

Clarion

Numbers 10:1-10

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
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**CALVIN LONGED FOR UNITY AMONG ALL THE
PROTESTANT CHURCHES**

Mixed Marriage

Living in a church community in which so many people are married and you are single has more than just a few challenges

One of the issues in the Christian church that never seems to go away is the issue of mixed marriage. By “mixed” I mean the union in holy matrimony of someone who is a Christian with someone who is not.

Why it never goes away

Why will it not go away? The simple reason is that our hearts are sinful and we do not want to listen to God. What is often called “love” takes over and this emotion becomes so powerful that it dominates over everything else. Whether it be the will of God, the teaching of parents, or the advice of friends, once “love” swoops in all else pales in comparison and has to take a backseat to what we are feeling. The flutterings of our heart become paramount.

They also lead to countless rationalizations. “I will marry him and I have every hope that over time he will become a Christian.” “I am going to marry her because she is such a kind and considerate person.” “I want to marry him because I can not face a life of singleness any longer.” “I plan to marry her (or him) because I have no choice as there are no eligible young ladies (or young men) in the church.”

Lonely hearts

Now it is easy to dismiss these responses as little more than mistaken arguments; however, we do well to realize that so often they represent the cries of a lonely heart. Someone who really wants to find a partner for life but can just not find him or her in the church is dealing with a painful and distressing situation. Living in a church community in which so many people are married and you are single has more than just a few challenges. Looking at your future and seeing no one to share it with – no soul mate, no children, no grandchildren – is much more than just a minor irritant.

Hence in no way do I want to minimize the pain of those who are single and cannot find a spouse. We need to empathize with them. We need to pray for them. We

need to encourage them. Why, at times and with great care and much wisdom we may even need to give them a helping hand.

Scripture is clear

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that when it comes to this matter, Holy Scripture is clear. In 1 Corinthians 7 the Apostle Paul is led by the Holy Spirit to give a lot of advice and direction on matters of marriage and singleness. As he concludes that chapter he writes these words, “A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, *but he must belong to the Lord*” (1 Cor 7:39). Notice that Paul says that this woman is free to marry whomever she likes but there is one qualification or condition that must be met, namely, that he must be someone whom the Lord has bought with his blood and claimed for himself. Quite simply, he must be a believer.

In his second letter to the same church of Corinth, the apostle elaborates on this qualification. No sooner has he finished addressing the Corinthians in a very emotional way and pleaded with them to open wide their hearts, and then he says this: “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Cor 6:14). He uses an agricultural image here. The picture is that of two oxen who are harnessed together under one and the same wooden bar or iron yoke. These two animals need to work in step and in harmony. Joined and linked as they are, they have a lot of plowing to do.

Only what is fine and fitting for two oxen is not so for a Christian and a non-Christian. There is no way that these two should be tied or harnessed together. Paul even supplies any number of reasons: (1) “What do righteousness and wickedness have in common?” (v. 14); (2) “What fellowship can light have with darkness?” (v. 14); (3) “What harmony is there between Christ and Belial?” (v. 15); (4) “What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?” (v. 15); (5) What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols?” (v. 16).

Incompatibility

What Paul is stressing here is the matter of incompatibility. A believer and an unbeliever may think that they are compatible because they love one another; however, the apostle stresses that there is much more that divides them than unites them. They may possess in common what they think is "love" but what they lack are such essentials as "righteousness," "fellowship," "harmony," "commonness," and "agreement."

And that is not all, for Paul also brings in the fact that believers are holy. "We are the temple of the living God" (v. 16), meaning that Christians are the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. The Third Person of the Triune God has set us apart. He has sanctified us. He has come and made his home in us and with us. He has transformed us into temples, and one thing you can never do with a temple is defile it or bring something into it that is unclean.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

This issue begins with an editorial about "mixed marriage" – the marrying of a believer to an unbeliever. The editorial outlines the problems such marriages face, what Scripture has to say about it, as well as practical examples from the author.

We are also pleased to include an article from Professor Donald Macleod, former Professor of Systematic Theology at the Free Church of Scotland College. His article was originally published in the *West Highland Free Press* and discusses the influence of John Calvin.

Continuing from the previous issue, readers will also find the second part of Dr. Arjan de Visser's review of *The Mission of God* by Christopher J.H. Wright. Also from the hand of Dr. de Visser is a College Corner, an overview of the internship program at the seminary.

Issue 16 includes a Treasures New and Old meditation, a Canticle, and a book review. There is also a Mission News insert.

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Defilement

Yet that is what a mixed marriage does. It defiles the believing partner. It contaminates the temple. It turns what is holy into something that is unholy. Listen to Paul again, “Therefore come out from them and separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor 6:17, 18). Here he reaches back all the way into the Old Testament and into the books of Isaiah and 2 Samuel to make his point. He is saying then and now to believers everywhere that they are not to be mis-mated with unbelievers. The gulf is just too wide. The chasm is just too deep. The difference is just too great.

Now, as if these biblical words are not clear enough, there is more that can be cited. We have that scandalous situation mentioned in Numbers 25 where Israelite men sought out Midianite women and joined themselves to them. How the anger of the Lord was ignited when his covenant people defiled themselves in this way. Or what about the situation that Malachi prophesies against in his day? He accuses Judah of desecrating the sanctuary the Lord loves by “marrying the daughter of a foreign god” (Mal 2:11). Then too there is Ezra who complains “You have broken faith and married foreign women, and so increased the guilt of Israel” (Ezra 10:10).

Hence Scripture is clear. Its testimony is unambiguous. Marrying an unbeliever is a violation of the will of God. In addition, it is also a recipe for disaster.

Past experience

This last point has been driven home to me over the years in countless pastoral situations. I have dealt with members of the church who insisted on entering into what I some times call “a missionary marriage” but which soon became “an unholy alliance.” I have seen the bitter fruits of these relationships: faith abandoned, marriages shipwrecked, children adrift, family despair, abject loneliness, and much bitterness.

In China

Recently I returned from a two-month stay in China and everywhere I went I was confronted with the tales of mixed marriage sadness. One sister complained to me that her husband had promised when they married that he would go with her to church, but he never did. Another sister married an unbeliever and for a while he worshipped with her but then when sickness befell him, he blamed God and refused to attend. A brother of Reformed persuasion married a Pentecostal lady and although both claim to be Christian, their marriage is a

daily battleground. A sister confesses that she had such great hopes for her marriage even though her husband did not believe, but he has since turned on her, found another woman on the side and treats her like dirt.

The tales of sadness and pain are everywhere in China. The landscape is littered with broken hearts and countless tears. Heaven is being inundated with the petitions of those whose hopes and dreams have been dashed. It is a sad, sad situation.

At the beginning of our Chinese stay, our translator, who is single and longing to be married, said that she too was thinking about marrying an unbeliever. She complained that there are just too few men in Chinese Christian circles. But then as we visited with believers who had married outside the faith and heard their sad tales, she talked less and less about going down that perilous road. Singleness is a state that one may wish to escape but to trade it for a marriage filled with unbelief represents a very bad deal.

So where does that leave those who cannot find a believing spouse? The main thing that they, and all of us, must do is pray. This difficult situation needs to be brought to the Lord repeatedly in earnest petition. Another thing that should receive serious consideration is using the modern means of communication to link Reformed singles together no matter where they are in the world. And that brings us to another related topic, which is moving. Sometimes those who cannot find a spouse in one part of the country or world should give serious consideration to living elsewhere. Should these kinds of efforts not find favour, then the end result may be that one decides to remain single. Contrary to what many people even in the church may think, being single is not an inferior way of living. Why, the Apostle Paul even commends it (see: 1 Corinthians 7).

At the same time I would also remind you that marrying in the Lord is not a sure formula for success. Even among believers there can be and often are problems, tensions, and disagreements. There can also be unfaithfulness and heartbreak. Thankfully most believers who confess a common Lord are determined to deal with and work through their problems. They acknowledge the presence of sin and see the need for confession. They choose for the road of forgiveness and are willing to work at reconciliation. They do not want to throw overboard their vows, their spouses and, above all, their Lord.

Indeed, blessed are those who follow the will of the Lord when it comes to finding believing spouses. May the Lord hear many prayers, open many doors and make happy many hearts.





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Caught in the Act

“Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”

(Proverbs 26:12)

The book of Proverbs floods the reader with succinct statements on a host of subjects. Even if, as some argue, there is a deeper structure to the book or that parts are organized around key words, it is not that easy to see. One can easily be overwhelmed by the variety of topics and the apparently indiscriminate order in which they are presented. As one scholar writes, the author of Proverbs was “not interested in putting it into the kind of order that would appeal to modern Western logic.”

That may be true. But still, picking up and reading Proverbs in its order is a valuable exercise. It can surprise even the unsuspecting reader. Let me share an example. Proverbs 26 begins with a number of observations about the fool. Verse 6 laments how frustrating it is to depend on a fool: “Like cutting off one’s feet or drinking violence is the sending of a message by the hand of a fool.” The author goes on to observe in verse 9 that the things a fool says, even when they are wise sayings, are harmful to those around them: “Like a thorn bush in a drunkard’s hand is a proverb in the mouth of a fool.” The fool stumbles around, tearing a strip off those around him. “The Lord has a plan for this!” he may say, but at precisely the wrong time for the grieving. And the problem, says verse 11, is that a fool doesn’t learn.

He does it over and over again: “As a dog returns to its vomit so a fool repeats his folly.”

It’s all true, isn’t it? If you’ve been around people, you’ve seen it. Fools repeating foolish behaviour again and again: the “wise advice” that hurt instead of healed, the disappointment in finding the one whom we depended on was not to be trusted. Fools, all of them! But then comes the next proverb.

“Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.” It is almost as if the author can read our thoughts. You’ve been reading this and thinking about other people, haven’t you? You’ve been thinking about the foibles of “fools” whom you know. And you have been simultaneously congratulating yourself that this is not you. You think you are wise? “Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.” Caught in the act.

This chapter feels like a set-up. It reminds me of my ecclesiastical exams as a theological student. If you’ve ever observed one, you may know how a guileful examiner can lead an unsuspecting student down the garden path. He goes step by step, question by question, until the poor fellow has tied himself in knots and is stammering answers that sound like all manner of heterodoxy.

But there is a point here. Proverbs is teaching us how easily we can become wise in our own eyes.

What does it mean to be “wise in your own eyes”? It is thinking that you have it all together when in fact you do not. The Lord knows the perverse pride of the human heart. We easily see the foolishness in the lives of others while being oblivious to the sin in our own lives. The splinter has our attention and we are ignorant of the log in our own eye. “Wise in his own eyes,” paradoxically, is not wise at all.

It can be a dangerous thing to be familiar with the Word of God – familiar in a way that it no longer speaks to us. The word helps us understand people, it helps us understand life and fix problems, but if we are not reading it for ourselves it doesn’t break us over our sin. It doesn’t restore us to hope with the gospel. It doesn’t set afire our zeal for the Lord. That is a dangerous place to be.

There is more hope for a fool than for a person who has convinced himself that no one has a more accurate view of himself than himself. And that is saying something, because there is not much hope for a fool. But by God’s grace, his Word continues to surprise and catch you with treasures new and old. C

Calvin: The Great Re-former

Donald Macleod is the former Professor of Systematic Theology at the Free Church of Scotland College, Edinburgh, Scotland.

This article first appeared in the West Highland Free Press on Friday, June 28, 2013.

John Calvin probably never heard of the Western Isles, and many in the Western Isles certainly wish they had never heard of him.

There's no point in re-traversing the old familiar allegations of his baneful influence on the arts; nor is there any point in defending him from the charge that it was his fault that in the 1970s a man from Barvas had to trudge the seven miles to Galson if he wanted a "Christian drink." What really bugs me is that scarcely a day passes but the phrase "a narrow Calvinism" walks across my computer-screen.

I have two problems with this. One is that Calvin never saw himself as the founder of an "ism." In his own lifetime, there is only one single instance of the word "Calvinism" being used, and that was as an insult, as if we today were to call someone a Nazi. In this respect things aren't much better in 2013.

Yet the man himself was never an innovator, and even less was he an iconoclast bent on destroying all that had gone before. He was a re-former, and by that he meant that his one great concern was to restore the church to the form it had in the New Testament and in the first four Christian centuries.

The result is that it is hard to find in Calvin a single idea that had not been part of Christian tradition from time immemorial. He shunned originality, and if his "ism" has any one distinctive it is that it has no distinctives at all. It is simply, as one great nineteenth century scholar put it, "Christianity come into its own."

Nor did Calvin ever demand personal loyalty. It never occurred to him, for example, that his *Institutes* should become the creed of a church in the way that Wesley's Sermons became the creed of Methodism, or a papal encyclical commands the loyalty of all the Catholic faithful.

One curious result of this is that in the decades after his death Protestant theologians felt no need to back up their views with quotations from Calvin. His own age didn't see him as a giant, and even in the nineteenth century a classic, four-volume work from a Scottish theologian quotes him only once.

But what bugs me even more is that whatever "Calvinism" was, it wasn't narrow. The lazy modern mind, of course, reduces it to one thing: predestination – and I'm certainly not going to disown that doctrine. It affords gives us a magnificent view of a world which was carefully and lovingly planned, and which runs on schedule despite the fact that every sub-atomic particle behaves randomly and every human being makes her own free decisions; and it helps us understand why some people accept the Christian message even though it cuts across every prejudice with which they were born.

But in Calvin's own teaching, predestination is but one subject among many, the sixty-seven pages he devotes to it in his *Institutes* dwarfed by the five-hundred devoted to the doctrine of the church and by the many others devoted to the foundations of knowledge, the value of pagan writings, the humanity of Christ, self-denial, and the freedom of the individual Christian conscience.

But he was no mere theologian, poring over ancient tomes four floors above the roar of the traffic. Calvin was as practical as he was logical. Such was the academic renown of his university at Geneva, for example, that even the Jesuits paid it compliments. Poor children and orphans received a free education in the city school, and Calvin even managed to set up a kind of public health service by securing the appointment at public expense of a physician for the poor. Everyone knows that compared to the mediaeval church Calvin had a relaxed view on lending money at interest. What is less well-known is that once, at a time of high unemployment, he persuaded the Council to establish a silk-factory.

All this reflects Calvin's firm belief that the church could not disclaim responsibility for social welfare; and to promote that welfare he was happy to see women as well as men employed as deacons.

When it came to arrangements for worship, Calvin was a stickler for order, reverence, and propriety. The whole service had to take its tone from the fact that they were gathered in the presence of the Almighty. Confusion and flippancy were anathema, and what he called theatrical props, trifling pomp and useless extravagance absolutely banned. Modern Evangelical worship would have driven him nuts.

Calvin's one great concern was to restore the church to the form it had in the New Testament and in the first four Christian centuries

Yet at the same time Calvin recognised that decorum and order mean different things in different cultures. What is appropriate to North Atlantic communities would be ridiculous in the Australian outback. What mattered, therefore, was not that there should be any one particular order, but that there should be an agreed order, and that all involved should observe it.

For example, Calvin believed that we should kneel at prayers and have Communion every week, but he would

never have left a church just because people stood for prayers and had Communion only once a year; and when he heard that his Anglican friend, Bishop Hooper, had refused to wear the prescribed episcopal robes at his investiture he was highly irritated. It was daft, he thought, to make such a fuss over an agreed piece of ceremonial.

Because, more than anything else, Calvin longed for unity among all the Protestant churches. He was no Episcopalian, but he happily addressed Thomas Cranmer as "most illustrious Archbishop" and warmly endorsed his proposal for a Council of all the Protestant churches to draft a statement of common belief. Four years later, Cranmer was burned at the stake and the proposal came to nothing, but this did not prevent Calvin declaring that he would be happy to see the Pope preside over a General Council of all the churches, provided he would accept the authority of Scripture.

The nineteenth century Scottish theologian, Hume Brown, once pronounced Calvinism and Catholicism the only two "absolute types of Christianity," and there is enough truth in this to rebut the charge of narrowness. No one ever accuses Romanism of narrowness. It is a monumental and encyclopaedic intellectual construction. But Calvinism matches it point for point, ranging from the doctrine of original sin to the theology of art, science, commerce, and even civil disobedience.

Which may explain why not much in modern Europe escaped the influence of the great Genevan re-former. **C**





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The Mission of God

by Christopher J.H. Wright (Part 2)

In this article we continue our review of Christopher J.H. Wright's book *The Mission of God*.¹ I will first mention some positive aspects of the book and then move on to highlight a number of concerns. For readers who do not have the previous article within reach, here are the five key aspects of the book again: (1) First and foremost, mission work is God's work. (2) Mission work focuses on every need in this fallen world, whether spiritual, social, economic, or environmental. Thus, mission work includes evangelism, social and political action, and care of the environment. (3) Mission work is more than being sent out with a message. It is also simply being a blessing to your society and the world. (4) Old Testament motifs such as the Exodus and the Jubilee have enduring significance as paradigms for mission today. (5) The Bible should be interpreted from a missional perspective.

Positives

In evaluation, let us begin by noting a number of positives. The best part of *The Mission of God*, in my opinion, is Part 2 which is entitled "The God of Mission." This part contains three good chapters. The first chapter is a defense of biblical monotheism. The second chapter is a defense of Jesus Christ as the unique Saviour of mankind. Wright points out that the Bible really comes with one message in this regard: "The YHWH-centered monotheism of the Old Testament became the Jesus-centered monotheism of the New Testament" (126). The third chapter explains how the Bible confronts idolatry in its many forms, whether ancient or modern. Quote: "Although gods and idols are *something* in the world, they are *nothing* in comparison to the living God" (187, italics as in original).

Another strength of Wright's book is his explanation of important aspects and institutions of the old covenant, such as the calling of Israel among the nations and the Year of Jubilee. Even though I do not agree with the missiological implications which Wright draws from such passages, one can learn much from his exegetical work. The same applies to his discussion of passages from the

psalms and the prophets which speak prophetically about the nations seeing the light, learning the law of God, assembling before his throne (230-243).

Use of Old Testament passages

Having mentioned that Wright's focus on the Old Testament passages is one of the strong aspects of the book, I also need to say that there are significant concerns with how he uses the Old Testament. The first concern is that his *exegesis of Old Testament passages seems to be influenced by his desire to read holistic mission into the text*. In order to illustrate this, let us take another look at what Wright does with Genesis 12:1-3. While everyone agrees that the call of Abram is a pivotal moment in God's plan of redemptive history, there are different interpretations regarding the question what is expected of Abram. To what extent is he expected to be involved in the life of the neighbouring tribes and towns? Is he expected to speak to his neighbours about God? Is he expected to promote justice and peace in Canaan? Or is he expected to live in relative isolation from his neighbours?

Wright argues that Abram is commissioned to mediate God's blessings to the nations. Much of his argument is based on the translation of the phrase ". . . and you will be a blessing." While most translations take this as indicating the result or purpose of Abram's journey to the promised land ("so that you will be a blessing"), Wright prefers to take it as a distinct command: "Be a blessing." As we mentioned in the previous article, he even suggests that it would be entirely appropriate to take Genesis 12:1-3 as "the Great Commission" in the Bible (p. 214).

Eckhard J. Schnabel, in his book *Early Christian Mission* (2004), rejects the suggestion that Abraham was called to actively mediate God's blessing to neighbouring nations. He interprets Genesis 12:1-3 as follows: "The blessing for the nations is a promise, not a command. Abraham does not receive an assignment to carry YHWH's blessing to the nations; rather, the nations are promised divine blessing if and when they see Abraham's faith in YHWH and if and when they establish contact with his descendants."²

This is confirmed in the ensuing chapters of the book of Genesis. Those who are well disposed toward Abraham and his descendants fare well (Melchizedek, Abimelech), while those who oppose him or his descendants are punished.

The promise that Abraham and his descendants will be a blessing to the nations is repeated several times in the book of Genesis (Gen 18:18; 22:18, 26:4; 28:14). Obviously, it is an important aspect of God's plan of redemption for the world. At the same time, the emphasis is not on the people of Israel actively "spreading the blessings" to the other nations. Rather, the emphasis is that God's people are called to live in covenantal obedience and that this will bring blessing not just to God's own people but also to the entire world. Ultimately, it will be through the great descendant of Abraham, the Lord Jesus Christ, that the nations will be blessed.

A related question is: If Abram was called to "be a blessing" to the nations around him – as Wright suggests – what form was that calling supposed to take practically? Was Abram expected to evangelize his neighbours? Or was he expected to help the poor and fight against injustice? A key passage for Wright in this regard is Genesis 18, Abraham's plea for Sodom, and especially the Lord's words in verse 19: "I have chosen him that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him." Focusing especially on the phrase "to do what is right and just" (or, more literally, "to do righteousness and justice"), Wright claims that the Lord expected Abraham "to do righteousness and justice for the oppressed and against the oppressor" (367). In the case of Sodom and Gomorrah this meant that the Lord wanted Abraham to be concerned "about the suffering of the oppressed in the region at the hands of these cities" (367). The weakness in Wright's argument is that the text does not support what he is trying to prove. The text says that Abraham was expected to teach *his children and his household* to do righteousness and justice. No reference is made to teaching *the nations*.

Moreover, Wright's suggestion that Abraham was concerned about the suffering of the oppressed in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah is not supported by the evidence in Genesis 18 and 19. The evil that is singled out in those chapters is not social injustice but rather moral decline and perversion, evidenced by the fact that the men of the city are addicted to sodomy. In the New Testament we read that Abram's nephew Lot, apparently the only righteous man in the city, was distressed because of "the filthy lives of lawless men" in Sodom (2 Pet 2:7).

In conclusion, Wright's explanation of Genesis 12:1-3 illustrates the problem that he is trying to find a holistic view of mission in the Old Testament.

New Testament evidence lacking

A second concern regarding Wright's use of the Old Testament is that *he does not sufficiently ask the question whether implications drawn from the Old Testament are supported by evidence from the New Testament*. For example, when Wright says that the Exodus and the Jubilee are paradigmatic and highly repeatable models for the way God wishes to act in the world (275, 300), he fails to entertain the question whether such claims are actually being backed up by the New Testament. Take the Jubilee: Does the New Testament really indicate that the Jubilee is a paradigmatic and repeatable model for mission work in the world today? Wright would have a hard time to convince his readers that this is the case. But he does not even raise the question.

Something similar could be said about the Exodus. Wright claims that "the rest of the Bible clearly takes it as paradigmatic" (275) but he does not offer any biblical proof for this statement. The same applies to the claim made in the next paragraph: "The inevitable outcome surely is that *exodus-shaped redemption demands exodus-shaped mission*" (275, italics as in original). In other words: Wright is saying that just like the Exodus had political, economic, social, and spiritual dimensions, so our redemption in Christ has political, economic, social, and spiritual dimensions. It sounds powerful. Wright says it is "inevitable." But does the New Testament actually support this conclusion? The question comes up what Wright does with passages such as Colossians 1:14 and Ephesians 1:7 where redemption in Christ is described in terms of forgiveness of sins.³

One would have expected Wright to discuss such passages and then attempt to prove that even though the apostle mentions forgiveness of sins, the New Testament actually supports a broader understanding of redemption. Now that Wright fails to do so, it reinforces the impression that the "exodus-shaped" understanding of mission which Wright promotes does not flow from biblical passages but rather from his own desire to understand mission that way.

In the third and last article of this series will mention a few more concerns.

(Endnotes)

¹ Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*. IVP, 2006.

² Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, Volume 1 (IVP, 2004), 63.

³ For this point I am indebted to Bobby Jamieson's excellent review of Wright's subsequent book *The Mission of God's People* at www.9marks.org.





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Canticle

Thyatira

Revelation 2:18-29

1. These are the words of God's own Son whose eyes are fierce-ly blaz-ing. His
2. "Yet this I have as my com-plaint: You to-le-rate a-dul-t'ry. A
3. "But as for you who do my will, en-dure un-til my com-ing. I

feet are like rich bur-nished bronze; on them he's firm-ly stand-ing. "I
'Je-ze-bel' mis-leads my church; that makes me tru-ly an-gry. I
share with you my vic-to-ry; the na-tions you'll be rul-ing. Let

know your deeds, your love and faith, your per-se-ver-ing ser-vice, and
gave her time to be con-trite and seek my free-for-give-ness. But
him who has an ear give ear and lis-ten to the Spir-it. He

that you do more than at first; your love for me is bound-less.
she re-fused, so she will die and feel my righ-teous jus-tice.
speaks to you the word of God: you must o-bey and heed it."

Text: Revelation 2: 18-29; vers. George Ph. van Popta, © 2012
Tune: Claudin de Sermisy, 1529; Harmonization: Frank Ezinga © 2012

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The Internship Program at the Seminary – An Overview

You must have seen them on the pulpit – theological students leading the worship service. Perhaps your church has even had a student doing an internship under the supervision of your local minister. The summer internship program for theological students has become a much appreciated part of the training for the ministry. What is not so well-known is the fact our students are expected to complete *four internships* during their four years of study at the seminary in Hamilton. In this article we provide an overview.

First internship

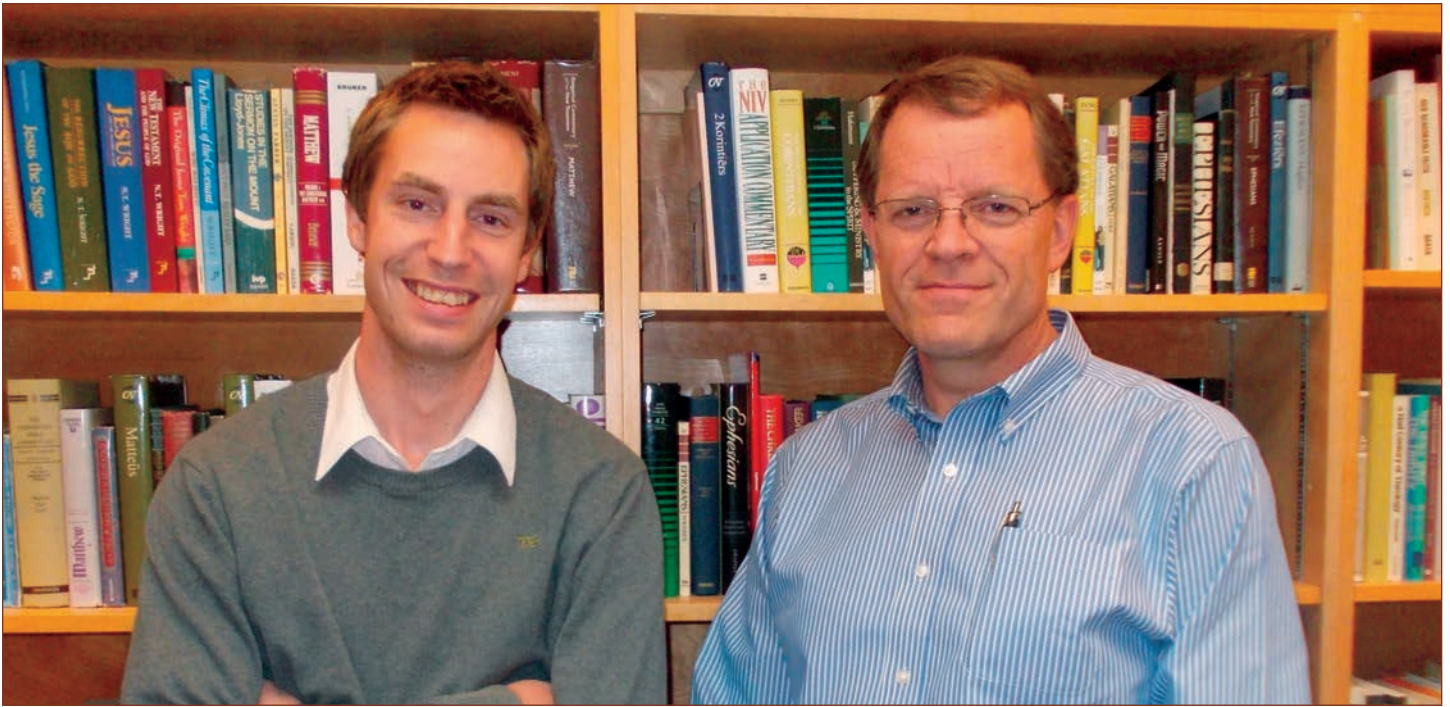
The first internship comes right after completing the first year of studies. It is a one- or two-week internship, called *Orientation Week*, which is designed to give the student a first taste of what the ministry is all about.

During this week the student “shadows” a minister and participates in his activities where this is possible. The student will work with the minister on his sermon for the next Sunday and accompany him on home visits. The student will also attend a council meeting and spend time with the minister asking questions about the ministry.

After the internship both the minister and the student submit a report. The students are usually very thankful for the experience. A quote from a student who recently finished his orientation week: “All in all, the entire orientation period with Pastor X was an amazing opportunity to get a glimpse into the life and work of a Canadian Reformed minister. The time I spent in the church of Y has whetted my appetite to continue moving forward with my studies at the seminary.”



Student Tyler Vandergaag with his mentor Rev. John Louwerse (Neerlandia)



Student Jeff Poort with his mentor Rev. Rob Schouten (Aldergrove)

Second internship

The second internship is the *Catechism Teaching Practicum*, which takes place during the second year of studies. Once again a student is placed under the mentorship of a minister. The student begins by observing the minister as he teaches Catechism classes in his congregation. The student then takes over one group of Catechism students from the minister. He will teach this group for a minimum of four weeks. If the student has the time and the guts, he might take on more than one group, or he may continue on for longer than four weeks.

Most theological students do not have teaching experience so they tend to struggle in the beginning. But with the advice and the encouragement of their mentor they usually make good progress in developing their teaching skills. When the student teaches his last class, an evaluator from the seminary will come out to evaluate the student's performance. The seminary has been blessed to be able to use the services of two experienced lecturers of the Teachers College in Hamilton for this purpose, Mr. A. Gunnink and Dr. C. Vanhalen.

Most students show good potential and complete the Catechism Teaching Practicum successfully. Occasionally it does happen that certain concerns need to be addressed. In such a case, an additional internship may be required.

Third internship

The third internship is the *Evangelism Practicum*, which takes place during the summer after the second year of studies. The goal of this internship is that students will learn more about evangelism and mission by being involved in an evangelism project or a church plant. If a student has the time and the money (or if someone donates air miles), he might even go to a mission field overseas. The minimum length of this internship is two weeks.

The evangelism internship was initiated in the summer of 2012. The first group of students went to a variety of places. One student did his internship with Rev. Paul Murphy in the URC church plant in Manhattan, New York. Another student went down to Florida to do an internship with Rev. Eric Watkins, OPC church planter in St. Augustine. The third student went all the way to Recife, Brazil, where he did some teaching at the John Calvin Institute and assisted the missionaries Wieske and VanSpronsen in their mission work. As you can imagine, these were exciting times for the students!

We do not foresee our students always going to exotic places like the ones mentioned in the previous paragraph. This year we have five students in the program and most

of them are staying in Canada. Nevertheless, given the fact that the Canadian Reformed Churches have only a few church plants on the go, we will continue to send some of our students to trustworthy colleagues in other federations. We can learn much from others, especially in the area of evangelism and church planting.

Fourth internship

The flagship of the Pastoral Training Program is the *Summer Internship*. This ten to twelve week internship takes places after the third year of theological studies. It is a kind of co-op program, fully sponsored by the churches through the PTP Funding Committee (Guelph-Emmanuel) which provides hosting churches with the funds they need in order to reimburse the students for their work.

The Summer Internship is the closest the student comes to experiencing what it is to be a minister of the Word. Under the supervision of his mentor he will make a sermon every week and be on the pulpit every Sunday morning. Towards the end of the internship he will probably try his hand at making two sermons and see how that goes. He will be doing pastoral home visits, initially with his mentor, later perhaps with an elder or on his own. The student will also attend council and consistory meetings, and be involved in activities that are still going on during the summer (for example, a new members' course or a pre-marriage counseling group). As a bonus, the student gets lots of time to discuss various aspects of the ministry with his mentor.

The Summer Internship has proved to be very beneficial. Of course, the one who benefits the most is the student. Through the years we have invariably received positive reports from the students. Nobody would have wanted to miss the experience. More than one student suggested that the internship should be longer, or that there should be two summer internships instead of one. The internship usually provides the student with the confidence that "he's got what it takes" to be a minister. In short, as one student said, "the summer internship is the best thing ever."

Another benefit of the Summer Internship is that it strengthens the bond between the seminary and the churches. It is always nice to see how hosting churches receive students and their families with open arms and how quickly the student becomes "their student." Minister, elders, and church members alike provide critique and encouragement along the way. Clearly, the churches cherish the opportunity to assist the seminary in the training for the ministry. Likewise, the seminary appreciates the willingness of ministers and local churches to assist us in preparing our students for the ministry.

This year we have three students in the field: Gerrit Brintjes in Lincoln (with Rev. Wynia as mentor), Jeff Poort in Aldergrove (Rev. Schouten), and Tyler Vandergaag in Neerlandia (Rev. Louwerse). Next year we will probably need five placements. The year after that we may need eight! Please continue to pray for the seminary and for our students.



*Student
Gerrit Brintjes
with his mentor
Rev. Dick Wynia
(Lincoln)*

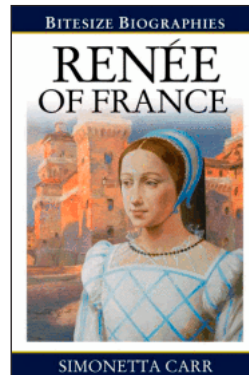
**Renée of France, Simonetta Carr
(Darlington, England: EP Books, 2013)**

Additional Information: Softcover, 128 pages, \$11.99

Sometimes it seems like the Reformation involved only men. Sometimes it seems that women were merely in the background. Generally speaking, the main movers and shakers of the Protestant Reformation were men. However, it would be a mistake to neglect the role of several important women. People should think not only of Katharina von Bora and other wives of the Reformers, but also of royalty such as Renée of France. This biography gives us a succinct but nuanced view of one of the most important women involved with the cause of the sixteenth-century Reformation.

The author, Simonetta Carr, is best-known for several church history books for children. This little book is directed to adults, though I think it could be read and appreciated by teens as well. Carr is a member of the United Reformed Church in Santee, California and a busy mom of eight children. She's developed a reputation for strong writing on historical topics and *Renée of France* only bolsters that further.

Renée of France (1510-1575) was a complex figure. Born into the French royal family, she early came to sympathize with the Reformation. While living in Ferrara (today in northern Italy), she was visited by John Calvin and other Reformed pastors. Throughout her life she maintained correspondence with Calvin. Carr has included excerpts of his encouraging letters to her throughout and especially in the last chapter, "Calvin and Renée." However, Renée also wavered back and forth between Roman Catholicism and the true faith. She was under intense pressure from other royal members to remain loyal to Rome. While she safely harboured many Protestant refugees over the years, Renée herself was at times weak.



Carr does not gloss this over, but instead presents Renée as a real human being who genuinely struggled with faith matters. She struggled not only with holding on to the content of the faith, but also in living out biblical convictions. In the end, Renée reportedly died as an "unrepentant

Protestant" and though some wanted to give her the burial befitting a princess, the king denied it since "Renée had not died in the true religion," i.e. in Roman Catholicism.

I want to mention something of interest in relation to chapter 2. Carr describes how a Roman Catholic monk came to Ferrara in 1535 to work on keeping Renée in the Roman fold. This monk was a well-known preacher named François Richardot. Simonetta Carr doesn't mention this, but this same François Richardot would go on to become the Bishop of Arras. In 1567, Guido de Brès was in prison awaiting his execution in Valenciennes. Richardot, the foremost debater of Protestants in the region, came to visit to debate and try to persuade de Brès to come back to the Roman Catholic Church. Richardot was unsuccessful that time too. Carr doesn't mention any of this subsequent history and I don't fault her for that – after all, her book is about Renée, not Richardot. However, it is interesting to note the connection with later developments.

While the book does not claim to be an academic study, it is still responsibly researched and written. Those who want do further study about Renée will find helpful resources in an annotated bibliography. I can highly recommend it for those with an interest in church history, as well as for church history teachers who might want to provide their students with insight into women's contributions to the Reformation.

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