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# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE



*And the Walls came Tumbling Down*

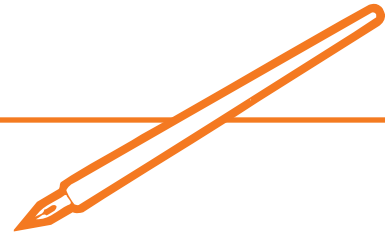
## INSIDE:

- *Willing Leaders*
- *The Canadian Reformed Churches at General Synod Zuidhorn*





By James Visscher



## And the Walls Came Tumbling Down

I am sure that many of our readers are familiar with the words “and the walls came tumbling down.” They are usually considered a reference to what happened long ago to the city of Jericho. The children of Israel led by Joshua marched around the city seven times on the seventh day and when they gave a mighty shout, the walls collapsed.

Well, today the walls are collapsing too. They are collapsing in the nation of Canada. Only they are not collapsing for good reasons. Rather the moral walls of our country are tumbling down.

Unlike Jericho, God is not causing these walls to cave in. This is the work of wilful man. And unlike long ago, this is not an instant thing. For years already the walls have been under attack.

### A definable beginning

Some would say that the process started in earnest when the government of Canada decided to allow abortion on demand. That was the first major breach in the wall. It removed one of the fundamental pillars of the Christian ethic from our land, namely that God is the Creator of all human life and that it is a sacred gift and trust which is to be protected and promoted.

### *Marijuana puffers are all but ignored.*

Ever since this sad development, the forces of darkness have been gaining momentum. The calls for legalizing euthanasia are heard on a regular basis. The use of foetal tissue as medicine to treat various diseases remains the subject of debate and, one suspects, the raw material for further experimentation.

### What are they smoking in Ottawa?

Yet if all of this is cause for dismay, and it surely is, then what has been happening over the last few weeks and months, can only be deemed to be a source of deep consternation.

First, the government informed the nation that it was changing its policy on the possession of marijuana. Being caught with minor amounts would no longer result in criminal conviction, sentence and record. Instead the focus is now going to shift to apprehending and punishing the major growers and pushers. Is this a new get-tough policy? Is the government about to get serious in its war on drugs?

One could wish that this were really the case, but is it? For some time now the government has been conducting

only a half-hearted campaign against the use and spread of illicit drugs. Marijuana puffers are all but ignored. Marijuana growers, even those who run large and sophisticated operations, are caught, slapped on the wrist with minor penalties and set free to begin even bigger and more profitable ventures. What assurances do we have that in the future the authorities will not continue to turn a blind eye to both the little fish and the big fish in this awful trade?

*Can preachers still tell their congregations that homosexuality is sin and abhorrent to God, and at the same time remain exempt from legal penalty?*

And it is an awful trade, let there be no doubt about that. All too often I have been told that marijuana is a harmless substance and does even less damage than alcohol. On a regular basis I hear calls for its legalization. What I do not hear about very often, however, are all of the brains that are fried as the result of excessive pot use. As a pastor I have met young men who have lost all ambition, focus and drive in life because of their addiction. Even worse, I have observed something even more frightening, a linkage between heavy marijuana use and a dreaded psychological disorder called schizophrenia. Last of all, I have read that medical authorities are investigating a connection between marijuana use and the appearance of holes in the brains of pot users.

Yes, and what about the connection between illicit drugs and crime? Car thefts, home break-ins, prostitution and so much other criminal activity are all fuelled by the desperate need to raise money to maintain the habit. Entire neighbourhoods are being victimized directly and indirectly by the drug culture.

In all of this one has to question seriously the new policy announced by those who govern us. Why not a clear and uncompromising position that all marijuana use is illegal and that its cultivation and sale will indeed be prosecuted by the authorities? Why not a national advertising campaign to counteract the myth that this weed is harmless? Why not a concerted attempt to rescue a generation that is in danger of succumbing to a cloud of marijuana?

### Gay rights

Hard on the heels of a new drug policy, we have another development in Ottawa, and it comes from none other than Mr. Svend Robinson, Member of Parliament for

Burnaby South. His private member's bill C-250 is aimed at all those who would say or publish anything of a negative nature against gays and lesbians.

Now, if it is Mr. Robinson's intent to deal forcefully with all those who promote hatred and violence against members of the homosexual community, I can see some merit in his effort. The problem is, however, that his bill is wider than that and has the potential to make all criticism of this lifestyle a crime. Can preachers still tell their congregations that homosexuality is sin and abhorrent to God, and at the same time remain exempt from legal penalty? Can parents teach their children openly, honestly and without hatred, that being gay or lesbian is not God's will for their lives? And what about teachers, social workers, printers, and all those who express hesitation, even reservation, when it comes to the homosexual lifestyle?

Of course, some insist that this bill is not meant to be so invasive and comprehensive, but who will see to that? Will our increasingly activist and pro-gay courts uphold our right to dissent?

### *What's inside?*

We have seen some very disheartening developments in our society in recent weeks. We seem to be on the very "cutting edge" of moral experimentation. However, the result is a society which is eroding rapidly. We truly live in a post-Christian age. Dr. J. Visscher reflects on this in the editorial.

In the previous issue of *Clarion*, the editorial delivered some cautionary words about jumping to unsubstantiated conclusions regarding developments within our sister churches in the Netherlands. In this issue, we have a response from the Netherlands regarding a published report by our deputies from the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad. Please note that our committee responds to this article from the Netherlands.

Once again Dr. J. Visscher presents us with quite a number of suggestions for good reading. Maybe you will find that book you are looking for as you enjoy the summer vacation!

Our column *Education Matters* takes another look at the matter of home schooling. This comes as a response to a letter written by Wes and Rose Bredenhof who were interacting to a previous column of *Education Matters*.

We have a letter to the editor which interacts what might be one last time on a letter by *Filia Pastoris*. We also have our regular columns *Treasures, New and Old* and *Ray of Sunshine*.

We have press releases from Classis Ontario West, Classis Central Ontario and Classis Northern Ontario. In one of the press releases we read that Rev. C. Bosch received approval for early retirement for health reasons. We wish our brother who has served the churches so faithfully and enthusiastically the Lord's blessings as he enters his retirement. It is our hope and prayer that that Lord will also grant him a measure of health, together with his wife, to be able to enjoy these years.

RA



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At the same time others say that it is only a private member's bill and that those hardly ever make it to third and final reading. Do not be too sure about that, seeing that C-250 has the support of the governing Liberal party.

### Same sex marriage

Still, if drugs and the gay and lesbian issue are not enough to spoil your appetite, there is one more thing that is sure to do it. It has to do with same sex marriages. For some time now the gay community has been lobbying hard for the right to marry and to have their marriages legally recognized. Recently the Ontario Court of Appeal, considered by many a very influential court, has ruled on this matter in *Halpern v. Canada*. It decided that the marriage laws should be reformulated and that gays may marry in the Province of Ontario. It also declared its ruling to be effective immediately.

Hard on the heels of this provincial court ruling the federal government was questioned about its reaction and response. For several days it pondered whether or not to appeal this decision to the Supreme Court of Canada; however, it appears that the Prime Minister, Mr. Chretien, intervened and decided that no federal challenge would be forthcoming. As a result, federal Canadian law will soon be amended to allow for the legalization of gay marriages.

Naturally, this matter will be contested. Already the Premier of Alberta, Mr. R. Klein, has said publicly that he will use every means at his disposal to prevent this from happening in his province. In addition, other provinces are concerned because here they see a federal government encroaching on marriage which has always been an area of shared jurisdiction. Finally, sounds of dismay can also be heard from across the border in that few American states are prepared to adopt what until now has always been considered an unacceptable position.

### Canada is sinking

Still, all of that is not at bottom what should really concern us. What is so deeply troubling about this development is that the government of Canada seems not to realize is that it is tampering with a divine institution and undermining a major social pillar in our society. Marriage in Canada has long been defined by the courts as "the voluntary union for life of one man and one woman, to the exclusion of all others." This will no longer be the case.

Tragically a country that already has such a poor track record when it comes to dealing with matters of marriage and divorce, child custody and spousal violence, is going to muddy the waters even more. For let there be no doubt about this: Canada is sinking into a moral morass. Our citizens no longer know what it is to live a biblically ordained life.

*As a result, federal Canadian law will soon be amended to allow for the legalization of gay marriages.*

Even worse, how can we as a nation continue to count on the blessings of the Lord when we so openly violate his holy will? In Romans 1 there is a terrible recurring phrase and it is this: "God gave them up." Thereby the apostle Paul is saying that there comes a point in human decline when God no longer holds back the rising waters of sin and depravity. He hands mankind over and allows it to experience the complete and utter consequences of their sin and rebelliousness. It would appear that we have come to that junction in the road.

### Our calling as Christians

Dear reader, it is not a pretty picture that I am painting for you. Some might even call it alarmist. Nevertheless, as Christians we are to specialize in the signs of the times, and who will dispute that the signs are dark and dreadful? They should drive all of us to pray earnestly and constantly for our beleaguered nation.

At the same time they should also cause us to reflect seriously on the extent of our political involvement. Perhaps the tide of secularism and humanism that is sweeping our nation cannot be averted, but have we tried hard enough to do so? Have we forgotten our Reformed heritage which calls for the reformation of all of life and for a recognition of the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all of life? The moral walls of Canada are tumbling, what will the righteous do? What can they do? What should they do?



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*Supreme Court of Canada*

*Front cover:  
Parliament Buildings,  
Ottawa*

By J.D. Louwse

## Willing Leaders

*"My heart is with Israel's princes, with the willing volunteers among the people. Praise the LORD!"*  
Judges 5:9

By this time of the year, many a congregation will have witnessed the blessed event of the installation of new office-bearers. The new elders and deacons have begun their tasks of leading and guiding and teaching God's people. Thankfully we can fill the vacancies every year again! And yet how often is it not a struggle for a church council to find brothers who are able and willing to serve? And how is the work of the elders and deacons being done? Eagerly? Willingly?

We are very much opposed to having women serve as elders and deacons. For God's Word is very clear on this matter. In 1 Timothy 2 God declares: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man." And yet, are we not today in danger of having women in office by default?

For generally our women's Bible study clubs are more numerous and better attended than that of men. Where are the men? Where are they preparing to be leaders and commanders among God's people?

That question could also be asked in the days of the Judges! In those days there was no king in Israel and every man did what was right in his own eyes. Yes, no king and no princes under a king either! For who arose in Israel? Deborah, a mother in Israel. Deborah as a prophetess and judge!

It is through this prophetess that the Lord God encourages men to leadership; to be leaders among His people. The Lord God encourages through Deborah's song of praise, specifically when she says: "My heart is with Israel's princes, with the willing volunteers among the people. Praise the LORD!" This mother and wife in Israel encouraged the princes to lead by offering themselves in service. So it should be today also: wives and mothers encourag-

ing their husbands and sons to lead by offering themselves in service.

But where were these leaders in Deborah's days! Where were the princes of Israel, leading in the fight against the army of general Sisera? Where were the men to direct the fight against the soldiers and 900 chariots of Jabin King of Canaan who reigned in Hazor?

Because of Israel's disobedience of turning to the gods of the surrounding nations, the Lord God sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan. In those days, the highways and roads in the valleys and plains of northern Israel were under the control of the Canaanites: no one dared to go out because of them. If they did, they stuck to the winding trails and little-used pathways of the hills and mountains. Also village life in Israel ceased. People didn't live in un-walled villages for fear of the Canaanites who would raid them! This was a time of cruel oppression. There was no law and order in Israel. There was no peace.

Who would deliver God's people from their enemies? Who would bring God's people justice and peace? Who would be defending them in those days of trouble? Who would be willing to serve among them: to lead them in battle against their enemies?

Deborah sent and summoned Barak, the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, "Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead the way to Mount Tabor. I (the Lord) will lure Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands."

It was the Lord God who called Barak to serve as leader under his supreme command! And yet, how unwilling Barak was! For what did Barak say to the prophetess Deborah? "If you will go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go!"

So unwilling to lead according to God's command! Lacking in faithfulness! Would there ever come one who was willing to lead among the people? There was no king in Israel in those days. But the days would come when there would be a king who would serve as commander in chief, as Prince of peace!

He would offer Himself willingly among his people. He is our Lord Jesus Christ! He said: "Here I am, I have come – it is written about me in the scroll. I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart." And so He offered himself willingly even unto death! And in this way He delivered us from our enemies.

But to keep us in our deliverance, our Lord Jesus Christ, as commander in chief, as Prince of peace, has also graciously given leaders to be among us, his people. These leaders are to offer themselves willingly among the New Testament people of God.

The apostle Peter exhorts the elders in his first letter: "tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly. . . ." So it is to be in the church of our Lord, with the elders, with those who are to lead and guide the flock: offering themselves willingly among the people! By the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, may there be that willing spirit among the office-bearers who serve in the churches.

And then let us, God's children, as those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, be wholly glad and willingly to follow them. May we submit to them, as we go into battle against our enemies! And so may the Lord be blessed and praised forever.



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By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honour your father and mother" – which is the first commandment with a promise – "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on earth." Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:1-4*

## Dear Brothers and Sisters:

"Honour your father and mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you." In this fifth commandment, we are dealing with matters at the heart of our homes: honouring our parents. The catechism teaches us that this honour also extends to all those who are in authority over us. God has given man this authority, since it is his will to govern us by their hand. We must never forget that all authority belongs to God alone.

To show honour, love and faithfulness, means to respect and show kindness and loyalty. This should be shown to our parents for God has set them over us. We can do this by means of submission and with cheerful obedience. As little children, this respect must begin at home. But it does not just stay here, but extends also to the governments, teachers, employers, and elders. We are not to heed to their instruction in a grudging manner, but willingly, realizing that those in authority are set there by the Lord, and are working for our good.

Paul teaches us in Romans 13:1,2 "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves."

Since mankind is so stained with sin, the catechism also teaches us that we must be patient with the weaknesses and shortcomings of those placed over us. As we all get older we may realize more and more that our parents are just like us all; weak and sinful people, who have so often fallen, just like us, in the service of God.

Jesus strongly warns us in Matthew 10:37 that "anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." God must be our first priority in life, over our family. This commandment also gives us a promise that it may go well with us. "Honour your father and mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you." Here we must realize that we stand before God's sovereign wisdom. To live as children of God can so often bring its trials and difficulties. By listening and obeying our parents and those in authority over us, we show our true love for the Lord. When Christ was on the cross, he was in total humiliation, and listened to the will of his Father. He showed all honour, love and faithfulness to his Father in heaven. We may also think of Job, who also suffered earthly trials. Why were all the trials of the righteous so many, while the ungodly seemed to prosper so well?

God teaches us throughout his Word that we must look beyond this earthly life, with all its cares and sorrow. We must keep our eyes and hearts focused on the promised

land that awaits us in the new Jerusalem, when Christ returns. "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Col 3:23,24).

Let us never forget that it is God who governs all things. With prayer and humility may we continue to honour and love our parents and those who are placed by God in authority over us.

*Give ear, my people, listen to my teaching;  
Incline your ear, and let my words be reaching  
Your heart and mind, and with their truth impress  
you;  
The parable in which I speak shall bless you.  
My mouth will voice dark sayings from of old,  
Things we have heard, which us our fathers told.*

*A testimony He in Jacob founded,  
In Israel He had His law expounded,  
And to our fathers He, the Lord, commanded  
That all His words from kin to kin be handed,  
That children yet unborn once might arise  
And teach their seed these laws so good and wise.*

Psalm 78:1, 3

## Birthdays in August:

### 4: Terence Berends will be 27

Anchor Home, 361, Thirty Road, RR 2,  
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2

### 5: Philip Schuurman will turn 44

65 Lincoln Street W., Welland, ON L3C 5J3

### 9: Rose Malda will turn 46

Oakland Centre, 53 Bond Street,  
Oakville, ON L6J 5B6

### 18: Fenny Kuik will be 51

140 Foch Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2C 5H7

### 23: Jack Dieleman will turn 31

5785 Young Street, Apt. 704,  
Willowdale, ON M2M 4J2

Our sincere congratulations with all of you who are celebrating your birthday this month. We hope and pray that you will be richly blessed in this year with much health and happiness. Have an enjoyable day together with your family and friends. Till next month,

Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman  
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# All about books

By J. Visscher

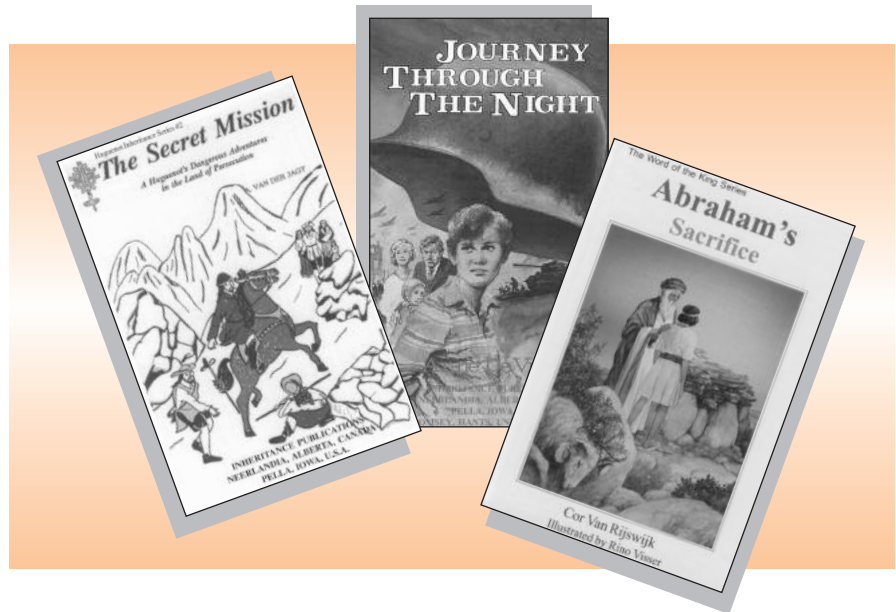
A number of books have been piling up on my desk in need of review, and if possible, recommendation. For your convenience I have put them in various categories.

## Children's books

Inheritance Publications out of Neerlandia, Alberta, was so good as to send a number of their most recent offerings. Of particular interest to our readers will be the Bible story books authored by Cor Rijswijk called *Abraham's Sacrifice*, *Gideon Blows the Trumpet*, *David and Goliath*. These books are usually about forty pages long, are well-illustrated by Rino Visser and are faithful, biblical renderings. They make for good birthday presents to four and five year olds.

Among an older group of children, the Huguenot Inheritance Series from Inheritance should be of interest. A. Van Der Jagt in his work *The Secret Mission* tells the story of John who flees the persecution in France, seeks refuge in the Netherlands, and then has to return to the country of his birth on a special mission. It is a sequel to Van Der Jagt's earlier book, *The Escape*. Also dealing with France and the Huguenots is a book by Deborah Alcock called *Done and Dared in Old France*. It tells the story of a French boy Gaspard who meet a famous Huguenot preacher called Claude Brousson.

From the United Kingdom comes a very attractive Bible survey book written by Carine Mackenzie called *The Bible Explorer* (Christian Focus). It tries to get elementary students into the Bible making use of computer graphics. As such it gives a faithful and interesting overview of the biblical storyline from Genesis to Revelation.



## Teenage and adult books

Once again Inheritance Publications presents us with a series of books geared to teenagers, and in some cases, older people as well. The classic by Anne De Vries, *Journey Through the Night*, was originally made available in four volumes but now it has been brought together in one volume of 373 pages. Here is a book to read and re-read!

The same publisher is offering us any number of books by Deborah Alcock, a prolific Irish Reformed writer who lived from 1835-1913. In the Reformation Trails Series we have her book *The Spanish Brothers*, which is a well-written story about Protestantism in Spain. We also have *Crushed Yet Conquering: A Story of Constance and Bohemia* and *Hubert Ellerdale: A Tale of the Days of Wycliffe*. The former gives us insight into the struggle for reform during the times of John Hus. The latter deals with John Wycliffe and the

circumstances under which he lived and worked. In all three works Alcock skillfully weaves together fictional characters and historical events.

Quite a different book is the well-known book by H. Knoop, *A Theatre in Dachau* (Inheritance Publications). It tells the moving story of a Dutch minister who was imprisoned in that place which has become infamous in history called Dachau, a German concentration camp. It is a wonderful testimony to the fact that God's grace is at work even in the darkest places.

## Study books

Speaking of Dachau, Inheritance Publications has also published a booklet by a Dutch minister who was martyred in that awful place. It is called *The Self-Justification of God in the Life of Job* and is written by K. Sietsma. It is actually a series of seven sermons on the book of Job that can still be read with profit in private and in the worship services.



The Banner of Truth has come out with a commentary on Hosea written by Ray Beeley called *Wayward but Loved*. In a series of twenty-four studies or chapters, it delves ably into the text of this Bible book. Of particular interest is the fact that each study includes a section called "For Meditation" which often suggests ways in which ancient words can find modern application. Any Bible study group studying Hosea would do well to consult this book.

The same applies to two other titles from the Banner of Truth Trust, namely Andrew W. Young's *Let's Study 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, and Hywel R. Jones' *Let's Study Hebrews*. Both are the work of respected Reformed pastors and teachers. Young, an educator in New Zealand, gives us an able 200 page commentary on Paul's two letters to the church in that northern Greek city. Jones, a Welshman currently teaching at Westminster Theological Seminary in California, gives us a lucid exposition of Hebrews. Both come complete with a study guide which means that they are ideally suited for group use. Give them, as well as other titles in this series, some serious consideration if you are making plans for a new season of Bible study.

### Books for pastors

Christian Focus Publications of Great Britain has recently published *Standing Forth: Collected Writings of Roger Nicole*. Those who are familiar with the North American theological scene will recognize Nicole as a theologian who has long promoted and

defended the Reformed faith. For many years he taught at Gordon Divinity School (later, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary) and then at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida.

This volume is divided into three sections. In the first called "The Bible" we have a series of articles dealing with inerrancy, neo-orthodoxy, the canon, truth, inspiration, the New Testament use of the Old Testament, and personalities such as Patrick Fairbairn, John Calvin, B.B. Warfield, and J.D.G. Dunn. In the second section called "The Atonement" Nicole pays special attention to this basic biblical doctrine dealing with its definition, nature and extent. Especially fitting are his comments on the views of John Calvin and C.H. Dodd. In the third and final section called "Miscellaneous Articles" he deals with matters relating to the Trinity, the Openness of God controversy, the five points of Calvinism, perseverance and universalism. In the opening section of this book Nicole also includes an interesting essay that should be required reading for all theologians and believers called "Polemic Theology – How to Deal with Those Who Differ from Us." All in all, a book which offers rich fare to all who dare to enter its pages.

Finally, from that well-known American publisher William B. Eerdmans we have a volume that some of us have been looking forward to with great anticipation, namely *The Age of the Reformation*, volume 4 in Hughes Oliphant Old's series *The Reading and*

*Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christ Church*.

Here in a work of 570 pages Old gives us a taste of preaching as it was in the days of the Reformation. As such he deals with the Reformers: Luther, Zwingli, Oecolampadius, Calvin; with counter-Reformation figures: Thomas of Villanova, Juan of Avila, Luis of Granada, Xavier, Canisius, Bellarmine, Borromeo; with Puritans: Perkins, Sibbes, Goodwin, Manton, Watson and Flavel. In addition, well-known preachers in Anglican, German, French and Dutch circles receive attention. Along with biographical sketches of these preachers, Old gives us sample sermons and astute analysis.

In the preface we are informed that told that this history of preaching will consist of seven volumes in all. Four have appeared thus far, and three are in process. Indeed, they have already been written and it remains for the publisher to bring them out at appropriate intervals. Quite a feat!

Indeed, Old is to be commended for giving the Christian church what can rightfully be called the best history of preaching. We have devoured the current volume with great pleasure and look forward to more servings of this homiletical feast. Preachers, do yourselves and your congregations a great favour, by taking and reading.



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# The Canadian Reformed Churches at General Synod Zuidhorn

By R.C. Janssen

In the end-of-year issue of *Clarion*, 2002, Rev. J. Huijgen published an article in which he shared his (and Rev. C. VanderVelde's) impressions gained during their visit to General Synod Zuidhorn 2002 of the *Gereformeerde Kerken Vrijgemaakt* (GKV). This article gives expression to both appreciation and concern regarding developments in the Dutch churches. As deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad (RCA) on behalf of the GKV, particularly charged with relations in the British Isles and North America we wish to respond to the concerns expressed.

We highlight the fact that Rev. Huijgen is describing his impressions. Impressions play a valuable role in coming to understand another church. However, impressions may not be determinative in deciding a stance with respect to another church. The words appended to the Canons of Dort still stand today:

Therefore, this Synod of Dort adjures, in the Name of the Lord, all who piously call upon our Saviour Jesus Christ not to judge the faith of the Reformed churches from the slander gathered from here and there. Neither are they to judge from personal statements of some ancient or modern teachers, often quoted in bad faith, or taken out of context and explained contrary to their meaning. But one ought to judge the faith of the Reformed churches from the public confessions of these churches themselves and from the present explanation of the orthodox doctrine, confirmed by the unanimous consent of the members of the entire Synod, one and all (*Book of Praise*, p. 576).

In view of these words we believe Rev. Huijgen does both the GKV and *Clarion's* readers an injustice.

## Sunday issues

Rev. Huijgen reports how the CanRC deputies discussed the "Sunday issues" with the GKV deputies. He writes: "We were assured by our counterparts that the Dutch churches maintain strong Sunday traditions. Rev. Vandervelde and I wondered whether traditions alone would suffice. We requested scriptural basis for some of their assertions. We were presented with their rationale, a range of interpretations existing from one end of the 'spectrum' to the other with variations in between."

Only at the GS Zuidhorn was the issue of Sunday observance tabled in its full breadth. GS Leusden decided it would be "synodical" to deal with the issue in its breadth and limited itself to the appeal with which it was presented. GS Zuidhorn confirmed the correctness of GS Leusden on this point. (This decision has been translated and can be found via [www.gkv.nl](http://www.gkv.nl)). Since the issue of Sunday observance had, however, been properly placed on the agenda of GS Zuidhorn, it decided to appoint deputies mandated to study the issue. Deputies RCA were unwilling to anticipate Synod and could thus do no more than relay the various positions held in the Dutch churches, positions which have been held ever since GS Dordrecht 1618-19, as GS Leusden 1999 art 25, decision 4 made clear. Rev. Huijgen's concluding comment, "we observed that their unity and uniformity has been exchanged for plurality," is thus considered by the GKV to be in error: this plurality has existed since at least GS Dordrecht 1618-19.

## New marriage form

Rev. Huijgen expresses concern about the role deputies play in the GKV ecclesiastical organization. He uses as

example the fact that deputies RCA placed a summary of the study of the new Marriage Form on the agenda of synod. He writes:

Today the Dutch deputies present to Synod any material they receive omitting discretion as to admissibility and relevance. During Synod the Dutch deputies are in attendance, to continue discussions and expedite the decisions. It should be noted that these deputies have the potential to be extremely influential due to their number. . . As a result discussions involving our members cannot be conducted unless our delegates partake at the Synod level. This degree of participation would require our physical presence for proper representation.

Three issues are raised here. There is the detail of the tabling of the summary report on the Marriage Form by deputies RCA. Concerning this fact, deputies RCA wrote to deputies Committee for Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations (CEIR) the following:

From our point of view it is only logical that this piece was submitted to our synod. When a general synod is being held, synodical deputies are formally decommissioned their mandate is finished and they have no new mandate. Since your discussion paper was received after the deadline for us to submit our report but before synod went into session, and since the marriage form had already been placed on the agenda of synod, we thought it proper to pass on your concerns to our synod. We passed your paper on, intending it merely to be used as extra information by the committee appointed by synod to prepare the matter. It was not our intention that synod would

receive this discussion paper as a formal objection from the CanRC. However, synod did so and the matter is now a fact. We sincerely apologize for thus having short-circuited the process which you, mandated thereto by GS Neerlandia 2001, had set in motion. We assure you that we had no ulterior motives in doing so.

The second issue raised by Rev. Huijgen relates to the influence of deputies at Dutch synods. Rev. Huijgen suggests a potential for what the Dutch term "*deputaten-cratie*." However, it is precisely at GS Zuidhorn that the GKV have experienced less influence of deputies. That deputies are in attendance when "their" item is being discussed is only logical: they are the expert advisors in such a case. However, GS Zuidhorn took responsibility for its own decisions and at times deviated from the advice of deputies. Thus, contrary to what deputies RCA proposed, GS Zuidhorn decided to postpone upgrading the relation with the GKSA ("*Dopper*" churches) to a sister church relationship at least until GS 2005. It also decided to approve only 90 of the 103 hymns submitted by Deputies Church Music for approval.

The third issue is the involvement of delegates from foreign churches in the decision-making process of a synod. This is a matter being studied at the moment. The problem is that synods of the GKV have a lengthy agenda and can last many months. It is the task of deputies RCA to ensure that foreign churches are aware of what is happening at synods of the GKV. For the GKV have decided that "Should alterations or additions, which would be in substance of confessional nature, be considered to the church standards, church order or liturgical forms, such intent shall be drawn to the particular notice of the sister churches, in order to permit as much consultation as possible before a final decision is taken." (Rules for Sister church Relationships # 6). It should also be noted that the language barrier makes it more difficult for a Dutch synod to involve foreign delegates in its proceedings than it would be for an English ecclesiastical assembly.

### Dutch liturgy

The next concern expressed by Rev. Huijgen relates to changes in Dutch liturgy. It is in the worship, as the meet-

ing of God and his people that one can see the church profess its faith, its convictions concerning and trust in the Triune God. Rev. Huijgen reports "we were told that. . . Dutch ministers were attempting to make the worship services more interesting. There is a special word for that in the Dutch churches: '*opleuken*.'" This "*opleuken*" evoked surprise and sadness with the CanRC delegates. "[We] believe we were witness to a regression and not a progression. We suspect the Dutch churches to be relying on the same practices the CRCNA embraced fifteen or twenty years ago."

In response we point out that deputies Worship Service in their report to GS Zuidhorn 2002 indicated introducing changes in the worship service for the sake of "*opleuken*" (literally "to make nicer" but with a decidedly pejorative connotation) is to no avail (*Rapport Deputaten Eredienst*, p. 57). The measures undertaken should be seen as attempts to enrich the worship service and to communicate all the more clearly the message of the Gospel.

With respect to the use of props during a sermon it may be pointed out that the use of a mask, a potato or a cell phone during a service is not at odds with biblical examples. God conveys a message to Jeremiah by showing him baskets of figs (Jer 24), Ezekiel conveys the definitive destruction of Jerusalem to Israel by making a model of the city (Ezek 4-5), Agabus portrays Paul's imminent captivity by binding himself with Paul's belt (Acts 21:11) and Jesus reveals the Gospel of world history to the apostle John by showing him what has been, is and will take place (Rev 1:19). Whether an illustration in a sermon is mental or physical cannot be the point; the point is whether the illustration serves the message or becomes an end in itself.

Rev. Huijgen suggests that many Dutch practices are "quite new," at least, foreign to the Canadian Reformed. The practice in various Canadian (American) Reformed Churches makes clear that there too there are such "new" elements. One of the present deputies has experienced how in a CanRC the handshake has disappeared, how elsewhere there is no collection in the afternoon service, how in a third church there are various spoken "amens," and how during a sermon on "paying unto Caesar what is Caesar's



Called by the Free Reformed Church of Launceston, Tasmania, Australia:

**Rev. J. Poppe**

of West Albany, Australia.

\*\*\*

Called by the church at London, Ontario:

**Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer**

of Aldergrove, British Columbia.

\*\*\*

Called by the church at Rockway, Ontario:

**Rev. R.E. Pot**

of Orangeville, Ontario.

\*\*\*

Called by the church at Cloverdale, British Columbia:

**Rev. R. Aasman**

of Edmonton (Providence), Alberta.

\*\*\*

Instituted on June 1, 2003: the church of St. Albert, Alberta.

**Please visit the directory for location and times of worship.**

\*\*\*

Morning worship services for the church at Abbotsford, British Columbia will begin at:

**9:30 a.m.**

**July 13 – September 21**

and God what is God's" the minister pulled a quarter from his wallet to prove the point.

### General trend

Rev. Huijgen concludes his impression of the Dutch churches with the following words: "We noticed a general trend among the Dutch churches which we summarize as a fear. This fear involves being identified as a type of church with exclusive truths. The Reformed character is almost unrecognizable. The Dutch churches are attempting to reinvent themselves in hopes of establishing an identity." The last sentence is even lifted out of the article to be accentuated in a text-box.

It is to this comment that deputies RCA take strong exception. This is no small accusation which creates misconceptions in the hearts of those



who depend on their churches' "ambassadors" for information. Deputies RCA consider such an unguarded comment very unbecoming for a deputy of synod.

We respond therefore with vigour. The GKV are not afraid to be identified as a church with exclusive truths. The Ecumenical and Reformed Creeds are maintained wholeheartedly, as is clearly evidenced by our contacts with the *Nederlands Gereformeerden* closely and the "Dopper" churches in South Africa. The GKV dare to be a church with exclusive truths. Our Reformed character is clearly recognizable. Rather than attempting to reinvent ourselves in the hopes of establishing an identity we are, in true Reformed tradition, constantly reforming ourselves (*semper reformanda*) so that the message God wishes to convey to the world through us may sound loud and clear, in covenant circles and in the world at large. We in fact wonder how it is possible for Rev. Huijgen to expe-

rience "the work of the Lord" in activities of the Institute for Reformed Theological Training and yet claim that the churches to which the IRTT belongs to be "almost unrecognizable" with respect to their "Reformed character."

The GKV will make no claim to being perfect. There is much to discuss, much to learn, much to flee from and much to pursue. Rev. Huijgen's impressions evidence this. However, the interpretation presented of these impressions are in error. We hope that we have reassured concerned brothers and sisters that the GKV are making serious work of their calling to be church in their environment. And we openly solicit the thoughts of our sister churches all around the globe to reflect on the issues that confront us.


In closing we note that we have submitted this article to Rev. Huijgen for comment prior to having it published. We have also informed deputies CRCA of its submission to *Clarion* for publication. Sadly, this Christian cour-

tesy was not extended us prior to the publication of Rev. Huijgen's article.

*On behalf of Section 3,  
deputies RCA of the GKV,  
Rev. R. C. (Karlo) Janssen.*

### Comment from the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad

The CRCA was informed only after the article had been submitted to *Clarion* and accepted for publication. The CRCA regrets that the Dutch Deputies took this course of action. First, it does not reckon with the fact that the report on the visit was not submitted under personal title but on behalf of the CRCA. Second, committees appointed by their respective church federations conduct their discussion not in the public press but by directly addressing each other.

*On behalf of the CRCA,  
Rev. Eric Kampen, Convener* 



### CALLING ALL FORMER TEACHERS!

We need your help! The boards of the Credo Elementary School, John Calvin School, William of Orange School and Credo Christian High School, located in the Fraser Valley in BC, set up an ad hoc Teacher Recruitment Committee last fall. Its mandate was to explore and ways and means of recruiting and maintaining teachers in our schools.

As part of that mandate, we are soliciting input from both current and former teachers across the continent. We have posted a short survey online which we are asking you to fill out in order to help us gather some valuable data (we hope) on why some have left the profession. We are also soliciting input on how schools can do a better job in keeping teachers happy and in the profession.

If you left the teaching world (or specifically teaching in our schools) at anytime during the past ten years, we are encouraging you to contact us by email so we can give you the location of the survey and the necessary code to access it.

You could be doing your (former) colleagues a great service and be part of the solution to what is an ongoing challenge for our schools. Please send a short email to the following address to get your access information: [jludwig@telus.net](mailto:jludwig@telus.net)

*Teacher Recruitment Committee*



## Is Home Schooling Less Reformed?

By Keith Sikkema

In the last twenty years or so, many feathers have been ruffled by home schooling. It first clearly challenged the public educational establishments of North America on their academic, moral, and philosophical failures. Moreover, it was illegal in many jurisdictions. The tide has turned however, and home schooling is now legal in most areas. Also, many parents without access to Christian day schools now have a better way to responsibly train up their children.

### Tensions in Christian contexts

The feathers of Christian day schools also got ruffled. *Christian Renewal* of September 10, 2001, speaks of strain in several communities between such schools and those who home school. While some seek cooperation between the two, others object to such efforts. The chairman of Heritage Christian School in Jordan, Ontario, is quoted as saying, "We certainly have those who believe, that, as part of the covenantal responsibility, you should send your children to the covenantal school." The editor calls this, "a serious charge (that) appears to disregard the Biblical truth that the ultimate responsibility for training children is that of the parents." At the May, 2003, Convention of the Ontario Christian Home Educators Connection (OCHEC), I asked some who home school about this controversy. Several, including members of the URC, CRC, FRC, and CanRC, acknowledged tension on the matter, particularly if their community was previously committed to a Christian day school. Finally, in a recent letter to the editor in *Clarion*, Wes and Rose Bredenhof identified some controversial comments in an *Education Matters* interview with a retired Canadian Reformed principal.

This interview presented one person's general view on the course of Reformed education, and was neither

designed nor intended to elaborate on philosophical issues. Yet, his controversial comments touch on a matter that lies at the heart of the home schooling controversy, however brief they may have been. Does it require a professional and Reformed teacher in a classroom setting to teach Bible and church history reformedly, or to provide a Reformed view on history, geography, and other subjects? Could this also be done at home by Reformed and able parents, not a few of whom are actually former teachers in our schools? If those who home school

*Does it require a professional and Reformed teacher in a classroom setting to teach Bible and church history Reformedly, or to provide a Reformed view on history, geography, and other subjects?*

cannot do it well, how well do our school teachers do it? The Bredenhofs suggest the comments also imply a "we-have-arrived syndrome." I assume that this syndrome entails that we have our schools, that they are Reformed, and that they are the final answer to educating the youth of the covenant. In this article, I suggest that the schools are not the only legitimate answer to education, and that we all must remember to serve the communion of saints: our brothers and sisters in the church.

### Cause for our schools

Canadian Reformed schools were established for good reasons. Here I only mention the situation, the faith commitment, and the tradition. Certainly in Ontario, it was becoming increasingly irresponsible to send covenant children to a public school environment during the 1950s and 1960s. These schools could only be trusted to esteem the Word of God in as far it was seen to pragmatically promote essentially humanistic virtues like love and honesty (cf. Ontario's

*Hope Report*, 1950). Although classes were still opened with Bible reading and prayer, and two half-hour weekly Bible periods were required by law, public education was shifting towards a more blatantly secular orientation. Ontario's *Hall Dennis Report* of 1968 was clearly secular in its quest for truth, and the subsequent *Mackay Committee* set out in 1969 to chart the path to make public education officially secular. This was the time our first schools were established in Ontario as well: Burlington, 1962; Smithville, 1964; Fergus and Orangeville, 1967; Chatham and Hamilton, 1973; Guido de Brès High, 1975. Without alternatives, parents understood that this situation required schools that preserved the unity of home, church, and school, that could help maintain their baptismal vows, that were true to their confession, and that upheld the antithesis. That response also connected them to the long and well-tested tradition of Reformed education carried by our Reformed forefathers in the Netherlands at the Synod of Dort (1618-1619), and through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

From the beginning, it was understood that these schools could only be viable with the Lord's blessing provided through the communion of saints. It may not have been understood by all, and it has been argued that it was all a matter of an immigrant community banding together to preserve a sense of group-identity, but the notion was clearly there that God's covenant people, that is the church, are jointly responsible for each other. It was not only impossible for parents to build and maintain a school and to pay teachers a (meagre) salary, but it was also wrong to leave it to the parents only. When the Lord calls his people to love Him and each other, He means that they must look out for each other. He means that they must help provide for each other. That may specifically be channelled through the work of the deacons in some ways, but in Romans 12-14 and in 1 Corinthians 12-13 all are called to use their gifts for the benefit of the other and to build up the body of Christ. Paul takes that far: he even would have us avoid things that could become a



stumbling block for others, especially if it is a matter of our freedoms and preferences. It is in that context that he calls the kingdom of God a matter of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Although Paul illustrates it with eating and drinking of certain foods, the principle applies to the whole broad spectrum of the life of the congregation. It is sin to resist sharing the gifts Christ gave with the other members of the body.

### **Communion of saints**

The communion of saints is the immediate context in which we have to raise our children – much like the Israelites had to do in the days of Moses, David and Hezekiah. I find it striking in Deuteronomy 6:9 that the commandments of the Lord should not only be written on the doorframes of the houses of the Israelites, but also on their gates, in prominent public places. The parents have the first responsibility, but the church also, as context of and witness to the baptism of the children of the covenant, is not at all aloof to the way they are raised, as it is also reflected in Article 58 of our Church Order. Within the communion of saints, then, people must understand that they are all obliged to support the parents in this effort: in gratitude to God and in love for the household of faith, the communion of saints supports its members in doing what God asks of them. If I understand Scripture right, God's thankful people would rather forego a luxury vacation or expensive toy than to see some of their brothers and sisters in church suffer under a burden that could take the joy and comfort out of their daily lives.

*It is sin to resist sharing the gifts Christ gave with the other members of the body.*

Our schools are not the only institutions that need support, but they loom large in the Canadian Reformed perspective. They are beautiful institutions in which children of the covenant can be taught in the fear of the Lord, together, as a continuous joint effort of the communion of saints. It is disconcerting that these schools are increasingly becoming "user-paid," as though they are of interest to those "who need the service" only: Paul does not place a cut-off date for when one "has done his share" in loving his brothers and sis-

ters. I believe that the user-pay problem of our schools is an indication of the failing health of the communion of saints, and that it may not automatically be blamed on those who home school: in one particular school's catchment area, ten percent of people home school, but fifty-five percent do not support the school financially.

While prominent, schools do not fully meet the ideal, and our teachers are not perfect, they have *not* arrived. Yet, efforts are on-going to support the Reformed character of education, for instance through in-service training through Covenant Teachers College in Hamilton, through the Reformed Curriculum Development Committee in the Fraser Valley, the Curriculum Assistance for Reformed Education committee in Ontario, teachers and principals conferences, and the like. In Ontario, school boards are considering the joint hiring of a full time Curriculum Coordinator to support the complex task of developing and delivering Reformed curriculum. Locally, parents and teachers alike gather around the same Word under the same preaching, the same sacraments, and the same discipline to maintain the unity of home, church, and school. Our schools rightly expect their teachers' living commitment to the Reformed faith, and a good level of pre-service and in-service training as part of their ongoing drive for improvement.

### **Consider home schooling**

When I published a review of the South African publication *Thuisonderwys* (Home Schooling) about a year ago, some people wondered whether I was perhaps "in favour of home schooling." Thanks to several people who home school, who shared their perspectives with me in the context of a study I am conducting, I have come to better appreciate some of its strengths and drawbacks. Without listening to them, I would not have been able to appreciate their joy, their pain, burdens, and frustrations, their relief, and the justification for their choice. There is more to be said here than I can do in this column, but (if only for the principle of not condemning anyone unheard) I believe that home schooling warrants careful consideration, as long as the key scriptural principles of the primary role of the parents in education and the actively supportive context of the communion of saints are maintained.

The claim that a Reformed day school is the only way in which education can be Reformed, or that parents are violating their baptismal vows if they choose otherwise, will need closer scrutiny. This is so, in the first place because the Bible nowhere demands that we send our children to a school. It demands that parents raise their children in the fear of the Lord, and it gives an actively supportive role to the community. That community, the communion of saints, may not be neglected, and it may not neglect that role. Now that home schooling is here to stay, we all

*God's thankful people would rather forego a luxury vacation or expensive toy than to see some of their brothers and sisters in church suffer. . . .*

are challenged to discover how the community can play its supportive role to parents who send their children to the school as well as to parents who home school. Neither our schools, nor our home schooling families have arrived. Both need to contend with their weaknesses, and both need to learn from each other, and both have a long way to go. It appears to me that means are now available that were not around in the 1960s, and that makes home schooling a viable option, again. Perhaps our communities must rise to this challenge of incorporating "new" ways of educating children, and perhaps they need to grow in their understanding of how diverse the Lord allows things to be in his church.

Is home schooling less Reformed? Undoubtedly, a home school mom or dad may apply different techniques and approaches than a professional teacher would, but that does not imply that it is therefore less Reformed. There is no reason a well-prepared home schooling mom or dad cannot bring a Reformed perspective into the lessons, or cannot teach the psalms, or cannot explain Scripture, or tell Bible stories. Of course, this puts these moms and dads on their toes, and one may rightly wonder how the resources they use affect the Reformed character of their curriculum. If Canadian Reformed schools and teachers spend tens of thousands of dollars and countless hours on these questions alone, it is well for parents

who home school to give that further consideration. This is one area in which we need the communion of saints! However, there are also good reasons to believe that children will learn well in a close and loving context with one-on-one attention from the teacher. Statistics on the achievements of home schooled children strongly suggest that, on average, they do better than seventy or even eighty percent of the general school population.

### Conclusion

Wes and Rose Bredenhof asked for some charitable Christian consideration. Let us give it just that. Let us explore together this “new” way of educating children, and see how the principles can be maintained. Let us listen to, rather than condemn parents who home school; let us encourage them to rejoice in the communion of saints rather than being driven into the community-of-like-minded-others. Let us see how the Lord can make the communion of saints flourish by a renewed

commitment to the love, harmony, and unity of which the Lord’s Supper form speaks. Misguided resentment and false accusations against the school or home schooling are wrong and not likely to accomplish much. Just like teachers,

*Just like teachers,  
parents who home school  
need support to remain  
Reformed in their teaching  
and to sharpen their  
perspective.*

parents who home school need support to remain Reformed in their teaching and to sharpen their perspective. Let’s get to work with this feather-ruffling topic, but let us especially consider how our gifts and talents can best be used for the benefit and well-being of the other members in the church community God gave us, for his glory.

This article does not answer all questions. If we have not given it a lot of thought, it may be difficult to see how the communion of saints can be as actively involved in a home schooling context as in the school context. I would ask a home schooler to tackle this in a future article in this column. We should also consider how our attitude on home schooling affects the body of Christ, and what message it sends to our children. It is my dream that we understand the communion of saints rightly again, that we learn the love again of which Paul speaks, and that we help each other apply Matthew 18. C

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*This column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teacher’s Association-East. Any responses to articles printed or any educational articles can be emailed to [abkingma@kwic.com](mailto:abkingma@kwic.com) or sent to Clarion.*

## LETTER 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,

*Filia Pastoris* pleaded, “Please tell me I’m wrong.” Well, she is – about ninety-five per cent of the time. Thankfully most of our congregations and pastors enjoy a biblically oriented, harmonious relationship. These congregations and their pastors take seriously the instructions of Paul to Timothy, “The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching” (1 Tim 5:17). They have heeded the charge given at the ordination (installation) of their pastor: “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you” (Heb 13:17).

Mostly, church members treat their pastors well, consistently providing support and encouragement. I know of a congregation where the council de-

ecided that their pastor should have an extra spring break, and provided financial assistance to make it happen. There are increasing numbers of congregations where the pastors receive sabbaticals, much appreciated time to study and reflect. In numerous congregations, pastors regularly receive positive and constructive feedback on their preaching and pastoral work. However, it would also be possible to list more than a half dozen instances where the relationship between pastors and their congregations has been much less rosy – in some cases, downright deplorable – but I won’t. Instead I’ll tell a story (told to me as true) of how things can change.

One year, at the annual family visit, the usual topic of the minister and his preaching arose. The mother of the family spoke vehemently and negatively about the pastor. He was cold and unapproachable. His preaching didn’t reach her. His family didn’t seem to fit in. He just wasn’t suitable as a pastor for

their congregation. And what was the consistory doing about this? Taken aback, the elder paused for a moment, absorbing the invective tirade. Then he asked, “Do you pray for the minister?” Surprised, the woman responded sharply, “No, I don’t.” The elder replied, “You should. In fact, you should pray for him every day.” The elder continued, elaborating how vital the church members’ prayers are for the proper functioning of the work of a pastor and shepherd within the congregation.

A year later at a subsequent family visit, the elder, no doubt having referred to his notes from the previous year, asked the woman, “So, have you regularly prayed for your pastor since we talked about it last year?” She replied, “Yes, I have. Everyday. And the amazing thing is that the Lord hasn’t changed the pastor a whole lot. But he has changed me!”

*Sarah Vandergugten  
Cloverdale, BC*





## Press Release of Classis Ontario West, June 11, 2003 at Kerwood, Ontario

### 1. Opening

On behalf of the convening and hosting Church at Kerwood, Rev. J. Slaa calls the meeting to order. He welcomes as guests to this meeting, Rev. J. Ferguson (OPC) and Rev. R. Wynia (URC). He also welcomes br. David DeBoer and his wife. Rev. Slaa requests that Hymn 38:1-4 be sung after which he reads from Revelation 21:1-8. After a meditation on this passage he leads in prayer.

### 2. Constitution

The credentials are examined by the convening church. All churches are lawfully represented. Classis is constituted. The following officers are appointed

Chairman: Rev. H. Versteeg  
Clerk: Rev. G.Ph. VanPopta  
Vice-chairman: Rev. D. Vandeburgt

### 3. Agenda

There are no instructions from the churches. To the agenda the following items are added:

- seven church visitation reports
- request for pulpit supply from London
- request from Hamilton re: Rev. Cl. Stam being relieved of all classical duties for a period of one year. The agenda is adopted.

### 4. Preparatory Examination of br. David DeBoer

All necessary documents are present and in good order. The examination proceeds. Br. DeBoer presents his sermon proposal on Ecclesiastes 7:1-6. In closed session Classis does not deem the proposal sufficient and the examination does not continue. Classis grants br. DeBoer permission to speaking an edifying word for the period of one year.

### 5. Question Period (Article 44 CO) is held

No advice is needed by any of the churches.

### 6. Proposals from the churches (Article 33 CO)

- The church at Chatham proposes to change the classical regulations,

Section 8.7 (3), (4) and (6) re: Financial Aid to Needy Students. Classis does not accept this proposal on the ground that it will inconvenience the councils in the timely preparation of their budgets.

- The church at Hamilton proposes to combine the Apostles' Creed and the administration of holy baptism by making a change to the form for baptism. Classis returns this proposal on the ground that it requires further documentation to support the grounds given in the proposal.

### 7. Correspondence

From the Theological College a letter is received indicating that brothers R. Bredenhof and I. Wildeboer have successfully completed their third year of studies.

### 8. Reports

- A report is received from the Classis treasurer. Classis agrees to change the assessment period to January 1 to December 31. Classis also agrees to the assessment of \$2.00 per communicant member to cover the period June 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003.
- The church at Chatham presents a financial statement regarding the fund for needy students for the period June 1, 2002 to June 1, 2003.
- The church at Kerwood reports that the archives of Classis Ontario West have been inspected and are complete and in good order.
- The church at Glanbrook reports that the books of Classis Ontario West have been audited and were found to be in good order for the period of June 12, 2002 to April 30, 2003.

### 9. Greetings from OPC and URC

- Rev. J. Ferguson (OPC Presbytery of Michigan and Southern Ontario) addresses the brothers. He informs Classis of the work of a minister of their presbytery in reaching the Portuguese community in Toronto. Greetings of the presbytery are also conveyed.
- Rev. R. Wynia (URC Classis Southern Ontario) addresses the brothers. He reads for encouragement 1 Corin-

thians 3:10-15. Greetings of the Classis are also conveyed.

The chairman responds with some fitting words and passes on the greetings of Classis Ontario West to the respective churches.

### 10. Church visitation reports

In closed session church visitation reports for the seven churches in the classis are received. In open session the chairman requests the brothers sing from Psalm 100:1, 2. After prayer classis breaks for lunch. After lunch the meeting continues with the singing of Psalm 147:1, 6.

### 11. Appointments

Classis releases Rev. Cl. Stam from all classical appointments for a period of one year. Classis makes the following appointments

- Next classis: London (convening and hosting church) on September 10, 2003.
- Officers: Rev. J. Ludwig (chairman), Rev. H. Versteeg (clerk), Rev. G.Ph. VanPopta (vice-chairman).
- Treasurer: br. B. Vanderhout
- Auditing the books of the treasurer: Hamilton
- Archives: London
- Inspecting the archives: Kerwood
- Church Visitors: Rev. G.Ph. VanPopta, Rev. H. Versteeg, Rev. J. Ludwig
- Classical Examiners: Rev. J. Ludwig and Rev. G.Ph. VanPopta
- Needy Students Fund: Chatham
- Needy Churches Fund: Ancaster
- Church for Ecumenical Relations: Kerwood

Classis also grants pulpit supply to the church at London for the period August 2003 to July 2004.

### 12. Personal Question period

During question period the church at Hamilton informs the churches of Classis that until December 2003 or January 2004 they will be worshipping in the Rehoboth URC at 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

### 13. Censure (Article 34 CO)

The chairman notes that censure is not needed and he expresses his appreciation for the brotherly co-operation.

### 14. The Acts are read and adopted.

## 15. The Press Release is read and approved.

## 16. Closing

The chairman mentions a number of items under memorabilia, among them the ongoing vacancy in the church at London. The church at London informs the brothers of the recent passing of Rev. Boessenkoel. The chairman requests the brothers to sing Hymn 64:1, 4 and then leads in prayer. Classis is closed.

*For Classis, D.W. Vandeburgt  
Vice-chairman at that time*

## Press Release of Classis Central Ontario, June 13, 2003 in Burlington, Ontario

1. On behalf of the convening church of Flamborough, br. E. Schouten called the meeting to order. He requested the singing of Psalm 107:1, 2, read Ephesians 2, and lead in prayer. He welcomed the delegates, the deputies of Regional Synod, and the guests.
2. The credentials were examined by the delegates of the Church of Burlington-Waterdown and found to be in good order. One church had a request for advice ad art 44 CO.
3. Classis was then constituted. The officers were: Rev. G. Nederveen, chairman, Rev. M. Jagt, clerk, and Rev. W. den Hollander, vice-chairman.
4. The chairman, Rev. G. Nederveen, thanked br. Schouten for opening the meeting, the Church of Flamborough for the preparations of Classis, and the Ebenezer Church for the use of the facilities. As memorabilia he mentioned:
  - a. the request of Rev. C. Bosch for early retirement, granted by the Fellowship Church; he wishes both God's blessing for the anticipated situation as per August 31, 2003;
  - b. the Church of Burlington-Waterdown is looking forward to the arrival of the Rev. J. Huijgen;
  - c. the Bethel Church of Toronto is still looking for a second mission-worker for the work in Papua New Guinea.
5. The proposed agenda was adopted. The request for advice was added. Rev. C. Bosch's request for retirement would be dealt with first.
6. Classis received as information regarding the request for classical approval for the retirement of Rev. C. Bosch:

- a. the request by Rev. C. Bosch addressed to the Council of the Fellowship Church, seeking early retirement for health reasons;
  - b. the response from the Council of the Fellowship Church, granting this request;
  - c. A Certificate of Retirement, granting honourable release, and containing the arrangements, financially and otherwise. Classis is informed that all arrangements had been made to the mutual satisfaction and agreement of the parties involved. Classis grants approval of the request, with the concurring advice of the deputies of Regional Synod.
- The chairman addressed the delegates of the Fellowship Church in regard to the upcoming vacancy, wishing them God's wisdom and blessing. He read the Certificate of Release from Classis, which the members of the moderamen signed. He also addressed the Rev. Bosch, thanking him for the work he did for Classis, wishing him the Lord's blessing for continued service whenever he will be able to render it. One of the deputies of Regional Synod, the Rev. D.G.J. Agema, also addressed the Rev. Bosch with words of thankfulness on behalf of the churches in the federation. Classis sang Psalm 134:3 and the chairman lead in prayer of thanksgiving. In conclusion, the Rev. Bosch received the opportunity to address Classis.
7. Classis received church visitation reports of visits to the churches: Ebenezer, Fellowship, Burlington-Waterdown, Flamborough, Ottawa, and Toronto. These reports were all received with much gratitude.
  8. In the question period according to Art 44 CO, the Church of Ottawa asked for advice in a matter of discipline. Advice is given in closed session.
  9. Classis received information from the Church of Burlington-Waterdown regarding the approbation of the call of the Rev. J. Huijgen. Classis advised that a Classis Contracta be requested in due time.
  10. Candidate W. Geurts requested Classis a one-year extension to his eligibility for call. Classis acceded to his request.
  11. The Committee of the Fund for Needy Churches of Classis Central Ontario made a recommendation

regarding the obligation of a needy church to pay the assessment for the Fund for Needy Churches. Classis agrees that the Needy Church should "include a line item expenditures amount for Needy Church assessments." Classis accepts the recommendations of the Committee.

12. Classis Ontario West informs Classis Central Ontario of its agreement with the proposal of Classis Central Ontario, June 14, 2002, to coordinate the delegation of observers to ecclesiastical assemblies of churches with which we are in ecclesiastical fellowship. Classis Ontario West informs Classis that it appointed the church of Kerwood to organize this coordination. Classis received this for information. The clerk will inform the Church of Kerwood that Classis Central Ontario wants to be included in the schedule for observers.
13. The treasurer, br. H.J. Sloots, requested that br. G.J. Nordeman be appointed as substitute treasurer for Classis Central Ontario. Classis accepted this recommendation and appointed br. G.J. Nordeman as substitute treasurer.
14. Classis appointed the Church of Ottawa as convening church for the next Classis, to be convened on September 19, 2003, at the Ebenezer church building. The suggested officers for that Classis are: Rev. J. DeGelder, chairman; Rev. M. Jagt, vice-chairman; and Rev. G. Nederveen, clerk. The Rev. G. Nederveen was appointed as coordinator of the examinations, replacing the Rev. C. Bosch.
15. Question Period was held.
16. Censure according to Art 34 CO was not deemed necessary.
17. The Acts were read and adopted, and the Press Release was read and approved.
18. The chairman thanked the ladies for their continued care at every Classis. He requested the singing of Psalm 67:1, 2, 3, and lead in prayer and thanksgiving. He then closed Classis Central Ontario of June 13, 2003.

*For Classis Central Ontario  
of June 13, 2003,  
Rev. W. den Hollander  
vice-chairman of that Classis*

## Press Release of Classis Northern Ontario, June 20, 2003 in Brampton, Ontario

### Opening

On behalf of the convening church of Brampton, Rev. B.J. Berends opened the meeting by inviting all present to sing Psalm 96:1, 2. He then read Psalm 96. After noting some of the concerns regarding the health of Dr. J. DeJong, he led in prayer. He welcomed all the delegates and guests. A special welcome was given to Rev. A. Merwin, of Grace United Reformed Church of Simcoe County, and student Reuben Bredenhof, currently working in the church of Guelph as part of the Pastoral Proficiency program.

### Constitution of Classis

After the delegates from the Church of Owen Sound examined the credentials and concluded that all the churches were lawfully represented, Classis was declared constituted. Classis appointed the following officers: Chairman: C. Vermeulen; Vice-chairman: R.E. Pot; Clerk: J. VanWoudenberg. These brothers then commenced their respective duties.

### Memorabilia

The chairman Rev. C. Vermeulen thanked the convening church for their preparations for Classis and for hosting the meeting. As memorabilia in addition to the concerns regarding Dr. DeJong, he noted that Rev. P.G. Feenstra has been able to resume his ministerial duties after some health concerns in the past months. It was also noted that Rev. P.G. Feenstra has received and declined calls from Carman East, Manitoba and Neerlandia, Alberta, and that Rev. R.E. Pot has received and declined a call to the Church of London, Ontario. Rev. J.D. Louwse is currently considering calls from Neerlandia, Alberta and Grassie, Ontario, and was wished the Lord's blessing in coming to a conclusion.

### Adoption of the agenda

After a minor revision, the provisional agenda was adopted.

### Reports

A church visitation report to the Church of Orangeville was received (Art 46 CO), gratefully noting that this church seeks to be a faithful church of Christ, upholding God's Word and the adopted church order.

### Question period (Art 44 CO)

Question period according to Article 44 of the Church Order was held. The churches declared that the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued, and the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured. The Church of Guelph requested the judgment and help of Classis regarding a matter of discipline. The Church of Orangeville requested the advice of Classis regarding a pastoral matter. Advice was given in closed session.

### Address by observer from United Reformed Churches

After a recess, Rev. A. Merwin, pastor of Grace United Reformed Church of Simcoe County, was invited to speak, and brought greetings on behalf of Classis Southern Ontario of the United Reformed Churches. Referring to Colossians 1, he expressed the wish for mutual faithfulness to God's Word and growth in Christ. Appreciation and thankfulness was expressed for the growing contact between our churches, and the mutual passion for the Reformed faith. He concluded with words of encouragement from 1 Peter 5. The chairman Rev. Vermeulen responded with appropriate words.

### Appointments

Classis made the following appointments:

1. Convening church for next Classis: Elora, September 26, 2003.

2. Suggested officers for next Classis: Chairman: P. Aasman, Vice-chairman: J. VanWoudenberg, Clerk: C. Vermeulen.

### Invitation of observers to the next Classis

The convening church of the next classis was instructed to extend an invitation to Classis Southern Ontario of the United Reformed Churches to send an observer to the next Classis. The Church of Elora was appointed to send an observer to Classis Southern Ontario of the United Reformed Churches on September 24, 2003.

### Question period

Opportunity was given for questions. No questions were asked.

### Brotherly censure (Art 34 CO)


The chairman judged that censure according to Art 34 CO was not necessary.

### Adoption of Acts and Press Release

The Acts were read and adopted. The Press Release was read and approved for publication.

### Closing

The chairman expressed gratitude to the sisters from Brampton for providing nourishment for the delegates. After reading Psalm 122, he invited all present to sing Psalm 122:3. He then led in prayer, and declared the meeting closed.

For classis, R.E. Pot,  
vice-chairman at that time 

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