

Clarion

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*As Christians
we must be
responsible
stewards of the
environment*

Inside this issue

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

Science and Ideology

Scientific enterprise is a human undertaking with all the potential pitfalls that fallen humanity experiences

We live in an age that generally considers science as the neutral arbiter of knowledge. Science is considered to be objective and true. It approaches the data without any preconceptions and gets results. Indeed, we live in a time of unprecedented scientific advances which have led to exploring and gaining more knowledge from the microscopic sub-atomic to the vast reaches of outer space. Digitization and computers would be inconceivable without science, as would the many medical advances and conveniences that we so easily take for granted. It is no wonder that science is applauded and I for one am very appreciative of what scientists have been able to do.

However, while one can appreciate the tremendous scientific advances that have benefited society, it is an entirely different matter to subsequently place scientists on a pedestal by themselves as the dispensers of truth and direction for society. But such thinking is often the current secular mind-set. As Christians we need to understand the times and view with a healthy skepticism any scientific claims for which the evidence does not fit the "truth" being promoted and for which the claims go beyond the ability of science. In other words, scientists are human and can be driven by ideological presuppositions that colour and influence the way they interpret the evidence. Two recent examples underline how the practice of science can be driven by preconceived theories: global warming and the dating of dinosaurs.

Global warming

For years the reigning consensus among scientific experts has been that the world's climate is undergoing fundamental change. Planet earth was getting warmer and warmer due to human activity in producing atmospheric pollutants. This is called anthropogenic global warming. To avert catastrophic events caused

by rising ocean levels and warming northern climates, governments are urged to cut carbon dioxide emissions regardless of the cost and economic consequences. International conferences have been and continue to be held. Political pressure is on governments everywhere to do something.

There is a problem, though. The earth has actually been cooling for the last number of years. So the buzz word is now "climate change" rather than "global warming." Even though the evidence does not support the original hysteria of global warming, the pressure is still unrelenting to act on the basis of a scientific model that does not reflect reality.

An ideology is being promoted which is not sustained by facts. A minority of scientists have happily bucked the consensus. One such group is making information available on their website www.friendsofscience.org. The site points out that some of the "facts" are wrong and that the available evidence could be interpreted differently. For example, the sun, rather than human activity, could be responsible for some fluctuations in temperature.

However, those pushing the ideology of climate change are so determined that quite unscientific methods are being used to make and to strengthen their case. It even appears that records have been falsified to support a theory of climate change that is not supported by the facts. The Climatic Research Unit (CRU) at the University of East Anglia in Britain is one of the world's leading institutions concerned with studying natural and man-made climate change. The data which it sends to the Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change (IPCC) is therefore very influential. The IPCC was established by the United Nations to provide authoritative scientific information to decision makers. But, stolen documents from the CRU show that for the last decade evidence has been manipulated and



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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Visscher; Copy Manager: Laura Veenendaal
Coeditors: R. Aasman, E. Kampen, K. 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:

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doubts concealed about the validity of global warming. There was even a long series of communications discussing how best to marginalise and professionally hurt scientists who did not agree with the so-called consensus on global warming or climate change. All this has been widely reported in the media.¹

This is not the place to go into detailed arguments about the scientific data. And for the sake of clarity I wish to emphasize that as Christians we must be responsible stewards of the environment and protect it. The point I wish to make is that a scientific consensus may not be the truth or the best way of interpreting the evidence. Scientists can have ideological interests to make their findings fit their theories. They too are part of fallen creation. Another example makes a similar point.

Dating the dinosaurs

Mainstream science dates the dinosaurs to about sixty-five or more million years ago. However, in recent years soft tissue has been discovered in dinosaur fossils. To find pliable blood vessels, red blood cells, and proteins inside fossilized bone is quite remarkable. Such discoveries raise questions about the age of dinosaurs. How can such relatively fresh material survive in that form for millions of years? When the first discovery was made in 1997², scientists who hold to an evolutionary time table for dinosaurs were perplexed and could hardly believe the evidence. It was not considered probable that organic material could endure for such a long time period. Further and more stringent tests were demanded of subsequent finds, but the initial discovery was not only confirmed but additional data relating to organic remains were secured. In the face of the overwhelming evidence, scientists who believed that dinosaurs were millions of years old then said that it must after all be possible for such cells to survive that long! Note their belief in the millions of years takes precedence over the evidence which suggests a far shorter age. And indeed it has been shown that it is impossible for organic material like blood cells to last millions of years. The logical conclusion of the new finds would be to redate the time of the dinosaurs to a much more recent past. However, it is apparently extremely difficult for scientists to abandon the evolutionary paradigm within which they have been working. Even in the face of such telling

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evidence as just noted, the ideology of evolution is winning out. The approach taken is that because the dinosaur has to be millions of years old, therefore the organic material must have been preserved for millions of years although we don't understand how that could ever be. Here a belief in a paradigm takes precedence over the available evidence.³

If scientists who have evolutionary presuppositions can resist such apparently clear evidence which begs for a much more recent date for dinosaurs and if they are unable to think outside their self-imposed evolutionary "box," how are we to evaluate their calculations about the age of the earth? That's a topic for the next time.

In conclusion

The scientific enterprise is a human undertaking with all the potential pitfalls that fallen humanity experiences. Ideology can interfere in the process of interpreting scientific evidence. It appears that ideology can even interfere in gathering the data. Christians do well to understand this reality and to evaluate the scientific consensus accordingly. Scripture instructs us to "Test everything. Hold on to the good" (1 Thess 5:21) and "Test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 John 4:1). Such vigilance is particularly necessary when science overreaches its limitations and endangers its credibility by projecting questionable data into the future or refusing to think outside its self-imposed paradigm when considering the past, as the two examples we looked at illustrate. The so-called general consensus and constant repetition of theories such as climate change or the evolutionary paradigm, in both scholarly and popular literature, do not make thereby make them to be true. They are at best tentative explanations and should be treated as such.

¹ For the above, see Michael Egnor, "Chris Mooney Turns a Climate "Trick" at <http://www.evolutionnews.org/>

² See Greg Moore, "Dinosaur Blood Revisited" at <http://creation.com/squirming-at-the-squishosaur>

³ For the above, see Mary H. Schweitzer, et al., "Biomolecular Characterization and Protein Sequences of the Campanian Hadrosaur *B. canadensis*," *Science* 324:5927 (2009) 626-631; for an abstract see <http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/abstract/324/5927/626> ; "Dinosaur-Bird Link: Ancient Proteins Preserved in Soft Tissue From 80 Million-Year-Old Hadrosaur" in *Science Daily* May 1, 2009 available at <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/04/090430144528.htm>; Carl Wieland, "Dinosaur Soft Tissue and Protein" (May 6, 2009) at <http://creation.com/dinosaur-soft-tissue-and-protein-even-more-confirmation>.



C



Rev. David DeBoer is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Dunnville/Wainfleet, Ontario dmdeboer@sympatico.ca



MATTHEW 13:52

There is No God Like You

“Among the gods there is none like you, O LORD; no deeds can compare with yours.”

Psalm 86:8

When we pray, it is easy for us to focus only on our own petitions and to make our prayers a list of the things that we need. After all, God has commanded us to ask Him for all that we need for body and soul. But then we forget that prayer must also be part of our thanksgiving to God. Prayer is not only for making requests of God, but also an occasion for thanking the Lord and praising Him for his greatness, his majesty, his love, and mercy. After all, the prayer which our Saviour taught us begins with the petition, “Hallowed be your name.”

Psalm 86 is a “prayer” of David, according to the title listed above the psalm. This psalm is an earnest entreaty in which David places himself in the position of a servant, in order to seek the help of his Master. Even though David was a king, he recognizes that God is the greater King, before whom David is only a servant. In this psalm David petitions the Lord for help (vv 1-7). But after presenting his petitions, he also makes sure to praise the Lord.

In verse 8 David switches from requests to praise. This verse presents God as incomparable. He is in a class of his own, especially when compared with other beings who were said to be gods. The Canaanites and the nations around Israel worshipped other gods: Baal, Asherah, Chemosh, and Molech. When compared to these gods, the Lord stands out. He is not limited like they are. He is not local to the

particular nation that worships Him. God has performed great works such as no other so-called god has ever managed to do.

Glorifying God in this way is something we must not forget to do in our prayers. God is presented to us in Scripture as one deserving of praise. Isaiah saw the seraphim around the throne, using their voices to praise God continually. John saw the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders praising God and declaring his holiness, glory, honour, and power.

Praise and exaltation of God should be part of our prayers. Yet there are many of us who think they do not know how to glorify God or what appropriate things to say to Him. Some people seem to have the gift of finding the right words, while others do not.

When we pay attention to Psalm 86:8, we learn that praising God in our prayers is not as difficult as we might think. David refers to God’s works, things which God has done. In his own life, David could think of the special anointing he received. He could also mention the many times that God saved him from Saul, or the many times that He provided for David and his men in the wilderness. David does not mention those things in Psalm 86, but he could have. And many of these great works are mentioned in other psalms of David.

David also could have thought about the works of God in the more

distant past, when He crushed Pharaoh’s army in the Red Sea, or gave manna in the desert, or knocked down the walls of Jericho. These great works proclaimed the power of the Lord and showed Him to be the only true God. By recalling these works, David and the other psalmists were often led to praise God. Psalms 105 and 106, for example, praise God for his faithfulness to his people. Psalm 104 praises God for his great work of creation.

What are the great works of God that will lead you to praise Him? Every time you open your Bible at the end of a meal or for your evening devotions, you are reading the gospel, which is a record of God’s great works. You read of his faithfulness, his love, his justice, and his almighty power. You read of Christ, the Anointed One, who is your prophet, priest, and king. These are themes that can be worked into your prayers with some practice. For example, if you have read about Christ’s redeeming work, you can praise God for the precious blood of his Son. If you have read about the new life God has given you, you can praise Him for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Whatever aspect of God’s work is before you can lead you to praise Him. He is the only God, the Most High God, and He is worthy to be sanctified, glorified, and praised.





Rev. Wes. Bredenhof is pastor of the
 Providence Canadian Reformed Church,
 Hamilton, Ontario
wbredenhof@bell.net

Fit to be Bound?

"No extra-confessional binding" is something of a motto in our churches. This familiar phrase is often trotted out to make the case for the toleration of certain controversial views within our church federation. The slogan is often persuasive because of its historical baggage. Older church members quickly call to mind how binding to the extra-confessional views of Abraham Kuyper led to the Liberation of 1944. History tells of how the early Liberated immigrants could not join the Protestant Reformed Churches because of their insistence on binding to their distinctive understanding of the relationship between covenant, baptism, and election. It might even be said that the Canadian Reformed Churches owe their existence to the saying, "No extra-confessional binding."

Yet, this saying is not without its problems. Holding consistently to this position can lead us to places we surely don't want to go and stances we surely don't want to take. In fact, as we'll see in this article, some form of extra-confessional binding is not only a reality, but also a necessity. To begin, let me share with you a hypothetical case study.

A case study

Dr. Smith is an ethicist at the University of Tuktoyaktuk and an elder in the First Canadian Reformed Church. Dr. Smith is trained not only in philosophy, but also in biology. Long ago, during his Ph.D. studies, Smith became convinced that the fetus is not a human being, and therefore abortion is not a moral issue – rather, abortion is a decision that needs to be made by a woman in consultation with her doctor, much like a woman would consult her doctor with regards to the removal of her gall bladder. Dr. Smith believes that evolutionary insights provide a satisfying scientific explanation for the non-personhood of the fetus. He also appeals to the fact that in Reformed churches for hundreds of years, when women would have spontaneous abortions (miscarriages), they would not name these fetuses, nor would they give them a proper Christian burial. Instead, many fetuses would be discarded with the household garbage or sewage.

It is evident that the anti-choice lobby is a recent phenomenon growing out of Roman Catholicism and American Fundamentalism. Further, according to Dr. Smith, there are no clear passages of Scripture which require Christians to believe that fetuses are true human beings before birth. In his opinion, the various Scripture passages can be interpreted differently to allow for his view. He maintains that his views on abortion fall within the freedom of exegesis.

When Dr. Smith was first nominated to be an elder in his church, there were letters making objections. In fact, some in his church felt that he should have been placed under discipline long ago for his views. The consistory considered the letters. However, it decided that since the Reformed confessions do not say anything about the humanity/personhood of the fetus, this is a matter of exegetical freedom. There can be no extra-confessional binding and therefore Dr. Smith is free to teach that abortion is not a moral issue and he may be an elder in good standing in the Canadian Reformed churches.

Extreme?

Now you have read that case study and thought, "Well, that's a bit extreme. Everybody in the Canadian Reformed churches agrees that abortion is wrong and the likelihood of this happening is very slim." True. Yet, the fact remains that there is nothing in the Three Forms of Unity that would prevent someone from holding the position of Dr. Smith. The fact also remains that we appear to believe that our binding is limited to the Three Forms of Unity. In principle, anything beyond the Three Forms of Unity is fair game, including one's views on abortion.

I developed this case study around the time that abortionist George Tiller was murdered at Reformation Lutheran Church in Wichita, Kansas. Tiller was a member in good standing of this church. Aside from the general consensus in the Canadian Reformed churches, what principled reason could we give to deny him membership or even a position as an office bearer? If we are not permitted to bind beyond the confessions,

and the confessions do not say anything explicit about the personhood of a fetus, there is no clear reason why he could not be a member or even an office bearer.

You see the problem, don't you? When it comes to an issue that involves the unborn, we are quite comfortable with extra-confessional binding. When it comes to something that arouses strong emotions, we easily deny freedom of exegesis. But when there are other issues where there is less emotional baggage but where there may be just as much or more at stake theologically and ethically, then we balk and pull out the "no extra-confessional binding" card.

There are things that are clearly taught in Scripture but do not necessarily find expression in our confessions

Let me be clear that I do not believe that somebody like Dr. Smith or George Tiller should be a member in good standing of any church. Someone holding his views should be placed under discipline and there should be no room for his views. There must be extra-confessional binding and this is something where there is no freedom of exegesis. In fact, we must be insistent on this. Moreover, this one issue is simply paradigmatic of a range of other ones. Therefore, we need to reflect thoughtfully on what we are bound to as Reformed believers in general and as Reformed office bearers in particular.

Bound by Scripture and confession

Not everything clearly taught in Scripture is included in the Three Forms of Unity. Our confessions were written several centuries ago. They were written in an era in which some of the issues were the same as those we face today, but also in which some were different. To be sure, many contemporary issues were around in some form in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but did not pose a threat to the Reformed churches and so don't find an answer in our confessions. However, that does not mean that there has not been a consensus amongst Reformed believers about these issues. It is simply the case that necessity has not required that this consensus come to written expression in the confessions of the church.

This continues to hold true today. There are things that are clearly taught in Scripture but do not necessarily find expression in our confessions. As an

obvious example, we could think of the prohibition against women serving in the special ecclesiastical offices. When men study at our seminary, they are taught in accord with this consensus. When ministers teach their catechism students, they teach not only what the confessions explicitly say, but also what our churches have understood Scripture to teach clearly beyond those confessions.

All of this illustrates that we are *not* bound only to the confessions. We have to dispose of that illusion in the Canadian Reformed churches. We are bound first of all by Scripture and its clear teaching and then by the confessions as faithful (but not exhaustive) summaries of what Scripture teaches.

What about the Form for Subscription?

However, I can imagine that someone will recall that our forms for subscription (adopted by Synod Smithers) do not bind office bearers to Scripture, but to the confessions. Yes, that is certainly true. The forms speak of heartily believing that "the whole doctrine contained in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort fully agrees with the Word of God." The forms pay special attention to binding office bearers to the summary of Scripture in the confessions.

Yet this is not the only declaration that office bearers make with regards to doctrine. We do well to remember that office bearers, just as well as the other members of the church, are bound to a declaration they made when they publicly professed their faith. All office bearers and regular members declare that they "wholeheartedly believe the doctrine of the Word of God, summarized in the confessions and taught here in this Christian church." They all promise "steadfastly to continue in this doctrine in life and death, rejecting all heresies and errors conflicting with God's Word." Likewise, when men take ecclesiastical office they affirm that they believe "the Old and New Testament to be the only Word of God and the complete doctrine of salvation." They further state that they reject all doctrines conflicting with the Word of God.

The church always teaches more than what is summarized in the confessions. The church teaches the doctrine of the Word of God. That doctrine says, for instance, that unborn children are human beings and that life must be respected from the moment of conception forwards. All members are bound to continue in that doctrine and to reject errors that conflict with it. Canadian Reformed church members are bound by Scripture to be pro-life. Consequently, a

consistory would be naive and short-sighted to think that Dr. Smith could be a member in good standing, let alone serve as an office bearer. In fact, the consistory that would allow that is departing from the doctrine of the Word of God, even if formally it still claims to hold to the Three Forms of Unity.

Breaking the unity

There is a broad consensus in our churches on a number of matters that are not explicitly defined in the Three Forms of Unity. We consider these issues to be clear in the Word of God. Consequently, our seminary teaches accordingly, and the same voice is then heard from our pulpits and in our catechism classrooms.

However, what if someone wished to break ranks with that consensus? Let's again take the case study. Dr. Smith made profession of faith as a young man long before he did his Ph.D. studies. He ought to have been taught the doctrine of the Word of God, including (but not restricted to) the summary found in the Three Forms of Unity. He would have known that the Canadian Reformed churches believe in the personhood of the unborn. Should he arrive at a different conclusion through his studies, he should have entered into a discussion with his consistory. His consistory ought to have made every effort to persuade him of his error. If he would fail to turn from this error after repeated admonitions, he should have been placed under discipline. Yes, a member can be placed under discipline for holding a view that contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture without necessarily contradicting a clear teaching of the Three Forms of Unity. Then obviously, a member can also be prevented from holding office in the church for holding a view that contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture.

Appeal and revision

Let's now say that Dr. Smith was a member of a faithful Canadian Reformed church that shared the consensual understanding of what Scripture teaches about abortion. This church placed him under discipline and, unless he repented, he was on the road to excommunication. Given what often happens in these situations, more than likely Dr. Smith would just withdraw and find another church more amenable to his views. But it could also happen that Dr. Smith decides to appeal his case to the broader assemblies. According to Article 31 of the Church Order, he would have the right to do this.

Perhaps the broader assemblies would hear the

case of Dr. Smith and decide that he was right and that the Word of God is sufficiently unclear to allow his position on the unborn. In that case, he would be free to teach and maintain his views and while properly the decision of the broader assemblies would only apply to him, most likely his case would set a precedent turning the consensus in the Canadian Reformed churches.

On the other hand, perhaps his consistory would be sufficiently alarmed by Dr. Smith's position that it would argue that the consensus of the churches on the clear teaching of Scripture should be codified in our confessions. So, for instance, perhaps the consistory might overture the broader assemblies to revise Lord's Day 40 of the Heidelberg Catechism so that it clearly and unequivocally states that abortion at any stage is a violation of the sixth commandment. The broader assemblies would weigh the arguments and it could very well happen that the confessions are amended to strengthen the church's stand.

Interestingly, something similar has happened in our churches with regards to same-sex marriage. There is nothing in the Three Forms of Unity that explicitly rules out same-sex marriage. Aside from our consensus on the clear teaching of the Word of God (!), up until 2007, someone could theoretically be a member in good standing in the Canadian Reformed churches and even be an office bearer and believe and teach that same-sex marriage is acceptable. To protect the churches from legal threats, Synod 2007 decided to add these words to Article 63 of our Church Order: "The Word of God teaches that marriage is a union between one man and one woman." However, it is interesting that the amendment was made to the Church Order and not the Heidelberg Catechism. It raises the question: is this extra-confessional binding? If so, why no protest?

Conclusion

Consistories should not be afraid to exclude men from office who hold to positions that contradict the clear teaching of Scripture while not necessarily contradicting the Three Forms of Unity. To take it further, consistories should not be afraid to proceed with general church discipline against such individuals. If we consistently apply the concept of "no extra-confessional binding," we're headed for a world of trouble. Because we're bound to Scripture, we must have extra-confessional binding. "No extra-confessional binding" amounts to a dead confessionalism that ultimately places the confessions of the church above the Word of God.





Rev. George van Popta is minister of the Jubilee Canadian Reformed Church at Ottawa, Ontario
gvanpopta@gmail.com

Ecumena

Calvin, Henry, and Benedict

Dear Readers, The Rev. George van Popta, who in the past has served as Managing Editor, has been invited to become a regular contributor to Clarion. We have asked him to keep you updated on the global religious scene and he has kindly consented. Welcome back, Brother!
The Editor

In AD 1509, two significant church-historical events took place. In France, John Calvin, the great Reformer and church ecumenist, was born. Across the channel, in England, Henry VIII, the man who would tear the Church of England away from the Roman Church, ascended to the throne.

Since no male heir was forthcoming from Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon, which put the dynastic legitimacy of the House of Tudor at stake, Henry sought an annulment from the pope in order to marry Anne Boleyn. Pope Clement VII, beholden to the Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor and nephew of Catherine, refused to grant it. Henry divorced the Church of England from the Church of Rome in order to divorce Catherine. He summoned the British Parliament to declare the Act of Supremacy, 1534, by which Henry became the Supreme Governor of the Church of England.

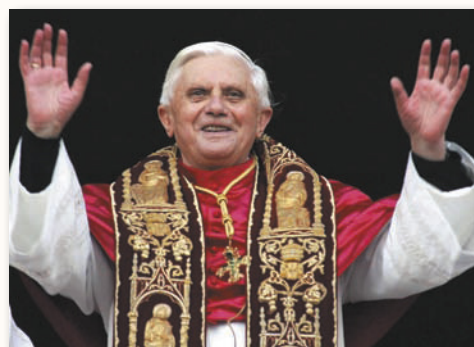
Last year, in AD 2009, five-hundred years after the birth of Calvin and five-hundred years after Henry's accession to the throne, again two significant church-historical events took place – events related to those of a half millennium earlier: Across the world, Reformed Christians celebrated the quincentennial of the birth of John Calvin; and, from the Vatican, Pope Benedict XVI invited the Church of England to re-enter the Roman fold.

The Anglican Church has always been a big-tent church from "High Church" to "Low Church." "High Church" parishes are those Anglican churches that use a number of ritual practices associated in the popular mind with Roman Catholicism. "Low Church" Anglicans have been influenced by Reformed thought, are evangelical in their beliefs and practices, reject the doctrine that the sacraments confer grace *ex opere operato* (e.g. baptismal regeneration) and lay stress on the Bible as the sole source of authority in matters of faith. They usually hold dear the Reformed Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England as their official doctrinal statement.

The Anglican Church ("Episcopalian" in the USA) has gone from being a big-tent church to a church in crisis. It is losing members by the thousands. Any growth is among conservatives in Asia and Africa.



John Calvin



Pope John Paul



Henry VIII

Two conservative movements have emerged within the Anglican Church. The split generally falls along the old High Church / Low Church divide.

The one wants to hold on to the Anglo-Catholic teachings, practices, and liturgy. It rejects same-sex marriage and the ordination of women. The other is evangelical. It rejects same-sex marriage, is divided on the ordination of women, and wants to hold on to fundamental Reformed doctrine. In Canada, this conservative movement is represented by the Anglican Network in Canada (ANiC). It is part of the worldwide Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans.

Benedict thought that five centuries of separation are long enough. He has invited the Anglican Church back into the fold. Not wanting to make it difficult, and in the typical Roman Catholic fashion of accommodating local practices, he has told the Anglicans the Roman Catholic practice of a celibate priesthood need not apply to them and they may keep their prayer books and liturgy. The only real demand is that they acknowledge him as the Head of the Church.

Benedict's offer will not appeal to the Low Church parishes, but it will be attractive to the conservative High Church, Anglo-Catholic parishes. The liberal, mainstream Anglican Church will continue to lose members and swirl into irrelevance. One almost feels sorry for the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, the supreme religious leader of the Anglican Church. His comment on the pope's invitation was that he did not think it was a "commentary on Anglican problems." Such a response beggars belief.

Did Benedict intentionally wait until the quincentenary of Henry's

accession to the throne? One can hardly believe he did not. The irony is too delicious. Did Benedict notice his invitation was made in the quincentenary of Calvin's birth? As Joseph Ratzinger (the pope's birth name) was born and bred among the Protestants of Germany, and is known to have read Calvin's Institutes, one can hardly imagine he did not.

Where does John Calvin fit into all of this? From Geneva, Calvin wrote Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury of his time. In that letter, Calvin showed himself to be a true ecumenist. Among other things, he wrote:

I wish it might be effected, that learned and stable men, from the principal churches, might assemble in some place, and, after discussing with care each article of faith, deliver to posterity, from their general opinion of them all, the clear doctrines of the Scriptures.

It is to be numbered among the evils of our day, that the churches are so divided one from another. . . . Respecting myself, if it should appear that I could render any service, I should with pleasure cross ten seas, if necessary, to accomplish that object.¹

We see here two streams of ecumenical thought and methods of church consolidation: Benedict's which is opportunistic; Calvin's which is principled. Benedict's way is one of merely overturing disaffected Anglicans; Calvin's overture to the Anglicans was based upon reaching consensus upon the articles of the Christian faith and the clear doctrines of Scripture.

We prefer Calvin.

¹ Letter 17, "Calvin to Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, Wishes Health." <http://www.godrules.net/library/calvin/143calvin23.htm>



Letter from a Canadian Reformed Church to a neighbouring Anglican Church

To St. George's Anglican Church

Dear Reverend and Esteemed Gentlemen,

We have learned from the news media that St. George's congregation has resolved to unite with the Anglican Network in Canada. By way of this letter, we would like to encourage you to continue to stand firm in the Word of God against the tide of humanism, which accommodates contemporary culture. It is the proclamation of the Word of God which transforms sinners, regenerates us by the power of the Holy Spirit, causes us to break away from the power of sin, and to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. It is our prayer that your congregation, and others, will continue to look to scripture for guidance and to maintain the historic creeds of the Christian church.

In the service of Christ the King,

Pastor

Clerk

Graduation 2009 at Emmanuel Christian High School

Highway 7 is a scenic highway, rolling down from Ottawa through the Canadian Shield, past the Kawartha Lakes, through Peterborough and into Toronto. Here modernization has forced it to change its name to Hwy 407, but once we pass Toronto, the familiar King's Highway 7 signs appear again, allowing one to drive this two lane road through the rolling Halton Hills and into Guelph. Just before one reaches Guelph, Hwy 7 crosses County Rd 29, not a well-marked intersection, although it does have a stoplight, but a landmark nonetheless. Hardly half a kilometre past that intersection is the Emmanuel Canadian Reformed Church on the left side of the 7, the venue large enough to host the Emmanuel Christian High School 2009 Graduation on October 2, 2009.

Thirty-three graduates, along with parents, staff, and board members, walked through the glass doors, gathered informally in the vestibule for some chit-chat, and then proceeded to sit around beautifully decorated round tables in the fellowship hall. All ate heartily and a hum-drum of noise provided the desired atmosphere; all seemed to enjoy the meal and the fellowship. Immediately after dessert was served, staff members provided light entertainment with an on-wall projected Jeopardy game, featuring special events or memorable characteristics of the graduates. The graduating class had a hoot.

By 8:00, the church auditorium was filled to capacity with family and friends of the graduates. After the graduates, now attired in black gowns with maroon stoles, took their seats of honour, the chairman of the Board, Mr. B. Medemblik, opened the festivities with the reading of Matthew 5:1-16, prayer and words of welcome. He thanked God for providing this celebration, for granting a Christian high school education to this community, and for providing families with the willingness and means to maintain the school. Rev. W. Geurts, father of two graduates, then addressed the audience with a speech entitled, "Welcome to the Real World." He did not imply that school is an imaginary or

a fantasy world, but he showed that the school is the necessary preparatory world where students gain the necessary knowledge and skills in a Christian setting to be prepared for a world of work, further education, or training usually provided in a non-Christian environment. Rev. Geurts urged the students to let God's light shine through them wherever they have chosen to go. How one does his or her tasks, how one speaks, and what one speaks about are all windows through which God's light can shine around us.

The principal, Mr. Henk Nobel, provided a second message for the students. After sharing an imaginary world where elephants fly overhead, bulls are guided by radar, and pizzas grow on trees, he told the graduates not to marvel at such unique worlds, but to "Marvel at the creation, and then praise your Creator. Keep alive that joy and wonder in your heavenly Father, the creator of all things. Trust his Son Jesus not only as the one through whom all things were made but also as the one through whom sin-shattered lives can be remade. Welcome his Holy Spirit not only as the one who breathes earthly life into bodies, but also as the one who breathes eternal life into our souls. Glorify this God."





After receiving two well-delivered messages, the graduates were ready to receive the diplomas. The chairman of the board ably assisted the principal in handing them out to the graduates. Each graduate smiled into the awaiting camera and then joined their fellow students on stage. Only after the last graduate, Nicole Woods, received her diploma and joined her class, could Mr. Nobel present the Graduating class of 2009 to the audience. Flashes and clapping filled the air.

Several graduates were recognized with different awards. Mr. Arthur Kingma and Mr. Theo Hopman presented the Honour Achievement awards to eleven graduates – all females. The Post Farm Structures Award was presented to a surprised Nick Mans, the Governor's General Award and the Jordan Hutchinson Memorial Award was presented to Emily Spenser (unable to attend this celebration because she was writing a university mid-term which she couldn't defer – Rev. Geurt's speech begins to sink in already: "Welcome to the real world"), the Citizenship Award was presented to Emma VanWeerden, and the Stewardship Award was presented to Janine Eygenraam (see the side bar for descriptions of the Awards).

After the awards ceremony, Emma VanWeerden dramatically shared the valedictorian address. She shared the variety of ways that this class "left their mark" at ECHS. She solved the mystery of the black spot in Room 104, told about other ungainly marks



left accidentally at school, but also shared marks to be remembered. Perhaps some of those marks were lessons they taught some teachers (like sinks are not natural habitats for slithery animals), or beautifully painted artwork on the hall or classroom walls; perhaps they were mental images in teachers' minds. Emma then reminded the grads of God's mark on them all, and she urged them to leave their mark in the world, not by doing earth-shaking deeds, but through living each day as a faithful Christian.

After a closing prayer, all in the auditorium moved into the fellowship hall. Family and friends shared personal congratulations, sipped water, tea, and coffee, ate from trays filled with home-baked pastries, and chatted with one another. Slowly, people wandered through the glass doors, back to their cars, and drove up the driveway, either turning left or right on the Highway 7.

This evening was the third commencement for Emmanuel Christian High. God has marvellously provided. Although the school is tight on space, sharing the Maranatha Christian School facilities, it has been blessed with increasing student numbers (now at 150 students, with increased staff members (eleven) and with good relationships among churches, homes, and school. May ECHS continue to be a blessing to the generations that go through its doors and into the worlds beyond. Congratulation, Grad 2009!

Church News

New Mailing Address:

Grace Canadian Reformed Church
of Winnipeg:
PO Box 43021, RPO Kildonan Place
Winnipeg, MB R2C 5G5

New Email Address:

Fergus Maranatha Canadian
Reformed Church
fergusmaranatha.clerk@gmail.com


Honours Achievement Award: All those who have attained an academic average of 80 percent or better in all Grade 12 courses: Janneke Brakke, Victoria DeJong, Janine Eygenraam, Laura Groen, Faythe Helder, Jenise Kamphuis, Emily Spenser, Liz VanOmmen, Jennifer VanTol, Emma VanWeerden, and Nicole Woods.

Post Farm Structures Award: Awarded to the student who has the highest average in all Grade 12 courses and has successfully enrolled in a university or college level program in construction technology: Nick Mans.

Governor General's Award: Given to the student who has the highest average of all Grade 11 and 12 courses based on the transcript of courses to the Ministry of Education: Emily Spenser.

Jordan Hutchinson Memorial Academic Proficiency Award: presented to the student who has achieved the highest standing in the top six Grade 12 university level courses and who is enrolled in studies at the university level: Emily Spenser.

Citizenship Award: The student who receives this award had to promote the school in a positive and active way throughout this school year: Emma VanWeerden.

Stewardship Award: To the student who has used his or her talents to the fullest: Janine Eygenraam. 



Welcome Rev. R. Vermeulen and Family

Ordination and installation

On Sunday, October 4, 2009, Trinity Canadian Reformed Church in Glanbrook was blessed with the ordination and installation of Candidate Rodney Vermeulen. Rev. W. den Hollander, with whom Candidate R. Vermeulen had done his pastoral training internship, led the morning service, using 2 Timothy 2:8 as his text. The theme for the sermon was: "Be motivated by Christ's resurrection." 1) It is the basis of your faith. Through Christ's resurrection we have been restored to our offices as prophets, priests and kings, causing us to love Him and live for Him. 2) It is the source of your strength. Christ, as Pastor of our lives, allows us to share in his life. He leads us by his Word and Spirit, giving us strength and courage to fulfill our daily tasks. 3) It is the gospel for your work. The gospel of the living Christ contains the promises of the risen Christ. He, the true Messiah, will reign on David's throne forever.

After the appropriate form was read, Candidate R. Vermeulen was ordained and installed. The laying on of hands and the signing of the form of subscription followed. Letters of congratulations were read, after



Our MC for the evening, Peter Smid

which the congregation enjoyed refreshments and had the opportunity to congratulate our new pastor and his family.

During the afternoon service, Rev. Vermeulen preached his first sermon as our pastor, using Colossians 2:2-3 as his text. The theme for the sermon was: "Know the mystery of God, namely Christ." This knowledge is: 1) The central focus of Paul's ministry. In Christ, by way of Paul's ministry, we, along with the Colossian and Laodecian Christians, are granted the assurance of faith, the riches of understanding the mystery of salvation, and a peace which knows no end. That peace results in self-sacrificing unity between believers. The love which Christ showed to us, miserable, unlovable sinners, we are to show to one another. 2) The certain foundation for our life. Unless we look at Christ's cross with the eyes of faith, we see nothing but a pitiful, dying man. Yet, with the eyes of faith we see our Saviour and the treasures of wisdom and knowledge contained in Christ. In Him we have all we need to live lives pleasing to God. Once we were enemies, now we are reconciled to God, in Christ. Without Christ, life is a hopeless end, but with Christ, life is an endless hope.



Rev. Vermeulen, with three of his sons, deliberating the correct answers

Welcome evening

On the evening of October 16, 2009, the congregation of Trinity Canadian Reformed Church was invited to welcome Rev. R. Vermeulen and his family. Br. A. den Hollander, chairman of the council, opened the evening and welcomed everyone. A special welcome was given to the parents of Rev. R. Vermeulen, who were able to be present for the ordination service as well as for the welcome evening. Br. P. Smid took over as MC and the celebration began.

The evening was a wonderful mixture of singing, performing, speeches, and games. The various study societies, several individuals, and our very own Trinity Singers all had an opportunity to do some performing in order to welcome the Vermeulen family. Mention should be made of one presentation, in which Sr. J. Hutten was given the "Mother of Us All" award. Through family lineage and marriage connection it was shown that all the members of the congregation are connected to Sr. Hutten, even Rev. Vermeulen and his family. For, you see, Rev. R. Vermeulen has a cousin, Rev. K. Vermeulen, who is married to the sister of John Bruning, who married Hanna Hutten, a granddaughter of Sr. Hutten. In many cases one direct relative of Sr. Hutten was the common link relating her to several members of the congregation.



Parents of Rev. Vermeulen, who were able to join us all the way from Australia



Rev. and Mrs. Vermeulen with their youngest child, Hannah



Rev. and Mrs. Vermeulen and their children, enjoying the entertainment

Finally the Vermeulen family was presented with a gift from the congregation. Since they enjoy the outdoors they were given a canoe to enjoy on the local bodies of water. A canoe, rather than some other kind of faster transportation, was chosen as a gift to discourage them from using it to leave our congregation any time soon.

Rev. Vermeulen, on behalf of his family, expressed his appreciation for the warm welcome they had received, closing the evening with a word of thanks to our Heavenly Father.

The evening, including the desserts and refreshments afterwards, was enjoyed by all. We, as a congregation are thankful to our Heavenly Father for his providential care, which we can also see in the fact that, after a very short vacancy, He has provided us with a new pastor and teacher. May the Lord give him all he needs to do his important task.





Denise Meyer is a teacher at Parkland Immanuel Christian School, Edmonton

CRTA West – Convention 2009

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” Isaiah 6:3

What is more beautiful than the colours of fall in the midst of a valley of rolling hills or the skyline meeting the endless vastness of the prairies? This was the setting of our convention at the Dallas Valley Ranch near Regina, Saskatchewan, hosted this year by the staff of Parkland Immanuel Christian School in Edmonton.

Wednesday night saw the arrival of seven schools: Winnipeg, Carman, Coaldale, Calgary, Edmonton, Neerlandia, and a guest school, Monarch Christian. Room assignments were sorted out and, with their narrow bunk beds, trundles, limited space, and numerous colleagues, these rooms contributed significantly to a “camp” experience. All of this sparked memories and enhanced our fun. Participants were given time to unwind after the drive, play games (crib, spoons, and the like), and of course, the highlight: eating home-made cinnamon buns! Kudos to the Dallas Valley Ranch for feeding us impeccable food!

Keynote addresses

Thursday morning after opening devotions and a most delicious breakfast, we were treated to a keynote address by Gary Duthler. The speaker’s experience included having served as Executive Director of the Federation of Independent Schools in Canada as well

as of the Association of Independent Schools and Colleges (AISCA) in Alberta. He was also an “Alberta Initiative for School Improvement” coordinator through AISCA and an assessment lead teacher, though he identifies himself first and foremost as a “child of God.” Duthler’s address focused on how we can teach God’s covenant children and how we can assess what we teach. “First and foremost,” says Duthler, “the world should not see a people getting it right but a broken people, sinners but healed. We as educators need to give hope. Students are created in the image of God, sinful, redeemed, growing, just as I, the teacher, am.”

Duthler also made us think about how and why we do the things we do in the classroom. How do we address the different learning styles and talents of the students? Do we allow the children to respond to their learning according to their strengths? He recommended the book *Teaching Redemptively* by Donovan Graham as a practical and useful guide, one that explores Reformed biblical norms for education and also explores the meaning of grace in how those norms lead us to be Christ-like in our nurturing and disciplining of children.

Duthler then addressed the assessment practices we use in the classroom. He spoke about the importance of two different types of assessment: assessment of learning and for learning. Assessment of learning is a summative evaluation – done at the end of learning, a “testing of what students have learned.” He also demonstrated the importance of assessment for





learning, where the teacher acts as coach, supports the learning, gives feedback and second chances, encourages practice, and helps students learn and improve from previous mistakes. He demonstrated not only that both these methods have a place in the classroom, but also showed what quality assessment looks like, and how it can be done effectively. All in all, he gave us much to ponder and reflect on.

Our second keynote speaker was Bernice Stieva, who came with a wealth of teaching experience in the field of Language Arts, clearly one of her passions. In Ontario she had been a teacher of both elementary and junior high students at various schools and also had worked with education students at Redeemer University College in Ancaster. Currently, she teaches courses to education students at King's University College in Edmonton. Stieva led three workshops, each geared to a specific grade division (K-4, 5-8, and 9-12), thus creating an opportunity to target the individual needs of the learners in a more refined way. After examining how students learn to read and how students use reading to learn, she addressed the specific challenges of the diverse needs of students at the different grade levels. She showed the importance of building knowledge and demonstrated activities that can make learning fun and engaging, which helps achieve the goal of awakening students to God's wonderful gift of Language Arts.

Workshops

Our first session after lunch featured the first workshop by Stieva, alongside two other workshops led by Edmonton's own. Margaret Tams and Helen Ostermeier introduced a writing program called "6+1 Traits of Writing" for the primary grades, which helps students identify characteristics ("traits") of good writing and in turn teaches them to apply these to their own writing. Richard Veldkamp led a workshop geared to high school, focusing on our world of technology.

He gave an introduction to how one can use Google's powerful e-mail system and the applications related to it (sites, calendars) without all the targeted ads. He also looked at some open source educational software that can be used at low to no cost, and demonstrated the use of Ubuntu as an alternative to Microsoft Windows.

The second part of our afternoon was spent enjoying some R'n R. Many took part in the varied activities offered by the ranch, even as light snow fell: horseback riding through the valley, testing arching skills, leaping off posts high in the sky to a swinging trapeze, climbing vertical wall faces, or simply exploring the picturesque terrain of the ranch on foot.

After supper we engaged in our second session of workshops, again one being led by Bernice Stieva. Ashley Diek from Monarch addressed the topic of assessment practices in Physical Education by presenting various theories and practical assessment practices used in his own physical education classes. Winnipeg's Michelle Kanis and Klaren Heidema walked their group through a software program called "Kurzweil 3000," which is a comprehensive reading, writing, and learning program. This program proves to be useful for struggling readers or individuals with learning difficulties, such as dyslexia and attention deficit disorder.

After a productive day of academia, we had some more time for R'n R. Those brave enough to weather blasting winds and driving snow jumped on a wagon of wet bales for a hay ride. Fun? Well, let's just say it was an experience to be remembered. The less adventurous attended a cricket demonstration led by George Diek, played games, chatted, or tried to get an early night's rest.

Friday morning saw the last session of workshops. Stieva spoke to the last of the grade divisions and Ashley Diek presented for a second time, on a "House System" used at their school. In this House System, each student is placed onto a team and students work to get points for their team, thereby providing a framework for a caring environment, encouraging participation in sporting and extra-curricular activities, and promoting leadership and development. Edmonton's Valerie Slaa and Darlene Dykstra explored how we can begin to help young children understand the principles of peacemaking and realize that they are capable of



using these guidelines in their own lives. They shared ideas and resources that can be used for children in lower elementary.

Stieva wrapped up the convention by addressing the participants as a whole. She shared how learning is a building up of the parts, and like "stacking round stones," the title of her address, is not always easy, but is possible with perseverance and patience. She

reminded participants of the importance in examining each "stone" carefully to build upon the next. At the same time, though, the enjoyment of literature as a whole without the dissection into its parts must be considered. There needs to be a balance between the two.

Time went by so quickly! It was again time to close another convention. As organizers of next year's convention, Calgary was given the floor, and they shared their plans for the upcoming year; they convinced us they are certainly on top of things! We bid each other farewell for another year, when D.V., we will meet again.

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

Dear Editor,

I really enjoy the canticles which Rev. G. Ph. van Popta is writing, but please could we make them to some new tunes? Don't get me wrong. I love our Psalms and Genevan tunes, but let us also move on and use some contemporary music or tunes from the URC books so that we can further that relationship. It is my understanding that John Calvin used the music of his time, so why can't we use our contemporary music? There are many beautiful "Praise and Worship" tunes which we could use if we paid the royalty fee. Let's do it.

At the same time could we also have four part harmony in our *Book of Praise*? Some of us have a hard time reaching those higher notes and if we read music we can also add to the singing, by singing the part that works well with our voice. We all have different singing talents and in this way we could make use of those as well.

Thanks for listening,

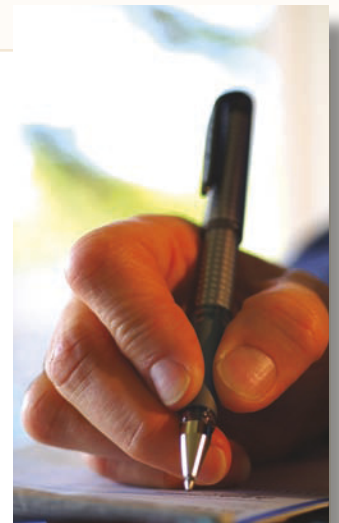
*Marcy Vandebos
Carman, MB*

Dear Editor,

In the 6 November 2009 issue of *Clarion*, Rev. Stam invites my response to three questions as he draws his lengthy response to my Letter to the Editor to a close:

- 1) What view should a "Christian" have on the Bible as God's Word?
- 2) When did sin and death enter the world?
- 3) What is the evolutionist position on the divine Person and saving work of Christ?

These questions go far afield from my letter, which clearly sought only to correct his false notions that (a) science as an enterprise is opposed to faith and (b) evolution is "only a theory." It is unfortunate that Stam fails to give due consideration to my offered corrections.



In response to (b), Rev. Stam simply appeals to the popular definition of "theory" as "guess" in his own defense, which reinforces my original point that evolution is not regarded as a theory in *that* sense, but in the *scientific* sense of a network of ideas widely supported by evidence. In response to (a), Stam simply gives a list of people "who left the faith after reading Darwin" and says there aren't many Christian scientists, and most of them are just theistic evolutionists anyway; however, it's clear to everyone who looks that there are in fact very many scientists who are Christians, most of whom are not even interested in Darwin. There are many studies on the matter. For example, at www.buffalo.edu/news/8732 it is suggested that the smaller proportion of Christians in the sciences is due to influential Christian leaders directing their followers away from the sciences because of some perceived conflict.

But let me answer the questions anyway.

1) As a Reformed Christian, I affirm the Belgic Confession which in Articles 2-5 and 7 confesses the Bible to be the second (more clear and full) means of God's self-revelation (the first being the creation, preservation and government of the universe), in which he "makes Himself more clearly and fully known...as far as is necessary for us in this life, to His glory and our salvation." The Word of God is inspired, holy and divine, authoritative, "for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith," of greater value than "any writings of men [or] custom, or the great multitude, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees or statutes." The Bible is best understood through the redemptive-historical hermeneutical approach in which Scripture interprets Scripture, and the historical, cultural, and literary context is carefully considered.

2) Romans 5:12 sums it up nicely: "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned. . . ."

3) I'm not sure why Rev. Stam asks *me* about the evolutionist position on Christ. Perhaps he mistakes me for an evolutionist, but I'm a theoretical physicist.

I do know that as a scientific (specifically biological) theory, evolution says nothing about Christ. Now, some do apply evolutionary ideas in unscientific ways, including those who mistakenly suggest that Christ is a stage in human evolution; I find that theologically and scientifically unacceptable. (It is also important to distinguish between evolution and *evolutionism*, which Dr. Freda Oosterhoff capably does at *Reformed Academic*, 30 October 2009.) If Rev. Stam is wondering what scientists say about Christ, that depends upon whether the scientist is a Christian or not. Every Christian I know – including those in science, many of whom (including myself) are not theistic evolutionists but explore other aspects of the wonderful creation of our Wonderful Creator (like chemistry, environmental science, agriculture, engineering, computing science, mathematics, geology, astronomy, botany) – affirms the Apostles' Creed including its confession regarding Jesus Christ in its Articles 2-7. We could continue with the Nicene Creed, and go on to affirm that Jesus Christ is both God and man, the centre of history, the fulfillment of Scripture, the creative Word of God, the Redeemer of all creation and of all who are his. Or, briefly, He is God's answer to the fall into sin: "As in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Cor 15:22).

Returning to the point of my original letter, if science is painted as "an enterprise opposed to faith" the young scientifically minded believer is more likely to choose medicine, engineering, or business to avoid the apparent conflict. By propagating the conflict myth, Rev. Stam is perpetuating this problem. We need faithful God-glorifying Christians in all the sciences, just like we need Christian lawyers, plumbers, electricians, farmers, artists, writers, film makers, politicians, and business leaders.

Yours, and His,
Arnold Sikkema,
Langley, BC

*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 for Classis Pacific West held in Cloverdale, BC on October 6, 2009

On behalf of the convening church of Cloverdale, the Reverend Theo Lodder called the meeting to order and led in opening devotions. In memorabilia Rev. Lodder mentioned that Surrey called Candidate Rodney Vermeulen, a call which he declined. Surrey has since extended a call to Rev. Ted VanRaalte. Rev. Julius VanSpronsen, missionary of the Surrey church, is in Canada on tour to the supporting churches. The church of Langley called Candidate Ryan DeJonge, a call which he accepted. Rev. Lodder welcomed the guests and gave a special welcome to Candidate Ryan DeJonge, who was present for his peremptory examination. Also in attendance and welcomed were the Deputies of Regional Synod West, Rev. Bill Wielenga and Rev. John Louwerse, present for the examination of Br. DeJonge. On this day Classis also welcomed some fraternal delegates. Rev. Benji Swinburnson and Rev. Peter Vosteen were representing the North-West Presbytery of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Rev. Dick Moes was present as a representative of Classis Western Canada of the United Reformed Churches. It was a joy to have them in our midst and further to give them an opportunity to speak and address the meeting and speak about their activities and experiences in Christ's church gathering work.

The church at Willoughby Heights, having examined the credentials, declared that all the churches were lawfully represented. Instructions were taken note of. The following officers were appointed: As chairman, Rev. Hendrik Alkema; as vice-chairman, Rev. James Slaa; as clerk, Rev. Anthon Souman.

When the executive took their places, Rev. Alkema thanked the convening church for their preparations and for hosting Classis. The agenda was adopted.

Brother Ryan DeJonge then presented himself for his peremptory examination according to Art. 5 C.O. After it was determined that all the documents were in order, Classis proceeded to examine Br. DeJonge. The first part of the examination was the presentation of a sermon proposal on Romans 13:11-14. In closed session, Classis judged the sermon sufficient, thereby deciding that the examination could proceed. The Deputies of Regional Synod West concurred.

At this time, the Grade 6 and 7 students of William of Orange School were welcomed. Also in attendance a little later was Sr. Ruth DeJonge, the wife of Br. DeJonge.

Classis next examined Br. DeJonge in Old Testament Exegesis (Psalm 48 and Amos 9:11-15), New Testament Exegesis (Acts 17:16-34 and 1 Timothy 2), Knowledge of Scripture, Doctrine and Creeds, Church History, Ethics, Church Polity, and Diaconiology. Once

again, Classis deliberated in closed session and determined that the examination was sufficient, a judgment which received the concurring advice from the Deputies of Regional Synod West. In open session, the chairman, with appropriate remarks, informed Br. DeJonge of the joyful news and declared that the way was open for him to be ordained to the ministry in the congregation of Langley. The chairman read the Classical Subscription Form, which Br. DeJonge signed. After a song was sung, Rev. Hendrik Alkema led the assembly in thanksgiving prayer. Opportunity was given to congratulate Br. and Sr. DeJonge. Rev. Anthon Souman was appointed to speak on behalf of classis at the welcome evening on October 25, 2009 D.V.

Question Period and Article 44 of the Church Order was held. The chairman asked whether the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued, whether the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured, and whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the judgment and help of Classis for the proper government of their church. All the churches answered positively to the first two questions asked. One church asked for advice in a matter of discipline. In closed session advice was given.

Classis considered an appeal of a minister against a consistory decision to not grant permission to preach in a church with which we do not have ecclesiastical fellowship. Classis considered that as a rule pulpits are open to churches under the umbrella of ecclesiastical fellowship. Classis decided that the consistory did not wrong the minister and denied the appeal.

The following reports were received, with thanksgiving:

Committee for Theological Students – The committee continues to provide support to prospective and enrolled students of theology from our classical region. Currently, there are two students from this region enrolled at our Theological College. Contact has been maintained with these brothers. There are also a number of prospective students, who have the care and attention of a mentor. Also, on the basis of the report, Classis assessed the churches an additional \$9.00 per communicant member for 2009, and made a one-time assessment of \$23.00 per communicant member for 2010.

Committee for Needy Churches – The committee reported that no requests for financial support were received from the churches.

Appointments for next classis were made. The convening church will be the church of Houston. Date: Tuesday, December 8, 2009 in Langley, at 9:00 a.m. Alternate date: Tuesday, April 6, 2010. Classis suggested officers: Chairman: Rev. James Slaa; Vice-chairman: Rev. Anthon Souman; Clerk: Rev. Theo Lodder.