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Ships That Pass in the Night

The myth of the survival of the fittest is debunked by the truth that we can survive only through Jesus Christ

There is a well-known saying about ships “that pass in the night.” Two ships for a moment come very close together. But they are each on their own course. They are headed in completely different directions. They pass by without even recognizing each other.

This editorial is concerned with two important ships. They never sailed in common waters. But everything that applies to “ships that pass in the night” applies to them.

The first ship is a rather small fishing vessel. 2000-year-old remains of this boat were found on the north-western shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was a single-mast ship that could hold at most only fifteen men. It was a mere four and a half feet high. One can easily imagine surging waves of a Galilean storm splashing into the boat. Had I been on board during one such event, I would have been horribly seasick and deeply afraid.

This small fishing vessel is called the *Zebedee*, named by two brothers after their father. When the two brothers became disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, the boat became a transport vessel. When the twelve apostles and the Lord (with perhaps a few others) travelled in the *Zebedee*, it was rather full.

The second ship is a more seaworthy craft and was known as the *HMS Beagle*. This was a 235 ton brig sloop with ten guns. Such ships were often used as accompanying ships which also brought supplies to the colonies. This ship was commissioned for surveying the Empire.

Why name a ship after a dog? Animal names were often used in His Majesty’s Royal Navy. There were about nine ships with a similar name. It was no

shame, for after all, a beagle is a bright whippersnapper. And this ship was filled with bright whippersnappers.

On board the *Beagle*

From 1831 to 1836 the *Beagle* had an important passenger, Charles Robert Darwin, a recent graduate in divinity from Cambridge University who was more interested in natural history than Bible history.

Darwin wrote *The Origin of Species*, in which he popularized the existing theory of evolution. I am not so much interested now in the theory of evolution. Despite widespread acceptance in academic circles, the theory remains only a theory. Things do evolve and change, and so the idea of a certain measure of evolution is not preposterous. Darwin went wrong when he used this theory to explain the *origin* of species, the beginning of life itself.

What concerns me more is Darwin’s notion of *natural selection*. We know it, perhaps, better as “*the survival of the fittest*.” Only the most capable, the best, the strongest, and the fittest of a species survive the process of natural selection. The weak, debilitated, handicapped, and inferior forms of a species are bound for extinction.

In Darwin’s thinking there is no place for the weak and disabled. *The survival of the fittest means the extinction of the weakest*. Whatever is not strong and healthy must be discarded. It should not escape us that this mentality has permeated modern society. Some even proclaim that an unborn child with a defect ought to be forthwith aborted.



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On board of the *Beagle* there are only strong and beautiful people. Those who are unfit have to walk the plank. Whatever is inferior must disappear, either by natural selection or by human intervention.

On board the *Zebedee*

On the other vessel, admittedly a rather rickety sloop, there is a different mentality. On the *Zebedee* the crew and passengers recognize that God is the Creator and Lord of all things. They know that this God has a special eye for the weak and the imperfect. They have heard a wondrous word, "Though the Lord is on high, He looks upon the lowly" (Ps 138:6). They believe that "the Lord is their Shepherd and that they shall not be in want" (Ps 23:1).

On board of the *Zebedee* there is also a Passenger. He knows all about the origin of species and their evolution. He sees that there are on this little sloop no perfect people. If "natural selection" was the prevailing rule, none of them would survive. By nature they are all doomed to perish.

Therefore He came to save them. "He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:6). Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place, not by natural selection, but because of simple obedience.

The self-righteous and haughty attitude of the men on the *Beagle* cannot exist with the men on the *Zebedee*. Jesus Christ turns things around. Strength becomes apparent in weakness. Science submits to faith.

"The race is not to the swift, or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise, or wealth to the brilliant, or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all" (Eccl 9:11). The myth of the survival of the fittest is debunked by the truth that we can survive only through Jesus Christ.

Through the storm into the harbour

The ocean floor is littered with ship wrecks. The *Beagle* and the *Zebedee* did not sink to the bottom of the seas which they travelled. They fell into disuse and disrepair.

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After its international voyages, the *Beagle* was commissioned as a coast guard or customs ship. She was moored mid-river on the River Roach. In 1851 oyster traders complained that the *Beagle* was blocking the way and she was sold for demolition.

After many years of service as a fishing vessel, the *Zebedee* was probably pulled on to the shore and left behind. Incredibly, this small fishing boat made in through some terrible storms.

We read about such a storm in Mark 4: 35-41. Jesus was on board, but He was so tired that He fell asleep in the stern, on a cushion. The storm was so fierce that the waves broke over the boat so that it was nearly swamped. Through it all Jesus kept sleeping. His disciples woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, don't

you care if we drown?" *Don't you care?* What a question to ask the Lord Jesus! He cares so much that He even let his blessed body be nailed to the cross. Christ is never lacking in power. But we easily and often lack faith.

He rebuked the wind and the waves and it was instantly calm. This mighty act blew his disciples right out of the water; they asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him!" Having Jesus in the boat meant coming through the fiercest storms and always entering the safety of the harbour. The *Titanic* sank, but not the *Zebedee*.

I've always thought that Charles Robert Darwin was on the wrong boat.



J. DeGelder



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God's Son Guarantees Life



MATTHEW 13:52

"But He answered, 'You give them something to eat'."
Mark 6:37

Our text tells us about an impossible yet encouraging and promising meal. By feeding this crowd of more than 5000 people, Jesus shows that God's power alone sustains life.

But Jesus also requires the involvement of his disciples as He multiplies this food. Note that Jesus does not say: "Don't worry, I will give them something to eat." He says: "You give them something to eat." Imagine how perplexed they must've been. "What do you mean? Us?" They don't get it. Do they have to go out and buy bread? You'd need a few transport trucks to bring it here! And it's not in the budget either. "Impossible," they say, "Jesus is asking us to put an impossible meal on the table."

But He wasn't asking them to go out and buy things. He was just asking for food: "Have a look and tell me what's available." And it's not much. How does Jesus think so little will feed so many? His disciples were quite sceptical, but they don't have to worry. If they trust Him and follow his instructions, they'll see how He is going to fill their empty hands.

Again and again, we also must learn to depend on God's grace. That doesn't mean we don't have to do anything, or that we can sit back and watch what God is doing. Trusting in Jesus requires at the same time our commitment to be fully active and obedient.

Jesus' disciples end up doing a lot of running around, for He puts

them to work. They don't know what is going to happen, but they do what He tells them anyway. They trust Him. And all these people? They don't know what's going to happen either, but they cooperate and sit down. Here already is the glorious power of God's Son. You won't be disappointed if you just trust in Him. Just trust his Word and He will surprise you.

Is this how you trust your God? If God asks you to do something, don't say: "What God wants me to do doesn't make sense to me. It's impossible. It won't work." Do you trust Jesus Christ to take care of all your needs and to protect your life? Do you, even at those times when common sense tells you such trust is ridiculous?

Then Jesus takes the loaves and the fish and, after offering a blessing and thanksgiving, He puts his disciples to work once again. But what an experience: Jesus kept going! There was more bread and fish, and more, and more. . . . What flowed from the powerful hands of the Son of God continued to fill the hands of his disciples, enabling them to share the abundance of God's grace.

They all ate and were satisfied. Let's recognize the compassion of the Good Shepherd in this. He gives hope. He guarantees life. He'll take care of you in a manner that you would never expect or imagine.

Through the power of God's Son, the disciples can do what Jesus had

told them to do: "You give them something to eat." An impossible meal turns out to be an encouraging meal! Later, Jesus' disciples will be sent out as apostles to proclaim the gospel of salvation. It's a big job, but as the Son of God enables them to go around and distribute generously what comes out of his hands; He teaches them to let Him do the actual work.

This also gives encouragement to the church today. We are called to feed others and to share the gospel. But our hands are empty. Jesus says, "You give them something to eat," even though we don't have anything to offer. This is the power of Jesus Christ: He who calls also provides. By filling our empty hands with his Word, He distributes the bread of life.

What we see in Mark 6 is also a promising meal. For at the end, there is more left over than what they started with. God provides beyond any expectation! It's with good reason that the perfect salvation at the end of history is often described as a festive meal. In Jesus Christ the way to eternal joy and satisfaction is open. The amazing meal for this crowd of more than 5000 is a reminder of the abundant festivities that are coming. Then, at the wedding banquet of the Lamb, we may gather with the great multitude which no one can count, to share in the joy that will last forever. Looking forward to seeing you there!





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Family Worship (Part 3 of 3)

So now we've surveyed what the Bible teaches about our topic in both the Old and New Testament. What I want to do now is look at some of the practical aspects of family worship. First off, we need to consider the elements. What are the parts of family worship? What should we be doing? From what we've seen from Psalm 78 and other passages, there are three elements that we should have in place: prayer, Bible reading and instruction, and singing. Family worship does not have to be an imitation of corporate worship. It's much simpler. It doesn't have to be elaborate. Just focus on reading the Bible, discussing it, and providing instruction from it. Focus on prayer and on singing. With the singing, if you've got kids in elementary school, this is a great opportunity to practice their memory work with them every day.

As for the length of family worship, it doesn't have to be long. Ten to fifteen minutes is quite adequate. It's better to have a short time of family worship every day than to try and do it once per week for two hours. Of course, none of this is written in stone, so families are free to be flexible according to their circumstances – for instance, you may have a family that relishes having long theological discussions or doing a lot of singing. The important thing is that

family worship is practiced on a regular basis.

With respect to the leadership of family worship, we've already noted that the biblical norm is for the father to take the lead. However, the father can delegate certain tasks in family worship. He can ask his children or wife to read the Bible or to pray or to lead in the singing. Whatever may happen, it must always be clear that, in a normal family situation, the father is the spiritual leader and head of the household. That's a biblical principle that we cannot lose sight of.

Challenges

That brings us to the challenges we face with family worship. The biggest is our enemy, the devil. Satan knows that he has the world. He doesn't need to make much effort to maintain his control and power in that area. However, the church is one area where he needs to make a concerted effort to undermine God's work. He does that in a number of ways and one of those is by attacking the stability and integrity of our families. The enemy uses various strategies and tactics to destroy our families and by doing so to destroy the church. We can't expect to have a healthy church life if our families are experiencing spiritual disintegration. Faithful, God-glorifying churches are built with

the bricks and mortar of faithful, God-glorifying families.

Probably the biggest thing that Satan uses to chip away at the stability and integrity of our families is the busyness of our day and the way time escapes us. This can happen in all our families, but those families where both parents are working out of the home need to be especially careful on this count. We need to take special care that the spiritual nurture of our families is not compromised by time spent out of the home. For all our families, family worship and spiritual nurture has to be a high priority, almost as high a priority as regular attendance at church.

For those of us who've been raised in traditional Canadian Reformed homes, this may require us to think outside the box. In the past, family worship was typically something that followed supper. In the broader culture, families rarely eat together nowadays. We were driving through the States a while back and we heard a public service announcement on the radio encouraging families to eat together once per week. That's sad, but it's the reality of the world in which we live. Unfortunately, it spills over into the church, hopefully not that much, but it does. There is no biblical command or principle indicating that families must eat together. However, we do find family

worship in the Bible. So if it is difficult for your family to eat together, it doesn't necessarily mean that family worship has to be abandoned. Rather, if we're serious about it, we have to be creative. Why not do family worship in the morning before everyone leaves? Or maybe do it in the evening when everyone is home again? When the will is there, a way can be found.

Another obstacle to family worship can be the telephone and the TV. The TV needs to be turned off and the telephone too, and if it isn't turned off, it should be ignored – let it ring! There's nothing so important that it can't wait until after family worship.

There are more challenges, but let me just mention one more: programs. Programs in the church or in the school community can be good and can be helpful. Having a Christian school is also a great blessing. Yet all these things should never be regarded as a replacement or a substitute for regular, daily family worship. We can't think that because our kids go to a Christian school, we can ignore their spiritual nurture. All those other things can be helpful and good, they can *supplement* what goes on in the home, but they can never, ever be considered as *replacements*.

Blessings of family worship

Finally, let's briefly consider the blessings of family worship. When fathers and mothers are serious about family worship, the family is more focused on glorifying God in daily life. God and his Word are constantly being put before their eyes and ears.

More than that, Christ is constantly being revealed through the instruction given in his Word. We're getting a steady diet of the gospel of our Saviour. This can guard against nominalism, against just being a Christian in name without really taking anything seriously. It will not necessarily entirely prevent nominalism, but it will go a long way towards guarding against it. When children see that their parents are serious and sincerely earnest about serving the Lord and teaching his Word, this will have a positive effect on them – it will be a big part of their spiritual nourishment.

The biggest thing that Satan uses to chip away at the stability and integrity of our families is the busyness of our day and the way time escapes us

Family worship is also a blessing for the church. When fathers and mothers shepherd the hearts of their children, when they're the front-line "youth pastors" (as they should be), the church is strengthened to worship and serve her Lord. Just think of the practical matter of singing. If we're regularly singing in our homes and also explaining to our children what we're singing and why we're singing, that will go a long way to bolstering the singing that takes

Church News

Declined the call to Vernon, British Columbia:

Rev. R. Bredenhof
of St. Albert, Alberta.

Accepted the call to London, Ontario:

Rev. R. Bredenhof
of St. Albert, Alberta.

place in church. Then the children are equipped to sing with gusto and understanding and God is praised through that!

Now there are many more blessings that could be mentioned, but we'll leave it at that. One of the things we didn't do was review the history of family worship in the Christian church. Briefly, I can tell you that family worship experienced a resurgence in the 1500s with the coming of the Reformation. That had to do with the availability of Bibles in people's native tongues and also the expanding network of schools and literacy. The Reformation capitalized on the printing press and the spread of literacy and reintroduced family worship to God's people. Christian fathers could finally read the Bible to their families and provide instruction and leadership for them. Where it's been taken seriously, it's been an enormous blessing for Reformed churches and their families. Let's not lose this important practice but let's be committed to it, for the love of our children, for the love of the Word of God, and most importantly for the love of the God who saved us.



London Bids Farewell to Rev. Pot and Family

Farewell evening

On May 29, 2009 the congregation at London gathered at the Pilgrim Canadian Reformed Church for an evening of farewells to Rev. and Monica Pot and their five children, Byron, Kara, Nathan, Chantal, and Alyssa. Wes McConnell, the MC for the evening, formally opened the evening with reading Philippians 1:3-18 and prayer. He went on to illustrate that at the end of a hard Canadian winter we can invariably expect potholes on our roadways in the spring which would necessitate repairs to our vehicles and crews would need to work feverishly to patch them up. This spring the church at London will experience seven Potholes.

When one has a minister who has a love for games, an Aussie accent (not to mention an Australian destination), and a surname like Pot, the evening will naturally lend itself to these three themes, as it did. The program proceeded with the Women's and Young Peoples Societies having the Pots participate in games, testing their knowledge and memory of various facts and events from almost the last five years. The musical portion of the evening consisted of a father/son guitar duet of Hymn 50 and the flag bearing Pilgrim Singers singing Advance Australia Fair, Waltzing

Matilda, and God Be With You Until We Meet Again. In order to act out the song Waltzing Matilda, a number of our younger members were enlisted as a swagman, a jumbuck, a squatter, and three troopers. A speech entitled "Ministerial History" noted that R.E.POT would soon be REPOted in West Albany. Like any good Reformed address it contained three points and was 3 Wilhelmina peppermints long. The MC required Rev. Pot to recite a sentence to test his ability to speak Canadian. Judging by his performance it was unanimously decided that he needed to stay in Canada longer. Rev. Pot, however, felt that his Australian had become quite Canadianized and that to prepare for repatriation to the land down under he would need to practice speaking Australian so he proceeded to do so for us. We're still not quite sure what he was trying to say! With the Pots moving from one part of the British Commonwealth to another, it was only fitting that the Queen of England (aka Monica Koopman) should enter with best wishes and a token of appreciation. A "So Long, Farewell" slideshow walked us through almost five years of memories that the Lord has allowed us to enjoy with the Pot family.

On behalf of Council, Br. Pete Engbers read 2 Corinthians 4 (the text used for Rev. Pot's first sermon as minister in London) and he thanked Rev. Pot for his work among Council and the congregation as a faithful earthen vessel (pot), preaching Christ and Him crucified.

Br. J. Temple, on behalf of the congregation, presented the Pots with a beautiful framed ink sketch of our historic church building in London. He thanked them for the gift they have given us, the gift of many fond memories, and for the devotion with which they worked among the flock. As pilgrims we are on the journey to the same place, even though we will be separated by many miles.

Rev. and Monica Pot in turn presented the vice-chairman of Council with various Australian memorabilia to use in the church and even a boomerang to assist them in the hope that someday they can come back to visit. Rev. Pot went on to apologize for any offences that may have been made by him as God's earthen vessel during the time of his ministry in London but he would not apologize if we had been offended and convicted by the Word of God. He thanked the various sectors of our congregation for the blessing they were to him and his family. Though they are sad to leave, we may all



be assured that the Lord leads our life and they can leave knowing that we are in the Lord's hand and that one day we will meet again. To close the evening we sang O Canada and Jack Pieterman closed with prayer.

Pancake breakfast

The following morning, on Saturday, May 30, a pancake breakfast was held at Covenant Christian School where pancakes, sausage, and eggs were served and fellowship was enjoyed by all.

Farewell sermon

On Sunday, June 7, 2009, in the afternoon service, Rev. Pot preached to us the Word of God using 2 Chronicles 16:9a as the text: "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him." This text has special significance, not only because it was the text used for the wedding ceremony of Rev. and Mrs. Pot, but more importantly that Christ addresses his bride to prepare for the marriage feast of the Lamb, whether in Canada or Australia. Wherever they are, the Lord

strengthens those whose hearts are loyal to Him.

Hanani, the prophet speaks to King Asa, telling him the Lord is all seeing and all powerful. He strengthens his people and uses his power for her benefit. King Asa needs to see this all powerful God behind all his life experiences. We act foolishly when our loyalties are divided but a loyal heart will show in an obedient life. None of us escape his sovereign attention. He will show Himself strong to those who are loyal to Him alone. The spiritual wellbeing of the Bride depends on the Bridegroom, not

Rev. Pot or the office bearers. When we look to Him in loyalty, He will not forsake us but will supply abundantly for every trial.

After the worship service, various members of neighbouring congregations spoke words of appreciation for the faithful preaching that Rev. Pot brought to their pulpits and for his work as God's servant in Classis Ontario West, as well as within the federation as a member of the Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas. They extended best wishes to Rev. and Mrs. Pot and their family as they prepare to take up their task half way around the world. Best wishes were extended to the congregation at London in the hope that the Lord would soon provide us with a new minister. We were assured that though Rev. Pot would be going to West Albany, London would not "go to pot." May the Lord bless Rev. Pot as he continues to minister in West Albany and we pray that in due time He will again provide London with a faithful pastor and teacher.



God's Grace at Camp Eden, 2009

"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)

Our theme at Camp Eden 2009 was "Godliness Grounded in Grace." Two speakers, Rev. Poppe and Rev. Vandeburgt, brought us excellent speeches all weekend on that subject. Godliness is a devotion to God that results in a life

pleasing to Him and we must keep our eyes on God's grace to live that life. By his grace, with his blood, He bought for us eternal life – and life to the full. A life that starts now. At Camp Eden in Colorado this year we were blessed with an abundance of that grace.

We were delighted with the company of brothers and sisters in the faith, some from as far as our

sister churches in Canada, and enjoyed a fellowship like those of the world can never know. Together we relished many activities, such as hiking; crafts like designing t-shirts and journals; and sports like volleyball, indoor hockey, and golfing on the mini golf course. We went zip-lining on a wire over a murky pond of parasite doom and poured our hearts before our Saviour in a hymn sing. And who could ever forget Bible Trivia! (I think it would be interesting to note that, with only a few advantages, the children's team came in second to the pastor's team.)

The time spent with one another was unforgettable and through it all we saw pictures of God's unfathomable love for us. Honey drizzled sunsets and starry night skies of diamond set in sapphire are experienced only in their fullest when one knows the God that made them. The intricate and flawless design of the natural world is a wonder that we have ever before our eyes.

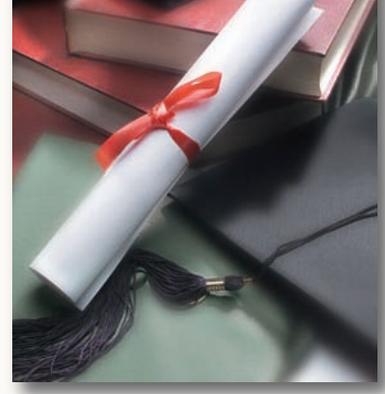
God was with us in a very real way and his grace is a very real gift. We hope to hold our family camp again next year, perhaps with even more of our brothers and sisters in the faith. Keep your eyes open for any future mention of Camp Eden and above all, ever keep your eyes on Him!



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Hurting



Most of us have scars – and, for some of these, we may not even remember how we got them; students lose pencils and grab a new one without much ado; carpenters think nothing of dropping a nail and leaving it. Such losses are minor and we get over them quickly. From time to time, teachers, pastors, doctors, and other professionals are faced with painful realities at the other end of the spectrum of pain, loss, and trauma: realities that make them mourn, and pray for the Lord's nearness and mercy. Among all suffering in this broken world, the trauma of sexual abuse and violation stands out as an insidious example affecting far more people than we like to believe. For the rest of their lives it affects who they are, what they believe about themselves, others, and the reality around them, and how they know God. As easy as it is to get over the loss of a pencil, so difficult it can be to come to terms with betrayed trust and abused power. When abuse is disclosed, caring listeners cry out to God for help in the other's behalf and look for other things they can do.

Statistics

Statistics about child sexual abuse in Canada are staggering. The 1984 *Badgley Report* first

identified it as a societal problem. In 1997, *Health Canada* defined it as "contacts or interactions between a child and an adult or adolescent where the child is being used for sexual purposes," and reported that it "is a serious social problem that cuts across all income, racial, religious and ethnic groups, as well as rural, suburban and urban communities." It also noted that "among *adult* Canadians, 53% of women and 31% of men reported being sexually abused as children." This far exceeds the instances that are formally reported shortly after an event: much abuse is not disclosed and many victims continue to suffer in silence. The 2001 *Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect* reported that "the most common *child* problems after sexual abuse are depression or anxiety (29%), age-inappropriate sexual behaviour (17%), behaviour problems (14%), negative peer involvement (13%) and irregular school attendance (10%) at the time that the reports of child sexual abuse were substantiated" (www.ucalgary.ca/resolve/violenceprevention/English/reviewprog/childsxintro.htm). In 2005, the Department of Justice further confirmed that "the available national data indicates that sexual abuse and exploitation of children and youth is disturbingly common

in Canada." It estimated an annual cost of over \$15 billion for child abuse and acknowledged that it is not really possible to measure the personal and social costs of sexual abuse and exploitation of children and youth (http://canada.justice.gc.ca/eng/pi/tv-vf/facts-info/sex_abu.html Sites retrieved August 3, 2009). There are no specific statistics about sexual abuse in the Canadian or United Reformed context. However, input the Ontario Principal's Association (OPA) recently received leaves no room for illusions. In one counsellor's experience, it is worse in the church than outside.

OPA typically meets on a Friday in August, November, February, and April. Morning sessions are devoted to themes relating to aspects of principals' roles and responsibilities, such as leadership in curriculum development and evaluation, development of a common vision for Reformed education, or a more in-depth study of an issue principals frequently encounter. For the 2008-2009 year, OPA devoted several meetings to the difficult topic of child sexual abuse. For this theme, OPA invited expert speakers from the Hamilton *Child and Family Services* (CAFS), a Christian counselor, and the legal profession.

CAFS

Joel Martin's and Melanie Raakman's Christian background helped them explain how CAFS has changed. It developed a bad reputation during the 1990s and early 2000s for the intrusive and harmful arrogance in "protecting" children from harm – such as displayed in the Aylmer, Ontario, case, where even the Court judged in 2003 that CAFS did act appropriately (<http://www.libertymagazine.org/article/articleview/663/1/24/>). New legislation has since redirected CAFS to work more closely with kin and the family's social context to seek the endangered child's best interest.

Christian children are now much more likely to be placed in foster care with family or members of the same church community

Christian children are now much more likely to be placed in foster care with family or members of the same church community. The speakers stressed that church leaders are not usually trained for child care – much like CAFS is not trained for spiritual care. Much damage to vulnerable children can be prevented if church leaders and the CAFS recognize each other's separate roles and their cooperation can lead to better solutions. Many churches and schools are now also developing safe-child policies, which recognize the CAFS's task and allow it to do its work before

jumping in. In such policies, professionals are required by law to personally call the CAFS if they suspect abuse – even if to ask for advice only. It is an indictable offence not to call.

Upon receiving the report, the CAFS screening officer and a supervisor will make a judgment whether to take action within twelve hours, within seven days, or to just file it. Subsequent reasons for suspicion should be reported as well, as ongoing concern may build up sufficient reason for further action. In its investigation, CAFS may work with police to maximize the protection the child needs and to minimize the harm of repeated questioning. The general impression is that CAFS seriously seeks to rebuild bridges to better serve its purpose of protecting children from harm. However, the application of new legislation and regulations may differ from one office to another.

The impact

Counsellor Joyce DeHaan gave a compassionate introduction about the devastation of sexual abuse. As even non-Christian societies view child abuse as a crime or violation of their moral code, the phenomenon also illustrates the fallen state of creation. Sexuality, as God created it, was good, monogamous, other-focused, self-controlled, and mutually beneficial when ready in its time. It involves the whole body, soul, and mind of both people in a relationship of love and trust. People are made in God's image, and both the person and the good order God set are profoundly violated when sexual abuse suddenly and deeply damages an existing love-and-trust

relationship. To halt its rampage, when disclosed, it must be reported (Romans 13, BC Art 36). This is in part to restrain the perpetrator from doing more and worse damage: about two out of three molesters will perpetrate again after being caught; an average molester may have more than sixty victims and some have more than 500. We must realize that the ravages of this sin will probably not go away until Christ returns with full restoration, but we should do what we can to fight it. Furthermore, let us consider that God's providence lets it come out in its time and, however hard it may be to understand, He will also use it for our benefit – as Joseph pointed out to his brothers when he made himself known to them. (Genesis 45)

The damage of sexual abuse can be lasting and severe – even a colour, a sound, a smell, a gesture, or any reference to something related to it may cause a victim to relive this violent crime. It is far worse than a common reminder of how old scars came about: The reminder will resurface the raw pain to the soul as though it just happened. The damage of sexual abuse may include long-lasting false feelings of guilt and shame, as though the victim was at fault, and not the perpetrator. It may generate incredible stress when discrepancy is observed between what a respected person says publicly and does in secret as a perpetrator – and, as a result, one's understanding of who God is and what He is like may be deeply warped. While called to forgive, it is hard to do when the molester gets away without repenting. And, perhaps years down the road, half of the victims may become perpetrators themselves.

When children disclose, it is well to respond with calm empathy, and to do what is needed and required to stop recurrence. In addition, it is good to take measures that prevent it from happening in the first place: use an abuse prevention protocol, address the dangers of sexual sins, and protect each other from them through accountability and transparency.

The law

Lawyer Herman Faber pointed out that child welfare is a provincial matter, which may affect the validity of some comments in this article for other provinces. Through a number of case studies and discussion, Mr. Faber illustrated that the law is open to emerging interpretation, which presents challenges in determining what the law actually expects one to do. When disclosure is made to a teacher, he or she should write down and keep on file what was disclosed and under what circumstances, and report – even when it is made “in confidence.” In Ontario, cases may be pursued under Civil or Criminal Law; in either case, there are also spiritual implications. Spiritual matters are for the elder and the minister to deal with, perhaps with assistance from a Christian counselor.

Mr. Faber also addressed cases in which the perpetrator is a teacher, volunteer, or other employee. A teacher will always be seen as a teacher, as a person “in authority and trust,” and is expected to act accordingly – certainly also in the home-school-church context. The school must take responsibility for civil and vicarious liability in this matter,

and should have a good abuse prevention and child protection policy in place. (Civil liability is the potential responsibility for payment of non-criminal damages; vicarious liability in the employer-employee relationship holds the employer responsible for the employee’s negligent behaviour during his employment.) A typical good abuse prevention plan states the policy with regards to abuse, definitions of abuse, screening procedures for all workers, operational procedures for preventing abuse, making sure that the premises and facilities help prevent abuse, staff training for abuse prevention, and a procedure for responding to all allegations or complaints. Clearly, this is not just a matter of responsibility for principals and teachers; it also affects the school board in its role of defining policies and in its various liabilities. Similarly, it is appropriate for church councils to pay attention to its responsibilities in this matter.

Conclusion

The presentations were consistent with each other in many ways, and helped principals to be better prepared when disclosures occur. Their task is not to heal injury, abuse, or scars, but to get the process rolling that helps the violated person to the best of their ability. It also helps them to understand that there are scars and that their scars are not likely to go away. Knowing that, they can be more sensitive to people who have been violated.

Thank God for good Christian counsellors and pray that He may endow them with wisdom and

compassion to help those who have been scarred. Pray that more such counsellors may prepare themselves and come forward, for the need is immense and there are no quick band-aid solutions.

The school must take responsibility for civil and vicarious liability in this matter, and should have a good abuse prevention and child protection policy in place

As long as there is no help, healing is unlikely. Pray for those in professional positions of trust and authority, that they may stand firm, and have empathy when disclosure is made. Pray also for those who were victimized and carry on as struggling survivors of sexual abuse, that they may find healing and rest for their souls. Pray for those around them, that they may be sensitive to their scars. Pray for the perpetrators that they may seek help, stop committing this sin, and find God’s mercy. And pray, Come Lord Jesus, Maranatha!

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.



**RE "Paul the Joker"
(Clarion Volume 58, No. 16)**

Dear Rev. Stam,

Thank you for asking aloud what many in our churches may be thinking with regard to women's voting: "If you take step one (voting), will it lead to step two (serving)?" The present developments in The Netherlands may give the impression that the second step inevitably follows the first, even though the historical record also contains examples of Reformed churches that have *not* proceeded to women's ordination. The Free Church of Scotland comes to mind, as do our partners in NAPARC. So it's safe to say that women's ordination is not the necessary or logical consequence of women's voting.

Perhaps the question that we should be asking is: "What must we do as federation to ensure that step one (which is biblically sound) does not lead to step two (which is biblically unsound)?" My hunch is that the answer to this question will not only allay concerns about women's voting in particular, but will also give confidence for the future more generally.

*Yours in Christ,
Ben Faber (Hamilton)*

Reply

I like to thank Ben Faber for his excellent question. It is indeed true that not *all* churches which allow women to participate in the election of office bearers eventually have women also ordained in the offices. Our Dutch sister churches have not (yet) done so either. This fact ought to give us some comfort and courage.

As you may know, I have in the past defended the right of women to vote in the ecclesiastical elections. I cannot find any biblical reason why this right should not be granted. What gave me concern is that I see developments elsewhere for which we must be on our guard.

The question is: what must we do as federation to ensure that step one does not lead to step two? This question is not easy to answer. We will never have airtight assurance, I think. But we can make clear to the churches that the ordination of women in office is not scriptural.

The churches have all received the report for which the previous synod commissioned the church at Hamilton. Every consistory has the right to address synod on the basis of this report. Synod could be asked to have considerations in place that

preclude step one (voting) from leading to step two (ordination). It would be helpful if the minor assemblies (classis and regional synod) supported this request.

KS

**Letter
to the Editor**

Rev. Holtvlüwer is to be commended for his article in *Clarion* on "Weed Control" (Volume 58, No.15, July 17, 2009), addressing the abuse of marijuana specifically as well as addiction generally. Furthermore, the comment that "it's time we as Canadian Reformed community pay attention to this concerning issue and deal with it openly, biblically, and constructively" is not only timely, it also requires follow up. Much of this work is already in progress, initiated through the Christian Counseling Center in Burlington Ontario. The quote "If it pours in the world, it rains in the Church" is well known; and this applies to addiction in Reformed circles, whether it is the teenager on the marijuana maintenance program, the house wife addicted to benzodiazepines, the father on the Internet addicted to porn, or the older adult who retires and drinks too much.

Concerns with the article, however, arose with me when addiction was referred to as sin: "the sin of alcohol addiction." Many diseases have a genetic component, addiction and type 2 diabetes being two examples. These diseases are present in the world today as a result of the fall. To deny the effect of genetics as the cause of addiction is to deny the full effect of the fall in paradise. *Addiction is a disease*, that if left unchecked results in both spiritual death and physical death. What is sinful is addicted (addictive) behaviour, addicted thinking, and addicted attitudes. Furthermore, poor compliance to diet as well as medication and a poor lifestyle for the diabetic is sinful behaviour.

Why the distinction? The addict as well as the diabetic will never be cured of their respective illnesses. The relapse rate in addiction is significant as is the rate of non-compliance with the diabetic. The disease of addiction can, however, go into remission if a program of recovery is followed.



In our circles this means the addict has to stop the unwilling enslavement called denial. (Willing enslavement is an oxymoron). On a daily basis the addict has to stop isolating and work a Christ-centred program of recovery, changing old behaviours and attitudes, leading a spiritual life, seeking the support of others in recovery (i.e.: Celebrate Recovery or other support groups, maybe even including AA, NA, CA etc), as well as having the support of a loving faith community.

G. Veenman, MD, Elora, ON
(veengary@homewood.org)

Dear Editor,

I am writing this letter in connection with the Rev. Clarence Stam's editorial "Paul the Joker" in *Clarion*, July 31. Herein he deals with an essay by a Dutch pastor, the Rev. W. Wierenga, on the position of women in the church. As we have come to expect from my pastor-emeritus, his editorial is informative and entertaining. I am not sure, however, that it does justice to the Rev. Wierenga's position and argumentation.

The latter's essay focuses on 1 Timothy 2:11-14. Here Paul forbids woman "to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent" (11-12), the reason being that "Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner" (13-14). These verses indicate that the prohibition was not just issued on cultural grounds, but as a creation mandate, and therefore as valid for all times and places. The two verses therefore continue to serve as proof text in deciding on the role of women in the church. As Rev. Wierenga points out, however, the text raises a difficult question, namely: Was Adam indeed not deceived, even though he joined Eve in eating of the forbidden fruit? Does not Paul in Romans 5:12 speak of "one man's transgression," i.e. Adam's? Eve is not even mentioned there.

It is in dealing with this exegetical problem that the Dutch pastor resorts to the idea of Pauline humour. He refers to the pronounced male chauvinism of ancient Jewish writers, showing that Jews of Paul's days habitually put the blame for the fall into sin and for human death and misery not on Adam, but solely on Eve, and subsequently on all women. We may assume that Paul, who often spoke appreciatively of women (such as his female co-

workers, for example; see his list of greetings in Romans 16), did not share that negative view. Rev. Wierenga therefore suggests that we may have to explain Paul's words in verses 13-14 as not literally meant, but as an ironic take-off on this male-chauvinist attitude.

I am not writing this letter to defend that exegesis. In fact, I agree with Rev. Stam's critique of it. I have a problem, however, with his easy dismissal of Wierenga's explanation as ridiculous, a mere joke. As a matter of fact, Wierenga builds his case on solid historical research on the Jewish cultural background and the prevailing male Jewish attitude toward women. The *Clarion* editorial fails to make any mention of this research and these arguments. More importantly, it fails to acknowledge the exegetical difficulties attending our understanding of 1 Timothy 2:13-14, even though these difficulties inspired Rev. Wierenga's argument in the first place.

This is a regrettable omission. By ignoring the exegetical problem, Rev. Stam not only does an injustice to his Dutch colleague, he also misses an opportunity to comment on the need for a scripturally acceptable explanation of the text.

F. G. Oosterhoff, Hamilton, ON

Reply

I thank Dr. Oosterhoff for her reply to my editorial. I regret that she mentions the name of the Dutch minister. It's not about persons but about positions.

Anyway, when Dr. Oosterhoff mentions that she agrees with my critique, I wondered: Where's the beef? Proper reading of the editorial would have shown that I did not dismiss this minister's viewpoint as ridiculous or as a mere joke, but I pointed out that this minister suggested that *Paul* was merely joking. There's the beef! My omission is that I did not refer to the "solid historical research" that underlies Wierenga's case. Perhaps that would have gone beyond the scopus of an editorial. But "the solid research" is nothing more than a conglomerate of assumptions and suggestions. Dr. Oosterhoff takes the same track when she also writes: we may assume that Paul. . . . There really are no (major) exegetical difficulties surrounding 1 Timothy 2:13, 14. Let us not make "an exegetical problem" where there is none. The text makes very clear that woman has received a place in the church from God. That place is not to serve in an office.

K.S.

Letters to the Editor should be written in a brotherly fashion in order to be considered for publication.
Submissions need to be less than one page in length.

Book Review

Reviewed by Rev. Jerome M. Julien

From House to House: Articles and Helps for Beginning Elders, W. Huizinga, Armadale, Australia: The Reformed Guardian, 2004

Additional Information: Soft cover, 73 pages. Available through Bethel Books

Every year elders are faced with the task of family visiting. It is never an easy task and, because of this, there is always a desire for help. Before this book closes there are ten different suggested passages for use on visits and a short explanation about each. Besides, there are suggested

questions for discussion growing out of the passages. Every elder in the church I serve have found them to be very helpful.

Family visiting is a fading practice in many churches, for many reasons – none of which are good. This little volume will be of help in counteracting the trend. Issues such as what is an elder, what is the background and value of this Reformation practice, how should it be conducted are all considered on its pages. Perhaps a thorough study of it will restore this valuable practice to what it is meant to be.

Although the references are made to the "Form for the

Ordination of Elders and Deacons" used by the Canadian / American Reformed Churches and by the Article 31 churches in The Netherlands, we can certainly learn from these chapters – and should! Any printed material on this subject is valuable for the whole Reformed community. There is precious little available out there.

Material from three authors, including the editor, has been brought together to produce this small, practical volume.

Although the subtitle states that this book contains "articles and helps for beginning elders," even seasoned ones will benefit from studying it.

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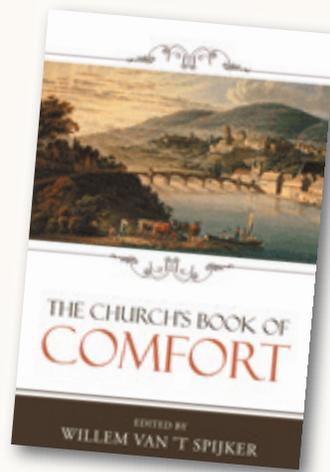
Book Review

Reviewed by W.L. Bredenhof

The Church's Book of Comfort, Willem van 't Spijker (ed.), Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2009

Additional Information: Hardcover, 291 pages, \$30.00 USD

The Heidelberg Catechism is probably the best-loved of the Reformed confessions. Warm, pastoral, and personal, it has taught the rudiments of the Christian faith to generations of Reformed believers all over the world. Translated into multitudes of languages, it has a proven ability to transcend both ages and cultures. It has truly been a blessing. Unfortunately, it is only too easy to take this blessing for granted. *The Church's Book of*



Comfort will serve to awaken a fresh sense of appreciation for this old friend.

This volume was originally published in Dutch in 2005. It is a collection of essays by a number of Reformed professors and ministers from The Netherlands. The effort was overseen by Prof. Willem van 't Spijker, an emeritus professor from the Theological University of Apeldoorn. The

translation is by Gerrit Bilkes and seems to be well done.

The opening chapter surveys the history of the German Reformation and especially its Calvinistic side. The next two chapters trace the development of the Catechism. The fourth chapter (by the editor) is a helpful overview of the theology of the "Heidelberger." Chapters five and six are devoted to its reception and use in The Netherlands. A concluding chapter by the editor argues for the continuing relevance of the Catechism, drawing attention to its great strength: a faithful summary of key biblical teachings, especially focussed on the centrality of Christ and the gospel. Everything points to Him; everything flows from Him.

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There are some really wonderful things to commend this volume. Besides the solid main content which is filled with all kinds of information about the background of the Catechism, there are also numerous sidebars with translations of various sources having to do with the Catechism. So, for instance, there are a couple of excerpts from Franciscus Ridderus on the necessity of catechism preaching (192-193). Another excellent feature of *The Church's Book of Comfort* is the fact that it is richly illustrated with numerous pieces of art.

Finally, there is an extensive bibliography of primary and secondary sources for those wishing to do further research.

It is a shame that so much of the rich history of our Reformed heritage is still in Dutch, locked away for the vast majority of Reformed believers in North America. *The Church's Book of Comfort* gives a much-needed glimpse of some of those riches. Let the editor's concluding words be the final commendation for this book:

The Catechism has many great qualities. It serves simplicity without ignoring the broader

dimensions of God's truth. Virtually everywhere and always it recognizes the central fact of God's love in Christ, which through atonement wins over the sinner to faith and strengthens him in this faith. What ultimately was the secret of the Reformation according to Luther, Bucer, Zwingli and Calvin – namely, communion with Christ – is also the secret of this presentation of doctrine. At the center are the cross, Christ's blood and Spirit in atonement, forgiveness, renewal and assurance (272).

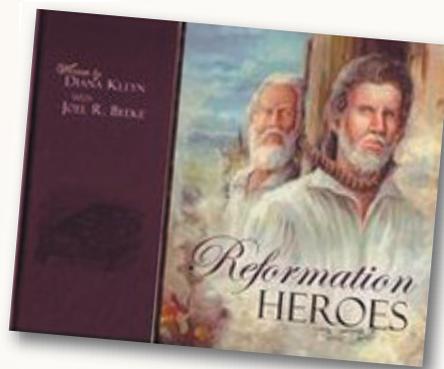
Book Review

Reviewed by W.L. Bredenhof

Reformation Heroes, Diana Kleyn with Joel R. Beeke, Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2007

**Additional Information:
Hardcover, 240 pages, \$25.00 US**

When I was school age, church history was about as interesting as fauvism – which is to say that I had no interest in it whatsoever. We were briefly taught church history in school using some weathered old books by W. Meijer, *Young People's History of the Church*. Unfortunately, the books were not particularly engaging and neither was the teaching style. Consequently, it was only much later that I came to deeply appreciate the importance of the history of the church.



Flash-forward about twenty-five years and we have been richly blessed with much better church history resources. From the Canadian Reformed community, we have the *Flame of the Word* series being used in many of our schools. But there are also other helpful volumes out there that deserve our attention and *Reformation Heroes* is one of them.

The book is subtitled, "A Simple, Illustrated Overview of

People Who Assisted in the Great Work of the Reformation." That says it all. It's simple: it's written for older children and teens. It's illustrated: the book is full of pictures. It's about people who assisted in the great Reformation of the sixteenth century – in other words, there is a clear recognition that the Reformation was in the first place God's work. The people covered include the staples: John Calvin, Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, William Tyndale, John Knox, and others. But there are also lesser-known figures, including some women such as Anne of Bohemia and Marguerite of Navarre.

This is a well-written and well-produced book that would serve well as a textbook for Christian schools or homeschools, as independent reading for young

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people or adults, or as a resource for family worship. There are several appendices featuring maps, diagrams, and a glossary. There's also a fairly extensive bibliography. As far as the facts go, Kleyn and Beeke seem to be accurate on most things. One small error was in the narrative regarding Guido de Brès. The

authors claim that de Brès was hanged and then his body burned and his ashes thrown into the Scheldt River. I've read this claim in one or two other places, but not only do the two definitive biographies (in French and Dutch) of de Brès demur, but also the only existing eye-witness account. According to that account, de Brès'

body was placed in a shallow grave where it was later desecrated by wild animals. That's a small point, of course, and I wouldn't want to let that dissuade readers from purchasing this handsome book. Indeed, I'd say that *Reformation Heroes* would be a worthwhile addition to any Reformed home library.

Book Review

Reviewed by W.L. Bredenhof

Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Centuries in English Translation, Volume 1: 1523-1552
Compiled with introductions by James T. Dennison, Jr., Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008.

Additional Information:
Hardcover, 820 pages, \$50.00 USD

The first striking thing about this volume is its handsome appearance. Reformation Heritage Books pulled out all the stops to produce a hardcover book that outwardly demands respect and careful attention. I hope that the subsequent volumes will be of the same high quality.

Furthermore, the contents rise to the quality of the appearance. James Dennison, professor of Church History and Biblical Theology at Northwest Theological Seminary (Lynnwood, WA), has compiled thirty-three confessional documents from the early years of the Calvinistic side of the Protestant Reformation. Some of

these confessions are appearing here in English for the first time, while others are being republished after some time in obscurity. Dennison has written helpful introductions for each confession, including information on where to find the documents in their original languages.

From these confessions, it becomes apparent that the period in view (1523-1552) was a time of consensus building amongst Reformed churches in Europe. While there was some broad, general agreement on many important matters, there were still many significant points that had yet to be ironed out. So, for instance, most of the confessions included agree that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the two

sacraments instituted by Christ. However, the Tetrapolitan Confession of 1530 says that these are the "chief sacraments" and the Large Emden Catechism of 1551 says that it "is permissible to enumerate more" sacraments. Like the first editions of the Belgic Confession, some of the confessions continue to use the apocryphal books as references for various points of Christian doctrine. The Bohemian Confession of 1535 is probably a little too cozy with the virgin Mary for later and contemporary Reformed believers and Juan Diaz's Sum of the Christian Religion (1546) does not seem to grasp the weight of Ephesians 2:1 when it says that unbelievers should acknowledge themselves as being sick, "as though we were almost dead" (523).

This volume will prove to be indispensable for anyone who has an interest in the development of confessional Reformed theology in the sixteenth century. The editing is well done, the introductions are helpful, the production quality is high and the selections are both thoughtful and thought provoking. Volume 1 definitely whets one's appetite for more!

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