

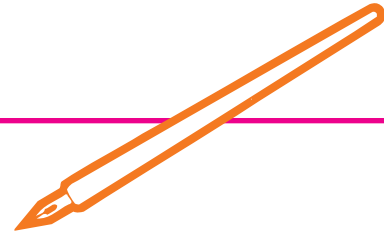
Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
VOLUME 49, NO. 3 FEBRUARY 4, 2000



Marriage Under Fire

By J. De Jong



Marriage Under Fire

A beleaguered institution

Probably no institution has suffered from the onslaught of secularism as has the marriage institution. Divorce rates have skyrocketed in western countries, and an increasing number of people prefer to live a single life. Take for example John Taylor's description of marriage in his recent book called *Falling: The Story of One Marriage*.¹ After twelve years of living with his wife, and after going through the birth and growth of one daughter, his marriage became "a mechanism so encrusted with small disappointments and petty grudges that its parts no longer closed." He can hardly account for the reason why he married: "It seemed a good idea at the time." But over the years "something went wrong," and while living together, they were actually miles apart. Taylor quotes the German writer Hermann Keyserling who called marriage a "state of tragic tension" between self-interest and duty, freedom and responsibility. A good marriage is "just a matter of luck." Why be so big on faithfulness? Says Taylor: "Surrounded by disposable goods, we were urged every day to switch brands, trade up, discard, gratify every appetite – our times encouraged faithlessness." After all, if everything else is disposable, why not your husband or your wife?

Other alternatives

Dissatisfaction with the monogamous relationship has caused a proliferation of new and imaginative alternatives to sprout from people's minds. In the legal world, the term "spouse" has even been applied to what is called a "same-sex union" – as if that is even possible. Then there are the promoters of the so-called new celibacy. For example, Elizabeth Abbot, the dean of women at Trinity College on the campus of the University of Toronto, says that because sex has become such a depersonalized, athletic activity in our post modern culture, more and more people are choosing to live without it. She opted for the same alternative after having taken the journey through marriage and childbearing. Why choose celibacy after marriage? She says:

This is because for me, as for most women, celibacy has major tangible benefits, namely respite from the time consuming burdens of housewifery to which even liberated professionals succumb. I am particularly grateful to be relieved of that aspect of previous relationships. No longer do I need to plan, shop for, cook, serve and clean up after a week's meals, or iron the shirts I once foolishly boasted I could do better than the dry cleaner, or answer that infernal question, "Honey, where are my socks?"²

In her own polite – or less than polite – way Elizabeth has told men, and especially the man in her life, where to get off. She's done with the "burdens of housewifery." The price she pays is no sex at all, but for her – in her situation, she admits – the deal is well worth it.

Or as another new alternative, consider the route chosen by Celine Davies (not her real name), a Toronto actress and producer. She used the avenue of the "Voice personals" to find a special partner. She says: "I decided to seek a lover after 10 years of celibacy in a 20 year marriage."³ For her, celibacy was decidedly *not* an alternative. "Frankly," she says, "my hormones eventually got the better of me." She tells her story of carefully choosing a Mr. Right from the barrage of options open to her. It was an elaborate process, but as far as she's concerned it worked. "I am happy. My husband is happy. My lover is delirious. But . . . there is a real danger. Our affection for each other continues to deepen. And it has become a struggle to keep our emotions in check."

Emotions in check? And that in the context of what is (or, let me say, *should be*) full marital intimacy? It's almost too absurd to believe. For here a relationship that is designed to bring one's emotions to their fullest expression is being exploited with the implicit proviso that the emotions be curtailed, so that a part of them can still be reserved for someone else. Oh, the bizarre meanderings of modern day people!

The root of the problem

One note strikes me in this selection of examples that I have listed above – a package which could easily be multiplied by hundreds of similar pieces in our day and age. People have lost sight of the purpose of marriage and its place in the God given created order. Marriage is no longer seen as an institution designed to serve God and his purposes in the world. The result? The pursuit of self-interest takes over, and takes precedence over the responsibilities to the other persons (spouse and children) that marriage itself requires. Such a pursuit of self-interest in marriage is the exact formula required to ensure its failure and eventual destruction. For it is by definition not a relationship conditioned by self-interest. It may initially be prodded by personal interests and the call of the created order itself, the call to reproduction that comes with our created structure. But it remains an institution of service in which personal interests must be complemented and overcome by service to your partner, and above and before this, your service of the one true God!

Marriage ultimately remains a *duty* and *calling*. The call of nature itself is filled out and entirely qualified by the call

of God. And when He calls, his call is always a call away from the pursuit of self-interest to a life of *service*. Marriage, too, is an institution designed to serve God, church and country, and whoever sees it as an arrangement to satisfy his own pursuits can never escape the world of "tragic tension." The tension is born out of apostasy! Only

when the human heart is directed to the service of the Creator, only then can a marriage achieve its real goal and find its true end. That is why the apostle enjoins marriage *only in the Lord* (1 Cor 7: 39). Marriage can only find its deepest meaning in its submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ, (cf Eph 5:21ff).

We also do not need to spiritualize marriage, as if it can only function as an institution for the sake of the church, and the building of the church. To be sure, that is a big part of a Christian marriage. But each and every marriage, also the Christian marriage, represents a calling from God to serve Him and his purposes. God calls man and woman to live in this special bond of companionship and fellowship, and still desires the expansion and growth of humankind! The one human race needs to come to its completion in order that from that whole, a new humankind can be shaped to the furtherance of God's glory.

A continued task!


Therefore the church still has an important calling and task with regard to the marriage institution today. In the face of widespread secularization, we

need to witness concerning the true purpose of marriage. It is an institution not just for the church, but for society as a whole. It's an institution representing the deepest relationship of human love that can be expressed. As such it also is instrumental in serving the stability and harmony of society as a whole. Therefore the church must call the authorities to enact and promote laws that protect this institution in the face of increasing ridicule and hostility.

Marriage is under fire. How do we meet the challenge? First, foster a marriage which is still on fire – fire for the Lord, nurtured by the flame He kindles. And second, let your marriage too become part of the living voice, the testimony of the church against a wicked and a perverse generation. Then, also through this institution, God will complete his purposes and lead his church to glory!

¹I am quoting from a review by Anne Kingston in *The Globe and Mail*, March 6, 1999.

²Quoted in *The Globe and Mail*, March 6, 1999.

³Writing in *The Globe and Mail*, (Facts and Arguments) March 9, 1999. 

What's inside?

Can marriage survive the onslaught of secularization? Alternatives to marriage, redefinition of "spouse" to include same-sex couples, cynicism, the acceptance and even expectation of adultery – the church looks pretty old fashioned in the face of all that. How do we hold the old biblical line on marriage? Dr. De Jong writes about this in the editorial.

Have you ever been lonely and homesick? Undoubtedly. Read Rev. Slomp's meditation.

Some of our churches have silver collection pots on the Lord's Supper table. What are they about? Dr. C. Trimp in an article translated by the Rev. J. Mulder informs us in an answer to a question he once received.

Have you heard of "postmodernism"? You probably have. Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff has written a very interesting and accessible book on the topic. Dr. De Jong reviews it. In turn, Dr. Oosterhoff writes an article about Dr. N. Postman's most recent book on the topic of post-modernism.

Finally, Mrs. Ravensbergen has sent us her last "Ray of Sunshine." After almost a decade of writing her cheery column, she has decided to pass the pen on to others – Mrs. Corrine Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman. I think I speak for all us readers when I say: "Thank you very much, Mrs. Ravensbergen, for the wonderful way you always pointed us to our faithful heavenly Father, to his promises, and the comfort we have in knowing that He has extended his covenant of friendship to us." We trust that Mrs. Gelms and Mrs. Nordeman, while adding their own touches to the column, will continue it in a similarly biblical and comforting way.

GVp



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: C. Van Dam
 Managing Editor: G.Ph. van Popta
 Coeditors: R. Aasman, J. De Jong, J. Geertsema,
 N.H. Gooftjes, G.Ph. van Popta

ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS:

CLARION
 46 Sulphur Springs Road, Ancaster, ON L9G 1L8
 Fax: (905) 304-4951
 E-Mail: clarion@compuserve.com

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

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.
 One Beghin Avenue
 Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5
 Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202
 Email: clarion@premier.mb.ca
 World Wide Web address: <premier.mb.ca/clarion.html>

SUBSCRIPTION RATES	Regular	Air
FOR 2000	Mail	Mail
Canada*	\$36.00*	\$60.00*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds	\$39.00	\$52.00
International	\$60.00	\$90.00

* Including 7% GST – No. 890967359RT
 Advertisements: \$11.75 per column inch

Cancellation Agreement

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

Agreement No. 1377531
 Publications Mail Registration No. 09907
 ISSN 0383-0438

Copyright © Premier Printing Ltd.

All rights reserved. No part may be reproduced in any manner without permission in writing from the publisher, except brief quotations used in connection with a review in a magazine or newspaper.

IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial – Marriage Under Fire
 — J. De Jong 54

Treasures, New and Old – *At that time, I will gather you; at that time, I will bring you home.* Zephaniah 3:20
 — W.B. Slomp 56

The Lord's Supper and Deaconry
 — C. Trimp 57

Neil Postman's Advice for the New Century
 — F.G. Oosterhoff 58

Book Reviews – Postmodernism: A Christian Appraisal
 by F.G. Oosterhoff
 — J. De Jong 61

Ray of Sunshine
 — Mrs. R. Ravensbergen 63

Letters to the Editor 64

CD Note – Psalms and Sacred Songs
 — C. Van Dam 65

By W.B. Slomp

*“At that time, I will gather you; at that time,
I will bring you home.”*

Zephaniah 3:20

When I was fourteen years old, I was anxious to have a summer job. I was a full of confidence in my own abilities and was willing to tackle anything. When some good friends of the family, who lived in the big city of Rotterdam, arranged a job for me in the same factory as their own son, I jumped at the chance. Although Rotterdam was more than 100 kilometers from where I lived, I did not give being away from home a second thought. I set off by train. However, I disembarked at the wrong station. I was in completely unfamiliar territory, I did not know anyone and was too ashamed and proud to ask anyone for help. My “uncle’s” son who was supposed to pick me up figured out where I might have gotten off, and finally fetched me from the train station.

The job was in a pop factory. They put me at the end of a conveyor belt where I had to grab the bottles, put them in a crate, and stack them. I had a very difficult time keeping up with those across from me. Although I did my utmost, the older, more experienced boys poked fun at me. At the end of the day, I was exhausted and miserable. My hands were full of blisters and cuts, and every bone in my body ached. My misery was compounded by the fact that I had to stay in a strange house, without family or friends, without my mother tending to my wounds. As you can imagine, after a few days of this I was longing for home. There is nothing like being away from home that makes you once again appreciate it. Only then do you realize what a wonderful place your own home is. It gives you a totally new perspective.

Zephaniah writes about Jerusalem. That is the central dwelling place to God’s people. It is their home. For that is also where the Lord God manifests his presence and that is where his tem-

ple is. There the people gather together to celebrate the various yearly feasts, to offer sacrifices and to receive atonement for their sins. It is a place of fellowship, of restored relationships with the Lord God and with each other. It is a place of peace and well being.

However, at the time that Zephaniah wrote his prophecy, the people were not showing appreciation for their home. Although outwardly the people went along with the reforms of Josiah that were going on at that time, in reality their hearts were not in it. The vast majority of them did not appreciate the wonderful riches they had received from the Lord God. They wanted to be independent. They wanted to do things

**There is nothing
like being away from
home that makes
you once again
appreciate it.**

on their own, in their own strength. They rejected God. So Zephaniah warns the people of Judah about the impending exile. He writes about it as a *fait accompli*. There is no doubt that the exile will take place.

But now, at the end of this prophecy, Zephaniah writes about the time during and after the exile. By the rivers of Babylon they will sing their songs of lament, expressing their sorrow and misery, being away from their home. Zephaniah comforts those who mourn their loss with the words that the Lord God is going to bring them home once again. He will again gather a remnant to himself.

Why would they yearn for their homeland and particularly Jerusalem so much? Would it be because of the fa-

miliar streets and market places, and their friends and relatives? Is that what it is all about? No, that cannot be, for Jerusalem will have been destroyed, and the temple as well. No one is left. Everything is gone.

What then will they be longing for? Well, they will be longing for restored fellowship with the Lord their God. The exile happened because God was angry with them because of their sins. They believed that they could do without God. They did not think that they needed Him for protection and care and love. Nevertheless, they will come to the realization that they cannot do without Him. Their true home is with the Lord their God, who manifests his presence in Jerusalem. They will be looking forward to rebuilding the temple, and the walls around Jerusalem.

We now live after Pentecost, and God chooses to dwell in our bodies as temples of his Spirit. God sent his Holy Spirit so that we can live in closeness to Him, so that we may experience his wonderful presence. However, sometimes it happens that we want to look for new experiences, for this world has so many things to offer. We want to try to make it on our own. Then God calls us back. He comes with his Word and Spirit to have us come home to Him. We must not be too proud and stubborn to heed his call. No, then we have to leave everything behind and allow Him to gather us. We must always long to be with Him. For we are but aliens here on this earth. Our true home is with the Lord our God. Are you longing always to be with Him? If you do then He will have you come home to the New Jerusalem, where you will never be miserable.

Rev. Slomp is the minister of the Canadian Reformed Church of Neerlandia, Alberta.



The Lord's Supper and Deaconry

By C. Trimp

Dr. C Trimp, Professor Emeritus of Diaconiology at the Theological University in Kampen, once received a question about the offerings taken at the Lord's Supper Table. We thought that the question and the answer may be of interest to our readers. This article first appeared in the Dutch periodical for office-bearers, Dienst (1974) and was translated and slightly abridged by the Rev. J. Mulder.

The question

On our Lord's Supper table there are always a few collection bowls in which those who attend the Lord's Supper put their donations. Originally these gifts were designated for the ministry of mercy (deaconry), but at the moment they are for the building fund of the Theological University. In our council meeting the question was raised whether it would not be better to do away with these collection bowls and have a normal collection during the service so that every one who attends can contribute.

This "problem" was handed over to the deacons because they had agreed to give up the proceeds which in the past went to the deaconry.

These collection bowls may have an historical, maybe even a symbolic origin of about twenty centuries. That is why we come with this question: does it still make sense to keep up this tradition today? Or is it better to give up this practice since not every one who attends church also attends the Lord's Supper?

The love meals and the Lord's Supper

When we trace the long history of this custom we soon discover the rich meaning of this thanksgiving offering at the table of our Lord. From the New Testament we know that caring for the needy brothers and sisters and the cele-

bration of the Lord's Supper were closely related. Maybe even so close that both activities took place at the same table. The reader only needs to turn to Acts 2:42 and Acts 2:46 and read them together in order to get an idea of how this matter was dealt with in the life of the congregation just after Pentecost

We don't know the details and the exact order in which they did things in the worship services of this first Pentecost congregation. But we *do* know of the so-called *love meals or love feasts* of that early time. We read about them in Jude 12 and 1 Corinthians 11:17-33. The richer members of the congregation brought along so much food and drink that also the poor brothers and sisters had enough to eat.

**The joy in
God's salvation
is the framework for caring
for each other
in the congregation.**

In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul warns the congregation that their love meals tend to develop into something which was the opposite of what they were supposed to be. The intention of this meal was that it reflect the fellowship and communion described in Acts 2:42. But in Corinth they were in danger of letting it degenerate into something totally different. It is this table of love and the Lord's Supper which is also meant in Acts 6:1.

In time this custom developed in such a way that the believers brought all kinds of food to their church buildings. We get the impression of a very colourful scene when we read that in those first centuries bread and wine, oil and cheese, olives and other fruit, plus all kind of birds were brought to the church. The deacons were always the

ones who were active in collecting and distributing these donations of food. During the Middle Ages this colourful scene changed when instead of all these various donations, *money* was taken along to church.

We also know that a small portion of these various donations was taken to be used as food and drink for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. All the rest, and that was quite a bit, was designated for the clergy and the poor. These poor brothers and sisters lived off the donations that had been reserved for them at the Lord's Supper table.

Thanksgiving and generosity to the poor

There is something beautiful and meaningful in this practice. In the Christian church the poor will not go hungry but they may live from what they receive in a direct manner from the hands of Christ. The love of the Lord Jesus Christ which made possible the Lord's Supper table in this world also incites much love and fellowship in the hearts of the believers so that the poorer brothers and sisters may expect their sustenance from that love and that table.

Although we know that already quite soon these donations became part of the "good works" and the "sacrifice" that at the Lord's table was offered to God (the beginning of the so called *offertorium* in the framework of the Eucharist), all this may not keep us from continuing to appreciate the Scriptural idea behind it. Despite that historically these donations later degenerated to "sacrificial gifts of atonement" offered by men to God, originally they were gifts of praise and thanksgiving for forgiveness received.

This custom of the New Testament church is also completely in line with the Old Testament stipulation that an Israelite not appear before the Lord empty-handed when he went to celebrate the feasts of salvation. Precisely

when he remembered God's deliverance from Egypt, the house of bondage (Passover), and God's taking care of his people in the desert (Feast of Booths), he had also to remember those who were so vulnerable among God's people: the widow, the orphan and the Levite (e.g. Deut 14:28, 29; 16:11,14). It was a good Jewish custom to remember the poor especially on the Passover evening. If we keep that in mind, we understand better a passage such as John 13:29.

The joy in God's salvation is the framework for caring for each other in the congregation (see Acts 2:46). It is there where the deep roots of the work of the deacons are.

A meaningful tradition

When we keep in mind what we have learned so far, then it is clear in which direction we must go to answer the question. The presence of collection bowls at the Lord's Table is not just an age-old tradition. It is also a *meaningful tradition* which provides a direct link to the church of the New and Old Testament. Those collection bowls remind the brothers and sisters who approach


the Lord's Supper that the celebration of God's salvation also means caring for those members whose joy is dimmed by worries for their daily needs. The powerful symbolism of the Lord's Supper is in an essential way enriched by these thank offerings.

Another aspect is that also the deacons are reminded that the roots of their office become visible at the Lord's table. Their work and visits in the congregation find their origin at *this* table. They distribute that which the believers have brought to the Lord's table out of love for his salvation. But, it is of course essential that we always designate these offerings as being for the work of the deacons! In the congregation where this question was raised things went wrong when the deacons allowed these gifts to be designated for something else. No wonder that then the question comes up whether it is not better to replace this custom of Lord's Supper bowls with an "ordinary" collection!

We would regret it very much if we would go in that direction. It would be to the detriment both of the celebration of the Lord's Supper as well as the appreciation of the office of deacon. There

is already among us a lack of recognition and an underestimating of the symbolic-power of the Lord's Supper. We should go into another direction. We have to learn again as congregation and deacons that the Lord's Supper donation is *the* offering for the diaconry, and the other so called "ordinary" collections of every Sunday are an extension of that Lord's Supper offering.

The argument that not everyone can bring his offering to the Lord's Table is really no argument and no way to discuss this beautiful custom. Any baptized member who has a donation which he or she wants to offer will also be able to find a way to hand in these gifts.

If we lose the right perspective in this matter then indeed the collection at the Lord's Supper table turns into a "vulgar" way of "making money" in the church. Then it would indeed be better to quickly remove these collection bowls from the table. But if that would happen we would be going in the wrong direction both with respect to the liturgy as well as in appreciating the office of deacon. 

Neil Postman's Advice for the New Century

By F.G. Oosterhoff

Neil Postman is no stranger to many of us. A professor in the department of culture and communications at New York University and the author of some twenty books, he is a widely-read cultural and educational critic whose work has received attention also in our circles.

Postman's areas of concern are several. They include our society's uncritical acceptance and idolization of technology, its enslavement to the media of entertainment, its refusal to pay attention to the lessons of the past, and its apparent inability to provide a sound education for its youth. As an educational critic he consistently asks for an approach to schooling that stresses the development of the children's mind,

rather than one that manipulates them into becoming docile producers and consumers. These various concerns are addressed in such well-known books as *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, *Technopoly*, *Teaching as a Conserving Activity*, *The Disappearance of Childhood*, and *The End of Education*.

This past year Postman has added yet another book to the list. It is entitled *Building a Bridge to the Eighteenth Century: How the Past can Improve our Future* (Knopf, 1999, \$ 35 Cdn). As the title suggests, his aim is to show that there is wisdom in giving heed to the lessons of history, but in the process of doing so he returns to several of his other concerns as well. They include the evil effects of our over-reliance on tech-

nology, the unwise equating of "information" with knowledge, and the urgent need for educational reform. The book also deals – as previous ones have done – with the need for finding a worldview that can replace the fragmentary and relativistic postmodernist one.

Flaws

Like earlier books by Postman, this new volume has drawn a good deal of attention, also in Canadian media. This is not surprising. Postman's cultural critique is generally to the point, and many of the educational and other guidelines he provides are worth considering. Therefore, being acquainted with some of his earlier books, I expected that I would be able to review this latest

volume in a largely positive manner. Now that I have read it, however, I realize that I can recommend it only with important caveats.

True, there is much in the book that is attractive, especially for those who are not familiar with the author's previous works. (To them I would especially recommend the chapters on Technology, Language, Information, Children, and Education.) But those who have read any number of Postman's earlier books will find this latest volume repetitive. This does not necessarily invalidate the work: it cannot hurt to be reminded of the author's often sound advice on how to counter the inanities of our postmodern culture. There are, moreover, some topics – for example in the chapter on language – that he has not dealt with in any detail before. But the fact remains that most of the issues he discusses in his latest book have been covered – and often in much greater depth – in previous ones.

This repetitiveness applies not only to the critical parts of this volume, but also to the solutions it proposes. It is here that we encounter the serious weakness – not only in the present work, but also in a number of the author's previous ones. Postman realizes the close connection between our society's discontents and its loss of a coherent world-view – or “narrative,” or “story,” as postmoderns call it – and he tries to help us recover such a world-view. He knows that religious convictions must be at its basis. They are necessary because only religion can give an answer to the nagging question – the one that every thinking being struggles with, whether consciously or not – as to why we are here and what is expected of us. Religious faith, he says, is also among the means that provide us with a transcendent authority to which we can turn for moral guidance. But being a convinced humanist, he is unable to construct a world-view on a truly religious basis and concludes by proposing a narrative that is almost indistinguishable from the defunct modern one.

In the end, therefore, the book serves to show the inability of modern humanism to solve the problems of fragmentation and meaninglessness that plague our postmodern society. Seen from that point of view – the one I will adopt in this report – the book is no less instructive than any of the previous ones.

Back to the Age of Reason

Postman is concerned about the future. The twentieth century has been one of almost unrelieved disaster, and he warns that unless we change our belief systems the prospects for the twenty-first century are gloomy. The necessary changes can be accomplished, he says, if we look to the past and imitate the positive examples we can find there. While agreeing with the philosopher Santayana that those who neglect history will be forced to repeat it, he thinks that this famous saying stresses the negative aspect of the lessons of history too much. We should turn to the past not only to learn what to avoid, but also to find out what works. Having done so, we can imitate these good examples. It is the only means we have of influencing the new century, for “the future” in itself is non-existent. Its nature will depend on what we bring into it from the past. It follows that we should choose the best part of that past to “fill” the future. In short, while it is bad to forget our culture's mistakes, it is worse to forget its successes.

**Only religion
can give an answer
to the nagging question
as to why we are here and
what is expected of us.**

The past to which Postman wants us to go for guidance is the eighteenth century, a period that is also known as the Enlightenment or the Age of Reason. A self-confessed enemy of the twentieth century, he sees nothing positive in the immediate past. He briefly considers the possible relevance of the teachings of the ancient Greeks and the Christian Middle Ages, but concludes that these sources are too far away and too abstract to be of much relevance for our scientific and technological age. It is in the eighteenth century, he believes, “that we may find ideas that offer a humane direction to the future, ideas that we can carry with confidence and dignity across the bridge to the twenty-first century.”

These ideas, he says, are not abstract, nor will they appear remote to us. It is in the eighteenth century that we find the origins of our present-day beliefs about science, about religious and political and civic freedoms, popular education, the reality of progress,



ACCEPTED the call from the church of Cloverdale, British Columbia for urban mission in the Greater Vancouver area:

Candidate Frank Dong

DECLINED the call from the church at Kelmscott, Australia, for mission work via radio broadcasts to mainland China:

Candidate Frank Dong

CALLED by the church of Houston, British Columbia:

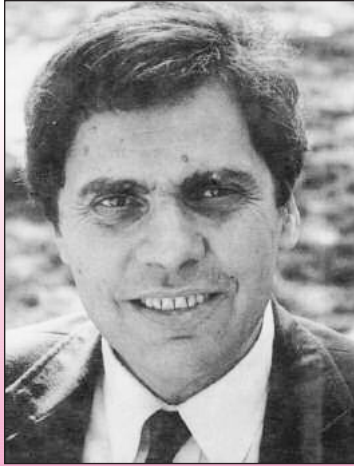
Rev. P.G. Feenstra

of Owen Sound, Ontario.

the need to fight superstition, and the importance of adopting a skeptical attitude with respect to all truth claims. Postman agrees that there were reactionary beliefs and practices in the Age of Reason, but reminds us that it was the same age which criticized and helped remove many of these shortcomings. He concludes that the roots of practically all that has been good in the modern age are found in the eighteenth century. The wise men of that century should be able to help us put the disastrous late-modern and postmodern eras behind us, if only we diligently study their works and enter into their spirit.

Searching for a narrative

Eighteenth-century thought will be particularly helpful in any attempt to construct a satisfactory narrative. The term narrative refers, as we noted, to what used to be called a world-view – that is, to the set of commonly-held beliefs about ultimate questions (questions about God, the nature of the world, and the duties and destiny of man) which serves a society as a guide, ensures coherence, and provides a sense of purpose. Such narratives can have different origins. They can be based on the Bible, or on pagan religions, or on the modern faith in science and progress. They can also be inspired by the idolatry of class



Neil Postman

or by that of folk and blood and race, as happened in the twentieth century with the rise of communism, Nazism, and fascism.

It was these twentieth-century aberrations that played their part in the postmodern dislike and rejection of narratives. Rather than asking for an overarching world-view, which they say can be “terrorizing” to minorities and dissenters, postmodernists promote pluralism and multiculturalism. The result, however, has not been as expected. Instead of getting rid of narratives, postmodernism has given rise to a new type of collective belief system, one that in denying the need for cultural unity and unchanging norms has greatly contributed to the fragmentation, scepticism, and relativism of our postmodern society. To ensure an “agreeable encounter with the twenty-first century,” Postman says, we need a different narrative. It must be one that ensures cultural cohesion and provides us with a sense of purpose and with guidelines as to how we must behave and why.

In the process of outlining such a narrative the contradictions in Postman’s position become apparent. On the one hand, he wants us to adopt eighteenth-century values, such as the period’s faith in reason, science, progress, and in a “naturalistic foundation of morality.” He also wants us to follow the Enlightenment in its rejection of “fundamentalism” (a category that for Postman includes any kind of orthodox faith), and in its belief in doubt as the royal road to all truth, both religious and secular. Scepticism, in fact, is to become a primary value, also in education. The skeptical attitude, he says (with typical overstatement) in his chapter on education, “is the principal legacy of the Enlightenment. There is

nothing more profound to do than to carry that legacy forward by making an effort at conveying it to our young.”

But he also states – without resolving the contradiction – that the new narrative must have a religious foundation, since only religion can provide us with answers to the all-important questions as to why we are here and what our destiny is. Because of his hatred of “fundamentalism,” he sees no other way of inculcating religious values than by the teaching of comparative religion, a subject he says should be on the curriculum of the senior grades of elementary schools and on that of the high school and beyond.

The implication is that young people will have to make up their own mind on the religious question. This was also the opinion of the Enlightenment philosopher Rousseau and his many modern and postmodern followers, and it has done its share in nurturing the relativistic attitude which Postman finds so objectionable in post-modernism. In his fear of “fundamentalism” he ignores the fact that we can have neither a coherent world-view nor an overarching moral code if we leave it to the individual to decide what is true and false, good and evil, praiseworthy and contemptible. Relativism, as he admits elsewhere, can hardly be avoided unless we believe in norms which come to us from a transcendent authority and therefore have universal validity.


In the end he concludes that we should settle for a world-view that combines aspects of the Christian and the modern-scientific one, but that does not portray either of these narratives as conveying ultimate truth. We have to act “as if” they were true, always remembering that they are to be read simply

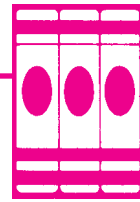
“. . . as tales, as limited human renderings of the Truth.”

Knowledge and faith

Postman’s contradictory conclusions show that he fears modern absolutism as much as postmodern relativism. He rejects the modern faith in absolute truths because it has given rise, on the one hand, to systems like communism and Nazism, and on the other to the idolization of technology. It was because of their belief in the infallibility of scientific knowledge, he reminds us, that people admitted the right of technology to produce whatever it can produce, no matter what the consequences. He fails to tell us, however, that we inherited this idolization of science from the very century he wants us to adopt as our guide. Its origin is in the Enlightenment idea of unlimited progress by means of science. And it was the realization of the groundlessness of this promise that contributed to postmodern disbelief in truth. There is a direct connection between eighteenth-century rationalism and twentieth-century irrationalism.

To help us find our way in post-modern times, Postman should have mentioned that connection. He should also have reconsidered his decision to ignore the Bible and the Christian tradition as sources of wisdom. Had he turned to these sources, he would have received confirmation of his belief that as finite beings we cannot claim absolute knowledge. To assume that we can know as God knows is to re-enact the sin of paradise. But he would also have learned that while we are incapable of reaching exhaustive knowledge, our knowledge can nevertheless be reliable. God created us as rational beings, so that we might use our reason in his service. The postmodern claim that no true knowledge can be had is not simply a reaction to Enlightenment arrogance; it is also an act of rebellion against God. The message of postmodern scepticism is that if we cannot know truth as God knows it, then we deny the very existence of truth.

Although this is not the conclusion Postman would want us to draw, his “as if” attitude to ultimate truths has similar implications. His position differs from the postmodern one not in kind but only in degree – which suggests that Enlightenment rationalism can indeed not deliver us from the morass of postmodern irrationalism. Our rescue depends on the acknowledgment of a Wisdom higher than that of the Enlightenment philosophers. 



Testing the Spirits

By J. De Jong

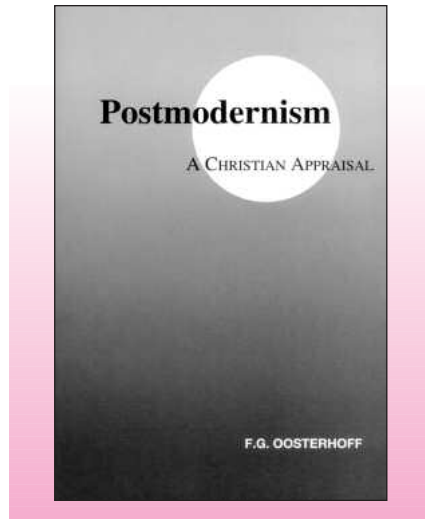
F.G. Oosterhoff, *Postmodernism: A Christian Appraisal*, Premier Publishing, Winnipeg, 1999, Soft cover 126pp \$8.00.

In this book, Dr. Freda Oosterhoff has published five lectures on postmodernism which she originally held in the fall of 1997 in Western Australia at the invitation of the Free Reformed Study Centre of the Perth area. The first lecture provides a general overview of postmodernism, particularly in its relation to modernism and previous periods. The following lectures are more specialized treatments illustrating how postmodern ideas work themselves out in the areas of language and literature, religious perspectives (which for postmodern means narrative), and education. The last two lectures on education allow Oosterhoff to expand upon her own vision of how Christian educators, and Reformed educators in particular, should be approaching their task. Here one will find many small gems of personal wisdom and the depth and insights gained through years of experience along the way.

The essays

The strongest feature of these essays is their descriptive approach that is sustained and deepened as the reader goes along. For novices in this area, which, I would venture to guess, will include a big part of the readership, it requires some effort to work through the essays, especially at the outset. However, the effort pays off double dividends when the reader finds Oosterhoff referring back to earlier descriptions and sources, and building on them as she treats the impact of postmodernism in specific areas.

The essays exhibit a fine balance between detail and overview, and between description and evaluation. Following her on her journey, the reader discovers that postmodernism represents a fundamental shift of thought affecting all areas of life and society. Whereas



the older modernist model was thoroughly secular, progressive, optimistic and humanistic, the new model is much more spiritual (in a broad quasi-religious sense of the word) and holistic. Postmodernism is romanticist rather than humanistic – that is, it postulates the unity of human beings with all nature, rather than accents the headship of humans above nature and all creatures. Finally, the new model is more reflective and conserving than progressive. Postmodernism's accent is conserving unspoiled nature and the human environment rather than exploiting it for economic and material gain.

In the area of language and literature, Dr. Oosterhoff introduces a further set of prominent characteristics of postmodernism. Postmodernism shows a new openness to paganism, reflected in a movement even as early as National Socialism. Nazism was essentially a postmodernist phenomenon, not a modernist one. Another important feature is that postmodernists reject universal truths and promote fragmentation and tribalization. In this model, truth represents nothing more than the metaphors and pictures you grew up with, or the view of reality your specific cultural milieu handed down to you.

The interspersed evaluations have many positive features, the most prevalent being that Oosterhoff is by no means an iconoclastic interpreter operating with rigid black and white categories. She's very open about the positive elements that postmodernism brings to society and to the world of ideas in particular. Perhaps the more dominant positive feature which she highlights in a number of ways is the increased toleration for Christian perspectives that postmodernism, at least in its moderate variances, is inclined to allow. The openness to holistic approaches, spirituality and the need for spiritual dimension all amounts to an increased willingness to at least tolerate those who defend the worship of the God of the Bible.

A global critique?

If there is any point at which critical notations could be made, I would say it falls here in the area of evaluation. In her appraisal, Dr. Oosterhoff is strong on what is generally called immanent criticism, but the force of the transcendental critique could be more thorough. What I mean is this: granted that postmodernism represents a corrective to the excesses and one-sidedness of modernism at many points, and granted that in itself it shows certain weaknesses and one-sided, even arbitrary, aspects, what is the overall impetus of this new philosophical paradigm? My fear is that the initial declamations of toleration to all forms of religiosity including Christianity will soon give way to the birth of a new, dramatically more aggressive, form of *intolerance* for any sort of absolute viewpoint – which, of course, remains the essence of the Christian position. In other words, there is more room for a *global* appraisal as well, and that is one area where Oosterhoff's critique of postmodernism could have been stronger. Indeed, the critique would, in my view, put postmodernism at a point farther removed from even the worst



F.G. Oosterhoff

aberrations of modernism. Also in these philosophical or “life and world-view” developments, we cannot escape the conclusion that the spirit of apostasy is only increasing all the time, and the way is being paved for the ultimate battle between the man of lawlessness, (and his propaganda!) and the defenders of the true Christian confession.

I do not mean to suggest that this perspective is lacking in the book. Indeed, there are references to the judgment of God working itself out in modern hedonistic culture, and Dr. Oosterhoff also highlights the inner contradictions of postmodernism which expose it as a potentially threatening force to the Christian walk and talk. She does not hold back her critique, uncovering elements of arbitrariness, incoherence and nihilism. Yet on the whole, she is softer in her judgments on more moderate forms of postmodernism, namely, those forms in which reason is not so ruthlessly thrown overboard, but still exploited as a tool given to humans to apply responsibly for the care of this world. And here she may well be right, as far as current circumstances are concerned; but my question would be: where will all this end up? Is it not clear already, as she herself intimates, that the more radical forms of this new perspective are out in front, and at the end of the day, that view will hold the centre stage? And does not this inner direction of this new paradigm require us to articulate a more global or all encompassing *rejection*, in spite of whatever positive gains one can glean from the insights of even its wisest and most moderate champions?

Postmodernism and preachers

Then a note on a topic which for me is a little closer to home. Dr. Oosterhoff suggests that the current postmodern climate has also led to re-evaluations in homiletics, that is, in the art and nature of preaching. In this assessment, she is correct; in fact, most of contemporary homiletics is built up from the point of view of the hearer. I also share her view that some aspects of Dr. C. Trimp’s second look at the development of the redemptive-historical approach and the debates surrounding this development has some positive aspects to it, namely, greater attention to points of application, and the needs of the hearer in the pew, and so on. However, I am not as convinced as she is that the modern day interpreter of the Bible must incorporate the present situation of the hearer into the actual *interpretation* of the biblical text. And, although she does not explicitly say this, she seems to allow the door to be opened in that direction by asserting that our preachers and interpreters of the Bible “give attention to the author, the times in which the text was written, the original recipients, the text, and the contemporary reader,” (p. 48).

It is particularly the last figure in the row above that troubles me; the others can keep their position there just fine. But the “contemporary reader”? When Ernst Fuchs, the pupil of H. G. Gadamer (to whom incidentally Oosterhoff refers as spearheading the new approach in hermeneutics) who applied Gadamer’s approach to the New Testament, said that we are responsible not only for what we say, but also for the state in which our word arrives in the ears of our hearers, there were many who hailed this as the new and long-searched for truth in hermeneutics. But was it? As they say in Dutch, there was a snake in the grass. Behind this new hermeneutic was a departure from the obedient and humble interpretation of the biblical text, that is, that interpretation which lets the *text* speak first and foremost. Therefore, in spite of Trimp’s marginal corrections, I would still say today: first the preacher must present to the congregation what the text says; only secondarily, that is, within the bounds of a paradigm shaped by the text, is he then obligated to bring this message to the hearers in words that they can understand and appropriate *today*.¹

But all this is only a small piece of criticism between us, moreover, one

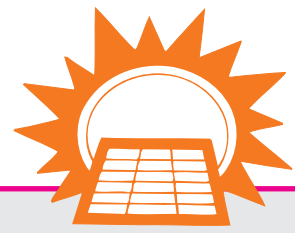
which, knowing her, she will deal with gracefully. At any rate she may take it as a sign that her book sets even preachers to thinking, which, with a book like this, they surely ought to do. I only mention it because this is an area about which I am particularly concerned. And it does not take away from the fact that I have great appreciation for the balanced and careful way Dr. Oosterhoff has chosen to package her message.

It is especially in the section on education that this book is very strong, and deserves an even wider readership. And who would expect otherwise? After all, she has given her life to the cause! On the whole she falls on the side of more traditional approaches, defending the classical emphases on content, memorization, and, especially, universal truths in learning, over against the current more postmodern approaches. And she ends her book right in the middle of that which she has always done best and, I would guess, loved the most: teaching history. She promotes an integrated and historical approach to the whole curriculum in elementary, but especially secondary education. I would almost call it the analogue to the redemptive-historical approach in preaching! To be sure, she’s right: we need to think about people and their emotions, conflicts and struggles in the world today. But – and here we endorse her main conclusion – this can only be done by showing the learners their historical context, shaping that context before their eyes, and fostering its own formation in their consciousness, having packaged it in a solid, theocentric, Reformed “world and life view.”

I can only heartily recommend this book, and along with my congratulations to the author (to whom I have other reasons to be grateful as well), voice the hope and wish that she may receive all she needs to complete whatever supplements there are planned for this volume. Any reader, but especially preachers and educators, will gain insight with this book. It is a substantial contribution to assessing the times in which we live, and a forceful encouragement for educators in particular to keep their ship moving steadily forward even against the forces of prevailing winds and rising tides.

¹All this has implications for the matter of Bible translation as well, but I cannot pursue this here.





By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

“For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come.” Hebrews 13:14

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Our life is full of changes. When it means that something is getting better, we like them. Maybe you change to a better job, or a nicer house, or new furniture. But it happens also that we do not like the change. We may lose a good friend, or some change at work may make us quite nervous. We have to face changes often, because nothing in the world is stable. It may happen that you have been going to the same store for many years and all of a sudden the store closes its doors. Changes can make you scared, because something you counted on is gone out of your life. Especially when this involves a good friend, or a family member a change can really affect our happiness.

Sometimes changes need to be made. When your job changes, you may have to move to another house or even to another town or city. When your house is very old, you may have to move to another house. When somebody at work gets married, she may have to be replaced with someone else. There is nothing we can do about that kind of changes: they have to be made. And as long as we live here on this earth, we will have to cope with changes, pleasant ones and difficult ones.

Yet there is something in our life that is stable and that will never change. Whatever happens to us, it will be there until we die. And what might that be? Our faith in the Lord. No one can take that away from us. Even when something terrible happens to us, our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is there, and it will help us to cope.

How do we get that faith? We do not have to be very smart to have faith; we do not have to pass difficult exams; we do not have to pay a lot of money; we do not need a health check-up to receive it. Faith is a gift from heaven. Faith is a sure knowledge that we belong to Jesus Christ who died for our sins. We know that by reading God's Word. And also by listening to God's Word when it is preached to us in church.

When we go to church on Sundays, and try to understand what the minister is preaching to us, then the Holy Spirit will work faith in our hearts. That is all we have to do for it: go to church and participate in listening, and in singing. When we do that, with all our heart, then the Holy Spirit will do the rest. He will help us understand what we found a little difficult.

Sometimes we can see some of the signs that the Lord gave us, through the administration of the sacraments. When a baby is baptized we can see the water that is sprinkled on the head of the baby. When the Holy Supper is celebrated, we can see (and taste) the bread and the wine. The water, the bread, the wine – they are real. The sacraments help us to see and believe that the Lord is real. Through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments the Holy Spirit makes our faith in the Lord stronger. He will make us happy, so we can rejoice in the Lord and thank Him for his Son, our Saviour, who died for our sins. If we cannot attend the church services because we are sick, or

maybe very old, then we can still pray for the Holy Spirit, and He will help us and comfort us.

Are there difficult changes in our life? Did we move to a strange city where we do not know anybody? Is everything at work messed up so our job has become very difficult? Are we lonely because we lost a family member or a good friend? Do not lose heart. Every week we may celebrate Sunday. Every Sunday we can go to church. And even when this is a new church in a strange city, it is still the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The same Word is preached there, the same sacraments are administered, and the same Holy Spirit helps us to grow in faith and in love for the Lord.

As long as we believe in the Lord, who never changes, we will be able to make it on our way to the everlasting city Jerusalem. No change here on earth can change that! For our Lord Jesus Christ has prepared a place for us in that promised city. He has done all the work for us, and we may just follow Him. Praise be to God, who accepted us, sinners, as his children, out of grace alone!

*Christ Jesus full atonement made
And brought to us salvation.
Each Christian therefore may be glad
And build on this foundation.
Thy grace alone, O Lord, I plead.
Thy death is now my life indeed,
For Thou hast paid my ransom.*

*Faith clings to Jesus' work alone
And rests in Him unceasing;
And by its fruits true faith is known,
With love and hope increasing.
By faith alone we're justified;
Works serve the neighbour and supply
The proof that faith is living.*

Hymn 24:5, 6

Birthdays in March:

3: TREVOR HOFKINK

C 106, 8920 165 Street, Edmonton, AB T5R 2R9

10: JAMES BOONE

22 Abdare Road NE, Calgary, AB T2A 6V9

12: GERRY EELHART

9713 – 151 Street, Edmonton, AB T5P 1S6

15: JIM VANDERHEIDEN

1156 Diltz Road, RR 2, Dunnville, ON N1A 2W2

18: ROSELYN KUIK

68 Lynn Lake Drive, Winnipeg, MB R2C 4N7

26: COURTNEY POPKEN

9445 Windsor Street, Chilliwack, BC V2P 6C5

Trevor hopes to celebrate his 22nd birthday, James his 4th, Gerry his 38th, Jim his 41st, Roselyn her 26th, and Courtney his 7th. Congratulations to all of you!

Mrs. R. Ravensbergen
RR 1, 7462 Reg. Road 20, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0
Tel: 905-957-3007
e-mail: RWRavens@netcom.ca

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A few excerpts from recent *Clarions* on which I would like to comment....

Re: "Hymns" Year end issue, 1999, page 594 and 595

In this third article Rev. R. Aasman came to the following conclusion (amongst others): "Hymns which are firmly based on Scripture and are to God's glory will be a blessing to the church." This is true only of rhymed renditions of Scripture passages; others are by the same token not firmly based on Scripture. We could cite a few examples of the latter: Hymn 5 relates that we are already kings and reign with the Lord Jesus. This is however a matter of the future. The singing of Hymn 12 is acting as if the Lord Jesus needs to be born yet, just like other so-called "Christmas carols." Hymn 16 has "peace on earth to men," which is unscriptural. It also has the angels "singing," while Scripture states that they spoke. Contrary to Hymn 22, we possess no crowns, and are not yet priests and kings; see Lord's Day 24, answer 62. Hymn 53 claims that we are "pilgrims," indicating that we are "passing through." This is nonsense and contradicts Gen 1:28, according to which we are to fulfill our mandate on this earth, not merely pass through life as though on a pilgrimage. We could carry on a while longer in order to prove that those hymns that are not rhymed Scripture passages are in fact not cognizant of God's covenant, relating nothing about his wrath and curse, and thus are not mindful of the complete Word of God.

Re: "Special Days" Year end issue, 1999, page 594 and 595

Dr. J. DeJong attempts to contradict Rev. G.I. Williamson in the matter of the celebration of Christmas. It is beneficial first of all to read an article by James Wanliss in *Reformed Perspective*, December 1999, page 21. Mr. Wanliss rejects, in my view correctly, the commemoration of "special" days. In the first 335 years of the churches, no thought was given to the celebration of

the birth of Christ, nor do we find such thoughts in the apostolic epistles. Dr. DeJong states: "But the apostolic hint and intimation is certainly present!" However, he fails to prove this from Scripture. The reference to 1 Cor 3:20 regarding the "dispensation of the spirit" must be an error. Dr. DeJong also points to the Church Order, article 53, in which reference is made to maintaining special days. Such extra emphasis is unnecessary; the weekly preaching of the Catechism pays sufficient attention to these special events. In my view, the Dutch Synod of 1574 correctly rejected these special days.

H. DeJong
Edmonton

Re: Press Release of January 07:

Thank-you for the regular, informative, and helpful Press Review. However, today when I read it I was surprised by what Dr. J. DeJong writes regarding the RCUS's synodical committee on the days of creation. The committee produced an Abstract defending the position that these days are "six, normal, chronological days of light and darkness . . . not only to the Hebrew shepherds and farmers who first heard the words of God through Moses, but also the 20th century person reading them today." (quoting Press Release in *Clarion*).

Dr. DeJong comments that we should be "wary of binding ourselves beyond the explicit teaching of Scripture." I agree (depending on what "explicit" means). He then writes, "In the early chapters of Genesis, Scripture clearly refers to a normal day in straight forward historical language." This agrees with the RCUS Abstract. However, his next sentence appears to directly contradict this: "But to insist, as the synodical Abstract does, that this was a 24 hour day exactly as we know it today goes beyond the testimony of Scripture."

Could Dr. DeJong explain what he means, since the two last-mentioned sentences appear contradictory?

Pastor T. Van Raalte
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Re: Unity in Discussion

I have some questions regarding Dr. De Jong's article on "Unity in Discussion" (the part on "Days of Creation") in the January 7th issue of *Clarion*.

Dr. De Jong says that to insist, as the RCUS does, that a day of creation was a 24 hour day exactly as we know it today goes beyond the testimony of Scripture.

I'm sorry now I'm really confused. Here are my questions: 1) Do you not believe that the word of God is infallible? 2) Do you not believe that our GOD has the power to create the world in 6 (24 hour)days? I have no problem believing that our God, as great as He is, could have created the world in far less time than 6 days.

Your statement seems to suggest that it is okay to believe that God created the world in 6 days, but that may not be the case. I mean these days could then be a billion hours or more. This of course could translate into billions of years in our time as we know it, thus giving in to the evolution theory. If this is what you are saying than that would make me doubt the whole Bible. I have faith in our God that when He inspired Moses to write the first 5 books of the Bible, He gave him the truth. The whole truth and nothing but the truth. Please don't get me wrong. I'm not trying to be disrespectful, but your statement does raise a lot of questions.

Then you write: "Let us avoid the danger of binding ourselves beyond and above the requirements of Scripture, especially where this does not appear to be necessary." What does that mean?

Please explain these things for your readers. Thank you.

Barry Post
Abbotsford, BC

A brief response:

Pastor Van Raalte sees two statements which in his view appear to "directly contradict" each other. But I should not know why this must be the case. For while the text (Genesis 1) speaks of a day like the one we experience, it does not insist that the day was exactly 24 hours long, and I would not see the value of insisting that it has to be exactly that long. In other words, while the day was a normal day, there may

be differences in its *length* relative to what we experience today. Given the magnitude of the cosmological and catastrophic changes that came upon the earth through fall and flood, I would consider this to be a possibility. Even if Pastor Van Raalte thinks it is unlikely, I would not want to bind him or anyone else to one particular view, and that seems to me to be the tenor of the *Abstract* on this point.¹

Br. Post raises the question that if the day was not twenty four hours, what then? A billion years? Frankly, I would have hoped that a reader of good will would have suggested a time period a littler smaller than that. After all, I did speak of a “normal day” and it is a little hard for me to conceive of a normal day as being *that* long. My only point is: I see no need to tie the length to a specific number of *hours*, and that with *binding* authority. This certainly does not take away anything from the authority of the scriptures. We must hold to all of Scripture. But holding to all of Scripture also means admitting that there are things we do not know with absolute certainty. And where there is not absolute certainty, there can be no ecclesiastically binding authority.

J. De Jong

¹The *Abstract* says: “Our subject is the length of the creation days, and our purpose is to defend the position that the days of creation, as recorded in the book of Genesis and interpreted in the fourth commandment, were of normal length, i.e. approximately twenty-four hours,” 63. Then: “Since we admit no exceptions or scruples to our doctrinal standards, the RCUS requires all officers to teach, defend and promote the belief that God created the world in six normal days,” 70. This seems to me to *bind* the officers to the notion of “approximately twenty-four hours” – something which I would not dare to do.

Re: Authority

I would like to react to part 4 of the series of articles entitled “Authority” by G.Ph. van Popta. I commend the author for writing this series. For one thing, it will serve as an effective resource for our Bible classes. I would just like to add a few comments to the section called “Abuse of Authority.”

The author states that “as those in positions of authority exercise their power by serving those they are called to lead, things will be well.” I believe that the intentions of those in authority in our councils, our schools, and our homes is to do just this, and yet there

are many people in our Canadian Reformed community who have reasons to feel bitter about the way they have been treated by any of these authorities. Some have even left our church to overcome this bitterness. I believe that one of the reasons for the existence of this bitterness is that those in authority (including principals and teachers) do not pay sufficient attention to the manner in which authority is exercised.

Our authorities often do not follow the rules of natural justice, which are:

- a. Right to know the allegations against you
- b. Right to reply to your allegations
- c. Right to an unbiased decision-maker to hear your case/appeal

Sometimes our authorities are ignorant of these basic rules of justice; sometimes, in

our enthusiasm to make judgments or decisions they are simply forgotten.

I would like to urge all authorities to etch these rules of natural justice on their minds. Following these rules and applying them in the widest sense will take away the reason for at least some of the hard feelings that often develop in a conflict situation.

Henk Van Beelen
Smithers, BC

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. Please include address and phone number.



CD NOTE

By C. Van Dam

Psalms and Sacred Songs

Unto the Hills. A Collection of Psalms and Sacred Songs. Pro Musica Choir, director Ian Sadler. Total time: 58:00 minutes. Audiocraft Productions. Available from Pro Musica Choir, c/o Marj Stieva, 4271 Forsyth Blvd., Burlington, Ontario L7L 2M2; phone 905 632 1347; Price: \$ 20 CDN

This fine recording of the Pro Musica Choir gives one a renewed appreciation for the beauty and vigour of the Genevan tunes as well as for a range of other types of sacred music. This Choir was formed about ten years ago and has been active in southern Ontario promoting a greater awareness of good music. Under its capable director, Ian Sadler, it has now produced a second CD and I hope this high quality recording gets the wide distribution it deserves.

There is a good variety on this CD. Five of the twenty selections are traditional Genevan tunes, mostly as arranged by Claude Goudimel (ca. 1507-1572) and with the words coming from our *Book of Praise*. Other Psalms are sung as arranged by Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924),

Zoltan Kodaly (1882-1967) and Barry Rose (1935-). Traditional hymns as well as selections from Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* and Stainer’s *Crucifixion* are also included in the choral selections. Ian Sadler, who besides degrees in musicology has also earned degrees in organ, presents two organ solos.

It is inspiring to listen to fine choral and organ music. Happily all the words of the songs are included with this CD so that one can follow the choir as it sings and also take in the message being given. May this CD also be an incentive and encouragement for improving our singing in church. After all, when we worship the Lord, our God, we must always strive for excellence, also in our singing.

Treat yourself or someone else to this fine recording. By doing so you will also be supporting the laudable efforts of this choir to promote good music. Also, for those who may have missed the first CD, *O Sing Joyfully. A Selection of Psalms* (1996), it is happily still available, both in CD and cassette format!

