

Clarion

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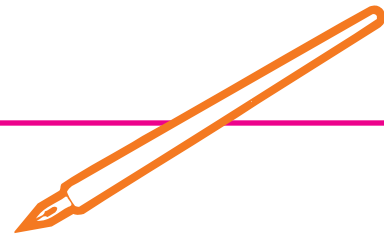


Mission at home

Numbers

10:1-10

By J. Geertsema



Mission at home and planting new churches

A few observations

Sometimes it can be good to share experiences. This summer I had a few that I think are worth talking about. I begin at my home church in Ancaster. Then I take you along on my vacation to a place on Rice Lake and to Trenton. All these names can be found on the Ontario map. However, from Rice Lake and Trenton we shall also go to the West, beyond the Ontario border.

Ancaster

Earlier this summer, the consistory of the church at Ancaster called us to a congregational meeting to discuss setting up a specific home mission project. Not only older members but also younger people attended the meeting. The congregation approved of the consistory's proposal to appoint a home mission board and a full-time mission worker. The work will be done in close cooperation with the neighbouring church of Burlington-South, under the supervision and final responsibility of the consistory of the Ancaster church.

These decisions consolidate evangelism work done for a number of years already by young people of the Ancaster and Hamilton churches. Among them were and are students of the Theological College. Partly as a result of this outreach, the church at Ancaster had a joyful Sunday in June when six new members from outside were added to the congregation by public profession of faith and/or baptism.

At the above mentioned meeting, the hope was expressed that this new project would not stop here, but would eventually expand into a nation wide organization with home mission workers and home missionaries also in the centre of the country and in the West. This organization would, then, be able to coordinate different undertakings and provide study material, for instance for the Summer Bible Schools and for other activities.

Rice Lake

One day, my wife and I went on a discovery trip around Rice Lake, between Peterborough and Campbellford, where we camped. We were particularly interested in Serpent Mounds Park, on the north shore of the lake. Up to three years ago, this was a provincial park, but since then it is owned and managed by Indians. These Serpent Mounds are serpent shaped burial mounds. (Beside this part of the park is a quiet family campground.) On a guided tour over the burial grounds, we learned many interesting things about the lives of the natives in that area in the past.

We also walked around in the Visitors' Centre. The displays about the geology, geography, and history of the area were still those the Provincial government had set up. As one can expect, the information was steeped in evolutionism. We were struck by a note on one display saying: "We do not believe all these things." This made us curious. We talked about it with a young woman sitting at a desk and later with our young guide. They said that they believe in the Creator who made everything some thousands (not millions or billions) of years ago.

This sounded good. And this positive impression was strengthened by the fact that these young people were well-behaved, decent young people who showed that they had and lived by high moral standards and were also economically doing fine. We liked what we saw and heard, but up to a point. For a principal difference became evident: the antithesis between the true, biblical faith and other forms of beliefs. The Creator-god of the Indians is not the God of the Bible, even though this may be suggested. He is not the Father of Christ Jesus. He supposedly created four different races, the white, black, yellow, and red, giving each their own characteristic features for their own specific task on earth and for their own specific way of communicating with the Creator. There was no reaction to the assurance from our side that there is only one way to God for all races: Jesus Christ with His blood and Holy Spirit. This is the sad part of our trip. It made our mind fly far to the West, to Smithers, where our sister church continues to involve herself in the evangelism labours among the natives. A visit to Serpent Mounds Park reminds one of the great need in Ontario of the type of work done in Smithers.

Not only do the natives themselves present a reviving Indian spirituality as the power that will save them, but they are also supported in thinking this way by modern liberal churches. "In 1986, at its national General Council meeting in Sudbury, Ontario" the United Church officially and formally apologized to Canada's aboriginal people for "denying the values of aboriginal spirituality."

All this stresses the need to proclaim that all need to believe in the only true Saviour Christ Jesus and to seek life and well-being in Him. We have a Christian neighbourly calling also with respect to the native people, whether they are well to do or at the lower end of the social ladder, just as many white people. We also owe it to these people of the First Nations to reach out to them with the only gospel of true redemption in Christ. If others take that gospel away, we should put even more effort into bringing it to them.

May the LORD, therefore, bless the evangelism work in Smithers and give much enduring, patient enthusiasm for it – an enthusiasm that is not rooted in great results but in the love of the triune God for lost sinners. Time and again, He shows us in his Word that his compassion often goes to those whose needs are the greatest and whose miseries the deepest. May He continue to gather and build his church also from the First Nations on this continent, and make us faithful servants with Him in this work.

Doing the one thing does not mean forgetting the other. There is so much to do. This brings us to our third point of interest: Trenton's house congregation.

Trenton

In the time of our stay in Campbellford's Park, I had the privilege one Sunday to lead the services in the Trenton house congregation. In accordance with Art. 41 of our Church Order, this house church lives under the supervision of the consistory of the neighbouring church at Toronto. The group is still very small and there is not much growth. I express the wish that their number may increase.

A similar effort of building up a new congregation is undertaken in the Saskatoon region. A couple of young families started farming there. It would be nice if others could join and strengthen these efforts. Our Canadian Reformed Churches have a place and task in this country. Our older congregations grow larger while there are still many regions where our churches are absent.

Forty to fifty years ago, when many immigrated to Canada, some churches were established. They have grown in membership and, through splitting, also in number. But this splitting and growing in number did not really result in spreading out geographically. We should spread out more and strengthen the smaller churches that need an increase in membership, including the present house congregations in our midst. There are two very good reasons for spreading out more. The first is to make the smaller churches stronger. The second is that we can be a light in more places.

¹*Nation to Nation*, by Diane Engelstad and John Bird, eds., p.32, Concord: Anansi Press, 1992.



What's inside?

In this issue, you will find the second and final installment of Dr. J. De Jong's speech on the covenant. From Scriptures and the confessions, he shows the relationships between the covenant, assurance of faith, and divine election.

We are again pleased to feature an article by Dr. Riemer Faber. Recently, we published an article from his hand about Martin Luther on Reformed Education. This time Dr. R. Faber writes about Philipp Melancthon on Reformed Education.

Mr. Ralph Winkel reflects on what to do with that shelf of Bibles you never use anymore.

Mrs. Ravensbergen adds her regular Ray of Sunshine to the pages of this issue.

Prof. Geertsema provides the editorial; Rev. Paul Aasman offers you a meditation. We round things up with a few book reviews and notices. Enjoy!

GvP



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By P. Aasman

Broken Bones Heal Stronger

Let bones you have crushed rejoice. Psalm 51:8b

The soccer ball was about twenty feet away from both of us, and I knew that I would get there first. But just barely. I'd be able to maybe get away a good kick, but at the very same instant, I'd be body-checked but good. My brother had no mercy. He was bigger than me. I don't recall whether or not I got the kick away, but I do recall the body-check. I tried to catch myself by falling with my arm stretched out straight. I heard a cracking sound and it seemed that I could feel it run right up through my shoulder.

The next few hours were a mixture of pain and fear. Certainly tears. The kind doctor who attended me at the hospital encouraged me with memorable words. He said that the human body has such remarkable healing powers that when a broken bone mends properly, it ends up being stronger than it was before. In my own way I found comfort in this. In a few months, I would be able to brag that my arm was uncommonly strong. At least the two bones which had broken would be. For a grade four boy, such bragging rights were important.

The healing power of which the doctor spoke to me does not just reside in the body. It is God's power that heals the body. After my arm was broken, He made it stronger by healing it. The healing power of the human body is a reason for being in awe of God's goodness. But the healing power of the human spirit is a much greater reason for being in awe of God's love.

As Christians, we become stronger and stronger. We gain in strong parts. It cannot be otherwise. If we don't become stronger, we simply are not Christians.

Let me explain. Sin has a way of seducing us into doing, saying or thinking things that we really do not want to do, say or think. When we do what we do not really want to do, then our sinful nature rejoices, but our new nature feels pain. The weight of a sinful deed becomes a terrible burden to a sanctified

heart. And if we do not confess our sin and repent of it, the weight will get heavier until it suffocates our righteous heart.

After we have committed a sin, we will do one of two things. We can keep turning away from God, fleeing his presence and grieving the Holy Spirit in order to hold on to the pleasure of satisfying our sinful nature. If we do that, our love for God will die. Sin has broken us and without healing grace, our spirits will bleed to death. On the other hand, we can stop a sinful pattern, clearly declare in our minds that the sin is evil and that it was very wicked of us to have done it, and then, admit all this to God.

Jesus promises that none of his sheep will be lost. He will search them out and bring them back to the fold. The good Shepherd carries a shepherd's staff. When the Lord Jesus strikes me with that staff, it hurts. It is not that our Lord is harsh or cruel. He loves us too much to let us go. He will bring us back even though we are extremely stubborn and we "kick against the goads." He will not permit his elect to be lost. That is a reason for thanksgiving. Yet, because I wander so far, it will be very painful when my Saviour turns me around and brings me all the way back. These are the blows of a friend which are sweeter than the kisses of an enemy. But be sure of this: Our Lord will cause us pain. It will be like the breaking of bones.

God says that it is only those who are crushed and broken that He will accept into his presence. It

is only those who have been daily converted, who have repented afresh for sin, who are broken by sin that He accepts. He receives us in order to heal us. He heals spirits at least as well as He heals bones. When we come before Him with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, He will heal us so that we are stronger spiritually than before. He will in the end enable us to gain the victory over the devil until at last we crush him under our feet.

Rev. Paul Aasman encourages the flock with memorable words of healing in Grand Valley, Ontario.



The Covenant and the Christian Life (Part 2) Assurance and Election

By J. De Jong

The following article is the second part of a speech held in Ancaster on September 25, 1996. The first instalment was published in the previous issue.

Covenant and assurance

In this second article we turn to the question how through the aspect of personal appropriation we come to the assurance of faith. This is an element in the personal realm, just as faith itself is. After all, assurance is particular and personal. You look not for certainty regarding another person's salvation but for certainty regarding your own salvation.

Here, too, many questions have come forward in recent discussions. On the one hand, some suggest that we are much too self-assured about our salvation and that we even come across that way. On the other hand, there are those who struggle with assurance. They say: I know I am in the covenant and so on, but does that really give you certainty? What about the role of faith? What if faith is weak, and struggling? Can you be sure of the love of God? Can you be sure you are a child of God? Is there not a danger that we are taking our role as adopted children for granted?

Lift your hearts!

The way to true certainty and assurance follows the line charted in the first article: we must look not to ourselves but to Christ! Everything hinges on the fellowship with Christ. We may begin with looking into ourselves, but we must end up turning to Christ! Faith means: seeking your salvation outside of yourself in Jesus Christ. And even though this faith may be so buffeted as to be near buried by the weight of sin and temptation, it remains the first step in finding reconciliation and hope in God.¹

This is not an automatic process, as some assert or suggest. One must certainly confront the fact that God is angry with our sins, and that his wrath goes out against sins every day (Ps 7:11). One who looks to himself cannot but condemn himself before God's throne. But assurance comes to our consciences when we hold to the conviction that God's mercy triumphs over his wrath in the life of the believer who genuinely condemns himself and looks to Christ.² The believer must rise in his heart to the wonderful exchange which God has effected on his behalf.³

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This does not mean that we must first tremble before an angry God before we can have a hint of the mercy and grace of God. In fact, as Calvin notes, true reverence before God is born out of the recognition of God's mercy.⁴ Repentance is not born out of a confrontation with the law, but out of faith in Jesus Christ. And the goal of repentance is the renewal of life. This renewal of life incorporates within it the principle of keeping a clear conscience (1 Tim 1:19). Therefore it is impossible for those who are grafted into Christ by

a true faith not to bring forth fruits of true thankfulness (Lord's Day 32). And while those fruits themselves contribute to greater assurance in faith, the ultimate ground of assurance is not to be found in us or in our works, but outside of ourselves in Jesus Christ. In Calvin's approach, "the free mercy of God is the irreducible foundation of the assurance of faith."⁵

The faith which is founded on the free mercy of Christ is at the same time directed solely to union with Christ. The highest goal in our life is not our salvation or our fruits, but our union with Christ through which God is glorified. Christ is here the beginning and end of our salvation, the Author and Finisher of our faith (Heb 12:2). Ultimately our assurance rests in our free adoption in Christ sealed in holy baptism. Also for assurance we consistently look outside of ourselves and only to Christ.

A covenantal gift

Once we recognize this, we can see at the same time that this is a covenantal gift first of all. For all Christ's blessings are given in the context of the covenant community. Not only faith but assurance too is imparted to the entire church through the means of grace. So we read in the *Form for the Baptism of Infants*: "And if we sometimes through weakness fall into sins, we must not despair of God's mercy, nor continue in sin, for baptism is a seal and trustworthy testimony that we have an eternal covenant with God." And the *Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper* says: "Therefore we may be heartily assured that no sin or weakness which still remains in us against our will can prevent us from being received by God in grace and from

being made worthy partakers of this heavenly food and drink."

This does not mean that we treat everyone the same and let the matter rest. The congregation is the covenant community, and legally all have equal status in the covenant. But the confession also recognizes the various differences that can and do exist among individual members. And because appropriation is personal, these differences can and should be brought out in the preaching as well.

What do the creeds say?

Let us give a few examples. In the Canons of Dort I/12 we read: "The elect in due time, though in various stages and in different measure, are made certain of their eternal and unchangeable election to salvation." And in I/16 it says: "Some do not yet clearly discern in themselves a living faith in Christ, an assured confidence of heart, peace of conscience, a zeal for childlike obedience, and a glorying in God through Christ. . . . Others seriously desire to be converted to God, to please Him only, and to be delivered from the body of death. Yet they cannot reach that point on the way of godliness of faith which they would like." And in Chapter V/11 the Canons of Dort state that "believers in this life have to struggle with various doubts of the flesh, and placed under severe temptation, do not always feel this full assurance of faith and certainty of perseverance." All these references point to difference stages in the lives of saints in the church, and different levels of assurance.

Spiritual growth

The confessions also recognize that we are involved in a process of spiritual growth. So it is normal to expect that we will be at different stages in spiritual growth. Again, precisely because appropriation is personal, the preaching may bring this out. One progresses from one stage to the next, not by leaps and bounds, or even by climbing steps, but by a steady and growing spiritual maturity and a deeper rooting in faith and conduct. It stands to reason that we are not all at the same place, even though we are all involved in the same process. Lord's Day 31 speaks of the way of receiving the Word, the way of appropriation, as a process: ". . . the kingdom of heaven is opened when it is

proclaimed and publicly testified to each and every believer that God has really forgiven all their sins for the sake of Christ's merits, *as often* as they by a true faith accept the promise of the gospel [emphasis added]." Lord's Day 33 asks what the dying of the old nature is: it is to "grieve with heartfelt sorrow that we have offended God by our sin, and *more and more* to hate it and flee from it, [emphasis added]." And in Lord's Day 44 the life to a new obedience is prefixed with the same phrase: "to be renewed *more and more* after God's image." Article 29 Belgic Confession says that although great weaknesses remain in the saints "they fight against them all the days of their life."⁶

One progresses from one stage to the next, not by leaps and bounds, or even by climbing steps, but by a steady and growing spiritual maturity and a deeper rooting in faith and conduct. The chief element of assurance, the assurance of one's election, also comes only by looking outside of oneself to Jesus Christ.

The same truth is reflected in our liturgical forms for the use of the sacraments. In the *Form for the Baptism of Infants* we pray that the child "following Him day by day" may joyfully bear his cross. And we pray that the Lord may so be with the child that he will "grow and increase in the Lord Jesus Christ." So also in the prayer for the Lord's Supper we ask that the Lord work in us though His Holy Spirit so that we might "*more and more* entrust ourselves to Jesus Christ [emphasis added]." And in the thanksgiving prayer we read: "Cause us to show *in our whole life*

our heartfelt love toward Thee and toward each other" [emphasis added].

You will find this same line in Romans 5:3ff and in 2 Peter 1:5-7. Both of these passages highlight the patterns of spiritual growth in the Christian life, and how we not only move in stages, but may find ourselves at various stages in the Christian life. There is every reason to be aware of this and to highlight it in the preaching. In that sense the preaching is truly barren if it does not include personal admonitions and exhortations. Just as they are found in the apostolic letters, so they must be found in the communication of the apostolic message to the church today.

The communal aspect

At the same time, as we discovered above, the personal aspect cannot be divorced from its communal setting. In fact, the hallmark of the passages is that assurance also is communal. Here, too, the same rule applies. Appropriation is personal, but the personal aspect is not the aspect with the most priority. From the personal aspect you come to the communal, and so discover the personal aspect's framework. That applies to faith, but the same applies to assurance. I do not mean to say that we suddenly become sure about each other, but we do believe that the assurance of faith is also experienced in a communal way. Is that not beautifully expressed in the prayer before communion as found in our *Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper*? "Let us so truly be partakers of the new and everlasting testament, the covenant of grace, that we *do not doubt* that Thou wilt forever be our gracious Father, nevermore imputing to us our sins. . . ." [emphasis added].

Perhaps two elements can be brought out here. First, there is a personal dimension in assurance in this sense that in giving assurance the Lord ensures that you are not leaning on another but are finding your assurance solely in Christ. Second, He also ensures that when you receive and find personal assurance, you at the same time find this in consort with fellow believers. In personal struggle and temptation you find the fellowship! And the fellowship is central! That is what it is all about! It will then be no surprise to you that the Canons of Dort, even in the section on perseverance, retain the plural form: the believers are assured

in their faith as the elect people, as a body, a covenant community, and not as a loose collection of individuals (see Canons V/9-13).

The dangers

One of the more pronounced dangers of modern pietism and evangelicalism is that the focus falls on the personal aspect of faith at the expense of its communal elements. The result is a manifestation of false certainty over and above the promises of God coupled with a corresponding and perhaps more prevalent uncertainty regarding our actual state. For example, false certainty arises whenever one rather easily divides people into the categories of "saved" and "unsaved." But with this false certainty comes a looming uncertainty as well, for who can be sure he will remain in the category in which he has placed himself? For whenever one tries to reach for more than what is given, he or she ends up shortchanged, having less than what can be received in true faith. One must stay in the room of the covenant, and find his assurance through the use of the means provided there.

Covenant and election

In conclusion, a few remarks about the relationship between covenant and election. Like faith and assurance, election is personal and particular. Paul calls each believer to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for God is at work in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil 2:12,13). And Peter calls the believer to confirm his call and election "for if you do this you will never fall" (2 Pet 1:10). Each believer must do this, and as he does so, God takes his own specific journey with each person in His covenant. The knowledge of one's election is the primary mark of assurance. So one moves from faith to assurance to the confirmation of election, all in the measure and time that God grants.

The chief element of assurance, the assurance of one's election, also comes only by looking outside of oneself to Jesus Christ. Here the one who willingly condemns himself because of his sins can only look to Jesus Christ, in whom he sees as in a mirror the image of the mercy of the Father. And in the very image of the mercy of the Father one finds

the image or mirror of his election. All this comes in the way of faith consistently holding to the Word. This knowledge comes not by human ingenuity but divine call. The knowledge of one's election is really the seal of the Holy Spirit upon the call of the gospel which the Spirit himself works quite personally and individually in the heart of each believer. Yet, to hold to Calvin's line, the real seal of election is not to be found in our life of holiness or our good conscience. "The call remains the fundamental testimony that assures our conscience of our election."⁷

From Christ to fellowship!

Here, too, the personal application only leads you back to the communal aspect with which you began your journey of faith. We all begin in the context of the covenant and its promises. But as we apply Scripture's injunctions to ourselves, we begin to walk a personal journey among God's people. However, we walk this road in the context of fellowship, and as we proceed we consistently find others walking the same road with us. We may all be at different stations on the road, but we are on the same path!

This makes clear that the covenant and election can neither be identified nor severed. To identify them is fatal; to sever them is equally so. We say the covenant is the means through which God realizes His election. He gathers the people of His choice through the means He has appointed. We must leave to God what belongs to Him, and work with what He has revealed.

It is true that the fulfilment of the blessings of the covenant apply essentially only to the elect. The reprobate are hardened according to the just punishment of God. But the final number of the elect is known only to God. We each must take our place around the means of grace He has instituted – word and sacrament – and exploit these means each in our office to their fullest potential. Then, in the way of the covenant, we are made sure of our election.

The covenant is communal, election is personal. But in the school of faith and in the avenue of faith that which is personal becomes consciously communal, and the covenant becomes a living reality in the faith-life of the church. For in both covenant and election God's

rule applies: appropriation is personal, but the gift appropriated is communal, and when you share that, you share in fellowship with the whole church. Prof. Van Genderen says it this way:

In the discussion of the covenant and election, as well as the address, contents, and realization of the covenant promise, one generally thinks in terms of the individual person. Yet the personal and individual element is not the only factor. One could even say on biblical grounds that it is not the primary consideration.⁸

Prof. Van Genderen then goes on to treat a number of biblical passages in which the plural dominates in the address of God's people. This does not rule out the singular references, but puts them in a specific framework.

Here the same truth applies. The communal aspect: that is the goal of faith! That remains the framework in which personal faith works itself out! That is what we live and die for! This does not cancel out personal faith. However, in the aspect of communion and fellowship our personal faith comes to its highest expression. In the end, we are never alone. We believe as members of Christ's body, and therefore take our place among the members in order to work for the smooth functioning of the whole. In this way, when every part is working properly, the whole body is built up in love. This is the rich gift that carries over through the grace of God from our world to the world to come.

¹Calvin says: "But no one can be fully persuaded that he belongs to God unless he first recognizes God's grace." cf. *Institutes* III.iii.2. From faith flows repentance and conversion.

²This is the approach of Calvin. See R.C. Zachman, *The Assurance of Faith. Conscience in the Theology of Martin Luther and John Calvin* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993) 182ff.

³On the "wonderful exchange (*mirifica commutatio*) see Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.17.2. This thought comes from Luther, and has old roots, see *Luther Works*, 31 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1957) 351.

⁴Zachman, 193

⁵So Zachman, 211

⁶See on this W. Kremer, *Priesterlijke Prediking*, (Amsterdam: Bolland, 1976), 26

⁷So Calvin, cf. Zachman, 219

⁸J. Van Genderen, *Covenant and Election* (Eng. trans. Neerlandia: Inheritance Publications, 1995) 76.



Philipp Melanchthon on Reformed Education

By R. Faber

Introduction

Philipp Melanchthon (1497-1560) was called the “Teacher of Germany” for a good reason. Active in the establishment and reform of schools for more than forty years, Melanchthon guided the development of the educational system in Germany. He wrote the constitutions of many reformed schools, composed the ordinances of several newly founded or restructured universities, and advised academic administrators throughout Europe. He also wrote many textbooks, grammars, and handbooks of education. As professor in the Arts faculty at Wittenberg University, Melanchthon taught hundreds of students who as teachers later implemented educational changes throughout Germany. And as the reformer most inclined to intellectual culture, Melanchthon sought to define a theory of education that was based on scriptural principles. It is no wonder, then, that Melanchthon’s contemporaries called him “Praeceptor Germaniae.”

There were many influences upon Melanchthon’s views of education, but two should be noted especially: Humanism and the Reformation. Melanchthon developed into a scholar of the foremost rank from the time that he came under the tutelage of Johann Reuchlin, one of northern Europe’s leading humanists. But while the rebirth of learning associated with the Renaissance would help all reformers in the sixteenth century to redirect the Christian faith to its scriptural origins, it would also cause friction and inevitable conflict with the doctrines of justification by faith alone, the authority of Scripture, and other Reformed tenets. For one principle of secular Humanism is that, by means of learning, one may be able to advance the fortunes of humanity. The “liberal arts” that were rediscovered during the Renaissance were so called because, it was believed, they



liberated one’s mind from the mastery of others. Humanist education makes the individual capable of thinking critically and deciding what is right moral action. By studying the societies of the past one would learn to appreciate the moral qualities of balance, simplicity, harmony, beauty and truth – qualities whereby the human soul could be improved. By means of eloquence, logical reasoning, and fine writing, the humanist would convince others of this way to improvement. Melanchthon, it should be stated, was not merely trained in the liberal arts, he excelled in them.

Already at the earliest beginnings of the Wittenberg Reformation, however, Melanchthon promoted theological reform. He embraced the doctrine of justification by faith, and together with Luther formulated the expressions of the other principles. Contrary to the humanists and their positive view of mankind, he steadfastly professed the depravity of fallen humanity. Melanchthon always believed that salvation comes only by the cross of Christ, and that no creature can earn righteousness. Also the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers affected Melanchthon’s views of education: learning was not for

future clergy and church leaders alone, but for all people, girls as well as boys, poor as well as rich, simple as well as gifted. Education was to serve all believers in developing their callings in God’s kingdom. The newly rediscovered biblical truths, therefore, required not merely a change in the curriculum of schools, but a completely new expression of the principles supporting Christian education. Throughout his life, but with varying success, Melanchthon sought to define and develop just such a system of Reformed education.

According to one modern view, Melanchthon attempted to form the principles of Humanism and Reformed faith into a theory of education. Certainly in his own career, Melanchthon integrated the rebirth of learning with the reform of the church. Seeing the difficulty, or rather impossibility, in Luther’s scheme of placing humanist education in the service of the church, Melanchthon examined the compatibility of Renaissance values with the Christian faith. Modern critics wonder how successful Melanchthon was in doing so, but it is clear that he constantly subjected learning to faith. Luther himself attests to this, for, able to smell a humanist rat at a great distance, he never accused Melanchthon of betraying the Reformation.

The reasons why Luther continued to collaborate with “Master Philipp” reveal why Melanchthon advanced both learning and the Reformed faith. Both men despised the anti-educational and anti-intellectual strains within Protestantism. In the famous 95 theses, Luther stated that “Christians must be *taught*,” meaning that faith is a sure knowledge as well as a firm confidence. And Melanchthon made it one of his life’s goals to dispel the foolish notion that a Christian’s ignorance is bliss. The two reformers also desired to provide reformed doctrine and life an academically credible basis, for they had observed that false teaching and false customs arose from

an ignorance of Scripture's teaching. Melanchthon wished to fight Romanist heresy with cogent arguments, and also to raise the level of discussion within the Protestant camp. The rebirth of the Christian faith had to be accompanied by the rebirth of learning.

Melanchthon integrated the rebirth of learning with the reform of the church.

Melanchthon wrote numerous treatises dealing with education and learning. In this article we shall consider only two of them, namely the lecture *On Improving the Studies of the Youth* and the speech *In Praise of the New School*. They present some of Melanchthon's key thoughts on learning, including his views on the basis, method, and goal of reformed education. However, we shall also consider briefly the influential tract *Instructions for the Visitors of Parish Pastors in Electoral Saxony*, composed by Luther and Melanchthon, as this work reveals their ideas about the practical aspects of education. We shall observe the way in which Melanchthon seeks to develop the concept of Reformed education, and shall conclude by noting a few of the differences between Luther and him.

On Improving the Studies of the Youth (1518)

Melanchthon's published interest in education begins with his inaugural lecture at Wittenberg University in 1518, entitled *On Improving the Studies of the Youth*.¹ The speech traces the history of education from biblical times, noting the steady decline in the knowledge of Scripture and the liberal arts. Over time, Melanchthon says, "bad things began to be taught as if they were good (49)," the authority of the church replaced the authority of Scripture, and the teaching of man replaced the teaching of God. Consequently, the true Christian religion was altered into "ceremonies, human traditions, constitutions, decretals, chapters, extravagances, and the glosses of second-rate scholars (50)." This decline of scriptural knowledge affected the well-being of church and society. From Melanchthon's perspective, the Middle Ages were marked by ignorance and impiety.

The University of Wittenberg, by contrast, provides the opportunity to improve learning and spirituality. His new colleagues, Melanchthon notes, are already promoting a new approach to Scripture and education that serves to reverse the decline. Stating the purpose of his speech, at the same time the purpose of his planned career at Wittenberg, Melanchthon announces to his future students that he hopes to help them understand "the rationale behind the revival of studies . . . so that when the order and path of learning is known, you may decide how the course of studies may be embraced with greater benefit and less danger (48)." Casting aside the teaching methods of previous generations, Melanchthon rejects scholasticism and its apparently obscure and irrelevant ways of argumentation. Especially in studying Scripture, the student should not waste his time on the "many frigid glosses, concordances, discordances, and still many other hindrances . . ." (55). He should turn directly to the primary sources, as these bear directly upon his earthly and spiritual life.

The rebirth of the Christian faith had to be accompanied by the rebirth of learning.

The newly appointed professor states his intention to follow the approach already chosen by Luther and the other colleagues at Wittenberg. In fact, Melanchthon promotes the same disciplines later advocated in Luther's *Letter to the Councilmen that they Establish Christian Schools* (1524): languages, literature, history, rhetoric. He also provides reasons for these choices. A proper appreciation for history, for example, is necessary because this discipline teaches "what is beautiful, bad, useful, useless. . . .(54)" Knowledge of God's work in history is relevant for contemporary times, since the past informs and shapes the ideas that are current in the present. About this discipline Melanchthon is so bold as to state: "No aspect of life, either public or private, can do without it. It is to this that the administration of urban and domestic affairs is indebted" (54). To use Luther's classification, history helps one understand the position of God's creatures in both the temporal and spiritual realms.

Melanchthon also proposes to reveal the value of studying literature, for he believes that it imparts a better understanding of the human experience and the way it has been expressed. Literature deals with "things that pertain to knowledge of nature and also to the forming of manners (54)"; furthermore, it teaches one to "speak fittingly and fluently about morals (54)." Reading the writings of other people helps one to understand what humans are like. Melanchthon also advocates the skills of reasoning, eloquence and fine writing, which teach one to express the truth most accurately and convincingly. Accepting for the moment the advantages granted by humanist education, Melanchthon intends to move Wittenberg into the "modern age" of learning. For the reformers this modernization means a return to the sources, and especially to the only true source, Scripture. Of all the works the student should read, the Bible is the central book; it is "the real thing and not the shadow of things (54)."

While it may appear that Melanchthon promotes a kind of "baptized Hellenism" in this speech, it should be noted that he explicitly distinguishes the study of humanity from the study of God. To put it differently, he affirms the biblical antithesis between secular and sacred, and warns his students ". . . that we not improperly contaminate the sacred with alien literature [Titus 2:7-8]." In fact, it was one of the lapses of the Medieval church that it failed to distinguish between the profane and the holy, between Aristotelian philosophy and Christian theology. But the works of God cannot be compared with the works of man, Melanchthon argues, for "the odor of the ointments of the Lord is far sweeter than the aroma of human disciplines (55)." While the mouths of men speak lies continually, all truth is from God, and "His truth will be your buckler." Nevertheless, since the "sacred things are the most powerful for the mind, work and care are necessary (55)"; one must be educated in order to understand God's Word and his will in our lives. Therefore, "with the Spirit as leader, and the cults of the arts as ally, we may approach the holy (55)." In keeping with this principle, Melanchthon proposes to his students that he begin lecturing on Homer's epic poetry and Paul's letter to Titus.

In Praise of the New School (1526)

Another important source for Melanchthon's thought on education is

the address he delivered upon the opening of a new school in Nuremberg in 1526, *In Praise of the New School*.² The civic leaders and businessmen of this city had responded to Luther's call to establish schools, and Melanchthon begins his speech by complimenting them on their action. He also endorses the argument, made by Luther in the *Letter to the Councilmen that they Establish Christian Schools* (1524), that education benefits state as well as church.

Knowledge of God's work in history is relevant . . . since the past informs and shapes the ideas that are current in the present.

As might be expected of a speech for municipal leaders and supportive businessmen, *In Praise of the New School* deals with the role of education in preparing good citizens. "In the well constituted state," says Melanchthon, "the first task for schools is to teach youth, for they are the seedbed of the city (63)." A liberal education is crucial for this task, as without it "there could be no good men, no admiration of virtue, no knowledge of what is honest, no harmonious agreements concerning honest duties, no sense at all of humanity (60)." As in his inaugural lecture at Wittenberg, so too here Melanchthon alerts his audience to the value of studying history, literature and philosophy for the cultivation of good citizens. Countering the prevailing attitude that youths should acquire trades and skills whereby jobs could be acquired, Melanchthon encourages parents to look beyond the obvious but simple goal of getting a job. Virtuous and noble citizens, who seek to promote the well-being of the temporal realm in which they live, are those who have studied the subjects that teach them about social life. Thus Melanchthon asks, how can anyone be a good civic leader if he has never read "that literature in which is contained all thought on the ruling of cities (63)"? Going beyond the practical advantages granted by schooling, the "Teacher of Germany" instructs parents to encourage their children to learn about virtues,



ideas, and principles. Children who will best contribute to the state are those who understand the higher goals of their vocations. They must learn the virtues of their chosen professions, and see their own tasks in the context of the larger purposes of the temporal realm.

Not drawing the distinction between the spiritual and temporal realms as sharply as Luther does, Melanchthon views education as integral to religious and civic life. By focussing on the training of the individual, Melanchthon seeks to unite the religious and civic duties of each believer. According to him, education should be seen as contributing to the formation of the human being, rather than as performing distinct functions in two spheres of activity. For this reason Melanchthon speaks about church and state in one breath. Without education, he argues, there can be no knowledge of the earthly estate and "no correct views of religion or of God's will for mortals (60)." The civic leaders are encouraged to support Reformed education for "unless you preserve literature, religion and good laws cannot endure (63)." Moral and intellectual developments are connected, and religious piety is linked to civic responsibility. In short, Melanchthon applies education to the whole person rather than to two aspects of one person. According to Melanchthon, then, the goal of education is "learned piety."

The Instructions (1528)

The combining of religious and intellectual reform found its expression in several works by Melanchthon, but is most succinctly expressed in the

Instructions for the Visitors of Parish Pastors in Electoral Saxony (1528).³ Luther and Melanchthon penned this document in order to assist in the reform of churches and schools. It comprises two parts: 1) a summary of the doctrine of the Reformed faith as it should be taught in the churches, and 2) a summary of rules for Reformed schools. After receiving approval from the faculty at Wittenberg University, the *Instructions* were sent to all churches in the region, in the hopes that it would effect some unity in church and school. The second part is useful for our present purposes, as it contains detailed advice concerning curricula and levels of instruction at the elementary schools.

The premise for Reformed schooling is baldly stated: "because it is God's will, . . . parents should send their children to school, and prepare them for the Lord God so that He may use them for the service of others (314)." Also clearly stated is the purpose of this part of the *Instructions*: to provide a "syllabus of study so that the youth may be rightly instructed (315)." After a brief introduction, the *Instructions* dealing with schools proposes that elementary education be divided into three main sections, or divisions.

Parents should send their children to school, and prepare them for the Lord God so that He may use them for the service of others.

The first division in the elementary school consists of children who are starting to read. The suggested text is a primer containing the basics of grammar, as well as the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and other prayers. All this in Latin, not German. For while Luther and Melanchthon thought it unwise that children learn many languages because it would be too complicated for them, they strongly encourage – indeed assume – instruction in Latin, as this language would provide students with grammatical skills readily applicable to their own language and to Scripture. After all, the standard edition of the Bible was still in Latin. For this reason the goal in grade one was building up vocabulary, memorizing the rules of grammar, and learning to write. Stu-

dents should also develop their skills of memory, and learn music.

In the second grade, besides learning more music, students should develop their reading and writing skills. The teacher should inculcate his charges with good morals; the ones in Erasmus' *Colloquies* that "are useful and edifying for the children (317)" may be learned. Students at this level should also memorize classical proverbs, and read Aesop's *Fables*. They then go on to study advanced grammar, etymology, and sentence structure. "The children are to recite these grammatical rules from memory, so that they are compelled and driven to learn grammar well (318)." On one day of the week, the class must study Scripture, for "it is essential that the children learn the beginning of a Christian and blessed life (318)." In teaching Scripture, the schoolmaster should avoid difficult or contentious passages, focussing instead upon those parts which teach "what is necessary for living a good life, namely, the fear of God, faith, good works (318)." Sections of the Gospel of Matthew are particularly advocated, as are those Psalms that "contain in themselves a summary of the Christian life, and speak about the fear of God, faith and good works (318)." Mentioned by name are Ps 112:1, Ps 125:1, and Ps 133:1.

The repeated words, "the fear of God," reveal an emphasis upon the moral aspect of education.

Students entering the third division have studied grammar well, and show promise of further learning. These advanced students should continue to learn music, and to develop their skills in translating and interpreting literature, including the poets Vergil and Ovid, and Cicero, Roman orator, politician and philosopher. When these skills have been developed, students may go on to acquire the ability of public speaking, cogent arguing, and eloquent writing.

These instructions and the three divisions of education set out in them have been much studied, and the debate concerning the reasoning behind the proposals continues. What has become clear, however, is that Melanchthon and Luther attempted to effect a number of Reformed principles in them. One is the priority granted to

the spiritual realm. The repeated words, "the fear of God," reveal an emphasis upon the moral aspect of education. While the first part of the *Instructions* stresses the teaching of the basics of the Christian faith in church, the second emphasizes the role of the schools in advancing knowledge of the commandments, creeds, and prayers. Students who had learned how to read, could read the Bible, and so fulfil their duties as prophets, priests and kings. Knowledge of grammar, dialectic and rhetoric would help every believer to read, interpret and explain the Bible. Memory work, musical skills, and logical thinking would help the student to learn the value of control, self-discipline, and orderliness. Furthermore, the students would learn, as a group, the tenets of the Christian faith, and so form a generation of like-minded believers.

"We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Cor 10:5, 6).

It should also be noted here that an important educational tool developed by Luther and Melanchthon was the catechism. Luther's *Small Catechism*, developed and adapted by Melanchthon, became a widely used textbook in Reformed schools of the sixteenth century. There are several reasons for this: it presented the key elements of the Reformed faith in direct and short statements. It could also function as a teacher's manual for instruction. And it presented a simple interpretation of the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, etc. And its composition in the form of questions and answers served well in the classroom. As a means of indoctrination, then, the catechism would help bring about harmony in the church by uniting young students in their understanding of the faith.

Conclusions

In conclusion it will be worthwhile to summarize the main features of Melanchthon's views on education, and to compare them with his fellow reformer, Martin Luther. As might be expected of a reformer with humanist train-

ing, Melanchthon held education in high regard. He even believed that schools as such were ordained in Scripture. He sought to support this view by pointing to the "teachers" in the Bible: Moses, the schools of the prophets, the apostle Paul and his spiritual students, and the Great Rabbi, our Lord Jesus Christ and his disciples. All the doctrines of Scripture, according to Melanchthon, may be viewed as teaching that is handed down by faithful instructors. The function of schools, then, is to inculcate, preserve, and pass on the true teachings of the Bible. In order for church and society to be truly Reformed, Melanchthon concluded, education must be improved continually.

Whereas Luther viewed education more as preparatory to the understanding of the Gospel, Melanchthon believed that learning had an end in and of itself. Languages, for example, were viewed by Luther more as a means whereby the Spirit spreads the gospel in this world, and not – as Melanchthon thought – as part of the rediscovery of the human being. And for Melanchthon, learning and education perform a more positive role in the renewal of the church and society; the revelation in Scripture can only be appropriated via knowledge gained through learning. To express this view in different terms: Melanchthon sought to understand more deeply the relationship between God's revelation of salvation and mankind's ability to understand and reason. He wished to define the relationship between faith and knowledge, belief and learning. He desired to comprehend how the heritage of the Western world in ancient Greece and Rome related to the true biblical heritage. In so doing, he did not seek to place Humanism and Christianity on a par, but to subject all learning to the revelation of God, and to do so for the praise of his glory. This view of education was summed up for him in 2 Corinthians 10:5, 6: "We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ."

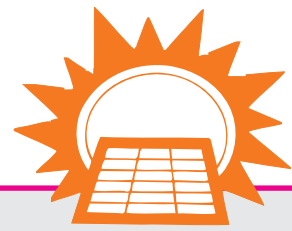
Dr. Riemer Faber is professor of classics at the University of Waterloo.

¹An English translation of the Latin text may be found in R. Keen, *A Melanchthon Reader* (New York, 1988), 47-63; quotations of the speech come from this edition.

²Citations of this speech come from R. Keen's translation in *A Melanchthon Reader*, 59-63.

³Citations from *Instructions* are taken from the translation by C. Bergendoff, in H.T. Lehmann, ed., *Luther's Works*. Vol. 40 (Philadelphia 1958), 269-320.





By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

Future

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Some people are so very physically handicapped that you hardly dare to look at them. That is sometimes quite embarrassing when you meet these people regularly. It needs courage and prayer to interact with such a person in an as normal as possible manner. For you almost feel ashamed to be able to walk around freely on two healthy legs.

Yet there is light in such situations. When such a challenged person is a child of the Lord, then you may trust that he or she is a person with a Future. That Future has started today already. That is a source of immeasurable gladness in a vale of tears and sadness! It is a daily, God-given comfort. Not only for the person him/herself, but also for the people around them.

For many years there was a severely physically challenged person in my life. I had never before seen a person who was as handicapped as she was. The only "normal" parts on her body were her arms and her hands. Also mentally she was very bright. She knew the Bible to a T, and you could have good conversations with her. Once in a while she would have a terrible temper tantrum. Woe to the nurses who would be her victims at such times. . . .

She was very active with her hands. She crocheted and knitted and wrote. She made many friends and acquaintances happy with little home-made gifts. She also often surprised the other patients and visitors with the sounds of her flute that could be heard coming out of her room.

When the doctor forbade her to use her hands temporarily, everything became rather difficult. In those days she sought some refuge at the TV now and then. One morning she watched with much interest a religious program. At the end of the show I was standing beside her bed. A choir sang very beautifully and someone spoke a message especially for sick and challenged people. The speaker ended his speech by saying that it was easy to understand that these people, because of their physical difficulties, often displayed a strong desire to go to heaven.

With a quick move she aggressively turned off the TV. She looked at me and said, "I do not at all agree with the last comment he made. If we long for heaven, does not that have to be because our sins are bothering us? Are not our sins the cause of the separation between the Lord and us? My short tempered nature causes me much more grief than my handicapped body."

How did I leave her bedside? I do not remember. Did she notice my tears? It does not really matter.

The Lord God taught me a visual lesson that morning. In the school of life I was allowed to witness a little

portion of His grace and greatness. A weak and sinful child of the Lord was, on her way to her Future, a visible letter from her Saviour!

(Translated from an article by A. Sarel. Published with the permission of Reformanda.)

*With many woes the wicked are afflicted,
But he who trusts in God is well protected;
Him will the LORD with steadfast love surround.
Those who revere Him are with mercy crowned.
Be glad, O righteous, in the LORD rejoicing;
Exult in Him your jubilation voicing,
For light and life He will to you impart.
Now shout for joy, you men of upright heart.*

Psalm 32:5

Birthdays in October:

- 6: Henry VanderVliet**
"ANCHOR HOME"
361 30 Road, RR 2
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0
- 17: Alan Breukelman**
2225-19 Street
Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4
- 22: Nelena Hofsink**
"BETHESDA CLEARBROOK HOME"
32553 Willingdon Cr,
Clearbrook, BC V2T 1S2
- 25: John Feenstra**
"ANCHOR HOME"
361 30 Road, RR 2
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0
- 28: Mary Ann DeWit**
"BETHESDA"
6705 Satchel Road, Box 40
Mount Lehman, BC V0X 1V0

Henry, who has moved into the Anchor Home quite a few months ago, will be 21, Alan 32, Nelena 38, John 40!!!, and Mary Ann 42.

Congratulations to all of you, and until next month,

Mrs.R.Ravensbergen
7462 Reg. Rd. 20, RR 1
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0
e-mail: RWRavens@netcom.ca

Credo Christian High School Graduation 1998

By Ron de Haan

At 11:00, Thursday, June 25, 1998, the last bell sounded almost cheerful as the last exam for the grads was completed. Twelve years of schooling had come to a close. And now it was time to prepare for the ceremony that evening and the banquet the next!

No doubt the days just prior to the graduation ceremony and subsequent banquet were something of a blur for the 59 students at Credo Christian High School. There were suits to press, gowns to prepare, ties to straighten and shoes to polish. And that is to say little about vacation plans, university preparation, and planning summer work schedules. For the next two days, though, are those cameras ready?

Approximately 1200 members of the school community came out to witness the 1998 graduation and were impressed with this classy group of grads.

After the entrance of the class of '98, grad Trudy DeWit welcomed family, friends and honoured guests. Principal Ed Vanderboom offered the opening speech and reminded the grads and audience of God's grace that was felt for "this little Christian school." In spite of the imperfections of parents and teachers, it was a blessed year. Using King David as an example, Mr. Vanderboom illustrated our weaknesses and the overwhelming power of God's grace. He issued the challenge to the grads: Are you ready?

Mr. Jim Dykstra spoke on behalf of the parents. He spoke about the need to recognize where we were, are, and will be in the future. He also made the point that unlike the public, secular schools who teach relativism and that truth is in the eye of the individual, we Christian, Reformed believers have a

constant: our heavenly Father who takes care of his own in all situations of life. Mr. Dykstra also reminded the grads to call on God in prayer and seek his ways by searching the Scriptures.

Chairman Jake VanLaar, principal Vanderboom and vice-principal Harry Moes then proceeded to present the diplomas which were accompanied by J. Douma's *The Ten Commandments*. Fifty-nine names later, there was a generous "Kodak moment" followed by the grads' song, Steve Green's "The Plan."

Jaelyn VanderHorst had the privilege of speaking as class valedictorian. Using the analogy of the mirror she spoke about "reflections" and the need to reflect Christ-like qualities in our lives. Only God is perfect and we do fall short so often. Yet, even after we "flip the tassel" and move into adulthood we grads need to examine our-





selves (in the mirror of God's Word) and seek our lives outside of ourselves in Him. A stunning challenge indeed!

Several students were then presented with awards and scholarships

for some very fine academic performances. Entrance scholarships, district scholarships, bursaries were passed on to these deserving students; and one, Bonnie VanLaar, was awarded the

Governor's General's Bronze Medal. Congratulations! All in all, great reason for gratitude.

The following evening was a time for the celebratory banquet. This well dressed crowd of 280 people took in some food, fun and laughs and even a few tears as good-byes were expressed to four teachers: Brad Davis, Dave Kieft, Bert Moes, and Ron Smouter. On this beautiful evening, students enjoyed more picture taking with friends and family (with the help of one father's Model T! At least that's what I think it was). A variety of excellent music, drama and awards were part of the evening's festivities.

It was good to hear so many grads say how they will miss the halls of Credo. Indeed, the school will not be the same without this group of young people, even though we will have over 80 to replace them, D.V., in September, 1998. May the Lord bless their lives in his service. C

REFLECTIONS

By R. Winkel

Bibles

Years ago I read about Dutchmen trudging down the streets of Amsterdam on the way to the Dutch Bible Society. These people carried all kinds of Bibles – the Old States-General Bible ("Statenvertaling," comparable to the King James Version) and newer translations. Where did all these translations come from? From deceased parents and other near relatives and as well as from personal copies of translations that were outdated.

The other day I counted how many Bibles I have accumulated over the years – King James Version, Revised Standard Version and New International Version as well as study Bibles. What will my sons eventually do with all those Dutch and English Bibles? Throw them out like old newspapers or keep them until their children make that hard decision? Are we supposed to idolize Bibles? No way! But, they should always be handled with awe and reverence.

Having God's Word in your hands creates a certain responsibility. Again think about those Dutchmen bringing those Bibles to the Society. Most of them did not want to part with those worn-out books which have been revered in the families for generations. Neither did they want to throw them out like garbage. When they entered the Society's office, most would generally say: "I hope you can find a place for them" and walk out.

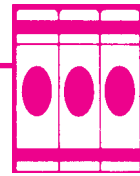
Some churches have pew Bibles, in addition to copies of the *Book of Praise*. Quite a few are used to support the knees against the pew in front. Damage does occur. This is a shame because Bibles are being abused. Again a certain amount of reverence should be shown. Rev. W.W.J. Van Oene once wrote that he was in favour of each church member carrying his own Bible and *Book of Praise* to church. Because of pride of ownership, it surely would

improve the handling of these books. However, many of our Reformed churches have them in the pew racks. It does help a lot for all members to follow the Scripture reading and the text of the sermon. Both ways, having your own or using the ones in church have their advantages. But the most important is to use these Bibles with respect and awe.

With 14,700 members in our church federation and with Dutch Bibles and different English translations, plus the study Bibles, there may be about 40,000 Bibles in use right now. What is your guess?

Sooner or later decisions have to be made what to do with all those Bibles that are no longer used. Who has the solution?

Mr. R. Winkel is a member of the Providence Canadian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta. C



By C. Van Dam

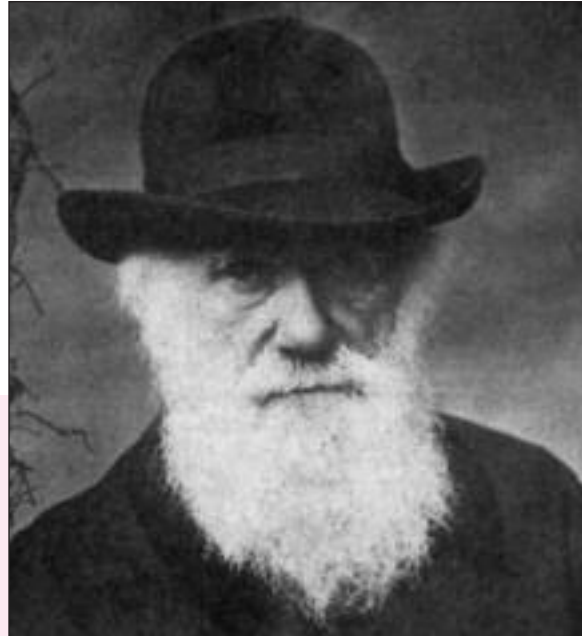
Creation and Change

Douglas F. Kelly, *Creation and Change. Genesis 1.1-2.4 in the Light of Changing Scientific Paradigms.* Fearn, UK: Mentor, 1997. (www.geanies.org.uk/cfp) paperback; 272 pages; \$ 15.99 U.S.

This is an excellent book. It defends the clear and obvious meaning of what God, the Creator, reveals to us in Genesis 1 and 2 and it persuasively argues that the time has come for a major paradigm shift in the scientific interpretation of origins. While the dogma of evolutionism is still dominant today, it is more and more being questioned and challenged across a broad field of studies and disciplines. Kelly shows that there is no need to apologize for what Scripture clearly teaches as the historical event of creation or to seek refuge in some sort of figurative explanation of what is recounted for us in the first chapters of the Bible. God made the world in six days and we, therefore, live on a young earth.

Although Kelly is not a scientist but a theologian who teaches Systematic Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina, it is obvious that he has studied and read widely in scientific literature. He takes great pains to be fair to the scientific community and has consulted with scientists in the writing of this book. In his preface he also openly states that he will “gladly correct any errors I can be shown, should there be future editions of this book” and expresses the hope that scientists will join the discussion about the need for abandoning the current scientific explanation of origins which, as he shows elsewhere in his book, is hostile to Scripture (p. 10).

Kelly begins his book by showing how important it is that we believe in the creation account of Genesis and that we do not believe in evolutionism (which also needs to be believed since it too cannot be scientifically proven). Accepting the clear teaching of the Bible as true rather than evolutionism means acknowledging that God created man after his image rather than believing that man evolved out of “the



Charles Darwin

slime” and is part of the animal world with all the detrimental consequences this has for one’s world view, outlook and morals.

“There is no need to apologize for what Scripture clearly teaches as the historical event of creation.”

There are two major components in Kelly’s study. First, Kelly gives a careful exegesis of the text of Genesis. His explanation is to the point and grounded in the fullness of Scripture. Kelly also interacts lucidly with past and present interpretations and does not shrink back from difficult questions. He is also not afraid to acknowledge where proper the limitations of our understanding. He recognizes the danger of trying to say more than Scripture says. For instance, it has been suggested that when God created the firmament and separated the waters which were below the fir-

mament and those above it that then “this stretched out firmament originally included a massive canopy of water, extending high up into the atmosphere. If so, it has been argued that it may have been the source for much of the water volume that fell during the Flood of Noah” (p. 182). Kelly however correctly notes that “the text of Genesis does *not* specifically state the formation of a canopy of water vapor in the firmament on the second day” (p. 183). He then goes on to note that other explanations are possible for understanding both “the waters above” and the possible mechanics of the great Flood which avoids some of the problems in the canopy hypothesis.

Kelly’s exegesis also has an eye for the real life situation of God’s people in the world today. It is not abstract or divorced from our present cultural context. Thus he touches on issues like the declining population of western nations (pp. 210-211) and he describes what a gift the weekly day of rest really is (pp.240-244).

The second major component in Kelly’s work is that in each chapter he details the implications of his exegesis

for the scientific study of origins. He is careful to note the philosophical and religious commitments that underlie evolutionism and thus influence the work done and the conclusions drawn. (See, e.g., his discussion on the alleged spontaneous generation of life for which there is no scientific proof, p. 190ff) Kelly is very careful to do justice to the scientific work done but he also notes the limitations of that work. He thus correctly warns against insisting on understanding a passage from Genesis 1 and 2 in terms of a current scientific theory. As he puts it: "it is never wise to identify in an absolute fashion the plain teachings of the Word of God with even the most compelling contemporary scientific, and especially, cosmological theories" (p. 152).

Also in his scientific discussions, Kelly does not avoid possible difficulties and does not come with cheap solutions to problems. For instance, he writes that

It is one thing to realize that Adam was created full grown, but quite another to hypothesize that distant stars were created with a pathway of light shining all the way to earth (perhaps indicating the historical explosion of a supernova, which – according to this theory – never actually occurred). The former follows from a sensible reading of the text of Genesis; the latter does not. (p.162 n. 7)

"He is careful to note the philosophical and religious commitments that underlie evolutionism and thus influence the work done and the conclusions drawn."

A very helpful feature of the book is that he interacts with perennial questions or points of discussion. Thus Kelly, for instance, responds incisively to the popular framework hypothesis (as championed, e.g., by Meredith Kline and Henri Blocher) whereby one avoids a chronological reading of Genesis 1 (pp. 112-134). In the process, the author also explores the ideas of Augustine.

Considering the intricate subject matter, Kelly has the gift of being able to write clearly. He communicates very well. The book is set up in such a way that the major part of each chapter is written in a popular way after which follows a section entitled "Technical and Bibliographical Notes." It is here that scientists and teachers and others with a great interest in the particular topic at hand can go into more depth and receive suggestions for further reading and study. Each chapter concludes with a set of questions for discussion purposes. This book could therefore be used very profitably for Bible study groups or similar forums. Scripture and topical indexes, as well as a select bibliography, further enhance the usefulness of this publication.

This book is highly recommended. Those who read and study it will be well equipped to do battle with the secularism and evolutionism of our times. The issues of Genesis 1 and 2 are basic to all of life! It is to be hoped that this book will be widely read in our circles, especially by all office bearers and teachers.

Reacting to Evolutionism

John Rendle-Short, *Green Eye of the Storm*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1998. Paperback, 294 pp. \$ 19.99 U.S.

This is a fascinating book in which the author takes a close look at four Christian scientists who took their faith seriously and who struggled against the theory of evolution. The scientists are Philip Henry Gosse (1810-1888), a zoologist and marine biologist, George John Romanes (1848-1894), a pioneer physiologist, Arthur Rendle Short (1880-1953), the author's father, who was a physiologist, geologist and surgeon, and the author himself (1919-) whose career was in paediatrics.

From the vantage point of hindsight, the author is able to show where his predecessors went wrong and how we can learn from their mistakes. At the same time, the author is sympathetic to the tremendous struggles they had and his sketches of the mind-set of the times which he discusses are very helpful. Darwin had tremendous impact not only on science but also on theology, art, politics and economics. The Christians who struggled within that type of setting had a very difficult time. Also solid institutions like Princeton Seminary were affected by the devastation

caused by evolutionism. Particularly moving is the account of the conversion of Romanes. Near the end of his life, this ardent disciple of Darwin, finally moved from materialism back to the Christian faith, to the dismay of his evolutionistic friends.

A theme that runs throughout the book is that the first three Christian scientists discussed were significantly handicapped by the fact that they were ignorant of many of the scientific facts and discoveries known today – discoveries that have served to strengthen the plain and obvious reading of the first two chapters of Scripture. The author also shows that evolutionism is a belief. It is the myth of our time. As a contemporary biologist, Michael Denton, has noted: "Ultimately, the Darwinian theory of evolution is no more or less than the great cosmogonic myth of the twentieth century" (p. 162).

The author himself also went through quite a pilgrimage from believing evolution to rejecting it wholeheartedly. In his own struggles he came to understand the import of the well-known words of Sir Arthur Keith. "Evolution is unproved and unprovable. We believe it because the only alternative is an act of creation, by a God, and this is unthinkable" (p. 229). Such a quote shows where the struggle is at! The author is convinced that the acceptance of evolution is one of the major stumbling blocks for someone to become a Christian and it also stunts the spiritual growth of many who call themselves Christian (p. 256). At bottom the struggle with evolutionism is a matter of life and death for it is hostile to the Christian faith.

Green Eye of the Storm is a timely warning and encouragement for us living today in a world still dominated by evolutionism and materialism. Reading this book makes one more sensitive to the vital issues that are at stake and encourages one to take Scripture on its word and to resist the claims of evolutionism. Judging by the findings of science in our time, such resistance should be easier to offer now than it was a generation ago.

The book concludes with three appendices. The first details some major scientific and historical evidence for special creation, the second deals with the significance of a global flood, and the third explains why the book of Genesis is so important. A subject index concludes the book.

Highly recommended!



BOOK NOTICES

Dutch Sermons on Ecclesiastes

By C. Van Dam

D. de Jong, *Praktisch perspectief. Zes vervolg-preken over Prediker*. Goes, the Netherlands: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1998. paperback, 77 pages.

Rev. D. de Jong, minister emeritus of the Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church in Burlington, Ontario and now residing in the Netherlands, has performed a real service in making available these six sermons on Ecclesiastes.

This is not the easiest book in the Bible to understand. Indeed, reading through Ecclesiastes and trying to comprehend it can be a challenging experience. Questions arise such as: Why does this book urge us repeatedly to enjoy the good things in life, but at the same time sound the refrain that all is vanity or futile? Is this an Old Testament book only, or does it have something to say for today?

This publication of sermons is set up in such a way that it functions as a mini-commentary on this book. Each text is set in its wider context and so in the course of these sermons most of the book of Ecclesiastes is discussed or commented on. For those who still read Dutch, this book is for you! You will see how relevant and full of instruction and joy Ecclesiastes can be for readers today. As the title suggests, Rev. de Jong has written a practical book.

This publication can be ordered for \$ 7.50 (plus postage) from:

Christian Book and Record
13042 - 82 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5E 2T5.

It can also be ordered by phone by calling Mr. D. Postma at 403 478 2798.

By S. C. Van Dam

E. J. Young, *The Way Everlasting: A Study in Psalm 139*. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1965; repr. 1997. Paperback, 117 pages; \$ 7.50 U.S.

A number of decades ago, the late Prof. E. J. Young of Westminster Theo-

logical Seminary in Philadelphia wrote a meditative little book on Psalm 139. It has now been reprinted and made available again by The Banner of Truth Trust. Young gives us a careful verse-by-verse exposition of this well-known and beloved Psalm.

Young set out to write this book because he realized that in our modern times a sense of awe and wonder at the majesty and greatness of God has all but vanished. God is widely denied or reduced to a vague abstract concept. By contrast, Psalm 139 speaks powerfully about the fact that God is a person who knows his creatures through and through. Time and again, Young emphasizes the close and intimate relationship we may have with the LORD, our faithful covenant God. God is the ever-present, all knowing person who knows us even better than we know ourselves. God knows us in all our situations in life and during each day; He knows what we are going to say before the words leave our mouth. No matter where one tries to go, God is always right there with him, leading and guiding him as a father takes his child by the hand. Young rightly stresses that this knowledge about God must awaken in us wonder and reverence. He encourages us to take the time to meditate about God and let his greatness sink in. When we ponder his high majesty, omniscience and omnipotence and other perfections, we can only worship Him with great astonishment and awe. Indeed, spontaneous bursts of praise (see, e.g., vv. 14a and 17 of this Psalm) should characterize the Christian as he contemplates the wonders of the LORD.

Young provides us with an excellent meditation on this uplifting and awe-inspiring Psalm. He also deals with the vexing verses 21-22 about hating one's enemies with a perfect hatred in a convincing manner. Young shows how they fit in the context of the whole Psalm. Read the book and find out what he has to say! The author certainly succeeds in the purpose he set out for himself in the introduction, namely, "to allow the Psalm to speak for itself." Highly recommended for both personal meditation and group Bible study!

Carl Van Dam is a graduate of our Theological College now studying in Kampen, the Netherlands.


Spiritual adultery

By C. Van Dam

Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., *Whoredom. God's Unfaithful Wife in Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996. paperback, 200 pages. \$ 18.00 U.S.

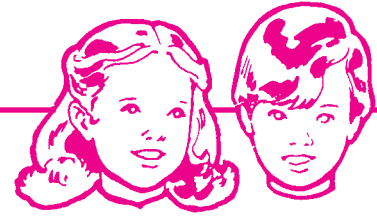
This is a competent survey and discussion of key passages in Scripture that mention the sin of spiritual adultery. In order to set the topic within its proper context, Professor Ortlund (who teaches Old Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Illinois) first deals with marriage as "one flesh" in Genesis 2:23-24. After that he proceeds with his survey through the Old and New Testament. He clearly shows how the marital imagery finds its fulfilment in the relationship of Christ and his bride, the church.

In the course of this book, many fine exegetical observations are made and the work can be used with great profit. Due to the nature of the topic, the reading of passage after passage on whoredom is somewhat depressing. Happily, Ortlund made some necessary exceptions. It is a joy to read his positive and solid exegesis of Ephesians 5:31-32 which shows what a blessing a truly Christian marriage is in reflecting the relation of the Bridegroom and his Bride. Also the glorious passages of Revelation 19:6-9 and 21:1-3, 9-10 are dealt with.

Our age is characterized by an obsession with sensuality and sexual sin. Ortlund's book is a good reminder of the rich meaning God has given marriage and what a grievous affront it is to Him to abuse this gift. Indeed, Ortlund correctly uses the occasion to show how wrong premarital sex is and how same-sex marriages are a perversion. In "Concluding Reflections," the author effectively drives the main points of his study home in a pastoral way, admonishing and exhorting to faithfulness in loving God with our whole being in our modern sensual world. 

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers

Summer is nearly over and you will soon be back at school, if not already. Summer was a wonderful time for you all, I'm sure. Are you looking forward to going back to school soon? Did you know that in other parts of the world, they are having winter right now, so when you are having winter, they will be having summer? It sounds very confusing, but it really isn't. Those people live in what is known as the Southern Hemisphere, which means that their seasons are completely opposite to the Northern Hemisphere, where you live. It's like the Canadian Geese – they fly south to find the warmer weather, and they may even cross the equator and end up in the Southern Hemisphere.

Isn't it amazing, but also really wonderful, how God has created seasons in their time, but not everyone has the same seasons at the same time?

Lots of love
Aunt Betty

BIRTHDAYS FOR SEPTEMBER

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|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Jordan Lodder | 11 Nicole Alderliesten |
| 2 Jessica Verhelst | 16 Ashley Tuininga |
| 4 Brandon VanAmerongen | 20 Chelsea Kampen |
| Cheyenne Bergsma | 22 Sarah Schulenberg |
| 9 Adena Feenstra | 26 Danielle deJong |

PUZZLES

ENERGY WORD SEARCH

by Busy Beaver Erin Kottelenberg

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SCRAMBLED ANIMALS

by Busy Beaver David Winkel

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- ERAB _____
- CCOORNA _____
- ALFOCN _____
- EERD _____
- EEACHHT _____

WORD SEARCH

by Busy Beaver David Winkel

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FROM THE MAILBOX

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, David Winkel. Thank you for your letter and puzzles. I'll put them in *Our Little Magazine* today.

