

Clarion



Follow the way of Matthew 18?

SEMINARY STUDENT PROFILES

CLARION KIDS

YOU ASKED



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Misusing Matthew 18

Matthew 18 is addressing the topic of sin

“Have you followed the way of Matthew 18?” That question has stopped a number of people in their tracks. Someone approaches a person in authority with concerns about the conduct of someone under their charge and often the first response is: “Did you go and talk with so-and-so? I can’t do anything until you’ve taken the steps of Matthew 18. That’s the Christian way, you know.” Oh. That usually ends the conversation and the concerned person walks away feeling guilty, frustrated, and intimidated. And all too-often the genuine concerns get silenced, swept under the carpet, never to be raised again to the powers that be. Yet they fester below the surface.

But should this be the case? Does Matthew 18:15-20 apply in all situations where a person might have concerns about the conduct of another? I think we sometimes jump to that passage too fast and end up misusing it. Doing so can unintentionally dampen or silence legitimate criticism which has nothing to do with the teaching of the Lord Jesus in that chapter. Over the years and across the federation, I have heard of such misuse in two particular areas: one relates to teachers in our Christian schools and the other to ministers in our churches.

Professional ability

I love our Christian schools and I’m sure most of us do as well. As a rule, we are blessed with faithful, competent teachers and I’m convinced we all wish to hold them all in the highest esteem. Yet there are times when parents grow concerned about the teaching ability of a certain instructor.

Suppose you learn through your child that the teacher is constantly disorganized, never finishes lessons, and has very poor control over the class-room. Or perhaps the issue is an instructor whom the students cannot understand,

a person who simply can’t communicate the material in a clear and understandable way. There may be other problems. You think maybe it’s just your son or daughter’s perspective but you ask around and find out it’s the concern of many parents and it’s been this way for years.

Now suppose your concern grows to the point where you raise it with the principal or with the chairman of the board only to be asked whether you followed Matthew 18. No doubt they ask this out of a desire to do right by the teacher and the Lord, to follow due Christian process for the sake of all, but *is this the correct process?* Is it fair to send such a parent to address a teacher in the way of Matthew 18? Would it actually be possible?

Matthew 18

To begin with, the Lord Jesus throughout Matthew 18 is addressing the topic of *sin*, not professional ability at all. He warns about temptations to sin (vv. 7-9), he calls the church to go out of its way to seek out the sinning member (straying sheep, vv. 10-14), and at the end of the chapter Christ teaches us to forgive repentant fellow sinners like our heavenly Father forgives us (vv. 21-35). In-between, in the famous passage (vv.15-20) that is often referred to simply as “Matthew 18,” the Lord gives specific instructions to church members in what to do when we notice that our fellow member has fallen into sin and has not repented. The opening verse is crystal clear, “If your brother *sins* against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone.”

The issue is *sin within a congregation* – not ineffectiveness in one’s daily job! If a teacher can’t communicate a subject clearly or get organized or has no passion to stir up the students’ interests, that should never be reported to the elders (v. 17)! And no one would ever

sanction the application of church discipline over such matters! The issue in those cases is the serious question of whether an employee of the school society is able to do his/her task. It's a matter of concern about a teacher's performance and as such should be addressed to the supervisor (the principal) who then should be following an established in-house policy to resolve such concerns.

Consider this: would it even be feasible for a parent to address the teacher about his concern in a Matthew 18 kind of way? That parent will in all likelihood not have witnessed what his/her child reported – it would only be at the student's say-so or perhaps with

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Mentioning "Matthew 18" most likely brings up the idea of church discipline – more specifically, the biblical way to conduct church discipline. In our editorial, Rev. Peter Holtvliuwer addresses misuses of Matthew 18.

From Rev. John van Popta we have an article entitled, "Higher Assemblies or Broader Ones?"

In this issue of *Clarion* we begin our annual profile of graduating CRTS students. There are so many fourth year students that this will stretch over two issues. Also regarding the seminary, there is an article from Women's Savings Action.

Issue 7 also contains a number of our regular columns: Treasures New and Old, Clippings on Politics and Religion, *Clarion* Kids, Education Matters, and You Asked. There is a Church Snapshot (this time featuring the Glanbrook congregation) as well as a Booklet Notice.

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third-hand information from other parents. And to expect a student to address the teacher – even with an accompanying parent – is neither realistic nor fair to the young person. A student cannot be expected to have the maturity to sort out what the teacher's proper task is and how he/she is falling short – never mind the fear of facing an older authority figure! Even from a practical point of view, the early steps of Matthew 18 just don't fit such a situation.

Concerned parents should not be turned away by the administration with a perhaps well-meant but misguided reference to Matthew 18. Instead, they should be invited into a process of careful, fair discussion and evaluation that seeks to uphold the reputation of all involved and verify the truth of the concern. Not every expressed concern may be valid and hence the need for the impartial assessment of someone in a supervisory role to the instructor. Invalid concerns can then lead to further discussion with the student and parents but valid and verified concerns can lead to further discussion with the teacher with the aim to bring about a solution beneficial to all. This is not a church matter but a school matter.

Professional misconduct

Would it be different if the concern was about the professional misconduct of a teacher? What if the issue is not so much about performance but rather behaviour that could be described as sinful? For example, suppose a teacher is consistently berating a student or students in front of the class, humiliating them (basically, bullying). Or making crude sexual jokes. What then?

There's no doubt that such behaviour breaks God's commandments. Teachers, too, must always look out for their neighbour's best interest and use words and actions to build up their students (sixth commandment, see Lord's Day 40). Teachers must also treat the gift of sexuality with utmost esteem and honour (seventh commandment, see Lord's Day 41). Yet, the process to follow is not in the first place Matthew 18 (which has no place for the supervisory role of principals and boards) but rather the protocol that each school society has (or should have) in place with respect to the conduct of its employees. Like any organization which hires workers, a school board should also have clear policies in place to discipline staff who violate the standards of the work place.

Is there a role for elders and church discipline to play? Only when there is hardening in sin or when the

initial sin was of a public nature and becomes known in the teacher's church community. In the case of hardening, the board should indeed "tell it to the church," that is, the elders. The matter has gone beyond the classroom and boardroom to the consistory room for now it is clear that the very soul of the teacher is at stake and with it the spiritual health of that person's congregation as well. Let's not forget the honour of the Lord's Name.

In the case of a public sin, the elders should be officially informed by the board. That way, the consistory can enter into the picture equipped with all the facts for the spiritual care of the teacher and take whatever action might be appropriate (such as an announcement and public prayer; much will depend on whether there is repentance and how the sin has affected the community).

Preaching concerns

What has happened at times in our schools has also happened at times in the church, specifically when a member has sincere concerns about the preaching. Such a member might raise the matter with the ward elder only to be told, "Have you talked to the minister about it? I can't do anything until you've followed Matthew 18." Really?

Unless the member is accusing the minister of a particular sin (which is almost never the case when preaching concerns are raised), it is *always* appropriate to dialogue with the elders about the preaching. Matthew 18 only comes into the picture if the minister has sinned – and if it's a public sin done in the preaching, the elders should already be actively involved!

Disquiet over the quality of the preaching is the bailiwick of elders. One of the important tasks of elders is to oversee the preaching and to help ministers in their calling, also when it comes to their effectiveness and fruitfulness as a preacher (see the Form for Ordination of Elders). After all, if the flock is not being fed, if the sermons are not edifying because something about them is lacking, who is to work that through with the minister if not the elders? Elders have the added benefit of having heard all the same sermons as the concerned member and can analyze the sermons at arms' length and help determine whether the member's complaint has validity. Not every concern expressed may be valid, and elders can play an important role in helping the member to see his or her own part in failing to benefit from what is otherwise sound and edifying preaching.

Approaching the minister

Now, I am not saying that speaking directly with the minister isn't a good idea – it can be a good starting point. Listeners, it is understood, will aim to be quick to listen and slow to criticize, recognizing the difficult task of a preacher and how he is charged with bringing the precious Word of God. Yet because sincere listeners rightly hunger for the Word, when that hunger is not satisfied, when despite their serious efforts they struggle to be strengthened in their faith by the preaching, their concerns should be listened to carefully. Such concerns can range anywhere from repetitiousness, to lack of clarity, to imbalance in emphasis, all the way to genuine questions about a preacher's doctrine. Discussing those concerns with the minister can clear up small issues or misunderstandings whether on the minister's side or the member's side. When both discuss the matter humbly and carefully, with a desire to understand one another and end up with improved preaching and listening, there can be much benefit.

But a member might feel intimidated to meet with the minister or fear a negative reaction. Perhaps they've tried to speak with the minister but did not get much of a reception. Such an earnest, struggling member should

always find a listening ear from an elder. Perhaps the elder will go with the member to discuss things with the minister, but the elder should not turn the member away with the cold shower of "follow Matthew 18!" This is not a question of sin but of ability, of being edified, not of being wronged.

Elders and preaching

Preachers have a weighty task to bring the gospel with faithfulness and clarity, in a balanced, understandable way that connects with peoples' hearts and lives. Elders have the equally weighty task of making sure this happens. When the sheep are missing that (or some of that), they should be heard, the concern should be seriously evaluated, and, if found to be accurate, properly addressed by the elders with the minister. This is all the more pressing where those concerns are long-standing and are found in a pattern over time.

Matthew 18 is a chapter filled with beautiful and important instruction on how to address sins within the church. Let's make good use of it to that end in each local body of Christ! But when it's about how teachers teach and preachers preach, let's get the appropriate authorities involved and use sensible protocols to resolve concerns.

C





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The Worst Kind of Blindness

John 9

In January the famous eighty-nine-year-old theologian J.I. Packer went blind. No longer able to read, or write, this puts an end to his long ministry.

The genius composer Beethoven was almost completely deaf by the end of his life. There are stories (possibly not true) that he would cut the legs off his pianos, lie on the floor and *pound* on them, *desperate* to hear something, *anything*, from the vibrations.

It is a terribly hard thing, to lose one of your senses. To once have seen the beautiful colours of creation, beautiful things, beautiful people, and then never again. Or to lose the ability to hear people speak, and hear beautiful music.

But there is something worse. Though he can't see now, Packer still has the ability to imagine, to recall what things look like. Beethoven was so familiar with music that he was able to compose many – and many of his best – works while deaf. Worse, is being *born* blind, or *born* deaf. You have no way of imagining what voices, animals, or music sounds like. You will never know. If you are born blind, there's no way you could envi-

sion anything like the magnificence, the stunning diversity of God's creation. And you would not even know what you were missing!

It is this condition that Jesus heals in John 9. He heals a man born blind, not just out of compassion for his terrible affliction, not just to demonstrate his power over disease, but also to teach a theological point. He is the Light of the World (verse 5). So he can even bring light to a man whose eyes and life has been dark since birth!

But being (physically) blind from birth, as terrible as *it* is, is not the worst condition one can have. Worse is *spiritual* blindness. That is why even after having healed his (physical) blindness, Jesus comes to find the man again (verses 35-38). He still has healing to do. Light to bring. Jesus can tell him, "You have *now seen* [the Son of Man]." Not in the first place because his eyes now work; but because he has confessed that he *believes* in Jesus. He "sees" him with the eyes of faith, that he *is* the Light of the World, that Jesus also saves him from the much worse spiritual darkness of sin and Satan. Spiritual blindness, the hopelessness and darkness of sin and

Satan, is what the Light of the World has truly come to save us from. When we put our faith and trust in him.

Spiritual blindness is a terrible disease. And it's one with which we have all been afflicted from birth (v. 34). And do you know what's the worst part of being spiritually blind from birth? You don't even know what you are missing! In fact, sinners are so used to being blind, they're not even aware that they *are* blind! That's the Pharisees (vv. 40, 41).

Just imagine – being blind but *thinking* that you can see. Imagine how you would cross a road! How much trouble and misery you would get into, not taking into account your blindness!

It's a ridiculous picture, right? But that's what sin does. It blinds us to the fact we *are* sinners, so we think we can see, that is, we think we can do good, and help save ourselves. Worst of all, if we think we can see, we do not attempt to find a cure.

The only solution is Jesus. He must come to us, and we must believe in him. *Then* he will open our eyes, and we will finally see our sin and darkness for what it is.



For Further Study

1. Examine your life and heart. What wrongdoings is your sin blinding you to? (For help to see, ask a good friend. Sometimes they will see it better than you can. Or a good book is Jerry Bridges' *Respectable Sins*).
2. Do you see Jesus? That is, really believe *he* is the only one who can bring light to your blindness? Or do you have pride, confidence in your own ability to "see," just like the Pharisees?

Higher Assemblies or Broader Ones?



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In the early 1990s, our churches mandated the Committee for Bible Translation (CBT) to evaluate which contemporary translation could be recommended for use in worship services. The churches recognized that it would be beneficial to have the CBT investigate this matter and to make a recommendation to the churches.

1995

At the 1995 Synod, following the recommendations of the CBT, the churches decided,

1. To recommend the NIV for use within the churches.
2. To leave it in the freedom of the churches if they feel compelled to use another translation.¹

This synod recognized that it could recommend a translation, but that it did not have the authority to legislate which Bible translation the churches *had* to use. This is true, since the Church Order adopted in 1983 does not deal with this matter.

It is noteworthy that the CBT, in its report, commented on the strong language used by the Australian churches at their 1994 Synod when it “endorsed” the NKJV and decided to “allow” the NIV for use in the churches. The CBT report to our 1995 Synod commented,

What is particularly striking is the strong language used here; the NKJV has not simply been recommended, but it has been endorsed. To the best of our knowledge, previous ecclesiastical assemblies have shied away from such strong terminology ... still today, e.g. it is a matter of debate whether any ecclesiastical assembly ever “authorized” the “Authorized Version,” the KJV.²

It should be noted as well, from the Observations and Considerations of the 1995 decision, that several churches argued that a local church should be free to use the RSV, the NASB, the NKJV, or even the KJV. There were

even suggestions to use the 21st Century KJV. Though the 1995 Synod did not think it acceptable to *recommend* the KJV or any other translation, nor to *recommend* continued use of the RSV, it recognized that it was in jurisdiction of the local church to use other translations. Since the adopted Church Order does not deal with Bible translations, synods have no mandate or authority to legislate which translation a local church must use.

1998

In 1998, a “creeping synodicalism” began to appear. That synod decided,

1. To continue to recommend the NIV for use in the churches.
2. To continue to leave it in the freedom of the churches if they feel compelled to use other translations that received favourable reviews in the reports.”³

No longer were with the local churches free to use other translations, but were only free to use translations with “favourable reviews in the reports.” However, in the next article, in reference to an appeal against the 1995 decision to recommend the NIV, this same synod wrote, “Although uniformity of practice among the churches is desirable. . . those churches that feel compelled to use another translation are free to do so.”⁴ That synod, at that point, correctly recognized and reaffirmed that it could not and should not legislate nor regulate which translation must be used, but could only make recommendations.

2007

Then several synods later, in 2007, there was a remarkable development. In its Considerations 3.4, we can find the following: “Synod Fergus 1998 indicated that besides the NIV, other approved translations include the NKJV and the NASB. Because the ESV has been found

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CHURCH NEWS

superior to the RSV, it can be added to this list of approved translations.”⁵ This seems to be the first time that a synod needed to “approve” a translation before it could be used in the churches. However, what is even more remarkable is that the 1998 synod never decided anything of the sort! A thorough search through the 1998 Acts will uncover no such decision *approving* any translations.⁶

Based on this undocumented and unwarranted Consideration, this synod decided, “4.1 To continue to recommend the NIV for use within the churches but to leave it in the freedom of the churches should they feel compelled to use other translations that have received favourable reviews in the reports of the CBT, namely, the NKJV, the NASB or the ESV.”⁷ No longer were the churches trusted to determine which translations had received favourable reviews, but now the synod carefully delineated which ones were “approved.”

2013

Several synods later, in 2013, the synod noted in Consideration 3.2, “Historically, synod⁸ has only made a single translation the recommended one while a few others have been approved for the churches to use should they so desire.”⁹ In the same consideration, the synod stated that there is “no need to remove the NIV 1984 from the list of approved translations.” In its Observation 2.7.2 the Synod wrote of “currently approved translations.”¹⁰ This synod decided, “4.3. To recommend to the churches the use of the ESV and leave it in the freedom of the churches to use the NKJV, NASB or the NIV1984”¹¹ with the implication from Consideration 3.2 that these now were the only versions “approved” for use in worship.

This type of authoritarian language seems to have crept in from communications from the CBT, as can be seen in Observation 2.2, where we read, “Herewith the CBT sought to caution the churches that the new Bibles they were buying might not be the edition *approved* for use in the churches.”¹² In Consideration 2.6, the Acts quote the committee about various versions being “. . . previously approved by general synods.”¹³

This hierarchical language has now become part of “the new normal.” For it appears in other places as well.

In Article 125, in rejection of a proposed amendment to the Heidelberg Catechism, this synod referenced “Synod-approved translations of Scripture.”¹⁴ Similarly, with respect to the *Marriage Form* in Consideration 3.3.2 we see referenced a “Synod-approved” translation.¹⁵ This appears in several other places as well.¹⁶

Conclusion

We have seen that over the past twenty years there has been incremental “language creep,” and that assumptions have been made that are unwarranted. Moreover, Synod 2007 made statements that were simply contrary to fact, but taken to be true. The churches should be aware and concerned about synodicalism of every kind, lest the *broader* assemblies mutate into *higher* assemblies. We need to roll back this newly developing hierarchal tendency of synodicalism by which synods are lording it over the churches on matters not regulated by the adopted Church Order, nor mandated by the churches.

¹ Acts 1995: article 72 (page 37)

² *Report to General Synod Abbotsford 1995 – NASB, NIV, or NKJV: Which Version Now?* (page 33)

³ Acts 1998: Article 121 (page 122) emphasis added

⁴ Acts 1998: Article 122 (page 125)

⁵ Acts 2007: Article 134 (page 143).

⁶ A careful review of 2001 and 2004 Acts of General Synod also have no evidence of this kind of decision. It is a mystery how this Consideration ever was written.

⁷ Acts 2007: Article 134 (page 143 – 144)

⁸ This singular, generic, use of the word “synod”, followed by a verb in the present tense, demonstrates another hierarchical and synodical tendency in the way we speak. This means that the synod is a permanent assembly!

⁹ Acts 2013: Article 97 (page 96)

¹⁰ Acts 2013: Article 97 (page 93)

¹¹ Acts 2013: Article 97 (page 97)

¹² Acts 2013: Article 97 (page 92) emphasis added.

¹³ Acts 2013: Article 97 (page 93)

¹⁴ Acts 2013: Article 25.3.7.1 (page 135)

¹⁵ Acts 2013: Article 101 (page 106)

¹⁶ Acts 2013: Article 101 (page 101); Acts 2013: Article 151 (page 191).

Student Profiles at CRTS



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With this issue of *Clarion*, we are pleased to present you with a whole series of profiles of graduating students. Of our total student body of twenty-one (which is our highest number ever), we have nine students completing their studies this spring. Not all of them are in the Master of Divinity program, and not all of them are going into ministry at this point. We will present you first with five students this issue: Iwan Borst, Jonathan Chase, Jeremy DeHaan, William denHollander, and Hilmer Jagersma. The next issue will feature four more students: HanGil Lee, David Pol, Jake Tornvliet, and John Boekee.

As to our other students, in the upcoming academic year, we hope to have one in the fourth year, four in the third year, seven in the second year, and so far we have four applicants for the first year. If there are others who are hoping to join us in September of 2016, they are encouraged to write to us as soon as possible. Do check out our website for the details.

As you read through these profiles, you will get a taste of what we experience: CRTS is an exciting place to be. Alongside of lots of interesting theological content and discussion, there is an emphasis on helping young men be the kind of persons they ought to be in Christ - the kind of persons who would be well-equipped and suited for ministry.

Alongside of the M.Div. program which is directed towards a future in ministry, we have a Diploma of Theological Studies, and a Bachelor of Theology degree. These are directed towards ministry-related fields and are open also to the sisters among us.

Want to stay tuned to events, conferences, meditations, articles, and books that are connected to CRTS? Be sure to sign up for our email list at www.canadianreformedseminary.ca/news-and-events/Stay-in-touch.html and we'll keep you in touch.

It is, after all, *your* seminary.

Blessings, Dr. G.H Visscher



Iwan Borst

Hi, I'm Iwan Borst and one of the fourth year students at CRTS. Let me introduce myself: I'm the oldest child of Ralph and Maaïke Borst, born some twenty-four years ago in a small prairie town called Carman. As I grew up, we would go to Carman for church and school, but our home was in the

even smaller prairie town of Elm Creek. Or should I say, we lived in the rural area surrounding Elm Creek. Indeed, you had to get off the paved road to get to our house.

Although we loved the Manitoban seasons of mosquitoes and bitter cold, my parents decided that the Old Country wouldn't be a bad place to raise a family. I didn't protest: I loved *stroopwafels* and I already had the indispensable word "*snoepje*" down pat. So at age seven, we left Carman and headed for The Netherlands where we stayed for the next eleven years. In Holland, we lived both in Berkel en Rodenrijs and IJsselmuiden. As I started to reflect on my gifts and interests in high school, I began to consider studying theology to become a *dominee*. And as I planned, my mind was more or less set on studying in Kampen, since the Theologische Universiteit was only a short bike ride from our house. I had probably never heard of Hamilton or CRTS.

That changed, however, when I entered my final year of high school. As a family we decided to cross the pond again; it was going to take more than a bike to get to seminary. I finished high school in The Netherlands and

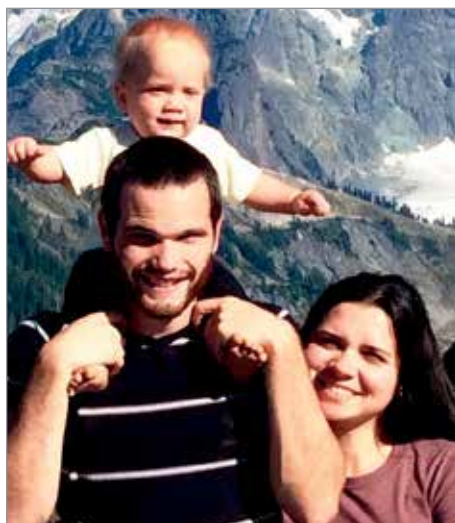
made plans to study at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. Set on going to seminary, I soon graduated with a BA and applied to CRTS. While in Manitoba, I was more or less reconnected with much of my family and my prairie roots by spending most of my holidays working on my uncle's dairy farm. Without sheep to shepherd, I guess this was the next best thing in preparation for pastoral care.

And so, almost four years ago, this prairie boy left the dusty gravel roads of Elm Creek to move to bustling Southern Ontario and to Hamilton in particular. Here I was, high school only a couple of years behind me, attending classes with guys superior to me in years, experience, and wisdom. I can say that it has been a great experience. As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another ... and over the four years a lot of sharpening has been done: not only in the seminary classrooms, but also in the catechism classes and with mentors (Rev. Agema, Rev. Wildeboer, and Rev. VanWoudenberg) during internships. And in the past year it has been a blessing

to be able to experience the fruit of this sharpening by teaching and leading worship in various congregations here in Ontario and back home in Manitoba. But what made the experience truly great was the fellowship and friendships that formed during and after the sharpening. For growing can be painful, but when classes can end with laughs and good conversations with friends, these growing pains are much easier to bear.

Altogether, by God's grace, seminary has been a great opportunity to learn and grow in the knowledge of God and his work of salvation. And the more that I have studied here, the more my desire to enter the ministry has grown. And yet, I'm not done studying. So at the moment I am making plans to study further and also use these gifts and opportunities that the Lord gives. The Lord has been good and he will remain faithful. He has provided in these last four years and will continue to provide in whatever comes in the next four and thereafter. And perhaps, I pray, he will use this love for the ministry in his church at a future time.

Jon Chase



Hi, I'm Jon Chase, and this is my wife, Dani, and our son Abel. Let me briefly try and sketch out how that happened. Sixty-some years ago, a strong-minded rancher-boy in Colorado came face-to-face with his identity as a sinner and a rebel, and – by the grace of God –

discovered the amazing gift of salvation in Christ. That was my grandpa, the strongest man I have ever known. In God's providence, after becoming a believer and then meeting and marrying his beautiful bride – that's a story of its own – he graduated from Bible school and gave his life to building God's Kingdom in the mission fields of Japan. There my father and my uncle were born and grew up, which explains why, if you ever have the opportunity

to drop by my parents' place, you will probably be served something with white rice. Oishīdesu.

But I must cut to the chase – specifically the third-generation one – or I will run out of space here. In God's providence, my dad was also compelled by God to attend a Bible college in southern Ohio. There, after being advised not to read the Institutes of John Calvin and other Reformed authors, and after doing so (obviously), he became convinced of the doctrines of grace and the Reformed tradition, and redirected his education towards Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. So it happened that, in the course of time, he found himself teaching Bible in a Reformed School. One has to imagine that somewhere during this period he probably had his first taste of *stroopwafels*, but he surely never imagined ultimately falling in love with a Dutch girl from Drenthe, Holland. Or ending up in the Canadian Reformed churches. Yet so it was; God works in mysterious ways.

I was born in Grand Rapids Michigan. When I was four, my family moved to Colorado – and then again ten years later to Lynden, Washington (a world tour, at least from an American's perspective). I graduated high school in 2007, and by then my mind was already set, long term at least, on heading towards ministry. As I worked on a linguistics degree from Western Washington University, I also worked in construction and had a small painting business. I had

initially hoped to get into the US Marine Corps, but God evidently had other plans, and after a couple of years, closed those doors for good – “The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps” (Prov 16:9).

In 2009, very unexpectedly, the Lord opened a door for me to spend a few months in the mission fields in Brazil, where missionaries Ken Wieske and Julius VanSpronsen were pouring themselves out, attempting to respond to the overwhelming hunger there for the gospel. As I taught English and sought to make myself useful in whatever ways possible, I was introduced to the incredible work that is being done there, as in so many of our mission fields. And, as it turns out, I was also introduced to the beautiful girl that is now my wife: Daniele Pereira da Silva. Her own story is super interesting in its own right, and I’d love to tell that story another time. In any case, meeting her meant that I would need further excuses to visit Brazil, so over the years I helped organize a couple of kids camps, taught English, translated some literature, helped with other mission-related activities, etc., etc. In 2013, a year and half after entering studies at CRTS, we got married during the short Christmas break, and she had her first experience of what she called the “giant freezer” that is Canada.

Not long after we were settled into our humble Hamilton home, we were blessed with our first son, Abel Kars Chase: a relentlessly rambunctious and tireless little man who easily keeps us both on our toes. I tip my hat to you parents who are outnumbered – I don’t know how you do it.

We are now nearing the end of our last semester as a seminarian family. It has been an amazing journey, and we have made very dear friends during our time here in Hamilton. I am deeply indebted to the faculty at CRTS for working so hard to sharpen the minds of us students and prepare us for what is surely the most important mission on earth: the building of God’s Kingdom and the bringing of his word to his people and to the nations. I am convinced that he is building his kingdom on this earth, and that the gates of hell will not overcome it – “The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Hab 2:14). It is my heart’s desire to serve our glorious God in this kingdom, and to be a servant of the Word to his people. Dani and I are eagerly looking forward to seeing what our Father has in store for us in the coming months and years as the details of his plan begin to unfold.

With warm regards and love and blessings in Christ,
Jon, Dani, & Abel Chase



Jeremy de Haan

My name is Jeremy de Haan. I’m married to Arenda, and our three children are James, June, and Alice. Arenda and I were born and raised in BC’s Fraser Valley. Although we’d known of each other all our lives, the fact

that she was two years older than me meant that our social paths rarely crossed. At some point in my mid-twenties I took a daring leap, and for reasons shrouded in mystery she went along with it. Now we’ve got almost a decade together behind us.

I can’t recall a single career planning assignment in school in which I listed attending seminary as a future option. It wasn’t on the radar when I graduated, and it wasn’t on the radar when I got married. For most of the decade following high school I worked at building cabinet doors, a job that I grew to love. There was also a brief attempt at rock stardom, but you know how that tends to go (Jimmy quit, Jody got married, etc.). It was only after I began attending university to pursue a career in the physical sciences that I felt the call to attend seminary. That was six years ago, and now I’m weeks away from the end of the journey.

You really can’t sum up a seminary education in a write-up like this. Because Arenda and I knew no one when we moved here, apart from the other B.C. students,

seminary life was a significant change for both of us. A change like that forces you to open yourself to new relationships and new blessings, and we always knew ourselves to be in the hands of God. We've enjoyed getting to know the profs and students, and we were privileged to meet and learn from the ministers – and their families – under whom I mentored: Rev. John VanWoudenberg, Rev. Jim Witteveen, and Rev. Marc Jagt. Marc was my mentor last summer in the church of Fergus North, where I learned that preaching was not quite the scary thing I thought it was. That summer in that pretty town was the high point of my seminary education.

Behind all this, the last four years were a period of intense growth. The looming goal of the ministry puts

pressure on you to grow up, as haphazardly as that may happen. But also, the constant exposure to Scripture and the close study of the deep and sacred truths of the faith are just as much maturing forces. The effect on me has been no less an effect on Arenda and our children. Our family has been bent and shaped and pruned these seminary years, and whatever flowering we've experienced has been the gracious gift of God. But as it is, I've decided not to go before classis in June. I'll be looking forward to a time of reflection and taking stock of things before deciding what to do in the future. Life can be a surprising thing in the hands of a sovereign God, but tomorrow's ground is made firm by his endless love.



William den Hollander

Hi! I'm William den Hollander and this is my wife and best friend, Diane, and our two sons, Gabriel (7) and Silas (2). I'm not sure what you know about us, so I'll assume nothing. Background is always helpful, so let me start there. I was born while my Dad (and namesake) was studying at the seminary (then known as "De College"). So was my brother Rolf, who has already entered the ministry. There must be something in the water. . . . My growing up years began in Winnipeg, followed by a stint in Orangeville, and ended in Richmond Hill. That's where I met Diane, who started off with a rather dim view of me but some years later found herself head over heels in love. We became high school sweethearts and got married in 2005, after I had landscaped for her father for seven summers. But despite the fact that I had wisely chosen the oldest daughter, I still ended up working for him another seven (plus two).

But that's mostly my own fault. When we were married I was in the middle of studying for my MA at York University, and my student status hasn't changed since. When I was a year from finishing my PhD, I began to consider the ministry seriously and prayerfully (after many years of paternal prompting) and Diane graciously agreed that we should make the transition to Hamilton and face the (somewhat daunting) prospect of four more years of schooling. So it happened that less than a month after defending my doctoral dissertation (on the first century Jewish historian Josephus), I attended my first class at CRTS. I have to say, though, that the years have flown by, especially the last four. It's also been an enriching experience. God has been very good. We found at the seminary a fantastic, close-knit community and we've forged deep friendships that we're looking forward to continuing despite drastically changing circumstances in the near future.

What more do you need to know? You might be surprised to know that being an eternal student isn't as boring as it sounds. Over the years Diane and I (together with the kids, when they were born) have had great opportunities to travel because of my studies. We've found ourselves living for various lengths of time in such exotic places as The Netherlands, Israel, and Neerlandia, AB, ☺ while I got to spend a month in Papua New Guinea, teaching at the Reformed Bible College in Port Moresby. These have been formative moments. We've built lasting friendships, received valuable mentoring, and enjoyed the fellowship of believers in widely different contexts. Almost as importantly, we've developed proclivities for such international delicacies as patat oorlog, baba ganoush, babi pangang, falafel, shawarma, pork jerky, and pannenkoeken met spek.

We are very excited at the prospect of serving in the ministry, if that's where God calls us. It's been a real privilege already to share the glorious Good News this past year on the pulpit, and for the past few years in the catechism room, just as it was a blessing

and a joy to serve as deacon in Bethel before coming to the seminary. My deep desire is to be a faithful servant of the gifts entrusted to me and an effective steward of the rich treasures of the kingdom of God. Soli Deo Gloria!



Hilmer Jagersma

So what exactly does one write as part of the annual seminary student introduction? It's a difficult question – especially given the fact that only ten years ago I would have laughed at the notion that my name would be included as part of this honoured tradition. Perhaps it's easiest to begin with the basics. My name is Hilmer, and the rest of this happy bunch includes my wife (Meagan), our man child (Rowan), and our two young ladies (Kiara and Whitney).

So. . . how exactly did I end up wandering the halls of CRTS? Well, I can honestly say that the concept of pursuing the ministry did not come totally out of left field. As a young(er) man growing up in the Fraser Valley of BC, I remember bouncing the idea around with family and friends from time to time. However, to be fair, I also bounced around the idea of becoming a bull rider, a trucker, an astronaut, and the prime minister of Canada. Needless to say, the time was not yet right. So, after graduating from Credo Christian High School, I first pursued a business diploma from UFV. After that I spent most of the next eight years as a salesman. These were important years for me as I transitioned from being a single man, to a husband, to a father. These were years in which I grew up a lot, I learned a lot about faith, and

I matured in my walk with God. For this I can't take the credit – God blessed me with a wife, parents, siblings, friends, employers, and coworkers who encouraged, advised, and challenged me along the way. I appreciate now, more than ever, the value of growing up in a Christian community.

As I mentioned earlier, in the midst of these busy years God brought an amazing woman into my life. Meagan and I were married in 2006. We've been through so much together – so many tremendously good times and some terrifically hard times. And yet, through it all she is, and remains, the anchor that keeps the Jagersma ship steady. Over the years we have been blessed with the birth of three healthy children – Rowan (2008), Kiara (2010), and Whitney (2012). It was in about 2009 that we began to feel God seriously calling me in the direction of ministry. This was a huge decision for us – and one that came through much prayer. Ultimately, in 2010 I returned to UFV to complete my degree and in 2012 we made the big move to Hamilton.

And. . . that brings us here. It doesn't seem that long ago that I walked through the halls of CRTS for the first time. In that time there have been many highlights, and certainly the internships I undertook would be right at the top of that list. The opportunity we had to pursue prison ministry with Divine Hope Reformed Bible Seminary in Indiana in 2014 and our opportunity to spend last summer with Rev. Aasman and Providence church in Edmonton gave us memories to last a lifetime. Overall the move to Hamilton has proved to be an amazing journey. We've particularly valued the friendships that we've made both at CRTS and in our church communities at Cornerstone and Blessings. Where we go from here, well, that is something only God knows. Over the years we've learned more and more that we might plot our course, but ultimately, it is the LORD that determines our steps (Prov 16:9). So at this juncture too, we once again rely on him and trust that he in his wisdom will lead the way forward.



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Islam



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Our prime minister has been showing admiration and concern for Islamic culture and religion in Canada while ignoring proven ties to jihad and Islamic terrorism of those he has befriended. Here are a couple of examples.

While he was the leader of the Liberal Party, he joined worshippers on the floor of a Surrey mosque for evening prayers during Ramadan in 2013. He wore traditional Islamic clothing and in his speech after prayers stated that the values of the holy month of Ramadan were also Canadian values. But surely it is not honest to suggest that Islamic values are those of Canada. As should be well known, sharia law which exemplifies Islamic values stands diametrically opposed to those of our nation. Countries such as Saudi Arabia whose legal system is based on sharia law enjoy few of the liberties we have today. Indeed, the European Court of Human Rights correctly determined in 2001 that Sharia law and its theocracy are incompatible with the requirements of a democratic society. However, Trudeau in a CBC interview with Maulik Doshi on January 30, 2016, said that he believes that “Islam is not incompatible” with Western values.

Trudeau also has a questionable relationship with an organization called Reviving the Islamic Spirit (RIS). Each year, it puts up Canada’s largest Islamic conference. In 2013 Trudeau attended even though the main sponsor of the conference, International Relief Fund for the Afflicted and Needy (IRFAN), had lost its federal charity status due to its financial support of Hamas, a terrorist organization dedicated to the destruction of Israel. But every year since, he has sent a message to this convention in spite of the fact that the convention typically features proponents of sharia law and Islamic supremacism. Last December, high profile Liberals attended, including two cabinet ministers and several Liberal Members of Parliament. Their presence lent credibility to the event. Trudeau himself attended via video conference and said that this is “about celebrating our shared beliefs in jus-

tice, fairness, equality of opportunity and acceptance.” Really? A textbook sold at the convention called *Islamic Studies* by Husain A. Nuri and Mansur Ahamd, contains items such as 100 lashes for adultery and the permissibility for a Muslim man to marry up to four women. So much for shared beliefs.

Furthermore, the 2015 RIS was sponsored by Islamic Relief Canada which belongs to the same international network as Islamic Relief UK with which the HSBC bank had cut their ties over alleged fears of terror funding. Featured speakers at the 2015 conference included a member of the Muslim Brotherhood which Britain has declared to be a terrorist organization and the secretary general of the ISNA Development Foundation which had its Canadian charitable status revoked after being found linked to a terrorist organization.

Point de Bascule, a Montreal-based webmagazine from which much of the material for this article comes, has aptly stated that “the endorsement given by Prime Minister Trudeau and several of his ministers and MPs to an annual event that has featured proponents of Sharia and Islamic supremacism from its inception in 2003 and has been sponsored by organizations linked to terrorism is incompatible with the mandate of the Government of Canada to insure the safety of Canadians.”

Canadians need to be vigilant. Unfortunately the mainline media is so politically correct that no critique of Islam seems to be permitted. That also appears to be the position our Prime Minister. However, Islam according to its own Scripture and authoritative documents knows itself to be a religion that should not rest until the entire world is subject to Islam for the co-existence of different faiths with the same rights is impossible (see, e.g., Qur’an 8:38-39; 9:5, 29). Surely the catastrophic failure of multiculturalism in Europe has made that fact abundantly clear. We ignore that reality to our hurt.



Trinity on Unity

First there was Hamilton Cornerstone, the mother church. Then followed Ancaster, Trinity (Glanbrook), Providence, and Blessings. Now Trinity is a “teenage” congregation numbering about 370 members.

Life at Trinity has not been dull. We started out renting a small Presbyterian church in Binbrook. Growth forced us to rent a larger facility, the United church just up the street. Still more growth caused us to purchase a surplus public school on Unity Road just off Highway 6 that connects Hamilton to Caledonia. With delight we reformed the school into a church.

The musical instruments in our rental churches were so bad that it was almost funny, but not to our fine musicians. When we came to Unity Road we had some really bad singing in the ceiling when the starlings in the roof vent were having a domestic squabble. Fortunately this distraction only occurs in the spring time. Regular visitors will quickly note that Trinity has an abundance of competent organists and pianists who make congregational singing a delight.

In a doors contest Trinity’s church building may well be a winner, since it is a former public school building. There are about six doors to get into the building and



a host of interior doors. In a windows contest Trinity would lose because the auditorium has no windows, but our meeting rooms have windows to beat all. The church building is bracketed by two parking lots; a paved lower level lot along Unity Rd. and an upper gravel parking lot behind the church building. Does your church have over six acres of lawn? We love mowing!

The church membership list reveals that construction workers are the largest occupational category followed by landscapers, farmers, technicians, retirees, teachers, managers, and three ministers of the gospel. The average age of the congregation is twenty-one years at the moment. That explains why we have so many eight to fifteen seat passenger vans in our parking areas.

Looking for non booster seat youth? Go to the rear parking lot. There you may hear talk of an upcoming “Gobble and Go” or a fund raising pancake breakfast. The teens manage to show enthusiasm with decorum and mix joy with decency.

Like most current Canadian Reformed churches, Trinity is well beyond the Bible Study trio of youth, men, and women. Bible Studies are found on Wednesday evening,



Thursday morning, and Sunday evening. For our young teens, Kings Daughters and Trinity's sons are led by capable leaders. Outreach Bible studies are offered as well. In 2015 Trinity began hosting Grief Share. This thirteen-week Bible focussed grief recovery program helps participants navigate the intense emotions, pain, and loneliness that arise after the death of a loved one.

In the Trinity congregation, as in every Canadian Reformed congregation, the godly instruction of our children is a very high priority. With the ever growing youth sector in the Hamilton area congregations, the highly respected Timothy school has come to overflowing. In response to this blessed growth a new school society called Glancaster School Society has recently purchased a surplus public school that will hopefully open on September 2017.

Trinity has been immensely blessed by both our former pastor Rev. Doug VandeBurgt and our present pastor Rev. Rodney Vermeulen. Rev. W. Den Hollander and Dr. J. Van Vliet besides being active church members also preach for Trinity as needed. Andrew and Megan Van Andel have a special place in our congregation as Wycliffe Bible translators working in the Solomon Is-



lands. As a senior Trinity member, it has been a great joy to see young members take on leadership responsibilities, faithful to the Lord even in the midst of growing pains in church and school life. Come visit us in our urban fringed country location just minutes away from John C. Munro airport. C





Holding up the Mirror (Part 2 of 2)

A review of the CRTA West Conference: October 7-9, 2015

Ed Balch
Teacher at Dufferin
Christian School in
Carman, Manitoba

In the last article, I mentioned how expressing faith into a culture that has rejected Christ can be quite challenging. In order to understand the nature of this challenge, Ray Pennings presented the role of Christians within culture and continued with an historical overview of how this important role has shifted.

All of society is Christ's

Within the last 1500 years, an individual's identity was directly linked to that individual's faith. The Roman Catholic Church, before the teachings of Martin Luther, held a strong hold over the society at large. Religiosity and missional work were low due to rural factors and unswerving obedience to the hierarchal system of the church. Post-Reformation saw a major shift in thinking. Included in this shift was the understanding that the priesthood of believers did not necessarily have to be hierarchal in nature. Later, John Calvin would also speak of a transformed kingdom and that all of life was under the headship of Jesus Christ. Thus, the understanding that all of society is Christ's became the root from which would grow the understanding of working within the culture.

Religion is relegated to "be feared"

Moving ahead 400 years to the 1900s, individuality was becoming more secular. However, in spite of the political and economic systems, the industrial revolution, and the expansion of empires and populations, Christian cultural engagement was still the norm for the majority. Until the mid 1950s and early 60s, Christian ideology was still strongly rooted in family and political policies. Yet in the 1960s social and moral rights became a strong influence that caused Christians to break apart from the world. The secularization and general religious decline in society led to a change in Christian perspectives on the place of Christianity within culture. With modernity,

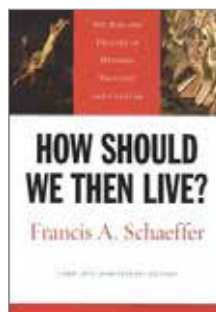
science and scientific reason had replaced Christianity as the new religion. Since evidential proof can determine reality, religious belief (which "cannot be proven scientifically") was placed in a less influential sphere of society and was certainly not taken seriously. By September 11, 2001, religion became seen as a driving force and something to be feared. Thus, the rapid changing of religion's place within the culture has changed so dramatically, that, according to Pennings, culture is changing faster than educators can educate.

We have lost the cultural war

What does the world say about religious practices today? Studies indicate seventy-nine percent say that they are Christian; but upon deeper inspection, forty percent say that they believe in the Apostle's Creed, twenty-seven percent pray in a time of crisis, eleven percent have attended church within the last month and five percent say that they are part of the Reformed churches. Identifiably, worldly society deems themselves to be spiritual without religion. These numbers continue to change. Generationally, unlike the Baby Boom and Generation "X" generations, those around the ages of thirty to forty years of age are not pretending to be Christian. They are either engaged in the church or they have completely rejected the concept of worship. Such changes in Christian culture and influence led Francis Schaeffer to publish *How Should We*

Then Live? (1976)

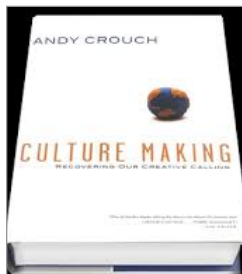
and later Charles Colson to publish *How Now Shall We Live?* (1990). Both authors wrote for the purposes of examining the cultural war. The conclusions of these



texts reveal that even though the general Christian society has been trying to win back the culture by writing letters, rallying behind leaders, and other forms of political actions, we have lost the cultural war. Christians have ceased to be the vital presence in our world today.

Christians need to create culture

Yet, does this mean that Christians do not engage in culture? In 2010 Andy Crouch published a text entitled *Culture Making*. Herein, he argues that Christians do one of five elements with culture: 1. Condemn Culture, 2. Critique Culture, 3. Consume Culture, 4. Cultivate Culture, or 5. Create Culture.



Quantitative evidence suggests that we have talked at length about the ills of culture, yet we have become voracious consumers of the culture. For example, statistically, Christians are quick to condemn Hollywood and musical genres generationally, but are, at the same time, consuming vast amounts of worldly music and videos. To justify, Christians create different languages (or excuses) of consuming and manage to live like those of the world.

Crouch argues that Christians should be cultivators and creators of culture and that Christians need a faithful presence in all aspects of life. In addition, Pennings cited author James Davison Hunter in his text *To Change the World* (2010), who added that the only way culture is changed is from the inside and in every sphere simultaneously. Thus, the change of culture must be more than just political action. It must encompass all parts of society including education. Thus, regardless of the tendency many have of being insular, it is important for Christians in all areas to fulfill our chief responsibility: to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Further, it is important for Christians to recognize that Christian education is necessary for the public good. In many ways, Christians today are living in a society that is completely unaware of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Many have forgotten the foundations on which the nation of Canada was established. Thus, it is beneficial that Christians, like Daniel in Babylon, understand how to engage in the culture and work within the culture system and live lives of faithfulness to the King of kings by anchoring our work within the context of his Word.

Natural fear

With this as a cultural framework, Pennings described the realities of working within such a cultural system. In the first place, many Christians have a natural

fear towards culture. It is perceived as being a threat to the Christian walk of life. Such fear can make one assume that Christians are living in a difficult time; however, fear of Christians trying to follow the triune God was also readily apparent within scripture.

Biblical examples

While in the culture of Egypt, Joseph was confronted with many personal challenges of purity and hopelessness, yet God used him during this time period to bring about his will. In addition, Samuel's task was to be obedient to the LORD in a time of Israel's ultimate disobedience and was commanded to set up a system of government against God. Further, David's task of terrible wars and Elijah's confrontation of the culture of Ahab and Jezebel as well as Obadiah's preservation of 100 prophets who were faithful to the LORD all serve as examples of children of God who were obedient during very challenging cultural times. Even within these examples it becomes clear of the differing nature of interacting with culture. As Christians today, we share in the challenges and fears that these and many other Christians faced throughout the unfolding of history. Yet, our finite minds cannot understand where our present history fits with God's purpose from the Garden to the City. Thus, it is important for Christians to understand the times and be able to discern and test the spirits (1 John 4).

Schools' role in culture building

So how can the work of the schools fit within the context of equipping and preparing the students for dealing with this sense of fear? It is imperative that the school leaves the students with an understanding of the biblical posture of humility and hope. There is a notion of progress also in the world. The LORD God continues to reveal himself over time and the world continues to see more and more of his glory in creation. Further, it is essential that the students do not become the central "actor" in history. It is God who is to be at the centre. Thus, even when Christians engage in today's fearsome cultural experience, we engage knowing that:

1. Jesus Christ is king. He has conquered.
2. The LORD God placed us as teachers and parents and members of the church in today's world at this time for a clear purpose. We are being involved in the history of the church in this time period.
3. We are on a journey and must live in the culture of the time. Therefore, graduates must own this time. They are living now for a clear reason.
4. We must understand the nature of spiritual warfare. It is a three-front war (the devil, the world and our

own sinful flesh). We must understand the nature of living our lives as prophets, priests and kings and engage in the spiritual struggle.

Not in fear, but in eager anticipation

For high school graduates, the concept of entering into a dark culture that is anti-Christian can be quite daunting. It does not need to be, nor is it effective to simply bury one's head in the sand and ignore culture. With the knowledge that there is not one square inch of the world that is not under the dominion of the King of kings, one can build on practicing effective Christian engagement within the spheres of culture. Pennings states that Christians must be aware of their role as the audience in the unfolding drama of God's glorious plan as taken up by the LORD Jesus Christ (Rev 5). As members of this audience, we must deal with

our neighbours and explicitly teach them the concepts of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration as outlined in Scripture. Further, we must look ahead to the judgement of the world not in a spirit of fear, but in eager anticipation of the wedding day of the Bridegroom with his bride, the church. And lastly, as God's covenant people, we must also live out our Christian calling with an ethic of integrity and a pilgrim spirit.

As educators, parents, and members within the church of Jesus Christ, it is important to understand that engaging culture is not about us. It is about God and his story to his honour and his glory. Thus, as schools reflect upon their mandate and how to implement them in a growing anti-Christian culture, it is important to remember that everything we do is meant to bring glory to our King. May we await his glorious return with eager longing. C

BOOKLET NOTICE

No Neutral Ground

The Association for Reformed Political Action has produced a very helpful sixteen page booklet entitled: *No Neutral Ground: A Christian Critique of the Secular Onslaught in Education Systems*. The introduction notes that "in provinces across the country education policy continues to evolve and usually for the worse. In particular, new policies and programs are being developed and implemented that directly undermine parental authority, advance a particularly hedonist sexual ethic, and openly attack the Judeo-Christian worldview." In view of this challenge, ARPA produced this informative booklet to help Christian parents analyse and critique the developments and so become involved and engaged in addressing the issues.

This publication begins with encouraging Christians to speak out on matters of fundamental importance for the family, church, and society. The next two sections deal with the reality that education is not neutral. If we are to bring every thought captive to Christ (2 Cor 10:5), we must insist on biblical values in education. God gave that responsibility to parents and not to the state.

The booklet also address sex and gender issues, emphasizing that one's gender is not fluid but biologically fixed and that sexual activity requires virtue.

Transgenderism and gender identity disorder are compassionately addressed in the light of God's Word. The positive gift of sex and marriage as given by God is also highlighted. The concluding section deals with the command to love one's neighbour, a command that condemns bullying. The shortcomings of anti-bullying legislation are also discussed. It is noted that Christian parents and schools are best equipped to handle this problem for they see their fellow human being as being made in God's image and therefore to be treated with respect.

This booklet is highly recommended as a great resource to get a handle on some of the burning educational issues of our time in the light of Scripture. It can be ordered at no charge at info@arpacanada.ca or freely downloaded from the ARPA website (under publications) (<https://arpacanada.ca/>). And while you're at it, why not also give a donation to this most worthwhile organization. It's an excellent investment! C



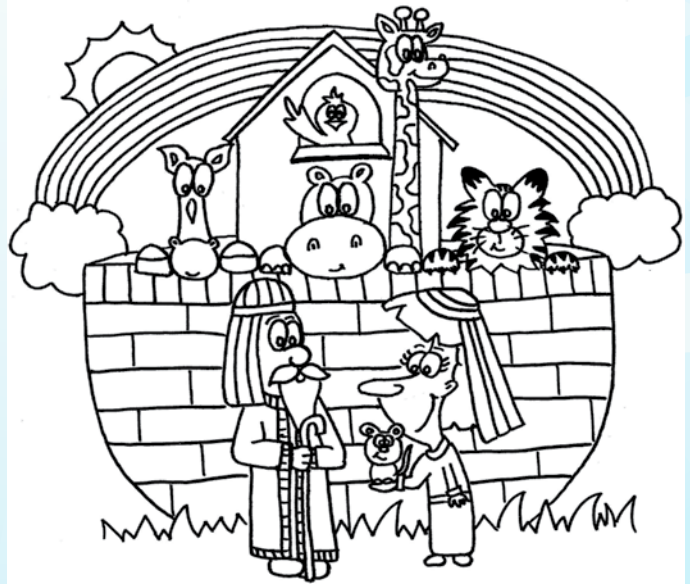
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Noah and the Flood

Genesis 6:9-17

After the fall into sin people became all the more wicked. God decided he would clear off the earth by a flood. Noah was a man who served God. God told Noah what he planned to do. Noah was told to make a large boat called an ark to keep his family and some of the animals safe. It rained for 40 days and 40 nights. Every creature that was not in the ark died. The flood lasted a long time. When the water went away God told Noah to leave the ark and fill the earth again. God made a beautiful rainbow as a promise that he would never send another flood over the whole earth.

Go to www.clarionmagazine.ca to print and colour a picture of Noah with the animals!



N A N Z E S Q G G F
X F E Q S O H J W O
S L A M I N A A I R
W B H V M F T M D T
Z O O J O E L E F Y
E C B J R N K O Q B
D V A N P C H Z O G
S F A M I L Y A Y D
Y K M W G A G D O R
H T R A E O R U H N

Find these words !

Animals	Flood	Promise	Wicked
Earth	Forty	Rainbow	
Family	Noah	Water	

Double Puzzle:

Unscramble the words. Then use the numbered letters to find the hidden word!

LODOF

--	--	--	--	--

2

MINSAAL

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

3

TAREH

--	--	--	--	--

4

IRNA

--	--	--	--

1

--	--	--	--

1 2 3 4

by Emily Nijenhuis



William den Hollander
Minister emeritus of the
Bethel Canadian Reformed
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Q When the believer dies, his or her soul is immediately taken up to be with Christ in heaven. The body is buried in the grave and turns to dust. From this time forward till the resurrection, are body and soul separated, whereas the soul without the body is not complete? Do they come together again? What is meant by the interim state and what is life like in this state? Is that complete separation of body and soul?

A Starting where the questioner starts, it is indeed so that when we die our body is laid to rest in the grave where it will decay and turn to dust. It means the end to our life in “this body of death,” as Paul characterizes it in Romans 7:24. Then we confess that “after this life my soul shall be taken up to Christ, my Head” (LD 22). Why is this separation necessary? What’s the matter with this body, this life in the body? As Paul mentions in many an epistle, our body, or this our *flesh*, is man in his external existence, the visible man; it’s weak, miserable, troubled in many ways, and especially subject to sin and iniquity. In Romans 7, Paul speaks about a big struggle between the flesh and the spirit. To Paul, his body has become an enemy, an obstacle in the way between Christ and himself. Although Christ has come to dwell in him, in his heart, yes in his eyes, ears, mouth, hands, and feet, so that it’s no longer Paul who lives but Christ who lives in him – still, that body hinders him time and time again in his life and union with Christ. Besides, Paul also describes the break-down of his body as the falling down of his earthly tent (2 Cor 5). In that same word in 2 Corinthians 5 Paul also says that at the moment of his death, “what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.”

Indeed, the Scriptures reveal to us that at death body and soul are separated. Then the Scriptures also show that the death of the children of God is also called the first resurrection (Rev 20:5). When his children die their soul is taken up to Christ, who determined their whole life, whose mind they had, and who was the head of their life. He holds on to them, also when they die! Then it’s best to speak the language of the Scriptures as well, the language that our Saviour taught us. In his parable about the rich man and the poor Lazarus he shows what happens: the angels came and they take Lazarus up; they take *Lazarus* up! The soul who is going to Christ in death is not some ghostly shadow but someone with a full consciousness. Whatever the difference may be, it remains the person as he was known by us. That’s why Abraham was in heaven under his well-known name; and about Lazarus it says that *he* was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. The soul is the *person*, as he or she exists after this life; it’s *you*, it’s your thinking, your spirit, your feeling, etc. The angels came to carry *him* on their hands to heaven. That may be hard to understand; you don’t have to understand it in order to believe it. As long as you believe that Christ takes control! The angels bring you to Christ, and into the communion with all the other saints in heaven, so that you can say in truth: Mom is now in heaven; Dad went home to be with Christ!

The time between our death, when the *soul* is taken up to heaven (i.e. our first resurrection), and the resurrection of the *body* (our second resurrection) at Christ's return, we call the intermediate state. As I already indicated, then we have made progress already: we have left this "body of death" and we are with Christ, which is better by far, as Paul puts it (Phil 1:21); it is gain! The book of Revelation also gives us some insight about what happens immediately after death: they came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years (20:4). Their dead and beheaded bodies rest in the earth. Everybody thinks they're silenced. However, the truth is that they're taken up into the government of Christ. That's why their joy continues! "Blessed, therefore, are the dead who die in the Lord from now on" (14:13).

In chapter 6:9-12, also, John sees the souls of those who were slain for the Word of God and for the testimony they had; they cried out with a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" They're involved; they continue the struggle of the church; they share in the joy of the anticipated victory. That's how the Scriptures describe their life! The Bible doesn't depict what their souls look like; yet, it expresses their life as if they have a *form*: they cry out to the Lord, they have a voice, they wear white robes, they have palm branches in their hand, and they reign as kings with Christ. Then

it's difficult to imagine for ourselves a conscious life of man outside his body, but neither can we imagine the service of angels, those ministering *spirits*, who without tongues of flesh and blood praise God day and night in his temple! The fact, therefore, that the Scriptures speak about those dead in this way shows beyond a doubt that they remained *people*, fully, even if it remains a mystery how that is possible without a body.

Then we also confess, based on God's Word that at Christ's return our bodies will rise from the grave and be reunited with our soul. We are Christ's with body *and* soul, and Christ will raise us up at the last day. That's what we confess in Belgic Confession 37, too, namely "those who will have died before that time will arise out of the earth, as their spirits are once again united with their own bodies in which they lived." It will be like Christ's glorious body, a body without weaknesses, without cancer, without handicaps, without depression or stress. It will be a spiritual body, too, immortal and imperishable, for the Spirit of God will dominate the body. The Lord Jesus Christ opened the way to this resurrection. He is the first-born from the dead, the first-fruit of all who belong to him and who will live with him, soul and body! Then we will possess perfect blessedness! That's the best! Then, with the words of the Apostle Paul, we cannot express it any further what that blessedness will be like: living with Christ in communion with God!



**Is there something
you've been wanting to know?**

An answer you've been looking for?

Ask us a question!

Please direct questions to Rev. W. denHollander

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WOMENS SAVINGS ACTION

“The blessing of the LORD brings wealth, and he adds no trouble to it” (Prov 10:22). The Lord has certainly blessed the work of the Women’s Savings Action again this past year.

What was the total collected this past year? \$35,818.53 enabling us to pledge \$35,000 for the library. This was up \$4,000.00 from the previous year and we are very grateful for that. Just to give you a little idea of how the money is used, at our annual meeting in June 2015 with the library committee of the seminary the librarian informed us that 375 new books as well as regular online databases and periodical subscriptions were purchased in 2014. The librarian also reminded us that the low Canadian dollar makes book purchasing more challenging.

When we asked the Women’s Savings Action representatives for feedback about maintaining our level of support for the library, we received some interesting responses, some of which we would like to share with you. The ideas ranged from door collections to donation thermometers in the foyer with weekly updates to letters in everyone’s mail slots.

We would like to feature one of these letters. This representative lives in Ontario and she accompanied students on a class trip to the seminary. This letter generated about double the amount given by the congregation in other years!

Dear sisters,

Last week Friday, April 17th, the Grade 3 and 4 class, together with their teacher, and quite a few moms and a dad went on a class trip to the Theological Seminary in Hamilton. When we got there, Dr. G. Visscher met us in the chapel and gave us an explanation as to what takes place at the Seminary and the students asked many wonderful questions! After meeting in the chapel, our tour guide showed us around the Seminary, and we spent a lot



of time in the library. It's very impressive! Upstairs, there are reference books, commentaries, and periodicals as well as a fascinating room called "Special Collections." That room had some really old books in it! Downstairs, there are rows and rows of books for the students, the professors, and ministers to use in their studies as they prepare papers and sermons. The library is so well stocked that students and professors from McMaster University also use the library at the Seminary at times! The students asked lots of good questions, but the tour guide also had a good one: "What is the Women's Savings Action?" Unfortunately, none of the students knew the answer. But now they do! They heard that the Women's Savings Action began when the Theological Seminary first opened its doors. The women of God's church wanted to help out in some way so they began collecting pennies for the library. This is the only way that the library can buy books! The work done by the Women's Savings Action is very important! In 2015, the Women's Savings Action no longer collects pennies because there are no more pennies. But they continue to collect money in whatever way they can.

Dear sisters, please take your envelope and give your donation as so many ladies have done in the past. The Seminary is so grateful! Students, professors and ministers can continue to be equipped for their all-important task of spreading God's Word!

A heartfelt thank you to this congregation and to all congregations for their generous donations! And if perchance, you or your congregation have not made a contribution to the Women's Savings Action this past year, do join us this coming year in helping to keep the library up-to-date!

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