

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Volume 53, No. 14 • July 2, 2004

*Of Marriage
and
Metaphors:
Christ's Bride*

*News from the
Theological
College*

*Reflections on
a Trend in
Missions*



*God's
creation
allows us
so many
beautiful
things.*



R. Aasman

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Summer Vacation

Summertime and summer vacations are wonderful opportunities for travel and experiencing the beautiful things of this world.

You might just catch this issue of *Clarion* before you head off for your summer vacation. No doubt you have made some plans and preparations for your summer vacation. Trailers have been pulled from storage, canvas and tires are checked and the bearings repacked. A trip to the local automobile club has presented us with an ample supply of maps and information. Reservations at a popular campground are all in order. For others, plans might be more involved and even exotic: tickets have been purchased and plans made to head for Europe, Asia, Australia, New Zealand and other wonderful places. The possibilities are endless. And it is all so exciting.

If life can be so good now, imagine what it will be like when our Lord Jesus Christ returns and inaugurates the new heavens and earth – a Paradise restored!

At times like these, I am reminded of a text from Ecclesiastes 12: "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, 'I find no pleasure in them.'" There will come a time in most people's lives where one is no longer able to travel and engage in such pursuits as canoeing, mountain climbing, long hikes and white water rafting. I don't mean to suggest elderly people can no longer enjoy varied and vigorous activities. They can and they do. But there does come a time that it slows down and there are significant changes in life. How important and wonderful it is to enjoy life and to enjoy the beautiful things of this world from a young age.

It is amazing how beautiful our Father's world is. It is amazing also when we consider the fall into sin. We just

quoted from Ecclesiastes. You also know the familiar refrain throughout this book which describes life under the sun as utter meaninglessness or the vanity of vanities. The apostle Paul also speaks about the world in a similar fashion in Romans 8: "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time." How amazing it is that our world which has come under the power of sin and death can still be a beautiful and an amazing place to live in. Of course, we know that God sent his own Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to redeem his people and to redeem life in the midst of a broken world. Still we often speak of life as no more than a constant death or a vale of tears. We still live with sin, trials and tribulations and with the last enemy which is death. And yet, God's creation allows us so many beautiful things and so many possibilities for travel, discovery and recreation. If life can be so good now, imagine what it will be like when our Lord Jesus Christ returns and inaugurates the new heavens and earth – a Paradise restored!

Keeping all this in mind, at the beginning of most summers, I include in congregational prayer not only that God will keep us in his care during the summer travels and activities, but also that we may all have a good time and be refreshed by the end of summer. Such prayer, admittedly, presumes that most people, if not all, will go on some kind of a vacation. But once, a single mother with several children came to me after the worship service pointing out that she and her children would not be going on vacation. They had no equipment, no money and no time. It was a sobering thought. As far back as I can remember I always had summer vacation. They could be very modest vacations. A vacation could be just a couple of days with dad and the brothers in a tent by the creek only a few kilometres from home. But it was vacation and it was grand. However, not everyone has this possibility.

It is something for us all to consider. I know that many do. Often one hears of an example where a church member has a cottage or a trailer set up at the lake, and invites a single mom

Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

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

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5
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Email: clarion@premierprinting.ca

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5
Email: premier@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.

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Agreement No. 40063293; PAP Registration No. 9907; ISSN 0383-0438

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and her children to use it for a few days or a week so that they too can have a vacation. We can all think of doing something like this. Lending a tent and some camping gear can be a huge blessing to someone who can afford nothing. Or inviting a child or young person who does not have the opportunity for vacationing to come and join your son or daughter on your family vacation is also something that we can consider. We can be a “big brother” or a “big sister” to children who because of circumstances beyond their control do not have the opportunities which for many of us is a simple fact of life. This is a beautiful and rich way in which to practise the communion of saints.

Summer time and summer vacations are wonderful opportunities for travel and experiencing the beautiful things of this world. They allow us to see the wonder of our Creator and the glory of his handiwork. They lead us to glorify our God. They so refresh and invigorate us that we are filled with delight and passion to give praise to God and to serve him with our whole being.

Have a nice summer. May the Lord keep you safe and enjoy yourself in his world.



Inside . . .

One of the great blessings that our churches enjoy is the Theological College in Hamilton. We have an update of activities at the College as well as a report of Rev. J. Geertsema on his trip to our sister churches in Australia. As he makes clear in his report, his visit demonstrates the strong bond between the Australian and Canadian churches with respect to theological education. May the Lord continue to strengthen this bond!

Rev. W.L. Bredenhof continues his two-part series on the exploding popularity in the last decades of short-term missions. He gives some practical advice on this. This will have realistic bearing for young people who would love to be involved in such work.

Rev. T. G. Van Raalte gives a very nice review on the *NIV Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible*. For those entertaining a replacement of their well-used and tattered Bible, this review might prove helpful.

We have some of our regular columns in this issue as well as an editorial dealing with summer vacation. Since this issue should be in your hands by the beginning of July and if you are planning a vacation, let me take this opportunity to wish you a blessed summer.

RA

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MATTHEW 13:52

Of Marriage and Metaphors: Christ's Bride (Part 1)

I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to Him.

2 Corinthians 11:2

The apostle Paul was jealous for the Church at Corinth. And that was a good thing. Jealousy, though, is not always a good attribute to have. There is a jealousy that is rooted in greed. For instance, if you are not content with the house that God has given you, and you covet the bigger, fancier homes of others, such jealousy is sinful.

However, Paul's jealousy for the Church at Corinth is of a different kind. It is a godly jealousy. That is to say, it is God-centred rather than greed-centered. In fact, God himself is a jealous God (Deut 4:24). The LORD passionately protects his own people and fervently desires their exclusive devotion to Him. So, God's jealousy is the jealousy of true love. Even as the beloved says to her lover in the Song of Songs, the jealousy of love is "unyielding as the grave" and it "burns like a blazing fire" (8:6).

This godly jealousy not only finds its proper place in the marriage relationship, but it is also felt in the family setting. A loving father is rightly jealous for his children. If they are endangered in any way, a father's heart will be aroused and he will certainly take action. His zeal for his own flesh and blood would not allow him to do anything less.

This, then, is the kind of paternal jealousy that the apostle has for the Church at Corinth. Previously he had identified himself as the spiritual father of this congregation (1 Cor 4:15). Paul nurtured this gathering of believers from its birth. Through all the growing pains of their maturation in doctrine and lifestyle, he brought them up in the training and instruction of the Lord with all the loving zeal that any father might muster. (Are office bearers in the church today still motivated with such a zeal?). And now, particularly at this moment in the life of the Corinthian congregation, "father" Paul cannot stand idly by, for there are evil men, the so-called "super-apostles" (2 Cor 11:5), who are seeking to defile his "daughter" with a false gospel. His heart is roused and he steps forward to protect his daughter and keep her pure for the Man to whom she is betrothed, Jesus Christ.

Betrothal is similar to, yet at the same time stronger than, our engagements. Like our engagements, betrothal is a pledge in which one man and one woman commit themselves to be married sometime in the near future. However, our

engagements are not legal arrangements. In the days of the apostle Paul, betrothal was a legally binding agreement. In fact, when a man and woman were betrothed they were even referred to as husband and wife (cf. Matt 1:19). The thing that distinguished betrothal from marriage, though, was that the bride did not move in with her husband. She kept on living in her father's house, and she was to remain a pure virgin until the marriage was consummated on their wedding day. Typically, a betrothal would last for about a year.

The apostle Paul uses betrothal as a metaphor in order to impress upon the Corinthian congregation the urgency of their situation. This church, as a bride, had already been promised to Christ, the bridegroom. Betrothal involves exclusive devotion: one man with one woman. Therefore, these other suitors, the false teachers, have no business whatsoever meddling in the relationship! Corinth's loyalty to Christ must remain undiminished and unadulterated. Moreover, as her spiritual father, the apostle Paul is going to do everything in his power to defend his daughter – for her own sake but also for the honour of the Bridegroom, the Son of God.

The betrothal to Christ which the Corinthian congregation enjoyed is shared with the entire, holy church wherever the Lord, through his Word and Spirit, gathers, defends and preserves for Himself a people chosen unto eternal life. In short, the catholic church is the cherished bride of Christ. That means, then, that we, too, are betrothed to one husband, even Christ. As local congregations we must consciously conduct ourselves in a manner that is befitting to betrothal. No other suitors – no matter how alluring they might be – may be courted. No false teachers. No unscriptural teachings. No immoral men. No impure actions or even innuendos. For already when you are betrothed you are duty-bound to cleave to your Husband, and to Him alone! So let us pursue congregational purity, both in doctrine and conduct, out of love for our Beloved.

This marriage metaphor of 2 Corinthians 11 also has implications for the relationship between the United Reformed and Canadian Reformed Churches, however, I would like to reflect further upon that in the next issue of *Clarion*. Until then.



C. Van Dam

News from the Theological College

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The students are writing exams and before this academic year is completely past, it is good to give an update as to newsworthy items at the Theological College.

A spring conference with Farel

On April 6, 2004, the Theological College hosted an in-house academic conference with our brothers from Farel Faculté de Théologie Réformée in Quebec. This conference resulted from a growing contact with l'Église Réformée du Québec and especially Farel. There were four lectures followed by discussion. Prof. A. Neele addressed the issue of "Exegesis, doctrine, and practice: a historical-theological approach." Using the seventeenth century theologian Johannes B. Marck, Prof. Neele showed that the model of continuity (rather than of discontinuity) does the most justice to the relationship of seventeenth century theology and that of the Reformation. Scripture remains the source of doctrine and practical theology and not scholastic logic. Prof. C. Van Dam addressed the issue of whether there was one office of elder, or two, namely, the teaching elder and the ruling elder. He concluded that

Scripture teaches two offices of elder and that we should see the office of teaching elder or minister as functioning in the fulfilled ministry of reconciliation as heirs of the Old Testament office of priest. Prof. M. Veldman dealt with the "The Word of God and its anthropological implications in the thought of Karl Barth and Herman Kohlbrugge." He pointed out some similarities but stressed the major differences between the two, especially in the manner in which the Bible as the Word of God is central. Finally, Prof. N. H. Gootjes dealt with the issue "Miracles, are they still happening today?" After going through the biblical evidence, he noted that miracles in Scripture served as special signs and had meaning with respect to God's redemptive work. He concluded that such special gifts died with the apostles. However, he also stressed that although miracle workers have disappeared, God is sovereign and He can do as He pleases.

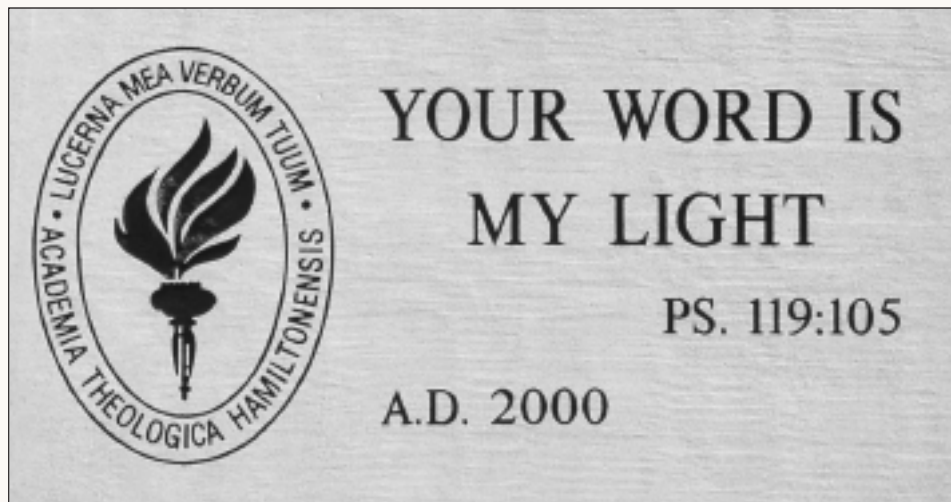
It was good to be together for the better part of the day and enjoy not only academic discourse but also Christian fellowship. May the Lord continue to bless, also the work of Reformed theology done in Quebec at Farel.

Zuidhof archives

Mr. Albert Zuidhof was a special friend of the Theological College who over the years has donated many scholarly books to our library, especially in the area of archaeology and Old Testament history. As a specialist in the science of measurements, he was a scholar in his own right. He worked as an Electronics Technical Officer at the National Research Council of Canada where he participated in High Accuracy Measurement Research. He used his specialized abilities for a careful study of all the available evidence on the molten sea that King Solomon had erected in front of the temple (cf. I Kings 7:23-26). The purpose of this part-time project, which consumed many hours of his life, was to determine precisely the measurements and final form of this structure. In the process, he showed that the biblical record was accurate and implied a much greater understanding of mathematical principles than has generally been accorded the ancients. Zuidhof's study resulted in the publication of eight articles in *Clarion* (in vols 26 – 27, 1977-1978) on the molten sea. He was also able to set forth his work to the academic community by

publishing his findings in the authoritative *Biblical Archaeologist* (Summer 1982), a journal now known as *Near Eastern Archaeology*. This article has become a standard in the field and when the topic of the molten sea is discussed, it is usually referred to.

Since Zuidhof's interest lay in an Old Testament subject and he would ask me questions relating to his research, we got to know each other quite well from the mid - 1970s on. After his death last year, Mrs. Zuidhof asked me to go through his extensive files and dispose of them in the best possible manner. In his files were a number of letters to Old Testament specialists in measurements that are of considerable interest. Most of these are related in one way or another to his



article for the *Biblical Archaeologist*. In addition, there is significant correspondence in which he interacts with scholars on the relationship of the Bible and science and defends the obvious meaning of the biblical account of creation and the Noachan flood. The Librarian, Miss M. Van der Velde, has

therefore agreed to place Zuidhof's files in a special archive collection at the Theological College. It is a fitting tribute to a humble man who desired above all else to be true to the Word and used his gifts to explore all its ramifications, also when Scripture gave information on his specialty, measurements.

Professor
M. Veldman



Professor
A. Neele



Your Word is my light

On the cornerstone of the new library addition is found the inscription: "Your Word is my light," with a reference to Psalm 119:105 ("Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path"). This motto has from the beginning served the College as a guiding maxim of the central importance of the Word of God in the training for the ministry. Recently, student Ian Wildeboer dedicated a chapel to this passage and in the process also shared some interesting historical notes which he had uncovered by speaking to our first principal, emeritus professor Dr. J. Faber. Since this information is not widely known, let me here share some of student Wildeboer's findings.

While Dr. Faber was a minister in The Netherlands, he edited an interdisciplinary journal called *Lucerna*. This word, *lucerna*, is the Latin term for "lamp" which appears in the ancient Latin translation of Psalm 119:105. Since our first principal wished to maintain

some continuity with The Netherlands, he adopted for the College the words from Psalm 119:105 on which the title of the magazine *Lucerna* was based. In the first issue of *Lucerna* (December 1958) we find an explanation of the appropriateness of the term "lamp," *Lucerna*, for this magazine. The word lamp is used in Scripture of the prophetic Word (Ps 119:105, Prov 6:23, 2 Pet 1:19), the work of our highest Prophet (Mark 4:21, Luke 8:16, 11:33), the reception of Christ's prophetic Word (Matt 6:22, Luke 11:34, 36), the public passing on of the Word (Matt 5:15), and watchful readiness (Luke 12:35). Finally, the term lamp metaphorically includes the idea of diligently searching (Luke 15:8). For all these reasons, and especially because the Word is a lamp before our feet, the title *Lucerna* was chosen. One can see how readily all of this also relates to the task of the Theological College!

Once the motto "Your Word is my lamp" was chosen, the late Professor L. Selles' father-in-law, br. Ackerman from Chatham designed the emblem or crest of the College, a picture of which accompanies this article. The words in Latin around the crest translate: "Your Word is my lamp; Theological College at Hamilton."



It is a tremendous privilege for our work at the Theological College to be always guided by the light of the Word of God. In a world of darkness and death, it is the only Word that gives light and life!



Reflections on a Trend in Missions (2)

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Some Christian relief organizations have been influenced by aberrant theologies of liberation and Marxism.

Short-term missions (STMs) have been exploding in popularity in the last decades. In the last article under this title, we explored the history of this movement and took a brief look at some of the positive and negative aspects of it from a broader missions perspective. In this article, I propose to take a critical look at the present appearance of the trend of STMs in the Canadian Reformed churches. In so doing, I want to be fair, realizing that the Lord uses many different means to bring people to true faith in the Lord Jesus. However, that realization is tempered by the divine obligation to discover and employ legitimate means to carry out the mission task of the church.

Once again, I want to emphasize that I am not against STMs. We saw last time that they do have value. However, my contention is that there is a need for greater discernment to be used by Reformed believers in their involvement with STMs.

Be discerning!

Let us begin in a positive way by asking what Reformed believers should look for if they are interested in a STM. The most important place to begin is with the nature of the “mission” that you’re interested in. Laying aside the question of a precise definition of mission, we will work with the sorts of activities usually mentioned as

comprising STM: construction, medical or agricultural assistance, verbal gospel outreach, education, and hospitality. Other items could be added to this list.

If an organization is geared towards only one of those activities, your task in discernment becomes easier. However, that is rarely the case outside of Reformed circles. In the evangelical STM movement, most agencies are involved with many different activities, some of which legitimately belong solely to the church. Here I’m thinking specifically of verbal gospel outreach. A responsible interpretation of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 and other passages will conclude that this mission task was given to the church, not to para-church agencies or so-called interdenominational organizations. If a given organization does gospel outreach and is not under the supervision of a local Biblical church, there is a problem and we should steer clear.

Sometimes you will find organizations that are devoted to many different tasks besides verbal gospel outreach. This is especially true for various Christian relief organizations. However, discernment is still needed when looking at STMs with these organizations, even if they do no verbal proclamation of the gospel. Some Christian relief organizations have been influenced by aberrant theologies of liberation and Marxism. Some relief

organizations will only tolerate Reformed believers if they check their baggage at the door. Your baggage is valuable and you do not want to lose it, not even for a minute!

Not so long ago I was a younger man and I realize that the possibility of travel to an exotic locale is very exciting. It can be so exciting that one quickly loses any sense of discernment in regards to the organization offering the possibility. A “Theological Statement” is offered which appears to be a version of the Apostles’ Creed. The organization appears to be Christian. But it is not always what the organization officially says that should be a concern – what about what is not said?

As one example, as Reformed believers we hold dearly to the importance of infant baptism. Reformed missionaries sometimes address people who were baptized as infants. That fact can determine the approach taken. We can appeal to them on the basis of their baptism: what have you done with God’s promises? Most evangelical STM agencies would not agree with this practice. They would ask you to check your baggage, at least implicitly. You can speak about Christ, but you cannot speak about baptism. You may think that an STM will enrich your life, but if you end up losing your Reformed faith, you will only have impoverished yourself.



Church News

Called by the Free Reformed Church of Launceston, Australia:

Rev. T.G. Van Raalte
of Winnipeg (Redeemer),
Manitoba.

Accepted the call to Surrey,
British Columbia:

Rev. J.P. VanVliet
of Lincoln, Ontario.

Accepted the call to London,
Ontario and declined the call the
to Carman-East, Manitoba and
Cloverdale, British Columbia:

Rev. R.E. Pot
of Orangeville, Ontario.

If you are interested in doing STMs, the most important thing is to find an organization or church that is Reformed. In other words, you need to find an organization or church that is based on what you profess in the Reformed confessions. Closely related to that, if you are interested in an STM oriented to verbal gospel outreach, it is critically important that you find an opportunity with a mission directly under the supervision of a local Reformed church.

Be creative!

Such opportunities do exist, and where they do not presently, some creative work can make them happen. There are many opportunities for the young people in our churches (and the young at heart) to get involved with STMs under a Reformed banner. A group of young people had planned to go on such a trip to Brazil to help the fledgling federation of Reformed churches there. Because of visa problems, this trip unfortunately had to be cancelled. Two young women from Alberta made a trip to Indonesia to help amongst the Reformed churches in Timor. Another two young women from British Columbia spent a number of months in Papua New Guinea, helping with the work of Toronto's missionary, Rev. Stephen 't Hart. We have not yet had the opportunity to host an STM in Fort Babine, though we have had some inquiries. We would certainly be very open to it! There are many

opportunities for short-termers here at the northern tip of Babine Lake.

There should not be a need or desire for mission-minded Canadian Reformed people to get involved with STM organizations whose Reformed commitment is questionable or non-existent. If there are obstacles to getting these warmly enthusiastic people involved with our own missions and organizations in Canada and overseas, we should be able to find creative ways to overcome them. One of those ways might be to more fully explore the

This is a great opportunity for Reformed young people who are looking to serve the Lord for one year or longer in a cross-cultural context.

options that exist with our URC, RCUS, and OPC sister churches. For example, Reformation Christian Ministries, under the supervision of one of our OPC sister churches, is often looking for English-speaking teachers for their mission school in Suriname. This is a great opportunity for Reformed young people who are looking to serve the Lord for one year or longer in a cross-cultural context.²

We should be aware of a trend in our churches that short-term mission or relief trips are increasingly seen as a just cause regardless of the organization under which they are carried out. It seems that Reformed matters much at home, but it does not matter when you travel to an exotic country or locale. If I am right and this is a trend, then there is something wrong with this picture. But it is not too late for the trend to be reversed.

In conclusion, STMs *do have value*. As a result of our material prosperity, we have opportunities to get more hands-on involvement in and exposure to the church's mission here and abroad. So long as it is God-centered, the desire for this is good! But we do have to take care that the desire is fulfilled via proper means. *STMs do have value, so long as they follow the Scriptures.*

¹ Cf. "Don't Check Your Baggage!" in *Reformed Polemics* 8.7, March 30, 2002, pp.8-11.

² Contact the author for more information: wbredenhof@canrc.org

J. Wiskerke van Dooren

Lord's Day 14.



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

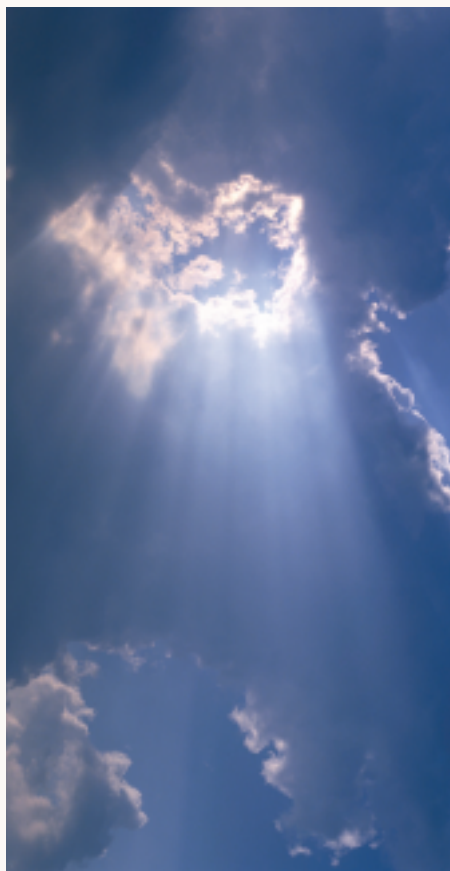
In Lord's Day 6 you first read about a mediator. A mediator is someone who comes between two or more people. He does that to straighten out the broken relationship between them. Have a quick look at that Lord's Day.

Now we will speak about the Mediator with a capital M. He is the Lord Jesus. This Mediator comes between us on the one side and God on the other side. As a result of our sin, the relationship between God and us is broken. We were unable to make it work again. But the Mediator wanted to come between God and us. He was willing to restore the broken relationship. That could only happen by taking our punishment.

Because the Father, Son and Holy Spirit love us, they made a plan. The Son said: When the time is right, I will go down to the earth. I will become a man, just as they are. Then I can take their punishment. To do that, he also needed to remain the Son of God. And he would be supported by the Holy Spirit. He would be born in Bethlehem, and belong to the descendants of David. Actually, he was born in the family of Joseph and Mary, who belonged to David's descendants.

This would be different from all other children. The child Jesus would be a person just like us, and at the same time

God. Jesus would grow as a baby in the body of Mary. But Joseph would not be the real father for that baby. The Holy Spirit would make this child grow in Mary. An angel had told Joseph beforehand that this would happen.



Joseph was very impressed by this message. And he thought: If the Son of God is going to be born from Mary, then I should not be married to her. Then I should leave. But God sent an angel, who said: Joseph, you may not leave. You must be his father on earth. And as a father you must give him a name. God himself had chosen the name: Jesus. Remember what Jesus means? If you don't, look back in Lord's Day 11.

Therefore we can say that the Lord Jesus had two fathers. One in heaven, because he was God. And one on earth, because he was man.

Do you remember that story when Jesus was twelve years old? He was allowed to go to Jerusalem with his parents. Joseph and Mary had to go look for him, for they could not find him anywhere. Finally they found him in the temple. There they saw Jesus talking with wise teachers of God's Word. When they heard what Jesus knew, these teachers were astonished.

But Mary was angry and said: Why did you scare us? The answer Jesus gave shows that he knew he had two fathers. He said to his father and mother: Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house? He had two fathers, father Joseph on earth and God the Father in heaven. For our Mediator Jesus is both God and man.



K. Sikkema

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Why Our Own Schools?

Calvin actually held that it is the covenant proper which makes education possible (as it gives hope) and necessary (as it demands growth)

Since Synod Neerlandia, 2001, several Canadian Reformed schools have opened their doors for members, students, and staff from the United Reformed Churches. There are indeed many points of agreement between these two church federations; unity of faith, rather than unity of perfection or practice is at the basis of the process. However, some have argued that opening the schools was putting the scholastic cart before the ecclesiastical unity horse. Indeed, there are remaining bones of contention that could affect this unity – and what will be the effect on our schools and their essential characteristics? In this article I deal with the original justification for our own schools, and in a subsequent one I address some philosophical challenges our schools must face.

In his published doctoral thesis, Dr. Harro VanBrummelen of Trinity Western University made some scant comments about Canadian Reformed schools (1986, pp. 260, 276). He asserted that Canadian Reformed people wanted to protect *the purity of their group* when they started Credo Christian High School in 1978. In fact, it was a Christian high school performance of the musical *Jesus Christ Superstar* which convinced people of the need to establish their own school, as the Reformed and covenantal purpose and character of the interdenominational school was insufficiently safeguarded. To safeguard the school's character properly, it would be necessary to place

restrictions on membership, attendance, governance, and purpose. In particular, the purpose would not be missionary or culture-transforming in nature, but, as a covenant community, to help parents with their task in bringing up covenant children. If the purity of the group was a factor at all, it was based on a deeper conviction.

To safeguard the school's character properly, it would be necessary to place restrictions on membership, attendance, governance, and purpose.

The restrictions were in line with the establishment of schools by Reformed brothers and sisters in The Netherlands. They were also in keeping with the understanding that the promises God makes in the covenant are firm and sure. Furthermore, it followed from their conviction that the church must be taken seriously as a visible, local entity, rather than a vague universal body, and that this local church was to be seen as the covenant community. This was significant, as they had learned in the previous decades that the Dutch *School with the Bible* had inherent weaknesses on exactly those points.

Before WWII

Before 1945, members of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands were encouraged to support the *School with the Bible*. They were the Reformed schools of the day, built, in many cases, with (half) pennies and nickels of the Seceders of 1834. At first, they might have been more concerned with true doctrine than with quality and the Three Rs, as Dr. Van Brummelen argues, but the link with God's covenant and baptismal vows was solid. After 1917, the Dutch government provided full funding and set standards for quality. *Schools with the Bible* were good schools.

These schools were Reformed, though not strictly denominational. In fact, A. Janse of Biggekerke, a well-known principal, called denominational schools a symptom of church-ism in 1936. He recognized "God's covenant faithfulness to those who do not follow Jesus with us," but Janse resisted using the school to promote church unity ("church unity is not kid's work"). He did argue that the Christian school must talk about God's Word and the church:

in order that the children learn to appreciate this (the communion with Christ Himself in the worship service and with each other) as a great gift of God, as a covenant holiness, as one of the greatest benefits of the communion of saints in the church (pp. 202-203).

Similarly, Prof. B. Holwerda of the Theological College in Kampen called people to give their full support of work, sacrifice, and prayer to the *School with the Bible* in 1941. He reminded them, first, that these schools integrate the Bible with all subjects, enabling students to recognize God as Creator and Ruler of the cosmos; and, second, that children must be trained to serve Him in all of life. To Prof. Holwerda, Christian education was a matter of the covenant, which set God's people and their children apart from the rest of the world. Without intending to promote a missionary or transformative purpose for the school, he held that the triune God calls for this separation and will provide the means for it (pp. 92-96, 99, 102):

For God, who will, in answer to the prayer of his church, one time destroy the world, will, in answer to the prayer for the hallowing of his Name, also make the world new in and through the school.

In this speech, Prof. Holwerda also hinted at the controversy that led to the Liberation of 1944: he considered that some people doubted whether children of believers belonged to the covenant of God. This controversy dealt with covenant and election. As there is no clarity in Scripture on who exactly is elect other than "the believers," however, some would say that it was also unclear who is in the covenant. They would rather speak of "*leading the little ones to Jesus*," and spoke with Dr. A. Kuyper about nurturing a presumed seed of regeneration, overlooking that God made his covenant with believers *and* their seed, and that they *do* belong to Him.

Dr. Kuyper

Among the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands, the seeds of uncertainty had been sown by Dr. Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920). Trying to meld covenant and election, he devised

the "theory of presumed regeneration," in which the obscurity of one's election overshadowed the certainty of God's covenant. God has not revealed who is elect, but Reformed churches had always taught the certainty of God's covenant promises as sealed in baptism (Belgic Confession, Article 34, Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Days 26-27, Canons of Dort, I:17, Form for the Baptism of Infants). Dr. Kuyper subjected the certainty of God's promises to an as-yet-unknown-but-presumed seed or bud of regeneration. He held that God planted this bud in the child before,

Janse resisted using the school to promote church unity ("church unity is not kid's work").

during, or after baptism, or not at all. If it was not there, or would not be planted there, baptism wasn't real; if baptism wasn't real, God's promises would not be valid, because He had never promised anything. The doctrine rendered parents uncertain about the status of their children before God. However, baptism never seals God's work, but God's promises (Stam, 1999, pp. 166 ff.).

There is no doubt about Dr. Kuyper's significant labours for Christian education. In a popular booklet, which, even in the 1940s, young people often received at their public profession of faith, he also connected the third question at Baptism to Reformed education (p. 73):

From generation to generation the knowledge of God must be transplanted through the work of nurture and education, and it is this vow at Holy Baptism by which you bind yourself to cooperate in that

great work. As this nurture and education takes place to a significant extent at school and in catechism class, you have to consider well where to send your child to school, and where you send it for catechism, because it would be a burden of guilt before God if you were to choose carelessly in this. But even if you did choose with care, it only remains a matter of assistance, and nothing relieves you from the vow to also personally, yourself, to help instruct this God-given little child in the way of life.

In a sense, he went back to John Calvin by laying the basis for Reformed education in the vows made at baptism and in God's command. Calvin actually held that it is the *covenant proper* which makes education possible (as it gives hope) and necessary (as it demands growth) (see also Brouwer, 1965). Langley (2001) recapped Dr. Kuyper's work for Christian schools in more detail.

However, in the same booklet, Dr. Kuyper also advised parents to pray for the mercy of certainty in view of God's pending mercy of regeneration (p. 52):

If it doesn't please Him, the Father of all spirits, to give your little child the mercy of regeneration beforehand, and to thus plant the bud of faith-capability, then baptism will be of no value to your child, even if it were baptized ten times; yes, then that baptism would rather make the judgment heavier for your child.

With the first question before baptism, Dr. Kuyper advised parents to consider that (p. 72):

You don't really know this (that they are sanctified in Christ) for sure; because the Lord does not give a special revelation for that; but you have to consider your child as such, and therefore and on that basis you request Christian baptism for that

member of the Christian congregation.

With the second question, Dr. Kuyper observed that people would of course believe the doctrine of the Old and New Testament, or otherwise they would not have their child baptized, and continued along the lines of presumed and hidden mercy:

What would you nurture in a child, and how could you admonish your child to repent, if you did not presume that some hidden mercy of God preceded your nurturing? . . . Your nurturing only serves to water the hidden seed of mercy in the field of your little child, and to hoe the weeds, in order that the seed of mercy will not be smothered.

1892-1944

At the Union of 1892, one year after the publication of Dr. Kuyper's popular booklet, most churches of the Secession of 1834 united with the churches of the Doleantie. Together, they continued as the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands. In this church union, Kuyper's theories were an issue that was temporarily resolved with a compromise formula in 1905. It stated (see Keizer, 1990, p. 187):

According to the confession of our churches, the seed of the covenant is to be considered regenerated and sanctified in Christ according to God's promises, until the opposite becomes clear in their lives and in the ideas they hold when they grow up. However, it is less accurate to say that baptism is administered to the children of believers on the ground of their presumed regeneration, because the ground for baptism is God's promise and ordinance.

Aside from the ambiguous "considered regenerated" terminology in the first sentence of the formula, the "less accurate" section in the second sentence

set out the controversy, and was meant to gently correct Dr. Kuyper. In that context, the *School with the Bible* remained the good school Mr. Janse and Prof. Holwerda recommended.

Dr. Kuyper subjected the certainty of God's promises to an as-yet-unknown-but-presumed seed or bud of regeneration.

In the 1930s, however, some church leaders began to critically review Dr. Kuyper's popular theories from a biblical point of view. Others, however, defended Dr. Kuyper's bulwark and reputation; and, eventually, his doctrines were declared binding. The 1944 Synod also suspended and deposed all professors of theology and office-bearers who seemed to disagree. Subsequently, the critics of Dr. Kuyper liberated themselves from the yoke of a Synod that 1) bound them to doctrines that went beyond Scripture, and 2) assumed powers that, according to Scripture and the Church Order of Dort, belong in the local church. They continued as the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Liberated). When liberated Reformed people immigrated to North America, and the Christian Reformed Church opted to side with the kuyperian and hierarchical synod, they were obliged to establish the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Impact on education

The Liberation also ended the hope for fruitful cooperation in various organizations, including, and especially, schools. There was a fundamental and explicit difference of opinion about the condition of the children in the classroom. Parents could not, in good

conscience, let teachers instil doubt in their children about God's covenant promises. They hold true, even if it needs to be stressed that the covenant comes with an obligation, and implies condemnation for unbelieving covenant breakers. Our understanding of who the child is before God makes a difference for our pedagogy. For instance, if we discipline a child, shall we suggest that God may have never promised it anything, or shall we appeal to God's promises and call for repentance?

The liberated people took this seriously. In the mid-1960s, my dad's milking business was struggling. Providentially, several of his customers decided to join their herds and resources, and asked Dad to become the manager, implying that we would live on the new farm. It was an appealing economic prospect, until we noted that we would have to ride our bikes more than ten kilometres to go to the Reformed school. The entrepreneurs, who also sought to strengthen their local *School with the Bible*, counselled Dad to accept their solution: send the kids here! As long as my Dad was a good worker, being Liberated Reformed was not a big deal, and for the school "small differences in theology;" as Dr. Van Brummelen labels it, were not an issue. "In that case," Dad responded, "Sikkema is not coming." The covenant weighed heavier than family-economics, and the school in town did not meet the standard. The entrepreneurs acquiesced to his principles; Dad got the position, and we rode our bikes.

The Education Matters column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association East. Anyone willing to respond or interact to an article or anyone willing to write an article for us is kindly asked to send materials to Clarion or to abkingma@kwic.com.

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Report of Trip to the Australian Free Reformed Churches

It was considered a good thing to give the general membership an idea how such trips function as “public relations business.”

This is a report about the journey of my wife and myself on behalf of the Theological College of the Canadian and the American Reformed Churches, to the Free Reformed (sister) Churches in Australia. These Australian sister-Churches support the College as being also their Theological College. It was the third of this kind of trip, following the first one by Dr. and Mrs. J. Faber in 1990 and the second one by Dr. and Mrs. C. Van Dam in 1997. This report is first of all meant for the Board of Governors of the College. However, since the College is the institution of and for the churches it was considered a good thing to give the general membership an idea how such trips function as “public relations business.” It can be compared with trips to the churches in Western Canada and the U.S.A.

The trip began on the last day of September, 2003. Skipping half a day, we arrived in Perth on Thursday, October 2, and were welcomed by Rev. and Mrs. C. Bouwman and a number of other brothers and sisters of the Armadale region, all “old” acquaintances from Canada and from Australia. Those originally from Canada had immigrated to “down –under” and those from Australia had visited the College. The Bouwmans acted as our host family, and they did a wonderful job, together with br. A. van Leeuwen, in taking care of us.

Rev. Bouwman and br. Van Leeuwen are convenor and treasurer of the Deputies for Training for the Ministry of the Australian Churches. During the time we spent in the Armadale (Perth) area, we were “housed” in a well-furnished home in the “Fair-Haven” complex for the older and retired brothers and sisters. Let us say, it was fitting. Though not feeling old, we felt at home. It is a beautiful complex of independent units and a central building for nursing care. A widowed brother was so kind as to allow us to live there in his unit for the duration of our stay in the area. The Bouwmans showed us how beautiful this part of Australia is, and other brothers and sisters assisted them in doing this. It was very pleasant in many ways. Wonderful it is to enjoy God’s majestic creation together as his children in different parts of his world.

On Sunday, October 5, I preached the Gospel to the congregation at Armadale in the a.m. service and to the congregation at Mount Nasura in the p.m. service. On Saturday October 11, an Office bearers Conference had been planned, for which I received an invitation to address the brothers. I spoke to them on the topic “Christ Jesus is the Foundation and the Starting-point in all Pastoral Work.” After an introduction in which it was explained what I meant with the two terms “foundation” and

“starting-point,” our guide was taken specifically, though not exclusively, from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. The address was received well. At the request of two brothers from the two congregations in Albany who were present, the address was also given later in Albany; it was repeated, again at the request of the office bearers, in Tasmania.

On Sunday October 12, I preached God’s Word to the congregations at Kelmescott and Darling Downs. The latter church had just been instituted as the twelfth Australian Free Reformed Church, the tenth in Western Australia, and the seventh in the Armadale region. On Monday evening of October 13 the first general address to the churches was held for the congregations of Armadale, Byford, Darling Downs, and Rockingham. The address dealt with the College. After the greetings from the College community were given, a number of new pictures of the College and the people working there were shown from a computer disk. Then the foundational biblical principle under the College as found in 2 Timothy 2:2 was explained. And it was worked out in the context in 2 Timothy, that is, the context of the antithesis between church and world and just as much between true doctrine and false, unsound teachings and way of life. In this tradition of the antithesis between Christ Jesus and Belial, and between true

faith and unbelief with falsified faith our College stands and works in this present age. The address was concluded with giving a brief overview of the New Testament studies (lectures) in the course of the four years of study at our College. On Tuesday evening, October 14, the same address was held for the congregations of Kelmscott, Mount Nasura, and West-Kelmscott.

On Thursday evening of October 16, the second general address was presented, again for the congregations of and around Armadale. It dealt with Paul's teaching, particularly in his epistle to the Colossians (esp. 1:15-20 in combination with 3:18-4:1) that in this present dispensation already, Christ Jesus redeems the (daily) life on earth which was first created by God through Him. This redemption of created life is done according to God's original creation design. God's incarnate Son redeems both the things on earth and the things in heaven through reconciliation by means of his blood and through renewing this created life by the Holy Spirit. [Here a question is raised: Do the things in heaven also need reconciliation through the blood of Christ? (Col 1:20)] The place where this redemption occurs is the church which is Christ's body. Having a clear view on this point and believing that Christ redeems our present life after God's creation design and not according to modern humanistic patterns is very important for maintaining a Christian, biblical life style in contrast with the life style of this present humanistic world. On Friday evening this same address was delivered for the congregations of Kelmscott, Mount Nasura, and West-Kelmscott.

On Saturday, October 18, we travelled to Bunbury, a small but nice city on the coast of the Indian Ocean, between Armadale and Albany. It was a privilege to proclaim God's Word to the congregation in both services on Sunday. On Monday evening the address on the College was delivered and on Tuesday night the one on Paul's message in Colossians. The Wednesday evening was "free." Thursday night the third speech

was held. The topic was "Reading God's Word in Context." This context was defined as, on the one hand, of a literary character. Each text is to be considered as it occurs within the concentric circles of, let us say, a paragraph or pericope, which is part of the wider circles of a chapter and possibly a few chapters, which form a unit (such as the Sermon on the Mount in Matt 5-7). And this, in turn, is part of the Bible book or also a combination of books (such as Matthew being one of the four Gospels). The widest circle is the Bible as it contains both the Old and the New Testament, together forming the one Word of God.

Believing that Christ redeems our present life after God's creation design . . . is very important for maintaining a Christian, biblical life style.

On the other hand, reading in context is not only reading a text, so to speak, in the widening concentric circles; it is also reading a text as a dot on a straight line. Here the point of the text is not that it has a literary character as being a part of a book; here the point of the text is that it has a historical character. The Bible paints a history before our eyes. It is the one history of God's great works from creation to the coming consummation, while in the fullness of time God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ was born the promised Son of David, the Messiah. The Old Testament describes God's promising and preparing of the first coming of his Son in the flesh; the New Testament describes that He came and fulfilled his task and went back to heaven's glory to rule all things toward the consummation. After the fall into sin, this history became a history of God's works of redemption and judgment. And the texts in God's Word have a place on the line of this history: a history of God redeeming, saving, helping, guiding and



Rev. and Mrs. J. Geertsema

instructing his people, but also chastising, punishing, judging – faithfully and justly. In the centre of all these great works of God is his Son, promised in Genesis 3:15. Now that He has come, He is working toward his return in glory with the final judgment and the final definitive redemption of what He created in the beginning. With a number of examples, one from the Old Testament and two of the New, such reading in context for a better and more helpful understanding of the Scriptures was illustrated.

On Friday, October 24, we drove from Bunbury to Albany, where we arrived in the evening, about seven o'clock in night's darkness. (The refusal to accept daylight saving's time causes the Australians and their guests to have a short period of light in the evening. In October it becomes dark about six o'clock.) On Sunday, October 26, I proclaimed God's Word in Albany in the morning and in West Albany in the afternoon. On Monday evening the speech on the College was held, and on Tuesday the one about Paul's gospel message for our daily life here on this earth as we have it in Colossians. On Wednesday morning, October 29, the annual meeting of the Women's League was held. The sisters had invited me to speak to them. The subject of the address was "The Epistle of James in its practical message for God's people." Together we went through chapter 1:1-18 specifically because this first part opens up the entire epistle and gives us a clear insight in how to understand and apply also what follows in the rest of this book. God's children, the believers in and



servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, surrounded by difficult trials, have to look at themselves and their situation not through the eyes of the world, but through the eyes of God. They have to see themselves as God sees them. In that way they will overcome the temptations, pass the exams of faith and receive the crown, or rather the victorious wreath of life for ever. And God Himself will work this victory in them. He wants to give to his children that in the wisdom of faith they will be able to discern how and where their faith is put to the test, while recognizing what God's will is for them in their trials. This Wednesday evening I delivered again the address for the office bearers to the brothers (with also some sisters present). And on Thursday evening those of the two Albany Churches who could still "absorb" some more, listened to the "Reading in Context" address.

On Friday, October 31, we drove back from Albany to Armadale. And on Sunday, November 2, I preached the gospel in West-Kelmscott, in the morning, and in Rockingham in the afternoon. After a free Monday evening, the early part of the Tuesday evening of November 4 was used for a meeting with young men considering to come to our College and desiring to speak about this and the preparations for it. The bulk of the evening was then occupied with the speech about "Reading in Context"

again for the Armadale, Byford, Darling Downs, and Rockingham churches, and on Wednesday evening for the congregations of Kelmscott, Mount Nasura, and West-Kelmscott.

On Thursday, November 6, we continued our journey with flying to Tasmania, the "under down-under" place. We arrived safely. The first ones greeting us were Rev. and Mrs. G. Wieske. Together with two brothers of the church of Launceston, they brought us to our place, a pleasant place in the Tasmanian country-side. On Sunday November 9, we went to the house congregation in Hobart with one of the elders. Here God's rich gospel-Word was proclaimed and the Lord's Supper

We felt totally at home in their midst and had the impression that they felt at home with us, being of the same family.

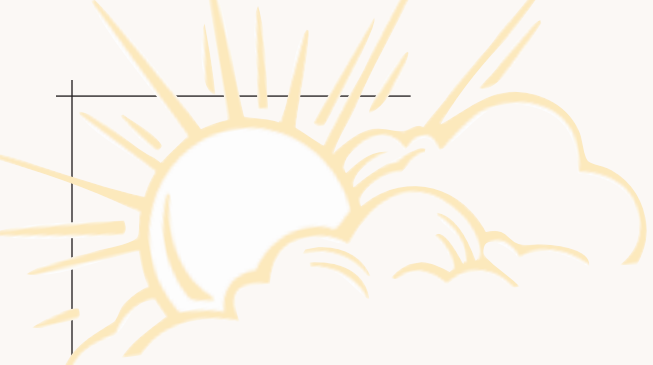
administered and celebrated in the morning, and his Word preached in the afternoon. On Monday evening the brothers and sisters of the two congregations of Launceston and Legana, and some from Hobart, heard the speech

about the College. It was followed with the address on "Reading in Context" on Wednesday evening, and by the office bearers address on Friday. On Sunday, November 16, I preached in the two services in Launceston. On Monday evening the address based on Colossians was presented to the brothers and sisters on Tasmania. The rest of the week was used for relaxing on the east coast, in the St. Helens area. And on the final Sunday, November 23, I could preach God's Word to the congregation of Legana. We said farewell to this wonderful place, Tasmania, on Monday, and via Sydney and Los Angeles, flew to Vancouver, back to beautiful rainy B.C.

The final remark can be made that those who listened to the speeches gave the impression that they appreciated what they heard: an effort to bring to them the riches of the gospel of Christ Jesus, the treasures of the Word of God, which gladden the soul of those who believe. This means that we can conclude that the purpose of this roughly quinquennial public-relation's journey of "the College" to the sister-churches in Australia served its purpose: the bond between the College and these churches was confirmed and strengthened, and in this way also the bond between the sister churches in Australia and Canada/U.S.A. We felt totally at home in their midst and had the impression that they felt at home with us, being of the same family.

It was a pleasure to be in their midst, indeed, and to serve them, while being taken care of by them in such a good way. The time was actually too short, and the contact too brief. Nevertheless, it was great joy to experience the communion of saints with our brothers and sisters on the other side of the globe. For all this our thanks go to the Board of Governors together with the Australian Deputies for the Training for the Ministry to grant us this trip and above all to our gracious God who gave us this present enjoyable experience in his service and in the service of the churches there and the College here.





Ray of Sunshine

By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

To proclaim the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendour.

Isaiah 61:2, 3

Dear brothers and sisters:

In this article we will focus on the second beatitude, namely, “blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.”

When we first read this beatitude, it may seem like a contradiction in words: happy are the unhappy. For what kind of sorrow leads to joy? Are we as Christians to walk around with sad faces? Some people are overwhelmed with grief at the death of a loved one, while others are filled with sadness over a broken relationship, or an opportunity that has passed them by. Is this then the kind of mourning that Jesus is talking about?

To answer this let us open our Bibles to 2 Corinthians 7:10. Here we can read how Paul instructs us about godly sorrow. This sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret. This grief is over the sinfulness in our lives. We must show heartfelt remorse for all the sins we daily do. In order to mourn properly, we must know our deep sense of sin that we feel about ourselves. We must also see this beatitude as being entirely spiritual. We cannot just pray that God will forgive our sins, and then we carry on with life as if nothing happened. Then there is some pride in the way. Our Lord abhors sin, and it grieves Him greatly when we disobey Him.

Some people are only sorry for the effects of their sins or for being caught. At times it may be difficult to be confronted with our sin, and even more difficult to get rid of it. Here too, we should accept correction as a tool for growth, and strive to humbly walk in His ways. Look at Paul for example in Romans 7 where he says in verses 18 and 24 “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”

Here is a man who was so grief-stricken about himself that he cries out in agony. A Christian may know that experience of feeling utterly hopeless about him/herself, and say about themselves as Paul did, “I know that nothing good lives in me.” For when we in all humility realize how weak and frail we are,

then we will also see in this regard how prone we are to transgress the ten commandments. As Lord's Day 2 of the Heidelberg Catechism teaches us: I am inclined by nature to hate God and my neighbour.

Yet we may also learn in question and answer 56 of the Catechism concerning the forgiveness of sins that because of Christ's satisfaction, He will no more remember my sins, nor my sinful nature, against which I have to struggle all my life, but will graciously grant me the righteousness of Christ, that I may never come into condemnation. What a great and mighty God we have!

When we are truly sorry and mourn for our sins, then that can but only make us very humble before our heavenly Father. This humility will make us aware that we can only turn to our Triune God for deliverance of our sins and shortcomings. Thus, this deliverance makes us show thankfulness and joy to Him alone.

Christ alone can make our tears of mourning to tears of happiness and thanksgiving. It is only the man who cries out “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?” who can also go on to say “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” As Christians who daily find ourselves guilty of sin, we will at first be cast down and mourn. Then the mourning over our sins will in turn drive us back to Christ; the moment we go back to Christ, our peace and happiness returns and we are comforted. The only way that we are able to diligently and seriously do this is by reading and studying God's Word. Pray also, that God will reveal our sins to us.

Let us end with the comforting words as found in 2 Corinthians 1:3-5: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flows over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.”

*Comfort, comfort ye My people,
Speak ye peace, thus saith our God;
Comfort those who sit in darkness,
Mourning 'neath their sorrow's load.
Speak ye to Jerusalem
Of the peace that waits for them;
Tell her that her sins I cover,
And her warfare now is over.*

Hymn 11:1

Birthdays in July:

4 JAMES BUIKEMA will be 43

c/o R. Feenstra
278 St. Catherine Street
PO Box 662
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

20 CHARLIE BEINTEMA will turn 29

19 Forest Street
Chatham, ON N7L 2A9

28 JIM WANDERS will be 43

538 Wedgewood Drive
Burlington, ON L7L 4J2

29 TOM VANDERZWAAG will be 51

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

Congratulations to all of you celebrating your birthday in July. It is our hope and prayer that our heavenly Father will continue to bless you in this new year with much health and happiness. We hope you have an enjoyable day together with your family and friends.

Till next month,

Mrs. C. Gelms and Mrs. E. Nordeman
548 Kemp Road East, RR 2
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
Phone: 905-563-0380



Reviewed by T.G. Van Raalte

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NIV Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible, Zondervan, 2003, available in hardcover, bonded leather, and real leather at your local bookstore

The tradition began with the Geneva Bible in 1560. For 100 years this English translation with thoroughly Reformed study notes was the Bible of the English world, eventually being eclipsed by the King James Version. It was not until 1995 that the New Geneva Study Bible (NGSB) was produced, which used the New King James Version (NKJV). Enter now the NIV Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible, produced in 2003. I'll abbreviate it SRSB. Now all the same light of the Reformation has been united with the translation recommended for use in our churches – the New International Version.

This new Study Bible is the definitive Study Bible for Reformed Christians. Although largely based on the NGSB, this Study Bible has much more to recommend it than its predecessor. What is unique about this Study Bible?

- *Readable NIV Translation.* The NIV provides a good balance between being easily readable English and being faithful to the original languages. In places where the NIV has taken liberties in translation, the study notes usually indicate what is “literal.”
- *Theological Articles.* This Study Bible has sixty-six substantial theological articles written from a Reformed confessional standpoint. For example, the so-called “Five Points of Calvinism” are ably defended, as is

the normative role of God’s law, the necessity of church discipline, the meaning of “image of God,” and the biblical teaching on justification. Very refreshing!

- *Study Notes.* This Study Bible actually has more study notes than the NIV Study Bible, over 20,000. Their contents are excellent since they accept the authority of Scripture and read it as a unity, in line with the Reformed confessions.
- *Confessions of faith.* An appendix contains the complete text of the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, Canons of Dort, and Westminster Standards. Truly a first.
- *Cross-references to the Confessions.* Truly a first as well, all the confessions of faith are reverse referenced in the study notes of the Bible. Each time a passage of Scripture is footnoted by one of the confessions, a note at that Bible text alerts the reader to consult the appropriate place in the confession. You will not find another tool like this anywhere.
- The indices of the theological articles, maps, and charts are far easier to overview than those of the NGSB and I find most of the maps and charts, taken over from the NIV Study Bible, to be more complete.

Although the SRSB has many more cross-references than the NGSB, it is unfortunate that the editors did not take over the sophisticated cross-reference system used in the NIV Study Bible.

My NIV Study Bible is now eleven years old, full of my own notes, and held together with duct tape. It’s too bad that

the SRSB I examined has very little room for one’s own notes – the margins are too small. Whereas NIV Study Bibles have two columns, the SRSB is like the old Harper Study Bible (RSV) with no columns. However, the study notes are set up in two columns, in very fine print, but quite readable. The words being commented on are set out in bold print, making it easy to find out whether the word you are studying is commented on or not.

Should you be replacing your NIV Study Bible, your Quest Study Bible, or simply looking for a good Study Bible, there is nothing better in English than this one. Get it.

I have a few concerns that I would like to pass on. First, the notes on Genesis 1 and 2 are decidedly non-committal when it comes to creation in the space of six days. In spite of the fact that the Westminster Confession and Catechisms clearly confess “in the space of six days” the editors appear to have been influenced by Meredith Kline’s “framework hypothesis” in calling the framework of days, “anthropomorphic” and stating that Genesis has no concern to teach “how and when” the world was created, only “who” did it and “why.” This was copied from the NGSB, for which Kline was also a contributor. This is *not* in the Spirit of the Reformation. Second, although the notes on 1 Corinthians 12-14 do maintain that the New Testament “tongues” were foreign languages, I find them weak in terms of the cessation of prophecy and the closing of the canon. I think we find here the influences of Wayne Grudem, one of the New Testament contributors. Third, the

study notes on the texts regarding the role of women in the church are not very clear. No theological article can be found on the important roles of women in the church. Fourth, like the NGSB, no firm stand is taken on the necessity of baptism for believers' children, to leave room for Reformed Baptists.

Regarding the confessions that are appended, I also pass on a few concerns. The particular edition of the Three Forms of Unity is that adopted by the

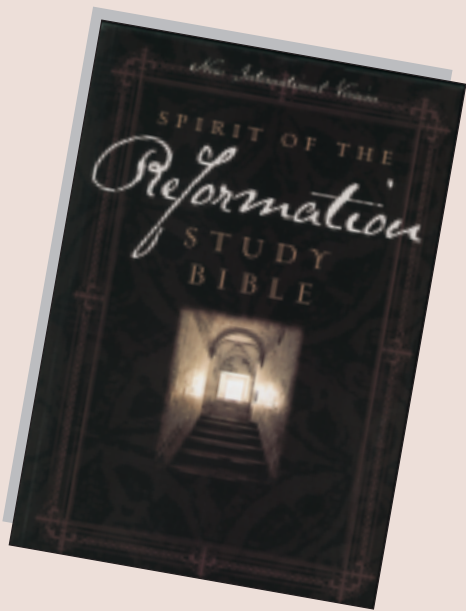
Christian Reformed Church (see BC, art 36, for example). One will find that this edition has caved into the demand for political correctness. Also, it is unfortunate that they cast doubt on Q/A 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism by making a special note about its exclusion from what is called the "first edition" of the catechism.

In my opinion the explanation of the doctrine of the covenant is sound. I especially like the article on being made

in the image of God. The outline of the Book of Revelation is top notch, following the NGSB. This structure is built on William Hendriksen's insights, with a slight improvement.

I very highly recommend this Study Bible. Get it in leather if you can afford it, because you will use it for many years. Give it as a wedding Bible. Use it in the Senior High School classes. Take it to Bible Study. Whatever you do, read God's Word every day.

Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible



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