



Clarion

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what's inside

It was eighty years ago that the Lord brought about the Liberation of his churches in the Netherlands, an event which is pivotal in our Canadian Reformed (and Australian) history. Clarence Bouwman's article helps us understand the struggle then going on concerning the biblical way to view the church which in turn continues to influence us still today. Reformation of the church invariably involves the songs of the church and yours truly reviews the role which the singing of Psalms has played in Reformed history. Jason Van Vliet's editorial also speaks of the church's singing but focusses on the key subject of our songs, be they hymns or psalms. William Helder even furnishes us with a new song that admirably shows the point of the editorial.

What is it like to be a Reformed Christian and serve as a police officer? Read Ilse Vandermeulen's column *Witness at Work* for one person's experience. Trauma is an ugly reality for many in this world and Rick Ludwig's summary of a recent conference gives some gospel encouragement in learning to navigate those difficult and delicate situations. Elsewhere you can also learn about the newly ordained minister in Devon, Alberta as well as the newly minted Delight Retreat that held its first event near Brantford, Ontario. There is also opportunity to rejoice with our brothers and sisters in West Timor at the report on their nearly-finished new seminary building.

Jan DeGelder's column *Governing the Church* returns with a discussion about the role of the consistory in the education of the children of the church as the churches have agreed upon in Article 58 CO. Lots of possible questions there! Jack Huizenga from our Teachers' College contributes a review of a book which looks very helpful in combating the rise of Critical Theory in Canada while Wes Bredenhof introduces us to a book that helps us understand all about the formation of the New Testament. You'll also find *Clarion Kids*, a meditation on Christ's ascension, a letter to the editor, and something new: a collection of clippings from various classis press releases rather than the entire press release of each. The idea is to zero-in on the bits relevant to our readers to perhaps save time and make it easier to stay up-to-date. You can always let me know what you think about this change or anything else for that matter.

Happy Ascension Day (May 9)!

Peter Holtvlüwer

On our cover: Pink fireweed wildflowers near the Shuswap Highlands in central British Columbia
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CLARION (ISSN 0383-0438) is published 16 times per year (tri-weekly) by Premier Printing Ltd., 1 Beghin Ave, Winnipeg MB R2J 3X5.

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Canada	\$ 59	\$ 104
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International	\$ 104	\$ 178
Digital	\$ 40	

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- I**n Submission to Scripture
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235 JESUS SONGS

I have heard children say, “Let’s sing a Jesus song.” What exactly is a “Jesus song”?

We can distinguish two meanings. Meaning #1: any song that explicitly contains that name “Jesus” in its lyrics. For example, Hymn 45, “*Jesus Shall Reign*,” fits this meaning. This is probably what the children are talking about.

However, there is also Meaning #2: any song that magnifies our Saviour *regardless of which of his names, titles, or descriptions appear in the lyrics*. Here we might think of Psalm 72. It does not contain the word “Jesus” but repeatedly praises the “King,” who in the new covenant is clearly Jesus (Rev 17:14). Or consider Hymn 62. We sing about our Saviour who broke the bread and gave the cup at the Last Supper but in each stanza the hymn calls him “O Lord” and never uses the name “Jesus.” As churches we need to keep *both* meanings in mind.

CLIMBING NUMBERS

If we limit ourselves to Meaning #1, I count about thirty hymns in the *Book of Praise* that contain the word “Jesus.” Leaning slightly into Meaning #2, about forty-five hymns have either this name “Jesus” or his most familiar title “Christ” (without Jesus) somewhere in the lyrics. Of course, Christ simply means “anointed,” so we can add nine psalms that speak of the “anointed (one).” Now we’re up to fifty-four Jesus songs.

Leaning further into Meaning #2, this Jesus is also *God* (Rom 9:5), and our *Lord* (Rev 22:21), and the *LORD*, that is, Yahweh, the great I AM WHO I AM (John 8:58; see also Hymn 79:3). Jesus is “true God of true God” (Nicene Creed) and as we confess this central truth the number of Jesus songs in the *Book of Praise* suddenly explodes to 235—150 Jesus-psalms plus eighty-five Jesus-hymns! At least I could not find a single psalm or hymn that does not contain at least one occurrence of *God* or *Lord* or *LORD* or *Jesus* or *Christ* or *Anointed One*. If I missed one, I stand corrected.

Of course, when we sing about *God* or *our LORD*, we worship the Father and the Spirit along with the Son, but the Son is still fully included. Similarly, some songs, like the psalms, were written before the Son was incarnate but they still magnify him who was, is, and ever shall remain true and eternal God (LD 14).

Working more with Meaning #2, if you add in Son of God, Deliverer, Redeemer, Defender, King, and Shepherd, etc., many of those 235 include manifold references to our Saviour. Thus, the entire *Book of Praise*—the psalm section no less than the hymn section—is rich with Jesus songs.

NO NT BOOK OF PSALMS

The Holy Spirit did not breathe out a new *collection* of songs for the NT as he did the book of Psalms in the OT. That is worth contemplating. True, the Spirit gave us some new doxological poems here and there in the NT. Examples include what we often call the songs of Mary, Zechariah, and Simeon, (Luke 1:46–55, 67–79; 2:19–32) and other doxological poems such as Romans 11:33–36, 1 Timothy 3:16, and Revelation 5:9–13, 15:3–4, and 19:1–8.

Remarkably, none of these NT poems listed above explicitly uses the name Jesus. None of them uses his most familiar title, Christ, either. Rather, just like Meaning #2 Jesus songs, these NT poems refer to our Saviour as our horn of salvation, a light for revelation, or the Lamb.

Philippians 2:5–11 also has poetic, hymn-like qualities, and it contains the name Jesus twice along with his title Christ once. So, it falls into the Meaning #1 category. Surprisingly, it’s the only one. Of course, composers have taken other non-poetic NT passages and turned them into faithful hymns that edify us, also those that use the name of Jesus explicitly. That is good! But the point here is that *the NT itself* contains very few Meaning #1 Jesus poem-songs—perhaps only one.

THE TAKEAWAY

With sincere fervour we need to embrace *both* meanings of Jesus songs. If we presume, consciously or sub-consciously, that only songs that explicitly mention “Jesus” or “Christ” are truly NT Jesus songs, then we could end up not only losing appreciation for psalm-singing but also setting up a standard that is stricter than the NT itself. In the NT the Holy Spirit gave us poems that are, for the most part, comparable to Meaning #2 Jesus songs.

Our ministers and missionaries, as well as our parents and teachers, would do well to remind us regularly that when we sing to *our God* and *Deliverer* or about *our LORD* and *Defender*, then we are, most certainly, singing Jesus songs. 



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The Benefits of The ASCENSION of Christ

As they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight
ACTS 1:9

Scripture teaches that after Christ arose from the dead he ascended into heaven. What does it mean for you that Christ ascended into heaven? Q&A 49 of our beloved Heidelberg Catechism tells us how the ascension of Christ benefits us. It benefits us in three ways: from heaven, Christ is our advocate, he is our assurance of future glory, and he is the source of power for us to live a new life.

Jesus is your advocate, representing you before the Father, interceding for you with his own blood. He pleads your case, not based on your merits, but on his righteousness. He defends you from the accusations of the devil, the world, and your conscience. He assures you of God's love, forgiveness, and acceptance. He is your lawyer, friend, and brother.

He is the assurance of your future glory, guaranteeing that you will one day be with him in heaven. By taking your human nature with him to heaven, he has shown that you too belong there. Some of the dust of the earth is present on the throne of heaven. He is preparing a glorious mansion for you and has promised to come back to take you to himself. As the head, he is connected to his body, which is you. And as the bridegroom, to you his bride.

He is your source of new life. He sends you his Spirit—the Spirit of truth, of power, and love. He fills you with his gifts, fruits, and presence. He enables you to seek the things above, where he is seated at the right hand of God, rather than the things of this life. His Spirit makes us look upward. Do you remember the muckraker in *Pilgrim's Progress*? He could not see the crown being held out for him because he was too busy looking down raking the muck of the earth back and forth. By his Spirit Christ empowers you to live for him, to serve him, and to worship him. He is your Lord, Saviour, and treasure.

Meditate upon these gospel truths. Appropriate them. Make them your property. As you do so, feel a surge of gratitude filling your heart. As the disciples left the Mount of Olives rejoicing,

having witnessed the ascension into heaven of their Lord Jesus Christ, you too can go your way rejoicing. As the disciples were filled with hope, you too can be bursting with expectation, as you eagerly anticipate the imminent return of your Lord and Saviour.

May you live in the light of Christ's ascension. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. Ask him to make you more like him, to conform you to his image, to transform you by his Spirit. Let us all look forward to the day we will see him face to face, to the day when we will be with him in heaven, when we will share in his glory, forever. ☪

FURTHER READING:

Numbers 6:22–27; Luke 24:36–53

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1. Christ's ascension marked the return of his heavenly glory. Jesus's glory had been veiled during his sojourn on earth, with one brief exception at the Transfiguration (Matt 17:1–9).
2. What are the similarities and differences in how Luke describes Christ's ascension in the Gospel according to Luke 24:50–53 and Acts 1:6–11?
3. Reflect on how Christ ascended with his hands uplifted (Luke 24:50) and how Aaron blessed the children of Israel (Num 6:22–27). Which of the offices of Christ comes into view here?



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The Priority of Psalm Singing

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

PETER HOLTVLÜWER

Did you know that Reformed churches have long been known as psalm-singing churches? For hundreds of years after the Reformation, Reformed and Presbyterian churches took on their lips primarily the words of the 150 Psalms to sing them back to God.¹ To be sure, a few other Bible passages were put to music and occasionally sung in worship, but Reformed churches prized the Psalms above all other songs. The tunes may have differed from place to place but all were agreed that the Psalms were to form the principal part of the congregation's singing. In the Canadian Reformed Churches we have this principle stated succinctly in the preface to our *Book of Praise*: "In Reformed liturgy the Psalms have a predominant place." Biblically sound hymns are not excluded but they are definitely given second place to the Psalms.

Today in our federation it seems that many are unaware of both this history and this principle. And of those who are aware of these things, some wonder why psalm singing would be placed above hymn singing. Aren't biblically sound hymns just as fitting to sing? And besides, since the Lord Jesus Christ has come and fulfilled all the expectations of the Old Testament, shouldn't the church sing about his *completed* work and not just the prophetic *anticipation* of Christ in the Psalms? Shouldn't we at least put psalms and hymns on an equal footing?

DEFINING TERMS

Before going further, let me define our terms. In this two-part series of articles, psalms refer to some or all of the 150 Psalms of

¹ While the remainder of this article will show this to be true in Dutch Reformed church history, this is equally true in English Presbyterian history. The Westminster Confession of Faith (1648) articulates what has been called the "regulative principle" of worship in Chap. 21. In describing the elements of the church's worship it states in 21.5: "The reading of the Scriptures with godly fear; the sound preaching and conscionable hearing of the Word, in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith, reverence; *singing of psalms with grace in the heart*; as also, the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ. . ." (emphasis added). The practice of psalm singing had earlier been spelled out in the Directory for the Public Worship of God approved by the Westminster Assembly in 1644: "Of Singing of Psalms. It is the duty of Christians to praise God publicly, by singing of Psalms together in the congregation, and also privately in the family . . . that the whole congregation may join herein, every one that can read is to have a Psalmbook" (Ted J. Postma, *Psalmody Through the Ages: A Survey of the History of Psalmody* [Brantford: Free Reformed Publications, 2005], p. 72.) The priority of psalm singing was practiced in Presbyterian churches for centuries until its decline in the 1800s. Even today, however, a number of denominations continue to sing mostly (some even exclusively) the Psalms of the Bible, such as the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), the Presbyterian Reformed Church, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America.

Which songs could be more fitting for the church to sing back to God than the ones inspired by the Spirit of God?

Scripture set to music in a singable translation. Hymns are basically all other biblically based songs approved by the church for use in worship. Hymns can be distinguished into two sub-categories, one being “canticles” and the other “free hymns.” Canticles are passages of Scripture (other than the Psalms) set to music in a singable translation,² while a free hymn is composed of lyrics which may convey biblical teaching but which are in fact the prayers, declarations, or faith-confessions of the Christian poet.³

I’d like to begin examining the above questions by reviewing the practice of psalm singing in our Dutch Reformed history (this article) and then go on to look at the reasoning behind the principle of predominant psalm singing (next article, DV). Although it’s worth noting that the Reformation sought to restore the priority of psalm singing found in the early church,⁴ we’ll begin with the Reformation and trace this practice into our present-day North American context.

JOHN CALVIN

The key Reformer to give shape to much Reformed and Presbyterian thought and worship practice is John Calvin. From early on Calvin led the way in promoting both congregational singing (which had been lost in the Middle Ages) and the primacy of psalm singing. In his introduction to the 1543 Genevan Psalter Calvin offered the following rationale:

And indeed, we know from experience, that singing has great strength and power to move and to set on fire the hearts of men in order that they may call upon God and praise him with a more vehement and more ardent zeal. It is to be remembered always that this singing should not be light or frivolous, but that it ought to have weight and majesty. . . . Now, what Augustine says is true, namely that no one is able to sing things worthy of God which he has not received from him. Therefore, even after

we have carefully searched everywhere, we shall not find better or more appropriate songs to this end than the Psalms of David, inspired by the Holy Spirit. And for this reason, when we sing them, we are assured that God puts the words in our mouths, as if he himself were singing through us to exalt his glory.⁵

Calvin follows Augustine and reasons quite plainly: which songs could be more fitting for the church to sing back to God than the ones inspired by the Spirit of God? While that reasoning did not lead Calvin to exclusive psalmody as evidenced by his early psalters which included several canticles,⁶ he nevertheless sought to resurrect the primacy of psalm singing which had held sway in the early church.

THE NETHERLANDS

Our forefathers at the Synod of Dort 1618/19 took this principle seriously. At that time in the Netherlands there was a growing trend in some quarters to sing a variety of hymns alongside the psalms. The churches collectively checked this trend when the Synod decided to assert the priority of psalm singing:

In the churches only the 150 Psalms of David, the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, the Twelve Articles of Faith, and the Songs of Mary, Zacharias and Simeon shall be sung . . . all the other hymns shall be kept out of the churches and if maybe some have already been introduced into the churches, they shall be retracted in the most adequate manner.⁷

The essence of this decision was codified in the Church Order of Dort in Article 69 and still persists in modified form in the church orders of a number of Reformed denominations today.⁸

The emphasis on singing primarily psalms continued in the Dutch Reformed churches for two hundred years. When in 1807 the Dutch national government introduced and imposed 192 hymns of questionable content to be sung in the churches, this

² Examples: the Ten Commandments (Exod 20) or the Song of Mary (Luke 1:46–55) as put to music in Hymns 11 and 17 respectively of the *Book of Praise* (Winnipeg: SCBP, 2014). Some canticles are clearly marked in Scripture as songs (e.g. the Song of Moses, Deut 31:30; see Hymn 12) while others are poetic or prose passages set to music.

³ For instance *Glory be to God the Father* or *O come, O come Emmanuel* (Hymns 7 & 16 in the *Book of Praise*).

⁴ See Terry Johnson’s essay “The History of Psalm Singing in the Christian Church” in Joel R. Beeke and Anthony T. Selva, *Sing a New Song: Recovering Psalm Singing for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010) pp. 41–46. Concerning the patristic church he concludes: “. . . the Psalter clearly was the primary songbook of the early church.”

⁵ *Book of Praise*, p. v.

⁶ K. Deddens in *Where Everything Points to Him* (Neerlandia: Inheritance Publications, 1993) mentions that one of Calvin’s early psalters contained “musical versions of the song of Simeon, the Ten Commandments, and the twelve Articles of the Apostles’ Creed.” Clearly Calvin meant for the biblical Psalms to dominate.

⁷ Cited in Postma, *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁸ See the church orders of the Protestant Reformed Churches (Art. 69), the Free Reformed Churches of North America (Art. 69), the Netherlands Reformed Congregations (Art. 69), and the Heritage Reformed Congregations (Art. 69).

movement away from psalmody was viewed as deformation and became one of the sparks leading to the Secession of 1834. The Secession churches officially reverted back to the predominance of psalm singing in their Synod of Amsterdam 1836 which decided:

In the gatherings of the congregation they will continue to use the common rhymed version of the 150 Psalms of David and of the songs which one finds in the Bible, omitting and excluding from the public gatherings of the congregation the human hymns, which are not found in the Bible, that the work of men may not be given equal status with the work of men who have spoken moved by the Holy Spirit.⁹

CRC IN NORTH AMERICA

When Dutch Seceders came to North America and eventually founded in 1857 what later became known as the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), the emphasis on psalm singing remained intact. They began with singing the Psalms mostly in Dutch, but in 1914 the CRC endorsed the English-language 1912 *Psalter* of the United Presbyterian Church. It contained multiple renditions of all 150 Psalms (in whole or in part, often employing paraphrases) plus eight doxologies and three canticles from Luke's Gospel.¹⁰ This was an influential psalter for many decades not just in the CRC but in other Reformed federations as well. In 1927 it was re-published and remains the basis for congregational singing in a number of Reformed churches with Dutch roots.¹¹

As the twentieth century unfolded, pressure increased in the CRC to include more hymns and also hymns from a greater variety of backgrounds. This led to a move away from the 1912 Psalter to a CRC-produced 1934 Psalter-Hymnal in which 141 hymns were included. That this was an unprecedented change in the history of Dutch Reformed congregational singing was acknowledged in the preface:

Up to the present time our Church has always adhered faithfully to its purpose to sing only the Old Testament Psalms in public worship, barring a few exceptions mentioned specifically in Article 69 of the Church Order. . . . During the 77 years of its existence, the Christian Reformed Church has sung practically nothing but Psalms in public worship.¹²

At the same time, the CRC of the day did not intend to downgrade the Psalms from their previous place of prominence. The

same synod which approved the addition of 141 hymns to the song book also changed the Church Order to read in Article 69, "In the churches only the 150 Psalms of David and the Collection of Hymns for church use, approved for church use, approved and adopted by synod, shall be sung. However, while the singing of the Psalms in divine worship is a *requirement*, the use of approved Hymns is left to the freedom of the churches."¹³ Sadly, the CRC dropped this language entirely in its 1965 revision of the Church Order so that now its churches are simply obliged to sing from synodically approved "songs" without any sense of the requirement or priority of psalm singing.

URCNA

When churches that seceded from the CRC in the 1990s later formed the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA), they sought to restore the predominance of psalm singing. They plainly stated this as early as 2004 in their Church Order which reads in Article 39, "The 150 Psalms shall have the principal place in the singing of the churches." In unity talks with the URCNA, the Canadian Reformed Churches agreed to include this precise statement in Article 36 of the Proposed Joint Church Order 2010.¹⁴ The URCNA has also endeavoured (along with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church) to give expression to this principle with the publication of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal (2018), in which the 150 Psalms are given a distinct and prominent place. Not only is the section containing the Psalms placed ahead of the hymns, but each and every one of 150 Psalms is fully represented in their entirety (not merely portions of psalms as was often the case in earlier CRC psalter-hymnals).

CANRC

The conviction that psalm singing should predominate in the worship services was carried across the ocean by immigrants from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated) who moved to Canada after WWII and soon formed the Canadian Reformed Churches. Our earliest synods appointed "Deputies for an English Calvinistic Psalter" and mandated these deputies to produce a complete musical rendition of the 150 Psalms in English. Psalm singing was the main and most urgent focus. General Synod 1954

⁹ Postma, p. 109

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 110.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 110–112. The churches which still make regular use of the 1927 Psalter include the PRC, NRC, FRCNA, and HRC.

¹² Psalter-Hymnal of the Christian Reformed Church (Grand Rapids: Publication Committee of the Christian Reformed Church, 1934), p. iii.

¹³ Ibid, p. iv. Emphasis added.

¹⁴ The 2010 PJCO can be found here: <https://canrc.org/documents/8034>

Psalms have consistently been prioritized over hymns in the singing of Reformed churches historically

and GS 1958 gave approval to only thirty-four psalms found in the CRC's Psalter-Hymnal of that period.¹⁵

At the same time, hymns based closely on Scripture and particularly the well-known canticles of the New Testament were also mandated but clearly came second in priority. The "little green book" was published early-on, consisting of the approved thirty-four psalms plus three additional psalms and four hymns.¹⁶ In 1961 the first edition of the *Book of Praise* appeared containing eighty psalms together with fourteen hymns. In 1967 a supplement was published containing thirty-four additional psalms and nineteen additional hymns (for a total of 114 psalms and thirty-three hymns). The first complete edition of the *Book of Praise* was published in 1972 containing all 150 psalms (each in their entirety) as well as sixty-two hymns. Over the following decade the *Book of Praise* was filled out in its prose section and fine-tuned in its song section, producing the much more definitive version of 1984 which brought the hymn total to sixty-five. It stayed at that number until 2013 when GS Carman adopted nineteen more hymns for a current total of eighty-five.¹⁷

Since their founding, the Canadian Reformed Churches have consistently upheld the priority of psalm singing mentioned in the preface to the *Book of Praise*. GS 2004 mandated the Standing Committee for the Book of Praise (SCBP) in part to "Set the limit at 100 hymns since Psalms have a predominant place in the liturgy of the Reformed churches" (*Acts*, Art. 115, 6.3). GS 2007 echoed this principle (*Acts*, Art. 133, 4.2) and GS 2010 decided to encode it in the provisional joint church order (PJCO 36; *Acts*, Art. 151, 4.2). Even the most recent general synod highlighted the distinction between hymns and psalms affirming that the latter indeed have "a predominant place" in the worship services (*Acts of GS 2022*, Art. 105, 4.2.3)

DOES HISTORY MATTER?

Perhaps you are asking by now: so what? What does all this prove? Why should I care about the last 500 years of history or even going back to the early church fathers? Isn't it the Bible that counts? Of course the Word of God is the authority for all we do as Christians and churches and we hope to get to what Scripture says in the next article, but let's not forget that we are not the first to interpret the

Bible and apply its teachings. Think for example of your children or grandchildren. If they ignored all you said and taught, or the example you and your peers set in church life, would you not consider that arrogant of them as well as unwise and dangerous? The Bible teaches us to remember and learn from the past (e.g. Ps 78) and to honour our parents—how much more, then, our parents and forefathers in the faith who also loved God and his Word and earnestly sought to honour him in everything they did!

Consider too that "reformation" means simply to go back to the teachings and practices of Scripture, to refashion the church after the example of the apostles whom Christ appointed as foundation stones for his church (Rev 21:14). Does it not make sense that the first generations after the apostles (i.e. the early church) would a) tend to follow the example inherited from the apostles and b) know better than our generation 2000 years later what those practices were? This is one of the reasons Calvin and the other Reformers steeped themselves not only in the study of Scripture but also in the writings of the early church fathers like Tertullian (d. AD 230), Eusebius (d. circa 340), and Augustine (d. 430). What they found there on the subject of the church's singing affirmed what they understood from Scripture, that God gave the Psalms to be the primary song book of God's people. How can we avoid the charge of arrogance if we today just ignore or sweep away the ancient and long-held practice of the primacy of psalm singing?

This history makes it clear that psalms have consistently been prioritized over hymns in the singing of Reformed churches historically, and in the Canadian Reformed Churches particularly, a principle which has long been reflected in the proportion of psalms to hymns adopted for the *Book of Praise*. But where in Scripture does this principle come from? Why have Reformed and Presbyterian churches sought to return to the ancient practice of singing primarily the Psalms? We hope to tackle those questions in the next article. 



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¹⁵ See *Acts of GS 1954*, Art. 56 and *Acts of GS 1958*, Arts. 194 and 209.

¹⁶ There is no publication date listed in the "little green book" (nor a title given to it) but it was likely published shortly after Synod Homewood-Carman 1954 which gave approval to the thirty-four psalms mentioned above. The four hymns consist of two canticles (*Song of Zacharias*, *Song of Simeon*), the Lord's Prayer, and Luther's *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*.

¹⁷ The numbering of the old Hymn 1A and 1B (renditions of the Apostles' Creed) was changed to "1" and "2" respectively, thus giving a new total of eighty-five hymns.

Church

IN CANADIAN REFORMED HISTORY

The Beginnings

CLARENCE BOUWMAN



The doctrine concerning the church—known as “ecclesiology” (nice big word!)—has a colourful development in the early history of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC). In two brief articles, I’d like to trace some aspects of that development. The trigger for presenting this material at this time is the fact that 2024 represents the 80th anniversary of the Liberation of 1944, an event in which the doctrine concerning the *church* played a pivotal role. In fact, the events of the Liberation served as a crucible which formed the church-thinking of so many immigrants. That thinking in turn explains to large degree why the CanRC came into existence and how they conducted themselves in their (early) years.

To kick open the door of this discussion consider this: the immigrants’ *church-thinking* meant they actively sought *not* to add another federation of churches to the existing ecclesiastical mosaic of their new homeland but sought instead to join in the Lord’s existing church-gathering work. It can only do us good to know our own history—lest we repeat its mistakes. The story begins with understanding the work of Prof. Dr. Klaas Schilder.

< Klaas Schilder, December 19 1890 – March 23, 1952

Schilder went so far as to say that the will to unity was actually a vital mark of a true church.

BACKGROUND

Klaas Schilder (born 1890) rose to prominence in the Netherlands in the decade after Abraham Kuyper died (1920). In the years after his death, Kuyper's students attempted to elevate their master's teachings in the areas of politics and religion as the final word on a given matter. In my years of ministry I've heard from multiple people who attended catechism classes in the 1930s that Kuyper's books formed *the* authority in the catechism class, even beyond the Heidelberg Catechism itself. For many in that time period,



Abraham Kuyper, October 29, 1837 – November 8, 1920

Kuyper's distinctives and his explanation of a given Bible passage amounted to the final word.

Schilder (amongst others) dared to offer criticism on some of the things Kuyper taught. To be clear: Schilder had very high regard for Abraham Kuyper and esteemed him as a gracious gift from God who contributed much good to his country and the church. But, like every other sinner, Kuyper didn't get everything right. As forces within the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands worked to establish Kuyper's words as final on some issue, Schilder dug into Scripture (with the assistance of writers in the course of church history) to expose weaknesses he spotted in Kuyper and offer a better insight. He used his position as contributor (and later editor) of *De Reformatie* (a weekly publication within the churches) to show where Kuyper was correct and where he stood to be corrected. Four years ago *Clarion* published an article in which I paid attention to Kuyper's teaching on Presumptive Regeneration.¹ This time I choose to draw attention to elements of his teaching on the church.

KUYPER ON CHURCH

Kuyper taught much about the church that remains highly valuable for us today (I think, for example, of his book on liturgy² and the positions he took in relation to church government). In his overarching view on the church, however, he gave place to philosophical concepts rooted in pre-Christian Greek philosophy. In keeping with distinctions he learned from Plato, Kuyper spoke of the church as it exists in the mind of God (which he called the invisible church) and as we see it (that's the visible church). The invisible church is the real thing, consisting of all the elect around the globe of past, present, and future. The visible church is the numerous manifestations of this invisible church in our towns and countries, of which one church is a more pure (or less pure) expression of the real church as God sees it. This is the doctrine of pluriformity. As each flower in your garden may be celebrated because of how it contributes its own beauty to the garden, so each church in town may be celebrated for what it adds to the town's ecclesiastical garden (this is Kuyper's analogy). So Kuyper declined to term the church from which he broke away in the Doleantie of 1886 a false church as it was simply another flower in the garden. He did, though, feel that his own church (the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands) was the most pure manifestation

¹ See Vol 69, No 12, p. 333–336.

² *Our Worship* (trans. Harry Boonstra, et al).

of the church as God sees it and that this church was duty bound to try to bring surrounding churches to better understandings of the various doctrines of Scripture. Though it was preferable that Christians join a church (particularly the purest, i.e., the RCN), at bottom your responsibility was to ensure that you belonged to the invisible church, i.e., that were a believer.

Coupled closely to this concept of invisible/visible was the distinction Kuyper made between the church as organism and the church as institution. The church as organism was the church as God sees it, carrying out its function in daily life. This involves believers speaking and acting as Christians in their daily activities and so growing the gospel in all society. The church as institution referred to that which met each Sunday, had office bearers, confessions, and perhaps a building. The organism dominated six days of the week; the institution dominated one day of the week. It's clear from Kuyper's thinking that Christians who separated on Sunday as each went to his own church could nevertheless fully participate in kingdom activities from Monday to Saturday, be it in joint Christian schools, a joint political party, joint labour associations, and so much more. Unity amongst Christians—and churches—had to lie on the organic level, not on the institutional level.

SCHILDER ON CHURCH

In response to efforts to absolutize Kuyper's positions, Schilder dug into Scripture to evaluate whether Kuyper's understandings were in fact what the Lord had revealed. As indicated, he used the writings of notable churchmen of the past as well as the confessions of the church to come to his positions.

He argued that Scripture nowhere teaches that there are two churches, one visible only to God and the other visible to people. He certainly granted that there are invisible aspects to the church, for example the faith in the members' hearts, their prayers-in-secret, and their private expressions of love for one another (be it in the form of admonitions or in the form of financial assistance). But invisible aspects of the church do not make a church invisible any more than invisible aspects of a person (think of one's soul) make the person invisible. Similarly, the fact that there are hypocrites in the church does not mean there's an invisible church beside the church you see, any more than the presence of choir members who come for less than honourable motives (from the conductor's perspective, e.g., to impress a girl; this is Kuyper's example³) means

there's an invisible choir. Scripture, Schilder insisted, teaches the existence of one church, and that's also how the confessions speak. We join the church of the Lord by very physically congregating with the saints, placing ourselves humbly under the oversight of the office bearers, and being a living member of the church. In similar fashion he argued that Scripture does not know Kuyper's distinction between church as organism and church as institution.⁴

In place of the weaknesses he saw in Kuyper's ecclesiology, Schilder resurrected a doctrine concerning the church that went back in largest part to the teachings of the great Reformers and was reflected in the three Forms of Unity.⁵ He emphasized that from heaven the ascended Christ is still *in the process of* gathering his church. Christ does that through the powerful working of his Word by his Spirit Sunday by Sunday, the fruit of which becomes evident through the week wherever believers receive their place in God's wide world. Since Christ is still gathering his church through the preaching, it remains necessary to distinguish between a true church and a false church, that is to say where the Word of God has final authority versus where that Word does not have final authority. People are obligated to work along with Christ in his church gathering work in the sense that they need to make it their business to be gathered where the Word is faithfully proclaimed and maintained. As churches are grounded on the clear Word alone, there ought not to be multiple churches in a given community; instead, churches that treasure the Word of God ought to work towards unity. That's even more so for churches with identical confessions (say, the Three Forms of Unity). Biblically speaking they may not co-exist comfortably side by side; they need to unite in one federation. In fact, Schilder went so far as to say that *the will to unity* was actually a vital mark of a true church.

SCHILDER IN TROUBLE

Schilder's writings on topics like the church in *De Reformatie* found their way into many homes—and were received by many readers as a breath of fresh air. Instead of defending philosophically founded distinctions not found in Scripture or in the confessions, his readers perceived that this man kept going back to the Bible and using the writings of esteemed church fathers to show that what he found in Scripture was by no means novel. For many who respected the Bible and appreciated church history, this was

³ D. Deddens, *Cursus bij Kaarslicht: Lezingen van K Schilder in de laatste oorlogs-winter*, vol 1, p. 23.

⁴ For a very readable introduction to Schilder's thoughts about pluriformity, see his article on this subject in *The Klaas Schilder Reader: the Essential Theological Writings*, p. 90ff.

⁵ See J. M. Batteau, "Schilder on the Church," in *Always Obedient: Essays on the Teachings of Dr Klaas Schilder*, ed: J. Geertsema (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 1995), 65–100.

invigorating. These people esteemed Schilder highly and thanked God for him.

With the coming of the Second World War in the Netherlands in 1939, invading Nazis forced the suspension of the publication of *De Reformatie*. Schilder himself was compelled to go into hiding to escape extradition to a German labour camp. Despite the war, however, a General Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands was convened in 1939 (it continued till 1942). On the agenda was the effort to vindicate Kuyper's teachings (on various subjects, including common grace, presumptive regeneration, the pluriformity of the church, and more). Synod made specific determinations on the subject of presumptive regeneration (see the earlier *Clarion* article). A subsequent synod (begun in 1943) demanded that all the churches agree with those conclusions—Schilder included. Schilder could not in good conscience do so; instead, he begged Synod to wait with finalizing their doctrinal statements till after the war (thus giving time for cooler heads to prevail). Synod, however, insisted on Schilder's immediate acquiescence to its statements. Since Schilder could not do that (he was all the while in hiding!), Synod summarily suspended him on March 23, 1944 from his position as professor in the church's seminary in Kampen as well as from his status as minister in the churches. As Schilder did not "repent," Synod deposed him three months later.

LIBERATION

News of his suspension came as a shock to many in the churches. They knew from his writing that Schilder was a man of the Word who loved the Lord and the church of the Lord. They could not understand how the General Synod could find fault with this man of God. To many in the churches, his suspension and deposition were grossly unfair and a wicked abuse of authority.

As church members read the material Synod wanted them to agree to, many protested that they could not in good conscience do so as that material bound them beyond Scripture and confession. As a result, Synod deposed these office bearers too and even placed whole consistories and churches outside the federation.

What now was to become of those members (and some churches) on the receiving end of Synod's heavy-handedness? On August 11, 1944, a meeting was held in The Hague to which were invited all those who were unhappy with Synod's work. The response was enormous. The featured speaker turned out to be Dr. Klaas Schilder himself, who took the risk of coming out of hiding for the occasion. He had penned—and now read out—an *Act of Liberation*

and Return, expressing liberation from the Synod's tyranny and return to the truth and freedom of Scripture and confessions.

The first synod of the newly Liberated churches in 1945 decided to establish a scripturally faithful seminary, to which Dr. K. Schilder was appointed to teach in the field of Dogmatics.

THE CHURCH—KEY ELEMENTS

I started this article saying that immigrants who formed the CanRC came with some fixed elements in their ecclesiology, formed in large part in the crucible known as the Liberation of 1944. We can now list some of these distinctives (in no order of importance):

- A high regard for scriptural instruction and allegiance to the Three Forms of Unity—with no place for binding to documents beyond these. Churches thus aligned were "true churches" with whom unity was to be pursued.
- A conviction that the church is the Lord's work as he *gathers* (present progressive tense, meaning ongoing work) his people. People were duty-bound to work along with God and so gather themselves wherever he was already gathering.
- A disdain for philosophical and scholastic constructions such as invisible vs. visible, organic vs. institutional, militant vs. triumphant, and the doctrine of pluriformity.
- An aversion against that form of church polity where the broadest assembly (the general synod) is seen as having the authority to set its own agenda or even discipline office bearers or members of local churches. Instead, the immigrants were convinced that the Lord had given authority to the elders and hence to the consistory of the local church.
- There ought not to be multiple (true) churches in a given community. As there is one truth and one gospel proclaimed from faithful pulpits, true churches ought to display the *will to unity* with other true churches.

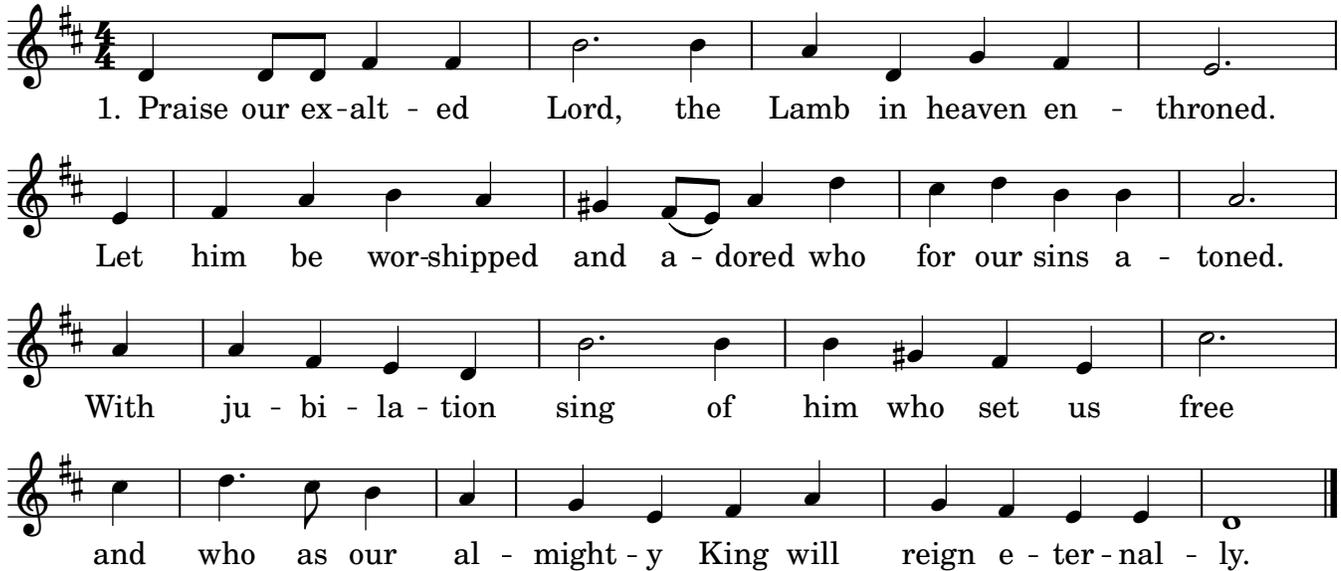
Convictions such as these led the first immigrants to strive to join church federations already existing in the new world (i.e., the Christian Reformed Church or Protestant Reformed Churches).⁶ When these new comers saw no option but to establish a new federation of churches, their initial synod decisions grew out of these distinctives. But that's a story for another article. **C**



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⁶ See the earlier quoted *Clarion* article in Vol 69, Number 12, pg 333-336.

Praise Our Exalted Lord



1. Praise our ex-alt - ed Lord, the Lamb in heaven en - throned.
Let him be wor-shipped and a - dored who for our sins a - toned.
With ju - bi - la - tion sing of him who set us free
and who as our al - might - y King will reign e - ter - nal - ly.

2. Praise him, the Prince of peace, who in his righteousness
will cause all wars and feuds to cease; all wrongs he will redress.
Rich blessings of shalom he on the earth will shower.
Praise with a loud and joyful psalm his mercy and his power.
3. Praise him, the Lord of lords, the sovereign King of kings –
he who as the incarnate Word did not to glory cling.
As humble servant he took on himself our curse,
but now in heavenly majesty rules all the universe.

Text: William Helder, 2023
Tune: Diademata

CHURCH AND SCHOOL

As we know by now, the Church Order is an agreement among churches to regulate how we run our federation. By joining the federation, churches with their consistories sign on to the Church Order as the document that governs the relationship by spelling out some of the practical implications of our spiritual unity of faith. Within that framework it may seem that Article 58 is somewhat out of place: “The consistory shall ensure that the parents, to the best of their ability, have their children attend a school where the instruction given is in harmony with the Word of God as the church has summarized it in her confessions.”

What kind of responsibility, if any, do the elders of the church have when it comes to the education parents choose for their children?

INSIGHTS CHANGE

What we have today in Article 58 is a new version of what we had in Article 21 before the Church Order revision at General Synod 1983. There is a difference in wording: the old Article 21 stipulated that “consistories shall see to it that there are good teachers. . . .” And there is also a difference in location within the Church Order: old Article 21 is in the section on “the offices,” whereas the current Article 58 is in the section on “worship, sacraments and ceremonies.” This place links it in particular to infant baptism, which is mentioned in Article 57. The place of old Article 21 views the matter of Christian school education more from the perspective of the task of the elders. This is not lost in our Article 58, but here the connection with the promises of the parents at the baptism of their children is more visible.

Is that a good thing? That depends on who you ask. There are different opinions regarding the relationship between the baptismal vows and the need for establishing Reformed Christian schools.

What used to be stipulated in Article 21 goes back to the sixteenth century, and the wording came straight from the Church Order adopted by the Synod of Dort 1618/19. In the time of the Reformation, parental Christian schools were unknown. Schools were established and supported by the government, but the

churches were directly involved in supervising the education of the children in those schools. That was because the government of the day in the Netherlands was committed to promoting the Reformed faith. This pattern changed in the nineteenth century. With the separation of church and state, the insight was growing that the Bible charges the parents with the instruction of their children—not the church, and not the state either.

The church does have direct responsibility for teaching the doctrine of the church, as is explicitly confirmed in Article 16, and also reflected in Articles 22 and 27. This is what the parents agree to in the third promise at the baptism of their children.

However, when it comes to further and more general education of the children, the church has at best an indirect responsibility. Why is that?

AN ECCLESIASTICAL MATTER?

Let’s think back (again) at one of the goals of the Church Order, as stated in one of the first columns in this series. As churches that are spiritually one, united in the Reformed faith, we accept mutual accountability when it comes to safeguarding the faithful teaching of the true doctrine of Scripture, as summarized in the Reformed confessions. For children this happens in settings like Sunday school and catechism classes but is not restricted to that. Life is one. Worldviews and moral values, whatever convictions those are based on, Christian or other, will permeate all education our children and youth are exposed to.

Ministers and elders are charged with the task to warn against and refute all ideas and views that are not in harmony with God’s Word (Art 27). Therefore, the church does have a vested interest in the education of the children of the congregation. This is expressed in Article 58, but in such a way that it does not take away the responsibility God has first of all given to the parents. The emphasis is on the task of the consistory towards the parental responsibilities of fathers and mothers.

Our Christian schools are not run by consistories, but by Christian school societies, made up of parents and other

supporters, under the leadership of a school board. Consistories do not supervise educational organizations, nor social and political organizations for that matter, as they “shall deal with no other than ecclesiastical matters,” as agreed on in Article 30. A consistory does not have the authority to overrule a decision of a school society or schoolboard, and so determine what should be done in the school.

This may sound obvious to most of us. However, the view that a school society or school board should be under direct ecclesiastical supervision has also been defended. The argument is that the vows parents make at the baptism of their children were made in the church. One author says: “parents, children, teachers and school board members are always, everywhere and in whatever capacity they function, under the supervision of their consistory.” This is correct, of course. But it does not require or justify a consistory’s organizational involvement in the Christian school. The duty of elders is restricted to supervision over the congregation. This includes comforting, encouraging, and admonishing with God’s Word all the sheep of the flock, whether those are teachers, parents, students, school board members, or none of the above.

SCHOOLBOARD MATTERS ≠ CONSISTORY MATTERS

All of this sounds pretty clear cut. Nevertheless, sometimes it requires much wisdom and careful discernment to prevent school board matters from becoming consistory matters. Especially when it involves the same people, things can get complicated and even messy.

What if elders have become convinced that there are good reasons to suspect that a teacher promotes views contrary to Scripture in the local Christian school? Elders can address the teacher personally, or the principal and eventually the school board. Can the consistory do that? Perhaps. But that’s where it ends. If the board defends and supports the teacher involved, no consistory has the authority to overrule the board’s decision.

Or imagine a parent who complains about an issue to the schoolboard, but the board turns a deaf ear. Where does the parent go, especially when all involved are members in the same church? Should he bring the matter to the consistory?

And what if a school board member accuses the rest of the board of lying to the membership of the school society? Or a school board suspends a board member, whom they accuse of slandering a teacher, but the person denies it, and takes the matter of what he calls “false accusations” to the consistory?

In all those scenarios there is no easy solution. But history and experience teach that when school board matters become consistory matters, it usually means trouble for the whole church community and school community. And sometimes the trouble falls out on an even larger scale, when one school serves multiple church communities. Think of the potential consequences: it would be quite inappropriate if a major ecclesiastical assembly were called to resolve a conflict between a school board and a consistory (or even more than one consistory).

WHAT ABOUT HOMESCHOOLING?

The expression in Article 58 “have their children attend a school . . .” triggers the question: what about homeschooling? This column is about the Church Order, and so it is not the place to get into the debate about the pros and cons of homeschooling compared to Christian school education. Here it is sufficient to observe that, also in the Canadian Reformed Churches, homeschooling has become much more “main stream,” so to speak, than it was twenty-five or thirty years ago. Let’s remind ourselves of what I wrote above: In his Word God gives parents the responsibility for the education of their children. And those who are committed to giving their children a Christian education can choose different avenues to reach that goal. More recently we also hear about collaboration between homeschooling and traditional schooling that leads to the development of new formats, like “hybrid schools” and “micro schools.”¹

In light of this it might be good to consider amending the current wording of Article 58. I think it is important to maintain the aspect that “the consistory shall ensure that the parents . . .” But the words “have their children attend schools” sound perhaps too restrictive. This was the obvious way of putting it forty years ago, when homeschooling was not heard of among us, but it’s fair to acknowledge that this has changed. I would suggest the following: “The consistory shall see to it that the parents to the utmost of their power make sure that their children receive instruction that is in harmony with the Word of God, as the church has summarized it in her confessions.” ☑



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¹ <https://www.cardus.ca/research/education/perspectives-paper/charting-new-horizons-for-independent-education-in-canada/>



Trauma

at the Table

RICK LUDWIG

While eating breakfast this past fall in a hotel restaurant on Virginia Beach, my wife and I were alarmed to hear the roar of what sounded like fighter jets overhead. It became clear that it was not a random event but part of a bigger operation, as the planes continued to noisily zoom by at varying speeds. A quick Google search revealed that a military base is close by, and test flights are actually part of the attraction to this tourist area. Our eager host smiled at our curiosity and beamed, “That’s the sound of freedom!” It crossed my mind that it would depend on where you are sitting. At some breakfast tables around the world that might be the most traumatic sound you could imagine.

It was actually trauma that brought us to Virginia. The Christian

inspire hopelessness in us. One of the more recent books on the impact of trauma on our lives is Bessel van der Kolk’s *The Body Keeps the Score*. As the title suggests, trauma is a whole person experience, and it requires careful tending in a holistic way. Welch followed J. I. Packer’s teaching by referencing two “books” as resource for the counsellor in tending to the victim of trauma. The first is the human heart. Being trauma informed is crucial to helping someone. Being a student of the other, listening with humility to learn, coming alongside with love and compassion, appreciating the complexities of each situation, and remaining curious are the keys. There is much to learn about the heart of another!

Forgiveness and restoration comes to us in bodily form

Counselling and Education Foundation (CCEF) hosted its annual conference on *Trauma: How God’s Light Breaks Into our Deepest Darkness*. We were meeting friends there to explore the topic together. My interest was on trauma related to the death of loved ones, while the others were engaged in understanding the impact of different types of trauma on individuals and groups, for different genders, ages, ethnicities, and how they intersect. We were all eager to learn about related counselling skills and further understand how the Scriptures speak to trauma. You can bank on the CCEF to round out Christian counselling by combining biblical truth and scientific advancement in a fulsome and thoughtful way. We were not disappointed.

DEATH INTRUDES

Ed Welch, a senior statesman at CCEF, led off with a presentation on the intrusion of death. He identified trauma as the reality of death coming close to us. Death, accompanied by his wicked companions (sinfulness, flesh-works, neglect, illness, etc.), along with his co-conspirator, the devil, leaves his fingerprints on us to the very core. The trauma introduced by death pushes us to question who God is and who we are. With trauma, the devil seeks to

The second book is God’s Word. Welch encouraged us to always expect more from Scripture. Greater scriptural awareness leads to greater understanding. It is fundamental for the counsellor to understand that “there is no dark corner in human experience that Christ has not gone.” There is no place beyond God’s reach.

A FAITHFUL WORD

Inspired by Welch’s kickoff, I attended Lauren Whitman’s presentation called “*Lord, See My Anguish*.” Using the Book of Lamentations, she revealed how the Scriptures contain dirges or plaints recorded to help the people of God give voice to their anguish in trauma. Lamentations is an example of this. It is composed of five poems, four of them are A-Z acrostic expressions of suffering and despair and a fifth is in the form of a prayer. These serve as a means to express suffering and pain to the Lord, to retell the story, to reorient oneself to turn again to God alone for help. They are composed to discover *hesed* again: the faithfulness of the LORD. Todd Stryd added insight to this by explaining how the gospel is essentially about our recovery, about God putting humanity back together again after the destruction of the fall into sin. In caring for us, God also gave us “liturgies” to express our

trauma and aid in our recovery. Liturgies are a guided practice with a particular aim. Stryd illustrated how many of the psalms contain the four characteristics of trauma recovery: sound, flow, ingredients, and foundation which help lead the “singer” along a healing pathway. Julie Love capped this teaching by clarifying that all hope requires awareness of what is permanent and trustworthy. Knowing God, as revealed in his Word, informs our circumstances and opens the way for hope. Simply wanting relief is not enough. The language of Scripture is infused with hope because it is a living Word in Jesus Christ. It also stands forever. It is the basis for all hope.

THIS IS MY BODY

Buoyed by these encouragements I attended Mike Emlet’s presentation, “*Trauma and the Body*.” Multi-day conferences always have their peaks and valleys. I would have to say that it felt like I landed near the summit of Mt. Sinai as this teaching really hit home. Emlet recounted how the Scriptures address us as embodied beings—body and soul integrally linked. Four main themes emerge around this truth: our created bodies, broken bodies, redeemed bodies, and glorified bodies. God has fearfully and wonderfully made us united in body and soul to worship him. The fall into sin was fully disruptive to body and soul and our ability to worship God. Our creation in God’s image did graciously provide us with an intricate system that helps us deal with this broken reality. However, trauma interrupts, hampers, or misguides our naturally given ability to cope with brokenness and it affects both the body and mind with under-function or over-function, fragmentation, and other forms of disarray. Trauma encourages us to mistrust our bodies.

However, the promise of redemption makes it clear that escape from our bodies is not our hope. God calls us back to present our bodies to him as our spiritual act of worship. Forgiveness and restoration comes to us in bodily form. Enter the incarnated Son of God. The One who came to earth to restore us bodily lowered himself into human form to suffer and die in our place. He declared, “This is *my* body, broken for *you!*” He urged us, in sacrament, to eat it regularly in remembrance of him. There is no greater demonstration than this. The new covenant is an exchange of our trauma for his redemption dramatically displayed at the table. Because of the sacrifice, death, and resurrection of his body our bodies present themselves again as our allies, not our enemies. And the glorification of our bodies is coming. Our bodies continue to keep the score but now in a battle that is already won. Now we

can experience a daily renewal, but eternal glory will be the end of the story of this life!

THE LAST WORD

Back at the hotel restaurant we met with our friends over dinner on the last evening and reflected together on how Alisdair Groves concluded the conference by assuring everyone that trauma would not have the last word. Using Mary Magdalene as an example, he recalled that she was one who had been delivered from seven demons. He spent some time assessing what type of trauma seven demons might cause in the context of Scripture. It was undoubtedly terrible and life-altering for her. And yet she became an ardent follower of the Lord Jesus. She witnessed his suffering and crucifixion. She attended his tomb. She was the first to meet the risen Lord. He revealed himself to her very personally. He called her affectionately by name, “Mary.” She was fully seen and known by her Lord. “Rabboni,” was her response. She truly saw her Lord and Saviour. What great hope for the trauma survivor!

Shortly after our dinner orders were taken a text message was received informing us of the sudden and unexpected death earlier that day of someone we knew. A little later, one of us left the table to spend a half hour on the phone talking a loved one through a distressful drive home. The beef was served, and it was bad and had to be sent back. Our appetites were lost. Salad and silence would have to do, with one dinner plate left unattended. Coffee and dessert were the last attempt to lighten the mood as the fighter jets could be heard making one last pass-over for the day. With departing hugs, we had to admit that trauma lingers and would be there to greet us as we returned home. However, we did not go without hope.

The closing words from Groves echoed in our ears. Two things are true at the same time: he sees our frame and knows that we are weak, *and* he sees us as his glorious inheritance. This is not a delicate balancing act but a coexistent reality. Our Saviour knows us and loves us as we really are *and* has incredible plans for what we will become in the future. One day, when he speaks our name and we respond with his, that will be the true sound of freedom! 🗨️



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BEING A CHRISTIAN DETECTIVE CONSTABLE

ILSE VANDERMEULEN





Detective Constable Frouke receiving an award.

Clarion is interviewing various professionals in our Reformed community to highlight how they are serving the Lord in their particular calling. In this issue we present Frouke Antuma (age 36), a Detective Constable for the Peel Regional Police's Intimate Partner Violence Unit in Brampton/Mississauga, Ontario.

BACKGROUND

After graduating from Owen Sound District Secondary School and Georgian College, Frouke was hired by Peel Regional Police in 2010. She was trained at the Ontario Police College and worked

as a uniform patrol officer, later a field training officer, and then as a school resource officer. Since 2021 Frouke has been a Detective Constable for the Intimate Partner Violence Unit.

Frouke has received several awards, including the International Association of Women in Policing and Ontario Women in Law Enforcement Community Service Award and the Regional Municipality of Peel Police Service Board Award for outstanding achievement for one of her investigations. She enjoys volunteering for the local Foodbank, Campfire, Anchor Camp, and Faithworks in Mexico and Kentucky.

Frouke, tell us about the work you do.

I work as a Detective Constable in the Intimate Partner Violence Unit (IPVU). It's my job to be the officer in charge or assist in cases that occur between intimate partners: married, exes, and dating couples. Most often, the call comes from uniform officers who give a briefing about what happened, and I take over from there. I arrange and conduct interviews with victims, witnesses, and the persons charged. I have to determine what offenses occurred and am mandated to lay charges. I collect evidence and prepare the required paperwork for the charges to go through the court system. I work with Crown Attorneys and the Victim Witness Assistance Program for all the different cases before the court until the end of the trials. I have to deal with a wide variety of cases and seriousness, anywhere from minor property damage to attempted murder cases and everything in between.

The IPVU at Peel Regional Police is new and I'm happy to be part of it. We have four platoons of sixteen detective constables, sixty-four in total for an area of over 1.3 million people. Each platoon works twelve-hour shifts, so we have twenty-four-hour coverage in our area. We do most of our work from our office but for some cases we have to attend the scenes or hospitals and work with the needs of the victim.

It is important to me that well-trained officers are available for these domestic violence cases. We are not so much focused on "how to solve the crime and who did it," but more on listening to the victims who are at risk and make a plan to keep them safe. We are not wearing uniforms and our office is not a typical police station, but a warm and welcoming environment as we deal with victims who are often traumatized.

What makes for a good day on the job?

A perfect day would be a day without calls, of course [laughs]! But a good day at work is when we work well together as a team and are able to stay on top of the calls that come in. The pressure at work is tremendous at the moment and we are understaffed.

The cases we deal with are difficult, but we are a source of help for someone in need. What makes our work complicated is that the person committing the crime is also the person the victim cares about. It's hard to accuse someone you love or even depend on. But we definitely have helped people and saved lives by getting involved and getting them out of an abusive relationship.

I would have liked to be married by now and have a family, but the Lord has not provided me with a partner, so I use my talents through my work. And I do like helping the community. It's hard to always see the dark side of society in my work, but there are

definitely times when I can make a difference in someone's life and that is meaningful to me. As a police officer, I am in a unique position to shine a light in the community.

What are some challenges you face?

Practically, the shift work can be hard, especially if I also have to attend court during the day. It's difficult to make it to Bible studies or Sunday worship or commit to being a committee member or playing a team sport.

It is also challenging to see so much violence and hatred. You can easily start to think the worst of people and that's no way to live. Or how I want to go through life. I have been very intentional in keeping close relationships with family, friends, and the church community to keep perspective on what a regular community is like. I also love volunteering because I meet so many great people and that balances out having to deal with some of the worst in my work.

Society is changing in the sense that people are more individualistic. There is more hostility towards the police now than when I started. Some of it I understand because we should be held to a higher standard and there needs to be accountability for the police, but it makes work challenging.

There are various movements going on in society and we constantly have to deal with that in policing. As a Christian, I don't agree with what certain movements stand for, but we are encouraged to wear pins and epaulets to show support. I have decided not to wear any of them and stay out of these kinds of endorsements. It's not forced on us, but I worry that it might come to that in the future.

How does being Reformed affect you at work?

I have had people ask me why I am different because they feel I treat them differently than other officers do. I often deal with people in the margins of society who are often seen as a nuisance or would rather be avoided. What I try to remember is that no matter their circumstance, they are also created in God's image; I want to treat everyone with respect and dignity.

I think the Reformed community can be somewhat naïve about what happens in society—and I'm happy about that. However, I am concerned that there are people in vulnerable and/or abusive situations in our circles who feel they cannot speak out because of how it will taint their family in our small community or who are encouraged to stay, being told Bible verses taken out of context.

As a believer, reading the Psalms, crying out to God about all the brokenness in the world is very real to me. The things that



Detective Constable Frouke holding her niece in front of her cruiser.

I see and deal with don't make any sense. In the world of policing, you get a front-row seat to how awful and evil people are. I have probably thought about death more than other people my age. I am not afraid of death, because I know going to heaven is the better place to be. I long for Christ's return to end all that is broken in this world.

As a Christian, what do you bring to your calling?

If it were not for my faith, I don't think I would have lasted in this job as long as I have. We are not promised an easy life, but God did promise to give us what we need, and I pray for that strength. When I sit across from someone who has a very hard time talking about what happened to them, I feel God gives me the words to speak.

What it comes down to is that I do my work to glorify God, which is not the same as how other people value their work. For me, this takes away the standard of human expectation. Also, as much as I cannot avoid working on Sunday, I do what I can to keep it a Lord's Day.

I can't bring up the gospel to victims or parties who are being charged, but I can talk about my faith when they ask about me. I

...speak to my colleagues about my faith too. With another Christian on my platoon, I have had many conversations about God, witnessing to the other colleagues and answering questions.

One of the cases we dealt with recently was an attempted murder. I was at the hospital and as I watched the medical teams work to save her life, I prayed for the victim's life. I believe in the power of prayer and the victim did survive and I spoke about that with my co-workers.

At the end of the day, I hope that everyone I have the privilege to meet and work with can see Christ's light in me. I have the confidence that that is not *my* doing, but that he uses me as his instrument. 🇨🇦



Ilse VanderMeulen
Elora, Ontario
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Devon's First Minister

HARRY NOOT

On Sunday, July 5, 2020, in a town on the outskirts of Edmonton, Alberta, Devon Canadian Reformed Church was instituted. By God's blessing, the church's membership has increased, a property and a manse have been purchased, and the Lord has now provided us with our own minister.

CALEB KOS ORDAINED

On November 26, 2023, Candidate Caleb Kos was ordained to the ministry. The worship service was led by Rev. Gerard Veurink of Barrhead who preached on 2 Timothy 4:1-2: "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: Preach the word, be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching."

Rev. Veurink started by saying what an incredibly special day this is for our congregation receiving its first minister and what a special day for brother Kos and his family as he is going to be ordained. This gives us great reason for thankfulness to God for his care and gifts to his church. As congregation we must be aware that receiving this gift of grace from God also implies that there is responsibility that comes with the gift. Brother Kos, you are receiving a task from God today, a task that also implies heavy responsibility, not one to be taken lightly. The words of our text contain very practical and very solid instruction. Our text reminds each one of us what is really important, and we are also taught again that these are not matters to be taken casually.

The sermon ended with "Well done good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter



Text: John 13:16

No slave is greater than the foot-washing Master!

1. The Master's greatness
2. The Master's love
3. The Master's example

into the joy of your master.” After the sermon, the Form for the Ordination of Ministers of the Word was read with the questions which were answered with “I do” from brother Kos. Then the laying on of hands took place with three elders from Devon and Revs. Aasman and Slomp in addition to Rev. Veurink.

In the afternoon, Rev. Kos conducted his first worship service as minister of the Devon congregation. The text he chose for his inaugural sermon was John 13:16 “Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.” Rev. Kos spoke about what an exciting day this is, how we rejoice that God has answered our prayers, but that we must not forget that the pastor is merely Christ’s servant. As Paul said, I am nothing but a jar of clay, so today and for the rest of our lives let us focus not on the jar of clay but on the treasure,

Jesus Christ, who alone is worthy of our praise. Rev. Kos ended his sermon with:

I will not tell you this afternoon how to wash each other’s feet. In fact, that would be too easy, because I would be giving you a list of instructions, dos and don’ts. What Jesus asks for is not just actions, but an attitude. An attitude of exceptional humility and service; an attitude which then manifests itself in remarkable service towards others.

But I will ask you a question. Which feet are you willing to wash today? The clean ones? The ones with the nicely painted nails? Or will you also follow your Saviour in serving those whose warts might make you a little squeamish?

It’s impossible in our own strength. Naturally we think like the disciples. We want others to wash our feet; we don’t

want to wash theirs. So as this sermon ends, I will leave you with one clear instruction to do this week.

It is this: look at Jesus. This week, as you manage the house, do your job, or go to school, in your work and in your relaxation, fix your mind on your towel-bearing Saviour. Remember his humble service, washing feet in the upper room, washing sinners with his blood on the cross. Bask in the unwavering abundance of his love for sinners. And then, as you enjoy his love, consider how to honour and represent your Master well, Almighty God who made himself the humblest of slaves. Amen.

WELCOME EVENING

On Friday, January 5, 2024, the Devon congregation gathered at the Devon Community Centre for a welcome evening for Pastor Caleb Kos, his wife Shanelle, and their son Titus.

Everyone was welcomed by our MC, Martin Bredenhof, after which the chairman of council, Gus Rus, opened with Scripture reading and prayer. The entertainment started with the little kids singing “My God is so Great,” “Jesus Loves Me,” and “Read your Bible, Pray Everyday.” After this, opportunity was given for everyone to check out and taste the amazing assortment of food and enjoy fellowship with each other.





This was followed by the catechism choir singing “Blessed Assurance” and the old standby “Welcome to Devon.” The Guess Who? game was then presented by Conner and Maria Bredenhof, where Pastor Caleb and Shanelle were given clues about the congregation. They both did very well, showing that they were already very knowledgeable about us. Another opportunity for food and fellowship followed.

The On the Way Bible Study group then sang “There is a Redeemer” and Psalm 121. Martin and Leona Bredenhof then had Pastor Caleb and Shanelle compete in a Human Scavenger

Game. Council then entertained with the singing of Psalm 134. Tom Froma on behalf of the congregation then presented Pastor Caleb and Shanelle with a gift, a smoker.

Pastor Caleb then expressed his and Shanelle’s thanks and appreciation to the congregation for the wonderful evening, for the gift, and for the welcome and love they have experienced here. Pastor Caleb then brought this happy occasion to a close with prayer. ☪

Harry Noot



Launching the **Delight Retreat**

I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word

PSALM 119:16



BRIGETTE VANHUISSTEDÉ

A year ago, a team of women began to pray over and plan a Christian retreat for young women. Our vision was to encourage intergenerational faith relationships by studying God's Word and addressing questions about faith, femininity, prayer-life, biblical literacy, and more in a gospel-centred way. Soon, the Delight Retreat was formed with a mission to glorify God by equipping, encouraging, and coming alongside young women in their walk with Christ.

Circle Square Ranch in Brantford, Ontario was booked, six workshop leaders joined our team, and it was prayerfully decided to gear the retreat towards mentoring women in Grades 7, 8, 9, 10.

We originally reached out to nine Hamilton churches (Cornerstone, Trinity, Mercy, Blessings, Providence, Ancaster, Rehoboth, New City, Streetlight) to invite their young women to the retreat and to ask for prayerful and financial support. The responses we received were encouraging and we are thankful for



pastoral support, congregational prayers, and sponsorship. We are also thankful for the prayerful, encouraging, and financial support of many Hamilton-based businesses.

The Delight Retreat took place on February 10, 2024. The weather was warm and sunny and one hundred eager, excited, and nervous young women arrived from more than just Hamilton; they came from Ancaster, Caledonia, Brantford, Flamborough, Burlington, Smithville, Grimsby, Arthur, Fergus, Guelph, and more.

The day began with our musicians leading us in worship. The keynote speech, led by Brigette VanHuisstede, talked about reclaiming our identity in Jesus by studying the words of Ephesians 2:10: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

The rest of the day was filled with gospel-centred workshops and outside activities. The workshops included Bible Study 101, Faith & Doubt, Emotional Health, Social Media, Body Image, and The Art of Saying No. Outside activities included archery, high-ropes, team-building games, and horse riding. It was an amazing day! We are deeply thankful for God’s blessing upon the Delight Retreat, for prayerful and financial support, for workshop leaders and musicians, and for young women eager to delight in God’s Word. 🇨🇦

A tremendous thank-you to all our sponsors!
delightretreat.wixsite.com/livelovelearn

*Brigette VanHuisstede
 Hamilton*





STAKRI BUILDING

Nearing Completion

In the autumn of 2020 the board of Mission Timor, under Smithville church, appealed to *Clarion's* readership for funds to help with the completion of an unfinished building on the property of the theological seminary (STAKRI). With the help of our missionary Rev. Edwer Dethan, STAKRI was established in 2007 in West Timor, Indonesia. With tremendous gratitude, we can now report that sufficient funds were gathered to complete the building. God is good and has answered our prayers beyond our expectations!

CONSTRUCTION

Work began during the pandemic when building materials were both more expensive and in shorter supply than usual. The initial plastering of the inside walls of the classrooms began in February of 2021, as did construction on the third floor and veranda. In April of 2021, Cyclone Seroja hit the islands of Indonesia and

caused much damage. The slow-moving storm brought heavy rain and wind that caused floods and landslides on the island of Timor. As a result, the almost-completed roof of the building was torn off and needed to be replaced. Thankfully, the main structure remained intact.

The storm also caused significant damage to the walls and plasterwork, which had been completed just a few months earlier. The raging winds left behind a large amount of debris on the property to clean up. An unstable power supply made the work very tedious; however, little by little forward progress started to happen again. A large stairway was built to get supplies and manpower up to the third floor. After the roof was rebuilt, concrete was poured on the third floor, and a veranda was built around the second and third floors. Next came the installation of the windows and doors, as well as tiling, painting, and interior electrical work. Some final tiling on the outside stairway will soon be completed.



Construction progress on the building has been slow, but now the end is in sight, and we anticipate the work will conclude later this year, the Lord willing.

CAMPUS

The building is located on a hill so that students are able to take in some good, fresh air and also enjoy at the scenery. They love to pose in front of the classrooms and building facade and are very excited and proud of the efforts which have gone into updating their school facilities. Many of the classrooms have already been used for courses and seminars since the fall. Yes, a slow start, but we may be thankful for the excellent progress of this much-needed building on STAKRI's campus.

The board as well as the students and staff of STAKRI thank you for your donations as well as prayers. With your help, this building is already a blessing for those being trained in the ministry and evangelism. On the main floor there are spacious administration

offices. The middle floor includes a large library while the top level holds additional classrooms. By contrast, STAKRI's older structure had small classrooms and a cramped library with too few shelves for all the books—never mind space for independent student study.

OUR VISION

STAKRI's vision is that its growth in floor space will also allow for an increase in enrolment, resulting in increased tuition income generated for the college. It is also our hope and prayer that the teaching and ministerial needs on Timor and the surrounding islands can now be met by STAKRI. As more students are hopefully attracted to attend, area church members will also become better educated. With better paying jobs, more money will as a result be available to support the college. STAKRI has been steadily growing, and a finished building will help them to attract students and enable them to operate more efficiently—for the ultimate purpose of furthering the Lord's work in West Timor.



Additional funds for capital projects are always appreciated at the college. The library is in desperate need of more Indonesian-language books for the students to use in their studies. In order for the college to maintain its yearly accreditation, the Indonesian government requires that new Indonesian books be added to the library. More books also give the students more information and resources with which to write their essays and sermons. Research is indeed a major requirement for students at STAKRI. The students are also in need of more laptops so that they can finish their papers digitally, rather than submitting handwritten ones.

NEEDED: MEN AND MONEY

While our brothers and sisters in West Timor are very thankful for the physical STAKRI building, they say that the biggest building project needed at STAKRI is “men.” The focus at STAKRI is on building young men and women. Teaching in the classroom encourages and prepares them for spreading the gospel in and around their own communities, churches, and schools. This gives them the opportunity to practice what they learn at the college and as they live in their own villages, being challenged there while telling others of God. Working with local ministers and other leaders as part of an evangelism practicum is core to the training program at STAKRI. However, practicums can also place a financial strain on the college and the students because of the costs of accommodation and transportation.

Operating costs at the college continue to increase, as they do everywhere in the world, so that STAKRI struggles to meet its budget obligations. Many teachers choose to be paid less in order that the main budget items can be covered first. The old building where much of the research and teaching activity has gone on for years still stands, but Cyclone Seroja damaged some interior walls, so some repairs are needed there as well. Yes, daily and yearly needs continue at the STAKRI, so your prayers and donations are much appreciated. **C**

If you are able or willing to support the work at STAKRI in West Timor, Indonesia, please send your donations to:
Canadian Reformed Church of Smithville
PO Box 268 Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

Please make your cheques payable to:
“Canadian Reformed Church of Smithville” and note “STAKRI support” in the memo line. You can also send us an e-transfer at smithvillecanrc.treasurer@gmail.com. Don't forget to include your name and address in the “memo line” if you wish to receive a tax receipt in the spring.

Please remember the work of Rev Edwer Dethan and his family as well as the work at STAKRI in your thoughts and prayers.

Thank you on behalf of the Board of Mission Timor in Smithville.

CLARION KIDS LORD'S DAY 45

LORD'S DAY 45 PRAYER

We all pray. But why? Maybe you think that we pray to ask God for help. Maybe you think that we pray to ask God to bless our day. And if you think those things, you are right! God loves to have a relationship with us and hear that we trust and depend on him. But the first reason why we pray is because we are thankful for all God's blessings to us, especially for the Lord Jesus dying on the cross. The catechism even says that "prayer is the most important part of our thankfulness." Did you catch that? It said most important part of . . . what? Thankfulness! Do you spend a lot of time saying thank you to God in your prayers? If we are honest, most times our prayers are filled with asking God about things we want or need. So then, next time you pray, remember that prayer is the most important part of our thankfulness.

Since we should pray to show thankfulness to God, write down three things that you are thankful for. Remember to thank God for these things next time you pray by yourself.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Did you know that songs can be prayers? There are Psalms in the Bible that thank God. Add the word THANK or THANKS to the verses below to complete the sentences:

Psalm 118:21

"I _____ you that you have answered me and have become my salvation."

Psalm 138:1

"I give you _____, O LORD, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise."



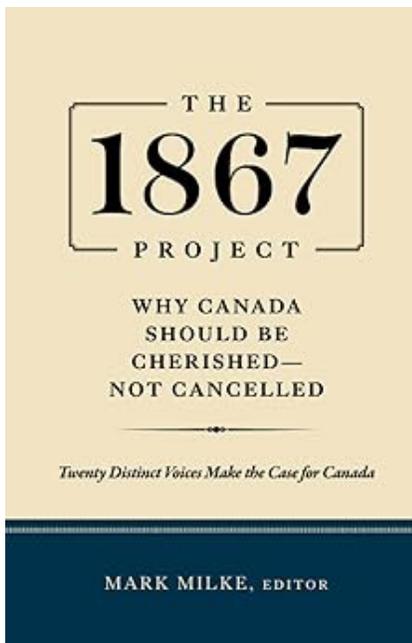
HEY KIDS!

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

AMANDA DEBOER

CHERISHED— NOT CANCELLED

JACK HUIZENGA



Sometimes I read something interesting. This past summer the *National Post* published an article by Bruce Pardy, Professor of Law at Queen’s University, entitled “How Canada’s secular religion of cultural self-hate took hold.” In the article, Pardy introduces the reader to what he calls provocatively, “the four doctrines of the apocalypse.” These include critical theory, postmodernism, social justice, and critical race theory. Of these, critical theory is the umbrella teaching which has found a home in universities (including in Faculties of Education and Faculties of Law), public elementary and secondary schools, government, media, and corporations. Pardy suggests that rather than critically thinking about these doctrines, many in our society have adopted the language and the ideology such that this is now the new way of thinking. The article itself was thought provoking so I was pleased to discover that it was a chapter excerpt of the Aristotle Foundation’s new book, *The 1867 Project: Why Canada should be cherished—not cancelled*.

The editor, Mark Milke, assembled twenty authors to contribute chapters to “make the case for Canada” in an effort to strengthen and renew “the project that is Canada, a centuries long conscious creation that has provided

The 1867 Project: Why Canada should be cherished—not cancelled. Twenty distinct voices make the case for Canada, ed. Mark Milke (Aristotle Foundation, 2023). Paperback. 319 pages. \$25.00 CDN.

ever-increasing opportunities to ever-more diverse peoples” (p. xxi). Reflecting that diversity, the authors are men and women of different skin colours, religions, and ethnicities. The book is organized into three sections. The first section examines a number of examples of individuals and institutions that have been attacked or cancelled for critically addressing what is often referred to as woke progressivism. The second section directs the reader’s attention to evidence of history being uncritically re-written, when statues of Canadian historical figures are defaced and efforts are made to erase their names from institutions and streets. In the third section, a number of authors wrestle with ideas about the kind of Canada we should be working towards.

In general, the book is not a difficult read. To be sure, there are some theoretical concepts like critical theory, neo-Marxism, and critical race theory, terms that many of us are unfamiliar with. But these concepts are always explained in relation to dozens upon dozens of real-life and recent examples of the new ideology coming to expression in the country in which we live. Consider, for example, the Canadian newspaper that felt compelled to publish an apology, contrary to the editor’s wishes, for allowing an opinion piece that was accused of being racist (it was not). Or the Canadian university professor who published a book that critically examined the “well-organized industry of indigenous activists and their lawyers” (p. 31). Other Canadian academics attacked the reputation of this professor and threatened the publisher. Consider also the Ontario public school boards where “white-privilege”

curriculum was being put forward as “anti-racism” instruction. Many parents were shocked to learn about this with some even organizing parent groups to push back against the “teaching that people should be judged by their immutable traits and not by their actions or characters” (p. 41).

There are many, many other examples in this book that will cause your eyes to roll or even your blood to boil. At times the Enlightenment, with its emphasis on human reasoning, is presented as the source of all that is good. The book is not written from a Christian perspective, even if some of the authors are Christian.

So why should you pick up this book? In a recent *Clarion* article (Vol. 72 No. 11), Rev. R. Vermeulen warned Reformed Christians to not be caught napping while the spiritual battle described in Ephesians rages on. It is better to be like the men of Issachar “who understood the times and knew what Israel should do” (1 Chron 12:32). Books like the *1867 Project* help us to identify the ideological ethos pervasive in our country, or to put it differently, to understand the tactics of our enemy.¹ This book is well worth reading and considering, especially by those in leadership positions in our schools and churches. 🇨🇦

Jack Huizenga

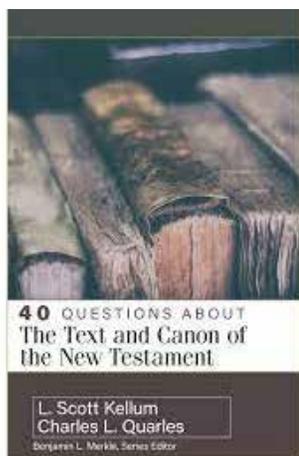
Lecturer at Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College

¹ Editor’s note: to begin to understand Critical Theory and its outworking in society, see also the *Clarion* issue dedicated to this theme, Vol. 71, April 29, 2022.

READ AND SEARCH OLD VOLUMES

of **Clarion**

clarionmagazine.ca/archive



CURIOUS ABOUT THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT AND CANON?

40 Questions About the Text and Canon of the New Testament,
Charles L. Quarles and L. Scott Kellum. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2023).
Paperback. 350 pages. \$38.30 CDN.

WES BREDEHOF

Are you a curious person? I sure am! One of the great things about being a pastor is always being able to dig into new things, especially about the Bible and theology. Since you're reading this, I suspect you're a curious sort too. And if you are, a book like this might really scratch that itch to learn something new.

Most Christians don't know a lot about issues related to the text and canon of the New Testament. They generally leave those matters to their pastor or to other scholars. But wouldn't you want to know how we got the Scriptures as we have them today? What's behind the English translations we use? Why do we have twenty-seven books in the New Testament? Who decided we should have those twenty-seven? Broadly speaking, this book answers those types of questions. While it's from an academic publishing house, it would be generally accessible to most people with at least a high school education. Some parts are more technical than others, but the format of the book allows for readers to browse the questions they're most curious about. And there is a helpful glossary if you stumble across an unfamiliar term.

Let me list some of the forty questions you might be interested in:

How did errors enter into the manuscripts?
Do the differences between the manuscripts really matter?
With all the variants, can we still speak of inspiration and inerrancy?

Did the early church councils decide the canon?
Were there orthodox books that nearly made it into the canon?
Is the canon closed, or could the church add books to the canon?
Some of the chapters have a few bonus questions that are quite fascinating too. For example, "Did the apostles know they were writing Scripture?" and "What if a previously unknown writing [e.g. by Paul] were found?"

I haven't read a book like this since my seminary studies, so I was intrigued to learn about some of the more recent developments in New Testament studies. One has to do with the manuscripts of the New Testament and a new approach to textual criticism called the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method. This method uses a set of computer tools to sort through the thousands of Greek manuscripts in an effort to determine more accurately the original text. So, if you're a pastor like me and you've lost touch

with the latest in NT studies, this book could be a helpful way to get up to date.

I do want to highlight one of the questions: “Should John 7:53-8:11 (the woman caught in adultery) be included in the New Testament?” The book is impressively even-handed in answering this, presenting evidence for and against. The author of this section (Kellum) concludes that “Although the account is clearly early and possibly historical, it does not appear to have been an original part of the gospel of John” (p. 181). That leaves a question in my mind, one that goes unanswered in this book. If this is true, does it necessarily mean that this section of John is not part of God’s Word? For example, I think of various OT books which have evidently been subjected to editorial activity—e.g. the original form of Deuteronomy as written by Moses isn’t the same as the Deuteronomy we have today. Is it possible that just as there’s been inspired editorial activity with the OT, that there also might have been some degree of inspired editorial activity in the NT? If so, then it wouldn’t really matter whether the Apostle John himself wrote 7:53–8:11. Someone else wrote it, but it’s now part of the Word of God. That could account for the difference in writing

style, the way it interrupts the flow of the book, and perhaps also the variety of manuscripts.

Not only will this book satisfy the curious Christian, it’ll also be helpful for answering agnostics and sceptics. Many years ago now, Dan Brown wrote a famous novel called *The Da Vinci Code*. It was then turned into a movie. It popularized some erroneous ideas about how we got the Scriptures. Those ideas are still circulating and if you speak with unbelievers, you may hear them. Quarles and Kellum provide a great reference resource for dealing with those claims.

I don’t agree with every conclusion the authors reach, but overall this is a book I’m happy to recommend as a great introduction to two fascinating fields of biblical study. 📖



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»	MY FRIEND
»	MY BROTHER
»	MY CHILD
»	MY GRANDCHILD
»	MY NEIGHBOUR



Dear Editor,

I would like to briefly interact with Andrew Douma's recent article "Capitalism Persecutes the Church."

In the first place, an economic system should not be assigned responsibility for how people behave. The author articulates how greed enticed Demetrius and his colleagues to orchestrate a riot in Ephesus many centuries ago, and how greed today entices lawless warlords in Columbia to further lawlessness. Capitalism cannot be considered to be synonymous with greed.

Secondly, the unnecessary slur against the United States at the end of the article was regrettable and didn't help the author's intent of enabling readers to develop a good understanding of persecution against Christians in Columbia. There are plenty of stones which can be thrown in numerous directions when considering how easily drugs cross "secure" international borders.

Thank you for informative articles which help readers become more aware of the limitations of freedom facing our brothers and sisters; such awareness helps us grow in appreciation for the blessings we have been given.

*Thank you,
Otto Bouwman
Lynden, WA*

CLASSIS CLIPPINGS

What follows are clippings from the press releases of recent classes across the federation. They have been culled by the editor for the interest of our readers. Each press release can be found in full at canrc.org.

CLASSIS NIAGARA (CONTRACTA) FEB 7, 2024

The purpose of the meeting was to seek classis approval (CO, Art 5) for the acceptance of the call to Rev. John Louwse of Cornerstone CanRC received to serve at Covenant CanRC of Grassie. The council of Grassie had provided delegates with written material outlining all that was necessary as per Article 5, CO. After a brief discussion the call was approbated. The church of Smithville was appointed to extend fraternal greetings on behalf of classis at the installation, which is to take place D.V. February 25, 2024.

CLASSIS ALBERTA FEB 8, 2024

Classis proceeds to the approbation of the call of br. Faustin Emadjeu by Neerlandia CanRC (CO, Art 5). After the sermon proposal was deemed sufficient, classis explored the various disciplines. Br. Emadjeu sustained his examination and classis approbated the call with the concurring advice of the deputies of

RSW. After praying in thanks to God, congratulations were offered to the candidate and his wife.

Rev. Kos gave verbal assent to the content of the subscription form in anticipation of his signing of the form at the next meeting of the churches of Classis Alberta.

Classis dealt with reports, appeals, and correspondence. (1) The report for contact with the provincial government was received with thankfulness. (2) Classis dealt with two appeals in closed session. (3) After reviewing the documents presented, Rev. Van Leeuwen was granted a certificate of release from Classis Alberta (CO, Art 9). (4) Devon church asked for and received advice concerning the work of convening churches.

CLASSIS ONTARIO WEST MARCH 6, 2024

Classis examined br. Noah Holtvliüwer, a second year student at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary seeking permission to

speak an edifying word in the churches. After judging his sermon sufficient to proceed with the exam, he was examined in doctrine and creeds. This was also judged sufficient. After promising not to preach or teach anything contrary to God's Word as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity, he was granted permission to speak an edifying word in the churches upon successful completion of his second year of studies at the seminary. This is valid for three years.

Trinity CanRC of Glanbrook asked for concurring advice to proceed with the institution of another Canadian Reformed Church in Caledonia, scheduled for April 28, 2024. With thankfulness to our Lord, concurring advice was given.

Trinity submitted a proposal to institute an appeals committee in Classis Ontario West. Since many churches had not discussed the proposal, classis decided to put the matter on the agenda of the next classis.

Trinity submitted a proposal to modify the regulations around cancellation of classis. This proposal was adopted.

A church visitation report of a visit to the church at Grand Rapids was received with thankfulness.

CLASSIS PACIFIC EAST MARCH 6, 2024

A welcome was extended to Rev. Bernard Westerveld who was seated as a fraternal delegate from the ERQ. Classis adopted its agenda with revisions.

Rev. Westerveld addressed classis on behalf of the ERQ. He introduced himself, as well as the ERQ federation. He expressed appreciation for the continued relationship between the ERQ and the Canadian and American Reformed Churches. Rev. Westerveld shared some words regarding the state of the ERQ and their five member churches. He noted some challenges, such as that three of their churches are currently vacant, and that there are only four Christian schools in the province of Quebec, none of which are Reformed. He expressed the great need to raise covenant children in the faith. He expressed thankfulness for our encouragement, prayers, and ongoing financial support. Thankfulness was also expressed for the support received for the French element of the Reformational Study Centre. An invitation was given for us to visit them, and Rev. Westerveld noted that they pray for our churches as well. The chairman responded with words that expressed gratitude for the address, and some delegates interacted with the fraternal delegate and his address. Prayer was offered up for the ERQ.

Letters & Overtures

A letter was received from Classis Manitoba regarding the status of the deputy contact with the URCNA Classis Southwest. The letter was received for information.

A letter was received from Langley Canadian Reformed Church regarding the funding of members at Manoah Manor. The letter will be directed to the individual churches.

A letter of fraternal address was received from Rev. Jonathan Merica on behalf of the RCUS Western Classis. Appreciation for our support and unity in the faith was expressed, along with a desire to continue to develop this relationship. The chairman responded with words of gratitude for the letter, as well as gratitude to the Nooksack Valley ARC for their role in maintaining this relationship.

A letter was received from Aldergrove proposing revisions to the CPE regulations regarding Ecclesiastical Examinations. The proposal was adopted with revisions.

A letter was received from Aldergrove proposing revisions to the CPE regulations regarding Church Visitations. The proposal was adopted.

A letter was received from Chilliwack proposing revisions to the CPE regulations regarding the formation of a Committee for Students of Theology. The proposal was not adopted.

A letter was received from Yarrow regarding two overtures related to appeals. Opportunity was given to interact with the first overture, regarding how appeals are dealt with at regional synod. The first overture was adopted with revisions. Opportunity was given to interact with the second overture, regarding the appointment of a Committee for Appeals. The overture was not adopted.

Reports

Opportunity was given for a report from the Committee for Needy Churches. There was no report as the committee is not functioning at this time, and the chairman expressed thankfulness to God that the work of this committee is not currently required.

Reports were received from the church visitors for visitations made to the churches of Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Vernon, and Yarrow. The chairman expressed thankfulness for each of the reports that were received. 🗨️



