

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
Volume 60, No. 2 • January 14, 2011

Numbers 10:1-10



*Official opening of
Cornerstone Christian School,
Guelph, Ontario*

Inside this Issue

- The LORD has Triumphed Gloriously!
- Should We Get Involved Politically?





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How Should a Minister Address the Congregation?

Is the gathered people merely a neutral audience or are they the special people of the Lord Jesus?

Do you know how the minister addresses the congregation as intro to his sermon? There are various ways of doing so. A bold minister might say, "Beloved congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ." We will see in a moment what might be amiss with this address. Another minister, perhaps not so bold, might suffice by saying "Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ," leaving out the word "beloved" because he does not want to assume that all members are indeed beloved by God. Still another preacher might just simply say "Congregation. . ." with no further adjectives.

Is this another wild goose chase by Klaas? Not at all. Some time ago I read in *Nederlands Dagblad* (dated Saturday, May 1, 2010) that the manner of addressing the congregation from the pulpit is beginning to vary a lot. It is becoming a problem in some places with certain ministers.

One minister stated that the address is rather unimportant, and he often skipped it altogether. He simply started his sermon without specifying to whom he was speaking. Germans would say that he was preaching "*ins blau hinein*," into the blue sky. Better no address than a wrong address.

What's wrong with the old address?

Now you might rightly ask: what is wrong with the old manner of addressing the church as "beloved congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ"? I think the concern is: how can the minister know if all hearers are really part of the congregation and are "beloved in the Lord." There are *hypocrites and unbelievers* who are sitting in with the congregation. Do we not assume

too much when we state that all are beloved in the Lord? This is presumptuous! Are all those sitting in the worship service really and truly children of God, part of his household?

Is the gathered people merely a neutral audience or are they the special people of the Lord Jesus? Should the church be addressed as the Bride of Christ, beloved by him, or as a mottled group of wanna-bes, constantly reminded that they have not yet received salvation?

It appears that like so many other matters which we once took for granted in the proper way (the congregation as the covenant people of God), also the address to the congregation is being critically appraised and by some overhauled to one that fits better in our modern, gentler society.

The professorial approach

Prof. Dr. S. Paas (Evangelistics, Kampen) wants to use an address that includes everyone. Often he does not use an address at all and simply begins preaching. Sometimes he will say, "Dear people," but that's about it. *Beste mensen*.

Prof. Dr. C. de Ruijter (Practical Theology, Kampen) feels that when sermon time comes around, he has already prayed, sung, and read Scripture with the congregation, and therefore does not need to address the sermon particularly. He rather waits until he has everyone's attention and then begins with a gripping first statement of the sermon.

Some make it worse, so I read, by adding all kinds of groups: brothers and sisters, boys and girls (as if they do not belong to the congregation), and guests. What



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

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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 2011

	Regular Mail	Air Mail
Canada*	\$48.00	\$ 82.00
U.S.A. U.S. Funds  	\$67.00	\$ 90.00
International	\$95.00	\$145.00

*Applicable GST, HST, PRT taxes are extra. GST/HST – No. 890967359RT

Advertisements: \$17.00 per column inch

Full Colour Display Advertisements: \$21.00 per column inch

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We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada, Canada¹¹ through the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) for our publishing activities.

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Agreement No. 40063293; PAP Registration No. 9907; ISSN 0383-0438

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about singles, parents, seniors, grandparents, and empty-nesters? Where do you start and where do you stop? Beloved empty-nesters. . . .

Back to the Bible

Having ingested all this stuff and feeling some nausea coming on, Klaas scurried back to the Bible to check out some forms of address there. Paul uses various forms. To the Romans, he writes, "To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints." To the Corinthians he writes: "To all who call upon the name of our Lord. . . To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere. . ."

Sometimes the address is geographical, "To the churches in Galatia." Often it is qualified, "To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus." The

What's Inside

In his editorial Rev. Klaas Stam explores the topic of how a minister addresses the congregation. Do we take the individual approach of addressing each special group or do we use a corporate approach?

We are also publishing an article by Dr. Cornelis Van Dam, based on comments made at the first ARPA Ontario Conference on October 23, 2010. The article seeks to answer the question: should we be politically involved? How do we do that? How do we keep informed about the issues of the day?

Dr. Frederika Oosterhoff reviews *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters* by N.T. Wright. Christians must live and act here and now in such a way that their life becomes an anticipation of the life to come. Wright teaches that character formation needs constant practice and daily training in the virtues of faith, hope, and love. In addition, Dr. Wes Bredenhof reviews *The Masculine Mandate* by Richard D. Phillips. The author's purpose is to give clear, sound, biblical teaching for men about being men – an important topic as we experience a cultural shift in gender roles.

Issue 2 also includes two regular columns, Treasures New and Old and Education Matters.

Laura Veenendaal

address is more than a mere formality: it often contains an appeal, a statement of what the church is *in Christ*. I'd really consider it a major step backwards if we lost this approach.

A common address appears to be: to the *saints* in. . . . When the Apostle wrote his letters to the churches he envisioned his readers as *believers and saints*. That is a general approach. That is also the sense of the word "beloved." These are not the preacher's beloved people, but the people dearly loved by the Lord. A proper scriptural address will therefore be "Beloved congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ."

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*It is best to see and address the congregation as a whole as God's covenant people*

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Actually, I was struck by the number of times the apostles use the term "beloved." In Philippians 2:12 we read about "dear friends" but literally it does say, "Beloved" (*agapetoi*). You probably know that the word "agape" is the New Testament word for the love that comes from God in Christ and must now function in the congregation. In 1 Corinthians 10:14 we find the same: dear friends (literally also *agapetoi*), dearly beloved. I have the feeling that the translation "dear friends" does not properly express the emotion of the original.

Perhaps it is good to note at this point that the truly beloved is Jesus Christ. In Matthew 3 at the occasion of our Lord's baptism we read, "This is my Son, whom I love" (*Agapetos*). The address "beloved congregation" approaches the congregation with the riches that it has from the Father, in the Son, the Beloved, through the Holy Spirit. I cannot find a more Christological approach to preaching and the congregation.

The gathering of God's covenant people

Every preacher knows that his hearers are a mixed bag, so to speak. There are members that are unfaithful. There are those who doubt. There are the hypocrites who are outwardly in the church but are not part of it. There are unbelievers who attend church for all the wrong reasons. There are also those who sincerely in faith, with all incumbent weakness, seek the Lord's will and blessing.

Church News

Declined the call to the Free Reformed Church of Albany, Western Australia:

Rev. H. Alkema

of Houston, British Columbia

Declined the call to the Eben-Ezer Canadian Reformed Church in Chatham, Ontario:

Rev. D. de Boer

of Dunnville, Ontario

It is best to see and address the congregation as a whole as *God's covenant people*. This people have received great promises in Christ. This very same people must esteem these gifts in Christ and appropriate them. In this way everyone is addressed. Those who refuse to believe will be rightly condemned.

When a preacher uses the term "congregation" in this covenantal sense, he realizes he is speaking to *all* that have assembled. He knows that there are the hypocrites and the reprobate. That is not his problem. He must address all with the rich promises in Christ and call everyone to believe in him. The preaching is gospel-preaching that comes to all hearers with equal force and power.

The address to the congregation is not unimportant. It is of great importance. In the address it is established from the start of the sermon who is being addressed and why. This is not a tinkering with minor details, but a matter of re-sounding principle.

The corporate approach

In Scripture we read that the church is a *body* (1 Corinthians 12:12). This means that we must take a corporate approach. In our time in which individualism appears rampant, it is not current to speak of the church in terms of a body. A preacher may be overly concerned about having a special message for each group in the congregation. In the address to the congregation, this corporate approach must be maintained. The minister does not speak to a part of the congregation, but to the whole congregation. All receive the same promises; all must meet the same obligations; all who disbelieve face the same punishment. The preaching seeks to motivate all members to serve the Lord in gratitude, personally and together.

All this has far-reaching implications. This is the age of rampant individualism. In some places members of the body are being grossly neglected. If you add to this volatile mix a watered-down address of the congregation, the church can become a conglomerate of like-minded groups which no longer has an eye for the body of Christ and how it functions in a fragmented society.





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MATTHEW 13:52

The LORD has Triumphed Gloriously!

“Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD: ‘I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea. . . The LORD will reign for ever and ever.’” Exodus 15:1, 18

When the LORD led Israel out of Egypt, he took Israel on a detour. The LORD did not take Israel through Philistine country along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, although that route was shorter. The LORD took Israel down and around through the desert. The reason was that he did not want his people to be scared by the Philistines and return to Egypt.

The LORD also had a deeper reason: he was laying the groundwork to triumph gloriously over Pharaoh. The LORD sent Israel toward the Red Sea because God wanted to drown Pharaoh’s army in the Red Sea. God instructed Israel to encamp by the sea so that Pharaoh would think that the Israelites were wandering around in confusion, and then the LORD would harden Pharaoh’s heart to pursue Israel. God said: “But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD” (Exod 14:4).

This is how God works today too. God leads events in unexpected ways sometimes as he works toward the eternal good of his children and the glory of his Name. This is very comforting for us. When we wonder about God’s direction in our lives, we may know that “...in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28).

When Israel saw the Egyptian army, Israel was terrified. But Moses told Israel that the LORD would fight for them. And so it happened.

Moses lifted his staff over the Red Sea and divided the water so that Israel could go through the sea on dry ground. When the Egyptians pursued, the LORD threw them into confusion and made their chariot wheels come off. These chariots were the symbol of Pharaoh’s power, but the LORD struck at the heart and symbol of Pharaoh’s power. As the Psalmist says: “Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? ...The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the LORD scoffs at them” (Ps 2:1, 4). When Moses stretched his hand over the sea again, the waters returned and the Egyptian army was drowned. Israel had seen God’s mighty hand in action!

Then Moses and Israel sang a song of praise to God for deliverance because of the LORD’s glorious triumph over Pharaoh. Throughout the Old Testament we hear God’s people singing. There is even an entire book of the Bible intended for singing, the Book of Psalms. Also today the church is a singing church. We have even more reason to sing after Christ’s work of deliverance on the cross!

It was by God’s grace that Israel crossed the Red Sea on dry ground. And Israel had to trust that the wall of water on their right and left would not come crashing down on them. Otherwise they would not have set foot on the dry seabed when the waters parted. “By faith the people passed through the Red

Sea as on dry land” (Heb 11:29). Likewise our deliverance from sin and misery through Jesus Christ – of which the exodus from Egypt was a foreshadowing (1 Cor 10:1-4) – is by grace through faith. We must walk in the faith that Christ is our Saviour from sin and misery, otherwise we will not be saved.

By grace through faith, believers are victorious over sin and misery because of Christ’s redeeming work. The book of Revelation shows the believers standing at the sea of glass mixed with fire (15:2-4). The fire points to judgment, but the believers are standing there as people saved from condemnation, and victorious over sin and death through Jesus Christ. John hears them singing what is called the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb because the deliverance through Moses finds its fulfillment in the deliverance through Jesus Christ. It is a song of praise and thanksgiving to the LORD who reigns for ever and ever.

But we are not yet at the sea of glass. As we go through this fallen and broken life we experience the power of sin in many ways, but we remember Paul’s words: “In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Rom 8:37). We look forward to the final victory when Satan and his dominion will be completely overthrown and we will sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb.





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Should We Get Involved Politically?

Comments made at the first ARPA Ontario Conference on October 23, 2010

Should we get involved politically? The short answer to that question is yes, we should get involved politically. But first, what is political involvement? Let's understand it as any activity whereby we seek to influence the current political scene and the direction of our city, province, or country.

Also on issues like this, the Bible gives direction. The first passage we can consider is taken from the book of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah's letter

Jeremiah was a prophet who ministered to God's people before and during the first part of the Babylonian exile. Those exiled for their sins did receive the promise that they or their descendants would eventually return to the Promised Land (Jer 32). But in the meantime, what were they to do in a strange country with a culture foreign to them? They were in a land whose armies had destroyed their country and would destroy their holy city of Jerusalem. In short, these exiles must have felt out of place as they settled in Babylon.

Now what was their attitude to their new surroundings to be like? Jeremiah sent them a letter with very specific instructions. We read in that letter, as recorded in Jeremiah 29:5-7,

Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.

In other words, they were told to participate in the culture and business of their new dwelling place. That

included seeking the peace and prosperity of the city in which they lived. The term used for peace is *shalom*, a very comprehensive term, covering all of life. It can also be translated by "welfare" - "seek the welfare of the city" (NASB). This advice to exiles is without parallel in the Old Testament and in the literature of antiquity. They were to seek the welfare of their captors and pray for them. They were to work for the good of the country and society of those who would one day destroy Jerusalem. To seek their welfare would have meant getting involved, culturally and also politically. They were to give their best efforts for that. And they had something to give. The heritage of godly wisdom in the Scriptures they had received was something to be shared. Indeed, had God not said to Abraham already that his descendants were to be a blessing to the nations (Gen 12:2-3)? Was Israel not to be a light to all peoples on earth? (cf. e.g., Isa 42:6; Deut 4:6; Ps 67).

At the same time, they had to realize that they would eventually return. For Jeremiah also said: "This is what the Lord says: 'When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place' i.e. Jerusalem (Jer 29:10). In other words, their staying in Babylon was ultimately to be temporary. They had to keep that in mind.

Now we need to step back and consider the principles involved in this part of Scripture. There are a couple of points relevant for our situation today. As believers we are in some ways like the Judean exiles living in Babylon. We are also not of this world, though living in it. We too know that ultimately our sojourn here is temporary and we too look forward to the promised land of the new world that is coming. And so on one level, this world is a hostile place for us, a temporary place, and some would say, let's avoid it and be separate! Let's concentrate on our own community and take care of our own needs. They are plentiful enough. Forget about the godless society around us. That is a response that could have been expected from



the Babylonian exiles. However, God said otherwise. His children have an obligation towards the society in which they live, even if that society is hostile to their faith and values. That obligation toward society also involves the political sphere. After all, like the Judean exiles, we too have explicit instructions to pray for those in authority over us. As we read in 1 Timothy 2:1-2, "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness."

How can we pray for those in authority over us if we do not do what we can to witness to God's norms for our society and nation? Those in authority over us are not our adversaries but those to whom we owe respect and obedience. They have been placed there by God himself (Rom 13:1-5). We should therefore help them in every possible way and get involved in the political process. If we as Christians and as Reformed confessors do not help our representatives on whatever level to see a Christian perspective on the issues of the day, who will? We owe it to them.

At the same time, we need to be realistic. We are after all strangers here and our sojourn is limited. We cannot expect to see immediate results and indeed we may not even see any results at all. For real positive change to occur on a political level, the culture and mind-set of a nation needs to undergo that change.

Daniel

And yet, you never know how the Lord can use us. Would Daniel have ever thought, while growing up in Jerusalem, that he would one day have influence in Babylon!? Let's just pause for a moment and consider how Daniel exercised his political calling as a believer.

Think for a moment of how Daniel stood up and said this to the mightiest ruler of the world at that time. "Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue" (Dan 4:27). Daniel is polite. "Be pleased to accept my advice." He is, after, all speaking to Nebuchadnezzar in whose hand is the life of every one of his subjects. But he is also firm and gives direction. "Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed." Indeed, God has just revealed to Nebuchadnezzar via a dream that the king would be driven away from his palace to live with the wild animals until he acknowledges that God is king! Daniel is to the point in charging the king to repent and do right.

Now in our current multi-cultural and politically correct context, this is not exactly what you would expect. Then Daniel would have been apologetic about his personal faith and basically told the monarch to do whatever his pagan advisors would tell him to do. After all, he, Daniel, should not impose his morals on others! But no, Daniel spoke the truth, politely but to the point. We need to do the same wherever God has placed us and whenever he gives us the opportunity. And we have many opportunities in a democracy. As Christians, we represent God's interests and so our leaders can expect input from us!

New Testament teaching

Let's move on to the New Testament. Two examples come to mind. John the Baptist had confronted Herod, the tetrarch, about the sin of his marriage to the wife of his brother Phillip (Matt 14:3-4). But he had also said more. We read in Luke 3:19 that he had also admonished him about "all the other evil things he had done." He addressed the government policies of Herod and pointed out the evil he was doing. It cost John the Baptist his freedom and then his life, but he knew his responsibilities before Herod, also his political responsibilities.

On one level, this world is a hostile place for us, a temporary place, and some would say, let's avoid it and be separate

In a similar way, the Apostle Paul confronted the Roman governor Felix while he was a prisoner in Caesarea. Acts 24:25 tells us that he talked to Felix about "righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come." One can be sure that also dealt with the moral standards of the day and thus government policy.

Well, one could say: I'm not John the Baptist, or Paul, the Apostle! I'm just a simple believer. However, the examples just given show that the gospel is relevant for government officials. We therefore need to reflect on what our Saviour said in the Sermon on the Mount. It is also relevant for political involvement. In his Sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus said:

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do

people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (Matt 5:13-16)

The Lord Jesus used two images. The first is salt. Salt prevents or slows down decay. Christians by living out their faith combat the moral and spiritual decay of the society in which they live. The imagery is grand. "Salt of the earth!" Not salt of our home or church, but of the earth! In other words, nothing is to be left outside the influence of Christians! Also society, culture, and politics need to feel the effect of the Christian testimony. Wherever this testimony is experienced, there is resistance against the moral decay of this age and it can ultimately have political consequences. If Christians don't live out their faith in the fullness of life, our words will mean little and our testimony will be compromised.

As Christians, we represent God's interests and so our leaders can expect input from us

The other image Christ used is light. Light is used in Scripture for many positive things such as righteousness and truth which Christians are to embody (Eph 5:8-9). Again the image is grand and comprehensive. "You are the light of the world!" Everything needs to be illumined by the gospel and Christian principles, including the often sordid world of politics. It is unthinkable to let the light be hidden under a bushel. Light is meant to shine! The positive impact must be such that "men may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

Tied to this is a further consideration. The Bible is relevant for today. It shows the way for all of life. Christians who get involved in the political process in a responsible way can shed the light of the gospel on the issues of the day and that's good for the nation. After all, biblical principles and solutions work! God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light on our path (Ps 119:105). But that truth is also relevant for the nation. The more we as a nation are in tune with God's wishes, the more blessed we are as a people. "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people" (Prov 14:34).

There are obvious ethical areas where our voice is needed in the political discourse. I think of the evil of abortion, the redefinition of marriage, the breakup

of the family unit, the idolization of human rights. A strong Christian voice continues to be necessary to remind the nation of the blessings of protecting the unborn, upholding the creation ordinance of marriage, promoting the family unit, and balancing rights with responsibilities. But there are many other areas as well that need our attention.

More than ever before we are faced with challenges that demand a biblical response for true solutions. This calls for our involvement.

The challenge and the comfort

But, one may say, it looks hopeless! And with the psalmist one can say: "When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Ps 11:3). The implication is: nothing! If a building is on shaky ground, as our society seems to be at the moment, what can be done about it? Nothing, many say. However, David in this particular psalm refuses to flee from the problem and avoid the hard reality. In a simple child-like faith he goes on to remind us that "the LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD is on his heavenly throne. He observes the sons of men; his eyes examine them" (Ps 11:4). God's throne may be highly exalted, but he knows what's going on in this world. He sees what people are doing!

Now David is realistic, as we also have to be. He knows that you can't always change a bad situation. But he comforts himself with the thought that God is in control and that there is a day of judgment coming. He says "on the wicked he will rain fiery coals and burning sulfur; a scorching wind will be their lot. For the LORD is righteous, he loves justice; upright men will see his face" (Ps 11:6-7). Meanwhile, he will do what he can and not flee from the problems of the moment.

We are further along in God's plan for this world than David was. We may know the confession that "Jesus is Lord" (1 Cor 12:3). Well, if he is Lord of heaven and earth, and he is, and if all power and authority has been given to him, and it has (Matt 28:18), then such a confession like "Jesus is Lord" is a political statement! As a Christian, such a confession has enormous political consequences. In the days of the apostles, the Christian church was nothing in the eyes of the mighty Roman Empire. But the empire feared the Christian confession of "Jesus is Lord" for they rightly saw that it opposed their confession that Caesar is Lord and ruler of the world! And therefore Christians were persecuted for their faith. But they carried on with their confession and simply lived out their lives in a Christian way with all the consequences. And in the end they conquered the world! The Christian faith is relevant for politics.



We today may also have that same rich confession that "Jesus is Lord" but it is a confession which we cannot and must not keep to ourselves. After all, government is a servant of God and ultimately all governments will have to answer to the King of kings and Lord of lords what they have done with the authority God has given to them. We as children of God owe it to those in authority to share with them what we know with respect to God's demands for our society today. As one of our forebearers, Abraham Kuyper, taught us: "There is not a square inch of territory in the whole universe over which Christ does not say 'this is mine.'" And therefore everything we do has to be done to the glory of God. As 1 Corinthians 10:31 tells us: "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." And as we seek to do our political responsibilities to God's glory we have a wonderful opportunity to show the way in which a country will ultimately be blessed. For applying biblical principles to the problems of today is good for society! It is not our political task to try to make Canada Christian. But it is our task to show those in authority what the Lord Jesus, to whom God the Father has given all authority and power, expects from them.

So we may work and labour in faith and therefore in the joyful realization of the triumphant Christ, our Messiah. But we do so soberly, realizing that we may not always achieve what we would like and realizing that ultimately we are indeed strangers on this world and we look forward to a new heaven and a new earth.

The place of the Association for Reformed Political Action (ARPA)

Well, if we have a political task, in one form or another, how do we fulfill it? Now I suppose it is human to let someone else do it. One can feel inadequate and we can easily pass the buck, or say: should the church not make pronouncements on the social and political ills of the day? After all, is the church not "the pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15)? Indeed, it is the task of the church to uphold the truth of Christianity and all those belonging to it are to exhibit life styles and behaviour in conformity to it. It is also the task of the church to equip its members to be a salt and light in society. But, it is up to the members of the church to actually be a light and leaven in the society in which God has placed them. The church's task is to proclaim the gospel. And having heard the gospel, the members of the church go out and apply it to all areas of life. The church has

neither the duty nor the expertise as an institution to seek to influence the political and social life of the nation. The members of the church must do that according to the gifts God has given them. However, if government asks a church for input, for example, by way of a parliamentary commission, then the church is duty bound to tell what the biblical principles are respecting the issue at hand.

It is our task to show those in authority what the Lord Jesus, to whom God the Father has given all authority and power, expects from them

Well, how then can we be politically active? What does God require of us? We have already covered some of that but let me summarize as follows. We pray for the authorities. To be able to pray meaningfully, we must study the issues of the day and seek a biblical perspective. We must vote on election day! We need to get to know our elected representatives and let them know our Christian convictions on the issues of the day. In short, we need to get involved in whatever way possible to make your Christian voice heard.

Well how can one possibly do all that? We're busy! Yes, and this is where ARPA comes in. It is an excellent organization which makes it very simple to keep up to date on what's going on and where action is needed. Join ARPA and benefit from their regular emails and fantastic website (<http://arpacanada.ca/>) which keeps growing and offering more and more.

And let us remember. We can easily complain about the direction of our nation. But we're part of the nation and we're co-responsible for what goes on. Perhaps as a Reformed community we can sometimes be too focused on ourselves and our immediate needs. If that is so, we need to reach out to the society around us. It needs our Christian testimony. To be silent would be to share in the guilt of all the negatives that we as Christians can complain about. If Christians show apathy and indifference, that will have devastating moral results for our country. And it's not just the hot button issues that should preoccupy us. We need to become more involved in all aspects of civic life. We are after all Canadians, many second and third generation Canadians! So let's get involved!



Official Opening of Cornerstone Christian School

On September 9, 2010 in Guelph, Ontario something of a traffic jam occurred on a quiet little side street. Unbeknownst to many in the town a momentous event was about to occur, the official opening of Cornerstone Christian School. The gathering was described by the evening's emcee Mr. Herman Post, the first and former board chairman, as one of celebration and thankfulness to our heavenly Father. An assembly where its attendants could look back joyfully on the work begun in 2006 that had now after almost five years of prayer, planning, and sweat come to fruition!

Gathered that evening was a group comprised of both the "young and the wise" and included a student body of ninety-eight students, families, supporters, and even local political figures. As Mr. Post gave his message of welcome, he reflected on the school's first day saying while it's typical for students to have a few tears of apprehension, at Cornerstone that morning it was the parents with the most tears to wipe!

The evening was opened in prayer by the board chair, Mr. Duane Westrik, and following this the school photo signed by the original school members was presented. Mr. Post then invited the founding fathers Art Lodder, Leo Lodder, Kevin Oostdyk, Bryan



Schieck, and himself to unveil the photo. While onstage it was humorous to hear them reflect on their first school discussions – early morning meetings that always occurred over bacon and eggs.

After presentations by local dignitaries came the official ribbon cutting. The four students who submitted the text chosen for the school name – David Nijenhuis, Sarah VanDelden, Gloria VanWeerden, and Spencer Westrik – all happily tromped onstage to participate in the symbolic cut. The school then received a presentation by Mr. Leo Kampen who was in attendance both in the capacity of grandparent to a Cornerstone

student, as well as chairman of the Harvest Foundation who had graciously provided a donation to the school capital drive.

Finally, as the presentations came to an end we were able to hear from the staff and students themselves. Cornerstone's first principal, Mr. Menco Wieske, took to the stage to speak after which the audience was treated to the first official performance by the Cornerstone students who sang the school's new song, written and composed by the school's choir director, Mrs. Cynthia Schieck.

The name "Cornerstone Christian School" came from the text 1 Peter 2:6-8: "See, I lay a stone





in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.' Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, 'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,' and, 'A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.'" Earlier in the evening Mr. Post pointed out how the school text was appropriate in any number of ways. The text provided for the name of our school, but it also provided our identity as found in Jesus Christ our Cornerstone. It would seem that the text was also an accurate description of the school building itself. While observing the vibrant and energetic sights of the school, it was awe inspiring to reflect on the text as an analogy to the physical location itself. Certainly there were a number of hurdles recognized back at the first official "Town Hall Meeting" in 2006, but not the least of these challenges was to find a building in which school

Cornerstone Christian School Theme Song

at Cornerstone Christian School
 we Only Serve our Lord
 we Rest on Him for our salvation
 for Now and
 Everlasting
 we Rely on Him to help us grow
 Studying all things so that we can know
 to Trust Him
 and Obey Him
 for Now and
 Evermore.
 Jesus Is our Cornerstone!!!

could be held. However, it would seem that Cornerstone Christian School would be like the "stone the builders had rejected." The old, discarded school was long ago rejected by its builders and had been sitting vacant for the previous two years. While there were some who saw this building as outdated and unnecessary, to the communion of saints in Guelph this building was seen in a much different light. The building was exactly what was needed and became elevated as the capstone; a unique place ideally

located, suited, and sized for its all-important task. In witnessing this building, in witnessing all the other details that came together to be Cornerstone Christian School, it is impossible to doubt the greatness of our God. Throughout the entire process it was humbling and awe inspiring to witness the Lord's unwavering strength, to see the flawlessly unfolding orchestration of his plans! Truly each and every innumerable task, detail, and obstacle was perfectly preordained by him!





Convention 2010 of the CRTA-Ontario

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Back in 1980, Dufferin Area Christian School hosted a convention for the members of the Canadian Reformed Teachers Association. Thirty years later, in the newly expanded DACS school building, another convention was held. Over 160 teachers followed their Google maps successfully to the quiet hamlet just north-west of Orangeville. After chatting briefly to the friendly faces behind the registration table, teachers could enjoy some delightful nourishment, and then chat with colleagues before finding a place to sit in the gymnasium. Mr. Keith Sikkema, principal of DACS, led the convention in opening devotions and introduced our devotional speaker, Rev. P. Feenstra, present minister of the Grand Valley Canadian Reformed Church.

Devotional address

Rev. Feenstra addressed us on the topic "Parables in Jesus' Teaching." In this devotional speech, Rev. Feenstra explained that Jesus did not choose to teach in parables in order to use a more attractive teaching method and draw in greater crowds; rather, he used this method to reveal the secrets and mysteries of the heavenly kingdom. Through parables, Jesus brings believers to the "heart" matters of his kingdom. By means of the parables, the gospel of the kingdom was shared to all, but only opened to those who believed and repented. It was closed to those who did not repent, those who did not accept the characteristics of the kingdom of heaven or its King.

Rev. Feenstra urged all teachers to carefully share these parables, not to dumb them down, but instead to teach them with precision and with the "heart" matters in mind. Through them, these mysteries of the heavenly kingdom are demystified, but only to those who hear with ears of faith. The parables are not given to the church for an exercise of human intellect, but for the growth in the heart of faith. We must not let human reasoning dim or snuff out the divine truths of Jesus' parables. After the devotional, participants studied a particular parable at their tables.

Presuppositional apologetics

At 11:15, teachers took their places in the various well-decorated classrooms (students: you did a great job decorating!) for their first seventy-five minute workshops. Topics ranged from Jump Math, Play-filled Teaching, Integrating the Weak Reader, and Teaching Human Sexuality, to Helping the Gifted, Four Blocks Literacy Model, Psalms in the Classroom, and Presuppositional Apologetics. Regarding this last one, Dr. Bredenhof explained that apologetics is a vindication (reasoned defense) of a Reformed world view. Apologetics helps us to defend our faith (see 1 Peter 3:15).

Carefully share these parables, not to dumb them down, but instead to teach them with precision and with the "heart" matters in mind

After a hearty lunch of soup, buns with Dutch cheese and ham, veggies, and dessert, the teachers moved on to a second set of workshops. The topics were as follows: Socratic Circles, Lap Books, the www.ReformedTeacher.net website, Using Technology in the Classroom, Speech and Language strategies, Learning Skills for Life in Different Ways, and Storytelling. Which one do you think was the most interesting? Socratic Circles, of course – although perhaps one of us is a biased reporter; however, if you do not agree, just buy the book with the same title at www.amazon.ca – it will be well worth your read.

Praise be to God

The second day of the conference began much the same as the first: coming before the Lord in praise, Bible reading, and prayer. These were enthusiastically led by Inge DeVisser, focusing on Psalm 66:15-18: "Come





and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me. I cried out to him with my mouth; his praise was on my tongue. If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer. Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!" Fitting words indeed for a day in which teachers again gather together to think about and discuss their task in our Christian community.

Keynote address

Dr. Jason VanVliet of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary in Hamilton was introduced as our keynote speaker. His speech was titled: *Healthy Discipline in Home, School, and Church*. His goal was to look at trends in discipline and respect in our Christian schools as investigated through a teacher survey in a Canadian Reformed elementary school. He began by reminding us of the well known triangle of home, church, and school. It has been tested, tried, and proven to be a blessing. It may not be a perfect model – lines between each institution have weaknesses and imperfections – yet it is well worth improving and maintaining.

He proposed an addition to the model: a circle around the triangle which would represent the world (the society of people opposed to our Lord God Creator, whose prince is Satan). He reminded us that we must not stick our head in the sand and forget that the world exists. The devil is working hard to morph the triangle into a circle – making home, church, and school more and more like the world.

With this in mind he introduced us to a survey he had conducted. With the results of this survey he identified a few over-arching themes:

1) Students, influenced by the circle, do not recognize discipline as an act of love (Hebrews 12:11). Yet, teachers need to avoid trying to make discipline something less painful so that it seems more loving – rather we must teach our children to look through the pain and see the eventual harvest of righteousness and peace for those who are trained by it.

2) Sincere respect is still generally shown for teachers. When disrespect is shown it is not explicit but rather found in tone of voice or "heel dragging." The students of today do not seem drastically worse in this regard than those of twenty or thirty years ago.

3) If there is something in decline, it is a lessening of an understanding of a category difference between teacher and student – that teachers have a God-given position of authority over students, regardless of age, size, gender, or even talents. This blurring of category difference is encouraged by the circle – the world (via TV, advertisements, books) informs the children that all are equal and the same in society. We need to address this by teaching the children not to live by sight but by faith. By sight, particularly as students get older, we can understand how they could feel that the category difference between them and teachers diminishes; however, by faith it is clear that the same respect and obedience is necessary.





4) Another large issue is that inconsistencies often exist between home, church, and school in terms of respect expected and discipline applied. This is a problem which needs to be addressed; we need to communicate amongst ourselves and establish biblical standards. Also we cannot assume that students know how to show respect or react to discipline; we must consciously teach this, keeping in mind that our goal is a harvest of peace and righteousness.

Following the speech there was a profitable question period. Discussion was opened to the floor with many helpful insights made by various teachers.

After a brief break for coffee and snacks the CRTA Business Meeting began. It is noteworthy that this was without a doubt the best attended meeting in years – although perhaps this comes as no surprise considering it occurred *during* the conference, rather than the customary before or after the conference. Reports were made by such bodies of the CRTA as Compass Magazine, the Professional Development Committee, and the Pension Committee.

Building community and collegiality

Following this, teachers were divided into groups based on grade level and they invaded DACS classrooms for a Language Arts “working together” session. From my perspective in the Grade Seven group, these sessions helped to build a sense of community and collegiality among teachers of the same grades, and again reminded us that we need to lean on one another in this very challenging task.

The teachers gathered again in the gym for another delicious meal, this time featuring hot cuts of meat,

beans, and potatoes. After an hour of socializing and song, the final workshops of the conference were commenced. Among the many topics discussed were: The Teacher as a Counselor, Philosophy for Children, and Basketball Teaching in the Upper Elementary Grades.

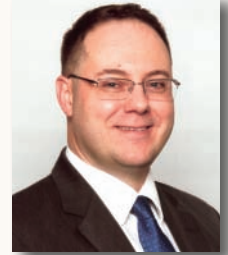
Thank you, presenters

Although many presenters were fellow teachers, some presenters were from other educational or professional backgrounds. One presenter was a registered nurse, another a freelance artist, two speech-and-language pathologists, a mathematician-author-playwright, and lastly, there was also a retired public school educator. As Reformed teachers, we learned from the gifts and knowledge that they shared with us from their professional disciplines, always ensuring, however, that what they shared and what we gained from them was placed in humble submission to the Word of our King Jesus Christ. How beautiful it is to be allowed to teach his children every year again. Soli Deo Gloria!

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.



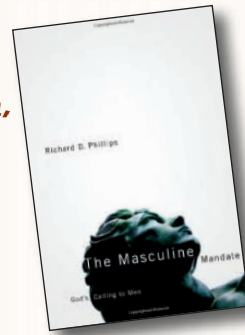
reviewed by Wes Bredenhof



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***The Masculine Mandate: God's Calling to Men,*
Richard D. Phillips, Orlando: Reformation
Trust Publishing, 2010.**

**Additional Information: Hardcover, 174 pages,
\$15.43**



Back in the 1990s, it was Promise Keepers that attempted to bring men to realize their calling as men, especially as husbands and fathers. At that time, helpful critiques were offered by some in the Reformed community. In the first years of the new millennium, it was John Eldredge and his book *Wild at Heart* that seemed to get the attention of many men. However, it soon became evident that Eldredge had some serious theological problems. For one thing, he seemed to lean towards a heretical view of God's sovereignty known as open theism. Open theism teaches that God takes risks – in Eldredge's language, "...there is definitely something wild in the heart of God." Since God takes risks (and he doesn't know what will happen), men too should go out on a limb and be godly (i.e. God-like).

It's easy to take shots at the bad stuff that's been put out there for Christian men. It's obviously much more difficult to come up with a positive approach. *The Masculine Mandate* is a solid effort in that direction. The author's purpose is to give clear, sound, biblical teaching for men about being men.

Richard Phillips is a PCA pastor in Greenville, South Carolina and the author of several other books. In a previous life, he served as a tank officer in the U.S. Army and a professor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. His military service certainly grabbed my attention. After all, what could be more masculine than commanding tanks? On several occasions throughout the book, he provides illustrations or anecdotes that could only be gained from someone with military experience. Yet it is the Bible that provides the foundation for everything in this little volume.

The author's starting place is the Garden of Eden. He notes that Adam's call was two-fold: to work and to keep. It's those two imperatives that form the thrust of this book. Everything is filtered through those commands: work, marriage, child-rearing, friendship, and church leadership. According to Phillips, the masculine mandate is "to be spiritual men placed in real-world, God-defined relationships, as lords and servants under God, to bear God's fruit by serving and leading."

One could quibble with a few minor points, but generally you'll find a biblically sound presentation of manhood in these pages. The one point that I'll comment on has to do with his discussion of the means of grace on pages 38-39. He rightly identifies one of those means as being God's Word. To be transformed into Christ-likeness, we need the Holy Spirit to apply the Word of God. One would expect a Reformed/ Presbyterian author to place the emphasis here on regularly sitting under the preaching of the Word of God. Instead, the only thing that gets mentioned here is personal Bible study. Were he pressed on it, I'm guessing the author would agree that regular church attendance and sitting under the proclamation of the gospel is crucial, but it's overlooked here and elsewhere in the book and that's unfortunate. Too often in the broader context, church-going is regarded as more of a feminine activity. Manly men belong in church sitting under the means of grace with their wives and children.

Phillips does interact some with other views of manhood. For instance, early in the book he provides a brief critique of John Eldredge's *Wild at Heart*. There are many aberrant views of masculinity floating about and even where this book doesn't address them directly, it will provide helpful biblical instruction to inoculate ourselves against them. A recent issue of *The Atlantic* had a cover story entitled, "The End of Men." The article stated that there is a massive role reversal taking place in our culture. Women are now in the majority in the US workforce. Most managers in US businesses are women. Most likely similar trends are taking place in Canada. We are in the midst of a major cultural shift and we need guidance from the Bible. Richard Phillips provides that.

Written with clarity, this book deserves to be read by men of all ages. Since it has study questions for reflection and discussion at the end, it could be helpful for a men's fellowship group at church. Or perhaps a father could read this book with his older teenage son(s) and have it stimulate some good discussion about biblical manhood. It's one of the better books on the subject.



N.T. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters* (HarperOne, 2010)

**Additional Information: 307 pages,
ISBN 978-0061 730559**

"What is expected of me now that I have come to believe? How must I live so that my faith becomes evident in my day-to-day life and indeed shapes it?" This sort of question is often asked today, both by new converts and by long-term believers. Discussions on the topic arouse much interest and books dealing with the nature of a radically Christian lifestyle find eager readers. This interest is to be explained not only by personal concerns, although these play a role. In a post-Christian society belief in God is no longer self-evident, a "matter of course." More perhaps than ever, Christians feel the need to be assured of their faith by its fruits (to use the language of the Heidelberg Catechism). But in addition there are evangelistic reasons. Our postmodern age wants authenticity; it asks for visible, material proof of the gospel's life-changing nature before it will even begin to consider its possible truth.

Well-known Bible scholar N. T. Wright, Anglican bishop of Durham, is among those who have written about this issue in the past. In the book now under review he does so again, seeking to describe a manner of Christian living that honours God, helps to assure the believer, and seeks to win others for Christ. As the sub-title already suggests, his focus is not primarily on an enumeration of variegated "good works" or on rule-keeping, but on the development of Christian character.

Wright begins by mentioning two related books he recently published, namely *Simply Christian* (2006) and *Surprised by Hope* (2008). Therein, and especially in the second one, he took issue with the idea that our ultimate destiny is simply "going to heaven." That view he rejected as far too narrow and therefore unbiblical. True, our souls will go up to heaven when we die, but that is not our ultimate destiny. To think so is to forget that according to God's plan the earth itself will be renewed and heaven and earth united. Because the completion of that plan has been secured by Christ's death and resurrection, the final destiny of believers is not an everlasting disembodied existence in a non-physical heaven, but a glorious, bodily resurrection in God's redeemed creation, the new heaven and the new earth. And this final destiny has implications for the way we are to live here on earth.

In the present book Wright pursues the topic further. He tells us that our final destiny is connected to our original vocation. Humans were created in God's image. As his vice-regents they were to rule, guard, and develop God's world and to reflect, as in a mirror, the Creator unto the world and the world back unto the Creator. When humanity fell into sin, Christ came to fulfill God's plan. He now calls his followers to work with him, assuring them that in his power, and by his grace and Spirit, they are being transformed to become what God originally intended them to be. In the author's own words, "Christian life in the present, with its responsibilities and particular callings, is to be understood and shaped in relation to the final goal for which we have been made and redeemed. The better we understand that goal, the better we shall understand the path toward it" (p. ix). In short, Christians must live and act here and now in such a way that their life becomes an *anticipation* of the life to come. The specific question Wright seeks to answer concerns both the "what" and the "how" of such a life, namely its nature and the way we are to learn to live it. I begin with the latter.

Character formation

In attempting to answer the "how" question, Wright gives much attention, as mentioned, to the need for deliberate *training* in Christian character (or "virtue"). In that training, he points out, we need the ethical guidelines God has given us, such as the Ten Commandments. These teach us, among other things, not to trust in our own wisdom and "listen to our own hearts," as is so often suggested today, but to rely on God's guidance. We should, however, also avoid the opposite error of putting our confidence in a legalistic rule-keeping. The commandments serve as essential signposts, but they do not have the power to renew us and so to equip us for our Christian task. What is needed is an internal change, a transformation of character, so that we act in certain ways not because of external pressure, but because of an inward inclination. And for this we need the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Wright has much to say about the necessity of the Spirit's work in us. He at the same time, however, stresses the need for an *active* human striving, something that the Spirit makes possible. In fact, he believes that the one implies the other. Doesn't Scripture tell us to keep working out our salvation because God works in us to will and to act (Phil 2:12f.)?

An important part of our involvement in character formation, Wright says, is constant practice, so that



the new behaviour becomes more and more “natural.” There is nothing automatic about the process: character training takes time, practice, patience, and perseverance. He compares it to learning a new language which, especially at first, can be difficult and frustrating, but with sufficient practice it gets easier, and in the end speaking it becomes almost second nature. It’s an apt comparison, for the goal of moral training is to learn the “language” of the world to come. To show the need for and the beneficial effects of persistent practice, Wright uses the example of pilot Chesley Sullenberger III who in January 2009, because of both his thorough professional training and his long-practiced “virtues of courage, restraint, cool judgment, and determination to do the right thing for others,” managed to land his plane, disabled upon its collision with a flock of Canada geese, on the Hudson River, thereby saving the lives of many.

The need for human effort in the pursuit of virtue is not a specifically Christian insight. As Wright reminds us, the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) already taught it, arguing that character is formed by the conscious and ongoing practice of such virtues as courage, justice, prudence, and temperance (the so-called cardinal virtues). Aristotle was a pagan. He was not particularly interested in *Christian* virtues like faith, hope, and love (1 Corinthians 13), and certainly not in those of meekness and humility. Nor did he realize the depth of our depravity and our need of divine grace. There is a profound difference between the Aristotelian teachings on character training and those of the Bible. Yet Aristotle was right in stressing that virtuous behaviour must be deliberately taught and rigorously practiced. Wright therefore regrets that fear of Pelagianism (“work-righteousness”) has caused many Christians – especially in the churches of the Reformation, he believes – to shy away from intentional character education. But the command that we work out our salvation (Phil 2:12) does not contradict the doctrine of salvation by grace alone.

What brain science tells us

The Christian view of character formation encompasses all that was worthwhile in Aristotle’s scheme, but it does not work the other way around, and Wright devotes by far the larger part of his book to the description of the biblical model. Before he turns to that topic, however, he briefly refers to some findings of modern brain science which suggest that consistent patterns of behaviour result in physical changes in the brain. Should this indeed be so (and Wright reminds us that the research is still in an early stage), it would serve as a scientific confirmation of the habit-forming nature of the moral and other choices we

make. According to neuroscientists our brain is wired, metaphorically speaking, and our choices and practices make “electronic pathways.” This is both encouraging and frightening: if positive actions have that effect, then the same must be true for negative ones. In Wright’s words, “. . .Supposing a decision to cheat on my tax return leaves an electronic pathway in the brain which makes it easier to cheat on other things – or people – as well? Or supposing the decision to restrain my irritation with a boring neighbor on the train. . . leaves a pathway which makes it easier to be patient when someone subsequently behaves in a truly offensive manner?” (p. 39). To ask these questions, as Aristotle already knew and as biblical wisdom teaches (see for example the Book of Proverbs), is to answer them.

The life defined

Turning to the “what” question, Wright condenses the concept of a truly Christian lifestyle into the word “discipleship,” a following of Christ, which implies a daily dying unto self and a daily training in the virtues of faith, hope, and love. The greatest of these virtues, we read in 1 Corinthians 13, is love, namely the tough, self-giving, Christ-like love that Paul describes in this chapter – a love that is patient, kind, not envious, or boastful, or proud, or rude, or self-seeking. . . and so on. A life guided by such love is cruciform, cross-shaped. It must be so. Nature is not simply to be reformed, it must be put to death in order “to come to life on the other side” (p. 239). Therefore, whereas the Aristotelian method led to pride in human achievement, the biblical one cultivates a spirit of humility and self-denial.

This self-denial is constant and eschews all pride. In Wright’s words, “. . .Christian virtue isn’t about you – your happiness, your fulfillment, your self-realization. It’s about God and God’s kingdom, and your discovery of a genuine humane existence by the paradoxical route – the route God himself took in Jesus Christ! – of giving yourself away, of generous love which constantly refuses to take center stage” (p. 70). The message that the *crucified* Jesus is the world’s true Lord is to be made known “precisely through the church’s following in his footsteps” (1 Pet 2:21-23 – Wright p. 86). Suffering as an essential part of the Christian life must therefore be actively embraced, as Christ teaches us in the Sermon on the Mount, a teaching that is repeated throughout the New Testament. It is also an element in the development of character. Suffering, Paul writes in Romans 5, produces perseverance, and perseverance character, and character hope.

Wright then turns once again to the “how” question, namely to the means of developing such a character. He makes clear throughout that the Christian life is possible only because Christ accomplished it for us

and grants us his Spirit who imparts to us Christ's benefits. Among the steps to be taken, therefore, are prayer, as well as the study of Scripture (and an *immersing* oneself in the biblical narrative), worship, both individually and corporately, and the active pursuit of holiness. Involved in all this, Wright points out (pp. 148-59), is the *renewal of the mind*, as Paul mentions it in Romans 12:2. Paul is not referring here to a believer's academic ability (not all believers have that sort of mind), but to the need to think not in a worldly, but in a new, a Christian manner. Such a renewal is necessary to "test and approve what God's will is" and to serve as a necessary antidote to the "pattern of this world" – that is, to the world's practices, assumptions, desires, and ways of thinking. And since Romans 1 defined the *darkening* of the mind as central to the problem of idolatry, dehumanization, and sin, the *renewal* of the mind is central to the renewal of the entire human being (p. 152).

Much more could be said, but I hope that those interested turn to the book itself. It is richly instructive, balanced, and geared to the common reader. I strongly recommend it. (Yes, I realize that Wright's views on justification raise concerns among many of us, but these teachings have no bearing on this book, or on many of the author's other writings. The message of the present book is unquestionably orthodox.) I do have a few practical questions. Firstly, I appreciate that Wright stresses the ongoing nature of character training. It is not a matter of a one-time conversion but a life-long process, one that must begin anew every morning. In view of the enormous challenge, it is good

to remember that one may count on the help of other believers, for character formation is an individual but certainly also a corporate project. In the communion of saints we must bear each other's burden and assume mutual responsibility. I believe that this mutuality deserved more emphasis than it got, although it is true that Wright does not ignore it altogether. And secondly, while reading the book I kept wondering if more could not have been said about the various areas in which deliberate character training can and should be practised. The church, of course, has a primary role to play – the Christian life is to be lived in community and must find its strength in worship. But shouldn't we think also of other agencies, such as the family, and even the Christian school?

As to the latter, I hear that the topic is in fact receiving attention in Reformed educational circles. It was discussed at the latest International Conference for Reformed Education (Lunteren, 2010). My question is if we should not continue the discussion. I realize that before we even begin to make plans for formal education in "virtue ethics," questions about both theory and practice would have to be answered (such as, in the practical realm, the choice of a proper "methodology"). But if we should decide to discuss the matter, Wright's book, although it does not address formal character education, could serve as a helpful preliminary guide. I suggest, however, that it be read first of all for its primary goal, which is not tell us how to teach virtue ethics to others, but simply to remind us as believers, both individually and communally, of the way we ourselves should live while on this earth.



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