

Clarion

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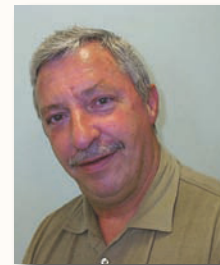


Camp Eden 2010



Inside this issue

- Is the Mass Really a "Cursed Idolatry"?
- Robbing the Word of its Power



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Is the Mass Really a “Cursed Idolatry”?

When the very heart of the gospel is at stake it is not a time to soft-peddle the truth of Scripture

From the time of our youth, we have become accustomed to the Heidelberg Catechism’s rather crass statement that the mass is an “*accursed idolatry*” (LD 30). Is this kind of terminology still correct in a kinder, gentler society?

Let’s face it, idolatry is a grievous sin. Idolatry is what finally sent the people of Israel in exile and captivity. But that was in a different era and circumstance. Should we still today dismiss the entire Roman Catholic Church? Is it fair to judge the Pope? Have we properly understood what it is exactly that this church teaches? Has the Reformation gone too far and outlived its usefulness?

In case you think I am simply imagining things, please note the following. Our sister church in Barneveld-Voorthuizen has sent a letter to the next synod of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (to be convened in 2011). The church at Barneveld will ask the synod to appoint a study committee to determine whether Question and Answer 80 of the Heidelberg should be revised.

There is a precedent, of course. In 2006 the Christian Reformed Church in North America placed the statement about a cursed idolatry in brackets with a footnote that that the catechism’s position does not truly represent what Rome really teaches and therefore is wrong. I found all this information in *Nederlands Dagblad*, Thursday, March 25, 2010.

It looks like some Reformed churches are back on the road to Rome. Gone are the days when the Pope was considered to be the *anti-Christ*. This is the

position of the Westminster Standards. But the current Pope is really a nice fellow, says the pastor of the church at Barneveld. The Pope states many things nowadays that Protestants can wholeheartedly agree with.

The Council of Trent is to blame?

Where in the world did this harsh kind of language come from? There are those who explain that the language of the catechism in Lord’s Day 30 is not original. The first edition of the Heidelberg published in 1563 did not call the mass an accursed idolatry. It was inserted only after the Romanist Council of Trent cursed the protestant heretics. Rome first used the word “*anathema*” (the Greek word for “cursed,” Galatians 1:9).

It was kind of like a knee-jerk reaction. Anathema, eh? You call us idolaters? Well, we will do the same and call you idolaters. It’s like tit for tat, typical sixteenth century radicalism. But the Reformed churches are now beyond the stage of name-calling. This is a tolerant era. We should take the high road and revise the dear old Heidelberg. It’s like removing warts from a loved one.

I mention this so that you will not be caught unawares by this so-called gentle spirit that is again wafting through some churches. The Apostle Paul was not so gentle in his time when he wrote, “You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?” When the very heart of the gospel is at stake it is not a time to soft-peddle the truth of Scripture.



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Is the catechism wrong?

In our subscription form we declare that the Three Forms of Unity fully agree with the Word of God. Still, if the catechism is wrong, it must be revised. There is not one creedal document that is infallible. Brackets and footnotes have been used before, for example with respect to Article 36 of the Belgic Confession. That article was said to go too far and therefore the offensive phrase was side-lined.

But is the catechism correct in expressing “anathema” at the Popish mass? Through the process of transubstantiation (the changing of bread and wine into the actual physical the body and blood of Christ) the bread and wine become godly and merit worship. Parishioners therefore worship the host as the real body of Christ, while in fact it is only bread. Since the bread, in Romanists eyes, has become God, it must be accorded worship. But bread is a created entity and therefore the creature is “adored” above the Creator who alone is to be worshipped. *Worship of created things is precisely what idolatry is all about.*

The Lord writes the following about this process, “They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator – who is forever praised. Amen” (Romans 1:26). Idolatry is always a serving of creature rather than the Creator!

The fox and the henhouse

Roman Catholic leaders soon answered that the host is not worshiped, but only adored. In reality, however, this is untrue. Adoration is practiced and becomes evident in worship of the host, which is the physical body of Christ. The church at Barneveld asked the Roman Catholic bishop from Friesland and Groningen to advise them as to how these things are experienced today among Romanists.

The bishop explained that in the mass the sacrifice is not repeated, as Reformed people wrongly think, but it is re-presented. The host makes visible what Christ’s sacrifice means, just as Reformed churches do

in their Lord's Supper celebration. I find the bishop's contribution very diplomatic but also extremely dangerous.

Asking the Frisian bishop for advice in this matter is like asking the fox to guard the henhouse. While we may be positive about some developments in the Roman Catholic Church, the basic doctrine that leads to an accursed idolatry is still fully in place: is Christ physically present in bread and wine, or not? Rome and Reformation continue to be miles apart and the two churches have principally great differences in doctrine that lead to difference in liturgy and worship. Rome does not preach the gospel of full redemption by faith in Jesus Christ through his one sacrifice made once for all on the cross.

*Worship of created things is precisely
what idolatry is all about*

The catechism may be somewhat crass in Lord's Day 30, but it is also accurate. Rome teaches a false doctrine like once the Judaists in the Apostle Paul's time. The exact terms and particular emphases may be different, but it's the same old story. We worship what we have in our hands and not what is in heaven above.

I find all this a distressing development in our sister churches. Sometimes it goes as follows: a church rejects orthodoxy and becomes a prey of false ecumenism. Before you know it, you are back in the suffocating bosom of the old mother church of Rome.

Fortunately the Classis Harderwijk where the church of Barneveld is located has not (yet) put the item on its agenda. Classis first wants to see what the ramifications of the Barneveld proposal are and how a possible decision affects the manner in which the confessions function in the churches. It is commendable that the regional churches have raised some red flags.

Personally I hope that this proposal never gets farther than the consistory itself. I fully believe that the consistory of Barneveld has the best of intentions. But that is not good enough, when it comes to the heart of what it means to be Reformed.



Altar, St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City



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MATTHEW 13:52

Robbing the Word of its Power

“But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water.” 2 Peter 3:5

This summer my wife and I had the opportunity to travel to Europe. In every city we found old and magnificent cathedrals. They were reminders that at one time Christianity had a great influence on Europe. While we enjoyed touring through many of these beautiful buildings, it was also striking that many have been turned into museums and tourist attractions. Occasionally a special service might be held, but generally the Christian church has seen a great decline.

What accounts for this decline? One might blame it on the Enlightenment or the Industrial Revolution. And while these did have some influence on the secularization of society, ultimately the blame for this decline does not rest with our society, but it rests with the church that has robbed the Word of God of its power.

Peter shows how devastating it is for God’s people when we rob the gospel of its power. At the end of his second letter, he is dealing with scoffers who question the coming of the Lord in judgment; they say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation” (3:4). They scoff at God’s promise that He will come to judge the world. They become bold in their assertions, for they believe that they will never need to give account to God for their wicked way of life. They say, “Nothing has changed since our fathers died, so why do you take God’s promise seriously?”

Peter reacts to this charge: “They deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water” (v. 5). What nonsense these scoffers are spouting! They forget that it was through God’s intervention that the world came into existence. It was by God’s Word that the heavens were called into being. And it was by the power of his Word that God formed the earth by separating the water from the land.


These scoffers also forget that it was by the power of his word that God released the waters He had separated from the land at creation, so that waters destroyed the earth in the great flood. God came to this world to punish mankind for their great wickedness. And so for scoffers to say that nothing has changed since the fathers died is to ignore deliberately that God has acted powerfully in the past through his mighty Word.

So Peter concludes in verse 7 that we can be certain that “by the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.” He argues that God’s actions in the past give us the firm foundation to believe that one day God will come in judgment as he has promised.

The scoffers that Peter refers to have not gone away but have become even more vocal today. The reason so many beautiful cathedrals have become museums and tourist attractions is because the leaders

in the church have robbed the Word of God of its power. They have done so by scoffing at the idea that God by the power of his Word created the heavens and the earth, and that by his power he also brought judgment with the great flood.

Many biblical scholars will say Peter is just basing his message on old myths. But you will understand that if these scoffers are right, then that which Peter writes amounts to nothing more than a house of cards. His whole argument is undermined and his message loses all credibility. If God did not really create the world by the power of his word, and if he did not really destroy the world with the flood by the power of his Word, then we no longer have a basis to believe that one day God will come to destroy the world in the final judgment by the power of that same word.

When the truth of God’s Word is undermined by the wisdom of mankind, the Word of God is being robbed of its power. And when the Word of God is robbed of its power, the church can no longer exist. Therefore if the church is to remain a powerful force in this world, she needs to maintain the truth of the gospel. We do not need to be ashamed to proclaim the Word of God as the Lord has revealed it to us. When the church is faithful in proclaiming the great and mighty deeds of God, her message will be the power of God by which he will transform the hearts and the lives of his people. 

Two Name Changes

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The name of our Theological College has recently been changed by a decision of Synod to become "Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary" (Article 153 of the Acts of Synod Burlington-Ebenezer 2010). The rationale for this is noted in Consideration 3.2, "The name 'Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary' is a fitting and appropriate name. The words 'Canadian Reformed' identify it with the churches, the word 'Theological' describes its area of study, and the word 'Seminary' underlines the fact that it is an institution in which men are trained for the ministry of the gospel." However, because of the law of the land the name by which our Seminary is registered must remain "The Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches," since that was established by an Act of the Ontario Legislature and cannot be changed.

A similar name change has taken place in The Netherlands. The name "*Theologische Hogeschool*" (Theological High School) of our sister churches has been changed to "Theological University." This has taken place a number of years ago. The change took place because the Dutch government decided to include the Theological schools in the funding for the universities. The Synod of our sister churches decided to accept fifty percent funding and change the name of their school to University as required by the revised Law of Higher Education.

Let us compare these two name changes and see whether there is a difference between the two, if any.

From College to Seminary

The name change adopted by the Canadian Reformed Churches (here after CanRC) is from College to Seminary. The title College is related to words familiar to us: words like collection and to collect. When we collect we put things together. In education we put several topics of learning together into a college. A good example is Red River College in Manitoba or

Conestoga College in Ontario. These colleges offer a wide range of technical studies and training from carpentry to nursing, from automotive to computer science. The students at a college choose a vocation. The aim is to become either a nurse or an automotive mechanic etc.

When we apply this to our Theological College in Hamilton then we start to wonder. Is the title College for our theological training in Hamilton really not a misnomer? When a student enrolls at our Theological College does he have a choice of vocations? All of us know the answer. The answer is no. The students that are trained at our Theological College have only one vocational choice. The program may contain many subjects but these subjects focus on one goal: training students to become ministers of the Word of God.

Now let us look at the title "Seminary." You may be surprised at what I found when I "Googled" on my computer. I was told that the word seminary comes from the Latin word *seminarium* meaning "nursery garden." At a seminary the professors sow the seed. We are familiar with the word "semen," seed. At our Theological Seminary the students are nursed, nurtured to ripen into men that are well prepared to be called by the churches to become pastors and teachers. However, don't let the word nursery fool you. There is nothing childish or amateurish about this training for the ministry at our Seminary. The training at our Seminary is theological. The level at which the subjects are taught is academic. However, the academic level of the theological training at our Seminary is by, and for, the Canadian and American Reformed Churches. The professors are bound to teach a content of studies that is fully in accord with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity. The professors, just like the ministers of the Word in the churches, are bound by their signature under the Form of Subscription. This means that there is no academic freedom. Academic freedom would bring professors, students, ministers,

and missionaries in conflict with their signature under the Form of Subscription. That brings us to the second name change, the change from Theological High School to Theological University.

From High School to University

The school for theological training for the ministry of our sister churches is located in the city of Kampen in The Netherlands. Around 1970 the faculty of the *Theologische Hogeschool*, as it was then called, published a study guide: "Orientation into Theology" (*Orientatie in de Theologie*). This study guide was prepared at the time that the Academic Council of The Netherlands was working on restructuring of the Theological Training within the Law of Higher Education. The first chapter was written by professor doctor Jochem Douma. I give a translation of a few passages. At the bottom of page nine we read about "the Committee for restructuring of the theological studies, organized by the Academic Council in 1968."

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*At our Theological Seminary the students are nursed, nurtured to ripen into men that are well prepared to be called by the churches to become pastors and teachers*  
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In her report the committee describes theology in general terms as "the scientific reflection on the quest for God and therein for the wellbeing of man and world." On page ten Douma comments, "Reflection on the quest for God – that is something different from reflection upon the exclusive revelation of God in Jesus Christ, as we have received this in Holy Scripture." The preparatory work of the Academic Council resulted in the Law on Higher Education and Scientific Research of 1992. The Theological School of our sister churches in Kampen resorts now under that Law on Higher Education and Scientific Research and is classified as a university. In this Law, as it stands at July 21, 2010, we read with regard to universities in Article 16.21: "Subsidy out of government funds for the

benefit of recognized theological and philosophy of life-view universities and seminaries." And in Article 1.6, Academic Freedom, "At these institutions academic freedom is observed."¹ The Reformed Churches liberated (*Gereformeerde Kerken vrijgemaakt*, from now on GKv) have accepted a fifty percent subsidy and changed the name of their Theological High School to Theological University. The downside of this is that the research at their Theological University has to accept the rule of "academic freedom." The acceptance of the rule of academic freedom has consequences for postgraduate and doctoral studies at their Theological University. Academic freedom flies in the face of adherence to the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity. Academic freedom allows researchers at the Theological University of our sister churches to go against biblical truth. *Duplex Ordo* has now become "double vision."²

Duplex Ordo and double vision

In The Netherlands theological studies were provided by two different types of schools. There were the church schools and there were the universities. At a state-funded university the theological student would first follow the general program. After the general program the university enabled the churches to appoint their own faculty to teach their future ministers according to their own principles.³ This two-layered system is called "*Duplex Ordo*" or double order. Since the First Secession of 1830 the Reformed Churches (*Gereformeerde Kerken*) have rejected the double system and maintained their own school, free from government interference, with the teaching fully in accord with the standards of the church. Our sister churches have left this behind and have gone on a path similar to the *Duplex Ordo*. I say similar for actually this has now become "double vision." One part of the spectacles of doctoral studies is focused on the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity. Another part of the spectacles of doctoral studies is focused on academic freedom with the opportunity to differ from the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity. There is now a tension between two layers of study at the Theological University of our sister churches. This tension cannot be denied. Neither can the two approaches of studies be reconciled.

That this tension at the Theological University of our sister churches is now present is seen in the Epilogue of a dissertation defended at the Theological University by Dr. Koert Van Bekkum:

This study is written by an academic theologian and journalist who loves intellectual freedom and who is convinced that critical inquiry, freedom of speech and public (scholarly) debate are very important means in constraining the powers of the modern world. Nevertheless, they are only means and not goals by themselves, for in that case the tyranny of only a certain interpretation of freedom, of human reason as the ultimate criterion in judging life, and of the free market is not far away... For me as a Christian and a member of a Reformed Church in The Netherlands, the narrative of God's history with Israel and of the fulfilment of this history in Jesus Christ is very important in this respect.⁴

I offer this quote to show the tension that is present in this dissertation between academic freedom and adherence to the Reformed confessions. To discern in how far Dr. Van Bekkum has made use of academic freedom in his conclusions we need to study the whole of his dissertation closely.

A matter related to all this is also a decision taken by Synod Burlington 2010. This decision was taken because of a dissertation written by Dr. Stefan Paas, now lecturer at the Theological University of our sister churches in The Netherlands. Synod acted upon the report received from the Committee for contact with the Dutch sister churches. The Committee reported, "Dr. Paas has written and defended a dissertation that makes many concessions to liberal scholarship." Synod decided to make known to our Dutch sister churches grave concern that "The Theological University did not exercise greater care in the case of the appointment of Dr. Paas as lecturer; and to urge the RCN to deal with these matters as yet" (*Acts of Synod* 4.4.1.2).

To understand why our synod needed to address our Dutch sister churches on this matter we need to go not only into what Dr. Paas has written but also into what Dr. Van Bekkum has written.

Two dissertations

In 2000, Stephan Paas received his doctorate in theology from the State University at Utrecht. The dissertation he defended was accepted and later published in the English language with the title

Creation and Judgment; Creation Texts in Some Eighth Century Prophets (Brill, Leiden, Boston, 2003).

Koert Van Bekkum received his doctorate in theology from the Theological University of our sister churches at Kampen in 2010. Brother Van Bekkum sent me an electronic copy of his dissertation for which I thanked him. The title of his dissertation is *From Conquest to coexistence; Ideology and Antiquarian intent in the Historiography of Israel's Settlement in Canaan*.

Dr. Paas is a minister of the Word in the Dutch Christian Reformed Churches. Presently he is a lecturer at the Theological University of the GKv. Dr. Van Bekkum is a journalist and co-editor of the daily newspaper *Nederlands Dagblad*; he is also a theologian but not an ordained minister of the Word.

The Theological University of the GKv is involved with the academic work of both men. The Theological University of the GKv appointed Dr. Paas as lecturer and granted Dr. Van Bekkum his degree on the basis of his academic work and dissertation.

Both authors emphatically state that they believe and accept the whole of the Bible as the inspired Word of God and adhere to the Reformed Confessions. Both authors make an effort to defend biblical truth. Dr. Paas defends the biblical truth of creation. Dr. Van Bekkum defends the truth of history as the Bible records it. However, the method that is used by each author is horizontal instead of vertical. By vertical method I mean basing your defence beginning and ending with God and his revelation from above laid down in the Bible. By horizontal I mean that you base your defence on the human authors of the Bible.

Academic freedom flies in the face of adherence to the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity

Dr. Paas approaches the truth of creation and judgment from the "creation faith of Israel" instead of from God's revelation in the Bible. The reason why Dr. Paas takes his point of departure in the creation faith of Israel of the ninth century B.C. is found on p. 14, ". . .the Primeval History (Gen. 1-11) - of which it is doubtful whether we are really dealing here with the oldest records of Israelite creation faith." With respect

to Genesis 1-11 Dr. Paas writes that this part of the Bible is of a specific genre. This genre apparently makes the early chapters of Genesis unsuitable with respect to creation and judgment. Dr. Van Bekkum also turns to the tenth to eighth centuries B.C. He approaches Joshua 9:1-13:7 from the viewpoint that scribes, in approximately the ninth century B.C., "reconstructed the past" (p. 491). The scribes were historiographers who recorded true history of Yahweh's granting the Israelite tribes possession of the land of Canaan as promised using the style in which scribes of Egypt and other nations recorded history: they recorded idealized history.

In spite of the good intentions of the authors both Dr. Paas and Dr. Van Bekkum leave us with a stripped down version of the Bible. The tension between personal confession and academic pursuit is reaching a breaking point. Synod Burlington of our churches has laid a task upon appointed deputies, and indirectly upon the faculty of our Theological Seminary, by deciding to approach our sister churches in The Netherlands on these matters. Both dissertations are written in a highly skilled fashion using academic language often introducing new terminology. This makes the task of retaining what is good and rejecting what is not good in these teachings a time consuming task. I worked through the book of Dr. Paas twice and am still not quite through the book of Dr. Van Bekkum. Personally I would like to approach the work done at the Theological University of our sister churches sympathetically. The horizontal methodology used and approved at the Theological University of our sister churches makes that almost impossible.

In this article I have made an effort to show the reason why our synod had to take the decision to approach our Dutch sister churches critically. Assessing the academic work accepted in Kampen is a task that will take time. In my contact with the Rector of the Theological University, Dr. M. teVelde suggested to have a conference about these matters. Dr. teVelde referred to the upcoming release of Dr. C. VanDam in January 2011. At that time the professor Old Testament, Dr. G. Kwakkel, hopes to be present in Hamilton. Dr. teVelde suggested further that our Seminary could invite Dr. Paas and Dr. Van Bekkum to take part in this conference. It is a suggestion worthy of our consideration.

¹ WET OP HET HOGER ONDERWIJS EN WETENSCHAPPELIJK ONDERZOEK (WHW)

"Tekst zoals deze geldt op 21 juli 2010."

"Artikel 16.21. Bijdrage uit's Rijks kas ten behoeve van aangewezen theologische en levensbeschouwelijke universiteiten en seminaria."

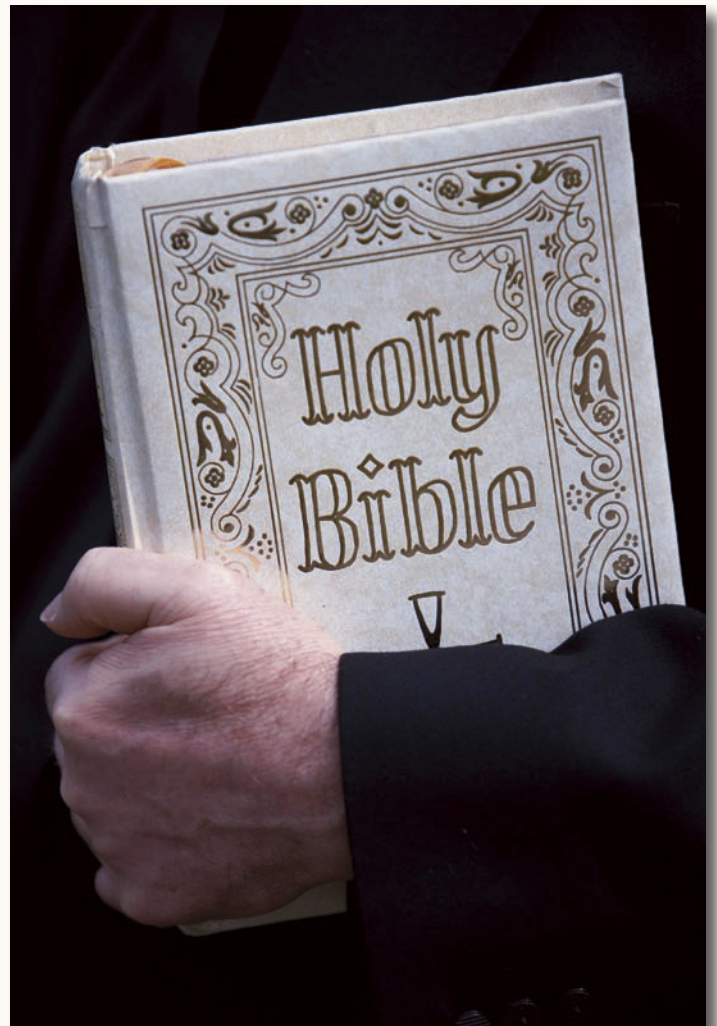
"Artikel 1.6. Academische vrijheid: Aan de instellingen wordt de academische vrijheid in acht genomen."

² I take the term "double vision" to mean that liberal methodology of interpreting the Bible becomes a second set of spectacles to a Reformed theologian interfering with the theologian's single commitment and focus.

³ Dr. J. Douma in "Orientation into Theology" p. 8.

⁴ Dr. Koert Van Bekkum, *From Conquest to Coexistence. Ideology and Antiquarian Intent in the Historiography of Israel's Settlement in Canaan*, p. 498.

C





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Ecumena: Commentary on News and Trends in the International Church Preventing Pastoral Burnout

In "Taking a Break from the Lord's Work," in the August 1, 2010 online *New York Times*, Paul Vitello mentioned some rather shocking statistics about the health of the typical American pastor. He writes: "Members of the clergy now suffer from obesity, hypertension and depression at rates higher than most Americans. In the last decade, their use of antidepressants has risen, while their life expectancy has fallen. Many would change jobs if they could."

According to the article, the problem seems to run across the different churches. A survey of Methodist ministers reported significantly higher rates of arthritis, diabetes, high blood pressure, and asthma compared to their non-minister neighbours. A study done in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America found that sixty-nine percent of ministers reported being overweight, sixty-four percent having high blood pressure, and thirteen percent taking antidepressants. The number of Presbyterian (PCUSA) ministers leaving the profession during the past five years has quadrupled, compared with the 1970s.

Since social phenomena in the USA are usually replicated in Canada, we can assume that Canadian results would be about the same as the American.

Why the spike in such health issues? Why are pastors experiencing more health woes than most North American citizens? There is, of course, no simple explanation. However, there is a simple remedy: pastors should ensure they get enough downtime.

Life has changed for everyone in the past twenty-five years, but I am best equipped to understand how it has changed for those of my vocation. Let me mention only two ways in which life has changed.

When I became a minister in 1987, I took care of all my mail correspondence on Mondays. I let the letters, including those from colleagues, family, and friends, pile up through the week, and then read and answered the mail in one weekly block of time, a wonderfully measured routine. Today, with email, that practice has gone by the way.

When I became a minister, I had no answering machine. If I missed a call, I was blissfully ignorant. Today, with voice mail and call forwarding to our cell phones, we never miss a call.

We are plugged in to each other through Facebook, LinkedIn, Google Chat, and Skype. Email, voice mail, and Skype are great media and we can use them thankfully to stay connected with loved ones on the other side of the world, as my wife and I were recently very happily able to do with a daughter working in Kampala, Uganda. But the immediacy of such media also has a downside in that it is sometimes difficult to take a break.

Everyone needs downtime. In the Old Testament, the people of God had their weekly Sabbath and their three annual festivals. Even the land was to rest for a year every seven years.

Pastors are very busy on the day of rest. While almost everyone else in the church is resting and soaking up the Word, the ministers are very active, preaching, teaching, and expending themselves. They are doing what they love to do most, but it is tiring. I was once told that one hour of intensive public speaking is as draining as six hours of physical labour.

It is true that many people are busy, active, and become tired. It is not easy to argue that pastors are



unique, and yet in some ways they are. Darryl Dash quotes the Scottish minister, Robert Murray M'Cheyne, who said, "Few people know the deep wells of anxiety in the bosom of a faithful pastor." Mr. Dash continues, "Pastors aren't the only ones to grow weary, yet there's something about vocational ministry that's draining and that requires attention" ("When Pastors are Spent," *ChristianWeek*, September 15, 2010).

What should pastors do?

Pastors should be thankful for consistories that take care of them and that seek to ensure their mental, spiritual, and physical well-being. The elders have the duty to care for their minister and we can thankfully note that the Canadian Reformed Churches excel in this. Through the years, having met ministers from many different churches, I'm pretty sure there is no church that cares for its pastors as well as Canadian Reformed Churches do.

Ministers should eat well and ensure they get enough exercise (walking, running, biking, swimming, racket ball, karate, or other). Pastors should take a day off every week and not pay any attention to the phone and email on that day. Pastors should make sure they take all the vacation time they are allotted in their letter of call. Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell, an assistant professor of health research at Duke University, reports, "We had a pastor in our study group who hadn't taken a vacation in 18 years." He comments, "These people tend to be driven by a sense of a duty to God to answer every call

for help from anybody, and they are virtually called upon all the time, 24/7" (NYT article).

Mr. Dash mentions that Martyn Lloyd-Jones took two months off each summer and filled them with reading. Some prominent pastors today, like John Piper and Tim Keller, take regular breaks for reading, writing, and refreshment.

Besides daily exercise and weekly rest, all pastors should be so blessed as to enjoy regular sabbaticals. The word "sabbatical" is derived from the Hebrew *shabbat*, "to cease," and became the name of the seventh day of the week. Sabbath is a day for rest, refreshment and a renewal. Similarly, a sabbatical is a period of rest, refreshment, and renewal, not an extended vacation.

I was so blessed to have a sabbatical when I served in Ancaster. After seven years of ministry in Ancaster Church, I was given a half-year sabbatical from January to June, during which I took courses at several schools both near and far away. My consistory made a very forward-looking decision at that time, to grant its minister a sabbatical every seven years. Happy is the minister who spends a decade or two serving Ancaster church!

We ministers need to get past thinking that life in our congregations will fall apart if we are away for a half year. It will not. No man is indispensable. In fact, as I witnessed when I was away for six months during the busy season, elders and others step forward to do the work of the church. Furthermore, our Church Order stipulates that a minister "shall at all times be and remain subject to the call of the congregation" (Article 14). Though on a sabbatical, the minister can always be called back to duty in case of emergency or special need.

Ancaster did not need to make use of any outside funding possibilities for ministerial sabbaticals, but they are available for churches that need such. The Louisville Institute helps to fund sabbaticals for Canadian pastors and the Lilly Endowment fund does the same for American ministers. If there is financial need, a church can make an application to one of these organizations.



Sabbatical funding resources:

<http://www.louisville-institute.org/>
(help for Canadian churches)
<http://www.lillyendowment.org/>
(help for American churches)

Spiritual Refreshment at Camp Eden 2010

They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your pleasures. (Psalm 36:8)



Every year our church in Denver, friends from around the U.S., and even from other countries, gather for our family camp – a weekend at Camp Eden.

It's a season away from the rush and whirl of the world, full of adventure to be had, old friends to grow nearer to, and new friends to be made.

We get to see God as he reveals himself in his complex creation. In golden morning mist as it drifts over the pond, in the flavor pine trees bring to the air, and the smoky chilled smell of a star-sprinkled night. We get to see him all the clearer as we delve into his Word and we have the opportunity to respond with fervent prayers and songs, all together in sweetest fellowship. My time at Camp Eden spills over into all the rest of my year, with its inspiration, friendships, and memories.

There was hardly a moment to spare, with an abundance of things to do around camp. When we were not listening to lectures on God's Word, discussing the book *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health*

by Donald S. Whitney, which was our theme book, or engaged in hymn sings, there were tons of activities to do with our brothers and sisters in the faith.

Sports in the gym, like soccer and basketball. Table tennis and pool. Outdoor mini golf. Hiking. Fishing. Exploring and talking while surrounded by hills and wildflowers. Crafts galore, including gorgeous tie-dye t-shirts. And, a huge favorite – the zip line – dangling from a wire while flying high above the pond. There were also lots of planned games this year, things like shuffle board and a scavenger hunt, to name a couple, and we played for really neat prizes!

We had all weekend to study the book of John in whatever moments we could muster, for another camp favorite, the Bible trivia, an ever fun way to conclude the camp. I've heard from several kids that they're already studying the Bible all the more to prepare for next year.

So, with Bible trivia, skits, songs, and prizes, we finished off our annual family camp. There were a few tears on our last day as we said goodbye to friends from far away. Camp Eden continues to be an enormous blessing to families near and far. Maybe you'll join us sometime!



Ray of Sunshine

Corinne Gelms and
Patricia Gelms



*I do not know what lies ahead,
The way I cannot see.
Yet One stands near to be my guide,
He'll show the way to me.*

*I do not know how many days
Of life are mine to spend
But One who knows and cares for me,
Will keep me to the end.*

*I do not know the course ahead,
What joys and griefs are there
But One is near who fully knows
I'll trust His loving care.*

*I know who holds the future,
And I know He holds my hand,
With God things don't just happen,
Everything by Him is planned.*

*So as I face tomorrow,
With its problems large and small.
I'll trust the God of miracles
Give to Him my all.*

Birthdays in December

- 1 **SANDY SPYKSMA** will be 29
6528 1st Line, RR 3 ,Fergus, ON N1M 2W4
- 10 **JAMES KAMMINGA** will be 26
Box 1125, Carman, MB ROG OJO
- 16 **JULIE KAMMINGA** will be 22
Box 1125, Carman, MB ROG OJO

*"Those who know your name will trust in you, for you,
LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you."*

Psalm 9:10

A warm birthday wish is sent your way, to enjoy this very special day. May God bless and keep you in this new year, putting your hope and trust in him alone. We hope that you have a very enjoyable day together 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:

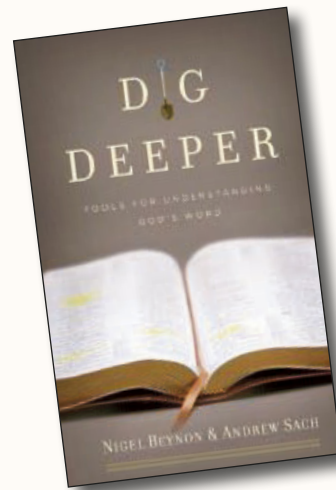
Mail: Corinne Gelms
8301 Range 1 Road, Smithville, ON LOR 2A0
Phone: 905-957-0380
Email: jcorgelms@porchlight.ca



Wes Bredenhof



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Dig Deeper: Tools for Understanding God's Word, Nigel Beynon & Andrew Sach, Wheaton: Crossway, 2010

Additional Information: Soft cover, 158 pages, \$16.50

Just as happens today, the presiding minister in a Reformed worship service in sixteenth-century Geneva would pray for God's blessing over the reading and preaching of the Word. Some of John Calvin's prayers for illumination have been preserved. One of them begins like this: "Almighty and gracious Father, since our whole salvation stands in our knowledge of your Holy Word, strengthen us now by your Holy Spirit. . . ." Calvin was right: our entire salvation depends on the Word of God. It is critically important for us to be familiar with that Word and to know how to work with it and understand it. This book is intended to help us to that end.

Both authors are experienced in the study of Scripture. Nigel Beynon is a Christian conference organizer and Andrew Sach is a pastor of a large conservative Anglican church in England. This book was originally published in the UK in 2005 as a result of their efforts at helping university and college students to better understand the Bible. Crossway has now republished it for a North American audience.

Overall, I am impressed with this little volume. I've long been looking for a simple, short, and faithful summary of biblical principles for interpreting the Bible. I'm pleased to say that I've found it with *Dig Deeper*. Through seventeen chapters, the authors unfold a comprehensive set of tools that will allow those who do not have a formal theological training to get a good handle on what the Bible says and how it should be applied to their lives. As an example, chapter 15 deals with "The Bible Time Line Tool." Whenever looking at a Bible passage, the authors encourage us to ask three questions:

1. Where is this passage on the Bible time line?
2. Where am I on the Bible time line?
3. How do I read this in light of things that have happened in between?

Some readers will no doubt recognize this as a way of approaching the Bible from the view point of redemptive history. This is the approach found, for instance, with S.G. De Graaf in his still very useful *Promise and Deliverance*.

I have only a small number of reservations. I wish, for instance, that more emphasis had been placed on the fact that all of Scripture points us to Christ. The authors do mention this, but it comes rather late in the book, almost as an afterthought. This should be central. Would I have written this book, I might also have included a paragraph or two distinguishing between the indicative (what God has done) and the imperative (what we are called to do). I also disagree with some of the interpretations of various passages and biblical concepts. For instance, chapter 7 tells us that we do not have to go to a special building or place to worship God. "There are no holy places anymore, only a holy person" (66). However, doesn't 1 Corinthians 3:16 say that the church is "the temple of God"? When the church is gathered in worship, is that not a holy place where God is present to bless his people with Word and sacrament? These sentiments betray an unfortunate acceptance of a minimalist ecclesiology by the authors.

Yet generally this is a well-written book. It has excellent illustrations and practical examples. They emphasize the importance of prayer for Bible study. Most importantly, the authors have the highest possible respect for the authority of Scripture and that respect is not mere lip-service. That's something that can't be taken for granted. So, who might benefit from *Dig Deeper*? High school Bible teachers would be the first ones to come to mind. It could be used as a textbook for high school Bible classes. However, certainly anyone who wants to enrich their knowledge of God's Word would be well-served by reading this little book carefully.



Ryan deJonge

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***The Gospel and Personal Evangelism,*
Mark Dever, Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2007
Additional Information: 124 pages**

It is perhaps telling that the author of a book called *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* describes himself as an “extreme extrovert.” Mark Dever is the Senior Pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. and he also heads 9 Marks Ministries (www.9marks.org). Though thoroughly Baptist in his convictions, Dever is well acquainted with and very fond of Reformation history and teaching, having acquired a doctorate from Cambridge in Church History. In fact, Dever often quotes approvingly from the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Confessions.

Why is it significant that Mark Dever is extremely extroverted? Perhaps you feel, as I have at various times, that the sort of evangelism that requires you to gregariously and strategically engage friends and strangers alike in conversation about religion and the bible *might* be okay for some people, extremely extroverted people like Mark Dever, but it is not the gig for me. Well, the extreme extrovert himself has set out to prove us wrong.

The title of this book makes clear where Dever’s emphasis is: it’s on the gospel, the Good News of Jesus, and it’s on evangelism. Not *all* evangelism – Dever would agree that evangelism begins and ends with the preaching of God’s Word in Sunday worship – but specifically *personal* evangelism, sharing the good news with friends, family, neighbours, and strangers.

Dever writes very clearly, very engagingly, and with superb organization. This book is very readable. As well, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* is very practical. Dever does not set out to give us a comprehensive treatment of the theory of evangelism (you might find more of that in Will Metzger’s *Tell the Truth*). His aim to help us overcome our fears and failings in personal evangelism, understand the need for the content of the gospel, and warmly encourage us to take up our Christian calling.

The content of the book is organized under key questions, which form the chapter titles themselves. The first chapter, *Why Don’t We Evangelize?*, goes through common excuses for not evangelising, such as “Other things seem more urgent” and “I don’t know any non-Christians.” To counterbalance these, Dever offers a twelve step plan to begin or renew your evangelizing initiatives. The rest of the chapters are as practically focused as the first. They are: *What is the Gospel?*, *Who Should Evangelize?*, *How Should We Evangelize?*,

What Isn’t Evangelism?, *What Should We Do After We Evangelize?*, and *Why Should We Evangelize?*

I found the chapters *Who Should Evangelize* and *What Isn’t Evangelism* to be the most notable. In *Who Should Evangelize*, Dever shows that evangelism is the task and calling of every Christian. Yet at the same time, contrary to many Evangelical discussions of the topic, he emphasizes the importance and necessity of the local church. The Christian’s task to speak the good news is an extension of the church’s calling to be a light to the world. Evangelism should be encouraged by the church, connected to the church, and should seek to bring others into the fellowship of the church. Dever even speaks of “using” the church to show your unbelieving neighbours and friends what Christian love and fellowship really looks like. Especially in our times, when evangelism is often viewed as the isolated pet project of certain overzealous individuals, we should remember the centrality of Christ’s church in promoting the gospel.

In *What Isn’t Evangelism*, Dever argues that we don’t do ourselves any favours by imputing the status of “evangelism” to activities that are not. Evangelism proper must be primarily focused on the communication of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore such activities as imposing of personal beliefs, personal testimony, social action and political involvement, and apologetics should not be confused with evangelism. These all may have their own place within a Christian’s interactions with the world. But if we baptize them “evangelism” then we are implicitly watering down (or even worse emptying) the gospel. The gospel, the good news of work of Jesus Christ on our behalf, must be present in our evangelising; otherwise we will have to give it another name. I wonder, incidentally, how much of what our “Evangelism Committees” do is actually concerned with communicating the gospel? Is the gospel the primary focus of our church’s evangelism activities? Or have BBQs and informational brochures taken over?

I would heartily recommend *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* for any and every believer; there is no reason not to! It is affordable (\$10.01 from Amazon.ca), it is eminently readable, it is well-grounded in Scripture, it is Reformed (in terms of its understanding of salvation. Dever is a Baptist, but that does not bear negatively on this book), it is practical, it is challenging, and it is encouraging. Added to all these, I think this topic hits a weak spot for many of us. Yet Dever does not employ guilt or shame as motivation, but the ultimately the glory of God.



CCCNA Press Release re: Seventy-seventh OPC General Assembly

The Seventy-seventh General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church met from July 7-13, 2010. Delegates from the Canadian Reformed Churches were not present as it is customary for the Committee to send them bi-annually. On behalf of our federation, the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America did send a letter of fraternal greetings to the commissioners of the GA. As Canadian Reformed Churches we look forward to being present for the Seventy-eighth General Assembly in 2011, a meeting to be held at Sandy Cove Conference Center in Maryland and which will also celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the OPC. We also look forward to our annual meeting with the Committee for Ecumenicity and Inter-Church Relations which is scheduled to take place during the thirty-sixth meeting of NAPARC (November 16-17, 2010).

As with a general synod in our churches advisory committees function to receive, review, and evaluate the reports of the permanent (standing) committees. The permanent committees function year round and deal with such matters as foreign and home mission, Christian education, diaconal ministries, interchurch relations, as well as chaplains and military personnel. In addition to the advisory committees the GA also has three temporary committees which review presbyterial and standing committee records and make the arrangements for future meetings of the GA.

From the Report of the Seventy-seventh General Assembly (www.opc.org/GA/77th_GA_rpt.html) we highlight the following items:

- Rev. Donald Duff, who has served for eighteen years as the stated clerk of the General Assembly, retired from that office and was replaced by Rev. George Cottenden.
- After many years of labour the New Directory for the Public Worship of God will take effect on January 1, 2011.
- The total membership of the OPC as of the end of 2009 was 29,421 persons, consisting of 485 ministers, 21,123 communicant members, and 7,813 baptized children.
- Currently the OPC has eighteen missionaries serving in Asia, Africa, South American, Canada, Haiti, and the Ukraine. "The goal in all fully operational mission fields is the establishment of 'a healthy indigenous national church' that

is firmly and fully committed to the Reformed faith, that is self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating; with which the OPC may have fraternal relations; that is itself sending out foreign missionaries to other nations, and which no longer needs the services of OP foreign missionaries."

- The Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension could report on the blessing of new church plants in 2009.
- The Committee on Christian Education publishes the monthly magazine *New Horizons*, manages the website, manages the ministerial internship program, manages in co-operation with the Presbyterian Church in America Great Commission Publications, and is currently working on a psalter-hymnal which is scheduled for completion by 2015.
- The Assembly voted in favour of inviting into a corresponding relationship the Heritage Reformed Congregations, the Independent Reformed Church of Korea, and the Free Church of Scotland Continuing.
- The Assembly voted in favour of inviting into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship the Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ).
- The Assembly declined to enter into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Liberated) "in view of concerns regarding its full commitment to a Reformed understanding of the sufficiency, interpretation, and authority of Scripture." (The OPC does maintain a corresponding relationship with these churches).
- The Assembly decided to address a letter the United States Department of Defense expressing concern about the potential repeal of the current military policy prohibiting homosexual behavior.
- The Assembly, like our General Synod, had to deal with a number of overtures and appeals.

What these highlights cannot convey is the commissioners' heart for worship during their Assembly and their desire to do all things in complete submission to the word of God. We rejoice in the faithfulness of the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches and their ongoing witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let us continue to remember these churches in our prayers.

On behalf of the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America,
Doug Vandeburgt

Press Release: Classis Niagara September 29, 2010

On behalf of the convening church of Lincoln, Rev. D. Wynia called the meeting to order and welcomed the brothers. Rev. Wynia read from 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12. The brothers sang from Psalm 96:1, 2, and 4. Rev. Wynia led the meeting in prayer to ask the Lord's blessing.

The delegates of the church at Lincoln reported that all the credentials were in order and that the churches were properly represented. Classis was declared constituted and the suggested officers took their places: Rev. K. Kok as chair, Rev. D. de Boer as vice-chair, and Rev. J. Huijgen as clerk. Rev. K. Kok thanked the church at Lincoln for their preparations and made mention of several special circumstances, including that (1) Rev. P. Holtvlüwer accepted the call extended to him by the church at Tintern, (2) the church at Smithville has extended a call to Rev. J. Louwerse of Neerlandia, (3) Rev. R. Schouten is under doctors care after having been diagnosed with colon cancer, (4) the church at Lincoln can commemorate forty years since its institution, and (5) the church at Bluebell can commemorate twenty-five years since joining the federation of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

After the adoption of the agenda, Rev. K. Kok asked the delegates the questions of Article 44, C.O. The delegates answered that the churches do maintain the ministry of the offices and uphold the decisions of the major assemblies. In closed session, advice was given in a matter of discipline. The church at Smithville asked for and received pulpit supply once a month.

With proper documentation from Rev. P. Holtvlüwer and from the church at Carmen East and from the church at Tintern and from Classis Manitoba September 2010, Classis could approbate the call of Tintern to the Rev. Holtvlüwer. Installation will be October 17, 2010 D.V.

Classis received correspondence in which greetings were given from Rev. Doug Bylsma of the OPC in Beamsville, ON. Classis also received a letter from the church at Grassie, who have been appointed to supervise a Federational Fund for Needy Students. Classis instructed the Committee for the Fund for Needy Students for the churches of Classis Niagara to make the transition to the Federational Fund, after which the Committee will be discharged of its mandate.

The church visitation reports of 2010 were read. All the churches of Classis were visited. In addition, the report of the visit made to the church in Attercliffe in 2009 was read. The reports outlined many reasons for thankfulness as the churches seek to remain faithful to Christ their head.

Classis received the report of the treasurer. The churches of Classis Niagara will be assessed \$2.00 per communicant member for the coming year (2011) for classis expenses. Classis also received the report of the church at Grassie that the books of the treasurer are in good order. The treasurer was thanked for his work.

The Committee for the Fund for Needy Churches submitted its report. The churches will be assessed \$47.00 per communicant member for the coming year (2011).

The following appointments were made. The Church at Smithville will be the convening church for the next Classis Niagara on December 15, 2010. The suggested officers are: Rev. S. C. VanDam as chair, Rev. J. Huijgen as vice-chair, and Rev. K. Kok as clerk. Smithville was asked to invite fraternal delegates from the OPC, URCNA, and RCUS and a fraternal observer from the FRCNA. Rev. K. Kok and Rev. J. Huijgen were reappointed as church visitors, with Rev. D. Wynia as alternate. Rev. K. Kok and Rev. J. Huijgen were reappointed as deputies for examinations. Br. D. VanAmerongen was reappointed as treasurer. Rev. K. Kok will visit the upcoming Classis Southern Ontario of the URCNA. Rev. D. de Boer and Rev. J. Huijgen were appointed as delegates to Regional Synod, November 10, 2010, with Rev. D. Wynia as first alternate and Rev. K. Kok as second alternate. Brs. L. Kingma and J. Van Zanten were appointed as delegates to Regional Synod, with Br. D. Bratcher as first alternate and Br. G. Alkema as second alternate. The church at Lincoln was appointed to represent the churches of Classis Niagara at the installation of Rev. P. Holtvlüwer in Tintern on October 17, 2010.

After Question Period was made use of, Rev. K. Kok judged that there was no need for censure according to Article 34, C.O. The Acts were read and adopted. The Press Release was approved for publication. Rev. K. Kok read Psalm 46 and asked the brothers to sing Psalm 92:1, 2, and 3. Rev. Kok gave thanks in prayer and declared Classis finished.

*Vice-chair at the time,
D. de Boer*

Press Release of Classis Pacific West of the Canadian Reformed Churches meeting of October 5, 2010 at Willoughby, BC

Classis was opened by Rev. J. Slaa of Smithers, BC, the convening church of Classis. Classis sang Psalm 147:1 and 4 and Rev. Slaa read Genesis 8:20-22, reflecting on the faithfulness of the Lord in restoring life even in the face of death. Rev. Slaa remembered the illness of Rev. R. Schouten, and the difficulty this is on him, his wife and family, and the Aldergrove church. He also noted with thankfulness that Rev. T. VanRaalte and his wife received a new child from the Lord. As well, the installation of two new professors, Drs. Smith and VanVliet, to the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary were noted. These matters were remembered in opening prayer.

Credentials and the attendance list were reviewed by the delegates of the church at Langley and found to be in good order. Then the executive of Classis was appointed: Rev. T. Lodder as chairman, Rev. R. deJonge as vice-chairman, and Rev. T. VanRaalte as clerk.

The proposed agenda was adopted.

Correspondence was received from Covenant Canadian Reformed Church of Grassie concerning the

Needy Student Fund and from the Canadian Reformed Church of Houston concerning a matter of discipline.

Classis then received the report from the Committee for Theological Students and read the aforementioned letter from the church of Grassie. The committee will fulfill the requests of the church of Grassie and provide a proposal to the next classis concerning the future of this committee. Following this the Classis received the report from the Committee for Financial Aid to Needy Churches with thankfulness.

Question period according to Article 44 of the Church Order was held. Advice was given in closed session to two churches in matters of discipline.

The convening church for the next classis will be Surrey Maranatha, on Tuesday December 7, 2010 at 9:00, with April 5, 2011 being the alternate date. The suggested officers for the next classis, according to rotation, are Rev. J. Visscher as chairman, Rev. T. VanRaalte as vice chairman, and Rev. H. Alkema as clerk.

Personal question period was utilized. The chairman, Rev. Lodder deemed that censure according to Article 34 of the Church Order was not necessary. After the adoption of the acts and press release, the chairman led in prayer and closed the meeting.

*For the classis,
R. deJonge, vice chairman at that time*



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

BIRTHS

The steadfast words God did command A thousand generations stand. Psalm 105:3, BoP

With thankfulness to the Lord we announce the birth of our fifth child and first daughter

SOPHY CATHARINA MARIA

Born on October 10, 2010

Karlo and Annet Janssen

Roy, Yannick, Kylian, Nyls

34678 4th Avenue, Abbotsford, BC V2S 8B9

Give thanks to the LORD, call on His name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to Him, sing praise to Him; tell of all His wonderful acts. Psalm 105:1, 2

We give thanks to this LORD who has blessed us with another covenant child to care for and raise in the riches of His promises.

JAMES JERRY

Born on October 15th, 2010 to

John and Hanna Bruning (nee Hutten)

Esther, Luke

18 Alice Road, Cardup 6122, Western Australia