

# Clarion



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- *Church Discipline*
- *Food and Holiness*







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# Church Discipline

*If we do not discipline ourselves, others must do this, and if we still do not listen, the church becomes responsible*

Uh, oh, wrong topic. Who wants to hear about *discipline* nowadays? Perhaps Klaas is having a bad day. Still, it is good when we remind ourselves that discipline is required. The exercising of church discipline is one of the three marks of the church, as we fondly say. Lately I read more often that church discipline is lacking in some Reformed churches. Is this really so?

For many years I have taught catechism students that there are three kinds of discipline, and we only meet the next kind if we neglect the former. Not hard to remember. What are the three kinds of discipline? Memorize.

## Three kinds of discipline

First, there is *self-discipline*. No one can really tell us what to do if we are not willing to do so ourselves. This is what the Apostle Paul means when he writes, "But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment" (1 Cor 11:31). This judging of *ourselves* is a matter of self-discipline.

Then there is *mutual* discipline. If we will not discipline ourselves, then *others* have to discipline us. This is the duty we owe each other as believers, as brothers and sisters in Christ. We are to admonish a sinner in love, and if he/she will not listen, we are to take along witnesses. The Lord Jesus speaks of this mutual discipline in Matthew 18:16.

Finally, there is *church* discipline. We read about this also in Matthew 18, when the Lord Jesus exhorts us to involve *the church* ("tell it to the church"), which must excommunicate a sinner if there is no repentance. This is the last phase of discipline which is only applied when the other phases have led to no positive result.

If we do not discipline ourselves, others must do this, and if we still do not listen, the church becomes responsible. It is clear, then, that before someone

is excommunicated, a patient path of longsuffering love has been followed and the refusal to repent has become very clear and obvious. No one is simply excommunicated bang-boom in a few short days. It often takes a long time and it needs to take its time before the end has come. Every opportunity and petition for repentance must be given.

Why this emphasis on discipline? "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline," says the Lord Jesus (Rev 3:19). The only proper motive for discipline is love. It would be a sign of sinful indifference and lack of love if we let a sinner go to his doom without admonition. We find the same emphasis in the book of Proverbs, "He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him" (15:24). Klaas is still having a good day. A church without discipline is a church without love. Who wants to be a member of such a church?

## Don't start what you can't finish

Now and then at the start of a process of church discipline, I have reminded my elders that they must not start what they can't finish. Whazzat? It is very tempting to start something without taking into account what the possible *ending* could be. We need to be very clear on this. Otherwise church discipline becomes a laughable joke.

To make it very clear and concrete, if there is no repentance, excommunication must follow. And this repentance is not a matter of a few words. Repentance always becomes visible in amendment of life. We actually have this in our catechism, "...the Christian church is duty-bound to exclude [such persons] by the keys of the kingdom of heaven *until they amend their lives*" (LD 30, Q/A 82).

Unless and until there is repentance of heart and amendment of life, church discipline will continue until



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it finds its fulfillment of love in excommunication. I said to my elders, "Don't start if you are not prepared to see this through to the final end." We pray that this end may be the restoration of a sinner.

Why is this so important? Because, humanly speaking, the way of discipline is too weary and too hard. We tend to give up and give in. That's life. Our patience can be sorely tried. We hate to be forceful and firm. We have this problem with discipline. It makes us so terribly. . . tired. Klaas is still having a good day, but he's getting tired. . . . Fatigue is lethal for all kinds of discipline. Remember the three kinds? Memorize, again.

I have seen some of this fatigue in my day and in my life. Sometimes I see it also in my church. I fully understand that it is not "my church," and that is precisely why there may not be any discipline-fatigue. Ask yourself this question: does my church show any discipline-fatigue?

**What's Inside**

Issue 2 begins with an editorial from Rev. Klaas Stam on discipline. Three forms of discipline are outlined and discussed: self-discipline, mutual discipline, and church discipline.

Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer concludes his three-part series on the Jubilee Woman. How do we find freedom from the opinions of others, freedom from false guilt, freedom from pressure? This series will resonate with wives and mothers in every situation.

Rev. Eric Kampen once again contributes an article of a church historical nature, this time on the question of where the Bible came from. How did the Bible, the books that are included and the books that are not included, come to be?

From the federation we have news of a church building grand opening for Winnipeg's Grace Canadian Reformed Church. There is also the Fiftieth Women's League Day Report from Ontario, where Rev. Holtvlüwer's Jubilee Woman speech was originally given.

Issue 2 also brings the readers a Treasures New and Old meditation, a book review, letters to the editor, and a press release.

Laura Veenendaal



All this does not mean that church discipline is a free-for-all. Please. I confess that sometimes it is wrongly exercised. I have been guilty of this. That is why our church order has built-in safeguards. That is also why the exercising of discipline is a shared responsibility. That is not now the point. The point now is that if discipline is properly begun it must be properly completed. Otherwise we make a mockery out of the love of Christ.

### **A word to the wise**

The church of Christ has three marks. Without neglecting the other two marks, the third mark is the most decisive because it is the fruit of the combined weight of the others. Should church discipline ever be used against us, let us humble ourselves and listen to the loving voice of the Lord.

When church discipline is exercised, the recipient(s) tend to stiffen the neck and offer immediate resistance. That is a normal human reaction. It is also a sinful reaction. Instead we should sincerely ask: what shall I do to have this burden lifted off me?

Sometimes we think that we are already living in "the last days." Older people tend to think in this way. Klaas is getting older, too. Let us remember, then, how people are characterized in the last days, "...lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control..." (2 Tim 3:1-5). In the last days the third mark of the church will be sorely missing. Is this not a word to the wise?

Let us always be prepared to discipline ourselves, to listen to fellow-members of Christ's church, and especially to heed the discipline of the church. Memorize. Again.





MATTHEW 13:52

# Food and Holiness

*"Do not eat any detestable thing." (Deuteronomy 14:3)*

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One of the more daunting tasks in Bible reading comes with the sections called "Sundry Laws." You're prepared for a section that jumps from one thing to another, none of which seems edifying. Of course, you know it's Scripture and therefore profitable. The longest Psalm is an elaborate song of praise for God's saving wisdom in the Law. Still, reading about what you're supposed to do if a gecko falls into your cistern (Lev 11:29-38) does not seem, well, very spiritual.

What are we to make of the seemingly odd amalgamation of instructions in Deuteronomy 14:1-21? Remember that Deuteronomy 6-26 is Moses' "sermon" on the Ten Commandments, and chapter 14:1-21 deals with the third commandment. It focuses on the character of those who bear Yahweh's name. Moses begins by reminding them that "you are sons of Yahweh your God." Because of this, when mourning they are not to cut themselves or shave their foreheads on account of the dead. Such defilements were designed to identify the mourner symbolically with the dead, but Israel was to be identified with Yahweh's life. They could tear their garments, but not their flesh; they could loosen their hair, but not shave it. The priests were even more restricted in their mourning, with the High Priest the most restricted of all. Israel is reminded that they are a nation of priests. They were to maintain life in the face of death. They were people whom Yahweh had chosen and set apart from the other nations.

After this come laws about clean and unclean food? This strikes us as a bit odd. What does this have to do with the third commandment?

What are clean and unclean laws all about? In Leviticus 11-16, it's clear that clean and unclean laws are about access to the sanctuary. The person who is unclean isn't allowed to draw near in sacrificial worship. This means that the food laws aren't health laws. Noah knew the distinction between clean and unclean animals (Gen 7:2). When God gave Noah the right to eat of the animals, he didn't exclude the unclean (Gen 9:3). Abraham could've eaten ham all of his life. Moses' favorite dish could've been lobster – until he was eighty years old, that is. If health was the concern, would not the unclean animals have been precluded for Noah, Abraham, and the rest? Yes, you can get ill from improperly prepared pork, but you can get just as ill from improperly prepared chicken, a clean bird. There's nothing innately defiling about eating the flesh of unclean animals.

What's going on here? Leviticus 20:24-25 is Yahweh's own commentary on the food laws. As Israel had been separated from the nations, so Israel was to make a distinction between clean and unclean animals. Symbolically, eating unclean animals represents joining yourself to the way of life of the unbelieving nations. But Israel was holy to Yahweh, and they were not to join themselves to those who were spiritually dead. Israel shows this in how they mourn and in what they eat.

Animals that walk in the dust without the raised, split hooves are like the serpent who was cursed to crawl through the dust. Animals that don't chew the cud are like Adam who seized God's

gift, instead of waiting for God to bless. (It's interesting that there are four "counterfeit" clean animals, three which chew the cud, but don't have split hooves and one which has a split hoof, but doesn't chew the cud. Israel may not even touch their carcasses, since they represent those who would lead them astray.) Similarly, the sea represents the nations (Ps 65:7) and the clean fish that move through it must have the symbolic protection of scales. The unclean birds seem to be associated with nighttime or the desert wilderness, that is, associated with darkness, away from the land. None of this is explicitly set forth, but as you look at the context and reflect on these laws, their general contours become clear.

Yet all of this may seem far removed from us. In Mark 7, Jesus declared all foods clean. Is not Deuteronomy 14 just so much dead letter? No, Jesus isn't repudiating the Old Testament Law, but fulfilling it; he is rejecting the demonic oral law. The Jews had forgotten the meaning of the Law and had turned it into works. The Law points to Christ, but the satanic purpose is to obscure this revelation. The laws of clean and unclean show what is in us: our sin, the old man in Adam. Adam was defiled and cast out because he allied himself with the serpent. The answer is in the meaning of the Law: Jesus Christ. In him, we have been chosen, made holy, and given access to the Father. This also means that in Christ, we are to be separated from unbelievers both in conduct and confession. We are to carry Christ's name in strength and not in vanity. C



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# Jubilee Woman (Part 3 of 3)

*What follows is the final of three instalments of a speech given to the sisters gathered at the 50th annual Ontario Women's League Day hosted by the Spring Creek congregation on October 19, 2011.*

## Free from opinions

Freedom from worldly views also means that you should not be curtailed by the opinion of fellow sisters in the church. I stress the word "opinion" because there's a difference between the biblical norms and commands of God on the one hand, which are upheld by the church and rightfully expected of everyone, also the sisters. We do need to watch over each other and gently be our sister's keeper, holding each other accountable to God's Word. But on the other hand, over time and with the development of customs and practices and ways of doing things, strong expectations can take shape that are not based on Christ's commands but on *human opinion*. And when people are not allowed to deviate from those human expectations, then that's a form of oppression we must take our stand against as well.

## Compassion, not competition

You'll know it's a form of oppression because inside you feel afraid of it. You'll have a great desire to conform so that you will find acceptance and favour and maybe even commendation from your fellow sisters in Christ. But sisters, Christ has come to cast out fear of punishment, to fill our hearts with peace and contentment. He did not shed his blood so that I could be yoked under a new form of fear, so that I have to imagine what those 200 sets of eyes see when they look at me and what their opinion is of my looks, my kids, my husband, my family. He did not put us together in the church so that we would compete with each other for the perfect-wife-of-the-year award, the best-mom-of-the-congregation badge, or the most-together, helpful and good-looking sister-in-the church prize! He put us

together so that we could serve one another as each of us strives to serve Christ. So that we could love each other out of a tireless love for our Saviour. He put us here not to ramp up pressure on each other but to be part of community of contentment, a society of solace, a people of peace.

## Finding freedom

We must be deliberate and conscious about this in order to over-come it, because it is so subtle. Ask yourself before you go to church Sunday morning: what does my Lord and Saviour ask of me on this day? What does he want from me as a woman? As a wife and mother? What does he want from my children? Why am I putting on this dress and why do I want my kids looking like this – is it to impress my church friends or is it to honour my Lord?

Ever notice how much tension is in the air in our homes when we are rushing the kids and ourselves to get dressed up? We have to herd them along like cattle and not one hair can be out of place. . . and by the time we get to the van the parents are frazzled and the kids are grumpy.

That is not freedom. And the Jubilee woman may say: *I will not bow down to the idol of vanity*. Also on Sunday mornings, I will take up my cross and stand under the yoke of Jesus Christ. I am free to prepare my family for a joyful day of worshipping our Saviour. I'll do my best to prepare their hearts and their bodies so that they come ready to sing God's praises and listen to his Word. I'll concentrate on reducing the tensions at home and increasing the wondrous expectation of meeting with our covenant God. I'll give more time to have breakfast, play some CDs of David's psalms or church hymns, and speak about what's coming in church that day. I'll be sure to have them looking respectable for the Lord's sake but most of all I will model and teach them to anticipate the Lord's Day and church worship with eagerness! That is the freedom for which Christ has set us free!



## Balancing commitments

Before you volunteer or sign-on to every church or school or community committee, consider what priorities the Lord Jesus places upon you. Are you able to look after the needs of your husband, children, and family in general? Are you able to make time to meditate on God's Word and pray? Christ gives us rest, remember – spiritual rest, to be sure, but that includes also sufficient physical rest in life. He calls no one to a frenetic life. Of course, we should be living members in the church and active citizens in our communities, but it must be in balance with being faithful wives and mothers at home while finding time to commune with our Saviour as his daughter.

And as for keeping up with the Jones in order to fit in and belong, let's remember that we *already* belong – to Christ and to his church! Our identity does not hinge on whether we are up to date with the latest sit-coms, movies, books, iPods, iPhones, or Wii games; or whether we frequent acceptable restaurants and go south for vacations – we already have pre-paid access to paradise through the precious blood of the Lamb of God!

Again, none of these things in themselves is ungodly, but it's what's driving us to get these things that's often the problem. We need to slow down and consider *why* we're buying *what* we're buying, and *why* we're going *where* we're going, and do not let ourselves be bullied by what others are doing. *Their choices* are not your master – *Christ is!* Sharing in their cultural habits does not give you acceptance – the cross of Jesus alone does! Being thought well of by your peers – even your church peers – does not make you belong or define your identity in the only place that it counts – in God's kingdom. Christ has established your identity there and even given you a new name: Jubilee woman! So *be what you are!* Become her more and more!

## Guilty or not?

There's another burden I see among church ladies that may not be obvious at first and that's the burden of false guilt. It is its own kind of pressure but with a moral side to it. We often mistake false guilt for true guilt which is why it is a sneaky and difficult form of oppression. But the two can be told apart. True guilt occurs when we have violated one of God's commands – when we have sinned against the Lord. By contrast, false guilt occurs when we have violated some merely human precept or expectation. The difficulty is that they can *feel* the same. It doesn't take much to berate

ourselves for doing something wrong before God when in fact all we have done is let down another human's expectation. And living with false guilt is oppressive.

Let me give an example. As a mother you wish to provide well for your children, to train them and equip them to live as God's children in the midst of an ungodly world. You want them to be successful in life, to be well-rounded, solid Christian men and women when they grow up. So you send them to the Christian school and you sign them up for piano lessons. And then you hear about *taekwondo* being offered and your son is interested but he'd also like to play hockey. And your daughter wouldn't mind to take figure skating this winter and an art class every second Saturday.

And as your family expands, these interests and expectations expand with them but you remain only one mother with only so much time and so much money and you begin to feel guilty that you can't do for your kids all that you should be doing. You see your friend has her kids enrolled in more of these things and that makes you feel more uptight about it. Maybe your own kids start to rub it in by mentioning that their friends do this and they have this at their house (while they go without) – the implication being you're not being a good mom. And so you stew over it and worry and wonder whether you're just a selfish person who is holding back on her children.

## False guilt at home

All of that, dear sisters, is false guilt. Jesus Christ does not ask you to give your child every opportunity or even most extra-curricular things, nor does he demand that you spread yourself so thin you have nothing left to give your husband or the church. He brought Israel up out of Egypt to give them *rest* from their enemies in the land of Canaan, remember? Running yourself ragged is like going back to Egypt. And even for the children who, in their immaturity, think it will be good for them, having so much of their time spent in organized learning environments can become an oppression too. Down-time, alone-time, meditation-time are necessary and beneficial for children too.

Instead, the LORD asks you to raise your kids in a God-fearing way, to teach them about their covenant God, his salvation, his promises, his obligations. They don't need so-called every opportunity to expand their potential but what they need from you is every consideration to ground their thinking, their attitude and their world-view in the covenant of God's love.

They need to understand the Jubilee for themselves, to see what a God-directed, balanced and *rest-ful* life looks like and feels like. If you run around like a headless chicken now, you'll only teach them to do the same later.

### **False guilt elsewhere**

False guilt can come also from siblings or parents or even adult children who place upon you their own expectations and make you feel bad if you don't live up to them. Quite often they are pre-occupied with their own situations – maybe they've had some misfortune in life and look to you for some relief or comfort. They can be consumed by their own circumstances to the point where they are almost blind to your circumstances and particularly your calling from God as a wife and mother or sister in the congregation.

*Strong expectations can take shape that are not based on Christ's commands but on human opinion*

And so the pressure mounts, for example, from aging parents who would like more visits or from siblings who want you to call more than you do. Or from an adult child with health or life problems who expects you to be around doing things all the time. Loneliness or perhaps a feeling of helplessness might compel them to seek your companionship often and when you don't meet their expectation then little comments are made or the tone of voice or change of facial expression makes it clear that they are hurt and disappointed. And so you go home or hang up the phone racked with guilt and wondering whether you're being selfish but not knowing how to give more because you have a family of your own to maintain or you just don't have more to give. You might even get a little angry and bitter because they don't seem to understand *your* needs and your other responsibilities.

### **Christ is judge**

This is often a difficult and sensitive matter and yet it is possible to distinguish right from wrong when you remember that your judge is not your family member but your Saviour in heaven is! You must do right *in his* eyes and to do that you must keep in mind his calling and his commands. Certainly you have an obligation to aging parents and needy siblings but if you are married, your *first* obligation lies with your husband

and children. Christ redeemed marriage so that it can function as intended at creation, as a new family unit under God. And if you are single, then you also have the obligation to provide for yourself, commune with your God and serve in the church, all of which takes time and energy.

So you have to ask yourself: am I treating my parent, my sibling, my friend (even) in a way that pleases God? Am I doing right in the eyes of the Lord? Your loved one may be disappointed in you but is God disappointed in you? If you are trying to be a faithful daughter of your heavenly Father then chances are you do visit your Mom or Dad or sibling regularly, you do think of them and phone them periodically, you do remember to pray for them. Sometimes in their trying circumstances they give you the feeling that it is never enough and, without realizing it, they add to your burden. But the truth is, they may be asking more of you than the Lord does, and it's that oppression from false guilt from which the Lord sets us free. Be honest before God, manage all your callings according to the priority he assigns, and live free from judgments based on human opinion.

### **Jubilee woman**

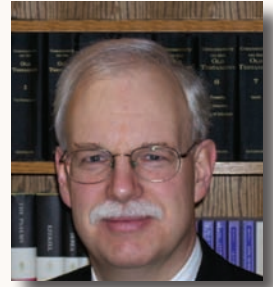
By now, dear sisters, you have begun to see the Jubilee woman. She is free – from the inside out. She knows peace in her heart, a freedom from the true guilt of her sins in Christ Jesus. And so she won't be sucked into the mud of false guilt or the vortex of communal pressure brought on by mere human expectations. She knows who she is: a simple child of the Lord, loved by her Father in heaven for the sake of the Son. Not precious in herself but precious in Christ.

She has a calmness about her and knows times of tranquility on a daily basis. Each morning she swings her legs out of bed and realizes that she lives ultimately for an audience of One – her Lord in heaven! It's his opinion that concerns her most and she will always inquire: what does my Lord ask of me? And she will daily pray: Father, preserve me in the freedom for which your Son has bought me!

In her freedom she refuses to become caught up in the rat-race of this world. If she's received the gift of marriage and children then she makes choices – together with her husband – to keep herself and her family in the peace of Christ as much as possible. Happily productive as a housewife, mother, and sister in the church, she finds room to breathe and rest, spiritually and physically, knowing that it is for freedom that Christ has set her free!







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# How Did We Get the Bible?

## A worthwhile question

The book that stands at the centre of our lives as Christians is the Bible. In the Belgic Confession, we confess that God “makes himself more clearly and fully known to us by his holy and divine Word, as far as is necessary for us in this life, to his glory and our salvation” (Art. 2). Further, we confess that “this Word of God did not come by the impulse of man, but that men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Spirit. . . therefore we call such writings holy and divine Scriptures” (Art. 3). Article 4 then gives a list of the sixty-six books we accept as canonical, that is, authoritative. We confess in Article 5 that we receive these books “for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith.”

Having grown up in a setting where the Bible is so central, the thought may never cross our mind as to how we got the Bible. It would seem to be self-evident. We should realize, however, that it is not self-evident. We see this, for example, in the way the Belgic Confession takes the time to list the books considered the Word of God in contrast to the apocryphal books. We also may come across people who question why we don't accept, for example, a book called “The gospel of Thomas.” We also will come across people who claim to accept the Bible but then have additional books, like the Book of Mormon. What are we to make of those who claim God speaks to them today?

For the answer as to how we got the Bible we need to turn to the early centuries of the Christian Church. A review of events at that time will give us an understanding of why only the sixty-six books of the Bible are called God's Word.

## The Bible during the time of the Lord Jesus and the apostles

While we are used to the term Bible, this is not a term found in the Bible itself. The word “bible” comes

from the Greek word for books. The term Bible indicates that it is a collection of books. The name “Holy Bible” indicates this is a small library from God. Terms we come across in the Bible are “the Scriptures” and “holy Scripture” (e.g. Luke 24:27; John 6:39; 2 Tim 3:15, 16).

It only takes brief reflection to realize that the mention of the Scriptures in the New Testament refers to what we call the Old Testament. The New Testament did not yet exist. The Jews referred to these Scriptures according to the three main sections. The first part was referred to as the Law (Torah) of Moses, as Moses wrote the first five books. The second part was referred to as the Prophets. This included the books from Joshua to Kings, as these were seen to contain prophetic explanations of the history of Israel. The third part was called the Writings. Often this was called by the largest book in this section, the Book of Psalms (see Luke 16:31; 24:27, 44). This covered all the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament. We don't know at what time in history this list of books was established. It must have been well before 200 BC, as these books were translated into Greek, in what has become known as the Septuagint because it was the work of some seventy translators.

The early Christian church simply accepted these Scriptures. This is not surprising in light of the fact that the coming of the Lord Jesus was the fulfillment of the Scriptures. Our Lord said this specifically on various occasions. It is also shown in the gospel accounts as events in the life of the Lord Jesus are said to be fulfillment of various prophecies. It was a characteristic of gospel preaching to show from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ (e.g., Acts 18:28).

As for the books of what we call the New Testament, we have only one passing reference to at least some parts gaining the same status as the Old Testament Scriptures. This is found in 2 Peter 3:16, where Peter refers to the writings of “our dear brother Paul.” Peter states that Paul's “letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable

people distort, as they do the other Scriptures. . . .” This reference is significant. It shows us that the apostles did not deliberately set out to produce writings of equal value to the Scriptures. Rather, it was the case that their writings gained respect and status equal to that of the Old Testament Scriptures. The church recognized that, while the writings of the apostles were truly human writings, in the end “men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:21).

Peter’s reference to Paul’s letters indicates that the churches had begun to share the various letters. There is even a specific instruction to do so at the end of the letter to the Colossians. We read in Colossians 4:16, “After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.” The existence of many manuscripts is evidence that the writings of the apostles were copied and circulated. There is no evidence, however, that there was a complete list of books by the time the apostles passed away.

### **Controversy leads to a list**

The acceptance of the writings of the apostles is evidenced in the writings of the next generation of church leaders. These writings often quoted the different gospels and the letters of the apostles. Three of the early leaders of the church, Clement, Polycarp, and Ignatius, at one time or another refer to all the books of the New Testament with the exception of Mark, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and 2 Peter.

It was a series of controversies in the second century AD that stirred the development toward a specific list of what we call the New Testament. In the first place, there was the controversy around 140 AD caused by Marcion. He contrasted the God of the Old Testament to the Father who had sent Jesus into the world. He rejected the Old Testament as Holy Scripture. Of the New Testament books, he kept only edited versions of the gospel of Luke and the letters of Paul. Second, some years later, the church had to deal with Montanus. He taught that there was ongoing revelation, especially through him.

These two controversies led the churches to begin to make lists of books considered Holy Scripture. It began to write down a list in contrast to Marcion’s reduced list. In contrast to Montanus, who suggested that there was ongoing revelation from God, it also made a list to indicate that the age of writing Scriptures

had ended with the apostles. In other words, the Scriptures are a closed, completed book and not open ended.

One of the oldest lists that has been found is called The Muratorian Fragment. A copy of this list was discovered in a library in Milan around 1740 by a librarian called Muratori.<sup>1</sup> It is called a “fragment since it is missing the beginning. Its origin has been dated towards the end of the second century. It lists most of the New Testament books, giving a brief description of their contents. We see this, for example with respect to the gospels. Since the beginning of the document is missing, we do not read about Matthew and Mark. It begins with the gospel of Luke. It also includes an elaboration on the fact there are four of them. The fragment states,

The third book of the Gospel is that according to Luke. Luke, the well-known physician, after the ascension of Christ, when Paul had taken with him as one zealous for the law, composed it in his own name, according to [the general] belief. Yet he himself had not seen the Lord in the flesh; and therefore, as he was able to ascertain events, so indeed he begins to tell the story from the birth of John. The fourth of the Gospels is that of John, [one] of the disciples. . . . And so, though various elements may be taught in the individual books of the Gospels, nevertheless this makes no difference to the faith of believers, since by the one sovereign Spirit all things have been declared in all [the Gospels]: concerning the nativity, concerning the passion, concerning the resurrection, concerning life with his disciples, and concerning his twofold coming; the first in lowliness when he was despised, which has taken place, the second glorious in royal power, which is still in the future.

Certain books are rejected. For example, it mentions letters written to the Laodiceans and the Alexandrians forged in Paul’s name to further the heresy of Marcion. Various other writings are mentioned that may be read but should not be read publicly to the people in church, for they are not in the same category as the prophets or the writings of the apostles.

### **Completion of a process**

It would be another two hundred years after the controversies caused by Marcion and Montanus before the process of drawing up a list of books would be



completed. It was clear that the early church accepted only books from the age of the apostles. Most were written either by an apostle or one closely connected with an apostle (e.g., Luke and Paul; Mark and Peter).

In a letter of Athanasius, written in the year 367 AD, we have the earliest list of the twenty-seven books as we have them today.

It was at a council held in the North African city of Carthage in 397 AD that the church concluded a process of many centuries. It is to be noted that at this council it was more a matter of taking note of the books that had gained acceptance in the churches over the centuries rather than having to make a decision. This Council decreed that "aside from the canonical Scriptures nothing is to be read in church under the name of Divine Scriptures."

## Conclusion

The gradual process that led to the acceptance of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament shows the guiding of the Holy Spirit. The church found itself in possession of these writings. Over the centuries, these rose to the top and they stayed there. It was not so much a case that the church had to make a decision which books to accept but it simply had to take note of the books that the churches had been using over the centuries. This was already evident in the second century and was confirmed by developments over the next two centuries. In this respect, we can see a parallel to the books of the Old Testament. We never read of a decision to accept them. Rather, the church simply found itself in possession of these books.

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### *The Scriptures are a closed, completed book and not open ended*

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That the establishment of the canon of Scripture was guided by the Spirit is captured in Article 5 of the Belgic Confession. It is stated that "we believe without any doubt all things contained in them. . . especially because the Holy Spirit witnesses in our hearts that they are from God. . . ." The process by which the church received these books underlines it was not a matter of making a decision but a matter of taking inventory of what the Spirit had given to the church.



This historic review also helps us understand why we do not accept the apocryphal books. The fact the Belgic Confession had to spell this out was because over the centuries the church had allowed these books to gain status in the church and base certain doctrines on them (e.g. purgatory, the perpetual virginity of Mary)<sup>2</sup> even though they had clearly been rejected by the early church. The apocryphal books had already been rejected by the Jews in Old Testament times, as well as the early church.

Finally, the historic review also reinforces that the canon of Scripture is closed. When people today ask why we don't accept books like the gospel of Thomas, why we reject those who add to the Bible, such as the Mormons, or why we will not accept ongoing revelation of the Spirit, we can point to the way the Spirit guided the church through this process in the early centuries to the sixty-six books we have today. Only they "are holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith."

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<sup>1</sup> See: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/muratorian.html>

<sup>2</sup> See for example the Decisions of the Council of Trent concerning the Canonical Scriptures in P. Schaff, *Creeeds of Christendom*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 79-81.



# The Official Opening of the New Grace Canadian Reformed Church building

*How lovely is your dwelling  
place, O Lord Almighty! Psalm 84:1*

November 18, 2011 wasn't the first time the congregation of Winnipeg's Grace Canadian Reformed Church gathered in the new church building at 730 Pandora Avenue West. It certainly wouldn't be the last. But the evening of that Friday night was more special than usual because it was our church's official opening.

As members and guests streamed into the building and settled in the pews, the hum of people talking became louder and a muted sense of excitement filled the auditorium. Every now and then a positive comment about the slide show, displayed on the digital liturgy boards and showing images of the church's demolition and framing process, could be heard above the mingled voices.

## **The ceremonies start**

At 7:30 pm Mr. Bob Leach, our MC for the evening, began the opening ceremonies with a heartfelt welcome to everyone. "We have much cause for giving thanks and rejoicing this evening," he said after commenting on the beautiful and spacious facilities of the new church.



*The outside of the completed Grace church building*

"Working together on this project clearly brought an even greater unity in the congregation, and we can see our heavenly Father's hand also in this," Mr. Leach said before beginning to read the text for the evening, Psalm 84. A prayer of thankfulness followed and then members and guests sang Psalm 118:1, 6, 7, and 8.

## **The beginning of a new church building**

"It's been difficult to pinpoint a starting date for this project," said Mr. James Teitsma, when it was his turn to provide a brief history of the building of the new church. He was a member of the committee that

kept the congregation up-to-date on the building process and was also intimately involved in many aspects of the building process.

While there have been many church building and church renovating committees over the past decades, the Pandora church building is the result of plans that began in 2008. At first Grace Church looked into purchasing land within the city. "And it was a lot," said Mr. Teitsma with a chuckle.

The next idea was a three-phase plan that would see the renovation of the old church building, the building of a new manse, and the expansion of the existing church building, if enough money was raised.



"The deal was that if we could get \$575,000 in pledges, we could do all three," said Mr. Teitsma. "When all the pledges were in, we noted with thankfulness, and frankly a little surprise, that the congregation had exceeded that top line [\$575,000] by over \$200,000, which was truly a blessing."

In the spring of 2009 plans began to build a new manse, which was completed in December 2009. While the manse was being built, the City of Winnipeg began accepting "expressions of interest" for the District 4 Police and Fire Station building at 730 Pandora Avenue West. The station was moving to another location and the city wanted proposals for use of the building and two-acre property.

Grace Church Council appointed a committee to provide the city with a proposal under strict confidence, as per city guidelines. No one outside of council or the committee could know about the proposal.

"Frankly, there was some doubt, even among us, that we should make a submission," said Mr. Teitsma, "because what the city asked for was [proposals] for multi-family residential developments."

At the encouragement of City Councilor Russ Wyatt, also a guest at our official opening, Grace Church Council went ahead with an expression of interest.

"To our surprise," said Mr. Teitsma, "the city decided to rank our submission as the most interest to them, right at the top of their list."

After collecting input from Grace Church members, council decided to purchase and renovate the District 4 Police and Fire Station in May 2009. "Target date set by council for completion of this project was fall 2010," said Mr. Teitsma. "We obviously missed that date," he added with a laugh.

"We finally gained possession of this property [730 Pandora Avenue West] on Thanksgiving weekend, October 9, 2009," said Mr. Teitsma.

Demolition and recycling, done by volunteers, followed after hiring architects and other professionals. "We went through eight different proposed layouts,"



*Before renovation when the building was still the police station and fire hall*

said Mr. Teitsma referring to the interior and exterior church design, "before settling on the ninth."

"We were able to have our very first worship services in this building on Sunday, July 17, [2011]," said Mr. Teitsma.

He concluded his presentation by thanking God and the volunteers. "We couldn't have done all this work, as a committee, all by ourselves."

### **Volunteer thank-yous and viewpoints**

The opening ceremonies continued with a thank-you speech by Mrs. Ellen Shpak. Mrs. Shpak was one of the volunteer coordinators for the project.

"In whatever way you helped out, it could not have been done had you not been here," she said comparing all the dedicated volunteers to a clock that came with the building. The clock continued to work through even the most extreme conditions. "You were like that too," she said of the volunteers, "and we thank you."

While the volunteers often had to work in extreme conditions, there were some fun and entertaining moments too. Speeches by Mr. Rick Mostert (Construction and Tradepeople Coordinator) and Mrs. Linda VanderVegte (general volunteer) presented a lighter side to the volunteer experience that brought many smiles and laughs.



(L to R)

Clarence Jonker, Melville Buist, Colin VandenAkker

### The ceremonies continue

Grace Canadian Reformed Church was blessed to have a couple of dignitaries present at our opening ceremonies as well.

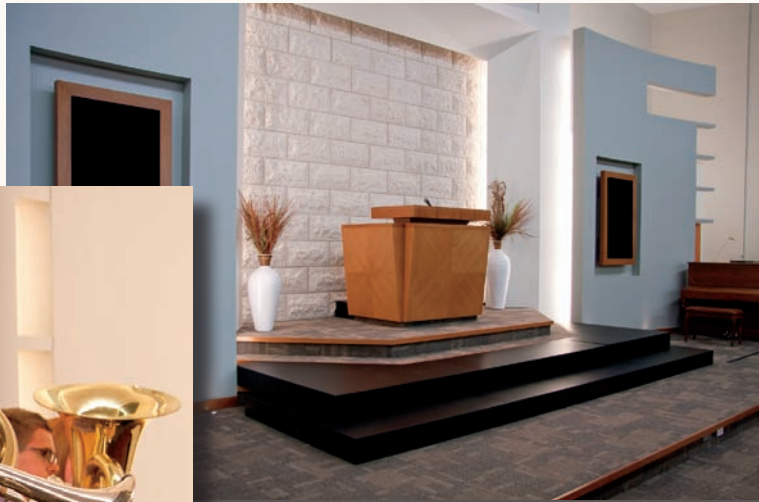
Mr. Lawrence Toet, MP, Elmwood-Transcona in Winnipeg, was one of those dignitaries. He is also a member of the Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church in Winnipeg. "May God bless the service in this building for many years to come," he said.

Mr. Russ Wyatt, City of Winnipeg councilor, was also able to attend. Although he has no connection to the Canadian Reformed Churches, or much of a connection to churches in general, Mr. Wyatt was an advocate for the building of our church when the original expression of interest was presented to the city.

"The love that comes from your congregation and the commitment that you give back to the community is something that we need in the city," said Mr. Wyatt. "And I want to thank you for your commitment and for everything that you're doing. May your church stand for a hundred years or more!"

When the dignitaries finished their speeches the choir, with band accompaniment, presented an earth-shaking, beautiful, roof-raising performance.

Following the performance, were official congratulations from our sister churches: Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church in Winnipeg, Providence



United Reformed Church in Winnipeg, Carman East Canadian Reformed Church, and Carman West Canadian Reformed Church.

Our minister, Rev. Rolf denHollander, closed the evening with prayer, and members and guests sang Psalm 150. The combined voices of all of us singing our thankful praises to God was thunderous, and an appropriate ending to the completion of our new church building.

*Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.  
Praise the Lord. Psalm 150:6*



Committee Leader Volunteers (L to R):  
Jack Toet, John Hoogerdijk, James Teitsma,  
Clarence Jonker, Rennie VanderVegte, Rick Mostert,  
Carolyn Versteeg, Ellen Shpak





# Fiftieth Annual League Day Report

On Wednesday, October 19, 2011, 402 ladies eagerly prepared themselves to make their way to Winona Vine Estates for our fiftieth annual league day.

Our League President, Jane Oosterhoff, brought us all to order and we began this day by glorifying God with our voices in singing Psalm 100:1-4, followed by prayer and the reading of God's Holy Word from Isaiah 61.

Jane welcomed us all to this Fiftieth League Day, a day where we can look back and celebrate the fifty years that God has allowed women in Ontario to meet together to learn more about him.

After several announcements and our traditional roll call (which showed that we had a sister in the Lord from the States visiting with us, three sisters from out west, and two from The Netherlands, as well as a few from the URC churches) we sang our League Song and then read Leviticus 25:1-13 and Luke 4:1-21

Jane introduced Rev. Holtvlüwer who then proceeded to speak to us on "Meet the Jubilee Woman!" Here follows a brief summary of his encouraging and biblical speech that we could all enjoy.

## Meet the Jubilee woman

We were introduced to a woman who suffers from modern day oppression. This woman is always on the run, meeting deadlines, meetings, church events. Mentally she is juggling many aspects, supporting husband, and on committees. The enemy isn't always so clear. But how can this woman be set free?

We know from the Bible that fifty is a significant number; it was the Year of Jubilee. This year was more than a physical rest; it was setting God's people free. The Year of Jubilee was to give hope, a new start, and restoration. Christ came to usher in the greatest jubilee ever. In Christ we are free. He made the one single payment for all, for all time. As Christians we do not have to toil under the curse any longer! We are the women of Jubilee. We have been set free in Christ. Every problem can be addressed. We need to identify the things that oppress us. Forms of oppression are the pressure to conform to women



in our society. Do we see careers as more important than motherhood and marriage? Society does not think much of homemakers and some of these concepts slip into church. Sometimes we feel the pressure from our own sisters in the Lord. Which one of us doesn't feel like we are being watched? There is a fear of what others are thinking about our behaviour (or that of our children) or our clothes. There is this constant pressure to keep up with the "van-Smiths!" Is this what the Lord wants for us? The pressure you feel due to opinions is a form of oppression from which Christ has set you free. The pressure you should feel is that from Christ in Scripture. He provides direction for healthy, satisfying, peaceful living. We should ask ourselves, "What does my Lord and Saviour want from me today?" "Why do I put this on. . . is it to impress others or to honour my Lord?" We need to take up our cross and stand under the yoke of Christ.

Rev. Holtvlüwer ended his speech beautifully explaining what the jubilee woman looks like. She has peace in her heart. She knows she is a child of God, precious in the eyes of Christ. There is calmness about her as she lives for the audience of the LORD, his concern, and his opinions! With that he ended his speech and Jane introduced the singing of Psalm 34:1. Julie deHaan opened with us for lunch which was thoroughly enjoyed. We began our afternoon by singing "O Canada." Jane closed lunch in prayer.



lady was even at the very first League Day. We had 4 generations represented at this League Day. And yes, we even had ladies that brought along their knitting or crocheting!

Then it was time for "A Call to Remember" by Erica Holtvlüwer. This was a brief speech stressing the fact that we are to remember what the Lord has promised and done for us and his people. He has given us his spirit to remind us. The things we are called to remember must be re-told. Do not long for a better yesterday but bring glory to God, a God who does not change, and who stands firm. For the past fifty years women have met together because they love God. They love to re-tell it and give God the glory. We have one short life to re-tell what God has done. Let us tell it often and tell it with joy!

To end our speeches Joyce Olij spoke on "Using our talents Face to Face." Here it was stressed that we are all talented. Each one is blessed with talents or gifts. We should not elevate any talents or activities. Working with hands and minds are always important. It also is important to pass on talents to someone else. Find time to spend time together face to face! This can be such a blessing. Seek after matters of the heart. We need to use talents and activities for his glory and for the benefit of our neighbour.

We then sang Hymn 66:1 and 3. Jane went over a few announcements and with thanksgiving was able to mention that we collected \$2116.99 for MERF. Spring Creek was thanked for all their hard work in bringing this day of celebration together. The pianist, Monica Oosterhoff, was also thanked for sharing her talents as were the babysitters.

Jane closed asking God to bless our homes, our walks, and our busy lives!

What a joy to be able to spend a day devoted to the study of the Lord and reflecting back on all that he has so richly blessed us, the women of his church. May we treasure these moments and meet again in a year. C

## Afternoon

Due to the fact this was our fifty-year celebration, the afternoon was ran a bit differently. We first enjoyed a musical skit by the Spring Creek Canadian Reformed Ladies that portrayed a Ladies Aid meeting fifty years ago ... and really how they are still ran today!

Then we all raised our voices to our faithful Father and sang Psalm 78:1 and 2 followed by Scripture reading. Jane Oosterhoff then introduced our three presenters for the afternoon.

Monica Oosterhoff gave us a bit of a history lesson, "Telling History and Loving it!" from our church and women's League Day. Did you know that for the first League Day ladies from the hosting church took ladies to their homes to serve them lunch? League Day is a good way to make sure that we tell the next generation about the glory of God. It is at League Day that we are able to have our relationship with the Lord enriched.

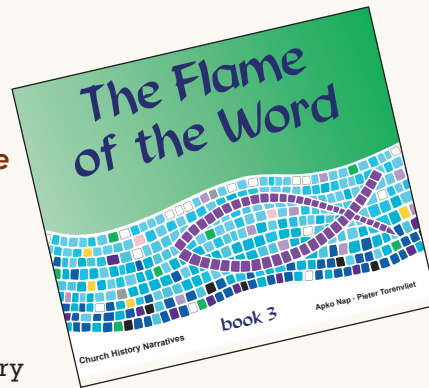
We also participated in a "Stand up and Be Counted," by Julie DeHaan. We were asked to stand up if a statement mentioned pertained to us. Through this and by watching who stood up we learned that no lady had attended every single League Day but some ladies had only missed one in the past fifty years. One





**Apko Nap, Pieter Torenvliet, *The Flame of the Word: Church History Narratives. Book 3***

**(Surrey: Reformed Curriculum Development Committee), 2010, 290 pp.**



The project is finished! With the publication of Book 3 (actually volume 4), an ambitious church history project launched some years ago has finally reached completion. Once again the main writers, Apko Nap and Pieter Torenvliet, two very experienced Reformed educators, ably assisted by a group of skilled editors, typesetters, illustrators, and printers, have managed to produce a superb textbook on church history. Indeed, one can notice that over the years their skills, as well as the skills of their helpers, have been honed to a keen edge. On almost every page this volume displays evidence of much thought, meticulous detail, and fine attention to the needs of students.

Using gripping narratives, the writers lead their students into a number of highly diverse, relevant, and modern subjects. Chapter 1 is all about how the gospel reached and spread into China. Attention is paid to Lao Tzu, Confucian, and Buddhist teachings, to early missionaries, Bible translation, and the impact of Communism. Chapter 2 introduces students to the First and Second Secession in The Netherlands, giving them worthy introductions to Hendrik de Cock and Abraham Kuyper. Chapter 3 deals with early immigration from The Netherlands to America and the church planting efforts of the Seceders under the leadership of Albertus van Raalte. Chapter 4 opens with a step way back in time to the Second Century and a presbyter by the name of Montanus, sometimes considered the father of the Pentecostal Movement.

Thereafter the book directs its attention at the rise of the Evangelical Movement and some of its leading figures (Charles Wesley, Charles Finney, Charles Spurgeon, Dwight Moody). Close scrutiny is given to the Second Great Awakening, revivals and revivalism, evangelistic campaigns, altar calls, and the role of hymns. Pentecostalism receives even closer scrutiny in chapter 6 under the heading of "You Also Need the Baptism with the Holy Spirit." Once again an interesting and thought-provoking narrative sets the stage for a closer look and evaluation of certain distinctive teachings, several main teachers and leaders (Parham and Seymour) and a founding event at Azusa Street. Chapter 7 continues to pay attention to the Holy Spirit directing special attention at the work of the Spirit in Old and New Testament, speaking in tongues, and miraculous healing. The rapid growth of this movement is also examined.

Chapter 8 picks up the thread of the Evangelical Movement and examines modern Calvinism, Billy Graham crusades, as well as the Mega Church development. Chapter 9 brings us back to the Reformed Churches and directs the attention of the students once more at Abraham Kuyper, and at such divergent subjects as worldview, baptism, and Americanization. It also addresses the rise and necessity of instituting Canadian Reformed Churches and what it means to be Reformed.

Finally, there is Chapter 10 and it stands apart from all of the previous chapters in that it is full of beautiful artistic renderings taken mostly from the Book of Revelation. The heading of this chapter also reveals its content: "The Path That Leads to Heaven."

I hope that this brief survey has whetted your appetite. More than any of the previous volumes in this series, this third Book interacts constantly with the modern religious world in which we live. If we and our children are to understand modern trends and developments, as well as to develop the critical tools that are needed to evaluate the world around us, then a study of the subjects contained in this book is crucial and critical.

Nap and Torenvliet have done us a real service by using the narrative approach, spiced with many colourful illustrations, charts and diagrams, to make church history come alive. In that sense this series called *The Flame of the Word* stands apart from all others. Indeed, it is hard to imagine a more engaging, interactive, and instructional approach to the teaching of church history. Together with their assistants, they have done a sterling job and leave us deeply in their debt.

Parents, here you have some great tools for teaching church history in the home. Teachers and educators, here you have some wonderful resources for the classroom. Be sure to have a good look at the extensive *Teacher's Manual* that accompanies the text. It furnishes you with a wealth of background material, with endless suggestions about how to teach each chapter, as well as with word searches, puzzles, charts, pictures, diagrams, and student exercises. It's a treasure trove.

Kudos to all involved in this wonderful project and thanks be to God for allowing it to be brought to completion.



## Letter to the Editor

We are grateful to Rev. Stam for bringing up the matter of paedocommunion, and in recognizing those issues which come up time and again. Hopefully this will mark the beginning of a more involved discussion, as this is sorely needed.

In this particular article, however, Rev. Stam paints with a broad brush when he generalizes concerning those in favor of paedocommunion. He puts them either in the "Gerber" camp (a touchy-feely approach to including children) or in the "ex opere operato" camp (Roman or Eastern Orthodox).

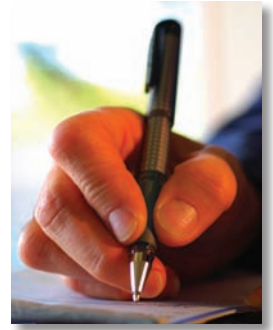
But the question is much more involved than this, on a theological and historical level. What does it mean for a child to be a member of Christ's body and to share in the blessings of the covenant? Why don't these blessings include being invited to the covenant meal? Is there a biblical distinction between inward and outward membership in the covenant? Why do we insist that our children do something first (profession) before they can receive God's grace given in the sacrament? Why was paedocommunion commended by church fathers such as Augustine? ("Yes, they're infants, but they are his members. They're infants, but they receive his sacraments. They are infants, but they share in his table, in order to have life in themselves.<sup>1</sup>") Did not Rome remove the sacrament from children (and the cup from the laity) as a result of a belief in transubstantiation? As a result of these questions, there is a third category of paedocommunionists, who are sincerely appealing to Scripture for the place of children at the Lord's Supper table.

There are other questions that arise from the article itself. Rev. Stam mentions that the only reason children are not allowed is because of what is said in 1 Corinthians 11. But this passage deals with an adult abuse of the sacrament (shunning the poorest members); should the exhortation be carried over to the context of children? As well, Rev. Stam makes the distinction between baptism and Lord's Supper saying that baptism is an initiation/admission to the covenant, and Lord's Supper is an ongoing nourishment. Do children not require nourishment even before they can articulate and explain their hunger? These are questions that paedocommunionists have been asking and could lead to much fruitful discussion.

Furthermore, there are a lot of practical questions about our practice as well. Do we not admit some of our special-needs brothers and sisters, whose ability to examine themselves is quite limited, even to the same level as a young child? Lastly, though faith-

filled partaking is certainly a requirement for nourishment even if not a qualification for coming, is our measurement of faith appropriate (ability to articulate faith), and does our standard exclude a child's faith? (i.e. "You made me trust when upon my mother's breasts" Psalm 22:9.)

Our concern is that Rev. Stam is not dealing with the paedocommunionist arguments and questions that have arisen among Reformed thinkers. It would be beneficial to have a more thorough discussion of all the concerns, rather than painting paedocommunionists into either the Roman or "fluffy evangelical" pale.



*In Christ,  
Raoul Kingma  
Jonathan Chase*

<sup>1</sup>Saint Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine*, trans. Edmund Hill, ed. John E. Rotelle, 11 vols. Part III-Sermons. (New Rochelle, New York: New City Press, 1992), 5:261).

## Response

Thank you for your letter. I appreciate it when there is some response. The main gist of the letter is that I have not interacted with the paedobaptists on a scriptural and historical level. Please keep in mind that I was interacting with two articles published in the Dutch magazine *De Reformatie* and not writing a general article on paedobaptism.

A key point seems to be the place of children in the church. Let me be clear on this. Children of believers are all *members of Christ's church*. Holy baptism seals and signifies that they belong to the church of the Lord. So this matter of belonging is not in question. The fact that infants do not (yet) receive the elements of the Lord's Supper does not affect their status as members of Christ's church.

There is no inner and outer covenant. There is only one covenant, God's covenant of love with believers and their children. All believers are invited to the Lord's Supper, but they must be able to take the bread and the cup "in remembrance of [Christ]" (1 Cor 11:24-26). The word "remembrance" involves deeper understanding and appreciation. In bread and wine the Lord comes to us on a different level than in baptism. Before partaking of this supper, Paul writes, "A man ought to examine himself." This should not be



restricted only to the situation in Corinth, but applies "to all the churches of the saints" (1 Cor 14:33).

The Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper explains that the required self-examination contains three parts. It means that we must carefully scrutinize our life. The outcome of self-examination should not be that we stay away, but that we come to the supper in the proper manner. I'd like to comment on this matter of self-examination further at another time because the letter writers refer to the admission of "special-needs" members. Then we can also take a closer look at "mother's breasts" (Ps 22).

The nourishment that the Lord's Supper provides is *spiritual*. It must be received in a spiritual manner, not by mouth but *by faith*. This has implications with respect to infants.

As far as the view of *Augustine* is concerned, consider the comments of John Calvin, "In the early Church, indeed the Lord's Supper was frequently given to infants, as appears from Cyprian and Augustine, but the practice justly became obsolete." Calvin, too, sees a clear difference between baptism and the supper. (Institutes, Vol. II, Beveridge, Eerdmans, p. 549 ff.) It is interesting to note that Calvin also writes with respect to the Passover (the precursor of the Lord's Supper) that it "did not admit all kinds of guests promiscuously, but was duly eaten only by those who were of an age sufficient to ask the meaning of it [Exodus 12: 26]".

As written, I hope to return to the important matter of self-examination another time, the Lord willing. For now, it's back to the paint brush.

KS

### Dear Editor:

I am pleased to see that a minister disagrees with women voting and has the courage to say so, even after the latest synodical decision. I very much enjoyed his article, but don't agree that this is an issue that we can disagree about. To have a belief that women should not vote, based on God's word, does not leave any room for disagreement. In addition to some fine points that were made (by Rev. Holtvlüwer), I would like to add something to the discussion.

First, the New Testament only reinforces what was clearly understood by the Jews in the Old Testament

times. Notice that the letter to the Hebrews did not contain "wives, be subject to your husbands." The Hebrews (Jewish converts) already understood this concept of male headship.

Women are to be in subjection to men at all times. Notice the word "submission" does not occur even once in the whole Bible. Women do not have a "sub"-mission. They have an equal mission, but in subjection. KJV says subjection. The root word is subject. I am a subject of Canada. I am not humiliated or put on a lower position by subjecting myself to the state. I do not feel like I need "liberation." Neither should women feel awkward in their subjection to their husbands. 1 Timothy 2:11, 1 Peter 3:4-6, and 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35 are just a few passages that should end the discussion. The only reason the discussion continues is because of new hermeneutics (hermeneutic is basically a method or principle of interpretation).

Secondly, the old hermeneutic expands the application of, and magnifies, the Holy Scriptures. The Heidelberg Catechism's application of the fifth commandment to "all in authority over me" is a good example of the old hermeneutic at work. More is understood and drawn out of the text than simply "father and mother." Or take, if you will, the fourth commandment: "that the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained." If all this is to be understood by "remember the Sabbath day. . ." (Exod 20:8), then what is concluded from the Bible when it says "women keep silence in the churches" (1 Cor 14:34). The old hermeneutic says women should not vote.

If the church allows women voting there needs to be a new hermeneutic. If we have a new hermeneutic, the confessions need a serious overhaul! The new hermeneutics, contrasted to the old, diminish the meaning and application of Scriptures. So which is right? Our confessions say the old hermeneutic is right.

"Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk therein'" (Jer 6:16).

*In Christ,  
Peter Van Iperen*

## Dear Editor,

I am referring to Marjory Korvemaker's article page 436 of your August 26 issue. She has found a way to bring a delicate subject to our attention, a subject which few ministers dare to touch.

I presume all of us have noticed forms of "worldliness" pop up within the church. It is one of many ways in which the evil one attacks God's children. Even when I was a boy I heard regular warnings, reminding us that, for the sake of our salvation, we may not ignore the "antithesis" between church and the world; warning us not to conform to the world, since this eventually deforms the church (Rom 12:2, 1 Pet1:14). History has proven that this is true. We therefore must learn from history, or we will unwittingly repeat it.

Our spiritual cousins in The Netherlands and Canada have tried to solve some of these issues in a legalistic way. But, apart from being wrong, it just does not work. For instance, banning the TV 100% is not the solution. Having a dress code for church is not good either. We obviously must draw a line in the sand somewhere, but the real problem is of course in man's heart. Only God's Word faithfully preached and applied in a sensitive but very specific way, Sunday after Sunday, will reach hearts. Tying in with the Korvemaker letter, a sermon on Lord's Day 41 could and should be specific. If time does not permit saying what needs to be said, why not make two sermons

for LD 41, and deal also with chastity? Chastity is, as we all know, what "modesty" in dress is all about. Some of our women seem to think that modesty is, for instance, about not wearing slacks in church. Wrong. We all know that fashions change constantly, only the Amish will deny this fact. It is about fashions *and* modesty, in church as well as on the street or on the beach. It is about how all of today's clothing, skirt, blouse, or slacks are made, how tight they fit, and how well they serve the main purposes of clothing that is to first of all to "cover" not to reveal. Of course clothing, especially for festive occasions and church services, ought to compliment the looks of the wearer; that is obvious. But cleavage and short skirts and tight slacks are not needed to accomplish this. Our pastors, who so faithfully bring us God's Word Sunday after Sunday, should not hesitate to be very specific in their sermons (and occasionally in their Sunday bulletin!), so that the congregation clearly knows what the Lord expects from his children – which is to avoid the dangers of worldliness, not just in clothing, but also in many other ways (use and misuse of TV and computer for instance). It must be done forcefully, convincingly, and with prayerful tact, which of course is not an easy task. But it can be and should be done. Let us not act as if we are defeated, we are not, we are more than conquerors.

Gerry Denbok  
Burlington

*Letters to the Editor should be written in a brotherly fashion in order to be considered for publication.  
Submissions need to be less than one page in length.*





**Press Release of Regional Synod West –  
October 31, 2011**

1. The chairman of the convening church (the Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church of Edmonton), called the meeting to order. He led in opening devotions with the reading of Romans 3:21-31 after which he asked the delegates to sing Hymn 53:1, 2. He then led the delegates in prayer in which he thanked the Lord for blessings poured out upon the churches of Western Canada and asked for the Lord's guidance in the work of Regional Synod. In his opening remarks, he noted a number of changes which have taken place in regard to ministerial status among the churches.
2. The credentials from Classis Pacific West, Classis Pacific East, Classis Alberta, and Classis Manitoba were examined and found to be in good order. Rev. W. Slomp was chosen as chairman, Rev. R. Schouten as vice-chairman, and Rev. D. Poppe as clerk. Classis was constituted. With a few minor additions, the provisional agenda previously submitted to the delegates was adopted.
3. A letter was received from the second clerk of General Synod 2010 informing Regional Synod of a decision of General Synod (Article 35) that "any overture adopted by a Regional Synod for submission to a General Synod should be distributed to all the churches no later than five months prior to the General Synod." The updated Guidelines for General Synod can be found in Appendix 11 of the Acts of General Synod.
4. A letter was received from the clerk of Classis Pacific East of March 2011 addressed to the convening church (the Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church of Edmonton). This letter informed the convening church that Classis Pacific East determined that the delegation to Regional Synod West 2010 (as appointed by a previous Classis Pacific East) does not stand for Regional Synod West 2011 since Article 44 of the Church Order specifies that "the last classis before Regional Synod shall choose the delegates to that Synod."
5. A letter was received from the Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church of Winnipeg expressing concern about the carry over of delegate to Regional Synod from the various classes in the case that Regional Synod is postponed. The letter points out that in many cases this carry-over procedure would result in delegates no longer being in office at the time they function as part of Regional Synod. The Redeemer church advises that a request be sent by the convening church to each classis to confirm or replace where necessary the delegates from their classis at the last classical meeting before Regional Synod.
6. A letter was received from Classis Manitoba of March 25, 2011 in which it reacts to the decision of the convening church to postpone rather than cancel Regional Synod 2010 and to carry over the delegations for Regional Synod 2010 to 2011. As in the letter from the Redeemer Church, concern is expressed that many of the delegates chosen for Regional Synod 2010 would not longer be in office by the time of Synod 2011. In response, Regional Synod judged that the convening church erred in postponing rather than cancelling Regional Synod 2010 and that it was correct for a subsequent Classis Manitoba to choose new delegates for Regional Synod.
7. An appeal was received from the consistory of the church at Cloverdale against a decision of Classis Pacific West of April 5, 2011. This appeal was not sustained.
8. A letter was received from the consistory of Cloverdale noting that an appeal to Regional Synod containing confidential material was distributed electronically rather than in multiple paper copies as required by the Regulations of Regional Synod. Regional Synod took note of this concern and recognized that the Regulations of Regional Synod likely need to be updated in light of electronic methods of communication.
9. Reports:
  - a. A Report was received from the Treasurer of Regional Synod indicating a bank balance of 13, 437.05. In regard to assessments, one church is in arrears in the amount of \$384.00.
  - b. A Report was received from the auditor of Regional Synod indicating that the Report of the Treasurer is considered accurate.
  - c. Reports were received from the deputies of Regional Synod regarding the peremptory examinations of Candidates Ryan Kampen, Arend Witten, and Anthony Roukema. In each case, the deputies report with gratitude that they gave concurring advice to the decisions of the respective classes meet to sustain the examinations.
  - d. A Report was received from the deputies of Regional Synod regarding the retirement of Rev. Tiggelaar indicating that they could concur with the decision of Classis Alberta to concur with the decision of the church at Barrhead to grant retirement to Rev. Tiggelaar due to age. The deputies also suggest that in the future Regional

Synod should instruct its deputies to be present at meetings of classis dealing with retirement only where difficulties might realistically be expected. They further suggest that where the retirement does not require the presence of deputies, pertinent documents can be sent to them for scrutiny and approval. Regional Synod decided that the deputies should have the discretion to determine whether or not their physical presence is required.

10. Appointments:

- a. Br. J. Moedt was reappointed as Treasurer of Regional Synod West.
- b. Kilometer reimbursement rate for delegates to this assembly was set at .45 per km. up to a maximum of the cost of an airline ticket from the delegate's home city.
- c. The church at Taber was reappointed to audit the books of the Treasurer of Regional Synod West.
- d. Deputies as per Article 48 of the Church Order:
  - i. For Classis Alberta: Aasman, Louwse (1st alternate); W. Slomp (2nd alternates).
  - ii. For Classis Manitoba: Dr. A.J. Pol; Rev. J. Poppe (1st alternate); Rev. R. J. den Hollander (2nd alternate).

- iii. For Classis Pacific East: Rev. W. Wielenga; Rev. R. Schouten (1st alternate); Rev. Karlo Janssen (2nd alternate).
- iv. For Classis Pacific West: Dr. J. Visscher; Rev. A. Souman (1st alternate); Rev. J.G. Slaa (2nd alternate).

- e. Church for the Archives of Regional Synod West: Edmonton Providence.
- f. Church for inspecting the Archives of Regional Synod West: Edmonton Immanuel.

- 11. Arrangements for the Next Synod: Convening Church: Langley; Date: November 5th, 2012 beginning at 7:30 p.m.
- 12. Question Period was held.
- 13. Censure ad Art. 34 C.O. was deemed unnecessary by the chairman.
- 14. The Acts were adopted and the *Press Release* was approved.
- 15. The chairman expressed gratitude to the convening church of Edmonton Immanuel for its work in preparing for Regional Synod and also to the church of Aldergrove for providing facilities and refreshments.
- 16. The vice-chairman led in closing prayer and Regional Synod was closed.



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

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*I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*  
*Psalm 139:14a*

We praise God for blessing us with another Covenant Child, we joyfully announce the birth of our second daughter

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**Richard and Brenda Hovius**

*Taylor, Braden and Ian*

10<sup>th</sup> grandchild for George(†) and Henny Bysterveld

23<sup>rd</sup> grandchild for Garry and Rita Hovius

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**OBITUARIES**

July 20, 1930, Roodeschool, Groningen

December 27, 2011, Burlington, Ontario

*The LORD is my Shepherd I shall not want. . . Psalm 23*

The Lord in His wisdom took home his child, our Mother, Oma and great-Oma

**FENNA ANJE NYENHUIS – nee Huisinga**

Mom was predeceased by her husband, Albertus Nyenhuis (1992)

She will be sadly missed by her children:

*Medford, MA:* Jenny and Hayo Jager

*Ottawa, ON:* Ellie and Peter Buist

*Midland, ON:* Yvonne and Brian Wilkins

John and Cheryl Nyenhuis

*Burlington, ON:* Judith and Edward Penny

and her 14 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren.

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