

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Volume 57, No. 11 ■ May 23, 2008

*... little about the earth
and its solar system
is typical, ordinary,
undistinguished.*



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- Presenting Three Graduates





E. Kampen

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Two Tier Christianity?

This deposit was not given to the believers individually but to the church collectively

In our interaction with confessors of Christ from different church backgrounds, sooner or later we will come across something called “the baptism with the Holy Spirit.” Other terms used are “sealing with the Spirit” and “the second blessing.” This experience is seen as an event distinct from and subsequent to conversion. The initial evidence of this baptism with the Spirit is said to be speaking in tongues.¹ This suggests that there are actually two tiers of Christians, with some only being converted by the Spirit while others have a second experience of the Spirit.

Such thinking leads to a two tier church, consisting of the sealed and unsealed Christians

As we are at that time of the year that we remember the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, it is a good time to give some thought to this. Talk of baptism with the Holy Spirit is always linked to Pentecost. This baptism with the Holy Spirit is an issue that has a habit of causing confusion both among old and young members alike, even undermining confidence in the Reformed understanding of the faith.

Scriptural basis

The primary scriptural basis given for the idea that every believer should expect a baptism with the Holy Spirit is found in the book of Acts. In chapter 1

we read about the way the Lord Jesus told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promised Spirit. In Acts 2 we read how when the Spirit came upon the disciples, in fulfilment of this promise, the disciples spoke in tongues.

Another key passage brought in to support the idea of being baptized by the Spirit after believing is Ephesians 1:13, 14. We read there, “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession – to the praise of his glory.” Emphasis is placed on the way Paul speaks of “having believed” and then speaking of being sealed with the Holy Spirit.

The scriptural basis provided for “baptism with the Holy Spirit,” however, is not as solid as it may appear at first glance. In fact, it soon breaks down when one considers the passages in some detail within their context.

Acts

With respect to the book of Acts, it is important to keep in mind that it is not a book that lays out a pattern of religious experience for individual believers. It is a book filled with narratives describing how our Lord Jesus continued his ministry from heaven through the apostles. The book is descriptive and not prescriptive. This does not mean that the Spirit has nothing to say to us in this book. He tells us very much but He does it in the same way as He does through the narratives in the books of



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

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ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5
Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202

Subscriptions: clarionadmin@premierpublishing.ca

Advertisements: clarionads@premierpublishing.ca

Website: www.premierpublishing.ca

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Subscription Rates for 2008	Regular Mail	Air Mail
Canada*	\$48.00*	\$ 79.00*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds  	\$60.00	\$ 77.00
International	\$89.00	\$130.00

*Including 5% GST – No. 890967359RT

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Samuel or the gospels. This means it is too much to take our Lord's promise to his disciples that they would be "baptized with the Holy Spirit" as a promise that is to be personally expected or sought after by each believer. That particular promise was fulfilled on Pentecost. We do not read of such an outpouring of the Spirit every time people believed. To be sure, we read it at transitional points such as when the gospel came to the Samaritans and to Cornelius. The point to highlight, however, is that they were transitional points as the gospel moved beyond the Jews.

Ephesians

With respect to Paul's letter to the Ephesians, a number of aspects need to be mentioned. First, there is a technical but important point. It is not easy to see this in our English translation but it can be figured out if one's mind is not predisposed to the sealing of the Spirit being subsequent to believing. Paul's choice of verb tenses does not point to a sequence. Rather, the words used speak of indefinite action. Human logic may wish to speak of faith before sealing, but God's gifts ultimately are one.

Second, we should note that Paul is speaking collectively, not individually. In particular he seems to have the Gentile believers in mind. This is a major theme in his letter to the Ephesians. Especially in chapters 2 and 3 he speaks about the unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ. When we keep these things in mind we will get away from thinking he is speaking of a sequence where sealing with the Holy Spirit is a separate event from becoming a Christian. Such thinking leads to a two tier church, consisting of the sealed and unsealed Christians. If you read through the whole letter you will quickly see that Paul is vigorously opposing a two tier church. The issue among the Ephesians, which was the main issue in the early church, was the status of the Gentiles as compared to the Jews. Already in his opening words he gave praise to God for having blessed the believers with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Eph 1:3). Their equality is shown in that all who believe were marked with a seal, namely, the Holy Spirit.

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Third, we should note how Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit as “a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance.” He uses similar language in his second letter to the Corinthians. We read in 2 Corinthians 1:22, “He anointed us, set us seal of ownership on us and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come.” A little further, in chapter 5:5, we read, “Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.”

The Spirit as deposit

The way the Spirit is described as a “deposit” requires careful attention. It is a commercial term that we still use in daily life. For example, when a person plans to buy a house or a car, he or she will need to put down a deposit. We also use the term “down payment.” Other synonyms that come to mind are “earnest” and “pledge.” In the case of someone buying a house, the deposit or down payment is both the first payment and the promise that the rest will be paid. With this everyday language Paul described the Spirit. That he is thinking of Pentecost comes out in the way he wrote of the “promised Holy Spirit” as the deposit. That is the language we find in Acts 1 in anticipation of the sending of the Spirit on Pentecost.

The term “deposit” reinforces the unique character of the baptism with the Spirit on Pentecost. After all, you give a deposit only once. This deposit was not given to the believers individually but to the church collectively. The gift of the Spirit on Pentecost was both God’s promise that He will give the inheritance secured by Christ and the first installment of that inheritance. By that first installment the church received a foretaste of what that inheritance will be like. If we think of how elsewhere Paul writes about the gifts of the Spirit, how He dwells in the church which is called the “temple of the Holy Spirit,” how the

Spirit renews our lives, or how the Spirit emboldens the believers to speak about Christ, the deposit is not some bare minimum. The deposit is very rich already. The experience of that first instalment should stir up a deep longing to receive the whole inheritance, that is, life in the resurrection body in the new heaven and new earth where we will live in full fellowship with God and our neighbour.

The church, therefore, is not waiting for another baptism with the Spirit. It was baptized with the Spirit on Pentecost. That means that in the church there are not two tiers of Christians, those without and those with a Pentecost experience. The church has had its Pentecost experience and all who believe in Jesus Christ share in that experience, just as much as they share in his death and resurrection. Those in Christ have been blessed “with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (Eph 1:3). God’s gracious deposit of the Holy Spirit is a lasting gift, shared by all those who belong to his church, rich enough to tide us through to the end when we will receive the inheritance in full.

¹ For example, the *Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths* of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada states, “The baptism in the Holy Spirit is an experience in which the believer yields control of himself to the Holy Spirit. Through this he comes to know Christ in a more intimate way and receives power to witness and grow spiritually. Believers should earnestly seek the baptism in the Holy Spirit according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. The initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance. This experience is distinct from and subsequent to the experience of the new birth.” Among the key Bible passages used to support this are Acts 1:4, 8.



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Pentecost – A Feast of Many Tongues



MATTHEW 13:52

“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”

Acts 2:4

There were ten days between the Lord’s ascension and Pentecost, Israel’s blessed harvest feast. The church, Christ’s new covenant community, waited for power from on high! No doubt there was what one commentator¹ has called “an intense pitch of anticipation.” It was an anticipation generated by the Spirit Himself as He moved history to this redemptive historical moment in which the church was drenched with his powerful presence.

The sign above the door of that “one place” (Acts 2:1) might well have been “Place of Prophetic Promises Fulfilled!” The Spirit knocked at the door of that place and quickly filled it with his personal, heavenly sound and sight (vv 2-3). Those marvelous, symbolic things did not only announce his divine presence, but also his active engagement. It was an engagement that moved the hearts and lips of no less than 120 saints, “In many tongues, one God, one faith confessing” (Ps 87:4, *Book of Praise*).

The fullness of God’s harvest is present. No more “a prophet here, a priest there, and a king at a distance.” Instead, there was a multitude of prophets, each one “declaring the wonders of God” in languages heard all over the world.

Here is the vanguard of the church, Christ’s holy, Christian congregation. They are together as the instruments of the ascended Lord Jesus Christ, so that the “glorious things” enumerated by the Sons of Korah in Psalm 87 might be fulfilled. Indeed, so that true Israel’s “sons and daughters” might prophesy, God’s “old men might dream dreams” and his “young men might see visions.” These weren’t pipedreams nor hallucinations, but the living Word of God (Joel 2:28-31).

On Pentecost, “The Holy Spirit comes to finish and perfect the work of Good Friday and Easter, to bring in from the first fruits (Easter) the full harvest of all God’s children.”² For Jesus Christ does not stand still. He’d promised to send the abundant Spirit down (see John 14-15), not only to comfort and counsel the disciples, so often quivering with fear and doubt. But also so that this Spirit, testifying of Jesus Christ, might open the mouths of all Christ’s followers to testify of Him! The latter activity was not just a suggestion but the command of Christ, who would have his “living stones” confess God’s glorious acts without fail (John 15:27; 1 Pet 2:9).

No doubt those “wonders of God” declared to the international audience on the day of Pentecost

would have been many. They surely would have included the saving acts of God in Jesus Christ: the wonders of his incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension to the throne room of God.

Would they not also have included those “wonders in the heaven above” of which Joel had spoken and which Peter called to mind (Acts 2:19)? These are the signs which testify of God’s impending judgment at the return of Jesus Christ. Those things too, belong to the “revelation repertoire” of God’s people, his word of justice and judgment, as well as of peace and comfort and hope. For all Pentecost prophets must follow the lead of Enoch, who minced no words as he warned his own generation (Jude 14-15).

Now here we are in the year of our Lord, 2008. We celebrate Pentecost, but not as a brief and momentary “high” on the church’s calendar. We celebrate it as a lasting gift and the initiation of that universal proclamation which must engage us every day. It is an engagement in which ministers and missionaries of the gospel have a leading role, for “How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” (Rom 10:14).

But it does not stop there. For “from the lips of children and infants” God has ordained praise (Ps 8:2). Even from the mouths of teenagers the world will know of the power and mercy of our Triune God. Think of that young girl in Naaman’s household who directed that powerful commander of a heathen army to the prophet in Israel (2 Kgs 5)! Think of Daniel

and his three God-fearing friends who witnessed to their God while under duress and far from home (Dan 1).

May we not be tongue-tied and unwilling to confess God’s Name. Rather, may our tongues be joined to that swelling, Spirit-filled throng which delights to declare the mighty works of God! Let us do it, so that one day the whole earth

may be filled with God’s praise and glory. For the gift remains and the Spirit will abide with the church forever.

¹ Alexander Maclaren, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New York: A.C. Armstrong, 1907), p. 42.

² Clarence Stam, *Celebrating Salvation* (Winnipeg: Premier, 1997), p. 217.



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Modern Science and the Christian Faith (Part 2 of 2)

This is a slightly adapted version of a presentation I gave at a conference for science and math teachers held at the Teachers College in Hamilton on February 29-March 1, 2008.

3. The Argument from Design – with reference to twentieth-century discoveries

In the first installment we concentrated on how we are *not* to use the book of nature in defending the faith. We saw that (1) in seeking to know God we may never forget about his revelation in the second book, namely the written Word, and (2) we must think twice before using the so-called “God hypothesis” to fill the gaps in our knowledge. We should simply follow those early scientists who rejoiced in discovering the *testimony* in nature of what Romans 1 calls “God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature.” By doing so we

come closest, I believe, to the original meaning of the ancient Argument from Design.

That Argument has been greatly enhanced by recent discoveries in physics, astronomy, and cosmology and it is these discoveries that I want to bring to your attention in this section. I am referring to two separate fields: (1) the fine-tuning of the universe and (2) the rare-earth hypothesis. Since I have dealt with this topic in the recent past I will not go into much detail but refer those who want to know more about it to two earlier articles. They can be found in the *Clarion* issues of December, 2007, under the title “In Wisdom You Made Them All. . . .”

My starting point was the so-called *Copernican Principle of mediocrity*, a concept dating from the twentieth century, which has greatly influenced the search for intelligent aliens (usually called the Search for Extra-Terrestrial

Intelligence or SETI). According to the Copernican Principle the earth and its human inhabitants are typical, run-of-the-mill phenomena, the results of random evolutionary processes. Contrary to the message of the Bible, they are of no intrinsic significance and are certainly not unique. This principle, I pointed out, is based on the facts that (1) the cosmos, as became evident especially since the work of American astronomer Edwin Hubble in the early twentieth century, is much and much larger than was formerly assumed, (2) our earth, its solar system, and even its galaxy are little more than specks in this inconceivably vast universe, and (3) the human species is a late-comer in cosmic history, which according to modern scholarship spans billions of years.

The limited size of our habitat and the limited age of our species, in short, are being used as arguments against our planet’s and

our own uniqueness. And the reason why the Copernican Principle has so greatly stimulated the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence is the assumption that, since the laws of nature are generally the same, developments that have taken place on the earth must have taken place elsewhere in the universe. The basic requirement for the development of intelligent life elsewhere was the existence of earth-like planets orbiting sun-like stars. Of such planets, it was believed, there should be untold numbers in the Milky Way alone.

That was the assumption. But as I proceeded to show, so far the search has failed, and the belief in the Copernican Principle of mediocrity is not as strong today as it has been. Although it is still widely accepted as scientifically proven, it is in fact under increasing scientific attack. The scientists involved show that rather than being average, undistinguished, run-of-the-mill, the earth appears to be unique after all, and even uniquely fitted for life, and that the same applies to the solar system, the Milky Way galaxy, and the universe as a whole. With respect to the uniqueness of earth and solar system, the conclusion follows that we may be alone in the universe after all. Here follows a summary of the arguments I listed.

3.1 A Goldilocks universe

The discoveries against the Copernican Principle of mediocrity began during the second half of the twentieth century. One factor was growing evidence of the so-called "fine-tuning" of the universe. That term refers to the fact that the laws

of nature are such that they make possible (1) the very existence of the universe as such and (2) the ability of this universe to sustain complex, intelligent life like our own. In connection with that second point, scientists are speaking of a Goldilocks universe. The name is derived from the children's story of Goldilocks and the three bears, where in the end things turned out to be "just right."

Similarly, it was found, conditions in the heavens and on the earth are "just right" for complex life. There appears to be nothing haphazard about them.

The idea of randomness and mediocrity are contradicted by solid scientific facts

Should the natural laws or physical constants be altered even to the smallest degree, a life-sustaining universe would be impossible. As physicist Karl Giberson writes: "Make gravity one percent stronger or weaker and the sun won't shine properly; change the electrical force just a bit and organic molecules won't form; make the universe expand just a little faster and there won't be any solar systems. And so on. All of the various features of this universe appear to have been optimized for life." He adds, "All this would occasion no surprise if it turned out that the laws of nature somehow have to have their current form, if there were some reason why gravity has its particular strength,

electrons their mass, the photon its energy, and so on. But, as nearly as anyone can tell. . . there is no reason why the various features of our universe are the way they are, and not some other, equally plausible, way."

All of this, of course, suggests design, rather than a process of random development. Here as elsewhere in nature, the Creator appears to have given us a book written in a language that is altogether understandable for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear.

3.2 A privileged planet

The book of nature suggests design not only in the universe at large, but also in the small part where we reside, namely the earth and its solar system. Here again, the idea of randomness and mediocrity are contradicted by solid scientific facts. I quote the following from the earlier series:

(1) There is the nearness of the moon, as well as its exceptional size and gravity. Our moon is large and heavy enough to stabilize the earth's rotation and prevent its axis from tilting too far into the direction of the sun or giant planet Jupiter. The earth's axis is tilted at 23.5 degrees, which gives us our seasons and assures a relatively limited range in temperatures. The moon also helps raise ocean tides and currents, which again play a role in regulating climate. In these and in various other respects the moon's life-supporting function is exceptional compared to other planet-moon systems that have been observed.

(2) The earth's situation appears optimal for the existence of life also because the planet enjoys

protection from asteroids, comets, and other "near earth objects" from space. There are large numbers of such objects threatening us and depending on their size their impact could be devastating. Other planets, however, including Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars, as well as our moon, form a protective shield around the earth, safeguarding our planet from ongoing bombardments. They serve as "cosmic vacuum sweepers," drawing killer rockets to themselves and so diverting them from planet earth. In the absence of these vacuum sweepers, it is unlikely that we would be here.

(3) The earth is located at the proper distance from the sun. If it were further away, its temperature would be closer to that of Mars with its perpetual deepfreeze; if it were closer, it might suffer the scorching heat of Venus. In either case, complex life would be impossible.

(4) Other necessities of life which the earth provides (unlike other planets in our system) include liquid water, an oxygen-rich atmosphere, and a protective magnetic field.

(5) Also important are the location and mass of the sun. Our sun is at the right distance from the overcrowded centre of the galaxy, where cosmic radiation is too high for life to exist. The sun has also the proper mass, making it possible for our planet to orbit at a safe distance – neither too close to its star nor too far away from it. Although more massive than many other stars, the sun is not so massive that it would produce excessive amounts of radiation and thereby make life impossible. It is also a very steady source of energy. If energy output was not constant – if there were great

increases or decreases – the consequences could again be deadly for complex life.

In short, little about the earth and its solar system is typical, ordinary, undistinguished. Both appear to be exceptional and so far, in spite of years of very enthusiastic and very expensive research, no similar system has been discovered. For the time being it seems best, therefore, to assume the correctness of the rare-earth hypothesis. The "coincidences" are too striking. They go directly against the Copernican Principle of mediocrity and the related belief in unplanned, unguided, random evolution.

3.3 *The Anthropic Principle*

Astronomers refer to the various factors I described as the "Anthropic Principle" (from *anthropos*, Greek for "human being"), since they suggest the "human-friendliness" of the earth, the solar system, the galaxy, and the cosmos itself. The news has, for obvious reasons, been welcomed by Christians, who tend to agree with astronomer Robert Jastrow's assessment that the Anthropic Principle is "the most theistic result ever to come out of science." But unbelieving scientists also realize the principle's strength and quite a few have attempted to disprove it. For them the universe simply *has* to be the result of a random process and they try to safeguard this cherished belief at all costs.

The best known argument against design is the assumption of a *multiverse* – that is, of an infinite number of unobservable parallel universes, which because of their very great number just might by accident yield one universe with the necessary

properties for life, namely ours. The argument is similar to the one that a million monkeys that are provided with a million computers will in the end, again by pure accident, produce the play *Hamlet*. I read somewhere, incidentally, that that argument has been tested and found wanting. (Apparently the monkeys produced nothing but long lists of aaaaaa's and zzzzzz's and so on, or they used the computers as toilets.) The argument of the multiverse seems to me to be equally speculative. It certainly needs as much faith as does the belief in a Creator. Indeed, as a Christian scientist remarked, if atheists can believe in multiple universes they should have no problem believing in heaven and hell. These, too, could be seen as alternate universes operating outside space and time.

There are also scientists who agree that the anthropic evidence is too strong to be ignored. Among them is the British astronomer Sir Fred Hoyle, author of the well-known statement: "A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a super intellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature." In his *A Brief History of Time* Stephen Hawking writes, "It would be very difficult to explain why the universe should have begun in just this way, except as the act of a God who intended to create beings like us." Yet another scientist, physicist Paul Davies, admits, "I have come to believe more and more strongly that the physical universe is put together with an ingenuity so astonishing that I cannot accept it merely as a brute fact." And astronomer Robert Jastrow famously writes (in *God and the*

Astronomers): "For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak. As he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries."

3.4 Show and tell

I have given this lengthy summary because in the fine-tuning of the universe and the uniqueness of planet earth we have suggestions of design that *should* be taught at our Christian schools and that can be taught even at some of the more junior levels. It is about real science, as even atheists will admit, and it has considerable apologetic value. It is of course true that we must not overestimate the religious significance of the discoveries. Scientific theories change and anyone who puts his faith in them lives on quicksand. That goes for both Christians and atheists. But the findings do give testimony to the wisdom and immeasurable power of the Creator and provide potent disclaimers of the current belief in a materialistic origin of reality.

The same applies, of course, to recent advances in astronomy and cosmology in general. Twentieth-century discoveries have shown the unimaginable vastness of the universe and we have seen that the Copernican Principle arose in response to these findings. Christian teachers should make sure that they do not ignore these developments. I suggest that when teaching about the discoveries I described, and about astronomy

and cosmology in general, they make sure to use visual aids. I have earlier recommended the DVD "The Privileged Planet," based on the book with the same title by Guillermo Gonzales and Jay W. Richards. I continue to recommend it, although no doubt there are other videos that fit the purpose.

Scientific theories change and anyone who puts his faith in them lives on quicksand

But do use them. When students have had visible evidence of "God's invisible qualities" in the created universe, then the first article of our confession – *I believe in God the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth* – will resonate much more deeply with them. So will the first petition of the Lord's Prayer, *Hallowed be Thy Name*, which Lord's Day 47 of the Catechism explains in these words: "Grant us first of all that we may rightly know Thee, and sanctify, glorify, and praise Thee in all Thy works, in which shine forth Thy almighty power, wisdom, goodness, righteousness, mercy, and truth."

Conclusion

We meet God in the Bible. We are convinced of the truth of the Bible by the power of the Spirit. And our conviction is strengthened, we learned, by studying the book of nature. It is strengthened, however, also by other means. That is what I want to mention by way of

conclusion. I am turning again to the Belgic Confession, this time to Article 5, where we confess that one of the reasons why we receive the books of the Bible as canonical is "...that they contain the evidence thereof in themselves; for, even the blind are able to perceive that the things foretold in them are being fulfilled."

This also is something that students should be reminded of. We can trace the fulfilment of what Scripture foretells in the history of peoples and nations and cultures. No less importantly, we can trace it in our own lives, when we observe God's care and providence in our day-to-day existence and when by the power and grace of the Spirit we increasingly experience how the Lord is making Himself known to us *personally*, speaking to us as Person to person. C.S. Lewis once expressed this well when he wrote that instead of saying, in a more or less neutral fashion, "I believe that God exists," we will learn to confess, "I believe *in* God, in *this* God, the increasingly knowable Lord." When all is said and done, then, it is a matter not only of talking *about* God, but also and especially of walking *with* Him and coming to know Him at a deeper, personal level. Then we will know the truth, not just in our heads, but also in our hearts.

Note: For additional information on some of the topics dealt with here, see the following on the website of the Teachers College (www.covenantteacherscollege.com): "Annotated Bibliography," especially Section II, and "Integrating Faith and Learning."



Ray of Sunshine

By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Patricia Gelms

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. . . Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

Galatians 5:22

When Paul speaks about the fruit of the Spirit, he refers to the gifts that every Christian must display. In the last issue of the Ray of Sunshine, we focused our attention on the first fruit that Paul mentioned, love. As Christians, we must love one another. From this love flow all the other gifts of the Spirit. We especially see this in the next fruit that Paul has listed: joy. After all, when love is present, then joy cannot be far behind.

God says that love is the fulfillment of the law and doing God's law brings delight (Ps 119). We are especially grateful or joyful when we recognize that the ability to obey the law of love is a gift from God. He gives us his Holy Spirit, which enables us to put off our old man and put on the new man. Knowing the deep love that God has for us allows us to rejoice even in the most distressing circumstances, as Paul himself did time and time again.

What gave Paul such a lasting joy? Sometimes we can be joyful or happy on a sunny day, or when it's our birthday, or when someone says nice things to us. However, how do we stay joyful when it rains, or when the cake is all gone and the birthday party is over, or when somebody says a mean thing to us? Paul wrote a letter to his friends the Philippians. He had such a deep longing to meet with them again, yet he was not able to because he was stuck in prison. Paul was in prison in Rome because he preached the truth about Jesus Christ. If anyone had the right to be unhappy, it was Paul.

The Lord Jesus spoke to Paul on the road to Damascus and told him to stop persecuting the church and to start preaching the gospel (Acts 9:1-6). The Lord opened Paul's heart and from that time on, Paul preached Jesus Christ. Life for Paul did not become easier at this point. Rather, he received several beatings, was cast in prison several times, and was

even left for dead at one point. Paul experienced all of this trouble and we do not read anywhere that he lost his patience or became sorrowful. Rather, the theme of joy is repeatedly in Paul's writing.

This theme of joy shows especially in his letter to the Philippians. What gives Paul this feeling of joy? Paul's joy comes from his confidence in God. To Paul, God was in full control of everything. If hardship came, God permitted it. If pain bothered his steps, God allowed it. If he was in prison, God remained in control of his life. Paul knew that God was not a distant God, but a present help in times of distress. God gave Paul, and us, the greatest gift of all: his son, Jesus Christ. Jesus' victory on the cross gives us eternal life. God also gave his Spirit as a deposit or guarantee of that eternal life. We can be confident, like Paul, that God will complete the work he began in us. This confidence in God is what feeds our joy. Therefore, even if the sky is grey or the party is over, we can continue to feel and know joy because of what God has given us in Jesus Christ. The source of our life is the Spirit, the Spirit directs our steps, so that we can make progress, moving forward step by step toward the goal of perfection in the Lord. Let us rejoice in the Lord with the words of Psalm 33:1 and 6.

Rejoice ye in the Lord, O righteous,
And let a new song fill the air.
Praise is becoming to the upright;
With harp and lyre His fame declare.
For the Lord has spoken
Words of truth unbroken
He is faithful still.
Righteousness He treasures;
Earth is with the measures
Of His goodness filled.

Our soul awaits the great Redeemer;
Our help and shield, Him we acclaim.
Our hearts rejoice in Him and glory,
For we trust in His holy Name.
So we humbly pray Thee,
Let Thy steadfast mercy,
Lord, upon us be,
And in love deliver
Us, Thy flock, forever,
As we hope in Thee.

Birthdays in June:

17 **JOAN KOERSELMAN**
Born June 17, 1957
Box 1312, Coaldale, AB T0K 0L0

30 **BEVERLY BREUKELMAN**
Born June 30, 1962
19th Street, Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4

Congratulations to all of you who celebrate your birthday in the month of June. We hope you have a wonderful day with family and friends. We wish you the Lord's blessing as you continue to live and work in his service. Till next month,

Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Patricia Gelms
548 Kemp Road East
RR 2, Beamsville, ON LOR 1B2
905-563-0380
jcorgelms@porchlight.ca



nowweseedimly

Hugo VanderHoek

Growing up Together

The growing plant is used as metaphor to describe quite a variety of things. We speak of growing up and maturing as people. Raising children is thought of as the nurturing care that a gardener gives to his trees. Feeding, weeding, pruning, and guiding can be terms that are applied to parenting and teaching. The New Testament speaks of spiritual growth and growing in faith.

The interesting thing with the growing process is that it is both an individual and a community effort. While much of the development in size and strength is unique to the one maturing creature, the process is one of interdependence with other creatures.

The pen drawing of plants in their pots, somewhere on the grounds of garden nursery, speaks to the struggles of growth and development. Having a close look you will find both positive and negative elements to the scenario of growing up together. These can be interpreted in the context of family, culture, church, work team, self, etc.

The plants are growing up in their own pots, yet are huddled closely together with the others. Some plants burst out of the confines of their shells and shoot roots into the ground. Others reach their roots into neighbouring pots and become intertwined with other roots, all the while finding sustenance in the other one's soil. Growing requires an increasingly larger context. It is a condition for achieving the ultimate purpose of fruit bearing. Plants that at one point flourish in their setting will need expanding boundaries over time.

This is true for people and organizations and for families. Growth often pushes people and organizations beyond the boundaries that once served as safe limits. This is nothing to be afraid of if it enhances the further health of the individual or the organization. It can become a problem if the boundaries become barriers that hinder growth. Stunted growth inhibits the purpose of bearing good fruit. A plant that is not given benefit of more space



and more soil either breaks out of the old pot to shoot its roots elsewhere or it dies.

As long as there is life, there is growth of some sort. When growth stops the organism dies. On this side of eternity we are meant to grow toward God our gardener, to grow for Him and bear our fruit abundantly.

Faith. . . is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. Yet when planted, it

grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade. Mark 4: 31

Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn. Matthew 13:30

You are invited to comment and interact with this column. Visit: nowweseedimly.com



G.H. Visscher



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gerhard.visscher@canrc.org

Presenting Three Graduates

Illness

Last time we began this column by speaking about the frailties of several who are involved with the life of the Theological College. Such frailties have continued to play a significant role in the minds and decisions of the College. While we were very grateful that the medical reports showed that for Dr. Gootjes there was no physical evidence of a significant illness, shortly after that was reported to the churches it became evident to Dr. and Mrs. N. H. Gootjes that it would be difficult for our brother to continue teaching in the immediate future. Thus, the Board of Governors, on the basis of the recommendation of the Senate, agreed that for the last five weeks, the Revs. P. G. Feenstra and E. Kampen would take over the remainder of his sophomore courses and Prof. J. Geertsema the remainder of the freshman course. We are thankful to these brothers for being willing to step in on such short notice. While the courses have been truncated to some degree since we could not expect them to come up with all the usual lecture material so soon, I understand that the students have appreciated the work of these brothers. The fact that Prof. Geertsema could also take the time to teach again is, of course, a sure sign of the ongoing progress in the health of his wife – something else for which we are thankful.

In the meantime, preparations have been made for next year, Dr.

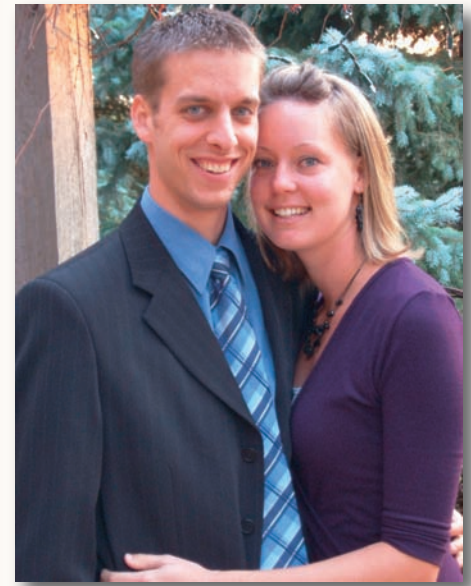
J. W. Maris, a retired professor from the seminary of the Theologische Universiteit in Apeldoorn, The Netherlands, has been found willing to teach from September to December of 2008. At the moment, we are also in contact with one of our own ministers regarding the possibility of teaching from January to April of 2009. When and if that works out, you will be hearing about it. All of this has been arranged so that Dr. Gootjes can get the rest he needs and his future regarding teaching at the Theological College again can be carefully considered. May the Lord give him health and strength again!

All this talk about the health concerns of some might give one the impression that we are burdened here with health concerns. The genuine concerns of some should not obscure our thanksgiving to the Lord that we have three professors, two staff members, and seventeen students who do enjoy good health. Praise the Lord for his continued goodness to us!

Presenting...

If all goes according to plan, the Theological College will have three graduates to present to the churches for consideration this spring. While we often presume that everyone knows them, only a moment's reflection makes us realize this is not so. Thus, it can be beneficial to introduce them to you all.

Rolf den Hollander



Allow us to introduce ourselves. For those of you interested in the traditional game of "Dutch bingo," we are the son and daughter of Rev. and Mrs. W. den Hollander and Mr. and Mrs. Gary and Betty Jansen. Aside from an aunt on the Jansen side we have no other direct relatives in our churches in Canada. Sorry for the short game! We were married on May 28, 2005 and currently live in Winona (Stoney Creek), Ontario, being members of the Covenant Canadian Reformed Church at Grassie. I, Rolf, completed a Specialized Honours B.A. at York University in Classical Studies in 2004. Over the past four years I have been studying at the Theological College. This past summer I completed the three

month internship for the Pastoral Training Program with Rev. DeGelder in Flamborough. My wife has her diploma in Early Childhood Education from Seneca College, King Campus and has been using her gifts at a local day care. During our years of schooling we both held summer jobs in the landscape industry and thus enjoy the outdoors – working in the garden or going for walks, etc. We use our spare time, whenever there is any, for a variety of activities, be that reading, playing sports, scrapbooking (for Liz), etc. I hope this may give a small taste of who we are and where we are at!

Stuart Harsevoort



Born in 1979, I have lived in Hamilton, St. Marys, Burlington, and then Hamilton again. I am the only one in my family to have attended grades 1-8 in one school (Covenant Christian School in London). After Guido de Bres Christian High School, I entered McMaster University and studied Philosophy and Comparative Literature as an undergraduate, and Philosophical Theology as a graduate, receiving a Masters degree after writing a thesis on the theory of knowledge of Nicholas

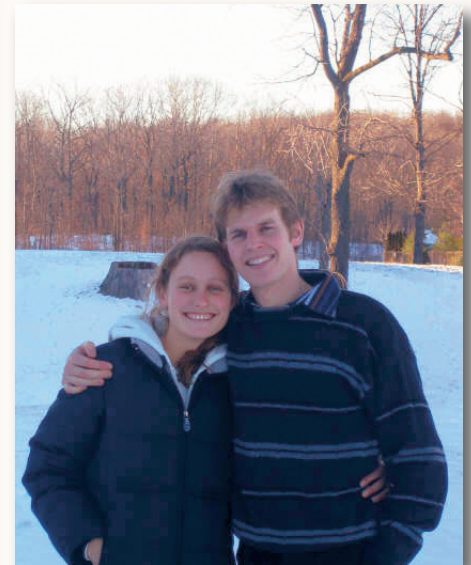
Wolterstorff. During the summer between my third and fourth year at the College I worked with Rev. Van Vliet in Surrey B.C. for the Pastoral Training Program, working in Surrey and Willoughby Heights, which was an excellent experience for learning in a more practical way what is entailed in the ministry. Thanks to both congregations for having my wife and I in their midst and to Rev. Van Vliet for mentoring me.

During my undergraduate degree, I met Sherri Keep and in 2004, the summer before entering the College, we were married. She has studied cooking and now plies her trade at home, as well as her hobby photography. In August of 2007 we were blessed with a baby boy, Callum, who now fills most of her time. We currently live in Mount Hope on the property of John Vanderwoude Sod Farms, where I worked during the summers I was in school, driving tractors, mowing sod (and picking rocks). In what spare time I have, I enjoy keeping up with my reading (I have always loved reading and have rather eclectic tastes), collecting books, and playing the occasional game of chess.

Cornelis Kleyn

We, Cornelis and Greta Kleyn, are recently married and are also expecting our first little one in August 2008. Greta is the daughter of the Australian based Mr. and Mrs. Ballast. Cornelis is the son of Rev. and Mrs. Kleyn, currently serving in South Africa. During the past four years Cornelis has been studying at the Theological College and prior to this four years at the University of Pretoria in South Africa to get his B.A. Cornelis has been working by the "sweat of his vrouw" during the past year – Greta worked as a Registered Nurse. But Cornelis hopes to finish his studies at the

Theological College in May 2008 and then present himself to classis to make himself available for call. During the past summer Cornelis did his Pastoral Training Program in Australia with Rev. van Delden. In our spare time we get involved in various outdoor activities such as walks out in the country; trying out some skiing and checking out the beaches.



On a different note, we have three third year students who will be occupied with the Pastoral Proficiency Program this summer. Ken Bergsma will be doing so in the Canadian Reformed Church of Fergus South, Ryan de Jonge in the church at Guelph, and Rodney Vermeulen in the Church at Toronto. In that way, the brothers receive some practical experience before they complete their final year and the churches witness some of the fruit of our labours again.

May the Lord bless the students whom we have mentioned here and continue to provide for all of us, students and instructors, as we prepare for a new season. We thank the churches for their faithful and wonderful support whereby the Lord makes all this possible.

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Help Requested for South Africa

Introduction

The Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) have enjoyed sister church relations or ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA) since 1958. Distance and language have long impeded the relationship from becoming very active. However, with increasing travel and communication as well as membership in the International Conference of Reformed Churches, our relationship with these churches has become more meaningful over the last number of years.

These churches, born mainly out of post-war immigration, have developed into multi-cultural churches. They consist of three distinct cultural (and social) groups within the federation – black Africans in the Pretoria area who conduct their services in Sotho, coloureds in the Cape area who speak their own type of Afrikaans, and the largely white congregations whose services are conducted in Afrikaans. This multicultural composition and the location of the FRCSA on the African continent have given these churches great opportunity to conduct mission and relief work in the name of the Lord. The FRCSA and its members have seen these opportunities given by the Lord to bring the Reformed faith to practice

and have taken on as much mission and as many relief projects as possible. They operate six mission posts and a number of relief projects. However, the federation is small, consisting of just seven churches and 1900 members in total. The Reformed Churches of The Netherlands (GKN) have given help in various ways, but there is such great opportunity in the mission and relief projects operated by these churches that more help would be quite welcome. It was because of this need in Southern Africa that Synod Smithers 2007, in Article 124 of the Acts of Synod, decided “to recommend the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa to the churches as worthy of continued and increased prayerful and financial assistance, to help them with their extensive mission work as well as the compassionate pursuits among the disadvantaged.”

To draw the attention to these opportunities, the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) recently sent letters to the councils of the CanRC recommending various mission and relief projects to the churches for consideration. This letter included a report by Rev. C. Kleijn, minister of the church of Johannesburg, about the various areas where our help could be used. This article is a follow up on that letter, to continue to keep this

matter “warm” among our churches. The Lord has richly blessed us as churches here in North America, also financially. And the Lord gives not only so that we can enjoy, but also so that we may show his mercy to others. So we ask the churches and members of the churches to seriously consider giving support to the FRCSA in prayer and in material assistance.

Spiritual unity

First of all, these churches, as expressed by Rev. Kleijn in a report to the CRCA, seek support in prayer. The great challenge in the multi-cultural FRCSA itself at this time is to grow in unity. Part of this challenge is that the churches that originate from the mission work may integrate well into the federation. For instance, until the present, theological students and ministers from the three cultural groups in these churches have each had their own type of training at different levels. The desire is that the spiritual unity continues to develop and enable these churches to operate as a fully-fledged federation of churches where there is mutual respect and understanding and building each other up in the Lord. It is also hoped that the ex-mission churches will fully integrate in the federation and become more and more effective in their own surroundings.

Assistance

The two greatest needs in the FRCSA are financial support of needy churches and assistance for the John Calvin School in Bethal, where one of the FRCSA congregations is located. In regards to the first, it needs to be noted that of the seven churches in the federation, three churches presently require assistance, and the federation also has responsibility for one emeritus minister. The churches that originate from mission work are generally in poorer areas and will in the foreseeable future not be able to support their own ministers. Thankfully there is support from The Netherlands as yet for the ex-mission churches. However, this support is being scaled down by twenty percent each year, so the FRCSA federation itself has to take up the slack. As those three churches do not yet have the prospect of becoming financially independent in the next five years, the burden for the federation will only increase for the time being. Without help from sister churches elsewhere, this is not going to be sustainable. There is a fund for needy churches with deputies in the FRCSA and it would be a blessing if churches would consider donating to this fund or even requesting to adopt a specific needy church via this fund as its own project. For more information Mr. Ferdi van Dijk can be contacted at ferdivandijk@cs.maravedi.co.za.

The other pressing need is the John Calvin School of Bethal, which is in dire straights. In 2003 the small congregation of Bethal established its own school in faith. Their dedicated staff works hard for little pay. The departure of the ministerial couple who helped

considerably has left the school in a crisis. Moral and financial support from among the CanRC would help greatly in this crisis situation and give new prospects. To give assistance to this school, Mr. Edward Strydom can be contacted at: edward@bpmpumalanga.co.za.

As far as help or co-operation in mission work goes, there are numerous opportunities. The Lord is certainly opening doors for the gospel in South Africa. The FRCSA presently has four active missionaries, two near Pretoria and two in the south near Cape Town. They are assisted by seven theological students. At this time the FRCSA are expecting the arrival of two new missionaries, one of them Rev. Boersma who formerly served in the American Reformed Church of Denver, CO. Next year they expect five students from the mission churches, three black Africans from the north and two coloureds from the south, to present themselves to the churches for examination in view of becoming eligible for a call. This will give even more opportunities for expansion of the work. If churches or individuals wish to contribute to the rapidly expanding work of mission on South Africa, they are invited to contact the secretary of the mission deputies, Mrs Ineke Hagg at inekehagg@telkomsa.net and she would be pleased to give direction in this.

The Lesedi la Ditshaba Christian School in Soshanguve North could also use considerable assistance. The school was set up by parents in January 2000, when Prof. A. J. de Visser of the Theological College of the CanRC was still missionary there. His wife, sister Inge de Visser, was

acting principal of the school for the first number of years. At present there are seventy-nine students and new students are expected each year. Due to very restricted funding the staff is only paid about fifty to sixty percent of what teachers receive in the state-run schools. Further support would be very welcome. There is an organisation called KOOS in Pretoria which does the fundraising for this school and which gives advice. For those who wish to receive more information or wish to give some support, Mr. Tjeerd de Wit can be contacted at Tjeerd.deWit@bcx.co.za.

In South Africa the misery caused by the HIV/Aids pandemic is huge. It is estimated that eleven percent of the population (more than 5.2 million South Africans) are HIV positive. The brothers and sisters in the FRCSA could not ignore the misery caused by this disease and members of the white congregations in Pretoria and of the black African mission churches in Soshanguve have combined their efforts and set up a joint AIDS Association called "Khothatsong." The aim of this association is to coordinate physical and spiritual care of those infected or affected by the AIDS epidemic in places like Soshanguve and Winterveld. The association provides hospice care, home based care, foster care, awareness, spiritual care, and training of health workers. For those who wish to support this project or to receive the newsletter, contact the secretary of the association, Mrs Christine Hordijk at cfhordijk@gmail.com. The Canadian Reformed World Relief Foundation (CRWRF) also supports this work, thus individual contributions designated for the

Kothatsong association could also be channelled via the CRWRF.

Finally there is still one smaller organization within the FRCSA called "Thusano," which aims to help students from mission churches to receive good post-secondary education. The members of the mission churches usually do not have the money to pay for such education and therefore unemployment is very high in those churches. This also means that the mission churches remain needy. By providing assistance for post-secondary education and training for students, the aim is not only to help the employment situation, but also help the ex-mission and mission churches to

become financially independent. Presently sixteen students are being supported by this fund, but there is room for much more help. If there are churches or individuals who would like to help "Thusano," you may contact Mr Hilko Lubbinge at hilko@lantic.net.

Conclusion

So far the opportunities to help passed on to us. Again, the FRCSA are a very small federation of churches facing many challenges and provided with huge opportunities in southern Africa. Synod Smithers 2007 has urged the CanRC to consider these churches and their work when thinking of sharing our bounty here. Please

consider becoming involved and providing help to and via the brotherhood in South Africa!

*For the Committee for Relations
with Churches Abroad,
Rev. J. Moesker*

Some websites to look at:

Website FRCSA:

<http://www.vgk.org.za/english.php>

Website Deputies Mission:

<http://www.vgk.org.za/maranata/Sending/pdfs/mission%20work-possibilities%20for%20collaboration.pdf>

Website Mission Pretoria:

http://www.vgk.org.za/maranata/Sending/default_E.php



Book Review

Reviewed by Wes Bredenhof

***When Sinners Say "I Do":
Discovering the Power of the
Gospel for Marriage, Dave
Harvey (Wapwallopen:
Shepherd Press, 2007).***

**Additional Information:
Paperback, 189 pages, \$12.61**

One of the privileges that I have as a pastor is teaching marriage preparation classes. This privilege also means that I regularly think about marriage, including my own. As part of all that, I try to read as much on the topic as I can. This book by Dave Harvey is the best I've read so far. Let me explain why.

It boils down to one simple fact: the author focuses on the gospel and how it applies to marriage. Dave Harvey (senior pastor of Covenant Fellowship Church in Glen Mills, PA) sees the salvation wrought by Christ as of utmost importance for couples learning how to live together in holy wedlock. He elaborates: "How a husband and wife build their marriage day-by-day and year-by-year is fundamentally shaped by their theology" (p 21). Moreover, that theology has to be Christ-centred, having the gospel at its heart.

When Sinners Say "I Do" is warmly and personally written and contains the stories of several couples. Harvey helps readers

come to terms with the biggest problem that all marriages face and the solution to this problem. He discusses what to do when your spouse is living in sin and needs a wake-up call. There's a great chapter on sex. Finally, there's something I haven't seen in any other book on marriage: a chapter on death.

This is a biblical, gospel-centred approach to the subject of marriage. No matter how long you've been married, you can benefit from the wisdom offered by Dave Harvey. Readers interested in learning more about this book can also check out the video clips on YouTube. Just go to www.youtube.com and search for "Dave Harvey When Sinners Say I Do."



Farewell to the Slaas

Farewell dinner

On March 29, 2008, the members of Kerwood congregation got together for a farewell dinner and evening with the Slaa family. The dinner was opened with the reading of Psalm 95:1-7 and prayer. After the delicious potluck dinner was enjoyed by all, the evening began with a welcome to all present including special guests.

The first, of many talents, was shown by Carolyn and Stacey Haan singing "Fortress." There was a power point presentation that reviewed the many activities the Slaas participated in. It started with their moving in day and welcome evening, which doesn't seem all that long ago, just a mere seven years. We were treated to a review of all the costumes our pastor and his wife wore to the Spring Parades every year. We remembered seeing the Slaa family grow from four children to six. We also got to see a preview of their new manse and church in Smithers.

The young members of the congregation got together to sing a few songs including "So Long, Farewell" from *The Sound of Music*. The Slaas were presented with a gift from the young people that included a penny so they will never be completely broke, an elastic so they can stretch beyond



their limits, a backscratcher for life's little itches, a highlighter to highlight the good things, a string to hold everything together when things are falling apart, and "kisses" to remember us by. Miriam was thanked for all her hard work and great ideas in helping the kids clubs. The Women's Society wanted to make sure they would not be forgotten by giving Mrs. Slaa an apron with the names and picture of the members of the society.

The Slaas gave us a picture of the Synod of Dordt with all the signatures of the attendees. The Slaas acknowledged that roots had been set down here and through all

aspects of their ministry, the good, the bad, and everything in between, there could be thankfulness and joy in this evening because we know that Jesus Christ is head of his church and it was under his rule that we could forge good relationships. Rev. Slaa then read Revelation 1:4-8 and asked us to continue to take care of one another and pray for one another.

The evening was closed with song and prayer and the Canadian Reformed tradition of coffee and cake was upheld following the closing.

Farewell sermon

On Sunday afternoon, April 6, we heard the farewell sermon. The text chosen was from 2 Peter 3:18. This is a text that has special meaning for our congregation as it is the text on the plaque outside of our church. We are to grow in the grace and knowledge of our God. The message of salvation must be preached every Sunday. With the Word of Christ in our hearts, there can be spiritual growth. Only the true preaching can give this spiritual growth. When the true preaching is not happening, it is a time for lament. God is good and He does provide. Parents also must teach their children, so they too can grow spiritually.

This growth is a decisive act of God. As a seed is planted and the farmer has to wait for sunshine and rain, so we can teach and listen to the gospel but it is God that grants the growth. It is God that determines the readiness of the heart to accept his gospel. When there was disunity in God's early church, it was because there was a wrong emphasis on who was teaching. There was pride in being taught by Paul or Apollos and thankfulness to men instead of to God. God alone deserves the credit and to Him alone belongs the glory. There should be no distraction from the truth by charismatic ministers who do not preach the whole truth. Only the true and complete gospel gives this growth.

There is a danger in becoming complacent – because the Lord

gives the growth we may start to feel there is nothing left for us to do. This cannot be further from the truth. As the farmer must work hard to get the fruits of his labour, so too, we are commanded to work for our spiritual needs. As faith increases, so do the fruits of faith. We can never rely on our past behaviour but must continually strive to know more, obey more, and heed his commandments as genuine. We must daily glorify Him until our death or his return. He has blessed us and we must continue to listen with open hearts and minds and strive to grow through reading and studying his Word.

This goodbye, although sad for us, is seen as God's will as our minister will continue his work in

Smithers. Rev. Slaa has worked very hard in many areas of our church life. He has led many meetings and attended workshops, gave talks at Providence Reformed Collegiate and at Trillium Village, the seniors home in Strathroy. Mrs. Slaa also did a lot of work behind the scenes and helped on the education committee for Covenant Christian School in London. While we are thankful to the Slaas for all their hard work, we also realize that it is only the Father in Heaven who is to be adored. We send greetings with the Slaa family to our brothers and sisters in Smithers.

To Him be glory both now and forever.



Reviewed by C. Van Dam

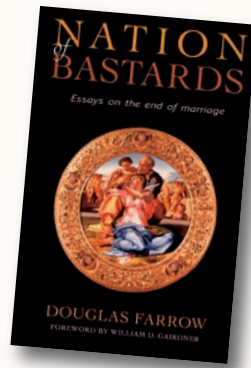
Nation of Bastards: Essays on the End of Marriage, Douglas Farrow, Foreword by William D. Gairdner (Toronto: BPS Books, 2007)

**Additional Information:
116 pages, about \$16.00 CDN**

Don't be put off by what appears to be a rather harsh title. This is a must-read book which underlines the crisis Canada is in due to its ongoing deconstruction of marriage and family. The title refers to the fact that our nation is rapidly becoming a nation where most children are born out of wedlock. In Quebec the figure is already at fifty-nine percent.

Professor Farrow is Associate Professor of Christian Thought at McGill University in Montreal. He is also a strong critic of the Anglican Church's approval of same sex marriage. He left that church for Roman Catholicism. His book contains four essays, along with an epilogue. The common theme is exposing the horrific implications of same-sex marriage and the need to maintain the institution of marriage as ordained by God.

Farrow's contribution is of great value. Let me give some examples. He correctly notes that no society can operate in a moral vacuum. In today's Canada, morality has come to be regarded as a matter of private judgment. That being so it should not surprise us that "equality rights should emerge as the only remaining public moral structure and the highest embodiment of justice" (p 12). The Supreme Court governs the country accordingly. However, both the 1960 *Canadian Bill of Rights* as well as the 1982 *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* acknowledge that Canada is "founded upon principles that recognize the



supremacy of God." It is God who instituted marriage and set the norms for it, not the state. The state therefore has no business or power redefining that which it is not the author of. "The state that imagines itself the author of marriage, or thinks that its Charter justifies it in assuming control over the very substance of marriage, is a dangerous state with highly inflated religious pretensions" (p 18). "Marriage does not exist for the state, but the state for marriage" (p 73).

In spite of constant media denials to the contrary, same-sex marriage is really an attack on children and family. "Same-sex marriage has in reality nothing to do with the establishment of human rights – if it did, the rights of children and parents would not have been left out of the debate – and everything to do with a revolt against the family. More specifically, it has to do with the normalization of homosexuality, which is a signal, still largely subliminal, of society's rejection of the future" (p 26). Marriage in Canada is no longer about being a parent, grandparent, uncle, and aunt and forming the basic cells of civil society. According to the law, it is "merely about coupling and copulation. . . it is state-approved fornication: a temporary stop on the road to nowhere in particular" (p 32).

There is, however, no foreseeable closure on the marriage debate. One of the consequences of same-sex marriage is that legal parenthood has now been severed from biological parenthood in a way never done before. As a

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consequence, the Ontario Court of Appeal was consistent in ruling on January 2, 2007 that a child can have three legal parents. So, what is a family? Even if one rejects God and his law, there is overwhelming evidence that God's way is the best way for children, namely that children have a father and a mother.

A closely related issue is: who owns the children? There are not a few who claim that they ultimately belong to the state. As Parliament and the judiciary slowly dismantle the family unit, at least one school board is in the process of imposing homosexual values into the school curriculum. Tolerance has become the highest good and tramples underfoot religious convictions in a supposedly free country. Farrow shows how the continued advance of state control over marriage and family leads to state tyranny. Only those with biblical religious convictions respecting marriage will be able to resist. A country that has a strong sense of the importance of the family unit will not allow the state to take over its functions. As events have shown, this is sadly not the case in Canada at the moment.

In a final chapter, Farrow notes that Canada's civil religion is about "Canadian values" which "our ermined philosopher-kings" talk about "in tones and in terms designed to make offending religious minorities fall to their knees and confess their sins" (pp 94-95). Our nation's holy writ is the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Farrow pleads for what he calls Christian secularism. In it Christianity recognizes that Jesus is Lord over all of life and Christians reserve their right to speak to the issues of the day and so hope to reach a consensus for the public good.

Much more could be mentioned. May this suffice to whet the appetite. Highly recommended.