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The Red Sea, Israel

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Did the Pharaoh Really Drown in the Red Sea?

(Using Extra-Biblical Sources)

Scripture cannot be broken

What in the world is an "extra-biblical source"? It means a source that is outside the Bible itself. The point is simple: sometimes the Bible states things that are not evidenced elsewhere or even go against what other sources say. Sometimes a biblical story is considered to be incredible because it runs counter to the claims of history, science, logic, and common sense.

In the case of the Pharaoh who chased Moses and the Israelites we have a real problem. Is it not strange that this Pharaoh is never identified in the Bible? Was he Ramses I or Ramses II? Or someone else? You would expect his name to be included, given such a monumental catastrophic event? But extra-biblical sources do not mention this event. There is no record in any Egyptian or ancient writings that a despotic and cruel Pharaoh perished in the Red Sea.

Besides, there is no tangible evidence that the Pharaoh and his army really drowned. Not one abandoned chariot was found in the big muddy. There is no trace of any happening of such magnitude. Ergo, it probably did not happen. The "story" is not validated "history" but is a narrative like a fable or parable. We can learn lessons from such stories, even if they are not literally true.

Using extra-biblical sources

Now the history of the water-logged Pharaoh is only an example. There are many other examples that I could have mentioned. The point in this approach is: if a biblical narrative is not borne out by additional evidence from other, non-biblical sources, it probably never happened in that way. By today's standards the

Bible is certifiably lacking on many points. Sometimes we think that we have to fill in the blanks. Imagine, sinful creatures filling in the blanks left by an Almighty Creator.

Now, please, I do not say that extra-biblical sources are unimportant and negligible. The issues that are raised on this basis give us opportunity and incentive to study Scripture even more carefully. But it must be emphasized that we accept the Scriptures on its own basis as the true and infallible Word of God. *It says what it says.* Extra-biblical sources are in fact irrelevant. Such sources neither prove that the Bible is wrong nor do they prove that the Bible is right. The Word of God is truth *by its very nature*. Back to that in a moment.

Crawling into the skin of a Scripture-critic?

The matter of using extra-biblical sources recently surfaced in our sister-churches in The Netherlands when a new professor was appointed to the Theological University in Kampen, my old alma mater. This appointee went along with today's Scripture critics by agreeing that the Israelites were probably not enslaved or persecuted in Egypt.

The Israelites, so we learn, developed as a people out of the Canaanites. No ferocious Pharaoh, no divine judgments, no massive drowning in the Red Sea. The exodus is really about a group of fanatic Semites who arrive on the scene in Canaan much later. The Israelites as a people actually developed out of the Canaanites and not out of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.



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To be sure, the professor and his colleagues explained that he had gone along with modern assumptions only for the sake of argument, to build a credible case against Scripture criticism. He wanted to meet and beat the critics on their own turf. Even if one has to descend to the level of one's opponents, it is a noble striving, is it not? The tempest behind the dikes soon died down.

Theological reflections

But how do we understand the exodus story in the Bible and the crossing of the Red Sea? It is said that these are *theological reflections* on events that really did not happen that way, although there may well be some tie-in with historical happenings (see: Stefan Paas, *Creation and Judgment*, Brill, Leiden, 2003, page 120).

I am always surprised that in the New Testament the stories of old are simply accepted as true. *It says what it says*. No extra-biblical proof needed. The Letter to the Hebrews says it very plainly: "By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned" (Heb 11:29). No theological reflection but divine proclamation. To question the Exodus and safe passage through the Red Sea, one really has to discard faith.

We'll leave that for what it is, but the matter of the importance and validity of extra-biblical sources powerfully came to the fore once more. A fierce debate ensued in the ancestral Low Lands. Can we really explain and defend the truth of God's Word by crawling into the skin of Scripture critics? Where must we draw the line? When do we dig in?

Back to my roots

So unsettled Klaas went back to his roots. I dug up an old book from the late Dr. S. Greijdanus, formerly professor of New Testament in Kampen. He came out of retirement in the days after the Liberation of 1944 to teach at the newly-reformed Theologische Hogeschool.

The book is titled *Schriftbeginselen ter Schrifverklaring* (Kok, Kampen, 1946). In this book Greijdanus develops a Reformed *hermeneutic*, i.e. Reformed principles of proper Scripture explanation. The main principle is this: because the Bible is the Word of God it is *different from all other writings in that it is the Word of Him who never lies*.

Ergo, there is not one error in the whole book. Everything contained in the Bible is without any doubt the truth. No other source, no ancient record or antique book can ever disprove the Bible. This is essentially what we confess in the Belgic Confession.

I'll give you a key quote from Greijdanus' book. "The Holy Scripture is not a book like any other, but a completely unique book, both with respect to its Author as well as its contents. All other books are books of people" (Greijdanus, page 43, translation by Klaas).

The Bible gives us God's self-revelation. It must be taken, understood, and explained as such. This is how the Lord Jesus and his disciples and apostles understood and upheld the Bible.

Sometimes a biblical story is considered to be incredible because it runs counter to the claims of history, science, logic, and common sense

One of the strengths of Greijdanus' work is that he always directed students and readers to the Bible itself to prove a point. With respect to the special character of the Bible, he quoted what our Lord Jesus Christ said in John 10: 35, "The Scripture cannot be broken." The NIV notes, "Jesus testified to the complete authority and reliability of the O.T." Every word in the Bible is true. Meditate on these words: *Scripture cannot be broken*.

What really happened to the Pharaoh?

Where does all this leave the Pharaoh? He is dead in the water. In Exodus 14:27 and 28 it is recorded: "The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen – the entire army of Pharaoh. . . not one of

them survived." Not one. Not even Ramses or what's-his-name.

Yes, but. . . does it really specify that the Pharaoh himself also perished? He could have stayed on the shore and watched his troops go under. How can we really be sure that Pharaoh himself also drowned? Is this not a case of reasonable doubt? Not much doubt, for we read, "And the Lord swept them into the sea." The whole kit and caboodle perished.

In case we are still not sure, the Israelites sang about it in their liturgy, Psalm 136:14, 15, "[The Lord] brought Israel through the midst of the Red Sea, but swept *Pharaoh and his army* into [it]." That is plain language. *It says what it says*. It would be rather strange to say that the army drowned but not its commander-in-chief. The complete victory included the demise of the principal antagonist.

The Form for Baptism makes a reference to the obstinate Pharaoh who drowned with all his host in the Red Sea. At Synod Cloverdale 1983, where the entire *Book of Praise* was revised, there was a suggestion to state only in the Form that all the host of the Pharaoh drowned, leaving open the possibility that the despot himself may have escaped. After all, the new exegetical consensus must have its pound of flesh.

Synod decided, however, that "on the basis of Exodus 14:6, 10, 17, 18 and Psalm 136:15 the prayer before baptism should read, "Thou hast drowned the obstinate Pharaoh and his entire host in the Red Sea." (Acts, Synod Cloverdale 1983, Article 145, C. 4A. 5 (page 100). Synod 1983 did not let the Pharaoh off the hook. In doing so, Synod applied one of the first rules of Reformed hermeneutics.

I remember, because I was there. It was one of those moments when the churches simply and quietly took a firm stand against improper Scripture explanation. Synod maintained: *It says what it says*. To me it was one of the luminous highlights of an otherwise sometimes tedious gathering.

The churches read the Bible and are not in the least concerned with extra-biblical sources. It says what it says, and the rest really does not matter.





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MATTHEW 13:52

The Gospel of Pentecost

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

Galatians 5:22-23

Paul speaks in Galatians 5:22 about “the fruit of the Spirit.” He chooses the image of fruit to represent the work of the Spirit because producing fruit is what fruit trees do by nature. It belongs to their nature as fruit trees to produce fruit, and to produce fruit in keeping with their kind. Apple trees produce apples and so on. And the promise of the gospel of Pentecost is that this is what Christ will do for you by the gift of the Spirit.

So instead of taking the automatic position of self-interest in your marriage and in your business dealings and in your friendships, trying to get those around you to do what you want and to get what you want out of them, it’s going to become natural for you to ask, “How can I serve them?” Because the fruit of the Spirit is love.

Instead of having your emotions and your confidence determined by whether things are going your way, whether your life is turning out the way you wanted it to, joy will be your natural disposition. Because the Spirit draws your focus to God’s love for you in Christ and the fact that you are a child of God. The fruit of the Spirit is joy.

Instead of tensions, disappointments, and disagreements keeping you apart from this one and that one, your life will be a life of peace, because you want and you work to bridge the gaps and right the wrongs by asking for forgiveness and granting forgiveness. The fruit of the Spirit is peace.

Instead of automatically feeling frustrated because other people aren’t treating you the way they should, because for some reason God has decided not to give you some good gift, like financial success, or good health, or a marriage partner, or children, you’ll be patient, because you trust the love and wisdom of the Lord, and you wait for Him. The fruit of the Spirit is patience.

Instead of resenting it when other people ask you to set aside your plans and to help them, instead of looking down on those who are different from you, instead of criticizing others who don’t measure up to your standards, instead of ignoring the needs and the struggles of the people around you, it will be natural for you to recognize those needs and to sympathize with their struggles. Because the fruit of the Spirit is kindness.

Instead of setting your standards by what others do, you’ll begin to want to do what is right, and to strive to set things right, and to see the ugliness and the wrongness of the way things are. You’ll begin to grieve about all the evil in the world and all the destruction it does in people’s lives. Because the fruit of the Spirit is goodness.

Instead of doing what you’re supposed to do only because people are looking, or only in an outward way, it will become important that you keep your promises and fulfil your vows, from the heart, and out of love. You’ll want to be a person of your word, a person of integrity.

Because the fruit of the Spirit is faithfulness.

Instead of having a sharp tongue, instead of constantly watching other people to judge and criticize and condemn them for their shortcomings, instead of joining in with gossip and slander, you’ll treat your brothers and sisters with consideration and you’ll correct their shortcomings lovingly, because you know that you’re a sinner who needs forgiveness just like they do. Because the fruit of the Spirit is gentleness.

And instead of being a slave to your temper or your desires, instead of letting your emotions run wild, and instead of saying the first thing that comes to your mind, it will be natural for you to control yourself. When those thoughts and those feelings arise, you won’t give in to them. Because the fruit of the Spirit is self-control.

This is why the Spirit came. This is the gospel of Pentecost: the promise of a new nature, a new character. And not for keeping a list of rules. Paul is saying throughout this letter to the Galatians that we can’t save ourselves through the law. We need to be saved by grace. So Christ says to us, “This is the salvation you need. And this is the salvation I bring.”

This is gospel and the right way to respond to the gospel is to believe it, to grab hold of it by faith. And Jesus says that faith prays. So ask, and seek, and knock. Because your Father in heaven will give his good gifts to those who ask Him.



Applying Law

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A few months ago a heart surgeon in Ontario was ticketed for speeding. Apparently he was doing seventy in a forty zone. He was speeding because he had received an emergency call: someone needed heart surgery – immediately. The process of receiving the ticket cost the heart surgeon ten precious minutes.

The patient was successfully operated on; however, this incident led to a country-wide debate on the application of the law. Sure, the heart surgeon was speeding, but, given the circumstances, shouldn't he have been allowed to? Assuming that a heart surgeon is a responsible person, he probably felt the traffic circumstances were such that seventy was a safe speed, not just for himself but also for others.

This incident and the debate surrounding it illustrate how laws can be used and applied differently. Speeding is illegal. That's the law. But the speed zone is in place to keep traffic safe and we can assume there was little traffic. The principle was upheld. But the doctor had a real reason for speeding: he needed to get to the hospital fast. So there was a fair justification for speeding.

Illustrated in all this are three approaches in applying law. As laws, in the form of common agreements, are part and parcel of church life, they are present there too.

In what follows I would like to describe these three approaches and illustrate how they function in church life, making evaluative remarks along the way.

Three approaches

The three approaches to law can be referred to as positional, principle, and interactionist.¹ These approaches are not so distinct as to be mutually exclusive; however, for the purposes of understanding them, it is helpful to view them as entirely distinct.

The *positional* approach takes the law as it is, as it has been *posited*. In this approach the text of the law is important. The law says doing seventy in a forty zone

is speeding and thus anyone doing seventy in a forty zone is to be ticketed. The Church Order says ministers are to preside at a classis (art. 44), so only ministers are allowed to do so. Someone taking the positional approach to an extreme might well argue that, if there are no ministers present, there can be no classis.

The *principle* approach takes the law as it came to be, or deals with the *principles* on which the law is based. In this approach the background to the law, sometimes referred to as "the spirit of the law," is important. The law may say doing seventy in a forty zone is speeding, but the speed-zone was put in place for the safety of traffic. If it is safe to go faster, that's fine. The Church Order says ministers are to preside at a classis, but the point of the article is that, to avoid dominance by any one individual, every minister is to have a turn at presiding a classis. Hence it is also fine to have an elder preside a classis, even if ministers are present.

The *interactionist* approach approaches the law with a view to what it seeks to achieve. The interaction of the parties is the focus. In this approach the purpose or goal of the law is important. The law may say doing seventy in a forty zone is speeding, but if someone has a good reason for speeding (like the heart surgeon), speeding is fine. The Church Order says a minister is to preside at a classis. However, if there's a very capable elder present it is just as wise for him to preside at the classis.

When the three meet

The three approaches can, in a given situation, lead to different applications of law. This may result in the collision of the three approaches.

Imagine a classis consisting of four churches, three vacancies and one minister. A person advocating the positional approach will hold the minister should chair every classis. A person advocating the principle approach will object that this goes contrary to the

spirit of the law. A person preferring an interactionist approach will prefer to look at the qualities of all those delegating to the classis and choose the best qualified person.

In the case of the speeding heart surgeon, the argument was primarily between the positional approach (seventy is speeding) and the interactionist approach (there's a good reason to speed). Both could use the principle approach to their advantage. The positional might argue that traffic conditions did not allow for speeding, while the interactionist approach might argue that traffic conditions did.

This illustrates that the three approaches are not mutually exclusive. Though people have a preference for a certain approach, generally all three approaches may be used by people to argue their case. An analysis of the arguments may in fact reveal that a person will first decide on his stance and then look for the best approach to argue his stance.

Advantages and disadvantages

All three approaches have advantages and disadvantages. Often, the advantage of one approach is a disadvantage with the other two.

The positional approach is appreciated especially by those who are not well acquainted with the law and those with the duty to enforce it, such as police officers. The positional approach has as an advantage the fact that it is clear. We all know what the law says: forty is forty and seventy is speeding. Another advantage of this approach is that everybody is treated equally by the law. Finally, with the positional approach it is clear that the government legislates and determines the law.

The disadvantage here is a tendency towards legalism. There seem to be no allowances for disobedience to the law. The ancient Romans had a maxim: "Let justice take place, though the world perish." There is something unmerciful, even unjust, about that. There is also something undemocratic about a government alone determining the law. Is such a government always aware of the impact of a law?

The principle approach is appreciated especially by those who are more acquainted with the law and with those who have to apply it, such as judges. The principle approach tends to be about being reasonable and equitable. Once laws are enacted, they are to be constantly updated to stay in step with changing circumstances.

The disadvantage here is a lack of clarity. While laws are enacted, underlying principles usually are not. Who determines what is the spirit of the law? This approach also falters when underlying principles are at odds with each other. The protests during the 2010 Games illustrate this: here freedom of speech and the protection of property often collided.

The interactionist approach is appreciated especially by those more acquainted with the law and involved in resolving a conflict, such as counsellors and mediators. Law is an instrument – often just one of the instruments – to reach a certain goal. The advantage here is that the circumstances play an important role in deciding on a course of action. Each case is judged on its own merits.

The disadvantage here is that there is total lack of clarity. This approach is very subjective. An objective law or principle does not determine a course of action, but the sentiments of a person or group of persons.

Summary

The three approaches thus focus on the source of law (principle), the status of law (positional), and the purpose of law (interactionist). One may put them in a chronological order. The principle approach looks to the past and asks "why was the law created?" The positional approach looks to the present and asks "what does the law say?" The interactionist approach looks to the future and asks "what does the law seek to achieve?"

An illustration

The three approaches are not mutually exclusive. A person may reflect on all three approaches when considering a situation. Or a group of persons, comprised of people with differing tendencies, may debate the issue from various perspectives.

By way of illustration, imagine a debate in secular society on whether someone is allowed to use soft drugs. The positional approach will note: soft drugs are illegal. The principle approach will note: one of a person's basic human rights is that they should be in control of their own body. The interactionist approach will note: using soft drugs does not harm other people but the user may become a burden to the health system. The positional will thus say "no," the principle will thus say "yes," and the interactionist will say "under certain circumstances."

The approaches in church life

In church life, too, these three approaches are also present.

Some (many?) will favour the positional approach. God is clear, so the church should be clear. Posited law, articulated in church order articles and ecclesiastical assembly decisions, takes on the character of a confessional statement. And, especially those not all too familiar with the workings of the law, will advocate the simple application of the church order: not doing so is sin against the fifth commandment.

However, the church order is not a confessional statement. It prescribes and outlines a way for doing things in given situations. Only, the church order does not cover all situations. Given this, many others will favour a principle approach. We are to work with the principles that underlie the agreements in our churches. The word "law" even becomes inadequate, for the church order is a set of prescriptive guidelines. As long as one acts within the spirit of the church order, keeps to the Reformed traditions, an accusation of sin would be out of place.



Yet others will favour an interactionist approach. We are to seek situations in which love and loyalty best come to expression. If the "law" (church order) helps us do that, make use of it. If it does not, we are free to ignore this man-made document and do all that promotes justice and mercy.

Because the three approaches interact with each other, the texts of the laws may actually reflect these approaches. Yes, it becomes this complicated. The principle and interactionist approaches may actually become posited law. At times this is frustrating to those preferring the positional approach.

The three approaches can, in a given situation, lead to different applications of law

An illustration may make this clear. The original Church Order of Dort prescribed that, if a church is not vacant, a minister will preside at the consistory. This prescription now reads that the minister shall preside "as a rule." This could be evidence of a principle approach: originally it was decided that the minister should preside as he was the best qualified. It could also evidence an interactionist approach: in today's world ministers are not necessarily the best chairmen.

Admission of guests to the Lord's Supper may also serve as a good illustration here. In Canadian Reformed Churches, the positional approach advocates only admitting those who have an attestation. The principle approach advocates also admitting those who have undergone a proper interview with respect to doctrine and for whom there is an independent testimony about their walk of life. The interactionist approach advocates admitting all who request admission, so as to express most fully the unity and catholicity of the church.

When the approaches meet

When the approaches meet in a debate, it often results in a collision. Especially when the issues are felt to be more pressing and sensitive, those having to decide will gravitate to one of the three approaches. With a view to Synod 2010, I think of such issues as our relationships with the URCNA, the GKN(v), and of women voting.

I have been a minister now for almost eleven years, and have attended in person, besides many classes and regional synods, eight general synods or assemblies, mostly in North America. My experience indicates that the following tends to happen.

The interactionist approach tends to find the other two too legalistic. The principle approach will find the positional approach too legalistic and the interactionist position too subjective and emotional. The positional approach will find the other two to be too unclear and subjective.

Scripture

All this raises the question: where does Scripture figure in all of this? Is one approach to be favoured above another? Should any be considered unbiblical?

I would argue the Scripture does not favour one approach above the other.

Our Lord urges his hearers to do as the Pharisees taught (Matt 23:2-3a). There is a place for a positional approach. Keep the law means keep the whole law (Matt 5:17-20).

But in applying law, our Lord takes us back to creation ordinances (Matt 19:8-9). Thus there is a place for a principle approach. We all know that "You shall not murder" also means "You shall not hate" (1 John 3:15).

Our Lord also reprimanded the Pharisees for neglecting the depth of the law, the more important matters of justice, mercy, and faithfulness (Matt 23:23). There is a place for the interactionist approach. It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath (Mark 3:4).

If our Lord used all three approaches, one may conclude that all three approaches should be given due consideration in a situation. This would seem to be the biblical directive on approaches to the law.

Fruitful co-operation

The three approaches also tend to collide where people are being self-centred (something that by their sinful nature they are). In a church setting, however, people should be other-centred, especially Other-centred. The approaches will not be used to defend a personal cause, but God's cause. Thus, even if there is disagreement on which approach to favour, recognising that others seek a similar goal will allow for an appreciation of these other approaches. This is what Scripture calls "having the attitude of Christ" (Phil 2:1-11).

How might this work in practice?

When drafting laws (church order articles, regulations) or decisions, it may be good to articulate these three approaches. The interactionist approach will be first: where are we going? The principle approach is next: what are the parameters or the limits? The positional is last: how shall it be articulated to be in keeping with the principles and to achieve the goal, without falling short or going too far?

When applying laws, it may also be helpful to go through this exercise. It may even indicate that the posited law requires fine tuning. There is always room for improvement (James 3:2). The Proposed Joint Church Order between the Canadian Reformed and the United Reformed bears this out. Regarding the person presiding at a classis, it reads: "The assembly shall choose one of its members to preside. The same person shall not function as chairman twice in succession."

We are governed by Christ

The proposed posited law has taken the principle approach into account. To take the interactionist approach into account, it could read (as it does in the article on church visitors) "one of its more able members."

May those called to draft and apply laws in our churches receive wisdom and insight from the Spirit to do so. For the church is the Lord's and the principle is that we are governed by Christ. In doing so, let us follow his example. May the church thus be all the more the place where unity, catholicity, sanctity, and Christianity come to expression.

¹ I have not yet found a standard English language explanation for these three. They are found in a standard introduction to law used at Dutch Universities: W. Witteveen, *De geordende wereld van het recht: een inleiding* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2001), 55-70.





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A Bit of Church History

Liberation of 1944

The Canadian Reformed Churches have their own history. Previous articles in this series on the Secession of 1834 and the Doleantie of 1886 (with the Union of 1892) brought that history to the beginning of the twentieth century. This time I'd like to trace this history further to the Liberation of 1944.

Pacification Formula

I do not doubt that the Union of 1892 was in accordance with the revealed will of God concerning the unity of his people. The churches formed by that Union, however, had their internal disagreements – and it's these disagreements that coloured to large extent what happened next.

The difficulty surrounded the thoughts and teachings of Abraham Kuyper in relation to presumptive regeneration (see the Doleantie article for detail on this teaching). The long and short of the discussions was that the Synod of 1905 had to make a ruling on whether Kuyper's teachings on presumption regeneration were scripturally grounded or not. Synod's answer on the point was this:

- "that, according to the Confession of our churches, the seed of the covenant must, in virtue of the promise of God, be regarded as regenerated and sanctified in Christ, until, as they grow up, the contrary is evident from their life or doctrine;
- that, however, it is less correct to say that baptism is administered to believers' children on the ground of their assumed regeneration, for the ground of baptism is the command and promise of God;
- that, furthermore, the judgment of charity, whereby the church regards the seed of the covenant as regenerated, does not therefore in any way imply that every child is truly regenerated, since God's Word teaches us that not all are Israel who are from Israel. . . ."

Notice the guarded wording of this answer. The first point confirms what Kuyper taught and ruled it was confessionally acceptable. The second point, however, found weakness with the first and stated that there's a better way to look at the matter. Kuyper was not wrong

then, but wasn't fully right either. Little wonder that this decision became known as the "Pacification Formula." The term "pacification" means to "make peace," and that name indeed catches what the Synod said: it strove to be indecisive so that no one would be offended and peace be maintained in the churches. Neither side in the discussion was deemed fully right or fully wrong and each was encouraged to live in peace with the other. At the end of the day the consensus was that Kuyper's position too fell within the parameters of the Reformed confessions.

Beyond Kuyper

In the course of the years, Kuyper's ability to maintain a position of leadership waned due to increasing age. Young leaders also arose who dared to question some of Kuyper's teachings – including his instruction on presumptive regeneration. In response, a number of Kuyper's followers carried their master's teachings to further extremes. Of particular interest to our subject today is the profile his supporters gave to Kuyper's position on the covenant. It was evident that not all children in the covenant in fact received salvation; there were children baptized in infancy who later rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ and showed themselves to be unbelievers and unregenerate. That's not neat and tidy: how can God make his identical covenant with those who will believe and be saved and with those who will not believe its promises and not be saved?! So Kuyper spoke of an inner covenant and an outer covenant and taught that those children who would believe were from infancy in the inner covenant, while those who would not believe (equally baptized on the grounds of presumed regeneration) were in fact in the outer covenant.

It turns out that Kuyper's followers took his material on presumptive regeneration and inner/outer covenant (as well as other distinctions, eg, visible and invisible church, image of God in broader and narrower sense, grace as common and special, etc) to the pulpit and to the catechism class – and the people of the churches fell asleep under the weight of these lifeless

distinctions. This was scholasticism at its best (or worst); heady theologians attempted to make the way and work of God in our fallen world understandable to limited human minds – and in the process the struggles the people of God encountered in real life were not addressed.

It's for this reason that those young leaders who dared to question Kuyper's teachings received an eager hearing in the congregations. These young leaders, including the young preacher Klaas Schilder, insisted on taking the Word of God at face value and were content not to be able to understand every part of God's revelation. Where, they asked, does the Scripture speak of the infant already having faith in his heart so that you may presume his regeneration already in the cradle? When father Isaac looked at his two toddlers Jacob and Esau, did he have to think in terms of inner and outer covenant, that God's promises

*In the process the struggles the people
of God encountered in real life
were not addressed*

to the one child were real while to the other they might not be? Schilder and those with him resisted the several distinctions Kuyper (and his followers) made on grounds that these distinctions were not found in Scripture and not echoed in the Reformed confessions. More, they understood that making these distinctions rose out of a desire to understand how the things one sees in real life square with what the Lord God had revealed in Scripture. But the young leaders questioned how any mortal, affected as we all are by the brokenness resulting from the fall into sin, can ever fit all the twists and warps of this broken life into neat little boxes. God, they insisted, was beyond human comprehension, and so for preachers to make distinctions beyond the Bible's revelation has no place in the public preaching. Let the congregations instead simply work with the Word as God gave it. That's to say specifically: your children are all equally God's children, with the same promises and so the same right to call upon God as Father and the Saviour as Redeemer. This is the way parents should approach their children, this is equally the way elders should approach the lambs of the flock, and it is the way

preachers need to address the entire congregation irrespective of age. All belong to God in equal measure, simply because the Lord said that He establishes his covenant with believers and their seed (see Genesis 17:7; Acts 2:39). And that, of course, means that all have equal responsibility to respond obediently to God's rich promises in the covenant.

Synod

The 1936 Synod of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands mandated a committee to evaluate the distinctions Kuyper (and his followers) made as well as the criticisms levelled against these distinctions. This committee's report served the synod convened in 1939. As a result, this synod (which, as it turned out, lasted four years – but that's another story) insisted that Kuyper's teachings in relation to presumptive regeneration and his distinctions about inner and outer covenant, etc, were biblically and confessionally correct, while those who criticized his positions were biblically and confessionally wrong. In fact, this Synod made clear that all preachers and teachers in the Reformed Churches of The Netherlands were expected to present and defend these emphases in their preaching and teaching. While the Pacification Formula of 1905 wanted to leave room for Kuyper's position as a possible interpretation of Scripture and confession (and so there was plenty of room to disagree publicly with Kuyper), the Synod of 1939-1942 left no room for disagreement with Kuyper at all, and insisted that Scripture and confession demanded Kuyper's understanding.

Predictably, the next synod, convened in 1943, received on its table a multitude of appeals and objections against the decisions of Synod 1939-42. The Dutch nation was still heavily engaged in its war against Nazi Germany and so freedom of movement and freedom of expression was much curtailed. Schilder himself, for example, had to hide from the invaders as they considered him dangerous to their cause. Understandably, this state of affairs produced the plea to maintain the pre-1939 status quo until the churches again had freedom and opportunity to consider responsibly the decisions of Synod 1939-42. But the new synod had no such patience. In fact, Synod 1943 demanded compliance with the decisions of the previous Synod, to the point that those office bearers who objected were to be deposed from their offices in the churches. The first man deposed was Rev. Klaas

Schilder who by now was professor of Dogmatics at the Theological College of the churches in Kampen. Though Synod did not know where he was hiding, and did not speak with him face to face, they yet had the nerve to depose him on the grounds that he (they said) unsettled the peace in the churches through his objections to Synod's embrace of Kuyper's distinctions.

*All belong to God in equal measure,
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establishes his covenant with
believers and their seed*

Other depositions quickly followed, so that soon enough a rupture appeared in the Reformed Churches of The Netherlands. The grounds for the rupture were not only the dogmatic positions adopted by Synod in relation to Kuyper's teachings, but also the inflexible and authoritarian attitude Synod adopted in forcing its position on the churches. There was no room left for freedom of conscience among those who could not find Kuyper's doctrine in the Bible or in the Confessions.

Liberation

While the war was still going on, a meeting was held on August 11, 1944 to discuss what to do in response to Synod's hard insistence on believing doctrines not found in the Bible. Schilder himself appeared at this meeting (and disappeared directly thereafter) to encourage those in attendance to stay simply with the Bible and its faithful echo in the three Forms of Unity. An Act of Liberation and Return was read out, in which those in attendance pledged faithfulness to God's Word and the Confessions of the church and refused to be bound by anything beyond that. In so doing these "liberated people" distanced themselves from the distinctions of Synods 1939-42 and 1943-44, on grounds that these distinctions were not found in Scripture or echoed in the confessions. More, those who liberated themselves from the bindings of Synod wanted to hear God's Words to sinners in their own God-given clarity, and that's to say that parents did not want to hear that maybe their little Johnny was regenerated or maybe he was not, and did not want to

hear either that maybe their little Suzie was in God's inner covenant or maybe she was in his outer covenant – all of which left the parents puzzled as to what God actually said to them and their child at baptism. They wanted to hear instead no more than the Bible actually revealed, and that was that God genuinely established his covenant of grace with believers and their seed, and that included themselves and therefore the children God sovereignly gave them. As they set themselves to their task of parenting, these parents wanted and needed reassurance that God's promises were actually true and real for *their* little son, and so they could see their son as God's child, count on God's faithfulness, and impress the reality of God's promises on their boy and train him to respond obediently and humbly to God's covenant promises.

At the end of the day, the fine point of the Liberation of 1944 was not about what one ought to think about presumptive regeneration. The fine point revolved around whether one could take God's Word at face value, or whether one had to box it in with maybes and possibilities, so that the clarity of God's Word was fogged in. Despite the war raging around them, many considered the clarity of God's Word of greater importance than safety itself.

*These parents wanted and needed
reassurance that God's promises were
actually true and real*

We are today some sixty-five years after the Liberation took place. The people involved in the Liberation – including persons deposed from their offices by Synod – include our parents and grandparents. Our ancestors received in the Liberation a new appreciation for the simple clarity of what God says and this is a clarity they have sought to pass on to those who followed them. This is the heritage we need to preserve, whether we're of those ancestors who remained in The Netherlands (to become the Reformed Churches of The Netherlands – Liberated) or whether we're of those whose ancestors migrated to a new land (to form in Canada the Canadian Reformed Churches). How that heritage was preserved in Canada will, DV, be the subject of another day.



Jack Moesker



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Morning Devotions

The following article is taken from the February 19, 2010 issue of *Gereformeerde Kerkbode – Groningen, Fryslan, Drenthe* of the Liberated Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. It's written by Rev. Pieter Groen and aside from the typical Dutch context of bicycle and bus, it's as relevant to Canada as it is to The Netherlands.

"I get up at six every morning and hurry off to work. I don't pray then." That's what an elder told me one time. What? I was taken aback at that, because he was a serious, believing man who didn't minimize his Christian walk. Maybe he prayed every morning at another time.

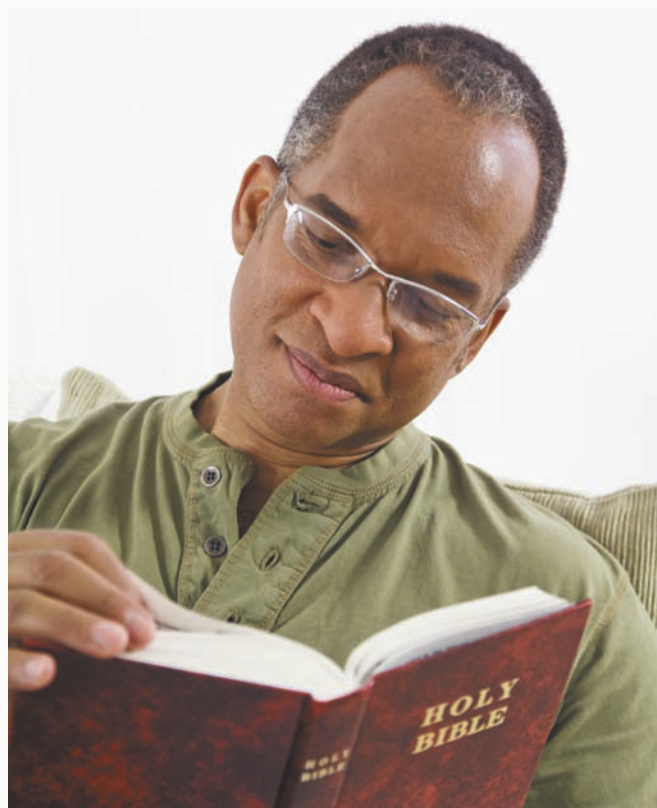
But how do things sometimes go with the average family? Dad has to leave for work at 7 o'clock. Son Patrick has to catch the bus at eight and gets out of bed at the last moment. Does a family like that begin the day with God? Who knows what lies ahead that day? Busy with all kinds of things and surrounded by dangers in traffic and all over. All kinds of spiritual choices that have to be made on a daily basis. The devil, the ruler of this world, lies in wait for us. How can anyone throw themselves into all the activities of a day without first folding of the hands and praying to God for his help and care? And please read a portion of the Bible too! You should be able to take a moment for that, shouldn't you? The Bible remains a source of guidance and strength for every day.

I spoke to someone who worked in construction and who had to get up at 5:30 in the morning. He enjoyed a hearty breakfast then and always read a portion of the Bible and from a daily devotional. See, that lays a wonderful basis for each day.

A young man had to again rush out on his bicycle to reach the bus stop on time. "You haven't

prayed yet!" his mother called as he hurried away. "I'll pray while I bike," he called back. Better late than never. . . .

Maybe great things are going to be achieved on a certain work day. Maybe good marks at school. Important work accomplished at the office or in the store. But what's the real value of it all if you haven't first brought that day before God in prayer, if you haven't dedicated the day to Him and petitioned Him for his guidance and blessing? "Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after wind" (Ecclesiastes 4:6).





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Canticles

Jonah's Prayer

Jonah 2 records a prayer the Prophet Jonah prayed and wrote about his experience of being thrown overboard by the sailors and swallowed by a great fish. Many of the themes of Jonah's prayer are also found in Psalm 116. The tune suggested itself rather forcefully.

Jonah's Prayer

1. In my dis-tress I called out to the LORD.
 And from the grave I cried to Him for mer-cy.
 He ans-wered me; He looked at me with pit-y.
 He heard my voice when I His grace im-plored.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>2. You hurled me down into the deepest sea.
 I was engulfed by all Your waves and breakers.
 They swept me down into the watery chambers.
 I truly thought it was the end of me.</p> <p>3. I said, "O LORD, I'm banished from Your sight.
 Yet I will look toward Your holy temple."
 I trust in You to help me when I'm fearful.
 I know that You will save me from this fright.</p> <p>4. The raging waters choked and threatened me.
 The deep surrounded me and pulled me downward.
 Weeds wrapped around my head till I was covered.
 I was distressed and cried out anxiously.</p> <p>5. I sank away down to the mountain base.
 The earth beneath imprisoned me forever.
 But You delivered me, O LORD my Saviour.
 You brought my life up from the dark abyss.</p> | <p>6. When life was ebbing slowly from my soul
 then I remembered You, LORD, in Your temple.
 My prayer arose to You, who are so faithful.
 You are my God, and You will me console.</p> <p>7. All those who cling to worthless gods of stone
 forfeit God's grace and they forsake their welfare.
 They'll be dismayed for idols give no answer.
 The LORD my God – He is true God, alone.</p> <p>8. But I – a song of thanks to God I'll raise.
 I'll sacrifice to You, O LORD my Saviour.
 I'll pay my vows because of Your great favour.
 Salvation comes from God – Him I will praise.</p> |
|---|---|

Text: Jonah 2; vers. George Ph. van Popta, 2009, ©
 Tune: Geneva, 1562

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 GENEVAN 116





George Hofsink is principal of
Covenant Christian School, Flamborough
Sharon Hofsink is a Special
Education Consultant

What About Gifted Learners?

Reformed schools seek to assist parents to fulfill the vows taken at the baptismal font. The school aims to equip covenant children with academic knowledge, skills, and attitudes that can be used in service of God and to their neighbour. It is intended that the students gain scripturally moral character so they acknowledge, accept, and use their God-given talents.

Who are the recipients of Reformed education? First and foremost, they are God's adopted children.

As heirs of the Father, they have received the forgiveness of sins through the blood of the Son and the cleansing and renewal of life through the work of the Holy Spirit. They, like we, were conceived and born in sin and are, therefore, inclined to all manner of evil. By nature they are unable to show forth the image of God in which man was created. Our children are, however, unique because of what God has given them: inclusion in the covenant. As such they have been called to deny themselves and to live for God and the neighbour.

All covenant children share in a common status before God. Each is called to serve and glorify Him. Within this common task, however, each has been given a unique set of gifts, talents, and opportunities by the Lord. The Reformed school must, therefore, recognize the diversity of abilities and gifts of its students and seek to address them in its instruction, curriculum content, and assessment.

Most of the efforts put forth by Reformed schools aim to assist parents in raising their children in the fear of the Lord, to love and serve Him, to recognize his supremacy over all aspects of life, and to learn to do good to others. These aims find their basis in the covenant established by God with his people and reflect the demands found on the two tablets of the law. The school works out its broad aim in various ways: most visibly, perhaps, but not exclusively, in its academic activities. Notable, however, is the fact that writers in both the Reformed and the broader Christian communities never give the pursuit of academic excellence as the *primary* goal of the Reformed Christian school. Such striving is always subservient to and encompassed by the larger aim of learning to serve our Maker fully and of learning "that belonging to our faithful Saviour means that we belong to each other as well."¹

Is it because of this that, within our schools, there is a small percentage of the student population whose needs are not being fully addressed; i.e., those of the bright and gifted learners? As awareness of special services in other school systems has increased over the past number of years, parents have become more interested in meeting the needs of these students. In the school evaluation that was done at Covenant Christian School in Flamborough, Ontario several years ago, this was one of the areas that was identified as needing attention. The report indicated that gifted and bright students required expanded opportunities in order to be challenged fully and in accordance with their talents and abilities.

Who are the bright and gifted and what makes them a needy group of learners? For decades researchers, educators, and parent groups have tried to define giftedness. To date, a universally acceptable definition remains elusive. Even the term "giftedness" has come under scrutiny for it is considered by many to be too narrow. In 2000, Alberta Learning, a provincial resource for teachers, described giftedness as broad in terms of academic ability, talent, social, interpersonal skills, and vocational domains. The document notes that giftedness is intimately linked to opportunity and that programming for students who are gifted is essential in their development. Similarly, the Ministry of Education in Ontario defines giftedness as "an unusually advanced degree of general intellectual ability that requires differentiated learning experiences of a depth and breadth beyond those normally provided in the regular school program to satisfy the level of educational potential indicated."

Students who display giftedness appear to have characteristics and abilities that stand out. The following list is a compilation of those most commonly accepted by educators and parents:

- wide range of abilities, academic and otherwise
- well-developed attention span, a deep curiosity, and an ability to grasp, retain, synthesize, and act upon information
- ability to work independently and to take responsibility

- capacity to adjust easily to new situations and demands
- superior vocabulary and reading ability
- well-developed capacity for abstract, complex, logical, and insightful conceptualizations
- motivated, goal-oriented, and enjoys learning
- self-aware and reflective
- creative and imaginative
- risk-taker
- ability to generalize information across settings and to see unusual diverse relationships
- highly developed sense of consequence and forward planning
- advanced sense of moral/ethical judgment
- thought processes accelerated²

All of this sounds pretty good. Where are the needs of such students? Have they not been gifted with extraordinary abilities? The characteristics noted above look only at the positive side of giftedness. Students who fall into this category of learners may find themselves possessing attributes that can be considered negative in a learning environment as well. These include:

- bored and inattentive, particularly when the subject area is not of interest to them
- highly sensitive, especially to criticism
- extreme perfectionism
- difficulty changing tasks
- stubbornly prefer certain ways of learning, inflexible
- overly self-critical and will strive for unrealistic perfection
- unwilling to listen to the perspective of others
- insist on dominating discussion³

Suddenly it's not such a bright picture. Imagine a child who, during his preschool years, has learned to read fluently sitting in a Grade 1 classroom "learning" how to identify common outlaw words (e.g., the, one, does, etc.). Or picture a student who has developed the skill of adding numbers in the thousands in her head. Such a child sits in a grade-level mathematics class "learning" how to add $1 + 3$. In science class, the gifted child may discover with delight and enthusiasm that the next unit of study relates to his area of expertise. Eagerly he begins to share his knowledge. Facts fall out of him at top speed. He uses vocabulary terms that few of his classmates understand. Oblivious to the fact that his peers are rolling their eyes and snickering behind their hands, he continues until the teacher politely tells him that it's enough for one day. History class and it's time to debate. The teams have been made and the positions assigned. The gifted child has her team's case all worked out. She's even anticipated all possible

counter arguments and is ready with rebuttals. But her group wants nothing to do with her ideas because she spoke too quickly, came on too strongly, and refused to compromise. Besides which, they didn't follow half of what she said because she drew in arguments from sources other than those read in class.

Are such children likely to be excited about learning? Are they going to be eager for the next day's lessons to come? Will they continue to participate with enthusiasm and gusto? Some will. They will make learning interesting in their own way. They will persist and achieve, expecting bigger and better things from themselves. They will amaze their teachers by producing work that far exceeds their expectations. They will carry on with zeal and achieve great things. "They" are usually the girls. They may not even be truly gifted, just hard-working overachievers.

What of those who don't embrace classroom activity because of the fact that it's too easy and boring? Some will tune out and escape to a world of their own making. Others will bury themselves in books of their choosing. Yet others will become disruptive and make a nuisance of themselves. Discouraged and let down, they lose interest in school and care little about what goes on therein. They become underachievers who produce work that does not reflect their true abilities. Parents and teachers become frustrated and wonder why they have chosen the easy way out. "They" are usually boys.

Do we, as Reformed school communities, accept this as inevitable for the gifted and talented amongst us? Historically speaking, we have grown from one room schools, wherein the needs of individual learners could not be addressed, to schools that have teachers whose main task is to teach those whose needs make it difficult for them to function in the regular classroom. It is good and right that those who struggle to develop basic literacy skills receive such teachers' primary attention. Scripture teaches us that we are to be patient and gentle with the weak. This does not, however, excuse us from tending to the needs of the gifted in our midst. Like those at the other end of the learning curve, they also require direction and encouragement. Should we not make it our aim to equip them for the unique challenges they face today so they are not too discouraged, disheartened, and/or disengaged to become tomorrow's leaders?

¹ *Assisting the Special Child (ASC), A Special Education Model for Reformed Schools - 2008*, p. 4

² *Special Education in Schools* (Highland Press, 2008), Sheila Bennett, Don Dworet, Ken Weber; pp. 134,135

³ *Special Education in Schools* (Highland Press, 2008), Sheila Bennett, Don Dworet, Ken Weber; p. 135.



Ray of Sunshine

Corinne Gelms and
Patricia Gelms

*We have included a prayer that speaks about the rightful use God's Name.
May we always uphold our Heavenly Father's Name to his honour and glory in all that we do.*

Use God's Name, But Not In Vain

O my God, let your great Name be used by me, but not in vain.
Yes teach me why You want to be addressed so humbly, reverently;
For when I call to You in stress, in true despair or hopelessness,
Your holy Name is guarantee that You are very close to me.

O my God, please teach me how to tame my tongue when even now
In praise to You my prayer I bring. For your great Name means everything
To all who hallow your great Name and do not want it used in vain.
To praise men other words will do, but "O my God" is meant for You.

O my God, show me Your way, that every moment, every day
My small and humble human ways be used to give you only praise.
Let "O my God" not come to mind to speak of things or humankind,
For other words can quick be found to show surprise in things all 'round.

O my God, yes You I ask, to help me with each daily task,
But let me not Your Name demean by casually Your ear to claim.
No, let my thoughts and deeds and talk show who you are, with whom I walk.
Please keep my "O my God" as true, kept for my times of prayer with You.

O my God, let Your great Name be used by all, but not in vain.
In this dark world your Word is light and seen by all who seek Your might.
Use me too, and hear my prayer that you are honoured everywhere.
Let those all around me every day say: "O my God, to you I pray."

Elsa Hopman, 2006

*O my God, Thy way is holy;
For Thy greatness we extol Thee.
What god is there, strong and great
Like our God, so high in state?
For Thou art the God whose glory
Makes the peoples bow before Thee.
Thy strong arm redeemed and freed
Jacob's sons and Joseph's seed.*

(Psalm 77:5)

Birthdays in June

17 JOAN KOERSELMAN will be 53
2113-16 Avenue, Coaldale, AB T1M 1J8

20 LARS HUIJGEN will be 19
85950 Canborough Road, RR 1
Dunnville, ON N1A 2W1

30 BEVERLY BREUKELMAN will be 48
2225-19th Street, Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4

Sincere congratulations to you all who are celebrating a birthday this month. We hope and pray that God will richly bless you in this new year. May we all continue to place our hope and trust in Him alone. Have a very enjoyable day with your family and friends!

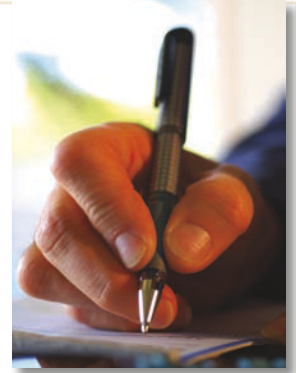
A note to all parents and caregivers

If there are any address or other changes that we need to be aware of please let us know as soon as possible.

You can contact us by the following means:

Mail: Corinne Gelms
8301 Range 1 Road, Smithville, ON LOR 2A0
Phone: 905-957-0380
Email: jcorgelms@porchlight.ca





Letter to the Editor

I'm writing to take issue with Rev. Wes Bredenhof's casual aside in his article, "Inerrancy – Lessons from History (Part 4 of 6)," published in your April 9, 2010 edition. He infers that the last synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches appointed the church at Hamilton to prepare a study with regards to the issue of women's voting, *presumably knowing full well what the outcome and recommendations would be*. The inference is made more objectionable by its comparison in the article to Synod 1969 of the CRC where *the CRC synod appointed men to this study committee who were not known to be of the concerned persuasion*. I can assure Rev. Bredenhof, and *Clarion's* readers, that the church at Hamilton did not presume any conclusion and served Synod with a detailed and thorough report. To suggest otherwise makes a mockery of the entire process.

Ben Harsevoort
Hamilton, Ontario

Response

The issue is not whether the Cornerstone church presumed a conclusion, but rather what Synod Smithers could have anticipated. The fact is that this matter landed on that synod's agenda because of a letter from Cornerstone. Synod then appointed Cornerstone as the committee to study this matter. Apart from the oddity of appointing a church as a committee, that certainly gives the impression of a foregone conclusion. However, I would clarify that it was not my intent to compare my neighbours in the Cornerstone church to "those were not of the concerned persuasion" in the CRC. The comparison is solely with regards to the decisions made by the respective synods. I apologize if that was not clear.

W. Bredenhof

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.

reviewed by Wes Bredenhof

**Come Join with Me in the
Worship Service,
Inge de Visser-Oostdijk,
Armada: Pro Ecclesia Publishers, 2008
Additional Information: Hardcover,
85 pages, \$20.58**



It's not often that I'm asked to review books for children. In fact, I think this might even be the first time. This book by elementary school teacher Inge de Visser was written to introduce children to Reformed worship. The author wants children to understand what we do and why we do it.

The book covers a Reformed worship service from beginning to end. It also includes introductory matter that covers such things as how we dress for church, praying for the minister and the worship service, and how we behave when we enter the church building. Towards the end of the book, de Visser also covers such things as the sacraments, days of commemoration, the consistory, and the home visit.

Overall, this little volume will be useful in teaching our little ones about Reformed worship. It could be used,

Book Review

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for instance, in daily family worship. I gave it a trial run in our family and our children seemed to profit from it. It's especially good that de Visser presents the material in bite-size chunks and ends each chunk with a question or two that could lead to some further discussion.

However, there are a few small points that deserve mention. First of all, the book makes some assumptions about Reformed worship services that may limit its usefulness. For instance, the author assumes that Reformed churches will use an organ, that all Reformed churches practice the handshake, that there is no explicit call to worship, that the congregation does not respond vocally at any time in the service, and that there is no assurance of pardon after the reading of the law and the confession of sin in prayer. Furthermore, a younger reader may not notice it, but an older reader may pick up that the font inexplicably changes at some places in the book. Otherwise, it is a handsomely produced book that includes tasteful illustrations. There is no other book like it and for that reason alone, I think it's worth recommending.



Press Release Classis Manitoba held on March 26, 2010

On behalf of the Grace Church of Winnipeg, Brother John Toet opened the meeting in a Christian manner. The credentials of the delegates were examined and the churches were duly represented. Due to the fact that Rev. R.J. den Hollander was out of province, the Grace church was represented by two elders. The church of Denver was represented by one elder. Classis was constituted.

Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer, the chairman of Classis, welcomed fraternal delegates: Rev. Vern Picknally of Bethel OPC in Carson, North Dakota on behalf of the Presbytery of the Dakotas; Rev. Larry Johnson of Prinsberg, Minnesota, from Classis Central of the URCNA; and Dr. Ken Cavers of Providence Reformed Church of Winnipeg, as well as Mr. Bill Gortemaker, one of Classis' representatives for contact with churches in fraternal relationship.

In memorabilia, Rev. Holtvlüwer mentioned the fact that Rev. G. Horner, the interim pastor of the church of Denver, has accepted a call to the Reformed Church of the United States in Rock Springs, Wyoming. Rev. Horner is not present among us, due to the fact that his wife's health is still of concern. Her brain tumour, which was shrinking under treatment, is increasing again, and requires further treatment. We are thankful for Rev. Horner's help in the church of Denver and commend him and his wife to God's care and blessing. Denver's ongoing vacancy was remembered and we pray that the Lord will again bless this church with their own pastor and teacher. It was mentioned that Rev. T.G. van Raalte, pastor of the Redeemer church of Winnipeg (on study leave), received and accepted a call to the church of Surrey, BC and has taken up his task there. The ongoing vacancy of the Providence church of Winnipeg was remembered as well. Mention was made of the upcoming synod to be held in Burlington in May and of the four brothers from our classis who have been delegated to attend. The chairman of Classis thanked the Grace church for the preparations made and the Redeemer church for allowing their facilities to be used.

A report from the classis treasurer was received. The assessment is increased to \$15 per communicant member, due mainly to the costs of travel to and from Denver in connection with their current vacancy. Reports are also received from Carman West regarding the inspection of the books of the treasurer; from Redeemer regarding the inspection of the classis archives; and the deputy for contact with the provincial government. These are received with thanksgiving.

Church visitation reports to the churches of Winnipeg Grace, Winnipeg Redeemer, Carman East, and Carman West were read. These were received with

thanksgiving. After each report, one of the elders gave thanks and laid the needs of each church before the throne of God.

There were no proposals or instructions from the churches. The chairman asked the questions according to Art. 44 of the Church Order. Each of the churches indicated that the ministry of the office-bearers was being continued, and the decisions of the major assemblies were being honoured. One of the churches requested and received advice in a matter of discipline.

Rev. Vern Picknally of Bethel, OPC in Carson North Dakota gave fraternal greetings on behalf of the Presbytery of the Dakotas. He gave an overview of the Lord's work in their churches. The Presbytery of the Dakotas consists of one church and one mission work (Fargo) in North Dakota, six churches in South Dakota, and six churches in Colorado, and one church and one mission work in Utah. Many of the congregations are smaller, and they cover a wide geographic area. Thanksgiving was expressed for the presence of Rev. Picknally in our midst and for the ongoing relationship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. One of the elders remembered these churches in thanksgiving and prayer.

Dr. Ken Cavers gave fraternal greetings from the Providence Reformed Church of Winnipeg. He expressed thankfulness to the ministers for being willing to fill their pulpit and to consistories for being willing to let them go. He mentioned that three members of their churches recently suffered a serious car accident in attending the ordination service of Rev. Brian Cochrane in Regina. Rev. Beukema is recovering well; Brother Henry Nagtegaal continues to suffer ill effects including concussion and will be off work for some time yet; Brother Ron Anderson is doing poorly and may not be able to return to work again.

Rev. Larry Johnson of Prinsberg, Minnesota, gave fraternal greetings from Classis Central of the RCNA. He updated Classis on a recent meeting of Classis Central, which also dealt with proposals concerning our unity talks together. He expressed the desire for a deepening of our unity, but noted that in the URC there was a need for the local churches to take more responsibility rather than leaving unity discussion up to various committees. There was further fruitful interaction together. Brother Gortemaker remembered in prayer the needs of those involved in the car accident, the vacancy of Providence Reformed Church, and the desire for increasing unity between our churches.


Winnipeg Redeemer is the convening church for the next classis. It will be convened, the Lord willing, on June 25, 2010 (if necessary), or else on September 24, 2010. The suggested officers for the next classis are chairman Dr. A.J. Pol, vice-chairman Rev. R.J. den Hollander, and

clerk Rev. J. Poppe. Brother Ed Harke will be thanked for his many years of service on the Committee for Students of Theology and another brother (yet to be notified) was appointed as his replacement.

Since Rev. G. Horner was not present at Classis, the clerk was appointed to write a letter on behalf of Classis

to thank him for his help as interim pastor in the church of Denver.

Personal question period was held, brotherly censure was not necessary, the press release was approved and the acts adopted. Rev. Holtvlüwer closed in prayer.

Clerk at the time, Rev. Joe Poppe 



Clarion Advertisements

Advertisements:

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

BIRTHS

Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. Psalm 95:6

With thankfulness to the Lord who has blessed us with our 4th son, we, **Roger and Catie Leistra** joyfully announce the birth of

SETH ROGER

Born at home, on his late Great-Oma's (Catharina Smouter) birthday, April 15, 2010.

Proud big brothers are *Walter Silas, Asa William* and *Sullivan Paul* 19th grandchild for Alida Leistra

9th grandchild for Bill and Lis Dykema

24 Parr Blvd, RR 2, Utopia, ON L0M 1T2



For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

Psalm 139:13 & 14

Giving praise and glory to God for the miracle and gift of life, we announce with thankfulness the birth of our daughter

KATHERINE GRETA

Born April 25, 2010 to

Allard and Elsa DeVries

Excited siblings *Claire, Arie* and *Joel*

16th grandchild for Harry and Cisca DeVries

29th grandchild for Rev. Willem and Gertie den Hollander

5567 Fly Road, Beamsville, ON LOR 1B2

aedevries@talkwireless.ca



With all praise and thankfulness to our Heavenly Father for the gift of life, we joyfully announce the birth of our new son and brother

JASON AREN

Born April 26, 2010

John and Shirley DeHaas

Curtis, Craig, Janessa, Trevor

#6, 53106, RR 264, Acheson, AB T7X 5A5

Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from Him.

Psalm 127:3

With great joy and thankfulness to the LORD, we announce the birth of our first child, one of His own covenant children.

We praise the LORD for this wonderful gift of life!

TITUS GEORGE DEBOER

Born April 26, 2010 to

Chris and Amanda DeBoer

35th grandchild for Dicky DeBoer

21st grandchild for John and Mary VanderHoeven

95 Caines Avenue, North York, ON M2R 2L2

ENGAGEMENTS

Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, his love endures forever.

Psalm 107:1

With thankfulness to our Heavenly Father who brought us together, we

RODNEY DEAN DEWIT

and

JESSICA MARIE RAAP

joyfully announce our engagement!

April 30, 2010

Box 14, Group 3, RR 2, Lorette, MB R0A 0Y0

WEDDINGS

Gerald and Helen Ostermeier are pleased to announce the forth coming marriage of their daughter

JASMIN KERIDA OSTERMEIER

to

AARON MEINTS

Son of Bernice and Joe Hamelink (Andy Meints†) of Smithers, British Columbia, on Saturday, July 24, 2010, D.V., at 1:00 pm, in the Smithers Canadian Reformed Church,

Smithers, British Columbia.

Rev. J. Louwerse officiating.

Standing reception in Church Hall to follow.