after that, and the “Foreign Delegates Week” was closed with singing and prayer. We were impressed by the organization and care we received throughout the week. However, we found that what we heard in our discussions with the RCN deputies and delegates with regard to the report “Serving Together” quite unsettling. The questions and criticisms of many of the foreign delegates concerning how the Bible was being interpreted were politely received but basically brushed aside. We were heartened, though, by the fact that many of the other foreign delegates from various parts of the world shared most of our concerns and criticisms. And we were thankful that we could network with so many of the foreign delegates there.

After we had returned to Canada, we received an extensive questionnaire from the advisory committee of Synod Meppel regarding the report “Serving Together” and we were invited to observe the synod session June 16 concerning our response to the biblical section of the report “Serving Together.” We declined to attend the synod session as our report criticizing the biblical basis of the report speaks for itself. And we did not reply to the extensive questionnaire. The accompanying letter stated, “Although we discussed with you in two groups for almost two hours, we all felt that a great deal had not yet been said. We also

had the impression that in the various rounds of discussion there was almost no attempt to seek common ground between our opinions and arguments.” We believe that we said what we wanted to say (also in our “Response to the Biblical Grounds”), and we were not interested in “seeking common ground” as far as the interpretation of Scripture was concerned since this would mean compromising the clear words of Scripture against female ordination.

Final decisions of Synod Meppel 2017 regarding females in office

The words of concern spoken by the CanRC deputies at Synod Zwolle 2008, the disquiet expressed in our meetings with the BBK before and at Synod Harderwijk 2011, the letter of admonition sent by Synod Carman 2013, the extensive critique of the report Deputies M/F submitted to Synod Ede 2014, our words at that assembly, our critique of the biblical evidence sent to Synod Meppel 2017, and our discussions with members of the Deputies M/F and of the synodical advisory committee of Synod Meppel apparently all fell on deaf ears. With their handling of the Bible in this as well as other matters, the RCN are charting a course that is different from that of almost all its Reformed/Presbyterian sister churches.



We were amazed at the pressure the deputies and delegates at synods felt they were under in order to produce some kind of biblical basis to justify opening the church offices to females. One of the delegates stated on the floor of Synod Ede 2014 during the debate on the report to that body that women can, must, and shall serve in office and that all that was needed was to find the biblical basis for that. Synod Ede did not find that the Deputies M/F had accomplished that in their report, but instead of putting aside the matter, appointed Deputies M/F to investigate “how the offices can be structured so that women can be active for God’s kingdom within that structure” (Decision concerning M/F in the Church, 3.a.1). This shows how there has been increasing pressure from within the RCN, influenced by the prevailing feminist culture, to open the offices for females and that the deputies had the task to come up with a biblical justification for that. The decisions of Synod Meppel show evidence of that kind of pressure. In the July 4, 2017 letter which Synod Meppel sent to all the churches outlining the background of its decisions concerning females and the offices, this body describes (p. 2) why this is a currently relevant issue:

A practice has grown of increasing deployment of our sisters and their gifts in all kinds of tasks in the congregations. Sisters perform pastoral, leadership and instructional tasks that in the past had only been carried out by office-bearers. This sets up a tension between our doctrine of the office and congregational practice.

Under pressure to come to a conclusion on the topic of females in office, Synod Meppel provided its own grounds for its decisions. Little of the actual reasoning of the report “Serving Together” comes to the fore in those grounds. The many clear and plain passages speaking about the gender-specific roles of men and women in the church were simply put aside as culturally determined and unclear and thus not normative for the church in this day and age. Instead scattered passages about women prophesying or using gifts in special circumstances in the church were sewn together as proof that the Bible does not forbid women to serve in church offices. Synod Meppel declared in its decision in June 2017 “that there are Scriptural grounds, next to men, also to call women to the ministry of mercy and therefore to the office of deacon” (Decision 4), and “that there are Scriptural grounds, that next to men, also to call women to the ministry of oversight, pastorate and instruction, and therefore to the office of elder” (Decision 5), and finally, “that there are Scriptural grounds, next to men, also to call women to the ministry of preaching and instruction, and therefore to the office of ministry” (Decision 6).

We do not see those grounds as solid basis for opening the church offices for females at all. Decision 5 concerning the office of elder, for instance, had as grounds the Old Testament references to Miriam (Micah 6:4) and Deborah (Judges 4-5), and New Testament references to older women being called to be examples and to spiritual care (Titus 2:3-5) and to Paul’s words about Junia and Andronicus as apostles and about other couples as his co-workers. Dr. C. Van Dam has demonstrated in his article in the July 28 issue of *Clarion* (Vol 66, No 15, pp.423-426) that these references constitute a very weak basis for Synod’s decision justifying the ordination of female elders in the church. He concludes in this article (*Clarion*, p. 426),

Synod ended up grasping at straws as any neutral reader of Scripture can see from the evidence. Furthermore, Synod’s apparent refusal to let the full weight of the clear apostolic teaching on the requirements for male eldership in the church (1 Tim 3 and Titus 1) come to bear on their decision making process is unreasonable. Synod ended up recommending women for ordination to the office of elder contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture.

There was a proposal to delay the implementation of the decision to allow females to be ordained to all the offices until the next synod, but this proposal was defeated and so the decision is effective immediately. The defeat of this proposal in fact cuts off the real possibility of appeal. As well, Synod Meppel also decided to again appoint Deputies M/F. Their task now is to “inform and advise” local churches and classes about the synod decision concerning women and office. If the decision was so clearly based on the non-clarity of the Bible passages about females and office, one wonders about the need for these deputies.

Later decisions Synod Meppel 2017 regarding church unity

The decision to allow females to be ordained to the offices in the church has removed a major obstacle in the movement toward unity of the RCN with the Netherlands Reformed Churches (NRC). They are a loose federation of eighty-seven churches with 33,000 members. These churches separated from the RCN in the late 1960s due to a number of issues including strict subscription to the Three Forms of Unity. The NRC are not as exactly bound to those confessions. They have also permitted the ordination of females to all church offices. They have acknowledged the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (CRCN) as well as the RCN as churches of Jesus Christ and there are quite a few local churches of all three federations which worship together in one form or another. The NRC have been engaged in (re)unity

talks with the RCN over the last twenty years or so, and we as SCRNL have noted a movement of the RCN in the direction of the NRC, particularly with respect to the matters of being more broad-minded in the binding to the confessions and in interpretation of the Bible. Neither of those matters are apparently now hindrances to federative unity, as Synod Meppel has decided to move toward full unity with the NRC and to accept the invitation of the National Assembly of the NRC to meet in Kampen on November 11, 2017 to discuss the process to follow to achieve that unity. It is wonderful when churches find one another and are able to come to full unity. However, such a unity ought to be grounded on the Bible as confessed in the standards and we do not see how a unity based on new biblical hermeneutics and looser binding to the Three Forms of Unity (!) is the unity so praised in the Bible (Ps 133, Eph 4:5-6).

The July 2017 meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches

The ninth meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) was convened in Jordan, Ontario from July 12-19, 2017. This meeting would be a kind of test for the decision of Synod Meppel to allow females to church offices. This matter took up much time in the meetings as there was much discussion and various options were entertained. Some delegates spoke of the fact that the RCN was one of the founding members of the ICRC in 1985 and have been a great help and encouragement to member churches in the past. Yet it was quite clear that the view of the RCN is not the view of any of the other churches in the ICRC, and certainly was not the view of any of those, apart from the RCN, who spoke at our meeting. It was judged that they had transgressed Article IV: 4 of the Constitution in their recent synodical decision to permit the ordination of persons to the offices of minister and ruling elder contrary to the rule prescribed in Scripture. It was with much heaviness of heart, then, that the Conference decided to suspend the membership of the RCN in the ICRC. If there is no change with regard to the decision of Synod Meppel, the RCN will be expelled from the ICRC at its next meeting in four years. It is hoped that the criticism of that decision at this body as well as the suspension will cause the RCN to reflect on the direction it has taken with regards to Bible interpretation.

Some concluding comments

There is an apparent pattern of actions once churches proceed to interpret the Bible in ways that accommodate to the prevailing western culture. Those churches will in due time also want to be more inclusive and seek ways to accommodate homosexual relations. The Bible, however, clearly shows that a homosexual lifestyle is sinful (Lev 18:22 and 20:13, Rom 1:24-27). Previous RCN synods (e.g. Zwolle 2008) dealt with issues of homosexual practice, and had stated in the past that such relations were unacceptable in the light of Scripture. Synod Meppel was confronted with a question from one of the churches about homosexual practice and there is reason to believe that there will be increasing pressure to interpret the Bible in such a way that same-sex relations are acceptable in the church. The NRC have accepted this and the growing unity between those churches and the RCN makes this a very real possibility.

Synod Carman 2013 sent a letter of admonition to Synod Ede 2014 of the RCN which stated,

Should you stay on your present course in regard to the matters we have raised in this letter, we fear that the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship which we have with you will be jeopardized. We urge your Synod and your churches to stand firm in confessing the whole truth of the Word of God and to defend this truth boldly and vigorously, even when it is denounced and hated by the world.

Unfortunately, this admonition has been ignored and the RCN have continued on the course that has caused so much concern in the CanRC. Synod Dunnville decided to suspend parts of the ecclesiastical fellowship. At this point it appears that this also has not had any effect in the RCN. A decision to terminate church relations between the CanRC and RCN seems inevitable at this time. Many of us were or are descended from emigrants from those churches, and so we share a common heritage with the RCN. A termination of relations between churches at the next synod of the CanRC would be very painful, particularly when it concerns churches in which we find our roots and with which we enjoyed almost seventy years of close fellowship. Please keep these churches in your prayers. And may the rapid pace of accommodation to modern culture and theological change in the RCN cause the CanRC to heed the serious exhortation of Proverbs 23:23a, "Buy truth and do not sell it."

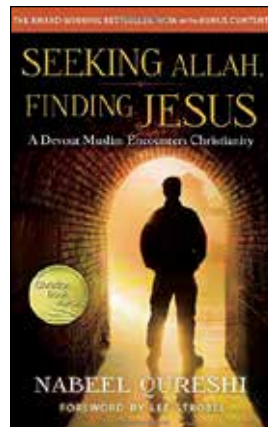


Islamic Reformation?

As we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, many ask whether Islam could not be reformed to make it more peaceful than it now appears to be. Is a moderate form of Islam possible? Is Islam not a religion of peace as many politicians constantly maintain? But what about the terror attacks and the Jihadists operating under the Islamic banner?

The late Nabeel Qureshi, author of *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*, was faced with this dilemma and eventually wrote a book, *Answering Jihad* (2016) to address these questions. Qureshi grew up as a Muslim whose parents and imams taught him that Islam is a religion of peace. His family is patriotic and loves America. So, Qureshi, as one shaped by moderate Islamic ideas, was well-qualified to enter the discussion about whether Islam should be reformed. I heartily recommend *Answering Jihad* for further information, since an article like this which quotes his book hardly does justice to the irenic but clear way in which Qureshi honestly faces the issues.

Is Islam a religion of peace? “The word *Islam* refers to the peace that comes from surrender” to Islam. “If you convert, you will have safety through surrender” (30). There are military connotations here and therefore “to contend that the word *Islam* signifies peace in the absence of violence is incorrect. *Islam* signifies a peace after violence, or under the threat of it” (30). Islamic history is full of war and violence. “No one can claim that ‘Islam is a religion of peace’ in the sense that the religion has been historically devoid of violence, neither in its origins nor in the history of the global Muslim community. Apart from the first thirteen years of Islamic history, when there were not enough Muslims to fight, Islam has always had an elaborate practice or doctrine of war” (31).



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At the same time, “though violence is writ large throughout the pages of Islamic history, including in its foundations, that does not mean our Muslim neighbours are violent. . . . In fact, their journeys may be leading many of them to confront Islam’s violence for the first time, as my journey once did. . . . May our eyes and our arms both be open to them” (33).

So, does Islam need a reformation? Qureshi wrote: “I have heard many people, frustrated by the increasing frequency and scale of Islamist terrorism, suggest that Islam needs a reformation. What they may not realize is that radical Islam is the Islamic reformation” (75). This may seem shocking, but as Qureshi and many others have noted, Islamic violence and terrorism is in accordance with the pronouncements of Mohammad and the Quran.

As Luther returned to the Scriptures in his desire to reform the decadent medieval church, so the radical Islamists of today wish to return Islam to its roots as canonized in the Quran. ISIS is part of the Islamic reformation.

Progressive Muslims who want Islam to be a religion of peace do not have much of a foothold, not even in the West. They do not have the authority of Muhammad and the Quran to back them up. Unlike in the past, the Quran is now freely available to all Muslims on the Internet. Reading it fuels the zeal of those who wish to be faithful to historic Islam. And so “radical Islam is the Islamic reformation” (79). “Violent expressions of Islam adhere more consistently and more literally to the foundational texts of the Islamic faith, the Quran and the hadith” (92).

We need to keep these sobering truths in mind. At the same time, Qureshi reminded us of Christ’s command to love our enemies (142). He therefore suggests that “we engage Muslims proactively with love and friendship while simultaneously acknowledging the truth about Islam. This is not the final step in answering jihad, but it is the correct first step” (148).



Clarion Kids

Daniel in the Lion's Den

Daniel 6

When Daniel was an old man, a man named Darius became the king of Babylon. Darius did not worship God. He commanded that no one should pray to anyone except the king. Daniel did not listen, and still prayed to God. As a punishment, the king had him thrown into a den full of hungry lions. Daniel was not afraid because he knew God would protect him. God sent an angel who kept the lions' mouths closed, and they did not hurt Daniel. Darius then declared that everyone in his kingdom should worship God because of all his wondrous works.

Go to www.clarionmagazine.ca to print and colour this picture!



Crossword Puzzle

Solve the clues to fill in the puzzle.

Down

1. King of Babylon
2. Darius did not want anyone to ____ to God.
4. Darius threw Daniel into a den of _____.
5. After Darius saw that God _____ Daniel, he wanted everyone to worship God.

Across

3. 3. God sent an _____ to protect Daniel.
6. Daniel was not _____ of the lions.
7. Darius did not _____ God.

by Emily Nijenhuis

Denver Family Camp

On a cool and drizzly weekend in August, the Emmanuel American Reformed Church of Denver and a few Canadian guests took to the mountains for Denver Family Camp. The occasional drizzle did nothing to dampen everyone's spirits because there's something about mountains, 8000 feet of elevation, and spending time with fellow believers that makes for a wonderful time no matter what. The theme for the weekend was: "Ordinary Devotion: Walking in the Word." What private worship learns from the Great Reformation."

The unofficial beginning of the weekend, the Thursday evening pool party (in which the children had to be enticed out of the pool just long enough to eat their supper) and the delicious Friday morning pancake breakfast at the church (put on by the youth of the church), were excuse enough to come to Denver, but now we were to be treated to a weekend we will not soon forget.

We arrived at the summit of the canyon pass in beautiful Camp Eden and set up camp. Most people opted to stay in the comfortable cabins on the premises, while others opted for the RV park. Introductions were made, and soon the lodge and its vicinity was full of excitedly chattering people, while some brave men challenged each other to frisbee golf and many of the children began what would become a week-end-long bug hunt to win the cherished prizes.

Soon it was time for the first of the absolutely delicious meals served at Camp Eden. Being a bit of a foodie, I was delighted to try many All-American meals I had only heard of before. But even better than the food was the fellowship we could share over the tables as we chatted and got to know each other even better.

The first speech was after dinner. This introductory speech was entitled, "The Wonder of Personal Devotion" and our speaker for the weekend, Rev Steve Vandavelde from Carman East Canadian Reformed Church, led us on a journey to see the wonderful and amazing fact that we have the Bible in our own language and in our homes. He then hinted at what was to come in the next two speeches, leaving us eager to hear more on Saturday.

Friday evening finished with a game called Lantern Sneak (in which the younger children could join in), and then Bear in the Woods (after the little ones were shoed off to



bed). The hills echo with sounds of fun and shrieks of joy until late in the night before it was finally time to rest.

Saturday morning began with a delicious breakfast, followed by a second speech by Rev. Vandavelde entitled "The Danger of Personal Devotion," in which we were introduced to two extremes when it comes to devotional life: the first extreme is doing nothing at all and the second extreme is thinking that our devotional life needs to be extraordinary in order to be worth it, or in order for it to bring us into favour with God. We were challenged to walk an ordinary life of devotion, day by day immersing ourselves in the Word of God, never forgetting that we are already saved through the sacrifice of Christ and that he is near to us.

Following the speech there was a hike to the top of the nearby hill to see the amazing view from the top. Then came the ever-popular sponge wars (thankfully the sun came out for this!) in which I believe the over-sixteen team was having a pretty hard time beating the under-sixteens, but that could be debatable depending on whom you ask. Lunch was not disappointing and we left the table again full of good food and fellowship.

Following lunch was the much-anticipated zip line event. I didn't think I would enjoy stepping off a cliff to zoom over a lake, but it turned out to be so very fun! Everyone clamoured for a second turn. Then when it was done we went to the field to fire off our home-built soda bottle rockets for bragging rights.

Then came the third speech entitled, "The Manner of Personal Devotion," in which Rev. Vandavelde encouraged us



to think about the word “walk” and what it meant to walk with someone. He gave us some specific ideas of how to walk with God personally, in a family setting, and in corporate worship, but mostly encouraged us to walk with God every moment of the day, remembering that God is near, walking with us, because he has saved us by the work of his Son.

Another delicious dinner in our bellies, and then we sat down to listen to the wrap up session called “Book Talk,” which was some recommendations of books to get us started with some good material for reading, as well as a good resource for finding good books to read on a variety of topics. The evening ended with Glow Stick Fireworks, a special treat put on by the Camp Eden staff to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Denver Family Camp.

Sunday brought with it more delicious meals, more fantastic fellowship, and more activities to keep the kids busy while the adults sat and chatted some more. The morning sermon was from Acts 3 entitled, “Walking and Leaping and Praising God,” while the afternoon sermon was from Acts 4

entitled, “Praying for Boldness.” Both sermons tied in wonderfully with our theme for the weekend and gave us spiritual refreshment as well, pointing us to stand in awe of our amazing God and the works he has done.

After dinner came the prize presentations in which everyone was awarded a prize for something that happened over the weekend. Prizes for bug collecting and the games, homemade trophies for various outstanding people, and gag gifts for funny events that occurred over the weekend.

As many of the people were to leave Sunday night we had our official closing Sunday evening and bowed our heads together and worshipped God and thanked him for giving us such a wonderful time of spiritual refreshment and communal fellowship. And then we began to sing and it seemed as if the angels themselves joined in as our voices joined together in praise of our Amazing, Almighty, Awesome God. As the last “Hallelujah” echoed down the canyon, it was time to start the difficult process of goodbyes, remembering (as we had sung) that God will be with us till we meet again. The goodbyes continued till Monday morning after breakfast when we all went our separate ways back down into the valleys and our daily lives.

I used to think Denver Family Camp was for families, those married with children. I left realizing that it is a camp put on by the Denver Family, the Emmanuel American Reformed Church, and they are inviting everyone to join in. So whether you’re zero or you’re closer to the age of Canada itself, whether you’re a single young adult, newly married, or a senior, whether you have kids or not, whether you’re a bit shy or you’re a boisterous individual, there’s spiritual refreshment and adventure waiting for you at the Denver Family Camp, and the Denver Family would love to see you there. C



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Q What's the biblical basis for the public profession of faith? Why before admission to the Lord's Supper?

I have often wondered, where do we find the biblical basis for the practice that baptized covenant children of God and members of his church need to make a public profession of faith, and where does the Bible teach us that this is required in order for them to participate of the Lord's Supper?

A Initially, in the case of adult converts to the true faith, prior to their baptism they made profession of their faith. In the Scriptures we read about the people on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:38, "Those who *received* [believed] his word, were baptized. . . . And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of the bread;" in Acts 8:12, "But when they *believed* Philip as he preached. . . , they were *baptized*;" the same happened with the eunuch (8:36), Saul of Tarsus (9:18), Cornelius (10:47-48), Lydia (16:15), the jailer (16:33), and the disciples in Corinth (18:8). When later on in the early church the baptism of infants (as children of believers) became common, also those members of the church who already were baptized made this public profession of their faith: e.g. Timothy (raised by his believing mother Eunice and his believing grandmother Lois) in 1 Timothy 6:12, "Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good *confession in the presence of many witnesses*." They, too, as we see in Acts 2:38, 42, had their profession of faith connected to the breaking of the bread, i.e. received admission to the Lord's Supper upon their profession of faith.

The church of Rome had moved the "sacrament" of Confirmation in between the administration of baptism as infant and the admission to the table of the Lord (Eucharist). For this practice they referred to the stories of Acts 8 and 19, where we read about the laying on of hands and the gift of the Holy Spirit. We do not hear of such a special ceremony in other accounts, however, so we do not accept this practice as a common tradition, much less as an institution of the Lord Jesus Christ. The church of the reformation, therefore, replaced this "confirmation" with the public profession of faith, not as a sacramental ceremony or ritual moment, but as a public profession of the faith in which the baptized members had been instructed with the use of a catechism.

John Calvin, particularly, reintroduced religious instruction with the help of a catechism (*Inst.* IV, 19, 8, 13). Already in 1563, when he first arrived in Geneva, he did so "in accordance with the ancient Christian Church," which, as he put it, already used catechisms to lead people to their public profession of faith. This is, he wrote, a requirement of the Holy Scripture, which relate faith to its confession. After his return to Geneva in 1541, he introduced a public catechesis on Sunday afternoon, during which the Genevan Catechism was taught. The ceremony of making profession

of faith remained simple: the youngsters concerned had to recite the main points of the Catechism. About this approach in the church at Geneva and the development toward the practice of the public profession of faith (just prior to every celebration of the Lord's Supper!), and the history of the present Form for that purpose, much can be gleaned from the book by Rev. G. Van Rongen, *Our Reformed Church Service Book*, pp. 193-201. Interesting though this history may be, we need to restrict ourselves to the pertinent issue in the question, namely the scriptural basis for this practice and the need for it, as required by the instruction in the Bible, prior to the admission to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord Jesus commanded his church to celebrate the Lord's Supper "in remembrance of him" (Matt 26:26-28; LD 28). In order to be able to do this, "remember" that is, one has to be aware of the meaning of this Supper as one partakes of it. One has to "discern the body" too, the apostle Paul exhorts us. As we confess in Lord's Day 30, in accordance with 1 Corinthians 10: 19-22; 11:26-32, those who partake must be true believers "who are truly displeased with themselves because of their sins and yet trust that these are forgiven them and that their remaining weakness is covered by the suffering and death of Christ, and who

also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and amend their life" (cf. The Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper in the part of the *self-examination*).

By way of their catechetical instruction therefore, the children of the covenant must be prepared for this participation so they can confess sincerely and knowledgeably that they know the doctrine of salvation, believe all the promises of the gospel, and are able to discern the body of Christ (i.e. the "body" in its sacrifice for atonement, and his "body" as the church, the gathering of true believers). These believers, also, must show their ability "to proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes."

As we can observe often when it pertains to practices in the church, there may not necessarily be specific and direct scriptural instructions for the practice as it has developed over time in the history of the church. Nevertheless, as we can see in these inferences brought together from the Scriptures, also the practice of the public profession of faith has its biblical underpinnings (Acts 2:18; 1 Tim. 6:12). Indeed, also the connection between this profession and the admission to the Lord's Supper is based on the necessities as set forth by the Lord Jesus at the time of the institution and by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11, and applied by the church in the course of its history.



**Is there something
you've been wanting to know?
An answer you've been looking for?**

Ask us a question!

Please direct questions to Rev. W. denHollander

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How Should We Dress for Church: What Does Scripture Say?

I was motivated to write this because of continued comments by brothers and sisters of my congregation who asked me why I always wear a suit and tie to church. Some would ask, "Are you not hot?" Some would even say, "Times have changed, does it really matter to God what you wear?" and I have responded back, "Have times really changed?" God is the same God today as he was back in Abraham's time, and I have no reason to think differently today as I grow older and hopefully wiser. My father told me at a very young age that we dress up for Sunday worship because we stand in God's holy presence and this we do to honour and glorify his name.

The casual dress down started approximately six to seven years ago and progressively became worse each and every year. Today when you say something about where we have gone in regards to dressing for church, you receive responses that we make too much about what one wears as though dress is a salvation issue. The comments are becoming more and more defensive almost as though they are justifying the change.

During a recent Sunday morning worship service, I noticed something a little unsettling, which is occurring more and more: there was hardly a handful men in the sanctuary dressed in a suit and tie. There were very few women wearing a nice dress and many were in slacks and blouses. There were men and women in jeans; some were even in flip flops and sandals. I couldn't help but think, "Whatever happened to putting on your 'Sunday best?'"

Now, please don't jump to any conclusions, I'm not about to launch into some legalistic diatribe that argues for a church dress code. Nevertheless, there is something about this latest trend for casual wear during Sunday services which is not only present in more contemporary fellowships, but everywhere, that makes me a bit uncomfortable.

Is it really sufficient to argue that when we come to worship all that matters is the heart? 1 Samuel 16:7 does read, "People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." Now, I would be mortified at the thought of some visitor avoiding church because a certain member had conveyed their clothing wasn't up to par. Yet, I would also add that, because worship is a matter of the heart, which I believe is often reflected in our appearance, we cannot entirely conclude God doesn't care about what is worn to church.

Granted, times change and so does fashion. There are no hard fast rules from Scripture about the way to dress for church. Still, there are biblical principles for worship acceptable to God that point us in the right direction. Each of us would do well to look into this mirror to see if we line up. If we do, chances are, so will our church apparel.

Worship is essentially the offering up of our self to God as a sacrificial offering. This is the meaning of Paul's instructions when he writes, "Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship" (Rom 12:1). In other words, New Testament worship in contrast to Old Testament practice requires we not only bring our best offering to the temple, but that we bring ourselves, our entire selves in a hallowed manner, for now we are the temple of God (1 Cor 3:16, 17). This means we should come before the Lord in reverence, presenting our best to him – bringing our best gift – coming with our best attitude – making our best appearance.

There are times when one's best is what he only has, one suit, one dress, shoe specifically set aside for Sunday. To some of us we might have thought that what they wore was not very Sunday-like, but for them this is all they had and only wore on Sundays and they did this to the glory of God. They did this because they believed worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24), as Jesus commanded, required their noblest demonstration of deference to God.

We all understand that the wrong clothes can distract our fellow worshippers. Elaborate, showy attire may reflect a prideful, elitist, egocentric display of wealth, status, and power. In this way our choice of clothing can be sinful. But this does not render our every day ("common") come-as-you-are attire as "spiritual" or "honest." If we care for our fellow worshippers as we ought, we will take them into consideration as we dress for worship. We will clothe ourselves in ways that edify them and strengthen their own worship. We will attempt to avoid the nonchalant attitude that says this event is entirely routine; that it merits nothing special from me; that my only consideration in what I choose to wear is what is easiest and most convenient. Such a self-centred attitude is corrosive to a true spirit of worship. Instead, the goal in our choice of clothing should be to express to the Lord and

those around us that this event matters, that I view it as a holy occasion, one which deserves our highest regard.


By asserting that we should avoid the glib assumption that God does not care what we wear to church; or what I choose to wear for worship doesn't matter; or that how I dress is a purely personal affair; or that my own convenience or comfort are all that need concern me. . . wittingly or unwittingly our clothing gives us away. In fact, the clothes we choose to wear for church may tell us a lot about our hearts that God already knows, but maybe we don't.

What does the way we dress for worship say about our relationship to God? Does it demonstrate we believe that he is high, holy, and lifted up, worthy of our deepest love, adoration, and respect? Which of us would plan to meet with the Prime Minister or Queen or an international dignitary

without trying to make a stellar appearance? What would our attire reveal about our appreciation and honour for their esteemed position? We dress for a wedding occasion, why? To stay in sync with the bride and groom as they are dressed for their special day – our dressing up completes a perfect wedding day for the bride and groom.

Again, the purpose of this article is not to contend for church dress codes. But it is meant to say that it seems that our worship in many situations may be too laid back, too casual, too informal, yes, even indifferent.

By our clothing we can display many things – the condition of our heart being one of them. When we bow before the Lord and venerate his name in public worship, he deserves our loftiest expressions from within and without.

Br. H. Smouter 

BOOK REVIEW

Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus

**Nabeel Qureshi, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus: A Devout Muslim Encounters Christianity*
Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016**

**Additional information: Enlarged edition,
368 pages; paperback; price \$19.07**

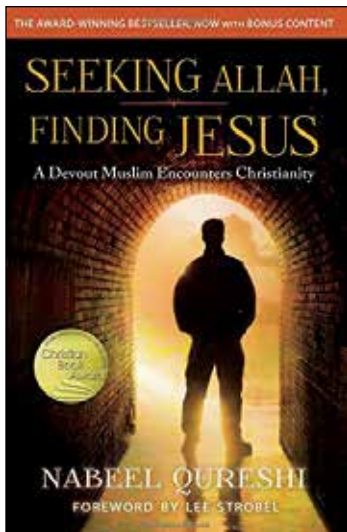
Nabeel Qureshi has become a well-known name in Christian circles. After his conversion from Islam to Christianity in 2005, he became one of the foremost Christian evangelists, especially in reaching out to Muslims.

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He joined the ministry team of Ravi Zacharias, travelled around the world, started a vlog (video blog), and developed into an effective Christian apologist.

In 2014 Nabeel Qureshi described his personal journey from Islam to Christianity in the book *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*. In 2016 an enlarged edition was published. I was halfway through the book, this past September, when I learned that Nabeel Qureshi had died after a yearlong battle with cancer at age thirty-four. Shocking news! The ways of the Lord are unfathomable, as the apostle Paul teaches us



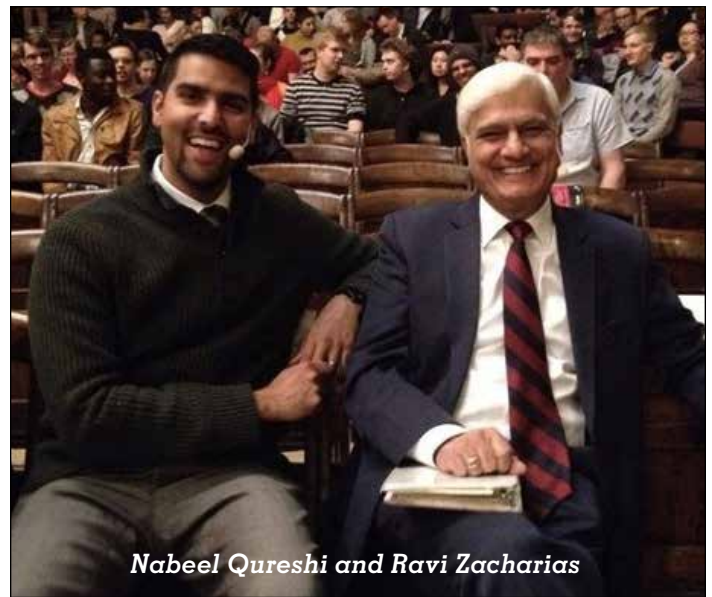
in Romans 11:33. Knowing that Nabeel had died recently made reading his spiritual autobiography even more special to me. It is a book that I heartily recommend.

Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus gives us a very real insight into the immense struggle that Muslim believers go through when they contemplate conversion to Christianity. Nabeel grew up in a Pakistani American family. His parents are devout Muslims and, on all accounts, “good people.”

The most difficult aspect of Nabeel’s struggle was the fact that he knew that it was going to hurt his parents deeply if he were to become a Christian. With an intensity that few of us ever experience, Nabeel experienced the truth of the word of Christ that those who would be Christ’s disciples must love him more than their own family, even their own parents (Luke 14:26).

But the love for his own family was not the only reason that made it difficult for Nabeel to become a Christian. Initially he was also strongly convinced that there is no God but Allah, that the Quran is inspired and true, and that Christianity is a compromised kind of religion. When he crossed paths with fellow student David Wood, a strong Christian believer, it started a process of asking questions and questioning beliefs. One of the most interesting aspects of Nabeel’s

book is that it gives us an insight into the process as such. A serious and strong-minded person, Nabeel set out to get to the bottom of the issues. He started out by questioning the truth value of the Bible, the factual truth of Jesus’ death on the cross, his resurrection from the dead and the doctrine of the Trinity (so hard for Muslims to accept). Once he became convinced that all these doctrines made sense, it led him to asking questions about Islam’s main doctrines: the authority of the Quran, the truth about Muhammad, and his moral behaviour. He studied Islamic sources and was shocked to find evidence that Muhammad was a man who was morally corrupt. Even then, when Nabeel was “done with” Islam (his



Nabeel Qureshi and Ravi Zacharias

own words), he could not bring himself to embrace Jesus Christ as his Saviour. It took three special dreams from the Lord to bring him to that point (a common theme in the conversion of Muslims).

Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus is an excellent resource for those of us who want to prepare for outreach to Muslims, and also for those of us who just want to be informed and study the issues involved. The book contains many verbatim reports of discussions Nabeel had with his Christian friends. Very informative! The enlarged edition (2016) also contains a good number of expert contributions on various topics, for example one by David Wood (Nabeel’s friend) on questions surrounding the person of Muhammad. It is not the kind of book that you finish in one afternoon but I found it easy to keep reading because the book is so interesting, so well-written, so personal, and so encouraging.

C



Nabeel Qureshi

Press Release of Classis Niagara September 13, AD, 2017

Opening of Classis

On behalf of the church at Spring Creek, Elder Nick VandenOever opened the meeting in a Christian manner. An examination of the credentials took place, which were found to be order. Classis was declared constituted.

The following brothers formed the moderamen as per the suggestion of the previous classis: chairman – Rev. D. Wynia; vice-chairman – Elder Nick VandenOever; clerk – Rev. J. VanWoudenberg. Rev. Doug Bylsma, a fraternal delegate on behalf of the OPC, was welcomed.

The agenda was adopted as proposed.

Question period ad Article 44, C.O.

All the churches are continuing the ministry of the office-bearers as well as honouring the decisions of the broader assemblies. Three churches sought the concurring advice of Classis in situations of discipline. Two churches received the advice as requested, while one did not.

Proposals

Point 7.1 on the agenda was moved to point 9.5.

Correspondence

There was no correspondence received.

Reports

The report from the classical treasurer was not available at this time, but arrived later in the meeting and was tabled.

The report of the audit of the books of the classical treasurer had been made available, both by email prior to the meeting and at the meeting, and was tabled.

Rev. John VanWoudenberg read a prepared report on the inspection of the classical archives.

Elder Frank Ludwig read a report of the Deputies for Neighbouring Classes/Presbyteries. Next he introduced a proposal from the same committee regarding “Concurrent

Classes CanRC and URC.” It appeared that all churches in Classis Niagara have discussed this proposal and are in favour of its implementation.

Appointments

The church at Attercliffe was appointed to convene the next classis on December 13, 2017 or, if cancelled, then March 7, 2018. Suggested officers for the next classis are Rev. C. Bouwman (chair); Rev. J. VanWoudenberg (vice-chair); Rev. D. Wynia (clerk).

Re-appointed were the classical treasurer, the church of Grassie to audit the books of the classical treasurer, the church of Attercliffe to take care of the classical archives, and the church of Dunnville to inspect same.

The committees who arrange examinations and church visitations will remain as is.

Rev. Bouwman and Rev. VanWoudenberg were delegated to the upcoming Regional Synod East, with Rev. den Hollander as 1st alternate and Rev. Wynia as 2nd alternate.

For the same the elders K. Jager and N. VandenOever were delegated, with elders R. Nordeman as 1st alternate and B. VanAndel as 2nd alternate.

Closing of Classis

Rev. Doug Bylsma was given the opportunity to address Classis. In his address he conveyed greetings and updated Classis on the OPC’s current statistics and activities. Some interaction took place with the brothers present. He was thanked for his attendance and detailed report.

Personal question period was not made use of. The chairman declared that censure according to Article 34 CO was, thankfully, not necessary. The Acts and the Press Release were each read and approved by the assembly. Rev. Wynia, as chairman, lead in thanksgiving prayer, after which Classis was declared closed.

*For Classis Niagara, September 13, 2017,
Elder Nick VandenOever (vice-chairman at that time)*



Press Release of Classis Alberta, September 19, 2017 Held in Calgary, Alberta

On behalf of the convening church, the church at Calgary, brother Noot opened the meeting by reading Psalm 25; he asked that Psalm 25:1, 2 be sung and then we prayed for the Lord's blessing over the meeting and the examination, the people affected by the hurricanes, and the churches in the federation, remembering also the needs of the Vandenbos and Slomp families.

The following memorabilia were noted: candidate S. van Leeuwen's acceptance of the call from Calgary; the call from St. Albert declined by Rev. A. Witten and the calls from Neerlandia South declined by the Revs. S. Vandeveld and S. t'Hart; the ongoing vacancies of Neerlandia South and St. Albert; the commencement of CRTS this past September; the health concerns of Dr. N.H. Gootjes, the passing away of Dr. Jack DeJong, and concerns for their wives as well.

The credentials were found to be in good order and all delegates were present. Classis was constituted and the following took their respective positions in the executive: chairman: Rev. J. Huijgen; vice-chairman: Rev. J. VanSpronsen; clerk: Rev. T. Vandergaag.

The deputies for Regional Synod, Rev. Andrew Pol and Rev. Bill Wielenga, were welcomed to the meeting, along with Rev. W. B. Slomp who was present for his role in the peremptory examination of Steve van Leeuwen, and Rev. Keith Davis from the Bethel URC in Calgary. The agenda was adopted with some minor additions.

Calgary CanRC requested that brother Steve van Leeuwen be examined by this classis. The executive determined that the documents were in order. After students of the Tyndale Christian school and members of the Calgary congregation were comfortably seated, brother Steve van Leeuwen presented a sermon on Leviticus 1. After a discussion in closed session, it was decided to continue the examination. Brother van Leeuwen was then examined on the various subjects in a peremptory examination. Classis decided with thankfulness that brother Steve van Leeuwen sustained his examination; the deputies of Regional Synod gave concurring advice. The call extended to brother van Leeuwen by the church at Calgary was approbated, and he signed the Subscription to the Confessions. The chairman led with the reading of God's Word, singing, and prayer.

Rev. Keith Davis from the Bethel URC of Calgary ad-

ressed Classis on behalf of the URCNA, speaking encouragingly of the relationship we have as churches. Rev. Julius VanSpronsen responded.

Rev. Huijgen gave a report about a positive visit made to the Classis Western Canada - URCNA in Winnipeg, MB. The church for the inspection of the books of the Treasurer (St. Albert) reported that the books were in good order. This report was received with appreciation.

In closed session, the church visitors gave reports on visits to the following churches: Barrhead (May 16, 2017), Neerlandia (March 27 & May 10, 2017), Neerlandia South (March 27 & May 10 2017), Taber (June 14, 2017), Coaldale (June 14, 2017), and Calgary (May 24, 2017). The reports were received with thanksgiving.

Question period according to Article 44 of CO was held. All the churches answered that the ministry of the office bearers was being continued, and that the decisions of the assemblies were being honoured. Three churches requested the judgment and help of Classis for the proper government of their church and advice was given.

Classis appointed the church at Coaldale as the convening church for the next classis to be convened on December 5, 2017 (alternate date March 6, 2018). Suggested officers: chairman: Rev. G. Veurink; vice-chairman: Rev. J. Huijgen; clerk: Rev. J. VanSpronsen. Church visitors remain: Revs. R. Aasman, J. Huijgen, T. Vandergaag (coordinator), C. Vanderlinde, and J. VanSpronsen. Rev. VanderGaag will organize another church visitation/pulpit supply schedule.

Classis appoints the following brothers as delegates to Regional Synod West, November 6, 2017: Brothers R. Noot and H. Voorhorst (alternates: brs. P. Schoen and A. van Leeuwen) and Revs. J. VanSpronsen and T. VanderGaag (alternates: Revs. R. Aasman, G. Veurink in that order).

During personal question period it was announced that the ordination of brother Steve van Leeuwen will take place on October 15, 2017. The CRTS provides the churches with information pamphlets and Rev. Aasman urges the churches to pray that God may provide men to serve in the ministry. The chairman deemed that brotherly censure (Article 34, CO) was not needed.

The Acts were adopted and the Press Release approved. Rev. T. VanderGaag led in closing prayer.

Julius VanSpronsen
Vice chairman (at that time) 