

# Clarion

A close-up photograph of a tattoo artist's hand, wearing a blue nitrile glove, holding a tattoo machine. The machine is in the process of tattooing a design on a person's arm. The background is blurred, showing more of the person's arm and the artist's hand.

## Marked for life?

**SAME-SEX ATTRACTION AND THE CHURCH**

**RAY OF SUNSHINE**

**CLARION KIDS**

# Marked For Life



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## *Should we take over that practice and show our allegiance to Christ by tattooing his name or Christian symbols on our body?*

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Tattoos are in. What used to be associated with rough sailors and lawless bicycle gangs has gone into mainstream fashion. Celebrities proudly display their latest body art and their fans are tempted to follow suit. What are we to make of tattooing? Does the Bible have anything to say on this issue?

### **What does the Bible say?**

The only biblical passage that specifically mentions tattooing by name is found in Leviticus 19, a chapter that contains many short prohibitions. Verse 28 reads: “Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the Lord.” The first part prohibits Israel from making gashes in their flesh when mourning the death of someone. Doing so was done by pagans. The practice is well-attested all over the ancient Near East. But God strictly forbade it (also in Deuteronomy 14:1).

The prohibition to tattoo oneself is often lumped together with the preceding ban of cutting oneself. However, it is best to treat the injunction against tattooing as a separate command since there is no evidence in the ancient world that tattooing was done in mourning for the dead. Having two distinct commands in one verse is as such not unexpected since the entire chapter of Leviticus 19 consists of short separate commands and sometimes more than one is put together in one verse (as e.g. in v. 26).

Now if tattooing had nothing to do with the pagan practice of grieving over the death of someone, why would God prohibit tattooing? The practice of tattooing or permanently marking the body of a person with some sort of mark or symbol was widely known in Old Testament times. It was done to mark ownership. Slaves were branded or tattooed with the name of their owner. In the case of Egypt, the slaves of the priests were marked with

the name of the god which the priests served or with the name of Pharaoh if the slaves were his. Furthermore, those devoted to a particular god would also have themselves tattooed or branded with the name of that god. This action would identify them as perpetual slaves of their deity for the markings were for life and could not be removed.

Tattooing was therefore associated with being enslaved, either voluntarily to a god of one’s choosing or involuntarily if captured in war and sold as a slave to someone who then placed his indelible mark of ownership on such a person. But God said: “You must not tattoo yourselves: I am the LORD” (Lev 19:28b). With the phrase “I am the LORD” as justification for this command, God reminded Israel that he, the Lord, the covenant God, is the one who had set them free from the captivity of Egypt. As a liberated people, they should not be bound again in servitude to another god or another person. Indeed, had the LORD not claimed this people for himself? And so body marking indicating ownership to a foreign god or person was prohibited.

It is interesting to note that the notion of body marking indicating to whom one belonged is used figuratively later in the history of redemption. In a prophecy of reassurance the LORD told Israel not to be afraid. He would pour out his Spirit on their offspring and Israel would once again identify themselves as belonging to the LORD. Such a person “will write on his hand, ‘The LORD’s’” (Isa 44:5). It was not unusual for slaves to have their master’s name written on their hand. They belonged to him and were part of his household. In this prophecy God promised that repentant Israel will want to identify themselves with the LORD. They will tattoo his name on

their hands. This does not necessarily mean that they would do so literally. It can be understood as a figure of speech to indicate that just as a tattoo showed to whom one belonged, so God's people will make it very clear that they belong to God.

This same image is also used by the Lord as the One who never forgets his people. He reassured them: "I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands!" (Isa 49:16). God has, so to speak, tattooed his hands with the name of Zion to assure his people that he will not forget them. This engraving cannot be taken

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Our editorial this issue is from Dr. Cornelis Van Dam on the subject of tattoos: what the Bible says and what we should consider today.

We have an article from Matthew Tuininga, assistant professor of moral theology at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan: "Same-Sex Attraction and the Church." This article reviews a book that gives direction to Christians in a time when many churches are compromising on the topic of homosexuality.

There are a number of pages devoted to Further Discussion responding to a series that ran earlier this year on the topic of Socialism and Capitalism. In addition we have a Treasures New and Old meditation, Clippings on Politics and Religion, Education Matters, *Clarion Kids*, Ray of Sunshine, and two press releases.

*Laura Veenendaal*

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literally since God does not have physical hands. But it is a figure of speech using the well-known significance of a tattoo to indicate that there is an indelible bond between himself and his people. He will never forget them.

In a slightly different way the image of the mark of ownership is also used in the New Testament. The faithful have the promise that God will place his name on them (Rev 3:12; 14:1; 22:4). God will claim them for himself. While God's people are identified with the divine name on their persons, the unbelievers will have on their persons the mark of the beast, that is, his name or number (Rev 13:17–18).

### **What should we do?**

So, where does this leave us with the question of how we should regard the phenomenon of fashion tattoos in our day? God forbade tattooing because in the world of ancient Israel it was a sign of ownership and servitude either to a foreign god or to a human master. But God had set his people free to belong to him alone. The fact that God used the metaphor of tattooing in order to show how he claims his people to himself does not as such mean that he recommends us to tattoo ourselves. It is only an image to convey a truth. That image is carried over into the New Testament. At the same time, if a tattoo today does not indicate unbiblical ownership or servitude, then the prohibition of tattooing (Lev 19:28) no longer technically applies, just as the laws not to cut the hair at the sides of one's head or to trim one's beard no longer apply because the funerary customs they were aimed against are no longer in our culture (Lev 28:27; cf. Jer 48:37).

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### ***We are to write and engrave on the tablets of our hearts steadfast love and faithfulness***

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It is of interest to note that in the early history of the church, there were Christians who tattooed the sign of the cross, lamb, or fish or the name of Christ on their wrists and arms. They desired the literal sign of which Scripture spoke metaphorically. In this way they wanted to show their identity as Christians. Should we take over that practice and show our allegiance to Christ by tattooing his name or Christian symbols on our body?

Although this is an area where believers may disagree and although I do not wish to condemn anyone

who may have a Christian tattoo, there are some biblical factors to take into consideration which suggest that it may be good to hit the pause button before proceeding to such body marking. It may not be the best way to honour our God. Do we really think that we can improve on his beautiful creation of our bodies by tattooing it (cf. Gen 1:31)? God has already claimed our body. We do not need a tattoo to indicate that. Besides, our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and he wants us to glorify him also in the way we keep the integrity of our body intact, both morally and physically (cf. 1 Cor 6:20). Furthermore, believers form a royal priesthood, a holy nation (1 Pet 2:9). The Old Testament principle that priests were not to disfigure their bodies in any way (Lev 21:5) would suggest that Christians today as holy priests to God should be loath to do so as well.

Secondary factors to consider include the potential health issues involved. The authoritative Mayo Clinic warns on its website that tattoos pierce the skin with ink making skin infections and other complications possible, including allergic reactions to dyes, blood-borne diseases, and other possible complications.


### **Marked for life**

A Christian doesn't have to go down that painful road. We don't need a tattoo proclaiming God's ownership of our lives for the triune God has already marked us for life with the water of baptism. The sign and seal of the holy water assures us daily of the wonderful promises God has made to us. And when it comes to letting others know that God owns us and has already engraved us on the palms of his hands, there are far more effective ways to do that than by means of a tattoo which can easily be dismissed as a fashion statement. Besides, being a Christian is too big a truth to be relegated to a symbol on our skin.

God has shown us the way ahead by clearly commanding in his Word how we are to brand ourselves with indelible marks. We are to write and engrave on the tablets of our hearts steadfast love and faithfulness (Prov 3:3; cf. Deut 11:18). That's in a way like writing God's name into our life for he is "abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Exod 34:6). In this manner our whole life will be a living letter from Christ, "written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God," not on tattooed skin, but "on tablets of human hearts" (2 Cor 3:3). What a wonderful way to be enabled to proclaim our identity as Christians, as those marked for life by the living God!

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# Walking Beautifully

***“He went. . . walking and jumping, and praising God”  
(Acts 3:8)***

The story in Acts 3:1-10 is well known to many of us. Peter and John are going to the temple at the time of prayer. On that particular day, they enter the temple through the gate called Beautiful. Yet what they encounter there is not at all beautiful. It's a lame situation. There begging for money is a man crippled from birth. He asks Peter and John for money; they don't have any. The man must have been disheartened by such news. How often had he heard that famous line that is still used today – “Sorry, I got no money.” But what Peter says next, is beyond all expectations: “But what I have I give you, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!” Jesus Christ – that's who will make this man walk! And then it happens. Peter stretches out his hand, helps this man up and “instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong” (v. 7). What a beautiful restoration at the gate called beautiful! Here is a man lame from birth who is suddenly leaping like a

deer (Isa 35:6). This is the power of the promised Messiah, the promised Christ, Jesus of Nazareth!

So what began as a lame situation turned into a beautiful restoration, but then it bubbles over into leaping praise. This man realizes that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah sent from God and for that reason he praises God (v. 8). In the words of Isaiah 35:9-10, he walks with the redeemed, he enters Zion with singing, he receives a crown of everlasting joy, gladness overtakes him, and his sorrow and sighing flee away!

Although we, as God's people, don't usually (if ever!) experience such dramatic healings today, we must realize that what happened to this crippled man is a picture of the beautiful restoration that will happen to all God's people when the Messiah returns in glory. Yes, what happened to that crippled man will happen to every crippled sinner who realizes that in Christ all sin, sorrow, and suffering will not last.

When Jesus Christ returns in glory, the full effects of his death and resurrection will be realized. The feet and ankles of those who spend their days in wheelchairs or with walkers will jump and walk beautifully before the Lord! There will be no more visits to the dentist, doctor, or chiropractor. No more strokes, cancer, or heart attacks. No more seizures, migraines, or memory loss. No more anti-depressants, eating disorders, or speech impediments. The list goes on and on and it's all because of the name of Jesus Christ! Through his death and resurrection he has obtained the victory over sin and the effects it has on our bodies! The healing of this crippled man is proof of this reality.

As we eagerly await that great and glorious day, we must continue walking – broken yet beautiful – in the name of Jesus Christ, praising God, and waiting patiently for the final restoration of all things.

## For Further Study

1. How can we help and encourage people we know who live with chronic pain, a disability, or a long-term illness?
2. If you are living with these things personally, what are some ways you can continue to praise God in your life?



# Same-Sex Attraction and the Church

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Ed Shaw. *Same-Sex Attraction and the Church: The Surprising Plausibility of the Celibate Life*.  
Downer's Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2015  
172 pages. \$16.00

For far too long in this country it has seemed possible to enjoy both the Christian life and the American dream. Christians have conflated the way of Christ and the pursuit of happiness. It has never worked as well as it was supposed to, but the inconsistencies and contradictions have always seemed relatively minor. Now that has all changed, and in this excellent little book Ed Shaw, pastor of Emmanuel City Centre in Bristol, England, is calling the church to wake up.

Christians, including young evangelicals, are increasingly being persuaded that it is unreasonable, or, as Shaw puts it, *implausible*, to ask those who experience exclusively same-sex attraction to live celibate lives. Sexuality is considered to be central to human identity, and sexual experience is thought to be an essential part of any decent life. To expect a person to be celibate – *for his or her entire life* – is to ask that person to deny his or her very own self. It is to reject any and all possibility of happiness. And for many Christians this is simply too difficult to stomach. God wants us to be happy, doesn't he?

Shaw captures the humanity and emotion of the argument for same-sex relationships in his opening story about a young man named Peter. Peter is an enthusiastic member of his evangelical church. Like other teenagers, he has experienced the excitement, the challenges, and the temptations of puberty, struggling to manage the fascinating new phenomena of sexual attraction in Christ-like ways. But unlike all of his friends, Peter knows that he doesn't merely have to wait, to practice abstinence un-

til he finds the right woman. Peter is exclusively attracted to men and hasn't been able to change that, and he knows that according to Christian teaching, that means he may never have sex.

Shaw captures the angst:

But boy, does Peter want to have sex. He's growing up in one of the most sexualized cultures since pre-Christendom. . . . Talking to the youth group guys in a males-only session afterward, the husband said sex was the best experience he'd ever had – God was so good to have created something so pleasurable. It would be that good for them too – if they kept it for marriage. But Peter won't be getting any if he sticks with what he's been told, if he lives in the light of the Bible's teaching. And that seems unreasonable (to say the least) for seventeen-year-old Peter. Sex is everywhere. His desire for it is overwhelming. And his church says no to that – forever (14).

Shaw points out that there is a growing number of Christian churches, theologians, and Christian writers willing to welcome Peter and affirm that he can be a Christian while practicing homosexuality. Given that, and given the power of our hyper-sexualized culture, simply quoting the standard litany of Bible verses on homosexuality is becoming less and less persuasive to people. "Just say no!" is no longer going to cut it.

Shaw finds this to be a powerful indictment of the Christian church. Christians have accepted so much of what our culture teaches about the good life, and our understanding of what following Christ means has become so compromised, that the clearest demands of the gospel no longer seem realistic to us. They no longer seem plausible. And Shaw's objective in this book is to help make those demands plausible once again.

The book is structured as a discussion of nine "mis-steps" the church has taken that have undermined the plausibility of a genuine Christian life, making believers



less likely to be willing to take up their cross and follow Christ, and consequently making it seem hypocritical and unnecessary to require believers who struggle with same-sex attraction to do so. Shaw seeks to correct these nine missteps and so to recover for Christians a plausibility structure that is rooted in the gospel. In short, Shaw's book is not just another look at the biblical texts. It gets at the heart of why so many young Christians are caving in to affirm same-sex sexual relationships. It shows why the practice of homosexuality doesn't simply run contrary to the Bible; it nullifies the heart of the gospel.

I do not have the space here to summarize the nine missteps Shaw identifies, and I want to give you a good reason to go and read the book – *which every thoughtful Christian should do*. But I do want to draw attention to what I take to be some of Shaw's most important points. At the foundation of his argument is his observation that believers ought not find their identity in their sexuality – whether gay, straight, or otherwise – but in Christ. This is, indeed, a central theme of Christian ethics from start to finish. The seductiveness of the argument for affirming same-sex relationships stems from its claim that gay Christians are and always will be gay in their orientation and that this necessarily constitutes their identity. It is who they are. And to resist this is therefore to resist the way God has made them. But, as Shaw demonstrates, even if a person's sexual orientation is unchangeable (and Shaw thinks that in this life it often is), this claim is fundamentally false. Sexual orientation does not constitute identity. Our identity is in Christ. We are children of God, and we are to consider ourselves dead to sin. The first and most important step to recovering the plausibility of the celibate life is recovering our identity in Christ.

From his foundational point about identity in Christ Shaw critiques evangelical churches for their idolization of heterosexuality and the life of families married with children. Christians, especially Protestants, have bought into the cultural lies that sex is where true intimacy is found and that celibacy is a bad thing. They have lost sight of the ways in which the New Testament points to a new and greater kind of community, one that transcends biological family ties and that is reflected in the kingdom-focused, celibate lives of Christian exemplars like Jesus and Paul. If the essence of the Christian life consists in conformity to Christ, and if Christ lived a perfect, celibate life, how can it be implausible for Christians also to walk that path? As Jesus himself said, "No one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or

father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and fields – along with persecutions – and in the age to come eternal life (Mark 10:29–30)" (47).

It is a commentary on the weakness of the Christian church that we no longer find this vision of discipleship – so emphatic and consistent in the teachings of Jesus and the New Testament – plausible. It says far more about our lack of faith in the gospel than it does about anything we have supposedly learned from science or experience.

The power of the argument for affirming same-sex relationships, Shaw recognizes, is the assumption – fundamentally alien to Christianity – that happiness in this life is our primary objective ("If it makes you happy, it must be right!") and that suffering must be avoided at all costs. That this perspective is increasingly being confused with New Testament Christianity – the way of life of a crucified Lord – is as powerful an indictment of western Christianity as could be mustered. Jesus "in effect, defines his disciples as those willing to sacrifice themselves for him. We need to grasp the full danger that we run into when we stop clearly asking people to sacrifice personal happiness. In not asking people to stick to Jesus' costly commands about evangelism, married life, financial decisions or sexuality, we have (unintentionally) put their very salvation at stake" (120).

And yet Shaw sees an opportunity here. Just as he sees his own same-sex attraction as a gift from God – a means God has used to draw him to greater fidelity and conformity to Christ – so the presence of people who experience same-sex attraction and the controversy that accompanies it comes as a "divine gift" to the church, a "divine gift, because it's just what we needed at this time in our history to help us see the whole series of tragic missteps we have taken to the detriment of us all, as well as to the detriment of the world we are trying to reach" (133). In short, wrestling with what it means for those who struggle with same-sex attraction to follow Christ will help all of us learn better to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him.

Shaw concludes the book with an appendix that offers sharp observations of some of the most popular arguments for the affirmation of same-sex marriage by Christians, including those of Jeffrey John, Justin Lee, James Brownson, and Matthew Vines. It is a powerful, much-needed book. Get a copy and read it.





# Hungary Wants to Help Persecuted Christians



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Hungary has made headlines in numerous media because it has opened up an official office to help persecuted Christians. This initiative is most noteworthy since it is unique in the Western, supposedly Christian, world. But this Hungarian action is desperately needed. Neither the Canadian nor American governments are giving Christian refugees priority.

Yet, the situation of many Christians in war-torn Middle East could not be worse. They not only have to contend with the dismal conditions that war brings, but they also have to deal with the hostility of the Muslim majority population in which they find themselves. Such hostility is also evident in the refugee camps, so much so that many Christian refugees refuse to go to United Nations refugee camps. Yet, in spite of their dire needs, they appear to be on the bottom of the list when it comes to being chosen for resettlement in the West. Since Canada and the United States rely on referrals from the Muslim dominated United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which only deals with refugees in UN camps, Christians are at a distinct disadvantage. Figures show that the percentage of Christians admitted under government programs is minuscule. The Pew Research Center noted that less than one percent of Syrian refugees accepted into the United States were Christian, the rest were Muslim. Canada under the Liberals no longer prioritizes persecuted religious minorities as the previous Conservative administration had done so the amount of Christian refugees admitted is very small. Rather the minority that Liberals are focusing on are (according to the Canadian government's website) "persons identified as vulnerable due to membership in the LGBTI community."

With all of this indifference towards what many characterize as a Christian genocide in the Middle East, the Hungarian government's action is heartwarming. World Watch Monitor, the source of what follows, quoted Zoltan Balog, Hungary's Minister for Human Capacities (and a Calvinist pastor), as saying that "Today, Christi-

anity has become the most persecuted religion, where out of five people killed [for] religious reasons, four of them are Christian." For that reason, Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban (also a Calvinist) said that "Europe should focus on helping Christians, before helping millions of Islamic people coming into Europe." The decision to have a special office for persecuted Christians came after Balog and Orban met with Middle East Christian leaders in Rome and heard first hand of the dire situation and challenges Christians face in the Middle East, especially Syria.

It is most telling how Orban characterized the European situation. For the European Union (EU) elite, the migration issue "is a great chance to destroy the Europe that is based on the conception of Christianity and nationality; to completely alter the ethnic-based foundations of the EU." He also mentioned the politics of massive Muslim migration. The elite "know that Muslims will never vote for a party with Christian roots, so with the huge volume of Muslims, the conservative parties will be crowded out of power." Hungary's response to the migration crisis has been in part to erect a fence on its southern borders.

The country's new office will have an initial budget of 3.35 million US. It appears that helping persecuted Christians will take the form of raising international awareness of their untenable situation and coordinating humanitarian efforts. There is the hope that if conditions can improve in the Middle East, it may be possible for persecuted minorities to remain in their homelands, thus stemming the flow of refugees. Interestingly, the new office will also keep an eye on developments in Europe where religious freedom for Christians is threatened by radical feminists and LGBT activists, but its main focus will be on the Middle East.

May Hungary's efforts be blessed and other countries shamed into action. The need to sponsor Christian refugees is obvious.



Mark Penninga and  
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### Dear Editor,

To all those involved with producing *Clarion* magazine – the editors, writers, and publisher – thank you for blessing us with this quality publication. What we appreciate most about *Clarion* is the love for God expressed through orthodoxy – its rootedness in Scripture and willingness to measure all things by God's Word.

So we were surprised to see that the editors of *Clarion* allowed an exception to this by republishing a blog post in the July 29 issue that is, using generous terms, misguided. In the article “Is Socialism Satanic” Reverend David Robertson from St. Peters Free Church in Scotland defends socialism and chastises an article that was published on the Reformation 21 site by the Reverend Rick Phillips about the danger of this system. The core argument is that socialism is not evil and that the church should not identify itself with a particular political, cultural, or economic system.

So what is the problem with *Clarion* republishing Rev. Robertson's rant?

First, Rev. Robertson's article commits the basic straw man fallacy, misrepresenting the opponent. Did Rev. Phillips equate the gospel with capitalism? Far from it. Rev. Phillips rightly pointed out that, without Christ, capitalism is a false and materialistic paradise. “Capitalism does not offer salvation: only Jesus can deliver us from our sins.” Going further he added, “Christians should be discerning enough to scorn the adolescent egotism of Ayn Rand-style capitalism and realize the need for government intervention against capitalistic abuses.”

Second, and more seriously, the article advances an increasingly popular view among Christians that is both illogical and, we would argue, not scriptural. In fact, after lambasting Rev. Phillips for an article with “little bible speak in [it],” Robertson advances a political argument devoid of any reference to Scripture, with the exception of a vague reference to “give to Caesar.” In his conclusion, Robertson says he is not here to defend socialism. “I am not a socialist. And I am not a capitalist. I am a Christian.” He aims his sights at Rev. Phillip's article because he believes that Christians who identify our faith with our own politics/culture/economics “are causing the rest of the church a great deal of harm.”

We understand why this view is attractive – we don't want the gospel to be tarnished by the weak and sinful ideas of mankind. If someone claims to be a Christian and then advances political or economic ideas that hurt, it makes the Christian faith look bad. But, as already noted, Rev. Phillips did clarify that by exposing the dangers of socialism he was not at all suggesting that capitalism offers any kind of salvation or is free from the mar of human depravity.

As good as his motives may be, Rev. Robertson's argument is not at all sound. Neither Scripture nor politics/culture/economics are value-neutral. If we want to govern our lives by Scripture, then we have to make political, cultural, and economic decisions accordingly. Scripture has much to say about all three domains. Some political/cultural/economic ideas will line up with what Scripture says, and others will not. To suggest that being a Christian allows one to arrogantly stand above all political or economic systems is naïve at best and would be very dangerous if acted upon. It is similar to saying, “I am not pro-life or pro-choice, I am Christian.” There may indeed be pro-life Christians who are bad examples, but that does not mean that our faith should not be associated with one side of this important moral debate.

If we look at just economics, the Bible is filled with passages that speak directly to the matter of property rights. I (Mark) recently attended two lectures in which Dr. John Bergsma, a professor of theology, shared dozens of Bible passages on this issue. Passages like 1 Kings 21 (Naboth's vineyard) can tell us a lot about what God thinks about people who steal. The fact that God does not treat the State (in this story, king Ahab) differently in this regard is noteworthy. The king was issued a death sentence by God because he, and his wife Jezebel, had Naboth killed in order to seize his property. Indeed, the eighth commandment (“You shall not steal”) and the tenth commandment (“You shall not covet your neighbour's [property]”) make absolutely no sense in a socialist or communist worldview.

Rev. Robertson provides the definition of socialism and then says that socialism is not stealing, “unless you are prepared to say that all forms of taxation are stealing.” This is another logical and scriptural fallacy. It is possible that some forms of taxes are legitimate because they

properly belong to the role of the State. But when the State goes beyond its proper role (e.g. taking a vineyard) then it is indeed stealing. Again, the Bible is very clear about the limited role of the State. See Romans 13, as well as Dr. Cornelis Van Dam's book "God and Government: Biblical Principles for Today." Nowhere in Scripture do we read that God gives the State the authority to own and regulate the means of production, distribution, and exchange. Rather, we read that God gives responsibility to multiple authorities, such as the family or church, to control production, distribution, and exchange. See, for example, the discussion of the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31, who is in charge of the economic affairs of her house.

This is no minor matter. When the state assumes control over realms that God did not give it authority over, it necessarily means that other authorities, whom God *did* give the responsibility to, are not doing what they are called to do. In most cases, the State ends up doing what we don't want to do, and we make that possible by giving the State the authority to tax the most wealthy (usually not us). The second greatest commandment is to love our neighbour. We are not loving our neighbour by demanding that the State look after them and pay for this by taxing the other wealthy neighbour. The Good Samaritan did not dial 911 and wait for the state-funded medical system to take over from there. Rather, we love our neighbour when we are the ones who are actually caring for our neighbour.

Like Rev. Phillips, we believe that if Christians lived under truly socialist regimes, they would realize very quickly that it is a nightmare and not at all for the glory of God or the good of our neighbour. In reply, Rev. Robertson confuses social *programs* with socialism (another fallacy known as equivocation). We submit that reasonable Christians can disagree over the prudence and rightness of particular public, social programs like a public health care system, a public education system, transportation infrastructure, etc. In fact, the two of us disagree on some of the finer points on this debate. But that is a far cry from saying reasonable Christians can support a socialist system, which is one type of social organization that is totalitarian, going well beyond economics, reaching into the family and church.

Robertson says that he lives in Scotland, which he considers to be socialist (we would argue that it is built on, and still benefiting from, a capitalist foundation) and he likes "living in a country where everyone has access to clean water, good roads, and good medical care – irrespective of their ability to pay." We are glad that Rev. Robertson enjoys these good things, but who is paying for these services? Scotland has billions of dollars of debt

and is currently running a deficit that is twice as large as the entire United Kingdom. In other words, Scotland (like Canada and the USA) is forcing future generations to pay for their current lifestyle. Like spoiled adults with massive credit card debts, we are getting what we want today without actually paying for it. Again, that is both greed and theft, neither of which Scripture is value-neutral on.

Regardless of debt, the reality is that Scotland today is far from being truly socialist. A better example would be the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Decades after the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of the USSR, the people living in the same area today are still suffering the consequences of such an evil regime. Consider also the headlines this summer of the starvation and turmoil in Venezuela due to the failure of true socialism in that country.

Time and space do not allow for a further critique of socialism, in particular its utopianism (which is false religion, contrary to the first commandment – see Q&A 95 of the Heidelberg Catechism), its interference with the family (particularly through outlawing independent and home education) and its interference with the church (privatizing religion, and sometimes outright banning it). These ideals of socialism as a worldview and a political system make it fundamentally incompatible with the free exercise of the Christian faith.

One final point before we conclude: Robertson's repeated insinuations that those Christians who have serious concerns with socialism are Donald Trump supporters is infantile, insulting, and ironic. Trump-ism and Socialism stem from the same faulty unbiblical assumption: the State can save us. Thousands and thousands of faithful Christians who oppose socialism are also the loudest voices within conservative camps opposing Trump.

One of the qualities that is making Two Kingdoms theology attractive to some in the Reformed churches is the distance it tries to create between spiritual life (the gospel, the church, Christian living) and worldly life (the State, society, economics, etc). In an attempt to keep our faith from being marred by the dirty aspects of worldly life, Christians find it quite attractive to divide the two. But as convenient as it is, it is not at all scriptural. God is sovereign over all, including the messy and difficult aspects of living in a broken world. Christians won't always do a good job exemplifying what it means to live Christianly. But that does not mean that we divorce our faith from the public square, as Rev. Phillips' arguments lend themselves to. Rather it means that we do our work in humility and show grace and patience with each other as we seek to live our whole lives according to God's Word.

# Is Socialism Satanic? Some Comments

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In the July 29, 2016 issue of *Clarion*, David Robertson took to task a blog post by Rick Phillips on the website of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals (which, by the way, was entitled “Is Socialism Evil?” not Satanic). I agree that Phillips goes too far in criticizing socialism. We should not equate socialism with such evils as racism and government sponsored torture as Phillips does or with homosexuality and abortion as Robertson notes others have done. Nor should we identify Christianity with our “own politics/ culture and economics” as Robertson reports the American brothers and sisters are doing. Neither socialism or capitalism is *the* Christian alternative.

Nevertheless, I believe that Robertson himself also goes more than a wee bit overboard. I suggest that Christians should speak in a more nuanced way about these economic systems. Moreover, although the church should not, ecclesiastically, pronounce on economics systems,<sup>1</sup> we, as Christians, are (in the footsteps of Kuiper and Schilder) called to apply biblical teaching to all areas of life – including economics and politics. Doing so, I believe that we *can* derive a biblical preference for a free market system although that preference must be conditional as I have argued for many years.<sup>2</sup>

In this article, I will comment on Robertson’s criticisms of Phillips. First, however, a discussion of the terminology of economic systems is in order since they both appear to be characterizing socialism and capitalism in an extreme fashion.

## Economic systems

Robertson uses the following “normal” definition of socialism: “A political and economic theory of social organization which advocates that the means of production, distribution, and exchange should be owned or regulated by the community as a whole.” In his discussion, however, he tends to focus on the “or regulated by” part of this definition rather than on the “owned” part. By doing so, not only Scotland but every country in the world can be called socialist! In practice, however, most countries cannot be classified as socialist or capitalist (I prefer

to use the term free-market since it carries less baggage). Virtually every country in the world uses a combination of these two systems, i.e. a Mixed Economic System in which some of the economic decisions are made by the market and some by the government; all have at least some degree of government regulation and some government owned industries. Countries can be ranked on a continuum based on the degree to which the government intervenes in the economy or to what extent the market is left free to operate – as roughly illustrated below in which we have a “command” or “communist” economy at the extreme left.

### Command Economy ← → Free Market

North Korea, Cuba, Venezuela (149), China (113), Russia (102), France (57), Germany (30), Netherlands (25), U.S (16), U.K.(10), Australia (10), Canada (5), New Zealand (3), Hong Kong (1).

The above continuum is derived from the Fraser Institute’s 2016 *Economic Freedom Index*<sup>3</sup> with numbers in parenthesis indicating the rank among the 159 countries ranked and shows some surprising results: e.g. the ranking of the U.S.

The point is, it’s not helpful to label a country as socialist or capitalist. We can only say one country is more socialist (government interventionist) than another. Similarly, political parties and politicians are socialist in comparative degrees. Bernie Sanders is more socialist than Hillary Clinton who is more socialist than Ronald Reagan was. The Canadian political party the NDP is more socialist than the Liberals than the Conservatives. In any case the real issue of importance and debate is whether in a specific instance government intervention in the economy is better, more stewardly, than to leave it to the market. For example, should Canada have government-sanctioned supply management of dairy products or should farmers be free to produce whatever products they want? Does the government need to do something about unemployment, poverty, climate change etc.? If so, what?



As to Capitalism, Robertson appears to see it through Marxist eyes according to which a greedy, wealthy group of “Capitalists” exploited the workers and government was run for the benefit of those “Capitalists.” While this situation may have existed in Marx’s days, such is not the case today in most countries. Universal suffrage has significantly changed the political influence of the wealthy. There is no capitalist system in effect today that resembles what Marx thought he saw—although this Marxist thinking still underlies the “us-and-them” class struggle that socialists and many unionists continue to wage.

### **The evils of socialism**

While it is then not really useful to discuss socialism as such, we, nevertheless, return to the debate between Phillips and Robertson. Phillips argues that socialism is evil because it is:

1. as system based on stealing
2. an anti-work system, and
3. concentrates the power to do evil

I’ll deal with each of these in turn.

### **Is socialism stealing?**

Phillips writes: “The whole point of socialism is for the government to seize control of private property, mainly involving the proceeds of peoples’ work, in order to give it to others. This activity is the very thing pronounced as evil by the eighth commandment: ‘You shall not steal’ (Exod 20:15).”

It is obvious that he refers here to the extreme form of socialism – communism – in which the state takes all property and holds it “in common.” Any government expropriation of property without fair compensation is clearly an act of theft. However, that is not a common practice, even in socialist-leaning mixed economic systems. In response, Robertson rightly notes that the more general version of socialism is not stealing “unless you are prepared to say that all forms of taxation are stealing,” which is contrary to Jesus’ command to give to Caesar what is Caesar’s. I agree.

However, Robertson ends this section with the gratuitous interjection: “Besides which there is a far stronger case to argue that unfettered market capitalism, with its reliance on high interest rates (which always harm the poor most)” is far more unbiblical. Here, he also engages in the black/white thinking (socialism/capitalism) that I have rejected in the previous section. Moreover, the assertion that market capitalism “relies on high interest rates” is highly questionable.

### **Is socialism anti-work?**

Phillips argues, quite reasonably, that: “Socialism promises to give a blessed life for free. Today, Presidential candidate Bernie Sanders promises to give free education, free health care, and free vacation time, etc. . . . As I listen to Senator Sanders, I wonder what incentive there would be to work hard. Why would I put myself through the ordeal of discipline, sacrifice, and sweat, much less risk-taking business endeavors, if I can have a wonderful life without working for it?”

Robertson, however, claims that this statement is “demonstrably false” and argues that “socialism, like capitalism, could not work unless there were people who worked hard.” However, there is reasonable evidence that extensive government intervention (socialism) does not work – even though there may be some people who work hard (e.g. Venezuela, Greece).<sup>4</sup> Moreover, “cradle-to-grave” government assistance reduces the necessity to provide for oneself – both now and for the future. With less need to so provide, there would seem to be an obvious reduction to work hard. A free market economy provides maximum incentive to obey the biblical command to work.<sup>5</sup>

Robertson may be able to point to one wealthy Dutch friend who is happy to pay sixty percent in tax because his hard earned money provides for the unfortunate. And no doubt some of us are God-fearing Christians who work hard because we know we are working for the Lord. Nevertheless, even introductory economics textbooks teach that increasing the marginal tax rates reduces the incentive to work and causes people to flee high tax jurisdictions. Recognizing the sinful nature of mankind is not “pandering to the lowest common denominator in human beings” but simply recognizing reality.

### **Does Socialism concentrate the power to do evil?**

Phillips writes,

Under socialism, however, a small number of government masters has control over almost all of the resources of the entire society. Unless one believes that politicians are inherently more virtuous than private citizens (and where one would get such an idea is a mystery to me), then this concentration of power is certain to work extraordinary amounts of evil...under socialism, access to scarce resources is based on government favor. This structure virtually reduces the society to slavery, eventually impoverishes everyone, and unfailingly promotes a culture of corruption.

Robertson responds vigorously: “Firstly, in the socialist system the idea is meant to be common ownership, not a handful of people controlling or owning it all. (The fact that this does not often happen is a testimony to human sinfulness, not the inherent evil of the system).”

Note, that both authors are here talking about socialism as communism – with state ownership of all means of production. That indeed does “virtually reduce the society to slavery, etc” as was evidence in the old union of Soviet “Socialist” republics, Cuba, Venezuela, North Korea, with scarcity of all consumer products. While it may have been meant to be “common ownership” rather than “a handful of people” does not change the real situation. Common ownership means ownership by the state as directed by government, concentrated in a small group of people. In those instances where extensive common ownership was introduced it failed miserably.

Robertson, then goes on to argue: “Capitalism is not primarily about individuals working hard to produce wealth. They work within systems. Sometimes those systems can be corrupt, bribery, greed, exploitation (refusing to pay workers their due reward) and are as endemic within the capitalist system, as they are within any socialist system.”

It would have been helpful if Robertson had made clear what systems he means. The only system in which the market operates is that of government control. Corruption and bribery are endemic in countries where government laws and regulations are excessive. If businesses choose or are forced to bribe government officials to be able to operate, should we blame the businesses or the organization of government that invites this corruption? Every permit or inspection that is required to operate invites corruption. The more government regulation, the more corruption! Moreover, more government involvement in the economy leads to higher taxes to pay for all the “benefits;” the higher the taxes, the more incentive there is for tax evasion – disobeying the authorities God has placed over us. Thus, increasing government (socialism) will concentrate evil. That doesn’t mean, of course, that no regulation is required; e.g. if there truly is “exploitation,” then we have to decide what steps government can take to control that sin.

Note that even if individuals are working “within a system,” in a free market they are required to work hard in order to live. With many individuals working in their own “self-interest,”<sup>6</sup> wealth and prosperity *have* been created when markets are left reasonably free.

Finally, Robertson argues that “it is unfettered free market Capitalism, not Socialism, which is concentrating

the power to do evil in the hands of a few. It is the big corporations, headed up by a few wealthy individuals who are pushing the LGBT agenda in the US and elsewhere.”

Yes a few corporations have boycotted certain states whose governments have tried to resist the LGBT agenda. But what came first? Is it not the almost universal slide away from God’s commandments that have permitted the LGBT community to push their agenda on both government and businesses? Corporate managers who are responsible to their shareholders cannot ignore this since if they don’t jump on the bandwagon, they may lose customers. Isn’t it the LGTB community and their sympathizers through their influence on government in general that has brought us this far? Governments have led or caved in on gay marriage. They have allowed gay pride parades and even “declared” gay rights week. To blame Capitalists for this trend is stretching it. Similarly, governments have accepted the push for abortion, euthanasia, etc. Or, would Robertson also blame Capitalists for that?

Robertson goes on to add: “It is they (the few wealthy) who are seeking to negotiate trade agreements that take them out of democratic control and leave them free to regulate their own affairs and control their massive wealth.” Another inflammatory statement that would require a whole article to unpack! Economists generally agree that international trade is good. Both sides of trade win as countries can specialize in those things they have an advantage in. In the long run, businesses are able to create jobs by increasing exports; consumers benefit from lower prices and more choice of products. Those politicians advocating such agreements do so because of the jobs effect! Of course, in the short run some industries are losers as less efficient companies close and the resources involved reallocated where they can be better utilized.

A basic free trade agreement is good but it is the current push by bureaucrats and unions to add all kinds of conditions to ensure a level playing field that result in “undemocratic” tendencies. Perhaps Robertson also refers to “dispute settlement” mechanisms that are being built in to prevent one side of the agreement from arbitrarily refusing to live up to the agreement. Companies will have access to these tribunals to ensure fair treatment – not to “leave them free to regulate their own affairs.” Besides, if Donald Trump – a Capitalist if there ever was one – opposes free trade, free trade can hardly be said to “concentrate the power to do evil.” Let’s not blame Capitalists but reasonably debate the provisions of specific trade agreements that are considered questionable.

## AVAILABLE FOR CALL AND PULPIT SUPPLY

### Rev. R.J. Kampen

is currently available for call in the churches, and thus available for regular pulpit supply among the churches in southern Ontario. Serving beyond Ontario would also be happily considered. Please feel free to take up contact with Rev. Kampen at 905-807-6717, or [rjkampen@gmail.com](mailto:rjkampen@gmail.com)

### Candidate Steve van Leeuwen

is presently available for call within the churches. Churches interested in learning more are encouraged to take up contact directly with br. van Leeuwen at 289-456-7301 or at [sandkvanleeuwen@gmail.com](mailto:sandkvanleeuwen@gmail.com)

## EXAMINATION SUSTAINED

**Candidate Gerard Veurink** sustained his peremptory examination at Classis Alberta on October 19, 2016.

**Candidate Jake Torenvliet** sustained his peremptory examination at Classis Central Ontario on October 21, 2016.

## CALL EXTENDED

Called by the Fellowship Church in Burlington, ON, the Winnipeg Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church to serve as a missionary in Manitoba, the Vrye Gereformeerde Kerk of Johannesburg (Free Reformed Church of Johannesburg, the Vrye Gereformeerde Kerk of Kaapstad (Free Reformed Church of Cape Town):

### Candidate Johan Bruintjes

## CHURCH NEWS

The rest of the article provides a litany of critiques of U.S. poverty, health care, etc. as if they are all the inherent evils of the Capitalist system. All these require much more discussion and may well justify encouraging the U.S. to move further to the left on the continuum of economic systems but may also illustrate failure of government actions. In any case, they need to be discussed individually to see what can best be done to solve these problems. Poverty has long been recognized as a case of market failure; if you don't have money you can't participate in the market system. "Third-world poverty" in the U.S. must, by now, also be considered a case of government failure. Similarly, gaps in health care should, by now, be attributed to government failure – although it must be recognized that a switch to Canadian type universal health care leads to lengthy waiting times.<sup>7</sup> It makes no sense to simply castigate these issues as failures of "Capitalism."

## Implications

Both Robertson and Phillips overstate and engage in overblown rhetoric. The labels "Capitalism" and "Socialism" are better not used – given the extreme connotations

of these terms. Rather, I believe Christians should have a conditional preference for the market; excessive government intervention in the market should be rejected. The degree of government intervention to "control the licentiousness of man" must be decided on individual issues. That makes choosing how to vote a complicated task since politicians and parties may push certain issues with which we agree with while also advocating those with which we disagree. Moreover, whatever their policies, their character and life-style must also be considered. Personally, that leads me to favour market-leaning economic policies. Since conservative parties which favour the market have tended also to be more reluctant to support anti-Christian social policies (abortion, etc.), it is not surprising to find evangelicals normally supporting them.<sup>8</sup>

## Postscript

I agree with the thrust of Robertson's second article, "Is the Church Capitalist?" (*Clarion*, Aug. 26, 2016); it is contrary to the Bible to permit the wealthy undue influence in the church. However, to call this Capitalist is questionable; it has nothing to do with economic systems. It, however, reflects Robinson's Marxist characterization of Capitalism.

<sup>1</sup> I think that Robertson castigates the "Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals" too much. Viewing the blog on which Rick Phillips' post occurs, it doesn't look like official statements of the Alliance – just a forum for discussion of topics of interest to Christian readers – like *Clarion*. Phillips does not purport to speak for his church anymore than Robertson claims to speak for the Free Church of Scotland on his blog. By the way, Phillips has also published a response to Robertson on his blog, at <http://www.reformation21.org/blog/2016/03/capitalism-is-not-the-gospel.php>.

<sup>2</sup> John Boersema, *Political-Economic Activity to the Honour of God*, Premier Publishing, Winnipeg 1999 and more recently on my blog, *Political-Economics as God's Steward* at <http://johnmboersema.blogspot.ca>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/economic-freedom-of-the-world-2016.pdf>; their rankings are based on publicly available numbers. North Korea and Cuba are not ranked; they are my personal addition.

<sup>4</sup> See [johnmboersema.blogspot.ca/2015/06/government-does-not-work](http://johnmboersema.blogspot.ca/2015/06/government-does-not-work) and [johnmboersema.blogspot.ca/2015/03/government-debt-and-deficits-do-matter.html](http://johnmboersema.blogspot.ca/2015/03/government-debt-and-deficits-do-matter.html)

<sup>5</sup> See my book, p.162

<sup>6</sup> Not necessarily "selfish interest."

<sup>7</sup> Health Care, Wait-lists and Private Benevolence at <http://johnmboersema.blogspot.ca/2014/07/health-care-wait-lists-and-private.html>

<sup>8</sup> Which leaves the choice in the current U.S. presidential campaign extremely difficult!

# Reflections: ICRE 5, Lunteren, Netherlands



*Ron de Haan*  
Assistant Principal at  
Credo Christian High School  
in Langley, B.C.

The International Conference for Reformed Education met for three days in this charming, forested location in central Holland. The facilities were excellent, the fellowship uplifting, and the information enriching.

After focusing on the school (2004), student (2007), teacher (2010), and curriculum (2013), this year's focus was on the place of the Christian school in society. What sort of impact ought our schools to have in the community or to "the public good"? How can schools interact with its community? How does the community view our schools? Are we sufficiently connected? Or are we afraid of being "out there"?

Several speakers spoke to the matter of our schools' place in society. Prof. Roel Kuipers pointed to the need for schools to battle the world's disintegration. While our students have been prepared for practical and economic spheres of life, more could be done on the area of ethics, politics, social justice; seeking core-formation in relationships both in and outside of the school.

Dr. James Kennedy presented the interesting notion of the "Contrast Community." This notion implies that schools need to be different somehow. What does that look like? Perhaps schools need to show their respective communities and the world that unlike the disintegration of the world's values, Reformed schools demonstrate a unity that can only be found in Christ. All educational endeavours, then, promote excellence in terms of, for example, the gifts of the Spirit. Our students should be encouraged to go out and transform the world in a way that reflects their Lord and Saviour.

Dr. Maarten Kater spoke about how the role of the school's basis (ie confessions) might be moved "inside out." The essential theories, foundational ideas, and fundamental operations need to move from an internal organization, to the outside, a more public and interactive model. Much of this can be initiated and promoted through prayer.

Several school leaders were given the opportunity to share what their respective schools were all about. We heard about schools in South Africa, India, South Korea, and of course, some schools and school projects in Holland. Even Lynden's Cornerstone School was featured! Having heard about the various challenges faced by these colleagues, it is safe to say that our schools in Canada are, on average, more stable and unified in terms of its supporting community, and its essential course deliveries, goals, and aims. We have so much reason for gratitude!

Along with lots of listening, there were many moments of reflection, devotion, and collegiality. For me, one such highlight was singing Psalm 1 in Afrikaans: Wonderful!

An excursion to the stunning city of Rotterdam was another highlight. It was great to get out and see this world-class port city; including hearing an amazing Christian testimony from the owner of a waterfront trattoria (hosted Café).

It was heartwarming and exciting to hear colleagues from around the world grappling with the crucial questions facing Reformed schools: For example, the Dutch schools seems to be moving away from church-membership-driven ideals and more to school-driven programs involving service-based community integration. South African schools are struggling with maintaining their schools as Reformed church membership is in decline. These are two sample challenges in the desire to best carry out this wonderful work of teaching God's covenant children.

All in all, it was a very uplifting and rich experience, especially for newcomers such as me. Despite the diversity, I felt warmth and unity with my fellow educators from around God's globe.





# Clarion Kids

## Samson

### Judges 13 - 16

When the Israelites did bad things and didn't listen to God, He sent people called the Philistines to punish them. Then he sent a man named Samson to save them. Samson had very long hair that he was never supposed to cut. God made Samson very strong and he killed many Philistines without any army. One time, he even killed a great big lion with his bare hands. When the Philistines finally caught Samson they cut off all his long hair and he wasn't strong anymore. God let his hair grow back, though, and Samson killed many more Philistines before he died.

Go to [www.clarionmagazine.ca](http://www.clarionmagazine.ca) to print and colour this picture!

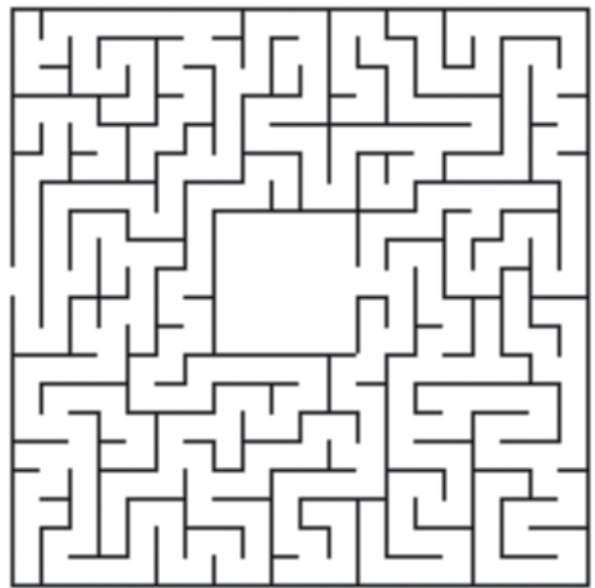


S S Z H J K R U X E  
B T A D I S L Q N P  
B I R H S D A I G U  
R O T O A B T T B N  
Y O U E N S P U U I  
V M C A I G F C Y S  
C C R L Q N X J C H  
T R I A V R I H J D  
B H Y B K G S B O R  
P S A M S O N O I L

#### Find these words!

Samson	Lion	Army
Philistine	Hair	Strong
Cut	Punish	

**Maze:** Help Samson find the Philistines and save the Israelites!

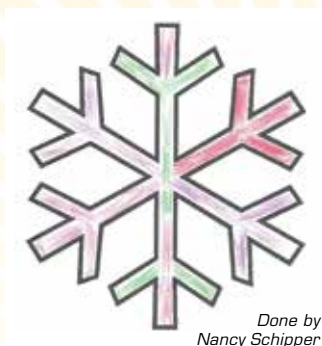


by Emily Nijenhuis

## Winter

*It's almost winter  
season again,  
but don't say, oh no!  
Falling from the sky, in  
beautiful individual, unique flakes,  
comes the pure white snow,  
As families sit snug and warm inside,  
by their fireplaces bright glow,  
Outside the cold blustery wind;  
doesn't seem as though it will soon stop to blow.  
It's a good thing it lasts only from December  
to March though.  
If it was any longer lasting, I wonder if I could  
patiently endure it;  
In fact I just don't know.  
But soon enough, anyway, spring will arrive,  
the snow will melt and disappear;  
once again there will be grass to mow.*

A poem by Gerald Denbok



Thank you to Gerald Denbok who provided us with this wonderful poem. He is very excited to share it with everyone. Gerald currently lives at the Anchor Home in Beamsville.

Congratulations to everyone celebrating a birthday in December. We wish you the Lord's blessing in the year to come, and a wonderful birthday and Christmas season.

## December birthdays

- 1 SANDY SPYKSMA will be 35**  
Peace Haven Homes  
6 Oneida Drive  
Brantford, ON N3S 7X8
- 10 JAMES KAMMINGA will be 32**  
Box 1125  
Carman, MB ROG OJO
- 15 FRANK ZEGERS will be 58**  
6528 1st Line  
RR 3 Fergus, ON N1M 2W4
- 16 JULIE KAMMINGA will be 28**  
Box 1125  
Carman, MB ROG OJO



## A NOTE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

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

Rachel Vis

731 Lincoln Street, Wellandport, Ontario L0R 2J0  
tom.rachelvis@gmail.com • 905-329-9476



## Press Release of Classis of Northern Ontario, at Owen Sound, September 30, 2016

Classis Northern Ontario was convened on September 30, 2016 in the Canadian Reformed Church at Owen Sound. Elder Henry Bosscher, on behalf of the convening church of Owen Sound, opened the meeting in a Christian manner. All the churches were properly represented and Classis was constituted. Delegates of Regional synod, Rev. J. Ludwig and Rev. J. van Popta were also welcomed. Rev. P. Feenstra served as Chairman of Classis, Rev. M.H. VanLuik as Vice-chairman, and Rev. D.G.J. Agema as Clerk.

Classis proceeded with the Peremptory Examination of Br. Jonathan Chase at the request of the Church at Elora after finding that the necessary documents were in order. Br. Chase then presented his sermon proposal on 1 Kings 22:1-40. Classis determined that he had sustained his sermon proposal and that the examination could proceed. At the conclusion of the examination on other areas concerning ministerial work, Classis judged that Br. Chase had sustained the exam. Br. Johnathan Chase signed the subscription form for Classis and the Chairman gave thanks in prayer. Classis then appobated the call by the church at Elora. Rev. Agema is appointed to represent Classis at his ordination on October 23.

During the course of the exam, Rev. B. Westerveld of the Reformed Churches of Quebec was given the opportunity to address Classis. He brought greetings from the churches in Quebec and expressed appreciation for the relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches as well as the financial support that is being given through the church at Owen Sound for the work done by Rev. P. Bedard.

Reports were given on church visits to the following churches: Fergus Maranatha, Fergus North, Grand Val-

ley, Guelph Living Word, Orangeville, and Owen Sound. The visits were received with thankfulness.

Reports were received from the church at Orangeville that that archives of Classis kept by Owen Sound were found to be in good order. A report was received from the treasurer with the recommendation that there be no assessment this year. An audit of the books of the Classical treasurer indicated the financial books were in good order. A report from the Needy Churches Committee indicated there were no needy churches in Classis and an audit of the books of this Committee indicated they were in good order.

The churches answered in the affirmative that the ministry of the office bearers is being continued and the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured (Art. 44 CO). No churches requested the advice of Classis.

The next classis was scheduled for December 16, 2016, to be convened by the church at Brampton.

Classis delegated to Regional Synod on November 9, as elder delegates, the Brothers Charles Groen and Brian Niezen and as alternates, Brothers Archie Bax and Jerry Hutten. Rev. P. Feenstra and Rev. E. Kampen were appointed as minister delegates with Rev. M.H. VanLuik and Rev. R. Visscher as alternates.

The delegates from the church at Brampton expressed thankfulness for the financial support that was received from the churches of Classis for the Urban Mission work in the Greater Toronto area. The churches at Brampton and Toronto will now, under the blessing of the Lord, proceed with this mission work.

The chairman noted with thankfulness that the meeting could be conducted in brotherly harmony. After thanksgiving in prayer, the meeting was closed.

*Rev. M.H. VanLuik  
Vice chairman at that time*





## Press Release of Classis Pacific West held on October 13, 2016

On behalf of the convening church, Rev. Anthon Souman welcomes all the delegates. He reads Matthew 19:16-30 and invites all present to sing Psalm 98:1, 3 and leads in prayer.

The credentials are examined and found to be in order. Classis is declared constituted and the following officers take their place. Rev. Ben Schoof is the chairman, Rev. James Slaa clerk, and Rev. Carl Van Dam vice-chairman. The agenda was adopted.

Candidate William den Hollander presented his sermon proposal. This proposal was discussed in closed session as a result of which the proposal is deemed sufficient to proceed with the examination after a short break. Candidate Den Hollander is examined in the topics of Old Testament exegesis, New Testament exegesis, knowledge of Scripture, church history, doctrine and creeds, ethics, church polity and diaconiology. With much thankfulness, Classis decides to sustain the examination of Candidate Den Hollander. The deputies from Regional Synod give their concurring advice in agreement with this. The way is open for Candidate Den Hollander to be ordained as minister of the Word and sacraments at the church of Langley. It was confirmed that all the documents were in good order. Classis appoints Rev. Lodder to represent Classis at the farewell evening for Rev. De Jonge and Rev. Souman to represent Classis at the welcome evening of Candidate Den Hollander on October 30.

The chairman asks the questions re Article 44 of the Church Order. Three churches ask advice regarding matters of the governing of their church and pastoral over-

sight. In closed session, advice is given. The impact of the updating of the BC Societies Act for churches is briefly discussed.

In closed session, Rev. Lodder presents the church visitation report brought to the church at Surrey on April 28, 2016. This report is received with thankfulness.

Opportunity is given for the churches to share the status of any mission projects they are involved with. Things are going well in the Chinese Reformed church. The work in China and the online Bible college is growing well. Prayer is requested for the Christians in China as their situation grows more difficult.

The convening church of the next Classis is Houston. The date is scheduled for December 13, 2016 with an alternate date for April 11, 2017. The suggested officers for the next Classis are: Rev. Carl Van Dam, chairman, Rev. James Slaa, vice-chairman, and Rev. Doug Vandeburgt, clerk.

Two new members for the committee for appeals are needed. Rev. Doug Vandeburgt (convenor) and Br. S. De Jong (alternate) are appointed as new members. Rev. Ben Schoof is appointed as the deputy for preaching arrangements in vacant churches. Question period is not made use of.

The chairman notes with thankfulness that nothing censurable was said or done during the meeting. The Acts of Classis are presented and adopted. The press release is presented and approved. After inviting the delegates to sing Hymn 9, the chairman closes the meeting with prayer.

*For Classis,*

*Rev. Carl Van Dam, vice-chairman at that time*

