



Clarion

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*The Scroll and
the Lamb*

Snatched Up

*Walking
Together
through the
Valley*

Grief is the price we pay for love



R. Aasman

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The Scroll and the Lamb

*Christians have kept their heads down
much like an ostrich buries its head in the sand*

It is always encouraging to read articles in a magazine such as *Clarion* that outline the challenges and dangers of our world and show how to deal with them. Thumbing through recent issues, I think of Dr. C. Van Dam's editorial on the severe moral crisis of our culture regarding gender blending. I also think of Rob Wildeboer's published speech regarding the need to ignite our culture through legal challenges and defence. Such articles not only point out the dangers of our world, but they show what we as Christians can do about it. The point is that Christians do not and should not take attacks against the kingdom of God lying down. Too often mainstream Christianity has been accused of a "quietist religion." In other words, Christians have ducked their heads when the salvos of the evil one are aimed their way and they have kept their heads down, much like an ostrich buries its head in the sand. The idea here is that this world is passing and will be burned up with fire on the last day. Christians can wait for a better day and a better world. Meanwhile there is nothing to be done for this world. However, such an attitude flies in the face of even such a basic teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ that we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

Reality check

Suppose we say, "I have read these articles and I have thought about what it means to be a Christian in this world and I am not going to take modern culture and the seductive attacks by Satan lying down. I am going to do something about it. I am going to make a difference." We love it when people talk so enthusiastically. We admire them. And we find ourselves feeling a little bit breathless when we start to think and talk that way ourselves. But then, perhaps, a small dose of reality sets in. We start to

consider whether we really can have an impact on our government and the legal system of our country. We wonder whether we can change ethics and morality such as it is in our culture. Do we really think, for instance, that we are going to bring back the norm of one man and one woman in a marriage as long as they are both alive? Do we really think we can change the mass dependency on alcohol, drugs, pornography, gambling, and other vices in our world? A reality check suggests that maybe with God's grace we can change ourselves and we can have some influence on our children and best friends. But changing society in such a fundamental and revolutionary way seems improbable.

The Lamb who is worthy

As a Christian you can feel like you are stuck between a rock and a hard place. We are supposed to be positive and active as we live out our faith in this world, but we wrestle with the tremendous obstacles that face us. However, the sense of being stuck is only true and it is only real if you think that your actions and accomplishments all depend on your own strength. We are reminded of what Paul writes in Philippians 4:13, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength."

*As a Christian you can feel like you are
stuck between a rock and a hard place*

At this time of year we commemorate the ascension of our Saviour. This is described in a very special and powerful way in Revelation 5. There we read of a scroll in the right hand of God as he sits on



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his throne in heaven. That scroll is described by some as being the Book of Life which is referred to elsewhere in the Book of Revelation. Given the context and given the obvious connections with Daniel 7:13-14 and Matthew 28:18, the scroll with the seven seals in the hand of God would be better understood as God's plan outlining the purpose and conclusion of redemptive history. The question then comes up in Revelation as to who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll. Who is worthy to run this world? The answer indicates that there is only one person who is worthy and that is the Lamb, looking as if it had been slain. This is Jesus Christ of whom the four living creatures the twenty-four elders then sing:

You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.

Because Jesus Christ laid down his life for sinners and redeemed them with his blood, He has the right to take the scroll of history as He ascends into heaven. He is now the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the King of kings and Lord of lords. He has almighty power and authority to run this world in accordance with God's plan. And what is at the heart of that plan? For what reason does Jesus Christ now govern the world? To gather, defend, and preserve the very people whom he redeemed with his blood, to make them a kingdom and priest to serve God on earth.

Opening the seven seals

Almost immediately, the Book of Revelation demonstrates how Jesus Christ starts to open the seven seals. The opening of the first four seals which send out the four horsemen of the apocalypse outlines for us that we live in a world of much turmoil and suffering that affects believers and unbelievers alike. What it does for the believer is test, prove, and strengthen faith. The opening of the following seals makes clear that everyone who is chosen by God, sealed by Jesus Christ, and holds in faith to Jesus Christ cannot and will not be separated from the love of God in Christ Jesus. While the ups and downs of life may challenge us and while Satan may

In This Issue

Editorial – The Scroll and the lamb — R. Aasman	234
Treasures, New and Old – Snatched Up — D.W. Vandeburgt	237
Walking Together through the Valley (I) — R. Ludwig	238
Welcome for Rev. Schouten and Family — M. VanWoudenberg	241
Education Matters – CRTA-West Convention — P. Groenwold	243
Letters to the Editor	246
Press Releases – Classis Niagara, Classis Ontario West	248



relentlessly step up his attacks, a true believer will not succumb to Satan or the culture of this world. Amazingly we learn that the number of believers is so great that they cannot be numbered. Obviously we should not be thinking too small about the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Proper optimism

In our brief analysis of Jesus Christ's ascension into heaven we realize that we have a lot to celebrate. On the one hand, Jesus Christ is absolutely sovereign in this world and, on the other hand, we as believers are a kingdom of priests in this world. Therefore in our country, matters of government, the legal system, education of children and youth, the institution of marriage, issues of morality, and so on all belong to Jesus Christ and require the kingly and priestly service of those whom He washed in his blood and Spirit. If we have a strong and very real sense of the power of Jesus Christ and our position in his kingdom,

We have every reason to be optimistic and positive in Jesus Christ

we will understand not only how much we are needed but also how much we can do in our world and within our culture. We can effect change through Him who strengthens us. How many poor, poor people are out there in our world who would never hear anything good or experience anything good unless they meet Christians who demonstrate the power, the glory, and the will of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?

We have every reason to be optimistic and positive in Jesus Christ. He redeemed his people and He is running this world for the sake of his people. How about a little more of the attitude, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength"?



D.W. Vandeburgt

Snatched Up

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The ascension of the Lord Jesus brings to mind a rather benign and pastoral scene. We see the Lord Jesus slowly leaving the earth with hands outstretched until a cloud takes Him from the view of his watching disciples. The book of Revelation, however, takes a much more dramatic approach to this event. An enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads awaits the birth of a child so that he might devour that child the minute it is born. But before the dragon can devour this child, it is snatched up to God and to his throne.

The enormous red dragon is that ancient serpent we meet in Genesis 3. His seven heads represent wisdom and his ten horns represent power. His seven crowns represent his authority, with which he deceives people. The woman about to give birth is figurative of the church of old in anticipation of the birth of Christ. The snatching up of the child to God and to his throne is the story of the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For all the drama of how the ascension is presented in Revelation there is also something disturbing. What is disturbing is that while Christ ascends unto the safety of heaven, the church is left behind to deal with the ongoing assaults of that ancient serpent. Do you see the paradox of the ascension? On the one hand Christ is caught up to God and his throne

while on the other hand his followers are left behind to endure all manner of struggles and persecutions.

At first glance this turn of events seems alarming. But upon further examination it really is not troublesome. Being left behind is not upsetting for believers when two things from this chapter are kept in mind. One, the struggles and persecutions of the church come as a consequence of the great dragon being hurled down from heaven. He is hurled down because Christ ascended to heaven having defeated him by his death and resurrection. The suffering of the church is a reminder that Christ has gained the victory over sin and Satan. The attacks of Satan upon the church are fuelled by his rage that he could not devour the child and so as a last resort he makes war on the rest of the woman's offspring, that is, the church of the new dispensation. We see him attacking in the different ways Revelation speaks of: the beast of the sea, which represents physical threat; the beast from the land, which represents spiritual deception; and the harlot, which represents material seduction. The church today is attacked from within and from without by these very things. But with Christ on his throne ruling all the nations with his iron sceptre, we know that He defends and preserves her against all her enemies.



MATTHEW 13:52

*“And her child was snatched up
to God and to his throne.”*

Revelation 12:5

There is something else that teaches us not to be disturbed by the ascension. It is the fact that God has prepared a place for the church in the desert. We are left behind, but by no means are we left alone in this spiritual battle. For what is the significance of the church being in the desert? The desert is the place where God's people learn that He alone nourishes and cares for them. It is where the helpless are protected by God's power and nourished by his Holy Spirit. When one thinks of the desert and the people of God, one thinks of Israel in the wilderness learning to live not only on the bread God provided but on every word that came from his mouth. The mouth of Satan constantly spews out lies in order to deceive the followers of Christ. Their refuge is found in the desert where they learn to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the ascended Lord Jesus Christ.

The paradox of the ascension underlines the key teaching of the book of Revelation, namely, that things are not always as they seem. It is not the ugly monsters of the book who are victorious. It is the child snatched up to God and his throne who is victorious. He is coming and He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. His name is King of kings and Lord of lords and all who are holding to his testimony will be snatched up to meet Him in

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Walking Together through the Valley (Part 1 of 4)

This seminar was recently presented by Mr. Ludwig in Carman, Manitoba

One of the most gripping moments in recent history in our North American experience would have to be the events of September 11, 2001. Just months ago we marked the fifth anniversary of the terrorist attacks where we could revisit the many and varied emotions we experienced during those tense hours and days. Once the dust settled, we witnessed a nation (or maybe nations) in grief. Many mourned the loss of loved ones, while others clung desperately to a faint hope of discovery or survival of missing relatives and friends. Those who sacrificed their lives in an effort to save others were given special attention and we were even invited to join in numerous public funeral or memorial services. While we watched these events unfold on our television sets we could not help but feel the effects of grief. We grieved empathetically for those who suffered loss. We grieved the loss of a sense of security. We grieved over the effect of sin in this world and the hopelessness of separation from God. We grieved because it was the natural thing to do.

Our Queen addressed the nations in one of the memorials by way of a letter. As she expressed

sympathies from the Commonwealth she added this fitting reflection, "Grief is the price we pay for love." I would like you to tuck that away for a moment, in your minds. "Grief is the price we pay for love." I hope to reflect upon this in a biblical context.

A death-denying society

Many writers in the area of grief and bereavement have suggested that we live in a death-denying society. Much of what is said and done in the mainstream of society pushes the imminence of death to the outer edges. Our society likes to think of freedom in retirement, golden experiences in aging, an ongoing pursuit of youthfulness,

Grief seems to bear the stigma of something contrary to faith

a marginalization of those who are no longer vital, and a quiet and dignified slipping away at the end of it all, all the while hoping that we will be long remembered beyond our death. The presence of death in life opens the door to examining the meaning and significance of each day in the context in which we live. For many it seems easier to live each day like this life will never end. In the

same vein, we experience a grief-denying society. A society that is unwilling to contend with death is equally resistant to coming to terms with the grief that accompanies loss. The journey of grief is expected to be short and expedient and we champion those who can best shoulder the experience and move on to new and better things. We feel best when others are tidy and private in their grief.

How is it in the church of Christ? Certainly we live in the light of eternity. We live with the hope of a better day, when tears and grief will be no more. We acknowledge death in terms of the victory of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures are rich in gospel proclamation about the sting of death being removed and the hope of the resurrection. I hope to speak about this in a future article. But where does this leave the grieving child of God who has lost a loved one? Can we sing the victory song and will it vanquish our feelings of grief? I suggested at the outset that we grieved over 9/11 because it was the natural thing to do. I hope to convince you in the light of Scripture that this remains our duty to grieve the loss of our loved ones and it remains our responsibility to give our brothers and sisters in Christ permission to grieve.

Grief with hope

The words of 1 Thessalonians 4:13 are often shared in times of bereavement: "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant of those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope." These words of encouragement to a bereaved child of God are intended to ease the pain of separation, yet are often infused with a sense of reprimand or correction to one who is grieving, suggesting that by grieving their loss they may be adopting a worldly position. One may suggest to the grieving that they can be lifted above their grief by virtue of their relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Thus we are not like the rest of men who have no hope. The suggestion may be that grief does not really exist for a Christian, or at least that its bite has been removed. Some understand grieving as a display of weak faith and giving up on Jesus Christ and so steer their brother or sister out of its path towards a more appropriate "faith" response to loss. In our losses we are often challenged to think in "other-worldly" terms and abandon the context of this life in favour of the life to come.

Let me not be misunderstood. There is hope for the bereaved in our Lord. Scripture is rich and clear on that point. Yet there is also grief in the life of the Christian. This is what Paul refers to in 1 Thessalonians – there is grief for the bereaved Christian, yet it is unique in that it is enveloped in hope; unlike those who without Jesus Christ encounter a grief with no hope (or false hope). This is the topic we will encounter first. Let us define and describe grief with hope so that there can be increased understanding about the physical,

emotional, social, and spiritual journey that the bereaved Christian is faced with. Once we have established this groundwork we can explore the roles we can play in assisting the grieving in a practical way.

Our Saviour worked out his grief in tears and prayer

We have to reckon with the realization that in the Christian context, dare I say the church, there is a built-in resistance to grief. Grief seems to bear the stigma of something contrary to faith. Grief is seen as a worldly response to bereavement and in many ways at odds with the gospel of hope. It is important that we first break down that construct.

What is grief?

Let's begin with defining grief. Grief is anguish, sorrow, or pain that is experienced both mentally and physically when we are separated from someone or something we hold dear or even love. Grief may be experienced over temporary or permanent separation. Grief is our response to the hurt of separation. We may grieve over the loss of a job or business. We may grieve when a dear friend moves away. We even grieve when a treasured item is lost or broken. We definitely grieve when a loved one dies. We express this in our infancy when things are taken from us that we want and we carry this response with us throughout our lives. We all know something of the symptoms. It may be a pain that starts deep in our belly, or catches in the back of our

throat; it often constricts our chest or causes our head to ache. It may prompt us to become openly emotional, either angry or sad, or feel empty and detached. A strict definition of grief is elusive because it is unique, influenced both by our personalities and our individual circumstances. Nevertheless it is brought on by separation, by interrupted love, and it seems to have a course of its own to run.

Grief is natural

Grief is our natural human response to loss. We're wired to grieve. I would even suggest it is part of our being made in the image of God. We read in Scripture how the Lord God the Creator was moved to holy grief and sorrow over the broken relationship with his people and that his heart was filled with pain. God grieved over the loss of communion with man whom He had created to serve and love Him. This covenant love relationship, broken by man's sin, came with a price: God's grief and man's grief. This led to the destruction of mankind in a flood, where only Noah and his family were saved because they remained, by grace, in covenant relationship with God. We can read more about this in Genesis 6. So we see that the relationship between love and grief is first discovered in the one who has revealed Himself as love.

We also see that our Lord Jesus Christ experienced grief in his lifetime. We read in Matthew 14 that after our Lord heard of the death of John the Baptist He withdrew to be alone in a solitary place. It was only the persistence of the crowds that followed Him that cut this expression of grief short. We are all familiar with the

stirring passage where Jesus wept at the grave of his friend Lazarus. I have often wondered about this passage. How could our Lord, who certainly had a good understanding of the purpose of his mission on earth and was able to keep in constant perspective the will of his Father, how could He be so moved to weep along with the people? If grief is incompatible with faith, would this suggest that the Lord was uncertain here, or lost focus or even lacked faith? Impossible! Yet He wept. Many suggest it is evidence of his true human nature, that He felt the pain of separation from those He loved. It was a natural response to grieve. Others suggest He may have wept over the futility of the people's mourning and their lack of understanding of his purpose on earth and in that respect we may see that this may speak even more dramatically of his divine nature, in light of God's grief in Genesis 6. I think it is safe to say it was part of his suffering, that He experienced grief, even though He was without sin. We see this more acutely in the Garden of Gethsemane as He anticipates the reality of being forsaken by and separated from his Father in Heaven in his impending death and burial. Jesus knew of a grief far more intense than any of us will bear, because He bore it for us. And what did He do? He wept and sweated droplets of blood and called out to his Father in prayer asking for relief. Here we see that grief and trust in the Father are not running cross current. Our Saviour worked out his grief in tears and prayer. It is for this reason He was prophesied to be a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"!

And then we can go on citing numerous examples of grief and its

expression in the lives of believers recorded in the Old Testament. We can think of Joseph mourning over his father Jacob and the lengthy funeral procession that ensued; of David lamenting over the death of Saul, the anointed of the Lord, or upon the report of the death of his rebel son Absalom; of Job sitting in sackcloth and ashes grieving the death of his children while his friends gathered to comfort and counsel him. There is a long tradition of Jewish mourning practices born out of the actions of the Jewish forefathers. It is not my intention to direct you to their customs, but rather to show that there is a place for grieving in the life of the people of God. Perhaps even more emphatically: grief is an important element in the growth and maturation of God's people.

The price we pay for love

We need to take a moment to reflect again on the words of the queen I mentioned at the beginning to test their validity. Do you remember? "Grief is the price we pay for love." The more you reflect on this you will come to see there is almost a mathematical exactness to it. If you could quantify emotions you might develop a formula to show that for the amount of energy one puts into a loving relationship with someone (or even something) there is a reciprocal amount of grief that is required to unravel that relationship when it is interrupted or terminated. Love and grief are inextricably joined. Grief in itself is not sinful but it is our natural God-given response to the brokenness of sin. You might say when we became "as wise as God knowing good and evil" we also inherited the capacity to grieve, which God

already had, as we were made in his image. Now if we accept this premise that grief is the price we pay for love and we expand our thinking to realize that our greatest calling from God is to love Him and only second to that, love our neighbour, we begin to see that we are destined or called to grieve in this life. The only way to avoid grief is to avoid loving and thus to deny God what He requires of us. And so you see why I insist that grief is part of our Christian experience.

And we need to reflect a little more. We can't leave this as mere theoretical consideration as we move forward. For grief is a thorny business because it doesn't remain with considering just matters pertaining to our head, to thought and reason; it burrows deep down in our hearts, in areas that we often are unwilling to expose or even examine. But isn't this the very thing God requires of us in relation to Him and to our neighbour? He doesn't want a superficial relationship with us, one only well thought out and militarily exercised. He wants our hearts, for this is where love dwells. And in the same way in our deepest relationships with each other, as husband and wife especially, but also as parents and children, as friends, as brothers and sisters in the Lord, we are not only called to acts of service but to deeper relationships of love that link our hearts and that are all the more richer when bound up with the Spirit in Jesus Christ. And so this business of grieving is tied up with the depth of our relationship with the Lord and our neighbour. This is sensitive and vulnerable territory that we will be exploring. Are you willing to go there?



Welcome for Rev. Schouten and Family

Installation

On January 7, 2007, Aldergrove church witnessed the installation of their new minister, Rev. R. Schouten. The installation service was led by Rev. Wielenga and featured Luke 2:21-40 as the framework and verse 30 as the text: "For my eyes have seen your salvation." In his message, Rev. Wielenga spoke about how we as modern readers know almost nothing about Simeon, who spoke those words about Jesus. What we do know, and what is important, is that Simeon was controlled by the Spirit and saw God's plan of salvation in the child. We had far more, he stressed, for we see the completed plan and know the resurrected Christ. He encouraged us to look beyond the physical and see the spiritual. Connecting this to the occasion, Rev. Wielenga encouraged the congregation to accept our new pastor as a man through whom God helps us see the plan of salvation and though his flesh is weak like ours, he brings the words of life. It is God's word he brings and so also through his preaching we can say, "My eyes have seen your salvation."

After the official installation, the congregation enjoyed a time of fellowship, celebrating also the baptism of a new covenant child into the congregation that day. The two events went together wonderfully as once again we received the concrete sign of God's promises.



Welcome evening

The evening was a time celebration. Opening the official welcome evening for the Schoutens, chairman of the council, Casey Dehaas, noted that as a church Aldergrove had been vacant for approximately two years. However, Rev. Schouten was the first minister called by the church when it was instituted in 1994. Therefore, it took Rev. Schouten twelve years, nine months, and several days to finally arrive from the time we first called.

As a representative for Classis, Rev. Wielenga delivered perfect deadpan humour – explaining that Classis was, all at the same time, happy, sad, and largely indifferent to what had happened. Happy for Aldergrove's gain, they were nevertheless conflicted by Abbotsford's loss. Since Rev. Schouten remained in the same classis, they were not affected as a body and so were indifferent to the whole affair. While the crowd

laughed loudly, Rev. Wielenga turned it around and offered the classis' sincere thankfulness to God for Aldergrove's blessing.

Rev. Bouwman offered congratulations and a reminder of how God once again shows He is an active God among us by sending a specific servant of his own choosing to his church. After Rev. Lodder added Cloverdale's best wishes, Rev. Visscher was introduced as the pastor of Aldergrove's "mother" church, Langley. Based upon this introduction, Rev. Visscher was unsure about what precisely this made him. After the roars of laughter died down, he also mentioned his happiness for Aldergrove and the desire to see Rev. Schouten on Langley's pulpit as well.

The chairman of council read off several emails from other churches sending their best wishes and took the opportunity to extend a special thank you to Rev. Visscher and Rev. Bredenhof for



their active involvement in our church family during our vacancy. Their efforts went beyond just preaching, extending pastoral visits and advice. The congregation will not soon forget their willing and dedicated service.

The speeches over, the Gems and Cadets took the stage and presented several songs for the Schoutens. They offered shirts to Kristy and Caleb and issued personal invitations for the children to join their ranks.

The Young People's Society presented a very slick Jeopardy game on Aldergrove. The competitors were Stephanie and Jillian Schouten, and though Jillian took the win in points, the final results were extremely close.

Next on the hot seat were Rev. and Mrs. Schouten. Their task was to match the male members of the adult bible study group with their wives' maiden names. Both made all matches without audience assistance. The bible study group ended their contribution with a list of exhortations for the congregation to pray for specific needs for the Schoutens in regards to their marriage, family, and ministry.

Music filled the air next, as the children's choir and the church's choral group, directed by Nicole VanWoudenberg and accompanied

by Karen Onderwater, presented a number of songs. Then it was back to trivia and Rev. Schouten had his own chance to display a deeper understanding of Aldergrove while being quizzed by the Young Adults Bible Study. He passed with flying colours, knowing things many members of the congregation had to admit they themselves did not.

Harold Ludwig delivered a welcome speech on behalf of Men's Society and on behalf of Women's Society Corinne VanDelft and Kandy VanDelden presented the Schoutens with an entertaining list of all the needs they may face around family and home – and a person from the congregation with the skills or trade to meet every one. During the presentation, they managed to include every single communicant member in the church. They concluded with the presentation of a map of Aldergrove with each family represented by a pin and a flag.

Nominated by Council to do the official welcome, Troy van Bostelen got his "revenge" by introducing each fellow council member in ways that elicited roars of laughter from the audience. Rev. Schouten received the lowdown on "Frugal Fred," "Tower of Power Bert," "Herman the Horse Whisperer," and others. Following his introductions, Chris Hoff presented

detailed statistics on Aldergrove church. Under the heading "Context is Everything," he explained how, based upon census demographics, those older than forty-five are "over the hill," the average age of the congregation is twenty-two compared to thirty-seven in general Langley Township, the congregation did not have Faith until less than five years ago (she is under five after all), and that Grace came after Faith. Who knew statistics could be fun?

Before the close of the evening, the congregation presented a new barbecue to the Schoutens as a welcome gift and Rev. Schouten himself offered his own greeting on behalf of himself and his wife and family. He then closed the evening in thankful prayer and enjoyed his second coffee social with his new congregation.

Inaugural sermon

The following Sunday, Rev. Schouten presented his inaugural sermon. The message used John 1:1-5 as the text, where it speaks about Jesus as the Word made flesh. In his message, Rev. Schouten spoke about the need to avoid the duality of life by trying to separate spiritual life and practical daily life. Instead, we need to fight the desire to hide in the darkness because of our sins, as Adam and Eve did. The light before Christ as just the predawn, but now we today have the full sunrise of grace; it is our task to live in that light and the minister's task to present the simple truth of Scripture and equip us to show the light to others.

It is the prayer of our congregation that together with our new pastor and his family, we may spend many years serving God and being a witness to those around us. May God continue to pour out the bounties of his grace also on his church in Aldergrove.

Piet Groenwold

Piet Groenwold is a teacher in Coaldale, and has probably attended more CRTA-West teacher conventions than anyone else on the prairies.

CRTA-West Convention, Coaldale, October 25-27, 2006



The staff and membership of Coaldale Christian School had the privilege of hosting the annual CRTA-West Convention last fall. On the evening of October 25, many of our colleagues came trickling in, some of them after a long journey. We were able to shake hands and it was wonderful to see numerous old and many fresh faces among the arrivals. Opportunities to socialize are rare in our situation; the distances are a problem.

The students in our care

The theme chosen for our 2006 convention was *Holistic Education in the Christian School*. Holistic education is directed at the whole person, including the mental, social, spiritual, and physical aspects of his/her being. Rev.

Poppe, Coaldale's minister, helped us begin thinking about the theme by addressing how we, as Christian teachers, ought to deal with the students in our care. The first part of his devotional dealt with who these children are before God; the second discussed how this influences our relationship with them.

When the covenant was renewed in Deuteronomy 29, we read that the children are part of it. The importance of keeping this covenant and not to "break faith with the wife of your youth" (Mal 2:14) is that God desires to have godly offspring. When the Lord's disciples attempt to restrict the access of little children to their Master, He is indignant (Mark 10:14). This again shows the love He has for the little ones. So how should we deal with these children? The Lord Jesus teaches us to welcome them, that is, to receive, accept, and bear with them – as if we receive Christ Himself. As much as we want children to emulate us, Christ teaches us that we must become like *children*. That means we approach others with humility, are never condescending, and show due gentleness and patience (See also Galatians 6 and Matthew 20). In conclusion, Rev. Poppe stated that for the well being of the students in our care, in order to become a trusted person to them,

we would do well to emulate the attributes of Jesus Christ. It is necessary, therefore, that we ourselves live close to Christ, develop a close relationship with Him, and study the Scriptures.

The story of our schools

Immediately following the devotional, Dr. Mike Goheen, the Geneva Professor of Worldview and Religious Studies at Trinity Western University in Langley, B.C., presented his address, "Which Story Is Shaping Your School?" In Romans 12:1-2 Paul urges us, in view of God's mercy, to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, a spiritual act of worship. Dr. Goheen focused especially on verse two, where we read, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." This text implies that we should say no to idolatry and yes to the gospel. We have to learn to discern, "to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing, and perfect will." What this means in our context is that we should not be conformed to western culture, but that we should say no to humanism and consumerism, as we aim to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Historically, two grand stories have been shaping western culture: the story of evolution and the story embodied in the Bible.



While the core beliefs of Christianity are summarized in 1 Corinthians 15:1-3, they are not shared universally. For example, an educator such as John Dewey has had a profound impact on the public education system in our country. He espoused several key doctrines, including humanism, in which human beings take the place of God as creator and redeemer. He also celebrated autonomous reason, believing that man could independently determine the meaning of human life and right and wrong. Furthermore, he promoted the role of science and technology, convinced that technology (non-human) enhances the rational organization of society (human). Lastly, he hoped for a new world, where freedom, material prosperity, justice, and truth would prevail. Largely due to his influence, modern humanistic education aims to pass on a unified body of universal scientific knowledge, equip a world of rational citizens, and build a more rational world leading to freedom, justice, truth, and material prosperity.

On the other hand, Dr. Goheen reminded us of the biblical story and education. We can view the Bible as a six-act play: creation,

fall into sin, Israel's mission, Jesus' mission, the church's mission, and the new creation. He suggested we live during the time period referred to as Act Five (the church's mission) above. As participants in this act, we realize that God's kingdom is already here, though not yet in fullness, that we have a foretaste of the kingdom (Hebrews 6), and that we are previews of the kingdom. Consequently, we must witness in all of life to the kingdom. Christian education, then, should be characterized by the insight into creation in the light of Scripture that will equip students to witness to Christ's rule over all creation. Furthermore, our

education should show what God intends. It is also education for witnessing in that we are called upon to witness in all areas of life. Lastly, it ought to provide "serviceable insight," so that students can serve the kingdom and serve others. The reason we have gifts is to serve God and others.

In our Christian schools we educate to form a "contrast community." Though we have not traditionally formulated our schools' tasks in this way, he suggested that we ought to aim to instill a sense of hope over against despair and consumer satiation, a sense of justice over against economic and ecological injustice, an awareness of truth over against pluralism and relativism, and of selfless giving over against a culture of selfishness.

In order for us to provide an education distinctly different from that in public schools, we must seek to reject the cultural idolatry that shapes these schools. We must base our education on a distinctive and comprehensive philosophy of education as we adopt a Christian approach that transforms goals, curriculum, pedagogy, evaluation, and structure.





Christian educators need to know the story of the Bible, our place in it, and how it shapes our educational task. We also need to be aware of our cultural story, its idolatry, and how it shapes education. Of course, we also require discernment to reshape educational forms by the gospel to achieve Christian education. Dr. Goheen directed our attention to the day we will appear before Christ. This is the Saviour who loves us and embraces us. It is our hope that He will say to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

ALL ABOARD

In his workshop on Thursday afternoon, Mr. Veenendaal, principal of the Immanuel Christian School in Winnipeg, reviewed nine aspects of a teachers' code of conduct. Teachers should be accountable, loving, show leadership, be above board, biblical, organized, available, respectful, and diligent. (Thus, the title of the speech was an acronym – all aboard.) After introducing these nine aspects of a teachers' code of conduct, Mr. Veenendaal gave each of the nine groups of participants one case study to consider, in which any of the nine aspects could be applied to resolve a conflict. The resolutions of each

group were presented to the plenary session and posted on the wall for all to see. During the remainder of Thursday afternoon, teachers and support staff were given the opportunity to attend a variety of workshops.

Business

That evening, colleagues tried their hand at curling at the Coaldale Curling Rink after supper. The wine and cheese function was also at the rink, which gave colleagues plenty of opportunity to socialize.

At its breakfast business meeting the next morning, the CRTA membership decided to have its next convention, and subsequent ones in the foreseeable future, at a retreat north of Regina. Also, the decision was made to keep the current CRTA-West in existence. A committee was struck consisting of two representatives from each staff, to study the role of the CRTA-West in the future.

Special-needs students

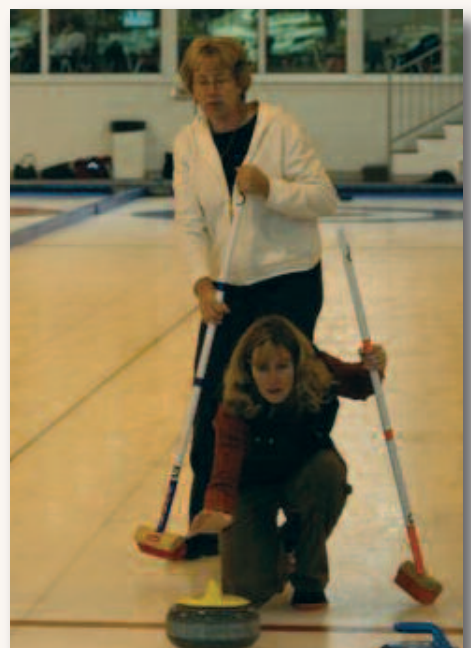
Mr. Mark Slomp is a counsellor and part-time lecturer at the University of Lethbridge. In his address on Friday morning, he focused especially on students with disorders that teachers are most likely to encounter in our classrooms: disorders first diagnosed in infancy, childhood, or adolescence, mood disorders, and eating disorders. Throughout his presentation, Mr. Slomp suggested ways to provide help to students with these disorders. Careful observation and the learning environment itself are extremely important. We must also attempt to be proactive, rather than reactive, if we want to help these special-needs students. We were encouraged to develop support teams, communicate regularly with parents, demonstrate acceptance

of all students, especially the most difficult and challenging. We were reminded of the importance to love first and teach second, thereby creating an environment in which each of them can be successful.

Closing

As lunch approached, we enjoyed a brief concert by the *Symphonia*, the school orchestra of the Greijdanus College in The Netherlands. Following that, Mr. J. Harthoorn, principal of the hosting school, officially closed the 2006 convention. Our subsequent lunch with our guests and colleagues brought a most enjoyable, educational, and informative convention to an end.

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
 bouwman@cornerstoneschool.us





Dear Editor,

Rev. Stam's editorials manage well to engage and provoke the reader. I have a good appreciation for them and only question his leaning on occasion. This time, however, the tilt was not towards the positive side. Although the editorial entitled "Appeals" (Volume 56, Issue 5) clearly describes the ecclesiastical process of appeals to our broader assemblies for our benefit, giving the why, when, and how, I have concerns with certain conclusions that may be drawn as well as the timing of the article.

First, in striving to make a case on approaching a general synod, I find that Rev. Stam's editorial appears to put a negative spin on appeals. He paints a picture of them almost being a waste of time because of the due process required to file one. Words like "doomed" and "dies" don't offer a lot of encouragement. It is not the ultimate success of the appeal that should drive us to submitting one, but as he does point out and could have given more stress, the fulfilling of one's rights and obligations as told us in 1 Corinthians 12. Besides, general synod is not the only receiver of appeals; many are directed to the regional synods and classes that convene annually. There is value in studying Scripture and the confessions on an issue, discussing it with others, composing your thoughts. Through the appeals process people are alerted to a concern and receive food for thought. Let us not give the impression that unless an appeal intended for general synod actually is admitted there and is sustained, that the appellant's efforts have been in vain. So the process requires hard work and persistence; but then these traits ought to be marks of the Christian.

Next, I find it regrettable that a hint of abuse of the common order is put forward with respect to past synods' admissibility decisions on the matter of women's voting rights. And further, should future synods not accept a lawfully presented submission on this matter (from an individual or church), that then the writer suggests that churches will proceed on their own. Even though he rightly laments such an outcome, the use of the words "abuse" and "obstruct" regarding the possible failings of synod sends a message of some legitimacy should a

church then do their own thing. I hope I'm reading a little between the lines here. Rev. Stam pleads for consistency with respect to allowing individual members to appeal directly to general synod on old matters considered belonging to the churches in common. This has been dealt with and decided on by the past synods. Synod Abbotsford repeatedly questioned the admissibility of individual appeals. Synod Neerlandia made decisions to declare some inadmissible. Only two churches appealed this to Synod Chatham 2004 and the reasoning to uphold Synod 2001 decisions are clearly outlined. Why then question consistency (with what?) in this editorial when the process has been clarified? Let's work with the words of 1 Corinthians 13: 4-5, "Love ... does not insist on its own way" (ESV). That command applies to churches as well as individuals as we could see in the editorial on congregationalism two issues back.

Lastly, I find the thrust of the article troublesome in respect to timing with Synod Smithers right around the corner. Rev. Stam subtitles the editorial "The church is not a political arena." The Second Provisional Agenda that the convening church of Synod 2007 recently sent to all the churches contains a submission from the church of Hamilton called "Matter of Women's Voting." This is the church of which Rev. Stam is member and minister emeritus. The church of Hamilton did not address the question of admissibility of appeals to Synod 2004. That this letter on the stated topic comes to Synod direct from the church may be within the parameters of CO Articles 30 and 33. Yet in view of its timing, one might consider Rev. Stam's editorial approaching the political lobbying he warns against. Is it proper to now "appeal" this whole matter via the press? There can be an "obstruction" of matters but there can also be a "pushing of an agenda." The caution Rev. Stam urges has to be in evidence by all parties. We pray for wisdom in Synod's dealing with the issues and the churches response to it. May God be honoured and the churches edified.

*Ben Meerstra
Chilliwack BC*

Dear Editor:

Re: Volume 56, Issue 6, March 16, 2007. My good friend Martin Van Bostelen wrote you a letter referring to his "ugly" memories of the "Liberation of 1944" in The Netherlands. Then he says: "We all think 1892" (I believe that he refers to the days of the "Doleantie"), "was so great; well, the Lord did not think much of it. He destroyed that church in fifty years. The reason it never worked, rotten from the beginning, was compromise." Wow, how does my brother know exactly what the Lord is thinking?

The lesson that we can learn from the "Doleantie" is that brothers and sisters in the Lord can live in relative harmony within the same church federation. For the benefit of our younger readers, who may or may not have much knowledge of Reformed church history in Holland, in brief the following: as a result of liberal tendencies within the Reformed Church (*Hervormde Kerk*) in Holland, a large group of people left that church in 1834. The churches resulting from that separation (*Afscheiding*) existed separately from the *Hervormde Kerk* under the name "Afgescheidene" (separated) or "Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken" (literal translation: Christian Reformed Churches) until the year 1886. In that year, there was another exodus from the *Hervormde Kerk*, led by Abraham Kuyper, among others. Few Reformed people would actually question the legitimacy of this second exodus called "Doleantie." The word "Doleantie" comes from the verb mourn or grieving, because these people said they were grieving over having to leave the established *Hervormde Kerk*.

Personally, I can not believe that Canadian Reformed people would have a problem with recognizing the separation that occurred in 1886 as anything else but a "work of the Lord" and calling Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) a faithful servant of the Lord, even with his faults and misconceptions about certain doctrines.

I would rather believe that my friend Martin refers to the reunification of 1892 as the problem date that "the Lord did not think much of." In that reunification the two groups that had left the *Hervormde Kerk* found each other and recognized each other as brothers and sisters again. I cannot see anything else but God's hand in this, Martin.

Now this new church union was not an easy one. From the *Afgescheidene* side they accused the others of leaving the *Hervormde Kerk* fifty-two years too late. Likewise, from the other side it was said that the *Afgescheidene* left fifty-two years early. This is a simplified picture of course, because nothing is ever simple in the church, especially differences over certain long time customs that never should be changed or abolished according to some.

This brings us to the real core of the matter. Between the lines of Martin Van Bostelen's letter, one can read his frustration with changes in liturgy, ecclesiastical forms, and customs. He is entitled to his opinions, but to call our efforts at unity with the United Reformed Churches "mildly [said] horse trading" goes too far. If unity is to be achieved and we do believe that God desires to have brothers and sisters live in unity, there will have to be a certain amount of give and take on both sides.

Last but not least, Martin, I think it is a blessing that we don't hear those words "goed gereformeerd" any more (literally translated it says "good reformed"). These judgmental words really defy being translated into the English language. We used to hear them quite often in early Canadian Reformed church life when most everyone spoke Dutch yet. It was often used to describe any church people who thought or dared to say anything contrary to the speaker's own opinion. What a horrible expression; I am glad there are no words for it in our language.

Art Lengkeek, Chilliwack

*Letters to the Editor should be written in a brotherly fashion in order to be considered for publication.
Submissions need to be less than one page in length.*

Press release of the meeting of Classis Niagara, held March 21, 2007 in Attercliffe

1. On behalf of the convening church of Dunnville/Wainfleet, Rev. D. DeBoer opened the meeting. He asked the meeting to sing Psalm 99:1, 2, read Zephaniah 1:1 and 3:1-20, and led in prayer. He welcomed the delegates as well as Br. and Sr. Rolf den Hollander.
2. The credentials were found to be in good order and there were two instructions.
3. Classis was constituted. Chairman was Rev. VanderVelde, clerk Rev. VanDam, and vice-chairman Rev. Souman. The chairman thanked the church of Dunnville/Wainfleet for the preparatory work. He remembered that the churches of Attercliffe and Lincoln were both still vacant. He wished the churches well and God's blessings in their work to call a minister. Rev. VanDam was blessed with the birth of a son. The church of Grassie could start worshipping in their new church building. The chairman welcomed Br. J. VanOmmen as convener of the committee for Blue Bell.
4. Br. Rolf den Hollander requested Classis to examine him so that he could be declared eligible to speak an edifying word. The required documents were scrutinized and found to be in order. Br. den Hollander had submitted a sermon proposal on Zephaniah 3:14,15 and he received the opportunity to read his sermon proposal. Classis discussed this proposal in closed session and the outcome of this discussion was that the examination could continue. Then Br. den Hollander was examined regarding his knowledge of the doctrines and creeds. After having discussed this examination in closed session and after Br. den Hollander declared that he will not teach anything contrary to the Reformed doctrines, as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity, Classis declared Br. den Hollander eligible to speak an edifying word in the churches for the period of one year, upon completion of his third year at the Theological College in May 2007. The meeting sang Hymn 35:1, 2 and the chairman led in thanksgiving prayer.
5. In question period ad art. 44 of the Church Order, the chairman asked the questions mentioned in this article. The delegates answered that the ministry of the office bearers is being continued in all churches; the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured by all the churches. In closed session two churches asked and received advice in matters of discipline.
6. After the lunch break, the reports of church visitation to all the churches in the classis were read in closed session and all received with thankfulness.
7. The church at Smithville had the books for the fund of the needy churches audited and a report was presented to Classis.
8. The report of the committee appointed by Classis Niagara September 20, 2006, to look at the viability of the Blue Bell congregation in light of its financial need, was discussed and Classis decided:
 - a) To continue the financial support by Classis Niagara for Blue Bell in the years 2007 and 2008;
 - b) to ask the church of Smithville to monitor the financial viability of Blue Bell and the developments in membership and to report to the December 2008 classis;
 - c) to strongly urge the consistory to promote and assist the members of the Blue Bell church for the work of evangelism in the neighbourhood;
 - d) to urge the church at Blue Bell to take up contact with the group of the URCNA in the Lancaster area in order to foster ecclesiastical relations with them.
9. The convening church for the next classis is the church of Grassie. The date for this meeting is Wednesday, June 20, 2007. Suggested officers are: Chairman: Rev. DeBoer, clerk: Rev. VanderVelde, vice-chairman: Rev. VanDam. Pulpit supply for vacant churches was requested and arranged until the end of this year. Rev. VanderVelde was appointed to represent Classis Niagara in case an invitation is received to attend an upcoming URC classis meeting.
10. Personal question period was made use off.
11. Censure according to art. 34 of the Church Order was not needed.
12. The acts were read and adopted and the press release was read and approved.
13. After Rev. Souman led in prayer, the chairman closed the meeting.

A. Souman
vice-chairman e.t.

**Press Release of Classis
Ontario West, March 21, 2007,
held in Kerwood, Ontario**

1. Opening

On behalf of the convening church of Grand Rapids, Rev. J. Ludwig called the meeting to order. He requested the delegates to sing from Psalm 19:3, after which he read Romans 12:9-21 and led in prayer.

Rev. Ludwig especially welcomed Br. Stuart Harsevoort and his wife and father. Br. Harsevoort requested to be examined in order to be allowed to speak an edifying word in the churches. Also fraternal delegates Rev P. Wallace of OPC and elders John and Jake Feddema of URC were welcomed.

2. Credentials

The delegates from Grand Rapids examined the credentials and found them to be in good order. Classis was declared constituted. The officers were Rev. R. Pot - chairman, Rev. Ludwig - clerk, and Rev. H. Versteeg - vice chairman.

Rev. Pot took the chair. For matters of memorabilia, Rev. Pot mentioned that Rev. Ludwig declined the two calls extended to him by the church at Willoughby-Heights and Lincoln and that the church at Hamilton extended a call to Rev. R. Aasman. Further, the chairman remembered that the Lord took home unto Himself sr. van Popta, the widow of the late Rev. J.T. van Popta.

3. Adoption of the Agenda

After some changes, the agenda for this meeting was adopted.

4. Examination of Br. Stuart Harsevoort

Br. Harsevoort delivered his sermon proposal on Luke 10:25-37. It was discussed in closed session. Classis judged the sermon proposal to be sufficient

and decided to proceed with the rest of the examination. Br. Harsevoort was examined in doctrine and creeds on Scripture, justification, and prayer. Classis judged the examination to be sufficient. Br. Harsevoort was given permission to speak an edifying word in the churches for a period of one year on completion of his third year study at the Theological College. The chairman requested Classis to sing Hymn 64:1 and Rev. Versteeg led in thanksgiving prayer. Br. Harsevoort was congratulated.

5. Examination of Br. Cornelis Kleyn

The chairman welcomed Br. Cornelis Kleyn and his fiancée. Br. Kleyn requested to be examined in order to be allowed to speak an edifying word in the churches. Br. Kleyn delivered his sermon proposal on Matthew 7:7-12. It was discussed in close session. Classis judged the sermon proposal to be sufficient and decided to proceed with the rest of the examination. Br. Kleyn was examined in Doctrine and Creeds on the fall of man, sanctification, and sacraments. Classis judged the examination to be sufficient. Br. Kleyn was given permission to speak an edifying word in the churches for a period of one year on completion of his third year of study at the Theological Study. The chairman requested Classis to sing Hymn 48:4 and Rev. Ludwig led in thanksgiving prayer. Br. Kleyn was congratulated.

6. Question Period (CO 44)

The questions outlined in Art. 44 (CO) were asked and answered. The church at Hamilton requested advice in a matter of discipline. Classis served the church at Hamilton with advice in this matter in closed session.

7. Correspondence

- a) The church at Ancaster requested advice according to Article 40 CO concerning the institution of a new church on West Hamilton mountain. Classis with thankfulness gave concurring advice. The church at Hamilton will represent Classis at the institution of this new congregation which is to take place on June 24, 2007, D.V.
- b) A letter from Interchurch Relations of Covenant East Classis of the RCUS conveying their greetings was received and read.

8. Fraternal delegates

Rev. P. Wallace addressed the assembly on behalf of Presbytery Michigan and Ontario of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Rev. D. Vandeburgt spoke some words in response. Elder John Feddema addressed the assembly on behalf of Classis Southern Ontario of the United Reformed Church. Rev. G. van Popta spoke some words in response.

9. Appointments

Convening church for the next classis: Hamilton
Date: June 13, 2007 in Hamilton
Suggested officers: chairman: Rev. J. Slaa, clerk: Rev. Pot, vice chairman: Rev. Ludwig.

10. Personal question period

Opportunity was given for personal questions.

11. Censure ad Article 34. C.O.

Chairman thankfully noted that censure was not necessary.

12. Adoption of Acts and Press Release

The acts were adopted and press release was approved.

13. Closing

The chairman requested the classis to sing Psalm 122:3 and then he led in prayer. The chairman closed Classis.

H. Versteeg