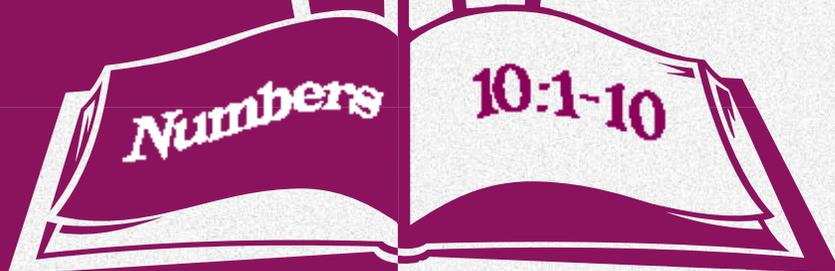


# Clarion

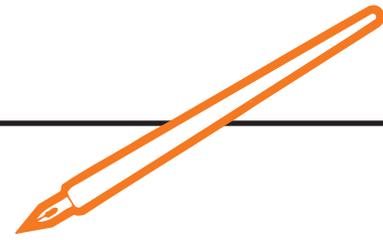
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*Juan Calvino Seminary,  
Mexico City*



By G.Ph. van Popta



## Moving

My family and I are moving again. When I first told them we were going, my teen-aged children were not very happy. I don't blame them. It's hard to leave good friends behind. They felt like Dad had pulled the rug from under their feet. After several weeks, they are starting to get used to the idea.

Many of my children's friends still live in their first house. My eldest sons (17 and 16 years old) have lived in eight houses. We've spent five years in the house we'll soon be leaving. That's the longest my wife and I have lived in one house in 18 1/2 (years of marriage).

Sometimes I envy the life my parishioners can give their families. They raise their children in the same town in which *they* grew up. In many cases, there are three generations of a family living in the same community, with lots of uncles, aunts and cousins. That's no longer a family. That's a clan, I guess. A clan with roots!

On the other hand, moving once in awhile has benefits too.

We have lived in three provinces – British Columbia, Ontario, and Alberta. (That's nothing compared to some of my colleagues who have lived on three *continents*!) There are benefits. One learns to know many people. A family tastes different aspects of our Canadian cultural phenomenon, and experiences the variety of Canadian weather.

We are moving. We're leaving a small town surrounded by acres of, well, acres – a town where most everyone knows each other – and headed for a large town on the edge of a big industrial city. We're trading the Prairie for "The Mountain." We've lived on the Mountain in Hamilton before. We moved there from BC 14 years ago. Coming from BC, we scoffed at "The Mountain." But I was speaking of the Prairie – an old-timer here once said that Southern Alberta is so flat, if your dog runs away you can see it go for two days.

Yes, the Prairie. We'll miss the Prairie with its wide open spaces, the fields – nothing less than quarter sections at a time – of wheat, sunflower, sugar beets, corn and flax. We'll miss the smell of harvest – the dust in the air – and the breath-taking sunsets the harvest dust creates. We'll miss the straight roads that go for miles and miles and miles without a curve, roads with posted speed limits that make one feel free as he drives. We'll miss the canola fields, fields so brilliant yellow it hurts the eyes. We'll miss the chinooks – those pleasant warm winter winds that let you walk outside without a coat in January.

We'll be trading the Prairie with its beauty for the Niagara escarpment with its own beauty – the Bruce trail, the

deciduous forests, the many waterfalls, rich fauna and flora, and its rock. We're exchanging a marvelous climate (except for the wind and the cold winters) for a marvelous climate (except for the humidity and the cold winters).

Politically, it will be quite a change. We will be leaving the stronghold of reform for the bastion of liberalism. In the recent federal election, every seat but two in Alberta voted Reform while every seat but two in Ontario voted Liberal. That's a change I could live without.



Southern Alberta, Southern Ontario. Vastly different – politically, climatically, topographically, culturally. And yet the same. The same because we leave behind a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we join a church of the Lord Jesus Christ. We bid farewell to a congregation of God's people, and we greet a congregation of God's people. The one congregation is bigger than the other. The one is more

rural than the other. Different people, different occupations. And yet, the Lord's people. As my family was embraced by the one, so will it be embraced by the other – for the people in both are the Lord's people. As I, by the grace of God, had the privilege to preach and minister to the one, so will I, God willing, have the privilege of preaching and ministering to another.

The church is one. Whether it be found in a small Prairie town or near the industrial heartland, it is one, joined and united with heart and will, in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith (Article 27, Belgic Confession). Both congregations, the church of Christ. They are both *Church*, the assembly whom Christ calls his bride whom he loves. Christ gave himself up for her. He made her holy. He cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word. He has presented her to himself in splendour, as a radiant beaming bride, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

At a wedding, everyone loves to see the bride walk down the aisle to her bridegroom. The bride always looks beautiful dressed in white, pure, no blemish or stain to be seen, gorgeously attired just for her man. That is an image of the church being presented to Jesus Christ. And as the groom takes on the responsibility of caring for the bride, so Christ nourishes, cherishes, and cares for His bride, the church. And whether that church is found in Taber or Ancaster, she is *Church of Christ*.

Knowing that makes moving possible.



By J. Louwerse

## Leftovers

*When you bring injured, crippled or diseased animals and offer them as sacrifices, should I accept them from your hands?" says the LORD.*

*Malachi 1:13b*

Leftovers: the food that is not eaten at dinner time. Leftovers. We all know what they are. Leftovers. Who really wants them? Just what happens to our leftovers?

Often they are put in the refrigerator only to be eaten by ourselves later on in the week or the month. And we all know that the longer we wait in eating leftovers the less desirable they usually become. In fact, if you do not eat your leftovers soon, they go bad. They turn green and white in your fridge if you do not watch it. In our throwaway society, we rather quickly toss them, rather than have to try to eat them later. No wonder we do not make a habit of serving leftovers to our guests. For we do not want to be caught giving them something that might be inedible.

But what about the LORD? Would we give the LORD our leftovers?

When you read the first chapter of the prophecy of Malachi, we read how the priests and the people did the unthinkable. They gave the LORD God their leftovers. There in the temple in Jerusalem the people with the approval of the priests, offered up to the Lord, the crippled cattle, the sick sheep, and the lame lambs. Instead of giving their Lord and Father the best they had, they gave Him their leftovers.

Considering the situation of the people of Israel in the days of the prophet Malachi, some might think that is this was acceptable. After coming out of exile, Israel was under the rule and government of Persia. Israel was nothing but a poor province in the great Persian Empire. The Israel of the days of Malachi, was nothing like the Israel of the days of Kings David and Solomon. Israel had not seen the restoration of the former grandeur and glory! In fact Israel, in the days of the prophet Malachi, was experiencing tough times. Not only were they under foreign rule, but they were also suffering from drought and plagues. And so

the crop yields from the fields and the profits in the shops were not what the people had expected.

In the face of these tough times the question could be asked: Why should the people and the priests be so meticulous about the sacrifices in the service of the LORD? Was not the LORD God disappointing them? They had great expectations when they had returned from exile and yet here they languished. If the LORD God loved them so much, why then was this not apparent in the life of His people?

Why should they do everything correctly and properly if they could not be sure that the LORD would keep His promise? And so Israel challenged the

LORD and His promise of love. They asked the LORD: How have you loved us? Where is the evidence of your love? Show us for we cannot see it.

To the situation, the prophet Malachi speaks the word of the LORD: I have loved you. These words are not empty words of the LORD. For the LORD has loved His covenant people Israel from their very beginning as a nation. The LORD has never turned His face from His own people. The LORD's promises were unailing to the house of Jacob. That was their wonderful heritage. The LORD God had said: Is not Esau, Jacob's brother? Yet I have loved Jacob but I have hated Esau. And indeed an always hostile Esau was under



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God's judgment. But Jacob and his children were shown undeserved love and grace. They could rebuild in the strength of the Lord, the temple and Jerusalem in the land of promise. Indeed the LORD God loved His people then as He loves His people today.

But what is the response of the priests and the people of Israel to the love of God? Would they show love in return? No. Instead they did evil. They despised the name of the LORD. They give no honour to Him. And how did they do evil? By offering blind and lame and sick animals for sacrifice at the temple in Jerusalem! Instead of giving the best of their flocks and their herds for sacrifice in the temple, the people brought their leftovers. They brought that which was unacceptable in the eyes of the LORD. They did not come with the best of the land, but that which they did not want themselves.

And priests had adapted themselves to this situation. They tried to make the best of the "hard times" that the people of the LORD were experiencing. Better leftovers for the LORD and for themselves than nothing at all!

But the people and the priests would not have done the same with governor of Persia, who also demanded tribute! In the "real world," to give a gift of lame sheep or blind goat, would not be acceptable! Well, so it is and so much more with the LORD God, the great King of Israel. He must come first in the lives of the ones whom He loves. His service and His Kingdom must be number one in our lives.

We know how our daily lives in this world can be difficult. There are the pressures of having to be competitive in business and getting enough hours in at work. And there is the constant pull to spend more and more time and money on sports and leisure. How easy it is then to compromise on the service of the LORD, to give Him the leftovers. But the LORD God says to us: I am number one. I loved you first. I showed that to you in sending My Son into the world. And the LORD Jesus Christ, the unblemished Lamb has died for us. Therefore we must present ourselves as living sacrifices of thankfulness, holy and acceptable to the LORD God. We must love the LORD and give the best we have to Him. Only then will the blessing of the LORD be upon us. 

## The Written Word

The starry firmament on high,  
And all the glories of the sky.  
Yet shine not to Thy praise O Lord,  
So brightly as Thy written word.

The hopes that holy word supplies,  
Its truths divine and precepts wise,  
In each a heavenly beam I see,  
And every beam conducts to Thee

When, taught by painful proof to know  
That all is vanity below,  
The sinner roams from comfort far,  
And looks in vain for sun or star;

Soft gleaming then those lights divine  
Through all the cheerless darkness shine,  
And sweetly to the ravished eye  
Disclose the dayspring from on high.

Almighty Lord, the Sun shall fail,  
The moon forgot her nightly tale,  
And deepest silence hush on high  
The radiant chorus of the sky;

But, fixed for everlasting years,  
Unmoved amid the wreck of spheres,  
Thy word shall shine in cloudless day,  
When heaven and earth have passed away.

Sir Robert Grant, 1815

## What's inside?

You are holding in your hands our annual combined issue. With No. 15/16, *Clarion* goes into summer recess for a month.

In this issue, Rev. J. Louwse of Houston provides something to help you meditate on the Word of God.

Rev. J.L. Van Popta of Ottawa in his second installment on evangelism writes about the different aspects of evangelism and argues against the construction of false dilemmas.

Dr. Van Dam tells us more about the great work the Lord Jesus Christ is doing in Mexico through His people there.

Mr. Vandervan provides you with many suggestions for your summer reading.

In addition, you will find a few other contributions.

Finally, for those who like to browse the Internet, we are pleased to announce that the editorials and meditations published in *Clarion* can now be accessed on the World Wide Web. Mr. John Hoogerdijk of Calgary maintains the on-line *Clarion* at:

<http://www.cuug.ab.ca:8001/~hoogerdj/clarion/>

Please take a look and tell us what you think.

GvP

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# Evangelism: The church's missionary presence in the world<sub>2</sub>

By J.L. Van Popta

## 1. The Gospel comes by the human voice

The promise of the Gospel is to be announced and proclaimed universally to all peoples and to all men. To nations and races – all peoples. To individuals – all men. The promise comes: those who believe shall not perish. The command comes: you must repent from sin and believe. That is the heart of the gospel. A promise and demand that must go out to all and everyone, collectively and individually, without discrimination. The Canons of Dort highlight this evangelistic calling of the church and the task of God's people.

Calvin points out in his commentary on Isaiah 2:3 that it is a deadness which would cause believers to be silent about the gospel in the midst of their neighbours. The Canons of Dort set out the biblical doctrine that the gospel must be proclaimed universally to all men. As Reformed confessors we note that it is Christ who gathers His church. With the Canons and Calvin, however, we remember that Christ uses primarily the human voice and the agency of men to do that gathering work.

## 2. Three aspects of evangelism

In an earlier article we noted that many distinctions have been made when discussing evangelism. These distinctions have often been used to excuse the individual from involvement in evangelism. I propose that we restructure our thought. We should not be making distinctions by which we limit the work of evangelism that can be done. Rather we should distinguish various aspects and types of evangelism and see how they can all work together. We should not set up dilemmas: either foreign or local; organized or unorganized; intentional or unintentional; church or individual. Rather, we should see that there are various aspects of evangelism that augment and com-

plement each other. Each is important in its own way. I suggest that there are three aspects with which we need to work. In this article we will examine these three aspects and then see how they can work together.

### 2.1. Church

As noted earlier, the church has a crucial role in evangelism. The church is not just a congregation of individual believers. It is also the body of Christ through whom the good news of salvation reaches the world. It is the church's duty to call and ordain qualified men to be preachers. These preachers and pastors work within the church, but there must also be preachers working outside the church. In the "Form for Ordination of Missionaries" as found in the *Book of Praise* we read, "It is the calling of the church, through the testimony of the Apostles, to move people to believe in Christ crucified. From the time of the apostles, the Holy Spirit has commanded the church to set men apart for the work to which He has called them."<sup>1</sup> Those missionaries are to preach first to those who are without Christ. Thus they bring hope to those who have no hope and who are without God in the world, that they, being far off, may come near through the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:12,13). They are to give instruction in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict it (Titus 1:9). They are to baptize believers and their children, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that the Lord Jesus Christ commanded the church (Matt. 28:19). This work can be done far away overseas, in all places of the world and has been done by CndRCs in Irian Jaya and in Brazil. The Reformed churches historically have sent missionaries all over the world. As we noted in an earlier article, the Reformed confessions give great impetus to foreign missions. However, there is also room for this kind of

work to be done locally. The church must set aside and ordain men to preach to those who are strangers to the gospel, at home and abroad.

### 2.2. Committees

There is also an evangelistic task that we can address with a committee in the congregation. A committee can coordinate the efforts of the church community, of the congregation. This might be with the systematic distribution of literature. *Evangel* magazine and other tracts or literature introducing your church to your neighbourhood is a worthwhile project. A committee can host evenings with topics and speeches that high-light and discuss the evangelistic task of the local church. It can also organize various outreach projects by which the Reformed faith is set forth for those in our community. We can point to Vacation Bible School, Coffee Break, *Gift From Heaven* study course, the *Voice of the Church* Radio Broadcast, and even local cable television. Perhaps there are others.

The committee should not, however, become the sum of the evangelistic work done by the church community. The committee should, indeed must, have a minor role. Often it is said that the committee should be mandated to encourage others to evangelize. That, however, is the task of the office bearers. We should not shuffle off to a committee the task of teaching the congregation its responsibility in this matter, as if it were too little a thing for the elders to be doing. The committee should only do things that you need a committee to do. Radio or TV broadcasting needs equipment, sound engineers, distribution, and it needs to be organized – so you need a committee. We need committees for translation work, for running an outreach Bible Study. You need someone to co-ordinate things. But to encourage the congregation to reach out, that is the task of the preacher and elders. As

Calvin said, "Nothing could be more inconsistent with the nature of faith than that *deadness* which would lead a man to disregard his brethren, and keep the light of knowledge choked up within his own breast." Calvin implies that silence about the light of knowledge is a matter of deadness of faith – of unbelief, of disobedience. That should not be the concern of a committee but of the elders. Of course the committee can organize educational and encouraging evenings and workshops, thereby equipping the saints for service.

### 2.3. Christian

The Christian also has a task in evangelism. Some will say that it is the duty of others. "I cannot do this. I don't know enough. Call a missionary. Send an evangelist. I am not competent." Though humility is a quality of which Christians often have too little, in this matter they seem to have too much. Humility becomes the excuse for evading responsibility. We can find all sorts of proof in the Scripture that it is everyone's duty to speak of the gospel to others.

Think of 1 Peter 2:5,9. The apostle says that God's people have a double mandate. In verse five the Apostle Peter exhorts us, his readers, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. We could say, "This is our call to worship." Sunday worship. But in verse nine Peter repeats those wonderful names: "You are chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people." Then he gives the reason why: "That you may *declare* the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." The word in Greek for *declare* is literally "to announce outwardly." Peter is not speaking to ministers or theological students. He is writing to the members of the church who were scattered by persecution throughout the world.

In the New Testament the believers are called *witnesses*; those who testify (Acts 1:8). Paul tells the Philippian believers to "be blameless in the midst of a perverse generation (Philippians 2:15)." (It sounds as if he were writing to us in the late 20th century.) They were to be separated from the wickedness of the world in which they lived. But not separation as isolation! They were to "shine like stars in the universe" shining like lights in the world as they held forth, (or better) hold out, the word of life. (The NIV is much better here, and much more literal than the RSV. The NIV follows the same translation as the late Prof. S. Grei-

jdanus does in his commentary on this passage). God's people are to shine like stars in the dark universe.

In John 17 the Lord Jesus in His high priestly prayer says, "As you Father sent me, so I send them." The Son did not remain in heaven. He came to earth and then mingled with the sinners. He lived with sinners like you and me. He did not hide in the synagogue either, but he went to the outcasts. He went to the tax collector's home. He preached to the sick, the mad, the unclean, to the Samaritans. Likely he even went to the prostitutes with the good news. Too often Canadian Reformed people are like rabbits. They stick their heads out of their ecclesiastical warrens and then when the coast is clear make a run for it to the next safe hole, and hope no one saw them. This attitude is sometimes cause for conflict between church members. Some want to go out and "do something." Others are quite content with the *status quo*.

When I first spoke on evangelism in Winnipeg someone pressed me in the discussion period about why this might be. Why are there some who do not want to, or do not see the need for evangelism? Since then I read, in a very different context, something written by Gordon Clark. He writes the following in a discussion about the doctrine sanctification as laid out in the Westminster standards:

The American Christian, influenced by American culture, is on the whole more extrovert, activist, and practical than the European Christian. Our (American) gospel songs verge on jazz; the hymns of the French church are worshipful and majestic. We (Americans) go in for organizations and vigorous evangelism; the European is more devotional and contemplative. We are apt to disparage theory and exalt practice.<sup>2</sup>

Much of what he writes of Americans is true also of Canadians. (Not to be too political here but) Canadian culture is being Americanized. We live in a much more activist culture than our forefathers did in Europe and this influences the church also. Especially the younger generations, the grandsons and granddaughters of the immigrants, have this activist motive in their hearts. As children of immigrants, we are truly children of our culture (I count myself among the younger generation!). What we need to do is live in our culture, work with our culture, work in our culture, without tossing overboard the im-

migrant ship the good aspects of European worship. We may and must be worshipful, devotional and contemplative. If, however, we are worshipful, devotional and contemplative simply because this is what our fathers did across the Atlantic, then we will be a dying church. We need to learn from the North American activist Christian that there is a task for each member of the church in the spreading of the gospel of Christ.

Scripture teaches that each and every Christian is a witness for Christ and His saving work and that it is his/her duty to speak of it in their daily occupation. In the first Lord's Day on thankfulness (32) we confess we do good deeds to praise God, to assure ourselves that we stand in the salvation obtained for us, and to win our neighbours for Christ. Outsiders to faith are first drawn to Christians, then to Christ. Those who are strangers to the gospel are drawn to faith in Christ by the voice of men and women who testify of the grace of God revealed in scripture and in His Son Jesus Christ.

## 3 How effective are we?

What can we say now about effectiveness? Are we effective? What is the measure of our effectiveness? Should we even consider effectiveness?

### 3.1. Christians

We should not measure effectiveness by the number of converts and new Christians in our church. Though, when there are none or few we can and should ask "Why?" Why are there so few? That could be the topic of another article. There is, however, another question we can pose as a measure of effectiveness. How many members of your congregation are involved in any or all three levels of evangelism outlined above? How many actively speak of the gospel in their daily lives?

### 3.2. Committees

How many committees actually sponsor some sort of outreach? How effective are the committees of your church? What is their mandate? Too often the committee is saddled with all the evangelism work. As if someone else could fulfill your obligation of thankfulness to the Lord! Too often committees are appointed by consistories. The consistory appoints say, five people: one real enthusiast, two who are sympathetic, one who is not too excited and one who thinks that evangelism is not and should not be a priority. This may not be the

situation in your church but it has been like this in many churches. The consistory wants to have a *balanced* committee and in the process appoints a committee that can do next to nothing. I prefer the model in which the consistory invites the congregation members to form a committee and then let them get to work. Assume that the members of that committee will want to encourage and be engaged in Reformed evangelism.

### 3.3. Churches

How many congregations have called an evangelist? It is time that the Canadian Reformed Churches begin seriously thinking of calling evangelist/missionaries for our own cities. We no longer need to go to the jungle to

find pagans; we need not go to the mid east to find Muslims; or to third world countries to find the heathen. Next door is close enough. We do not need to go to the urban poor or downtrodden. Why is it that we think we need to step outside our own social class and community, as if our neighbours do not need the gospel? We need to evangelize our middle class neighbours; those who live right next door.

By these measurements of effectiveness, the work of the individual Christian, the committee, and the church, we generally fail dismally.

### 4. Conclusion

We have identified three aspects of evangelistic effort: The church's, the

committee's and the Christian's efforts. These are not either/or distinctions but complementary sources from which to mount a Christian witness in our communities. I believe we must cease making all sorts of false distinctions and instead find ways to integrate evangelism programs based on these three aspects of evangelistic effort.

*Rev. J.L. Van Popta is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church in the Nation's Capital.*

<sup>1</sup>*Book of Praise* "Form for the Ordination of Missionaries" p. 624.

<sup>2</sup>Clark, G. *What Presbyterians Believe*. Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Philadelphia: 1956. P. 59.

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# The Light of the Gospel in Mexico

(second of two parts)

By C. Van Dam

In our previous article we looked at the history of the Independent Presbyterian Church in Mexico (IPCM). Now let us take a look at their seminary in Mexico City.

### The Seminary

The Seminario Teológico Juan Calvino is the official training school for the ministry of the IPCM and is managed by a Board of Governors made up of ministers and members of the IPCM. The professors are appointed by the General Synod of the IPCM. As already mentioned in the previous article, the seminary remained in the hands of the IPCM after the break with the CRC. The entire faculty was united in its resistance of Marxist Liberation Theology.

This seminary where I was privileged to deliver a series of lectures on Levitical law is located in a relatively quiet and beautiful part of Mexico City called Coyoacán. The school is housed in what used to be a private home and has been adapted for use as a seminary. The faculty consists of seven professors (see picture) and various part-time assistant and associate professors. Due



*The Juan Calvino Seminary building on Vienna 99, Coyoacán, Mexico City.*

to the dire economic conditions in Mexico, they are all full-time pastors who are supported by their respective congregations. They are also full-time professors. The costs of running the

seminary building are covered by the tuition fees of students who need to work about eight hours a day to make ends meet. Lectures and studies commence after 3 p.m.

There are two basic reasons for students to come and study here. The first is for preparing oneself for the ministry of the word and sacraments in the IPCM. The basic licentiate program to prepare for the ministry runs for 4 years. There are also Master of Theology and Doctor of Theology programs available. The second basic motive for coming to study at this seminary is to learn how the Word of God impacts on the fullness of life. For these students a Master of Education and a Master of Christian Philosophy are available, as well as a Doctor of Education program. Thus professionals from a variety of walks of life who already have had advanced education can be found studying at this seminary in order to find out what a Christian view of life and their particular vocation is. In that sense the seminary also functions as a type of Bible college which helps many overcome the lack of Christian schooling. The members of the IPCM are now endeavouring to set up Christian schools, but it is a long and slow process and in the meantime, the seminary meets an important need in this area. Indeed, in several ways the seminary acts as a catalyst for integrating the Reformed faith into Mexican society. After rejecting Roman Catholicism and after the failure of socialism, Mexican society is adrift and searching for answers. The Reformed faith has the solutions and the seminary wants to be in the forefront of giving those answers.

At the moment there are three (part-time) doctoral students, forty-one part-time master level students and 8 full time (and 4 part-time) students in the li-



*The Faculty of the Seminary. Back row, left to right: Professors Nicolás López M.; Misaél Custodio V.; J. P. Roberts; Salathiel Vázquez S.; Front row seated, left to right: Professors Jorge Ramírez C.; José M. Velázquez I., (rector); Victor Manuel Ramírez G. (Administrator). Not pictured: Prof. Virgilio Crisóstomo and all Associate and Assistant Professors.*

centiate program. The use of English is increasing in the student body and indeed the study of this language is now encouraged in the schools of Mexico.

### Concluding reflections

My recent trip to Mexico was most encouraging in terms of what the Lord is doing in that country. His Name be praised for what is taking place there! In the IPCM there is an unselfish giving and dedication for the cause of the Reformed faith. In the classroom I experienced a sincere hunger and desire to be

taught in the Biblical truths. The history of the IPCM indicates there is a very strong commitment to the undiluted Reformed faith and what I saw and heard only confirmed that central fact. These churches want to be faithful confessional churches. After their rather unpleasant experiences with the CRC there were isolationistic tendencies in these churches and a desire to withdraw from any contact with others. That has now changed and the message I heard is that the IPCM would love to have more contact and interchange with the Canadian Reformed churches. They would also like us to share in the challenges of mission in Mexico. The fields are white for the harvest, but their labourers and resources are few. A strong desire was also expressed for more contact between the seminaries that can be of mutual benefit. It should be remembered that Mexico has a position of leadership in Latin America and what happens in Mexico may have an impact far beyond its borders.

Based on my reading about their history and my experiences of this recent trip, it is to be hoped that ways and means can be found for a meaningful interaction between the IPCM and the Canadian Reformed churches in the ecclesiastical and other channels that are available. May all this serve the glory of the name of our God and the coming of His kingdom. 



*The participants in the Saturday morning lecture (May 10, 1997).*



## Modesty Matters

Ontario is in the middle of a grand public debate concerning the “right” of women to dress topless in public places. The debate hit the press once the Supreme Court of Ontario ruled that women had as much right as men to appear topless in public, and that it was not lawful to impose restrictions on them in this regard. Since that time the Premier of the province has also gone on record as stating that while society could not condone an action like this in the regular business and commercial venues of the province, what happens at the beach is a different matter. This, he intimated, seems to be society’s perspective as well.

It’s just another sign of the times indicating to what depths we have descended in order to defend what is perceived to be an inalienable “right.” Somehow we can’t seem to avoid having people – even women themselves – defending positions (and poses) which are degrading to women, rather than a token of increased status or equality with men.

In the climate of such a debate, Rev. C. De Prine of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church of Bowmanville wrote a short article in his church bulletin which later appeared in *The Trumpet*, the magazine of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches. He presents a Scriptural viewpoint on the matter, which we all – including our young people – do well to ponder. Rev. De Prine writes

In setting forth those things that should govern the conduct of women in the gathering of the church, one of the things which Paul mentions is “that women adorn themselves in modest apparel” (1 Timothy 2: 9). Now it is important to remember that the Apostle is speaking here to women who are members of the church, women professing godliness. He is not giving directives to unbelieving women who

might be present when the Lord’s people gather for worship.

The women of the church are to adorn themselves in “modest apparel,” that is, in “becoming dress,” dress which is both modest and with good sense. The woman’s outward dress is to be a reflection of an inward invisible veil of a chaste attitude and disposition. Now while the Apostle says nothing about such things as the length of one’s skirt or the tightness of its fit, he does give us indications here of what he has in mind.

He says that a woman’s dress should not be with “braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array.” Is the Apostle saying that it is wrong for a Christian woman to wear her hair in braids, or to wear gold earrings, a necklace of pearls, or an expensive dress? No. He is condemning an ostentatious display of these things that indicates to others that she is coming to the house of worship controlled by attitudes and desires that are contrary to godliness. Why would a woman dress in an elaborate or immodest way except to call attention to herself?

If a woman appears in God’s house dressed this way, she is either doing it to parade herself (which is to commit idolatry), or to make others envious (which is to cause them to stumble and sin), or to draw attention to herself in an immoral way (which is a form of solicitation). In dressing like this, at the very least, she shows a lack of good sense and modesty.

What does a text like this tell us? It tells us that while our outward attire is never to be made a matter of detailed legislation in the church, nevertheless, one’s outward attire is not an amoral issue to be governed only by taste, fashion and personal preference. God reserves the right to tell us what we wear especially

when we appear in His house. He is telling us that our dress should reflect the state of our hearts. And surely it becomes both men and women of godliness to reflect something of this same modesty of dress at all times and in all places, even in hot weather and at the beach.

Beloved, let us take these things to heart as we all, both men and women, seek to adorn ourselves with that which is becoming to those “professing godliness.”

Perhaps we need to be cautious with respect to the motivations for what appears as immodest dress. Sometimes the younger set hardly realizes the kind of impressions they portray with their apparel. But, as Rev. De Prine points out, the language of the apostle Paul is clear. We should foster modesty in our clothing and appearance, to the glory of God, and for the benefit of our neighbour. 

### CHURCH NEWS



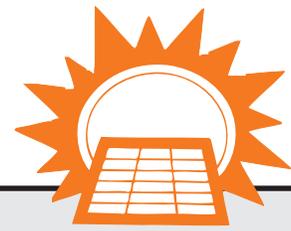
DECLINED to Chatham, ON  
**Rev. R. Aasman**  
of Edmonton Providence, AB

\*\*\*

CALLED to Coaldale, AB  
**Rev. W.B. Slomp**  
of Neerlandia, AB

\*\*\*

CHANGE OF ADDRESS FOR  
**Rev. D. de Jong**  
Van Ravesteyn-erf 168  
3315 DL Dordrecht  
The Netherlands



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

*“And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.” Revelations 21:23*

## Dear Brothers and Sisters:

This month this column is a little different from usual. I received a letter and a poem from Mrs. Anita Jansen. After reading it, I thought this contribution would give comfort and hope to all of us, and therefore I am using it to fill up my page for this month. First I copy part of her letter, because it helps to understand the poem.

*“I would like to tell you about my son, Marten. Marten is a seven year old child who has been through a lot.*

*When Marten was 3 1/2 years old he was diagnosed with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. This is a disease which causes his muscles to slowly weaken, starting with the legs and eventually the rest of his body. (He is currently in a wheelchair almost full time, by Christmas, he probably won't be able to walk at all).*

*When Marten was almost four years old, he was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia. This is a fast acting type of cancer in the blood stream. He has been in remission for 3 1/2 years now, and just finished a three-year chemotherapy regimen. I wrote this poem about him, because it is his faith that keeps us going. I thought that you may want to use it in your column, that others may receive encouragement from it.”*

Oh, For the Faith of a Child

“What will happen when I die?”  
Was the question asked of me.  
Like he had an intuition,  
Of what was meant to be.

“You will go to heaven,”  
Was my answer, pat and true.  
However, this easy statement  
Was not good enough for you.

So, the Bible we did open,  
Turned to Revelation 21.  
We read “The New Jerusalem,”  
The city with no sun.

For the light will be God's glory,  
Its streets are paved with gold.  
Its gates will be of pearls,  
They will not crumble or grow old.

There we will be with Jesus  
And our Father, in all glory.  
We will be free of all this life,  
Its pains and sins and worries.

“There's more than this, “I said to him.  
“The blind there, they will see.  
The deaf man, he will hear again,  
And the lame will walk with me.”

At that, his eyes grew wider  
And a smile crossed his face.  
And from his wheelchair, grinning  
He said, “That all sounds very nice.”

Yes, he's had a life of sorrow,  
Lots of pain, and many tears.  
Yet this child has more wisdom  
Than his mom of many years.

For though he cannot walk too well,  
And his life's been far from fun.  
With longing in his eyes, he said,  
“Then to Jesus I can run.”

And when He takes you home with Him,  
And into His arms you run.  
I'll pray for a little of your faith  
And know that your battle is done.

by Anita Jansen

Thank you, Mrs. Jansen, for sharing your and Marten's faith and comfort with us.

## Birthdays in September:

### 8: Marsha Moesker

18955 Sunrise Ave. Surrey, BC V3S 7M5

### 11: Mary Vande Burgt

c/o Fam. Togeretz, 32570 Rossland Place,  
Abbotsford, BC V2T 1T7

### 14: Jerry Bontekoe

“ANCHOR HOME,” 361 30 Rd. RR#2,  
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0

### 29: Paul Dieleman

156 St. Catharines St., Unit 12,  
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

Marsha will be 20 this year, Mary 41, Jerry 33, and Paul 28.

A Happy Birthday to all of you! and until next month,

Mrs. R. Ravensbergen,  
7462 Hwy. 20, RR#1, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

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# Farewell evening for Rev. and Mrs. Wieske

On May 30, 1997 at 8 p.m. Chatham's congregation gathered in the church for the farewell evening of Rev. and Mrs. Wieske. Mr. Bob Beintema, elder and clerk of the Council, was the M.C. He opened with prayer and reading Psalm 138 after which he expressed a hearty welcome to all who came to celebrate the 4 1/2 years' service of Rev. Wieske.

Before proceeding with the program the MC asked the congregation four questions. The one who gave the correct answer first would receive a program in "color." The following questions were asked: 1st – How old is Rev. Wieske? (59); 2nd – How many children does he have? (8); 3rd – How many grandchildren does he have? (30) and 4th – What is the name of the oldest child? (Janet). We were amazed how soon these questions were answered correctly. A sign that our minister was well-known in the congregation.

We continued then with singing Hymn 64: 1,2,3 and 4 after which various members participated in the program. The children of Eben-Ezer school beautifully sang "This earth belongs to God" under the leadership of one of the teachers, Miss Annette Buist. Eleven year old Stephen de Boer excellently played a piano solo. Sr. Tracy Bultje, sr. Jackie Bultje and br. Pete Bergsma did a very comical skit: "Wieske, Wieske, Wieske" (pronounced as Whisky, Whisky, Whisky), which was ended by presenting flowers to Rev. and Mrs. Wieske by several children.

Mr. Mike de Boer and Mrs. Jenny Ytsma sang for us "Faith of our Fathers" and "Have Thine own way Lord." Both were received with a good applause. Br. Arend Smid recited some nine poems in Dutch and English, written by well-known authors.

The students of the catechism classes expressed their thanks with the words "Roses are Red" in which each student presented a red rose and a well-known reminder of an incident of what happened during the classes, to Rev. Wieske.

The members of the Young People Society recited a "Farewell" poem with several comical remarks.

Brother Pete Bergsma from the Administration Committee mentioned some very humorous remarks, experienced with Rev. and Mrs. Wieske, regarding some desired improvements in the manse.

Elder Jake Van der Gaag spoke words of thankfulness to Rev. Wieske for his 4 1/2 years' service and presented Rev. and Mrs. Wieske on behalf of the Council and congregation with two beautiful oil paintings, a book about Kent County with pictures and a cheque for future use.

Representatives of the Thamesville Women Society (Mrs. Sandra Vander Veen and Miss Joanne Vander Veen), of the Dutch Women Society in Chatham (Mrs. Teena Van Dieren) and of the church of Watford (Rev. J. vanWoudenberg) expressed their appreciation for Rev. Wieske's labour in the congregation and the neighbouring church of Watford. They all wished him God's strength in his work at Rockway. Coming to the close of the evening Rev. Wieske was given the opportunity to speak. He thanked the congregation for this beautiful evening and the gifts, also on behalf of his wife. He was aware that his work was done with shortcomings, but always tried to educate the congregation with the riches of God's Word and the love of the Lord for His people, which love also had to be reflected in the congregation and which he and his wife indeed experienced during the years in Chatham.

After singing Hymn 32:1 and 3, elder George Bultje closed the evening with prayer, in which he thanked the Lord for the faithful service of His servant in Chatham.

I like to finish this official part with the wish, printed on the back of the program. "May the Lord bless your work in Rockway." We had a social get-together in the basement with coffee and refreshments.



On the next day, Saturday May the 31st, Rev. Wieske did his 11th funeral "service" during his stay in Chatham, due to the passing away of Sr. Teresa Algra on the Wednesday the 28th of May.

On June the first in the afternoon service, Rev. Wieske held his farewell sermon. He choose as text: Revelation 22:6-9 and the theme of the sermon was "The glory of the Revelation of Jesus Christ" and he considered three points:

- 1st - It is true and certain
- 2nd - It calls for a believing response
- 3rd - It must bring you to worship God alone.

We sang Hymn 64 "Ye servants of God" as closing hymn with Rev. Wieske on Chatham's pulpit for the last time during his stay in Chatham, ON.

A.J. Ytsma 

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# Pastoral Letter

Issued by the Free Reformed Churches of North America

## Out of concern for all confessing and baptized members

A recent synod of the Free Reformed Churches of North America published the following "Pastoral Letter." With permission, we have taken it over from *The Messenger* (July/August 1996), the magazine of the Free Reformed brotherhood. This letter contains warnings that are instructive for all believers and which ought to be taken to heart by us all. – Editor

To All Confessing and Baptized Members,

With regret the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches has noticed that many secular thoughts, customs, habits and forms of entertainment are increasingly affecting members of our congregations, as if these were acceptable to Christians. In view of this, Synod wishes, to remind our members of the doctrinal and ethical principles of Scripture relating to these issues.

We confess that the Bible is the infallibly inspired Word of God, sufficient and authoritative for faith and life.

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness* (2 Timothy 3:16).

While Christ gathers His church out of the whole human race, her calling, while she remains in the world, is to reflect His holiness, (John 17:15-20; 1 Peter 1:15,16). Scripture exhorts us not to conform to the pattern of the world's practices but, by spiritual separation from the world, to consecrate ourselves to God in our thinking, speaking and acting (Romans 12:1-2).

*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?*

*And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?*

*For ye are the temple of the living God: as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,*

*And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.* (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

Friendship with the world and love for riches, pleasures and practices of the world are not only great dangers and hindrances to spiritual life and growth, but are contrary to love for God.

*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

*And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.* (1 John 2:15-17).

\* \* \*

***And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.***

***Romans 12:2***

\* \* \*

We need not abstain from all contact with the world, nor deny authority to those placed over us. But in order to be a Christian witness in the world, a distinct life-style is important.

*Ye are the salt of the earth: But if the salt have lost his savour wherewith*

*shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*

*Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid . . .*

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.* (Matthew 5:13,14,16).

In light of the above principles, God's Word also comes to us with the following applications to our lives:

- A. Scripture exhorts us to strive daily to the utmost of our ability, to adorn our profession with good works and with chasteness in habits, speech and clothing, desiring more to adorn ourselves in modest apparel than to keep up with the trends or fashions of the world (Titus 2:11-13; 1 Timothy 2:9).
- B. Synod urges that all confessing and baptized members also avoid those practices or influences implicitly forbidden in the Ten Commandments. Although not intended as an exhaustive list, the following may serve as examples:
  - 1. All practices related to the occult, such as fortune-telling, consulting horoscopes, ouija boards, as well as other rituals, recreations, or amusements which promote the principles and practices of anti-Christian religions, spiritism or the occult. (Deut. 18:9-12; Gal. 5:20).
  - 2. The idolizing of movie actors, sports heroes and other popular figures in society.
  - 3. All blasphemous, violent and pornographic films, videos, games, books and magazines (Ps. 119:37; 2 Tim. 3:2; Col. 3:8; Phil. 4:8).

4. Desecration of the Lord's Day and neglect of worship services (Isa. 58:13, 14)
  5. Disrespect for the authority of parents, office-bearers and all those in authority over us (Eph. 6:1ff., Heb. 13:17; Rom. 13:1ff.).
  6. All forms of induced abortion, the practice of euthanasia, drug and alcohol abuse, smoking and other forms of endangering our health and life (Gal. 5:21).
  7. Sexual immorality in all its forms, for example pre and extra-marital sex, homosexuality and all Biblically unwarranted birth control (Gal. 5:19; Heb. 13:4).
  8. Dishonesty in business, including tax evasion and other illegal ways of increasing one's wealth (Eph. 4:28).
  9. All false representation, gossip or hurtful reporting regarding others which may malign their reputation (Eph. 4:31; Phil. 2:3).
  10. All covetousness or inordinate desire to become rich and increased with goods at the expense of one's spiritual good and that of one's family. (1 Tim. 6:6-10).
- C. Synod, therefore, also urges that all baptized and confessing members seriously consider that almost all television productions convey an anti-Christian perspective of life and consequently are harmful to spiritual life and growth. For the same reason synod warns against theatre attendance, all God-dishonouring music (such as rock, rap, country, and certain forms of so-called gospel music), as well as night club attendance and dancing, since all of these tend to promote disrespect for God and others or nurture sinful desires and attitudes. Another evil to which many in our society are becoming addicted is gambling, especially in its popular form of state or provincial lotteries.
- D. Contact with the world should not become compromising friendship, so as to avoid being "unequally yoked together" with unbelievers (Ps. 1:1; Jas. 4:4; 2 Cor. 6:14). Such an unequal yoke in marriage is especially warned against (Gen. 6:4; 1 Cor. 7:39).
- E. Recreation is beneficial to maintain physical health but should be used

moderately so as not to threaten our spiritual well-being, or result in neglect of duty (1 Tim. 4:8).

- F. When vacationing, serious attempts should be made to worship at churches of our own denomination, or, if this is not possible, at churches of which one may be reasonably sure that the Truth is preached (Heb. 10:23-25). Furthermore, it is undesirable to take long vacations which conflict with faithful attendance of worship services in the congregation to which we belong.
- G. In order to have our affections set on things above and not become absorbed in the affairs of the world, Scripture exhorts us to exercise our-

selves in godliness. To this end, personal and family devotions are helpful as a means to make God's Word our meditation all the day (Col. 3:1,2; 1 Tim. 4:7,8; Ps. 1:2; 119:97).

Synod issues these Scriptural exhortations with the prayer that the Saviour and King of the Church may use them to call our people to repentance, so that we may walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called and as a church manifest more of His holiness. Knowing that our sinful tendency is toward legalism on the one hand and careless rebellion on the other, let us prayerfully acknowledge dependence on the Holy Spirit to write God's law upon our hearts.

## THE BATTLE SONG OF GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS

*The following was composed in prose by Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, after the battle of Leipzig, Sept. 7, 1631. It was versified by his chaplain, Jacob Fabricius.*

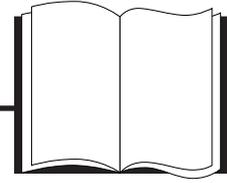
Fear not, O little flock! the foe  
Who madly seeks your overthrow;  
Dread not his rage and power:  
What though your courage sometimes faints?  
His seeming triumph o'er God's saints  
Lasts but a little hour.

Be of good cheer; your cause belongs  
To him who can avenge your wrongs;  
Leave it to him, our Lord.  
Though hidden now from all our eyes,  
He sees the Gideon who shall rise  
To save us, and his word.

As true as God's own word is true,  
Nor earth or hell with all their crew  
Against us shall prevail.  
A jest and byword are they grown;  
God is with us, we are his own  
Our victory cannot fail.

Amen, Lord Jesus; grant our prayer!  
Great Captain, now thine arm make bare;  
Fight for us once again!  
So shall the saints and martyrs raise  
A mighty chorus to thy praise  
World without end! Amen.

Translated by Catherine Winkworth, 1855.



By A. Blokhuis

## Combined parental schooling or home schooling?

The tinder is out of the tinder-box and the consequence of this is a flaming fire, fed by sincere passion. At issue of course is schooling, formal, meaning organized, or home schooling.

Is this a manifestation of true spiritual revival or the characteristics of a rebellion among the flock of our Lord, Jesus Christ?

When we read the history of Israel during the time of the Judges, we can not help but be struck by the fact that each period of decay and revival took about forty years. Sometimes we read of: forty years of oppression followed by deliverance only to be followed by forty years of decay. Think also of the forty years in the wilderness – punishment for their lack of trust and unbelief.

Our churches and schools have existed about forty years, give or take a few, in this country. I see myself as a member of the “sandwich” generation. I was a very young observer of the effects of the “vrijmaking” (liberation), and witnessed the consequent growth of the liberated schools, being myself one of the first students to enter one such school, namely, the second grate at the Groen Van Prinsterer School, in Spakenburg, Holland. I had spent my first year in a two-room school, a little more than a converted barn.

I experienced the formation and growth of church life in this country, and saw the committed members of mostly parents, but also single church members, stand shoulder to shoulder in the cause of “true faith.” Should we establish ourselves in comfort first? No! First, establish the Church! And so it went. Rented facilities, church basements, etc. No sooner was the church established than that the groundwork was put in place for our schools. It is with sincere humble thankfulness that those parents realized the blessings that flowed from God for their arduous labours.

That these labours are now spurned by some of the younger generations is

inexcusable but understandable. Many parents and grandparents remove themselves from their task of leading as “fathers of houses” by basking, or baking down South until “well done” for periods of up to four months or more. They have become, so called, “content and complacent.” “I have fought the fight and have survived the struggle,” they say. “Let the young take care of their own; we want some well deserved rest, peace and quiet” – as if we can opt in or opt out of God’s kingdom work!

There are many small congregations which we would not consider viable – using our own foolish human calculations – who are earnestly and prayerfully working in faith to establish their own schools. Often the churches they build have provisions for school facilities already incorporated into their design.

Is all this to say that I am against or opposed to home schooling? Absolutely not! I take very serious my promise made at the baptism of my children, (entrusted to us by the Lord) but I am obligated to all baptized children, yours as well as mine, and therefore agree to support their education as well as of my own. That is the only acceptable way among God’s elect. It means, being a hand and a foot to one another. I have the greatest respect for those who home school their children when it is simply not possible to send their children to a Christian school where the undefiled Truth is taught. It is my prayer that their efforts are blessed by the Spirit in whom all believers believe. The public school system leaves us with no alternative.

How about home schooling where our (the Lord’s) schools exit? In my view, this is an indefensible situation.

1. It has been said, There are those, and rightly so, who cannot afford to send their children to our schools.

It is to our eternal shame if we, as brothers and sisters, do not enable these unfortunates to experience the love that binds us. Are we not our brothers keepers?

2. There are those who claim their children are unduly influenced by sinful behaviour acquired at school.

Is it not true that we confess that we are inclined to all manner of wickedness, in fact, incapable of any good? Cat. L.D. 3, Q.A.8

Satan does not concentrate His efforts surrounded by His followers, but uses extreme measures among the saints. Take comfort from what we have in the Canons of Dort, “Fifth Head of Doctrine The Perseverance of the Saints” Article 3, God Preserves His Own.

3. There are parents who are convinced that they cannot leave the teaching of their children to others.

Is this not precisely the reason why we become involved in the teaching process of our, as well, all covenant children? As communion of saints we are duty bound to serve with zeal all inclusively rather than only our own exclusively.

Reflect on and pray for those who are involved in the education of our covenant children. Those home schooling in isolated areas, schools comprised of dedicated fathers and mothers like you and me committed, together as God’s children, unselfishly following where the Good Shepherd leads.

Teaching may always be in a state of flux but the fundamental Truth of His Word stands firm forever. May His Promise elicit a Love response from every single one of us.

The views expressed in Reader’s Forum are not necessarily those of the editorial committee or the publisher.

Submissions should not exceed 900 words. Those published may be edited for style or length.

By T.M.P. Vanderven



## Summer Reading An odd collection of older and newer books

### *Read in order to live* (Gustave Flaubert, 1857)

#### Reading

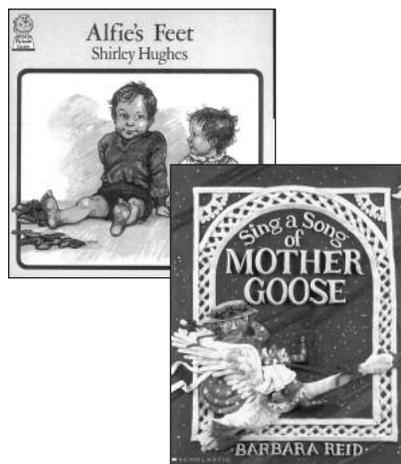
I found this saying of Flaubert on the title page to the first chapter of the remarkable best-seller **A HISTORY OF READING** (Alberto Manguel). In the first chapter Manguel describes his journey towards becoming a reader, and in the remainder provides a captivating account of reading through the ages. This is not a dry account of the development of books, the book trade, and the importance of being literate. On the contrary, the author shows how reading has everything to do with life; he writes of his own experience: *Each book was a world unto itself, and in it I took refuge.*

Indeed, as another author states, literature deals with significant truths expressed in appropriate elements and memorable language. Reading good books opens worlds for the reader; it provides pleasure, and will help enlarge our understanding of ourselves and the world we live in. The Bible is our first and main book that will give the reader pleasure and broadens the understanding – the Lord God in his infinite wisdom made use precisely of this medium to reveal himself to his people. The Bible is not merely *a world unto itself*, it describes people and their world in full reality and truth. It's the standard for all of life, and all human endeavour, including that of writing books. Christians are people of The Book, and to them reading ought to be a most treasured ability.

In this article I offer some delicious honey for a child heart to be eaten during the summer months for instruction and delight. I add some temptations for adults as well, lest they feel neglected!

#### Early reading

Children need to be introduced to books from as early an age as possible. Start, of course by reading to your child



from a very early age – some argue that already in the womb an unborn child is sensitive to voice and language, and thus the recommendation is born that mothers (and fathers!) should read out loud to their unborn child. Too far-fetched? Perhaps, yet it is clear that parents have a tremendously important task in introducing their children to the wonderful world of books and ideas, of strange and magical worlds, of lovely sounds that can tickle the tongue and our fancy. Check out the books written and illustrated by artists such as **Shirley Hughes, Ezra Jack Keats, and Jan Ormerod.**

Hughes' lovely books about Alfie and his real-life mischief will become beloved by mother and child alike, such as **AN EVENING AT ALFIE'S, ALFIE'S FEET, ALFIE GETS IN FIRST.** Hughes is a British children's book author, and this is clear from her illustrations. However, these are so true to life and wonderfully amusing, that words and illustrations truly supplement each other. Reading and looking and talking flow together into a satisfying event that will call for more!

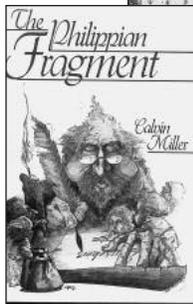
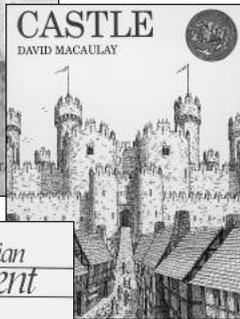
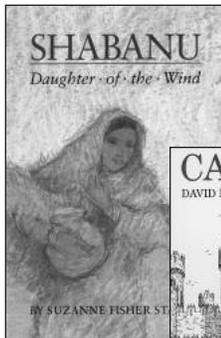
Ormerod is an Australian, and her books for little children are equally exciting. In her wordless picture books

**SUNSHINE** and **MOONLIGHT** she gives an account of typical early morning and evening rituals in a family – it could be yours! How many small children crawl into their parents' bed early in the morning? And what about the rushed get-dressed routines because it is so cozy to snuggle in bed for just a minute longer? *Reading* a wordless book, you ask? Indeed, these books invite your children in and will give the youngsters much pleasure in talking about their own lives. Ormerod's **KITTEN DAY** includes minimal text. The words are the thoughts in the little girl's head as she plays with her kitten: *I think that you're a thirsty kitten . . . that's right, you are, you see!*

Ezra Jack Keats is a well-respected creator of books for the very young. He has received the Caldecott Honor medal for some of them, in recognition of the quality artwork in these books. Some of the titles are: **WHISTLE FOR WILLIE, JENNIE'S HAT, A LETTER TO AMY,** and the award winning **GOGGLES!** Books of quality are often those in which the author manages to truly represent life. Peter wants desperately to learn to whistle, but whatever he tries, it does not seem to work. Till all of a sudden . . . And what girl has never dreamt about a beautiful hat, more beautiful than that of the most gorgeous princess. Keats manages to touch strings in the hearts of our young people which will make them read and read again, and wonder and dream.

#### Independence in reading

Usually our youngsters learn to read in school, taking from one to four years to become independent readers. Parents and teachers will then have to ensure that the learning process itself does not hinder the development of a love for and interest in reading. Let these two always go hand in hand:



skill development and interest development. It is thrilling to see the youngsters suddenly discover that they *can* read – silently even, in their head!

There are quite a number of simple books available to them at this stage, often called chapter books. Take a look at the series **THE I CAN READ BOOKS**. These are well-produced, and offer fiction as well as non-fiction. I have with me **THE DRINKING GOURD** by F.N. Monjo. This book tells the story of the underground railway in simple prose and artful illustrations. Each page has no more than approximately 50 words and an illustration which supports and extends the text. Most readers at the end of Grade 2 or the beginning of Grade 3 will already be able to manage such a book. Other well-known books in this series are Minarik's **LITTLE BEAR** books. Make the reading of these books a joint adventure.

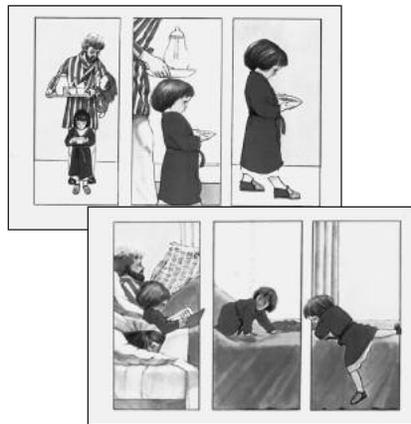
Beginning readers find it taxing to read page after page, so you might try to read in turns, or get your children to read along with some of the key phrases or sentences. In this manner you can create quite an enjoyable performance. A classic picture book that can be read in this manner is **MILLIONS OF CATS** (Wanda Gag). Children will readily pick up the refrain: *Cats here, cats there / Cats and kittens everywhere / Hundreds of cats / thousands of cats / millions and billions and trillions of cats*. Another title which can be read in this manner is **THE BEARS ON HEMLOCK MOUNTAIN** (Alice Dalgliesh). The chant *There are no bears on Hemlock mountain*

helps Jonathan to suppress his fears (isn't this what even adults do at times?).

By the way, do not be overly concerned with the presence of difficult words (millions, trillions). I continue to find it an illustration of the amazing power of the human mind that children as young as four or five derive great pleasure from the books of **Beatrix Potter**, and she uses quite difficult language at times!

### Poetry and song

Don't miss introducing your children to the magic of poetry: rhythm, sounds, rhymes, and strange, fascinating images. Despite her age, **MOTHER GOOSE** remains popular among young and old. Canadian artist Barbara Reid produced a newly illustrated version which she called **SING A SONG OF**



**MOTHER GOOSE**. Reid's illustrations are particularly attractive because they are made in plasticine (Reid has also published a book on how to make such plasticine pictures). This may well be a nice diversion for a rainy summer's day. Recently I discovered yet another version: **MOTHER GOOSE: A Canadian sampler**. The "sampler" in the title refers to the work of twenty-nine Canadian children's illustrators who collaborated to produce this book which is a virtual visual feast.

**KNOTS IN A COUNTING ROPE** (Martin & Archambault) is a conversation between an Indian grandfather and his blind grandson. Perhaps two friends (10+ year old) can prepare a performance of this poem, against a self-made backdrop with others miming the actions. It is not necessary to memorize the whole poem; find two books and work on your expressive reading.

Most of us will be familiar with the work of the poet Robert Frost. I found an illustrated version of one his poems,

**BIRCHES**. Such a book is in fact an interpretation of the poem, and may give an incentive to create a personal interpretation. The artist who did this Frost poem is Ed Young, whose work has received the highest praise. One title: **OWL MOON** (Jane Yolen) is a lovely book, indeed. He also created an illustrated version of the well-known poem of the wise men who went to see the elephant (though all of them were blind): **SEVEN BLIND MICE**. Quite a profound book that brings philosophy into the home (and classroom).

### How things work

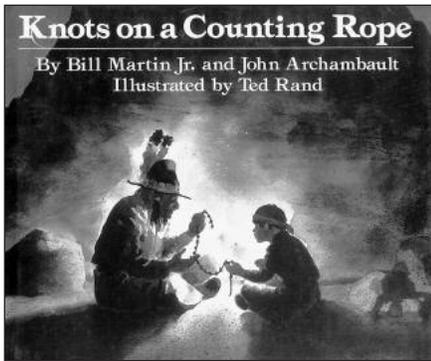
Informational books are much sought after by older children. When they discover the world, they often are keenly interested in **HOW THINGS WORK**, the title of one of David Macaulay's books. Other titles include **CATHEDRAL**, **CASTLE**, **PYRAMID**, **CITY**. Fascinating reading because of the amount of detailed information and the artist's ability to draw the reader in. Check out the computer store, because some of these titles are now available on interactive CD-ROM and video.

The books in the "cross-section" series are worth considering. My favourite is Stephen Biesty's **MAN-OF-WAR**, a marvelously detailed book about Admiral Nelson's flagship the Victory. An interactive CD-ROM is also available.

Remember that puzzle of the grains on the chessboard: one on square one, two on square two, four on square three, and so on with double the number of grains on the next square till you've used the whole board. How much grain will be needed to get to square 64? You will find the story (not the answer!) in **THE KING'S CHESSBOARD** (David Birch).

A favourite summer pass-time is a visit to a pioneer village. Children and adults are also fascinated by "the olden days." The award-winning **A PIONEER**





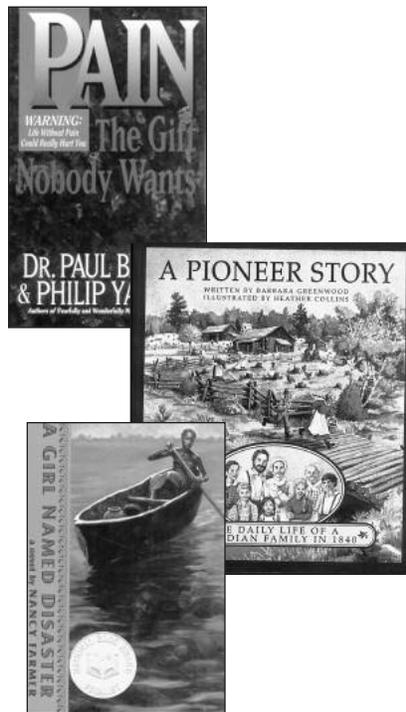
**STORY: The daily life of a Canadian family in 1840** (Greenwood & Collins) provides a lovely introduction to such a visit, as well as a useful source to check on further details after the visit is over.

The last non-fiction book I want to mention is **THE MIDDLE PASSAGE** by Tom Feeling. This book gives an account of the voyages of the slave traders who sailed from Africa to America. It is a wordless picture book for adults because words fail to describe the horror and the pain wreaked upon the Africans by European traders, the Dutch among them. This is not a book for the weak-hearted, yet neither is it a book to be shunned. It is a telling elegy, lest we forget.

#### Some suggestions for young and old teenagers:

- **HERO OF LESSER CAUSES**, Julie Johnston – what would you do when your favourite and only brother suffers from polio?
- **A GIRL NAMED DISASTER**, Nancy Farmer – Nhamo sets out for Zimbabwe, alone on the Musengezi river to escape a cruel man and to find her father.

- **PANGUR BAN**, Mary Stolz – life in ninth century Ireland during the dreadful times that the Vikings raided the island. A good introduction to the best-seller **HOW THE IRISH SAVED CIVILIZATION**.
- **SHABANU: Daughter of the wind**, Suzanne Fisher Staples – compare Shabanu with Nhamo: both girls struggle against circumstances and traditions; Shabanu is a coming-of-age story set in Pakistan's Cholistan desert.
- **THE SLAVE DANCER**, Paula Fox – a flute player was such important asset to have aboard a slave ship



that captains would not hesitate to kidnap a piper if they heard one.

#### Some suggestions for those who feel older yet:

- **MIND RENEWAL IN A MINDLESS AGE: Prepare to think and act biblically**, James Boice – A study of Romans 12 : 1, 2. attempting to provide practical help for avoiding world conformity and living a transformed life.
- **O PIONEERS!** Willa Cather – I recently discovered this Pulitzer Prize winning author. This book describes the experiences of early immigrants at the beginning of the 20th century. Cather's other books are also good reading.
- **PAIN: The gift nobody wants**, Paul Brand & Philip Yancey – A sensitive, informative, and graceful book about man's most common enemy: pain. Also check out **FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE** and **IN HIS IMAGE**: your appreciation for God's amazing creation of the human body will increase many fold.
- **THE PHILIPPIAN FRAGMENT**, Calvin Miller – A satirical description of life in the (early) church in the form of a reputedly newly discovered manuscript of the letters of Eusebius of Philippi to his beloved friend Clement.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

By P. Aasman

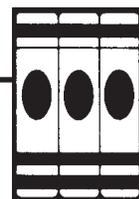
### The Bleeding of the Evangelical Church

David F. Wells, *The Bleeding of the Evangelical Church*. Edinburgh, England: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995. 13 pages. \$ 2.00 (U.S.)

David Wells is the author of the famous 1993 book, *No Place for Truth*, in which he gave eloquent expression to a growing consensus, that evangelicalism was sacrificing its doctrinal depth in the interest of the evangelical passion for the conversion of the lost. Since 1993, many have joined the public debate concerning evangelicalism's apparent anti-intellectualism, and its

yielding to American pragmatism and consumerism. Several well-known evangelical scholars who have entered this debate include Mark Noll, Os Guinness and Richard Mouw.

It takes very little time to read this little booklet, (it is only 13 pages!), but you will be rewarded by a strong urge to lay your hands of the longer version (*No Place for Truth*) which gives fuller



expression to these ideas. This booklet presents one with tantalizing statements that simply demand a more substantive presentation. For instance, Wells says, "The importance of theology is eclipsed by the clamor for management skills, biblical preaching by entertaining storytelling, godly character by engaging personality and the work of the ministry by the art of sustaining a career." There are many similar insightful statements in this booklet.

Wells contends that the Evangelical Church is bleeding. The evangelical capital of theological insight and depth, accumulated over the past centuries is the life-blood of the church, but it is bleeding. The thoughts expressed in this debate surely deserves our attention if not to heal an anti-intellectualism and a consequent yielding to pragmatism and consumerism in our own midst, then perhaps instead to draw attention to the enormous capital of theological insight and depth which we have, and to celebrate it.

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By P. Aasman

## Ecclesiastes for Today

**Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Pundit's Folly: Chronicles of an Empty Life*. Edinburgh, England: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995. 88 pages. \$ 3.95 U.S.**

It is possible for a person to study the Bible by randomly opening the book, reading a passage and meditating on the message which he has read. Admittedly, this is not the best way to study God's word. The context is usually highly relevant to any message, but such a haphazard study can be done. There are, however, several books of the Bible that will remain a riddle, a virtually impenetrable mystery, unless one has first grasped the overall message of that book. This is especially true of the two books purported to have been written by Solomon: Ecclesiastes and The Song of Songs. No one is able to randomly read a chapter from these books and reflect on its message. He will inevitably be disappointed, disillusioned, puzzled or frustrated. He needs first to have a hold on the overall message.

*The Pundit's Folly* is an attempt to give such an overall perspective for Ecclesiastes, and to draw out the significance of this book for the reader at the

dawn of the 20th Century. Ferguson does an admirable job. But he does it in an arm-chair fashion. There is no discussion of authorship, date, or addressee. Never does he even slip a word in edgewise on such matters. He maintains his goal of providing a practical and popular introduction to Ecclesiastes, and yet without sacrificing the depth of the message.

The Reformed touchstone for any biblical exposition is twofold: Is it theocentric (does it deepen the revelation of who God is)? Is it christological (does it reveal God through Jesus Christ)? This booklet measures well on both counts. The whole substance of Ecclesiastes, Ferguson demonstrates, is the significance of God to human life. The Teacher (Qoheleth) describes "life under the sun" as burdensome, futile, frustrating and meaningless. The expression "under the sun," Ferguson argues, simply means: life from a secular point of view, life without God. The Teacher discovers that life becomes futile only when we cut God out of the picture. He makes this discovery for himself, having been frustrated in trying to find meaning in life through education, the pursuit of pleasure, accomplishing great works and finally through the prospect of success. It is only when life is viewed through the filter of 12:13 "Fear God," that these pursuits are redeemed and meaning is restored to life.

However, this theocentric substance of Ecclesiastes is presented in a christological way. The little parable about a small city rescued by the wisdom of a poor man from a powerful king who tried to capture and destroy it (9:13-18), is the christological key to Ecclesiastes that leads us beyond life "under the sun," out of the meaninglessness of life into the joy of fearing God as His children. Jesus Christ is the poor man who will deliver us by His wisdom.

It is questionable, however, whether this parable functions as the logical turning point in the Teacher's search for meaning in life. While Ferguson's exposition of this parable is undoubtedly correct, his suggestion that it functions centrally in the Teacher's search, and that this is what leads to the discovery that meaning is found in "the fear of God" is not proven and does not seem likely when one reads through Ecclesiastes. Rather than to isolate one passage as christologically central to the message, it seems more reasonable to find christological teachings throughout the book.

*The Pundit's Folly* is basically a traditional exposition of the main message of Ecclesiastes, but Ferguson's vigorous and often poetic prose makes this little volume especially delightful to read and meaningful for the study of Ecclesiastes.

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By Tony Jelsma

**Phillip E. Johnson, *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds*  
132 pages, \$10 US  
InverVarsity Press, 1997**

When I was interviewed by the consistory in preparation for my making public profession of faith, the discussion included my plans for my future career. When I informed the consistory that I was planning to study Biochemistry, one of the elders asked me whether that might not have some dangers, considering that I would have to deal with evolution. My response was something to the effect that if evolution is wrong, further scientific enquiry would only show more clearly how wrong it is. While this answer is true, in my naivete I had not considered the prejudices of scientists in their refusal to acknowledge God's actions in the formation of the world. Thankfully, biochemists are not preoccupied with evolution (though most accept it), so my creationist beliefs were not seriously challenged in my studies. Now that I am teaching Biology in a Christian university, I am struck by how the Biology textbooks are so organised around evolution that Darwinism appears foundational to the study of Biology. How can a young Christian eager to learn about God's Creation deal with this? How can any person who is not trained in Biology be able to counter the dogmatic statements of the thousands of Biologists who accept evolution? Phillip Johnson's latest book will help Christians deal with this challenge.

Phillip Johnson is a Professor of Law at the University of California in Berkeley and is the acknowledged leader of a movement which exposes the fallacies of evolutionary theory and shows instead how the world gives clear evidence of intelligent design. Johnson's first book *Darwin on Trial* exposed not only the faulty logic behind Darwinism, but also demonstrated that the scientific evidence does not support the theory. Johnson's second book, *Reason in the Balance* showed

the ramifications of naturalism (the doctrine that “nature is all there is”) on society in general. The latest book, *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds* is intended for a different audience, namely senior high school and beginning university students as well as their teachers and pastors to equip these students to deal with evolution when they encounter it.

In *Defeating Darwinism* Johnson reveals the faulty reasoning of people who try to reconcile Christianity with evolution. The theory of evolution states that we arose as a result of a random and purposeless process. This is not a scientific but a philosophical statement, one that is incompatible with Christianity and God’s providence. However, people who reject evolution are portrayed as Bible-thumping fanatics who distort science by insisting on their own interpretation of the Bible. In chapters such as that entitled, “Tuning Up Your Baloney Detector” Johnson shows how

it is actually the evolutionist who distorts science. The reader is equipped to look critically at arguments made in favour of evolution and see the theory for what it is – a house of cards.

*Defeating Darwinism* does not contain a lot of *heavy science*, instead the reader is referred to other books for more detailed information. Its purpose is to prepare the reader to encounter the academic climate in Biology, one of evolutionary naturalism. As the case against Darwinism gathers momentum (see also Michael Behe’s book *Darwin’s Black Box, The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*) Johnson encourages young Christians to take up the cause. Although creationism is looked upon as foolishness by the scientific establishment, God chooses the foolish things of the world to shame the wise (1 Corinthians 1:27). By opening our minds to see Darwinism for what it is Johnson wants to drive a wedge deeper

into the rotten log of evolutionary naturalism and split it wide open.

When Christian students study at a secular university there is a justifiable concern that their faith will be challenged and even threatened by their professors. This is the case not just in Biology but in all areas of study. This is not a reason to avoid such study, but we are called to serve God with our mind as well as our heart and soul.

I would recommend this book to all those students who are likely to encounter evolutionary theory in their studies, as well as to their parents, teachers and pastors to help them encourage and equip these students to fight against and conquer the spirit of the age, evolutionary naturalism.

*Dr. Tony Jelsma lives on Darwin Drive in Riverview, New Brunswick, and teaches Biology at the Atlantic Baptist University in Moncton.*



## PRESS RELEASE



### Press Release from the Committee on Bible Translation Concerning the New International Version (NIV)

1. On December 12, 1996, we had issued a press release via *Clarion* indicating that an inclusive language edition of the NIV was being released in England, and that tentative plans were being made to prepare an inclusive language edition of the NIV in North America by the year 2002. With this press release, we would like to inform the churches of further new developments.
2. On May 27, 1997, the International Bible Society (which owns the copyright to the NIV) published a press release indicating that these plans have been definitively canceled. The International Bible Society (IBS) states in part:

- IBS has abandoned all plans for gender-related changes in future editions of the New International Version (NIV).
  - The present (1984) NIV text will continue to be published. There are no plans for a further revised edition.
  - IBS will enter into negotiations with the publisher of the NIV in the U.K. on the matter of ceasing publication of its “inclusive language” edition of the NIV.
3. The IBS press release also indicates some of the rationale for this decision. “The NIV doesn’t belong to the IBS or our licensed publishers, it belongs to the people,” said Dr. Victor L. Oliver, board chair of IBS. “Virtually all other contemporary Bible translations already reflect gender treatments consistent with the language of today. However, the NIV has essentially become the

Bible of the evangelical church, which has come to trust in, and depend upon, the NIV’s current accuracy, clarity, and readability.”

Dr. Oliver noted that in recent weeks it has become very clear that many people in North America don’t want the NIV changed, even if many Bible scholars feel a revision could more clearly reflect shifts in English language usage, and more precisely render the meaning of the original text into English for current and future generations.

“As the most popular contemporary version of the Bible ever published, we knew the significance of the NIV,” said Dr. Lars Dunberg, president of IBS. “But it was not until the evangelical community became aware of the possible revision that we realized the beloved place this translation occupies for the Bible-reading public.”

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