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Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
Volume 64, No. 15 • July 31, 2015

WHAT DOES GOD REQUIRE IN WORSHIP?

God, Liturgy, and Us

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There is a covenantal, two-way direction in our worship services

Just before I was ordained into the ministry, an experienced pastor advised me to tread carefully when it came to liturgical matters. His comment went something like this: Nothing in church life stirs up more discussion, passion, and disagreement than the details of what happens in a worship service.

Why do we only sing songs from the *Book of Praise* in our worship services? What's the right atmosphere in church: informal or formal, comfortable or dignified? And, of course, which instruments should we use? Should we stick with organ and piano? Do we make use of other instruments? If so, which ones? How? How many?

These questions, and many more, are guaranteed to generate opinions, some of which may be forcefully expressed. As such, this may not be a bad thing, so long as the vigorous debate remains brotherly. After all, worship on the Lord's Day is the opening highlight of every week. We are permitted, through the new and living way opened by Christ (Heb 10:20), to enter God's majestic presence and honour him. Given the elevated status of our weekly worship, we should be passionate about the details.

The challenge, though, is to find biblical answers to liturgical questions. On the one hand, our Lord does not give us a prescribed order of worship in the Bible. That is to say, you will not find something like an A or B Liturgy (*Book of Praise*, 595-96) in one of the letters of the apostles. On the other hand, we rightly confess that we are not to worship God "in any other manner than he has commanded in his Word" (LD 35). This is also called the regulative principle of worship. Yet to what level of detail should we regulate? The answers to these questions need to be rooted deeply in scriptural principles. This article will explore four of them.

Principle #1
Worship is something we give to God, therefore it must please him.

The Lord our God taught many basic principles of worship already in the Old Testament. For example, repeatedly in the book of Leviticus we learn that a sacrifice, when offered in the prescribed manner, is "a pleasing aroma to the Lord" (e.g., Lev 1:17). This truth is confirmed in the New Testament where our spiritual worship is to be "holy and acceptable to God" (Rom 12:1) and "pleasing to God" (Heb 13:16). For this reason we also need to guard our steps when we go up to the house of God (Eccl 5:1). Before all else, we go to the house of worship to honour and exalt our God.

Of course, if we go to church with a reverent and receptive attitude, then we will certainly be edified as well. There is a covenantal, two-way direction in our worship services. And the Holy Spirit will use his means of grace, the preaching of the gospel and the sacraments, in order to strengthen our faith. However, this vital work of the Holy Spirit only serves to highlight who is truly at the centre of the worship service: our Triune God. Therefore, the foremost question in all liturgical matters is this: Does our holy and gracious God like it?

That question is fundamentally different from the one that we naturally ask. Just listen to any conversation about liturgy. Inevitably you will hear a lot of language that sounds like this: "We visited another congregation, and they do [fill in the liturgical blank] in their worship. I just find that so refreshing! I really like it!" or "That kind of worship? It just doesn't do much for me. I don't feel motivated afterwards." Do you sense why comments like these miss the liturgical mark? In a profound sense,

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Our issue begins with a guest editorial from Dr. Jason Van Vliet. In it he addresses the scriptural principles which should guide our liturgical choices. In our previous issue, Dr. John Smith contributed a guest editorial as well. His second part appears in this issue.

Elsewhere on these pages readers will find the Treasures New and Old column, the Clippings on Politics and Religion column, and a book review. In news, we have an article from Guelph on the welcome and installation of Rev. Feenstra. Issue 15 is also full of interaction from you! This includes two letters to the editor, the Further Discussion column, and a question for You Asked.

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THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

CLARION
Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue
Winnipeg, MB Canada R2J 3X5
Phone: 204-663-9000, Fax: 204-663-9202

Subscriptions clarionadmin@premierpublishing.ca
Advertisements clarionads@premierpublishing.ca
Website www.clarionmagazine.ca

2015 SUBSCRIPTION RATES

		Regular Mail	*Air Mail*
Canada	VISA MasterCard	$49.00*	$ 82.00*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds		$69.00	$ 92.00
International		$98.00	$154.00

***Applicable GST, HST, PRT taxes are extra.**
GST/HST no. 890967359RT

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PUBLISHER

Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd.
Winnipeg, Manitoba

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We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Canada

Agreement No. 40063293; ISSN 0383-0438

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worship is not about what you like or what I like. It is all about what our God likes. So let's make sure that principle is the firm foundation and constant reference point in all our liturgical considerations.

Moreover, we should not be too quick to assume that God must like it because we happen to like it. Here is one quick illustration that may drive home the point. I like singing happy, upbeat songs – maybe you do, too. However, of the 150 psalms that God has given us, no less than fifty-nine of them are categorized as lament songs and by comparison forty-one are labelled as praise songs. At a minimum, this means that the LORD is pleased to hear us sing songs of sorrow from time to time. Whether lament psalms are our own personal favourites is entirely beside the point. If our Redeemer likes them, we should sing them – readily and willingly. After all, we are there to please God.

Principle #2

As God's people of the new covenant, we participate in heavenly worship.

In the old covenant God's people joined with their fellow believers to worship the God of heaven, but they did so as an earthly assembly in Jerusalem where the temple was located. Now, to our natural eyes not much has changed in the new covenant. Of course, we no longer gather in Jerusalem, but for the rest we still assemble with our fellow believers in a physical church building in some town or city to worship the God of heaven.

Is the location of the worship building the only thing that has changed? No, much more than that has been transformed, but we need to look with the eye of faith if we are to see it. In Hebrews 12:22-24 the Holy Spirit says:

> But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the meditator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Now that certainly sheds a different light on worship. When you step into the church building you do not see innumerable angels in festal gathering, nor do you see God, nor do you see the sprinkled blood of Jesus. Yet when worship begins, by faith we walk into the *heavenly* Jerusalem, yes, into the very presence of the angelic hosts and our Risen Saviour. This new covenant blessing speaks volumes about the proper ambiance in worship each week. Since we are stepping by faith into the heavenly Jerusalem, our worship definitely should be dignified. After all, the throne room of God, the judge of all, is an extremely exalted place. Just read Revelation 4.

Principle #3

So far as the musical aspect of worship is concerned, congregational singing is the key thing.

Approximately seventy-five times in the book of Psalms, God's people are commanded to sing to him. This command is repeated in the New Testament when the congregations in Ephesus and Colosse are specifically instructed to sing (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16). Moreover, in final glory God's redeemed people, the symbolic 144,000, certainly enjoy singing to their Saviour (Rev 14:2-3).

Our worship definitely should be dignified

Now there is a lot of different singing in the world. There are soloists who sing. There are small quartets and large choirs who sing. There are professional singers who sing for money and hit every note just right. And there are sing-along singers as they drive down the road. They don't get paid a dime and don't always keep the tune so well either. Each kind of singing can be beautiful in its own way.

Yet when we sing in a worship service, something different and very special happens: a *congregation* sings together. Some in the congregation are excellent singers; some are, quite literally, tone-deaf and therefore sing in a nearly monotone voice. Some are so young that they still struggle to read the words and follow the tune at the same time. There is *a lot* going on in those young minds when we sing Psalm 118. Others have aged lungs that run out of oxygen more quickly than previously in their life. They really need that half-rest at the end of the line to respire and make it through to the end of the stanza. Despite the diversity of singers and musical abilities, though, we all sing together as God's congregation.

Singing *as a congregation* is beautiful. More than that, though, it is particularly fitting for us as God's new covenant people. In the old covenant, certain Levites were particularly engaged in singing and music in the temple. The clans of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun come to mind (1 Chron 25). However, in the new covenant we no longer have a special Levitical or priestly tribe; instead, all together we are "a royal priesthood" (1 Pet 2:9). Therefore, we all sing together – regardless of age or musical aptitude.

Applying this principle means that there is a noteworthy difference between instrumental or vocal performances and congregational singing. When done well, each one is beautiful thing; however, let's not confuse the two or blur them together. At an organ concert, the performer is there to show what the instrument and he can do – and all of that to the glory of God. At a Christmas concert, we may enjoy all the different musical talents that God has given to various individuals in our congregation. These are wonderful opportunities.

However, in a worship service both the occasion and, consequently, the key question are different. In worship the question is not what can the instruments or the musicians do. In worship we are not looking for a display of the diversity of talents that are available within the congregation. Rather we are asking how we can best sing together *as a congregation*. If that means asking the accompanists to pick up the tempo a bit because the congregation feels draggy as it sings, so be it. By the same token, if that means asking the accompanists to slow down a bit because the grade one children and elderly members are struggling to sing that fast, then so be it. After all, we are focusing on the very best congregational singing that we can offer to our majestic God.

Principle #4

Congregational singing involves teaching and admonishing one another; therefore, lyrics are crucial.

Perhaps one of the most underexplored aspects of God's revelation concerning liturgy is the connection between singing and teaching each other about our Saviour's mighty deeds. The Holy Spirit makes this connection in Colossians 3:16 where he says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." He also confirms it in Ephesians 5:19 where singing is part of "addressing one another."

Do you ever think about that when you are singing in church? Of course, when we sing, we praise the Lord and offer up our songful petitions to him. Yet, at the same time, according to God's own Word, we are also speaking to each other as fellow believers, teaching each other about the miraculous works of our God and exhorting each other to respect his holiness in our daily words and deeds. Obviously, a tune can be pleasant to the ear, but a tune by itself cannot teach, let alone admonish, in any significant way. In order to accomplish that we need lyrics – good, solid, balanced, biblical lyrics.

When people express their preferences for this song or that song, for songs in the *Book of Praise* or songs beyond the *Book of Praise,* most of the discussion revolves around the tunes. Oh, that we would be as passionate about the lyrics as we are about the tunes! Moreover, if we cherish and wish to share the truth that "The Lord is King" despite the haughty pride of wicked men, then we'll be eager to sing the lyrics of Psalm 10, even if it does not have the most peppy tune, which is actually quite appropriate, considering the content of the psalm.

In conclusion, this little article does not answer all your liturgical questions. The author is well aware of that. Yet the modest goal has been to consider the necessity of addressing matters of worship using the principles revealed in God's Word rather than simply following the preferences that live in our hearts. That is also why the title reads: "God, Liturgy, and Us." The order is purposeful. God and his desires are first. That is where they should be, especially in worship. C

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CHURCH NEWS

Impressed with God

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"Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."
Psalm 103:2

What we experience in life can easily get the patterns of our thinking on a negative track. David, as an instrument of the Holy Spirit, encourages us to take ourselves in hand when the dark clouds of negativity threaten to descend on us. Rather than letting our circumstances cripple us, we need to be impressed with everything the Lord has given us and done for us. The Lord's benefits need to reshape the thoughts of our hearts and the direction of our lives. Indeed, "Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

When we contemplate all that the Lord has given to us through his Son we are awed and impressed. The Lord satisfies our desires with good things – things that will carry us through this life into eternity. The Lord speaks to the oppressed and the depressed as he puts on display his nature and character. His deeds tell us that he is merciful, gracious, slow to anger and abounding in love. He crowns our lives with his compassion and love.

Have you ever stopped to think about how impressive God's love really is? The depth of his commitment to us is beyond our comprehension. You cannot measure it with any human standard. "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him" (Ps 103:11). The mercy of the Lord is completely awesome and amazing! God's eternity assures us that his mercy is never ending – from everlasting to everlasting. He takes pity on us and redeems our life from the pit – from the most difficult circumstances. God's redeeming love, forgiveness and grace are not short-term benefits but carry us through each day. When going through a rough stretch we may look for the support of family and friends but someday all these people will no longer be with us. The people we love and depend on are like the flowers of the field – they look beautiful for a short while, but they die. The Lord's compassion, care, forgiveness, and grace are so different. They will be with you to our dying day and beyond! How do we know this to be true? God is from everlasting to everlasting!

What should be our response to the enumeration of all God's glorious benefits? We should be impressed with his greatness and then express it with our obedience. We are to meditate on God's character and deeds and let that saturate our whole being. The psalmist tells us to praise the Lord's name wholeheartedly and without reservation, to say good things about the Lord in all circumstances and with every facet of our being. David invites us to praise the name of the Lord with our lips and with our lives. He encourages us to praise God, in a very personal way, with our inmost being – with all that we are and all that we have received.

As you face the challenges and trials of every day, take yourself in hand and readjust your focus. Bless the Lord with your whole being! Let the love the Lord has shown by sending Christ gladden your heart. The blood of Christ that was poured out for the complete forgiveness of all your sins allows you to enjoy all the benefits of redemption. Be impressed with God and enjoy the multifaceted benefits of his love and grace. C

For Further Study

1. Read through Psalm 103. List all the "benefits" of the Lord mentioned in this psalm.
2. Think about how the benefits of the Lord have impacted your life.
3. Why is it significant that forgiveness is the first benefit listed in this psalm?
4. We will look to family and friends for help and support through times of trouble. Taking into consideration what is stated in Psalm 103:13-18, what are the limitations of such help?

Pastors and Property Laws (Part 2 of 2)

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Last time we saw that studying the property laws of the Old Testament can help us to understand the tenth commandment better. With these laws the Lord as Owner and Distributor of the land graciously put a number of measures in place to counteract the sin of covetousness. In this second installment we'll focus on a particular passage, Leviticus 27:16-21, and then draw some conclusions.

Leviticus 27:16-21

The passage reads as follows:

> If a man dedicates to the LORD part of his family land, its value is to be set according to the amount of seed required for it – fifty shekels of silver to a homer of barley seed. If he dedicates his field during the Year of Jubilee, the value that has been set remains. But if he dedicates his field after the Jubilee, the priest will determine the value according to the number of years that remain until the next Year of Jubilee, and its set value will be reduced. If the man who dedicates the field wishes to redeem it, he must add a fifth to its value, and the field will again become his. If, however, he does not redeem the field, or if he has sold it to someone else, it can never be redeemed. When the field is released in the Jubilee, it will become holy, like a field devoted to the LORD; it will become the property of the priests.

The context shows that this passage is about a vow. A man could make a vow to dedicate a field to the Lord. The dedication was voluntary, but if he chose to make it, he had to follow certain regulations. He was to go to the priest who would set the value of the land. To determine its value the priest would take the number of years remaining till the next Jubilee and he would multiply that by number of homers of barley it would take to seed the field. That would be the set value of the land in silver shekels.

What would happen next? Well, the owner had a choice. He could redeem the land – that is, pay the monetary equivalent and get the field back – but to do so he would have to pay twenty percent on top of the set value. That was a costly option. But *not* to redeem it would cost him even more: "If he does not redeem the field. . . it can never be redeemed. When the field is released at the Jubilee, it will become holy, like a field devoted to the LORD." Notice the distinction between "devoted" and "dedicated": something that is dedicated can still be redeemed, but something that is devoted cannot: it becomes the permanent property of the priests. So normally the land would return to its owner in the Year of Jubilee, but if it was dedicated to the Lord and not redeemed, the owner would forfeit all rights to the land. Therefore, even though it would cost him twenty percent extra to redeem the land, the owner would be inclined to redeem it anyway; otherwise he would lose the land permanently.

Now the owner might try to get around this by dedicating a piece of land he had already sold to someone else. (To our thinking it sounds impossible to dedicate to the Lord something that you've already sold, because it's not yours to dedicate anymore, but to the Israelite mindset, selling a part of his inheritance was never final: he would get it back in the year of Jubilee, so he was still the "owner," and thus he could still dedicate it to the Lord.) Why would he want to do so? As a way of avoiding the twenty percent surcharge! A crafty landowner might think like this: if I sell it before I dedicate it, then the law of Jubilee will take precedence over the law of dedication. But the law closed this loophole: if you've sold it to someone else, and then dedicated it to the Lord, then at the Year of Jubilee the land will not revert to you but to the Lord: "it will become the property of the priests." That was a significant deterrent: someone who would try to use a vow to his own financial advantage would not be blessed but would risk losing his land.

Leviticus 27 in action

To illustrate all of this, let's consider an imaginary scenario. Farmer Zebulun has three daughters but no sons. He makes a vow that if the LORD will bless his marriage by giving him a son, he would dedicate a field to the LORD. The LORD answers his prayer, so "Zeb" heads for the temple to dedicate the field. The Year of Jubilee is twenty years away, so Zeb figures that he'll get the field back just when his son is old enough to work the land. But the priest tells him that he won't get the field back in the Year of Jubilee unless he redeems it by paying the value of the land plus twenty percent. Zebulun hadn't counted on that, but a vow is a vow, and he doesn't want to lose the field. The size of the field is two acres, so what will the price of redemption be? Get out your calculators, and let's figure it out.

1. One modern (Ontario) estimate is that barley is sown at a ratio of about fifty kilograms per acre, which makes 100 kilograms for two acres.[1] (I don't know what the ratio would have been in Old Testament Israel, so let's use this ratio for convenience' sake.)
2. The formula for calculating the redemption price of the land uses the homer, which is not a measurement of weight but of volume. One homer is about 220 litres (not the same as an *omer*, which is about two litres). A litre of barley weighs about 0.609 kg (though the exact weight depends on the quality of the barley, as well as how compact it is). So a homer of barley weighs about 134 kilograms, which means that 0.75 of a homer is needed for the two-acre field.
3. By law, the value of the land is set at fifty shekels per homer of barley seed, which works out to 37.5 shekels (or thity-seven shekels and ten gerahs) for Zebulun's field. But given that thirty years have elapsed since the last Jubilee and only twenty years remain until the next one, the value is reduced to forty percent, making it fifteen shekels of silver.
4. The priest adds a fifth to the value, bringing the total to eighteen shekels. Zebulun thinks to himself, "Maybe I should sell it first. Old Naphtali down the road wants the field pretty badly and has already offered to buy it for thirty shekels. I can sell it to Naphtali for thirty, redeem it for eighteen, pocket the other twelve and still get it back at the next Jubilee. Win-win." But it's as if the priest could read his mind. He pulls out an old, worn-out scroll, unrolls it, and says: "Keep in mind that if you dedicate a field that you've sold, it can never be redeemed. When the field is released in the Jubilee, it will become holy, like a field devoted to the LORD; it will become the property of the priests (Leviticus 27:21)."
5. Zebulun looks a bit unhappy, so the priest pulls another scroll out of his robe. This one's brand new. "'How can I repay the LORD for all his goodness to me? . . .I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people' (Psalm 116), just written last year." He looks up at Zebulun and says quietly, "A vow's not a business move, Zeb. It's a sacrifice."

Conclusions

Let me conclude by drawing out the implications of the Old Testament property laws for the tenth commandment and for the lives of Christians today.

1. "You shall not covet" is not a true summary of the tenth commandment, because it implies that we're not allowed to covet anything at all. The verb "to covet" means "to desire." The Lord did not forbid us to have desires, but there are certain desires that he does forbid. A better summary would be, "You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbour." Such a summary is true to the wording and intent of this command, does justice to its place in the second table of the law, and properly links it to the property laws of the Old Testament. It remains true, as we rightly confess in Lord's Day 44, that this commandment specifically addresses our desires, which, if not kept in check, can lead to sins against the other commandments as well (e.g. murder, adultery, and theft). Only God can judge the desires of our hearts, and this commandment therefore shows the high standard of obedience to which God's law calls us. And the Lord knew very well that it is precisely when I peer over the fence and see what he has given to my neighbour that covetous thoughts awaken in my sinful heart. That's why he worded the commandment as he did, to stop sin where it starts.
2. In the Old Testament age, God gave his people the land of Canaan as an inheritance. He divided it fairly so that every family could share in his blessings. God wanted his people to be happy with their lot, and he forbade them to covet what he in his wisdom had apportioned to their neighbour. That principle still applies today. To be sure, the tribe of Levi did not receive an allotment. After the episode of the golden calf they were set apart for service to the Lord. As such they received towns and pasturelands for

their livestock (Num 35, Judg 21), but they did not have fields in which to grow crops of their own (Deut 18:1). They were at the mercy of God's people who had to care for them through their offerings, especially at harvest time. Repeatedly Moses warned the people not to neglect the Levites (Deut 12:19; 14:27). As people who are likewise called to special service in God's kingdom, pastors and their families can relate to those Levites, both when we enjoy the generosity of our congregations and when we perhaps feel as though we're at their mercy. Thankfully, many ministers today are well cared for by the congregations they serve. And even when that is not the case, we may trust that God has a special concern for those whom he calls to gospel ministry. When we get tired and frustrated at the sacrifices we have to make, or at the inconsiderate comments we occasionally have to listen to, we can take comfort from the knowledge that God hears them too. He is watching, and he will make it right. In Matthew 19, when Peter said to the Lord Jesus, "We have left everything to follow you. What then will there be for us?" then our Saviour answered, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life."

3. Under the old covenant the Israelites were not allowed to sell their ancestral inheritance permanently. They had to allow it to be redeemed, and they could receive it back in the year of Jubilee (Lev 25:23-28). But in the New Testament age we see Christians selling their homes and fields. In Acts 4 we read that no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. Their earthly inheritance was not important anymore. Notice too that they did not bring the money to the temple treasury but they laid it at the apostles' feet: a new age had come. Yet there is also continuity between old and new. We see from Leviticus 27 that already in the Old Testament the Lord hated the self-serving spirit that Ananias and Sapphira would display in Acts 5, pretending to give everything to the Lord, but really looking out for their own interests. So yes, the ceremonies of Leviticus 27 have ceased with the coming of Christ, but their truth and substance remain, and we may still use them "to order our life in all honesty, according to God's will and to his glory," as we confess in Article 25 of the Belgic Confession.
4. In Acts 4:32 we read that after Pentecost the believers "were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions were his own, but they shared everything they had." We should not conclude from this that Christians are forbidden to own property. It doesn't say that. But our property today is no longer an allotted inheritance from God in the same way that Israelite property was. Our divinely allotted inheritance is a heavenly one. It cannot be taken from us but is secure in Jesus Christ. That is more important to us than any earthly property, and so we learn to say with Paul in Philippians 3:8: "I consider everything as loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ."

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[1] The website of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs gives a figure of 120 lbs/acre, or 54.4 kg/acre (http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/busdev/bear2000/Budgets/Crops/Grains/sbarley_static.htm, consulted on 19 June 2015). Of course, that figure will vary depending on soil conditions and farming practices, so it should not be assumed to reflect actual ratios in ancient Israel.

C

North Korea's Christians Continue to Suffer

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The suffering North Korean Christians endure defies one's imagination. We are simply unable to fully comprehend what these believers go through. The All Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief in Britain published a report which gives some insight. It is entitled *Religion and Belief in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea* (DPRK) and available on the Internet. Although reliable information is scarce, the inquiry on which this report is based was able to hear credible testimonies from refugees, nongovernmental organizations, experts, and academics. It is especially the Christian religion that is targeted by the regime.

North Korean authorities use the *songbun* system which categorises citizens into three groups: core class, wavering class, and hostile class. Religious people are assigned to the lower rungs of the hostile class and when found out are banished to remote areas and prison camps. "One refugee described how he and his wife hid under a blanket to sing hymns, whereas another reported how their friend was taken to one of the most notorious prison camps in the DPRK after being seen saying grace over dinner." In addition, there is a system of three-generational guilt. For example, "In 2009, Ms Ryi Hyuk Ok was executed for distributing Bibles. Her husband, children and parents were sent to a political prison camp." In these camps, the oppression follows them. "When in a camp, religious followers and particularly Christians are subject to especially harsh treatment. One woman, arrested for her faith, was 'assigned to pull the cart used to remove excrement from the prison latrines. Several times the guards made her lick off excrement that had spilled over in order to humiliate and discipline her.'"

While the religious persecution goes on, North Korea authorities are imposing on the population their own religious ideology called *Juche*. It has no tolerance for any other belief and all citizens must adhere to it. According to *Juche* each citizen must "accept the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il-sung's revolutionary thought as your belief and take the Great Leader's instructions as your creed." In the words of one defector this means that "from birth to adulthood all worship Kim Il-Sung. There is no other faith – so we can't compare it to anything. It was all we knew. We worshipped because if we didn't bow down we would be killed." Another escapee put it this way: "In North Korea we call ourselves 'Kim Il Sung people.' The only ideology is Kimilsungism, and no other ideology is allowed." There are many reports and witness statements testifying to the deification of Kim II-Sung and Kim Jong-il. He is to be honoured like God. The civil religion which the authorities have established combines "a relationship with God [i.e., the Supreme Leader Kim II-Sung] and a sincere faith. . . with a religion that prescribes loyalty to the nation."

The North Korean authorities want total control over their people. If you are a Christian, you are seen as undermining the authority of the Supreme Leader for you do not acknowledge him as the supreme Lord of your life. Now, to be sure, the authorities have built a Protestant and a Roman Catholic church in the capital of Pyongyang. But this is for foreigners to see as evidence of "freedom of religion." There are no other such projects anywhere else in North Korea. Tellingly, when a foreign Christian tried to enter one of these churches in the capital on Easter Sunday without prior consultation, the doors were locked.

Still, the Lord is working in North Korea. In spite of horrific persecution and punishment dealt out to three generations of those caught, there are verified reports of house churches meeting in absolute secrecy in private homes. Due to the nature of the situation, no one knows how many Christians reside in that oppressed nation. Let us not forget these people in our prayers. C

Heather VanWoudenberg

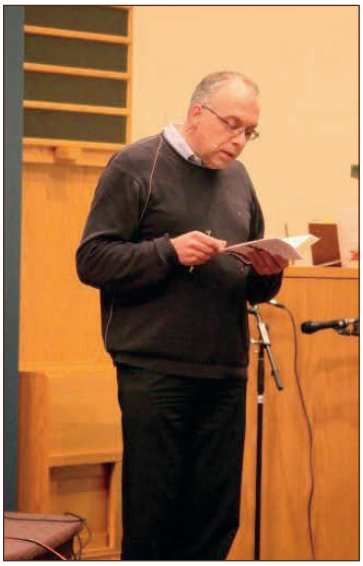
Rev. P.G. Feenstra Installed as Pastor in Guelph – Emmanuel

Installation

On the second Sunday morning of the first month, in the year of our Lord 2015, the congregation of Emmanuel Guelph Canadian Reformed Church gathered with an extra sparkle of thanksgiving. For it was on this day that the Lord was providing us with our own pastor and teacher once again.

Rev. Agema, from our neighbouring congregation, Living Word, led the installation service. Using 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16, he taught us that the congregation is the crown of the minister. In order to become Rev. Feenstra's crown, we have to receive and accept the Word that he brings and let it rule our lives. A minister is one who brings the Word and as such is a faithful voice of the Master. He shows that he is not out for himself, but is a servant who has a deep commitment to the mandate he is given. Rev. Agema also directed us to look to the future since receiving a minister now is part of a much larger picture. The goal is to glorify God. God receives the glory when at the last day Rev. Feenstra's crown, Emmanuel, is there with Christ.

Feenstra family



Gerrit Bos

Immediately following the service, the consistory opened a congregational meeting. It was here that Rev. Feenstra and his wife were officially welcomed by the chairman on behalf of the congregation. The chairman expressed much thankfulness to God for his guidance in bringing us all to this moment. Rev. Feenstra signed the subscription form and delegates from churches in classis Northern Ontario were invited to speak. Letters of thanksgiving and congratulations were read as well. It was noteworthy that since beginning his ministry in Guelph in 1986, Rev. Feenstra has never left this classis.

In his inaugural sermon, Rev. Feenstra spoke of the power of the gospel (Romans 1:16). He proved from Scripture that because the gospel is Christ's effort, it has power to deliver from hell, to change hearts and to transform lives. He exhorted us to embrace the gospel by faith, to know it so well that it enters into all the corners of our hearts and to never stop ceasing to talk about it. He encouraged us to put all our hope in it and to trust the Author of it to hold us in his arms as we strive to have as goal, the glorification of God.

Welcome evening

A few weeks later, we were able to gather again, this time on a Friday evening to welcome Rev. and Mrs. Feenstra

Mens Society

Young Peoples

in a less formal and more relaxed way. Again, thankfulness to the Lord, was evident and spoken of since God has given us a shepherd after a two year vacancy. Mr. Gerrit Bos opened and chaired the evening. Between presentations, he amused us with Guelph inspired jokes and enlightened us with *Did you know?* facts about Guelph. The Kingdom Seekers and Cadets opened the entertainment with a letter of welcome that was accompanied by gifts that were alluded to in the letter. The women's Societies were next, presenting in Jeopardy style, some of the changes that Guelph has seen in the past twenty-three years. The men's societies challenged our new pastor and his wife to match the cities of origin with various men of our congregation. The Young Adults Bible Study presented a skit of the Pun-American Games which was a play on words in honour of our pastor's own gift to play with and present words. There were selections of singing by the very young , less young, older and even up to some of our senior members. The youth group tried to see whether Rev. and Mrs. Feenstra were as good at riddles as they were at puns. They weren't. Thankfully they are good at puzzles. They placed the last pieces of a puzzle that had been unfolding throughout the evening. It was a visual metaphor representing our theme of the evening, namely, the body with many parts is one, just as a puzzle with many pieces is one. Two books gifted to the Feenstras closed the congregation's part of the evening.

Rev. Feenstra was the final speaker of the night. Using his talent with words and humour, he thanked the congregation for the welcome experienced that night and also in preparation for his coming. The evening then concluded with a prayer of thankfulness and further time of fellowship and refreshment. We could reflect with much joy how the Lord continues to bless the congregation of Emmanuel. C

Response to Dr. J. Visscher Regarding the BC 14 Proposal

I would like to thank Dr. James Visscher for his response to the proposal to make a change to article 14 of the Belgic Confession ("Amending the Confession?" in *Clarion* 64.11). This provides an opportunity to address both his concerns and similar ones that have recently been expressed by others. Since most of his concerns are actually dealt with in the proposal itself and its supporting appendices, I will try to be succinct.

There is first an apparent ethical issue: names are named without any apparent due process. In response, the proposal is not about these individuals as such – indeed, they are only mentioned in the first ground of ten to prove that a certain problematic way of thinking exists in our churches. The individuals mentioned have publically written myriads of words. They are outspoken representatives of a way of thinking that either holds theistic evolution as credible, or at least wants to leave room for theistic evolution in our churches. If one pays attention to social media, one soon hears a fair number of these voices in our churches. Moreover, those involved with drafting and adopting this proposal have in fact at various times and places interacted with these brothers. To suggest that anyone has been condemned "rashly and unheard" is hardly, if at all, credible.

Dr. Visscher further notes that one of those mentioned in the proposal has publically claimed that he is not a "theistic evolutionist." Why did he then allow his name to be included and remain on an online list of evangelical Christians who believe that evolution is true?[1] Readers should further remember that, to his dying day, Jacob Arminius claimed to be faithful to the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism. More to the point, in the 1990s in the CRC, Dr. Howard Van Till also claimed that he was not a theistic evolutionist.[2]

Finally under the heading of ethical concerns, Dr. Visscher mentions a case brought before a Regional Synod East. This discipline matter was dealt with in closed session and I fail to see how it can be discussed publically without the consent of all parties involved. What if one of the parties plans to appeal to general synod? Moreover, if we are going to publically comment on decisions made in closed session by a regional synod, why not go all the way and actually share with readers the full text of the decision? As it stands, readers are only hearing one side of the story (see Proverbs 18:13, 17).

Dr. Visscher's next set of concerns are about whether doctrinal issues should be addressed by a change to the Confession. He disagrees with the proposal's approach. In response, I would ask Dr. Visscher how serious and widespread a theological error would have to be before the church federation rises to some kind of action and then, what action should she take? Dr. Visscher is long on critique and short on a constructive alternative. Moreover, in ground 2, the proposal proves that the error being addressed is not only unbiblical, but also an attack on the very gospel itself. As is documented in Appendix 3, the Reformed churches have in the past responded to these types of grave challenges with confessional additions (the Canons of Dort) or amendments (Belgic Confession, Art. 22). There are precedents. Finally, Dr. Visscher anecdotally mentions some of his professors who warned against "tampering" with the confessions. Again, I would direct readers to Appendix 3 for published quotes to the contrary from some of our theological forefathers, including Dr. J. Faber and Dr. K. Schilder. These men committed themselves in writing to the very opposite view that Dr. Visscher mentions. Why doesn't he interact with this material?

Then there is "the textual issue." Dr. Visscher feels that the existing confessions address the problem of theistic evolution quite adequately. This is *precisely* the point at issue. Reformed Academic asserts, and I quote, "Theistic evolution is not outside the bounds of the Three Forms of Unity."[3] Dr. Visscher and others say that it is; Reformed Academic claims that it isn't and they have others who agree with them. Who is right? This is the question this proposal has been drafted to answer as it (hopefully) is discussed at General Synod 2016.

The last issue Dr. Visscher raises is about our sister-church relationships, especially those with whom we share the Belgic Confession. It should first be noted that the Canadian Reformed churches already have their own unique edition of the Confession – again, readers should refer to Appendix 3 for the evidence. The Belgic Confession we have in our *Book of Praise* is not the Belgic Confession as originally written by Guido de Brès in 1561, nor is it the exact Confession of, say, the RCUS or URC. This has never been an issue. Moreover, at Classis Ontario West of March 11, 2015 there were fraternal delegates from the OPC, URC, and RCUS present as this proposal was discussed. They contributed to the discussion and all encouraged us to proceed in this direction. Contrary to the belief of Dr. Visscher (and others who share his opinion), we should expect that our faithful sister churches would be more concerned about our tolerating theistic evolution than about us making a change to the Belgic Confession to address theistic evolution. They would be far more concerned about us taking *no* action than taking *this* action. Finally, the proposal does leave the door open for Synod to decide that this is a substantial change (requiring discussion with sister churches) rather than a clarification (see Process, point 5).

Reactions like that of my colleague give the impression of being conservative. However, this type of reaction will end up sacrificing biblical orthodoxy on the altar of maintaining a human document as an immutable historical artifact. This is a "conservatism" that does not serve the ongoing defence and maintenance of biblical truth. Our confessions need to be living documents, expressing the biblical faith of the church and also, where necessary, responding to the most egregious errors of our day.

In conclusion, I urge readers to study the proposal for themselves. Also, please study carefully the three appendices – these contain important supporting material. All of this is available online at creationwithoutcompromise.com.

Wes Bredenhof

Response

Dear Brother and Colleague,

Thank you for your response to my recent editorial. In reply I would like to make the following points:

a. In spite of your explanation I still have my ethical reservations. If, as you write, "the proposal is not about these individuals as such" why mention them by name? Furthermore, knowing that a man's reputation is a most precious thing, why did Providence Church Council not go the extra mile and contact them before publicly naming them? Furthermore, why sow the idea that their consistories may have been negligent in not dealing with them?

b. That one of the brothers named is part of an online list in which some participants support evolution may be true, but that alone is not sufficient to condemn. I too am a member of a few online lists but that in no way means that I support and endorse what everyone on those lists writes or promotes.

c. Colleague Bredenhof also wonders about "how serious and widespread a theological error would have to be before the federations rises to some kind of action. . . ?" While I share his concern about the dangers associated with theistic evolution, I am not convinced that the problem in our circles is as great as he makes it out to be. I am not aware of any professor, minister, missionary, elder, or deacon in the Canadian Reformed churches teaching and defending such a view. I am aware of a certain website that has in the past been accused of such, but it has been dormant now for well over year.

d. Colleague Bredenhof also believes that history supplies ample evidence Reformed churches and theologians have changed the confessions in the past. He also points me to several appendices. As I study them, however, and as I look at what Providence is proposing, I see a lot more than just the linguistic and theological revisions connected to Synod 1983. What

his Council proposes to add and what we changed as churches in the past are two different things.

e. As to whether or not my view on this matter of confessional revision is the opposite of that of Dr. J. Faber (as well as K. Schilder), I would dispute that. Dr. J. Faber was my teacher all through seminary and even afterwards. Together we translated and edited many sermons and articles. Together we discussed precisely these kinds of issues. While he was not afraid to recommend certain changes to the Three Forms of Unity, he always considered these to be of a minor nature. He was far too cautious a theologian to suggest, embrace, or advocate anything that would result in a major addition. For him the historic character of the confessions was always a paramount consideration. He did not see the need for major changes to any of the confessions and before such a step could even be considered in the least it would need to be the result of a broad consensus among Reformed churches around the world. His 1969 inaugural lecture on "The Catholicity of the Belgic Confession" revealed much about his respect for and careful handling of the confessions.

f. While I appreciate the need for us to address doctrinal and ethical issues as they arise, I seriously doubt that altering our confessions in this fashion is an appropriate way to do this. To what degree can the church alter the Belgic Confession substantially and continuously as you propose and still claim that it is the Belgic Confession authored by Guido de Bres in 1561?

James Visscher

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[1] See https://patrickfranklin.wordpress.com/2014/05/21/devout-christians-who-affirm-evolution/

[2] See https://yinkahdinay.wordpress.com/2012/12/25/howard-van-tills-lightbulb-moment/

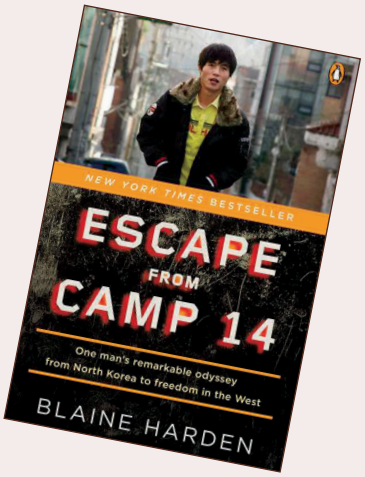
[3] See http://reformedacademic.blogspot.ca/2010/04/response-to-ten-reasons-10.html

C

From Inside North Korea

For an incredible account of life in a North Korean camp, read Blaine Harden, *Escape from Camp 14* (2012). The one who managed to flee to China and eventually the United States is not a Christian but the perspective he provides to conditions in North Korea is unforgettable. It helps to contextualize what believers go through in that country.

cvd



Dear Rev. Stam,

I wanted to thank you for explaining in your article on Genesis 1 and 2, how the chapters complement, rather than oppose each other. Some of these insights may seem like old hat to you, but for a layman like myself, it helped a couple more gears click into place. I found myself reading the texts with satisfaction (how I used to read them), rather than trying to do literary gymnastics in my head. The mind gets stretched enough when you consider the magnitude of what's being presented, never mind the fact that we're even privy to the account of how everything began. I'm afraid if I had to bend it any more I might pull something. I also appreciate your tone toward Rev. Tim Keller. I suspect he would mimic the same courtesy.

James

Dear Editor,

In the article about "The Beloved Matthew Henry on Innocence and Grace" (Vol 64, No 12), the Prof. Dr. Van Raalte gives a very clear explanation of how Matthew Henry interpreted texts in Genesis that had him conclude that there are two covenants, not one. At first the validity of Henry's reasoning appeared to be questioned, but then Prof. Van Raalte concluded with the advice to keep Matthew Henry's perspective in mind to "guide us in every Bible study." I was somewhat taken aback, for is there not just one covenant between God and man or in other words, is the pre-fall covenant not the same covenant as the post-fall one? That there is a difference between "pre-fall" and "post-fall" is obvious. However, to use man-made qualifiers of God's covenant and so construct a concept of two covenants seems unwarranted.

Presbyterians and other academics may construct such theories, but what is their scriptural basis and how does it strengthen faith? Was man really capable of ending God's covenant and so "force" God to come up with a second covenant? Also, does qualifying the pre-fall covenant as one of "innocence" (or later of works) not call for a conclusion that God in his providential care had failed with the first covenant? Apparently the concept of two covenants also called for further identifying "two ways to the tree of life." One way was closed but another opened to a new way into the gospel by the promise in Christ. Also two kinds of grace rise up for "special grace" before the fall is mentioned, which shows to be "non-saving grace" for that is only in Christ.

It seems that out of necessity, one academic construct led to another. But is that a scriptural method and does it edify faith? Were Adam and Eve not instructed that obedience gives life and disobedience means death as signified by those trees? Did Dr. Van Raalte not argue in the previous issue that Adam and Eve were not just "warned" but "threatened"? Were they in this way not made aware of evil and death? Where is the "innocence" in all that? Please tell me that my reading of the article was all cockeyed.

Was not God's eternal covenant fellowship of love and peace under attack by Satan? And did not God stop him in his tracks by proclaiming his Word (of creation and re-creation) that turned the attempted enmity sown between God and man into enmity between Satan and the woman, between his offspring and hers (who will crush his head, Gen 3:15)? Is it not one covenant, that shows another facet in God's progressing revelation (cf. Eph 4:4-6)? Other facets of the one covenant were revealed later with Noah, Abraham, and Moses. I always believed that this was the Reformed view of the one covenant between God and Man. Academic constructs can be helpful and interesting, but there is a difference between using concepts dogmatically or in a biblical way, especially when these terms are not even used in Scripture.

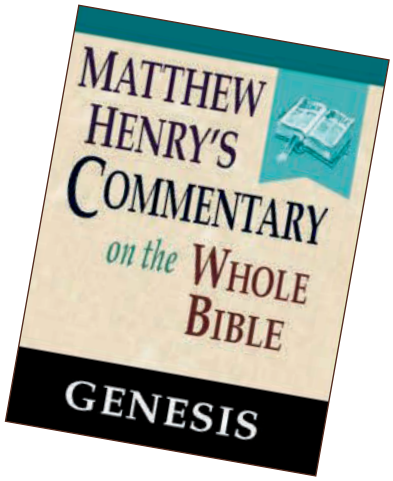
Dennis Teitsma

Response

I thank my brother for his reaction because the topic is important. Allow me first to note an irony: it wasn't my idea to study Matthew Henry, nor do I consult his commentaries frequently; rather, an interlocutor in *Clarion* suggested him. Note also that I didn't end by saying that we had to keep Henry's perspective in mind for every Bible study, but that praising God for his grace in Jesus Christ should guide us in every Bible study.

We all agree that there are differences pre- and post-fall, but are the differences sufficient to speak of a different covenant? I, with the majority of Reformed theologians, prefer to speak of two different covenants and I especially love the term "covenant of grace" for the second covenant, as found in the Canons of Dort 1.17 and our liturgical forms. I have recently published in *Clarion* some exegetical considerations regarding Genesis 2:17 and have added aspects of Henry's exegesis of Genesis 2:16-17, 3:23-4, and 4:6. Br. Teitsma dismisses Henry's and my conclusions as "academic constructs" but he doesn't offer an alternative exegesis of the relevant Scripture texts. Instead, he argues about implications, such as his concern that Henry's views make man himself capable of ending the covenant or imply that God must have failed in his providence. But these implications don't follow, for the Lord himself first set the terms of the covenant and then acted accordingly when man disobeyed. God himself barred access to the tree of life. For a comparison, consult Hebrews 8:7-8 where the occasion for ending the old covenant with Israel is indeed the fault of God's people, yet he is not failing in his providence nor are they unilaterally ending the covenant. *He* ends it because of *their* sin (note: this is not about the first and second covenant, but is about the old and new *within* the covenant of grace).

I realize that men like S.G. de Graaf, C. van der Waal, J. Murray, and K. Stam have expressed significant concern about the term "works" in "covenant of works." I share much of their concern. But both Murray and de Graaf, in spite of these concerns, clearly affirmed a radical distinction between the Adamic administration (Murray) or covenant of favour (de Graaf) and the covenant of grace. Neither they nor such great theologians as Geerhardus Vos and Klaas Schilder reduced these two covenants to one. Sybrand Strauss's dissertation specifies that Schilder distinguished the covenant of works from the covenant of grace (Strauss, *Alles of Niks* [1986], pp. 125-6). We CanRC folk may not have frequently heard about these distinctions, but they were very common and normal in our history, even if they're not exactly required by our confessions of faith (see, e.g., the opening pages of de Graaf, *De Rechten des Verbonds: Leerboek voor de Catechisatiën*).



I must underline that the grounds Reformed theologians used for speaking of a distinct covenant before the fall were primarily exegetical, and wide-ranging. Richard Muller has written that "the doctrine was a conclusion drawn from a large complex of texts, among them, Genesis 1:26-27; Leviticus 18:4-5; Matthew 19:16-17; 22:37-39; Romans 1:17; 2:14-15; 5:12-21; 7:10; 8:3-4; 10:5; Galatians 3:11-12; 4:4-5, with Hosea 6:7 and Job 31:33 offered only as collateral arguments" (Muller, "Covenant of Works," in *CTJ* 29:1 [April 1994], p. 90).

Finally, Brother Teitsma closes with a contrast between using terms in a dogmatic versus biblical way, relating the former pejoratively to "academic constructs." Let's not fall for this dilemma. The question is whether our doctrinal conclusions are rooted in Scripture. How do we ensure this? May our dogmatic conclusions only quote Scripture? Or may we also legitimately use words like Trinity, substance, person, and sacrament? May we reason about "infant baptism" and Christ "dying for the elect"? Of course! But note well that every one of those terms and ideas is the result of comparing Scripture with Scripture, reasoning by implication, and assigning terms that are not found in Scripture in so many words.

This topic is worthy of far more consideration than I have space for here. I thank Br. Teitsma for his letter and urge all interested readers to a warm appreciation for the rich history of Reformed exegesis and theology. C

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Q When believers find each other outside the area of the established church of Jesus Christ, they may wish to assemble and establish themselves as a legitimate body of Jesus Christ. Once instituted, this church seeks out other true churches to assist and watch each other in their self-governing task of maintaining the pure preaching of the gospel, the pure administration of the sacraments and the proper exercise of discipline as one body, one church under one Head, Jesus Christ.

In North America the term "to institute" a church appears to have been replaced by the term to "plant" by various Reformed or Presbyterian churches. (Was it to avoid bureaucratic notions?). Nevertheless, it seems that in our circles both terms are used. The term "plant," however, is among us not used as a synonym of "institute." It appears to rather suggest that people make a decision to "plant a church" before finding faith and based on such considerations as locality, job opportunities, population growth, industrial varieties, educational possibilities, etc. When such church "planting projects" are suggested, I shiver. After all, do we still believe that it is Christ who by his Spirit and Word gathers those chosen by the Father? As his fellow workers we are to proclaim the gospel in word and deed. Is our walk of life holy and blameless, governed by one Spirit with Christ and in that way attracting others? Or do we as individuals choose projects we like and think it to be pleasing to God and beneficial to the growth of his Kingdom? Are "outreach projects" synonymous to church plants or are churches "planted" after believers assemble in unity of faith? In either case, is the term "plant" not too ambiguous to be in our dictionary?

A It seems best to start this reply by addressing the terminology and its semantics. The terminology of "church planting" is fully scriptural, seeing that the Apostle Paul also characterizes the work in which he was engaged as "planting a seed," as "planting and watering," in which he was involved with his fellow workers (1 Cor 3:5-10). That's how he denotes the work of preaching and teaching in Corinth (Acts 18:4-11). The people are God's field and the congregation God's building. Paul did the founding work (Eph 2:20-22) while others do the work of church building (1 Cor 3:11f.), yet he acknowledges that it is God who gives the growth! Throughout the book of Acts, as the apostles went on preaching Christ, baptizing believers and their households, they were engaged in God's work of planting churches, with appointed elders to oversee the new disciples (Acts 14:21-23). Then we see the church at Antioch, by the leading of the Holy Spirit and through prayer, take on the task and responsibility of sending out Paul and Barnabas to spread the gospel and plant churches.

This model of a congregation taking on the task of establishing a church elsewhere has been taken over throughout church history in the work of foreign mission (sending out missionaries abroad) and through lo-

cal outreach and church planting. In my own experience as minister in Orangeville and Toronto I have had the privilege of being involved in such a work in Grey/Bruce County (starting out with a core group in Thornbury, a house congregation in Chatsworth, and the establishing of an autonomous congregation in Owen Sound), as well as in Quinte County with the Trenton group (which did not come to fruition but after a number of years folded – a possibility that's realistic as well and must be considered). Today, throughout North America, we see the Lord opening doors of opportunity at particular times and places, with people forming such a core group under the supervision of a Consistory, organizing a Bible Study group, developing into a house congregation worshipping together, and under God's blessing of growth and maturity come to the point of establishing (instituting) a congregation that's viable, with a pool of potential office bearers.

This entire process, from the initiative of believers in a certain locale (e.g. who otherwise may have to travel far to the nearest church) to the establishing of a faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ in that place, is called "church planting." Perhaps in the past the last phase in that process was called "instituting a church" while now the expression is used of "establishing an organized church." The term "church planting," then, is a comprehensive term for the entire process. Either way, however, the model, approach, and process is totally based on the Scriptures, executed and implemented under the supervision of a Consistory, and resulting in an autonomous church that's developed within the midst of a federation of churches!

The federation of United Reformed Churches in North America, for instance, has published a beautiful and scriptural manual that follows this model closely: *How to Plant a Reformed Church*. They made use of a similar manual published by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, which contains many helpful and biblical instructions to expedite this process in a scriptural way. Anyone who is engaged in this work or is seeking to incite a local consistory to initiate such a work will do well to use these manuals in their preparations! Then the questioner and anyone else can see that, clearly, this process is not one of personal choice and ambition "to plant a church" but of *churches* planting *churches*, especially there where there is no sound Reformed witness or Reformed church presence! This, too, is in humble submission to the Great Commission of Matthew 28. Then, of course, such church planting can only be accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit and the means he has chosen to bless, namely the Word. That's how Christ continues to perform his work of gathering, preserving, and defending his church today still! In accordance with the Word of the Spirit, church planting must be done in an orderly and methodical way (1 Cor 14:33, 40). C

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

denhollanderw@gmail.com

23 Kinsman Drive, Binbrook, ON L0R 1C0

Book Review Correction

The Quest for the Historical Adam

This excellent book by William VanDoodewaard was recently reviewed in the July 3 issue of Clarion. In the review I noted that the book had no index. I did not realize at the time that I had a pre-release edition of the book. Apparently the final edition as it is now for sale is indexed.

Cornelis Van Dam

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Pastor of the Providence Canadian Reformed Church, Hamilton, Ontario
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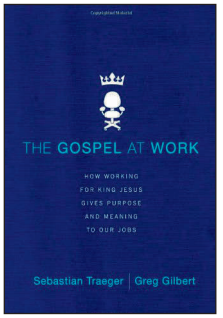
The Gospel at Work: How Working for King Jesus Gives Purpose and Meaning to Our Jobs, Sebastian Traeger and Greg Gilbert. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013

Additional Information: Paperback, 176 pages, $21.00



Reformed Christians used to speak often about the importance of a Christian work ethic. How does having Christ as your Saviour and Lord affect how you live from Monday to Friday in the workplace? This is a worthwhile question and, unfortunately, there are not a lot of resources available to help answer it. Therefore, I'm pleased to commend highly this little book as a readable, practical, yet biblically faithful treatment of the Christian view of work. It would be well-suited not only for our young people getting in the work force, but also for those who've been at the daily grind for many years already.

The two authors are uniquely qualified to address this subject. Sebastian Traeger is an experienced entrepreneur and Baptist elder, while Greg Gilbert is a Baptist pastor in Louisville, Kentucky. While the authors are ("Calvinistic") Baptists, I didn't detect anything in this book that was unacceptable or concerning to a Reformed reader. In fact, I would argue that there's only benefit to be gained here.

This book gets us to view our work through the lens of the gospel. How does the good news of Jesus Christ transform the way we view our daily work? From there, the authors deal with the two greatest challenges with regard to work: making it into an idol or being idle. The Scriptures are the infallible guide for addressing these hurdles. *The Gospel at Work* then tackles other practical questions: How should I choose a job? How do I balance work, church, and family? How do I handle difficult bosses and coworkers? What does it mean to be a Christian boss? How can I share the gospel at work? The answers to these questions are laid out clearly and systematically. In fact, the book is so easy to follow that I've taken it and turned it into an outline for teaching future pre-confession students on this subject.

Let me give you a taste of how the authors write. In this brief excerpt, they're providing a set of diagnostic points for readers to assess themselves as to whether idleness is their challenge in the workplace. This is the first of those diagnostic points:

> **Your work is merely a means to an end, a place to serve your own needs.** Sometimes this kind of thinking can be pretty blatant and obvious. I work, some people say, so I can play. I'm in it for the money and the things money can buy. Or it can take on a veneer of spirituality. "I work," you might say, "so I can be free to serve my church, and so I can give money to my church." Either way, it's pretty clear that a person who thinks like this doesn't care much about their job at all. They only care about the other things their job allows them to do.
>
> What's wrong with this line of thinking? It ignores the fact that God has purposes for us *in our work itself.* Our jobs are more than just a means to an end – whether that end is selfish enjoyment or service in the church. Our work is more than just something we "slog through." However menial, however boring, however unmatched to our interests, our jobs are one of the key ways in which God matures us as Christians and brings glory to himself. God has a purpose for your work. (*The Gospel at Work,* 37)

This is exactly right. Work is not evil. Work is not part of the fall into sin. We were created to work. Work is inherently good and worthwhile and God *does* have his purposes in that. Therefore, Christians need to have a positive attitude about work.

The Gospel at Work is not difficult reading. The authors use simple, everyday language and the book is supplied at points with helpful visual illustrations. Every chapter concludes with questions "For Further Reflection" and these could be used in a group study setting. I can't help but think that if every Christian worker would read this book and take it to heart, not only would they be more content in their daily work, but it would also strengthen their witness to a world that's all messed up when it comes to work. C

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As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
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What then, shall we say in response to this?
If God is for us, who can be against us? Romans 8:31

With great joy and thankfulness to our Heavenly Father,
we celebrate the 40th Wedding Anniversary of our
parents and grandparents

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Grace Hulleman

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WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

40th Wedding Anniversary

1975 ~ July 18 ~ 2015

One thing have I asked of the LORD, that I will seek after:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.
Psalm 27:4

RICK and NORA VANOENE (Heetebrij)

With thankfulness we rejoice with our loving parents for the
many blessings they have been given by our Gracious Father
throughout the years.

With love from your children and grandchildren:

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40th Wedding Anniversary

1975 ~ August 15 ~ 2015

The LORD has done great things for us; we are glad. Psalm 126:3

With great thankfulness for God's faithfulness in their lives, we
hope to celebrate the 40th Wedding Anniversary of our parents
and grandparents. God has richly blessed us with them.

HENRY and MARGARET VAN IPEREN (née Visser)

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WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

30th Wedding Anniversary

1985 ~ August 2 ~ 2015

But those who wait on the LORD
shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not be faint.
Isaiah 40:31

With praise and thankfulness to our Heavenly Father for his great love and mercy shown to us, we

JOHN and THERESA VAN DOODEWAARD (nee Feenstra)

joyfully announce our 30th Wedding Anniversary.

We continue trusting the Lord to surround us with his love and care, praying for his strength and guidance.

2469 Shurie Road, Smithville, Ontario L0R 2A0 Canada
Email: jvandoodewaard@cogeco.ca

OBITUARIES

November 16, 1919 – June 7, 2015

Psalm 103:15-18

The Lord in his infinite wisdom
took unto Himself into his eternal glory,
our dearly beloved Mother,
Grandmother, Great-grandmother
and Great-great-grandmother

GEERTJE GELDERMAN (Buit)

at the age of 95.

Our Mother's greatest love and concern was for Christ and his church. Her knowledge of the Scriptures is our gain.

We pray that God will grant to us as family, wisdom and strength to keep his covenant and to stand firm in the faith as Mom did.

Chilliwack, BC:	Henry and Hilda Gelderman
	(Henny†) Nick and Sieta Lieuwen
Coaldale, AB:	Betty and Sid Oostenbrug
	Wilma and Dirk DeVries
Langley, BC:	Diny and John deHaas
Falkland, BC:	Chris and Jerry deJong
Chilliwack, BC:	Trudy and Gord Huebert
Langley, BC:	Liz and Al Hendricks
Coaldale, AB:	Dave and Irene Gelderman

And many grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren.

THANK YOU!

RE: BILL GORTEMAKER

Throughout his illness, Bill himself, and we as family also after his passing, have been richly blessed, comforted, and encouraged by the many expressions of love and care from our brothers and sisters in the Lord locally, across the country, and abroad, and for that we thank you! Your visits, calls, cards, emails, tributes, flowers, and food provisions were all greatly appreciated. Thank you, too, for the many wonderful Scripture passages you shared and for your prayers. Also through them God gave Bill, and us as family, peace with His plan and strength for each new day. To Him, above all, our thanks and praise!

~ Grietje Gortemaker and family

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CCRS is a K-12 school with an approximate student population of 240 that serves the churches of Barrhead and Neerlandia. We are a rural community about 1.5 hours northwest of the city of Edmonton, AB.
We offer a supportive school community and a very competitive wage and benefit package. Covenant also offers shorter work weeks with many four day weeks throughout the school year. We are looking for enthusiastic teachers who are committed to the Reformed faith and the cause of Reformed Christian education. We especially encourage those teachers with administration experience or aspirations to take on administrative roles to apply or inquire, as these position(s) will likely be coming available in the near future. Also, university students in their final year are encouraged to inquire about positions starting in 2016/2017.

Additional information can be obtained by contacting the principal:
Mr. James Meinen
780-674-4774 (work), 780-674-3145 (home)
principal@covenantschool.ca

Applications can be sent to:
Gwen Mast, Secretary of the Board
Box 26, Neerlandia, AB TOG 1RO / tngmast@xplornet.com

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The Canadian Reformed School Society of Edmonton, operating **Parkland Immanuel Christian School,** invites applications for the 2016-2017 school year for the position of

PRINCIPAL

Parkland Immanuel Christian School operates a growing, reformed, K-12 school with 325 students, and a staff of 30 teachers and educational assistants. The school is blessed to have a supportive school community, competitive wages, and a collaborative and professional environment that encourages and supports excellence in teaching.

Applicants must be a professed member in good standing of a Canadian Reformed, United Reformed, or sister church, and must have the necessary post-secondary qualifications to teach in Alberta. They will have the necessary skills and desire to serve the school community with responsible leadership, educational expertise, and superior communication skills.

The closing date for applications is
Monday, November 30th, 2015.

For further information, please contact the Board President,
Mr. Rob Appleyard
Home Phone: 780-633-5807, Cell Phone: 780-239-7622
Email: president@parklandimmanuel.ca

Applications should be emailed to the address above, or directed in writing to the school:
Mr. Rob Appleyard, Chair of Principal Search Committee
c/o Parkland Immanuel Christian School
21304 35 Avenue, NW, Edmonton, AB T6M 2P6

The board for the **Tyndale Christian School Society** of Calgary invites applications for the following positions

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If you would like further information about the opportunities, school operations or living in the beautiful Calgary area, please contact the board chairman:
Mr. Joe Schouten
Home: 403-568-2822, schoutenjoe@gmail.com
Or the principal: **Mr. Ed Hoogerdyk**
Home: 403-285-4680, ed.hoogerdyk@gmail.com

Applications can be sent to:
Lyndon Kok, Secretary of the Board
138 Mount Douglas Point SE, Calgary, AB T2Z 3J8
lyndonkok@gmail.com

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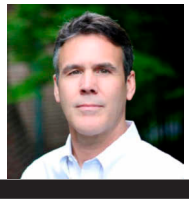

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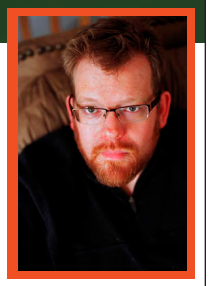

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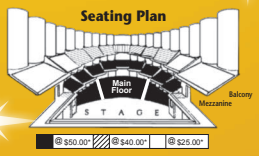

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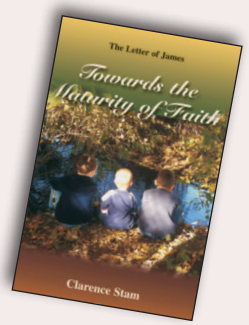
Towards the Maturity of Faith



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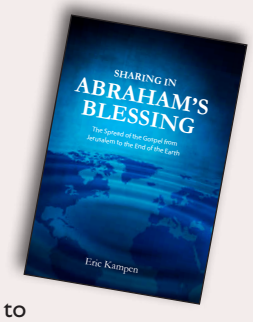

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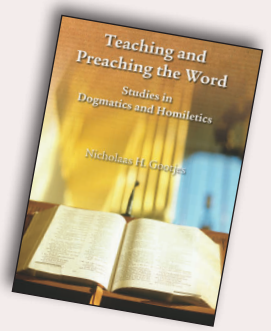

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