



Clarion

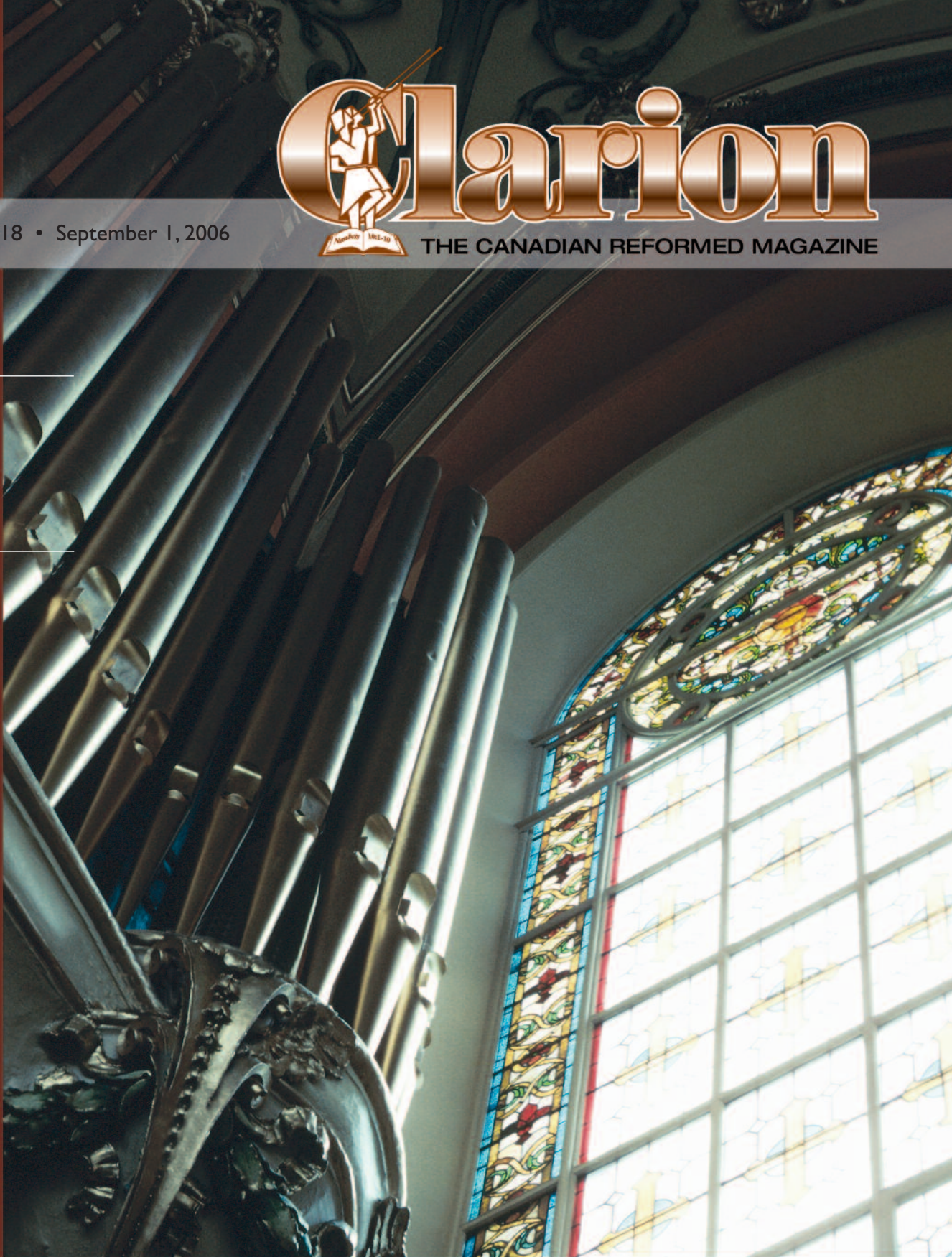
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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True

*Maintain
Enmity with
the Children of
the Serpent!*

*Behold What
Manner of
Love!*



*The main purpose of the church's singing
is to give praise to God.*



Cl. Stam

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True

We need to have a clear understanding of the meaning of the words “true” and “false” when it pertains to the church of Christ

I love reading *Christian Renewal*. It is a magazine that presents timely articles in a balanced, Reformed manner. There's a lot to learn via this magazine. One thing I learned is that Canadian and American churches ought not to be federated. Canada is not Bush country, although admittedly the Great White North has plenty of soft forestation.

Sometimes, however, in the best of magazines there are items that tend to raise an eyebrow (I never raise both at the same time). This was the case when I read the letter of Arie de Haan (*Christian Renewal*, vol. 24, no. 10). Some writers have already reacted to Arie's specific allegations and hence I do not have to do so again.

Faithfulness does not imply perfection, for nothing is perfect in this life

Arie partially has a point. In the Canadian Reformed Churches we were not ashamed to call ourselves “true” churches. I do not recall anyone officially stating that the Canadian Reformed Churches are the *only* true churches. The word “only” is Arie's perception, but the perception may have been raised that “only” was inextricably to be connected with “true.”

Apology

If that ever was suggested, and if I have ever given that impression, I heartily apologize for it. The word “true” does not mean to be exclusivist. I'll get back to that in a moment.

In 1979 I published a book about the Belgic Confession titled *Everything in Christ*. It did not become a best-seller, like Rick Warren's book, although it has appeared in an eighth printing. But in that book I wrote some lines about the true church. Let me quote the pertinent lines.

I wrote the following:

No church ought to hold the pretense that only within itself are found true believers. Nevertheless, a church which by God's grace faithfully lives according to the norms of Christ, however imperfectly, may certainly in grateful humility lay claim to the title “true church” (in the sense of Article 29), and call others to be enjoined with it in the one worship of God. (Page 85)

I am so bold as to italicize these words. This has been and still is my position on the church, and no one has ever stated that this position is wrong or sinful. Actually, looking back on these sentences almost thirty years later, I kind of like them even more. I wish Arie would have quoted from this fine book. Because I am sure that this way of putting things does properly express the way in which most Canadian Reformed believers thought and think about the church of Christ.

True and false

The words “true” and “false” (with respect to the church) were not invented by Canadian Reformed people but were written by Guido de Bres and included in the Belgic Confession in 1651. So these words have some seniority.

What do these words mean? Their meaning has not changed over the past 400 years. If we take our confessions seriously, we need to have a clear understanding of the meaning of the words “true” and “false” when it pertains to the church of Christ.

As I understand it, “true” simply means *faithful* while “false” means *unfaithful*. A church is either faithful to the Word of God or it is not.

Faithfulness does not imply perfection, for nothing is perfect in this life. But it does mean that, as far as we are able, with all sins and shortcomings considered, we strive as churches to be faithful to the Word of God.

There may be varying degrees of faithfulness within a certain church federation, and one church

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
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may act more scripturally than another, but the norm is still simple: does a church hold in all things to the Word of God?

In the Dutch ecclesiastical struggles of 1944, which led to the so-called "Liberation," the point was whether we would remain faithful to the Word of God, among other things, with respect to holy baptism.

The Christian Reformed Church in Canada and the USA officially took an unscriptural position and hence was not faithful. To use the language of the confession: they were not *true*. This decision of the Christian Reformed Church led to the establishing of the Canadian Reformed Churches in the 1950's. Again, in confessional terms, these newly-established churches were *true*, i.e. faithful to the Word of God. These are the facts.

It should be noted that the Canadian Reformed Churches were eager to recognize other faithful church federations: the URCNA, the Scottish Presbyterians, the OPC, the RCUS, etc. They also immediately sought restoration of relationships with the Christian Reformed Churches and many brotherly appeals were written.

The word "only" true church is rather out of place here. In truth, initiatives towards concrete and active unity mostly came from out of the *Canadian Reformed Churches*. As we went along, we certainly discovered other true churches and sought unity with them. This was not always an easy and unencumbered process, but it still was and is an *ongoing* process.

Confession of sin?

The shoe is really to be put on the other foot. Wrong impressions are easily given and we may have done so as members of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

But my uncle and father were suspended and deposed as office bearers in false churches. Now is the time for your tears. If any confession of sin must be heard – and I don't require one, because love covers a multitude of sins – it should be heard from the circles of the suspenders and their supporters.

Meanwhile, time has moved on. We face greater challenges today than childishly nurturing hurts from the fifties. Suck it up. Get with the program, Arie, and see the sun shining. "Sunshine almost always makes me high."

Let's all be true churches, faithful to the Word of our Lord, as best as we can and strive "to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3). Wouldn't that be lovely?



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Maintain Enmity with the Children of the Serpent!



MATTHEW 13:52

*Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially,
live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.*

1 Peter 1:17

We now live in what many people call the post-Christian era and remaining faithful followers of Christ is becoming increasingly difficult. One of the greatest temptations that we all face is thinking that we in the church are really not all that different than everyone else around us. The danger in this is that we can become so much part of our society and culture that we lose the distinction that our God wants between his children and the people of the world.

Nearly 2000 years ago the Apostle Peter already warned the church of Christ to live as strangers in the world. He wanted us all to know that in a very fundamental way we are different than other people; we belong to a different family and we have a different Father. In his love and mercy God has made us his own children. Through Christ and through faith in his sacrifice, our heavenly Father has taken us out of the family of Satan so that he is no longer our spiritual father.

This separation of the human race into two very different groups of people began immediately after the fall into sin. There in the

creation that man had just ruined, God showed his merciful nature by declaring that there would be enmity between his children and the children of the serpent. He would choose some of those who had fallen and He would make them different from the rest.

In contrast to those who live only for themselves and for the sinful pleasures of this life, God's children stand out because they have a different attitude that comes from a very different nature. Through faith we realize that we aren't here to serve ourselves. We have been sent to live here on earth as the Lord's ambassadors. As we now fulfill the duties of the office that we have all been given, our lives should reflect the character of the great and holy God that we represent. He will then use our faithful service to have a positive impact on the culture around us, to preserve it, and to call out of it all those whom He has chosen.

Our service as the Lord's ambassadors is not going to be easy. Those who follow Satan will refuse to accept us just like they refused to accept the Lord Himself. The Lord Jesus warned us that

when we are faithful, and if we show this by maintaining enmity in the way that He wants us to, then we can expect persecution in various ways (John 15:19).

In all of our struggles and suffering we can be encouraged by the promise that we are not alone. In John 17:15 the Lord Jesus prayed and asked his Father to be with us. While we remain here in service to our Lord the Father will answer his Son's prayer by protecting us from the evil one. We can be sure that through his grace and by the sanctifying work of his Spirit He will give us everything that we need to stand against temptation and to mature in our faith.

Peter tells us that showing our faith by continuing to live as strangers in this world is something that grows out of a reverent fear toward God. While those who continue in their rebellion by refusing to maintain enmity with the world should fear God's judgment, those who belong to Christ by a true faith can live secure in the knowledge of their salvation. Fear of God is then a response of wonder and joy at the revelation of his holiness and his love for us in Christ.

Our faith also grows and expresses itself as we listen to God's Word and are reminded about what is truly important. Through faith the Lord changes our thinking so that we understand that the treasures and the pleasures of this world are only temporary and that they will all

pass away. What has real and lasting value are the heavenly treasures and the eternal pleasures that God will give to those who live in faith and who through that faith maintain enmity with the children of the serpent.

With this perspective God's children can look forward in joy to

the day when the Lord's victory will be complete and the enmity will be over. Our Lord is coming for us and when He arrives his judgment will bring in an eternal separation between his people and all the rest. Then He will finally take us home to be with Him in perfection and glory.



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Defending Christian Freedom: Our Civic Responsibility (Part 3 of 3)

This article was originally a speech delivered at the Second Annual ECP Centre Conference in Burlington, Ontario on November 12, 2005.

4. How must we do our duty?

Salt and light

I must begin with a warning. There is no quick fix for our country. The present moral crisis in all areas of life is not just a sudden phenomenon. For example, it took much patient and tenacious work over the long haul for the gay community to come where it has today. It has come slowly over time. It will take a long time to turn things around. All the important political, legal, educational, media, and cultural institutions of our land are firmly in the grip of the prevailing secular liberal spirit.

Where do we begin? In a sense we can feel powerless and marginalized in our own country.

We must begin with the basics, in our homes, neighbourhoods, towns, and cities, with a clearly articulated Christian walk and talk. The early church did not have it easy. They, much more than we, certainly were marginalized and excluded from the corridors of power, the political processes, and the educational institutions. But eventually their faith conquered the world! We are sliding into a new paganism. But our task is clear. Christ said: "You are the salt of the earth." Salt is a preservative, but it works slowly. It needs time to infiltrate the surrounding tissues. So we must be realistic. As the salt of the world our contribution to turning society around to a more biblical

orientation will go very slowly, with small increments – as long as we are faithful (cf. Matt 5:13).

At the same time, we must not be shy. We have something that the world needs. We need to project that. Christ said:

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven (Matt 5:14-15).

Even though we may not have ready access to the power brokers and influential judicial activists, it is clear that we need not be bashful or shy about the contribution we can make to our

society. But there are no quick fixes that Christians can initiate for the difficulties Canada faces.

Ultimately, the real power that will bring change is the power of the gospel (cf. Rom 1:16). It is the sword of the Spirit who alone can renew the hearts of men. And in the end that is what is needed (1 John 5:4; cf. Zec 4:6). And so the first order of the day is for us to live Christian lives and to do our tasks in society as those who confess Christ.

We need to study the issues, become well-informed, and seek to make our arguments clear and comprehensible

Society must see that Christians are not some weird extremists from the prehistoric past, but law-abiding and loving citizens who truly seek the good of their community and country. This can be demonstrated by becoming involved in local civic affairs and volunteer organizations. In this way the salt and light of the Christian hope can spread. We need to step beyond the comfort zones of our churches and Bible study groups and engage others outside our own intimate circles. People need to get to know us so that they realize we face the same issues and problems that our secular neighbour wrestles with: raising a family, balancing the budget, and trying to cope with the stresses of our fast-paced society. We need to bond with our neighbourhoods in a positive sense and show we are also conscientious citizens. We can mention to people that we pray for the government, realizing their

task is difficult and often thankless.

From low key neighbourhood and civic lifestyle witnessing, we need to move further into being involved in organizations that project a Christian understanding of the issues and into writing letters to the editor. We have to try to persuade. This means that we need to study the issues, become well-informed, and seek to make our arguments clear and comprehensible to those who do not see it our way. We must also be able to demonstrate why the biblical way is good for society. Issues such as abortion and marriage are fairly clear cut and Christians are united on what Scripture requires. However, with other issues the biblical way out of modern dilemmas may not be as obvious. Christians can differ on how to apply biblical principles to complex areas of modern life such economic or fiscal policy. But it is important that Christians make a contribution to the more difficult issues so that we are not simply known for what we are against but also positively make a contribution to other problem areas. Biblical wisdom has much that is positive to offer for our culture! Here Reformed specialists in different fields can make a big difference.

Furthermore, we should cooperate with others wherever and whenever we can do so with integrity to achieve attainable goals. In politics one must also consider what is attainable and possible.

As Christians, we should become more involved politically and also support or continue to support institutions in our country such as advocacy groups and think tanks which promote ideas consistent with biblical teaching.

One thing, however, needs to be stated clearly. No matter how meek we may live as Christians and seek to propagate our message in a peaceful way, once we start projecting our wishes, we can expect strong opposition. For at bottom the conflict is spiritual.

Handling opposition

Yes, we can expect resistance and strong opposition. Our credo as Christians is diametrically opposed to the prevailing philosophy of our day. The religion of our land is essentially secular liberalism. This is a religion, a fervently held belief system. In the view of secular liberalism, there are no absolute rights and wrongs. Everyone must be free to make their own moral choices.

Our struggle is not to make a Christian society and to force others to accept our world view

There are no overriding norms. Indeed, secular liberal politicians consider the mentioning of absolute norms of right and wrong such as are found in Scripture horrendous, for that questions their authority to impose their idea of what is right or wrong on the land. This moral imposition of what is right and wrong, independent of God or Scripture, amounts to immoral tyranny as recent legislation has illustrated. However, after years of aggressive secular liberalism in the Canadian chambers of legislative and judicial power, many people are not ready for the message that our country needs to return to the divine norms of right and wrong.

This reluctance is evident from the successful sleazy campaign waged against Christians during recent federal elections. Christians were pictured as scary and bad for the country and for human rights and many voters bought into this. We can therefore most probably expect more of the same, for the conflict is ultimately spiritual. Also in Scripture we see that wherever the gospel of the risen Christ went, conflict broke out and Christians were accused of being troublemakers. Think, for example, of how the civil peace was disrupted on account of the gospel in Thessalonica (Acts 17:6-9). The gospel and the Christian life in a secular or neo-pagan world brings a clash and a confrontation.

But the important thing is that we must simply carry on and carry on in such a way that we do not dishonour God and bring disgrace to Christianity. The Lord never promised us a bed of roses in testifying of his will. The Lord Jesus encountered hostility to his testimony and He said that it would be hostile to ours as well. "No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also" (John 15:20). As a matter of fact, in Revelation 11, the two witnesses, representing the faithful testimony of God's people, are eventually killed (Rev 11:1-8).¹

However, we still have all kinds of opportunities to serve our country by opposing the aggressive secularism of the day. We can oppose the evil of the day by lobbying the authorities, using the courts, and by educating fellow citizens on the issues at stake. But as Christians we do all this within the law. Christians are not rebels against lawful authority or anarchists. They respect the rule of law, and if necessary seek to undo

unjust law or to improve legislation through the legal channels.

The task before us

How concretely can we be effective? Besides the basics of living an exemplary Christian life and being involved in our communities, consider the following. Advocacy groups are often a very effective way to get the Christian point of view across. One could begin, for example, by joining the ECP Centre and urging others to sign up. The ECP Centre is a Christian advocacy organization that educates, motivates, and mobilizes Christian participation and leadership in the public square and that defends, initiates, or supports legal challenges (www.ecpcenter.org). So, that's just what is needed! Join this organization and get others to sign up.

Apathy will cost us dearly

Other advocacy organizations such as the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (www.evangelicalfellowship.ca), which does much work on parliament hill as well as in the courts in defending Christian freedoms, also deserve our support. Christian think tanks which seek to influence policy making and provide solutions consistent with biblical thinking, such as the Work Research Foundation (www.wrf.ca), are also important and likewise merit our support.

We should also not hesitate to get involved politically, be it through the Christian Heritage Party, Family Coalition Party, or a mainline party. If there is no biblical obstacle to working with or

through a party such as the Conservative, such can be considered. Christians can make a vital difference in mainline parties as well, as history has shown, since a positive Christian influence on policy can eventually be reflected in law.

Christians can make a difference! As Reformed confessors, we have, generally speaking, kept ourselves out of the public square and politics far too long. We need to get more involved. The example of Christians being a force to reckon with in the USA can be encouraging, although the Canadian context is different.

The second thing we need to keep in mind is that we be realistic. This is going to be a long and hard struggle. It is not for those looking for quick fixes and easy solutions. Even if we should gain political power tomorrow, it will not significantly change society. You cannot quickly change people's secular mind set. In today's secular and atheistic context, this means we have to commit ourselves and our resources for the long haul struggle and seek to regain the ground and institutions we have lost.

Thirdly, we also need to keep in mind that our struggle is not to make a Christian society and to force others to accept our world view. Rather, our desire is to have a society where church and state respect the limitations of their authority and competence and where both can do their God-given task. A society where there is freedom for Christian values and norms and where the gospel can be freely proclaimed. We also desire a society where the freedom of conscience which we claim for ourselves is there for others as

well. Even if a distinctively Christian government should ever be formed in Canada, it should never force Christianity on the nation. That is not the task of government. However, a Christian government will see the mandate and wisdom of applying the principles of the Ten Commandments to our society. These have nationwide applicability. Such principles include: acknowledgement and respect for God in public life; the importance of a weekly day of rest; giving full freedom to proclaim the gospel both within and outside of church; enhancing the dignity of work in all segments of society; guarding the place and authority of parents and recognizing the importance of the family unit; protecting human life, including the unborn; defending the institution of marriage; revisiting the issue of lotteries and the social grief it brings; encouraging respect for truth in speech and communication.²

Fourth, and this is somewhat related, we also need to remember that we will never be successful in the sense of politically getting everything we would like as Christians. Christ Himself said that the wheat and the weeds would grow up together to the day of Christ's return. Only then would perfection arrive (Matt 13:30). Ultimately, only the Holy Spirit working through the gospel can change the hearts and minds of our fellow secular citizens. But this does mean that we need to work wherever we can as Christians and seek to influence society and its institutions in a positive way.

And surely now, at this juncture of history, is the time to take a stand. The foundations have been shaken with the redefinition of marriage and Christians cannot

remain silent. Other issues like euthanasia will come up and indeed are already being discussed. As life issues and current problems are run through a secularizing mold, Christians and their beliefs and solutions will more and more be sidelined and marginalized unless we protest and raise our voice and work through the democratic and legal channels available to all citizens of our land.

Let us leave our comfort zones and fight for freedom

We need to get more and more involved. Apathy will cost us dearly. When Israel was apathetic in the days of Eli, who also let everything go, the country went to ruin. Principally it is no different today. We cannot say, "Let the church do it." It is not the church's responsibility. It is the responsibility of Christians working together. Let us leave our comfort zones and fight for freedom, freedom to be Christians in a country where the family unit is protected and marriage is promoted, where justice and integrity will be advanced, where there will be true freedom of religion, where justice and compassion will embrace the poor and vulnerable.

Let us fight for the freedom to live according to our Christian convictions in a land where biblical and traditional values are upheld by Parliament and thus by the courts, a land where we are full participants in the democratic processes and institutions of our great country. A land where the



Church News

Declined the call to the church at Taber, Alberta:

Candidate Hendrik Alkema

SERVICETIME CHANGE

The Bethel Canadian Reformed Church of Toronto has changed the time of its morning worship service from 10:00 a.m. to **9:30 a.m.** beginning September 3, 2006.

rights of Almighty God are not despised but honoured. A land where the Bible can be quoted without being charged with a hate crime. A land where the preamble to our Charter of Rights and Freedoms functions. As you know, this preamble states that *Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law.* May that preamble not just be an empty phrase but a conviction that translates into reality.

Part of our national anthem is a prayer. It is a cry to God for the true freedom of our land. "God keep our land glorious and free! O Canada, we stand on guard for thee." May all those who love God and Canada be used by the Almighty to make that prayer a reality.

¹ See the clear but brief exposition of Hendriksen, *More than Conquerors*, 129-132. Similarly, Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (NTC; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 328-329.

² See on such issues, e.g., "For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility" 6-12, by following the links at: www.nae.net. See also John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (Basingstoke, Hants, UK: Marshalls, 1984) 45-61.



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Towards a Common Songbook (Part 6)

Our Reformed Confessions and Our Common Songbook

Whereas the psalm section of the common songbook is addressed in guidelines two and three, the fourth guideline deals with the hymn section:

In the case of songs other than the versification of Scripture, the words must faithfully express the teaching of Scripture as summarized by our Reformed confessions.

With hymns, new challenges (and opportunities!) face our Songbook Committee. We are agreed that the hymn section will be shorter than the psalm section in the future songbook, but how much shorter will not be known until we look at the collection as a whole. The current *Book of Praise* contains sixty-five hymns, about half of which either are in the *Psalter Hymnal* or are generally known. In comparison, the *Psalter Hymnal* has a larger section, around 200 hymns.

At this point, our committee is forming a "gross list" of hymns available for the final collection. These hymns meet the synodically approved guidelines for good hymns. As a joint committee we are more than halfway finished in completing recommendations of potential hymns to our respective synods.

In our public professions of faith we have agreed that what the Scripture says, our Reformed confessions say. We do not make the two equal; rather, we affirm that our confessions faithfully summarize the essential teachings of the Bible. Therefore, our Reformed confessions, the Three Forms of Unity, can be used for evaluating potential hymns.

As Christians standing in Reformation history and, more explicitly, the continental and Dutch part of that history, it is good to make use of our Reformed confessional statements in the evaluation process of potential hymns. Moreover, our Reformed confessions help us keep a scriptural "balance" in our collection of hymns as a whole.

For example, before meeting jointly with the Canadian Reformed committee, the URC Songbook Committee noted that the current *Psalter Hymnal* is weak in hymns about the Holy Spirit. The eight hymns about the Spirit were mostly written in the middle to late nineteenth century. They reflect the popular "Holiness Movement" of that era, calling upon the Spirit for greater filling and greater holiness. While this is indeed one aspect of the Spirit's work, his most important role is

uniting us with Christ and keeping us in communion with Him. We need hymns which better teach this important doctrine.

Using our Reformed confessions as a model, ideally our final collection of hymns will cover all the "heads of doctrine" in a proportional manner. Thus, for example, we obviously need hymns about the atonement and justification (justification seems to be another topic lacking in both hymnals), but we also need hymns on sanctification and Christian living.

One advantage to a confessional categorization of hymns is that ideally biblical/theological topics will be given appropriate "weight" in the collection. One doctrinal topic should not become "over-weighted" in our final collection. Check the popular evangelical hymnbooks and you will find an "overweighting" of Christmas carols compared to hymns devoted to the topics of church or the sacraments.

A couple of other biblical/doctrinal topics which may be "underweighted" in our two current songbooks are the topics of the Lord's Supper and of the new earth. Many hymns speak about heaven

and believers going there to be with Jesus, but in good Reformed fashion, this is the “intermediate state.” Our final destination actually is the new earth, when Christ returns and the new Jerusalem comes down from above. Then with our glorified, resurrected bodies we will live with the Lord on the new earth forever. So we have some “gaps” in our current songbooks, which, hopefully, will be filled by the new songbook.

The main purpose of the church’s singing is to give praise to God. Yet, we can teach one another through our singing. The Apostle Paul instructs the church members in Ephesus to “speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” (Eph 3:19). He urges a greater indwelling of the Word of Christ not only through verbal instruction, but also through our singing together (Col 3:16). Thus, by singing hymns (and psalms) we can grow in our

knowledge of the teachings of God’s Word (doctrines), even as we are giving glory to God.

There is no doubt that down the road we will have to make some hard choices for our common songbook. Obviously we cannot include every hymn in it, not even every well-written, biblical hymn. Our choices will be to decide among the good, the better, and the best. May God lead us forward to select the very best!



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Knowing God: Knowing the Father Lesson 4: God, the Holy Trinity

This is the fourth and last lesson in the unit dealing with “Knowing God the Father.” The first three lessons dealt with knowing God the Father of creation, the Father of Jesus, and the Father of the Kingdom. This lesson will round out our knowledge of God the Father by dealing with Knowing God, the Holy Trinity.

Relating to the Trinity

When I ended my introduction of the last lesson, I wrote: “Ask the group to write out a short three-line

prayer of thanksgiving for what they have learned about God in the lessons so far. The prayer should include:

- one line about God’s creativity explored in lesson one of this unit;
- one line about God’s loving character embodied by his Son explored in lesson two of this unit;
- one line about the inbreaking of God’s kingdom into the present explored in this lesson.”

Hand out these statements about God. Ask the members of the group

to indicate how each statement relates to different Persons of the Trinity. Then show them the Trinitarian structure of their statements. The one about God’s creativity refers to God the Father. The one about God’s loving character refers to God the Son. The one about the inbreaking of the kingdom refers to God the Holy Spirit. Be sure to point out that each statement is about God. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are *all* creative, *all* loving, and *all* involved in the inbreaking of the kingdom, but we experience these

different aspects of the one God through the experience of three Persons.

The Nicene Creed

Remind the group that those who are baptized were baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Point out that the earliest creeds of the church were a set of questions asked before baptism: do you believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit? Have the members of the group look at the Nicene Creed in the supplementary handout and ask which sections refer to the Father, which to the Son, and which to the Holy Spirit. If you want to, you could also remind the group of the baptismal formula ("I baptize you into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit"). If there are people in the group who recently professed their faith and were baptized, they will remember this Trinitarian formula.

The story of the Trinity

Take the group through the story of the Trinity. Emphasize the following points:

- The understanding of God as Holy Trinity developed in the church by reflection upon Scripture and experience. Point out that this is why we have been finding out about God in this course by reflecting upon Scripture and our experience of Him.
- The earliest Christians were all Jews. Therefore they believed in one God, who was the source of everything (Gen 1:27, 31). Remind the group that we explored these ideas in lesson one of this unit.
- Jesus presented a problem. After God had raised Him from death, they experienced Him as their Lord and Saviour. Did that mean that there were two gods?

Or was Jesus somehow always part of what it had always meant to believe in one God (John 14:8-10)? Remind the group that we explored these ideas in lesson two.

- The Holy Spirit also presented a problem. They experienced the Holy Spirit as the life and power of Jesus coming from the Father. Were there three gods? Or was the Holy Spirit part of what it always meant to believe in one God (John 20:21-22, Acts 5:4)? Remind the group that we explored some of these ideas in lesson three.
- Both Jews and Muslims say that Christians worship three gods instead of the one and only God who revealed Himself to Israel. This is a misunderstanding. Christians, however, should not lend credence to this misunderstanding. Indeed, there is only one God. We believe, however, that this one God also revealed Himself in Jesus and the Holy Spirit. This is how first-century Christians understood and experienced this. This is one of the reasons why the church formulated the doctrine of the Trinity.
- The Trinity is about our belief in God. It safeguards the belief that Jesus is fully human and fully God. It is the central belief of the Christian church.

Allow as much time as the group needs for questions and discussion around these points.

Living out the Trinity

Split the group into two to discuss how our understanding of God as Trinity informs the way we live our Christian life.

- God is understood to be a community of Persons—three Persons, distinct and individual, but one in creativity, love, and purpose. This understanding of

God could be a model for human society. How should human communities reflect the Trinitarian community of God?

- One of the best ways of understanding the Trinity is by seeing how the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are in a perfect relationship of love with one another (John 17:21, 23). This understanding of God could be a model for human relationships. How should human relationships reflect the Trinitarian relationship of God?

Point out that these questions may seem complicated. In reality, however, it is a matter of reflecting upon experience. What have been our best experiences of human community? Was it not when men and women were treated as equal and shown decency, love, and respect? What have been our best experiences of human relationships? Was it not when sacrifice, trust, and unconditional love were shown? Point out that in saying this we are only acknowledging that we cannot begin to know how to be human until we know God the source of humanity. Emphasize that the doctrine of the Trinity reveals that God is a community of Persons in a relationship of self-giving love.

After the discussion in groups, allow time for general discussion and questions. Finish by asking the members of the group whether thinking about God as Trinity in the way the four lessons of this unit developed will make a difference to any aspect of their Christian life.

If you would like to view the outline of this lesson, go to www.reformedevangelism.com and follow the links. Next time, I plan to begin a new unit called "Knowing Jesus." The first lesson will deal with "Who is Jesus?" Thanks for reading.



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Behold What Manner of Love!

(Part 2 of 2)

At the CRTA convention last fall, Rev. Peter Feenstra from Owen Sound presented the following devotional, based on 1 John 3:1-3. It serves as a good reminder at the beginning of another school season for all those involved in education to consider.

"See what manner of love!" The implications are all-encompassing. Let me list but a few things for your consideration – matters that are quite tightly connected to one another and can be summarized by the word "orientation."

First of all, fundamental and foundational to Christian education is orientation – attachment and relational orientation (note: the idea of attachment and orientation and some of the ideas that follow are the outworking of what Gordon Neufeld writes about in his book, *Hold on to Your kids*, 2004). Teachers and students have a mutual attachment and orientation – we are in a relationship with our heavenly Father. Students and teachers are part of the same family. We are covenant children who have the same Father, who are adopted by grace.

As Christian teachers you need to have your bearings straight and be oriented in the right direction – upward – looking to the Father. Behold! Our orientation is relational. Being called covenant children serves as the compass point that will help us keep our bearings and prevent us from becoming lost. What children fear more than anything else is getting lost. To them being lost is losing contact with their compass point (Neufeld, p. 18-20). In the triangle of home, school, and church, both parents and teachers are to keep the children close to the compass point. Their orientation is to be toward their heavenly Father.

*Our schools are more than
academic centres of
learning*

When you read through the gospels you will see that Jesus is constantly aware of his relationship with his Father. His attachment and relational orientation is toward his Father. That relationship controls his living, thinking, and manner of

teaching his disciples. Jesus always considers, "What does my Father want?" This upward orientation ought to be reflected in how our boys and girls communicate with their peers. If our boys and girls and our teenagers remember the attitude of Jesus toward his Father and their Father, that will change how they speak with their teacher and how they treat each other and it will keep them from bowing to unhealthy pressure or relationships.

Our schools are more than academic centres of learning. In our efforts to establish a solid Reformed curriculum and teaching methods let us not forget this is done in the context of relationships. Children in Reformed schools are to be fed material as they mature in their relationship toward God and their fellow students. The teaching environment should be one of security – a security that is in the Father's love.

Secondly, teaching within the setting of a Reformed and Christian school is so much more than a job. It is not merely a set of skills to be followed along the lines recommended by experts

that qualify you as a Reformed teacher, but Reformed education is first and foremost a relationship that is oriented toward the Father. The secret to teaching, just as it is with parenting, is not merely in what a teacher does but rather what the teacher is to a student (Neufeld, p.6).

Third, in the covenant setting in which we have learned and continue to stand in awe of the Father's love we are to see connectedness with our students as a high priority. Covenant is more than a theory, a doctrine, or a word to be bandied around. It is to be practised and lived. Think of the damage that is done to the students if they feel detached from us or if we keep them at arm's length. The importance of attachment relationship that flows out of the love God has lavished upon us underlines the need for teachers to be more than academics in the classroom. When the children feel that they are genuinely loved they will respond. You have developed a positive environment for learning that cannot be matched by any other school.

In the fourth place, if we are not achieving the results we want, we beg our students to behave, we bribe, reward, punish, or we lose our cool. We hear ourselves address them in tones that seem harsh even to us. We blame ourselves for failing at the task of teaching or our students for being unruly. We look at outside influences that are distracting them or we complain about lack of support coming from the parents. I would suggest, however, that you as teachers will be greatly helped and facilitated if you recognize a student's misbehaviour most likely means he has lost his bearings and

orientation. When a child is rude, disrespectful, hostile, or refusing to listen it is a *behavioural* problem that is rooted in a *relational* problem – where is he at in his relationship to the Lord, his parents, his teachers? Children are more than their behaviour. If relationship needs are not met properly, that has disastrous results for a child's emotional, social, and intellectual development. We need to pray for healthy homes and parent/child relationships that build upon the love of the Father.

It is not merely a set of skills to be followed along the lines recommended by experts that qualify you as a Reformed teacher

Fifth, if children do not feel attachment with their parents and with their teachers they will fill the void by looking to their peers. But alas, that attachment often distracts them from beholding what manner of love the Father has bestowed on them. Peers become their orientation and they become bored and listless when away from them. They take their cues from them about their language and bearing, their expressions and demeanour, their attitudes and appearance. They balk at the slightest request and respond to requests of interest as if they are being intruded upon. It is enough for them to just be with each other, even if they are completely off the map. They take comfort in each other even when adults (parents and teachers) see that they are heading in the wrong direction or

in no direction at all (Neufeld, p.21). Students' attachment with peers prevents them from being oriented toward the love of the Father and from forming more meaningful attachments based on our common relationship of being children of the Father. Loyalty to peers can bring a child into direct conflict with loyalty to teachers and parents as they follow the orders of their peers and stand up for them (p.31). The children are coming to school mainly to socialize with their friends rather than to learn and to be stimulated to think. That often has consequences for the rest of their lives. Their orientation remains their friends. Church is seen as little more than an opportunity to socialize and such individuals are controlled by what others think, rather than doing all to the glory of God.

Sixth, as teachers we can express love for the children we teach in so many ways – by our body language, the tone of our voice, or manner in which we discipline those who have stepped out of bounds. If you ask a child "how was your day?" their response will be in terms of attachment. You do not hear them say, "School was just great! The teacher did such a wonderful job teaching the lesson. I am so glad that he is right on schedule." But they will say, "The day was great! The teacher was in such a good mood." "The day was not so great! The teacher just seemed so angry, agitated, and grumpy." A child will thrive in an environment where they feel they are loved as a child of God.

Seventh, every student is your brother and sister. When you have to break up an argument, or when you have to speak to a child that has caused you considerable grief,



he is not a bad kid, or a difficult or miserable child. Think of your students as children of the Father. Your student may be absolutely frustrating, but he is still a child of the Father.

Take up your task!

Dear teachers, you have a tremendous task which keeps you busy. The dedication you demonstrate is something that is not always fully appreciated or conveyed to you. What will you take back with you into the classroom after this confession? It is my prayer that at the very least you take back with you five words: behold what manner of love!

It's Monday morning. . . the bell rings. Behold what manner of love that all those children who stream into the classroom are called children of God! Behold what manner of love! May that give you the patience to help the child with learning disabilities, to discipline in love the student who has stepped out of line, to build good relationships with each other as

staff members – a desire to work with each other rather than compete against each other. Behold what manner of love! May that weed out every tendency toward favouritism. Behold what manner of love! May that cause you to look to the Lord for your strength and may it cause the children in your class to experience warmth

A child will thrive in an environment where they feel they are loved as a child of God

and compassion – that you are more than their teacher – you are their brother or sister. Think of what you have received in Christ. You yourself are first a child and then a teacher. You are not a child because you made the grade, but because you were bought through grace. What goes on in the church of Christ, in covenant homes, and

in covenant schools is so amazing. The privileges that we receive in this life are so great the world with all its technological advancement is not able to grasp it. The love the Lord has lavished upon us today is a foretaste of what is to come. Today we teach and we learn; we live in relationships and we admire the works of God. But we realize all too well that everything is done with many sins and shortcomings. Today we are encouraged by the message of God's Word, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us to call us children."

Luxuriating in what He has lavished upon us, we also know the best is yet to come! The day is coming when our orientations will always be correct and we will not spoil or wreck anything. At the final bell of world history we will see Christ as He is. We will sit at the feet of our great Teacher. The crowning joy of our relationship as children of God, of our labours here, is that as we look upward we also look ahead to the time when the children of God will behold the Lamb of God and will forever exclaim, "Behold what manner of love!"

The Education Matters column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association East. Anyone wishing to respond to an article written or willing to write an article is kindly asked to send materials to Clarion or to Otto Bouwman obouwman@cornerstoneschool.us

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Against Judicial Activism. The Decline of Freedom and Democracy in Canada

Rory Leishman

(Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006). Additional Information: Hardcover, 310 pages, \$44.95 CDN.

This is an excellent, be it disturbing, book. It should be read and pondered, but also motivate to action. It clearly shows, among other things, that our rights as Christians are systematically being eroded by unelected, activist judges. It is time to wake up.

Author Rory Leishman is the national affairs columnist for *The London Free Press* and former lecturer of political science at the University of Western Ontario. In this book, he tells the story of how the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms has been a failure in terms of protecting the fundamental freedoms of Canadians because judges have used the Charter to legislate from the bench rather than letting our elected representatives in Parliament make those kinds of decisions. Leishman does an excellent job in writing clearly and concisely. The story is depressing but needs to be told; it is wonderful that we now have his account available.

Because this book is so important for us to take note of and to work with, I will give a fairly extensive overview of its contents, highlighting especially items from this book that will be of special interest to readers of *Clarion*. The

numbers in brackets point to the pages referred to.

Leishman starts his account with a chapter ("Judicial Activism Versus the Rule of Law") showing how judges in the British tradition have for centuries shown restraint. They were always careful to interpret law and not to create new law. This restraint largely evaporated after the Charter was signed into law in 1982. Leishman gives detailed examples to make his case. For example, although sexual orientation was deliberately left out of the Charter by Parliament so that there was no equality of rights for homosexuals, the Supreme Court of Canada soon in effect amended the Charter through interpretation by reading "sexual orientation" into it (37).

Gay rights

In the second chapter ("Gay Rights Trump Freedom of Religion"), the author shows how gay rights have been upheld at the expense of freedom of religion. The main example Leishman uses is the 1997 case in which an Ontario human rights board of inquiry ruled that Mayor Dianne Haskett of London, Ontario had to issue a gay pride proclamation at the request of the Homophile Association of that city. She refused for religious reasons and never gave in, but by the time the whole thing was over the London city council unanimously capitulated and paid the fine. These final events took place about a month before the municipal election in which Haskett ran again for the office of mayor but did not campaign in the last three weeks prior to election day. Although she did not

campaign, a concerted smear campaign by the media and prominent politicians was started against her for her supposedly not respecting the rights of gays. It is telling that the people of London nevertheless elected Haskett back to office in a landslide victory. Clearly the agenda of a human rights board of inquiry was quite far removed from what the people of the city perceived to be the correct course of action, yet the human rights board of inquiry had the city council on its knees.

In the next chapter ("Trust Not in the Charter"), Leishman shows that in spite of the supposedly limited powers of human rights tribunals, Canadians can be fined and imprisoned as a result of their investigations. He illustrates the first point with the case of Scott Brockie, who refused to print material promoting the gay agenda. The Ontario Human Rights Commission ordered Brockie to apologize, pay a fine, and promise never to refuse on principle to accept print orders from gay organizations. Brockie refused, arguing that the Commission's order violated his constitutional right to freedom of conscience and religion as guaranteed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In the hearings that followed Rev. Dr. Bruce McLeod, former moderator of the United Church of Canada, testified against Brockie and, as Leishman notes, contrary to the plain teaching of Scripture (84-89). In the opinion of the adjudicator, Heather MacNaughton, the equality rights of homosexuals take precedence over freedom of conscience, freedom of religion,

and freedom of expression for all other people, including Christians and Jews who have the most serious and high-minded objections to abetting the practice of homosexuality (90). She contended that her order that Brockie print the material "does not restrict Brockie's right to believe as he does, just the manner in which he may practice those beliefs" (91). Leishman aptly quotes James 1:22, "Be doers of the Word and not hearers only." Brockie lost on appeal to the Ontario Superior Court of Justice. He did not appeal any further and therefore apparently paid the fine. Leishman notes that such travesty of justice would have been inconceivable if the time-honoured rules of the common law were still in effect in Canada. Unelected, activist judges have now become a law to themselves.

In the case of Bill Whatcott, he had denounced homosexuality as sinful and harmful to health in a series of flyers he had written and distributed. The Saskatchewan Human Rights Tribunal ruled that Whatcott had no right to express truthful statements or honestly held religious convictions that expose homosexuals to hatred, ridicule, or contempt. The Tribunal made this ruling notwithstanding the ostensible guarantees of freedom of conscience, religion, speech, and expression found in the Charter (102). The Tribunal also ordered him to pay damages to the complainants and never again to distribute the flyers or anything similar. If he loses his appeal and refuses to obey a court order upholding the Tribunal's directives, he will probably be charged with contempt of court and jailed.

Leishman accurately observes that most Canadians are not alert to the danger, thinking that the

Charter talk of freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of association mean what they say. They don't. Human rights tribunals and the courts have invoked the Charter to suppress some of the very historic rights and freedoms that it was supposed to safeguard (104).

In his next chapter entitled "How Human Rights Commissions Suppress Our Freedoms," Leishman gives more appalling evidence of the truth of this suppression. He shows that the only way out is "to eliminate the Canadian Human Rights Act and other laws like it that are enforced in an overtly discriminatory manner" (106). He also shows that prior to the Charter, "Canadians could foresee with fair certainty what the law requires under the great majority of circumstances. Today, there is no such certainty. The rule of law has, to an alarming extent, given way to the arbitrary rule of human rights adjudicators and judges" (119-120). He also highlights the gross injustice in the system whereby the complainant typically enjoys free legal representation, provided by the prosecuting human rights commission (and tax payer), while the respondent can easily get stuck with more than \$100,000 in legal bills if the case goes to court. Even worse is the fact that a respondent can have no confidence in getting a fair hearing, for typically those conducting human rights violation hearings are likely to be sympathetic to the one complaining that his rights have been violated (124). So Leishman calls for the elimination of human rights tribunals in Canada. If such tribunals are retained, they should have no more than educational or advisory powers (132). "Democracy

and the rule of law are preferable to the autocratic and arbitrary rule of judicial legislators and human rights adjudicators" (133).

Judges should know their place

In the fifth chapter ("How Judges Have Become Politicians"), Leishman shows how judges have arbitrarily struck down laws, as when the Supreme Court of Canada struck down Canada's abortion law in the 1988 Morgentaler decision. The Supreme Court has even dictated laws to Parliament, as in the case of overturning lower court rulings in the Feeney case. These rulings upheld the right of police to enter a private dwelling without a warrant if there were reasonable grounds that the occupant had committed an indictable offence (in this case murder). This right goes back to common law of hundreds of years. But the Court found that the rights of the accused had been violated by the police and also ruled that the incriminating evidence of the murder which the police found in his home could not be used in a future trial. After more examples, Leishman's conclusion at the end of this chapter is that "instead of upholding the law and the Constitution as originally enacted and understood, they legislate. And in so doing, they undermine the very democracy and the rule of law that, as judges, they are supposed to safeguard and affirm" (164).

The sixth chapter ("Escalating Judicial Attack on Christians") begins with a quote from Madame Justice Bertha Wilson in which she admitted that constitutional principles would favour judicial restraint in changing the law from the bench. However, "moral

considerations may impel a judge in the opposite direction." Judges must "reflect current notions of what is right and fair" (165). Leishman pointedly notes that the preamble to the Charter declares the recognition of the supremacy of God and the rule of law. "The pretence that the Charter has established 'the essentially secular nature of Canadian society' is a fabrication of activist judges bent on trying to justify their disposition to change the law and the Constitution to conform to their secular values" (166). Leishman gives example after example of how the courts have especially attacked Christian values.

Any Christian instruction in public schools was suddenly made illegal in Ontario starting with a series of court rulings from 1988 to 1994, against the wishes of democratically elected school boards. The court rulings arising from a conflict in British Columbia were even worse. In 1997, the School Board for District 36 of Surrey decided that three books depicting children with same-sex parents were not suitable for use as recommended learning resources. This decision was made with the backing of the Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh communities. However, a gay kindergarten teacher objected and went to court. By the time it was all over, the majority of the Supreme Court of Canada sided with the complainant because the Board's decision had a human rights dimension. In their view the Surrey School Board had violated "the principles of secularism and toleration" in the School Act (173). There is, however, no reference to tolerance in this Act and the Court virtually conceded that it had no legal basis for overriding the decision of the Surrey Board. Yet it

did so and thereby "distorted the law [the School Act] to conform to their own ideological preferences in favour of having grade-school children indoctrinated in the acceptability of families headed by same-sex parents" (174). We have the astounding situation in which the overwhelming majority of parents sided with the democratically elected Board in believing homosexual behaviour is unhealthy and immoral, yet such a Board was essentially forced to endorse materials that extol gay values. In Leishman's words, this "constitutes an unprecedented attack on the democratic rights of all parents who uphold the traditional teaching of the Christian church on the sinfulness of homosexual behaviour" (176).

In another case involving religious freedom, the British Columbia College of Teachers refused to approve a full education program at Trinity Western University, an affiliate of the Evangelical Free Church of Canada. The reason for the refusal was that students attending Trinity Western had to uphold the view that all sexual relations outside marriage, including homosexual relations, are sinful. The British Columbia College of Teachers considered such biblical morals to be discriminatory. The Supreme Court of Canada eventually ruled that by refusing to accredit a full education program at Trinity Western, the College had violated the right of students at the university to freedom of religion.

Many hailed this ruling as a victory for Trinity Western, but Leishman asks, was it? Can Trinity Western graduates "rest secure in the knowledge that the Supreme Court has upheld their constitutional right to affirm and act upon their religious beliefs



while teaching in the public schools?" The answer is no (177). Other Supreme Court of Canada decisions would support the College of Teachers' contention that one upholding historic Christian teaching on the sinfulness of homosexuality can not teach in a public school, for such a person would discriminate against those who are gay. Indeed, in the case under review, the Supreme Court also distinguished between belief and actions. "The freedom to hold beliefs is broader than the freedom to act on them" (186). In Ian Hunter's words, "In essence, the Supreme Court has ruled that there is a right to believe what you want as long as you never communicate those beliefs or attempt to put them into practice. Trinity Western ought not to be celebrating such a Lilliputian view of religious freedom. . . You are free to be hearers of the Word but not doers" (180-181).

In line with this pessimistic assessment is the Chris Kempling case. While he taught high school in Quesnel, British Columbia, Kempling expressed his views on homosexuality in an article and in a series of letters to the editor in the local paper. As a result, the British Columbia College of Teachers suspended his teaching licence in 2002 for one month. Kempling appealed on the basis of

freedom of thought, belief, and opinion but lost on appeal to the British Columbia Supreme Court in 2004. He lost again in 2005 on appeal to the Court of Appeal for British Columbia. The courts rejected his appeal on the grounds that his statements were discriminatory against homosexuals, even though the statements as such were true (e.g., that homosexual behaviour carries health risks). In the end it boils down to this. Kempling

...must give up his career as a teacher in the public schools unless he is willing to forgo any more public expressions of his Christian convictions on the sinfulness of homosexual behaviour. And let there be no mistaking the implications of this finding. The same choice is impending for elementary and secondary school teachers all across Canada. And they are not alone. The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada has warned that the Kempling precedent suggests that all professionals – be they teachers, lawyers, doctors, accountants, or dentists – could be subjected to a judicially enforced ban on practising their profession for speaking out on the politically incorrect side of the debate over same-sex marriage (193-194).

Indeed, in Canada you are free to be hearers of the Word but not doers. Since Leishman's book went to press, the Supreme Court of Canada has refused in January 2006 to hear Kempling's appeal. Kempling has vowed to keep fighting by taking his case to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

While judges virtually write laws, they are also defending their right to do so. In Chapter 7 ("The

Chief Justice Defends Judicial Supremacy"), Leishman gives a troubling account of how this judicial activism is being defended by the Chief Justice, Beverley McLachlin. She believes that unelected judges are better qualified than elected legislators not only to interpret and uphold laws, but also to enact and amend laws affecting minority rights (215). Judicial activism has resulted in, among others, the rewriting by provincial appeal courts of the statutory definition of marriage to include same-sex couples, with the eventual approval of the Supreme Court. This chapter also gives telling detailed critique of such activism on the part of the judges who encroach upon the law-making authority given to Parliament.

What to do?

In the final chapter ("Reviving Parliamentary Democracy"), the author suggests ways to make judges more accountable, such as confirmation hearings so that the federal Parliament has a voice in the selection of judges. Another is to make use of an outside body to give vital information and advice to the court so that the court has as much relevant data as possible prior to making a judgement affecting public policy. Also, judges could be required to give an account from time to time of their policy preferences to Parliament.

One method currently available for checking the judicial subversion of legislative powers is for Parliament to invoke the notwithstanding clause and so override a judicial interpretation of the Charter. However, the federal Parliament has never invoked it. It could be used though. Harper has promised a free vote on the definition of marriage as the union

of one man and one woman to the exclusion of others. Let us assume for a moment that such a law would pass. If the Supreme Court of Canada struck down this law, Harper would have "an ideal opportunity to call another election to seek a mandate from the Canadian people to invoke the notwithstanding clause of the Constitution to prevent the Court from imposing legalized same-sex marriage. . . . Nothing less than an epochal confrontation between Parliament and the Supreme Court of Canada can persuade activist judges and their abettors in the academy that unelected judges should stick to judging and allow elected legislators to do the law making" (268).

If this book does nothing else, it should impel us to get more politically involved. Read and study this material and get involved in the affairs of our nation. Only when there is a sustained public outcry against judicial abuse will there be any political will to address the problems of judicial activism and the erosion of freedoms, especially as those of Christians. The judges are crafting for our country a society where there is virtually no norm but a respect for the human rights of minorities. Sin is exalted and common sense is repudiated all in the name of human rights. God's blessing will not rest on such a society and we will all eventually pay the price.

One way to get involved would be to join an organization such as Equipping Christians for the Public Square (<http://www.ecpcenter.org/>). As Christians we have a duty to do whatever we can to articulate biblical values and seek to prevent the ruin of our nation. There is no excuse to remain on the sidelines.