



Clarion

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CENTER CHURCH?



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Infallible and Inerrant? How True is the Bible?

Can I believe the whole Bible as being true?

Recently I learned that there is a great difference between the *infallibility* of Scripture and the *inerrancy* of Scripture. Please do not be alarmed. I am running a bit behind. This difference has existed for some time already and apparently major theologians have accepted it. Seems to be legit. Everyone should learn to accept this difference and work with it. *Otherwise* we may fall into fundamentalism, literalism, Biblicism, and populism etc. Not good.

Recently these monikers were liberally applied to me because of what I wrote in a previous editorial about Bible-thumping. It was also suggested that if we accept and apply the difference between infallibility and inerrancy we can better appreciate the efforts of scientists and will refrain from science-bashing. Clear skies and smooth sailing will follow. I am sensitive to that because I love clear skies and smooth sailing.

So much for that. I plan later *Deo Volente* to write something about evolutionism and Scripture-criticism. Right now an explanation of the terms infallibility and inerrancy is necessary. This is not easy, for the terms do overlap. *Infallibility* means that the Bible is true and trustworthy for it is not a human but a *divine* word. This is a logical consequence of the doctrine of inspiration. Simply said, God cannot be wrong and so his Word is completely true. Infallibility leads to inerrancy.

But what do we do with obvious errors in Scripture? Well, some say that even though the Bible is infallible, the Bible is not inerrant, not without errors. Inerrancy means, strangely enough, that there are some errors in Scripture, not caused directly by God but by human transmission. One could say, then, that while the Bible is infallible, it is not inerrant. Somehow some errors have

crept in from the time and era, the culture in which it was written.

Stay with me now, for the ultimate question is: Can I believe the whole Bible as being true? It is nice to make fancy distinctions which are meant to help the discussion, but the bottom line is always: is the Bible really true from beginning to end? Some have found another way out of the difficulty by introducing the idea that the Bible is inerrant only in matters of *salvation*. Does the Belgic Confession not state this in Article 7 when it teaches that Holy Scripture fully contains “all that man must believe *in order to be saved*”?

Explanation: the Bible is unquestionably true only in matters of salvation, but not necessarily when it comes to history, geography, mathematics, natural science, etc. Examples? One will suffice: the Bible says that the sun stood still, but nowadays we know that the sun is the centre of our universe and doesn't move. So the sun simply cannot stand still. If we take the Bible literally here, there is a glaring error. If we acknowledge that errors have crept in here and there, our problem is solved.

Some say: the LORD accommodated his speaking to our human (level of) understanding. Like a father sometimes uses baby-talk with children. Ga-ga-gaga-goo. Accommodation. Now that's a different kettle of fish. That also falls beyond the primary scope of this editorial. Perhaps I can sometime come back to this, too.

True in matters of salvation

I referred earlier to Article 7 of the Belgic Confession. This article is said to state the Bible is inerrant in matters of salvation but not necessarily in other matters. Hmmm. Is that really what it says? In other words,

whenever it comes to the saving work of Christ, the Bible is true and without any error. But whenever it comes to other matters that are bound by time and culture, the Bible is not always reliable.

Let me give you an example. The Bible makes very clear that “mankind” fell into sin. To what extent fully-evolved persons like Adam and Eve were involved is not so important. Also, we know

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Is the Bible infallible and inerrant? Or are there obvious errors in Scripture? How does one deal with such questions? This is the topic of our editorial by Rev. Klaas Stam. On the same topic, Rev. Peter Holtvliwer reviews a book by J.P. Versteeg, *Adam in the New Testament*.

Issue 19 begins an evaluation by Dr. Arjan de Visser on Tim Keller’s *Center Church*. How should churches conduct mission work in an urban setting? Look for the second half of this series in the next issue.

Dr. Karlo Janssen church order commentaries and old and new church polity in his article, “Red or Blue? Commentaries on the Dort Church Order.”

Issue 19 includes regular columns Treasures New and Old and Ray of Sunshine. We also have a Canticle from Rev. George van Popta, as well as a letter to the editor.

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from biology that snakes and other animals cannot speak. Like Balaam's donkey, the silly beast. The speaking of the beast is only a *hyperbole* to emphasize how foolish Balaam was and not how bright the ass is. We should not take this literally, I hear. Remember, I was warned about literalism. These things are like "metaphors," a spruced-up and spice-filled way of saying things. Take it literally? Nah. Watch out for fundamentalism and literalism and populism.

It is not important, I hear, exactly *how* something like the fall into sin happened, but it is important *that* we accept the reality of the fall and what it means for us today. Don't touch that! What about the snake, the trees in the garden, yes, the whole garden itself? Exit, stage left. Probably never happened that way. What we read in Genesis 3 is a narrative that must not be taken literally.

Manoeuvring space

Article 7 of the Belgic Confession, however, does not allow for this manoeuvring space. To say that the Bible is inerrant only in matters of salvation is blatantly false. Follow the articles 3-7 of the Belgic Confession with an open mind. Article 3 says that the Scriptures are fully the inspired Word of God. Here we confess that the Bible is true because it is *inspired*. A reference is made to 2 Peter 1:21, "Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

When we start down this path, will we not lose the Scriptures altogether?

The next article makes clear that only a very specific list of books is taken up into the canon (adopted and authoritative text) of the Bible. There are also apocryphal books (Article 6) and these books have some value, but they are not canonical, inspired books. "Apocryphal" means either that the origin of these books is unclear or that these books were hidden away in a drawer or cupboard and would not mistakenly be used in the Sabbath service.

Then follows Article 7 in which we confess the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures. In this context it is said that "all that man must believe in order to be saved is taught therein." The Scriptures are not only inspired and infallible but are also *sufficient*. This article contends against the Romanist idea that the Bible is not enough and that other sources are required, for example, the living tradition of the church.

But our confession speaks differently. The Bible is enough and contains all we need to know and believe

in order to be saved. Nothing or nobody stands above the Bible; *the truth is above all*. Note that in Article 7 it also says "It is evident that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects." Most perfect. And complete. In all respects. There is no wriggle room here.

If we suggest that the Bible is inerrant only in matters of salvation, where do you draw a line and say: Well, this belongs to salvation, but that does not? Is there anything in the Bible that does not pertain to our salvation? Is the simple truth that God created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them as described *in six days* not a key matter of salvation? Why should we not take this literally, as it is written? Does the revelation of one week with one day holy to the LORD as day of rest and worship not need to be believed? Can we make this into a matter of millions of years?

Let us hold to both

Infallibility and inerrancy are not two unrelated things. The one is the result of the other. If we confess infallibility we also confess inerrancy. Let us hold to both.

I understand that there are Christian scientists who in their daily work come across matters that seem to militate against Scripture. We have some academics also in our churches. Their struggle is not easy. I can appreciate that they are afraid of fundamentalism, literalism, Biblicism, and populism. But is it proper, then, to allay our anxieties (if we have them in this respect) with the thought that Scripture does have errors? When we start down this path, will we not lose the Scriptures altogether?

Our Lord Jesus Christ himself said, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life. And these are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). All Scriptures testify of Christ. From Genesis 1 – Revelation 22. I do not want to lose even the smallest verse of Scripture, for I would be losing something of Christ. The Bible is completely true or not at all. This touches the very heart of my faith, about which I can get very emotional. Forgive me. It reminds me of a beautiful hymn: (version: Chris Tomlin)

*Lord, I need you,
Oh I need you,
Every hour I need you,
My one defense,
My righteousness
Oh God how I need you.*

Therefore every attempt to cause suspicion on any Bible verse, no matter how well-intentioned, must be humbly and firmly resisted from the onset.





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Worship

"Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth."

(Psalm 57:5, 11)

Psalm 57 speaks about man and God. If you start at the beginning of the Psalm you would, humanly speaking, end at verse 4: "I am in the midst of lions; I lie among ravenous beasts." But Psalm 57 forces us to start at the end. The last verse, and also the fifth verse, point to God. These verses are words of acceptable worship. We worship God in church as we sing and listen and pray. Do we also worship God in our homes, as families and as individuals?

In Psalm 57 we learn about the history described in 1 Samuel 22. David was surrounded by those who had fallen on hard times and had come to him. They may have looked to the right or to the left, but they learn under the leadership of David to look up—right there in that cave. About four hundred men were with David, seemingly a motley band of people. But they were troubled, rather than being in trouble. They were distressed, rather than causing distress.

And David the leader puts things in the right perspective. Acknowledging that they are unworthy, all the emphasis is on the work of the LORD. In the cave of Adullam, David leads the people in worship. The praise for God does not stay in the cave, but breaks right through the roof because David points at the LORD and his work in this world.

David speaks about the Name of the LORD. David expects everything from that Name. In this Psalm, he mentions the Lord's grace, the Lord's wings, and the Lord who fulfils his purpose for him. In the cave, for the ears of so many who have been treated badly, David leads in worship. God teaches us that the world does not revolve around you, but revolves around him. In the midst of anxious questions, David leads in worship: "Let your glory be over all the earth."

Later David would be given the kingship to establish truth and justice in Israel again. These things would later show in the kingship of Solomon, and would lead to the well-being of God's people.


But there has to be more. Verse 5: "Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth!" This is a prayer to let the glory of God go beyond the cave, beyond the wilderness, beyond Palestine. It is about the entire earth. This prayer is about the place where God wants his Kingdom, founded on truth and justice, to be re-established. That is what David touches upon in this Psalm, but which is even now still not completely fulfilled.

Now it has come closer because the Lord Jesus Christ has come and has established truth and equity as the pillars of his Kingdom. And he

is already seated in glory at the right hand of his Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead, and to establish his Kingdom on this entire earth. That is the horizon of Psalm 57. It is as if the roof of the cave is lifted: "For great is your love, reaching to the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the skies" (v. 10).

That puts things in perspective. With a heart full of confidence, you can give your life over into the hands of the LORD. The words of the Belgic Confession state that the Son of God will present the cause of God's children in such a way that it will be recognized as the cause of the Son of God. What a comfort to have!

Psalm 57 teaches us that it is not about mankind. It is about the worship of God who is worthy. This is an activity that all of God's children should be busy with. This is an activity that all of God's children should be experienced in. For if you don't worship God, whom do you worship? If you start with yourself, you will likely get stuck on that. But when you begin at the end of Psalm 57, you have the right beginning.

Those who begin with the worship of God will never run out of praise. Those who begin with the worship of God will never look down. Those who begin with the worship of God will never be distracted by trouble. 



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Tim Keller's Center Church – An Evaluation (Part 1)

For most readers of *Clarion* Tim Keller will need no introduction. The founder and senior pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City is widely known as a powerful preacher, a successful church planter, and a prolific writer. Recent book titles include *The Reason for God* and *The Prodigal God*.

Last year Keller published *Center Church*,¹ a book that stands out among the others not only because of its size (around 400 pages), but also because of its content. In this book Keller presents his vision for doing church planting and ministry in large cities in North America.

The book is not easy to categorize. Although Keller gives practical advice for evangelism and church planting, he delves deeper than the practical. The book presents a wide variety of issues such as the nature of the gospel, the character of revivals, and the need for contextualization. Much more than a “how to” book, *Center Church* presents theological reflections on various aspects related to being a church in an urban context.

Theological vision

Tim Keller feels that there is a problem among North American church planters and church leaders. They usually have well-defined principles, summarized in confessions or statements of faith. They also use certain practices which they have inherited from their church's tradition. But they have not always thought through the connection between principles and practice. This can cause problems. If changes to the *practice* are suggested, some people will feel that *principles* are at stake. This can lead to difficult and unfruitful discussions. Keller suggests that there is a middle ground between principles and practices. He calls for the development of theological reflection that straddles this middle ground. The product of such reflection he calls “theological vision.” The book *Center Church* is an attempt to put together such a vision.

In order to develop a theological vision for gospel ministry in the city Keller suggests that we need to reflect on three important questions, and then let the answers intersect with one another. The first question: How do we understand the gospel? The second question: How do we view the culture and society around us (more specifically, the city)? The third question: How do we organize our church ministry? In each case Keller uses the image of an axis with two extremes, the idea being that we should try to find a balance in the middle.

With respect to the first question (“how do we understand the gospel?”), Keller describes two extremes: On the one hand there is irreligion and relativism, that is, people don't care about God. On the other hand there is legalism and moralism, which is to say, people think they are acceptable to God because they live a good life. Neither of these represents the true gospel. The true gospel is that sinners are saved by God's grace because of the work of Christ, by faith alone.

With respect to the second question (“how do we view culture?”), Keller discusses the important topics of urbanization and contextualization. With respect to the latter there are, once again, two extremes: over-contextualization and under-contextualization. Over-context-



Tim Keller

ualization happens when a church adapts too much to culture. Under-contextualization happens when a church refuses to adapt and the gospel remains something that is alien to the society. The truth is in the middle: Balanced contextualization.

With respect to the third question ("how do we organize our church ministry?"), Keller again tries to avoid two extremes. On the one hand a church can be too structured. This happens when everything is tightly organized and closely supervised by the church's leadership. On the other hand, a church project can be too fluid. This happens when too much is left to spontaneous initiatives and there are no clear lines of authority. In order to be successful, a church project needs to combine good organization and flexibility.

In sum, Keller's ideal church is a church that has a balanced understanding of the gospel, a balanced approach to contextualization, and a balanced approach to church organization.

Keller's book has three main sections (Gospel, City, and Movement), and is further subdivided into eight parts. Each of these parts consists of three or four chapters, which gives the book a total of thirty chapters. In this review I will summarize the eight parts and make evaluative comments along the way.

Gospel

Part 1 of the book is entitled *Gospel Theology*. Keller describes two enemies of the gospel: legalism and anti-nomianism, also called moralism and relativism (p. 31).



The true gospel is something totally different: It is the message to sinners that their sins have been forgiven in Christ, and that this salvation is received through repentance and faith. For those who are familiar with Keller's

preaching there is not much new here, but it is always good to be reminded of the essentials of gospel preaching.

The second part of the book is entitled *Gospel Renewal*. Here Keller offers an interesting discussion of revivals, which he defines as "seasons in which the ordinary operations of the Holy Spirit are intensified manifold" (p. 54). Following in the footsteps of theologians such as Archibald Alexander and William Sprague, Keller attempts to recognize the positives of revivals while avoiding the pitfalls. On the one hand, he honours the ordinary means of grace (especially preaching). On the other hand, he wants the church to be open to the idea

The church is called to be a body of believers from various backgrounds

that there may be special seasons during which the Holy Spirit works with more intensity than at other times.

I found Keller's discussion of revivals instructive. I appreciate the fact that he does not offer a method of "how to kindle revivals" but rather describes characteristics of revivals. It is good to be reminded that the Lord is sovereign and that the Spirit may at certain times work with more intensity than other times. Especially if we see decline in the church, we should pray that the Lord would send his Spirit to work reformation and to grant special "times of refreshing" (Acts 3:19).

At the same time, it seems to me that Keller overstates the case when he says that, historically speaking, revival is "a consistent pattern of how the Holy Spirit works in a community" (p. 55). The more consistent pattern, I would

argue, is that the Holy Spirit uses faithful preaching of the gospel in the regular worship service to bring hearers to repentance and faith. We should not downplay the significance of the primary means of grace!

An aspect that warrants further debate is Keller's redefinition of sin in terms of idolatry (p. 70-71). Keller argues that every sin is a form of idolatry, a form of misplaced love (you love your idol instead of loving God). Elsewhere in the book (p. 126-128) Keller says that explaining sin as idolatry works well for preaching the gospel to postmodern people. He claims that they do not put up much resistance. They "quickly and sheepishly admit" (p. 127) that they have idols in their lives and that they struggle with anxiety and discouragement as a result. "Of course," Keller continues, "a complete biblical description of sin and grace must recognize our rebellion against the authority of God's law" (128). With this last sentence Keller appears to be responding to critics who have accused him of preaching a message of sin and salvation that is less than fully biblical.²

Keller clearly wants new converts to grow to a deeper understanding of sin. This is to be appreciated. At the same time, I have lingering doubts about his approach.

essence and particulars of the gospel itself" (p. 89). Again, he stresses the need to maintain a balance. If the preacher does not contextualize the message, the gospel will remain alien to the people. If the preacher adapts the message too much, the gospel will lose its power and no real repentance will take place. Thus, the preacher needs to adapt without giving up the essentials. But how do you do that?

Keller offers many pieces of good advice. The first task of contextualization, he says, "is to immerse yourself in the questions, hopes, and beliefs of the culture so you can give a biblical, gospel-centered response to its questions" (p. 121). He adds that "the most important source for learning will be the hours and hours spent in close relationships with people, listening to them carefully" (p. 121). This is important advice, based on decades of experience in evangelism and church planting.

I have some reservations about the *method* which Keller proposes for analyzing a culture and its belief system. He suggests that one should look for what he calls "A" beliefs and "B" beliefs (p. 123). "A" beliefs are beliefs that roughly correspond to some parts of biblical teaching. "B" beliefs are beliefs that are in opposition to



Somewhat I miss a clearer acknowledgement that the Holy Spirit will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16:8). Real revivals have always been characterized by people being genuinely and deeply convicted of their sin and guilt before God.

Contextualization

In the third part of the book Keller discusses *Gospel Contextualization*, a concept which he defines as follows: "Sound contextualization means translating and adapting the communication and ministry of the gospel to a particular culture without compromising the

biblical teaching. What a preacher should do, then, is to draw the hearers in by talking first about something in the "A" category, something they can appreciate. Once that foundation has been laid, the preacher can confront the hearers with a "B" doctrine. According to Keller, this is exactly what the Apostle Paul did in his address to the philosophers in Athens (Acts 17).

I find this approach problematic for several reasons. First, a culture's beliefs cannot be neatly categorized as "A" and "B" beliefs. Aspects of belief systems are always interconnected. Something that might seem to be an "A" belief will usually turn out to be closely connected to "B"

beliefs as well. It is therefore risky to use a so-called “A” belief as a stepping stone for preaching the gospel.

Second, Keller makes too much of what Paul was doing in Athens. Did Paul really stress “the similarity between his hearers’ beliefs and the Bible’s” (p. 125)? He certainly used expressions with which his audience was familiar. But, as D. A. Carson has observed, in every case Paul tweaked such expressions so that they conveyed the peculiar emphases he wanted to assign to them. In other words, while he used vocabulary that drew the hearers in, Paul was always establishing a biblical worldview.³

To summarize, I am afraid that Keller’s method would lead him to err on the side of over-contextualization. Nevertheless, his reflections on this topic are worth reading.

City

In Part 4, entitled *City Vision*, Keller offers a perspective of the city as a place where the church is called to do ministry. His view is based on biblical evidence as well as socio-geographical evidence. Keller is in love with the city, especially the city where he works: Manhattan, New York. While he acknowledges that cities are often places where sin and perversion mushroom, he also feels that Christians should learn to appreciate the city as a place where the church can flourish.

Keller offers many valuable insights. An example is his analysis of four groups of people in cities who must be reached by the church: 1. The younger generation; 2. Cultural elites; 3. Unreached (immigrant) people groups; 4. The poor (p. 160-162). Whoever thinks of starting a church plant in a city will do well to reflect on this reality. It is hard to be a church in which all groups feel at



home at the same time. It can easily happen that a church plant remains “stuck” with people from one particular subculture. Yet the church is called to be a body of believers from various backgrounds.

Sometimes Keller’s love for the city gets the better of him, especially when he tries to give a theological defense of ministry in the cities. To give an example, he criticizes the idea that the countryside is intrinsically more pleasing to God than the city (p. 170). Agreed. But then he proceeds to make the claim that God loves the city more than the countryside because there are more people in the city. . . Not a convincing argument, I would say.

(Endnotes)

¹ Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

² Just before finishing this review I became aware of a new book that discusses some of these issues: Iain D. Campbell & William M. Schweitzer (eds.), *Engaging with Keller: Thinking through the theology of an influential evangelical* (Evangelical Press, 2013).

³ D.A. Carson, “Athens Revisited,” in D.A. Carson (ed.), *Telling the Truth: Evangelizing Postmoderns* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2000), 392.





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Red or Blue?

Commentaries on the Dort Church Order

Church Polity is where the rubber of Scripture hits the road of organized church life. As such, it is a place of friction. Scripture, given its divine origin, reveals abiding, eternal truths. Regulations, given their human origin and context, change, accommodating to new circumstances. The tire is the same but the road is new all the time. However, where tires and asphalt are easily distinguished, it is not always clear what in the practice of the church is permanent or changeable.

Church order commentaries

Church Order commentaries are a helpful tool in this endeavour. In Canadian Reformed circles we have been blessed with three useful English language works produced by our own. There's Rev. W.W.J. VanOene's *With Common Consent*. There's Rev. C. Bouwman's *Spiritual Order for the Church*. And there are the smaller works of Rev. G. VanRongen in the *Reformed Guardian Series*. Another, more detailed, commentary that serves us well is *The Church Order Commentary* by the Christian Reformed Revs. Idzerd Van Dellen and Martin Monsma. It is the digital republication of "Van Dellen and Monsma" that gives cause for this article.

Church order commentaries in the Dutch language have been freely available since the early 1920s. It would seem that by the mid twentieth century the need for an English language commentary was felt. Van Dellen and Monsma took it upon themselves to ensure the studies of Dutch men such as Dr. F.L. Rutgers, Rev. Joh. Jansen, and Rev. H. Bouwman would continue to be known in the English speaking world as knowledge of the Dutch language lessened. Moreover, the Christian Reformed Churches in North America (CRC) were best served by a commentary on their own church order, rather than one on that of the Dutch.

The first "Van Dellen and Monsma," published in 1941, sold out quickly. A second, "somewhat revised and up-to-date" edition appeared in 1950. It too was soon out of stock. And so a third edition, with minimal changes compared to the second, appeared in 1954. During the 1960s the Christian Reformed Churches thoroughly revised their church order. Hence a "Revised Church Order Commentary" was published in 1967. VanDellen had passed away by then, so strictly speaking it was authored just by Monsma. However, many passages written by VanDellen passed unchanged into this Revised CO Commentary. A noticeable difference among these books was: the first three editions had a red cover; that of the revised was blue.

It is not always clear what in the practice of the church is permanent or changeable

The 1954 edition has been so popular that, during the 1990s, prices rose to well above fifty dollars a volume. This may be in part due to churches leaving the CRC, many of whom would federate to form the United Reformed Churches (URC). Prices dropped again when in 2005 Wipf & Stock republished the 1950 edition in paperback and in 2009 a paperback version of the 1954 edition. "Van Dellen and Monsma" is, however, in such high demand that recently the Reformed Free Publishing Association (www.rfpa.org) published an eBook version.

This raises the question: why is there such a demand for the older editions of "Van Dellen and Monsma"? Why the preference for red over blue?

Red or blue, the choice also exists in The Netherlands. During the 1910s, Rev. Joh. Jansen began publishing an extensive commentary on the Church Order of the Reformed Churches (RCN). He had to abandon this and instead publish a short commentary. That happened in 1923. Thus he popularized the work of Dr. F. L. Rutgers. It had a red cover. In 1937 a second “enlarged and revised” edition was published. Its cover was blue. So was that of the third revised edition, published in 1952. Following the Liberation of 1944 the 1923 edition was so popular that, in 1976, a facsimile of the 1923 edition was published by Ton Bolland, with a red cover.

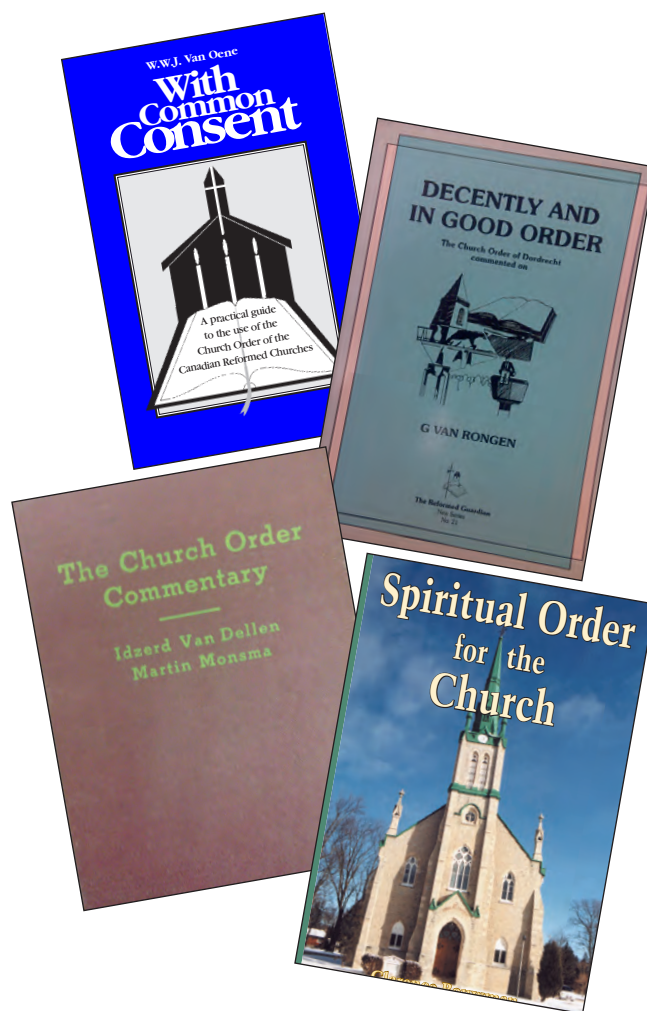
Old and new polity

In what follows I want to describe why in Holland and in America red is preferred over blue by orthodox Reformed churches with a church practice shaped by Dort polity.

In the 1920s, both the RCN and CRC had to deal with issues of alleged doctrinal unfaithfulness by ministers and consistories. During the course of the various trials that took place, synods on both sides of the Atlantic took it upon themselves to depose office-bearers. Some in the churches objected to this course of action. They argued that a major assembly does not have the authority to depose office-bearers, holding that deposition is the prerogative of the local church. In both the RCN and CRC two camps arose: those defending so-called “old polity” (primacy of the local church) and those defending so-called “new polity” (a measure of authority for major assemblies).

In The Netherlands, things came to a head during the 1940s. Disputes over various matters of doctrine led to General Synod Utrecht 1943 deposing many office-bearers. Those deposed, often whole councils, formally seceded from the RCN in 1944 to form the RCN(liberated). The majority of those deposed advocated the “old polity.” Hence the RCN(liberated) (and CanRC) continued to practice “old polity.”

In the CRC there was no huge schism and the debate continued. During the 1960s, the Church Order was thoroughly revised. The changes then made have been documented by Rev. W. W. J. VanOene in his unpublished M.Th. thesis. While the changes were not as extreme as



those in Holland, there clearly was a tendency in the direction of centralization. It is noteworthy that during the 1990s those who left the CRC chose for a more decentralized approach to the church federation. As a result, the URC also tends to practice “old polity.”

The switch from “old” to “new” is very noticeable in the various editions of the commentary by Jansen. A comparison of the commentary on Articles 30, 31, and 36 of the Church Order makes clear that the red edition advocates “old polity” while the blue editions increasingly advocate “new polity.” The blue editions of Jansen (second and third) advocate a more hierarchical and centralized church polity than the red (first) edition. That is why the orthodox Reformed in Holland prefer the red over the blue.

The English language church order commentaries also have red and blue editions. The switch from “old polity” to “new polity” is not as noticeable here. In fact, given the heated discussions in Holland, the silence of Monsma on many issues in his 1967 edition is surprising.

He himself inclined towards “old polity” at crucial points but seems to have preferred steering clear of controversy on this matter.

Both editions defend the primacy of the local church in Dort polity. While there is no higher or lower authority between the assemblies, the assemblies do differentiate as to character and domain. It is quite proper for a consistory to tell a major assembly: “hands off.” Even the Revised CO Commentary states that “no major assembly . . . has the right to depose a minor assembly.” However, as VanOene points out, in 1971 it did happen: a classis suspended a consistory.

Regarding major assemblies dealing with matters not finished by the minor assemblies, both editions follow Jansen’s first and second edition, neither mentioning “neglect to exercise discipline” as an illustration of “unfinished business” as Jansen does in his third edition.

Both red and blue English commentaries quote H. Bouwman (Dutch, 1934), who stated: “Ecclesiastical authority consists of three things: Authority to administer the Word and the Sacraments; authority to elect ecclesiastical office-bearers; and authority to exercise ecclesiastical discipline. There is no other authority in the ecclesiastical sphere. And this three-fold authority does not pertain to the Major Assemblies, but to the office-bearers of the particular Churches.” Monsma thus would disagree with Jansen that a major assembly can exercise church discipline or that they have the authority of office.

Where broader assemblies are concerned, the red and blue English Church Order commentaries are similar. However, they are not identical. One change is remarkably similar to one of Jansen’s. Like Jansen, Monsma argues that if a person objects to a decision taken by a major assembly, such a person should submit and conform to that decision during the course of appeal. In the first edition Van Dellen and Monsma had quite adamantly defended the freedom to act in accordance with conscience, implying one does not have to conform to the decision.

What makes the third edition of Van Dellen and Monsma useful is that the church order it comments on is, for the most part, identical to the original Church

ACCEPTED

Accepted the call to the Maranatha CanRC of Surrey, BC:

Candidate Ben Schoof

CALLED

Called by the Free Reformed Church of Bunbury, Western Australia:

Rev. D. Poppe

of Coaldale, Alberta

Called and declined the call by the Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church of Burlington, Ontario:

Rev. R.J. den Hollander

of Winnipeg (Grace) Manitoba

CHURCH NEWS

Order of Dort. Many federations of churches still use a church order that closely follows it. The Revised Church Order Commentary is a commentary on a strongly revised church order.

However, it should be noted that already the (red) revised third edition of Van Dellen and Monsma reveal some of the tendencies found in Jansen’s second edition and that the blue edition does go further. For example, appealing to Acts 15, Van Dellen and Monsma argued that an assembly has authority over local churches. Those who defend “old polity” would dispute this.

The red may be preferred, but it needs to be used with caution. What Prof. S. Volbeda wrote as introduction to the 1941 Church Order Commentary is true for all: “Not all the views propounded by the authors command the assent of all who are able to judge of matters canonical.” Hence there are quite a number of commentaries and guides on the Church Order.

Orthodox Reformed Churches with Dutch roots have faced the dangers of hierarchy, and thus have a tendency to steer clear of centralization. Hence there is a preference for red over blue. Thus it is good that the red Van Dellen and Monsma is now available electronically.

¹ A longer version of this article is to appear in *Lux Mundi*, an English magazine published by deputies Relations Churches Abroad of our Dutch sister churches. That longer version outlines the major changes.

² Many commentaries on Church Government in the tradition of the Church Order of Dort can be accessed at www.kerkrecht.nl > Bibliotheek > Commentaren. Most are in Dutch, some are in English or Afrikaans. Those looking for an orientation in Reformed Church Polity will find Bound yet Free: *Readings in Reformed Church Polity* edited by J. DeJong helpful.





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Canticle

Philadelphia

Revelation 3:7-13

1. These are the words of him who is the true and ho - ly one, who
 2. "I know you have but lit - tle strength, yet you con - fess my name. All
 3. "I'm com - ing soon! Hold fast your crown, en - dur - ing faith - ful - ly! You'll

holds the key to Da - vid's realm, who eve - ry vict' - ry won: "The
 Sa - tan's host and syn - a - gogue I will bring down in shame. Since
 be a pil - lar in God's house to dwell e - ter - nal - ly. I'll

door I o - pen, none can shut; I am the king - dom's Lord. I
 you have served me pa - tient - ly and kept my roy - al word I'll
 write on you the name of God, as well as my own name. On

know your deeds and faith - ful - ness and how you've kept my word.
 keep you from the hour of trial and per - se - cu - ting sword.
 you I'll write these bles - sed words: "The New Je - ru - sa - lem."

Text: Revelation 3: 7-13; vers. George Ph. van Popta, © 2013
 Tune: Gotfried W. Fink, 1842

BETHLEHEM
CMD



*The rays of sunshine strike me in kindness.
Where the sun is light begins. Light is sweet to the eyes.
When colours brighten, then we see the rainbow of life.*



David VanVeen

Hi. I am David Elliot VanVeen. I was born September 25, 1970. I was born on my Mom's birthday. What a big surprise. I had four brothers and two sisters. I lost count of all my nephews and nieces and their own children. I was born and raised in Fergus.

I used to live in Burlington at Twin Oaks for eight years. Then in 2010 I moved to the Lighthouse, back to Fergus. Then I started working at Fergus Auto Recyclers under the authority of my former classmate. Wow. There I work four days a week separating and sorting metals. I like my job.

At home I like to sit and think more than talk. I enjoy my coffee while listening to music. Often you will find me practising pool on my own, improving my skills. I have a beautiful desk and spend time on my computer on Facebook and emailing and looking things up on the Internet. Of course, I do help with cutting the lawn, and vacuuming the van. Almost every evening I dry the dishes and I always leave the kitchen clean and neat. I walk almost every day, just like I used to do with my Dad. Often before bed, I challenge staff to a game of Scrabble or Boggle.

Some of my other hobbies are being poetic, music (playing recorder), and photography.

I do like to offer my special thank you to Fergus Maranatha and Fergus North congregations in opening your arms of love. Thank you.

Birthdays in September:

8 MARSHA MOESKER turned 36

6528 1st Line, RR 3, Fergus, ON N1M 2W4

14 JERRY BONTEKOE turned 49

c/o Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road, RR 2, Beamsville, ON LOR 1B2

22 NICK PRINZEN will be 41

653 Broad Street West,
Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8

25 DAVE VANVEEN will be 43

6528 1st Line, RR 3,
Fergus, ON N1M 2W4

29 PAUL DIELEMAN will be 44

653 Broad Street West,
Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8

Birthdays in October:

3 JANELL DEBOER will be 23

6311 Silver Street, RR 2,
St. Ann's, ON LOR 1Y0

6 HENRY VANDERVLIT will be 46

c/o Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road, RR 2
Beamsville, ON LOR 1B2

12 LEONA BARENDREGT will be 30

Box 2184, Smithers, BC VOJ 2N0

13 NANCY SCHIPPER will be 57

653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8

17 ALAN BREUKELMAN will be 47

225-19th Street, Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4

21 CAMERON DANTUMA will be 22

6528 1st Line, RR 3, Fergus, ON N1M 2W4

22 NELENA HOF SINK will be 53

Bethesda Clearbrook Home
32553 Willingdon Crescent
Clearbrook, BC V2T 1S2

28 MARY ANN DEWIT will be 57

31126 Kingfisher Drive,
Abbotsford, BC V2T 5K4

Thank you so much Dave, for your beautiful contribution to the Ray of Sunshine! Congratulations to you all celebrating a wonderful birthday in these beautiful months of September and October! We hope that you have a very enjoyable day, and that together

with your family and friends you may share the joy we have in Christ. We pray for Gods mercy in all our lives and that in all we do, it may be with joy and honour to his great and holy Name! Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

A NOTE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

*If there are any address or other changes that we need to be aware of, please let us know as soon as possible.
You can contact us by the following means:*

Mail: Corinne Gelms

8301 Range 1 Road, Smithville, ON LOR 2A0

Phone: 905-957-0380, email: jcorgelms@porchlight.ca



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,


Article 28 of the Church Order calls upon our office-bearers to “set a good example to the whole congregation in this matter [respect for civil authorities], and endeavour by due respect and *communication* to secure and retain the favour of the authorities towards the church, so that the church of Christ may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way” (emphasis mine).

Although Canada was once a place where the church was able to live a quiet life, the winds of change are blowing. We are witnessing increased opposition to religion as a basis for charitable status, we are seeing human rights tribunals examine whether a consistory was right to discipline a member, and legislatures and courts are increasingly demanding that the public expression of our faith be limited to issues and places that they condone. A recent Court of Appeal decision held that the State may force a private Christian school to teach a secular subject from a secular perspective, even though it directly violates its confessional basis. As the Church Order understands, we won’t be able to maintain a quiet and peaceable life if we aren’t interacting with the civil authorities. Let’s not wait until it is too late.

Many evangelical churches have distanced themselves from anything that has even a hint of politics. And mainline Protestant churches are bringing a message to government that directly violates Scripture. As a result, our government officials hear very little from faithful churches. Although God gives the church and state clear and separate roles, there needs to be healthy communication between these spheres, as God is Lord over both.

I encourage church consistories to get to know their elected representatives and build a positive relationship with them. This isn’t very difficult. Their schedules are surprisingly accommodating and the discussions are almost always rewarding. When they know us as caring neighbours they will think twice before taking further steps against the church.

This fall ARPA is organizing visits to the provincial Legislatures in Ontario (September 26) and BC (October 22). And another visit to Parliament is planned for the spring of 2014. These visits involve ordinary Reformed Christians (farmers, mothers, teachers, etc) sitting down with the leaders of our provinces and nation and discussing issues that are close to our hearts. ARPA Canada provides talking points and background research to make this as easy as possible. Local ARPA groups welcome ministers and elders to join their delegations as they meet with MLAs, MPPs, and MPs. Will you encourage your office-bearers to get involved?

Mark Penninga
Executive Director
Association for Reformed Political Action
(ARPA) Canada
www.ARPACanada.ca 

*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.*



Adam in the New Testament: Mere Teaching Model or First Historical Man? J.P. Versteeg, Trans. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2012). First edition 1978

Additional Information: Approximately \$12 from your local Christian book seller

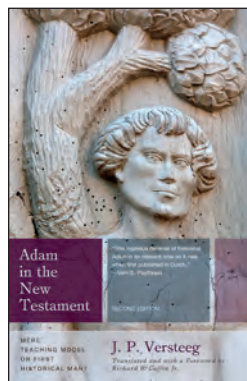
This is a great book for evangelical and especially Reformed scientists, scholars, teachers, and ministers – let me tell you why.

Pressure from science

Under the pressure of scientific discovery and evolutionary theory, more Reformed scholars and scientists are feeling the academic heat to drop the long-held Christian conviction that the human race began with one man, Adam, as Genesis 1-3 relates. Websites like www.biologos.com (whose authors describe themselves as “evangelical Christians”) openly accept evolution of humans from earlier life forms and consequently think that, at best, Adam and Eve were one pair of humans along the way.

PCA ruling elder and Old Testament scholar Dr. Peter Enns is a leading figure calling for also Reformed Christians to reject the Genesis account of Adam as historical, insisting that God did not intend it to literally describe human origins. For those of us working in a secular scientific or academic environment, such a call is tempting. Why stand against much of what our colleagues believe to be true if we really don’t need to?

But that call is shown by this book to be the Siren calling from the rocks, leading ultimately to the sinking of our faith. This little gem of a book (it’s only 67 pages) speaks as freshly and incisively to the subject as it first did in 1978. Translator Richard B. Gaffin, OPC minister and retired professor of Westminster Theological Seminary, has helped the Reformed and evangelical communities by making this essay of Rev. J.P. Versteeg widely available once again. Rev. Versteeg served as New Testament Professor at the Theological University of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (sister churches to the Free Reformed Churches of North



America), Apeldoorn. In it he demonstrates that at stake in Adam’s historicity is nothing less than the gospel itself.

Adam a historical person?

The beauty of this book is that Versteeg moves the controversy concerning the historicity of Adam away from the immediate context of Genesis 1-3 and looks at it from the perspective of the New Testament. This has the advantage of getting away from the scientific controversies surrounding the origins of the world and of mankind and concentrating instead on what Christ and the apostles believed and taught about Adam. Since the Bible is its own best interpreter, this approach is surely worthwhile and can be a corrective should current scientific theory press a person to take a wrong turn in Genesis 1-3.

Versteeg’s essay was, naturally, written in his context – The Netherlands in the mid-1970s. But he addresses a teaching then prevalent, which is resurfacing in our time on this side of the ocean, namely that Adam was used by the New Testament writers as a sort of “teaching model.” This view teaches that for Paul and the other NT authors, Adam is no more than a pedagogical example to explain some truth about Christ and Christianity. The authors did not assume or need to believe that Adam was a real man, the first man, created in the literal manner described in Genesis 1 and 2. In a careful, judicious, and highly readable manner, Versteeg challenges and refutes that claim as he exegetes each passage in the NT where Adam is mentioned by name.

Gaffin on Peter Enns

Another valuable contribution this book makes is Gaffin’s introductory essay in which he outlines the present-day controversy. This helps a reader to get a feel for the various arguments being made today. Gaffin uses the writings of Peter Enns as an example, providing quotations and footnotes and evaluating his writings fairly but firmly. He draws out the dangerous consequences of Enns’ views. It takes courage to publicly address a

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former colleague (both were professors at Westminster Theological Seminary) on his erroneous teaching (which is also done publicly), but how necessary it is to preserve the church from error! We may thank the Lord for the courage and clarity which Dr. Gaffin has been given and now presents to us in his essay. This essay alone is easily worth the price of the book.

Though others will benefit from this book, I would especially urge every minister, teacher, academic, scholar, and scientist in Reformed or evangelical circles to read

this book. It may confirm you in the ancient teaching of the church and the historic Reformed conviction concerning Adam or it may gently correct your thinking on the topic. It will certainly educate you on the finer points of exegeting what the Bible itself says about Adam. I hope it will help you withstand pressures to set aside the clear teaching of Scripture in favour of man's scientific theory. Whatever the case, it definitely won't leave you unaffected. Edifying and recommended!



ADVERTISEMENTS

Announcements of Weddings, Anniversaries (especially those with an Open House) should be submitted six weeks in advance.

BIRTHS

In Him we live, move, and have our being. Acts 17:28

With thankfulness to the LORD, **Wade and Leanne Van Bostelen** announce the birth of their second son

TODD BYRON

Born July 22, 2013

Also welcomed by proud older brother *John Stanley*
19th Grandchild of Harold and Annette Leyenhorst
15th Grandchild of Peter and Sonja Van Bostelen

WEDDINGS

With thankfulness to our heavenly Father who brought us together, we

NICOLE JULIA WIERENGA

and

PHILIP JAKE VANLEEUEWEN

together with our parents, are happy to announce that we will be joined in marriage, the Lord willing, on Saturday, September 28, 2013 at 1:30 p.m. in the Neerlandia Canadian Reformed Church

Rev. J. Louwerse officiating

Future address: Box 52, Neerlandia, AB T0G 1R0

ANNIVERSARIES

25th Wedding Anniversary

1988 ~ October 7 ~ 2013

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Ephesians 5:1, 2

With all praise and thanks to our Heavenly Father we wish to announce the 25th Wedding Anniversary of our dear parents

PETER and TAMMY RAVENSBERGEN (nee Ludwig)

We thank God for allowing Dad and Mom to celebrate 25 years of marriage and pray that He continues to bless them and be their guide in the coming years.

With much love from their children,

Scott and Michelle Feenstra

Austin

Stephanie

Laurisa

Nicole

Joshua

Sarah

Peter

7442 Regional Road 20, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

