

Clarion



THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
Volume 60, No. 4 • February 11, 2011

*Immanuel
Canadian Reformed
Church
Edmonton*



Inside this Issue

- Hated
- Stewards of Our Bodies



Hated!

A lot of pastors in China claim that they are Reformed but when you visit their churches on a Sunday you discover that almost anything and everything goes

Have you ever been hated? Are you currently the object of the criticism, hostility, anger, disgust, and disapproval of other people? If this applies to you then you know that it is far from a pleasant feeling. As a matter of fact, this is something that cuts deeply. I suspect that it is part of our human make-up that we all want to be respected, esteemed, and loved. None of us desire or are eager for the opposite.

And yet it happens. Recently on another trip to China I came across it. Another person and I were meeting together with a number of church leaders who had made a conscious decision to turn their churches into Reformed churches.

A good move?

Now, on the surface this sounds like a good move. After all, both the American evangelical press (*Christianity Today*) and the Dutch religious press (*Nederlands Dagblad*) have for some time been full of stories about the growth of the Reformed faith in China. The only problem with this is that the definition of what it means to be Reformed in China varies widely. Many believers in China wear it as a badge but they do not know what the badge means. The result is that the strangest ideas are expounded and the weirdest practices are employed under the umbrella of the name "Reformed." Only, they have nothing at all to do with being Reformed. So when you read more stories about there being an explosion of Reformed this or that in China, be skeptical.

But getting back to those church leaders who had made a conscious decision to go Reformed, you need to understand that they knew the real meaning and implications of this name. They had studied hard, done their homework, received advice, and knew what they were doing.

Over time they taught their respective flocks about what it meant to really be Reformed and what the implications would be. Most of them wholeheartedly agreed that this was the way that they should go; however, some wanted nothing to do with it. One of the pastors looked after two churches, one in his home and the other in a different part of the city. Upon declaring openly for the Reformed faith, the church across town severed all ties with him.

In addition, he and the other pastors lamented the fact that no sooner did they adopt the real Reformed way and they were on the receiving end of all sorts of abuse. Other Christians called them extremists, radicals, heretics, and other unpleasant names. In short, being Reformed became a byword.

Now that immediately raised my curiosity and I asked them why were they being so criticized and ostracized from people who formerly counted them as brothers and sisters in the faith? The answer that I received gives you a bird's eye view into the nature and dynamics of the church in China.

Reforming worship

Take the matter of the worship service. A lot of pastors in China claim that they are Reformed but when you visit their churches on a Sunday you discover that almost anything and everything goes. People are constantly walking in and out. Cell phones are going off. (Sound somewhat familiar?) One person will stand up and pray with gusto. Another person will wail and pray often at the same time or a few seconds after the first one has started. Others chime in. The volume goes up. The tears flow. The drama heightens. Bedlam breaks out. Or the pastor gets up and begins to preach, but it has little or nothing to do with opening the Scriptures. The singing takes place and many

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, through the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) for our publishing activities.

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of the songs are full of mushy subjectivism and trite emotionalism. There is no discernible structure or order to the worship service. It just goes on and on and gradually it runs out of steam and peters out.

Now, compare that to the Reformed approach where there is an order of worship, a flowing of one liturgical element into the next, prayers that have substance and content, psalms and hymns that are theologically sound and musically fitting, sermons that open the Word and strive to apply it appropriately, and what you get is a contrast.

And that's where part of the hatred comes from. People who are used to doing their own thing in worship, flaunting their piety, being in the spotlight, generally detest order, and despise restriction. They want to worship their way and not God's way. Whether they realize it or not, they convey the impression that the Holy Spirit is the spirit of chaos and disorder.

Reforming leadership

Or take the matter of church governance. Just how should a church be run? If you go by the most popularly model in China you will soon come to the conclusion

What's Inside

In our fourth issue of the year our editorial shares experiences of work going on in Reformed congregations in China. There is reformation needed in worship, leadership, and even finances. Prayer is needed for our brothers and sisters in China as they persevere in their work.

Rev. Peter Holtvliwer follows up on a recent editorial and examines the command to be stewards of our bodies in relation to weight gain and loss. Do we eat because we like eating, it makes us happy, or comforts us? We may be in danger of letting food be our master. Stay tuned for a concluding article in an upcoming issue.

In the Ecumena column, Rev. George van Popta discusses Bible translations with a view to decisions the Committee on Bible Translations will have to make regarding the upcoming revisions to the NIV.

Issue 4 includes a book review from Dr. Wes Bredenhof, news from the Women's Savings Action, and a report on the official re-opening of Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church's building in Edmonton. We have our regular columns, Treasures Old and New and Roadside Assistance, as well as a Mission News insert.

Laura Veenendaal

In This Issue

Editorial – Hated! — Barnabas 74

Treasures, New and Old – Feast or Funeral?
— J. Ludwig 77

Stewards of Our Bodies
— P.H. Holtvliwer 79

Ecumena: Trends in Bible Translation, 1611-2011
— G. van Popta 82

Official Re-opening for Immanuel Canadian Reformed
Church, Edmonton — H. Klaver 84

Roadside Assistance — K. Foekens 86

News from the Women's Savings Action 88

Book Review — reviewed by W. Bredenhof 90

that the church should be run either by one man or by a club of ladies. In the case of the one-man approach, he is one who makes all the decisions and dominates over the members. If there are elders, and that's a big "if," they are usually nothing more than a bunch of errand boys and "yes" men. If there are deacons, and that's an even bigger "if," they are little more than assistants who dispense the monies at the behest of the leader. He, and he alone, determines who gets what, when and if.

Reforming the church, whether it be in doctrine or practice, is no easy thing

In addition to one-man rule in China, one also comes across ruling ladies. Often these ladies are very sincere, committed, and well meaning. Sometimes they lead by default because their husbands are indifferent or unconverted. At other times they lead by intent because they deem themselves to be spiritually superior. Whatever the case may be, they are in control, and there is just no way that they are going to give it up.

Now, just imagine for a moment that in such a situation a church decides to become truly Reformed in polity as well as in worship, and you can pretty much predict what will happen next. Fireworks! There is just no way that the local spiritual dictator is going to surrender his prerogatives willingly or that the leading ladies are going to give up their church powers meekly. Not on your life!

Still, that is what will need to happen if a church is to become Reformed in its governing structures. The one-man show will have to give way to the collective leadership of the elders and the ladies club will need to discover serving and give up ruling.

Reforming finances

But then if being Reformed has implications for worship and leadership, it also has implications for money. Again, imagine a situation in which money is demanded, collected, and dispensed by one man without any accountability whatsoever. There are numerous stories in China about church leaders building big houses, buying fancy cars, going on extravagant holidays, hosting elaborate meals for their cronies, while their members slave and scrap to make a living.

In addition, there are all of those well-meaning foreigners who come along, their pockets bulging with

dollars and euros, and who are going to help the poor in China. Some of these local leaders see them coming a mile away and they proceed to spin the most pious of stories with the holiest of faces. They promise to set up orphanages, to fight disease, and to assist struggling farmers. But in the end it all comes down to one man's word but no accounting and no audit.

Question: do you really think that people who upset this cozy financial applet are going to be appreciated and applauded? In such a situation a church which stresses that the monies and tithes collected are going to be handled collectively, through proper accounting procedures, and with member oversight and support, will make waves – huge, turbulent waves.

A hard, strange road

Reforming the church, then, whether it be in doctrine or practice, is no easy thing. It never comes without resistance. It is thus no wonder that these church leaders who have chosen for the Reformed way in word and deed are hated and hounded. Being a Luther, a Knox, or a Calvin never amounts to a cakewalk. Or what about the greatest reformer of all, our Lord Jesus Christ? Teaching and doing things differently than the Pharisees and Sadducees made him the lightning rod for much anger and hatred.

Nevertheless, this is what the church in China needs. It needs men and women of strong Reformed confession and conviction. Pray for these men and their churches that they may receive the strength they need to persevere. In some ways the success or failure of the church in China is in their hands.

Strange is it not? No doubt many of you have always been of the opinion the worst hatred that believers face is the hatred of the world and the devil. Perhaps in the case of China you would like to add the hatred of the government to the list. Such a conclusion, however, would be an over-simplification and it would result in a great omission as well. For both Scripture and history teach us that the most extreme opposition may come not from the outside but from the inside, from those who claim to belong to the same house and to the same family of faith. All who call themselves "Christians" are not always Christian and all who call themselves "Reformed" are not always Reformed.

So who are real McCoys? Only those, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ says, who do the will of the Father. Being hated for his sake is still painful, but it will be noticed and one day it will be rewarded.





MATTHEW 13:52

Feast or Funeral?

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"The day of death is better than the day of birth."

Ecclesiastes 7:1b

Our first reaction to these words of the Preacher might be one of alarm and perhaps confusion. The day of our death is better than the day of our birth? We celebrate birthdays. It is precisely then that we experience thankfulness, the joy of life, and companionship. But we mourn the death of our loved ones. With funerals there is separation, loss, fatigue, often frustration, and even anger. How can the Preacher say that the day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth?

To answer that question we need to see the connection with the first part of this verse. In order to discern more sharply the point of comparison in this verse, we may translate it like this, "As a good name is better than good oil, so the day of death is better than the day of birth." It is true that the emphasis is not on the first half of verse one. Nevertheless, it serves to set up the second half. The point is: both elements are good – name and oil, death and birth – but one is better than the other.

The oil (NIV: perfume) was extracted from olives. These grew in abundance in Israel; Moses in Deuteronomy 8 calls Canaan "a land of olive trees." Olive oil was a necessity of life in biblical times. It was a precious commodity and as such became the symbol for prosperity and abundance.

The Preacher uses that truth in order to vividly make his point that

even better than precious oil is "a good name." By that he means an unblemished reputation. Someone who loves God with all heart and soul and strength and loves his neighbour as himself – that person has a good name. Now just as a good reputation is better than good oil, so one's day of death is better than one's birthday. Thereby the Preacher is not declaring the day of birth to be worthless, but by this comparison he goads us on to what is still greater: evaluating and leading our life from the viewpoint of death, of the end that awaits us all.

We are inclined by nature to disagree with the Preacher. Did God not create us with a love for life? Is death not the last enemy? Instead of dwelling on death while we are in our prime, we should distance ourselves from that imminent reality as long as we can.

Why does the Holy Spirit counsel us in this way? Because someone who judges and defines his life solely according to his birthday says, "It doesn't really matter how I live. I'm going to receive what has been appointed for me anyway – prosperity or adversity, good or evil – so I may as well make the best of life. Death comes soon enough." Whereas he who goes through life bearing in mind *the end* (that death is the wages of his sin) realizes, "It does matter how I live my life, because

God has appointed for man to die and after that comes the judgment. Therefore I will enjoy every gift of God. . . but then always in the light of his Word."

Although the thought of the final judgment is not explicitly mentioned in this verse, it certainly underlies it! For why would he counsel us to be aware of the end, if death were merely the annihilation of body and soul? The preacher tells us in the closing chapters, "Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment" (11:9). Death is not the end. There will be a calling to account before the supreme Judge of heaven and earth. And he will pass sentence on what we have accomplished "under the sun," on everything we have said or done on this earth. He will do that not according to some unknown law book, but according to the ten words of the covenant which he has given us. Consequently, one who lives his life out of that perspective will strive to "fear God and keep his commandments." He will offer himself as a living sacrifice of thankfulness to the Father *through* the Son *in the fellowship* of the Spirit.

Keep in mind that we have to look at this text through the window of the entire book. The Preacher was a child of Abraham, an heir of the promises of God. Also in

his heart God had put eternity so that he longed for the coming city, the city with foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. He sees, above all, the necessity for the promised Messiah to come and make all things new. That's evident throughout this book when the Preacher asks not "how" the change will come about, but "who" will accomplish it. Without the promised Messiah everything will remain futile. Ecclesiastes is a passionate cry for the Man who is wiser than Solomon. That's why the author has seen everything so clearly. From out of this world the city which endures forever will never be established. It

must come from above the sun, from God.

This proverb remains pertinent for our life in the covenant as well. We are on the same path of God's salvation as the Preacher, only we are much further along. We live after the fullness of time for which the Preacher longed. Yes, there are still similarities between our time and his. We also groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. Nevertheless, because greater grace has been revealed to us, we are called to live in an even greater awareness of the coming judgment. For the New Testament "Israel of

God," how much more meaningful are the words "Better is the day of death. . . ." What the Old Testament church saw dimly, we see in the full brightness of the noonday sun. Jesus Christ is the "firstborn from the dead." He has taken away the sting from death. Death does not represent loss for us, but everlasting gain. On our deathbed we are closer to the full redemption of Christ Jesus than when we lie in our crib. As full as he fills the cup of life while we travel toward the city with foundations, our covenant God keeps the best wine till last. He makes the end of a thing better than its beginning. C





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Stewards of Our Bodies

Why do I do it? Why do I keep snacking when I need to lose weight? What causes me to eat more than I should? In a recent editorial I introduced the idea that in many cases our struggles with weight gain/loss come out of the choices we make each day. Choices, of course, arise out of our hearts and the problem with our hearts is that by nature they are corrupted by sin. That means that very often it is my sinful impulses which govern my food and exercise choices. But what exactly are those sinful desires? Can we do anything about them?

Thinking as stewards

It should be clear that the bottom-line issue at stake here is not what's happening around our waist but what's happening inside our heart. It's not in the first place about our weight *per se* but about our thoughts and desires. Good health is more than weight management. We have been appointed by our Creator as stewards of our bodies and so we have to *think like stewards*. We have a responsibility, even a calling to see to the overall health of our body (and mind!) to the honour of the Lord. This is doubly so for us Christians since our bodies have become inhabited by God himself, making us temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19)! This involves a clear awareness of and making choices toward good health, *all out of respect for our Maker*. If that is our over-riding thought, then that's half the battle already.

Now, just because a person is "slim" that doesn't mean he's thinking along this track yet. Becoming a good steward isn't just for those of us with extra padding. For example, it is possible to be relatively trim because of a high metabolism and yet have no notion of managing one's body to the glory of God. You are the way you are and that's that – and no more thought goes into it. Some keep lean by eating infrequently or eating poorly or under-exercising, not caring about the strength, fitness, or endurance of their bodies.

For others it may be giving in to the cravings, eating like a glutton but then relying on that high metabolism or high levels of exercise to work it off. For those of us who are obsessed with self-image it may be caring too much about the look of the body that prevents us from eating a balanced diet (i.e. mal-nutrition) and exercising properly, or even over-exercising. Trimness does not in itself mean good health nor (most importantly) the right attitude of the heart. The relatively fit appearance of the body on its own does not yet mean the Lord is being honoured.

Bodies of circumstance

I'd also like to be clear that not all over-weight persons are this way because of sinful desires of the heart. Sometimes body chemistry, faulty glands, or needed medications play a significant role in the metabolism of even a modest diet. Cognitive impairment can be another major factor. Nor do I wish to minimize the struggles of (much less offend) those who deal with serious, diagnosed eating disorders. Such situations are mainly the result of the *general* corruption of sin. As such they need to be dealt with primarily through other means, quite often with medical intervention.

The bottom-line issue is what's happening inside our hearts

Yet also in these situations, as much as is possible, the heart needs to be trained by the Word and Spirit to see the body as God's gift and so to make choices for good stewardship as God's image-bearer. But it remains a fact of life in this fallen world that unhealthy body conditions brought on by circumstances beyond our control must often be endured while waiting for the complete redemption of all creation.

Choices

However, when it comes to the majority of us, I am suggesting that these choices can be traced back to the *particular* corruption of the heart. Sinful desires compel us to make bad food and exercise choices which result in an unhealthy, mis-managed body, all of which fails to honour our Creator. And for that there is hope and opportunity for change *today* through both the blood and Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ! Christ has come not only to wash us clean from the guilt of our sin but equally to set us free from the reign of sin (Rom 6:18) and to lead us forward in obedience by his Spirit (Rom 8:13). That means that these inner corrupt desires can be combated and overcome!

But then we must know our enemy. We must assess what triggers these choices and target these areas for spiritual battle. Last time we examined some motives for desiring weight loss, but what motivates our weight *gain*? Of course, we don't normally set out to gain weight but what is the thinking of our heart and mind that leads to the pattern of over-eating and under-exercising? What desires cause us to eat without regard for the consequences, to treat our bodies in a way that does not serve to honour our Maker? Once we have exposed and confessed what's happening in our heart, then we can pray for the Lord's help to fight those sinful desires.

Driving forces

These inner impulses may vary from person to person but among the common ones are these: we eat it because it's there and we like it; we see food as a source of pleasure and eat to be happy; we eat for comfort. With respect to exercising, normally the problem is finding excuses not to be active: I don't have time; I don't like it; it doesn't help much. What these all have in common is their "me-centredness" and the absence of God from our thoughts.

In our decision making we aren't busy grappling with what *God* expects of us or how best to please him. Instead, we are focused on how best to please ourselves and in so doing we have raised up idols in our hearts. Once we've identified the idol(s) we serve, then we can seek the Lord's help to break that sinful habit and be assured that he will help. Jesus Christ is in the business of smashing down our self-made idols and being Lord over all parts of our lives.

Because I like it

It may not sound like a bad thing to simply eat because it's there and we find it enjoyable. And it would not be if we ate in moderation, exercising self-control. It's quite biblical to enjoy eating (Eccl 8:15). Food is not the enemy. Like all of God's gifts, it needs to be appreciated and used with an eye to serving our Master. The occasional festive occasion where extra food is brought out can also be enjoyed with thanks to God as can be seen in the feasts appointed by God. So long as feasts (or parties) remain exceptions (as they were in Israel), they will not interrupt a normal pattern of balanced eating and can fit into a healthy lifestyle.

~~~~~  
*Does food provide lasting comfort?  
Does it bring more than  
momentary pleasure?*  
~~~~~

Trouble starts when our normal, daily pattern becomes imbalanced. We *abuse* food when we develop the regular habit in our homes of going to the cupboard or fridge and snacking every time we think about food. We upset the balance if we always extend our hand when food is within reach when we've already eaten well at the meals. At that point, we are letting our appetite control us. We know we don't need the food and, worse, that it will add to our weight problem, yet we indulge anyway because it's there and we like the taste. We are convinced we have a right to eat as we please (and how dare there be consequences!).

Anytime we show a lack of self-control we give evidence of a spiritual problem. Something has mastered us and we must have only Christ as our master (Rom 6:13-23). The antidote in this case is to confess the sin of desiring to satisfy the appetite, to serve the god of the stomach (Phil 3:19) rather than to serve the living Lord in caring for his creation – *our bodies!* We need to pray for forgiveness and then to ask for the specific fruit of the Spirit called self-control (Gal 5:22).

It gives me pleasure

Food is (or can be) pleasurable and tasty food brings a certain delight. Some of us will even say that we "just love food!" It tastes yummy, it satisfies my desire, and leaves me feeling happy. This motivation

is slightly different from the previous one in that we deliberately seek out food to provide us with the pleasurable sensations and feelings we know it brings. Long before the party, we're thinking about how delicious the food will taste!

Sinful desires compel us to make bad food and exercise choices which result in an unhealthy, mis-managed body

Now, on the one hand, Scripture recognizes the physical pleasure which food brings as something good in itself. Proverbs 24:13 advises, "Eat honey, my son, for it is good; honey from the comb is sweet to your taste." The Promised Land, God's gift to his people, is described positively as a land "flowing with milk and honey." The food at the Lord's feasts was to be tasty, sweet, and rich (Neh 8:10; Isa 25:6). But on the other hand, this pleasure is not to consume us. Proverbs 25:17 exhorts, "It is not good to eat too much honey. . ." and other proverbs warn us against over-eating or gluttony (Prov 23:2; 21). God wants us to keep a balance between enjoying the sweet pleasure of food while at the same time caring for the health of our bodies and that is where our problem often is. Our desire for pleasure often trumps our concern for being stewards of our God-given bodies and so the weight piles on.

How can we diagnose if this is our problem? A key question to ask ourselves is: does the desire for pleasure dominate or even dictate my food choices? Some of the signs of this are: I *must* have some sort of food every time I sit down for coffee or have company over; I consider a visit, party, or an event a failure if there is no food or if the food is lousy; I feel unhappy and disappointed when food isn't offered to us at such an event; one of the first things I report to others about the visit or party is how good or poor the food was; if there is no tasty "treat" in the house, I get depressed.

If the pleasure food brings governs and directs our lives in this way, it has become an idol for us. The happiness we get from food means more to us than taking proper care of our bodies and so we bow to our desire for pleasure rather than find pleasure in obeying the LORD's command. The answer is to acknowledge this sin of our heart, repent, and in the renewing power of the Spirit of Christ make a new start in being a good steward of the body God has given.

It makes me feel better

Related to the pleasure motive is the comfort motive. If we are feeling down, blue, or depressed, we instinctively go to the cupboard or drop by a coffee shop to pick up some delicacy as a way to improve our mood. We even talk about "treating" ourselves after a rough day. We turn to food in an effort to soothe our emotions, calm our hurt feelings, or generally cheer ourselves. It is even a known phenomenon in the secular world to speak about "comfort food." And as we turn to ice-cream or apple pie or cream puffs to provide our comfort, we ignore the calling we have to take good care of God's temple, our bodies. Moderation is often thrown aside in a bid to get the good feeling that comes with eating certain foods. And again, the rolls in our hand quickly become rolls around our waist which is all that remains once the "comfort" disappears.

We must have only Christ as our master

But should we find our comfort in food? When we are honest, we soon realize that we have neglected the only source of true comfort and been using food as a substitute, and a very poor one at that! Does food provide lasting comfort? Does it bring more than momentary pleasure? To ask the question is to answer it. Food brings at best a temporary sense of relief or joy but we all know it has no power to keep us comforted or filled with pleasure – only the Lord Jesus Christ can do that! He is our only comfort in life and in death. Would it then not be far better for us to open our Bibles instead of our fridges and search in the Word for consolation, encouragement, relief, and happiness?

Why do you turn to food? What draws you to the cupboard or fridge? This is where the hard work begins, the work of assessing our deepest needs in this area of life. If we can clearly identify the sinful desire that triggers our choices and habits, then we can do what we do with any other sin: repent. Let us seek forgiveness in the cross of Christ and a new obedience through the Spirit of Christ. The needs we have are real but the way to fill those needs is in Christ alone. Then we'll find ourselves more and more becoming good stewards of our bodies to God's glory. More on that next time, the Lord willing.





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Ecumena

Trends in Bible Translation, 1611–2011

Likely, we will be hearing much about Bible translations this year. A.D. 2011 is a significant year in that respect, for it is the 400th anniversary of the King James Version (KJV) and the year that an updated rendering of the New International Version (NIV) is being released.

The KJV is reputedly the most printed book in the history of the world. It is estimated that there are more than one billion copies in print and it continues to be used by English speaking people throughout the world. My first Bible, a gift from my parents in 1967, was a KJV.

In the years following its release, many errors crept in. For example, one printing omitted the word “not” in the seventh commandment. Another printing said that the children shall first be “killed” (rather than “filled”). Over the century and a half after 1611, hundreds of changes and corrections were made to the text. Suddenly I do not feel so bad about the many hours the *Book of Praise* committee spent on proof-reading the latest version of the *Book of Praise*!

The KJV started with the controversial idea that every person, even the ploughboy working the field, should be able to read and understand the Bible. Language changes, and so what was once clear, is now rather vague. For example, who today understands the KJV rendering of Ezekiel 13:18, “Woe to the women that sew pillows to all armholes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls!”? Perhaps even the ploughboy did not understand it. And who, of my vintage, does not remember smiling when dad read 1 Kings 21:21?

Bible translation and revision is necessary because “the ploughboy” still needs to be able to understand what he reads and hears. Reading the KJV at the table or in church would not be edifying, and so, in the early 1970s, the Canadian Reformed Churches switched to the Revised Standard Version (RSV), which came out between 1946 and 1971. It

was an interesting choice, and was met by some resistance, since the RSV was the work of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, not a very conservative body.

The RSV was replaced by the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) in 1989. This version was not deemed acceptable by us since the philosophy of gender sensitivity was one of the guiding principles for its production. It is used by many mainline churches today.

The English Standard Version (ESV), another revision of the RSV, appeared in 2001. Since the noted conservative scholar, Dr. James Packer, was the general editor, it was more acceptable to conservative Reformed and evangelical readers than the NRSV. This is the version we read at our table and which I have on my Kindle. The language was modernized and passages in the RSV that conservative Protestants had always complained about were corrected.¹

In the mean time, we, as Canadian Reformed Churches, had already opted to switch to the NIV. Had we known the ESV was about to make an appearance, we may have held off. For some unknown reason, the release of the ESV was kept under wraps.

Whereas the KJV is the most printed book in history, the NIV is, at this time, the most popular English translation of the Bible. Presently, most of our churches



Church News

Called by the Church at Abbotsford, British Columbia:

Rev. Marc Jagt
of Taber, Alberta.

use the NIV while some use the New King James Version (NKJV) or the updated New American Standard Bible (NASB). A past general synod instructed the *Book of Praise* committee to replace all the RSV scripture quotations with the NIV renderings. Such a *Book of Praise* was published in 2008.

Between 2002 and 2005, a new version of the NIV was released, Today's New International Version (TNIV). It is influenced by the philosophy of gender sensitivity. For example, Genesis 1:27 reads: "So God created human beings in his own image." For this, and other, reasons, the TNIV has been criticized by conservative scholars.

And that brings us to 2011, the four hundredth anniversary of the KJV and the year that the publishers of the NIV have released an updated text, which will replace both the TNIV and the NIV (1984) with which we have become familiar. The publisher will no longer be printing the 1984 version. Our synodically

appointed committee on Bible translations will need to study the updated NIV to see whether or not it can be recommended to the churches. We look forward to their recommendations.

The committee will be aware of this very helpful website <http://biblewebapp.com/niv2011-changes/> which tabulates all the changes between the NIV, TNIV, and the updated NIV. It may be that the readers of this article will also be interested in the comparisons, in this significant year for Bible translations.

¹ For example, Isaiah 7:14—Where the RSV says that a young woman shall conceive, the ESV says that a virgin shall.

Sources:

National Post, Nov. 27, 2010, "A Biblical Birthday."
Adam Nicholson, *God's Secretaries: The Making of the King James Bible*, HarperCollins, 2003. Rev. John van Popta reviewed this book in *Clarion* 52:18, p. 431. 

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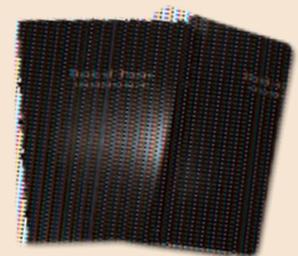
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Official Re-opening for Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church, Edmonton

Renovations

For many years the Immanuel congregation has wished to upgrade their facilities as the congregation grew but the building didn't. Several years ago a Vision Committee was appointed and recommended an extensive upgrade to the church. In September 2007 a Building Committee was appointed with the mandate to see the "Vision" Plans through to completion. Phase 1 of the vision was the renovation of the sanctuary; this was completed on schedule by December of 2008. Included in this renovation were new pews to replace the 100 year old used pews that had a tendency to rip clothes and pinch one in embarrassing places.

The congregation enjoyed the use of the beautifully rejuvenated (pinchless!) sanctuary for a year and a half while further planning and fund raising were undertaken.

Phase 2 called for the renovation and expansion of the remainder of the building and parking facilities by December 31, 2010. Thus construction began anew in early June 2010 with the excavation for footings for the building expansion. Despite the rain, and the mud, and the mess, we continued to use the building with access via wooden ramps across the excavations. In late June we moved out of the church and began worship services in the nearby Parkland Immanuel Christian School (also under construction). At this time the demolition of a large part of the original church building was begun.

Unusually heavy and frequent rains affected the construction for the next two months. To compound the mess the gas line to the school and church, which runs through the parking lot, decided to fall apart; it was dug up and repaired several times until finally it

was replaced. In the meantime another contractor was trying to expand the parking lot and a good portion of the parking lot was covered with construction trailers, building materials, and machinery. Yes, it was a crowded, muddy mess for a few months! Eventually the sun did return and construction proceeded at a rapid pace.

Finally, on the afternoon of December 18, (thirteen days before the completion date set three years previously!) the congregation and guests could come together with joy and thankfulness to officially open the renovated building.

Ceremony

The ceremony was begun by Rev. Slomp, who welcomed everyone, read from Psalm 84, and thanked our Heavenly Father for the blessings we had received, especially in this new building. He remarked that Psalm 84 speaks about the dwelling place of the Lord, referring to the temple of the Lord. We no longer worship in the temple, for the temple worship looked forward to the Lord Jesus Christ. With his coming the Holy Spirit was put out upon all the believers and now God's Spirit dwells in us and we ourselves are now temples of God. Yet, we do worship together in a church building and many of the things the psalmist says also apply today; it is especially in a church building that we celebrate God's presence. Therefore a church is often referred to as the workshop of the Holy Spirit, where he is actively engaged to bring us closer to God. Rev. Slomp remarked that the renovation was well done, there are few flaws, and you see excellent workmanship. It is obvious that there is an attempt to make it as beautiful and as perfect as possible. And

so in this building we are reminded of heaven where everything is perfect and new and beautiful and that is what we look forward to. For the Lord tells us that he will make everything new. May this building remind us of this and may we seek renewal with God.

A presentation by the chairman of the building committee, Br. Bert De Bruin, followed with a brief history of the planning and building process – lots of meetings, reports, more meetings, more reports, and more meetings with the congregation, followed by the inevitable coffee and cake. He introduced and thanked the various people involved in the planning and design as well as the contractors. He ended with a presentation to Rev. Slomp which was to involve the handing over of the giant wooden ceremonial key that was first presented twenty-six years before at the opening of



the original building to Rev. S. De Bruin, Bert's father. Unlike the building, the renovation of the key was not completed in time and we had to use our imaginations as a virtual key was presented.

We were then entertained by children of the congregation singing several Christmas carols and by congregational singing.

Further acknowledgements and thanks on behalf of the Council were then made to the various committees and individuals; with a special thanks to the school society for the use of their facilities. Br. Bert DeBruin was presented with a collection of framed pictures of the building construction and finished features of the building in recognition of his work in overseeing the planning and actual construction.

The formal part of the afternoon was concluded with prayer to our Heavenly Father for all that he has given us especially in this building; that it may be used for the teaching of his Word, for the building up of the congregation, and the spreading of the gospel.

We then moved into the new foyer where Mrs. Irene Klaver, the senior member of the congregation, cut the ribbon to officially declare the building open so that we could conclude the afternoon with the inevitable coffee and cake and tour the new facilities.





Fighting Spiritual Depression

By Kimberly Foekens

What is spiritual depression?

Have you felt sick and ready to give up because of your apparent lack of spiritual progress? Your "get up and go" has got up and went. It is as if all your personal energy has gone on vacation somewhere. The oomph with which you lived your life, the joy and happiness, is gone and you're stuck in a downward spiral that feels like your life is spinning out of control.

Spiritual depression usually follows what we have come to view as a spiritual "high." After a time in our lives when we may have been experiencing closeness to God – the sense of consoling grace and fatherly favour – there comes a time where we feel like we've hit rock bottom. In *When I Don't Desire God, How to Fight for Joy*, John Piper observes: "There are times when our faith is the size of a mustard seed and barely visible. In fact, the darkest experience for a child of God is when faith sinks out of his own sight. Not out of God's sight, but his." Yes, it is possible to be so overwhelmed by darkness that you do not know if you are a Christian – and still be one. Suddenly, the closeness that we have been enjoying seems to end. Moreover, no matter how hard we look for God; he appears nowhere to be found. We say with Job, "If only I knew where to find him" (Job 23:3a). Just as he tested Job, God sometimes may test us by withdrawing himself from us. However, he has not abandoned us. He is for us!

When we cry out, "How can I know that I am truly a child of God?" – not out of a reason to affirm our faith but out of the struggles plaguing our soul – we must remember that struggles are normal in our Christian

life. Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones comments: "If you never had any trouble in your Christian life I should very much doubt whether you are a Christian at all. From the moment we become Christians we become the special objects of the attention of the devil." One should not feel that spiritual depression is sinful, as if we have done something in order to deserve it.

How do we fight spiritual depression?

In Psalm 42:5 and 11, the psalmist shows us that he is also struggling with spiritual depression. His soul is "disturbed" and has become "downcast" within him. In fact, many people who have success in leading others to Christ suffer with spiritual depression. Even Jesus uses the words of this psalm on the night of his arrest (John 12:27; Mark 14:34).

Struggles are normal in a Christian's walk of life. Talking through our struggles and fears with God and other fellow believers is very important when we seem to be stuck in a rut. We should not be afraid to discuss our trials and our struggles that we are going through. Satan is hard at work confusing us and wreaking havoc trying to make us believe that we are alone in our fight and that no one else has experienced this. To us this may seem true as we look around on Sunday morning and see others worshipping God with great joy. It seems that we no longer feel the joy that we had before. We think that we must hide these feelings because everyone appears to have such an amazing faith in God. This only drives our feelings deeper.

Remember why you have trusted God so far: "My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you" (Ps 42:6).

You can look at examples of personal faithfulness in your own life and historical faithfulness to help you affirm that God remains faithful to you. Read Psalm 42:7, where the psalmist watches the melted snow gushing forth in waves from the mountain cataracts. He sees himself in this situation as blow after blow reigns down on him. However, he does not say "these" breakers and "these" waves have rolled over me. He says "your," meaning he knows that God is still in control of his situation. He realizes that suffering is followed by hope.

You have to challenge your feelings and thoughts, as the psalmist does when he uses the phrase "my soul" (Ps 42:5, 6).

As Lloyd-Jones says, "Take yourself in hand and talk back to yourself." Both you and Satan have used feelings and thoughts to make you feel spiritually depressed. Now you need to confront your soul and ask what the psalmist asks himself. How might we do this?

Lloyd-Jones makes a very interesting comment on this. He says that "we allow ourselves to talk to us instead of talking to our self." When you wake up in the morning, and thoughts enter your head about the problems or mistakes that you made yesterday, who is talking to you? Your *self* is. Now, if we look back at Psalm 42, instead of allowing his self to talk to him, the psalmist starts talking to himself, "Why are you downcast, O my soul?" In other words, "Self, listen for a moment, I will speak to you."

The chorus of a popular Christian song by Stellar Kart goes like this:

"Someone loves you even when you don't think so
Don't ya know you got me and Jesus, by your side,
Through the fight, you will never be alone, on your
own,

You got me and Jesus."

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. . . ."

(Ps 23:4)



News from the Women's Savings Action

Collection

In the presentation at the College Evening on September 10, we asked the audience how much they thought the Women's Savings Action had contributed to the library of the Seminary over the years. The answer was: \$828,035.

In the past book year a total of \$34,021.28 was collected and a cheque of \$35,000 was handed to the principal for the current year.

New in the library

We all know that this money is being used to buy books and periodicals, but did you know that it is possible for anyone to see which books have been added recently to the library of the Canadian Reformed Seminary? If you go to the Seminary website (<http://www.canadianreformedseminary.ca/>) and click on "Library," then "Search Library Catalogue," you get to (surprise. . .) the catalogue of the library. On the left there are four tabs. Of these, choose "Visual search," where you will find lists of all the books that have been

added to the library in the past year. If you would like to know more about a certain item, click on the title and you will be taken to a page with more information.

Some people have asked whether the time for paper books is not over. I don't know about that, but the Seminary has also bought e-books. If you look under the visual search I mentioned above, you will also find new e-books in the library.

So the information about where the money of the Women's Savings Action goes is only a few mouse clicks away.

Conclusion

What used to be called the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches is now known as the Canadian Reformed Seminary. Whatever the name of the institution, the Women's Savings Action hopes to continue its work to support the library, so that present and future ministers and their teachers may have the tools they need to do their work. May the Lord give his blessings over our efforts.

Statement of Income and Expenses for the period July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010

INCOME:	
Donations	\$ 34,021.28
GIC. plus interest	\$ 31,623.38
Total Income	\$ 65,644.66
EXPENSES:	
Theological College Library	\$ 40,000.00
Administration	\$ 127.65
Bank Service Charges	\$ 58.62
Total Expenses	\$ 40,186.27
EXCESS OF INCOME OVER EXPENSES:	\$ 25,458.39

Joanne Van Dam (President)
Christina Nienhuis (Treasurer)

Balance Sheet as of June 30, 2009

ASSETS:	
Bank	\$ 53,610.44
GIC	\$ 00
Total Assets	\$ 53,610.44
MEMBERS EQUITY:	
Balance, start of year	\$ 28,152.05
Excess of income	
Over expenses	\$ 25,458.39
Balance, end of year	\$ 53,610.44
TOTAL MEMBER'S EQUITY:	\$ 53,610.44

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Women's Savings Action

Contributions for the year July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010
(With comparative figures for the previous year)

Congregation	2010	2009	Congregation	2010	2009
Abbotsford	1385.00	70.00	Grassie	438.20	117.31
Aldergrove	1240.00	1620.00	Guelph	395.00	779.50
Ancaster	746.98	891.69	Hamilton/Cornerstone	1864.25	1576.83
Attercliffe	1282.00	842.50	Hamilton/Providence	170.00	273.83
Barrhead	205.00	390.00	Houston	251.00	--
Brampton	117.00	300.00	Kerwood	660.00	225.00
Burlington/Ebenezer	1225.70	1338.40	Langley	2312.00	2145.00
Burlington/Fellowship	230.00	295.00	Lincoln	740.00	1080.25
Burlington/Waterdown	670.00	985.00	London	--	--
Calgary	621.73	488.23	Lynden	512.77	481.97
Carman/East	574.00	638.00	Neerlandia	360.00	662.00
Carman/West	244.50	381.00	Orangeville	210.60	250.00
Chatham	669.85	1046.48	Ottawa	190.00	120.00
Chilliwack	870.00	705.00	Owen Sound	270.00	--
Cloverdale	--	650.00	Smithers	391.85	869.00
Coaldale	815.00	500.00	Smithville	1634.00	1931.00
Dunnville/Wainfleet	--	--	Spring Creek	361.00	216.10
Edmonton/Immanuel	2830.00	2032.00	St. Albert	1470.00	1655.00
Edmonton/Providence	20.00	120.00	Surrey	845.00	636.00
Elora	412.00	499.75	Taber	--	--
Fergus/North	232.93	159.00	Toronto	414.50	570.57
Fergus/South(Maranatha)	535.50	403.00	Vernon	436.00	535.00
Flamborough	377.00	276.00	Willoughby Heights	1245.00	1210.00
Glanbrook	874.58	806.38	Winnipeg/Grace	701.00	--
Grand Rapids	490.55	237.61	Winnipeg/Redeemer	940.00	1145.00
Grand Valley	229.79	314.93	Yarrow	310.00	125.00
	Royalties Selles	--		1079.44	
	Total Collected		34021.28	33673.77	





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Collected Writings on Scripture, D.A. Carson, Wheaton: Crossway, 2010

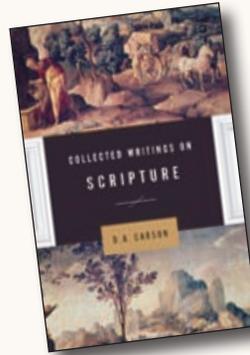
Additional Information: Hardcover, 335 pages, \$30.99

Let me say right away that this book is not written for a broad audience. The readers who will most benefit will be biblical scholars/professors, pastors, seminary students, and perhaps others who have at least an undergraduate university education. This is a collection of mostly technical or more academic essays on the Bible. While Don Carson is able to write at a more popular level, these essays find him addressing complex issues that require more advanced responses. If terms like epistemology, redaction criticism, and perspicuity don't need explanation, then you should find this book accessible.

Carson is research professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Wheaton, Illinois. He is the author of many books and articles and a popular speaker on the Christian conference circuit. While ecclesiastically a Baptist, he does hold Calvinistic convictions when it comes to the doctrine of salvation. Most importantly, he believes in a high view of Scripture – and that's clear in this volume. When it comes to bibliology (the doctrine of Scripture), Reformed Christians have an ally in Carson.

Collected Writings consists of two parts. Part 1 contains five lengthy essays. The first, "Approaching the Bible," is the most accessible and gives a basic introduction to biblical hermeneutics. "Recent Developments in the Doctrine of Scripture" is an older essay that surveys various challenges faced by a high view of Scripture's inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy. "Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: The Possibility of Systematic Theology" takes on the often-discussed relationship between systematic theology, exegesis, and biblical theology. "Redaction Criticism: On the Legitimacy and Illegitimacy of a Literary Tool" – the title speaks for itself. Finally, the last essay answers the question "Is the Doctrine of *Claritas Scripturae* Still Relevant Today?" Part 2 features reviews of several books dealing with the authority, character, and interpretation of the Bible. It should be readily apparent that all of these essays and reviews consist of previously published material.

The church always faces challenges with regards to the doctrine of Scripture and so a book like this is always relevant, even when it features essays written in the early 1980s. I appreciate Carson's lively defence of biblical inerrancy – a doctrine that needs to be freshly appropriated and guarded in our generation.



Today there are also efforts underway to discount the contributions of systematic theology in favour of biblical theology – Carson brings a valuable perspective to this important debate. With the book reviews in part 2, two of them are particularly worth noting: Peter Enns' *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*; N.T. Wright, *The Last Word: Beyond the Bible Wars to a New Understanding of the Authority of Scripture*. The Enns book is important because it resulted in his departure from Westminster Theological Seminary in 2008. N. T. Wright is a popular figure associated with the false teaching known as the New Perspective on Paul. Both works require a fair and critical analysis and Carson provides it. In the end he makes it clear that men like Enns and Wright do not hold to the highest view of Scripture – to a thoroughly biblical view of the Bible.

I don't have any serious problems with this volume. The only points that I might raise are incidental to its purpose and program. For instance, there's footnote 35 on page 66 which regurgitates the old "Warfield was an evolutionist" line. More recent research by Fred Zaspel dispels that myth. As another example, on page 178 Carson states that Cornelius Van Til is right in his development of a biblical theory of knowledge (epistemology), "but then wrongly demands a presuppositionalist apologetic." Unfortunately, this statement comes right at the end of an essay and is prefaced by the disclaimer that Carson cannot here defend his view. I'd like to hear more on that, because I'm not convinced. Could we not have had at least a footnote to some further discussion on that point somewhere else?

Don Carson is one of the most important theologians of our day. What makes him worth listening to is the fact that he humbly listens to our Father. I think these words sum it up: "The aim of thoughtful Christians, after all, is not so much to become masters of Scripture, but to be mastered by it, both for God's glory and his people's good" (40).

