

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Volume 57, No. 6 ■ March 14, 2008

*The Father has given us
new birth.*

Inside this issue

- Happy Birthday!
- An Acceptable Sacrifice
- Building One Another Up





E. Kampen

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

Happy Birthday!

When you take the approach that you are born again when you decide to accept Jesus as your personal Saviour, you in effect become the agent of your own birth

Happy Birthday! Those are familiar words we hear every year on the day that we came into the world. Though we can't remember it personally, nor did we have anything to do with our coming into this world, we nevertheless will gladly accept the best wishes and perhaps a present to mark the occasion.

When you think about it, as Christians we actually should be able to have two celebrations each year. After all, Christians are people who have a twofold life. Besides the life received in our first birth, we also have a life received in our second birth (cf. BC 35).

Second birthday

While we may be eager to celebrate a second birthday each year, we run into a problem; namely, when exactly was that day? We may have come across people who do not find this a problem. They think they can tell you exactly when they experienced this second birth. Following the pattern of noting the exact moment someone is born into the world,

If someone asks us, "When were you born again," we can answer, "On Easter morning, 33 AD."

someone may say "I knew Jesus was mine at quarter to nine on May 24, 1999." You even have some Bible editions with a space in the back where you can fill out the date you accepted Jesus Christ as your Saviour. They work on the assumption that when you make the decision to accept Jesus into your heart or when you have some sort of warm glow overwhelm

you in a religious setting, that is the moment you are born again. Some may even go further and say that if you cannot tell when you were born again, you obviously are still an unbeliever.

We can quickly see that in this approach the whole analogy with birth comes apart at the seams. For one thing, it suggests that, unlike our first birth, we will consciously experience the second birth. Furthermore, when you take the approach that you are born again when you decide to accept Jesus as your personal Saviour, you in effect become the agent of your own birth. This is not to deny that people may have important religious moments in their lives. However, rather than calling this the moment of the second birth, we are better to see these as moments of maturing, of growing self-awareness as a child of God. It is in the same category as children going through different phases of development and coming to increased understanding and awareness of themselves. To give a simple example, a boy may come to the realization that he is a boy and that he is different from a girl by age four or five. This does not mean he was not a boy before that point. He was one all along. It was a matter of maturing.

The church's birthday

Does this mean that we have to do away with celebrating our second birth? Not at all! In effect, we do it every year already, without perhaps realizing it. After all, we celebrate Easter and we have good reason to call Easter our second birthday. If someone asks us, "When were you born again," we can answer, "On Easter morning, 33 AD." In effect, the answer will be the same for each and every Christian. Indeed, the first Easter is the birthday of the church.



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Visscher; Copy Manager: Laura Veenendaal
Coeditors: R. Aasman, E. Kampen, Cl. Stam, C. Van Dam

ADDRESS FOR COPY MANAGER:

Clarion, 57 Oakridge Drive South, St. Albert, AB T8N 7H2
E-Mail: veenendaal@shaw.ca

ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5
Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202
Subscriptions: clarionadmin@premierpublishing.ca
Advertisements: clarionads@premierpublishing.ca
Website: www.premierpublishing.ca

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


Subscription Rates for 2008	Regular Mail	Air Mail
Canada*	\$48.00*	\$ 79.00*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds  	\$60.00	\$ 77.00
International	\$89.00	\$130.00

*Including 5% GST – No. 890967359RT

Advertisements: \$15.00 per column inch

Full Colour Display Advertisements: \$21.00 per column inch

We reserve the right to refuse ads.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada,  through the Publication Assistance Program (PAP), toward our mailing costs.

Cancellation Agreement

Unless a written subscription cancellation is received we assume you wish to continue to subscribe. You will be invoiced prior to the subscription renewal date. Agreement No. 40063293; PAP Registration No. 9907; ISSN 0383-0438

Copyright © Premier Printing Ltd.

All rights reserved. No part may be reproduced in any manner without permission in writing from the publisher, except brief quotations used in connection with a review in a magazine or newspaper.

Useful Link: www.canrc.org

That we can speak in this way is rooted in the words as found in the first letter of Peter. Near the beginning of his letter, addressed to the strangers scattered in the world, he wrote, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. . ." (1 Pet 1:3).

There are a number of aspects to highlight so that we can see how Easter, when we remember the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is truly the birthday of all the believers. First, true to the nature of birth, we are passive. Peter clearly praises the Father as the one who has given new birth. Second, we see that this day is the birthday of all the believers when we keep in mind that Peter was writing to people who became believers some years after our Lord died. He sees himself standing in unity with his readers as he writes that the Father has given "us" new birth. Third, he makes it clear that the resurrection was the redemptive act by which God brought about this new birth as he says it happened "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

Between the cross and the resurrection

We need to have a keen eye for this pivotal place of the resurrection of our Lord. This is important to stress because so often we speak of the gospel of the cross. The cross points to Christ's death. Still, the cross, as significant as it is, is nothing without the resurrection. Spiritually speaking, you could say that between the cross and the resurrection there was a great suspense hanging over the world. Was the death of Christ the end? What about his words that He would be raised from the dead, were they going to come true? It is significant that in the letter where Paul stressed the cross near the beginning he ends up stressing the resurrection at the end. For, he stresses in 1 Corinthians 15 that if Christ was not raised from the dead, everything would be in vain and we would still be in our sins. If Christ remained dead, everything was lost. Paul also indicates the importance of the resurrection in his letter to the Romans. It is striking that in the midst of writing about how we are justified by faith he wrote that our Lord "was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification" (Rom 4:25). Note how he

In This Issue

Editorial – Happy Birthday — <i>E. Kampen</i>	126
Treasures, New and Old – An Acceptable Sacrifice — <i>D.G.J. Agema</i>	129
A Guide to Reformed Worship (9) – The Lord's Supper — <i>W.L. Bredenhof</i>	130
Reflections on a Conference (2) — <i>C. Van Dam</i>	133
Ray of Sunshine — <i>C. Gelms and T. Gelms</i>	136
Emmanuel Christian High School Graduation — <i>A. Kingma</i>	138
Here Come the Cadets	141
Education Matters — <i>A. Kingma and K. Sikkema</i>	142
Letters to the Editor	144
Readers' Forum — <i>C. Van Spronsen</i>	145



links our justification not to the cross but the resurrection. His words indicate that our Lord rose not only to indicate that we are justified but also to apply that justification to us.

Spiritual birthday

Everything then hinges on Easter, when our Lord rose from the dead. His resurrection is the spiritual birthday of the Christian church. Does that mean there was no church in Old Testament times? Of course there was. The Son of God has been gathering his church from the beginning of the world. Already then the Spirit was working faith in the hearts of God's children. We do have to keep in mind, however, that in the Old Testament everything was waiting for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. You could say that everything was bought on credit, with the bill sent to the address of our Lord Jesus Christ. His resurrection was proof that the outstanding bill of the Old Testament saints was paid in full and the bill of the New Testament saints was paid in advance.

All this impresses upon us that we can call Easter the birthday of the church, indeed, the birthday of all God's children. If we understand this, we will stay away from that subjective search for the moment of personal second birth. Part of growing up for a Christian is the realization that he or she is a Christian, born anew to a living hope. That realization will always take us to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

At Easter, therefore, keeping in mind who gave us our second birth, namely, the Father, and how He did that, namely, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we can all congratulate one another with a joyful, "Happy Birthday."



D.G.J. Agema

Rev. D.G.J. Agema is minister
of the Maranatha Canadian
Reformed Church at
Fergus, Ontario
d.agema@canrc.org

An Acceptable Sacrifice



MATTHEW 13:52

*“He will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the
LORD will prosper in his hand.”*

Isaiah 53:10b

When Paul explains to the Corinthians the importance of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus, he ends with a song of praise: “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 15:55-57). Who can remain silent when hearing the good news of the opened grave of our Lord Jesus Christ? His victory is our victory and it gives us lasting joy.

We see this same joy in the song of Isaiah 53. This is a well-known song, put to music in our *Book of Praise* with Hymn 21. This hymn starts with 53:1, but Isaiah’s song actually begins in 52:13. Starting at 53:1, the humiliation of the servant is emphasized. Yet looking back to 52:13, you see that the song starts with his victory: the Lord announces that his servant will be raised and lifted up.

The context of this song is then one of comfort, joy, and victory. This shows us that Christ’s suffering should not be isolated, but considered within the whole of God’s work. Likewise, to understand the joy of Christ’s resurrection we have to keep in mind his suffering.

So we go back to his sacrifice, described in the beginning of 53:10. Twice the word “will” is used in this verse. In the beginning of the

verse we learn that it was God’s will to crush Him, for it was God’s will to rescue his people through this sacrifice.

Then in the end of the verse, the noun “will” comes back: “The will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.” Instead of “will,” you could translate it as “good pleasure.” The latter expresses delight or desire. God’s good pleasure will prosper in this servant, for God delights in saving sinners.

It is noteworthy that in the Old Testament, the Lord connected “delight” with sacrificing. The person who brings the sacrifice has to do it with “delight,” that is, in faith. The Lord also tells his people that He delights in sacrifices that are pleasing to Him (see e.g., Psalms 40, 50). In response to their sacrifice, the Lord shows his delight by granting his blessing. In that joy the people of Israel could leave the temple and return home.

This helps us understand the words of Isaiah 53. This sacrifice of the servant is also pleasing to the LORD, for this sacrifice was brought in accordance with his will. The Lord Jesus showed perfect obedience to the Father. His delight was to do the will of God (cf. Ps 40:8).

And the Father shows his delight in accepting this sacrifice. How do we know? Well, it says in verse 10 that the servant will see his offspring and prolong his days.

In previous verses we have read about the servant’s death and burial – people who die and are buried do not see their offspring. But that the servant will see his offspring means death and grave will not be his end!

Yes, already at the beginning of the song (52:13) it says that this servant will be raised. Christ’s death is not the end, and his burial is not the end, though many thought it was. But the grave could not remain closed. Why? Because God was pleased with his sacrifice!

Christ’s resurrection is the proof that his sacrifice was accepted by the Lord. The open grave is the undeniable proof that Christ conquered death and that Christ paid for our sins. That is the victory! That is the power of God’s arm!

That is also why the song speaks about offspring. As with Christ’s other works, so also his resurrection is part of the one work of God, the work of redemption. The offspring of this sacrifice is the gathering of believers, the communion of saints. In this communion, God gives his delight to us, even life forevermore (Ps 133:3).

We rejoice in the victory of our Lord! We are on the way to the day when his work will be completed, when all graves will be opened, and we will receive life in all its glory!





Rev. W.L. Bredenhof is
co-pastor of the Canadian
Reformed Church at Langley,
British Columbia
wbredenh@telus.net

A Guide to Reformed Worship (Part 9) – The Sacraments: the Lord’s Supper

Today we want to consider what may be regarded as the most controversial of the elements in a Reformed worship service: the Lord’s Supper. Lest we think that there is anything new under the sun, it has always been controversial in the Reformed churches. Even the contemporary perennial question of who may be admitted to the table is something that was being hotly debated in the days of John Calvin.

However, my aim today is not to discuss that particular controversy, or indeed all of the controversies surrounding the sacrament. Nor do I intend to discuss the theology of the Lord’s Supper. Instead, I want to discuss the biblical basis for celebrating the Lord’s Supper in our worship services and then briefly reflect on three liturgical/practical items.

Does the Lord’s Supper belong in public worship?

Interestingly, the Lord’s Supper was not instituted in a public worship service or in anything even approximating one. Instead, the Lord Jesus instituted this sacrament at a private gathering where He and his disciples were celebrating the Passover. But following Pentecost we read these words about the early church: “And

they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). This certainly seems to indicate that the Lord’s Supper was a regular feature of the gatherings of the early church. The early church appears to have understood that it was the will of the Lord to have this sacrament administered in public worship.

The Lord’s Supper has always been controversial in the Reformed churches

This is confirmed by what we read in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthian church. In 11:20, Paul writes, “Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper.” While these words have a negative scolding tone, it is clear that the church did come together with the idea that they were partaking in the Lord’s Supper. This sacrament obviously played an important part in the worship of the church during and after the time of the apostles.

As time marched on, it continued to be a feature of Christian worship. Unfortunately,

with the passage of time the Lord’s Supper took on a deformed appearance. The mass had some external, formal connections to the Lord’s Supper, but it was in many ways a bastardization of the holy sacrament. God opened the eyes of the Reformers and the Lord’s Supper returned in its pristine biblical state. We can conclude that the sacrament rightly belongs in our public worship as a divinely instituted element through which God signs and seals his promises and we take, eat, and drink, in remembrance of Christ.

Covenantal dialogue

That brings us to consider some of the more liturgical and practical issues surrounding the sacrament. The first is closely connected with what we just concluded. In earlier articles, we have noted that Reformed worship is covenantal in structure. There is dialogue between the two parties of the covenant: God speaks and man responds. This “dialogue” is also present in the Lord’s Supper, albeit in a sacramental way.

While we do hear God’s Word spoken during the reading of the Form, God also speaks in a way during the partaking of the bread and wine. This is a sacramental form of communication in which

we receive “sure signs of Christ’s body and blood” (HC, Q/A 75). With this visible sign and pledge, Christ assures us that we share in his true body and blood and that all his suffering and obedience is ours (Q/A 79). Finally, we confess that the Lord’s Supper is God’s sacramental testimony to us that we have complete forgiveness of all our sins and are grafted into Christ through the Holy Spirit.

But what about us? What are we saying or doing in the Lord’s Supper? Well, obviously we are taking the bread and wine and eating them. In so doing, Scripture says that we are proclaiming the Lord’s death until He comes (1 Cor 11:26). Who are we making this proclamation to? Naturally, we proclaim this to one another and to ourselves. And when we hear this sacramental proclamation, our natural response is going to be thanks and praise for God and so the covenantal, dialogical circle is again complete.

Making this more concrete, whenever we celebrate the holy supper, we need to be self-consciously aware of what we are doing as an act of worship at this moment. I think that, just as in baptism, we often regard the Lord’s Supper as something passive, something done to us or for us. However, the Lord’s Supper is intended to be an act of worship, something that God’s people do and do with their hearts focused on worshipping. Keeping this in mind, during the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine, we should be concentrating on what these elements sign and seal to us. Regrettably, time constraints often prevent any extended reflection on

the sacrament. Therefore I would suggest that believers “proclaim Christ death until he comes” to themselves by deeply reflecting on one or two of the many aspects of the sacrament mentioned either in the Form or the Heidelberg Catechism or the Belgic Confession.

Frequency

A second practical issue that does not receive a lot of attention is the frequency. How often should the Lord’s Supper be celebrated? It is no secret that John Calvin favoured a weekly celebration, although he was not able to implement it in Geneva. In more recent times, several United Reformed churches celebrate the Lord’s Supper weekly and I was privileged to be a guest at one such church for two months in 2004-2005. Closer to home, one of our churches in the United States also celebrates the sacrament on a weekly basis.

With the passage of time the Lord’s Supper took on a deformed appearance

There are sound biblical arguments for adopting a weekly celebration. Acts 2:42 and 1 Corinthians 11 seem to indicate that the Lord’s Supper was celebrated very frequently, if not weekly. Some of the early church fathers indicated a familiarity with weekly celebration, as did the later fathers. According to Augustine in the fifth century, the minimum was once per week. Of course, we acknowledge what was mentioned

before about deformation of the sacrament, but weekly communion was not introduced as a later innovation – it was simply continued as the practice of the apostolic church.

Unfortunately, logistical considerations in many of our churches make a weekly celebration impractical, if not impossible. When our larger churches insist on sitting the congregation at five or six tables each time the Lord’s Supper is celebrated, we cannot expect to see weekly communion. It would only be practical with smaller churches or with the congregation taking the sacrament in the pew.

At the beginning of this series, when we discussed the Regulative Principle of Worship, we noted that it only covers the elements and not the circumstances of worship. I would argue that the frequency of the Lord’s Supper is a circumstance of worship and therefore there is freedom for each local church to decide what is best. While a weekly celebration may be ideal and most consistent with the practice of the ancient church, we cannot say that a church that decides to have annual communion (as was sometimes done in Presbyterian churches) is sinning. Nevertheless, since the sacrament is designed for the strengthening of our faith, who would not desire a more frequent celebration?

Administering the sacrament to shut-ins

The strengthening of faith brings us to another contemporary issue: the administration of the Lord’s Supper to shut-ins. Propelled

Church News

Accepted the call (extended for the second time) to Willoughby Heights, British Columbia:

Rev. A. Souman
of Smithville, Ontario.

Called by the Free Reformed Church of Australia at Baldivis, WA:

Rev. S. 't Hart
working in Papua New Guinea as missionary for the church of Toronto, Ontario.

by necessity, this matter has been studied by our churches in the last number of years. Our last Synod decided that no change in the Church Order is required for this practice to take place – in other words, the churches are free to administer the Lord's Supper to shut-ins, provided this takes place in the normal fashion, i.e. within the context of a worship service.

This is a wise and laudable decision and it opens the door for the Lord's Supper to be celebrated by those who may need it most. When shut-in and unable to go to church for weeks, months, or years on end, one misses many of the blessings available in the worship service, including the sacraments.

If we really believe, with the Belgic Confession (Art 33), that the sacraments are there for people who are weak, who are we to deny them to those shut-in? Are those experiencing physical suffering and loneliness also to be denied the nourishment and refreshment of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament? Compassion and love compel us to do the right thing for these brothers and sisters.

However, it should be stressed that this compassion and love come to the shut-in on a principled basis. In other words, the context should be as regular as possible. It should be done under the supervision of the consistory. A minister of the Word and

sacraments should conduct a regular service with a number of other people in attendance. The regular Form for the Lord's Supper should normally be read and so forth. Doing things in this manner also ensures that this practice will not be abused.

The Lord's Supper is a precious gift from our Saviour. Like the preaching of the gospel, it is something that we should never take for granted. For, like the preaching of the gospel, it puts the beautiful promises of God before us. Whenever we partake, let's remember how rich we are and give thanks!

With respect to the frequency of the Lord's Supper, I acknowledge my indebtedness to a presentation done by Rev. T. Lodder at the 2006 Western Canadian Reformed Ministers' Conference. Readers interested in more detailed arguments for weekly communion are referred to Rev. P. Aasman's "Celebration of the Lord's Supper – How Often?" in *Clarion* 46 (1997), Nos. 4 and 5, also available online at www.spindleworks.com





Dr. C. Van Dam is professor of Old Testament at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Ontario
cvandam@canrc.org

Reflections on a Conference (Part 2 of 2)

In a preceding article I outlined some of the key aspects of Rev. Norman Shepherd's teaching about justification by faith as heard in a special conference last November. Let us now consider some of the criticism that has been levelled at his teachings as heard at the conference. I will need to concentrate on the main issues and not go into all kinds of details.

Faith alone as instrument

A key objection lodged against Shepherd's understanding has been that he does not clearly and simply say that one is justified by faith alone and leave it at that. Rather, Shepherd usually qualifies such a statement by saying, for example, that one is justified by obedient faith. Shepherd wants to make clear that justification by faith alone means that the faith involved must be a true faith which shows itself obedient to God's will. However, those opposed to him say that such a qualification brings too much ambiguity and compromises the doctrine of justification solely by faith. If we follow Shepherd, are we not in danger of equating faith and obedience and thus undermining the doctrine of justification by faith alone? Are we not actually saying that you are saved by faith *and* works? What are we to make of this?

Shepherd made it clear that by obedient faith he means a faith that is accompanied by obedience in the manner in which the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) speaks of it. The WCF states that "faith. . . is the alone instrument of justification" and then continues by saying: "Yet is it [i.e. faith] not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is not dead faith, but worketh by love" (11:2).

His critics, however, are not generally satisfied with this explanation. One suggested that in order to make the distinction between faith and obedience crystal clear, one should distinguish between a passive justifying faith and an active sanctifying faith and that there is a nano-second in between the two. But where is the biblical basis for this construction?

Now the very fact that there is such a controversy about Shepherd's saying that one is justified by an "obedient faith" indicates that people perceive the meaning of this expression differently. Some interpret "obedient faith" as indicating that the faith should be a true faith which shows itself in humble obedience to God's will. This is biblical and this is Shepherd's intended meaning. The problem is

that others hear Shepherd not only affirming that dead faith, that is, faith without works, cannot save, but they fear that he is also saying that obedient works need to be added to faith so that these works can be a human contribution to man's righteousness. Such a position is of course unbiblical and it is certainly not Shepherd's view. Shepherd wants to get across that faith must be living and real, otherwise it is a dead faith and such a faith does not justify. John Murray put it well:

Faith alone justifies but a justified person with faith alone would be monstrosity which never exists in the kingdom of grace. Faith works itself out through love (cf. Gal 5:6). And faith without works is dead (cf. James 2:17-20). It is living faith that justifies and living faith that unites to Christ both in the virtue of his death and in the power of his resurrection.¹

The covenantal context

Shepherd wishes to honour the dynamic that is integral to the covenant relationship which God has established with his people. This point was obvious at the conference as well as in his book, *The Call of Grace* (2000). Because we are in a living covenant relationship with God, we can never say, "Well, I've been justified

and now that's done." Justification is not just a one-time declaration. There is also the ongoing response of faith and obedience to the proclamation of God's good news of the forgiveness of all our sins. God's righteousness, as evidenced in his justifying sinners, is a covenantal righteousness. God's righteousness establishes communion with us but also demands love from us. There is the promise of the forgiveness of sins, but there is also the ongoing obligation of faith and repentance and fleeing from sin. You cannot separate the one from the other. As our forms of baptism remind us, the covenant contains two parts: a promise and an obligation. Justification is of pure grace and in grace God gives us faith. But God also obliges us to a life of faith. And therefore justification is never simply a one-time thing.

At this point an objection is raised. Is justification not a declaration that can never be undone? Once justified, are we not always justified? Has God not justified the elect who can never fall away? These are good questions. Shepherd's answer included the following. As humans we are always tempted to begin with election and then reason from there, trying to determine what may or may not happen. The Bible, however, does not begin with God's decrees but with our concrete covenant relationship with God, a relationship that includes both promise and obligation. God said that He had chosen Israel, but He also said that if they turn away from Him then He would destroy them (Deut 7:6-11). We cannot deduce from God's election what may transpire in history. Election provides the foundation for our obedience to God. Therefore the message of the prophets was essentially that "God has chosen you to be his people, therefore obey Him. If you don't do that He will destroy you" (e.g. Isa 41:8-9; 42:18-25). That is how the prophets

spoke and that is how we must speak. That is also how the Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians. He addressed them as elect (Eph 1), but he also urged them to faith and obedience (Eph 4-6).

When we believe, we are one with Christ (cf. Gal 2:20). We are justified and do not have to wait until the last day to hear that declaration (cf. Luke 18:14). As those justified by faith, we also have the assurance of faith. However, Scripture also teaches us that we must persevere in our faith. "You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised" (Heb 10:36). Trials and the testing of our faith can come. The temptation to fall away can be very real. Faith can waver. It can be stronger at one moment and weaker another time. Because obedience is the fruit and evidence of faith, assurance will rise as one walks close to the Lord. Disobedience leads to diminishing assurance. We need to cultivate the assurance of grace and salvation in the same way we cultivate faith, by attention to the Word, the use of sacraments, and by seeking to live close to the Lord. Therefore Scripture encourages us to persevere through the trials and testings that can and do come. Indeed, the testing of our faith can develop perseverance and those who persevere will receive the crown of life (James 1:2-4, 12).

Closing reflections

Much more could be said about this conference and what transpired. But that is not the purpose of these articles. Such information can be gotten elsewhere.² Part of my purpose in going to this conference was to hear first hand what the discussion in Presbyterian and Reformed circles in the United States was all about. I went away with the following impressions.

First, Shepherd is someone who is fully committed to the Reformed

faith. There is no doubt in my mind about that. He clearly placed all his thinking and reasoning under the absolute authority of God's infallible Word and he honours the Reformed confessions. Unfortunately some of his expressions, like the one illustrated earlier, have been taken in ways he did not intend and so caused misunderstanding. I do, however, think that more is involved. Having attended the conference and reading more about the Shepherd controversy, I am getting the impression that his covenantal approach to the issue of justification has created much of the controversy in part because he is challenging some of the ways that the biblical teaching of justification has been packaged and explained. He is also reminding us that explaining Reformed doctrine must always be supported by convincing biblical exegesis.

Second, his emphasis on the covenant is both refreshing and much needed. He pointed out repeatedly that the covenant includes both God's gracious promises as well as the obligation that rests on us to receive these promises with a true and living faith. For this covenantal emphasis he freely acknowledged his debt to the theological studies and thinking coming out of the Liberation of 1944 in The Netherlands. He especially referred to the late Prof. B. Holwerda's published sermon on justification.³ While emphasizing the grace of God from beginning to end, Shepherd also affirmed the necessity of the obedience of faith.

Third, happily the conflict surrounding Shepherd is not an issue with us. The controversy has been outside the federation of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC). I think it is fair to say that those familiar with the struggles of the 1940s will be able to appreciate where Shepherd is coming from and, if they have criticism, they



Rev. N. Shepherd, Rev. Ralph Boersema, Mrs. Lucille Boersema

will probably be considerably more nuanced in their critique than has generally been the case south of the border. As with any human attempt to articulate biblical truth, there can undoubtedly be things that will raise questions in Shepherd's formulations or arguments. I personally also have some outstanding issues which I need to study further. But, these are not of such a nature as to warrant the charge of heresy.

Fourth, whether we like it or not, because of our unity discussions with the United Reformed Churches (URC), the doctrinal points raised in the Shepherd controversy will become an issue which we will eventually have to deal with in some form. In a recent publication of Westminster Seminary California, Professor Scott Clark, who is a URC minister, drew a direct line between the current controversy and "the covenant theology developed in the Netherlands by Klaas Schilder (1890-1952) and S. G. de Graaf (1889-1955) and in North America by John Murray (1898-1975) and Norman Shepherd."⁴ Yes, you read the names of these "trouble makers" correctly. What can one say but that Norman Shepherd is in good company. Obviously, if the source of the trouble is considered

to come from our heritage, this view of the situation has and will have its impact on the unity discussions. If any united church is to emerge, there must be freedom of exegesis in humble submission to Scripture and in agreement with the doctrines taught in the Three

Forms of Unity. The CanRC have attained this freedom of interpretation at a great cost in 1944. It is something we should never surrender.

¹ John Murray, *Redemption - Accomplished and Applied* (1961) 131. For a similar understanding by Calvin and Francis Turretin, see Mark Garcia, *Ordained Servant*, October 2007 found at

<http://www.opc.org/os.html>.

² The proceedings are available in audio and DVD from Act Three at <http://www.act3online.com/home.asp>

³ This sermon is on Lord's Day 23 of the Heidelberg Catechism and is found in B. Holwerda, *De Dingen die ons van God geschonken zijn* (1954) 2.151-163.

⁴ R. Scott Clark in R. Scott Clark, ed., *Covenant, Justification, and Pastoral Ministry: Essays by the Faculty of Westminster Seminary California* (2007) 3.

Recommended Further Reading

For those interested in pursuing some of the issues raised, the following is recommended.

For Shepherd's views, see especially Norman Shepherd's paper "The Grace of Justification" at <http://www.hornes.org/theologia/norman-shepherd/the-grace-of-justification>. He submitted this to Westminster Theological Seminary at the height of the controversy. Also see Norman Shepherd, *The Call of Grace: How the Covenant Illuminates Salvation and Evangelism*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2000 and his two essays on justification in P. Andrew Sandlin, eds., *Backbone of the Bible: Covenant in Contemporary Perspective*. Nacogdoches, TX: Covenant Media Press, 2004. Further one can consult Rev. Ralph F. Boersema's website: <http://pro-rege.net/rfb/theology/> where articles by Norman Shepherd, the late Dr. J. Faber, and Ralph Boersema can be found.

For views critical of Shepherd, see R. Scott Clark, ed., *Covenant, Justification, and Pastoral Ministry: Essays by the Faculty of Westminster Seminary California*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2007. A review of this book by Mark Garcia, an OPC pastor, can be found in the online journal, *Ordained Servant*, October 2007 found at <http://www.opc.org/os.html>.

The December 2007 issue of the same journal (found at <http://opc.org/os9.html>) contains further comment by Garcia and a reaction to the original review. A book-length response to the Westminster California volume has also been published.

P. Andrew Sandlin, ed., *A Faith that is Never Alone*. Kerygma Press, 2007 and available from <http://www.lulu.com/content/1189642>. In this volume Norman Shepherd contributed two chapters: "Faith and Faithfulness" and "The Imputation of Active Obedience."



Ray of Sunshine

By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. T. Gelms

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

Galatians 5:22, 23a

What is fruit? Fruit comes from a tree. An orange tree produces oranges and an apple tree produces apples. What does Paul mean when he says that the Spirit produces fruit? Throughout the Bible, the Christian life is often compared with fruit of a tree or even a tree itself. Psalm 1 says that the righteous person is like a tree planted by streams of water and this tree produces fruit during the right season. Jesus says in Matthew 7 that every good tree bears good fruit and every bad tree bears bad fruit, so by the fruit we can recognize whether the tree is good or bad. Jesus also says in John 15 that He is the vine and we are the branches, if we remain in Jesus and He in us, then we will bear much fruit. Paul continues on the theme of fruit when he addresses the Christian church in Galatia. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal 5:22, 23a).

Paul writes these words to the Galatian Christians to remind them that when they have the Holy Spirit working in their hearts then they will be like a tree producing good fruit. The Galatians lost sight of what it was to be a follower of Christ. They forgot what makes a person Christian. Most of the believers in that church had a Jewish background and they began to practice the Jewish laws. They insisted that the gentile Christians follow the Jewish laws as well. Paul hears about the struggles of the Galatians and is deeply troubled. He writes this letter to set them on the right path. He tells them that sinful man is saved from his sins because of Jesus Christ’s death on the cross. He reminds them that they are saved from their sins through believing in Jesus Christ. “You are all

sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:26). He explains how there is a freedom in believing in Jesus Christ. The Galatians do not need to be slaves of the law, but can be free in Christ. They do not need to continue to obey the Jewish laws because Christ’s work on the cross fulfilled the law. Christ became the great sacrifice. Paul continues to encourage them that when they believe in Jesus Christ and they put off their old nature then the Holy Spirit works in their hearts. The Holy Spirit at work in their hearts makes them want to live in a beautiful and thankful way; in fact, the Holy Spirit makes them to be Christ-like. Paul wants to see Christ in the Galatian believers (4:19). Paul is not saying that these character traits are a list of laws that must be kept; rather, he is saying that they are the result of living and being led by the Spirit.

When we read the words that Paul wrote to strengthen and encourage the Galatian people, then we can be strengthened and encouraged as well. Christ died on the cross for our sins. His one sacrifice is sufficient to cancel the debt we have with God. We believe this and know this to be true because of the Holy Spirit working in our hearts. What a freedom we have in Christ. When the Holy Spirit has taken control over the growth of our tree, and where our tree is planted, then the fruit from our tree will be good. We receive our strength from the Holy Spirit and the Spirit will lead us in each area of our lives. Over the next few installments of “Ray of Sunshine” we hope to dig into what each fruit of the Spirit means and how living in the Spirit keeps us in step with the Spirit.

*The Spirit, sent from heaven above,
Shows us the way of truth and love,
The promised One dwells in our hearts;
He light and life to us imparts.*

*He is Himself the guarantee
That we shall be forever free
When Christ returns on His great day.
"O come, Lord Jesus, come," we pray.*

Hymn 38:1, 4

23 ARLENE DEWIT will be 47
31126 Kingfisher Drive, Abbotsford, BC V2T 5K4

29 BRYCE BERENDS will be 33
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8

Congratulations to all who are celebrating a birthday in the month of April. May our heavenly Father continue to guide and bless you in the New Year. Have an enjoyable day together with your family and friends. Till next month,

Mrs. C. Gelms and Mrs. P. Gelms
548 Kemp Road East
RR 2, Beamsville, ON LOR 1B2
905-563-0380
jcorgelms@porchlight.ca

Birthdays in April:

2 DEREK KOK will be 38
653 Broad Street West
Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8



Emmanuel Christian High School Graduation

On Friday, October 12, all roads led to the quaint old town of Fergus, a town of Scottish heritage. But it wasn't the Scottish that came, nor was the event the world renowned Scottish Highland Games, but those of Dutch descent, or those somehow related, converged upon this town, to become meaningful participants in a premier celebration of ECHS. Have you not heard of ECHS? Have you not travelled those kilometres of pavement to limestone valley of the Grand River? Have you not heard of a grade twelve graduation?

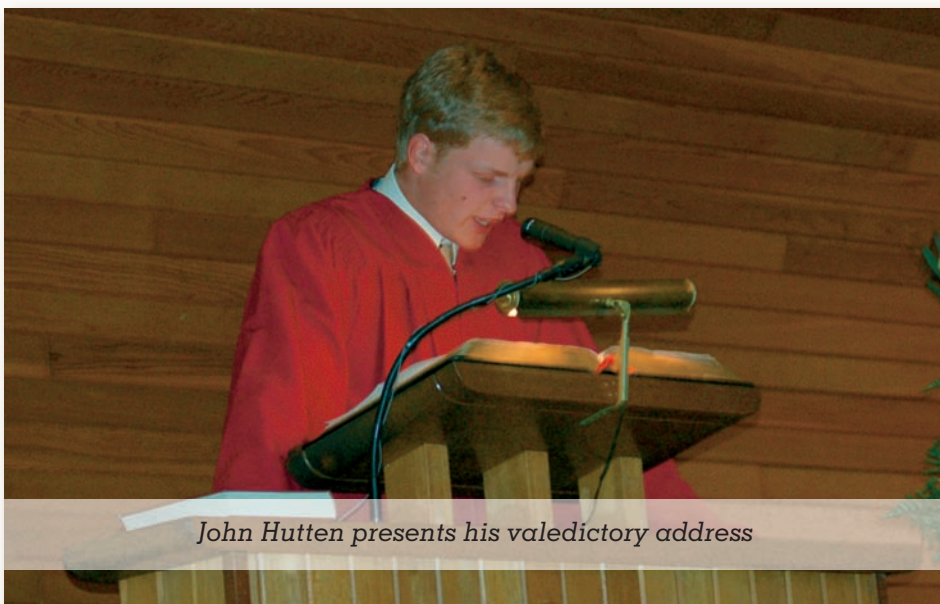
The school's gym had been transformed into a banquet room. A wall of stringed lights hidden behind translucent curtains filled one corner of the room. Deep burnt

orange table clothes draped exquisitely over old and well used fold-up tables, and on those cloths lay white dinner plates, sparkling stainless steel cutlery, clear unfilled glasses, and bun-laden woven baskets. Candles burned brightly, sending rays of firelight between the warm coloured, hybrid chrysanthemums, each table's centrepiece. From the far corner wafted various delightful aromas, causing the guests to twitch their noses, tilt up their heads, sniff a little and seek the assurance of other that their senses of smell were not fooling their minds. All those who came filled the darkened gym with jestings, chidings, informative welcomes, and of course laughter. Then came the guests of honour, twenty-eight

young men and women, dressed in a dazzling array of dress, sport jackets, or other suitably fine clothing. Only after all were seated around a twenty-four foot table could the dinner commence.

A well decorated room, hearty meal, and a happy occasion provided a gezellig atmosphere for all guests. School board members, parents, teachers, and graduands could celebrate together – what a blessing. Staff members even dared to display various hidden and not-so-hidden talents of song writing, singing, and power-pointing, thereby adding delightful memories of the previous years for the benefit of the grads and for the better understanding of the parents. After thanking our God for this festive meal, we all exited the building, entered our vehicles, and motored across town, over the Grand River and up the hill to the Canadian Reformed Church of Fergus. Many other family members and friends came also, filling the church pews and chairs to full capacity.

The evening was opened by the ECHS board chairman, Mr. Andrew Wildeboer, who correctly recognized that this graduation was not the first grade twelve graduation that Emmanuel experienced. Many years ago Emmanuel Christian High School offered education at the grade twelve level and therefore celebrated a few years of



John Hutten presents his valedictory address



Andrew Wildeboer offers congratulatory remarks

graduations, but due to lack of support at the time, the school could only offer education at the grade nine and ten levels. Once again, God has blessed this community with the possibility to offer a full high school program

beginning in September 2006, and so the communities of Orangeville, Grand Valley, Fergus, Elora, Guelph, Listowel, Sheffield, and Owen Sound can now again enjoy this celebration of a grade twelve graduation.

Rev. E. Kampen, minister of the church at Orangeville and father of one of the graduating ladies, urged the excited graduands to see that Christian education is a "tremendous gift" which they should not only treasure and polish, but also use in their futures. With it, they can be better stewards of what the Lord has given them. Christian education also helps them solve problems that daily life brings; it aids them in effectively and wisely using their communication and problem solving skills; it gives them a foundation which shapes all further learning; and it assists

Awards at ECHS

Honours Achievement Award

(for those who attained an academic average of 80 percent or better in all Grade 12 courses)

Janneke Bijlsma	Kathleen Geurts
John Hutten	Rachel Hutten
Erin Kampen	Shannon Kamphuis
Liane Mans	Debbie Meijaard
Klaarissa Reinink	Ken Tamminga
Dave Timmerman	

Citizenship Award

(for the student who showed leadership in providing a positive and active school spirit)

John Hutten

Stewardship Award

(for the student who "has used his or her talents to the fullest")

Klaarissa Reinink

Post Farm Structures Award

(for the student who has successfully enrolled in a university or college level program in the field of construction technology and who has the highest average of these students in all Grade 12 courses)

Walter Kingma

Royal LePage RCR Business Excellence Award

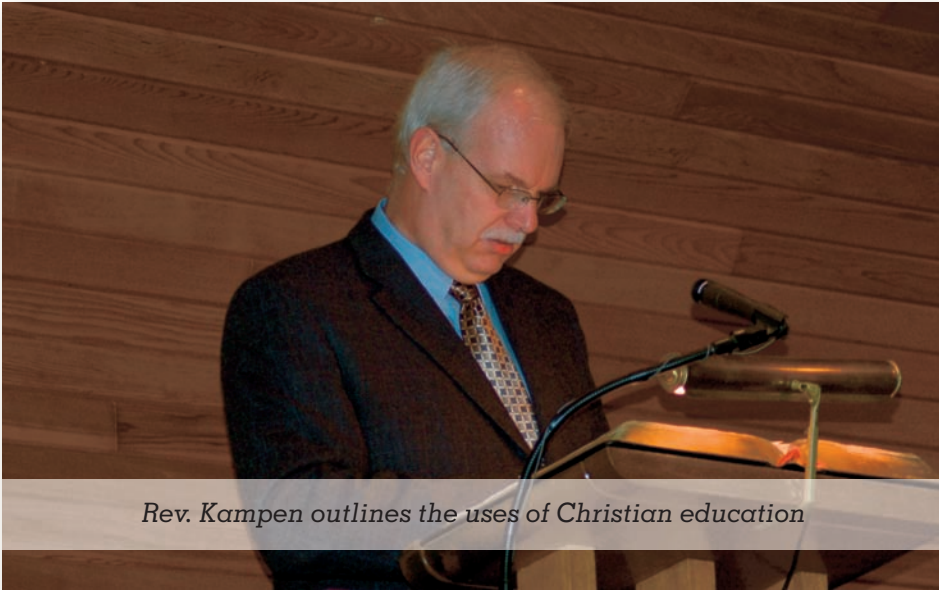
(for the student who has successfully enrolled in a university or college level business program and who has achieved the highest standing in all Grade 12 courses)

Scott Swaving

Jordan Hutchinson Memorial Academic Proficiency Award

(for the student who has achieved the highest average in all Grade 12 university level courses)

Erin Kampen



Rev. Kampen outlines the uses of Christian education

them in being an active, positive contributor in the church or general communities. He reminded them to hold on to what God's Word teaches in Colossians 1:17, "In Christ, all things hold together."

The principal, Mr. Henk Nobel, gave the graduands a little "green grass" advice. He urged the students not to "spend much of life longing for a future that won't make us as happy as we think, and [then] spend the rest of our life longing for a past that wasn't as happy as we now imagine it," but to remember the Creator already now. Using words from Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14 as his theme, Mr. Nobel ended his speech by reminding the students to "trust Jesus as your Saviour now. Fear God and keep his commandments now. In that way the grass will always be green wherever you find yourselves, graduates. You will not be looking at a future seemingly better time, but whatever you find to do now, remembering that your Creator will give you joy and contentment. Go in that way, graduates. May God be with all twenty-eight of you."

After the two addresses to the grads, Mr. Nobel and Mr. Wildeboer presented the grads with their diplomas. The vice-principal, Mr. Arthur Kingma, then presented certificates, awards, and bursary awards to a variety of expectant or surprised students.

To further lighten the celebratory mood, a unique grade twelve student, John Hutten, delivered a fact-filled, opinion-driven, metaphorical valedictory address. Wow, presenting a whole

speech in an extended metaphor about an airplane was one humorous literary adventure!

Twenty-six years ago Emmanuel Christian High School had its last grade twelve graduation. That's a generation ago! Especially for those who experienced the loss of grades eleven and twelve at that time, this graduation must have had special emotional meaning; how gracious God is to again provide this blessing of Christian education! What a wonderful thing it is to see and celebrate this joyous event with children who are now parents and with grandchildren who are now graduating. Not only for them, but also for the whole north-of-the-401 Canadian Reformed community, this celebration in a historic town along Ontario's Grand not only marked a new beginning of sorts, but also evidenced God's continuous care. May all Christian education hold together in Christ our Lord. +



A delighted audience

Here Come the Cadets

The Calvinist Cadet Corps is an independent (non-denominational) organization whose purpose is to provide the local church with a midweek club program that will enable them to effectively share Christ's love with boys from their congregation and community.

Founded in 1952, the Corps has more than 600 clubs throughout North America. Although the Cadet Corps was originally founded by men of the Christian Reformed denomination, it has never been an agency of that or any denomination. Currently, much of the organization's growth comes from Canadian Reformed congregations, United Reformed congregations, and the Reformed Church of East Africa, located in Kenya.

The Cadet Corps is quite similar to the Boy Scouts, with uniforms, merit badges, rank advancements, and an emphasis on camping and the outdoors. There is one major difference, however. The founders of the ministry didn't want Cadets to be simply a scout program with a Bible lesson tacked on. They wanted a ministry that had Jesus Christ at the heart and centre of it.

That vision remains true today. At the most recent annual board meeting, called Congress, the congressmen mandated the development of three new merit badges: Creeds, Calvinism, and

God's Names. The Creeds badge will focus on the Apostles Creed, Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dordt, the Belgic Confession, Westminster Confession, and various other creeds from the church's history. It's not intended to cover these materials in depth, but to give the Cadets an opportunity to become familiar with what their church believes.

The Calvinism badge will require that the boys be able to articulate the points of TULIP and other reformation truths. Again, it won't be an in-depth study, but Cadets will understand the difference between a person who is a Calvinist and one who is not.

The God's Names merit badge will study some of the names that God is called in the Bible and explain their significance.

In addition to the new badges, this year will see a Cadet International Camporee come to Ontario, Lord willing. They anticipate 1,400 men and boys to register for the event, scheduled to take place from August 6 through August 13 near Burk's Falls. There they will spend time in Bible study, wilderness camping, and activities, including mountain biking, archery, a service project, riflery, orienteering, canoeing, and more.

Currently, Cadet records show that nine Canadian Reformed congregations are making use of



the Cadet ministry – four in British Columbia, four in Ontario, and one in Alberta. Any interested church can request an information packet from the headquarters in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The packet contains much helpful information on how to get involved and be effective in this ministry. Much more information is also available at the Cadet website: www.CalvinistCadets.org.

Calvinist Cadet Corps

PO Box 7259
Grand Rapids, MI 49510
Phone: 616.241.5616 ext 4
Fax: 616.241.5558

Arthur Kingma and Keith Sikkema

Mr. Arthur Kingma is
vice principal of Emmanuel
Christian High School in
Fergus, Ontario
abkingma@kwic.com

Mr. Keith Sikkema is
principal of Dufferin Area
Christian School in
Orangeville, Ontario
ksikkema@istop.com

Building One Another Up – CRTA Convention 2007



The two-day CRTA convention is back in Ontario! Already in June 2007, the convention committee sent our booklets and registration sheets. Not only did we teachers learn about the theme of the convention (Building One Another Up), but we also read about the format, keynote speakers, various workshops descriptions, and presenters. Already in June those registration forms had to be returned, enabling the committee to continue their preparations for the October 2007 convention at Timothy Christian School in Hamilton, Ontario.

All roads leading to Timothy Christian School were under construction – Hamilton finally squeezed enough money out of the provincial and federal coffers to assist the city in rebuilding its infrastructure. So, the last thing we non-Hamiltonians wanted to see upon our arrival was more construction right on the school grounds, but that is exactly what we saw: red cones, caution tape, road blocks, safety vests, and signs such as: “Building Site,” or “CAUTION: teachers at work.” (Makes one wonder what teachers do on regular school days.) For the benefit of primary teachers or parents of young children, even the mascot, Bob the Builder, visited the site.

Building through speech

Not only did Mr. Shawn Wolski allude to this extended visual metaphor in his opening words, but Rev. R. Pot also built verbally upon it, stating that teachers are workers who must always be busy constructing knowledge for the students. This construction, he urged, must be done with wholesome talk. Rev. Pot’s whole speech expounded the value and importance of wholesome talk. Both the content of our speech, he said, and the manner of our speech, must build up our students.

The content and the manner of our speech must build up our students

By referring us to Ephesians 4, especially to verse 29, Rev. Pot explained that teachers need to develop biblically sound and spiritually correct speech to be apt and qualified construction workers. To do so, we need to listen to God speaking to us in his Word, we need to correctly speak to Him in prayer; we need to recognize that we are God’s “work-in-progress,”

for every day we are being renewed in Christ by his Spirit; we need to recognize that our students are God’s “work-in-progress” too; we need to help them grow in their spiritual warfare; we need to affect the heart as we teach. The context of our speech must be one of love – the same context in which God speaks to his covenant people.

Although some may think that speaking is like riding a bike – once you know it, you got it for life – Rev. Pot assured us that riding a bike is not the right simile for wholesome speaking. Satan twisted God’s words in paradise and, since then, seeks to twist our words so that we will slip into unwholesome talk. Infected by our sinful flesh, by the voices of the world and Satan himself, we can easily become involved in foolish talk, coarse language, vulgar jokes, or we can easily not warn against the voices of the world found in textbooks, literature, play ground, or hallways. Instead, we need to continue learning and practicing wholesome speech, constructing ways for our students to do likewise.

The rest of the morning was spent in small group discussions, wherein we reflected on the speech, extended it or applied it to our teaching situations, or where we dove into some of the eighteen discussion starters supplied by

Rev. Pot. Here's one of them: What role does the Reformed school have in directing students to Jesus Christ as the heart of wholesome speech? How can the school support the home and the church in this regard? Here's a second one: What are some concrete (another building term) ways that teachers can promote and encourage each other's spiritual well-being and walk with the Lord? Why might this be important? To what extent could there be room for sharing spiritual struggles with each other?

Workshops about building

After a hearty meal and social time, the teachers moved into their pre-selected workshops. The workshops had to cover a wide range of topics as well as a wide range of grade levels – not easy for a convention committee to plan. On Thursday, the workshops were led by fellow colleagues, covering topics like: How can we develop a Reformed art curriculum, coaching, critical thinking, developing minds, music in your classroom, the role of special education teachers and educational assistants, making history exciting, writing in the primary grades, and Are we teaching Students or Subjects?

Workshops bring like-focused teachers together, enabling them to share, learn, teach and build one another up in thought, ability, and in the sense of togetherness. Teachers need not feel so alone – often caused by being the only grade one teacher or the only grade whatever teacher at the school – but they can find encouragement from one another as they speak to each other about a similar subject matter, similar skills, grade level issues, or any other educational issue. The

communal aspect of learning is a major objective in these workshops and therefore the CRTA committee not only brought the workshop back to our conventions, but also encouraged each teacher to take the opportunity to lead a workshop, where one need not be the expert, but where anyone can share his or her knowledge, zeal, commitment, and faith with other Christian teachers.

Workshops bring like-focused teachers together, enabling them to share, learn, teach and build one another up

We experienced a wonderful first day. The opening of the second day of the convention was led by one of the CRTA executive members with Scripture reading from Judges 2, prayer, singing, and a fresh word of welcome. The day held another key-note speech, more good fellowship and shop-talk, good food and refreshments, and another round of workshops. Once again, it was good and pleasant to be together in good Christian harmony that helped to make the most of learning from each other.

Building character

Speaking from some notes only, Mrs. Inge de Visser addressed the audience on "Teaching ... more than knowledge and skills," and explained why the Bible reading had stopped abruptly at verse 15. We can take the passage as a mirror, compelling us to pause and look at ourselves, wondering what the Lord would do after such disobedience. The following verses

reveal the answer: He shows his compassion. His compassion energizes and encourages, because He is faithful. Teachers and parents can and must have such compassion when dealing with their students and children, especially when faced with sinful worldly attractions; they may not let them starve emotionally or socially, for instance by giving them a TV in their own rooms. Just like being busy with his Word builds our conscience, we must proactively help children build theirs through modeling, guidance, and discipline. For instance, it is good to insist on chaste dress in school and in church, so as not to become stumbling blocks to wandering eyes. Teachers also stand in *loco parentis*, in the place of the parents – and Mrs. de Visser led them to wonder whether their students want to be like them. She stressed that teachers should know each of the students individually, like a father would, and so be able to have compassion on them when they are lonely, or depressed, or in need of support, or prayer. In closing, she advised teachers to study Proverbs every day, to study the book of Romans, and to read chapter 7 in Harro VanBrummelen's book, *Walking with God in the Classroom*. Finally, she expressed her hope that there could be a meeting of church and school leaders with parents and students to talk together about walking with the Lord. In the following group discussions, each group worked with a prepared set of questions related to the topic.

Afternoon workshops were scheduled to take ninety minutes each. They addressed a wide range of topics, including ADD, classroom medical emergencies, puppetry, using reading to learn

mathematics, youth in the twenty-first century, insects in the classroom, daily vigorous physical activity, evaluation and expectations in kindergarten, story telling, and assessment and evaluation practices.

After the workshops, teachers met for a brief closing assembly in the gymnasium. If the singing was any indication, it certainly had been a good conference. Teachers spontaneously rose to sing their praises to God with all their hearts. Beautiful.

On the roads in Hamilton, as well in the schools, construction continues unabated. True, at times it may be difficult to see progress, and at times it may even be frustrating to meander through construction zones, but over time, teachers, parents, and students may experience the wonderful results. Better waterlines, smoother pavement, safer sidewalks may be the physical benefits for the Hamiltonians, but greater skills, better abilities, more knowledge and wisdom in our students will be

the visual and auditory benefits for our Christian communities. May this CRTA Convention 2007 pave the way to smoother and better conventions in coming years.

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

Letters to the Editor

Re: "In Wisdom You Made Them All. . ." **by Dr. F. G. Oosterhoff**

Dr. Oosterhoff did us a big favour by exposing the errors of the Copernican Principal which denies the special status of the earth in the cosmos. As Martin Luther said regarding the ideas of Copernicus, "Even in these things which are thrown into disorder I believe the Holy Scriptures." I would, however, like to make a few remarks about some things she states especially in the second part of her article in the Year-end *Clarion*. On page 637 she has a subtitle, "And a rare planet." By referring to the Earth as a planet (i.e. wanderer), the subtitle unwittingly agrees with Copernicus' theory that the earth "wanders" around in space as it circles the sun.

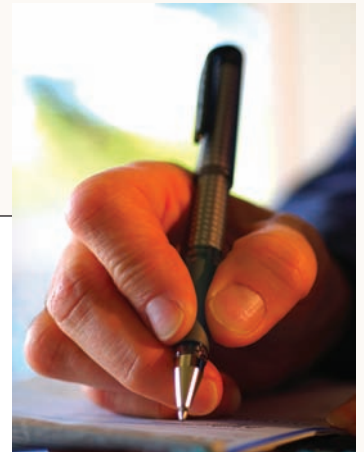
Before Copernicus and Galileo all Bible believers knew without a doubt that the earth was at rest in the centre of the created world. When Copernicus published his hypothesis of a sun-centred world, the Bible's authority was openly challenged. The Bible clearly depicts an earth at rest (cf. 1 Chron 16:30, Job 26:7, 38:4-6, Ps 93:1, 104:5, Heb1:10) as apposed to the heavenly bodies (sun, moon, stars/planets) which experience daily, monthly, and yearly motions and courses (cf. Gen 1:14-16, Ps 104:19, 19:4-6, Eccl 1:5, Job 38:32-33, Isa

40:26). The Lord intervened to stop these heavenly motions (Josh 10:13, Hab 3:11, Isa 38:7-8) according to his purpose. Luther, John Calvin (see his commentary on Psalm 93:1), and others openly criticized the Copernican error.

Moreover, science can only measure relative motion. It has no way to measure absolutely that the Earth rotates on a tilted axis at a speed of 1,000 mph or whirls around the sun at one hundred thousand kilometres per hour! Every scientific experiment ever performed to measure the Earth's movement through space has come up zero.

Dr. Oosterhoff writes that the moon stabilizes the Earth's rotation and prevents its axis from tilting too far into the direction of the sun or Jupiter. This is a remarkable assertion, considering the Earth already existed for three days before the sun, moon, and stars/planets were even created! An Earth at rest needs no moon to stabilize it. (A good resource for studying biblical cosmogony vs. Copernicanism is www.geocentrism.com.)

Respectfully,
Rick Duker



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.

Did Synod Smithers Treat the Free Church of Scotland (Cont) Fairly?



Synod Smithers (May 2007) again dealt with the issue of our relationship with the Free Church of Scotland (FCS), which has become a complex issue since the break in this church in 2000 and the appearance on the scene of the Free Church of Scotland-Continuing (FCC). Previous synods, Neerlandia 2001 and Chatham 2004, decided to continue the existing relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with both sides of the split, but Synod Smithers changed course concerning the FCC. Synod Smithers decided to: "Acknowledge that Synod Chatham 2004 erred by 'continuing' a Relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the FCC which, in fact did not exist." And secondly, "To discontinue the Relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the FCC and express regret for the error and any hurt we may have caused them with error" (*Acts 2007*, Art 80, 5.3, 5.4).

The question is whether Synod Smithers, by doing so, dealt fairly with the FCC in the given situation. One can also wonder whether they understood the reasoning of the previous synods who dealt with this same issue. In my humble opinion they have not done justice to the FCC by

discontinuing the relationship and have, by implication, judged them without having clear and convincing evidence that this church is no longer a faithful church and does not deserve to call itself the Free Church of Scotland *Continuing*. Are there even some similarities in how the Christian Reformed Church dealt with the split in the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands in the years following the liberation of 1944? I do not mean a similarity in issues but in how a church on this continent reacted to a split in sister churches across the ocean.

What happened? A most unfortunate and regrettable break occurred in the Free Church of Scotland in the year 2000. As you will know, for years we have already had a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with them. This break-up resulted in two churches both claiming to be the Free Church of Scotland, for convenience being referred to as the Free Church of Scotland (Majority) and the other Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), or the FCS and the FCC. From the beginning there appeared to be no clear-cut justification for this

separation and the real issues between the two were of such a nature that it was and remains difficult to form a judgment. To those not familiar with the Scottish situation it seemed more an internal, brotherly quarrel that should never have come to the point of separation. Both sides agree that there is no scriptural warrant for a permanent separation.

However, the purpose of this article is not to try to delve into the real issues at stake but rather to review how the synods of the Canadian Reformed Churches responded to this break and how Synod Smithers in the end came to an implied judgment by breaking off the relationship with the FCC without convincing evidence.

What made Synod Smithers decide to break off the relationship with the FCC? They concluded that actually since Synod Neerlandia of 2001 there was no longer a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the FCC but only with the FCS. In their opinion Synod Chatham of 2004 erred by "continuing" such a relationship

with the FCC (*Acts 2004*, Art 43, 5). What was the reasoning of Synod Smithers?

Synod Neerlandia 2001 dealt with the dilemma of being faced with the reality of two Free Churches of Scotland, instead of the one with whom our churches had established ecclesiastical fellowship. They acknowledged that this was a problem. Neerlandia considered that it would not be proper to show equality by continuing ecclesiastical fellowship with both, without some further qualification, and then decided "to continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Church of Scotland (Majority) under the adopted rules while continuing to monitor the situation with the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) in order to come to greater clarity on the matter" (*Acts 2001*, Art 34, 5.1.1). They added: "To inform both the FCS (Majority) and the FCS (Continuing) that they have our prayerful support with the hope that they will, by God's grace, come to reconciliation" (5.1.3). They thereby adopted the recommendations of the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA), who in their report stressed the fact that those who seceded claim to be the legitimate continuation of the Free Church and have therefore taken on the name "Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)." The Committee did not want to pass judgment at that time (*Acts 2001*, p. 232).

Synod Neerlandia did not want to judge either and nowhere declared that the FCC was not the legitimate continuation of the FCS.

Yes, they acknowledged the sad developments and how this troubled our relationship to such an extent that they decided to monitor the situation but withheld judgment in the meantime. They dealt very cautiously in this delicate matter and expressed the hope that soon there would be more clarity in the situation and, hopefully, reconciliation between the two who both claimed to be the legitimate FCS. True, they did state clearly that they continued the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the FCS (Majority), but we may not simply conclude that this implied that there was no relationship with the FCC. That would have meant a judgment which Synod Neerlandia sought to avoid until there would be more clarity in the whole matter.

Synod Chatham 2004 carried on in the same vein. The report of the CRCA could not give more clarity and admits not even being able to receive all the details. Synod therefore considered "that it is our duty to continue to investigate the situation and to encourage both sides to reconcile" (*Acts 2004*, Art 43, 4.3). Synod Chatham continued the line set forth in 2001 by deciding "to continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the FCS and FCS(c) under the adopted rules;" the CRCA was mandated "to continue to monitor the situation in the hope of gaining greater clarity and report to the next synod; to assure both the FCS and FCS(c) that they have our prayerful support and to encourage both sides to reconcile" (*Acts 2004*, Art 43, 5.3, 5.4.2,3).

Synod Smithers, however, without having any more new information, decided to change course. It left the cautious road taken by previous synods, acted against the recommendation of the CRCA, and decided to discontinue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the FCC. Synod thereby declared that the FCC was not the continuation of the Free Church of Scotland, as they claimed. We could no longer have ecclesiastical fellowship with them. In Synod's consideration big ammunition was used, Belgic Confession Article 28: "All therefore who draw away from the church or fail to join it act contrary to the ordinance of God" (*Acts 2007*, Art 80, 4.2). The same ammunition could have been and was used against us in the years after the liberation. But to be able to apply this confessional statement (which, by the way, is not one of their confessional standards), one needs to have much more information and consultation with the party itself. It could very well happen that the end result would be that we can no longer live in ecclesiastical fellowship with them; but to break off the relationship at this time, in this way, seems to be premature, unwarranted, and unfair to our brothers in Scotland. Have we really heard them and listened to them before taking such a dramatic step? Should there not have been another face-to-face session with the brothers to first discuss this possible break in our relationship? Hopefully for the CRCA this will not be the end of the story now that Synod has spoken.

