

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Volume 57, No. 16 ■ August 1, 2008

*The struggle against Islam
is at bottom
a spiritual struggle*



Inside this issue

- A Growing Darkness? ■ Under God's Mighty Hand
- Freedom of Choice





C. Van Dam

Dr. C. Van Dam is professor of Old Testament at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Ontario
cvandam@canrc.org

A Growing Darkness?

“Fight those who believe not in Allah. . . until they feel themselves subdued” The Qur’an

The religion of Islam is much in the news. Wherever it goes, it casts its shadow. The darkness is deepest in the Middle East and Afghanistan. Radical elements in Islam have transformed the face of their religion into one of exploding bombs and suicide killings. The darkness emanating from the Middle East affects much of Asia and sets a sombreness over Europe. There is a real possibility that parts of the latter continent could be dominated by Islam in the foreseeable future. The shadow is also beginning to extend to North America. Indeed, not a few imams, Islamic religious leaders, are calling for Islam to dominate the world. They make no secret of it. The openness and liberal values of the West are exploited to further their agenda. Security forces all over the world, also in Canada, are kept on the alert for possible terrorist attacks.

The darkness

It is often said by western leaders that Islam is a religion of peace. That may be true of moderate Muslims who abhor violence. However, radical elements appeal to the Qur’an for their agenda of subjugating others to Islam, by force if necessary, and many religious leaders back them up. Does it not say in their holy book, the Qur’an: “Fight those who believe not in Allah. . . until they pay the *Jizyah* [poll tax] with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued” (Surah 9:29)? It is also most telling that virtually no protest is ever heard from Islamic leaders in the West against terrorist attacks and against the issuing of death sentences (death fatwas) for those who speak ill of Islam. The general silence of Islamic leaders can be interpreted as their agreement with this type of aggression because such acts of terror are justified by the Qur’an.

A major difference between Christianity and Islam is that the Qur’an urges the submission of unbelievers to the Islamic faith by force. The Bible gives no such command. The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God (Eph 6:17). Whenever Christians have sought to subjugate others by force to the Christian faith, they have gone against Christ’s teachings. However, acts of violence for the cause of Islam are in agreement with Mohammad’s instructions. Not surprisingly, therefore, Islam is a religio-political system. “Church and state” are so to speak one. Christians are viciously persecuted in many Muslim countries. Indeed, there are very few Islamic countries where persecution does not take place. Such persecution is in accordance with the Qur’an.

Much could be said about the darkness that is Islam. For our purposes now, let two examples of Islam’s impact on their society suffice. One example is in their treatment of women. They are treated as a class lower than men (cf. Surah 53:27). They are not allowed to have eye contact with them and they must hide themselves by wearing a veil (Surah 24:31). Men can have more than one wife (Surah 4:3) and it is relatively easy for them to divorce (according to the Hadith, Sahih Muslim 9:3493). A horrific practice that reflects the lesser status of women is the so-called “honour killing.” Women are murdered, usually by their father, to preserve the honour of the family. For example in greater Toronto last December, a sixteen year old Muslim girl was strangled by her father for refusing to wear the *hijab* (Muslim head scarf). It has been estimated by the United Nations that perhaps five thousand of such murders occur each year. Despite denials by western imams that this practice is tolerable, such killings are perceived as excusable or understandable in Islamic countries.



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Visscher; Copy Manager: Laura Veenendaal
Coeditors: R. Aasman, E. Kampen, Cl. Stam, C. Van Dam

ADDRESS FOR COPY MANAGER:

Clarion, 57 Oakridge Drive South, St. Albert, AB T8N 7H2
E-Mail: veenendaal@shaw.ca

ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5
Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202

Subscriptions: clarionadmin@premierpublishing.ca

Advertisements: clarionads@premierpublishing.ca

Website: www.premierpublishing.ca

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5

Subscription Rates for 2008

		Regular Mail	Air Mail
Canada*		\$48.00*	\$ 79.00*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds	 	\$60.00	\$ 77.00
International		\$89.00	\$130.00

*Including 5% GST – No. 890967359RT

Advertisements: \$15.00 per column inch

Full Colour Display Advertisements: \$21.00 per column inch

We reserve the right to refuse ads.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada, Canada through the Publication Assistance Program (PAP), toward our mailing costs.

Cancellation Agreement

Unless a written subscription cancellation is received we assume you wish to continue to subscribe. You will be invoiced prior to the subscription renewal date. Agreement No. 40063293; PAP Registration No. 9907; ISSN 0383-0438

Copyright © Premier Printing Ltd.

All rights reserved. No part may be reproduced in any manner without permission in writing from the publisher, except brief quotations used in connection with a review in a magazine or newspaper.

Useful Link: www.canrc.org

A second example of the darkness of Islam is the glorification of martyrdom. To encourage volunteers to keep coming forward for suicide bombing missions, radicals have seized on Muhammad's teaching that those who die in a jihad or holy war go straight to heaven to be welcomed by virgins (Sahih Muslim 781-782). It has also been documented that children as young as six have been and continue to be recruited as suicide bombers. This is literally a modern form of child sacrifice. Many young people, brainwashed from their youth of the glories of martyrdom, are being sacrificed on the altar of the ambitions of radical Muslims.

Against such darkness there is only one source of light – the gospel.

Resisting the darkness

It needs to be recognized that the sword or military might is no real solution to the threat of an aggressive Islam. The struggle against Islam is at bottom a spiritual struggle. For that reason the western world and culture can offer very little meaningful resistance, for the West is abandoning their Christian heritage and becoming spiritually bankrupt. Already there are signs that the western world is simply adapting to a growing Muslim presence. Secular man is pragmatic.

The only way to resist the darkness and to help those in bondage to Islam is through the gospel. Only the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, can counter the darkness. Only the gospel can present the light of the world, Jesus Christ. He is the only Saviour who can deliver those in bondage from the darkness that is Islam. And the light overcomes the darkness!

The light of the world triumphs

In spite of vicious persecution, there are many conversions to Christianity in Muslim countries. In Iran, which wants to be a model Islamic state, many young Iranians have become Christian. Some sources estimate that in the last five years as many as a million may have abandoned Islam. As a result, there is now a law before the Iranian parliament which would impose the death penalty on all those who leave Islam. In neighbouring Iraq, the Christian population of that country has plummeted because of largely unchecked violence and killing of Christians.

In This Issue

Editorial – A Growing Darkness? — C. Van Dam402

Treasures, New and Old – Under God's Mighty Hand
— J. Moesker405

Are Christians Sinners or Not? (3)
— W.L. Bredenhof406

Roadside Assistance — R. Bonefaas408

Psalm 76 and 85 — W. Helder410

Glory to the King — M. Doesburg411

Annual Manitoba Women's League Day Report
— E. VanLaar413

Press Release – Board of Governors of the
Theological College415



*Inscription in Arabic and English
on a Christian orphanage in Khartoum, Sudan*

Everywhere in the Muslim world Christians are under duress and those who convert from Islam are especially vulnerable and live in fear for their lives.

Yet, the Lord continues to gather his elect and He calls his own from the darkness of Islam. Back in 2001, a Saudi Arabian Muslim leader, Sheikh Ahmad al Qatanni, reported on al-Jazeera television that every day about 16,000 Muslims become Christian. Even when allowing for exaggeration in order to incite Islamic hatred of Christians, this remains a remarkable confession. It is estimated that since the early 1990s about five million Muslims in Sudan have become Christian in spite of horrific persecution. Other examples can be given.¹ The Lord is clearly doing a great work in the Islamic world which Muslim leaders fear and are forced to acknowledge. This miracle of so many conversions is rarely reported in the main line media. But it is a miracle which testifies to the love of God.

Military might is no real solution to the threat of an aggressive Islam

In central Khartoum there is a Christian orphanage for young boys. Above the door to their dormitory is the inscription in both Arabic and English: "God is love" (1 John 4:8). Surely this reality is the light which alone can penetrate the darkness of Islam. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,

that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). God's love is revealed in Christ. He is the light of the world (John 8:12).

Islam does not know of God who is love. Allah's love is rarely mentioned in the Qur'an. It is mentioned that Allah loves those who love him (Surah 3:31). But Muslims know nothing about God who loves sinners of mere grace and who even sent his one and only Son to this world to die for undeserving sinners and save them. This is the gospel which Muslims need, also those who have come to our country and now may be our neighbours. Christ is the light of the world and Him they must see. We also have responsibilities in that regard. For He who is the light of the world has also charged us to be light! "You are the light of the world!" (Matt 5:14). As the Lord gives opportunity, let us show the only light that can release our Muslim countrymen from the bondage of darkness.

The struggle against Islam is at bottom a spiritual struggle

Let us therefore support all biblical mission work among Muslims in our nation. And going beyond our country, we can support the work of the Middle East Reformed Fellowship. The light of the gospel shines in the Middle East through their work. And it is bearing fruit, much fruit. Indeed, could it be that the rise of radical Islam, as seen especially in countries like Iran and in terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda, is due to the fear of the power of the gospel that invades the Muslim world? Could the military and terrorist struggles now being unleashed be a reaction to the onward victory march of our Lord and Saviour as he gathers his people, also in Islamic countries?

The Reformation "Prayer for all the needs of Christendom," found in the *Book of Praise*, also includes the prayer for mission among the Muslims. Let us not forget them, for they live without hope in this world and the call of the gospel also goes out to them.

¹ See, e.g., Chuck Colson's "They Want Jesus Instead," in his *Breakpoint* commentary of March 24, 2008 found at <http://www.breakpoint.org/listingarticle.asp?ID=7670>



J. Moesker



Rev. J. Moesker is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Vernon, British Columbia
jack.moesker@canrc.org

Under God's Mighty Hand



MATTHEW 13:52

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time."

1 Peter 5:6

Our passage includes the important word "therefore." That means this verse is a conclusion to what the Apostle has just written about the suffering of his readers. These Christians in Asia Minor were suffering for doing right, for confessing the gospel, and living according to it. And that was getting them down. That happens more often with believers, doesn't it? We want to do the right thing and we still end up facing adversity. Then it's easy to throw up our hands in frustration: "Forget it! What's the use?"

But Peter steers us away from that kind of reaction by pointing to the mighty hand of God. References to God's hand in the Bible describe God's almighty power to do what He wills. Think of Israel's exodus from Egypt, how God led Israel out of Egypt "with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm."

Peter wants to remind his suffering readers that their suffering isn't outside of God's government and control. Whatever we may endure, whatever we might have to deal with, we shouldn't forget that all adversity – accident, disease, disappointment, persecution – all of it comes to us from God's mighty hand. To be sure, there are often mistakes on the part of humans that cause disappointment and suffering. Everyone is still responsible for what he or she does. But God's hand is still in it. He deems it necessary for us to go through those difficulties.

And for his people, God's hand is always a caring hand, even when it

chastises us. It's the hand of a faithful and loving Father in Jesus Christ. That's why it says in the verse right after our text, ". . .because He cares for you." Is there anyone who cares for us as much as God the Father, He who gave his one and only Son for us?

So we need to learn to feel God's fatherly hand in everything we undergo. For only if we feel God's hand will we be able to deal with life's ups and downs in the right way, without becoming bitter or anxious.

I'm afraid that sometimes we don't acknowledge God's hand in our adversities. But think of Job's response to his wife after she told him to give up on God. He said, "Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" (2:10). Job felt God's hand, also in his terrible suffering. He received it from God's hand, just as he had received prosperity from that same hand. Knowing that, he was able to accept what happened to him without losing his faith and his desire to do right.

That's how we too need to deal with difficulties in our daily lives. We need to feel God's hand with us, not only when things go well, but also when there are trials. If there are health problems, if there's an accident, if there are financial difficulties, if there are concerns with work, if there are troubles in the family, if someone makes fun of us because of our faith – we need to see the hand of God behind these things too. Then we'll be able to deal with our difficulties and

sorrows in the right way, even growing spiritually through them.

That's what Peter means when he speaks of "humbling" ourselves under God's hand. Humbling oneself under God's hand means accepting what that hand does to us. We must struggle against sin of course, but also accept what God allows in our life, even the things He brings upon us as a consequence of our sins and shortcomings. Like Job, we ought to take the trouble as well as the good.

For you'll be blessed if you do! As Peter adds, "That He may lift you up in due time." "Lift up" here doesn't necessarily mean being lifted right out of your difficulty. It means being lifted up out of your despair in adversity. It's a spiritual lifting up!

If you accept what God's hand sends you, you'll discover that God gives you peace, even if He doesn't change your circumstances. He'll renew your joy and put a song in your mouth. He'll give you a strengthened trust and love for Him, He who loved you so much in Jesus Christ. If we're willing to take hold of his hand as it presses down, He promises that He'll also lift us up.

Peter says this will take place "in due time." For it takes time and prayer to work through adversity and to receive it as from God. But when we do that, we discover more and more the warmth of the Father's hand. Just as David wrote in Psalm 63:8, even while he was fleeing Saul, "My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me."





Rev. W.L. Bredenhof is co-pastor of the Canadian Reformed Church at Langley, British Columbia
wbredenh@telus.net

Are Christians Sinners or Not? (Part 3 of 3)

In the last installment, we saw that we have a peace with God that has started a war. We are at the same time justified and sinners. I also mentioned that one of the most important things to remember when reading and studying the Bible is context. When we talk about context, we're not only speaking about the immediate context, the verses before and after the passage. When we deal with difficult passages, we have the context of the whole Bible to help us out. This has traditionally been summarized with the saying, "Let Scripture interpret Scripture." So when we deal with Romans 7, we should also look elsewhere in the Bible for help. We not only consider the immediate context, but also the broader context of all of God's revelation.

The broader context

As we do that, we come to a passage like 1 Timothy 1:15-16. There Paul describes himself as the worst of sinners. When he says this, he uses the present tense. He does not say, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I was the worst." He could have used the past tense. But he did not. He said, "Of whom I *am* the worst." He is describing himself at the moment he is writing. This parallels what we have in Romans 7 where Paul calls himself a wretched man. Paul has no qualms about calling himself a sinner

while at the same time being justified in Christ.

Here it needs to be pointed out that there are three different ways that the Bible uses the word "sinner." First, it's used to describe those who are objectively wicked in the eyes of God. In this sense, Christians are not sinners. Second, it is used to describe those who are wicked in the eyes of men. We see that usage in the gospels when Jesus is said to associate with sinners. Third, it is used to describe those who still struggle with the remnants of a sinful nature, even though they may be objectively righteous in the eyes of God. That is the sense in which Christians can still be described as sinners. That's also the sense Paul uses in 1 Timothy 1.

In Philippians 3, Paul writes about his pre-conversion life. Before Christ grabbed him, Paul thought he was living a good and righteous life. He saw himself as being blameless. There was no struggle like what we read about in Romans 7. So, we have to conclude that the struggle came after he was converted.

Still with the broader context, there is a parallel passage in Galatians 5. In that chapter Paul is clearly describing the experience of all Christians. When he writes to the Galatians, he's writing to Christians. Chapter 5, verses 16-17 has Paul encouraging the

Galatians to live by the Spirit and in so doing they will "not gratify the desires of the sinful nature." When believers do not live by the Spirit, they are gratifying the desires of the old nature. And then in verse 17, he describes the struggle. And he says that the Spirit is contrary to the sinful nature. "They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want." Here again, this is all present tense. This is a present reality in all Christians. There is a conflict between the new nature (which is through the Holy Spirit) and the remnants (desires) of the old sinful nature. This directly parallels what we read in Romans 7. Believers are both justified and sinners at the same time.

Therefore, the broader context supports the traditional Reformed reading of Romans 7. So does one more basic rule of proper Bible reading. Whenever we read the Bible, we should stick with its natural, literary sense. Paul was not playing games; he was writing to be understood. Let me make clear what we're getting at here. In the first verses of Romans 7, Paul uses the past tense throughout, also when speaking about himself. But in verses 14-25, he uses the present tense. If he was speaking about his pre-conversion life or about some kind of "carnal Christian" period in his life, we would expect him to go on using

the past tense. Then he would say something like, "What a wretched man I was! I was a slave to sin in my sinful nature." However, he uses the present tense. It is only natural to read it as being a description of what he is presently like. To see it any other way does injury to the natural, literary sense of the passage.

Why this matters

This is not an insignificant, petty matter. Understanding this properly is crucially important. God in his wise providence has left these remnants of the sinful nature in us. Romans 7:13 tells us why: so that sin might be recognized as sin. He has done this so that in this life we would continually fix our eyes on Christ. As we grow in grace, more and more our eyes are opened to the defects and weaknesses that still cling to us, we more and more see the sinfulness of sin. Our vision becomes more and more clear. It horrifies us. But more than that it makes us see how much we need Christ. We need Him every day, every hour. We run to Him because it is only in Him that we have hope and salvation. When we look to Him, we have the assurance that sin has been already defeated for us and soon will be wholly and utterly defeated in us.

Seeing ourselves as justified sinners is crucial *because it keeps bringing us to Christ*. Knowing this biblical truth forces us outside of ourselves and drives us to the Lord Jesus. However, if we see ourselves as simply justified, what happens when we grow and we see that sin is a bigger monster in our lives than we initially thought? If I come to see a sinful nature against which I have to struggle, I must not be a Christian at all, or I must be a second class Christian. There can't be much hope for me. Is such a person going to be thankful? Is such a person going to be making

much of God in their lives? I think not. Or what happens is that we deceive ourselves into thinking that everything about the old sinful nature has been totally eradicated. We don't have a sinful nature against which we have to struggle our whole life. It would be too crass to say it, but we're thinking that we're actually doing pretty well. While everybody else is grovelling and confessing their sins, we can hold our chins high and carry on with confidence. All that's left is for us to praise God.

We need Christ every day, every hour

But what does Scripture say in 1 John 1:8? "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." And a little further in verse 10, "If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives." And if we have sinned, then we are sinners. That's reason to humble ourselves before God and constantly fix our eyes on Christ, just as the Israelites fixed their eyes on the bronze snake in the wilderness. That's reason to also take seriously what it says in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Christ alone is our righteousness and holiness and sanctification before God!

Honesty and reality

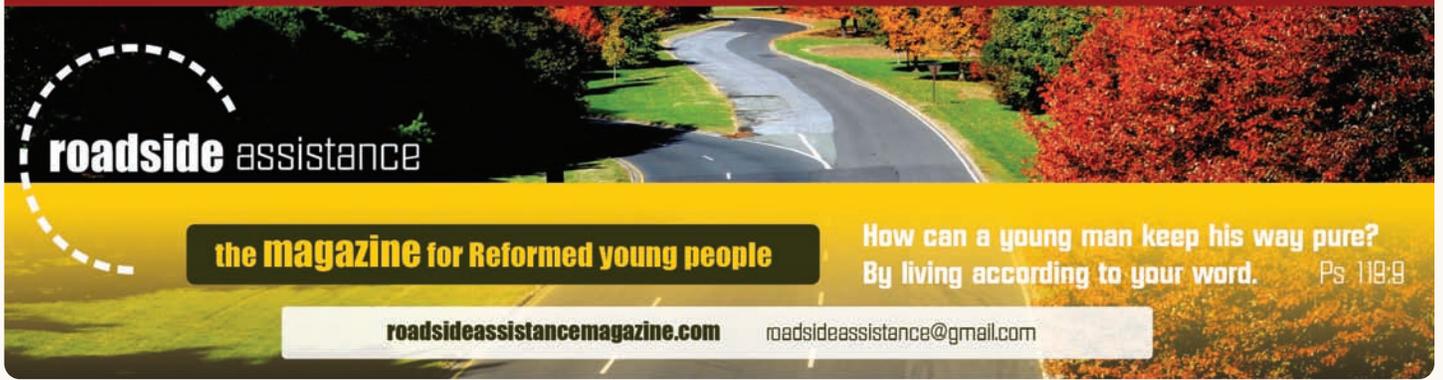
We need to read the Scriptures properly and we need to be honest with ourselves. The reality is that we are justified in Christ. Through his redeeming work, we are right with God right now. That is reality, glorious good news. Yet, the reality is also that we all have to struggle with sin. Consistently offering ourselves as sacrifices of

thankfulness does not come easy. This is because of the remnants of the old sinful nature. Realizing this reality does not bring us to despondency and despair and leave us there. Instead, realizing it brings us closer to Christ. "Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom 7:25) We flee to Him, because we need Him not only for our justification, but also for our sanctification. Of ourselves, we're hopeless and helpless. Apart from Christ, we are nothing and our works are nothing. It is only when we are looking to Christ, when we are united to Him in faith, that we will make progress in holiness. Furthermore, the fact that the struggle is there, that's not a sign of defeat, but a proof that Christ is indeed working sanctification in us. This is the normal Christian life.

So, as we go through this life, we have this struggle, this conflict. It causes us pain and frustrates us. On the one hand, justified. On the other hand, still a sinner. We have a peace that has started a war. What that war does is make us call out to God for the final act of the drama of redemption. The drama is not over. Christ still has work to do. He still must complete his work in us. He still must return with the clouds of heaven to inaugurate the age to come. I encourage you to look for his coming, because when He comes, the consequences of what happened on Golgotha on Good Friday will be fully realized. In the absence of sin, the fullness of both righteousness and peace will greet each other.

Note:

I gratefully acknowledge Kim Riddlebarger's article "Romans 7 and the Normal Christian Life" in the July/August 2006 issue of *Modern Reformation*.



roadside assistance

the magazine for Reformed young people

How can a young man keep his way pure?
By living according to your word. Ps 119:9

roadsideassistancemagazine.com

roadsideassistance@gmail.com

Freedom of Choice

Rob Bonefaas

As an immigrant from The Netherlands, people often ask me, "Why did you come to Canada?" I usually explain that a sequence of events occurred which attracted me to Canada: visiting family, seeking work experience, seeking job security, school, girlfriend, fiancée, wife, and now I'm back in school.

Like The Netherlands, Canada is a free country. A free country fosters freedom of expression and belief. As citizens of this country, we are allowed and even encouraged to express and believe what we choose. However, even in a free country there are laws which prohibit us from harming our neighbours. Laws prescribe a positive restriction of our freedom, restricting it when that freedom is used to violate our neighbour's rights. Throughout history, laws have been amended to protect people and to promote freedom for individuals and diverse groups.

However, for twenty years there has not been a law in Canada protecting the most vulnerable group of human beings, namely the unborn. In Canada, abortion is

allowed during the full period of pregnancy, with no medical reason needed. The nullification of Canada's previous abortion law was *intended* to protect mothers experiencing an unwanted pregnancy. All mothers who have an unwanted pregnancy *do* need support. However, offering an abortion to mothers experiencing a crisis pregnancy does not serve the mother and the unborn well.

The "Pro-Choice" movement came into being to give an option, but they in fact took it away

According to law, if you have been violated, or a sequence of events leads to circumstances out of your control, you cannot violate another human being for what has happened to you. If someone steals my car, I cannot go and steal my neighbour's car.

Choice?

The "Pro-Choice" movement wants to force doctors in Canada to present the option of abortion to the mother who has an unwanted pregnancy. However, they do not want to present the life-saving option of adoption. Supposedly, the process above describes giving people a "choice." Imagine being in a crisis situation and having to make a life-changing decision based on slanted information. The "Pro-Choice" movement came into being to give an option, but they in fact took it away.

The *New Webster Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the English Language* gives the following definition of choice: "The act or power of choosing; a selecting or separating from two or more things that which is preferred; selection; election; option; preference; the thing chosen; the best part of anything; worthy of being preferred; select; precious."

In the beginning, God gave Adam and Eve a choice. He said, "You are free to eat from any tree in

the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die" (Gen 2:16, 17). That God gave this command implies that He gave Adam and Eve the ability to make choices; moreover, it implies that Adam and Eve had the ability to make the *right* choice. The choice is between many trees and one tree, between good and evil, between life and death. Indeed, the consequences for making the wrong choice are life-changing.

Life

Life on earth *did* change drastically when God's command was disobeyed; "Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned" (Rom 5:12). As with Adam and Eve, the mirror of God's Word and law today too reveals our sinfulness. And through self-

examination, we become aware of how much we need God's grace. "The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 5:20, 21). We cannot make right choices on our own.

Because of Christ's saving work, we have a Father in heaven through whom we understand what life on earth is to be like

Therefore, we seek our life outside of ourselves and in Christ alone! Just having this knowledge

and comfort puts us ahead in the world in which we live today. We already have obtained eternal life even though we live on earth; we are enabled to make the right choices because God sent us his Spirit, through whom we testify that we are children of God (Rom 8:16). All this means that because of Christ's saving work, we have a Father in heaven through whom we understand what life on earth is to be like. He has revealed it to us through his Word. Therefore, we say "Abba, Father" (Rom 8:15). As Christians we must prefer life; moreover, we must protect and promote life. We cannot dissociate the gift of life from the One who gave it.

And so, when it comes to the freedoms we have in our country, we as Christians must take the right stance on issues like abortion. Knowing what God teaches us about this issue, we cannot be passive.



Psalm 76 and 85

PSALM 76 (Geneva, 1551)

1. God has in Judah spread His fame;
Great is in Israel His name.
In Salem stands His tent of praise;
In Zion is His dwelling place.
There shield and sword no longer rattle:
He broke the weapons used in battle.
2. O God, more glorious is Your might
Than awe-inspiring mountain heights.
Men bold and warlike, stripped of spoil,
Sank into sleep and ceased their toil.
None of the valiant and stouthearted
Could lift a hand; their plans were thwarted.
3. O Jacob's God, at Your rebuke
Our enemies were terror-struck;
Stunned lay both horse and charioteer.
You, You alone, evoke such fear.
Who does not stand in trepidation
Before Your wrath and indignation?
4. In fearful silence, all the earth
Heard how Your verdict thundered forth
When You, O God, in judgment rose
To save the humble from their foes.
All merely human wrath and fury
Will but increase Your praise and glory.
5. Come, honour and revere the LORD;
Make vows to God and keep your word.
Let all the nations tribute bring
And fear Him as almighty King,
For He cuts off the breath of princes
And sweeps away their proud pretences.

PSALM 85 (Geneva, 1562)

1. You showed Your favour to Your land, O LORD;
You Jacob's fortunes graciously restored.
Your people You then from their guilt set free,
For You forgave all their iniquity.
You did not let Your indignation last;
Your fury and displeasure quickly passed.
Now, God our Saviour, hear us as we pray:
Again restore us! Take Your wrath away.
2. LORD, will your blazing anger never cease?
Will it go on forever and increase?
Will You not once again our strength renew,
That all Your people may rejoice in You?
Your never-failing love and mercy show
And Your salvation, LORD, on us bestow.
To us Your constant faithfulness unfold,
Your lovingkindness as in days of old.
3. Let me now hear what God the LORD will speak,
For to His saints who Him in worship seek
He will proclaim His peace and righteousness –
But let them not to foolish ways regress.
He surely with His saving help is near
To those who serve Him and His name revere,
That in our land His glory may prevail
And He may there among His people dwell.
4. Unfailing love meets constant faithfulness,
While righteousness and peace embrace and kiss.
Up from the ground fidelity sprouts forth;
Down from the heavens justice views the earth.
Rich blessings will the LORD on us bestow;
With plenteous crops our land will overflow.
Before Him justice will its banner sway
When for His footsteps it prepares the way.



Glory to the King

Saturday May 17, 2008 marked the arrival of a long anticipated day for many people in Alberta and British Columbia. After three years of practicing twenty-one songs, seven choirs from Aldergrove, Chilliwack, Coaldale, Edmonton, Neerlandia, Surrey, and Yarrow gathered together at the Bell Performing Arts Centre in Surrey, BC to share two performances entitled "Glory to the King."

Three years earlier, Chilliwack's choir "To the Praise of His Glory," who hosted this event, requested each choir to submit six songs. From these six, three were chosen to be included on the program for a total of twenty-one. A lot of research went into determining if the songs were still available and how to get them ordered. Once each choir had ordered their music the practicing could begin.

Four weeks prior to the concert date the four choirs from the Fraser Valley began practicing together in the Abbotsford church building. It was nice to hear how all our practicing was paying off with the beautiful sound of 125 voices singing together. We really started to look forward to adding the other choir members from Edmonton, Neerlandia, and Coaldale. These practices were good preparation for the first time the entire choir of 210 voices met on the Friday evening before the concerts in Yarrow church.

Each choir provided their own director and pianist for their three

songs. This is quite a challenge for the choir members as you become very accustomed to how your own director directs. Now we had to watch other directors who do things differently and sometimes at different speeds as well. Each director had the opportunity to run through their songs with the entire group. Everyone was pleasantly surprised at how smoothly this practice went and that the entire choir was able to adjust to each song and follow the directors' suggestions.

This was also the first time the choir members could hear the songs sung with the special accompanists to each song. Kent Dykstra was kind enough to organize a string orchestra to join us on several songs. He even arranged the score for them from the original music. Corjan Buma played the organ which had to be brought in for this special event. Ken Linde played the trumpet and Stephanie DeWit and Wendy Doesburg played their flutes which rounded out the program quite nicely.

We were able to include two soloists on the program as well. Nell Schouten sang the soprano solo part along with the choir on the closing song "King All Glorious." Her part was essential in creating the right feeling of this song. We also had one late addition of a baritone solo performed by Jeremy Ludwig. He sang "Behold, I tell you a Mystery"

and "The Trumpet Shall Sound" from Handel's Messiah during one of the short choir breaks.

On Saturday morning we were all at the Bell Performing Arts Centre in Surrey, BC for a 9:00 am practice. We again ran through as many songs as possible so we could get a feel for the different acoustics at the Bell Centre. It was incredible how very different it felt and sounded standing on the stage compared to singing in a small church. It took a little while for everyone to get adjusted to how our voices projected towards the audience.

We finished the practice at 12:15 and were able to enjoy a light lunch before getting ready for the 2:00 pm matinee performance. The audience began arriving just after 1:00 pm and the choir was eager to show what we could do.

There was an audible gasp and applause when the curtains were lifted at the Bell Performing Arts Centre during both the afternoon and evening performances. The sight of 210 participants all dressed in white and black was an amazing sight to behold.

Each concert began with the singing of the song "A Celebration of Thanks" by Don Besig and Nancy Price. Arthur DeLeeuw then officially opened the concert with Bible reading and prayer. After a few announcements the choir began singing the first set of five songs. In order for the choir members to have a short break we



entitled "King All Glorious," written by Charles Wesley and George M. Vail. This song was the perfect ending to the program as it included the piano, organ, trumpet, string orchestra, and the incredible talent of Nell Schouten as the soprano soloist for this song. What a great finale to the program, as we all sang praise and thanks to God. All glory to the King!

then listened to a beautiful strings orchestra arrangement of Psalm 1 written and directed by Kent Dykstra. The choir was able to perform another five songs before the intermission began.

I heard that the concession stand ran out of coffee during the 2:00 pm performance intermission. Even with the thirty degree weather outside our "Dutch" people still like to drink coffee and the concession staff were definitely not prepared for that! I believe they prepared extra coffee for the evening performance to ensure they didn't run out again! The intermission was a nice opportunity for the choir members to intermingle with the audience. The feedback was encouraging and everyone seemed very pleased with the performance so far!

After twenty minutes we all went back to our seats and were able to begin the second half of the program. We once again sang another five songs after which we enjoyed listening to the strings

orchestra for a second time. This time they performed Psalm 81 again arranged and directed by Kent Dykstra. Jeremy Ludwig was invited to sing his solo. What a beautiful addition to the program!

The choir then rose once again to sing the last five songs on the program. The very last song was

We are happy to say that we were able to make a live recording of this event and are currently creating a CD that will be available for purchase. They will be \$16.00 each (plus applicable shipping costs) and can be pre-ordered through our website: CanrcChoirs.org.



Annual Manitoba Women's League Day Report

In the morning of May 7, 2008, ninety-seven women braved the prairie wind to gather in Carman for the Annual Manitoba Women's League Day. The hosting ladies of Carman East welcomed the participants. The spacious Carman West facility, all decked out in spring flora and fanfare, suited the occasion well. The "hellos," steaming coffee, and delicious baking added to the friendly atmosphere. Everyone added their greetings to cards destined for the missionary wives serving abroad, as well as for the sisters in Denver, who, although members of the classical region, are hindered from coming because of distance. An opportunity was given to make a donation to the organization "Coram Deo International Aid" and all income over expenses from this day will also be sent to this organization. Although still cool outside, it was time to put off the doldrums of winter and get on with the renewed activity of spring. And what were we busy with this day? We came together to learn what God's Word says about "Sisters Helping Sisters."

Morning session

The morning session began with words of welcome by Marry van Dijk. Everyone was invited to sing Psalm 68:3, 12 and we read from 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. Marry led in opening prayer. Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer was introduced as our speaker for the morning and, after

we sang Psalm 122:1-3, he began his address.

Starting at the very beginning, Genesis shows much about the role and task of women. Eve was created to be a helper and complement to Adam, supplying what was lacking when Adam was alone. Although Adam and Eve stood together in God's image to fulfill the task of subduing and filling the earth, their specific roles were different. Adam had the task of subduing the earth; Eve's role was focused homeward, helping her husband and nurturing the children. These roles have, in essence, not changed. Proverbs 31, Romans 16, 1 Corinthians 12, 1 Timothy 5, and Titus 2 all paint a picture of blessed women who are strong, faithful, trustworthy helpmates, managing their households well and extending their helping hands outward. Although the Bible speaks of the lives of blessed and faithful women, sin has brought challenges to all realms of life.

Though created to serve God and our neighbour, since the fall into sin we are inclined to serve ourselves. Woman serving as a helpmate is now met with resistance and resentment, even, to some extent, within the church. We chafe at having to submit to any authority. Sin also brought about pain in child-bearing and child-rearing. Although children are a rich blessing, there is nothing easy about bearing children and



raising them in the fear of the Lord. Widows, single women, and abandoned women also face many challenges, and the Bible teaches us to take special care of those who are alone.

Challenges also surface in the culture around us. In today's anti-God culture, it is all about "me." Woman's orientation has shifted from helping others to serving herself. Feminism pushes the idea that women are equal partners, have equal say, and are not subject to any authority. The differences between men and women are not inherent, but a result of the environment. Submission and obedience in marriage is a form of slavery. Better to avoid the trap of marriage altogether, or get out while you can. Child-bearing should be limited to ensure the fulfillment of career ambitions and dreams. The pain and hard work of raising children is to be avoided at all costs, so daycare takes on the daily grind of raising the kids. How

much have we in the church been affected by this deluded culture?

Women also face challenges from within the church. We are subject to pride. Do we dress ourselves and our children to meet the approval of our peers, or do we clothe ourselves with the modesty held up by Scripture? Do we accept helpful advice about how to raise our children faithfully? Do we make opportunities for discussions about things that matter, or are we focused on the latest styles, the best garage sale deals, or what our kids have accomplished? Do we encourage and assist each other in our day-to-day calling as God's people? Do we ever compliment each other on modesty, patience with the children, and respect for husbands?

God has provided many means to help his daughters fulfill their calling. Christ has conquered sin, so that we may be free from resentment in our submission. Through the working of his Spirit, He enables us to resist the sin within ourselves and the sinful culture without. Pray for the Holy Spirit to change us, pray for strength to love our husbands, children, families, and those around us selflessly. When there is a mutual willingness to submit to God's ways, even difficult

relationships can become more harmonious. The Redeemer's blood and Spirit are also sufficient for those of us who are single, widowed, or abandoned.

The Lord has also given avenues for mutual encouragement and help from within the body of Christ. Let us be active where God places us. Let the older women guide the younger women, praying and studying together, sharing the peace and insight that comes from living in the Lord's strength. Let us pray for each other, for harmony and for the up-building of his church. Let us also be open with each other, allowing others to share our burdens and sorrows. We need to make an environment where there is safety even in vulnerability, where there is no fear of betrayal and gossip which could prevent a sister from receiving much needed guidance and encouragement. We need to guard against making our own personal convictions binding on others, instead striving together to live for Him.

Rev. Holtvlüwer urged us to honour and serve our Creator and Redeemer as sisters helping sisters. After a round of applause in appreciation for Rev. Holtvlüwer's address, we sang Hymn 38. Mary Kamminga thanked

the minister for his biblical and encouraging speech and made a few announcements. We then had a break and were treated to a delicious lunch. We were also "nourished" through informal discussion and fellowship around our tables and soon it was time to ease into the afternoon session with some fun.

Afternoon session

Several groups of ladies were requested by Edith Rook to display sisterly cooperation and great ingenuity by on-the-spot preparations for, and subsequent performances of, "Jack and Jill." They did so in several styles, from country-western, to singing in rounds, from "kitchen" instrumental, to Native American, complete with some very original props! Then it was time to settle down for the opening of the afternoon session by Joanne Termeer and the singing of the "League Day Song."

During the question and answer period, Rev. Holtvlüwer gave many practical biblical tips and insights in response to a variety of questions and comments pertaining to the morning's address. Alison Versteeg then presented Rev. Holtvlüwer with a token of appreciation to express our collective thanks for all his time and effort! During general business, Joanne Termeer reminded us if anyone was interested in a CD of the speech, copies could be requested from the sound/recording committees of each of the participating churches.

To end the day, we sang Psalm 146:1, 3, 5 and Erica Holtvlüwer led in closing prayer. With fond memories of this up-building day, we look forward to another Manitoba Women's League Day, in Spring 2009, DV, hosted by the ladies of Grace Canadian Reformed Church in Winnipeg.



Press Release for the Board of Governors of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches for a meeting held on January 24, 2008

The Board of Governors met at the College Facilities in Hamilton, Ontario on January 24, 2008. Present at the meeting were Archie J. Bax, Lammert Jagt, Hank C. Kampen (Treasurer), Dr. Gijsbert Nederveen (Chairman), Gerard J. Nordeman, Rev. Andrew J. Pol, Rev. Robert A. Schouten (Secretary), Rev. Willem B. Slomp, Rev. Eric Kampen, Rev. John VanWoudenberg, and Karl J. Veldkamp. All board members are present with Rev. Kampen attending in replacement of Rev. George Ph. van Popta (see below). The meeting is opened by Dr. Nederveen with the reading of Scripture and prayer.

Preliminary matters

Due to the resignation of Rev. van Popta, Rev. Kampen joins the Board as a designated ministerial substitute as determined by Synod Smithers 2007. It is confirmed that Rev. Kampen, together with Br. Kampen and Br. Bax, have signed the "Declaration of Governors." The Board elects Br. Veldkamp as Vice Chairman to replace Rev. van Popta who acted as Vice-Chairman previously.

Minutes and agenda

The minutes of the Board meeting held on September 6, 2007 are reviewed, revised, and approved and the agenda for the meeting is settled.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee reports on its current activities, particularly in the context of ensuring the churches are informed on a timely manner relating to the health challenges of Dr. N.H. Gootjes.

Finance and Property Committee report

This committee reports and it is noted that:

- a. The College continues to receive, enjoy, and benefit from the ongoing faithful support of the constituent churches;
- b. The committee proposes and the Board approves an amendment to bylaw no. 12 which clarifies the calculation of and manner in which outside pension income is received or deemed to have been received by retired professors, their spouses, or their dependants (to be further ratified by the next duly constituted Synod of the churches); and
- c. It is confirmed that the Principal's allowance will now be paid to Prof. G.H. Visscher as the new acting Principal effective January 1, 2008.

Correspondence of note

Correspondence of note is received from:

- a. The Australian Deputies for Training for the Ministry inquire regarding the possibilities for distance education via the Internet, videoconferencing, and the like. Although the Board is hesitant about such proposal due to practical challenges, the Board appoints a sub committee consisting of Rev. Schouten and Rev. Pol to dialogue with the Australian Deputies and to seek greater clarity on the matter.
- b. The Senate seeking:
 - i. Approval for one Rev. Steve Frieswick providing limited instruction in the World Religions course. Approval is granted;
 - ii. Approval of the reappointment of Rev. de Gelder as instructor in Church Polity for a three year term. Approval is granted, subject to

- iii. Approval for the appointment of Ms. Margaret B. VanderVelde and Prof. Visscher (at that time) to the Website Committee. The Board approves these appointments.
- c. Dr. C. Van Dam regarding his retirement in 2011 and proposed period of sabbatical for the 2010-2011 academic year. Consistent with the bylaws of the College, Dr. Van Dam's requests for retirement and the sabbatical are noted and granted. The approval for the sabbatical is subject to the provision in due time of an acceptable formal proposal consistent with sabbatical requirements.
- d. Rev. van Popta advising that due to ministerial and other related duties he must regretfully resign from the Board of Governors. This is accepted duly acknowledging his contributions to the Board as Vice Chairman. Concurrently a letter of acceptance of appointment is received from Rev. Kampen, his designated replacement.

Material agenda items

- a. Dr. Gootjes - due to the current ill health of Dr. Gootjes and his inability to attend to his regular duties at the College, upon the advise and recommendation of the Senate, it is decided that Dr. Gootjes will be relieved of his teaching duties for Semester I of the 2008-2009 academic year. The decision regarding the teaching duties of Dr. Gootjes for Semester II of the 2008-2009 academic year is deferred to a meeting of the Board scheduled for April of 2008, with a request to the Senate to consider alternatives and provide a

- proposal in advance of the meeting scheduled. It is expected that Dr. Gootjes will complete his teaching duties for Semester II of the current academic year (2007-2008).
2. The Senate advises that Dr. VanDam will function as Dean of Students and Recording Secretary and Dr. A. de Visser will act as Registrar and Corresponding Secretary.
 3. Prof. Visscher is appointed as Principal and Dr. Van Dam as Vice-Principal. The appointment of Dr. Van Dam as Vice-Principal will be reviewed in January of 2009.
 4. Based upon a recommendation of the Senate and following extensive discussion the Board agrees to appoint Dr. J.W. Maris as a temporary instructor in dogmatics for Semester I of the 2008, subject to:
 - a. Dr. Maris agreeing to sign the Subscription Form as adapted to reflect his status as a non faculty member; and
 - b. Clarification and confirmation being received with respect to what Dr. Maris might believe in regard to Genesis 1, the doctrine of the church, and the calling to the ministry. This will be attended to by seeking satisfactory written responses and otherwise from Dr. Maris to questions formulated by the chairman and secretary of the Academic Committee. Dr. Maris will be a retired professor of the Theological University of the Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken in Apeldoorn effective January of 2008 and a member of the Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken in The Netherlands.

5. In response to decisions of Synod Smithers 2007 the Board:
 - a. Appoints Rev. Kampen (convenor), Br. Bax and Br. Jagt to a committee to initiate and oversee accreditation of the College with the Association of Theological Schools. This accreditation will include a full and independent review as mandated by Synod Smithers 2007.
 - b. Mandates this ad hoc committee to research the appointment procedure for faculty members and to recommend various ways in which a recommendation and/or decision relating to future faculty appointments would be made by the Board in consultation with the Senate and subject to the approval of the churches by way of a duly constituted Synod.
 - c. Mandates the ad hoc committee to consider pursuing membership in the Association of Reformed Theological Schools at such time as membership in the Association of Theological Schools is achieved.
6. The Report of the Foreign Students Bursary Fund is

- received for the fiscal period ending December 31, 2006 showing a balance in the fund of \$91,578 as at December 31, 2006.
7. The Board receives the report of Dr. Van Dam regarding his attendance at a three day conference on "God's Righteousness and the Obedience of Faith" which included presentations by Rev. Norman Shepherd.
 8. The Board receives the report of Dr. Nederveen and Rev. Van Woudenberg of their visits to the lectures at the College in October of 2007 which is gratefully received.
 9. It is confirmed in Question Period that all materials relating to agenda matters of the Board will be shared with the Australian Deputies for Training for the Ministry, save and except that which is deemed to be of a personal and confidential nature.
- Next Meeting of the Board is scheduled for April 24, 2008, D.V. The Meeting is closed in prayer and thanksgiving by Br. Kampen.

*On behalf of the Board of
Governors of the Theological
College of the Canadian Reformed
Churches, Karl J. Veldkamp,
Vice Chairman*

