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*The Geek
Generation*

*The Axe and
the Shoot*

*Substance
Abuse*



A new generation is emerging. . .



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The Geek Generation

Electronics have invaded the lives of a whole generation

They are everywhere

You can't miss them! They are everywhere! What am I referring to? Who am I referring to? Why, to young people walking down the streets, strolling in the local malls, and going from classroom to classroom. All the while they have white buds in their ears and cell phones in their hands, or pants, or backpacks.

By the way, those white ear buds are connected to one or other iPod device that can generate an almost endless stream of music. Meanwhile, the cell phone rings and interrupts the beat. No matter! This is the multitasking generation. They can listen to music, take incoming calls, carry on a conversation with friends around them, and type messages to others – all at the same time.

In addition, many of their cell phones carry the ability to shoot pictures. These pictures are shared and compared with friends. Some of the best, or the wildest, get downloaded to a computer, perhaps uploaded to a site like MySpace or sent to friends. At times the results are funny. At other times they are anything but funny.

Technology is a tool – it has good uses and bad ones

And what about text messaging? So you don't feel like talking out loud. No problem. You take out your phone again and simply type in whatever it is that you want to say to whomever. Do you want to talk to that fellow student on the other side of the lecture hall? You used to have to write a note and get other students to pass it along. If its contents were really personal, you held your breath while the note was going from person to person across the room. No

longer. Now you just take out your cell phone, type in the message, and send it electronically across the class. Your prof may think that you are all ears, but really you're all fingers, fingers making messages.

An emerging generation

So what is really going on here? Before the very eyes and ears of older adults, a new generation is emerging. Some might want to call it the post X Generation or the Wired Generation. My choice is the Geek Generation. I decided on it after walking into a Best Buy store, you know one of those huge American electronics stores. In one or other corner they often have a department called the Geek Squad.

It's a rather neat department. Your computer gets loaded down with spam and spyware and it slows to a crawl. What to do? Take it to the Geek Squad and they will fix it. They know their electronics. You need more storage space because all of those digital pictures and videos are plugging up your hard drive? They'll fix that too, at a price of course, but they'll fix it.

Computers, cell phones, iPods, PDAs, software, they cover it all. And so, it seems to, does this new generation of tuned in young people. And they are everywhere. I went to China recently and the streets were full of them. I went to Europe too and it's the same story. Electronics have invaded the lives of a whole generation.

An old man's perspective

What to think of it? Here I am a male approaching sixty. Some would say "an old man!" I've never seen anything like this before. When I started as a minister in the early seventies, I wrote out all my sermons by hand. Later I graduated to the typewriter and then to the computer and the laptop. So I too have evolved.

But not like this new generation. They seem to take to new tech toys like ducks take to water.



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And I suppose in a way that's good. It's good to be flexible and adaptable. It's good to be able to learn new things and put them to instant use. As a Christian I don't think that technology is inherently good or bad. Technology is a tool and, like all tools, it has good uses and bad ones. Take a hammer, a rather old fashioned tech tool, but one nonetheless. You can use it to build a house or bash a head. Obviously the first use is good, the second is not.

Technology the good

What's good about technology, especially electronic technology? I suppose one positive has to do with productivity. I can sit behind my desk with a computer on it and do many things: write letters, compose music, assemble pictures, research, contact fellow workers, and keep in touch with world events.

For myself, as editor of this magazine, I can hardly imagine what I would do without a computer and email. Everyday I feel sorry for colleagues of old who had to resort to writing letters and mailing them and then waiting days or weeks for a response. Why, I even feel sorry for more recent colleagues, and I was one of them, who used to rely on faxes. In so many ways things have become easier, faster, and better.

But of course the advantages of new tech devices are not just limited to productivity; communication has also benefited. It's great to be able to email family and friends, to send pictures off just like that, to set up websites and blogs, and to dig into all sorts of sites to learn, see, and grow. It's also amazing to have access to a program like Skype and thus be able to talk free to almost anyone, anywhere, anytime. That appeals to the Dutch in me.

Technology the evil

Unfortunately, however, the news on the tech front is not all good. There is the dark side too. What do I mean?

I'm thinking for one about the matter of building relationships. How do you do that? Any number of people these days seem to think that you can do this electronically. You pick up your phone and you talk. You log into MSN and you type. You click the camera on your phone and send a picture.

But surely there is more to building friendships than pushing buttons. It's a matter of meeting face to face, of eye contact, of noting expressions, of

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hugging, of sharing, of being side by side, and doing things together. Tech things can help build relationships, but they can never take the place of personal, physical contact.

Another area of concern has to do with self-control. As I lurk on various group sites it strikes me that some people get really brave – or should I say foolish – on the web. They will write the strangest and most offensive things. What they would never dare say to someone face to face, they will say in an email.

Closely related to this are some of the things that young people will say to one another on MSN, or pictures that they will post on websites like *MySpace*. Parents who read what is written or see what is posted should be prepared for a shock. Often the language is gutter language and the pictures are totally inappropriate.

The way to deal with the world and the things of the world is not by withdrawing from it

Another frequent casualty in the world of high tech is honesty. Teachers who assign essays today know that there is a high likelihood that some of their students will go to the web and simply buy the essay they need, or else they will steal what someone else has posted. It is a sad commentary on education today that almost every institution of higher learning sends the essays of its students to another tech company that specializes in ferreting out those who cheat.

A call for critical participation

But enough said for now. Where does this leave us? I think that it leaves us with the need to take an approach of critical participation when it comes to today's electronic media. At the same time I realize too that some in our Christian circles will argue for the old approach of avoidance and exclusion. Ban the TV, smash the cell phones, outlaw the internet, and abolish MSN! I even have to confess that at times this approach appeals to me as well.

Nevertheless, we all know deep down that it does not work and is not the answer. The way to deal with the world and the things of the world is not by withdrawing from it but by interacting with it critically.

Some challenges ahead

Having said that, here now are some challenges. No, don't pull a funny face and turn up your noses. Hear me out.

Geeks and techies, the first one is for you. What are you doing with all of your tech toys and electronic devices? How are you using them? Are they being used in the spirit of Philippians 4:8 – "whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things"? If you are using the internet to say silly, foolish, dirty things, if you are using it to view porn sites, if you are using it to cut up or demean other people, you need to repent and sanctify your electronic tools. Turn them into agents and means of good. Or else, you should seriously consider becoming a Luddite.

Parents, the second challenge is for you. Get into the act. Pull your heads out of the sand. Stop pretending that all of this stuff is beyond you. Talk to your children about what they are doing on the web and with their cell phones. Hold them accountable. Monitor their computer time. Consider subscribing to web monitoring programs like covenanteyes.com or safebrowse.com.

Teachers, the third challenge is for you. Teach your students about the latest technologies, both their uses and abuses. Enlighten them. Confront them. Arm them.

Readers, the final challenge is for all of you. Be discerning in everything. Embrace the good, reject the evil. And remember always the ancient but ever modern words of the Apostle Peter, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pet 2:9).

In other words, use also your geek tools and toys to push back the darkness and to promote the light. +



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The Axe and the Shoot



MATTHEW 13:52

“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse.”

Isaiah 11:1a

Our text has a well-known sound to it; we all heard this passage before as a prophecy of the birth of Jesus the Saviour. It's the context, though, that makes the text come alive.

That context speaks of God Almighty swinging the axe, chopping down tree after tree. Notice the two verses preceding our text:

See, the Lord, the Lord Almighty, will lop off the boughs with great power.

The lofty trees will be felled,
The tall ones will be brought low.
He will cut down the forest thickets with an ax;

Lebanon will fall before the Mighty One. (10:33, 34)

God the lumberjack.

Which trees will the Almighty fell? Verses 28-32 picture the king of Assyria –that ruthless world power of those days – marching on Jerusalem, getting closer and closer, terrorizing the country towns as he approaches the city, raping, pillaging, devastating. Isaiah mentions a series of towns, each successively closer to Jerusalem; Michmash is twenty kilometres away, Geba is fifteen, Gibeah of Saul but ten kilometres from the city, and Nob a paltry five! Under the blazing sun of Palestine's blue sky, the horrified people on Jerusalem's walls can see the glitter of the polished armour of the dreaded enemy in the distance. . . and they're filled with horror. Raping, pillaging, burning: the reputation of the Assyrians ties the peoples' stomach into knots. . . .

But God the Almighty moves Isaiah his prophet to announce to his frightened people in Jerusalem what He is going to do; Isaiah must tell the people of Israel that their God swings the hatchet, that even now the axe is laid to the root of Assyria's tree. In the midst of Israel's terror must come news of a gospel most delightful!

That gospel does not stop, though, with the promise that God Almighty is swinging the axe against the tree of Assyria. That gospel also instructs the people of Jerusalem to observe the devastated forest in their own back yard. For the day would come, says the prophet, when the Lord God would swing the axe also in Judah and Jerusalem, fell the sinful forest of his covenant people, and send them into exile in Babylon. But, says Isaiah, the people of Israel should keep an eye on that one stump over there. The stump where the tree of the family of Jesse had stood, that felled tree which looks as dead as all the rest – look! – it's sprouting new life: a shoot, a twig, a branch, it becomes a tree! God the lumberjack is also God the arborist; though He chops down his enemies, He causes this one family to grow, causes the house of Jesse to produce another King in Israel.

Here is the gospel in the face of the horrors of Isaiah's day: God will act sovereignly to defend and preserve his people. How He does it? He destroys his enemies; more, He sends a Saviour.

For our part, we know that the promised Saviour has come; in

Bethlehem, that town of Jesse, a plain shoot appeared in the person of the son of Joseph and Mary. There was nothing attractive about Him as a baby; like David when he still tended his father Jesse's sheep, nobody considered that tiny Jesus might one day be King. But this unlikely shoot grew, became a twig, a branch, a tree.

O yes, on Calvary this branch from the stump of Jesse seemed to be destroyed, chopped down by God the holy axeman. But it wasn't really so; on Good Friday the shoot that appeared on Christmas Day destroyed the enemy. Satan, that foe who thought to march on the church of the Lord and to terrorize, pillage, and devastate God's bride, has himself been destroyed. The shoot from the root of Jesse has overcome the strong man of this world. More, the Holy Spirit of God has come to rest on this root of Jesse so that Jesus Christ today rules the world with the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, with the Spirit of counsel and of power, with the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord (Isa 11:2).

Christmas has come and gone. So we may believe that Christ the Son of God has swung the axe of judgment and felled forever those dreaded enemies of God and his people: sin and Satan. The shoot from Jesse's stump now grows into a majestic tree giving shade for the entire world.

In the New Year of our Lord 2007 we need fear no evil at all.

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Knowing God: Knowing Jesus

Lesson 3: Why did Jesus die?

The first lesson about *Knowing Jesus* focused on who Jesus is, what He taught and did, and what difference He makes. The second lesson focused on what Jesus taught. This third lesson focuses on why Jesus died.

Why the cross?

Begin by pointing out that the cross is central to Christianity. Remind the group that just as we will never understand all there is to know about God, so we will never understand all there is to know about the cross for when all has been said and done, it remains a profound mystery. Then stress that it is important to try to think about why the cross is so important and to explore some of its many facets.

The most important point in this lesson is that the cross was necessary. It was part of God's plan and not an awful mistake. Point out that Jesus Himself believed that his messianic task of bringing in the Kingdom of God would be accomplished through his own suffering and death. Illustrate this by discussing the following Scripture passages:

- Mark 8:31-33; 9:31-32; 10:32-34
- Luke 24:13-27
- John 12:20-36
- Matthew 26:20-29

The meaning of the cross

Point out that when Paul speaks about Jesus, he usually talks about his death and resurrection. Mention that Jesus' death and resurrection are often mentioned together because Jesus' resurrection is God's "yes" to his self-offering on the cross. Thus, when we speak about the cross, we do not focus narrowly on his crucifixion, but on all that is involved in Jesus' suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension.

Emphasize that the New Testament uses different images or pictures to try to help us understand the meaning of the cross. Stress that the meaning of the cross is always greater than the sum total of the different pictures. Point out that this is like looking at a very precious cut jewel. At any one time we may concentrate on one particular facet. In doing so we may not be able to focus clearly on the other facets, but they are always there and it is the jewel itself that is valuable, not just one aspect of it.

Now proceed to highlight some of the facets of the jewel of the cross. Point out that at different times in the history of the church some facets seemed more

prominent or important than others. Remind the group that this is also true for individuals. There will be times in our lives when one aspect of the cross speaks to us more strongly than another.

On the cross Jesus identified with our human predicament and took our place. In his life Jesus identified with suffering humanity. He healed the sick, befriended the outcast, freed the oppressed, and forgave sinners. He ended up where any of these could have ended up: a failure, condemned as a criminal, in agonizing pain, deserted by his friends, forsaken by God. Yet, He did this not because He deserved it, but because He freely chose to share our failure, condemnation, despair, and God-forsakenness. And in so doing, He brings the love of God into the depths where God's absence is known. Because He suffers the absence of God, no one else need do so.

As the friend betrayed, Jesus deals with all that destroys relationships and offers restoration and reconciliation. At the Lord's Supper we remember "that the Lord Jesus on the night when He was betrayed took bread. . . ." This is not simply a way of dating the Lord's Supper nor of reminding us

of something Judas did. It reminds us that the story of God's dealings with the human race is one of repeated betrayal. Like the parable of the tenant in the vineyard, the coming of Jesus is the climax of all those times when God comes and is rejected by his people. In the cross we see the extent of God's faithfulness and constant love in the face of human rejection. Yet, the cross is more than God's love and faithfulness. The New Testament teaches that, through the cross, we are "put right with God," our relationship with Him is restored. Paul also teaches that, because of the cross, barriers between individuals and groups are broken down and relationships restored.

In his death Jesus makes a new covenant with his people. The Old Testament repeatedly mentions the covenant between God and his people. History shows that time and again God's people betray Him and leave Him in the lurch. Thus, they are incapable of keeping the covenant themselves. If God wants to be faithful, He cannot just wink at this betrayal and incompetence. Because Jesus is true God and true man, He is able to keep both God's side of the covenant as well as ours. He does this by offering Himself in

complete obedience to God as a sacrifice in a way that no other human being was able. As such, He makes a new covenant with his people. We share in the blessings of this new covenant by trusting God and receiving Jesus as the Mediator of the new covenant.

In his death Jesus bears the punishment for our sins. Romans 6:23 says that the wages of sin is death. By dying in our place, Jesus died the death we had to die. The New Testament clearly says that our salvation is very costly. This means that sin has a price tag attached to it. The good news is that Jesus chose to pick up the tab instead of demanding that we pay it ourselves.

Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. While sacrifices may seem strange to us today, they were commonplace in the first century. When the New Testament speaks about the death of Christ, it often uses sacrificial images and language (especially in John and Hebrews). Sacrifices are ultimately about reconciliation and fellowship with God. By his perfect sacrifice Jesus takes away sin and makes it possible for us to offer ourselves as living sacrifices to God (Rom 12:1).

In the cross Jesus triumphs over all the powers of sin and evil. Colossians 2:15 says that Jesus disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them on the cross. Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, sin and death and evil can no longer have a final hold over us. As Paul says in Romans 8:31-39, nothing can now separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In the cross Jesus identifies with all the pain and suffering of the world. "If there is a God of love, why does He allow so much suffering?" is a question asked from time to time by Christians as well as unbelievers. There are no easy answers. Some suffering is clearly the result of human sin but much is not. Because of the cross, we can say that God does not stand aloof from the suffering of his world but enters into it in the person of Jesus, who suffered not just physically but mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

On the cross Jesus shows us perfect love. Not only is the cross the supreme demonstration of God's love for us (John 3:16), it shows us how we ought to live our lives in response to that love.

Different aspects of jewel of the cross are reflected in the songs we sing. Give each member of the group a copy of a hymnbook. Ask the group to select some hymns or give them a starter list, asking them to select which hymn most clearly expressed what they want to say about the cross.

Putting it into practice

Assign Luke 13:1-19:44 or John 13:1-17:26 for next time.

If you would like to view the outline of this lesson, go to www.reformedevangelism.com and follow the links. Next time, I plan to introduce "The Difference Jesus Makes." Thanks for reading.



Substance Abuse

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Tipsy? High?

Drunkenness, society would have us think, is fun and deserving of a chuckle – as long as we don't hurt anyone in the process. So here's my question: would drunkenness be sin? How about getting high on pot or meth?

Forgive my naïveté. Perhaps I should think we all know the answer. But I'll ask it anyway, because I encounter Christians who consider the occasional binge acceptable and the resulting inebriation something to laugh at. Yet I do not believe the Lord laughs along. And I'd rather not laugh when He doesn't.

Genesis 1

Why does God not laugh at drunkenness? I invite you to consider with me God's Word in Genesis 1. God determined, says verse 26, to create man in his image and authorized man to "rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." Notice: in his office as image of God man was to be king over all creation; everything that God had created on the first five and a half days of creation was placed under man's feet. As image of God he was to rule over creation as the Creator would rule over his handiwork.

We understand the consequence. God's mandate to

Adam would make it wrong for Adam in Paradise to let animals or plants or minerals or any other created thing rule over him. By the ordinance of God, all creation must be under the influence of man, not man under the influence of any created thing. To let a created thing rule over man – for however short or long a time – was a denial of the honourable place God had given to man as his image. Imagine: the one created to image God lying drunk in a stupor, under the influence of a created thing! How offensive to God!

Israel

Let the readers, older and younger, be aware that after the fall into sin God maintained the same standards He insisted on before the fall. Under no circumstance was one "made. . . a little lower than God, and crowned. . . with glory and honor" (Ps 8:4f) to come under the influence of creation such that he lays sprawled in a gutter. This is the point the Lord God drove home to his people when He established with them his covenant of grace at Mount Sinai. Though the Lord was pleased to live among sinful humans in the tabernacle, He emphatically told Israel that the priests who would serve Him in the tabernacle were never to have any alcohol in their blood when they went about their priestly duties. Said the Lord to Aaron: "You and

your sons are not to drink wine whenever you go into the Tent of Meeting, or you will die. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come" (Lev 10:8). It was not that a drop (or glass) of alcohol made the priest incoherent; it was rather that Israel should know that they have a lofty position as ruler over creation, ruler under God – and that's why the priests were never, not even in smallest measure, to reverse the order and place themselves under the influence of a created thing.

Israel, of course, was to take instruction from God's command to the priests. The people as a whole were to learn of the absolute need to maintain the order God had created; man is to exercise influence over creation, not creation over man. That is why Solomon, for example, repeatedly warned his sons (and all Israel) about the dangers of alcohol. "Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise" (Prov 20:1). "Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, for drunkards and gluttons become poor" (23:20f; see also 23:29-35). The people were to learn from God's command to the priest to maintain always the order God had established between man and the rest of creation – and never let themselves be ruled by a created thing.



Jesus Christ

That is also why Jesus on the cross refused the wine that was offered to Him (Matt 27:34). True, a shot of wine was a token of sympathy to the crucified, to take the edge off the suffering. But Jesus would have none of it. As He confronted the righteous judgment of God on the cross and fought the devil and his hosts, He had to have all his faculties about Him, was to be fully ruler over creation with no created thing having influence over Him in slightest measure. He had to be *man* as God created man to be, ruler and master over creation – and so image of God. It's because He was perfectly aware of the infinite hatred of God against sin – his sense of awareness was not dulled in any way – that He could satisfy *all* God's justice and pay for our sins.

Man is to exercise influence over creation, not creation over man

The blessed result of Christ's triumph is that the people of God are *restored* to their place as ruler over God's world. That is why it remains God's will that you and I

are to rule over creation (how wonderful the privilege!) and never permit creation to rule over us. Paul tells us not to "get drunk on wine," but instead to "be filled with the Spirit" of the God whose image we are (Eph 5:18). In fact, Paul damns those who let creation rule over them. He includes drunkenness in his list of the "acts of the sinful nature" and adds, "I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal 5:21). That's so obvious: those who do not reflect what God is like – Master of His creation – have no place in the kingdom of God!

Consequence

So we need to conclude: substance abuse – be it with alcohol or marijuana or nicotine or crystal meth or whatever else may give one's mind a buzz – is simply sin against God and provokes his judgment. Since it is sin, those of us guilty of drug abuse (of which drunkenness is Canada's primary offender!) may not simply pass it off as an experience of the past, as something to laugh at or to belittle. Rather, such conduct requires *repentance*, requires humble acknowledgement before God that "I have sinned against You and I'm sorry for it; please forgive me."

Similarly, where we witness that someone lets a bottle or a chemical rule him, we need, in love for that sinning brother or sister, to admonish according to the Lord's command in Matthew 18 – even bringing the matter to the attention of the office bearers and exercising church discipline as a result. We need to do so since those who do not reflect the Creator's place over creation – and drunkards don't – cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.

Substance abuse is simply sin against God

Does this condemn all use of alcohol? No, it does not. The Apostle told Timothy to "stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses" (1 Tim 5:23). Wine can have a beneficial medicinal function. The Psalmist relates that God gave wine to cheer the heart of man (Ps 104:15). When the Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Lord's Supper, He mentioned that He would "not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes" – and so made clear that the "fruit of the vine" is a permissible drink (Luke 22:18).

Yet the privileged position of the Christian is that he relishes his place *over creation* – there is no higher honour than being allowed to image what the Creator is like! – and so the Christian steadfastly refuses to come under the influence of any created thing. He knows: the glory of his God and Saviour is at stake.

Installation and Welcoming of Rev. E. Kampen and Family

August 6, 2006

"How beautiful are the feet of Him who brings good tidings!" (Isa 52:7)

The long awaited day had finally arrived and the atmosphere was one of anticipation. After almost two years without our own minister, the Lord had answered the prayers of the Orangeville congregation and filled our church building to capacity with worshippers; hearts were overflowing with praise for such a wonderful

Rev. P. Aasman, minister of Grand Valley congregation, led the service in which our new minister, Rev. E. Kampen, would be installed. Rev. Aasman chose Job 42 as his text. The theme for his sermon was "Satan loses the battle of Job" and his points were: 1) Job learns to bear his burden and 2) God blesses him for his faith.

He began by explaining that while the story of Job seems so unusual, the book actually describes the struggle that happens over every human soul. Satan wants our lives and will not accept defeat. Rev. Kampen will play an important role in this battle since the ministry of the gospel will equip us in the struggle



against the devil and help us to turn to God.

Rev. Aasman pointed out that Job, not understanding the will of God, had been a fool. But Job took instruction and learned much about the Lord through his struggles. We are all inclined to folly, but we must listen to the Word, acknowledge our sin, and become wise. But like Job's friends, there are many false teachers who seek to give us a wrong impression of God. We must be careful who we listen to. As a true servant of God Rev. Kampen will speak God's Word to us each Sunday and that is a beautiful thing – for when we listen to God, we see Him more clearly. Then we will be able to meet our troubles with faith. Job had proven that blessings didn't

matter; all he wanted was his Heavenly Father. And so God blessed Job. These are rewards earned by Jesus Christ. God blesses us today with the preaching of the Word each Sunday. May the pure message of God's grace always resound from this new ministry.

After the preaching of the Word, the form for ordination was read; Rev. Kampen said his vows and he officially became Orangeville's new minister. Next various delegates from local churches assumed the pulpit. Br. F. Westrik carried well-wishes from the church of Guelph. Br. B. Span, representing the United Reformed Church of Simcoe County, offered the words of Ephesians 3:14-20 to sum up their prayers for the church



and our new minister. Rev. Aasman brought congratulations from both Classis Ontario North and the church of Grand Valley. There were also three letters expressing thankfulness from the churches of Brampton, Fergus North, and Fergus Maranatha.

In the afternoon, Rev. Kampen chose 1 Corinthians 3:10-17 as the text for his first sermon as our new minister. His theme was "As we continue to build, each one must be careful how he builds because: 1) there is only one foundation, 2) our work must pass the test of fire, and 3) we are working on God's holy temple."

Rev. Kampen began by pointing out that as you walk into the Orangeville church building there is a plaque that quotes Nehemiah 2:20b, "Therefore we his servants will arise and build." This text is also quoted on the front of the church bulletin. Those who chose these words filtered them through the words of the text. Paul's building language is fitting especially on this occasion, as our congregation enters a new building phase. Paul speaks of living stones and building the church of Christ. Our foundation is Jesus Christ and it has been well-laid. We do not have to fix or

modify it, as many throughout history have tried to do; we have to ensure that what we build is square with the foundation that is already present. Paul also states that our work must pass the test of fire. He is referring to our spiritual work, that which is done for the upbuilding of the congregation. Let our work not burn up on the last day, no matter how impressive it seems. We are also warned to be careful how we build, since we are working on God's holy temple. We must see the church as holy, just as the Old Testament temple was holy. But while we must be careful, it is necessary for us to continue to build; for God in his wisdom uses living stones. Let us all be living

stones and continue to build God's church on the foundation of Jesus Christ. After the sermon Rev. Kampen had the opportunity to carry out the "second duty of a minister" by baptizing the youngest member of his new church.

We were then given the opportunity to meet our newest family. A coffee social was held after the second church service. On August 11, an evening was held to welcome the Kampen family to the church. Through various games and entertainment the Kampen family got to know the different families of our church and how they are related. At the end of the evening they were presented with a scrap book to help them remember "who is who" in the congregation. On August 12, the church held a church picnic, providing another opportunity to welcome the Kampen family in a more relaxed setting. We all enjoyed an afternoon of fun and fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. May the Lord continue to bless the church of Orangeville and the new ministry that has begun!



What's New???

Rev. E. Kampen is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Orangeville, Ontario
eric.kampen@canrc.org

It is only fitting to begin with a word of thanks to all those who have started to send me their congregational bulletins. At this point, I am able to peruse the goings on in approximately fifty percent of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Canada and the Free Reformed Churches in Australia. At the same time, I encourage others to join in and start sending the local bulletins. With email, it does not have to cost anything. My email address is eric.kampen@canrc.org.

Perhaps in due time I will develop some organizing principles for passing on various items. For the time being, I will just mention items that seem worthy of sharing in the order I came across them.

The honour of being mentioned first falls to the church at Aldergrove. In their Church News of November 5, 2006, the congregation was informed, "We've passed third reading on the rezoning application for the church property. This means we can now proceed to the next phase of planning which involves services and building plans etc. A very exciting time indeed for our congregation as we now prepare to build our own place of worship." While a church is in the first place a community of believers, the life

of that community is most certainly enhanced and also gains a more public profile in the community when a congregation has its own facility. As such, it is easy to understand the excitement.

In two different congregational bulletins mention was made of how Regional Synod East had adjourned. Most interesting was the reason given, namely, that the churches had not received some materials in time in order to give input on the proposals on the table of the Regional Synod. Thus, the Synod decided to reconvene at a future date, once the churches had a chance to give their input. From a church polity perspective, it is rather unusual for a broader assembly to actually continue its existence and reopen its agenda. Taking slight liberties with the title of this column, that's definitely new.

The church at Darling Downs in Australia anticipated the happy occasion of some young members publicly professing their faith. Such occasions, as many congregations experience, can tax the facilities used for worship. It appears that on a previous occasion, the church service had to be delayed for ten minutes to get more chairs. Some members even went elsewhere as there was no room. This gave the consistory reason to write a few

comments about it. They would like to give priority for close family and close friends. Indeed, something does not seem in balance when churches are so full for a special occasion that the members of the congregation can't even find a seat. Special occasions are first of all special congregational occasions.

The Providence Church in Edmonton has become quite involved with a group of Sudanese believers. The information found in the Providence News of November 19, 2006 is worthwhile to quote in full.

With thankfulness to God only, we can report that catechism classes for the Sudanese Brothers and Sisters worshipping among us are set to begin in the last week of November. These classes are aimed at our Sudanese brothers and sisters who had come to faith in the Presbyterian Church of Sudan (PCOS), made their confession of faith using the Westminster Confession, and who now wish to become members of the Canadian Reformed Church. What a blessing it is that God has brought these Brothers and Sisters home among us. Recent troubles in the PCOS leadership have led 12 churches to break away and form a new Reformed

federation who adhere to the same doctrines and confessions that we do. Let's keep these Brothers and Sisters in Sudan in our prayers. In an effort to bring the gospel and feed the spiritual needs of the Sudanese community in Edmonton there will be Sudanese language worship service in the Providence Church building. The date is tentatively set for Dec. 10. Our consistory has been working hard and meeting often with John and James; we've developed an appropriate Liturgy, found easy sermons that can be translated and worked

out some practical matters concerning rides and lunch (though more will need to be done as we get started). It is our hope that this service will feed those of faith who struggle with a new language and new culture. It is also a hope that this service will attract new immigrants and therefore function as somewhat of an outreach. We are taking some first steps into an area that we've never been before as a congregation. We have taken advice from Ministers J. VanPopta and F. Dong, and are very thankful for the

experiences and direction they've shared with us. This is an undertaking that will need many prayers and helping hands here in the local congregation. What a blessing it is that God has brought this to our doorstep, may we as a faithful church of Jesus Christ, reflect his love and be a strong support spiritually and socially to these Brothers and Sisters.

It is with the good news of the spreading of the Good News that we wrap up this first column of *What's New???*



News from the Women's Savings Action

Collection

With thankfulness we can look back on another good year for the Women's Savings Action. Our treasurer usually sees the contributions for the new year starting to come in shortly after she has closed the books at the end of June. All through the year the bank balance keeps on growing, but it is in the course of June of the next year that the contours of the end result really become visible. Then on June 30 she knows. Shortly after that, the members of the committee receive the long awaited email with the year-end figures. That signals it is time for a meeting: the meeting to decide how much we will be able to contribute to the Library of the Theological College.

Once we have reached a certain level of contribution, we prefer to be able to continue at that level for some years. If for some reason one year the results are higher than the previous years, we do not immediately increase the contribution to the maximum level. We keep some funds in reserve, and when we see a trend, after a few years, we increase the amount for the cheque that is handed to the Principal at the College Evening.

Results

In 2005 a record amount was received through the representatives of the Women's Savings Action all over Canada and in the United States: \$34,912.92. At the time we decided on a cheque for \$30,000. This year we

received a bit less than the previous year: \$31,136.72. Still, more than enough to keep our donation to the library at the same level: \$30,000. This is a great result, translating into many needed books for the library. Our thankfulness is first to the Lord, who gave the willingness to donate and the possibility to donate. Further we also want to thank our representatives and their teams, who again collected the money and sent it to the treasurer. And then we want to thank all our donors who gave generously for the Library of the Theological College. The collection of books is growing and can be kept up to date in great part thanks to the funding via the Women's Savings Action.

Library

What kind of books can be found in the library? When you enter via the main door on the second floor of the building, you see bookcases to the right and left. This is where the reference books are kept: commentaries on the Bible, different translations of the Bible, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and other works of general importance. They can be used in the library, but they cannot be taken out. On the same level, recent copies and bound back issues of magazines can be found. There is also a special room where the collection of rare books is kept. Most of these books have

never been reprinted and are indispensable to the College. When we go downstairs to the first floor, we find the general collection. These books can be taken out for use at home. All in all there are almost 28,000 volumes in the library in a variety of languages: English, Dutch, German, French, Afrikaans, Greek, Latin, and even a few (donated) books in Korean. These books are the tools for professors and students. We are thankful that the Lord provides them through the work of the Women's Savings Action and we pray that they may be used under his blessing and in his service.

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Women's Savings Action

Contributions for the year July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006
(With comparative figures for the previous year)

Congregation	2006	2005	Congregation	2006	2005
Abbotsford	-	1709.44	Hamilton	1339.17	1512.77
Aldergrove	-	1010.00	Houston	-	441.00
Ancaster	990.48	989.73	Kerwood	344.00	-
Attercliffe	938.00	748.00	Langley	1900.00	1815.00
Barrhead	290.00	270.00	Langley/Willoughby Heights	805.00	1060.00
Brampton	313.50	225.50	Lincoln	1012.85	985.00
Burlington/Ebenezer	1302.00	1143.90	London	180.00	-
Burlington/Fellowship	402.00	320.05	Lynden	776.05	1340.26
Burlington/Waterdown	990.00	805.00	Neerlandia	300.00	-
Calgary	459.00	391.97	Orangeville	538.25	215.75
Carman/East	494.00	500.00	Ottawa	150.00	125.00
Carman/West	287.50	307.00	Owen Sound	745.00	700.00
Chatham	625.00	513.60	Smithers	699.90	784.65
Chilliwack	620.00	585.25	Smithville	1435.23	738.00
Cloverdale	75.00	944.82	Spring Creek	367.50	371.50
Coaldale	460.00	835.00	St. Albert	1437.03	1410.00
Dunnville/Wainfleet	462.00	859.00	Surrey	1196.00	919.37
Edmonton/Immanuel	1908.50	1787.00	Taber	345.00	90.00
Edmonton/Providence	1060.00	830.00	Toronto	-	116.19
Elora	449.00	729.30	Vernon	429.00	426.00
Fergus/North	113.00	326.00	Winnipeg/Grace	625.00	784.00
Fergus/South (Maranatha)	289.30	556.35	Winnipeg/Redeemer	872.50	955.00
Flamborough	-	1008.55	Yarrow	-	-
Glanbrook	781.65	740.50			
Grand Rapids	-	-			
Grand Valley	217.48	153.28	Royalties Selles	450.11	495.44
Grassie	306.72	254.25			
Guelph	1355.00	1084.50	Total Collected	31,136.72	34,912.92

Reviewed by C. Van Dam

Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from its Cultural Captivity

Study Guide Edition, Nancy R. Pearcey. Foreword by Phillip E. Johnson. (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2005).

Additional Information: Hardcover, 511 pages, \$ 34.00 CDN

Is our Christian faith to be kept locked up in church and in the privacy of our homes? As Reformed believers we immediately answer no! But our present culture vehemently and loudly declares yes! Keep your religion out of the science lab, out of the business world, out of politics, out of schools. It has no relevance in the public square. There is the world of religion and beliefs and the real world of facts and reality. These are the convictions of our society today.

How did we get into this situation where such a dichotomy in life is widely accepted? What is the underlying malaise that allows secularism to reign triumphant in our day and God to be excluded from virtually all aspects of public life? Why are so many Christians paralysed, unable to counter the onslaught of the social and legal retooling of our society that is taking place? In this excellent book, Nancy Pearcey deals with these issues head on.

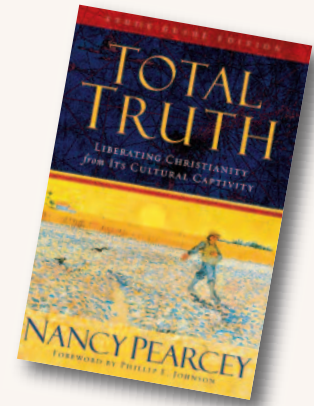
She shows the critical importance of one's worldview, for it colours one's perception of every aspect of life. Our society's worldview determines their outlook. It is a worldview that splits reality into two separate entities. There are values which are your private business and facts that are publicly verifiable truths; there is faith in God which is your personal preference and there is scientific realism that has no need or use for

God. There are many variations of this dualism, but the two parts are never integrated. They are in constant opposition to each other.

Over against this world view, Pearcey repeatedly makes the point that the Christian faith is not just about some personal religious truths, but it is a complete worldview. It is total truth and cannot be excluded from any part of life. Indeed, only within a consistent biblical worldview do all the pieces and aspects of life truly fit together into a proper whole. She correctly affirms that we not only need to equip our children with a Christian worldview but we must also make them familiar with competing worldviews. Otherwise they will have great difficulty surviving as Christians against the spirit of the times, be it at school or on the job. In her book she therefore exposes the roots of unbiblical worldviews and shows the way ahead to spiritual and intellectual renewal by embracing a consistent biblical worldview.

Like her mentor, Francis Schaeffer, Pearcey is an excellent communicator. This is no dry dusty book of philosophy. She liberally sprinkles her account with true anecdotes and helpful illustrations so that the material comes alive and hits home. She also involves herself and her own personal pilgrimage back to the Christian faith. This material is real for her and she writes with passion and precision. And her message deserves to be heard, yes it must be heard.

Charles Spurgeon once said: "The gospel is like a caged lion. It does not need to be defended, it just needs to be let out of its cage." Pearcey adds: "The cage today is our accommodation to the secular/sacred split that reduces Christianity to a matter of private



personal belief. To unlock the cage, we need to become utterly convinced that . . . Christianity is not merely religious truth, it is total truth-truth about the whole of reality."

The truth of this statement is evident in this book. Within the confines of this review it is impossible to do justice to its rich contents. Pearcey deals with a host of current concerns such as the impact that post-modernism is making on school curriculum, the distinction between spirituality and Christianity, the folly of evolution, and the enormous impact that evolutionism continues to make on virtually every aspect of life today. She also covers such topics as how the eighteenth century revivals fostered anti-intellectualism in evangelicalism and why Warfield and others in Princeton did not fully comprehend the implications of Darwinian evolutionism. Also subjects such as the family, feminism, and the changing role of male and female are addressed.

This book deserves a wide hearing. It should be widely read, especially by teachers, students, and those engaged in public life in whatever form. This edition of the book comes with an appended study guide. This guide comes with questions for discussion and gives additional examples and stories to help apply the message of the book. It can therefore also be used by study groups. Highly recommended.

**Press Release of Classis
Pacific West of the
Canadian Reformed
Churches held in Cloverdale,
October 10-11, 2006**

The minister of the convening church opened the meeting with the reading of 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 and led in prayer. He welcomed the delegates, the deputies of regional synod, Candidate Hendrik Alkema, his father-in-law, and the other guests. Rev. Peter Vosteen was also welcomed as observer of the Presbytery North West of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and seated as a fraternal delegate. After the credentials were examined and found to be in good order, Classis was constituted. Following the rotation, Rev. Jason VanVliet was appointed as chairman, Rev. Theo Lodder as vice-chairman, and Rev. Wes Bredenhof as clerk. The agenda was adopted. The following brothers, who were also present, were seated as examiner/advisors: Rev. James Visscher and Rev. Kenneth Wieske. The deputies of regional synod, Rev. Richard Aasman (Classis Alberta) and Rev. Rob Schouten (Classis Pacific East), were also seated.

Classis conducted the peremptory examination of Candidate Alkema, who accepted the call extended to him by the Houston church. After judging the sermon which Br. Alkema prepared and presented edifying and faithful to the Scriptures and to the subordinate standards, the candidate was examined in the following subjects by the ministers of classis: Old

Testament Exegesis, New Testament Exegesis, Knowledge of Scriptures, Doctrine and Creeds, Church History, Ethics, Church Polity, and Diaconiology. In closed session, Classis decided to sustain the examination, giving the Houston church approbation of their call and opening the way for Br. Alkema to enter the ministry of the Word and sacraments. Opportunity was given for those present to congratulate Br. Alkema.

All the documents relating to the call were collected, perused, and found to be in good order. The subscription form will be read and signed at the next classis meeting. Elder Richard Barendregt (Smithers) was appointed to represent Classis at his ordination in Houston on October 29, 2006. Br. Henry Hansma offered thanks to the churches of classis for providing Houston with pulpit supply during the vacancy.

In the meantime, Rev. Vosteen had spoken on behalf of the Presbytery North West of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Rev. Bredenhof responded.

Classis was informed that Rev. Colin Macleod had resigned as missionary of the church at Smithers because he felt unable to fulfil the mandate given to him by the council of that church and that council had agreed to his release effective December 31, 2006. It was noted that there are no provisions in the church order to deal with a Canadian Reformed minister becoming a minister in the Free Church of Scotland and also that during his brief sojourn in Smithers, Rev. Macleod conducted himself in an honourable and Christian manner. Thus, Classis was prepared to commend him to the Free Church of Scotland for further consideration with respect to the ministry of the gospel.



Church News

Declined the call to Lincoln Ontario:

Rev. J.E. Ludwig

of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The Covenant Canadian Reformed Church in Grassie, Ontario has moved to a new location for their worship services:

480 Wolverton, Grassie, Ontario

Worship times:

9:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.

The church of Smithville, Ontario has changed the times of the worship services to 9:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. starting Sunday, December 17th.

Classis also agreed with the decision of the Canadian Reformed Church at Smithers to continue to support Rev. Macleod and his family till December 31, 2006. The deputies of regional synod were consulted, since they were present, and they concurred.

Classis approved the honourable release of Rev. Elso Venema from his calling as missionary in Brazil sent by the Maranatha Church at Surrey, since he has accepted a call to the Reformed Church (Liberated) at Tilburg, NL.

Classis decided to send on to Regional Synod West the proposal of the Smithers church regarding the administration of the Lord's Supper to shut-ins, namely, that since a revision of the church order is a matter which belongs to its churches in common, general synod should be requested via regional synod to clearly address the issue of Lord's Supper to shut-ins in the church order, leaving aside the local regulations concerning its implementation, noting the pertinent portions of Articles 33 and 35 of the Belgic Confession be considered, particularly that our gracious God has ordained the sacraments "to nourish and sustain our faith," being "mindful of our insensitivity and weakness," and that "we receive this holy sacrament in the congregation of the people of God."

Classis adjourned until the next morning after Elder Len Stam closed in prayer.

Classis reconvened the next morning. The chairman read Psalm

122, led in prayer, and invited the assembly to sing Psalm 122:2, 3.

The overture of the Cloverdale church regarding regularly holding the convocation of the Theological College in the West was discussed. Cloverdale was advised to bring their proposal to general synod, since this is a matter which belongs to the churches in common.

The Cloverdale church overtured Classis regarding Article 20 of the church order, proposing that a committee be struck to pursue better means of fulfilling Article 20 of the church order, particularly the first part. The article reads: "The churches shall endeavour that there be students of theology, extending financial aid to those who are in need of it." Classis decided to adopt Cloverdale's proposal.

Reports from the Committee for Financial Aid to Students for the Ministry and the Committee for Needy Churches were given and received with thankfulness.

Under the provisions of Article 44 (CO), the Willoughby Heights church requested and received advice regarding contact with the local United Reformed Churches.

Houston was appointed as convening church of next classis on December 12, 2006, alternate date March 27, 2007. Suggested officers of the next classis, according to the rotation, are Rev. Lodder (chairman); Rev. Van Spronsen (clerk); Rev. Visscher (vice-chairman). The church at Cloverdale was appointed to audit the books of the classis treasurer. Classis noted with thankfulness

the work of Br. Dick Mulder, who served as treasurer of classis and was recently taken home to be with the Lord. Br. Ken Bulthuis was appointed in his place. Delegated to Regional Synod West on November 14, 2006 were the following elders: Henry Dykstra (Houston) and Henry Voorhorst (Cloverdale); as alternates, Clarence DeVries (Cloverdale) and Siebe DeJong (Cloverdale) in that order. The following ministers were delegated: Rev. Van Spronsen and Rev. Visscher; alternates Rev. VanVliet and Rev. Lodder in that order. Br. Mark Moes (Cloverdale) was appointed to replace Br. Dick Mulder on the Committee for Financial Aid to Needy Students. Appointed to the Ad Hoc Committee for Students of Theology (CO Art. 20): Rev. Bredenhof, Elder George Gunnink (Cloverdale), and Rev. Visscher.

The Acts and Press Release were adopted. The chairman closed the meeting with prayer.

*Theo Lodder,
clerk at that meeting*