

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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*Summer
Reading*

*Hope in the
Midst of
Lamentations*

*Praise the
Spirit?*





J. Visscher

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Summer Reading

Throughout the year book publishers send *Clarion* any number of books to review. Some of these are passed along for others to read and review. Some I set aside to take care of myself and to tell you about when the time is right.

Yet when is the time right for reading? Perhaps the summer months afford the best opportunities, for then the meetings wind down, the pace slows, and holidays beckon. So, if you are bored at the beach or just need something to stimulate your heart and mind, here are some suggestions.

For the teenager in the family

From Multnomah Publishers comes another book by Joshua Harris, the man who became well-known some years ago for the book with the provocative title, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*. One of his latest offerings is called *Not Even a Hint*.

What's it about? Basically, it's about lust. It's about growing up and dealing with one's emerging sexuality. In very practical and clear language, Harris outlines a problem often connected to raging hormones, brings God's Word to bear, and reminds his readers that the power to change does not lie within. In the process he deals with the differences between guys and girls, masturbation, the media and its temptations, accountability, as well as with truth and holiness.

In short, if you are looking for a good book to give to your teenagers to read about human sexual desire and how best to handle it, here it is! Highly recommended!

For the Bible student

The Inter-League Publication Board in Ontario has two new outlines that deserve our attention. The first is by the Rev. H.M. Smit and is called *Outlines on the Book of Joshua*. The second is by Rev. H. Geertsma and is called *A King According to God's Will: The Messianic Kingship of David and Solomon*.

The former contains fifteen outlines and the latter twelve outlines, making them appropriate for the regular study season extending from September to April. Each outline also contains a brief commentary on the text, along with appropriate questions to stimulate a good discussion. Studies societies are encouraged to have a good look at them and to make use of them as they dig into God's Word.

Some time ago The Banner of Truth Trust launched a new series of books intended for personal and group Bible study.

Each of the titles is written by a very capable author or authority in the field. They are all of Reformed persuasion.

The latest three to cross my desk are *Let's Study Acts* by Dennis E. Johnson (371 pages), *Let's Study Revelation* by Derek Thomas (203 pages), and *Let's Study Luke* by Douglas J.W. Milne (414 pages). For your information, Johnson teaches at Westminster Seminary in California, Thomas teaches at Reformed Seminary in Mississippi, and Milne teaches at Presbyterian Theological College in Melbourne, Australia.

Each author divides the Bible book that they are dealing with into manageable parts and then proceeds to expound on their meaning. At the back one will find a group study guide where the entire Bible book is divided into sections (Luke has 26, Acts has 13, and Revelation has 13) complete with suggestions for personal study and group leading, as well as pertinent questions for discussion.

Thus far I have been impressed with the volumes that have appeared in this series and do not hesitate to recommend them to you. You will find them lucid, reliable, and suggestive. Church libraries especially should put them on their list of future acquisitions as they will serve both members and Bible study groups well.

For the elder and the preacher

Lately the Rev. W. Huizinga has done the churches a service by editing and contributing to a book on biblical eldership called *From House to House: Articles and helps for beginning elders* (*The Reformed Guardian*, No. 19). In it you will find chapters entitled "The History of the Home Visit" by Rev. K. Jonker, "Pointers for Elders" by Rev. C. van der Leest (from *Diakonia*), and three chapters by Rev. W. Huizinga: "Helps and Themes for Home Visits"; "Introduction to the Practical Helps"; "Practical Helps in Home-Visiting." What many elders will find especially attractive is that in the last chapter, ten Bible passages for visitation are introduced and questions for discussion are supplied.

So, if you are an elder, or just an interested person, here is a practical book that should help elders improve the quality of your visits. Get it before the new season begins!

Turning from the elder to the preacher, Hughes Oliphant Old has spiced up the summer with the latest offering in his history of preaching. It is called *The Reading and Preaching of the*



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Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church (Volume 5: Moderatism, Pietism and Awakening. In this volume of 620 pages published by Eerdmans, Old deals with notable preachers living between 1630 and 1840. This list includes men such as Matthew Henry, Philipp Spener, John Wesley, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, Thomas Boston, Thomas Chalmers, and John Newton. As an indication of its comprehensive character, this book also deals with little known preachers in Hungary, California (Franciscans), Romania, and Russia.

Once again Old has done it! He has given preachers and other interested readers a wonderful overview of another rich period in the history of preaching. *Tolle lege!*

For the history buff

For those who are fascinated with church history, Eerdmans has two recent titles that deserve a good read. The first one is of special interest to those who have Van Raalte as a last name. It is called *Albertus and Christina: The Van Raalte Family, Home and Roots.* What you will find in it is a brief sketch of their lives, a chronicle on the family homestead, the Van Raalte papers, and the descendants of Albertus and Christina. In short, here are all sorts of interesting details about this Michigan pioneer and early American church leader.

A somewhat related but totally different study comes from the pen of Robert P. Swierenga and is called *Dutch Chicago: A History of the Hollanders in the Windy City* (Eerdmans, 908 pages). In it you will find the fascinating saga of how immigrants came from The Netherlands and settled in that city on the banks of Lake Michigan. Special attention is paid to the founding years, to Reformed church life, to churches moving to the suburbs, to the history of settlers from Groningen and Friesland, to Christian education, to social life, farming, business, politics, and other Hollanders. All in all, a most absorbing look into how an emigrant Reformed community came to a new land, settled in, and was transformed over time. For those who have both the time and the money (after all these 900 plus pages will cost you both a few hours and dollars), enjoy!

Now, for a different history book, even a highly controversial one. If you are among the many who have always believed that either Columbus or the Vikings discovered America, here is a shocker. Gavin Menzies makes a very intriguing argument for the Chinese! Read his book *1421: The Year China Discovered the World* (Bantam, 650 pages). Menzies

IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial – Summer Reading	
— J. Visscher	294
Treasures New and Old – Hope in the Midst of Lamentations — D.W. Vandeburg	297
Lord's Day 38 — J. Wiskerke van Dooren	298
reformedevangelism.com — D. Moes	299
Ray of Sunshine — C. Gelsms and E. Nordeman	300
Praise the Spirit? — W.L. Bredenhof	302
Education Matters — K. Sikkema	304
Book Reviews	306
Press Release – Combined Meeting of the URC Psalter Hymnal Committee and the CanRc Book of Praise Committee	309



spent more than fifteen years traveling around the world, visiting countless museums, and doing the research for this book. Recent newspaper accounts about investigations in Nova Scotia indicate that he is still busy promoting and proving his thesis. Does he succeed? That's for you to figure out as you read this intriguing book. As such it is not what one might call a "Christian" book but its central claim has implications for Christians and non-Christians alike.

For the helper

For some time now Paul Tripp has been making a name for himself in Christian counseling circles. Some of you may be familiar with one of his first books called *Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens*. If you did not actually read the book, you may have seen the video series based on it. Thereafter Tripp authored *War of Words: Getting to the Heart of Your Communication Struggles*.

His most recent offering is called *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands* (P&R Publishing), and although the title does not give away the actual content of it, there is a dual sub-title that does. The first sub-title is *People in Need of Change*; whereas, the second is *Helping People in Need of Change*.

Obviously, then, this book is about change. It opens with a series of chapters full of insights holding out hope for change, describing the various spiritual tools of change, examining the need for change, as well as getting to the heart of change. In the second part of his book, Tripp deals extensively with strategies that can help affect change. In particular he elaborates on four ways in which someone can act as an ambassador of change.

As one reads through his book, it becomes apparent that Tripp's style is clear, biblical, and often insightful. He has a lot to say and much of it is helpful. At the same time, it has to be admitted that while his literary style is not difficult, it can at times be somewhat on the ponderous side. So, those who read it will need to apply themselves in order to see their way through to the end of it.

Still, those who persevere will be rewarded and come away with a much better, biblical understanding of not only the dynamics of change but also of how they can become effective agents of change. Church members, elders, pastors, and counselors would do well to read it and learn from it. Heartily recommended!

Well, here are some of my reading suggestions and recommendations for the summer of 2005.



D.W.Vandeburgt



MATTHEW 13:52

Hope in the Midst of Lamentations

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“Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope.”

Lamentations 3:21

As I write this meditation it is during a week in which the daily news reports focus on VE-Day. Together the two countries of Holland and Canada remember the liberation of Holland some sixty years ago. As I watched the Canadian war veterans over in Holland I saw one veteran wipe away the tears from his eyes. What he cannot wipe away are the memories of the horror of war.

These thoughts come to mind as the Scripture lies open in front of me to the book of Lamentations. Here too we are confronted with the horror and devastation of war. Words become images that fill our mind's eye. A city is destroyed. A nation is in exile. Children are fainting and then dying in the arms of their mothers. The year is 586 B.C. The city is Jerusalem. The destruction has been wrought by the invading armies of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. The poet is thought to be the prophet Jeremiah.

As he writes his poems in the aftermath of war, with tears running down his cheeks, he confesses that the Lord in his righteousness has punished the sins of his people. The Lord has sent the armies of Babylon to devastate his beloved Zion and take her people into captivity. Jeremiah affirms God's justice and Judah's sins. He does so for he knows that only then will the prayer of the last poem be answered, “Restore us

to yourself, O Lord, that we may return; renew our days as of old” (Lam 5:21). In the face of God's just actions the aftermath of war becomes a time for self-examination in the hope that repentance will lead to renewal and restoration by the Lord.

The message that the Lord is righteous and that sin cannot go unpunished comes from the desolation of Jerusalem but also from the desolation of Christ outside Jerusalem. On that hill called Golgotha sin was punished. The hands of Almighty God wove our sins together and set them upon his neck like a yoke. He was exiled from the city of the righteous to endure the suffering and the agony reserved for the unrighteous. And the book of Lamentations teaches us to say that in all this, “The Lord is righteous” (Lam 1:18). At the same time it teaches us to say in the same verse, “Yet, I rebelled against his command.” In the face of God's just actions the cross of Christ leads to self-examination in the hope that our repentance leads to renewal and restoration by the Lord.

So it is that we find in the mist of Lamentations the words, “Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope” (Lam 3:21). What does Jeremiah call to mind? He calls to mind the Lord's great love and compassion, which are never ended. As he sits amid the devastation of the city Jeremiah knows in the depths of his

heart that this is not the end of God's people. That is why this verse begins with “Yet.” He knows this because he knows the Lord who has revealed Himself as slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He is full of compassion and mercy. In wrath He turned his back on his daughter for a moment but Jeremiah knows it is not for a lifetime. In wrath He turned his back on his beloved Son but we know it is not for a lifetime. And so as we survey that wondrous cross we see not only the justice of God, but also his mercy. For in wrath He remembered mercy. After the darkness of his wrath had come over Jerusalem, the sun returned. After the night there is morning. And as Jeremiah writes, the Lord's compassions “are new every morning” (Lam 3:23).

Whenever the people of God turn to Him with broken spirits and contrite hearts He who is faithful will show his unfailing love and compassion. That is our hope even amid the darkness of sin and its effects in this world. Because of who our Lord is we can wait patiently for Him. We wait in hope, for He has promised to restore us to Himself. He has promised to renew this world in which we live. When that day comes He will wipe away the tears of old men who remember war. He will wipe away the tears of mothers whose children's lives have ebbed away in their arms. He will wipe all our tears away.

J. Wiskerke van Dooren

Lord's Day 38

Mrs. J. Wiskerke van Dooren published a Children's Catechism in Dutch. This has been translated with her permission.



We have come to the fourth commandment. It says that we must remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Sabbath is another word for day of rest. When God had created the heaven and the earth in six days, his work was done. On the seventh day God could enjoy looking at the fine results. It became a day of rest. But not only for God; He gave this day of rest as a present to the people. After they had been working for six days, they were allowed to take one day off to rest.

Israel had become God's own people. God had given the Ten Commandments with his own voice. Among the commandments, the fourth received much attention. The Lord had said to Moses: "I order this day of rest to show to Israel that they belong to me. During the six days of the week they

may look forward to the rest on the seventh day. They may also look forward to the rest in the promised land of Canaan, and the rest that the promised Messiah will bring." The children of God will enjoy the nicest rest you can imagine, and that is why God told us to remember the Sabbath day. Therefore we don't work on that day.

Much work was done in the tabernacle on the Sabbath, and later in the temple. The priests and Levites were twice as busy on that day. Do you know why? On the Sabbath no daily work was done, but there was freedom and time to serve God.

That is how it went in the time of the people of Israel. Now the church is the people of God. Every Sunday we hear the Ten Commandments, including the command about the Sabbath, the day of rest. But there are some changes. We no longer look forward to the birth of Jesus Christ, for He was born. What is more, He rose from the dead on the first day of the week. From that time on we read in the Bible that the people came together to worship God on the first day of the week.

When you plan to make a long bike ride, do you go away on an empty stomach and eat after you have come back? I am sure you don't. First you eat and then you go.

In the same way, we are first nourished in the church from God's Word, and then we do the work of the six weekdays.

On the Sabbath, fathers did not go out to do their daily work. In our time, they don't work on the first day, the Sunday. They go to church. They also enjoy a day of rest with their children. There is work that needs to be done on Sunday. People who are ill and the elderly must be cared for. And water and electricity must be available. The police have to work, and there are more examples of people who have to work on Sundays. The Lord thinks that is good. Do not forget to bring money for the needy people. We also need to collect money for people who have to work in the church, and for theological education, because we always need new ministers.

The Sunday is a great present, and God gives it for free!



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Part 3: Living the Christian Life – Sharing the Faith

The aim of this lesson is to enable the members of the group to look back over what they have experienced through the *Emmaus* Nurture course and forward to a lifetime of Christian discipleship. The lesson is structured around two Bible passages: the Beatitudes and the story of the Emmaus road. You will need some space in this lesson for looking at what you are going to do once the course has ended.

Sharing together

Ask people to divide into small groups and tell the story of their journey through *Emmaus*. Have them focus on what has been most significant and helpful for them and where they still need to grow. Once the groups have talked together for a while, go around the room inviting each person to say something to the whole group (if they feel comfortable doing so).

Why share the faith?

Ask the people to discuss together in small groups again. Have them focus on the reason why Christians should be willing to share their faith, the things which can often prevent us from sharing our faith effectively, how they feel about the prospect of talking to someone they know about their beliefs, how much sharing is an individual exercise and how much the whole church is involved. Draw the groups together and have them share their findings with the whole group.

The good news of the Kingdom of God

Point out that the good news we share with others is that the future life of God's coming kingdom is breaking forth into the present. Show how Jesus summarized this good news of the Kingdom of God in his Sermon on the Mount. Then, introduce the Beatitudes, saying a little about the meaning of each beatitude. Illustrate how the Beatitudes together describe the character of Christ and the character of Christ's people. In small groups, have the people discuss what strikes them most, what puzzles them most, what gives them the most hope, and what the Beatitudes leave them wanting to discover or do.

The end and the beginning: sharing the journey of faith

Read the story of the Emmaus road in Luke 24:13-35 together. Show how the risen Christ draws alongside two disciples who are moving in the wrong direction. Point out that in the story there is a time when Jesus draws alongside and listens, a time when He teaches, and a time when He reveals Himself in a new way. Invite the members of the group to reflect first on how they can find these three elements in the story. Then, ask them to reflect on how they can find each of these elements in their own journey of faith. Third, ask them to reflect on what lesson they can draw from this story about how to share their own faith with others.

How do we share our faith?

These points may emerge naturally from the Bible study on the Emmaus road story. If they do not, highlight them now. First, point out that the most effective way of drawing people to Christ is not through argument or persuasion or badgering, but through praying for them. Have the group members reflect on how they will pray regularly for their family and friends. Second, point out that the second most effective witness is our lifestyle, especially the way we are with those who know us best – at home and at work. Illustrate how beautifully Paul states this when he says: "You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (2 Cor 3:3). Third, if we are praying, and if our lifestyle is right, we may be given natural opportunities to share our faith. Often the best way to witness in words is to tell the story of how you became a Christian or why you are a Christian. Be sure to point out that, for everyone, coming to faith is a journey and a process. Thus, our task may not be to guide them the whole way to faith but to play a part in their journey, along with others. Fourth, sometimes we may feel inadequate in telling our story or explaining what we believe. When this is the case, lend people a book or a tape or invite them to a special event or introduce them to someone else.

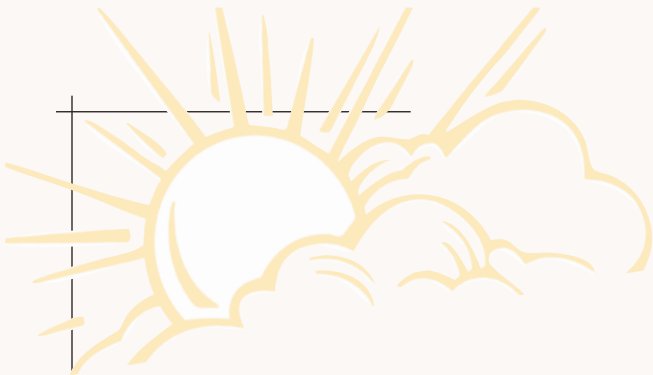
Prayer tips

Since all our witnessing begins with prayer and is bathed and surrounded with prayer, the handout includes some very meaningful prayer tips. These tips are divided into three categories: praying for them, praying for yourself, and praying for us (the relationship). Illustrate the importance of each of the petitions listed.

End the lesson by asking everyone to thank God for what they have received in the *Emmaus* Nurture course. Encourage each person to pray regularly for their family and friends that their eyes may be opened to know the risen Christ.

If you would like to view the outline for this lesson, go to www.reformedevangelism.com and follow the links. This finishes our

introduction of the Nurture module of *Emmaus*. In September, we hope to introduce the first unit of the Growth module called *Knowing God*. The first three lessons will deal with understanding, serving, and praying for our *oikos* (network of relationships). The fourth lesson will deal with building stepping stones to faith. Thanks for reading. Till we meet again in September.



Ray of Sunshine

By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

*“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.”*

Psalm 51:10, 11

This Psalm is written by David, a child whom God loved very much. It is mostly a prayer of David pleading to God not to leave him. David describes the relationship that he longs to have with God again. He is deeply grieved by his sin with Bathsheba and wants to be cleansed. He humbly prays for God to create in him a pure heart. Here David pleads for the Lord to make him “new” again. He also goes on to ask the Lord to still be with him and not to take his Holy Spirit from him. David knew what it was like to be embraced with God’s love and nearness. His relationship with God was very close because the Holy Spirit was with him. The Lord does forgive David and also continues to care for David by allowing David to feel his presence again. The Holy Spirit continues to work in David and he is renewed.

Today we may also continue to feel God’s presence in the nearness of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the presence of God among his people. In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit was restricted to certain men like Moses and Aaron. The Holy Spirit still lived among his people and they were all in his presence. “I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will

pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord” (Ezek 39:29). Later on at Pentecost, with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit lived in everybody’s hearts.

There are many things that we can learn from the Holy Spirit. We know that the Spirit of God was there at creation. He still continues to renew the face of the earth. Psalm 104:30 says, “When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.” The world that God made was never without the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is very active in God’s creation. When we look at all the beautiful things that grow in creation we can only stand in awe at the work of the Holy Spirit.

If we know that God cares for his creation, how much more will it be true for God’s children? We are assured of God’s presence wherever we go. Think of Psalm 139:7, 8: “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.”

We know that the Holy Spirit watches us closely every day. He searches our hearts and knows our thoughts perfectly. Through all our trials in life the Lord is there through his Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in us and makes us living members of his church. Without the Holy Spirit guiding our lives we would not have faith and so would not believe.

What a comfort it is for us as Christians to have such an awesome God. From our conception in our mother's womb till the day we depart to be with God we are assured of God's presence. In a world so full of sin and uncertainty, we have a Father who watches over us every day. We may open our hearts and life to Him and seek Him through prayer and reading the Bible. As Christians we have to pray constantly for the Holy Spirit to guide and mould us to live a life pleasing to God. We have the promise of the Holy Spirit already at baptism. The Holy Spirit promises that He will dwell in us, imparting to us what we have in Christ. This promise is real and we may build on it. A Christian is not to discover what we believe on the basis of our own experiences, for that can be very untrustworthy. What we believe concerning the Holy Spirit is that He is true God. He is also given to me, to comfort me and to remain with me forever.

We can see why David pleaded with God to not let the Holy Spirit depart from him. Without the Holy Spirit there is no life. Let us also daily pray for God's continued presence so that we can live a life of thankfulness and joy before Him. Praise be to God alone for this indescribable and awesome gift!

*Where can I from Thy Spirit flee?
Where do I find escape from Thee?
If I to heaven's height ascend,
Then I shall there before Thee stand.
The grave can from Thy eyes not hide me,
For even there Thou art beside me.*

Psalm 139:4

Birthdays in July:

- 4th James Buikema will be 44**
c/o R. Feenstra
278 St. Catherine Street, P.O. Box 662
Smithville, ON LOR 2A0
- 20th Charlie Beintema will be 30**
19 Forest Street, Chatham, ON N7L 2A9
- 28th Jim Wanders will be 44**
2142 Deerwood Drive, Burlington, ON L7M 2Y3
- 29th Tom VanderZwaag will be 52**
Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road, RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0

Congratulations to you who are celebrating your birthday this month. May God richly bless you in this new year with good health and happiness. Hope you all have an enjoyable day together with your family and friends. Till next month,
Mrs. C. Gelms and Mrs. E. Nordeman
548 Kemp Road East, RR 2, Beamsville, ON LOR 1B2
Phone: 905-563-0380



Praise the Spirit?

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Of the three persons in the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit tends to be the one who receives the least amount of attention. This is partly by divine design: his function is to put Christ forward; in fact, He is often described as the Spirit of Christ. Moreover, He is also confessed in the Nicene Creed as the one “who proceeds from the Father and the Son.” Rightly or wrongly, this procession is sometimes understood as putting the Holy Spirit in a background position. The Father and the Son are seen as the primary persons. This is especially so when it comes to our worship. Some argue that we may pray and sing to the Father and the Son, but this cannot be done with the Holy Spirit. In this article, I will advance four arguments as to why we can and should pray and sing to the Holy Spirit in exactly the same manner that we pray and sing to the Father and the Son.

An argument from the Reformed principle of worship

The Reformed principle of worship is found in several places in the confessions of the Reformed churches. For example, we find it in Lord’s Day 35 of the Catechism: “We are not to make an image of God in any way, nor to worship Him in any other manner than He has commanded in his Word.” This finds a slightly different expression in Belgic Confession Article 32, “Therefore we reject all human inventions and laws introduced into the worship of God which bind and compel the consciences in any way.” Some interpret this Reformed principle rather strictly: every element of Reformed worship requires

an explicit command or example in Scripture. Since there is no explicit command in Scripture to worship the Holy Spirit through prayer and song, then the conclusion must be that this is forbidden.

If the Father and the Son are to be worshipped through song and prayer, and all three are equal, then it follows that the Holy Spirit may also be worshipped through song and prayer.

However, such an interpretation fails to do justice to this Reformed principle of worship as understood historically. The Westminster Confession of Faith 1.6 gives some helpful direction: “The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture.” This concept provides guidance when we seek to apply the Reformed principle of worship. For instance, there is no direct command or clear example in Scripture compelling us to baptize infants. However, in the same line as our confessions, we deduce this practice by “good and necessary consequence.” To borrow an example from John Calvin: there is no direct command or example in Scripture of

women partaking in the Lord’s Supper. However, we deduce this practice by “good and necessary consequence” from Scripture passages such as Galatians 3:28.

So, even though there is no command or example in Scripture of prayer or song to the Holy Spirit, can this practice be deduced by good and necessary consequence from Scripture? From Scripture three things are apparent: first, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are the three persons who make up the one true God. Second, in the words of the Belgic Confession, these persons are “equal in eternity. There is neither first nor last” (Art 8). Third, we have very clear examples of the early Christian church worshipping the Father and the Son. From these three premises, we can conclude by good and necessary consequence that the Holy Spirit may be worshipped in exactly the same way as the Father and the Son are worshipped. If the Father and the Son are to be worshipped through song and prayer, and all three are equal, then it follows that the Holy Spirit may also be worshipped through song and prayer.

An argument from the covenantal structure of worship

In our short history, the Canadian Reformed churches have strongly emphasized the covenantal structure of worship. Thanks to the emphases of the late Rev. G. VanDooren and the late Dr. K. Deddens, we see our worship services as being a covenantal dialogue between God and his people. God speaks and his people respond. This is typically reflected

in the way we organize the elements of our worship services.

From this perspective as well we can make a case for prayers and songs to the Holy Spirit. After all, we learn from 2 Peter 1:21 that the Holy Spirit is the primary author of Scripture. In the worship service, we read from this same Scripture. From 1 Corinthians 2:13 we can infer that there is also a connection between the preaching of Holy Scripture and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we may conclude that the Holy Spirit speaks to God's people through the reading and preaching of the Word.

If this is the case, then the covenantal structure of worship would give us the freedom to respond to the Holy Spirit through song and prayer. We are not commanded to do this any more than we are commanded to offer up a prayer or hymn to the Lord Jesus in every worship service. However, the *freedom* is there do this on occasion. The fact that the model prayer of the Lord Jesus teaches us to call on the Father suggests that addressing the Holy Spirit and the Son in prayer would not be our regular practice. But the fact that the early church did call on the Son in prayer (e.g. Acts 7:59, 1 Cor 16:22) says that the freedom is there. If the freedom is there to call on the Son in prayer (and song), then why not also the Holy Spirit?

A confessional argument

Our creeds and confessions provide a helpful summary of the teaching of Holy Scripture, also when it comes to our approach to the Holy Spirit. In this respect, the Athanasian Creed is particularly apropos. Article 19 states, "We are compelled by Christian truth to acknowledge each separately to be both God and Lord." We confess in Articles 25 and 26, "And in this trinity there is nothing before or after, nothing greater or less, but all three persons are co-eternal with each other and co-equal." With these articles we do away with any notion of the Father and the Son being the "primary" persons of the Trinity. We also do away with any notion that we

cannot worship the individual persons of the Trinity separately. This is likewise confessed in Article 27: "Thus in all things, as has been stated above, both trinity in unity and unity in trinity must be worshipped." I would especially draw your attention to the last three words: "must be worshipped." Worship naturally includes song and prayer. From the Athanasian Creed, then, we can conclude that we are standing on solid Scriptural ground when we pray and sing to the Holy Spirit.

An argument from church history

Admittedly, this last argument is the weakest. However, as those who confess a catholic church, a church that spans the ages, we are compelled to take the practices of our ancient brothers and sisters seriously. Our forebears were not always correct in their practices and beliefs, but especially if we see a correlation between their practices and the teaching of Scripture, we should pay attention. As the saying goes, if the shoe fits. . . .

We are standing on solid Scriptural ground when we pray and sing to the Holy Spirit.

Augustine of Hippo (354-430), one of the well-known early church fathers, composed the following prayer to the Holy Spirit:

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.

Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.

Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy.

Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.

Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy.

Amen.

Note that Augustine lived during the fourth and fifth centuries. During this time, it does not appear to have been controversial to pray to the Holy Spirit in this fashion.

During the ninth century a well-known Latin hymn, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, was penned. Its authorship cannot be ascertained with certainty, but most likely rests with Rabanus Maurus (776-856), Abbot of Fulda and Archbishop of Mainz. The first verse reads thus in the English translation of John Dryden:

*Creator Spirit, by whose aid
The world's foundations first were laid,
Come, visit every pious mind;
Come, pour Thy joys on human kind;
From sin and sorrow set us free,
And make Thy temples worthy Thee.*

This hymn has had wide circulation in the Roman Catholic Church, but there is evidence that this hymn was also sung from the earliest days of Protestantism, particularly in Germany. It continues to be found in many Protestant song books, including those used by several churches with which we have ecclesiastical fellowship.

Other examples could be given. However, these two sufficiently demonstrate that the catholic church (using the word in the good Christian sense) has seldom had a difficulty with prayers or songs to the Holy Spirit. If nothing else, this should caution us against insisting that such prayers or hymns are forbidden today.

To conclude, if the singing of hymns and the praying of prayers are scripturally warranted, then also hymns and prayers to the Holy Spirit may be seen as faithful acts of worship. In fact, if this is true, is it not then sad that we have *only* two hymns to the Holy Spirit in our *Book of Praise*? As the days for a revised church book draw closer, it would be good to see our Committee add the ancient hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* – particularly since this hymn finds a place in the *Psalter Hymnal* used in many United Reformed Churches (Blue #393). So, praise the Holy Spirit? By all means and with all your heart!

Keith Sikkema

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Parents, School, and Community in the Old Testament

Our time generates questions about how we do things and whether they could be done differently from the ways our parents did them. In education, that sometimes means that parents opt to home school their children, even if there is a local Reformed elementary school. Some debate the extent of the school's role in education. Should the school take on more roles, such as organizing group outings, even if not directly related to the curriculum? Should the school be allowed to perform a function that goes beyond its primary purpose of teaching a more or less academic curriculum? In order to address questions such as these, we need to consider that Scripture does not require us to have schools as we know them. It is not a matter of principle that the school exists, even though there is scriptural room for the existence of a school. At the same time, there are roles for which a school is particularly well suited. It is well, then, to carefully consider the role we give the school.

In this article I illustrate how, in the Old Testament, the Lord gave the task of bringing up children primarily to the parents. This task was not a burden that lay on their shoulders alone, however. Within the covenantal context, He provided others who were jointly responsible for aspects of this task and for the environment in which it was to be done. The Lord even provided judges and prophets to lead his often rebellious

people back to his ways. In subsequent submissions I intend to address other aspects of my query.

Parents

In the Old Testament, bringing up the next generation was the task of the parents. Adam and Eve had a task to be fruitful, to multiply, to fill the earth, and to subdue it (Gen 1:28), and they were the obvious people to introduce their children to God's world and their cultural mandate. It would always be the parents who were first responsible in bringing up their children, not just because it was the natural order of things, but also because God decreed it

Within the covenantal context, He provided others who were jointly responsible for aspects of this task and for the environment in which it was to be done.

for Israel in Deuteronomy 6:4-9. This was maintained in Psalm 78, and alluded to on several occasions in the book of Proverbs. Mothers were to instruct their children (Prov 1:8; 6:20; 31:1), and fathers had to teach their sons the

words of the covenant and the history of redemption (Ex 10:2; Deut 4:9; 32:46-47; Prov 3:1, 2; 4:4; 7:2). Thus, like fathers taught their sons a trade, mothers taught their daughters how to be wives and housekeepers. Even today, serious Jewish fathers learn from the Talmud that they must act as priests in their family, and teach their sons the Torah, a trade, and how to swim (perhaps in the realities of life).

Scripture explicitly tells fathers to answer their sons' questions. When a son asked about the pile of twelve stones in the Jordan River, Dad had to tell him that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the Ark of the covenant of the Lord (Josh 4:1-7). When he asked about the meaning of killing the Passover lamb and the surrounding ceremony, Dad had to answer that it is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when He struck down the Egyptians (Ex 12:26; 13:8). When, for instance at the time of the Feast of Booths, a son asked for the meaning of the annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem and of the Lord's laws and statutes, Dad had to explain that the Lord had the Israelites live in booths when He brought them out of Egypt (Lev 23:43).

Covenantal answers

These answers were hardly impressive in themselves. The crossing of the Jordan might have gained significance

if the father added that it was a raging torrent at the time, with all the spring rains. However, it referred to all that the Lord had done for his people in the preceding days and months and years, to what He did on that day, and to much that was yet to come. The twelve stones were reminders that the Lord was fulfilling his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that nothing would stop Him. It brought to mind the covenant God made at Horeb and God's deliverance when they were attacked or his mercy when they rebelled. It showcased the Ark of the covenant as a centre-piece during the crossing, as a symbol that God alone could bring salvation and bring them into the promised land. The monument in the Jordan signified that God was the God of Israel, and that they all, together, were his people. Dad's explanation to his son placed them squarely in the context of God's covenant with his people.

Similarly, the Passover spoke of much more than the death of the Egyptian firstborns and the survival of the Israelites. The Passover feast also spoke of the bitterness of slavery and the threat of death and annihilation; it spoke of God's power, judgment, and mercy that gave death to some and life to others; and it spoke of the coming Messiah whose blood would be shed as redemption from slavery to sin and Satan. As all fathers explained the matter to their sons, it was in communion with them all, just like God had communion with the entire people, unbroken like the bones of the Passover lamb.

Likewise, the Feast of Booths spoke of more than living in tents for forty years. Israelites had to remember that they together were God's people, and that He had given and sustained their life. He did so because atonement would be made through the coming Messiah, and the abundance of his mercy shown in the harvest from the land would one day be fully revealed through his Son. Again, this

was a communal feast, celebrated as a covenant community in the presence of God. Parents had an explicit task to teach their children, but what they were taught and how they were taught received meaning in the covenant context of God with his people.

Community

As people were to live in their community, it was quite by God's design that not only parents had an impact on the development of their children. Yet, the antithesis of Genesis 3:15 set a division between people who would and who would not serve God, who would and who would not develop culture in devotion to Him. Now, at home *and* outside, children were to not only learn about God's world and their mandate,

The community was also responsible to maintain an environment in which parents could teach their children antithetical discernment.

but also learn to discern whether people were devoted to God. The latter was quite a challenge. While Seth's descendants humbly called on the name of the Lord, Cain's descendants proudly exalted their own name, and before long society no longer encouraged antithetical discernment. Noah's intoxication quickly proved that the problem had not disappeared in the flood.

In Israel, God provided a setting in which people could be encouraged to keep his ways. Children could learn discernment when they heard the elders teach and the judges rule at the gates (Deut 6:9; 21:18-21). At the watering places they might hear from the singers of God's righteous acts (Judg 5:10, 11).

Church News

As of May 1st, 2005, the Rockway Canadian Reformed Church has changed its name to "Spring Creek Canadian Reformed Church." Directory details are now listed under "Tintern."

Bethel Canadian Reformed Church of Toronto is now worshipping in their own building located at 11251 Bayview Avenue (just north of Elgin Mills Road), Richmond Hill, Ontario.

Examined by Classis Ontario West on June 8th, 2005 and received consent to speak an edifying word in the churches, C.O. Art. 21

Student Hendrik Alkema

Examined by Classis Ontario West on June 8th, 2005 and received consent to speak an edifying word in the churches, C.O. Art. 21

Student Dong Woo Oh

On their way to Jerusalem they heard pilgrims sing the songs of ascents (Ps 120-134). They would frequently see the tassels with blue cords on people's clothes (Num 15:37-41). Joseph and Mary could assume that Jesus was in good company (Luke 2:44), and children would be allowed to play with each other (Zach 8:5; Matt 11:16). Society impacted on children, for better or for worse.

The community was also responsible to maintain an environment in which parents could teach their children antithetical discernment. The context of Deut 6 shows that the whole community was addressed, rather than just the parents or certain leaders. All Israel was to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." All Israel was told that "these commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts." All were to "impress them on your

children.” All were told to “talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up, and to tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and your gates.” God set a standard for his people: it had to be a society in which everything and everybody was devoted to God, and in which all were to help keep it that way. To be devoted to the Lord their God was their life, their salvation, their righteousness (Deut 32:47).

Similarly, in Psalm 78, Asaph relates what he learned from his father. As he speaks of “our fathers” and of “their children” and the “next generation,” he appears to instruct the people that they together, as a society, “would not be like their forefathers – a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to Him.” Asaph clearly speaks about education in a covenantal context.

Erosion and recall

Throughout Israel’s history, the normative expectation of a supportive community often got eroded again. One theme in the book of Judges is that everyone did what was good in his own eyes. As the community drifted away, God

gave oppression from enemies and subsequent direction through prophets and judges. They pronounced judgment on apostasy, and announced redemption for the faithful. Their message, to old and young alike, was that a nation is blessed only when it serves the Lord. Later, when Bethel’s youths mocked God’s messenger (2 Kgs 2), the immediate punitive response was a call to take God’s Word and messenger seriously.

The Old Testament not only assumes a covenantal context and responsibility for raising the next generation, but also assigns specific teaching tasks to people outside the immediate family context, for instance to elders (Deut 32:7). Priests had to teach the people, and, as well as other counsellors, were often called “father” in that role (Gen 45:8; Judg 17:10; 18:19; 2 Kgs 2:12). Samuel was instructed by Eli, and King Joash by the priest Jehoiada (1 Sam 2:2 Kgs 12:2). In the ninth century BC, King Jehoshaphat sent priests, Levites, and officials throughout Judah to teach the book of the law (2 Chron 17:7-9). After the Exile, Ezra prayed before weeping men, women, and children about their unfaithfulness (Ezra 9, 10:1) and later he read the law to “all who were able to understand” (Neh 8: 2).

Summing up

In the Old Testament there were many opportunities for parents to elaborate to their children on the covenant God made, the deliverance and care He provided, and how they were to live in anticipation of full redemption. Quite naturally, just like it was Adam and Eve’s task to teach their children about God’s plan and their cultural mandate, bringing up children in the fear of the Lord fell in the first place to the parents (Deut 6:4-9). It was within the safe family unit that the fundamentals of the children’s tasks, the monuments, the feasts, and even the Lord’s statutes and ordinances had to be taught. However, parents had to fulfill their task in a covenantal context of God’s love and mercy, in the midst of his people, who were mandated to learn to show similar love and mercy to one another. They helped each other to remain holy to God and maintain an environment in which children could learn discernment and grow in the fear of God.

The Education Matters column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association East. Anyone wishing to respond to an article written or willing to write an article is kindly asked to send materials to Clarion or to Otto Bouwman obouwman@cornerstoneschool.us

Book Reviews

Reviewed by J. Visscher

The Flame of the Word, Book 2b

Apko Nap, Pieter Torenvliet, Jan Gansekoete, and Crystal Koat
Additional Information: 255 pages.

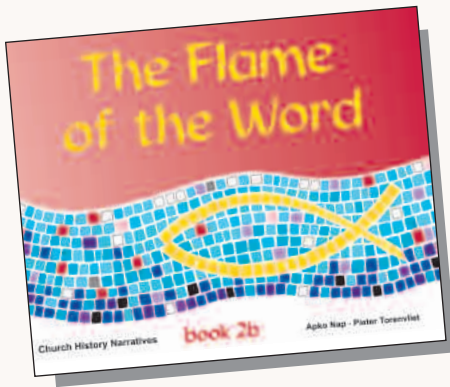
On the surface it appears as if church history is one of the easiest subjects to teach. It is filled with so many interesting events, fascinating personalities, and startling developments that one might think that every teacher would be equal

to the task and eager for the opportunity.

The truth of the matter, however, is otherwise. History may look easy but it is one of the most difficult subjects to teach. And church history is no different. How does one excite students about the past when they have hardly any knowledge of it or appreciation for it? How does one make the past come to life? Or, as one website puts it, “what can a bunch of dead guys teach us?” As a result, if it is part of the curriculum many

a Christian teacher wrestles with this subject and how to present it.

Well, be encouraged: more help is on the way for those who teach at the elementary level. Another volume in the church history series *The Flame of the Word* has appeared. A number of years ago, Book 1 appeared. Then in 2001 Book 2a was published, and now in 2005 Book 2b has been printed. As such it is not only the latest but also the longest of the three volumes.



Yes, and what a delightful volume it is! It opens with the Reformation period and proceeds to deal with major events that happened over the next centuries. It closes with a great chapter on the early history of mission work in New Guinea.

Once again the authors start each chapter with a story that immediately catches a student's attention and awakens his or her curiosity concerning the particular period or event about to be introduced. The early history of Anabaptism begins with a story of a young boy living in the German city of Munster when it is taken over by John of Leiden and his extreme followers. The English Reformation starts with the interesting story of Thomas Cranmer and his martyrdom. The story of the Puritans in New England commences with the tale of a zealous printer. Perhaps most surprising is how the story of the Synod of Dort is launched with a tale about a modern soccer game. As well there is the

chapter on the Enlightenment and the origin of the Bible societies and how it opens with the story of Mary Jones.

More introductory stories could be mentioned, but let it suffice to say that this reviewer is sold on the idea of teaching church history to elementary students (and perhaps older students too) using the narrative approach. Once one sees how it works, the old method of simply trying to make facts, events, and people interesting pales in comparison. I am sure that these great introductory tales will go a long way to capturing and holding the attention of the students.

Those presenting this course will also benefit greatly from all of the hundreds of pages of material to be found in the accompanying manual for teachers. Stories, maps, quizzes, crossword puzzles, fill-in the blanks, and other exercises for students are included. As well, teaching outcomes and strategies accompany each chapter. In short, here is a gold mine of information and support material.

As in past volumes, many fine illustrations, time charts, and maps are liberally sprinkled throughout the book. They all enhance the learning experience. A new addition in Book 2b is the inclusion of an opening page and a closing page for each chapter. On the opening page there is now a heading "What will you learn?" after which three

or more points are listed. There is also a closing page with the heading "In conclusion: What have you learned?" after which the main points presented in that chapter are reviewed. No doubt this will help each student grasp the highlights even better.

In closing, I wish to extend kudos and accolades to the main organizers of this project: Apko Nap and Pieter Torenvliet; to the two new and able writers: Jan Gansekoete and Crystal Koat; to the layout people: Karin Louwerse and James Bredenhof; to the artists Sheila VanDelft, Hugo VanderHoek and Leen VanDijk. You have made a real contribution to the teaching of church history in our Christian elementary schools and to keeping alive the great deeds of the Lord in the history of his people.

If I have one wish, it is that the Lord will give you all the time, energy, and insight to complete this project. Perhaps He will even allow you in the future to give some much needed help when it comes to teaching church history to high school students.

Highly recommended!
(Orders and inquiries may be directed to admin@WofO.org or to the William of Orange Christian School, Box 34090, 17790 – #10 Hwy, Surrey, BC V3S 8C4)

Reviewed by G. Nederveen

Work & Leisure

Edited by Cornelis Van Dam and Kristen Kottelenberg Alkema (Winnipeg: Premier Publishing, 2004). Additional Information: 75 pages.

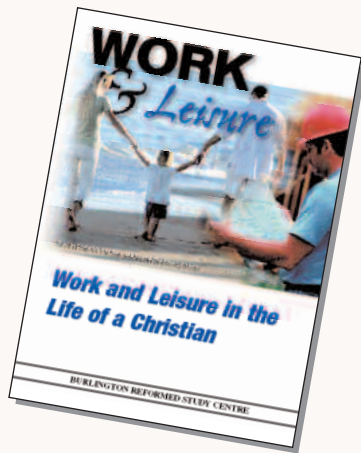
Once again the Burlington Reformed Study Centre has published the speeches and discussions of its most recent conference. This latest work deals with Work and leisure in the life of a Christian, and it is the fifth publication

of the Study Centre. And let me state up front that I heartily recommend this booklet.

It is not my intention to give a detailed review of the book; I just wish to spark your interest. After all, the most enjoyment one gets out of learning is not by reading someone's review, but by interacting with the source itself. The booklet contains two main speeches followed by comments from respondents. This is the familiar format of the Conference.

Work and vocation

The first speech is by Mr. Ray Pennings who deals with the topic Work and Vocation. In this essay of eighteen pages he stresses first of all that the term "work" is broader than the term "job" or "labour." He defines work as "all that we are obliged to do to meet our physical and social needs." Work is "effort directed toward some purpose or end" (p 2). This definition explains why the focus of his paper is on a



Christian perspective of work which he develops based on ten biblical principles. One of these principles is that we are called to bear God's image also in our work. God's work of creation is a model for human work. Work was a calling for Adam in Paradise before the fall and in that sense work is a gift from God. At the same time, and this is another principle, we must work because God has commanded us to. The question is how we must work and Pennings points out that this should be done within the framework of God's other commandments. He says, "The command to work is captured in the summary of the law, namely that we love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and that we love our neighbour as ourselves" (p 7).

Another important biblical principle is that God holds us accountable for our work and expects to be acknowledged through our work. Pennings fleshes this out in connection with Deuteronomy 8:10-12, 17-19, and concludes: "We neither own our work ... nor the reward that we are able to accumulate as a result of our work. They are all gifts of God" (p 8-9). When he says this, Pennings is well aware of the fact that with the fall into sin came the curse and its profound effect on work. Work has become toil, a word we associate with pain and displeasure. I found his next comment both instructive and encouraging: "Yet, there is something beautiful and God-honouring that flows from these painful processes — the beauty of God's creation is marred, but the remnants of God's glorious creation and purpose can still be seen" (p 10).

The speech carries the title "Work and Vocation." What is the difference between work and vocation? Is our vocation not our work? Vocation is a calling to a particular type of work that suits us. It has to do with the way in which we use the gifts God has given us in our search for work. Pennings highlights four things. First of all, each person needs to honestly assess what his or her gifts are. Second, in our assessment we should not overlook the things we love, for a passion for something is also a gift from God. "One of the principles guiding our view of work is that we need to derive satisfaction and see meaning in our work" (p 14). A third aspect is that we assess whether or not we have the suitable temperament for a task. Our personalities suit us to some vocations over others. In the fourth place we need to be attentive to God's leading. "The doors of providence open and close in ways we cannot always make sense of, yet we know that our calling takes place within this context" (p 15).

Pennings wraps up his essay by highlighting seven different gifts as found in Romans 12:4-8. He concludes with the observation that a biblical perspective on work and calling is a long-term perspective in which we see the immediate task in the context of God's eternal plan.

The respondent to this speech is Mr. Lammert Jagt. He appreciates the foundation that Mr. Pennings has established for a Christian perspective on work and vocation. Jagt points out that in our worldly environment the cultural mandate that God has given us has been replaced by "mission statements" that have little to do with the glory of God and the supremacy of this creation order. He warned that positive promotions are usually directed at the self.

The discussion session to the speech by Mr. Pennings and the response by Mr. Jagt covers a wide range of questions. Let me simply state that I am pleased with most of the answers of the two participants. Most questions were

addressed to Mr. Pennings and I am impressed by his measured and balanced answers.

Work and vacation

The second essay is by Dr. Gideon Strauss and deals with Work and Vacation. He reminds us of what all of us experience: we are pressured to find a proper balance between work, and the rest of our lives. Strauss stresses the need to find a work/life balance and points out that we cannot think of leisure without thinking of work. He develops his paper around four areas.

Let me quickly summarize each area. The first is understanding work as co-creation which sees work as the measure of life. A man finds satisfaction in the fulfilment of his own nature and in the contemplation of the perfection of his work. In connection with this view Strauss rightly asks: "if the meaning of our lives and the very essence of being human can be found in our work, why ever *not* work?" (p 37) The second view on work/life balance is that work is necessary for leisure. This view has its origin in classical Greece and sees work as deriving its meaning from the leisure it makes possible. However, leisure should not be confused with rest. In this instance leisure is activity, the cultivation of the mind. A third view considers that work is dignified but irksome. This view is based on Genesis 3 where the pain and burden of work is mentioned. In this situation work is often experienced as having camaraderie with fellow workers while there is little or no fulfilment in the work itself. The fourth view is work as vocation. This is the view Strauss holds and he considers it a combination of views one and three. Work as vocation emphasises that vocation is neither self advancement nor self-fulfillment, but service of God and the neighbour.

In the next section Dr. Strauss deals with what he calls the limits of work. These limits are play, family, and the rhythms of human life. Regarding play he writes: "life without variation is tedious, and that work must be interrupted by play," but he goes on to cite the caution

that “if play is to bring lightness and freshness to the soul, it must remain what it really is — a pause in the difficult serious affair which is human life” (p 42). The next limit to work is family. We live in a time where work is gobbling up not only our time but also our loyalties in which work identities are overtaking other identities. Strauss concludes: “Family is perhaps the second most important limit to work” (p 44). He does not say what the most important limit is, unless he means the next one: The rhythms of the human life.

In the last section of his paper, Gideon Strauss focuses on how Christians are to think about leisure. The term leisure is never defined, but in discussing the concept of leisure Strauss reflects extensively on the role of the Sabbath for Israel. He believes that in the biblical teaching on Sabbath “we find the proper beginning point for our thinking

about work and vacation, about leisure, about work/life balance” (p 48). The Sabbath lifestyle is one of ceasing, resting, embracing, and feasting and Dr. Strauss sums it up with these words: “I am convinced that the Sunday worship service is the epicentre of personal and cultural renewal. What happens in church on Sunday reverberates through the week, ripples out into other parts of our lives. If we give corporate worship its proper place, we have done perhaps the most important needful thing in the process of putting work in its proper place” (p 52).

The respondents to this essay are Dr. Cornelis Van Dam and Mrs. Eleanor Boeringa. Dr. Van Dam is in basic agreement with the content of the speech. He finds the term “limitation” somewhat negative and would rather speak of positive obligation. Van Dam is highly appreciative of Strauss’ idea of

embracing the kingdom of God as the meaning of Sabbath, or rest, and concurs with the speaker’s view that the Sunday worship service is the epicentre of personal and cultural renewal. Van Dam’s response is a worthwhile contribution to the discussion. In Mrs. Boeringa’s response I appreciated the reference to Colossians 3:23-24 in which Paul speaks of our eternal inheritance in the same breath as he does of our work. And from a practical point of view as a busy mother and wife she makes the practical, but also to the point observation: it seems ironic that we pursue various leisure activities in whose participation so much extra work is involved.

I hope this review gives you a flavour of the book and that it has sparked your interest to read it for yourself. It is worth the time and effort, and you will discover that reading it is both work and leisure.



Press Release

Press Release of the Combined Meeting of the United Reformed Psalter Hymnal Committee and the Canadian Reformed Book of Praise Committee held March 31 – April 1, 2005 in Ancaster, Ontario

This meeting was the fourth combined meeting of the two committees. Rev. G. Ph. van Popta, convener of the *Book of Praise* committee, led us in opening devotions. The participants (re)introduced themselves, and Rev. Allen Vander Pol was introduced as a newly appointed member of the United Reformed (URCNA) committee, attending for the first time. The meeting schedule was established and the proposed agenda was adopted. The previous combined meeting’s minutes were accepted as an

accurate reflection of that meeting. It was noted that Dr. Peter Wallace, pastor of the OPC at South Bend, Indiana, was present as an observer. Dr. Wallace is involved in preparing a scriptural Psalter as mandated by his Session.

Each committee had an opportunity to report on their respective progress:

1. The URCNA committee’s mandate was changed by Synod Calgary (at the committee’s request) in that the “non musical” section of the song book was assigned to a separate committee. In the past year, work was done in evaluating a number of psalters and hymnals in use by Reformed and Presbyterian churches in England, Scotland, Ireland, and North America. A number of hymns, from various sources, were tentatively selected for potential inclusion in the new song book. The Principles and Guidelines, as adopted by Synod Calgary, were used in the

selection process. Although good progress has been made, this work will continue.

2. The Canadian Reformed (CanRC) committee reported that Synod Neerlandia gave this committee the mandate to expand the current hymnary of the *Book of Praise* as well as to work together with the URCNA *Psalter Hymnal* Committee to work towards a common song book. It has been a challenge to work through these two mandates, therefore the committee has been busy considering and provisionally selecting hymns using the Principles and Guidelines, as adopted by Synod Chatham. The hymns selected are available for potential inclusion in the new song book. Much thought has been given on an index for the song book. Often we need to deal with copyright issues as we receive many requests for permission to reprint



Photograph taken at the conclusion of the joint meeting of the Song Book Committee, April 1, 2005

Back Row (L to R): Rev. D. Vander Meulen, Rev. D. Agema, Rev. G. Ph. van Popta, Dr. N.H. Gootjes, Rev. A. Vander Pol.

Front Row (L to R): Rev. R. Lankheet, Rev. D. Royall, Dr. C. van Halen-Faber, Mr. C.J. Nobels, Rev. D. Wynia.

songs or prose sections. In the past year a central archive was established at the Theological College in Hamilton. It is a challenge to make such an archive complete after some fifty years of the committee's existence.

To date all joint efforts between our committees have been on the hymnary part of the new song book. At this meeting time was devoted to a discussion on inclusion of the 150 Genevan Psalms. A frank discussion was held about a number of issues: complete unfamiliarity of many URCNA brothers and sisters with the Genevan tunes, the apparent difficulty of a number of the tunes, having only the melody line (not harmony), and the physical size of the new song book when potentially two versions of each Psalm, hymns, confessions, and liturgical forms are to be included. After the discussion, the committees did agree that it will be helpful if the URCNA committee clearly outlines their views, thoughts, and concerns about including the 150 Genevan Psalms, and the CanRC committee outlines their motivation for maintaining all 150 Genevan Psalms. These documents will be of immense benefit in gaining greater appreciation of each other's views and will be of great

benefit in preparing reports to our respective Synods.

Reports of studies by the two committees were presented:

1. A list of Reformed psalters and hymnals and information about the song books that are in use by different churches. (URCNA report)
2. Possibility of adding harmony and /or meter (adding bar lines) to the Genevan melodies. Conclusion was that adding harmony is possible, and we resolved to recommend that harmonies for these melodies be included in the new song book; however, adding bar lines is not recommended as this would require frequent alternation between 4/4 and 6/4 time and would make for a untidy presentation. (CanRC report)
3. Evaluation of the sixty-five hymns of the *Book of Praise*. Great appreciation was expressed for the faithfulness of the text. A number of hymns are very long; many of the hymns originate from the seventeenth century; other hymns appear to have a mismatch between the words and the music, for example: a song of praise set to music in a minor key. (URCNA report)
4. The structure in which to organize the hymnary of the song book. As a starting point, it was suggested to have a Trinitarian structure, much

along the lines of the Apostles Creed with additions for special occasions such as Holy Baptism, The Lord's Supper, Marriage and Ordination. This would form a good starting point and would be a good guide as to where to place the potential hymns, and would be an aid to compile a balanced hymnary. A number of indices, such as a confessional index (keyed on the Three Forms of Unity), a textual index, and a topical index would be helpful for the end users. (CanRC report)

The URCNA committee reported on the progress of evaluating the hymns of the "Blue Psalter Hymnal." Approximately 100 potential hymns passed the initial scrutiny of the URCNA committee using the accepted Principles and Guidelines. More work is required in that some of these were done before these Guidelines were in place.

There was a mutual understanding that the functioning as a joint committee would be greatly enhanced by meeting more than once a year. Therefore, we agreed to meet again in the fall of 2005, the URCNA committee acting as host. In this context, the decision was made that all the potential hymns, as selected by each committee to date, will be collected and duplicated for each committee member. It is expected that this will enhance the possibility to present a concept hymnary for the common song book to our next respective synods. The *Book of Praise* committee realizes that the good progress being made on the mandate for a common song book may well render the mandate to produce a new *Book of Praise* redundant.

This meeting was a very productive one and showed a unity of purpose. Much ground was covered and a lot was accomplished including a better appreciation of each other. It was acknowledged and understood by all that we are working on a common goal, a common book of worship that will benefit the unity that the Lord demands of his believers. With that in mind, we adjourned.

On behalf of the joint committee,
C.J. Nobels