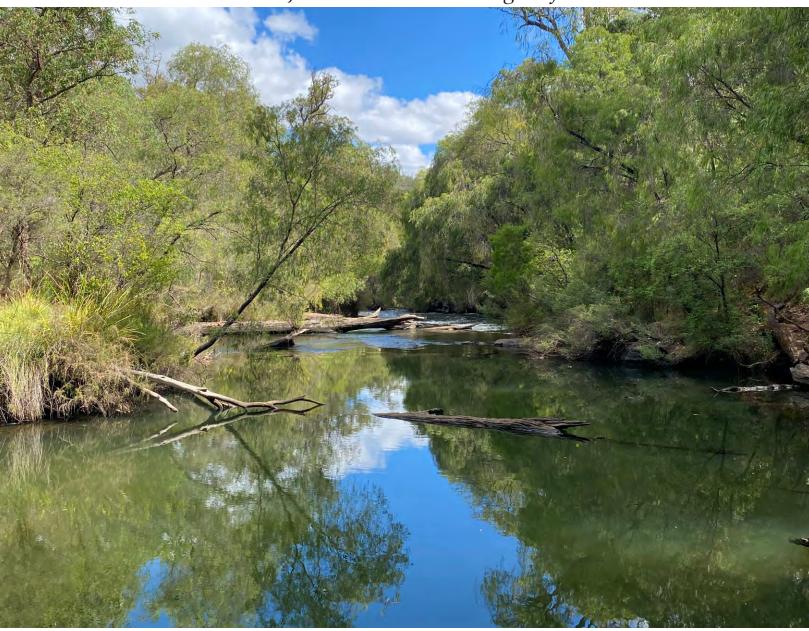


Lux Mundi

43:1 March 2024

Jesus said: "I am the light of the world." John 8:12



In this Issue
NAPARC 2023
A Warning Against Secularism
Israel
In Holy Service

Magazine published by the International Conference of Reformed Churches

What's Inside



Author: Rev. Dr. Karlo Janssen Karlo Janssen is minister with the Canadian Reformed Churches and an editor of Lux Mundi.

Kingdom Work Continues

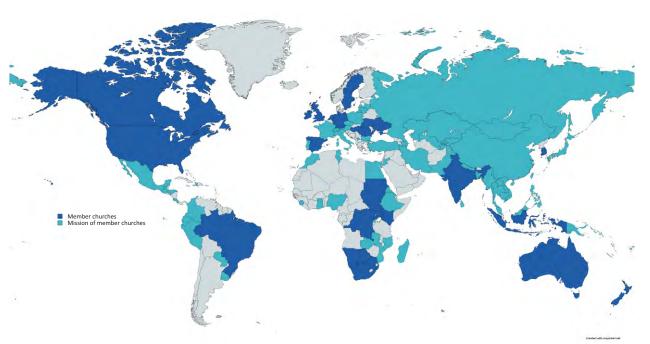
We're seeing nation rise against nation and ideologies estranged from reality strive for a following. In the midst of this the Son of God continues to gather, defend, and preserve His church. Kingdom work continues! Proof of this reality is found in the pages that follow.

The devotional is the last of those presented at the 2022 ICRC: a timely and timeless calling to repentance. It is followed by a report from the Diaconal Committee and an announcement from the Theological Education Committee. In the category ecumenism we share a press release from NAPARC 2023 (NAPARC functions much like a regional ICRC). This is followed with something on The Netherlands: information on who is who and a translation (by undersigned) of a press release from the GKN on a pending merger with the DGK.

We share some news from the African mission field. Then you'll encounter some food for thought from Brazil (on secularism) and a public letter on the question of Israel written several decades ago and signed by many around the world, including leaders in several ICRC member churches. Next an article from Ireland on singing from Jesus' hymnbook, followed by a review of a study resource on the Psalms. Finally there is a book review on a publication dealing with office in the church.

Where churches are concerned, flow charts are handy. You'll find one for the Dutch Reformed with the article on The Netherlands and one on Presbyterian Korea on the back "cover".

In this and following months we celebrate the victories of our Saviour and Lord through the cross, resurrection, ascension and outpouring of the Spirit. May the Kingdom of our Lord come soon to establish God's shalom forever more on this earth.



Nations where ICRC member churches and their mission projects are located



The logo combines the ICRC logo with the Lux Mundi monogram, an early Christian symbol combining the initials of Jesus Christ (in Greek I and X), referring to Him as the Light of the World (Lux Mundi).

Lux Mundi: Volume 43:1 - March 2024



CONTENTS

02 What's Inside

Devotional

04 Christ is coming! So repent!

News

07 Diaconal Committee

08 Theological Education Committee

Ecumenics

09 NAPARC Press Release

11 The Netherlands - Acronyms and flowchart

13 The Netherlands - In State of Union

Mission

14 God is Faithful

16 Africa

17 Safe in His Loving Hands

Theology

18 A Warning Against Secularism

20 A Public Letter on Israel

23 Singing from Jesus' Hymn book

Book Reviews

25 Psalms Study Resource

26 In Holy Service

28 Presbyterianism in Korea (flow chart)

CONTRIBUTORS

Editors

Karlo Janssen

Sjirk Bajema

Lawr Khawbung

Ben Glaser

Chris Boersema

Design & Print

Minuteman Press - Chilliwack, BC, Canada

Regional contacts

North America Ben Glaser

South America Chris Boersema

Europe William Middelkoop

Sub Sahara Africa Paul Bukenya
Southern Africa Albert Coetsee
South Asia Lawr Khawbung
East Asia Heon Soo Kim
Pacific Sjirk Bajema

ICRC liaisons

Missions Committee Arjan de Visser
Diaconal Committee Pieter Boon

Theological Ed Committee Gerhard Visscher Regional Conferences Reinier Noppers

SUBSCRIPTION

The digital version is published free of charge to readers. To receive notice of a new edition posted to the ICRC website, please register with luxmundi@icrconline.com, subject line "Lux Mundi digital registration". One is free to print and/or distribute the digital version. To receive a printed copy via mail, printing and postal fees will be charged. To receive a printed edition, please register with luxmundi@icrconline.com, subject line "Lux Mundi postal registration".

CONTACT ADDRESS

Lux Mundi

7949 202a Street,

Langley BC, V2Y 1W8, Canada

Email: <u>luxmundi@icrconline.com</u>

Phone: +1-604-854-4011 www.icrconline.com

Devotional

ra the bia

Author: Rev. Dr. Heinrich Zwemstra Heinrich Zwemstra is a minister with the Reformed Churches in Namibia

Christ is Coming! So Repent!

But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

2Peter 3:8-9

Dear Brothers, in the second last verse of the Bible, in Revelation 22:20, Jesus says: "Surely I come quickly." But why did 2000 years pass since His first coming? Generations come and generations go. The world is full of despair and sin.

Since Jesus' ascension there were a lot of disasters, hunger and diseases. And throughout the ages the church was persecuted in many ways. Throughout the ages the church cries out: Maranatha, come Lord Jesus!

God speaks to us, and He assures us: Christ is coming again! And He calls us to abide and to persevere. While we are waiting for the second coming of Christ God is calling people to repentance.

1. Christ is coming

It is important that we take note how the apostle Peter addresses the readers. He calls them beloved, and this expression is repeated 4 times in chapter 3. The expression shows the intimate relationship between the apostle and the readers. He really cares for them. And this is also the way God addresses his children. He calls us beloved because he really loves us and cares about our well-being.

Peter also gives the purpose of this epistle in chapter 3 verse 1: "This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder."

Yes, in 2 Peter God is encouraging us by reminding us of the promises of the return of Jesus Christ.

In the first chapter Peter has reminded the believers of the precious faith they have been given. Through faith in Jesus Christ they are righteous before God. And in chapter 1 he also reminded them of their calling to godliness because of their wonderful salvation.

In the second chapter Peter has reminded them to be careful about false teachers among them. These false teachers try to exploit the believers and are full of greed. They follow their own sinful desires and despise authority. In short: The lives of the false teachers are characterized by wickedness and worldliness.

But that is not all. Not only are the lives of the false teachers wicked, but also their teaching. They are bold and arrogant, and they try to justify their sinful deeds.

Today we must also be careful about false teachers. We must be careful about those whose lives and teaching are contrary to the word of God.

In the third chapter Peter now reminds the believers of the second coming of Christ, and he warns them against scoffers that will come in the last days. In verses 3 and 4 we read:

"knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. 4 They will say, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.""

The "last days" is the time between the first coming of Christ and His second coming. Like the first readers of 2 Peter we are also living in the last days. And in the last days believers are warned against scoffers. A scoffer is someone who follows his own will and mocks with God's will. From the context we can make the conclusion that the scoffers were the false teachers in chapter 2 who followed their own sinful desires.

In the last days God is constantly reminding us about the truths of the second coming of Christ. But why is it necessary that we must be reminded of these truths? God knows that we have a bad memory, and therefore we need to be reminded. It is easy for believers to "get accustomed to God's truth". The Holy Spirit gave us the truth of the Word, but often we take this for granted and become complacent. We need to be reminded regularly so that we are awake!

Because God's Word is true, we must pay attention to it and take its message serious. The teaching and preaching of God's Word must not lull us to sleep, but rather is it must awaken us to godly lives and to proclaim the gospel to those who are not saved (Rom. 13:11-14).

In verse 2, Peter makes it clear that the second coming of Christ is not only something which the apostles teach. The prophets taught it and so did our Lord Jesus Christ. Peter stresses the unity of the Word of God. When scoffers deny

Devotional

the coming of Christ, they are denying the truth of the prophetic books, the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels and the writing of the Apostles.

The scoffers who deny the second coming says:

"For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."

Fathers refer to the first generation of Christians. Peter wrote this letter just before his death (cf. 1:14) in (A.D.) 68. At that time many of the first-generation Christians passed away. The argument of the scoffers is: To the first-generation Christians the promise was given that Christ will come again. But now many of them died without the fulfillment of that promise. No, they say, the world will continue as it is.

Also today many scoffers deny the second coming of Christ. In the secular world in which we live many people deliberately ignore this truth and even mock it. Maybe you have personally experienced mocking because you are holding onto this truth. But these scoffers must not discourage us. In 2 Peter 3 the Holy Spirit is reminding us that we can expect scoffing and he encourages us to remain faithful.

Peter gives evidence which scoffers deliberately ignore. Today it is also amazing how many people ignore certain information.

Peter shows two events in history to prove his point:

- God's work at creation (verse 5);
- 2. The flood in Noah's day (verse 6).

God created the heavens and the earth by His word. The phrase "and God said" occurs nine times in Genesis 1. God spoke and everything just happened. With his Word God also sustains his creation. He did not wind up his creation like and clock to run on its own. No, God is in control and he can intervene when He wants to.

Peter shows that in the past God did intervene in His creation. Just like the scoffers, the people living at the time of the flood thought that everything is calm and nothing would change. But, suddenly everything changed, and the wicked world perished by water. Only Noah and his family were saved.

Peter's argument is clear: With His Word God created everything and with his Word He is keeping his creation in place. With his Word he can also change things anytime. In the past he has sent rain when He wanted to. In the future – when Christ comes – He will judge and purify his creation with fire (Belgic Confession, Article 37).

We have seen so far that Christ is coming again. That is clear from God's Word and His Word is certain.

Someone may ask: But why is it taking so long? The scoffers

argue that it is taking so long because there is no second coming of Christ?!

2. God is calling His children to repentance

In human terms 2000 years may feel and look long, but verse 8 gives us God's perspective of time:

"But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

Peter is here referring to Psalm 90:4:

"For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night."

God is eternal and He is not limited to time the way we are. As a matter of fact, God is the creator of time and He uses time perfectly. When we study the works of God it is clear that He is never in a hurry, and He is never late.

God is not limited to time, but He uses time perfectly to accomplish his purposes. After the fall He didn't send the Savior immediately, but he waited till the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4).

Scoffers do not understand that God is eternal, nor do they understand His mercy. Why is God allowing time before the return of Christ and the coming of the Day of the Lord? It is not because He is unable or unwilling to act. He is not off schedule! Nobody has the right to decide when God must act and how he must act. God is sovereign in all things and does not need the counsel of sinful man (Rom. 11:33-36).

God delays the return of Christ and the Day of Judgment because He is patient. He is giving time for the salvation of sinners. In verse 15 (of 2 Peter) we read: "And count the patience of our Lord as salvation..."

God brought salvation through Jesus Christ. He became man and with His life on earth, and His suffering on the cross he paid the price for our sins. Because of our sins we deserved to be eternally condemned, but in God's wonderful grace Jesus took our iniquity on Him.

After Jesus died for our sins he rose from the dead, He ascended to heaven and gave the Holy Spirit to His church. Through the preaching of the gospel, the Holy Spirit is calling people to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

The time we are living in is indeed a time of God's grace. In his patience God is giving time for the proclamation of the gospel so that people repent. Not everyone one who hears gospel repent... But his children... God wants His chosen children to come to Him so that the number of the elect can come to fullness.

God calls us, His church, to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world. It is not our responsibility to decide

Devotional

who God's children are. They are throughout this world. Our calling is to bring the gospel to them.

The second part of verse 9 needs our attention. It reads:

"...not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

[The Lord is] "...not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

Does this mean that all people are saved?

When we look at other parts of the Bible we see that God is not saving all people. I can quote many passages, but I will quote 2:

John. 6:36: "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out."

Matt. 20:28: "even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

So, God does not save all people; we see that from other parts of the Bible. The "all" is not all people.

The meaning of "all" is determined by the context in which the words are found. For example, when a teacher is getting ready to start a class and asks his students: "Are all here?", he is not asking if every living person on earth is present in the room! Rather he is referring to all the students enrolled in the class.

2 Peter shows us that that Peter is writing to a specific group and not to all of mankind. In 2 Peter 1 verse 1 Peter identifies the readers as those who "have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ." And in chapter 3 verse 1 Peter says: "This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved…"

So Peter is writing to the believers in. The "all" (of verse 9) that God wishing not to perish must be limited to the same group he is writing to. Christ's second coming has been

delayed so that all of the believers (God's children) can be saved. God is not willing that any of his children should perish, but that all of them come to repentance.

Dear friends. Christ is coming again! Do you live in the expectation of His coming? And do you have the desire to be united with your savior? We can and must live with the expectation that Christ is coming, and while we wait continue our calling.

Parents who are expecting a child are excited about the birth of the child. But they do not want their baby to be born earlier, because it will be bad for the baby. While they are waiting they are preparing everything so that when the baby comes everything is ready.

Let us live with excitement for the coming of our Savior. We know that He will come at the right time. While we are waiting we must prepare and work for His coming. A Christian always keeps his eyes on the horizon for the coming of Christ, but at the same time he continue his daily work faithfully.

Close

As a closure I want to refer to the words of Jesus in Matt. 25:45-51. The faithful and wise servant is the one who is faithfully doing his work when his Lord is coming again. Let us be encouraged by the Word of God that Christ is coming again and continue to cry out with the true church of all ages – Maranatha; Come Lord Jesus!. And while we are waiting we must continue our calling to preach the gospel. Let us pray that God will enable us in this through His Word and Holy Spirit.

Devotional presented on the last day of ICRC 2022.



Rev. Zwemstra leading a field trip to the San People during ICRC 2022

News (**)

Author: Rev. Pieter Boon Pieter Boon is a minister with the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa. He currently serves as secretary of the ICRC Diaconal Committee

Diaconal Meeting in Brazil

Working on a Toolbox for Deacons

Once every 4 years the ICRC Diaconal Committee holds an in-person meeting. This time (the last week of January) it was in the northeast of Brazil. From all over the globe – Korea, South Africa, Netherlands, USA and Canada – we came together. Unfortunately, our brother from Manipur in India – Lungawiruol Khawbung – could not make it, due to the continuing violence in his part of the world. Let us not forget to pray for the Indian churches!



Meeting in Maragogi, Brazil

What did we do? A short overview:

 Evaluation of 10 years of Diaconal Committee ICRC. Are we fulfilling our mandates?

- What is a "major disaster"? Better defining a major disaster and the role of the Diaconal Committee in answering to and promoting the needs. Special attention was given to the 'ministry of presence'.
- Equipping deacons to do financial training of church members – how to be good stewards.
- Local and International Ministry of Mercy Do's and Don'ts.
- How do we reach out to the different ICRC federations those in need and those who can help.
- Diaconal Outreach on each continent inventory of projects and initiatives.
- Planning for the future how to reach more people. In all honesty, the reach of the Diaconal Committee does not really go beyond those who are directly involved with the ICRC. Our goal is to reach in the coming years also the pastors and deacons of the ICRC churches. To that end we are going to publish a very practical 'Toolbox for a Deacon'.

'Toolbox for a Deacon'

After taking stock of many publications on the diaconal office, it is clear that most of these books are on a theological and academic level which is not easy for a starter up deacon. Often when a deacon is ordained, he doesn't

have any training and has to learn while 'doing the job'. To reach out to them, we have started to compile a very practical manual (a book of about 50 pages), say a 'Toolbox for a Deacon'. For example. when a deacon must visit a person requesting financial help, or when he has to visit a person who is terminally ill, there will be a page in the booklet assisting him with such a specific visit. There will be an applicable Bible passage, points for a meditation, the right questions to ask, pitfalls to avoid, a few prayer points and the like.

God willing, we hope to present this 'Toolbox' on the next international conference in South Korea in 2026.



Members of the Diaconal Committee (fltr): Chris Boersema (Brazil); David Nakhla (USA); Aaron Bae (South Korea); Gé Drayer (Netherlands); Pieter Boon (South Africa); Rick Postma (Canada). Absent: Lungawiruol Khawbung (India)

News (**)

Further Highlights in Brazil:

❖ Diaconal Conference in Recife

On Friday January 26 a Diaconal Conference was held in Recife together with deacons from the federations IRB and IPB. Thanks to the able translation of Chris Boersema from English to Portuguese and vice versa this was a very edifying experience. It was a privilege to meet deacons in Brazil and share in their day-to-day challenges and activities as deacons.

Portuguese Worship Services in Recife and Maragogi

On Sunday January 28 we attended the worship services in the Igreja Reformada do Brasil in Recife and Maragogi. These were unique experiences never to forget, meeting many fellow believers and sharing in the worship of our Lord Jesus Christ. Although there was a language barrier, it did not prevent experiencing the communion of saints tangibly.



The Diaconal Committee at work



The Chris Boersema Family

Hospitality and sight seeing

Chris Boersema and his family did their utmost to make us feel at home and taste something of Brazilian life, whether it was scuba diving with an instructor (a member in his church) between the tropical reefs or tasting the meat of an armadillo during a barbecue at his in-laws.



Theological Education Conference 2025

As ICRC Theological Education Committee (TEC), we are excited to inform you that we are planning a three-day conference for ICRC Church Federation Representatives and Representatives from Seminaries identified by ICRC member church federations as seminaries from which they call pastors (termed "ICRC Seminaries"). The theme of the conference will be "Meeting the Challenges of Theological Education in the 21st Century: Education, Accreditation, Formation". The conference is being planned for June 11-13, 2025, at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary (PRTS), in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA. Please mark these dates in your calendar! It is being scheduled for June 2025 (not 2024) to allow time for seminaries to include travel to Grand Rapids in their travel budgets. To reduce travel expenses, the HRC and FRC churches in Grand Rapids are willing to billet representatives attending the conference from a distance.

Ecumenics

Author: Rev. Ralph Pontier

Ralph Pontier is a minister (emeritus) with the United Reformed Churches in North America. He serves as secretary of NAPARC.

NAPARC 2023

The 48th annual meeting of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) convened on Tuesday afternoon, November 14, 2023. It was hosted by the Presbyterian Reformed Church at the Beacon Church in Exeter, Rhode Island. The outgoing Chairman, Rev. Michael Ives, led the opening devotions.

All 13 Member Churches of NAPARC were represented. The Member Churches include the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC), the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC), the Reformed Church of Quebec (Église réformée du Québec) (ERQ), the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA), the Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC), the Korean American Presbyterian Church (KAPC), the Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin) (KPCA), the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), the Presbyterian Reformed Church (PresRC), the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS), the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA), and the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA). Representatives of the Bible Presbyterian Church (BPC) and the Protestant Reformed Churches in America (PRCA) attended as invited observers.

The basis of NAPARC's fellowship is "Confessing Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Sovereign Lord over all of life, we affirm the basis of the fellowship of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches to be full commitment to the Bible in its entirety as the Word of God written, without error in all its parts, and to its teaching as set forth in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms." (NAPARC Constitution, II. Basis)

One of the first orders of business was the election of new officers. Elected as Chairman was Rev. Dr. J. P. Mosley of the RCUS. Elected as Vice-chairman was Rev. Bruce Parnell of the RPCNA. Rev. Ralph Pontier was elected to a sixth term as Secretary, and Mr. Danny McDaniel of the PCA was elected to a first term as Treasurer. Appreciation was expressed for the retiring Treasurer, Rev. Todd De Rooy who had served four terms. The chairmanship and vicechairmanship rotate annually among the 13-Member Churches following an alphabetical listing. The Vicechairman this year is slated to serve as Chairman next year, and his denomination is asked to host the following year. The bulk of the time at NAPARC is to hear from the Member Churches about what the Lord is doing in their midst, and to pray for one another after each report. Reports were heard of both spiritual blessings and the struggles of ministry.

After Member Churches gave reports and prayed for one another, four topics of discussion were taken up. They included how we can encourage compliance with the NAPARC Comity agreement, how we can encourage organic union, how to retain young people in our churches and recruit new ministers, and a proposal regarding the formation of an independent Investigations Counsel to serve NAPARC member churches, providing objective counsel to Member Churches regarding instances of sexual abuse and related scandalous crimes.

A devotional service was held on Tuesday evening with Rev. Michael Ives leading in prayer for the churches. On Wednesday evening, Rev. Tim Worrell addressed the delegates and guests on the subject of "John Murray: He Yet Speaketh" reviewing the writings of John Murray on five



NAPARC 2023

Ecumenics (1)



subjects,: public worship, private worship, evangelism and missions, Christian education, and ecumenicity. Rev. Ives and Rev. Worrell are ministers in the host denomination which John Murray helped found.

The NAPARC schedule runs from Tuesday afternoon to Thursday noon and provides time slots for bi-lateral meetings between the inter-church or ecumenical committees of the Member Churches. These smaller meetings have proven fruitful for Member Churches to grow closer together and manifest more fully their oneness in Christ. This year, the plenary sessions concluded on Wednesday afternoon, but some bi-lateral meetings continued on into Thursday morning.

In addition to the annual meeting of the Council, NAPARC sponsors consultations where representatives of Member Churches gather to discuss cooperation in a specific area of ministry. For more than thirty years, there have been annual world mission consultations in September of each year. This past September representatives from eight NAPARC Member Church world mission agencies (WMA) were present. They were from the ARPC, HRC, KAPC, OPC, PCA, PresRC, RPCNA, and URCNA. They met together for the annual consultation at the OPC's administration offices in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania. Joining with them were representatives from three NAPARC Member Church diaconal ministries/agencies (DMA). They were from the HRC, OPC, and URCNA. Items for discussion included:

- Recruiting missionaries in the post-pandemic era;
- Pastoral care of missionaries and their families;
- · Opportunities for mutual cooperation and encouragement.

In the meeting of WMA representatives, note was taken of the recurring need for more missionaries. All agreed to draft a letter to the presidents of seminaries, that are endorsed or used by their respective churches/federations, to encourage further those seminaries in their endeavors to help prepare men for the gospel ministry and to consider increasing the emphasis reflected in their curriculum and institutional culture on the subjects of missions and evangelism. The letter was be sent by the WMA representatives, writing in their individual capacities as representatives of their respective church/federation WMA, and not as an official communication from NAPARC itself. The next NAPARC Joint WMA/DMA Consultation is scheduled for October 15-17, 2024, with Mr. Mark T. Bube as the chairman and Rev. Timothy J. Worrell as secretary. The Council enjoyed the gracious and generous hospitality of the Presbyterian Reformed Church and experienced warm and joyous fellowship with fellow delegates, observers, and other guests.

The next meeting of the Council is scheduled for November 12-14, 2024, to be hosted at the Northland Reformed Church (RCUS) in Kansas City, Missouri.

Rev. Ralph A. Pontier NAPARC Secretary secretary@naparc.org



Fellowship after the Sunday worship service during ICRC 2022

Ecumenics (19)





Author: Rev. Dr. Karlo Janssen

Karlo Janssen is minister with the Canadian Reformed Churches and an editor of Lux Mundi.

Who's Who in Reformed The Netherlands

A lot has changed in the church scape of Protestant / Reformed The Netherlands in the past two decades. In my own circles, predominantly of Dutch heritage, I repeatedly hear people sigh they can't keep track of it all. It would be even harder for those who are on the outside. Herewith a brief overview of what acronym and name refers to which church group.

To avoid disambiguation (confusing different matters with the same name) the practice is becoming more common to refer to federations of churches by their name in English, but to put their acronym or abbreviation in the language of origin. Thus, for example, the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (liberated), a found member of the ICRC that saw its membership terminated in 2022, will be referenced in this overview as the GKv. The English acronym that has been used in ICRC circles is listed in square brackets.

- CGK [CRCN] Christian Reformed Churches: in 1834 over a hundred churches led by just a handful of ministers left the Dutch Reformed Church (NHK) over issues of doctrine. By 1869 the majority of these churches had covenanted in a bond of churches. In 1892 a small minority of CGK did not participate in a merger, and in the years that followed many CGK that had returned to the CGK. The CGK have been members of the ICRC since 1997.
- **DGK (also DGKH)** The Reformed Churches (Restored): these churches came out of the GKv in 2003/2004. In January 2024 these churches declared in synod that they are "in state of union" with the GKN.
- **GKN** Reformed Churches The Netherlands: these churches came out of the GKv in 2009 and years following. The GKN have been members of the ICRC since 2022. In December 2023 these churches declared in synod that they are "in state of union" with the DGK.
- GKN / GKN(s) [RCN] Reformed Churches in The Netherlands. This bond of churches was formed in 1892 through the merger of most of the CGK with the bond of churches that had come out the NHK in 1886 in the Doleantie. The GKN split in 1944 into the GKN(synodical) and GKN(liberated) in 1944. In 2004 most of the GKN(s) merged into the PKN, the few that did not continued as the vGKN (continued GKN).
- **GKv [RCN(I)]** Reformed Churches (liberated): this federation formed in 1944 separating out of the GKN in an event known as the Liberation. The GKv are founding members of the ICRC; their membership was terminated in 2022 on account of the GKv tolerating female ministers and elders. In May 2023 most of the GKv merged with the NGK to form the NGK (aka NeGK).

- **HHK** Restored (Dutch) Reformed Church: churches in the NHK that refused to participate in the union of three churches in 2004 that saw the formation of the Protestant Church in The Netherlands (PKN).
- **NGK (also NeGK)** Netherlandish Reformed Churches: the bond of churches formed when most of the GKv and all of the NGK merged in May 2023.
- NGK Netherlandishly Reformed Churches: a confederation of churches that found themselves outside the GKv during the late 1960s and early 1970s on account of noncompliance with the church order and a broad tolerance of doctrines. The NGK merged with most of the GKv in May 2023 to form the NGK (aka NeGK).
- NHK Dutch Reformed Church. The privileged church in The Netherlands since the Reformation ("privileged" is similar though not identical to "established" in the United Kingdom). The NHK saw an exodus of members seeking to be orthodox in 1834 (Secession) and in 1886 (Doleantie). In 2004 it merged with two other churches to form the PKN.
- **PKN** Protestant Church in The Netherlands: the church formed in 2004 through the merger of the NHK, the GKN (synodical), and the Evangelical Lutheran Church.
- zGKv Independent GKv's: at the time of writing there are 4 GKv's which refuse to be part of the NeGK; these currently function as independent congregations and are considering joining the GKN & DGK when these two federations have merged.

An observant reader will notice some peculiarities. The current "GKN" does not have the word "in" in its name. Further, "DGK" includes the article "The" in its official name. I understand that the reason for these peculiarities has a legal background.

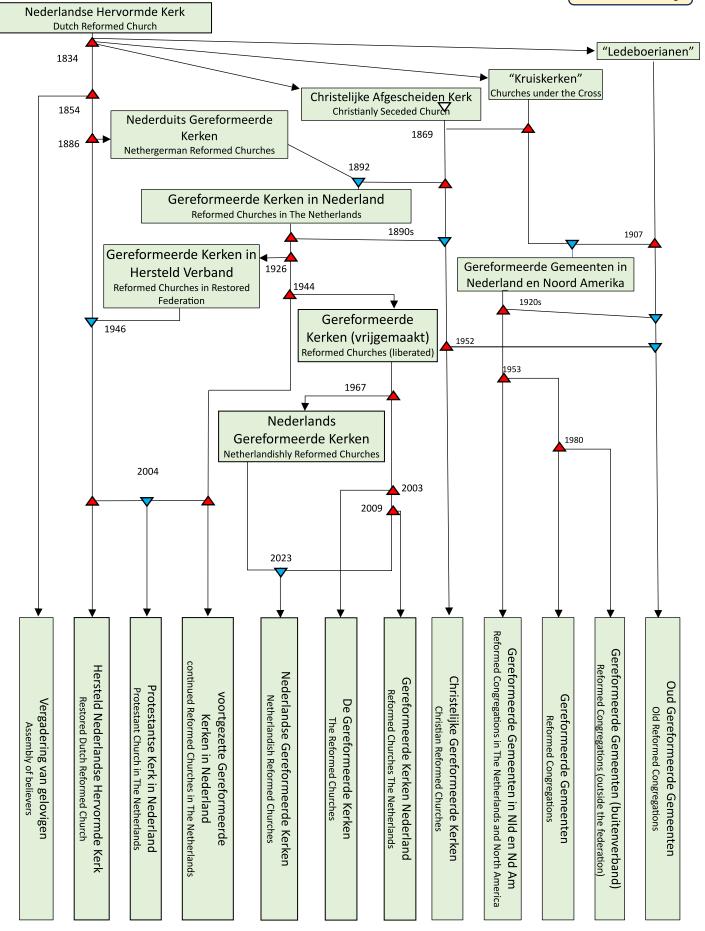
As to "Netherlandishly" and "Netherlandish", there is a little grammar going on here. In the name "NGK" the "N" ("Nederlands") is an adverb and thus modifies the participle "Reformed". The NGK were Reformed churches that had been Reformed in a Dutch manner. In the name NeGK the "Ne" (Nederlandse") is an adjective and thus modifies the noun "Churches". My impression is that the acronym NeGK was used around the time of the merger, to distinguish it from NGK. As the NGK no longer exist, the acronym for the new federation has become NGK.

The pending merger of the DGK and GKN will likely form what could best be considered the continuation of the GKv. Meanwhile, the CGK finds itself in internal discussions similar to those of the GKv in recent decades.

May the Lord continue to gather, defend, and preserve His church in the unity of true faith, also in The Netherlands.







Ecumenics

Author: GS-GKN 2023

A Press Release from the 2023 General Synod of the Reformed Churches The Netherlands

In State of Union

The General Synod of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands Kampen 2023 decided, in its session on Saturday, December 1 in Harderwijk, to recognize The Reformed Churches (restored) as true churches of Christ that stand and build on the foundation of apostles and prophets. This includes recognizing the offices and office-bearers, opening the pulpits, and accepting attestations. The GS Kampen has decided that the federations GKN and DGK, after and with the mutual recognition of the churches as true churches of Christ, are in a state of union and the process to this union must be set in motion.

It has been decided to propose to the DGK Synod that all deputies be instructed to jointly come up with proposals for the next two synods, in order that, after approval by both separate synods, by a joint synod to ratify the proposals and to merge the two federations. These include:

- · Inventorying differences that still exist,
- a proposal: a. how existing differences can continue to coexist in practice and b. existing differences can possibly be eliminated by aligning practice;

 Wherever possible, to carry out tasks together and to serve the churches.

Furthermore, it has been decided to propose to the DGK Synod that in preparation for the actual unification, both parties should appoint a deputation with the joint task:

- identify differences in current church polity, synodal regulations, local regulations and other possible bottlenecks;
- propose how these differences can be reconciled and, where appropriate, eliminated;
- make a proposal for the name of the joint federation after the unification;
- make a proposal for the divisions within the federation;
- · convening the synods and
- preparing a joint General Synod

The synod has decided to set up a committee, which will help local church councils, where necessary and desired, in local difficulties with regard to continuing in a new federation in which the churches of GKN and DGK form a functioning federation.



Members of GS-GKN 2023 with foreign delegates and observers

God is Faithful

What is it that makes you want to say that when your path crosses with that of Jacobus Albertus van Rooy, you want to say as the men in Zechariah 8:23 did, "We want to go with you because we can see that God is with you"?

Are you asking him about that? Over the span of his 91-year life, his answer is simple: *God is faithful!*

Covenant Marriage and Mortgage Appeal

Delve a little deeper, then you realize: for Koos van Rooy, this is God's covenant faith, as he learned it from God's Word and experienced it richly in his life. It was the source of a life of surrender, godliness, and richly blessed service.

This is somewhat ironic, because he says: "At the time there were leading figures in our churches who found me unacceptable because I rejected the covenant theology of H. H. Kuyper which at one time had strong influence among South African theologians." Then he speaks of "covenant automatism" and "presumptive regeneration," which led to the call to faith and rooted conversion being condemned as Methodism. But what, then, is the place and importance of God's

His answer comes immediately and clearly: This is precisely the appeal of the covenant, the call that God makes on you through his covenant promises and covenant acts in Christ. Undoubtedly, this realization of the necessity of the call to faith and repentance confirmed his own calling to the mission field. "Soon, in my dealings with the Lord, I realized that I could best serve Him by engaging in missionary work. In fact, I still had an incredible sense of sin and unworthiness until my early student years, until I learned to look away

believing He wanted to use me after all."

Covenant Example

covenant?

What he "learned and received and heard and saw in them" from his father and grandfather (Philippians 4:9) had a profound impact on his life and ministry. His father -

from myself and keep my eyes on my King and Savior,



Three generations of Van Rooy ministers

grandfather and greatgrandfather were ministers. So he had a lot of exposure to the way of life of a minister of the Word. "At a young age, the Lord called me out of my spiritual death to be his child. My father's selfless devotion was an example to me of what attitude a servant of the Lord should have." He must also have inherited the love of the mission from

the love of the mission from his father, Rev. Jacs van Prof. Koos van Rooy

Rooy. "Our family visited the Siloam mission station once during my primary school years during the winter holidays. I later learned that my parents had undertaken to swap charges with Rev Hugo du Plessis of Siloam for a year. It was an unforgettable experience for me to experience the missionary work up close. With the unexpected passing of my mother at the youthful age of 36 years, the swap unfortunately fell through the carpet.

Years later, in my last year of study at theological school, Siloam mission station in Vendaland was vacant, and my only call was to there – much to my delight. Precisely, in his own words, "because of the love of Christ and the need in the Gentile world," he decided to become a minister.

Truly: God is faithful!

Siloam

When he came to Vendaland in 1957, church life among the Vendas was in a state of disrepair. Some of the missionary posts still existed only in name. At that time, they realized that the Reformed Churches did not have sufficient means to reach the whole of Vendaland.

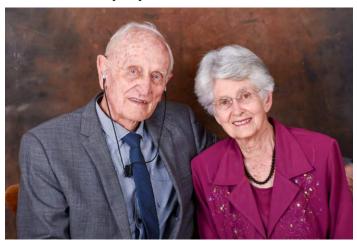
Yet the Lord provided. They learned that the Christian Reformed Churches (CGK) in the Netherlands were looking for a new mission field, and approached them. This led to a greatly blessed cooperation in the Word proclamation, medical work and theological training. People like Prof Bert Floor and the medical doctor and Mrs Helms made their mark there.

Together they began to pray persistently for spiritual awakening among the Venda Christians. The answer to their prayers was not very encouraging at first. Although there was a mass movement towards the church between 1961 and 1963, it was not a mass conversion.

"Whether it comes with that, I don't know, but right after I accepted a call to Soweto in 1963 and left Vendaland, the answer to our prayers came. *God is faithful*. The Venda

believers themselves began to spread the gospel. The instrument the Spirit used for it was a young theological student, the later Prof C T Rabali."

Prof Koos recalls with grateful excitement: "The conversions were profound and life-changing now, unlike in the past. There was a conscious break with all forms of the old pagan religion. A number of gifted young men also signed up for theological study, and they worked with great blessing..." In his old age, it was a highlight for him to look back and see how the Lord had given him so much joy and grace in its rich fruits – so much more than he could have imagined in his wildest dreams: "so many genuine, devoted black believers here in Vendaland and elsewhere, especially among the Venda-speakers nationwide, with gifted and enthusiastic ministers, well equipped spiritually and academically. And the most beautiful thing of all is that they no longer need me..... God is faithful"



Prof. and Mrs. Van Rooy - a lifetime of grace

Regina van Rooy

Our conversation for *Die Kerkblad* took place when the Van Rooy children from Louis Trichardt took their parents through the Voortrekker Monument on their mother Regina's 90th birthday on 21 July. What makes this so special is that about growing up in Ventersburg, Prof. Koos writes elsewhere: "A tremendous event for us was the symbolic Ossewatrek of 1938. The women looked beautiful in their long Voortrekker dresses, capes and neckerchiefs. Even the little girls dressed like that. I think it was there that five-year-old Regina Kruger first caught my eye. "

And on her 90th birthday on a wakis (a type of pioneer wagon), in the Monument, again with a cape on?: "She is becoming more beautiful and beautiful to me!"

The Lord gave him a spouse who fully identified with his calling. In fact, she also soon learned to help herself with Venda, and now in his old age, as the murmur of the mill weakened, and the toes of the song of the little birds began

to grow dull, (Pred.12:4), he called her but to come and interpret for him if he could not hear what the people were saying.

All four of their children, Annerooy, Elsje, Jacs and At were born in Siloam. Two of Elsje and Louis Linde's sons, Lohan and Jaco, are ministers in Wonderboom South and White River respectively. In 1975 he became theological professor in Hammanskraal, and in 1995 in Potchefstroom, until he became emeritus. Throughout time, the connection with Vendaland remained alive.

The Bible in its own language

One of his fellow students once said: If a language runs by, Koos grabs it by his tail. "Unfortunately, that's not true. Learning any language is hard work, but it goes faster if you enjoy it." But again, also in this practical necessity of being a missionary: *God is faithful*. "The Lord gave me in his faithfulness one gift that confirmed my calling and leveled the path for me, and that is that I developed a great love for languages at that time".

In addition to his prescribed subjects, he also took Northern Sotho, Zulu and even a course in Venda. In his fifth year, he spent a month with a French missionary family in Lesotho during the summer holidays, acquired a reading knowledge of French there and also learned to speak and preach Southern Sotho. Since pitch is very important in the black languages, the gift of a good ear for music was a wonderful gift from the Lord. With dashes in his text indicating the pitch and the help of a Venda student, Rev. Koos van Rooy gave his inaugural sermon in Venda! "For the first six months my throat and lips were constantly sore from wrestling with all the strange sounds, but after that it became an exciting adventure to discover new treasures of idiom every day."

In this way, the Lord prepared and equipped his servant to take the lead in translating his Word into Venda during his service as professor. After his emeritus, he was involved in the translation and/or revision of 17 languages in Ethiopia. He and Regina housed a group of Congolese at home to translate the New Testament into the Nyungwe language.

Because Zulu is such an important language, out of love for it years ago, during study leave, he stayed in their homes for ten weeks with Zulu Christians to learn to speak the language. Based on his experience in translating the Venda Bible, the Bible Society asked him to also take the lead in translating the Bible into Zulu. It's all the work of God's faithfulness that, at 91, still excites him. (Only through Google did I learn of his two PhDs and his honorary Doctor's degree in 2010 from North West University and the record in 2017 in recognition of outstanding achievement as alumni of the University!)

And when the evening twilight subsides....

We really wanted Prof. Koos and Aunt Regina to be awarded as guests of honour over two days from the time of writing at the Festival of Thanks for 90 years of the Bible in Afrikaans at

the Monument. She because, like the Bible translation, she also saw the light of day in 1933. He, because he is the personification that that precious Word did not pool with us, but flowed out of the temple stronger and stronger as the waters of Ezekiel 47, bringing life wherever it flowed, into the Dead Sea.

Now, however, he is in Pretoria for a different reason. In the Willows Hospital where the doctor says a heart bypass is a must. He, Regina and the kids have to make a big decision now. What they're going to decide he doesn't know yet, but one thing he knows with calm cheerfulness: Whatever the decision and its conclusion may be.....

God is faithful!

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Viewing the land

Mission



Mukhanyo as Seen from South Sudan

Journey to South Sudan, where four outspoken and highly positive Mukhanyo alumni share their perspectives. Having pursued their studies in South Africa and residing in the KwaMhlanga hostel, these individuals return home annually to contribute to Sudanese churches during the summer holidays.

Deng Akol Ajuong Garang completed his BTh studies two years ago and returned to Juba, the capital of South Sudan, with a fervent ambition to preach the gospel in line with the Reformed confessions. While assisting the local pastor, he has recently, after a prolonged wait, obtained a certificate from local authorities recognising his Mukhanyo degree. He attributes this achievement to the Mukhanyo website, which facilitated the South Sudan Council for Higher Education in monitoring Mukhanyo's activities, accreditation status, and alignment with the national qualifications framework.

Currently assigned to pastor the local congregation of the Grace Sudanese Reformed Church in Khor Wulyang, Juba, near a military base in a challenging and impoverished area, he expresses gratitude to God Almighty for the training received at Mukhanyo. This training empowers him to approach his work with a Reformed worldview and a missional mindset. Rev. Garang urges African churches to consider sending theological students to Mukhanyo. Looking ahead, Rev. Garang's next significant step in life is



to marry his fiancée, a milestone he plans to achieve as soon as he secures the necessary finances for dowry and other expenses.

Isaac Monytung has completed his BTh in three years and is now returning home to Parieng, close to the border with North Sudan, where he hopes to plant a Reformed church. He was baptised in the Roman Catholic Church in 2010, but by studying the Bible he increasingly became dissatisfied with worshipping idols like Maria and the lack of Bible preaching. Through a friend, he connected with a Reformed church, engaging in various youth activities and evangelism. After a few years he was recommended by his church and supported by a Reformed church in the Netherlands, he was sent to Mukhanyo for pastoral ministry training. Why Mukhanyo? Isaac cites the institution's well-organised structure, teaching salvation through Christ alone, and a healthy biblical exegesis as key factors. Isaac considers himself blessed to have been sent to Mukhanvo. Other students from Sudan include Gatbel Khan who completed his study at Mukhanyo last year and returned home to his family, eager to embark on preaching, though he awaits his certificate. Additionally, Stephan Bennykuach, who completed his studies at Mukhanyo two years ago, is now working as a secondary school teacher in South Sudan.

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Safe in His Loving Hands

Author: Mr. Mark Mulder

Mark Mulder has been sent out by the Free Reformed Churches of Australia to serve as a mission worker in Port Moresby, PNG.

Editor: The Reformed mission project in Papua New Guinea is overseen int by the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, in part by the Reformed Churches in New Zealand, and part by the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Port Moresby was in the world news for all the wrong reasons this week. The public servants received less than they expected in their first pay for 2024 (due to a technical glitch) and became quite angry, and understandably so. The police, however, decided to go on strike over this matter, and it wasn't long before many in the population realised that with no functioning police force, they could do what they like. It wasn't long before shops were being plundered of food and goods and then set alight. It was chaos and with police idly standing by, mob mentality kicked in, and it was each man for himself. People were stealing washing machines, fridges, TV's, computers, everything you can think of; just because they could. I'm sure a lot of those individuals don't even have power to use those stolen goods. No doubt they'll be selling them on the black market. Store owners didn't stand a chance as they witnessed their stores being emptied and then set on fire. As more and more people streamed in, not wishing to miss out, fights broke out, with bush knives being swung without restraint. Inevitably people lost their lives. At this point in time 15 are confirmed dead, though I suspect that number will rise as investigators sift through burnt down buildings. The PNG Prime Minister had this to say, "Not only have our security forces failed us but some of them went out of their way to incite or encourage our people to loot, I even went to the extent of asking the Australian Government to be on stand-by and I make no apology in that respect, you see I can't trust our security forces, I can trust the Australian security personnel to come and give us support." Fortunately, the police realised they needed to do something, and they, with the army, were able to restore a semblance of order by later that evening. We are now in a state of emergency for the next 14 days.

Though we can shake our heads, this does highlight how depraved mankind is. If left to our own devices, this is what we become, each looking out for himself at whatever cost. The 10 commandments are often seen as outdated and restrictive; imagine a society where the commandments were followed perfectly. That would be heaven! In the meantime, we thank God that he has left mankind with enough knowledge to know the difference between right and wrong. May he continue to extend his grace and mercy to us.

Here at the Bible College, we are gearing up for the new academic year. At this point in time we have 6 new students wishing to come, and all of them are married and have children. It will mean 10 families and 7 singles. The campus will be a busy place; exciting times. We have space for 1 more family, and at least 10 more singles.

Part of the preparation has been extending the certificate classroom, back to its original size. Before my time the room was reduced by 1.5m in length, to create a small storage space. With the new security / canteen building, we included an upstairs section dedicated for storage, which meant we could reclaim the original classroom. We also added more fans, and increased the lighting. It looks great (but I'm biased).

My wife, Liz, is spending a lot of time in the photocopy room, preparing booklets and song books. When it's 34C and humidity of about 75% it's not a fun spot to be. Though it has an air conditioner, we don't really use it because you're often in and out of the room, and when you exit you literally get hit by the heat, and doing that constantly only increases the desire to have air conditioning throughout the house. This will inevitably result in us staying more indoors rather than interacting with our students.

Though the events of the past week were turbulent, we felt secure knowing that God has everything in control and is using every event to further his plan. We know that God is holding us in the palm of his hand, and nothing will be able to tear us away from his love. That gives peace and confidence.

In his loving hands, Mark and Liz Mulder

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Author: Rev. Elissandro Rabelo Elissandro Rabelo is a missionary with the Reformed Churches in Brazil.

A Warning Against Secularism

"The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."

Matthew 13:33

Introduction

In our generation, how is Satan developing his cunning strategies to weaken and undermine the faith of the Church? What are the external attacks he launches against God's people in our day? And how should the church fight Satan with the correct weapons and with all firmness? Every Christian leader must be attentive to these questions and use the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit, to not only know the enemy's strategies and his vain philosophies, but also to combat them, in order to preserve the Church of Christ in the truth of the Word of God and in her doctrine and conduct.

Among the many fangs with which Satan tries to tear God's people apart today, we can highlight Secularism. In this article we will give attention to the danger of Secularism among God's people and argue against it based on Jesus' teaching in the parable of the leaven in Matthew 13:33.

1. Knowing the Enemy of Secularism:

The Latin word "saeculum" refers to a generation or an era. In ecclesiastical Latin, it acquired the meaning of "the world", "the life of the world" and "the spirit of the world", which is how we arrived at the meaning of the word "secularism" or "secularization". In contemporary discussion, Secularism points to a humanistic and earthly approach to the life of an individual or society that glorifies the creature rather than the Creator, in addition to excluding God from man's life, so that man seeks to live no longer in the light of eternity, but for the here and now, and no longer in fear of God, but for oneself and one's interests. A basic characteristic of Secularism is its dualistic culture of making a separation between the secular and the sacred, between the immediate and the eternal in people's lives. This type of attitude goes against Christ's Gospel, as it does not allow or accept that Jesus is the Lord over all of people's lives. The problem is that many want to be in church and be called Christians; they want to have Jesus as their Savior, but not as their Lord; they delight in the benefits of the cross, but they are not willing to deny themselves, take up their cross and faithfully follow Christ, since they are still conformed to this age, like Lot's wife, having their hearts in the world and the world in the heart. Many churches have been deeply affected by the spirit of

Secularism. We can highlight the following evidence of Secularism in churches today: a) The delivery of quick, superficial and humanistic sermons with an emphasis not on the Saving Gospel of Christ, but on self-help or winning in life in this world; b) The acceptance of superficial members within the church without undergoing in-depth discipleship; c) Negligence in the exercise of Christian discipline, which promotes licentiousness among members of the church, especially among young people; d) The choosing of ecclesiastical leaders based not on biblical qualifications for the offices, but on the administrative capacity or sympathy of the men chosen; e) The promotion of false dualism between what is profane and sacred, excluding God from the whole of life.

Faced with this sad reality, it is necessary for every Christian leader to clearly teach the Lordship of Jesus Christ over every thought, action and sphere in the life of Christians. Every believer needs to know that being a member of a Christian church and going to church on Sundays, but at the same time, living like people of the world on other days of the week, whether at home, at work, at school or on the streets, is not the true Christianity preached by Christ and his apostles. Contrary to this, the Word of God teaches us that the believer's entire life – church, family, stewardship, work, leisure, etc., must be under the sovereign and gracious government of Christ, as the Lord himself teaches us in the parable of the leaven in Matthew 13:33.

2. Explanation of the Text in Matthew 13:33

In the parable of the leaven, Jesus compares the kingdom of God to something very simple and known to his listeners: A woman preparing bread using yeast. Jesus says the following: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened." This was a common scene in those days and Jesus was well familiar with it. Surely he often saw his mother mixing wheat flour with water and yeast, letting the dough rest for a while to undergo the fermentation process and then baking bread for the family meal.

The central point to which Jesus draws our attention in this parable is the action of yeast in the dough. After mixing the dough, you can no longer see the yeast, but its influence is evident as it makes the dough rise. The Bible uses the figure

of yeast to indicate its power of influence and contamination. Yeast permeates every dough in which it is placed. On the Easter Feast, God commanded his people to eat unleavened bread, as a sign of purity (Exodus 12). Therefore, yeast began to be used in some contexts in the Bible as a symbol of something bad and impure (Examples: Matthew 16:11,12 – yeast of the Pharisees = false doctrines; I Corinthians 5:6-8 – yeast indicating evil and malice). However, in the parable we are analyzing, Jesus is not pointing out yeast as a symbol of impurity, but merely indicating its power of influence.

Jesus draws our attention to this aspect of the power of influence of yeast over the entire dough to teach us the following lesson: *In the same way that a little yeast affects* an entire dough, the kingdom of God manifests its power and presence in the entire life of every true believer. In other words, every area of our lives is influenced by the power of the gospel of Christ. There is not a single aspect of our lives that is outside the influence of the kingdom of God. Being a Christian, therefore, does not just mean going to church on Sunday or just praying and reading the Bible from time to time. It's more than that. It means that everything we do, whether in family life, at work, in the use of our possessions or in leisure, must be done for Christ, the King whom we serve (Colossians 3:23,24) and for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31), which should exclude any manifestation of secularism in the life of every true Christian.

3. Practical applications:

In this parable of the leaven Jesus calls his church to abandon any type of secularist attitude and to recognize the Lordship of Christ over all areas of life. The principles and commandments of Christ's kingdom must guide and completely contaminate the believer's faith and life practice within and outside the context of the church.

- 3.1. Personal reflection: In order not to be contaminated by Secularism, every Christian needs to apply this teaching in their personal life. Therefore, it is necessary for each believer to look at himself and evaluate his life based on Christ's teaching against Secularism here in Matthew 13:33. Every Christian must ask themselves: "Do I live a life divided between the sacred (this is God's) and the secular (this is my way)? Or does the leaven of the gospel of Christ dominate every area of my life so that everything I do honors Christ and glorifies God? Am I a true disciple of Christ? Or am I part of that large group of nominal Christians who only follow a weekly ritual of coming to church on Sundays and despise God on the other days of the week?"
- 3.2. Exhortation to Church Office Bearers: In pastoral visitation work, pastors and elders of the Church of Christ should instruct and encourage church members to submit themselves fully to the Lordship of Christ.

At the family level, the following questions can be asked: "Has the yeast of the gospel of Christ permeated your family life? What kind of husband or wife have you been? Can your husband count on your submission and assistance? Can your wife enjoy your care and love? What type of parent are you? Can your children trust you and learn good things from your example and teaching? What kind of child are you? Are your parents happy with your obedience or are they saddened by your rebellion?" Every Christian needs to know that the Christian life does not begin in church, but begins at home and that Christian families contaminated with the Gospel of Christ promote strong churches and a more just society. In the aspect of life at work, you can ask yourself the following: "Has the yeast of the gospel of Christ permeated your life in your work? Have you shown integrity in your affairs? Or have you been using the unfortunately so-called "Brazilian way" to take illicit advantages? What has been your behavior as a boss or employee? Have you, the boss, treated your employees well and fairly? Have you, the employee, faithfully done your work?" Every Christian needs to be warned against the sins of laziness, envy, theft and greed in the exercise of his functions and exhorted to work honestly with his own hands so that he may glorify Christ, eat from his own labors with his family and have something to help those in need (Ephesians 4:28; Psalm 128:2). In regards to Christian stewardship, which is also a practical aspect of the believer's life, ministers can ask members the following: "Has the gospel of Christ dominated your life in the way you handle your possessions? Have greed, envy of the prosperity of the wicked, invaded your heart? Or are you grateful and content with the things God gives you? Have you honored God with the firstfruits of your income or have you been unfaithful in your tithes and offerings? Are you making an effort to meet your obligations and pay your debts or are you taking on more and more debt without being able to pay?" Every Christian needs the wisdom that comes from the Word of God to be a good steward of God's good gifts and use his possessions to promote the kingdom of God, the support of his home and the good of his

Leisure is a blessing that God gave us in creation! Christians can also have fun and enjoy the good things that God created! He can go to the beach, play sports, watch a movie, listen to music, as well as eat and drink everything God created! In this regard, Christians need to be encouraged to have fun not in a secular way, but for the glory of God. They can be asked in this way: "Has God been honored in the way you have fun? How have you been having fun? Like the wicked, who don't keep the Lord's Day in order to go to the beach or to the mall and who eat and

neighbor!

drink without self-control? What kind of music and movies have you heard and watched?" Being a Christian also involves glorifying Christ in the way a Christian has fun! The Christian who desires to please God in everything will ask himself before doing anything for his leisure: "Is it befitting a Christian to do this? Does it edify others? Does it glorify God?" (I Corinthians 10:23,31).

Conclusion

In the parable of the leaven, Jesus calls us to live the Gospel in all areas of life. Serving God is not just being surrounded by four walls worshiping the Lord in Sunday worship! It also has to do with a useful and exemplary life out in society and, in all aspects, influenced by the gospel of Christ! Contempt for God and his Word, as well as false religiosity and holding on to what is secular, excluding God from all of

life, has permeated most of Brazilian society and unfortunately has come through the doors of some Christian churches. The Brazilian people, mostly nominal Christians, surrounded by superstition, idolatry and immorality and contaminated by the virus of Secularism, need to know the truth of the Gospel of Christ and receive a new heart to bow before the Lordship of Christ and receive the grace of Salvation. The Lord, by his power and grace, desires to use the faithful preaching of the Gospel and the exemplary testimony of his Church to lead other sinners to Salvation, which involves not only receiving forgiveness of sins and the grace to go to heaven, but to be restored to the original purpose of our creation which is to live for the glory of God in all things here and now in this life and more fully in the world to come!

Theology (

Israel

Editor: The following document was published in 2002, signed by many church leaders, including many from within ICRC circles. This open letter does not necessarily represent precisely the views of ICRC member churches or members of those churches. It does represent a typical Reformed/Presbyterian response to general Evangelical thinking regarding Israel. Hence the Lux Mundi editors thought it helpful to republish this, as war rages in the

An Open Letter to Evangelicals & Other Interested Parties: The People of God, the Land of Israel, and the Impartiality of the Gospel

Recently a number of leaders in the Protestant community of the United States have urged the endorsement of farreaching and unilateral political commitments to the people and land of Israel in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, citing Holy Scripture as the basis for those commitments. To strengthen their endorsement, several of these leaders have also insisted that they speak on behalf of the seventy million people who constitute the American evangelical community.

It is good and necessary for evangelical leaders to speak out on the great moral issues of our day in obedience to Christ's call for his disciples to be salt and light in the world.(1) It is quite another thing, however, when leaders call for commitments that are based upon a serious misreading of Holy Scripture.in such instances, it is good and necessary for other evangelical leaders to speak out as well. We do so here in the hope that we may contribute to the cause of the Lord Christ, apart from whom there can never be true and lasting peace in the world.(2)

At the heart of the political commitments in question are two fatally flawed propositions. First, some are teaching that God's alleged favor toward Israel today is based upon ethnic descent rather than upon the grace of Christ alone, as proclaimed in the Gospel. Second, others are teaching that the Bible's promises concerning the land are fulfilled in a special political region or "Holy Land," perpetually set apart by God for one ethnic group alone. As a result of these false claims, large segments of the evangelical community, our fellow citizens, and our government are being misled with regard to the Bible's teachings regarding the people of God, the land of Israel, and the impartiality of the Gospel.

In what follows, we make our convictions public. We do so acknowledging the genuine evangelical faith of many who will not agree with us. Knowing that we may incur their disfavor, we are nevertheless constrained by Scripture and by conscience to publish the following propositions for the cause of Christ and truth.

 The Gospel offers eternal life in heaven to Jews and Gentiles alike as a free gift in Jesus Christ.(3) Eternal life in heaven is not earned or deserved, nor is it based upon ethnic descent or natural birth.(4)

- II. All human beings, Jews and Gentiles alike, are sinners, (5) and, as such, they are under God's judgment of death. (6) Because God's standard is perfect obedience and all are sinners, it is impossible for anyone to gain temporal peace or eternal life by his own efforts. Moreover, apart from Christ, there is no special divine favor upon any member of any ethnic group; nor, apart from Christ, is there any divine promise of an earthly land or a heavenly inheritance to anyone, whether Jew or Gentile. (7) To teach or imply otherwise is nothing less than to compromise the Gospel itself.
- III. God, the Creator of all mankind, is merciful and takes no pleasure in punishing sinners.(8) Yet God is also holy and just and must punish sin.(9) Therefore, to satisfy both his justice and his mercy, God has appointed one way of salvation for all, whether Jew or Gentile, in Jesus Christ alone.(10)
- IV. Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man,(11) came into the world to save sinners.(12) In his death upon the cross, Jesus was the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world, of Jew and of Gentile alike. The death of Jesus forever fulfilled and eternally ended the sacrifices of the Jewish temple.(13) All who would worship God, whether Jew or Gentile, must now come to him in spirit and truth through Jesus Christ alone. The worship of God is no longer identified with any specific earthly sanctuary. He receives worship only through Jesus Christ, the eternal and heavenly Temple.(14)
- V. To as many as receive and rest upon Christ alone through faith alone, to Jews and Gentiles alike, God gives eternal life in his heavenly inheritance.(15)
- VI. The inheritance promises that God gave to Abraham were made effective through Christ, Abraham's True Seed.(16) These promises were not and cannot be made effective through sinful man's keeping of God's law.(17) Rather, the promise of an inheritance is made to those only who have faith in Jesus, the True Heir of Abraham. All spiritual benefits are derived from Jesus, and apart from him there is no participation in the promises.(18) Since Jesus Christ is the Mediator of the Abrahamic Covenant, all who bless him and his people will be blessed of God, and all who curse him and his people will be cursed of God.(19) These promises do not apply to any particular ethnic group,(20) but to the church of Jesus Christ, the true Israel.(21) The people of God, whether the church of Israel in the wilderness in the Old Testament(22) or the Israel of God among the Gentile Galatians in the New Testament, (23) are one body who through Jesus

- will receive the promise of the heavenly city, the everlasting Zion.(24) This heavenly inheritance has been the expectation of the people of God in all ages.(25)
- VII. Jesus taught that his resurrection was the raising of the True Temple of Israel.(26) He has replaced the priesthood, sacrifices, and sanctuary of Israel by fulfilling them in his own glorious priestly ministry and by offering, once and for all, his sacrifice for the world, that is, for both Jew and Gentile.(27) Believers from all nations are now being built up through him into this Third Temple,(28) the church that Jesus promised to build.(29)
- VIII. Simon Peter spoke of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus in conjunction with the final judgment and the punishment of sinners.(30) Instructively, this same Simon Peter, the Apostle to the Circumcision,(31) says nothing about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel in the land of Palestine.(32) Instead, as his readers contemplate the promise of Jesus' Second Coming, he fixes their hope upon the new heavens and the new earth, in which righteousness dwells.(33)
- IX. The entitlement of any one ethnic or religious group to territory in the Middle East called the "Holy Land" cannot be supported by Scripture. In fact, the land promises specific to Israel in the Old Testament were fulfilled under Joshua. (34) The New Testament speaks clearly and prophetically about the destruction of the second temple in A.D. 70.(35) No New Testament writer foresees a regathering of ethnic Israel in the land, as did the prophets of the Old Testament after the destruction of the first temple in 586 B.C.(36) Moreover, the land promises of the Old Covenant are consistently and deliberately expanded in the New Testament to show the universal dominion of Jesus, (37) who reigns from heaven upon the throne of David, inviting all the nations through the Gospel of Grace to partake of his universal and everlasting dominion.(38)
- X. Bad Christian theology regarding the "Holy Land" contributed to the tragic cruelty of the Crusades in the Middle Ages. Lamentably, bad Christian theology is today attributing to secular Israel a divine mandate to conquer and hold Palestine, with the consequence that the Palestinian people are marginalized and regarded as virtual "Canaanites."(39) This doctrine is both contrary to the teaching of the New Testament and a violation of the Gospel mandate.(40) In addition, this theology puts those Christians who are urging the violent seizure and occupation of Palestinian land in moral jeopardy of their own blood

guiltiness. Are we as Christians not called to pray for and work for peace, warning both parties to this conflict that those who live by the sword will die by the sword?(41) Only the Gospel of Jesus Christ can bring both temporal reconciliation and the hope of an eternal and heavenly inheritance to the Israeli and the Palestinian. Only through Jesus Christ can anyone know peace on earth.

The promised Messianic kingdom of Jesus Christ has been inaugurated. Its advent marks the focal point of human history. This kingdom of the Messiah is continuing to realize its fullness as believing Jews and Gentiles are added to the community of the redeemed in every generation. The same kingdom will be manifested in its final and eternal form with the return of Christ the King in all his glory. Of all the nations, the Jewish people played the primary role in the coming of the Messianic kingdom. New Testament Scripture declares that to them were given the oracles of God, (42) the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises.(43) Theirs are the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and from them, according to the flesh, came Christ.(44) Salvation is, indeed, of the Jews.(45) While affirming the Scriptural teaching that there is no salvation outside of Christ, Christians should acknowledge with heartfelt sorrow and grief the frequent oppression of the Jews in history, sometimes tragically done in the name of the cross.

But what are we to make of the unbelief of Israel? Has their unbelief made the faithfulness of God without effect for them?(46) No, God has not completely rejected the people of Israel,(47) and we join the apostle Paul in his earnest prayer for the salvation of his Jewish kinsmen according to the flesh.(48) There always has been and always will be a remnant that is saved.(49) While not all Israel will experience the blessing of participation in the Messianic kingdom,(50) yet Jews who do come to faith in Christ will

share in his reign throughout the present age and into eternity. In addition, it is not as though the rejection of some in Israel for unbelief serves no purpose. On the contrary, because they were broken off in unbelief, the Gospel has gone to the Gentiles, who now, through faith, partake of the blessings to the fathers and join with believing Jews to constitute the true Israel of God, the church of Jesus Christ.(51)

The present secular state of Israel, however, is not an authentic or prophetic realization of the Messianic kingdom of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, a day should not be anticipated in which Christ's kingdom will manifest Jewish distinctives, whether by its location in "the land," by its constituency, or by its ceremonial institutions and practices. Instead, this present age will come to a climactic conclusion with the arrival of the final, eternal phase of the kingdom of the Messiah. At that time, all eyes, even of those who pierced him, will see the King in his glory.(52) Every knee will bow, and every tongue will declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (53) The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever. (54) In light of the grand prophetic expectation of the New Testament, we urge our evangelical brothers and sisters to return to the proclamation of the free offer of Christ's grace in the Gospel to all the children of Abraham, to pray for peace between Israelis and Palestinians, and to promise all humanitarian sympathy and practical support for those on both sides who are suffering in this current vicious cycle of atrocity and displacement. We also invite those Christian educators and pastors who share our convictions on the people of God, the land of Israel, and the impartiality of the Gospel to join their names with ours as signatories to this open letter.(55)

Advent
In the Year of our Lord 2002
Soli Deo Gloria



Author: Rev. Joel Loughridge

Joel Loughridge is a minister with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland

Singing from Jesus' Hymnbook

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

Luke 24:45-48

In Luke 24 the risen Lord Jesus is commissioning and equipping his disciples for the great work he would give them of proclaiming the Gospel and teaching the Scriptures. He therefore taught them about how "everything written about me in the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

It is not just that the Law, Prophets and Psalms (that is, the Old Testament Scriptures) have predictions about Jesus, but that the Scriptures can only really be understood in light of Christ's sufferings, resurrection and the proclamation of these things to all nations. In other words, Christ is not just spoken about occasionally in the Old Testament Scriptures; he is, in every part, their subject matter. He is the key to understanding them.

This is critically important for our appreciation of the Psalms. Some people have the idea that there are several 'Messianic Psalms' (usually ones that obviously prophesy Christ's life or are quoted in the New Testament) and several that are not. I think we do better to understand all the Psalms as messianic. All 150 Psalms speak of Jesus Christ in a wonderful variety of ways. There is no hymn book that speaks more of Christ than the Psalter. My hope in this article is to pull back the curtain a little and look through our window of the Psalms to see the dazzling views of Christ's glory.

If we ask two simple questions each time we sing, we will behold Christ's glory:

- 1. What is being said about Christ in this Psalm?
- 2. What is Christ saying to me in this Psalm?

1. What is being said about Christ in this Psalm?

Sometimes Christ is very easy to spot in the Psalms; Psalms 22 and 16, for example, are explicitly mentioned in the New Testament as being about Jesus. Others are not mentioned, yet Christ is clearly in them. Consider Psalm 61, for example: "From the ends of the earth to you I cry with fainting heart; O lead me to the rock that is higher than I." Familiar and precious words for struggling Christians. But look at where the song's hope lands: "O God add many days unto those days which to the King belong, and may you years to him extend like many generations long" (stanza 4). Have you

ever been puzzled by parts of Psalms like this? Psalm 61 is short enough that it is most natural to sing the whole Psalm, not just pick the familiar verses. Yet after singing the familiar, comforting words, we sing on to find ourselves echoing sentiments similar to those found in the British national anthem! What is this all about?

The point in Psalm 61 is not only that God is our rock (stanza 1), but that, when our hearts are faint, our blessing depends on the longevity of God's King (stanza 4). The longer he rules, the more we are blessed.

Who is our eternally reigning King? The risen, reigning Jesus Christ!

As we consider what is being said about Christ in each Psalm, another good question to ask is: "How would Jesus have sung this Psalm during his earthly life?" It is especially important to ask this question when we sing what may be considered "less obviously- messianic" Psalms. The next time you attend a worship service, have a look for how many of these "Christ-categories" you can see in the Psalms that you sing: the Innocent Sufferer, the Coming One, the punishing Judge or King, the teaching Prophet, the atoning Priest, the King blessing his people, the obedient Servant, the mighty God who saves, the satisfying Companion, the ends-of the-earth Saviour, the glorious and praiseworthy God, the true and better Old Testament hero, the raised and exalted Messiah, the eternally-ruling Mediatorial King, the substitute Sin-bearer, not just Punishment-bearer. For an example of this last one, take a minute and look up Psalm 69. Christ's sufferings are clearly spoken of (verses 1-4) and it is explicitly applied to Christ in the New Testament (verse 8 and John 2:17). Yet look at verse 5, and have your heart broken that he who knew no sin became sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). There is no better aid to seeing the innumerable glories of Christ than singing the Psalms.

2. What is Christ saying to me in this Psalm?

These songs not only speak about Christ, but they are the Word of Christ (Colossians 3:16) - that is, Christ speaks to us in them. As a King he rules us by his Word and as a Prophet he reveals God's will to us. So many Psalms are the words of a King (often David) instructing his people according to

God's will. As you sing these songs, consider that you are hearing the orders of our King, and we are to live our lives accordingly. Next Lord's Day, listen and hear Christ teaching and admonishing you through the united voices of his people.

But Christ doesn't just speak these psalms to us as our King. He sings these songs with us, and we sing with him. Imagine vou're singing Psalm 41, heartily acknowledging that the LORD sustains the ill believer on his sickbed (verse 3). Then you come to verse 5: "My enemies say of me in malice, 'When will he die, and his name perish?"' Have you found yourself mentally stumbling over words like that in the Psalms, thinking to yourself, "that's never actually happened to me, thankfully!" Realise this: it has happened to you. It happened to Christ, and you are united to Christ; his experience is your experience. Spiritually he picked us up and carried us through all of his life, so we sing with him. He endured this, so you wouldn't have to. That means that his certainty of victory in verses 11-12 is your certainty of victory too. Jesus speaks to us in Psalm 41 and says: "I experienced this and sang this for you, so you can sing it too - with certain hope and thankful joy." United to Jesus, we sing with Jesus.

But there's another angle; he sings with us. Sometimes a Psalm resonates deeply with our own experience. As we hear other voices sing it with us, we should hear our Saviour sing with us. He is saying to us "In that suffering, in that sin - I am with you." How that should encourage us in our suffering and horrify us in our sin. He never had to sing Psalm 51 mourning for his own sin, but he knows what it's like for you to sing it - because he is united to us. As we give voice to our hearts, he brings our hearts to God. He knows the depths of your contrition and the sincerity of your repentance. He desires restored joy of salvation and a willing spirit for you. He takes your plea for mercy to his Father and merits that mercy for you.

There are profound depths here, far beyond what I can deal with in a single article. Think about these things as you prepare for and come to worship. Christ, the great Worship Leader, sings with us, instructing, comforting, rebuking, with a loving communion and intimacy far more profound than we have yet begun to grasp.

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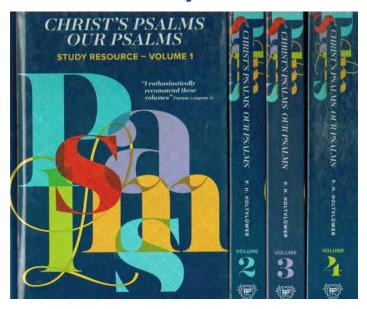
San people welcoming delegates to ICRC 2022 with song

Book Review



Author: Rev. Larry Wilson Larry Wilson is a minister with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Christ's Psalms Our Psalms - Study Resource



Christ's Psalms, Our Psalms—Study Resource, edited by Peter H. Holtvlüwer. Reformed Perspective Press, 2020. Hardcover, 4 volumes, \$70.00.

Christ's Psalms, Our Psalms is a commentary on the psalms, but much more. It calls itself a "study resource." Its distinctive contribution is to show the Christ-centered focus of each psalm (cf. Luke 24:25-27, 44-47; John 5:39), along with its application to believers and the church in the new covenant era. And it does so exceptionally well, not by imaginative allegorical reveries, but by sound grammaticalhistorical and redemptive historical methods of interpretation and application that comport with good scholarship and a framework of sound doctrine. The introduction to the whole resource is so good that it could be published separately as a useful booklet introducing the book of Psalms. By the way, don't confuse this resource with Christ's Psalms, Our Psalms—Devotional, a single volume of daily devotions that reflect fruit from these studies. Under the guidance of Peter H. Holtvlüwer, a team of

Canadian Reformed pastor-scholars worked together to study and distill how each psalm should be understood in its original context, including: how it fits into the book of Psalms as a whole; how it reveals Jesus Christ; how it applies to new covenant believers in Christ (individually and corporately)—for example, it has an excellent discussion of how the imprecations (prayers for God's curse) apply in the new covenant; how it relates to other Scriptures in the Old and New Testaments; and suggested occasions for its apt use in Scripture reading, preaching, singing, and counseling. Its strong pastoral character makes it evident that it's written by pastors. But this resource is not meant to be limited to pastors. It's written in a very accessible, userfriendly style. Still, pastors will find it especially useful. For instance, when a pastor preaches a psalm, he'd do well to be able to show how that psalm in its context specifically calls people to follow Jesus in faith, repentance, and newness of life to-day. When a pastor selects a psalm to read to the congregation in worship—or to be read by the congregation—he'd do well to make it clear how it fits appropriately at this particular point in this particular service. When a congregation sings a psalm, a pastor would do well to introduce it by showing its meaning and Christcentered relevance to the worshipers, so that they can sing it with understanding. This resource is an outstanding help toward each of these ends.

In a nutshell, this resource suggests doctrinal, devotional, practical, and occasional uses for each psalm in a Christ-following, new covenant context. I can't recommend it highly enough. Even more, I urge that we try to serve the broad- er body of Christ and seek to stimulate her gospel renewal and biblical reformation by not allowing this superb resource to re- main hidden under the basket of our small Reformed circles, but by making it widely known—even gifting it out—throughout the broader body of Christ.

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Book Review





Author: Rev. Sjirk Bajema Sjirk Bajema is minister with the Reformed Churches in New Zealand

In Holy Service: Essays on Office

In Holy Service: Essays on Office - Personal and Ecclesial, by Cornelius van Dam, Lucerna CRTS Publications, 2023

I would have loved to have this book back in my College days, in the process of entering upon the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. It deals with all the questions that have been thrown at me over the years in regards to the much debated and disputed subject of women in office with the truth of God's Word.

This is not to say we did not then have relevant articles and books and other resources that helped open up the teaching of Scripture upon this, but to have it all in such a format with the foundations clearly laid out, and being logically developed into the right answers to the constant questions around this ubiquitous subject, would have been that much more of a help.

While the style of this author is somewhat different than the popular Kevin DeYoung or the erudite Carl Trueman, and so can be a harder read, it is well worth the perseverance. Emeritus Professor Cornelius van Dam has thrown the net wide and deep in trawling in whatever would touch upon the subject of "office" in the Church of Christ, according to God's Word.

The framework of the book

One would already pick this up in the general divisions he uses for this book. There are four parts:

Part A (Chapters 1-5): The General Office of a Believer;

Part B (Chapters 5-11): Ecclesiastical Offices

Part C (Chapters 12-14): Women in Special Service Part D (Chapter 15): Epilogue.

Within each of these parts there are various subsections, and even occasional excursuses, such as 'Should Women Be Voting?' A number of these indicate they have been addresses given at different times and in different places yet they are drawn into his overall theme in a helpful way for the reader.

Right throughout his book, however, there is the constant underlying backbone of the Christian following his Master's example in being a prophet, priest, and king, which develops well the scriptural teaching underlying Lord's Day 12 of the Heidelberg Catechism. He takes us through this threefold office as being basic to every believer in Part A, and seen in specific form in the calling those serving in the offices of the church have, in Part B.

Part C deals with the so-called 'curly' questions regarding the whole women in office debate. It looks at prophetesses and deaconesses and how they fit in or don't fit in to the teaching in God's Word.

Michael Horton sums this up well: Grounding both the general and special offices in the history of revelation, Professor Van Dam exhibits beautifully how the Second Adam has restored believers to the dignity of prophets, priests and kings. The way he works this out into the life of the church gathered on the Lord's Day and then scattered into worldly callings reflects the rich resources of classic Reformed interpretation of Scripture. In modern societies, where authority is surrendered to autonomy and even churches often capitulate to cultural pressures, this book comes as a bracing challenge. Reformed readers will be edified by understanding the rationale for practices often taken for granted, while other brothers and sisters will find scripturally-based reasons for cherishing the visible form of Christ's church. I highly recommend In Holy Service to its intended audience: all of the Lord's people! (Editorial Review.)

A key motivation for the book

Throughout much of this book it is quite clear that what has transpired in his former Dutch sister churches – the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (Liberated) – is a motivating force in this writing. Particularly the Synod of that federation at Meppel in 2017 showed the devastating damage wrought by liberalism.

Van Dam comments: Modern scholarship disputes ... traditional analysis in order to make room for women in office. This view is, for example, reflected in the report that laid the basis for the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) to open up all the offices to women. It suggests that women had to be silent because they lacked knowledge since it was not usual for women in the culture of Paul's time to be educated. So, when the apostle said: "let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness" (1 Tim 2:11), he indicated that women were to be silent because they needed further instruction. That would also explain why the apostle did make use of gifted women such as Priscilla. The essence of the matter, according to this view, is that everyone is permitted to speak, but knowledge and insight are needed.

Furthermore, it is incumbent on men and women to behave appropriately when speaking. What is appropriate is culturally determined and what was culturally fitting in the apostle's day is not necessarily culturally appropriate in our day. Thus the passages telling women to be silent (1 Cor 14:34 and 1 Tim 2:9-10) form no basis for keeping the

Book Review

ecclesiastical offices closed to women. Rather, according to this way of thinking as articulated in this report, these passages "contain a call to let oneself be educated in all modesty—something that pertains to both men and women—although that means something different for each of them as also determined by the culture of the time (p.190f)."

This helped me to understand the background behind what the RCN (Lib) representative said at the 2017 *International Conference of Reformed Churches* in alluding to not being out of step with the society within which they live, and thus they had to be culturally relevant. Many of us there had already picked up, quite sadly, that their society had already become deeply imbedded into the thinking and doing of their churches. Dr van Dam succinctly and adroitly tackles the unbiblical thinking underlying this attempted justification for change, and thereby further strengthens our arm for taking on this liberalism.

The heart in the book

The final chapter (15) concisely brings together the attacks of the evil one in past and present times and how God's people have confronted them with his Word and Spirit. Here van Dam brings out how God used young and old who honored their identity as sharing in Christ's anointing and exercising their office as prophet, priest, and king (p.207). He aptly outlines the situation the early New Testament Church faced in its pagan environment and then draws an analogy to the neo-pagan age we live in today. He brings out the essential counter-cultural character of the New Testament Church and how that needs to be increasingly seen in the Church of our age. Inevitably there will be cancelling by the society we live and increasingly harsh judgments and punishments but the martyrdoms of the early Christians put all this in a much bigger picture. Into this scene he highlights the Church's worship and instruction as being central to fulfilling its calling to be God's set apart people.

Conclusion

One might say this is essentially written for those from the 'Liberated' bond of churches struggling to make sense of developments within the Dutch mother-church. And a number of the quotes, together with numerous footnotes, can seem to support this. But there is nothing new under the sun, to quote Ecclesiastes 1:9, and so what Dr van Dam interacts with and argues against is exactly what we all face in some way or another within our own respective federations and communities. Some may be a bit further along this path, particularly those churches in the western world, while others are not, yet the attack of the evil one is constant nonetheless.



Dr. C. Van Dam

With the author's parallel interacting with the early New Testament Christian Church, there is application for all churches as they face paganism in an increasingly sharper way wherever they are. History does repeat, and through such writing we can learn lessons from the past which can keep us holding on to the Lord in the present. Dr van Dam is to be thanked for this valuable contribution, and all Christians would do well to make this book part of their own libraries – whether in printed or e-book format.

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