

Clarion

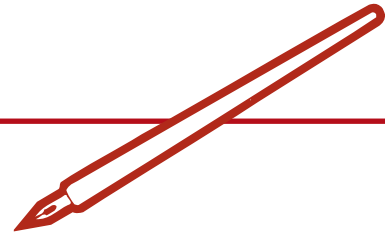
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Numbers 10:1-10

Anchor
Summer Camp

INSIDE!



By R. Aasman



Take Hold of One Jew

You will probably agree that the church is not exactly highly respected and sought after by our world. The very fact that worship service attendance has plummeted in many churches, and that the Sunday has become a day of business as usual, suggests that the church is not attractive to many people in our society. And yet, the church is the most beautiful thing in the world. It is something which is much sought after by those whose minds are awakened by the emptiness of an existence without God, and the blood of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit. Scripture foretold this wonderful truth. To Abraham it had already been promised that he would be a source of blessings to the peoples of the earth. There is also another striking Old Testament passage which proclaims how beautiful and attractive the church is to the world. We read in Zechariah 8:23:

This is what the LORD Almighty says: "In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'"

How could some of the most despised people on the face of the earth become some of the most sought after?

A people magnet

Zechariah prophesied these words shortly after the time of the Babylonian exile as the Jews struggled to rebuild the temple and Jerusalem. Quite frankly, this was not a time when Jews were held in high esteem by the surrounding nations. Jerusalem had no drawing power for the world – not to look at in any event! And yet, the LORD proclaimed that it would be like a magnet drawing people in. Literally the LORD says: "ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you.'" How would this be possible? How could some of the most despised people on the face of the earth become some of the most sought after?

The attraction

The image used by God, of taking hold of a Jew by the hem of his robe, is one that is familiar to us. We have seen pictures of remote countries where little children are peering at the cameraman from behind their mother, clinging to her robe. Clinging to the robe is a sign of refuge, protection and security. Thus the ten men who take hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe are clearly men who are seeking refuge. The ten men who are described as being "from all lan-

guages and nations" represent people of different nations round about the Jews. We have here people who have lost direction and control in their own lives. They are lost souls. They have no hope, no purpose, no future. They feel like ghosts floating in the miasmal mist of despair. They are sinners whose lives are dead in their trespasses and misery. They need the Jew. They beg to hold on to the Jew, to go with the Jew to the temple. They hunger to hear the gospel of salvation which has been given to the Jews so that their sins may be forgiven, their lives liberated from slavery and despair, and they may live as a people with hope.

The great Jew

What the lost world ultimately needs is to know the great Jew, the Son of David, Jesus Christ. This Jew was born in Bethlehem, fulfilled all the demands of God's law, died for our sins on the cross of Golgotha, was raised from the dead in glory, ascended to the right hand of God, poured out his Spirit on Pentecost, and now rules this world for the gathering, defending and preserving of his church. This Jew, and he alone, is the only hope and refuge for the world. During the past two millennia, people from every tribe, tongue and nation have been taking hold of him in true faith. They have been drawn to the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and have been liberated from sin and death through his blood. They will stand with that great multitude of people from every nation on Zion as it is promised in the Book of Revelation.

Still taking hold


What was said about the Jews in the Old Testament still applies to every Christian today. This is something to think about as we find ourselves in the midst of the Christmas season where the person of Jesus is given a fair bit of attention in our society. Unfortunately, the message that many deliver in this Christmas season, while mentioning the story of Jesus' birth, will be seriously demolished as to its true contents. Lost and restless souls will not be rescued and given safe haven by some idyllic story about the baby born in Bethlehem's stall.

The world needs to know where to find refuge.

How important it is that the lost and restless can still identify the one person who can lead them to safety. The world needs to know where to find refuge. We acknowledged earlier that the church is by and large not highly respected and sought after by the world. But that is not a reason for us to withdraw

and to be ashamed. This is not a time to keep a low profile. Being the church of Jesus Christ is not about quietistic compliance with a world that often despises us. The people among whom we live – our neighbours, coworkers, fellow students, and everyone else we meet – need to know that we are Christians who have a hope within us, and answers to the most vexing problems of life. They need to know that they can take hold of us and say: I know that you have God in your life; take me along so that I may know him too!

The only refuge

In a world which has come under the power of sin and death, where Satan is the prince that dominates in people's lives, there is only one bright spot, only one thing of beauty. It is God's gift of Jesus Christ who shed his blood for sinners. Jesus Christ is now given through the proclamation of his Word by his church. Jesus Christ is given to us so that we might share Him with others. Can there be anything more beautiful than to experience the privilege of Jesus Christ opening a door for you where someone will take hold of the "hem of your robe" and be led to the knowledge and conviction of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour? 

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What's inside?

On September 7, 2002, a number of people gathered at the Theological College of our churches to participate in a symposium organized by Dr. Riemer Faber to mark the retirement of Prof. J. Geertsema from active service in the New Testament department of the College. Participants included former students of Prof. Geertsema as well as a number of ministers and professors. Rev. R. Schouten presents us with a report of this symposium. Clearly, there is deep appreciation and affection for Prof. Geertsema who has served our churches faithfully for so many years. May the Lord continue to grant him health, together with his wife.

Rev. P.G. Feenstra writes about the importance and necessity of every Christian to engage in self-examination, along the lines of what is described in the Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper.

We are very happy to have in this issue a report on Anchor Camp by the director of this camp, as well as a personal reflection from a young sister who helped out at this camp. It is an eye opener.

We have a thought provoking meditation by Rev. Theo Lodder. We also have a presentation of a Women's League Day, the column *Ray of Sunshine*, the column *Education Matters*, and a letter to the editor. The latter makes some remarks about the general character of letters to the editor.

The editorial is in keeping with the time of year: Advent. In all the excitement, materialism and partying of this festive season, only the church of Jesus Christ which proclaims the gospel has something to give to people who have walked in darkness. Enjoy your reading.

RA



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By Theo E. Lodder

What is God's will for my life?

"... the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

Romans 8:27b

What is God's will for my life? That's an important question, and it is wise of you to ask it. Sometimes behind this question, whether spoken or not, lies another question, though. And that is: what is God's plan for my life? For some, this latter question nags their whole life through, and turns into an endless search. God's plan for their marriage, family, career, and kingdom service remains a secret code they just can't crack. For such people, depression and uncertainty, fear and insecurity become a way of life.

Need that be so? Not at all. One thing you may know: it is not God's will for you to go through life like that. The problem may lie, then, with how that first question – what is God's will for me? – is asked. If we seek the answer to that question through private communications from the LORD, we'll soon become despondent when we don't get the clues we're looking for. Either that, or we'll somehow convince ourselves that God is telling us something that we simply have no way of corroborating.

And just imagine that we were convinced that God reveals his will to us through private revelations. The confusion and tension that would enter our lives and relationships would be considerable, and quite possibly, unbearable.

Suppose a couple has to make a decision about whether to accept an offer to transfer to another town or city. Jack says, "Dear, the Spirit is telling me that it's best for us to accept the offer and move." Jill says, "You know, honey, the Spirit is leading me to the conviction that it's his will for us to stay." So? Who's right?

Does this all mean that God's will for our lives will always remain a secret? No. For the Holy Spirit reveals God's will to us. How? Not through private communications, but through the proclaimed Word! What is God's will for you, then? His will is, firstly, that you are saved. Listen to what our Saviour says in John 6:40: "For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." Your salvation is God's will for your life.

His will is, secondly, that you are sanctified. The apostle Paul couldn't be more clear about that than in 1 Thessalonians 4:3, where he writes: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification." And then he goes on to explain that this means, for example, that the one desiring to do God's will must abstain from sexual immorality and control his own body in holiness and honour.

He continues this instruction in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, where he commands: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

There you have it. That is God's will for you. Fine, you say, but how does that help me with all the big decisions of life? That's a fair question. Well, never should we forget that "we live by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7). We may never treat God like a clairvoyant, who will give us a peek into our future.

Moreover, when we are living in accordance with God's will, seeking our salvation in Jesus alone, and

seeking our sanctification by his Spirit, then our lives and our futures are secure and in good hands. No, God won't tell us exactly what decisions we should make, as in whom exactly we should date or what school we should attend, what career we should pursue or what outfit we should purchase. So we don't need to imagine that we are receiving all kinds of hints from God through people, things or circumstances. That's all too pagan. We have a better use for tea leaves.

But when we're seeking God's will, by looking to the Son, and asking Him to fill us with his Spirit, the Father will make a level path for our feet. He may not make life easy for us, but He will give us the inner strength, joy and peace and the beautiful gift of assurance that He will never forsake us. Don't worry, then. God's given you all the details you need for your journey. Besides, He's promised you his Spirit, who will intercede for you according to his will (Rom 8:27).

Maybe you don't know what to pray, or how. But the Spirit does. He will plead with your Father, on the basis of your Saviour's shed blood, to lead you along the path of salvation and sanctification, the path of life! And if that's the case, then what a promising life you've got ahead of you, in this world, and forever!



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The Art of Christian Living

By P.G. Feenstra

The title of this column implies that Christian living is never separate from scriptural norms. The doctrines and teachings of the Bible are the underpinnings for our task in all areas of life. Biblical doctrine by its very nature isn't stagnant, but it is the foundation of our thinking, speaking, writing and conduct. How we act is never separate from what we believe. Therefore it belongs to the art of Christian living to examine our lives to see whether what we do and say conforms to God's standards and norms. No Christian is immune to spiritual delinquency or neglect. As children of God we need to take the time to consider whether our motives are pure or whether we have allowed sin to creep into our lives.

Self examination

Examination is necessary in almost every area of life. Most people will not leave the door unless they first take a good look at themselves in a mirror. Students are quite familiar with examinations in their courses of study. Medical doctors examine their patients and engineers have a criterion for examining buildings and roads. In each type of examination a standard exists by which the examiner measures the condition of the thing checked. Any deficiencies caution him to make changes. Such self-examination needs to become part of our Christian lives.

Several passages of Scripture speak of self-examination as a crucial element in Christian living. Paul writes in Galatians 6:3,4a, "If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test (examine) his own actions." The same apostle instructs the Corinthians to examine themselves prior to the celebration of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:28). Our lives must come under

the testing of God's refining fire (1 Peter 1:3-7). The form for the celebration of the Lord's Supper spells out how true self-examination consists of the following three parts:

First, let everyone consider his sins and accursedness, so that he, detesting himself, may humble himself before God. For the wrath of God against sin is so great that He could not leave it unpunished, but has punished it in His beloved Son Jesus Christ by the bitter and shameful death on the cross. Second, let everyone search his heart whether he also believes the sure promise of God that all his sins are forgiven him only for the sake of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ and that the perfect righteousness of Christ

Self-examination needs to become part of our Christian lives.

is freely given him as his own, as if he himself had fulfilled all righteousness. Third, let everyone examine his conscience whether it is his sincere desire to show true thankfulness to God with his entire life and, laying aside all enmity, hatred, and envy, to live with his neighbour in true love and unity (*Book of Praise*, p. 595).

What is stated in the Lord's Supper Form reflects the language of the Heidelberg Catechism. The art of Christian living includes a knowledge of our own sins and misery, how we have been delivered from our sin and misery, and how we are to show thankfulness to the Lord for such deliverance (Lord's Day 1 answer 2).

Knowing our sin: the start of Christian living

It is clear from the second answer of the Heidelberg Catechism that Christian living rests on knowledge. Knowledge is the primary ingredient of living in the joy of our only comfort. Of course there are things we'd rather not know. No one takes delight in the knowledge of his own sinfulness and guilt before the Lord. Yet if we don't have knowledge of how great our sins and misery are we will never comprehend the depth of God's love in Christ Jesus (Romans 7:13-25). When a physician examines your general health you don't expect him to say, "There are a lot of things wrong with you but I don't think you should know about them. Even if the news is not very pleasant you want to know and otherwise there is no cure. The Word of God acts as a two-edged sword. You need to be cut by the knowledge of sin to see the need for the Physician.

In Scripture, "to know" breathes intimacy. Knowledge of our sin, deliverance and gratitude does not merely speak to our intellect but touches our hearts. It is far more than collecting information with our brains. Knowledge of the heart takes what we know and uses it purposefully for the development of a relationship. The knowledge we have of our own sinfulness is to build our relationship with the Lord. Thus Christian living is knowing that we are sinners but also how great our sins and misery are. It is to know Jesus Christ as Saviour but also how He has saved us.

As we grow in knowledge of our own sins and as an awareness of our misery is deepened we stand in awe of the Lord's work of salvation in Christ. It never ceases to amaze us how Jesus, as the Shepherd of his flock, came to save

us and provide us with a place of refuge. It will also lead us to the service and worship the Lord desires.

The art of Christian living is not individualistic; yet it is intensely personal. If I am to live and die in the joy of belonging to my faithful Saviour I need to know *my* sin and misery. Each believer must say this for themselves. The apostle Paul writes in Romans 7:18-20, "I know that nothing good lives in me (notice the present tense), that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it." David in Psalm 51 gives us a similar picture. He confesses that by nature he is evil. His mother conceived and gave birth to him in sin. Sin touches his whole life. David realizes that every sin he commits is against the Lord.

True self-examination keeps in check gossip, slander, jealousy and other works of the flesh whereby we lash out at the weaknesses and sins of others.

As believers we know ourselves to be chief of sinners because there should be no one else's sins we know better than our own. There is no one I know to be a greater sinner than myself. That knowledge automatically changes how we deal with other sinners. Rather than being quick to condemn, we acknowledge before the Lord that we are *all* sinners who stand before the Lord in need of his grace and mercy. If the Lord would deal with us according to our sins no one would be able to stand before his judgement. True self-examination keeps in check gossip, slander, jealousy and other works of the flesh whereby we lash out at the weaknesses and sins of others.

Knowing how great my sins and misery are, should not lead to despair or self-abasement. Instead we seek our lives in Christ with all humility. The Father hated my sins so much, yet loved me so much that He gave up his only Son in order to make atonement and reconciliation for them.

Salvation: the heart of Christian living

We are to know Jesus Christ as the One we need for our spiritual health. Had He not entered our lives we would surely die! For sin is not a matter of making a few mistakes; neither is it a matter of some human weaknesses. I am in desperate need of help. Amazingly, however, I do not fully comprehend and I am not aware of how bad my sins really are. The Lord opens my eyes to see it by giving me his holy Word. He takes away the scales of my spiritual blindness so that I can see how good and gracious He is in providing a way of escape.

Sin saddens the Lord who created us fearfully and wonderfully. We hurt others by our sinful words and by our failure to act the way we ought to. Yet there is a blessed hope in the mercy and compassion of Jesus Christ. He grants us his plenteous salvation. There is freedom and peace through his blood shed on the cross. Though my sins be like scarlet I am washed clean and am made white as snow (Isaiah 1:18). He takes away my sin and my guilt completely without any merit of my own. In Jesus Christ my redemption is *complete*. David says in Psalm 51:12, "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation. . . ." Restoration is possible because there is a perfect way of escape! No matter how great my sins and misery are, there is redemption and therefore I can live in the certainty of forgiveness and restoration! Without a doubt Christ's redemption is greater than all my sins.

No matter how great my sins and misery are, there is redemption and therefore I can live in the certainty of forgiveness and restoration!

The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7). Christ Jesus has come and granted complete and full redemption. Our sin is great but our Saviour is far superior! Though the disease of sin is so bad that it is killing us, we may rejoice because there is a cure in Christ.

Service: the path for Christian living

The Lord wants us to know how we are to serve Him; otherwise we cannot live in joy and happiness. The God who



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created and redeemed us must be taken into account in every thought, decision, word and action. That resolve ought to fill our hearts at all times whether we be in church, at school, at work or at home. If we are to enjoy the comfort of God's saving work, we need to be eagerly ready to learn from God how to give thanks for all his blessings.

The art of true Christian living means you will know how to serve the Lord in gratitude – not as a part time job but as a daily occupation. How refreshing it would be if we could wake up each day and examine what motivates us. Is it my sincere desire to show true thankfulness to God with my entire life and, laying aside all enmity, hatred, and envy, to live with my neighbour in true love and unity? A people who show true thankfulness to God and live in true love and unity with their neighbour give evidence that their heart has been turned around completely in the service of the living God. Let us know the art of true Christian living by practising self-examination each day so that the wealth and the riches of the gospel may be unlocked to us. 

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Symposium: New Testament Studies and the Reformed Faith

By R. Schouten

On September 7th, 2002, about forty-five people gathered in the chapel room of the Theological College. They had come from far and near to participate in a symposium entitled "New Testament Studies and the Reformed Faith." The conference was initiated and organized by Dr. Riemer Faber to mark the retirement of Prof. J. Geertsema from active service in the New Testament department of the College. Participants included former students of Prof. Geertsema as well as a number of ministers and professors.

After a hearty welcome from Dr. R. Faber, opening devotions were led by Dr. C. VanDam. This led to the first presentation by Dr. Al Wolters of Redeemer University College in Ancaster, ON. His paper was entitled "Semantic Borrowing and the Meaning of Greek **kefalh**" (the Greek word at the end of the title is pronounced "kephalay"). Until recent times, this Greek word has been translated as "chief," "leader," "head," or "authority." This traditional range of meanings has been challenged by numerous contemporary scholars who argue that the accepted translations do not reflect usage in ordinary ancient Greek. In place of the traditional understanding, the newer proposal is to translate "**kefalh**," as "source."

Dr. Wolters, however, presented the thesis that *both* meanings ("source" and "authority") are, in fact, extremely rare in Greek until NT times. When these meanings do occur, he argued, they reflect a phenomenon called "semantic borrowing." The meaning "source" is an isolated semantic loan from *sar*, the regular Persian word for "head," which also means "source." The meaning "chief" is a case of semantic borrowing from *ro'sh* and/or

re'sh, which are the regular Hebrew and Aramaic words for "head," both of which can also mean "chief." This latter sense, though unattested in pagan Greek, can be found in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) as well as in Philo, Josephus and Paul. The use of "**kefalh**," in the sense of "authority" or "head" spread in Greek usage through the impact of the NT writings, so much so that it became common in the writings of the church fathers as well as in medieval and modern Greek.

The upshot of Dr. Wolters' carefully argued and well-documented presentation is that the traditional translations of "**kefalh**," are fully in line with the overall semantic development of this disputed word. As you might guess, the scholarly debate about this Greek word has significant impact on one's understanding of controversial passages such as 1 Corinthians 11:3ff and Ephesians 5:23. It was good to hear a sound, scholarly defense of the accepted translation, especially in the face of aggressive, feminist critiques (although Dr. Wolters did not directly address this issue).

The next speaker was Dr. Dean Anderson, minister of the Reformed Church (Liberated) at Katwijk, the Netherlands. As Dr. Anderson is a former student of Prof. Geertsema, it was fitting that he could participate in the symposium as a speaker. His address was entitled "Internal Exegesis: Psalm 95 in Hebrews 3 and 4." Hebrews 3 and 4 present us with a somewhat rare phenomenon in the NT. A passage from the OT is not only quoted and applied to a particular situation but is also exegeted. Dr. Anderson therefore referred to this as a case of "internal exegesis."

Psalm 95 warns its readers not to harden their hearts as the unbelieving wilderness generation did when God swore that they would not enter his rest. Hebrews picks up on the fact that Psalm 95 describes the promised rest in Canaan as "God's rest" and connects this to God's rest on the seventh day. For the author of Hebrews, this means that the entrance into Canaan under Joshua cannot have fulfilled the promise of God's rest for his people. According to Dr. Anderson, Hebrews implies that God's rest after his works of creation lasts for eternity and not just one day. This means that Adam and Eve were created to live in God's rest and not to toil in hard works. God's saving work is intended to restore the situation of paradise. Entrance into Canaan, however, was not yet a restoration of paradise.

Dr. Anderson then gave an innovative exegesis of Hebrews 3:9 in which he argued that the author of Hebrews understood the "works" of God mentioned in Psalm 95:9 as a reference to God's works of creation (compare Psalm 95:4-5) and not to God's wonders in the time of Israel's sojourn in the wilderness. In order to support this innovative exegesis, Dr. Anderson had to postulate that the word "therefore" in Hebrews 3:10 is a corruption and does not belong to the original text. Since text-critical evidence to support the supposed later addition of the word "therefore" is completely lacking, Dr. Anderson's position is not very convincing. However, his unconvincing exegesis of Hebrews 3:9-10 does not necessarily undermine the main thought of his paper which is that the author of Hebrews exegetes Psalm 95 to advance his teaching that God's salvation works are intended to restore the



“empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party” (1:10). Over against God’s truth, the Judaizing opponents engage in “foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law” (3:9). The phrase “evil beasts” is cited by Paul to demonstrate the wild, unrestrained behaviour of the false teachers while the phrase “lazy gluttons” is a satirical response to their attempts to gain purity by way of food laws and the like.

Having demonstrated this basic point, Dr. Faber went on to give a brief overview of the whole letter highlighting throughout the connection between sound doctrine and godly behaviour. In conclusion, he stated that the purpose of Paul’s citation of Epimenides is to show that doctrinal error is accompanied by moral corruption. A subsidiary conclusion highlighted the unity of the letter to Titus. Many scholars believe that Titus is a mishmash of unrelated topics. However, the consistent emphasis of the unity of doctrine and life points to its underlying unity. Dr. Faber’s presentation was most helpful in opening up for participants the theme of the letter of Paul to Titus.

Next in line was the new professor of New Testament at the Theological College, Prof. G.H. Visscher. His speech was entitled “Were the Reformers Wrong about Abraham? A Central Aspect of Romans 4.” Recent interpreters of Paul have argued that Paul’s

Sabbath rest in which Adam and Eve lived before the fall.

As a final thought, the speaker expressed his view that the word “sabbatismos” as used in Hebrews 4:9 should be translated as “Sabbath-keeping” or “Sabbath observance” and not as “Sabbath rest.” According to Dr. Anderson, the word does not refer to the eternal Sabbath rest promised for believers but to a continuing practice of Sabbath-keeping in the NT church which points forward to the eternal Sabbath on the new heavens and earth. His exegesis on this point seems unconvincing since the contrast in Hebrews 4:9 is between a rest that Joshua failed to deliver (4:8) and a future, end-times rest into which we must strive to enter (cf. 4:11). A reference to Sabbath-keeping in this framework seems unlikely. It seems more appropriate to maintain the translation “Sabbath rest” or “rest” as found in all the modern versions (including KJV, RSV, NRSV, NAS, ESV and NIV). All in all, Dr. Anderson gave participants a good exegetical work-out and much food for thought about a difficult NT passage.

The next presentation came from Dr. Riemer Faber, Professor of Classical Studies at the University of Waterloo on the topic: “Evil Beasts, Lazy Gluttons: The Exegesis of Classical Quotations.” His title comes from Titus 1:12 in which the apostle Paul cites a line of Greek poetry attributed to Epimenides.

The full citation is: “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” Dr. Faber’s speech focused not so much on the source and original meaning of this poetic citation but instead endeavoured to show its function within Paul’s letter to Titus as a whole. He argued that Paul applies this line of Greek poetry to the Judaizing opponents of the true gospel in Crete. The lying Cretans are teachers at work in the Cretan congregation who pervert sound doctrine. They are





resistance to “works of the law” was not an attack on so-called legalism but rather an attack on Jewish nationalism. Many Jewish Christians said that Gentiles could belong to the Church only by way of becoming Jews, i.e., by getting themselves circumcised, keeping Sabbath and upholding the Jewish food laws. When Paul says in various places that we are justified by faith and not by works of the law, he is showing that Gentile Christians need not become Jewish in order to be part of the church. Prof. Visscher showed quite convincingly that the new interpreters of Paul are on the wrong track. In a passage like Romans 4:4-5, Paul’s basic point is the “non-works” character of faith. Paul is not simply repudiating circumcision, Sabbath-keeping and Jewish food laws as “identity markers.” Instead, the apostle is indeed concerned to ward off a “works” mentality in a more general sense as an ever present threat to the purity of faith. Since Prof. Visscher hopes to do more work in this area of NT studies, we look forward to his further reflections.

Last on the menu for all hearty eaters at this well provisioned symposium was the topic “New Testament Studies and Modern Ethical Issues,” presented by Dr. Nelson Kloostermann, of Mid-America Reformed Seminary. He

dealt first with the question of how the NT functions as a source of moral guidance. The NT is the story of God’s redemptive action in Christ Jesus. What we read in the NT makes sense only as the climax of the story of Israel in the Old Testament. The principles and rules of the NT function only within the NT story of who we are, namely, the redeemed people of God. Dr. Kloostermann highlighted the fact that in Scripture there are no norms without a story, no ethics without a narrative. Ethics is concerned with how we are to live but that can only be answered on the basis of what people we have become in Christ. Our understanding of who we are determines in the end how we must live. Dr. Kloostermann also showed how contemporary ethics is more aware than previous generations were of the communal or ecclesial nature of ethics. The proclamation of the gospel gives rise to the church and the church as the people of God has an important function in moral nurture. Dr. Kloostermann’s presentation was the last of five in one afternoon but those who were able to remain alert were richly rewarded and enticed to further study.

Dr. J. DeJong led in concluding observations after which Prof. Geertsema spoke words of thanks and ap-

preciation. Participants were thankful for the many years of devoted service on the part of Prof. Geertsema. He was described as an “archeologist of the Word.” Prof. Geertsema always did his scholarly work as a servant of the churches. As a minister of the Word, he loved the people of God and as a professor of NT, it was his passion to open Scripture for his students so that they, in turn, could pass on the treasures of the gospel to the churches. We wish him continued pleasure in the study of God’s Word during his retirement. A word of thanks is in order to Dr. Riemer Faber for the excellent manner in which this conference was organized. Following the conference, most participants were able to share in a festive banquet at a nearby restaurant. There students, ministers and professors could continue their discussions of the presentations they had heard. In some places, those discussions are still happening. That’s the benefit of a scholarly symposium.



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Anchor Summer Camp 2002

By Helen Dorgeloos

On the afternoon of Monday, July 8, Peacehaven Scout Camp near Paris, Ontario was filled with great excitement as the Anchor Camp participants arrived for their yearly holiday. Participants enthusiastically greeted each other and the volunteer staff members. Everyone was eagerly looking forward to another twelve days of singing, talking, laughing, playing, swimming and more. Our heavenly Father has blessed the operation of Anchor Camp greatly. Among his countless blessings, He granted us health, safety, traveling mercies, beautiful weather and the enjoyment of being together as fellow believers.

Participants

The Anchor Camp mandate indicates that "Anchor Summer Camp seeks to provide twelve days of holiday experiences for individuals of all ages with special needs. . . Through dedicated volunteers, the Camp supports the individual, physical, emotional and spiritual needs of the participants." Anchor

Summer Camp began in 1980 at Valens Conservation Area. The first Camp consisted of nine participants and twelve volunteer staff. This past summer, thirty-two Campers (four of whom joined us for one week each) attended Anchor Camp 2002. In total Anchor Camp 2002 consisted of an average of sixty-five people. In the beginning years Anchor Camp provided an opportunity for the parents to enjoy a rest and/or holiday. But over the years the participants have grown up and entered adulthood. This summer our dedicated staff ranged in age from the early teens (assistant counsellors) to seventy or more (for several of our kitchen staff). This year our youngest participant was five years old while the oldest was fifty. Everyone enjoyed having several younger children join us this past summer.

Although some things have changed since that first Camp, many things have remained the same. Socializing and partaking of excellent meals are still a highlight. Lifting our voices in joyful song has continued to be another

favourite activity. Most important of all is the fact that the participants and staff are united by a common bond of faith. Preparations for Anchor Camp begin in March when invitations are sent out to the participants and volunteers from past years. Advertisements for volunteers are also placed in the church bulletins on a regular basis. A small committee makes the many arrangements for food, transportation, accommodations, outings and volunteers. A representative from the committee regularly reports to the Anchor board. In June a volunteer meeting is held where the volunteers have the opportunity to meet each other, learn about Camp and to read the folder of information concerning their participant. The staff consists of counsellors, kitchen staff, a nurse, a lifeguard, laundry and cleaning staff, and a director. For the past four years Anchor Camp has rented a Boy Scout Camp which consists of several buildings for accommodation and a kitchen/dining room. This past summer a number of trailers were also required to supplement the available accommodations.

Your typical day

A typical day begins with a delicious breakfast: perhaps bacon and eggs. Each meal is usually followed by numerous announcements. Several of the participants love to stand up and publicly thank our talented cooks. After each meal the campers from one row of tables have the privilege of doing dishes. Around ten a.m. everyone gathers in a circle outside on their lawn chairs. A number of the participants select a song from the Anchor songbook which consists of a spiritual section and a fun song section. This is followed by a Bible story told by one of the volunteers. Then it is snack time. Thereafter a craft is made and displayed in the dining room. After a tasty lunch and more dishes of course,



everyone looks forward to the pool opening for several hours.

People swim, have pool races, play catch, play games, while some relax and observe all the fun. Then it's time for a shower and believe it or not, time to eat again! By this time everyone has a hearty appetite after all that busy activity. In the evening a day-closing is held, singing from the *Book of Praise*. This time other participants select a song and this time is concluded by singing the evening prayer. Weather permitting, this is also time for a roaring fire which may be followed by a gooey marshmallow roast. Throughout the day, there is also lots of opportunity for leisure activities such as playing catch, baseball, soccer, making jigsaw puzzles, playing card and board games, colouring, and best of all, socializing, gentle teasing and joking.

Once the participants are all tucked in for the night, a number of counsellors supervise these resting/sleeping participants. A few of the older campers enjoy a final snack with the company of a counsellor. The remaining counsellors attend a staff meeting at 10 p.m. where the day is discussed and plans for the following day are explained. This meeting is closed with a scripture reading and prayer of thankfulness that our heavenly Father has kept everyone safe in his loving care.

An exciting day

Towards the end of the first week, there was a buzz of much excitement throughout the Camp. Early Friday morning everyone tumbled out of bed early. After a great breakfast and the final preparations, everyone boarded the school bus (which one of our local schools lends us) or the Anchor van or another vehicle. Then off we set for our destination – Marineland, Niagara Falls. It was a long drive but soon everyone was singing joyfully, songs from the *Book of Praise* or other favourites such as "How Great Thou Art." Upon our arrival, everyone enjoyed a delicious picnic lunch. Thereafter everyone set off in small groups to enjoy the whale and seal shows, the rides and the animals. But the excitement of the day was not over yet. At the end of the day, we loaded the bus and vehicles and headed in the direction of Vineland where a number of the Rockway congregation were eagerly awaiting our arrival at the Breukelman farm. They provided us with a scrumptious barbecue



supper, which was followed by a wild, bumpy hay ride and time to socialize.

On Sunday everyone was up early dressed in their Sunday best. The participants displayed their childlike faith and were eager to go up to the house of the Lord. Each year Anchor Camp visits a different congregation and this year it was Kerwood's turn. After the morning service each participant and their counsellor visited a host family for lunch, while several campers stayed with a host family in the church building. The afternoon service was followed by a coffee social and an opportunity to meet the members of the congregation. During this time a van full of campers also visited the Kerwood fire hall where they were given a tour by a member of the congregation who works there. Others used their time to play the piano in the church auditorium. The chairs were moved, tables were set up and the ladies provided us with an ap-

petizing cold buffet. Soon it was time to return back to Camp. Sunday evening is also time when some staff members return home to be replaced by new ones, while other staff members somehow find the energy to remain for whole Camp time.

On the Tuesday of the second week, much of the day was spent decorating Camp and preparing for the evening Open House. Several Campers delight in the opportunity to direct traffic and show our visitors where to park. After a formal Christian opening, several campers select their favourite song from the *Book of Praise* and once again the air is filled with the sound of joyful songs to the Lord. A small choir of campers sang for us. Two brave counsellors mounted a picnic table to play the exciting game of "Name That Camper." At the conclusion of the evening, the participants led the way to the refreshments in a musical parade.

Our second week

During the second week, we also spent a morning bowling in Ancaster. This is a favourite activity as some of the participants begin asking after Open House and sometimes even before Open House: "When are we going bowling?" On the way to the bowling alley, one of the volunteers brought her guitar and once again the bus was filled with sounds of praise to the Lord. Then the bowling alley resounded with shouts of enthusiasm as the pins tumbled down. Before returning to Camp, we made an important stop – for an ice-cream treat! During Camp one or more small group outings occur when a van full of participants accompanied by several counsellors visit a local place of interest. This year the group visited a butterfly conservatory and hiked around Crawford Lake. Another special activity is "Hat Day" when everyone arrived for breakfast wearing some form of headgear from caps to sombreros to strange and unusual creations.


All too soon the last night of Camp arrived. Before retiring for the evening, it was time to watch the soaring, glowing fireworks and celebrate with bright sparklers which lit up the evening sky. Friday was a time of packing and cleaning up. But before the morning ended, one important event had to take place – Kangaroo Court was in session! Everyone welcomed the colourfully attired judge and attorneys. This entrance was followed by roars of laughter when almost everyone was found guilty and treated to wet or other unique consequences. When the cooks were found guilty of fattening us up, they were required to perform some hoop and skipping exercises for the captivated audience. Throughout the afternoon, family and caregivers arrived to pick up their child or charge. Although Anchor Camp 2002 was over, it wasn't long before everyone started looking forward to Anchor Camp 2003. About two months later, staff and participants gathered at the Anchor Home for the annual Reunion. It was a time to share photos and memories. The afternoon was concluded with a singsong and a tasty barbecue.

Many thanks

A large number of people actively volunteer their time either helping at Camp or in the organization behind the scenes. Others lend their trailers so that we have sufficient sleeping space. Others donate food which helps to keep



the food part of our budget at a healthy level. We are thankful for all those who helped make Anchor Camp a success. But most importantly of all we are grateful to our heavenly Father who has granted us a successful Camp. It is the Lord who has given everything necessary to provide a safe and enjoyable holiday for our special brothers and sisters. During Camp we are all reminded how everyone on this earth has limitations in life, whether they are physical, mental or other. But at Anchor Camp we are all united by a love for the Lord

and the knowledge that we are not alone but that we belong to our Father who knows all our needs and limitations and still loves us. The name of Anchor Camp is taken from Hebrews 6:19: "as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul." We give honour and glory to our Father as the One who guides our daily lives and has made all things well at Anchor Camp 2002. 

Helen Dorgeloos is the director of Anchor Camp and is a grade 9 teacher at Attercliffe School.

Can You See What I See?

By Christina Aasman

I went to Anchor Camp this summer excited but nervous, not knowing what to expect. The only special needs person with whom I have regular contact is my cousin. I sat back and watched the participants arrive, amazed by what I saw. They all came to say hi, introduced themselves and were ready to make friends.

The first night there, I played cards with my friend. Before we knew it, there was a small group of participants gathered at the table. They each took a side to cheer for. We didn't know them and they didn't know us, but that didn't matter to them. I learned a lot throughout the week. The participants were very loving and accepting, willing to share, and willing to befriend anyone who spent time with them.

They are people; they have special needs, yes, but they are people just like you and me. They care and laugh and love and cry with a fiercer passion than I've ever seen before. Never have I felt so much in one week; never have I learned so much. One of the participants, Grace, really stood out because of her unfailing helpfulness and compassion. Anytime someone was hurt, upset, crying or angry, she was there with a comforting hug and a kind word. She was always helping out. She loved to do the dishes even if it wasn't her turn. She would grab an apron and start rinsing, singing while she worked.

Each person is so special. Many of them are very intelligent, can read and write, but have practical needs like washing, dressing, and walking to the bathroom. Others are the total opposite. They do most things for themselves but don't have the capacity to read or write. Living for a week in Anchor Camp really made me think: how many of us so called "normal" people give our special brothers and sisters the time of day?

The participants at Anchor Camp will never forget you. In just one week you make an impression by being with them, loving them, and treating them like real people. They also left a positive

My cousin Cameron.




impression on me. I discovered so many talents. They can play baseball like there's no tomorrow, sing more enthusiastically than any famous singer, play piano from memory, and laugh! They never hesitate to smile at anyone or to laugh at a joke.

One boy, named Shawn, loved to make people laugh and always had a smile. His intense love of whales spilled into every conversation. He'd ask you if you were a whale, or if you ever became one, would you give him a ride on your back? He loved to joke around. They love so freely. It didn't take long for my cousin Cameron and a girl named Sarah, both ten years old, to become friends. Sarah never missed an opportunity to help Cameron and play with him. She always remarked how cute he was.

I didn't think I'd be the one learning that week, but I did. They taught me so much about living as a child of God. My experiences at camp have added a new dimension to the way I learn about God and his Word. The Bible tells us to have faith like a child. I saw such faith at Anchor Camp. When you are with a person who has special needs, don't right away think about their handicap. We have so many barriers that keep us from faith and love and truth and honesty. These people know how to break

them down. They believe in God because they see the evidence of his hand in all creation. Their acceptance, love, and ready truth and honesty have made me believe that in a lot of matters of the heart, we have so many more handicaps than they.

I did not know how hard it would be to say goodbye. We had just met, and I was already leaving. Looking back at my fears before my week at Anchor Camp began, I now realize how ignorant I was. I've learned so much from them, but there is still more to learn. The times I've spent with them will never be forgotten and will follow me all my life. I urge you to take the time to get to know these people, to learn from them, and to give back to them. The least I can do for them will never make up for what they have done for me. I find myself already thinking of next year and anticipating all the good times waiting for me.

If in writing this I have inspired even one person to get to know someone with special needs then I'll be happy. I hope I have helped you to see what I see now. 

Christina Aasman is a fifteen year old, first time assistant counsellor from Millcourt, Ontario.



By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

“Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for Him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.”
Psalm 37:7

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

David shows us in this Psalm how the Lord takes delight in those who put their trust and commit their lives in everything they do, to Him. We must wait patiently until He returns, and until then, we must strive to walk in the ways that He has shown us in his Word.

In this Psalm, David vividly shows the differences between the ways of the wicked and the ways of the righteous. We read in verse 9, “For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land.” At times we can become frustrated and angry when things don’t go our way, or when sickness or other trials enter our lives. David teaches us that if we put our focus on our problems and concerns; then it will only but make us anxious. Rather, when we concentrate on God and on his goodness, then we will find peace. Peace can only be truly found when we humble ourselves before our Heavenly Father. Through the working of the Holy Spirit, we will be able to grow in the hope of faith and knowledge of his sure promises. Jesus also promises a sure reward for those with humble attitudes. Matthew 5:5.

In all humbleness we must also commit ourselves to the Lord. In doing so, we must entrust everything to Him alone – our lives, our families, jobs, possessions are all in his control and guidance. By committing ourselves to the Lord we are trusting in Him that He can care for us better than we can ourselves. Therefore, we must be willing to wait patiently for Him to work out what is best for us.

For when we look in the world around us, it so often seems like they are all so wealthy, and have so many material things. The ungodly seem to be so content and happy in all they have. But as Christians, doesn’t it seem like we are committed to so many things? So many of us have to work very hard to get somewhere in life. Indeed, we are blessed with more than what we as sinful people need. David too reminds us, that also in the material and earthly possessions, we must keep our focus in the right perspective. “Better the little that the righteous have than the wealth of many wicked; for the power of the wicked will be broken, but the LORD upholds the righteous” (verse 16,17).

In verse 34, we are told to wait for the Lord and keep his way. It is not always easy to be patient when we endure trials. We always want a change to happen much earlier. God promises to us that when we wait and submit under his will, that He will honor us. In 1 Peter 5:6, we can read, “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time.” We simply *must* be

patient, steadily doing the work God has given each of us to do, and allowing God to change our circumstances if He wills, on his time.

God will not forsake those who put their trust and hope in Him. He will carry us through and will be there with every trial and suffering that we face on this earth. “The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD; He is their stronghold in time of trouble. The Lord helps them and delivers them; He delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in Him” (verses 39,40).

We are so rich in Him. It is so good for us to take time out of our busy schedules and reflect on all the goodness that our gracious God and Father has bestowed on us sinful people.

Stand firm in the truth of his Word, and take comfort in the knowledge; that He will be our stronghold in times of trouble, and He will redeem those who take refuge in Him.

*How blessed is the man whose walk is not
In evil counsel which the wicked plot,
Who does not stand where sin its pleasure offers
And will not take his seat among the scoffers;
But his delight is in God’s cov’nant law:
By night and day he ponders it with awe.*

*Behold the righteous man is like a tree
Which by the streams yields fruit abundantly,
Whose leaves are green and shall not fade or perish;
In all he does, the righteous one shall flourish.
But wicked men are not like him, for they
Resemble chaff that winds will drive away.*

Psalm 1:1, 2

Birthday in December:

1: MARTEN JANSEN will turn 13
98 Morgandale Crescent,
Orangeville, ON L9W 3C7

Congratulations with your thirteenth birthday Marten. We hope and pray that our heavenly Father will continue to bless and keep you in this new year. May you have an enjoyable day together with your family and friends. Till the new year,

Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman
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Australia's John Calvin Schools' Support Office

By K. Sikkema

The Free Reformed Churches of Australia have put significant efforts into building a network of Reformed schools in the vicinity of each of the congregations of those churches. Recognizing the significance of John Calvin, they named each of their seven schools after this leader of the Reformation. In submission to the Word of God, and in adherence to the Three Forms of Unity, they have endeavoured to hire a support officer in the person of A.C. Breen from the Netherlands about two years ago. He was so kind as to send us a recent report on his efforts. In this review, salient elements from that report are quoted, in his words.

Roman Catholic and Reformed

The report begins with some comments regarding the unit on Ethics / Pedagogy brother Breen teaches as part of the Reformed Education Diploma Course (REDC):

... Christ's grace is sufficient for us, for his strength is made perfect in weakness. (2 Cor 12:9). It is by his Holy Spirit that teachers and students can bring beauty to God's pathway. At God's right hand Christ rules his church and brings together his congregation, the assembly of the members of his kingdom. He gathers, defends and preserves *for Himself* a church from the beginning of the world to its end. One of the examples of this church gathering work is to teach the youth to glorify God's name. What a privilege to work with his children, a heritage of the LORD (Ps 127). Christ has the dew of his youth (Ps 110). God builds his kingdom out of the mouth of his children (Ps 8). Therefore pray for the teachers and the students that they may find Christ's strength in their weakness.

Other courses in this REDC program are also under development, and actually

are awarded credits at the Roman Catholic Notre Dame University's teacher education program. Interestingly, the Support Officer also acts as "Head of Professional Practice" for student teachers in the John Calvin Schools, ensuring an even higher level of input in the training of Reformed teachers. The courses in the REDC program include:

4 Units for the Primary School (student) teachers, and 4 Units for the high school (student) teachers. In the first semester we went through *Old Testament 1* and *Doctrine of the Bible/Church History 1*. . . In the second semester we studied *New Testament 1*, and *Ethics/Pedagogy 1*. . . As soon as a (student) teacher passes all the 8 Units, he or she receives the REDC Diploma.

Not what the teacher says, but what the student does, is the climax of teaching.

Support officer

Just what does this support officer do?

I support the teachers who have to implement several Learning Areas. And during the Reformed Education Diploma Course I present the importance of education as equipment for a life of service and edification. We are so thankful for the Word, which the LORD has given us, not only for information, but also for transformation, for continuing conversion. Not what the teacher says, but what the student does, is the climax of teaching. If you love Me, Jesus said, keep My commandments. Not *know* My commandments, but *keep* them. As a faithful scholar, friend, coach and communicator the teacher equips the students for service to the LORD, and together with the students the teacher goes through all the Learning Areas. To God's glory and our salvation. Because the John Calvin Schools are established by parents

and other members of the Free Reformed Churches, the whole congregation of Christ is responsible for Reformed Education, that means, education in compliance with God's Word and committed to the Reformed Confessions which binds us to God's Word. "With the cooperation of the communion of saints," parents give their children education which is based on Scripture and Confession (art 53 of the Australian Church Order).

The work of the support office is managed by a committee consisting of all school principals in the Metro (Perth) and Albany areas and representatives from each Board. This support office committee meets once every semester and reviews the work done as well as setting new goals for the period ahead. In between Committee meetings an executive Committee looks after the day-to-day operations of the support office." With an expanding workload, proposals were being considered to add "a half time person (curriculum officer) for the work of writing curricula; and a half time person (learning area consultant) to give direction to the classroom programmes of teachers across the schools."

One area of focus for the support officer lies in the development of a Health and Physical Education Learning Area (HAPELA), which includes units on safety and environment, nutrition, drugs and diseases, and fundamental movement skills. The latter includes body management skills, locomotor skills, and object control skills, and is approached as part of "fulfilling our cultural mandate of being God's images. We are responsible to God for the way we take care of our bodies." The report presents several quotes of student outcomes statements, but for the sake of brevity I lift out just this one:

In the *Drugs & Diseases* document you can read statements like: "the students recognize and express that they do not experience perfect health here on earth, although society aspires to utopia, but that they

it is a question of faith. As such, it asks for priorities set by faith that recognizes God's providence, and that remembers the purpose for which He put us on this earth. In the end, can we, with a clear conscience and having done all we could, ask the Lord for a blessing on our efforts of gratitude, and then leave it in his hands?

From baptism to profession

Mindful of the above, I like to present here a case for secondary Reformed education, in which I quote some work by Dr. Riemer Faber from some years ago. In his five arguments he focused on the addition of grades 11 and 12 to an existing grades 9-10 program in Fergus, but his foundational points are equally valid for all of the secondary years. For the first argument, Dr. Faber referred to the parents' baptismal vows that they will have their children instructed in the faith:

This implies that the young receive Christian education until they reach an age of discernment. Psalm 78:6-7 reminds parents to "arise and tell [the will of God] to their children, so that they should set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments." While such instruction begins at an early age, it is especially in the teenage years that a child comes to set her hope in God, that is, to come to a saving faith, the Lord willing.

In the second argument, he pointed up the covenantal responsibility of parents:

This means that they must foster the faith in home, church and school until the child is able to discern for herself. Such discretion is developed especially in the years when she receives upper level instruction. Christian instruction in the high school encourages the child to make decisions which are according to God's will, while secular schooling cannot provide such help. Parental responsibility diminishes as discretion is assumed by the youth, especially at the public profession of faith.

With a reference to Deuteronomy 4:9-10, Dr. Faber linked this to an implication that to "foster the development of faith in the teenager to that end, the school should provide Christian education especially in the knowledge of

Scripture and the Reformed faith at the upper level of the high school."

In the third argument, Dr. Faber addressed the character of the students:

During the age of adolescence, young people question and throw into the doubt the instruction they have been receiving throughout their youth in home, church and school. It is especially during the teenage years that the faith and all it entails is questioned. Deuteronomy 6:20 reminds us that these questions will arise: "when your son asks you, 'what is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the ordinances?'" It goes on to warn us that it is the duty of parents to remind their children of the promises and obligations of the covenant. Furthermore, during the teenage years Reformed teachers may equip the young people to prepare proper responses to the attacks against the faith, not only in society but also in intellectual culture. Grades 11 and 12 are the critical years; we ought not to entrust God's own children to secular teachers in this stage of life.

During the teenage years Reformed teachers may equip the young people to prepare proper responses to the attacks against the faith, not only in society but also in intellectual culture.

In the fourth argument, Dr. Faber pointed to the need for a good level of emotional and spiritual maturity if students are to grasp deeper matters of the Christian faith:

As the Reformed school is one means parents and members of the church may employ to prepare the youth for a life of service to God, the instruction should focus also on the deeper matters of the Christian faith. While at an earlier age students cannot readily grasp the profound teachings, at a more developed stage in life they appreciate more fully the doctrines by which they should guide their lives. Thus especially the disciplines of Bible, Reformed Religion, and Church History are best received by those

who have reached a certain level of emotional and intellectual maturity. This level comprises grade 11 and 12. Deuteronomy 4:9 commands us to "make the statutes known to your children and your children's children," that is, teach our youth the will of God. While secular schooling at this stage may be anti-Christian if not relativist, Reformed education would provide what are arguably the most important subjects.

The fifth argument was more practical in nature:

The transition to a secular high school comes at a most inopportune stage in a youth's life. For just when conformity and peers exercise great pressure, one is exposed to worldly thinking and behaviour, and is tempted to "conform to the spirit of this age." It is wiser to make the transition at a more mature age, and when an entire cohort of students enters a new program, such as the workforce, college or university.

Conclusion

To increase the scope of our schools to include secondary education, or for any major decision to work towards a laudable ideal for that matter, our communities need to carefully consider the arguments for and the barriers against such endeavours in the local context. Even if there are strong arguments in favour of increasing the scope such as presented by Dr. Faber, for the sake of Christ and for the love He asks us to have for our brothers and sisters, we must also take the hurdles seriously. If we do, we will humbly receive with gratitude out of God's hand *what* we receive in the manner and at the time *that* we receive it, and we will remain patient and diligent in our responsibilities as we wait for his providence. We must not let our temporal or temporary disagreements on a practical application of a good principle allow to divide and tarnish the eternal body of Christ; instead, we need work together to do all we can to help our covenant youth learn and live in the fear of the Lord.



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League Day – Fraser Valley

June 19, 2002

By Janey Van Seters

The thirty-ninth annual women's league day of the Fraser Valley was attended by more than 200 ladies from a number of different churches. Not only were all the Canadian Reformed Churches of the valley represented, but also present were some members from the United Reformed, the Orthodox Reformed, the Free Presbyterian, and our sister churches in the Netherlands. Truly an ecumenical gathering! The women of Langley hosted the event in their recently renovated facilities. The spacious new foyer was appreciated by the large contingent gathered for early-morning coffee.

The theme of the day was "Our Life of Christian Service." Magdalene Vanderlinde of Abbotsford introduced the morning topic, "Christian Hospitality." She stressed that hospitality is not a gift given to some, but is demanded by Scripture of all church members. The Christian hostess does not "entertain," but rather she shares and serves, with a thankful heart to God for his many gifts. Magdalene listed many examples of hospitality from the Bible, and showed how the early messengers of the good news relied on the hospitality of their listeners. Many excuses are given to avoid the practice of hospitality, such as being too busy, or having an unwilling spouse, but the Bible does not allow us the option of neglecting this essential part of our Christian service.

We should not rely on host families, nor should we limit our invitations to our family and friends. We were asked when we had last asked one of the following: widows and widowers, new Christians, confessed sinners, the handicapped or families with handicapped children, those with financial problems, those with terminal illness, etc. Magdalene concluded with an exhorta-



tion to "brighten the corner where we are," so that we may reflect God's love and grace to a dark world.

After a thorough discussion on the practical issues involved in being hospitable, Chilliwack provided a poem entitled, "Lord, I Have No Time." The hectic pace of our lives leaves little time to reflect on God and his word, and we

do well to remember that time itself is a gift of God to be used in his service.

A catered lunch was provided in the church hall for all those who had pre-registered. On previous league days it has been difficult to estimate the number of people attending, so this system was adopted to prevent an awkward shortage of food.

The afternoon was hosted by the Cloverdale's Women Society. The mother-daughter team of Sarah Vandergutten and Deborah Huttema presented the topic, "Fit to Serve at Every Age and Stage of Life." 1 Corinthians 12 was used to illustrate that both diversity and unity are required in the body as we work together for the common good. There is no room for self-absorption, but we must be willing to follow Christ's example of self-sacrifice and service. Whether we are young mothers coping with the challenges of a busy family, middle-aged

women with talents and time for service in the church, or older women providing spiritual guidance and a link to the past, we all may rejoice in the gifts God has given in every stage of life. We are to use these gifts to build up the body of Christ. We concluded this presentation by singing "The Servant Song," after which a lively discussion followed between women of all ages. It was emphasized that younger and older women should not study in separate societies, for they can each be enriched by the viewpoints of the other. Other inter-gener-

ational activities also enable the seniors to share their rich heritage of experience and faith.

After singing the League Song, duties for the next league day were assigned. After the official closing, coffee and refreshments were enjoyed by those who wished to socialize before once more returning home. Many favourable comments were heard on the encouraging and practical messages of the day, and many resolutions were no doubt made to develop our lives of Christian service. May God bless our tasks as women of his church! **C**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please mail, e-mail or fax letters for publication to the editorial address. They should be 300 words or less. Those published may be edited for style or length. Please include address and phone number.

Dear Editor:

I have subscribed to *Clarion* for several years and for the most part believe that the magazine is a blessing to be able to read. Having said that, there is a particular section of the magazine whose style, at times, is more harmonious with a secular periodical than of a Christian publication.

I am referring to the section known as Reader's Forum or Letters to the Editor. If my understanding is correct, this section is for readers to share their thoughts and opinions on prior publications within your magazine. My point of view is that often these submissions subtly question the character or motive of the author of the original article. Further, the writing style can sometimes be so condescending that any meaningful content is lost. Rather than evaluating a different point of view readers may be caught up in focusing on whose pencil was the sharpest. What a pity if subscribers eagerly anticipate the next issue primarily to find out if another round will take place.

I'd like to offer some suggestions that could possibly improve this condition:

1. When writing a letter to the editor, focus on the issue(s), not the author of the previous article. Instead of prefixing statements with, "Brother so and so tries to suggest" or, "Then

our sister illogically concludes. . ." one could use an alternative such as, "The article makes reference," or "It was read that. . ." Perhaps this sounds rather trite since how one makes reference to the prior article is merely semantics. But it is precisely in these statements that focus is taken away from the topic and turned on the author, regrettably at times, creating a spirit of controversy and inviting a quarrel.

2. Those who submit letters to the editor should not act as the final authority on the subject. Although I've never read anyone explicitly indicate to be an authority, sarcasm and punctuation sometimes leave little doubt that an author believes their point of view is the only correct one. Regardless of a person's age, experience or position it's difficult to believe any one opinion is so much more valuable than the other. To be sure, the Bible is clear on everything and it is perfect! It is we sinners who are imperfect in our understanding and application of what God requires of us in his Word. Discuss and extrapolate a particular issue on the pages on *Clarion*? Sounds good! But before you begin to write let's remind ourselves that if a contribution is made in humbleness there is more of a

chance that it will be received in the spirit in which it was intended.

3. The Editorial Committee of *Clarion* should not publish submissions that are not edifying and up building. It's possible that a person feels so strongly about their opinion that they write a letter in contrast to the above two suggestions. In these cases, I wonder if the Editorial Committee shouldn't return the letter to its author, requesting it be revised as required. We shouldn't be too quick to join the world in resisting censorship in a publication. Since the subtitle of the magazine indicates, "The Canadian Reformed Magazine," all of us are negatively implicated when something is published that isn't indicative of who we really are. If other denominations view us as having an arrogant and know-it-all attitude, it's possible that some Letters to the Editor have contributed to this impression. Clearly the Editorial Committee has a difficult and important task.

This is just my opinion and isn't necessarily the only approach. It likely isn't even the best. But it does offer an alternative which might prevent future issues of *Clarion* from being a catalyst to gossip and meaningless chatter.

Andrew Douma
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