

# Clarion

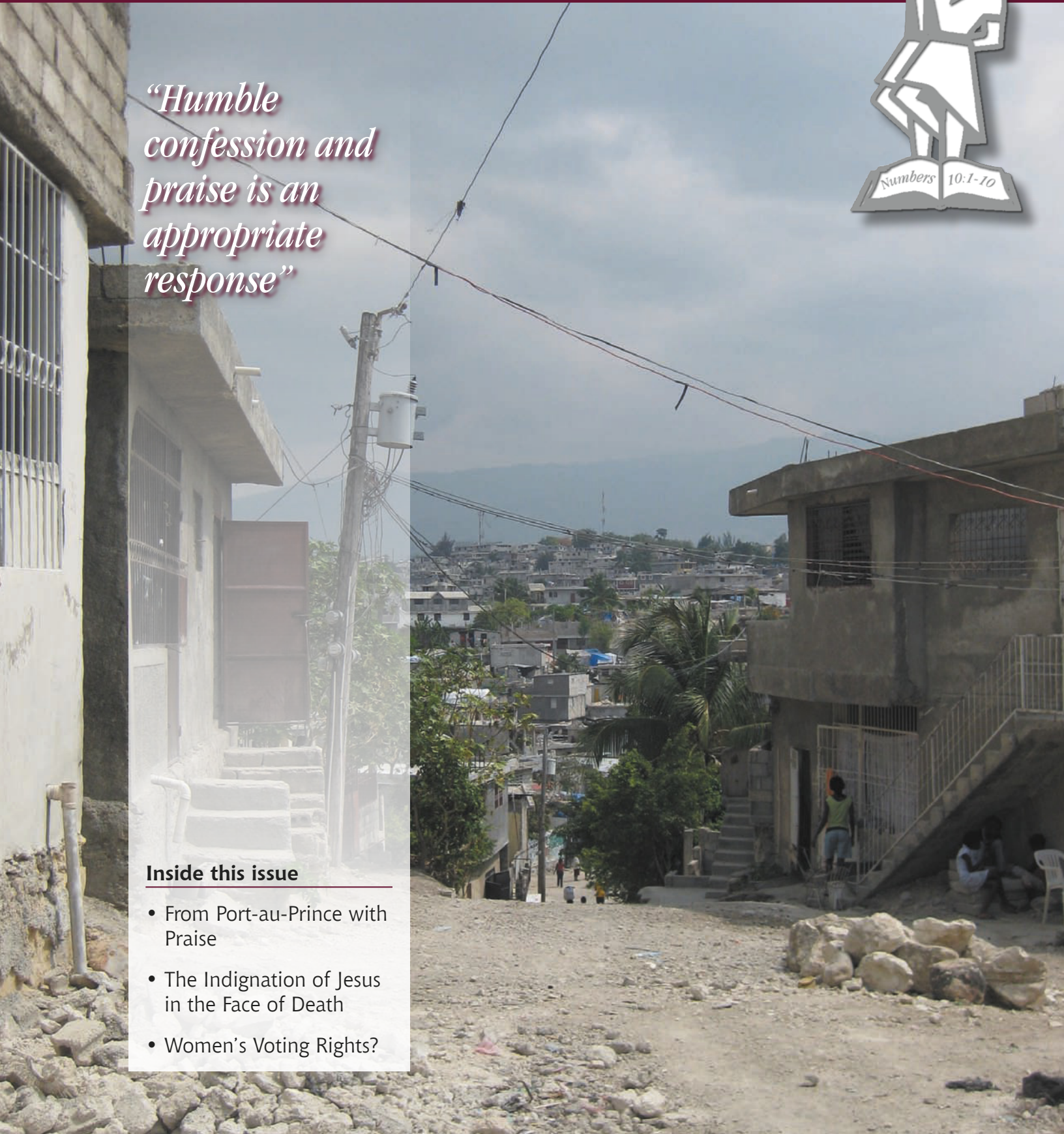
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*“Humble  
confession and  
praise is an  
appropriate  
response”*

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- From Port-au-Prince with Praise
- The Indignation of Jesus in the Face of Death
- Women’s Voting Rights?





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# From Port-au-Prince with Praise

*Scriptures teach us that we should be  
very careful with making up causal connections  
when calamity strikes*

Three months after the devastating earthquake struck Haiti, it is impossible to forget the images of collapsed buildings and people searching for survivors under the rubble. Even as the emergency relief efforts have come to an end and the process of rebuilding has begun, we still struggle to comprehend the magnitude of the calamity. Compared to what happened in Haiti, the earthquakes that hit Chile and Turkey six weeks later somehow seemed like minor events.

How should we react when we witness an earthquake like this? The Book of Revelation refers to a severe earthquake that caused a tenth of the Great City to collapse. It says that "the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven" (Rev 11:13). I'm not sure that this particular act of "giving glory" was a sign of true repentance, but one thing that struck me after the earthquake in Port-au-Prince was that many people who survived the calamity gave thanks to the Lord. They went "on air" to acknowledge that it was because of the Lord's mercy that they were alive. CNN reporters also told their American viewers how they were moved by the sound of hurting Haitians singing hymns of praise during sleepless nights in Port-au-Prince. Indeed, one of the most striking aspects of the disaster in Haiti was the praise that was heard in Port-au-Prince after the earthquake had struck.

For us, living in North America, humble confession and praise is an appropriate response as well. After all, even for us it is true that it is only by the grace of God that we may live. But we are also tempted to ask questions: Why would God allow an earthquake of this magnitude to hit one of the poorest countries in the Western hemisphere? And if it needed to be Haiti, why should it happen in Port-au-Prince, a city where millions of people lived in poorly built homes and

apartments? It is almost as if the disaster was designed to cause maximum damage!

Rev. Pat Robertson, an American televangelist, soon offered an explanation on the TV program *The 700 Club*. He said that Haiti has been under a curse because some two hundred years ago Haitians had made a pact with the devil. Quote: "They were under the heel of the French. You know, Napoleon III, or whatever. And they got together and swore a pact to the devil. They said 'We will serve you if you'll get us free from the French.' True story. And so, the devil said, 'Okay, it's a deal.' And they kicked the French out. The Haitians revolted and got themselves free. But ever since they have been cursed by one thing after another."

## Voodoo

So what was Robertson referring to? Well, the story goes that in 1791 a group of Haitian voodoo priests and slaves came together at a place called Bois-Caiman and asked the devil to liberate them from their French colonial masters. As part of a voodoo ritual they sacrificed a black pig and drank its blood. In exchange for their liberation they promised Satan to give the country to him for the next two hundred years. Sure enough, the French left Haiti soon after and the country became independent. How much of this is true and how much is perhaps fabricated, is hard to say. Given the strong voodoo influences in Haiti, it is quite imaginable that Haitian slaves would have engaged in pagan rituals.

Rev. Robertson's suggestion that Haiti is under a curse of God did not go over well with most people. *National Post* columnist Rex Murphy lambasted him as an "obnoxious ignoramus," described his comments





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as “demented mewling,” and observed that it would only serve as fodder for the secular media who love to reinforce existing caricatures of evangelical Christians.

It is indeed difficult to accept Robertson’s line of thinking. Even if we assume that there was an element of punishment in the earthquake, it is hard to believe that this would be a punishment for the sins of the fathers. The Bible tells us that God punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation (Exod 20:5). May we then assume that God in this case has punished a country for a sin that was committed more than two hundred years ago?

The Bible tells us that “the son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him” (Ezek 18:20). If the calamity in Haiti was a punishment, it would make more sense to see it as a punishment for the sins of the present generation. Something that comes to mind is the fact that in 2003 the Haitian government declared Voodoo to be an officially recognized religion. At that time, President Jean-Bertrand Aristide explained that Voodoo is an essential part of the Haitian national identity.

That Aristide, a former Roman Catholic priest, reinstated paganism as an official religion of his country, is horrible enough. One is tempted to think that Aristide’s political downfall less than a year later was perhaps a punishment from above. But could the earthquake that struck the city of Port-au-Prince also be seen as a punishment from the Lord?

**Disaster**

We should not dismiss the possibility too easily. The prophet Amos asked: “When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?” (Amos 3:6) The Bible teaches us that God judges the nations righteously and there are examples of cities that were punished by the Lord because of their wickedness. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were annihilated because of their arrogant attitude and because of the detestable things they did (Ezek 16:49-50). The city of Nineveh was almost destroyed because of its wickedness (Jonah 1:2). It was



*Food distribution at Adoration School compound in Port-au-Prince. Randy Lodder and his team organize a time of singing and prayer and sharing a message from God's Word.*

only when the king of Nineveh ordered the nation to fast and pray to God, that the disaster was averted.

At the same time, however, the Scriptures teach us that we should be very careful with making up causal connections when calamity strikes. The gospel of Luke tells us about a tower in Siloam that fell over and killed eighteen people in the process. The Lord Jesus commented: "Those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them – do you think they were more guilty than all the other living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish" (Luke 13:4-5). And coming back to the example of Sodom: if the Lord was willing to spare Sodom for the sake of ten righteous people that lived there (Gen 18:32), we should be careful with making assumptions about Port-au-Prince. There may be thousands of believers in that city!

## **Righteous**

It is true that God judges the nations both now and in the future. His judgment is perfect and righteous. As Christians we cannot accept that God would have been a mere bystander when the earthquake struck Haiti. God was not taken by surprise when it

happened. On the other hand the Bible teaches us that God is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, "a God who relents from sending calamity" (Jonah 4:3). And yet, sometimes God allows a calamity to happen. When it does, we should be careful and not pretend to be able to explain why it happened. This applies to the earthquake in Haiti as well.

Perhaps there is more than just one reason. Perhaps the Lord is using this calamity to create a new openness to the gospel among the Haitians. It was impressive to learn that President René Préval proclaimed a day of fasting and prayer on February 12, a month after the earthquake struck. On that day hundreds of thousands of people gathered in central Port-au-Prince for the main prayer service, and thousands more in church buildings throughout the city. Was this a sign of true repentance or was it just a sign that the survivors were terrified just like the people in the Great City of Revelation 11? Who knows: it was reported that many Voodoo priests repented from their idolatry and turned to the Lord. May it be true and lasting repentance indeed!

Perhaps the Lord intended this calamity to have a wider effect. Personally, I found it impressive to hear survivors of the earthquake giving glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. I never heard someone giving praise to the voodoo spirits (although I may have missed that), but I have heard survivors testifying – even through secular media such as CNN – that it was the Lord who had miraculously saved their life. To borrow an image from C.S. Lewis: Perhaps the Lord was using Haiti as a megaphone to speak to the world.

Haiti has always been known for its religious syncretism – mixing beliefs of Roman Catholic and Voodoo religions. It would be wonderful if this calamity caused Haitian people to turn to the Lord. May the Lord bless the work of faithful preachers of the gospel. May the Lord also bless the work that is done by Christian organizations and individuals to alleviate the suffering of the Haitian people and to show Christian love through various kinds of relief work. May it lead to more hymns going up from Haiti. More praise in Port-au-Prince.







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MATTHEW 13:52

# The Indignation of Jesus in the Face of Death

*“He snorted in the spirit and was troubled.”*

(John 11:33, my translation)

The year of our Lord 2010 will probably be remembered in coming decades as the year of the earthquake. Hundreds of thousands perished as a result of the Haitian catastrophe, and the number of known fatalities in the wake of the recent Chilean quake will be in the hundreds.

Extraordinary natural disasters of this variety provoke emotional unrest and invite thoughtful reflection.

The news of the earthquake in Haiti on January 12 made me think of a satirical novel written by the French philosopher Voltaire entitled *Candide*. Four years before its publication, in 1755, there had been a terrible earthquake in Lisbon, Portugal, which killed tens of thousands of people. The widespread devastation prompted Voltaire to write this novel in which he satirized the views of his contemporary Gottfried Leibniz, a Christian mathematician and philosopher.

Leibniz's was a philosophy of optimism, as expressed in his familiar slogan, "All is for the best in the best of all possible worlds." Voltaire had long found this philosophy offensive and the horrors of the Lisbon earthquake clinched the matter. He attacked the optimistic Enlightenment philosophy in *Candide*. This tale chronicles the horrific calamities and injuries that *Candide*, the protagonist, encounters and describes them with such meticulous detail that it's humorous

in the end. Voltaire's point is to show that this world is not necessarily the best possible one.

The number of casualties of the Haitian earthquake is more than triple than that of Lisbon, which so distressed Voltaire. The images transmitted by the media reveal the pain, the loss, the blood, and the tears. We find ourselves sympathetic to Voltaire. Surely there is nothing good about such a calamity.

In view of God's absolute sovereignty, what can we say? If we say that these Haitians (and Chileans) had it coming, we are right, but only as Job's friends were right and they in fact were wrong. We must admit that we can't pinpoint the reason for this disaster other than indicating, in a general sense, that human sin has caused numerous and varied disruptions and disturbances in creation. God permits us to raise our hands to heaven in bewilderment and to lament tragedies of this sort. In fact, in the psalms of lament that He Himself inspired, God gives us words to express our confusion, even our anger.

Although it surprises some Christians to hear this, God invites our laments, our tears, and our grieving. Jesus, who was a perfect human being, without sin, wept when his friend died. In fact, John tells us in his gospel that Jesus, when He saw Mary Magdalene and others weeping at the loss of Lazarus, was deeply moved in

spirit. Interestingly, the verb John uses here is sometimes used of horses, which leads me to translate, "He snorted in the spirit."

There is nothing pious about saying in the face of tragedy, "All is for the best in the best of all possible worlds." We stand alongside the hurting, grieving Haitians and Chileans and we snort at this tragedy.

But we haven't said enough. The Bible invites us to weep, to lament, and to grieve, but only in hope. Our hope is rooted in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which we recently commemorated. His resurrection from the dead, as I indicated in the previous issue of *Clarion*, marks the intrusion of a new creation into this world of creational disruptions and disturbances. There's a new power, Easter power, operative in this old world.

Tragedy and calamity don't have the last word, and neither does death. At Lazarus's tomb, Jesus said to the people, and also to us, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" (v. 40) The glory of God in John 11 is manifest in the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead. God will one day raise the dead and calm the storms in creation; Jesus Himself, in his earthly ministry, gave us powerful previews of that day. In the meantime, we point people to the only one in whom this hope is found. We point them to Jesus Christ who is the resurrection and the life. **C**



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# Women's Voting Rights?

The church is the work of the ascended Christ, and so it is He who gives office bearers to his people. Central, then, to the process of finding office bearers is calling on the name of the Lord, beseeching Him to show who He wishes to see in the offices of the church. There is no doubt to my mind that the sisters of the congregation should participate in this most fundamental and powerful aspect of the selection process. That is why the sisters (and also the children) should be present at the congregational meeting where office bearers are chosen. In fact, the sisters do well to be involved in drawing consistory's attention to potential office bearers as well as giving their approbation after the chosen brothers have been appointed. This, it seems to me, follows from the Lord's outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (see Acts 2:17, 18).

Should the sisters of the congregation also participate through casting a ballot? Some faithful churches around the world have answered the question with Yes, with some churches (eg, Free Church of Scotland) granting sisters voting privileges more than a century ago. Other faithful churches of the Lord have to date answered the question with No. The Canadian Reformed Churches are amongst the latter. Upcoming Synod Burlington (May, 2010) has to deal with the question. It seems to me that Synod Burlington needs to grapple with some very far-reaching questions before a final decision is made.

## Some history

Synod Coaldale 1977 appointed a committee to study whether there were scriptural grounds for the sisters of the congregation to cast a ballot. This committee presented a detailed report to Synod Smithville 1980 (see *Acts*, pg 205-225), concluding that "it is more in harmony with Scripture if women are not called upon to be involved in the voting for office

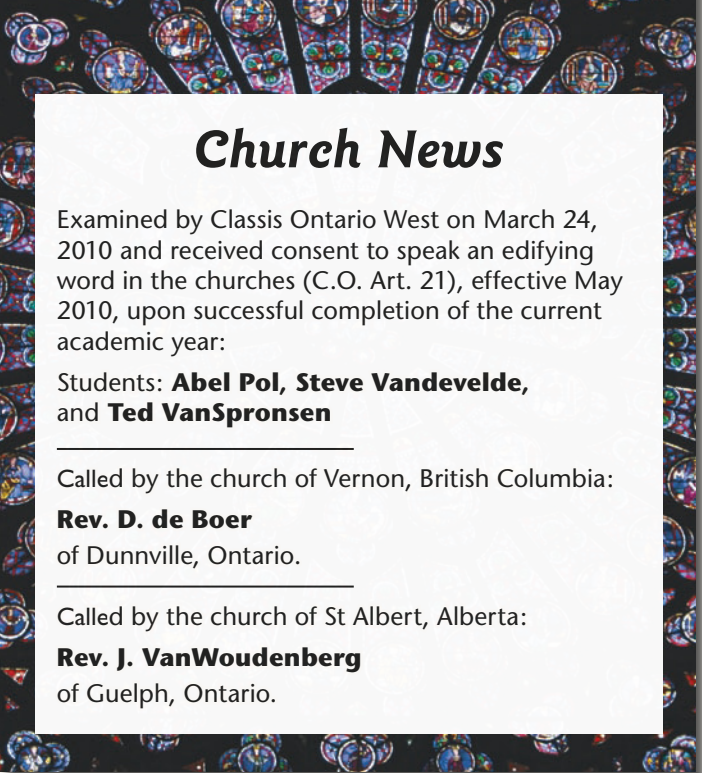
bearers" (pg 221). Further, "The teaching of Scripture and the testimony of church history clearly assert that women are not to exercise privileges that include official ruling and teaching, or . . . that are linked to official teaching and ruling in the church, such as voting" (pg 222). Despite these strongly worded conclusions, Synod Smithville felt that some questions remained unanswered and so appointed a second committee to do further research (see Art 83).

This second committee reported to Synod Cloverdale 1983 (*Acts*, pg 388-409), recommending that "there are no Scriptural or Church-political grounds which forbid the consistories to call the sisters in the congregation to participate in the election of office bearers by their vote" (pg 409). Synod, however, declined to go in the direction pointed by the committee because

- the churches as a whole were obviously not persuaded by the argumentation of the committee (that's a reference to the many letters Synod received from the churches on the subject),
- the committee's explanations of several key Scripture passages were "rather unusual if not questionable,"
- the Dutch churches argue that voting carries a binding character on the church council and expressing such binding positions would not be consistent with the submissiveness God requires of women.

This conclusion of Synod Cloverdale has represented the position of the Canadian Reformed Churches on the point ever since. Various attempts in subsequent years to reopen the matter met with no success on grounds that new arguments had to be raised (see Church Order Article 30) and none have yet been brought up.

Synod Smithers 2007 received a request from the church at Hamilton to "finish the mandate extended by Synod Smithville 1980." Synod Smithers agreed with



# Church News

Examined by Classis Ontario West on March 24, 2010 and received consent to speak an edifying word in the churches (C.O. Art. 21), effective May 2010, upon successful completion of the current academic year:

Students: **Abel Pol, Steve Vandeveld, and Ted VanSpronsen**

Called by the church of Vernon, British Columbia:

**Rev. D. de Boer**  
of Dunnville, Ontario.

Called by the church of St Albert, Alberta:

**Rev. J. VanWoudenberg**  
of Guelph, Ontario.

Hamilton that “the matter of women’s voting rights has not been dealt with in a conclusive way by any general synod” (Acts, Art 136). Synod in turn appointed the church of Hamilton to come with a report that would assist Synod Burlington 2010 in finalizing the matter.

## Hamilton report

It turns out that Hamilton has produced not one but two reports on the subject, a majority and a minority report. The majority report argues that “female communicant members have the responsibility to participate in the election of office bearers, no less than male communicant members, under the supervision of the consistory” (Reports to General Synod Burlington-Ebenezer 2010, Volume 1, pg 249). The minority report, on the other hand, concludes that “female communicant members do not have the responsibility according to biblical directives nor church orderly requirement, to participate in the election of office bearers” (Reports, Volume 3, pg 23).

## Synod Burlington needs to grapple with some very far-reaching questions before a final decision is made

What ought Synod to do with these two reports? To be honest, I was very disappointed with both reports. My disappointment lay not in the conclusions reached but in the manner in which the reports were put together. Both reports begin with their conclusions and then proceed to prove those conclusions from Scripture. In the process both reports choose to hear what they want to hear from the Word of God on the subject. As a result, too much scriptural data is left untouched. I do not see, then, how Synod Burlington can use either of these reports to make a definitive decision on whether the sisters of the congregation ought to participate in the election of office bearers through the casting of a ballot.

## Why?

It seems to me, though, that there is a bigger question that needs urgent attention. It’s this: why does the matter of women voting in the election of office bearers continue to arise? Why have the churches had

such difficulty in finding a biblically convincing answer to the question? Are we perhaps asking the wrong question?

I think we are. It seems to me that the question of the sisters’ voting is itself a symptom of a deeper unresolved issue. The deeper question turns on what the actual relation between male and female ought to be. How did God wish the relation between man and woman to be in Paradise? Is there a creation ordinance on this point that remains in force for all people of all times, despite the fall into sin? Does the renewing work of Christ’s Spirit enable believing men and women to seek to act in obedience to the pattern God revealed in the beginning? If Yes (and the answer definitely is Yes) *what was that pattern?*

It is understood in our churches that the Lord would have the man be the head of his wife and so of his family (see the Marriage Form). It is also understood in our churches that the Lord has limited office holders in the church to the male portion of the human race. But here’s the question: does the man’s God-given headship pertain only to marriage and the church and not to society in general? Does God’s norm in Scripture allow for a woman to become the company CEO? Does God’s norm in Scripture allow for a woman to become the principal of the local school? Was it in agreement with God’s revealed standards that Hillary Clinton ran for the American presidency?

Our society sees nothing wrong with women striving to attain the same positions as men. In fact, modern western society aggressively pushes to equalize the number of men and women taking up leading positions in government, business, etc. We are children of our times and take on similar thinking. Yet in home and church we insist on a different pattern.



This results in a tension that comes to the fore in a subject as women voting. If in nation and in business a woman may vote and speak with equal acceptance as a man, why may this not be so in church? It seems to me that the contradictory positions we afford our sisters in family and church on the one hand and in society on the other cause the question of women's voting to keep arising.

*The flow of our times will invariably push onto our agenda the question of whether the offices of the church should be opened to the sisters of the congregation*

I'm increasingly convinced that the different positions we afford our sisters in church and society are not biblically justifiable. Was Adam in Paradise Eve's head only at home and when they gave themselves to worship, but not when they laboured together in the Garden? Had the fall not happened and generations of children been born to Adam and Eve in Paradise, would it have been pleasing to the Lord for one of Adam's granddaughters one day to become Chief Executive Officer of Paradisial Mining Inc? Where is the biblical warrant for the distinction we make between society on the one hand and church and family on the other? Is the notion that the man's headship position is limited to those two spheres of life we know as Marriage and Church not a man-made limitation?

This deeper question needs, to my mind, urgent attention, if only because the flow of our times pushes this fundamental question out of sight – and we've gotten pretty used to that. If Synod would now isolate the issue of women's voting in church from its context and strive to give an answer to the narrow question-by-itself, the churches would receive no assistance in the bigger question our times are pushing upon us. And make no mistake: the flow of our times will invariably push onto our agenda the question of whether the offices of the church should be opened to the sisters of the congregation. We will ultimately have no defence against such a push if we do not come to grips with the bigger question of whether life indeed is to be divided into spheres, with male headship pertaining only to the sphere of church and marriage.

## Implementation

A second question arises in reaction to the two Hamilton reports. Suppose Synod Burlington would agree with the conclusions reached by the Majority Report and allow the sisters of the congregation to join in voting for office bearers. How is a consistory to implement this decision? I'm convinced that some sisters (to mention now only the sisters) in our congregation would welcome the decision with enthusiasm. I'm equally convinced that other sisters of the congregation would decry such a decision with equal displeasure. In that situation, how could a consistory implement a synodical Yes decision without bringing up division in the congregation? Equally, for consistory to decline to implement a synodical Yes decision (because some are unconvinced) will also bring division in the congregation (since others are convinced women's voting is a good thing). Is there a way to prevent such tension? I'm not sure how. So, if Synod thinks it necessary to give the sisters permission to participate in filling a ballot, I would welcome some good guidelines on how to implement that decision in a way that protects peace and harmony in the churches.







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# Schilder's Views Regarding the Reformed Psalter

*This article is a revised version of a speech delivered together with Rev. George van Popta at Office Bearers' Conferences in Ancaster, ON and Yarrow, BC (November 2009 and March 2010 respectively).*

A major item on the agenda of the Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) which is convened in Burlington in May 2010 is the revised Anglo-Genevan Psalter. If we compare the words of the new version with the old, the first thing that strikes us is that so much of the old version was left untouched. If we take a closer look at the sections that were revised or rewritten, two aspects stand out: First, the language has become more contemporary. Second, some flowery language has been pruned back in order to represent the original text of the psalms more accurately.

As always, change causes a degree of restlessness in the churches. Questions are asked: Are these changes necessary? Are we actually improving anything or are we perhaps deviating from principles set out by previous generations? These are valid questions. Being a member of the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* myself, I want to refrain from evaluating the revised psalter. The matter is before the churches at the upcoming synod.

At the same time I have noticed that the allegation is easily made that the revised psalter is somehow deviating from principles formulated by "men like Calvin and Schilder." The name of Dr. Schilder is particularly important in this respect since he was a major influence on the thinking of the first generation of CanRC immigrants – the generation that produced the *Book of Praise*. Since few people are able to check what Schilder actually said (you need to be able to read Dutch), I thought it might be helpful to offer a brief overview of his views with respect to the church's psalter.

Dr. Schilder has never outlined his liturgical views in a systematic way.<sup>1</sup> He usually expressed his opinions in magazine articles as he interacted with current

developments. Interestingly, during the 1920s and 1930s the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands were going through a process that was quite similar to the one the CanRC is going through at the moment: They were expanding their hymnary and they were discussing the need to revise their psalter (which dated back to 1773).

Schilder felt strongly about the need for a revised psalter. He addressed the issue several times. In 1923 he published the book *Kerksaal en leven* (Church language and life).<sup>2</sup> The next year he wrote a series of articles entitled "*Onze Psalmberijming*" (Our Psalter).<sup>3</sup> During the 1930s Schilder addressed the topic again when he reviewed a new psalter that was published by Rev. H. Hasper.<sup>4</sup> Reading these articles together gives us a fairly clear picture of what Schilder considered to be the requirements for a Reformed psalter. What follows is a summary of his views.

## Principles

First, the psalter should be based on the full text of the psalms. No psalm, not even Psalm 119, should be abridged to a summary of a few stanzas. The congregation should not be given a "bouquet of flowers" ("*bloemlezing*") from the psalms, but it should be able to sing through the complete text of the psalms. Based on this principle Schilder voiced concerns regarding the new psalter by Rev. Hasper because he had summarized certain sections of the psalms.

Second, the psalter should reflect sound exegetical insights. One problem of the old 1773 Psalter was that it did not always do justice to the original text of the psalms. Sometimes this was simply due to the fact that the psalter was quite old indeed. Recent exegetical insights could obviously not have been taken into account. A more significant problem was that the worldview of the poets sometimes overshadowed the meaning of the Hebrew original.

Third, the psalter should leave room for the fulfillment of the prophetic aspects. If a psalm contains a Messianic prophecy, the versification should not

conceal that aspect but rather reveal it or, at the very least, leave open the possibility for messianic interpretation. In this respect Schilder had a serious problem with Rev. Hasper's psalter because it often concealed Messianic interpretations. An example is David's prophecy about the "holy one" who would not see decay (Ps 16:10), a prophecy that was fulfilled with the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:31). In his version Rev. Hasper used the word "vrome" (pious) instead of "heilige" (holy), thus making it more difficult to see the Messianic aspect. Schilder criticized this approach and formulated as a guideline: After the congregation has heard a sermon in which the light of the New Testament shines over a Messianic psalm, the congregation should be able to find that same light reflected in the rhymed version of the psalm.<sup>5</sup>

Fourth, the psalter should use *contemporary language*. The 1773 Psalter was based on the old seventeenth century Bible translation (the so-called "Statenvertaling," comparable to the King James Version in English). Schilder was no admirer of the old *Statenvertaling*. He felt that this translation was too literal and that it did not do enough in terms of rephrasing the content in Dutch. Schilder also criticized the tendency to use a kind of "holy" and other-worldly language during worship. Church language should certainly be worthy and have dignity but it should not be archaic. The church should use language that is contemporary without being colloquial.

Fifth, the psalter should have *poetic quality*. Just like the original Hebrew psalms are impressive not just because of the content but also because of the high poetic quality, the psalter should impress by both content and poetic quality. Schilder judged that the 1773 Psalter lacked poetic quality. In this respect he had much more appreciation for the new psalter by Rev. Hasper.

## 2010 Psalter

The Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* has submitted a revised Anglo-Genevan Psalter to the synod that meets in Burlington in May 2010. If we evaluate the 2010 Psalter, it is clear that Schilder's principles are reflected admirably. A quick recap of the five principles shows the following:

(1) The revised psalter is based on the full text of the psalms and is generally closer to the original Hebrew than the current version. See, for example, Psalm 3. With its three stanzas the new version is a more accurate reflection of the original than the older version by D. Westra which had four stanzas.

(2) The revised version continues the tradition of the old version in reflecting sound exegetical insights. Again, the new version is sometimes closer to the original text than the old version. See for example

Psalms 47 where the revised version includes references to Jacob (stanza 1) and Abraham (stanza 3). In the old version by Westra these names are missing. The revised version reflects the covenantal aspects of Psalm 47 more accurately.

(3) The revised version leaves room for the fulfillment of prophetic aspects. See for example Psalm 2, stanza 4: "Now kiss the Son, lest He in fury scorn you." The capital letter that is used ("Son") makes the Messianic aspect explicit. Similarly, in Psalm 16:5 it says that the "Holy One" will not see corruption. This leaves room for the fulfillment of this Messianic prophecy with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. One could argue about the question whether capital letters should be used. Some would argue that using capitals may reduce the interpretation too exclusively to a Messianic one. A counter-argument would be that these psalms are so evidently Messianic that it would be wrong not to use capitals. In such cases, a choice needs to be made between the two options.

(4) The revised version uses contemporary language without being colloquial. See for example Psalm 147:3 with its interesting use of the word "resources": "He does not value man's resources: the runner's legs, the strength of horses." Another example: In Psalm 121:3 the awkward line about the moon and the sun that "shall not afflict or smite you" has been rephrased with "will never harm or hurt you." Many more examples could be given.

(5) The revised version has poetic quality. Psalm 148 is an example of a psalm where beautiful phrases of the old version have been retained while at the same time archaic phrases like "days of yore" have been removed. The last four lines of the new version are beautiful: "His saints He blessed with praise and splendor, showed Israel His mercy tender. Close to His heart He keeps His own. O praise the LORD! Praise Him alone!"

In conclusion: Synod will decide whether the revised Anglo-Genevan Psalter is worthy of being adopted by the churches. The brothers do not need to be concerned about the underlying principles: The proposed revision of the Psalter is in line with principles that have always been held high among us.

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Jan Smelik has summarized Schilder's liturgical views in the article "Schilder, de kerkdienst en het kerklied" in George Harinck (ed.), *Alles of niets: Opstellen over K. Schilder* (Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2003), 47-77.

<sup>2</sup>K. Schilder, *Kerktaal en leven* (Amsterdam, 1923). Republished in K. Schilder, *Om Woord en Kerk*, Vol. 3 (Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1951), 96-227.

<sup>3</sup>Republished in K. Schilder, *Bij Dichters en Schriftgeleerden*, (Amsterdam: Uitgeversmij Holland, 1927), 310-356.

<sup>4</sup>K. Schilder, "Een nieuwe psalmberijming." *De Reformatie* 17:16 (15 Jan. 1937), 122-124.

<sup>5</sup>K. Schilder, "Iets over Psalm 16 in de berijming Hasper," *De Reformatie* 23:40 (3 Jul 1948), 335-336.



# What is the future of the Reformed Churches in PNG?

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This question is best handled, of course, by the Head of the church. He alone has ordained what the church in PNG will look like, say in fifty years or more. And, He will also ensure that those whom He has called are nurtured in the faith; but it is in this work that He enlists our help. It is for this reason, as participants in this divine work, that the question concerning the future of the Reformed Churches in PNG is also ours to address – today.

Now the answer to the question depends on a host of factors more than we can cover in this short article. Yet, it seems that one of the most important factors lies with those who will lead the PNG church into her next chapter. That is, it lies with the national brothers who are and will be called to administer God's Word. We could go so far as to say, the future of the Reformed Churches in PNG is held in the balance of well-trained pastors today. So that the future looks bright when the leadership is well fitted with the gospel of grace; the future looks grim when the leadership is not. And this is our burden. This is no less Australia or Armadale's burden – my sending church – as it is Canada's or New Zealand's. As fellow missionaries and supporting churches, we all share a common burden to see vibrant Reformed churches in this land, from sea to sea, coast to interior, which are led by well-trained, passionate, and godly men. For this reason, some three years ago the Reformed Churches Bible College (RCBC) was established in Port Moresby.

Recently this burden was more squarely addressed by the Board of Governors and teaching staff at the RCBC. As a member of the Board, I met with the missionaries from the Port Moresby area (which is Toronto and New Zealand's field), to develop a strong pastoral program. In this brief mission news article, I wish to share something of the challenge to develop such a program, as well as to show the need for your continual prayer for the future of the churches here in PNG.

## Context

However, before we can begin discussing the challenge in developing this program, a bit of context is needed. Over the past three years, students have enrolled at the RCBC in what is called a Certificate Program in Reformed Studies. In general, this is a two-year study of Scripture, the confessions of the church, and a number of courses in evangelism, marriage, church order, children's ministries, etc. This program, which has seen seven graduates, three of which just graduated on November 21, 2009, is open to both male and female students. It is also a mandatory program of study for any male student who desires to enter the three year pastoral program. From the Lae side, where Australia is supporting two missionary families (the VanderHeides and Wildeboers), we are blessed to have three students enrolled in this program: Jerry Isaac, Joel, and his wife, Gami.



*A lush student garden at the Reformed Churches Bible College in Port Moresby*





*A few of the students singing at the graduation, three of which are from Lae: Jerry (1st from left), Joel and Gami (1st and 3rd from right)*

*Jerry, a gifted musician and student from Lae who also desires to enter into the diploma program after next year*



Although we have attempted an ad hoc program of study for two students this past year, the pastoral program, or better known as the diploma program, has not been fully developed. The goal of this diploma program is simple: to prepare young men to be effective, God-honouring ministers of the Word in the Reformed Churches of PNG. Although simple to state on paper, it is in fact a lofty goal which demands some unpacking.

### Three components

There are mainly three components that need to be addressed in attempting to reach this goal: (1) knowledge, (2) tools for the ministry, and (3) ethic or behaviour. Beginning with the first, the student needs to be well-informed. They should be very well versed in Scripture including the various themes of Scripture, for example: the covenant (s), the promises and fulfilment, typology, etc. They should also have a thorough understanding of the full orb of reformed dogmatics, a basic understanding of the ancient languages (i.e. Greek and Hebrew), an awareness of the church through the ages especially as she has battled heterodoxy, a measure of insight into how the church ought to be governed – and the list continues. All this is the foundation upon which the next component, the tools for the ministry, need to be applied.

The tools for the ministry are those component parts that in short allow a student to apply what he has learned. For example, they need to have the tools

for exegeting a text in order to prepare a well-crafted sermon; for defending against falsehood (apologetics); for administering the Word to the poor, the sick, the lonely, the wayward, and instructing the adults and the children and the youth in the truths of Scripture – again the list continues.

The final, and possibly one of the most important aspects of the preparation, is the ethical component. This deals with the student's spiritual walk with the Lord. Indeed, a student may have the necessary understanding and ability to serve in the ministry, but if he is not living for Christ, he has nothing. Here attention is paid to the spiritual qualities that befit a pastor: his love for Christ and passion for his Word, his pursuit of holiness, his integrity and humility, his work ethic, his spiritual disciplines, etc. We feel this is an extremely important element that demands some extra mentoring from the instructors at the RCBC.

### Obstacles

Now, if we further unpack these three main components in the context of Papua New Guinea, we immediately face a number of obstacles. For example, for the foreseeable future, the students entering the diploma program are not university graduates. Rather, due to limited education funds and scarcity of good schools there are a number who do not hold a high school diploma. Coupled with this educational deficit, there is the other issue that the average student has had very little Reformed catechetical training. The

latter issue can translate into a general blurring of doctrinal truths regardless of their weight or importance. These obstacles have forced us to move from an initial two year diploma program to a three year program of study with one year of practical experience under a missionary. Therefore, before the student can sit his "classical" exam, he will have had six years of training – five at the RCBC and one in a local congregation.

Connected both to the knowledge and tools for the ministry component we have the issue of English comprehension. The goal for our diploma students is not only to know English conversationally, but also to be able to read English commentaries, theological dictionaries, and process the information in order to develop cogent arguments which can be articulated on paper. The reason English becomes a necessary tool for our future pastors is because Pidgin (Tok Pisin) is not only a non-theological language, there is also a desperate lack of theological resources in Pidgin. Presently, some students who have completed grade twelve are fairly proficient in English, while many are not. Not surprisingly then, we have to have English as one of the core courses in our certificate program in order to prepare the students for the rigor of the diploma program.

Finally, the third major component is one's ethic or behaviour. This is not the article to work through the many issues that impact one's ethic, but in general, one issue does stand out: many of the young men have had



*Three recent graduates of the Certificate Program in Reformed Studies*

poor role models in their fathers. Many of their dads have not been godly examples as fathers or husbands; have not taught them in the ways of the Lord and some have succumbed to alcoholism or marital infidelity. This coupled with the strong, negative peer pressure that many of the students have faced growing up has forced us to ensure there is a strong mentorship program in place; or, as some call it, "the informal yet intentional training situation" which might be something akin to the Paul-Timothy relationship.

## Conclusion

Having worked extensively through these component parts and the various obstacles to meeting them, a program has emerged. The contents of which might be left to a later article, but in closing the challenges remain great. As missionaries, instructors at the RCBC, supporting Boards and churches, we are unable to meet these challenges on our own. Again, the burden to have men who are knowledgeable, well-equipped with the tools to administer the gospel of grace, godly, humble, and committed can only truly be borne by the Lord. Our desire is that his Name is exalted and his Kingdom work advances mightily in this geographically and demographically diverse nation. Therefore, we ask you to join us in prayer for the future of the Reformed Churches in Papua New Guinea. We ask you to pray as well for those who are doing their bit to prepare men to be pastors. Finally, we ask you to pray for those men who – the Lord willing – will be pastors and called to lead God's people in PNG to the deep wells of salvation! For if they do that then the future will be bright.

**C**



*Some of the missionary personnel from the Port Moresby side*





# Introducing. . . Future Ministers of the Word?



Dr. Gerhard H. Visscher is the principal and professor of New Testament at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Ontario  
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If the Lord continues to direct all things in the way that we are planning, six of our eighteen students will receive the M.Div. degree this September. Four of the six are planning to present themselves for the classis examinations for the purpose of being declared eligible for call by the churches. In keeping with our now annual practice, here they are. I have asked each of them to introduce himself. May the Lord bless them and the churches that are in the midst of the calling process.

## Ryan Kampen



Allow me to introduce myself.

A son of Leo and Diane Kampen, I was born and raised in the city of Richmond Hill, Ontario. Following high school, I enrolled in Computer Science at York University to pursue a career in computer programming. Toward the close of my first year of studies, however, I felt the

strong compulsion to shift my focus (just a little!) and pursue studying for the ministry. In due course and under the Lord's blessing, I completed my university training and graduated from York in June 2006 with a Specialized Honours B.A. in Classical Studies. That summer I relocated to Burlington and assumed my studies at our Theological College. The Lord directed my studies such that during the summer of 2009 I was able to participate in and complete the internship for the Pastoral Training Program under the care and tutelage of Reverend J. Poppe in Winnipeg-Redeemer CanRC. This was an especially profitable experience in preparing for pastoral ministry. This June I hope to present myself to classis to be made eligible for call in our churches.

During past summers I have been employed in the landscape maintenance industry, enjoying the time outdoors. My spare time is occupied by various activities such as sports, board games, reading, and enjoying the company of family and friends.

## Tony Roukema

Thank you for the opportunity to introduce myself and my family. My name is Tony Roukema, my wife's name is Alisa, and our five children are Kennedy, Annelise, Jonah, Miriam, and Layla.

I was born in Grand Rapids, MI, and then lived in Orangeville, Chatham, Burlington, and Aldergrove. I graduated from Trinity Western University in 1994 and then in 1995 began to work for a company called Premier Agendas, doing sales for ten years. Alisa and I met in BC and after we were married we moved to the U.S. where we lived for ten years, eight of those in Lynden, WA.





As time went on I began to feel a draw towards the ministry and then in 2004 Alisa and I began to talk about quitting my job, selling our home, moving to Canada, and studying theology, and I began to organize things so that I could be ready to attend the Theological College. In September 2005 I began to attend TWU once again. Since I had my B.A. already, all I needed was Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, which I was able to do in one very long year. During the summer of 2009 I was able to do my practicum with Rev. DeGelder in Flamborough, an experience I enjoyed and benefited from immensely.

When I am not studying, which has not happened often in the last five years, I enjoy biking, soccer, basketball, and baseball. (I got into biking while recuperating from injuries sustained while playing the other three sports). As a family we enjoy reading books, playing board games, and cards, and enjoying the beach in the summer and the ice rink in the winter.

The Lord has blessed Alisa, me, and our children greatly and we have felt his hand at work in our lives as we moved into uncertain waters. We have enjoyed the support of family and friends, as well as the communion of saints, here in Ancaster, as well as from those out west. We thank the Lord for all these blessings and pray that He will bless this work and that it may be used to his glory.

### Tim Sikkema



I spent the first five years of my life in Indonesia, where my parents (Keith and Coby) ran a youth hostel for missionary kids. After that, I moved to Canada, and spent most of my youth in Smithville, Ontario, but also a few years in Grand Rapids, Michigan. After high school,

I studied classics and philosophy at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario. During that time, I also had the opportunity to study for a year in Leiden, The Netherlands; that gave me a chance to brush up on my Dutch. Upon returning to Canada, I finished up at Brock and began my studies at the Theological College. All the students there were great, but I especially liked the girl in my Hebrew class. Meanwhile, I spent my summers working several jobs, and also the occasional

week as a counselor at Campfire! (Ontario) and at Stepping Stones (BC). In the summer of 2009 I did my pastoral internship with Rev. Richard Aasman in Edmonton (Providence); I learned a lot from him and grew in my desire to serve the churches of the Lord. All this time I stayed in touch with that girl from Hebrew class, and to make a long story short, I eventually married Francine VanWoudenberg (this past summer, in fact). We have been blessed with one child, Noah, who is already with the Lord. We continue to live in Hamilton while I finish up my studies and Francine works as a freelance editor. We enjoy being involved with our church family at Streetlight Ministries. When I'm not busy studying, I enjoy running, biking, and travelling.

### Arend Witten



My name is Arend Witten and I live in Hamilton, Ontario with my wife Renae and son Jacob. We come from Albany, Australia,

where Renae (daughter of Jack and Alice Bruning) grew up. I was born and raised in Southern Ontario till age 13. In 1997 my family (Pete and Marg Witten) moved to Albany. Renae and I married in 2006 and shortly thereafter moved to Hamilton. Our marriage has been blessed with the birth of Jacob and, D.V., we are expecting a second child in May of this year.

I received my BA from the University of Western Australia, in History and Classical Greek. Following my third year at the Theological College, I participated in the Pastoral Training Program with the Free Reformed Church of Bunbury, Australia, under Rev. E. Rupke. This was a very productive learning experience. I hope to present myself to classis this June to be made eligible for a call.

Renae enjoys playing piano and received an Advanced Diploma in Piano Teaching, from the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts (ECU). Since Jacob's arrival, Renae is now busy in our home and teaches some piano students.

In our spare time we were able to be involved with the publication of the Roadside Assistance Youth Magazine. We also enjoy reading books, spending time with friends, walking, and sightseeing.



# Further Discussion

## Dear Editor,

Rev. VanOene (Feb 26) and br. VanDerBruggen (March 12) felt compelled to raise some objections to my piece on the revised psalm lyrics (Jan 15). Without wishing to prolong the issue, I would like to offer a few remarks for the reader's consideration.

1. Rev. VanOene posits that I have misinterpreted old Article 69, CO. He insists that the limitation spoken of in that article applies only to the hymns and not to the psalm *rhydings* as the present Article 55 does. This would make the previous testing of new psalm lyrics in the worship services permissible but since 1983 and the new Article 55, CO, impermissible.

Let the reader consider again the wording of old Art. 69 (and please note the punctuation adopted by Synod 1968): "In the Churches the 150 Psalms shall be sung, and the Hymns, maintained and adopted for ecclesiastical use by the Synod of Middelburg in 1933." Grammatically, the second comma would seem to indicate that the words "and the Hymns" are meant as an additional subject to the 150 Psalms already mentioned. What follows, then, would apply to *both* subjects. If the intention was to describe *only* the Hymns with the words that follow then the second comma is completely unnecessary and unwarranted.

I, too, hold out the possibility that my understanding here is wrong but given this wording I continue to believe it is a defensible understanding nonetheless. The restriction mentioned in the English rendition of Art. 69 certainly *appears* to apply to *both* Psalms and Hymns. My knowledge of the circumstances leading up to and including 1933 falls far short of Rev. VanOene's, but I find it difficult to believe that the Dutch churches never felt themselves restricted by Art. 69 as to which Psalms they could sing in the worship services. Would the churches before or after 1933 really have felt free to sing different rhydings of the 150 Psalms to perhaps different tunes? According to Rev. VanOene's reasoning they would have but I have seen no evidence for it. Were there congregations that brought in other (i.e. non-Genevan tunes) with alternate lyrics for the Psalms?

2. Rev. VanOene candidly admits that the restriction of Art. 69 most certainly applies to hymns. As I demonstrated previously, the Canadian Reformed Churches certainly tested in the worship services new hymns never yet seen by a general synod. Rev. VanOene's contention was that the churches prior to 1983 never broke a promise when they tested psalms in the worship services. What then about the new hymns tested in that same time-period? Did no church consider that this practice was in violation of Art. 69? My contention that the churches saw all such testing as in harmony with the intention of Art. 69 explains why the churches never raised this objection. Rev. VanOene's contention would make the churches to be promise-breakers *in that era too* and should have raised an outcry, including appeals. There is none to be found.


3. All the churches regularly receive the Committee Reports that go to general synod and have opportunity to provide comment to synod if they so choose. That no church provided negative comment about much less disagreement with the suggestion made by the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* in its report to Synod Smithers to test psalm lyrics *within* the worship services shows tacit agreement. At least one church made the effort to express disagreement with the suggestion of the committee test hymns within the worship service (Acts Art. 149, Observation 2.8), but no church wrote about the psalm lyrics in this respect. Synod shows the same tacit agreement by *not* rejecting the clear suggestion of the Committee.

Rev. VanOene states that Synod Smithers did not overtly speak of testing the psalms "during the services." However, Synod Smithers did state concerning hymns, "The last time hymns in our federation of churches were tested, they were sung in the worship services. Yarrow gives no reason for not following this practice again. . ." (Acts, Art. 149, Consideration 3.8). This is a clear sanction by Synod to test hymns *within* the worship services. If Synod Smithers can say this about the testing of hymns, what would have prevented it from saying the same about the testing of new psalm lyrics? Clearly this Synod saw no violation of Church Order Art. 55 when it came

to testing hymns or psalms properly put forward by the SCBOP but not yet adopted by a general synod.

4. In the end, Rev. VanOene, br. VanDerBruggen and I all agree that it is fitting to test the new psalm lyrics. Our dispute is about *how* this is to be done. The one says to sing them before the worship service and at home and the other says only to read them and submit comments. Each method has merit. For myself, I continue to believe that the churches have established a careful and considered practice by a) having new psalm lyrics or new hymns first painstakingly scrutinized by a synod-appointed committee according to synodically-approved criteria, then b)

tested by the churches in various ways, including the option to sing them during the worship services, and finally c) decided upon by a general synod of the churches. Testing is temporary and serves the very purpose of Article 55: to arrive at new psalm lyrics or new hymns which are eminently suitable for the church to sing (more permanently) to God's praise and the congregation's edification. This is neither promise-breaking nor deformation. Such testing is a responsible and stewardly way to safe-guard the orthodoxy of the church's doctrine as expressed in song.

Peter Holtvlüwer 

## Letters to the Editor

### Dear Editor,

As a specialist physician and career clinical scientist faced with increasing pressures to consider human health from an evolutionary perspective (1), I am thankful for the clear scriptural direction provided by Rev. Bredenhof and colleagues in the January 1 edition of *Clarion* (2). The evidence for creation in six days is unequivocal and compelling – after all, scripture teaches us so – and the “Ten Reasons Why Evolution is Dangerous and Evil” powerfully illustrates the destructive fallacy of believing otherwise (2).

Dr. Oosterhoff would have us believe that there is “strong” evidence for the theory of evolution and common descent, citing antiquity of the earth, homologies between animals and humans, the fossil record, and biogeographical evidence to support her position (3, 4). Conclusions about the strength of *scientific* evidence may simply be in the eye of the beholder; I am reminded of the ancient proverb of the frog in the well who concluded that the sky was round, ostensibly also on the basis of strong evidence. In the absence of a palatable alternative explanation, many scientists likewise accept the evidence for evolution as proof of the theory, despite gaping limitations. By contrast, *scriptural* evidence is irrefutable.

Dr. Oosterhoff believes that we should teach the theory of evolution in our Christian schools and refrain from telling our children that it is unbiblical (3, 4). Scripture teaches in the fourth commandment: “In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth,

the sea, and all that is in them. . .” (Exod 20:11); and instructs parents to “Impress [the commandments] on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deut 6: 7-8). Dr. Oosterhoff proposes that we tell our students that “many Christians are able to reconcile the theory of evolution with their faith”

(3). There are, however also many who reconcile with their faith a rejection of scriptural truths concerning the Great Flood, the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection and the Trinity, and we would not want such a case made to our students even though it would be in keeping with Dr. Oosterhoff's proposal.

I hope and pray that the Canadian Reformed Church maintains the scriptural truths concerning Creation and that we continue to diligently teach these truths to the next generation, in our homes, in the classroom, and from the pulpit, and in simple language that even our youngest children can understand.

John Eikelboom  
Hamilton, Canada

1. Evolution in Health and Medicine Sackler Colloquium. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*. 2010; 107 Supplement 1.





(Speakers at this Colloquium argued that a greater understanding of evolution would improve both patient care and medical research and called for a greater focus on evolution education for physicians).

2. Bredenhof W, Geurts G, van Popta G, van Popta J, Witteveen J. Ten Reasons why Evolution is Dangerous and Evil. *Clarion* 2010; 59: 6-9.

3. Oosterhoff F. Letter to the Editor regarding Bredenhof W, Geurts G, van Popta G, van Popta J, Witteveen J. Ten Reasons why Evolution is Dangerous and Evil. *Clarion* 2010; 59: 124.

4. Oosterhoff F. Teaching Evolution at Our Schools - Why and How. Friday October 30, 2009. Available at <http://reformedacademic.blogspot.com/2009/10/teaching-evolution-at-our-schools-why.html>. Accessed March 8, 2010. (This paper was delivered at the Annual Convention of the Canadian Reformed Teachers Association in October 29, 2009. A link to the paper is found at the blogspot referred to by Dr. Oosterhoff in her letter).

## Letter to the Editor

In a letter to the March 12/10 issue of *Clarion*, environmental chemist Harry Alkema declares: ". . .mankind is unique and made in the image of God. But, the DNA also needs to give us input. What should that be? . . .Even though Scripture is above science, it should respect and be influenced by science."

What many people do not realize, and what has never been explained to them in their formative years (one supposes), is that the DNA does not tell us anything. DNA is just a sequence of base pairs like letters, so there are potentially millions or billions of A, C, T, and G. This has to be interpreted. Once the scientists have identified the sequence of letters that code for one protein, they then use computer programs to look for a similar code in other organisms. The computer must assess, too, whether any differences are too great to consider that it codes for the same or a similar protein, or not. So far everyone would agree that this procedure is reasonable.

Differences in interpretation now enter the picture. Evolutionists look for similarities in coding and conclude that these similarities indicate lines of descent. Thus the DNA is said to "prove" that organisms are evolutionarily connected. However it is just as reasonable to conclude that any similarities are the result of common design. God used similar proteins in a wide variety of organisms. The *a priori* assumptions thus dictate what the conclusions will be.

The interesting thing about DNA, however, is that the expectations of evolutionists about what the DNA sequences should be (reflecting common descent) are often not confirmed. All too often they find completely different DNA sequences for similar proteins or similar sequences for proteins which have a very different use. Nowadays we hear a lot about "convergence," that is, similar "evolutionary" designs which appear from "totally different lines of descent" (as deduced from the DNA coding sequences). Thus almost every phenomenon, especially very fancy ones requiring a lot of detail, exhibits convergence – or in other words, several totally separate origins (based on the DNA sequences). This situation has created havoc with ideas about evolutionary trees.

Also, the scientists have discovered that the DNA does not code for the shape and function of the organisms but merely for housekeeping proteins. There are levels of organization which the scientists do not understand but which dictate why one is a fruit fly and another is a mongoose, etc.

So the DNA does not tell us anything on its own. What it tells us depends upon our own preconceptions. The pity of it is that so many Christians are prepared to acquiesce to the secular assumptions. They don't seem to know what they are doing and that they have a choice.

An article on the topic of DNA was published in the September 2009 issue of *Reformed Perspective*. The article was based on recent technical discussions in the scientific journal *Nature*. See "On Ducks and DNA" on the *Reformed Perspective* website.

Margaret Helder

## Letter to the Editor

Re: *Clarion* Volume 59 April 9, 2010  
Synod 2010 in View

Women's Voting Rights by James Visscher

Dr. Visscher, as in previous synod years gives in *Clarion* a view of the various matters Synod Burlington 2010 will be dealing with. Not only does he list the various items, but also gives his comments on what "some say" and "others say." He does not explain who the some or others are. He writes "all this raises an interesting question;" he then goes in the direction of do men have the right to vote. This may hint at they should not be involved in voting, because it would be "Congregationalist" rather than "Reformed church polity in the former the members

of the congregation ruled the church in the latter the elders ruled the church." He leaves the impression that maybe or perhaps no congregation members should vote. This could be a bridge to the conclusion that if men vote perhaps women should or must vote as well. I believe Dr. Visscher clouded the issue.

I for one cannot understand that synods as a matter of procedure judge issues that have been denied at previous synods and contain no new items which had not previously been considered, admissible, period. I attended Synod Fergus 1998 and women's voting was on the agenda then and perhaps at previous synods. I have heard the lame duck statement "but it lives in the churches;" unfortunately there are a host of other things living in the churches. The churches who keep the issue of women voting at every synod should first of all prove that the church of our Lord Jesus Christ has been wrong according to Scripture during the last 400 years. Why is the onus being placed on the existing position? If something cannot be proven to be unscriptural and has served the church long and well then why should it be overturned? The ball is in their court and in no one else's. They are the ones who should show how we have failed to serve God in a proper way and therefore cheated Him of the honour due to his name. I find it striking that at a time like this we are so concerned about the voting of our sisters without considering the following. The desire of some church members (consistories) comes at a time when:

1. Women's liberation is world wide and does have its effect on the church in some way.
2. In today's world men increasingly abscond their headship; this too affects the church.
3. Political correctness affects us all to some extent. We cannot fully escape it.
4. The desire for women voting comes at a time when we have more concern about remaining faithful in comparison to the past sixty years.
5. Other denominations have in the last 100 years gone the first step of women voting with women office bearers to follow splitting churches apart. Currently our sister churches in The Netherlands are considering women in office after adopting

women's voting only seventeen years ago e.g. the CRC, GKN(s). Acting out of fear is something else than learning from history and other peoples mistakes.

6. Introducing women voting will cause unrest rather than harmony and peace in the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It was overheard in the kitchen of one of our congregations where the sisters cleaning up after a meeting made the comments "we don't want to vote at all, we trust our men to do it well under God's guidance. The problem is men in leadership roles no longer dare to say no." Instead of considering history and the above mentioned items it appears that the whole matter is going to be hung on, is it scriptural or not with "some" saying yes and "others" saying no. So the tug of war continues until we will have a synod wore down enough and say yes, women members should vote. It is my prayer for Synod delegates to make a decision that promotes the peace of Jerusalem rather than sift through Scripture to find something that may be used to justify women voting.

*Terry Veenendaal,  
Carman, MB*

### **Editorial Comment**

Did I really cloud the issue?

What I highlighted is the fact that the main issue in this whole debate has to do with authority in the church. If the basis of biblical authority in the church rests with men, then we are at odds with Scripture and Reformed church polity. For the basis lies with Jesus Christ, who through the Holy Spirit, causes elders alone to rule and exercise authority in the church (see: Acts 20: 28; Heb 13:17).

When the elders (or the consistory) invite the members to vote, these elders are not sharing or delegating their authority. They are wisely making use of the collective wisdom that the congregation receives from the Holy Spirit.

That's how I see it.

*James Visscher*

*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 the Board of Governors of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches for a meeting held on January 28, 2010

The Board of Governors met at the College Facilities in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada on January 28, 2010. Present at the meeting were Archie J. Bax, Lammert Jagt, Dr. Gijsbert Nederveen (Chairman), Gerard J. Nordeman, Dr. Andrew J. Pol, Rev. Robert A. Schouten (Secretary), Rev. Willem B. Slomp, Rev. Eric Kampen, Rev. John VanWoudenberg, and Karl J. Veldkamp (Vice-Chairman). All board members were present, save and except Hank Kampen (treasurer). The Principal, Dr. G.H. Visscher was also in attendance. The meeting was opened by Dr. Gijsbert Nederveen with the reading of Scripture and prayer.

### Minutes and agenda

The minutes of the Board meeting held on September 10, 2009 were approved and adopted and the agenda for the meeting was settled.

### Correspondence of note

- a. Correspondence was delivered to two churches in response to letters they had written in which they expressed concern and objection to the choice of words in correspondence from the Board of Governors. The Board acknowledged that, although unintended, it had overreached somewhat in presuming the decision of Synod Burlington 2010 relating to the appointment of Dr. Van Vliet.
- b. A letter was received from the Deputies for Training for the Ministry of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. In this letter our sister churches wholeheartedly confirmed their ongoing support for the College, both financial and otherwise for which thanksgiving was expressed. It was noted that the churches in Australia have adopted the guidelines developed by the Pastoral Training Program Funding Committee (Canada), with adaptation for the Australian context.
- c. A letter was received from a church in the federation with recommendations to: expand and develop the Diaconology department (Missions/Evangelism) into a full fledged department; and having a fifth professor at the College specializing in historical theology, symbolics, and church history. On the advice of the Academic Committee the Board accepted the recommendation of the Senate and did not accept the recommendations made by such church. This will be communicated by way of letter to Synod Burlington 2010.

### Receipt of reports-material items:

- a. **Academic Committee Report** – This committee provided their report which: confirmed that Dr. Van Vliet had signed the form of subscription for Professors; and considered and advised the Board on recommendations made by a church of the federation relating to an additional professor for the College, the establishment of a new department and a re-division of responsibilities amongst the professors. In summary the Senate advised against adopting such recommendations.
- b. **Finance and Property Committee** – This committee provided an update on the ongoing arrangements with Dr. Gootjes, both financial and otherwise.
- c. **Lecture Visits** – the report of Rev. E. Kampen and Rev. J. Van Woudenberg on visits made to the lectures on September 30 and October 23, 2009 was gratefully received.
- d. **Governance Committee** – An updated version of the Form for the installation of new professors was reviewed and approved.
- e. **Review and Accreditation Committee** – This committee provides an update on our accreditation with the Association of Theological Schools, which has become a somewhat detailed and slow process. Concurrently the board considered further ways in which the Seminary could be evaluated by third parties and at the same time develop a process whereby the Board could complete a full and comprehensive review of the Seminary, its offering of courses and the number and composition of the Faculty.
- f. **Conference Reports** – the following reports were received: from Dr. A.J. de Visser re: NAPARC World Missions Executive Meeting of September 2009; and from Dr. C. Van Dam and Dr. G.H. Visscher with respect to the 61st annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society of November, 2009.
- g. **Pastoral Training Program** – the 2009 report of Dr. A.J. de Visser was received which provided a summary of the internships completed in 2009 and the proposed internships for 2010.
- h. **Visit to the churches in Alberta** – the report of Dr. G.H. Visscher on his visits to the various churches in Alberta completed in October of 2009 was received.
- i. **Proposals for General Synod Burlington 2010** – The Board (in closed session) reviewed and finalized the formal submissions to Synod Burlington 2010 seeking leave to appoint Dr. J. Van Vliet as the Professor in Dogmatics and a Professor of Old Testament (to be named and



disclosed to the delegates of Synod), both positions to commence at the start of the 2010-2011 academic year. The Chairman was delegated to advise the suggested appointees of such appointments for their early consideration, all of which is subject to the approval of Synod Burlington 2010.

- j. **Duties of the Secretary** – Experience demonstrated that there are too many tasks and responsibilities delegated to the Secretary and that serious consideration should be given to spreading the task over more than one individual and/or placing strict limitations on the task of the Secretary. The matter will have the attention of the new Board in September of 2010.
- k. **Departing Members** – As the meeting was the last meeting at which Dr. G. Nederveen, Rev. R.

Schouten, and G. Nordeman were in attendance, time was taken to properly recognize the unique and singular contribution and efforts of each of these brothers.

Next meeting of the Board is scheduled for September 9, 2010, d.v.

### Press release and closing

The completion of the Press Release is delegated to the Vice Chairman in consultation with the Executive and the meeting was closed with prayer and thanksgiving.

On behalf of the Board of Governors of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches, Karl J. Veldkamp, Vice Chairman **C**



### Advertisements:

Announcements of Weddings, Anniversaries (with Open House) should be submitted six weeks in advance.

## BIRTHS

With thankfulness to our God and Father, we joyfully announce the birth of our daughter

**KARA LEEANNE**

Born March 8, 2010

**Chris and Rebecca Veenema**

A sister for *Lydia*

211 Davies Street, Dresden, ON N0P 1M0



*The LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.  
Psalm 118:23*

With thankfulness to our heavenly Father who has made all things well, we joyfully announce the arrival of our fourth child, a daughter

**KARA MARIE VIS**

Born March 9, 2010

Welcomed by **Ralph and Jane Vis**

*Jaden, Keegan and Ariel*

7<sup>th</sup> grandchild for Bert and Joan Vis

28<sup>th</sup> grandchild for Ernie and Jane Schulenberg

20 Grant Street, Dunnville, ON N1A 1Y1

## ENGAGEMENTS

*Come and see what God has done, how awesome His works  
in man's behalf! Psalm 66:5*

With thanks to our Heavenly Father, we

**ERIC FRANK BERGSMA and LISA MARIE OOSTERHOFF**

together with our parents

Wayne and Fina Bergsma and Jake and Grace Oosterhoff,  
announce our engagement March 19, 2010.

737 Deveron Crescent, Unit 106, London, ON N5Z 4X9

## WEDDINGS

John and Trudy VanLuik invite you to join them in asking God's blessing over the ceremony of their daughter

**LEEANNA MARIA**

to

**GARETT PETER**

son of Henry and Margaret VanIperen as they unite in marriage  
on May 1, 2010, D.V., at 1:00 P.M.

Vineyard Canadian Reformed Church - Lincoln, Ontario

3 Jane Street, Smithville, Ontario