

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
Volume 64, No. 17 • August 28, 2015



SHOULD WE FOLLOW OUR HEARTS?



Eric Kampen
 Minister of the Canadian
 Reformed Church at
 Orangeville, Ontario
 eric.kampen@canrc.org

Follow Your Heart

Old age comes much faster than you may think

An editorial for the youth

I hope that many young brothers and sisters show an interest in the articles in *Clarion* because this editorial is written especially with them in mind. This does not mean parents and grandparents can stop reading. Most likely, they will read it first, simply because they are interested in the lives of their children and grandchildren. The primary audience, however, is our young brothers and sisters, as they work through the question and have to make decisions about what to do with their lives.

When it comes to making decisions about what to do with one's life, it is not possible to give specific answers. It is only possible to deal with general guiding principles. A popular principle that can be heard is, "Follow your heart." This principle can be heard in popular children's movies. For example, one of the songs in the *Thumbelina* movie states,

You're sure to do impossible things
 If you follow your heart
 Your dreams will fly on magical wings
 When you follow your heart.

Another song, with the same title of "Follow your heart," has the refrain,

Follow your heart (you got to follow your heart)
 Living for today, forget about tomorrow
 Follow your heart (you got to follow your heart)
 Any other way will only lead to sorrow
 Don't wait any longer
 Follow your heart.

This all sounds very similar to what we read in Ecclesiastes 11:9, "Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes."

While it may seem we have a guiding principle on which the world and the Word agree, there is a very big difference. The words in Ecclesiastes are followed by a

"but." It reads, "But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment." In addition, there is mention of remembering your Creator in the days of one's youth and the fact that, someday, youth will be the youth of yesterday. It is worth reflecting on this some more to encourage the young brothers and sisters indeed to follow their heart, in a godly way.

The young soon get old

The time to follow your heart is indeed when you are young. The exhortation in Ecclesiastes is preceded by the words, "Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth." One will not be young forever. There is only so much opportunity in one's life to do things. If you don't think about the fact that, as the Preacher says, there will be many days of darkness (11:8), referring to old age, then you are prone to waste your life, missing opportunities that present themselves in the years of one's youth. Being only young once is not to be taken as a reason to party hearty, but to make the most of it in terms of developing your abilities. Youth is the time to follow the ways of your heart, pursuing the interests that excite you, because it won't last. Old age comes much faster than you may think. When those days come, one will not find the same enjoyment and be able to follow the desires of one's heart.

Lest there be any doubt about that, the Preacher paints in rather vivid colours what it means to become old, beginning in Ecclesiastes 12. What in Ecclesiastes 11:8 he called days of darkness, in chapter 12:1 he calls the evil days, which do not give pleasure. Indeed, all the pleasures of life just seem to disappear. That is the gist of saying that the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark. The things that used to sparkle and give excitement in life just don't do it anymore. The mention of clouds returning after rain makes one think

of how one illness or ailment has barely been dealt with before another one shows up. It is not rain and then sunshine, but rain and then clouds anticipating the next rain of trouble in one's life. You may have seen this in the life of your grandparents or great-grandparents as they have health troubles in their lives. Once they start, it just never seems to end as one rain shower has just passed, while the cloud of the next health issue appears on the horizon. There simply is no time to follow your heart when life begins to revolve around doctor's visits.

All this is not nearly the end of it. The wearing out of the body is portrayed like the wearing out of a house over time. You will

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

"Follow your heart," Rev. Eric Kampen writes in his editorial – a principle that we can find in the world, but also in the Bible. How is this a biblical principle? Take a look at the article, and pass it on to the young people in your life.

Does it ever strike you that Christ called his disciples men of little faith? What does this mean? And if the men who became the twelve apostles were men of faith, what does that make us? Rev. Klaas Stam issues readers a challenge: prepare for the new study season in such a way that we may indeed grow and mature in faith.

Issue 17 brings you a translation of a speech by Prof. Jakob van Bruggen; it "aims to lend a helping hand to people who are struggling with questions about creation and evolution, faith, and science." There is also a Treasures New and Old meditation, the Clippings on Politics and Religion column, and a question for Rev. William den Hollander's You Asked column.

Laura Veenendaal

- 466 EDITORIAL**
Follow Your Heart
- 469 TREASURES NEW & OLD**
What Gain Has the Worker from His Toil?
- 470 Little Faith**
- 472 The Blind Man Sat by the Road and He Cried**
- 476 CLIPPINGS ON POLITICS AND RELIGION**
- 477 YOU ASKED**
- 479 Nearer to God Devotional**

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editor: J. Visscher; Copy Manager: Laura Veenendaal
Coeditors: P.H. Holtviüwer, E. Kampen, K. Stam, C. Van Dam

ADDRESS FOR COPY MANAGER

Clarion
8 Inverness Crescent, St. Albert, AB T8N 5J5
Email: veenendaal@telus.net

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			\$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

Cancellation Agreement

Unless a written subscription cancellation is received we assume you wish to continue to subscribe. You will be invoiced prior to the subscription renewal date.

2015 ADVERTISING RATES


Advertisements: \$19.75 per column inch
Full Colour Display Advertisements: \$21.00 per column inch.
We reserve the right to refuse ads.

PUBLISHER

Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd.
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Copyright © Premier Printing Ltd.

All rights reserved. No part may be reproduced in any manner without permission in writing from the publisher, except brief quotations used in connection with a review in a magazine or newspaper.

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

Agreement No. 40063293; ISSN 0383-0438

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5

see those old houses, the old homesteads, as you drive through the countryside. As you pass by them over many years, eventually what was once a nice family home collapses to the ground. Paul referred to our bodies as tents, fading over years of use.

The fact that one day you will be judged puts necessary boundaries on following one's heart

It is not a pretty picture. The mention of the keepers of the house trembling makes us think of arms and legs. When young, you can run, skate, play sports. You can throw a ball, and lift heavy weights, but eventually, muscles weaken. As people age, they often shrink and begin to get a stoop in their posture. The legs become unsteady, and at a certain age, a cane or a walker is a must. As for the grinders, that makes us think of teeth. People compensate with false teeth, but still, one cannot chew the same. Add to that the way, with age, eyesight can begin to diminish and the ability to hear fades. The loss of hearing is captured in the way the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades. With loss of hearing, one becomes shut out to what happens in life, unable to follow all the conversations. On top of that, sleep can become elusive, so that one gets up with the birds, not because the birds woke one up but because sleep just won't come.

We get some further images of what happens as one grows old. The fear of heights makes us think of how old people get trouble with stairs and walking up hill. One is not as alert, as agile, and falls can result in bones easily broken. The mention of the almond tree blossoming is an image of hair turning gray. The mention of the grasshopper dragging along the ground make us think of how with age one moves slower and slower. As for desire, well, all the desires of life just fade away. There is little appetite for living as the years go by and the body weakens.

The time, then, to follow one's heart, is when you are young. All too soon, you will be like an old, worn out house, a faded tent. There is only a small window. Use it.

There will be judgment

It is not just the case that one day you will get old, but it is also the case that one day you will be judged. If the thought of getting old was meant to stimulate the

enjoyment of life and the pursuit of one's dreams while young in the sense of, "Now is the time to do it, seize the opportunity," the fact that one day you will be judged puts necessary boundaries on following one's heart. The reality is that God will judge us for how we lived our whole life. That judgment will take place when old age eventually leads to death.

The Preacher describes death with various images. There is talk of man going to his eternal home. We read of a silver cord being snapped, a golden bowl broken, a jar breaking into pieces as it knocks against the walls of a cistern, the pulley used to haul water buckets from a well breaking and crashing into cistern. All these images of dying show how what once was beautiful, useful, eventually comes crashing down. The curse over sin, as recorded in Genesis 3, is fulfilled when bodies return to the dust and the spirit returns to God.

Following your heart is always to be governed by the call to love God with all your heart

The reality of having to face judgment spans the Bible. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil."

The awareness that God will one day bring all things into judgment is important so that the pursuit of enjoyment and the desires of your heart will not lead to a life of wild abandon, of indulging in whatever you feel like doing. It brings out that following your heart ultimately cannot be done apart from loving God with all your heart. Those who love God with all their heart need not fear the day when they have to give account.

Get going!

Young Christians may throw themselves into the task of living with all energy and gusto. There is no time to waste, for old age comes fast enough. At the same time, in following your heart, it has to be kept in mind that one day everyone has to give account to Christ. To that end, following your heart is always to be governed by the call to love God with all your heart. If that is the first and foremost concern in one's life, one can safely follow one's heart, seeking to live a fruitful, busy, God pleasing life. **C**



Ryan de Jonge
Co-pastor of the
Canadian Reformed Church
at Langley, British Columbia
ryandejonge@gmail.com

What Gain Has the Worker from His Toil?

Ecclesiastes 3:9-13

Sometimes you just know the kind of answer that you are going to get. You know that Winnie the Pooh is going to be preoccupied with honey, that Piglet is going to be anxious and fretting, and you know that Eeyore is going to see the negative side of things.

When we hear the Teacher's question in Ecclesiastes 3:9, "What gain has the worker from his toil?" we are expecting an Eeyore-like answer. After all, since the opening verse stated, "Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity," the perspective of the Preacher has been decidedly negative. Consider the headings from the ESV for chapters 1 and 2:

- All Is Vanity
- The Vanity of Wisdom
- The Vanity of Self-Indulgence
- The Vanity of Living Wisely
- The Vanity of Toil

So what gain has the worker from his toil? It looks like the question has already been answered: Vanity! Nothing! Meaningless!

Surprisingly, this is not the answer that we get. Rather, we read in verse 12, "I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil – this is God's gift to man."

"Alright," we want to ask suspiciously, "Who wrote this and what did he do to the *real* Preacher, the one who thinks everything is vanity?"

But make no mistake, this is the same Preacher who writes this, and he has every reason to, since in the course of the book he has made a discovery, and that discovery is that everything is beautiful in its time (verse 11). The Preacher arrives at that conclusion after the famous words of 3:1-8, which begin, "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." The discovery that the Preacher makes is that while there are good times and bad, God is still God and sovereign over it all. The Preacher has recognized the providence of God.

Since the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, the discovery that God is God and he makes everything beautiful in its time changes the way that the Preacher sees life. Now he can see that it is best to enjoy life and do what is good. In other words, receive what God gives with thanksgiving and serve Him in wholehearted obedience.

Not surprisingly, this simple formula, in whole and in part, gets repeated throughout the New Testament as the way that Christians are to live. And no wonder, because in Christ, God has proven beyond a doubt that he makes everything beautiful in its time. God redeemed all of time and proved his sovereign power and goodness in history when in the fullness of time God sent his Son (Gal 4:4).

What gain has the worker from his toil? Embracing the gospel of Jesus Christ, we have every reason for joy and to do good as long as we live (Eccl 3:12). We can take pleasure in all our toil, because in Christ God has made everything beautiful in its time. **C**

For Further Study

1. When you are working, what gets you upset and frustrated?
2. How does an awareness of God's providence change your approach to your work?
3. How does (has/should) the gospel change the way that you work? Meditate on the Apostle Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15:56-58.

Little Faith



Klaas Stam
Minister emeritus of the
Canadian Reformed Church
at Hamilton, Ontario
cstam@sourcecable.net

**(Matthew 6:40; Matthew 8:26; Matthew 14:31;
Matthew 16:8; Matthew 17:20)**

It is remarkable how many times the Lord Jesus calls his disciples people of “*little faith*.” He says this to them in various situations, and it is not easy to determine the exact extent of this nomenclature. He says it so many times that it becomes almost like a nick-name that deeply characterizes the disciples’ main problem. I have taken only the ones out of the gospel according to Matthew, but they are found elsewhere also in the other versions of the gospel.

This way of speaking becomes even more important when we realize that in the original Greek it is only one word. It says “*oligopistoi*.” Oligos means little. Pistoi is the word for believers. Taken together these words denote believers who fall short, are lacking in faith, and therefore often do not understand what they see and hear. They find it hard simply to accept some biblical histories.

Oligopistoi. Notice that the Lord Jesus does not call his disciples *unbelievers*. I think that this is a very important observation. It is not a word of condemnation but a word of encouragement. The Lord Jesus knows his disciples very well. He knows the nature of us all. Yet he does not push his disciples away but says to them: O ye of little faith! It is almost, forgive me, like an endearment. In that one word he characterizes them perfectly but also holds to them steadfastly. Unbelievers have no place with the Lord Jesus. Let the dead bury the dead, he once said. But *oligopistoi* are always welcome. Little faith can and will grow and mature. Perhaps that takes a lifetime. Unbelief is unacceptable. But “little faith” will be shaped and molded by the Spirit and Word of God.

Nullifidians

I am not trying to be amusing by choosing to use difficult words. I actually dislike using difficult words. But

the word “*nullifidians*” is rather priceless in this context. Perhaps you can remember it. The word means people who have no faith. Null, zero, basta. No faith, not ever. Nullifidians. Unfortunately there are a lot of people with no faith whose greatest joy is to ridicule God and malign his word.

Indeed, the goal of *nullifidians* is to demonstrate that the Bible is not true, and cannot be true as written, because it contains matters that simply cannot be accepted by a rational, intelligent mind. How could the Israelites ever pass through the Red Sea? How could this people survive a gruelling forty-year stay in the desert? How can the sun stand still? How can a young lad defeat a giant? “With a stone, dear Henry?” How can anyone survive for three days in the belly of a great fish, whatever it was? How can a dumb ass speak? How can a virgin bear a child? How can the son of God give up his life on the cross? How can someone rise from the dead on his own steam?

So many questions, some of which are very pertinent. *Nullifidians* will triumphantly say: see, we told you! All this simply is incredible. Those of little faith will shake their heads and tuck their fears inside. Some will compromise and go with the flow; others will hang doggedly to the Scriptures. The life of faith is not always constant and strong. But those of little faith will not deny simple biblical truths.

Scriptural faith

Our forebears who were certainly not *nullifidians* used to speak about Scripture-faith. The activity and content of faith is determined by what it says in the Scriptures. In Lord’s Day 7 of the Heidelberg Catechism this question is asked, “What is true faith?” The answer is surprisingly simple, “True faith is a sure knowledge whereby I accept as *true* all that God has revealed to us in his *Word*. At the same time it is a firm confidence

ACCEPTED AND DECLINED

Accepted the call to Grace CanRC of Winnipeg, MB, and declined the calls to Pilgrim CanRC of London, ON, Ebenezer CanRC of Burlington, ON, Calgary, AB CanRC, and Owen Sound, ON CanRC:

Candidate Rick VanderHorst

CHURCH NEWS

that not only to others but also to me God has granted forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteous and salvation, out of mere grace only for the sake of Christ's merits. . . ." What then, must a Christian believe? "All that is promised us in the gospel."

Our faith is Scripture-faith. "This faith," it says in Lord's Day 7, "the Holy Spirit works in my heart by the gospel." The apostles and disciples did not understand yet how the Old Testament related to the New Testament, but in time they accepted all this as fulfilled in Christ, and went out to proclaim the gospel of salvation. The men of the "little faith" became the men of the Great Commission.

Unbelief is unacceptable.

But "little faith" will be shaped and molded by the Spirit and Word of God.

Our faith is based on and focused on the Holy Scriptures. We have the complete revelation of God. Take away the Bible, or parts of it, and you risk losing it all. From Genesis 1 to Revelation 22 the Bible gives us the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. When you are ever assailed by doubt or confusion, go back to the Bible, read it again, accept fully what it says and see the beauty of the gospel. But you have to say to yourself every day, "I believe what it says in the Bible." Yet sometimes I am of little faith. *Oligopistos* sometimes, perhaps. But not a *nullifidian*! God forbid. Is it not of great comfort that God takes people of little faith and makes them into spiritual powerhouses?

There was a man who had a child with severe and crippling epilepsy. He brought this child to the Lord Jesus. He begged the Lord to heal the boy (Mark 9:23-24). The Lord says, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes". The man cried out, "Lord I believe, *help my unbelief!*" (Mark 9:23-25). The man believes, but he is also aware of the weakness of his faith. It is an honest confession: I believe, but unbelief always assails me." *Help my unbelief.* It is a prayer which should often come up in our minds. "Help my unbelief!" I can tell you honestly that this is a key petition in my life of prayer.

Some pastoral urging

I am not saying that little faith is acceptable. On the contrary, we need to grow into the full manhood of faith. That process is not the same in everyone. In Ephesians 4:13 we receive a glimpse of the future: "Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to *mature manhood* to the measure of status of the fullness of Christ." A child is not yet an adult. There's always still a lot of growing to do, even for grownups. It takes time and resilience for a mustard seed to become a big tree.

Mature manhood is coming, also maturity in faith. We need to be aware of it. It is to be a great comfort for all of us that one day we shall know the complete truth. But until that time we need to heed the apostolic urging. We need to *grow* into manhood, to maturity, also in faith.

Is it not of great comfort that God takes people of little faith and makes them into spiritual powerhouses?

But how do we grow? There are many articles on the Internet and in books that provide with much advice on how one grows in faith. All of this has its merits, I'm sure. But I would like to issue a concrete challenge to all readers of *Clarion*. Prepare for the new study season in the fall by studying and discussing together Hebrews 11 and 12. The best time may perhaps be in late August. I'd like to give you a little outline.

Hebrews 11: discuss what faith is: being sure and certain of God's promises. Consider also how each person mentioned in Hebrews 11's "cloud of witnesses" arrived at the ultimate expression of their faith.

Hebrews 12: discuss how faith grows. Here the key elements of Hebrews 12 need to be explored; the perseverance of faith (1-6), the discipline of faith (7-13), the holiness of faith (14-17), the worship of faith (18-28).

I realize that not everyone has time for an elaborate preparation for the study season. But it may be well-spent time. Because time does run out, and without the proper preparation we might miss the boat.

C

The Blind Man Sat by the Road and He Cried

About seeing and not seeing

How can you talk about the Creator God with people whose starting point is evolution? Or should we, to reach modern society, trade in the creation story for an evolution story? The following lecture (at a conference of college students in Dronten, The Netherlands, 2014) aims to lend a helping hand to people who are struggling with questions about creation and evolution, faith, and science. The theme of the conference was “Open your eyes.” We will consider: 1. Light, 2. Eyes, 3. Seeing, and return at the end to the title.

Light in order to see

It was on the first day of the world. A world where darkness lay over the primeval flood. It was the first thing God spoke: “Let there be light.” And from then on there was light, separated from the darkness. It was there, and it came back after every dark night. A permanent recurrence: days full of light.

Nobody knows what light is. Waves? Particles? People acquire much knowledge in the light of sun and lamps, but what that light *is* they do not know. Only God, who surrounds us with it, knows.

He himself is the light. He dwells in inaccessible light. For us that is totally incomprehensible. Light is all about opening and accessibility. Is there light that is as impenetrable as darkness and yet still light? There is and God lives in it. Therefore he who is the most exalted light cannot be seen by us. His light is too strong for our eyes to see.

God is light, and the first thing he gave the world was light. On the fourth day he also set out candlesticks for this light: sun, moon, and stars. And so we know where to look for light. But the light itself is more than the candlesticks.

It is a mystery that surrounds us. The light itself does not come from the sun or moon, but from God: he ignites the light and he *is* light. As John says: God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all.

So far about the light of the first day, the beginning of the beginning. After this first day the world was filled in a few days with land and oceans, with fruit trees and plants, with celestial bodies for fixed times, with birds and fish, with all sorts of living creatures in the wild.

And at the end of the creation days, on the sixth and last day, God created the eye that is able to see all this. The eye which receives light. The light that bears and delivers all the images of lands and seas, fish, and birds. Man: open your eyes and see!

The eye is as equally mysterious as the light. Evolutionary theory falls apart when it comes to the eye, at least when this theory doesn't shut its eyes to it. The eye is different. Actually, we shouldn't talk about “the eye.” God did not create the eye but humans in his image. People with two eyes. You do not talk with eyes, but with people. You can say to people: Open your eyes! Utilize the most complex element of creation. It was given to you!

When we take the time to stop and reflect, light and eyes become for us breathtaking miracles in which we lose ourselves. Light and eyes frame and encompass the six days of creation. With what we do not comprehend, we are allowed to observe and investigate the creation. With what we do not understand, we are allowed to acquire knowledge.

When you want to know what people are without light and eyes, read José Saramago's book *The City of the Blind*. This book is about people who once had sight and so have the memory of their sight. As such, the book only tells half the truth of what a city of the blind would be like.

“Open your eyes” could, of course, mean anything. At this conference, at the very least, it means you should be aware of the world around you. That you should not close your eyes to parts of reality. To poverty, injustice, environmental pollution. Open your eyes and do not turn away from your neighbour and his or her problems. Do not

be a one-sided or biased person in this world. Open your eyes to research for new opportunities. In short: be a responsible human being and do not play blind man's bluff!

These are all good and useful meanings of the conference theme, and elements thereof will certainly be worked out and expanded on. For that, it may be helpful to realize upfront that light and eyes are gifts that are not understood. Mysteries from God that require us not to be lazy. Be thankful, wake up, and look around you! It's a miracle that this can be said: Open your eyes!

Eyes to give light

This evening I want to mention two things you must not forget when you start looking around you. The first of those two is that your eyes not only *receive* light, but they must also *give* light. Seeing properly does not begin with the outside world; it begins with your inner world. The world behind your eye. The heart with which you look when you open your eyes. To look properly, you must be a virtuous person.

Our Saviour makes some remarkable statements about our eyes in his Sermon on the Mount. We read them in Matthew 6:22 and 23: "The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!"

Right living begins with right looking!

Whether we are immersed in darkness or living in the light, we depend on light outside us. But Jesus says whether we are in darkness or light depends not on external light, but on internal light. Your eyes not only receive light: they are themselves also lamps. The headlights of your body. When they fail, you drive in the dark.

By speaking so crassly of the eye as a lamp, Jesus underlines the central importance of our sight. Where the eye looks, the feet follow. Our eyes focus our attention and our body follows.

The Bible is full of examples of a bad eye darkening the whole body. Eve looked with a bad eye at the only fruit God had denied humans. She opened her eyes and saw that the fruit was appealing for food. When she followed her wrong looking, her whole body became

darkened: shame came between people and guilt overshadowed their birth and labour.

Michal, David's wife, looked with a wrong eye at David who danced and jumped with the common people before the ark. And her life became barren because of pride.

Judas opened his eyes to Mary when he smelled the scent of the expensive perfume with which she showed the Saviour love before his death. But he looked with a darkened eye. In the end he hung himself because he had betrayed innocent blood.

How great the darkness is when the eye is not pure! Our eye has everything to do with looking forward to treasures in heaven and breaking with the service of mammon on earth. When our eyes are aroused and fascinated by the treasures of this earth, our body is carried away into the bondage of greed or jealousy or lust or stinginess. Those who want to attain heaven must be careful with their looking. The eye must be captivated by the things of God and his future. When our eyes are truly focused on God, as the eyes of a slave are focused on the hand of her mistress, our body is illuminated to all good work. Right living begins with right looking!

In our visually oriented time it is good to learn that our eye is the lamp of our body. It is very important *how* we look and *what* we look at. When our eye is pure, we look with joy at all that is good and worthy of praise: as we look at good examples we learn to follow. With a pure eye we also only look with reluctance at that which is improper or which ventures in bad character or feelings: we learn to get an aversion to evil. Pure looking keeps our life fresh and keeps the outlook on the heavenly treasure open.

In this age of the visual, we must learn that the eye is not a neutral receiver, but a lamp of our body. This light must shine by directing our eye to God, the only Master. Make a sticker for your PC or tablet or smart phone: "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light."

As a college student, you deal with science and research and its results. This scientific world claims a kind of holy objectivity. Research seems to go its own path. And your eyes follow it. There is little attention then for the eye as an independent light source.

Sometimes this is recognized and seen as a deficiency. The developers of the atomic bomb in the Second World War had little eye for its potential consequences for humans, the environment, and the ethics of warfare.

They looked at what could be and made it. Would it have been made if the researchers had had an eye for its destructive and long term consequences? People dare to ask such questions with respect to nuclear weapons. But are those questions not in play as well in the development of drugs or space travel or the Internet? Is the researcher nothing more than an obedient slave of what is possible, or are there yet, above the microscope, behind the telescope or while programming loving eyes that are focused on fellow humans and world? Theoretically we can articulate this as follows: "Is everything that is possible permitted?" But as long as this general ethical principle is not translated into an individual ethic by the researcher and developer personally, much will be researched and developed that will lead to harm. Mephisto is not excluded by merely being scientific.

Open your eyes: Look around you in the world for that is good. It is God's world! But you cannot open your eyes without also asking what *kind* of eyes you have, what kind of *person* are you. Because – in science, in finance, in business and politics – it is about people. If it is good, it's about people who have light in themselves. Without virtue, you do not see the world rightly. You think you are heading towards light but you will be encompassed by darkness.

Eyes that see less than half

This is the first point you must not forget when with open eyes you look around you in the light: your eyes themselves have to give light! Be a *virtuous* observer. There is also a second point to remember: when we open our eyes, we see much, but more than half is not visible for us to see at this moment and in this time. That ought to make you a *modest* observer.

Being more than half blind is a reality that we do not like to admit: why would there be things that we cannot see? For us, what you do not see and which cannot be observed is unimportant. It simply does not exist, we think.

Yet there is more we do *not* see than we *do* see. Someone who once experienced this was the servant of Elisha. Getting up in the morning, he discovered that the village of Dothan, where they had spent the night, was surrounded by a large Syrian army with horses and chariots. He surveyed the situation and was terrified. Understandably. But then Elisha prayed: "Lord, open his eyes." This servant suddenly saw the larger half: "Behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (cf. 2 Kings 6:8-23).

The human world is full of people who are full of themselves. But this same world is even fuller with angels of nations and guardian angels and heavenly powers and saints in heavenly places. Because you don't see them, you don't take them into account. The invisible doesn't count on earth.

This invites us to reflect on today's dominant worldview: of a visible and researchable cosmos. That's our worldview too, but it is very incomplete. It's limited to the observable. For the rest we only have knowledge from hearsay or incidentally through a dream, vision, or appearance.

Our eyes focus our attention and our body follows

Only faith in what we have heard makes us aware of more than we see. As we read in Hebrews 11:3, "By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the Word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible." Faith "convinces us of the truth of things we do not see."

We now arrive at the much-discussed distinction between faith and science. With as shibboleth whether or not to believe in the evolution of the history of the earth and mankind.

In various ways people try to relieve the tension by devising an escape route:

1. 1st escape route. "Faith is of a very different order than science. Let science inform us how the earth rotates and the Bible how you get to heaven" (Galileo). This escape route is illusionary, because the Bible is about the exact same creation as the one we focus on in our research.
2. 2nd escape route. "When it comes to reality, science comes before the Bible. Use science as a lawnmower to trim the Bible. Whatever is still standing of the Bible at this time, you may believe if so desired, without seeming old fashioned in your modern times." This escape is in fact denying the problem. Man remains the sole legitimate observer, authorized to trim the Bible and make it subservient to human insight.
3. 3rd escape route. "The Bible is above all, so attempt to fit all observations into the cadre of the biblical revelation of creation, flood, etc." This escape route is a dead end, because the Bible is far too limited and incidental in information to use as a scientific handbook.

But why should we seek an escape? We need not be ashamed of our faith *vis à vis* the forum of a science that is half seeing and half blind. Our mistake, in my opinion, is that we accept science as complete and final. Without considering that this science is not able to investigate even half the material at hand. No one knows what influence angels had at creation or beyond. No one can examine the effects the world of spirits and demons have had and still have in diseases and major events.

Psalms 115:16 reminds us of our limitations: “The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth he has given to man.” And the book of Ecclesiastes never tires of making clear to us that man has a vain task in exploring the world under the sun. That burden is imposed on him, though he is not able to find ultimate truth in all his searching. All scientific conclusions should be accompanied by a disclaimer stating: “As far as we can see now with the incomplete information at our disposal, we come to the following preliminary conclusions.”

Our mistake, in my opinion, is that we accept science as complete and final

These conclusions can be very workable on earth, while metaphysically or historically they are not the last word. The computational models that are released on strata may be useful for exploratory drilling, without thereby requiring that the mathematical models of processes lasting millions of years be deemed also historically accurate.

Question the absolute truth claims of human sciences: “How do you know that the observable world is

the only factor in play?” A theory of evolution may be a useful model for organizing everything we observe in the world of fossils and animals, but it does not have to be at the same time a statement of historical nature. Simply because we have only been able to examine less than half the field because our eyes have limited range.

Summary

I come to the conclusion of these three points, summarizing as follows:

1. Open your eyes: enjoy the light. Be thankful.
 2. Open your eyes: let your eyes be lights for others. Be virtuous.
 3. Open your eyes: know you see less than half. Be humble.
- In summary: be happy that you may peek through God’s fingers and firmly hang on to his hands when you open your eyes.

The blind man sat by the road and he cried

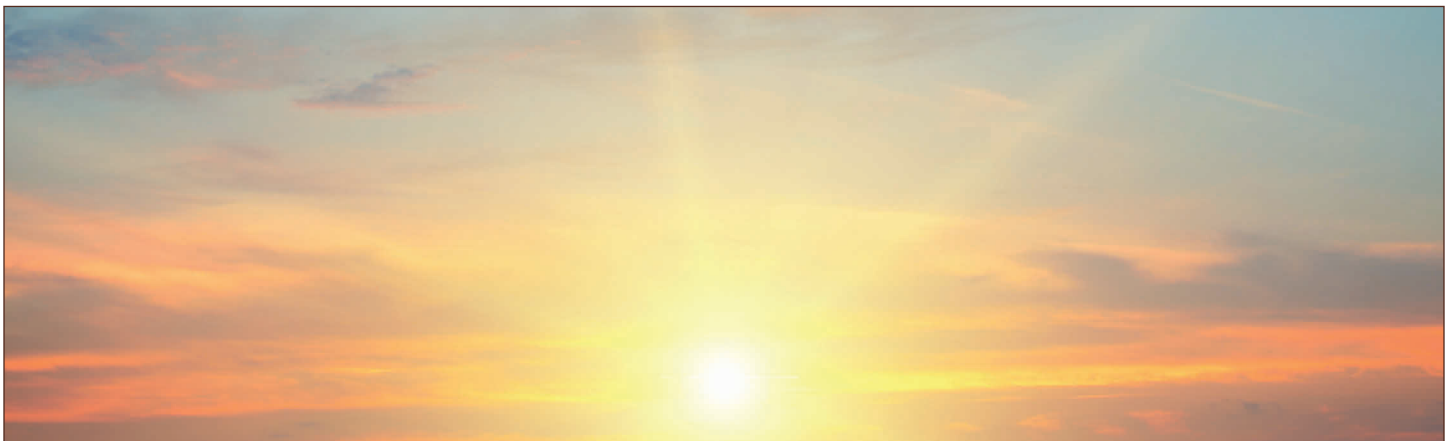
I come now to the title of this lecture. It is the first line of a Negro spiritual about Bartimaeus:

“The blind man sat by the road and he cried:
‘Show me the way to go home!’”

Perhaps we are tempted, like the crowd, to walk quickly past the blind beggar. Fortunately we are able to see and we only have to open our eyes to see. But is that really true? Was that true with the servant of Elisha? And with Saul on the road to Damascus? And with Balaam who struck his donkey? And with the Areopagites who sent Paul away because he believed in a resurrection?

You may call to each other: Open your eyes. But for yourself it is at all times best to join the blind beggar and cry with Bartimaeus: “Open my eyes, show me the way to go home!”

C



The Mosque and Terror



Cornelis Van Dam
Professor emeritus of Old Testament
at the Canadian Reformed
Theological Seminary in
Hamilton, Ontario
cvandam@canrc.org

The instances when a Muslim murders non-Muslims are adding up. Most recently at the time of writing, four American marines were killed in Chattanooga, Tennessee, on July 16, 2015. The politically correct keep repeating that this has nothing to do with Islam, which is to be considered a religion of peace. The evidence however increasingly indicates otherwise. As Tarek Fatah noted in the *Toronto Sun* (July 21, 2015) with respect to this particular case, the murderer had issued the equivalent of an Islamic declaration of war on America in a text message before the killing. He had justified the murders from sayings of Mohammed.

Some Western governments are beginning to take note. It is to the credit of Prime Minister Stephen Harper that he has recognized the threat of jihadi terrorism in Canada and is trying to do something about it. More recently, UK Prime Minister David Cameron in a landmark speech on July 21, 2015, named Islamist extremism and its ideology as the root cause behind terrorism. As he put it: “Simply denying any connection between the religion of Islam and the extremists doesn’t work, because these extremists are selfidentifying as Muslims.” Not all Muslims support this mentality, but as Jamie Glazov has perceptively noted (July 23, 2015): “There are obviously many good Muslim people who do not engage in Jihad or want Sharia, but the problem is that they are considered bad Muslims by Islam itself.”

To be a *good* Muslim according to the canons of that religion, you need to hate all non-Muslims. This attitude is encouraged in a typical mosque. As Tarek Fatah wrote in the November 25, 2014 issue of the *Toronto Sun*: “In mosques across Canada, our Friday congregation begins with a prayer to Allah for a victory of Muslims over the kuffaar (Christians, Jews and Hindus).” Research has shown that three in four American mosques preach anti-West extremism. Not surprisingly, sermons preach that “jihad or support of jihad is not only a Muslim’s duty but the noblest

way, and suicide bombers and other so-called ‘martyrs’ are worthy of the highest praise; and that an Islamic caliphate should one day encompass the U.S.” (<http://www.wnd.com/2008/02/57141/>). It is no wonder then that a moderate Muslim as Tarek Fatah, a founder of the Muslim Canadian Congress, warns Canadians in the *Toronto Sun* article just mentioned that you cannot rely on Islamic religious clerics to fight radicalization. This would be “like employing the fox to guard the chicken coop.”

What then can be done about this threat that few politicians seem to want to talk about? Tarek Fatah recommends that one must try to prevent radicalization. The way to do this is, among other things, to:

Lay hate speech charges against any Muslim cleric who hides behind religious rights as he attacks and demonizes other religious faiths or people of no faith at all. . . . Every mosque must be monitored for such hate speech where the word “kuffar” is invoked to hide the real target – Hindus, Christians and Jews. . . . Any mosque indulging in active politics must have its charitable status revoked. . . . Immigration from Pakistan, Somalia, Iran, Iraq and Syria must be suspended until Canada can be assured that security documents, identity papers and university degrees cannot be bought on the black market or from state agencies.

While the mosque preaches hatred towards anything not Muslim, the Christian church preaches the love of God to save sinners and enjoins one to love God and the neighbour. While the mosque foments disrespect and opposition to the legal authorities, the Christian church prays for the authorities “so that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness” (1 Tim 2:2). While the mosque encourages taking up the physical sword for Allah, the church uses the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God (Eph 6:17), to advance the cause of Christ. **C**



William den Hollander
Minister emeritus of the
Bethel Canadian Reformed
Church of Toronto, Ontario
denhollanderw@gmail.com

Q

We believe that God is a Triune God, that there are three persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit: The Trinity. Scripture also reveals that God is known by the name Yahweh. Who then is Yahweh? Is that God the Father, or is that God the Son? Will the scriptural answer of that question have any bearing on historic redemptive preaching?

A

God has indeed revealed himself as the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We also confess him as such, e.g. in the Belgic Confession, articles 8, 9, where we confess the Father as the cause, origin, and beginning of all things visible and invisible; the Son as the Word, the wisdom, and the image of the Father; and the Holy Spirit as the eternal power and might who proceeds from the Father and the Son. Yet, God is not by this distinction divided into three, we confess; they're distinguished by their properties but in such a way that these three persons are but one only God. Article 9 elaborates on this unity in the Trinity and observes as well the distinct offices and works of these three persons toward us: the Father is called our Creator by his power; the Son is our Saviour and Redeemer by his blood; the Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier by his dwelling in our hearts. Nevertheless, as we confess in article 10, the Lord Jesus Christ as true God also was involved in the creation of the world, namely as the Word through whom the Father made all things (John 1:1-5).

When we, then, observe that God reveals himself by the name Yahweh (LORD), the I Am, the One who is and who was and who is to come, we have to keep this unity in Trinity in mind. It is especially in the OT high priestly blessing in Numbers 6 (24-26) that we see this: given the contents and meaning of each line, the NT believer has long recognized the Triune God in them. "The LORD bless you and keep you:" as NT believers we know that it is the work of God the Father in his work of creation and preservation (Providence) to bless and to keep us. It's a

benediction by which the LORD, God the Father, not only makes life flourish and prosper but he also keeps and protects.

In Aaron's blessing we are not only blessed and kept by God the Father, we're also loved by him in his Son: "The LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you." That is, may the LORD look favourably upon you, expressing his affection for you, so that you may expect much from your good and gracious God; his blessings, his mercy, his forgiving love and grace! How can he do so, forgive, restore, and renew? We see the basis for this benediction in Leviticus 9, where we see Aaron bless the LORD's people after he had made atonement for all their sins. Everything in the worship services in temple and tabernacle spoke of the blood of the Messiah who was to come! That the blessing had to come from the priests was a constant reminder that this blessing was completely undeserved; it was by grace alone. It's this same blessing that comes to us as NT believers in the blessing the Lord Jesus gave to his church in Luke 24:51. He is the LORD as well, in whom we enjoy God's love, mercy, and grace!

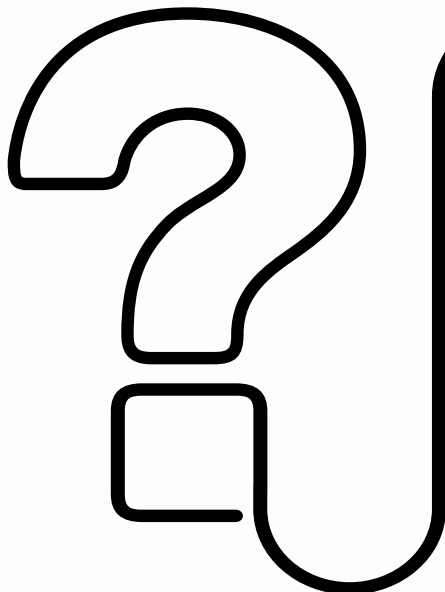
Then in the third benediction Aaron has to say, "the LORD lifts up his face toward you." By lifting up his face God is in fact looking directly at his people so that they may receive the benefit of his full attention. Now, as all these riches and promises and realities are pronounced and proclaimed over the LORD's people, the high priestly blessing comes to its climax: "and give you peace!" Shalom! The word "peace" in the Scriptures is the summary of all the blessings and salvation the LORD bestows on his people. It's the peace that's based on the sacrifice of sin, the peace that restores what was broken, the peace that's

ours thanks to the reconciliation with God. It's the peace the LORD wants to give his people thanks to the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ! He obtained the peace for us and he sent his Holy Spirit from God that through him he might work in us this peace!

From this wonderful benediction we learn that already in the OT the Triune God revealed himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and presents himself as such as the LORD, Yahweh. In this name we see his unity, while the benediction in its three-fold composition shows us the distinct blessings of each of the three persons. Also elsewhere the LORD reveals himself that way, e.g. in Isaiah 63, where Isaiah prophesies, speaking about the LORD as their Father (v. 16), who said "Surely they are my people, children who will not deal falsely." Isaiah then adds, "And he became their Savior. . . and the angel of his presence saved them," in which we recognize a reference to the OT appearances of the Son before his incarnation (as he did in other places and events). Then we see in Isaiah's prophecy how he also includes the

Holy Spirit in the work of salvation and deliverance (v. 11, 14) who came along with Moses, who divided the waters, etc. and of him it says, "The Spirit of the LORD gave them rest."

Again, depending on their "distinct offices and works" (BC, Art. 9) we see the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit revealed as the LORD. Hence, we may come to the conclusion that it is not a matter of either/or, but of the LORD being God the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit! In the redemptive historic preaching these distinct offices and works may be highlighted, but always in the understanding that it is the Triune God who is at work, and who as Father, Son, or Holy Spirit reveals himself as the covenant LORD to his people. Yes, also for his NT believers and their seed this covenant LORD is their God whose Name as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit they bear on their foreheads, and whose faithfulness and steadfast love they confess in Lord's Day 1, articulated in their distinct works for the only comfort of the NT covenant people!



**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

Nearer to God Devotional

In September 2014 a new Reformed devotional was created that could be used for family and personal devotions as well as something that an unbeliever could pick up and read and be used by the Lord for salvation. *Nearer to God* devotional was started to achieve a dual purpose, as an outreach tool to draw sinners to Christ and for the edification of the people of God. Mr. Jake Zekveld initiated the project, with the blessing of the Wyoming Covenant United Reformed Church consistory; he recruited Mr. Michael Jaatinen as general editor and to look after printing and Mrs. Christine Faber as copy editor and to manage the financial responsibilities.

Ministers of Reformed churches were asked, and generously agreed to write meditations based on Reformed, redemptive and historical exposition of the Scriptures, teaching that man is lost in sin and rebellion, that only by faith in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and resurrection can the lost sinner be reconciled to God and that man's

response, through the work of the Holy Spirit, is a life of thankful worship and obedience.

The response to the devotional has been very positive and orders have grown quickly from all over North America. Many churches are using the devotional for evangelism as well as their members using it for personal and family devotions. The work has been blessed to the extent that close to three thousand booklets are now being shipped every other month. Over the last year, two more volunteers have been recruited, Mr. Bill Nywening to look after bookkeeping and invoicing and Mr. Robert Vanderhill to handle distribution and shipping.

If you or your church is interested in receiving the *Nearer to God* devotional, the booklets are printed six times a year, with two months in each booklet for a cost of \$1.30, plus shipping. The devotional comes as a large print edition. Booklets can be ordered at ntg365@gmail.com or Robert Vanderhill, 2651 Catherine Street, Dorchester, ON, N0L 1G4, 519-455-1004 or robertvanderhill@yahoo.ca. 