



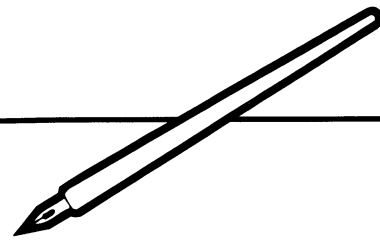
Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Volume 42, No. 4

February 26, 1993





A shift in direction with the schools?

In this issue the reader will find an interesting report from Br. A. Kingma about the meeting of the principals of our schools in November 1992. The two key speakers were Drs. H. Messelink from The Netherlands and Dr. Harro VanBrummelen of Trinity Western University. Drs. Messelink visited Ontario also and spoke to teachers and interested parents and grandparents. A report of this latter meeting was made by Miss J. Kingma, principal of the Smithville school and was reprinted with her permission in *Church and Child*, the magazine of the Timothy Canadian Reformed School Society of Hamilton. I make use of this report, too.

Of course, one has to be careful with reacting to reports, because they give a personal impression of what was said. Such a personal rendering can be quite subjective and lacking in objectivity. The fact that I was present at the meeting reported on by Miss Kingma does not really change this. The best thing is to go by the written text of those who spoke. Even then one does not always avoid some possible misunderstanding because of a lack of knowledge of the background of what was said. In spite of the danger of not fully knowing and understanding of what was spoken at the meeting in Langley, I would like to express my concern in connection with what I read (and heard).

Let me begin with what is reported about the speech of Dr. VanBrummelen, both with regard to the present situation as consequence of what happened in the past, and with regard to the future. With respect to the former, Dr. VanBrummelen remarked that "some schools have conformed too much." He mentions as one of the causes that "they have been influenced by public funding," and another cause was that "they have not spent enough time developing their own identity." The two causes might be related. Strongly desiring public funding, although in itself not unjust, can be a danger. When the government support is wanted and received, it becomes a greater temptation for the government to come with its demands to the private or Christian school concerning the contents of what is taught; and it becomes a greater temptation for the school (society and board) to give in to these government demands because of the money. In both cases I speak of a temptation because from the point of view of God's Word, the education of the children is the task of the parents, and not of the government. Children are not entrusted to the government, but to their parents. Reckoning with the living God and His Word includes the rejection of the claim of many people and governments that children are children of and for the state. Those who belong to God's covenant with their children know as the strong conviction of faith that their children are God's chil-



dren. God put His claim on them in Christ. That is why they want them to receive a biblically sound and confessionally faithful education in the home, in the church and in the school, to the utmost of their power. For this reason we should be willing and prepared to refrain from government funding if this would mean being forced to give up our Christian and Reformed confession. VanBrummelen came back to this aspect when saying regarding the future: "We should also fight the idea that the government must have full control of education . . ." Here I agree wholeheartedly.

With respect to the future, Dr. VanBrummelen said, according to the report, that "Christian schools should 'nurture students to be responsive disciples'." The reporter then summarized what the speaker said in the following words: "Schools can do this by concentrating in three aspects: unwrapping our gifts, sharing each others joys and burdens, and thirdly, seeking shalom." Here I have grave concerns.

The first thing to concentrate on is that the students learn to unwrap their gifts. I suppose that the background of this first element is the parable of Christ in Matthew 25 about the different servants each receiving their own talents with which they have to work in the service of their Lord and Master. Refraining from questions about the interpretation of this parable, I can say that the application often made is that each person, thus also each child, has his or her own gifts. Many speak in this connection about the child's potential. Thus we could formulate this first element also with these words: the education in the school has to aim at the development of each student's own personal potential.

We use modern language here. An official "Curriculum Guideline" on "History and Contemporary Studies" issued by the government of Ontario in 1986 describes the "Goals of Education" of the "Ministry of Education in Ontario"

with the following words: "...In its contribution to programs, personnel, facilities, and finances, *the ministry has the overall purpose of helping individual learners to achieve their potential* (emphasis added, J.G.) in physical, intellectual, emotional, social, cultural, and moral development."

This "overall purpose of helping individual learners to achieve their potential" is broken down in the following thirteen "goals of education":

1. develop a responsiveness to the dynamic process of learning;
2. develop resourcefulness, adaptability, and creativity in learning and living;
3. acquire the basic knowledge and skills needed to comprehend and express ideas through words, numbers, and other symbols;
4. develop physical fitness and good health;
5. gain satisfaction from participating and from sharing the participation of others in various forms of artistic expression;
6. develop a feeling of self-worth;
7. develop an understanding of the role of the individual within the family and the role of the family within society;
8. acquire skills that contribute to self-reliance in solving practical problems in everyday life;
9. develop a sense of personal responsibility in society at the local, national, and international levels;
10. develop esteem for the customs, cultures, and beliefs of a wide variety of societal groups;
11. acquire skills and attitudes that will lead to satisfaction and productivity in the world of work;
12. develop respect for the environment and a commitment to the wise use of resources;
13. develop values related to personal, ethical, or religious beliefs and to the common welfare of society.

When we look at this list, it would be easy to ask a number of questions and to add some positive and negative comments from a biblical, confessionally Reformed point of view. Not everything said here is wrong a such, if only it would receive its proper place in a biblical Reformed frame of thinking and set-up of the education. However, I do not want to deal here with the details. I want to ask the attention of the reader for this program as a whole. Then we can clearly notice that in these thirteen points the basic purpose of the government with education is worked out, namely, that the "individual learners achieve *their potential*." This is pure modern humanism. Man, (that is, the child) is here in the center of the education. The aim is (to say it with some other modern terms) that each person, each child comes to his or her full self-realization and self-fulfillment. Man has to develop in such a way that he achieves a fully satisfying life for himself. The reader understands that the term "man" is used here in a generic way and means both man and woman. Hereby it is striking that the development of the potential of the students is first, while the contents of the teaching receives a subordinate second place.

Let us now look again at the first aim for the future as summarized by Dr. VanBrummelen. He uses a different terminology when he speaks about "unwrapping our gifts." But, as for the form, it is basically the same thing as developing the student's potential. Sure, it is the Christian language which implies that there is a Giver who calls us to develop our gifts, our potential. But is the student and his potential the first thing that we must concentrate on in the



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Geertsema
Coeditors: J. De Jong, C. Van Dam and W.W.J. VanOene

ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS:

CLARION
41 Amberly Boulevard
Ancaster, ON, Canada L9G 3R9

ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS: (subscriptions, advertisements, etc.):

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

SUBSCRIPTION RATES FOR 1993	Regular	Air
	Mail	Mail
Canada*	\$32.00*	\$57.25*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds	\$35.00	\$50.00
International	\$46.25	\$78.00

* Including 7% GST – No. R104293055

Advertisements: \$6.50 per column inch

Unless a written subscription cancellation is received we assume you wish to continue to subscribe. You will be invoiced prior to the subscription renewal date.

Publications Mail Registration No. 1025
ISSN 0383-0438

IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial – A shift in direction with the schools? — J. Geertsema.....	78
Improving Personal and Family Worship2 — R.A. Schouten	81
The Tithe: Its Enduring Value – Part II, <i>The Relevance of the Tithe to the N.T. Church</i> — P. Asman.....	82
Stirring the ecumenical waters — Interviewer J. Van Dyk.....	84
Second National Principal's Conference: November 18-20, 1992 — A. Kingma	87
Book Review – Blok, M.J.C., <i>The Epistle to the Galatians</i> — G. Nederveen	89
Letters to the Editor	90
Church News	91
Our Little Magazine — Aunt Betty	92

school education with regard to the future? Is the way in which this is formulated not following the form of the world?

I hope that my critical questions are unfounded. But when I read what, in the view of Dr. VanBrummelen, the second aim for the Christian schools in the future has to be, I see confirmation of my concern. The second point in the summary of what Dr. VanBrummelen said is: "sharing each other's joys and burdens." One can see that here is, in different words, a formulation of the second part of "the great commandment": (love God with your whole heart and) love your neighbour as yourself. But it strikes me that the formulation concentrates our attention on the second part of the law of God and leaves the first part out. Thus, there is, again in this formulation, a concentration on man, now in his relation to his fellow man. Man is here, of course, the Christian man, let us say, the born-again man. But it is still man in the center. This I find again in the third point of concentration. The school is to concentrate on "seeking shalom". "Shalom" means peace. The concept means total well-being. Our life, and therefore the teaching in school, has to aim at building for the common well-being in every respect. I find this formulation too much on the horizontal plane. I mean: concentrating on man, even though it is the Christian man, leaving out the vertical line to God.

Now the reader should not think that I deny the importance of teaching love for God (that first) and for the neighbour in our Reformed schools as something that has to permeate everything. Of course, this has to be there. But this should not be our concern that we have to concentrate on with respect to the future of our schools as something so special for the Reformed school education. This is just as typical in our Reformed homes and our Reformed churches. I would say, this is just self-evident. Besides, this love for God and the neighbor speaks about the way we have to live. It deals with our conduct, the form of our life. Our Christian lives are (to be) lives of love in which God's love dominates us so that we live out of love for Him and each other. But the Reformed school has to teach what the Word of God reveals and what we confess with regard to all the subjects that are taught. This is what I miss in this formulation of what we have to concentrate on for the future. I come back to this.

What is the background of this call to concentrate on the unwrapping of our gifts and on the teaching of love? Does Dr. VanBrummelen work here with a basic motive of a Christian view of life? Is this motive that all of creation, including mankind, is placed under the curse of sin but that there is redemption from sin through Christ? Working with Calvinistic motives in this way is done by what is often called the "Philosophy of Law" or "the Amsterdam Philosophy" (the philosophy developed by Dr. H. Dooyeweerd). This philosophy worked with three basic motives (grondmotieven). These three basic motives are taken from the Bible and permeate this system of a Calvinistic philosophy: the motives of creation, of the fall in sin, and of redemption in Christ.


When this "Dooyeweerdian" philosophy works with "basic motives" and does not have as basis the Reformed confession (because the confession is seen as only pertaining to the church and church life), the line of Dr. Abraham Kuyper is followed. Kuyper founded the Free University on Reformed or Calvinistic principles, not on the Reformed confession. From the people of the Secession (for instance, Rev. H. Beukers and Dr. L. Lindeboom) this approach of founding a Reformed institution of learning on (Reformed, biblical) principles was too vague and not concrete enough. In line

with this men of the Liberation (for instance Dr. K. Schilder, Prof. B. Holwerda, Prof. J. Kamphuis, Dr. J. Douma) objected to building a Reformed philosophy on ground motives, while leaving the confession out as basis. They said: life is one; therefore what we confess as the truth of God's Word is true for all of life. This truth is basically our faith in our triune Covenant God: God the Father and our creation, God the Son and our redemption, God the Holy Spirit and our sanctification, gathering His church, gathering the people of the covenant. The men of both Secession and Liberation wanted only and totally Scripture and confession as basis for all school education, including the university training.

What our schools, and therefore our teachers and principals have to concentrate on for the future is the biblical, confessional basis of the contents of all teaching at our Reformed schools in all subjects.

I indicated above what I missed in VanBrummelen's advice for concentration. All the stress on the aim of Christian education is on teaching love for the neighbour. But where is the stress on teaching the truth, the doctrine of Scripture and confession with regard to all the subjects that are taught in the Reformed school? I read nothing about the importance of basing all of the education in all the subjects on the truth of God's Word. I would have expected that much attention would have been given, also for the future, on the question: how do we teach history (not only the history as described in the Bible, not only church history, but also world and national history) in the light of the truth of God's Word? What light does God's Word and does the confession shed on this history and its teaching? The same goes for the subject of geography and its teaching: how do we teach this in the light of what God's Word reveals to us. The same holds for language, mathematics, physics, and so on. Should we not maintain, and also clearly express, and keep discussing that is the very first aim of all education at our Reformed schools that in all the subjects the triune God and His self-revelation, that it is His Word, is in the center? Should not in the first place our aim be how we have to teach in every subject that God is the Creator, that Christ is the Redeemer of what God has created, and that the Holy Spirit sanctifies our life, including our studying and all our work in whatever field it is, so that it is holy for the LORD? In this way not the development of the student's potential is in the center but the triune God and His revelation, His Word. This Word with its truth has to dominate all teaching, not only on the point of the form (we have to love one another) but also with respect to concrete contents. In this framework, we can then, but in the second place, speak about the development of each student, according to his and her gifts. And let us avoid the humanistic term "potential." Our Reformed schools, having as basis Scripture and confession, should maintain their *Reformed confessional* character and image also in the way in which they appear on the public scene, and not shun the word Reformed and the contents of what is our confession.

These are my concerns, expressed in connection with what is rendered in a report that presents brief summarizing formulations and does not give a complete rendering of what was said. Nevertheless, this report gives an impression that appears on the pages of our magazine and needs some comment. The reader understands that it is said out of concern for our Reformed churches and our Reformed schools with our rich basis.

Next time I would like to make a few remarks with regard to the speech of Drs. H. Messelink. 

Improving Personal and Family Worship₂

By R.A. Schouten

In the first article under the above heading, attention was given to the nature of worship. We saw that the worship of God is to be distinguished from the service of God. The service of God concerns the way we glorify Him in all of life, while the worship of God involves special, consecrated times in which we consciously bow our hearts and minds before our Maker.

The need for public worship may at this time be taken for granted. However, is there also a biblical mandate for personal or family worship of God? Our answer is “yes” and we offer the following as evidence.

Instruction in worship

In the first place, we notice that a major part of corporate worship is *instruction*. The Word of the King is to be declared and applied to the lives of His people. In Scripture, we see that instruction happens not only in corporate worship, but also in families.

For example, in Gen. 18:19, we read that God chose Abraham so that he might charge his children to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice. It would be impossible for Abraham to fulfill his calling without *instructing* his children in the promise and obligation of the covenant.

In Ex. 12:26, 27, the Lord lays on His people the sacred obligation to *teach* their children the meaning of the Passover (see also Ex. 13:8, 14). In Deut. 4:9, 10, the people of Israel are exhorted to keep alive in the minds of their children through the generations the memory of the stupendous events which took place at Mount Horeb. Deut. 6:6, 7 states: “And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall *teach them diligently* to your children.” A similar ordinance is found in Deut. 11:19.

Many of the *Psalms* also speak about instruction in the family environment. It was through the family that God wished knowledge of His saving work to be preserved. Through family instruction, the people would *remember* the mighty deeds of God. See, for

example, Psalm 78:1-8 and Psalm 145:4. On the other hand, if fathers and mothers did not do their job of instructing, the children would soon *forget* the ways and the laws of the LORD.

The *Proverbs* frequently demonstrate how parents are to be deeply involved in training their children. Through the faithful teaching of father and mother, children become *wise*. For an example, see Proverbs 6:20 ff.

Moving to the New Testament, we can point to Eph. 6, verse 4, which requires especially fathers to bring up their children in the fear and discipline of the Lord. In addition, we may think of the example of Timothy. From childhood, Timothy was acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Timothy grew up in a home which was saturated with the Word! (see 2 Tim. 1:5, 3:14, 15). His faith was born and nurtured in the home environment.

In summary, we can say that family worship follows naturally from the biblical mandate to teach God’s Word in the home.

Bible reading

Family worship also follows from the many exhortations to read and meditate on God’s Word in a regular way. For some texts on this point, see Psalm 1, Joshua 1:8 and Col. 3:16. For example, the last passage exhorts us to let the Word dwell in us richly. Fulfilling this command is not possible without daily Bible reading. If we don’t focus on the Word in a daily fashion, it won’t dwell in us richly, but only superficially.

Prayer

Another important part of worship is prayer. Must families engage in prayer? Yes, for Scripture commands us to “pray constantly” (1 Thess. 5:17), that is, regularly. We are also called to “give thanks in all circumstances” (1 Thess. 5:18), for “this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” Consider also Phil. 4:6-8 where believers are instructed to “have no anxiety about anything, but

in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known to God.” It is impossible to obey these Scriptural commands without regular family worship.

Singing

As I will argue in the next article, family worship ideally includes *singing*. Is there a biblical basis for this? Yes, for in Scripture, God’s people are often heard singing. Think of the Lord and the twelve disciples singing hymns at the Last Supper (Matt. 26:30). Or, consider Paul and Silas praying and singing in the Philippian jail (Acts 16).

Then, too, there are explicit commands calling believers to engage in song. Col. 3:16 states: *Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*. Similarly, Eph. 5:19 envisions believers as people who “make melody to the Lord with all their hearts.” This is said not in the context of public worship, but in the context of daily life! (compare v. 20).

The importance of family

Family worship also follows from the nature of the family. The family is a very important institution in God’s dealings with His people. The covenant of grace is established with believers and with their children. It is in the family that faith in the God of the covenant is nurtured and strengthened. It is in the family above all that children learn the meaning of obedience to the Lord.

As the Lord shows His grace to Christian families, He desires these families to respond to Him in worship, confessing their love for Him, listening to His Word and singing His praise. If things are well in a Christian home, personal or family worship will develop naturally! How could we fail to exercise communion with our Father in heaven?

Having established the biblical basis for home worship, we will examine some of the practical concerns involved in this topic in a following article. **C**

The Tithe: Its Enduring Value

By P. Aasman

Part II, *The Relevance of the Tithe to the N.T. Church*

In the first article about the tithe, we had examined the O.T. institution of the tithe, had drawn a satisfactory picture of what that tithe was and we had drawn some significant conclusions concerning the O.T. tithe. Now we will see how this institution has been received in the N.T. church and we will draw some conclusions concerning its enduring relevance for us today.

3 The Tithe in the N.T. Church

3.1 N.T. Data

The N.T. has a great deal to say about giving, especially about how we should give. When He walked on earth, our Lord Jesus Christ spoke many remarkable words about giving, and His servant, the apostle Paul did too. It is simply taken for granted that the N.T. believer will give gifts to God. But it is rather striking that never is a word spoken about tithes, apart from the one time that our Lord spoke of how the Pharisees were abusing the tithe (Mt. 23:23). Therefore, there is no direct N.T. data regarding how we should view the tithe.

3.2 Views on the Tithe in Church History

A few of the church fathers said directly that the tithe was no longer in force as an institution. For instance, Epiphanius (315-403), himself a converted Jew, called the tithe an O.T. shadow which has passed away. Others like Jerome and Irenaeus did not directly say that the tithe was an O.T. institution that is obsolete, but they did say that the N.T. church should give more liberally than the O.T. church did.

Augustine held that the tithe was still due to God but he added that it should not be given to God out of obedience to O.T. law, but out of a higher ideal of

freedom. This seemed to be the general idea current in the early church.

However, this higher ideal was thrown down when the Council of Macon in 585 declared that the giving of the tithe was henceforth demanded by canon law. Everyone must give a tithe of all his income to the church. The law of the church became the law of the land when Emperor Charlemagne made it civil law in the 8th century. This statute stood for 1000 years until the rise of secular nationalism, when the obligation of citizens to pay a tithe to the church came under attack. It was officially removed from civil law in the time of the French revolution and soon after, by every modern nation state.

The tithe was never adopted by the Eastern churches.

Luther approved of the giving of a tithe, and as a consequence, it has been widely practised by Protestant churches

since the reformation.¹⁵ Many Pentecostal churches regard it to be a disciplinable sin for anyone to not give the tithe to the church. The recent movement of Christian Reconstruction or Theonomy regards the tithe as an enduring divine institution, as one would expect.¹⁶

3.3 What About Us?

As indicated earlier, we must take our starting point in the Belgic Confession Art. 25. In order to do so, we must carefully observe what parts of this institution belong to the O.T. era of shadows, and what parts endure.

3.3.1 *What Belongs to the O.T. Shadows*

1. Paul says that the Sabbaths were only a shadow of what is to come. We have seen that the giving of the tithe was intimately tied up with the sabbath regulations, therefore, as a divinely required institution, it has become obsolete.
2. Many object to this by pointing out that the tithe was the divinely ordained portion for giving long before the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, and therefore, although the law of Sinai has passed away, the tithe has not.

But this kind of reasoning will lead us into unacceptable conclusions. For instance, the division of animals into clean and unclean was in existence before Sinai,¹⁷ and yet, from the moment of Christ's resurrection, that division of foods became meaningless, as Christ Himself told Peter in Acts 10:15. Other things that were essential to the liturgy of believers before Sinai have passed away too, such as the need to offer gifts to God on an altar, or the raising up and anointing of pillars.

OUR COVER



3. The tithe given by the twelve tribes was the inheritance which God gave to the Levites in place of a tribal territory. Although, as we have seen, the Levites were the pastors in the land, forerunners of the N.T. ministers, nevertheless, we may not transfer this institution to the N.T. church. Since believers at large cannot lay claim to a physical heritage – a tribal region – from the Lord, then neither can ministers lay claim to a portion of the tithe for their support.¹⁸

3.3.2 *The Substance that Remains*

1. The O.T. saints expressed their joy at Yahweh's providence and Lordship by giving one-tenth to God. The point made by Jerome and Chrysostom is well taken when they said that our joy in the Lordship of Jesus Christ has multiplied tenfold. If we were to adequately express our joy, then ten-tenths of our income would not be enough.

On this basis Christ commands the rich man, "Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and come, follow me" (Lk. 18:22); and on this basis Paul can say, "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." (Romans 12:1) There is a new focus in the N.T. In the O.T., believers knew that "the earth is Yahweh's and the fulness thereof" (Psalm 24:1), and giving the tithe was a recognition of this. In the N.T. believers recognize this by giving everything they have to God when occasion requires it.

2. On the other hand, if any person should give less than one-tenth of all his income for the sake of the kingdom of God, then it would seem that the wonder of living in the age of fulfilment has made little impact on his soul. It would be very hard for any person to justify not giving more than ten percent of his income.¹⁹ The expression has merit which goes,

You can give without loving;
but you cannot love
without giving.

If we love much, we will give much.

3. It is still important to God what proportion one gives, not how much one gives. Our Lord indicates this when He pointed out that in God's eyes, the poor widow who put a mere penny into the temple treasury gave more than the rich (Luke 21:1-

4). Paul instructs the church at Corinth to lay money aside on the first day of every week, "as he may prosper" (1 Cor. 16:2). He also commends the Macedonian churches for giving according to their means and indeed, for giving beyond their means for the sake of the poor in Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8:3).

4. We must still give to God with two goals in mind:

i. For the support of the ministry.

When our Lord went preaching the gospel with His disciples, then He accepted support from some well-to-do women who, Luke tells us, "provided for them out of their means." (Luke 8:1-3) The apostle Paul too received support from the Macedonian churches when he preached the gospel in Achaia. He writes, "I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. And when I was with you and was in want, I did not burden any one, for my needs were supplied by the brethren from Macedonia." (2 Cor. 11:8,9) Furthermore, in his first letter to Timothy, he writes about the elder who rules well. The context makes it quite clear that the apostle is speaking about the minister of a congregation, for he says, "Let the elder who rules well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching; for the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain,' and, 'The labourer deserves his wages.'" (5:17,18) In the O.T., that support was demanded of Israel when they gave the tithes. In the N.T., it is still the responsibility of the congregation to provide that support. The only difference is that since she is not obliged to give the O.T. tithe, the support must be given through voluntary contributions.

ii. For the relief of misery. The heart of religious giving remains this: that we take care of widows, orphans and the needy. The apostle Paul was very zealous about getting the Gentile churches to relieve the poverty of the churches in Jerusalem. James writes, "Religion that is

pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction" (1:27), and then he goes on to speak of one of the most pernicious acts of hypocrisy recorded in Scripture: "If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit?" (2:15,16)

When we reckon on these two things, then we would have to conclude that our chequebooks should reflect a certain spiritual pattern. One author put it very aptly when he said that one's chequebook is like a spiritual cardiogram²⁰ – it shows whether we take these two callings seriously.

5. What is perhaps of greatest enduring worth in this O.T. institution is that when we give, we must do it joyfully. No one in the O.T. could possibly give without joy. The feast before God prevented that. In the O.T., the saints showed how wonderful it was to submit to this God. Their giving was to be a confession of faith.

God is not interested in the gift of anyone who gives grudgingly. If I have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal – particularly when we give. God says through His servant Paul, "Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." If a person is not inclined to give an offering to the Lord, he must not! He must give as he feels in his own mind. This surely sounds the death knell to any idea that God still requires the tithe. Yet if a person does not give much more than a tenth, his soul knows not the richness of Jesus Christ.

6. When the O.T. church gave to the Lord, they gave for the poor *and* for the ministry of the Word. Both aspects were united in one liturgical act of worship. This is something that we have lost in our worship. Lord's Day 38 gives a list of liturgical acts that should be included in the corporate worship of the church, but as to giving, it only refers to giving Christian alms for the poor. We should reflect on the

truth and substance of the tithe, and recognize that giving for the support of the ministry of the Word should be done in the context of an official worship service as a liturgical action. Lord's Day 38 does not deny this connection since it also states that the fourth commandment requires of us that we support the ministry of the gospel.

7. The tithe was not only a liturgical act of worship, it was an action performed by the whole family. This also deserves more attention. When we give, it should not be done quietly or secretly in such a way that the children do not even know that something is being given to the Lord. We should give only after preparing ourselves for giving to the Lord in our homes. Preparation for giving would include acknowledging how abundantly God has blessed the family and a prayer asking for God's blessing on the ministry of the gospel and on the ministry of mercy.

4. Conclusion

- i. Ten-tenths is not enough to give in the N.T. dispensation to express our joy in salvation.
- ii. Anyone who gives less than one-tenth of his income to God as a free will offering should do some serious self examination.
- iii. God is pleased when we give generously in proportion to what we have.
- iv. It remains the responsibility of believers to support the ministry of the gospel.
- v. It remains the responsibility of believers to share what they have with the needy in their midst.
- vi. Believers must give cheerfully, and thus confess their faith in God.
- vii. Giving to God is a liturgical act of worship.
- viii. Giving to God is an activity of the whole family.

¹⁵"Tithe," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 11 (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.: Toronto, 1974 [15th edition]) 802-3.

¹⁶R.J. Rushdooney makes his point rather forcefully when he says, "Those who do not tithe are spiritual anarchists: they destroy both the freedom and order of society and unleash the demons of statism," in *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (The Craig Press: 1973) 58.

¹⁷God commanded Noah to store up in the ark one pair of unclean animals but seven pairs of clean in Gen. 7:2.

¹⁸Calvin writes, "the Papal priests draw a silly inference, when they claim the tithes for themselves as if due to them in right to the priesthood"; and responding to the Roman stand on Heb. 7:2, he writes, "whatever the law conferred on the Levitical priests now belongs to Christ alone"; see his *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, Vol 2, (reprint by Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, 1981) 278-9.

¹⁹Saying this is not meant to bring the tithe legislation back again as though to lay down an absolute minimum which we by law must give. It is only cited to highlight the difference between dispensations.

²⁰George B. Davis, "Are Christians Supposed to Tithe?," *Criswell Theological Review*, Vol. 2, 1987, 93.



Stirring the ecumenical waters

Taken over, with permission, from Christian Renewal of February 1, 1993. The interviewer was Mr. John Van Dyk.

At its November 1992 Synod, the Canadian Reformed Churches approved the appointment of synodical deputies for contact with former CRCs. To understand the significance of this move for the future of ecumenical relations in the Reformed community, *Christian Renewal* interviewed Dr. Cornelis van Dam, a professor at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Ontario.

1. *First, some background information. At the November meeting of the Alliance of Reformed Churches your colleague, Rev. John Mulder, announced the appointment by the Canadian Reformed synod of two synodical deputies. How did this come about, who are the deputies, and what is their role and function?*

The matter of deputies for the promotion of ecclesiastical unity came on

the table of synod through overtures from the churches. The church at Vernon, B.C., proposed the appointment of deputies for contact with the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches (OCRC) "to see if we can come to the mutual recognition of each other as true churches of Jesus Christ and seek ways in which our unity of the faith can be expressed and appreciated." Also, Classis Ontario North proposed the appointment of a committee "to promote ecclesiastical unity with Reformed Churches and/or assemblies which recently have withdrawn or are withdrawing themselves from the Christian Reformed Church and which in all things want to bind themselves to the Word of God and the Three Forms of Unity and which in governing the Church maintain good order in accordance with a Reformed church order."

In dealing with these requests, Synod 1992 decided:

"to appoint Deputies for the promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity, con-

sisting of an equal number of committee members from the two Regional Synod districts, to promote the unity of Reformed believers who have left the Christian Reformed Church with the mandate:

1. to make their presence known for the purpose of information and consultation;
2. to represent the churches, whenever invited, at assemblies or meetings held for the purpose of coming to an ecclesiastical unity;
3. to report on its activities to the churches and to the next general synod."

Synod appointed to this committee: from eastern Canada, Rev. W. den Hollander, H.T. Van der Velde, and myself as convener; and from western Canada, Rev. R. Aasman, Rev. J.D. Wielenga, and elder P. Van Woudenberg.

It goes without saying that my response to your questions in this interview is on a personal basis and that it

may not always represent the thinking of the other deputies.

2. How do you see the significance of this appointment for ecumenical relations with those who have left the CRC?

In the first place, it is now possible for the Canadian Reformed Churches to be officially present when invited to ecumenical meetings of those who have left the CRC, be they meetings of the OCRC or independent Reformed churches or similar gatherings such as the Alliance of Reformed Churches. There is now also an official address where information about the Canadian Reformed Churches can be obtained. It is my hope that these new possibilities will result in a better understanding of the issues, especially those of federative concern, that are now in discussion among us.

In the second place, one should not overestimate the importance of these new deputies. If there is going to be any real progress in understanding each other and finding ways and means to experience the unity of the true faith together, (so that we may eventually find each other in some sort of a united Reformed church), then one must never forget the importance of the local Reformed congregations in seeking each other out in both informal and formal ways. If the establishment of these deputies further stimulates such local initiatives and contacts, then a most important fruit of this decision will be evident.

Finally, as a historical footnote, I would like to mention that this decision to appoint deputies gives expression to the same desire for ecumenicity that the appeals in 1963 and 1977 to the CRC have in the past. The idea behind this decision is therefore as such nothing new.

3. How do you intend to carry out your task?

I cannot answer that question in detail since the newly appointed deputies are still getting organized and no decisions have been made on how precisely our task should be executed. The mandate from synod is, however, quite clear in specifying that we as deputies are to make our presence known for the purpose of information and consultation and secondly that we are to represent the churches, whenever invited, at assemblies and meetings held for the purpose of coming to ecclesiastical unity.

4. From what you've heard, if anything, how is this decision to appoint synodical deputies being viewed in the Canadian Reformed Churches? Have you had reactions or feedback from sources outside your denomination?

The reactions I have heard are all positive, both from within the Canadian Reformed Churches as well as outside. Within our churches I sense gratitude that a concrete step has been taken on the federative level.

Now at Synod there was a letter from one of the congregations asking Synod to reject the proposal to appoint deputies for ecclesiastical union. This request was however not made because this congregation was against ecumenical action. (It is very active on this front.) But, one of their concerns was that the place of the local congregation in the ecumenical process was not sufficiently safeguarded by one of the proposals coming to Synod. Synod recognized that concern as legitimate and took it into consideration in drafting the mandate.

5. Why were deputies not appointed when the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches (OCRC) formally organized as a federation?

Although the origins of the OCRC go back to 1980, they were only federated in 1988 and the first synod of the OCRC was not held until August 20-22, 1991. (Prior to that they met annually as Inter-Consistorial Conference.) Since the Canadian Reformed Churches convene in general synod once every three years, our 1992 synod was really the first one that could appoint ecumenical deputies who would be able to meet on the federative level with the OCRC. All this is not to say that there was no real interest in the Canadian Reformed Churches for the OCRC. For example, already in the early 1980's Canadian Reformed representatives were present at the "birth" of an OCRC congregation and the consistories of the Canadian Reformed Church and the OCRC met in the Toronto area. Also in Western Canada there were contacts. Indeed, because of a request from the OCRC congregation in Ripon, California, the consistory of the Canadian Reformed Church at Langley, B.C., authorized Rev. D. VanderBoom to administer the Word and sacraments for half a year in that OCRC congregation which he did in 1985. When Classis Pacific was offi-

cially informed of the decision it was grateful for it and encouraged the consistory to help the brothers in Ripon. In subsequent years there was considerable contact between Canadian Reformed ministers and those of the OCRC in British Columbia.

6. What other attempts have been made by the Canadian Reformed Churches in the recent past to promote ecumenism?

Our Synod of 1992 decided among other things to continue discussions with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and continue to work towards full Ecclesiastical Fellowship (similar to what used to be called sister-church relationship). Ecclesiastical Fellowship was offered to the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin) and to the Free Church of Scotland, including naturally its congregations in Canada. The Committee on Relations With Churches Abroad was instructed to investigate the Reformed Church in the United States with a view to entering into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship. This Committee's new mandate also allows it to further investigate the Reformed Churches in South Africa and the Église Reformée Confessante in Zaire with a view to ecclesiastical fellowship. The Synod also decided that the Canadian Reformed Churches continue to participate in the International Conference of Reformed Churches.

7. How is ecumenism understood in your denomination?

In its simplest form, ecumenism is understood to heed the desire of the Lord Jesus Christ "that they all be one" as articulated in His high priestly prayer (John 17). Concretely this meant that when Dutch immigrants from the Reformed Churches (Liberated) came to Canada, they did not desire to set up a new church, but sought to join an existing one. Many joined the Christian Reformed Church for that had always been their North American sister church. After it became clear from CRC synodical decisions that the CRC choose the side of the Reformed Churches (Synodical) and considered the Reformed Churches (Liberated) a new church and not a legitimate continuation of the Reformed Churches, many Liberated people who had joined the CRC left and the first Canadian Reformed Church was established in Lethbridge in 1950. Other immigrants

had joined the Protestant Reformed Church and new congregations were established in Hamilton and Chatham, Ontario, but here too they ran into great difficulties when the Protestant Reformed Church adopted a Declaration of Principles (in 1950) which these new immigrants could not in good conscience accept. When appeals against this declaration were unsuccessful, Canadian Reformed congregations were established in Chatham and the Hamilton area.

The Canadian Reformed Churches did not forget the CRC, as, e.g., the official appeal to the CRC of 1963 and subsequent the contact and the second appeal of 1977 indicate. I detail a little history to show that the Canadian Reformed Churches have been serious about true ecumenicity. The "birth" of these churches in this continent and the subsequent history show that they have never been content simply to be on their own, but have tried to realize their responsibilities in this regard, be it with many weaknesses and shortcomings.

It is also fair to say that the Canadian Reformed Churches are by and large not interested in superficial ecumenical associations, but desire to manifest the unity of the faith with others as concretely as possible. The ideal goal remains that all truly Reformed believers find each other in one church, locally and federatively, "that they may all be one."

8. Do you see much hope of closer ties in the future with, for instance, the Free Reformed Churches? If not, why not?

It would be wonderful if the Free Reformed Churches and Canadian Reformed Churches could find each other. I see no Biblical reason for our remaining separate from each other and I hope and pray that we may see a union coming. I am convinced that the Head of the Church wants us together.

At the moment I am not so hopeful, however, that such a union will happen in the immediate future. On the one hand there have been and are some excellent personal contacts that Free Reformed and Canadian Reformed have with each other, but on the other hand it never seems to get beyond that. In the past there have been a number of Canadian Reformed initiatives to seek the unity of the faith with the local Free Reformed Church. I think, for example, of efforts in the past in

Chatham and Ancaster in Ontario, to only mention these two; but with little positive result. For that reason, no effort has been made on our part to approach the Free Reformed Churches on the synodical level.

A big stumbling block for our Free Reformed brothers seems to be in the perception that we do not sufficiently guard and maintain the experiential element in preaching. I reject that perception as being true to fact. It is not clear to me how you can preach Biblically without confronting the hearers with the demands and responsibilities that come with the applicatory work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives. This too is part of Canadian Reformed preaching.

Another factor that makes me pessimistic for the short term is that the Free Reformed delegation at the last meeting of the ARC has suggested that we maintain denominational distinctives and not work for a full organic unity, only a type of ecumenical structure wherein each denomination can retain their distinctives. In this way of reasoning the Free Reformed Churches follow their Dutch sister churches which via a formal synod decision last fall essentially said that seeking unity with the (Liberated) Reformed Churches is not the goal we should be striving for. That is a most regrettable decision and I hope that developments in North America will not follow that pattern.

9. I trust you've read the book Seeking our Brothers in the Light: A Plea for Reformed Ecumenicity, edited by Theodore Plantinga. What is your opinion of the book, and, what kind of impact do you think it will have in the CRC?

This book is an honourable and final attempt from within the CRC to confront the CRC with the incorrect way the ecclesiastical Liberation of 1944 was dealt with by the CRC. Happily, the two appeals which the Canadian Reformed Churches addressed to the CRC in 1963 and 1977 are included. These official documents (with the helpful editorial notes) speak for themselves. In this book the readers are also thus confronted with the legitimate existence of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Judging from the overall direction of the CRC, I do not think this book will have much impact on it. I suspect that the book's greatest significance will be to give all the concerned mem-

bers of the CRC as well as those who have already left a good introduction to the Canadian Reformed Churches. Some knowledge of the past should be of great help in understanding and in finding each other as churches of our Lord.

10. Finally, what is your personal vision for the future of ecumenical relations in the Reformed community in light of discussions taking place (the ARC), and with the confessional conference set to go in July 1993?

We are living in a time which for all intents and purposes is post-Christian. That is an additional reason for Reformed believers to seek each other. I am, therefore, very happy that discussions are taking place and that the ARC provides a North American forum for many of those discussions. Hopefully, it will also stimulate local discussions. The more we understand and get to know each other the better it is.

In principle, I am of course all in favour of attempting to establish a broadly based Reformed Church which embraces both the Presbyterian and Reformed traditions. Who would not want to see this happen!? I do not, however, understand why we do not first seek unity among the Reformed churches. That would appear easier to obtain. We could work from there. In this context, I am thankful for the Confessional Fellowship of Reformed Churches, (the newly independent Reformed churches) and I hope that they may come to some sort of provisional federative relationship with each other and that this arrangement may stimulate further Reformed ecumenical activity.

With respect to the confessional conference, I wish it well; but, all factors considered, I fear that rather than working for the unity of Presbyterian and Reformed churches it may prove divisive. The topics on which confessional agreement is sought seem simple and straight forward on the surface; but, given the range of opinions in conservative circles, these topics will probably turn out to be quite complex and potentially very divisive. It is not clear to me why unity between the Reformed and Presbyterian tradition is not first sought on the basis of the classic expressions of the Reformed faith (the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards). Further efforts to come to a contemporary confession can take place from there. **C**

Second National Principal's Conference:

November 18-20, 1992

By A. Kingma

Several principals made their debut in *The Valley* – a place known for its warmer winter climate. After most of us enjoyed a short preparatory rest on Tuesday night, we all followed the roads leading towards Langley, eager to greet and meet each other and to begin our Second National Principal's Conference. The host of the Conference, Mr. Co. Nap, welcomed us all to BC and to the Conference. After opening the conference in a Reformed manner, and after excusing us for the early starts (the regular starting time of a principal's day), he urged us to fully participate in the conference to get the most out of it.

Drs. H. Messelink, the Assistant Director of the Reformed Education Advisory Centre for the Reformed Schools in the Netherlands, outlined the historical developments of the Reformed schools in the Netherlands. I am not about to outline his whole speech here, but it is maybe worthwhile to give a quick synopsis. Drs. Messelink mentioned that there are three basic Christian school systems in the Netherlands: the general Christian schools, the Reformatorische schools and the Reformed Schools (from the *Vrijgemaakt/Liberated Reformed Churches*). The present Reformed School system has 120 elementary schools, 15 high schools (3 of them with more than 2000 students), 1 vocational school, 1 college for teacher training and the Reformed Education Advisory Centre. All these schools, Messelink stated, are presently fully funded.

It was really not until 1957 that most *Vrijgemaakte/Liberated* people agreed to establish their own schools. Messelink mentioned three main motives for establishing Reformed (not Christian) education: an ethical conflict, the increased insight into the nature of covenantal education, and the commitment of parents to an educa-



Drs. H. Messelink

tion for their children in accordance with Scripture promised at baptism. Messelink mentioned that in the Netherlands, the Reformed schools are now wrestling with the question of identity. "How," he asks, "are the schools Reformed in character?" He recognized that during the 50s and 60s general Christian schools lost their Reformed character due to the influences of Barthianism and "pluriformity." The only basis that remained for those schools was a Christian *tradition*, not Scripture. The reaction, then, was to set up Reformed schools, but Messelink admitted that Reformed schools would have had a slow start had they not been fully funded by the government and recognized by Royal decree.

Messelink explained that to prepare for the future, the Reformed schools in the Netherlands need to remain strong. Society in the Nether-

lands is changing: the acceptance of Christianity in the Netherlands is waning rapidly; the Reformed schools are deficient in showing their real Reformed identity, and outsiders see Reformed schools as a political power-grabbing phenomenon. Our identity therefore, Messelink continued, must be clearly shown: in the philosophy and direction of the school, in the pedagogical views and structures of the school, and in the curriculum of the school. The schools need Reformed curriculums, but most importantly, Reformed, believing teachers.

When addressing the question whether our schools should allow children of members belonging to the Reformed Churches only, Messelink urged the schools to keep the Three Forms of Unity as a basis; that all parents who send their students should subscribe to it.

At the end of his speech Messelink did not only discuss the future of the Reformed schools in general but added a more global aspect: Reformed education is tied closely to the developments in the Reformed churches. The more pluriform, the more difficult it is to shape the school's identity. He urged all schools to remain confessionally faithful.

The second speech was delivered by Dr. Harro VanBrummelen, professor of Education at the Trinity Western University. He discussed the developments of Christian education on the North American scene. Like Messelink, he also began with a historical context and then addressed the present and future of Christian schools.

Many Christian schools began, VanBrummelen explained, as a result of two key motives: to keep a religious and social isolation, and the idea that Calvinism would be able to transform the North American society. From 1910-1960, the latter ideal faded because many people assimilated into North American society and became influenced by personal piety and by materialism.

It was not until the late 50s and early 1960s that Christians (people mainly from Reformed background) began to restate the idea that Calvinism can have an impact on society. They realized that neutral and objective learning does not exist, but that all curriculum contains a bias. Recognizing that secular texts were filled with strong humanistic biases resulted in setting up NUCS – the National Union of Christian Schools which mandated itself to write Christian curriculum, Christian texts, and literature about Christian education. Many independent Christian schools joined up with this organization – now known as CSI (Christian Schools International).

The present state of Christian schools in North America is far from perfect, VanBrummelen stressed. Some schools have conformed too much. Why? They had different ideas of culture, they have been influenced by public funding, or they have not spent enough time developing their own identity. Other Christian schools (and I think he also included Canadian Reformed schools in this category) have proactive, principled, convicted and convincing leadership; have a strong sense of identity and believe that they have the right to exist as an alternative to public education.

To address the future, Christian schools should "nurture students to be

responsive disciples" VanBrummelen says. Schools can do this by concentrating in three aspects: unwrapping our gifts, sharing each others joys and burdens, and thirdly, seeking shalom. We should also fight the idea that the government must have full control of education: government control of education is only a 150-year-old practice. We should promote the idea that the government can ensure that each child is in school, but need not meddle further with education.

After a super lunch, we participated in a workshop lead by Mr. Peter Torenvliet (Yarrow). Before he allowed us into the nitty-gritty of it, we were first given some focus points and a particular model for instructional leadership by Drs. Messelink. Mr. Torenvliet then gave us a number of key in-depth questions upon which our groups had to focus; for example, is it necessary to have a principal (a deep philosophical discussion ensued); what a principal needs to be effective, types of leadership, the differences between a principal and a manager, to what extent do principals accede to leadership expectations from teachers, boards and parents, and the real philosophical one, what determines leadership in a Christian school setting. We really experienced a real sense of collegiality in this workshop, something which I had hoped for and something which grew throughout the next two days.

Thursday morning began at 8:00 sharp (conference style). Mr. Ed Vanderboom (Credo High, Langley) ran us through a workshop elegantly entitled, "Leadership: Exposing the Encumbrances." In typical group style, with chart paper and markers, we dealt with topics: how our schools differ from other schools; who are the stakeholders in our schools and what tasks and responsibilities do they have; what type of problems do principals encounter in our schools. These were the easy issues. The more difficult ones were: what are the indicators of the problems and how can you tackle them. Are there types of problems which you can handle using a standard approach/method? As we worked through these issues, we were made to realize that not only do principals deal with "problems" often, but they should be able to have trained eyes and ears to recognize problems early and to strategically curtail them before the problems affect a larger community.

Our afternoon session was on a lighter note. All principals were asked

to visit the various schools in the Valley. Besides looking at buildings, equipped with gleaming furniture and shiny hallways (Poppe Vandermeulen and family were hard at it), and besides meeting happy teachers and former colleagues, we picked up on the actual programs and activities in each school. The sun lightened us up further, beaming its pleasant rays through the clouds for a good half hour, creating a spectacle to remember for the next two days (Yes, we had some BC sun). It was a very enjoyable and pleasant afternoon.

At 3:00, we all met again to discuss a workshop on Child Abuse, led by Mr. Henk VanBeelen (Smithers). We discussed several aspects of this current and complex issue. We also followed two case studies and discussed how we would go about them: whether or not we should report, and how we should report and follow-up. The papers prepared by Rev. J. Visscher and Rev. P.K.A. de Boer, as well as written comments of Rev. VanLuik were tabled. Parts of several schools' established protocols were tabled also. The ideal of a Taskforce to deal with the issues surrounding Child Abuse Reporting was suggested, but all members present realized that each school would have to deal with these topics in its own locale.

School board members of the Valley schools joined us for supper. Drs. Messelink then propelled us into our discussion on School Visits. The discussion was based on a paper entitled "The Sense and Nonsense of School Visits" written by Dr. van den Berg. The purpose, format and content of school visits were discussed. Mr. Messelink enhanced the article by stressing that boards who operate in different manners have different reasons for school visits. He then identified three operating styles: the monitoring board, the executive board and the policy-making board. It may be that some boards do not wholly fit into one category, but this breakdown provided us with a good basis for examining our boards. In the practical part of this session, boards and principals were asked to identify their operational style. From this workshop I gathered that boards should have a proper vision of their tasks to have a proper understanding of why and how they should make school visits; boards and staff should communicate their views on purpose and procedure for school visits; staffs should know the purpose, time and intent of a school visit; and school boards should

examine whether they are actually doing school visits, teacher visits or content assessment visits. The session supplied us with some interesting points for boards to reflect on.


Friday morning, Mr. John Roukema (Credo Elementary) ably and effortlessly led us through the last of the three workshops on Leadership entitled "Essousing the Effortless." It took a little more effort on our part to motivate ourselves on this topic, but through a hands-on approach, we were able to concentrate and become totally involved in the workshop. We were asked to identify the problems of Miss Fanny Flea, as well as those of Miss Pansy Pickle. Once we identified the real problems, we were asked to design strategies to deal with the problems and a plan for continued supervision and evaluation of them. We were then asked to deal with Mr. Uzzie Bumbledrip's problem, the long-term fixture-type teacher who presupposed that time-tested traditional methods were best, despite disinterested and failing kids. Only after we endeavoured to help Mr. Bumbledrip were we addressed by Drs. Messelink, who shared with us some hints on how to talk with and to teachers. Mr. P. Torenvliet

(Yarrow) then role-played Mr. Charlie Chumbuddy and Mr. VanDooren (Guido) Charlie's principal. Mr. Chumbuddy was a nice guy who couldn't discipline his students. Charlie's principal had to apply a little pressure to get Charlie to realize that he had created the problem and that he now had to solve it.

Our last case study was a Dutch teacher: Mr. Zekie VanderKlutz, the type of teacher who wanted all students to be prepared for university. Kids who couldn't handle the content were "donderheads." After discussing Zekie VanderKlutz's problems and the issues involved (process/content learning; recognizing various talents; career-oriented teaching), we stopped for lunch, feeling very satisfied with solving four teachers' problems in one morning. We felt very satisfied with our hard work.

Friday afternoon was a business meeting. CARE (Committee for Advancement of Reformed Education) and RCDF (Reformed Curriculum Development Fund) made presentations. Mr. H. Nobel (Timothy) circulated a memo from their board to the League re advertising in *Clarion* for teachers' positions. We also decided to hold the next meeting, the Lord willing, in Edmonton, 1994.

During the conference we really experienced a unity: a unity based in our purpose to teach covenant children Reformedly (Let us not be afraid to use this term instead of the adverb "Christianly" – a term which can be applied too loosely). This unity was expressed in several ways: we should continue to hold firmly to our Reformed basis; we are eager to see a closer working relationship among schools; we should have a Curriculum centre; CARE should seek to service all schools; we should have more regular contacts with the Dutch and Australian Reformed Schools. Principals and schools were asked to make good use of the *CRTA Magazine* as well as the Covenant Teacher's College Resource Centre.

We recognize that we must talk and work together. We must share the same conviction to uphold our Reformed education and to demonstrate our position in our curriculums and classrooms. Let us hope that God will continue to provide for a growing together, for clarity in our Reformed pedagogy, and for a strengthening of our Reformed schools. I am sure that this conference contributed to that hope. 

BOOK REVIEW

By G. Nederveen

Blok, M.J.C., *The Epistle to the Galatians*. Revised edition, London: Inter-league Publication Board, 1991, 47 pages.

The Inter-league Publication Board (ILPB) has reissued a study outline on Galatians. The first printing was in 1977.

I am happy to see this revised edition come off the press. It presents a marked improvement in more than one way. First of all there is the refinement in translation. The 1977 edition slavishly followed the dutch text which made for a workable but stilted translation. This new printing has made many changes of a stylistic and grammatical nature.

Another definite improvement is the layout. A larger typeface was used and the whole outline received a more appealing appearance. The new edition consists of 47 pages; the 1977 edition


contains 33 pages. I was also happy to see that certain comments and references which used to be part of the text have been placed in footnotes.

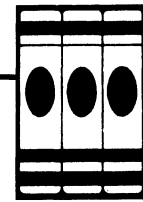
As to the content, this outline is faithful to Scripture. It will be of much help in gaining a better understanding in studying Paul's letter to the Galatians.

There is one serious omission. It is unfortunate that no one took the time to check and correct the personal data on the author. Under "Canadian Cataloguing and Publication Data" we find the following information: Blok, M.J.C., 1914 -. Since the next date is missing this indicates that the author is still living at the time of publication. That is how it appears in both the 1977 and 1991 editions while the author passed away on June 14, 1976.

I have one final remark which is really a recommendation. The next time the ILPB publishes a study out-

line, please provide the readers with a list of the abbreviations used. E.g. on page 23 we find the abbreviations HC and CD. One may assume that everyone knows that HC stands for Heidelberg Catechism and CD stands for Canons of Dort. However, that may be assuming too much, especially if the intention is to reach a larger readership from other backgrounds. In other books CD is used as the abbreviation for *Church Dogmatics*. Therefore, a list of abbreviations used may be helpful.

The reader will understand that these "technical" details do not diminish my appreciation for this new edition. It will be a welcome addition to any Bible study library. It is a very useful tool for societies at all levels. The points for discussion provide much food for thought and will stimulate the further study of God's revelation. Therefore, recommended! 



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

I would like to respond to the editorial in the October 9 issue entitled, "On Small and New Churches," by Prof. J. De Jong.

In his article, Prof. De Jong raises a number of issues and questions that have obvious reference to the congregation here in Laurel, MD, U.S.A. Having been in the federation now for over five years as a needy church, having seen relatively little numerical growth, and having barely enough manpower to fill the minimum requirement for the offices, we have grown increasingly aware of the problems raised by Dr. De Jong. These matters have the active attention of the consistory and the congregation, in consultation with others. And we appreciate the catalytic function of Prof. De Jong's article in this process.

There are, however, two matters which require some comment. First, in commenting on the churches like ours which have come from other federations or denominations, Prof. De Jong says: "One can perhaps point such a group to a faithful church that has the Presbyterian system of church government. But if the group strongly desires the Reformed order above the Presbyterian one, what grounds would there be for denying this request?"

Prof. De Jong gives the impression that there are faithful Presbyterian churches to which groups may be directed. The Synodical decision of 1977 declaring the OPC a true church notwithstanding, I would like to challenge the practical implications of Prof. De Jong's assertion. When we seceded from the OPC in 1983, our preference was indeed to find another Presbyterian church which we could in good conscience join; but we found none. Our view of how the Lord's Table should be protected was virtually identical to the manner practiced in the Canadian Reformed Churches, but the OPC made it clear that there was no room among them for the consistent practice of this position, and we could find no other Presbyterian church which held our views. Thus, our seeking affiliation with the Canadian Reformed Churches was not merely a preferential choice, as one chooses a grocery store, but a principal choice based on the Bible.

In addition to the question of whether or not there is a faithful Presbyterian body to which people may be directed, there is also the issue of the differing church governments. Again, the question is posed in terms of mere preference. Without indulging in a lengthy polemic regarding church government, suffice it to say, the principal and practical differences between Presbyterian and Reformed church government are more profound than is often acknowledged. To cite but one example: the issue of confessional membership. You will find that this is one of the important issues integrally related to the question of the proper administration of the Lord's Supper. I've enclosed a separate article on this matter for possible inclusion in the *Clarion*.

If seeking affiliation in the Canadian Reformed Churches is simply a matter of preference, then a whole different light is cast upon the history of the churches at Laurel, Blue Bell, and Denver. Have we struggled and fought for Biblical principles for nothing? You may imagine how such sentiments make those of us feel who have sacrificed a great deal in order to remain faithful to the Lord.

The second matter deserving comment is the one regarding how our federation of churches should deal with "smaller and distant groups seeking affiliation with our federation." If we take the position that these groups could be referred to a faithful Presbyterian denomination, then the tenor of Prof. De Jong's comments make sense. For then, essentially, we are in the position of seeking to accommodate people's preferences. And his comments about burdens on the churches are apropos.

However, if these groups are seeking affiliation with our federation out of a desire to be obedient to the call of Christ in His Word, then it should not simply be a matter of concession on our part. For in such a case, we have a calling to respond positively and aggressively, realizing that we are, as Prof. K. Schilder put it, cooperating with the church-gathering work of our Saviour (vid. "Theses Concerning the Church," *De Kerk*, Vol. II, pp. 245-250.)

How this should best be done in given cases may need further discussion. Prof. De Jong's footnote suggesting

a mission model for small groups has merit. Also, Professor Van Dam makes a similar suggestion in his article, "Notes on the OPC" (*Clarion*, Vol. 41, No. 21, p. 450) when he writes, "But why is it that there is no organized effort among churches to send, for example, a home missionary to an urban center in North America, or, to use an existing small isolated core of believers in an urban area as a base from which a home missionary can spread the glad tidings?" From a personal perspective, after five years as a "regular" congregation in the federation, it appears that being viewed and treated more like a mission congregation would be more helpful and realistic.

Furthermore, Prof. De Jong's suggestion that members of these small groups that do not grow move to where there is a larger church raises some serious questions. We can readily understand such a recommendation when a group has moved from a large congregation in Canada to an outlying area with the hope of forming their own congregation. Then, returning at some later point when it is evident that a church cannot be planted there, makes sense. However, we must respect what the Lord has done in bringing into existence the congregation in Laurel, Blue Bell, and Denver. To suggest, that, due to small size, the families of these congregations should all move to Grand Rapids or Lynden is only reasonable if your assumption is that they chose the Reformed way as a preference and so must live out the consequences. But if the Lord brought these congregations into existence in their respective locations, then it would seem that these people should remain in the place and calling where the Lord called them (cf. 1 Cor. 7;17-24). The difficulties of size then need to be addressed, but in a context of seeking to positively advance the cause of Christ in the U.S.A.

In the larger perspective, we must consider what the official church visitors once recommended to us, and that was to work towards an American classis and federation. But in the end, we are brought back to the original issue of preference. For *if* there are faithful Presbyterian churches already in existence in the U.S.A., then to establish an American Reformed Federation

would seem to implicitly foster a form of pluriformity which we as churches repudiate. But if we cannot in good conscience commend such groups of believers to a faithful Presbyterian church, then we have a duty to build on our existing presence in the U.S.A. This dilemma must be resolved, not only for ourselves but for the sake of these groups. And if we conclude that there is a faithful Presbyterian church in the U.S.A., then not only groups such as ours must be referred to it, but the churches at Grand Rapids and Lynden must also be told to seek the unity of the faith in the country where the Lord called them. Preferences may not stand in the way of principles!

On behalf of Christ's Church gathering work,

Rev. B.R. Hofford

Response

In stating that a church may strongly desire to adopt the Reformed church order, I did not mean to make this a matter of "mere preference" as Rev. Hofford suggests. Naturally, I maintain that the Reformed order is superior to the Presbyterian; indeed, I concur that there are hierarchical elements in the Presbyterian order. However, I also share the opinion that churches with the Presbyterian order cannot be discounted for that reason. I simply follow the line of our synods which have never seen this as an impediment for recognizing the OPC as a faithful church.

The Rev. Hofford's view that there is absolutely no room in the OPC for the Lord's Supper practice as maintained by the Canadian Reformed Churches is one which I find curious, considering the want of evidence supplied. From our side the matter is still under discussion, and does not concern the question whether the table must be guarded, but more exactly *how* it ought to be guarded. I would think that some progress could be made on this point, especially when one considers that the Westminster Confession clearly defends a guarded table, (cf. Art. 29/8; Art. 30/4).

I do not want to take anything away from the struggles that have taken place in Blue Bell, Laurel, and Denver. At the same time, these churches must move forward with the federation in the framework of what our synods have decided with respect to the OPC. It would be unwise for these churches to take a position *vis a vis* the OPC which would jeopardize our discussions with this church.

With respect to the second point raised, it seems to me to be highly forced to use Paul's words in 1 Cor. 7:17-24 ("... in whatever state each was called, there let him remain with God") as an injunction requiring one to keep building the church at a place where it was first established. The apostle's directive concerning "calling" cannot be read in a geographical way. Certainly Reformed church polity has never done this, and has always seen it as distinctly possible that just as a church is newly instituted in one place, it may also be naturally disbanded in another, simply by the force of socio-economic circumstances.

In his concluding remarks, the Rev. Hofford again raises the issue of the faithfulness of the OPC. He points to some concepts that may well live among these churches, but do not form an integral part of their confessions. So far our synods have never seen these matters as impediments to recognizing the faithfulness of the OPC. Therefore, without themselves adopting a concept of the pluriformity of the church Laurel and other churches having dissented from OPC and having joined our federation should be able to develop more nuance in their view both of what they did in terms of their own recent history, and of the church they left behind. In other words, they should be able to accept that the matters we see as "impediments" may have formed an obstacle for them to continue their relationship with the OPC, but presently do not form such an obstacle for us. This approach can make the best contribution to all future discussions.

J. De Jong

Dear Editor:

In the October 9, 1992 issue, Dr. J. De Jong wrote an article entitled "On Small and New Churches."

I question the suggestion that a small church (less than 60 - 80 members) has little right to exist.

It was the church at Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13), the church which had but little power (v. 8), about whom the Lord Jesus Christ had nothing ill to say. Christ could only commend this small, weak church. It was nothing in the eyes of men, but it counted for something in the eyes of Christ. He commended it for having kept His word and not denying His name (vv. 8,10).

Is it not faithfulness to the Word and to Christ which makes a local church a realistic and viable enterprise?

Jesus Christ promised the church at Philadelphia that He would keep them



CHANGE OF ADDRESS as of
March 1, 1993

Rev. D. Moes

5600 MacDonald Road
RR 5 - S2 - C57
Vernon, BC V1T 6L8
Phone (604) 545-1535

from the hour of trial (v. 10). Interestingly, this church was one of the last churches, if not the last church, to disappear from Asia Minor. In the 14th century, it continued to shine in the darkness of Turkish Islam.

It was only the affluent church of Laodicea about whom Christ had nothing good to say (Rev. 3:14-22).

Perhaps our small isolated churches will shine as lights of the gospel of Christ in their communities longer than our large churches which are now comfortably in the mainstream of Canadian Reformed life.

G. Ph. van Popta

Response

Anyone who reads my article will plainly see that I did not make "the suggestion that a small church has little right to exist." My only point was that we should maintain the existence of the small church *in accordance with the principles of our Reformed church order*. Have we not agreed to maintain the church order? Whence then the difficulty with following its provisions?

I also question the comment that is made here about our large churches who are said to live "comfortably in the mainstream of Canadian Reformed life." Do they? I know large churches where large offerings are made for our causes. Are they comfortable just because they are large?

I think most people will agree that size is not the decisive factor that determines the endurance of our light. Whether we are part of a large or small congregation, faith is what the Lord asks for. And that will also manifest itself in a willingness to do all things "decently and in good order," 1 Cor. 14, 40. That was all I was trying to say.

J. De Jong **C**

By Aunt Betty



Hello Busy Beavers,

One Busy Beaver wrote about his class trip. I'm going to let him tell you the story.

"We went to the Grimsby Water Treatment Plant. We liked it that it was close to Lake Ontario and that the dirty water splashed into our face. We liked the deep hole that showed the dirty water from the lake. We also liked the pipe that we could look through to see how clean the dirty water had become. I also liked the ice hanging from the trees by the water. We also liked the water filter, because it was just like a mirror. When we came home we checked the tap to see whether the water was still dirty. It was clean!"

by Busy Beaver *Harold Sikkema*

Busy Beaver *Trina Jelsma* also went on a school trip. Here is her story.

"On Thursday . . . the Junior Grades (Gr. 4, 5 and 6) of John Calvin Christian School went to the Kitchener Stockyard and Flea Market. Each of us took money. There was a market inside and outside that sold lots of things like pictures, candies, books, pies, clothes, and lots more. We got to buy things that we wanted. I only bought a maple sugar candy. We also went to a place where upstairs a man with a missing hand showed and told us about the Mennonites. Downstairs we watched a movie about the Mennonites. There were also Mennonites riding around the city in horses and carriages. After that we all bought an ice cream cone from the ice cream caboose. It wasn't the best trip ever, but it was still really fun."



Quiz Time!

ALIKE

The following people shared something alike. Match the persons with the thing they had alike.

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Nebuchadnezzar and Aaron
Daniel 3:1; Exodus 32:4 | a. witnessed to kings |
| 2. Jesus and Jonah
Matthew 8:26; Jonah 1:15 | b. longed for by father |
| 3. Miriam and Naaman
Numbers 12:10;
2 Kings 5:27 | c. received a slap |
| 4. Daniel and Joseph
Daniel 2:25 ff.;
Genesis 41:25 ff. | d. built golden images |
| 5. Joseph and Zechariah
Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:13 | e. had leprosy |
| 6. John the Baptist and Paul
Mark 6:18; Acts 25:26 | f. gave death kiss |
| 7. Jesus and Joseph
Matthew 27:9;
Genesis 37:28 | g. stopped a storm |
| 8. Naboth and Jesus
1 Kings 21:9-10; Mark 14:56 | h. angels told of birth of
a son |
| 9. Judas and Joab
Mark 14:44-45;
2 Samuel 20:9-10 | i. interpreted dreams |
| 10. Jesus and Micaiah
Matthew 26:67;
1 Kings 22:24 | j. accused by false
witnesses |
| 11. Joseph and prodigal son
Genesis 44:27-28;
Luke 15:20 | k. sold for silver |

TRACING MAZE PUZZLE

by Busy Beaver *Miranda Hulst*

*G	O	I	S	G
S	D	E	T	R
L	O	V	A	E

Remember the directions?
Start at the * letter. Go up, down, right, left.
Never diagonally. Find the sentence.

SPRING JOURNAL

I was happy to see the sun *still* shining at five o'clock yesterday afternoon! Sure sign of spring coming! And I'm watching closely to see our tulips come up!

There are *lots* of other signs of spring, too, right?

Watch for them!

Keep your *eyes and your ears* open!

You could make a little *journal* of the signs of spring. In the journal you could write *what* you see (or hear), *where* you see it, and *when* you saw it. Get a *reward* for sending it to



Spring Journal
c/o Aunt Betty
Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R2J 3X5

MIXED PAGES

by Busy Beaver *Jessica DeHaas*

Put the sheets in the right order.

A

- Go to strawberry farm
- Buy film for trip to zoo
- Dinner with Pam 7 p.m.

B

- Eye exam at Dr. Mow's 9 a.m.
- Mail letter to Grandma
- Get tickets for game

C

- Play tennis with Scott 10 a.m.
- Send zoo film to be developed
- Make strawberry jam

D

- Get glasses with new prescription 9:30 a.m.
- 1 p.m. go to zoo
- Bill's party 8 p.m.

E

- Call Scott to play tennis later this week
- Wrap Bill's gift
- Go to game 8 p.m.

F

- Write to Grandma
- Buy tennis balls
- Buy present for Bill

Correct order _____

(See answers)

BIRTHDAY WISHES

"Happy Birthday" and "Many Happy Returns of the Day" to all the Busy Beavers who were born in March. We send you our best wishes for the Lord's blessing in the year ahead and for one super day celebrating with your family and your friends.

MARCH

Brian Dijkstra	2
Jessica Bos	3
Jennifer Hoogerdijk	4
Andrew Bos	8
Earl Van Assen	8
Melanie Muis	10
Julie Bratcher	11
Sherri Malda	12
Monica Dalhuisen	14
Linda Schouten	20
Rebecca Stel	21
Jeffrey Vandergaag	22
Suzanne Schouten	26
Elisa Vandergaag	27
Erika Hopman	30



FROM THE MAILBOX

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Harold Sikkema*. Did you get to help your Dad make your playhouse? Did you play in it this winter? Write again soon, Harold.

Welcome to the club, *Pamela Hulst*. We are happy to have you join us. Do you have plans for the March break, Pamela? Bye for now.

Hello, *Lisa Burger*. It's good to hear from you again. Thank you for sharing with the other Busy Beavers. Have you tried their recipes too, Lisa?

Congratulations on your new baby brother *Miranda Hulst*. How did you feel while you were holding him in church? Do you get to help look after him? I think you have pleasant memories of last summer's camping, *Miranda*!

Sounds to me as if you had lots of fun dressing up at school, *Katherine Wiersema*. And how did you enjoy your concert you were writing about? Thank you for your letter, *Katherine*. I hope you'll write again soon.

Answers:

Mixed pages: F B E A D C is the correct order.
10. c 11. b
Allie: 1. d 2. g 3. e 4. i 5. h 6. a 7. k 8. j 9. f

How did you like our puzzles? Did you get them right? Great! Keep up the good work! Hope to "see" you all next time!

Love to you all,
Aunt Betty

