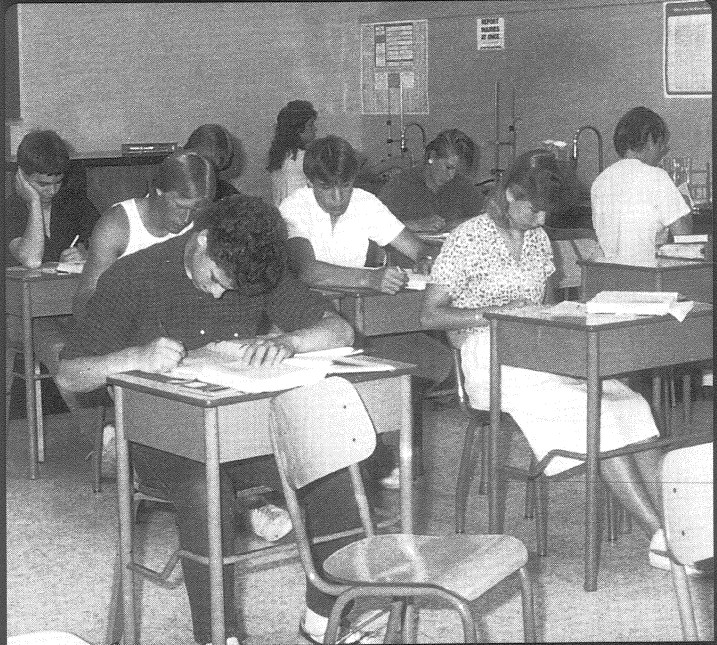


# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE  
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*School/Education*

By C. Van Dam

## Questions About a Decision

For any ecclesiastical relationship to function properly, the adopted rules not only need to be agreed upon, but also to be followed. Otherwise problems arise. This truth also holds for our relationship as churches together in a federation. We are all bound by the same Church Order.

These general truths came to mind on reading a decision of Classis Ontario South of March 8-9 as reported in *Clarion* (April 7, 1995, p. 167). Before dealing with the decision in question, let me first give some background so that the matter that gives rise to questions can be properly placed in context.

Classis Ontario South apparently has had some difficulty dealing with an appeal from the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) against Rev. B. Hofford. The Press Release of the Classis of March 9, 1994 informs us that a decision of a previous classis to declare this appeal admissible was reversed and the appeal was declared inadmissible after all (*Clarion*, March 25, 1994, p. 146). As a result of this decision, the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic of the OPC went to the Regional Synod East to appeal this declaration of inadmissibility by Classis South. Regional Synod East, meeting on November 16-17, 1994, decided that Classis South was "incorrect when on the basis of the grounds it presented, it declared the appeal of the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic of the OPC inadmissible" (Press Release in *Clarion*, Year End Issue 1994, p. 630). In its actual decision, as sent to Classis South and the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic, Regional Synod gave a detailed accounting of why each specific ground for Classis' refusal to admit this material from the OPC was incorrect.

As a result of the regional synod decision, the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic of the OPC again went to Classis South and renewed their appeal. One would expect Classis South in dealing with this appeal once again to consider the decision of Regional Synod. After all, do we not hold for settled and binding the decisions of major assemblies unless they are proven to be in conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order (Art. 31 CO)? Classis South however once again declared the appeal from the OPC presbytery to be inadmissible, but now on a completely new ground! Surely this cannot be done. By ignoring the decision of Regional Synod East and adducing a new ground, this decision goes against our understanding as churches federated together in a fellowship of churches and makes mockery out of the appeal process to Regional Synod. It would be

understandable if the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic again takes this matter to the Regional Synod East.

Why is this issue a matter of concern and why is it so important that it be resolved properly? There are two basic reasons. Firstly, Classis South did not act in accordance with the accepted Church Order by not receiving for settled and binding the decision of Regional Synod that the OPC appeal could not be declared inadmissible on grounds classis had previously adduced. If Classis could not accept this decision of Regional Synod East then they were under obligation to demonstrate where Regional Synod had gone wrong. Instead, Classis South basically ignored the decision of Regional Synod and tried to circumvent it by coming up with a new ground. The fact of coming with a new ground (that non-members of the Canadian Reformed churches cannot appeal to major assemblies) is unconvincing. If this is the case, why was this reason not adduced earlier? By choosing to go this route Classis South is acting more in an independentistic way than in a Reformed way. Furthermore, the new ground as such is not convincing. Even if Classis would not be able to deal with an appeal from outside the Canadian Reformed churches, one can hardly say that the OPC is simply "outside" and that we have nothing to do with them. We have recognized the OPC as a true church and we have continued contact with them. All this means that we have obligations towards them. This brings me to the next point.

A second basic reason for concern is that beyond the church orderly question lies the larger question of dealing fairly with each other as brothers in the Lord. The Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic obviously has a pressing issue that they wish to clear up. This matter even concerns a minister in our midst. Should not every effort be made to clear up such concerns? Is that not the Biblical way? Think, for example of the principles evident in Matthew 5:23-24. Instead, Classis South refuses to deal with the issue and when Regional Synod says it should, the Classis thinks of another reason not to deal with it. Why does the Classis not want to deal with it and work for harmony between churches of the Lord? Whatever the reason may be, the matter should be resolved openly and fairly. How else can we expect the blessing of the Lord on our church life together?

No good will come from a continued refusal to deal biblically with a matter put before us fairly by a church which is recognized by us. May this matter as yet be dealt with. Confessing to be a true church of Jesus Christ brings its obligations. C

# Meditation

By G.Ph. van Popta

Read Acts 11:19-30:

*"So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul."*

## LEVI AND BENJAMIN

Acts 11 tells us about the beginning of the long partnership between the apostle Paul and Barnabas. For many years they were partners in preaching the gospel of Christ and in teaching Christians.

Barnabas was a Levite (Acts 4:36). Paul was of the tribe of Benjamin (Rom. 11:1; Phil. 3:5). Although not perfect, there was good cooperation between this Levite and this Benjaminite. There was a time when Levites and Benjaminites did not have much use for one another. The last three chapters of Judges tells us about a time when Levi and Benjamin were at each other's throats.

A Levite and his concubine were travelling through the region which belonged to the tribe of Benjamin. They planned to spend the night in the town square of Gibeah, a Benjaminite town, but an old man of the town graciously invited them to stay at his house.

As they were relaxing, some local trouble-makers began pounding on the door insisting that the old man bring out the Levite. In order to save himself from the perverted desires of the men of Gibeah, the callous and selfish Levite gave them his concubine. They raped her and abused her throughout the night. She died.

The Levite cut up her dead body into twelve parts and sent one part to each tribe as a testimony to the evil of the Benjaminites of Gibeah.

Israel rose up in arms with disgust and fury. They demanded that Benjamin give up their wicked brothers of Gibeah so that they could punish them for this sin. Benjamin refused. Instead, they defended Gibeah. This led to an all out war between Benjamin and the rest of Israel.

The Benjaminites were tough, but they could not withstand the combined might of eleven tribes. The LORD

gave Benjamin into the hand of the rest of Israel. All but 600 men of Benjamin were killed. The rest of the tribe was completely wiped out.

Once the war was over and the 600 remaining Benjaminites were in hiding, Israel began to grieve that one tribe of God's people was functionally dead. They had sworn by oath not to give their daughters to these men. But that meant that one tribe would die out. They found a loophole. (See Judges 21 for the amazing story.) The 600 men received wives. Benjamin was brought back from the brink of extinction.

The monotonous theme running through Judges is: *There was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes.* They fought, raped and killed.

But now there is a king, King Jesus. He brings people together. He reconciles us to God. He also reconciles people who once fought. He reunited Benjamin and Levi.

Benjamin had to be saved from annihilation so that Saul of Tarsus could be born and called by God to serve as a herald of the gospel. Barnabas, the Levite, was the first to recognize what God was doing through Saul (Acts 9:26,27). Barnabas brought this Benjaminite from Tarsus to Antioch to work in the church there. Together they brought the gospel to many Gentiles. They had a falling out (Acts 15:36-41), but they were again reconciled five years later (1 Cor. 9:6).

There is a King in Israel, Jesus. He can bring together people who once hated each other. He can make the children of people who once were at odds coworkers in the Kingdom of God. Let us have our eyes open for the work which Christ is doing and seize the opportunities He gives.

## What's Inside

By the time this *Clarion* has found its way to your mail box, school will be over for another year. Students and teachers will be taking a well-deserved two month summer recess. Time, however, flies. Before you know it, the pupils and their instructors will be back at it again. This issue contains two articles which have to do with schools. In one, the Rev. J.L. Van Popta argues in favour of a solidly Reformed confessional basis for the education of our children. In the other, Mr. F.C. Ludwig gives an extensive report of a National Principals' Conference. These articles should provide food for thought.

GvP

# The Need for a Confessional Basis for Our Children's Education

By J.L. Van Popta

First presented as a speech to the Ottawa congregation in the spring of 1994.

In the past year several church communities in our federation have opened small schools. With the emergence of these schools we are reminded that Reformed education has been a hallmark of Canadian Reformed churches ever since "William of Orange Christian School" opened in Burnaby, BC, in September 1955. The children of almost all the congregations are now able to attend schools that are owned and operated by Canadian Reformed parents. But why should this be important? Why should these small schools exist? What legitimacy do they have if there is a large general Christian school in town? What makes a Canadian Reformed school different from a general Christian school? This has been a question raised by many in the past. It was likely raised in those communities where parents wanted to open new schools. It surely will need to be addressed again in the future. Why should we have our own schools?

## Article 58 of the Church Order

The title of this article is not simply picked out of the air. Article 58 of our Church Order reads:

The consistory shall ensure that the parents, to the best of their ability, have their children attend a school where the instruction given is in harmony with the Word of God as the church has summarized it in her confessions.

In article 58 of the Church Order the churches have agreed that consistories should encourage parents to send their children to Christian schools. These schools should be not just general Christian schools, but schools that have the Reformed confessions as their basis. Before we examine the specific question of the need for a confessional basis for our children's education we should look at the historical background to article 58 of the Church Order.

The Church Order came into being in the late 1500s, more than 400 years



ago. The Reformed churches of the Lowlands, of Belgium and the Dutch states, had met together in various meetings and synods and made decisions that affected the churches in common. The churches assembled these decisions and so formed the skeleton for the Church Order that the great Synod of Dort of 1618/19 wrote and adopted. This is the same synod that gave us one of our creeds, the Canons of Dort. This synod also adopted the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession as doctrinal standards for the Reformed churches of the Netherlands.

In the Church Order of Dort the churches included Article 21. In translation, it reads as follows:

Everywhere consistories shall see to it that there are good schoolmasters who shall not only instruct the children in reading, writing, languages and the liberal arts, but likewise in godliness and in the Catechism.

Fifty years earlier, in 1568, the Reformed churches meeting at Antwerp had decided that, *The parents, as shepherds of their families, shall be exhorted, in order to form their children in the fear of the Lord, not to send them to schools or whatever other institutions there may be, where they could be corrupted or steeped in wickedness of conduct or doctrine.*

We can notice from these two quotations that there was a development of thought from a rather negative, defensive position of protecting the children from wickedness of conduct or doctrine, to a positive attempt at providing good schoolmasters who would also teach the Catechism in school.

To place this in an historical context we should note that the churches assembled at Antwerp just 50 years after Luther's famous 95 theses. Calvin had come to Geneva only 30 years before, in 1538. The Reformation came to the Lowlands in the decades that followed. Guido de Brès wrote the Belgic Confession in 1561. This means that the Reformed churches' decision about the children's education comes at the very beginning of the Reformation in the Netherlands. From the very first, the Reformed churches defended the position that parents were the primary educators of their children. By 1600 the Reformation had taken deep root in the Netherlands and Belgium.

We must understand that while the government funded the schools of the 17th century, the consistories nevertheless had great power in appointing and hiring the teachers. The government itself was committed to the Reformed faith and to the reformation of the church. The laws of the land required that all teachers in the schools be Re-

formed confessors. They had to be godly in their conduct. They had to show knowledge of the Catechism and have an ability to teach it. They were to be Reformed believers who lived under the supervision of the consistories.

### Church, home and school

Our Canadian political and social situation today is radically different from that in Reformation Holland. Still, we must note that in the very midst of the great Reformation, the church, state and home recognized the role the Confessions played in the school. We must not now place the confessions in an ecclesiastical ghetto. The confessions, rather, should have a prominent place in all of life. The old Church Order held the Catechism to be mandatory in the curriculum. Teachers were to be confessors of the Reformed faith. There was a recognition that Reformed children of Reformed parents were to be instructed by Reformed teachers. There was a unity of confession between church, home and school.

It is important for us to observe, however, that there is also a separation of authority and jurisdiction among church, home and school. We have come to understand more clearly that the primary responsibility for raising and teaching children lies with the parents. Children belong to their parents, not to the state. Parents are to teach their children (Deut. 6:7; 11:19; Eph. 6:4; Proverbs 2-7). The primary responsibility for their training and education lies with fathers and mothers, not with church or state. The idea that children belong to the state is from the philosophy of ancient Greece. The Roman Catholic church teaches that children are possessions of the church. The Reformed and biblical position is that responsibility for children's education falls to the parents, for it is to parents that God gives children. Our fathers did not promote nor envision church schools like the Roman Catholic parochial school. According to the Church Order, however, the consistory does have a role. The office bearers must promote the organization and proper maintenance of Christian schools based on the confessions of the church – the Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity.

### Baptism

At this point we need to examine a pressing question. Do parents, at the baptism of their children, promise to send their children to Canadian Reformed schools? Do they promise this when they vow that they will instruct their children in the true and com-

plete doctrine of the Old and New Testaments, summarized in the confessions and taught in the church, and have their children taught therein to the utmost of their power? Is this promise a vow of commitment to Canadian Reformed schools and education? Is this a commitment to confessionally based institutions of learning? Is this perhaps a vow before God to establish Canadian Reformed schools and even universities?

I think not. I do not think that we can defend that position, though many people do. If that were true, then the consistories of churches where children have attended general Christian schools and public schools would have had to place many parents under discipline for being negligent in breaking godly vows. Hundreds of parents would have had to quit their jobs and go work where they could send their children to Canadian Reformed schools. If it were true that baptism vows bind parents by vow to Canadian Reformed schools for their children then many congregations should have been dissolved. Perhaps it was even sinful for our parents to have emigrated to this fair land. This is not the case, however.

Rather, the promise at baptism is a promise to train the child in the doctrine of salvation at home, as well as to take the child to church and to send the child

to catechism. The doctrine of salvation is taught first by parents and then by office bearers, especially the minister. These are the people appointed and ordained by God to teach the doctrine of salvation taught in the church and summarized in the confessions. In church and catechism classroom, the teaching of doctrine is supervised by the consistory. In these places the office bearers of the church of Christ have authority. They do not have this direct authority in the school class room. Neither does the consistory have direct authority in associations into which church members enter. The consistory does not have authority over the Chamber of Commerce if a church member joins. The consistory does not have authority over the professional associations that church members join. It also does not have direct authority over school associations in which church members are active. This is perfectly clear in Ottawa, for example. Canadian Reformed church members of this congregation are also members of the school associations that run Metcalfe Community Christian School, Ottawa Christian School and Redeemer Christian High, the local Christian schools. The office bearers in the church have no special role there. They have simply joined with other parents to do what they think is best for the children. So we can only conclude



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### IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial – Questions About a  
Decision — C. Van Dam .....298

Meditation  
— G.Ph. van Popta .....299

The Need for a Confessional  
Basis for our Children's  
Education — J.L. Van Popta .....300

The National Principals' Conference  
– November 14-16, 1994  
— F.C. Ludwig.....304

Annual Men's League Day  
– April 1, 1995  
— Keith Sikkema.....307

Ray of Sunshine  
— Mrs. R. Ravensbergen .....308

Letters to the Editor .....309

Reader's Forum  
— R. Duker .....310

Press Release – Classis  
Contracta Alberta/Manitoba .....311

Our Little Magazine  
— Aunt Betty .....311

that the promise to instruct the child in the doctrine of the church and have the child instructed in that doctrine is not a matter of the school. School is an academic institution preparing children to live and work in the world.

### Academic institutions

Why then have a school? Why then have a Canadian Reformed school if we do not need a school to have the children taught in the doctrine of salvation? Parents establish schools because the law of the land says that they must have their children educated in the arts and sciences. This education must also meet certain academic standards. The school, then, must teach children in all sorts of subjects, math, history, science, art, music, literature, language and so forth. The school is not there as a result of the parent's promise to have their children taught in the doctrine of salvation. It is an institution of learning run by like-minded parents who want to prepare their children for their place in the world.

Does the establishment of a Canadian Reformed school then have no relationship to faith and confession? Here we come to the heart of the matter. What then should underlie the teaching of math and science and art and music? Upon what should we base the teaching of literature, reading, writing? In the Church Order we have agreed that our schools should be founded on the Word of God as it is summarized in the confessions of the church. There is a good reason for this. Their education equips the children for their task in the world. The task of Reformed people in the world is always in the office of all believers, namely, as Prophet, Priest and King. In their office, believers (also children) submit their lives to Christ as their chief Prophet and Teacher, as their great High Priest and as their eternal King. Together with their parents they pray, "Thy kingdom come," that is, "So rule us by Thy Word and Spirit that more and more we submit to Thee." Thus the children also pray to Father that He might rule them by His Word and Spirit in their whole walk of life. As they learn to read, write and figure, as they learn about their bodies, about the earth and its creatures, about our country and its history and as they study literature, music and art, church and Bible history, they will learn that all of life is a matter of faith and confession. We want our children to have a "world view" that is in harmony with the Word of God. Scripture teaches us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and of knowledge. Without the fear of the Lord, as taught in the Scripture, true knowl-

edge is simply impossible. This includes knowledge of things concerning His creation. Without faith there is no real knowledge and understanding, but only facts and great learning.

Now someone may say, "Well and good! That is what the general Christian schools strive to do." There must be, however, a unity of faith between church, home and school. The confessions are not only confessions of the church. We must also say that they are the personal confessions of the believer. They are expressions of the head and heart knowledge of the believers, also of the children.



### Confession or philosophy?

We may be able to agree with the basis of the general Christian schools as well as the religious principles that they use as guidelines for instruction, but are they enough? I do not believe so. The underlying principle of the general Christian school is based on a philosophy not a confession. This philosophy, this system of thought, formulates the main tenets of the Christian religion around the themes of Creation, Fall and Redemption. This philosophy holds that as long as these three themes are dealt with in the set up of human institutions, they will function correctly without confessions.

In the first half of this century a Dutch philosopher, Herman Dooyeweerd, developed this train of thought. His followers in North America (whom some like to call the neo-Dooyeweerdians) worked out this philosophical understanding in the framework called "sphere sovereignty." This philosophy teaches that every sphere of life has to draw up its own creed in which are included the three themes of Creation – Fall – Redemption. Schools are simply one of the spheres of life. Christian schools are one sphere among many and so they need their own creed and their

own religious principles. Most general Christian schools in Canada function under this kind of philosophical idea.

This way of thinking means that also the church must draw up its own creeds. It is but one sphere, one community among many. It is a community of people not unlike school societies or labour unions or professional associations. Each sphere of life develops its own creed. A church creed is for the church. A school creed is for the school. A union creed is for the work place. And there are yet other creeds for business or professional associations. Sphere sovereignty is based on an idea that philosophy is the basis of our understanding of God, creation, fall and redemption. It also promotes the idea that the institutional church is not really the church of Jesus Christ at all. It is but one social structure among many. The real church is not the body of believers that meets as a local congregation on Sunday. The real church does not have an address or a local existence. Supporters of this view teach that the real church is that invisible supra-temporal church to which all believers belong. Each one of the social structures, as long as it is organized in a Christian way, is considered to be the body of Christ, with its own offices. The local church is a manifestation of the church, but also the school and the work place, if organized with a creed that recognizes Creation – Fall – Redemption, are bodies of Christ. The church with its creeds can be called the church as institute. The others are the church as organism. Each of these bodies needs its own peculiar and specific confession.

Those who hold to the ideas of sphere sovereignty would say there is no place for the church confessions within the school walls or in the halls of learning. They do not belong there. They have no meaning and cannot function there. The church as institute has its own confessions.

### We believe

We should answer, however, that the confessions are the confession of the believers. The "we believe" of almost every article in the Belgic Confession is the "we believe" of the man and woman, the child in the pew. The confession is not the testimony of only the minister or of the elders and deacons. Yes, the confessions are the confessions of the church, but the church is made of believers, of confessors. It is made up of people, men and women, who are confessors, believers, and their children. When we made a profession of faith,

each one of us confessed that “we believe” the doctrine as it is taught in this church (and that doctrine is taught in harmony with the Reformed confessions). We promised that we would steadfastly continue in that doctrine in life and death. We confessed that the doctrine taught in this church is a doctrine for all of life – also for our life as mothers and fathers and for our life in all occupations.

We cannot pretend that the confessions are only part of our church life. Look at them! Read them! Listen to the creeds! Lord’s Day 12 is about our life as a Christian in the world. Belgic Confession, article 36, is about our relation to the state and lawmakers, to our government. Lord’s Day 27 is about the separateness of the children of the covenant. (Perhaps the fundamental reason for our schools.) The Heidelberg Catechism’s discussion of the 10 Commandments is about our life in the world and our life with God and neighbour. The confession about the Lord’s Prayer is about our walk of life before God, about our bread, God’s kingdom, about God’s will for all men.

Clearly, the confessions are not (only) church confessions. They are life confessions. Lord’s Day 1 is not restricted to church life. It is about all of life. As parents, we must pass on these Reformed confessions to our children. We need to teach our offspring that the confession is a confession of faith for all of life. It is that confession which should be the basis of their education. It should be the testing stone for what they learn. It should be the measure our children use to test the spirits of our time. They need a lens through which to examine the world. They need a paradigm by which to structure their thoughts, their ideas, their conclusions. They need a “world view.” We should not base that “world view” on some philosophical construction, but rather on the doctrine of the Word of God which we confess in summary in the confessions.

Abraham Kuyper said that not one inch of life falls outside the domain of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ who is sovereign says about your whole life, “It is mine.” With this I think we can all agree. Jesus Christ has claimed our lives. “He has bought us,” Lord’s Day 1 says. He has paid for us so we must then live for Him from now on and confess our faith in Him. Confessing Christ and living for Him, however, has serious implications, because our confession is not simply a church confession. The confession of our faith remains the same on Monday as it was on Sunday. We do not leave the Heidelberg Cate-

chism in the book rack of the pew at the end of the afternoon service. We take it with us to work on Monday. We carry it to school on Tuesday. This is true because all of life is one. Because this is true, we must also teach our children that all of life is one.

### **Faith or religion**

As Reformed people we stress faith and knowledge, not religion. We maintain confessions of faith, not religious principles. Dr. Klaas Schilder, that great theologian and thinker of the past generation, has said:

To the Reformed believer, the Bible is everything. It is the norm and guideline for his piety. The experiences of his heart may only rest on what the Bible teaches as truth. Therefore, the contents of his faith, his confession, must be firmly established in his mind.

Prof. J. Geertsema, one of my teachers, has said:

The evangelical believer stresses the heart, his religious experience. He has no problems with all kinds of different views and opinions in matters of doctrine. One can believe this and the other that; it does not really matter. Each experiences his faith, his mystical union with Christ in his own way and any way is OK. The Reformed believer, however, wants to have his doctrine straight so he brings his confessions to bear on all of life. This is not intolerance. This is faith in Scripture and in God who reveals Himself to us in His Word. Therefore his confession is important in all of life.

Those who do not want to maintain confessions as the basis of all of life are actually attacking the Word of God. For they attack the truth of revelation. This opens the door to spiritual relativism. Each person has his personal experience. Each can have his own interpretation of the Bible. This is the cry of the Anabaptist. “No creed but the Bible. I will not be bound to your interpretation.” The Bible, however, is not a book of many interpretations. It does not teach for and against infant baptism. It does not teach for and against the Roman Catholic mass. It does not teach for and against prayer to the saints. It does not teach for and against women’s ordination. It does not teach for and against homosexuality. There is but one message. There is but one doctrine. There is but one truth.

### **Denominationalism**

The Reformed view about the place of the confession is opposed by modern

denominationalism. In denominationalism no one may say that other people are wrong. We can no longer say that the Anabaptists are wrong or that the Roman Catholic Church is wrong. “No,” we are told, “we just have differing insights; different emphases.” We must, however, reject this. We must test the spirits of our times, also in general Christian schools, even if this makes us rather unpopular. Just because the world no longer wants to say what is right, and what is wrong, we may not follow suit. We must be willing to stand up and say, “This is what the Scriptures teach. This is what ‘we believe.’” This is what we confess. We do that together as church of Jesus Christ, with one voice, in the Three Forms of Unity and in the Ecumenical Creeds. But if we say that in church, we must say that in our homes and teach our children to say the same. By implication we want the school to say the same.

### **True knowledge**

Our confessions are products of great struggles against heresy and of defenses mounted against attacks on the Word of God. This is true both of the Ecumenical Creeds as well as of the Three Forms of Unity. These latter three confessions testify against the error of the Roman Catholic Church, the Anabaptists, Libertines and the Arminians. They are faithful summaries of the Word of God in the face of attacks on the truth of that very same Word. Today we again live in a time of unprecedented attack on the truth of God’s word. We live in a time of relativism. It is a time when everyone has an opinion and everyone’s opinion is regarded to be as good as the next person’s. Truth, and the possibility of knowing anything for sure, is abandoned. We, however, can know the truth. God has revealed it to us in His Word. True knowledge is really possible – knowledge of God, but also knowledge of biology, psychology, origins, history, social structures, physics, language, music, art. Such knowledge can only be arrived at within the framework of scripture and confession. As we educate our children, let us then strive to base their education upon that confession, the confession that our fathers held to in life, the confessions for which also many of our fathers died.

We must take this call very seriously. In this day of moral and social relativism, in this day when faith and confession are but a matter of opinion and not truth, let us stand fast on the Reformed confessions so that we and our children might not be blown about

by every wind of doctrine. Let us teach our children to love their confessional heritage. By those confessions they can learn and confess that the truth of

God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. With these confessions they will learn that in all the market places of life they can be Reformed confes-

sors holding fast to the truth of Scripture as the only rule for all of life. **C**

Rev. J.L. Van Popta is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church in Ottawa.

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# The National Principals' Conference

## November 14-16, 1994

By F.C. Ludwig

This past autumn was a particularly mild and beautiful one in Southern Ontario, a little bonus as we gathered in "Ebenezer" Burlington's Fellowship Hall for the third National Principals' Conference, an event held every two years.

The initial event took place in the Fall of 1990 in Smithville, Ontario and the next venue was Langley B.C., in 1992. The purpose of these conferences is for the principals of the Canadian Reformed Schools across the country to get together to reflect upon and discuss their common tasks. We live and work in relative isolation and it is good to periodically put aside the daily concerns and look at the bigger picture to ensure that we don't lose sight of our ultimate goal.

As Canadian Reformed schools, we have a distinct perspective, which is probably most evident in our insistence on the covenantal connection, but we do not walk alone on the road of Christian education. There are many fellow travellers, particularly in the OACS (Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools), who have been working longer than we in defining their educational vision. Insofar as we can learn from them, we sought to share some of their experience. The theme of the conference was *Covenantal Education*, with a focus on several practical aspects. The opening presentation dealt with the curriculum implications of the theme, presented by Dr. Theodore Plantinga.

### T. PLANTINGA

Dr. Plantinga is a professor of philosophy at Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ontario. He is quite well-known in our circles, especially for his work of translation from the Dutch, particularly of, and about, K. Schilder. He is also an author in his own right, his latest work being *How Memory Shapes Narrative*.

Dr. Plantinga presented a wide-ranging, rapidly delivered paper, lasting the better part of three hours. No attempt will be made to summarize this, but perhaps to simply highlight a few points.

In general terms, we can agree that the purpose of Christian education is to build up God's people for service in this world. When we get beyond such generalities however, we tend to run into difficulties. Conservative thinking is facing some challenges today, because it tends to define itself in the negative. Conservatives tend to know what they don't want, but not necessarily what they do want. When denial is used as a form of affirmation, a problem develops when the element denied disappears:

- in politics, with the collapse of Communism conservatives lost their focus;
- in church politics, once the women in office issue was "won," conservative forces tended to become disarrayed;
- in education, conservatives tend to exist simply in reaction to the public school.

The problem is this: how do we define ourselves positively?

Dr. Plantinga also spoke at length about the adequacy of defining ourselves in covenantal terms, especially as this relates to assisting us in curriculum selection. He spoke of the various interpretations of covenant and stressed that since the concept of covenant is very broad, we need to ask whether it really does help us to define ourselves and our curriculum.

The speaker suggested that the Christian school needs to be confessionally circumscribed in the first place, rather than through the much broader concept of the covenant. This confessional starting point narrows the focus. Such a beginning has implications for membership

and enrolment, which is confessionally oriented. It also has implications for school-effectiveness, on the principle that schools work best when there is a strong element of commonality.

In terms of curriculum, however, we can adopt a much broader covenantal orientation. The epistemological implications of a covenantal orientation, with its emphasis on "we," is quite different from the Enlightenment mode of thinking in terms of "I." Just compare Descartes' defining phrase, "Cogito ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am) to the obvious corporate character of the covenantal relationship.

This covenantal "we" has a broader character than is often assumed. Plantinga identified three groups of covenantal "cousins" which should have curricular attention, these being liberal Protestants, Roman Catholics and believing Jews.

Plantinga fleshed out his argument by demonstrating our common covenantal roots with these groups, and our possible (desirable?) current attitude toward them. He emphasized the importance of letting the children know how big their community is. They must know how important and wide-spread is the work of God on earth.

Plantinga concluded that the main barrier to an understanding of the significance of covenant for curriculum is the near-universal tendency to think in terms of two histories, church or sacred history on the one hand, and general or world history, on the other. The first is regarded as limited in scope or significance, whereas the other is given high profile, with leading secular historians dictating the interpretive philosophies and views.

Plantinga instead pleads for a unity in our understanding of history a la K. Schilder (1890-1952). The latter





speaks about Christ taking in hand and breaking the seven seals of the book of God's counsels (Rev.5), which indicates that history "... is a history that is Christo-logically determined in every respect and is only comprehensible as such" (*De Openbaring van Johannes en het Sociale Leven*, pp. 45:6). It is the same Schilder who wrote in another of his works "Alle straf is verbondswraak. . ." (*All punishment is covenant wrath*) [*Tolle Legge* (Neem en Lees) pp .52,67].

This line of thinking implies that a covenantal approach to curriculum is broad-based, Christological in emphasis, and inclusive of our Western cultural tradition. It is not limited to a mere celebration of the fruits of faithful covenantal living, but includes also a recognition of the antithesis, and the reality of divine judgement that is beyond our comprehension. This perspective calls for sober, humble and Scripturally-guided teaching.

The afternoon of day one was devoted to "school visits." In this case, this was largely a matter of Western principals visiting the schools of their Eastern (or should we say Central) colleagues. This is always an interesting, and often fruitful exercise wherein we pick up new ideas ranging from school and classroom layout, to curriculum items.

## J. VISSCHER

Day two began with a presentation by Dr. J. Visscher of our Langley Church, titled, "Re-thinking Covenantal Education." This address was deliberately and considerably shorter than

that of the previous day to allow plenty of time for discussion.

Dr. Visscher began with a review of the recent history of the discussion, including the contributions of several writers and speakers on this topic, as well as the reaction of some of their critics.

After reviewing what he perceives to be the several ground rules of covenantal education and after having a look at another recently proposed model as laid out in *A Vision With a Task*, (Blomberg & Stronks, Ed., Baker Books, 1993), the speaker proposed another model, based on the office of all believers.

Dr. Visscher suggests that students should be directed toward their office of prophet, priest and king. He sees some of the advantages in this approach as follows:

- it takes the emphasis away from the personality of the students;
- training for office equips man to reflect God's image on earth;
- a model based on the concept of office covers all areas of life;
- such a model binds together the role of church, home and school.

According to the speaker, then, the aim of covenantal education should be to equip students for their office. In terms of their office as *prophets*, students must focus on the Word. Both the home and the church have a significant teaching and modelling role here, but at school there should be a demonstration of the implication of the Word for all areas of the curriculum, for relationships and for witness.

In this regard, a few questions were posed as well, such as: Are our Bible

courses perhaps too factual? These must be so constructed as to drive students to Christ, to worship and to the world, (i.e., witness, evangelism). Another question was: Do we do enough to give our students a proper prophetic vision? We must enable them to see their calling and help them to understand how it may be exercised.

With respect to their office as *priests*, students must be pointed to God. They must be called to holy living, to exercise piety in their daily lives. To that end, the work of our school must be wrapped in prayer, and clothed in love and compassion. Has this area perhaps received too little attention? Indeed, we *must* put more stress on piety, if piety is properly understood as exercising the fruits of the Spirit.

As *kings*, students should have their vision directed to the world and Christ's kingdom. They must be taught to recognize the attacks of Satan as what we must fight against. Their education must equip students for rulership. Their training is not for personal fulfilment in the first place, but for service.

How well does this work as a model for education? It isn't meant to replace the idea of covenantal education, but is perhaps more like a refinement or a more specific rendering of it. Further, this model based on office might be regarded as a reaction to the rather general nature of most writing about covenantal education. Its strength lies in its balance between home and school.

The school, of course, does not stand alone. As schools tend to take on more and more roles because homes are often becoming dysfunctional, we need to be reminded that the home also has a function. The pulpit also has to be more prophetic, because the pews are becoming too comfortable. While we flog the concepts of "church" and "covenant" to death, we often forget the marks of the true Christian as given in Art. 29 of the *Belgic Confession*. Since students react to the hypocrisy of adults, we need to strive for a balance between right doctrine and right living; we must not only *confess*, but also *live* the truth.

The gap between theory and practice is often a source of frustration. How do we translate the one into the other? We might begin by asking how piety comes to expression in a Christian school. Without trying to be exhaustive, the following points come to mind:

- the teacher has to be a model of piety;
- (s)he must show the fruits of the Spirit in, e.g., Bible telling and literature;
- the teacher has a pivotal role in the environment of the classroom;

- (s)he creates the environment for learning;
- (s)he has the respect of the student;
- there has to be a concrete relationship between the content and context of the work.

The mark of the Christian is to be prophet, priest and king. Can this model work? Christ alone can make it work by His Word and Spirit. Any hope of success depends upon the triad of home, school and church working together with this model. After all, education is a communal thing. The speech of Dr. Visscher gave is a lot to think about and build upon!

## E. VANDERBOOM

The afternoon session was devoted to the issue of leadership within our schools and how we, as principals exercise it. This presentation was made by Mr. Ed. Vanderboom, principal of Credo Christian High School in Langley, under the title of "Leadership: Implications and Challenges for Reformed Schools."

Mr. Vanderboom focused his presentation on leadership . . . "with a human face" and discussed three areas of our leadership function from that view point, namely with respect to the board, the staff and the students.

Because of the nature of the presentation it is difficult to give a lot of specifics for a review. Mr. Vanderboom drew heavily on his lengthy experience as a school leader, and did so largely anecdotally. This method was very effective in evoking the emotional toll that the leadership task often involves.

In summary, suffice it to say, that the afternoon speaker was very successful in reviewing with us the many elements involved in the leadership role, and enlightening us on many of them.

## A. WITTEN

After enjoying a hearty meal together, we gathered again in our meeting place at 8:00 p.m., to listen to Dr. Art Witten speak to an audience of principals and board members on the topic of "Discipline and Covenantal Education."

Mr. Witten wrote a doctoral dissertation on the subject of discipline, especially as practised in the Canadian Reformed Schools. This made him a natural choice to speak on this topic. The subject is one that tends to engage the emotions rather easily, and is one that few are neutral about.

Discipline has always been associated with learning, and the relationship has often been an uneasy one. The ultimate purpose of discipline is to enable a child to live in a covenant relationship and should result in self-discipline.

Mr. Witten took us through a historical survey of the subject, filling us in on how discipline was regarded and practised in the Jewish tradition, the Hellenistic world, and by various giants in church history, such as Augustine, Calvin, Luther and Ursinus.

In the 20th century, the principle of *in loco parentis* (in the place of the parent) is used to maintain corporal punishment, which remains as part of a statute in the Criminal Code in spite of various attempts to change it.

Discipline is a major cause of teacher stress. A 1988 study revealed that many teachers saw themselves as martyrs, having no authority to discipline students. A 1991 study specific to the Canadian Reformed community, and the basis for much of the aforementioned dissertation, rendered some interesting results.

Among these was the finding that teachers, parents, and students favoured corporal punishment. In the case of students, 53% were found to be *in favour* of the strap, which was seen as a deterrent. In spite of this finding, and given the current cultural milieu, most schools now have a "hands off" policy, and the majority of teachers favour alternative forms of punishment.

The religious basis of our schools gives us a common denominator which provides for a high degree of harmony between home and school, but we shouldn't take anything for granted. Local school guidelines should spell out the discipline policy clearly, including reasonable physical punishment. A point was made, however, of emphasizing that good teaching reduces discipline problems, thus placing less reliance on coercive methods.

The speaker drew on Hebrews 12 as evidence of the Scriptural view of discipline. Discipline is proof of a real relationship. While the discipline imposed by God may be painful, it is always positive. Its aim is to remediate and deter, leading ultimately to self-disciplined, loving service to God and man.

Quite a number of questions came up for discussion and debate after the coffee break. In fact, the discussion was cut short because at 10:00 p.m., exhaustion was setting in for the participants, who had been busy since 9:00 a.m.

## J. VREUGDENHIL

Wednesday, the last day of the conference, featured Mr. Jim Vreugdenhil, co-author of *Hallmarks of Christian Schooling*. Mr. Vreugdenhil is Education Coordinator for the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (O.A.C.S.).

The work referred to is the attempt by the OACS to define the philosophy and practice of Christian education in the OACS schools.

Mr. Vreugdenhil took us through the stages of the process that was followed to arrive at the final document, thus setting the framework for the morning's presentation. He mentioned that we are quite good at talking about Christian education in faith or theological terms, but less so in educational terms.

By way of overheads, questionnaires and so forth, the speaker took us through the process of defining a number of specific components of a model of education. He established clear distinctions on several of these components between the most recent Ontario Ministry model known as the *Common Curriculum*, and *Hallmarks*. He then had us reflect on our views on the same points and "forced" us to articulate these. In doing so, he gave us a very good taste of the difficulties and challenges involved in clearly defining our goals in those specific educational terms. This process reminded us of the original presentation of the conference, in which the speaker had stated that we tend to be more clearly defined on what we are *against*, than what we are *for*.

It would be a vain undertaking to try to reproduce the whole presentation/discussion of the morning. Hopefully the foregoing has given you a taste. For those with a keen interest, it would be well-worthwhile to get a copy of *Hallmarks of Christian Schooling*, by Vreugdenhil & Vriend. It is available at the **Redeemer College Bookstore** for \$12.95 plus tax. Better yet, it can be ordered from the OACS office by telephone for \$10.00 including GST.

After another tasteful lunch, we reconvened to wrap up the conference with reflection on what we had experienced and learned over these three days. Some preliminary plans were made for the next conference, to be held, D.V., in November 1996 in Langley, B.C.

Finally, this review would not be complete without a word of appreciation to "Ebenezer" Canadian Reformed Church for the use of their fine facilities, and to Jerry and Minnie Meyer of *Choice Cuisine* for taking care of our nourishment needs in such a tasty and timely fashion.

May the total experience serve to build up the participants and, in turn, the schools that they lead, under the LORD's blessing.

Mr. F.C. Ludwig is the principal of John Calvin Christian School in Burlington, ON. **C**

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# Annual Men's League Day, April 1, 1995

On Saturday, April 1, 1995, the League of Men's Societies of the Canadian and American Reformed churches held its annual league day in the Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church of Burlington East. Some 80 brothers and sisters had come from across Ontario for a morning of instruction and fellowship. It was a beautiful spring day in every sense of the word.

Brother George Helder, the vice-chairman of the league, opened the meeting at ten o'clock with audience singing of Psalm 148:1 and 2, prayer and the reading of Hebrews 1 and Ephesians 6:10-13. After some introductory remarks, he gave the floor to the Reverend C. Bosch of Burlington South.

Reverend Bosch addressed his audience under the title, *Angels of Light and of Darkness* (The text of his address will be made available to *Clarion* for publication.) After the speech the speaker entertained several written

and verbal questions, inviting the audience to participate in the discussion. Several questions were raised during this dialogue, including ones about the distinction between the cherubim and the seraphim; the Angel of the Lord; the apparent prevalence of evil spirits in other cultures; the time of the fall of the angels; the nature of being possessed by demons; the role of the angels in the Old Testament and in the New Testament; the place in our hearts for the Holy Spirit, angels, and Satan; the concrete manner in which angels encourage the saints; and the phrase "because of the angels" in 1 Corinthians 11:10; finally, the "omnipresence" (angels are everywhere) of angels was also questioned. While Rev. Bosch responded to most questions, some dialogue from the floor took place as well.

At the end of the morning session, Keith Sikkema presented a report on the

progress of the Inter League Publication Board.

The mealtime provided ample opportunity to further discuss angels, syndical issues (like Bible translations and Reformed - Presbyterian relations) and other matters that keep our minds occupied. It also allowed us to enjoy and experience the bond of a common purpose in studying Scripture and Confession and the ramifications these have for our lives.

Throughout the day, interested people could look at and buy books published by the Inter League Publication Board. The ILPB publishes Quality Reformed Study Material for the study of Scripture and Confessions, although some other books have been produced as well.

After lunch, a short council meeting was held of the delegates of represented societies.

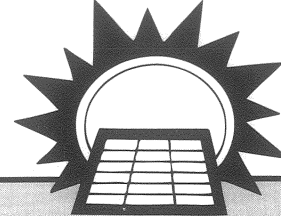
Keith Sikkema,  
for the Men's League. 



*Men's League Day in progress*

*Rev. C. Bosch  
delivering his  
speech*





By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

*“As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people, from this time forth and for evermore.” Psalm 125:2*

## Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Do you remember the story of the Israelites in the desert? They were led out of Egypt. The Lord had drowned Pharaoh and his soldiers in the Red Sea. Now Israel was free. They were on their way to the promised land. The cloud by day and a fiery cloud by night assured them of the presence of the Lord. They had nothing to fear. The only thing they had to do was to follow the directions given to them by Moses and Aaron in the name of the Lord. That did not sound too difficult!

But the people started to complain: there was no food. They thought their life in Egypt had been much better, for there they always had enough to eat. They forgot the freedom they had received, they forgot the promises that the Lord had given them, they even forgot to pray. They began to complain, and they became angry with Moses and Aaron. It was even worse than that. For actually they were angry with the Lord. Moses and Aaron could not do much at this point. And what was the Lord going to do?

You know the continuation of this Bible story. The Lord sent them so many birds, that they ate meat until they became sick of it. And the Lord also gave them bread. The people had to gather the “manna” themselves, but at the end everyone had just enough for one day. The Lord took care that everyone had exactly as much as he/she needed. They were not allowed to keep anything until the next day. But on the day before the Sabbath day, they had to gather for two days. On the Sabbath day, the Day of Rest, they would eat what they had gathered on the day before. These were the instructions from the Lord. In faith the Israelites would have to follow them. If they would do as the Lord had instructed Moses, the Lord would bring them into the land of Canaan. That was the promise. The instructions were plain and straightforward. Everyone could follow them. Not much could go wrong. The future of the Israelites was clear and sure.

Now let us compare the position of the Israelites with our present lives. We are not travelling in the desert and we do not live in tents, or eat manna. Our lives are much more comfortable than that. We live already in a beautiful country, and most of us have nice, cozy homes. So what do we have in common with the Israelites?

The same God Who took care of the Israelites, also takes care of us. He gave His instructions to the Israelites, He even gave them the Ten Commandments. We have to obey those same Ten Commandments still today. The Israelites had to trust the Lord. They had to show faith in Him, trusting that the manna would be there every day; they were not allowed to worry about the next day. And we have to do exactly the same thing: depend on the Lord, expect everything from Him, and never doubt that He is taking care of us. We know from the Bible that the Israelites often failed God’s test. They complained and disagreed with Moses and Aaron. Many things went wrong on their travels to Canaan. At the end only a few people of that first generation were allowed to enter the promised land. We are not any better. We are often unhappy about certain things in our lives, or we worry about the future, or we want to do things that are not pleasing to the Lord. We often do not show faith, or we disobey the Lord’s commandments.

Even though we live in nice houses, yet we are not here to stay forever. We also are on our way to the promised Land. The Lord promised to bring us there if we obey Him.

But there are many obstacles on our way, and we often forget to follow the instructions. Just like so many of the Israelites were not allowed to enter the land of Canaan, so we could never reach the promised Land either.

Yet we do not have to lose hope. For the Lord gave us His Son. He humbled Himself and came down to the earth. He suffered, He died on the cross and He was buried. He bore all that humiliation, He suffered all that pain and loneliness for our sins. And now, sitting at the right hand of God the Father, He pleads for us. He took upon Himself all our sins and bore God’s wrath for us. Through Him we receive a free passage into the promised Land.

We are travelling, just like the Israelites were. We are meeting many anxieties. There is so much human suffering, there are many temptations, there is loneliness, there is hopelessness, poverty, stress and much, much more. But whatever it is that makes our journey difficult, there is nothing that is not included in the instructions that the Lord Himself made up for us. Because He personalized everyone’s instructions, He also provides us with the means to follow them. The Lord took care that every Israelite had enough manna for the day. He also gives us “our daily bread” when we ask Him for that. The daily bread includes much more than only food. It is everything we need for our physical and spiritual needs. He is there to help us. With Jesus Christ as our Guide we cannot fail. With Him we can take obstacles and face temptations. He helps us to take every step necessary to reach our final goal.

So we may go with Him, every day, every step. Our Saviour opened the gates to the Land of the Promise, to the heavenly Jerusalem. Let us hurry and not look back. Let us follow the instructions. The Lord will decide when it is time for us to enter His eternal glory. As long as we are on our way, He will provide for us and make sure that none of His children will fall short of anything. Trust in His almighty power, believe in His promises, and everything else will be given onto you.

*All look to Thee, a countless multitude,  
That in due time Thou mayest give them food.  
Now filled with the good things that Thou providest,  
They are dismayed when Thou Thy countenance hidest.  
When Thou dost take away their breath, they die;  
They are created when Thou, from on high  
Thy Spirit sending, them with life enduest.  
The face of all the earth Thou, LORD, renewest.*

*Psalm 104:7*

## Birthdays in August:

- 5: Philip Schuurman**  
156 St. Catharines St., Unit 12, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0
- 9: Rose Malda**  
Oakland Centre, 53 Bond St., Oakville ON L6J 5B4
- 18: Fenny Kuik**  
Box 35, Group 606, SS 6, Winnipeg, MB R2C 2Z3
- 23: Jack Dieleman**  
5785 Yonge Street, Apt 704, Willowdale, ON M2M 4J2

Happy Birthday to you. I wish you a nice day, and hope you will receive lots of cards! Until next month,

Mrs. R. Ravensbergen  
7462 Hwy. 20, RR 1, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please mail, e-mail or fax letters for publication to the editorial address.  
They should be 300 words or less.  
Those published may be edited for style or length.

## Dear Brother in Christ,

Re: News Medley debate. You must be close to ending the debate on Reverend W.W.J. VanOene's discontinued column "News Medley." Please allow me to make a few observations before you take that step.

Almost 25 years ago, I started reading the *Canadian Reformed Magazine* as a subscriber as well as the history of the Secessions in the Netherlands. At first, I found "News Medley" rather amusing, and certainly conforming with the general perception Christian Reformed people often hold about the Liberated churches. However, as I read more about the history of the Secessions and saw what was happening in my then ecclesiastical backyard, the more I appreciated VanOene's efforts at putting the seemingly insignificant issues (may I refer to them as "the little foxes") before his readership. Needless to say, I read them with great profit.

That "News Medley" was read with mixed feelings at times, may be expected. When its author gleaned items of questionable content or expression from council reports, etc., he did the churches a service by pointing these out for correction.

"News Medley" comment can be taken two ways, of course. The "popular" one, is a dismissal of any comment with a statement such as "meddling in affairs of local churches." But is it that simple?

The other one, which is to be preferred, has its roots in Scripture (see Romans 12: 3-8, 1 Cor. 12, Gal. 6:1-5) where living membership of the church is being dealt with. Even more to the point are the letters of the apostles to the churches, where they express their interest in and concern for the members of the churches (Romans 16, 1 Cor. 16, 2 Cor. 13, Eph. 6, Phil. 4, etc.) by way

of encouragement, exhortation and admonishment. The apostles did not hold the careless attitude that is so prevalent in today's individualistic society and one we so desperately need to avoid. Scripture teaches us humility, also in matters of the federation of churches.

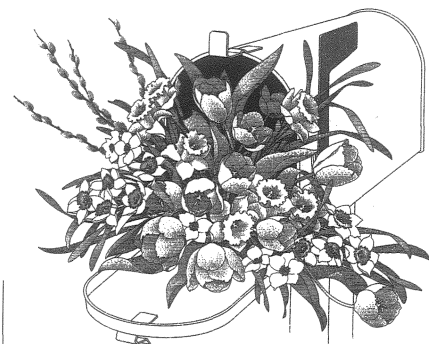
As a federation, we conduct ourselves according to Scripture and have mutually formulated a set of rules to which we adhere voluntarily (as a minimum). We need to take our mutual responsibility very seriously, even if some think it is meddlesome (if this is indeed so, it should be discerned on the basis of Scripture, Confession as well as the Church Order, and be challenged Scripturally.)

The Canadian Reformed churches have been well-served by VanOene's efforts at commentary. In addition to "News Medley," there is a comparative study in church polity as used in the Christian Reformed Church and the Canadian Reformed Churches, a church order commentary and a history of the federation. Let's build on this heritage, and keep in mind that the little foxes spoil the vineyard.

A.A. van der Heide,  
Surrey, BC

## Dear Editor,

It appears that the scissors of the Editor are a strong weapon what can be used to change the purport of a letter to the Editor. In "Clarion" May 19/95, my letter to the Editor regarding an article of Rev. Kampen in "Clarion" Feb. 24/95 is placed. However not the letter like I have sent to the Editor. After the words . . . "with foreign churches", line 8, the words: Somewhat pluriform, one would say," are left out. After the words: "Eeuw, pp. 335 and 337" line 16, the following is left out: "The G.S. of the

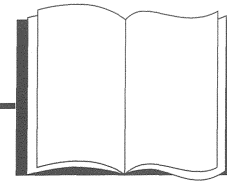


Doleantie churches was convened in 1890 at Leeuwarden. This G.S. decided to send a written declaration of appreciation to A.F. de Savornin Lehman and to his brother W.H. de Savornin Lehman, for the work done by them in defending the Doleantie churches in the courts and for advising the churches. (Ibid. pp. 207-208) Most likely the influence of Dr. Kuyper's ideas about the church (pluriformity) was part of that "interaction." The intention of my letter was to prove that not the Seceded churches made statements about attestations, etc. with foreign churches, but the Doleantie churches and that most likely the pluriformity idea of Kuyper was the basis for that contact with foreign churches. The Seceded churches did not agree with that pluriformity idea. Since in the Federation of American/Canadian churches, it can be heard more and more to have pulpit exchange, and to admit to the Lord's Table those who did not yet join one of the churches of our Federation, it appears that the same pluriformity idea, comes more and more to life among us.

Rev. Kampen wrongly refers to the Seceded churches in his article. I think it is proper to refer to those churches in the correct way: They and we do not have any in our Confessions about pluriformity.

Finally a little correction: Two times is mentioned the year 1890: "Brummelkamp declared to G.S. 1890 . . ." and a little farther: "This information is found in the Acts of G.S. 1890." In both cases it is a misprint. It must be 1840. Brummelkamp passed away in 1888, so he could not declare in 1890."

With brotherly greetings  
W. DeHaan, Wardsville, ON



The views expressed in Reader's Forum are not necessarily those of the editorial committee or the publisher. Submissions should not exceed 900 words. Those published may be edited for style or length.

## To the Editor:

In a recent letter br. H. DeJong addressed the topic of the last days and the coming again of Jesus Christ. He makes the following conclusions: 1) Matt. 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 speak only of the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem, 2) There will be no personal anti-Christ, and 3) Christ can return at anytime. I would like to comment on these points.

First, the term "last days" in Scripture generally refers to the time between the ascension and return of the Lord Jesus. The judgment of 70 A.D. was the first fulfillment of those days. However, this was only the "beginning of sorrows." (Matt. 24:8) A second judgment will happen in the last days that is yet to come. Both judgments focus on the apostate church. The destruction of Jerusalem foreshadowed the final judgment. The events of Mark 13:24-27 did not happen in 70 A.D.

Br. DeJong states that in 70 A.D. Christ came in His wrath. He refers us to Matt. 16:28; P.P. Mark 9:1 and Luke 9:27. The wording used is slightly different in all three gospels, but there is no mention of judgment or wrath. Rather, the emphasis is on seeing the Kingdom of God. Jesus later informs the disciples where this would take place and that it would happen in their lifetime. (Luke 24:49) The parallel passage we should refer to is Acts 2:1ff. Here Christ came in His Spirit with power as He had promised.

Only some of the hearers of the Gospel actually received the Spirit at Pentecost before they died. The majority of Jews would die in their unbelief.

When the disciples did receive the Holy Spirit as promised then the Kingdom of God could be seen by them. (1 Cor. 2:7ff)

Second, Paul explained to the Thessalonians that the Lord's return would happen only after the apostasy or falling away. (2 Thess. 2:3) Paul also wrote about this to Timothy in 1 Tim. 4:1 and 2 Tim. 4:3,4. We know today what happened to the church in the common era. The church became apostate and millions of people have fallen away to the heresies of Rome and Islam. God's Spirit then caused a Great Reformation to counteract the Great Apostasy. Paul also tells the Thessalonians that the "man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; so that he as God, sits in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God." (2 Thess. 2:3,4) So we know that the son of perdition arises out of the church and replaces God himself. References to the church as temple can be found in Eph. 2:19-22 and Rev. 7:15. Who in the history of the church in the last days has taken the seat of God in the church? Calvin and other reformers thought it to be the Pope. This view is not popular today but I believe it is correct. Although there have been many Popes in history, there has been one continuous reign as it is a perpetual office as Calvin points out. The Pope claims the name of "Holy Father" (see Matt. 23:9 and John 17:11) and the title of "Vicar of Christ" (usurped from the Holy Spirit). The church of Rome has severely persecuted the reformed believers. It performs false miracles (infuses grace, transforms the bread and wine at mass, etc., not to mention the many visions and bleeding icons

that are reported). Rome also prays to saints, Mary, and idolizes numerous relics. The Vatican is also a political entity. Its influence on world governments is widespread. The masses of unregenerate people praise the wisdom, goodness and honourableness of the Pope. His every public message is broadcast around the world. People listen to his edicts and make his published works best sellers. He is renowned as the great Spiritual leader of our time.

We as reformed Christians, should be under no illusion who and what our archrival is in the world. The church of Rome continues to influence the World Council of Churches using reconciliatory language to bring State and Mainstream Protestant churches under its wing. Islam, the other stream of apostasy, remains the leader in persecuting Christians around the world. The dragon, beasts, false prophet, and Babylon all work in unison to destroy the true church.

Finally, the question of when Christ will return. Anytime? Those who believe this must also believe that the apostasy has come and that man of sin has been revealed. Otherwise, Christ will not return yet. The Scriptures say He will come like a thief. (2 Pet. 3:10, etc.) However, we do not know exactly when the Son of God will return for some things God has reserved for Himself. (Acts 1:6,7) We do know that we also live in the last days. We should only heed the Lord's command: "Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." (Matt. 24:42)

R. Duker 



# Quiz Time!

Busy Beavers, do you help out with the gardens around your house? If you do, then fruit and flowers are your rewards!

## FRUIT AND FLOWERS WORD SEARCH

by Busy Beaver *Barbara Bultena*

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

### Find these words:

flower marigold  
 mum rose  
 garden pine  
 oak glads  
 maple oranges  
 apple grass  
 pear plum  
 peach figs  
 pick plant  
 lilac sap  
 rain sun

## FURNITURE!

Houses in biblical times had few pieces of furniture. Fill in the blanks with the furniture mentioned.

1. A man on a \_\_\_\_\_ was let down through a roof to see Jesus. Luke 5:19
2. A beggar wished to eat crumbs which fell from a rich man's \_\_\_\_\_. Luke 16:21
3. Jehoiada made a bank from a \_\_\_\_\_ to hold the offerings. 2 Kings 12:9
4. A great woman of Shunem and her husband made a room with a \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ for El-isha to use. 2 Kings 4:8-10
5. Jesus told a man sick with palsy to take up his \_\_\_\_\_ and walk. Matthew 9:6
6. God said the Egyptians would have frogs everywhere, even in their \_\_\_\_\_. Exodus 8:3
7. Solomon said the virtuous (good) woman "puts her hands to the \_\_\_\_\_." Proverbs 31:19
8. To protect David, Michal put an image in a \_\_\_\_\_ and said David was sick. 1 Samuels 19:13
9. Seven men were chosen to work at \_\_\_\_\_ to free the disciples to study and preach. Acts 6:2-3
10. No one would put a \_\_\_\_\_ under a bushel. Matthew 5:15

## WAGON WHEEL CODE

by Busy Beaver *Eritia Smit*

D E G I L O S V W F P Q R K M  
 ⊗ ⊕ ⊙ ⊚ ⊛ ⊜ ⊝ ⊞ ⊟ ⊠ ⊡ ⊢

⊣ ⊤ ⊥ ⊦ ⊧ ⊨ ⊩ ⊪ ⊫ ⊬ ⊭ ⊮

## BIBLE TEXT CODE

by Busy Beaver *Candace Schuurman*

A ⬆ G Ⓜ M X S ⚡ Y ⚡  
 B ★ H ☹ N ✓ T ▲ Z ♁  
 C ? I ⊗ O ◇ U ☼  
 D ⚡ J Ⓛ P Ⓢ V ⚡  
 E ☺ K □ Q ⊙ W ⊖  
 F ♁ L O R ⚡ X Ⓢ

Ⓛ ☺ ⚡ ☼ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⊗ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡

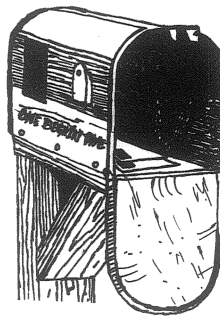
☹ ⊗ X' ⊗ ⚡ X ⚡ ☹ ☺

⊖ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ✓ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ☺

▲ ⚡ ☼ ⚡ ☹ ⚡ ✓ ⚡ ⚡ ☹ ☺

Ⓛ ⊗ ♁ ☺ " John 14:6a

(answer at end)



## FROM THE MAILBOX

Hi, *Michael Versteeg*. Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club. I'm glad you enjoy doing the puzzles in this column. How were your trips to Australia and Holland? Hope to hear from you soon! Bye Michael.

Hello, *Michael Janssens*. Thanks for the letter. Do you have lots of time now to watch the birds? Have a good summer holiday! Bye Michael.

Hi *Lorelle Barendregt*. Nice to hear from you. Thanks for the puzzle. How's your family. Bye, Lorelle.

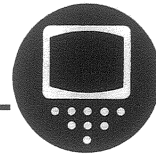
Hi *Deanna Wierenga*. When is your cousin's wedding? Are you ready for it? What kinds of songs are you learning for the C.D.? Sounds like a lot of work! Bye, Deanna.

Answer to Bible Text Code.  
 That's all, Busy Beavers.

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life.'"

Have a happy holiday.

Love,  
 Aunt Betty



## Press Release of Classis Contracta Alberta/Manitoba held in the Immanuel Church building on May 17, 1995

Elder L. Bol representing the convening church, the Immanuel Church in Edmonton, opens the meeting, reads Ps. 147 and leads in prayer. He welcomes the delegates to the meeting.

The delegates from the convening church examine the credentials and find them to be in good order. Delegated are:

Rev. E. J. Tiggelaar – Barrhead  
Elder L. Bol and Elder C. Meliefste – Edmonton Immanuel  
Elder J. Bosch and Elder B. Van Raalte – Edmonton Providence  
Rev. W. Slomp – Neerlandia  
Classis is declared constituted.

Rev. W. Slomp is appointed chairman and Rev. E. J. Tiggelaar is appointed clerk.

### Agenda:

1. Matter of the release of Rev. R. Schouten from the Church at Calgary and a request for counselor.

The agenda is adopted as proposed.  
Incoming Mail:

a. Cover letter from the church at Calgary requesting the honourable release of the Rev. R. Schouten.

b. Letter of call from the church at Abbotsford, B.C., dated April 19, 1995

c. Letter of acceptance of call from Rev. R. Schouten, dated April 21, 1995

d. Letter from the church at Abbotsford to the church at Calgary, stating that they will take responsibility of Rev. Schouten on June 1, 12:01 a.m.

e. Letter of release from the church at Calgary, non-dated, specifically setting the time of the release of the Rev. R. Schouten at June 1, 12:01 a.m. Pacific Daylight Saving's Time.

After reading and examining all the documents and finding them to be in good order, Classis Contracta decides to grant Rev. R. Schouten an honourable release from Classis Alberta/Manitoba. The chairman reads and provides the Certificate of Release. This is duly signed by the chairman and clerk.

The church at Calgary requests that Classis appoint the Rev. J.D. Wielenga as their counselor in the absence of a minister. This request is granted.

Classis appoints the church at Taber to represent Classis at the farewell evening of Rev. Schouten and family.

Question Period is not made use of.  
Censure ad Art. 44 is not necessary.

The Acts are read and adopted.

Press release is approved.

The chairman, Rev. W. Slomp closes the meeting with prayer.

*E.J. Tiggelaar, clerk e.t.* **C**

## OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



### Dear Busy Beavers,

*Let's all cheer – Hooray!  
Four our country great  
July 1st is Canada Day,  
Our country's 128!*

*Canada has many wonderful sights,  
High mountains covered with snow,  
flat, flat prairies where grasses blow,  
farmlands where lots of food can grow.*

*But most of all . . .*

*Here we can praise God's Name,  
Read His Word  
Tell of His fame  
'Til everyone has heard.*

*God has been so good to us,  
Let's all thank Him,  
For giving us great blessings,  
In our country Canada!*

### JULY BIRTHDAYS

Congratulations! These Busy Beavers have their birthdays in the same month as our country, Canada! On July 1st, Canada will be 128 years old.

I hope you all have a wonderful birthday celebration with your friends and family.

Kristin Vandergugten	1	Rachel Wierenga	15
Deborah van Beek	1	Barbara Bultena	15
Rebecca Kelly	1	Jared Helder	18
Joanna Vink	3	Karen Terpstra	20
Amanda Hoeksema	3	Vickie Aikema	23
Heather Muis	6	Kimberly VanderVelde	24
David Aikema	9	Jacquie Selles	24
Shaun Smeding	9	Cecilia Barendregt	25
Tim Hordyk	12	Crvstal Slaa	25
Lorelle Barendregt	13	Trina Jelsma	26
Jeremy Koopmans	14	Luanne Feenstra	27
Henrietta Breukelman	15	Melyjille Buist	29