

Clarion

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The 27-Year Itch

*Humility Comes
Before Honour*

*Igniting our
Culture through
Legal Challenge
and Defence*



In our modern society divorce has lost its stigma



R. Aasman

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The 27-Year Itch

A fundamental problem is a failure to communicate

I have unabashedly borrowed the title of this editorial from the cover story of *Maclean's* magazine (January 29, 2007). What is the 27-year itch? No doubt you have heard of the 7-year itch. I am not sure how far this expression goes back, but in 1955 Marilyn Monroe starred in the comedy, *The Seven Year Itch*. This film satirized the tendency of men to "stray" from their wives after seven years of marriage. Keeping this in mind, the expression "27-year itch" seems an improvement – twenty years improvement! But that is not the point of this expression and it is certainly not the point of Anne Kingston's article in *Maclean's*. The 27-year itch indicates a growing trend of late-life divorces in the fifty to eighty-five age group. In fact, the fastest-increasing divorce rate in our country and throughout the world is among marriages that have lasted twenty to sixty years. Once it was only the rich and powerful that divorced and remarried, but now it is a cross-cultural phenomenon.

"People change and they forget to tell each other."

Why?

Anne Kingston interviewed Deirdre Bair who has just come out with a new book, *Calling It Quits: Late-Life Divorce and Starting Over*. Kingston makes clear that Bair is a well-respected and accomplished researcher. Kingston asked Bair whether she observed any patterns among late-life divorces. In other words, was there a pattern in the reason for divorce at this stage of married life? Here is Bair's response:

A growing apart. I used a quote from Lillian Hellman to introduce one of the chapters: "People change and they forget to tell each other." An indifference comes to pass, a lack of

communication, a non-sharing of anything on any level. That seemed to be what inspired so many people to say, "There has to be something better, there has to be something different." Of course, infidelity was a very large component, but mostly in the upper classes. And the reason that it was possible for these people to divorce rather than to just end their lives living separately within a dead marriage, I think, was the feminist movement of the 1970s. Many women either worked or they had the experience of knowing that they could make it on their own, that they were entitled to a portion of their husband's pension or whatever if they had not worked outside the home, so they felt that financially they would be able to survive. People in their 60s are saying, "I could have 20 more years of life and I don't want those 20 years to be what I'm living now, I want something better." I think having more opportunities for financial survival, and leading long-term healthier lives, has inspired many people to make this really astonishing step. In her article, Anne Kingston points out that in place of traditional commitments to marriage and family, people are putting more value on individual freedom, self-identity, starting over, and the pursuit of happiness. It is an ironic twist to what is considered one of the "unalienable rights" of the United States Declaration of Independence: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Basically in our modern society divorce has lost its stigma and therefore if one marriage partner feels stymied in any way by the other, then divorce becomes very attractive. In fact, Kingston shows from one survey that one in four divorced men and women stated that there were no major problems leading to divorce. People had fallen out of love and had grown apart and they believed that a greater satisfaction beckoned them once they were free of their marriage partner.



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The norm

A family-law conference in Chicago held last year suggested that in fifty years the average person will be married three times. The first marriage will be a starter marriage; the second marriage will be for procreation and raising children; the third marriage will be for companionship. Considering contemporary trends of marriage and divorce, this is not an impossible scenario. A more likely scenario, however, is that people will engage in multiple cohabitations without the bother of marriage.

Any advice or hope?

Neither Kingston nor Bair give the impression that they like or are strongly promoting divorce. Both warn against overly romanticizing divorce. Bair warns that divorce is “such a drastic action” and “it should be your last resort. It should not be something you go into lightly.” They warn against dangers such as loneliness, depression, and poverty which can be the fallout of divorce. But in the end, the message is this: if you need to divorce, then do so with your eyes wide open and turn this failure into the beginning of a new and successful endeavour.

I suppose that this is what one can expect from a secular publication. The dismantling of marriage and family, and the acceptability of divorce and remarriage is a way of life in our world. The 7-year itch or the 27-year itch is not going away. It extends to all age groups and to every corner of society.

What about us?

In the pages of our little magazine, *Clarion*, there have been plenty of warnings against the spirit of individualism or narcissism which is the very thing that puts self-expression ahead of commitment to others. We also are well aware of the biblical mandate to remain married “till death do us part.” Commitment as husband and wife to the marriage bond is sacred. Understanding this and remaining committed to one another protects us from the lackadaisical attitude that so many have toward marriage. Of course we cannot be smug or complacent: we are not immune to the attitudes and lifestyles of our world. We may think of the Book of Revelation, which consistently warns the church living in the end of times that compromise with the world is our biggest threat. We are to stand on guard, holding to the Word of God and being obedient to Jesus Christ.

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Something further?

It is, however, simply not enough to resist the spirit and practice of our modern age and avoid the pitfall of divorce. Marriage is not simply a matter of staying together no matter what! When God instituted marriage, husband and wife were designed to be each other's helpers. In passages such as 1 Corinthians 13 and Ephesians 5 it is clear that husband and wife are to blossom in each other's love.

“If you need to divorce, then do so with your eyes wide open, and turn this failure into the beginning of a new and successful endeavour”

Two things should happen in marriage: first husband and wife are to build each other up in every possible way and secondly they are to help each other live to the praise and glory of God. A marriage is to be typified by such things as love, respect, tenderness, empathy, and caring. If there are wrongs, they are to be forgiven and forgotten. Husband and wife are to be each other's confidant. That is a very important component to marriage: our spouse should be the one person in our life with whom we can be completely open, relaxed, and comfortable. This is our bosom friend. This is the one person we can trust, with whom we can share anything and from whom we can expect complete support. A marriage partner is a wonderful gift from God to be appreciated as long as we have life together.

At the beginning of this article, I quoted Bair, “People change and they forget to tell each other. An indifference comes to pass, a lack of communication, a non-sharing of anything on any level.” While I don't like where Bair ends up with her research on divorce, I do appreciate this insight into a fundamental problem with marriage. A fundamental problem is a



failure to communicate. When husband and wife do not talk to each other, sharing their struggles, their fears, their dreams, their hopes, and when they no longer listen to each other and therefore know each other, then marriage becomes an empty shell. Husband and wife can become like two strangers under one roof. How important it is that every day husband and wife talk openly and tenderly with each other. It is not uncommon to see in a good marriage that a couple spend at least two hours a day in good conversation with each other. If there are any struggles or concerns, husband and wife can show support for one another, forgive one another if that is necessary, and most importantly, bring that together to the throne of God's grace.

Marriage is an amazing and beautiful relationship. It was designed by God to bring two people closer to each other and to God. With his grace and blessing, husband and wife can walk hand-in-hand through this life, even for many decades, going from strength to strength, leading each other to eternity and the great wedding feast of the Lamb.



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Humility Comes Before Honour



MATTHEW 13:52

“Humility comes before honour.”

Proverbs 15:33b

Humility is a very important virtue in many different aspects of our life. Lord's Day 45 teaches us that humility is important for prayer, where we need to humble ourselves before God. The Lord Jesus taught in John 13 that humility is important for those who lead. The one who would be first must be last and the servant of all.

Humility is especially important in our relationship together as brothers and sisters in the communion of saints. We cannot live together in a meaningful way if we are not humble to each other. The Apostle Paul says in Philippians 2:3 that we must consider others better than ourselves, having the same attitude as Christ Jesus, who made Himself nothing (v 5).

Proverbs 15:33b teaches us that humility comes before honour. Both humility and honour are good things, but humility comes before honour. This means that humility is more important than honour. It also means that humility leads to honour.

In what way is humility more important than honour? Humility benefits the person who has it. A humble person can accept his own shortcomings and failings and ask forgiveness for them. A humble person also benefits the communion of saints more. He is able to sacrifice himself for the sake of others, as is demanded of us in our office of

priest. Our office of priest (LD12) is that we sacrifice ourselves for the sake of our Lord. One way in which we do this is by sacrificing ourselves for the sake of his body.

Indeed, how can we say that we love Christ if we do not also love his body? But how can we really love the body of Christ if we are not humble servants of one another? It is nice to receive honour from one's fellow brothers and sisters. But who, really, are the ones that we honour in the communion of saints? We honour those who are most generous and faithful in serving others. It is through service that we obtain honour.

Our Saviour taught his disciples that he who would be first must be last and the servant of all. And He Himself got down on his knees to wash his disciples feet as a visible example of this teaching. The Lord Jesus received honour when He first humbled Himself, taking the form of a servant and enduring the shame of the cross.

The Apostle Paul speaks of the example that the Lord Jesus has set for us in Philippians 2. Have the same attitude as Christ Jesus, he says, who did not seek his own honour but found it through serving. We, too, will find honour in the sight of God and of our fellow believers, if we are willing to be humble and to serve.

Being humble is not an easy thing. Especially if we have to be

humble for others who are not humble. But the Lord requires this of us as part of our sacrifice to Him. Throughout Scripture we see honour being given to the small, the weak, and the humble, because these are the ones who can put their trust in God rather than in themselves.

Yes, being humble is a matter of faith. Counting others better than yourself is a matter of faith. In the eyes of the world it makes no sense for us to follow the example of Christ. From an earthly point of view, what did Christ gain by his humble service? He gained a death on a cross. From an earthly point of view what do we gain if we consider others better than ourselves and give way to their point of view or to their needs?

But we do not judge things from an earthly point of view, we judge by the eyes of faith. With the eyes of faith we see that humility has great value. It has value for us and it has value for the communion of saints when we submit to one another and serve one another. We also see that God will reward those who are humble.

Humility comes before honour. A congregation made up of truly humble members is a credit to the Lord Jesus Christ who is the head of that congregation. It will also be a happy congregation, whose members consider the needs of their fellow believers ahead of their own. If everyone does this, then no one

Igniting our Culture through Legal Challenge and Defence: the Mandate and Objective of the ECP Centre and Other Thoughts (Part 1 of 2)

This article was originally a speech delivered at the Second Annual ECP Centre Conference in Burlington, Ontario on November 12, 2005
ECP = Equipping Christians for the Public Square

Introduction

Today I am going to briefly talk about constitutions, interpretation of constitutions by judges and others, and participation in the legal/constitutional process in general and by the ECP Centre – what has been achieved and to some extent what we hope to achieve.

Let me first tell you what I am not going to do. I am not going to give a complete overview of the law in Canada on freedom of religion. There is some good literature available, particularly from David Brown (for example, "Freedom From or Freedom For?: Religion as a Case Study in Defining the Content of Charter Rights," 33 U.B.C. Law Review 551), a constitutional expert and, among other things, the legal counsel for Chris Kempling in his appeal to the Supreme Court of

Canada, which I will touch on later. My focus is not the political side, but the legal side and the battle in the courts.

Let me tell you also who I am not. I am not a constitutional expert. I do not profess to know all the constitutional arguments and minutiae – there are experts on those issues and I defer to them to try to make sense out of the case law we have in this country. I am not sure that the case law in our country makes sense; there is much inconsistency, even between decisions of the highest court in our land, the Supreme Court of Canada. I am not a litigator either – I do not go to court as an advocate.

However, this background reflects in part who I am: I am a fairly experienced lawyer; I have been a regulator; I articulated for a lawyer who later became a Supreme Court of Canada judge, John Sopinka (although I am sure the fact I articulated for him had nothing to do with him getting the job!); and I have been an associate professor of law at Canada's largest law school. I know lawyers, judges, law professors, and the

legal system and have worked with them for a considerable period of time. I have come to the view that the legal system and its participants have not assisted the Christian cause. On a personal level, I am someone who believes that in order to fully serve our Christian mandate to glorify our God and serve Him, we have to be participants in the legal system. Political involvement, speeches, letters to the editor, and so forth are not enough. We are in a war for our God and his soldiers also need to do battle in courts, using the weapons we have at our disposal.

Constitutions and their interpretation

I would like to start with two excerpts from the Canadian constitution. In the preamble, there occurs this phrase: "Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law..." In Section 2(α), the Charter states, "Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms – freedom of conscience and religion." This sounds good so far, especially from

a Christian perspective. "The supremacy of God" is a good sounding phrase and, coming from a country brought up in the Christian tradition, one may expect that such a phrase refers to our God, the Christian God. "The rule of law" sounds pretty good too. We all like rules and law and order seem like good things, also from a Christian perspective. "Freedom of conscience and religion" provisions, representing fundamental freedoms, are very, very heart-warming on their face to the Christian believer, implying that a Christian, or indeed any religious person, has the freedom to believe what he or she believes and to express it, not only privately, but publicly.

In sum, the basic wording of our constitution is something most can and would support, including Christians. From the perspective of a Christian believer, the constitution itself is not a problem. The words sound good. But we need more than wording for real protection and the ability to act for God's glorification, also in the public square.

Let me make a few broad comments, which I think are reflected in historical context. Constitutions, even though very nicely worded, and the law itself or the rule of law itself, have not always protected people, or people's rights, that one would have thought they are designed to protect. For example:

- The need to find fault before conviction, part of Roman legal rights and the rule of law, did not protect our Lord Jesus Christ from the cross. Pilate stated he did not find fault and yet delivered Jesus up to crucifixion on the cross;

- The constitution of the Soviet Union was worded very nicely, as are most communist manifestos, and yet the rights of individuals, especially in the religious context, have not been protected;
- The application of the German constitution and the rule of law in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s led to the finding that it was permissible, even mandated, under Germany's rule of law to send not only Jews, but handicapped people, retarded people, Slavs, etc. to camps for extermination because, under legal interpretation of those rules, such groups were not really Aryans; that is, not really people under the law, deserving of its protection;

The legal system and its participants have not assisted the Christian cause

- The American constitution is a wonderfully worded document also. "All men are created equal," it says. But, in defining that phrase, originally "men" did not include black men and later I believe it only included a percentage of a black man. For many years women were denied the vote. Constitutional wording is never enough, the rule of law is never enough. This is because the constitution has to be interpreted. And words can always be ambiguous. The reality is that



Church News

Called by the church of Grand Valley, Ontario:

Rev. P.G. Feenstra
of Owen Sound, Ontario.

Called by the church of Attercliffe, Ontario:

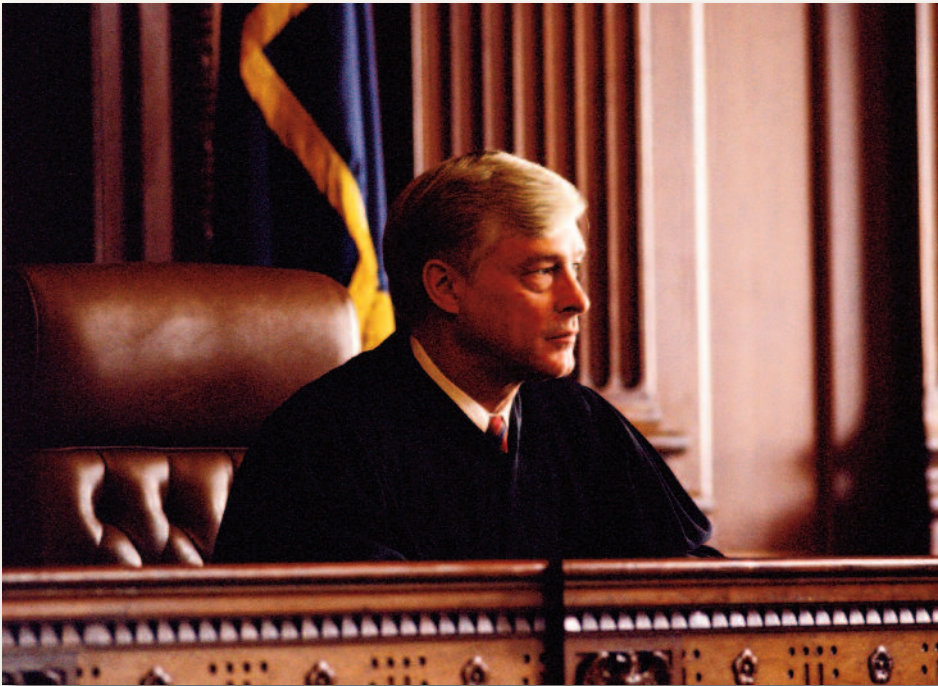
Rev. J. Huijgen
of Burlington-Waterdown, Ontario.

constitutions are interpreted by people; the law then reflects the views of the people that do the interpreting and how they are motivated by the arguments before them.

The interpretation of a constitution and of rights

Judges interpret the law. Judges are people and products of their society. They reflect society and respond to the cases brought before them as people. Who is a judge will ultimately help determine constitutional rights and protections. And not just judges, but regulators at first instance, such as commissioners of a human rights tribunal.

That is why, for example, we have seen in the United States a huge debate on the makeup of the Supreme Court. President Bush has been pushing for a more conservative court, one which is more likely to interpret the constitution from a socially conservative perspective and, one may suppose, Christian perspective. With one candidate in, another candidate dropped her nomination, in part because social conservatives felt she may be soft on abortion. After a further nominee, a recognized social conservative, was nominated, the



battle lines have been drawn. Americans know that who judges is critical to constitutional protection and religious freedom.

Canadian judges are no different, despite many protestations to the contrary. And why would they be? People are people and judges are judges. The same issues being debated in the U.S. context apply in Canada as well.

Let me share with you a story from my law school days. I heard this from my tax professor, who told it to the class, so in my view it is in the public domain. He was a clerk to a Supreme Court of Canada Justice, a respected Supreme Court judge. A case came before the court, a negligence case, where the parents of a paralyzed young boy hit by a car when his toboggan crossed the road were arguing the driver of the car was negligent. The parents had lost at trial and on appeal; the driver was clearly not

negligent. He had been driving his car on the road and the unfortunate boy's toboggan had come into his path. Clearly an accident, albeit a tragic one. The case made it before the Supreme Court. My professor, a student at the time, had to do the research and concluded that it was clear the driver was not negligent, consistent with the views of the lower courts. His boss, the judge,

Constitutions are interpreted by people; the law then reflects the views of the people that do the interpreting

sent him to do more research, looking at case law throughout the Commonwealth to see if there was a principle of law that would hold the driver negligent – it seems like

there may be a theory of negligence here, he thought. My professor went back – nothing; clearly, no negligence. The judge said there must be a theory of negligence. My professor said, "You don't understand – there is no law to support fault here." His boss stated, "No, it is you who does not understand – if there is no liability, this poor boy will grow up with a terrible life and the insurance company can pay to fix that." The result: a finding of negligence and liability. Note that this occurred in the times prior to no fault insurance.

I have never forgotten that story and everything I have seen since supports that basic view. Hard facts may make bad law, but it is clear that the personal views of the judges of the results of their decisions are relevant to the making of the decision itself. The personal element will affect decisions. Judges are people and are affected by their views of the facts. They are often active in promoting their own perspectives. Many of you have heard of "judicial activism."

In many cases, first comes the conclusion and then comes the reasoning. This happens much, much too often. Members of the legal system often deny this. But how else can differing decisions be explained, especially when interpreting constitutional rights under the same constitutional wording?



What's New???

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By now it has become a regular routine to review the local bulletins sent my way. Receiving them electronically is efficient and enables for a timely review.

What stood out over the past weeks was the repeated mention of church building projects at various stages. I will list them in chronological order.

On November 25, the church at Smithers had an official dedication of their new worship facilities. From other pieces gleaned from their bulletin, they have wasted no time in making the building a busy place for all the congregational activities. Undoubtedly this building will not only serve the congregation well but also provide a better venue for the forthcoming synod to be convened in Smithers in May of 2007.

In Grassie, the congregation was able to meet for worship in their new building for the first time on December 3, 2006. Rev. S.C. Van Dam wrote,

Today we may worship in our new building for the first time! How good the Lord has been to us in making this possible in such a relatively short time. All the hard work by so many in our midst has paid off and just over

a year after the ground breaking ceremony, we may meet together in our new church. What a tremendous blessing! It is wonderful to be able to have our own place of worship and more suitable times for worship. May we also show our thanks to God for this and not take it for granted. Let us never forget what being the church of Jesus Christ is all about. He alone is the cornerstone. The church throughout the generations is not made of brick and mortar but of people bound together in the unity of the true faith.

From other information it is clear that the whole project is not quite finished, especially in the landscaping department. This prompted the chairman of the building committee to relate a few rules on behalf of the building committee a few weeks later: "*Rule number one! PLEASE refrain from walking around the building since there is no grass yet and as some are not aware. . . mud tends to stick to shoes, then once inside a clean building, seems to release itself from shoes without notice. Please Do not walk in the building if you happen to miss rule number one.*"

I suspect that many a caretaker will be tempted to cut out that rule and post it near the door of the church building.

Finally, on the other end of the building spectrum, the church at St. Albert met on December 21 to discuss purchasing a property. It turns out to have been a successful meeting as it was stated, "Having heard the brothers and sisters, council has decided to proceed with this property, according to the resolution that was voted upon. May God grant his blessing on our plans!"

Reading these reports, it is reason to rejoice with the churches at Smithers and Grassie as they could begin using their new facilities and the church at St. Albert for having made the concrete step of obtaining property for building.

From time to time, the pastoral columns contain more than the normal updates on what is happening in the congregation. While meant for very concrete situations, some of the thoughts are worthwhile to be read by more than just the local congregation as they are valid in many different situations. Three examples follow,

two of which are left anonymous as the points raised are very general.

First, one minister wrote, "It has come to my attention that the going to and fro from the auditorium is happening far too frequently. Let us remember that we are gathered for reverent worship, not for a casual get-together. Do ensure, if at all possible, that the facilities are used before the service rather than during it."

Second, another minister wrote,

Just as an aside, as your pastor and preacher I notice that many of us do not consider the time of giving of "Christian offerings for the poor" (as the Catechism calls the collections) part of the worship service. As soon as the deacons stand up to take the collection, all sorts of conversation and chatter rises up. Perhaps for those 3 or 4 minutes we should quietly and thankfully reflect on the gifts God has given us, instead of engaging in all kinds of

conversation. The giving of Christian offerings is part of our worship of our heavenly God and Father, and should be done in a worshipful way.

The third example is taken from the bulletin of Carman West. Rev. Pol wrote,

In response to a question raised in regard to public prayer, here is a clarification that may be helpful for more people. If you have a personal issue or event that you would like remembered in public prayer, please bring this to the attention of your ward elder or the minister. It is difficult for consistory to respond to a prayer request coming from someone who feels that a prayer should be offered for someone else if whoever that "someone else" may be has not personally requested this. Some people prefer to keep things "in the family" and do not request public prayer. Or they prefer to

wait first and determine when a particular matter should be made public. They would be quite offended if at someone else's instigation, their personal affairs would be made public without their knowledge and consent. Of course, this also applies to matters for the *Manitoba Church News!* Do not assume that just because some people know something personal about someone that it should therefore be publicized.

One might argue that none of these three items constitute "news." At the same time, it may be new to some. Furthermore, the comments are meant for edification. As such, reading them will serve our ongoing renewal.

As it is time to wrap up it up, I invite any congregation that has not yet started sending the local bulletins, to please consider doing so. The email address is eric.kampen@canrc.org. Till next time, the Lord willing.



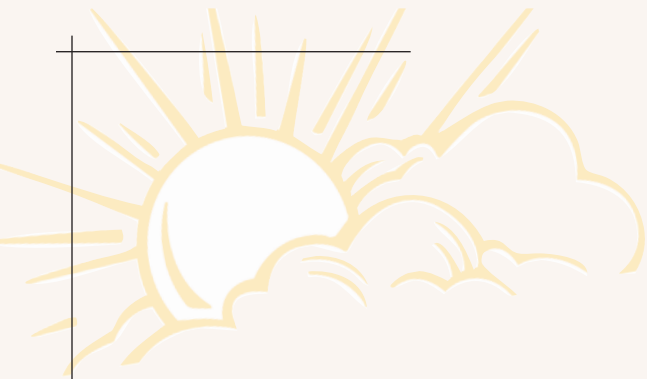
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Ray of Sunshine

By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

*“The way of the LORD is a refuge for the righteous,
but it is the ruin of those who do evil.”*

Proverbs 10:29

Have you ever come to the crossroads of good and evil? When we reach a point like this in our lives, our minds may be busy deciding what to do. Can we just not do some things that are not too evil? Will God really be so angry with us? Let us work through these questions and see what this text teaches us.

When we read this proverb, it shows us how the ways of the Lord have different effects on different people. This effect depends on whether there is faith or not. We can then see here how the ways of the Lord are like a two-edged sword.

The Word of God is not simply a collection of words from God; it is living words, life changing and dynamic as it works in us. God's Word reveals who we are and what lives within us, both good and evil.

As we read in Hebrews 4:15, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet without sin." He knows the many temptations that we face each and every day. He knows them for He has experienced them throughout his life as a human being, yet without sinning. He shows us that when we stand at the crossroads of good and evil we may not fall into sin. We must follow Christ's example.

The covenant ways of the Lord can easily be learned from the Bible. We can see the blessings, but also the curses. A faithful child of the Lord can indeed find a refuge, a hiding place in the God of the covenant. The Lord's promises of forgiveness of sins and life everlasting are most true and trustworthy because of the blood of his Son Jesus Christ. God's children can safely hide under the everlasting wings of God's love and care which He has spread out over his people.

Yet the ways of the Lord will be terrible for those who insist on disobeying Him and choosing the road to evil. Destruction comes to those who turn their backs on Him.

Truly, the way of the covenant does not change. Those who live by faith will be saved but those who do not will perish everlastingly. "Let us then approach

the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Heb 4:16).

*Blest be the LORD of my salvation,
For He has heard my supplication.
He is my strength, my shield forever;
I trust in Him, He fails me never.
So I am helped. Exult, my heart,
To Him your joyful songs impart.*

Psalm 28:4

Birthdays in February:

- 24 **FRED LUDWIG** will be 55
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, Ontario N1A 1T8

Birthdays in March:

- 3 **TREVOR HOFKINK** will be 29
C106 8920 165th Street, Edmonton, AB T5R 2R9
- 10 **JAMES BOONE** will be 11
1020 Abbeydale Drive, NE, Calgary, AB T2A 6H5
- 12 **GERRY EELHART** will be 45
C/O Mr. & Mrs. Peter Eelhart
305, 10041-149 Street, "Summit Village"
Edmonton, AB T5P 4V7
- 15 **JIM VANDERHEIDEN** will be 48
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8
- 18 **ROSELYN KUIK** will be 33
68 Lynn Lake Drive, Winnipeg, MB R2C 4N7

Congratulations to all of you celebrating a birthday. May our heavenly Father grant you all enjoyable days together with your family and friends. Continue to place your hope and trust in Him alone.

Till next month,

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

Jubilee Celebration at Smithers Canadian Reformed Church

On April 15, 2006, the Canadian Reformed Church at Smithers, British Columbia celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. What a blessing this was! In preparation for this big day, a beautiful commemorative book was put together by several ladies of the church. This book includes a summary of events over the last fifty years as well as many photographs. It contains family and group pictures and personal contributions consisting of illustrated stories of founding families and former ministers. (81 pages, full colour, bound; copies available for \$10 plus shipping by contacting Judy Hofsink at 250-847-9364 or sunnysidehill@telus.net).

Prior to the formal evening service that commemorated this special day, a fellowship celebration was held at Ebenezer School in the afternoon. At the school we enjoyed dressing in 1950s period clothing, watching a revolving PowerPoint presentation and movies of the olden days, and the camaraderie of fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Games were hosted for the young kids and a potluck supper filled the gymnasium to its maximum.

Our current pastor, Rev. Julius VanSpronsen, opened the formal evening celebrations by reading



Psalm 124. He explained how this Psalm is relevant for every church service as well as a celebration such as this because "if the Lord had not been on our side. . . they would have swallowed us alive." Many children's children's children (i.e. third generation) were sharing this evening with their grandparents who had founded the church. This would not have been possible if the Lord had not been on our side! The congregation has had to face its weaknesses and the community also sees this. At times it may have felt as though "the flood would

have engulfed us," but we were always reminded that "our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth."

The Smithers church has changed in many ways since its institution on April 15, 1956. There were forty members at the time of institution as compared to almost 400 today. The first presentation acknowledged an aspect of the fifty years that hasn't changed. Of the forty original members, eight were in attendance at this evening and seven of them are still members in Smithers today! To recognize the special part that

these eight members have played in the development of the congregation, a painting was given to each that depicted the first church and our current church with the backdrop of the beautiful Bulkley Valley surrounding the churches.

The second presentation was a skit performed by the Women's Society to share some of the changes that have occurred over the fifty years. Back then it was a Ladies Auxiliary, then it became a Bible Study, and finally Deborah Women's Society. A review of the minutes of the early years (all in Dutch) indicated that the ladies were sent a kind note to say the sweaters and knitted hempes could not be used by Mission Aid Brazil! It was also dutifully noted in the minutes that they now had enough money to move from instant coffee to real coffee grounds! Today, the ladies take water to meetings, nursing mothers bring their babies, minutes are recorded on the computer, and the Internet is used as a research aid. How times have changed!

The audience was also treated to some excellent music including a performance from the elementary school children, an organ solo, and a piano duet.

The last portion of the program was an opportunity for guests to speak some congratulatory words. A representative of the Smithers Ministerial Association reminded us that fifty years is a testimony to



faithfulness, unity, and growth – to what God has done for us.

Next, the Mayor of Smithers explained why he thought the statement that Smithers is a community with “too many churches” was actually a very positive thing and that Smithers is very blessed to have so many churches. He said the original families came to new land, they came with the gift of Jesus Christ, and they left a lasting legacy – the church. He shared how he personally knows many of the families in the congregation and was thankful for how we have become part of the community. He ended by quoting from Philippians 4:8, 9, “Whatever is true. . . noble. . . right. . . pure. . . lovely. . . admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into

practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”

The last two speakers were representatives of the local United Reformed Churches who testified as to how the churches have grown in love and respect for each other through the local unity talks. It was their prayer that we may have full unity with them one day.

What a great privilege it was to hear so many wonderful words spoken during this portion of the program and indeed throughout the entire evening!

Finally, Rev. B. J. Berends, a former minister, recounted some of his own experiences in Smithers and then closed the evening in prayer.

During this joyful time of reminiscing it became very clear that the Lord has been faithful to his covenant promises – also to his children here in Smithers.





Press Release: A Progress Report on the Activities of the Reformed Curriculum Development Committee, November 23, 2006

The Reformed Curriculum Development Committee (RCDC) meets twice annually as stipulated in its mandate. At its November 23, 2006 meeting, the RCDC received several reports on activities conducted on its behalf. This press release is intended to provide you with a brief overview of the activities, decisions, and plans of the RCDC and its subcommittee, the Curriculum Cooperative Committee (CCC).

The K-12 social studies curriculum development project

Three summers in the making, this project was finally completed during this past summer, when writers developed the third stage of its development. As you may recall, the writing team made use of a curriculum design that develops curriculum in three stages: stage 1 deals with formulating desired understandings; that is, what is it we want the students to know and do. Stage 2 deals with assessing what the students are to learn and do. The teaching and learning activities comprise the third stage of this design. Each stage took the writers a summer week in July to complete. The RCDC is grateful for the cooperation from many Canadian Reformed schools

across the country. The curriculum writers expended many hours on this effort.

The socials project was coordinated by the CCC, as are all RCDC-sponsored curricular projects. As part of the project's implementation, the CCC organized an orientation to this curriculum development by hosting an orientation session just before the start of the new school year (August 31, 2006). This was received with enthusiasm and appreciation. Many found the curricular model used to be very clear and purposeful. The CCC will be working on further implementation strategies as well as on review of implementation at schools.

Feedback was also received from the Curriculum Assistance for Reformed Education committee (CARE), the CCC counterpart in Ontario. This committee has studied our document in quite some detail and has forwarded us its observations and comments.

A professional resource centre

As approved by the RCDC at its March 3, 2006 meeting, the CCC has installed a few shelves in the CCES building location. This site will function as a resource for valley-wide Canadian Reformed

schools. As the title suggests, the resource centre contains books, periodicals, videos, DVDs, and copies of RCDC curricular projects. These are available upon request from staff members.

The RCDC has also approved the creation of an RCDC website to make all RCDC materials accessible to interested parties, password accessible and mostly as "read only."

Church history project

This project is mainly the work of authors Mr. A. Nap and Mr. P. Torenvliet, who, under the auspices of the RCDC, have been busy with the writing of a church history series, *The Flame of the Word*, geared primarily for the grade 4-7 grade levels. The series is comprised of three volumes, each dealing with main events and activities in the history of the church, covering material from Pentecost to the twenty-first century. Volume two is actually split into two books. The authors are now working on the last volume in this series. Each volume is accompanied by an elaborate and beneficial teacher's manual, which has proven to be extremely helpful for teachers of this course. While they are happy to report that many of our schools across the country have now purchased class

sets of the first two volumes, the authors keep being challenged by time, as both are busy with their other commitments.

The RCDC is grateful for the blessings upon this project and encourages its authors to persevere under challenging conditions. The RCDC also informs all readers and supporters of our schools that *The Flame of the Word* is available at VanderHeide Publishing and at Anchor Books. Especially parents of our students are encouraged to obtain these books. Not only can they themselves learn from this material, but they can also read and study along with their children.

Narration course

This is a course that was developed by Mr. Nap and Mr.

Torenvliet almost fifteen years ago. It has been offered to our valley schools twice and in other Canadian Reformed schools jurisdictions. Over the years, this course has acquired global recognition. In its November 23, 2006 report, we were informed that Mr. Nap and Mr. Torenvliet had traveled to South Africa (late June/early July, 2006) to present their story-telling course and have been asked to come back for a second run. In January of 2007, Mr. Nap is scheduled to teach it in Mexico. There is also the possibility for a session in Surinam, where the Evangelical School for Theology in Paramariba would like to give the story-telling and church history a higher profile. All this globe-trotting demands much time and energy, not only in

travel but also in formulating presentations meaningful to the area.

Conclusion

The above demonstrates again to us that God has richly blessed us. He has given people gifts to be used for his Kingdom. We are grateful for these gifts and we ask that you continue to pray for wisdom and strength in our endeavours. Pray that we maintain our focus on God's calling to fulfill our cultural mandate.

The Education Matters column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association East. Anyone wishing to respond to an article written or willing to write an article is kindly asked to send materials to Clarion or to Otto Bouwman obouwman@cornerstoneschool.us



Press Release



Press Release for the Combined Meeting of the Board and Committee of Administration, Inter-League Publication Board, December 13, 2006

The chairman of the Board, Mike Vandeburgt, opened the meeting in a Christian manner and all were welcomed.

Present were the following. For the board, representing the League of Men's Societies in Ontario, John Schutten and Mike Vandeburgt. Representing the League of Women's Societies in Ontario, Mary DeBoer and Betsy Kingma. For the Committee of Administration (CoA), Paul DeBoer, Cathy Jonker, Brian Jager, Annette Nobel, and Debbie Swaving. Theresa Westrik was absent with notification.

The agenda was established. The marketing report prepared by Theresa Westrik was presented. All the representatives in each congregation have recently received a newsletter with an update on new materials. The ILPB Direct Book Club is growing slowly and Theresa will continue to publicize it to encourage membership. The web page (www.spindleworks.com/ILPB) will be updated as needed.

Debbie Swaving updated the meeting with sales figures for the last year. In the last six months 1,724 books were sold.

Cathy Jonker gave a progress report indicating the progress of various books being worked on. A new translator is now available. Since the last meeting a workbook on James by Rev. Schouten has

become available. The commentary on 2 Corinthians by Rev. Selles has been reprinted.

Brian Jager presented the financial statements. The financial situation is good, even though sales are a little down. There are sufficient funds to print some new books.

Information for the yearbook of the churches was reviewed for accuracy. The board will discuss ways to recommend other Reformed study guides that are not printed by the ILPB. The board updated the CoA on books being reviewed for publication. Possibilities for book reviews in a couple of Reformed magazines were discussed.

Question period was held. The press release was approved and the meeting was closed with prayer.



Reviewed by C. Van Dam

***Whatever Happened to Truth?*
Andreas Kostenberger, Ed.,
(Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway)**

Additional information: Paperback;
173 pages; \$20.00 CDN

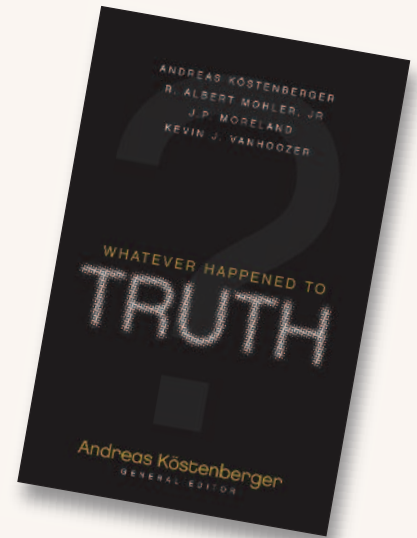
In our postmodern world, the notion of truth as conveying what is factually accurate and trustworthy has come under considerable pressure. The idea of truth has become subjective. The pragmatic credo of many is that whatever works for me is true. Postmodernism does not like to hear of absolute truth. To meet the challenge of changing conceptions of truth, the Evangelical Theological Society organized its 2004 Annual Meeting under the theme "What is Truth?" The four plenary addresses that came out of those meetings have now been made available in print. There is much to learn and reflect on in this book.

In the first chapter, Andreas Kostenberger examines Pilate's question, "What is truth?" within the context of the gospel of John and the entire Scripture. In the process he underlines some of the biblical perspectives on truth such as that truth is embodied in the person and work of Christ (John 14:6) and in his ongoing work in the world today. Kostenberger's careful exegesis and his stressing that the truth is the gospel of salvation which is found only in Jesus is a necessary and welcome emphasis in an age that derides absolutes.

Next, R. Albert Mohler addresses the issue from a cultural perspective. After showing how our culture dislikes absolutes and struggles with the loss of objective meaning, he underlines how Christians should be deeply concerned about the challenge postmodernism presents. However,

he also sees reason for hope. Postmodernism is inwardly contradictory as it too needs a firm beginning point which is not subject to doubt. Furthermore, postmodernism is not sustainable since no one can live without some understanding of truth as corresponding to reality. Mohler correctly asserts that the way out of the dilemmas brought about by postmodernism is to recognize and understand that God has revealed Himself to us in the Bible. He has spoken to us in language we can understand and we can have confidence that what He says is true. The Bible is God's speaking to us. We can never fathom God's truth in an exhaustive way but we accept that divine revelation is the source of all truth. Although postmodernism urges us to doubt, we must never affirm less than what is asserted in the creeds, confessions, and doctrinal statements of the church. Mohler ends his paper with a call to meet the challenge of our culture with a solid reaffirmation of biblical truth.

J.P. Moreland approaches the topic of the nature of truth as a philosopher. His refutation of postmodernism is tightly argued and strongly worded because the burden of what is at stake rightly weighs heavily upon him. His arguments are not easily overturned. He concludes with a call to arms, especially for those called to be teachers and scholars to serve the church and indeed also the unbelieving world. We are to defend and impart truth and knowledge of it. He warns that "not only are postmodern views of truth and knowledge confused, but postmodernism is an immoral and cowardly viewpoint that people who love truth and knowledge,



especially disciples of the Lord Jesus, should do everything they can to heal" (p. 76).

The fourth address entitled "Lost in Interpretation? Truth, Scripture, and Hermeneutics" is by Kevin J. Vanhoozer. It is a fitting climax to the book since it is an excellent and patient grappling with the issues of truth that reading the Bible in postmodern times evokes. He draws no hasty, cheap conclusions but carefully distinguishes the issues at stake. He clearly shows, for example, the limitations of simply relying on the idea of inerrancy to describe the authority of Scripture. His desire to rehabilitate the usage of the term infallibility is commendable (Cf. "this infallible rule," BC, Art 7). Although one may quibble about the way some issues are expressed or formulated, reading his discussion is most stimulating and rewarding. Due to the nature of the case, it will of course not be the last word. The debate on the proper way to interpret Scripture will continue, but those who have read this contribution (and his other writings) will be better equipped to meet the current challenges.

The editor concludes this worthwhile volume with an appropriate epilogue which pulls together the major themes of the book.

