

*Silence on the
Cross*

*The Open
and Empty
Tomb*

*A Movie:
The Passion
of the Christ*



*Introducing Reformation
Christian Ministries*



R. Aasman

Rev. R. Aasman is minister of the
Providence Canadian Reformed
Church in Edmonton, Alberta.
raasman@canrc.org

Silence on the Cross

*The great miracle is not a Saviour who can
come down from the cross.*

We read in the gospel: “The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, ‘He saved others; let him save himself if He is the Christ of God, the Chosen One’” (Luke 23:35).

Amazingly, during the final hours of his life, Jesus Christ was mostly silent. Considering all the injustice levelled against him, his silence is almost irritating! At the trial He was very quiet. But now on the cross we hear hardly a word – certainly not in response to his tormentors. Why, O why, was He so quiet? The answer rests in the fact that He is the second Adam who came to pay for the sins of the first Adam and all of God’s elect children. In Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 5:21: “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us.” He was brought under the curse of the law, the eternal burden of God’s wrath, and He became deserving of hell. What right did He have to open his mouth at that moment? He had no right. He had no right to defend himself. He was guilty. What is there to say? Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, He remained dumb, and He did not open his mouth. This is the silence of the Lamb.

We need to understand that all those people milling around on Golgotha with their despicable and blasphemous insults – as much as they could have been corrected and rebuked – was not the issue. The issue was between God and the second Adam. God was saying to Jesus Christ: do you willingly take the sins of your people on yourself and are you willing to pay for those sins? The second Adam responded: Lo, I have come to do your will, O my God. And so God thundered down his judgment – so awful because his wrath burns against our miserable sins which now rested on this lamb, this scapegoat. He thundered: into the curse you go, into three hours of darkness, the agony of hell. And in obedience, Christ was silent. The condemned man has had his last word. What more could He say? All He could do was be obedient to God and pay for our sins. Yes, in agony He

blurted out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” But it was no defence, no protest; certainly it was no defence before his tormentors. He was silent, and that silence was golden. It was a golden silence because it meant that He did not try to talk his way out of what was happening. He accepted it in order to pay for our sins. Yes, I can say and you can too: He died for my sins. All you heard was a cry of agony come up from the heart and emitting from his mouth. All you hear is faith and obedience when He said that He committed his spirit into his Father’s hands. All you hear is his pronouncement that He has stuck it out to the bitter end when He said, “It is finished.”

This is the silence of the Lamb.

We can still hear those people on Golgotha: come down from the cross, they cried, and then we will believe you! They did not understand that Jesus Christ had agreed to be there and to die there. Come down, they said, and we will believe. That is completely backwards. What leads to faith is not a Saviour who comes down from the cross, but who stays on the cross – who willingly came there in the first place. The great miracle is not a Saviour who can come down from the cross. The great miracle is a Saviour who would want to be there and who would stay there because of the great miracle of love for sinners. For you and me. He would not come down, until it was the hands of others who pried his lifeless, cold body from the cruel nails of the cross. O, was He silent then. Not a peep. Not a word. But in heaven, the Father and the angels were singing for joy because of the salvation of those who once were lost but now have been found. Silence on Golgotha. But the music had started again: sweet strains

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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

**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

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started to emanate from heaven and would fill the earth with the melody of a victorious Saviour who had reconciled God and sinners. Today we still hear the sweet gospel of how much God loves us. And our hearts swell with the melody of praise and thanksgiving to God that will culminate on Zion where we will sing to the Father and to the Lamb who is silent no more.



Inside . . .

This issue of *Clarion* should be in your hands around the Easter weekend. Accordingly, the editorial and *Treasures, New and Old* focus on that. We also have an interaction by Rev. T.G. Van Raalte on the Mel Gibson movie, “The Passion of the Christ.” It is most appropriate to hear some discussion on this movie which has taken North America by “storm.” Fittingly it also helps us to understand the crucifixion of Jesus Christ in a truly biblical fashion.

Rev. W.L. Bredenhof has been involved for many years in an organization known as Reformation Christian Ministries. He now introduces us to this important work.

Press Review by Rev. J. Moesker speaks about the phenomenon known as “dumbing down.” Within our own churches and sister churches there is the threat that members seek to learn the Scriptures and confessions quickly and easily. The result is a “dumbing down” of the knowledge of and eventual commitment to the truth. It is a most timely topic.

Rev. Cl. Stam addresses the issue: who may come to the table of the Lord? He focuses in particular on the fact that admission to the table is and remains the responsibility of the local consistory. Considering our discussions in recent years with sister churches on this subject, it is a most relevant topic.

We have our column, *Ray of Sunshine*, and a press release of Classis Alberta.

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J.G. Slaa

Rev. J.G. Slaa is minister
of the Canadian
Reformed Church at
Kerwood, Ontario.
jgslaa@canrc.org

The Open and Empty Tomb



MATTHEW 13:52

“Come and see the place where He lay.”

Matthew 28:6

Early on the morning of the first day of the week, several women went to the tomb of the Lord Jesus. Unaware of the glorious thing that had happened or was happening, they went to the tomb to anoint the Lord's body with spices and to offer their last respects.

On their way to the tomb, the women realized there might be a problem. They asked, “Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?” (Mark 16:3). The tomb was a chamber hollowed out of a cliff. At the threshold of the tomb was a groove carved in the rock. A large stone, shaped like a coin, had been rolled along the groove, sealing the entrance. The women realized they couldn't move the stone. The stone stood in the way of the women's intentions.

Their concern was quickly laid to rest. As they entered the cemetery, and looked up, they saw that the stone was already rolled away and the tomb was *open*! Matthew explains how it happened. “There was a violent [great] earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it.” In other words, God intervened and opened the tomb to make known his intention.

For not only was the tomb open, but, as the women were invited by angels to look in, they also observed that the tomb was *empty*! The first reaction was that the body of the Lord had been stolen. What they found, however, was a tomb in order. The linen lay there and the cloth that was placed on the Lord's head was neatly folded up. This fact is later witnessed and recorded by John (John 20:5-8). All indications were that what happened in this tomb was peaceful and glorious. No disciple had been there to remove the body, nor had an enemy pillaged or desecrated the tomb. Those who looked into the tomb observed that Christ was restored from death to life and was gloriously alive! Whereas initially there was doubt, confusion, and even suspicion, the open and empty tomb clearly proclaimed Christ's victory over sin, death and the grave.

Interestingly, there is no description in the gospels of the actual moment when Christ rose from the dead. Nor do we read anywhere of how the Lord opened his eyes, took off his bandages and put on a garment that made Him appear as any normal being. We don't read of when He got up and exited the tomb. Because of this, it becomes clear that the large stone

was not moved to allow the Lord Jesus *to come out*. Whether Jesus came out of the tomb through the opening is not important for us. Certainly, walls did not contain Him, as was evident later that day when He visited his disciples in a locked room (John 20:19). Rather, it is important to note that the stone was removed for the women, for the disciples, and also for the church of all times and places. God opened the tomb to allow them to peer into the open tomb, *to go in*, and to witness that it was empty.

Therefore, the angel of the Lord invited the women to, “Come and see the place where He lay.” It is as if the angel said, “Come here and look into this tomb. I have moved this stone so that you might look in and see the glorious triumph of Jesus Christ over the dead. He is not here, for He is risen, as He said. He came to this world, took upon human flesh, and died, in order to conquer the sin that held all flesh captive.” The women were invited to see something that they could have known, but did not come to expect. Jesus Christ was not there. He had risen!

The only real reason, then, for God to remove the stone from the entrance of the tomb was that the women were coming. It was for the two disciples who came soon after that. It was for the guards who later, unwittingly, proclaimed the gospel of the resurrection to the Romans and the Jews. But above all, the opening of the tomb took place for the church. The open and empty tomb was a sign for the church that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead, that He is alive, and that He has conquered Satan. Come, says the Lord to the church, look into the tomb, and see: it is empty, it is orderly. Christ has risen! There is victory over death!

We as church of the Lord Jesus Christ are called to peer into the tomb, by means of the reading of this Scripture. We are called to see and believe that Jesus Christ is alive! We are called to believe in his resurrection – and by extension, its consequence – our glorious resurrection! Jesus Christ has lovingly obtained righteousness for us, and has opened up not only one tomb, but also our tombs. Through Christ's resurrection we too will be raised up to eternal life. Let us, then, look through the eyes of Scripture, and see that Christ has, in fact, been raised from the dead.



Rev. Cl. Stam is minister of the
Canadian Reformed Church at
Hamilton, Ontario.
clstam@canrc.org

Who are to come to the Table of the Lord? (Part 1)

It should be noted that a general rule or policy is not to be taken as a personal affront.

The title above this article is taken from the *Heidelberg Catechism*, Lord's Day 30, Q/A 81. It is a question, and the answer places emphasis on *personal examination*, "Those who are truly displeased with themselves because of their sins and yet trust that these are forgiven them and that their remaining weakness is covered by the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, and who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and amend their life. But hypocrites and those who do not repent eat and drink judgment unto themselves."

In the next question and answer (82) the emphasis shifts to the task of the consistory and the calling of the congregation in this respect. Those who show by their confession and life that they are unbelieving and ungodly shall not be admitted, for "then the covenant of God would be profaned and his wrath kindled against the whole congregation." Therefore "the Christian church is duty bound to exclude such persons by the *keys of the kingdom of heaven* until they amend their lives."

It also becomes clear from Lord's Day 30 that the use of these keys of the kingdom is determined and regulated by the office bearers, *the consistory*. This is the body which locally bears the responsibility to keep the celebration holy.

Topic of discussion

In the past time the policy of admission to the Lord's Supper has again become the topic of many editorials and

articles in various ecclesiastical magazines. This policy is also one of the points of discussion that exists between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

The Canadian Reformed Churches have further outlined their policy in Article 61 of the Church Order, which states, "The consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only those who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. Members of sister churches shall be admitted on the ground of a good attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct." The article does not speak about members of non-sister-churches or people who have no membership in any church, but by implication it would follow that these, too, are *a priori excluded*. This is the general rule: only communicant members in good standing and members of sister churches with proper attestations shall be admitted. It is the task of the *consistory* to see to it that this general rule is duly observed.

A general rule

I do not have a problem, as such, with this general rule. It should be noted that a general rule or policy is *not* to be taken as a personal affront. When a "stranger" is present (in a service where the Lord's Supper is celebrated) who does not meet the established criteria, and is not admitted, this should not be taken as a personal insult. The church has the right to make rules and to maintain them; it's

simply a matter of policy. The rule is not directed against any individual, but establishes a general ecclesiastical policy which is derived from the direction given in Holy Scripture. The Bible does not give us concrete regulations in this respect, but a general rule is established: the holy supper must be *kept* holy.

The basis for this is found in I Corinthians 11:27, "Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks of the cup in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord." Not only can one eat and drink "judgment on *himself*" (verse 29, personal responsibility) but such participation also has consequences for the whole *congregation* (verse 30, corporate responsibility).

Article 61 of the Church Order seeks to blend personal and corporate responsibility into one solid policy. Not every possible angle is explored and determined. The CO gives only general rules, and these must be applied wisely in each local situation, keeping the scriptural principle in mind. But the rule is clear: whether someone may attend a local Lord's Supper is not just a personal decision but one that is decided by the consistory who has the calling to oversee and supervise.

The case of the missing article

In 1983 the Canadian Reformed Churches (Synod Cloverdale) revised and adopted a complete *Book of Praise*. A revised church order was also presented

and accepted. It is to be noted that an article disappeared. Article 62 used to state, "Every church shall determine the manner of administering the Lord's Supper that it deems to be the most edifying, with the understanding that the external ceremonies, prescribed in God's Word, are not changed and all superstition is avoided, and that after the preaching and prayers the Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper and the accompanying prayer be read."

I am not a CO specialist, but I think that fragments of Article 62 are found still in the present Article 56, even if the article itself has disappeared. I understand fully that the old article dealt not with the *admission* to the celebration but with the *manner* of the celebration. Still, the overriding point is: the exact manner shall be *locally* determined. Would this not also apply, *mutatis mutandis*, when we speak about the *admission* to the supper? Keeping the general rule in mind, is the (incidental) admission of certain persons not at the discretion and insight of *local* office-bearers?

Just as every local church has some "latitude" in determining the exact manner of the celebration, and there are many local variations in this respect, so every church has the same latitude in determining exactly who shall be admitted to a specific celebration. The consistory does wise to discuss this with the congregation, perhaps, but the freedom of the local church must be respected. Admission to the table is and remains the responsibility of the local consistory.

Current discussions

I would not have written on this point except that I read about it often these days in other ecclesiastical magazines. One magazine has extensively editorialized on the matter and concluded that a *closed* celebration is the only proper way: only those shall be admitted who are locally communicant members in good standing *and* members of sister churches with proper attestations. To do it any other way would go against the Bible, the

confessions, and the church order. This follows the strictly literal interpretation of Article 61. I surmise that most of us feel quite comfortable with this approach. A literal interpretation and strict compliance is the least complicated and most consistent.

In the magazine *De Reformatie* (Volume 79, issues 7-9, November 2003) Rev. K. de Vries also tackles this hot topic. At first (around 2000) Rev. de Vries also favoured the literal interpretation. But he writes, "I come back to this because I have in the meantime come to think differently about the consequences of what I wrote then. Feelings which I have had for a longer time were confirmed by reactions to my articles." He previously defended the closed system not out of a feeling of superiority or a rejection of those who think differently. His principle motive at the time was to take seriously the sanctity and unity of the congregation. But now he wants to revisit the matter in the hope that a national reconsidering will take place with respect to the closed celebration. His main concern with respect to a closed system is that (believing) people are judged and rejected.

Admission to the table is and remains the responsibility of the local consistory.

De Vries finds it rather inhospitable and offensive to refuse other believers. He also notes that within the Reformed churches there is a growing disparity in this respect. Some churches are more open or flexible than others. Perhaps the pursuit of unity is better served by allowing other believers to attend. Is it really proper to accentuate what divides us at the occasion of the Lord's Supper? Are we in the closed system not being led by fear instead of faith? Are there not limits to our responsibility when we



Church News

Declined the call to the Free Reformed Church of Launceston, Tasmania:

Rev. J. VanWoudenberg
of Guelph, Ontario.

admit members of non-sister-churches? Is there not a contradiction between having an open (public) service and a closed (private) table? De Vries asks these and other questions because he feels his conscience is bothered by the present method.

In a subsequent article I plan to outline what de Vries notes as important criteria for admission to the celebration. He also proposes some kind of a "form" which all guests of non-sister-churches are required to sign. We will examine whether this route can or should be taken.

Initial conclusion

The matter of admission to the Lord's Supper has had a lot of attention in our churches because of our contacts with the OPC. It is one of the church-political divergences under discussion.

It is not such a burning issue as one might think. Most people who come to our services are either members of the congregation or members of sister churches. They know the rules. But every now and then someone is present who does not know or understand our rules. Such a person is offended. I repeat that a general rule should not be taken as a personal affront.

My initial conclusion is that we do *not* need to change our church order. Celebrating the Lord's Supper is the calling of members, and not a general, indiscriminate privilege of everyone. There's nothing wrong with the rule itself. But I add to this that locally every consistory must use much wisdom in *applying* this rule. More about this, hopefully, in a subsequent article. All this is offered only as a discussion piece, for I do not claim to have the definitive insight into these matters.



A Movie – “The Passion of the Christ”¹

Rev.T.G.Van Raalte is minister of
the Redeemer Canadian
Reformed Church
in Winnipeg, Manitoba.
tvanraalte@canrc.org

*We are faced with the question of whether we should
join others in endorsing this movie.*

Part I

I.1 Praises for the movie

“It is as it was” (John Paul II). “Every time I preach or speak about the Cross, the things I saw on the screen will be in my heart and mind” (Billy Graham). “It was an encounter, unlike anything I’ve ever experienced” (Keith Fournier). “It’s as close as any of us will ever get to knowing, until we fully know” (Jody Dean). “It’s the best evangelization opportunity we’ve had since the actual death of Jesus” (Lisa Wheeler).

I.2 What is it?

The accolades are almost breathtaking! Who would not want to go see Mel Gibson’s new movie called, “The Passion of the Christ” after reading recommendations like these? The movie purports to follow the text of Scripture entirely as it portrays the last twelve hours of Christ’s life, from the garden to the grave, ending with a brief glimpse of the resurrection. Its producer is none other than Mel Gibson, now 46 years old, the successful actor turned director who has played the main role in some of Hollywood’s most violent and bloodiest movies. Gibson is actually a devout Roman Catholic who stated about this new movie, “It reflects my beliefs – I’ve never done that before.” The huge hype and anticipation surrounding its debut result from the fact that Gibson first took the movie to thousands of clergy and church leaders to obtain their opinions. Most, especially evangelicals, responded

with ringing endorsements, urging Christians to buy out whole theatres to give this movie a huge success at the box office (e.g. Rick Warren, James Dobson). We are faced with the question of whether we should join others in endorsing this movie, and the question presses upon us, particularly with all the publicity surrounding the movie.

I.3 But we don’t watch movies!

Some readers may find no reason at all to read on, since they reject movie-going out of hand. I applaud your position, for I do not think Christians should support Hollywood. In this article, however, I am not addressing that wider question but restricting myself to this one movie. I fear that the wider publicity may well persuade some Christians to overcome their trepidation and go to the theatre for the first time. If so, please read this first. And, if you do attend the movies, I particularly desire to dissuade you from watching this one.

Part 2

2.1 Problems - second commandment

Principled objections are most important. One might think that the role of Christ can be played in a movie, for he was and is fully human, like we are. Though he was God, the people of the time did not see that he was God simply by gazing upon him. Nevertheless, his divine nature cannot be separated from his human nature and therefore mere humans are unable to re-enact his life as

the Christ who is both God and man. Even in his humanity he was and is sinless. Sinners cannot play this either. Finally, no one knows what he looked like. In this movie, the portraits of Christ are front and centre. James Caviezel, who plays Christ in the movie, was chosen for his penetrating gaze. His eyes seem to hold the suffering of the world in them, and this was very important to Gibson, for reasons which will soon become clear. Caviezel blasphemously noted that his own initials are J. C. and that he was 33 at the time of shooting the movie. Some people actually bowed down to him. This underlines how playing Christ breaks the second commandment.

2.2 Problems – redemption complete already

As Reformed Christians we speak biblically about redemptive history. We mean that the events of redemption were accomplished at a certain time and place, once for all. There is not one event of Christ’s earthly ministry that needs to be repeated (biblical history is linear). Christ’s moment of glory on the mount of transfiguration will no more be repeated than his death on the cross. This is a major criticism that the Protestant Church has always had towards the Roman Catholic doctrine of the mass, where Christ is sacrificed over and over. We confess that the crucifixion and death of Christ are now to be preached, just like all the events of redemption, as completed events, by which our salvation was secured and remains secure.

2.3 Roman Catholicism by the back door – stations of the cross

The movie is actually a stylized version of the fourteen stations of the cross. What are they? The stations of the cross are a series of fourteen devotional pictures (two or three dimensional) which Roman Catholics view at Easter (or other times) which trace Jesus' journey from his condemnation to his burial. Roman Catholic writings emphasize that the stations are not an exercise in understanding but an "imaginative exercise" meant to lead to a deeper "experience" of the "mystery" of the faith. At each of the fourteen stations the worshipper focuses on the picture to worship Christ and express veneration for the saints, and repeats a short prayer.

Mel Gibson's sources were not only the gospels but also the diaries of St. Anne Catherine Emmerich (1774-1824) and Mary of Agreda's "The City of God."

This movie is nothing but a stylized moving version of these pictures. In our Heidelberg Catechism we regard such "books for the laity" to be against God's holy will (Q/A 98). People who watch the movie have been leaving in awe and tears – therefore they are most certainly using the movie as an aid to worship, which is wrong. Their error only grows when we realize what is moving them: a number of imaginative additions to the gospel.

2.4 Mystical additions - imagination

Mel Gibson's sources were not only the gospels but also the diaries of St. Anne Catherine Emmerich (1774-1824) and Mary of Agreda's "The City of God." Both of these are Roman Catholic

mystical writings, based on "visions." Their influence appears in such additions to the gospel as Jesus meeting Mary on the road to the cross (fourth station), Veronica wiping the face of Jesus (sixth station), Jesus falling three times on the road to the cross (third, seventh, and ninth stations), Mary holding Jesus' dead body after it is taken from the cross (thirteenth station). These are all in the movie. Gibson has also added imaginative flashbacks such as Mary helping Jesus as a child when he fell on the dirt road outside their house. Plus Mary looks like a nun. The devil appears in several places, though he is not mentioned in the gospels in these places. More additions can be noted. As several reviewers strongly emphasized: this movie is a work of art and as such it is both an interpretation and an exercise in imagination. Dobson's claim, that "there are no specific references to unique Catholic doctrine in the film," is incredible.

2.5 Experience of physical suffering only

Why make additions to the Scriptures? This is directly tied to the main emphasis of Roman Catholicism. The Roman Catholic religion is based in experience, namely the experience of the sacraments, particularly the mass. Both in this religion and in the movie, additions were made so as to add to the overall experience. In fact, non-Christian reviewers have still appreciated the film as a beautiful story of a mother and her son. Is it possible to read the Scriptures and come to such a conclusion? Rather, Scripture reveals God the Father giving up his Son to death! Roman Catholicism focuses on Mary and Jesus, and on Jesus' physical suffering, while aiming to have church members identify with him through this. Thus, the focus on pictures and imagination. But the message of the cross is more than the physical suffering of Jesus – the reason for his suffering is explained in the rest of the New Testament in ways that no movie can portray, which is why God gave his Word

in words and not in pictures. This movie is a very dangerous way to have false doctrine slip into your mind through the gateway of an emotional experience, both by what is added and by what is left unsaid.

However, the movie focuses only on his physical suffering – it is described as brutal and gruesome, a Mel Gibson classic.

2.6 Who has suffered the most?

There is absolutely no question that no one has ever suffered as much as Christ, for he suffered under the burden of God's eternal wrath against sin. However, the movie focuses only on his physical suffering – it is described as brutal and gruesome, a Mel Gibson classic. In this respect, one could certainly make the case that others have suffered more terribly than our Lord did, for some of the church's martyrs underwent severe torture for years. In fact, the emphasis of the New Testament in terms of physical suffering is not the physical suffering of Christ, but the physical suffering of his church. Paul even writes that he fills up in his own body the afflictions of Christ – and here he refers to the physical afflictions (Col 1:24; cf. Phil 3:10). If we wish to focus on Christ's sufferings today, then we should look at what is happening right now to our persecuted brothers and sisters.

2.7 The mass – an accursed idolatry

The core of the Roman Catholic faith is the mass. Mel Gibson himself said that he attended mass every morning while shooting the movie because, "we had to be squeaky clean just working on this." James Caviezel said that he needed the sacrament "in him" to play the Christ. Gibson adheres to a Latin Mass, something largely abandoned in the

Roman Catholic Church since Vatican II in the 1960s. Part of Gibson's intention in the movie indeed is to juxtapose the sacrifice of the altar (the mass) with the sacrifice of the cross, since for him they are the same thing. Roman Catholics believe that Christ is sacrificed over and over in the mass. The movie, by way of flashbacks, etc., is designed to help such thoughts grow in the viewer's mind.

2.8 Roman Catholic conversions

Gibson claimed many conversions and even some healings during filming. Make no mistake, however, he does not merely mean conversions to Christianity but to Roman Catholicism, and, best of all, to the pre-Vatican II Tridentine rites of Roman Catholicism. Disagreeing with Vatican II, he believes that there is no salvation outside the Roman Catholic Church. Gibson has his own chapel at home where he receives the mass spoken in the old Latin every Sunday. For him it is a most moving religious experience.

2.9 The medium of film

Does it become more clear why a devout Roman Catholic would make such a movie? It is an act of devotion for him (could it even be a way of atoning for past sins?). And in this case, it is more true than ever, that the medium is the message. Instead of coming with the Word, Gibson comes with the picture (originally the movie was not even going to have subtitles, leaving all to the viewer's imagination, since the languages spoken are Latin and Aramaic). The Roman Catholic emphases on the visual, on experience, on Christ's physical suffering, and on mystery (mysticism) are all well-served by this movie on the passion of the Christ. Roman Catholicism is not a religion of the Word, but of the sacraments, of the imagination, and of the authority of the church. Film as such reinforces this kind of religion. We have here the great modern-day relic, the moving picture. The medium is the message in this sense also: films are about entertainment. As one web

blogger put it after seeing the movie: "They don't get the fact that most people who see this will still see it as a film, and within the context of a film."

As Reformed Christians who hold to the Word, we confess that God regenerates us by his Word, which is the tool given and used by the Holy Spirit. We confess this in Heidelberg Catechism, Q/A 65 and Canons of Dort III/IV, art 17. His Word is not only the "seed of regeneration," it also provides our souls with daily bread (cf. CD V, art. 14). It was precisely in the time of the Reformation that the Reformers emphasized *Sola Scriptura* in the face of all kinds of Roman Catholic abuses such as the stations of the cross. Let us follow in their footsteps, in accordance with our confessions of faith (cf. Belgic Confession, art 3,5, 7)!

Dobson urged his readers to do everything possible to support this movie.

Part 3

3.1 Why then all the praise?

Much of the praise for the movie is from evangelical Protestants. Rick Warren's Saddleback Community Church, for example, snapped up 18000 theatre seats. Dobson urged his readers to do everything possible to support this movie. This led one reviewer to write, "Times have indeed changed when [evangelical] church representatives vocally support a film that focuses so literal-mindedly on the physical suffering of Jesus' body rather than the metaphysical meanings that suffering helped convey to humanity."

3.2 "Evangelicals and Catholics together"

The explanation begins with something called "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" (ECT). This movement was initiated by Chuck

Colson in 1985. In 1994 they produced their first document, called, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium." In 1996 a further document called, "The Gift of Salvation" was produced. Signatories included Chuck Colson, Bill Bright, Mark Noll, Richard Mouw, and J. I. Packer, from the evangelical side. It should be noted that the Roman Catholic side was not endorsed by Rome but simply represents a limited number of Roman Catholic theologians (the danger is that many evangelicals will not realize this until it is too late). How did ECT come about?

3.3 A common foe

Evangelicals and certain Roman Catholics noticed that they had a common foe, namely, the liberals who reject the authority of Scripture. Here is an example of the difference: Liberals would say that Jesus did not actually rise from the dead; it's just a story/myth. Evangelicals and Roman Catholics believe he actually rose (note, however, that there are many liberal Roman Catholics). Whereas the liberals would allow abortion, euthanasia, and homosexual marriage, most devout Roman Catholics and Evangelicals would not. Therefore, they united on several fronts.

3.4 Unity on social issues

Evangelicals and Catholics found themselves standing side by side against abortion, euthanasia, and homosexual marriage. Reformed Christians have a place here too. The problem comes when such issues receive so much emphasis that they are mistaken for the essence of the gospel. Opposing abortion does not save us! We must beware that we also do not assume that our motivations are identical. Evangelical leaders who endorse this movie overlook the differences with the Roman Catholics in the doctrines of salvation, the church, worship, Mary, sacraments, etc. Why? Likely because doctrine is being downplayed more and more these days. One of the reasons for this follows.

3.5 Unity of experience

A big movement behind the unity of all kinds of different churches is the charismatic movement. This movement is found in practically all churches, from Roman Catholic to Christian Reformed. What is this movement but a focus on experience? People in the many different churches experience the same ecstasy, be it speaking in tongues, being slain in the Spirit, or singing “praise and worship” songs. When reviewing the movie, Richard Bennet, a former RC priest, asks, “Will history reveal this day as the time when evangelicalism, on a popular level, merged with the Roman Catholic Church?” This unity in experience fits hand-in-glove with the Roman Catholic emphasis on experience and the Roman Catholic Church has always been happy to accommodate others, provided they stay within the “mother” church. I see ECT as an effort on part of the Roman Church to try to woo Evangelicals back “home.” Judging by the acceptance of this movie, their tactics seem to be working.

Mel Gibson’s movie is being praised by all for precisely this reason – that it might be one of the greatest evangelism tools ever.

3.6 Even unity in mission

Surprisingly, the ECT documents also encourage unity in mission and evangelism. Mel Gibson’s movie is being praised by all for precisely this reason – that it might be one of the greatest evangelism tools ever. But the end does not justify the means. By his Word, God regulates both our goals and our methods. If the movie does not hold forth the true gospel, and if the movie as medium should not be used to convey the gospel, then we must not use it. The very real danger is that a generation will

be raised on Gibson’s movie, but still very few people will actually turn to the Word of God and become true Christians (BC art 29, paragraph 3). Sometimes churches succeed more in exporting American culture than in teaching the gospel. (Imagine showing a movie amongst a tribe that’s hardly ever seen a TV, let alone owned one! They’ll want the TV, not the gospel, and the gospel just becomes a means to get the culture that has the TV.) As Reformed Christians, we cannot unite with the Roman Church in mission, nor should we compromise biblical principles by using a medium of which our Father does not approve.

3.7 Hollywood is listening

Recently, one unique Hollywood publicist has been underlining one big statistic for studio leaders: “week after week roughly five times as many people go to church as attend movies.” The message to Hollywood is: tweak your movies with some Christian themes and you can access a pool of movie-goers five times bigger than you now have. Money, lots of it! What do we get? Movies that have spiritual themes or sub-themes, but without the real truth of the gospel. The devil comes on slippers, to deceive those who do not know the truth as well as they should.

3.8 Part of a wider context

To summarize: the wider church is falling prey to a false idea of toleration – unite with each other and ignore the differences. The result is inevitable: The longer you ignore the differences, the more they just disappear. Instead of sticking to the gospel, both in method and in message, many churches have opted for a false unity. This is achieved by uniting on social issues, or uniting at the level of experience, or uniting on the goal of evangelism. Many are losing the heart of the gospel, namely, justification by grace alone through faith alone. Or, even while maintaining the heart of the gospel, many are compromising the rest of the commandments of the Lord. While so many speak of transforming the

culture, the culture appears to be transforming the church. Mel Gibson’s movie may seem to be the beginning of a wide turning to the gospel, but, given what I’ve written, I see it as part and parcel of a turning away from the true gospel of free forgiveness.

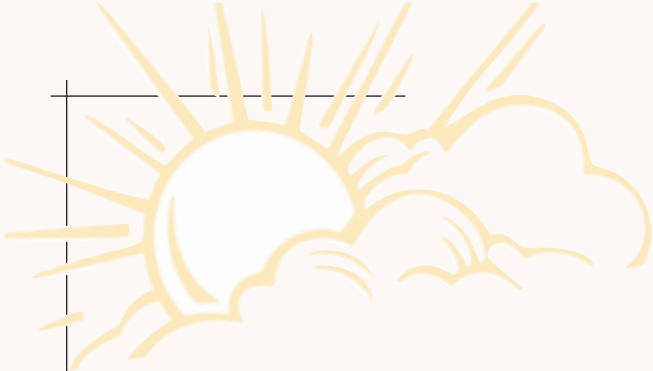
3.9 Time for renewal

It is time for us as Reformed Christians to renew our allegiance to the Word of God in the fullest sense. Rev. Richard Pot, pastor of the CanRC of Orangeville, reminded his congregation, “[T]his is an opportunity to renew our enthusiasm and passion for the Word –

The message to Hollywood is: tweak your movies with some Christian themes and you can access a pool of movie-goers five times bigger than you now have.

read and preached – which reveals the living Christ. Ultimately our understanding of Christ’s life is to be shaped by the Word. If you are looking for greater insight into the suffering of Christ’s passion, don’t watch the movie, but read the Book! And if people come to us with questions about that Book as a result of this movie, let us be ready to answer them! I encourage you to read and study Scripture, and listen carefully to its message as it is preached by God’s servants week by week. May the Lord use that message to encourage us in our faith today too.”

¹ The original version of this article contains thirty-seven footnotes, many of which lead to various websites. Those who have computer access can view the footnotes at <http://www.redeemer-canrc.ca/ppage.php> and those who do not have computer access can mail the author to request them.



Ray of Sunshine

By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

“Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory” (Romans 8:17).

This text gives us great comfort. We are comforted in knowing that as children of God we have rich blessings through his Son, Jesus Christ. He has adopted us, through grace to make us his own possession. He has also fully revealed to us the secret council and will of God concerning our redemption. Since we are God’s children, we may also share in his great treasures as co-heirs. What a great privilege!

God has already given us great gifts, namely his Son, and through him, forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. Yet, with these rich treasures, also come trials and sufferings. Through the trials in our life, we must always remember that Christ has also suffered. His suffering was done for us, so that we might also share in his glory. Nothing can compare to the immense suffering Christ endured on the cross. He bore the wrath of all mankind, in order to free us from eternal death. When we suffer, we know not to set our hearts on the brokenness of this life. Rather, we must have our eyes fixed on our Lord and Saviour on high, and the future glory that will be revealed to us when Christ returns.

*Loving Shepherd of Thy sheep,
All Thy lambs in safety keep;
Nothing can Thy power withstand,
None can pluck them from Thy hand.*

*Loving Shepherd, ever near,
Teach Thy lambs Thy voice to hear;
Suffer not their steps to stray
From the straight and narrow way.*

Hymn 45:1, 3

Birthdays in May:

- 4 DEBBIE VEENSTRA will be 30**
RR 1, Sherkston, ON L0S 1R0
- 10 ROB DE HAAN will turn 39**
Anchor Home,
361 Thirty Road, RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
- 30 BERNIE DEVOS will be 29**
40 Kerman Avenue, Grimsby, ON L3M 3W5

Congratulations to you all as you celebrate another birthday. May our heavenly Father bless you in this new year with health and happiness. May we all keep our eyes focused on our loving Shepherd on high, through whatever life may bring us in this new year. Best wishes, and till next month,

Mrs. C. Gelms and Mrs. E. Nordeman
548 Kemp Road East
RR2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
Phone: 905-563-0380

Keep Looking Up!

Jesus is my tender Shepherd,
Leading me along life’s way.
If I keep looking up to Jesus,
I will never go astray!
Through the valleys He may lead me,
My Guardian He is.
My tender Shepherd He has always been!
Up on the mountain-top with Jesus,
Joyfully,
Forever, with Him at last I will live!

This poem was written by Connie VanAmerongen. She has dedicated this poem to John Feenstra, who was taken into eternal glory on February 13, 2004.



J. Wiskerke van Dooren

Lord's Day 8

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



The Apostles' Creed

- I. 1. *I believe in God the Father almighty Creator of heaven and earth.*
- II. 2. *I believe in Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son, our Lord;*
3. *He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary;*
4. *suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried;*
He descended into hell.
5. *On the third day He arose from the dead;*
6. *He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty;*
7. *From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.*
- III. 8. *I believe in the Holy Spirit.*
9. *I believe a holy catholic Christian church, the communion of saints;*
10. *the forgiveness of sins;*
11. *the resurrection of the body;*
12. *and the life everlasting.*

You know the Apostles' Creed. The numbers I through 12 have been added to it. Our faith can be summarized in twelve statements. We call these the twelve articles of the Christian faith. But we have also added the numbers I, II and III. Perhaps you wonder why that was done. Look at what follows the I. Here, God the Father is mentioned. And following the II, you see the name of Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God. And III is about the Holy Spirit.

Now we put these three together: Father – Son – Holy Spirit. When someone who does not know the Bible sees this, he could say to you: How is that possible? I thought you believed there is only one God. But here you say there are three!

That is hard to understand. How could you give a good answer? From ourselves we would not know what to say. But we do have to give an answer. Maybe this will help: "Yes, there is only one God. But instead of 'God,' you can also say: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That is what the Bible says."

When you think of God the Father, you remember that He made everything. When you think of God the Son, you remember that He died on the cross. When you think of God the Spirit, you remember that He teaches you to believe in God, and to be obedient to God. In the following instalments, you will hear more about Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Why don't you write the number I. And now you write a 3 through the I. Like this:

There is 1 God. At the same time He is 3: Father, Son and Spirit. In the following issues, you will hear more about Him.



J. Moesker

Rev. J. Moesker is minister of the
Canadian Reformed Church at
Vernon, B.C.
jmoesker@canrc.org

My second instalment of press review! I'll try to combine articles with common themes from various publications. This time it's about knowledge of Scripture and the doctrines of Holy Scripture.

The *Reformed Herald* is the official publication of the Reformed Church in the United States, our sister church south of the border since Synod Neerlandia 2001. You can subscribe to this publication by contacting Rev. Frank Walker, 6121 Pine Vista Way, Elk Grove, CA 95758 USA. Subscriptions are \$10 per year in the US, so possibly a few dollars more in Canada. You can also read this publication online at www.rcus.org. In the November 2003 issue, Rev. Robert Grossman, pastor of Providence RCUS in Vermillion, South Dakota, wrote an excellent article entitled "Dumbing Down of the Church."

Over the past fifty years, we in the Reformed Church in the U.S. have struggled to maintain a conservative Reformed teaching and Church in our nation. This has been no small struggle. A number of other denominations, that seemed just as conservative and Reformed as we were fifty years ago, are no longer that way. It is time that we, for our own good, ask, "Why is it that really Reformed denominations have given up on holding to some basic teachings of the Bible and to a solidly Reformed theology?"

As someone who has been well acquainted with some of these denominations throughout the last fifty years, I have been particularly impressed with one change that seems to underlie the others. When I moved to Berkeley, CA, from our RCUS in Shafter, CA, as a college student, then later to San Francisco to work, and then to Philadelphia for seminary training, I knew which denominations I should seek out for church attendance. Later in life, when

I taught seminary in a city with no RCUS congregation, my family and I again attended worship every Sunday at an historically Reformed denomination. In each case, the denominations of Reformed or Presbyterian churches I attended have changed. Their teachings are no longer so distinctly Reformed, and some are well-tinged with liberalism. The question of course is, "Will this also happen to the RCUS?"

Dumbing down

Brother Grossman describes how North America is afflicted with a need for speed and ease, for instance, even in the field of education. This has the danger of "dumbing down" the education system. And then he adds:

Unfortunately this same desire for speed and ease has also afflicted the Christian church. We don't want to spend the time and work to really learn Bible teaching, and especially to have to actually teach it to our children, so that we and they can be Christians who, as the apostle Paul says, "will not be tossed about by every wind of doctrine." When the people of the church do not know the Bible's teaching, they are easily led astray. And we may be certain, as Christ Himself warns and the apostles do too, that false teaching will bombard us from inside as well as from outside of the Church. Dumbing down the knowledge requirements for church membership is NOT a good idea.

As I have lived with various congregations in the RCUS, and outside of it, I have noticed a definite desire to make church membership

classes and catechism classes easier. In the cases of some other Reformed denominations such classes have become little more than "doing your time." Churches that used to require memorization of the Heidelberg or the Westminster Shorter catechisms, have given up that practice and replaced it with little lessons of multiple choice questions in "workbooks." People no longer know the Bible History because Sunday School and Catechism Classes simply no longer teach it. As Reformed Christians we know that we are part of Bible history. Abraham is our father in the faith, David and Peter are our brothers. If we do not know how God lived with them, we will have no idea how He will live with us or how we ought to live before Him. We will use the word "covenant," but have no real covenant life before God.

The Heidelberg Catechism has it right. Three things are *necessary to know* if you and I are going to live and die happily as Christians. And then the Catechism goes on to explain each of those three things carefully over the next 127 questions and answers. Do YOU care if you know these things well? Or do you want to get by on the minimum? Would you rather have your operation by a well qualified doctor, or by a person who flunked out of medical school? But many people want flunking education in the church. The teachings of the Heidelberg Catechism are NOT about unimportant things, these are things essential for a Christian to know and believe. You can, of course, learn them from other catechisms or

teaching material, but when people substitute other materials, they are, 100 times out of 100, dumbing down the system. I have seen that so often and the results are so sad. Several of my own children attended both RCUS catechism classes and those in another Reformed denomination at the same time. Each of these children reported that almost none of their friends in the weaker class were becoming real Christians. "True faith" is a certain "knowledge," not a certain ignorance. God does not want dumb Christians.

Solid catechetical instruction

Rev. Grossman describes the blessing of good, solid catechetical instruction – something that all Reformed ministers and consistories certainly need to take to heart. He writes:

Fifty years ago the RCUS was blessed with a good number of "old fashioned" Reformed ministers. All of them had graduated from more or less liberal seminaries. Yet all of these men knew what a good catechetical program was, from their own experience as young people, and the churches they served were filled with their confirmation class members for years to come. For fifty years the undersigned has observed the same results from pastors in our Church, whether raised in the RCUS or not. When the pastors do a good job of catechizing the children according to the RCUS Constitution, good numbers of their students end up in the RCUS or similar conservative Reformed churches. When a poor job is done, for instance by spending small amounts of time, or by not requiring real learning and understanding of the Catechism, the opposite is the case. Their students are blown around by every wind of doctrine and many end up with no church membership at all. There are exceptions on both sides, of course, but I continue to be impressed by how consistently these results follow.

Parental involvement

Brother Grossman also brings the parents into focus here, and emphasizes the great need for parental involvement in the instruction of the children of the covenant. As He remarks:

The other major factor in educating covenant children is, of course, the commitment of their parents. Where parents are uncommitted, or even oppose the Christian education of their children, the best catechetical program will often fail to produce consistently good results. Parents who abdicate or give up their responsibility for the training of their children also put those children at risk. Parents who expect the Christian school, and/or the catechism program to do their work while they sit idly by are teaching their children by bad example. They too will be sadly disappointed by the results. If, for example, they talk about the Bible, but never actually take time to read it regularly with their children, their children will be happy to remain ignorant of Bible truth, most likely for all their lives.

Rev. Grossman advises seriously Reformed people to do two things in connection with the instruction of the covenant youth. First of all, be busy with the Bible at home, in the family. When the Bible is being read and discussed at home, we are engaging in the most important activity possible there. And secondly, regular attendance to worship and to Catechism instruction is important. Our Lord gave the disciples and so the whole church the task to "teach them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matt.28). And that means that ministers need to be diligent students of God's Word too, so they can be good teachers. And consistories and parents need to insist on solid catechism instruction, instruction which doesn't skimp on time or try to make it easy. Rev. Grossman mentions that in the RCUS catechism classes should be an hour-and-a-half to

two hours in length and given over around a four-year period of time. This is actually not that much different from our three-quarters-of-an-hour to an hour classes over approximately a six-year period of time. Anything less, he says, is "just robbing our children of the advantage of the covenant, which is, "much in every way, chiefly because to them were given the words of God" (Rom 3:2). I believe we could all say "amen" to these words.

Sad statistics

Speaking of instruction, I found disturbing what I read in *Nederlands Dagblad* (Dec 18, 2003) concerning the knowledge among the Dutch about the meaning of Christmas. According to a survey carried out by the NCRV (Dutch Christian Radio Association) which questioned 750 people, one third of the people in The Netherlands do not know what is celebrated at Christmas. What was remarkable was that also among those who called themselves Christians, there was a lack of knowledge about the meaning of Christmas. 13% of *Hervormde* (old Reformed state church) persons questioned named a wrong Bible story. 26% of Roman Catholics and 16% of *Gereformeerden* (Reformed) didn't know the right Bible story either. 35% of non-Christians didn't know what the reason for the Christmas celebration is. Interesting is that one out of six respondents figured that by the year 2050 no one will know anymore what is celebrated at Christmas.

Those are sad statistics, and show how secularized Dutch society has become and may become in the future. Let's not think that the same "dumbing down" is not also taking place in North America, as feared by Rev. Grossman. All the more reason to consider what he wrote above, and to make sure that the next generation of covenant children has the knowledge to continue in the only comfort in life and death, namely the biblical doctrine of salvation.



Introducing Reformation Christian Ministries

Rev. W.L. Bredenhof is missionary in
Fort Babine, British Columbia.
wbredenhof@canrc.org

If we follow the Scriptures, there must always be a meaningful relationship between church and mission. Unfortunately, this relationship is missing in much of Christendom today. Far too many mission agencies are independent of any oversight by a church and many have only a superficial relationship to a local church. Reformed believers need to be aware that this is a problem! And we need to be careful that we lend our support only to missions which have appropriate accountability in place through a local Reformed church.

Reformation Christian Ministries (RCM) is one such mission. Before anything else, it should be noted that RCM is under the direct oversight of one of our sister congregations in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Sharon OPC in Florida. Sharon OPC shares this oversight with The King's Reformed

Presbyterian Church, also in Florida. This oversight assures sound ecclesiastical accountability for RCM.

Reformation Christian Ministries is an international, educational missions ministry. Its history dates back to the 1970s. At that time, Rev. Geoff Donnan was converted to the Christian faith. Eventually, Geoff (together with his wife Nancy and their two children) became involved with church planting work in the South American country of Suriname. They had adopted the doctrines of grace and other Reformed distinctives prior to leaving for Suriname, but while there, came in contact with Rev. Karel Verlind, then a missionary from the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Lib.) in Paramaribo. He greatly assisted them in their journey towards a full endorsement of Reformed theology in all its aspects. In 1979, Caribbean

Christian Ministries was begun in Suriname, and by the late 1980s, Geoff and Nancy had repatriated to Florida to continue this work. Caribbean Christian Ministries changed its name in 1995 to Reformation Christian Ministries.

Among Reformed missions, RCM has a unique approach in most of its fields. Rather than sending out cross-cultural missionaries, RCM endeavours to work with indigenous Christians in their own countries. So, for example, RCM supports the work of Dr. Franco Maggiotto in Italy. Many of our churches were privileged to hear Dr. Maggiotto speak when he visited Canada in March of last year. RCM supports two Reformed missionary ministers working in Russia (in Moscow and Tver). Their church has fraternal relations with our sister churches in The Netherlands. In Suriname, however, RCM does support a Canadian missionary, Rev. Rudy Poettcker and his wife Sharilyn. Rev. Poettcker is involved with administering a mission school, Christian Liberty Academy. He also assists in developing leadership for the First Presbyterian Church of Paramaribo. Rev. Poettcker and Rev. Donnan were recently privileged to ordain an indigenous pastor for the church in Suriname, Rev. Asgar Hamid.

In addition to the mission ministries mentioned above, RCM is engaged in educational ministry through its Reformation International College and Theological Seminary. The College and Seminary provide affordable educational training for students throughout the world. The courses are done via tapes and readings and contact with the students is either through e-mail correspondence or regular snail-mail or



Rev. Geoff Donnan
(back) with wife
Nancy and Rev.
Vladimir Lotsmanov
(right), pastor of
the Evangelical
Reformed Church
of Moscow, Russia.



Rev. Rudy Poettcker (centre right) and Rev. Asgar Hamid (centre left) with the owner and assistant of a construction company at the ground breaking of the new building in Suriname to replace the one damaged by fire. The new building will only be able to be partially constructed (first floor) because of lack of funds.

sometimes through telephone and personal contact when practical and necessary. Through the College and Seminary, which operates legally under the statutes of State of Florida in the U.S., students can attain a wide variety of degrees from baccalaureate up to doctorate.

The author has personally been involved with RCM since 1992. I was invited to join a group of students from Credo High School in Langley for a work trip to Suriname. On this three-week trip, we helped in building an addition for the Christian Liberty Academy (CLA) in Paramaribo. While in Suriname, we stayed in the main building of the CLA. Tragically, this main building burned to the ground on March 8 of last year. Not only was the main building destroyed, but also the residence of Rev. Poettcker. The Poettckers escaped with their pyjamas and not much else. Rev. Poettcker lost his entire library and the school lost its library, classroom space, and administrative offices. Since March, the many supporters of RCM have generously allowed both Rev. Poettcker and CLA to begin rebuilding their lives and their facilities. But more has to be done! So much was destroyed in this fire and the needs are great. Would you consider contributing to RCM? The

information needed for doing this can be found at the end of this article.

My involvement with RCM has continued over the years. In 1997, I was asked to serve on the Canadian Board of RCM and I have gladly done so since that time. The Canadian and American boards administer the business affairs of RCM. Over the years, we have had several Canadian Reformed members on the board, mostly from the Fraser Valley. Currently, I serve on the board with Rev. Barry Beukema, a United Reformed pastor in Thunder Bay, Ontario (but recently from Smithers, B.C.).

Dr. Franco Maggiotto and his family in Italy (Franco and Aurora, bottom row, Alberto (left) and Tabitha (right), their two children). Picture was taken in 1998 in Alpignano, the town where Franco has established the first Protestant witness in local history. This town was the place from which the Popes used to train and launch the troops for the Inquisition to kill Protestants.



Through your support of RCM, the opportunity is there to be involved practically, financially and prayerfully with the Lord's work in several different areas of the world. RCM is committed to the Reformed faith and is stoutly zealous to see disciples won for the Lord Jesus. RCM seeks after the goal of seeing those disciples gathered together in Reformed churches. RCM encourages those churches to be a salt and light in their culture. Would you consider partnering with RCM in the pursuit of those goals?

Donations for RCM (donations are accepted for income tax purposes) can be sent to:

RCM Canada

1833 Edgehill Avenue
Kelowna, BC V1V 1R7

Or in the USA:

RCM

13950-122nd Street
Fellsmere, FL 32948-6411

To be added to the RCM newsletter list or for additional information and inquiries, write to the above addresses or e-mail: reformation@direcway.com

Website for RCM:
www.reformation.ws



Press Release of Classis Alberta held in Edmonton (Providence) on March 9, 2004

On behalf of the convening church, Rev. R. Aasman called the meeting to order. He welcomed the brothers and read with them Jeremiah 32:36-44. In his opening prayer he remembered before the Lord especially the vacant congregations. He thanked the Lord that General Synod Chatham could complete its task, and that Dr. A. J. de Visser could accept his appointment as Professor of Diaconology and Ecclesiology at our Theological College. Rev. Aasman also brought before the Lord the needs of Dr. J. de Jong and his family as well as Rev. J. van Popta and his family.

Under memorabilia, Rev. Aasman also mentioned that the Lord had blessed Rev. and Mrs. Lodder with the birth of a baby boy. Further, it was noted that the Church at Neerlandia was disappointed recently when Rev. W. Wielenga declined the call extended to him, so that the Churches at Coaldale, Neerlandia and St. Albert all remain vacant.

In closed session church visitation reports to the Churches at Barrhead and

Coaldale were received. These reports indicate that in both these congregations everything is being done in accordance with the Church Order. Classis received these reports with gratitude, and offered special encouragement to the office bearers of the Church at Coaldale. The treasurer's report was discussed, as well as a letter from the Providence consistory reporting on the inspection of the treasurer's books. Classis then received a report on the state of the archives. Rev. E. J. Tiggelaar reported on his work as liaison with the provincial government.

Classis decided to continue the present arrangement where all the vacant churches are provided with a minister every four weeks. The Church at Calgary requested and was given advice on the position of their minister in consistory with respect to Article 38 of the Church Order. Question Period (Article 44 of the Church Order) was not made use of. Advice on a matter of discipline was given to one of the churches. Classis dealt with a letter from Rev. J. van Popta concerning his release from the Church at Coaldale. The



Church at Neerlandia was appointed to convene the next Classis on June 8, with October 19 being the alternative date. It was proposed that Rev. W. B. Slomp should be chairman, Rev. Th. Lodder vice-chairman, and Rev. R. Eikelboom clerk. The Church at St. Albert was appointed to audit the books of the treasurer. All other deputies and committees were re-appointed. Several brothers made use of the Personal Question Period. Brotherly Censure was not made use of. The Acts and Short Report were read and adopted. Psalm 147:4 & 6 was sung before Rev. Lodder led in closing prayer.

*For Classis,
Rev. R. Eikelboom (vice-chairman)*



"Majesty"

TICKETS ARE NOW AVAILABLE!



To the eternal praises of our LORD, you are hereby cordially invited to the Canadian Reformed Choirs of the West mass concert entitled "MAJESTY." At this concert you will hear en-mass the sound of six combined choirs with over 200 voices performing over 20 selections of beautiful awe-inspiring Christian songs.

This concert is being held in the world class 'Francis Winspear Centre for Music' in Edmonton, Alberta.

The date for this concert will be the Lord willing on Saturday, May 22, 2004, at 8:00 PM.

Tickets are being sold on a first come first serve basis. The ticket price is \$ 18.00 each. Since this event will be recorded live for the production of a CD, the age limit is a mature six years old and up. Please understand that we cannot reserve or issue tickets without first receiving payment. Please make your cheque payable to "Canadian Reformed Choirs of the West" and send it, together with your return address, to the attention of Dorothy Veldkamp at Box 40, Site 212, RR2, Edmonton, Alberta T8N 1M9.

If you require further information please contact **Dorothy Veldkamp** at area code **780-984-0544** or visit our web page at www.massconcert.canadianreformed.ca, which includes periodic updates, an e-mail address, and a web link to the Francis Winspear facility.

We hope you will be able to attend what promises to be a joyous memorable event. Until then, please keep us in your prayers.

Our Little Magazine



Dear Busy Beavers

I hope you are all doing well. It's nice to receive your letters by mail or e-mail.

Isn't it wonderful to have friends. I hope you all have a friend you can play with and have fun times with. Maybe it is someone you know from school, from church, or someone from your neighbourhood. What kind of things do you do with your friends?

Having friends is a great blessing which God has given us. We can show God's love for us by also showing this love to our friends, by sharing with them and caring for them. Do you also try to be friends with someone who doesn't seem to have any other friends. This may not always be easy but it is something which we should try to do.

Until next time,

Love, Aunt Betty

From the Mailbox

Thank you for your letter **Kelsey Kuit**. Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club. Is the snow gone already in Barrhead so that you can ride your bicycle? I like your cat's name. Does it run around a lot? I am glad that you enjoy doing the puzzles.

I enjoyed reading your long letter **Cheryl Driegen**. I get the impression that you love snow and enjoy many winter activities. Your family must have a lot of fun in your big back yard. Since you enjoy making word searches, it would be nice if you could send me one to put in the *Clarion*.

PEN PAL WANTED

Sharon Driegen would like a pen pal.

She is 12 years old. She enjoys playing soccer, swimming, snow boarding, doing crafts, and reading.

Her address is:

2060 Windsor Street, Abbotsford, BC V2T 6L9

Puzzles

Clue sentences

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. The first man | 13. The Pharisee who came to see Jesus by night |
| 2. She was a judge and a prophet | 14. The mother of Samuel |
| 3. He obtained his brother's birthright for a bowl of pottage | 15. He led the people out of Egypt |
| 4. He put out a fleece to determine the will of God | 16. The earthly father of Jesus |
| 5. He denied knowing Christ three times | 17. He was the governor of Syria when the decree went out that all the world would be taxed |
| 6. Paul was brought before him at Caesarea | 18. She became a mother when she was old |
| 7. Hosea's wife | 19. Pilate released him in the place of Jesus |
| 8. He was willing to sacrifice his son to God. | 20. The first Christian martyr |
| 9. The slayer of Goliath | 21. A Christian persecutor who later became a Christian leader |
| 10. The prophet who appeared with Christ on the mount of transfiguration | 22. The third son of Jacob |
| 11. Isaac's wife | 23. The disciple Jesus saw casting a net with his brother |
| 12. He asked for wisdom over wealth | 24. He was married to the Jewess Drusilla |
| | 25. The mother of Jesus |
| | 26. He married Ruth |

The Bible A to Z

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