

Clarion

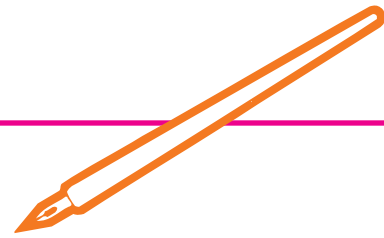
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*Constructing the new library facility
at the
Theological College in Hamilton.*



By R. Aasman



It must have been the guns

Guns are not a usual topic of discussion in this magazine. That is more likely the domain of *Field and Stream* or the crime section of the newspaper. So you would hardly be faulted for raising a quizzical eyebrow at the title of this article. But what if guns were being used as a scapegoat for sinful behaviour? What if guns were being targeted as the culprit for some of the most horrible atrocities committed in our society? What if guns were being used as a smoke-screen which avoided what is really the underlying root of violent behaviour and attitudes in our society? Suddenly we find ourselves saying, maybe we ought to have a talk about these guns.

During the past year, some terrible acts of violence have been carried out with the use of guns. On April 20, 1999, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold strode into Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, and unleashed a fury of gunfire which killed thirteen people and wounded twenty-three others. Then they turned the guns on themselves and committed suicide. Only eight days later, a young teenager shot and killed a seventeen-year-old fellow student at a school in Taber, Alberta. It was clear that he was fully prepared to kill others as well. There have been other cases of multiple shootings and murders during the past year – one particularly horrible case occurred in a church building in the United States – but what is so horrifying about the two examples of Littleton and Taber is the spectre of very young people indiscriminately murdering other young people.

It is an understatement to say that guns are extremely lethal. Obviously, everyone who owns a rifle, shotgun or handgun has a momentous responsibility to keep his guns and ammunition stored away safely. The sixth word of the covenant has clear implications in this regard. What is so disconcerting, however, is that after a tragic incident such as the shooting at Columbine High School, some people and some media sources start crying out: the problem is guns. They level an accusatory finger at guns and say: it must have been the guns! Guns are the problem! Get rid of the guns and an essential part of the problem will be obliterated!

No one will deny – I hope – that guns can be deadly and therefore require responsible ownership and operation. But to suggest or state that guns are the problem in murder and other violent crimes, is to create a smokescreen which ignores the underlying problem. Now that is a danger. Unless the real problem is addressed, the violence and the bad attitudes will continue. Even when we look at the example of the two


young men who did all the shooting at Columbine High School, we see that the guns which were used by them are only part of the complete picture. They had set up a large number of homemade bombs throughout the school which were designed to destroy the entire school. They used guns. But if they did not have guns, they could just as easily have used their bombs made from pipes and propane tanks and caused far more damage and loss of life. This suggests that there is a bigger problem here than just the type of instrument of violence one chooses. The bigger problem is why there was an intent to kill. To underline this, we can think of the murder of fifteen-year-old Dmitri Baranovski in Toronto last November. He was killed by a gang of teenagers who wanted his cigarettes and money. What did they use to kill him? They used their

boots. They kicked him to death. Think also of fourteen-year-old Reena Virk who was severely beaten, brutalized, and drowned in Victoria exactly two years before Dmitri. Again a group of teenagers murdered her with their bare hands. Clearly one cannot make guns the scapegoat of society's violence. There is something deeper to be considered.

All of this does not make for appealing discussion. But it is the reality of the world in which we live. The question needs to be asked: why? Why do healthy, privileged young people kill? Thankfully there has been some sober reflection in the media during the past year. Because of what happened in Columbine, some writers and thinkers have begun to examine the question why such things can happen. A number of questions have been raised which are really rhetorical in nature. What could the problem be? Could it be the disintegration of the basic family unity in our society? Could it be television shows and video games which take glory in acts of violence and destruction? Could it be that the whole matter of life and death have become banal or bland in a world desensitized by violence? Could it be that our narcissistic or self-centred society has become so preoccupied with the pursuit of personal pleasure that egotistic pleasure has become more important than the needs of others? Could things have come to the point where a young person is so bent on his own happiness that he is willing to murder others if he can get personal satisfaction from it? Here we are getting to the heart of the matter. Guns, fists, boots, a pool of water, a stick or a knife are only the symptoms of a human nature which has an inclination for evil and will do evil when not controlled. Unless this inclination to do evil is understood and addressed, the violence, hatred and damage to life and property will continue unabated.

Why do
healthy, privileged
young people
kill?

We confess in Lord's Day 2 of our Heidelberg Catechism, "I am inclined by nature to hate God and my neighbour." This is no exaggeration, as David makes clear in Psalm 51 where he reflects over his sin of adultery and murder: "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." David was not trying to excuse himself with these words. He was acknowledging the reality of original sin and the power of that sin which acted as a corrupting influence in his life. This led him to fling himself on the tender mercy and awesome grace of his God: "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me." From this we learn two things. First, that man is inclined by nature to hate God and his neighbour. That is why people take guns and shoot their neighbour. Even children of God are never free from temptation and the power of sin in their lives as Paul outlines very clearly in Romans 7. We need to acknowledge this so that we also learn to do the second thing, and that is to ask God to create in us a pure heart which causes us to fight against our old sinful nature and to demonstrate the nature of God instead. God's Word strengthens us to understand this and to drive us to the throne of God's grace to find help in time of need. Moreover, the Lord has given us Christian homes and families where parents have the duty and gifts to train their children to recognize their sinful nature and to seek God's grace and guidance to control their anger, selfishness, jealousies and feelings of revenge, and to replace it with love for God and neighbour.

What our society needs as it reels under the load of its fractured existence is the Word of God which reveals the truth about sin and misery, the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ and the way of thankfulness which glorifies God and builds up the life of our neighbour. We pray that all men may submit themselves to the Word of God. Meanwhile, we keep close watch on our own lives and the lives of our families to seek continued forgiveness and recovery in the blood and Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. Only then can there be peace in the place of violence. 

What's inside?

Radio, TV, Walkman, Discman, Nintendo, the Internet, colossal movie theatres — these have become the toys and playgrounds of people today. Is there much difference between the culture choices made by believers and unbelievers? What effect does popular culture have on us? How deeply has contemporary culture reached into our homes? Is its influence in our homes and in our lives positive or negative? How ought we to relate to the media? We live in an image based culture. Society has made a big shift from a print culture to an image culture. The feature article by Mrs. Sarah Vandergugten deals with questions relating to how Christians ought to live in a television dominated world.

And then there is a further question. Are the often violent video games, music, movies and TV shows a negative influence on people? Does such violence feed man's present depravity? Rev. R. Aasman reflects on this in the editorial.

A cancerous blemish on today's cultural map are the casinos. They seem to be cropping up all over. Rev. J. Moesker tells us what the Apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, had to say about the lust for money.

We might live in an image based culture, but the printed word still has a place. Mr. Rudy de Vries tells us about how the printed and written words is setting prisoners free.

The Theological College is undergoing a library expansion construction project since the present building is groaning under the weight of all the books. Books are still being printed and bought and studied. Dr. De Jong writes about this in College Corner.

With this issue, we welcome Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman on board as co-writers of the Ray of Sunshine page. We wish you well in this, Sisters. We're sure that many will look forward to your regular monthly contributions.

Sadly, there has been a painful schism in our sister church in Scotland. Dr. De Jong addresses this in the press review.

We hope you will enjoy what we have to offer.

GvP



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By J. Moesker

Many foolish and harmful desires...

People who want to get rich fall into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:9, 10)

Gambling has become a national pastime, and winning big a number one fantasy. It's hard to believe, but it's only been just more than thirty years since lotteries became legal in Canada. In 1968 the civic authorities in Montreal organized a lottery to pay for the expensive structures needed to host the 1976 Olympic Games. Since then lotteries have spread across the country like an epidemic. Provincial lotteries, charity lotteries, and what not. It's been embraced as a sure-fire way to raise money. And on the coattails of the lotteries you have the casinos. The government of Manitoba recently decided to license a number of new casinos. And the casinos that exist are fancy and flourishing establishments. Club Regent in Winnipeg has one hundred handicapped parking spaces.

The Internet is also fraught with gaming sites. Just give them your credit card number and play to win from your own home! Charity lotteries and casinos have also become popular. They are organized to raise money for hospitals and foundations that have come into a financial pinch over the last years of government cutbacks. Pay for a chance to win big, and at the same time support a good cause!

Recently television broadcasters have come up with a new kind of gambling disguised as a sort of game show. You've probably heard about shows like "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" and "Greed." People are asked questions and win money when they give right answers to a certain number of trivia questions. If you answer all the questions correctly you win a million dollars or even more. You can become a millionaire simply by answering a number of skill-testing questions! The form, the

lighting, the music on these shows are meant to build suspense. And millions of people *watch* in suspense. This is gambling with your mind. Instead of dice, people play with their memories.

And let's not forget the mailings proclaiming you to have won hundreds of thousands of dollars – that is, *if* you have the winning numbers. Retailers are becoming more and more oriented to this approach too. We are encouraged to buy certain products so we can win big money or tropical cruises. Just going to a store sometimes seems somewhat like going to a casino too. Win, win, win!

Don't people see what this is about? What about Canadian Reformed people? I wish I could believe that no Reformed person ever bought a lottery ticket or set foot inside a casino or played a video lottery terminal. That's because the Bible, for example in the text above, speaks very strongly against this sort of thing. This plays on the love of money, on greed, which the apostle calls the root of all kinds of evil.

The text calls this *foolish* desire. Gambling and gaming is designed so that almost all players lose. The very few winners win big and are celebrated. They gain a lot for a little, and they are used to promote envy and greed among the many, so that those many will play again. This is a glorious moneymaking scheme, as cash-strapped and cash-hungry governments, institutions, and organizations have discovered. It's easy to get people to part with hard-earned money like this. Ornate casinos, exciting ads, easy slot machines, and charity benefit all make what R.M. Rogers in his book, *Seducing America* (1997), called "a spiritual and financial time bomb in a pretty package." It's foolish-

ness which plunges people not only into financial ruin, but, even worse, spiritual ruin.

The apostle Paul also speaks about *harmful* desires. It's not wrong to set your mind on something and to work to obtain that. That is not covetousness in itself. But once one starts being dissatisfied with what one has because of that desire, that's covetousness. Covetousness breeds discontent with the possessions and opportunities God has given. Gambling feeds this covetousness and discontent with God's gifts. D.J. Kennedy called it "institutionalized covetousness" in his book, *Gambling: America's Hidden Addiction* (1995). This makes it harmful. It is sin that is destructive to the covenant relationship with God.

It's true, one can be captured by the love of money and be covetous and greedy without being a gamer or gambler. People who cheat on taxes are no less captive to the love of money. But that doesn't take away from the fact that the words of God above apply to the whole gambling and gaming culture of today.

The apostle of the Lord warns in 2 Timothy 3 that in the last days people will be lovers of themselves and lovers of money. We live as people of God in the middle of such a world today. We need to be watchful. And if we have succumbed, we need to acknowledge sin and show repentance. For there is forgiveness too, also for those who have fallen into foolishness and the sin of covetousness. We have a Saviour who was stripped naked on the cross for us, so that we might be forgiven and so that we might be heirs of all things with Him.



Hope for the Christian family

The Word is Worth a Thousand Pictures: Living the Word in the Age of Television

By Sarah Vandergugten

The family home – traditionally people consider it a haven, a place of escape and refuge. Is that still true today? Over the past two centuries, North America (in particular) has been transformed from a place of farms and villages, connected by dirt roads, to a supercity where almost every home is connected to the ever-growing network of world wide communication. The home, whether on a remote farm or in a bustling city, is no longer an isolated haven, but has become the centre of the media world.

Technological missionaries

Quentin Schulze, author of *Winning your Kids back from the Media*, describes the all-pervasiveness of the media and technology as he experienced it on a family camping trip. To his astonishment, he discovered that the bluish glow of the television sets was almost as prevalent in the campsite as in suburbia. An evening stroll through the camp revealed that fellow-campers were well supplied with portable CD and tape players as well as radios. Cell phones rang insistently. The video rental shop at the park entrance was doing a brisk business. Media consumption has become such an integral part of North American culture that many families find it impossible to take even a brief respite from it.

Defining the family

This voracious appetite for media has an impact on the family. In fact, it has even affected how many would define the word “family.” Some British sociologists have traced the definitions over the decades. In the 1940s, the family was described as a kinship network based on blood relationships. In the Fifties, the definition was functional: “The family is the unit of society that passes on values and helps to cement all the other units of society together.”



Mrs. Sarah
Vandergugten

In the Seventies, one sociologist quipped, “A family is a collection of individuals around a television set.” The “box” for many became the centre of family life.

The saddest definition in Britain came in 1992: “A family is an arrangement of bedrooms around a refrigerator and a microwave.” Even the corporate nature of watching television together had disappeared. Adolescents come home, raid the fridge, zap their food in the microwave, and disappear to their own bedroom to do their own thing. And their own thing is usually playing computer games, watching television, listening to their own music, phoning their friends, or surfing the Internet. Family members come and go in and out, and the sense of community, of doing things together has virtually disappeared. That is Britain. We recognize similar trends in our North American culture, possibly also in our own Christian families. Perhaps some of us would prefer to think that we’ve managed to escape the influence of the media in our families somewhat, but I would suggest that we haven’t.

An informal survey

I teach at Credo Christian High in Langley, British Columbia – a school of about 350 students, almost exclusively from Canadian Reformed families. In preparation for this presentation I did some informal polling of the almost 100 students (Grades 9, 10 and 12) that I teach. Ninety eight per cent of them have a TV at home. More than 50% have two TVs. More than 50% subscribe to cable. Their favorite TV show is *Friends*. Forty two percent of them watch it regularly. Ninety seven percent of the families rent videos. Parents – one or both – are present for less than half the time that these students watch a movie or television.

I asked them if they go to the movie theatres. Before they would answer that question, they wanted to know if they had to say whether their parents allowed them to or not, but I said, “No, I just want to know whether or not you go to the movies.” So they told me; 90% of them go. Here the break down according to grade shows that the older they are, the more likely they are to go to the



Rev. J. Mulder
asking a question

theatre (Grade 9: 71%, Grade 10: 88%, Grade 12: 97%). The teens are seldom accompanied by their parents, but usually go to the movies with their friends.

I didn't even ask them any of the following: How many CDs do you own? Do your parents have any input into your choices? Do you own a Walkman or Discman? Does your home have Nintendo or a computer? Are you hooked up to the Internet? I restricted myself to TV and movies, since those seem to be the most common way that teens spend their leisure, entertainment time. Our teens seem, and perhaps we parents, too, seem to be in step with our times.

But when and how did our world (the Western world) move from a print-based culture to a visual, television-based culture? How does this shift impact the way we communicate with each other, especially we Christians who claim to be people of The Book? How might our Christian families learn to be discerning in their use of the media, especially television?

An historical overview

For anyone who is interested in finding out how television has become the dominant media in today's culture, Neil Postman's book, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, is a must-read. He begins by suggesting that Aldous Huxley's prophetic *Brave New World* is finding fulfillment today. Huxley wrote that people would adore the technologies that undo their capacities to think. George Orwell's somber 1984 predicted that books would be banned. Huxley says there will be no reason to ban any book because no one will want to read. There will be such an information overload that people will be re-

duced to passiveness and self-centeredness. The truth will not be concealed, but will drown in a sea of irrelevance. What we love – entertainment and distraction – will ruin us. Huxley's prophetic vision seems alarmingly accurate, describing what we see around us today.

A voracious appetite for media has an impact on the family.

We have moved from a print-based to a television-based culture. Image counts more than substance and content. Less than a hundred years ago, this was not the case. In the Western World, communication and public discourse was done via print. Even in politics, what you said and wrote was more important than how you looked.

This is not the case today. The United States is currently gearing up for a Presidential election. Various handsome, suave candidates are vying for the chance to run for office. It is unlikely that someone like United States President William Taft, a three hundred pound, multi-chinned man would successfully run today. A man's size and shape are not relevant to the shape of his ideas if these are being transmitted in print or via radio waves. They do become relevant on television. Viewers would pay little heed to his words. Taft's obesity, his wobbling chins and jiggling jowls, would undermine the content of his speech, no matter how pertinent. Television gives conversation in images not in words. Consequently, a savvy image

manager is of more value to today's politician than the most competent speechwriter. In today's culture, the content of politics, religion, education and anything else that comprises public business must be recast in terms that are most suitable to television.

Print literacy

We know what it takes to be print-literate. In a print-based culture, intelligence involves the ability to do the following. You sit immobile for extended periods. You ignore the shape of the letters on the page, but see through them, directly to the meanings of the words they form. You perceive the tone of the author (Is she joking or making a serious argument?). If he is making an argument, you must have the ability to delay your verdict until the whole argument has been stated. You keep questions in your mind which may or may not be answered later. You bring to bear on the text any prior knowledge or experience you may have with the issue being argued.

What you likely will not be required to do is to call forth concrete images. Print intelligence implies that you can live quite comfortably without pictures in the domain of abstract concepts and generalizations. These abilities constitute a primary definition of intelligence in a culture where ideas of truth are organized around the printed word. I would suggest that people of my generation and older are overall fairly print-literate. I don't believe that we can presume that of our children. This should give us pause when we think of what this means with regard to them learning Scripture.

The transition from print to television

The printed word, and oratory based on that word, dominated North America culture until the latter half of the 19th Century. It allowed all the advances in science and philosophy of the Enlightenment and the Modern Age to become an integral part of the modern man's mindset and worldview. The shift in the Western World from a print-typographic culture to an image-television culture did not happen overnight. It involved a couple of intervening, overlapping steps: the telegraph and the photograph. The telegraph made information into a commodity, a "thing" that could be bought and sold irrespective of its uses or meaning. The strength of the telegraph was its capacity to

move information, not collect, explain or analyze it. It changed the concept of news, making everything everyone's business. Many people began to know a little bit about a lot of things.

This fragmentation of information and knowledge was intensified by the invention of the photograph. The photograph tends to dismember reality. It wrenches moments out of their contexts, and it places side by side events and things that may have no logical or historical connection with each other. This new focus on the image undermined traditional definitions of information, news and even people's idea of reality. The telegraph and photograph laid the groundwork for television.

Interestingly, just as the telegraph and photography rose in popularity, the crossword puzzle and radio quiz shows came into being. (Later of course came the ever-popular television games shows, like *Jeopardy* and *Wheel of Fortune*.) No information was too trivial to be considered useless. What else can one do with all those unconnected facts but turn them into entertainment? The telegraph and photograph prepared the way for television to turn our society toward a ceaseless chasing after entertainment.

Television's dual capacity

Stanley Grenz (*A Primer on Postmodernism*) suggests that television has a dual capacity which endows it with unique power. It has the ability to offer live broadcasting of the "facts" as well as to propagate the products of a filmmaker's creativity. This dual ability of juxtaposing "truth" (what the public sees as an actual event) with "fiction" (what the public views as never having really happened) blurs the lines between truth and fiction.

It is typical of commercial television broadcasting to present the viewer with an ongoing variety of incompatible images. "A typical evening newscast, for example, will bombard the viewer with a series of unrelated images in quick succession – a war in a remote country, a murder closer to home, a sound bite from a political speech, the latest on a sex scandal, a new scientific discovery, highlights from a sporting event. This collage is interspersed with advertisements for better batteries, better soap, better cereal, and better vacations. By giving all these varied images – news stories and commercials alike – roughly equal treatment, the broadcast

leaves the impression that they are all of roughly equal importance" (Grenz, 34).

The nightly news broadcast is followed by prime time shows that draw in the audience by focusing on and glamorizing sex, scandal, crass humor, violence and action, with frequent interruptions to sell the latest shave cream, beer and underarm deodorant. Since these programs are invested with a similar weight as the evening news, the demarcation between reality and fiction blurs. Everything is trivialized.

Television has become the defining metaphor of our culture. In order to maintain some validity and status, and to retain their share of the market, one cultural institution after another is learning to speak its terms. Television

Most of all,
Christian families
should yearn and strive
to become and remain
"people of The Book."

is transforming our culture into one vast arena for show business and entertainment. This suggests that boycotting television will not free us or our families from its effects. The television as metaphor for communication has permeated into all other areas of public discourse. Many popular magazines and newspapers are beginning to focus on page layout and eye appeal rather than on written content.

Now film and television have been joined by a new and increasingly popular mode of delivering information, the personal computer. With its easy access

to the Internet, it has added a whole new dimension to entertainment and information gathering, but that's a topic for another day.

How to read television

It is not unusual for Christian parents to feel inadequate to raise their children, no matter what era they live in. It seems to be an exceptionally difficult task in this postmodern, television age. Parents find many TV shows and movies nonsensical. Scenes flip from one to the next with little rhyme or reason. Dialogue is difficult to follow. There is no discernible story line. If we grasp that, it's one step towards understanding the postmodern television culture. As Bob Pitman said while he was Chairman of MTV (Music Television channel), "What we've introduced with MTV is a non-narrative form. . . . We rely on mood and emotion. We make you feel a certain way as opposed to you walking away with any particular knowledge." Much of today's television does not worry about telling a coherent story. Selling an image based on mood, emotions, feelings – this is the youth culture as we enter the 21st Century.

This should also make clear that there is a significant difference between the print culture that many of us feel more comfortable with, and the television culture our teens seem to have absorbed. So, what is the difference between reading a book or magazine and watching television? When we read, at any time we can stop and think, "Hey, I don't think I agree with this line of argument." Or you can pick up another book or article on the same topic, compare, contrast, and come to a conclusion.

Television does not work that way. We absorb the images without much resistance. Most of us have brains that



have a knack for retaining the visual better than the verbal. We don't question or raise any arguments against what we see. It's very difficult to argue verbally with a visual image. Of course, we can just click the remote to something that pleases us more or at least offends us less, but often we tend to be dismissive of television and its message. That's exactly what makes it so effective and so dangerous.

Worldview questions

Some people solve the problem by getting rid of their TV, and that's certainly not the worst option. But, since almost all of us do have a television in our homes, how do we cultivate the ability to stand back enough to gain an intellectual distance between ourselves and what we see? How can we, from a critical perspective informed by our faith, look at what the media are doing and saying? We need to achieve and maintain this distance, or we will easily accept the television world as our world. We need to clarify our own value system, our Christian worldview, in order to compare it to what the media, to what television, offers.

What are the basic, foundational worldview questions? Although there are more, we'll consider four of them. Where are we? Who are we? What's wrong? What's the solution? First we'll answer them from a Christian perspective, and then we'll see how the popular television show, *Friends*, answers them.

Where are we? We live in a historical world created, ordered and sustained by God.

Who are we? We are creatures made in God's image, given a mandate to develop and care for his creation under his reign.

What's wrong? Human sin and rebellion which have affected our relationship with God, with each other, and all parts of creation.

What's the solution? God's restoration of the creation to its original goodness in Christ Jesus and by the Holy Spirit.

How does a television show like *Friends* answer these questions? (You'll remember that according to my informal survey, 42% of my students said this was a show they really like and watch regularly.) The setting is New York City. Six twenty-something young people – three beautiful girls, three handsome guys – gather at each other's apartments and hang out at a local coffee

house. They're all good *Friends*. Couples seem interchangeable with little talk of marriage. One episode I began to watch involved a gay wedding. There is a lot of crude banter and joking. Smoking is out, but drinking is in.

So let's ask the four questions again.

Where are we? *Friends* characters says that we live in a world that is ours to use and exploit for our own benefit.

Who are we? The *Friends* believe people are basically good. We are autonomous people who have the right to happiness. Our needs must be met and our feelings catered to.

What's wrong? *Friends* are unhappy because they haven't really found the right relationship yet.

**We also must live
in a relationship of
love with our children
and they must taste
this love everyday.**

What's the solution? Keep trying and make sure you're having fun while you're doing it.

It's helpful to take these four basic worldview questions and apply them to what we watch. In this way, we develop the ability to stand back and to gain an intellectual distance between ourselves and what we see. Then we can compare the values portrayed in the program to our own Christian values. Try using this grid to analyze commercials. Again, you'll discover an overriding message. Happiness is the chief end of life, and happiness consists of obtaining material goods. Try answering the four worldview questions while you're watching a hockey game, or a news cast, or *The Simpsons*, or *The Nature of Things* with David Suzuki, or the next time your family rents a video. You'll become more analytical about what you watch, and no doubt more discerning too. So worldview questions provide one set of tools to work with.

Signs and symbols

Another helpful way we can read television is in terms of signs and symbols (*Mythmakers: Gospel, Culture and the Media*, William Fore). We can look at what we see, not from the point of view of who the characters are, or even what they do, but what they mean. Let's

look at the show *M.A.S.H.*, the eleven-year TV hit of the seventies – still in re-runs today – from the perspective of signs and symbols. What did the characters mean? Hawkeye, the cynical but loving doctor in perpetual search of both nurses and his own home-brew alcohol, symbolized the frustration and immorality of war. *M.A.S.H.* was about the Korean War but appeared during the Vietnam War and helped raise public sentiment in the United States against this war. B.J., the other lead doctor, married and compassionate, represented the way all of us would like to be perceived: witty, kind understanding. These two together represent authority; they were in charge of their little corner of the world. Radar, true to his name, meant that brains and technology are potent problem solvers. Margaret, the head nurse, was often made into a clown, yet was truly competent and necessary. This meant that women are shortchanged in society. Father Mulcahy, the priest, meant that religion is normally peripheral to life, sometimes good for comic relief, but when the chips are down, helpful in facing the mysteries of life and death. Now whether you agree or disagree with this interpretation of the meaning of the central characters of *M.A.S.H.*, the point is to realize that television can be read in terms of signs and symbols. Television is teaching us something. We need to be aware of what the lessons are, and be ready to compare them to our Christian values.

Camera shots and editing

We can read TV's visuals as well (*Mythmakers*). Here are a few camera shots and editing techniques and what they mean:

Visual	Meaning
Close-up	Intimacy
Medium shot	Personal relationship
Long shot	Context, setting
Angle down	Power, authority
Angle up	Weakness, smallness
Zoom in	Observation, focus
Fade in	Beginning
Fade out	Ending

Now this may sound very unfamiliar to most of us, yet they're very basic to the televisual media. In our schools, our students do learn how to recognize good writing and learn how to write stories and poems. Perhaps the time has come for us to encourage the teaching of televisual literacy in our schools and churches as well.

Above all, we should realize that commercial television is exactly that, commercial. The reason television shows are on the air is because of the commercials. This is particularly evident in children's programming, where the characters of a show may well be the characters in the commercials as well.

Some practical approaches

In some homes, the biggest problem may be the number of hours children watch TV. Here Quentin Schulze, in *Winning Your Kids Back from the Media*, proposes a simple formula: a three to one ratio. For every four hours of discretionary leisure time, three parts should be spent in relational, low-tech activities, and one part media. This means that parents plan family times and parent-child activities. You could still plan the occasional family movie evening, but then

It's been said that we are doctrinally conservative but culturally liberal.

make time to discuss it together afterward. You and your children will learn to discern. True, family togetherness will take time, but it will be time well spent. Remember that love is a four-letter word. It's spelled T-I-M-E.

Michael Medved, in *Hollywood vs America*, suggests becoming involved with any number of watchdog organizations, such as the Christian Film and Television Commission or Focus on the Family. *Plugged In* and *World Magazine* provide analysis and reviews of television shows and movies. Read them and the reviews in the daily papers. Be informed. He also urges Christians not to underestimate the impact of a boycott campaign. Have the phone numbers of your local TV stations handy. If you see something that's objectionable, phone and complain. If you see something you like, phone and tell them you want more of that type of programming.

People of the Book

Most of all, Christian families should yearn and strive to become and remain "people of The Book." Although there is much talk about spirituality nowadays, this interest in spirituality is not accompanied by an increase of interest in

Scripture. People today have their own trinity that guides their lives – the unholy trinity of their own wants, needs and feelings. We need to take in the Holy Scriptures in a way similar to the way we eat food. Just as the cereal and fruit we eat for breakfast becomes part of our muscles and sinews so that we can do our work for the day, so Holy Scripture should become such an integral part of us that it informs everything we do. We should not come to Scripture with the thought, "What do I get out of this?" but rather with the thought, "What in this portion of Scripture can I be obedient to?" That is a yearning we need to model, and to instill in our children.

After all, how did God's people come to learn of Him? From the outset, everything they learned about God was in the context of a relationship of his love for them. First He spoke to them; later the words were written down, and we still have the Bible today; but then the Word became Incarnate. Jesus Christ became the Word in the flesh. He made God visible and touchable. This gives us a helpful pattern to follow in relating to our children in today's visual, television-based culture. We also must live in a relationship of love with our children,



CALLED by the church at Houston, British Columbia:

Rev. J.P. Van Vliet
of Lincoln, Ontario.

and they must taste this love everyday. We need to speak with our children with joy, humor, gentleness, good judgment and wisdom; we need to read and absorb the written Word together; but most important of all, we need to represent Christ and his self-sacrificing love to them. This is what it means to live the Word in a television culture. Truly living the Word will be worth a thousand pictures to our children.

Mrs. Vandergugten is a teacher at Credo Christian High School in Langley, BC and a member of Cloverdale church.

THE BURLINGTON REFORMED STUDY CENTRE

Illuminating Modern Issues in the Light of God's Word

Hosted a series of speeches by Rev. R. Wynia, Mrs. Sarah Vandergugten and Prof. Michael Goheen.

The Lord Sets Prisoners Free!

CornerStone Bible Institute

By R. de Vries

Allow me to introduce David.* David is short, stocky and is decorated with many tattoos. David is serving a 25 year sentence in Kingston, Ontario. He has served 15 years and has 10 more to go before he is eligible for any kind of parole or release. He enrolled as a Bible correspondence student with CornerStone Bible Institute (CBI) in the spring of 1997 and in the fall of 1999 things began to change in David's life. What follows are several excerpts from his letters and from the response of his CBI Instructor:

I can't honestly say I believe Jesus is Lord. . . I am what they call an Eclectic Witch. I take the best from all religions and leave the bad. . . We believe we create our own demons. We do not practice evil because of the 3-fold law – what you put out comes back to you three times over. This is called Karma. . .

His CBI Instructor wrote him a letter back calling him to faith and repentance and CBI included a book entitled "Wake Up and Live" (Also titled "Alarm to the Unconverted") by Joseph Alleine:

. . . My friend, we are all born and conceived in sin and must become right with God. We must believe that He is, repent of our sins and trust in the finished work of Christ for our salvation. I want to urge you to this. Today is the accepted time. . .

At the end of October David wrote back:
Attn: Instructor,

I would first like you to know that I really enjoyed the book "Wake up and Live!" This book has brought me back to reality. . . The Chaplains here really helped turn me off [to Christianity] . . . A so-called man of the cloth told my friend to go to the trailer with his girlfriend and have a good time when they are not married. He was

encouraging him to commit fornication (some preacher). Most churches today are apostate churches just like the one here. They don't teach God's laws, they teach their own. In my opinion, belonging to an apostate church is no different than being a member of a cult, because neither one is Holy or in God's grace. This is what turned me to other religions. . .

. . . I want to study the truth and find a church that teaches Biblical truth and does not change just to put more bodies in the seats. . . I want to learn but not from hypocrites who say one thing and do the opposite. Are there any real preachers left?

Do you know a church I can join who teaches and keeps God's commandments and doesn't buckle to homosexuals and other practices that the Bible calls abominations to God...I want to accept Jesus with my heart and not just my words. I don't want to be a hypocrite. If you can help me please do.

*Sincerely, David
(Thank you for the book. I will read it again and reflect on its teachings.)*

How important is it to reach out to prisoners? Are there Biblical reasons why the church should shun them? Should the government lock them up and throw away the key? Should not Canadian criminals have an opportunity to hear the great news that by grace they too can be saved?

What did the thief on the cross say to Jesus? More importantly, what did Jesus say to the thief? "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." Yes, it is possible for criminals to repent and to be forgiven. Today there are thousands of incarcerated men and women who must be offered salvation in Christ alone through faith alone.



However, the words of Romans 10 ring loud and clear, "how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? . . . faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."

In 1996 the Lord laid it upon the hearts of a number of Reformed people in Canada to begin a formal Reformed gospel outreach to prisoners. Through much prayer and many small steps the Lord has provided CornerStone Bible Institute as a means to that end. We are grateful for men from various Reformed Churches who now serve on the CBI Board of Directors including the 1998 addition of Mr. Richard Bultje of Ancaster Canadian Reformed Church.

- CBI's Name: "See I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame" (1 Peter 2:6). Without the cornerstone, it was impossible to erect a building. Without Jesus Christ no one can be saved; no one can become a living stone.

- CBI's Purpose: "To facilitate the Church in the evangelization, teaching and discipling of prisoners." Our desire at CornerStone Bible Institute is to involve the church in calling prisoners to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, the chief Cornerstone, and as living stones to be built up as a part of a spiritual house, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.

Since 1996 CornerStone has been enrolling Canadian inmates in Bible correspondence courses and assisting churches with involvement in their local prisons.

Many inmates are enrolled in our multi-level Bible correspondence curriculum. This type of discipleship ministry is vitally important. Jesus gave the commission to "make disciples of all



nations." But Jesus goes on to further explain what disciple-making is; "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." The desire of CBI is to see imprisoned men and women turn to God in repentance and faith, and to be educated regarding all that Jesus commanded us in his Word.

Canadian inmates are referred to study with CBI by their chaplains, by current CBI students and by the promotional material and books which CBI places in the prisons. Prison Fellowship (PF) volunteers across Canada are also involved in enrolling inmates with CBI since PF does not offer their own Bible correspondence courses.

Due to the many prisoners who are enrolling for CBI studies, CBI depends heavily on Reformed Churches to assist with this evangelistic and teaching ministry. Since it is our desire to be church-based, local churches establish their own prison ministry via CBI. Church members sign up to be Volunteer Instructors, are approved by their elders and are trained by CBI to grade course material for our students. Already CBI has students from coast to coast and has trained Instructors in several Canadian provinces.

Over and over CBI Instructors are finding this ministry to be a great blessing to them as they evangelize and pray for lost souls. At times they also find it to be a challenge as they are forced to dig into the Word of God because of questionable views and interpretations given by their student. Mrs. Monica Pot is a Volunteer Instructor with CBI and is a part of the CBI prison ministry team of Orangeville Canadian Reformed Church. She writes:

I first considered becoming a CBI instructor after a presentation by the Director of CBI at our local church. In the short time that I have been an instructor, I have found it to be a very encouraging experience. It is exciting to be involved in sharing the good news of salvation with those who have not heard it before, or who want to learn more. It is amazing how God can work in the lives of desperate people and change their hearts.

At the same time it is an up-building experience that involves personal study of the Scriptures, and reaffirms the Reformed faith. One inmate I correspond with believes that man is not totally depraved, and it has been enriching for me to delve into Scripture and explain to him what the Bible teaches about this.

May God continue to bless the work of CBI, that his Word may go out and bear fruit, and may He also grant wisdom and understanding to the instructors.

One of CBI's goals for 2000 and beyond is to open a half-way home for inmates who have been studying with CBI. Upon their release from prison, this home would serve as a place of transi-

tion and enable them, by God's grace, to integrate well into society and church. Another goal for this year is to see a greater portion of the Reformed community involved in this vital ministry to Canada's prisoners.

Please remember this work in your prayers and consider how through your church you might play a role in God's gracious work of setting prisoners free. Pray with us that, by God's grace they would grow in knowledge and wisdom regarding our all glorious God; that this knowledge will move them to offer their bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.

Join us in proclaiming to the inmate population of Canada, "Come and see what God has done; how awesome his works in man's behalf!" (Psalm 66:5).

** For the purpose of this publication the inmate's name has been changed.*

To Contact CBI:

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National Director of CornerStone
Bible Institute
Cambridge, Ontario
Contact Information:
Phone: (519)448-1180
Fax: (519)448-1872
Email: cbirdv@iname.com



PSALM 1

1. How blest is he who shuns the path of sin
And does not heed advice of wicked men.
He will not seek the company of scoffers;
To him their sneering pride no pleasure offers.
But in the law of God is his delight;
He meditates on it both day and night.
2. Those who the precepts of the Lord obey
And from His good commandments do not stray
Are like a tree which, planted by a river,
Is lush and green: its leaves don't fade or wither
And it in season yields abundant fruit.
So they will thrive, whatever their pursuit.
3. Not so the wicked! For like chaff are they –
Like worthless chaff. The wind blows it away.
When judgment comes, they'll stand condemned and humbled,
Cast out from where God's people are assembled.
The Lord will guard the pathway of the just;
The way of sinners leads to death and dust.

Melody: Psalm 1 of the Genevan Psalter
Strasbourg, 1539 / Geneva, 1551

William Helder, A.D. 2000

COLLEGE CORNER

By Dr. J. DeJong



The Library

The fall brought us some unusual sights and sounds on our small “campus” as the construction crews began work on our new library facility. Cranes, loaders, diggers and cement trucks managed to get our attention, and add new dimensions to the generally quiet tone of activity at the College. The project has progressed well! The concrete for the lower floor of the building has been poured, and the cor slabs for the upper floor have been laid. So we now have a closed-in area sitting out the winter and waiting for a second storey.

The winter months have brought something of a “standstill” with regard to the building and it will be a couple of months before work resumes. However, the contractor is pleased about the progress to date, and everything is still progressing right on schedule. Meanwhile, arrangements are being made for furnishings and housing the books. Much planning and consulting is involved in this work, and we are grateful to our librarian and administrative assistant for the time and effort they are putting into this project. We hope it may be crowned with a good result!


New material

Over the past few years we have been able to publish (for in house use

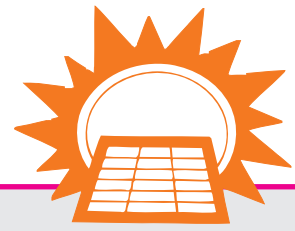
only) the class notes of the late Rev. H. Scholten in the areas of Church History and Church Polity. Scholten’s *Church History Notes* was published in 1998, and serves as a syllabus for the three year cycle of Church History that the students take at our College. In 1999 his *Workbook for Church Polity* was able to be edited and published. The latter book contains only the questions that Scholten used as a guide to his lectures. A list of support texts of Scripture has been published in the volume as an appendix. In

the early years of the College students were required to memorize the support texts as part of the course requirements in Church Polity. Since that time, however, more texts have been added, and we presently have the rule that the student should be familiar with the contents of the passages and know how the passage functions as a support for the principle and practical points covered in the Church Order.

We are thankful that in this way the work of one of the teachers of the first hour at the College can be preserved for future generations of students. The Workbook is especially helpful for foreign students, as it gives them an opportunity to review the material at their own pace, and discover for themselves what the essential issues for Rev. Scholten were.

The project was completed through the help of several people. But I would especially like to mention the generosity of Premier Impressions Ltd. in Grimsby, which did all the spiral binding for us free of charge. Another sign of the support of the community for the work we do! Many thanks to all of you supporting the work of the College in your gifts and prayers! 





By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

Devote yourselves to prayer,
being watchful and thankful (Colossians 4:2)

Dear brothers and sisters,

The end of winter is almost in sight, and the beginning of a new season will soon be upon us. Yes, the beginning of a new season, and now also in the following articles you might notice some new names who will be writing for you all.

With this article we would like to focus on prayer. In our daily life, when we pray, we ask the Lord for his blessing on this new day, and we give thanks for all his marvelous deeds.

I'm sure you all have seen a little baby at some time. With each passing month there are changes that happen with a baby. First, they will begin to smile at you, and then they will soon start to move around. Walking becomes another big milestone in their lives. A child will also begin by making sounds from their mouth, and as they get older they will begin to mimic words that their parents say; even though they may not know what the word means. As this child grows older, their vocabulary will also grow.

Are you finding it difficult to pray, or even to grow in prayer to Christ? Or are we too overwhelmed in all our tribulations and everything that goes wrong in our lives? What should we do then; stop praying? No! Let us look at what our heavenly Father has taught us in his Word. In Luke 23:46, the Bible tells us that when Christ humbled himself on the cross, even there Christ did not stop praying; Christ died with a prayer on his lips, yes, a simple prayer, "Father into your hands I commit my spirit."

In the Gospel according to Mark, chapter 14, Christ warns his disciples: "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation." Yes indeed, if we start to think that we may pray too much, and become more reluctant to pray, than Satan will also see us as an easy prey.

As Christians it is necessary for us to pray because it is the most important part of thankfulness. As the Catechism says in Lord's Day 45, prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness which God requires of us. This must come from our heart, the centre of our existence. A thankful person is a praying person; and a praying person gives thanks. When we pray with a heartfelt longing, then God will give us also his grace and Holy Spirit. When we pray we may feel weak or anxious and may feel like we stand alone. Christ teaches us in the prayer He taught us, that we must "pray like this." We are to pray in the same basic manner. We may begin by calling God "Our Father. . ." This prayer teaches us that we pray together in the unity of God's children everywhere in the world. We share in the same needs and expectations; that is; all that we need for body and soul, for this life and hereafter. Every area of our lives is touched by the prayer that Christ taught his disciples to pray. Daily we must grow in learning to pray to God, not only for ourselves; but for others as well.

As parents we seek communion with our children. Yes, we even get very excited when our children say their first words. Jesus rejoices even more when we as children respond to Him in prayer. Children learn prayer first at home, and then in the church and schools. How do we address God,

and how do we begin to speak with someone so unlike us? Christ teaches us to call Him "Our Father" and He demands that we do this with childlike reverence and trust to God. As children of God, when we pray a simple prayer from our hearts in true humbleness, then God will certainly hear our prayer for the sake of Christ our Lord – even though we do not deserve it. A true father never leaves his children. He loves them even when they are bad, not just when they are good. The prophet Isaiah says this also applies to a woman ". . . can a woman forget her suckling child?"

Our parents at times may forsake us, but the Lord is faithful. Blessed is the child who has faithful parents; and even more blessed is the one that is baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. May we urge you to stand strong in your faith, by daily reading the Word of God, and seeing the riches of knowing God. Then you will also turn to God in humble prayer and thank Christ for all his rich blessings he bestows upon us.

*With song and prayer, in faith progressing,
In all you do God's will obey.
Expect from Him alone your blessing;
He will renew it every day
For God will never those disown,
Who put their trust in Him alone.*

Hymn 48:4

Birthdays in April:

2: Derek Kok

464 Domville Street, Box 4
Arthur, ON N0G 1A0

19: Marinus Foekens

4-290 Forest Street
Chatham, ON N7L 2A9

23: Arlene De Wit

c/o P. De Wit
Barnston Island
Surrey, BC V3T 4W2

29: Bryce Berends

89 Field Gate Drive
Orangeville, ON L9W 4S2

Bryce is a brother of Terrence, and he is looking forward to receiving lots of cards and/or letters on his birthday. He lives at home with his parents, and is in a program to learn to become somewhat independent.

Congratulations Derek, with your 30th birthday, Marinus with your 48th birthday, Arlene with your 39th birthday, and Bryce with your 25th. We wish you all the Lord's blessing in this new year, and an enjoyable day with family and friends.

Until next month,

Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

Mailing correspondence:

548 Kemp Road East,
RR 2 Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
Tel: (905) 563-0380

By J. De Jong



Schism in Scotland

Many of the church papers have recently reported on the schism in the Free Church of Scotland. As this is one of our sister churches, readers will no doubt be interested in the story. The following account is taken from *Christian Renewal*:

A long simmering dispute within the Free Church of Scotland came to a boil when 31 ministers walked out of the General Assembly on January 21, 2000 to form the "Continuing Free Church." The ministers refused to accept a proposal to suspend them with full pay until the General Assembly could meet again in May. The 22 ministers moved their meeting to Magdalene Chapel in Edinburgh where John Knox held the first assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1560. There they signed the "Declaration of Reconstitution of the Free Church."

The split was not unexpected. The ministers had formed the "Free Church Defence Association" to coordinate their efforts. They had even established a trust fund to care for the eventual suspension and deposition of FCDA ministers. The chairman of the FCDA, Rev. Maurice Roberts, had been suspended in June, setting the stage for this final confrontation.

The Free Church has 115 ministers, 120 congregations and 16,000 members. Fourteen of the 22 ministers who left have congregations.

At the centre of the dispute has been the Free Church Defence Association's criticism of the theology and person of Professor Donald MacLeod, principal of the Free Church College. The FCDA considers MacLeod to embody liberalizing tendencies within the Free Church. In the eyes of the FCDA the unwillingness of the Free Church to discipline MacLeod was evidence that the church had drifted from the Westminster Standards.

Writing in the West Highland Free Press, Prof. MacLeod detailed some of the charges against him: he has suggested that women not be forced to wear hats in church and that congregations be allowed to sing an occasional hymn instead of only the psalms; he once shared a platform with a Roman Catholic; he doesn't always wear a clerical collar and he once attended the Sydney Opera. MacLeod also asserts that many congregations were in a "better heart" than they had been in a hundred years.

The crisis surrounding MacLeod came to a head when four women accused him of sexual assault. After the Free Church's own investigation absolved MacLeod of any blame, the professor took the issue to the civil courts to clear his name. In 1996 Judge John Horsburgh delivered a devastating rebuke to the accusers: Horsburgh concluded that the women who charged MacLeod with assault had lied. He added that they "squared their consciences" in the belief that their "moral wrong" would secure the downfall of the professor and rid the Church of a troublesome figure.

A split appeared inevitable when the General Assembly of the Free Church started disciplinary proceedings against the chairman of the FCDA, Rev. Maurice Roberts of Inverness. Roberts was suspended in June 1999. By then the lines were drawn. The FCDA was not going to end its agitation against MacLeod while the majority of the Free Church was no longer willing to put up with it.

The disruption was greeted with disappointment and a certain amount of relief. The Free Church's moderator, Rev. Kenneth MacLeod told the Dutch daily newspaper the *Reformatisch Dagblad* that a solution within the church order appeared to be impossible. "There are many

good brothers among the seceders. But it is unfortunate that they have no understanding of the basic principles of the church order. In 1995 we concluded there was insufficient evidence to discipline Prof. MacLeod. According to the Presbyterian church order you cannot overturn a decision like that without new evidence."

Rev. John Gillies of Glasgow, the new moderator of the Continuing Free Church, said the split was inevitable. "The majority of the church was hostile towards us. He rejected the notion that his group consists of hardline traditionalists. "We want a broad church where the Bible is preached. But the Bible is no longer the highest authority in the Free Church."

Although he voted against suspending the FCDA members, Rev. John McIntosh of Poolewe and Aultbea will not go with them. "Important people took extreme positions. The group in the middle was too small to have any influence," said McIntosh. "The church did not look at other options." MacIntosh is also troubled at the implications of a mass suspension of the FCDA ministers.

Both sides expect the split to cause a court fight over church buildings and assets of the seceding ministers. The Free Church denomination owns all the property in trust. The ministers are paid from a ministers' fund to which all the churches contribute.

Most of the seceding ministers are from the Highlands and Western Isles. Six of the ministers are from Skye. Many of their churches speak Gaelic.

The Free Church has good relations with the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches of North America and the Netherlands. The Free Church is a member of the International Conference of Reformed

Churches and has ecclesiastical relations with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Gereformeerde Kerken (Vrijgemaakt) and the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland.


Although Prof. MacLeod is well known outside the Free Church so too are some of his opponents. Revs Maurice Roberts and John J. Murray write for *The Banner of Truth* magazine.

The Free Church was formed in 1843 when about 200 ministers seceded from the Church of Scotland. Detailed comment on such a incisive event in the life of a sister church would not be appropriate at this time. Any sound judgment on this schism would require more intensive study and examination than we have time or room for here. Let it be said that I do not envy our Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad that is entrusted with

this task. One enters a labyrinth of charges and counter charges in which one can become so deeply entangled that there is no way of escape.

On the one hand, if a professor has been cleared of all charges by a civil court, all the churches should be prepared to accept the decision of the Assembly on this issue, and simply move on. All parties should abide by the decisions of the Assembly once passed. We have a similar provision in our church order, and therefore can appreciate the standpoint of those defending this position. On the other hand, suspending 22 ministers by a Commission of a General Assembly, and that as a *temporary* action, seems an action jarring sharply with the way we would expect things like this to be done in a Christian church. Even suspending a minister for contumacy at the General Assembly level strikes one as an anom-

alous procedure. Whatever happened to the local church?

Who can give a sound judgment here, especially in a case that has been dragging on for over five years? A schism on *moral issues* is for all parties the most unpleasant of affairs. What else can outside bodies decide, but that if there is no deviation from the professed standards of the church, continued cooperation and fellowship must be possible? Only when it becomes clear that there has been a clear departure from the standards and basis of the church, can a stronger, disciplinary judgment be made. Barring that, let us seek to work together and promote and encourage healing and reconciliation. May the Lord also strengthen and equip his faithful people in that part of the world, and grant his help to those suffering under the pain of schism and strife. 

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Re: Press Review January 7th

As I read and reread the Press Review in the January 7th issue of *Clarion* I was wondering if my eyes were playing tricks on me. Did Dr. J. DeJong really state that, "to insist that this (the days referred to in the early chapters of Genesis) was a twenty-four hour day exactly as we know it today goes beyond the testimony of Scripture?" Does Dr. DeJong also really see this as, "a danger of binding ourselves beyond and above the requirements of Scripture?"

Unfortunately, a couple of weeks later I am no better satisfied with Dr. DeJong's further explanation in the February 4th issue. Does he really believe that the days described in Genesis could conceivably be longer than twenty-four hours? Why is this concession made to evolutionists and even to theistic, when Scripture itself does not do so? To my understanding this kind of statement constitutes a change in direction in the Canadian Reformed churches, especially considering that this statement comes from our Theological College. I have always been taught that God created all things in six days, with these days being twenty-four hours in length. Why have I been taught that? Because

that is clearly what the language of Scripture indicates. Don't we read, no less than six times "And there was evening and there was morning a sixth day?" Do we find any indications in Scripture that this means anything but a twenty-four hour day? If God intended for it to mean anything else, why did He not call it, "a sixth period of time?"

If the church makes these kinds of concessions, how long will it be before we make further concessions, how long will it be before theistic evolution is accepted as a Scripturally sound doctrine? It is statements such as these that feed directly into the hand of theistic evolution.

So why does Dr. DeJong make the statement? I find it hard to believe Dr. DeJong as accepting theistic evolution, but why open the door at all?

If God did, perhaps not create things as He said in His Word, why do we believe Him when we are told that His Son was resurrected from the dead? If God did not create things as He said, in His Word, why should we believe that God will re-create things as He has promised in His Word? Scripture clearly shows that God created all things in six days, not in six time periods. There is nothing in Scripture to

show anything but, and to read anything else into it, is to go beyond the testimony of Scripture.

H.A. Stel,
Barrhead, AB

Dr. J. De Jong responds. . .

There is much highly charged language here in which brother Stel speaks about "a change of direction in the Canadian Reformed Churches" and "concessions to evolutionists and even to theistic evolution," but through all this sort of language the essential point I made is ignored. Brother Stel says that he has always been taught that God created the work in six days, "with these days being twenty-four hours in length." I also spoke about six normal days, but I object to being bound to an exact hour-length of time, which Scripture does not speak about. Is brother Stel prepare to make his view binding on all church members, so that no one is permitted to have a different view, or else be subject to suspension, further discipline and even excommunication? If that is his view, I can only say that it does not represent what I have always been taught, nor what I currently espouse. 