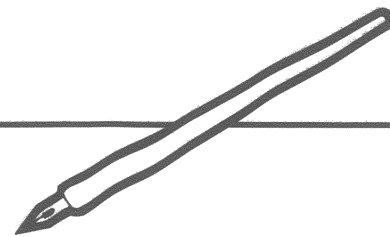




Clarion
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Volume 43, No. 17

August 26, 1994



Speaking about the need of a personal relationship with Christ

God's Word points to it

Many Christians speak and write about the need of a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is good to think about this expression in the light of Scripture and confession.

In order to avoid misunderstanding, let me begin with saying that I do not deny at all the necessity of a believer's personal relationship with the Lord. If a person would believe all the truth of God's Word only as a theory, a doctrine, but would not have a relationship with the God of this truth and would not live holy for Him in thankful love according to this truth, such a faith would be a dead faith. This is why there is spoken about dead orthodoxy. Such a non-involved faith without works, without life, is like a body without a soul, as James points out in his epistle. It is clear, therefore, that a living relation with God is necessary.

This is evident from God's Word. A few examples will make this clear. God's Word tells us that Enoch walked with God (Gen. 5:22,24, cf. Hebr. 11:5) and that Noah did the same (Gen. 6:9). Walking with God implies a close relationship of faith with God. Hebr. 11:5 says that Enoch walked with God through faith. And by faith Noah prepared an ark (Hebr. 11:7). When we read the Psalms of David it is simply unimaginable that David could speak to the LORD in prayer and thanksgiving without having a personal relationship with His God. This is not different in the New Testament. The manner in which the apostles write and speak about God the Father as also their Father in heaven, and about Christ as their Lord and Saviour, and about the Holy Spirit, is impossible without a personal relationship with their triune God.

The origin and cause of the use

However, the stress on the necessity of a personal relationship with Christ is rather new among us. A few years ago the term was hardly heard or read in our Reformed churches. It was more known in evangelical circles. Therefore, the question can be raised why this expression was taken over by us and is given an increasingly important place in our Reformed church language? It seems to me that the question where the expression comes from is easy to answer. It probably comes from evangelical literature in the first place.

More important is the question what the cause might be that it has gained an increasingly significant place in our church language. This cause seems to me the fact that among us a concern grew about the discrepancy between doctrine and life. It was felt that there was among us an emphasis on maintaining the Reformed doctrine as we confess it while

there was an unholy life style at the same time. The remedy was seen in emphasizing the necessity of a personal relationship with the Lord.

The covenant context of this relationship

In what follows I would like to make a few remarks with regard to this expression about the need of a personal relationship with the Lord and its increasing use among us. Could a word of caution be in place?

First of all, this speaking about a personal relationship with Christ can easily show an unbiblical individualism. It can stress the human person by him or herself and the Lord, apart from the covenant relationship between God and His people. In other words, the framework for this expression can easily be that of a relation between Jesus and myself or Jesus and my soul.

However, what does God's Word teach us? When we take as example the Psalms, it strikes us that the poet often speaks very much about himself in his personal relationship with the LORD. He expresses his trust in the LORD. He asks for the LORD's help and deliverance. "I cry to the LORD." "Give ear to my words." But this "I" and "me" is at the same time strongly linked to the "we" and the "us," that is, to God's people, to Israel.

Again, a few examples will show this. In Psalm 3 we hear David say to His God, "I cry to the LORD" and "Deliver me, O my God." But then David sings in v. 8, "Deliverance belongs to the LORD; Thy blessing be upon Thy people." In Psalm 16 David speaks again very much about his relationship to the LORD. But in v. 3 he mentions "the saints in the land" in whom is "all his delight." "The saints" is here a term with which David points to God's people. He does not want to go to a foreign country and there live in the midst of those who serve "others gods." He wants to stay among God's people, the saints and with them serve the LORD.

Another example is Psalm 22. It begins with the well-known words, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" This very personal "I" and "me" comes back time and again. However, in vv. 3-4 David speaks of Israel, God's people. "Yet Thou art holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. In Thee our fathers trusted; they trusted and Thou didst deliver them." And in v. 25 David says, "From Thee comes my praise in the great congregation" and this deliverance will also be proclaimed "to a people yet unborn" (v. 31).

We learn from these examples that David saw his personal relationship with the LORD in the context of God's covenant with His people Israel. It is within this context of

God's covenant relationship with His people that David saw his relationship with his God. The God who made a covenant with Abraham and his seed, is also David's God. David belongs to Israel. In other words, the very personal relationship, is, at the same time, a relationship within the covenant of God with His people to whom He spoke, "I am the LORD your God." Our conclusion is that in the thinking of God's Word our personal relationship with the LORD is always a covenant relationship. This does not just mean covenant with us as individual persons but covenant with His people of which we are members and to which we belong.

In Christ God has made His covenant of grace with His people. In the Old Testament, after Abraham, this people was Israel. In the New Testament, this people is gathered out of all the nations. Instead of people or Israel, we can also use the term "church." In the Heidelberg Catechism we confess that children of believers must be baptized because with their parents they "belong to God's covenant and congregation." Baptism does not bring them in the covenant. It signifies and seals that they are in it and that the promises of it are truly for them.

The apostle Paul speaks in this way in Rom. 11. He compares God's covenant people Israel with an olive tree from which natural branches were cut off but in which others, branches of a wild olive, were ingrafted. Paul speaks in the same way when he calls also the believers from the Gentiles children of Abraham. Christ Jesus gathers His church from the beginning of history to be end. It is the one church, the one people of God's covenant.

It is in this respect beautiful to see how David speaks in Psalm 22 to which we referred above. After having cried out his need to God, David addresses the LORD as the holy God of Israel, the people of the covenant in whom the fathers in the past trusted and were saved (vv. 3-4). David trusts in God as his Helper in the present on the basis of God's faithful covenant help in the past. He also refers to the future generations who must hear of God's help in the past in order that they too put their trust in the God of the covenant.

A false dilemma

Beside the danger of individualism, there is another danger in the emphatic use of this expression about the personal relationship with Christ. It is the danger of creating a false dilemma. Recently I had a conversation about our Christian faith with some people. The remark was made that Christianity is not doctrine but a relationship with Jesus. Here we have one of the many false dilemmas. Doctrine is placed over against relationship. Doctrine receives a negative stamp. The Christian faith is not doctrine. It is a relationship. This false dilemma is similar to the other one: doctrine divides Christians, but the Spirit unites them.

Why is this a false dilemma or contrast? The Word of God teaches us clearly that doctrine is important. Doctrine is that what the Word of God reveals and teaches us. Paul, for instance, praises the church at Corinth that it has maintained "the traditions," that is, the teachings, the doctrine as he gave them to them. And the apostle urges the Thessalonian congregation "to hold to the traditions" (2 Thess. 2:15) which they were taught by Paul, and to keep away from any brother who does not hold to those traditions (3:6). The word "tradition" must be understood here as the teaching or doctrine as Paul taught and passed on to them. In his letters to Timothy and Titus Paul speaks about "the sound doctrine" as basis for a God-fearing holy

life worthy of the gospel, see for instance Titus 2. Paul constantly, in strong words, warns against falsifying the gospel, which means the doctrine about Christ Jesus and His person and work.

In faithfulness to this constant admonition of the Holy Spirit through the apostles to hold on to the gospel and to the confession of the truth, the churches have formulated the doctrine of the Scriptures in their creeds and confessions. It is evident, therefore, that the doctrine of the Scriptures as the churches confess it is a great gift of God and that the church has the calling to preserve this teaching faithfully as the sound doctrine for all times and places (cf. for instance 2 Tim. 2:2). It is also clear that it is in conflict with Scripture to say that the Christian faith is a relationship and not doctrine. The Christian faith is both. We are not to add or to take away from the Word of God.

The stress on the necessity of a relationship with Christ can bring along the danger that people diminish the importance of the doctrine of the Scriptures as the church confesses it and create a false dilemma. This one-side stress can have as result that we start thinking that if we have this personal relationship with the Lord, the rest does not matter (too much). And we are in danger to live by what we think is right and do no longer hold on carefully and precisely to what God's Word teaches us. But we must not forget that both a living relationship with the Lord as well as the biblical doctrine about God and about this relationship and what it means is a precious gift of God through the Holy Spirit of Christ.

"Faith" is a better term

Further, let us not forget either that the term "relationship with the Lord" as such does not occur in the Scriptures or in our confession. In fact, we have already a word in the Bible and in our confessional standards that expresses the matter of this relationship so very well, while it includes also the doctrine. It is the word "faith." A true faith always implies and includes a living relationship with the God in Whom we believe. We cannot have faith in the triune God without this living relationship with Him. When our catechism explains what it means to believe in God the Father, it says that this means that God, for Christ's sake, is my Father in whom I trust. We cannot really trust in God as our Father unless we have a personal relationship of faith with Him. In the biblical and confessional sense of the word, we cannot truly know and trust God unless there is the relationship of faith with Him.

This relationship with God the Father is real and living through Christ, the doctrine of the Bible teaches us. And we confess this doctrine of the Scriptures about Christ Jesus, when we call Him "Jesus" Who "saves us from all our sins." This "us" includes the "me." Our faith, the doctrine of God's Word as we confess this teaches that I, with all believers, must have "all that is necessary for (my) salvation in Him. This same doctrine of God's Word, as confessed in Heidelberg Catechism, L.D. 13, says that Jesus Christ is "our Lord." When one is taught to believe in Christ Jesus, God's eternal Son, as his Lord, this faith, this doctrine, is unthinkable again without the personal relationship between Lord and servant. And when we believe with a true faith in God the Holy Spirit, we believe that He is the third person in God, but we believe at the same time that He is given "also to me." Once again, this faith implies a living relationship or fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, faith without this relationship with our triune God is not a true faith.

But it has also been clear that this personal relationship with Father, Son, and Spirit, is fully a matter of doctrine. It is a relationship that binds itself fully to what this triune God has revealed in His Word about Himself and His relationship to His creation and, in particular, to His covenant people and its members. True, biblical faith is a relationship according to the sound doctrine in which the believer binds himself to this doctrine. We confess that "true faith is a sure knowledge whereby I accept as true all that God has revealed to us in His Word. True faith accepts and abides by the true biblical doctrine, and trusts all what God in this doctrine promises. True faith trusts in God's Word, the gospel of Christ. True faith trusts in the promising God.

Conclusion

We conclude that the biblical and confessional term "faith" includes both the personal covenantal relationship of God's child with his triune God and the doctrine which this God has revealed about Himself in Christ to His people. With this biblical and confessional word "faith" we are not in danger of becoming one-sided and stress one aspect at the cost of the other. With the word "faith," when used in the biblical and confessional sense, we shall keep the right track of that faith, that relationship, that is according to God's Word and will.

Do you, reader, believe in the triune God of the Scriptures, and confessed accordingly in the churches' confession, as your God? C

The communion protected₃

By C. Trimp

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Our responsibility for the community

We have discussed the catholicity of the church. We have seen the church in its totality. It has become clear to us that it is world-wide and that it spans the ages. At the same time, it is not far away from us. On the contrary, it is present at this very day in the large or small local congregation: the local catholic church. The pledge of the Spirit is the guarantee of the fullness of the church. We look forward to this in great anticipation.

Next, we want to pay attention to the contents of B.C. article 28. It deals with our personal responsibility toward the one, catholic church of Christ. That responsibility toward the church coincides with our responsibility for ourselves in the presence of God: it concerns our salvation which Christ wants to grant us precisely in his congregation. The calling comes to us to

- keep the unity of the church;
- subject ourselves to its teaching and discipline;
- bend the neck under the yoke of Christ;
- serve the building up of the brothers, according to the talents that have been given to us as members of one body.

Thus, also here union and communion – with Christ and with each other is at stake.¹ This union and communion are placed over against (1) staying apart or separating from the "holy assembly" of article 27 in order to "be by himself"; and (2) the refusal to join the church by letting oneself be hindered by those who "do not belong to the church." Over against this refusal this article places "the duty of all believers, according to the Word of God, to separate from those who do not belong to the church." This separation serves the maintenance of the unity and the functioning of the community of the church of Christ. Apparently, there are two threats: (1) individualism; and (2) being bound to people who are actually foreign to the church. Both weaknesses demonstrate how much the church is being assailed in this world. After all, no

church member is immune to these weaknesses. We want to have a close look at both weaknesses.

The call to union

The warning against staying apart and against snobbish complacency ("content to be by himself") is directed against religious individualism, as it especially came to the fore in spiritualist (Anabaptist) circles. According to the general view there, it is probably good for an ordinary person to join a congregation. Enlightened spirits, however, have a source of "spiritual" life in themselves.

When we read this first sentence of article 28 against the backdrop of Calvin's *Institutes* (IV.i.5-6; IV.iii.1-2), we discover an interesting example of such religious complacency. Calvin turns against people who appeal to their ability to read the Bible individually, and who turn this into an argument to neglect the meetings of the congregation and to despise the service of the office bearers. Such behavior arouses Calvin's indignation. After all, we must remain in the school of the Holy Spirit all of our lives, and therefore we do not have the right to look down on being taught by

ordinary people. Going to church is also a matter of humility – before God and before the people. Calvin disqualifies a separatist attitude as pride, arrogance, and jealousy. He counters it with the care of God who, in His goodness, has given the preaching of the Word to bring us to the salvation of Christ and to keep us in it (with reference to Rom. 10:17; Eph. 4:11; 2 Cor. 4:6).

Also elsewhere, Calvin more than once deals with this arrogance of these “home readers.”² He even brings up this matter in his Catechism of 1545. In question and answer 304, 305, and 308, Calvin states:

But must we then not be industrious and employ all diligence in reading, listening, and meditating (God’s Word) in order to make progress in this? Most certainly; when every one trains himself at home by daily reading, and then also especially all together diligently attend the meetings where the doctrine of salvation is explained in the gathering of the believers.

Do you deny, therefore, that it is sufficient when every one reads by himself, unless all come together communally to listen to the same doctrine? It is necessary to come together when the freedom is there, that is to say, when the possibility is given.

But is it not sufficient for a Christian that he has been taught once by his teacher, or must he follow this path throughout his life? To begin means little if you do not persevere. For we must be students of Christ to the end, or rather, without end. After all, he has entrusted this office to the servants of the church that they might teach us in his place and his Name.

Due to the invention of the printing press, the age of the Reformation placed the Bible in many people’s hands. Doubtless, the Reformers have encouraged private Bible literature to support the knowledge of faith. But they resisted an attitude of snobbish individualism, by which a person alienates himself from the meetings of God’s congregation. A listening congregation emerges under the preaching. Private literature can easily become an instrument of individualism. In warning against this, Calvin expressed an insight which is not obsolete even today.³ When a person functions as a member of the church, this calls for unity with the congregation under the Word,

around the baptismal font, and at the Lord’s table. How else shall we maintain the unity, build up brothers, and bend under the yoke of Christ?

The call to separation


A second threat to the proper functioning as church under the Word lies in being bound to those who “do not belong to the Church.” Who are these people? Here we come across a distinction (“in the church, but not of the church”) which already occurs in Augustine (around AD 400).⁴ The background to this distinction lies in the conviction that the church on earth is a “mixed body” (*corpus permixtum*). This means: there are weeds among the wheat; or, with a different metaphor: there are wolves in the sheepfold of Christ.

In the age of the Reformation people were acutely aware of this difficult reality. Precisely against the perfectionist drive of the fanatic Anabaptists, the Reformers asked attention for this reality. There are people in the church who do not belong there at all. This matter has been brought up with regular reference to 1 John 2:19.⁵ One can think here of Luther. Already before 1517 he spoke about this harsh reality in his lectures on the Psalms (1513-16).⁶

Many years later, in his polemics with the “papists,” he used similar language.⁷

In connection with “those who do not belong to the Church” we can think of the hypocrites (see B.C. art. 29). The hypocrisy in the church was a great concern for the Reformers, and they have expressed this concern, on more than one occasion. Also in our confession, this concern comes through (see Lord’s Days 30 and 31). Yet, this category cannot be meant in B.C. article 28. One cannot separate from hypocrites as long as the hypocrisy has not been unmasked.

In sixteenth-century literature, “not belonging to the Church” is also applied to the “papists,” who have let go of the doctrine of the church, have disrupted the order of the church, and have distorted the worship service with their man-made ceremonies. Article 28 is typically a word which is spoken during a process of Reformation. Many true believers, particularly in France, did not yet dare to free themselves from the hierarchy of Rome. After all, such an act could have serious consequences for these people’s personal lives. Article 28 also conveys this atmosphere: physical punishment or the death penalty could be expected. Shortly after 1561, history



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

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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

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Publications Mail Registration No. 1025
ISSN 0383-0438

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would prove the truth of these words, also in the life of Guido de Brès himself.

This explains that many sought refuge in hiding places. In secrecy they worshiped God according to the Reformed doctrine, but before the public's eye they remained members of the Roman Catholic church. At that time this attitude was called (pseudo-) *Nicodemism* (according to John 3:1-2).⁸ Thus, the "duty of all believers" to "separate from those who do not belong to the Church" presupposes a situation in which people who are not really members of the church have acquired such a dominating position that by their influence the church of Christ has become a false church, while the holy church of God is transferring to a congregation where the Word of God has been restored in its dominion. That is the background of this passage: "to join this assembly wherever God has established it."

Whoever does not move then, is, in fact, moving nevertheless: from now on he will live in a house which has been deserted by the principal occupant, the Holy Spirit.⁹ According to article 29, no one has the right to separate from the true church. That is precisely the reason why everyone has the duty to break with a fellowship which is dominated by "strangers" (in the sense of John 10:5), and which prevents people from functioning as true believers in the church of Christ.

In this way, article 28 is a confession in which God's command is recognized as a beneficial commandment. This commandment is able to protect us against the religious individualist and to cure us from the understandable hesitations of the believer who is beset by temptations. Article 28 is a document of spiritual courage to be and to remain a member of the church! "Therefore do not throw away your confidence" – not in days of persecution either (Heb. 10:35a)!¹⁰

¹W. van 't Spijker has served us with a sharp analysis of these tasks pointed out by the confession. He points, for example, to the fact that "to bend the neck under the yoke of Christ" (cf. Matt. 11:29-30) is a summary statement which comprises the "teaching and discipline" of the church. He sees three elements in the reference to "the yoke of Christ": personal faith, joining together in the unity of the congregation, and living together in one church federation. See W. van 't Spijker, " . . . den hals buygende onder het jock jesu Christi . . . ': Oorsprong en zin van een uitdrukking in artikel 28 en 29 van de Nederlandse Geloofsbelijdenis," in J. Douma, et al., *Bezield verband*, Festschrift for J. Kamphuis (Kampen, 1984), pp. 206-19.

²Cf. Calvin's commentary on Eph. 4:12 and 2 Tim. 4:1. Further, B. Gassmann, *Op. cit.*, p. 129; E. Kinder, *Op. cit.*, pp. 222, 303; A. Ganoczy, "Das Amt des Lehrens in der Kirche nach Calvin," in R. Bäumer, ed., *Lehramt und Theologie im 16. Jahrhundert* (Münster, 1976), pp. 23-24; W. Krusche, *Das*

Wirken des Heiligen Geistes nach Calvin (Göttingen, 1957), p. 222, n. 515; p. 303.

³Cf., e.g., W. J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London/New York, 1982), pp. 74f.

⁴References in L. Doekes, "De reformatische onderscheiding van ware en valse kerk," in *Lucerna*, 5 (1964-65), 247-69, esp. 254f. Cf. also J. Faber, *Op. cit.*, pp. 108, 120; B. Gassmann, *Op. cit.*, pp. 117, 122, and the Second Helvetic Confession's speaking in article 17 (E. F. K. Müller, *Bekennenschriften der reformierten Kirche*, 199, 13ff.).

⁵Here we may also think of the Bible's speaking about "in the world" and "of" or "from the world" (John 15:19; 17:11-16).

⁶M. Luther, *Werke* (WA), 4, 129, 7ff.

⁷*Wider Hans Worst*, 1541 (M. Luther, *Werke* [WA], 51, 505, 521).

⁸W. de Greef gives clear information about Nicodemism in his *Johannes Calvin: Zijn werk en geschriften* (Kampen, 1989), pp. 126-31. He mentions that Calvin wrote a letter about this subject to Luther (dd. Jan 21, 1545), and that he has been engaged in polemics with the Dutchman, Dirk Coornhert.

⁹Cf. Calvin's speaking about "moving" in *Inst. IV.ii.3*.

¹⁰In the explanation of B.C. art. 28 we receive great support from A. D. R. Polman, *Onze Nederlandsche Geloofsbelijdenis* (Franeker: Wever, n.d.), III, 295-308; C. Vonk, *Op. cit.*, pp. 117-25; and from the reports at the synods of Heemse and Spakenburg-Noord. Cf. *Acta synod Heemse* (1984/85), I, 355-93, esp. pp. 360-71; and *Acta synod Spakenburg-Noord* (1987), pp. 561-630, esp. pp. 567ff., 593ff.

REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By R. Schouten

Dressed like women

I want to write about something controversial. I hope that if some young people disagree with me or want to comment on what I write, they will take the time to respond.

The topic is: earrings. In particular, the topic is earrings worn by young men. My idea is that this practice is inappropriate among Christian young

men. I know that there is no text which specifically forbids male earrings. However, I believe that the overall drift of Scripture indicates this practice to be inappropriate.

Unisex culture

From Scripture we know that in the beginning, God made man in His own

image. Male and female He made them. Man and woman were both made to reflect the glory and holiness of the Lord. Before God, they are equal in worth and dignity, both fully and marvelously human.

Male and female are equal and yet different. Their biology and psychology are different.¹ To each, God also gave a

unique role to fulfill within the development of creation. These roles are not interchangeable without violation of the creation order.

Because of these created differences between male and female, human societies have nearly always raised their boys and girls differently. From earliest childhood, children were encouraged to express their unique masculinity or femininity. Boys played boy games. Girls played girl games. Boys went fishing. Girls played house with dolls.

The obvious sex differences and role distinctions were also expressed in the mode of dress. There was a unique male way of dressing and a unique female style of adornment. These distinctions varied between different cultures, but always expressed the essential male/female duality of the human race. Such distinction of dress accepted and celebrated the differences between male and female.

Today, however, we live in an increasingly unisex culture. Under the influence of feminism, it is taken for granted by millions that sex role distinctions are completely artificial. They are not the product of creation, but of culture. Feminism argues that apart from strictly biological realities, like fathering and bearing children, the roles of men and women are completely interchangeable.

For a feminist, equality of male and female means sameness of male and female. Feminists hold that whatever is appropriate for a man is also appropriate for a woman. To say that certain kinds of work and certain roles within family, church, and state are particularly appropriate for either male or female is an opinion widely held to be discriminatory.

Today, then, in both government policy and social convention, there is a stress on the interchangeability of male and female roles. What we see in this development is truly a rebellion against the Creator who has given to His creation a certain order. Rebellion against the Creator brings with it rebellion against the created order and structure of life. Hence, in our irreligious age, we have seen an increase of public homosexuality and militant feminism. Both these movements represent a blatant defiance toward the way God has made the world.

We may add that because feminism is contrary to the created order, it is also doomed to fail. Believing himself exempt from the law of gravity, a

deluded man might hurl himself from a tall building. However, quite indifferent to his delusion, the law of gravity remains the same. The man will perish in his delusion. Similarly, a feminist culture can pretend that sex roles are completely interchangeable. Again, however, quite aloof to this folly, the conspicuous male/female biological and social distinctions remain. No opinion of a feminist can obliterate creation. Feminism will be dashed on the hard rocks of reality.

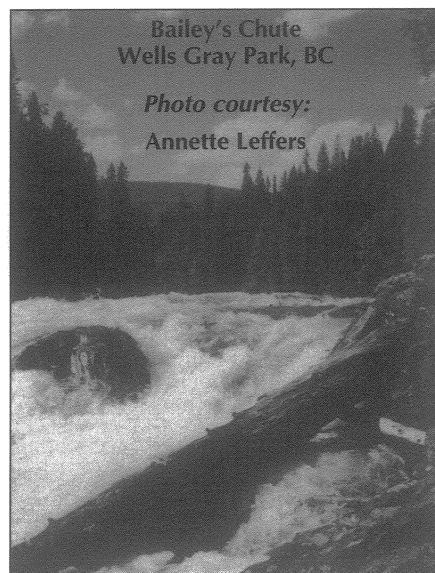
In the meantime, however, the unisex ideals of feminism (by the way, feminism is a philosophy widely espoused by men) still have their effects on our culture. These effects are massive, touching education, taxation systems, hiring policies of universities and, not least of all, the dress codes of millions.

Dress reflects identity

It is true that there are still wide differences in the way men and women dress and so present themselves to the world. Men shave their faces. Women in America shave their legs and underarms. Men avoid makeup, while women use mascara and lipstick and fingernail polish. Women sometimes wear dresses on formal occasions, while men wear suits and neckties. By and large, females let their hair grow longer than men.

Nonetheless, the dress code of male and female has to a large degree converged in the last decades. I live

OUR COVER



across the street from a junior high school and thus have the possibility to witness contemporary styles. What I see is that both young men and women wear jeans, t-shirts, sweatshirts and so forth. There is no recognizable male or female style. The blurring of styles is also noticed in the widespread adornment of male ears with earrings. The trends I describe are also quite visible in some Reformed churches.

I argue that this mixing of male and female styles is regrettable and indicative of world-conformity. Let me show why I believe this.

Scriptural direction

In Deut. 22, verse 5, we read these startling words: "A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord."

Underlying this commandment is the desire of the Lord that His people respect the given order of creation and the distinction of the sexes. They should not try to make the same what God has made dramatically different. However, the specific reference in this verse is probably to transvestite dress which was and is common among a certain class of homosexuals.² The word abomination is also used in Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 to describe the Lord's loathing of homosexual behaviour. Also in our time, the association between homosexuality and the wearing of earrings is well-known and should give pause to any man contemplating getting his ears pierced.

In 1 Cor. 11: 2-16, the apostle Paul deals with the matter of how women should present themselves in the gatherings of the believers. He is not interested in giving specific directives for a dress code. A dress code is not the point here. What Paul insists on in this section is that women should conform to the prevailing expression of femininity when they gather for worship. In Corinthian culture, a headcovering was a normal symbol of female adornment, modesty and of subjection to the male as head.³ Some female Corinthian believers apparently took the view that as liberated Christian women, they were not required to wear this headcovering during praying and prophesying.

Paul responds by teaching that redemption in Christ does not neutralize the creation order. Yes, of course, women are equal in worth and dignity.

True, they are joint heirs with the men of a common salvation. And yes, they have with the men a glorious place in the Spirit-filled, New Covenant worship and fellowship. However, even among the redeemed, women remain women and should manifest this also in their manner of dress. Paul is arguing that even in the worship of the NT Church, the men should appear as men and the women as women.

In verse four of 1 Cor. 11, Paul says that "any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonours his head." Why does Paul say this? The answer is simple: in the eastern culture of that time, to cover your head was a female way of dress and therefore shameful for a man. Paul assumes in this verse that a male instinctively draws back from adornment that is explicitly feminine.

In verses five and six, Paul continues by saying that "any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonours her head – it is the same as if her head were shaven. For if a woman will not veil (cover) herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her wear a veil."

Paul is being somewhat sarcastic here. His point is that if a woman wants to appear as a man, then she might as well go all the way and cut off all her hair (which is her feminine glory). Implied by Paul is the thought that a woman can't have it both ways. She can't be feminine in the care of her hair, but unfeminine in prayer and prophesying.

Nature teaches . . .

In verses 13-15 of 1 Cor. 11, we find further revelation which is very helpful for our topic. Paul asks the Corinthian readers to consult their own inward sense of what is appropriate. He writes: "Judge for yourselves; it is proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not "nature" teach you that for a man to wear long hair is degrading to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her pride? . . ."

Our concern here is this: how does "nature" teach that long hair is degrading for a man but is the pride of a woman?" How do we gain such insights from nature itself? To understand these verses, we need to see that Paul uses the word "nature" in a special sense. In this instance, the word "nature" refers to natural feelings and in-

born attitudes of men and women. Paul uses this word to describe "the natural and instinctive sense of right and wrong that God has planted in us, especially with respect to sexuality."⁴ This sense of what is appropriate or fitting has been implanted in human beings from creation. The point is that when all is well, a male instinctively shrinks away from doing anything that his culture labels as feminine. For example, in Paul's days and throughout most human history, it has been considered a mark of effeminacy for men to wear long hair, while for a woman, longer hair has been considered a beautiful covering.

In this usage, it is obvious that what "nature" teaches changes from one generation to another and from one culture to another. The "form which these feelings assume is necessarily determined in great measure by education and habit."⁵ Nonetheless, in every generation, "nature" teaches that it is shameful for a man to dress as a woman and a woman as a man. The God-created difference between male and female finds a natural expression in different modes of dress and adornment.

Thus, in 1 Cor. 11, Paul is resisting a breakdown of the differences between the sexes in the gatherings of the believers.⁶ He teaches that the use of spiritual gifts in worship does not nullify being a man or a woman nor the requirement to dress like a man or a woman.⁷ It is true that in Christ there is neither male nor female (Gal. 3:28). Nonetheless, redemption does not obscure but rather renews the created role distinction between men and women.

Paul is not teaching that in all generations to come, all Christian women must wear a headcovering. In Corinth, the lack of a headcovering sent a clear cultural message of rebellion against female decorum and male headship. In our culture, the lack of a headcovering sends no such message. The principle, however, remains for all ages: women should dress in a way that does not challenge male headship and which does not make them look like the opposite sex.

Conclusion

In my view, "nature" in 1994 teaches that it is shameful for a man to wear earrings. The vast majority of men in America avoid earrings as something feminine. Most male and female church members are offended by male earrings. The trend for men to wear

them arises from a decadent subculture influenced by unisexism, transvestism and feminism. With or without their awareness, these young men are sending a message to others of defiance against the created order. Their earrings form a statement. Thus, they bring shame upon their heads. I am not saying that every young man who wears an earring is consciously in revolt against God. I am saying that his behaviour reflects more the spirit of this world than the Spirit of Scripture. The word of God says: Let men glory in their manhood and women in their femininity. **C**

¹For a good summary of these differences, see Gregg Johnson, "The Biological Basis for Gender-Specific Behavior" in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1991), pp. 280-293.

²Peter C. Craigie, "The Book of Deuteronomy," *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, ed. R.K. Harrison (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), pp. 287-288.

³J. vanBruggen states that in the time of the New Testament, the head covering was no longer a universal custom in Corinth. However, not wearing one was still making a statement. In Paul's time, there was still a connection between wearing a covering in public and submission to male headship. See *Emancipatie en Bijbel*, (Groningen: Utgeverij Ton Bolland/De Vuurbaak, 1984), p. 45. However, many other commentators argue that "it can be assumed that respectable Greek women wore a head covering in public." So Conzelmann as quoted by Leon Morris, "1 Corinthians," *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, ed. Leon Morris (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1985), p. 148.

⁴Thomas R. Schreiner, "Head Coverings, Prophecies and the Trinity," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, p. 137.

⁵Charles Hodge, "1 & 2 Corinthians," *The Geneva Series of Commentaries* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, first published 1857, reprinted by Banner of Truth 1988), p. 213.

⁶See Gordon Fee, "The First Epistle to the Corinthians," *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. F.F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), pp. 508, 510, 512, 527, 530.

⁷Compare VanBruggen, p. 51.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

In his article, "Speaking out of two sides of our mouth" published in the July 1, 1994 issue of *Clarion* Rev. E. Kampen makes a good point. He is correct when saying that the Canadian Reformed Churches have recognized the OPC as a true church and also correct in saying that when there is a true church somewhere and some refuse to join it (namely, the American Reformed Church at Denver), this amounts to practising *church pluriformity*. Having admitted the American Reformed Church at Denver into the federation in these circumstances, he fears that this practice will lead to where "the door to federation shopping and hopping" is opened.

The problem is that Rev. Kampen forgets that the American Reformed Church at Denver does not want to join the OPC because the kind of "federation

shopping and hopping" which he does not want and Article 28 of the *Belgic Confession* does not permit is already being practised in the OPC. That the OPC practices "federation shopping and hopping" is shown by the points of concern expressed in the past and remain in the present, including; "confessional membership," "fencing of the Lord's Supper," and the OPC "relation to the Christian Reformed Churches."

If anyone has spoken out of two sides of the mouth it is the general synods which on the one hand said that the OPC is a true church and on the other hand have said that we do not practice this recognition as sister churches. This inconsistency is related to how the churches do not want to deny that the OPC is a true church and at the same time want to be steadfast in rejecting unscriptural church pluriformity. The admission of the American

Reformed Church at Denver into the federation could and should show the OPC and anyone who is well informed that the Canadian Reformed Churches received this congregation being convinced that practising church pluriformity is of such great concern that it rightly refuses to be joined to this practice as found in the OPC.

What will help the most in the present situation is that we as Canadian Reformed Churches give the clear message to the OPC that we must reject church pluriformity. While doing so, we can commend the OPC in many other things. Time should be given to teach and convince the OPC of scriptural ecclesiology. Time will tell whether the OPC will harden in its practice of church pluriformity or whether it will turn away from it.

Rev. P.K.A. de Boer, Carman 

Two Nathans

By J. Faber

Graduation Timothy School,
Hamilton, June 28, 1994

**Esteemed graduates and parents,
Board and Staff members,
honourable guests.**

Today we may joyfully celebrate the graduation of Class 1994 and I have the great privilege of being your graduation speaker.

Let me first of all congratulate the boys and the girls of Grade 8. I do so from the bottom of my heart. I know that I speak on behalf of all parents, grand-

parents, brothers, sisters and other relatives, yea on behalf of all those who are present here at this happy occasion. And don't you worry: my words are not the last congratulations: later this night your mother will kiss you and your father will hug you, for we are so thankful for you and if we may, we are a little bit proud of you. Well done, boys and girls, or rather ladies and gentlemen of Class 1994!

I thank the honour of being graduation speaker to one of the graduates, our eldest grandson. His name is Nathan and this name is dear to me and so is

he. Since I do not want to embarrass him, I will not speak about him but about two other Nathans.

The one is Nathan the prophet, the other is Nathan the wise. What is the similarity and the dissimilarity between these two Nathans? Well, let me first tell you something about both Nathans.

All of you know the first one. He is Nathan the prophet. We read about him in the Word of God, especially in the second book of Samuel. He was the prophet who in the name of Jahweh told king David that not he but his son would build the temple of the Lord.

Through Nathan God spoke this glorious promise to David: "Your house and your kingdom, shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established for ever" (2 Sam.7:16).

It is the foundational promise concerning David's son. In the light of the fulfillment we do not only think of Solomon, but especially of the great Son of David, David's Son and David's Lord, Jesus Christ. God has given to our Lord Jesus Christ the throne of His father David and of His kingdom there shall be no end. And we may be His subjects. The great Son of David builds God's temple and we may be living stones, built on the cornerstone Christ, and at the same time we may be His royal priesthood, ready to serve Him all the days of our life.

I cannot now mention everything Holy Scripture tells us in connection with Nathan the prophet. But I certainly must remind you of 2 Sam. 12, when the LORD again sent Nathan to David. The king had taken Bathseba and had murdered Uriah. Everyone of you knows the story of Nathan's coming to David, and everyone knows the parable Nathan then told.

Nathan the prophet became Nathan the storyteller. Listen, there were two men in a certain city; the one rich and the other poor. The poor had nothing but one little ewe lamb. And the rich man took the poor man's little lamb. David, you did this; you are this man and you deserve to die. Then David acknowledged his sin and he wrote Psalm 51: A psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathseba.

Well, let this for the time being be enough for the first Nathan. You know him better than the second Nathan. The second one is not Nathan the prophet, but Nathan the wise.

Who is this Nathan the wise? First of all, let me tell you that this Nathan never really lived. He is a figure of fiction. He is the product of the imagination of a German philosopher who was also a poet. This poet-philosopher was Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. Lessing lived in the eighteenth century, to be exact from 1729 till 1781.

This 18th century was, as you know, the period of the Enlightenment, the period in which humanists rejected God's revelation and made human *reason* their idol. It was the period of rationalism. The 18th century was also the age in which *tolerance* became the slogan of the day, and together with

the Frenchman Voltaire, Lessing was a preacher of the humanist idea of enlightenment and the humanist ideal of tolerance.

At the end of his life, just before the French revolution began, Lessing summed up his thoughts in a poetic drama. He called it "Nathan the Wise. A dramatic poem in five acts."

I cannot now tell you the entire drama. The scene is Jerusalem and the year is 1193. It is during the third crusade and the drama tells of the struggle between Christians, Jews and Moslems. Nathan the wise is a Jew and Saladin the sultan is a Moslem and then there is a crusader – a young Templar – who is a Christian. We now restrict ourselves to the third act. There Saladin says: Listen, Nathan, of the three religions – the religion of the Jews, the Moslems and the Christians – only one can be the true one. Tell me of your choice and the reason therefore.

Well, then in scene 7 of the third act, Nathan the wise tells the now famous parable of the ring.

In days of yore, there dwelt in eastern lands

A man who had a ring of priceless worth

Received from hands beloved. The stone it held,

An opal, shed a hundred colors fair,
And had the magic power that he who wore it,

Trusting its strength, was loved of God and men.

I would love to read the whole fable but let me give you Nathan's story in short form. The ring with the magic power is bequeathed to one of this man's sons, the one he loved the best and

The dearest son, by virtue of the ring should be the head, the prince of all his house.

...

At last this ring, passed on from son to son,

Descended to a father of three sons,
All three of whom were duly dutiful,
All three in consequence he needs
Must love alike.

This father who loves all his three sons alike, "in pious frailty" promises the ring to each one separately. When his death is near, he is embarrassed and tries to make up for this "pious frailty." But what to do? Well, he has two other rings made, in all points identical to the first one.

The jeweller succeeds. And when he brings

The rings to him, the sire himself cannot

Distinguish them from the original. In glee and joy, he calls his sons to him,

Each by himself, confers on him his blessing –

His ring as well – and dies. – You hear me, Sultan?

Indeed, we hear Nathan the wise, that is, we hear Lessing, the man of the Enlightenment, the man of the humanist tolerance. We understand his parable. The three rings are the three religions, those of the Jews, the Christians and the Moslems, and the father is the one God. And Nathan the wise, that is Lessing, says: Basically, those three religions are identical. You cannot distinguish them; not even the father could see any difference. Let us hear the rest of the story:

Scarce is the father dead when all three sons

Appear, each with his ring, and each would be

The reigning prince. They seek the facts, they quarrel,

Accuse. In vain; the genuine ring was not

Demonstrable; – (*he pauses for a reply*)

almost as little as

Today the genuine faith.

There you have the clue of the parable of the three rings. Nathan the wise says: Jew nor Moslem nor Christian can prove that *his* faith is true. Let each one believe his ring to be the genuine one, but let them not quarrel. Instead

Let each strive

To match the rest in bringing to the fore

The magic of the opal in his ring!

You remember: the magic power was that he who wore it, trusting its strength, was loved of God and man. Lessing means to say: There is the power of human love to fellowman, the power of morality, the horizontal civic religion of love of humanity. Religions that speak of *revelation* are only worthwhile insofar as they agree with *natural* religion, the religion of human reason and of human love.

Do you now see the similarity and the dissimilarity between Nathan the prophet and Nathan the wise?

Indeed, there seems to be some similarity. They have the same name; they both tell a story and their story is a parable, a fable. It conveys a message. You do not easily forget the parables told by the two Nathans.

But there is much greater dissimilarity. Nathan the prophet was real; he was a real "gift of God" and even more, he was a messenger of God; he came with revelation from above. He spoke of sin and forgiveness; he prophesied of David's Son and David's Lord, our Lord Jesus, the mediator between God and man. In a direct message of Jahweh he called Solomon with a new name: Jedidiah, that mean "beloved of the LORD" (2 Sam. 12:25). And the real Solomon, the Prince of peace, was the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ (Is. 9:5). More than Solomon is he; He is the Son of whom the Father said: This is my Beloved with whom I am well pleased (Mt. 3:17; 17:5).

Nathan the wise was a figure of imagination. And as far as he is called "wise," we hear the living God saying
I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the cleverness of the clever I will thwart.

The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to those who are called Christ crucified is the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 10.)

Listen, graduates of 1994, you live in a period which is called the second En-

lightenment. You live in a Canadian society that is proud of its multi-culturalism – and to a certain extent rightly so – but that forgets its Christian heritage and that bows down for the idols of human reason and of humanist tolerance.


But by the grace of God, in "Timothy" you have been taught the true religion. It is the *Christian* religion, the *Reformed* religion.

It is the religion not of Nathan the wise but of Nathan the prophet. It is the religion in which the voice of the living God is heard. For the Bible is the truth. God's Word in Old and New Testament addresses you and me. It speaks of sin – "you are this man" – and it speaks of forgiveness in the Beloved, the crucified Christ. Indeed, you cannot prove it – it remains a matter of faith – , but you may believe it.

I hope that in your teenage years you will often read Psalm 51, the psalm of David when Nathan the prophet came to him: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy steadfast love . . . and cleanse me from my sin! . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me."

Think often of the cornerstone of your elementary school. Do not forget

Timothy. For the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: Evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived. But as for you, *continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus* (2 Tim. 3:13-15).

Class of 1994, congratulations and may God bless you! 

See for Lessing: C. Bertheau, *PRE 11*, 3.A., Leipzig: Hinrich, 1902, 406-414; J. Jacobs, *Lessing: eine Einfuhrung*, Munchen: Artemis 1986.

See especially for Nathan the Wise: G. Stenzel (ed.), *Lessings Werke in einem Band*, Salzburg: "Das Bergland Buch," 430-565; B.Q. Morgan (tr.), *G.E. Lessing: Nathan the Wise. A dramatic Poem in Five Acts*, New York: Ungar, 1955. The quotations are from this translation. See further K. Bohnen (ed.), *Lessings "Nathan der Weise"*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984, esp. S. Atkins, "Die Ringparabel in Lessings 'Nathan der Weise' ." 155-187.

Almighty God Direct Their Paths

Credo Christian High School Graduation – 1994

By Sarah Vandergugten

Credo's grad was late this year. Some students had written their Chemistry final on the morning of June 29 – some of them till 12 noon. But they had made it. Now it was evening. The grads were standing ready in the foyer, resplendent in their blue gowns and their caps – white for the girls and blue for the guys. Decorously, they marched into the auditorium to the stirring strains of Pomp and Circumstance. Cameras flashed. It was time to begin.

The Almighty Reigns

Vincent Aikema spoke the initial words of welcome. The grads had chosen as theme Revelation 19:6b, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the

Almighty reigns!" Accompanied by the enthusiastic Mr. Dave Kieft and Mr. Brad Davis, the grads rendered a spirited version of "Almighty God," a song which glorifies the magnificent power of God, both in His Creation and in our Re-Creation.

As is traditional at Credo grad ceremonies, several speakers received the opportunity to address the grads. First at the podium was Mr. Ed. Vanderboom, principal of Credo High, but this year for the first time also the parent of a grad, Kimberly Anne. His address centered around Colossians 3:12-17, reminding the grads of the most important dimension of their lives in this last high school lesson. The Biblical bottom line

advice is "do everything in the name of the Lord." Choose the fear of the Lord; for the fear of Lord is to hate all evil. Choose the way of the Lord; for the way of the Lord is the way of wisdom. Choose the word of the Lord; for the word of the Lord shall endure forever.

Known by its Heroes

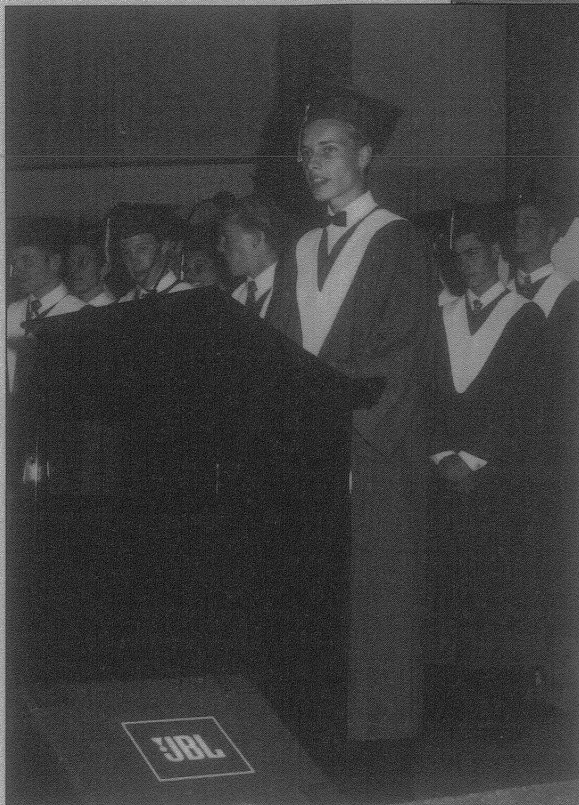
Mr. H.E. Hoogstra, father of Shannon and Shawn – the only twins in this graduating class, had the honor of giving the parents' address. He titled his message "A Nation is Known by its Heroes." Mr. Hoogstra, in the inimitable style of a man who has been a teacher for many years, began by taking us on an interesting trek through history, politics and



Just waiting to get started . . . from left to right, Kim Vanderboom, Shannon Hoogstra, Krish VanPopta



Grad '94 after receiving their diplomas respond in song . . . "Listen to our Hearts"



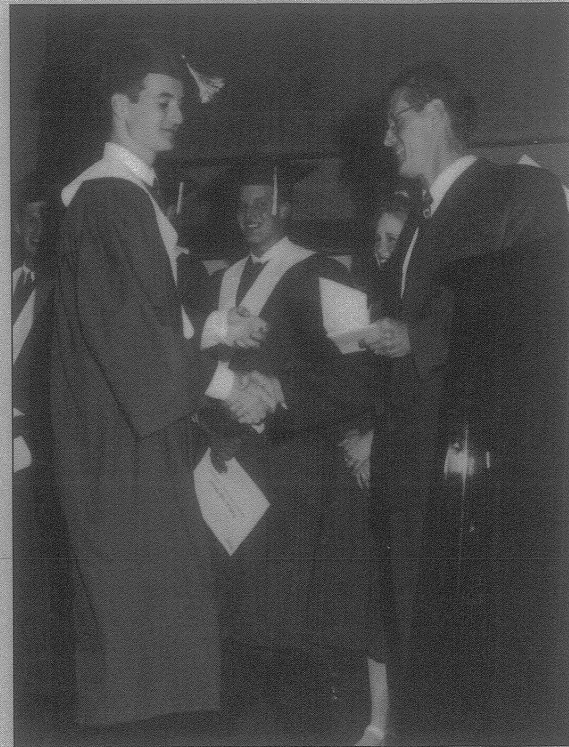
Vincent Aikema speaks words of welcome on behalf of the graduates.



Mr. H. Hoogstra speaks to the graduates on behalf of the parents



Board chairman, Mr. H. Berends presents the Governor General's Bronze Medallion to Julius VanSpronsen



Mr. Robert Bontkes on behalf of the Fraser Valley Scholarship Foundation, makes a presentation to Ryan Van Driel

sports. He asked some pointed questions. Who were Alexander the Great, Charlemagne, Henry VIII and Hitler? Who are Jean Chretien, Bill Clinton, Lucien Bouchard and Kim Campbell? These are all "heroes" who will make the history books for the role they played, for good or for evil. Who are Pavel Bure, Michael Jordan and Diego Maradona? The students – perhaps not their parents – will recognize these as the modern aristocrats of sports and heroes in the eyes of many.

Who are these graduates? Indeed, tonight they are special; but they always have been. They are Covenant-children, born and raised in families where God is served. That is also why they attended Credo. Tonight the grads may feel invincible, on top of the world. But what are their aspirations? By what are their choices determined? Home, church and school or the media? Are they concerned about making a living or making a life? Serious questions to answer.

What memories will they keep of Credo? The homework, the dress code, the social aspects, the assemblies, certain teachers . . . or the guidance and Christian environment provided by the staff? The teachers have done their part in arming the grads with a Christian life

view that will help them to critically analyze and combat today's vulgarization of life. Remember Credo for that.

Braves walk single-file

Thanks to the grads! Thanks for the wonderful confession in their opening song. They proclaimed they had no choice but to magnify Him unashamedly. May God Almighty give them the courage to live up to that confession and so to celebrate their new independence. Remember, cowards walk in crowds, braves walk in single file.

Remember that this God Almighty who stands by His promises is no ogre, peering over their shoulders. He is the Good Shepherd who seeks only good for his sheep. The grads will remember 1994 as the year when the hometown Vancouver Canucks battled their way to the #2 spot. The grads are more privileged than that. In the eyes of God they are #1. He holds out a much greater prize: eternal life. Can they get as excited and totally involved in that issue? Will they play with every fibre in their body to obtain that prize?

The grads may face the future with confidence, living as His Covenant children. May they become visible Heroes of His Covenant-nation. They may not

make the history books or some hall of fame. They will obtain a much greater reward. Their names will be found in the Book of Life. "Put on the armor of faith, you soldiers of El Shaddai, Heroes of God Almighty!"

A burst of applause greeted the conclusion of this wonderful speech. Mr. Hoogstra had eloquently – and lovingly – expressed the thoughts that lay in the hearts and minds of the parents.

That all important walk

The moment had come. Each grad now made that all important walk across the stage to receive that long-worked-for diploma. Every grad was introduced with a text they themselves had chosen. Post-secondary plans were revealed. Then again the grads demonstrated that they know how to sing! "Listen to our Hearts" – "A song of praise that flows from those You have redeemed."

Jamie Hellewell spoke on behalf of the students. He depicted the twelve years of school as a voyage – a journey during which the Lord had helped them to become artists, athletes, scholars, musicians, technicians and more. The talents were not buried, but cherished and developed. God-fearing teachers, board members, and parents

were essential in bringing about this transformation. Economic and social conditions may not be ideal, but" . . . our God, the Almighty reigns," even over Wall Street. Perhaps this graduation is simply a stop-over. The grads will continue their journey, in different boats, remembering as all good sailors know, "You're lost without the Son."

Various representatives from community business firms, financial institutions and colleges, as well as those representing the Fraser Valley Scholarship Foundation now had the pleasant task of handing out more than \$40,000 in scholarships and bursaries. The most prestigious award, the Governor General's Bronze Medallion, went to a most-deserving Julius Marnix VanSpronsen.

The discerning mind

Mr. H.A. Berends, school board chairman, offered the closing remarks. He stressed that Credo had been a place that busied itself with the development of the minds of this graduating class. They sometimes needed to be reminded who they are – covenant children, set apart for service. The teachers aimed to teach them the art of learning, something that would not stop beyond the walls of Credo. This renewal of the mind is a life-long process; it is a

continuous seeking to do the things approved of God. "But we have the mind of Christ." 1 Cor. 2:16.

It was time to leave. The grads were the first to go, somewhat less decorously than they had entered. They were finished! It was hard to believe, but true! As usual, it was a beautiful evening. (It doesn't rain in B.C. on grad night.) Refreshments were served outdoors – hugs, kisses and handshakes for 61 grads. Camera flashes punctuated the night sky. This part of grad was over.

The theme visualized

Next evening the grads, their parents, board members and teachers gathered in the Credo gym for the traditional banquet. The gym had been transformed to give visual reality to the 1994 theme, "The Lord Almighty Reigns." Murals of mountains, an abundance of potted plants, fishbowls with gold fish, stars dangling from the ceiling and sprinkled on the tables, white carnations, the blue of the sky, the yellow of the sun all represented in artistic manner the almighty power of God in creation. It was hard to imagine that this was the gym. Indeed, as Jamie had said, some of Credo's grads had become artists.

The staff and students each did their share of entertaining the guests. Teachers were gently teased about their

foibles. Eddy and the Chevies delighted the audience with a medley of songs about the Grads, from the teachers' perspective. "I wasn't even trying . . . I got a B, got a B." (To the tune of "Let it Be"). The highlight of the evening, as usual, were Mr. Hellewell's Golden Awards. This teacher has the uncanny knack of finding something uniquely special about each of the Grads. These Golden Awards are treasured and often find a place of honor in many a grad's bedroom bookcase. Bryce Berends, one of Credo's very special students, spoke a word of thanks to the staff, to his peers, and to the Learning Assistance/Special Ed teacher, Mr. K. Jagersma. A moving moment for all assembled. Again, a wonderful celebration.

But it wasn't time to go home yet. The C. Leyenhorsts had offered to host the grads and their parents for the final wind-up of the night. A temporary canopy over the basketball court offered relief from the rain spatters. (Rain? Yes, rain.) Around a blazing campfire the grads had a final chance to relive the events of the past couple of days. It was a time for nostalgia. This was their last evening together. Life would be different tomorrow. Some stayed until morning light began to shimmer in the east. It was time to go home.

Almighty God, direct their paths. **C**



Impressions of the MERF Study Center

By W. Huizinga

Rev. Winston Huizinga is a minister of the Free Reformed Church of Armadale, West Australia.

This was the first time to the MERF (Middle East Reformed Fellowship) Study Center for the undersigned, and first-time experiences often impress and last. It certainly held true in this case. From 23 May - 3 June, 1994 lectures were given to thirteen men (one could not come) from Egypt from a number of centers (Cairo, El-Minya, Asyut, Sohaq). They are all members of the Church of the Nile, a presbyterian/reformed bond of churches. Two were elders, and the rest worked in church programs such as youth work, teaching Bible study groups, or outreach. They occupied an impressive array of daily vocations – for example, five engineers, a professor, a chemist, a pharmacist plus two retired men.

Rev. M.A. Flinn (the other lecturer from the Pukekohe Reformed Church of New Zealand) and I had to cope with all those new faces and Arabic names (two “Medhats” and two “Alfis”). We solved the problem by photocopying their passports so we could put a face to a name. After a couple of days of acquaintance and adjusting to each other, all went smoothly. What struck us as we went along was that almost all these church-workers had never met each other before, had never left Egypt, had never been in an airplane and never swam in the Mediterranean Sea. Just to come to Cyprus, we started to realize, was a tremendous experience. Yet, indeed, the main purpose was to receive instruction and have fellowship in the Lord.

The lectures were given in the study center, which is a modest, one storey building. The lecture room functions as a place for devotions, for eating meals and for refreshments. All thirteen men were housed in three bedrooms, using bunkbeds! The limitations of the study

center (it can only accommodate 14 people) limits the number of trainees to fourteen. There certainly were no luxuries. A Dutch retired couple from the (liberated) Reformed Church of Eindhoven in the Netherlands, John and Regina Ramaker, on a volunteer basis take care of the study center, provide the meals and act as “house-parents.”

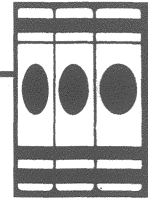
Thirteen lectures were scheduled for each lecturer. Three times a day lectures were given for about 60-80 minutes each. Rev. V. Atallah or the secretary of the MERF office, Majwa Rizk, translated the lecture from English into Arabic. Rev. M.A. Flinn lectured on the redemptive-historical significance of the life of Abraham, while the undersigned lectured on Paul’s letter to the Philippians, focusing on the Christological “hymn” in chapter 2 about the person and work of our Lord. The men absorbed these lectures well, interacted with it by asking questions and discussing it further among themselves. They did not allow the lecturer to gloss over points. In my estimation, the men operated on the level of keen church-workers. Interaction with the lectures also meant that they raised questions we had not anticipated; yet they really struggled with these questions (e.g. the moslems accuse them that the Bible is unreliable because Jesus did not stay in the grave for 72 hours as He predicted in Mt. 12:40 and because it is alleged that there is a discrepancy between the first three gospels and that of John in the dating).

So an excursus had to be prepared for the following day in order to give instruction and to have these matters settled in their own minds. Some could understand quite a bit of English. Others learned English as the days went on. For they first listened to the lecturer in English, picking up quite a bit, and then hearing it in their mother tongue helped even more. At the end of the study term we noticed that their English had im-

proved (so did our discussions at meals, etc.), while our Arabic was still hopeless! We did test the translators at times by using English sayings such as “throwing out the baby with the bathwater!”

Another significant impression concerned the location of the study center in Larnaca, Cyprus. The Greek Cypriot side of Cyprus (the Turkish occupied the northern part since 1974) is free, under the protection of Great Britain, and has a busy international airport in Larnaca (the one in the capitol of Nicosia was closed down under pressure by the Turkish Cypriots). So this is an ideal center. But there is a more important reason. By attending the English and Arabic worship services on Sundays and by meeting those who attend (some do so regularly every Sunday), it impressed us that this was indeed a *microcosm of the Middle East*. Families of refugees from Iraq lived and worshipped here; refugees from Lebanon had settled here; people who worked in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia had homes here to use during their weeks off; people who operated businesses in the Middle East had their offices and homes here; Christian workers from around Aden in Yemen sought refuge here because the tribal warfare along the borders between North and South Yemen forced them to evacuate; score of Christian vacationers from Great Britain and Europe come to the International Evangelical Church and study center; and yes, refugee families are being helped from here to find reformed churches who will sponsor them in a new land. Indeed this church (it is really more of a mission post) is the only reformed one in the area. By staying in Larnaca one comes into contact with the Middle East, its political and ecclesiastical problems and progress.

May the LORD bless the multi-faceted ministry of MERF for the sake of the gospel, the believers and the churches in the Middle East. **C**



How do we look at fossils?

Margaret J. Helder, *Completing the Picture. A Handbook on Museums and Interpretive Centres Dealing with Fossils.*

1993, 139 pages (coil bound and large 8 1/2 x 11 format); price: \$12.95 Can. Available from Creation Science Association of Alberta, #194, 3803 Calgary Trail S., Suite 1136, Edmonton, Alberta T6J 5M8.

Dr. M. Helder has written a most delightful book on fossils that should appeal to a wide age group. The author (who has a Ph.D. in botany and who at one time was Assistant Professor in Biosciences at Brock University in St. Catharines) has written this book to help bring balance to the explanation of fossils one finds in typical government-run museums and so to complete the picture (cf. the title!) of the fossils presented. The author has limited her investigation to animals without backbones (with the exception of some fossil plants, dinosaurs and fish), one reason being that a good book on vertebrate animals is already available (D. Gish, *Evolution: The Challenge of the Fossil Record*, 1985). Realizing that museums attract young and old, Dr. Helder has presented her material on two different levels. The first part (pp. 9-58) is written for grade eight students, where the account of the fossils is often spiced with human interest stories and includes useful summaries. The adult section which covers the same topics (pp. 59-131) has more information and many references to authorities on the particular items being discussed.

It was a pleasure reading this book. The author is clearly competent to make potentially difficult material accessible to readers who are not scientists. It is also gratifying that she does not hesitate to mention historical facts from the Bible that may have significance for her topic, such as the world-

wide flood. If all the facts are to be considered in weighing the evidence, should this not be considered too? It may provide a plausible explanation, although due to nature of the case it can never be proven. For example, about dinosaur fossils Dr. Helder writes:

All types of dinosaur fossils are evidence for sudden burial in rapidly moving water which carried vast loads of sediment with it. Whether one considers articulated skeletons, skin impressions, bone beds, footprints or nest – they all testify to the terrible fury of lots of water. It seems most unlikely that local floods could account for the conditions which led to the formation of these fossils, records of the dinosaur life on earth. To imagine that such peculiarly damaging local floods happened again and again, is really stretching one's credulity. The reasonable interpretation is that there was one universal flood which brought about changes on a vast scale on the face of the earth (p. 71).

The author also discusses the age of rocks in connection with fossils. This is an important area because it is often due to an insistence by geologists of an age of billions of years that many Christian scientists and teachers feel they must accept an extremely old earth, although few would dispute that the Biblical account of creation and the early history of this world suggests that the world is actually relatively young. Dr. Helder shows the many pitfalls and uncertainties of radiometric and related ways of dating, once held to be able to give us absolute dates. She does this by quoting and referring to the current authorities and their published findings and concludes "There are thus so many unknowns involved in the radiometric dating of rocks that the whole process seems obviously unreliable. As radio-

metric dates are used to give validity to the dating of sediments which contain fossils, the credibility of relative ages too become immediately open to question" (pp. 123-126).

It stands to reason that if we are to truly understand God's creation and the material found in His world (such as fossils), we must take into consideration what He Himself has said on whatever may relate to the scientific topic at hand. Considering the evolutionistic mind-set not only of museum labelling and explanation, but also of virtually all textbooks "approved" by the state, this book is a sorely needed corrective to bring all the facts to bear and so to complete the evidential picture. It is heartily recommended, not the least for use at school! The book is also illustrated and indexed. **C**



News from the League of Canadian Reformed School Societies

On June 3, 1994, the league met for the fifth time this school year at the Covenant Teacher's College in Hamilton. The following are the major current topics reported on and discussed at the meeting.

Curriculum Assistance for Reformed Education (C.A.R.E.)

C.A.R.E.'s report on its activities over the past year included Church History (summer) Conference '94, Curriculum Writing, Resource Center and Contact with Western Schools.

For Church History, C.A.R.E. has finished its initial reviewing of current outlines and has gathered current inventory used in our schools. It felt that the 1982 Church History document has served its purpose and a new curriculum needs to be written to capitalize on the strengths of the old document and make changes to improve on its weaknesses. This summer, July 7, 8 and 9, C.A.R.E. is sponsoring the "Church History Conference '94, with the main aim being to again kindle a warmth and fondness for this subject in our curriculum." Following this C.A.R.E. will organize the writing of the new curriculum.

After much brainstorming, C.A.R.E. has produced a model called a "Matrix for Curriculum Decision," which it will use in curriculum writing.

Since the league has requested more information before committing finances to the endeavour of setting up the computer cataloguing of the proposed resource center, C.A.R.E. has continued to search out all required information for setting up such a center.

It is reported that the "Curriculum Development Committee" for the Western Schools (B.C.) and C.A.R.E. are mindful of what the other is doing so as to make use of each other's work and not duplicate any work being done.

Assistance for the Special Child (A.S.C.)

The final public meeting held on April 14, on "The place of the exceptional child within the context of home-church-school," was well attended and well received. Since the aim of A.S.C. is to raise the awareness of the needs of children with special needs, it will again focus on setting up two public meetings in 1994-95. A.S.C. also plans to make two presentations at the C.R.T.A. Convention, purchase and review resource material and make contributions to the C.R.T.A. magazine.

Government Contact Committee

This committee reported on the recent activities of the Forum of Independent School Associations of Ontario. The focus of F.I.S.A. (Ont) "has been on its proposal for a Co-operative High School Inspection Model to the Ministry of Education. The proposal seeks to replace the annual high school inspection process with a model for inspection to be implemented in two steps." F.I.S.A. delegates met with government officials, including a Deputy Minister, on February 2nd, 1994, to discuss the proposal. The document is now in the hands of the M.O.E. officials. Hopefully, this will raise the awareness of F.I.S.A. (Ont) within the M.O.E. (T) (and Training) and serve to allow it to pursue other issues with the government.

The decision regarding the appeal of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools and Ontario Jewish Congress over the complete non-funding of education in "religious" schools has yet to be delivered. Although it has been close to a year ago the appeal was made, it is not unusual that it takes this long.

Borne out of a request of the Government Contract Committee to have in

place a policy on School Evaluation and Staff Development, these committees both had reports at this June meeting.


"An *Integrated Model for Staff Development Proposal #2*" was handed out. It is a fresh, new, more simple report responding to the oral and written submissions made on its first proposal. The league will place this submission on the agenda of its November meetings.

Open for dialogue was, *The Report from the School Evaluation Committee*. All representatives had the opportunity to express their boards' views on the document. Since it appeared that most societies were, in principle, in favour of school evaluation, the league would continue its work on reaching a consensus on this endeavour. The committee would welcome written submissions so it can reflect and respond on them in their continuing work.

Ontario Principals Association

During this past year, the principals have made an indepth study of "The Common Curriculum" put out by the M.O.E. This was primarily to stay informed as to what is going on in the Ministry and in the public system. They have concluded that they will now turn their focus on "clarifying our own expectations in specific areas and streamline our curricula, accordingly, from grades one to twelve." Thus the Guido/feeder school meetings will begin addressing these things in the area of Social Studies and History.

The Principals' report informed us of their handling of the co-operative activities among our schools both on the sports and academic fronts.

Lastly, two principals are finalizing the organizational details of the National Principals' Conference to be held D.V. in November in Ontario. 

An evening to celebrate Ancaster's new church building

By Nicoline Vandermeer

On June 24, 1994 the Ancaster Canadian Reformed Church joyfully celebrate the completion of its new church building. This Friday evening marked the result of eight years of hard work and preparations. The heavy fog and rain outside could not dampen the mood as members of Ancaster and a number of visitors entered the building and took their places in the pews.

The events leading up to this evening began on May 5, 1985, when the congregation of Hamilton was split up because the Cornerstone church building had become too small to accommodate the growing number of members. The congregation of Ancaster was formed and St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Ancaster was rented to accommodate the worship services. The Rev. R. Aasman became Ancaster's first pastor in November of 1985. Soon, however, the congregation was forced to find a larger facility, and the auditorium of Redeemer



College became Ancaster's new meeting-place. Several years later the Rev.

Aasman accepted a call to Edmonton and Ancaster was left vacant until the Rev. M. VanEssen accepted our call in February of 1993.

In the meantime plans for our own church building were well under way. The options considered were either to buy an existing church building or to build on a piece of land which had been generously donated by a member of the congregation. After some investigation the decision was made to build, and with this decision the building committee took upon itself the responsibility of making severance application, requests for amendments to the Official Plan, and the necessary zoning changes for the property on Shaver Road. Eventually, the actual building plans could be made and presented to the consistory and the congregation for approval, and the necessary permit were granted.

At the end of June 1993 the work was finally started. The construction progressed steadily, and the building and landscaping were completed on



schedule and without incident. With thankfulness the members of Ancaster and a number of visitors came together on the evening of June 24, 1994 to celebrate the completion of Ancaster's new church building.

The evening was opened with Bible reading and prayer. After an initial word of welcome, the congregation sang and was accompanied by a trumpet and the beautiful new Content digital computer organ which was manufactured in the Netherlands by Content Organs of Ermelo.

The women's society "Thy Word is Our Light" then presented a framed drawing of the church building. On the bricks were written all the names of the families and single members belonging to Ancaster, appropriately demonstrating that we as members make up the church. The Rev. VanEssen accepted this gift on behalf of the congregation.

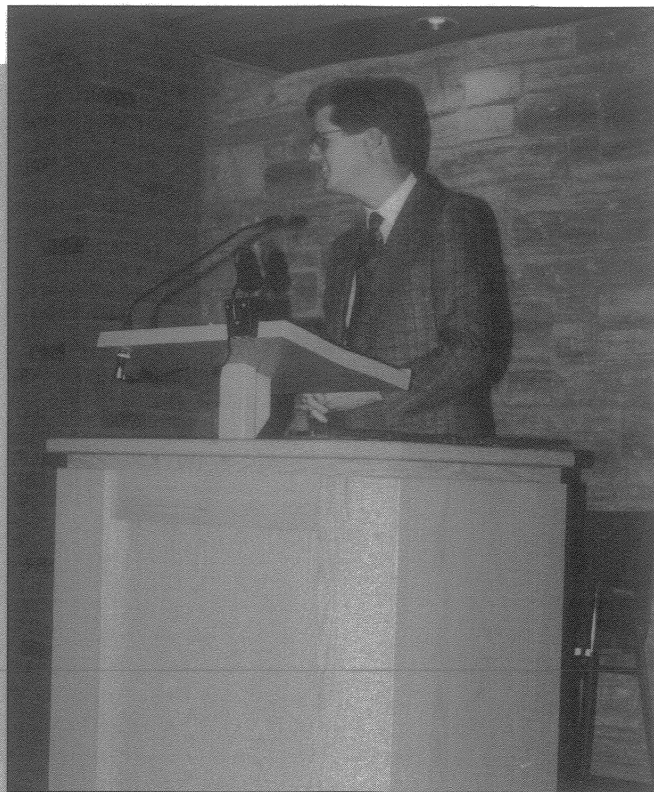
Following this presentation by the women's society the architect of the building, Mr. G.L. Heeringa, presented the key to Mr. C. Heeringa, chairman of the building committee. Mr. C. Heeringa then proceeded to thank certain people who played key roles in making the building of the church possible. Among those mentioned were Mayor Bob Wade and the Ancaster Council, as well as all those involved in the legal proceedings. And, although all their names could not be mentioned, the many volunteers who offered their time and skills were greatly appreciated. Credit was also given to the architect and to his wife, who's talents as interior decorator greatly benefited Ancaster's new church building.

Finally Mr. C. Heeringa presented the key to the Rev. VanEssen, who in turn thanked Mr. Heeringa for his many years of acting as chairman of the building committee. He also conveyed the congregation's appreciation to the organists for investigating the different types of organs available and recommending which one would best suit the church's needs.

Willem Van Suydam from the Content Organs of Ermelo then demonstrated the excellence of the organ by playing variations on two old Dutch songs, "Scheepje Onder Jesus Hoede:" and "Ruwe Stormen Mogen Woeden." He expressed his delight in the fact that the builders had allowed the organ's makers to do their job properly by having the speakers installed at the front of the church, where they should be.

After Mr. Van Suydam's impressive performance, Mayor Bob Wade of Ancaster spoke a few words of con-

Rev. H.M.
VanEssen



gratulations and emphasized the importance of churches in Ancaster's heritage. He also commended all those involved in the legal proceedings for their hard work and perseverance in dealing with the three levels of government when making a rezoning application. In his commendation Mayor Wade made a special mention to Mr. C. Heeringa, who as chairman of the building committee worked closely with lawyers in order to overcome the obstacles which stood in the way.

When Mayor Wade had finished his speech several musical selections were performed, first by a group of four young people and then by the Hamilton/Ancaster choir "Sursum Corda." Both groups made lovely contributions to the evening.

Following the communal singing of Hymn 65 some words of congratulations and greetings were conveyed. First Prof. N.H. Gootjes spoke on behalf of the Theological College. To ensure his audience that he was not giving a sermon Prof. Gootjes did not head his speech with a theme; however, lest his predominantly Reformed audience should become unduly concerned, he faithfully adhered to the usual three points. In offering his congratulations he also expressed his hope that the Ancaster church would act as a lamp, that the presence of the church building as

well as the presence of its members would have a positive effect on the surrounding community.

Congratulations were also conveyed by Dr. J. Cooper, President of Redeemer Reformed Christian College, and by the Rev. Vogel from the Independent Reformed Church of Ancaster.

Finally a letter with congratulations from Ancaster's first pastor, the Rev. R. Aasman, was read.

Just before the close of the evening, an opportunity was provided for everyone to express their appreciation for the work done by the Program Committee consisting of sisters Willie Bartels and Dinie Gootjes, and brothers Cas Herringa, Harold Olij, and Bill Smouter, the convenor who also chaired the evening. After the final singing of Hymn 6 and the closing prayer a coffee social was held in the fellowship hall of the church. During the social people were free to inspect the building and view pictures hanging on the wall in the foyer which showed the progression of the church building at numerous stages, from the construction of its 35 foot high roof to the installation of the pews. In looking at this beautiful building we see again that the Lord always provides for His people, whatever their needs. May we, in turn, show our thankfulness by using what He gives us for His honour and glory. **C**



Board of Governors of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches

Subject: Meeting of the Board of Governors held on the 22nd day of February, 1994

Opening

The Meeting is opened by the Chairman, Rev. J. Visscher with the reading of Ephesians 2:11-22 and prayer.

Roll Call

All Board Members are present, save and except one. All Faculty members are also present.

Agenda

The draft agenda is revised and adopted.

Principal's Report

The Principal provides an interim report as to the College activities. The

student body continues to number 15, with the loss of one student and the gain of another since the commencement of the 1993-94 academic year. The computerized upgrading and cataloguing of the library is progressing well.

Proposals

The proposed survey of former students is discussed at length. The format of the survey, together with the substance of a inquiry letter to be delivered to the consistories of the Canadian/American Reformed Churches are substantially finalized. It is intended that the delivery of the surveys and letters will be completed by May 1, 1994, with the intent that the responses may be received, evaluated and reported on for the September, 1994 Board Meeting.

Covenant CCRTC

A letter and proposal of the CCRTC regarding possible integration of the CCRTC and the College facilities is discussed at length. The Board provides a

mandate to the Finance and Property Committee to:

1. Assess the present and long term physical needs of the College;
2. Discuss the needs and plans of the CCRTC with representatives of the CCRTC;
3. Consider the benefits of cooperation with the CCRTC; and
4. Consider the issue of preserving the distinct identity and image of both the CCRTC and the College.

The report is to be available for the full Board for September, 1994.

25th Anniversary of College

The 25th anniversary of the College will be remembered and commemorated in conjunction with the Convocation scheduled for September, 1994.

Closing

The meeting is closed with thanksgiving in prayer. **C**

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

Chris and Michelle picked up their new school bags, opened the door, and shouted, "Bye Mom, we're off!"

It was the first day of school, and the kids were on their way to the bus stop.

Chris said, "Boy, I can't wait to get to school and play football with the guys!"

Michelle agreed, "I'll be glad to be back so my friends and I can start some soccer! I wonder if we'll have any new people in our class?"

"I hope we get a new boy, so we can have even teams," said Chris. "Well, here we are at the bus stop. I hope we aren't late. That happened too often last year, eh Michelle?"

"Yea," his sister agreed, "that bus driver was so early all the time - well, maybe we were just slow! Oh, here it is!"

The two eager students hopped on the bus and they roared off to school.

When they arrived, they immediately started to look for their friends among all the excited kids at school.

All of a sudden, they noticed two scared looking girls standing close together near the school doors. Chris and Michelle walked up to them and said, "Hi, we're Chris and Michelle. We're going to start grade 5 today. Who are you?"

"I'm Mieke, and this is Tollie. We go to class 5, we think." The girl talked slowly, and Chris and Michelle could tell she didn't know very much English.

"Well," Chris said to his sister, "I can see we're going to be doing some teaching ourselves this year!"

Well, Busy Beavers, you may not have someone from another country in your class this year, but I'm sure that all of you will have some kind of challenge to take up in this new school year.

Some of you may have moved to a new school.

You might start junior high.

Maybe you're starting music lessons.

Whatever situation you are in, you can be sure your Father in Heaven is guiding you and watching you. He will make you able to do it!



SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS



What a way to start the school year!
With a birthday!

I hope all you Busy Beavers who celebrate this month have a great day with friends and family!

Lydia Penninga	1	Marcia Rook	16
Kyle Lodder	4	Gerald Bartels	20
Anthony Nyenhuis	4	Nellie Beukema	22
Jonathan Janssens	8	Sophie Witten	23
Adena Feenstra	9	Danielle deJong	26
Tineke Bouma	11	Breanne Meyer	28
Joanne Jans	11	Cheryl VanAndel	30
Alisa Krabbendam	12		

Quiz Time!

CRACK THE CODE!

by Busy Beaver *Melissa Bremer*

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UNSCRAMBLE THE SUMMER WORDS!

by Busy Beaver *Esther Synder*

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2. anginrdge
3. igneedw
4. wnla woingm
5. pstsor
6. nsu nat
7. kbie

HORSE CROSSWORD PUZZLE

by Busy Beaver *Nelena Bergsma*

T A M E R I C A N S A D D L E H O R S E
H U T E W K E L P U B E T T Y A R U H P
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R T N W L E N T Y F E S R O H K S F R O
O E N L S B K M J O O O E S S N E E E E
U A E U H A L N U L T H N U I E L N C L
G N S O P R S I M K R N E T K Y A U A D
H W S C O B H I P C K E N O S A D M O M
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D K A R I S S T H Y B E A G E U Y O R E
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W C K H K E Y T R T E B D A Z R C B D I
Z A I B N G I K S T A N D A R D B R E D
X R N V I C E B E I B L E R P K E D A U
Y E G S H C R U H C N E P A K O L O B N
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N E O N K E U A R E S T E I P A I M L I
G R R M I C H E A R L I C A H A O R D W
K L S U C I N D O A L Y L N E M N I K E
C A E D N A M H A C K N E Y P O N Y A E
C K R I S M O R G A N T E N Y O L A N D
B I B O R L N E L E N E I A S D O R H S
A K N N O R E H C R E P W X Y Z N G L Y
T U U P S H E T L A N D P O N Y E R F X

- Lipizzan
- Belgian
- Thoroughbred
- Shetland Pony
- Morgan
- Suffolk
- Tennessee Walking Horse
- Hackney
- Polo Horse
- Welsh Pony
- Arabian
- Clydesdales
- Hackney Pony
- American Saddle Horse
- Jumping Horse
- Shire
- Standardbred
- Percheron
- Przhevalski's
- Barb Horse

FROM THE MAILBOX:



Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Jacqueline Post*. Glad to have you with us. I hope you enjoy doing the puzzles and activities. It sounds like you enjoy living on a farm with lots of animals around. Bye, *Jacqueline*.

Hi, *Esther Synder*. Thank you for sending in your puzzles. I hope you had a good summer. What did you do in your holidays? Hope to hear from

you soon, *Esther*. Bye.

Hello, *Melissa Bremer*. Is it cooler in the summer with short hair? I bet it is! Do you have your glasses yet?

Why don't you write and tell me about it? Bye, *Melissa*.

Hi, *Nelena Bergsma*. Thanks for the puzzle. Do you have a horse yet? What kind would you like? I hope you have a place to keep it! Bye, *Nelena*.