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# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE



*Grand Rapids receives Rev. J. Ludwig*

## INSIDE:

- *Membership*
- *Your Joy in God's Covenant*
- *Creation and Flood*





By N.H. Gootjes



## Membership

A news item concerning the church situation in the Netherlands caught my eye.<sup>1</sup> According to the report, the decline in church membership has stopped. In the period 1960 to 1990, the churches lost more and more members, but during the next decade the situation appears to have stabilized. This can be concluded from statistics: in 1991, about 60% of the Dutch people indicated they belonged to a church, and the number was the same ten years later.

This report raises the interesting question what is meant by church membership. That is hard to define on the basis of this article. This much is clear: being a member of a church does not imply regular church attendance. On the negative side, the article mentions that two-thirds of the membership hardly ever attends the worship services. On the positive side, 20% of the Dutch people attend church at least once a month. And of this 20%, a majority of three out of five go to church once a week.

*Many belong to the church without being involved in it.*

It takes some figuring out to translate these numbers into concrete church people, but when this is done, the numbers are rather disconcerting. If 60% of the population are still officially a member of a church, but only 20% attend the worship service, that means that two out of three people who still want to be counted as a church member in our secular world are hardly ever present when the congregations meet. Formally, they belong to the organization of the church, but they do not participate in the life of the congregation. They stay away when the Christians meet together to worship their God. They are members, but they do not contribute. They do not work in it and for it.

This is not written gladly, gloating over the decline in the Netherlands. I am not so sure that the situation in Canada is significantly better. Rather, these figures should make us think about the meaning of being a member of a church body. What does church membership mean?

### Serving God and one another

Actually, the whole idea of membership is not our invention; it has its origin in the Bible itself. It was particularly the apostle Paul who developed this in his epistles. He compared the church to a body consisting of many members. He used this expression first of all to show that people are not all the same; they are different. He says that *we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others* (Rom 12:5). And a few lines later he added that the church

members have different gifts (12:6). Paul goes on to mention some of these gifts: serving, teaching, encouraging, giving money to the needy, giving leadership, doing works of mercy.

This list shows that church people contribute to the church in many different ways. It is true that the minister works in the church by teaching the word of God to the congregation, but he is not the only member who has a function. There are also the other members, who have many tasks to fulfil in the church. There are not only leaders in the church, there are also servers, people who faithfully work in all the many functions that must be fulfilled within the congregation. Some contribute with words by encouraging, some contribute by providing in the physical needs of other members and giving money to the needy. Some functions you can take upon yourself, other functions are given to you. But in the body of the church, each member has a place and function.

The meaning of the word “membership” has been hollowed out, generally speaking. Today, one can have a membership at a fitness club, where people take care of their own muscles. And one can have a membership at a supermarket, to save up for one’s own financial benefits. It is possible that people see membership of the church in the same way. They ask the leaders of the church: What are the benefits of this “club” for me? And if the club does not offer competitive benefits, they stop paying the dues, and do not show up. Our time encourages a consumer’s attitude to membership. But that is not what membership means in the church. There, membership is by nature participation.

*It is impossible for a member of the church not to participate.*

Membership in the church has to do with the fact that the church is like a body with different parts. It means that as a member you are one of a wider group of people who all work together for the same goal. This is first of all visible in the worship services. There we come together to show that we are living members of the church which is the body of Christ. Right at the beginning of the service, we confess that we are powerless in this world, but that we expect our help from the God who made the heavens and the earth. We do not just confess this for our own person, or for our own family. We confess this in and for the community of the church. We tell God with humility that we trust him to protect us as a church community and take care of us. Another part of the service is that we praise him together. How many would continue to praise God of their own, if we did not do it regularly in church? Together we are addressed in the preaching, for all

the members of the congregation have the same duty to live before God, and they live in the same world. After having been addressed together we will use this teaching to help us form patterns of godly behaviour in our daily life.

The fact that we are a body, a community, also shows in the fact that we ourselves contribute to it. We not only receive together, we also give. An obviously communal element is the collection in the worship service which, together with the regular contribution, is used to support financially members close by and far away. But that is not the only way of mutual help. In Romans 12, many different ways are mentioned in which we can contribute to one another. The gifts God has given is not the same for everyone. There are different functions. However, it is impossible to be a member and not participate. Paper members cannot exist in the church as a body. You cannot be a member and not participate in the worship service. And you cannot be a member and not involved in congregational activities for others. The body of the church must be alive, and its members active.

Church membership is more than being on the books. Church membership is participating in the community of God's people by worshipping God and helping one another.

<sup>1</sup>The following data are taken from an article in *Christian Renewal* January 13, 2003. This unsigned article, entitled "Study says secularization of Netherlands has 'stabilized,'" can be found on p. 7.



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## What's inside?

We regularly read of secular polls which give surprising statistics of how many people consider themselves Christians and church members. In the editorial, Dr. N.H. Gootjes shows how being a church member means more than being a member on paper. It is all about being a living participant within the church. This is a sobering fact, but also encouraging for us to be living members of Christ's church.

Some months ago Dr. F. G. Oosterhoff wrote on the relation between faith and science in Reformed thought. She now complements these articles with a two-part series on Dr. K. Schilder's views. These thought provoking articles show how and why Schilder left room for different interpretations on the length of the creation days. The question is, can we follow him in his exegesis?

From time to time, William Helder supplies us with a new metrical version of one of the psalms. Those who know brother Helder know his love for language and for the psalms. This is one of his interests, and we reap the benefits.

Not long ago, we read of Rev. J. Ludwig and his family leaving the Church at London. Now we read of their joyful welcome in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

We have our *Treasures, New and Old*, *Ray of Sunshine*, and *Education Matters* columns. In addition there is a press release from the ILPB and two letters to the editor.

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By P.H. Holtvlüwer

## Your Joy in God's Covenant

*"I said to the LORD, 'You are my Lord; apart from You, I have no good thing.'"*

Psalm 16:2

Psalm 16 is a well known and, I think, a well-loved psalm among us. There is much comfort to be gained from its confidence in life with the Lord beyond the grave. But earlier in the psalm the author David also makes a remarkable confession of faith in his God. This confession is particularly remarkable when we consider David's circumstances.

While we do not know the precise historical event of David's life, certain clues within the psalm indicate that David is in a time of crisis. In fact, his very life is on the line. Verse 1 begins with the petition, *"Keep me safe, O God. . ."* showing that danger was nearby. The verses 9-11 show that death was on David's mind for he finds great comfort from the fact that Yahweh will not abandon him to the grave.

Such a trial could refer to the period before David ascended the throne when king Saul hunted him all over the countryside. Another possibility is his stay in Ziklag among the Philistines where a safe existence was precarious. There he also may have been tempted to worship other gods (spoken of in verse 4). On these (and other) occasions David found himself in trouble, facing enemies who desired his death.

How striking it is then, that in the midst of such peril David should make this confession (verse 2), *"I said to the LORD, 'You are my Lord.'"* In verse 1 David had made his request for safe-keeping from God, but in verse 2 he moves to bring into focus the covenant aspect of his relationship with God by addressing Him as *Yahweh* (LORD). *Yahweh*, "I AM WHO I AM" is the name intimately associated with God's covenant, and David uses only it in the remainder of the psalm. Focussing

on the God of the covenant brings with it also his covenant promises. By calling upon *Yahweh*, it's as if David pleads, "Remember your covenant with me as part of your people, O LORD! Remember how you promised to chase our enemies away from us, how you promised to fight for us. Remember how you promised us peace and prosperity in the Promised Land. Remember, O *Yahweh*, and come to my aid!"

But David doesn't stop with *Yahweh's* promises. He also speaks of his own covenant obligations by adding, *"You are my Lord."* The emphasis here falls on David's person – you are my Lord. David confesses himself to be a servant of *Yahweh*. *Yahweh* has made a covenant with David and with all the people, but David knows full well that it is not a covenant between equals – no, *Yahweh* is his *master*. David has an intimate relationship with his covenant God and yet it is still a relationship conducted by David in reverence and holy fear.

This is rather a surprising confession. David appeals to *Yahweh's* covenant promises in his time of trouble but at the same time he also acknowledges that he owes a service of obedience to that same LORD. I find this remarkable that in his moment of crisis, facing death, David does not fail to confess his own duties within the covenant. How many of us would think of our *duties* toward God in such a terrible moment of personal danger? Is not our first thought to call upon God to rescue us, to appeal to his steadfast love and goodness, to his mercy and ask for relief?

But while looking to the promises, David also confesses *Yahweh* as his

Lord, the one who owns him, the one to whom he owes a debt of gratitude. Even in his darkest hour, this covenant child has an eye for his position within the covenant – for the promises *and* the obligations.

It's a worthwhile reminder for us to keep in mind the balance of covenantal life when in crisis. It can be that we are so over-wrought by trouble that in our calling upon the LORD for help, we forget all about our role and responsibility toward God. By nature we are self-centred and in trials we can fall-back into the position of being "takers" only. God then becomes the one who can "do something for us" but meanwhile we do nothing for Him, that is, we forget our duty of thankful service. We forget to love our God. And when our requests are not immediately answered and relief is not given, we find little to be happy about.

But when we remember *both* sides of the relationship, then we can also say with David, *"apart from you I have no good thing."* The joy is in the relationship, the fellowship, the communion with our covenant God! The gifts and the promises are important benefits, but they are secondary to the source of the joy – knowing and loving the LORD himself! In life *and* death, the joy is in relating to Him in Christ as servant to Master, as child to Father. For then even in the midst of difficulties and trials the joy may remain, for the fellowship remains, through the Holy Spirit. C

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# Klaas Schilder on Creation and Flood (Part 1)

By F.G. Oosterhoff

## Introduction

Some months ago I wrote a series of articles on the relation between faith and science in Reformed thought, giving attention, among other things, to the interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis and the challenge of evolutionism.<sup>1</sup> At the time I dealt with the position of the Dutch theologians Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck. In the present series, which consists of two articles, I return to the topic and describe the views of a Reformed thinker who is equally well known among us, namely the theologian Klaas Schilder, professor of dogmatics in Kampen from 1934 until his death in 1952.

Schilder's work deserves our attention for at least two reasons. One is that the situation in which he wrote has similarities with the one in which we find ourselves. In his days as in ours, disagreements existed within the Reformed community about the exegesis of the first chapters of Genesis, especially regarding the nature and length of the days of creation. Some insisted that the days had lasted exactly 24 hours and that those who disagreed with that interpretation were assailants of the authority of Scripture. A number of influential Reformed theologians belonged to the latter group. When in the 1920s the disagreements came into the open, Schilder joined the fray on behalf of the accused.

He did not, however, condemn the ordinary (or 24-hour) day interpretation, and this brings me to the second reason why his work merits our attention. It is that Schilder *relativized* the issue under discussion, concluding, in effect, that the matter was not really worth fighting over. Although he defended the men of the extraordinary days, he

nowhere stated that their exegesis was the definitive one. Apparently both interpretations could be defended. In any case, the question regarding the nature and length of the days was for Schilder of only incidental interest. The important thing was not the conclusion the exegete reached in the matter, but the manner in which he reached it. He had to bow before the absolute authority of God's Word and, for that very reason, earnestly and diligently search the Word. He was also to give attention to the findings of science and consider whether these made it necessary for him to reconsider the conclusions he had reached. At no time, however, was science to have the last word. Scripture alone decided in exegetical matters; science merely served to help the exegete in his attempt to reach the proper understanding of the text.

*The question regarding the nature and length of the days of creation was for Schilder of only "incidental" interest.*

In short, then, for Schilder the differences between the two groups were differences not of substance but of exegesis, of interpretation. In what follows we will see how he worked out his theme. We will deal not only with the interpretation of the days but also, as the heading shows, with that of the flood – another issue that caused disagreements in his days. As to the format of these articles, we will proceed by simply stating Schilder's arguments, leaving our evaluation to the concluding section.

## The occasion

The present series owes much to an article in a recent issue of the *Westminster Theological Journal*.<sup>2</sup> The author of that article, Dr. Max Rogland, a pastor in the Presbyterian Church of America, gives a survey of the views that various Reformed theologians in the Netherlands have held on the days of creation. The theologians he deals with, all of whom lived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, are A. Kuyper, H. Bavinck, A.G. Honig, G.Ch. Aalders, and K. Schilder.<sup>3</sup> Rogland's conclusions are interesting. He shows that none of these men held what I shall call, for brevity's sake, a "scientific-creationist" view. It is true, all five rejected a "day-age" interpretation (although at first Bavinck thought that it could perhaps be considered). But they also believed that because of such factors as the absence of the sun, days one to three were unlikely to have been "ordinary" days. Instead, they referred to them as "God's work days," "creation days," "extraordinary days," and so on. As to the duration of the rest of the days, Kuyper thought that days four to six (or days five and six) were ordinary days, but the others believed that nothing could be said with certainty on this point; the days could well have been considerably longer (or shorter) than our normal 24-hour days. Nevertheless, they insisted that they interpreted Genesis 1 "literally," by which they meant that they treated the creation account not as symbolic or mythical or allegorical, but as truly factual and historical.<sup>4</sup> We will come back to that point.

The views of the first four men are of interest, but we will, for the sake of brevity, largely ignore them and concentrate on Schilder. Much of



Schilder's work on the topic was published shortly after the special Synod of Assen, 1926, and was indirectly inspired by it. This Synod had been called to deal with the Geelkerken case. Dr. J. G. Geelkerken, a minister in the Reformed churches, had been accused of having intimated (in a sermon on Lord's Day 3 and in later writings) that the statements in Genesis 2 and 3 regarding the two special trees in paradise and the speaking serpent did not have to be interpreted in what he called the traditional manner, namely as historical and factual. The paradise account, he said, spoke of matters belonging not to the world as we experience it, but to a "higher reality." By implication, a symbolic or allegorical interpretation could well be legitimate.<sup>5</sup>

When the issue came before the Synod, Geelkerken said that he accepted the historicity and factuality of the events recounted in the two chapters, but nevertheless demanded the freedom to consider a different exegesis than the "traditional" one. Continued scientific investigation, he believed, could well make that interpretation untenable, and exegetes therefore should not be bound to it. The Synod denied the legitimacy of Geelkerken's position. It declared:

- (a) that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the serpent and its speaking, and the tree of life are, according to the clear intention of the scriptural narrative of Genesis 2 and 3, to be taken in a factual (*eigenlijke*) or literal sense, and thus were realities observable by the senses; and
- (b) that therefore the meaning of Dr. Geelkerken that one can dispute whether these matters and facts were realities observable by the senses, without coming into conflict with the authority of Holy Scripture confessed in articles 4 and 5 of the Belgic Confession, must be rejected. Geelkerken was asked to sign a statement indicating his agreement with the Synod's decision. His refusal to do so led to his suspension. When he nevertheless preached the following Sunday, the Synod deposed him. Geelkerken and his supporters then seceded from the Reformed churches and established a new federation, the so-called *Gereformeerde Kerken in Hersteld Verband*.

Geelkerken had not been accused of questioning the historicity of the creation account, and Assen therefore did not deal with the exegesis of Genesis 1. Some of Geelkerken's supporters, how-

ever, believed that it should have done so, and especially that it should have pronounced on the nature and length of the days of creation, since disagreements on that issue existed among Reformed believers. Some, as we already noted, held the six days to be ordinary, 24-hour days, whereas others believed that an extra-ordinary-day interpretation might well be called for. Even some members of Synod Assen believed this. Among them were two of the professors we already mentioned, namely A. G. Honig and G. Ch. Aalders, who were advisors to this Synod, and four other theologians, who served the Synod in the same capacity.<sup>6</sup> By failing to pronounce on the matter, the critics argued, the Synod had been inconsistent and treated Geelkerken unfairly.

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interpretation.*

#### An attack upon "Assen"

Among those who raised this criticism was the author of an anonymous pamphlet, which saw the light in 1928 under the title *Zijn de mannen van Assen zelf aanranders van het Schriftgezag?*<sup>7</sup> This pamphlet (which was, as appeared later, from the hand of J. L. Jaspers, a minister-emeritus within the Reformed churches) did not restrict itself to the interpretation of Genesis 1 but explored pronouncements by Reformed theologians on a variety of other issues. Jaspers accused one theologian, for example, of a "non-literal" explanation of Scripture by stating that the book of Ecclesiastes was not authored by Solomon. Another (Abraham Kuyper) was attacked for suggesting that the Genesis flood may not have covered the entire earth, but only the inhabited part. To Jaspers' accusations Schilder responded with a brochure of his own, which he entitled *Een hoornstoot tegen Assen?*<sup>8</sup> It was in this brochure that he set forth in detail his views on the disagreements regarding the days of creation and the flood, and on the manner in which they were to be resolved.

A brief note on Schilder's approach is in order. His concern was not simply to arbitrate between the diverging positions held by Jaspers and "the men of Assen" on Genesis 1. It was also, and

especially, to challenge the claim that the exegesis of the "men of Assen" (or that of Kuyper on the flood) was comparable to Geelkerken's position on Genesis 2 and 3. As a result, there is an element in the brochure that is perhaps not immediately relevant for our readers. Schilder's concern with Geelkerken does not, however, greatly detract from the interest his brochure has for us, since it did not prevent him from dealing at length with the issue that dominates the discussion today – namely the question whether in Genesis 1 the Bible definitely speaks of "ordinary days" or whether it allows a "non-ordinary day" exegesis.

#### Sun, moon, and stars

Before turning to the matter of the duration of the days, we will deal with Schilder's treatment of a related controversy, which Jaspers' brochure had also mentioned. It concerned the relationship between the first day, when God called forth light, and the fourth day, when he made sun, moon, and stars. One of the questions that is often asked in this connection concerns the source of light during the first three days, before the appearance of the sun. Some Reformed exegetes have suggested that the sun existed already before the fourth day, and that the light of the first three days came from it. Among those who had made this suggestion was Dr. W.H.J.W. Geesink, a professor of ethics at the Free University of Amsterdam and one of the advisers to the Synod of Assen. It was on his work that Jaspers focussed when he attacked the position as a violation of the authority of Scripture.

Responding to Jaspers' accusation, Schilder began by stating that his own or Jaspers' or anyone else's opinion on the validity of Geesink's point of view was irrelevant. The only question to be decided was whether Geesink's exegesis and pronouncements constituted an attack upon the authority of Scripture. Schilder answered that question in the negative. He argued as follows (pp. 33-37):

1. Geesink upholds the biblical teaching that it was not until the fourth day that the sun became a light *for the earth*.
2. Geesink questions the idea that the *material* of sun, moon, and stars was created on the fourth day, and he is, Schilder says, right in doing so. To say that it was created on that day would be in conflict with Genesis 1:1, which speaks of the "first

creation," that of heaven and earth, as separate from the "second creation," that of the six days.<sup>9</sup> Schilder points out that in stating that the material of sun, moon, and stars was created well before these bodies were placed in the firmament, Geesink is in agreement with Calvin and other orthodox scholars, some of whom Jaspers, strangely enough, attempts to use against him.<sup>10</sup>

3. These earlier scholars, Schilder shows, further emphasized that while Genesis 1:1 speaks of the creation of heaven and earth, the rest of the creation account concentrates on the earth alone. Sun, moon and stars are described from the perspective of the earth and therefore only with a view to their importance for life on earth. Genesis 1:14-19, the scholars in question make clear, proposes no scientific theory regarding the origin of the heavenly bodies as such. These points Geesink had also made.
4. Schilder further draws attention to the fact that Genesis 1:14 uses not the Hebrew word for *creating*, but that for *preparing, making ready*. The choice of that word in this particular case may again be seen as proof, he believes, that the heavenly bodies were not *created* on the fourth day, but that they were only *made ready* on that day in order to be placed in the firmament.<sup>11</sup>

**Calvin, Schilder reminds us, rejected the idea that in Genesis 1 Moses speaks as a philosopher or scientist. Rather, Moses accommodated himself to the worldview and understanding of his original readers.**

5. In this connection Schilder quotes Calvin, who in his *Commentaries* on Genesis went even further than Geesink and suggested that beings like the fishes (which the Bible clearly states were *created* – rather than simply prepared or made ready – on the fifth day) had their beginning in an earlier act of creation and were given "form" only on the fifth day.<sup>12</sup> If Calvin's teaching that marine animals had their beginning long before the fifth day is not a violation of the authority of Scripture,

he says, then neither is Geesink's conclusion.

Schilder continues the discussion on the fourth day with another quotation from Calvin, wherein the Genevan Reformer rejects the idea that in Genesis 1 Moses speaks as a philosopher or scientist. Rather, he says, Moses accommodated himself to the worldview and understanding of his original readers, many of whom were uneducated, and all of whom were unacquainted with the findings of modern science. The quotation in question refers to verse 16, which mentions God's making of the "two great lights," the sun and the moon, which were placed in the firmament to give light respectively to the day and the night, and his making of the stars. Calvin writes:

. . . Moses makes two great luminaries; but astronomers prove, by conclusive reasons, that . . . Saturn, which, on account of its great distance, appears the least of all, is greater than the moon. Here lies the difference; Moses wrote in a popular style things which, without instruction, all ordinary persons, endowed with common sense, are able to understand; but astronomers investigate with great labour whatever the sagacity of the human mind can comprehend. Nevertheless, this study [astronomy] is not to be reprobated, nor this science to be condemned. . . Nor did Moses truly wish to withdraw us from this pursuit in omitting such things as are peculiar to the art; but because he was ordained a teacher as well of the unlearned and rude as of the learned, he could not otherwise fulfil his office than by descending to this grosser method of instruction.<sup>13</sup>

Schilder adds that Calvin followed a similar kind of reasoning elsewhere in his exegesis of Genesis 1:14-19. With respect to verse 14, for example, he said that Moses relates only ("nothing else than") that God established fixed bodies which would spread throughout the world the light that had already been created. Schilder emphasizes the words "relates" and "nothing else than." With the use of these words Calvin implied, he says, that further questions fall beyond the boundary of revelation (p. 38). It may be added here that Calvin draws attention also to the *order* of the events of days 1 and 4, telling us that this order shows that God does not depend on the light-bearing bodies he creates; that "he holds in his hand the light,

which he is able to impart to us without the sun and moon."<sup>14</sup>

As to Jasper's attack upon Geesink, Schilder mentions that many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed believers agreed with the views Geesink [and Calvin] held, but that there were also those who disagreed. The differences at the time were seen simply, however, as differences in exegesis. At no point were the words "violation of or assault upon the authority of Scripture" used (pp. 38f.). It would be good, Schilder writes, if the anonymous pamphleteer and his associates possessed some of that same "generosity and power of discernment" (p. 39).

**Calvin draws attention to the order of the events of days 1 and 4, telling us that this order shows that God does not depend on the light-bearing bodies he creates; that "he holds in his hand the light, which he is able to impart to us without the sun and moon."**

In the second article we will look at the controversy regarding the length of the days of creation, the charge that a "non-ordinary" interpretation of the days opens the door to the acceptance of evolutionism, and Kuyper's exegesis of the flood.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Clarion*, February 1 and 15; March 1, 15, 29, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> *Westminster Theological Journal*, Vol. 63 (2001), pp. 211-33. I thank Dr. Tony Jelsma of Dordt College for drawing my attention to this article.

<sup>3</sup> Kuyper and Bavinck were introduced in the previous series. A. G. Honig (1864-1940) was Bavinck's successor as professor of dogmatics in Kampen; G. Ch. Aalders (1880-1961) was professor of Old Testament at the Free University; K. Schilder (1890-1952) succeeded Honig as professor of dogmatics in Kampen.

<sup>4</sup> Rogland, pp. 227f. For the view of influential Reformed theologians of Dutch background in North America who held that Genesis speaks of "ordinary" days, see *ibid.*, pp. 229-33. The question why North America appears to be more hospitable to the "ordinary days" position (and also to creation-scientist views) than Europe is an intriguing one.

<sup>5</sup> For an account and evaluation of the matters at issue, see Rogland, as well as C. Trimp, *Om de klaarheid der waarheid: Een taxatie van de leeruitspraak van "Assen-1926" en haar terzijdestelling in 1967* (Groningen: Vuurbaak, 1967), and G. Ch. Aalders, *De Exegese van Gen. 2 en 3 en de beslissing der Synode van Assen* (Kampen: Kok, n.d.).

<sup>6</sup> The other four were W. H. J. W. Geesink (1854-1929), professor of ethics at the Free University, J. Ridderbos (1879- 1960), professor of O.T. in Kampen, F. W. Grosheide (1885-1972), professor of N.T. at the Free University, and C. van Gelderen (1872-1945), professor of O.T. at the Free University. As to the last-mentioned one, Rogland says that it is not altogether certain but "most likely" that he agreed that the days of creation were probably "extraordinary" ones. Rogland, pp. 228f.

<sup>7</sup> English translation: *Are the men of Assen themselves assailants of the authority of Scripture?* The subtitle was: *Een conscientiekreet door een gereformeerd predikant (A cry of conscience by a reformed pastor)*.

<sup>8</sup>The brochure was first issued in 1928. References will be to the second edition, published in 1929, and will be given by

page number(s) only. In quotations from Schilder's work I have often omitted italics.

<sup>9</sup> As this statement shows, Schilder understood the creation account to speak of two separate acts of creation, the one described in Genesis 1:1 and 2, and the other in the account of the six days (the so-called Hexameron). The verses 1 and 2 dealt, then, with the *beginning* of creation; the six days with the *completion*. The same view was held by Kuyper, Bavinck, Honig, and Aalders. Rogland, pp. 227f., note 68.

<sup>10</sup> Calvin in his commentary on Genesis 1 does not use the terms "first" and "second" creation, but he seems to make a similar distinction as Schilder c.s., for example when writing that the "confused mass" of vs. 2 "was to be the seed of the whole world," and also, as will appear presently, in his account of the fifth day. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses called Genesis*, John King, transl. (Grand Rapids: Baker Bookhouse, 1984), p. 70.

<sup>11</sup> Schilder implies that not everybody may agree that in Genesis 1 one can clearly distinguish between the meaning of these

two words, although he himself thinks one can (p. 36).

<sup>12</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries*, p. 89.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 86f. For similar pronouncements, see the same work, pp. 79, 80, 84, 85.

<sup>14</sup> Calvin's statement on the issue is worth quoting at greater length. Calvin writes: "It did not...happen from inconsideration or by accident, that the light preceded the sun and the moon. To nothing are we more prone than to tie down the power of God to those instruments, the agency of which he employs. The sun and moon supply us with light: and, according to our notions, we so include this power to give light in them, that if they were taken away from the world, it would seem impossible for any light to remain. Therefore the Lord, by the very order of his creation, bears witness that he holds in his hand the light, which he is able to impart to us without the sun and moon." *Commentaries*, p. 76; see also pp. 82f.



*Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff is a historian in Hamilton, Ontario.*

## Psalm 101

### A Psalm of David

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1. LORD, I will worship You with great rejoicing,<br/>My praise of righteousness and mercy voicing.<br/>Of steadfast love and justice I will sing<br/>To You, my King.</p>       | <p>4. If one should secretly his neighbour slander,<br/>I will not fail to silence the offender.<br/>Proud hearts and haughty eyes I cannot bear<br/>And will not spare.</p> |
| <p>2. The path of blameless living I will ponder.<br/>When will You come to me, lest I should<br/>wander?<br/>I'll walk within my house from sin apart,<br/>With upright heart.</p> | <p>5. Those who are faithful, without guile or<br/>malice,<br/>I will appoint to serve me in my palace.<br/>No liar and no scandalmonger shall<br/>In my house dwell.</p>    |
| <p>3. Things base and worthless I will not have<br/>near me.<br/>The faithless and their deeds I hate sincerely.<br/>I shun all evil. No disloyalty<br/>Shall cling to me.</p>      | <p>6. The wicked I will punish without pity,<br/>Of evildoers rid God's holy city,<br/>And each new day those who still jeer and<br/>scoff<br/>I will cut off.</p>           |

Melody: 1543 / Geneva, 1551

Revised metrical version by William Helder, 2003



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# Welcome to Rev. John Ludwig

By A. Wyngarden



On September 1, 2002, the congregation of Grand Rapids was blessed with the privilege of receiving a new under shepherd from the hand of the Lord, after being vacant for over three years. The congregation of the American Reformed Church at Grand Rapids was very happy that the Rev. John Ludwig had answered the call extended to him by the church of Grand Rapids in the affirmative, and was installed by Rev. Ken Kok during the morning worship service of September 1st, 2002. Rev. Kok used Bible reading from both Leviticus 18:1-5, and Deuteronomy 30:1-14, and had as his theme: "God confirms the way of Life in Christ" for his installation sermon based on Romans 10:5-13. Rev. Kok brought out from that theme that it is also the way of the Law, which was his

first point. He explained that Christ was the climax of the law, and that Christ had not come to do away with the law, but rather to fulfill the law. Here Rev.

Kok also made note that when we hear the preaching of the Word we must have a response of both heart and mouth; we must not only be hearers of the Word, but also doers of the Word. Rev. Kok had as a second point, that since God has confirmed the way of Life in Christ, this also leads to calling on Him. Rev. Kok explained in this point that both faith and worship belong together, and that we must show this in our daily confession. By way of illustration, Rev. Kok pointed to the lives of Noah, and Abraham in the Bible showing us that anyone who trusts in God will not be put to shame. We should always be ready and willing to give account of the hope that lives within us, and by truly living a life of faith, we will also always want to know more about our Lord and Saviour, as well as want to help gather His Church.

After the end of the worship service, words of congratulations, as well as support and encouragement were given both to Rev. Ludwig, and the congregation, by representatives from Classis Ontario West and from various Canadian Reformed Churches. All the representatives had as their hope and prayer that both the congregation of






Grand Rapids, and Rev. Ludwig may grow in faith and love for the Lord.

Following the morning worship service, and the words of congratulations, everyone was invited for a time of fellowship with coffee and cookies, which then lead up to a picnic lunch on the church lawn for a perfectly beautiful sunny Lord's Day.

Soon it was time for the second service, which would be Rev. Ludwig's first service as the under shepherd of Christ's church at Grand Rapids, Michigan. Rev. Ludwig had scripture reading from Ephesians 2, and used as his text, Psalm 122. Rev. Ludwig's theme was that God preserves for Himself and defends His own church all through history even though none of us deserve it, and we see this through Psalm 122 as David sings for joy to worship in Jerusalem. Rev. Ludwig's first point showed the congregation the ardent love for the communion of the church. The example Rev. Ludwig used here was that Israel was happy to meet God in Jerusalem; they had a heartfelt response and jubilation when they went to the House of the Lord. Rev. Ludwig explained that we must work together in true communion to experience the ardent love that Israel had for the Lord even despite trials and difficulties that may come our way. Rev. Ludwig's second point showed that there must also be humble submission to the government of the church. He noted that attending church also brings with it order and judgment from God, and that just as God ruled His Church through David, even today He rules His Church through Christ who has appointed elders who have been given authority from the Lord Jesus Christ. Rev. Ludwig's final point was that David's joy finds expression in constant prayer for peace for the

Church. Rev. Ludwig explained that we can not establish or maintain peace in God's Church, which is why we must pray to God for peace. Pray for peace first, and then God will supply us with prosperity and security. Here in his final point as well as his prayer for the congregation at Grand Rapids is that we must all pray and work, just as in the morning sermon it was pointed out that our daily confession must be both with heart and mouth. Pray and work; pray for each other and work together in communion so that God may be praised and glorified, and thus bring also His blessing upon us.

On Saturday, September 7, 2002, the congregation of Grand Rapids

hosted a welcome evening for Rev. Ludwig and his family. The evening contained speeches from representatives of the consistory, the combined men's and women's societies, the young people's society, and the congregation as a whole wishing Rev. Ludwig the Lord's blessing and much encouragement and support as he fulfills his pastoral duties at Grand Rapids. The evening was also filled with songs from the children's choir, various skits, and games, at the end of which Rev. Ludwig and his family were presented with a quilt from the congregation of Grand Rapids which had each of the families names from the church embroidered on it. Rev. Ludwig with his wife thanked the congregation of Grand Rapids for the warm welcome, and Rev. Ludwig expressed his sincere desire and prayer for the church of Grand Rapids to continue in the Way of the Lord, and that he would certainly treasure all the support and prayers to help him in the task that awaits, in being Christ's under shepherd here in Grand Rapids. Afterwards, the congregation and Rev. Ludwig and his family had a time of fellowship and refreshments, where Rev. Ludwig and his family were introduced to the families of the church, and church members could personally welcome Rev. Ludwig and his family as well as give them many words of support and encouragement. 







By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

## Dear Brothers and Sisters:

"You shall have no other gods before Me." When we hear this first commandment, we begin with the foundation on which our Christian lives must depend. God alone! This puts us at the basis of our faith and trust. This first commandment is also the key and foundation to all of the other commandments. Each and every week anew we must renew our commitment to God alone and obey his entire covenant law.

In Joshua 24 we can read how the Lord has used Joshua as an instrument in guiding the people of Israel back to serving the one and only God. Joshua was a strong leader, and time and again tells of his trust and faith in God alone. No matter what the others decide, Joshua had made a commitment to God, and he was willing to set the example by living by his choice. Joshua tells the people that they had to decide whether they would obey the Lord, or obey the local gods which were only man-made idols. The people then answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve other gods! We too will serve the Lord, because he is our God."

Then Joshua also warned the people in verse 19-21, "You are not able to serve the Lord. He is a holy God; He is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, He will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after He has been good to you." But the people said to Joshua, "No! we will serve the LORD."

Then Joshua made a covenant between Israel and God, that the people would worship and obey the Lord alone. To do this properly, Joshua told the Israelites to throw away their foreign gods and idols. To follow God means to destroy whatever gets in the way of worshipping Him.

The way that we live too, should show to others our commitment to serving God. For it is one thing that we say that we will serve God alone and dedicate our lives to him alone, but it is even more important that we live by what we say and believe. We too have many forms of idols around us; namely the love of money, Olympics, science, and much more. God is not pleased when we merely hide these idols. We must completely remove them from our lives, and as the catechism says, "that I rightly come to know the only true God" (Lord's Day 34).

As children of God we must all grow in the knowledge of the Lord and his Word. Are we always seeking to increase our knowledge of the Lord and his Word? Daily we must open our Bibles, and see how God shows his faithfulness and love to those who put their trust in Him alone. We must also realize the anger and wrath of God when we think everything is going well and we do not need Him as much in our lives. We must encourage

*"But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."*  
Joshua 24:15b

those of us who are able to go to study societies to grow and increase in knowledge.

For when we make a choice to serve God alone, we must do this whole-hearted! To love Him is to show faithfulness. This love is not then just an emotion, but rather an action! This calling is very important for us today, for we know of the greatest love that his only begotten Son has given to us sinful people. He has shown the greatness of his love, and the strength of his faithfulness by giving us this great gift.

Thus in return we can and must show and place our trust in Him alone. We must submit to Him in all humility and patience, expecting all good from him; and that we love, fear and honor him with all my heart (Lord's Day 34).

Do not turn away from the Lord, for in his sovereign and perfect wisdom, He guides our lives. Even when we face trials or difficulties in life, we must continue to seek him alone. Enthroned in heaven on high is the only living God, who remains faithful to those who love Him. He will redeem those who put their trust in Him alone. Let us continue to build on this foundation, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"

*Come praise the LORD; let all revere Him.  
Blest is the man who loves and fears Him,  
Who takes delight in His commandments.  
Blest shall be also his descendants;  
They shall be mighty in the nation,  
For blest shall be their generation.*

Psalm 112:1

## Birthdays in April:

### 2: DEREK KOK will turn 33

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

### 19: MARINUS FOEKENS will be 51

19 Forest Street, Chatham, ON N7L 2A9

### 23: ARLENE DEWIT will turn 42

C/O P. DeWit  
Barnston Island, Surrey, BC V3T 4W2

### 29: BRUCE BERENDS will be 28

4130 Ashby Drive, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B9

Our sincere congratulations with your birthdays. May our heavenly Father bless you in this new year with much health and happiness. We hope you all have an enjoyable day together with your family and friends.

Best wishes and 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





## The Importance of Education: Just the Parents' Business?<sup>1</sup> (Part 1)

By R. J. Eikelboom

Twenty-three years ago, a Christian Reformed minister, Rev. C. Van Schouwen, wrote in *The Outlook* (April 1979, page 18): "We as ministers and consistories must be deeply concerned about our Christian schools. . . . If we lose our Christian schools, we will eventually lose everything, as far as the spiritual well-being of the church is concerned." That's a remarkable statement. If the schools are lost, so are the churches! Clearly, according to this writer, then, Christian schools are tremendously important for all of us. If the well-being of the one is so closely linked to the survival of the other, then every church member will concern themselves with the affairs of the school.

*There was a feeling that some parents were not doing their job, and letting the school educate their children instead.*

Of course, Rev. Van Schouwen is just one man, and this is just one man's opinion. However, if we look at the history of the Canadian Reformed Churches, and before that, the history of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, we can trace this line of reasoning all the way back to the Reformation.

At the Synod of Dort, when our Church Order was initially adopted, our forefathers wrote: "Consistories shall see to it that there are good school-teachers who do not only teach children in reading, writing, speaking, and liberal arts, but who also teach children in godliness and in the catechism" (See Rutgers, vol. 1, 125). The consistory was responsible for ensuring that there were good teachers at school. This tradition was maintained in the Christian Reformed Church here in North America. Their 1934 Church Order

stated: "The Consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools."

However, our Church Order deviated slightly from that. The current wording is that: "The consistory shall ensure that the parents, to the best of their ability, have their children attend a school where the instruction given is in harmony with the Word of God. . . ." The emphasis is on the parents' responsibility to educate their children, and the consistory must hold the parents accountable. That is an appropriate emphasis, because education is, in the first place, the responsibility of the parents. This was an issue when our Canadian Reformed church order was written. There was a feeling that some parents were not doing their job, and letting the school educate their children instead. To counter this attitude, our churches decided to adopt this particular wording.

In truth, that is a slight variation from the emphasis previously, when the churches focussed on their responsibility vis-à-vis the school. Consistories, who governed over the churches, were reminded to view the education of the children as a high priority. History also shows us how this principle was put into practice. When the heresy of Arminianism crept into the Dutch churches, the church responded in the preaching and in the home visits. The parents also responded, through the nurturing and upbringing of the children in the homes. But there was also a reaction in the schools: because it was understood that the school children were *the future of the church*.<sup>2</sup> Our forefathers understood that a church that neglects the education of its children is doomed to failure, but a church that looks ahead to the future is – by definition – concerned about the education of its children. It follows that the consistory must ensure that there are good Christian schools, with good Christian teachers, because such schools and such teachers will be a blessing for our churches.

Perhaps you believe that our forefathers greatly exaggerated the importance of Christian schools. After all, the Bible says nothing about Christian schools, and even today there are Cana-

dian Reformed communities which don't have their own school. We need to understand that Scriptures teach that there is a very close relationship between the actions of individuals and the faithfulness of whole communities. For example, in the beginning of the book of 1 Samuel, we learn that Hannah had no children, because of the unfaithfulness of the Israelite community (Deut 7:14). Read that story, and observe that what the covenant community did had great effect on the well-being of each individual. When the community was faithful, God blessed.

*. . . a church that concerns itself with the education of its children is wisely preparing for the future. . . .*

When the church was unfaithful, the consequences became clear in individuals' lives. A few chapters later in 1 Samuel, God used Samuel to deliver Israel from the Philistines, thereby saving the whole community. How often isn't that pattern repeated in the Bible and in the history of the church? Just think of David, Hezekiah, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Kuyper, and Schilder! God used the talents of these individuals to bless thousands and millions of others.

Of course, not every school child will grow up to become a reformer in the church. Having said that, though, does not take away the necessity of me being faithful in my personal life; I need to bring up my family in a Christian way. For a church to function properly, it needs educated fathers and mothers, well-trained school teachers, and knowledgeable elders, deacons and ministers. That's why I support Christian education – not because it concerns my children, but because it concerns the well-being of the church. Therefore I put it to you: a church that concerns itself with the education of its children is wisely preparing for the future and may even expect a blessing of the Lord. On the other hand, a church that does

not concern itself with the education of its children has no future at all.

### **Covenant education: what is it?**

If we agree that the church must concern itself – in principle – with the education of its children, we need to ask ourselves: is there a reason why our congregation members must necessarily send their children to Canadian Reformed schools? Why not to public schools? Why not to interdenominational Christian(!) schools? Why exclusively to Canadian Reformed schools?


To start with, we need to recognize that in some circumstances this may not be possible. Sometimes it might be necessary that we are satisfied with second best, whatever that may be. You are aware of people who have moved from one community to another in order to satisfy the desire to send their children to a Canadian Reformed school. Was that because so many children in the public schools came from broken homes, and they didn't want their children corrupted? Was it perhaps because our teachers were better or more committed than others? Or was it because our curriculum was different? No, it wasn't. It was because of the recognition that our children are different – covenantally different. God set our children in the covenant and now He wants

them trained in the Word of the covenant, the life of the covenant. That life of the covenant, we learn from the Old Testament, covers every part of life, from the cradle to the grave. It concerns work and holidays, eating and drinking, marrying, having children, looking after children, loving and caring for others, and providing for the aged. The covenant way of life described in the Scriptures must become our children's way of life. Not surprisingly, we use the schools to teach them.

*... if a school provides covenant education, that should first become evident in its admission policy . . . .*

That education is called "covenant education." It is an education that is given to God's children, in the context of the church community, under the umbrella of the care of the consistory. The purpose of this education is to help our children to make sense of this world and of themselves – their own strengths and weaknesses – so that they can do the task that their heavenly Father has prepared for them. Covenant education says to the child: God is your Father, and you are his child. As God's child,

this is how you are supposed to live. You have these talents: develop them! You have these responsibilities: fulfill them! Covenant education says to the child: this is what God has given to you; now, this is how God wants you to respond. As elders in the church, we should be able to teach God's people that this is what covenant education is all about.

Such covenant education can be given in only one institution: in the Canadian Reformed school. It cannot be given in an evangelical Christian school or in an interdenominational school. When Canadian Reformed parents request to have their children enrolled in the school, the answer must be: "yes," because that child has the status of a covenant child. His status makes him eligible. To say it more dramatically: when that child was baptized, God put his seal on that child's application form. The interdenominational school, on the other hand, might well judge applications on the basis of the parents' faith or religiosity. It might also accept children from various denominations, including those who reject infant baptism. Such a school cannot do justice to the status of my child, nor will it do justice to the God who made a covenant with my child. The bottom line is: if a school provides covenant education, that should first become evident in its admission policy: that school will enroll children of believing parents precisely because they belong to the church, the covenant community. Such a school will teach my children the unspeakable riches and tremendous privilege of the covenant, as well as the high calling. 

*Rev. R.J. Eikelboom is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Calgary, Alberta. [reikelboom@canrc.org](mailto:reikelboom@canrc.org)*

### **A Progress Report of the Activities of the Reformed Curriculum Development Committee**

**Press Release, November 28, 2002**

In the April, 2002 Press Release, I reported on several matters of a general nature: purpose of these releases, name change of the RCDF to RCDC, mandate of the RCDC, and the number of meetings the RCDC holds annually. I will not repeat these in this report but will report on the activities that transpired on behalf of the RCDC since last April.



## 1. CARE/RCDC exchanges

After some delays due to misconceptions or misunderstandings, the RCDC is encouraged by initiatives on both ends of the continent to undertake more formalized contact with each other's work, whether that be curricular or other works in progress.

## 2. Curriculum Cooperative Committee

### 2.1. K-7 Music Curriculum.

In the April, 2002 Press Release it was reported that The K-7 Music Curriculum Writing Team be mandated to write more sample lesson plans and to add these to Appendix F: Sample Lesson Plans of this curriculum. Through the coordination of the CCC, this was done during the past summer, with the result that sixty-eight more lesson plans were developed; that is, at least one lesson plan for each Music Curriculum Organizer per grade.

### 2.2. Primary Cross-Graded Units.

In the meantime, the primary staff of Credo Christian Elementary School have developed another Primary Cross-Graded Unit, "Celebrate Canada." Another Primary Cross-Graded unit, "Marine Life on Ocean Shores," is in the word-processing/printing stage and should be available in the Spring of 2003.

2.3. Copies of the above-mentioned documents have been forwarded to our RCDC supporting schools as well as to Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College (CCRTC) and the Curriculum Assistance for Reformed Education committee (CARE). CCC would welcome constructive criticism of the work done.

2.4. Meanwhile, the CCC has been taking up contact with other western provinces to come to some consensus collectively on Social Studies topics and strategies. As it stands now, the BC Socials Studies Curriculum is somewhat vague in its content directives. The significant advantage to that, though, is that such vagueness gives us the opportunity to be more direct with our own curriculum as that pertains to content material and learning objectives.

2.5. Another new venture the CCC is entertaining is the coordination of a discussion forum among Intermediate teachers (Gr. 5-10) to deal with teaching methodologies and content matter in subject areas such as Reading, Writing, and Numeracy. For starters, we will focus on the Writing component.

2.6. Such discussions will also lead into contemplating our assessment and evaluation practices for and of learning

and how we can link these more meaningfully and effectively to our curricular learning objectives. To that end, the CCC is planning a workshop approach to deal with implementation strategies for meaningful assessment practices.

## 3. Outreach

The RCDC is encouraged by the financial commitment of the Carman and Winnipeg Canadian Reformed schools towards the RCDC efforts. By doing so, they are full-fledged members of the RCDC. We look forward to their participation in the deliberation and consultation efforts. We invite other western schools to join in our endeavours as we seek to promote God's Kingdom as that pertains to the education and nurturing of our students so that they may be equipped for every good work and respond as faithful stewards of His creation.

## 4. Flame of the Word

4.1. The Teachers Manual for Volume 2A was made available in Sept. of this year. While sales are moderate, the RCDC is encouraged by the positive critique from Mark Knoll, a leading North American Church historian, as well as from other experts in the field. Also in Australia there are educators promoting this endeavour. Work on Volume 2B is progressing, albeit slowly. At the pace it is going now it would take another six years to complete both Vol. 2B and 3. A proposal has been made to make RCDC funds available to allow one of the authors one day per week to work on this project. This would need the approval of the combined boards of the supporting schools. A submission outlining in further detail the modus operandi of such arrangement will be made at the March, 2003 RCDC meeting.

4.2. The Kelmscott (Australia) Mission Committee has requested to have *The Flame* on the Internet in English and in Chinese. The RCDC has reservations about Internet exposure and on-line copyright problems. It has therefore communicated these reservations to Kelmscott and offered suggestions and details for further discussions. As well, the RCDC will look further into copyright issues for *The Flame*. Having said all this, though, the RCDC is much gratified by this request and it hopes that ways and means may be found to accommodate Kelmscott's requests.

## 5. Narration Course

The Escola Biblica Crista in São José (Brazil) has requested a Brazilian (Por-



Declined the call from the church at London, Ontario:

**Rev. R.E. Pot**

of Orangeville, Ontario.

\* \* \*

Accepted the call from Burlington-Waterdown, Ontario:

**Rev. J. Huijgen**


of Cloverdale, British Columbia.

tuguese) version of the Story-Telling Course, "Ears Acquire Eyes When You Listen," as developed by A. Nap and P. Torenvliet. One of the authors, A. Nap, having just retired as teacher/principal, will be translating this course into the Portuguese language. He is quite capable of doing so, having taught in Brazil for several years. The translation process will also give the authors the opportunity to revise and update the course material. A Narration Course session is planned for the summer of 2003 for the Fraser Valley teachers.

The RCDC is encouraged by the above-mentioned developments. It is with gratitude to God that we can continue with boldness and courage as He keeps opening new gates for the work in his Garden.

*J.A. Roukema, secretary*

*'This two-part article is an edited version of a speech first presented by Rev. R. Eikelboom at an office bearers' conference in Edmonton, May 2002.*

<sup>2</sup>In a *Press Review* in *Clarion*, vol 28, J. Geertsema quotes P.Y. deJong: ". . .I was surprised to observe that those early, enormously influential, Reformation churches gave as much attention to securing sound Bible teaching in the schools as they did to getting it in the churches." Geertsema also refers to Lord's Day 38 of the Heidelberg Catechism which mentions "the ministry of the Gospel and the schools." He points out that Ursinus does not limit "the schools" to the theological colleges. Instead Ursinus says: ". . .unless the arts and sciences be taught, men can neither become properly qualified to teach, nor can the purity of doctrine be preserved and defended against the assault of heretics." *Commentary*, 570. 



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Dear Editor:

Once again, it is good to see the year-end issue of *Clarion*. A bright colourful magazine with the season's greetings, as well as regular articles and church news updates. May God continue to bless your work in the year 2003.

I especially enjoyed the editorial, which focusses on the centre of our life, Christian living in thankfulness for all that God has done for us. Especially the emphasis that our reflection and walk in life is to reflect our faith in God's Word.

There are two issues which I would like to see addressed in future issues dealing with our walk in life in accordance with God's will for our life.

The first issue relates to the shortage of ministers. Both in Holland and Canada we hear of vacant churches and the need for ministers. But I understand in Holland there have been many ministers "relieved" from their congregation. Also within our federation, we have situations where seemingly qualified ministers/candidates are not receiving calls. How does this reflect the biblical commands to accept those called to preach the Word? Are Ministers willing to humbly submit to their council? Are elders encouraging and admonishing their ministers? And are congregations submitting to those placed in church authority?

The second issue raises another concern. Our Dutch sister churches only recently allowed women voting within their churches, using arguments similar to Br. Roukema, with little if any biblical support. Why did *Clarion's* editorial committee allow a two page letter promoting women's voting? The letter clearly shows that this issue has been discussed, addressed at synods and dealt with over the span of two decades. This letter only provides arguments whereby the writer tries to promote his view, without bringing forth any new or biblical grounds. Both the brother, and others wanting to raise this issue should consider the advice of Synod 2001, where the decision was made to lay the issue to rest, since "no new biblical grounds for changing the current practice exists." At what point does a brother or sister raising this issue create dissension within our fed-

eration, which is not God-pleasing, and contrary to Titus 3:1,9?

What may be more beneficial is a discussion about what are the biblical grounds for voting. A study of the Bible, especially the New Testament related passages, is that qualified men were appointed by the apostles (Acts 14:23), and if there were more than one, then lots would be cast (Acts 1:20). By maintaining this system, congregational members (both male and female) would still be able to recommend qualified men. Once the qualifications have been confirmed by council, the men could either be automatically appointed, or lots would be cast, taking away the democratic process. Of course, objections by men and women could still be reviewed by council, but this should be allowed to happen at any time, using the rules of Matthew 18.

To address only one argument in the letter, if voting is only providing advice, as Br. Roukema claims, then something does not make sense. Writing letters to council recommending a brother, or objecting to a brother, is providing advice, with supporting reasons. Voting does not allow an individual to provide the reasons for making a decision, which is a poor way of providing advice. Perhaps it is also unbiblical, since God demands that we always be ready to provide a defense for any word we speak or action we take, especially in regard to an individual's integrity.

Perhaps the editor may find some qualified individual willing to address the above issues. And my prayer is that *Clarion* may continue to be a magazine for promoting Reformed news and articles which build up God's people, especially when we see signs of deformation around us.

*Yours in Christ,  
Henry Salomons  
Beamsville, Ontario*

## Dear Brother,

Thank you for your letter and its encouraging words. In it you also ask a question about the decision of the editorial committee to print the contribution of br. John Roukema favouring women's voting rights.

Why did we print it? The following reasons can be passed along:

- a) *Clarion's* policy is that we will print contributions from readers as long as they deal with pertinent subjects, are readable, and do so in a Christian manner;
- b) It should also be clearly understood that the opinions expressed are those of the writer and should not be interpreted to mean that the editor or the editorial committee are in agreement with said opinion. From time to time we publish letters or articles that we do not at all agree with; however, we believe that our readers have a right to hear them and our contributors have a right to have their voices heard;
- c) As for the particular issue of whether or not women should vote for office-bearers in the church, this is not the place to get into that subject, except to say that you make it sound as if the editorial committee has violated some sort of synodical command. We, however, do not read anywhere that Synod 2001 claims to have laid this issue to rest and that it deems further comment to be either unnecessary or forbidden.

*J. Visscher, Editor*

## Dear Editor:

Regarding J.A. Roukema's article on women's voting rights, I have the following question: What harm has it done to the church since its beginning some 2000 years ago that only men have voted? In fact, since the beginning of time, women have not been involved in voting (or casting lots) in selection of Israel's leaders, and what harm has it done? Has the church lacked something all these years? I don't think so. Another problem with the issue is motives. I have never heard a discussion on the subject starting with "Listen, for the bettering of the church, for the furthering of the kingdom, it would be a good thing if also women voted." But instead, the discussions have strong undertones of "I want. . ." Many church issues are not spelled out to us in the Bible; we cannot say that the Word forbids women voting in church elections. But does the Bible give us enough support that women voting is a good idea?

*Liz van Weerden  
Guelph, Ontario*



## Press Release of the Inter-League Publication Board with the Administration Committee

### Representation

Representing the Men's League: Don Bos, Mike Vander Burgt; Women's League: Elaine Spriensma, Joni Vis; Young People's League: no representation; Administration Committee: Paul DeBoer, Debbie Swaving, Annette Nobel, Theresa Westrik, Cathy Jonker, Bernie Kottelenberg.

The chairman Don Bos opened the meeting with the reading of Psalm 78 and prayer. All are welcomed and introduced since this is the first meeting with the new administration committee.

### Reports

Books to be published the Lord willing this year:

*Workbook on 1&2 Timothy* by Rev. D.J.G. Agema

*The Bride's Treasure and To the Praise of His Glory* by Dr. J. Faber

*The Lord and Giver of Life* by A.N. Hendriks

*Believe and Confess Vol. 1* by Rev. C.G. Bos

*Messianic Motherhood and The Book of Ruth* by H.J. Nijenhuis, S.S. Cnossen (reprint, after being reedited)

*Work in Progress: A King According to God's Will* by Rev. H. Geertsma

*Believe and Confess Vol. 2* by Rev. C.G. Bos

*Isaiah* by H.P. Dam

*James* (workbook) by Rev. R.A. Schouten

*Jonah: God's Prophet* by Rev. H.J. Room

*Joshua* by Rev. H.M. Smit

*What is Your Answer?* By Rev. M.H. Sliggers

Books which need to be reprinted and will be done as soon as financially possible:

*Purim* (needs to be reedited before reprint)

*Enduring Joy* (Philippians)

*1 Corinthians*

More books are needed for translation and/or publication; we would welcome any suggestions that fit within our mandate to provide Reformed study material for Bible Societies. Suggestions could be passed on to any member of the Board.

### Sales

Sales are progressing on track, and we encourage anyone to look at the website <http://spindleworks.com/ILPB> for the latest books available.

Books are available through your local representative, or by calling Debbie Swaving at 1-519- 846- 8566.

### Marketing

An article was sent to *Clarion* (Christmas issue) explaining all the changes to the administration committee. A new catalogue and price sheet will be made shortly. We are trying to get representatives to encourage all church libraries to carry the books of I.L.P.B.

### Financial

Financial statements were discussed. A preliminary budget was presented for the new year (starting June 1, 2003), some changes will be made and presented again in the Spring. Financially, we are able to hold our own with the help of the donations that continue to come in. However with increased income, our output will also be faster.

### General discussion

Archive binder: it continues to be worked on by Elaine Spriensma who is collecting and sorting through thirty years of work. The Young Peoples League is not a running league anymore which leaves the I.L.P.B. Board with two empty chairs.

Paul DeBoer closed with prayer.



Photo courtesy Cor Laddler