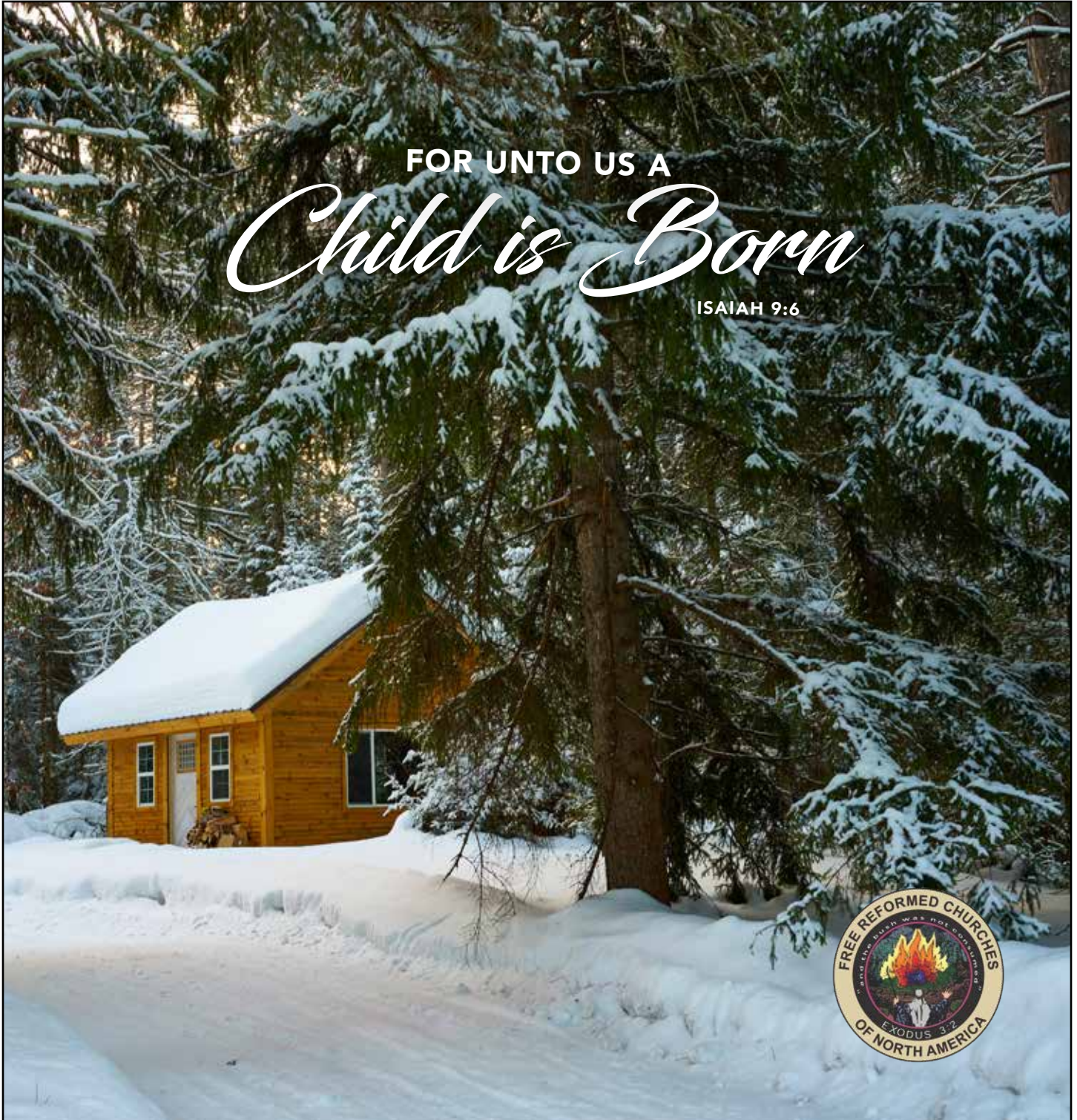


VOLUME 69 NUMBER 11 · DECEMBER 2022 EDITION

THE MESSENGER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF NORTH AMERICA



FOR UNTO US A
Child is Born

ISAIAH 9:6



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THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST

Usually at Christmas time, we focus on the story of Christ's birth. That is good, proper, and fitting. However, do we also focus on the meaning of His birth? This is of utmost importance! We are all very familiar with the passages of Scripture which speak of Christ's birth. For example, we read of the prophecy of Christ's birth in Isaiah 9:6: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." In the New Testament, we not only have the record of Christ's birth in Luke 2, but John also makes a simple and profound statement of fact in John 1:14: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." These passages are all instructive to us.

What is the meaning and significance of the conception and birth of the Lord Jesus for us? How should we respond to His incarnation?

Its Wonder to Us

First, we must consider its wonder to us. The Lord Jesus, the Son of God, being incarnate, having come into the flesh, should fill us with wonder! We should stand in awe at our Lord's coming in the flesh to this sinful world. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! Why is it a wonder to us?

First, the incarnation of the Lord Jesus is a wonder because of the manner in which He was conceived and born. This manner leaves us wondering: "How – how is it possible that the eternal Son of God should come as a man?" When Mary asked how it was possible that she should give birth to the Son of God, the angel responded saying: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

So, the angel makes clear that her conception was the result of God's divine work not involving a man. In fact, Mary was a virgin, as prophesied in Isaiah 7:14: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son." Through conception by the Holy Spirit, Mary was to become pregnant, and as a result the Lord Jesus would be born as the Son of God. This was the only way in which Jesus Christ could be born as a sinless man. The conclusion is very clear. The Holy Spirit would come upon Mary, and therefore she would conceive, and her offspring would be called the Son of God!

Can we understand everything about the holy conception of

the Lord Jesus Christ? No, but this is what Scripture reveals of it, and therefore we must simply believe and marvel at the works of God. Through His holy conception and birth, Christ Jesus was born from the flesh and blood of the Virgin Mary, while still being the Son of God! That is a wonder to us!

Second, the incarnation of the Lord Jesus is a wonder to us because of the *nature* of His birth into this sinful world. When the British Prince George was born in 2013, extensive preparations were made for his arrival. His parents and staff made sure that he would have all the latest items: the safest crib, the trendiest clothes, the most secure car seat, and the best security guards. Surely no expense was spared for his arrival! When he was born, official announcements were released sharing the news of his arrival. Media gathered on the steps of the hospital where he was born, waiting to be the first to release pictures of the newest prince.

In contrast, the Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus Christ, was met with swaddling clothes and a feeding trough – a place for dirty animals. What a humble King! Does not the nature of Christ’s birth fill you with wonder?

Third, the incarnation of the Lord Jesus is a wonder to us because of the *fact* of His birth in this sinful world. Reflect for a few minutes on what is happening here.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. He is all-knowing and all-powerful. Yet, out of His great love for us, He became like unto us. Does not the very fact that our Lord Jesus Christ willingly came from such a place of exaltation to this sinful world leave you filled with wonder? It leaves us asking “why – why would the Lord Jesus Christ go to such extremes to come to this sinful earth?” But even more so, it should result in you personally asking: “Why would the Lord Jesus Christ come to save me from my sins?” Does it leave you filled with breathless wonder that He was willing to be born under the bondage of sin for you? The mere fact of Christ’s incarnation is amazing.

Think of a millionaire who was used to a life of luxury and comforts. He ate of the finest delicacies, he lived in the most luxurious home, he slept in a most comfortable bed. Until one day, while driving through the downtown core, he sees hundreds of homeless men and women sleeping in the streets. His heart is moved with compassion. He then voluntarily sells all that he has except the clothes on his back, collects all his money, and gives it all to homeless shelters in town. But that is not all, for then he becomes a poor beggar, one of those standing on the street corner begging for a slice of bread or a cup of coffee. Imagine how he would feel. But what would others think? Would they not think that he was mad?

But think of Christ who was rich - much richer than any billionaire – becoming poor. Why? That we might become rich!

Its Importance to Us

Second, we must realize *its importance to us*. His incarnation is of fundamental importance to us. Our Heidelberg Catechism highlights this importance in Lord’s Day 14 by saying: “That He is our Mediator, and with His innocence and perfect holiness, covers in the sight of God, my sins, wherein I was conceived and brought forth” (Q&A 36).

Christ having become incarnate means that He has become a perfect man who is at the same time true God, meaning that He is our perfect mediator! His perfect righteousness as the incarnate Son of God enabled Him to offer up Himself as the perfect sacrifice for sin to destroy the devil (Heb. 2:14). He was ideally suited with His innocence and perfect holiness to be our Mediator. He covers us perfectly in His blood; “covers in the sight of God, my sins, wherein I was conceived and brought forth.”

You and I were conceived and born in sin. Our sin separates us from God. Our sin must be covered. No sinner can appear before God by nature, for He is holy. But through Christ Jesus, the way of reconciliation is opened.

As the Lord works in our hearts, we are made aware of our sin. We then sorrow over sin, for we

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recognize that we have sinned against God. We then are made to cry to the Lord: “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned” (Ps. 51:4). Have you come to see this great need for your sins to be covered in the sight of God? Do you at times feel so sinful that you do not dare to approach God? Do you despise your sin?


What are you going to do about it? Are you going to wait until you feel better – perhaps hope for a better day tomorrow? Do

you think that you need to be a little more disciplined in your life? Do you believe that it is just a matter of time until you are able to do a little better? Well, let me tell you that even if you wait until the end of your life, you will never be able to cleanse your heart from its corruption. The only way to commune with the Lord is to have your sins covered! Are your sins covered in the sight of God by Christ’s perfect sacrifice?

Do you see the benefit of the conception and birth of the Lord Jesus? Only when you embrace this Saviour will you be able to live. He invites you; He calls you to Himself!

What we learn by the incarnation of our Lord Jesus is that He is our all-sufficient Saviour in every way. The only way to stand before God perfect and righteous is to come to the Father cleansed in the blood of Jesus Christ. Through Christ, we can come boldly to His throne of grace. This is the message of the gospel! This is the message of life! 

Rev. John Koopman is pastor of the Free Reformed Church of Chilliwack, British Columbia.

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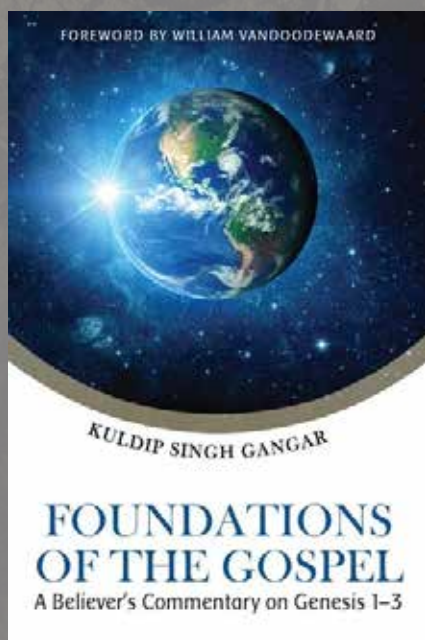
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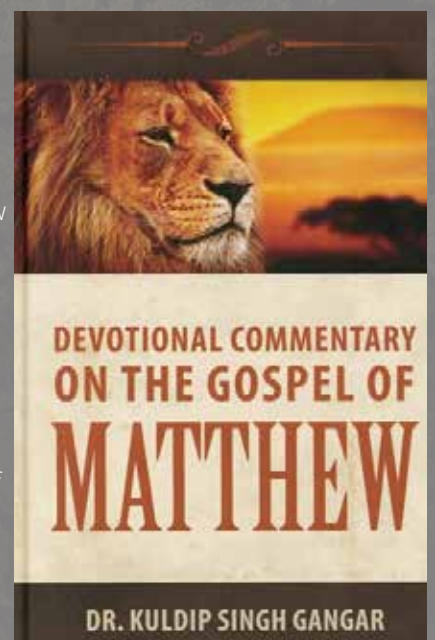
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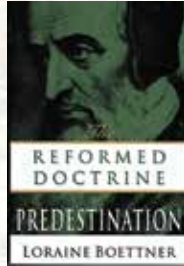
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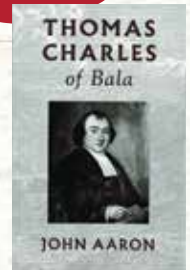
Loraine Boettner is regarded as an authority in his field. He is best known as the author of *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*. It is considered to be one of the most thorough and convincing statements on predestination to have appeared in any language. Softcover, 440 pages, P & R Publishing
RBS Price \$17.00



Thomas Charles of Bala

By John Aaron

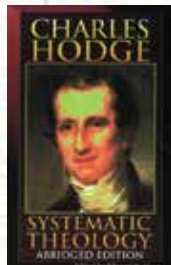
In Wales, the popular picture of Thomas Charles (1755–1814) had traditionally been of the man who gave a Bible to Mary Jones; who was the 'Father of the Sunday School'; and who was behind the formation of the British and Foreign Bible Society. In modern Wales, this picture has almost completely faded, and this is the first publication about him for over a hundred years. This new biography covers many aspects of Charles's life, including his long and frustrating courtship of Sally Jones; his early connections with evangelicals in the Church of England, including John Newton and Henry Thornton; the immense and rapid spread of his schools; the revivals which took place under his preaching; his editorial labours over the text of the Welsh Bible; and his leadership of the Calvinistic Methodist Connexion. Here is a book to inform, stir, and inspire. Hardcover, 382 pages, Banner of Truth Trust
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By Charles Hodge

During his tenure at Princeton Theological Seminary, and later through his *Systematic Theology*, Charles Hodge (b.1797; d.1878) has contributed to the training of many thousands of theology students. Having been in print since 1872, this book has served as a primary textbook in many leading seminaries. This version is a careful abridgment of Hodge's three-volume systematic theol-



ogy in a convenient single volume. This new edition captures the full essence of Hodge's theology, minus the more esoteric material and untranslated Latin quotations. Incisive study questions at the end of the volume will help to make Hodge's *Systematic Theology* useful not only to students of theology but also to interested laypeople for many decades to come.

Softcover, 585 pages, P & R Publishing

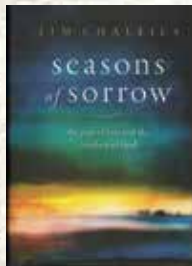
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Seasons of Sorrow: The Pain of Loss and the Comfort of God

By Tim Challies

On November 3, 2020, Tim and Aileen Challies received the shocking news that their son Nick had died while a twenty-year-old seminary student at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Participating in a school activity with his fiancée, sister, and friends, he fell unconscious and collapsed to the ground—no one could revive him. His parents received the news at their home in Toronto and immediately departed for Louisville. While on the plane, Tim, an author and blogger, began to process his loss through writing. In *Seasons of Sorrow*, he shares real-time reflections from the first year of grief—through the seasons from fall to summer—introducing readers to what he describes as the "ministry of sorrow." The result is an honest look at grief and fears, faith and hope. Combining personal narrative, sound theology, and beautiful writing, this is a book for anyone who has loved and lost.



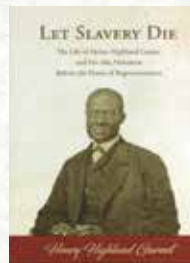
Softcover, 208 pages, Zondervan
RBS Price \$25.00

Let Slavery Die: The Life of Henry Highland Garnet and his 1865 Dis-course before the House of Representatives

By Henry Garnet

Henry Highland Garnet, Presbyterian minister and a strong voice for the abolition of slavery, was the first African American to preach before the U. S.

House of Representatives, on February 12, 1865, to celebrate Congress' passage of the 13th Amendment. This book contains a narrative of his life up to that point, and the discourse he delivered. A Foreword by Dr. Sean Lucas introduces Garnet and his significance for our day. Hardcover, 85 pages, Log College Press
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A Beautiful Mystery: What's Up with Modesty?

By Heather Thieneman

Because true modesty is rooted in a deep appreciation for the body and its beauty, *A Beautiful Mystery* shows pre-adolescent girls how God gives variety in beauty—different shapes and sizes and colours—and how modesty honors their bodies. In chapters such as *The Case of the Ordinary Marvel*, the author opens up from Scripture the themes of God's goodness, body image, inner beauty, modesty, God's design for marriage and, above all, the need for Christ. Each chapter closes with *A Clue to Chew On*—a verse from the Bible for additional meditating and journaling. Illustrations from life help to keep young girls engaged. In focusing on the principles behind modesty, *A Beautiful Mystery* stays away from specific rules so that you can fill in the standards of dress for your family. The opportunities for meaningful conversations are a great reason to read this book with your daughter! Hardcover, 107 pages, Christian Focus Publications
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ABUSE IN THE CHURCH (2): THE CHURCH AND ABUSE

In our first article, we considered the soul of abuse in the mind and heart of the abuser which produce abusive actions. We also saw that abuse has a deep and often abiding impact of trauma in those abused, affecting them at deep emotional, spiritual, and mental levels. We turn now to how the church sadly can make things worse for those who are abused and how the church can become a safe place for those who have suffered abuse.

Christians can learn much from experts in this area. Like other communities and organizations, churches often display the same sinful human tendencies to cover up abuse and even to foster abuse. However, the Bible itself gives much explicit direction to the church on abuse, to which we should take diligent heed. We should not selectively choose one or other passage, for example, on submission, and make it say something different than it does, while neglecting many other passages from both the Old and New Testaments. All elders should be trained to deal wisely, justly, and humbly with incidents of abuse as they will certainly come across them, whether they recognize them for what they are or not.

How the Church Often Fails

For all our emphasis on human depravity and the brokenness of life, we often still think of ourselves and our churches as pretty good. The fallen human mind is arrogant. Sadly, in the church we are not immune to arrogance, but easily betray its presence. Too often we are like Laodicea thinking you “have need of nothing” (Rev. 3:17), or at least, we may speak about our failures in general terms without becoming specific about the ways in which we often fail. When it comes to abuse (sexual, domestic, emotional, etc.), we often fail in the following ways:

1. *We silence or blame the victims.* We can do this when they come forward and we do not take their testimony seriously, do not investigate their charges, smooth over what they do tell us, or send them back to abusive situations with pat answers, e.g., how they should try harder, be better, or pray more. We also silence victims in more subtle ways by making them think that abuse cannot and does not happen in our churches. In this way we shame victims further by making them think that they must be the only ones and that they must be the problem.
2. *We think we are competent to handle abuse and abusers.* Churches do not have a good track-record in handling abuse. Though we wish to laud churches who have handled abuse situations well, for every case like that, there are many more that

have been mishandled. I want to stress that the mishandling of abuse is not always malicious; abuse is often mishandled because of ignorance or naiveté. It is wrong not to consult with experts or report to the civil magistrate when civil laws have been broken.

3. *We cover for the abusers or believe them.* This especially happens when the abusers are prominent people, from prominent families, or skilled manipulators of others (which abusers most often are). We may also cover for the abusers because we do not want there to be division, unrest, or what we think will be a blot of the name of the cause of Christ. The problem is that, through covering for abusers or believing them, we do bring a blot to the name of Christ's cause, and, in addition, hurt victims and dishonour the Christ who is said to care for and protect them.
4. *We are so eager to see repentance, forgiveness, and restoration that we run roughshod over truth and righteousness.* As churches, we so cherish the message of mercy and grace for sinners and transgressors that we cover over festering sin with a band-aid of forgiveness, as opposed to the surgery of truth, dealing with reality as it is. We too often urge the victims to quickly forgive the abuser, who in turn uses that forgiveness to further the abuse. We too easily believe the sob-stories of abusers, imagining that we are putting the balm of Gilead on wounded souls when neither they nor we have faced the heinousness of the sin of abuse.
5. *We treat the grace of God cheaply by pushing the victim to forgive the abuser.* The discipline and punishment of the offender must take place in accordance with Scripture. To brush aside the serious and far-reaching discipline which Scripture commands is to treat the grace of God lightly and twist this doctrine. To push the abused to forgive their abusers arises from an unbiblical understanding of how divine and human forgiveness relate to each other, and involves ironically "abusing" the precious doctrine of repentance and forgiveness of sin (see Dr. Kranendonk's recent editorials on forgiveness).

In these and other ways, the church fails victims and abusers by failing to follow Scripture. We turn next to how the church is called to follow Scripture in dealing with abuse.

How the Church Can Have the Right Focus

The question is not whether abuse might happen in our churches. Abuse is as common as one in three women and one in six men experiencing abuse. These are numbers for society at large, but the numbers for the church might not be much different. Sadly, we may expect there to be members who have experienced or are experiencing some level or type of abuse. To pretend it is not present by never or rarely having it addressed from the pulpit or in other gatherings only makes for more hidden suffering. Ignoring it produces a greater sense of isolation and shame for those suffering it.

1. *Protect the vulnerable.* The Bible often speaks about how the Messiah protects the weak, the broken, and those who have no helper. Psalm 72 reads: "He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor ... For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight" (vv. 4, 12-14). Elders, Sunday school teachers, and others should be trained to know how to recognize signs of abuse, and listen empathetically to those who come forward with stories of abuse. Churches should make sure anyone dealing with minors is trained on best practices, so as to avoid abuse and to know what to do when people come forward speaking about it. Churches should not put a cloak of secrecy over abuse, pleading Matthew 18 in cases of crimes or heinous sins. Where civil laws have been broken, the magistrate, who bears not the sword in vain, should be alerted and involved. Outside experts should be consulted, and the abused should receive diaconal help for counselling and with finances. The church should not care more about the reputation of the church than the protection and care of people, and must never put a cloak of secrecy over the stench of sin. Doing so is neither right nor God-honouring and will not help anyone. 1 Timo-

EDITOR: Dr. Gerald M. Bilkes
2692 Bridge Place NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49525
USA · T: 616.977.0599 ext.121
E: jerry.bilkes@prts.edu

ASSISTANT EDITOR:
Rev. David H. Kranendonk
T: 616.290.4125 · E: kranendonk@frcna.org
The Editors report to the Synodical Publications Committee.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:
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Rev. Jerrold Lewis, General Editor
160 West Parkway, Pompton Plains, NJ 07444
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thy 5:24 says: “Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after.”

2. *Exercise the key of discipline.* Elders who imagine that abuse is a matter of saying sorry and moving on do not understand that such an approach makes them tools in the hands of the abuser to further oppress the victim. Reading the letters of Paul to the Corinthians, we can recognize that the church was reluctant to discipline when they should have. They may have been manipulated by the transgressor, or simply reluctant to deal with open sin, even heinous sin (1 Cor. 9:13). Paul realizes that failing to exercise the key of discipline toward transgressors brings the discipline of God upon the whole body (1 Cor. 11:30-31). Indeed, when it concerns a true believer, discipline aims at the ultimate restoration of the believer. However, it may also be that discipline drives the impenitent from the assembly of the congregation. Whether a believer or not, true fruits of repentance must be ascertained over the long term. The repentant person under discipline will himself desire “truth in the inward parts,” and want to be dealt with entirely in line with Scripture. He will not make short shrift of his crime or of the discipline imposed upon him.
3. *Understand that true repentance is comprehensive and deep.* We believe and know that sin makes deep inroads into our souls. It affects our desires, thoughts, and view of the world and others. Sin masks itself with all sorts of well-reasoned arguments. In true repentance, God’s grace unmasks layer upon layer. A sudden repentance from long patterns of abuse is often only part of the deceiving ability of sin, trying to morph itself on its way to its next prey. Tears can be prime tools of manipulation. How we need true discernment, particularly as elders. Scripture admonishes us to know things by their fruits, which takes time. How we need Christ, who is wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30), both personally, but also collectively as churches. The church at Corinth needed true repentance, and after Paul’s intense travail in soul, through words, and in prayer, he was able to write through the Spirit: “For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Cor 7:8-11).

May the Lord give us grace to go His way, which is a good way, though hard on the flesh. 

--To Be Continued.

IS CHURCH HISTORY BORING?

CHURCH HISTORY by Simonetta Carr. Published by Reformation Heritage Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2022. Hardcover, 265 pages.

Church history!? Boring? Many children and even older ones may be tempted to say about anything to do with history: boring. However, let me assure you that when you open the first page of this attractively illustrated and sturdy book with colour pictures throughout, you and your children will be captivated. If you are a teacher, you will want to keep this handy resource nearby for quick answers about facts in church history. In fact, every home will benefit from this church history resource. Why?

Not only is Carr a masterful storyteller and observant student of history, but you will be encouraged that, after two thousand years, the church of God is still growing and continues to be the instrument whereby God's gracious Good News of salvation for sinners is spread all over the world. Using a fascinating method of interactive presentation, enhanced with attractive visuals, young readers, but also older ones, will see from chapter to chapter how God has preserved His church from the time of Christ until the 21st century.

Church history is divided into nine easily identifiable eras. Each era is introduced with dates, a map covering the timeline, and a brief description of the main events of that era. Colourful and representative pictures, interspersed with call-outs stating facts or reflective questions, draw the reader into the subject matter.

You will not just learn about the most important events that took place during each era, but the author also draws attention to the importance of these events for the growth or decline of the church's doctrines and development. Part I, *The Early Church* (30-312), deals with the questions of persecution and martyrdom and answers the question, "Did the Early Christians read the Bible?" It also gives a biography of some important and some lesser-known men and women of this time period. It includes information on the predominant culture and even mentions the way people dressed. An interesting call-out states that Armenia was the first Christian nation.

Part II, *The Church in Late Antiquity* (312-622), relates the changes that occurred as the church gradually spread from the ancient world to the Middle East, focusing on the doctrinal questions that faced the church, such as "Is Jesus really God, how can God be three-in-One," which led to the formulation of the Nicene Creed. Bible translations were an issue then too. Monasteries and church buildings as places of worship emerged. The initial pattern of Part I is repeated, as it is in the other chapters, beginning with an introductory map. During this era, the emergence of bishops and the spread of the Gospel to the East – as far as China and India – are significant developments. Biographies of important men, Athanasius, Ambrose, and of a woman named Egeria, are not forgotten. During this period, as the church spread both to the east and to the west, this separation led to the branching off to Eastern Orthodox churches, with differences in liturgy and history.


Part III, *The Early Middle Ages* (622-1000), shows the church spread further north, and began to face the rise of Islam in this period. Questions such as, "May we make pictures of Jesus," the introduction of rituals, and the consequent violence that rocked the church is recorded. Men and women of that period, Hilda of Whitby, Bede, and Boniface are introduced. It was a time of fast-moving mission activity of the Roman church, even reaching into Russia through Queen Olga (d. 969).

Part IV, *The High Middle Ages* (1000-1517), as usual, is introduced by a map displaying the spread of Christianity into Europe and Great Britain. It was the time of The Crusades and great divisions. Familiar names of powerful actors such as Henry II, Henry IV, Pope Gregory VII, and archbishop Thomas Beckett, murdered in the cathedral, come to the fore. An important theological question, "Why the God-Man?" was hotly debated.

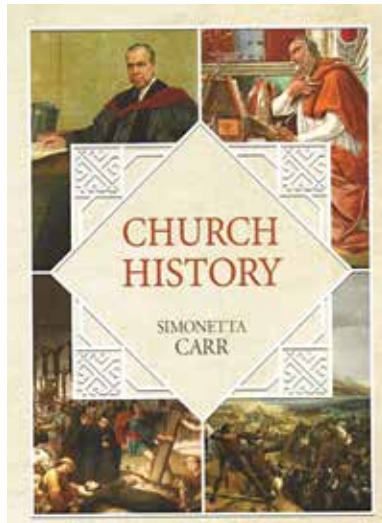
Hopefully, these descriptions are enough to whet the reader's appetite. One could go on and describe how in a similar interactive fashion the following eras are dealt with: Part V, *A Time of Reformations* (1517-1600); Part VI, *A Troubled Century* (1600-1700); Part VII, *A Time of Revivals* (1700-1789); Part VIII, *A Changing World* (1789-1914); and finally Part IX, *The Modern World* (1914-2000). Needless to say, some of the parts are longer than others, due to the number of important events that occurred.

Simonetta Carr's interactive, salvation-oriented, and doctrinally sound presentation is unique and fascinating. In this comparatively brief but comprehensive book, the reader receives an overview of the history of the Christian church. Its focus is not only on the spread of the Gospel in western Europe, but also to lesser-known parts of the world such as Africa and Korea. A glossary is included to explain the more difficult terms.

The book is endorsed by well-known men and women who express high praise for Carr. Most profuse is the endorsement of well-known church historian, Dr. Michael Haykin: "Blessed indeed are the children who read and study this fresh account of the history of Christianity. It is an amazing work, both in terms of content and design. In the relatively brief compass of 250 pages or so, it covers the entirety of church history, highlighting key developments and key issues. Familiar figures in church history such as Augustine, Luther, and the Wesleys are touched upon, as well as lesser-known individuals like Ann Dutton and Phillis Wheatly. With the various study questions throughout the book, it makes for an ideal textbook for a course on church history so thoroughly and well written that I am even tempted to use it in one of my own seminary or college introductory courses on the history of the Church! I cannot say this loudly enough: Very highly recommended!"

After this high commendation, I trust no one who reads this book will find church history boring. 

*These books and others may be purchased in Canada at Reformed Book Services in Brantford, Ontario, and at Reformation Heritage Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan, U.S.A.





THE ORDER OF SALVATION (4)

HYPER-CALVINISM AND THE FREE OFFER

Hyper-Calvinism Defined

Last time, I stated that opponents of the free offer of the gospel belong, in varying degrees, to a religious movement within Protestantism known as Hyper-Calvinism. What exactly is Hyper-Calvinism?

Hyper-Calvinists believe in double predestination, i.e., God has from eternity decided to save a certain number of sinners, while deciding to leave the rest of fallen humanity in the state of sin and eternal perdition. As such, they can agree with what we wholeheartedly confess in the Canons of Dort (1.15): “not all, but some only are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal decree, whom God, out of his sovereign, most just, irreprehensible, and unchangeable good pleasure has decreed to leave in the common misery into which they have willfully plunged themselves and not to bestow upon them saving faith and the grace of conversion.” This statement confesses that God’s decision regarding the salvation of the elect and the damnation of the reprobate is biblical.

Most Calvinists recognize there is a difference between the basis on which God saves the former and condemns the latter. God decided to save the elect on the basis of His sovereign grace. There is nothing in man that qualifies him for salvation. But when we ask why God decided to condemn the reprobate, the Canons say that He permitted them “in his just judgment to follow their own ways, at last for the declaration of His justice, to condemn and perish them forever, not only on account of their unbelief, but also for all their other sins” (1.15). Authentic Calvinism recognizes this distinction in God’s judgment regarding the objects of His sovereign decision. Both the elect and the reprobate deserve damnation because both have sinned.

While agreeing with other Calvinists that the elect and the reprobate are equally guilty and deserving of eternal punishment, Hyper-Calvinists bring predestination to bear on the preaching of the gospel. According to them, preaching the gospel is to be limited to the elect. The reprobate cannot be saved. Christ came to save His people. As He says in the High priestly prayer in John 17, “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine (v. 9).” So, the gospel is for the elect.

Herman Hoeksema on the Well-Meant Offer of Grace

Among the strongest opponents of preaching the gospel offer to “the world” is Herman Hoeksema. As I mentioned last time, he was a Dutch American theologian who brought to America the controversy surrounding the so-called free and well-meant offer of the gospel in the Secession and Doleantie churches. In this contro-

versy, Hoeksema sided with those who rejected the notion of this offer as being Arminian heresy and a misinterpretation of God's will for His creatures.

The Word of God, says Hoeksema, should never be presented as a gospel *offer* because that would imply man could accept that offer in his own strength, which is impossible. Only the elect are given the ability to accept the gospel call, which, for that reason, cannot be a universal offer of grace and salvation, but "an odour of life to life and an odour of death to death, in accordance with the express purpose of God."

According to Anthony *Hoekema* [not to be confused with Hoeksema], the theology of Hoeksema is dominated by the overruling causality of the double decree of election and reprobation. He contends that it is impossible to maintain the decrees of election and reprobation and still speak of a well-meant offer to both categories of hearers. The promise of salvation is unconditional. The elect will be saved by this promise but not the reprobate who are beyond hope.

The Place of the Reprobate in the Covenant

For Hoeksema, there is no room for the reprobate in the covenant of grace. They may belong to the sphere of the covenant, or live "under the covenant," but the essence of the covenant is never offered to them. As Hoeksema explains,

In the historical manifestation of the eternal covenant, God's chosen ones are intertwined with and connected with an evil and reprobate shell, carnal Israel. Indeed, that entire people, according to the will of God, is addressed and treated as God's people. As the covenant people, they are baptized, admonished, comforted, stirred up to repentance, instructed in the way of the covenant. But in all this we may never lose sight of the fact that, positively speaking, the purpose is the salvation of the elect kernel, and that not all who are both in and from the church on earth are saved.

The Promise of Salvation is Restricted

According to Hoeksema, whether the gospel is preached to the congregation or on the mission field, the promise of salvation is to be addressed only to the elect. The call to faith and repentance is issued publicly, but only as a declaration of God's demand to turn from sin and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The reprobate are not invited or urged to plead the promise of salvation. They are only warned and reminded of their destiny: eternal damnation. God, Hyper-Calvinists insist, has only one will consisting of two parts: He wills to save His elect and wills the destruction of the reprobate.

God's Revealed and Secret Wills

Over against Hoeksema and other Hyper-Calvinists past and

present, most Reformed theologians insist that the preaching of the gospel includes a well-meant offer of salvation, not just on the part of the preacher, but on God's part as well. All who are privileged to come under the proclamation of the Word of God are seriously and earnestly invited to come to the waters of salvation, both the penniless and the spendthrift, provided they are thirsty (Isa. 55:1-2). In both cases, the Lord is pleased. "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" (Ezek. 18:23). God answers His own question in chapter 33:11: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

Ezekiel prophesied to the exiles in Babylon who had sinned grievously, especially by committing the sin of idolatry. The prophet is pleading with his countrymen to repent of their sins and covenant breaking and to return to God! Though these words were addressed to Israel as a nation, there is no reason to assume that they were addressed only to "the elect" among them. In fact, most of the exiles were covenant breakers under God's wrath. So, when Ezekiel says that God had no pleasure in the death of the wicked, there is no justification for

limiting these "wicked" to the elect wicked among them. We can only conclude from this that God does not delight in the death of impenitent hearers of the gospel, but in their turning to Him in repentance so that they may be saved. This is God's revealed will toward all who hear the gospel call to repent and believe in Jesus Christ, who is freely offered to all sinners. John Calvin's comment on the passage quoted above is both clear and comforting:

It follows, then, that what the Prophet now says is very true, that God wills not the death of a sinner, because he meets him of his own accord, and is not only prepared to receive all who fly to his pity, but he calls them towards him with a loud voice, when he sees how they are alienated from all hope of safety.... If anyone should object--then there is no election of God by which he has predestinated a fixed number to salvation, the answer is at hand: The Prophet does not here speak of God's secret counsel, but only recalls miserable men from despair, that they may apprehend the hope of pardon and repent and embrace the offered salvation.

Rationalistic Theology

Hoeksema theology is problematic because it is based on a rationalist understanding of God's dealings with human beings. As Hoeksema writes:

The Bible teaches that God seriously desires that all who hear the gospel should believe in Christ and be saved. The same Bible also teaches that God has chosen or elected his own

The prophet is pleading with his countrymen to repent of their sins and covenant breaking and to return to God!

people in Christ from before the creation of the world. To our finite minds it seems impossible that both of these teaching could be true... We should remember that we cannot lock God up in the prison of human logic. Our theology must maintain the Scriptural paradox. With Calvin, our theological concern must be not to build a rationally coherent system, but to be faithful to all the teachings of the Bible.

Another Scripture passage that clearly teaches the reality and comforting truth of a free and well-meant offer of salvation is Matthew 23:37, where Jesus says to the covenant nation of Israel: "O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" In the parallel passage, Luke 13:34, the Saviour shows His deep sorrow when He tells Jerusalem how often He has longed to have her citizens come to Him to be saved, and how grieved He is at their refusal to do so. Jesus here speaks as the Messiah and the Revealer of the Father: both show the same attitude toward Jerusalem because Jesus says in John 14:9, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," and in John 7:16, He says, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." This clearly implies that the Father and the Son feel the same way about the eternal destiny of the Jerusalem sinners. We may conclude from this that the Holy Spirit is also included in the appeal made to the entire city to come to Christ to be saved. Surely, those who say Jesus was only addressing the elect here are mistaken.

One more passage to prove not only that Christ offers Himself to all sinners, but that He urges his servants to do so with great compassion is 2 Corinthians 5:20, where Paul writes, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Here God is making His appeal through men. Paul's readers are implored and begged to be reconciled, which means they are en-

emies by nature who need to surrender to Christ and accept His overtures or offers of peace.

Erskine on Christ's Willingness to Save All Sinners

More passages, showing Christ's willingness to save, could be mentioned, but the two mentioned above are sufficient to demonstrate God's love towards sinners. Ralph Erskine, one of the greatest defenders of the well-meant offer of grace, says there are many poor sinners who, when they hear the call to be gathered under the wings of Christ, are afraid they are excluded. This is what he says to encourage them:

Why will you exclude yourselves from coming to Christ? The gospel excludes you not... I must tell you that all that are called by the gospel of Christ are allowed to gather under his wings; and it is by the free universal call given to all the people to whom the gospel comes...; it is by this

that God gathers all his chosen into Christ; and the promise, given forth indefinitely to all the people, is a ground of encouragement to them all to come to him by faith.

This agrees with what we sing in *The Psalter* (number 255, stanza 5, based on Psalm 95: "Today if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart...")

While He proffers peace and pardon
Let us hear His voice today,
Lest if we our hearts should harden
We should perish in the way;
Lest to us so unbelieving,
He in judgment shall declare;
Ye so long my Spirit grieving,
Never in my rest can share. ①

Dr. C. Pronk is an emeritus pastor and member of Grace Free Reformed Church of Brantford, Ontario.

...the Saviour shows His deep sorrow when He tells Jerusalem how often He has longed to have her citizens come to Him to be saved, and how grieved He is at their refusal to do so.

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INTERNATION PLOWING MATCH & RURAL EXPO 2022

The International Plowing Match (IPM) was held September 20-24 near the town of Kemptville, North Grenville, Ontario. The IPM had not had this five-day match since 2019, due to gathering restrictions.

The IPM is run by the Ontario Plowmen's Association annually in different counties

throughout Ontario. There is a huge variety of farm equipment, tractors, new innovative high-tech equipment, antiques, steam engines, great varieties of workwear, tools, and clothing, as well as horse and other animal shows. And, of course, the annual plowing competition. In the past, over 100,000 people have visited the huge tent city.

For the thirty-sixth year the Reformed Evangelistic Outreach Committee has set up a booth at the IPM. As in the past, there were several other evangelizing and church groups present handing out tracts, pens, and other items to promote the Gospel, which is encouraging.

Each day there were eight workers that handed out free tracts, Bibles, and calendars. Inside our booth, there was a variety of Christian books, Bibles, and many children books available for a discounted



price. Visitors to our tent quite often had questions about religion in general or asked about the nature of the Reformed faith. Some had no background at all in the Christian faith. Many Bibles, Scripture text bookmarks, and colouring books were given to children. Several admitted they did not know what a Bible was, and many never had their own Bible. Normally, we would have handed out more than 5,000 calendars in the five days, as well as 500 French calendars. Each page on the calendar has a Bible text and an Ontario scenic picture on it. However, this year, approximately 2,500 calendars were handed out. This was due to a smaller crowd of only 67,128 visitors attending the match. This is much less than normal, which was partly due to the weather. The opening day was very wet and

cold, with the rest of the week having a mix of sun, clouds, and rain. Saturday was a nice sunny day, which resulted in the busiest day at the match.

Even though less religious material was handed out this year, our prayer is that the Lord would bless His Word that has been distributed and be the means of many coming to know more about the most high God, our Maker and Redeemer, to seek and find Jesus the Saviour, and to be born again! ¹¹

Reformed Evangelistic Outreach Committee (www.reoutreach.com) is made up of members of the Free Reformed Churches among others.



RESUMED: ANNUAL FREE REFORMED PASTOR'S RETREAT



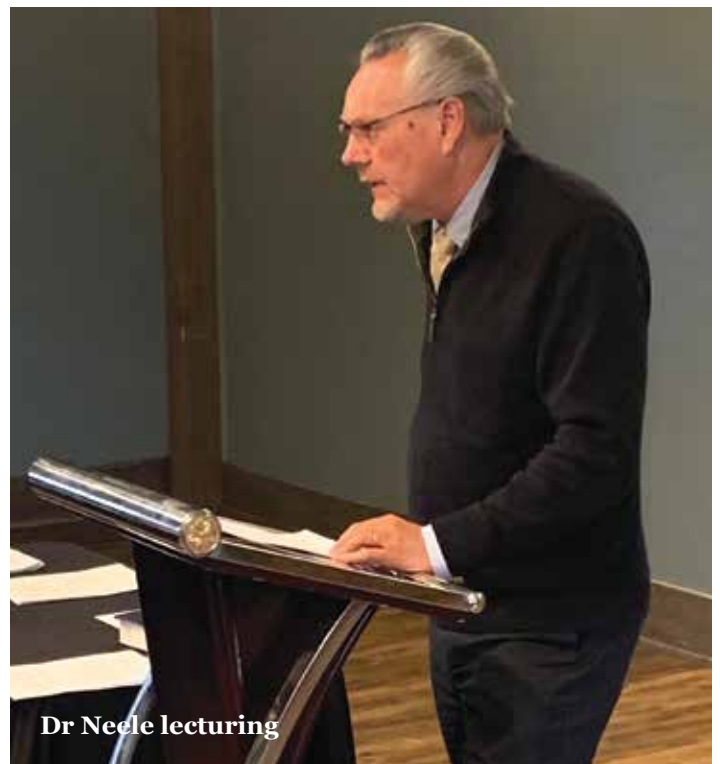
Listening to a lecture

On October 12 and 13, about 25 ministers, mostly from the Free Reformed Churches, as well as a few others from churches with which the Free Reformed have a strong ecclesiastical relationship, met for a retreat at the Elmhurst Inn in Ingersoll, Ontario. This retreat is a time for some rest, fellowship, and encouragement, as well as an opportunity to be sharpened and further equipped for ministry. Because of COVID-19, this retreat had not been held for a few years.

The two speakers were Dr. Adriaan Neele and Dr. Jerry Bilkes, both professors of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. This year's topic concerned Reformed Homiletics, which is a technical term for "preaching." Dr. Neele opened the retreat with the topic: "Classical Considerations and Contemporary Challenges." In this first address, Dr. Neele sketched the development of homiletics from the early church till today, stressing the blessings of the Reformed tradition, especially as taught in the seventeenth century. His second address was entitled: "Reformed Homiletics: A Proposal." In this second address, Dr. Neele educated us about some new developments in Homiletics, and some possibilities of learning from others, especially on the experiential connection with hearers today, including skeptics, both in and around the church. This led to significant discussion about this important topic.

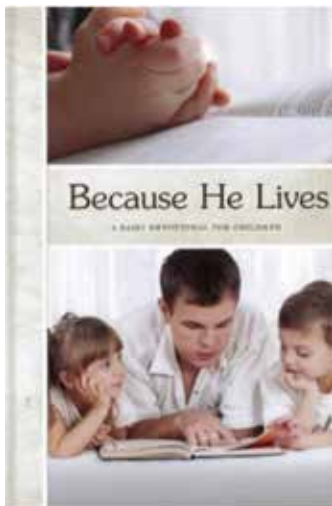
On the second day of the retreat, Dr. Bilkes spoke on: "The

Exegetical Foundation of Experiential Preaching." He sought to show that "experiential preaching" which describes, addresses,



Dr Neele lecturing

CHRISTIAN DEVOTIONALS



Ages 6-8

Because He Lives

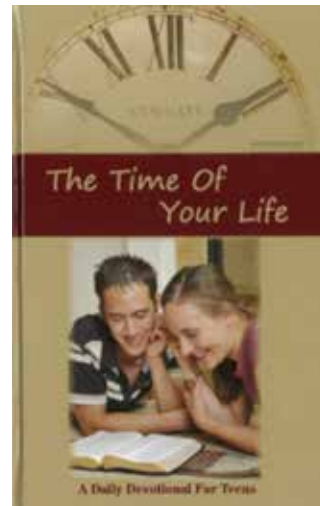
Devotions for young children
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Ages 9-11

Their Lives & Your Life

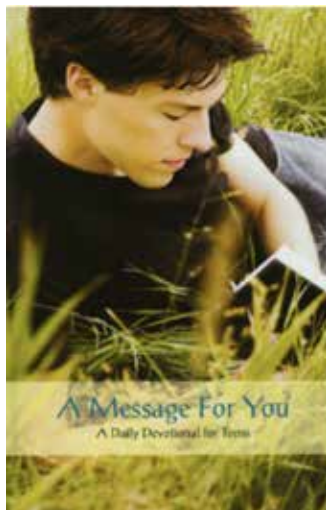
Devotions for upper elementary
Hardcover | 372 pages | \$15.00



Teens

The Time of Your Life

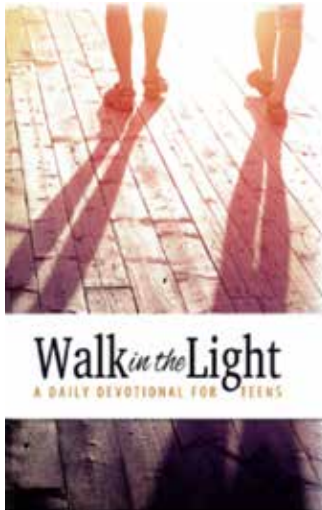
For Young People Ages 16-17.
Hardcover | 372 pages | \$15.00



Teens

A Message for You

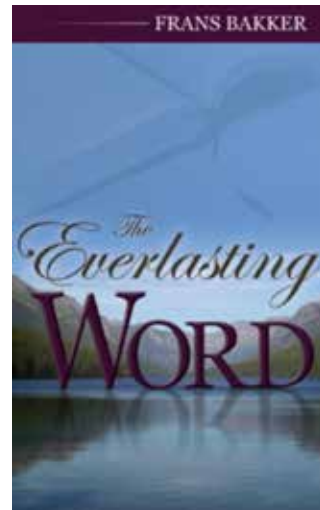
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Adults

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Adults
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and aims to produce Spirit-worked spiritual experience is not just a peculiarity of certain churches but demanded by the Word of God. In the afternoon, he gave an edifying message on Amos 9:11-15, about the Lord's restoration and blessing of the church.

The rest of the sessions were sharing times in which each



Rev C. Pronk and Rev J. Th. Pronk

minister shared about the joys and struggles in their personal life or ministry. Each time, a sharing session was closed by one of the ministers praying and laying before the Lord the joys and struggles that were mentioned. These sharing sessions give a brotherly connection, as do the times of fellowship around



food, some walks together or alone, and the rest that can be enjoyed. Robust singing of the Psalms, accompanied on the second day by Rev. Henk Bergsma playing the pan flute, was enjoyed. We are grateful to the Lord for this opportunity and for the churches making this possible. ①



Singing with Pastor Bergsma playing the pan flute



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The Call to Serve as an Office Bearer

PART 1: THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST'S CALL TO SERVE

Introduction

One of the Questions on the form for the installation of office bearers is, “*Are you elders and deacons, convinced in your hearts that you are lawfully called by God’s church, and therefore by God himself, to your respective holy offices?*”

Why is it important to know that you are lawfully called by God, by means of His Church, to your holy office? Because unless our hearts are fixed on Christ as the Head of His Church, we will easily be led away with error, our love will grow cold, and we will be ineffective in His service. How do we kindle that love and zeal for Christ and His Church?

As we consider our responsibility pertaining to the call to the office in the Church of Christ, we must keep Christ first and foremost in our hearts and minds. We will consider the call to serve as an office-bearer, first from the viewpoint of the authority of Christ’s call to serve.

Christ is the Source of Authority for the Call to Serve as an Office Bearer

Christ has been given all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). Colossians 1:18 also tells us, “*And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.*” Christ is supreme and the whole body is for His glory. He laid down His life to purchase her and to purify her for Himself. He now gathers His blood-bought children from the remotest jungles and cities of this world and continually rules it by His word and Spirit (Matt. 16:15-18).

The Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 21 confesses: “*the Son of God from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to himself by his Spirit and word, out of the whole human race, a church...*” Christ gathers His Church through the authority of His word that is preached through the Church. Matthew 24:14 says, “*And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.*” This world still exists because Christ still needs to finish gathering His Church!

Specifically through His Church, God reveals His authority in the world. That is why, in 1 Timothy 3, Paul says that he gave the qualifications for office-bearers so that we would know how to conduct ourselves in the Church as the pillar and ground of truth in the world. Christ is “*the Way, the truth, and the life*” (John 14:6) and His word has the final authority for time and eternity.

The Office bearers in the Church of Christ are called to live exemplary lives in conformity to Christ and His word because secondly,

Christ has Delegated and Entrusted His Authority to His Church

The Heidelberg Catechism confesses that “Christ is the Church’s Chief Prophet, ... only High Priest, ... and Eternal King” (Q&A 31). In his church order commentary, Martin Monsma states that “The offices ordained for the organized church here on earth are nothing but extensions and continuations of Christ’s three-fold office.”¹ Christ’s threefold office of Prophet, Priest and King, corresponds to the three ecclesiastical offices of Minister, Deacon, and Elder. All three share in the importance and dignity of the church of Christ.

Elders specifically serve in the kingly office. The ruling authority is delegated to the elders as stewards on behalf of Christ. They are to manage the affairs of the king. They minister divine authority with eternal significance. They do not merely pass on good advice or suggestions, but the authoritative word for the saving of sinners and the governing of Christ’s Church on earth.

That makes Paul exhort in 1 Corinthians 4:1-2: “*Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful*” (emphasis added).

That word and authority of Christ must first seize office-bearers! They must have a real and living sense of the authority of Christ ruling their own lives as ones who were by nature enemies of God, living under God’s wrath due to their sin, but have by the power of His grace and Spirit been brought under His dominion. Being governed by His authority in every aspect conforms them to the qualifications given in 1 Timothy 3, “*so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God*” (v.15).

Christ Himself is the Divinely anointed office bearer. Isaiah 61:1-3 says, “*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek...to proclaim liberty to the captives...to comfort all that mourn...*” That authority is delegated to office bearers under him, as Acts 20:28 says, “*Take heed therefore to yourselves and the flock, over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the church of God.*”

Do we feel the weight and responsibility that Christ delegates His divine authority to His office bearers? That is how God prepares men to serve in His offices.

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OFFICE BEARER

Christ Prepares Men to Serve as Office Bearers

Office bearers are Christ's gifts to the church for the edifying of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:7-13). He gives them through an internal and external call. The office is not just for men who have certain natural abilities, but for men whom Christ equips, makes willing, and calls to serve in the office.

First Timothy 3:1 says there must be an active desire: *"If a man desires the position of an overseer."* The word desire means to aspire to, or to strive for. This desire is not just an inactive hope for a position, but an active working towards being fitted for the calling! 1 Timothy 6:10 says, *"for the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith."* The word "coveted" is from the same root word as desire. They aspired to become rich and work hard to gain wealth. Filling the heart with something other than Christ, their love grew cold.

Do you aspire to godliness the way the covetous man aspires to wealth? That is what Paul says next in 1 Timothy 6:11, *"pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness."* Does your desire make you strive to live godly before God so that you may know how you must conduct yourself in the church of Christ and be equipped to lead others? In 1 Corinthians 9:16, Paul expresses his desire, even his compulsion to preach: *"woe is me if I preach not the gospel!"*

God lays this desire in the hearts of men, even though they may feel themselves to be undone, unqualified, the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints. There is a burden for the church of Christ, a *striving desire* to walk uprightly, and compulsion to meekly lead others in God's word of truth.

In Isaiah 6:8, the Lord said to Isaiah, *"Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"* This was a time of great uncertainty in the land because king Uzziah died after reigning for more than 50 years, and who knew what would happen to the nation now? But God also gave Isaiah a special word about his ministry going forward. He is the same God amid all the uncertainties today.

What struck Isaiah when he saw the vision of God on His throne? He was struck with God's universal sovereignty and unsurpassable holiness compared to his own sinfulness! When he saw that great contrast, he had to cry out *"woe is me for I am undone."* (v.5). He saw himself and the people as condemned sinners before a holy God! But then God also showed the way of atonement through the altar of burnt sacrifice. With that knowledge and application of forgiveness, Isaiah was able, willing, and even compelled to say, *"Here am I! Send me"* (v.8).

Here is an inner compulsion to do the work of the Lord and to be used by God amid those in rebellion against their Supreme Ruler. Who will go? Who is willing? Who has seen something of the glory of God? Who has seen their own need for a Saviour? Who has found Christ's cleansing for filthy sinners? Who will go tell the people? Who has been brought under the authority

of Christ? Whose lives are dictated by the sovereign Christ to the point where you can say, “*here I am, send me.*” Not only, send me for a year or two, but my life is the Lord’s. That is the internal compulsion to speak of Christ despite our weaknesses and an inner desire to be used of God.

Paul also says in 2 Timothy 2:15 “*Be diligent, to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*” Sometimes we don’t even know what that means or how that will go, but Christ has already instituted the means in which He employs men. We don’t need to make our own way. The way Christ calls to the office is by the external call through the church.

Christ Calls Men to Serve as Office Bearers through His Church

No one takes a church office on himself. Christ Himself was anointed to His office. Without the external call from the church, you have neither office nor authority in the church. The apostles and their helpers were called “*minsters of Christ*” (Colossians 1:7), and “*servants of Christ*” (2 Corinthians 5:20), indicating that we are called to serve Christ and His Church. Through the Church, new office bearers are called to serve Christ.

Acts 13:2 records that prophets and teachers in the church of Antioch ministered to the Lord and fasted. The Holy Spirit then told them to separate Barnabas and Saul for the missionary work.

In Acts 20:17 and 28, Paul called for the Ephesian elders to meet him and exhorted them to “*Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood.*”

In Acts 14, Paul and Barnabas healed the crippled man in Lystra. The people were so impressed they wanted to sacrifice to them, as the gods come down to earth. But later, Jews from Iconium and Antioch turned the people against Paul, and these men of Lystra stoned him (v.19). He and Barnabas left to preach in Derbe for a time, only to return to Lystra a short time later, and then went to Iconium and Antioch.

Why? What did they do there? Verse 22 says, they were “*strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, we must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God. So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.*” The church in each of those cities needed its own office bearers who would serve the people and lead them through the tribulations that they would face! Acts 14:2-3 shows Paul himself stayed for many days doing the work of an office bearer to speak boldly amid the opposition against the new Church.

Ethnos Canada gives a recent example of a church plant among the Biem people in Papua New Guinea. Elders were chosen before the missionaries left the area, but the thought of

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“The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord” Revelation 11:15

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John 6:12

the missionaries leaving was a fearful one for this church plant. Unbelievers thought that the church would disappear because the people who started it were leaving. But these new elders said that they did the only thing they had been taught to do: continue in the faith, teaching the word. They knew that it was not their work, or the missionaries work, but God's work! They depended on God.

Paul told Titus in Titus 1:5, "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you— if a man is blameless..." That leads us to the qualifications for the office.

Christ Specifies the Qualifications for Men to Serve

1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 specify qualifications for men to be chosen as office bearers. In his Church Order commentary, Monsma summarizes the requirements as: "A thorough knowledge of God's Word; unquestioned sincerity of heart as a professing

Christian; wholehearted loyalty to the Church as to its doctrinal position; exemplary conduct in everyday life, ability to instruct others; forbearance [patient self-control]; good-judgment; self-denying devotion."

These passages emphasize godliness, not giftedness. 1 Timothy 3:15 deals with your conduct in the house of God, referring to a blameless walk of life. Acts 20:28 says, "Take heed to yourselves," that is to your heart and walk. When appointing deacons in Acts 6:3-4, the apostles said, "seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

Christ seeks faithful men to lead His Church. That means when the church calls a man to serve in the office, he must wrestle with that call first of all before God! Not first with his feelings, work, wife, or family, but with God. If you walk close to God, you will already be seeking for His guidance in everything

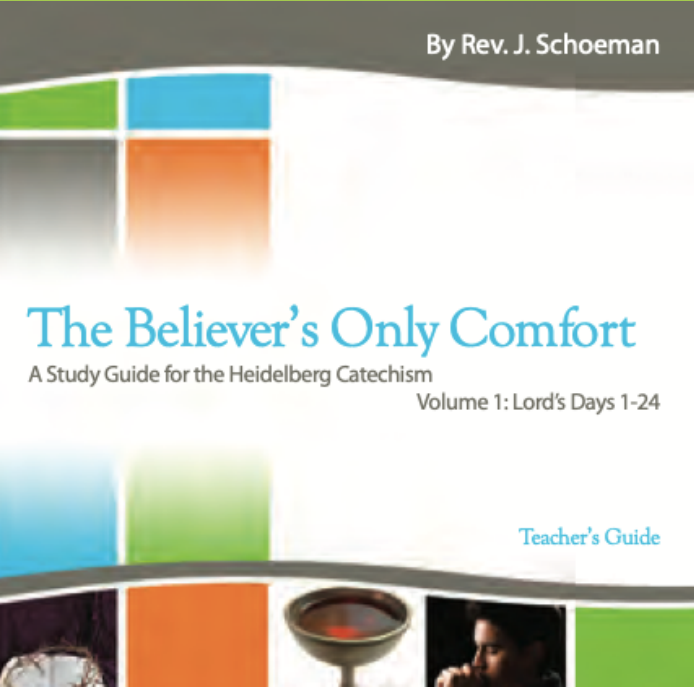
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including how He would direct you in relation to the Church.

But people can also make mistakes. No office bearer or consistory is error-free. What the consistory perceives from the outward conduct or hears from our lips can be very different from what lives within. Therefore, we must lay our hearts open before the Biblical qualifications for an office bearer. We must seek for the light and guidance of the Holy Spirit to show us the reality of our heart and life and see if He has begun to conform us to His image as reflected in the stated qualifications for office bearers.

When we do that with an honest heart before God, it should make us cry out like Isaiah, “*woe is me for I am undone, Because I am a man of unclean lips,*” but also, by God’s grace, make us willingly submit and say, “*Here am I, send me.*”

If we are secretly living in unrepentant sin, we must honestly confess that to the elders. They are our spiritual overseers who carry Christ’s authority to call us into the sacred office. We ought to tell them why we are Biblically disqualified from being appointed to that office. We must not enter the offices but first seek to come under the Authority of Christ and His Word by way of repentance and faith in Christ!


If there is no Biblical warrant to decline the call to the office, we must seriously weigh the call that Christ has extended to us to serve Him in His Church, which will be considered further in the next section. 

Rev. B. vanLiere is pastor of the Free Reformed Church in Langley, BC. This series was first given as a lecture at a Free Reformed Office-bearers conference in Chilliwack on November 5, 2022.

Endnotes

1. Martin Monsma and Idzerd Van Dellen, *The New Revised Church Order Commentary: A Brief Explanation of the Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1967), 23.
2. *The Reformation Heritage KJV Study Bible*, ed. Joel R. Beeke et al (Reformation Heritage Books, 2014).

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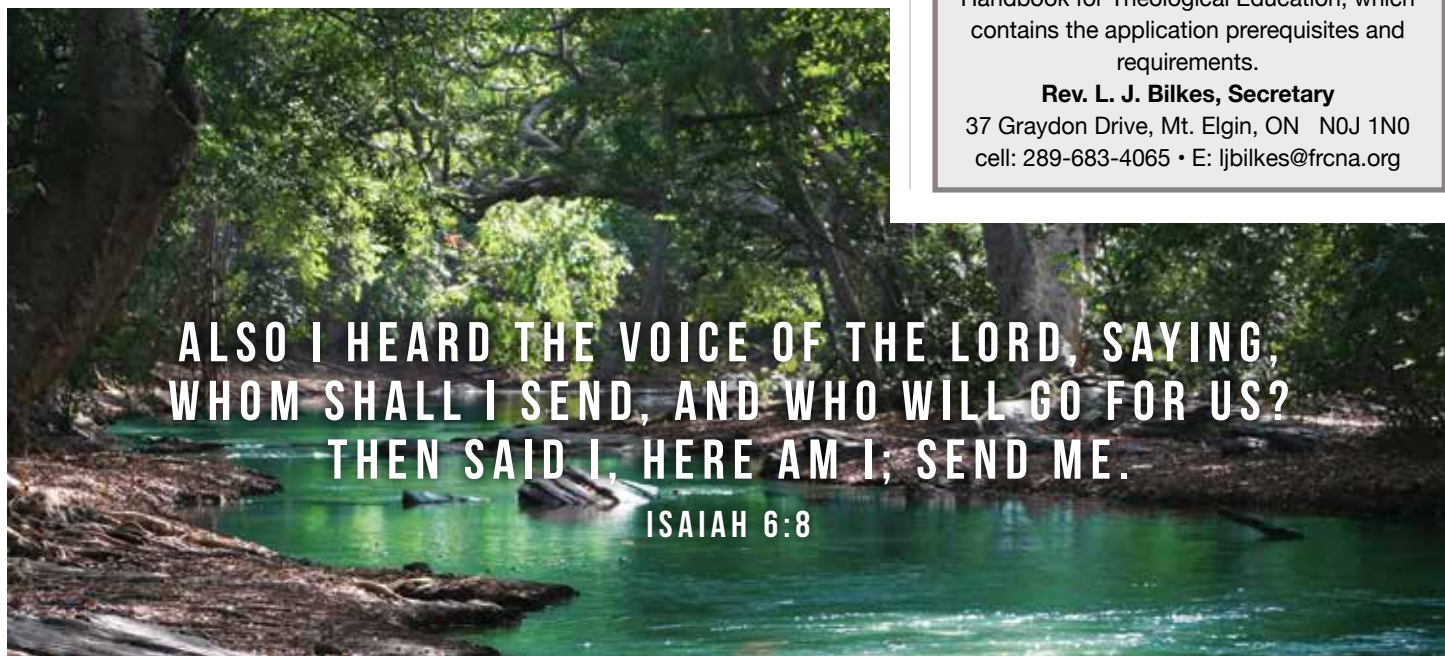


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**ALSO I HEARD THE VOICE OF THE LORD, SAYING,
 WHOM SHALL I SEND, AND WHO WILL GO FOR US?
 THEN SAID I, HERE AM I; SEND ME.
 ISAIAH 6:8**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

OBITUARY



WILMA PENNINGS

(nee Haveman)

"And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." (John 11:26 & 27)

March 4, 1958 - September 20, 2022

Beloved wife of Herbert Pennings.

Wilma is survived by her children:

Valerie (Derek) Slingerland

Ryan, Jack, Kaylie, Isabel, Keem

Matthew (Julianna) Pennings

Aaralyn, Melody, Katrina, Levi

Justin (Jennifer) Pennings

Emily, Jacob

Megan (Richard) Van Dyk

Ethan, Abigail, Clara, Weston

Lisa (Dave) Dekker

Madilyn, Joshua, Hudson

Philip Pennings

Bethany (Mark) Naves

Mikayla, Jodie, Curtis

Lauren (Tim) Kielstra

Theo, Ruby

Luke Pennings

Simon Pennings

Pre-deceased by her parents
Hank and Nellie Haveman

Daughter in-law to
Gerda (and the late Henk) Pennings

Dear sister of Liz (Steve) Doré,
Rudy (Julie) Haveman,
Henry (Chris) Haveman,
Pam (John) Orchard, and Teresa.

Sister-in-law to Ron (Marilyn) Pennings,
Frank (Adriana) Pennings,
Joanne (Frank) Fousert,
Linda (Allan) Brouwer,
Diane (Rick) Postma,
Lucy (John) van Eyk.

Wilma was a member of the
Free Reformed Church of St. Thomas.

The funeral service was held on
September 22, at
St. Thomas Free Reformed Church
with **Pastor Eric Moerdyk** officiating.