

Clarion

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*A true church
is dedicated
to Christ, not
perfectly but
completely*

Inside this issue

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- Humbly Ready to Obey





Rev. Klaas Stam is minister emeritus of the Canadian Reformed Church at Hamilton, Ontario
cstam@sourcecable.net

Is Speaking about the True and False Church Passé?

The church is not a human invention or institution, but a masterful creation of Christ Himself

“Passé” means that something is over, has become obsolete, and no longer functions. This can be easily applied to what we believe concerning the true and the false church. There was perhaps a time when this distinction was widely used. Think of its usage in the Reformation time over against the old exclusivist idea that Rome is the only true church. But a prevailing sense nowadays considers that this terminology is no longer needed. *It is passé.* Goodbye out-dated terms.

We hear that it is a distinction that has been easily misapplied and misunderstood. I secretly think that Clarence has been guilty of that, too, now and then. These terms were sometimes applied loosely and quickly. Whoever stated that he/she belongs to the true church was soon considered to be uncharitable. And this was especially unacceptable when the idea was given that someone belonged to the *only* true church! When stating this about your own church, do you then not *ipso facto* condemn all other churches as *false*? Is this not insulting to members of those churches who may be sincere Christians?

Therefore it is much more pleasing and palatable when we speak about *more or less pure* churches (as does the Westminster Confession, Article 25). Some churches are purer and better than others. *C’est la vie.* Membership in a certain church is then not a matter of obedience but of upbringing or preference. It’s part of your background but should never be in the foreground. Mostly a church is pure or less pure. To say more would lead to elevating yourself at the cost of others. No church is perfect, so do not speak about being true or false churches.

Our churches have never taken over the Westminster doctrine of more or less pure churches. In fact, we have consistently argued against it. But there comes a time when you must tolerate and appreciate another’s way of putting things. What unites us is more than what (may) divide us.

It was taken ill of many Canadian Reformed or Dutch “*vrijgemaakte*” believers that they used the old and testy notions of *true and false*. My father (also Klaas) was very thankful for the confession’s distinction between the true and the false church. When he liberated himself from the Synodical churches in The Netherlands and was not accepted in the Christian Reformed Church in Canada, leading him to seek a Canadian Reformed Church, he saw this not as a matter of obstinate human preference but a matter of divine calling. It was an act of obedience to Him who gathers the church. Belonging to a true/faithful church was for my father and many others foremost a matter of *legitimacy*. To break with a true/faithful church would be a matter of schism. Klaas Sr. believed that schism is sin. So does Klaas Jr.

Therefore it is good to devote some paragraphs to what we believe regarding the true and the false church. This may help us in preventing or ending a wrong usage or non-usage of these terms.

Confessional language

The distinction between the true and false church did not come out of my (sometimes) fertile mind. It is something that we confess as churches in the Belgic Confession (Articles 27-29). We find there that the church of Christ is *catholic* (Art 27), at the same time *local* (Art 28), and *distinct* by its marks (Art 29).

In fact, we confess that the true and false church is *easily* distinguished. Hmm, no kidding eh? Perhaps it was easy at one time, but according to some it is certainly not so easy today. The complexities of church life in our post-modern age do not allow us still to speak in terms of *true or false*. And so we go, Winken, Blinken, and Nod, one day, off in a wooden shoe.

Meanwhile, the words “true” or “false” should not confuse us in the least. In the context of our confession true means *faithful*; false means *unfaithful*. It means



nothing more and nothing less. It has nothing to do with being nasty or nice. The notion is that a church which deserves its name is fully faithful to the Lord Jesus, the Head of the Church. A true church is dedicated to Christ, not perfectly but completely. This faithfulness means submitting to the Word of God in all things. It also means that if there is a faithful church where I live, I should recognize it as such and I should join myself to that church. Failure to do so is schismatic. Remember, schism is sin (Klaas Sr.).

Our confession ties all these things together in a very clear manner. The church is *catholic*, that is, universal and global, gathered from all times and places (BC, Art 27). Think *big*. I have to join that church and I can do so concretely only *locally*, where I live (BC, Art 28). Think *local*. The holy Catholic church has a local address. Otherwise it becomes a pie-in-the-sky. *Think responsibly* (BC, Art 29).

Can there be more than one local address, multiple faithful churches in one town? Circumstances may have indeed led to this, perhaps. But these local churches are then bound to seek unity with each other. When we initiate local discussion with others on the point of unity, it must be done with conviction.

I should not presume to be able to stand on my own. The church is a *body* outside of which I cannot function as believer. Moreover, the church is gathered according to certain *norms*. These are called “marks,” distinguishing features that stand out (BC, Art 29). The marks make the church eminently *visible*. Therefore our confession does not speak in terms of “visible” or “invisible” (as does, again, the Westminster Standards). The *global* church is gathered *locally* according to Christ’s own *norms*. Catholicity, locality, and visibility are expressed as key elements in the proper confession concerning the church. Locally the Catholic church becomes eminently visible and is recognizable by its marks.

I largely now leave aside the question what to do when there is in a certain place no faithful church. Normally speaking, we would not go to such places, for church membership is not a trivial matter. Decisions are made that will affect us and generations to come. If we go to such places, we do obligate ourselves to join a church that shows the marks, or further the establishment of a true church.

The church is not a human invention or institution, but a masterful creation of Christ Himself. He said: “It is my church” (Matt 16:19). That is why the confession adds that outside of the church, *there is no salvation*. That is strong language, no doubt. Our forebears used to say, “*Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*.” *Nulla* means nothing, none, nada, zero. Don’t you just love the conciseness

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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Visscher; Copy Manager: Laura Veenendaal
Coeditors: R. Aasman, E. Kampen, K. 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.
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of the Latin language? It is actually a quote from the writings of Cyprian, who lived in Carthage in the third century A.D. The saying has been around for a long time. Since it is true that outside of Christ's church, there is no salvation, the saying was included in our confession as a key and crucial statement of faith. It means to say that church membership is not a matter that may be lightly considered and quickly resolved.

A matter of legitimacy

Now the question may be asked: where does *Scripture* distinguish between the true and false church? Is this confessional language also *scriptural* language? I thought that at this point Klaas would do wise to listen to John. On the one hand, John Calvin was rather mild and cautious in speaking about the church. He writes, ". . . trivial errors in this ministry ought not to make us regard it as illegitimate. . ." (*Institutes*, Book IV, chapter 2.1) yet on the other hand he was not afraid to state that where the marks of the church are not present "I say that the whole body [or federation – Klaas], as well as every single assembly, want the form of a legitimate church" (*Institutes*, Book IV, chapter 2, 12). I used the Henry Beveridge translation, Eerdmans, 1966 edition. I like beverages.

Calvin acknowledged that some deformed churches still have the remnants of what is necessary to be a church. He called these "*vestigium ecclesiae*," remnants, traces, footprints of what one was. When these remnants are still found in a church we should not easily dismiss it, separate from it, or look down on it. But where the marks are clearly no longer present a church ceases to be legitimate (true). Notice that Calvin was also very focused on the notion of *legitimacy*.

Calvin also distinguished the mode of judging institutions and individuals. He writes, "There is, however, a slight difference in the mode of judging individuals and of churches" (*Institutes*, Book IV, 9). I think what he means is this: even if you consider a church to be false, this does not mean that you pronounce the members of this church as non-Christians or reprobate. We examine an institution but do not judge its members. God alone judges people.

For Calvin a true church is a *legitimate church*, worthy of its name. My sentiments exactly. Calvin based his teaching on many important Bible passages. Let me mention only a few.

A scriptural confession?

Calvin referred his readers to 1 Timothy 3:15, where the church is called "the house of God" and "the pillar and bulwark of the truth." There is a reference to Ephesians 5: 27 where we read about, "A radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless." Another reference is made to

Ephesians, ". . . the church which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way" (Eph 1:23).

All these passages demonstrate to us the importance of the church. If the church becomes unfaithful to its Lord and Head, it deserves the name "synagogue of Satan" (Rev 2: 9), although it will continue to claim for itself the name of the church. That's what we confess in Articles 27-29 of the Belgic Confession.

The church has one foundation, the doctrine of the prophets and the apostles (Eph 2:20, 21), who proclaimed *Christ and Him crucified*, as the chief cornerstone. When this foundation is removed a church ceases to be a church of Christ, no matter how lofty its names are.

Thankful for this name

I mentioned that in our time many do not want to use anymore the concepts of "true" or "false" when it comes to the church. As indicated, I understand that this is sometimes a reaction to a lot of abuse in this respect. But let us not be misguided.

As Canadian Reformed Churches we have always taken our confession seriously, also when it comes to the church. In the early 1950s we sought fellowship with the PRC (Protestant Reformed Church). More than once we appealed to the Christian Reformed Church to pursue unity. When the United Reformed Churches were formed, they were recognized by us and a process of unification was initiated from the Canadian Reformed side. There may be some serious obstacles on that pathway, but the desire to grow together is real.

Our churches joyfully have recognized as sister churches those churches who are faithful to the Word of God. I think of the OPC, URC, FCS, and RCUS, to mention only a few. Seeking unity and fellowship is not a hobby, but it is obedience to the Lord. It should not be a matter of false pride but of true thankfulness that the Lord has kept us faithful to his Word. Whatever you can say about the Canadian Reformed Churches, we have by grace always prioritized mission work and sought to promote ecclesiastic unity, as faithful churches should.

Speaking about the true and false church, as our confession does, may be even more critical now than in Calvin's time. We need this to know where true catholicity may be found, especially now that catholicity is becoming an eroded concept. We need this also to help us understand what it means today to be a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

At another time, the Lord willing, I hope to devote space to the marks of the true Christian (Article 29). These are very closely connected to the marks of the true church. For now let it suffice: thinking globally (Art 27) means acting locally (Art 28), with full responsibility (Art 29).





Rev. Cornelis Kleyn is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Kerwood, Ontario
kleync@gmail.com



MATTHEW 13:52

Humbly Ready to Obey

"Above [the robe] were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two their covered their feet, and with two they were flying."

Isaiah 6:2

Before he starts his ministry in the year that King Uzziah of Judah died, the prophet Isaiah gets a small glimpse of God's throne room (Isa 6:1). But Isaiah sees only the end piece of God's robe and nothing else of the Lord our God. However, Isaiah does see seraphs above God's robe. The word "seraph" means "burning one." God is often described as surrounded by fire, and these flaming messengers guard the throne room to keep it pure and holy.

But take note of the six wings of these seraphs: "With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying." What do all these wings indicate? Well, with the first two wings the seraphs cover their faces in order to stop themselves from seeing God. The Lord is holy and the seraphs realize this full well. They cannot look at God and at his majesty. They need to cover their eyes.

The seraphs also cover their feet, a less honourable part of their body. The seraphs are self-conscious in front of such a holy God. Just imagine that you stand exposed in front of an important leader: would you not try to cover yourself up? These seraphs realize that they are not worthy to be gazed on by the Almighty. They are only creatures, whereas God is the exalted Creator. And so they cover their feet with two wings as well.

The third set of wings is used by the seraphs to fly continually. They hover over the robe of God's kingly garment, ready for action. Just picture a bird guarding and feeding its young. It hovers without resting, looking for food and guarding its chicks. In a similar way, the seraphs are hovering around the throne, ready at all times for action, ready to do the will of God!

And what a contrast these actions form with King Uzziah and the people of Judah in the days of the prophet Isaiah. Uzziah entered the Holy Place to offer incense on the altar that stood right in front of the Most Holy Place (2 Chron 26:16). He thought that he could look at God a little closer. But in contrast, the seraphs cover their eyes; they do not dare to look at the Holy God.

Uzziah and the covenant people of Judah were willing to expose their weaknesses and sins before God without second thought. Uzziah even gets angry in the temple when the priests tell him off (2 Chron 26:19). He certainly does not stand in awe of God's holiness and cover himself. But in contrast the seraphs cover their feet; they do not want to be exposed before the Holy God.

King Uzziah serves God in his own manner and not according to the laws that the Lord gave. God had commanded that only the priests should enter into the Holy Place, but King Uzziah ignores this command of God and simply

enters (2 Chron 26:18). In contrast the seraphs are flying and always ready to obey God fully; they are always ready to do the will of the Almighty.

And what a beautiful picture this forms for us. Do you realize and stand in awe of the holiness of God? Is your reaction like that of the prophet Isaiah, who cries out a little later: "Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips" (v 5)?

The prophet Isaiah realizes that whereas the seraphs were only finite creatures and separated from the Creator, for Isaiah and all humans there is an even bigger thing separating us from God, namely *sin* – which Isaiah speaks of as "unclean lips." We need the grace of God to reach out to us. We need to be saved by Jesus Christ from our unclean lips and broken lives.

As you do your daily task, do you take the holiness and majesty of God into consideration and do you honour Him for that, just like the seraphs who cover their eyes? Are you continually aware that you are a finite creature and a sinner, so that you humble yourself before God – relying on the work of Christ – just like the seraphs who cover their feet? And are you always ready to obey God fully and according to his will, always "hovering" like the seraphs, ready to obey God at every turn in your life?





Dr. James Visscher is co-pastor of the Canadian Reformed Church at Langley, British Columbia
jvisscher@telus.net

The Challenge of Being a Church Kid

(Part 1 of 2)

This article was originally a speech for the May Long Weekend organized by the Fraser Valley Young Peoples' League of the Canadian Reformed Churches in BC, held on Sunday, May 17, 2009.

Earlier we considered what it means to be a church kid. We dealt with both its positives and its negatives. Now I want to go on to explore and discuss with you what it means to be a church kid in today's world and society.

The world today

First let's look together for a moment at the world or society in which you and I are living. What are some of its characteristics or distinguishing features?

Secular: This means that by and large our world no longer thinks in terms of God nor does it ask after the will of God. God is absent, excluded, ignored.

Humanistic: This means that our world is a world in which man rules and dominates. Human life is all about us, our needs, our hopes, our dreams, and our agenda.

Hedonistic: This means that most people live for their own pleasure. Holidays, time off, going out to dinner, sports – everything that increases our pleasure quotient is pursued.

Technological: This means that in our world there is a huge stress on anything of a technical nature whether it has to do with cars and trucks, computers and ipods, cell phones and game boys.

Relativistic: This means that by and large there is no longer a recognition of basic values and norms. At one time living common law, homosexuality, same sex marriages were all deemed to be wrong and in conflict with basic human values. Today there are no longer any universally recognized moral absolutes. Everything is in flux and up for grabs.

Environmental: This means that in today's world questions relating to the environment often receive top billing and dominate the headlines. The fact that we

have a Green Party, that global warming, polar icecap meltdown, carbon sequestering, and the quest to be environmentally friendly are all major issues indicates a shift of values and concerns.

Multicultural: This means that in some societies (Canada, USA, Great Britain, Europe) the culture is becoming more diversified and moving away from its racial, historical, religious, and cultural roots. In some places the increase of peoples who adhere to Islam threatens to alter that country in profound and, some would say, disturbing ways.

What all of this means is that you young people are living and inheriting a world that is changing quickly. At the same time many of these changes are not for the better. Generally speaking there are signs that our Western world is going into decline and that economically and politically, it is being overtaken by the emerging countries of Asia. Every time I travel to the Far East and I see the scale and scope of the building going on there, the amount of money being spent on infrastructure, the commitment of its people to advance and move forward, I cannot help but conclude that power is shifting from West to East.

At the same time it has to be said that more than power is shifting, values are too. In particular Christian values are in decline. So where does that leave you? How should you prepare to live in a changing world?

A critical juncture

Before we get to some specific recommendations, there is one more thing to which I need to alert you and that is the fact that all of you are at a critical juncture in your life. What do I mean by that? I mean that the decisions that you make today as teenagers and young adults will follow you all the days of your life. In that regard good decisions will produce good fruits and results. Bad decisions will lead to the opposite.

Let me illustrate that in various ways.

Career choices

First, let's just look at career choices. Some of you are using these years well to study, learn, acquire new skills, and expand on your abilities. Some of you even know what careers you would like to pursue after high school, or after high school and college or university. But then there are also some of you who are coasting along, having fun, turning high school into a grand social experience, and not really bothering to hone your talents or making plans for the future.

Now it does not take a rocket scientist to predict who is going to do better in the future. Those of you who use the days of your youth well, even if it is filled with a number of bumps and setbacks, will find that it pays future dividends. On the other hand, those of you who squander the years of your youth will one day wake up with bitter regret. As a pastor I have heard it said more than once, "I should have applied myself in school. Then at least I would be something today. Now, I am nothing. I have a lousy job, no upward mobility, no skills, no papers, always one step ahead of my creditors. . . ."

Relationships

Another illustration. It has to do not with careers, but with relationships. How many times over the years have I not warned young men and women not to marry because they were making a foolish choice. But they insisted, because they thought that they were in love. Never mind that the girlfriend does not believe, or that she claims to be a Christian but has grown up in a completely different way (different worship style, no Christian schooling, no awareness of covenant, no understanding of the Lord's Day, no real desire to have but as few children as possible). And the result? Misery, heartache, and disappointment.

I can relate to you a case of a young woman who was under the spell of a non-Christian young man and who was determined to marry him. I talked and talked to her. Finally, I convinced her to move to another part of the country and create some space. On the day that I was to pick her up to go to the airport, she eloped. A few years later I met her again, and what did she say to me, "Reverend, why did you not stop me?" The marriage had been a disaster and ended in divorce. Her children had no father. She was lonely and miserable.

Why do I relate this? Because again, the choices that you make in your youth will follow you all of the

days of your earthly life. If you make bad choices, you will suffer the consequences. On the other hand, if you make good choices, you will reap a goodly harvest.

So what are good choices? What do they look like? The first is this: train hard. The second is this: stand up. The third is: do battle. The fourth is: trust your commander.

Young people are living and inheriting a world that is changing quickly

Now, as you can see all of these choices are put in military terms. I do so because this is something that I learned from the Apostle Paul. In Ephesians 6 he implores the Ephesians and us,

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints (6:10-18).

Paul here uses the imagery of an army and of military service. It is an imagery that we can learn from.

Train Hard

It is also an imagery that begins with training, or else with the advice to train hard. Now what do I mean by that? I mean that it is important for all of you to participate in spiritual disciplines. What are they? They have to do with the Bible, with prayer, with worship, with serving.

You all have Bibles, but how often do you read them, study them, reflect on them, and learn from them? Often a lot of Bible reading happens around us – at home, in church, at school, but just how much of it do we do ourselves? Do you have a special time of day when you read your Bible and meditate on what you have just read? Do you have a Bible reading program that you follow day by day, week by week? Just how much are you into the Word?

*The choices that you make in your youth
will follow you all of the days of your
earthly life*

Paul says that the Word is like a sword (Eph 6:17). In his day you could not be a soldier if you had no sword. Well, in both his day and our day you cannot really style yourself a Christian if you ignore the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

So read your Bible, young people! Read it every day, church kids! Read and learn! Read and digest! Read and reflect! Read and apply!

In addition, wrap all of that reading in a lot of prayer. By the way, just how is your prayer life?

Again, do you let your father, your minister, your teacher, do it for you, or do you also do it yourself – regularly, fervently, humbly, comprehensively?

And what about worship? Of course, all of life is worship, but what about corporate worship? What about coming together as God's people on the Lord's Day? Do you prepare for that? Or is it so that Friday and Saturday night are for partying – late and with abandon – and Sunday is for recuperating – in church?

With what kind of a heart and mind do we worship? Do we go to the house of the Lord with enthusiasm, anticipation, and dedication, or is it all a chore, a burden, and a bother?

Then too there is service. Do you serve? Is there anything that you volunteer for in the church or in the kingdom? Do your talents get used? Do your abilities get employed? Or are you an ecclesiastical spectator?

Realize then that these spiritual disciplines are important. You cannot have a real life with the Lord without them. And what is more important than that? To live close to the Lord, to understand his will, to depend upon his grace, to hear and respond to his Word, to make use of the talents He has given us – all of these things are fundamental if we are to love the Lord with heart, soul, mind, and strength. So train hard! **C**





Dr. Wes Bredenhof is pastor of the Providence Canadian Reformed Church, Hamilton, Ontario. wbredenhof@bell.net

Guido de Brès and Communion for the Sick

The sacraments were designed by God to strengthen our faith in Jesus Christ. As we go through life, we experience trials and difficulties that sometimes challenge our faith. In those sorts of times, we can be glad that our Father has given us the sacraments to nourish us, and to confirm us in the promises of the gospel. Historically, however, the Canadian Reformed Churches have withheld the sacrament of the Lord's Supper from those who are shut-in and unable to attend a regular public worship service. Those who might benefit from it the most have been unable to. Until recently.

Recent decisions

In 2006, the Canadian Reformed Church at Smithers brought an overture to a Classis Pacific West, requesting that the Church Order be amended to accommodate administering the Lord's Supper to those who are shut-in because of sickness or old age. The suggested revisions maintained that the sacrament would be administered in the context of a worship service by a minister and all other agreements in the Church Order with regards to admittance to the sacrament would be followed. Classis Pacific West of October 10-11, 2006 agreed to pass on Smithers' overture to the next Regional Synod West. Regional Synod West 2006 considered the matter and agreed to forward it to General Synod Smithers 2007.

Synod 2007 decided that it was not necessary to revise the Church Order to accommodate the administration of the Lord's Supper to shut-ins. The Synod agreed with and took over these considerations of Regional Synod West 2006:

1. It is not the number of attendees nor the venue that constitutes a "public worship service," but the presence of office bearers together with congregation members ('the form of the church').
2. The current recognition of the form of the church in multiple places can by extension be applied to extraordinary circumstances in the congregation, in the sense that the consistory could have a worship

service for those who cannot come to the normal gathering. In principle this does not differ from a consistory calling the congregation together at two times (e.g., because the building is too small, necessitating two services back to back) or calling the congregation together at two locations (e.g., because members live too far apart).

3. Consistories are responsible for the pastoral care of the members. If in the consistory's judgment a shut-in member requires the encouragement contained in the Lord's Supper, the consistory ought to do what it can to provide that encouragement.
4. While the administration of the Lord's Supper does belong to the churches in common, it remains debatable whether or not a revision of certain Church Order articles is needed.

Essentially then, Synod 2007 gave the green light to Smithers and other Canadian Reformed churches to provide the Lord's Supper for shut-ins. Despite three appeals, Synod 2010 upheld the decision of Synod 2007.

An older discussion

This issue has been discussed before in our history. I recently came across it in a debate that was held between Guido de Brès and a Roman Catholic bishop. The author of the Belgic Confession was in prison in Valenciennes, awaiting his date with the executioner. He had been charged with celebrating the Lord's Supper contrary to the order of the government. On May 22, 1567, Francois Richardot came to visit and debate with de Brès. He had hoped to change his mind and yet bring him back to the Roman Catholic fold.

The debate centered on the differences between the biblical Lord's Supper and the Roman Catholic mass. About half way through their session that day, de Brès said the following:

Inasmuch as you say that the mass is the Supper of the Lord Jesus Christ, I really want to know why the priest does other than what Christ has done and commanded to be done. Christ was seated at the table with his disciples. He preached and

admonished from the Word of God. He was not at all disguised in a get-up like a priest. He did not speak in an unknown language. He took the bread and after having given thanks to God, he broke it and distributed it to his disciples. And likewise the cup, saying, "Drink from it all of you." He did not have an altar, but a table. He did not sacrifice, but ate and commanded to eat.

De Brès' strategy in this debate was to constantly come back to the differences between the way the Lord's Supper was celebrated in Scripture and the way the mass was done by the Roman Catholic Church.

In his response, Richardot latched on to what he thought was the weakness of de Brès' position in the words quoted above. De Brès had noted that this was a communal meal, celebrated by Christ and his disciples. Bishop Richardot responded:

...I say that the mass is such a wonderfully praiseworthy thing, that every time that it is said, that communion is held, I eagerly desire it. And if anyone should ask for it, it should not be refused him. If there should be a priest who has the devotion to celebrate it, should he be prevented from this blessing because there are no other communicants? That would not at all be reasonable. And certainly you are greatly to be condemned for cruelty and inhumanity. Pardon me that I speak thus about your refusing the sacrament for the poor sick, which is a thing totally repugnant to brotherly charity and to the manner of the early church, who allowed it to be taken to the sick.

For our purposes it is the mention here of communion for the sick that draws our attention. The bishop alleged that the Reformed churches forbade giving the Lord's Supper to those who are shut-in and that this was cruel, inhumane, unloving, and out of step with the early church.

A short time later, de Brès came back to this point and gave his response to the bishop:

As for you accusing us of inhumanity for not giving the sacrament to the sick, I confess that it has been done some times before. But whether it is lawful, based on what I have said, I cannot see a good reason. It is not a sacrament designed to be given to just one person, since it is a communion of many who should receive it together, and not just one. However, I would not be too strict if some believer being sick requested to receive this sacrament and if several others were prepared to receive it with the one making the request, and if it were the custom of the church, I would not, I say, condemn such a custom.

At first glance this response appears to reflect some ambiguity on the issue.

A well-considered position

On the one hand, de Brès was a careful student of the early church fathers. His extensive knowledge is revealed not only in his debates and other writings, but also in the Belgic Confession and its many patristic allusions, quotes, and paraphrases. When he says, "I confess that it has been done some times before," he is giving some deference to the early church. However, he quickly adds that it is difficult to rationalize the lawfulness of this practice. That statement should be understood in the context, however, of a number of aberrant practices. For instance, in the medieval church there was the practice of reserving consecrated bread/wafers to be received later by the sick. They would receive it privately, typically without any explanation or any accompanying administration of the Word (see John Calvin's *Institutes* 4.17.39).

De Brès insisted that the sacrament, by its very nature, was not designed to be taken by one person all by himself or herself. It is called "communion" for a good reason. A communion of one would be an oxymoron.

However, de Brès recognized the danger of being overly rigorous with regards to those who are sick and shut-in. The normal practice should be communion with all the other believers in a public worship service. But he did not exclude the possibility of allowing a believer to take the Lord's Supper outside of that context, provided that it would be done in a communal setting, and with the approbation of the church. He would not stand in judgment over that kind of carefully circumscribed celebration for those who are shut-in.

The bishop dropped this particular issue at this point in the debate and so no more was said. If we had the opportunity to ask him, undoubtedly de Brès would say more. What exactly he would say has to remain a matter of speculation. Unfortunately, besides the Belgic Confession, de Brès only wrote two major books and a few other shorter writings and, so far as I know, this matter is not addressed in any of these other works.

What is clear is that, under carefully delineated conditions, the author of the Belgic Confession was prepared to allow those shut-in to receive communion. Of course, Guido de Brès does not have the last word on this matter. He was but a man and men can and do err – see his own statement on that in Belgic Confession Article 7: nothing is "of equal value with the truth of God." Nevertheless, the historical record demonstrates that the position taken by Synod 2007 falls within the range of positions taken by our Reformed forefathers on this issue.



Support for South Africa

The Canadian Reformed Churches have enjoyed ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA) since 1958. After becoming aware of the great need in South Africa, Synod Smithers 2007 decided to "recommend the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa to the churches of the federation as worthy of continued and increased support in both prayer and finances as well as in the work of mission and charity." This decision was reaffirmed by Synod Burlington (Ebenezer) 2010.

At the request of the *Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad*, the Council of the Canadian Reformed Church at Coaldale appointed a committee in December of 2009 to help the FRCSA. The primary mandate of this committee (*The Committee for the Needy Free Reformed Churches of South Africa*) is to gather funds from the Canadian and American Reformed Churches and send them to our needy brothers and sisters in South Africa. The committee will also keep the churches in Canada and the United States informed of the ongoing needs of the FRCSA and of the exciting church gathering work being done in South Africa.

The FRCSA is a very small church bond. Their federation consists of eight churches and it faces many challenges. Of the eight churches, three cannot support themselves. The young churches that have been instituted in the last couple of years are a result of mission work and this is a great blessing. However, because they are located in disadvantaged areas these newly instituted churches do not currently have the financial means to support their own ministers. It is apparent that they will not be able to support their ministers in the foreseeable future either. Of the other five churches, two are also relying on support from "deputies needy churches."

Since the establishment of the *Committee for the Needy Free Reformed Churches of South Africa*, many churches in our federation have provided funds to support the FRCSA. As a result, two substantial transfers of funds have already been made to the Deputies for Needy Churches in South Africa (CO,

Overview of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa



★ <u>Church</u>	<u>Instituted</u>	<u>Members</u>	<u>Self-Support</u>
1. Pretoria	1950	434	Yes
2. Belville	1952	409	Yes
3. Johannesburg	1957	100	Mainly
4. Bethal	1996	55	No
5. Pretoria-Maranata	1997	332	Yes
6. Mamelodi	2002	168	No
7. Soshanguve North	2003	182	No
8. Belhar	2008	103	No

Free Reformed Churches in South Africa - Support For Ministers Needed

★ Dated December 2009 - Supplied by Harry Pouwels chairperson of the art 11 Needy Churches of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa



The Free Reformed Church in Soshanguve - North

Church News

Called by the Emmanuel American Reformed Church of Denver, Colorado:

Candidate Tim Sikkema

Art 11). Great appreciation has been expressed by representatives of the FRCSA for the support shown so far. Harry Pouwels, who is the chairperson of the Art 11 for Needy Churches has put it his way, "We are grateful for the support we receive from abroad, we see the Lord's providence and the work of the Holy Spirit in opening avenues."


But the needs in South Africa continue to be great. Poverty, unemployment, and low wages remain a reality in some of these churches. May we participate in the communion of saints with the brothers and sisters of the FRCSA and help in a concrete way with the many serious challenges they face.

At the same time there are many great opportunities. The mission work which was started in the 1960s is expanding rapidly. What a blessing

it is that we in North America can share in these opportunities and so contribute to the spreading of the gospel of salvation!

It is our prayer that the Canadian and American Reformed Churches continue to support the needy FRCSA in prayer as well as in financial aid. Until next time!

On behalf of the *Committee for the Needy Free Reformed Churches of South Africa*,

Miriam Hofsink, Joanne Vander Heide 

Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary

CONVOCATION 2010

September 10, 2010 at 8:00 p.m.

You are invited to our 2010 convocation evening
celebrating God's faithfulness in enabling us to commence a new academic year.

Highlights of the program:

Installation of New Professors:

Dr. Jason Van Vliet Dr. Jannes Smith



Speaker:

Dr. Jason Van Vliet:
*"Teaching Sound Doctrine
as Redeemed Servants"*



Venue:

Auditorium of
Redeemer University College
Ancaster, Ontario

M.Div. Graduates:

Ryan Kampen
Tony Roukema
Tim Sikkema
Jason VandeBurgt
Sean Wagenaar
Arend Witten





Rev. George van Popta is minister of the Jubilee Canadian Reformed Church at Ottawa, Ontario
gvanpopta@gmail.com

Canticles

This song, based on Exodus 15, praises God for having liberated his people from Egypt and for having drowned Pharaoh and his armies in the Red Sea. As we pray in the baptismal prayer, "You drowned the obstinate Pharaoh and all his host in the Red Sea, but led Your people Israel through the midst of the sea on dry ground." *The Song of Moses and Miriam* was set to the Genevan tune of Psalm 105 since many of the themes of this song are similar to those of the psalm.

The Song of Moses and Miriam

1. Sing to the LORD, so high ex - alt - ed.
 Our en - e - my He ful - ly rout - ed.
 The horse and rid - er He has hurled,
 in - to the sea - down - wards they swirled.
 Oh, praise the LORD for He is good.
 He drowned all those who sought our blood.

2. The LORD's my strength, my exaltation.
 He is my song and my salvation.
 He is my God – Him I will praise,
 my father's God, His worth I raise.
 The LORD's a warrior – that's His fame;
 the covenant LORD is His great name.
3. All Pharaoh's chariots and his soldiers
 God hurled into the sea like boulders.
 The best of Pharaoh's mighty force
 God drowned, along with every horse.
 The deepest waters covered them,
 they sank way down just like a stone.

4. Your right hand, LORD, is great in power;
Your right hand made our haters cower.
How great You are in majesty;
You threw down Your vile enemy.
Your furious anger You let go;
it burned them up like dried-out straw.
5. One mighty blast from Your own nostrils
made heaping piles of all the waters.
The surging floods stood like a wall;
they firmly stood, erect and tall.
The tow'ring waters of the sea
prepared to drown God's enemy.
6. The enemy said, "I will catch them,
and with my sword I will dispatch them.
The spoils I take I will divide.
Those Israelites can't from me hide."
One breath of God and they were dead;
they sank into the sea like lead.
7. O LORD, what other god is like You?
Among the gods, who does what You do?
You are supreme in holiness,
so awesome and so glorious.
You stretched Your hand out over them
and to their graves did them condemn.
8. In constant love You'll lead Your nation,
the people who possess salvation.
In pow'r and strength You them will guide
until they in Your house abide.
The nations all will shake with fear
when they this awesome news will hear.
9. Philistia's people will know anguish,
and Edom's chiefs in fear will languish.
The kings of Moab will be scared
when they see how Your arm is bared.
The Canaanites will melt away
due to the power You display.
10. The nations will be done with boasting;
just like a stone they'll be unmoving,
until You lead Your people by
and bring them to Your mountain, high.
There in Your dwelling them You'll plant;
a place for them You'll freely grant.
11. Sing to the LORD, so high exalted.
Our enemy He fully routed.
The horse and rider He has hurled,
into the sea – downwards they swirled.
The LORD will reign forevermore.
Him we will praise, Him we adore.

Ray of Sunshine

Corinne Gelms and
Patricia Gelms

Hello! My name is Marsha Jennifer Moesker. I am almost thirty-three years of age. My dad and mom live in Owen Sound and I have three brothers and four sisters. I am also aunt to thirteen nephews and nieces. I live at the Lighthouse in Fergus. I have lived all over the place, so it's exciting that I now live in the same town where I was born. When I was young my family left Fergus to live in Hamilton and London, Ontario. Then I moved with my family to Cloverdale, BC. Then to Carman, MB. And after that to Vernon, BC. And finally to Fergus again! My dad is a minister, and that's why all the moves. Everywhere I went I made good friends who helped me a lot. Greetings to all the people in all those places who I know and who helped me so much over the years!



You see, I have always needed supervised living. I have autism and don't understand everything and don't talk at all. I do let everyone know what I want by pushing and pointing. And sometimes when they don't understand I get frustrated and bite my clothes, and that often brings me some attention. I love walking a lot. When I moved to Fergus there was more opportunity for me to walk than before, so I walked a lot and lost a fair bit of weight. Some of the ladies who walk with me lost weight too. If you want to lose weight, I invite you to come to Lighthouse and to walk with me. They call me the Lighthouse weight-loss program.

I deliver newspapers every day and help in the vegetable garden here at Lighthouse. One of my other activities is trying to drink other people's coffee when they're not looking, swinging on my super-sized swing set, and playing with sand or stones. Oh, and I love camping and campfires. I'm thankful to be a covenant child of God and I attend church faithfully every Sunday. Sometimes I try to sing along in the worship, and sometimes I bang on the bench because I don't really like the song we're singing very much. If you ever

come to Fergus, drop in to see me at the Lighthouse. I'd love to have a cup of coffee with you! But watch your cup. . . .

September:

- 8 **MARSHA MOESKER will be 33**
6528 1st Line, RR 3 ,Fergus, ON N1M 2W4
- 11 **MARY VANDE BURGT will be 54**
32898 Highland Avenue, Abbotsford, BC V2S 7A8
- 14 **JERRY BONTEKOE will be 46**
c/o Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road RR 2, Beamsville ON L0R 1B2
- 22 **NICK PRINZEN will be 38**
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8
- 29 **PAUL DIELEMAN will be 41**
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8

Congratulations to you all celebrating a birthday this month. We hope that you have a wonderful day together with your family and friends. May you continue to seek your hope and joy in the Lord! Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

A note to all parents and caregivers

If there are any address or other changes that we need to be aware of please let us know as soon as possible.

You can contact us by the following means:

Mail: Corinne Gelms
8301 Range 1 Road, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0
Phone: 905-957-0380
Email: jcorgelms@porchlight.ca



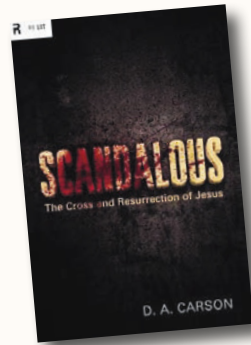
reviewed by Wes Bredenhof

Scandalous: The Cross and Resurrection of Jesus, D.A. Carson, Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2010

**Additional Information:
Paperback, 173 pages, \$17.99**

I've always enjoyed and been edified by Don Carson's books. From his commentary on Matthew, to his *Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*, to his surgical dissection of postmodernism in *The Gaggling of God*, to the loving story of his father in *Memoirs of an Ordinary Pastor*, I've come to expect excellence from this author. Recently I had the opportunity to listen to him speak just a couple of blocks from where I live. He was one of the featured speakers at the Canadian Gospel Coalition Conference. I heard a man with conviction, intelligence, and a gift to communicate basic gospel truths clearly and effectively. Shortly afterwards, I received *Scandalous*. This book is comprised of five presentations that he made at a conference in Seattle in 2008. It's vintage Carson.

The five presentations here are all expositions of Scripture passages having to do with the cross and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The passages are all found in the New Testament. As to be expected, three of the expositions are from the gospels (Matthew 27; John 11 and 20), while the other two are drawn from Romans



3:21-26 and Revelation 12. So, we get teaching from narrative passages, an epistle, and apocalyptic – a holistic picture of what the New Testament teaches about the cross and resurrection of Christ.

There are three valuable features of this little book. Of course, at the top has to be the faithful teaching that you'll find from Scripture. Carson is a seasoned, careful student of the Word of God and that's evident throughout. But all of that faithful teaching means little if it can't be successfully communicated. Carson knows how. With fresh, vivid language and timely illustrations and anecdotes, he keeps the reader's attention throughout. The last feature that I value in *Scandalous* is its devotional character. The author is passionate about his message and his passion contagiously directs the reader's heart to Christ. Various excerpts from hymns and poetry (some of which Carson himself has written) contribute nicely to this aspect. The book makes for excellent devotional reading on a Sunday afternoon.

This introductory explanation to the cross and resurrection of Christ is a treasure. These are truths that can be easily taken for granted. Don Carson is dedicated to making sure that we don't. Even though I write a lot of reviews I don't often say this, but I will about *Scandalous*: highly recommended!



Press Release

Press Release for the Combined meeting of the Board and the Administration Committee, Inter-League Publication Board, held April 7, 2010 in Fergus, Ontario

The chairman of the Board, Dan VanDelden, opened the meeting with Scripture reading and prayer, and welcomed everyone present. Felicia Bijlsma was welcomed as she is considering appointment to replace Annette Nobel as secretary. The agenda was established.

In attendance for the Board, representing the League of Men's Societies in Ontario, Dick Nijenhuis and Dan VanDelden, and representing the League of Women's Societies in Ontario in Ontario, Betsy Kingma and Dianne Westrik. In attendance for the committee of Administration (CoA): Paul Deboer (chairman), Debbie Swaving (sales), Nelly Hoeksema (treasurer), Cathy Jonker (administrator), Theresa Westrik (marketing) and Felicia Bijlsma .

The minutes of the last meeting held November 4, 2009 were reviewed and adopted, and matters arising from the minutes were dealt with.

Updates were made on the books being reviewed. There will be two new books ready for the new study season. Ads promoting book bundles have been published in *Clarion*, *Reformed Perspective*, and *Christian Renewal*. The finance report indicated that progress is being made and there is sufficient resources for our upcoming publications. Sales remain strong.

The Board updated the C of A on the progress of evaluating books to be forward to the C of A for publication. Administrative matters discussed.

General question period was held. Press release was approved. Paul Deboer closed the meeting with prayer.

