

Clarion

Numbers 10:1-10

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
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*Church discipline
is a mark of the
true church of Christ*



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- *Christ's High Priestly Blessing*





Rev. Klaas Stam is minister emeritus of the Canadian Reformed Church at Hamilton, Ontario
cstam@sourcecable.net

Church Discipline and Withdrawal

Does withdrawal as a member really end the process of church discipline?

I received a question concerning church discipline and withdrawal. Previously I wrote that when we commence church discipline, we must be prepared to face the ultimate consequence which is *excommunication*. If there is no repentance, the consistory must proceed to final censure. Once started, the process cannot be aborted except by repentance of sin and amendment of life.

A reader wrote me that it happens when church discipline is applied the person being disciplined *withdraws* from the church. The question is: does this withdrawal affect the process of discipline? Should the consistory then acquiesce in the matter, cease discipline, and inform the congregation of the new situation? Or should the consistory be so bold as to continue the steps of discipline?

This is not (yet) about *how* the consistory makes the announcement. That is a matter for a different article. The question is now: does withdrawal as a member really end the process of church discipline?

Different historical perspectives

It should be made clear that through the ages the churches have followed different practices. I mention this as a weak form of self-defence. Misery loves company, so if I take an erroneous route it is a route that others have taken before me. Small comfort, but a comfort nonetheless.

The letter-writer refers to the Dutch (Regional?) Synod of 1841 which stated that the old Synod of Dort (1618-1619) recognizes only excommunication as the one way to terminate membership and does not mention withdrawal. Actually the point is made that our Church Order nowhere even uses the word "withdrawal." The writer concludes that withdrawal during the process of excommunication is simply an attempt to *neutralize* the process of discipline.

I tend to agree with this assessment. Sometimes a withdrawal is used as an easy way to end the process of

discipline. After all, you cannot discipline a non-member, can you? Before a consistory can apply the final step of church discipline, this step is *pre-empted* by the member's withdrawal. I have found the step of withdrawal in this situation to be mostly one of convenience.

In the time of my active ministry I have only once experienced it that someone was properly *readmitted* to the church with the use of the adopted Form. Most colleagues have never had to use this Form. Is this because withdrawal has become the way to leave the church rather than to wait for the process of church discipline to come to its proper conclusion? Perhaps we must scuttle the Form for Readmission as one that has ceased to function. I am afraid that withdrawal has become the back door through which we easily slip out of the church.

Sign of the times?

Is it a sign of the times that people rather withdraw than be excommunicated? Is withdrawal something that is done more readily nowadays than in days past? I will quote from the standard book of the late Prof. Dr. H. Bouwman (Professor of Church Polity in Kampen).

In Volume 2 of his opus he writes, "In our days as a rule worldly people withdraw from the church because the church through its discipline is severely pressing them. Many unwilling and unrepentant [members] would rather seek refuge in all kinds of sects than humble themselves before the office bearers of the church who admonish them in the name of Christ against their sins. Alas, the heart of man is so haughty and conniving. It is so difficult to be the least, humbly to confess sins and break with them" (*Gereformeerde Kerkrecht*, Volume 2, Dr. H. Bouwman, 2nd edition, Kok, Kampen, p. 655).

The "days" about which Bouwman is writing are the 1920s - 1930s. It would appear that in our time there is nothing new under the sun in this respect. Withdrawal from the church is *still* used as an easy way out.

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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Visscher; Copy Manager: Laura Veenendaal
Coeditors: P. Holtvlüwer, E. Kampen, K. Stam, C. Van Dam

ADDRESS FOR COPY MANAGER:

Clarion, 57 Oakridge Drive South, St. Albert, AB T8N 7H2
E-Mail: veenendaal@telus.net

ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5
Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202

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
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Continuation of discipline?

Still, it is difficult to continue with church discipline in the case of withdrawal. I understand this fully. How can you principally and practically exercise church discipline over those who are no longer members?

I think that a consistory has to look carefully at each situation. If the withdrawal is clearly a means of escape, the elders should inform the one who has withdrawn that the withdrawal is unacceptable and that church discipline will *continue*.

After all, church discipline is not given to pester people but to show Christ’s love to unrepentant sinners. The hope and prayer is that a member will repent and be reconciled to God and his church. If withdrawal is an automatic way out, the sinner does not benefit when church discipline is suddenly stopped.

All this is not just a matter of form. The proper exercising of church discipline is a mark of the true church of Christ. Members may sometimes seek to escape discipline by withdrawal, but this does not undo the consistory’s responsibility.

My letter-writer expresses the hope that “one day our churches will revisit this matter and draw the scriptural ‘conclusion’ on this important matter.” Perhaps the first step now is to discuss the matter of withdrawal and how to deal with it properly.



What’s Inside

Issue 9 begins with an editorial from Rev. Klaas Stam. In it he poses the question: does withdrawal as a member of a church really end the process of church discipline?

As a follow up to his article on finding office bearers, we now have an article from Rev. Clarence Bouwman on “Finding the Elders We Need.” In this article, Rev. Bouwman outlines scriptural qualifications as well as the nature of the work that needs to be done by elders.

In this issue we start a four-part series on early Canadian church history. The articles are adapted from a chapter of *Geloof in de Nieuwe Wereld: Ontmoeting met Afrikanen en Indianen* by Leen Joesse with the assistance of Dr. Wes Bredenhof.

Issue 9 also includes regular columns Treasures New and Old, Ray of Sunshine, and Roadside Assistance. We also have a book review, two press releases, and a Mission News insert.

Laura Veenendaal



MATTHEW 13:52

“He lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven.”

(Luke 24:50-51)

Christ's High Priestly Blessing



Rev. Walter Geurts is minister of the Fergus North Canadian Reformed Church in Ontario
walter.geurts@canrc.org

As Luke comes to the end of his gospel, he tells us that the Lord Jesus finished his earthly ministry by blessing his disciples and then being taken by his Father up into heaven. As the Lord gave his blessing, his raised hands tell us something about the basis on which it could be given. To understand the significance of these raised hands, we have to think about the way that God's people were blessed in the book of Leviticus.

Leviticus 9 tells us about Aaron and his sons doing their official work as priests in the tabernacle. Through the sacrifices which they offered, atonement was made for God's people. It was only after Aaron the high priest had offered the prescribed sacrifices that he could then turn toward the people, raise his hands over them, and pronounce a blessing in the name of God. Without atonement the people couldn't be blessed; without atonement they were covenant breakers.

When the sacrifices were done and the blessing was given, the next thing Aaron did was to go into the tabernacle. There before God's presence he continued his work by mediating for the people. He stood between them and God to bring reconciliation and a restored relationship.

Looking back at Luke 24, we can see that what the high priests did in the Old Testament was fulfilled in Christ. First, Jesus offered himself as the sacrifice for our sins. Once

that sacrifice was done, as also his resurrection testifies, he continued to act as high priest by raising his hands over his people and blessing them. Then he finally entered into the presence of God to continue mediating for us. He now stands between God and us, and on the basis of what he did we can receive the blessing that he pronounced.

Christ's work as high priest is so much greater than what Aaron and his descendants did in the Old Testament. In Leviticus 9, Aaron not only went into the tabernacle but had to come out again. For his work wasn't done; it had to be repeated endlessly day after day because with those sacrifices he couldn't give a permanent solution to sin.

The Lord Jesus came as the great and final high priest, and he offered himself so that permanent atonement could be made. Neither his sacrifice nor his blessing would have to be repeated because when he entered into the heavenly temple, he didn't have to come out again. His work was sufficient to completely remove the guilt of all our sins, and through faith in him we are now right before God and one with him for all eternity. Nothing else needed to be done.

We aren't actually told what the Lord said when he lifted his hands over his disciples and blessed them. But when we turn back to Leviticus 9, we get an idea of what God's

blessing to his people involves. After Aaron had finished his work in the tabernacle, he came out and blessed the people for a second time. We are told that immediately after this, the glory of the LORD appeared to them. This was how God fulfilled the blessing that had just been given by his high priest. Whatever else God's blessing involves, it begins with his presence among his people.

This was also part of the blessing given by Christ as he ascended into heaven. With his arms outstretched, he promised that his people weren't going to be alone; he was going to continue watching over them. In the verse just before our text he told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were "clothed with power from on high." In Acts 1 he said that they were going to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Ten days later, on Pentecost, they received this part of his blessing. By pouring out his Spirit, the Lord is not only with us, he is even in us. Just like God's love to his Old Testament people meant abundant blessing in all of life, so the Lord now promises to be with you in every part of your life.

As we celebrate the ascension of our Lord, remember the blessing that he left us with. When he went into heaven, he didn't leave us alone. He promised that he was going to continue being with his people. Through his Spirit he now applies the blessing of God's forgiveness and all that this means for us.





Rev. Clarence Bouwman is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Smithville, Ontario
clarence.bouwman@gmail.com

Finding the Elders We Need

We set ourselves at this time of year to finding new office bearers to tend the flock of the Lord. By means of the congregation, under the leadership of the consistory, the Lord is pleased to indicate which brothers he wishes in the offices of elder and deacon in his church.

As the congregation considers what names to mention to the consistory, what criteria should be used? Again, who may consistory nominate for the office? And for which of the candidates nominated by consistory may the congregation vote? In what follows I attempt to supply an answer to these questions. Today we look at the qualifications for the office of elder; next time, the Lord willing, we look at the qualities required of the deacon.

Scriptural qualifications

Who may serve in the office of elder? Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Paul answered the question with these words to Timothy:

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil (1 Tim 3:1-7; ESV throughout this article).

And to Titus Paul writes:

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you – if anyone is

above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it (Titus 1:5-9).

Any brother who does not meet the standards of 1 Timothy 3 or Titus 1 may not be nominated for the office of elder, nor may any congregation member vote for such a brother. The Lord God simply has not made him available for the office. This is a rule of thumb that consistories and congregations do well to bear in mind.

This does not mean that the Lord cannot use such a brother. But the question now revolves not around what God is able to do, but around our responsibility. If the Lord does not grant per 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 as many brothers in the congregation as we think we need for the office, we shall simply need to acquiesce to the fact that the Lord is pleased to lead his flock through less elders than we think necessary. And we are responsible to see to it that brothers prepare and/or change themselves to be available according to God's standards.

Nature of the work

To help put into sharper focus which brother(s) should be recommended or nominated or voted, we do well to look further than the matter of scriptural qualifications. For the Lord has also revealed what task he lays upon the elder. So the question arises whether a particular brother has the gifts needed to do this work. The nature of the work the Head of the Church gives his elders to do can possibly best be drawn out by considering the terms used in Scripture for the elder. The following need a mention:



Church News

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Rev. Richard Aasman

of Edmonton (Providence), Alberta

Declined the calls extended by the Redeemer CanRC of Winnipeg for mission work in Manitoba and by the Adoration URC of Vineland, Ontario:

Rev. K. Wieske

missionary in Brazil of the Maranatha CanRC of Surrey, British Columbia

Overseer

In Acts 20:28 Paul instructs the elders of the church at Ephesus, "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers." What, we wonder, is an overseer to do? One finds the answer in Acts 15:36, "After some days Paul said to Barnabas, 'Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing.'" Although our translation uses the word "visit," the Greek original has here the word "oversee." Paul says as it were, "Let us go back and oversee our brethren." The apostle's intent, then, is to go and keep his eyes open to learn how the brethren are doing. This clarifies the meaning of the scriptural term "oversee." To oversee is to keep an eye on how things are going.

*In their task as overseers,
the elders are to visit the members of
the congregation out of genuine interest
in the members' well-being*

One also finds the word in Matthew 25:36. Jesus tells the parable of the separation between the sheep and the goats. Christ, the Shepherd, will say to the sheep gathered at his right hand, "I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me." Here again, the Greek word is "oversee." In the context of Jesus' parable the purpose of the visit is not simply to see or look at someone. Rather, the visit is an expression of care and genuine interest. So, in their task as overseers, the elders are to visit the members of the congregation out of genuine interest in the members' well-being, to find out what they are up against in life, and seek to stand beside them, to encourage, and if necessary, to admonish.

Shepherd

This title appears repeatedly in John 10 as a description of Jesus. The Lord says in verse 11, "I am the good shepherd." The Lord goes on to describe what he as shepherd does for his sheep: "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." In contrast to this, the Lord describes what the hired hand does: "He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd. . . sees the wolf coming

and leaves the sheep and flees. . . . He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep" (v. 12f). As the good shepherd, Jesus Christ went so far as to lay down his life so that his sheep might live (Heb 13:20).

The task of shepherding was not assigned to the Lord Jesus Christ exclusively, but given also to the elder. In the passage quoted before from Acts 20:28, Paul told the elders of the church at Ephesus to "pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood." The word translated here as "care for" is in the Greek original the word "shepherd" used as a verb. It is the elders' task to shepherd the flock for which Christ has laid down his life. It is in the Lord Jesus as the Good Shepherd that the elder finds his role model.

Over against the way the Good Shepherd carries out his office, there is the way of the hired hand of John 10 who, in the interest of his own well-being, deserts the sheep so that they need to fend for themselves. His conduct is exemplified by the admonition that Ezekiel had to give the shepherds of Israel for the irresponsible manner in which they shepherded the flock of Israel:

Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord God: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts" (Ezek 34:2-4).

Here is the example of what elders are not to do.

The elders of Ephesus were to shepherd their flock, following in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd. Paul did not command them to be shepherds in order to build up their own reputation or to make the congregation do what they wanted them to do. The flock was not there for the benefit of the elders, but the elders were appointed for the benefit of the flock. The elders are even to lay down their life for the flock, for that is what the Good Shepherd did. When Paul in Ephesians 4:11 listed the various offices that Christ gave to the church, he used for "elder" the word "pastor" (= shepherd): "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers." Pastor is an apt description for the elder, for it captures well the elder's task of looking after the sheep.

Steward

In his list of qualifications for the elder in Titus 1:5-9, Paul writes in verse 7 that "an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach." Luke 12:42 draws for us a picture of what a steward is and does. In his parable concerning the faithful servant and the evil servant Jesus asks, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time?" Here the task of the steward is captured: this is the person who is responsible for managing a household, a servant appointed to care for the other servants (even providing their food), and who is accountable to his master.

Paul likens the elder to a steward: a person "over the household" and yet under God and so accountable to him. For what purpose does God make the elder a steward over his congregation? Not for the elder's own



benefit, but rather so that he may give the congregation "food at the proper time." The elder, then, serves the congregation with the possessions God has entrusted to him for the benefit of the congregation.

Leader

In Hebrews 13:7, 17, and 24 the apostle gives the following instruction to the Hebrews, "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God to you. . . . Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give account. . . . Greet all your leaders

The elders were appointed for the benefit of the flock

and all the saints." We understand that the term "leader" describes here the elders of the Hebrews. Characteristic of a leader is that he gives a proper example to those whom he leads; he guides. Again, the elder does not lead for his own benefit, but for the benefit of the congregation ("they are keeping watch over your souls"). Given this task of the leaders, the Hebrew saints are instructed to submit to the elders; it is in their best interest to follow the leadership of these men.

In sum: Elders must use the Word of God

In his care for his people, the Lord supplies the gift of elders. These elders are mandated to oversee, shepherd, be stewards over, and lead their congregation for the sole purpose of directing the congregation to God. For that reason God has also given the elders the one resource they need to perform these tasks, and that resource is of course the Word of God. If the elder must shepherd the sheep, feeding them in good pasture, he must feed them in the Word of life. But before an elder can begin to shepherd, or even to lead, oversee, or manage his Master's flock, he himself must be spiritually healthy. To use the words of Titus 1:9, an elder "must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it." For an elder to be an elder in the scriptural sense of the word, it is imperative that he himself stands by that Word and be "able to teach" that Word (1 Tim 3:2).

As we set ourselves to nominating brothers for the office of elder, or voting for those nominated by the consistory, this is material we shall very much need to keep in mind.



Early Canadian Church History (Part 1)

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

Dr. Leen Joosse is minister-emeritus
of the Reformed Church in
Groningen-West, The Netherlands

This series of articles is adapted from chapter 4 of Leendert Jan Joosse, *Geloof in de Nieuwe Wereld: Ontmoeting met Afrikanen en Indianen (1600-1700)* (Kampen: Kok, 2008).

On the European continent scholars are constantly exploring past methods of colonization. These days the focus of research has shifted from economic to social and religious relationships between Europeans and aboriginals on the other side of the Atlantic. It is now clear that colonization has never been a one-sided development. Both sides, natives and Europeans alike, have experienced benefits and losses. These investigations have implied a reassessment of what Christian culture was about and what kind of religion was being promoted in the transformation of the Americas.

There has been a surge of interest also in the historic relationships between Europe and what we today call Canada. Europeans identified themselves as colonizers and migrants identified themselves as Christians when they met native inhabitants. There are also the questions of what kind of Christianity was introduced into Canada, how it was introduced, and why. The French Huguenots in Canada had a unique self-understanding with regard to being Calvinists and how they interacted with First Nations during the seventeenth century. This was different from the Reformed Dutch in the new world. Whereas the Dutch focused on planting churches (for example, in today's New York State), French Calvinists were engaged merely in spreading the gospel in Canada. Consequently, we find no Protestant church buildings from the early period in either the area around the St. Lawrence River or in Nova Scotia. Instead, there are only Roman Catholic buildings. It may be instructive to explore the origin of Christianity in Canada in order to understand the way French Calvinists acted.

France and the Americas

During the sixteenth century, European nations were looking for a new western route to China. This

is why the other side of the Atlantic Ocean was explored. French sailors thought they could discover a route to China and to the East Indies by travelling west. They met the St. Lawrence River and the land which is nowadays called Canada. When word of this reached the French king, he urged his people to begin colonizing whatever area could be taken from the indigenous nations.

This situation has to be understood in its Roman Catholic context. The Roman pope deemed the whole world to be under his dominion. Therefore, he thought he could claim all authority to distribute the lands and nations in the name of Christ to the governments of Roman Catholic kings as his papal representatives, whether in Italy, Spain, or Portugal. This he did in the famous Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494 – the agreement which divided up the Americas between Spain and Portugal.

The Roman Catholic king of France also acted as one of the owners of the world on the other side of the Atlantic. He did this wherever French fishermen and merchants operated and the peoples in those areas were regarded automatically as his French subjects. He also promoted the expeditions of Jacques Cartier in 1532 and 1541 and Jean-François de La Rocque de Roberval in 1541-1543. They were mandated to gain control over the St. Lawrence Valley and have it colonized. However, these sixteenth century efforts ultimately failed due to conflicts between the colonists and the Iroquois. The Iroquois did not think that the French behaved as those who owned the land.

During this period, the Wars of Religion were raging in France. Consequently, persecuted Reformed people fled from France. Slightly earlier, John Calvin and Admiral Gaspar de Coligny encouraged Reformed church members to spread the gospel across the Atlantic by means of colonization. Nicolas Durand de Villegaignon gathered about 600 people and started a colony in South America in 1555. He landed in present-day Brazil in the area of Rio de Janeiro. Working together with the native inhabitants, they established

a colony and a military fort (Fort Coligny). They clearly showed a desire to be Reformed. Unfortunately, the leader of the colony, Villegaignon, went back to the Roman Catholic Church and then turned on the Reformed colonists, even killing many. This persecution led to the first Protestant martyrs in the new world and the first Reformed confession to be written in the Americas. As they were waiting in prison for their date with the executioner, Reformed pastor Jean du Bordel wrote a confession with the help of his colleagues Matthieu Vermeuil, Pierre Bourdon, and André la Fon. The Guanabara Confession contained sixteen articles and it was meant to be an outward-looking witness both to the Roman Catholics and the pagan Brazilians.

Much further north, where the royal plans for colonization had come to nothing up till 1598, the French king Henry IV took a different tack. He wanted to stimulate private enterprise. That led to his allowing Huguenots to renew their efforts to build colonies in North America. Let's now turn to the beginnings of New France and consider how Reformed people introduced Calvinism into this new environment.

The early beginnings

The period of 1603 to 1629 is often remembered as the era of the famous Roman Catholic Samuel de Champlain. He was married to a Calvinist lady, making his role slightly more ambiguous than generally acknowledged. This period should really be understood as the era of a fierce struggle between the Huguenots and Jesuits in Canada. They were struggling on several fronts, including and especially with the planting of true Christian religion among colonists and First Nations. What happened?

French, Spanish, and Basque fishermen became familiar with the coastal areas of the east and their peoples, especially in the area of Newfoundland. They did not see any need to live in that area on a permanent basis. They just built temporary settlements for whaling and fishing. Meanwhile, they gradually became better acquainted with the Six Nations of the Iroquois, the Montagnais along the St. Lawrence, and the Huron peoples of the Georgian Bay region. Only once the fur trade began was the need felt for establishing permanent settlements. Colonization really began with economic interests in mind. Colonists needed to ask permission and pay for the documents required from the French crown to settle down overseas.

The hat making industry in Paris led to increased demand for fur. This is why merchants were urged by King Francis I to take control of territories and not just to trade with the natives. He also endorsed private enterprises among the Huguenots. Merchants were to provide themselves with personnel and materials so as to be able to live in New France. This king also



Samuel de Champlain



Bust of Pierre Du Gua de Monts in Quebec City

considered all inhabitants of New France to be his subjects whether they were colonists or aboriginals. However, Huguenot merchants did not respond well to this imperialistic notion. Their trade company was mandated to work overseas with the Six Nations in terms of a partnership or alliance, rather than as imperialistic colonizers.

Thereafter several wealthy merchants planted colonies overseas. In 1598, Queen Catherine de Medici (wife of Henry IV and niece of a pope who favoured the Jesuits) granted a fur-trade contract to Troilus de La Roche de Mesgouez. She then named him lieutenant-general of New France. Then there was an important Huguenot merchant, Pierre de Chauvin de Tonnetuit. He was from Dieppe and he also obtained a royal monopoly for the fur trade and a charter to establish a colony overseas. Having enlisted some 500 colonists and the required material, he sailed across the ocean and landed near Tadoussac, in the mouth of the St. Lawrence. A third man, a renowned Huguenot from Saintonge, Pierre Du Gua de Monts, also started a commercial enterprise with a royal grant in 1603. After his arrival, however, he realized that he did not like the climate of the St. Lawrence Valley. Therefore, he eventually moved to the coastal area of Acadia (present-day Nova Scotia) and settled there.

In our next instalment, we'll look at what happened in the St. Lawrence Valley from 1598 to 1629. Then, later, we'll look further at the developments among Calvinists in Acadia during this same period.





roadside assistance

the magazine for Reformed young people

How can a young man keep his way pure?

By living according to your word. Ps 119:9

roadsideassistancemagazine.com

roadsideassistance@gmail.com

Comfort from 2 Peter 3:8-18

Rosanne VandeKamp
is from Neerlandia, AB

By Rosanne VandeKamp

It was just the other night that I read a passage from Holy Scripture which greatly comforted me and I would like to share this excitement with you. This passage that I am referring to is 2 Peter 3:8-18, written by Peter, one of the twelve disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. He wrote this particular book to the Christians who lived in the northern part of Asia Minor since they were in danger of being confused by false teachers. Peter reminds the Christians that the best way to resist these false teachers is to grow in the knowledge and practice of the Christian faith. He warns them that God would destroy the false teachers. Because Jesus will certainly keep his promise to come again, Peter reminds these Christians to live "holy and godly lives." As I said earlier, I am only referring to Peter 3:8-18 in this article, but that does not mean that the rest of this book is not important.

Beginning at verse 8, Peter reminds us, from the perspective of eternity, how short a man's lifetime on earth is. We can see it in our own busy lives that time goes very fast and before you can even blink, you have become older and are not the same young person you were before. However he goes on to say that God is not slow in keeping his promises, indeed he never breaks his promises – they are everlasting! It is weakness of our human nature that easily questions God and his unrevealed will when tragedies come upon us, yet we must truly acknowledge that he will work out all things for our good (Rom 8:28).

In verse 9, Peter tells us that God is patient with us, not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance. How comforting! Many times we see our incapability to do any good and are inclined to all kinds of evil and we are discouraged because of it, yet there is hope. The LORD is always patient, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love (Exod 34:6) and

he forgives our sins through Jesus Christ. We must not, however, come up with excuses that we will always fall short each day and therefore there is no need to try to do better – this is the wrong attitude. No, we must come to true repentance each and every day when we pray and ask the Holy Spirit to give us the strength to so strive against our sin.

The following verse describes the day of judgement. Peter tells us it will come like a thief – no one will know the day or moment. The heavens will disappear and the earth will be destroyed. It is inevitable; this day is bound to come – no one can stop God's will. "Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness" (v. 11-13).

What great comfort! God promises the elect a new heaven and new earth, the dwelling place of the righteous, after sin and the devil have been destroyed. How great is his mercy and grace towards his people!

Peter goes on to tell his dear friends: "Since we are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him" (2 Pet 3:14). There should be no questions asked – we have been given salvation through Jesus Christ by God's abounding grace and therefore should automatically show true thankfulness by living holy and blameless lives. Peter then continues to speak about Paul and his letters and also tells us to "be on our guard" so that we may not be carried away by the error of lawlessness and fall from our secure position. We need to ask God

to work in our hearts through the Holy Spirit to sanctify us so that we may indeed be thankful for his promises. Using the fruits of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control – we can evidently show in our lives that we are thankful.

I was very moved and felt great comfort in this beautiful passage and wanted to share this small

piece of Scripture with you. Peter was a great blessing to those Christians in Asia Minor and his words still apply to us today. How truly joyful and blessed are the words Peter declares as he concludes his book – “But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to him be glory both now and forever! Amen” (2 Pet 3:18).



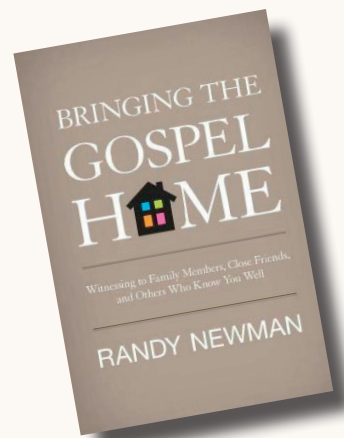
Bringing the Gospel Home: Witnessing to Family Members, Close Friends, and Others Who Know You Well, Randy Newman, Wheaton: Crossway, 2011

Additional Information: Soft cover, 220 pages, \$15.99

There are growing numbers of first generation Christians in our Reformed churches. There are also growing numbers of those who have come from unbelieving families that a generation or two ago were Christian. These brothers and sisters face the question of what to do about their unbelieving parents, grandparents, siblings, and other relatives. Sadly, we do also have those whose children or grandchildren have abandoned Christianity. There too, we can be confronted with the question of how to most effectively reach out to these loved ones with the gospel. If you identify with any of those situations, then this book is for you.

Randy Newman grew up in a Jewish family and was brought to faith in Christ while in college. He's writing out of his own first-hand experiences. He's also interviewed numerous others with a burden for lost loved ones. They and he have learned that evangelizing family is tough.

This is a well-written and practical guide to evangelism amongst those who know us best – and may be the least likely to listen to our witness. Each chapter is structured around a biblical theme: Family, Grace, Truth, Love, Humility, Time, and Eternity. At the conclusion of each is a set of concrete “Steps to Take.” The book is filled with anecdotes – many with happy endings, and some not so happy. As I was reading the book, I often got the sense that the author was sitting across from me and telling me all this first-hand.



Bringing the Gospel Home has a breezy, conversational feel to it and the author's great sense of humour is often evident.

Let me quote just one paragraph to give you a feel for the book. It comes from the chapter on humility. Newman suggests that humility can sometimes be framed as a question. Sometimes it can be put as a request for permission:

“Would you ever be up for discussing spiritual things?” sounds less threatening to some people than, “If you were to die tonight, how sure are you that you'd go to heaven?” A permission question accomplishes two things. It disarms the hearer of normal resistance because the question implies you don't want to talk about religion right now. It also opens the person up to your presentation at some later date because they gave you permission. The contrast yields dramatically differing results (143-144).

That's a fabulous suggestion and it could be useful in many other situations besides witnessing to family.

Bringing the Gospel Home is theologically sound and saturated with a passion for teaching people the best ways to share the good news of Christ. It has the potential to be a powerful tool to help those who care about the eternal destiny of unbelieving loved ones. This is definitely among the best books on evangelism that I've come across.



Book Review

Wes Bredenhof

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

Ray of Sunshine

by Corinne Gelms and
Patricia Gelms



Hi, my name is Bernie DeVos. I was born on May 30, 1975. I was born in British Columbia. I have five sisters and one brother. I grew up mostly in St. Mary's near London, Ontario. And I went to church in London. My parents moved to Grimsby and I came to live at Anchor. I work four mornings a week. On Mondays and Wednesdays I work at Chrysler in Grimsby, and on Tuesdays and Thursdays I work at a greenhouse in Grimsby. I

really enjoy working. I like to help out with some work at Anchor as well. In the summer I take my turn at cutting the grass, and in the winter I take my turn with shovelling the snow. I look forward to our evening programs. On Monday we have Catechism, and every other Tuesday we go swimming, and on the other Tuesday we have Story Hour and Singing. Wednesday is a free night, Thursday is workshop, and Friday we have band! I enjoy getting mail and look forward to my birthday. One of my favourite things to do in the summer is going to Anchor Camp, there I get to see some friends that I only see at camp and we have lots of fun. We sometimes go swimming and canoeing, and we sing around the campfire. . . lots of fun! I enjoy going out and visiting people or just going for coffee! I really like living at Anchor with my friends.

Birthdays in May

- 1 **CLARENCE ZWIEP** will be 58
653 Broad Street West
Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8
- 4 **DEBBIE VEENSTRA** will be 38
4238 2nd Concession Road
Sherkston, ON L0S 1R0
- 10 **ROB DE HAAN** will be 47
c/o Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road, RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
- 21 **EDDIE VAN ROOTSELAAR** will be 19
1488 Highway 3 E
Dunnville, ON N1A 2W7
- 30 **BERNIE DE VOS** will be 37
c/o Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road, RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2



Congratulations to you all who are celebrating a new year in your life. May our heavenly Father bless and keep you in his care, and may you all enjoy a wonderful birthday!

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 L0R 2A0
Phone: 905-957-0380
Email: jcorgelms@porchlight.ca



Press Release of Classis Manitoba convened in the Winnipeg Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church on March 23, 2012

Opening

On behalf of Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church, the convening church of the March 23, 2012 classis, Br. W. van Beek called the meeting to order. He requested that the brothers sing Psalm 111:1, 5 read 1 Peter 1:1-16, and led in prayer. He welcomed all present.

Memorabilia

It was noted that since the last classis, Rev. J. Poppe received and declined a call to the church at Chilliwack, Rev. K. Wieske is considering a call to serve as missionary for the Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church, Rev. S. Vandevelde has been ordained as minister of the Carman East Canadian Reformed Church, and Rev. R. Kampen has moved to Denver and his visa has been approved. It was noted with thankfulness that Br. Abel Pol formerly of the Carman West congregation sustained his preparatory examination and is now eligible for call.

Examination of credentials

The credentials of the delegates were examined by the brothers from the Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church and reported to be in order. All delegates in attendance were primary delegates other than Rev. J. Poppe, who was ill at the time.

Appointment of executive officers

The following officers were appointed:

President: Rev. R. den Hollander
Vice President: Br. W. van Beek
Clerk: Rev. A. Pol

Adoption of the agenda

Rev. den Hollander thanked the Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church for the preparations involved in convening the classis. The agenda was adopted. There were no fraternal delegates present.

Reports

A financial report was received from Br. H. Veldman, the treasurer of Classis. It was decided that the classical assessment for 2012 will remain at \$10.00 per communicant member. The church of Carman West reported that the books of the treasurer of Classis, Br. H. Veldman, were audited and found to be in order. The Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church reported that the archives of Classis have been inspected and found to be in order, with the comment that some of the email correspondence was not signed or dated. A report was received from Br. W. van Beek in regard to the activities of the Deputies for Contact with the Provincial Government.

In closed session the church visitation reports on visits to the Canadian Reformed Churches of Carman East and West and the Grace and Redeemer Canadian Reformed Churches in Winnipeg were read. Opportunity for comment or questions was given. Prayers were offered for these churches after each report.

Question period

Question Period according to Art. 44, C.O. was held. All churches answered in the affirmative that the ministry of the office-bearers is being maintained and that the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured. The Winnipeg Grace church requested advice which was given in closed session.

Fraternal delegates

There were no fraternal delegates present, but letters of response from OPC, URCNA, and Winnipeg Providence were received and read to the meeting. Prayers were offered for the churches with which we have ecclesiastical fellowship.

Appointments

The convening church for the next classis is the Carman East Canadian Reformed Church.

The classis is scheduled to be held on June 22, 2012. Alternate date: September 28, 2012.

The suggested president for the next classis is Rev. R.J. Kampen.

Personal question period and adoption of the Acts and Press Release

Personal question period was held.

No censure according to Art. 34 of the Church Order was necessary.

The Acts were adopted and the Press Release was approved for publication.

Closing

The president led in closing prayer.

*For Classis Manitoba, March 23, 2012
W. van Beek, Vice-president at that time*

Press Release of Classis Pacific West held on March 27, 2012 in the Cloverdale Canadian Reformed Church

The Rev. Theo Lodder opened the meeting on behalf of the convening church of Cloverdale and led the opening devotions. He welcomed the delegates and brought to light some of the significant events that have occurred in the last while within the classical region and mission works associated with the churches. He brought these matters as well as the convening of Classis before the Lord in prayer.

When it was determined that the credentials were in order and all the churches were duly represented, he declared Classis constituted. The following brothers were appointed as moderamen of the meeting: Rev. Hendrik Alkema as chairman, Rev. James Slaa as vice-chairman, and Rev. Anthon Souman as clerk. At this time the chairman welcomed Rev. Jim Witteveen of the Prince George Mission congregation, who was in attendance, and was seated in an advisory capacity. Rev. James Visscher, who also was in attendance, but not as a delegate, was welcomed and seated as an advisor. The agenda was adopted.

Rev. James Visscher has requested from his consistory that he be relieved of his regular ministry in the Langley church, effective May 6, 2012, due to his having reached the age of retirement by that time. The church of Langley requested Classis for its approbation and for his release of his classical duties as well. Since Classis could determine that everything was in order based on the documentation received, and since the deputies of Regional Synod had reviewed the same documents prior to Classis and gave concurring advice, Classis granted approbation and further released him from his classical duties. Langley informed Classis by way of letter that Rev. Visscher will preach his final sermon in a service on Sunday, May 6, 2012. Classis appointed Rev. Theo Lodder to represent the churches of Pacific West in its expression of thankfulness at the social event the same day in the evening. On behalf of Classis, the chairman expressed thanks to the Lord for all the blessings the Lord has worked through Rev. Visscher's ministry and wished him and his wife and family God's further blessings. Song and prayer were offered to God. Rev. Visscher was given and took the opportunity to address Classis.

Rev. Hendrik Alkema has received and accepted a second call from the Free Reformed Church of Albany, Western Australia. The church of Houston asked Classis for its approbation in honourably releasing him from his ministerial duties per July 1, 2012, the date agreed upon by Houston and Albany, so that he can take up his call to the ministry in the church of Albany. Since everything was in order, Classis gave approval of the call and granted his honourable release. With thankfulness and joy the brothers could remember Rev. Alkema's faithfulness and diligence in the fulfillment of his ministry, that he remained Christian and God-fearing in his confession and conduct, and the willingness with which he performed all his tasks. Rev. Alkema was commended to God and the Word of grace. Rev. James Slaa was appointed to represent the churches of Pacific West with words of thankfulness at the farewell social for Rev. Alkema. Upon the request of Houston, Rev. James Slaa was appointed as counsellor of Houston as per Article 45 of the Church

Order. In addition, as requested by Houston, monthly pulpit supply by the ministers of the classical region was granted. In prayer before lunch, thanksgivings and supplications for Rev. Alkema and his family were brought to the throne of God.

Based on a proposal from a church to change the regulations of Classis, a discussion was held regarding the sending of confidential and potentially sensitive materials and correspondence in relation to the convening of Classis, such as appeals, via electronic means. It was decided to ask that church to consider the matter further as more aspects of sending documents for Classis can further be implemented into the regulations.

In addition to several regular reports, Classis approved the recommended assessment of the treasurer of \$6.00 per communicant member. Reports of the church visitors were read on visits to the churches of Cloverdale, Langley, Houston, Smithers, and Willoughby Heights, as well as a special visitation to the Prince George Mission Congregation. A request for advice from the Surrey church resulted in a special visit there.

Question Period per Article 44 C.O. was held. One church sought the judgment and help of Classis regarding the proper guarding of the Lord's Supper. It concerned the admission of guests. Advice was given.

A new item on the agenda as approved by a previous classis is called Evangelism and Mission Reports. Each church was given the opportunity to apprise the others of its mission activities overseas and in its own community. Opportunity was given and used for questions and discussions. It was a wonderful blessing to hear how the Lord is at work in various communities and mission projects. For this reason Classis took time at the end of the reports to offer thanksgiving prayer to God and implore him for his Spirit and Word to continue to be active in these mission projects.

Appointments were made for various committees and tasks of churches or individuals. The convening church for the next classis is the church of Houston, to be held, the Lord willing, on June 12, 2012 at 9:00 AM, in Langley. An alternate date was set for September 18, 2012.

Personal Question Period was held. As per Article 34 of the Church Order, the chairman deemed with thankfulness that censure was not necessary. The Acts of Classis were adopted. The press release was approved. Rev. Hendrik Alkema led the brothers in devotion and thanksgiving prayer and Classis Pacific West of March 27, 2012 was closed.

*For Classis,
Rev. James Slaa, vice-chairman at the time* 