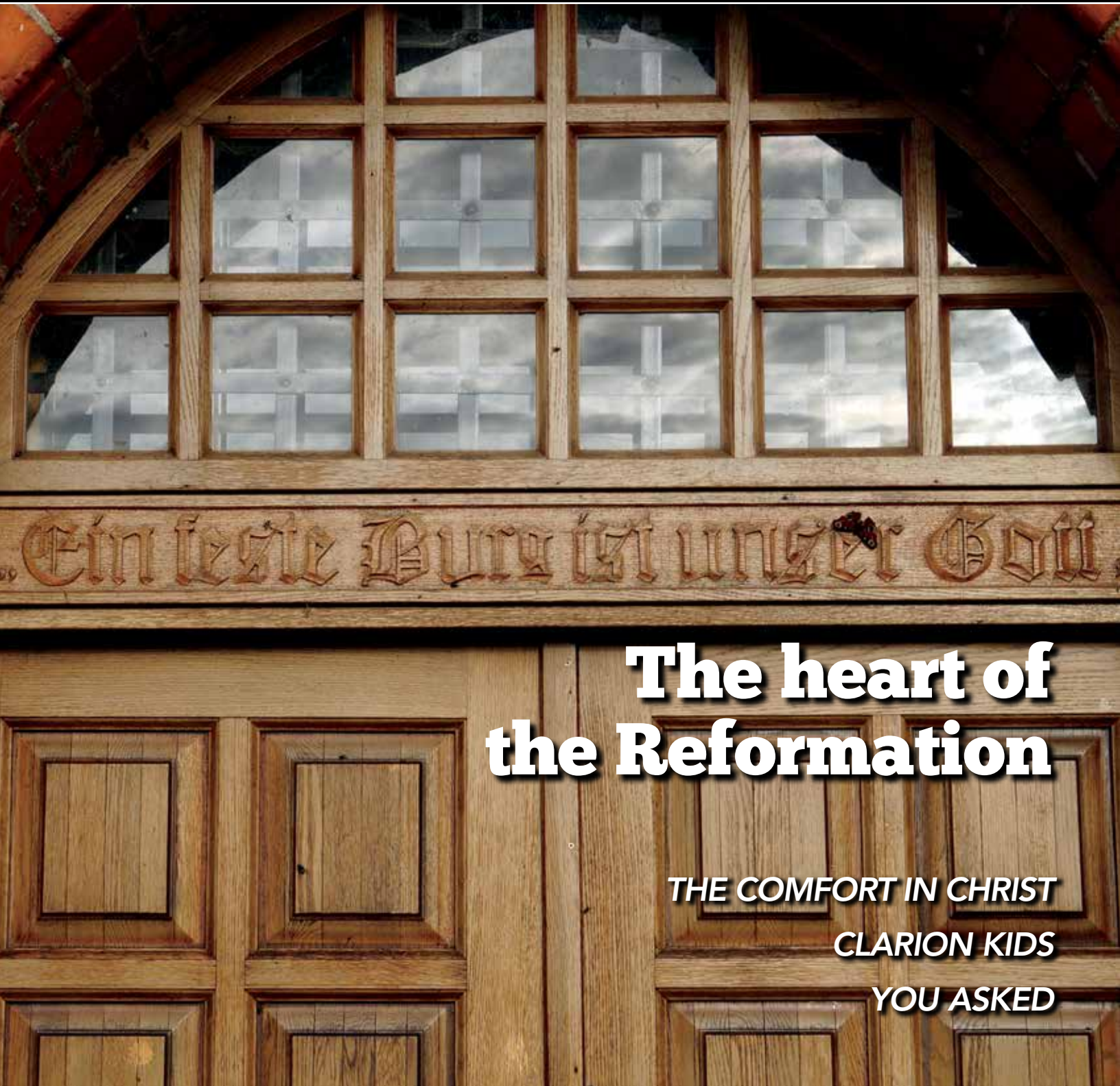


Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

V 66 N 4 FEBRUARY 24 2017



The heart of the Reformation

THE COMFORT IN CHRIST
CLARION KIDS
YOU ASKED

Christ Alone

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The Reformation was, in the first place, a restoring of Christ and his once for all sacrifice for our sins to the very centre of attention

In the year that marks the 500th anniversary of what we call the Great Reformation, it can be expected to read many articles dealing with various aspects of the Reformation. In this editorial, I will address the key issue in the Reformation, evident already in Luther's Ninety-Five Theses, dated October 31, 1517, as well as in the Heidelberg Catechism.

Five Solas

The teachings of the Reformation are often summed up by the expressions, "*Sola Scriptura, Sola Fide, Sola Gratia, Solus Christus, Soli Deo Gloria*." Translated, they mean, "Only Scripture, Only by Faith, Only out of Grace, Only Christ, Only to the Glory of God."

Of these five, the one most often identified as being the heart of the Reformation is *Sola Fide*, followed perhaps by *Sola Scriptura* and *Sola Gratia*. One could point to Calvin, who, in his interaction with Cardinal Sadoletto, wrote that justification by faith was "the first and keenest subject of controversy between us." He then adds, "Wherever the knowledge of it is taken away, the glory of Christ is extinguished, religion abolished, the church destroyed, and the hope of salvation utterly overthrown."

Note how the first thing he mentions is the glory of Christ. We are directed to the *Solus Christus*. It can be argued that it is *Solus Christus* which is at the heart of the other solas. The Reformation was, in the first place, a restoring of Christ and his once for all sacrifice for our sins to the very centre of attention. When you do that, *Sola Fidei, Sola Gratia, Soli Deo Gloria* follow. The emphasis on *Solus Christus* was re-discovered by going back to *Sola Scriptura*.

This emphasis on *Solus Christus* should not surprise us. The centre of the Scriptures, after all, is God's work of salvation in Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus told the Pharisees that the Scriptures bear witness to him and that Moses wrote of him (John 5:39, 46). In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote that he preached nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified. It is not just an interesting aside that believers have become known as Christians, again reflecting the *Solus Christus*.

The Ninety-Five Theses

We see this emphasis in Luther's Ninety-Five Theses. In these, he challenged the sale of indulgences. An indulgence was a declaration of forgiveness for sins that had been committed. Luther did not question the task of the church in declaring forgiveness. Rather, he was critical of the superficial way of dealing with sin, even to the point that a certificate of forgiveness could be purchased. Forgiveness was, in effect, obtained by paying a fine. This trivialized repentance and denied the centrality of Christ. In the opening Theses, he states that Christ's call to repent applies to the entire life of the believer. This repentance is to be shown in a godly lifestyle (1-4).

Of great significance is a short sequence of statements about one third of the way into the document. Luther states,

- 36. Any truly repentant Christian has a right to full remission of penalty and guilt, even without indulgence letters.
- 37. Any true Christian, whether living or dead, participates in all the blessings of Christ and the church; and this is granted him by God, even without indulgence letters.
- 38. Nevertheless, papal remission and blessing are by no means to be disregarded, for they are, as I have said (Thesis 6), the proclamation of the divine remission.

His final two theses are, "Christians should be exhorted to be diligent in following Christ, their Head, through penalties, death and hell. And thus be confident of entering into heaven through many tribulations rather than through the false security of peace (Acts 14:22)."

When you follow through the Ninety-Five Theses, you can see that Luther began by speaking of true repentance and denied the need for indulgence letters, either given by the priest after the sacrament of penance, or after performance of acts of penitence. He denied above all that one could obtain forgiveness of sins by buying indulgence letters. He ended up speaking of following Christ and so finding true peace. The

church has a role in declaring forgiveness, but all believers can find full forgiveness in Christ. While this forgiveness is available to all who believe, the emphasis is more on Christ's sufficient sacrifice than faith.

The Heidelberg Catechism

Luther posted his Theses in 1517 and the Heidelberg Catechism was published in 1563. Tensions arose between the followers of Luther and those of other Reformers, especially John Calvin. One of the key points of contention concerned the presence of the Lord Jesus in the holy supper. It is interesting to note that while the Heidelberg Catechism clearly

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

What is the key issue at the heart of the Reformation? Read Rev. Eric Kampen's editorial, and pay close attention to the centrality of Christ.

This issue brings you an article that was originally a Women's League Day speech, "Self-Deception and the Pursuit of the Authentic" by Rev. Gerrit Bruintjes.

For this first time in a few issues we have a Church Snapshot – of Smithville CanRC. Readers, if you are enjoying this bios of your fellow congregations, you may want to follow up with your own Council and see if one has yet been planned for your congregation!

Issue 4 contains regular columns Treasures New and Old, Clippings on Politics and Religion, Education Matters, *Clarion* Kids, and Ray of Sunshine. There is also two You Asked questions, as well as a book review.

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showed the influence of John Calvin, it was published in a territory where the ruler had to subscribe to the main Lutheran confessional document, the Augsburg Confession, and he defended himself against accusations that the Catechism differed from that confession. The question before us, however, is what is the heart of the teaching of the Catechism. Upon reflection, it is apparent that it shares the same emphasis as Luther's Theses, namely, the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. In short, the Catechism, true to Scripture, is more about *Solus Christus* than *Sola Fide*.

This emphasis on *Solus Christus* is apparent in the very first question and answer, which asks about our "only comfort." That comfort is in belonging to Jesus Christ, who has fully paid for all my sins and delivered me from the power of the devil. It is also the Lord Jesus who preserves me and who works in me by his Holy Spirit. There is no mention of faith, Scripture, grace, or even *solī deo Gloria*. It is about Christ's blood that has paid for sins, and the resulting comfort for the believer. Scripture will only be mentioned indirectly in Lord's Day 6:19. Faith is not mentioned until Lord's Day 7, and then again in Lord's Day 23. Christ, however, is front and centre both in the structure and the details of the Catechism.

As for the structure, the centrality of Christ is evident in the three parts. The first, about sin and misery, sets the stage to show the need for a Saviour. The second and largest part shows us the Saviour in all his glory. In the very structure, the focus is on the Saviour, the Deliverer from sin and Satan, not the instrument by which believers are given a share in him.

As for the details, some samples must suffice. Lord's Days 5 and 6 impress on us that the only one who can save us from our sins is the one who is true God and true man, that is Jesus Christ. When the Catechism elaborates on the Apostles Creed, everything is explained with reference to Christ. God the Father is the Father of Christ. It is in the explanation of the person and work of our Lord himself that the *Solus Christus* focus is the most apparent. Nine Lord's Days deal with his person and work. The explanation of the name Jesus brings out that he is the only one who saves us from our sins. In contrast to those who seek salvation in saints, themselves, or anywhere else, it is driven home that Jesus is the complete Saviour. In explaining the name Christ, his saving purpose comes out especially in the way it teaches us that he is our only high priest. In Lord's Day 23, which speaks of being righteous only by faith, an extra question and answer spells out that we are not righteous on account of our faith but on account of the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ. Faith is only the instrument.

We see the same focus on Christ when it comes to the sacraments. For example, in Question and Answer 67 it is

stressed that both Word and Sacraments focus our faith on the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as the only ground for our salvation. In the explanation of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, any thought that these somehow take away sin is clearly refuted. Everything points back to the power of Jesus' sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. The *Solus Christus* emphasis shines most brightly in the somewhat controversial Question and Answer 80 as it contrasts sharply the Papal Mass to the Lord's supper. The Lord's Supper, it stresses, testifies that we have complete forgiveness of all our sins through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which he himself accomplished on the cross once for all. This is in sharp contrast to the Mass, which teaches the need for a daily sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. The conclusion is that the mass is "nothing but a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ."

The centrality of Jesus's sacrifice is also mentioned in explaining the preaching of the gospel as a key of the kingdom. The gospel is that there is complete forgiveness for all sins for the sake of Christ's merits for all who believe.

Helpful

It is helpful to see this focus on Christ if we want to capture in a very succinct way what it means to be Reformed. We can make that complicated, and try to bring in many nuances as to why, as Reformed Churches, we are different from a host of other church groups. By seeing this focus on Christ, we can keep it simple. If someone would ask us what it means to be Reformed, we can point to the very centre of God's plan of salvation, to the very heart of the Scriptures, that is, to Jesus Christ. We should not confuse people too much with names like Martin Luther or John Calvin. To be sure, they were instruments in God's hand to point the church back to Jesus Christ as the only and complete Saviour. The church at the beginning of the sixteenth century had lost sight of that, seeking salvation in sacraments, prayers to saints, themselves, good works, even their money. The Reformation restored Christ to the centre of attention, and thereby restored true comfort for believers.

You can talk about faith and Scripture and grace, but in the end, it is best to begin with the most important, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ, the only mediator between God and man. In him we find everything we need. Luther said it well when he wrote, "Christians should be exhorted to be diligent in following Christ, their Head, through penalties, death and hell. And thus be confident of entering into heaven through many tribulations rather than through the false security of peace."



The Comfort in Christ

1 Thessalonians 4:13-15

This meditation was originally published in this magazine in 2005.

On more than one occasion the Apostle Paul wrote about the resurrection of the dead. He did so to comfort and encourage the believers, also with a view to the future. In this broken world believers are the people of hope. They bury their dead in the hope of the resurrection. They do so because of their unity with Christ; because of their faith they have all things in common with Christ!

The comfort and hope of believers who live by faith in the resurrection of the body is needed beyond the day of the funeral. When times move on the loss is felt sorely, and the empty place is there every day and night. Grief can take over and sorrow can become overwhelming. Continued comfort is needed. Further encouragement is required! They need to be reminded of the larger picture, of the complete work of Christ in this world, in the history of this world.

It's for those purposes that the Apostle Paul writes the church of Thessalonica. He had left the congregation to pursue his missionary task; yet, he has not forgotten about the grieving of some. He wants the congregation to be aware of them too, those grieving members in their own midst who need this further encouragement! Yes, he wants the entire congregation to keep its focus on the larger picture. That's why he connects the passing away of their loved ones to the return of Christ. He puts the losses and deaths they've experienced in the perspective of the fi-

nal outcome of Christ's work: the total removal of all traces of death, the total restoration of the powers of life!

When Paul writes, "We do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep," he doesn't write this way to introduce some new teaching. He uses this kind of expression elsewhere (1 Cor 10:1), and he does so to stress: "I want you to know this very well, dear readers! In your grieving, don't let go of what we believe about the resurrection of the body and of Christ's return!" In your grief don't neglect to remember the facts about Christ's resurrection, about our sharing in it and about the hope we have in the midst of this hopeless world!

Just as we hear it in our time, people in Paul's days comforted each other with all sorts of ideas and theories. They spoke about the immortal soul, or about death that can't be stopped anyway. Today people comfort one another by saying that the deceased continues living in our memories, in their legacy, and all that nonsense. No, says Paul, the only true comfort we find is in Christ's victory over death! In Jesus' life all the traces of death have been erased!

We believe that, right? Well, then, this faith unites us with Christ! By faith this resurrection of Christ becomes manifest in our life, through our communion with him. Just note how Paul repeats this over and over in this passage: God will bring *with Jesus* those who have fallen asleep *in him* (14); and the dead *in Christ* will rise first (16); we will *meet the Lord* to be *with the Lord*

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forever (17). Unity with Christ is our only comfort, now and forever! That's why we may share in the way Christ went through death to life! God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him! They will share with Christ in the course of victory!

It's that course of the victory of life over death that Paul further explains. When you are brought by God with Jesus, all the misery of death will be conquered. Today death is still bitterness; yet God will take this bitterness away. He won't leave a trace of death in your life. What a great comfort that is! If you consider what tracks death leaves behind in families, in personal pain and suffering; consider what terrible things death does, what joy and beauty it destroys! Can that all be undone, erased, and removed totally? Yes, Paul says, and he quotes a word of the Lord as if to add to his authoritative writing: in your grief, in your sorrow, in your pain, listen to God! Let him comfort you in your mourning: "We who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep!" Those who have fallen asleep won't miss out on anything! To these Thessalonians, to us who are still alive, Paul says: don't think death is doing something irreparable. Right now your loved ones have been taken away and we've been left behind, but afterward there won't be a trace of death left anymore! These Thessalonians, and we, must know for what future the dead are heading with the Lord Jesus Christ! **C**

Self-Deception and the Pursuit of the Authentic

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This article was originally a Women's League Day speech.

Western culture values the authentic. Of paramount importance to our culture is that a person or thing is accurately portrayed throughout, from top to bottom, from outside to inside. Whatever you see, feel, or experience must be truthful and genuine *throughout*. For example, when you drink an apple juice, you expect it to be one hundred percent real apple juice. If you purchase something labeled as gold, you expect it to be pure gold. If you buy organic, you expect it to meet your standards of organically grown products. A compromise in any way results in a person feeling cheated.

An article by Steven Poole pointed out the obsession our culture has with pursuing authenticity: one hundred percent is probably the most beloved percentage in the grocery store aisle. Anything labeled one hundred percent receives a healthy markup in price. In 2011 Starbucks began selling salad-based lunchboxes labelled “Real Food.” Coca-Cola uses the slogan, “the Real Thing.” “Even the clothing company Mark & Spencer’s joins in by selling men’s underwear branded ‘authentic,’ posing the nice question of what an inauthentic pair of boxer shorts or trunks would look like.”¹ We will no longer settle for imitation, no matter how good. A product must be authentic.

The pursuit of authentic also applies to people. Society expects, even demands, that a person be themselves. Success is achieved when you have both the courage and the opportunity to be the real you. Such individuals are greatly admired. The following common slogans underscore this: “be yourself,” “be real,” “quit pretending,” “don’t be a poser,” and “find your identity.” Being fake or untrue to *you* seems like the unforgiveable sin. A politician can lie, cheat, or

even commit adultery yet still gain broad support; however, if he is perceived as inauthentic public support vanishes.

In such a society, child education shifts from teaching, training, and disciplining a student to encouraging and guiding a child to be who they think they should be. Parents are increasingly uncertain about their role in child formation, and worry that their advice or discipline might create internal conflict as the child is taught to be someone they are not.

The pursuit of the authentic has not escaped contemporary Christianity either, and, dare I say, also the Reformed churches. The manner of dress on Sundays must authentically represent who you are. Words you sing must reflect what you truly feel inside. Pastors who show themselves to be a “real person” on the pulpit are appreciated and admired. Church is seen as a place where church-goers should go to be themselves and participate in authentic worship.

Real/true/honest/genuine/authentic – these are the valued catch-words of our day.

This pursuit of the authentic is, of course, a noble pursuit. We must prize honesty and truthfulness in all we do and say. Truth should be sought and prized wherever possible for “the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). However, in this article I hope to inject humility into the pursuit of authenticity. I will do so by introducing and explaining the truth of self-deception, and then show from Scripture the sinful heart’s inclination to self-deception. I will then proceed to show how self-deception thwarts the cultural pursuit of authenticity. Finally, I will conclude by explaining how the gospel of Jesus Christ gives us hope for success in this pursuit. This is an expansive topic and in this article we can only touch the surface by introducing the topic.

Introducing self-deception

Self-deception is lying to yourself and accepting the lie. While you may know something to be true, for any number of reasons, you cannot or will not embrace that truth. Instead, you weave half-truths or even outright lies to cover the truth – the thicker the web of lies, the easier it is to suppress the truth. Self-deception avoids the truth because it might be embarrassing, uncomfortable, difficult to deal with, or clearly just wrong. You cannot face the full consequences of the truth and instead prefer to embrace the lie. The following examples may help illustrate self-deception.

Young children demonstrate an innate ability to self-deceive. Imagine a two-year-old boy who has recently learned how to take off his own boots and has repeatedly demonstrated this skill. However, one day, for reasons not even known to himself, he decides that he does not wish to take off his own boots. His mother, busy already, encourages him to take off his own boots. The young boy responds, “I can’t.” This is a lie for clearly he hasn’t all of the sudden lost the ability to take off his boots. Does he believe the lie he has just told? It certainly seems that way. He may even proceed to support this lie with evidence by showing how even though he tries with all his energy, the boots will not come off. He may even become angry when his mother suggests that he is capable of taking off his own boots. This young boy, who once knew how to take off his boots, has deceived himself into thinking that he is now unable.

The ability to self-deceive doesn’t leave as we grow older; we only get better at deceiving ourselves. The teenager, when asked to take out the trash, foregoes the simple and less believable “I can’t” to the more believable and acceptable “I can’t, I have homework.” Adults, with many years of deception practice, refine their excuses to themselves and others with, “I’ll do it tomorrow,” “I just didn’t have any time,” “I can stop whenever I want,” “my personality just doesn’t do well with that,” or “I’m sinful by nature.” These excuses allow a person to cover up the truth of personal failure, weakness, or unwillingness with a socially acceptable reason.

Self-deception and Scripture

The most well-known text speaking about self-deception is found in Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” Normally when deceit or lying is discussed, there is more than one person involved. To tell a lie you need someone to tell it to. However, Jeremiah does not refer to inter-relational

lying between people; he is referring to deception found within a person. A lie told to oneself.

The context shows that self-deception happens when we trust in man (Jeremiah 17:5-6). Such a person is compared to a shrub, tenaciously clutching to the desert rock of the Judean wasteland. When rain comes, this bush never has a chance to absorb the nourishing rainwater. The water rushes right by the shrub on its way down the mountain. Why does the bush continue to cling so tenaciously? Why does man cling so tenaciously to self-trust? Because man thinks he can do better next time. Obadiah 3, “The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rocks and make your home on the heights, you who say to yourself, ‘Who can bring me down to the ground?’” Your pride has deceived you into thinking you are better than you are. You have bought into your self-deception and live within a web of lies of your own creation.

***The pursuit of
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Rather than trusting in God, who knows the heart, the sinner trusts in himself, conceited and deceived in his own potential or ability. “An oracle is within my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes. *“For in his own eyes he flatters himself too much to detect or hate his sin.”* (Psalm 36:1-2). Sinners are self-deceived, buying into a false system of internal rationalization and flattery; a system that covers the truth so that a person cannot even detect his own sin.

The deadliest form of self-deception is described in Romans 1.

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men *who suppress the truth* by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. . . . For *although they knew* God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. . . . *They exchanged the truth of God for a lie*, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator – who is forever praised. Amen. (Rom 1:18-19, 21, 25).

Notice the two levels of truth and lie. The truth within them is suppressed by their wickedness, and instead of ac-

knowledging and embracing the truth of God's existence and his claim on their lives, they choose the lie of following other gods. They will not accept the truth.

Men in Scripture were ensnared by self-deception. David lived the lie of adultery with Bathsheba. When the truth threatened to break through, David tried to find some way of getting rid of Uriah, Bathsheba's husband. Not wanting to face the full weight of his own murderous heart, he used the dangers of war to justify his contracted killing of Uriah (2 Sam 11:14-15, 25). He lived in his own web of lies, until the Word of God through the prophet Nathan broke the web and revealed the truth of his deceitful, darkened heart. Similarly, the heart of the disciple Peter deceived him into thinking that he would never deny the Christ. He deceived himself into thinking he was more capable of being faithful than he really was. It took the words of God through the mouth of God to reveal the truth of his deceitful, darkened heart.

We too, suffer from rampant self-deception. It often falls into two general areas. Self-deception can minimize and even glorify evil. For example: the countless hours spent on Facebook are necessary to stay in touch; the harsh words, spoken or typed, are necessary to set others straight;

Sinners are self-deceived, buying into a false system of internal rationalization and flattery

the eighty-hour work week away from wife and family is necessary to be a good provider; the habitual alcohol is necessary as a stress-reliever. Self-deception can also malign good. For example: the kind gesture from an enemy must have had ulterior motives; the gracious gift from the church must have come with strings attached; a woman is less valued by

God because Scripture forbids her ordination. Self-deception can glorify evil and cover-up the depth of our sin and misery; it can also malign good and cover-up the depth of the love of God for us in Jesus Christ.

Self-deception and Authenticity

Self-deception is pervasive in society and our own lives, but it is rarely acknowledged or discussed. Why? Because we live in a culture that values authenticity, where one of the greatest sins is not being true to yourself. No one can face the truth that they aren't being honest with themselves. "Who are you to tell me: 'I'm wrong in thinking this way or that I'm lying to myself? Do you really think you know me, better than I know myself?'" It is hard to admit

chronic self-deception, because in doing so you admit failure at the very pursuit society prizes most.

At this point, I hope you are beginning to see the deceitfulness of the sinful heart and the conundrum presented. How can we believe anything about ourselves when our hearts tell us what we want to hear? How can we break free of self-deception when this is the way our hearts tick? Such questions are not just a philosophical, but intensely practical. How can I be sure that my vehemence in debate was out of purity of heart and love for God and neighbour? How can I know I wasn't just being selfish or prideful in my staked-out position? How can I be sure that when I pushed and fought for that specific decision in our home, in Christ's church, or with my friends, I wasn't just pushing a personal agenda? How can I know if I'm looking out for the interest of others instead of just my own self-interest (Phil 2:4)? How can I be sure I see myself as I really am?

Society's pursuit of the authentic is doomed to failure apart from God. No one could live and function well in this world while authentically showing the darkness of their own heart. The depth of sin and misery would overwhelm and destroy society. No one is willing or able to recognize or adequately respond to the darkness of the heart. Apart from God in Christ, the authentic reality is so vile and ugly no one could stand under it or with it. Thus, in the end, the pursuit of the authentic apart from God only leads to greater skill at deception, ever weaving more intricate and complex webs of lies.

Overcoming self-deception

The depth of sin and misery makes the grace of God in Jesus Christ shine magnificently. God knows the depth of the deceitful heart. Knowing the breadth and depth of humanity's deceit, God sent Jesus Christ to testify to the truth. In Christ, God fully revealed the holiness and purity of life God called us to, for Christ came to fulfill the law and the prophets (Matt 5:17). In Christ, God gave a way to deal honestly with our failure and not be destroyed. He revealed full forgiveness and renewal found in the Saviour. Jesus Christ said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

Christ's testimony of the truth continues to this day through the Spirit of Truth. "But when he, the Spirit of

The depth of sin and misery makes the grace of God in Jesus Christ shine magnificently

truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come” (John 16:13). The pursuit of the authentic comes only through humble submission to the work of the Spirit in our hearts.

As the Spirit works, the authentic sinners can be purified into authentic saints. “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:8-9. We begin to see the depth of our sin and misery, we confess this sin, find shelter in the righteousness of Christ, and seek the purifying work of the Spirit of Truth.

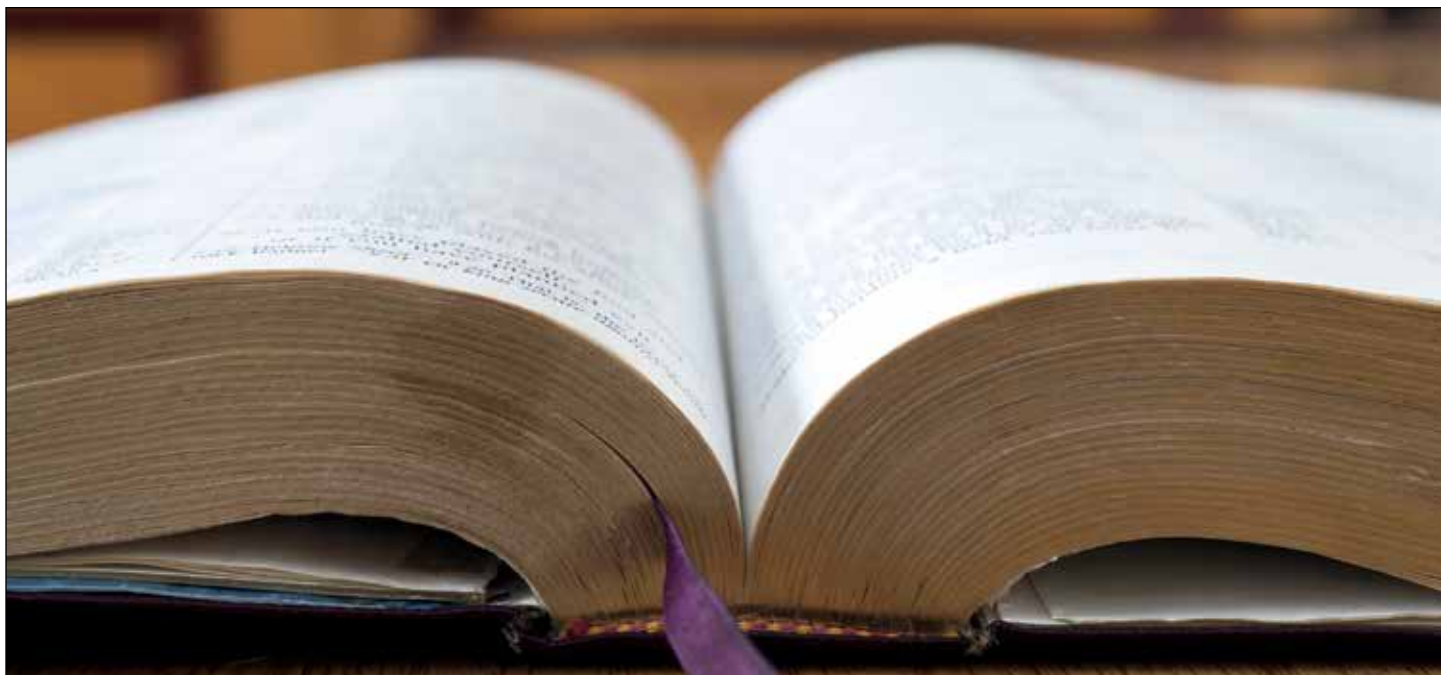
Have you ever wondered why you repeatedly hear the law of God read? Don’t you know it by now? Yes, you know the truth. Each week, the Spirit uses the law to pierce through the self-deception that you have done better at keeping God’s law than you actually have. The law exposes sin as sin. The law of God points to areas in your life that you have covered with a web of lies. The law clears away the spider web of lies and points to the truth: this thought, word, or deed is sin. Just as Nathan the prophet spoke truth into David’s life, so the Word of God continues to speak the truth into our lives.

Have you ever wondered why you repeatedly need to hear the basic gospel of Jesus Christ? So that as the Spirit of Truth

exposes the darkness and deceit of your sinful nature, you at the same time embrace the truth that all is not lost. Christ’s perfect life and atoning death is all-sufficient and covers a multitude of sins, even self-deception, even when you do not recognize it. We can pray confidently with the psalmist, “Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults” (Ps 19:12) and know that God knows our hearts better than we know them ourselves. Confess your sin, and continue to fix your eyes on Jesus Christ and learn from him.

Yes, you are lying to yourself. I can’t tell you where, how, or why: but I do know there are ways you resort to self-deception. Don’t be surprised, don’t be angered, don’t be discouraged, and don’t lose hope. Exposing self-deception is a painful process, made more so in the culture in which we live. But the Holy Spirit is our comforter that encourages us and says, “This is sin, but don’t be discouraged, God knows and sent Jesus Christ to bring the truth to you, to die for your sin.” In him you have hope. Fix your eyes on Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate, the Way, the Truth, and the Life and never shift your gaze. “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32).

¹ Poole, S. “Why are we so obsessed with the pursuit of authenticity?”, <http://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2013/03/why-are-we-so-obsessed-pursuit-authenticity>.



Islam in Church

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A recent trend in Europe is to welcome Islam into church services. In January 2017, the Glasgow cathedral in Scotland invited Muslims to join in worship on the feast of Epiphany. Episcopalians celebrate it to remember the visit of the wise men and their worship of Jesus as divine. A Muslim was invited to read from the Quran. He read from a chapter which included the Islamic teaching that Jesus is not the Son of God and should not be worshipped. "It is not befitting to the (majesty of) Allah that he should beget a son. . . . And lo! Allah is my Lord and your Lord. So worship Him. That is the right path" (Surah 19:35-36). Happily, worshippers protested but the cathedral provost, Kelvin Holdsworth, defended the practice and said the reading was aimed at promoting understanding between Islam and Christianity in Glasgow. The head of the Scottish Episcopal Church, David Chillingworth, deeply regretted the protests and abuse that came with them. He also said: "Our desire is that this should be a worthy expression of the reconciliation to which all Christians are called." But what happened to the church's identity as "the pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15)?

A senior Church of England Bishop, Lord Harris of Pentregarth, has suggested that Prince Charles's coronation service should be opened with a reading from the Quran. The gesture would be a "creative act of accommodation" to make Muslims feel "embraced" by the nation.

In Potenza, Italy a priest, Franco Corbo, dressed Mary in what looked like a Muslim burqa for the church's Nativity scene, done "in the name of dialogue among religions." As a result of angry demonstrations, the priest took down the display but called those who opposed it narrow-minded. In Florence, Muslim songs resonated through the cathedral, accompanied by Christian ones. Even Muslims songs like "Koran is Justice" were sung. This happened a mere week after Islamic terrorists killed twelve people in Paris in response to the controversial depictions of Mohammed in the satirical magazine, *Charlie Hebdo*. Many more examples can be given. There seems to be very little resistance from the Roman Catholic hierarchy against importing Islam into the church.

Pope Francis embraces religious relativism. He was the first pope to visit the Grand Mosque in Rome and when he travels he spends a lot of time in mosques. Not surprisingly then, this pope also allowed the reading of Islamic prayers and Quran readings in the Vatican when he met with the Israeli Prime Minister and the Palestinian Authority President. The idea was to foster peace. In July 2016, a verse of the Koran was recited during Mass in one of Rome's oldest churches, the papal Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere. The bitter irony of the whole affair was that it happened during a ceremony in memory of eighty-five-year-old Father Jacques Hamel who was murdered by ISIS terrorists in a horrific way during a church service in a northern French town.

The use of the Quran in church is not limited to Europe. In America there are more than fifty churches, including the Washington National Cathedral, that have the reading of the Quran.

It's a one way road. You don't hear of the Bible being read in mosques. Considering the history of the church and its conflicts with Islam, it is unbelievable that Rome and too many Protestants are accommodating to Islam. But then, if postmodernism has entered the church and all truth is relative we should not be surprised at these developments. But there is no future for such churches.

Sources used: Calum May, "Clergyman defends St Mary's Cathedral Koran reading" BBC Jan 12, 2017; "Church 'deeply distressed' by Koran offence, says primus" BBC Jan 15, 2017; Giulio Meotti, "Christian Clergy Welcomes Islam in Church, Then Bows to It" January 4, 2017, Gatestone Institute.



Glasgow cathedral, Scotland

Smithville Canadian Reformed Church



Situated in “the heart of Niagara” is a little town with only one traffic light. It’s here that you will find the Canadian Reformed Church of Smithville located at 330 Station Street. We worship at 9:30am and 2:30pm each Sunday and we would love for you to join us!

Instituted September 14, 1952, the church and congregation have undergone various changes throughout the years. On several occasions the LORD blessed the Smithville congregation with such growth that new church buildings were able to be built and new congregations formed; namely the CanRCs of Lincoln, 1970, Attercliffe, 1985, and most recently Grassie in 2001. On each of these occasions, members of the Smithville congregation branched out and joined these new churches. In addition, church boundaries were also revised over the years and this subsequently sent members to other churches as well. However, for all members lost, members are also gained! The LORD has richly blessed the Smithville congregation in that the total membership sits at 612 members. Wow!

In 2010 the decision was made to revamp the church building. So, the demolition of the original building and the construction of the new one began. During this time, the

congregation was able to worship next door in the gym of John Calvin School until a year later when the new church building was complete. Not only were we blessed with a new church building that year but also a new minister. Rev. Clarence Bouwman, along with his family, accepted the call to serve in our congregation, willingly and faithfully taking up his task in Smithville and continuing to do so to this day.

Of the 612 members of the Smithville congregation, there are 352 communicant and 260 non-communicant members. With this many individuals you can be sure that there is a wide age range, from a few months old all the way to our Sister B. Kingma, 101 years old. Occupations within the congregation also vary. Some of the most common jobs are landscaping, trucking, office administration, manufacturing, hairdressing, contracting, construction, health-care, and teaching. A wide selection to be sure!

With regards to communication between all members, our church makes use of the Church Social web app where members may see a detailed calendar of events, photo gallery, or use the email tool to send a message to the whole congregation.

So what is it like to be a part of the Smithville congregation? Church life in Smithville is quite busy with various





societies active throughout the year; men's and women's societies as well as Youth Group. In addition, there are also groups for the children, Cadets for boys and Kingdom Seekers for girls; here the children spend time in Bible study, doing crafts, and earning badges. Both Youth Group as well as Kingdom Seekers and Cadets organize outings each year and spend time with the older members of the congregation by means of dinners and games nights. Visits are also made to nearby, Anchor Home. Various fundraisers, sports, and choir practices also take up time during the year, as well as Vacation Bible School in the summer. In the winter, the congregation organizes a church picnic with snowmobiling, sledding, games, a warm fire, and some delicious hot chocolate. After service on News Years Eve, we celebrate

with some freshly-made oliebollen, the tasty Dutch treat made by various volunteers. Spreading the gospel in our community is also a focus. Members organize community breakfasts, food drives, and often serve as dinner hosts to our neighbours in need.

With all this activity going on in Smithville, we also remember and support our church's missionary, Rev. Edwar Dethan. He, along with his family, continually aim to spread the gospel on the other side of the world in Indonesia.

We hope you have enjoyed this snippet into the life of the Canadian Reformed Church of Smithville. If you would like more information regarding our church, you can find us online at <http://www.smithvillecanrc.ca/>. We hope to see you soon!



Reflections on the CRTA-West Conference October 2017

Chris Deboer
Principal of
Dufferin Christian School,
in Carman, Manitoba



Author's Comment: For the purposes of transparency, this article is written with a blend of reporting on things said and the author's reflecting on them. It will be difficult to tell where one ends, and the other begins.

Opening

All across Canada, it seems that winter arrived later than normal. Many postings on Facebook in October and November referenced the beautiful and unseasonably warm weather. However, the first weekend in October saw snow flying in eastern Alberta and western Saskatchewan. Of course, this is the weekend that the Canadian Reformed Schools in Alberta and Manitoba gather together in Caronport, SK to engage in the annual CRTA West Teachers Convention.

With thankfulness for travelling mercies, our conference began on Wednesday evening, October 5. Rev. Brian Cochran of the Redeemer URC in Regina led an opening devotional to help set the tone and context for our time together. He encouraged us with a meditation on Galatians 6:9 and 10, "And let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." Rev. Cochran knew he was speaking to teachers; he understood the weariness that is sometime experienced in trying to do good, sometimes without parental support. He encouraged us to be motivated by the gospel even when we do not get confirmation from others. Strength from God, through prayer and personal time set aside to meditate on God's Word, was greatly emphasized. We serve a risen Christ, and in serving him, we seek to serve others. We draw our strength from Christ. The evening ended with a great trivia game where teachers from different schools but serving at similar grade levels competed with other groups of teachers. The kindergarten teachers competed against some high school math/chemistry teachers in the finals. The old adage rings true: Everything I need to learn, I learned in kindergarten.

Keynote speech

Our keynote speaker for the conference was Mr. Peter O'Donnell. His topic during the presentations on Thursday and Friday mornings was, "Will There be Faith. . . and Will it Make a Difference?" referencing Luke 18:8 where we read: "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

O'Donnell referenced some statistics that demonstrated how many young people struggle with their Christian identity. With the increasing secularization of society, our students are often challenged and tempted in a manner that is more intense or is at least quite different, than in our own history as parents and grandparents. Our three sworn enemies remain the same: the devil, the world, and even our own flesh, but the strategies and the methods used to attack are changing. O'Donnell noted that when it comes to discipling youth, times are changing and that "time-tested approaches stopped working. Discipling has fallen out of favour." In asking the question why young people leave the church, O'Donnell cites research done by the Barna Group (www.barna.com). Those struggling with their Christian faith observe that it seems as though "Christians demonize everything outside of the church, that Christianity seems to be anti-science, that churches are too simple or judgmental on key issues and unfriendly to those in doubt." Also included in the list of concerns that these young people had was "Christianity is too exclusive of other faiths."

A discussion

How do we address these issues? We need to be careful in our speaking about how we talk to our young people about those challenging issues with which they and we are faced today. We need to not just teach Math and Science, French and Phys. Ed., from a Christian perspective, but we also need to teach our students to understand with singular clarity the false worldviews and their inherent inconsistencies and

weaknesses. We need to understand that our faith is not an illogical, irrational, blind faith but that, rather, the Christian worldview is the only one that can make consistent sense of the world as it is experienced everyday. While we may not be ashamed of our faith, of the gospel, we are often unprepared to speak openly and strongly about it, because we are not always aware of its power, of its complete and powerful effect on all areas of life. “Not one square inch. . .” isn’t just a great quotation from Kuyper, but it is confession that needs to be explored and rediscovered by every generation anew. It isn’t just a given; it needs to be learned by studying the Lordship of Christ in every arena of life and understanding what the arena looks like without Christ.

One of the key elements that has been echoed over the past years in various presentations has been this idea that we need to equip and prepare our students to be “world changers.” This has often been the assumed position of presenters as they speak to various groups of which

I have been a member. Before O’Donnell came to make his presentation, I asked him to make the case for such a claim. In the end, he explained that mothers are world-changers, that entrepreneurs are world-changers, etc. This fits in well with the notion that we are called to serve the Lord in whatever vocation or location in which he places us. But that isn’t what is always implied by being a world-changer. Even the rhetorical question found

Do we want the schools to be equipping students for life of service in the church and in the world?

at the end of the main address, “. . .and will it make a difference?” implies something greater. It isn’t asking us about letting our light shine in our own little corner, it’s challenging us to let it shine much more broadly. It is interesting how quickly this call to be world-changers often accompanies a lot of critical self-reflection as a group. That is, I am surprised at how quickly we are to see areas of weakness, rather than the Lord’s great blessings.

I remember at one meeting, when this idea of being a world changer first arose, the work of ARPA and its ability to motivate our people to action was mentioned. One response (with many nodding heads) was a critical one – “we still aren’t doing anything; we’re creating a false sense of activity.” The vast entrepreneurship evident among CanRCs was

criticized because we aren’t interacting with larger corporations and having an impact on them. Our political involvement was criticized, our lack of higher education (Masters and Doctoral studies) was noted, etc. It was striking to see how critical (in a negative criticism manner) we often are. Can we do more as the salt and light in this country and in our communities? I’m sure we can, but a lack of appreciation for the work that is already being done and attempted, the constant criticism of those making the effort leads one to ponder why anyone else should even try.

It is a difficult thing to become even more vulnerable when one seeks public office. In recent history we have seen Mr. Toet and Mr. Teitsma from Winnipeg, Mr. Viersen from Neerlandia, and most recently, Mr. Oosterhoff from Spring Creek all hold public office. We won’t always agree with them, with the decisions they have to make, the seeming public compromises they make in order to continue to have influence and to be a part of the process. We won’t always agree with the practical approach of WeNeedALaw or ARPA; we may not always agree with the content of the conferences held by Reformed Perspective or the Reformed Bible College, etc. And when we don’t agree, we often stop supporting, by prayer or finances, or even word of mouth. Let’s be careful how we respond to the effort of others.

Do we really want people of our church communities to be world-changers? Do we want the schools to be equipping students for life of service in the church *and* in the world? How intentional must we be, as schools, to be involved in giving our students formative opportunities for service? There is a shift taking place in our schools and communities, quite possibly a positive one, where we are now able to stand on the strong foundation laid down by our grandparents, and parents, to enable our young people to see how they can remain faithful as a citizen of God’s kingdom while being actively engaged as a citizen of this country. The antithesis does not mean entire separation; it means careful contemplation and contribution. When we see others getting involved, let us be slow to speak against them or about them, but let us pray that they may stand firm in the faith, able to give an account to God for all that they do. When we question their actions, let us reach out to them in a brotherly manner, seeking for understanding; let us be careful to build up, rather than tear down. God has blessed us richly, and every one who does his or her work to God’s honour and glory “is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in due season, and its leaf does not wither. In all he does, he prospers” (Ps 1:3).



Clarion Kids

David and Saul

1 Samuel 18 - 20

David was so successful in everything he did because God was with him. This made King Saul very angry and jealous. Saul's daughter Michal was married to David and Saul's son Jonathan was David's best friend. Saul hated David and tried to kill him many times. Jonathan helped David escape so that his father would not kill him. One time David had an opportunity to kill Saul in a cave, but he did not. He trusted in God and knew it would be wrong to kill the king. Eventually Saul died and David became the king of Israel. God was with David and he was a good king.

Go to www.clarionmagazine.ca to print and colour this picture!



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

Find these words!

David	God	Jealous
Jonathan	King	Michal
Protect	Saul	Success

Double Puzzle

Unscramble the words. Then use the letters to solve the mystery word!

JHANNATO

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by Emily Nijenhuis

Jim VanderHeiden

Tell me some background history about you. Where did you used to live? What was life like growing up? How many siblings to you have?

I lived in Smithville. Life growing up was a learning experience. I have six siblings, two brothers, a twin sister, and a sister. I built good relationships with my siblings. We played with forts and gardened. We like to go for picnics. My mom encouraged us to use our imaginations and be adventurous.

How do you like living at Beacon home? What specific things do you especially enjoy doing at home?

I like it, it's busy so I like relaxing in my room sometimes. I love playing music such as my guitar. At home I like playing Skip Bo, singing, playing baseball (I pitch!), and ball hockey. I love that we do devotions and read the Bible together at Beacon; this is important. I enjoy the friendships I have at Beacon.

What job(s) do you have? What chores at home?

I work at Feenstra's Flowers. I clean up, do yard work, and work on the patio. It gives me something to do and gives me purpose. I clean my room, vacuum the vans, clear, and set the table at home.

What do you like to do for fun? What hobbies do you have?



I love to entertain others with music, especially playing guitar. I make hats with my wool loom for poor people. I like to color. I love music though; it is so much fun. I like to glorify the Lord with my music and it gives me peace.

What church do you go to? How are you involved in your church?

I go to Dunnville Canadian Reformed Church. I go to church to worship God. I like to socialize at church and see how my brothers and sisters are doing. God calls me to care for others out of thankfulness for all God has done for me.

How often do you visit your family? Tell me more about your family.

I visit my mom once and a while and I go for a sleepover with my family about once a month. My dad took the time to teach me to serve the Lord, and taught me Dutch too! My one sister lives in Holland.

How has the Lord provided for you in your life?

The Lord has provided me with good health and the ability to do a lot a lot of things. He gave me a caring Anchor Association who supports me. I appreciate that a lot. Also the manager Marlene for all she does. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!





March birthdays

- 3 TREVOR HOFKINK will be 39**
14407 McQueen Road, Edmonton, AB T5N 3L3
- 9 DAVID RAWSON will be 55**
c/o Twin Oaks, 3217 Twin Oaks Crescent,
Burlington, ON L7M 3A8
- 10 JAMES BOONE will be 21**
c/o Care West “Nickel House”
950 Robert Road, Calgary, AB T2E 7T4
- 12 GERRY EELHART will be 55**
c/o Mrs. Grace Eelhart
120 13425-57 Street
Emmanuel Home, Edmonton, AB T5A 2G1
- 13 JOHN VANWYNGAARDEN will be 39**
c/o Beacon Home
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8
- 14 TINEILLE VANROOTSELAAR will be 21**
219 Lock Street W, Dunnville, ON N1A 1V2
- 14 LISA ALKEMA will be 36**
c/o Harbour Home
42 Spadara Drive, Hamilton, ON L9B 2K3
email: lhalkema@gmail.com
- 15 JIM VANDERHEIDEN will be 58**
c/o Beacon Home
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8

Congratulations to everyone celebrating a birthday in March. We wish you all the Lord's blessing in this coming year in each of your own homes.



HAPPY
BIRTHDAY

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



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



Q Should elders pray over the sick, anointing them with oil?

Reading James 5:14-16, are we amiss in not following this to the letter? We pray for the sick in the congregational prayer, in the hospital, at home, but I have never experienced an elder praying over the sick and anointing him/her with oil.

A From the context we observe that James has people in mind who are suffering. He encourages his fellow Christians to endure in the faith. He reminds them of a man like Job or of the prophets in the OT, who also endured and persevered in their faith. It is possible, thanks to the compassion and mercy of God to persevere. Just like these OT people, NT Christians meet with a lot of opposition in their life. They encounter many trials and tribulations. The temptations from the world are many and very difficult at times. That's what causes suffering. Who is always able to stand them? Then don't start swearing oaths to strengthen your position or to confirm your confession, James tells them, but just be faithful. If you have said "yes" to God, stick to your "yes." If you have said "no" to the world, don't swear that you did, trying to cover up your weaknesses, but stick to it. Don't let your "no" to the world change into a "yes" because of the pressures. However, if that does happen, if you so succumb at times, if you do suffer from those pressures, these troubles, you should pray, James says! For when you pray, you receive power to endure, to remain patient and faithful to your vows.

So let's note carefully that James is here addressing suffering due to troubles and concerns, *spiritual* suffering first of all. The word he uses we find in 2 Timothy 1:8, 2:9,

where the Apostle Paul also speaks about his suffering for the gospel. Such suffering quite often is accompanied of a sense of weakness, of failure, and of experiences that will trouble our conscience. What happens then, James intimates, is that people's weakness of faith or feelings of guilt make it hard for them to pray. It makes them sick, or weary, or depressed. They can't handle it any longer. Then, what do you do? You call the elders of the church that they may pray over you. Besides, they'll anoint you with oil in the name of the Lord, he adds. However, that's subservient to the prayers. The *prayers* are *central*, as the sentence shows. The *prayers* are the most eminent means for pastoral care! The *anointing* is then not a means with a medical purpose or so, but it is *symbolic* for the power of God, like the OT sign of the Holy Spirit. As *sign* that action has disappeared, yet its *meaning* remains! Through prayer the elder pleads for the power of the Holy Spirit to strengthen the suffering believer so that he may endure, persevere in faith, and continue on the way of Christ!

"And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up." Then the "sick person" here is such a *sufferer*. Then James does not make a plea for faith healing or so. He doesn't suggest calling the elders into the sickroom of one of the members of the congregation. No, the word James uses here is the same as in Hebrews 12:3, "Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility

against himself, so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted.” It’s from spiritual weariness that the sufferer, the sick person, will be healed upon the prayers of the elders. That’s a spiritual healing, a healing in the sense of being saved from stumbling, from falling into sin, as James adds as well.

What great blessing it is for office bearers to lead him or her back to the throne of God’s grace, to the work of Jesus Christ, and to the forgiveness in his blood. Then in

his Word the LORD does not promise to heal the sick, but he will sustain the weary! With faith we may pray in the midst of all our problems, and the Spirit will pray for us and with us, with sighs too deep for words. The Spirit will comfort us and strengthen us and lead us in all the truth! Yes, he will help us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, that we may strengthen our feeble arms and weak knees, make level paths for our feet, and be healed.

Q May Christians sue a fellow Christian?

Matthew 5 and 1 Corinthians 6 are two Bible passages that suggest it unwise to initiate a civil lawsuit. 1 Corinthians 6 is actually quite clear and specific as it pertains to brothers and sisters. May Christians sue fellow Christians?

A In a broken world in which conflicts arise, it also happens in the church that the question comes up: may a brother take a fellow-believer to court? Christians are called to love, to be the least, and to suffer wrong. As the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:7, “To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you.” Also, “When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints?” No wonder the question comes up again and again whether a Christian may seek justice with the worldly judge or not? Especially in our present society with its many laws and statutes pertaining to the business world and employment relationships, Christian business men are dealing with labour conflicts, also in labour relations with Christian employees, in which they would like to have a case resolved by a judge who applies these laws and statutes to their particular situation. So, may they?

It’s true indeed that Paul is speaking about lawsuits before worldly judges. He is doing so, however, in the *context* of matters in which church members must judge regarding fellow-members who are living in a sinful lifestyle. His main focus is not so much the question whether lawsuits before a worldly judge are allowed or not, but whether the church is actually pursuing the holiness and righteousness *within* the congregation concerning members who are living in sin. Hence Paul’s conclusion in 9-11 reiterates what he addressed in chapter 5 (9-11 lists almost literally the same sins as in 5: 9-11). Paul’s main concern is first and foremost the lack of discipline and spiritual judgment within the congregation at Corinth (5:3-5, 12-13). Then in chapter 6 Paul emphasizes the church’s calling to judge sinners, especially given the fact that believers will have to judge the world, even angels, in the Day of Judgment! As a marginal note Paul observes that they do have lawsuits before the worldly judge yet they are avoiding church discipline within the church. In fact, there are brothers who do have lawsuits

before the worldly judge but they refuse to be judged by the saints. As if the saints have to condone or tolerate sinful lifestyles within the congregation yet they do seek the judgment of unrighteous judges.

Paul's plea, therefore, is the proper evaluation of the importance of church discipline, especially in the midst of the church of believers who will have to judge the world and angels eventually. Against that background, they should be able to judge the smaller matters and conflicts that arise in the church. These conflicts could then also include matters pertaining to the labour and employment issues of the members. As if the church can judge only matters of worship, faith, and salvation, while any issue pertaining to the world and society of today can only be judged by worldly judges. Then Paul is saying: exactly because the believers have such a high calling of judging the world and the angels eventually, it should be able to interfere, arbitrate, or judge in conflicts arising among its congregations. If not, you're living too low, Paul shows, and you should be ashamed of yourself! Would there not be wise men in the midst of the church(es) who are also able to judge in matters of labour relations, employment conflicts, or business deals and contracts?

The Apostle Paul exhorts the church of Corinth and the church today to live up to its high status of congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are called to discipline sinners, even to the point of excommunication (ch. 5), and thus to judge those who are within. This includes conflicts and matters pertaining to today's world of laws and statutes that brothers may have with each other. Then solutions for these conflicts should be found in the way of

love, indeed, and possibly suffering wrong, yet then also the sin of defrauding and wronging each other should be exposed in order that the guilty brother may repent or else suffer church discipline. In the congregation of Christ there can be no place for impenitent sinners, nor for those who wrong each other or defraud each other, neither for anyone else who is unrighteous and cannot inherit the kingdom of God (and then Paul reiterates the list of sins that were prevalent in those days and from which some have repented, sanctified as they were by faith and washed in the blood of Christ)! That's the issue Paul addresses first of all, and not the question whether worldly judges are needed in some cases and whether it is okay to seek their help.

Against this background we may conclude that it is up to the church to deal with wrongs and frauds in the first place. The church will have to judge whether there is a need for a lawsuit or not, whether the one suing is doing so in a spiritual way or in a carnal way, whether it's done in love or by refusing to suffer wrong. It will be good also if there are among the church(es) wise men, even lawyers, who could form an arbitration committee (as some federations of churches have for conflicts and matters like these). A wise consistory knows its limitations; in cases of doubt it is better not to judge than to judge wrongly. The Name of Christ is at stake, as well as the holiness of his congregation! Ultimately the resolution should pursue reconciliation in love through the Spirit of Christ as the rule in the kingdom of God. This pursuit does not always or necessarily exclude the involvement of a lawsuit that's pursued in this same spirit as well.



**Is there something
you've been wanting to know?
An answer you've been looking for?**

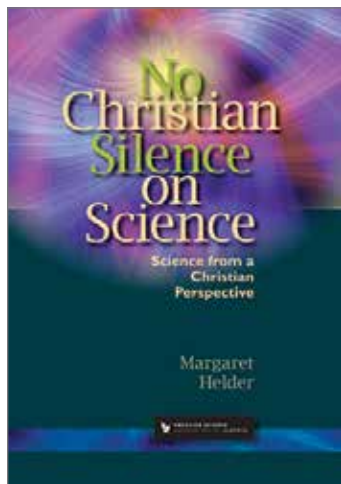
Ask us a question!

**Please direct questions to Rev. W. denHollander
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No Christian Silence

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Margaret Helder, *No Christian Silence on Science: Science From a Christian Perspective* Calgary: Christian Science Association of Alberta, 2016

Additional Information: 115 pages; \$14.00. Available from CSAA, 5328 Calgary Trail, Suite 1136, Edmonton, AB T6H 4J8

The dogma of evolution seems to be everywhere. Although technically a theory, many treat it as a fact. Christians who wish to honour Scripture's account of the origin of the world can find it very difficult to be knowledgeably critical of the prevailing evolutionary consensus and to ask the right intelligent questions. Dr. Helder has written this book to address this concern. Christians who accept the biblical creation account as historical and true do not need to be silent.

In the first chapter, Dr. Helder gives a general sketch of science from a Christian perspective. She notes that scientific data have to be interpreted. Secular scientists will do so from their materialistic bias while Christians can be expected to do so in terms of their faith in the historical reliability of Genesis 1. The outcomes can be quite different. The disputed age of the earth is an example. The next chapter has a fascinating overview of how design in nature reveals God's character and work. The wonder, complexity, and mystery of DNA serve as an illustration.

Chapter three deals with Christian versus Darwinian ethics. Dr. Helder notes that "the scientific establishment strongly supports the idea that evolution has entirely replaced any need for religion and that we can ignore any ideas of our duty toward God." Its morals therefore come from evolution. This has huge implications for how one regards human embryonic stem cell research and the natural world, to mention two examples. This book gives excellent insight into these issues.

The Christian student is the focus of the fourth chapter. Dr. Helder encourages Christians to study science. It is a beautiful way to give glory to God and to be a salt and light in the world. The author rightly notes that not just science but all subjects at a secular university can be hostile to one's Christian faith and worldview. This chapter gives some practical guidelines for students so that they can graduate with their faith intact or hopefully enhanced. There is much encouragement here for Christian students studying science.

The final chapter sketches the impact of evolutionary thought on church and society. The impact is devastating for foundational Christian doctrines. But, Dr. Helder ends her book on a high note. Humanly speaking there is hope for the future given the increasing number of highly qualified scientists who accept the Genesis account of creation.

It is very good to have this resource available. It is easy to read and has many contemporary examples to make the point. Everything is clearly documented with an extensive bibliography with every chapter. Highly recommended, especially for science students!

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