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# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE  
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**THERE ARE MANY SILENT SUFFERERS**



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# We Have a Drinking Problem

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*For too long in our families and  
 in our consistory rooms we've either  
 looked the other way or we've kept it "hush-hush"*

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Before you can help an alcoholic, that person needs to admit in all honesty, "I have a drinking problem." At that point, you can begin to take steps with them to get help. I am convinced that as a community of Reformed churches of largely Dutch background, we have a drinking problem. And it's high-time we honestly admit that and begin the road to recovery.

## **Under the carpet**

You ask: is it *that* bad? Isn't this rather alarmist? Are we staggering drunk across the federation? Let me say immediately that alcohol abuse is not (thankfully!) found in every individual or home. Nor is it even in the majority. Many, many people and households can responsibly enjoy alcohol. But there is a culture of casual drinking that is wide-spread in our community and in the midst of that there is a significant minority who fall into alcohol abuse.

I have had the privilege of growing up in Ottawa, ministering in British Columbia and on the prairies and now in southern Ontario, and in every place I have personally encountered "problem drinking" as well as full-fledged, out-of-control alcohol addiction (I will leave out other drugs, but they are often just as much a problem). When I speak with pastors and elders from other areas, I hear the same concerns. Cases of beer emptied after hockey or baseball games; multiple glasses of wine flowing at every social function; drinking and driving and making a game out of it; tail-gate parties; guys getting drunk at weddings; men and women who cannot go a

day or two without a drink; middle-aged closet drinkers as well as openly high youths; beer cans stacked to the ceiling in wood-shops and garages; mothers and fathers who can hide it from everyone except their families. In truth, I doubt there's a single congregation in the federation where there isn't one and more often several cases of alcohol abuse.

So, there is a small but persistent number of us abusing alcohol – yet the majority of us are standing idly by. That's where the rub is and that's where we need to bring about change. For too long in our families and in our consistory rooms we've either looked the other way or we've kept it "hush-hush." Too often we have gotten out our brooms and swept the "mess" under the carpet, dealing with it entirely behind closed doors.

And what good has the secrecy done? Generally, the alcoholic is not getting the help he/she truly needs nor is the family around him/her. The sin and shame, the suffering and sadness simply go underground – and we need to stop that. A festering wound will only heal when it is opened up to oxygen and cleaned out and so it is with our spiritual wounds.

## **Step into the light**

Exposing sin is the first step toward repentance and reconciliation. Secrecy is the ally of sin and our human nature loves nothing more than to hide its shame in obscurity and darkness. But Scripture teaches us otherwise: "Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead

expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, 'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you'" (Eph 5:11-14 ESV). Stepping into the light that Jesus shines brings healing, hope, and life.

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Does our federation have a drinking problem? Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer writes in his editorial: "Many, many people and households can responsibly enjoy alcohol. But there is a culture of casual drinking that is wide-spread in our community and in the midst of that there is a significant minority who fall into alcohol abuse." The next step: addressing such problems in an open but compassionate way.

This issue brings you an article by Rev. Paulin Bédard, entitled, "Was Adam Created at the End of the World?" We also have Dr. Cornelis Van Dam's third part in a series about developments in our Dutch sister churches. The conclusion is coming in the next issue.

The Canadian Reformed Church at Brampton brings news of the grand opening for their building. Issue 13 also contains Treasures New and Old, You Asked, Further Discussion, and a book review, as well as a Mission News insert.

*Laura Veenendaal*

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In that context, only a few verses later Paul commands, “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery” (v. 18). Drunkenness is sin. Putting yourself under the controlling influence of alcohol is sin – doing it regularly so that you become “hooked” and addicted just makes the sin that much more devastating for you and your loved ones.

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***We need to be gentle  
in our admonitions and prepared to go  
the long-haul to help***

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And what does God command us to do when a brother or sister sins? Admonish them in a brotherly way. Confront them in love that they might turn away from their sin – first privately so as to prevent public shame and embarrassment. The goal is not to humiliate a church member but to return them to peace and fellowship with God, for while they live in their sin they are under God’s wrath. But, if there is no repentance over time, more people need to be involved and eventually the whole church in order to rouse the person’s conscience (Matt 18:15-18). The point is: God insists that we deal with sin forthrightly, that it get exposed and expunged from a person’s life and from the congregation.

### **Compassion**

Now, we need to be very careful here, and deeply humble. Non-alcoholics may not approach an alcoholic with any sense of superiority. Each of us is a sinner. Every single one of us needs the grace of God in breaking with sinful habits and being forgiven. “Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor 10:12 ESV). There is zero room for arrogance in dealing with any fellow sinner but in particular with addicts we need to have extra compassion because their enslavement is so powerful.

Sin has an enslaving effect more often, but its grip when alcohol is abused is like a vise that only gets tighter. Choices are made to drink and our human will is involved, but there is also a biological component to addiction. The body gets used to alcohol, likes it, and constantly wants more of it. Like smoking, an insatiable craving develops in the flesh which makes it extremely hard to say “no” to. The sin becomes virtually uncontrollable. Even when a person wants to break with it,

she finds it nearly impossible. Outside help is needed – a detoxification centre, a rehabilitation facility, a Christian 12-Step program, godly counselling, accountability partners, Christian friends, and a lot of prayer besides will likely all be required before the person is stabilized in a life of daily repentance from this sin.

All of this to say: we need to be gentle in our admonitions and prepared to go the long-haul to help. Much love, patience, and persistence is required. But from our side (as non-addicts) the first step is being willing to admit this sin is in our families and in our congregations and that we have a responsibility to take action to deal with it. Addiction is not just the problem of the addict or his family but of the whole church family.

### **Prayer and openness**

So, what’s our first move? Prayer. Unless we begin with calling upon the Lord, we will get nowhere in this battle. We need to pray as individuals and families but especially in public as congregations. When was the last time your pastor prayed in church for those struggling with addiction? For alcoholics? If we don’t name the sin, if we don’t admit that it is or may be within our midst, we contribute to the cloak of secrecy.

On the other hand, when a minister (carefully, without necessarily naming names) lays before the throne of grace the struggle that some have with alcohol (or drugs), and mentions also the great stress this places on their families and loved ones, this immediately does three things: it seeks help from our heavenly Father (so desperately needed!); it tells those who have these struggles that someone is aware and cares; and it brings this sin and struggle into the open so that people can begin to share their burdens.

There are many silent sufferers when it comes to addiction. Many addicts refuse to admit their sin or simply try to deal with it on their own. They only get more lonely. But there are also spouses and children, close family members and friends who are aware of the alcohol abuse, who feel its effects, who live with its consequences, and yet who feel they have nowhere to turn for help and no support in their struggles. Sitting in church or standing in the crowded foyer, such brothers and sisters can be the loneliest people because there, in the family of God, where the most compassion should be offered and the most support given, no one even knows. No one suspects there’s a problem. And no one seems ready to listen to the sorrows and sadness of an addiction-filled life.

## Families of addicts

This is the atmosphere in our congregations that we can and must change. Just consider the difficulties of the families: A wife who lives with the stress of not knowing when or if her husband will come home that night or who walks on egg-shells around him for fear of setting him off. Or think of children who don't know if Mom (yes, there are many female alcoholics too!) is going to be giddy or bitter or mad or if she'll be there at all. Imagine parents of older teens who've become addicted, pulling their hair out in tears and frustration because their son or daughter is throwing away their life. Daily uncertainty, worry, anger, sadness, and a cocktail of other emotions fill their hearts with stress upon stress.

Church members with these burdens need to know their brothers and sisters are concerned and care, that

there is some awareness of their difficulties. What a blessing for them to simply be able to pour out their troubles to a listening ear and a compassionate heart. Addictions are never solved over-night and many take years (if ever) to over-come, but in those long days, weeks, months, and years of suffering, those dealing with it need the support of their church family. We may not know anything about addictions and we likely don't have solutions to offer, but more than anything they need our prayers, our love, friendship, and encouragement to help them get through.

Openness. Honesty. Prayer. Consideration for the other. Let's start a new trend where hope, healing, and healthy relationships are the hallmarks and where our Saviour's grace is generously poured out on each other. C





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# Wells of Salvation

***“With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.”***

(Isaiah 12:3)

Water! We all know of our need for water! It is essential for life. One of the most important things in desert lands is a steady supply of water. Just think of the people of Israel as they travelled through the desert to the promised land of Canaan. They were without water numerous times and they complained bitterly against God. Yet he abundantly provided for them. In fact God always provides living waters for his people both then and now.

In chapter 12 of Isaiah’s prophecy, we find a very beautiful song of praise to God: a well-known song for many. This song which also sings of God’s wells of salvation bubbles up in the midst of God’s oracles about judgement. This song directs us to our God of grace. As it says in verse 2: “Surely God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the

Lord is my strength and my song! He has become my salvation!”

Truly the Lord is the source of our glorious salvation: of the water of eternal life! But where do you and I draw this reviving water? As Isaiah says: “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” While some wells produce little water which turns brackish in the hot desert sun; others produce an abundance of life giving waters. These waters continually bubble up from deep in the ground. The wells of God which are living wells always give clear, cool water. These wells are truly life giving. They are wells from which we may draw salvation and have our thirst satisfied.

The wells of salvation are God’s wells and they never run dry. And of these wells Jesus Christ our Saviour said to the Samaritan woman in John

4:13-14: “But whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst.” Then he added: “Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” The wells of salvation speak of God’s saving work in Jesus Christ: of the restoring work of his grace and the reviving power of his Spirit.

With joy we will draw water from the wells of salvation. With these wells there is an endless supply God’s grace. With him there is an abundant salvation for all who believe. Are we always joyously drawing living water? Are we always joyfully drinking? Let us come to Zion: for in her are the springs of salvation. Drink deeply of the waters of everlasting life. And let us be encouraged to bring ever growing praise and thanks to our Saviour and Lord.



## For Further Study

1. What is the cause of our thirst?
2. How do we personally and communally take time to draw water from the wells of salvation?
3. When will we no longer thirst anymore?

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# Developments in our Dutch Sister Churches and Lessons to be Learned

(Part 3 of 4)



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## Union with the Netherlands Reformed Churches

There is an irresistible push to become one with the Netherlands Reformed Churches. About fifty years ago, these churches became separated from our sister churches. They generally wanted a looser binding to the confessions and they now also have women in office. Since 1993 there has been a growing contact between these churches and our sister churches. It is instructive to have a bird's eye view of what has happened over the subsequent years in their relationship.

Up to 2005, synods and committees of our sister churches identified considerable obstacles to a closer relationship with the Netherlands Reformed Churches. So, for example, General Synod Amersfoort Centrum (2005) expressed its disappointment with the decision of the Netherlands Reformed Churches to open the ecclesiastical offices to women and called it a serious barrier to closer relationships. Deputies for contact with these churches were then instructed to talk about this and also about the place of the confessions in the life of the church (*Acta*, Art. 135).

The next synod (Zwolle-Zuid 2008) received two reports, a majority report which was quite optimistic with respect to a binding to the confessions. That issue was no longer considered to be an obstacle. The minority report disagreed. It said that the Netherlands Reformed Churches have not changed. The result was that Synod no longer mandated its deputies to continue discussions with a view to a merger, as the deputies had recommended, but to discuss with the committee of the Netherlands Reformed Churches the three topics that keep coming back: (1) the differences in binding to the confession; (2) the

differences in dealing with ongoing deviations from the confession; (3) the matter of women in office within the Netherlands Reformed Churches (*Acts* Art.112). However, the amazing thing is that these deputies did not do what Synod had asked them to do.

Synod Harderwijk (2011) received an upbeat report which detailed discussions about baptism, the Holy Spirit and the church, and the Lord's Supper – none of these topics had been on their mandate. However the report stated that on the basis of agreement in these areas there is much harmony between these two church federations. However, the harmony spoken of was only imaginary. For example, office bearers in the Netherlands Reformed Churches who reject infant baptism and do not sign a subscription form are still accepted. Nevertheless General Synod Harderwijk 2011 decided to receive this report of their deputies and its appendices with thankfulness and instructed their deputies to continue the discussions with the Netherlands Reformed Churches, with the specification that the discussion should focus on two topics: (1) women in office, and (2) the manner in which local churches handle the binding to the confessions. Synod considered that the results of the discussions so far gave enough confidence to continue with the expectation that in the near future the discussion could be focused on ecclesiastical unity (*Acta*, Art. 81).

Reflecting on these developments, one gets the feeling that the local contacts are apparently going so well that the brothers fudge the major issues at the federation-level to keep the momentum going. But church unity is a serious business. If there is no clear agreement on the authority of Scripture and the confessions, such a lack of agreement shows a weak resolve in maintaining



the primary normative place of Scripture. And indeed, this “rush” has impacted negatively on issues like women in office and our sister churches are the big losers in terms of staying faithful to the Bible. The Netherlands Reformed Churches have not changed, but our sister churches have. And so the reason that our sister churches are poised to become united with the Netherlands Reformed Churches is because they have shifted from their positions and not the Netherlands Reformed Churches. Synod Ede has declared that there are no longer obstacles with respect to interpreting Scripture (and women in office) and therefore gave the mandate to current deputies “to continue the contact with the Netherlands Reformed Churches and to proceed from talks to discussions with an eye to church unity” (*Acta*, Art. 7-13).

### **Some general observations**

It is not a rarity within the bond of our sister churches that a local church goes its own way in disregard for a particular decision of synod. We saw that with the issue of women in office. Congregations feel free to do their own thing, regardless of what a synod may have decided. For example, when I taught in Kampen in the fall of 2012 students told me openly that their consistories have disregard for synod decisions when it comes to picking songs to sing during the Sunday worship services. The indifference to synod decisions is also evident from Dr. De Bruijne’s observation, noted earlier, that church discipline with respect to homosexuality is rare and he himself also counseled for restraint or no discipline for practicing homosexuals.

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***A common denominator  
in all these developments appears to be a  
desire to fit in with the current  
Dutch culture***

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Another observation is that many churches are itching to have change. It struck my wife and I that in virtually all the worship services we attended in The Netherlands, it was always a woman reading the Scripture, never a man. It is hard to escape the thought that along with the change of having a female reader there is also a process of desensitization going. Is it to prepare people

for seeing a woman preach from the pulpit? Another change we noticed is that the reading of the law was also dropped from time to time and some New Testament passages read, or nothing at all was done to take the place of the Ten Words of the Covenant. Why is that? Can people no longer bear to hear the words from the Sinai? Also, should churches not stick to the liturgies that the federation has adopted to be used in their worship services?

A common denominator in all these developments appears to be a desire to fit in with the current Dutch culture. It is considered very important that the place of the woman in the world outside also be reflected inside the church and that the music of the world outside also be played inside. There is talk of trying to keep the young people in church and being appealing to those outside.

Yet, for all this talk and rhetoric, church attendance is dropping, young people are leaving, and concerned people who have given up on their church are leaving as well. In 2003, our sister churches had almost 127,000 members. The 2015 *Handboek* of these churches now mentions a total for last year of 120,688. The reasons for leaving vary. Some drop out of the faith altogether, others go to evangelical churches, others, wanting to remain Reformed, join those who had already left for doctrinal reasons.<sup>1</sup>

### **Those who left to remain Reformed**

There are currently two groups of churches that have their origin in our sister churches. There is contact between these two groups and it is to be hoped that they can get together and provide a united front and thus be an attractive address for those who are giving up on our sister churches to go to. The Canadian Reformed deputies have been in touch with both of these groups.

### **Reformed Churches Restored (DGK)**

These churches are composed of people who were the first to separate from the Reformed Churches - Liberated. In 2003 they published an Act of Separation and Return. Dr. P. van Gorp and Rev. S. de Marie were important in the early years and continue to have influence in this federation. Initially there was considerable internal dissent in this group which resulted in fractures in their fellowship. They have regrouped so to speak and others have joined them (like Rev. E. Heres of Dalftsien). They appear to have a total of three active ministers.<sup>2</sup> They have a magazine,



*De Bazuin*, but have unfortunately accepted a sister relationship with an assembly of former Canadian Reformed members that meets in the Fraser Valley around Abbotsford. It is to be hoped that they take a second look at this relationship. As Canadian Reformed Churches we are unable to accept such a sister relationship. The Reformed Churches Restored have twelve congregations.<sup>3</sup>

The second major group composed of those who have left our sister churches follows.

### Reformed Churches Netherlands (GKN)

They originated from 2003 and subsequent years. The name of this federation was decided in 2009. From the outset these churches were more moderate in stating their position. The website of these churches indicate that there are nine places where they come together to worship (Assen, Zwolle, Ede-Veenendaal, Goes, Hardenberg, Kampen, Twente, Zwolle, and Zwijndrecht). Church services are held twice on Sundays. They have three active ministers: L. Heres, E. Hoogendoorn, and R. van der Wolf.<sup>4</sup> Dr. J. Douma, emeritus professor of ethics, together with his wife, have also left our sister churches and joined the Reformed Churches Netherlands in November 2014. He justified his departure in a small book entitled *Afscheid (Departure)*.

Next time: what can we learn from the developments in Holland?



*Amsterdam, the Netherlands*

### CANDIDACY EXAMINATION SUSTAINED

Examined by Classis Ontario West of May 27/June 10, 2015 and declared eligible for call:

**Brother Rick Vanderhorst**

### LICENSURE EXAMINATION SUSTAINED

Examined by Classis Ontario West of May 27/June 10, 2015 and granted permission to speak an edifying word:

**Brother Hangil Lee**

### CALLS EXTENDED

Called by the Aldergrove Canadian Reformed Church to serve as missionaries in Brazil:

**Rev. Ryan de Jonge**

Co-pastor of the Langley Canadian Reformed Church and

**Rev. James Witteveen**

Home missionary of the Smithers Canadian Reformed Church serving in Prince George, British Columbia

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Called by the Grace CanRC of Winnipeg, Manitoba and the Pilgrim CanRC of London, Ontario:

**Candidate Rick Vanderhorst**

### CHURCH NEWS

<sup>1</sup> "Meer vrijgemaakten verlaten de kerk" reported on 24 Feb 2015 at <http://www.gkv.nl/meer-vrijgemaakten-verlaten-de-kerk/>

<sup>2</sup> S. De Marie (Zwolle), E. Heres (Dalfsen), C. Koster (Berkel/Bergschen hoek) <http://www.gereformeerde-kerken-hersteld.nl/kerken>.

<sup>3</sup> The website of these churches is <http://www.gereformeerde-kerken-hersteld.nl/>.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.gereformeerdekerkennederland.nl/kerken/>.



# Was Adam Created at the End of the World?



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Was Adam created at the beginning of the world or at the end? This question may seem awkward, since the church has always considered Adam as the father of the human race. But in a context where secular theories on the origin of the world are being pushed into the church, this question must seriously be raised and answered by the clear teaching of Scripture.

## **Created in the beginning or at the end?**

Both progressive creation and theistic evolution teach that the origin of man is much older than what the church has traditionally believed. According to these modern doctrines, man appeared on earth a very long time ago. So if man is so old, why ask such an awkward question about man's possible appearance near the end of the world?

Both progressive creation and theistic evolution are "old earth" views, which means they believe that the earth is extremely old and that the world has existed for billions of years. On this gigantic scale, man either slowly evolved (according to theistic evolution) or was instantaneously created (according to progressive creation) after an extremely long history of the earth. Thus, man would have appeared on earth a very long time after the beginning of the world – not in the beginning.

As for the traditional literal interpretation of the days of creation, it maintains that Adam and Eve were created on the sixth day of the history of the world, approximately 4000 years before Christ. On this scale, the creation of man corresponds to the beginning of the world, after only 0.0004 % of the 4000 year period.

Progressive creation, on the contrary, claims that God created the world and the living creatures by successive stages spaced out over billions of years. The days of creation are said to be very long periods of time. According to this view, the universe is 13.8 billion years old, the earth 4.5 billion years old, and man was created approximately 50,000 years ago.

To help us understand the meaning of these gigantic numbers, let us imagine that we compact into one single year the whole history of the earth until the first coming of Christ. If we reduce the alleged 4.5 billion years into one year, the earth began to be formed on January 1, and the end of the earthly ministry of our Saviour corresponds to December 31 at midnight. On this reduced scale, man would have appeared on December 31 at 11:54 PM, and the extra-biblical recorded history (less than 3000 years before Christ) would cover only the last twenty seconds of the year. In other words, Adam was supposedly created after 99.999% of the 4.5 billion years of the earth.

As for the theory of evolution (both atheistic and theistic), it alleges that God created the living creatures by means of a very slow biological evolution from the first cell to man. According to this view, the first hominids (or pre-humans not yet in the image of God) appeared about 5 million years ago. On the scale reduced to one year, it would correspond to around 2:00 PM on December 31, after 99.9% of the 4.5 billion years. It even took another 4 million years or more before they became real men. We are told, for example, that archaic *Homo sapiens*, the forerunner of anatomically modern humans, evolved between 400,000 and 250,000 years ago, or between forty to twenty-five minutes before midnight on the last day of the year, according to the compacted model.

We could add to these numbers another 2000 years after the first coming of Christ or another 10,000 years of future history, it will not change significantly these proportions.

This means that, for both progressive creation and theistic evolution (and any hybrid view), man was created close to the end of the history of the earth – not in the beginning.

## **In the beginning, according to Christ and the apostles**

What did Christ and his apostles teach about this subject? They taught, on the contrary, that man was created

in the beginning and that the human beings have existed ever since the beginning of the world.

Christ said in Matthew 19:4: “Have you not read that he who created them *from the beginning* made them male and female?” In Matthew 19:8, he also said: “Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but *from the beginning* it was not so.” The phrase “from the beginning” recalls Genesis 1:1, John 1:1-2, and Hebrew 1:10. These texts use the same word and that points us to the absolute beginning of the world.

The gospel of Mark is more precise. Combining Genesis 1 and 2, Christ said in Mark 10:6-8: “But *from the beginning of creation*, God made them male and female. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” Some claim that it means “from the beginning of *their* creation” or “from the beginning of *marriage*.” They say that the phrase “the beginning of creation” cannot mean “the beginning of the world,” because, by saying that, Christ would have made a mistake. He would have falsely said that Adam and Eve were created in the beginning of the *creation process*, on the first day of Genesis 1, while in fact they were created on the sixth day, at the end of the creation process. This argument, however, is not valid. First, why would Christ have needed to say that God created the human beings male and female from the beginning of their creation? Emphasizing such a thing does not really make sense. They were obviously male and female from the beginning of their own creation and from the beginning of the institution of marriage. They could not have been anything else. Moreover, as the texts below show, Christ meant the beginning of world history, not the beginning of the creation process. The context is clear. In God’s whole plan for the world, marriage is permanent because man was created male and female from the very beginning of the world.

The same phrase is used in other passages referring to the beginning of the world. In Mark 13:19, we read: “For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been *from the beginning of the creation* that God created until now, and there never will be.” The beginning of creation is not opposed to the end of the creation process, but to “now” and to the end of the world. In fact, the parallel text in Matthew 24:21 uses the equivalent “*from the beginning of the world*.” Jesus predicted trials of great magnitude that will come just before his return. Happily, for the sake of his chosen ones, the Lord decided to cut short the days of the final tribulation. And yet, Jesus warns us that trials of such intensity have never been experienced by human beings from the beginning of the world and will never be

experienced to the near end. This implies that man has existed from this very beginning, as he will exist until the end.

Again, we find the same phrase referring to the beginning of the world in 2 Peter 3:3-4: “Scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, ‘Where is the promise of his coming?’ For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were *from the beginning of creation*.” According to the Apostle Peter, even the scoffers of “the last days” will know the connection between the beginning of the world and the time when the first patriarchs began to die. This passage shows us again that man has existed from virtually as long as the creation itself and that the fall into sin and its deadly effects happened very early in God’s good creation.

John 8:44 says: “He [the devil] was a murderer *from the beginning*, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him.” Satan became a murderer when he lied and tempted Eve to sin, which resulted in man’s death. This murder happened from the beginning, not billions of years later.

We read in Luke 11:49-51: “I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute, so that the blood of all the prophets, shed *from the foundation of the world*, may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah.” Men of God began to be killed from the time of Abel, the first murdered man recorded in the Bible. According to Christ, this event virtually corresponds to the moment when the world came into existence. The phrase “the foundation of the world” meaning the moment when the universe began to exist is also found in Matthew 25:34, John 17:24, Ephesians 1:4, 1 Peter 1:20, and Revelation 13:8; 17:8.

Romans 1:19-20 says: “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, *ever since the creation of the world*, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.” The Apostle Paul says that the eloquent witness of God revealed through his created works has been clearly perceived by men from the creation of the world. Such a claim would be irrelevant if there were no man to see this creation during billions of years.

Clearly, these passages rule out the possibility that man was created billions of years after the beginning of creation. According to Christ and his apostles, man was really created in the beginning of the world – not near the end!



## **A good explanation of the present situation**

This teaching is in full harmony with what Paul says about the painful condition of the present corrupt creation and the origin of this sad condition. Romans 8:20 tells us: “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope.” Paul does not specify who is the “him” who subjected the creation, but in the context, we understand that the creation was subjected by God. Of course, Adam was responsible for his sin, which provoked God’s judgment. But it is God who subjected the creation to futility when he said in Genesis 3:17: “cursed is the ground because of you.” In Romans 8:20-21, the creation which “was subjected” by God is also the creation which “will be liberated” by the same God. Only God has the authority to subject creation to vanity and to do it “in hope,” as only God has the power to liberate creation from its bondage to decay.

“Submission to vanity,” “bondage to corruption,” and “the sufferings of the present times” mentioned in Romans 8:18-22 could not have been in this world for billions of years before the creation of man. Contrary to what “old earth” views claim, God did not create the world with these painful, futile, and corrupt realities. According to Genesis 1:31, all that God had made was “very good” before the fall. The earth was not cursed yet. Subjection to futility and bondage to decay came after the fall and after the curse, the creation having been subjected “not willingly” to futility.

This is precisely why there is hope! According to “old earth” argumentation, God created the world with suffering, illness, catastrophes, and corruption, billions of years before man’s appearance and sin. Then, near the end of the world, he decided to deliver the creation from that weakness and usher mankind into a newer, better, and suffering-free creation. But how can such a scenario be possible? If God created the world with inherent futility and built-in decay, how could there be any hope for change and deliverance? Vanity and corruption would be constitutive of God’s “very good” creation itself. But what has been broken by man can be and will be repaired by God! Yes, the present creation is in deep need of being “set free from its bondage to corruption” and is eagerly awaiting the moment it will “obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Rom 8:21)!

Paul says in Romans 8:22: “The whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.” Believers are also suffering (v. 17-18) and groaning (v. 23). In these shared groaning and pains, both the creation and the believers are awaiting together the deliverance to come. As

“the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God” (v. 19), so “we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (v. 23).

In this subjection to suffering, God had already prepared his own liberating purpose, for it is “in hope” that the creation was subjected. The creation has been awaiting this deliverance since the very moment it was subjected to corruption. According to the Genesis account, there never was a period of time when the cursed creation existed without any hope of redemption! Even before God cursed the ground (Genesis 3:17), he had already promised to send a Saviour through the offspring of the woman (Genesis 3:15), a Saviour who would come to destroy Satan and give new hope to both sinful man and the whole damaged creation. This promise was given to man right from the beginning! As soon as Abel (and maybe Adam and Eve too?) believed in the promise of redemption, a shared groaning in pains began to be expressed and a shared hope in the deliverance was born. There has been an ongoing “groaning together” of both creation and believers from the beginning of the world “until now!” There is no room for a creation in pain, subject to decay and vanity for billions of years in the absence of believers. There is no room for 99.999% of earthly history without a “groaning together” and without a hope shared together with believers on earth.

In all these passages, the Word of God clearly teaches that man and woman have existed from the beginning of the world. They fell into sin very early in the history of creation. All its awful and deadly consequences have subjected men and the world to corruption since virtually the beginning of creation. The good news is that in Christ there is a glorious hope for the children of God and for the whole creation.

## **It really does make sense from the beginning to the end!**

According to this biblical perspective, it is really the “old earth” views that are awkward. Why would God have waited for billions of years before creating man in his image? Why would he have left the earth without stewards and gardeners for billions of years? Why would he have left the beauties of his creation without human eyes to perceive them and marvel at the glory and power of the Creator? Why would so many wonderful creatures have appeared (and many of them become extinct) during billions of years without a man and a woman to enjoy them and to develop these resources to the glory of God? Why would a good God have made a world subjected to

a corruption intrinsic to the created order? Why would he have presented to Adam animals to be named (Genesis 2:19) that had imperfections, illnesses, and genetic malformations caused by millions of years of reproductive activity before man's creation? Why would God have given to Adam and Eve food (Genesis 1:29) with diseases and genetic defects due to millions of years of existence in a corrupt world prior to man's creation? How do we explain that Christ our King would have been without a church and human subjects on earth for billions of years? Why would the suffering creation be left alone in its childbirth pains for billions of years, without any children of God sharing with it the same sufferings and the same hope of redemption? Why wait until December 31st, till the last minutes before midnight?

These false teachings distort the biblical worldview concerning the role of man and woman on earth and concerning the origin of suffering and decay in the creation. God's goodness itself is questioned, since he would have created a world with corruption and vanity affecting the world for billions of years before man sinned. Even the reign of Christ on his church and the place of the church on earth become insignificant in the history of the earth – being relegated to the last paragraph, even the last line of the history of the world.

What really does make sense is the fact that man was created in the beginning of the world. In his goodness and wisdom, the Lord God gave to Adam and Eve the mandate to have dominion over the world and to take care of the earth in his name – right from the beginning. “He formed the earth and made it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!” (Isa 45:18). God created the world with all its beauties and resources, so that man could see God's wonderful works in their original splendour, immediately after they were created. As God's steward of his goods, man could exercise dominion and so glorify his Creator on the “very good” earth that had freshly come out of the hands of the Lord. God placed them in this originally very good earthly habitation, surrounded by wonderful animals created the same day or the day before, and excellent vegetation and food created just three days before, thus having no illnesses or defects at all.

When vanity, corruption, and bondage irrupted into creation, profoundly affecting the whole earth, immediately, there were sons of God on earth who began to be recreated by God's grace, based on the promise of the Saviour. In this way, the gathering of God's people and Christ's reign on his church extends to the whole history of the earth, from the beginning to the end. Ever since

the moment the gospel began to be preached in Genesis 3:15, “The whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.” Creation is expressing that groaning in conjunction with the children of God, in the glorious hope of their shared future deliverance. And all this, right from the beginning of the world!

This is why we confess that “the Son of God, out of the whole human race, *from the beginning of the world* to its end, gathers, defends, and preserves for himself, by his Spirit and Word, in the unity of the true faith, a church chosen to everlasting life” (HC, Q/A 54). “This church has existed *from the beginning of the world* and will be to the end, for Christ is an eternal King who cannot be without subjects” (BC, Art 27). “Although the work of redemption was not actually wrought by Christ till after his incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy, and benefits thereof were communicated unto the elect, in all ages successively *from the beginning of the world.*” (WC, Art VIII.6). Then, on the judgment day, “all people, men, women, and children, who ever lived, *from the beginning of the world* to the end, will appear in person before this great Judge” (BC, Art 37). Do we really believe and uphold this confession?

No, Adam was not created near the end of the world. It is the last Adam who came “in these last days” (Heb 1:2). Our Saviour Jesus Christ came to redeem us from our sins and misery and to give us the glorious hope of a restored and beautiful new creation. As children of God, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, we are strongly encouraged by this promise that we are eagerly awaiting to see in all its glory. Like the creation in its childbirth pains, we must be patient and persevering in our present sufferings. We have the comfort and assurance that, at the very end of the present world, we will enjoy to the full the perfect deliverance and beauty of the new creation with our Saviour.

As the first Adam was given dominion over the earth from the beginning – but lamentably failed – so the last Adam has received complete dominion in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18), and he will fully succeed in accomplishing his plan of redemption to the end. He came to repair all the wrongs that the first Adam and all his descendants have done and are doing to God, to themselves, to their neighbours, and to the whole world. We have the glorious hope that our Saviour will wonderfully succeed in his work of restoration. As the one seated on his throne promised: “Behold, I am making all things new” (Rev 21:5). Glory, honour, and praise to the one who is “the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” (Rev 22:13)! C

# Grand Opening at Brampton

The congregation of the Grace Canadian Reformed Church of Brampton recently celebrated the Grand Opening of its newly constructed church building. In reality, this celebration was the result of over eight years of planning and preparation. Over eight years ago, a thought developed that the congregation could benefit from the rapid expansion of the City of Brampton. Although the congregation's church building had originally been built in the countryside on the west side of Brampton, development brought expansion of a residential neighbourhood to the church's front door. The idea was to enter into negotiations with Mattamy Homes, the builder who was expanding the residential neighbourhood, to use the church's land holdings to improve the congregation's current church facility. With many twists and turns, more than eight years later, the LORD has blessed the congregation with a new church building that certainly exceeds expectations.

## New church building

Located at the corner of Creditview Road and Fairhill Avenue, the new church building stands high above the residential houses which surround it. At 12,051 square feet, the new church building is a spacious facility. The 240 seat worship hall provides more than ample seating for the current membership. This hall is the focal point as the two wings filter towards it from left and right. Truly, the Word is truly the focal point of this new structure. In one wing, there is a nursery, library, office for the minister, council room as well as two meeting rooms. In the other wing there is a large Fellowship Hall along with a fully functional servery. With all this, the LORD has provided additional tools to the members.

## Grand opening

Although occupancy of the church building was granted in December 2014, the official Grand Opening took







*Master of Ceremony  
John Schoon*



*Rev. G. Nederveen*

place on Friday, May 1, 2015. Psalm 27 was the theme, as the evening was focussed on dwelling in God's house to view the beauty of the LORD. In keeping with this theme, the congregation's choir performed the song "The Lord Is My Light." Reverend M. H. Van Luik delivered the devotional address as he provided a call to the congregation to let the beauty of the LORD shine forth from this new building so that it can be a light in the community.

The evening presented an opportunity for those in the surrounding Reformed community to provide words of congratulations. Representatives from Classis North, Bethel Canadian Reformed Church, Immanuel United Reformed Church, and Covenant United Reformed Church conveyed messages of congratulations and offered words of advice. Words of congratulations were also offered by Mr. Case Lindhout, who acted as legal counsel for the purchase of the new building, as well as former pastors Rev. G Nederveen and Dr. C. Van Dam. Throughout these presentations there was a consistent reference to the fact that this blessing from the LORD presented an opportunity to the congregation.

In celebration of the Grand Opening, the Chairman of the Long Term Financial Planning Committee (LTFPC) and the Building Committee, Tony Tenhage, delivered a presentation outlining the eight year long history of the negotiations and construction. He explained how an idea led to the formation of the LTFPC followed by negotiations with Mattamy. Mr. Tenhage explained how intimidating this process was for the members of the LTFPC. Nevertheless, the LORD blessed those negotiations and provided members who volunteered their time, energy, and skills to the negotiations and to the building plans. Despite its small size, the Brampton congregation was blessed to have members with experience and degrees in engineering, urban planning, and even acoustics. As

such, the Grand Opening also represented a chance to extend formal words of appreciation to those who had been members of the LTFPC and the Building Committee over the years. A special thank you was extended to brother Tony Tenhage who is an original member of the LTFPC and the current Chairman of the LTFPC and the Building Committee.

Thanks were also extended to those outside the congregation who had been involved in this project. Gifts were presented to representatives of Tambro Construction (contractor), Dickinson & Hicks Architects Inc. (architects), Mr. Case Lindhout (lawyer), and Koopmans Company (organ builders). The congregation has been blessed with an impressive organ to lead its worship services. The façade of the organ was designed by Brother Chris Nobels and the congregation is thankful that Brother Nobels received the opportunity to play the organ before he was taken to the LORD. The façade remains as a reminder to all of Brother Nobels' contribution.

### **Community barbecue**

In addition to the Grand Opening, the congregation celebrated the opening of its new church building by holding a community barbecue on May 9, 2015. May 9, 2015 brought a bright and sunny day and little by little members of the community filtered in. While there was a barbecue, games, and even a bouncy castle, the focus was on providing information. The congregation was emboldened by the fact that the barbecue was a chance to engage the community in conversations about the Reformed faith. Literature was provided to all those interested at an information table manned by willing volunteers. In addition, throughout the duration of the barbecue, Reverend Van Luik was busy with those who had questions about who we are and what we believe.

### **Conclusion**

It was not that long ago that the members of the Grace Canadian Reformed Church all gathered together for the ground breaking ceremony for this new church. With the completion and Grand Opening of the church the members are excited by the opportunity which has been presented. The latest census data (2011) reveals that the population of Brampton was 523,911. It is undeniable that the city has grown even bigger since that date. As such, the city represents a very large mission field and the members of the Grace Canadian Reformed Church are hopeful that the LORD will use this new church building to spread his Word across this large community. **C**



Klaas Stam

# Posse Peccare

The above title is not taken from some “Wild West” scenario. Surely you know that in the olden days, when a criminal or gang of criminals robbed and vandalized a town, the upstanding citizens organized a posse to chase and capture the bandits. That’s not the kind of *posse* we’re talking about. *Posse* means “to be able.” *Peccare* means “to sin.”

These are Latin words which I ordinarily would not use, but they summarize clearly something that Dr. Van Raalte mentioned in his response to my editorial. He distinguished between being able to sin, not being able not to sin, and not being able to sin (anymore).

We know these words from a classical trio of concepts often used in dogmatics, the study of the doctrine of the church. This trio is helpful to explain how the situation of Adam and Eve changed with respect to sin.

The trio works like this:

1. Before the fall: *posse peccare*: mankind was able to sin but had not yet sinned (state of “innocence”);
2. After the fall: *non posse non peccare*: mankind was not able not to sin (state of “corruption” or “total depravity”);
3. After Christ’s return: *non posse peccare*: mankind is not able to sin (state of “perfection”).

Let’s see if we can explain this in simple terms following a calmly flowing, meandering river. Before the fall man was able not to sin. He had a free will and he could have rejected the lies of Satan. But after the fall, the nature of man became totally depraved and utterly corrupt. He was now a sinner and could not do any good. But the Lord Jesus took our sins upon him and freed us from the curse of death. We are united in the *new* covenant in his blood. He is now seated in glory in heaven, and when he returns to judge the living and the dead, the righteous will be changed and no longer be able to sin.

Actually the end-result is better than the beginning. We go from a state of being able to sin to the state of not being able ever to sin again. The fall will not be repeated. Paradise has been restored by Christ and we will never again be banned from the presence of God.

Before the fall



After the fall



After Christ's return



There is another measure of progress to be noted. Before the fall, God did not live with man, for he was in heaven. Yes, he came down to walk with man in the cool of the day, but he lived in heaven, where man did not go. Heaven and earth was still separated. After the fall the two would be opposed to each other in a fierce battle. We sometimes call this the “antithesis.” But when Christ returns the dwelling place of God will be with men. Heaven and earth unite. We will see God every day. This truth is found at various places in Scripture, but especially in Revelation 19. See illustration.

### ***Posse Peccare***

Dr. Van Raalte sees in the fact that before the fall man could sin and had actually been warned for the consequences, the proof for a “covenant of works” before the fall. Adam and Eve were being tested in this so-called covenant of works. They failed the test, broke the terms, and were banished. Then we understand Dr. Van Raalte’s position that after this first covenant of works was broken, God made a second covenant, the covenant of grace in Christ.

But the very fact that God instructed Adam against sin and warned for possible death as punishment does not at all make the covenant one of *works*. Not even close. Especially not as terms to be met before eternal life was received. What could be merited by obedience? God spoke and instructed in his *love*. When that love was rejected in the fall, the LORD continued in an even greater expression of his love by revealing the gospel.

All brotherly disagreement notwithstanding, we rejoice together in the truth that one day we will be perfect, unable to sin, and will love God and our neighbour without fail. Not able to sin anymore: truly a grand perspective!

### ***Non posse non peccare***

Our current state is that we are unable not to sin, that is, we sin grievously every day. This should be to us a reminder that we are not yet in the state of perfection and that we must long and work for the coming of the Lord, when sin and death, and all the misery evident in this world will end forever.

In the letter to the Romans the Apostle Paul makes very clear that our current situation is at best precarious and unsettling. The thought development in Romans

goes as follows: the *Gentiles* are under judgment because they have exchanged truth for lies, and worship creatures rather than the Creator. The *Jews* are no better, for they have received the covenant and the Law, but failed to keep it. They are also under judgment.

What about Christians, born again, burning with zeal through the Holy Spirit? Surely they are far above the rest of mankind in righteousness and holiness? Yes, that is to be expected. But also here we find disappointment. Reality check. The apostle writes, “We know that the law is spiritual, but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do; what I hate I do. . . . So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me” (Rom 7:14-23). There is always a war going on inside us, the members of my body making war against the law of my mind. *I am a battlefield*. So are you. *Non posse non peccare*.

I cannot keep the law. Every commandment condemns me. I am all the more condemnable because I know better. We live in the last days, when the gospel has been fully revealed.

What does all this mean? First, we need to *flee to Christ* who alone paid for our sins and overcame our enemies! Do this consciously all day long. Immerse yourself in his comfort.

Second, we need to battle against our sinful nature and not be slaves to sin. Identify your weakness, seek to root out your sins, be filled with the Spirit! Oh, this is hard, don’t I know it, but little by little we progress, fall back, start anew, focusing on the route set before us, thankful that we have God’s covenant of love.

Third, we need to long to be delivered from *this body of death!* For only then will the inward battle have ceased, my enemies defeated, and I am free forever! No longer able to sin. *Non posse peccare!* All this has far-reaching significance for personal faith, public preaching, and being a missional church.

The state of innocence is long gone. The state of depravity is still our natural habitat. But there are signs of new life. I can feel it; we’re movin’ on, to the state of perfection. Following the Lord Jesus, the Pioneer and Perfector of our faith. Maranatha!







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### **The Quest for the Historical Adam**

**William VanDoodewaard, *The Quest for the Historical Adam: Genesis, Hermeneutics, and Human Origins***

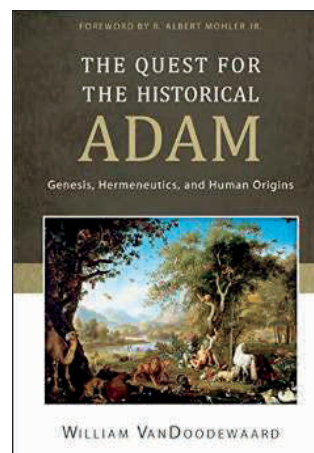
**Foreword by R. Albert Mohler, Jr. Grand Rapids, MI:  
Reformation Heritage Books, 2015**

**Additional Information: xiv + 345 pages  
Also available as an eBook**

This is a much needed book and comes at an opportune time, given the discussions on the historicity and origin of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Reformed, Presbyterian, and evangelical circles. The author, Dr. William VanDoodewaard, is Professor of Church History at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and an ordained minister in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. In this book he gives a historical survey of how the first chapters of Genesis were understood throughout the history of the church. He rightly notes that before we get taken in by new ideas about how to understand the opening chapters of Genesis and get tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine (Eph 4:14) we need to be able to judge the new teachings exegetically, theologically, and historically. His historical survey of two thousand years of Christian understanding of Genesis helps us to do just that.

Before embarking on his journey, he defines what he means by a literal understanding of Genesis. One reads Genesis 1 and 2 “as a nonfigurative, detailed, historical record of events and existence narrated as they actually were. For those who hold to the ‘literal interpretation of Genesis,’ the six days are ordinary days, the sun was created after the initial creation of light, the dust was real dust, the rib a real rib, and Adam and Eve the first people, specially created on the sixth day, without any evolutionary ancestry” (p. 6-7).

Chapter one demonstrates that the rest of Scripture shows Adam and Eve to have been the first human beings and that their creation was a unique historical event. Chapter two shows that the literal interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2 was with very few exceptions the mainstream position of the Christian church in the patristic and medieval periods. However in the medieval church there was a growing stream of allegorical interpretation which viewed much of Genesis 1 and 2




as figurative. But, as chapter three demonstrates, in the Reformation and post-Reformation eras the dominance of the literal or historical sense returned. Even during the rise of the Enlightenment from the late sixteenth to the late eighteenth century, the vast majority of Protestant theologians both in Europe and in the colonies continued to maintain a literal hermeneutic (chapter 4).

However that all changed as European society and culture more and more rejected the authority of Scripture and gave more credence to science and technology during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (chapter 5). Darwin was very influential in making many reconsider a literal understanding. Those coming under his influence in some measure even included Princeton theologians Charles Hodge and B.B. Warfield. However, their Princeton colleague Geerhardus Vos was committed to a literal interpretation, as were the theologians at Calvin Theological Seminary (William Heyns, Foppe Ten Hoor, and Louis Berkhof). In The Netherlands, Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck, and G.C. Aalders all maintained “a special, temporally immediate creation of Adam and Eve apart from any evolutionary processes” (186).

Chapter six comprises about a third of the book and traces developments from the 1950s to the present. In this chapter Van Doodewaard surveys the landscape and traces the decline of the literal interpretation of Genesis in the Christian Reformed, Presbyterian, evangelical, and other

churches. Included in his overview are Westminster Theological Seminary California (influential within the United Reformed Churches) with its advocates of a nonliteral hermeneutic and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church which upheld a literal reading of Genesis in their 1994 General Assembly. Ecclesiastical study committee reports on Genesis, as well as the views of well-known scholars, challenges seminaries faced, and the involvement of BioLogos in promoting evolution are all discussed as well. He concludes that in spite of the challenges of modern science and secularization, “there remains today, as in previous eras, a strong commitment to the millennia-old literal approach toward early Genesis, which includes the special, temporally immediate creation of Adam and Eve as the first humans, apart from any ancestry or immediate contemporaries” (275). While that is encouraging, history teaches that a denial of a literal Adam and Eve has always ultimately led to the rejection of an infallible Scripture and its God-given authority (279).

Chapter seven describes the high cost of denying a historical Adam and Eve. Theistic evolution is incompatible with Scripture. Embracing it ultimately means refusing to accept the plain teaching of Scripture and giving precedence to scientific understanding. It also erodes a biblical ethic of human life and marriage as a divine institution, and yields a host of other problems. Denying the historicity of Adam and Eve in the end can also lead to the loss of the gospel of the second Adam, Jesus Christ. In an epilogue, VanDoodewaard briefly discusses harmonizing special and general revelation.

This book is an impressive piece of work with much detailed information. The author is fair in his analyses and very often lets those with contrary views speak for themselves. The book has an extensive bibliography but unfortunately lacks an index of the names of individuals and institutions discussed. We are indebted to Dr. VanDoodewaard for the research he has here made available. This is a valuable resource on the historical Adam. Highly recommended! 





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# Q

In 1 John 4:1, we can read the following: “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God.” Would you be able to tell us something about “evangelicalism” and its adherents? What is it exactly, and how does it differ from what we know to be the truth? I understand there is a lot of emphasis on “God is love,” and little on covenant demands. Is this true? If so, where can or does this lead to? Do they have their own organization, or are they to be found elsewhere? I understand evangelicalism has greatly infiltrated our Dutch sister churches. Can its ideas be considered a threat to our churches in Canada? If so, how great, and could we “arm” ourselves in any way?

# A

This question is (or these questions are) rather loaded, so that it won't be possible within the parameters of this column to address each aspect and issue related to evangelicalism in detail. Hopefully the answer will incite to further study and investigation.

Evangelicalism, then, has its roots in the pre-reformation (Wycliffe) and the Great Reformation (Luther) when the gospel of justification through faith only was rediscovered. In the eighteenth century the term “Evangelicals” was used for preachers (Puritans) who proclaimed the gospel of grace in all its richness and exhorted to a personal faith. The name Evangelicals became more commonly known through preachers like the Wesley brothers and Whitefield, the so-called Methodists (Great Awakening), and showed a lack of confessional, dogmatic, and church oriented tenets. In the nineteenth and twentieth century it became a movement across denominational and international borders which emphasized an explicit way of believing and living as a Christian.

One of the important aspects in the movement of evangelicalism is the emphasis on the Christian's personal sanctification, his continued conversions. Since the revivalist movements of the eighteenth and nine-

teenth century, however, under the influence of Methodist preachers, a combination of Calvinist (justification by faith alone) and Arminian thinking (the decision of man's will) became apparent. Revivalism and the Holiness Movement in the nineteenth century added such accents as “perfect love,” “complete sanctification,” and a “second blessing” to the characteristics of evangelicalism. In the twentieth century the number one pursuit of the Evangelicals (evangelizing) has become the top priority on their agendas, seeking to reach the masses and exhort them to be converted. At the same time, during this time of Scripture criticism and liberalism the Evangelicals stood out for their strong defense of the authority of the Scriptures. For a more extensive and informative resource concerning the history and development of evangelicalism, see (the now Rev.) P.H. Holtvlüwer, *Clarion*, Volume 48, Nos. 8-13.


In a general way we can characterize Evangelicals positively for their bold proclamation of God's grace for poor, wretched sinners, their call for repentance, conversion, and a personal living faith which shows in a holy life for God in accordance to his Word. In the same general way, we must observe negatively that this emphasis upon a personal faith leads to an individualism that's contrary to the scriptural call for a life in the covenant,



communion, and church, united with God and his people. Due to the absence of an adherence to the scriptural concept of the covenant, infant baptism is rejected by most, man's determining will and decision given priority, and the call to join the church that's faithful to God's Word made into a matter of personal choice and preference. As well, the emphasis on sanctification leads to what is called perfectionism, rather than admitting and confessing that the believer continues to be a sinner (Rom 7:24; LD 44). In the process toward sanctification and perfect holiness there also is the demand for a special revelation or personal experience of conversion. Other standards that are self-imposed are the requirement of joy and praise (at the expense of other expressions of life like crying, despair, and complaints, as shown in the Psalms for instance) and the demand for evangelism and making as many converts as possible (at the expense of other fruits of faith and activities of service and obedience).

As the questioner already indicates, among Reformed people (not *only* in our Dutch sister churches, among *us* as well!), there is much that's attractive in the evangelical way of thinking. With those attracted to evangelicalism there is a kind of aversion for tradition, confessions, and dogmatics that have come to us from the past, while evangelicals are living more in the present. They would rather concentrate on the basics, the "gospel-light," on a faith for today, and a message that's marketed in an appealing way. The attention, therefore, is also much more on the individual, his experience practically and realistically, without the rules and structures which the church has inherited from the past. Church, then, is more

a social event in which Christians work together in an informal, interdenominational, and spontaneous way. No wonder people who feel attracted to a new and modern way of service and worship don't "feel at home" any longer in the Reformed church.

There may be some aspects of which we can learn and which we can use for self-examination – like the more conscious and living experience of a faith that shows the fruit of the Spirit – in order to ward off dead orthodoxy, traditionalism, and confessionalism. There is much in this movement of evangelicalism, however, that should be exposed as unscriptural: the neglect of the covenant, of a covenantal obedience, and the demand for infant baptism, as well as the negativism toward the church, the confessions, and the richness coming to us in the heritage of reformed church history. Their one-sided emphasis on personal experience and their views on conversion, sanctification, witnessing, and a different way of speaking about faith experiences, confessions, and the functioning of the offices, are some of the wrong tenets that threaten to influence members in Reformed churches (ours included!) and will alienate them from the reformed tradition, confessions, and active church life. When the need for revival is observed, this should be promoted and pursued in the scriptural way of proclaiming the need and call for daily repentance from sins in our own lives, and a serious and sincere desire to live in complete dependence of God in Christ; this will show in the fruit of the Spirit in a life of love and service to God, to his honour and glory, and in obedience to his will. 

**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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