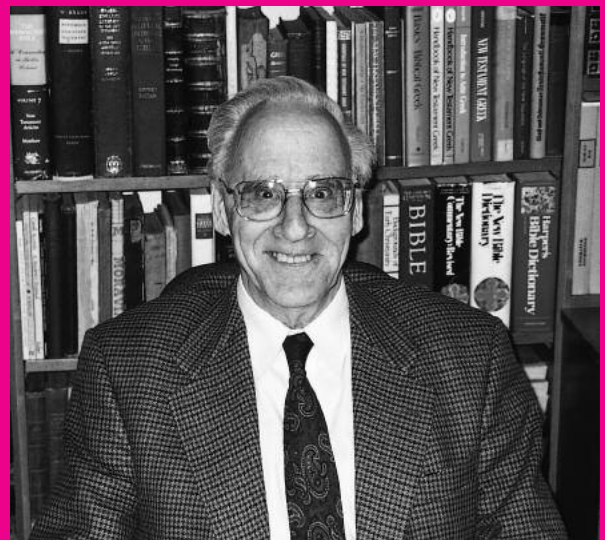


# Clarion

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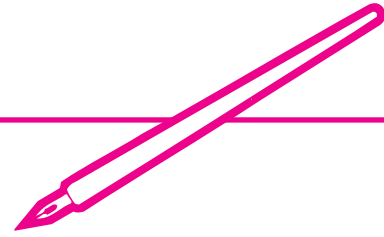


*Theological College:  
Prof. J. Geertsema retiring*

Numbers

10:1-10

By R. Aasman

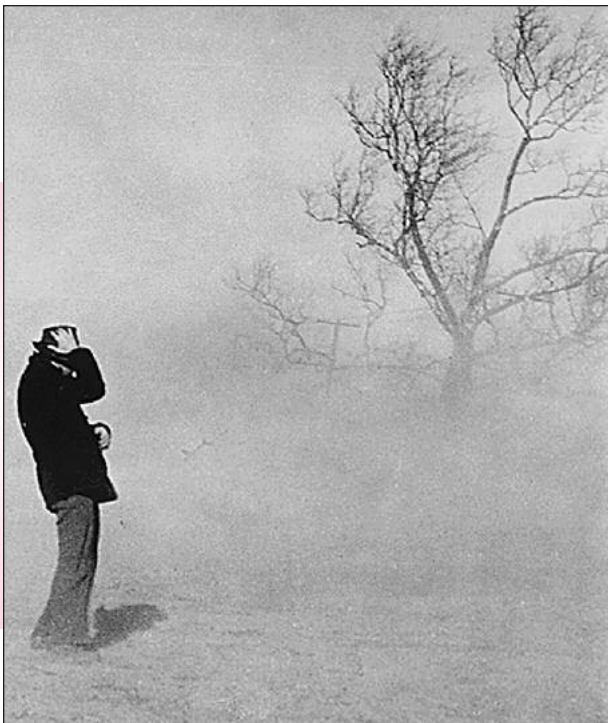


## O Lord, please let it rain

### Last week of May

This morning, while I am writing these words, it is the last week of May. I am writing this in Alberta, which is relevant to the topic of rain. Typically, at this time of year, the land is a verdant green, ponds are brim full of water, and rivers are overflowing as the melting snow from the mountains cause the rivers to fill up. But we do not see much of this right now.

The situation has become desperate. How desperate? Well, if we do not get several days of good rain in the next two weeks, then the situation here could be worse than the dirty thirties. A lot of ponds are empty. A forest fire has been raging out of control for a week in northern Alberta, sending its acrid smoke southwards for hundreds of kilometres. The soil is so dry that it digs like sawdust. Some farmers are desperately trying to sell off their cattle and horses because they are certain that they will have no water or hay to keep their animals alive. And the wind is blowing like it has never blown around here before. Yesterday, on the Neerlandia highway, I had to slow down to a crawl as an easterly wind whipped up such enormous clouds of topsoil,



that it darkened the sun. One poor farmer was losing his precious topsoil. Another had it piling up like drifts of snow – deep, black drifts. One can only imagine how the wild animals must be suffering, and how plants and trees must be under deep stress.

*A lot of prayers are going up to our heavenly Father for rain.*

### Praying for rain

A lot of prayers are going up to our heavenly Father for rain. Any kind of rain will do, but specifically, we are asking for one of those long, gentle rains that will go on for days. Such rain does not run off the land quickly. Rather, it soaks deep into the soil, to provide nourishment for a long time.

We pray to God for rain, because we believe and we know that all things are in his hand. Food and drink, sunshine and rain are all from the providential care of our heavenly Father. We read in Psalm 145:14-16: “The LORD upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.” Even the wild deer which pants for fresh water or the aspen tree, which is drying out, owes its life and its need for water to the almighty Creator and upholder of life.

How much more do God’s children count on Him for everything they need for body and soul, in life and death. We confess in Lord’s Day 9 in connection with God’s work as the Creator, and the upholder and governor of life, that He “is for the sake of Christ his Son, my God and my Father.” He who loved us so much that He gave his Son to die for us will He not also provide us with all that we need in our daily lives? Our Lord Jesus Christ taught us to pray: “Our Father in heaven . . . Give us today our daily bread.”

God’s children may pray and they should pray in the name of Jesus Christ that their heavenly Father provide them with the basic necessities of life. It is fitting that we should pray to Him for rain to nourish the land. And so from the heart, give Him the praise, the glory and the thanksgiving for his tender mercy. He is almighty God and He is a faithful Father to us in Jesus Christ our Lord.

### Humbling effects

One of the hallmarks of our society is a steady erosion of awe for the God of the Scriptures. We live in a day and



age where man often sees himself as god. Moreover, he believes that he has the ingenuity, the talents and the ability to carve for himself a world in his own image. If there is a hole in the ozone layer, man can fix it. If there is drought, man can fix it. If trees are dying, man can fix it. If there is a disease, man can fix it. At least, that is the impression one receives as every problem that arises in daily life is addressed by man-made solutions and answers.

But there are a lot of things for which man can do very little. What can man do for the horrible drought in Alberta and many other parts of North America? Nothing. In desperation he sells off his cattle and his horses. Glumly he looks at his topsoil blowing away and his pond grow dry. In this way, God also humbles man. Those who want to rely on their own strength and who believe technology and science is the answer for everything, are humbled by a drought. Man is helpless. What should a humbled and powerless man do? He should turn to almighty God on his knees. He should confess his own weaknesses, shortcomings and sin to God, and petition God to be merciful, and to turn his face in love to the one who bows down before Him.

A very clear benefit of something as sad and difficult as a drought, is that it shows people how dependent they are

## What's inside?

This issue of *Clarion* contains two articles which show how life at our Theological College is thriving. We also have an article which informs us that Rev. G. Nederveen has received his degree of Doctor of Ministry. There is a connection between our College and Dr. Nederveen's new degree. The degrees issued by our College are not always honoured by other universities. However McMaster Divinity College accepted this student from our College on the strength of his B.D. For that we are thankful. We rejoice with Dr. G. Nederveen in completing his studies and we give thanks to the Lord for all that we receive in our Theological College.

Throughout North America, there are many places which are wondering whether there will be a harvest this year because of severe drought. Thankfully we know that the Lord is in control over all things, and He will provide us with what is best. The editorial in this issue reflects on the implications of drought in our land.

Dr. G. Nederveen continues his articles on Theonomy. Rev. P. Aasman's meditation reflects over the incomparable wonder of Jesus Christ who was made to be sin for us. That does not mean that Christ now minimizes sin. Having paid for our sins, He now calls us to leave our life of sin in Him.

Dr. J. DeJong takes us back in history to a dialogue between the Protestant Reformed Churches and the Christian Reformed Church, from whom the former broke away. Apparently, there was a significant attempt at reunion in 1939. What is interesting, is that it was occasioned by a visit of Prof. K. Schilder. Dr. DeJong draws some important conclusions about the norm of church unity.

We are also supplied with the informative and thought provoking column, Education Matters.

RA



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### EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Visscher

Managing Editor: R. Aasman

Coeditors: J. De Jong, N.H. Gootjes, Cl. Stam

### ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS:

CLARION

26 Inverness Crescent, St. Albert, AB T8N 5J3

Fax: (780) 418-1506 E-Mail: raasman@canrc.org

### ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

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CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.

One Beghin Avenue

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on God. Canada was once called a Christian nation. Most people still have a Bible in their homes or they know somewhere to go for worship. Something like a drought can become a wake-up call to send people back to the Word of God.

*Tribulation has the effect of making a lot of the more mundane things of life become secondary.*

### **Trials and tribulations**


Now all of this is not meant in some smug fashion as if trouble is only meant to teach the world a lesson. The Lord also humbles his own children. James writes at the beginning of his epistle: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance." As a Christian living in a time of drought, as a Christian farmer seeing his livelihood hang in the balance, our faith is being put to the test by our heavenly Father. It is being proven whether our faith is genuine, whether we hold on to the Lord our God, not just in the good times, but also in the bad: in times of rain and drought, fruitful and barren years. We may also rejoice when this happens – consider it pure joy –

because in adversity our faith is so sharpened and focussed that it brings us closer to the Lord.

The experience of life shows that this is true. Believers who go through great trouble and suffering, to an extent that few of us have experienced, demonstrate a peace, happiness, contentment, and a close walk with the Lord. It can make one jealous, in the good sense of the word. Tribulation has the effect of making a lot of the more mundane things of life become secondary, and sharpening the heart, soul and mind to focus on one thing: one's relationship with the Lord God. Prayer becomes so important. Reading Scripture and meditating on it becomes a consuming passion. Relationships within the family and walking together on the path-way of life gives the greatest joy.

This is not to say that living in difficult times, such as the drought in Alberta, is a great delight. It is burdensome. But there is also the fact that as burdens are laid upon us, our lives are drawn closer to the Lord and the all-important fellowship we have with Him.

### **Let it rain**

Having said all this, we still implore our heavenly Father for rain. But we add: Father, whether it rains or not, we know it is from you. Thus it will be good. We know that there is nothing that can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord. Everything must serve for our salvation. We praise and glorify you! 

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## **General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 2001**

*By R. Aasman*


The 68th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church met in Grand Rapids from May 30 through June 6, 2001. From the web, one can glean the unofficial running report of this Assembly. We may recall from the Press Release of General Synod Neerlandia 2001 of the Canadian Reformed Churches (issue 12 of *Clarion*), that Synod Neerlandia "decided to establish Ecclesiastical Fellowship under the adopted rules upon the OPC's acceptance of the 'proposed agreement.'" Therefore it is with great thankfulness that we read the following report and decision of the OPC General Assembly (confirmed by email from Rev. J.J. Peterson):

### **Saturday June 2, 2001**

Saturday morning, June 2, 2001, commissioners assembled at 8:00 a.m. and sang the hymn *Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon his throne; hark! how the heav'nly anthem drowns all music but its own: awake, my soul, and sing of him who died for thee, and hail him as thy*

*matchless King through all eternity.* Moderator David J. O'Leary prayed and read from Proverbs 10.

The Rev. "Texas Jack" Peterson (pastor of Grace OPC, San Antonio, Texas), Chairman of the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations, presented its report. The OPC has "Ecclesiastical Fellowship" with the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, the Free Church of Scotland, the Presbyterian Church in America, the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin), the Reformed Church in Japan, the Reformed Church in the United States, the Reformed Churches in New Zealand, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America; "Corresponding Relationship" with the Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the Church of Christ in the Sudan Among the Tiv in Nigeria (pending their response to our invitation), the Evangelical Presbyterian

Church in England and Wales, the Presbyterian Church in Uganda (also pending), the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated). The OPC is also in communication with the Bible Presbyterian Church, the United Reformed Churches of North America, (the Evangelical Presbyterian Church – we just give information about them), (the Presbyterian Reformed Church – just information), the Protestant Reformed Churches, Free Reformed Churches in North America, and L'eglise Reformee du Quebec. The OPC is a member of the International Conference of Reformed Churches and the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council. It was determined without dissent to enter "Ecclesiastical Fellowship" with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales. It was determined without dissent to approve an agreement with the Canadian Reformed Churches which brings us into "Ecclesiastical Fellowship" with them. Mr. Peterson led in prayer on behalf of this new relationship. 

By P. Aasman

## Jesus confronts Moses

*"If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."  
(John 8:7)*

Some passages in the Bible have been misinterpreted so often and for so long that the message lies buried. In this passage we read about a woman caught by the Jewish leaders committing adultery. They brought her to Jesus for judgment. It is commonly seen as a story that brings the harshness of Mosaic law into conflict with the era of mercy and forgiveness ushered in by Jesus Christ.

Now it is true that here love triumphed over judgment. But there was no conflict between Jesus and Moses. Jesus honoured the law. Moreover, Jesus was not the image of warmth and love here, for when the Pharisees brought the woman to Him, his first reaction was to bend down and scribble in the sand, as though to ignore the whole thing. He came not to condemn the world but to save it (Jn 3:17). He bent down to write in the sand as though to say to the religious leaders: *It is not my business. Apply the law yourselves. You sit on Moses' chair to enforce the law so you enforce it.*

But they kept pressing Him for his judgment. So Jesus stood up and rendered his judgment: *Stone her. Yes, she has committed adultery so put her to death.* The law is clear: "If a man commits adultery with another man's wife, both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death" (Lev 20:10). Jesus did not dispute the judgment of Mosaic law.

However, Jesus wanted to draw attention to the person who carried out this judgment. He had once taught, "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Mk 4:24). Let the person who begins the execution of this woman be careful lest he bring the same punishment down on himself. This is what was new in Jesus' teaching.

"If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." The Word of God has the power to cut through to the very core of a person's heart. That happened here. Suddenly, each man there felt exposed because Jesus' words had uncovered the leering, sexual, and lusting thoughts that had touched their hearts in connection to this woman. Each man there knew that if truth be told, he would have to stand beside the woman and be stoned with her. So they began to leave, one by one, the older ones first until only Jesus and the woman were left.

Now what? Moses had said that she should be killed! Jesus agreed for He gave his approval to the verdict. Jesus should then have begun to carry out the sentence. He should have taken stones and thrown them at her until she was dead. But Jesus did not come to condemn sinners. Instead, He would save her. He would do what all those cowards were afraid to do. They were afraid to face the conse-

quence of their own sin, so they quietly left, one by one. Rather than punish her for her sins, Jesus was willing to accept the consequences of her sin. In effect, He not only chose to take the woman's place at the centre of the execution ring, but He would also suffer the punishment which the law demanded should fall on her. No, He would not be stoned to death; He would die in a more horrible way: He would be crucified.

Jesus is not against Moses. They agree. When we see that agreement, the immensity of God's love opens up for us in this passage. The law of Moses puts us all in the centre of the ring of execution, but Jesus has taken our place and suffered God's wrath fully.

There is only one thing that Jesus requires of us: If you would escape the punishment, then you must turn away from the sin which leads to such punishment. Turning to the woman, Jesus said, "neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin." **C**



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# Theonomy: What is there to Re-construct? (Part 3)

By G. Nederveen

Last time we learned about the battle plan, the enemies, and the hermeneutic (i.e., principles of biblical interpretation) Gary North proposed for reconstructing society. In this third article we will take a close look at the biblical evidence North submits for his theonomistic views. It will become clear that North's views are truly based on a new hermeneutic, i.e., a new way of interpreting Scripture.

## Dominion assignment (BCS, 45-46)

First of all, there is Genesis 1:28 where God told Adam and Eve to "fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over . . . every living creature." This is considered the foundation of the dominion mandate. I don't think anyone of us will have a problem acknowledging the dominion/cultural mandate. Matters become a bit problematic when Christian reconstruction maintains that God repeated the *same* mandate in Genesis 9:1, "Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.'"

The question needs to be asked: Is it the *same* mandate? While in paradise and before the Fall God said, subdue the earth and rule over it, after the Flood the tone was different. Now God mentioned that the fear and dread of man would lie upon creation. This can be taken as an indicator that man's dealing with creation is going to be different so that we not only subdue the earth, but also are prone to exploit it. Therefore I am of the opinion that North's reaction that Lloyd-Jones is misinterpreting Scripture by conveniently neglecting the cultural mandate, misses the mark. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones took the Fall into consideration; North does not. The cultural

mandate after the Flood is not identical to that before the Fall.

Also Genesis 17:2 is taken as a confirmation of the dominion mandate (BCS, 46). But all we read there is that God told Abram: "I will confirm my covenant . . . and greatly increase your numbers."

North applies an Old Testament passage about Israel as a nation of conquest to Christian reconstruction today. For example, Exodus 23:27-30 reads: "I will send my terror ahead of you and . . . make all your enemies turn their backs and run. . . . Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land." Says North:

*According to North, God's blessing of prosperity and victory comes to the nation that maintains God laws.*

God promised Israel victory. He promises us victory, too. But this victory is a slow, continual process. It is *victory through competence*. It is *victory through steady, long-term replacement* (Conspiracy: A Biblical View [= Con.; 1984], 141). We are not yet ready to lead. It is our job to prepare ourselves for competitive free market service in every area of life (Con., 142).

Consequently, he also applies Deuteronomy 28:11-13 in a literal sense today. There God instructed Moses to tell Israel: "The LORD will grant you abundant prosperity . . . The LORD will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands . . . you will always be at the top, never at the bottom." According

to North, God's blessing of prosperity and victory comes to the nation that maintains God's laws. Did God not promise his faithful people that he would make them the head, not the tail? If Christians pay attention to God's commands they will always be at the top, never at the bottom. That's dominion; that's victory.

But what is required? Leviticus 26:40-42 supplies the answer: "if they will confess their sins and the sins of their fathers . . . I will remember my covenant . . . and I will remember the land." What this entails for North is that as first requirement there is the *will to ethics* (i.e., keep all God's laws). Second, there must be the *will to resist*. Satan and his host have a strategy based on myth: the sovereignty of anything except God. That strategy must be resisted. Next, we need the *will to self-educate*. Truth seekers are forced to find better information by means of "alternative media." Last, but not least, is the *will to dominion*. This is not the quest for power apart from ethical law, but the quest for authority by means of ethical action. We need to do more than expose evil in high places. We need to make plans to *replace* evil in high places (Con., 124-6). What is needed is a counter-offensive. It must be a *bottom-up* campaign, starting in the family, then in the church, then spreading into civil and social affairs. It will come about when God's people first assume that when God saves men's hearts, He intends thereby to save every area of life touched by redeemed men's hearts – every relationship and every institution. The issue is spiritual (Con., 143-4).

North also refers to Psalm 2:8-12 which speaks about the nations conspiring together against God, and



writes: "Psalm 2 warns rulers against becoming conspirators against God and God's law: Blessed are they who put their trust in him. This should be the ultimate hope of man" (*Con.*, 122). But he does not deal with this Psalm in its New Testament context.

A New Testament text he uses as his starting point for defending the ongoing requirement of the law is 1 John 2:3: "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands." North does not anywhere carefully define what he means by the law. In connection with 1 John 2 he does not bother to find out either. The question is: Does the apostle John refer to every law that was practised in the Old Testament, or does he have in mind the main requirement of the law as already found in the Old Testament: Love God with heart, soul, and strength (Deut 6:5), and love your neighbour as yourself? (Lev 19:18).

Probably *the* key New Testament passage is Matthew 5:17-19. After a number of questions based on Bible passages relating to the law, North comes in Question 49 to this Bible passage. I will quote his argument almost in full (BQ, 135-6).

Jesus was very clear: *God's law is a unified whole*. The tiniest Hebrew letter is to be maintained, **'till heaven and earth pass.'** Have heaven and earth passed away? No? Then how can Bible-believing people legitimately say that any Old Testament law is no longer morally binding?

The question is this: Are all Old Testament laws still binding in their details? Not if Christ's life, death, and resurrection have altered a law's application. But all Old Testament laws are *moral* laws. Jesus didn't distinguish 'moral laws' from 'ceremonial laws.' We sometimes find specific New Testament teaching that a particular Old Testament law is to be *honoured* in a *different* way in the New Testament era. But we may never *abandon* any Old Testament law in principle.

Since *all the law of God is a moral law*, we must not distinguish one law from another in terms of a false distinction: 'moral law' vs. 'ceremonial law.'

Yes, Christ perfectly fulfilled the terms of the law. But he spoke not of the law passing away, but of heaven and earth passing away

*before* the law passes away. So why should Christians believe that any Old Testament law has passed away ('died') because of Christ's earthly ministry? How can Christians legitimately believe that Christ's perfect life in any way abolished any of the laws of God? (Remember: an altered application *isn't* the same as abolition.)"

**North does not anywhere carefully define what he means by the law.**

He next deals with **Romans 3:31** where Paul asks: "Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law." According to Gary North, Paul could not have made it any plainer (BQ, 137).

What could he possibly have meant by the phrase, "yea, we establish the law"? Isn't this what Jesus said in Matthew 5:17-18 – that he came not to annul the law but to fulfill (or establish) it?

Faith does not make void or empty God's law. The grace of God enables a regenerate man to begin to use the law of God as a *tool of dominion*: first, in his own spiritual life; second, in his external relationships with others; third, in the progressive construction of the kingdom of God, in time and on earth, and subsequently, beyond the grave, after the resurrection. The law is a *curse* to the sinner and a *blessing* to us (BQ, 137)

**For Gary North, biblical law is the very foundation of God's civilization.**

Here North has made a leap in logic. He equates Paul's argument of upholding the law with Christ's role as fulfiller of the law, and then says – like all other Christian theonomist authors I know of – that "fulfil" really means to establish (North), confirm (Bahnsen), put into force (Jordan). But the Greek words in Matthew and Romans are not the same at all and do not have the same meaning.<sup>1</sup> What is also missing is a discussion of Galatians 3:24 that the law is our "supervisor" till Christ

came. How does that text connect with Christ's words in Matthew 5 about fulfilling the law?

One more quick comment in connection with upholding the law: North states that the "grace of God enables a regenerate man to begin to use the law of God as a *tool of dominion*" (BQ, 137). That is really amazing because the dominion mandate was given well before the law. In other words, the dominion mandate never depended on the law and should not now be made dependent on it either.

North also finds reason for victory in Matthew 5:13-14 about being the salt of the earth. He takes this to mean that Christians are to improve the world, in the same way that salt improves flavour in otherwise bland, tasteless foods. How should Christians do this? With their good works, which, he says, is the focus of Matthew 5:13-16. "Remove a Christian's good works, and he is no better than tasteless salt in the eyes of the world" (BQ, 145). Here we learn that good works and keeping the law are one and the same. He writes further on the same page:

How are we to discern what good works are? We return to that now-familiar question: *By what standard?* And we come up with that now-familiar answer: *biblical law*. We use the revelation of God concerning his character and our standards of action to serve as the salt of the earth.<sup>2</sup>

For Gary North, biblical law is the very foundation of God's civilization (BQ, 147).

Many more texts could be mentioned, but time will not allow me to do so. It is now time to come to our wrap-up evaluation and conclusion, which will be the final installment in this series.

<sup>1</sup>For an excellent Reformed evaluation of the use of the law see Jochem Douma, *The Ten Commandments* (transl. Nelson D. Kloosterman; Philisburg: P&R Publishing, 1996), 358-390. He deals specifically with Matthew 15 on page 376.

<sup>2</sup>North also maintains that the city on a hill (Matt 5:14) parallels the evangelical function of the whole Old Testament commonwealth as expressed in Deut 4:5-7. For a good response to that claim see R. Aasman, "Theonomy and Christian Reconstructionism," (*Clarion*, April 8, 1994), 164.



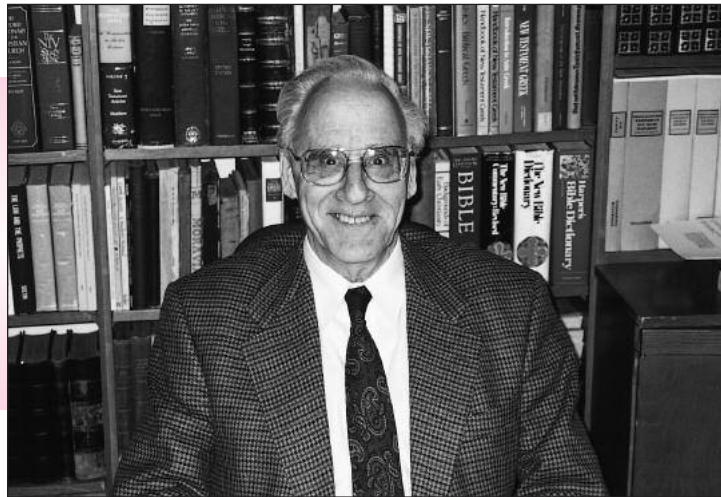
By Dr. J. De Jong

## Another year

Friday, May 11, 2001 was a special day in the life of the College, as the work of the second semester came to a close, and the final examination period of the year ended with a time of relaxation and refreshments. We are grateful that the work at the College could proceed unhindered throughout the year. Both students and staff are especially happy with our updated library facilities, and this part of the building is getting a lot of happy users!

## Retirement

Just over a year ago, Prof. J. Geertsema informed the Board of Governors of his intention to retire at the end of this academic year. This request was approved by the Board, and the search for a replacement began. Prof. Geertsema gave his final classes and final set of examinations at the end of this term, and this was noted in the closing chapel of the year. If I may venture to assess his sentiments, I would guess that one goes through



*Our retiring professor in his office.*

such a time with mixed feelings. On the one hand, there's the interaction with students and the joy of teaching that I'm sure will be missed; on the other hand, retirement brings the opportunity to pursue other projects and bring other earlier initiatives to completion. Knowing our colleague Geertsema, we can

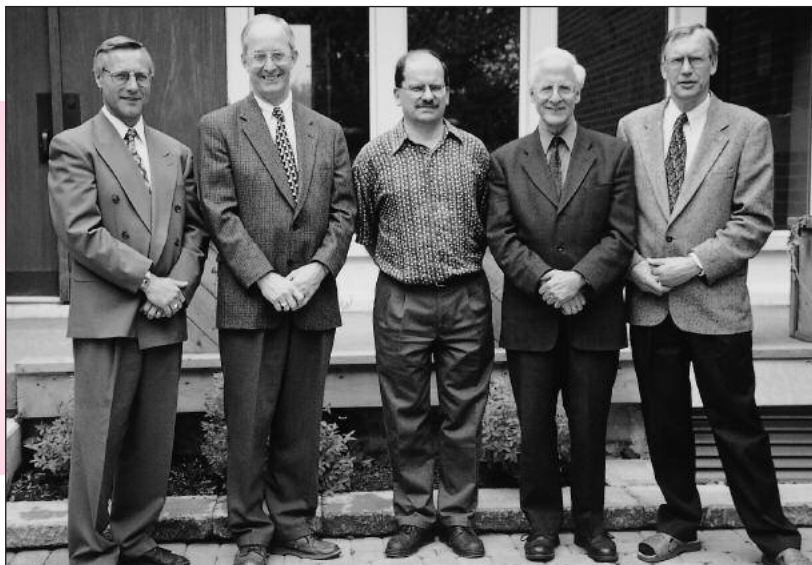
be sure that retirement will not be a holiday for him!

An opportunity for a fitting farewell is being planned for our colleague, together with his wife and family. But let me, on behalf of the students, former students and staff, at this point express the sincere appreciation of us all for the untiring efforts and the many years of faithful service of our colleague.

## A new professor

The new professor on board is Rev. G.H. Visscher, minister of the church at Burlington- Waterdown. He previously served in the churches Houston, Ottawa, and Surrey before coming to Burlington in 1992. Together with his wife Teny, and their six children, they will be moving soon to the Ancaster congregation.

Rev. Visscher has been involved in additional studies in the New Testament disciplines for some time. He first pursued further studies under Prof. J. Van Bruggen at the Theological University in Kampen, Holland, from where he received his "doctorandus" degree in 1991. He then enrolled in further



*The faculty welcomes the new professor.*



graduate studies in the department of religion at McMaster University, with a special emphasis on biblical studies in the New Testament area. He is presently working to complete all examinations so that he can begin with his dissertation. We wish him all he needs in the pursuit of this goal, which is also of importance for the further development of our College.

It was a pleasure to welcome Rev. Visscher at our closing chapel. We congratulate him with this appointment, and we wish him all he needs in the service of the churches in this new capacity! Welcome brother Visscher!

### Another milestone

Another highlight of our closing ceremonies this year was a special commemorative day for our administrative assistant Catharine Mechelse. This past April 21, 2001, she marked a period of fifteen years of service at the College. This was remembered in a fitting way with a number of brief addresses, including one from the students in which the impact of Ms. Mechelse's work with regard to the students was described in a delightful and humorous way. Mr. Martin Kampen, the chairman of the Finance and Property Committee was also on hand to speak a few congratulatory words, and make a presentation on behalf of the Board of Governors.

We owe Catharine our sincere thanks for her willing and faithful ser-



*Catharine Mechelse celebrating fifteen years!*

vice at the College for these last fifteen years and we wish her God's continued guidance in her life of service in the future.

### Students!

We are looking forward to the graduation of one student, our most recent Australian arrival, Carl Vermeulen. He hopes that the way will be opened for him to receive a call in the churches very soon.

As I write, the registrar has informed me that we have one applicant for the coming academic year, a student from Korea. At the same time, in

our own immediate surroundings in Hamilton and the Niagara peninsula, the churches are all involved in discussions concerning the formation and institution of new congregations. Some of this growth results from relocations, but some also comes through the Lord's blessing in the growth in homes and families. And what does it mean? Young men are needed to prepare themselves for ministry to serve in these churches!

Occasionally we as faculty hear the remark that the churches are more or less provided for, and that new candidates are hardly needed. However, the growth patterns with the accompanying changing developments indicate that the churches will continue to need a steady flow of ministers for some time to come. Do the churches and ministers pay enough attention to this matter in regular prayer, and also in the congregational prayers? Let us with a lively zeal and firm conviction continue to pray that God will send labourers into the harvest. For his kingdom comes, also through the fervent and constant prayers of his faithful children who seek all their needs and help with him alone.

Let me end with a big thank you! to all our volunteers, and to all who assist in the regular work of the College, also through the Women's Saving Action. May the Lord continue to bless our efforts for his church and kingdom.

Till next time!



*Faculty and students after final examinations.*



By Margaret Van der Velde

## Librarian's Report: May 16, 2001

### General information

The library contains approximately 24,176 volumes in a variety of languages, including English, Dutch, German, French, Afrikaans, Greek, and Latin. Areas of subject coverage include biblical study, biblical commentaries, dogmatics, ethics, diaconology, missiology, history, and related fields. There is also a respectable rare book collection, with the oldest volumes dating from the sixteenth century. Most of these books have never been reprinted and are indispensable for the College.

### Library move

Moving the library from its former location to the new facility was the major undertaking of the past year and was an exercise in team work and cooperation. It was accomplished ahead of schedule in June 2000 according to a detailed plan drawn up by the librarian. No major glitches were encountered. Student Carl Vermeulen was hired for several weeks and together with the volunteers who signed up, helped make the project a huge success. In fact, several men who had volunteered their time for the second week did not need to come in after all. A special word of thanks to Mr. John Bol of Voortman Cookies for the boxes (and the cookies!), Mr. Ken Post, Mr. Bill Oostdyk, Mr. and Mrs. George and Marta Bartels along with Monica Bartels, Mr. Gerry Van der Velde, Joyce Van Duyn, Rev. Wes Bredenhof, the faculty, Mr. Carl Van Dam, Alison Hopman Schutten, Rev. Dirk Poppe, Catharine Mechelse (for ignoring the regular work on her desk and ensuring that the call numbers stayed in order!) and several students (Pila Njuka, Edwer Dethan, and Walter Geurts). Without their help, the move would have been a disaster.

### New facility

The new library facility has been in use now for the duration of an entire academic year. It has proved to be extremely functional and everyone is pleased with the layout and the study areas offered by the new library. The process, from design to construction and finally completion, seemed long and at times busy, but the end product has made all of this worthwhile. The College is grateful to the church community for recognizing the need for a new building and for consequently funding this project.

*Moving the library from its former location to the new facility was the major undertaking.*

### Women's Savings Action

At the annual September Convocation, held on September 8, 2000, the Women's Savings Action (WSA) was present and promised \$25,000 in funding for the library of the Theological College. It is with gratitude that the library staff could work with these funds during the past academic year and will continue to do so during the coming year.

The funds received from the Women's Savings Action were complemented by a contribution from the Board of Governors. The money received from the WSA was used exclusively to purchase books and periodical subscriptions, whereas the money received from the Board was used to purchase some additional books and to pay for the binding of the periodicals.

Thus far, some 401 books have been purchased and received by the li-

brary since June 1, 2000, although many more are on order. One noteworthy acquisition this year was the collected works of John Calvin. A high quality reprint of the accepted academic edition (a sub-series of the *Corpus Reformatorum*) was offered to the library, with the result that the library now finally has this primary source available.

### Donations

A large number of individuals donated books or magazines to the College and it is impossible to list each and every donation. However, donations are always appreciated. Books not required by the library are made available to the students and faculty. Rev. J. Van Dyke, a retired Christian Reformed pastor, donated several boxes of books, including a partial commentary set which was in high demand with the students. Rev. R. Sikkema, formerly of the Rehoboth United Reformed Church in Hamilton, donated boxes full of periodical back issues. These were used to fill in gaps in the College's collection. Rev. C. Bosch also donated several boxes of Dutch books, many of which were distributed to the students. Rev. T. Hard, a guest at the opening of the new library in September 2000, sent several boxes of books from his home in the United States. Rev. Hard, a retired OPC pastor, is the Director of the Christian Literature Asia Service Program. He scours book sales and private libraries across the United States, and buys books to ship to developing libraries in Asia. He culled his collection of books not suitable for shipment to Asian libraries, and sent those books to the College. In total, some 228 books were added to the library via the many donations.

One final donation should be mentioned. The College recently received a legacy from the estate of Mrs. Pieter-nella Koops of Albany, Australia. Mrs. Koops had earmarked this donation in her will for the library and as a result an additional \$5780 in funding has been received.

*The College recently received a legacy from the estate of Mrs. Pieter-nella Koops of Albany, Australia.*

### Library staff and volunteers

Whereas there are no changes to report in regards to the regular library staff, a few changes should be noted concerning the volunteers. Mrs. Helen ten-Haaf and Mrs. Jo Jagt are no longer able to assist in the library. Their regular and enthusiastic help was greatly appreciated. During the first term of this past academic year, Mrs. Margreet Batteau and later Miss Saskia Batteau were regular library helpers. They frequently spent their mornings at the College while Rev. Batteau was lecturing, and divided their time between the administrative office and the library. It was a mutually satisfying arrangement and of great help to the library. Finally, Miss. E. Van den Aardweg, a volunteer with a lengthy service record, had to resign. Her faithfulness, enthusiasm, and good cheer are sorely missed.

On a positive note, Miss Joyce Van Duyn has been volunteering her time on a weekly basis for several months already and she joins the ranks of the regular volunteers, Mrs. A. Blokker and Mrs. D. Gootjes. Together they are able to complete various tasks for the librarian.

### Cataloguing

Cataloguing is an ongoing process, since each new book must be catalogued. The database provided by the Online Computer Library Center is still being used to save as much time as possible. The donation of Rev. G. Van Rongen of Australia has now been completely processed.

### Public services

The library was used extensively this year. More than 220 requests for assistance were dealt with by the librar-

ian. Once again, these requests come from the students and faculty, but also from other individuals. The library has much to offer and seeks to serve the wider community.

### Periodicals

Another ongoing process is the management of the periodical collection. Each year issues are not received (publisher error, mail problems, etc.) and numerous letters must be sent out requesting the missing issues. As well, there are missing issues from years gone by, and these gaps need to be filled in before back issues can be bound. By scanning library duplicate lists as mailed (often electronically) to the librarian, many items have been obtained for the library.

Preparing material for binding is another major undertaking. This year the material will have to be sent in two separate shipments because a number of publishers failed to publish indices, etc. in a timely manner.

*The library has much to offer and seeks to serve the wider community.*

### Computer network

Part of the librarian's time is spent troubleshooting any problems which crop up with the computer network. By now everyone is accustomed to the system, and in reality there have been few problems with the system. A special word of thanks should go to Mr. Andy David and Rev. G. Visscher, who came in and assisted with the extension of the network to the new library and offices. In addition, Mr. David has bailed out the librarian several times when more serious problems cropped up.

### Anticipated summer projects

Any spare time this summer will be devoted to an indexing project. For many years the librarian has felt the need to index journals which are not indexed by the American Theological Library Association as part of their Religion Database (a CD-ROM to which the College subscribes). This would be a huge undertaking and would probably not be feasible simply because of the amount of time it would take. However, some periodicals such as *Clarion*, should be indexed. A number of peo-

ple have attempted this over the years, but there were problems with the various indices. Through a number of contacts the librarian was able to have the existing data converted into a standard format (MARC format) compatible with the library's catalogue program. Now the cleanup must begin, gaps must be filled in, and current issues must be added. At the moment only *Clarion* and *Reformed Perspective* are being indexed. The project will have to be re-assessed later to determine which other journals can or should be added.

### Conclusion

Another year has gone by: a year in which the library could move into its new quarters and the students could move into the chapel for classes and devotions. The regular work of the librarian, the associate librarian, and the administrative assistant could continue in good harmony and cooperation, together using the resources and donations with which the College has been blessed, to build the library so that it may assist in preparing ministers of the Word for the churches.

*The above report is an abbreviated version of the annual report submitted to the Board of Governors.*



C
HURCH NEWS

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New Address:

**Rev. G.H. Visscher**  
16 Brant County Road 22  
RR 2, Caledonia, ON N3W 2G9  
Phone: 905-765-2578

• • •

Declined the call to Smithers, British Columbia:

**Rev. R.E. Pot**  
of Orangeville, Ontario.

• • •

Declined the call to Albany, Western Australia:

**Rev. R.E. Pot**  
of Orangeville, Ontario.



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# Congratulations to Rev. G. Nederveen: Doctor of Ministry

By G.J. Nordeman

Friday April 6, 2001 was and will be a memorable day for Rev. Gijsbert Nederveen. With much gratefulness to our heavenly Father, we share in the joy of our minister for having completed his courses of study for the Doctor of Ministry degree at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton.

That afternoon he successfully defended his thesis, "Life Under the Umbrella of Promise: Addressing Pastoral Needs of the Elderly from a Reformed Perspective." The panel conducting the oral defence was chaired by Dr. Andrew Irvine, Director of the D.Min programme at McMaster Divinity College. It consisted further of Dr. John Morgan, professor emeritus of King's College, London, Ontario, a recognized scholar in the area of Death and Bereavement, Dr. David Sinclair, who wrote his thesis on pastoral care to the elderly, and Dr. Malcolm J.A. Horsnell, professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at McMaster Divinity College. Dr. Horsnell was also the thesis advisor.


Rev. Nederveen chose Ministry with the Aging as his area of specialization because the Ebenezer congregation of Burlington East has a substantial number of elderly. The question he thought to address was: "What are the spiritual needs of the elderly and how can we best address them pastorally?" He had determined that while much is being done in the areas of social, community and health care, only limited resource is available in the area of pastoral care from a Reformed perspective. In his opening comments to the panel, Rev. Nederveen concluded that the course of study and the writing of the thesis forced him to interact and test his beliefs and value system to that of others. The more he studied the more he became convinced of the positive and enriching contribution Reformed thinking can bring to ministry with the elderly.

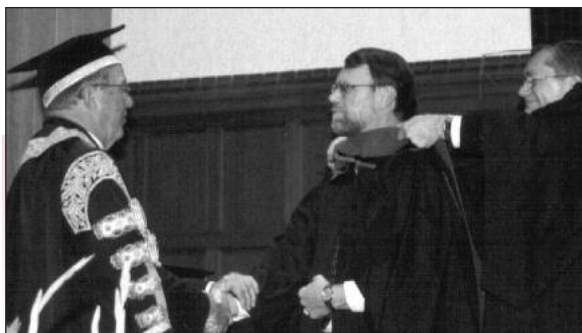
In his dissertation he identified from a biblical perspective the aging process as part of the cycle of life. He focussed on life's origin and purpose, covenant relationship, and the place and function of the elderly in the Old and New Testament community. He also focussed on the following: respect for the elderly and the blessings of old age as well as the physical signs of senescence; how we live life as a prelude to eternal life; death and dying, and the care and respect for the dead through burial. A separate section dealt with the issue of "Inhumation or Cremation: Does it Matter?"

A good third of the dissertation was an analysis and findings of the Needs Assessment questionnaires that Rev. Nederveen had sent out to elderly members as well as elders, deacons and ministers in sixty churches across Canada. It asked a number of specific questions about aging, fears, pastoral visits and pastoral needs. While the responses were at times surprising, we will leave

it to Rev. Nederveen to publish his findings at some time in more detail.

Much to the delight (and some surprise) of the panel about twenty-seven family members, friends and congregation members had crowded in the board room of the College to witness this event. While Rev. Nederveen was strongly tested on the Reformed emphasis of certain positions and conclusions in his thesis, it was particularly gratifying to hear the panel's verdict that the thesis was acceptable and could be published without any changes and that the degree of Doctor of Ministry (D. Min.) will be conferred to him at a graduation ceremony on May 8, 2001, D.V.

As council and congregation of Burlington Ebenezer, we congratulate Rev. Nederveen with these accomplishments. It is our prayer that God will bless also these efforts to the glory of his Name and that it may benefit not only our congregation, but also ministers and other office bearers in sister churches and beyond. 



*Graduation of Rev. G. Nederveen.*



*Defence of thesis.*



## More Union Talks

In our world of increasing attention to ecumenicity on the part of many Reformed and Presbyterian church groups of different backgrounds, it was of interest to observe yet another attempt at opening discussions regarding an old breach, that between the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC). This time the initiative came from the editorial staff of *Calvin Theological Journal* in its April 2000 edition, and particularly from the editor in chief at the time, Prof. John Bolt.<sup>1</sup> In a feature article, Prof. Bolt reviewed the entire history leading to and through the schism of 1924 and his review led him to the conclusion that the measures taken against Rev. Hoeksema and others in 1924-1926 could not pass the test of ecclesiastical honesty and fairness in judgment. Another article written by Rev. R.A. Blacketer, minister of the CRC in Neerlandia, in the same issue of *CTJ* came up in favour of the PRC position on the well meant offer of the gospel (i.e., the Hoeksema position), even though the stand of the CRC on common grace was still defended.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile Bolt turned the results of his research into an overture for the CRC Classis Grand Rapids East in the spring of this year, going to the same Classis that brought the disciplinary action against Rev. Hoeksema (and those with him) seventy-five years ago. And we can be sure that it is not unknown to him and others in the CRC that the United Reformed Churches have also opened discussions with the PRC, and in the process the Ecumenical Relations Committee (CERCU) has firmly distanced itself from any doctrinal or ecclesiastical attachment to the Three Points on Common grace as adopted by the CRC in the Hoeksema struggle of 1924.

All this was enough for the editor of the PRC paper, the *Standard Bearer*, Prof. David Engelsma, to present his perspectives regarding the possibility of a reunion of the PRC with the CRC. His

comments led him back into the history of the relationship between the two groups since the schism of 1924. Apparently there was only one significant reunion attempt in March 1939, which received the name "The Pantlind Conference." The conference, interestingly enough – and, of course, here is where we as the CanRC come into the picture – had been occasioned by the visit of Prof. K. Schilder; it took its name from the hotel in Grand Rapids at which Schilder was staying at the time. Here follows Prof. Engelsma's description of the conference, a description which leaves little doubt concerning his sentiments and hopes regarding the future:

*The measures taken against Rev. Hoeksema and others in 1924-1926 could not pass the test of ecclesiastical honesty and fairness in judgment.*

In the 75 years of the divided history of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC), there has been one, and only one, notable meeting on behalf of the reunion of these two denominations. That was the all day conference in the old Pantlind Hotel, now the Amway Grand Plaza, in Grand Rapids, Michigan on March 29, 1939.

By decision of those in attendance, Herman Hoeksema opened up the conference by reading his prepared address, "*De Hereeniging Der Christelijke Gereformeerde En Protestantsche Gereformeerde Kerken: Is Ze Geeischt, Mogelijk, Wenshselijk?*" (English translation: "The Reunion of the Christian Reformed and Protestant Reformed Churches: Is It Demanded, Possible, Desired?") . . . .

We have a reliable, full account of it especially in two editorials by

Hoeksema in the issues of the *SB* that immediately followed the conference (May 1 and May 15, 1939). Both were in Dutch: "*Wat Op De Conferentie Voorviel (1)*," and "*Wat Er Op De Conferentie Voorviel (2)*" (English translation: "What Happened at the Conference"). Hoeksema's account was that of an eyewitness and leading participant. In addition, he had before him the complete record of the meeting by one of the two clerks appointed by the assembly.

### The Pantlind Conference

The "Pantlind Conference" was occasioned by the presence in the United States of the Dutch Reformed theologian Klaas Schilder. Schilder had been urging such a conference in order that the breach between the CRC and the PRC might be healed.

The Christian Reformed men arranged the conference. William B. Eerdmans, Sr., of the publishing house, evidently took the lead. Sixteen Christian Reformed men were invited. Hoeksema reported that ten attended. In a later reference to the meeting, Gerrit Vos spoke of nine. Nine are identified, eight ministers and Eerdmans. Like Eerdmans, the eight ministers were prominent men in the CRC: Dr. Henry Beets, Rev. Van Wijk, Rev. Bel, Rev. J.K. Van Baalen, Rev. William Hendriksen, Dr. Y.P. De Jong, Rev. Daniel Zwier, and Rev. John Weidenaar.

Those who declined the well-meant invitation were also prominent: Prof. Louis Berkhof, Prof. Samuel Volbeda, Prof. Martin Wyngaarden, and Rev. H.J. Kuiper. Hoeksema observed that the "'Big Four' frowned upon the conference."

Fourteen Protestant Reformed ministers attended. Eight are identified in Hoeksema's account of the meeting: Rev. P. De Boer, Rev. W. Verhil, Rev. J.D. De Jong, Rev. R. Veldman, Rev. H. Veldman, Rev. L Vermeer, Prof. G.M. Ophoff, and Hoeksema.

Dr. Schilder was also present as a very vocal participant.

The group chose Dr. Henry Beets as chairman. Beets opened by reading 1 Corinthians 13! Hoeksema praised Beets for the worthy and honourable way in which he had led the meeting.

*The “Pantlind Conference” was occasioned by the presence in the United States of the Dutch Reformed theologian Klaas Schilder.*

Hoeksema and the other Protestant Reformed men obviously regarded the meeting as important. Hoeksema told the readers of the *SB* that he had taken a full week off from his normal work in order to concentrate on preparing the speech that he would give at the meeting. Three Protestant Reformed ministers drove all the way from Sioux County to attend, and in those days there was no I-80. In addition, the entire April 15, 1939 issue of the *SB* was devoted to the printing of Hoeksema’s address to the meeting. The full text was given first in the Dutch original and then in English translation. All the regular rubrics made way for the conference.

The meeting was a failure.

The reason was that the Christian Reformed men refused to discuss the issues.

Hoeksema presented his thorough analysis of the doctrine of common grace as adopted by the Christian Reformed synod of 1924. He concluded with twenty propositions for the meeting to discuss and debate. Schilder spoke at length, and more than once, on Hoeksema’s speech and on the doctrine of common grace.

William Eerdmans repeatedly urged his colleagues to discuss the specific aspects of the doctrine of common grace. This was the purpose, he said, of the committee that arranged the conference. At one point in the afternoon, the no-nonsense businessman told his ministerial confederates to stop their jabbering, whether to discuss the three points, and to begin discussing the three points so that the conference could get somewhere. Schilder called on the Christian Reformed

ministers to state their views. In order, as he said later, to provoke them to discuss, Hoeksema finally accused them of being afraid to enter into a doctrinal discussion.

Nothing availed. They all were determined to sit as “silent listeners.” Two of them were at pains to advertise their complete disinterest by ostentatiously reading the newspaper.

Dr. Y. P. De Jong responded to the pleas by stating that the meeting was not the time to say much about common grace. In his report, Hoeksema remarked that De Jong’s statement struck him as odd. “If a meeting which was called to conduct a scientific dialogue is not the time to say much, when is it then the time? At a closed committee meeting perhaps, where the opponent is not present? Or at a hierarchical synod, where one can deny the accused the right to speak? What danger can there be in a scientific discussion of the questions, if one does not feel himself too weak to do this?”

*Common grace was never discussed.*

Something might be said in defense of the silence of the Christian Reformed ministers. Obviously, they were not prepared to debate the issue of common grace as adopted by their synod 15 years earlier. None of them had a paper. One reason may have been that they mistook the nature of the meeting. From a line that Hoeksema had dropped in the *SB* prior to the conference, they may have supposed that his opposition to the three points was weakening. They would then have regarded the upcoming conference as a forum for (church) political negotiations, both parties cooperating to find the right words to paper over the division between the churches and to make the return of the Protestant Reformed people as painless as possible. Hoeksema’s uncompromising address disabused them of that notion and left them speechless.

A second reason why they refused to discuss the issues was likely the warning issued just before the conference by the “Big Four.” An unofficial gathering had no business discussing official decisions of the CRC. That, no doubt, was a shot across the bow of the good ship

ecumenicity manned by the Christian Reformed ministers at the Pantlind Conference.

The conference came to a sorry end. The last three hours were a wrangling, whether the group should discuss the doctrine of common grace. Common grace was never discussed. The conclusion was the charge to the committee that had arranged the meeting to call another meeting in about two months.

Whether he was referring to the outcome of a subsequent conference or to the holding of it at all is not clear, but Hoeksema ended his report with the admission of pessimism about a future conference. “After the meeting we just had, I really do not have such optimism as to expect anything of it.”

History has validated his pessimism.

Sixty-one years later, we must report that another meeting was never held.

Indeed, as far as I know, the committee never reported.

I doubt that it even met.

### **Schilder’s role**

On this description by Mr. Engelsma, a few brief comments may be made. First of all, it is fitting to commend Prof. Engelsma’s description of Schilder’s role in the conference. The standard journalistic approach of the *Standard Bearer* to Prof. Schilder’s work has been less than accurate, to say the least. But here we have an unusually forthright and clear statement of Schilder’s essential aim in this whole affair, that is, to heal the breach. In all this perhaps more than we recognize, Schilder was a student of Prof. A.G. Honig, who in his irenic style

*Later history has also shown that the CRC has never been comfortable with the 1924 declaration on common grace.*

sought to bring (and keep) those together those who belonged together, and who also defended a scripturally based Reformed ecumenism.

However, it might be helpful to add Schilder’s own assessments here. In the main his own sentiments of the conference match Engelsma’s description, and we have no reason to doubt the accuracy



of Engelsma's report. However, Schilder was less pessimistic than Hoeksema concerning the possibility (and necessity!) of future negotiations. His discussions with CRC leaders at the time led him to believe that the declarations of 1924 were not, in general, regarded as binding theological statements. More importantly, he himself, (rightly, I believe) was convinced that neither in Holland or America had any form of a *communis opinio* been reached on the issues surrounding common grace.<sup>3</sup> Later history has also shown that the CRC has never been comfortable with the 1924 declaration on common grace. It was more or less retained as a binding statement up to the sixties. Finally, in 1968, in the ecumenicity discussions with our churches, the binding force of 1924 as a doctrinal statement was relaxed.

Second, I wonder if there is reason for the pessimism which Engelsma's approach reflects. Schilder himself promoted an ongoing "will to ecumenism." His belief was that the issues dividing these two groups were not of the kind that required ecclesiastical separation. On that point he was fundamentally correct. Whether it is on the point of common grace or the approach to the covenant, there was and is no justification for a continued ecclesiastical division, and as such the split in the CRC in 1924 will always be tainted with the sin of public schism and the abuse of church discipline.

### The view on the covenant

Third, it seems to me that the greater part of the current lack of ecumenical spirit among the Protestant Reformed lies not so much in their rejection of the theory of common grace, (a point on which we have more than once voiced our agreement with them) but more particularly in Hoeksema's radically supralapsarian view of the covenant. That distorted view of the covenant as a strictly monopoleuristic arrangement was already latently present in the schism of 1924, and may even have contributed to the intensity of the polarization between the two groups, an intensity that led to the faulty application of disciplinary measures. At the time, Schilder probably was not aware of the extent to which Hoeksema was bound to a unilateral covenant view which essentially had no place for the normal functioning of human responsibility.

Later in the early fifties, when the *Declaration of Principles* was thrown on the table in the relations with the first immigrants coming from the Reformed

churches (Liberated) it became clear just how skewed Hoeksema's view of the covenant was. And here, albeit not with the same hierarchical force as had been applied, the PRC resorted to the same sort of doctrinal binding from which they had escaped in 1924! If the CRC wants to sit down at the table with the PRC in the current situation, they will also need to look closely at the doctrinal status of this document!

**Brothers and sisters  
formerly of one house have  
the duty before God to heal  
the breach, and to unite on  
the basis of our common  
confession.**

It seems to me that if Schilder had known about the depth and extent of Hoeksema's adherence to a unilateral and supralapsarian view of the covenant, he and others would not have so readily asserted that in the American struggles the PRC represented the continuation of the true church, whereas the CRC had become a false church. Naturally the CRC's erroneous rejection of the stand of the reformatory group of 1944 deeply disappointed him. And the fact that the pulpits of the PRC were open to him on his second 1947 trip to the US while those of the CRC were closed was a significant factor in the formation of his judgment. But such a static approach did not even fit with his own ecclesiology! And in my view, we should not present the history of the American struggle as one in which the line of the true church only continued in the Protestant Reformed Churches. It is clear that through the alliance with dominant synodically minded opinion in the Netherlands, the CRC made erroneous choices in the first part of the twentieth century, and the fruits of those choices are plain for all to see today. But strange leaven also harboured in the circles of the PRC, and the experiences of the immigrants in our own early history only confirmed what many had feared from the very first: in the 1924 conflict there were no winners, only losers. The PRC was also not a group with which one could easily make progress.

### Never give up!

This is not to say that I do not admire the initiative of Prof. Bolt in *CTJ*. In fact, the CanRC should be ready and

willing to join in the discussion – that is, if serious work is being put on the agenda by all sides, and if it is going to be done in a church orderly manner. But Bolt's overture on these issues to a Grand Rapids classis of the CRC only indicates in an all too telling way where this is going to lead. According to the report in *Christian Renewal*, the overture died at Classis, since no one was interested in taking the route of apology and withdrawal of the points.<sup>4</sup> The huge corporate bulwark that is the CRC has little time for a fringe group like the PRC. And theologically and confessionally, as the CRC turns to the mainstream, it is beyond debates about the covenant and common grace. New items have come on the agenda.

Still I would say: let's not end with pessimism, but with pointing to the norm. Brothers and sisters formerly of one house have the duty before God to heal the breach, and to unite on the basis of our common confession. Persistent refusal to answer the call for unity on the part of the American churches, whether PRC, CRC or any other group for that matter, only adds to the guilt already incurred by the failures of previous generations.

Of course, there's no point in beating a matter to death. If doors close, they are closed, and we cannot pretend to force them open. But let it never be said of our own people that on these matters of Reformed ecumenicity, whether with the CRC or PRC, that we closed the door from our side, or that we were never even willing to try and get it open. "Never grow weary of well doing" says the Master (Gal 6:9) – also with regard to the issues of church unity. Who knows what the Lord will do? Then at least it may be said: it was not for their lack of trying that all ended in a stalemate. May the Lord do what seems good to Him, but from our side let it be said: blind to the future, we obey the Lord's command.

<sup>1</sup>J. Bolt, "Common Grace and the Christian Reformed Synod of Kalamazoo (1924). A Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Perspective" *CTJ* Volume 35, no 1 (April 2000) 7-36.

<sup>2</sup>R.A. Blacketer, "The Three Points on Most Points Reformed: A Re-examination of the So-called Well-meant Offer of Salvation" *CTJ* Volume 35 no 1 (April 2000) 37-65.

<sup>3</sup>Schilder reflected on the Pantlind Conference in *De Reformatie*" Vol 20, #2, (Oct. 13, 1939) 13-14.

<sup>4</sup>See *Christian Renewal*, March 12, 2001. 



## Christian Education: For Whom? Why? How? (Part 1)

By *Otto Bouwman*

The education of the youth of the church is a matter that concerns all members, including office bearers. In the 1940s, Prof. Krommenga, a church history professor at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, wrote the following about education and the Christian Reformed Church:

*They are by virtue of their baptism, children of God.*

A matter in which the Church had occasion to give its constituency constant guidance for the proper performance of the believer's duty lies in the educational ... field.... In 1870 the General Assembly, as our Synod then still was called, advised consistories in cases where a church school could not be had to make provision as far as possible for Dutch and Reformed instruction, both of which then were still possible in the public schools. While realizing that the matter was not strictly ecclesiastical, the Synod of 1886 resolved to arouse parents to united efforts, wherever possible, to insure the use of Christian textbooks in the district schools, and two years later Synod even recommended *Sanders' Union Readers and Spellers* and *Wilson's Readers*. It also urged our people to seek from the school boards the introduction of Bible reading in the district schools. There evidently were schools even then where this was not the custom.

The progressing dechristianizing of the public schools together with decreasing local autonomy forced the Church more and more into seeking the establishment of Christian schools, free from gov-

ernmental control and positively Reformed in character. Already in 1886 the Synod expressed the desirableness of furthering Christian primary instruction with united strength by means of church schools. In 1892 Synod emphasized the duty of all ministers and elders to support vigorously the establishment and welfare of Christian schools and urged the organization of a society for this purpose, promising it synodical aid. The idea of church schools was thus dropped, and general society rather than local societies was envisioned. The problem called for study of the functions proper to the Church, the State, and the family respectively in the matter of primary education, and in course of time and under the influence of the example of the Christians in the Netherlands the solution was found in the parents' school independent of both state and church control though open to inspection by both these institutions.

Evidently, education has a long history of being discussed by ecclesiastical assemblies. However, Canadian Reformed synods have been rather silent about elementary education per se, and our confessions don't address it specifically either. Having said that, there are clear educational ramifications of our synod's decisions. There are three major questions related to education which I hope to cover here. They are the "who" the "why" and the "how" of education.

### Who?

Who comes to Reformed schools to receive Christian education? How do we view these children? What are we to expect from these children? Different Christians – and now I use that term broadly – answer the question in different ways. Many schools view children as potential converts. These children need to be claimed for the kingdom. So one of the functions of the school then is to be involved in missionary activity, and the classroom becomes a mission

field. As a matter of fact, some educational theorists seem to suggest that the school is a divinely instituted organization, and the teacher is a quasi-divinely appointed office bearer to lead the children to Christ. Then the children can personally accept their Saviour and personally claim God's promises. And really, isn't that what we hope happens to our children? That they be led to Christ? That they learn to follow Christ?

The Canadian Reformed heritage, and I would hastily add the Christian Reformed heritage too, recognizes that it is more helpful to view the children as children of the King. In other words, rather than teach them because they might become converts someday down the road, our motivation is the status that they have been given, usually since birth. They are by virtue of their baptism, children of God. That is their status automatically. Parents have to recognize that their children are children of the King, children who deserve the very best, children who have to develop their talents, children who must learn to serve.

*Covenant – a very helpful and rich concept, provided we don't abuse it.*

### Covenant children

Ten, twenty, thirty years ago, a lot was written in Canadian Reformed circles about children as covenant children. That's a very, very helpful and rich concept, provided we don't abuse it or make a caricature out of it. Let me explain: The term covenant child is to be used to remind us first of all about the status of the student. The student is a recipient of God's wonderful promises. This status entitles the individual to attend a school where God's name is not profaned, where the covenant community is given expression in daily life, where fellowship with other covenant members can be experienced, and where a safe and caring community can develop for the well-being of the children.





plan new ways to achieve better marks.

4. Be cautious when praising and rewarding. Too many compliments can give a child a false impression of himself. In some children, this can accentuate a superiority complex; in others, an inferiority complex. Our appraisals must be honest and realistic.

British Columbia's Reformed Curriculum Development Fund (RCDF) is considering the hiring of a full-time director. The Church History project it sponsors, *The Flame of the Word*, has been well received in the western provinces, and volume 2A is slated for publication this summer. RCDF is also involved in developing several Primary cross-graded units, and some K-7 programs. Their materials are typically shared with CARE (Curriculum Assistance for Reformed Education) and Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers' College in Ontario, and are thus accessible to schools in East as well as


West. As Ontario is also proceeding with a part-time curriculum coordinator, it might be a good idea to combine efforts and resources to do the things that can benefit all our schools and students across the country. Commenting on the importance of curriculum work, Attercliffe's principal concludes: "Having Reformed teachers and having Reformed curriculums are two necessary ingredients to keep our schools Reformed."

*"Having Reformed teachers and having Reformed curriculums are two necessary ingredients to keep our schools Reformed."*

In April and May, at Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers' College, Dr. Riemer Faber addressed an enthusiastic audience on the visions of the

reformers about what it takes to have Reformed schools. In three Wednesday-evening lectures, he explored the relation between home and school, between church and school, and the implications for reformed curriculum.

We have come to the end of another school year, in which we could see the Lord's blessings in many ways. At the same time, there remain acute and chronic personal as well as community challenges affecting Reformed education. May we all be encouraged by the Word and the Spirit to continue in the ways of our faithful God and Father who cares for us, and who uses trials for our benefit, and whose eternal Son gathers his Church no matter what.

*Education Matters is a column supported the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association of Ontario. Send reader responses or articles to-be-printed to Arthur Kingma at [acres@kwic.com](mailto:acres@kwic.com) or to Clarion.* 

## PRESS RELEASE



### Press release of Classis Contracta Central Ontario held in Burlington on Monday, May 28th, 2001

1. On behalf of the convening church of Ottawa, Rev. G. Nederveen welcomed the delegates and opened the meeting with Scripture reading and prayer. The credentials were examined and found to be in good order.
2. Classis was constituted: Rev. G. Nederveen was appointed as chairman and C. Bosch as clerk.
3. The agenda was adopted.
4. The church of Burlington Waterdown requested that Rev. G.H. Visscher be granted a certificate of

- release from his ministerial duties in Classis Central Ontario. This in connection with Rev. Visscher's appointment as professor of New Testament Studies at the Theological College in Hamilton.
5. The necessary supporting documents were received and found to be in good order. Classis released Rev. Visscher from his ministerial duties in the classical region as of June 1, 2001, with the prayer that Rev. Visscher's work at the College will be a blessing to the churches.
6. Burlington Waterdown requested that, due to the vacancy created, Rev. J. de Gelder of Flamborough be appointed counselor to Burling-

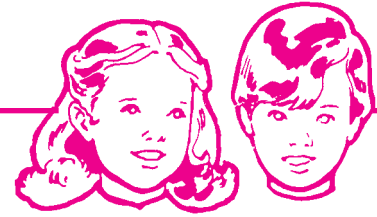
ton-Waterdown and classis granted this request.

7. The chairman spoke some words of farewell to Rev. Visscher noting his faithful work in this classical region over the years. Rev. Visscher then took the opportunity to respond.
8. The officers of classis were appointed to take care of the Acts and Press Release.
9. Rev. J. de Gelder led in closing prayer.

For Classis Contracta Central Ontario  
May 28, 2001

C. Bosch 

By Aunt Betty



## Dear Busy Beavers,

Isn't it wonderful to be able to celebrate Canada Day? It is a day when you can remember that Canada became a country instead of a colony. If you look at what you can see and do in Canada now and how it was so many years ago, you will really notice how much God has looked after the country and the people in the land. We can honestly say how much God has blessed Canada.

He has also blessed the churches in Canada. Not even eighty years ago, there were no Canadian Reformed Churches in Canada. Now there are so many, all across the country. Isn't that a wonderful thing? Not only does God bless the country but He also blesses his people in the country.

Praise the Lord.

Lots of love, Aunt Betty

## Puzzles

### Add Words!

To complete each of the Biblical characters below, add a word of the number of letters shown by the dots and to which a clue is given in brackets.

1. NI . . . DEMUS (fish)
2. . . . IPHAR (vessel)
3. R . . . . L (pain)
4. PHI . . . . (fruit)
5. TI . . . . Y (insect)
6. V . . . TI (tree)
7. HO . . . (ocean)
8. NA . . . (chant)
9. . . . . . US (month)
10. SAN . . . . AT (plaything or dance)
11. . . . PORAH (fastener)
12. RAB . . . . . H (tremble)

### Miracles

Match the miracle with the person.

- |   |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. Devils were cast out of him                  | a. Elisha, 2 Kings 4:2-6      |
| 2. Survived a snake bite                        | b. John, Revelation 1:9-11    |
| 3. Walked on water                              | c. Noah, Genesis 8:18         |
| 4. Increased the widow's oil                    | d. Legion, Luke 8:30-33       |
| 5. Saw a burning bush                           | e. Zechariah, Zechariah 2:1-2 |
| 6. Had a vision of an angel measuring Jerusalem | f. Moses, Exodus 3:3-4        |
| 7. Journeyed to heaven on a whirlwind           | g. Paul, Acts 28:3-5          |
| 8. Wrote about a vision of heaven               | h. Peter, Matthew 14:28-29    |
| 9. Turned water into wine                       | i. Elijah, 2 Kings 1, 11      |
| 10. Survived a flood on a boat he built.        | j. Jesus, John 2:9            |

*I think it is time for another story. This one is called "Trouble with Rainbows." Unfortunately, I can't add the coloured pictures, but the book I have is very colourful with lots of very beautiful pictures. Here goes . . .*

One morning Abi woke up before anyone else. The house was quiet and outside the air felt cold. She could make steam with her breath.

She wheeled her bike out of the shed and pedaled off down the footpath towards Mr. Caprile's shop. She was going to buy some bubble gum for a different kind of breakfast.

She sped down the hill. Abi loved it when no one was about and she could pedal as fast as she could go.

She hurtled past Charlie's gas station. She knew he'd be up. Charlie was always the first awake in the street. He was probably out the back fiddling about with his car.

Down at the corner, she could see Mr. Caprile's shop. It looked as if it was open.

Something colourful caught her eye. She tried to break. It was too late. She couldn't . she couldn't . Wham!

Abi gave a quick yell of surprise and fell off her bike. Then she realized what she had just run into. It was a rainbow, although now it was all in pieces.

Her yell, of course, caught the ears of Charlie and he came running to help her. He picked up the bike and gave it a quick once over. "Didn't you see it?" He shook his head and put the bike on its stand. He sat down on the sidewalk.

Abi sat beside him and looked up at the mess. Pieces of broken rainbow were everywhere. Then she noticed Charlie. He was eating part of the rainbow!

"Charlie! What are you doing?"

"Thought I'd have a nibble."

"Does it taste any good?"

"Not bad, a bit like rain, early morning rain."

She picked up a piece. It wasn't like ice, not cold at all. She licked it.

It tasted like jelly crystals, rain-flavoured jelly crystals.

Abi looked over the fence at Mrs. Trimmer's roses, her prize roses. "What colour are they meant to be, Charlie?"

"Not sure, Abi, but I don't think they're meant to be all those colours at once. Do you?"

"No," Abi said very quietly.

"I'll get the yard broom from the gas station. We'd better sweep this mess up."

A voice called out. "Now for once in your life, Charlie Watkins, you've had a good idea."

On the other side of the roses was Mrs. Trimmer. She was a mass of red flannel dressing gown and grey hair.

"Just look at my roses! Last night when I went to bed, my roses were white. Look at them now. Bits and pieces of colour everywhere!"

Charlie stood up. "Oh, Agnes, don't go on about it. I'll fix it for you."

He went into the garden and began fiddling with the hose fitting. He turned on the tap. "Here, Abi, hold this and wash the roses down."

Ever so slowly, the colour began to drain away. It dripped off the petals onto the leaves. It fell on the ground in big splashes. It coloured the grass and the pebbles and the brick path.

Mrs. Trimmer seemed very flustered. "Last week it was a jogger, before that it was the paper man. You'd think people are blind."

Charlie scratched his head. "You've had trouble with rainbows before, then? At the spot where Abi hit it?"

"Quite!" was all Mrs. Trimmer said.

*And the story will be continued next time.*