

Clarion



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*An
important way
to reach the goal
of spiritual maturity
is through
biblical
instruction*

Inside this Issue

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- *Overcoming Sin in the Power of Christ*



OFFICE
→



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Stuck in Adolescence?

Culture and society congratulates itself on being non-judgmental

Understanding the times we live in helps us to cope and seek biblical solutions to the issues that arise. It is no secret that Western culture is in the throes of enormous change, mostly at the cost of biblical norms. There are of course many reasons for that. One striking development that is not often mentioned has been the emergence of youth as the new authority and trend setter for much of today's culture. Interestingly, two recent books make this point from two completely different perspectives. The one approaches the influence of youth from a secular cultural vantage point, the other examines its impact on Christianity.

Where are the grownups?

In her insightful and provocative book, *The Death of the Grown-up* (2007), Diana West basically argues that our culture has become a teenage culture. The most significant expression of youth culture is rock 'n' roll. It is the inspiration for "the worldview of the perpetual adolescent who sees constraint and definition as padlocks on self-fulfilment and self-expression" (34). Rather than challenging these notions, adults have in general abandoned their duty to give leadership and direction to their offspring and are content with giving them the necessary information for them to make their own decisions. This abdication of responsibility is reflected in, for example, sex education with lots of information but little moral guidance. "Central to the surrender of the adult was also the collapse of the parent" (57). By embracing the values of youth, society began to abandon the old authority of tradition, accrued wisdom, and reason and embraced novelty, emotion, and feelings. Age old practices and attitudes have been overturned and nothing is sacred anymore. The consequences are obvious in society today both in our culture's attitude to authority in general and its take

on moral issues such as those relating to marriage and family. Those who resist are considered old fashioned and out of touch.

Our culture's rejection of traditional notions of authority and norms (often biblically based) means that we now have a culture and society that congratulates itself on being non-judgmental. Basically everything is okay. One can therefore no longer distinguish between art and trash (95) or between what is publicly decent or not. So non-judgmental has society become that a typical citizen is not even sure of his own identity anymore and has a hard time defending it over against other cultures in a multicultural society.

Does this rise of an adolescent culture with the rejection of tradition and an emphasis on doing what feels good have any consequence for church life?

Adolescent Christianity?

Thomas E. Bergler in his Notre Dame dissertation published as *The Juvenilization of American Christianity* (2012) presents a fascinating study of how youth culture has impacted North American church life. He defines "juvenilization" as:

The process by which the religious beliefs, practices, and developmental characteristics of adolescents become accepted as appropriate for Christians of all ages. It begins with the praiseworthy goal of adapting the faith to appeal to the young. But it sometimes ends badly, with both youth and adults embracing immature versions of faith. (4)

Juvenilization was a process of unintended consequences and a byproduct of noble goals. Desiring to reach the youth, churches in the first half of the twentieth century catered to the youth culture of the day. But, as Diana West had already noted, the



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boundary between adult and youth was being blurred and Bergler acknowledges that the juvenilization of American Christianity and the emergence of a new immature adulthood mutually reinforced each other. “Indeed, after fifty or more years of juvenilization, adolescent spirituality powerfully shapes the religious identities of many adults” (7). Not all of this is bad. Young people can be more enthusiastic about their faith than jaded adults and provide needed zeal and idealism. On the other hand, adolescents can be very self-centred and assume that strong emotions authenticate their faith and that God is there to help them feel better or to heal their emotional pains. Youth spirituality also “favours physical activity, touch, and other bodily ways of expressing faith” (9) which in the context of worship can detract from focusing on the Lord. Furthermore, their faith has to be fun and entertaining and so the church must use the latest music, technology, and cultural trends.

Bergler traces the developments through the twentieth century that led to the eventual triumph of the juvenilization of American Christianity. It is a most interesting study in which the struggles of keeping church and world separate, while trying to hold on to the youth, are described.

What’s Inside

This issue begins with an editorial from Dr. Cornelis Van Dam, in which he examines the emergence of youth as the new authority in today’s culture and discusses the impact this trend is having on church life.

Issue 19 also brings the readers a timely article on Bible study from Rev. Reuben Bredenhof. With the Bible study season once again upon us, this article will assist readers in how to approach Bible study. What should we focus on? What questions should we ask?

Rev. Eric Kampen once again contributes an article of a church historical nature, this time on the origins of the Apostles Creed. Our use of this creed in worship can be enriched with some awareness of how the creed developed.

As usual we have for our readers a Treasures New and Old meditation and our regular Ray of Sunshine column. Issue 19 also contains a book review, a canticle, and a letter to the editor.

Laura Veenendaal

Although catering to the youth has had some success in some churches, Bergler also underlines some negatives. A major one is that “as they listen to years of simplified messages that emphasize an emotional relationship with Jesus over intellectual content, teenagers learn that a well-articulated belief system is unimportant and might even become an obstacle to authentic faith” (220). A consequence is that many people of all ages “not only accept a Christianized version of adolescent narcissism, they often celebrate it as authentic spirituality” (224). And so many are left mired in spiritual immaturity. Young and old are all adolescents regardless of their age.

If North American Christianity can be described this way, where does this leave us as Reformed Christians? Within the limited scope of this editorial, let us focus on some aspects of our Reformed identity and worship.

The way forward

It is obvious, and Bergler acknowledges this, that a feel-good faith is not enough. Spiritual maturity is needed and that comes from progressing from drinking milk to eating solid food. An important way to reach that goal is through the instruction of biblical truth. A godly home where parents train their children, solid preaching, catechism classes, and Christian education are very important tools to reach that goal. These means need to be carefully safeguarded.

Spiritual maturity is needed

A church should of course do what it can to make the young feel at home and be part of the congregation. For that reason cultivating an inclusive fellowship of the saints in the local church is a matter of high priority. Young and old belong together as Christians. This is reflected in activities done together but especially in corporate worship.

In Sunday worship, the entire congregation comes together. All are involved as they praise God in song and listen to the preaching of the gospel. There have been liturgical changes over the years in order to promote more congregational involvement such as the singing of the Apostles Creed and the use of communal “amens.” Such changes can make young and old experience a greater participation in the worship service.

In terms of meeting the challenge of a juvenilizing culture, it is necessary to ask whether we are

sometimes more influenced by it than we may care to admit. To begin with what may appear to be a superficial matter: more and more are attending church dressed down, that is, with casual clothes that are more associated with leisure and fun than with worship and church. Is this a nod to our juvenile culture or is it an enhancement of the seriousness of meeting holy God in reverent worship? When a minister introduces more stories into his sermon, sometimes with a joke thrown in, are such additions truly making his message more effective or is he catering to an adolescent culture that craves merriment and informality? Would the introduction of the latest electronic technology be from motives to improve worship or to be “cool” and more appealing to the younger generation? Would the introduction of a youth band in the worship service be for the enhancement of praise or to accommodate the wishes of a teenage mind set? Would the introduction of solo singing and personal testimonies be an improvement of the experience of focussing on God and worshipping him or would that be a sop to the young that wants at least some entertainment?

In our day there is often a craving for something new and exciting in Sunday worship. The argument is sometimes made that this will help us keep the youth. However, any change should be based on biblical norms with the object of raising the level of holiness and focus on our Lord and Saviour. It is after all a *worship* service in honour of the King of kings. It is not a feel-good, narcissistic session for personal self-enhancement. Changes should never be introduced in order to keep up with the culture around us. For in the end, we will just blend in with the current culture of juvenilization and seriously compromise our witness as church of Christ. C





MATTHEW 13:52

Overcoming Sin in the Power of Christ

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"If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."

(Genesis 4:7)

Have you ever puzzled over the wording of this text? "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."

This is God speaking to Cain when he was upset with Abel his brother, whose offering was accepted by the LORD while his own was not. God tells Cain that sin is lying at the door of his heart and wishes to enter his heart, but Cain is called to overcome this test. In the New Testament we find a similar statement in James 1:12, "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him."

In Cain's case, the LORD instructs him that he has to do what is right. That is to say, he must overcome sin, at which time he will be approved and his offering will be accepted by God. This is before God had instituted his covenant of grace with the rite of circumcision. Yet Cain was the son of Adam and Eve. To them God had promised that from the seed of the woman one would come who would crush the head of the destroyer of the peace which they had with God their Creator before the fall. Therefore their son Cain, too, was promised the strength of God to rule over sin and to persevere in trial.

With the instruction given in James 1:12, we are in the new dispensation. The covenant of grace has been firmly established in the Son of God, and it is proclaimed to the church. But God is unchangeable, and what he asked first of Adam and again asked of Cain, he also asks of us. He calls us to obey him, and to rule over the sin which lies at the door of our hearts. We find other words of God where this same principle is presented to his people. Like in James 4:7, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." And a similar thought is found in 2 Peter 1:5-6, "Make every effort to add . . . to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance."

God can demand of his people that we rule over sin, because he has provided the means by which this can be achieved. We find it in Hebrews 5:8-9, speaking of Jesus Christ, "Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him." Christ not only died for our sin, but he also gave us his example to follow, to learn obedience and to overcome temptation. It is in him that we are provided with the ability to rule over sin.

Too often we who have received the inheritance of Christ's work are dull of hearing and do not diligently fight our daily battle against

sin. Paul saw this already in the Christian congregations that had been established; he saw spiritual immaturity. So look at your daily talk and walk: Do you fall short? Or are you fighting until you are bloodied in your fight against your own sinful inclinations?

Our Lord Jesus commanded us to be perfect as God in heaven is perfect (Matt 5:48). Certainly our Lord would not ask this of us if it were impossible. Therefore as children of the LORD Almighty, we must not have feeble knees or just sit down in despondency. Instead, we may look toward our Father in heaven, and he will provide us with the strength to rule over sin. No, not only in the life to come, but already in the here and now. Strive for this with all your God-given ability, and persevere by putting on his spiritual armor.

The result will be an inner peace, a confidence in God's great love for you, and a communion with him in your daily walk of life. This is what Adam and Eve experienced in Paradise before they became disobedient and lost this wonderful privilege. Yet we know that Christ restores it to his people through his perfect work. So persevere under trial, because when you have stood the test, you will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him!





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Needed at Bible Study: More “Cross-Referencing”

Beyond the minutiae

Are you going to Bible study this year? In our churches this activity is about to swing into gear again. And if you asked one of the study groups about their plans, they'd reply with something like: "We're studying the book of Esther" or "Our focus is the letter of James." People will be getting into a book, discovering new things from the Word.

Along the way many questions will be asked: "Why does Paul say it like this?" or "What exactly does that phrase in Isaiah 14:12 mean?" Some questions may be minor. Some may seem insignificant. Even these are worthwhile, to ponder why the Spirit led someone to choose this word or take this emphasis.

Yet we sometimes lose sight of the big picture. So enamoured by the trees, we forget it's a forest we're admiring. At the end of some study sessions, all are agreed that we gained a better knowledge of some point of doctrine, and are satisfied that our agile minds were able to dissect some passage. We might even say the more minute the question, the better. But then what's the purpose of Bible study? Is it merely about facts and details? Alternately, is it only about finding "what this text says to me today"?

Take a stroll through the forest!

When we study Scripture, we need to put a wide-angled lens on our vision. We need to have a second focus, one wider than the particular book we're studying. This helps us admire the grand forest, made up of all those individual trees. It helps make sense of all the little facts and minute details put together.

What's that new concentration? When we study, our ultimate focus must be on the Lord Jesus Christ. For he's the very centre and heart of the Bible, the greatest truth revealed on its pages. God has given Christ as the Redeemer of the lost and the mighty King of his people. Without Christ, we've got no salvation from

our sins and the death we deserve. And if there's no salvation, why study the Bible? Is it only a nice read, some "Chicken Soup for the Christian Soul"? Or do we study it because there's nothing better to do on Wednesday and Sunday evenings? We study because the Scriptures are all about our one hope, our new life, our only comfort. The most important thing they could ever tell us is the good news about our Saviour!

Taking this focus agrees with the Bible's whole purpose. Think of what Jesus says in John 5:39-40. He was rebuking the Jews for not believing in him, though they knew the Bible very well: "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life." When he says "Scriptures," Jesus refers to the Bible of the time, what we know as the Old Testament. He says it all points in one direction: to the coming Messiah. The Jews knew the plot and the setting of the Scriptures, but they'd overlooked the main character!

Jesus says a similar thing in Luke 24, right after his resurrection. He was walking to Emmaus with two disciples who didn't recognize him. These two disciples were dismayed about the events of Jesus' death and the disappearance of his body. Yet there was no need for disappointment; as Jesus says, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And then Luke tells us, "Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself" (vv. 25-27).

If already the Old Testament is all about Christ, the New Testament is even more! So the gospel of Mark, probably the first New Testament book to be written, begins with our Saviour, front and centre: "The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (1:1). Paul also says Christ is the focus of all New

Testament ministry: "We preach Christ crucified" (1 Cor 1:23). It's only fitting then, that he's at the heart of any study of Scripture. Every time we stroll through the Bible, our thoughts should turn to the Saviour. But how is this to be done?

Progressing and fulfilling

When we study an Old Testament book it's undeniably harder to focus on Jesus Christ. There, he doesn't preach or heal or teach or debate. So how can Jesus say in all seriousness that "the Scriptures" testify about him? Consider the Heidelberg Catechism's Question and Answer 19. Notice all the communication-themed words: in the Old Testament the gospel of Jesus Christ was "revealed. . . proclaimed. . . foreshadowed. . . [and finally] fulfilled."

So one excellent way to focus on Christ is to see Old and New Testament together on one, unbroken timeline. More than paying lip service to it, we have to be deliberate in thinking about this unity. Someone once suggested ripping out that blank page between the Old and New in our Bibles, so we never think that Matthew 1 begins a completely new story. It's one book, with a certain progression from the first gospel promise in Genesis 3 to the time of its fulfillment, the entrance and coronation of our Saviour.

Which means we can read any Old Testament passage and legitimately ask, "How does this echo in the New Testament? How does this event, this person, this announcement, relate to the coming of Christ? Is this God working out his salvation promise, or is it perhaps Satan futilely trying to prevent his own destruction?" Deborah defeating the Canaanites is God preserving his people, even by a most unlikely saviour, for the eventual arrival of another unlikely Saviour. Ahab marrying Jezebel is Satan trying to hinder the Messiah's birth by breaking down the difference between the church and the world. For every moment of the Old Testament, important things are at stake.

We can also see how God gives specific promises in the Old and brings them about in the New. Think of the prophecies of the virgin conception, the place of Christ's birth, the style of his ministry, and so on. Especially in the days around his crucifixion, almost every moment seems to be the fulfillment of some different promise or saying. Then after his ascension, the apostles say how also these results of Christ's work were prophesied long ago: the giving of the Holy Spirit in fullness, the spreading of the gospel to all nations, the end-times and Judgment Day. With the 20/20 hindsight of New Testament vision, we can read from Genesis to Malachi.

Foreshadowing and contrasting

The Catechism teaches us to look for the foreshadows of Christ. There are Old Testament events repeated in the New according to basically the same pattern; the event is replicated, but in a fuller way in the Lord Jesus. For example, all of the sacrifices are one vast collection of foreshadows. And everything from the altar of incense to the structure of the tabernacle pointed ahead to aspects of our Saviour's work. As the Belgic Confession states in Article 25, "The ceremonies and symbols of the law have ceased with the coming of Christ, and [in him] all shadows have been fulfilled."

And once you start looking, you find lots of them! Consider how the priest-king Melchizedek (Gen 14) foreshadows Christ our high priest and Lord (Heb 7); how Jonah in the fish for three days prefigures Christ in the tomb (Matt 12); how the manna in the wilderness (Exod 16) connects to the teaching about Jesus as the Bread of Life in John 6. Or marvel at 1 Corinthians 10, where Paul's speaking about how Israel fared in the wilderness journeys: "They drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ" (v. 4). The Rock was Christ! Jesus wasn't with them physically, but the reason God's presence went with the Israelites was the merits of the Saviour, as-yet unborn.

There are also revealing contrasts between the Old and New. There are positive contrasts: Moses was a great prophet, but Christ was greater (Acts 3). Solomon was wise, Jesus even wiser (Matt 12). And then we can think of many negative contrasts: Saul was disobedient in his office as king, but Christ is faithful, the perfect king.

Tracing Scripture's themes

Numerous themes can be found in Scripture. They are long arcs, traced out over many centuries and many Bible books, but all culminating in Jesus Christ. For example:

- The theme of sin and its judgment, evident in various ways (such as in the law, the days of the judges, the major and minor prophets), cries out for a Saviour.
- The theme of deliverance in the Old Testament (such as from Egypt under Moses, from the Philistines through David, from Babylon under Zerubbabel, from Haman under Esther and Mordecai) anticipates our salvation from sin in Christ.
- The theme of God's covenant faithfulness (such as keeping his promise of land and descendants to Abraham) parallels how God still keeps his promise today in Christ.

Other themes too, presage the richness of what Christ does for us and gives to us: themes of temple, sacrifice, and priesthood; war and victory; inheritance and blessing; prophets and prophecy, and more. Undergirding all these lines is the essential truth that our God is the same today as he was back then. His power and grace are the same. His people are the same: sinful, stubborn, saints. And his desire to save them is the same. Paul speaks of this continuity in Romans 15, "Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (v. 4).

Know when to draw the line

Students of the Bible are rightly eager to find Christ in the Old Testament, and suggested connections to the Saviour can be pretty imaginative. As just one example, it's been said that the wood of Noah's ark points ahead to the wood of Jesus' cross. Like the wood of the ark provided deliverance from the flood, so the wood of the cross saves us from God's curse on sin. Does this suggestion hold water? Well, a necessary check on our imagination here is that the Bible itself needs to give reasonable grounds for seeing a correspondence to Christ. There is a "bridge" from the Flood to the cross, but it's not made of wood (1 Pet 3:20-21). Not everyone is Paul, who can say so boldly, "That Rock was Christ!" Nor do we need to make countless Old Testament objects or details into direct indicators of our Saviour, but we can look for him in the ideas of progression and fulfillment, foreshadowing and contrast, or through tracing Scripture's themes.

The "New Beetle" effect

When your Bible study group chooses a New Testament book, it seems natural to focus on Christ. Easy, even. Because when we open the four gospels, they're all about Jesus. Acts is about Christ building his church. The apostles wrote constantly about the Lord Jesus, and he's central in Revelation. It seems it'd be simple to have a Christ-focus, but that's not necessarily the case.

This neglect may be because we've read a passage so often, we feel we know what it's all about. Take John 3:16, "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Sounds good – let's move on to the next verse! But do we really know how Christ fits here? Think about it: how could God give up his own Son? What does it mean that he was given for "the world?" Why is believing in the Son so important? And what does that snake in the desert have to do with all of this? (v. 14)

We also might stop noticing Christ because he occurs on every page of the New Testament. Call it the "New Beetle" effect. Do you remember when Volkswagen starting making the Bug (or Beetle) again with that distinctive round shape, back in the late 90s or so? Everyone was excited when they saw one: "Look, there's a new Bug!" But after a while, everyone had one. They were ubiquitous: purple ones, green ones, pink and yellow ones. And so the excitement about the new Bug faded. Perhaps the same is true for Jesus Christ: it's a wonderful name, occurring hundreds of times in the New Testament. It's everywhere, so we may read over it quickly, like at the beginning of all Paul's letters: "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph 1:2). But this is when it's good to ask: Why does Paul greet us *in Christ*? Why not just in the Father? And how does Christ afford us grace and peace?

What then to do with Christ in the New Testament? When he's mentioned, even dozens of times in a short chapter, ask why. Why bring him in here? What's his place in the teaching? In this verse, what exactly do we learn about him? And when he's not mentioned as often, like in James, ask how Christ still has everything to do with what you read.

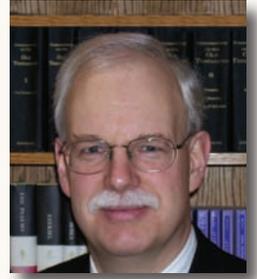
Building on the cornerstone

Making more "cross-references" doesn't mean the main topic of every Bible study has to be Jesus' work at Golgotha, or his victory over the grave. Scripture is far too diverse for us to speak only and all the time about Jesus Christ. But it means recognizing how all of Scripture does point to him. Some texts teach us about ourselves and our desperate need for a Saviour. Other texts reveal what preparations the Father made for his Son's coming. More texts teach what our Messiah did in life and death, and what he's doing in heaven right now. Still more texts instruct us about serving the King today, and what he'll do in the glorious future.

In the study of Scripture, we place our hands not just on details and facts, but on a living and saving truth. So we too, have to heed Jesus' warning and not overlook the Bible's main character, or leap too quickly to "what this passage says to us today." But whenever we study Scripture, be able to answer, as individuals and groups, "What has this passage taught us about the glories of God our Saviour?"

The Bible is a diverse book about many things, but it's about especially one thing: God's redemption of his people through Jesus Christ. With that gospel fixed in the centre of our minds and hearts, let's faithfully search the Scriptures!





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How did we get the Apostles' Creed?

Introduction

A familiar part of the weekly afternoon worship service is the use of the Apostles' Creed. It may be sung or recited by the congregation, or read by the minister. On occasion, a minister may use the Nicene Creed, or even more rarely, the Athanasian Creed, but the Apostles' Creed is the most prominent. The prominent place of the Apostles' Creed in the life of the church is further shown by the way it is incorporated in the Heidelberg Catechism. In the Catechism it is referred to as the Twelve Articles of our catholic and undoubted Christian faith (HC, LD 7, Q/A 22). It is explained, article by article, in Lord's Days 9-22.

As with so many activities that we do routinely, the use of this creed may not give rise to any thought about how we got it or why we do it. Knowing how and why, however, is always beneficial. Such knowledge will lead to a deeper appreciation and awareness of what one is actually doing. In short, it will enrich the experience.

With a view to enriching the experience of the use of the Apostles' Creed, this article will explain how the church ended up with this creed.¹

Initial impressions

If we think of the most common name for this creed, then we might think that it must go right back to the twelve apostles themselves. This thought would seem to find support when we think of the description in the Catechism. The way they are called the articles of our catholic and undoubted Christian faith suggests that this creed has functioned as an expression of faith for believers throughout history, basically since the days of Pentecost.

For many centuries, people thought this to be true. This is evident from a commentary about a creed written around 404 AD by a man named Rufinus. This creed looked very much like our current Apostles'

Creed. He stated that after the pouring out of the Spirit on Pentecost, the disciples drafted a short summary to guide them as they went into the world to preach the gospel. As Rufinus had suggested that each apostle had contributed one clause each, later authors tried to determine which phrase was to be associated with each apostle. Peter was said to have started off, saying, "I believe in God the Father almighty." Matthias was credited with the last phrase about eternal life.

This understanding of the origin of the Apostles' Creed prevailed until the fifteenth and sixteenth century, the time of the Renaissance and Reformation. A careful study of sources led to the conclusion that this was not accurate. One reason for rejecting this understanding was that if the apostles had indeed composed such a creed, one could expect it to be mentioned specifically in the book of Acts or the various letters. Further, historical study led to the realization that the Apostles' Creed only took on the form as we have it around 725 AD. It was also realized that while this creed had gained wide acceptance in the Western, or Latin speaking church, with Rome as its centre, it was not known or used in the Eastern churches, which had Constantinople as its centre.

The conclusion was that the Apostles' Creed had not been written by the apostles. It had not suddenly appeared as a complete entity. Rather, the Apostles' Creed was the fruit of a long development.

The development of the Apostles' Creed

While the Apostles' Creed in the form as we have it did not originate in the time of the apostles, we can trace its beginning back to what we learn from the New Testament. We learn that there was a definite body of teachings. One could bring this down to the very basic teaching that "Jesus is Lord," or, that "Jesus is the Christ." At the same time, there are also more extensive examples which focus especially on the birth, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. For example, in 1

Corinthians 15:3, 4, Paul wrote, "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (see also 1 Tim 3:16). When you read through the letters of Paul to Timothy and Titus, there are frequent references to "the faith" (1 Tim 1:2; 4:6; 6:12), and "the sound teaching" (2 Tim 1:13; Titus 1:9). Jude in his letter wrote of "the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3). While there is no compact, comprehensive statement of all the points of Christian belief, it is obvious that there was a very clear body of truths, focused on the Son of God come in the body for our salvation.

The church has a long history of summarizing the key teachings

We can see the beginning of the formation of actual creeds in the writings of the generation of church leaders after the apostles. These leaders are usually called the "Church Fathers." There is actually a considerable body of their writings that has been preserved. In their writings you get examples of efforts to sum up the key teachings of the Christian faith. For example, Ignatius of Antioch, around 107 AD, wrote, Be deaf, therefore, when any would speak to at variance with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was descended from the family of David, born of Mary, who truly was born, both of God and of the Virgin, truly took a body; for the Word became flesh and dwelt among us without sin, ate and drank truly, truly suffered persecution under Pontius Pilate, was truly crucified and died, who was also truly raised from the dead. . . was received up to the Father and sits on his right hand, waiting till his enemies are put under his feet.

It is not difficult to find the scriptural references for these various statements. There is also obvious similarity to the part of the section in the Apostles' Creed that speaks of God the Son. The choice of words suggests that Ignatius was responding to forms of Gnostic teaching which denied the Son of God had come in our human flesh.

A second example is from the writings of Irenaeus, around 180 AD. What is significant to note in his writings is the way it shows the growth toward the Trinitarian structure as found in the Apostles' Creed.

He wrote,

The Church, though scattered through the whole world to the ends of the earth, has received from the Apostles and their disciples the faith in one God, the Father Almighty, who made the heaven and the earth, and the seas, and all that in them is; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became flesh for our salvation; and in the Holy Ghost, who through the prophets preached the dispensations and the advent, and the birth from the Virgin. . . passion. . . resurrection from the dead. . . bodily assumption into heaven. . . his appearing from heaven in the glory of the Father. . . and the resurrection of the dead.

More examples could be given.² What should be noted at this point is the way the early church leaders summarized the core teachings of the Christian faith. Not surprisingly, the first such summaries focused on the person and work of the Lord Jesus. It did not take long, however, before the summaries expanded and made references to God the Father and God the Spirit. This is not surprising in light of the commission of our Lord Jesus to make disciples from all nations, which included baptizing into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

It is a testimony to the faithful preaching of the apostles and the leaders who succeeded them that there was such consistency in the formulations used. There definitely was a clear body of teachings passed on through the generations. These leaders, in their efforts to teach new believers and in their need to refute false teachings, produced succinct summaries, similar in content but with varied wordings.

Among these various summaries, over time one rose to the top, namely, one written in Rome. It gained acceptance not just as a local teaching tool and confession but also as a statement of faith that showed the unity of the various local churches. There is reason to think that this Roman creed may go back as far as the early third century. A version dating from before 341 AD reads as follows:

I believe in God the Father Almighty. And in Jesus Christ his only begotten Son, who was born of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary; crucified under Pontius Pilate, and buried; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost; the holy Church; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; the life everlasting.

Again, those wishing more information are

encouraged to follow the references in the footnotes.³ In particular, it is very interesting to see a comparative chart which shows minor variations and how they compare to the final form of the Apostles' Creed. By this point, it is clear that the contents essentially go back to the apostolic age, but the form developed over time.

As for the form that we use, it was mentioned that it can be traced to around 725 AD. It was the work of Priminus, a monk in the Benedictine order. He lived in southern Germany, where he wrote a mission manual which included the Apostles' Creed in its present form. This was during a time of renewal under the kings of Gaul. Especially during the reign of Charlemagne, psalters came into greater use. These psalters included prayers and the Apostles' Creed. Other documents from that time indicate the similar form of the Creed was used even on the western edge of Europe, namely, Ireland.

The Apostles' Creed is the possession of the church of all ages and places

From what can be gathered, the form of the Creed as written by Priminus prevailed and became the standard form used in the Western churches somewhere in the tenth to twelfth centuries. It is interesting to note how a creed rooted in the Scriptures developed in Rome and came to its mature expression in southern Germany.

Conclusion

This review of the development of the Apostles' Creed impresses on us a number of points.

In the first place, the church has a long history of summarizing the key teachings. This is helpful to keep in mind over against those who have as slogan, "Only the Bible." The leaders of the early centuries continued the pattern of the apostles, passing on the body of sound teaching by use of summaries. These summaries were developed with a view to teaching newcomers and youth, as well as ensuring correct doctrine over against false teachings, such as Gnosticism.

In the second place, these summaries soon took on a Trinitarian format, with most of the emphasis placed

on God's work in his Son Jesus Christ. This is not surprising since the Lord Jesus is the fulfillment of all God's promises and all Scripture points to him.

Third, while the form of the Apostles' Creed we use may be considered relatively recent, tracing its development and comparing it to other statements written by church leaders, and comparing it to Scripture itself, shows consistency in content with earlier forms. It is catholic in content.

Fourth, the awareness of this rich history underlines how the Apostles' Creed, in effect, is the possession of the church of all ages and places and it took a long time to come to a common form of expression. Therefore, local churches or federations need to be very careful about making changes or modifications. The Creed is communal property. The Reformers recognized this and claimed it as part of their heritage. Making changes at a local level or as a federation indicates a separation from the church of all ages and places.

Finally, awareness of the history of the Creed should stir up in us an awareness that whenever we confess our faith with these words, we are joining a great throng of believers that have gone before us, and a great throng that confesses it elsewhere in the world to this very day. It truly is an expression of our catholic faith and the catholicity of the church. Confessing this ancient creed, with its deep roots, guards a local congregation against sectarianism and weekly refreshes the sense of catholicity.

Next time you use the Apostles' Creed, recall its history. Knowing this should also enrich your use of it.

¹ A more extensive description of this history can be found as an Appendix in Fred H. Klooster, *Our Only Comfort: A Comprehensive Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism* Vol. 2. (Grand Rapids: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2001) 1169-1204. Klooster essentially condenses the information from J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, third ed. (New York: Longman, Inc.; 1972).

² More examples can be found in P. Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*. See <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds2.pdf>: Rules of Faith. Of particular interest will be a Comparative Table at the end of that section.

³ *Ibid.*, See the section, "Scripture Confessions, Symbolum Apostolicum. The Apostles' Creed." 

Ray of Sunshine

by Corinne Gelms and Patricia Gelms



Hi, my name is Nick Prinzen – many of you may not know me very well as I am from Jarvis, Ontario. I have been living at the Beacon Home since it opened.

I will be 40 years old this year and I love birthdays almost as much as I love food!!! Some of my favorite things to

do are work, work, and work!! I am very proud of the different jobs I hold and look forward to going to work every day.

I am the youngest in the family with only an older brother and my mom. I go to visit her every other weekend. I am also an uncle to five nephews and nieces. I used to be very shy but I am not so much like that anymore!

My hobbies are playing the piano, watching movies, and writing out recipes, since food is also one of my favorite things! I also look forward to Anchor Camp every year and Beacon Baseball, Special Olympics bowling and baseball, and Friendship Club at Dunnville URC!

I have a busy and full life at the Beacon Home but always welcome a visit!!!

Birthdays in September and October

SEPTEMBER

- 8 **MARSHA MOESKER will be 35**
6528 1st Line, RR 3 Fergus, ON N1M 2W4
- 14 **JERRY BONTEKOE will be 48**
c/o Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road, RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
- 22 **NICK PRINZEN will be 40**
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8
- 25 **DAVE VANVEEN will be 42**
6528 1st Line, RR 3 Fergus, ON N1M 2W4
- 29 **PAUL DIELEMAN will be 43**
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8

OCTOBER:

- 3 **JANELL DEBOER will be 22**
6311 Silver Street, RR 2, St. Ann's, ON L0R 1Y0
- 3 **JEANETTE WIERENGA will be 18**
328 Garner Road East, Ancaster, ON L9G 3K9
- 6 **HENRY VANDER VLIET will be 45**
c/o Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road , RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
- 12 **LEONA BARENDREGT will be 29**
Box 2184, Smithers, BC VOJ 2N0
- 13 **NANCY SCHIPPER will be 56**
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8
- 17 **ALAN BREUKELMAN will be 46**
225-19th Street, Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4
- 21 **CAMERON DANTUMA will be 21**
6528 1st Line, RR 3, Fergus, ON N1M 2W4
- 22 **NELENA HOF SINK will be 52**
Bethesda Clearbrook Home,
32553 Willingdon Cres., Clearbrook, BC V2T 1S2
- 28 **MARY ANN DE WIT will be 56**
31126 Kingfisher Drive, Abbotsford, BC V2T 5K4

Congratulations to everyone celebrating a birthday in these months. Wishing you God's rich blessings as you celebrate another new year. May you also be blessed with the gift of family and friendships. Enjoy your special day!



A note to all parents and caregivers

If there are any address or other changes that we need to be aware of please let us know as soon as possible.

You can contact us by the following means:

Mail: Corinne Gelms

8301 Range 1 Road, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

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Dr. Wes Bredenhof is pastor of the Providence Canadian Reformed Church, Hamilton, Ontario
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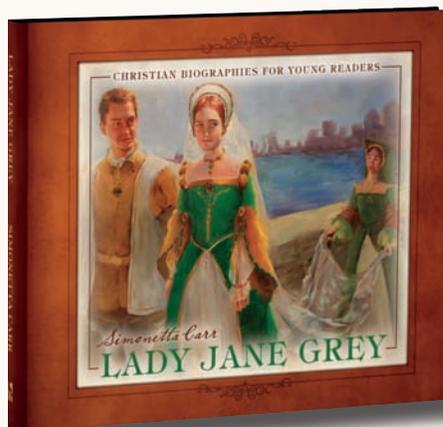
Lady Jane Grey, Simonetta Carr, Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012

Additional Information: Hardcover, 64 pages, \$18.00

Like many of you, my family and ecclesiastical roots are in The Netherlands. As a result, I tend to know a lot about Dutch church history and comparatively little about happenings across the North Sea. Prior to reading this book, I knew nothing about Lady Jane Grey, though I did know something of some of the other characters involved in her life such as Henry VIII and Edward VI. This book, written for children, is an excellent way to expand our church history horizons.

Lady Jane Grey briefly took the throne of England after the death of the Protestant boy-king Edward VI in 1553. It was his wish that she would rule instead of his step-sister Mary. Lady Jane Grey was a Protestant too; she loved the gospel and would have strengthened the work of the Reformation in England. However, in his providence God decided otherwise. Mary had the powerful support of key figures and she soon seized the throne from Lady Jane Grey. Mary lived up to her nickname (Bloody Mary) and had Lady Jane Grey and her supporters executed.

With this volume, Simonetta Carr continues to excel as a writer of church history for children. The story moves briskly and is not weighed down by unnecessary details. A member of a United Reformed Church in the San Diego area, this is now her fifth book in the series "Christian Biographies for Young Readers." Other volumes deal with Athanasius, Augustine of Hippo, John Calvin, and John Owen. As with the other works, *Lady Jane Grey* has professional quality pictures, maps, and illustrations throughout.



There is also a timeline, an appendix entitled "Did You Know?" and, most compelling of all, Lady Jane's last letter to her sister Katherine. Let me share an excerpt from this powerful letter:

Strive, then, always to learn how to die. Defy the world, deny the devil, despise the flesh, and delight yourself only in the Lord. Repent of your sins, and yet don't despair. Be strong in faith, with humility. With St. Paul, desire to die and to be with Christ, with whom, even in death, there is life.

Just from those sentences, you can get a sense of what gave Lady Jane Grey hope and comfort in life and death. Realize, too, that Lady Jane Grey only lived to be about seventeen years old.

This would be a fantastic addition to family libraries. Moreover, elementary teachers will also want to have this book on hand for teaching church history. While doing a unit on the Reformation in England, this could be a good book to read aloud. Reformation Heritage Books promises more books in this series. If they are all of this calibre, please keep them coming!





Rev. George van Popta
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Mostly Canticles

Praise God, All Nations, Glorify His Name

"Spoken by David when returning thanks to God, who had delivered him from the lion and the wolf and he had slain both of them."

1. Praise God, all na-tions, glo - ri - fy his name for he is our Sa - viour,
2. I was in dan - ger from the fear - some beasts, from the wolf and li - on -

age to age the same. His e - lect he res - cued from the hands of death,
how my fear in - creased. But God sent his an - gel who closed up their mouths.

for my soul he ran - somed and pro - longed my breath. From sure de - struc - tion,
From their teeth he saved me, and des - troyed them both. My soul shall praise him

he de - liv-ered me. From e - ter - nal an - guish he has set me free.
and ex - alt his name, for he has shown kind - ness; I will spread his fame.

Text: Syriac Psalm; vers. George van Popta, 2011, ©
Tune: George Frederick Handel

MACCABEUS
10,11,11,11+10,11



Dear Rev. Stam,

Re: Announcing a withdrawal

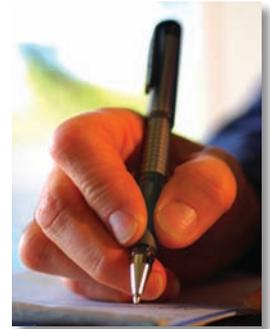
With reference to your article in *Clarion* about what is appropriate to be announced from the pulpit, I beg to differ. My contention is especially directed at your statement that as the pulpit is not a bulletin board it is only for the preaching of the gospel. You did refer to the Church Order, but I do not find that it elucidates anything in that regard.

The reason for my objection is that if we are to be a body of believers who care about the church and are therefore obligated to spend time in prayer about difficult relationships in the church, we must know something of what we are to pray about.

This could all be handled with loving concern by informing the congregation of goings on with the consistory so that prayer can be made and pleading with those who declare ultimatums. Exhortation to informed prayer must take place from the pulpit. Announcements of sharing concerns for the body of

Christ are most appropriate. Other announcements such as tickets for special events are things you could have issue with even if it is merely in the bulletin.

*Bernice Van Hof
Toronto*



Response

Thanks for your letter.

There certainly are instances when a matter or member should be mentioned in prayer. But this requires great care and utmost wisdom. The consistory should determine ahead of time what must be said and how it should be said. Sometimes prayer is abused because it reflects the opinion of the one praying rather than carefully doing justice to the matter. Prayer must not be contentious.

KS

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

