

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Volume 57, No. 18 ■ August 29, 2008

*Do not work for food
that spoils. . .*



Inside this issue

- The Corinthian Crunch
- Work for Food that Endures
- They are Singing New Songs





Cl. Stam

Rev. Cl. Stam is minister emeritus of the Canadian Reformed Church at Hamilton, Ontario
clstam@mountaincable.net

The Corinthian Crunch

Selfish and self-directed Christians are just like pagans

In a previous editorial I held forth as my understanding that the special gifts (the “charismata”) of the Holy Spirit were given mainly to the apostles and some of their fellow workers but have ceased with the passing away of the apostles. In other words, I take in the *cessationist* position.

The cessationist position has always been under fire, often from the evidence provided in the letters to the Corinthians. I call this the *Corinthian crunch*. Just when you think it’s safe to poke your head out, here comes this big steamroller and. . . crunch. . . your position is flattened. For is it not evident from 1 Corinthians 12 that the *entire* congregation has access to special gifts?

Spiritual gifts are meant to build up the body of Christ. . . they are not a goal in themselves

The Apostle uses two words in 1 Corinthians 12 which we should note. There is the word “*pneumatikos*” which means “spiritual” gifts or “of the Spirit” and there is the word “charismata,” meaning gifts of grace. Take this together and the Apostle is referring to particular gifts *that come from the Holy Spirit and are received out of God’s sovereign grace*.

This is an important set of words. The gifts are not ours to demand or to keep. They belong to and come from the Holy Spirit. They are given not because

someone has reached the proper status. They are a matter of God’s sovereign grace. He gives as He determines and apportions. The Corinthians did not quite understand this.

I am always impressed by the awe and reverence with which Paul writes about these things. The Corinthians considered the spiritual gifts as a matter of course and proof of status. They used the spiritual gifts for their own purpose and glory. What was given *temporarily* in God’s wise council and spread throughout the congregation, the Corinthians made into *permanent* and personal status symbols. Some Charismatics, too, tend to speak about spiritual gifts as common matters to which they have a right.

When you were pagans...

I have often wondered why Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:2 reminds the Corinthians of their *pagan* past and serving of mute idols. What’s that got to do with special gifts? How do “mute idols” fit into the picture?

Well, the pagan world is divided over clergy and laity. Only the priest-class has access to God. The clergy speak God’s Word and the laity has to follow. The common man has no spiritual gifts that enable him to commune with the gods. Since the idols are *mute*, the temple priests have to pass on the word of the idol. They read tea leaves or study entrails to predict the future. Common people have no understanding of such things.

Paul writes: you know about these things. When you were pagans, you were led astray to mute idols. But that is in the past. By the Holy Spirit, *all members* of the church can confess Jesus Christ. All members



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Visscher; Copy Manager: Laura Veenendaal
Coeditors: R. Aasman, E. Kampen, Cl. Stam, C. Van Dam

ADDRESS FOR COPY MANAGER:

Clarion, 57 Oakridge Drive South, St. Albert, AB T8N 7H2
E-Mail: veenendaal@shaw.ca

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

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5

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

Advertisements: \$15.00 per column inch

Full Colour Display Advertisements: \$21.00 per column inch

We reserve the right to refuse ads.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada, Canada through the Publication Assistance Program (PAP), toward our mailing costs.

Cancellation Agreement

Unless a written subscription cancellation is received we assume you wish to continue to subscribe. You will be invoiced prior to the subscription renewal date. Agreement No. 40063293; PAP Registration No. 9907; ISSN 0383-0438

Copyright © Premier Printing Ltd.

All rights reserved. No part may be reproduced in any manner without permission in writing from the publisher, except brief quotations used in connection with a review in a magazine or newspaper.

Useful Link: www.canrc.org

share in the same Spirit. This allows them all to worship the Lord together and help each other as members of one body. To that end, Christ gives the manifestation of the Spirit to each one for the common good. As a living body under Christ the Head, all members share the same care and concern for each other.

The real crunch is that the Corinthians were starting to slip back into heathendom because they did not properly acknowledge the Spirit and discern the body. They did not have a correct understanding of spiritual gifts and how these are to be used in the church. Selfish and self-directed Christians are just like pagans. It may be a different method, but it's the same result.

Nowhere in these chapters of 1 and 2 Corinthians does Paul state that the spiritual gifts of his time are permanent. That is not the crunch. The "gifts" will vary from time to time and from person to person, but their purpose is the same: the body is a unit that must function as such. Spiritual gifts are meant to build up the body of Christ. If they do not edify, they do not function and will cease. They are not a goal in themselves.

They will cease. . .

I did not myself invent the idea that certain gifts will cease. The Corinthians thought that having specific gifts was proof of their salvation and status. But Paul makes clear that certain gifts are bound to disappear and will cease. What goes for some gifts, even the most important ones, in essence goes for all, except the one singled out as very special.

Paul especially writes about spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12. He mentions the following charismata:

1. The message of knowledge
2. The message of wisdom
3. Faith
4. Gifts of healing
5. Miraculous powers
6. Prophecy
7. Distinguishing between spirits
8. Speaking in different kinds of tongues
9. The interpretation of tongues.

In This Issue

Editorial – The Corinthian Crunch
— Cl. Stam454

Treasures, New and Old – Work for Food that
Endures — R. Bredenhof457

They are Singing New Songs
— A.J. de Visser458

Roadside Assistance — T. Boeringa461

Contemplations on the Voice of the Organ
— J. deGlint462

Book Review — reviewed by W.L. Bredenhof464

Press Release – Classis Central Ontario465

The list is probably not exhaustive. Notice that Paul mentions last those gifts (tongues and their interpretation) which the Corinthians saw as most important. The gifts of healing are placed somewhere in the middle. Later in the chapter Paul mentions other gifts as well: apostles, prophets, and teachers, workers of miracles, gift of healing, gifts of administration, and tongues.

Who would think of the work of the *administrator* as a special gift, a charisma? Most administrators quietly do their work behind the scenes with little thanks for their efforts. Yet they do this work out of love to the Lord.

Endless bickering over spiritual gifts can put quite a damper on the greatest gift of all

Not all have these gifts. But they may be eagerly desired (1 Cor 14: 1). And Paul shows us the “most excellent way” to the best gifts. These are faith, hope, and love (1 Cor 13). In this chapter and context Paul uses the word “cease” (13:8).

Paul was a bit of a cessationist, shall we say. He uses a strong verb that means “to lose power” and so to pass away. What does not function anymore is slated for removal. Do you see it? The gifts are not permanent and were never intended to be lasting.

This is said of *prophecies, tongues, and knowledge*. They function for a time and then disappear. I think that there is solid biblical basis for cessationism. Perhaps I interpret things too rigidly, but it says *sans doubt* that certain gifts will cease. We also find out *why* they will cease. There is a reason.

When I became a man...

In 1 Corinthians 13 Paul contrasts being a child with becoming a man. “When I was a child, I talked like a child; I thought like a child, I reasoned like a

child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.” We used baby-talk, infantile thoughts, and childish reasoning. We did not know better. Children can be excused for not acting as adults.

But there is a time when we are all grown up. Then we put childish ways behind us. We act our age. Life is an interesting process of maturing. When children are young they want to be older. When they are older, they reminisce about their youth. But the time of youth is fleeting.

In the letters to the Corinthians Paul is dealing with a church that is mature or should be. Speaking in tongues is out. No more baby-talk. Prophecy is out, too, because *all has been revealed*. A mature church should not act like a bunch of kids.

The apostle adds that things are not yet perfect. We have not yet been glorified. “But when the perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.” In any case *we are past the stage of infancy*. Longing for what has ceased means that we measure the present in terms of the past. That is a non-profit business.

Love remains

What will never cease is *love*. Love never ends, but grows to perfection. Endless bickering over spiritual gifts can put quite a damper on the greatest gift of all, love that is rooted in the sacrifice of Christ, evident in his suffering and death. “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God” (1 John 3:1).

We go from infancy to maturity. This life will end. God’s love will never end. It is the calling of the church throughout all the ages to show this love of God in Jesus Christ his Son.

Wonder what happened to the Rev. Yeboah of Uganda? Well, he’s off the radar screen. It’s easy to go from one gimmick to the other. People are being fooled all the time, even with claims of piety. He has “the electric touch,” eh?

Those who love have the magic touch. Learn to discern the Corinthian crunch.





Rev. R. Bredenhof is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at St. Albert, Alberta
reuben.bredenhof@canrc.org

Work for Food that Endures



MATTHEW 13:52

“Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life.”

John 6:27

After a summer of rest and relaxation it's time to get back to work – back to school, back to the office or jobsite, back to a regular schedule around the home and in the church. At such a time it's good to seek some perspective on our daily labour. What's it all for? What's the real purpose of all those hours we put in?

We find our answer in John 6. This is Jesus' discourse on Himself as the Bread of Life, a message prompted by his feeding of the 5000. Sadly, this awesome miracle had been misunderstood entirely. The crowds weren't interested in Jesus as the one who could save their souls, but merely as the one who could stuff their stomachs. And so Jesus rebukes those who trailed Him to the other side of the lake: "You are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill" (v. 26). The people were missing the point altogether! Life doesn't consist in being satisfied physically, nor is following Christ all about having your bodily desires met.

In a similar way we too might miss the point of this present life. For after a while we could forget why we labour every week. We forget because we're just too tired or too busy or too stressed out to reflect on the reason for our daily work – there's so little time even to pray for God's blessing on what we undertake. Or maybe we forget the purpose of it all because we've become consumed with material gains. After all, the

more hours you put in, the more clients you have, the more things you sell, the more money you can earn! Even students might become fixated on the high-paying job that beckons after graduating from this or that program.

But again, what's it all for? Consider Jesus' exhortation: "Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life" (v. 27). Jesus says we need to orient our lives in the right direction. He teaches his followers not to be so focused on temporary material things like bodily satisfaction and physical comforts.

Putting an eye on our own work, we should honestly ask: are we doing it for "food that spoils?" And here Jesus isn't talking simply about filling up your pantry and freezer with perishable food items. He's speaking of all things that spoil, all those fleeting earthly gains. He's talking about that decent house you live in. He's talking about that shiny car you drive. He's talking about those other nice possessions and positions you treasure or desire. About such things Jesus says elsewhere, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal" (Matt 6:19). In themselves, all the profits from our earthly labours are only passing.

So Jesus urges, "Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt 6:20). In our text Jesus puts the same truth another way, "Work for food that endures to eternal life."

This is a radically different kind of work, done to gain a gloriously different kind of reward. As Jesus goes on to explain in John 6, "The work of God is this: To believe in the one he has sent" (v. 29). Putting our faith in Jesus Christ is the one activity that'll gain a lasting food! In this life that's our first duty, our primary task, our highest calling: that we believe in Christ and that in believing, we serve Him as Lord.

This vital work of believing will then give perspective to all our other labours. For to be sure, God still wants us to go to work. Only this is how we have to look at it: we're working not for ourselves, nor for our employer, but for the Lord. We're earning money not to build a personal security, but to advance Christ's Kingdom. We're raising children not for their own successes nor for own pride, but to be faithful disciples of the Saviour. We're busy in the church not for the sake of our reputation, but for the glory of the church's Head. It's as the Holy Spirit says in Colossians 3, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (vv 23-24).

At the beginning of a new season of our labours, let's be reminded that only the work of believing in Jesus Christ will bring us "food that endures." For believing in Him, we'll be filled with the Bread of Life, the Bread that will sustain us today and forever.



Dr. A.J. de Visser is professor of Diaconology and Ecclesiology at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Ontario
arjan.devisser@canrc.org

They are Singing New Songs

Review of *And They Sing a New Song. About Psalms and Hymns.* by C. Van der Waal

During the 1970s Dr. Cornelis Van der Waal, pastor of the Kandelaaer church in Pretoria, South Africa, watched in dismay as the Reformed Churches (liberated) in The Netherlands embarked on a process to expand their hymnal with some more hymns. Up to that point the Dutch churches had been singing the 150 Psalms and twenty-nine hymns and it was felt that more hymns should be added to the collection. Dr. Van der Waal voiced his concerns in a booklet on the singing of psalms and hymns that was published in 1978 (two years before his death). His message was clear: by introducing new hymns the Dutch churches are ignoring the lessons of history and starting to slide down the slippery slope of deformation.

Thirty years later Inheritance Publications has published an English translation of Van der Waal's booklet, entitled *And They Sing a New Song*.¹ Why, and why now? The preface informs the reader that translation of Van der Waal's booklet has become "very urgent" (p. 6) because recent synods of the Canadian Reformed churches have opened up the way to include more hymns in the *Book of Praise*. Although Van der Waal's booklet was written for the Dutch situation, the publisher feels that it

will be beneficial for the Canadian Reformed people to listen to Dr. Van der Waal since he "clearly reveals the Biblical foundation for what is to be sung in Church."

Canticles and hymns

So what is Van der Waal's view? In short, he is in favour of singing psalms and canticles but he strongly opposes the singing of hymns. Canticles (or *cantica*) are hymns that are found in the Bible outside the book of the Psalms. Hymns are songs for worship which have been made later during the history of the church.

Van der Waal would applaud the Canadian Reformed churches for singing the 150 Psalms and for singing canticles like the Song of Moses (Hymn 8) and the Song of Mary (13) but he would criticize the churches for singing hymns like "The Church's One Foundation" (40) and Luther's "A Mighty Fortress is our God" (41). Had Van der Waal been alive today, he might indeed have written a booklet entitled "They are Singing New Songs in Canada" or something along those lines.

What is the biblical foundation for Van der Waal's view? The main surprise of the book is perhaps that so little is offered in terms of biblical argumentation. An example is Van der Waal's discussion of the Apostle Paul's exhortation that believers should "speak to one another with psalms,

hymns and spiritual songs" (Eph 5:10; Col 3:16). This is obviously an important text and there are exegetical questions here. What exactly did Paul have in mind when he spoke about psalms, hymns and spiritual songs? Was he referring to psalms and free hymns? Was he referring to three distinct categories of songs? This was Luther's interpretation. Luther believed that the three terms refer to psalms, canticles, and hymns respectively.

More recently Dr. C. Trimp has studied the matter and came to the conclusion that none of the terms refer to the Psalms of the Old Testament. He believes that all three terms refer to New Testament hymns. That the Apostle used three different terms points to the rich abundance of the songs of praise in the new covenant.²

Clearly, the exegesis of Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 is not a simple matter and one would have expected Van der Waal to spend some time discussing various explanations that have been offered. Surprisingly, the only thing he does is to quote a Roman Catholic liturgical dictionary where he found the explanation that the three words "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" all refer to the same thing: the Old Testament Psalms (p. 14). Why the Apostle would use three different words to refer to the Psalms remains a mystery.

Lessons from history

An important part of Van der Waal's argumentation against the singing of hymns comes from "lessons" which he suggests are taught by church history. Taking the reader on a quick tour through twenty centuries of church history Van der Waal paints a clear picture: when the church is in decline you will hear people singing hymns (p. 38), when there is reformation you will hear the singing of psalms and canticles.

The problem with Van der Waal's overview of church history is that he often does not tell the whole story. Let me illustrate this.

With respect to the early Christian church, Van der Waal refers to the *Codex Alexandrinus* (a document dating from the fifth century) to prove that the early church was in the habit of singing psalms and canticles. That is fine. But why does he not mention that respected church fathers such as Ambrose wrote hymns which were used in the church as well?

With respect to the Reformation, Van der Waal mentions that Calvin restored the singing of the Psalms in the worship service and that he did not include hymns in the Genevan songbook. Unfortunately he does not deal with the important question whether this was a matter of principle or a matter of preference. The leader is left with the impression that it was a matter of principle for Calvin.

It is interesting to compare the approach of Calvin with the approach of his friend and colleague Martin Bucer, the leader of the Reformation in Strasbourg. Both Reformers shared the view that the church should sing songs that are drawn out of the Scriptures. Bucer applied this principle in such a way that the Strasbourg songbook contained

both psalms and hymns.³ Calvin applied the principle in such a way that the Genevan songbook contained only psalms but we do not get the impression that he ever criticized Bucer for including hymns. H. O. Old asserts that "one can be sure that Calvin had no objection if in other churches hymns other than Psalms were sung. His use of exclusive psalmody was a matter of preference. He did not consider it the rule of Scripture."⁴

With respect to the churches of the Secession (1834), Van der Waal refers to Rev. Hendrik de Cock who vehemently opposed the use of hymns in the worship service. The reader is left with the impression that the Secession churches in general were against the singing of hymns. Again, this is not true. Leading ministers such as Van Velzen and Brummelkamp had no problem with the singing of hymns as such. They had a problem with bad hymns, and they objected when the Hervormde Kerk tried to force people to sing them, but they would never say that Scripture does not allow the singing of hymns. In fact, Van Velzen is on record to have stated that De Cock's fierce attacks against hymns had damaged the cause of the Secession.⁵ Brummelkamp supported initiatives to add more hymns to the songbook of the churches.⁶

An interesting part of Van der Waal's book is his discussion of the position of K. Schilder. Of course, Van der Waal would have liked to have Schilder on his side but apparently Schilder did not have strong opinions about the issue. While he was not really enthusiastic about the hymns that were added in the 1930s, he did not oppose the expansion of the hymnbook either, stating that a hymn collection will always be a matter of compromise (p. 51). After

the Liberation of 1944 Schilder did nothing to remove the hymns from the hymnal of the liberated churches, even though Van der Waal suggests that by that time Schilder had converted to a "psalms-and-canticles-only" position.

In evaluation we have to say that Van der Waal offers a biased overview of church history. It is simply not true to say that the singing of hymns is always a sign of deformation. When Van der Waal draws the "lesson" from church history that "behind the attempt for free ecclesiastical song hides a rejection of the unity of the covenant, a refusal to sing the Psalm out of Christ" (p. 50), he is doing many people a grave injustice.

It would be more correct to say that the Reformed tradition has always used the fundamental principle that whatever is sung in church must be drawn out of the Scriptures. Based on that principle the Reformed tradition has generally held the view that the singing of the Psalms should have priority in the worship service but that there is room for the singing of good hymns as well.

Covenant

An important aspect of Van der Waal's approach is his emphasis on the unity of the covenant which corresponds to his appeal that the churches should sing more canticles from the Old Testament. We should not just sing the song of Moses (Deut 32) but also the song of Deborah, the song of Jonah, the song of Habakkuk, the song of the vineyard (Isa 5:1-7), and many more. Instead of expanding the songbook with hymns we should add canticles from the Old Testament.

Van der Waal's main reason for this approach is his emphasis on the *unity of the covenant*. His recurring lament is that "the unity of the

covenant is not understood properly anymore" (p. 39). If Reformed people appreciated the unity of the old and the new covenant, he suggests, they would stop asking for the inclusion of hymns in the songbook. Instead, they would enjoy singing about the riches of the new covenant by using the prophetic language of the Psalms and canticles of the old covenant.

Of course, there is nothing against the singing of canticles from the Old Testament but it becomes problematic if the singing of old covenant canticles is played out against the singing of new covenant hymns. Why does Van der Waal do that? I suggest that the basic problem is that his emphasis on the *unity* of the covenant has prevented him from fully appreciating the *progress* from the old to the new covenant. Unfortunately, there are more examples of this tendency in Van der Waal's theology. He has promoted some strange ideas by using the "unity of the covenant" argument. For example, he believed that the letter of divorce which Moses allowed the Israelites to use (Deut 24:1-4), can still be used appropriately today.⁷ This was the main reason why the Canadian Reformed churches discontinued their relationship with Dr. Van der Waal and his congregation in 1974.

The covenant cannot be used as an argument against the singing of hymns. Instead, a biblical understanding of the covenant will support and encourage the singing of hymns. The Bible speaks about an old covenant and a new covenant. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Mediator of a covenant that is superior to the old one because it has better promises (Heb 8:6). We expect our ministers to bring out the riches of the new covenant through redemptive-historical and Christ-centred preaching. It is signified to us in the administration of the sacraments.

The greater riches of the new covenant need to be reflected not just in the preaching and the sacraments but also in the singing of the church. The New Testament gives us hints in this direction. Apparently, in Ephesus the believers were singing a new hymn that included the following lines: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you" (Eph 5:14). From the Book of Revelation we know that new songs were sung in heaven after the Lord Jesus Christ had completed the work of redemption: "You are worthy. . . because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God..." (Rev 5:9).

We may draw the conclusion that just like everything else that is done during the worship service, the singing needs to reflect the better promises of the new covenant. The Lord Jesus should be praised, not just by using the prophetic language of the Psalms but also by using hymns that mention his name.

An objection which is often made against the use of hymns is that they are not "inspired" in the same way the Psalms and the canticles are inspired. While this is true, it is remarkable that this argument is used only with respect to the singing of hymns. If we can only use inspired words in worship we should stop reading liturgical forms and prayers as well. But nobody seems to have a problem with that. So, if we can trust the churches to draft and adopt forms and prayers for use in the worship service, why can't we trust the churches to adopt hymns that are biblical in content and that will help the church to praise our Triune God?

Conclusion

It will be clear that I am not enthusiastic about Van der Waal's approach to the singing of Psalms and hymns. It makes for an interesting read but I find his approach idiosyncratic and even erratic. Reading the book has

convinced me that there is no biblical case against hymn singing. At the same time it has reminded me that we need to use caution when it comes to selecting hymns for singing in the church.

The Canadian Reformed churches have embarked upon a process to expand their hymnal. The churches have received an *Augment* of twenty-eight new hymns. It is my hope that the churches will do what Synod has asked them to do: test the new hymns, sift through them, throw out the less desirable ones, and keep the good ones. If good, biblical hymns are added to the hymnal, it will add to the praise and glory of God.

The covenant cannot be used as an argument against the singing of hymns

¹ C. Van der Waal. *And They Sing a New Song. About Psalms and Hymns*. Translated by Roelof A. Janssen. Inheritance Publications, Neerlandia, 2008. First published in Dutch as *En Zij Zingen een Nieuw Lied* by Drukkerij de Nijverheid, Oudkarpsel, The Netherlands, 1978.

² C. Trimp, *De gemeente en haar liturgie*, Van den Berg, Kampen 1983, p. 90-94. Previously published as an article in *De Reformatie*, January 29, 1977.

³ G. Van Rongen, *Our Reformed Church Service Book*. Inheritance Publications 1995, p. 55.

⁴ See also H.O. Old, *Worship – Reformed according to Scripture*, 2nd and expanded edition, Westminster John Knox 2002, p. 45.

⁵ For more information: H. van Veen, "De Afscheiding en de gezangenstrijd." In D. Deddens & J. Kamphuis (ed.), *Afscheiding – Wederkeer. Opstellen over de afscheiding van 1834*. Haarlem: Vijlbrief, 1984, p. 117-149.

⁶ See M. te Velde, *Anthony Brummelkamp 1811-1888*. De Vuurbaak 1988, p. 317-319.

⁷ See Acts of the Synod of Toronto, 1974, article 57. For more information, see the Acts of the Synod of the Reformed Churches (lib.) in the Netherlands, held in Hoogeveen, 1970, article 401.





The Kingdom of Self-Esteem

Taryn Boeringa

“Welcome to the Kingdom of Self-Esteem! In order to enter the gates you must say ‘I am lovable’ three times.” This was the main concept of Diane Loomans’ book, titled *The Lovables in the Kingdom of Self-Esteem*, a book meant to boost children’s self-esteem. It included a workbook as well as a poster to hang on your wall reminding you of how special you are. A similarly themed school-curriculum, called “Self-Science,” was also developed, encouraging children to escape the mud-mind and embrace the sparkle-mind, enabling them to do whatever they set their minds to.

These two examples are the product of a fad back in the late 1980s, which aimed to teach children great self-esteem and so solve all of their problems. However, this emphasis on self-esteem and self-worth soon turned into narcissism. Children were being told so often that they were special that they believed they were better than everyone else, and that, following their dreams, they could become whatever they desired.

As these children have grown into teenagers, they are holding

onto fantastical dreams which they believe they can accomplish some day because they are so special. There is an exceptionally high rate of teenagers these days who believe that they will become instant stars, instant millionaires, and instant heroes. This is partly why shows such as “Canadian Idol,” “The Next Top Model,” and “Who Wants To Be A Millionaire” are so popular these days. The media has told us that instant fame is just around the corner. Teens believe that they are so unique and so special that they are going to be the next best thing. These high rates of optimism have contributed greatly to the amount of depressed teenagers that are all around us these days. Some teenagers have lived all their lives expecting that they will become a celebrity, but once they enter the real world they begin to realize that this is likely improbable. Their perception that they are so special is suddenly dashed and can result in depression.

Another negative side effect to the push of great self-esteem is the fact that many teens these days

equate looking good with feeling good. There has been an increase in such things as plastic surgery, steroid use, anorexia, and bulimia. Teens use all of these things to change their body image in order to feel better about themselves.

It is easy for us to lose respect for other people, if we have constantly been told we are so smart and so special. Our natural inclination is to think that we can outsmart our teachers or know better than our parents.

As Christians, it is important to realize that we derive all of our worth and esteem from God. Outside of our Saviour Jesus Christ we know that we are worthless sinners, but through God’s grace and the gift of his Son, He has called us his own children and showered us with all kind of blessings! Living out of these blessings, we are transformed into people who want to serve God and our neighbour and find worth within the new life that God has given us. By finding our worth and purpose outside of ourselves in Jesus Christ, we can avoid the narcissism of our age, and instead, focus on following God’s will and imitating Christ.



Contemplations on the Voice of the Organ

The Canadian Reformed congregation in the sprawling town of Langley had received notice. They were informed that their entire church building would be off limits from early Monday morning to late Saturday night to allow for the construction and “voicing” of their new organ. It was explained that organ pipes are very sensitive and that the voicing could not be done in the midst of any interfering vibrations. The congregation understood and willingly complied.

It was the final stage of the organ change. The process had started when the walls to the sides of the organ were reinforced with an extra layer of drywall to enhance the acoustics. It had continued with the systematic removal of the old organ and its shipment to a private purchaser in the States. For a few weeks the organ loft had stood empty in stately anticipation of the new arrival. It seemed fitting indeed that we kept our distance during the climax of such momentous events.

Even though we were discouraged from entering the building during the week, no one could stop us from looking up to organ loft above the pulpit during the worship services. By leaps and bounds (keep in mind the weekly intervals) the organ took shape. We did not see much of the inside, but the front arose with strong lines from the lower sides to the height

of the centrepiece. The intersecting lines invited allusions to countless symbols. It was an interplay of angelic wings, dignified crosses, strong anchors, the Ichthus sign, the boat from which Jesus preached to the crowds, a royal crown – all supported by the pulpit below. It seemed as if the symbols asked us to lift our souls on high. And this was all before we heard the organ.

Perhaps you can imagine my disbelief when I received an email from our organist, Frank Ezinga, with the request to interview Monsieur Jacquelin Rochette. He was introduced to me as the tonal director of the Casavant Frères

organ builders of St. Hyacinthe, Quebec. This interview would allow me into the building on a Wednesday afternoon to talk with the man who taught organs to speak properly. My excitement made it difficult for me to wait.

But wait I had to. When I arrived at the appointed time there were no organ builders in sight. Very carefully I ventured into the building, making sure that I did not inadvertently cause any damage with the stumble of my feet or the swing of my purse. As my courage grew I slid onto the organ bench. Modestly the rosewood keys displayed their subdued colours to me: soft white and gentle brown.



Up in the loft to define the pitch and tone of each pipe



At the console to activate each pipe in the voice-shaping process

But I quickly left. I must not be seen among these things.

My hasty departure was just in time. The door flung open and in blew such rapid French that I was well nigh blown away. The two entering organ experts immediately switched to English as soon as they spotted me and profusely explained that Jacquelin was delayed. No problem. My extended wait became an unexpected opportunity to observe these two men as they sounded a pipe, took it out, made an adjustment, placed it back and repeated the process till, satisfied, they moved on to the next pipe.

I must admit that after an hour of waiting the urgency of a matter at home won out from my curiosity and patience. I left. Maybe Jacquelin had prioritized me out of his agenda.

Ah, non madame! As soon as I put my purse on the kitchen counter the phone right next to it began to ring. Monsieur Jacquelin Rochette! The delight about hearing the apologizing voice of Jacquelin melted all my disappointment and blocked out all other matters. Immediately I drove back to church and rushed through the door.

Although I had not formed a mental picture of him, there was no mistake that I stood eye to eye with the tonal director of Casavant Frères. But his person exuded more than tonal expertise and intimate knowledge of organ building. This soft-spoken, polite man was a passionate visionary, who used his knowledge and expertise for reasons beyond the visible and audible.

My intuition had not failed me. As we sat down I explained to him that it was not my intent to ask for technical details about organ construction and pipe voicing. I would like to talk with him about what he is listening for when he teaches an organ to speak, what the place of the organ is in the twenty-first century, what the function of the organ is in a worship service.

He nodded in agreement and the conversation naturally unfolded as a symphony of faith and culture, of humility and glory, of reality and hope.

When the congregation meets to worship the Lord, they offer their songs of prayer and praise. The heartfelt congregational singing gains in character and strength when the organ adds its voice. The voice of the organ blends well with the human voice, since both are carried by air that flows through a voice box and is amplified by sound chambers. As these combined voices fill the building, the walls in their particular position and structure amplify the sound further. The interplay of voices between the believers and the organ helps us to come to grips with our place and task on earth. We are in the house of worship to find hope and offer praise.

The task of a tonal director is crucial. He is able to alter the voice

of an organ by making changes at the mouths of the pipes and by adjusting the wind pressure. Not only does a tonal director make sure that the sound is neither too dense nor too weak, he can also give the voice a certain character. Over time different regions developed unique characters in organ tone: French (clarity), English (vibrance), Dutch (depth and precision), Spanish (colour and warmth). In turn each region had composers who wrote for their particular instrument.

Apart from geographical differences, there is the different in purpose. The organ in a church building is different from an organ in a concert hall. A church organ blends with human voices, whereas an orchestral organ engages in a conversation with other musical instruments.

Recent times have seen the entrance of the band as accompaniment for congregational singing. Certainly band music is one of many ways to express one's faith. However, a band is not able



*Monsieur Jacquelin Rochette,
Tonal Director of Casavant Frères*

to sustain and augment congregational singing in the same way as an organ can do this. First of all, many bands depend on electronic amplification, as the sound produced by the strings of piano and guitar is no match for the voices of the congregation. Moreover, the organ can draw from a wide range of sounds and volumes to express sadness as

well as joy, repentance as well as confidence of faith.

There were many other elements that propelled our conversation, such as choral singing, teaching music to the youth of the church, the healthy balance between tradition and change. Yet the main flow consisted of the congregational singing by God's people as they

communally approach the throne of their Lord in worship.

All good conversations come to an end. The organ voicer had to go back to work. But even after his return to Quebec his conviction will continue to be echoed by the soft-spoken voice of the organ. Truly, there is no greater joy than lifting our voices on high in the assembly of the faithful.



Book Review

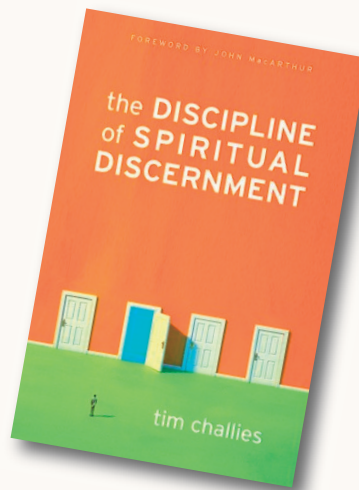
Reviewed by W.L. Bredenhof

The Discipline of Spiritual Discernment, Tim Challies
(Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2007).

Additional Information:
Paperback, 206 pages, \$13.86

"Challies dot com" (challies.com) is one of the most popular Christian blogs on the Internet. Tim Challies has been blogging every day for about five years. Readers have come to appreciate the site for its book reviews, insights into popular culture, and wisdom for Christian living. Through it all, Tim has achieved a solid reputation as having a good grasp on biblical teaching and knowing how to apply his knowledge to the assessment of books, movies, and trends. In other words, it's widely acknowledged that Tim has a gift for discernment.

In his first foray into the world of books, he shares what he has learned from the Scriptures about the subject of discernment. Some of the questions he addresses



include: What is discernment? Why is it so challenging? What are some of its dangers? Challies provides an excellent, biblical approach to the subject and his writing is clear, warm, and interspersed with just enough illustrations and anecdotes to keep it interesting.

He correctly notes, "The truth is under attack more today than at any other time in history and this should not be surprising in a culture that so values religious freedom and tolerance. Add to such an accepting culture unparalleled speed of communication and the ability to publish books and other writings quickly and easily, and we can rightly conclude that error is being spread with startling speed and efficiency" (p.134).

Rev. W. L. Bredenhof is co-pastor of the Canadian Reformed Church at Langley, British Columbia
wbredenh@telus.net

In the final chapter, Challies gives a concrete example of how to practice discernment. Using a popular Christian song which promotes self-forgiveness, he illustrates how to apply biblical discernment. He effectively demonstrates how important it is to think carefully and with an open Bible. The only significant criticism I have is that while he emphasizes the importance of seeking "the consensus of the Christian church through the ages," he doesn't explicitly mention the valuable role that creeds and confessions can play in helping believers discern truth from error.

This book is popularly written, making it accessible to a wide range of readers. A helpful appendix provides further resources for honing one's discernment skills and there's also a study guide. That last feature could make a book such as this useful for high school Bible classes. It's essential reading for all believers who value the truth of God's Word and the gospel it contains.



Press Release of Classis Central Ontario, June 13, 2008

Opening

On behalf of the convening church at Toronto, Rev. W. den Hollander opens by reading 2 Timothy 2:1-8 and asking everyone to sing Hymn 46:1, 2. He then leads in prayer. All the delegates are welcomed, as well as all visitors.

Constitution of Classis

The delegates from Ottawa examine the credentials. Everything is in order and all the primi delegates are present. Classis is declared constituted. The officers take their place: chairman – Rev. J. DeGelder; clerk – Rev. J.L. van Popta; vice-chairman – Rev. den Hollander.

Memorabilia

The chairman thanks the church at Toronto for the preparations and opening of Classis. As memorabilia he mentions the church at Burlington-Waterdown, which is about to become vacant at Rev. J. Huijgen's departure; the church at Ottawa received an acceptance of the call by Rev. G.Ph. van Popta; the church at Toronto will see their missionary, the Rev. 't Hart, go to the church of Baldvis, W.A.; the Rev. Bosch is enjoying good health and engaged for four months with work in Australia; the Rev. and Sr. Huijgen celebrated their twenty-fifth anniversary; Prof. G.H. Visscher successfully defended his doctoral thesis; Dr. DeJong suffered a fall, breaking his hip; Dr. N.H. Gootjes has been relieved of his teaching duties at our Theological College for health reasons, yet the teaching at the College could continue. He entrusts all these churches and members to the special mercies and blessings of our God!

Agenda

The agenda is adopted after a few additions: the reply of the Deputies art. 48 C.O., reporting upon the request of Classis Central Ontario, March 14, 2008; 2 instructions from the church at Burlington-Waterdown, namely the release from Classis Central Ontario for Rev. Huijgen, who accepted a call to the church at Attercliffe) and the appointment of a counsellor; 1 instruction from the church at Ottawa regarding the approbation of the call of Rev. G.Ph. van Popta.

Reports

Upon request, the report of the Deputies art. 48 C.O. is tabled first. Classis went into closed session for the discussion of this report. After the matter had come to a judgment, a motion was made requesting that Classis be adjourned. Classis granted this request, with the provision that it would deal with the instructions of Burlington-Waterdown prior to this adjournment. Classis moves out of closed session.

Instructions

The church at Burlington-Waterdown requests the release from Classis Central Ontario of the Rev. Huijgen. Classis scrutinizes the required documentation, which is found to be in good order. Classis grants this request and the chairman and clerk sign the Certificate of Release. The chairman addresses the Rev. Huijgen with some appropriate words. The elder delegate of Rehoboth Church at Burlington-Waterdown extends an invitation to the churches to attend the farewell service, D.V., on June 22, 2008, at 4:00 p.m. The neighbouring church of Flamborough is appointed to represent Classis. The

church at Burlington-Waterdown also requests the appointment of the Rev. DeGelder as a counsellor ad Art. 45 C.O. Granted. Since the church at Ottawa had asked Classis to make arrangements for a Classis Contracta with a view to the approbation of the call to the Rev. G.Ph. van Popta, Classis decides to deal with this matter upon the continuation of Classis on June 27, 2008.

Question Period: is not used.

Censure according to Art. 34, C.O.

The chairman observes with thankfulness that such censure is not necessary. He thanks the brothers for their good cooperation.

Acts and Press Release

The Acts of the proceedings on this day are read and adopted; also the Press Release to this point of the meeting of Classis is read and approved.

Closing

The chairman suggests the singing of Psalm 84:1, 6. He leads in closing prayer and adjourns the meeting till June 27, 2008.

Re-opening, June 27, 2008

The chairman of Classis, Rev. J. DeGelder, re-opens the meeting, which is a continuation of the June 13, 2008 meeting of Classis. He asks everyone to sing Psalm 147:1, 2, reads Romans 12, and then leads in prayer. He reads the roll-call and notes that there are alternate delegates for the churches at Burlington-Fellowship and Flamborough. He reiterates the remaining matters on the agenda of Classis. Classis continues in open session. The chairman asks the delegates of the Fellowship church for the response of their council to the decision of Classis in its first session. After ample

discussion of their response, Classis decides that the recourse of Fellowship is to follow the way of appeal.

Reports

Church Visitation Reports – Visits to the church at Burlington Ebenezer, Burlington Fellowship, Burlington-Waterdown, Flamborough, Ottawa, and Toronto are reported on by the church visitors. These reports are received with thankfulness for the Lord's care and blessings on these churches and for the faithful leadership in these churches.

Question Period ad Art. 44 C.O.

The chairman asks the delegates the questions from art. 44 and the delegates answer in turn. The church at Flamborough asks advice concerning a request as per the Fund for Financial Aid to Students for the Ministry, which is managed by the church of Flamborough. Advice is given.

Instructions

The church at Ottawa requests the approbation of the call to the



Rev. G.Ph. van Popta. Classis examines the required documentation, which is found to be in good order. Classis grants the request. The chairman congratulates the church of Ottawa with her "new" pastor and teacher and wishes them the Lord's blessing on his ministry. He also addresses the Rev. G.Ph. van Popta, who is present as guest at Classis, wishing him the Lord's blessing during this time of transition. Classis appoints the church of Burlington-Fellowship to represent Classis at the installation of Rev. van Popta.

Correspondence

1. A request for Revision re the appeal of Rev. D. de Jong at Classis Ontario June 9, 2006 is given in discussion. Classis declares this request admissible. Classis judges that, 1) Ebenezer is correct in its understanding that the funds received from Superannuation belong to the member church; 2) Ebenezer must use these funds for the purpose of meeting its obligation under Art. 13 C.O.
2. An appeal against Burlington-Fellowship re Women Voting privileges is given in discussion. Classis declares this appeal admissible according to Art. 31 C.O. Classis deals with it in open session. Classis formulates its judgment in response to the appeal.

Appointments

- a. Next classis – convening church: Burlington Ebenezer, on September 12, 2008;
- b. Suggested officers:
Rev. G. Nederveen – chairman;
Rev. DeGelder – vice-chairman;
Rev. den Hollander – clerk.

Church News

Accepted the call to the church at Toronto, Ontario for the work of mission in Papua New Guinea (mission to begin, D.V., on June 1, 2009):

Rev. H. Versteeg
of Chatham, Ontario.

New Address

Rev. J. Mulder
2085 Amherst Heights Dr.,
Apt 105,
Burlington, ON L7P 5C2
Email: jmulder1@cogeco.ca

Question Period

Question period is used. A question is raised for the purpose of receiving pastoral advice. At this time also, the Rev. Huijgen expresses words of appreciation and gratitude for the years he has been working in Classis Central Ontario. The chairman responds in kind.

Censure according to Art. 34 C.O.

The chairman observes with thankfulness that such censure is not necessary and thanks the brothers for their good cooperation. The vice-chairman thanks the chairman for the manner in which he led the sessions of this classis.

Acts and Press Release

The Acts are read and adopted. The Press Release is read and approved.

Closing

The vice-chairman suggests the singing of Psalm 122:1, 3 and leads in closing prayer.

For Classis Central Ontario of
June 13/27, 2008,
W. den Hollander,
vice-chairman at that time