

Volume 53, No. 7  
March 26, 2004

*Decently and in  
Good Order*

*Christ's unique  
suffering*



*Helping Hands  
at  
Synod Chatham  
2004*



**W.B. Slomp**

Rev. W.B. Slomp is minister of the Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta.  
[wslomp@canrc.org](mailto:wslomp@canrc.org)

# Decently and in Good Order

*Synod Chatham deemed it important to clearly spell out how individuals must interact with decisions of Synod.*

There are many things that a General Synod has to deal with. It has to deal with the reports of the various committees pertaining to our relationship with other federations of churches, our *Book of Praise*, Bible translations, the Theological College, to mention just a few. Synod also receives letters and overtures from churches and individuals.

The question that will have our attention in this editorial is how individual members of the churches are to interact properly with the decisions of Synod. For it is important that they do. The decisions made at Synod in one way or the other affects everyone in the churches. And so, Synod Chatham deemed it important to clearly spell out how individuals must interact with decisions of Synod. For some churches wrote to Synod that this issue had been inconsistently dealt with in the past. Indeed, Synod Abbotsford 1995 already noted such inconsistency and on that basis considered it unfair to declare certain personal submissions invalid.

## Personal submissions to Synod

Synod Chatham, however, took a different approach. It did not make its decisions regarding personal submissions on the basis of past practice, but on sound church political grounds. Synod Chatham noted that individuals come with their requests to Synod for various reasons. In the first place they do so because they are appealing a decision against them personally. In such a case there is little confusion. The Church Order (art 31) states that you can only appeal such a decision to General Synod if you have gone through the various minor assemblies first. This is generally clearly understood. However when it comes to other matters it is not always as clear to everyone. What do you do when you want to send a letter or an overture concerning the reports of the various synodical committees? And what about interacting with matters that pertain to the churches in common?

With respect to submissions concerning the reports of synodical committees, Synod Chatham pointed out that individuals have to deal with their local consistories first. Those reports are first sent to the churches six months prior to the start of Synod. This is done because it is ultimately the local church that placed these matters on the floor of Synod in the first place. It is now up to the local church to take note of these reports, and, if deemed necessary, to address Synod if they want to express any concerns or make recommendations.

---

*The involvement of the whole federation in the affairs of the churches is very important.*

---

However, these reports are not made available to the individual members of the churches. That does not mean that individual members are not allowed to have access to them. Of course they are. All they have to do is ask their consistory for a report. But, that does not mean that now these members may directly go to Synod with their comments on these reports. No, Synod Chatham correctly points out that the proper address is the local consistory. They have no right to go directly to Synod with any concerns they may have. It is only after Synod makes its decisions that they can begin the appeal process.

## The appeal process

What then is the appeal process? Well, suppose an individual has certain difficulties with a decision of Synod. Then he cannot go directly to Synod and make his concerns known. No, it is his duty first to address his local consistory about this



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

**EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:**

Editor: J. Visscher; Managing Editor: R. Aasman  
Coeditors: N.H. Gootjes, W.B. Slomp, Cl. Stam

**ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS:**

CLARION, 26 Inverness Crescent, St. Albert, AB T8N 5J3  
Fax: (780) 418-1506 E-Mail: [raasman@canrc.org](mailto:raasman@canrc.org)

**ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:  
(subscriptions, advertisements, etc.):**

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.  
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5  
Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202  
Email: [clarion@premierprinting.ca](mailto:clarion@premierprinting.ca)

**RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:**

One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5  
Email: [clarion@premierprinting.ca](mailto:clarion@premierprinting.ca)

Subscription Rates for 2004	Regular Mail	Air Mail
Canada*	\$42.00*	\$69.00*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds  	\$44.50	\$57.50
International	\$69.00	\$103.00

\*Including 7% GST – No. 890967359RT

Advertisements: \$13.50 per column inch

Full Colour Display Advertisements: \$19.00 per column inch

We reserve the right to refuse ads.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada, through the Publication Assistance Program (PAP), toward our mailing costs.

**Cancellation Agreement**

Unless a written subscription cancellation is received we assume you wish to continue to subscribe. You will be invoiced prior to the subscription renewal date. Agreement No. 40063293; PAP Registration No. 9907; ISSN 0383-0438

**Copyright © Premier Printing Ltd.**

All rights reserved. No part may be reproduced in any manner without permission in writing from the publisher, except brief quotations used in connection with a review in a magazine or newspaper.

Useful Link: [www.canrc.org](http://www.canrc.org)

matter. And then it is best to elicit first the help of one's ward elder. Office bearers are chosen because of their wisdom and knowledge. However, if the elder is not able to help, then he can approach the whole consistory. It may well be that he misunderstood a certain decision of Synod, and a consistory can help him in that regard.

However, what if you disagree with the consistory, and the consistory does not want to take over your concerns? Well, then you may still not go directly to Synod. Then you take it further to Classis, and to Regional Synod. Only once you have gone through that process are you able to go to Synod.

Why is it so important that this process be followed? Well, in this way the concerns have filtered through the various assemblies, and a clearer picture has emerged as to the validity of the appeal. It has withstood the test of time.

## Inside . . .

At the time of writing this, General Synod Chatham completed its agenda a little over a week earlier. Rev. H. Versteeg gives some of his personal observations and conclusions about this Synod. In his editorial, Rev. W. B. Slomp interacts with a decision of this Synod regarding personal submissions to Synod. Dr. C. Van Dam welcomes Dr. A. J. De Visser as the new professor to our Theological College.

Over the years *Clarion* has had a news column dealing with life in the churches. Who will forget the work of Rev. W. W. J. Van Oene in this regard? Since Rev. J. DeGelder retired from writing this column, known during his time as *Hiliter*, we did not have someone to write this column. But all has changed. It is now taken over by Rev. Cl. Stam who has immediately placed his own stamp on the column by entitling it: *What's New???* If you think that is a unique title, you should have seen what he first wanted to call it. We look forward to your column, Clarence. We also thank Rev. J. DeGelder for his contributions in recent years.

We have our regular columns, including *reformedevangelism.com* and *Education Matters*. We also have a book review by Rev. J. Geertsema and three letters to the editor.

RA

## IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial – Decently and in Good Order — W.B. Slomp .....	158
Treasures New and Old – Christ's unique suffering — D.Ph. Poppe .....	161
What's New??? — Cl. Stam .....	162
Welcome Dr. A.J. De Visser! — C. Van Dam .....	164
Children's Catechism – Lord's Day 7 — J. Wiskerke van Dooren .....	165
General Synod Chatham 2004 (2) — H. Versteeg .....	166
Education Matters .....	168
Letters to the Editor .....	169/170
reformedevangelism.com — D. Moes .....	171
Book Review — J. Geertsema .....	172

## Next Synod

The next Synod is still three years away. Once we have the *Acts of Synod Chatham* in our possession, then we can all take a closer look at the decisions that Synod has made. It may well be that there are certain things in there, on first reading, you disagree with, or have grave concerns about. For it is true that Synods have made mistakes in the past, and no doubt they will continue to do so. A Synod is made up of sinful men. However, these men are also spiritual men specially delegated by the churches to carefully make the decisions. And the wonderful thing about our Synods is that we take our time in responding carefully to all the material before it.

And so, when you respond to the decision of Synod, then it is important to also carefully look at what Synod decided. What is often done is that people will look first at the recommendations and the decisions before carefully examining the reasons why it came to such a decision. But, there are lengthy considerations that precede the decisions. They must be read carefully. Only then can you understand why synod came to the conclusion that it did.

## Be not rash

We may not rashly make our conclusions. Synod Chatham itself could not do that either. For example, Synod had to deal with many reports that concerned our relations with other federations of churches. The reports and various letters from the churches expressed some concerns about certain practices in those federations. However, Synod responded carefully. Synod listened to the various fraternal delegates of the sister churches, and thoroughly scrutinized the reports. On the floor of Synod the delegates also carefully listened to each other. Only then did it come with its conclusions. For we may not condemn others rashly or unheard.

That is how we must all conduct ourselves. Let us consider carefully, and listen to others for advice. We are there to help one another to do the right things before the Lord. The involvement of the whole federation in the affairs of the churches is very important. We are all responsible to the Lord in our conduct. Let us steer each other on the right path, but let us do so decently and in good order.



## *[De Profundis]*

Out of my soul's depth to thee my cries  
have sounded:  
Let thine ears my plaints receive, on just  
fear grounded.  
Lord, should'st thou weigh our faults,  
who's not confounded?

But with grace thou censur'st thine when  
they have erred,  
Therefore shall thy blessed name be  
loved and feared.  
E'en to thy throne my thoughts and  
eyes are reared.

Thee alone my hopes attend, on thee  
relying;  
In thy sacred word I'll trust, to thee fast  
flying,  
Long ere the watch shall break, the  
morn descrying.

In the mercies of our God who live  
secured,  
May of full redemption rest in him  
assured,  
Their sin-sick souls by him shall be  
recured.

*Thomas Campion (1567-1620)*

D. Ph. Poppe

Rev. D.Ph. Poppe is  
minister of the Canadian  
Reformed Church at  
Houston, British Columbia.  
[dpoppe@canrc.org](mailto:dpoppe@canrc.org)

# Christ's unique suffering



MATTHEW 13:52

*“And He began to be sorrowful and troubled.”*

Matthew 26:37

When we look at what people have endured through the ages, we could conclude that others have suffered the same, if not more, than Christ. Others have been misunderstood, maligned, deserted, betrayed, mocked, beaten and crucified. There have been people who have suffered a more excruciating death. But there is something about Christ's suffering that is unique.

Our first indication about the depths of Christ's suffering is a change in our Saviour's reaction to his suffering. Throughout his public ministry, Christ had no difficulty doing the will of his Father and enduring the hatred and scorn of his enemies. But as the hour of his arrest and crucifixion approach, our Saviour begins to struggle. In Matthew 26:37 we are told that as Christ came into the garden of Gethsemane He began to be sorrowful and troubled, even to the point of death. In Luke 22:44 we are told that He was in anguish and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. In his deep agony He cries out to the Father in heaven asking Him to take this cup from Him. Why this change? What has happened to our powerful Saviour?

Some think it is due to demonic attack. In the chapters prior to Christ's crucifixion there is very little explicit reference to the work of the evil one. But all of a sudden Satan is shown to be prowling about. In Luke 22:3 we are told that Satan entered Judas Iscariot. In verse 31 we are told that Satan had demanded to sift Simon Peter like wheat. And in verse 53 we are told that the Jewish

officials arrest Jesus at night for this is their hour and that of the power of darkness. Satan is on a mission to destroy. Could this be the cause for Christ's intense agony?

Others have pointed to the shift that has taken place in Christ's own focus. Up to this time He has always focussed his attention on the needs of others: preaching to the crowds, teaching his disciples, healing the sick, or casting out demons. But all this changes in the garden. Now He turns his attention to his own needs. He turns from helping others to crying out for help Himself. Could this be what causes Him such great distress?

Or could it be the knowledge of everything He is soon going to suffer which causes Him such agony in the garden? We must understand that none of these things stood at the heart of Christ's sorrow. He had endured the temptations of the evil one since the beginning of his ministry. He had faced unbelief, rejection and denial all his life. He was accustomed to much pain and suffering. The source of Christ's sorrow was not what men were about to do to Him.

He was in anguish because of what the Father was about to do to Him. The Father was about to withdraw Himself from the Son. The bond of intimacy that Christ had enjoyed for all eternity was beginning to unravel. Christ prays, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me.” This cup. Not only a cup of God's wrath. Not only a cup of seething rage against the sin of all God's children. This is also the cup of forsakenness.

Never before had the Father turned from Him or denied access to Himself. But now the LORD had begun to shut the doors of heaven. As the Son approaches the moment of his greatest need, the one thing He wants is to talk to his heavenly Father. He wants his support, his comfort, his love. But it is precisely in this moment of greatest need that the Father begins to withdraw himself from his Son.

It should be clear to us that we will never fathom the depths of Christ's suffering. For no other believer will ever be forsaken by God. Christ has endured this punishment on our behalf. Instead we have received the sure promise of God, “Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you” (Heb 13:5). Even if we feel that God does not love us, we can rely on the sure promise of God that for Christ's sake we have an eternal fellowship with the Father in heaven. As the form for the Lord's Supper so beautifully states, “He called out in a loud voice, My God, My God, why have you forsaken me? that we might be accepted by God and nevermore be forsaken by Him.” Being forsaken by God and suffering God's wrath against sin is what caused our Saviour such intense sorrow.

Let us be sure that we never belittle the suffering and death of Christ by thinking of it in only human terms. Many people will point to the intensity of Christ's physical pain, the betrayal of his friends or the raw hatred of his opponents. But Christ's suffering and death is unique because He alone has been utterly forsaken by the Father and borne the wrath of God against sin.





# What's New???

Rev. Cl. Stam is minister of the  
Canadian Reformed Church at  
Hamilton, Ontario.  
[clstam@canrc.org](mailto:clstam@canrc.org)

It has been many moons ago that VO wrote his last inimitable *News Medley*. In the meantime Rev. J. de Gelder has served us with his *Hiliter*, but that was unfortunately short-lived. Now the task has fallen upon me to write a column which presents some of the “news” in our churches to the general readership. It's not that I have a lot of time for this kind of work, but whatever is edifying must somehow be undertaken.

The title of this column is a bit misleading. Really, there's nothing new under the sun. It is like living in a small town: all the news is last week's news. I am sure that by the time my stuff gets into your home via *Clarion* it's all old hat. But the purpose is still to pass on whatever may be of interest, so that we may be kept up to date with one another's well and woe.

I do not have to restrict myself to our own Canadian scene. Whenever this is feasible, we also look beyond our borders to parts unknown. The idea is to pass on things that are of interest generally in the life of the Reformed churches, things especially from which we can learn something.

I already receive via email some bulletins. These are greatly appreciated, for the local church bulletins will be my main source of material. My predecessor in this field remarked that he was not receiving bulletins or not receiving them on time, and then this work is impossible.

My email address is [clstam@sympatico.ca](mailto:clstam@sympatico.ca) or at the [canrc.org](http://canrc.org) general address for our ministers. I am looking forward to receiving the bulletins either electronically or via regular mail. My mailing address is:

**Clarence Stam**

3369 Tisdale Road, RR2

Mt. Hope, ON, Canada L0R 1W0

Then I can glean and pass on whatever catches my eye as a news-worthy item. This column may, perhaps, not appear in every *Clarion*, but rest assured that we are always working on another instalment.

## Overview

Let me begin our series of *What's New???* by mentioning that in Hamilton, Ontario, the renovation of the Cornerstone church building has been completed. The congregation, which for a few months used the Rehoboth United Reformed building, could go back to its own facility on Christmas Day. A report of the festive opening of this restored and expanded building will be submitted with photos to *Clarion* in due time. Even Hamilton's new mayor, Mr. Dilanni showed up, and was promptly welcomed as Mr. Deliani. What's in a name? His worship did not take any noticeable offence at having his name thus butchered. Classy fellow. Classy building, too, which should suit the congregation for many years to come. The existing organ was expanded and a grand piano was added. A special concert by Andre

Knevel and his son Andrew was enjoyed by many.

In our area, the weekly radio broadcasts on Hamilton's talk-radio CHML continue unabated. The Rev. G. van Popta from Ancaster has now officially become co-host of the program, while Rev. C. Bosch, though retired, functions as active back-up man. This work is unselfishly supported by a group of local members who have organized Biblical Truth Broadcasting (aka BTB). A report on this work has been sent as “editorial” to our magazine. I thankfully note that in various regional bulletins the program times are duly presented. The program can be heard all over the nation and the world via live streaming. Just direct your web-browser to [chml.ca](http://chml.ca).

The work of *Streetlight Ministries* continues through the fine efforts of Mr. R. Bultje and many local volunteers. It is almost time that a missionary is called for this work. These are the “vacancies” that are easily forgotten but which nonetheless exist. Now that the Church at Smithville has become a “sending church” (Timor, Indonesia) there is in the Golden Horseshoe area much emphasis on outreach. Often we read about the ministers Yonson and Edwar Dethan in the local bulletins, but it is good that their reports also appear in our official *Mission News* for the benefit of all. Let us not forget our missionaries and others

working overseas for the promotion of the Gospel.

Ontario (and some related provinces) is in the usual winter deep-freeze. Now and then schools are closed and even catechism classes are cancelled. But the regular work goes on, week after week.

The Church at Chatham is preparing as host for the coming *General Synod*. From past experience (Smithville, 1980) I know how much work this preparation involves. The trick is to get a good organizing committee. Some have asked: why Chatham as meeting place? It seems an out-of-the-way, isolated place for a meeting of such importance. Still, these isolated congregations consider it rightly to be a great honour to organize and host a Synod. Besides, what appointment can you expect from a Synod that is held in a place like *Neerlandia*? Chatham is

nowhere nearer to the centre of things than the place of its predecessor: Love that country hospitality. We wish all the members of Synod the Lord's blessing as they meet to do their important work.

A few items yet from Ontario. The churches at Rockway and Grassie have begun to finalize plans for the building of their own facilities. It is important for a congregation to have its own meeting place. Calling and having a minister is important for a new church, but having a proper facility for worship and meetings is not a luxury. Perhaps Burlington-South (Fellowship) has also progressed on the path of securing its own church building after having enjoyed the kind hospitality of neighbouring churches.

### Health concerns

Let me close off this first instalment of *What's New???* by mentioning that



## Church News

Called by the Free Reformed Church of Launceston, Tasmania:

**Rev. J. VanWoudenberg**  
of Guelph, Ontario.

Available for preaching:

**Rev. John van Popta**

will be available for pulpit supply to Ontario churches as of April 1, 2004.

Eligible for call:

**Candidate Walter Geurts**

3417 Rockwood Drive  
Burlington, ON L7N 3H6  
905-631-8433  
[wgeurts@cogeco.ca](mailto:wgeurts@cogeco.ca)

Called by the church of Cloverdale, British Columbia:

**Rev. W.M. Wielenga**

of Lynden, Washington, USA.

there are many health concerns, also among the ranks of our ministers and family members.

We think particularly of the J. de Jong family, who has to cope with the sickness of Prof. Dr. J. de Jong. His illness is a blow also to our churches, but we acknowledge that nothing comes by chance, for all things come to us from God's fatherly hand. We do not question his sovereign will. It is not always easy to accept this will, when "bad" things happen, but through faith and prayer we can and do accept his way. May the Lord strengthen us in all the trials of life and help us to count the blessings there still are.

Meanwhile, I'll start counting your bulletins, as they come in. Don't wait to send them, for (as the song goes) "I will go this way but once; I'll not pass this way again."



## Welcome Dr. A.J. De Visser

*Dr. C. Van Dam is principal and professor of Old Testament at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Ontario.*  
[cvandam@canrc.org](mailto:cvandam@canrc.org)

In view of the vacancy created by Dr. De Jong's illness, Synod Chatham has adopted the recommendation of the Board of Governors and appointed Dr. Adriaan Jan De Visser as new professor of Diaconology and Ecclesiology. Since he has now accepted his appointment, we would herewith like to welcome our new colleague and introduce him to the churches.

Dr. De Visser was born in The Netherlands in 1958, but at the age of 13 the family emigrated to South Africa where he attended high school near Cape Town. In 1979 he enrolled as student at the Theological University of our sister churches in Kampen where he received the equivalent of the degree of Master of Theology (Th. Drs.) in 1987. His specialization was dogmatics which he studied under Prof. J. Kamphuis.

In 1989 he married Inge Oostdijk and the Lord has blessed them with three children. Also in 1989 he was called by the *Gereformeerde Kerk of Drachten-Zuid/Oost* to become a missionary in South Africa. After missiological studies, he went to South Africa where he laboured as a missionary in Soshanguve. Eventually his sending church became the *Maranatha Vrije Gereformeerde Kerk* in Pretoria which is close to the mission field. The Lord has blessed this mission work which has resulted in one new congregation and with another one in



progress. In 2001 he received a doctorate in theology in the field of missiology from Potchefstroom University. His dissertation was published under the title *Kyrios and Morena – the Lordship of Christ and African Township Christianity* (Pretoria, 2001). The last seven years he has worked as a part-time lecturer at Mukhanyo Theological College where those in the mission congregations who are aspiring to the ministry receive part of their theological training. The subjects he taught were: Dogmatics,

Homiletics, Liturgics, Evangelism and Church Planting.

Because of his many responsibilities, Dr. De Visser comes to us with a wide experience in being a missionary and pastor, as well as in teaching theological students and training office bearers. We are very thankful that the Lord has opened the way for him to come to us and take up his new task at the Theological College. Welcome, Dr. De Visser! May the Lord bless your coming to Canada! Welcome also to Mrs. De Visser and the children!





J. Wiskerke van Dooren

# Lord's Day 7



*Mrs. J. Wiskerke van Dooren published a Children's Catechism in Dutch. This has been translated with her permission.*

You are a hothead. Of course I do not know whether you are, but let's imagine you are quick tempered. And you wear your new sneakers. They are okay, but they are not an expensive brand. Your mother did not want to buy such expensive running shoes. And now one of your friends in the street calls your shoes dumb. You get mad, and it ends in a fight. He throws you down and sits on you. You wriggle out, and there on the ground you find a stick. You are so mad, you throw the stick at him. It does not hit him, but it hits a window. The glass shatters. In a panic you run home.

Your dad is talking with the neighbours. With tears in your eyes you run to him. Why to him, and not to the neighbour? Because he is your dad. But

that is not all. You know that you can always go to your dad. Sure, he will be angry when he hears what happened. And he will require you to help pay for it. But you can trust your dad. He will tell you what to say to the neighbour. And to the boys in your street. Trust dad.

This Lord's Day is about faith, or trust. You can also call that believing. Could you belong to Christ if you did not believe in Him? Surely not. What do you believe? You may say: I believe that everything in the Bible is true.

That is a good answer. But there is more to believing.

Remember the story? You ran to your dad, because you knew that he would help you. You trusted him.

Faith is that you know the God of the Bible. The more you read in the Bible, the more you know about God. But that is only one part of faith. There is another part. When you broke the window, you expected your dad to help you. You can also expect help from your heavenly Father. In your prayer, you can tell him about your problems. For you know that He can be trusted. He is always ready to listen and to help me. That belongs to faith.

What is the content of the faith? If people ask you: "What do you believe, what do you say?" You cannot run home, pick up a Bible and tell them to read it. That would take more than a week! Many centuries ago, Christians had the same problem. The gospel of Jesus Christ needed to go out to all nations. For that, they needed a short summary. And they made it. In twelve lines they summarized the most important teachings found in the Bible. We use this summary; it is in our *Book of Praise*. We call it: the Apostles' Creed.

That sounds as if the apostles wrote it. But that is not true. They did not write it; they preached about these important things, and they wrote about it, too. Later, others brought together twelve lines about what the apostles had taught. And you can use that as the shortest summary of what you believe.



# General Synod Chatham 2004 (Part 2)

Rev. H. Versteeg is minister of the  
Canadian Reformed Church at  
Chatham, Ontario.  
[hversteeg@canrc.org](mailto:hversteeg@canrc.org)

## Contact with our Sister Churches

### Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

Eight churches appealed the decision of Synod Neerlandia 2001 stating that Synod Neerlandia did not specifically interact with the Proposed Agreement as amended by Synod Fergus 1998. The main practical issue which remains is the manner of *how* the table of the Lord is supervised. Synod Chatham decided to discuss the differences that still remain in the context of Ecclesiastical Fellowship, in particular the issue of fencing of the Lord's Supper table and confessional membership.

Rev. J. Ferguson was present during much of the discussions and addressed the assembly expressing the heart-felt joy of the OPC of being in unity with another faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ. He expressed the hope that they

and we may continue to grow in greater unity as we serve the Lord in obedience to his Holy Word in a world of increasing immorality.

### Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA)

The report from the committee expressed the disappointment that, although many discussions and attempts were made to understand one another better through various papers written and speeches made, yet the progress towards attaining federative unity was very minimal. There was concern whether the distinctives which the FRCNA hold with respect to their "experiential preaching" has not been elevated to become an obstacle. Such obstacles may not exist among churches who hold to the same biblical foundation as summarized in the same Three Forms of Unity.

Rev. L. Bilkes addressed the assembly after the preliminary discussion and

thanked the assembly for the brotherly and yet frank expression of how the CanRC sees the progress in the relationship. Further, he mentioned that the FRCNA is not opposed to federative unity as such but asks for more time, stating that there are also stereotype perceptions of each other among the membership of each other's congregations that must be removed. He encouraged the congregations to get to know each other better on a local level. Our committee is mandated to seek out from the FRCNA whether they seriously desire to come to a federative unity as Christ prayed in his High Priestly prayer, "that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. I have given them the glory that You gave Me, that they may be one as We are one: I in them and You in Me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that You sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me" (John 17:21-23).

### United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA)

Rev. H. Zekveld was given the opportunity to address the assembly. In his speech he expressed thankfulness for the manner in which our respective churches are working together towards full unity. Much work has been accomplished in the sub-committees for a common song book, church order, and theological education. Nevertheless, Rev. Zekveld frankly added that the URNCA is not as prepared to come to a full unity as soon as the CanRC are. He attributes this to the fact that they are



Rev. G. Syms, Rev. T. Mayville, Rev. R.C. Janssen, Dr. K. Wezeman





*Rev. J. Moesker and Rev. W. den Hollander*

still a young federation of churches and so are still struggling to find their own identity. There remains much diversity within the URCNA and more unity still needs to be sought among themselves. Further, many also have never met a CanRC member. Nevertheless, because we are founded on the same foundation of God's Holy Word as summarized in our confessions, we are to continue to encourage one another to move forward toward full unity.

The report from the committees also takes note that much progress has been accomplished by the sub-committees. Synod spoke words of praise for the manner in which the committees went about their work, going back to the basics, the Church Order of Dort 1618-19, the principles for a Reformed songbook, and the principles for maintaining a seminary from the churches for the churches. The Synod encouraged the committees to continue in their good work as they work towards

submitting a single comprehensive report to be compiled and presented by the Committee for Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity (CPEU) for the next Synod of our churches. Synod also stated that "Phase 2" is the equivalent of a sister church relationship, also called "Ecclesiastical Fellowship."

### **Conclusion**

Much more can be said. However, I want to be brief. I believe that the above are most of the items that are of particular interest to the general membership. More details and other items of personal or individual church interest can be found on the website where the Acts of Synod are already posted. For those who do not have a computer the Acts in book form should be in print in the not too distant future. Electronic technology allows us to

complete this work much quicker than during the days when everything had to be done by typewriters. In conclusion, Synod decided to appoint the Church at Smithers to be the next convening church. Further, Synod decided that it would be in the best interest of most to having Synod during the month of May. Thus, the next General Synod will take place, D.V., May 2007. May the LORD bless the decisions of Synod Chatham 2004 for the well-being of our churches and for the progress in Christ's church gathering activity in our nation and abroad! May the Head of the church be pleased and glorified with what these sixteen brothers have been able to accomplish over nine and half days, as ambassadors delegated to do this special task on behalf of his churches. They have also daily sought his guidance and direction in Word and prayer!



*Front Row - L-R - Rev. H. Versteeg, Rev. J. de Gelder, Rev. C. Van Spronsen, Rev. J. Van Vliet, Rev. D.G.J. Agema, Dr. A.J. Visser  
 Second Row - Prof. J. Geertsema, J. Kuik, Rev. K. Jonker, Rev. W.B. Slomp, P. Van Woudenberg, Sr., G. Van Woudenberg, Prof. G.H. Visscher  
 Third Row - J. Jonker, B. Veenendaal, Prof. N.H. Gootjes, J. Vander Stoep, W. Pleiter, Rev. J. Moesker, H. Vander Wel, Rev. W. den Hollander, Prof. C. Van Dam, F. Kampen*

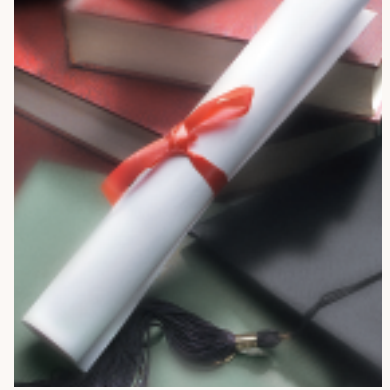
*Front Cover (main photo) from left to right:  
 Teresa Bergsma, Sandra Vanderveen, Elsa Vanderveen, Joanne Holsappel  
 Photo credit: Mrs. T. Bultje*

K. Sikkema

Mr. Keith Sikkema is a grade 8 teacher and vice-principal at John Calvin School in Smithville, Ontario. [ksikkema@juno.com](mailto:ksikkema@juno.com)

## Peregrine Survey

*Much of the academic seeding for this year has also been done, and the harvest is near.*



Spring is here, and before long we expect to see God's faithfulness in bringing seedtime upon the farmers' fields. For students, teachers, and parents, the March break is a time to catch their breath, and to take stock of progress to date. Much of the academic seeding for this year has also been done, and the harvest is near. Some students will still have to work hard to receive passing grades; some will have to repeat the year, or a course, or need a program that better meets their particular needs; and some will continue to make the mark, whether by effort, talent, or both. For students, parents, and teachers alike, the task God gives remains, and may all be diligent with the talents He gave for that purpose. This edition of Peregrine Survey picks up on some trends in our schools across the country.

### Strain

Several schools experience strain on their resources. This could be due to economics or the effect of government policies, a special effort to include special needs students in programs, or even declining populations; it could be due to fewer students being around, or families moving elsewhere, or students going to other schools. In the latter case, this will invariably generate friction if there has not been some sort of communication that might have helped in program and facilities planning, and have prevented overly stretched resources. Finally, a lower than desired attendance at society meetings (i.e., failure to meet a quorum) can hamper decision making. Burlington's Long Term ad hoc

Committee considered enrolment, facilities, staffing, curriculum, society structure, and finances. The school is not only facing declining enrolment and smaller classes, but also rising tuition costs. Among others, it is looking at the need and options for alternative ways to finance the school. Of course, the classical source of funding in our schools should not be forgotten:

*Of course, the classical source of funding in our schools should not be forgotten: contributions from people who understand that covenant education is a matter of every church member.*

contributions from people who understand that covenant education is a matter of every church member. In all cases, let us do what the Lord makes our hands find to do in his service.

### Safety

Safety concerns and student well-being have had the special attention of several schools. Flamborough has given significant thought and effort to bullying issues, including a survey among students and parents. Their definition of bullying:

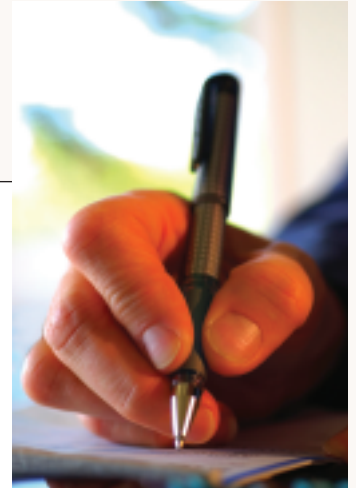
A student at Covenant Christian School is bullied when he or she is regularly and often treated in an un-Christian manner. This means that he

or she is being mistreated by physical, verbal or emotional actions. These actions are done wilfully and/or purposefully by an (other) student(s) or adult(s).

Further considerations point out that the victim is helpless, never responsible for being a target, and that bystanders do nothing to prevent a bullying situation or does not tell an adult. Burlington now requires a badge for all guests to the school, whether visitors, parents, or volunteers. Ebenezer School in Smithers learned about the increasing standards required to demonstrate "due diligence" particularly with regards to safety issues. Attercliffe's ACRES has urged parents to stand with their children at the bus stop on foggy mornings, and adopted a one-way traffic rule on its premises. To keep darting students safe from getting run over by cars, Fergus' Maranatha-Emmanuel schools put restrictions on the driveways that can be used. It also adopted a new birthday party policy to avoid silent student harassment of being excluded. The latter is a "distortion of how God intends for us to live in relationships, emotionally, physically, spiritually and socially." The policy entails that if students are invited through the school, all students (by gender) in the class should be invited. If that is not possible, "then students should invite their friends via the home route, not the school." Also, "any baggage (such as presents and sleeping paraphernalia, etc.) should go to the party via the home, not the school." Finally, the Fraser Valley schools contemplated characteristics of drugs and drug use, and how to deal with it.



## Letters to the Editor



### Teacher enrichment

Many teachers continue to refresh and develop themselves through workshops, courses, and conferences. Among these, the Reformed principals and teachers' conferences stand out. However, there are also many other conferences from which teachers learn things that help them to be more effective in the classroom. It is good to see that boards, jointly or severally, encourage continued professional development and teachers' credentials. The role of Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers' College is increasing in this regard as well.

### Complete staff

This is also the time of the year that Boards and their Education Committees are trying to put together a full complement of staff. Where do you think all the teachers and principals will come from next year? Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers' College rejoices in a record number of students which will help indeed. However, some schools have filled positions with teachers from abroad, and continue to face work permit issues. Others have hired committed people without formal teacher training. Could it be that there is a connection between the attendance at membership, parent information, and PTA meetings, and the ongoing shortage of teachers? In 1999, Neil Postman wondered about how people understand community:

I have the impression that "community" is now used to mean, simply, people with similar interests, a considerable change from an older meaning: A community is made up of people who may not have similar interests but who must negotiate and

### Dear Sir:

Br. H.A. Stel deals in Vol. 53.2 with the article of Dr. Byzet (Vol. 52.2). You deal with Dr. Byzet's remark that there are groups of people withdrawing from the church. You then state that Dr. Van Gorp calls it "liberating themselves in the same way we liberated ourselves in 1944." There is a fundamental flaw in the reasoning of Dr. Van Gorp. Liberating in 1944 meant freeing the church from an unscriptural dogmatic binding, and hierarchical execution of church discipline. Now there is no binding to any doctrine and no one is deposed from office by the Synod. Br. Stel, where is Dr. Van Gorp liberating from in the style of 1944? And why do some say that they are really the continuation of the church?

Dr. Byzet states that it is "indisputable that there are developments that cause great concern," and he identifies some. He was present at the Synod and assures us that he was not happy with all the decisions. Your accusation that Dr. Byzet defends a second view of the Lord's Day is unfounded. He simply states what Synod Zuidhorn dealt with, and that the Synod appointed a committee to study how to safeguard the meaning of keeping the fourth commandment, and try to overcome the dilemma of having two views side by side.

I agree with Dr. Byzet that there have been aggravating articles by the *Reformanda* group. You brush this off with "that is possible." They published a so-called report of a hypothetical situation in a non-existing church at a fictitious place called Wagendrecht. It is indeed what that place name seems to imply, a load of human waste and it is far from brotherly exhortation!

Customarily Synod's decisions are reviewed by the consistories after the Acts have been received. Why are church members encouraged to give the consistories six weeks to reject the synod decisions? For objections to be taken seriously, those who object would do well to be above reproach.

Dr. Byzet implores us: "Pray much and often for your churches and the sister churches elsewhere. Pray that the Lord may open the eyes in time to discern heresies and misconceptions and that we may not be asleep. But also, pray that there not be rash and thoughtless accusations and mistaken diligence. *Kyrie Eleison*, Lord have mercy."

Cor Hoff  
London, Ontario

resolve their differences for the sake of social harmony.

The covenant community has a yet deeper, more meaningful and richer definition of community in Q/A 55 of the Heidelberg Catechism.

What do you understand by the *communion of saints*?

First, that believers, all and everyone, as members of Christ have communion with Him and share in all his treasures and gifts. Second that everyone is duty-bound to use his gifts readily and cheerfully for the benefit and well-being of the other members.



## Dear Editor,

In a recent “Readers’ Forum” column, Br. Torenvliet takes several other brothers to task for expressing reservations about the transformational role of our schools. His desire is to see our schools change: “The Reformed education we impart to our children would be seriously impoverished if we did not move beyond the insular and antithetical nature that some people apparently want our schools to be.”

I’m thankful there are leaders in our schools who question the appropriateness of these changes, who wonder about adopting transformational and mission language into our schools *carte blanche*.

Just last year, a committee appointed by the Christian Reformed Church to study the state of Christian education in North America, felt that they ought to move beyond where the Christian Reformed schools originally were; they suggested that besides the covenantal and kingdom bases for their schools, they recommended a third justification for Christian (Reformed) day schools: mission.

On the other hand, our schools were established because many believed that was the faithful response by parents to the covenant promises that God gave to their children. Our schools and parents have not completely embraced either a kingdom basis or a mission basis, but simply desire to recognize – and have our students recognize – that God has established his covenant with them and has also thereby created an antithesis in this world.

When, at a principals’ conference, a speaker with a wealth of life-experience comes with recommendations for our principals, there are of course going to be many things that can be heartily appreciated. But since when is everyone expected to accept – lock, stock, and barrel – everything he says, including a transformational rationale for education? Why does everyone have to embrace, without questioning, the appropriateness of a “transformational role” or a “mission role” for Canadian Reformed schools? If there is pressure for our schools to adopt these bases, then discussion would certainly be helpful.

When our educators are publicly derided for being cautious, attentive, and vigilant, then something seems to be amiss.

Otto Bouwman  
Lynden, Washington

## Dear editor,

Please allow me a short reply to Rev. R. Eikelboom’s article “Does baptism save?” (*Clarion* Volume 53, no. 3).

The way colleague Eikelboom speaks about baptism (and preaching for that matter) as “saving us” still raises questions in my mind, however much he tries to explain it. He also puts a question into the mind of Peter that I am pretty convinced the

apostle himself was never asking when he wrote his first epistle, namely “whether we should teach our children that they are saved by baptism.” Peter most probably wrote to first generation Christians and baptism does not at all function as a central theme in his letter.

Scripture and our Confessions are abundantly clear: It is the Gospel which saves. This Gospel is proclaimed in the preaching and the promise thereof is sealed by the sacraments. Never does “the preaching” or “baptism” as such save us! And to be even more precise, it is God the Holy Spirit who in and through the Gospel saves those who are granted faith and repentance. And the Gospel is not: “Lo, you are baptized!” but “Lo, you are a great sinner! Come unto Jesus Christ for salvation, in faith and repentance, for you are by nature under God’s wrath and only He can reconcile us to God” (cf. Canons of Dort I:3). Now the difference may seem trivial, but it is in fact enormous!

To argue from baptism that the reality of this Gospel-wrought-transformation has somehow taken place in us, is not only an anachronistic reading of I Peter but also an eclipsing of the very Gospel in favor of the sacrament. The “now” of I Peter 3:21 does also not refer to “today” (as Rev. Eikelboom has it) but to the post-Pentecost Gospel era over against the time of Noah. In other words we are “now” not saved by an ark from a flood, but by the blood and Spirit of Christ from a guilty conscience and judgment to come. Of this salvation baptism so powerfully testifies!

Christo Heiberg  
Cambridge, Ontario

## Reply

Rev. Heiberg’s central thesis appears to be that I may not argue “from baptism that the reality of this Gospel-wrought transformation has somehow taken place in us” (Last paragraph of his letter). I agree wholeheartedly with this statement. Peter certainly is not saying that every baptized child is saved. However, the apostle Peter does write that baptism saves. And then we need to understand what this means. What Scripture says about the Gospel and about faith provides a context in which we need to understand our text, but we may not use the context to nullify the message of a particular text. While Rev. Heiberg rightly stresses the contents of the Gospel – saved by the Gospel; saved by God through the Gospel – in I Peter 3 the emphasis is on baptism as a means of grace. This is not meant to replace the Gospel. Instead it is one aspect of the Gospel.

R. Eikelboom

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.





## D. Moes

Rev. Dick Moes is minister of  
the Surrey Covenant  
Reformed Church in  
Cloverdale, B.C. (URC)  
[dickmoes@canrc.org](mailto:dickmoes@canrc.org)

# reformedevangelism.com

## Part 1: What Christians Believe – We Need God in our Lives

The first lesson focused on believing in God. This lesson will try to get people to think about God and their own lives, and where they are in relation to Him. In order to bring this into discussion, the facilitator has the participants read the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). Once the passage has been read, he highlights the different stages the younger son went through in his relationship with God. At this point, have the various groups discuss among themselves whether they can identify with any of the stages of the younger brother's journey and which stage they are in at the present time. This is a very important exercise, for it allows people to share with others something about their own relationship with God. Perhaps, they are running away from God. Maybe, they sense a need of their heavenly Father. Perhaps, they had just decided to turn around and come back. Maybe, they are taking their relationship with God for granted. Whatever the case may be, allow people to talk about their journey with God and what their relationship with God is like at this present time.

### How do we know we need God?

Because our need for God is often hidden, it is beneficial to discuss how we know that we need God. The facilitator focuses on three ways that show our need of God. First, God has created us to live in relationship with Him. Thus, when we do not, we notice there is something missing in our lives. Many people spend their whole lives trying to fill this void with all sorts of things instead of God. Ultimately, however, only God satisfies, as Augustine also confessed with the words,

“You have made us for Yourself and our hearts are restless until they find rest in You.” In order to involve the participants, ask them to pool some of the ideas on how people try to find inner peace or a sense of purpose in their lives. Then point them to Jesus' promise in Matthew 11:28-30: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

### Building walls between God and ourselves

Having shown how God has designed us to live in relationship with Him, proceed to show how by nature we tend to shut God out by building all sorts of walls between Him and ourselves. By erecting walls, we in essence show that we really need God, but for various reasons want to keep Him out of our lives. Focus on how our sin is a wall that separates us from God. Illustrate this, for instance, with the story of David and Bathsheba. Focus on the role pride plays in separating us from God. Something inside us hates to surrender to God because we all like to be our own boss. Focus on guilt. Many people think God will never forgive them because of all the wrong things they have done. Focus on how an unwillingness to change hinders people in coming to God. Many people realize that if they become Christians, their lifestyle will have to change. Unfortunately, many people are unwilling to do this. Involve the participants in this teaching section. In order to do this, ask them if and how they can relate to walls people tend

to build. Also ask for their input into other walls that you have not mentioned.

Third, our fear for the future also shows our need of God. One day, each of us will die. We don't like to think about this, but it is a fact of life. By nature, we are afraid to die and so we cover up our fear of death in a various ways. Have the groups share some of the ways people cover up their fear of death. Then point the participants to Jesus who promises eternal life to all those who believe in Him. Show how when we believe in Jesus, we do not need to be afraid of death.

### Affirm the questioner and give honest answers

As with the first lesson, so also with this one, allow for a question time in which the participants can ask any questions the lesson has raised in their minds. Be prepared for questions such as: “Do we believe in reincarnation? Is Christianity the only way? What about those who have never heard the gospel?” Be sure to affirm the questioner and give honest answers. If some of the questions raised will be dealt with in future lessons, be sure to indicate this.

Close the lesson with prayer and encourage the participants to read some of the Bible passages related to the lesson material.

If you would like to view the outline for this lesson, go to [www.reformedevangelism.com](http://www.reformedevangelism.com) and follow the links. We have added a new article by Cornelis Van Til, “Why I Believe in God.” It may help you in sharing with others why you believe in God.

Next time, we hope to introduce the third lesson: “The Life and Ministry of Jesus.”

**J. Geertsema**

Rev. J. Geertsema is professor emeritus of New Testament at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Ontario.  
[jgeertsema@canrc.org](mailto:jgeertsema@canrc.org)

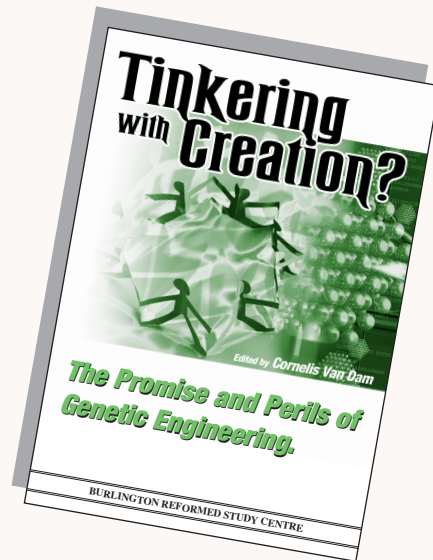
***Tinkering with Creation? The Promise and Perils of Genetic Engineering*, edited by Cornelis Van Dam, published by the Burlington Reformed Study Centre.**

Premier Publishings, 2003; 112 pages.  
The price is \$ 8.25.

This booklet contains the three speeches, one response, and the discussions after these speeches, organized by the Burlington Study Centre on October 18 and 19 of the year 2001. Part I deals with "Genetically Modified Foods." Dr. J. Vanderstoep gives his address the title "Do You Know What You Are Eating?" After an introduction, he first deals with the meaning of the term "Genetic Modification," and with the question how this technique is applied to the production of food. (Assumed) risks are discussed, the responsibility of the government, and the principles of God's Word. Are we as human beings allowed to interfere in the basic building blocks of what God has created and still upholds?

The term "Genetic Modification" indicates the technical modification or alteration of genes. Genes are "the smallest parts of the chromosome" (p 4) and are parts of the DNA. A gene contains so much information that it is able "to replicate itself" (p 4). The many, many genes in the DNA strands (also called ladders) of the chromosomes in the nucleus of the cells in plants and animals, also in humans, determine heredity. Genes cause a specific plant or animal to produce the same kind of plant and animal, with the same traits. This counts also for people. Drawings help the explanation of these terms.

Modern biotechnology is increasingly able and busy to bring genes of the DNA of one kind of creature into the DNA of a different kind of creature. Vanderstoep uses as example that a specific gene of a cold water fish is brought into the DNA



of a tomato to make the tomato better able to survive in low temperatures. Another example is more directly beneficial for people. Cholera is still a disease that kills many. "By introducing the cholera gene into potatoes, researchers in California have developed what might be a simple, nutritious, and effective way to deliver a vaccine against cholera. Initial results suggested that eating one transgenic potato per month, with periodic boosters, could provide sufficient immunity" (p 13). I find this contribution interesting and informative, as well as balanced.

Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman gives a response, in which he deals more specifically with the question of what God's Word teaches us in this matter of genetic manipulation. He distinguishes different approaches depending on different worldviews. These are the "ecocentric" [balance in nature], the "anthropocentric" [man in the centre], the "scientism or technologism" [human science and technology must be promoted above all], and the "covenantal" worldview. The last one reckons with God as Creator and places genetic engineering within our mandate to "cultivate" the earth and to preserve it (Gen 2), while, after the fall into sin, this mandate received a further "curative" aspect.

The extensive rendering of the discussion adds a picture of the questions and opinions living among those who were present. This part, too, is informative and interesting.

The second part deals with "Human Engineering". Dr. T. Jelsma speaks about

"Human Cloning and Stem Cell Research." He explains the potentials of stem cells. The closer the cells are to the point of conception, the greater is their potential. The first cell, the fertilized egg, called zygote, carries the entire number of all the different cells of the body that grows from it. Stem cells are present in the embryo, but also in the placenta and the umbilical cord.

One problem is in vitro fertilization (fertilization in a test tube). In this process more embryos than just one are formed. When one is chosen, develops and is placed in the mother's womb, the others can and often are used for stem cell research, or destroyed. Here we find ourselves in the midst of ethical problems. Our Canadian government has made decisions. So have President Bush and the North American government. What is right? What are possibilities? Are we allowed to make use of the possibilities here to overcome or correct hereditary defects? These are questions Dr. Jelsma tries to seek a biblical answer for.

While Dr. Jelsma gives more information on the technical side, though not leaving out answers of faith, the second contributor, again Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman, approaches the same matter more from a principial angle. Which data from the Scriptures do we have to work with when thinking about and discussing "Human Engineering" (the title of his contribution)? Also here an interesting extensive rendering of the discussion follows the addresses.

I hope that the reader's appetite is aroused. The Burlington Study Centre did the Reformed community in the Burlington region a great service with these topics and their speakers. And it is now doing a much wider readership the same service with the publication of this booklet. It orientates, informs, and gives leadership. Additional literature is pointed to. If you are not an "Inheritance Publications" member, and did not automatically receive this work, I highly recommend that you buy it. This study material deals with one of the present-day problems, and gives us good introductory information that invites to further study. The price of \$8.25 should not be an obstacle.

