

# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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**Is labour  
meaningless?**

**WORKING FOR TRUE RICHES  
WHY DID JESUS COME?**

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

This issue of *Clarion* falls near Labour Day. Our editorial, from Rev. Matthew Van Luik, focuses on our attitude towards our labours: "When we do not see our work within the context of Christ's kingdom work, our work will appear to be futile and meaningless." The Treasures, New & Old meditation by Rev. Gerard Veurink also takes work as its theme.

We are running the final section of Rev. Tim Schouten's "Understanding Christianity." Here he explains some of the fundamental beliefs of Christianity regarding Jesus, his grace, and our transformation.

Issue 17 includes the columns Clippings on Politics & Religion, *Clarion Kids*, and Ray of Sunshine. There is a report from the 2018 graduation at Guido de Brès Christian High School in Hamilton, ON, a letter to the editor, and a press release.

Laura Veenendaal

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# Labour: Meaningful or Meaningless

*The fall into sin had a negative impact on our labour*

A popular American television series, “Dirty Jobs,” highlighted people making a living doing jobs that most people refuse to do. It introduced people who were happy and found fulfillment in the job they were doing. The premise of the show is that these people are doing necessary jobs for society, even though society denigrates these jobs and glorifies others. Mike Rowe, the creator of the show, wrote, “The world is full of very happy septic-tank cleaners and miserable investment bankers.” Today’s society promotes the idea that everyone needs a bachelor’s or master’s degree in order to find the ideal job, while menial jobs are left for those without ambition. Society has separated jobs into socially acceptable and unacceptable, into meaningful and meaningless jobs. The job you choose now determines your social standing.

There is also a cultural difference in the attitude people have toward work and labour. North America has the reputation as a land of opportunity. People come here for the opportunity to work hard in order to make a success of their life. If you work long, hard hours you can expect to be materially successful. On the other hand, in Europe, the stress is on a balanced lifestyle so that success is not measured by your material wealth but the enjoyment of social pleasures. Working hours are limited so that people can pursue the more “meaningful” cultural aspects of life. The result of this cultural divide is that the one feels morally superior to the other.

## Why labour?

So, what is the purpose for our work and labour? The preacher in Ecclesiastes 2:11 took some time to survey all the things his hands had done and all he had achieved with

his toil and labour and concludes, “Everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.” If he is right that all our labour is meaningless, what is the purpose for our work? Is our labour just a necessary evil in order to survive? Do we only work in order to eat or is there more to it? Is our labour perhaps part of God’s curse over the earth after mankind fell into sin? Is work itself God’s curse on us?

Too often we do not think about our labour as something positive but as a means to an end; the means to survival or the enjoyment of material things. In our culture people are working toward retirement, when they no longer need to work but can pursue their own pleasure at their leisure. Is that what we should be looking forward to, a future in which labour is no longer necessary, and all our time is available for the pursuit of leisure? That too is meaningless.

When God created mankind in the beginning, he intended labour to be an integral part of our human existence. In Genesis 1:28, God gave mankind the mandate to be fruitful and increase in number, to subdue the earth and rule over all creation. God created us to be labourers in his creation. To care for God’s creation gives a sense of purpose that brings joy to the heart of mankind.

## What has happened to our labour?

The Teacher in Ecclesiastes 2:11 comes to a completely different conclusion when he says that labour is meaningless, a chasing after the wind, and nothing is gained under the sun. Why such a dark and negative view on his labour? This is because the fall into sin had a negative impact on our labour. God warned Eve in Genesis 3:16 that he would greatly increase her pains in childbearing and that Adam

could only eat by the sweat of his brow. Labour would no longer be a joy, for it would be accompanied with hardships and pain and end in much frustration. From a human perspective, our labour seems meaningless, for we toil and work hard, mothers have children, fathers work hard to feed their families, one may amass a great fortune but no matter how hard we work, everything ends in death. Why should we labour if in the end we will lose it all anyway?

It may seem rather strange to find a book in Scripture that takes such a dark view of life. We expect Scripture to give a more hopeful view for the future, a reason to find joy

***Too often we do not think about our labour as something positive but as a means to an end***

in our daily labour. The reality is that God's people struggle with the futility of life. Picture the Teacher living in Jerusalem and everyday he sees the sun rise in the morning and set in the evening, but day after day what is being accomplished? One day David sits on the throne and his sons follow him in succession, but they only become in-

creasingly evil with each successive generation. How futile when God finally sends his people into exile in Babylon and David's son no longer rules in the city. After a period of time a small group of Jews return, but no king from David's fam-

ily ever again arises on the throne of Israel. What is the purpose of this endless cycle of futility that never seems to end?

## **Labour and rest**

God's own people suffer the troubles of life. We experience darkness and often suffer depression, as well as pain, sorrow, and death. Life can be so wearisome. Yet, in the midst of this weary life, the Lord gives his people the sabbath rest. Each week God's people are to rest from their labour, just as God rested from his work of creation on the seventh day. God also gave Israel other feast days so that the people could rest from their work. God does not demand his people to become slaves to their labour, for he also wants us to enjoy rest from our labour. The Lord God already indicates in this way that life is more than just work and he is working to give us the eternal rest.

The work and labour of God's people is never meaningless, for the Lord gives them the wonderful hope of the Messiah, a Saviour who would give them the eternal rest. Each generation knew that their labour was not meaningless, for they were working toward the fulfillment of the glorious promise of God's rest. From a human perspective, we only work so that we can eat and enjoy the material things of this life for a few short years and then it all passes away, but from the perspective of God's promises, our whole purpose in life has changed. We are now working for the glorious promises of God that will last for eternity. Our work becomes meaningful again in Christ.





## CALL ACCEPTED AND CALLS DECLINED

Accepted the call to serve as co-pastor at Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church in Hamilton and declined the calls to the Vernon Canadian Reformed Church, Attercliffe Canadian Reformed Church, Adoration United Reformed Church in Vineland and the call to serve as missionary in Lae, Papua New Guinea:

**Candidate Darren Feenstra**

## CHURCH NEWS

### Christ and his labour

The Lord Jesus himself experienced the futility and frustration of this broken world in the work he came to do. He felt first-hand the suffering and hardships we experience, he knows the toil and labour that makes us weary. He has experienced that in a much deeper way than we ever will. On the cross, the Lord experienced the frustration of the world that lay under the curse of God in which everything ends in death. Here Christ endured the great futility of life when he suffered the total rejection of his Father in heaven.

Paul says in Romans 8 that he endured this darkness in order to liberate us and all creation from its bondage to decay and bring us into the glorious freedom of the children of God. Christ broke the endless cycle of life that was leading mankind nowhere. By breaking that futile cycle of life, he restored meaning to our lives. We no longer work and labour to enjoy a few short years on this earth, for the Lord restores a better hope for our labour. The purpose of our work is no longer to satisfy our own selfish desires, but we now work for the coming of the great day of liberation. Today women still endure “pain in childbirth” and people still work in the “sweat of their brow to eat.” Our labour can be difficult and at times feel tedious or menial. It may bring great stress and we wonder what is the value in the work that I am doing? In his gospel the Lord reminds us that our work is of great value because of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our labour is not meaningless, for Christ has delivered us from the futility of this life and promises us eternal rest with God.

### Paul and labour

Paul addresses a situation in the church in Thessalonica where he admonishes those who had become idle and stopped working. Some may have stopped working because they expected the imminent return of Christ, others may have taken advantage of the generosity of the believers. Paul says to the faithful followers of Christ, “Work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody” (1 Thess 4:11-12). Paul reminds them how he was an example for them, for when he was

with them he worked night and day, labouring and toiling so that he would not be a burden on any of them.

Paul sees his labour in the light of his work for the kingdom of God. His new focus is to effectively spread the gospel message. When we do not see our work within the context of Christ’s kingdom work, our work will appear to be futile and meaningless. Work is not just a means to enjoy life as best we can for a few short years, but we must see our labour within the context of the greater work of our Lord Jesus Christ. This changes our attitude towards our daily work and it will also change our attitude towards our retirement. Retirement is not a license to withdraw from the kingdom work of Christ, but it gives us new, exciting opportunities to give witness to our Lord Jesus Christ. Retirement may allow us to escape from the daily rat race of the work force, but it now frees up God’s people to help those in need, to visit the lonely, to encourage those in distress, and to speak about our comfort to those in our community who do not know the comfort of Christ.

### The future

Christ gives us a new direction for our entire life, for he restores a glorious future when we will no longer need to deal with the futility of this life. Isaiah 65 paints a picture of that future when the meaningless cycle of life will be broken. The day is coming, the Lord says, when he will create new heavens and a new earth. Never again will there be an infant who lives only for a few days or an old man who does not live out his years. Those who die today at a hundred will then be thought of as a mere youth. Never again will we build houses only to have others live in them or plant and others eat the fruit. Today we can only enjoy the fruit of our labour for a few short years, but Christ promises this glorious rest when we will enjoy the fruit of our labour with the Lord forever. We must see our labour today within the eternal perspective of our Lord.

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# Working for True Riches

***"But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'"***  
 (Luke 12:20)

Previously, we looked at Jesus' teaching regarding contentment, as he addressed the conflict between two brothers in Luke 12:15. From there, Jesus would continue his instruction using the parable of the rich fool to make his point clear. A certain man had a bumper crop one year and as a result he tore all his old barns down and built newer and bigger barns. He wanted to store it all up, so that he could relax for many years.

But in Luke 12:20, we find God's answer to the plans of this rich man. And with this answer, it also becomes clear that there are two major issues that this rich fool did not consider. First of all, he failed to think about human mortality, the fact that life does come to an end, at times even unexpectedly. And secondly, this man shows that he has no concept of what life really is.

To put it simply, life is a gift that God gives. This actually comes out in

the words that God speaks in verse 20. In the original, the word for "required" can mean "to demand back." God had given this man the gift of life, but now, in his divine wisdom, God was taking back the life that he had given at a time when the man least expected it. And when you consider that God still does the same thing today, it puts all of life, including our work, into the proper perspective.

Life is not to be consumed by working only for treasures on this world, for when we die, those earthly treasures won't do us any good. Furthermore, the treasures for which one works in this life shows where one's true priorities lie as well. The Lord Jesus makes this clear in Luke 12:34, where he says, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Working hard, even being a workaholic, only for treasures in this world, means that your heart is in this world. And it means that this world is as good

as it will ever get. But working hard for the treasures of the kingdom of heaven means that things are going to get better. It means that we know what is truly important to be busy with already here and now.

There is no time to put off working for the treasures of the kingdom either. God can call us out of this life at any moment, even "this very night," as he did to the man in the parable. And once God has called us out of this life, there are no second chances to go and fix our priorities.

Thanks be to God, then, that through Jesus Christ we have been set free from our slavery to everything, including the god of work. We are now free to pursue those treasures of the kingdom of heaven, storing up wealth where no thief approaches and no moth destroys (Luke 12:33). And at the second coming of our Saviour, then we will get to experience the eternal joy of those true riches!

## For further study

1. How does knowing about the frailty of life impact the way you work?
2. Living in this fast paced and busy world, what are some ways that we can ensure that work does not control our life?





# Understanding Christianity

*What do Christians believe? Why is the cross the symbol of their faith? In this series, originally prepared in ten short parts for the Prince George Citizen, Pastor Tim Schouten explains some of the fundamental beliefs of the Christian faith. In this issue we publish parts 7–10.*

## Part 7: Jesus

We've finally arrived at Jesus.

You may have wondered why the name of Jesus was not mentioned in the first six parts of a series about Christianity.

The reason is that it's only when we understand something of the basic teachings of the Bible about God and humanity that we will be able to understand who Jesus is, and what he came to do.

It must be admitted that many Christians have an incomplete or false understanding of Jesus' identity and mission. Some see Jesus as a great moral teacher and an example of love. These things are true but incomplete. Others see Jesus as their ticket to good health and financial success. This is false and contrary to the teaching of the Bible.

Why did Jesus come? And why did he die on a cross? The biblical answer is that Jesus came into this world to satisfy the justice of God on our behalf. Yes, he came to heal and to teach, and through these things to show us the nature of the new life that he intends to bring. However, he came in the first place with a specific objective: to give up his life on a cross.

Why a cross? To die on a cross was to be cursed. This manner of death was a powerful symbol that Jesus was taking on himself God's curse upon sin. The Bible teaches that every person has sinned and has rightfully earned the penalty of death, that is, eternal separation from God. Yet God, although perfectly just, is also supremely merciful: "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. . . . As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him" (Ps 103).

How could this compassion of God be carried out without compromising his justice? The answer is found at the cross. Jesus Christ, the divine son of God, willingly suffered the penalty for our sins. He experienced complete abandonment by his divine Father. The punishment that belonged to us fell upon him. He cried out those agonizing and heart-wrenching words, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Jesus received the justice of God so that we might receive God's mercy.

Christians believe that after Jesus died, he rose again. He lived a sinless life and therefore death could not hold him, since the cause of death is sin. Jesus' resurrection is therefore a testimony of his victory over sin. Not only that, it is a promise of resurrection for all who are forgiven (made sinless) by God.

This is the heart of the Christian faith. Through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God rightfully offers us the complete forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

## Part 8: Grace

We cannot take anything from God against his will. We can only receive what he willingly gives.

As we have seen in the earlier parts of this series, Christians believe that God is a completely independent Creator, while people are dependent creatures. God has all the power and the rights, while we have none, except for what he gives us. We can wrestle nothing from his control but are dependent upon his favour.

The refusal to accept this is what led our ancestors to commit the first sin. They wanted the power and the rights for themselves. This has been part of the basic human desire ever since.

This human desire makes it very difficult to accept the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Receiving grace requires us to acknowledge that we have no power or rights. It requires us to humble ourselves and ask God for something that we know we cannot do, and then simply accept what he gives as a gift. We are like a drowning man in the ocean who can-

not swim to shore. He can only cry for rescue, and cling to it when it comes.

It is important to make this point clear when it comes to what we looked at in the previous section: the Christian

### ***This is the heart of the Christian faith***

belief that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead for the forgiveness of our sins and eternal life. Christians don't simply believe that forgiveness and life are made possible by grace. They also believe that these things can

only be received by faith, as a gift (not earned). God is not only gracious in making eternal life available, but also in the way that he dispenses it, that is, through faith alone.

When a man is drowning in the ocean, the rescue team does not simply bring a boat within shouting distance and then tell the man to swim on over. He is too far gone for that. Instead, they place the life preserver directly into his hands.

Our spiritual rescue is "by grace alone, through faith alone." This is a central belief of Christianity, and sets it apart from every other religion. Every religion deals in some way with the problem of getting right with God, but every religion except for Christianity deals with that problem through our merit or supposed goodness.

Christianity denies that we have any goodness to merit God's favour. Nor do we have any rights to forgiveness or power to attain it. We can only come humbly before God saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13).

God's grace means that this plea for mercy will be answered. Jesus says about the one who made this plea, "I tell you, this man went to his house justified."

## **Part 9: The Trinity**

Did God die on the cross?

Over the centuries, Christians have given different answers to this question. Some have said yes, but the large majority have said no. The majority, in this case, are correct. God is eternal and the source of all life. He cannot die. If he did, everything would die with him.

Nevertheless, this question is a window into a very important Christian teaching about God: the doctrine of the Trinity. This doctrine says that God is one in essence, but three in persons. He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, yet he is only one God, not three gods.

You may have noticed (in part seven of this series) that Jesus was referred to as "the divine Son of God." The word

"divine" was meant to imply that Jesus is not simply a man. Instead, Christianity teaches that Jesus is truly God – the second person of the indivisible Trinity. When a humble Jewish carpenter died on a cross some 2000 years ago, he was somehow both man and God.

If you are not sufficiently confused, we must add to this the Christian teaching about the Holy Spirit. Christians believe that the Holy Spirit is also God – the third person of the indivisible Trinity. The Holy Spirit is God's living presence in the world. Most importantly, the Holy Spirit brings the presence of God into the hearts of those who believe in Jesus Christ.

How do Christians make sense of this? The short (and honest) answer is that they don't. They simply accept it. They accept that, although God cannot die, Jesus Christ died on the cross. They accept that, although God cannot be divided, God the Holy Spirit lives within individual human beings. They accept that God's wisdom and mercy are far beyond our understanding. They rejoice (and marvel) that God was willing to become one of us in order to rescue us.

In another way, however, some Christians do try to make sense of the Trinity. Some Christian philosophers have pointed out that the unity and diversity of the Triune God is a very logical foundation for the unity and diversity of all reality. Others have pointed out that the relational nature of God explains the relational needs of people, who are made in his image. Just as the three persons of God love, share, and work together perfectly, so people desire the same.

For Christians, the most important part of the teaching about the Trinity is that each person – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – has graciously acted on their behalf. We've already seen how this is the case for the Father and the Son. In our final lesson, we'll focus specifically on the Holy Spirit.

## **Part 10: Transformation**

As mentioned in earlier parts of this series, Christians believe that the basic human problem is sin, and the separation from God that sin brings. The root cause of all sin is pride – the desire to be like God. We have a drive to be at the top of the heap, to win the rat race. This drive is the source of envy, anger, gossip, abuse, murder, rape, lies, racial tensions, war, genocide, and every other evil.

As terrible events pass across our screens almost every day, the variety of these events demonstrates that the basic problem is not religion, ideology, racism, or lack of education. Instead, these things are the result of the pride that lives within each one of us, however subtle it may be.



The Bible teaches that we are slaves to pride (and its results), and that the greatest human need is to be freed from this slavery.

The gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ is that this freedom is possible and available. Through faith in Jesus Christ, people are not only freed from the penalty of their sins, but also from the power of their sinful nature. The Holy Spirit of God comes to unbind them from their captivity and set them free.

The New Testament teaches that the Holy Spirit brings the presence of God into a believer's heart and begins a process of spiritual transformation. This process is sometimes referred to, in the original Greek, with the word "metamorphosis." Our present life, as good as it may be, is like the life of a caterpillar. We were made for something better – to fly like a butterfly. We can't do this on our own, but the Holy Spirit gives us wings.

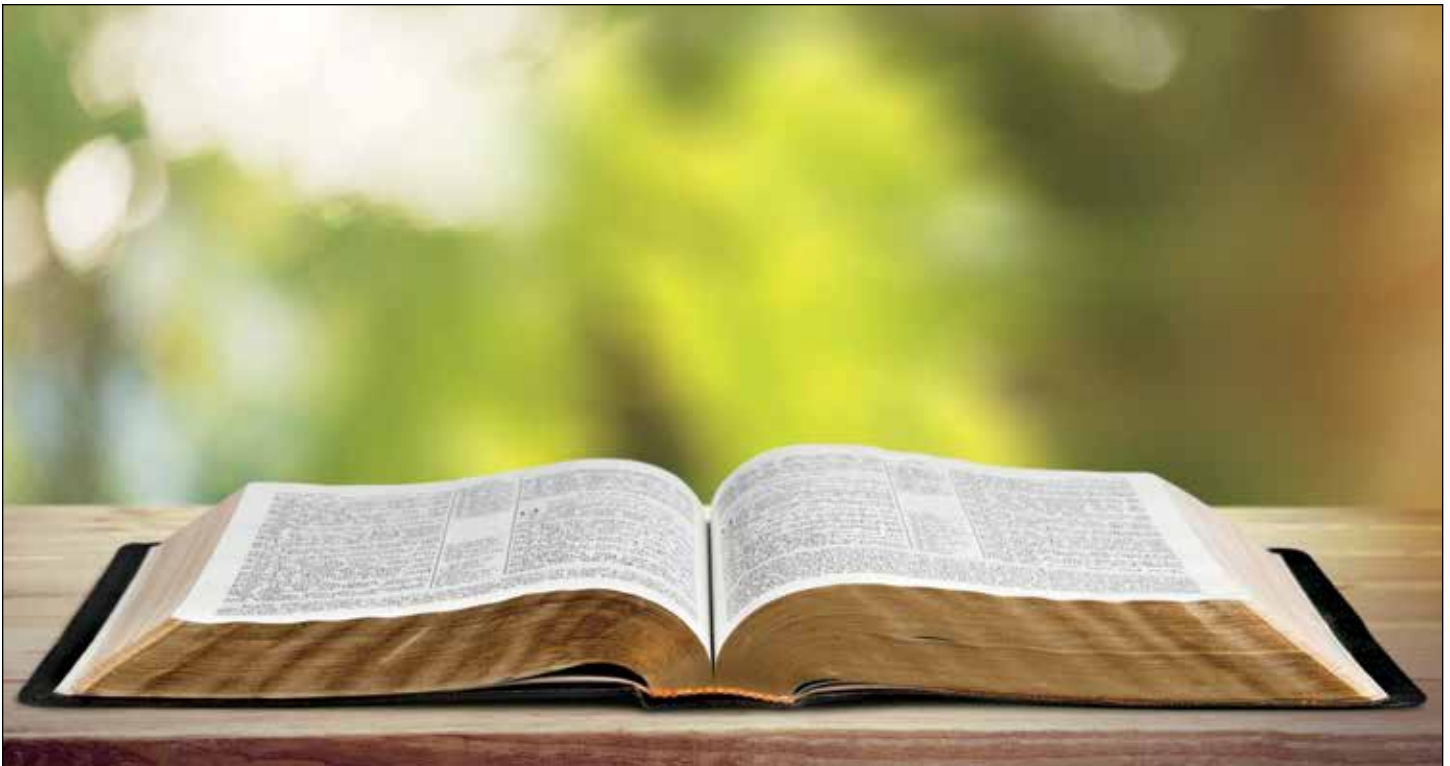
The Christian challenge to the world is that we would be honest with ourselves about our spiritual condition. The Christian gospel to the world is that this spiritual condition has a remedy: there is freedom in Jesus Christ. We can be released from our pride and ridiculous strutting about.

We can be released from our obsession with ourselves, from our anger with God, and from the penalty and power of sin. We can be set free to "glorify God and enjoy him forever," as God intended for us in the first place.

Within this life, Christians see many results of the Holy Spirit's transforming power. By God's grace, they grow in humility and love. Nevertheless, sin still clings to them. That is why the ultimate Christian hope is in the future, on the day when they (so to speak) become a butterfly. Christians believe that this will happen when they die, or on the day that Jesus comes to this world again. They will then be brought into the presence of God and their hearts will overflow with everlasting joy.

This is the great Christian hope, and is a good note on which to end this series. Thanks for reading. I pray that God will bless you by what you have read.

***Christians  
accept that  
God's wisdom  
and mercy are  
far beyond our  
understanding***





# Appeasing Islam in Britain

About eight years ago, Bruce Bawer detailed many examples of appeasing Islam in the Western world at the cost of our freedom in his book, *Surrender: Appeasing Islam, Sacrificing Freedom*. The appeasement has gotten worse.

A recent example is the Tommy Robinson fiasco in Britain which Bruce Bawer highlighted in an article provocatively entitled: “In the European Appeasement Olympics, Who Wins? [Britain].” Tommy Robinson has admitted that he is no saint. He is an outspoken critic of Islam and has in that context been imprisoned several times, sometimes for relatively minor physical disturbances. However, after watching hours of interviews with him, Bawer has concluded that he is “a decent man who is free of prejudice but legitimately concerned about Islam.”

On May 25, Robinson was livestreaming on Facebook in Leeds from outside a court “where yet another trial of Muslim child rapists was underway.” He was promptly arrested by the police for breaching the peace; but his arrest was technically for a second offence under contempt of court laws. His previously suspended sentence was therefore now carried out and within hours he appeared before a judge and put in prison. So, Robinson is indeed not a saint. However, as numerous critics observed, there was much more going on than the arrest of a probation-breaking citizen.

For many years, Muslim gangs in Britain have been raping “infidel girls” whom they considered fair game. It is estimated that from the 1990s to the 2010s about 1,400 mostly white girls were raped largely by male Muslims in Rotherham. But rape gangs have more recently been discovered in many other British locations. What made a horrible situation worse is that armies of social workers “did nothing for fear of being labelled racist or sparking Islamic uprisings.” Robinson’s real crime was that “he was drawing attention to Muslim crimes that they [the cops] would rather see ignored – and drawing attention, too, by extension, to their own genuinely criminal failure to defend innocent children from what was essentially jihadist torture.” As Bawer notes,

whatever faults Robinson had, “he is a champion of those victimized children, a voice for freedom, and a living rebuke to the cowardice of the British media, police, social workers, and other officials and public figures who knew what was going on in flats in Rotherham, Newcastle, and elsewhere, but stayed silent.”

This whole episode is just another example of how Britain is appeasing Muslims, hoping to avoid conflict by hiding the ugly side of Islam, but in the process betraying its own history and values. “It has already banned Robert Spencer, a serious and cogent American critic of Islam, from its shores, even as it lets in the looniest of sharia preachers. More recently, three other critics of Islam – American Brittany Pettibone, Austrian Martin Sellner, and Canadian Lauren Southern – were turned away by British border authorities.” Incredibly, Britain did recently allow Dutch critic of Islam, Geert Wilders, to enter.

On June 9, Wilders spoke at a huge rally for Tommy Robinson and free speech in London. “Because our governments sold us out with mass immigration, with Islamization, with open borders, we are almost foreigners in our own lands. And if we complain, about it they call us racists, Islamophobes. I say no more! . . . My friends, it was not Tommy who was breaching the peace, it was your government who was breaching the peace!”

In his book, *Surrender*, Bawer notes that the politically correct view is that “if social harmony is to be achieved between Muslims and non-Muslims in the West, it’s necessary for non-Muslims to undergo a radical shift in views and values” (p. 75). This is appeasement and surrender to an anti-Christian religion and culture.

Sources used: Unless otherwise indicated, direct quotes are from Bruce Bawer “In the European Appeasement Olympics, Who Wins?” on the Gatestone Institute website; Bruce Bawer, *Surrender: Appeasing Islam, Sacrificing Freedom* (2009); Matthew Vadum, “Tommy Robinson, Political Prisoner” (May 31, 2018) on FrontPageMag website.



# Graduation Ceremony of Guido de Brès Christian High School, Hamilton, ON

Close to one hundred graduands dressed in blue-and-gold robes filed into the McIntyre Performing Art Centre on the Mohawk College campus in Hamilton on June 26, 2018. Their families and friends had come here to celebrate with them the successful completion of their Guido de Brès Christian High School program, and to thank God for making all this possible. Those not able to make it were able to follow the event through live-streaming technology. It was the first time that this occasion was held right after the completion of their high school program, instead of the following fall as was done previously.

## Chairman's remarks

The audience sang "Great is Thy Faithfulness" and the chairman, Dave Kampen, read Psalm 71 in preparation for the main address this evening. I'm paraphrasing what Kampen said in his opening remarks for the evening:

I recall how, thirty-two years ago as a former Guido student, I had challenged Mr. Ronn VanAndel while reading Macbeth. "Mr. VanAndel. This is the most useless thing I've ever had to learn. When will we ever be using poetry?" VanAndel had said, "You never know how you may ever use it." I will now show that Mr. VanAndel was right. I am going to be using some poetry. I will read the last part of "Invictus" by W.E. Henley: "It matters not how straight the gate. How charged with punishments the scroll. I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul." Wrongly, this author thought that he could control his future by following the right course of action. And many people around us think the same.

But who really controls your future? Graduands, I encourage you and everyone here to think about the answer to this question. Who is the master of your soul? My prayer is that you find the answer in God's Word.

Psalm 71 says, "My soul you have redeemed." God is the master and the captain of your soul. With God we begin a new path. It's our prayer that you continue to recognize this truth every day.

## Principal's words

Mr. Richard Tomlin, acting principal, spoke briefly about the graduands. He chose one word to describe this class: "Impact." While making clear he was not referring to the number of concussions that the student body had experienced, he observed that students of this class have in many ways been a blessing to others. They have had a positive impact on the school and he expressed the hope that they would continue to have a positive impact on the people around them when they move on. Tomlin made clear that his main point was not to praise people here, but to acknowledge what God has done in the lives of these students and to thank him for his work. He deserves all glory!

Six of the graduates sang and performed "I wouldn't be." It was a beautiful multi-harmony rendition of the song written by Steve Garrigan and Mark Prendergast as adapted by Deanna Hutten. What a talented group of young people!

## Main address

Many times, the people of Israel in the Old Testament relied or leaned on other nations. They were clearly warned not to do that. As Isaiah 36:6 states, "I know you are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces the hand of anyone who leans on it!" Rev. P. Holtvliwer, in his speech, "Leaning on the LORD," impressed on the audience that there is only One you can rely on. This is his paraphrased speech:

Graduands. When you begin a journey, you might see the road, but you don't see the end of the road. Similarly, on this road of life you can't clearly see your destination.

You may be wondering: Will my plans work out? What twists and turns are in that road of life? Maybe you are a bit anxious about the future. Maybe the open road in front of you freaks you out a bit. What if my plans fail or my health takes a turn for the worse, or what if my boyfriend or girlfriend breaks up with me?

Well, graduands, you are not the first to feel uncertain about the future. Believers don't know what their earthly life will bring. David experienced the same uncertainty. Psalm 71 finds David in a tight place. He is advanced in years. As he is in this crisis, he looks at his past and remembers many troubles. Life had been very hard. He had been hunted down by Saul. He was pursued. He was wanted dead or alive. His own sons had rebelled against him and had done unspeakable things to him. And not just because of the sins of others. Also, his own sins created hardships. His sin with Bathsheba caused so much hurt and damage. He recalls the time he was chased by a lion and by a bear. He was only about fourteen years old then. And he was only seventeen when he confronted Goliath. And from all these hardships the Lord rescued him in the past. That gives him confidence for the future.

Are we a match for what the future may bring? No. We are not. David was not really a match for Goliath. But the LORD our God is. Goliath is no match for God. That is what David confesses. He has leaned on God from birth. God is his Rock and Refuge. David lays claim to God as his God. His own God. He lays claim to the Creator as his creator. Why? Because God tells him that he can. God has made it clear to David that he has made a covenant with David. And he said, "You can rely on me. You can lean on me."

Some of you have had to rely on wooden crutches when you broke a leg. At first you might have doubted if they would hold you up. But then, after a while, you really start to count on these crutches. You know they are not going to snap in half. You will begin to go faster, full of confidence. And next, it almost seems as if these crutches become part of you. So also, David looks back on his life and realizes that in the past he was able to rely on God. And likewise, you also can rely on God. He is your shelter through Jesus Christ. Jesus suffered many trials too. He was hounded by enemies. He was bruised and battered. And through that greatest of trials, he saved those who oppressed him. Jesus is like a fortress, where even the lame, the sick, and those with concussions are safe. He provides us with a refuge from the storm. Death cannot hold in its grip those who belong to Jesus. Ultimately, we cannot rely on ourselves, or

our family members, for we are like broken reeds. But we can lean on the Lord Jesus. Jesus is like crutches that we need to have close at hand. If you rely on Jesus, you will keep his Word, the Bible, close at hand. In a faithful way, test God. Pray to him. Rely on him. He is dependable and trust worthy. Trust him with your future. Thank you.

After the diplomas were handed out to the graduates, special awards were presented to students who had achieved special accomplishments. All the graduates and awards are listed following this article.

### Valedictory address

The valedictorian was Noah Holtvlüwer, who just happened to be the son of the main speaker. He started out by considering the seemingly contradictory nature of his task. Again paraphrased, Noah Holtvlüwer said this:

My speech is to reflect on the past while looking ahead to the future. It ought to be not too specific, but be specific enough to be concrete. It is supposed to be serious but sprinkled with some brilliant wittiness. Quite a challenge has been put before me, but I will give it a shot. I call my speech "The Exam of Life" (*greeted with jovial groans from the graduates*).

You just wrote your final exams. And you're thinking, "Phew. I'm done." But actually, you are not really done. As depressing as it sounds, what you wrote was not the final exam. The final exam is still to come. The exam of life. The end of high school is the beginning of the real world. Which brings with it a bit of scariness. The further you get along in life, the harder the exam gets. But look at the motto of Guido de Brès Christian High School: "Everything in Christ." The Alpha and Omega symbols refer to Christ, as he protects us from the first day of our lives to our last. We must lean on Christ. I believe that our education at Guido was always done with this number one aim: for Christ and through Christ. Guido is not a perfect school. The students aren't perfect. But we are truly blessed to be at Guido. And no, I am not being told by the teachers to say this and I'm not saying this because the PR committee is sending me an e-transfer tonight, but it is the truth. And I think an appropriate way for a preacher's kid to end his speech is to say, "Amen."

Graduands no longer, the same graduates who performed at the beginning of the program did another delicious musical piece ("Thrive" by Mark Hall) that had some people in the audience tapping their feet and swaying their heads slightly. Suitably, the ceremony was concluded with audience singing "He Will Hold Me Fast," prayer, and singing "Oh Canada."



## List of Graduates

Jacob Albert Alkema	Jacob Daniel Jager	Brooke Elana Schulenberg
Katie Jacoba Bartels	Brent Ryan Jans	Kyle Herman Schutten
Lauren Chantelle Bartels	Cullen Michael Jans	Amanda Priscilla Schwantz
Maya Emmie Bartels	Jack Gerald Jans	Kenton Dirk Slaa
Jocelyn Joanne Beijes	Jacob Brent Jansema	Christina Susannah Smid
IanKenneth Bergsma	Hailey Justine Jongbloed	Maynard Kornell Smid
Francine Espoir Bos	Logan Klaas Jonker	Cole Christopher Spoelstra
Diana Lynn Breukelman	Miranda Celeste Kampen	Mariah Kerri Tamminga
Kenneth Leslie Breukelman	Stephanie Caroline Knol	Lucas Garret Tenhage
Calvin John Buikema	Sydney Tayva Koning	Tarissa Dawn Tenhage
Landon Stewart Buikema	Esther Lynn Langendoen	Elianna Jolene Van Raalte
Warren William Buikema	Alexandra Michelle Leistra	Trevor Edward VanAmerongen
David William Buist	Todd Arend Linde	David Jeremy VanDasselaar
Jack Derek Buitenhuis	Ashley Helena Lof	Esther Rebecca Vandenbeukel
Annika Kaitlin D' Addazio	Edward John Lof	Erika Danielle Vandenbos
Aidan Joshua de Haan	Syvannah Jade Lof	Bailey Nicole Vanderee
Arina Ann DeBoer	Sheena Nicole Louwerse	Matthew David VanderLaan
Delaney Denise DeBoer	Chelsea Lauren Ludwig	Kelsie Karina VanderVeen
Justin Spencer DeGelder	Lisa Marie Ludwig	Luke Alexander VanderVelde
Mark Thomas Dekker	Samuel Ryan Ludwig	Taryn Debra VanderVelde
Jordan Cole DeRuiter	Samuel John Aidan Malda	Brooke Alanna VanEgmond
Colin Joshua Douma	Quinton Bryce Mans	Justin Andrew VanEgmond
Sarah Diana Evink	Samantha Taylor Mans	Jody Triana VanLuik
Owen Michael Frebold	Nathan Gerard Nordeman	Luke Zachary VanSpronsen
Ryan Jonathan Groenwold	Ayden Faith Onland	Titus Andrew Van Veen
Megan Sarah Heemskerk	Jayden Renard Petter	Benjamin Ian Vis
Brent John Heeringa	Ryan Johan Petter	Olivia Renee Walters
Hope Diane Heres	Julia Aly Poort	Katrina Nicole Wanders
Noah Edward Holtvlüwer	Khirsten Elizabeth Ravensbergen	Kayla Jacoba Werkman
Kylie Olivia Hordyk	Maria Magdalena Ravensbergen	Trevor Charles Westlake
Leah Jeanice Hordyk	Rebekah Petronella Redwood	Julia Amber Widmer
Madison Faith Hulzebosch	Annelise Marieke Roukema	Taylor Lynn Wielink
Deanna Adele Hutten	Shannon Nicole Schenkel	

## List of Awards

### Guido de Brès Scholarships

#### University –

Arina DeBoer, Todd Linde, Elianna Van Raalte

#### College –

Jack Buitenhuis, Leah Hordyk, Kayla Werkman

### Subject Specific Scholarships

Applied Skills – Syvannah Lof

The Arts – Julia Widmer

Humanities and Social Sciences –

Diana Breukelman

Languages – Jocelyn Beijes

Mathematics – Sam Malda

Science – David Buist

### Academic Athletics Scholarship –

Bailey Vanderee

### The Guido de Brès Christian High School Participation Awards –

Jacob Jager, Edward Lof, Elianna Van Raalte, Titus Van Veen, Jack Jans, Ashley Lof, Bailey Vanderee, Stephanie Knol, Kenton Slaa, Kelsie VanderVeen

### The Governor General's Academic Medal –

Arina DeBoer

### The Lieutenant Governor's Community Volunteer Award for Students –

Stephanie Knol

### The Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff Student-of-the-Year Award –

Elianna Van Raalte



# Clarion Kids

## Jesus Walks on Water

### Matthew 14:22-33

After a long day of preaching, Jesus told the disciples to go ahead of him in a boat to the other side of the sea. It was a stormy night. After the boat had been out for a long time, the disciples saw Jesus walking toward them on the water! They were very afraid, but Jesus comforted them. The disciple Peter said, "If it is you, tell me to walk to you on the water." Jesus called Peter, but he was afraid and started to sink. Jesus grabbed him by the hand to save him. When they got in the boat the storm stopped, and the disciples worshipped Jesus saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

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



#### Word Search

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

Afraid	Boat	Disciples
Jesus	Peter	Save
Walking	Water	Worship

#### Double Puzzle

Unscramble the words, then use the numbered letters to solve the final phrase.

PERTE

		8		10

FARDAI

7			2		

WIOHPSR

1		6				

SEUSJ

		9		

TNGIH

4	3	5		

		L	K									
1	2		3	4	5	6	4	1	7	8	9	10

by Emily Nijenhuis



## Nick Prinzen

Hi, my name is Nick Prinzen! I live at the Beacon Home in Dunnville with eight other residents. I always enjoy working, and I work at RosaFlora banging trays. I keep my own job!

Living at Beacon is wonderful, and we do lots of fun things. I love writing birthday lists and Christmas lists! I give them to my counsellor and family. Playing piano is one of my hobbies, and watching movies is another. Sharon, Lois, and Bram “Skinny Marink a dink a dink” is my favourite song. In the summer I enjoy Beacon baseball, swimming, the Prinzen barbeque, and of course going to Anchor camp. We just got back from Anchor Camp and the open house and my counsellor Kenny was my favourite. In the fall and winter we also go bowling and sometimes Anchor Home joins in. Once every month we do an Anchor fun night and get together with the other homes in the area, there is always lots of good food there! I love having people come for visits and going to Tim Hortons.

I am a member of Grace United Reformed Church in Dunnville and frequently visit Dunnville Canadian Reformed Church. I have lots of friends in both churches.

Thanks for letting me share a bit about me!

## September Birthdays

### 6 Katie Deboer will be 18

481 McNaughton Avenue East  
Chatham, ON N7L 2H2

### 8 Marsha Moesker will be 41

c/o Lighthouse  
6528 1st Line RR 3, Fergus, ON N1M 2W4

### 14 Jerry Bontekoe will be 54

c/o Anchor Home  
361 Thirty Road RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2

### 22 Nick Prinzen will be 46

c/o Beacon Home  
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8

### 25 Dave Vanveen will be 48

c/o Lighthouse  
6528 1st Line RR 3, Fergus, ON N1M 2W4

### 29 Paul Dieleman will be 49

c/o Beacon Home  
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8

## 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

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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

**Dear Editor,**

### **Re-evangelism; As church we need to repent and radically reform!**

Reading the above line and other assertions in the article by Rev. P. Murphy and the letter by J. Sieders in the June 15 *Clarion* did not sit well. Was I ill at ease because they hit a sore spot and was I perhaps troubled by guilt? Self examination as urged by both writers is certainly required of us, also on the subject matter of being mission-minded churches, since we're by nature quick to give ourselves a passing grade. Yet, after a few rereads of the article "Orthodusty" and the "Letter to the Editor" along with more reflection, I find it regrettable that both have sweeping statements which are very negative and uncharitable to members of Reformed and Presbyterian churches faithfully serving the Lord.

It appears that in their efforts to push for a change in the churches and promote a culture of evangelism, they create a bleak picture of a dead or dying church today and tar its members with the same brush. Perhaps it's their zeal (I've sat in on a Rev. Murphy seminar and remain impressed with his goals and ability to motivate) to urgently reach the unchurched with the gospel; but in so doing, are they forgetting that the so called "great" commission is not the only commission that we have been given by our Lord? By calling the one "great," do they perhaps relegate to a "lesser" status our other God-given responsibilities? We pray with the catechism that Jesus also defend and preserve his church, not just increase it, and that prayer also must result in work. So, let's not throw out the baby with the bath water as the saying goes, and get rid of things that have helped to keep us in the faith till now, some of which the authors knock, such as our forms and our European Reformed heritage.

For that has proven to result in church decline (see the "Burning of the Wooden Shoes" article as noted by br. Sieders) when the truth is no longer proclaimed along with love. A quote I came across aptly underlined this: "A church that has mission as its only mission will eventually not have a mission."

Specific statements and quotes by the two authors which trouble me include the following:

Rev. Murphy blames our "traditions" or "orthodusty" on our forms, noting in quoting T. Rainer that too many of us want it "the way we've always done it, fighting for the

past, the good old days." It is rather ironic for Rev. Murphy to state that Christianity is a religion of faith not forms, however true, when we will celebrate by way of various *Christian Renewal* and *Clarion* articles over the next year, our gratitude to the Lord for granting us 400 years with the indispensable forms produced by the Synod of Dort.

While Rev. Murphy makes some valuable points with examples of a lack of prayer and effort among us with respect to ministering to people in our community, he spoils these positive remarks by quoting a good friend who calls the preaching in your average Reformed congregation "a joke, mostly a lecture that puts people to sleep, hardly qualify as sermons, not contextualized, no application, ministers have trouble crafting a simple and compelling introductions, and often presenting incongruent musings that reflect the ramblings of one wandering in a theological wilderness."

Rev. Murphy reacts with an "Ouch," which may be a good and true answer if only applied personally.

I would call those words a negative rant, an overgeneralization, and therefore an untruth.

Br. Sieders laments the fact that after seven decades we are "still almost completely ethnically Dutch," which he calls a danger, an identity problem that we can't even see. Well, I can't see a reason to anglicize my last name anytime soon, or adopt a twenty-first century Canadian culture, which seems to model itself on Hollywood, sport, and sex. Besides, seventy years is but a brief segment of the 2000 years since the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. Nor do the various races and nations of all times and places mentioned in Psalm 87 need to be found in each local church. His last paragraph accuses us of "holding on to non-essentials, striving to preserve outward uniformity, sitting in safe seats on the sidelines while pointing and feeling proud, and not finding our identities in Christ alone." Again, quite the charge!

Too bad these writers did not offer more practical means for increased evangelism in "addition" to the blessings we as churches now enjoy, rather than using the "instead of" approach. A good start would be John Dickson's book on Christian Mission, recommended by Rev. R. Schouten in an earlier *Clarion*.

Ben Meerstra,  
Vernon, BC

*Letters to the Editor should be written in a brotherly fashion in order to be considered for publication.  
Submissions need to be less than one page in length.*



## PRESS RELEASE

### Press Release of Classis-Contracta Manitoba, July 5, 2018

Classis was opened by Rev. H.J. Vanderhorst, the chairman of the convening church Winnipeg Grace. He read from Psalm 46, invited us to sing from Psalm 46:1, 2, and led in prayer. The credentials of the churches were examined, and the churches of Carman East, Carman West, and Winnipeg Redeemer were represented by two delegates each, while Winnipeg Grace was represented by one delegate as was the Emmanuel Denver church, who was present by Skype. Classis was constituted. Rev. H.J. Vanderhorst was appointed President, Rev. J. Poppe as Vice-president, and Dr. A.J. Pol as clerk.

As memorabilia it was noted that Rev. S. Vandeveldel has received and accepted a call to the Emmanuel American Reformed Church at Denver. The result is that Carman East will become a vacant church. It is noted that church services have begun at the Ambassador church plant in Niverville in early May. The wife of our late professor Dr. J. Faber passed away during this past week.

Classis received incoming correspondence in connection with the release of Rev. S. Vandeveldel from the church of Carman East and the approbation of his call to the American Reformed Church at Denver. Received were a letter of call from the church of Denver, and a letter of acceptance of call from Rev. S. Vandeveldel. In correspondence between Carman East and Denver, Carman East has suggested that Denver take responsibility for Rev. S. Vandeveldel as of July 23, 12:01 am Central Standard time. The church of Denver's delegate at Classis, elder Chris Huffer, affirmed verbally that Denver will take responsibility as of this time and date. Denver will need to submit to the classis clerk a letter formally accepting responsibility for Rev. S. Vandeveldel and his family at this time and date.

The church of Carman East sent letter indicating that it had decided to honourably release Rev. S. Vandeveldel from his ministerial duties in Carman East, it declared that he was faithful and diligent in his ministry, and Christian and God-fearing in his confession and conduct, to grant him sufficient copies of a certificate of release, and to commend him with sincere gratitude to the Lord for the work he has faithfully carried out in the past six and a half years in Carman East. With that, Classis approbated the call of Rev. S. Vandeveldel to the church of Denver.

The president congratulated the church of Denver with the acceptance of call from Rev. S. Vandeveldel. He expressed thankfulness for the work of Rev. Vandeveldel in our midst, and that he was remaining in our Classis. Some of the delegates spoke words of thanks and appreciation to Rev. Vandeveldel, and he responded with expressing thankfulness to the church of Carman East for the consistory and congregation's love and support. The chairman also spoke encouraging words to the church of Carman East regarding their upcoming vacancy, hoping that they will soon again receive their own pastor and teacher, and wishing the office-bearers the Lord's blessing in pastoring the flock during this time.

Under question period the church of Carman East requested pulpit supply, and this was granted one Sunday per month during the time of vacancy. Carman East also requested that a counsellor be appointed. Classis appointed Dr. A.J. Pol as counsellor.

The chairman ruled that censure according to Art. 34 of the CO was not necessary. The Acts were adopted and the Press Release was approved. We sang from Psalm 46:5, and the vice-president closed the meeting in prayer.

*On behalf of Classis Manitoba,  
Rev. Joe Poppe* 