

A CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

TO ENCOURAGE, EDUCATE, ENGAGE, AND UNITE

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Clarion

Tolerance And Truth
Turning Over A New Leaf
Book Review



Clarion

Clarion: a trustworthy and engaging magazine, widely spread and read in Canadian Reformed households and beyond.

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

What's Inside

Happy New Year dear readers! In this first issue of Volume 71 you will find some changes, most of which I explain in the article, "Turning Over a New Leaf." As I begin my work as editor of *Clarion*, I thought it would be nice to reach out to you each issue and help "set the table" for the tasty meal we hope you'll find inside! Laura Veenendaal has done this for many years now (thank you sister!) and she kindly agreed to turn this little box over to me.

Kids, are you ready for some fun? Get out your pens and colouring pencils as "Clarion Kids" returns! Kids will also love the story of "King Radbod of the Frisians" by K. Sikkema (parents, omas/opas, or aunts/uncles, please read it to them!). Find out about the "kings" and "nations" coming into the new Jerusalem in W. den Hollander's "You Asked" column. How is the gospel

landing in the Middle East? The MERF insert gives us hopeful insight to start this new year. Rev. George van Popta contributes both a meditation (on looking to Jesus) and a book review (on mission work in Brazil), both encouraging pieces.

That leaves just the editorial on the next page over by yours truly. We've retired the "lead article" and have decided to bring back the classic editorial only this time it's shorter, crisper, and to the point (no easy task for us ministers, by the way!). We hope you like our changes. Most importantly, we hope *Clarion* will grow in its usefulness to you as readers as it serves in its own way to tie together and build up our federation of churches. May God bless you all this new year of our Lord 2022!

Peter Holtvliuwer

- 003 Editorial
- 004 Treasures, New & Old
- 005 Turning Over a New Leaf
- 008 King Radbod of the Frisians (part 1)
- 011 MERF Newsletter

- 013 A New Home for Living Word
- 015 Clarion Kids
- 016 You Asked
- 018 Book Review

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EDITORIAL

Tolerance and Truth

Tolerance is a very popular idea in our Western world, but is it actually as tolerant as people think? And as this idea works into our thinking as Christians, what is happening to our understanding of truth?

To tolerate means to put up with someone whose ideas you don't agree with. At least, that is historically how it's always been understood. To tolerate always meant the right to personally disagree with and argue against another person's beliefs while never forcing the other to your point of view. So, it was once possible in the West that a Christian, a Jew, and a Muslim could debate the truth of their respective religions, even with great vigour and passion, but in the end leave each other be. Each respected the other's right to worship as they saw fit and could live peaceably with each other while being convinced the others were wrong.

Intolerant "tolerance"


Yet, in the West today, that concept of tolerance is changing. You're no longer allowed to think your beliefs to be true and those of others false. According to the United Nations Declaration of Principles on Tolerance (1995), tolerance "involves the rejection of dogmatism and absolutism."¹ To this way of thinking, the concept of absolute truth is to be rejected. Truth is reduced to a relative concept: you have your truth and I have mine and none is more true than the other. The great sin in our day is to dare pronounce your beliefs to be right and the convictions of others wrong.

Ironically and tragically, this thinking is what makes the new tolerance very intolerant. Canadian professor Leslie Armour, a proponent of this concept, famously quipped, "Our idea is that to be a virtuous citizen is to be one who tolerates everything except intolerance."² It's not hard to see how this line of thought overtly targets belief systems which hold to absolute truths. As Christians, we believe there is only one true God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation; and that it is sin against God to break any of his commandments. Christians (and other religious people) are being pressured to keep their beliefs to themselves and not to criticize anyone else's ideas of right and wrong. If we don't, we are dismissed as intolerant and subsequently marginalized (or "cancelled" in today's culture).

Truth, tolerance, and church

Has this way of thinking crept into our churches? Not, as far as I can tell, in this full-blown way, but I do detect its subtle beginnings. Here and there the truth of some doctrines is being questioned, but, more concerning, *the very ability for us to know truth is being questioned*. For instance, we confess and teach as an absolute truth that children of believers belong to God's covenant and congregation and therefore ought to be baptized (LD 27). To refuse them baptism is wrong. But some are saying: can we really know the truth about this matter? The Bible can be read both ways. Some express the same sentiment when theistic evolution comes up or women serving as ordained office bearers: the Bible can be interpreted different ways. If this keeps up, how long can it be before tolerance for absolutely true doctrine disappears?

Certainly the Bible can and has been interpreted in different ways. But that does not mean that every interpretation is valid, much less true! There is such a thing as a correct interpretation and an incorrect one, a true and a false one – and it's our calling to discern which is which. God tells us that his Word is truth (Ps 119:160; Rom 12:2). A love for God and the truth he has given us as well as a love for our neighbour should drive us to seek the truth, uphold the truth, and argue for the truth while at the same time treating with respect those who fail to see the truth. Isn't God most honoured and our neighbour best served when the truth of God's own Word is loved, cherished, and promoted?

Tolerance does not cancel out truth. In fact, true tolerance is built on truth. Christians certainly tolerate the existence of doctrinal error only not within the church. A person is free to believe in error (or to live a sinful lifestyle for that matter), but then they must do that outside the church. As the world presses in on us with its new version of "tolerance," let us hold fast to both God's truth and to a true tolerance based on that truth. 



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¹ See Article 1.3 of the UN statement at: <https://www.oas.org/dil/1995%20Declaration%20of%20Principles%20on%20Tolerance%20UNESCO.pdf>

² Quoted in D. A. Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013) p. 12. Both the statement of Armour and that of the UN are inherently self-contradictory. If intolerance may not be tolerated, is that not itself an act of intolerance which should be rejected? And if tolerance means the rejection of absolutism and dogmatism, isn't that a dogmatic statement which should be rejected?

TREASURES NEW & OLD :: MATTHEW 13:52

Looking to Jesus

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus” (HEBREWS 12:1–2A)

On whom are you going to fix your eyes in the new year? There is so much weariness and discouragement in life. Think of COVID-19, of the floods in the Fraser Valley, of the wars throughout the world that just won't stop, of the worldwide refugee problem. There is so much happening around us to dishearten and weary us. We need a word of encouragement. Dear reader, let the words of Hebrews 12:1–2 encourage you this year.

We are all running the race of faith; some of us walk with a limp, and yet we are running the race. We are all athletes.

When your child or grandchild is running a race, you might stand along the road to cheer them on. A runner needs encouragement. We are encouraged by a great crowd of witnesses, the Old Testament saints mentioned in the well-known Hebrews 11.

We ought to think of a great amphitheatre packed with cheering fans. There are the runners, the racetrack, and bleachers filled with spectators cheering on the contestants.

The outcome of the lives of the Old Testament saints encouraged the first readers of this letter, and they encourage us. They inspire us when we consider how they lived by faith. They give us a boost from the pages of Scripture. They teach us how to live by faith. The expression “by faith” occurs twenty-two times in Hebrews 11. They lived by faith and were commended for their faith.

We are also encouraged by the communion of saints today. We all need to encourage each other in faith and life. Life is not easy. There is so much to dishearten us. A word fitly spoken at the right time can carry us along a bit longer and farther.

We need to focus on the race. A runner wears appropriate clothing. You don't run in a football uniform. You might go to the event wearing heavy clothing, but you throw them off before the race.

We're told to lay aside everything that hinders. The thing may not be wrong in itself, but does it slow you down? Does it help, or hinder?

And we lay aside the sin that entangles. Imagine an athlete wearing a robe or toga. It would trip him up. Sin easily entangles. One sin leads to another. Think of King David and the apostle Peter. Men of God, but one sin led to another. Sin trips us up.

We are encouraged to run with endurance. An athlete keeps running, even when it hurts. No athlete coasts to victory. He strains with every fibre of his being. Running involves hardship.

We run the race set before us. A runner must follow the course marked out by pylons or by people standing at corners directing the way. If you don't follow the course, you'll get lost. Scripture marks out the course for us. We also have the regular preaching of the Word, the communion of saints, and the office bearers in the church to point us in the right direction.

But ultimately, we look to Jesus. We don't look up at the stands; we don't look around us at the other athletes; we look to Jesus.

There is a bronze sculpture at Hastings Park in Vancouver of two men running a race. The sculpture memorializes the 1954 race at the British Empire and Commonwealth Games of the then two fastest men in the world: Roger Bannister and John Landy, who had both, separately, broken the four-minute mile. The men competed in “the race of the century.” Landy was leading, but as he approached the finish line, he looked over his left shoulder to see where Bannister was. At that moment Bannister strained past Landy on the right for the win. Not quite Lot's wife, but the sculpture stands as a warning about looking the wrong way.

As we are running the race of faith, we need to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. If we do that in this new year, we will run well, and we will finish well. Even if we walk with a limp, we'll still be running the race. We are all athletes. Let's keep looking to Jesus. 🏃

For Further Study

1. Reading a bit farther in this passage, what does it mean that Jesus is the founder and perfecter of our faith?
2. What was the joy set before Jesus?
3. What is the crown laid up for us that Paul mentions in 2 Timothy 4:8?



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Turning Over a New Leaf

At the start of every year, *Clarion* literally turns over a new leaf of paper. The previous year's volume is capped and a new volume is begun—this year it is Volume 71. Believe it or not, we are entering into our seventy-first year of publishing this magazine (including its predecessor, *Canadian Reformed Magazine* [CRM]). However, this year *Clarion* is turning over a new leaf in more ways than one. Let me explain.

New editor

Perhaps the first new thing to note is the change in editor-in-chief from Dr. James Visscher to yours truly. After more than twenty-one years at the helm (a record length in the history of *Clarion* and CRM!), and some nine years after retiring from full-time ministry, Dr. Visscher has decided to also retire from his task at *Clarion*. Thank-you, brother, for your dedication over



We are turning over a new leaf in more ways than one

these many years, both in writing and in editing. By God's grace, things have run efficiently and smoothly under your hand, and we've had plenty of upbuilding articles to read—you leave a tough act to follow! We know you will not be idle as God allows and enables you to be involved with other activities and yet we wish you a time of restfulness with fewer obligations even while we look forward to your occasional contributions to our magazine.

As for myself coming on as replacement, it is not for me to comment on suitability. On behalf of *Clarion's* publisher, Premier Printing, br. Will Gortemaker asked me to step in and I do so with some trepidation. Although I have served as a contributing editor for more than ten years, I suspect a steep learning curve awaits me in adapting to the task of editor-in-chief and I would ask for your prayers. As in pastoral ministry, so in this writing ministry I am keenly aware of my dependence upon the Lord—and your support is appreciated.

Team approach and editorials

With a new editor naturally comes new ideas, and in consultation with the editorial committee we are setting out to work much more closely as a team. I am happy to have increased collaboration with my colleagues and contributing editors Revs. Eric Kampen, Matthew Van Luik, and Dr. Jason Van Vliet. Rounding out the team are managing editor Laura Veenendaal and Will Gortemaker who add lots of good ideas to the mix. *Clarion* has long had a group of contributing editors whose main task was to write four or five lead articles per year and assist, when called upon, with content decisions. We would meet once per year in person to review the past volume and make general plans for the new volume. Each contributing editor would then work fairly independently for the rest of the year.

Going forward we have decided to make two basic changes. Since we've all gotten much more comfortable meeting over Zoom (or the like) the past two years, we now plan to meet three

times per year to plan topics to write about, and to agree on them in advance. We hope this will lead to a more timely and beneficial approach to the topics of the day. Closely tied to this, we've also agreed to return to the classic editorial as the opening article in *Clarion* (rather than the more general "lead article").

An editorial is a distinct kind of article, offering the writer's opinion on a current subject of relevance to the readers. Our aim is to offer clear opinions that are well-supported by biblical, Reformed reasoning and sound logic. As we work together to select topics and basic approaches, we hope to provide leadership in dealing with current issues. We've also decided to make the editorials much shorter, roughly one page (see the first sample in this issue). Our thought is that readers like you will appreciate a well-expressed opinion that is short, sweet, and to the point. We hope it will be something you can easily take in, mentally chew on, and then discuss with others.

Letters to the editor

Of course, that does not mean *Clarion* will always get it right! Or that readers will always find our arguments persuasive. Indeed, for some issues there may be more than one valid approach. This is where we hope to give you, dear reader, every opportunity to express your thoughts via a letter to the editor (letters@clarionmagazine.ca; see our website for particulars). We encourage you to express your opinion, be it for or against (or somewhere in the middle of) an editorial or even a regular piece in the magazine. We'll give you 300 words to write your Christian response and we hope to publish as many as feasible. Also, as a rule, we are not planning to respond to each letter. Instead, readers may take in the comments and evaluate them for themselves (and even write a follow-up letter to the editor if so desired).

Why not get plugged in and be part of the conversation in the bigger church family?

New columns

As we move into Volume 71, we look forward to welcoming some new writers and their columns, the Lord willing. Mr. Mitchell Bosveld, currently studying at our seminary in Hamilton, will keep us regularly informed on the plight of persecuted Christians in this world. Mr. Lucas Holtvlüwer, who with Mr. Tyler VanderWoude forms the dynamic duo behind Real Talk podcast, will periodically provide us with podcast reviews. A couple of times per year Dr. Jeff Temple hopes to keep us abreast of developments within NAPARC churches. Mr. Keith Sikkema, part-time lecturer at our Teachers' College, has a passion for telling the history of God's work among his people and plans to contribute church history stories that can be read aloud to children (and yet remain fascinating for adults too!). Speaking of children, this year we also expect to see a return of the *Clarion* Kids page under the guidance of new-to-us contributor Mrs. Amanda DeBoer.

More broadly, we are hoping to see a wider cross-section of our pastors from across the Canadian and American Reformed churches contribute an article or two this year (and beyond; brothers, if you are interested, please reach out to me). *Clarion* has from the start been a church and family magazine, a periodical dealing both with church matters across the CanRC from east to west as well as topics that affect home and family life. For that reason too, I would like to invite the youth or young adults of our churches to consider organizing a regular column written by one of your number and dealing with topics directly pertinent to your age group. Years ago our Young Peoples' Societies used to produce *In Holy Array*, a magazine for themselves. Since it disappeared, nothing has taken its place (that I know of). We would be happy to give our youth a dedicated place in *Clarion*, so if you feel you can be part of organizing something like that, I invite you to get in touch with me.

Readers old and new

All of the above would be useless without you, the reader, taking an interest in *Clarion*. Thank you, dear reader, for your dedication to *Clarion* over the years. As volunteers, we do this work as a labour of love, to be of service to you as fellow church members, all for the honour of the Lord. For that reason, we solicit your prayers for our labours and encourage you to be active supporters both in reading our articles, communicating with us as needed, sharing any new ideas you may have, and in suggesting to others to join you in subscribing.

Why should young adults, or newly married couples, or other church members think of subscribing to *Clarion*? For the same reason you and I take an interest in our local congregation: we are family, God's family. Our federation of Canadian and American Reformed Churches is this same church family extended across the land, and so just as we naturally care about what's going on in our local church family, so it is fitting to care about what's going on in our federational church family. *Clarion* is the only magazine that focuses on church issues in our federation while also bringing articles of benefit to individual households. Why not get plugged in and be part of the conversation in the bigger church family?

May our gracious God continue to keep and bless our church federation and our individual homes and be pleased to use our efforts at *Clarion* toward that end. 📖



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Editor's Note: This is a story meant to be read aloud to children. God's saving work in history is intended to be told from generation to generation – so, please, read it to your children at home, in the classroom, around a campfire, or wherever!

King Radbod of the Frisians¹ (Part 1)

A long time ago, along the North Sea coast, there was a mighty warrior. It was Radbod, the legendary last great king (r. 680–719) of a barbarian, proud, and pagan people, the Frisians. He was tall and big and muscular. He grew his hair long like the surges of gray water rolling inland from the sea on a dark and stormy day. His eyes were hard and blue. His lower jaw jutted forward, making him look determined and bold. His heart allowed no objections, and Frisians feared him. Even his enemies trembled when he came on the scene.

Radbod's enemies were those who invaded his realm, like the pagan Saxons to the east and the Christian Franks to the south, Germanic speaking tribes like the Frisians themselves.

Radbod was also an enemy of God, because the Christian Franks and their king, Pepin II of Herstal (r. 687–714), kept invading his land. Pepin II was the father of Charles Martel (r. 714–741) and the great-grandfather of Charlemagne (768–814). When Pepin II died in 714, Radbod quickly reclaimed the land the Christian Franks had taken and destroyed the churches he found.

¹ This story was initially prepared as a component of a school-wide Pentecost Assembly at one of the Canadian Reformed schools. It has been revised for publication. It has no scholarly or academic pretensions, but an effort has been made to ensure alignment of fictional aspects with trustworthy sources.

Defiance

This story is about how Radbod of the Frisians defied God. It is an old story, and it is a sad story, but it is also a good story. It is *old* because it happened over 1300 years ago. It is *sad* because it is about people who could not hear about God, as their king wouldn't let them. It is a story of the king's hatred against God and his people. Yet, it is a *good* story, because, in the end, God won. The Holy Spirit had been poured out at Pentecost some 700 years earlier, and the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ, the blessing of Abraham, must be brought to all tongues and languages and nations. Indeed, by his Spirit and Word the Lord Jesus Christ gathered, defended, and preserved his church from among the Romans and the Philippians, from among the Gauls and the Galatians, from among the Franks and the Saxons, and yes, also from among the Frisians along the coast.

Radbod did not know God and yet distrusted missionaries even when his father, Adgild, was still king. Radbod worshipped pagan gods. They were false gods, but Radbod believed they were true and real and likable and fearsome, and he wanted to hold on to them—as he had learned from the druid-priests in their long woolen robes. Druids, Radbod believed, could tell the will of his gods from animal guts and livers, and they were to be trusted.

Odin and Ash-gard

Odin was Radbod's chief god. Odin was the god of wind and storm and anger and conquest, whether it was swells from the ocean or waves of enemy armies invading the land. Radbod believed that Odin lived in Glads-home, up in the middle of the sky. Glads-home had golden gates and silver shingles,



and Valhalla was its largest hall with 540 doors. One of these doors led to another hall with a dozen golden thrones. On these thrones sat the famous warrior-heroes of bygone days, which Radbod longed to one day join.

Outside Valhalla was a beautiful forest, Ash-gard, with trees of gold. Every morning the heroes would go into the forest with Odin, shooting a boar or joining a battle. Every morning they were successful, and every day they roasted the boar and feasted with their god, who would watch and smile and drink his mead or honey-beer.

King Radbod thought of this every time he saw the rainbow. It warmed his cold heart to think of the day elves, named Valkyries, would carry him over the rainbow into Ash-gard and Valhalla. On that day, he would join his brave ancestors to fight, to hunt, to win, to drink, and to sit on one of the golden thrones. It made him eager in battle against the Franks to the south and the Saxons to the east, and unafraid to die, for only braves who died in battle were welcome in Valhalla.

Now, these were myths, but Radbod believed what the druids and the bards had told him. He did not know about God's promises to Noah and how the rainbow was a sign of God's faithfulness in keeping his Word. And when missionaries proclaimed salvation in Jesus Christ, Radbod wanted no part of it. He believed that Jesus Christ was the God of his enemies, the Franks, and he had vowed that he would never ever worship a foreign God. So, Radbod was *Christ's* enemy because the *Franks* were Radbod's enemies. Plus, he wanted to keep Odin on his side, which meant keeping his Frisian people as enemies of God.

Adgild and Wilfrid

His father, old King Adgild of the Frisians, had been different. Adgild wanted his people to know peace as well as farming. He had allowed Wilfrid, a missionary from the islands of the Angles and Saxons to the west, to preach the gospel among the Frisians. Wilfrid's language was a bit like that of the Frisians, and the Holy Spirit worked mightily. Many Frisians believed and were baptized. Simple churches were built.

The druids did not like it, and Satan did not like it at all. In time, the devil even set up Frankish kings against Wilfrid. Late one fall, the Frankish envoys brought a letter to king Adgild's court. King Adgild prepared a dinner for them in the large palace hall. The room was comfortable. The polished tables were lit


by candles and held all sorts of food: bread, boar, steak, and fish. There was plenty of mead to drink. A fire was crackling in the fireplace. The king and his guests were sitting close to it. The servants knew their tasks well. After all, it was a dinner to honour the Frankish envoys. Why provoke their anger and risk war? King Adgild was a man of peace, not war.

At the end of the dinner of pork and beef and beer, the guests stood up to present their message. All eyes were on them. One of the envoys unrolled the vellum with their king's message and read it: "The king of the Franks demands that King Adgild kill Wilfrid or deliver him into their hands. Do not delay."

It was a tense moment at the court of King Adgild. Would he allow the missionary to be killed in order to avoid war? Would he, a man of peace, allow such a thing?

After the envoy finished reading the letter, King Adgild stood up. He now stepped towards him—one step, two. He looked around at all the people at the dinner table. All eyes were on him. Adgild's face was taut. His eyes were fire. He lifted his right hand and reached for the letter; he grabbed it. He crumpled it into a wad. He threw it into the fire, and as it burned to a crisp, he thundered, "May all traitors like you be burned like this letter if I betray the hospitality of us Frisians!"

It suddenly felt cold in the hall. The servants gasped. The druids turned pale. The envoys' beards quivered, their eyes blinked, and their knees trembled. They held their breath. They knew the lot of traitors: death. Would it be quick or torturous?

But Adgild was a kind man. The next day, he let the envoys go home to Frankenland with a letter for their king. Wilfrid was allowed to continue preaching the gospel. The work of the Lord continued. The churches grew. New churches were built. All winter Wilfrid preached, and all winter he baptized. But in the spring he had to go to Rome to see the Pope, and he left the young churches alone. Shortly after, in 679 AD, King Adgild died, and his son Radbod ruled in his place for forty years. 

The second part of this article will appear in the next issue



Keith Sikkema

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MERT News

November 2021



Middle East Reformed Fellowship—"Declaring the Whole Counsel of God"

Obstacles or Opportunities?

by Pastor Victor Atallah



"Good Morning"
Arabic daily program

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Currently in Arab and Muslim lands, there is much talk about the failures of "Christianity." Islamic ideologues identify Christianity with Western countries and Western political, social and cultural developments. Issues increasingly promoted publicly in Western media are used as anti-Christian propaganda, such as redefining human gender, gay marriage and the prevalence of abortion. The weakening of marriages and families in the West is also frequently pointed out. These so-called representations of Christian life are compared to Islam in order to promote and "prove" Islam to be truly a heavenly religion.

Infidels

The recent Taliban triumph in Afghanistan is also being considered a sign of Allah's favor and pleasure. It is interpreted as evidence of Allah's approval and vindication, evidence that the Supreme Being is on the side of Islam against the "infidel Christians." The "Christian" West is viewed as unjustly attacking Muslim countries and killing many innocent Muslims. The objective of this interpretation of contemporary events is clear -- convince the masses that "Christianity" is corrupt and constitutes a danger to family, society and the world. Thus Islam is presented as

the true religion. And many simple people, including some non-Muslims, are influenced by some of those claims.

It is not uncommon in Arab and Muslim lands for members of Christian minorities to be intimidated and challenged to convert to Islam. These modern issues are added to the traditional arguments against the Bible and the deity and crucifixion of Christ as reasons to yield to the majority and recognize Islam as the only true religion.

Likewise, one frequently meets naive Arab Christians who still believe that the

West truly stands for and defends the Christian faith and values. Consequently, they become alarmed to hear of Muslims in prominent political positions in leading Western nations.

Gospel Impact

The false impression that the West represents the Christian identity or Christian values clearly negatively impacts gospel work among Muslims. Yet, the gospel has had an immeasurably positive impact on Western societies and nations. There are many volumes dealing with this vital subject and some Muslim scholars recognize this.



A good number of years ago, a Turkish professor of *History of Islamic Thought and Philosophy* corresponded extensively with me. He was curious to learn about Christianity and Christians in Arab countries. He voluntarily stated his own conclusions from study of the impact of religion on societies.

He had concluded that historically whenever biblical teaching impacted societies the results were positive: more freedom, more tolerance, more progress, more emphasis on human dignity and social justice, improved quality of life and better care for the poor and the oppressed. On the other hand, he observed that periods of return to

the teachings and practices of Mohammadan Islam brought intolerance, injustice, oppression, strife, violence, suffering, and decline in the quality of life.



Outspoken

A Syrian scholar, Mohamed Maghoot fearlessly wrote and spoke extensively about the terrible impact of his inherited religion on the lives of millions in Muslim lands over 14 centuries of existence. While his daring narratives gained him condemnation and even death threats from Islamic zealots, scores of other Muslims continue to defend him, praise his courage and support his conclusions. This includes a growing number of lawyers, journalists, educators and

other thinkers. This is only a tiny example of the intellectual revolution taking place in Muslim lands. In some ways, this makes gospel proclamation easier. We do not have to do the polemical work of pointing out what is wrong with Islam. Disenchanted Muslims are doing the job.

Golden Opportunity

Actually, the problem of mistakenly identifying the growing moral decadence in the West with the Christian faith provides us with golden gospel opportunities.

بَدِي خَيْر



"I Need to Know"
Arabic radio program

Relevantly pointing out, in clear and simple terms, who Christ is, His perfect life, unique heavenly teaching and His self-giving redemptive work is our joyful calling. The Lord has provided

"The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost."

— 1 Timothy 1:15

the tools and is graciously working in many hearts and minds to draw them to Him. So, we praise God that it is neither difficult for us to do nor hard for Muslims to understand. H.R. of Al-Hofuf, Saudi Arabia wrote: "...What matters to me is not what life is like in those corrupt and immoral societies in Europe and America. They are already far from the purity and beauty of the heavenly Jesus the Christ (Issa-al-Masih). They are not worthy of him and I am sure he rejected them...For me I know that we Muslims need him and no other prophets..."

Please pray for the continuing witness of MERF's Arabic and other media language gospel ministry teams and for those hearing and coming to faith in Christ.

MERF-Canada

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"The True Story"
Arabic radio program



A New Home for Living Word

“For he is good, his steadfast love endures forever.” (2 CHRONICLES 5:13)

DIANNE WESTRIK

“**F**or my house shall be called a House of Prayer” (Isa 56:7). This text served as the theme of our morning worship service on Sunday, November 14, 2021, led by our pastor, Rev. Douwe Agema. It was a very special day for Living Word Canadian Reformed Church in Guelph, Ontario. On that morning, for the first time, our congregation filled the pews of our newly purchased church building.

During our service we were reminded that this new building is a “House of Prayer.” Notice the unique roof line. The architect designed it in 1959 in such a way that it depicts praying hands; hands pointing upwards to God to whom all praise belongs. This symbolizes a gift and a calling. This gift is a place of worship that we can use in total dependence on our LORD, and a calling in that this place is to be filled with the proclamation of



the living Word, Christ, our Lord and our Saviour. And so, we can dedicate it to him. It is heaven on earth when God and his people have fellowship.

An unexpected opportunity

For the past ten plus years, since our institution, the Living Word congregation has worshipped at Cornerstone Christian School. This arrangement with CCS suited us very well. How grateful we are for having had the use of this wonderful facility, in an ideal location. Yet, we longed to have a place to call our own. In his time, God made available the opportunity to acquire a building.


Let me take you back to early 2020. The aging congregants of the Westminster St. Paul's Presbyterian Church could no longer sustain their facility and were quietly looking for a new congregation to become the owners of their property. When we showed an interest in their building, we received an invitation from the WSPP members to use their church for an afternoon worship service. We held our service there on Sunday, March 1, 2020. That "test run" gave our congregation a real feel for the facility and its suitability for our needs. The Presbyterian Church of Canada was determined to sell to a Christian church; they were not interested in entertaining the interests of developers. Under the blessing of the Lord, just eighteen months after first learning of this opportunity, our congregation decided to make a bid for the building. With thanks to God, our offer to purchase was accepted. The excitement quickly escalated!

House of prayer

Once the closing date arrived in October 2021, many hands got to work to spruce up the property and building—a clean up of the gardens, a fresh coat of paint, repurposing some of the many rooms—and opening day was set for November 14, 2021.

During our inaugural service, Rev. Agema reminded us how we are to receive this building—as a gift! A gift that we dedicate it to him. The Spirit makes it his workshop, so that renewed, we may serve our God. Indeed, this is simply a building—not the house of God itself, but a gift of our God, that we so may receive it from him, dwell in it with him, and dedicate it to him.

Yes, the architect designed it with a message. It is a house of prayer. And this is our two-fold prayer: First, that the building may remain dedicated to the worship of our God, and so be a blessing in our community, in our own lives, and as a light: "Come, all who thirst, drink! Seek the Lord!" May the Lord give that we remain faithful to his Word. And second, our prayer is that whatever we do in this building, how we worship, is indeed pleasing to God, and is in line with the message that this building gives. It is to be a house of fellowship with God, for all nations.

May the outward shape of this building continue to be a true reflection of what goes on inside of it as we worship in humble, holy obedience, as God's covenant people, now and for years to come, by his grace—living from what he gives, and giving it back to him. To God alone be all the glory! 

CLARION KIDS

AMANDA DEBOER

THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

Hello! Welcome, again, to the Clarion Kids! For the next while we are going to be learning about something called **The Heidelberg Catechism**. Wait a minute, have you heard those words before? Yes, in church! Usually, on Sunday afternoons, the minister preaches from The Heidelberg Catechism. "Heidelberg" and "catechism" are big words, aren't they? What do they mean? Well, **Heidelberg** is a city in another country called Germany. And a **catechism** is a list of different questions and answers to teach about God's Word, the Bible. You see, a long time ago, two men were asked to write a catechism. After that was done, there was a big meeting in Heidelberg where they decided to use the catechism in the churches. Today, the catechism is written in different languages, including English.

1. Page 517 of the *Book of Praise* tells us that Zacharias Ursinus was _____ years old and Caspar Olevianus was _____ years old when they wrote the Heidelberg Catechism.
2. Find the very last Lord's Day in the catechism. What number is it? _____
3. Find the very last question and answer of the catechism. What number is it? _____



Colour Germany on the map.

YOU ASKED

Kings and Nations of the New Jerusalem

Revelation 21 speaks about the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven. It says the gates are never closed and the kings of the earth will bring their glory and the honour of the nations into it. Who are these kings and nations? It would seem on the surface that they are from outside the city. It is understood that the believers, the Bride of Christ, are within the city. Are there then also people existing outside who are able to come in bringing glory? Surely these are not the reprobate. Or might some mistake this as proof of the doctrine of universal atonement?

In Revelation 21:9-22:5 we receive an impression of the new Jerusalem where John describes to us both the *outside* and the *inside* of the holy city. What an awesome sight it was! It wasn't fiction, or fantasy, or a fairy tale city but a revelation of the reality yet to come. In fact, we recognize much of the old Jerusalem, with features of the OT Paradise (garden of Eden), tabernacle, and also the temple with its gold and jewels, its provision of safety for God's people, and its glory. The new Jerusalem also projects many of the features of the church of God in the NT: its communion with God, its foundations, its gates, and its holiness.

John also shares what differences he observes: "I saw no temple in the city" (v. 22). Zion is no longer the temple mount, the place where God dwells in a tabernacle, a temple, or any kind of building made by man's hands. "The LORD God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." All of life will be one continuous service of worship to the LORD, the faithful covenant God, the Almighty one, who will be everything to everyone. Whatever the believers will be doing there, God will be present in it, and in everything they'll be giving God the honour and glory that's due to him, be it in their work, hobbies, conversation, walks, singing, eating, or playing! God will be the city's glorious centre and focal point!

What great progress we may see in this impression of the life on the new earth, in the new Jerusalem! It will be as intimate a communion as it was in Paradise before the fall into sin,

but then in a city, in a society, and in a culture that has all the features of our life today. Now, John's vision shows us Paradise restored and a life in the city of God in which God is everything to everyone all the time. God's glory permeates all of life, radiates from every being, and attracts all love and attention at every moment. Just as the glory of God made the foundations, the gates, and streets transparent, so God's glory makes all of life radiant and transparent. There is so much light and glory that there is no longer a need for sun or moon. There is nothing that darkens the atmosphere. There is nothing that obscures the love between God and men. Its people, its mansions, and its streets will no longer need the artificial light of lamps either, for the Lamb is its lamp!

Nations will come in

This great and glorious light means that the gates of the city won't need to be closed anymore. There will no longer be any night, nor will there be any danger that could threaten the peace, freedom, or safety of the city. Indeed, its glory also attracts the *nations* from every corner of the earth. The nations will walk by its light, John says, which doesn't mean that *every single person* will be able to enter it. Entry is reserved for true *believers* who will be drawn from and represent all the nations. Only those who have washed their robes and cleansed their lives in the blood of the Lamb will enter the new Jerusalem (cf. Isa 60:3, 6; Rev 7:14; 15:4). The inhabitants of this city originate from every


tribe, language, people, and nation; they were purchased by the blood of the Lamb. They make up the great multitude that no one could number. It's a glorious city and a holy city! Therefore, *nothing impure* will enter it. That includes anyone who does not break with the shame of sin and deceit, or who deviates from the truth of God. Ultimately, only those may enter whose names are written in the book of life, the names of those who lived their life on the basis of Christ's work, by the Spirit of Christ, and in thankfulness for his sovereign electing grace.

Kings and their glory

The holiness of the new Jerusalem also pertains to all that's brought into the holy city. It is therefore a glorious thing as well to hear John report that the glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it (vv. 24-26). Just like the wise men from the east brought glory to the newborn king in Bethlehem by presenting him with gold, incense, and myrrh, so the kings of the earth will bring their splendour into it. To be sure, these nations and kings are all citizens in God's kingdom—they have bent their knee, acknowledging Jesus as Lord of lords and King of kings. This, too, reminds us of Paradise, and of the cultural mandate given to Adam to rule over all creation, to subdue and develop the earth. As fruit of this mandate, mankind has taken out of the earth what was in it and developed its treasures to this day, showing its riches and glories in the manifold cultural products in art, architecture, and technology.

Yes, especially the people who learned to see the effect of their sins in their work and in the fruits of their labours, yet who

served their Lord and King Jesus Christ in the execution of their cultural calling, *they* will see their work enter the new Jerusalem, purged by the fire that will test the quality of their work (1 Cor 3:12-14). Some of what they produce will turn out to have been wood, hay, or straw, as inferior materials used in God's service (and will thus be burned up), but whatever work was done in obedience to their King will survive the refiner's fire. Such deeds are even said to follow them after they die (Rev 14:13).

Likewise, Peter teaches us that all human works left upon the earth at the Lord's return will be "exposed" or laid bare by means of God's fire (2 Pet 3:10). After the cultural glories have been thus purged of all their sins, defilement, and uncleanness, the (believing) kings of the earth will bring them all in to enhance the honour of God and the life of those who inherit these glories. What all will be included, we can only guess, and we may wonder what cultural products these will be—evidence of the seven wonders of the world? Rembrandt's art? Mozart's music? Some of the most incredible fruits of science and technology? We don't know. Yet, we may be comforted that our deeds done in love for our Saviour will follow us and the results of mankind's explorations and inventions of God's awesome creation will enter the city of God for his glory and our benefit! 



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ASK A QUESTION

Is there something you've been wanting to know?
An answer you've been looking for? Send us your
most thought provoking questions to explore
in our **You Asked** column.

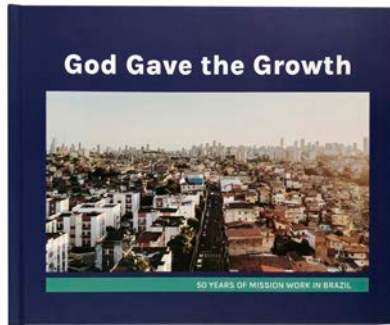
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BOOK REVIEW

God Gave the Growth: 50 years of Mission Work in Brazil





**God Gave the Growth:
50 years of Mission Work in Brazil**

Editor, Harold J. Ludwig

Available from "Aldergrove Brazil Mission Society,"

PO Box 809, Aldergrove, BC V4W 2V1 or

hugofeunekes@gmail.com.

144 pages; hardcover; \$30.00

To mark the fiftieth anniversary of mission work in Brazil, the Aldergrove Brazil Mission Society sponsored the publication of a beautiful commemorative book. In its 144 pages you will find the stories of past and present missionaries, mission aid workers, and educators. You will also read the accounts of many volunteers as well as of wives and children of past missionaries.

The book is well-bound and wonderfully laid out, with many colour pictures and interesting sidebars. Rather than a dry recounting of history, the stories are engaging, vivid, and fascinating.

How it all began

Did you know that there was a well-established Reformed church federation in the north-east of Brazil from 1630-1654? At its high point, there were twenty-two congregations organized in two classes. What happened to these churches? You can read about their development and demise in the opening essay by Rev. Jonathan Chase, "The Reformed Church in Dutch Brazil."


Did you know that the first Canadian Reformed missionary and his wife had not even visited Brazil before they accepted the call and landed in their new homeland? Rev. Cornelius Van Spronsen writes about this and much more in, "How it All Began."

You can read about the struggles, trials, triumphs, disappointments, setbacks, and advances of the workers of the first and of the later hours. Contacts were made among the fishermen of São José da Coroa Grande, the city dwellers of Recife, Pernambuco, and the people of Maceió, Alagoas. Today, under the blessing of God, there is a thriving federation of churches and a seminary producing Brazilian preachers of the gospel. May the Lord be praised, and may he bless the congregations, seminary teachers, and the preachers!

Reformed Reading Room

All the individual pieces are great to read, but I found the two by Rachel van de Burgt the most delightful. Rachel is a native Brazilian born and raised in a Roman Catholic home and context. In "My Life and the Mission Field" she tells her story. In her mid- and late teens Rachel began to attend a Presbyterian church, which caused disappointment, tension, and conflict in her family. At age twenty-two, she started going to the Reformed Reading Room in Recife, followed Bible studies, and met Rev. Ken Wieske. To learn more about Rachel's growth in the Reformed faith, her witnessing to her family, her work with the Esther Project (girls at risk), her marriage to a Canadian man named Ryan living in Recife, their work at the seminary, and their eventual move to Alberta, Canada, you will need to buy the book.

Rachel's second essay is "Foreign Culture and the Mission Field." Here she writes about the meeting of two cultures, Canadian and Brazilian, and specifically of a Canadian Reformed culture, confession, and way of living impacting upon the lives of Brazilians who, for the first time, are coming to know the gospel of pure grace and the five solas of the Reformation. As a bonus, this essay is also published in Portuguese as "*A cultura estrangeira e o campo de missões*."

This "coffee table book," with its many stories and pictures from the past and present, brings alive the work that has been done for "Mission Brazil." It would make an excellent addition to your home and will generate discussion and prayer for the missionaries, pastors, and churches in Brazil. Highly recommended! 



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