

Clarion



GOODBYE FACEBOOK?

THE STATE OF THEOLOGY

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

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What's Inside

Our issue begins with a question: Is it time to say goodbye to Facebook? Rev. Peter Holtvliwer discusses a number of growing concerns with the use and influence of Big Tech social media. And that's not the only question in Issue 6; Rev. Julius Van Spronsen asks readers, "What Do You Want?" Are our lives ruled by what we can't do, or what we want to do?

Issue 4 reports on the ordination of Rev. Aidan Plug; there is also a press release and regular columns Treasures, New & Old and Ray of Sunshine.

Laura Veenendaal

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Clarion

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LEAD ARTICLE



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Goodbye Facebook?

Facebook as a social media platform has been servicing the general public since around 2006. It got into the game early, rose to prominence, and continues to dominate its field. When I previously wrote about Facebook some eleven years agoⁱ, the platform had 900 million users. Today it has more than 2.7 billion active monthly users – nearly a third of the earth’s population (and growing)! For the owners and managers of Facebook, that’s an almost unprecedented level of influence on humanity and one of the reasons I’m wondering if it’s time to say goodbye to Facebook. The following concerns have given me pause and perhaps they’ll give you pause too.

ⁱ Clarion Vol. 59 No.4, p.86-88. Find it online here: http://www.clarionmagazine.ca/archives/2010/081-108_v59n4.pdf

From friend to customer

I use the word “influence” deliberately because the very platform of Facebook itself is not neutral. No platform or media outlet or even any person can ever truly be neutral. We all have a way of looking at the world and our ethics and business practices naturally flow out of that. Facebook is a business, and its primary founder, owner, and CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, is out to make money. That’s one driving force behind the way the app works. Zuckerberg also has his beliefs and political views; these also shape the way Facebook operates.

On the business side of things, the algorithms have changed to favour paid advertising over the organic reach of ordinary (non-paying) users like most of us who joined Facebook for the social connection. Algorithms are the complicated formulas at work behind the scenes, dictating which posts or ads will show up in your personal news feed. In the early years of Facebook, these algorithms gave a lot more allowance for the posts of your

The more you shared, or others shared with you, the more the algorithms noticed you and made your posts more likely to appear to others in your wider friend group. Your social activity would attract interest from friends of friends and your circle of contacts would grow naturally. This is part of what is called “organic growth.” Your network of contacts expanded according to how you used Facebook.

Over time, however, the algorithms were adjusted (and they continue to be tweaked) to cater to businesses and advertisers.ⁱⁱ Soon people began to notice a decrease of postings in their feeds related to their friends. It seemed like a restriction had been imposed on the reach of friends into each other’s network. Your social circle became smaller. In its place, you began seeing many more ads and an increasing number of articles and news items which someone had paid to advertise in your newsfeed. A change was underway: Facebook social users steadily became customers of a variety of merchants. It’s not that being a customer is bad, or that advertisement is inherently evil. But I personally don’t like being manipulated by algorithms on a platform that drew me in for the social experience. It feels like a bait and switch to me and that’s a turn off.

Facebook might soon be in my rear-view mirror

personal friends and contacts to appear. Being on Facebook then felt more like socializing among a broad range of your friend group, a group you controlled (in terms of access) and were comfortable with.

This made it fun to share or comment on pictures, funny stories, an event, a joke, or the like. Conversely, expressions of grief, support, and encouragement could be readily offered.

Privacy invasion

Facebook is free for anyone to sign up, but, as mentioned, Facebook is a business. So how can Zuckerberg make money off users who don’t pay anything for his service? By taking something of value from users that he can sell to others. That something is our personal information and data. This is a growing concern with other Big Tech players like Google, YouTube, and Twitter too. We can use their handy and (in many respects) helpful services but in turn they receive basic information about us (our personal info we sign up with) and, even more importantly, they receive data about our habits, interests, and patterns of usage on their platforms. Facebook (and the others) turn around and use that data to attract paying advertisers of products (which the algorithms suggest would interest you personally) who view you and me as customers. We become targeted by merchants. Ever notice how after reading an article on a certain topic or searching for a certain subject that the next day you begin seeing ads pop up that are related? Or paid news or blog items of a similar nature appear in your newsfeed? In 2010 this practice was in its infancy and barely noticeable, but now the

ⁱⁱ For an overview of how the algorithms have changed in favour of paid advertising, see <https://www.falcon.io/insights-hub/industry-updates/social-media-updates/facebook-algorithm-change>

Facebook steals our time, our mental energy, and our focus

tracking of our personal data has become so sophisticated and so accurate it's uncanny how they "know what we're thinking." And creepy. Some might like this feature because it gives you lots of what you want, but I don't like the feeling of being stalked. I've stopped Tweeting, I now use Duck-Duck-Go instead of Google, and Facebook might soon be in my rear-view mirror.

Throw-away content

As Facebook has shifted from primarily a place to share fun things among friends, more and more content has crept into our newsfeeds in the form of blog posts, news items, full length articles, and all kinds of "click bait" items. Videos are also populating the platform like never before. Businesses of all kinds are vying for our attention. The volume of information is immense. No one could ever read (or watch) all of it and it's a never-ending stream. It reminds me of the old cable or satellite TV where you could watch hundreds of channels. There was (still is!) something to watch every minute of the day, 24-7, but what is the quality of the content? What good does it do us? No one could possibly watch even a fraction of all that video, so what is the value of it all? Very little, in my estimation.

There is so much to watch but so little to see. There is so much to read but so little worth retaining. Let's be honest. While certainly you can wade through the sea of content to find the odd informative article or truly educational video, isn't the vast majority of it simply forgettable? Throw-away? And how much

time do we waste looking for the occasional pearl? It's long been established that Facebook is addictive (and designed to be!) and so it's a simple matter to thoughtlessly scroll for long stretches at a time (where did that hour go? that evening?), multiple times a day, and what have you got to show for it in the end? How much useful knowledge is gained? Does Facebook make us wise? Are we helped as Christians to grow in our faith? Precious little if any of that actually happens. Mostly it's the other way around, isn't it? Facebook steals our time, our mental energy, and our focus. I think we should steal them back.

Censorship

Another annoying and concerning trend at Facebook (and the other Big Tech companies) is censorship of content. It comes down to this: if Facebook doesn't like what you post, it will get publicly flagged and ultimately taken down. In fact, you don't even own your own profile or page, Zuckerberg does. And he is legally allowed to take it/them down anytime he wants. More than a few have had their pages "disappeared" with barely an explanation. If you violate the "values" of Facebook (whatever those are), you risk getting booted off. Twitter famously did this recently with President Donald Trump, and if the President of the United States can be deactivated, you know it can happen to you too.

Here is where being a Christian and posting biblically-based content can run us into trouble. Apparently, Facebook values do not align very well with the teaching of the Bible. Christian pastor and writer Paul Washer had a sermon taken down from his account because it was deemed "hate literature."ⁱⁱⁱ The Christian satirical website the Babylon Bee had its account suspended a couple of times because Facebook thought their joke was serious.^{iv} The values of Facebook align with the progressive left which means that anything that offers criticism or even perceived criticism of homosexuality, transgenderism, feminism, Black Lives Matter, radical Islam, and the like is subject to censorship and likely to get the boot.^v As Facebook (and other) social media platforms seek to shut down contrary voices (and Christians are among them), I feel increasingly like an unwanted stranger. I ask myself: why wait till Facebook's inhospitable environment becomes outright hateful and oppressive?

ⁱⁱⁱ christiantoday.com/article/if-facebook-keeps-censoring-christians-perhaps-time-to-say-goodbye/132592.htm

^{iv} washingtontimes.com/news/2020/oct/22/facebook-apologizes-babylon-bee-reinstates-christi

^v christianpost.com/voices/social-media-facebook-google-censorship-out-of-control.html

Are we honouring our heavenly Father by the manner in which we interact?

Makes me judgmental

So far I've mentioned serious concerns with the platform itself, but there are also problems on my side as a user that make me think of quitting. I've noticed myself becoming judgmental. Maybe you can relate. What I mean is, there are people I know or have an acquaintance with whom I like and think well of. But then they post a picture (or a bunch of pics) or recommend an article that makes me question how I feel about them. Or I notice a trend in their posts that I interpret as self-centred or egotistical. They're all about themselves, I catch myself thinking. The article they post raises questions about their politics or their theology. Suddenly I find that my opinion of them has soured.

Without full context, without a discussion on why they posted that piece or what they think about the topic, I find myself inwardly critiquing them and thinking ill of them. In short, I become judgmental. This is judging a person rashly and unheard, and it's wrong in God's eyes. It also only serves to break down my relationship with those neighbours. It soon bothers me that I have formed unfair negative opinions of people based on such incomplete information, and this is another powerful motivator to get off Facebook. Friendships and acquaintances are far and away best to form and enjoy and develop in-person.


Divisive arguments

One thing I've learned the hard way over the years is not to engage in debates on Facebook (or on any social media). Arguments can start very quickly with a provocative comment

or the posting of an opinionated or pointed article. Whether or not it's intended, people can quickly become offended and soon fire back with offensive remarks. I am currently part of several discussion groups (all of them Christian, some within our Canadian Reformed community) and, as long as the comments or questions raised are informational or without a hidden agenda (which is never really hidden, is it?), people can usefully answer queries, share helpful facts or tips, and generally be of benefit. But, when someone wants to start a discussion or debate (even with the best of intentions, namely, to broaden the discussion and learn), it isn't long before uncharitable assumptions are supposed and harsh comments follow, which often include name-calling and insults. In some Facebook groups it seems that these chippy arguments are the norm. As Christians, are we honouring our heavenly Father by the manner in which we interact on Facebook?

I also wonder: has anyone actually changed their mind on a topic by means of a Facebook debate? Has greater understanding developed and a consensus appeared among participants? Do people on opposite sides of the issue grow closer to each other, gain a respect for one another, and show true Christian harmony and love? From all that I observe, the results trend in the opposite direction: people get upset, they entrench in their own views, their opinion of others who hold different views is lowered, and, in the end, there is greater division. Surely this too does not please the Lord who gave his life for his church which he earnestly desires to be united as one body (John 17:20-23)! This aspect of Facebook is, frankly, an embarrassment for us Christians and for me another good reason to leave Facebook behind.

Don't get me wrong: discussions and debates are absolutely important, but let's have them in person, face-to-face, where we can look each other in the eye, read body language, and hear tone of voice. Let's do it accompanied by prayer and with every intent to stay unified. Then, in the grace of the Holy Spirit, we will be much better positioned to understand one another, see the bigger picture, and maintain unity and love even when we disagree.

Will I leave Facebook? I'm still undecided. Is there a case to be made to stay involved? Maybe. Perhaps one of our readers will write a compelling letter to the editor convincing me. Meanwhile, I'm edging toward the exit. How about you? 

The Humiliation of Death

“And you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.”
(Acts 3:15)

Jesus endured the deepest of humiliations on the cross. He was mocked and jeered for the things he had said. He was beaten and stripped naked, shown to be weak and powerless by the leaders and soldiers. This all led up to the moment in which Jesus was rejected by God himself, by his own heavenly Father, so that darkness came upon the whole land. After all that Jesus had said and all of the power he had shown, Jesus was left humiliated.

But in Acts 3, after healing the lame beggar in Jesus’s name, and the crowds started to gather around Peter and John, Peter points to another great humiliation that Jesus endured on the cross. Not only did they convict the holy and righteous One and ask for a murderer to be released instead, they also “killed the Author of life.”

Herein lies a terrible humiliation for Jesus Christ on Good Friday. He was the Author of life, the one by whom all things were created (Col 1:16). This means that the people to whom Peter was talking, who had put Jesus on the cross, were the ones that Jesus had given life to in the first place. They owe their very existence to him and yet they dare to crucify him and have him killed.


In addition to this, the last thing you would expect the Author of life to do is die. Others receive life from him! He produces life! For Jesus to die then is more humiliating for him as the Author of life than for anyone else. What a terrible shock that the one who brought about life was killed!

When you commemorate Good Friday and remember Jesus’ breathing his last on the cross, it is important to see the bigger picture of how far he has fallen. From being the Author of life, sharing glory with the Father, he was willing to humble himself, taking on human flesh, and dying even a death on the cross. We confess in Lord’s Day 16 that all of this together is itself a descent into hell.

We should also keep in mind what is at the root of sin. All sin is really human beings rebelling against the one who gave them life. God “gives to all mankind life and breath and everything”

(Acts 17:25), and yet we treat him with such a lack of love and honour and dedication. We attempt to dethrone the one who reigns eternally. Although we were not shouting “Crucify him!” among the crowds on that Good Friday, our sinful nature is prone to treat the one who authored our lives with similar disdain and denigration.

Thankfully the glorious good news that comes to us on Good Friday is that we see that the Author of life did this willingly. For the joy set before him he disregarded this shame. He endured the cross and suffered the shame of death in order to atone for the sins we committed. He was put to shame so that we would never have to be shamed. Indeed in Jesus Christ our death becomes an entrance into eternal life. In this way the Author of life through his humiliation in death produced even more life.

We rejoice that Jesus Christ so very willingly endured the humiliation of the cross for his Father’s glory and for the salvation of those who trust in him. His love for the Father and his love for you are truly beyond our expectations. 

For Further Study

1. The Lord’s Supper form in the Book of Praise says, “He suffered countless insults that we might never be put to shame.” Does this mean that Christians will never experience humiliation or shame? How are we to understand this?
2. In Philippians 3:19 Paul describes enemies of the cross of Christ as those who “glory in their shame.” Though these people are obviously in the wrong, would it be fitting to glory in Christ’s humiliation? In other words, can we not call his shame glorious?



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What Do You Want?

Imagine that you are a regular player at a local golf course and while you are in the pro-shop grabbing some bottled water after a Saturday afternoon game, the person behind the counter asks you (again!), "So, are you coming to play golf again tomorrow?" Your first reaction is to say, "Yes, I'd love to", but then you remember that it will be Sunday, and you say, "Oh no, I can't because I am a Christian and I have to go to church." Since you obviously are capable of playing golf on whatever day of the week you choose (it is good to get a high score, right?), your use of the word "can't" can be very misleading.

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faith

with that community. Maybe you are being controlled by a bossy parent or spouse who is over-zealous about religion. Is that what you want others to think? Not only would you have left them in ignorance about God, but you would also have shifted the responsibility (or the blame) from your own shoulders onto the shoulders of someone else. It may be the message you want to send at the moment to free yourself from the time commitment and the pressure of sharing your faith, but isn't there a better way of saying this? More importantly, is it really truthful to say that you can't do an activity because you are a Christian?

For many children there are parental household rules in place for a time as they are growing up, so that they are made to follow the outward forms of a Christian lifestyle whether they like it or not. Eight-year-old children who are not eager to be in church every Sunday are telling the truth when they say they can't skip a service. Although some grown adults continue to describe being a Christian like little children might talk about going to church ("I can't play golf on Sunday"), when God works in our hearts, he brings us to a spiritual maturity and freedom that far surpasses this childish view of the Christian faith. When Christians, willingly and voluntarily, publicly profess their faith, they aren't just declaring that they will continue to act like their parents want them to, but they are declaring that they love Jesus Christ as their Saviour and their Lord and they want to dedicate their lives to him in thankful worship.

Why can't you disobey God?

When people hear you tell them that you can't accept their invitation to break one of the commandments because of your Christian faith (whether it has to do with golf instead of worship, relationships, dating, business, or whatever else), they can only assume that there is some outside, dominating, and controlling force in your life that is preventing you from doing what you would love to do. Maybe the Christian religion has strict laws that must be followed in order to continue to enjoy fellowship

What Christ wanted to do

God wants us to desire him above everything else, and this unforced desire to love and serve the LORD is the end goal of the LORD's saving work through Jesus Christ. The LORD showed that he created us to love him willingly and voluntarily, when he placed the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in paradise. This tree made it possible for Adam and Eve to sin and therefore they were able to demonstrate true, genuine, voluntary love. The law reveals that God wants us to love him with all our heart,

soul, mind, and strength and to love our neighbour as ourselves (Matt 22:37-39; Rom 13:10). The subjects of the kingdom of heaven are motivated by their desire to live in fellowship with their Father in heaven by doing his will. The Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled this righteousness for believers while he was on earth, and so reveals to us what it looks like when believers come to do his will (cf. Ps 40:6-8; Heb 10:5-10).

Our Lord Jesus had come to do God's will, not by being served but by serving, and he was resolutely determined to complete his mission in the world. In Luke 9:51 we read: "When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). Our Lord Jesus knew it was time for him to suffer and die at the hands of God's enemies in Jerusalem, and yet he revealed his deep desire to glorify God above everything else by setting his face and going. Luke 9:51 assures us of the voluntary nature of Jesus' suffering and death. He succeeded where Adam and Eve had failed. Our Lord Jesus only needed to go because he wanted to manifest God's love to the world, by doing God's will in order to save all those whom God had chosen before the foundation of the world. Our Good Friday commemoration of the death of our Lord Jesus on the cross for our sins is made sweeter by the knowledge that although he received opportunities to turn away, our Lord had set his face toward Jerusalem (Luke 9:51) and stayed on the cross when his enemies jeered him and urged him to save himself (Luke 23:35; cf. Matt 27:40). Jesus' righteousness was revealed not only in his obedience, but also in his resolute desire to be obedient. When the Holy Spirit works faith, he works that faith in our hearts, which is the centre of our will and desires. As a result, true faith in the Triune God is evident in the things that we want and pursue in this life. As we grow more independent and have the freedom to make more decisions about our lifestyle choices, the number of temptations we face increases and we are faced with the question about what we want. Is it our heart's desire to glorify God with every part of our lives? Do we want to set our face toward God in worship?

What are your motives?

The goal of God's saving work is to transform spiritually dead slaves to sin and the devil, into free, living members of Christ who want to worship God and live in fellowship with him. The question of what you want in the depths of your heart is an

No one is imposing Christianity on you

important question when you are in the moment of deciding whether or not you should publicly profess your faith. Your deepest desires give evidence concerning whether or not the Holy Spirit is working in your heart. Only those who, given the freedom to pursue other ways of living, insist that they would prefer to serve the LORD should respond to this inner calling with a public profession of their faith in Jesus Christ. To impose a Christian lifestyle on someone who doesn't really love Jesus Christ as their Saviour will only result in hypocrisy. Although such an approach to Christian faith requires parents and leaders to patiently trust in the work of the Holy Spirit, God's servants must do their utmost to ensure that the members of God's church don't view Christianity as an imposed religion that deprives them of the things they want to do.

Spiritual leaders in the church must shape the care they give based on the members' response to the question, "What do you want most in your life?" When pastoral work begins with the question "What do you want?" God's servants can determine if their message is to be evangelistic or pastoral encouragement. If, in their hearts, people don't want to serve God, it is the task of God's servants to simply share the gospel message of forgiveness, spiritual transformation, and eternal life in the Triune God. If people insist that they don't have any desire to worship the LORD now and forevermore, they should not be encouraged to join (or remain) in Christ's church on earth. A wise spiritual leader will not force someone to do what they don't want to do. However, if the honest reply to the question "What do you want?" is that the person wants to do God's will, then God's people can rejoice over the work of the Holy Spirit


in that person's heart. Even if they are losing battles with the temptations of the flesh, have an erroneous view of the Triune God or salvation, or feel like they've lost a sense of God's favour, a person's desire to return to God in worship is the spark of evidence of God's preserving hand. The Holy Spirit will fan such a spark of desire to worship God into a flame, through instruction, exhortation, and encouragement, and the desire of Christians to worship the LORD will be evident in their lives.

The test

If you are a Christian, you can ask yourselves regularly: "Why do I give financial gifts? Why do I seek to rest and worship God on the Lord's Day?" You don't have to do any of these things. God doesn't need your worship, and his church would continue just fine without you if you weren't a believer. No one is imposing Christianity on you. In fact, if you are living as a hypocrite, the LORD calls you to stop using the church as a cover for the sinful desires of your heart, and to honestly live in the consequences of your rejection of God as your Lord. God may use this honest confrontation with the consequences of your life choices to humble you and bring you to genuine repentance. If you keep responding to the temptations to sin with the words "I can't because I'm a Christian," it will not take long before you, your neighbours, and your children will think Christianity is nothing more than a big restraining hand that keeps our authentic, natural, root desires at bay, through an intricate system of draconian laws and authoritative leaders. If being a Christian meant that I had to tell a pro-shop staff member that I couldn't play golf on Sunday, I don't think I would want to be a Christian.

So why are Christians so eager to keep the Ten Commandments? Why did our Lord Jesus send Satan away rather than accept his offer to receive the kingdoms of the earth without suffering? Why did our Lord Jesus set his face to Jerusalem to begin the road to deepest shame and agony? Hebrews 12:2 tells us that he wanted to endure the cross and despise the shame for the joy that was set before him. When the Holy Spirit works faith into your hearts, he also opens your eyes to see the joy that Christ Jesus obtained for you. By God's grace, Christians can see the glory of God's majesty, grace, power,

and love, and there is nothing they desire more. When Jesus, the Light of the World, shines in a Christian's heart, then the incomparable greatness of God's promises is like the light of the sun compared to the glimmer of reflected light on a piece of garbage in a cave. When the Holy Spirit opens people's eyes, it is not hard to understand why they want to obey the commandment "Thou shalt not seek joy in the hopeless emptiness and despair of junk." Christians don't obey God merely because they are unable to indulge in worldly pleasures, or because they are afraid of being condemned by their church family, or even by God himself, but they obey God because they love their heavenly Father and they want to continue to walk in fellowship with him.

Freedom is perhaps the strongest test of genuine love. After the pandemic restrictions on in-person worship are lifted, we will see what people really want by the opportunities they take hold of. When young people, who are well educated in the Christian faith, are given independence in their lives, they will reveal what they really want by their lifestyle choices. Although we are often afraid of "losing" members in our churches because we wrongly value the size of our churches and the unity of family groups more than sincere faith in Jesus Christ, it is good for Christians to pass through the testing fires of other "opportunities." Such challenges test the genuineness of our love, reveal the sincere desires of our heart, and bring glory to God, who powerfully preserves his own until he comes again and his kingdom will be all in all. On the surface there doesn't appear to be a lot of difference between the words "can't" and "want," and yet the two words often flow out of two very different hearts. So, what do you want? 



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THE State OF Theology (3 of 3)

Every other year since 2014, Ligonier Ministries has partnered with LifeWay Research to survey the beliefs of Americans on a number of theological and ethical issues. Like past surveys, the 2020 State of Theology survey reveals some encouraging results, but it also reveals confusion and a lack of theological knowledge among evangelicals. In this article, we will take a look at each of the thirty-one questions on the survey in an attempt to help readers understand the orthodox Christian view on these issues as well as the biblical grounds for it.

To take the survey yourself and explore the data, go to www.thestateoftheology.com. New this year is the option to create a group survey that you can send to your friends, family, or church. It's completely confidential and is a great way to start a discussion on what the people in your community believe.

This article was first published in *Tabletalk*, the Bible study magazine of Ligonier Ministries. Find out more at TabletalkMagazine.com or try it free for three months today at TryTabletalk.com.

By Keith A. Mathison Professor of systematic theology at Reformation Bible College in Sanford, Fla.

Dr. Mathison is author of several books, including *The Lord's Supper*.

21. Christians should be silent on issues of politics

There are a number of ways this statement could be interpreted depending on the assumptions one brings to it. Is it referring to all Christians or some Christians? If only some, which ones? Is it referring to pastors? Is it referring to Christians considered individually or corporately? What does “be silent” mean? Public silence or complete silence? What exactly is an “issue of politics”? Does it mean specific pieces of legislation or specific court rulings? Or does it mean contested ethical issues? How do we define the word politics? That word can mean everything from “the art or science of government” to “the total complex of relations between people living in society.” Does it take local circumstances into account? Is the answer for Christians in England different from the answer for Christians in North Korea or Iran?

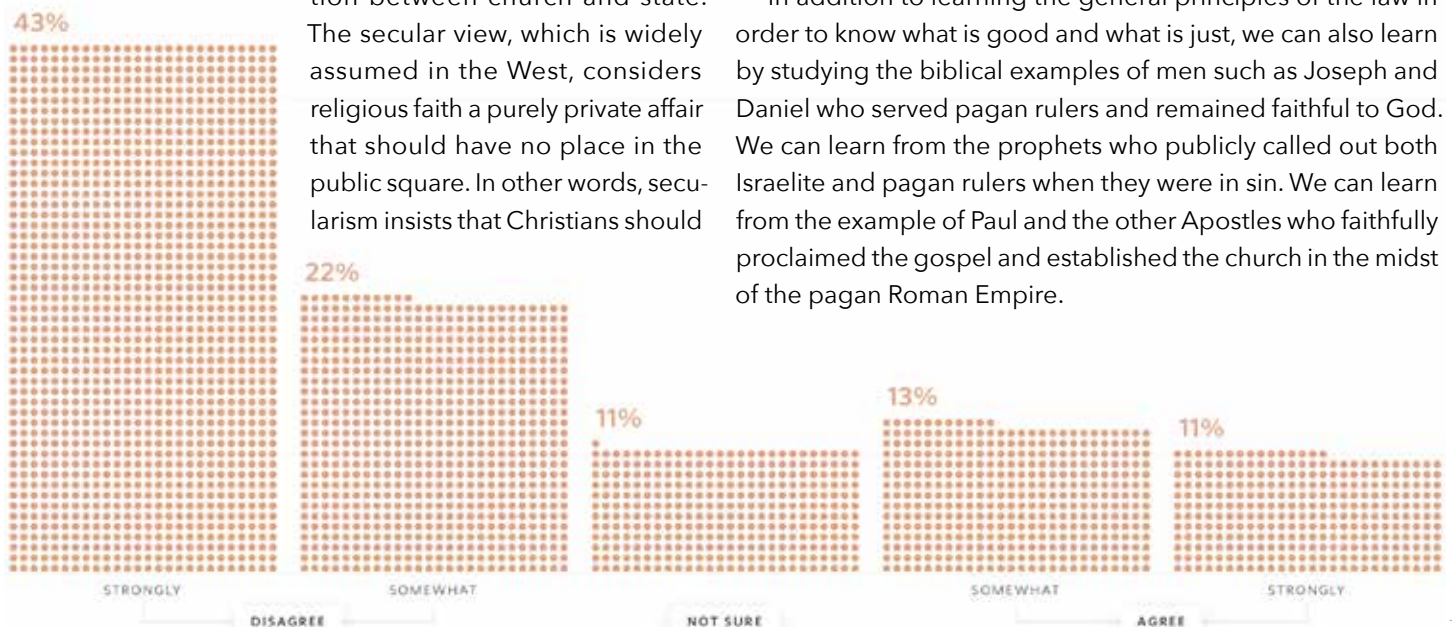
In the North American context, the question speaks most directly to the post-Enlightenment secularist view of the relation between church and state.

The secular view, which is widely assumed in the West, considers religious faith a purely private affair that should have no place in the public square. In other words, secularism insists that Christians should

not express their beliefs publicly; nor should they take stances on political issues based on their Christian faith.

Scripture does not allow Christians to remain silent about their beliefs, and it encourages them to be salt and light in the midst of fallen cultures (Matt 5:13-16), but Christians disagree on exactly how they should speak to the political and cultural issues they encounter. One reason for this is that Christians come from all tribes, tongues, and nations. They exist and have existed in a huge variety of cultures and countries. Each nation, each political structure, and each culture is different. Scripture does not provide detailed instructions on how Christians should interact with every potential kind of political and cultural context that might arise in history. It provides general principles, and Christians have to use biblically informed wisdom to apply those principles in their specific context. Sometimes they disagree on how best to do that.

In addition to learning the general principles of the law in order to know what is good and what is just, we can also learn by studying the biblical examples of men such as Joseph and Daniel who served pagan rulers and remained faithful to God. We can learn from the prophets who publicly called out both Israelite and pagan rulers when they were in sin. We can learn from the example of Paul and the other Apostles who faithfully proclaimed the gospel and established the church in the midst of the pagan Roman Empire.



22. God chose the people he would save before he created the world

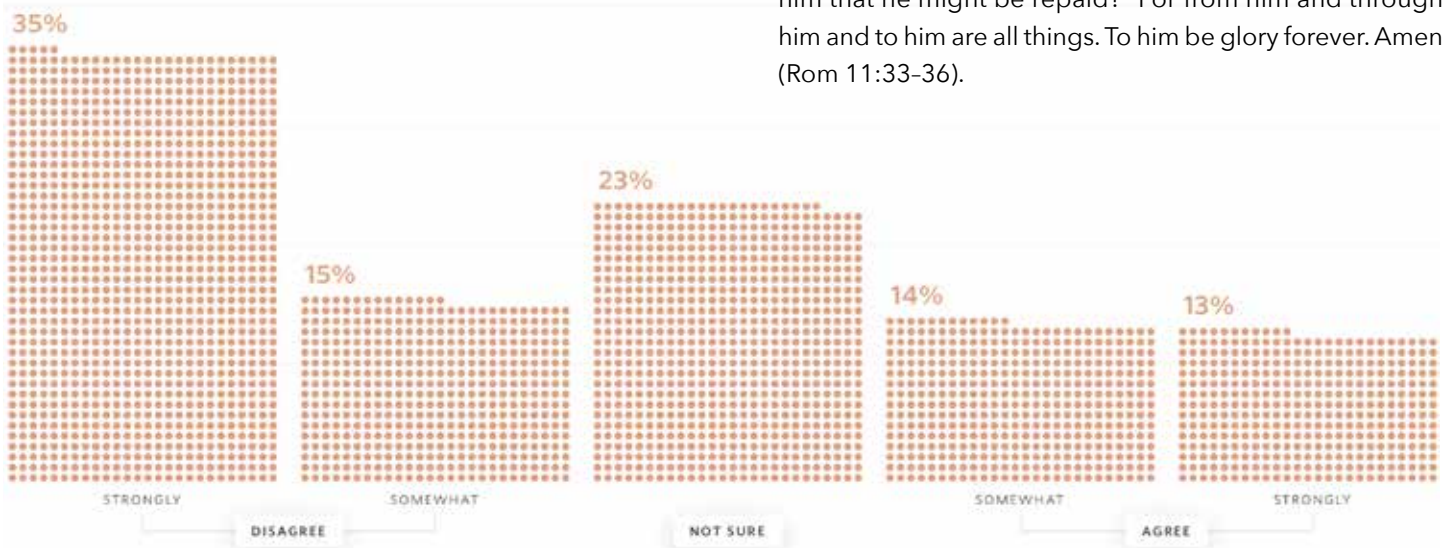
The doctrine of election has been at the centre of controversy in the church for centuries, but this is not due to a lack of explicit teaching in Scripture. From beginning to end, Scripture places the salvation of sinners in the sovereign hands of God. God reveals in his Word that he sovereignly works all things according to his will (Eph 1:11). He also reveals that those who are saved are saved not because of their works but solely on the basis of God's grace (2 Tim 1:8-9). We are taught by God's Word that his election unto salvation occurred before the creation of the world (Eph 1:3-6; 2 Tim 1:9). Those whom God predestined for salvation before the foundation of the world he calls in time (Rom 8:28) and draws to Christ (John 6:44). As creatures of God and as sinners, deserving of God's wrath, we have no right to question the ethics of election (Rom 9:20). We know God is good and that all he does is good. When we do not fully understand something, that knowledge alone should be enough for us.

The Canons of Dort helpfully explain the nature of God's work of election:

Before the foundation of the world, by sheer grace, according to the free good pleasure of his will, he chose in Christ to salvation a definite number of particular people out of the entire human race, which had fallen by its own fault from its original innocence into sin and ruin. Those chosen were neither better nor more deserving than the others, but lay with them in the common misery. He did this in Christ, whom he also appointed from eternity to be the mediator, the head of all those chosen, and the foundation of their salvation (I.7).

Our response to the biblical doctrine of election should be one of humility rather than arrogance. It is a mystery we can barely begin to fathom. With Paul, we should cry out:

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen (Rom 11:33-36).



23. Churches must provide entertaining worship services if they want to be effective

A Christian cannot affirm this statement without denying everything that Scripture reveals about the nature and purpose of corporate Christian worship. In the first place, worship is to be directed toward God alone. As Jesus said, quoting Deuteronomy, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve" (Matt 4:10). Not only is worship to be directed to God alone, but God alone reveals the acceptable

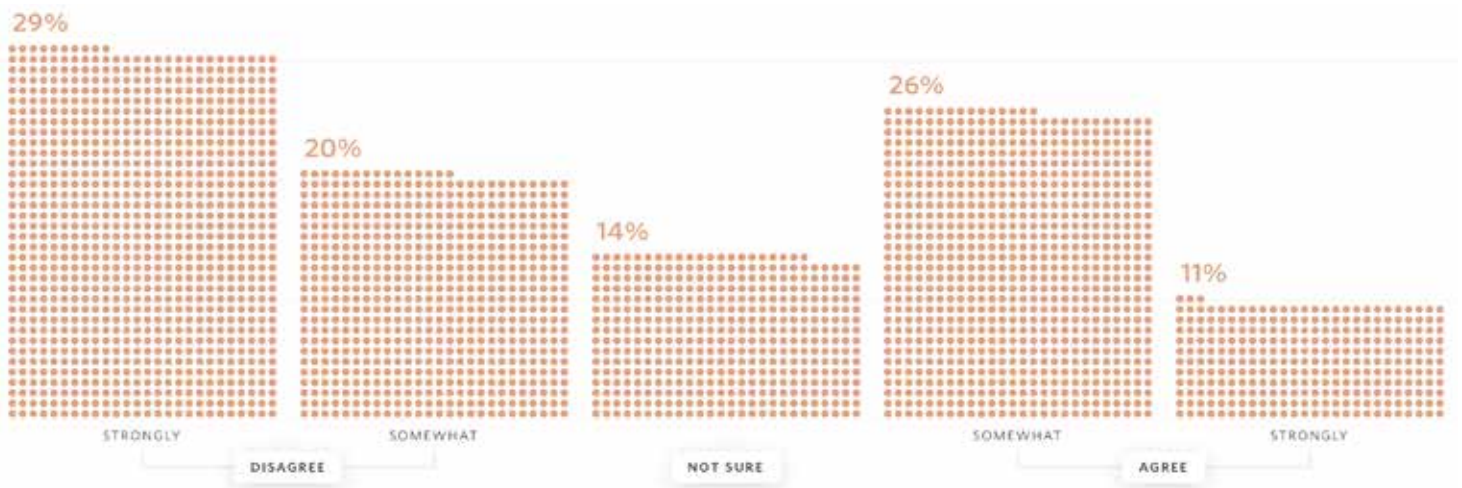
way he is to be worshipped (Deut 12:32; Matt 15:9). God "may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men" (WCF 21.1).

The idea that worship should entertain those in attendance places the worship of Almighty God in the same category as a sporting event, a movie, or the circus. It is a blasphemous inversion of the nature of worship; it can turn something

that is intended to be God-centred and God-honouring into a man-centred spectacle. Biblical God-centred worship involves prayer with thanksgiving. It is to be done “with understanding, reverence, humility, fervency, faith, love, and perseverance” (WCF 21.3). It involves the reading and preaching of the Scriptures, the singing of hymns and psalms, and the administration of the sacraments. God is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth (John 4:43). We are called to “offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire” (Heb 12:28-29).

The idea that the church has to offer entertaining worship services to be “effective” is also importing a worldly concept of

“effectiveness” into the church. The church is not called to be “effective.” The church is called to be faithful to her Lord. If the church is faithful, the Lord will add however many to the church that he sees fit (Acts 2:46-47). The simple preaching of Christ and him crucified may appear ineffective to Madison Avenue, but it has always appeared foolish to the worldly (1 Cor 1:23). In reality, it is the power of God to salvation (Rom 1:16). The church is not in the business of entertaining believers or unbelievers. We are to leave that to actors and athletes. The church has a much higher calling, and we abandon it at our own peril.



24. God is unconcerned with my day-to-day decisions

God has given us instruction in his Word regarding how we are to walk and please him (1 Thess 4:1). Walking involves putting numerous small steps together. Likewise, our spiritual walk involves putting numerous small decisions together. God is concerned with our day-to-day decisions because God’s will for us is our sanctification (1 Thess 4:3). He calls us to take up our cross daily and follow Christ (Luke 9:23). To do this daily requires many good daily decisions.

All our decisions are acts of our will. Since our goal is to be more and more conformed to Christ, our goal involves having our wills, by grace, more and more aligned with his will (2 Cor 3:18; Eph 1:3-5; Phil 2:12-13; Col 3:3-10). Our day-to-day decisions, therefore, either contribute to our sanctification or detract from it. For our wills to be aligned with God’s will and for our decisions to please him, we have to know his revealed will, his

law. We find his revealed will, his instruction for us, in Scripture (Ps 119:105; 2 Tim 3:15-16).

Regarding God’s will and our decisions, there are several things we have to understand. For instance, we have to understand that God’s law does not tell us what our decision should be in every conceivable circumstance. Scripture doesn’t tell you whether you should go to this college or that college, take this job or that job. Generally speaking, God’s moral law provides broad principles. Wisdom is required to apply those principles in the innumerable different circumstances that Christians will face. Christians should study both the law and the Wisdom Literature of Scripture to develop the wisdom necessary to make good day-to-day decisions.

A second important point to note is that although God is concerned with our day-to-day decisions, not every decision



is a decision between good and bad. Not every decision is of the same kind. "Should I rob this bank or not?" and "Should I have the soup or the salad?" are not the same kind of decisions. One involves a choice

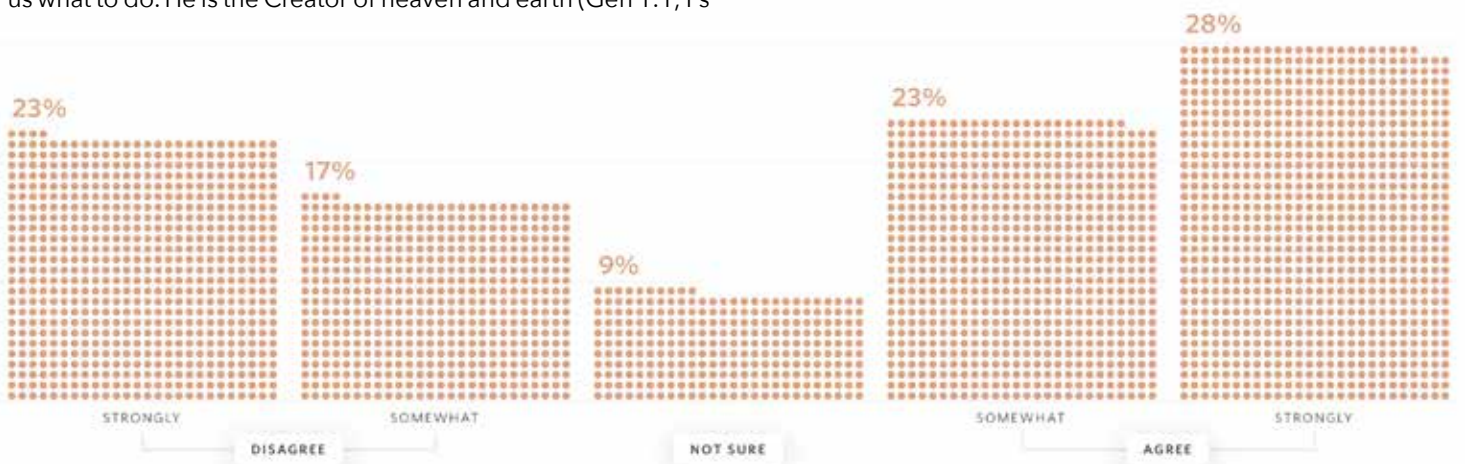
between good and evil. The other involves a choice between one good and another good. Eating soup or salad only becomes a sinful choice if you eat without thankfulness to God for that food or you become a glutton. God has numbered the very hairs on our heads (Matt 10:30). He is certainly concerned with our everyday decisions.

25. The Bible has the authority to tell us what we must do

To understand why this statement must be affirmed by all faithful Christians, one must understand what the Bible is. Paul explains this in his second letter to Timothy: "All Scripture is breathed out by God" (3:16). The word translated "breathed out by God" is "theopneustos." It literally means "God-breathed." In other words, the Bible is the very Word of God. The Bible has the authority to tell us what to do because God has the authority to tell us what to do.

It should go without saying that God has the authority to tell us what to do. He is the Creator of heaven and earth (Gen 1:1; Ps

146:6). He upholds our very existence (Heb 1:3). He is King and Lord (Ps 47:6-7). We are, therefore, his creatures and subjects and owe him obedience. The living God is also infinitely good (34:8). Because the psalmist recognized the perfect goodness of God, he asked God to teach him his statutes (119:68). The psalmist knew that his Creator had the authority to tell him what to do, and he knew that what God told him to do was good. Jesus also made it abundantly clear that man is to live by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Matt 4:4).



26. Learning about theology is for pastors and scholars only

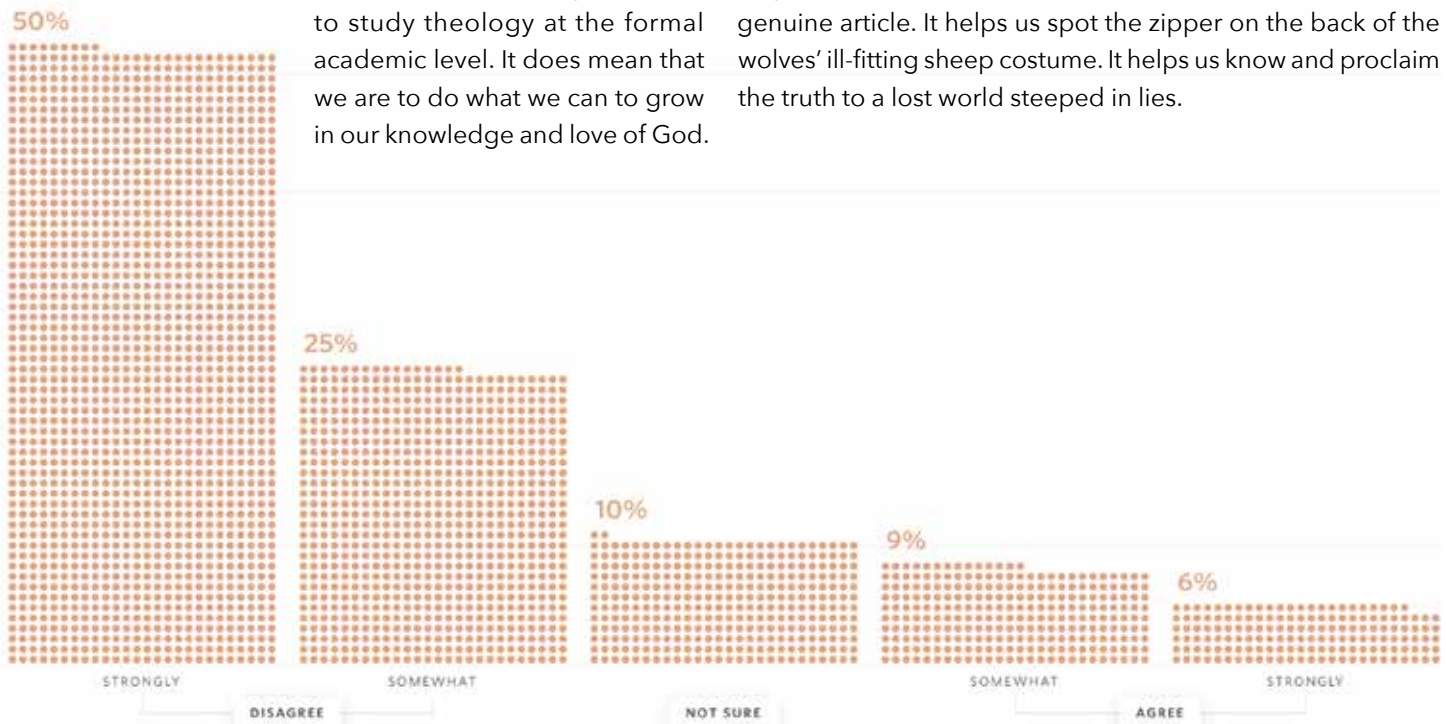
Christians will sometimes affirm this statement because there is some ambiguity in the way the word theology is used. It is often used to refer to a formal academic study requiring mastery of ancient languages and other related fields. But that is not the only way the word theology is used. The basic meaning of the word is “knowledge of God.” Is knowledge of God for pastors and scholars only? No. We are all called to know God (Col 1:9-10).

This is why theology is important for all Christians. Theology is the knowledge of God. If we are all called to know God, then we are all called to learn about theology to some degree. This

does not mean that a person has to study theology at the formal academic level. It does mean that we are to do what we can to grow in our knowledge and love of God.

This is the most important function of theology, and it is why theology can never be rightly done if it is separated from prayer and praise. Theology and doxology must not be separated.

Studying theology has secondary benefits as well. Learning at least the basics of theology can help all Christians be more discerning and better able to spot the kind of serious errors we have discussed throughout this article. A lack of any theological knowledge leaves Christians open to the wiles of false teachers. There are many wolves in sheep’s clothing roaming around the church, harming unwary sheep. Studying theology helps us discern the difference between a counterfeit and the genuine article. It helps us spot the zipper on the back of the wolves’ ill-fitting sheep costume. It helps us know and proclaim the truth to a lost world steeped in lies.



27. Sex outside of traditional marriage is a sin

The fact that so many Christians deny this statement is a clear example of how much Christians have become conformed to this world as opposed to being conformed to Christ. The sexual libertinism that has become the norm in Western culture in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is gradually becoming the norm in the church as well. All manner of sexual immorality is being excused by professing Christians in flagrant disregard for God’s Word, and on those rare occasions when his Word is

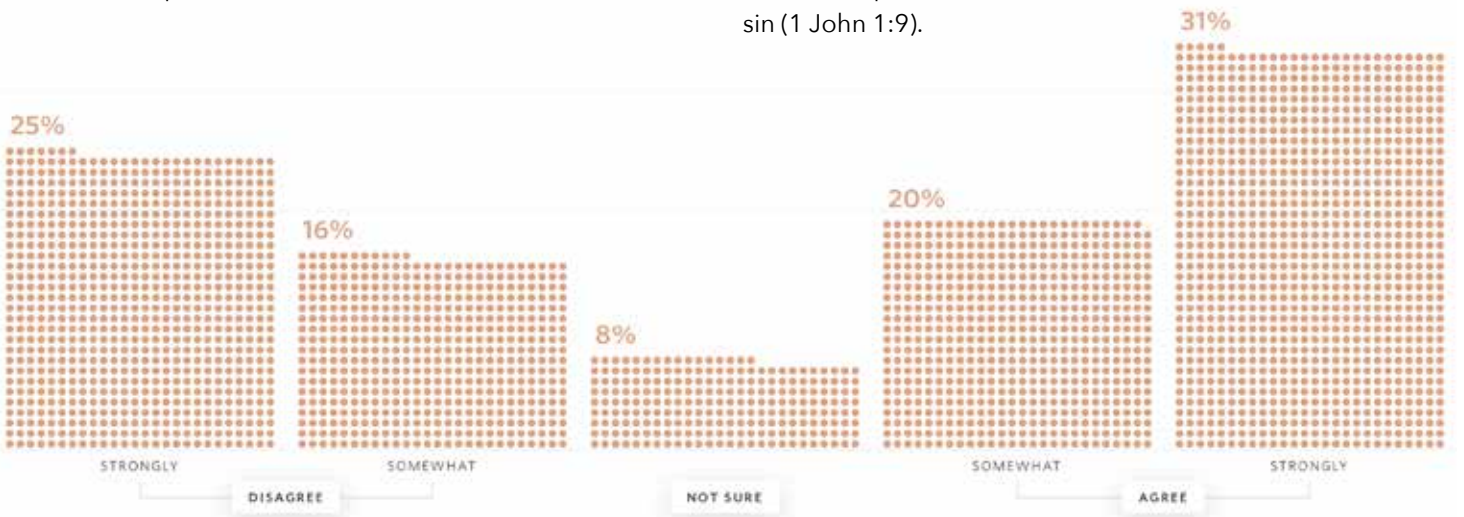
taken into consideration, it is being twisted beyond all recognition by those who want God to call good evil and evil good in order to justify their lusts.

God takes sexual immorality very seriously. Over and over, in both the Old and New Testaments, sexual immorality of all kinds is strongly condemned (e.g., Lev 18; 1 Cor 6:12-20) and judged (e.g., Gen 19). Christians are commanded to abstain from sexual immorality (1 Thess 4:3). In fact, we are to flee from it

(1 Cor 6:18). Why? Because sexual sin is a sin against our bodies, which are united to Christ (1 Cor 6:15) and are a temple of the Holy Spirit (v. 19).

Marriage is a creation ordinance designed to establish a covenantal bond of faithfulness and unity between a man and a woman and to provide a place for the procreation and raising of children. The marriage bond is an earthly image of the covenantal relationship between God and his people (Isa 54:5; Jer 2:2). This is why Israel's apostasy is often compared to adultery (e.g., Jer 3:1; Ezek 16:14-63; Hos 1:2). The same analogy is carried over into the New Testament when marriage is used as an image of the relationship between Christ and the church (2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:21-24).

Sexual intercourse is reserved for marriage because of the unity it creates between a man and a woman. As Jesus explained, the man and the woman "become one flesh" (Matt 19:5). That unity in the flesh is built on the covenantal bond of unity established by the covenant of marriage. Sex without the marriage bond creates a union of the flesh without the corresponding covenantal union. This is why fornication is contrasted with marriage in Scripture (e.g., 1 Cor 7; Heb 13:4). Those who are unable to control their sexual desires are to get married and not commit fornication (1 Cor 7:2); we are warned that fornicators will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9-10). Those who have committed this sin are not to attempt to justify it. They are called to repent and confess their sin (1 John 1:9).



28. Abortion is a sin

Abortion is sin because murder is sin (Exod 20:13; Rev 21:8). Murder is the unjust killing of a human being. Abortion is murder because abortion is the unjust killing of a human being. Every embryology text on every college and university campus states that the fetus is a genetically distinct individual human being from the moment the sperm cell fertilizes the ovum. In other words, conception is the point in the reproductive process where a new individual human being exists. The fetus, therefore, is not a "potential" human being or a "potential" life. It is an actual genetically distinct human being in its earliest and most defenseless stages of development.

This means that abortion is not merely an abstract debate over a woman's right to choose. That choice involves the life

or death of another individual human being. Abortion is not merely a private medical decision involving a woman and her doctor. It always involves a third distinct human being as well. Abortion is not merely the ending of a pregnancy. Abortion is the murder of a human being. Abortion is not a "right," because no one has the right to kill these human beings any more than they have the right to kill any other human beings. No one has the "right" to commit murder.

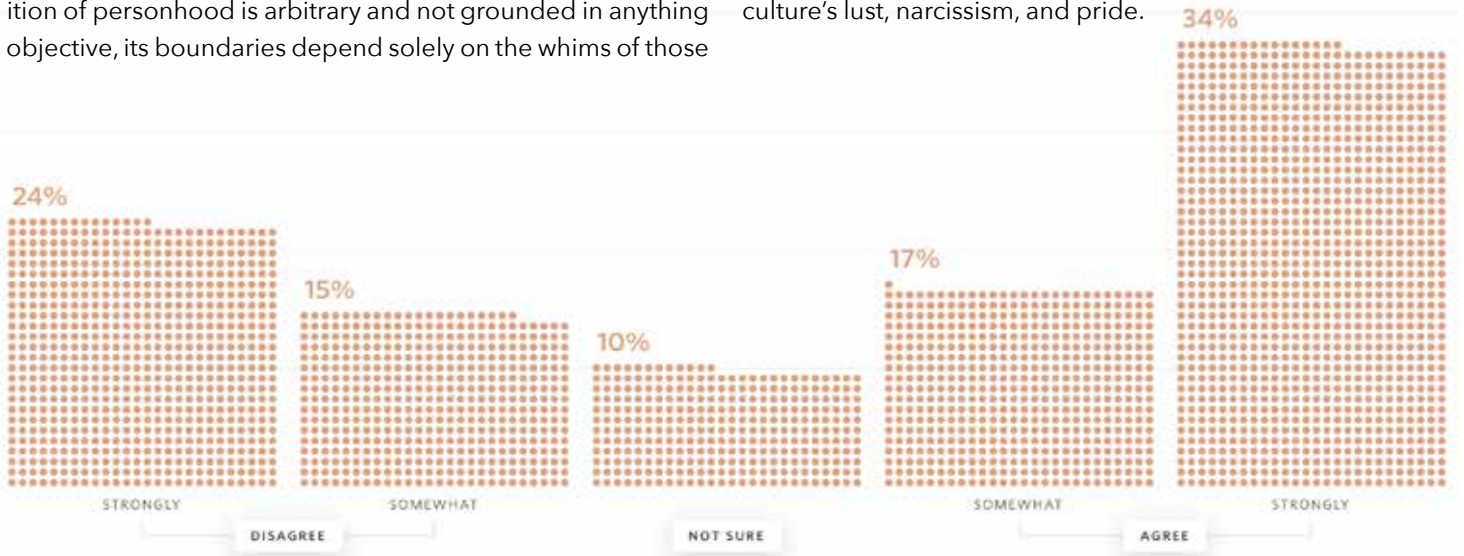
Many of those who used to defend abortion by claiming that the fetus is not a human being have been forced by science to abandon that argument. Many of them now grant that the fetus is a human being but deny that it is truly a person. In this way, they follow in the footsteps of racists and genocidal mass

murderers of the past who have justified their sins and crimes by denying the personhood of those they hurt or killed.

Like those Europeans and Americans who denied that Africans are truly persons and like the Nazis who denied that Jews are truly persons, the pro-abortionists of today deny that children in the womb are truly persons. Because their definition of personhood is arbitrary and not grounded in anything objective, its boundaries depend solely on the whims of those

in power. In some places, the mentally handicapped and those suffering from a variety of illnesses and injuries involving the brain are also in danger of being removed from the category of “persons.”

Abortion is quite simply evil. It is a wickedness that stems from our culture’s lust, narcissism, and pride.



29. Gender identity is a matter of choice

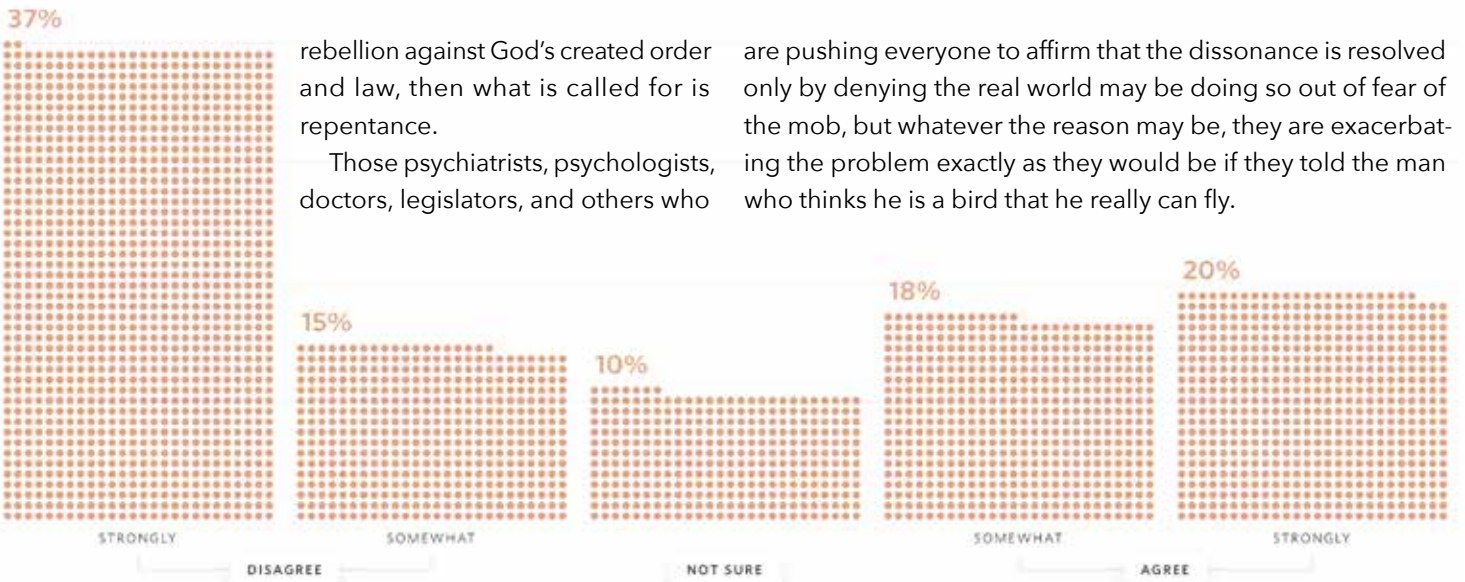
To understand the meaning of this statement, we have to have some grasp of the claims of the transgender movement. Over the last several decades, this movement has become very prominent and very vocal. Transgenderism separates the concepts of sex and gender. According to transgender ideology, sex has to do with biological and physical aspects of a human being (including DNA and sexual anatomy). Gender, on the other hand, has to do with a person’s subjective feelings of being masculine or feminine. The transgender person, generally speaking, is one who identifies himself or herself with a gender that does not correspond to his or her biological sex. Transgenderism, thus, rejects what it refers to as the “gender binary,” the idea that there are only two genders. Instead, gender exists as a spectrum with an almost limitless number of possibilities.

Transgender ideology stands in direct contrast with Scripture, which teaches that human beings are created in the image of God and are created male and female (Gen 1:27). There are no other

options. Scripture also teaches that our behavior is to correspond with our biological sex. For example, Scripture forbids women from wearing men’s clothes and vice versa (Deut 22:5).

We cannot choose our biological sex any more than we can choose to be a bird rather than a human. If our subjective experience does not correspond to the real world, for whatever reason, our feelings have to be conformed to reality because reality will never change to match our feelings. If I claim to be a bird trapped in a human body, I can put on a bird mask, say I’m a bird, and even pass laws making everyone else say I’m a bird, but if I leap off the top of a high-rise in an attempt to fly, I am going to die regardless of my feelings.

If the cause of the dissonance between my feelings and the real world is a disorder in the brain like those that cause delusions, hallucinations, and psychoses, then the disorder should be treated appropriately. If the cause of the dissonance is willful



rebellion against God's created order and law, then what is called for is repentance.

Those psychiatrists, psychologists, doctors, legislators, and others who

are pushing everyone to affirm that the dissonance is resolved only by denying the real world may be doing so out of fear of the mob, but whatever the reason may be, they are exacerbating the problem exactly as they would be if they told the man who thinks he is a bird that he really can fly.

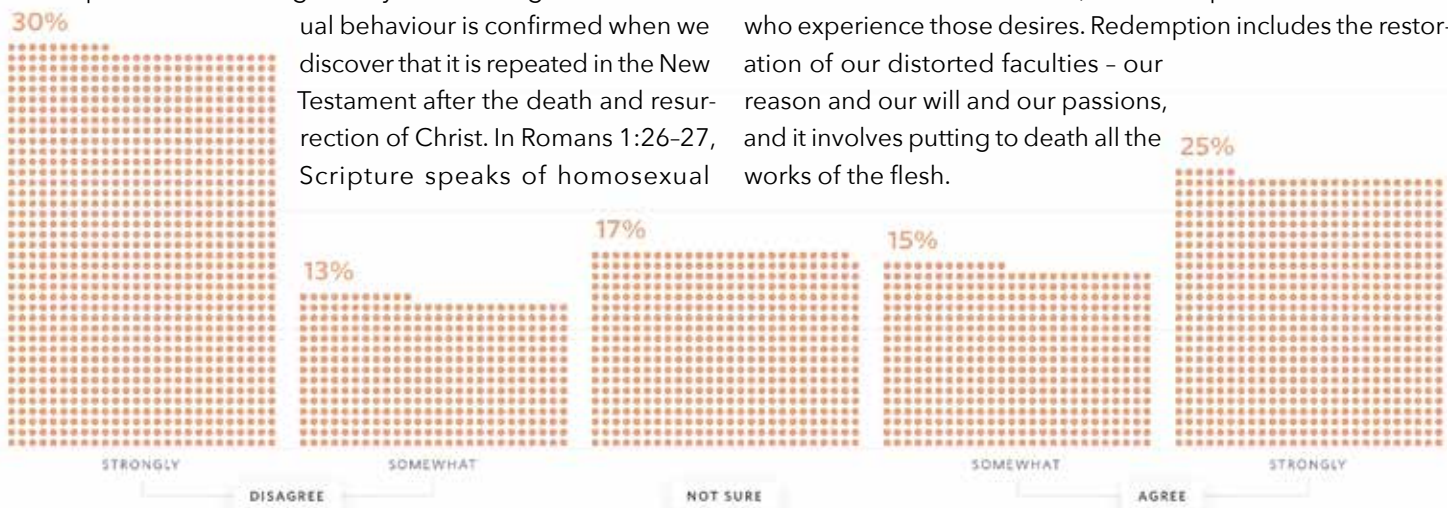
30. The Bible's condemnation of homosexual behaviour doesn't apply today

The fact that a growing number of professing Christians affirm this statement is another example of how much Christians have become conformed to this world as opposed to being conformed to Christ. Scripture repeatedly and clearly condemns homosexual behaviour as an abomination. In Leviticus 18:22, for example, homosexual behaviour is addressed between child sacrifice and bestiality. In Leviticus 20:13, it is listed alongside incest and bestiality as sins worthy of the death penalty. This indicates that it is among the permanent moral laws of the Old Testament rather than the temporary ceremonial laws found elsewhere in the Pentateuch.

The permanent binding validity of the law against homosexual behaviour is confirmed when we discover that it is repeated in the New Testament after the death and resurrection of Christ. In Romans 1:26-27, Scripture speaks of homosexual

behaviour as a dishonourable passion, an unnatural relation, and a shameless act. All this behaviour is a result of God's giving them up to their impure lusts as punishment (1:24-26). Elsewhere Paul says that those who practice homosexuality will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9-10). He urges his readers not to be deceived about this. Sadly, many contemporary professing Christians are deceiving themselves and others.

Every human faculty has been perverted in one way or another by the fall, and as a result some people are sexually attracted to those of the same sex. Both the desire for sexual and romantic intimacy with a person of the same sex and giving in to the desire are sin. However, there is hope in Christ for those who experience those desires. Redemption includes the restoration of our distorted faculties – our reason and our will and our passions, and it involves putting to death all the works of the flesh.




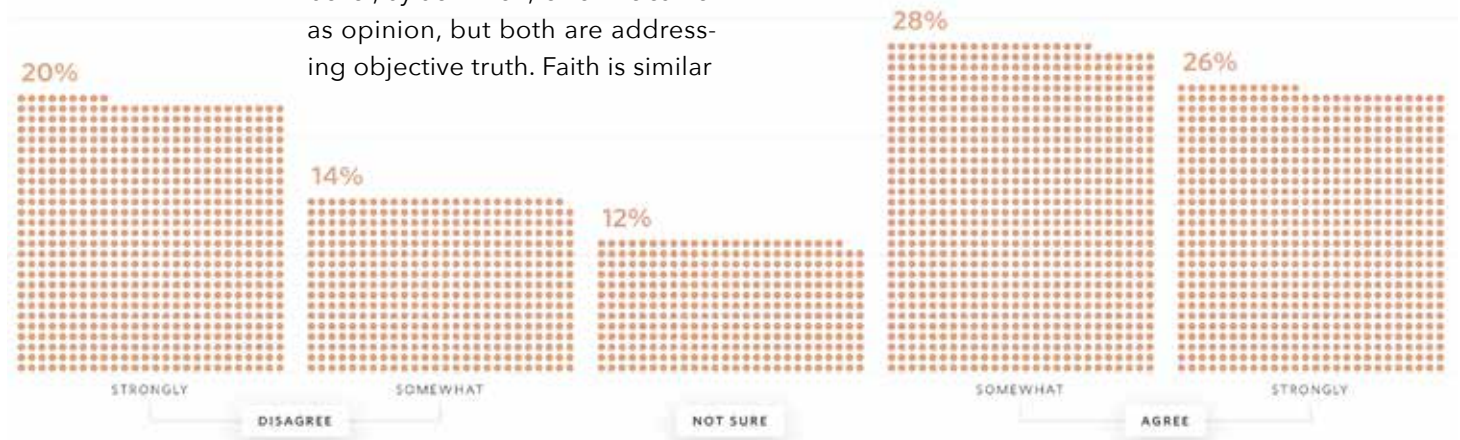
31. Religious belief is a matter of personal opinion; it is not about objective truth

The use of the words "belief," "opinion," and "truth" can be confusing to Christians today because these words have different connotations to different people. Belief is often seen as something one does that is opposed to reason. Opinion is seen as purely subjective and having no binding force. Truth, if it is admitted to exist at all, is often relativized.

In classic theological works, opinion, doubt, knowledge, and belief were all ways of responding to a proposition. Opinion meant that you assented to the truth of the proposition while holding out the possibility that it might be false. Doubt meant denying the truth of the proposition while holding out the possibility that it might be true. Knowledge meant assenting to the truth of the proposition on the basis of direct experience. Natural belief meant assenting to the truth of the proposition on the basis of another person's testimony. In this way of thinking, belief, by definition, is not the same as opinion, but both are addressing objective truth. Faith is similar

to natural belief, but it is not something that fallen man can do. It is the gift of God.

Jesus Christ claimed to be God incarnate and the only way of salvation (John 14:6). That proposition is either objectively true or isn't. Every religion in the world either affirms the truth of Christ's claims or else denies it. This means that ultimately every religion is about objective truth. Every religious claim is either objectively true or objectively false based on where it stands in relation to the claims of Jesus Christ. Individuals may think that Christ's claims are true while holding out the possibility that they are false. They may think his claims are false while holding out the possibility that they are true. Neither opinion nor doubt, however, changes the fact that his claims are objectively true. 



By Arthur Kingma

Rest in God's Time

Graduation at Emmanuel Christian High School,

November 27, 2020

In a new venue, the Italian Canadian Club in Guelph, and on a new day, November 27 - instead of on the third Friday in September - graduates and a few teachers of Emmanuel Christian High (Fergus) gathered for their graduation, COVID-19 style. They wore masks. They kept social distance. And like some couples do at wedding receptions, the administration arranged seating for optimal social/friend interaction. The interior of the hall looked fancy: beamed ceilings decorated with strings of lights, black linen table cloths, maroon cloth napkins, neatly arranged place settings, and four students per table. Once seated, the guests could remove the masks, and thankfully, the chatter began. It was a welcoming, heart-warming hub-bub,

you know, the kind of noise that you love to hear at a festive dinner reception.

At 7 pm, the principal, Mr. Stephen DeBoer, opened the festivities, highlighting the word "strange," but urging all to enjoy the evening. Mr. Derek Spanninga, a parent of a graduate and a school board representative, opened the meeting with Scripture reading and prayer. After sharing congratulatory words, he told us that we could not join together in singing, but that we could enjoy the appetizers, drinks, and more conversations.

During the main course, Mr. Alkema shared the annual, now famous, jeopardy game. Every year staff highlights specific statements, actions, events, or clips about our grads that the



Clockwise, from top: Keynote speaker: Henk Nobel; An interesting speech; Valedictorian: Katrina Kampen; Four to a table; Board rep: Derek Spanninga.

grad can puzzle out. The grads enjoy this "memory lane" game, especially when nearly unknown facts were revealed to the rest of the grads and, in previous years, to their parents.

After the main course was served, savoured, and ingested, Mr. Nobel, last year's principal and a grad parent, took control of the podium to share his keynote address. He used Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 for the basis of his message. My take-away from his speech were four truths and three parallels. I want to share them with you:

Truth 1: God's timing is beautiful and meaningful; therefore, surrender to God and trust what he gives.

Truth 2: God has put time in our hands but eternity in our hearts.

Truth 3: Only when we look to eternity can we enjoy the now. (Time is the appetizer to prepare our appetite for the dinner of eternity.)

Truth 4: God is in charge and nothing can change his plan and purpose.

Parallelism 1: "Instead of resisting God's time, rest in it."

Parallelism 2: "Instead of resenting God's rule over all, revere it."

Parallelism 3: "Instead of rebelling against the Lord, rejoice in him."

Awards and Bursaries

Honours Achievement Award

Mariah Degelder, Rieneke Helder, Rhiana Helder, Carmen Jonker, Katrina Kampen, Adrianna Kottelenberg, Zachary Kroezen, Hannah Nobel, Kerissa Penninga, Kim Scheper, Janice Vanderloo, Nicole Vandermeulen, Aaron Vanleeuwen, Eva Vanleeuwen, Nikki Vanleeuwen, Olivia Vanleeuwen, Troy Vanleeuwen, Jessica VanRaalte, Tessa VanVeen, Jenna Wildeboer.

Royal LePage RCR Realty Business Excellence Award

Olivia Vanleeuwen

Post Farm Structures Award

Andrew Vis

The Wightman Family Bursary

Nicole Vandermeulen

The Ashley's Music Studio Music Appreciation Award

Katrina Kampen

L. Martin Toet Memorial Athletics Scholarship

Tessa VanVeen

Governor General's Academic Medal

Eva Vanleeuwen

Jordan Hutchinson Memorial Academic Proficiency Award

Eva Vanleeuwen

Lieutenant Governor's Community Volunteer Award

Matthew Brouwer

Alec Calder Award

Josiah Kottelenberg

Golden Eagle Award

Katrina Kampen, Arielle Swaving, Nicole Vandermeulen, Tessa VanVeen, Aaron Vanleeuwen, Eva Vanleeuwen, and Jenna Wildeboer

Citizenship Award


Hannah Nobel

Stewardship Award

Katrina Kampen
Eva van Leeuwen

The principal, Mr. DeBoer, then addressed the class as "unique," because they were a class that went through a unique online experience, that rose to unique challenges, and that overcame unique obstacles. More importantly, he said, they are unique, as in "holy," with an identity in Christ, and with resilience in God's strength. And since no parents, grandparents, family members, or friends could congratulate the grads, Mr. DeBoer asked them to uniquely congratulate themselves with as much enthusiasm and noise that they could muster.

After the vice principal, Arthur Kingma, walked the grads through the awards and bursaries, Katrina Kampen shared her valedictorian speech. Obviously, she shared some key memories and some teacher jabs, but she also shared that several times this year she felt downcast, struggling with uncertainty and lack of direction. She also mentioned a classmate's reassuring reply to her struggles: "We are all lights. God is taking this class of lights, sprinkling us throughout, so that we can be shining lights to an immense and diverse world." That remark lifted her up. She more assuredly directed her classmates to the assurance in Jeremiah 29:11, that "God's plans and purpose for us is unsurpassable." On a final high note, she advised us all: "Accept that God's plans prevail - for our good."

The graduation ceremony was unique. Circumstances were strange. COVID-19 is still a scary unknown, but God's message is the same. How comforting for the students. Many are in college or university - taking classes online. Some have switched to other paths. As Katrina shared, "Put our faith and trust in God. See where he takes us." And as Mr. Nobel concluded, "Life isn't empty or meaningless; God appointed time for every event." 

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editors,

The article in question is named, "How to Respond to Conspiracy Theories," written by Ilse VanderMeulen. I am saddened and concerned that you allowed this article in a magazine that has as its "mission statement" the following: "To equip God's people for his glory, in faithfulness to Scripture, as summarized in the Reformed Confessions." Do we need an article on conspiracy theories in a Reformed magazine? Is this a big concern or problem amongst God's people? This article sounds pious in trying to warn Reformed Christians of said dangers of conspiracy theories, but it is really an opinion piece that belongs on a blog or on Facebook, not in *Clarion*. What also concerns me is that there is an underlying tone to the article and perhaps an underlying reason for why it was published. I know that I might be accused of coming up with a "conspiracy theory" for saying this, but could it be that those believers who are concerned about certain government and public health actions during this current crisis are being told to "be quiet"? Has "cancel culture" come to *Clarion* magazine?

One of the statements in the article is, "Let us be more discerning instead of gullible." Yes, this is so important, but it's true for everyone, not just people who dabble in so-called "conspiracy theories." We need encouragement as fellow believers to test the spirits and, to do this, we first of all need to hear the true preaching of God's Word. We need encouragement to keep

praying for wisdom and patience in our present circumstances. And we need encouragement to keep up the bond of faith within the communion of saints by listening to and speaking with one another with love and grace. Thankfully, by God's grace, this is happening, but let us not grow weary. I encourage the editors of *Clarion* to publish articles for the purpose of truly "encouraging, educating, engaging, and uniting" Reformed believers. Let there be boldness in promoting the truth as only can be found in God's Holy Word!

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Breukelman

Elora, ON

Response

Dear Diane,

Thank you for your letter to the editorial committee. As Editor of *Clarion* I have reflected on your comments. I thank you for them, but I disagree. The article that you mention is applicable and sadly necessary. In these days of ever-increasing Internet influence, Trump politics, and covid controversy, it is not out of order to warn our readers of the need to be discerning and to test the spirits.

Blessings,

James Visscher

Editor

A NOTE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS If there are any address 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

April Birthdays

- 2 Derek Kok** will be **51**
 c/o Beacon Home
 653 Broad Street West
 Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8
- 23 Arlene DeWit** will be **60**
 #4 6560 Vedder Road
 Chilliwack, BC V2R0Y6
- 29 Bryce Berends** will be **46**
 c/o Lighthouse
 6528 1st Line, RR #3
 Fergus, ON N1M 2W4

*Happy birthday to the three of you
 celebrating a birthday in April!
 We wish you the Lord's blessing
 in the coming year.*



Bryce Berends

Hello everyone!

I'd like to introduce myself. I'm Bryce Berends from Anchor Lighthouse in Fergus. I've been living here almost seven years, along with my brother Terence and six others. My birthdate is April 29, which I share with my niece Brianna. I will be turning 46 this year.

Each day I eagerly go to the mailbox and get the mail. I love getting cards and letters from my church family all over this country. I look forward to looking at the Clarion, especially the ads. I also always like to read the Fraser Valley Church News since I was born and lived there till after high school. Some activities I enjoy are diamond painting, family tree research, paper delivery, card-making, and listening to music. Most days I go for a walk to keep me fit, and my moods upbeat. Usually on weekday afternoons I work at RONA in Elora, unless we have to stay at home.

I love the Lord and I'm so thankful that Mom and Dad are in heaven now, even though I miss them very much. Jesus is preparing a place for us all in God's time. At Lighthouse, we love to sing and make music praising God's name which we do often. Staff plays the piano while we play on different instruments. God has blessed us richly, and even during the past year, we have been able to praise and worship him.

Written by Bryce and Marian

Clarion

To equip God's people for his glory,
in faithfulness to Scripture, as summarized
in the Reformed confessions, Clarion
adheres to the following core values:

Confessionally Reformed
Loving in manner
Attuned to current issues
Readable and Reliable
In Submission to Scripture
Open to constructive criticism
Nurturing Christian living