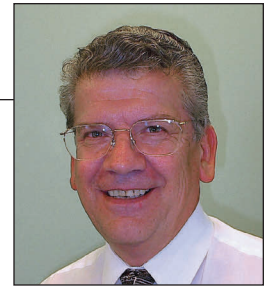


Clarion

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HOW DO WE SEE OUR WORK?



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Commitment

Is the word “commitment” still recognized by us?

Is there still such a thing?

One has to wonder whether or not there is still such a thing as true commitment today. Of course there is lots of false commitment in the sense that many people are dedicated to themselves, to their own agendas, aspirations, and pleasures. However, true commitment is not a self-centred business. It is other centred. It often comes at a considerable cost to oneself. It describes a dedication or loyalty that puts the other person or cause first and foremost.

If you need an example of that, think of Jonathan, son of Saul, mentioned in the Old Testament (1 Sam 20). He is not just a royal son, he is also the royal heir. When his father dies, he is supposed to assume the throne of Israel. Nevertheless, the Lord God in his infinite wisdom, decides otherwise. He rejects Saul as king and has David anointed as the new heir. Needless to say, this has tremendous repercussions for Jonathan. Legally and in the eyes of the people, he is still the rightful heir, but that is no longer how God sees it. David has supplanted Jonathan.

What is Jonathan’s reaction? Is it one of bitterness and jealousy, of hatred and scheming? In other words, does he act like his father? No, the Scriptures tell us that Jonathan loves David as a friend and brother. He also realizes that the kingship is not something that David wanted or expected, but that this is God’s doing alone. David is the divinely-appointed heir and Jonathan both recognizes this and submits himself to it.

In summary, then, Jonathan remains a committed friend to David. What God has done and what his father is doing, or trying to do to David, does not change their relationship or their covenant of friendship. Jonathan represents the loyal friend and the dedicated brother. He shows us what true commitment is all about, and in the process he points us forward to that ultimate figure of commit-

ment, namely Jesus Christ our Lord. His commitment to his followers is so deep that even the horrors of hell and the curse of the cross could not alter it.

Therefore, in the biblical context the word “commitment” represents a noble quality. Indeed, we are led to think not only of a Jonathan, but also of such figures as Abraham, Ruth, Hannah, Elijah and a host of others. Consider the list in Hebrews 11.

Yet that was then and this is now. How is it with us today? Is the word “commitment” still recognized by us? Is it still embraced, adopted and applied? Or is it so that commitment has given way to convenience?

In the workplace

One can think here in practical terms of the work place. Just how do we see our work and how do we see our relationship to our boss or employer? Does commitment still play a role here or is it a case of reluctant tolerance and simply putting up with a bad situation in the sense of “I need to eat and support myself and my family, and he needs to make a profit?” I suspect that for many people work is no longer about commitment at all. It’s about doing what you have to do. It’s all about just making a living.

At the same time there is little real thought to doing one’s best, developing one’s talents, respecting one’s employer, and promoting one’s company.

How distant such an approach is from what the Bible teaches. I am thinking here of what the Apostle Paul writes to the believers in Ephesus, even to slaves and masters. He tells the Christians who are slaves to “serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men. . .” (Eph 6:7). He tells the Christians who are masters to treat their slaves with respect and care (Eph 6:5, 9).

So what are Christian workers, even slaves, to do? They are to do their work with gusto. They are to work as

committed people. They are to see beyond their employers and view their daily work as divine labour. And what are Christian employers to do? They are to deal with their employees, even their slaves, in a spirit of equality and fairness.

The biblical model is thus all about being committed to one's work, to one's employer, to one's employees. It does not major in mediocrity. It does not encourage a culture of complaint, much less an adversarial posture. It calls on all of us as believers, employees and employers alike, to re-examine just how we go about doing our daily work.

In marriage and family

Commitment, however, should thrive in more than just our work place. It should also thrive in our marriages and families. When it comes to marriage the Apostle Paul has some fitting words for husbands and wives (see: Eph 5).

He urges the latter to be committed to the principle and practice of submissiveness. Wives are not allowed to do their own thing and

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Commitment: there seems to be a decreased level of commitment both in the work place and in marriages and families. Dr. James Visscher asks in his editorial, "What about in the churches? . . . There is an ever increasing indication that even in the church it is on the decline."

Further on in our issue, Dr. Cornelis Van Dam has written an article entitled "Musical Instruments in Public Worship." We also have the fourth part of "Good News For Women" by Sarah Vanderugten. The final article in this series will appear in the next issue.

Issue 4 brings readers their regular Treasures New and Old meditation, as well as columns such as Clippings on Politics and Religion, Education Matters, and You Asked. There is also a press release.

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ignore the standing and the feelings of their husbands. They are to see to it that their husbands lead and they are to help them to lead well.

At the same time Paul urges the husbands to love their wives. Which is harder, by the way, to submit or to love? In any case, the point is that husbands are called on to love their wives not as the world loves, but as Christ loved and still loves his church, meaning sacrificially.

But while Paul is dealing with mutual marriage commitment here, he is also dealing with something else. He is dealing with commitment to one's family. Parents are to promote the well-being of their children and children are to honour and esteem their parents.

Now all of that represents the biblical viewpoint, but what is the worldly reality? Sadly, we live in an age in which there is a decline, if not an absence, of commitment. People marry and make all kinds of fancy vows to one another, but no sooner is their relationship put to the test, and they bail out. They are done. They have had enough. The "D" (divorce) word is pursued. Little do they realize that it is better in so many ways to work through your differences, as hard as that may sometimes be, than to drown them in legal fees. They fail to see that a much better case can be made against it then for it. Try harder. Dig deeper. Pray more. These are all better options.

And what about the family? What about commitment to one's children? So often that too is sacrificed on the altar of personal pleasure, wants, and agendas. Our Western world is filled today with single parent homes. The mothers are doing all the heavy lifting and the fathers are out gallivanting around. Meanwhile, the government (and that really means the rest of us taxpayers) is doing all of the paying. Such a development does not bode well at all when it comes to the promotion of a happy, productive, and law abiding society.

In the church

Yet if commitment is on the decline in the work places and in the homes of the nation, what about in the churches? If you would expect it to be thriving anywhere, it would be here. Right? After all, Christians march to the tune of a different drummer. They serve a higher Master. They follow a nobler agenda. Surely here commitment is alive and well.

Sorry to disappoint you, but there is an ever increasing indication that even in the church it is on the decline. Reginald Bibby, the well-known Canadian sociologist of religion in Canada, was once asked to explain the growth of the evangelical movement. He replied that it was due to "the procreation and the circulation of the saints." In other

words, Christians have more babies and Christians change their church address often.

Now, I am not so sure that the former is still true. The last time that I looked at the data it indicated that there was little or no difference between the birth rate in the church or in the world. This is, of course, not to say that the world has caught up to the church but rather that the church has dumbed down to the world.

But then there is also the latter phenomenon, namely "circulating saints." That too has changed in that it has accelerated. My, my, my, are the saints ever circulating today! Then they are Baptist, then they are Alliance, a little later on they are Community Church, still later they are Presbyterian. Always moving, never settling down anywhere for long.

Is it because they are seeking more truth from the pulpit, fewer decibels from the band, greater love from their fellow saints? Usually not. More often, they are doing so because their ears are itchy for new things, their eyes long to gaze at nicer and better looking pastors, their hearts yearn for more stimulating surroundings. "It's all about the worship experience," you know.

Is it really? I must be greatly mistaken. I thought that church was all about serving the Lord, about worshipping God in spirit and in truth, about using your gifts and talents to improve the communion, about being Christian in meekness, humility, patience, and service. In other words, it's not a case of "what can the church do for me?" but rather "what can I do for the church?"

Commitment, again! Just how committed are we to promoting the unity and the welfare of the local church of Jesus Christ?

Of course, this does not mean that you need to stick with a certain church – no matter what. No, there are valid reasons for departure as when error trumps truth, worldliness blows away holiness, and spiritual dictatorship torpedoes biblical leadership.

Yet these are rarely the reasons that people cite today for leaving. It's a lot less principled and a great deal more emotional than that.

Too bleak a picture?

Am I painting too bleak a picture? Perhaps, but I doubt it. In this world true commitment is in danger of going the way of model T Ford. Should that lead us to despair? No, for God is still active in the hearts and lives of his saints as they work, as they marry, and as they parent. The church of Jesus Christ as well continues to be under his special care. He preserves a remnant. And they will receive the strength to let their light shine, also the light of true and abiding commitment. May you be among their number!





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Jeremiah: The Reluctant Prophet

“I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

Jeremiah 1:4-8

Life is full of surprises. People's lives can change dramatically. Jeremiah experienced a huge and unwelcome change in his life.

He was born in Anathoth, a town five kilometres from Jerusalem. His father was a priest, so he knew that he would be one too. Josiah was king. He was a good king. One of Judah's very best. He wanted reformation. For priests, this was good. If people repented and changed, the priests' work was much easier. People would offer sacrifices and worship God and that was very nice for a priest. Jeremiah's future looked good.

He had friends but he never married, for God wanted him to be a prophet. And a prophet's life was too hard for a man with a wife at that time. That was God's choice, not Jeremiah's: “The word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.’” God wanted Jeremiah to be a prophet because there were a lot of sinful things in the land. The people were not very

faithful at all. Pagan worship had become immensely popular because it involved a lot of sex. The Sabbath was hardly observed. And the poor were treated badly.

A prophet would have to fight against all this and more through his sermons. And you know what happens when people get criticized for their behaviour from the pulpit: They grumble against those preachers, and soon everyone seems to hate them. Jeremiah complained a lot about that.

Jeremiah didn't want to be a prophet. He said as much to God: I can't make a difference. Nobody will listen to me. “‘Alas, Sovereign Lord, I do not know how to speak; I am too young.’” Besides, my life is set. I'm going to be a priest. I don't want to be a prophet.

But God said: I've been preparing you for this since before you were born. To you it's like having your life turned around, but you were born for this. But “‘Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,’ declares the Lord.” And Jeremiah didn't have to worry about what he

would say for, “The Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, ‘I have put my words in your mouth.’”

That message is the book of Jeremiah. When you go through this book and feel Jeremiah putting demands on you that you do not feel ready for, don't be afraid. God prepared Jeremiah, and God prepares us too. Even before we were born, God knew us. We can change. We can get rid of bad practices and evil ways. God gives us the power to live up to whatever challenge he gives us. God calls believers everywhere to be prophets, just as he called Jeremiah to be one.

But one thing is really important to grasp: Jesus Christ is our Saviour. He came to save us from our sins, and not just from the guilt of sin, but from its power. When we believe in Jesus Christ, he forgives us and completes the preparations he began before we were born, so that we might be effective prophets for him. We can do it because God can. C

For Further Study

1. Was Jeremiah surprised when God called him to be a prophet? What career path was he expecting?
2. Do you think that God is calling you to a different path than the one you are on right now? What kinds of changes do you think God wants to bring about in your life?
3. Does Jesus make it easier for us to make changes in our lives?

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Good News for Women

First Century Christian Women (Part 4)

The active involvement of women in the early Christian church continued after Jesus' ascension, as Luke makes clear from the first chapter of Acts. Immediately upon their return from the Mount of Olives, Jesus' followers gathered in an upstairs room in Jerusalem. The Eleven are mentioned, but in addition "the women" and Mary, Jesus' mother, were present. "They all joined together constantly in prayer" (Acts 1:14). It was this group of disciples that proposed the names of two men, one of whom would replace Judas.

Pentecost: Spirit filled men and women

The next major event was Pentecost, the day the Holy Spirit was uniquely and visibly poured out on the disciples. Peter takes the lead, and affirms that this amazing event was a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, which reads in part: "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days" (Joel 2:28-29). The new age of the Spirit had dawned. The Holy Spirit would no longer only come on particular people for a particular occasion, but on all God's children equally. Three thousand were added that day, and their response was to devote themselves "to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). Growth continued as "more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number" (5:14).

The exponential growth of the church led to persecution by the Jewish authorities, whose leadership and control of their people was seriously threatened. Saul (later Paul) began his murderous campaign to snuff out

the church: "Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison" (8:3; 22:4). He requested a letter of authority to do the same in Damascus, "so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem" (9:2). Apparently both the men and women who scattered from Jerusalem "preached the word wherever they went" (8:4) and both were subject to similar persecution.

Philip, one of the seven chosen to "wait on tables," also preached. Fleeing Jerusalem, he followed Jesus' command to move beyond Judea, going to Samaria, with good results. "[W]hen they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (8:12). The baptism of all believers, male and female, has continued since Pentecost despite early attempts of some Jewish Christians to revert to circumcision. "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:27-28). There would be no going back to separation or special status due to ethnicity, economics, or gender.

Crucial role of women

As the church expanded from Jerusalem, first to Asia Minor and then Rome and beyond, women were an integral part of the effort. We read of the prominent Greek women of Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 17:4, 12), of Damaris of Athens (17:34) and of Philip's four daughters who prophesied in Caesarea (21:8-9). Luke and Paul both mention with appreciation Priscilla the wife of Aquila. She and her husband were tentmakers, but also

teachers – Paul’s “fellow-workers” to whom all “the Gentiles are grateful” (Rom 16:3). Interestingly, of the seven times this couple is mentioned, Priscilla’s name comes first five times. Commentators are not sure why. It could be that she was of higher status or the more prominent teacher (Acts 18:2, 18, 19, 26; Rom 16:3; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19). On one occasion, she and her husband invited the passionate Apollos into their home to teach him the faith beyond “the baptism of John” (Acts 18:25-26). Lydia and Nympha opened their homes as a place for Paul to preach (Acts 16, Col 4:16). Lois and Eunice, Timothy’s grandmother and mother, are honoured as instrumental in bringing him to faith (2 Tim 1:5). Paul calls on Euodia and Synteche, those “women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel,” to resolve their differences (Phil 4:2). Their reconciliation was vital to the well-being of their congregation.

Romans 16, a chapter we tend to skip because of the many names, proves to be a rich source of information about women whom Paul appreciates for their efforts on behalf of the gospel. Phoebe is called a servant, possibly even deaconess, of the church of Cenchrea and has been a great help to Paul and to her own congregation. William Hendriksen, among others, suggests she was the carrier of Paul’s letter to Rome.¹ Priscilla has been mentioned already; a more controversial name is Junia(s) (v. 7). Early church fathers such as Jerome and John Chrysostom presumed Junia was a woman. This changed in the early fourteenth century, likely to avoid the problem that Paul refers to both her and Andronicus, a man, as “outstanding among the apostles.”² Other women greeted in this chapter included Mary (v. 6), Thyphena, Tryphosa, and Persis (v. 12), all of whom Paul commends as having “worked very hard in the Lord.” Rounding out the references to women are Julia and Nureus’ sister, as well as Rufus’ mother, who has been like a mother to Paul.³

It’s good to remember that Paul writes to a church in its infancy. Church offices – elder, deacon, minister as we know them today – were in their nascent stage. Yet, it is clear that women were given greater prominence than they had ever had in the Jewish synagogues. This one chapter, where ten women are mentioned as Paul’s associates, emphasizes that women were vital in the ministries and expansion of the church; they worked right alongside men like Paul.

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CHURCH NEWS

The same but different

As we make our rather cursory journey through the letters of Paul, it’s worth pausing at Ephesians 5, where Paul gives some instruction on household relationships, also between husbands and wives. There are other passages (Col 3; 1 Tim 5; Tit 2; also 1 Pet 3), but a brief look here will have to suffice.

As always, cultural context is important. Paul was speaking into a situation different from today. Many Greco-Roman men would have had one wife, but also mistresses and concubines. The Athenian statesman and orator Demosthenes (384 – 322BC) stated: “Mistresses we keep for the sake of pleasure, concubines for the daily care of the body, but wives to bear us legitimate children, and to be faithful guardians of our households” (*Against Neaera*, 1:122). Paul is not telling husbands to be the head of their households; they already were, sometimes in abusive ways. He does not undo the structures, but radically changes how they are to function. Paul instructs husbands no fewer than three times (Eph 5:25, 28, 33) to do the really radical thing: “love your wife.” This is not referring to romance or sex, but to giving his life in loving service to her. The model is Christ’s love for the church; he was the bridegroom who willingly gave his life for his bride. The Apostle presumes the husband (father) will continue to provide leadership, but his role will be dramatically transformed into one of caring for his family, not just one of having them around to serve his own self-interest. Authority is not about controlling others, but about caring responsibly and lovingly for them. Under such leadership, a wife will have ample opportunity to flourish in her family, home, church, and community. Blessed are the wives of such husbands, both in Paul’s day and today! Respect and submission become a joy!

In this very brief survey of the epistles, it’s impossible to touch on every instruction given with regard to women and their functioning within family and church community. To be honest, not all guidelines are equally

clear and sometimes it's hard to see how they apply today. In some ways, reading the epistles can be like listening to only one side of a telephone conversation. That's because what we're reading are responses to particular questions and concerns raised in a letter or sent via an envoy to Paul (cf. 1 Cor 1:11, 5:1, 7:1). Paul gives answers, but we're not always sure what the questions are. 1 Corinthians 11: 3-16 can serve as but one example among several. The passage states expectations for appropriate behaviour and dress when men and women are praying and prophesying. Paul gives arguments from culture, from creation, and from propriety. Commentators readily admit, that even after much study, certain aspects of this passage remain obscure, such as verse 10: "For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign (symbol) of authority on (over) her head." Gordon Fee suggests that because we don't know exactly what the Corinthians have asked Paul, "we're left on the outside looking in. . . and must forever be content to 'look through a glass darkly' and learn what we can in the midst of admitting how little we know."⁴ Humility in exegesis and application are warranted.

Thankfully, there are passages with sufficient clarity to give guidance specific to women. Paul tells Titus to urge the older women to live temperate, respectable lives, and to train the younger women to love and respect their husbands and to run their households well (2:3-5). Peter encourages wives to maintain a quiet and gentle spirit, putting their hope in God, rather than relying on outward beauty and expensive adornment as a way of gaining status or attracting men. Honouring one's husband as leader was required, even if he was not a believer (1 Pet 3:1-6, cf. 1 Tim 2:9-10). Widows are to receive help if necessary, but are also given opportunity to show hospitality, helping those in trouble and devoting themselves to all sorts of good deeds. Younger widows are encouraged to marry again (1 Tim 5:3-15). Single women are only obliquely addressed when Paul suggests it's good to remain unmarried, so as not to face the troubles of married life and have opportunity to pursue God's service without the burden of familial duties (1 Cor 7:7, 28).

Restoration of status

This brief journey – too brief perhaps – through Acts and the Epistles, focusing on the portrayal of women, shows that the role and position of women was being restored. There was change and significant improvement between the Old Testament time and that of the early church. Jesus had affirmed marriage as it was intended from the

beginning. Paul broadened the parameters of the love of a husband for his wife; a wife could safely and respectfully submit to the loving and sacrificial leadership of her husband. She could flourish as wife and mother in her household. Jesus permitted, even encouraged, women to learn the gospel from him. He gave them radically significant roles as witnesses of his death and resurrection. Paul's letters show that women were welcomed in the public arena, albeit in a limited way, and allowed to participate in spreading the good news of Jesus Christ. Their persecution gives evidence that they were considered as much a threat by the Jewish leaders as men were. Paul made a point of mentioning and commending many women for their hard work, faithfulness, and contribution to both church and the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Of course, in the most important ways, the Christian woman was not so different from the Christian man. Both belonged to the family of God because of the saving work of Jesus Christ. Both enjoyed all the benefits of being in Christ – forgiveness, sanctification, sealing with the Holy Spirit, and eternal life. Both had responsibility to "conduct [themselves] in a manner worthy of the gospel" (Phil 1:27). For both it is a matter of spiritual rebirth in Christ.

We come to the close of our focus on what Scripture reveals about women. Hopefully such an overview is helpful. It allows us to explore what it meant to live as a woman before the face of God from the time of creation, through the fall and Old Testament days, and then to trace the changes that occurred in the early Christian church. We observe that in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit the woman was being restored to the place God had initially given her as co-image bearer responsible for reflecting her creator as co-regent with the man.

Next time we'll wrap up this series with some reflections how this study of women in Scripture might be worked out in our lives as women in our marriages, families, churches, and communities.

¹ William Hendriksen, NTC, *Romans*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981), 499.

² Ruth A. Tucker and Walter Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 72-74.

³ As to the topic of women in office or leadership in the church today, I defer to the eminently qualified CRTS New Testament professor, Dr. G.H. Visscher's "1 Timothy 2:12-15: Is Paul's Injunction about Women still Valid?" *Correctly Handing the Word of Truth: Reformed Hermeneutics Today*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 142-154.

⁴ Gordon Fee, NICNT *First Epistle of the Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 518.





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Musical Instruments in the Public Worship

How important are musical instruments for our public worship? Does Scripture mandate them? If not, are they forbidden or do we have the freedom to choose whatever instrument we wish to have in our worship service? These kinds of questions were raised in the Reformed Music in Worship Conference in Burlington on October 25, 2014. The conference was positively stimulating and got me thinking.

Now on one level it seems obvious that Scripture mandates that we have musical instruments in church. Do we not sing, for example, in Psalm 150 that we are to praise God with the sounding of the trumpet, the harp, the lyre, the tambourine, the flute, and with resounding cymbals? But, in the history of the church some have asked, is it that simple? Do such and similar passages in the Old Testament actually command the church today to include these instruments in public worship? The New Testament is virtually silent on the use of instruments in worship and on that basis there are churches, such as the Free Church of Scotland, which up until recently did not allow instruments in their church service on the Lord's Day. This exclusion of instruments is done according to the regulative principle of worship which, in John Calvin's words, means that "God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by his Word."¹ And so Calvin refused to allow musical instruments in worship since there was no direct command from God that these should be included in the New Testament church. The use of these instruments belonged to the Old Testament "dispensation of shadows and figures."² "Musical instruments were among the legal ceremonies which Christ at his coming abolished; and therefore we, under the Gospel, must maintain a greater simplicity."³

It is interesting and of benefit to listen to the arguments of Calvin and his spiritual heirs on this point before we consider our own use of musical instruments in our worship services.

No musical instruments

To understand Calvin's opposition to musical instruments it is helpful to be aware of his interpretation of John 4:23-24.⁴ In this passage the Lord Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that "a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth." In his commentary on this passage, Calvin basically explains this passage to mean that in light of the fulfilment of the worship prescribed by the law, our worship should be unencumbered with outward ceremonies and crutches and be spiritual and therefore simple, focussing on the inward reality of worship. For Calvin that includes the exclusion of musical instruments from congregational worship. This is evident from his commentaries on the Psalms.

When Psalm 33:2 says: "Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to him on the ten stringed lyre," Calvin comments that such use of instruments was part of "the puerile instruction of the law." Of Roman Catholic usage of instruments he then writes: "When they frequent their sacred assemblies, musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law." A little later he comments, with reference to 1 Corinthians 14:16 that "the voice of man, although not understood

by the generality, assuredly excels all inanimate instruments of music.” Elsewhere, in his comments on Psalm 92:4, Calvin acknowledges that music was “useful as an elementary aid to the people of God in ancient times,” but “now that Christ has appeared, and the Church has reached full age, it were only to bury the light of the Gospel, should we introduce the shadows of a departed generation.”

The result of Calvin’s view was that the Reformed churches in The Netherlands banned the playing of the organ in the worship service. Its use in church was considered a Roman Catholic leaven that must be done away with since the organ functioned in their elaborate liturgy in which congregational singing was virtually absent.⁵ Also in Scotland the usage of the organ in the worship service ceased.

The New Testament is virtually silent on the use of instruments in worship

It is interesting to note some of the rationale for the banning of the organ, beyond simply using the regulative principle of worship.⁶ Of all the references to musical instruments in the Old Testament, the only ones that really matter in this discussion are those that specifically mention musical accompaniment in official worship. Such use of music was established by David when he organized the elaborate temple worship. What is noteworthy is that the Levitical musicians stood near the altar (2 Chron 5:12). Indeed, the sacrifice on the altar was the reason for the music. This is especially clear when Hezekiah restored temple worship. We read in the account that “the Levites stood ready with David’s instruments, and the priests with their trumpets. Hezekiah gave the order to sacrifice the burnt offering on the altar. As the offering began, singing to the LORD began also, accompanied by trumpets and the instruments of David king of Israel. The whole assembly bowed in worship, while the singers sang and the trumpeters played. All this continued until the sacrifice of the burnt offering was completed” (2 Chron 29:26-28; cf. 23:18). Indeed, it has been said that all temple music “was nothing but an accessory to its sacrificial ritual. Without sacrifice, the music loses its *raison d’être*.”⁷ All this music-making is fittingly de-

scribed as a “ministry of prophesying” (1 Chron 25:1). After all, the Old Testament sacrifices pointed to the coming of the fulfilment of the sacrificial ministry with the coming of Christ. Today, with the sacrificial service fulfilled, can we still insist on the music that accompanied this Old Testament shadow (Heb 8:5)? Those opposed to instrumental music in worship answer that we cannot. The music making has lost its reason for existence. We will be returning to this passage.

Coming to the New Testament, the silence with respect to instruments in worship is remarkable. Only in the book of Revelation do we find references to musical instruments. But opponents of instrumental music point out that it is difficult to draw conclusions from their usage in this book since much of the language is symbolic, modelled after Old Testament types. The heavenly scene in Revelation 5 is full of symbolism. The twenty-four elders dressed in white are probably symbolic of the Old Testament saints. The Old Testament symbolism continues with the incense being the prayers of the saints (Rev 5:8). The twenty-four elders holding harps remind one of twenty-four orders of Levites, commissioned to sing and prophesy to the accompaniment of the harps and cymbals (1 Chron 24:7-18; 25). None of all this amounts to a directive much less a command for the church to have musical instruments. The same is the case with Revelation 15:1-4 where a prophecy of the victorious coming of God’s kingdom is described in terms of Old Testament symbolism, including the sea of glass, the laver of Solomon’s temple, the exodus out of Egypt, and also the harps.⁸ Trumpets are also mentioned in Revelation; however, not in the context of worship but of important announcements and warning (Rev 8; cf. Exod 19:16-19).

Those who would see the New Testament direct us to use musical instruments in church sometimes claim support for their view by saying that Ephesians 5:19 shows that musical accompaniment took place in apostolic times. This passage literally reads: “Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming.” The Greek root of this last word (psalming) historically, in view of its origin, literally means to pluck or play the strings of an instrument. In the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament it means to sing with or without musical accompaniment. However, experts agree that in the New Testament the meaning of this verb is

best understood without such accompaniment. For this reason it is not surprising that to my knowledge there is no official Bible translation of this passage that indicates musical accompaniment. The early church sang (1 Cor 14:26; Col 3:16), but there is no evidence that they had accompaniment with musical instruments. Indeed, the post-apostolic church sang a capella and also understood Ephesians 5:19 as such.⁹

The absence of any directive for the use of instrumental music in worship means that the New Testament stresses the human voice. The people of God are his new temple both individually and collectively (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19) and the music that fills the air is in the first place that of the most beautiful musical instrument possible, the human voice. The life of thankfulness is full of music and song, moulded by the Spirit (Col 3:16). Not surprisingly in view of the above, the early church did not use musical instruments in their worship and even today the Eastern or Greek Orthodox Church officially continues to have no musical instruments in worship.

In view of all this evidence, the question arises: Do we err by having an organ or other instruments in church?

Musical Instruments in Church

With Calvin's opposition to musical instruments in church and above all without clear biblical precedent in the apostolic church, how did we end up with musical instruments in our worship services? In our own Dutch heritage, it appears that practical considerations played an important part in allowing the organ to function in the church service. It became increasingly difficult to keep the massive congregational singing on track without the help of the organ. As a result some churches such as those in Arnhem and Delft introduced organ playing in 1632 and 1634 respectively.¹⁰ The result was a gravamen to the 1638 Provincial Synod of Delft requesting the synod to judge whether the playing of the organ during the worship service in the Reformed churches during the singing of the psalms was edifying. The synod judged that "this is a middling matter and is therefore left in the freedom of each church whether to do it for edification."¹¹ Notice that this synod did not make this a matter of principle, but of edification. If in the judgment of a particular church the organ playing would result in better congregational singing, then such usage of the organ

should be permitted. Each church should judge for itself. The result was that gradually the use of the organ spread. By the eighteenth century the use of the organ in church services was generally accepted and by 1910 even the Reformed Church in Urk had an organ installed in spite of protests.¹²

***The absence of any directive
for the use of instrumental music
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stresses the human voice***

Although there were strong protests as the transition was made to the use of the organ, sometimes by very prominent scholars such as Gisbertus Voetius, the change was made. Obviously Calvin's reasoning did not convince in the long run. Why was that? Probably because there is no clear command in Scripture one way or the other respecting musical accompaniment in the church service. The matter is thus best left up to the wisdom of the church in question. The regulative principle of worship goes too far by insisting that Scripture is clear on not permitting musical accompaniment in worship. We confess with respect to the second commandment that we are not to worship God "in any other manner than he has commanded in his Word" (HC, Q/A 96). There is no specific command regarding the use or non-use of musical instruments. We therefore need to understand the biblical principles of worship that hold true for all times and places and apply them to our situation. These principles are also found in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament teaches us that singing praises to God is pleasing to him. The Book of Psalms is an eloquent testimony to that. Furthermore, it can be shown that Psalms had musical accompaniment (e.g., Ps 4, 5). They functioned in worship and in the temple liturgy, as the association of Levites such as Asaph and the sons of Korah to the Psalms makes clear (Ps 42-49, 73-83). One example touched on earlier in this article shows that singing and musical accompaniment took place with the sacrifice of the whole burnt offering (2 Chron 29:27-30). This liturgy was according God's directives (2 Chron 29:25). Now all the sacrifices that took place were fulfilled in Christ (Heb

9-10). But there is no biblical evidence to suggest that the musical accompaniment was fulfilled in Christ and thus has no place in a church service. To the contrary. If Israel was grateful and excited about the forgiveness of sins as pictured in the sin offering that had taken place prior to the sacrifice of the whole burnt offering (2 Chron 29:21-24), should we not be all the more full of thankfulness since *the* sacrifice has been offered for all our sins? Indeed, we are now to offer ourselves “as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God” (Rom 12:1)! Just as in the Old Testament, singing is in order and if musical accompaniment can enhance the praise what biblical justification is there to forbid this? It is noteworthy that the singing of the redeemed before God’s throne is accompanied with harps (Rev 14:2).

Now it is understandable that Calvin, given the times in which he lived, reacted to Roman Catholic rituals and pomp by constructing a biblical liturgy from scratch as it were and not allowing musical accompaniment due to its abuse in the medieval church. But could he insist on it as a biblical principle for the church at all times and places? The evidence is wanting. And so a church is free to have an organ or whatever appropriate musical accompaniment is available if they so desire in order to enhance the singing.

But we can learn from Calvin and the following point is what I appreciate about his stance and those of his spiritual descendants. The singing is what counts. *The* musical instrument that *is* highlighted in the New Testament is the human voice. We must never forget that it is the only musical instrument created by God himself and we do well to honour him by using that instrument! The accompaniment by man-made tools can be very useful, but it must serve the sung praises of the congregation for they are what really matter. Think of passages such as: “Let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name” (Heb 13:15) and “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God” (Col 3:16). The stress in the Psalter is also on the voice and singing. The verb for singing pervades it. “Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song” (Ps 95:1-2).

There is a trend in our days toward what Dr. de Visser has called the “musification of worship.”¹³ This occurs

when performances by musical instruments tend to dominate worship, for some at least, to make worship more appealing. This current evangelical trend we have to avoid. All music produced in church should be subservient to our worship and not be an end in itself. With respect to our song it should therefore support and enhance our praises and not interfere with them. Happily this was also a dominant focus and emphasis at the conference. It was good to have been there.

In the meantime let us do much singing and praising God. Not only in our worship in church but also in our homes. Singing psalms and hymns provides great blessings and is pleasing to the Lord. It is also a great preparation for being in the very presence of God himself in glory where the redeemed sing a new song before the throne (Rev 14:2)!

¹ John Calvin, *Tracts and Treatises* (Torrance edition, 1958) 1:128; also see The Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 21.1. For a recent treatment, G.I. Williamson, “The Regulative Principle of Worship” in *Proceedings of the International Conference of Churches, June 20-27, 2001, Philadelphia, U.S.A.*, 213-234.

² John Calvin in his *Commentary on the Psalms*, 3:98 (on Ps 71); see also 1:539 (on Ps 33:2).

³ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses*, 1:263 (on Exod 15:20).

⁴ A point made by W. David. O. Taylor, “John Calvin and Musical Instruments” *Calvin Theological Journal* 48 (2013) 251.

⁵ See H. Hasper, *Calvijns beginsel voor de zang in de eredienst* (1976), 720.

⁶ I have benefited for what follows from G.I. Williamson, “Instrumental Music: Commanded or Not?” *Blue Banner Faith and Life* 27 (1972) 60-67; also available at <http://www.westminsterconfession.org>. A classic work is John L. Girardeau, *Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of the Church* (1888).

⁷ E. Werner, “Music,” *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (1962), 3:459.

⁸ See G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (1999) 323-324, 357, 789.

⁹ H.G. Little, R. Scott, H.S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (with supplements to 1998), 2018, F.W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (2000) 1096; G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (1961) 1539; H.W. Hoehner, *Ephesians* (2002) 711-712.

¹⁰ Louis Peter Grijp, Aggie Langedijk; et al, *Een muziekgeschiedenis der Nederlanden* (2001), 366-367.

¹¹ W.P.C. Knuttel, ed., *Acta der Particuliere Synoden van Zuid Holland 1621-1700* (6 vols.; 1908-1916) 2:175.

¹² Grijp, Langedijk et al, *Een muziekgeschiedenis*, 367; Joost Langeveld, “A Mighty Instrument (2),” *Reformed Music Journal* 9 (1997) 127.

¹³ A. de Visser, “Church Music in Calvin’s Tradition” (Part 3 of 3) *Clarion* 58 (2009) 622.





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Euthanasia and Secularization

According to Life Site News the Royal Dutch Medical Association reported that out of a total of 175,000 babies born in The Netherlands, up to 659 babies are euthanized every year because they are believed to be suffering or because a newborn's imminent natural death is emotionally distressing for the parents. In 2002, this country became the first in the world after the Nazi regime to legalize the killing of humans, called euthanasia. At that time, no one under eighteen could be euthanized. Since then the conscious medical killing of humans has escalated in that country. Theo Boer, a professor of ethics, has said that "Euthanasia is now becoming so prevalent in the Netherlands, that it is on the way to becoming a default mode of dying for cancer patients. Assisted deaths have increased by about 15 per cent every year since 2008 and the number could hit a record 6,000 in 2014. Campaigns for doctor-administered death to be made ever easier will not rest until a lethal pill is made available to anyone over 70 who wishes to die. Some slopes truly are slippery." Life Site News also reported that this same person testified to the British House of Lords in 2014 that he now believes that the very existence of a euthanasia law turns suicide from a last resort into a normal procedure. Such a view seems justified when one considers that many instances of euthanasia are not reported.

One of the world's most prestigious medical journals, *The Lancet*, published a study which concluded that in 2010, twenty-three per cent of all Dutch euthanasia deaths were not reported. Peter Saunders, CEO of Christian Medical Fellowship, who reported this study, went on to note in his blog that "euthanasia in the Netherlands is way out of control." Other places where assisted suicide was legalized had similar sharp increases: "Oregon (450% since 1998), Switzerland (700% over the same period) and Belgium (509% in ten years from 2003 to 2012). The lessons are clear. Once you relax the law on euthanasia or assisted suicide steady extension will follow as night follows day."

Needless to say, the relevance of all this for our own country is clear. The Supreme Court of Canada is currently preparing a ruling which will determine whether Quebec's law allowing doctors to help terminally ill patients kill themselves is legal and whether any Canadian can ask a doctor to help kill himself. Many lobby that current laws against

euthanasia be struck down. Happily, the Association of Reformed Political Action (ARPA) was able to present written legal arguments on this case to the Supreme Court and so defend the current prohibition against assisted suicide.

Polls indicate a growing support for legalizing suicide. How is such an embracing of a culture of death possible? It is not by chance that while euthanasia is becoming more and more acceptable in society, many churches are being shut down, especially in Europe. The Western world is becoming more and more secularized. A revealing article published by *The Wall Street Journal* (online, January 2, 2015) showed just how shocking the statistics are.

The Church of England closes about 20 churches a year. Roughly 200 Danish churches have been deemed nonviable or underused. The Roman Catholic Church in Germany has shut about 515 churches in the past decade. But it is in the Netherlands where the trend appears to be most advanced. The country's Roman Catholic leaders estimate that two-thirds of their 1,600 churches will be out of commission in a decade, and 700 of Holland's Protestant churches are expected to close within four years. "The numbers are so huge that the whole society will be confronted with it," says Ms. Grootswagers, an activist with Future for Religious Heritage, which works to preserve churches. "Everyone will be confronted with big empty buildings in their neighborhoods."

These empty buildings are being converted into all types of uses from retail shops to restaurants and even skate board parks. The situation in North America is not nearly as dire, but with falling church attendance the future is not all that bright. The churchgoing population is graying and according to one expert quoted in *The Wall Street Journal*, "Unless these trends change, within another 30 years the situation in the U.S. will be at least as bad as what is currently evident in Europe."

Without a vibrant Christian faith functioning in society, there seems to be little to oppose or counter a culture of death. May we cherish God-given life, pray for the judges, and do everything in our power socially and politically, also by supporting organizations such as ARPA, to oppose this culture of death.

C



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Something to Think About: School Membership

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I was given a light little book the other day entitled *I am a Church Member* by Thomas Rainer. I say it's light because it weighs a mere 160.8 grams (yes, I weighed it), and it takes only about an hour and a half to read through. After reading it, however, it weighs heavily on the mind. Because of this I cannot resist the temptation to write a little about Rainer's insights into church membership and apply them to what it means to be member of a school society.

Right off the top we should recognize that the church and the school are not on the same plane of existence. Scripture calls us to belong to the church so we can hear the proclamation of the Word, participate in the sacraments, and be a living member in the communion of saints. The same cannot be said about the school – at least not in such a direct way; however, I hope to reflect what Rainer relates about church membership onto the school system with which we have been blessed.

Living members

In his book, Rainer outlines how we are to be living members of the church. It is a brilliant explanation of what we already know deep down, but perhaps without considering what it really means. After all, when we profess our faith in the church, we confess with Lord's Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism that we are pledging to be, and forever to remain, living members of the church. Since we swear an oath to the Lord that we will be *living members*, we should know what a living member looks like. Unfortunately we are broken and sinful people; we often forget how to do the important and difficult things in our lives. While that may seem depressing, it is actually a beautiful reminder to admit that we are unable to do everything ourselves. We need the proverbial kick in the

backside once in a while if we are to live our lives in a way that pleases the Lord. That includes learning how to be a living member of God's church, and Rainer's little book provided that kick for me.

In churches to serve

Rainer points out that the church is not a country club; it is not an institution whose main purpose is to service the needs of members who pay their fees (we would call them "Regular Voluntary Contributions"). No, the church does not service the needs of the members; rather, the members – all of them – must service the needs of the church using the gifts with which the Lord has blessed them. Allow me to include one quote that sums up the book's purpose:

I am proposing that we who are church members need to look in the mirror. I am suggesting that congregations across America are weak because many of us church members have lost the biblical understanding of what it means to be a part of the body of Christ. We join our churches expecting others to serve us, to feed us, and to care for us. We don't like the hypocrites in the church, but we fail to see our own hypocrisies. God did not give us local churches to become country clubs where membership means we have privileges and perks. He placed us in churches to serve, to care for others, to pray for leaders, to learn, to teach, to give, and, in some cases, to die for the sake of the gospel (5).

These are powerful and poignant words. Rainer backs them up with scriptural references that leave no doubt as to the authenticity of his views about how to be a functioning member of the church.

As mentioned above, it is dangerous to equate the importance of school membership with the importance of church membership. There is no direct biblical imperative for parents to become members of any Christian school society, let alone a Reformed one. Yet there are two very good reasons why we, as functioning church members, should

also be functioning school members – even if our children are not in the school. Both reasons find their basis in the oath we take when we profess our faith and baptize infants.

Article 58

When we profess our faith, we bind ourselves to the Lord, his word, his church and its confessions. In the last part of the form for public profession of faith, we promise that we will subject ourselves *willingly* to the “admonition and discipline of the church, if it should happen, and may God graciously prevent it, that [we] become delinquent in doctrine or in conduct.” On oath, we willingly submit to the admonition of the church when we do not act as we should. So the question is: how are we to act toward our schools? May I be so bold as to point to the Church Order? The Church Order is not Scripture, but since we become living members of our local church through our public profession of faith, we also willingly submit ourselves to the rules of the church as found in the Church Order.

Article 58 of our Church Order is fascinating. It reads: “The consistory shall ensure that the parents, to the best of their ability, have their children attend a school where the instruction given is in harmony with the Word of God as the church has summarized it in her confessions” (p. 638, *Book of Praise*). Unfortunately I do not have the space here to lay out and prove a logical argument for why Article 58 does not only apply to parents but also to all members of the church. Suffice it to say that unless the whole church community gets involved, parents alone will not *be able to* (which speaks to their ability) have their children attend the school described. This counts not only for the financial aspect of running the school, but also for its volunteers, board and committees.

The more familiar baptismal vow

Perhaps you are not swayed by the Church Order. After all, who actually ever reads it? It is not given a position of prominence in our *Book of Praise*. I have even spoken with adult members of the church who professed ignorance of its existence. When you look up Article 58 to see if I quoted it correctly, you will note that the article above it, logically titled Article 57, speaks about baptism. This is no coincidence. The article on Christian schools stems from the vow taken by parents, which is witnessed by the congregation, when a child is baptized.

I am sure that church members are more familiar with that vow than with Article 58. It reads: “Third, do you promise as father and mother to instruct your child in this doctrine, as soon as he (she) is able to understand, and to have him (her) instructed therein to the utmost of your

power?” The baptismal vow leaves a more powerful impression than Article 58. (Which makes sense since Article 58 gets its teeth only from this vow.) We promise God that we will have our children instructed in the doctrine of the church. We have to do this not just a little bit, but to the “utmost of our power” or, as we read it in the Church Order, “to the best of our ability.”

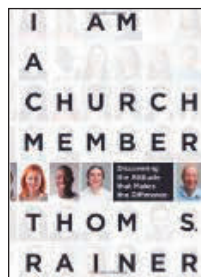
Functionally involved

Using the same logic as above, the communion of saints, having witnessed the baptism and the vows of their brothers and sisters, is duty-bound to help. Church members need to help not just to make *general* Christian education attainable, but more specifically to make *Reformed* Christian education within the power of all parents. To put it another way, the people whom Thomas Rainer would call “functioning church members” need to be involved – financially and in leadership – so that Reformed Christian education continues to be attainable for all parents.

Thankfully teaching

Thankfully all of this places a responsibility of care on the teaching and administrative staff of the school as well. They too are called to be living members of Christ’s church; they too have an obligation to make sure that they are instructing children in a way that meets the standard of their parents’ baptismal vows. What a challenge! What a joy! What a daunting responsibility! There is only one way they can make it happen. They need your prayers more than anything else. They also need to be and act as living members of God’s church – who are also functioning members as Rainer describes.

Rekindle our love and passion



If you have made it this far in my diatribe, I commend you. Perhaps I am preaching to the choir. Also, I realize that people who feel they have finished with school do not need a principal to tell them how they ought to behave. Though I wonder, can a member of Christ’s church every truly say they are finished with children’s education?

Be that as it may, if you are able, pick up the 160 gram book that weighs so much. *I am a Church Member* by Thomas Rainer will likely not teach you anything you did not already know. It may, however, rekindle your love and passion for your local church and its institutions, including the school.





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Q

There seems to be some debate if the Apostles' Creed is correct in saying that Jesus descended into hell. Some emphatically believe that Jesus actually descended into hell while others would interpret this to mean that he suffered the agony of hell while on the cross but did not actually descend into hell.

Also, before he was resurrected and still bodily in the grave, where was his Spirit during this time period? If he suffered God's wrath against our sin while he was on the cross, is the Apostles Creed correct in saying he descended into hell? In Luke 23:43, Jesus tells the robber on the cross, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise." How then can we confess that Jesus Christ descended into hell while that very day he is in Paradise?

A

"He descended into hell" is part of article 4 of the Apostles Creed. "Why is it added?" the Heidelberg Catechism asks. Well, it was not part of the original version of the Apostles' Creed. About the year 350 AD, when the Apostles Creed was still in development to its present version, these words were either changed from "He descended into Hades" (the realm of the dead) to "He descended into hell," or added where we have them now. Why? Christ suffered hellish agony when God forsook him on the cross; however, he did not go to the *place* of everlasting damnation, did he? Indeed, that *is* a problem in the Apostles' Creed. With that problem we touch upon a bit of history. The ancient Christian Church included Christ's descending into hell in this place, because *they* believed in those days that Christ *really* descended into hell during the time between his burial and resurrection. Supposedly he went there to defeat the devil and to take the Old Testament believers along to

heaven triumphantly. They based this on 1 Peter 3:19, for instance, where it says that Christ "preached to the spirits in prison," or on Ephesians 4:9 where Paul writes that our Saviour "also descended to the lower, earthly regions."

Now the Reformed believers, following John Calvin, rejected this understanding of the article. After his death and burial Christ did not descend physically or spiritually into hell at all. He had said to the criminal on the cross, "Today you will be with me in Paradise." When he died, Christ gave his spirit into the hands of his *Father*. Then the difficult question came up, however, whether they should delete this article of faith, drop it from the Creed or not. They did not drop it! They wanted to maintain the Creed in its entirety, in order to express clearly the bond with the ancient church. Instead, they gave it another meaning! Some people wanted to express with it merely the fact that Christ was in the *realm of the dead*. One of the Reformed hymns has it that way: "He died for us, and then was buried, descending into *death's domain*" (Hymn 2, *Book of Praise*). That's a true confession, yet one that actually ne-

cessitates a change in the Creed (e.g. from “He descended into hell” to “He descended into Hades,” the original reading and intent).

Then John Calvin went deeper into the matter. The main thing today, he said, is not so much what the ancient church meant with it, but whether the words of the confession reflect the truth of the Scriptures and can be explained scripturally! Thus, Calvin explained the confession “He descended into hell” to mean that on the cross Christ went through *hellish* anguish and torment. When God poured out his wrath on Christ and forsook Christ, it was *hell* on earth for him. During those three hours he went deeper and deeper into it. No one can explain how heavy that must have been. Then what does the Heidelberg Catechism do with this explanation by John Calvin? It sees in it the *climax* and *summary* of all Christ’s suffering!

Well, that’s very scriptural. Nowhere in the Bible do we read that the Lord Jesus has been in hell as the

dwelling place of the devil. Nowhere does it say that he went to the realm of the dead to deliver Old Testament believers from the devil. Yet, the Scriptures tell us that Christ did experience the weight of the wrath of God; in Gethsemane and on the cross, for instance. We read about the seriousness of God’s indignation over sin, his anger also on the brokenness due to sin. Christ knew! He sensed it consciously. He suffered from it very much every time he was confronted with it and touched by it! Why? It was with a view to the people he had come to save, to you and me! That’s what Lord’s Day 16 expresses: In my place and for me Jesus Christ our Mediator was born, suffered, was crucified, and died. . . “*He descended into hell!*” In that confession the *death* of our Mediator is confessed very truly! For *him* life on earth was much more than “a constant death.” It is that much more, that ongoing descent into hellish agony, which lies at the foundation of our only comfort!



Is there something you’ve been wanting to know?

An answer you’ve been looking for?

Ask us a question!

Please direct questions to Rev. W. denHollander

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Press Release of Classis Manitoba convened in the Carman East Canadian Reformed Church on January 9, 2015

This classis is held in response to a request by the Emmanuel American Reformed Church at Denver, CO to hold a special classis to approbate a decision to dismiss their minister, Rev. R.J. Kampen according to Article 11 C.O.

Opening

On behalf of Carman East Canadian Reformed Church, the convening church of the January 9, 2015 classis, Rev. S. Vandeveld called the meeting to order. He read Deuteronomy 33:26-29, led in prayer and requested that the brothers sing Psalms 80:1, 7, 8. He welcomed all present, including fraternal delegates Rev. R. Anjema and Br. H. Nagtegaal from the Providence United Reformed Church in Winnipeg. Also welcomed are deputies of Regional Synod, Rev. R. Aasman and Rev. A. Souman.

Memorabilia

The Winnipeg Grace Canadian Reformed Church has extended a call to Rev. R. Schouten of Aldergrove, BC. Br. W. Gortemaker who was delegated to this classis was absent due to illness.

Examination of credentials

The credentials of the delegates were examined by the brothers from the Carman East Canadian Reformed Church and reported to be in order. All delegates in attendance were primary delegates other than from Redeemer CanRC where one of the primary delegates was replaced by an alternate. Rev. J. Poppe, minister of Redeemer CanRC in Winnipeg is seated as advisor as requested by the Redeemer consistory with the deacons and approved by Classis because of his involvement in the Denver situation as classical church visitor. Dr. A.J. Pol takes his seat as President as appointed in the previous classis and Classis is constituted.

Appointment of executive officers

The following officers were appointed:

President: Dr. A. J. Pol
Vice President: Br. W. van Beek
Clerk: Br. L. Bergsma

Adoption of the agenda

Dr. Pol thanked the Carman East Canadian Reformed Church for the preparations involved in convening the classis. The agenda was adopted. The fraternal delegates and synodical deputies were seated.

Proposals / Instructions from the churches

A letter with appendices was received from the Denver ARC and a letter with appendices was also received from Rev. R.J. Kampen. Classis proceeded in closed session.

Classis gives approbation to the consistory of the Emmanuel American Reformed Church at Denver to proceed with the dismissal of Rev. R.J. Kampen as their minister according to Article 11 of the Church Order. The deputies of Regional Synod give their concurring consent. An announcement regarding this decision to the churches in the classis is formulated and approved by Classis.

The church at Denver requests pulpit supply from Classis. Classis decides that pulpit supply will be provided four times per year. Denver requests the appointment of a counsellor. Dr. A.J. Pol is appointed.

Fraternal delegates

The President thanked the delegates from Providence Reformed Church for participating in the discussion and gave them opportunity to address Classis. Rev. R. Anjema and Br. H. Nagtegaal spoke on behalf of the PRCW in appreciation for the invitation to Classis and the close bond that exists between them and the Canadian Reformed Churches in this province. Br. R. deRuiter led in intercessory prayer.

Question period

Question period according to Article 44 C.O. was held. All churches answered in the affirmative that the ministry of the office-bearers is being maintained and that the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured.

Appointments

The convening church for the next classis is the Carman West Canadian Reformed Church.

The classis is scheduled to be held on March 27.

The suggested president for the next classis is Rev. J. Poppe.

Personal question period and adoption of the Acts and Press Release

Opportunity was given for personal question period.

No censure according to Art. 34 of the Church Order was necessary.

The Acts were adopted and the Press Release approved for publication.

Closing

The Vice-President requested that the brothers sing Psalm 67:1, 3 and led in closing prayer.

*For Classis Manitoba, January 9, 2015
W. van Beek, Vice-President at that time* 