

Clarion

Summit Reached

5th Year Anniversary Celebrated One Year Later!



What's Inside

Is it possible for someone who has no faith in Jesus Christ to be holy? That is the question Rev. Peter Holtvliwer asks at the top of his lead article, "Holy Unbelieving Spouses." The apostle Paul writes about this in 1 Corinthians 7; what does he mean?

We have an article by Dr. James Visscher discussing the relationship between the preaching and the Holy Spirit. When we think about the preaching, our thoughts may first go to the text and its analysis, or the clarity of the theme and points of a sermon. But what about the Spirit's role in the preaching? This is something we may think about less often – but it is no less important.

Issue 20 also brings readers our Treasures, New & Old column, a report from Summit Reformed Youth Conference, a book review, and a press release.

Laura Veenendaal

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Clarion

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LEAD ARTICLE



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Holy Unbelieving Spouses

Is it possible for someone who has no faith in Jesus Christ to be holy? Sounds strange, eh? And yet, according to 1 Corinthians 7:14, it is not only possible but an actual fact in at least one situation: “For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.” What does Paul mean exactly? And why would he describe the unbelieving spouse this way?

This is one of those verses often brought up in the debate on infant baptism. To be clear, this verse is part of a longer passage dealing with marriage and more particularly the marriage of a believer with an unbeliever (vv. 12–16). While it does not deal with baptism per se, verse 14 does state something significant about the children of a mixed marriage, calling them “holy.” Because of this, Reformed believers have reasoned that this qualifies children of believers for the sacrament of

baptism. However, Baptists will be quick to point out that this same verse also describes the unbelieving spouse as “made holy,” so why don’t we insist that the unbelieving spouse be baptized as well? Fair is fair after all.

This verse is a challenge for both sides in the baptism debate. Baptists have to explain why God considers babies of believers holy and yet does not wish them to be baptized. The Reformed have to explain why God considers the unbelieving spouse

Holiness can never come out of a mere human or some other earthly source, but must always come forth from or be linked to God

holy and yet such is not normally baptized. Both sides have to answer the basic question: on what basis does God declare each to be holy?

Holiness ≠ salvation

One thing both groups agree on is that holiness is not the same as salvation. Baptist pastor John MacArthur says it well, “In this sense ‘sanctify’ does not refer to salvation; otherwise the spouse would not be spoken of as ‘unbelieving.’ It refers to being set apart, the basic meaning of ‘sanctify’ and ‘holy,’ terms that are from the same Greek root.”¹ Paul clearly identifies the spouse in question as an “unbeliever” and Scripture is very clear that an unbeliever is not saved. So, on what basis can the Holy Spirit, through Paul, call the unbelieving spouse “holy”?

This designation certainly seems odd at first, because in Scripture holiness is always related in some way to God, who is in himself naturally and perfectly holy. Only God is *inherently* holy. His name is holy (Lev 20:3) and he is regularly called “the Holy One” (e.g. Job 6:10; Prov 9:10; Isa 10:17). His holiness has to do with how as God he stands apart from all created things. He, and only he, is sinless, majestic, and awesome. The seraphim sing of it day and night, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” (Isa 6:3) Holiness is at the core of God’s being and so whatever in Scripture is said to be holy must in some way be connected to him. Holiness can never come out of a mere human or some other earthly source, but must always come forth from or be linked to God. Since the unbelieving spouse by definition neither loves God nor acknowledges him in any way, what connection can there be between such a person and the holy God?

Holiness as a status

When the holiness of people is discussed, we may tend to think first about *acting* in a holy manner, living a holy life. Certainly

God calls us often to “be holy” or to conduct ourselves in a holy fashion because he himself is holy (1 Pet 1:16; 1 Tim 2:15). To “be holy” is frequently a synonym for living a godly or righteous life (1 Thess 2:10). But just as often, the LORD uses “holy” to describe the *status* of something or someone. For instance, all of the utensils of the tabernacle are declared “holy” (Exod 40:9-11). Of themselves, these metallic or wooden objects were no different than similar objects used in any other setting. But because God commanded these particular furnishings and utensils to be set apart for exclusive use in the tabernacle, they were holy to the LORD. God gives them a status distinct from all other similar utensils.

In the same way, God also bestows on various people the status of being holy. Although individual Israelites such as priests, prophets, and kings were designated as holy to the LORD (Exod 29:21; Luke 1:70; Ps 89:20), the most obvious and pervasive example in Scripture is the nation of Israel as a whole. The LORD declared all of Israel to be his “holy nation,” a “people holy to the LORD your God” (Exod 19:6; Deut 7:6). As with the holy things of the tabernacle, so with the holy people of God: both are set apart to serve the LORD. That is the connection between having a holy status and living a holy life. Whatever is declared to be holy to the LORD (whether inanimate objects or people), such must be employed in service to the LORD. Thus, holy Israel was under God’s calling to live holy lives “to the LORD,” that is, unto his glory.

Whence the holy status?

Returning to 1 Corinthians 7:14, it is plain that Paul speaks of holiness in the sense of status, but from where does that status arise? Various answers have been given. Some Baptists have taken “sanctified” as an equivalent to “legitimate” or legally acceptable, and reason that Paul is simply calming the fears of the Corinthian Christians. Those involved in mixed marriages

can breathe easy, for Paul is clarifying that their marriage is legitimate in God's eyes just as their children are legitimate (i.e., not bastards)². The problem with this view is that the Bible nowhere uses "sanctify" or "make holy" to mean "legal" or the like.

A more common Baptist view (and, interestingly, one shared by some Reformed commentators) is that this passage teaches that the presence of the believing spouse sets the family apart as *an arena for God's grace to be operative*. Through the witness of the believing spouse, family members (both unbelieving spouse as well as the children) are exposed to a "sanctifying influence."³ While in itself that is true, Paul is describing the existing official *status* in God's eyes of both the unbelieving spouse and the children⁴, not the daily *circumstances* of family life in which it is hoped that they might one day actually become holy through faith in Christ. Paul simply says of the two parties in question: each is holy *now*.

Holiness and covenant

A better explanation is to see the holy status of both the unbelieving spouse and the children as derived from God's holy covenant. It's easiest to see this with the children. As mentioned earlier, God applied the status of holiness to the whole nation of Israel. Collectively, they were set apart from other nations and dedicated to God's service inside the formal relationship of the covenant of God's grace. Through no merit of their own, God chose them to be *his* people and *declared* them to be holy, from tiny tot to grizzled old-timer (Deut 7:6-8). The birth of children is specifically promised as a blessing inside this covenant and from birth were regarded as part and parcel of God's holy covenant people (Gen 17:1-14)

Neither Baptists nor Reformed will disagree that this was the case in the old covenant, but what about in the new covenant? Baptists are of the opinion that the new covenant is made only with believers *and not with their children*, but Jeremiah 31:31 says something different: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah." The recipients of the new covenant are not merely believing adults, but the "house of Israel/Judah" – and by definition that includes the children of believers (cf. Acts 2:36)!

Peter uses very similar collective terms to describe the church community he's writing to, "But you are a chosen *race*, a royal priesthood, a holy *nation*, a *people* for his own possession" (1 Pet 2:9). "Race," and "nation" and "people" are necessarily

inclusive of the babies, toddlers, children, and teens. That also explains why Paul freely addresses children in his letters to the churches at Colossae and Ephesus (Col 3:20; Eph 6:1), because those children were every bit a part of the "holy people" or "church of God" as the adults there! So, God's new covenant people, the church, *must* include the children of believers, and that is why they too are designated as holy.

Holy unbelievers?

But someone may object: what about the unbelieving spouse? *How can an unbeliever be in covenant with God?* How can an unbeliever be considered holy by virtue of a covenant that he or she doesn't accept?

The phenomenon of a holy unbeliever is actually not new, but occurred repeatedly in the old covenant. We know of individuals like Hophni and Phinehas, who were certainly holy as Israelites, and even more so as priests serving in God's house, but who clearly were unbelievers (1 Sam 2:12). Consider further how the LORD declared all of Israel holy to himself at Mt. Sinai (Exod 19:6) – but were all the people, even all the adults who had just come through the Red Sea, actually true believers? The next forty years demonstrate that the vast majority of these were rebellious and many were put to death by God in dramatic fashion (think of the golden calf incident in Exodus 32 or how God sent serpents to poison the people in Numbers 21). Hebrews 3:14-19 is clear that many Israelites, who had the status of God's holy people, nevertheless "were unable to enter [the promised land] because of unbelief" (v. 19). Yet the children of these unbelievers continued to be in covenant with God and continued to be designated as his holy people (an arrangement arrived at only by God's grace to be sure!).

And the old covenant knew also of unbelieving spouses, of mixed unions which nevertheless produced holy children. Think of how the Israelite Ahab married the Gentile Jezebel, who hated the LORD, or how Solomon married many foreign wives who maintained their idol worship. Yet their children were regarded as part of God's holy people – why? Because when those unbelieving women joined their husbands in a marriage covenant, they became one with them (Gen 2:24). And since each man was already in covenant with God, it only makes biblical sense that the wives entered into that covenant relationship too, regardless of their faith.

Elsewhere in the Bible it is clear that when God entered into covenant with a man, God included his whole household

at the same time (e.g., Abraham's household of more than 300 persons, Gen 17:12-14, Gen 14:14). They were thus all considered God's holy people – and *faith was not the determining factor for this status, but rather God's covenant*. This was also true when God entered into covenant with a woman, an example of which we have in Rahab. Because of her trust in the LORD, she and all her father's household, specifically “all who belong to *her*” (Josh 6:22), were rescued from Jericho and allowed to live in Israel. That they became part of Israel and thus one with the covenant community and holy to the LORD is proven by how this Rahab later married an Israelite and became an ancestor of the Messiah (Matt 1:5).

New covenant households

From old covenant to new covenant the concept of God covenanting with an individual believer *and their entire household* remains in place. Without any indication that things are different in the new covenant, the New Testament records God entering into covenant with believers and their entire household on several occasions – and, as before, the faith of the household residents is not the determining factor. To be sure, faith may well be found among the household members as the Christian head of the home would surely hope (e.g., some in the household of Cornelius, Acts 10:2, 44, 47 and those in the household of Crispus, Acts 18:8) but the extension of the covenant, as made visible in the sign and seal of baptism, was applied as a matter of course to the whole household on the basis of God bringing to faith the head of that home. Just like with Abraham, we see that Lydia believes, and she, along with her household, is baptized (Acts 16:15). Similarly, the Philippian jailer believes and he, along with his household, is baptized (Acts 16:33). It's

the expected course. There is no indication here that the new covenant applies to a believer's household any differently than the old covenant did.

Baptizing unbelieving spouses?

Returning to our original questions, it seems quite biblically defensible to say that an unbelieving person married to a Christian is considered holy (though certainly not yet saved!) in God's eyes by virtue of belonging to God's covenant. God considers such a person to be in covenant with himself because he/she has united him/herself to one of his covenant children in the sacred bond of marriage. Similarly, the children of this marriage are also considered holy to God by virtue of belonging to God's covenant. God has always graciously extended his covenant to believers and their children. Thus, children have every right to receive the sign and seal of entry into God's covenant, holy baptism.

What then about the unbelieving spouse? Biblically speaking, they may indeed be baptized along with the rest of the household, and the church should freely offer that. The difference between Bible times and our day is that the concept of a single “household” overseen by a “head” has been greatly eroded. In the West, people see themselves primarily as individuals and not as part of a household. Whereas in Bible times the household would unquestioningly follow the lead of the head, the hurdle now is to get the unbelieving spouse to willingly submit to baptism. That, most likely, is not going to happen until that individual comes to faith. But, according to Scripture, as God sees things, the unbelieving spouse is in covenant with him and thus has both great privileges (receipt of baptism and the covenant promises) and great responsibilities (faith and obedience), just the same as the children. **C**

Endnotes

¹ <https://www.gty.org/library/bibleqnas-library/QA0183/a-sanctified-spouse>

² See John Gill's comments on 1 Corinthians 7:14 here: https://biblehub.com/commentaries/gill/1_corinthians/7.htm

³ David Kingdon, *Children of Abraham*, p. 90 as quoted by Stan Reeves in *A Reformed Baptist View of 1 Cor. 7:14*, found here: <https://www.eng.auburn.edu/~sjreeves/personal/1cor.html>. Similarly Gordon Fee, who also holds to a Baptist view of baptism, says, “From Paul's perspective, as long as the marriage is maintained the potential for their realizing salvation remains.” But this is to assign a meaning to the verb “sanctify” that cannot be found elsewhere in Scripture. See Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) p. 300. John Calvin held this view as did Simon Kistemaker who approvingly quotes Calvin. Interestingly, both Calvin and Kistemaker assign a different reason for the holiness of the children (i.e., God's covenant) although nothing in the context suggests that Paul is referring to two different sources of or two different kinds of sanctification. That inconsistency is often pointed out by Baptist commentators as problematic and unsustainable. See Simon J. Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993) p. 224-25.

⁴ Paul uses a perfect passive of the verb “to sanctify” (“has been sanctified” NIV) which indicates that the state of sanctification began at some point in the past and continues into the present.

No Other Name

“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (ACTS 4:1-12)

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, proclaimed the name of Jesus Christ to be the only name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. The true church of Christ has continued to insist upon the uniqueness of Christ. He is the only Saviour. Besides him, there is no Redeemer.

The Christian religion is criticized as being exclusivist. We live in a religiously pluralist society where our communities are dotted with temples, mosques, and synagogues, as well as churches. The universities offer degrees in comparative religions. We are taught that the five great religions of the world, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, are equally valid. They are all different roads to the same Divine Mind. It is taught that animist religions point to Christ just as well as Old Testament religion does.

What do we say about these people of other religions, who live, work, and worship in our towns and cities? Have they found God *their* way while we have found God *our* way? Are the Five Pillars of Islam the way to God for the Muslim, just as the Eight-Fold Path is the way for the Buddhist, while Jesus Christ is *our* way to the Father?


Many mainline churches say that each religion is a valid expression of man's longing for the eternal. A Hindu praying to his favourite god, a Muslim praying to Allah, a Buddhist pinning his petition on a prayer wheel, a Christian praying to the Father through Jesus Christ – it makes no difference. Liberal churches tell us that we have no right to evangelize Jews and Muslims. We must enter into dialogue with these brothers and sisters and learn from one another's traditions.

Peter spoke differently. He said that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour. His is the only name given by God by which we must be saved. The Lord said in John 14:6: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 2:5: “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

Let us not be swept away by the relativism of our age which seeks some common denominator in all the religions of the world. The Christian faith has nothing in common with any other religion. Every other religion is an attempt of man to reach up to God to be saved, while the Christian religion is the only one which confesses that God has reached down to man and given the Saviour.

Let us embrace the only Saviour. Let us rejoice in his name. The Eight-Fold path of Buddhism is an eternal circle leading nowhere. But there is a One-Fold path. It is Jesus Christ, the only Way to the Father. The Five Pillars of Islam hold up nothing. There is only one Pillar, one Foundation. It is Jesus Christ, the Cornerstone. Many have rejected him, but he is the Head of the corner. Be built into his house. Establish your life on him.

Song: Psalm 118:6, 8 

For Further Study

1. Is it correct to say that while there are many ways to Jesus, there is only one way to the Father?
2. What is the difference between how the Lord brought in Timothy (2 Tim 1:5) compared to how he brought in Paul (Acts 9:1ff)?
3. How ought we to speak to our neighbour about Jesus Christ and the only Way of salvation without sounding arrogant?



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This article was originally prepared in 2013 for Diakonia.

The Preacher and the Holy Spirit

When it comes to the preaching of the gospel, there are many aspects for the preacher to consider. Some of them are obvious, such as the need to select a text, to read it often, to wrap it in prayer, to do a thorough linguistic analysis, to come up with an all-embracing theme, to construct an outline that is accurate, clear, and logical, and to find appropriate illustrations. All of these are part and parcel of the preacher's stock and trade.

At the same time, though, there are other things that are not so obvious. One of these has to do with the relationship between the preacher and Holy Spirit. Of course, every preacher knows how important and essential the Spirit is. But, do we ever really stop and count the ways? More often than not we need to admit that we take him very much for granted.

The Spirit's book

And that's a shame in more ways than one. For consider this book that we are so busy labouring over. Whose book is it, anyway? Is it not the book of the Spirit? The apostle Paul tells us that "all Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Tim 3:16). Peter tells us who especially is doing the breathing out when he adds, "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God, as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet 1:21).

In other words, man may be doing the writing down here, but in actual fact it is the Holy Spirit who is carrying him along like a piece of driftwood down a fast-flowing river. He is doing the directing and guiding, the shaping and moulding, the informing and teaching. True, he uses men. He takes into account their backgrounds, their level of education, their

“I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe” (Eph 1:17-19a).

talents and abilities, as well as their personalities. He works in such a way that they are convinced that what they are writing comes from them. And it does, but the deeper truth is that the Holy Spirit is the One who is behind all of their thoughts and words.

Now, this has tremendous implications. It means that the book that the preacher is expounding is no mere human book. It is God’s book. It is the Spirit’s book.

As such, it is endowed with *authority*. The Spirit is God. Of him it can be said “for from him and through him and to him are all things” (Rom 11:36). Nothing exists apart from him. Nothing lives and breathes without him. In him resides all power, might, and majesty. Thanks to his authorship, the preacher can say to his listeners, “Thus says the Lord. You need to listen to this!”

At the same time, this Word is also filled with *reliability*. God the Father does not lie, and neither does God the Holy Spirit. What he has men put down in his Word is true, accurate, and without error. The preacher can have great confidence that when he is proclaiming the Word, he is presenting the truth.

One more implication is that this Word is filled with *essentials*. Is the Bible a textbook for geography, history, psychology, astronomy, sociology? The answer is “No!” It says nothing about the landscape of India, the battles of Genghis Khan,

personality disorders, the speed of light, or the dynamics of human society.

So, what kind of a book is it? It is the book of God’s saving deeds. It is his redemption textbook. It is his salvation manual. It deals with life’s most basic needs and fundamental issues. Yes, and in the process of doing so, it is always correct, revealing, and pertinent.

In short, the preacher should never underestimate just what kind of a special book he is working with. It is a resource beyond compare, a treasure without price, a blessing beyond measure.

The Spirit’s light

Yet, there is more, for not only does the Spirit allow the preacher to work with his book, he also gives the preacher a mind that can understand this book. Many years ago already, the Psalmist understood this so well. He turns to God and prays along these lines: “Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law” (Ps 119:18) and “Give me understanding according to your word” (Ps 119:169). He knows that if he wants to see and to grasp what God is saying to him, he needs light from above. He realizes that it is only “in your light” that “we see light” (Ps 36:9).

The same thing is understood by the apostle Paul. He writes to the Corinthians and says, “We have not received the

spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us" (1 Cor 2:12). To the Ephesians he writes this: "I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe" (Eph 1:17-19a).

What thus becomes clear from all of this is that the preacher not only needs to appreciate the treasure that he is working with, he also needs to pray fervently for the Spirit to enlighten him as he works on this treasure. The study of God's Word may never become a purely objective exercise. This Word needs to be read and studied in humble dependence on the Spirit.


This applies, however, not only to the preacher, but also to his hearers. Believers too need the Holy Spirit to open wide their eyes, ears, hearts, and minds. Paul says that it is "through the Spirit" that believers are given "the message of wisdom" (1 Cor 12: 8).

The Spirit's power

Still, if the preacher needs the help of the Spirit to understand the Word, he also needs the strength of the Spirit to bring the

Word. This becomes very clear as one reads through the book of Acts. Chapter four even gives us a dramatic example of this. There Peter and John are threatened, seized, and imprisoned by the Jewish authorities. The next day they are even arraigned before the whole Jewish Council - rulers, elders, teachers - in an attempt to intimidate them and make them stop their preaching.

What happened? You might say, "the Holy Spirit happened!" For, in response to all of these scare tactics, Peter stands up and speaks with great boldness. This man, who previously denied his Saviour three times because he does not have the courage of his convictions, suddenly finds a backbone. How come? What changed him? The Holy Spirit! Luke writes, "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said..." (Acts 4:8).

And so, it is recorded everywhere in the book of Acts. It does not matter whether it is Peter, John, Stephen, Philip, or Paul, they all proclaim the Word with boldness. They can do so because the Spirit keeps on filling them up. 



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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Dear reader,

You may have noticed inside the front cover of each issue of *Clarion* our acknowledgment of financial support from the Government of Canada for our publication activities. This has caused some to wonder whether this support comes "with strings attached." In particular, does *Clarion* make editorial or content decisions based on how the government of the day sees social and political issues? Has *Clarion* ever chosen to censor itself rather than put financial assistance in jeopardy?

Quite simply, the answer is: no. In the first place, as a matter of principle, we would never do this. Further, there has been no interference or pressure to do so. If you review previous volumes, you will see that we have acknowledged this financial

support for about 20 years, well before the current government or other recent Canadian governments. As part of the process, we have annually submitted copies of our magazine to the government department in charge of the program. Over the years, we have received no feedback on the content of any articles, and absolutely no pressure to adjust our content.

Clarion remains committed to our goal of encouraging, educating, engaging, and uniting our readers in adherence to the doctrine of Scripture, also as summarized in our Reformed confessions!

William Gortemaker

SUMMIT 2021

Summit Reached

5th Year Anniversary Celebrated One Year Later!

On August 2, 2021, 230 young people, young adults, chaperones, and staff converged on the campus of Mt. Royal University in Calgary, AB for the annual Summit Reformed Youth Conference. This year was special, because it marked the 5th year anniversary of Summit. Last year would have been the five-year anniversary of Summit, but due to COVID-19, Summit 2020 was cancelled.

Planning Summit 2021

On May 31, 2021, Alberta still had restrictions in place for group gatherings; however, the Summit organizing committee made the decision to go forward with plans to host the Conference in August. The committee prayed that things would open up – and they did, praise be to God! Still, attendance did have to be capped at 230 people, and it was restricted to Canadians only. Summit was not quite the same without all our friends from the U.S. Lord willing, the Canadian/US border will be open for Summit 2022!

Summit 2021

The theme for Summit 2021 was “Keep Running,” based on Hebrews 12:1b, “Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” On each of the five days of Summit, Conference attendees gathered in the beautiful Bella Concert Hall to sing praises to God, hear a powerful message, and have a little fun. The Main Session speakers were Rev. Winston Bosch and Rev. Hilmer Jagersma.

Both of these pastors did an amazing job presenting very personal and challenging messages. The feedback shared following the conference reflected just how well these men

connected with the young people and young adults. One high school age attendant from Carman, MB wrote: “So many times this year I was in tears during the worship sessions because of the ability of the speakers to speak at our level and use their experiences and tell their life stories – that hit the hardest. The speakers were able to really connect to the audience and hold their attention.”

On Tuesday and Wednesday, the Conference featured eight Break-Out Sessions, all tying into the “Keep Running” theme. The young people could attend four sessions in total. Break-Out Session speakers were: Rich Bout, Angela Bout, Brian Cochran, Simon Lievaart, Bill Pols, Kelvin Tiemstra, John van Eyk, and Jason Vander Horst.

Thursday at noon, following the Main Session, busses arrived to take everyone to their Out-Day Activity. Due to COVID, the usual Out-Day activities were limited (like white water rafting, Heritage Park, the Calgary Zoo). Instead, everyone went hiking. Three different trails were available ranging from easy, to intermediate, to more advanced. The weather was beautiful, and the mountain scenery was amazing!

New for Summit 2021!

On Monday afternoon, an inflatable obstacle course was set up that turned out to be a huge hit. Also new for Summit 2021 were food trucks! We had a breakfast food truck each day as well as a coffee truck.

A discernable need

From the very start of Summit on Monday, it was obvious to everyone just how desperately this conference was needed!



(Top left) Pastor Hilmer Jagersma speaking at one of the Main Sessions.

(Top right) Summit sports tournaments are held on Tuesday and Wednesday

(At right) Pastor Winston Bosch speaking at one of the Main Sessions

Page opposite

(Top left and right) Break-Out Sessions are one of the most important parts of Summit. Everyone attends four of the eight sessions.

(Middle right) The food truck was a huge hit.

(Bottom) Overhead view of the Summit 2021 Attendees





Page opposite
(Top left and right) Break-Out Sessions.
(Bottom) More fun on the Out-Day!

For nearly two years our young people and young adults have been isolated from each other. The speakers and chaperones sensed a discernable hunger and desire for fun and fellowship – for these young people to be in social settings once more and enjoy each other’s company!

Noticeable effects of COVID

There was a drastic increase in the number of individuals who suffered panic attacks and anxiety while on campus. Some of this anxiety was due to the fact that this was the first time in a long time that many of these young people had been away from home. Summit staff, speakers, and the Summit nurse did a wonderful job coming alongside these young people and helping them cope with their anxieties and fears. Thankfully no one had to leave campus early to go back home.

Who attends Summit?

Every year the Summit committee tracks registration details so they can get a better idea of who attends Summit and which churches Summit is serving. Because this year’s conference was planned so late in the spring, we saw a sharp drop-off in participation of Post-high Young Adults. We usually have sixty to eighty young adults attend, but this year only thirty-three registered. We had 154 high school age young people register – and many were first time registrants. That was exciting to see.

Summit attendees travelled from five different Canadian provinces, reaching as far East as Ontario. We continue to have very good representation and participation from the Canadian Reformed Churches. Of the 230 attendees, fifty-nine people were from the Canadian Reformed Church – thirty-three came from the Smithers and Houston churches in British Columbia! The majority of the remaining registrants were from the United Reformed Churches, and a small number from Presbyterian and other Reformed churches.


Summit invests in youth!

Rev. Winston Bosch made the comment that the Summit Conference is an investment that is made in the hearts, lives, and

souls of the church’s youth. Speaking for the Summit Organizing Committee, Rev. Keith Davis stated: “Each year, it is a great privilege to organize these conferences, to invite speakers to come, and to meet and fellowship with hundreds of Reformed young adults and young people who travel from near and far! We want to continue this ministry, but the future of Summit depends in large part on the willingness of the churches (both URC and Canadian Reformed) to partner with us in this important ministry. We covet your prayers and thank you for your support!”

Support needed

Over the past five conferences the committee has tried to keep registration fees to a minimum so that cost would not be a deterrent to those wanting to come to the conference. But in order to keep registration fees low (that fee only covers food and room accommodations for the week), Summit relies on offerings from churches and donations from individuals. For example, the Summit 2021 budget called for \$60,000 in support from church offerings. That’s a significant percent (about one third) of the annual budget – and going forward, as Summit grows in popularity, the budget will also grow.

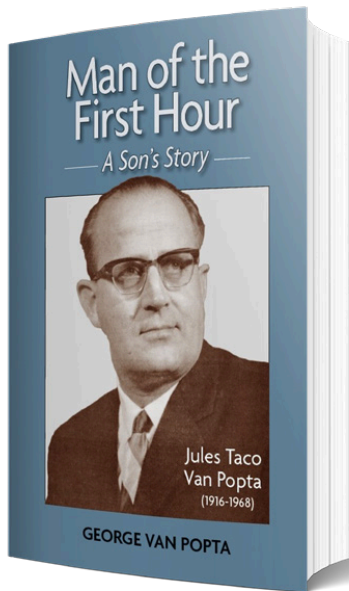
To assist in meeting the budget, Summit relies almost exclusively on the generous support of the United Reformed Churches in Classis Western Canada. However, gauging from the level of interest and participation from our Canadian Reformed brothers and sisters, Summit is hoping that the Canadian Reformed Churches would be willing to come alongside the URC in support of this work. Since youth from both federations attend and benefit greatly from the conference, it makes sense that both federations would joyfully share in the financial support. 



Keith Davis *Pastor*
Bethel URC, Summit Organizing Committee
Calgary, AB

Note: All Summit activities and finances are under the supervision of the Bethel URC Council and Deaconate. To inquire as to how you or your church can support Summit, contact Rev. Keith Davis at kdavis@bethelurc.org. Summit Organizing Committee: Jesse & Laura Vink, Russell & Beckie Vanderveen, Debbie Oostenbrink, Leonard & Jessica Vanwoudenberg, and Keith & Laura Davis.

BOOK REVIEW



Man of the First Hour: A Son's Story
 - Jules Taco Van Popta
 George van Popta Carman:
 Reformed Perspective Press, 2021
 Paperback, 226 pages

Man of the First Hour

In the grand sweep of church history, the ordinary men and women don't often get noticed. We think in terms of the great moments - like the Reformation of 1517, or the Liberation of 1944 - and we concentrate on the key players at such tumultuous times.

Yet many thousands of the Lord's people were caught up in these critical periods. All of them faced very real and significant decisions about where to worship, or how to respond to opposition, and, ultimately, about who was worthy of their highest loyalty. There are countless untold stories throughout church history about how Christ's people have always struggled to live in the freedom for which he set us free.

In *Man of the First Hour*, one of these compelling stories of struggle and faith is preserved. We listen to Rev. George van Popta tell the tale of one of Christ's "ordinary" servants, his father, Rev. Jules T. Van Popta.


Born in the Netherlands in 1916 and raised by God-fearing parents, Van Popta was witness to the horrors of World War II and the church unrest of the 1940s. It is difficult to imagine the sorrow and strain that was compounded in that period. Not only was Jules Van Popta's father imprisoned in a concentration camp, where he died in early 1945, but Van Popta - as a young seminary student - was forced to confront the doctrinal and church political issues of the Liberation. Yet, the Lord faithfully led his path, and that of his young bride, Helen.

After ministering to a liberated congregation in the Netherlands, Van Popta accepted a call to the Canadian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta. He and Helen and their young family made the transatlantic and transcontinental voyage to the rugged frontier of Canada. For a time, Van Popta was the only minister serving this federation. He often travelled the vast distances of Western Canada by rail - pillow

and portable typewriter in hand - preaching the gospel, administering the sacraments, and helping to organize the young churches.

Those "first hours" saw their moments of laughter, together with some heartache. The author shares small glimpses of levity in the parsonage, tension at consistory and synod, and tells readers about the burnout experienced by his father and how God mercifully renewed his strength. Then, in 1968, he was appointed as professor at the new seminary in Hamilton. But in his perfect wisdom, the Lord called Van Popta to himself before he could take up this important task.

Shortly after he passed away, a colleague referred to Van Popta as "the man of the first hour." Christ had indeed used him for effective service during the first critical decades of the Canadian churches. But Van Popta had a clear sense that he was but one humble man among many who have been privileged to serve Christ's catholic church. The author relates how, as a young boy, he once asked his father whether it was true that he was the first minister in Canada. And his father replied, "No, there have been many, many ministers before me."

This book is delightfully engaging, and I'm confident that it will be enjoyed by many. It radiates the warmth of a son's love for his father, and it expresses deep gratitude for the Lord's unwavering faithfulness. The unmistakable and encouraging message in *Man of the First Hour* is that Christ has always used ordinary people to build his kingdom, and will continue to do so, until he comes again. 



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PRESS RELEASE

Classis Ontario West, September 8, 2021

On behalf of the convening church, the American Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, MI, Rev. K. Kok opened Classis in a Christian manner. The credentials were examined and found to be in good order. Classis was declared constituted.

The executive suggested by the previous classis were asked to take their place. These were: Rev. P. Holtvlüwer, chairman; Rev. K. Kok, vice-chairman; and Rev. J. Poort, clerk. The chairman thanked the convening church for its work in preparing for this classis.

Classis proceeded to the preparatory examination of Candidate R. Offringa. In closed session, Classis determined that his sermon proposal was sufficient to continue, and the brother was informed of this in open session. Br. Offringa was examined in Old Testament exegesis, New Testament exegesis, and Doctrine and Creeds. In closed session, Classis determined that the brother had sustained his examination. Br. Offringa was informed of this in open session and, upon giving his promise not to preach or teach anything contrary to the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity, was declared eligible for call within the Canadian Reformed Churches.


The chairman asked the questions from Article 44 of the Church Order. All the churches indicated that the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued and the the decisions of the broader assemblies were being honoured. No churches needed the advice of Classis.

The Ancaster Canadian Reformed Church, as the church in charge of the Fund for Needy Churches, proposes that the American Reformed Church in Grand Rapids receive support in the amount of \$30,000.00 (US) for 2022. This proposal is adopted.

The Report of the Fund for Needy Churches is received with thankfulness. The Report of the Classical Treasurer is received; he proposes a \$0.00 assessment for 2022 because of the funds on hand. This is adopted.

Delegates for next Regional Synod were elected. They are: ministerial delegates – primary delegates: Rev. P. Holtvlüwer and Rev. J. Temple; alternates: Rev. A. Witten and Rev. J. Louwerse (in that order); elder delegates – primary: Br. A. Witten and Br. P. Engbers; alternates: Br. J. van Popta and Br. G. Bartels (in that order).

The next classis is scheduled for December 8, 2021 (with March 2, 2022 as alternate date). The convening church will be Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church of Hamilton, ON. The proposed executive are Rev. K. Kok, chairman; Rev. J. Poort, vice-chairman; and Rev. J. Temple, clerk.

The Acts were read and adopted. The Press Release was read and approved. The chairman closed the meeting with prayer. 

For Classis Ontario West September 8, 2021
– Rev. K. A. Kok, Vice-Chairman, e.t.

Clarion

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

Confessionally Reformed

Loving in manner

Attuned to current issues

Readable and Reliable

In Submission to Scripture

Open to constructive criticism

Nurturing Christian living

