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Clarion

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ARE MISSIONARIES TO HELP THE POOR?

Word and Deed

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Does evangelism include both spreading the gospel (verbally) and supporting the poor (with the deed)?

Do not fear. This article is not going to be a promotional for Word and Deed North America although I do believe that this organization (just like CRWRF) deserves our wholehearted support. Rather, it is my intention to discuss the relationship between Word and deed in mission and evangelism. This is an old and difficult question that has become more relevant again with the emergence of the so-called *missional movement*.

The question is this: If we send out a missionary to a foreign country, should we give him the mandate to preach the gospel *and* help the poor and needy? Should he be expected to plant churches and set up welfare organizations? Or should he stay away from social action and consider the preaching of the gospel to be his main priority?

Similar questions come up when we reflect on evangelism and church planting here at home. Does evangelism include both spreading the gospel (verbally) and supporting the poor (with the deed)? Should our evangelism committees be expected to create opportunities for verbal witness *and* get involved in "doing justice," as it is often called? Or should they just focus on opportunities to preach Christ to those who do not know him?

Let me warn the reader. By stating the question in this way I may have already set you on the wrong foot. Many commentators today would criticize me for posing a kind of dualism between verbal witness and social action. In their mind there is no dilemma here. It does not matter whether you start on the *word* side or on the *deed* side, as long as you do something. This attitude is reflected in the popular slogan: "Preach the gospel at all times. Use words if necessary."

Reformed view

The classic Reformed view of mission and evangelism is rooted in the doctrine of election, as summarized in the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort. We believe that mankind has fallen into sin and is subject to the wrath of God. However, God has manifested his great mercy by rescuing and saving from eternal death those whom he has elected in Jesus Christ (BC, Art. 16). His wrath remains on those who do not believe the gospel (CoD I, 4).

In order that people may be brought to faith, God mercifully sends heralds of the gospel to whom he will and when he wills (CoD I, 3). The Lord Jesus sent out his apostles to preach the gospel to all nations. After the apostles, the work was continued by evangelists, missionaries, and others.

In line with these principles the seventeenth century Reformed theologian Gisbertus Voetius identified three goals for mission work: (1) the conversion of unbelievers, (2) the planting of the church, (3) the glorification of God's name. If we reflect on these goals a missionary mandate emerges that is limited in scope. A missionary is not supposed to be all over the place and be involved in all kinds of activities even though such activities may be good and laudable. He has a specific mandate: he is called to preach and teach the gospel in order that – under the blessing of the Lord – people will repent from their sinful way of life and believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

Would it be wrong for a missionary also to be involved in socio-political action? This is a difficult question. Was it wrong for someone like William Carey to speak out against the horrible custom of widow burning in India? Of course not. There are times that a missionary cannot ignore poverty, injustice, and social evils. However, it is important that he should remember his mandate and his main goals. For this reason, in classic Reformed missiology a distinction is made between primary and secondary tasks in mission work. The core business of mission work is the preaching and teaching of the gospel. Activities that support this, such as hospitals, schools, programs to alleviate poverty, etc., are called *auxiliary* ministries.

In sum, the classic Reformed view of mission work distinguishes between Word and deed, with the verbal proclamation of the Word as *primary* task and the deed being seen as *auxiliary* or supporting.

Shifts in missiology

During the last one hundred years significant shifts have taken place in missiological thinking. The understanding of mission work has been transformed, not just in liberal-ecumenical circles (e.g., the World Council of Churches) but more recently also in evangelical circles (e.g., the Lausanne movement). While this process is complex and multi-faceted, I will highlight three key aspects to show that much modern missiology diverges from the classic Reformed approach.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Our issue begins with a guest editorial from Dr. Arjan de Visser. He writes about the term "Word and deed" – in mission and evangelism, what is the role of spreading the gospel and providing practical assistance to those in need?

We also have an article originally featured on thegospelcoation.org entitled, "The Sunday Worship Killer." The blog post was written by Rev. Jason Helopoulos, of the University Reformed Church in East Lansing, Michigan.

Dr. Cornelis Van Dam writes about issues surrounding sex education in his column "Clippings on Politics and Religion." Our pages also contains the Treasures New and Old, Education Matters, and Ray of Sunshine columns. There is a letter to the editor, a book review, and two questions for Rev. William den Hollander in "You Asked."

Laura Veenendaal

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To begin with, the concept of election is denied or ignored. Rather than seeing God as a sovereign God who is gathering his elect from the nations, God is believed to be "a missionary God," a God who is sending himself into the world to establish his kingdom. Second, the idea of a Last Judgment is denied or ignored as well. Rather than accepting the biblical prophecy that Jesus Christ will return to judge the living and the dead, the assumption is that God is improving the world, helping the poor, fighting injustice, and protecting the environment. Third, the emphasis is no longer on the church-gathering work of Jesus Christ (that view is considered to be too *ecclesio-centric*). Rather, the Lord is believed to be at work among the poor and the suffering in the downtown areas of our cities.

This has important consequences for the goals of mission work. The first two goals of Voetius (conversion of unbelievers and planting of the church) have been replaced by two new goals: doing good to all people and establishing God's kingdom in the world. The focus is no longer on the church as the bride of Christ. The focus is on the world as the arena of God's work.

It is instructive to analyse the developments in the Lausanne movement in this regard. When John Stott and Billy Graham initiated the original Lausanne declaration in 1974 it was stated that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both important. At the same time, it was emphasized that evangelism is *primary*.[1] This position has changed in subsequent years. In his highly acclaimed book *The Mission of God* British theologian Chris Wright, a leader in the Lausanne movement, promotes what he calls "a different way of thinking about mission."[2] In his opinion we should understand mission holistically and we should take all aspects, whether it is evangelism or social action or protection of the environment, as being equally important. According to Wright it does not matter whether we start with evangelism or with social action, as long as *ultimately* we get to the point that we tell people the good news of Christ.

Evaluation

From a Reformed perspective, we have to be very uncomfortable with these trends. Let me say it again: there is nothing against social action or political action or protection of the environment *as such*. These are good causes, and it is wonderful if Christian believers are involved in them. But we should not take these good initiatives and call them mission work or evangelism. The primary means of grace is the preaching of the gospel (LD 25). Therefore, the primary task of mission and evangelism is the verbal proclamation of the gospel.

I'm noticing that the term *missional* is becoming more popular in our circles. This word can mean all kinds of things. It could simply mean that the church should be mission-minded and look for opportunities to spread the gospel. In that case, I agree: let's be missional! Unfortunately, in the broader evangelical world the word *missional* is being used to refer to all kinds of well-meant action. There are *missional conferences* these days where you can listen to interesting ideas about how churches can help improving the quality of life in our towns and villages. After listening to some speeches and attending some workshops, however, you may find yourself wondering: "Whatever happened to evangelism?"

Is someone involved in improving the livability of the downtown area of your city? Excellent! But this in itself cannot be called evangelism yet. Does your church have an annual initiative to clean a park in the neighbourhood? Excellent! Call it outreach perhaps, but do not call it mission. The terms *mission* and *evangelism* should be reserved for those activities where the gospel is shared and proclaimed verbally with unbelievers.

This reminds me of the slogan I quoted earlier: "Preach the gospel at all times. Use words if necessary." In his book *Word versus Deed* Duane Litfin comments, "At first blush this sounds right. Except that it isn't."[3] Litfin then goes on to explain that it is simply impossible to preach the gospel without words. Our actions and our deeds can support the Christian message but they cannot replace preaching and teaching and sharing the gospel.

Conclusion

In conclusion, let's keep the mandates of our missionaries clear: Preach the gospel and teach the Christian doctrine so effectively that under the blessing of God unbelievers will be converted and the church of Christ will be planted, all to the glory of God. Likewise, let our evangelism committees look for creative ways to initiate relationships with people in our cities *and* let them remember that evangelism has not happened until we have told people the gospel of Jesus Christ, with a call to repentance and faith.

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[1] Lausanne Covenant, 1974, paragraphs 5 and 6. See also John Stott, *Christian mission in the modern world* (Falcon, 1975), 35-36.
[2] Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2006), 317
[3] Duane Litfin, *Word versus Deed: Resetting the Scales to a Biblical Balance* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 12.

C

I Am Nothing

Proverbs 30:1-5

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Arturo Toscanini was a world famous, if somewhat eccentric, conductor during the 1930s, 40s, and 50s. Persecuted in Italy because he defied Benito Mussolini, he moved to the United States and conducted several world-class orchestras to much acclaim. It is said that after one particularly moving performance of a Beethoven symphony, where the audience rose for endless applause, Toscanini addressed the orchestra after the curtain finally dropped. "You are nothing," he said to them, much to their surprise and disbelief. "I am nothing," he then added to their even greater surprise. But they understood him completely when he said, "Beethoven is everything."

Toscanini's words have the same resonance as the wise man Agur's words in Proverbs 30:1-5, where Agur is basically saying, "I am nothing. You are nothing. God's Word is everything."

I am nothing

Agur's opening words are surprising for their stark humility. He declares that he is too stupid to be a man (v. 2). He says that he has not learned wisdom and has no knowledge of God, the Holy One (v. 3). What would lead him to say this about himself? Certainly Agur is trying to make a point. He is clearly renouncing the assumed confidence in human reason that we are so familiar with, typical of the enlightenment and pervasive throughout the modern period. Yet at the same time, he is not pre-empting the postmodern philosopher of today who asserts that truth is arbitrary and meaningless (except, of course, that truth which he himself speaks). What Agur is doing is making a comparison. In comparison with God, the One who lives in heaven, who gathers the wind, who controls the waters, and established the pillars of the earth, Agur is a complete and utter fool who knows nothing.

You are nothing

Agur does not say this to earn pity or disdain. What he wants is your agreement. Can you claim to have heavenly knowledge, nature-controlling power, creational authority? Then maybe you and your wisdom are not as wise as you think. Agur's self-critique is in effect a critique of all man-centred wisdom. Agur doesn't lack wisdom because he is sub-human; he lacks wisdom because he is sub-God. That's the point that Agur is making, and the starting point for anyone who would seek true wisdom for themselves. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov 1:7).

How does your wisdom measure up? How does postmodernism or modernism line up? How do the feminist, the secularist, and the materialist sound now? Whatever happened to the Stoics, the Epicureans, or the Peripatetics? Never heard of the Peripatetics? That's the point.

God's Word is everything

While Agur is pessimistic about his own wisdom, he is glowing in his review of God's wisdom: "Every word of God proves true" (v. 5). The word that Agur uses there for "proves true" conjures up the imagery of a refinery, where once a precious metal has been thoroughly heated, it is proven true, that is, it is pure. As Psalm 12 declares, God's Word is refined in a furnace, purified seven times. There is nothing false in God's revelation of himself through His Word. There is only truth.

Yes, and we can even capitalize that word. God's Word is Truth. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). The gospel of Jesus Christ proves the truth of God's Word in every way. Every purpose, plan, and promise of God is "Yes" in Jesus Christ, and he has proven it true through his incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven.

I am nothing. You are nothing. Jesus Christ is everything. C

For Further Study

1. Are you offended by Agur's assessment of himself? In what ways could you say the same thing of yourself?
2. What man-produced or man-centred wisdom is tempting or attractive to you?
3. How can you ultimately trust the Word of God? What role does the Spirt play in convincing you of the truth of God's Word (1 Cor 2:12)?

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The Sunday Worship Killer

This article was originally posted as a guest blog on thegospelcoalition.org. It is republished here with permission.

Few things harden the soul, deaden the heart, close the ears, and chill the affections more. It serves as one of the greatest weapons of our adversary, though few recognize it. One would expect such a foe to be obvious, but it often chooses to operate subtly in the shadows of the mind and the private ruminations of the heart. It has the added deadliness of feigning holiness while encouraging pride with the false assumption we are more holy than others due to our greater "discernment." Donning the robes of the critic maims and kills many would-be worshipers in churches every single Sunday morning.

In all honesty, very few of us knowingly enter church with such a motivation. How silly it would be for us to rise early on Sundays to play the role of the critic. But as we take our seat in the church pew, our focus and motivation cowers to the voice crying out within, "they are not doing this right," "they are not doing this well," "they are not doing this as I would do it." And in the midst of it all, we move from worshipper to critic. No doubt, the Christian is called to be discerning and discriminating in worship. All that passes for worship these days should not receive our approval. Paul has no qualms identifying wrong practices in the worship of the Corinthian church (1 Cor 11-14), Jesus is clear about worthy and non-worthy worship (John 4), and God's seriousness about the manner and means by which we worship cannot be overestimated (Lev 10). Yet, there is a temptation to spend more time at church critiquing than confessing, judging than rejoicing, criticizing than praising, and challenging than receiving when there is very little reason to do so.

This trap is great and our adversary is pleased with the results. The Christian leaves church with a satisfied conscience. She rests having fulfilled her "weekly duty," but little worship was practiced or experienced. Instead of meeting with God, she played the cynic. Instead of hearing the voice of God, she heard the frail words of the preacher. Instead of a mind stirred by truth, it was stymied in criticism. Instead of a heart moved with joy, it was hardened in judgment. If you or I depart church on Sunday mornings and our main thoughts or topics of conversation consist of concerns, critiques, and criticisms, it is likely we have become a critic rather than a worshiper.

How do we fight this tendency? First, we must remind ourselves of the great privilege of corporate worship. My friends, we are meeting with the Triune God of the Universe. The Lord of Glory is speaking to us, the grace of Christ is being extended to us, and we are enjoying a taste of that which we shall enjoy for all of eternity. Nothing in all the earth is more significant, monumental, and remarkable than the reality that God chooses to meet with us by His Word and Spirit week in and week out. Corporate worship is the high-point of the Christian's week. Anything that detracts from it is an enemy.

If you or I depart church on Sunday mornings and our main thoughts or topics of conversation consist of concerns, critiques, and criticisms, it is likely we have become a critic rather than a worshipper

Second, intentionality goes a long way in fighting unnecessary critique. Begin Saturday night by setting aside time in prayer and reading the Bible to soften your heart for the next day's holy appointment. On Sunday, rise early enough to seek the Lord in order to have your

heart moved with affection for him before entering the church building. As you take your seat in the sanctuary, remember above all else that worship is a meeting between God and his people. You are not there to sit in judgment or question the motives of others. You journeyed to this place at this time to meet with the Living and True God of heaven and earth. What a delight! As the music begins, even if it is not your "cup of tea," seek to meditate upon the words you are singing. Allow your affections to be stirred as you think and meditate upon him. As prayers are uttered, seek to stay your thoughts upon him. Say over and over in your mind, "Amen," as you agree with the words offered in corporate prayer. As the sermon is preached, plead with him to lay bare your own heart, root out sin where it is found, and provide comfort where it is needed. When driving home from church talk about how the service or sermon impacted you. Limit critiques and abound in discussion about how the Word preached, sung, read, confessed, and prayed that morning shaped and informed your own understanding and life in Christ. And throughout the week meditate upon that Word and watch for how the Lord is conforming you more and more to the image of Christ.

Criticism can detract and deject the worshiper. We all must seek to limit it to healthy bounds. It may be the case that you attend a church where the Word isn't preached, the sacraments aren't administered, and worship is absent. If that is the case, it is time to move on. However, if you attend a church where the Word is preached, the sacraments are rightly administered, and worship is present then delight in worshiping God. You are meeting with the Triune God of the universe. Don't let our adversary tempt you to do something less. The worship critic stands in judgment over everyone and everything else, the God-adoring worshiper rightly kneels in unity with her brothers and sisters humbly before her King. C

The Politics of Sex Education

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The Ontario Premier, Kathleen Wynne, is imposing a revised sex education course on the province's schools. Happily there has been a groundswell of opposition. Objections include that the material is completely age-inappropriate, is psychologically manipulative, does not warn against some of the sex practices discussed, and is implicitly immoral. Above all, it is not the task of the state but parents to guide their children in this sensitive area. There is however much more at stake than simply telling the kids about the birds and the bees. And parents rightly sense that. In discussing sexual matters, the course presents a world and life view that is far removed from that of the parents objecting. For Christians, the course is clearly hostile to biblical norms. What actually is behind the drive for more and more sex education? This is a phenomenon found all over the Western world.

The motivation

In this connection it may be good to listen for a moment to Peter Hitchens, not to be confused with his older brother, the late Christopher Hitchens, a prominent atheist. Peter Hitchens wrote in Britain's *Daily Mail* (November 9, 2014) that sex education:

> began about 50 years ago, on the pretext that it would reduce unmarried teen pregnancies and sexual diseases. Every time these problems got worse, the answer was more sex education, more explicit than before. Since then, unmarried pregnancies have become pretty much normal, and sexual diseases – and the "use" of pornography – are an epidemic.
>
> It is only thanks to frantic free handouts of "morning after" pills and an abortion massacre that the number of teenage mothers has finally begun to level off after decades in which it zoomed upwards across the graph paper. In a normal, reasonable society, a failure as big as this would cause a change of mind. Not here.
>
> If you try to question sex education, you are screamed at by fanatics. This is because it isn't, and never has been, what it claims to be. Sex education is propaganda for the permissive society. It was invented by the communist George Lukacs, schools commissar during the insane Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919, to debauch the morals of Christian schoolgirls. It works by breaking taboos and by portraying actions as normal that would once have been seen as wrong. By discussing all sorts of sexual topics and practices without any moral direction, sex education releases people from natural inhibitions and restraints. As Hitchens pointed out in an interview with Jonathon Van Maren, (lifesitenews.com, June 30, 2015):

> Discussing these things in the way that they're discussed [makes these] things sound normal. . . . So it's assumed that children will have underage sex or unmarried sex or promiscuous sex, and it's assumed that they will do so, and all the precautions they're supposed to take is based on this idea that this will happen. "If you can't be good, be careful." That, of course, is why our schools are so involved in handing out condoms and ensuring ready access to birth control pills, because it assumes that people, even children, are entirely incapable of abstaining from sex outside of marriage. Sex education, in essence, proceeds directly out of that assumption. And that assumption is very much promoted by our current political class.

Peter Hitchens continued:

> There is politics in sex. . . . Much of those politics are about the family and the State. The state is increasingly hostile to the strong family, and the strong family is sustained by lifelong marriage and by a pretty stern and puritan attitude towards sexual relations – whereas the strong state benefits in many ways, as does modern commerce and the modern employer, from weak marriages and relaxed sexual relations.

One needs to realize that Peter Hitchens was once a leftist thinker and understands where the Left is coming from.

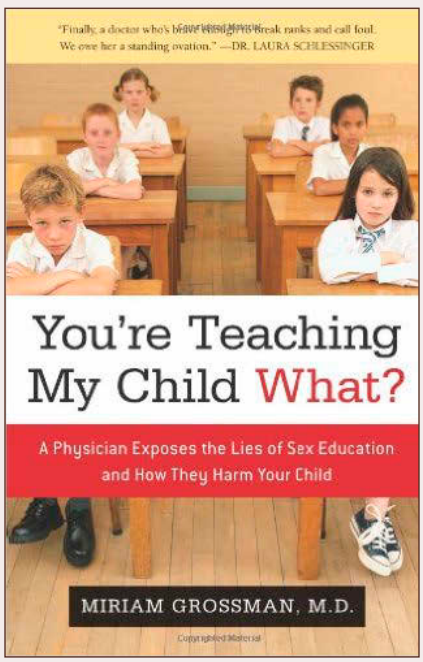
He sees very clearly that the state is not just giving sex education, but is claiming the children as its own. They belong first to the state and then to the parents. He calls it the "nationalizing of childhood." "Giving to the State and its education system the task of teaching children what to believe and which values to hold, and you've essentially coopted the family structure." Hitchens also pointed out that "when they say children should speak for themselves, what they actually mean is that the parents should be removed from the discussion. They don't actually want them to speak for themselves, they want the children to do what they want them to do, and they know the parental home is the biggest obstacle to this thing. This is why many states seek to ban practices that threaten this goal, like homeschooling."

The social engineering agenda that lies behind so-called sex education has been confirmed by many. A good example of one who has done research in this area is Miriam Grossman, a certified child, adolescent, and adult psychiatrist. In a lecture delivered on October 15, 2009, and published online by the Heritage Foundation (http://www.heritage.org), Grossman exposes some of the principles of sex education as generally given in public schools. "The principles of sexual health education are not based on the hard sciences. They don't rest on what's seen under the microscope. Sex education is animated by a dream, a specific vision of how society must change, and because of this, sex ed curricula omit critical biological truths and endorse highrisk behaviors." By suggesting that almost any sexual encounter is okay as long as you feel "ready," this type of sex education makes teens and young adults vulnerable to all types of infections and diseases that could easily have been prevented if accurate, up-to-date medical information had been included in the course. But such information does not fit the agenda of your typical public school sex education course. Grossman noted that the primary goal of groups like Planned Parenthood (which has lobbied for the revised sex education curriculum in Ontario) "is to promote sexual freedom and to rid society of its Judeao-Christian taboos and restrictions. In this worldview almost anything goes. Each individual makes his or her sexual choices; each person decides how much risk he or she is willing to take, and no judgments are allowed."

Over against this human foolishness it is an enormous blessing and privilege to be able to submit to the norms of Scripture also when it comes to God's gift of sex and marriage. Christian parents know that they have the first responsibility to educate their children in a biblical world view in the fear of the Lord God, also when it comes to sexual matters (cf. Prov 1:1-9; Deut 6:7-9). Then true wisdom is handed on to the next generation.

At the time of writing, the NDP government of Premier Wynne does not seem to be in a mood to budge on the issue. But the protests have heralded the fact that children belong to the parents and not to the state. This is an important truth and certainly also applies to this sensitive area which is of enormous consequence for the development and future well-being of children. C

A helpful resource on what is involved in so-called sex education given in public schools is Dr. Miriam Grossman's *You're Teaching My Child What? A Physician Exposes the Lies of Sex Ed and How They Harm Your Child* (2009). In an interview, she described her book as not politically correct, but medically accurate.



What's This Pile of Stones, Dad?

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This story about Joshua 3-4 was prepared with the help of the CARE Bible Templates and told at the February 13, 2015 CARE Day. A subsequent article will consider how evaluation of student learning in this lesson may be done legitimately.

It is spring time, and in the Promised Land the harvest is ripening. The LORD again keeps his promises by maintaining seedtime and harvest, summer and winter. Another promise also stands out, the one of a multitude of children for Abraham: There are *millions* of them, encamped in the plains of Moab, near the promised land of Canaan – just across the Jordan River now. There is a buzz in the camp: Two spies have returned from Jericho reporting that the Canaanites are shuddering in fear for the mighty deeds the LORD has done for his people ever since they left Egypt, some forty years ago.

Some Canaanites may feel safe, because, from rain and melting snow of Mount Hermon in the north, the river is full of water, raging along, white caps cresting the waves, and hard to cross. In summer or winter the river is shallow and easy to ford; but now, it is wild and dangerous. Only strong men, like the spies, can cross. Fording it with women, children, sheep, lambs, and all their carry-on will be near impossible. Which God is there who can help millions to cross it now? They know no one.

However, like Rahab, who helped the spies, most people in Jericho know: The LORD, Yahweh, the God of Israel, *Who Is Who He Is,* led his people through the Red Sea, and destroyed Pharaoh and his armies some forty years ago; he then guided and fed them all these years through the wilderness; he defeated their attackers, and already gave them the lands of Sihon and Og. Those Israelites, they are a terrifying people, for they have a fearsome God! The courage of many Canaanites melts like snow on Mount Hermon.

Among the Israelites, only the elderly remember what happened in Egypt. All grown-ups of the time died – except for Joshua and Caleb. Joshua is now leading them, appointed by God, to bring them safely to the Promised Land. So, most Israelites only heard of the plagues in Egypt or the crossing of the Red Sea, and when they look at the Jordan River full of water now, raging along, white caps cresting the waves, and hard to cross, what will they think?

They need not fear. Their God, the LORD, is the almighty Creator of all things. He has told Joshua to be strong and courageous, because he will go with them and give them the land promised to Abraham. They know it and believe it. With that strength and that courage the spies went and came across the Jordan; with that strength and that courage they, too, can cross!

Here is the LORD's order: Let the Ark of the Covenant, carried by the priests, go first; others must follow at a distance of 1 kilometre; let all consecrate themselves; and select twelve men, one from each tribe. The Ark first! *That is:* The LORD will go before you. Everyone follows and passes by at a distance! *That is:* All will gaze on the Ark from afar, and know that the LORD goes with them. Consecrate yourself! *That is:* Wash yourself, be holy to the LORD, let nothing distract you from what he is doing, for he will show his power to instill awe in the hearts of all men.

The day has come. All await what the LORD will do. If they look at the river, they see it full of water, raging along, white caps cresting the waves, and hard to cross. But hasn't the LORD told them to be strong and courageous? Aren't they ready and consecrated? Isn't the Lord going before them like he did all these years? Didn't the spies come back with good news? Be strong then, and courageous, ready to go!

Hear now the first blast on the silver trumpet, the signal for the first tribes to break camp. Everyone knows what Joshua announces now: "Rise up, Lord! May your enemies be scattered; may your foes flee before you!" They know it; but today is special: There is the enemy, first the river, full of water, raging along, white caps cresting the waves, and hard to cross. And beyond, on the other side, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites, all melting in fear: They are the enemies to be scattered, the foes to flee. Be strong then, and courageous, for the LORD rises up before you!

There the priests come, in their holy robes of white, carrying the Ark by the poles on their shoulders, moving slowly, solemnly, step by step going down towards the banks of the raging river, strong and courageous. Hear now the second trumpet blast, the signal for the other tribes to join in and follow. But keep your distance, a kilometre of respect and awe, for all to see how and where the LORD leads them as the priests carry the Ark!

Now they approach the raging river, the feet of the priests stepping in. But as they step in, the water draws back, it stops flowing from the right and just runs away to the left. They step forward into where the river was, but they step on dry ground. And as they go further, their feet stay dry as the water flows away. Who would not stand in awe of their mighty God who makes the waters flee? As they go, that river full of water, raging along, white caps cresting the waves, and hard to cross. . . it recedes, it becomes a highway for all to cross! And when the priests get to the middle of the river, they stop, stand still, and the people follow and pass by, the Gershonites and the Merarites with the tabernacle, the Kohathites with the holy things, fathers, mothers, children, grandparents, and grandkids, tribe after tribe, their sheep and goats, their goods, and the bones of Joseph. Even the soldiers of Rueben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh cross over to help in the coming battles. If they now look to the right from where the water came gushing before, there is none – it is a wide dry riverbed. In the middle of the river, they see the priests, standing still, keeping the Ark on their shoulders. They can be strong and courageous, for the LORD clears the path and goes with them! If they look ahead, they see the opposite bank coming ever closer, as they go up towards it.

It was because their God went before them

(If Canaanites are watching, they shudder in fear, their courage melts: Who has a God as mighty as this? In fact, he stopped the river some thirty kilometres upstream, near Adam. Which God can do that, at such distances? Their gods are local gods only – but who knows a God with power far away? There is only one such God, the LORD, the Creator of heaven and earth, and they *must* stand in awe for him who rose up to scatter his enemies and make his foes flee!)

But now, look! As the Israelites continue to cross, a row of men. . . one, two, . . . eleven, twelve strong men return to the middle, towards the priests with the Ark. Near the priests, they each bend over, pick up a rounded rock from the river bed. . . heave it up to their shoulder, and carry it to the new camp. Who are they? Well, they are the twelve men Joshua appointed, one from each tribe. Their special task is to pile up their rocks right at the new camp, as a monument, easy to see from the riverbed. Anyone who will come by here will see it and be reminded of what happened here – or ask about it! That's what monuments are for.

But now the men return, back to where the priests stand still with the Ark. They each heave another stone to their shoulder, one for each tribe, and pile them up near the priests. Now there are two piles, two reminders

of today's events, two monuments to ask about, two times to tell the story. It matters not what tribe you are from: For each tribe there is a stone!

The twelve men finish their task and go back to the new camp. Even the stragglers among the people finish crossing now. At last, after hours of standing still, the priests come too, in their holy robes of white, carrying the ark by the poles on their shoulders, moving slowly, solemnly, reverently, step by step going up the banks. All watch, with reverence and awe: Their God is a mighty God!

The priests go up the bank, just a few more steps now – and as the last one lifts his toes from the bed where once the river flowed, people hear a gurgle, and then splashing and a rush, and the rush becomes a roar, and then the river is full of water, raging along, white caps cresting the waves, and hard to cross – as before. Yet, *not quite* as before, for look, in the middle of the river, where the priests stood with the Ark of God's Covenant, there is now the top of a pile of stones sticking out. *How* could they have crossed in safety? It was because their God went before them; he held back the waters – and he now sets out to give them the land that flows with milk and honey, in which the harvest is ripe, in which the Canaanites' courage melts with fear. The LORD Almighty, *Who Is Who He Is,* he has done it!

From now on, when Israelites cross the Jordan here, boys will ask, "What's this pile of stones, Dad?" And he must say, "My sons, back in the days of Joshua. . ." and tell them of the LORD's great deeds.

But the story isn't finished: A greater event is coming with a Saviour greater than Joshua. Years later, near this spot, there is John, who baptizes all who repent of their sins. One day, Jesus comes. He, too, is baptized, even though he has nothing to repent of – but he is baptized, for us. Then heaven opens and the Holy Spirit comes down like a dove and lights on Jesus; and God the Father speaks loudly and clearly, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." Jesus then defeats Satan, pays for our sins, and is our complete Saviour.

This God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who kept his promises of making Abraham into a great nation and giving him the land of Canaan, who still keeps his promises of the seasons, also keeps his promises that through Abraham all nations will be blessed. This God is our God of whom we sing in Psalm 105. This God is the one of whom the fathers must tell their children, as in Psalm 78. This God is the one of whom our teachers are privileged to tell the children in their class. He is awesome and lets us fear him, but without melting or shuddering. For Christ's sake.

The Education Matters column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association East. Anyone wishing to respond to an article written or willing to write an article is kindly asked to send materials to Clarion *or to Arthur Kingma akingma@echs.ca.* C

The Red Sea, Egypt

RAY OF SUNSHINE

Rachel Vis

From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the LORD is to be praised!
Psalm 113:3

Have you taken the time lately to sit outside on your chair, close your eyes, feel the sunshine on your face, hear the birds chirping, and breathe in the fresh air? Did you take deep breaths and have a sense of peace? It is such a wonderful, gentle reminder of who is in control and who has provided us with everything we need. The Lord made the heavens and the earth; he created the birds and the sunshine. He gave us the freedom to praise and worship him. The next time you are outside, take a moment to take it all in, and thank the Lord for everything he has given you.

We are now nearing the end of the summer; many of us have gone on vacation, spent time with family, gone on outings, had a BBQ, and enjoyed the outdoors. Some of us have celebrated birthdays, gone to weddings, gone to church, and thanked the Lord for everything he has given us. Others of us may have also gone through difficult times this year. May you also know that our creator is in control of everything, and has you in his loving care. Now with September approaching, some of us are preparing to go back to school, and some of us are looking forward to our regular routines. We may go back to participating in catechism, women or men's society, choir, swimming, band, or other things. We can enjoy many different events in the community.

Congratulations to all of you celebrating your birthday in September. May our gracious and Heavenly Father bless you in this new birthday year, and grant you an enjoyable day with family and friends.

Everyone celebrating a birthday in September is from one of our Anchor Homes. To all those who are family, friends, and church community of those celebrating a birthday, I encourage you to stop in at one of the homes for a visit.

Birthdays in September

8 MARSHA MOESKER will be 38
c/o Lighthouse
6528 1st Line, RR 3, Fergus, Ontario N1M 2W4

14 JERRY BONTEKOE will be 51
c/o Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road, RR 2, Beamsville, Ontario L0R 1B2

22 NICK PRINZEN will be 43
c/o Beacon Home
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, Ontario N1A 1T8

25 DAVE VANVEEN will be 45
c/o Lighthouse
6528 1st Line, RR 3, Fergus, Ontario N1M 2W4

29 PAUL DIELEMAN will be 46
c/o Beacon Home
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, Ontario N1A 1T8

So starts my adventure of taking on Ray of Sunshine! I look forward to celebrating many birthdays, connecting with many new people, learning many new things, and growing in the Lord. If any of you have any thoughts or ideas for the column please email me, I would love to try some new things.

I would like to mention both Corinne and Trish Gelms and thank them for their many years of dedicated time and service in writing this column every month. I think I can say from all of us that their input has been a true blessing from the Lord in many people's lives.

A NOTE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

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

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Letter to the Editor

"The biblical testimony binds us to a 6-day creation. . . ."

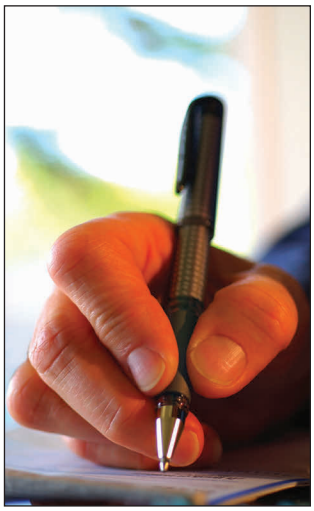
In his editorial of the June 19 issue, Rev Stam reiterates a *literal* interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2 and its attended young earth position. This response is to restate an additional Reformed interpretation.

First, a comment. Rev. Stam appears to have difficulty with the view that Genesis 1 is seen by some scholars as "exalted semi-poetical language." Yet it is not difficult to see that the language is powerfully poetic: the writer of Genesis uses a special construction to demonstrate that the Sovereign Lord speaks to his people as the One who creates, avoids calling the "greater and lesser lights" by name and writes the account with the lack of the definite article in the numbering of days. When dealing with spiritual and abstract concepts, with phrases like "hovering above the waters," and even with verb tenses, it becomes clear that an *absolute* literal translation and interpretation of Genesis 1 (and 2) is problematic and another interpretation may be needed.

Second, the place of science in our understanding of cosmology. The church has historically been resistant to the truths of scientific discovery. Especially with Galileo in the early 1600s, the church first denied and then held themselves above the simple celestial discoveries of the day: moons orbiting Jupiter, and sunspots, for two examples. Little has changed. Like it or not, good science driven by scientific observations of our earth and universe, many of them ordinary, have shown the creation to point to a great age. Science, when properly and humbly done, can only point to the truth of creation, and thus to the truth of the Creator, the infinitely True Being and the source of all truth.

How have our Reformed churches historically accepted the truths of science over the last century? I would point out that two of our sister churches – at URC Synod and Presbyterian General Assembly – have taken a middle course to accept two major approaches to the interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2 (URCNA minutes 2001, URCNA Acts 2004, OPC Minutes 71st General Assembly 2004). Rev. Stam fails to mention the critical decisions regarding the opening chapters of Genesis and has erected an unnecessary and unfortunate barrier, not only between us and other churches but also between us and those in society around us that might be reached through God's word. *Clarion* would do well to publish in a more balanced manner on the interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2 otherwise we are on a course of isolation in our family of Reformed churches.

Harry Alkema
Mount Hope, ON



Response

It's nice to receive a letter from Harry. We go back to the second half of the previous century and could probably talk for hours, but this response must be kept as short as short as possible. We have already devoted ample space to the matter of old/young earth. I would not have written about this topic again, had Harry not raised it anew in a letter to the editor. Now it merits a response.

Let's first go to the statements from the sister-churches. Just to be clear: positions of our sister churches are not necessarily our positions. We are allowed to differ with sister-churches. Only when they *depart* from Scripture and their confessions do we have the calling to address this. I mention this lest someone think that our churches are responsible for everything that is said in the URC or OPC.

But let us not too quickly claim that the URC and the OPC allow for evolutionism, especially the old earth theory. The URC Synod of 2001 dealt with the creation days. "At the URC synod of 2001 held in Escondido, California delegates addressed the matter. Instead of taking a definitive stand in line with that taken by the OCRCs, the synod responded by affirming what the confessions teach concerning creation, and reiterating its commitment to discipline those who teach contrary to the confessions. Arguably the most significant statement the synod made touching the creation days was the following: "God created all things good in six days defined as evenings and

DECLINED

Declined the calls to the Flamborough CanRC and the Aldergrove CanRC (to serve as a missionary in Brazil):

Rev. R. deJonge

of Langley, British Columbia

mornings" (from a report in Christian Renewal). Note the emphasis on *evenings and mornings*.

Harry might ask: how can there be morning and evening when there is not yet a sun, moon, or stars? Gotcha! Well, that's what it *says*: there was evening and there was morning – the first day. God called the light "day" and the darkness he called "night." Why not submit to the wording and meaning of the text? Day and night are not independent, created entities, for it is God alone who determines light and darkness. When God says: let there be light, there is light. And when he says: let it be dark, it is dark. Actually I don't like the word "entities," but for the sake of discussion, okay.

The OPC, as a denomination, has no statement or decision regarding the length of the days of creation. Note, however, that the OPC General Assembly denied the appeal of a ruling elder who taught the animal ancestry of Adam (determining that such teaching was contrary to the Westminster Confession of Faith). It has thus far had no judicial case with regard to the length of the days of creation, and therefore has rendered no ruling on the matter. OPC ministers and elders are divided on that issue but are not divided on the matter of animal ancestry.

Those in the OPC who hold to literal 24-hour days appeal to the words "in the space of" in Shorter Catechism question 9 ("The work of creation is God's making all things of nothing, by the word of his power, *in the space of six days,* and all very good"). The OPC is a confessional church, and therefore the Confession, Larger and Shorter Catechisms must always be the standard by which to determine an officer's orthodoxy. "Unless it is determined by a judicial ruling that our doctrinal standards teach a particular position, there must be latitude in this area." I found this on an OPC website. Check it out.

Our sister-churches do not give to the days of creation the latitude that Harry suggests. Quite the contrary. The OPC may not have a specific statement on the length of the creation days because this matter until now has not come before the GA. But to say then (as Harry does) that these churches have taken "the middle course" is not scientifically accurate. The URC and the OPC consider themselves unreservedly as upholding their confessions. Our confessions are clear, too, and I am wondering whether we do not do best simply to state this clearly at our forthcoming General Synod. That will *keep* us *fully in line* with the OPC and the URC.

Regarding the text of Genesis 1 as being "exalted semi-poetical language" Harry states that it is not difficult to see that the language is *powerfully poetic*. But what is or is not difficult to see is more a personal matter than a confessional statement. With respect to the Spirit "hovering over the waters" I recommend Harry to read what I have written about that passage in the book "Celebrating Salvation" (Premier Printing, Winnipeg, 2004). Tolle, lege! I do not deny any poetical aspects but I do follow a historic-literal exegesis to find what God is revealing about himself.

It was refreshing to see Galileo being dusted off again. He is always the first example to be readily resurrected as martyr of literalism. We could also mention Copernicus first. But that was all in a different time and era. The Middle Ages cannot be compared to the Renaissance. I have never defended the decisions of the Roman Catholic Church, and I will not start now. Today`s level of science tells us stuff that Galileo and Copernicus never dreamed of. Methinks that these men would blush at the audacity of some contemporary scholars. *But the Word of God will not be broken*. If we allow Scripture criticism to go unchallenged, we become irrelevant as churches. That is really my prime concern.

Greetings,
Klaas

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

William den Hollander
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Q *Every Sunday we hear the Ten Commandments when it says "six days you shall labour, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the* LORD *your God" and you shall rest on it. My question is: why do we rest on the first day of the week and not on the seventh? How did this come about?*

A Indeed, in the OT the seventh day was the Sabbath, the day of rest, and everyone knew why: "For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy." This is the commandment as we hear it every Sunday, while the church has changed its usage and practice of it to the first day of the week, the Lord's Day. We better know it very well *why* the day of rest was moved up one day. The fact that we call it the *Lord's Day* indicates already where we must find the answer to this question. It points at the Lord Jesus Christ, who did not give a specific command to make this change, yet who did give this first day of the week a prominent place: it's the day of his resurrection! In the evening of that day he came to his disciples, i.e. on this first day of the week as John mentions with some emphasis (20:19). In this way he shows the great significance and incomparable character of that day that changed so much for the people of God in this world and for their relationship with God! He showed this great prominence again by appearing a week later on this first day of the week to his disciples with Thomas. So it was the Lord Jesus himself who set this day apart!

It is not at all surprising therefore, that we see a practice develop in the NT church in which the first day of the week retained this prominence. First of all, on the first day of the week, while the congregation was together on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the church (Acts 2:1). Then we also read in verse 42 that "they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and to prayer." In Acts 20:7, also, we read that "on the first day of the week we came together to break bread." By the time the Apostle Paul writes his epistle to the Corinthians it has become the custom to come together for these same purposes, or so it appears from his recommendation (1 Cor 16:2), "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income. . . ." Many years after his ascension the Lord Jesus appeared to John at Patmos, and again we read, and now even more specifically, "On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet. . ." (Rev 1:10). Apparently by that time the first day of the week was designated already as the Lord's Day!

Since that time, in many a Christian manuscript, we read that the Sunday is called the Lord's Day. It is the day of the resurrection of the Lord! Yes, in Revelation 1:17-18, the Lord Jesus introduces himself to John as the one "who was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!" It is noteworthy therefore, that the specific designation of this day of the Lord's appearance to John is "the Lord's Day," and most likely the entire book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ was given to John on this special day. In it we see our Saviour who shows his NT church that he is on his way to bring those who are his to the Promised Land. That's the theme of the book of Revelation. Hence we see in it the fulfilment of the exodus from Egypt, and more specifically also the fulfilment of the OT Sabbath! Now, just as baptism is called the Christian circumcision (Col 2:11), we could call the Sunday the Christian Sabbath. On this day as the day of rest, we confess in Lord's Day 38, we "diligently attend the church of God to hear God's Word, to use the sacrament, to call publicly upon the LORD, and to give Christian offerings for the poor. . . , and so begin in this life the eternal Sabbath!" And all that as a fruit of the new life and perfect rest Christ has obtained for us by his death and resurrection, which we celebrate on the "day of the Lord!"

Q *In our current form for the Public Profession of Faith young believers answer "I do" to the following: "Do you wholeheartedly believe the doctrine of the Word of God, summarized in the confessions and taught here in this Christian church?" The 1972 form reads: "Do you acknowledge the doctrine which is contained in the Old and New Testament and in the articles of the Christian faith and which is taught here in this Christian church. . . ." Are both "the confessions" and "the articles of the Christian faith" referring to the Apostles Creed? Or is the current wording now referring to the Three Forms of Unity? If the latter, why do office bearers sign a subscription form? Could you please walk us through the change in wording and clarify what it means for those who are, or who will be, professing members of our churches?*

A As the question implies, there is a bit of history to the different formulations in some of our liturgical forms regarding the way "the doctrine of the Word of God" is identified. The question makes reference particularly to the Form for the Public Profession of Faith. At General Synod Cloverdale 1983 the liturgical forms (as well as the *Church Order*) received a thorough review and revision and it was the result of this process that a change came about from "the doctrine which is contained in the Old and New Testament and *in the articles of the Christian faith*. . ." to the present reading of "summarized in the confessions." Although the Committee that prepared the revision had recommended the change from "the articles of the Christian faith" to "creeds," in the Acts of G.S. 1983, Article 145 C.A.8 (p. 101) we read: "In order to avoid misunderstanding, the word "creeds" in the second question [of the Form for the Baptism of Infants, i.e.] should be replaced by "confessions." The same is mentioned with regard to the Form for the Public Profession of Faith.

In the *Acts* of the subsequent General Synod of Burlington 1986, Article 144 (p. 66), in response to an appeal against the above-mentioned decision, a further elaboration and explanation is given concerning this change in formulation. In its "considerations" G.S. 1986 states that the formulation in Lord's Day 7, Q. & A. 22 of the Heidelberg Catechism, mentioning the articles of our catholic and undoubted Christian faith, "does not suggest that the basic summary excludes the further confession given in the Three Forms of Unity." Synod also states that "the statement in the Forms '. . .as is taught here in this Christian Church' means one gives allegiance to all the confessions of the church." In a further consideration Synod adduces that "it is evident that the meaning of the forms is not changed by the linguistic revision which was made."

In view of the above, we may conclude that our synods considered the change in wording a clarification "to avoid misunderstanding." When young people (and others) make public profession of their faith in our churches they confess *to agree with* (as the earlier Form for the Baptism of Adults used to read) and *believe* the doctrine of the Word of God as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity. It is important therefore that in their preparations for this public testimony they are instructed in these Forms of Unity, which is generally done indeed in the catechetical instruction they receive in the years prior to their public profession of faith. This means that at their public profession of faith candidates should *know* the Three Forms of Unity and by their profession express agreement with and faith in the doctrine of the Word of God, summarized in these confessions.

The question has been raised sometimes how well versed they are in these confessions and/or how well they understand all the points of doctrine contained in them. This question, however, goes beyond the scope of the question submitted for this column. An informative, interesting, and thought-provoking treatise of this question can be found in the magazine *Diakonia*, Volume 10, Number 4, of March 1997, pp. 96-99.

The subscription to the Creeds and Confessions as required from the office bearers when they take office as minister, elder, or deacon [C.O. article 26], has a meaning that is much farther reaching than the expression of agreement and adherence as expressed at the public profession of faith. These office bearers do not only confirm their unity in the true faith as summarized in these confessions, but they also promise to discern and reject heresies that are contrary to the confessions. They, too, accept the Creeds and Confessions as correct summaries of the doctrine contained in Holy Scripture, but this acceptance means more than "just" a public profession of their faith; they also promise to maintain this doctrine and to refute errors conflicting with it. Besides confessing, teaching, and defending this true doctrine as summarized in the confessions, the office bearers also promise not to express in public any doubt concerning any of its points but to submit their sentiments to the scrutiny of the Consistory, and if necessary to Classis, meanwhile refraining from proposing, teaching, or defending such points. Thus by their subscription the churches are safeguarded against the introduction of errors as much as they are able to effectuate. 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

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John Smith
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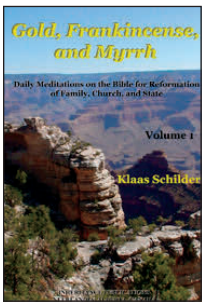
Klaas Schilder, *Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh: Daily Meditations on the Bible for Reformation of Family, Church, and State*

(trans. Roelof A. Janssen; Neerlandia: Inheritance Publications, 2013)
4 volumes. 765 pages

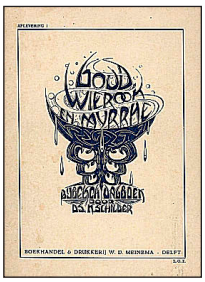


We're all familiar with the name of Klaas Schilder – onetime professor at the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands, outspoken critic of German National Socialism, victim of synodocracy, well-loved leader of the Liberation of 1944, longtime editor of the Dutch paper *De Reformatie,* and author of important theological works, such as *Christ and Culture, What is Heaven?* and *Christ In His Suffering.* For many of us, however, Schilder is little more than a name on the cover of a dusty book; we've hardly read a word he wrote.

That's quite forgivable. He wrote in Dutch, and rather difficult Dutch at that. His style is passionate, polemical, and profound. He wrote for the wartime generation, for those who experienced the Liberation firsthand, and his passions have become our past. His pen stopped in 1952, before many of us were even born. K.S. is history: you need to understand his context in order to get what he writes. That's less true of his meditations, however. Schilder was a masterful expositor of Scripture. He stuck to the text and explored its timeless truths, with the result that his meditations are among the most enduring and accessible of his writings today.

As a student I fell in love with Schilder's trilogy on the suffering of Christ,[1] and I still heartily recommend it to anyone who wants to grow in amazement at what our Saviour has done for us. Besides this trilogy, Schilder wrote many shorter meditations in church bulletins and in De Reformatie, but few of these are available in English. I was quite excited to hear that a new set had been published in the form of a daily devotional, entitled *Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh*. I was not familiar with this book. Even the CRTS library does not have the Dutch original, though it is available online – just Google "Schilder, *Goud, Wierook en Myrrhe*" and you'll have it on your screen, courtesy of the Digital Library of Dutch Literature.[2]

Schilder's meditations



It turns out that Schilder began to publish a daily devotional back in 1926, but he only got as far as April 15.[3] The publisher has filled in the rest of the year with meditations taken from elsewhere in Schilder's writings, so the English translation is much bigger than the Dutch original. The title of the book comes from the first meditation, which is about the visit of the Magi. The publisher has produced four slim volumes, each covering three months of the year. Each meditation is printed on two pages in large print and takes roughly five minutes to read out loud.

For those who'd like to become better acquainted with Schilder, *Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh* is a good place to start. It is not an academic work of theology, but a collection of reflections on Bible verses, published in bite-sized pieces, and written with the average churchgoer in mind. That said, his meditations do take some chewing, and the average churchgoer of ninety years ago perhaps had more time and patience for that than people do today. This is neither fast food nor fluff, and it takes a fair bit of concentration to follow Schilder's train of thought.

In my view these books are better suited for (adult) personal devotions than for family worship. Realistically, I doubt that toddlers or even teens would get much out of them, though for families that want to make the attempt, the publisher has posted song selections from the Book of Praise to go along with each meditation. Mature individuals who take time to read and reflect on these meditations in their personal devotions will be blessed with new insights into Scripture and renewed adoration for their Saviour.

Ten characteristics

So what are these meditations like, and what do they tell us about Schilder's way of interpreting the Bible? Here are ten characteristics, in no particular order.

1. They are *reverent*. The author speaks of the Lord with respect and humility and treats the Scriptures as a treasure trove to be explored with wonder and thankfulness.
2. They are *redemptive-historical*. Each passage is explained as a particular moment within the history of God's saving work in Jesus Christ. In this regard Schilder seems to focus more on the place of an event within redemptive history than on the place of a story within a book.
3. They are *comparative*. Schilder often liked to compare two episodes in Scripture to bring out the similarities and differences between them. In the meditation for January 3, for example, he compares the man of God from Judah (1 Kings 13) with the wise men from the east, since both returned home "by a different way" than they came. Schilder thus links passages that one might not think to connect. On the one hand, one is reminded of the multifaceted character of Scripture which lends itself to endless interpretation. On the other hand, one occasionally wonders whether Schilder's connections are legitimate or speculative.
4. They are *theocentric*, focused on what God is doing in a particular passage. Schilder peppers a passage with intriguing questions, asking why God acted in one way here and in another way there, and then suggests answers to his own questions.
5. They are *focused*, often paying attention to small details of the text and drawing deep truths from them. He does not waste time explaining the setting of a passage, but assumes that Bible readers already know all that.
6. They are *interconnected*. Themes introduced in earlier meditations come back in subsequent ones as Schilder looks at a particular truth from a variety of angles.
7. They are *diaconiological*. Schilder does not treat Bible characters simply as men and women but pays due attention to the way they fulfill their particular office and calling. A clear theme that emerges from these meditations is that of obedient faith.
8. They are *imaginative*. Schilder tried to make passages come alive by imagining what the biblical characters must have been thinking, or by putting words into their mouths. Sometimes he even dons the prophet's mantle and sternly rebukes a character for his wickedness.
9. They are *evangelical*, in the best sense of the word. The publisher translated these meditations in response to "apostasy taking place in the church today" (p. 4). Some might be inclined to counter apostasy by means of legalism, introversion, and narrow-mindedness, but none of these are found in Schilder's work. Instead of rules, walls, or the jargon of a rigid theological system, one finds the beauty of Christ, testifying to Schilder's simple faith in the transformative power of the gospel.
10. They are *playful*. Schilder loved to play with words, often taking a phrase from Scripture and turning it over and inside out. Such devices are a nightmare for any translator, since wordplays seldom translate well. And sometimes Schilder was too clever for his own good and clarity is lost.

Some last thoughts

The publisher could have enhanced the usefulness of this collection by providing an index of Scripture passages to allow preachers, teachers, and students to refer to Schilder's take on a particular text. Yet those who consult it as a reference work should bear in mind that these meditations are not thorough studies but incidental reflections on a passage, and, in light of their interconnectedness, they are best read consecutively rather than *ad hoc*.

The translator did his best to stick closely to the Dutch while producing a translation that is comprehensible in English, but the result is sometimes a bit clunky and cumbersome. Translation is always a matter of negotiating the competing demands of source and target languages, of dodging the Scylla of unintelligibility on the one hand without running afoul of the Charybdis of unfaithfulness on the other. In this case I find myself wishing for an editor with a freer hand to enhance its readability. That said, translating Schilder is no easy feat, and the translator is to be thanked for his perseverance. If I may offer a double Dutch comfort: for most of us, Dutchisms are easier to read than Dutch, and the books are available for a Dutch price. So tolle lege (take and read), and for those who prefer listening to reading, they're also available on CD as an audio recording.

---

[1] *Christ In His Suffering, Christ On Trial,* and *Christ Crucified,* translated by Henry Zylstra and edited by Henry Beets. The three volumes were published by Eerdmans in 1938, 1939, and 1940 respectively, and the English translation is excellent.

[2] Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren. For *Goud, Wierook en Myrrhe,* go to http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/schi008goud01_01/index.php (accessed on July 10, 2015).

[3] The online version only goes to April 3, since the last twelve meditations were never published.

C

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Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.
It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.
1 Corinthians 13:6, 7

With thankfulness to the Lord, we announce the 40th Wedding Anniversary of our dear parents and grandparents

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We thank the LORD for His goodness and mercy in their marriage and pray that He will continue to bless them in the coming years.

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1975 ~ August 23 ~ 2015

The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms. Deuteronomy 33:27

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

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We are thankful that together they have enjoyed the embrace of God's everlasting arms over the past 40 years and pray that God will remain their dwelling place. We praise God for the blessing they have been and continue to be in each of our lives.

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OBITUARIES

On July 14th, 2015 the Lord in his mercy took into eternal glory his child

PIETER JANSEN

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. Philippians 3:20, 21

Beloved husband of Dicky Jansen (nee Berends)

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Voorburg, The Netherlands — Chatham, Ontario Canada

Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Revelation 22:14

It pleased the Lord to take her earthly body to be made perfect in Glory with Him

JOHANNA SOPHIA DEBOER (née Hoek)

in her 84th year.

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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

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

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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

TEACHING POSITIONS

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge."
Prov 1:7

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Due to the pending retirement of our current Principal, Credo Christian High School seeks a candidate who will continue to provide Christ-centered administrative leadership.

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The closing date for applications is Wednesday, September 30th, 2015

For further information, please contact the Board President,
Mr. Ken Linde
k110linde@gmail.com
Cell phone: 604-816-3679

Applications should be emailed to the address above, or directed in writing to the school:
Mr. Ken Linde, Chair of the Principal Search Committee
c/o Credo Christian High School
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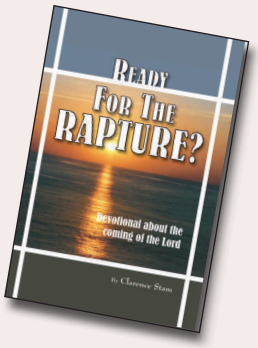

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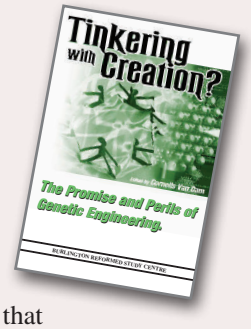

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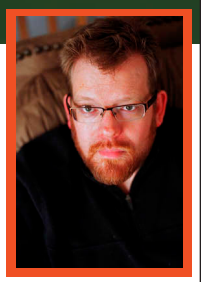

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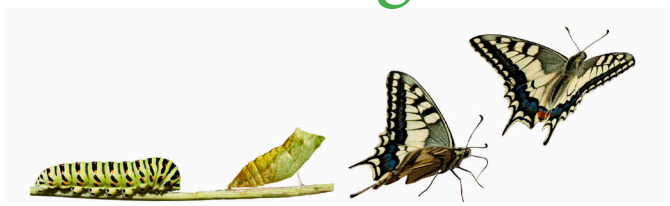

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- ✔ investment property

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AMP MORTGAGE BROKER

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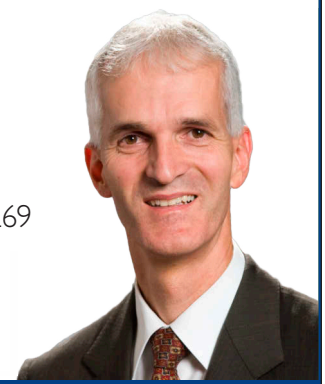
MORTGAGE INTELLIGENCE



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