

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	9
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PREAMBLE: COME AND SEE

C.T. PARAGRAPHS

Preamble 1.....	1, 2	13
Preamble 2.....	3, 4	14
Preamble 3.....	5, 6	15
Communal Covenant.....		17

CREATION

C.T. PARAGRAPHS

1. The First, Last and Every Spoken Word in Between.....	7, 8	21
2. It's All Good	9	24
3. Image is Everything	10, 11	27
4. God Defying Fortune, Chance and Fate.....	12	30

THE FALL

C.T. PARAGRAPHS

5. "It's Not My Fault!"	13	35
6. The Personal Nature of Sin	14	38
7. Estranged from Our Creator	15	41
8. Infecting All Spheres of Life.....	16, 17	44

JESUS AND REDEMPTION

C.T. PARAGRAPHS

9. More Than Just a Handshake!	18, 19, 20, 21	49
10. Training for Reigning.....	22, 23, 24	52
11. The Heart of the Gospel	25	56
12. Elected into His Sovereign Reign.....	26, 27	60

THE HOLY SPIRIT

C.T. PARAGRAPHS

13. The Outpouring of God’s Love..... **28**67
14. Equipping the Saints **29**70
15. Unfolding the Father’s Mission **30**73
16. The Bible as the Holy Spirit’s Sword..... **31, 32, 33**76

GOD’S NEW PEOPLE

C.T. PARAGRAPHS

17. The Rhythm of New Community..... **34, 35, 36**81
18. Water, Bread and Wine..... **37, 38**85
19. Sinners or Saints..... **39**89
20. The Broken Body’s Confession..... **40**93

THE MISSION OF GOD’S PEOPLE

C.T. PARAGRAPHS

21. Training Disciples Under His Lordship..... **41, 42, 43**99
22. Morality, Ethics and the Fullness of Life **44, 45, 46**102
23. Priests in Education, Vocation, Vacation and Environment..... **47, 48, 49, 50, 51**106
24. Politics, Public Justice and Peace **52, 53, 54**110

THE NEW CREATION

C.T. PARAGRAPHS

25. It’s Later Than You Think..... **55, 56, 57, 58**115
Endnotes120


INTRODUCTION

Come and See... is a discipleship manual that has taken the Contemporary Testimony *Our World Belongs to God*, from the Christian Reformed Church of North America, and divided 58 paragraphs into 25 chapters. The 2008 edition of 58 paragraphs moves from the beginning of time, when God created all things good, to discovering what went wrong in this world and how God worked on making things right by sending his son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, to grow a new community called “the church,” giving the church a mission and purpose, to the end of time as we know it today. This manual has 4 teachings on Creation, 4 teachings on the Fall, 4 teachings on Jesus and his Redemption, 4 teachings on the Holy Spirit, 4 teachings on God’s New People, and 4 teachings on the Mission of God’s People. The final chapter is on the New Creation.

Each chapter begins with Contemporary Testimony paragraphs, followed by “Encouraging Conversation” questions to stimulate dialogue and discussion. The second section is called “Entering God’s Word,” taking a primary Bible passage with questions designed to explore the text. All genres of scripture in both the Old and New Testament are explored, including historical narrative, poetic, prophetic, gospels, epistles and apocalyptic writings. The third section is called “Enhancing Our Thought,” serving as a one-page written reflection on the topic at hand. The final section includes a Spiritual Discipline on week one, a Personal Reflection on week two, an Action Response on week three, and a Food Celebration on the fourth week. Also included on the fourth page are Echoes from a Confessional Past and Extra Readings on the topic discussed, for those wanting to go deeper.

Come and See... Our World Belongs to God is a discipleship manual written and designed to help high school students, new believers, small groups, and followers of Jesus discover God’s love in the unfolding of His kingdom, seeing ourselves as Christ’s ambassadors through the working of the Holy Spirit. Entering scripture is learning to live out of God’s word as the Holy Spirit transforms our flesh into being His living word. Each writing reflects themes laid out in the Contemporary Testimony paragraphs. There was a pastor and politician who became Prime Minister of Holland, Abraham Kuyper, who wrote daily newspaper articles in the Netherlands, in the late 1890s and early 1900s, exclusively on the kingdom of God. As a prominent theologian, educator and politician who began the Christian school movement, Kuyper proclaimed at the opening of a Christian university “*There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: Mine!*”¹

Following Jesus is a lifelong journey of growing in his presence, and this discipleship manual hopes to assist in that growth. For all who want to follow, Jesus says, “*Come and see...*” He takes us as we are and offers forgiveness, teaching, training and transformation, by adopting us as a sister/brother and giving us freedom and ambassadorship in His kingdom. He introduces His Father in heaven as our Father in heaven, and sends His Holy Spirit to enter our inner being, calling our body home. The invitation from God has been extended a long time ago and is still extended to our lives today. *Come and See... Our World Belongs to God.*



PREAMBLE: COME AND SEE...

Preamble 1

(C.T. Paragraph #1, #2)

Preamble 2

(C.T. Paragraph #3, #4)

Preamble 3

(C.T. Paragraph #5, #6)

As followers of Jesus Christ,
living in this world—
which some seek to control,
and others view with despair—
we declare with joy and trust:
Our world belongs to God!

C.T. Paragraph #1

PREAMBLE 1

QUESTION: HOW IS GOD MOST FAMILIAR TO YOU?

- a. God as Creator of the heavens and the earth
- b. God as Father, authoritative, judgmental, in control
- c. Jesus as Redeemer, forgiver of sins, and friend
- d. Jesus as master, teacher, Lord and King
- e. Holy Spirit as comforter and guide
- f. Holy Spirit as transformer, renewal in life

From the beginning,
through all the crises of our times,
until the kingdom fully comes,
God keeps covenant forever:
Our world belongs to God!
God is King: Let the earth be glad!
Christ is victor; His rule has begun!
The Spirit is at work:
Creation is renewed!
Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

C.T. Paragraph #2

History is a notebook through which God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, has revealed himself to mankind, beginning with the act of creation. God was, is and always will be who spoke this world into being and continues to move in our world, through conflicts and crises, through victories and defeats, through the rising and falling of civilizations, bringing healing and hope to individuals and communities living in a broken world. He reaches in and draws near us with his love. God's kingdom continues to unfold in this world and one day will come to completion.

Second, God also reveals Himself to this world through His written word, the Bible. God called Abraham and his children, embraced and enfolded them, performing signs and wonders, building relationships through the teaching of laws and by making promises and agreements called covenants, all pointing to His Son, Jesus Christ. The laws and covenant promises were fulfilled in Christ Jesus, transforming believers around the globe as beneficiaries of the law and promises to this day. We worship a sovereign God, whose kingship is revealed in Jesus Christ, the crucified King of the Jews. As well as dying on the cross, Jesus arose from the dead and ascended into heaven, where He rejoined His Father and carries out His reign in our world as we speak. This world continues to unfold as God has planned and we have been invited to join in this drama as ambassadors of His love and grace.

Finally, God reveals Himself to us through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit who not only comforts and guides, but also transforms and renews our lives, bringing us into relationship with Jesus and our heavenly Father. It is this Holy Spirit that helps us become more like Christ Jesus, which is why believers have long responded to the call to follow Him. Come and See...

PREAMBLE 2

Still, despair and rebellious pride fill the earth:
some, crushed by failure or broken by pain,
give up on life and hope and God.
Others, shaken, but still hoping for human triumph,
work feverishly to realize their dreams.
As believers in God, we also struggle with the spirits of this age,
resisting them in the power of the Spirit,
testing them by God's sure Word.

C.T. Paragraph #3

God is still present in both modernity and post modernity. He is active in peoples of North America as well as the Middle East, in Antarctica as well as Africa, in Asia as well as South America. He is seen in so much more than the stars of the heavens, the ocean's tide, the changing of the seasons, the variety of animals and the complexities of mankind. Education has been developed, science has been discovered, technology has been invented, social and economic progress has taken place all through God's incredible Sovereign Grace. Reformed theologian Abraham Kuyper described all of life; including science, technology, art and physics; as falling under God's Common Grace. As well as being creator of the great blue heron, the giant redwood, and long-necked giraffe, God is also creator of the materials used to make energy, steel, airwaves, music, and of human minds that work on shaping each invention and tool for today's world. Children are born, families are raised, communities are developed and cultures are fashioned as a testimony to the fullness of God's goodness.

Our world, fallen into sin, has lost its first goodness,
but God has not abandoned the work of his hands:
our maker preserves this world, sending seasons, sun, and rain,
upholding all creatures, renewing the earth,
promising a Saviour, guiding all things to their purpose.

C.T. Paragraph #4

In regards to this world's struggles, disasters, calamities, sufferings, sorrows and sins, God continues to work through history, and in our present time, revealing his Special Grace. The Bible records this story of redemption for all nations, centering on the coming and arrival of his one and only son, Jesus Christ. For two thousand years God's Spirit has been working in and through the lives of believers proclaiming his kingdom and building his church. John Calvin was a sixteenth-century theologian who described the Bible as aiding mankind like a pair of spectacles for those struggling with vision. Seeing history and all of creation through the lens and revelation of scripture is like putting on a set of glasses and finding a whole new world with greater detail, perspective, clarity and truth. Come and see...how this world belongs to God.

God holds this world with fierce love.
 Keeping his promise, he sends Jesus into the world,
 pours out the Holy Spirit, and announces the good news:
 sinners who repent and believe in Jesus
 live anew as members of the family of God—
 the firstfruits of a new creation.

C.T. Paragraph #5

PREAMBLE 3

We rejoice in the goodness of God,
 renounce the works of darkness,
 and dedicate ourselves to holy living.

As covenant partners, set free for joyful obedience,
 we offer our hearts and lives to do God's work in the world.

With tempered impatience, eager to see injustice ended,
 we expect the Day of the Lord.

We are confident that the light
 that shines in the present darkness
 will fill the earth when Christ appears.

Come, Lord Jesus; our world belongs to you.

C.T. Paragraph #6

1. How do you best understand Jesus at work in your life today?

- a. He is the greatest prophet and smartest man history has known.
- b. He is a friend who comforts me in times of loneliness and trouble.
- c. He is my saviour who died for all my sins.
- d. He is my teacher, trainer and disciple maker unto all righteousness.
- e. He is Lord of Lords and King of Kings over my life and the whole world.

2. Where are you at in your spiritual walk with the Lord?

- a. An unbeliever, open to learning more.
- b. Sealed by infant baptism and saved by God's grace.
- c. A servant disciple, seeking to follow Jesus and become more like him.
- d. A disciple, looking to disciple others in following Jesus.
- e. An apostle and ambassador, looking to influence many.

3. How do Spiritual Disciplines strengthen your walk with the Lord today?

Silence & Solitude	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Fasting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Bible Meditation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Prayer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Service	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Fellowship	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Celebration	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

COMMUNAL COVENANT

Attendance: I will make a serious commitment towards attending each week, for the duration of the 25 weeks.

Preparation: I will work through each chapter, Entering Conversation, doing homework in Entering God's Word, reading Enhancing our Thought, and doing my best to Exercise Spiritual Disciplines and Action Responses as mapped out.

Participation: I will enter enthusiastically into group discussion, contributing and sharing where I can.

Prayer: I will pray for the members of our team or small group or class and for our experience together.

Personal Growth: I will be open to God's transforming work during this discipling period of 25 weeks.

Confidentiality: I will not share with anyone outside the group what is said during group sessions, giving each person a safe place to grow.

Community Building: I will be honest and forthright, open with others, respecting each person without judgment, advice, or criticism, and caring appropriately for the needs of those in our group when needs arise.

Discipling: I will give serious consideration to continuing the discipleship chain by committing myself to invest in other persons following the initial completion of Come and See...Our World Belongs to God.



CREATION

1. The First, Last and Every Spoken Word in Between

(C.T. Paragraph #7, #8)

2. It's All Good

(C.T. Paragraph #9)

3. Image is Everything

(C.T. Paragraph #10, #11)

4. God Defying Fortune, Chance and Fate

(C.T. Paragraph #12)

Our world belongs to God—
not to us or earthly powers,
not to demons, fate or chance.
The earth is the Lord's.

C.T. Paragraph #7

CREATION: LESSON 1

THE FIRST, LAST AND EVERY SPOKEN WORD IN BETWEEN

In the beginning, God—
Father, Word, and Spirit—
called this world into being
out of nothing
and gave it shape and order.

C.T. Paragraph #8

ENCOURAGING CONVERSATION

1. What is your favourite word game?

- a. Scrabble
- b. Crossword Puzzles
- c. Boggle
- d. Word Streak
- e. Word Scramble
- f. Other _____

2. How did this world come into being?

- a. God created the heavens and the earth.
- b. The world evolved over billions of years.
- c. A cosmic explosion marked the beginning.
- d. God spoke the world into being.
- e. It just happened.

3. Which “word of God” are you least familiar with?

- a. The Bible as the word of God.
- b. The prophets saying, “Thus says the Lord.”
- c. The word of God creating the heavens and earth.
- d. The word becoming flesh.
- e. The Holy Spirit giving a “word of God.”
- f. A pastor preaching the “word of God.”
- g. God’s word becoming your flesh.

4. Which description of Jesus are you most familiar with?

- a. Jesus as God’s word: John 1:1-3, 14
- b. Jesus as life: John 1:4; 11:25; 14:6
- c. Jesus as the light: John 1:4-5; 8:12
- d. Jesus as the truth: John 1:14; 14:6; 18:37
- e. Jesus as the bread of life: John 6:35, 41, 48.
- f. Jesus as the good shepherd: John 10:11, 14.
- g. Jesus as the resurrection and the life: John 11:25

ENTERING GOD'S WORD: JOHN 1:1-21

1. **Who is John introducing his readers to in the prologue of his gospel?** Verses 1-3
2. **Why does John choose to use "logos" or "the word" rather than the name Jesus?**
3. **What kind of role did Jesus have in creation?** Verse 3
4. **Describe life in the word and how it became the light for mankind.** Verse 4
5. **How does the darkness still not understand the light today?** Verse 5
6. **What did Jesus give to those who received Him, to those who believed in His name?** Verse 12
7. **Who is this word that became flesh? How did He reveal His glory?** Verse 14
8. **How do you see grace and truth come through Jesus Christ?** Verse 17

ENHANCING OUR THOUGHT: GOD'S WORD LIVES IN OUR FLESH

Whereas Mark began his Gospel with John the Baptist and Matthew began his with a genealogy reaching back to David and Abraham and Luke's genealogy goes all the way back to Adam, the Gospel of John begins his revelation of Jesus with the story of creation. John echoes the words of Genesis 1:1-3, saying, "*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made*" (John 1:1-3). John used the Greek word "logos" for "word" and "reason" as marking the beginning of creation. Greeks spoke of reason being the universal principle that governed all things in their world. On the other hand, Jews had the highest regard for "the word," as pointing to God and, in John's case, "was God." John used "the word" so both Jews and Greeks (Gentiles) could be drawn into the gospel story. Jews and Christians alike believe that all things were created in and through God's word. John begins his gospel by echoing the opening words of scripture in Genesis 1.

In Genesis 1 we read: "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light*" (Genesis 1:1-3). God the Father was present, as well as the Holy Spirit hovering over the waters. Then the author of Genesis writes; "*And God said, 'Let there be light.'*" Those spoken words are what brought light into being. That is God's creating word. God then spoke expanse between the waters, calling sky and water into being. Third, God called dry ground to appear and it was so. Using words, God called this world into being.

God also spoke words to Adam and Eve, Cain and Enoch, Noah and Abraham and Jacob and Moses too. God's verbal speaking to mankind is called a "theophany." The Ten Commandments are a theophany, where we read "*God spoke all these words, saying 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery'*" (Exodus 20:1). In the New Testament, when Jesus was being baptized by John, God spoke and said, "*This is my Son whom I love. With Him I am well pleased*" (Matthew 3:17). God spoke to people who heard and understood him.

Creation: The First, Last and Every Spoken Word in Between

A third use of “God’s word” comes in the writings of Moses and the prophets, in prayers and poetry, in the gospel writings and letters from the apostles, giving us 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament. *“No prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit”* (2 Peter 1:20-21). Both words in the Old Testament and the New Testament give special insight and revelation into who God is, as creator, sustainer, redeemer and restorer. Then John adds to the definition of “word.”

John says, *“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth”* (John 1:14). This same word, who created the heavens and the earth, who is God, became one of us. Jesus is the one who came to redeem this world and restore that which God created. John says that God loved this “cosmos” so much that he gave this world His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him will find everlasting life.

Finally, through the working of the Holy Spirit, God’s word enters our being and begins to live through us. *“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joint and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight”* (Hebrews 4:12-13). God’s word changes us and transforms our lives to live for him, giving God all glory, and honour and praise. God has the first, last and every spoken word in between.

EXERCISING SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE: SOLITUDE AND SILENCE

Carve out a measurable block of time, fifteen minutes this week, a half hour next week, one hour the third week and three hours in the fourth week, where you experience solitude and silence. Eliminate all sounds possible: no music, no electronic stimulation, no traffic, no voices, and no talking yourself. One gains a deeper appreciation of words when challenged to use them sparingly. Listen for the natural sounds of wind in the trees, birds, running water, your heart beating and your breathing. This is also known as the discipline of not having the last word.

Read Psalm 46 in your period of silence.

Journaling thoughts and words that you receive from the Lord may enhance your communication and communion in this block of silence. End your time of silence with words of praise and thanksgiving directed to the Lord.

ECHOES FROM A CONFSSIONAL PAST:

Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day #9, Q&A #26

The Belgic Confession, Articles #2, #8, #9 and #12

EXTRA READING:

Barton, Ruth Haley, *Invitations to Solitude and Silence*, Intervarsity Press, 2004.

Bavink, Herman, *In the Beginning*, Baker Books, 1999.

Colson, Charles, *How Now Shall We Live?* Tyndale House Publishing, pp. 1-146.

God formed sky, land, and sea,
stars above, moon and sun,
making a world of color, beauty, and variety—
a fitting home for plants and animals and us—
a place to work and play,
worship and wonder,
love and laugh.
God rested
and gave us rest.
In the beginning
everything was very good.

C.T. Paragraph #9

CREATION: LESSON 2

IT'S ALL GOOD

ENCOURAGING CONVERSATION:

1. **Where is the most beautiful place on earth for you?**
2. **What's the most bizarre thing that you believe God created?**
3. **What kind of creative abilities have you been blessed with?**
4. **Describe your favourite time and place of rest?**
5. **What is your favourite website to explore the beauty and wonder of creation?**
(Check out www.africam.com and see what kind of animals are presently feeding.)

ENTERING GOD'S WORD: GENESIS 1:1-2:3

1. **What does John 1:1-3 have in common with Genesis 1:1-3?**
2. **Where do you see evidence of the Triune God present in creation?** Genesis 1:1-3
3. **How did God create everything into being? What did He use?**
4. **What phrases are repeated in the act of creation and how many times?**
5. **The NIV Study Bible describes days of forming and days of filling. What are they?**

Day 1 Form _____ Day 4 Filling _____

Day 2 Form _____ Day 5 Filling _____

Day 3 Form _____ Day 6 Filling _____

6. Who is the "us" when God says, "Let us make man in our own image"? Verse 26

7. What does God tell mankind to do? Verses 26-28

8. Why would God include rest in his act of creation? 2:1-3

ENHANCING OUR THOUGHT: "IT IS VERY GOOD!"

Public elementary schools and high schools, and secular colleges and universities all teach curriculum on how the world began. Most educational institutions teach two theories, called "big bang," or evolutionary principles. It is important to realize that both are called theories: "The Theory of Evolution" and "The Big Bang Theory." Public schools and secular colleges and universities have created a dividing line between science and religion, between facts and faith, between the mind and the soul. Most secular institutions work to exclude any notion of God from the conversation surrounding the beginning of the universe. Christian schools, colleges, and universities usually begin with God in their conversations of origin and have faith with facts, minds that strengthen understandings of the heart and soul and religion presented as complimenting the work of science. Christian scientists will testify to their work enhancing their marvel and understanding of God and his creation.

The "Big Bang Theory" speaks of an expanding universe which began through an explosion approximately 13.8 billion years ago. After the explosion the universe cooled down, allowing subatomic particles to form into simple atoms, with gravity creating stars and planets, that slowly evolved into what we know as earth. There is no explanation of the matter created prior to the explosion, or the ability for the intricacies of life to form out of matter. It takes faith to believe in "The Big Bang Theory." The same with the "Theory of Evolution." In 1859 Charles Darwin wrote *The Origin of Species* where molecules and organisms expand into every kind of species, creating the biological organisms we have today. It takes a lot of faith to believe that one species has evolved into another, through a period of 3.5 to 3.8 billion years, beginning with tadpoles and evolving into the intricacies of humanity. There are scientists who believe in a Prime Mover God, an initial intelligent being, who created all things to have their being. That's where Christians allow Genesis 1 to give insight to their understanding of the origins of creation.

Genesis 1 has God speaking creation into being, and everything that God created was good. On the first day God created light. He separated light from darkness and called the light day and the darkness night. On the second day God separated the water from the water and created an expanse that he called sky. And it was good. On the third day God created dry land, gathering the water together in one place and creating land in another. On the land he planted trees and seed-bearing plants. On the fourth day God took what he created in day one and filled it with the sun in the day and stars and the moon at night. On the fifth day God took what he created in day two and filled the sky with birds and the waters with fish. On the sixth day God took what he created on day three and filled the land with animals, both wild and domestic and it was still all good. For his crowning act, God created mankind whom he called his image bearers, as he created male and female and gave them a mandate to be caretakers of his creation and this, he said, was "very good."

On the seventh day we are told God rested. On that day all of creation was to glorify God and enjoy him together. Six days of labour and one day of rest was a created rhythm which many still follow to this day. It takes faith to believe in a creator God, but this creator God is also tied to a written word of wisdom literature that also records the history of a chosen people known as the Jews. From the Jewish people came the person Jesus, who claimed to be God's Son. When Jesus left this world, he poured out his Holy Spirit on people who believe in Him and the church of Jesus Christ has been growing every decade and century and millennium since. All of this is tied to God who created this world in six days and after creating this world said, "It is very good."

EXERCISING SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE: SOLITUDE AND SILENCE

Carve out a measurable block of time, a period of a half hour, where you experience silence. Eliminate all sounds possible: no music, no electronic stimulation, no traffic, no voices, and no talking yourself. One gains a deeper appreciation of words when discipline teaches us to use them sparingly. Listen for the natural noise of wind in the trees, birds, running water, heart beating and breathing. This is also known as the discipline of not having the last word.

Read Psalm 46 again, in your period of silence.

PERSONAL REFLECTION: WRITING DOWN GOD’S GOODNESS IN ME

Go online and Google Myers Briggs Test – Strengths and Weakness. Take the test and see how you score on the Myers Briggs Personality Types, which are divided into 16 different categories. Print off your strengths and weaknesses and see how accurate the charts are and see what kind of self-awareness you are able to discover.

For example, I am an “ENFP” (Extrovert – Intuitive – Feeling – Judging) kind of person.

Then add to your insight, writing down words that describe everything good about yourself. How has God created you good? (eg. smart, athletic, kind, healthy, tall, etc.)

ECHOES FROM A CONFESSIONAL PAST:

Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day #9

Belgic Confession, Articles #2

EXTRA READING:

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Plantinga, Cornelius Jr., *Engaging God’s World*, pp. 17-44.

Watts, Ricky E., *On the Edge of the Millennium: Making Sense of Genesis 1*, Living in the LambLight Lectures, Regent College Publishing, 2001.