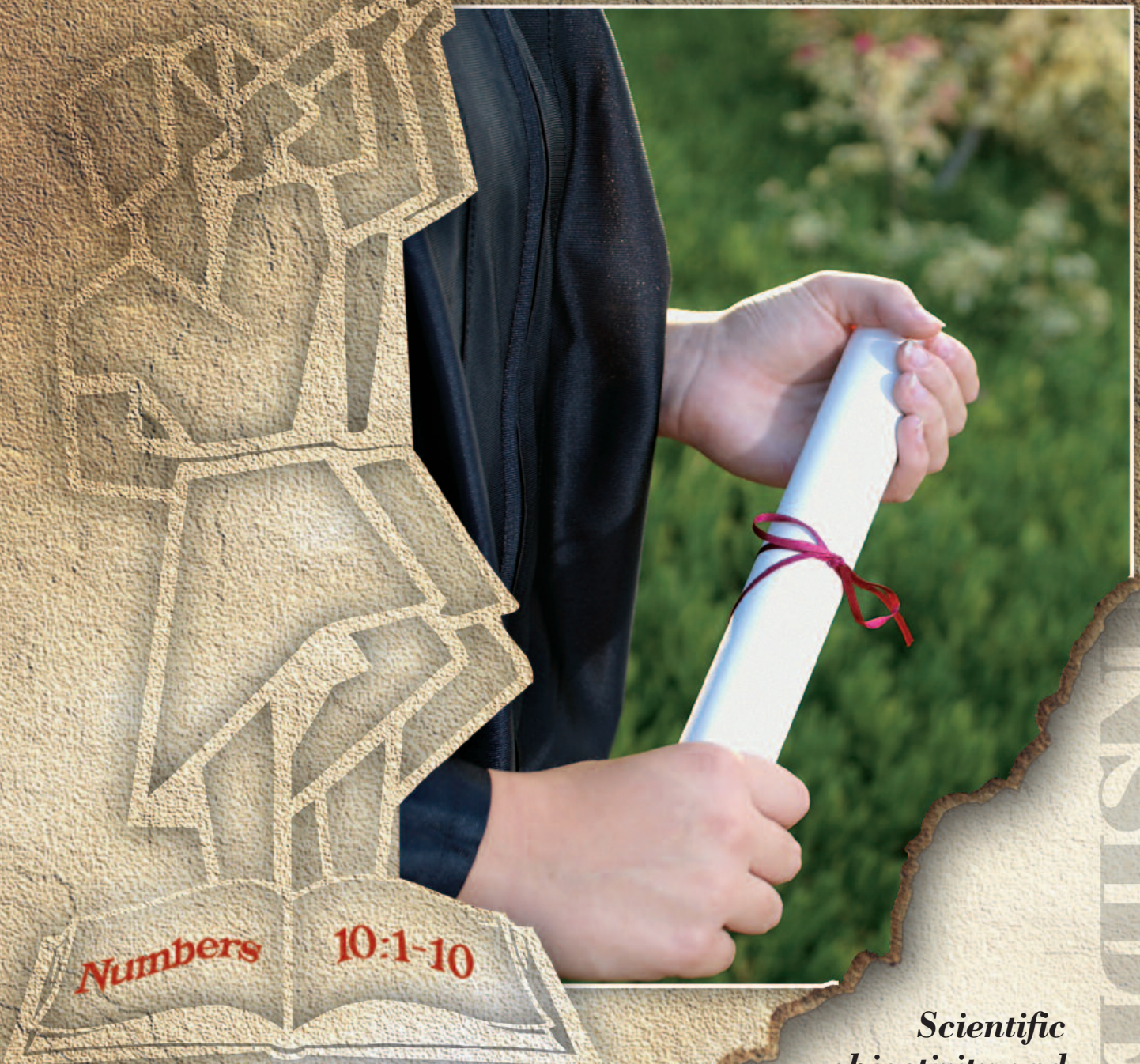


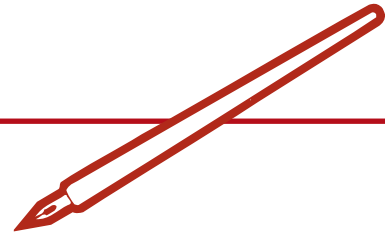
Clarion

The Canadian Reformed Magazine
Volume 51, No. 4, February 15, 2002



*Scientific
objectivity and
human knowing.*

INSIDE!



By J. Visscher



On to Phase 2 with the URC

Some background information

In the summer of 2001, first the General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches meeting in Neerlandia, Alberta, and thereafter the Synod of the United Reformed Churches meeting in Escondido, California, responded positively to the proposal to enter into phase 2 of a budding courtship. During phase 1 the respective committees of both churches had met many times and had hammered out a general agreement on various theological and church political matters. This agreement, along with a recommendation to proceed to phase 2, was passed along to both broader assemblies for discussion and deliberation.

The result, as many of you know, is that Synod Neerlandia voted unanimously to enter into phase 2 and that Synod Escondido voted almost unanimously to do the same. Still, this was not the end of the matter: the URC set up its Church Order in such a way that a majority of its local churches needed to vote in favour of what Escondido had done before it would become effective.

Synod Neerlandia voted unanimously to enter into phase 2 and Synod Escondido voted almost unanimously to do the same.

Well, the vote was taken and the results were released early in the new year. It appeared that the churches in the URC had ratified the decision of Synod Escondido, but then by only a narrow margin (40 voted in favour, 24 against and 12 missed the deadline). This was not expected. After an overwhelming vote in favour at Escondido the expectation was that the local churches would endorse that vote with an overwhelming vote of their own. This did not happen.

Indeed, this has led to speculation as to what really did happen. In addition, some now wonder what would have happened if the CanRC had done the same. Would local churches in the CanRC federation have voted in favour by the same narrow margin? Of course, there is no way of telling.

Reasons not to support Phase 2

Needless to say, some have deduced from the narrow URC vote that there is a good deal of opposition in these churches to phase 2 in particular and to the Canadian Reformed Churches in general. Is this true? From any number

of sources I have gleaned that there was quite a wide range of reasons as to why certain URC churches voted not to support phase 2.

A number of churches were convinced that the timing was not right. They were of the opinion that seeing as the URC is a relatively young federation more time was needed for consolidation and establishment. Better later than sooner, the argument went.

Move forward armed with a determination to be biblically faithful, confessionally sound, historically knowledgeable, fully charitable, prayerfully dependent and boldly obedient.

Several other churches were convinced that local challenges and difficulties were more pressing, and that time and energy was better spent on dealing with these unresolved matters close at hand. They simply did not see phase 2 as a priority item.

Then too, there appears to have been a different voting pattern between the American and the Canadian churches in the URC. The former were more often heard to complain that they did not really know the CanRC. As a result, some of them voted negatively and others simply abstained from voting altogether.

Finally, although it is more difficult to get anyone to say this, it would appear that in the minds of some in the URC the CanRC still have an image problem. Over the years things have happened in families, accusations have been made, disagreements have arisen locally that have led some to see the CanRC as narrow-minded, conceited and sectarian. Being a member and minister in the CanRC, this sort of reputation hurts. It hurts a lot.

An admission of wrong

But, is it true? Let me be open with you and say that from our side things have been done, words have been said and attitudes have been displayed that were not right. We need to acknowledge that. Some times with the very best of intentions, we did not choose for the high road but for the low road. So, if certain brothers and sisters in the URC have a bone to pick with us regarding past behaviour, we should be mature enough to admit any wrongs we have done.

Yet, an admission of wrong-doing alone is not enough, there also needs to be a willingness to mend fences and a determination to walk the high road of truth, love and unity. And that, it seems to me, is what Synod Neerlandia was doing in its decisions regarding not only the URC but also the OPC and the RCUS.

The road ahead – locally

Still, our readers may be wondering about where this road will lead us. What is in store for us as we forge closer ties with these churches, but especially with the URC? I am no seer, so I cannot say. All that can be said is that we need to move forward armed with a determination to be biblically faithful, confessionally sound, historically knowledgeable, fully charitable, prayerfully dependent and boldly obedient. Surely, our God will bless such an attitude and approach.

More specifically, the fact that we have entered into phase 2 means that there is plenty of work to do both locally and federatively. On a local level there needs to be good contact between CanRC and URC churches. In many places this is already a reality and many meetings have been held and more are being planned. If there is a local URC church in your area and there has been no contact thus far, then obviously there is a lot of work to do. Respective councils and ministers need to meet together to become

What's inside?

The United Reformed Churches recently ratified a decision by their Synod Escondido 2001 to enter into Phase 2 of relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches. The implications of this are profound. The goal of these relations is full federative unity. In his editorial, Dr. J. Visscher examines some of the practical applications of entering into Phase 2. It is our hope and prayer that the Lord God will bless our ecumenical aspirations.

Darwinism is presented in our society, including all levels of education, as a scientific theory which is virtually infallible. Everything from articles in a reputable magazine such as *National Geographic* to TV programs and movies such as *Jurassic Park* assume that evolution over billions of years is a fact. This flies in the face of what we are taught in God's Word. Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff continues her series of articles which examine how a Christian deals with this teaching.

Rev. G.Ph. van Popta examines the involvement of Reformed people in politics. In his column, *Observations*, he addresses the vicious attacks which brought about the demise of Stockwell Day's influence in politics. This has serious implications for any Christian's involvement in politics. He also commends the revival of ARPA.

We have our regular columns, *Treasures New and Old*, *Ray of Sunshine* and *Education Matters*. We also have two letters to the editor.

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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:

(subscriptions, advertisements, etc.):

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.

One Beghin Avenue

Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5

Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202

Email: clarion@premier.mb.ca

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acquainted, to discuss matters, to remove erroneous perceptions and to build relationships of trust and confidence in one another.

As well, congregations need to get together both for formal and informal meetings. Indeed, it has been my experience over the years that nothing does more to break down barriers and stereotypes than face-to-face discussions. Exchanging letters is something that has its place, but real human contact is essential if closer ties are to be formed.

On a local level there needs to be good contact between CanRC and URC churches.

Such closer ties will also help greatly when it comes to inviting one another's ministers to leading the worship services. I realize that there may be a temptation on the part of some consistories to move "full speed ahead" without properly preparing the congregation, but that would be folly. Of course, there needs to be leadership, but good leadership takes the pulse of the congregation and, if there are prob-

January 10, 2002

Committee for the Promotion of Church Unity
Dr. Jack DeJong
Canadian Reformed Theological College
110 W. 27th Street
Hamilton, Ontario
Canada L9C 5A1

Dear Brethren,

Greetings in the name of our Sovereign God!

The tally has been taken concerning the ratification of our churches of the decision of our Synod Escondido 2001 on moving to the second step of ecclesiastical relations with you, the Canadian/American Reformed Churches. Not all of our councils responded. Some responded late. A majority of our congregations eligible to vote would be thirty-nine (39). The vote was forty-one (41) in favor, and twenty-four (24) against. The churches not heard from are considered negative votes. Already, our committees have been notified and they will be in contact with your committees in the near future.

May the Lord of the Church lead and direct in this very significant and sensitive matter.

Sincerely,



Rev. Jerome Julien, Clerk
United Reformed Churches – North America

lems and hesitations, deals with them first. Unity with your next door neighbour should not come at the cost of disunity at home.

The road ahead – federatively

In addition to lots of local action, there will also be a need for broader action. The Synods of our respective churches agreed to appoint three committees. From the side of the URC these committees could only begin their work in earnest once the ratification vote had led to a positive result. This has now happened, so what are these committees all about?

a) A Church Order Committee

First, there is a Church Order Committee whose mandate it will be "together to produce a suitable and agreeable adaptation of the Church Order of Dort. The differences between the current orders of the federations would be evaluated in the light of the scriptural and confessional principles and patterns of church government of the Church Order of Dort" (*Acts 2001*, p. 151).

This should prove to be a challenging mandate, for although there are many, many similarities, at present there are also some different practices with regards to visitors at the Lord's Supper, voting for office bearers, congregational singing and so forth. Indeed, in this connection it will also be very important for this Committee to distinguish between that which is biblically described and that which is biblically required.

Produce a song book that contains the Anglo-Genevan psalter and other suitable metrical versions, while including hymns that also meet the standard of faithfulness to the Scriptures and to the Reformed Confessions.

b) A Theological Education Committee

Second, there is a Theological Education Committee. It has as task to see to it that should a merger take place there will be "at least one federational theological school and that the synod recommend the school's professors and teaching staff for appointment" (*Acts 2001*, p. 153). In addition, this Committee will also have to make recommendations as to which non-federational seminaries will be approved as training places for future candidates for the ministry. Finally, it will need to recommend a course of action in the case of aspiring candidates who have not had adequate instruction in areas such as Reformed church polity or Reformed church history.

At the moment there are three schools that supply the vast amount of candidates in the CanRC and the URC. For the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Theological College in Hamilton is the main training school. For the United Reformed Churches, Mid-America Theological Seminary in Dyer, Indiana, and Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, California, train most of the candidates. The first is a federational school; whereas, the last two are both independent seminaries.

Obviously, on this front as well there will be interesting discussions. The fact that the Theological College is strongly

European in background and structure and that both MARS and WTS are American will no doubt occasion some interesting exchanges. The fact that one is on Canadian soil and the other two are on American soil will also play a role. Then too, there is the complicating fact that admission standards, course descriptions, as well as graduation requirements are different. Clearly, a great deal of work needs to be done here.


c) A Song Book Committee

Third, there is the Song Book Committee. From our side as CanRC churches, the appointees to this Committee will all come from the Standing Committee of the *Book of Praise*. From the URC side the members will not be coming from a particular committee.

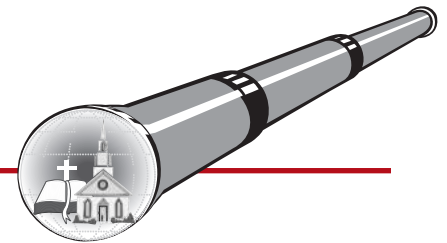
As to its mandate, this Committee has been charged to “work together to produce a song book that contains the Anglo-Genevan psalter and other suitable metrical versions, while including hymns that also meet the standard of faithfulness to the Scriptures and to the Reformed Confessions” (*Acts* 2001, p. 152). Before such a combined effort sees the light of day – and that may take a number of years – both churches would continue to use their accustomed song books. It is apparent that also this particular mandate calls for a consider-

able amount of work on the part of the Committee. No doubt it will also prove to be interesting work, as well as work that will be watched with bated breath in both federations.

All in all, then, what lies ahead is a lot of work both at the local level and at the broader committee level. No doubt along with the challenges there will also be frustrations and disappointments, perhaps even set-backs. Nevertheless, there is great potential in all of this to make us grow as churches of Jesus Christ in the world. After all, our Saviour prayed that his church would be one and that unity, while being fundamentally spiritual in nature, should not stop there. It cannot rest and it may not rest until every barrier has been removed. The church on earth always needs to strive to be as united and as perfect as the church is in heaven.

Let us, therefore, work and pray for the unity of the church. Let us take up the challenge to do whatever we can to break down any and all barriers that exist and, if our God should bless it, become one day a truly United Reformed Church. 

Dr. J. Visscher is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Langley, BC.



Observations

By G.Ph. van Popta

Politics

Reformed Christians have a long and rich history of involvement in politics. The names of G. Groen van Prinsterer, Abraham Kuyper and Hendrikus Colijn are not unknown to us. Many will know the names of Dutch political parties such as the Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP) and the Reformed Political Alliance (GPV – *Gereformeerde Politiek Verbond*).

The latter party, begun in 1948, was established by members of our sister churches in the Netherlands. The GPV is a confessional party. It wants to base its political work on Scripture and the Reformed confessions.

Our Reformed brothers have been able to let their political voice be heard in the Netherlands. At present, the GPV has two representatives in the upper house of the Dutch parliament, two in the lower house, sixteen members in the various provincial legislatures, 162 municipal councillors, three mayors, and one representative in the European parliament (J. Boersema, *Political-Economic Activity to the Honour of God*, Premier: 1999, p. 15f).

The Dutch brotherhood can be effective in politics because of several favourable circumstances we do not enjoy. In the Netherlands, the seats in the legislatures are assigned to the various political parties in proportion to how many votes each party garnered. This system is called Representation by Population, or Proportional Representation. Simply put, if a party acquires 10% of the votes, it is assigned 10% of the seats.

Different in Canada

In Canada we use the First Past the Post (FPTP) system which means that whichever candidate in each riding amasses the most votes is sent to the legislature. FPTP systems are found in the United Kingdom and those countries historically influenced by Britain: Canada, Australia, India, and other “Westminster” democracies. Which system is better is well beyond the ken of a pastor. We can, however, observe that the FPTP system would render it virtually impossible for an outspokenly Reformed person to gain a seat in a provincial or federal legislature. That

aside, with thanks we can say that more than just a few Reformed brothers and sisters have won seats as local aldermen, and some even as mayors. We wish them God's continued blessing.

An ARPA can be a small organization with a big mouth in the community.

The other circumstances that favour the Dutch brotherhood is that they are about ten times our numbers concentrated in a country with half the population of Canada, and half the size of Prince Edward Island.

Even though factors are not too favourable for Reformed people to do politics in Canada on a large scale, yet we have a political calling. And one wants to be involved. In the late 1980s, we took out a membership in the Christian Heritage Party (CHP). After all, Mr. Ed Vanwoudenberg, one of our own, was the leader. We were very optimistic when the CHP ran a strong candidate in our riding, Ottawa South, against Maureen McTeer, wife of Gay Pride Marshall Joe Clark. (The reigning Liberal candidate won.) Eventually we let our membership lapse.

Stockwell Day

We became somewhat optimistic a decade later when Stockwell Day, an evangelical Christian, became the leader of the Canadian Alliance (CA) party. Ray Pennings, a member of a Free Reformed Church, ran in the riding in which we now live, Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot. He gave the reigning Liberal a good run. (The Liberal candidate won.)

Since then, Mr. Day, leader of the opposition, has been torn to shreds by the media and many in his own party. As one who takes the Word of God seriously, he has been scorned and cold-shouldered. The left-leaning media and the political elite have found repellent Mr. Day's belief that God created the world about 6,000 years ago. They loathe him for his espousal of biblical morality. They treat him as a pariah dubbing him an "extremist" and "fundamentalist." The media's hatred for conservative Protestant Christians is



Stockwell Day

matched only by its abhorrence of smokers. Bay Street loves fiscal conservatives but not social conservatives. The Canadian Alliance Party has played the Judas to Mr. Day. The Canadian Parliament filled with those who sound like crackling thorns under the pot (Eccl 7:6), is not worthy (Heb 11:38) of someone like Stockwell Day. He is too good for Canadian politics, at least its corrupt federal brand. We stand amazed that he is running again for his own job after being hounded from office.

What can we do? We can continue to work in the system and support the CHP or the CA. We wish anyone who still wants to work with the CA well; however, after seeing how the knives came out and brutalized Mr. Day, and how the CA seems to be intent upon crawling into bed with Gay Pride Marshall Joe Clark's party, many have lost interest in the CA.

We wish anyone who still wants to work with the CHP well; however, one might conclude the CHP is striving for a bridge too far. The FPTP method of electing representatives will continue to shut out believers of any doctrinal stripe who dare to speak what they believe. It is true that we are called to be faithful, not successful; however, we also need to be good stewards of our limited resources.

The media's hatred for conservative Protestant Christians is matched only by its abhorrence of smokers.

ARPA

Recently, the ARPA movement has been revived. In the 1970s and 80s, there were quite a few vibrant Associations for Reformed Political Action (ARPA) working out of our congregations. They all but died out. Now Mr. Peter Veenendaal of Carman, Manitoba, is visiting the churches speaking about our political calling and encouraging the renaissance of the ARPA movement. We cheer him on.

We might as well realize that Canada is, essentially, a one-party state. The Liberal Party has ruled for 70 out of the past 100 years. Since Canada is a liberal society where the goal posts are constantly shifting and nothing is fixed by, e.g., the Word of God, the ever evolving Liberal Party will surely be the party of choice for the foreseeable future. The Liberal Party is the best incarnation of the Canadian psyche.

The ARPA movement has much to commend it. An ARPA can be a small organization with a big mouth in the community. It can help Reformed people win seats on town councils. It can organize all candidates meetings. It can study local, provincial or federal issues, formulate positions, educate people, write letters, and encourage people how and what to address to elected representatives. Likely, through involvement in a vibrant ARPA one can do more than by attempting to work "in the system." Arguably, it is the better use of the resources we have at our disposal as we strive to do politics.



Rev. G.Ph. van Popta is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church in Ancaster, Ontario.

By M.H. Van Luik

The Lord uses creation for his own redemptive purposes

“. . . and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.” Exodus 6:6

On the front page of this morning's newspaper there is the following heading, "Large asteroid misses Earth by a whisker" and underneath there is the caption, "Devastation Averted." Man is accustomed to think that devastations are part of this world in which we live. Whether man worries about asteroids falling out of the sky, or the next earthquake that will destroy some major city, or some major flooding or drought and famines, man lives in the constant fear of the devastations that may come upon us. Those are also the fears that motivate the environmental movements of our day. They see man bringing calamity upon himself as he destroys the environment.

While mankind sees the calamities of this world as belonging to the normal things of this life, the Scriptures reveal something different. The Scriptures reveal an almighty God who in his providence is in control of the whole earth. Not only is the Lord God in control of the lives of man, but He also controls all the elements of creation. We do not live in a creation that is out of control, but in a creation that is always responsive to the commands of God.

The Lord God reveals himself in Egypt as the Almighty One who has complete mastery over every aspect of nature. He says to his people Israel, "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment." The Lord does not reveal his power and might in the conventional way of man by defeating Egypt with a mighty army. Instead He uses the forces of nature to destroy the mighty Egyptian power. His judgment on Egypt is revealed in the ten plagues. The Lord also reveals his judgment when He causes Pharaoh and his great army to be drowned in the Red Sea.

The Lord teaches his people Israel that He uses his creation for his own redemptive purposes. The Lord in his providence uses the forces of nature to bring judgment upon the wicked but redemption for the righteous. This is an impor-

tant theme that runs through the whole of Scriptures. In the very beginning we have a beautiful description of God's creation activity. God brings about a beautiful order out of a world that was formless, empty and dark (Gen 1:1). He separated the water from the land, the night from the day so that God prepared for man a most beautiful place to dwell. Out of the chaos, the Lord created a perfectly ordered world where men never feared calamities such as earthquakes, floods or plagues. It was paradise.


When man fell into sin, that wonderful order of creation was disturbed. Although the Lord in his mercy did not allow the earth to fall back into utter chaos, yet the Lord often used great calamities to bring his judgment upon man. But his judgments must always be seen within the context of his redemptive purposes. In the time of Noah, the Lord used the great flood to destroy all of mankind and yet he also used this means of judgment to save Noah and his family. You find the same pattern in Egypt. The Lord uses the plagues and the Red Sea to bring his terrible judgment on Egypt, and at the same time work deliverance for his people Israel.

When Jesus Christ came to this world, He reveals his complete mastery over creation. There can be no doubt that He is our Immanuel, God with us, for He has the power to bring about order in the chaos of this world. He has the power to restore health, to rebuke the storms of the sea to be quiet, to walk over the water, and to feed thousands with a few loaves and some fish. His mastery over creation serves to reveal Him as the great redeemer and Saviour of his people.

In order to redeem us, Christ had to face the judgment of his Father. At the time of his crucifixion, all the forces of creation were marshaled against our Lord. The order of creation was turned to chaos, for the day turned into darkness, the earth shook, and the rocks split. This chaotic happening on Golgo-

tha was God's sign that creation was turned against Christ as an instrument of judgment. They reveal the full wrath and fury of God brought against Christ on account of our sins. Through this judgment Christ was punished, but we have been redeemed from our sins.

When we understand God's use of his creation that also gives us a proper perspective of what is happening in the world around us. When we experience and see calamities in this world, we know that the Lord is busy with his redemptive purposes. It is the means by which our God brings his judgment upon wicked men, but it is also a call to mankind to repent and seek their deliverance in Jesus Christ. God's judgment today is intended for the redemption of man.

The Lord has also revealed that everything must work towards the final Day of Judgment. In the end our Saviour will return from heaven. On that day the Lord will again use the forces of creation for his redemptive purpose. The book of Revelation reveals that the plagues and earthquakes and great upheaval of creation will signal the destruction of the wicked (Rev 16-18). Therefore the upheavals of creation in our day are a sure sign of the destruction that will come upon all those who today oppose the God of heaven and earth. While wicked men will be destroyed in the great judgment, all those in Christ Jesus will be delivered. Paradise will be restored so that there will again be perfect order in God's creation. Never again will man live in fear of flooding, earthquakes or other disasters. The new earth will be a fitting dwelling place for all those redeemed by Christ Jesus. The redeemed may forever praise and magnify the Almighty God of heaven and earth. 

Rev. M.H. Van Luik is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church in Chilliwack, British Columbia.

Faith and Science in the Reformed Tradition (2)

By F.G. Oosterhoff

Two approaches

In the previous article we asked why from the beginning Christians have believed that evolutionism constitutes a serious threat to the faith. A major reason, we found, was that Darwinism was presented as a scientific theory and that many believers, together with the general public, held that the pronouncements of science were all but infallible. If carefully and properly followed, the scientific method guaranteed fully objective and therefore absolutely certain knowledge.

This implied for some Christians that the most effective, and indeed the only, way to deal with the challenge of evolutionism was to fight fire with fire. If unbelieving science attacked the reliability of Scripture, then Christian scientists had to come with scientific counter-evidence and so validate revelation. It is this conviction, which is strong especially among American Evangelicals, that explains the appeal of the creation science movement. Creationists have assured me that they do not teach that the truth of Scripture can be proven in a scientific manner, and I believe them. My concern is of a different kind. It is that the movement, by concentrating on the search for scientific evidence in support of revelation *without truly challenging the scientist theory as such*, may well leave the impression among its adherents that the scientist claims are indeed correct – a conclusion which would be clearly opposed to biblical teaching. Nor is that the only drawback. The approach, as I hope to show, is also of little help in cases where unbelieving scholarship cannot be refuted by means of scientific counter-evidence.

It is on these points, then, that the traditional Reformed position differs most strongly from the creationist movement. There are of course areas of contact as well. Scholars in the Reformed tradition would agree, for example, that when Christians are able to challenge a theory like evolutionism on scientific grounds, they should do so. Nor would these scholars deny that such possibilities exist, even if they are not always as sanguine in this regard as creation scientists. But if they are of one mind with creationists in their opposition to a naturalistic evolutionism,

Kuyper and Bavinck made clear beyond doubt that the belief in full scientific objectivity cannot be maintained and is in fact idolatrous. By doing so they have removed the stumbling block that the modern view of scientific objectivity has placed on the way of faith.

they question the sufficiency of the creation-scientist approach. For them the more promising course of action is to tackle the assumptions which lie at the root of these problems, namely the idea that the scientific method is religiously neutral and fully objective, yields knowledge that is absolutely certain, and is the means of reaching truth in all fields of knowledge.

This is the course adopted by Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck, and their followers. These people have not

by any means solved every problem that can be raised regarding the relationship between faith and science; nor has every solution they proposed escaped criticism, even within their own circles. But what these people did accomplish – and that is the pertinent issue here – was to make clear beyond doubt that the belief in full scientific objectivity cannot be maintained; that this belief, in fact, is idolatrous. By doing so they have removed the stumbling block that the modern view of scientific knowledge, and therefore also Darwin's hypothesis, have placed on the way of faith.

One possible misunderstanding must be removed at this point. By stating that subjective elements play a role in scientific knowledge, these thinkers do not attempt to promote a postmodern type of relativism and skepticism. With Calvin himself, scholars in the Reformed tradition have always received science as a most valuable gift of God, one that opens the way to reliable, true knowledge. But they also stress the tentativeness of scientific conclusions – after all, scientific theories come and go – and show how unwise it is to build one's religious faith on them.

Kuyper on scientism¹

Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) was a member of the first generation of those confronted with Darwinian evolutionism. (Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published in 1859, when Kuyper was 22 years old, and the *Descent of Man* twelve years later, in 1871.) Already in Kuyper's days, evolutionism served not just as a scientific hypothesis but was considered a proven theory, one that could be applied, moreover, to practically all of life and thought. Biblical

studies were not exempt. Evolutionism influenced the so-called higher biblical criticism, which in the course of the nineteenth century came to dominate the theological faculties at many universities. Both Old and New Testament critics tended to see religion in developmental terms and to explain Christianity as having evolved from primitive or even legendary origins. Having received his theological education at the University of Leiden, whose theological faculty was a hotbed of modernist thought, Kuyper was well acquainted with the dominant trend in biblical studies. It is not surprising that after his conversion to the orthodox Reformed faith, and especially after he had, in 1880, established his own Christian university (the Free University of Amsterdam), he would examine the claim that science and its method lead to fully objective and universally valid truth.

The conclusions he reached can be found in several of his publications. These were issued at different times throughout his long academic career and served different purposes. As a result, there are also different emphases. Nor did Kuyper avoid inconsistencies. His goal, however, remained constant, and that goal was to show that the generally held belief in the so-called scientific method as the way to all truth is both dangerous and demonstratively false.

Why is it dangerous? First of all, of course, because the belief in scientific infallibility can, and all too often does,

place a stranglehold on religious faith. The role played by evolutionism can serve as an example, but it is certainly not the only one. The belief is also dangerous because it easily leads to the opinion that matter alone exists. To explain why and how this happens, a bit more must yet be said about the prevailing view of science. According to this view, objectivity and therefore certainty can only be achieved if the researcher's personal input is ignored. The scientist's mind is supposed to become, as Kuyper describes it, a blank sheet (a *tabula rasa*), and is to serve as

With Calvin, scholars in the Reformed tradition have always received science as a most valuable gift of God.

But they also stress the tentativeness of scientific conclusions – after all, scientific theories come and go – and show how unwise it is to build one's religious faith on them.

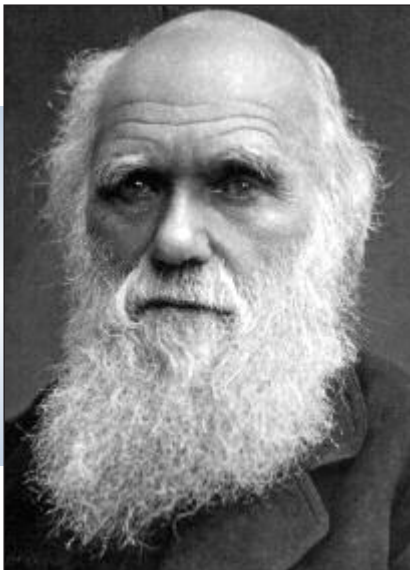
no more than a camera or a type of mechanical measuring device – something that is capable of observing and analyzing phenomena in a fully neutral manner.² The personal element is to be put on hold and an airtight division established between the subject (the re-

searcher) and the object (that which the researcher examines).

This approach was followed first of all in the natural sciences, where its weaknesses were not immediately apparent. In sciences like physics, astronomy, chemistry and so on, phenomena can be objectively investigated – at least up to a point. Scientists are guided by hypotheses and in their creation the personal element does play an essential role. But for the rest a reasonable degree of objectivity is possible. And generally speaking the object of research can indeed be seen as an *object*, as something which (in most cases) is not affected by the researcher's probing, and which can be examined – weighed, measured, analyzed – in a largely objective manner.

It is different, however, with branches of knowledge such as history, psychology, and other human and social sciences. Here one deals not with lifeless objects that can be manipulated at will, but with living, thinking, and feeling beings. In this type of work the method of the natural sciences can therefore not really be used. The prestige of the latter, however, is such that the human sciences all too often do attempt to apply the method in their research. This means that they must objectify that which they examine and that they can deal only with external aspects: with the visible, the measurable, the material. It is this approach, Kuyper shows, which encourages the reductionistic view that all things, even the spiritual, have material origins and causes. Ultimately, it implies the belief that matter alone exists; that there is no God, no soul, and no true human self.

This is the situation the Christian meets in his life and work. Because of the overwhelming prestige of science, the temptation is strong for Christians to forget that in these scientist presuppositions they are encountering idolatry. They all too easily believe, Kuyper says, that they can assume an attitude of compromise and adopt a type of "double truth": that they can live with the claims of both scientism and revelation and in the end escape the dangers of a materialistic worldview. But he warns that this can't be done. It doesn't help you to argue, he says, that you won't cross the line; that your faith is secure because it is based on divine revelation. If you try to hang on to your religious belief without rejecting the false ideas of modern scientism, then you limp on



Charles Darwin



Abraham Kuyper

two opinions and your scientific work will in the end drive you to the rejection of the spiritual.³

We can't serve God and idols. The way for believers to deal with the dangers of an atheistic evolutionism, and of a materialistic scientism in general, Kuyper concludes, is to reject the idea of full scientific objectivity and to insist that the input of the subject (the knower), be acknowledged – in the sciences and in all other branches of knowledge. In a similar manner, non-believers are to admit the subjective elements in their work. This means, among other things, an acknowledgement of the role of *religious* presuppositions – those of both the Christian and the non-Christian – in human knowing.

The error of scientism

The cult of scientific objectivity is not only dangerous – in the sense that it is destructive of religion and humanity – it can also be demonstrated to be false. Kuyper has given a good deal of attention to a Christian critique of the scientist claim. I have described his arguments elsewhere⁴ and will not go into detail here, but a brief summary is necessary.

In his attack upon the belief in a well-nigh infallible science, Kuyper begins by drawing attention to the shortcomings and imperfections that affect the work of the scientist – who is, after all, a fallen and fallible being like the

rest of humanity. He points out that scientists are subject to bodily and psychological weaknesses, that they are not necessarily free from self-deception, that they are prone to make mistakes in observation, memory, and thinking,

Evolutionism was considered a proven theory, one that could be applied to all of life and thought. The field of biblical studies was not exempt.

and that they may be tempted to pursue their own selfish interests. In addition, they are influenced by such factors as their education, the language of their community, the views of other thinkers in the field, and their own political and social environments. All this means that they are not the detached, autonomous, self-sufficient thinkers that the believers in the cult objectivism believe a person has to be (and in fact can be) in order to achieve objectively valid knowledge.

If people really paid attention to the many obstacles to scientific objectivity, Kuyper says, their reaction would not be one of unquestioning belief in scientific truth, but rather one of full-fledged skepticism. That this does not normally happen he explains with

reference to yet other subjective elements in human thought, namely common sense, natural wisdom, and, especially, a mental faculty or function which he calls faith. Kuyper's usage of the term faith in this context has aroused criticism, since he is not speaking here of religious faith. Rather, he is thinking of an attitude of mind that is religiously neutral and serves merely to convince people of the reliability of their observations and reasoning, thereby keeping the danger of all-out skepticism at bay.

The appropriateness of calling such a function or attitude "faith" can indeed be questioned. It is not easy, however, to find a substitute. Among the possibilities are words like trust, or intuition, or set of presuppositions, or perhaps a combination of the three. Kuyper seems to have preferred the term faith because the element in question gives certainty in human thought apart from demonstrative proof. As such it has similarities with religious faith. He also used it to show that the modern habit of drawing a sharp distinction between knowledge and faith, calling the former objective and certain and the latter subjective and arbitrary, is nonsensical. Faith and knowledge, and therefore also faith and science, go together. As a later philosopher (Michael Polanyi) was to put it, all knowledge necessarily takes places within a framework of faith.

Kuyper goes to some length to indicate the role which faith as a common mental function plays in the scientific enterprise. He shows, for example, that it makes it possible for scientists to believe that they can trust what their senses tell them – for as skeptics have argued throughout the ages, the reliability of sense experience cannot possibly be demonstrated. It can only be believed. Faith in the non-religious sense plays a similarly essential role in reasoning. Reasoning is only possible if, for example, one assumes the reliability of the rules of logic (such as the rule that A is not not-A), for this, too, cannot be logically demonstrated.

Not in the last place, faith in the sense of trust is necessary for scientists to formulate and accept scientific laws. It is needed here because it is impossible to give exhaustive evidence in support of such laws. In many cases one cannot collect all the currently available evidence, and even if one could, there is always the possibility of

counter-evidence to turn up later. Here as elsewhere, one simply has to believe that the assumptions on which one operates (such as those regarding the stability and uniformity of nature) are reliable. If one did not do so, science would be impossible.

So much for faith as a common mental function. As we have already seen, Kuyper is also very much aware of the role which *religious* faith and beliefs play in human thought, in that of the Christian and in that of the atheist. Here we come to the great division – Kuyper calls it the antithesis – that he says runs through all of science and indeed through all of human life and thought. As far as science is concerned, Kuyper says that in preliminary scientific activities such as numbering, measuring, weighing, and so on, religious convictions do not normally play a role. At these levels cooperation between believing and unbelieving scientists is therefore possible. This is often no longer the case, however, when the scientists draw up hypotheses to interpret their observations. Here religious presuppositions tend to come in and must be taken into account. A primary example is Darwin’s evolutionism, which, Kuyper argues, has not been proven, can in fact be demonstrated to fail on scientific grounds, and is being accepted by many for religious rather than scientific reasons.

Conclusion

Kuyper did not develop a systematic theory of scientific knowledge, and he did not by any means deal with every question that can be asked regarding the relationship between faith and science. One of the questions he failed to answer is how the concept of the antithesis can be squared with the fact that unbelieving science produces work of real significance. He was fully aware of the value of unbelieving scholarship and shared Calvin’s admiration for the work of non-Christian scientists, philosophers, and other thinkers. At one time he speaks of Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and even Darwin, as “stars of the first magnitude, geniuses of the highest degree.”⁵

A closely related problem concerns the matter of cooperation between scientists with opposing religious convictions. The antithesis which Kuyper says exists between believing and unbelieving scholarship would seem to imply that Christians have to separate

themselves from the mainstream scholarly enterprise and work on their own specifically Christian projects. This is indeed what on more than one occasion he seems to suggest, when he speaks of the necessity and reality of “two sciences” (*tweeerlei wetenschap*), that of the regenerate and the unregenerate. But he also believed that Christ is the Sovereign of all of life, and that therefore the believer may not isolate himself from the public sphere. To convince Christians of the need to interact with their culture, and also to explain the validity of the work of unbelieving scholarship, Kuyper had recourse to the idea of common grace. But this concept (in the way Kuyper systematized and used it) introduced difficulties of its own, particularly in the religious field.⁶ And it contradicted the idea of the antithesis, an idea that he never abandoned.

Kuyper’s goal was to show that the generally held belief in the so-called scientific method as the way to all truth is both dangerous and demonstratively false.

Kuyper’s colleagues and heirs inherited these and other problems. In following articles we will note whether, and if so to what extent, one of them, namely Herman Bavinck, was able to resolve these problems. We will give special attention, however, to the manner in which he expanded on Kuyper’s truly positive contribution to the debate on faith and science, namely his demonstration of the importance of the subjective element, including the element of religious faith, in human knowing.

NOTES

¹ A note on some of the terms used in these articles. The word “scientism” refers to the belief that the scientific method is universally applicable and guarantees full objectivity, so that the conclusions it leads to are indubitably true. The Dutch term “*wetenschap*” I have sometimes translated as “scholarship” or “learning” and sometimes as “science,” more or less according to the context.

² Abraham Kuyper, *De Gemeene Gratie*, III, 4th ed. (Kampen: Kok, n.d.), p. 506.



Called and accepted to the church at Zevenbergen, the Netherlands:

Rev. G.A. Snip

of Edmonton (Immanuel) Alberta.

• • •

Called to the church at Smithers, British Columbia and for the work of mission in Papua New Guinea:

Rev. T. Lodder

of Taber, Alberta.

This volume contains a lengthy appendix on the sciences and the arts (pp. 487-572). For much of what follows in the present section, see that appendix, especially the chapters 3 and 4 of “*De Wetenschap*.”

³ *Ibid.*, p. 510.

⁴ See my *Ideas Have a History*, ch. 20.

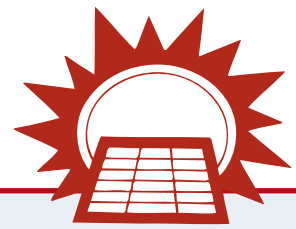
⁵ Kuyper, *De Gemeene Gratie*, III, p. 498.

⁶ For Kuyper’s theory of common grace, see his 3-volume work *De Gemeene Gratie*, cited above. A brief account of the concept and of the problems to which it gave rise can be found in my *Ideas Have a History*, pp. 287-89. A widespread objection to the theory was that it clashed with Kuyper’s idea of the antithesis, that it might well lead to further secularization, and that it encouraged attempts to christianize culture without placing Word and church central. A detailed critique of Kuyper’s dogma can be found in Jochem Douma, *Algemene Genade: Uiteenzetting, vergelijking en beoordeling van de opvattingen van A. Kuyper, K. Schilder en Joh. Calvijn over ‘algemene genade’* (Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1966). The question how one can explain, without recourse to the doctrine of common grace, that unbelieving science produces work of value is taken up in the third article of this series. See on this point also my *Ideas Have a History*, p. 290, which deals with the fact that the same data can often accommodate more than one theory, even conflicting ones.



Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff is a retired principal of Guido de Brès Christian High School in Hamilton, Ontario.

RAY OF SUNSHINE



By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands, and remain in His love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that He lay down his life for his friends.”

John 15:9-13

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

It is at this time of the year when so many people around us have their hearts and eyes focussed on Valentine’s day. A day in which an expression of love or kindness is to be made. The stores all around us are filled with gifts and ideas to please those whom we love. But is this the love that God requires of us to show to one another? Is this the same love that our text of John 15 is speaking of? What is love?

Let us begin with an open Bible. Here we can find the word “love” being described to us as we can find this in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. It says here, “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.” Indeed, there is a lot involved in showing Christian love to one another.

Here we can only but look to our faithful Saviour, Jesus Christ and what He has done for us miserable sinners. The love of God for us sinners, which none of us deserved, that He sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

As we must daily “dig into” our Bibles we can read about the countless acts of love from God throughout the Old Testament, and continuing in through the New Testament. Yes, it does not stop here; for even now, each and every day we may see God’s love. In the Old Testament many of the Israelites were witnesses to numerous acts of God’s love. God repeatedly came back to his undeserving people, as He delivered them from the land of Egypt. The unthankful Israelites had much to grumble about. For example, they were not satisfied with the food and drink they were supplied with, and therefore many times they sought after other gods. In Deuteronomy 11:16,17 we can read of how a warning was given against being enticed to turn away, and how the Lord’s anger will burn against you, and He will shut the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce, and you will soon perish from the good land the Lord is giving you.

At times we may think, that the Israelites should have known better, and why did they go their own way. But before we can even continue, we must ask ourselves if we are any better. We have the whole Bible in front of us, and we can read of the whole redemptive work of Christ, and how it has all been fulfilled; and yet we stum-

ble, and are just as stubborn and rebellious as the Israelites. How often is it that we can so easily remember all the bad things that someone has done against us? We can hold grudges for such a long time, but this is definitely not what the Bible teaches us. To forgive our neighbour is commanded. Here too, we must follow the example of Christ: for as often as He wipes away our many sins, so we too must forgive our debtors.

Thus, we can see the importance of what Christ teaches us in Deuteronomy 11:18-20, “Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the Lord swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth.” Here we can truly see how we must live, and how we must go about our daily activities in all that we do. First and foremost Christ must be in our thoughts, actions and deeds. Our whole life must reflect our Creator. Yet, we cannot do this on our own accord, nor in all perfectness as our Savior did. But rather, it is only through God’s sovereign grace and the working of the Holy Spirit that we can stand before our Almighty God.

Daily we must acknowledge our sin and misery, and humbly ask for forgiveness. Then only can we see how through God’s love we have been delivered from being slaves to sin. Thus, this can only result in thankfulness to God alone, for his love and kindness which He has bestowed on us sinful children.

Continue to walk in faith, and may you be strengthened and comforted in seeing how God’s love has been evident in your life. Praise God with the words of Hymn 65:1.

*Now thank we all our God
With hearts, and hands, and voices,
Who wondrous things has done,
In whom His world rejoices;
Who from our mothers’ arms
Has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
And still is ours today.*

Birthdays in March:

- 3: TREVOR HOFKINK will turn 24**
C106 8920 165 Street, Edmonton, AB T5R 2R9
- 10: JAMES BOONE will turn 6**
22 Aberdare Rd. NE, Calgary, AB T2A 6V9
- 12: GERRY EELHART will be 40**
9713-151 Street, Edmonton, AB T5P 1S6
- 15: JIM VANDERHEIDEN will be 43**
1156 Diltz Road, RR 2, Dunnville, ON N1A 2W2
Tel.: 905-701-9000
- 18: ROSELYN KUIK will be 28**
68 Lynn Lake Drive, Winnipeg, MB R2C 4N7
- 26: COURTNEY POPKEN will turn 9**
9445 Windsor Street, Chilliwack, BC V2P 6C5



Congratulations to you all who are celebrating your birthday in the month of March. We hope and pray that our Heavenly Father will surround you in this new year with his love and care. May you have an enjoyable day together with your family and friends.

Till next month:

Mrs. Corinne Gelms and
Mrs. Erna Nordeman
Mailing correspondence:
548 Kemp Road East
RR 2 Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
1-905-563-0380

Friendly Reminder: If you have a new address, or e-mail, please let us know.

A Biography of Prof. Dr. K. Schilder



In Prof. Dr. K. Schilder (1890-1952) the Reformed Churches received a gifted theologian, a prolific writer, a brilliant journalist, a first rate preacher and an ardent confessor of the faith. He became a professor in Dogmatics at the Kampen Theological School in 1933. His unique talents were recognized and his publications were welcomed as a revival of the Reformed tradition. He formulated the Reformed belief anew over against new challenges such as modern philosophical trends like existentialism, the theology of Karl Barth and the Nazi ideology. The Reformed tradition, however, was considered to be completed by Abraham Kuyper. That is why some church members criticized him. Another reason for this critique was his modern polemic attitude. They objected that he disturbed the peace in the churches. To restore this peace the synod

tried to stop the discussions within the church by prescribing the "right" views concerning the issues in debate. Schilder rejected this hierarchal intervention as a new yoke on free churches. In the end he was thrown out of the churches by the synod of 1944 for being disobedient and creating an uproar.

This started the Liberation: nearly 100,000 people (about 8 % of the members of the Reformed Churches) liberated themselves from the synodical decisions and formed new churches in the midst of the war.

Schilder is acknowledged as one of the most important Reformed theologians of the twentieth century and as the key figure in twentieth century Reformed church history in the Netherlands. But we still lack a good biography. Dr. R.H. Bremmer wrote an academic biography on Herman Bavinck. A new Kuyper biography is being written, but a modern Schilder biography is still missing.

That is why the Prof. Dr. K. Schilder Foundation – founded in 1992 to publish Schilder's collected works and to promote the interest in Schilder – is raising funds to get this job done. What is needed is \$90,000 to give an academic researcher a sabbatical to do the research and the writing. A Schilder biography would be important to honour him in our Reformed tradition, but it is also important to promote the Reformed tradition in our time.

Do you want to donate money for this important project, or have any suggestions to raise the money? Please contact the Foundation via info@adckampen.nl





Peregrine Survey

By K. Sikkema

The RCDF K-7 Music curriculum prepared during last summer has seen its cycle of revision and further development, and has since been printed. RCDF K-7 is jargon for British Columbia's Reformed Curriculum Development Fund's Kindergarten through Grade 7. Undoubtedly, the program is of interest to schools across the whole country. Mr. A. Nap in that area has also been doing a number of presentations on "Post-modernity for Dummies," in which he explains that the "key point of post-modernism is that all meta-narratives (grand, encompassing stories or ways of life), including the biblical story, should be swept into the garbage dump. We should live our own 'local' stories, and construct our own values or meaning for life. There are no absolutes. What may be true is not necessarily true for me." It would be of interest to people further east to take note of RCDF's curriculum and of Mr. Nap's insights as well.

As of this school year, Credo Elementary in Langley is cutting back on its financial commitment to the CCRTC for undisclosed reasons. As Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers' College has been instrumental in keeping our chronic shortage of teachers in check, is currently actively training an enthusiastic group of would-be teachers, and is looking for an additional full-time faculty member, this appears to be an unfortunate decision.

Credo Christian High School is building an addition to its shop, with private funding outside the regular budget.

Birthdays have had the attention of a number of schools around the country. Credo (Brampton/Toronto) concluded that "it would be in the best interest of the younger children if we stopped the tradition of handing out edible treats. . . . Yet we understand the delight of an extra snack, and the joy it brings to be able to brighten classmates' and teachers' days. We therefore will allow edible treats in grades five and up only. We will not allow the children to go from classroom to classroom with treats. . ." Other schools had to stipulate regulations for transportation of stu-

dents on school buses for birthday parties – often in view of the buses' over crowding. Carman discussed the issue that certain students always get invited, while others don't, often through invitations distributed in the classroom. This inevitably leaves some students left out of the fun of organizing parties, as well as the joys of receiving and giving presents. It, in turn, drew on a new policy introduced at Credo Elementary (Langley), which seeks to "nurture and model a school climate that fosters community, prevents harassment and works for forgiveness, healing and reconciliation when harassment has occurred. . . ." The new policy entails that,

An open house for all local board members, followed by an informal wine and cheese gathering with the teachers.

"all students (by gender) be invited if such invitation is done through the school. If students cannot invite all, for whatever reasons, then students should invite their friends via the home route, not via the school. Each student will bring home a class list which includes addresses and telephone numbers. Any baggage (such as sleeping bags, pillows, etc.) should go to the party via the home, not the school. Not having the baggage at school would eliminate another harassment." It is nice to see how schools across the country can and do learn from each other.


Guido de Brès Christian High in Hamilton wants to strengthen the ties among its regional board, local boards, and staff. Activities to accomplish this included an open house for all local board members, followed by an informal wine and cheese gathering with the teachers, and a formal meeting of all board members to help all involved to start from the same page.

The Guido Board has also appointed a committee to study the impact of our developing relations with the URC on membership and status stipulations in the school's constitution. The matter of governance has the board's attention as well, as the in-

crease of congregations in its feeder-area is beginning to make the Regional Board (now going up to twenty-eight members) less efficient.

The winter hit Edmonton with "instant fury:" "We compliment our drivers, and thank our Heavenly Father for keeping our students and drivers safe. No one can imagine what it feels like to get halfway up an icy hill with a busload of students, unable to continue and have to back all the way down the hill and take an alternative route. Our drivers deserve a medal for driving safely in such icy conditions. Our students deserve a medal for waiting at their stops for an extended time."

Speaking about winter weather, this also poses a special challenge for those schools that do not have access to a regular gym. Some schools remedy this issue by teaching health classes during the winter months, but that is hardly satisfactory in view of the ample evidence that frequent and vigorous physical activity significantly enhances students' health and ability to learn. ACRES is one of these schools, and has added lacrosse to its program of outdoor activities, and emphasizes the need for warm clothing during such outdoor events. Others are seeking funds to add a gym to their facilities.

Finally, for all subjects and programs, let us keep in mind what a principal writes about our tasks as fathers and mothers. "God has given us this Christian school so that we can assist parents in nurturing the children of the covenant. This means that we must show the love of the covenant to them during the time that they have been granted to us. Showing this love means that in school there must be teaching and instruction grounded in God's Word. This covenantal love also means that in the school, teachers must be "fathers" and "mothers" to our students: showing respect and care for each one of them. Covenantal love also means that we must urge them, through our order and discipline, to show covenantal obedience to their heavenly Father. May God use us to further the next generation of his Church." 

Mr. Keith Sikkema is a grade 8 teacher at John Calvin School in Smithville, Ontario.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

It was interesting to read the text of the speech by J. Smith given to the CanRC in Burlington-Waterdown (Difficult Tunes, 2001 Year-end Issue). I would have liked to be there to question Mr. Smith at the conclusion. Perhaps he or others could answer my questions given here. Why doesn't this denomination have a living, growing musical culture? Why don't we encourage composers to compose new settings for the Psalms that reflect the progression of musical skill over the four hundred years since the Genevan psalter was hurriedly assembled? Does the classical period of musical composition have nothing to contribute to psalm singing? Shouldn't we perhaps learn the "correct" way to sing the Psalms from the Hasidic Jews? Is it wrong to allow musical trends from "the world" to affect the music of the church? Is the style of music we sing prescribed in Scripture? Did you know that supposedly some of the Genevan tunes were originally bar-room tunes? Is it the job of the church to preserve a certain culture or tradition of music unchanged? or at all? Does being Reformed mean that our music may not express the full range of human emotions so evident in the words of the Psalms? Why do all the Genevan tunes have the same dull and dreary sound as if, as my son says, "they are set in boring mode?" Isn't it true that the younger people are much more inspired by lively music that actually has a melody? Why are the lyrics of the psalms still written in Middle English (e.g. thee, thou, didst, dost) when the Bible version we use is translated into Standard English? Did Synod 1971 consult *only* church musical "experts" before they imposed a four hundred year old Swiss musical culture on the denomination? Do the people sitting in the pew not have any contribution to make to what tunes the Psalms are sung to? Isn't the strict adherence to one set of tunes for the Psalms in the church akin to idolatry or just hanging onto the security blanket of the "old" country's cultural icons along with "drop," King, and Faam. If/when the URC and the CanRC join, will we like each other's musical traditions? Will the people in the pews have any input into what songs will go into the new song book? Please, who ever responds, don't be patronizing like Mr. Smith was to his fellow church members – as if by letting go of the Genevan tunes we will be letting go of the psalms themselves! Never!

Yours in Christ,
J. Vandervliet, RR 2, Erin, Ontario

Response

Thank-you for your letter. The sheer volume of questions you ask shows that Reformed church music is a very broad topic, one that is too complex to cover in a short speech. Bear in mind that I attempted to address a rather restricted issue, namely, the value of singing the less-familiar Psalms in the context of the local Canadian Reformed congregation. True, I also made some comments about Psalm-singing in general and about the history of the Anglo-Genevan Psalter, but only insofar as these would help to address my particular topic. Note as well that I did not defend the Genevan tunes as musically or liturgically superior to other genres. I encouraged the singing of the less-familiar Psalms not because they have Genevan tunes but because they are Psalms; God gave Psalms to his covenant people of old so that they might praise his name, and He enjoined his New Testament Church to continue to sing them (Eph 5:19, Col 3:16). My point, then, was that the fact that some Psalms have lesser-known Genevan tunes should not prevent us from singing them.

The Canadian Reformed Churches have never supposed that the Genevan melodies alone are suitable for worship: witness that the *Book of Praise* also has sixty-five hymns, most of which are not set to Genevan melodies. Nor did Synod 1971 "impose" the Anglo-Genevan Psalter on the churches – the CanRC share the URC's opposition to synodal hierarchy – but the reason a general synod handled the matter is that a common worship book was a matter affecting the churches in general. The "people of the pew" have never been prevented from contributing to the *Book of Praise*. There is a Standing Committee for the Book of Praise which is mandated to receive proposals from local churches for changes to the *Book of Praise*.

A view of the Genevan Psalter as a "security blanket of the 'old' country's cultural icons" provides insufficient motivation for the mammoth task of producing a Genevan Psalter in English. Bear in mind, too, that many of our members had already been away from the "old country" for some twenty years by the time the first complete edition of the *Book of Praise* appeared.

Presently the Psalms in the *Book of Praise* are all set to Genevan melodies.

This makes it a consistent collection, but does not imply that the Psalms may not be set to alternate melodies. To relegate the Genevan tunes to the category of antiquated relics, however, is to disregard the valuable service they have rendered to many generations of Reformed Christians as a vehicle for praising God with the Psalms He has given.

Let not the Genevan tunes be regarded as an obstacle to unity between URC and CanRC. But more importantly, let not Psalm-singing be regarded as a Canadian Reformed idiosyncrasy but recognized as a legacy of the Reformation and so a heritage of the common history of both our federations.

J. Smith

Dear Editor,

When is someone going to wake up and smell the coffee?! In the article "Difficult Tunes" in the Christmas edition of the *Clarion*, the point was made that "since the Canadian Reformed Church began" we have struggled with difficult tunes. Maybe it's time once and for all to get rid of them and replace them with singable songs of praise. How many generations have to try to sing these unsingable tunes that don't glorify God because we can't sing them? The *Book of Praise* is not the inspired word of God (as the Bible is) but manmade; so let's change it and move forward. Let's get more music suited to the piano so that we can sing to our Awesome God with raised voices praising and glorifying Him, and that are not drowned out by the organ. As the article says, people are different and we all have different tastes in music, so now is the time to change and explore those other tastes. May the Lord bless you all as we all strive to serve God in what we do and sing! Let's move forward this New Year of 2002 and make some changes for the positive.

Your sister in Christ,
Sharon Tams,
Taber, Alberta

There is opportunity for making changes. General Synod Neerlandia 2001 made a decision in article 97, giving the Standing Committee of the *Book of Praise* the mandate to "receive submissions and proposals for additional hymns from the churches with reasons for their suitability." Those who seek to make changes can approach their local church council with suggestions.

The editors 

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers

Christmas and New Year have come and gone. We were able to fully realize how much Christ gave up when came to this earth as a little baby. He had to become like a human being so that He could suffer like a human being. Yet He remained God. Isn't that amazing?

So now we begin a another year. Another year where we are able to join in with others to sing God's praises. And in singing God's praises, we must always do our work to the best of our ability. Although our talents may not be the same as someone else in our classroom, yet the talents we have must be used to God's glory, and therefore we have to do our very, very best.

God has been very good to us. Therefore, we also should be very good with what God has given to us, be it a lot or a little.

Lots of love, Aunt Betty

Puzzles

Word Search

by Busy Beaver Ashley Tuininga

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

FIND:

fish	chicken	pig	hamster
dog	lamb	cat	horse
			mouse

Unscramble the Code

by Busy Beaver Jennifer Harink

Why do hurricanes have girls' names?

Unscramble the code to find the answer.	△ = A	⊙ = H	✕ = O	# = V
	⊙ = B	X = I	⊙ = P	⊙ = W
	♥ = C	⊙ = S	⊙ = G	♀ = X
	□ = D	∞ = K	⊙ = R	♂ = Y
	■ = E	λ = L	■ = S	○ = Z
	Υ = F	Υ = M	⊙ = T	
Υ = G	Υ = N	⊙ = U		

⊙ ■ ♥ △ ⊙ ■ ■ ⊙ ⊙ ♀ ♂
 △ □ ■ ⊙ ■ □ □ × ♥ △ Υ ■ ■
 Υ ✕ ⊙ ⊙ × Υ × ♥ △ Υ ■ ■ !

In Common

What have the members of each of the following groups in common?

1. Timothy, James, Titus, Jude
2. Elah, Jezreel, Achor, Baca
3. Abraham, Peter, Israel, Paul
4. Timbrel, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer
5. Cherith, Kidron, Besor, Eshcol
6. Darius, Cyrus, Artaxerxes, Ahasuerus
7. The prodigal son, the unjust steward, the lost sheep, the sower
8. Jacob, Pharaoh's chief butler, Nebuchadnezzar, Pilate's wife
9. Belial, Lucifer, Beelzebub, Apollyon
10. The raising of the Shunnamite's son, the increasing of the widow's oil, the healing of Naaman, the striking blind of the attacking Syrians
11. Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Anna
12. Absalom, Chileab, Adonijah, Solomon
13. Coos, Melita, Chios, Patmos
14. Bithynia, Pamphylia, Galatia, Cilicia
15. Joseph, Daniel, Obadiah, Pilate



FROM THE MAILBOX

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, Ashley Schutten. You were very spoiled at Christmas time, weren't you? When you write again, will you tell me what your hobbies are? I always like to know what my Busy Beavers like to do. After all, each one

of you enjoys different things. Would you also tell me what year you were born. Your pictures were very well done too. It is very obvious you really like cats! Bye for now, Ashley.

Welcome also to another Busy Beaver, Jessamy Vegter. Do you enjoy going to school, Jessamy? Have you got lots of very good friends in your class? What are your hobbies? How many brothers and sisters do you have? There are so many things I would love to hear about. Would you write again sometime and tell me more about yourself and your family? Until then, Jessamy.



Aunt Betty

c/o Premier Printing Ltd.

One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2J 3X5

Email: clarion@premier.mb.ca

