

Clarion

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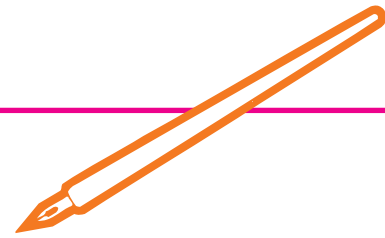


Teaching in Tajamulco

Numbers

10:1-10

By N.H. Gootjes



A personal relationship with Jesus

Christians derive their name from Jesus Christ. That name does not necessarily say all that much, however, for people can be called Dutch without knowing much about the Netherlands. The real issue is whether Christians are giving an important place to Jesus Christ in their lives. Is He important for them, or is He neglected? A special expression is often used to indicate the need for interacting with Him: “having a personal relationship with Jesus.” And church people may be confronted with the question: “Do you have a personal relationship with Him?”¹

Implicit in this question is a rejection of having a formal relationship with Jesus. And in the background an aversion against the doctrine of Jesus may be detected. Should we not communicate with Him rather than debate about Him? Believing is not knowing some facts about someone but it is a living communication and interaction with a person. If it is to mean anything, a personal relationship with Jesus should be the centre of the Christian life.

The question as such whether we should have a personal relationship with Jesus is not hard to answer. Imagine having an impersonal relationship with Him! We have an impersonal relationship with the things we own. We may like the house we live in, and make it suit our taste. We may be proud of the car we drive, and may even talk to it when it has safely delivered us to our destination. We know, however, that these are dead things, and we merely imagined them to be personal. No one has a personal relationship with some piece of property he owns.

Animals are different, particularly pets. Not only are they alive, they have a character of their own. Animals have a certain individuality. They respond to us in different ways, according to their character. We become attached to them, yet we do not have a personal relationship with them. They do interact with us, but on their own level, not on a personal level.

Jesus, on the other hand, is a human person, and with Him we can have a personal relationship. It would not be right if we treated Him like a thing, even a treasured possession. We can interact with Him on a personal level. It is obvious that we should have a personal and not a formal relationship with Jesus.

And here the discussion often ends. That is regrettable for it leaves us with questions that are not answered. It makes quite a difference what kind of person He is. We interact with many people in various ways. The way we live with our parents is different from the way we behave when we are

among our friends. When we have the elders visit us we act differently from when we speak with acquaintances at a reception. We do need to maintain a personal relationship with Jesus, but the real issue is: what kind of relationship is it?

Who is Jesus?

The Bible, particularly the New Testament, provides us with abundant information. We will have to limit ourselves to a quick glance through the shortest gospel, that of Mark, which gives us the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God (see Mark 1:1).

His first recorded words can be found in Mark 1 when he called fishermen to become his special followers and witnesses. Verse 21 goes on to tell us what He wanted them to witness: Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. When someone possessed by an evil spirit attempts to prevent Him Jesus orders the spirit to go out from the man. The people respond with amazement: “What is this? A new teaching – and with authority” (v. 27).

That is how He first became known: as a teacher. He went around to preach in nearby villages (1:38,39). He preached in houses (2:2), in the open air (2:13) and in synagogues (3:1). He taught in different ways, by explaining things in a straightforward way and by speaking in parables (4:1). He is addressed as “teacher” (5:35). This function even came up at his trial, when they made fun of Him as a prophet. They blindfolded Him, hit Him and then asked whether He could tell who had struck Him (14:65). Jesus showed himself first of all as the great teacher and prophet who made known God’s will.

Another aspect of his work comes out when He said: “Even the Son of man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” (10:45). This refers to his sacrifice on the cross. He had the power to come down from the cross, but He did not want to do so and died on the cross. In all this, He sacrificed himself for the sins of his people, as it is particularly explained in the epistle to the Hebrews.

Jesus showed a third aspect of his work when he entered Jerusalem riding on a colt. The people correctly understood this a royal presentation: “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David” (11:10). This aspect, too, came up at his trial, when He was asked the question: “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?” Jesus in his answer acknowledged his royal position: “I am. And you will see the Son of Man

Imagine having
an impersonal
relationship with
Jesus!

sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven" (14:62). The ridicule of the written notice on the cross confirms this: "The King of the Jews" (15:26).

Jesus is the prophet who made God's revelation known, the priest who sacrificed himself, and the king who ascended into heaven, is seated on his throne and reigns at God's right hand. Actually, this is the Christian teaching of the threefold position of Jesus Christ, as developed in the doctrine of the church (see the Heidel-

What's inside?

In the editorial, Dr. Gootjes gives a biblical perspective on having a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

How is your family worship? Do you take the time for it? Is it a priority? Do you admit no interruptions? Do you shut the phone off while you worship together as family? Recently, at the Burlington Reformed Study Centre, we heard a challenging speech on this topic delivered by Dr. Michael Goheen, a professor at Redeemer College in Ancaster. We are very pleased to publish it in *Clarion*. There is hope for the Christian family, but the proper functioning of a Christian family depends largely on its faithfulness in observing family worship.

In his regular column, Rev. Peter Feenstra writes about the comprehensive significance of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Linda Baartse is doing wonderful work aiding women in Tajumulco, Guatemala. Gerard Torenvliet tells us about this work.

Recently, the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA) invited the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches (OCRC) to join them under the URCNA church order. The OCRC declined the invitation. Under "Press Review," Dr. J. De Jong updates us on this.

What kind of peppermints do you like? King? Faam? VS? Under "Reader's Forum," you will read what a relative newcomer to the Reformed faith thinks of our peppermint culture. Worth pondering.

We hope you enjoy our magazine.

GvP

berg Catechism, Lord's Day 12). The doctrine shows us who He is. All this means that we cannot have a biblically correct, personal relationship with Jesus if we neglect the doctrine.

Our relationship to Him

What this means is that we need the doctrine to have a proper personal relationship with Jesus. Personal relationship and doctrine are not opposites; rather, they go together and need one another. Our personal relationship to Jesus is characterized by who He is. He is first of all the greatest prophet. More than anyone else in the Old and New Testament, He explained to us God's work and his will. That casts us in the role of listeners, or rather, students. The people had to listen to the prophets sent by God. However, in the case of Jesus, He spoke as the one who had perfect personal knowledge of God's thoughts. A personal relationship with Jesus requires from us a humble, listening attitude. We submit unconditionally to what He told us.

Our personal relationship to Him is further determined by the fact that He is the priest who sacrificed himself on the cross. We have sinned against God; we are guilty; we deserve punishment. He took our guilt upon himself, and underwent the punishment for us. We owe our very lives to Him who bought us with his blood. He owns us and we are his possession, with body and soul.

And our personal relationship to Jesus is determined by the fact that He is in heaven, where God has installed Him as King. We have to obey Him. This means for us that we must live in total submission to Him who is the King of heaven and earth. We must obey and eagerly do his will here on earth.

We have to bow deeply before Jesus Christ for we are so far below Him. All the more it is surprising that He, our Prophet, Priest and King has established a personal relationship with us, who are lowly, weak and sinful people.

¹J. Bolt made some interesting remarks on this expression, in his 'Editorial' in *Calvin Theological Journal* 34,1 (April 1999) 7f.



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By J. Moesker

Exposing sin, saving from death

The visions of your prophets were false and worthless; they did not expose your sin or ward off your captivity. The oracles they gave you were false and misleading. (Lamentations 2:14)

It is easy to say what people want to hear. It becomes a lot more difficult when you point out someone's faults. Anyone who has been concerned about wrong words or actions of a brother or sister and tried to warn them, knows how difficult it is. Admonition, of course, should always take place in love. However, it is not always appreciated. At least not at first. It is hard to humble oneself before the will of God.

However, persistent sin needs to be talked about with the other for their good. We may not leave them in their sin. It is not right to think that it is their own business and they have to answer for themselves anyway. We are all responsible for each other in the communion of saints. This is how our God wants us to ward off each other's decline and destruction.

This is what the text shows. Jeremiah was lamenting the fall and destruction of Jerusalem. The covenant people had been led into exile. And why? Largely because their prophets had not warned about sin. They had given false and misleading words. They had spoken what the people wanted to hear.

Think of what the prophet Hananiah said just before the final destruction of Jerusalem. He knew what the people wanted to hear – that there would be no destruction and captivity anymore. They wanted to hear about restoration without repentance. He declared, "This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two years, I will bring back to this place all the articles of the LORD's house that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon removed from here and took to Babylon. I will also bring back to this place Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim king of Judah who went to Babylon,' declares the LORD, 'for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon'" (Jeremiah 28:2-4).

Who didn't want to believe those words? Jeremiah himself says, "Amen! May the LORD do so!" (Jeremiah 28:6). But he saw through this. He realized this was false. There had been no repentance, and so further punishment would surely come. The vision of Hananiah was false, his prophecy misleading. God had threatened judgment on Jerusalem unless there was repentance from sin. Hananiah neglected to point out those sins. And so he simply speeded the city on to its destruction.

Today's prophets can learn from this. Ministers are not ordained to say what the people want to hear. They are to expose sin – not to put people down, but to show their need for the Saviour. That's the point: to call to Christ. That alone can ward off condemnation. God's people do not need interesting speeches. They need sermons that call to repentance and to faith in God's grace.

And that is what the people need to accept too, for their own salvation. We constantly need to be called to repen-

tance and to faith in Jesus Christ. In Lord's Day 44 of the Heidelberg Catechism we confess that God wants his law preached strictly so that we become more and more aware of our sin and so seek more eagerly the forgiveness of sins and righteousness in Christ. Preaching has to point out sin, not because people have to earn their own righteousness, but to bring them to Christ the only Saviour. That's prophecy from the pulpit.

After Pentecost, however, we are all prophets. Christ poured the Holy Spirit on the church so that we all might speak and confess the truth uprightly. Therefore, in a very real sense, the words of the text above apply to all of us now. We are called to expose one another's sins in the church, and so to ward off disaster for each other. That is why the Lord Jesus gave the rule of Matthew 18 in the New Testament. We are all to speak the truth in love to each other, for, "Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:20).

I think *Lamentations* says something we need to remember in our age of freedom and individualism. As prophets, we are called to expose one another's sins. Not in self-righteousness, but to call to Christ and to his righteousness. That may not be a pleasant thing to do. It is a lot easier to say nice things, and to avoid the issue. But where sin is not exposed, destruction is not warded off, and forgiveness is not sought. God wants us prophetically to point out sin in order to point to Jesus Christ. Then we are the living church of Christ.

Rev. J. Moesker is minister of the Gospel in Carman, Manitoba.



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Hope for the Christian family

Family Worship¹

By M. Goheen

There is some sweet irony in the fact that I have been asked to come to this Burlington Reformed Study Centre to speak to you about "Family Worship." Not many of you might know that I grew up in a Baptist Church. In 1980 I went to Westminster Seminary. While studying there I took a course on infant baptism. During this course my mind on the issue changed. I read as much as I could on both sides of the issue, on infant baptism and on believers' baptism, and gradually I came to the conclusion that infant baptism was biblical.

It was precisely because of that understanding of God's covenant of grace and baptism that my wife and I made a very radical commitment toward family worship. A commitment that we have been able to hang on to for about seventeen years together with what are now four teenagers. I am going to be sharing primarily my experience with you on family worship as we have done it in our family.

Right at the beginning I will warn you that our commitment to family worship has been rather *radical*. I don't expect most families to follow the kind of pattern we have. I don't believe that every family *has* to follow exactly what we have done. But maybe some of what we have done can challenge you.

Opening words of the Westminster Confession of Faith

Let me begin with these opening words taken from the introduction of the Westminster Confession of Faith. It is addressed, "TO THE CHRISTIAN READER, ESPECIALLY HEADS OF FAMILIES" and signed by the members of the Westminster Assembly 1643-1647.

As we cannot but with grief of soul lament those multitudes of errors, blasphemies, and all kinds of profaneness, which have in this last age,

like a mighty deluge, overflown this nation; so among several other sins which have helped to open the flood-gates of all these impieties, we cannot but esteem the disuse of family-instruction one of the greatest.

Singing is extremely important for family worship.

There are according to the members of the Westminster Assembly all kinds of errors overflowing this nation. I wonder what they would have said today. There are all kinds of blasphemies like a deluge overflowing the nation. But of all these sins according to them probably the worst is – *the disuse of family instruction*. They end with these words:

If, therefore, there be any spark in you of love to God, be not content that any of yours should be ignorant of him whom you so much admire – If there be any compassion to

the souls of them who are under your care, – if any respect to future generations, labour to sow these seeds of knowledge, which may grow up in after-times.

Those are strong words. And they are addressed to the heads of families. All the members of this assembly call upon those heads to use the Catechism they are providing to instruct their families in the faith.

Importance of family worship

There are more reasons, but allow me to just mention two reasons why family worship is so important.

1. Family worship builds the faith-life of the entire family and especially the children

Now we are familiar in our tradition with the term "means of grace"; that is, God provides various instruments for us to use to nourish and build the faith-life of our families. God in giving these means expects us to use them, and to use them wisely and to use them often. But sometimes I believe we



Dr. Michael Goheen



take these means for granted and we are not wise in their use of them.

There are *two dangers* that have afflicted the church of the twentieth century that may call for our attention here. The one danger is what I call *pietism*. It reduces Christian obedience to faithful exercises of devotional activities; that is, it reduces the Christian life to prayer and Bible reading and worship, and it focuses on the inward. There is another danger that we may refer to as the *social gospel*. That reduces Christian obedience to social, political and economic activism which diminishes, if not eclipses, the important faith nourishing exercises.

Now the tradition that you and I are committed to is able to hold these things well in balance. Nevertheless I have often noticed among Reformed people that it is easy to fall to one of these sides. If we understand the nature and the scope of the Good News of Jesus Christ it *will* enable us to avoid both of these dangers. Our faith in the gospel of Christ must be nourished if we are to be enabled to practice the obedience of the gospel in the whole of our lives. It must be nourished not only in the fellowship of the congregation but also in our families.

So the first reason why I think family worship is important is that it is the way God has given us to nourish faith-life. It is in the book of Deuteronomy that this task is pressed upon the fathers of the home to instruct and to teach their children. See Chapter 6.

2. Family worship builds family unity

In our home we have been able to pray together and repent together. Often

if there has been a bad day and we have been fighting during the day, we spend time together on our knees as family repenting over the way we have treated one another. We have been able to rejoice together and talk about issues together, to think together and at times to cry together. All this has built a family unity for which I thank God. It has enabled my children at this point – hopefully for the rest of their lives – to be best friends with each other. This family worship enables us to enjoy life together.

**Sometimes we expect
that the prayer life of our
children is going to grow
automatically.
It doesn't.
It needs instruction!**

One tremendously important thing is the establishing of a particular time for this family worship. And then not allowing anything to move that time. Don't let anything budge you but make it a top priority. Now in our home we have seen all kinds of distractions. Let me mention some of them. The kids of the neighbourhood come over during the summer after supper knocking at the door to ask our kids to come outside to play, or it is homework they have to do for school, or various extra-curricular activities. The phone is always very intrusive. But in all these cases we have attempted to make worship a top priority and not allow any of these things to upset the routine. This has meant that our kids at times cannot participate in various activities. It has meant that we

do not answer the phone in this time period. It has meant that at times I have gone to teachers of the school my children attend to say, look the kids could not finish their homework, so do what is just and fair. So we have attempted to make that time period something that is settled and cannot be moved.

Now the way we have done it – and again I do not call upon each person to follow this pattern – but here is what we have attempted to do in our family. We have set aside from six o'clock in the evening till eight-thirty, on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday for family worship; that is, two and a half hours. The first hour we eat supper together and we do not do anything else except eat supper. I always come home from the office at that time and at that time the kids are also expected to be home. Then we clean up together and by 7:00 p.m. we are usually ready for family worship. And as a rule we are together until 8:30. Often it will go later, sometimes we quit early, but our normal time is to spend that hour and a half in family worship. We attempt to make that something that cannot be budged.

Let me now talk about worship. A contemporary testimony used by a Reformed church says about worship:

Our life in Christ is celebrated and nourished in the fellowship of congregations where God's Name is praised, his Word proclaimed, his way taught, where sins are confessed, prayers and gifts are offered and sacraments are celebrated.

The two key words in that basic statement are *celebration* and *nourishment*. And indeed the word celebration takes hold of what worship is and especially as it is unfolded in the book of Psalms. Seventy-five times in the Psalms it tells us to worship the Lord with joy and exultation. Rejoice in the Lord! To celebrate his mighty acts and his mighty deeds. But worship also nourishes and builds our new life in Jesus Christ. Through the Word and through singing, prayer, and confession of sin, God's ways are taught.

Elements of family worship

Let me also say something about *the elements of our family worship*.

1. Singing

Singing is extremely important for family worship. Luther said somewhere: give me the preaching of the Word and the music of the church and I will

change that church. He goes on to talk about the importance of music, how it very powerfully nourishes and builds us in one of the songs. He had never been taught that idea. As a matter of fact he had been taught the opposite. Yet that song had driven something into his little mind. Music nourishes and shapes young children. And that is why good music, singable music, music with good words is a top priority for family worship. I will often change the words of the songs for our family to make sure that they are in keeping with our Reformed tradition. Normally we sing for approximately 30 to 40 minutes. Very often it is hard to get the family to stop singing.

I remember one time as we were praying my son prayed something which was out of keeping with what we had been teaching him from the Word. I wondered where he got it. Then I thought, what songs have we been singing? And sure enough, there it was in one of the songs. He had never been taught that idea. As a matter of fact he had been taught the opposite. Yet that song had driven something into his little mind. Music nourishes and shapes young children. And that is why good music, singable music, music with good words is a top priority for family worship. I will often change the words of the songs for our family to make sure that they are in keeping with our Reformed tradition. Normally we sing for approximately 30 to 40 minutes. Very often it is hard to get the family to stop singing.

What is normative music for family worship? I am not talking about corporate worship, or worshipping together as a congregation in church, but family worship. It must be music that enables us to express our joy, to express our thanksgiving, to express our penitence, and to express our commitment. I am not moved by music experts that tell me, normative music must be classical, or from this or that era. If music in the family does not allow us to express our joy, our thanksgiving, express our commitment, it is not normative. Cultural styles must be taken into account. And we sing many kinds of musical pieces. Psalms, hymns, choruses. We have many kinds of different song books.

One of the questions which always come up at this point is, what if we don't have a musician in the family, or what if we do not have a family that is as musical as yours. I don't have good answers, but what I have done with families is to go and look for various kinds of recordings and tapes that have instrumental music and they'll have a selection of 30 different hymns or choruses that they can put on their stereo and use for singing. Or if there is no musician you can also sing "a cappella." But I do believe that music is essential for good family worship.

2. Prayer

I am speaking here of *Scriptural* prayer and not perfunctory (done merely

as a duty) prayer. Often I have found prayer in families to be perfunctory, mechanical, repetitive, very predictable.

What is biblical prayer? I think one of the best images comes from Calvin's *Institutes*. He speaks of prayer as the shovel that digs up the treasures and blessings of the Kingdom. In other words in Christ who is in heaven there are many benefits and treasures to be enjoyed by us. However, they as it were remain buried until we take the shovel of prayer and begin to dig them up. In this context it is important to understand the biblical aspects of prayer, like its urgency, its perseverance, its specificity (asking for specific things), reverence, thanksgiving, praying in faith. We usually pray for about twenty to twenty five minutes. We often divide that up into sections. Ten minutes for thanksgiving, ten minutes for praying for various parts of the world, ten minutes for praying for their friends. We divide it up so that we have a particular focus.

Now that we are moving into a post-Christian era, Christians need to be much more intentional, and much more radical in their family worship.

When I speak of prayer for the world we make grateful use of a book called *Operation World*, by Patrick Johnstone (1995). It talks about the church in literally every country of the world. When my kids were younger, I often summarized a section for them, telling them what was happening there, and pointing the country out on the globe, and then we would pray for that part of the world.

One of my children's favourite times in prayer has been when I took each of them on my knee – when they were young – and prayed for them for three or four minutes. We called that the father's prayer for the children. I believe it is a very important part of family worship.

A last thing I want to say about prayer is that it is important to give instruction to your children about prayer, to listen to how they pray and to help them to learn to pray more biblically. It is interesting that when we teach our children music or the various subjects in school or sports, we do not assume



CHURCH NEWS

Declined the call to the church at Smithers, British Columbia:
Rev. R. Schouten
of Abbotsford, British Columbia.

that they just are going to learn how to do it. We teach them, and we teach them bit by bit. Sometimes we expect that the prayer life of our children is going to grow automatically. It doesn't! It needs instruction!

3. Scripture

The first important thing is to understand the proper nature of Scripture. One of the things you should be thankful for is the particular tradition you have in understanding the nature of Scripture. I did not grow up with that. I am very thankful that I have come to understand that *Scripture is one redemptive historical story*. The Bible is not an assorted collection of stories and doctrines and laws. It tells one unfolding account of redemption.

We will always be shaped by some understanding of history, some world view. If it is not Scripture that is shaping and gripping our lives, it will be another story. It will likely be the story that is shaping our present culture and society. I believe that it is critical that children learn very early to read the Bible as one unfolding account of redemption – not reading the Bible as little pieces that don't seem to fit together very well but that they hear one panorama, that they hear one drama of God's mighty acts in history. If you look at Deuteronomy 6 you will see the way the Old Testament people of God confessed and passed on their faith – by telling a story. While their father was a wandering Aramean (Deuteronomy 26:5) God chose him, made him into a great nation, took them into Egypt, redeemed them from slavery. They tell a story. And that shaped their identity. In those stories God is the Hero. The mighty acts of God. We are not trying to moralize the account and find human heroes but letting the account of Scripture speak for itself with God's power or

faithfulness or wrath or love. We read about that in Psalm 78.

It is also important to wrestle with the contemporary significance of the Scripture. The Bible must not become a book about the past but it must shed light upon our path *today*. We don't look for simplistic applications but we want to know how God is acting in history and how He acts today. What has He done? What does this tell us about Him? What does this tell us about his purposes and what does that mean for us in seeking first the Kingdom of God. We have done many things to make this more meaningful. I would tell the story and involve them in acting it out. Now that the children are older we read the Bible together. We all participate, all having our own Bible of course. Then we give opportunity for discussion at the end.

4. *Confessing our faith*

We have some marvelous and wonderful confessions, the Belgic Confession, the Westminster Confession, the Canons of Dort and the Heidelberg Catechism. In our home we have read from various of those but

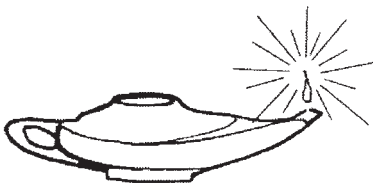
we also made use of the Contemporary Testimony (CRC Publications, 1988), as a confession of faith that has been written to address the current issues of today. It deals with the issues of our time and it tries to bring the Gospel to bear on secularism today. We have memorized portions of it and often we have done it together with actions. This opens an opportunity to talk about contemporary issues. It deals with evolution, human rights, earth keeping, money, scientism, feminism and so forth. It tries to give you a biblical perspective on these issues.

Concluding comments

1. *Family worship is only one component of a healthy family life.* That means that another thing is important, namely:
2. *Early discipline.* Our children learned to obey when they were young, before they were three or four years old. I believe that that was critical. For if they did not learn it early they would most probably never learn it.

3. *Affection.* It is important to give a lot of affection to children. Another thing is:
4. *Play.* Kids need to understand that we not only worship and pray together but that we also can play together. It is important for a father to spend time playing with his children.
5. The last one, which is getting increasingly important when children grow older is *communication*. Talking with the children and listening to them about the particular issues they are struggling with.
6. In all this you have to keep especially two things in mind:
 - One is that *all families are different*. Each family needs to use the gifts and creativity that God has given them. It is essential for our children to grow and to be nourished in the faith but *how that is worked out will be different from family to family*. All of us have to ask, how does God want us to work it out in our own family.
 - Another is: *it will take time, effort, work – especially for the father –*

THE BURLINGTON REFORMED STUDY CENTRE



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Modern Issues
in the Light of
God's Word

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discipline and sacrifice. We had to give up things that we wish we didn't have to! But if we want our children to walk in the way of the covenant, we had better be very intentional about nourishing them in their faith. It may make us uncomfortable if we as parents ourselves struggle with praying and reading the Bible. If that is the case let there be an humble openness and confession: parents saying, we have not been doing this, we are not good at it, but we should, and so let's learn together as a family.

We live in a post-modern world. A world without God. Our children are being fed the story of this world every day, by advertising, television, rock music and many other things. Present day technology is very powerful in shaping the lives of our children. They are told a story about man and his world, and we as Christians don't believe that story. We know it to be a lie. Now that we are moving into a post-Christian era Christians need to be much more intentional, and much more radical in their family worship. There may have been times when our society was more Christian, and where it would have been possible to have a shorter time for family worship. That time is over.

When I was teaching in Amsterdam in the Netherlands, I asked people, "How is it that only one percent of the population in Amsterdam goes to church?" How could this secularization of a Christian nation happen so quickly? I do not have all the answers. But I do wonder if things would have been different if there had been a more vital worship-life in the homes of that nation. We are facing the same kind of postmodern currents in Canada. We need to be very firm and intentional if our next generation is to rise up committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. I pray that we will not lose our children to the idols technology produces. I pray that there will be families that are intentionally committed to train their children in the Word of God, teaching them to pray, and determined to worship the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹An abbreviated version of the lecture presented for the Burlington Reformed Study Centre on November 12, 1999. Dr. Michael Goheen, is Assistant Professor of Religion and Theology at Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ontario. 

CLOSING REFLECTIONS

by C. Van Dam

In bringing this series on "Hope for the Family" to a close, let us reflect for a moment on some of the topics raised and pull various issues together.

We heard that God has given to us our children, but at the same time the Lord our God indicated that they are *his* children. After all they have the sign and seal of baptism on their foreheads. Our children, teenagers, young adults, belong to the living God! We must never forget that.

It is this claim of the Lord that makes Christian parenting so awesome! The living God has a claim on our family! Him we must worship, adore and serve – also in the family circle!

As we approach a new millennium it may be good to think back on those words of God spoken near the dawn of history – the words which echoed through a very distressed paradise. After the fall into sin, the Creator in his great mercy did not give up on his creation, but he said to the serpent: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers."

Those words of mercy and love set the basic parameters for the agenda of the lives of Adam and Eve, but also for our lives, also for our families. God's love, shown in the beginning in his not giving up on his creation but claiming it for himself, is the love that we should show to our children and pass on to them. How? By maintaining and showing them clearly the present ongoing war that God declared in the beginning between Satan and the seed of the woman, the people of God. This is a war we are also engaged in and we must guide our children accordingly.

Yes, make no mistake about it. It is a war!! It's a battle against the spirit of unbelief and derision of the living God in which we find ourselves today. We live in the midst of a modern Sodom and Gomorrah which, if we are not careful, can even confuse us as to the lasting norms for our own lives.

Let us be on the alert and heed those words of old: I will establish enmity and hatred, between Satan and the woman, God's children. Let us keep that battle cry alive, also for our pre-schoolers, youth and teenagers. Let us make it a family project, a life-long project! Why – so that we take on a purely negative stance in life? No, but so that we can move onwards, by ridding ourselves of the sin of this age which also seeks to cling to us and so that we can positively equip ourselves, also through family worship, to serve the living God who is holy, holy, holy!

Awesome is our responsibility, but joyful is also the reality of what is happening. For look, the living God has had mercy on us and in a world which decays and fades away into judgement, in this world, the Lord raises us for himself a new creation, a new beginning. That's what a Christian family is all about!! It is a place of new beginnings where the Spirit of God raises to new life! It is a place of celebration and worship. After all, the victory has been won in Christ. The old serpent's head will be completely crushed.

And therefore let us heed the call of Scripture, to be different from the world, radically different in our priorities, entertainment and goals – holy in an unholy world. We don't belong to this fallen world but to the living God! And therefore, as the apostle John admonished: We are not to love the world, nor the things of this world, for the lust of this world and its sin passes away! It's the old creation! There's no future there! The world and its desires pass away, but the one who does the will of God lives for ever!

What joy to know that with us is our God – Father, Son and Spirit! God is moulding us, raising us up as a new creation, new mankind, for a new world!! So, let's encourage each other with that prospect. In Christ, there is hope for the family! Also as we approach a new millennium!!

The Lordship of Christ

By P.G. Feenstra

The doctrine of Christ's Lordship is a foundational truth of the Christian faith. It is directly related to our salvation. Thus we read in Romans 10:9, ". . . if you confess with your mouth 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." The fabric of new Testament preaching is woven by this doctrine. Paul writes to the church at Corinth, "For we do not preach ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor 4:5). Every part of our life is affected by this confession. Acknowledging that Jesus is Lord is essential to developing healthy relationships in the church (Rom 14) and in marriage (1 Cor 7:39). Every Christian is to be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so that we may lead a life worthy of the Lord. (Col 1:9,10).

The cosmic significance of Christ's Lordship

But what exactly does it mean that Jesus is Lord? The title 'lord' means ruler, owner and master. When we confess that Jesus Christ is Lord we are stating our conviction that He is the ruler and master of the universe. In Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth. All things were created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together (Col 1:15-17). Jesus Christ is Lord and Master over all the spheres and dimensions of the cosmos, including the many galaxies beyond our cognizance.

Christ is Lord over every element in this realm, over climate and catastrophe, over economics and social development, over education and the arts, recreation and sports. When Christ was born in Bethlehem the angel announced the cosmic significance of his incarnation by telling the shepherds, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a

Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10,11).

Christ is our Lord

Jesus Christ is master of the universe. He has been given authority to rule both heaven and earth and everything in it. Yet the significance of Christ's Lordship is far from being impersonal. As a result of his resurrection you and I are to worship Him as "my Lord and my God" (John 20:28). The gathering of New Testament believers is designated "church" because they are the assembly of those who belong to the Lord.

In the church we not only believe and confess that Jesus is ruler and master of the universe but we acknowledge that He has the right and the authority to rule over our lives. Thus we honour the Lord's Day as the day we receive further instruction as to how we are to serve Him as our Lord and our God every moment of our life.

Our Lord bought us off the slave market of sin through the payment of his precious blood. He paid for us in full by his death on the cross. He humbled himself and became a slave in order that we might become his possession. We are owned and operated by Him.

As our Lord and master He also has the power to deliver us from the dominion of sin and the devil. He has the power and the authority to take us out of the grave and give us victory over the grave. He has the keys of death and hades (Rev 1:18).

You can't be your own boss

As sinful human beings all of us have within our hearts the sinful desire to balk against Christ's Lordship. We prefer to run our own lives, to be our own boss and to make our own decisions. We like to think we know what is best for ourselves. Yet such sentiments must be identified as sinful and cast aside.

By the power of the Spirit we are to surrender ourselves to Christ by acknowledging Him as Lord (1 Cor 12:3).

In all humility we must submit ourselves to the will of our Master. "For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord" (Rom 14:7,8). Calling Christ 'Lord' compels us to do what He tells us (Luke 6:46). We are called and obliged to give up every habit, custom or practice that gives us the false illusion that we are in the driver's seat. We are to submit ourselves to Christ's Lordship even if it means having to do something we do not want to do. For we must trust that He who gave his life to purchase us will seek our best interests and will not ask of us more than we can handle.

You are not your own

Since Christ has bought us with his precious blood He owns our bodies too. Therefore we are not free to do with them as we please. Our own body or that of other human beings is not for sale or to be used for personal gratification. It was bought at a very high cost. "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. Therefore honour God with your body" (2 Cor 6:19,20).


Furthermore, we may not withdraw ourselves from our Lord in any area, nor may we separate ourselves from the rules and the norms which He gives to us. Being under Christ's Lordship is not burdensome but it opens to us a whole new world. He gives us regulations and ordinances to keep from returning to the slavery of sin and to allow us to enjoy true freedom. It is easy for all of us, and especially teenagers, to be attracted to a culture which basically allows you to do what you want. Yet the "no rules" and "no authority" philosophy does not give anyone freedom but it enslaves. We become slaves of the devil, the world and our own cravings. The chains of bondage eventually choke its

victims to death. True freedom is only found under the Lordship of Christ.

Looking ahead

Being his possession we may look ahead to the day when heaven and earth will be completely one. When will this take place? On the day of the

Lord! On that day everything which sours the good relation between God and us will be taken away. At that time believers will confess and unbelievers will be forced to acknowledge the Lordship of Christ. On the basis of Christ's suffering the Father has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him a

name which is above every name so that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2:9-11). That glory of his lordship will be fully revealed to us on his great day. Therefore, with the Spirit we pray, "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev 22:20). 

PRESS REVIEW

By J. De Jong



The cautious approach

The last synod of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church in North America (OCRC) dealt with a proposal from the United Reformed Churches (URCNA) for immediate union, subject to the ratification of the local churches, all under the current church order of the URCNA. After a lengthy debate, the proposal was defeated. The deputy representing the Canadian Reformed Churches at the synod, Rev. W. den Hollander, has informed readers about this occasion in *Clarion*.¹ Readers may also be interested in listening to one of the voices from the side of the OCRC opposing the union. Several opinions were expressed in the OCRC paper *The Trumpet*, of which I selected some remarks made by elder van Dyken of the OCRC in Cambridge, Ontario. Quoting lines from John Calvin on the unity of believers in Christ, he adds:

Echoing the prayer of our Master in John 17 and the great passages on unity found in I Corinthians and Ephesians, they remind us again that all deliberations among the Lord's children regarding any issue (and particularly about unity!) must reflect the deep oneness we find in Christ. Such unity transcends national, tribal, cultural, and denominational lines. Barbarian, Scythian, bond, and free – all confessing and faithful believers are glorious Body of Christ. This unity is to be expressed in our love for one another, a love that is free from rancour and suspicion of motives. It is to be humble and self-effacing, seeking only the cause and glory of Christ. Others within this paper have expressed this, and ably, yet it bears repeating as we come to deliberate

a question of much importance for our small federation of churches. Otherwise, we, too, will be but noisy gongs and clashing cymbals.

What, then, is this unity? Others have already reminded us that the Scripture would clearly teach us that such unity is not first of all an outward organization unity but an inward spiritual unity. This observation is right and true and must never be obscured in any discussion on unity. After these introductory remarks, VanDyken turns to the URCNA proposal, and takes the cautionary approach:

There are several matters that would urge us to caution at this time. They have been variously expressed and demand necessary prudence. One in particular stands out, the question of the interpretation of the Creation account. Most of the United Reformed churches stand with us in their view of Genesis 1. Nevertheless there are certain among them who hold to a differing view, that of the Framework Hypothesis. There is yet no federational position taken on this matter among the United Reformed churches.

We do well to examine this question more closely. The proponents of the Framework Hypothesis are not liberals. They are indeed devout, wise brothers in Christ, who have been greatly used in the Church and from whom we have much to learn. Furthermore, these men would argue that their position arises from within Scripture itself, that they are being true to the basic Reformed principle of the Scripture interpreting Scripture.

However, there are serious objections to be raised regarding their position. Their position violates one of the central principles of Biblical interpretation. That principle is the *perspicuity* of God's Word. Again and again, indeed within the wider attendant principles of Scriptural context and Scripture interpreting Scripture, it is the clear, straightforward understanding of the Word that is the Truth of God. In the 60s, as attempts were being made within the CRC to syncretize a Scriptural understanding of creation with the macro-evolutionist position and its Siamese twin (joined by the heart!), an old-age earth, there were many arguments put forth. We heard them all, ranging from the Schofield gap-theory of the Darbyites to the full-blown Barthian position and the modified Barthianism of the AACS understanding of the Word. Noticeable also among these positions was the literary type argument which argued that Genesis 1 and 2 could not be read as a literal, step-by-step creation account because it was poetry or some other literary form. The intention of Genesis 1 and 2, so this position maintained, was to merely set forth the reality of the *ex nihilo* creation by the sovereign God, and to proclaim that antithetically to Israel's pagan, polytheistic neighbours. But as to details, as to the steps – no, a chronological account was not in view. (This is of course, essentially the same as the Framework Hypothesis position. We have heard it before, and from others.)

Why this proliferation of alternative interpretations? Genesis 1

and 2 clearly purport (at least to the unlearned and unschooled!) to be a simple, step-by-step account of God's creative work in six ordinary days. They may indeed be poetry, but so are the historical psalms. The many historical psalms attest to the historicity of God's redemptive and judgmental works, in poetry, with indisputable historical detail.

Why does the Framework Theory require mental gymnastics to be understood? Why does it contradict the six ordinary, solar days taught not only in Genesis 1 but also elsewhere in Scripture? If the Bible says that God created light and set up days before he made the sun, moon, and stars, then we must believe the Bible and put aside our uniformitarian notions of cause and effect.

We have just come out of the whole business of searching for another interpretation of the creation account, one which would satisfy the pressure brought to it by a God-denying, evolutionistic world view. From the explanations of the various proponents of the framework theory, I cannot escape this conclusion: it was a nagging uncertainty regarding the creation of light and the seeming disparity in the creation account that led them to devise the alternative Framework Theory.

There is a slippery slope. There was in the 60s and there is today. If the slide does not occur in the life of the early proponents of a particular false teaching, it does so more radically in the lives of the followers and later proponents. The history of the Church is replete with examples.

The Scripture-affirming creationist position has been such a blessing in the understanding of all of the Christian life, indeed as it should and must. The antithetical God-denying, evolutionist view has shaped in horrifying proportions the thinking and living of western world. There is no room for quar-

ter, for concession of any kind. We just came out of all that. Please, please, let us not return, or even consider it. Despite its protestations that it is Scripturally derived, the Framework Theory represents an imposition of man, a seemingly small concession to the anti-God scientism and empiricism of our age. And for what? Why?

Then follows br. VanDyken's conclusion: Let us be frank in our answer to the URC's. Let us say to them, "You are our dear brothers in the Lord. Let us seek to work together, particularly, and most meaningfully, at the local level. Let us continue to consider the question of merging. At this point however, we cannot accept, until you yourselves have federationally taken a position on this central and determinative position of creation."

Some observations

Van Dyken's remarks are a very open and forthright statement concerning some perceived problems that he, and I'm sure others with him, have with regard to union with the URCNA. One can notice in his remarks the pain the churches went through during the separation from the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), and one can sense the lingering scars of dealing with the rising tide of the new hermeneutic as is swept though the CRC's in the 60s and 70s. Hence one can only appreciate the sense of struggle reflected in br. Van Dyken's words.

At the same time, one might question whether it is wise to insist upon a further ecclesiastical statement on Genesis 1-11 at this point, beyond what the churches have already adopted. No doubt, the need for such a statement is felt more strongly in situations where the struggle has been fought. Yet, I am convinced that a faithful adherence to what we confess in the *Three Forms of Unity* is sufficient in matters such as this, and should be maintained as such for the future.

Br. Van Dyken rightly points out that the URCNA federation as a whole has not taken a stand on the matter of the Framework Hypothesis. What is this "framework theory"? Briefly stated, it takes the language of Genesis 1-11 as a descriptive metaphor which does not purport to give an exact historical description of what actually took place. The "framework theory" holds that the author of Genesis 1 had other intentions than specifically historical ones, and these predominate over historical concerns.

Space does not permit us to enter into all aspects of this issue. Perhaps it may be said that one of the professors at Westminster Seminary West (Escondido), – one who is not a member of the URCNA – holds to this view, and another on staff – a member of the URCNA – has expressed a certain toleration on the whole matter of the interpretation of the days of Genesis 1-11. That make this an issue of importance for us as well, since we are in dialogue with the URCNA on precisely these sorts of issues.

Yet I repeat my conviction – as also voiced in a previous press review – that we do not need an additional binding statement on this matter like the one adopted by the OCRC federation.² Rather, I see this as a matter of theological education and its proper regulation and control. All professors who contribute to the training for the ministry in the URCNA should be bound by the *Three Forms of Unity*, and be willing to be subject to the disciplinary judgments of the church on that basis. Is that not the best safeguard to the training for the ministry?

The reader will understand that I do not mean to support anything like a "framework theory." But these sorts of issues are best resolved in the ecclesiastical way, on a case-by-case basis, rather than by introducing a multiplicity of additional, binding "position papers," the status of which ends up being the subject of endless debates. Here, too, by maintaining the line of history and upholding and applying our doctrinal standards, we may hold to God's Word, and also pursue the unity that makes for peace.

¹See *Clarion*, Volume 48, #24 (November 26, 1999) pp.566-567.

²The days of creation are dealt with in a position paper called "Creation," cf *1999 Yearbook OCRCNA*, 49-51.

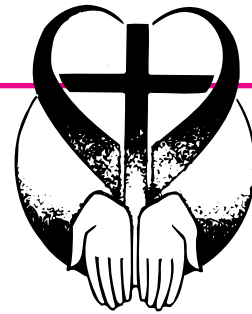


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Tajumulco Women's Program

*"Give a man a fish, and you'll feed him for one day.
Teach him how to fish and you'll feed him for life."*

By G. Torenvliet

When you think about the aid provided by CRWRF funding, it is likely that foremost in your mind is the relief and aid provided to orphans in poverty-stricken Sudan or the disaster relief implemented in Honduras. While all of this forms an important – and integral – part of the work funded by the CRWRF, we are increasingly working to direct a portion of our resources to community-based, educational programs.

As you might know, Linda Baartse has started one such program in the Guatemalan community of Tajumulco, the Tajumulco Women's Program. While providing food to these communities would be helpful in the short-term, Linda's work has a longer-term vision that aims to equip groups of women with important household management skills, and then to teach those skills to others. For instance, Linda has been helping groups of women to gain the resources necessary to install community cook-stoves and water reservoirs for doing laundry. Linda has also been teaching basic money management skills to help these women earn more from their business and spend their money more wisely on their families. Since the transition to profitability can be difficult for some women, interest free loans have been made available to these women to help them out as they are learning to get on their feet. The value of this program is tremendous – traditional sources of loans charge 10 to 20 percent interest *per month* (!) while this program provides interest-free money for five months and only a nominal (3%) interest charge after that. The blessing of the Lord has been evident in the success of each of these efforts.

The focus of this program is not just on home economics. Helping the women come to know and serve their Saviour is a high priority. Educators – Guatemalan women who help in bringing these programs out to the commu-



Learning to cook nutritious meals for the family.

nity – are scoring higher and higher on Bible knowledge tests. As women come to know their Saviour they are urged to reflect their faith through bi-weekly aid visits to elderly, handicapped, and sick people in their community. Linda relates a particularly telling example of the impact this is having on the women doing the visiting:


Serving the needy in the community was a new concept for some members. One of the common responses was, "We have never done this before, or visited these people. When the people ask why we are doing this, what should we say?" We discussed several passages in the Bible about Christians with a changed heart being concerned for others, and about showing the love of God . . . in the same manner as the Good Samaritan. Some women felt uncomfortable because they said it was the Catholics that visited people to earn their way into heaven. We then discussed that as Christians we are not saved by doing good works, but we are saved by faith so that we are empowered to do the works of God. Linda is very thankful for the blessings that she has seen on her work to date.

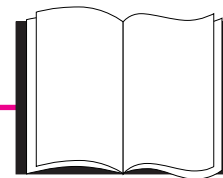
Understanding that this success only comes from God, she requests that we remember her work in prayer with thanksgiving and also remember a number of specific concerns. Most importantly, pray that God will bless Linda as she works with the over 100 Tajamulcan she has been in contact with, and also that He will bless these women as they learn good stewardship skills. Pray also that the Lord will bless Linda with a qualified program assistant who can help in sharing some of Linda's workload. Finally, please pray that the many links that have been created with community organizations might be kept and strengthened so that this work might continue.

Gifts for the works of CRWRF may be directed to:

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Pass the peppermints

As an immigrant to the Canadian Reformed Church about 10 years ago, I was amused at first at how almost everyone in the church would eat a peppermint at exactly the same time: the start of the sermon and at each subsequent sermon point thereafter. Talk about ritualistic. It didn't take me long to see that there was no humour in this practice.

If you stop and take a look around you at church, you will realize that this "peppermint thing" has gotten out of hand. Over the years, there has been a tremendous evolution in the frequency of candy consumption, its variety, and the source of its distribution.

Parents used to pass out 1-2 peppermints during the sermon, now children have their own pocket or purse full that they can eat as they please. It used to be that a candy was distributed at the start of the sermon, then part way through, now people eat candy during the entire church service. I am not sure how people can sing with a candy in their mouth. One has to wonder as well, how people are able to follow the sermon in its entirety when so much time is spent on dispensing and unwrapping candies.

Plain peppermints are no longer as popular as the chewy and fruit flavoured candies or those delicious Werther's Originals. And what about those toffees and fruittellas, you know the ones that make you look like you are chewing a wad of bubble gum. As candies have changed, a new problem presented itself, the wrapper. If the adults don't attempt to unwrap their candies quietly, do you think the children will? What happens to the wrapper after the candy is out? Well, the children can pass some time folding it into different shapes and at the same time annoy and distract the people sitting next to them. Then when you are bored with the wrapper, just leave it in the pew for the caretaker to dispose of.

Few people make an attempt to quietly sneak a candy anymore. Let's face

it, we all know why you reach into your pocket or purse. Eating candies in church has in fact become a social event, where rolls and even bags of candies are passed up and down the bench to family, friends, and even strangers.

Why exactly do people need to eat so much candy in church? If it's hunger, I suggest that you eat more for the breakfast and lunch before church. If it's sleepiness, go to bed on time on Saturday night and/or have a nap between services. If it is boredom, then I suggest that you re-examine your heart.

Adults and children go to work and school for 6-8 hours a day and do not need to eat candy to make it through the day. I have attended other churches and have not witnessed people eating candy after candy during church. For a church that professes to be a "true church," we should be ashamed of this practice. You might think that I am making much out of nothing, but is it not a sad case if you have to eat 3, 4, 6, 10 candies to make it through a 60-75 minute church service. Church is

where we are fed by the word of God, strengthened by the use of the sacraments, share in fellowship with other believers and finally with thankfulness and joy give our praise and worship to God for his great love, care and protection in our lives. Remember, we don't deserve his love, it is by God's grace that He cares for us.

There wouldn't have to be anything wrong with one peppermint handed out quietly to a squirming child or a sleepy adult, but this candy consumption has gone beyond what is acceptable, and reverent.

What kind of message are we sending to our children or to our church visitors by this indulgent practice of eating candy in church? Is it that church is a boring place, something that must be endured and eating candy helps to sweeten the bitter pill? A better question yet is, what kind of worship are we offering to God?

*A concerned Sister in Christ
(Name withheld upon request
– Editor*



PSALM 121

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1. I lift my eyes unto the hills.
In all my grief and fear,
From where will help draw near?
The Lord His promises fulfils –
He who made earth and heaven;
His help is freely given.</p> | <p>3. He is your shelter on the way,
The shade at your right hand
In a forsaken land.
The moon by night, the sun by day
Will never harm or hurt you;
The Lord will not desert you.</p> |
| <p>2. He will not let you slip or fall,
For He is at your side
And will support provide.
The Keeper of all Israel
Will guide and guard you ever;
He'll sleep or slumber never.</p> | <p>4. All evil strikes at you in vain;
The Lord will keep your life
Secure in woes and strife.
When you go out, when you come in,
The Lord will fail you never
But keep you safe forever.</p> |

William Helder A.D. 2000
Melody: Psalm 121 of the Genevan Psalter Geneva, 1551

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Re: "Martin would be aghast."

M. Werkman of St. Mary's (*Clarion* Vol. 49, No. 2) seems quite excited about a rather trivial matter. If one does even a cursory study of the life of the great Reformer Martin Luther, one discovers quickly that he was an earthly man, and not one to stand on ceremony. He might well consider it an honor that a fellow believer almost 500 years hence, would feel so at home with him and his teachings as to call him by his first name. Besides, to call someone by his or her given name is not necessarily disrespectful, much less *irreverent*. We all speak of Adam, Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Miriam, Hannah, James, Mary, Anna, Peter, Priscilla, and Timothy, to mention but a few, by given name without anyone suggesting that to do so is the least bit respectful. And then it's quite the leap of logic to suggest that the author of the original editorial might suffer from a lack of respect for God's gifts for his church, and worse yet, a lack of reverence for God himself simply because he calls Martin Luther by his first name! That's making a megamountain out of a minuscule molehill. A current aphorism may serve well here – "Don't sweat the small stuff, brother!"

Sincerely,
Sarah Vandergugten, Cloverdale, BC

Re: Authority

Permit me to react to the letter of Henk VanBeelen in *Clarion* dated February 4, 2000, concerning a series of articles from the Rev. G. Ph. VanPopta.

I too can commend those series and agree with VanBeelen about the bitter feelings we see among us. You can feel the frustration when you hear the complaint: "It does not matter what we say or do, we are always wrong and they are always right."

When people are brought to that state of mind there is little hope of solving a problem, and there is no need for that.

The rule of natural justice VanBeelen mentioned and his appeal to pay attention to them are good.

A. The right to know your allegations against you.

B. The right to reply to your allegations.

C. The right to unbiased decision makers to hear your case/appeal.

However, I think we need a 4th one, namely,

D. The right to know on what basis and grounds a decision was established.

When our authorities would make it a rule to spell out clearly on what grounds they have come to a decision, it would be hard for them to do so without paying attention to A,B and C.

Our major assemblies are required to do so! People may not always be happy with the verdict, but they will know they are dealt with fairly and honestly.

Sometime ago I heard a sermon in which was mentioned the danger of councils having a club mentality and ruling with authority, instead of serving the congregation.

I am afraid we see too much of that already and if we are not constantly on guard for that danger, we may end up with beautiful congregations, but will they still be churches?

Arend Harke, St. Albert, AB 

PRESS RELEASE



On the evening of February 4 and the morning of February 5, five gentlemen from four different Canadian provinces met together in the capital city of Manitoba. The motivation for coming together was the desire to discuss the feasibility of reawakening our Christian witness as it pertains to our cultural mandate.

After some very in-depth discussion this group of gentlemen determined that they would proceed at least to the next stage: to organize what they boldly have called The Reformed Canadian Political Research Council. Bill Gortemaker and Jacob Kuik of Winnipeg, Manitoba; Henk van derVelde of Wellandport, Ontario; Pete DeBoer of Surrey, BC; and John Voorhorst of Coaldale, Alberta, agreed to work as a steering committee, with their main objective being to stimulate the Reformed church community in their witness to the social and political fabric in society.

The vision of the steering committee is to establish a national center with a full-time paid director whose objective will be double pronged. This director will promote and discuss our Christian response in a very public arena, and more importantly, will stimulate and educate individual Christians so they either alone or in a group can also participate in the public arena.

If you are interested in working for The Reformed Canadian Political Research Council, be sure to let either Bill Gortemaker or Jacob Kuik know. They and the rest of the steering committee would love to hear from you.

This Research Council is based on the Bible as faithfully confessed in the Belgic Confession, The Canons of Dort and the Heidelberg Catechism. One of the main objectives, as we already said, is to promote Scriptural norms in Canadian Society with particular emphasis on political matters. Once the Council

has found a national director it will very quickly begin the process of reestablishing Reformed political study groups that will work in their respective communities towards actively being a light and a salt in the social and political realms.

A lofty name and a mammoth dream. But a very humble and realistic group of men have determined to establish a national Reformed research council. Come and help them.


The address is:

RCPRC, One Beghin Avenue,
Winnipeg, MB R2J 3X5

For further information, call:

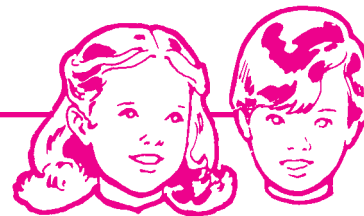
Bill Gortemaker, Interim Chairman
Phone (204) 663-9000

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John Voorhorst, Press Liaison
Phone (403) 328-9114

Email john@cvbenefitsinc.com 

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers

On April 21, it will be Good Friday. What does that mean for you? Why have we been given a day called Good Friday? Well, remember that the Lord Jesus died on the cross for our sins? Before He was actually hung on the cross, He had to go to "court," a court where there was a Judge and a jury. That is what you will see when you go to a courtroom where a person is being judged for the things he has done.

Although the Lord Jesus hadn't really done anything bad, because of course He was perfect, the people were very upset with many of the things which He said. You see, many of them did not want to admit that they were very bad people. So He was found guilty of many things. And for that He was hung on the cross.

But let us also remember that this was part of God's plan for us. He sent our Lord Jesus Christ to die on the cross for our sins. And because Christ did this, we don't have to be afraid to die, because we know that God has forgiven our sins, although we have to continually ask for His forgiveness.

Lots of love,
Aunt Betty

CAT WORD SEARCH

by Busy Beaver Nelene Brouwer

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

FIND: kitten, cute, cat, fluffy, small, big, purring, calico, black, white, orange, playful, fun, grey, yellow, whiskers, soft, eyes, purr

UNSCRAMBLE THE BEDTIME THINGS

By Busy Beaver Nadine Barendregt

AASPMJA _____
 OOTTH-BHUSR _____
 WOPLLI _____
 EDB _____
 FSLOS _____

MATCH EACH COUNTRY WITH ITS CAPITAL CITY

By Busy Beaver Stephanie Kingma

NETHERLANDS	ROME
CANADA	BERLIN
USA	BEIJING
FRANCE	AMSTERDAM
ITALY	OTTAWA
GERMANY	WASHINGTON DC
CHINA	PARIS
GREAT BRITAIN	VIENNA
AUSTRIA	MADRID
GREECE	ATHENS
SPAIN	STOCKHOLM
SWEDEN	LONDON



FROM THE MAILBOX

Thank you to *Nadene Barendregt* for your letter and puzzles. That was very nice of your friend *Fay* to send you some puzzles, and also nice of you to share them with all the other Busy Beavers. I can't put them all in at the same time, but I can put one in for now. Bye now.

Thank you also to *Jolene Breukelman* for your letter. You must be very excited that your Mom is going to have a baby. You were very spoiled to get presents on your brother's birthday! What were the other snow sculptures that were made at school? The snowmobile must have been pretty neat to make. Write again, won't you, *Jolene*. 