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TO ENCOURAGE, EDUCATE, ENGAGE, AND UNITE

74 | 13
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Clarion

533 THANKFUL FOR THIS CHURCH | 536 THE DIDACHE | 542 CRTS—CONVOCATION REPORT

544 CRTS—IS THERE A GOSPEL IN GENEALOGY? | 560 SERVICE SNAPSHOTS—CCCS

what's inside

Do you feel as I do that in general our men could be better prepared to lead? My editorial offers a few suggestions for bringing that about. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, such training would help in renewing our minds to think and act more like Christ, something Arjan Vreugdenhil meditates upon in *Treasures New & Old*.

Throughout our churches, many efforts are being made by members to organize for specific needs and services within and even beyond our Reformed community. In a new(ish) feature we call *Service Snapshots*, Cornerstone Christian Care Society introduces us to their important work in southern Manitoba.

In the spirit of Thanksgiving, Rob Schouten gives us many excellent reasons to be thankful for the faithful church where we are members. Part of that is to express our appreciation for the faithful shepherds the Lord provides for us, an example of which comes in the form of Dr. Jerry Visscher's *In Memoriam* for Rev. Chris Bosch.

As we remember the departure of one servant of the Word into glory, we also celebrate the graduation of ten new potential servants from our seminary, all of whom wish to enter ordained ministry—how good the Lord is to us! We have several articles covering the recent CRTS convocation, including a copy of the keynote address by Dr. John Smith on the question, “Is there gospel in a genealogy?” A stimulating read!

It feels of late that there is much to be sad about in this world. Jake Torenvliet's timely Advent series on Lamentations helps us to lament in faith, with a sure hope of salvation. Keith Sikkema's historical account of monastery building continues, while the history and ongoing importance of the Nicene Creed is touched upon in Wes Bredenhof's book review. We also have several thoughtful contributions from readers who engage with previous articles.

Did you know that Australia does not have a Thanksgiving Day? And that in America Thanksgiving Day is always celebrated on the fourth Thursday in November? While I hope all our Aussie and American readers may be thankful each day, let me say specifically to my fellow Canadians, happy Thanksgiving Day (Oct 13)!

Peter Holtvliuwer

CONTENTS

530	WHAT'S INSIDE
531	EDITORIAL <i>Peter Holtvliuwer</i>
532	TREASURES, NEW & OLD <i>Arjan Vreugdenhil</i>
533	THANKFUL FOR THIS CHURCH <i>Rob Schouten</i>
536	THE DIDACHE <i>Eric Kampen</i>
540	CRTS—PRINCIPAL'S REPORT <i>Jason VanVliet</i>
542	CRTS—CONVOCATION REPORT <i>Jeff Temple</i>
544	CRTS—IS THERE A GOSPEL IN GENEALOGY? <i>John Smith</i>
548	CRTS—WOMEN'S SAVING ACTION
550	ECHS GRADUATION <i>C.J. Vanderveen</i>
552	GOVERNING THE CHURCH <i>Jan DeGelder</i>
554	ADVENT SERIES PART 2 <i>Jake Torenvliet</i>
556	DEDICATED TO ADEWERT: CITEAUX TO ADUARD TO CLAIRVAUX PART III <i>Keith Sikkema</i>
559	RAY OF SUNSHINE <i>Rachel Vis</i>
560	SERVICE SNAPSHOTS—CCCS
562	BOOK REVIEW <i>Wes Bredenhof</i>
563	READER'S FORUM <i>Kevin Vanderzyl</i>
564	LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
566	IN MEMORIAM: CHRIS BOSCH

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Clarion

A trustworthy and engaging magazine, widely spread and read in Canadian Reformed households and beyond.

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

Confessionally Reformed
Loving in manner
Attuned to current issues
Readable and Reliable
In Submission to Scripture
Open to constructive criticism
Nurturing Christian living

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

How well-equipped do our younger men feel to lead in their homes, in the school community, and in church? My observation would be that many feel ill-prepared to be godly heads of their wives, to serve meaningfully on school boards, and perhaps most of all to serve as an elder or deacon. What I see are generally sincere Christian men with a willingness to serve when called upon but who—for whatever reason—have not received much dedicated instruction for their new task. This makes them somewhat unsure and tentative in their roles. It is not uncommon for them to experience the stress of “imposter syndrome.” They are looked to as leaders but inside they lack knowledge and confidence in their ability to lead, and it worries them.

As a Reformed community, we can work together to do something to help our men become confident, humble, solidly prepared, godly leaders. Let me suggest four ways.

PRAYER

First, let’s begin in our homes, congregations, and board rooms to pray for the Lord to raise up men with the desire and capability to serve as leaders—and to help us train them. Our heavenly Father is the source of every good gift, and we confess that he only gives his grace and Holy Spirit to “those who constantly and with heartfelt longing ask him for these gifts and thank him for them” (LD 45). We need men filled with his Spirit and gifts. While such men can possibly train themselves to an extent, those currently in leadership positions have a responsibility to teach and prepare the next generation of leaders at home, church, and school. It’s a significant need, so why not make such a prayer a regular feature at our dinner tables, council meetings, in worship services, and in our board rooms? Such regular prayer will also raise and sustain awareness among all of this need.

READING

Second, I suggest that the current church leadership ask men with experience in office (but not currently serving) to start a book club (or two) for men within the congregation to simply study a book dealing with one of the offices. Over time, the book topics could include serving as husbands and fathers, or Christian leadership generally. Invite all the men of the church to attend—think 16 and up!—and consider personally asking men who have been on the nomination list in the past but have not yet been elected to serve. Studying with experienced men adds the element of informal mentoring and forges healthy relationships among

brothers of different ages. Studying one or two books per year can really help increase knowledge.

Related to this, to offset the growing tendency to find answers to even life’s serious questions via AI, it would be good for such book clubs to encourage the additional personal reading of solidly biblical, Reformed resources. I’m not arguing for an *exclusive* diet of only Reformed/Presbyterian authors, but I would argue that this be our *regular* diet—authors whom we can trust. We need to build up in our young men a sound depth of knowledge of the Bible’s teachings and their application in everyday life. It would be good if such groups could share magazine articles from *Diakonia*, *Clarion*, *Reformed Perspective*, and *Christian Renewal*. It would also be helpful for the club to curate a list of books known to be sound, edifying reads which could even be shared more broadly in the congregation.

SHORT COURSES & JOINT VISITS

A third suggestion is for experienced elders or deacons (starting with those *not* currently in office), perhaps with the pastor’s help, to offer a short course of 4–6 evenings which teaches some principles of each office and offers case studies for discussion. Here too it would be good to invite all the men in the congregation, with extra encouragement for those who have been nominated for leadership. Think of the blessings that would come from multiple evenings of direct teaching, interactive discussion, and prayer.

My last suggestion is for current experienced office bearers to hand-pick younger men (16+) and invite them to come along on certain visits (e.g. to those who are elderly, shut-in, infirm, or lonely). Judgment must be used about whom to visit, but in my experience those who normally appreciate visits from pastors, elders, and deacons also appreciate the involvement of trainees. The practice of visiting will help many who, growing up, may have had little experience with such.

Would you, your council, or board have additional ideas? Please write a letter to the editor to share them. Meanwhile, let us all think and take action to better train up men for godly leadership. 



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Renewal of Your Mind

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind —Romans 12:2

On Reformation Day, we remember that some 500 years ago the church underwent a thorough, necessary transformation. The old church was bent out of shape in several ways. By God's grace, many things were straightened out. We celebrate this Reformation and remind ourselves to retain purity in our doctrine, church organization, and worship.

In Romans 12, the Bible clearly calls for reformation. The Greek word translated "transformation" is *metamorphosis*, which biologists use to describe the process of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly. The old form or shape must be replaced by an entirely new shape. Our situation is similar. As the church of Jesus Christ, we must take on a new form. The first half of Romans lays out the glorious gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ; then, in Romans 12, the church is called to work deliberately on putting that truth into practice, through reformation.

We celebrate reformation and emphasize the unique identity of the church. But do we know what old forms we must avoid, and what new forms we must embrace? When talking about the Reformation in the 1500s, we may point to corrupt practices of the church or misguided doctrine, and our need to retain true teachings and correct liturgy. Yet, to be a church that is effective in its "Reformed" character, we must consider the deeper principles.

What is the old form to get rid of? Anything in which we "conform to this world." Jesus preached most pointedly to the Pharisees, men who appeared to be very pious, yet in the end acted on the same principles as the world around them: loving those who loved them back, acting religious to look good, taking advantage of the weak, looking down on those whose lives were messy, and so on. But Jesus's church may not be like the world in these matters.

In the Protestant Reformation, one issue was that much of the church focused on earthly power, status, and wealth. Martin Luther pushed hard for change among the clergy, seeking to get rid of this worldly focus. With Reformation Day in view, we could ask ourselves if perhaps worldly concerns have slipped into our church life and government.

What is the new form to strive for? Paul speaks of the "renewal of your mind" that brings us into harmony with the holy will of our Lord. True reformation does not lie in superficial changes (or lack of change). It has to do with our mindset, our attitudes, toward the Lord, toward ourselves, toward each other, and toward the world around us. It is about priorities around work, money, and the use of our time.

The rest of Romans 12 gives a powerful description of the life of a church that is "reformed" in this way. It is a model to follow, and it gives important homework for every church community. Let us pray for and work on the ongoing reformation of the church, that we may not remain spiritual caterpillars but undergo the profound metamorphosis that makes us stand out beautifully in this dark world as the church that has been shaped by the gospel of Jesus Christ. 

SUGGESTED READING:

Romans 12

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1. In what ways, specifically, does the Bible tell us not to conform to this world? Consider, for instance, 1 Cor 3:18ff; 7:29-31; Gal 5:19-21; Jas 1:27; 1 Jn 2:16.
2. What does it mean to have "the mind of Christ?" See Phil 2.
3. In what ways is your family life or church life (still) conformed to the world? What would it look like after transformation? What change of mindset will be needed for this?
4. Romans 12:1 famously calls us to "present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." This text is often applied to the individual Christian. Is there a specific way in which we are a living sacrifice communally, as the church?
5. When speaking about the reformation of the church, we often point to the "three marks of the church" in Belgic Confession, Art. 29. At first glance, it may seem that this presents a very different picture than the practical instructions in Romans 12. Why is this not the case?
6. Church A excels in mutual love, acts of charity, and hospitality, but its doctrine and preaching are theologically weak. Church B has profound preaching of pure doctrine, but her members are not much involved with each other. Which of these churches is most in need of reformation?



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Thankful for This Church (Yes, This One)

ROB SCHOUTEN

Every Christian congregation is a mixture of strengths and weaknesses. It is a community of those who belong to Christ, yet who are still being restored. Here we see genuine faith, prayers lifted to heaven, psalms sung, and people who strive to love God and one another. Yet here too we encounter what is less than ideal: a sermon that does not seem to connect, a song choice that is not to our taste, a personality that irritates us. And at times there are heavier burdens: patterns of sin, sharp disagreements, or leadership that falters. The church is rich with grace, but it is also marked by imperfection as God sanctifies his people.

The question, then, is what governs the way we view our congregation? Do the irritations and weaknesses dominate our outlook? Or will we allow the blessings to lead, thus cultivating a spirit of gratitude?

Gratitude begins with the conviction that God in his wisdom has placed us in a particular church. *This* congregation—with this pastor, these people, these strengths, and these shortcomings—is not an accident of history but a gift from the Father. To complain constantly about the family into which he has adopted us is to cast doubt on his wisdom and love.

When the Lord's apostles wrote to real churches, they knew their blemishes. The Corinthians, for instance, had divisions and scandals. Yet Paul did not begin with lists of faults. He began with thanksgiving: "I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor 1:4). His instinct was to thank God for the evidence of grace in the church. That instinct should be ours as well.



Thankful for:

Faithful Gospel

Shared History

*Ordinary Saints with
Real Holiness*

Unseen labor

A Stubborn Unity

REASONS FOR THANKFULNESS

A faithful gospel. Week after week, the message faithfully declares Christ crucified and risen. It does not settle for superficial moralizing or empty cheerleading but calls us to behold Christ himself. This proclamation confronts our weary hearts and shifts our focus from what is missing or wrong in our lives to the abundant grace God has shown in Christ. Left to ourselves, we magnify shortcomings; under this Word, we learn to magnify God's redemptive work. We give thanks for faithful preaching, not least because it is a key means Christ uses to awaken gratitude and deepen our devotion to him.

A shared history. Our churches did not simply appear; they stand on the faithful prayers and sacrifices of saints who came before us. Saints prayed here before we were born. They pooled resources to build. They endured conflicts and found reconciliation. They engaged in polemics which clarified truth. They sang from battered psalters, lifted immigrant prayers in a new land, and stood at gravesides singing hymns through tears. Baptisms, professions of faith, weddings, funerals—all these mark the faithfulness of God from generation to generation. Gratitude reads this history not merely as nostalgia, but as testimony to God's covenant-keeping grace.

Ordinary saints with real holiness. A father leading his family in worship. A mother teaching her children to pray. A young professional quietly refusing to compromise integrity for advancement. A tradesman who does his work with honesty when cutting corners would pay more. A small business owner who treats employees and customers with fairness. A believer laying aside resentment to extend forgiveness. A widow who supports the church with her intercessions. A retiree who spends his time helping others. A teenager who sings the creed with conviction. A student resisting peer pressure. A member who brings meals to a family under strain. Another who shows up each week with a word of encouragement. These are not dramatic moments, yet they are marks of the Spirit's work in God's people. They are Christ's likeness reflected in ordinary lives.

Unseen labor. Much of what sustains congregational life is hidden. Elders pray and read and give long hours to meetings and visits. Deacons bring help and bear burdens in confidence. Nursery workers serve with patience so parents can hear the Word. Musicians prepare diligently so the congregation may sing with one voice. A bulletin editor faithfully keeps members informed. A gardener tends the grounds. A delegate to classis takes time to prepare. A custodian cleans the sanctuary. A clerk records carefully so that decisions are remembered clearly. A treasurer manages finances with integrity. Committees oversee property, budgets, and a hundred practical needs. Volunteers run sound and livestream so the Word is heard clearly. Others make coffee, set out chairs, or clean up afterward. Thank them—then thank God.

A stubborn unity. Not sameness, but unity. The church brings together people of different ages, cultures, incomes, and temperaments. Seniors pray for newborns. Children sing alongside the elderly. Farmers, professionals, students, and retirees all gather at the same table. Different accents and backgrounds, yet one faith, one baptism, one Lord. This unity is not natural but supernatural. It is the Spirit's gift to Christ's body.

GRATITUDE AS WARFARE AGAINST COMPLAINT

Thankfulness for a church does not mean we overlook sins or excuse failures. Paul rebuked the Corinthians; Jesus warned the seven churches of Revelation; the prophets denounced Israel's transgressions. Believers are instructed to confront sin in the church of God. Complaints have their place when they are faithful and constructive.

But our first instinct should not be complaint. Gratitude must come first, because it sets the tone for how we see everything else in the church. True gratitude is a form of spiritual warfare. The dark powers of this age seek to sow discontent and division,

but thanksgiving exposes them and makes them flee. Gratitude retrains our eyes to see grace before fault. It silences grumbling and directs glory to Christ, who sustains his people.

Here is the irony: the very flaws we are tempted to complain about will be best corrected not by grumbling, but by gratitude. Thankfulness softens hearts, opens ears, and creates the kind of fellowship where change can actually take place.

Where gratitude grows, the atmosphere changes. A thankful church becomes a joyful church. A thankful church grows generous in spirit. A thankful church learns patience with weakness. A thankful church builds up rather than tears down. And here is the irony: the very flaws we are tempted to complain about will be best corrected not by grumbling, but by gratitude. Thankfulness softens hearts, opens ears, and creates the kind of fellowship where change can actually take place.

A PRACTICAL CHALLENGE

This Thanksgiving, resist the pull of complaint. Instead, name three specific things about your congregation for which you are thankful. Speak them aloud. Write them down. Share them with someone.

And then pray with Paul for your church: "I thank my God every time I remember you" (Phil 1:3, NIV). Pray it for your pastor, your elders, your deacons, your pew-neighbour. Pray it for the fellowship of saints where God has placed you.

Your church is not perfect. But it is Christ's body and his bride and his flock. To see the church this way reshapes our outlook: what belongs to Christ is worthy of our love and our thanks. And that thankfulness does not remain abstract. It takes shape in concrete gratitude—not just in generalities, but for *this* congregation, *this* community, *this* body of believers. Here, in all its ordinary weakness and very real flaws, the Lord is at work. That is reason enough to silence complaint, cultivate thanksgiving, and to rejoice that God has placed you exactly where he intends you to be. 🙏



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THE DIDACHE:

A GLIMPSE INTO THE LIFE OF THE EARLY CHURCH

ERIC KAMPEN



A common news story is one about the discovery of some ancient ruins indicating a lost civilization, or the fossilized skeleton of some extinct creature. These stories capture the interest of those with a historical or scientific bent. While Christians can show interest in such discoveries, they will be particularly interested in discoveries pertaining to our Christian faith.

Discoveries of particular interest to Christians could be of ruined cities mentioned in the Bible, or historic sites with Christian significance. Ruins from biblical times may shed light on some passage that previously eluded understanding. Ancient Bible manuscripts may contribute to a better understanding of Scripture. Discovery of other historical documents may help us get a better picture of the life of the Christian church at various times in history.

One of these interesting discoveries is a document known as the Didache (pronounced *did-ah-kay*), or *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. Didache means “Teaching.” It is worth looking at the history of this document, its contents, and its relevance for us today.

HISTORY & CONTENT

In 1873, Bryennios, a leader in the Greek Orthodox Church, discovered an old manuscript in the Jerusalem monastery near Constantinople (present day Ankara). That manuscript contained copies of various documents from the first centuries AD, including letters of Clement and Barnabas, a summary of the Old and New Testament by Chrysostom, and the Didache. From a notation by the scribe who copied the document, it could be determined that this manuscript had been copied in AD 1056, making it over 800 years old. Bryennios did not get around to publishing the Didache until 1883.

The Didache takes us back to what is known as the age of the Apostolic Fathers, after the apostles had died and the church was led by men who had been taught directly by the apostles.

As is evident from the writing of Eusebius of Caesarea (c. AD 260–339), the Didache was known and regarded very highly in the early church. Eusebius referred to it as “The Teachings of the Apostles” right after he listed the books of Scripture that were

considered canonical.¹ It was written either in Egypt or in what today is known as Israel and Syria. At that time, there were large concentrations of Christians in that part of the world.

This document, therefore, takes us back to what is known as the age of the Apostolic Fathers, that is, after the apostles had died and the church was led by men who had been taught directly by the apostles. The Didache was not written by the apostles but contains the teachings as given by the apostles.

The Didache is readily available in book form.² It consists of sixteen chapters, which can be divided into two main parts. The first part (chapters 1–6) contains ethical instruction. The second part (chapters 7–15) deals with church rites and practices, with a concluding chapter on our Lord’s coming in glory. Each part is worth a brief look.

ETHICAL INSTRUCTION

The Didache starts with the words,

“There are two ways, one of life and one of death.” The way of life consists of loving God and our neighbour, as well as the golden rule, “And whatever you want from people to refrain from doing to you, you must not do to them.”

Reading through these chapters, one hears echoes of the Sermon on the Mount, where the Lord elaborated on various commandments. There are also echoes of parts of Paul’s letters, where he contrasts the way of the flesh, the old nature, with the way of the Spirit, the new nature. Mention of the two ways also brings to mind Psalm 1, with its contrast of the righteous and the unrighteous, and the book of Proverbs with its contrast of the wise and the foolish.

This section concludes with words of encouragement and instruction:

See “that no one leads you astray” from this way of the teaching, since such a one’s teaching is godless. If you can bear the Lord’s full yoke, you will be perfect. But if you cannot, then do what you can. Now about food: undertake what you can. But keep strictly away from what is offered to idols, for that implies worshipping dead gods.

CHURCH RITES AND PRACTICES

Chapters 7–10 deal with baptism, fasting, and the Lord’s supper. With respect to baptism, the Didache states:

Now about baptism: this is how to baptize. Give public instruction on all these points, and then “baptize” in running

¹ Eusebius of Caesarea, Book III.25.4

² For a full text of the Didache, see J.B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, or it can be accessed online (e.g.: <https://ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers/fathers.viii.i.iii.html>)

water, “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” If you do not have running water, baptize in some other. If you cannot in cold, then in warm. If you have neither, then pour water on the head three times “in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” Before the baptism, moreover, the one who baptizes and the one being baptized must fast, and any others who can. And you must tell the one being baptized to fast for one or two days beforehand.

Chapter 8 speaks about fasting. It shows that this was a common practice in the early church. The point is made that it should not be done as the hypocrites, who fast on the second and fifth day of the week, but on the fourth and the sixth day. They add that one should pray simply, using the Lord’s Prayer rather than wordy prayers.

The next two chapters deal with the Eucharist (Lord’s supper). It is noteworthy that it speaks of the cup and then the bread. In connection with the bread it states:

Then in connection with the piece [broken off the loaf]: (say)
We thank you, our Father, for the life and knowledge which you have revealed through Jesus, your child. To you be glory forever. As this piece [of bread] was scattered over the hills and then was brought together and made one, so let your Church be brought together from the ends of the earth into your Kingdom. For yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever. You must not let anyone eat or drink of your Eucharist except those baptized in the Lord’s name. For in reference to this the Lord said, “Do not give what is sacred to dogs.”

This is followed by a chapter giving an example of how to give thanks after the Eucharist. It concludes with the sentence:

Remember, Lord, your Church, to save it from all evil and to make it perfect by your love. Make it holy, and gather it together from the four winds into your Kingdom which you have made ready for it. For yours is the power and the glory forever.

PROPHETS, TEACHERS, AND CHRIST’S RETURN

Chapters 11–15 give instructions regarding those who claim to be apostles, prophets, or teachers. It starts off by stating:

Now, you should welcome anyone who comes your way and teaches you all we have been saying. But if the teacher proves himself a renegade and by teaching otherwise contradicts all this, pay no attention to him. But if his teaching furthers the Lord’s righteousness and knowledge, welcome him as the Lord.

Instructions are then given on how to deal with travelling apostles and prophets. These instructions indicate that the document dates from a very early stage in the life of the Church, as there were still many itinerant preachers. A basic rule was that a traveling preacher should be given hospitality for a day, perhaps a second day, but “if he stays three days, he is a false prophet.” A prophet should be given provisions for his journey, but “if he asks for money, he is a false prophet.”

After some further instructions on how to discern true from false prophets, there are directions on how to deal with travellers.

Everyone “who comes” to you “in the name of the Lord” must be welcomed. Afterward, when you have tested him, you will find out about him, for you have insight into right and wrong. If it is a traveler who arrives, help him all you can. But he must not stay with you more than two days, or, if necessary, three. If he wants to settle with you and is an artisan, he must work for his living. If, however, he has no trade, use your judgment in taking steps for him to live with you as a Christian without being idle. If he refuses to do this, he is trading on Christ. You must be on your guard against such people.

As for a prophet who would like to stay permanently, Chapter 13 states:

Every genuine prophet who wants to settle with you “has a right to his support.” Similarly, a genuine teacher himself, just like a “workman, has a right to his support.” Hence take all the first fruits of vintage and harvest, and of cattle and sheep, and give these first fruits to the prophets. For they are your high priests. If, however, you have no prophet, give them to the poor. . . .

Chapter 14 gives instruction about faithfully coming together each Lord’s Day to break bread and give thanks. There is also an exhortation to be reconciled to one’s neighbour before assembling.

Chapter 15 gives instruction about choosing elders and deacons and respecting them. There is also instruction for mutual discipline.

The Didache concludes with an exhortation to be ready always for the coming of the Lord. There is a warning about false prophets and seducers. It then mentions the Lord coming in glory to judge the living and the dead.

RELEVANCE FOR TODAY

In the introduction, it was mentioned how discoveries of ancient ruins or fossils are of interest to many people. Something can be interesting, but that does not mean it is necessarily relevant. For that reason, it can be hard to understand why someone gets excited about discoveries. One may brush it off as being their “thing.” There

might be a similar reaction to the Didache. It might be just a “thing” for church history buffs, but does it make any difference for your typical Christian? Are our lives enriched by knowing this? I would suggest the answer is yes, for the following reasons.

First, there is the general reason that it benefits the study of church history. Knowing about events in the past reminds us that we belong to the one holy, catholic, apostolic church, the great community of believers the Son of God is gathering throughout history and the world, and has been gathering since the beginning of the world. Knowing about happenings in church history is the antidote to spiritual narrowmindedness or arrogance that our way of doing things is the measure for everyone else. Knowing church history gives us perspective on and appreciation for what we have received.

Second, as we apply this specifically to the Didache, we see how, from its earliest days, the church came up with what we might call catechetical material. In a time when people simply could not have their own Bibles, as everything was handwritten, there were documents containing summaries, which were easy to commit to memory. In the Didache as it has been preserved, there is no section dealing with doctrines like creation, the Trinity, or the work of Christ. Perhaps it was assumed that people knew these teachings. But the ethical chapters very much remind us of the part of the Heidelberg Catechism which explains the Ten Commandments. The first part, therefore, comes across as a catechism booklet to teach the youth and those new to the faith about the Christian life.

Third, the Didache shows how the early church knew only two sacraments. This is important in light of developments that saw the number of sacraments increase to seven in the Roman Catholic church.

Fourth, it is worth noting that while there may have been a preference for baptism by immersion, it was not considered essential. This is important in light of developments in certain circles which insist that baptism must be by immersion because that's how it was from the beginning. What is essential is baptism in the name of the Triune God.

Fifth, with respect to the Eucharist (the Lord's supper), the attentive reader may have been thinking that some words sounded rather familiar. In case you couldn't place it, these words are found in the Fellowship section of the Lord's supper form (*Book of Praise*, p. 605) as well as Hymn 61:2:

Watch o'er your church, O Lord, in mercy;
save it from evil, guard it still.
Perfect it in your love, unite it,
cleansed and conformed unto your will.

As grain, once scattered on the hillsides,
was in the broken bread made one,
so from all lands your church be gathered
into your kingdom by your Son.

When we read these words in the Form and sing this hymn, we echo the words of the Didache.

Sixth, the exhortation not to just let anyone eat or drink of the Eucharist shows how the church from the earliest times saw the need to limit access to the Lord's supper.

Seventh, the extensive instructions about receiving apostles and prophets and related matters show how the church has seen the need to guard the flock from false shepherds from the beginning, and how they evaluated those who presented themselves as prophets. When we reflect on the many articles in our current Church Order pertaining to office bearers, we see that this stands in a long tradition of guarding the flock.

Finally, the concluding chapter about the coming of Christ reflects the ultimate hope of the Church through all ages, to see her Lord come in glory. It is echoed in the concluding article of the Belgic Confession, which deals with the very same topic.

CONCLUSION

When we reflect on the Didache, we see that it is more than just a matter of historical interest. What we do in church life has deep roots. Reflection gives us insight into the unity and continuity of the church throughout the ages. Reflection will make us wary of thinking we have to begin anew. The proper way is to review and, where necessary, renew. We can see the wisdom of the exhortation of the final chapter of the Didache not to let our lamps go out, to be ready, for we do not know the hour when the Lord is coming. We do well to meet frequently, and to be alert for wolves among us, as we eagerly wait for the day the “Lord will come and all his saints with him. Then the world will see the Lord coming on the clouds of heaven.”

We do well to add, “May that day come with haste.” 



Eric Kampen

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PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

CRTS Update: Considering the Ministry

With deep gratitude to the Lord, I can report that all is well at our seminary. Our heavenly Father has given health and strength to our faculty and staff. The weekly work proceeds at a regular pace.

At convocation on Sept 5, 2025, we witnessed the graduation of ten students with our Master of Divinity degree and one student in our diploma program—our largest graduating class ever! We are also excited to welcome five new full-time MDiv students and one part-time, online student in our BTh program. These new students come from Canada, the Philippines, South Africa, and

Brazil. May the Lord bless them all as they transition into their studies at CRTS.

We rejoice in all this because Christ's church needs more ministers and missionaries. Let us continue to pray for him to fill this need, also recognizing that it is a big step for a man—any man—to decide, "Yes, with the Lord's help, I wish to prepare for gospel ministry." *How* should he decide? *How* should he prepare? *Where* will he find solid answers and wise advice as he considers all this?

A local pastor, an elder, or a close friend can contribute to these considerations in a very meaningful way. Here at CRTS we also want to do our part. Over the past year, we have dedicated

significant time and effort to these important questions. The result is a whole new section on our new website called “Considering the Ministry.”

FRESH WEB PRESENCE

Here is some context to this initiative. In 2023–24, our seminary building was renovated in two phases. Every day we continue to enjoy the benefits of this work. At the same time, an organization’s *digital* presence is also important. The last time CRTS’s website received a major overhaul was back in 2015. A decade is a long time in cyberspace, so a refresh was long overdue. Our new website has a contemporary design that highlights visual elements (e.g., more graphics and pictures), while retaining the functional elements of our older website (e.g., an easily accessible menu system so users can quickly find what they need).

CRTS’s digital renovation includes a sizeable addition: the “Considering the Ministry” section. Professors identified key questions that prospective students have asked over the years. These questions were then sub-divided into four logical sections that represent someone’s journey from thinking about the ministry to one day entering seminary as a registered student: deciding, preparing, experiencing, and settling. Answers to all these questions were composed and carefully reviewed. All these FAQs now appear in an attractive format on the “Considering the Ministry” pages.

Recognizing that a picture, or perhaps a video, is worth a thousand words, we also worked with a local company to condense and recast the written content of those FAQs into a series of short videos featuring professors, current students, and graduates. It’s not every day that the seminary community is illuminated by bright studio lights and recorded by digital cameras, but we hope that these videos serve to focus and guide men in our churches who are “Considering the Ministry.” Please feel free to check out our new website at www.canadianreformedseminary.ca. You’ll find the link for “Considering the Ministry” at the top right-hand corner of the home page.

FUTURE EVENTS

Looking ahead, we have organized a conference for January 9–10, 2026, entitled “Pressing On: Spiritual Care for Pilgrims.” More information can be found on our website. We welcome *everyone* to attend and to be edified by our keynote speakers, Reuben Bredenhof, Mark Jones, and Tim Lane, as well as our engaging panel discussions.

Just prior to the conference, we will host our third Campus Visit event. Past events have been well-attended, ranging from 20–30

SELLES PRIZE

The **Selles Prize** is awarded to students who show exceptional promise in New Testament studies. It is named after Professor L. Selles, the first New Testament professor at CRTS.

FABER HOLWERDA BURSARY FUND

The **Faber Holwerda Bursary Fund** is named after the wife of the first dogmatics professor, Dr. J. Faber. This fund is for students who have a need due to special personal circumstances or unexpected family situations. The Fabers also wanted students to be able enjoy festive times of year.

Church members may contribute to these funds, if desired. Please contact CRTS for more information.

participants. Some of the attendees are now students at CRTS or already serving as ordained ministers. We pray that this upcoming event, featuring informative seminars and informal interaction, will encourage more men to prepare for gospel ministry.

Finally, like every educational institution, and indeed society at large, CRTS is coming to terms with the advent of AI. Policy development is well underway, and our faculty are equipping themselves to guide students on this important topic. Even as times and technologies change, we confess with full confidence that our God and his Word remain the same (Ps 102:25–28). We continue to appreciate all the prayerful and financial support of the churches. Thank you! 🙏



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CRTS Graduating class of 2025

CELEBRATING GOD'S GOODNESS: *CRTS's 51st Convocation*

The 56th Anniversary Meeting and 51st Convocation of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary was blessed to be convened in the now familiar environs of Redeemer University. A large crowd gathered to celebrate the LORD's good provision in enabling another year of seminary education to be completed. Many who could not be there in person were able to join via the livestream.

The festivities opened in the customary fashion, with a processional and an opening song of praise. The chairman of the board, Dr. Jeff Temple, extended a warm welcome to all those present and led in a prayer of thanksgiving for the many ways in which God supplied what was necessary for the completion of the previous academic year. Specific thanks were given for the continued health and service of the emeritus faculty and their spouses, including Mrs. G. Deddens, Mrs. M. DeJong, Mrs. D. Gootjes, Dr. & Mrs. de Visser, Dr. & Mrs. Van Dam, and Dr. & Mrs. Visscher.

GREETINGS & ADDRESS

After the opening, Dr. Temple welcomed representatives from our sister churches in Australia and South Africa to come forward

and give their greetings. Rev. Stephen t'Hart spoke on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. He gave thanks for the strong historic bonds between our two federations. He remarked that the strength of those bonds can be seen in the fact that, of the eighteen men currently serving in ministry in Australia, sixteen of them were trained at CRTS. Rev. Jopie van der Linden then brought greetings from the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa. Rev. van der Linden reflected on the continued need for seminaries to train up "soldiers" who are well equipped for bringing the gospel to the ends of the earth. He also gave thanks for the ways in which our respective federations have been drawn into deeper fellowship by the use of a common seminary for pastoral training.

After thanking the delegates for their warm and encouraging remarks, Rev. Temple read from I Chronicles 1:1-4, 24-27, 34, as well as Titus 3:3-9, the focal passages for the upcoming address from Dr. John Smith. Dr. Jason Van Vliet then presented his annual principal's report, which you can read elsewhere in this issue.

Dr. Smith then delivered his address entitled "Is There Gospel in a Genealogy?" He explained how the genealogies function as a compressed recording of the history of God's people. As such,



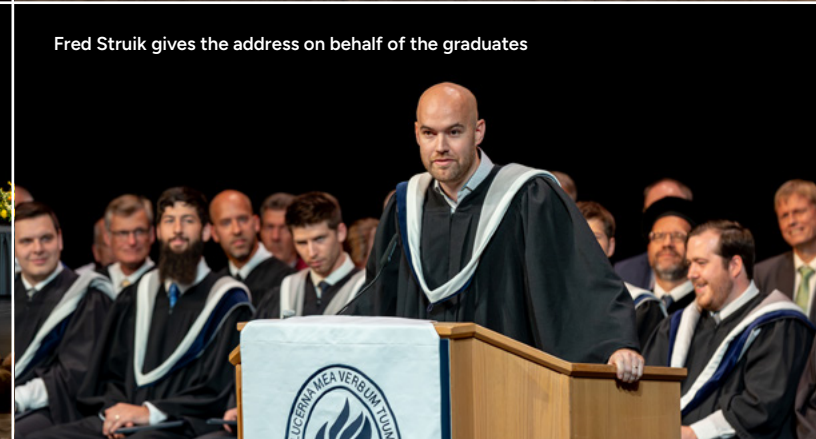
Jeff Temple opens convocation



Graduates with CRTS faculty



Convocation 2025



Fred Struik gives the address on behalf of the graduates

genealogies are a poignant reminder of how God has cared for His people in the past. More than that, however, we must learn to hear in the biblical genealogies a message of hope—genealogies always lead somewhere, and so they testify to the faithfulness of the LORD in always completing the work that he has begun. The full text of Dr. Smith's address can be found elsewhere in this issue.

GRADUATES & WSA

After singing Hy. 36:1, 2, the degree of Master of Divinity was conferred on Damon Bosveld, Mitchell Bosveld (*in absentia*), Hongdi Chen, Reese Gaillard, Todd Linde, Josh Schouten, Fred Struik, Adrian Tams, Quentin Vandermeulen and Marc Vermeulen. The Diploma of Theological Studies was conferred on Moacir Campos (*in absentia*).

Fred Struik had been chosen to speak on behalf of the graduating class. In his speech, he treated the audience to a variety of humorous insights into the character and exploits of the graduates. On behalf of his compatriots, Br. Struik expressed thankfulness for how God had sustained them during the course of their studies. He also expressed a deep sense of gratitude for the many ways in which the graduates were supported by family, friends, and the churches.

Mrs. J. Van Amerongen and Mrs. J. Van Vliet spoke on behalf of the Women's Saving Action. The audience was treated to the presentation of the newly designed poster for this year's campaign. Thanks was expressed for the tremendous support which had come in from churches throughout the federation. Time was taken to thank Debbie Alkema and Karen Schuurman for their years of faithful service on the committee. Janet Van Vliet then had the

special honour of presenting her husband with a contribution of \$53,000 in support of the seminary library.

On this occasion, a collection was taken up in support of the Publication Foundation. This fund assists the faculty in publishing materials which can be used within the federation. Following the collection, Rev. Clarence Vandervelde closed the evening with prayer, prevailing upon the LORD to bless the graduates with the opportunity and strength to serve him in his Kingdom. He also sought the LORD's blessing on the upcoming academic year, asking God to supply the faculty, staff, and students with all they need to complete their work safely, successfully, and in joyful service to him. The national anthem was sung as the final note to the evening's formal proceedings. Much festivity followed, as there was an opportunity personally to congratulate the graduates and to enjoy the communion of saints. 🇨🇦



Dr. Jeff Temple

Minister

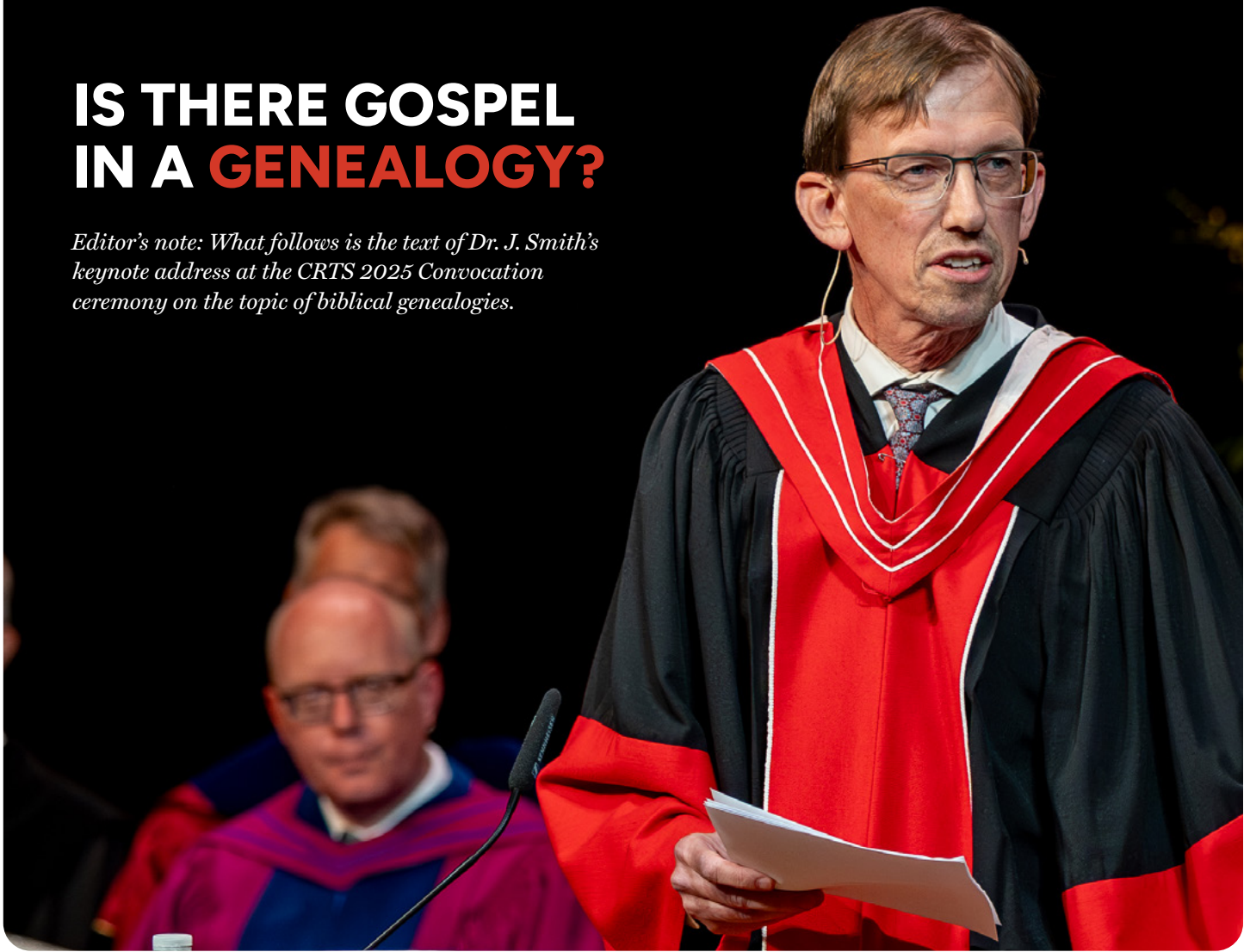
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If you were not able to be present that evening, you can still take it in by watching the video recording of the convocation which has been made available on the seminary website:
<https://canadianreformedseminary.ca>.

IS THERE GOSPEL IN A GENEALOGY?

Editor's note: What follows is the text of Dr. J. Smith's keynote address at the CRTS 2025 Convocation ceremony on the topic of biblical genealogies.



*“Adam, Seth, Enosh; Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared; Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech; Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth; . . . Shem, Arpachshad, Shelah; Eber, Peleg, Reu; Serug, Nahor, Terah; Abram, that is, Abraham. . . . Abraham fathered Isaac. The sons of Isaac: Esau and Israel”
(1 Chron 1:1–4; 24–27, 34).*

Mr. Chairman, governors, colleagues, graduating class, brothers and sisters in the Lord: is there gospel in a genealogy? At seminary, we train students to proclaim the whole counsel of God. As Christians, we read the Bible from cover to cover. But along the way we encounter some tedious passages: long lists of names, often difficult to pronounce. Genealogies!

Genealogies have none of the lively drama of a story, or the moral lesson of a parable, the practical wisdom of a proverb, the passionate rhetoric of prophecy, or the literary beauty of poetry. They're not the sorts of passages that we set to music and sing in church. Are they even relevant for the Christian life? As preachers, we're inclined to look for a different text, and as Bible readers we're tempted to turn the page, though perhaps with a twinge of conscience. After all, it's still the Word of God. But is there gospel there?

A PREACHABLE TEXT?

Is there good news in a list of names? There can be! We're all here this evening because of the list of names printed in our programs. Behind each name there's a story. With each name there is reason to remember what God has done, and with every passing name there is growing anticipation, as you get closer to that special name that *you've* been waiting for. So it is with the genealogies of Scripture: behind each name is a wealth of redemptive history; with each name there is reason to meditate on the mighty deeds of the Lord; and the list of names leads somewhere, to the special name we're waiting for. In 1 Chronicles 1, that name is Israel, the family of God. Perhaps you thought that I would say, “Jesus,” but his name wasn't on the list that we read, and a preacher should stick to his text. But that sharpens our question for this evening: is there gospel in 1 Chronicles 1? Is it a preachable text? Let's find out.

I summarize the message as follows: *The family of God is born of God*. We will see how God's family is, first of all, *born*, and secondly, *born again*.

According to my calculations, genealogies and lists of names make up about five and a half percent of the Old Testament.¹ So a preacher could easily spend a lifetime of fruitful ministry on the other ninety-four and a half percent of the Old Testament, to say nothing of the New Testament. I suppose that's good news in itself. It would get a bit harder, though, if a minister decided to preach a series of sermons on First Chronicles: there the ratio increases tenfold to fifty-five percent.² The first nine chapters are made up of lists of names!

Why is that so? It has to do with the purpose of the book. Chronicles was written quite late. In fact, in many Hebrew manuscripts, it's the very last book of the Old Testament. We know from the book itself that it was written a number of generations after the return from exile.³ It was written for the Jews who had come back from the Babylonian captivity. These returned exiles needed to find their way again in a promised land that had been ruined by the Babylonians. They needed to set up their way of life again after a seventy-year absence; they needed to know their genealogies so that they could sort out who was allowed to live where, who was allowed to serve as a priest, or a Levite, or a temple servant; they needed to become rooted again in the promised land. So, the book of Chronicles retells their history. First Chronicles 1 starts by retelling their birth story, going all the way back to Adam and tracing the line of descent from Adam to Israel. After all, those returned exiles—who to all appearances were not even a nation anymore, but just a provincial backwater of the Persian Empire—needed to hear that they were *still* Israel; they were the family of God.

A NAME IS ENOUGH

Now, these returned exiles were not newcomers to the faith; they knew their Scriptures. The author of Chronicles did not have to retell Israel's birth story in a lot of detail. He could simply give a name, and all the old Bible stories would come to mind. Adam: the first human, the son of God himself, created in God's likeness, with the very breath of God in his nostrils. Yes, but he disobeyed

God's clear command and was banished from the garden for his rebellion. An instructive story for Jews who had been banished from their land for their rebellion too; and now a hopeful story for Jews who were allowed to return; a story that did not need to be retold: a simple name was enough. And so the chapter hastens on to Seth, who took Abel's place; Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel, and Jared, who carried on the line of promise; Enoch, who walked with God; Methuselah and Lamech, who lived through times of growing apostasy; Noah, who built the ark and survived the flood; Shem, Ham, and Japheth, who fathered the seventy nations of the world. And finally, the birth of the nation of Israel, born out of God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

It is clear that the names in 1 Chronicles 1 come from the genealogies of the book of Genesis.⁴ It is interesting to see what the author of Chronicles does with the names. Let me mention three things.

First, nothing is said of Cain, nor of Adam's other sons and daughters. Those lines died out with the flood; they did not matter anymore. Second, the line of promise is always mentioned *last*.⁵ Of Noah's three sons, it does list the names of Japheth and Ham and their children, but it *ends* with the line of Shem. Of Abraham's children, it lists the names of Ishmael and of Keturah's children, but then it *ends* with the line of Isaac. Of Isaac's children, it gives the genealogy of Esau, but it *ends* with Jacob, or rather, Israel. The genealogy leads somewhere: Israel is the heir of the promises.

Third, our text traces ten generations from Adam to Noah, and then another ten from Shem to Abraham, or twelve when you add Isaac and Jacob. Jacob, the twelfth generation from Shem, is named *Israel* and had twelve sons himself, the twelve tribes of Israel. By genealogy, then, the Israelites are the chosen family of God. As the LORD said to Pharaoh, "Israel is my firstborn son. Let my son go, so he may worship me" (Exod 4:22–23). And now, all these generations later, at the end of the exile, the king of Persia has let the Israelites go again, so they might worship God again (2 Chron 36:23).

In short, the message for the returned exiles is this: you are *still* the family of God. The LORD is still faithful to his promises; he has graciously brought you back to your promised inheritance. Remember who you are: the children of God. That is the message behind the names. You see, a genealogy is history written

¹ 1,293 verses out of a total of 23,213 verses in the Old Testament.

² 519 verses out of a total of 943 verses in 1 Chronicles.

³ See, for example, 1 Chron 3:19–24; 9:2.

⁴ For the significance of *toledoth* in Genesis, see Benne Holwerda, *Oudtestamentische Voordrachten* (Kampen: Copieerinstelling v.d. Berg, 1971), 1.9–17. For an English summary of Holwerda's important contribution, see Marten H. Woudstra, "The *Toledot* of Genesis and their Redemptive-Historical Significance," *Calvin Theological Journal* 5 (1970) 184–89. My thanks to Joshua Schouten for sharing Woudstra's article with me.

⁵ See *The NIV Study Bible, 10th Anniversary Edition*, *ad loc.*

in the shortest possible form: all the stories are stripped away, only names are left. It's like walking through a graveyard, where entire biographies are reduced to a name, a date, and an epitaph on a tombstone. Very sobering! Yet the names are still there. God remembers them, and so should his people.

A MESSAGE FOR US

So yes, there is a message for the first readers of Chronicles. It was, after all, their genealogy, their identity. But as you know, as fascinating as it is to read one's own genealogy, it's not so interesting to read someone else's. So the question arises: is there a message for us? Can *we* identify with this list of names? Yes, we can. First, remember that in Adam we too are born of God. As Paul said to the men of Athens, "[God] made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth. . . . We are his offspring" (Acts 17:26, 28). Second, the genealogies of our text are not dead letters but part of the life-giving Word, inspired by the Holy Spirit to regenerate hearts and lives. Third, we as Gentile Christians are deeply indebted to the Israelite authors who wrote these records down and carefully preserved them. They are the natural branches of the olive tree and we are the wild branches grafted in, so that the gospel which was theirs first has become ours through faith in Christ (Rom 11:17). And fourth, it is from Israel's Scriptures that we learn what kind of God we have and how he deals with his people.

GOD'S FAMILY IS BORN AGAIN

To read a list of names might deceive us into thinking that the Old Testament religion was a *nominalist* religion, that is, that a physical line of descent was enough to make someone an heir of the promises, that one could enjoy the benefits of the covenant without a heartfelt commitment to the Lord; that it was enough simply to have one's name on the membership list. But that's not so. Consider the example of Esau, the firstborn of Isaac. Yes, the LORD had ordained that the older would serve the younger, but Esau was still responsible for spurning his birthright. Yes, God willed that Jacob should receive the blessing, but Jacob still had to grow in faith, to become *Israel*, learning to depend on the LORD rather than his own devices. Or consider the people of Israel. Yes, they were heirs of the promised land, but they still had to conquer it in faith, and the first generation perished in the wilderness and forfeited the promise because of their unbelief. Yes, the LORD gave his people the land, each tribe its allotment, each clan their towns and fields, but they still had to fight enemies, they had to work for their crops, they had to trust in the LORD for his blessing.

The name "Israel" was not a guarantee of blessing, but it was a calling to radiate God's glory. It was an invitation to the nations to see the abundant life that the Lord alone could give. And if the Israelites rejected the LORD, they would receive death instead of life. In Deuteronomy 30, Moses set before God's people the ultimate choice: "I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live . . . For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers." Yet the LORD foresaw that they would choose death. As it says in the Song of Moses, "You deserted the Rock who fathered you; you forgot the God who gave you birth" (Deut 32:18).

DEATH AND REBIRTH

The LORD sent prophets, one after another, to warn his people about the path of death that they were on. Finally, God sent them into exile, and then the covenant life of Israel stopped: the land of milk and honey became rubble and thorns, and the temple lay in ruins. Think of Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones. The Lord said to Ezekiel, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.' Therefore prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. . . . I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land'" (Ezek 37:11-14). So the return from exile was like a rebirth: the death sentence was lifted, and the people could breathe again. These were the people for whom Chronicles was written! As reborn children of God, they needed to know their identity again, they needed to inherit their ancestral properties, to *live* again as the people of God. And indeed, the Holy Spirit *was* with them, as the LORD said through the prophet Haggai: "My Spirit remains among you. Do not fear" (Hag 2:5).

And yet we know from Scripture that the exiles who returned had a difficult life: they were few in number; they faced opposition from the neighbouring peoples; they struggled with apostasy; they neglected the temple; they experienced famine; they had financial burdens. To return from exile was not enough. To take up their place in the line of descent was simply to take up their *old* life again with all its shadows, brokenness, and vanity. They still awaited the full restoration, the glorious renewal that the prophets had foretold. The family tree of Israel could not flourish until a shoot would come forth from the stump of Jesse, as the prophet Isaiah foretold, and the Spirit of the LORD would rest upon him, "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,

the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD” (Isa 11:1–2).

Now, 1 Chronicles 1 is not a prophecy; it’s a genealogy. It records *past* generations but does not predict *future* ones. And yet it stands at the end of the Old Testament, unfinished, and it calls for fulfillment in Christ. Therefore, we may turn to the New Testament to see what comes of the genealogy of Israel.

NEW TESTAMENT LINES

I mentioned earlier that genealogies and name lists make up about five and a half percent of the Old Testament. In the New Testament, it’s less than one percent.⁶ In terms of genealogies, we think especially of the genealogies of Jesus Christ in Matthew 1 and Luke 3. Matthew 1 traces the line of descent from Abraham to David, from David to the exile, and from the exile to Christ, fourteen generations times three, to show that Christ was the Son of David and the Son of God. Luke 3 traces the line of descent from Jesus back to Adam, to show that Jesus was the Son of Man, the Son of God. These genealogies do not show Christ’s exaltation but his humiliation: the eternal Son of God received a birthday, a lifespan, and a grave. He joined the ranks of the human condition destined for death. His genealogy did not earn him the throne but the *cross*. He was crowned with thorns as the King of the Jews, bearing the sins of all the generations of mankind.

What earned him the *throne* was his perfect obedience, for which God granted him eternal life, and the right to share that life with those who believed in him, and the gift of the Spirit to work that life in them. Only when the ancient sin of Adam was paid for and the death sentence endured, only then could Pentecost come and the fullness of life in the Spirit begin.

In terms of name lists in the New Testament, we think especially of the names of the apostles. I find it interesting that the New Testament does not give us their genealogies. We know very little about their lineage or even their tribes. James and John were sons of Zebedee, but they left their father to follow Christ. Barnabas was a Levite and Paul a Benjaminite, but that matters little for their apostolic task. In fact, the apostle Paul warned the Philippians against those who promoted circumcision as the mark of the family of God. No, said Paul, *we* are the circumcision, “we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—though I myself have reasons for such confidence: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews. . . . But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. . . . I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ” (Phil 3:3–8). And when the apostles established churches

and looked for men who could serve as office bearers, they did not look for a pedigree, proper family connections (nor should we today), but they looked for spiritual qualifications, for trustworthiness, for evidence of new life in the Spirit.

BORN AGAIN

What then is the message of our text for us today? Think of it like this: Chronicles begins with a genealogy to show how *Israel* was born of God. Matthew begins with a genealogy to show how *Christ* was born of God. The enduring question that arises from our text is this: are *you* born of God?

Here I think of how John’s Gospel begins: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . He came to his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (John 1:1, 11–13). Beautiful! When you believe in Jesus Christ, you have God as your Father and fellow believers as your brothers and sisters, no matter what their nationality or ancestry might be; the congregation of Christ is your family.

I’m not suggesting that our natural families don’t matter anymore. No, godly parents and grandparents are still a great blessing for their children and grandchildren. God still works through the generations. But a *tenth*-generation believer has no more right to be a child of God than a *first*-generation believer does. And nominalism has no more place in the church today than it ever did in Israel: the LORD is seeking *godly* offspring (Mal 2:15). We cannot assume that the next generation will inherit our faith. No, “Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit” (John 3:6), and therefore we must pray for their regeneration and equip them for life in the new covenant. And, as preachers, we need to say with Christ, “You must be born again” (John 3:3, 7).

Finally, the message of 1 Chronicles 1 is a message of hope. A genealogy must lead somewhere. The Lord finishes what he begins, and Christ will not rest until the last generation of Christians has been gathered into his church and the life that his Spirit has begun in us becomes fullness of life forevermore. 



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⁶ 66 verses out of a total of 7,941 = 0.83%.



A New Promotion Poster

Every year, the Women's Savings Action comes up with an innovative way of presenting the ongoing need for funds for the seminary library. In the past, the innovation has been supplied by our very capable long-standing secretary, Debbie Alkema, and this year is no exception. We have a brand-new poster—a great tool for our local Women's Savings Action representatives to use for raising awareness of the library's needs. Hopefully this will help to imprint the seminary library on the minds of congregants all over the country! You can expect to see it in the near future on your church bulletin board but here is your “sneak peek.”

The Women's Savings Action has been collecting in faith since 1969 to provide funding for the seminary library. The funds raised go to purchasing books, periodicals, subscriptions, electronic resources and teaching aids in support of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary. Please give when your local rep reaches out to you!



Also, thank you, Debbie, for this and all of the hard work you have contributed to this effort for the last eight years. The committee won't be the same without you!

Debbie isn't the only one deserving thanks for her labours. Karen Schuurman has also been serving faithfully on the committee for many years as treasurer, a time-consuming job and one that not many of us could do! I am thankful that it is Corrine

VanWoudenberg and not myself taking over that particular post. As an aside, we understand that she may be signing the cheques with a new name in the very near future, that of a recent CRTS graduate, Zach Vanderploeg. Congratulations on your engagement!

Janet VanVliet has been busy this past year, connecting with our many reps across the country. We have reps in most of our 71 churches and Janet organized quite a number of personal and Zoom meetings in groups of 4 or 5. These meetings were great for networking and learning from each other about how to promote the library needs to the broader church community. It's these ladies who get the work done on the ground. This year they collected \$55,241.86! We applaud and thank you for your willingness to go the extra mile!

We do also want to highlight the fact that the library is available not only to the seminary students but to all church members as well! Almost all the resources available to the students are just a car ride away (for those living locally). It's a great way to gain a sense of connection to our students and professors. We encourage you to visit the library, either digitally or personally. The website itself is easy to navigate and from there you can also navigate to past issues of the *Clarion* and *Reformed Perspective* magazines. It's a great way to become more familiar with the seminary, and maybe even to meet the good people who frequent its halls, both the seminarians, whom you may later meet on the pulpit, and the staff who support them on their journey there.

Speaking about good people, we'd like to especially recognize the work of Mrs. Debbie Alkema and Mrs. Karen Schuurman. Debbie has crafted creative presentations and kept detailed minutes for us while Karen has filed numbers in spreadsheets, guided everyone through new ways of donating via e-transfer or Canada Helps and helped our 69 reps with their financial questions. We thank you both for your enthusiastic service on our Women's Savings Action board. We thank God for you and pray that he will bless you in new ways of service in his kingdom.

Last but not least, we are pleased to present this year's donation in the amount of \$53,000. May God be glorified! 🙏

Your Women's Savings Action Board,
Janet VanVliet, Joyce VanAmerongen, and Corrine VanWoudenberg



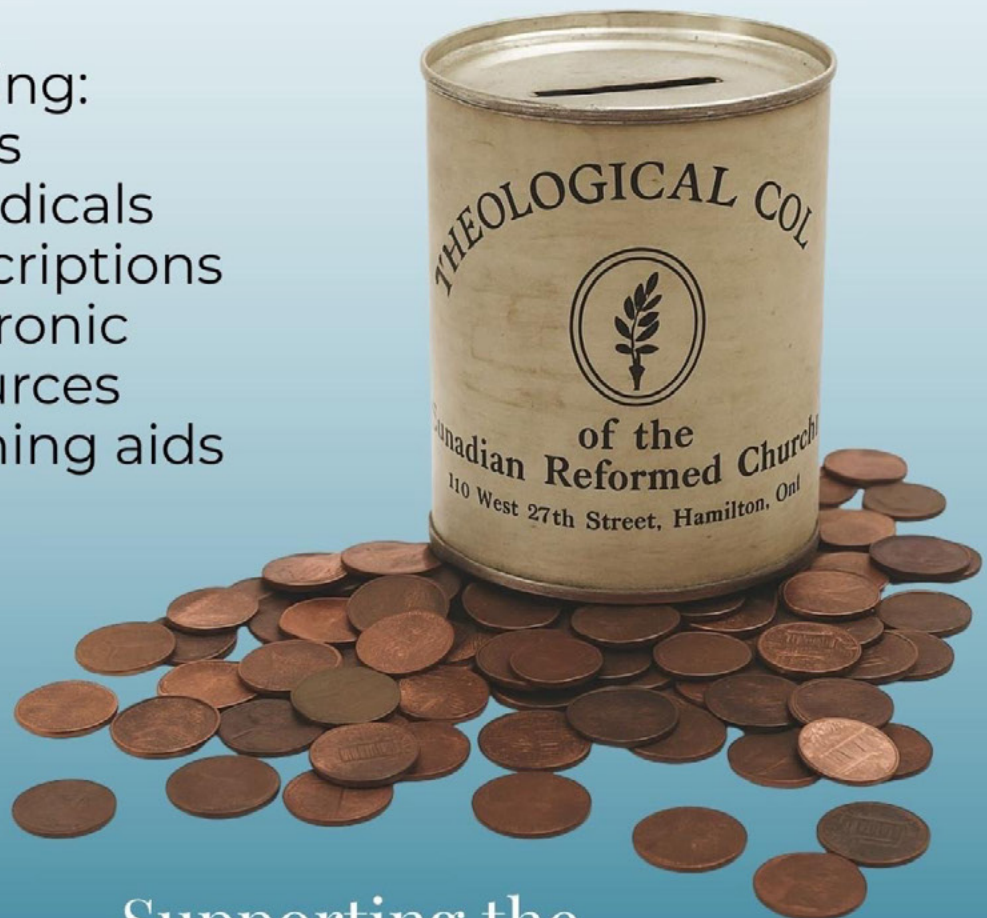
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Equipping for Kingdom Service:

GRADUATION 2025 AT EMMANUEL CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL

This year, for the first time in its history, Emmanuel Christian High School celebrated the graduation of its Grade 12 students with a June ceremony, a change from the late September date that has marked the occasion in past years. On the hot and humid evening of Friday, June 27, the 45 graduating students of the class of 2025, fresh off their final semester of high school, enjoyed a dinner in the school's gym in Fergus before moving on to the ceremony at Lakeside Church on the outskirts of Guelph.

As is often the case, the graduation ceremony presented an opportunity for reflection and introspection. The engine that is high school, which has trudged along for four years with its demanding schedule of daily lessons and due dates, has finally

reached its destination for this graduating class. The journey is complete, and the big picture, so often obscured by the bustle of everyday life, suddenly comes fully into view and is able to be appreciated.

At Emmanuel, that big picture is perhaps best captured by the school's vision statement: "Equipping for Kingdom Service." This guiding principle, which shapes life at the school, was clearly evident throughout the graduation evening. In his opening remarks, board chair Mr. Greg Wildeboer reminded the students that while each of their paths may look different, all are being prepared to serve in God's kingdom. Principal Mr. Stephen DeBoer encouraged the class to walk that path of service "one step at a time."

THE PROUD FATHER

The graduation address, entitled “The Proud Father,” was delivered by Rev. Marc Jagt. The title of the address seemed at first to derive from the fact that the speaker’s daughter was among the graduating students. While he was certainly a proud father himself, Rev. Jagt soon explained that the father whose rejoicing we should most seek is our heavenly Father’s. To illustrate his points, Rev. Jagt brought with him a bag of props: a hammer, an old iPhone, a rock, and an ethernet cable (standing in for a tapeworm). The iPhone did not survive the evening, but the faux-tapeworm and the hammer (which was used by Logan Reinink and Hadassah Broersma, in conjunction with the rock, to destroy the phone) did. The question facing the students, along with the audience of friends and family, was simple yet profound: are you using things to help you live your life, or are things living off of you? By describing a number of virtuous attributes, including loyalty, faith, humility, obedience, and love, Rev. Jagt elaborated on the proper way to use things as tools and directed the students on how to follow the example of Jesus and make their Father proud.

The students were, of course, the focus of the evening. After the diplomas and awards had been distributed, Silas Meerstra took the stage to give the valedictory address. He poetically connected the four grades of high school with the four seasons of the year. Each grade, like each season, brings its own challenges and blessings, with changes to comfort level, pace of life, and a variety of other topics. In his reflection, Silas captured the high school experience succinctly. He concluded his speech with the recognition that God holds the seasons in his hand, including the new season of life ahead.

It is not every day that we pause to appreciate the past and intentionally look ahead to the future, but it is an appropriate exercise for a momentous occasion such as graduation. The ceremony’s program of songs, speeches, Bible passages, and prayer effectively led the graduating class and the audience as they went through the experience of reflection and introspection, all in the service of our heavenly Father. 

C.J. Vanderveen
Guelph, ON



Cousins Karina and Desiree Vanleeuwen share the Citizenship Award



Karina Vanleeuwen, Brenna Niezen, and Silas Meerstra receive the Golden Eagle Award



WE ARE GETTING VISITORS TONIGHT

In the previous installment of this series on governing the church, we talked about the mutual responsibility of office bearers in the church to encourage and, if needed, kindly admonish one another by evaluating the work they do in caring for the flock of Christ. That's in Article 73 of the Church Order.

What about mutual responsibility among the *churches* that have chosen to federate together in our Canadian Reformed federation because they are one in faith? Do they have any responsibility towards each other? Reformed churches have rejected the idea of local churches being supervised by a pope or bishop. Local congregations are autonomous churches. But how far does this autonomy go? Can a fully independent church be a faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ? Of course it can. A federation is not a prerequisite for being part of the church. However, it is beneficial for the well-being of the church. And thus, by adopting the Church Order (CO), the Canadian Reformed churches have agreed to accept some level of mutual accountability. The question of the best way to make this work brings us to Article 46 (CO), which is about the role and work of church visitors.

Church visitation was not part of the ecclesiastical structure from the beginning of the Reformation. But the churches did feel the need for advice, help, and care to build up local church life, which was sometimes quite chaotic. Many ministers lacked proper training and quite often consistories just did their own thing. Lutheran churches had "superintendents," supervising officials with a permanent and powerful position. But the Reformed churches did not want to go there. They were afraid of any form of hierarchy. Introducing the instrument of church visitation was initially considered "unnecessary and dangerous" (1581). In 1586, an overture to have church visitors appointed by the classes was reluctantly approved, but with several restrictions to avoid

the impression that it might become a permanent hierarchical position. Soon after that, the practice was adopted by all classes.

WISDOM REQUIRED

Article 46 (44 in the old CO) was revised in 1983 and, apart from some minor updates, it is now explicit that church visitors are appointed for one year. They can be reappointed, but it is not a permanent position. It was also added that the church visitors are to submit to classis a written report of their visits.

Who should be appointed as visitors? "At least two of the more experienced and able ministers." Because of their training and experience, ministers may often be better equipped for this work, especially when they are confronted with conflicts and disagreements. However, I do not believe that there is anything wrong with the idea that a classis should also have the freedom to appoint a wise and experienced elder to this task. It makes sense that classis looks for experience, wisdom, discretion and tact when appointing church visitors. These men are not just going through a list of formal questions when visiting a local church but should use the opportunity as a time for encouragement and advice. Their work is also meant to be "preventive care," so that potential conflicts can be resolved locally, and formal ecclesiastical procedures can be avoided.

The limitation here is that church visitors are not authorized to make decisions in favour of or against a consistory decision.¹ When it becomes clear that such a judgment is required, church visitors must step back and suggest an appeal to let classis decide.

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

A regular church visitation is usually done once a year. We have all heard the announcement that church visitors are coming. You

¹ In the rest of this article, I will use 'consistory' for 'consistory with deacons' and 'consistory without deacons.' It becomes a bit tedious to repeat constantly 'council and/or consistory.'

may not have given it much thought, but apparently it is important enough that the whole congregation knows on that evening: “we are getting visitors tonight.”

But why should you care? First of all, we are reminded of the mutual accountability we have accepted as federated churches. Church visitation is a tool to make sure that together we remain faithful to God’s Word and that we can trust each other to be loyal to the regulations we have agreed on in the CO. Secondly, it gives you, as a church member, the opportunity to voice concerns about decisions of your consistory to the visitors, and ask them for advice. The only condition is that you have first presented your concerns or complaints to your consistory, so that they are aware of the matters you want to talk about to the visitors.

This does not imply that you need the permission of your elders to meet and speak with the church visitors. Sometimes consistories may want to judge beforehand whether the matter you want to ask the visitors’ advice for is important enough, and in this way try to limit the access of church members to the church visitors. However, even if opinions differ whether or not a consistory has the right to do so, it would be utterly unwise. A member’s request to speak with church visitors is usually an indication of a (potential) conflict or difficulty with the consistory. This means that restricting members who want to speak with the church visitors is a sure way to make things worse. The same can be said about the rule some have defended that members can only speak with the church visitors in the presence of the consistory. Members should not feel intimidated and thus inhibited when asking help from the church visitors.

A CONVERSATIONAL INQUIRY

Article 46 does not give detailed instructions for the task of the church visitors. It does give three reference points that frame their work: the authority of God’s Word, the duties of the office bearers, and commitment to the Church Order. It also defines the character of their task: as guests, without ecclesiastical authority over the local office bearers, they can only inquire, ask questions. But Article 46 does not prescribe how they are to do this. Most classes, however, have regulations for church visitation, which usually includes a list of questions for that purpose. Consistories often have the habit to use these questions to prepare for an upcoming meeting with the visitors. That’s convenient, but it does come with a risk. It can turn the church visitation into a formal interrogation, following a checklist, with prepared answers given by the chairman or clerk of consistory. If that’s how it is done, you might as well get a mailed-in questionnaire.

I am quite sure that most church visitors will try to avoid such a formal approach, and want to make it more of a conversation that engages all office bearers around the table. This can be done with the help of an approved list of questions as framework. But it can also be done without such a list. Then the framework is formed by the three questions in Article 46. In this way it is also possible to avoid an annual repetition of the answers given in previous years, provided that all the major elements of the Church Order are still addressed. The latter set-up requires more preparation on the side of the church visitors. But I think it’s worth it. It gives them the opportunity to focus on a particular theme or emphasize some topics this year, while shifting to other aspects next year.

Some might ask: If there is no adopted list of questions to go by, how is a consistory supposed to prepare itself for a meeting with the church visitors? But is such preparation really necessary? Perhaps not. Perhaps it’s even better not. Why would a consistory not be capable of having an unprepared conversation with two ministers to give an account of how the authority of God’s Word, the work of the office bearers, and the loyalty to the adopted Church Order function in their local circumstances? And when all office bearers are invited and feel comfortable to participate in such a conversational inquiry, I am convinced it will give the visitors a pretty good snapshot of how this local church functions within the federation.

As I said earlier, a regular church visitation is done once a year. But what if difficulties arise in one of the churches of that classis? Does the fact that church visitors are appointed for a year imply that during that year consistories can also ask them to come and give advice in dealing with urgent difficulties? Some say no, that after one regular church visit their mandate is completed. They have no business going there again. When a church needs help or advice, they can ask for it at the next classis in the question period for that purpose (Article 44 CO). I have always wondered about that, for the simple reason that I think that every consistory has the freedom to consult anyone they expect to be able to give helpful advice. 



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Lamentations 2:

WHEN GOD FEELS LIKE AN ENEMY

Editor's note: This is the second in a series of advent reflections on the book of Lamentations. The Lord willing, one reflection will appear in each issue of Clarion leading up to Christmas.

THE WRATH OF GOD

Lamentations reveals a central biblical truth: our most pressing issue is a holy God's wrath against our sin. God is not a benign figure. He is a consuming fire, infinitely powerful and perfectly just. As sinners, we face the dire consequence of this reality. Without repentance, God will hold us accountable, as depicted in Lamentations.

Lamentations graphically illustrates what hell will be like for the unrepentant. But even here, words fail. God's righteous anger unleashes unimaginable terrors. Yet, in this darkness, there is a glimmer of hope. Nicholas Wolterstorff, in his book *Lament for a Son*, reflects, "I shall look at the world through tears. Perhaps I shall see things that dry-eyed I could not see."¹ In our grief over sin, perhaps we, too, will see our desperate need for Jesus.

AGONY: SINNERS IN THE HANDS OF AN ANGRY GOD

In Lamentations 2, the tone shifts dramatically. While chapter 1 portrays Jerusalem as a forsaken widow, chapter 2 focuses on God's anger. The author gasps, "How!" (2:1). This isn't merely about Jerusalem's devastation; it's about witnessing God's fierce judgment.

The lament begins without using God's covenant name, emphasizing the spiritual chasm sin has created. In verse 1, we see a storm cloud blocking God's comforting presence. God has cast down Israel's glory, destroying the temple—his dwelling place. This devastation represents a severed relationship, a shocking reality for his people.

In Lamentations 2, God's actions are described with terrifying imagery. "He has bent his bow like an enemy" (Lam 2:4). This divine anger is not reckless; it's a settled hostility toward sin. The lamentation serves as a wake-up call. If God did not spare even Jerusalem, we must examine ourselves.

GRIEF: WHEN WORDS FAIL

The emotional weight intensifies as the author, likely Jeremiah, becomes overwhelmed with grief. "My eyes are spent with weeping; my stomach churns" (2:11). He is gutted by the sight of suffering children, a haunting image that resonates today.

Jeremiah is at a loss for words. "What can I say for you?" (2:13). Adele Berlin notes that "Lamentations is not a book of consolation; it is a book that refuses to console, keeping the moment of grief in focus."² There are no words to comfort Jerusalem for her anguish is unprecedented and incomparable. The prophets who should have warned the people failed, offering false hope instead.

It sounds eerily familiar, doesn't it? Many Christian preachers today ignore the reality of sin, preaching comfort without accountability; discipleship without confession of sin. Yet Lamentations reminds us that we, too, must cry out to God.

ANGER: "GOD, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?"

The lament culminates in Jerusalem's anguished cry: "Look, O God, what have you done?" (2:20). This cry reveals deep anger and confusion toward God.

As we reflect on this, we must remember that the Advent season is not only about joy and love but also about recognizing God's righteous anger against sin. John 3:16 assures us of God's love, "For

¹ Wolterstorff, Nicholas. *Lament for a Son*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987

² Berlin, Adele. *Lamentations: A Commentary*. Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life,” but John 3:36 also warns, “Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”

In Jesus, we find the ultimate answer to God’s wrath against our sin. He came to bear the weight of that judgment, experiencing hell in our place. As Jesus cried out from the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” we remember the answer: “that we might be accepted by God and nevermore be forsaken by him.”³

CONCLUSION: EMBRACE THE COMPLEXITY

As we journey toward the Advent season, let us not shy away from the sobering truths found in Lamentations. The weight of our sin is real, and God’s judgment is serious. But in this darkness, we also glimpse the light of Christ, who transforms our despair into hope. “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly”

(John 10:10). May we embrace both the solemnity of our sin and the glorious gift of salvation. In the midst of darkness, the light of Christ shines brighter than ever, offering hope to all who believe. 

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- 1. How do you respond to the reality of sin in your life?
- 2. What does God’s wrath teach about his holiness and love?
- 3. How can you share the hope of Christ’s grace with others this Advent season?



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³“Form for the Celebration of the Lord’s Supper.” In *Book of Praise: Anglo Genevan Psalter*. Winnipeg: Premier Printing Ltd., 2016.

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DEDICATED TO ADEWERT

Citeaux to Aduard to Clairvaux (Part III)

KEITH SIKKEMA

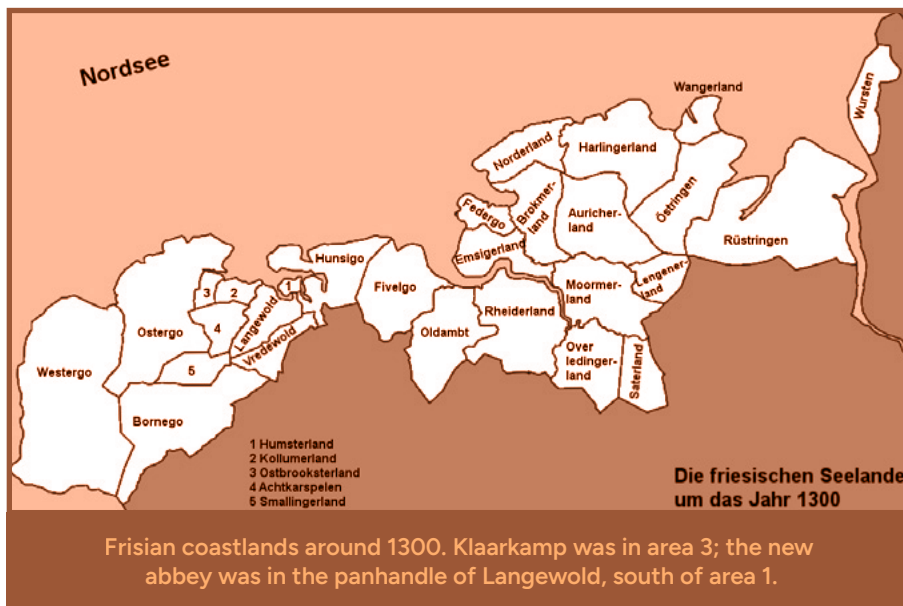
Editor's note: This is the third in a series of articles sketching the history of certain monasteries in the Middle Ages. The author tells some of this history by way of fictional stories based on known facts. These stories link to a previous series on Cluny and earlier monasteries by the same author (see *Clarion* Vol. 74, Issues 4 & 5).

It was not just a pool of freshwater Albertus had slid into. Every time the tide had reached the pool, some dark clay particles had settled to its bottom and made a soft sludge. “*Eripe me de luto!*” he screamed as he sank.

The lay brothers quickly untied their belt-ropes, knotted them together, and tossed one end to Albertus. Trying to find footholds and grasping for weeds with one hand, he caught the rope with the other. The lay brothers, straining against the sucking mud, pulled him out. Dripping wet and smelly, from the waist down Albertus’ habit was now as black as his scapular.

“Was he swearing?” one lay brother asked, aghast, after he caught his breath.

“He was not. He pled for mercy,” Wibrandus said, and added, “We can rinse his habit with water, but his robe needs blood to become spotless.”² When they found a pond a little further down,



the lay brothers washed Albertus’ scapular. Using the lavabos, they splashed water over him. Albertus felt guilty and ashamed. His robe was filthy, and it stank.

At mid-afternoon, the travelers came to the Lauwers. They stopped to pray and reflect on Christ’s death for their sins. Albertus felt like a dirty sheep and a soul in need of washing. As they traveled further eastward, hoping to find a place for the night, puffs of dried clay began wafting off Albertus’ habit. It seemed like a shedding of some of his guilt for breaking his vows—but he needed more than that. It still reeked and was itchy. By late afternoon,

¹ Psalm 69:14: “Pull me from the mire!”

² Rev. 7:14, 1 Pet. 1:18-19



they stopped to pray for forgiveness, to give thanks, and to eat a cold meal.

FOG AND FLAMES

The way now rose onto a ridge higher than the surrounding fields. Further south on the ridge, between trees, they noted a village with a stone church. Tomorrow, they could ask the parish priest for directions!

As the sun set, a foggy haze settled in patches over the lands. The men knelt to give thanks and to seek God's protection during the night. Without changing, they lay down on the ground. They were tired and slept well, waking up as usual around two in the morning. The night was dark and moonless, but stars sparkled in the sky. Above the land below, they noticed mysterious blue-green flames dancing about. They rubbed their eyes, and wondered, "What is this? Is God sending his lights to lead us to his holy hill?"³

After devotions, when it became light, they looked back to where the flames had danced but only saw peat land, saltmarshes, tidal channels, and werts. Strange. Was someone lighting flames there? At church, after mass, they could ask the priest. It was time to go.

People came from their thatch-roofed sod-and-wood houses to go to church for mass and wished the travelers good morning in Frisian, "*Goeie-moarn!*" The locals were wondering where they were from, what their purpose was, where they had slept, and why were not all their habits white? Wibrandus just smiled and waved.

THE PRIEST

The church they approached was built with German volcanic tuff.⁴ It looked quite new and was taller than the houses. At its west entrance, the old priest was easy to spot in his simple white cassock. He welcomed them and, in Frisian⁵, Wibrandus asked him for some time after mass.

Wibrandus explained their task, "We seek a place for an abbey and saw flames dancing on the lands. Might that be God's sign that this is his chosen place?"

The priest smiled and nodded, "God does give us signs, does he not? We often see the lights, but I never thought that God was telling us to start an abbey! There is no abbey nearby, but we do have people who seek peace for their souls and would gladly devote their lives to God!"

"We saw saltmarshes and werts, but does anyone live there? Who owns it? Is there a city to connect to?" Wibrandus asked.

The priest was not bound to Cistercian vows and responded with many words. "In the dreadful floods of 1164 and 1170 much land was washed out and abandoned. So were werts, like in Middag and Humsterland to our north. The sea cut new channels. Some land to our south was less affected, and our village, Suderhorn, is safe near the southern end of our ridge. Yet, many people and livestock perished, with none to bury them. Survivors retreated to higher land. The sea level seems to be rising,⁶ and people hesitate to return. God is in control, but if Cistercians made it habitable

³ Psalm 43:3. Bioluminescence, will-o'-the-wisp, or superstitious folklore? There was no known celestial event.

⁴ It still stands and was later enlarged with local red monastic brick.

⁵ Priests were often poorly trained locals. Some knew Latin. Some were celibate, some not.

⁶ Perhaps heavy clay-on-peat subsidence.



again, that would be wonderful! The city of Groningen is nearby and can be reached by road *and* water!”

Wibrandus looked at his team, lifted his eyebrows, and said, “Brothers? Explore?” They nodded but said nothing.

The priest noticed, smiled, and continued, “The bishop of Münster approved my ordination, but unlike our first bishop, Liudger, he has never been here.⁷ Like in most of Frisia, we are free and have no count to rule over us. Our local chieftain is lord, owner, and judge. He is a good man, but he is aging and troubled about the future of his soul. He thinks that God forced him to abandon his land to the north in Adewert because of his sins. His buildings are still there. He was at mass . . . shall we go and see him?”

THE CHIEFTAIN

The chieftain was at home and thrilled to hear that his often-flooded land might still be used for God-pleasing purposes. “Before my hair turned grey,” he said, “God gave me a generous inheritance, including parts of Middag and Humsterland to our north. My sheep fed on it, and I even grew some barley. At very high tides, the sheep came to Adewert, where I built a home, a livestock-shelter, and some other structures. Then, the flood of 1164 took my sheep. There was no shepherd to rescue them. It drenched my land, making it less fertile. We prayed, but Saint Christopher and Saint Nicholas did not protect us. The land flooded again in 1170. I turned grey, gave up, and abandoned it. The Lord will soon take me, too, if he does not abandon me. I should have served him more seriously on my way to heaven. Giving the land back to God would give me assurance of salvation and less time in purgatory. You are monks on the royal way. Would you pray for me and reclaim the land? That would give me peace and entry to heaven!”

Wibrandus looked at his companions and pointed up. He then turned to the chieftain, and said, “*Ora et labora*, brother, we vowed

to do just that! Serving the Lord, Cistercians pray and work. Let us pray first and then get to work!”

THE SITE

Taking the path to the wert, Wibrandus and his companions found that the area had all they needed to support an abbey: a steady source of fresh water from Pizerdeep Creek⁸, land for reclamation, peat for fuel, clay for bricks, land and water links to Groningen, channels to the sea, and Suderhorn people eager to help. With modifications and repairs, the house could become the monks’ sleeping quarters, the shelter at the northeastern edge would be perfect for a chapel, and other structures could be used for materials for a washing, cooking, brewing, and sleeping facility. The same day, the chieftain agreed to prepare a legal charter confirming that he donated the land and would remain a patron. It would also state the abbey’s purpose, rights, and duties.

The next day, the travelers left for Klaarkamp. When Wibrandus reported how God had miraculously led their way to Adewert for a monastery, everyone praised the Lord in worship. They soon sent to inform Utrecht’s bishop, Baldwin II of Holland, and to gain the support of the bishop of Münster. In September, the General Chapter in Citeaux approved the new monastery. They agreed to prepare the site in 1192, after the winter and spring storms.

To be continued . . . 



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⁷ Suderhorn was at a distant fringe of his diocese. Liudger (~742-809) was Charlemagne’s Frisian missionary.

⁸ Peizerdiep

MEET CAMERON DANTUMA!

On October 22, I will be celebrating my 34th birthday! I am spunky and love anything to do with cameras or batteries. I love surprises and one of my favourite games is "pie in the face." I live at the Lighthouse with seven other residents in Fergus. My days are full. Mondays are usually swimming days with a few of my housemates. On Tuesdays I go with a support worker to a day program in Palmerston where we do lots of fun activities and games. On Fridays I go to Emmanuel Christian High School and sort recycling. During the summer months I am involved in special needs soccer on Wednesday nights. I love seeing all my friends there! On Sundays I love going to church and sitting beside the piano player after the service while he/she plays! I am quite a connoisseur of food and love watching food prep by staff, and Master Chef shows. I aspire to be a chef some day!!



OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS:

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <p>3 Janell DeBoer will be 35
6311 Silver Street RR #2
St. Ann's, ON
LOR 1Y0
Email: janell.db90@gmail.com</p> | <p>8 Lindsay Kottelenberg will be 35
c/o Lighthouse
6528 1st Line
RR 3 Fergus, ON
N1M 2W4</p> | <p>21 Cameron Dantuma will be 34
c/o Lighthouse
6528 1st Line
RR 3 Fergus, ON
N1M 2W4</p> |
| <p>3 Jeanette Wieringa will be 31
6674 Wellington Rd 7
Elora, ON
NOB 1S0</p> | <p>13 Nancy Schipper will be 69
c/o Beacon Home
653 Broad Street West
Dunnville, ON
N1A 1T8</p> | <p>22 Nelena Hofsink will be 65
Bethesda Clearbrook Home
32553 Willingdon Cr.
Clearbrook, BC
V2T 1S2</p> |
| <p>6 Henry Vander Vliet will be 58
c/o Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road RR 2
Beamsville, ON
LOR 1B2</p> | <p>17 Alan Breukelman will be 59
2225, 19th Street
Coaldale, AB
T1M 1G4</p> | <p>28 Mary Ann De Wit will be 69
#4 6560 Vedder Road,
Chilliwack, BC
V2T 5K4</p> |

Happy birthday to the many of you celebrating a birthday in October! We wish you all the Lord's blessings in the year to come, and a wonderful day with family and friends.

- Rachel Vis

"Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!" (Psalm 100:3, 4)

CORNERSTONE CHRISTIAN CARE SOCIETY

Editor's note: Within our Reformed church community there are numerous organizations which run independent of church oversight, but which nevertheless provide valuable and frequently vital services for members of our churches. Clarion is launching this new Service Snapshots column to occasionally share news about such societies so they may be prayed for and supported. If you serve in leadership in such a group and wish to be featured in this space, please contact me at pholtoluw@ gmail.com.

Cornerstone Christian Care Society (CCCS) operates homes in the Carman and Winnipeg areas (southern Manitoba) for those in our faith communities with disabilities. The Carman home opened in 2008 followed by the Winnipeg home in 2016. As our mission statement says, "We believe that it is both a privilege and a duty that the children of the Covenant be cared for in accordance with Holy Scripture and to the honour and glory of our Covenant God. We are convinced that the care for those with special needs can best be accomplished through the cooperative efforts of like-minded Christians. In thankful response we have therefore, as individuals, joined together as an association to help one another in the communion of saints so that the purpose of the association may be achieved."

There are currently five residents in our two homes. Along with day programs in which some of the residents are enrolled, the House Managers and Direct Service Staff involve the residents in a wide variety of activities on a daily basis. The residents are involved in the community through attending sporting events and helping at our Christian schools. The residents love visitors, and the community is encouraged to visit these brothers and sisters to show love and support to them.



Partners and Pals Summer Camp

CAMPS AND EVENTS

CCCS also organizes respite for families of those with disabilities, mainly in the summer months, by connecting them with caregivers from our community. Partners and Pals is an annual weeklong summer camp for children up to the age of twenty-one. This past summer there were thirteen campers along with their "pals" and counselors. This camp is a summer highlight for many campers and counsellors alike. This past February, a Winter Retreat was held for those with disabilities in our communities over the age of eighteen. These camps are organized and run by volunteers



Cornerstone Winnipeg Home



Cornerstone Carman Home

who willingly spend countless hours preparing for and attending the camps. The plan going forward is to hold the Winter Retreat annually, as it is an upbuilding weekend for all who attend.

In order to support the operation of the camps, big items such as a vehicle for each home, and various renovations to the homes, fundraising is done mainly through two annual events: a hockey tournament held in February and a golf tournament held in September. These events are well attended, and the generosity of the community is invaluable. Another ongoing fundraiser is the Pop Can Factory, which recycles aluminum and other metals.

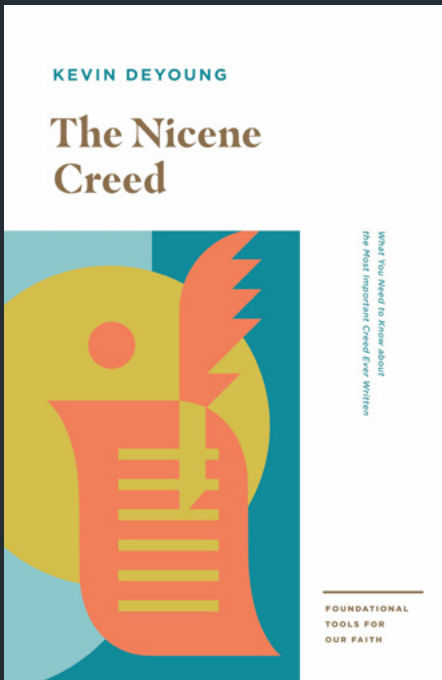
We are thankful that the Lord has blessed us to be able to operate these homes for the benefit and well-being of our neighbours in Christ. As the organization continues to grow, we are actively looking at ways to improve the operation of CCCS and ultimately provide the best possible care to the brothers and sisters in our care. This past year we have collaborated to write a Director's Handbook. Our annual general meeting is held in June, alternating between Carman and Winnipeg. If you are interested in learning more or getting involved to support this work, please visit www.cornerstoneccs.ca. 

Judith Dewitt
Winnipeg

READ AND SEARCH OLD VOLUMES

of **Clarion**

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Embrace the **NICENE LEGACY**

The Nicene Creed, Kevin DeYoung. Wheaton: Crossway, 2025. Softcover, 93 pages, \$18.49

2025 is the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea. While the Council didn't write the Nicene Creed as we know it, it was responsible for the theology behind it and a precursor creed. What better way to commemorate this momentous ecumenical council than to learn a little more about the creed which bears its name?

Kevin DeYoung has written a short introduction to the Nicene Creed expanding on some of its characteristics. This book is part of a "Foundational Tools for Our Faith" series addressed to a general Christian audience helping them "know what to believe and how to live."

After a short summary of the history behind it, DeYoung explores several of the key phrases in the Nicene Creed:

- We believe
- Only begotten
- One substance
- For us and our salvation
- Who proceeds from the Father and the Son
- One holy catholic and apostolic church
- One baptism for the remission of sins

Some of the issues related to these phrases are quite theologically involved, but the author does well in simplifying things as much as possible. The only phrase I would have liked a chapter on would be "the Lord and giver of life" (referring to the Holy Spirit).

I thought I knew the substance and meaning of the Creed quite well, but DeYoung highlighted some blind spots, and he may very

well do the same for you. For example, one of the famous controversies related to the Nicene Creed is the so-called *filioque*, the article which states that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son*. It's the procession from the Son that is contested by the Eastern church. Why does this double-procession matter? Is it biblically supported? Read Chapter 5 to find out. As another example, what does the Creed mean when it speaks of "one baptism for the remission/forgiveness of sins"? Is it referring to how many times we should be baptized? Chapter 7 has the answer.

The Apostles' Creed gets the most attention of our ecumenical creeds. It's expounded on in the Heidelberg Catechism, it's set to music, and we use it most often as our confession of faith in public worship. By contrast, the Nicene Creed may only get used in the second service when there's a Lord's supper celebration in the morning and the Apostles' Creed has already been used. However, it is a vital part of our creedal library, and DeYoung's little book will help you embrace it more closely and meaningfully. 



Wes Bredenhof
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GOD'S WRATH:

A Call to Repentance and Renewal

Dear Editor,

The article written by Dr. W. Bredenhof in a recent *Clarion* encouraged me to ponder the attributes of God in more depth because it left me somewhat confused on the topic of the wrath of God.

We find in the invitation to the Love Feast the call to examine ourselves before we partake of Lord's supper. We must be willing to accept our own unworthiness, to realize that God's wrath against sin is so great that he could not leave it unpunished, but has punished it in his beloved Son. God's love and his wrath are not mutually exclusive. Deuteronomy lays out the covenant relationship as a choice: "choose you this day" blessing or curse. It is only in the full awareness of our unworthiness, aware of the cost of sin, that we will offer ourselves as a living sacrifice—flee to Christ, die to ourselves, crucify our old nature—to live a life which reflects our gratefulness.

God's attribute of being just means he is an all-consuming fire, who burns with indignation against all unrighteousness. He has graciously given us the Holy Spirit, who also manifests himself to us as a flame of fire. Revelation 3:19 says: "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent." When we refuse to respond to this refining, to repent, we harden our heart and have a seared conscience. There are times when the church must hand such a person to the state, also called "the agent of God's wrath" (Rom 13:4).

The form for Lord's supper requires us to examine ourselves against the standard of God's law, because the covenant demands and obligates us to reflect his holy character. This alludes to the reality that God's justice requires us to face judgment. Romans 1 and 2 say much about God's wrath. In 2:12-13 it says, "All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous." In the face of God's wrath, Revelation 14:12 says, "This calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus."

If we confess that, before the foundation of the earth, in love, God predestined a number of believers whom he would save by the power of the blood of his beloved Son should we not then deduce that already then he also had determined that a number of unrepentant people would face his eternal wrath in a place he created?

By grace, with no merit of our own we have been made active partners in the covenant. We can easily become complacent and placate ourselves that we are saved because we believe and have made a confession. The apostle Peter believed and made a strong confession of his faith but, in the horror of the climax of all of history, as stood and denied his Saviour three times. In a 2021 *Clarion* issue dedicated to remembering Herman Bavinck, Dr. VanVliet quotes Bavinck as having said that Peter called curses upon himself; later, when Jesus confronted him three times and he confessed and repented, Dr. VanVliet says Peter was reinstated. The text states that when Peter had fully repented Jesus said, "On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

This doctrine is also evident in LD 30, Q&A 82, where it speaks about the covenant being profaned and God's wrath being kindled against the whole congregation if the office bearers do not guard the table properly from the unbelieving and ungodly; where the hypocrite and unrepentant eat and drink to their judgment because, by their choice they are excluded from the kingdom of heaven.

As believers, we ought always to be fully assured of the forgiveness of all our sins, even if we had killed the very Son of God. But shouldn't the truth about the wrath of God spur us on to be displeased with ourselves because of our sin, to amend our lives, and to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling? Fearing God, we as kings should fight with a free and good conscience against sin and the devil in this life, being heartily willing and ready from now on to live for him.

Respectfully,
Kevin Vanderzyl
Neerlandia, AB

letter to the EDITOR

I very much appreciated Rev. E. Kampen's article "Baptist Churches" (*Clarion*, July 25, 2025). Some of this was quite new to me and I thank him for the clear explanation. I struggled, however, to understand what he meant, in the context of Baptist churches, by his concluding remarks where he writes:

"At the same time, it has been said before that where the Word is, the Spirit is working. This will also be true in the case of Baptist churches. All this brings to mind again the prayer *For the Church Universal* found in the Book of Common Prayer:

Most gracious God, we humbly beseech thee for thy holy Catholic Church. Fill it with all truth; in all truth with all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where any thing is amiss, reform it; where it is right, strengthen and confirm it; where it is in want, furnish it; where it is divided and rent asunder, make it whole again; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*"

What confused me was the link Rev. Kampen is making between Baptist churches and "*the Church Universal*" (referred to in the prayer as "thy holy Catholic Church"). The reason for my confusion is because we confess that Christ gathers, defends and preserves one catholic church (LD 21 & BCF 27) which manifests itself in local true churches which believers must join (BCF 28) and which governs itself according to the pure Word of God (BCF 29). If, as Rev. Kampen seems to be saying, the Baptist churches are part of that catholic church which Christ gathers, then people in the area must join it. Maybe Rev. Kampen could help me to understand his concluding comments.

Jelte Numan

Free Reformed Church of Mt Nasura, Western Australia

Rev. Kampen responds

I thank br. Numan for his letter. Such a letter shows that the articles one has written are being read, appreciated, and give reason for reflection.

Br. Numan indicates some confusion because my use of the prayer "For the Church Universal," from the Book of Common Prayer in connection with the Baptist churches seems to suggest the Baptist churches are part of that catholic church which Christ gathers. He concludes that if that is the case, then, according to LD 21 and BCF Art. 27-29, people in the area must join it.

In response to his request for clarification, I point to the opening article in the series on *Churches Outside the PARC*, (*Clarion*, Jan 12, 2024, pp 11-12), in which I anticipated this concern. There I wrote the following:

Where the Word is, the Spirit is working

Now the thought might arise that paying attention to what's happening in churches outside the PARC is going to legitimize them and condone them. That would be a wrong thought. The reality since the Reformation is that church life has been very messy. Schisms happened for good and bad reasons. There have been schisms because a church had drifted away from the Word of God, bringing division as some chose the path of reformation. There have been schisms where, in the final analysis, it was more personal than principal. The reality is, though, that the Word of God is still there. Wherever the Word is, there the Spirit is convincing and convicting. Deformation may continue, or reformation may happen.

We can see this in what happened after the division of the kingdom after the death of Solomon. Jeroboam set up worship centers in Bethel and Dan, to keep people from going to Jerusalem. He appointed priests who were not Levites. Remarkably, we have a record of God dealing with Israel for the next two hundred years, addressing them as his people even though they were engaged in false worship of him and guilty of idolatry in following Baal and other gods. Yet, Scripture informs us of what was happening in what we might call a false church, telling us how God was calling the people to repentance before eventually bringing the covenant curses upon them in full. So, where God's Word is present, he is working, and his Word never comes back to him empty. As reading about the history of Israel benefits us, showing us God's patience and grace, as well as righteous anger, so being aware of what's happening in churches outside the PARC can benefit us.

I hope that this will remove the confusion.

With brotherly greetings,
Rev. Eric Kampen

letter to the EDITOR

In the July 2025 issue of *Clarion*, I enjoyed the article "Meet Arnold Viersen, Member of Parliament." It must be very interesting and hugely challenging to be a Christian MP and it is encouraging to see members of the church taking up such a challenging position. His experience in and support by ARPA and his use of the work of Groen van Prinsterer are also good to see.

Nevertheless, when I read: "As Reformed believers, we have a robust Reformed theology about politics based on Abraham Kuyper's teaching of sphere sovereignty" I feel uneasy. A letter to the editor gives me limited space to explain but I would refer to some of our forebears (Prof. K. Schilder, Rev. Joh. Francke, GPV politician P. Jongeling and others) who point to the lack of scriptural basis for, as well as the dangers of, this theory. For those unable to read Dutch, John Boersma in *Political-Economic Activity to the Honour of God* referenced Prof. K. Veling's extensive study on sphere sovereignty.

The Bible does not carve society up into different spheres, each with its own "sovereign," but it says there's one Sovereign—God—and there's one "sphere": this earth. And there are two ways to work on and with this earth and in society: in covenant faithfulness to God or in covenant disobedience to God.

Jelte Numan
Free Reformed Church of Mt Nasura, Western Australia



Christiaan Bosch

March 20, 1941—August 9, 2025

On August 9, 2025, one of God's faithful and humble servants was united in glory with his Master and Saviour in the heavens above. Already at the age of 19, Chris Bosch was busy serving the Lord as a teacher at West Edmonton Christian School. It was in his late 30s that Chris became a student at the Theological College; he was ordained as a minister of the Word in Smithville in 1985 at the age of 43. He later served in Kelmscott, Australia for five years, and from there he became the pastor of the Fellowship Canadian Reformed Church in Burlington in 1994, where he served until he needed to ask for early retirement in 2003 after having a brain tumour removed.

It was in Burlington that I got to know Chris as a dear colleague and friend. He had a clear passion for the gospel, a love for God's people, and a jovial disposition. Chris had his priorities right and was exemplary in so many ways. It was always a pleasure to spend time together, whether that was in one of our studies, discussing mutual concerns or challenges, or on the pleasant surroundings of a local golf course. Chris leaves behind his dear wife Rita (nee Werkman), with whom he enjoyed 61 blessed years, 7 children, 30 grandchildren, and 16 great grandchildren.

For his funeral, Chris—ever the pastor—picked Job 19:25–27 for the message. It is such a suitable passage, speaking to Chris's need for a Redeemer, his confidence in the resurrected Lord, and to his sure hope in the gospel. Expressions of thanksgiving for Chris's life and example were abundant throughout the day. His children said it best when they wrote about him:

"Chris enjoyed music and the outdoors, especially in the teaching years when he took his guitar along on the many camping, canoe, and bike trips he organized. He enjoyed all sorts of arts, dabbling in poetry, painting, drawing, and above all woodworking, making wonderful toys for his grandchildren and even building a canoe.

Chris was a compassionate and generous man who loved the Lord and the church. He was deeply aware of his own failings and showed so much grace to his fellow sinners and sufferers, never shirking his pastoral work and visits, and volunteering for nearly two decades at Streetlight ministries. He was a passionate and humble preacher, continuing to preach at every opportunity long past retirement. We are deeply blessed and grateful for the many gifts we had in him, and we know that after years of suffering he has now entered into eternal rest, having heard his Saviour say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your master' (Matt 25:23)."

So long, dear brother . . . in the confidence that, in the risen Lord, your labours were not in vain (1 Cor 15:58).



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