

# Clarion

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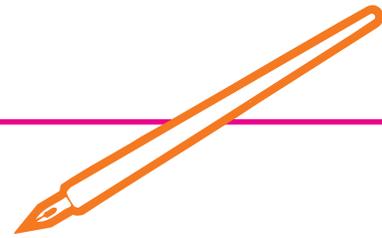


*Studying at a secular university*

Numbers

10:1-10

By J. De Jong



## Another test case . . .

Not long ago the *National Post* reported on a significant case that will be heard in the Supreme Court some time this fall.<sup>1</sup> It concerns the right of a British Columbia Christian university, Trinity Western University in Langley, to fill out its teachers' training program with a practical component, the so-called Professional Development Program. Students graduating in this programme are currently required to take their practical development year at Simon Fraser University, since the TWU programme has not received the required certification. In 1995, the British Columbia College of Teachers, a government agency administering and maintaining professional standards for British Columbia teachers, refused to certify TWU to administer the practical training which would allow their graduates to teach in the public school system. The reason? This would lead to the promotion of discriminatory views against gays and lesbians in British Columbia public school classrooms. The refusal has been contested twice in the British Columbia higher courts and in both cases it was considered a red herring. But this is a tenacious organization with plenty of spending power. So the case is now on the docket of the Supreme Court in Ottawa.

*All students are responsible to refrain from practices that are contrary to biblical teaching.*

### The university stand

According to the *National Post* story, TWU requires all those seeking admission to the university hold to the following guideline: "All students are responsible to refrain from practices that are contrary to biblical teaching . . . including premarital sex, adultery, homosexual behaviour, and viewing of pornography." Although one could find more things to add, this Community Standards statement is a good summary of what Scripture teaches with regard to the seventh commandment. This position is being contested by the College of Teachers as representing a system of values which discriminates against gays and lesbians and is "inconsistent with the attitudes of wider Canadian society." One catalyst prompting appeal to the highest court is the tendency of more higher courts in the land to view sexual orientation as a basic human right. The argument is simple: if the orientation and the practices of homosexual behaviour are legitimate rights in the country, those espousing other views cannot reasonably serve as teachers in secular schools.

### Rights versus rights

This case is just another test case – a good indicator of the way things are headed in modern western society, and especially in our own country. Ever since the Charter of Rights was passed in 1982 the power of the judiciary has increased dramatically. Parliament has abdicated its responsibility to pass legislation on moral issues, leaving the courts to make the decisions. It becomes the prerogative of the courts to determine what constitutes current public opinion on a moral issue, and then legislate on one's rights accordingly. The issues of abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality and homosexual marriage have all passed through the higher courts in one form or another, and the grip of traditional values has steadily been eroding. In a multi-cultural society, so the argument goes, we need toleration for everyone's views and behaviour patterns, and the rights of marginal groups' needs to be respected as well.

However, this drive to secular "toleration" has drastically changed the face of modern democracy. For in the absence of a holistic and consistent world view, the rights of one group clash directly with the privileges and rights of others. For example, secular education sees public funding as a right, but that right is categorically denied for separate schools, at least in Ontario. Similarly in this case, we have a clear clash of rights. The rights of gays and lesbians with regard to their values are given precedence over the right of a fully recognized university to administer its own teachers' training programme for the benefit of its students and of society as a whole. The university and its degrees are given government recognition; but the door is closed to the graduates in the teaching field! A circle of contradictions!

*Let us continually pray for those in positions of leadership and authority.*

### The tyranny of democracy

The abdication of parliament in moral issues and the subsequent increasing power of the higher courts has had drastic consequences for our modern democracy. It has opened the door to a new tyranny, the tyranny of the majority over the minority. For when what constitutes majority public opinion on any moral issue becomes the lever by which rights are defended for some groups and stripped away from others, one sees the moral values of some (the

majority) become the legally binding measuring rod for the privileges and rights of the others (the minorities). When certain opinions regarding a moral question assume the force of law binding all to a specific code with no opportunity to differ, one encounters a new form of intolerance and discrimination, in this case the tyranny of the majority against the minority, public opinion against the rights of graduates with traditional values.

### What's inside?

By now, many of our readers will have heard about the challenge against Trinity Western University's right to demand of its students that they abide by the moral teaching of the seventh word of the covenant. Trinity Western demands of its students that they refrain from premarital sex, homosexual behaviour, pornography, etc. Dr. J. DeJong's editorial examines the challenge against this university's right to make such demands of its students. Considering that this is about to go to the Supreme Court this fall, the editorial is timely.

We have in this issue the final article in a series by Dr. C. Trimp. He deals with a reality that exists today which our ancestors in the 16th century would not have dreamed of, namely, the great variety of Reformed churches that exist alongside each other. He states quite frankly that it is absurd to have two or more churches of Jesus Christ in one location. This compels true churches of Jesus Christ to seek unity in an open and frank discussion with one another. This is timely considering, for instance, the discussions our churches are having with the Free Reformed Churches, the United Reformed Churches, and others as well.

As was promised previously, Prof. J. Geertsema's editorial, "Reality: What is it" is now followed by an article dealing with studying reality at the secular university. This is not a short article. Neither is it light reading. At the same time, it will be a blessing to our young people who are attending or considering attending a secular institution of learning. We need to know what kind of humanistic spirit awaits us in college and university.

Rev. J. van Popta presents a meditation on "the wellspring of life" in Proverbs 4:23. Considering that he lives in what has proven to be one of the driest places in Canada this summer, he aptly and meaningfully uses the images of "dry" and "wet" in his meditation.

Dr. C. Van Dam has submitted one book note and one book review in this issue. His book review is on a book written by Dr. John Boersema from Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ontario. Dr. Boersema is a member of the Ancaster Canadian Reformed Church and is well-known to many of us. It is a pleasure to read a good review about his book, *Political-Economic Activity to the Honour of God*. Hopefully this will encourage us to read the book.

We receive from the Church at Guelph an article in connection with Rev. A. J. Pol and his family leaving Guelph for Carman. Also in this issue is a letter to the editor from A. Bareman regarding a meditation by Rev. J. Slaa. We also have Rev. Slaa's response.

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#### EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Visscher

Managing Editor: R. Aasman

Coeditors: J. De Jong, N.H. Gootjes, Cl. Stam

#### ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS:

CLARION

26 Inverness Crescent, St. Albert, AB T8N 5J3

Fax: (780) 418-1506 E-Mail: raasman@canrc.org

#### ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

(subscriptions, advertisements, etc.):

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.

One Beghin Avenue

Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5

Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202

Email: clarion@premier.mb.ca

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## What is needed?

In this growing clash between the rights of one group versus the rights of others, one notices the ever greater vacuum in our modern age. We no longer have a common heritage, a common goal or common purpose. The ideals that built the country, along with their roots in the Judeo-Christian tradition, have all been levelled in a sea of post-modern opinions, options and viewpoints. Without a holistic and unifying conception of what political and social values should look like, the very fabric and structure of the system begins to tatter, and precisely that which it was intended to prevent – tyranny and absolute rule – rears its ugly head more and more.

The values of democracy are workable, and fair enough: individual rights, personal freedom, and popular sovereignty. But every political system needs a collective sense of what it means to be “one nation under God” if those values are going to have any effect, or be properly maintained. And where the fundamental religious foundation is lacking, and where any collective sense of respect for historical traditions and ultimately for biblical values no longer holds sway, polarization, factionalism and intolerance will only increase. The public promotion of gay and lesbian rights is

only a few steps away from the violence and sanctioned abuse characteristic of Sodom and Gomorrah.

## Pray and work

Any collective sense of being one nation under God begins with a respect for his law as the central standard of truth and justice in any social and political context. Public opinion cannot be the last standard; we need God’s standard. His law is not simply a rule for believers, but also a standard for civil order, national well-being and universal peace. Throw away this standard (if it were possible!) and corruption, unrest, polarization and violence will only increase all the more.

Let us therefore continue to work, speak and act in such a way that we also seek to set forth and uphold the law of God as the abiding standard for civil and societal life as well. Only that can give us and our children a peace that lasts. And let us continually pray for those in positions of leadership and authority, that notwithstanding the pressures of the modern age with its apostasy, they may judge fairly and justly, according to God’s law, and so promote the well-being and good of all. For “those who forsake the law praise the wicked, but those who keep the law resist them.” (Prov 28:4). 

<sup>1</sup>The article appeared in the *National Post* on July 15, 2000.

# Thanksgiving

by R. Aasman

In recent weeks, there has been a flurry of activity around the country as farmers have taken their crops off their fields. Combines have been combing the fields; market gardens have been pulling their crops off the fields by the wagons full; orchard owners have been taking in the fruit from the trees; and vineyards have been relieved of their bunches of grapes, except in the case of those grapes being reserved for ice wine. It is true that not every farmer and not every part of Canada has enjoyed a good crop and harvest this past season. In some places it was too dry and in others it was too wet. The consequences have been devastating. Our thoughts and prayers certainly go out to those who are faced with poor crops. However, by and large, our country has been richly blessed with abundant crops, a healthy economy, low unemployment and prosperity. As we enter the thanksgiving season, we know that we have a lot for which to be thankful.

Are we thankful? Are we thankful in the sense that we truly reflect over the implications of all our material blessings and give serious thought as to how we are to use this to the praise and glory of our God? It is easy to remember God in the difficult times and pour out our

hearts to Him as we ask Him for the things we need. But when times are good – the barns are full in a manner of speaking – then we can forget that we still rely upon the Lord and need to thank Him for his gifts. We read in Deuteronomy 8 that when the Lord was bringing his people into the land flowing with milk and honey, his great concern was that their material prosperity would make them forget the Lord their God: “You may say to yourself, ‘My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.’”

It is precisely when we have gathered in the harvest and sense that our material needs have been more than adequately covered, that we should reflect on how good God had been to us. We should tell Him in prayer how grateful we are. Moreover, we should ask ourselves the question: now that God has provided so adequately for us, how can we use our blessings and gifts in a meaningful way to praise God and work for the coming of his kingdom? That is why the Lord blesses us so richly. It is for the purpose of giving us life and the ability to use our lives to serve Him and build up the lives of our neighbours. That is true thanksgiving.

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# Our responsibility

By C. Trimp

We are people with a limited life span, and there are many things that are beyond our capability. That also applies to our responsibility. We can carry only a limited responsibility with regard to the developments within Christ's church here on earth. It is not required of us to bear the burden of all centuries.

We are not accountable for the course of world history. None of us sits on the throne of this world. We may believe and confess that, for centuries already, honour is given to our Lord and Owner for his universal reign. One day the time will come that we will reign with Him over all creatures (Q&A 32 Heidelberg Catechism).

## Limited responsibility

Our responsibility is limited to us, our family, the congregation we are a member of, our church federation, and our effect on the outside world. It is an enormous terrain when we view it from our own perspective. It is a very limited terrain in the context of church and world history.

Within this confined area of our primary responsibilities we constantly run into the stubborn reality of dissension and schisms in the church and among its members. This difficult, hindering, painful and embarrassing reality accompanies us continually. To some extent we try to get a grip on this situation by, for example, studying the historical circumstances, considering the points of dispute, endeavouring to empathize with the emotional undercurrent of the differences of opinion, and searching personally and as a community for a settlement of these differences.

It turns out that the closer the two sides were originally acquainted, the more painful the effect of discord is. In specific terms we can think of the division between people who love the same Bible and confession as we do, and who want to direct their faith and life by it.

## An undreamed-of situation

In this respect we are confronted with situations in this century that our ancestors in the 16th century could not have dreamed of even in their most frightful dreams. The great variety of Reformed churches that exists today would have been incomprehensible for them. One could link a number of cultural, political and theological observations to this reality, but we will omit that at this point in time.<sup>1</sup> The one fact that concerns us now is that we are not able to get a firm grip on the actual church situation when we attempt to classify this situation solely with the aid of the terms that Article 29 of the Belgic Confession hands to us.

*We are confronted with situations in this century that our ancestors in the 16th century could not have dreamed of.*

Understand this: we do not want to part with the confessional terminology of "true church" and "false church." We deem these terms indispensable in exercising our responsibility in this present day and in view of the future. However, this does not mean that Article 29 of the BC has foreseen *our* days and that it can provide for all the needs of *our* time. That has never been the pretence of any confession. The wisdom of the Holy Spirit is not available from a storeroom. It is only found in a present day relationship with God. From this knowledge we can conclude the following:

- It prevents us from making the confession into a last word, as confessionalism does
- It allows us to look for new words in new situations

- It prevents us from storing the confession in a museum as a "declaration of emotion" and a product of its time.

## One location – how many churches?

Previously we discussed the fact that the church of Christ not only may, but even ought to present itself as Christ's catholic church at a specific location, since this signifies that the congregation recognizes that it is called to its weekly Sunday gatherings by none other than Christ himself. Furthermore, this conveys the message that all other children of God at this location are also called to come to this assembly.<sup>2</sup> This is because it is and remains absurd that in *one* location there are two or more churches of Christ. This simply should not happen, considering that Christ's church cannot have dissension as its mark. In her essence as church of Christ she is characterized by unity and catholicity. However, we know all too well that things that should not happen, nevertheless do happen. Not only to *our* grief – it is a sadness constantly endured by the Holy Spirit.

Let us assume we have two congregations, A and B, who conduct their church services across from each other. If both recognize that it is Christ who calls them to gather as a congregation, then both A and B will present themselves as Christ's catholic church at that location. (If one of them does not recognize this, they consequently proclaim themselves to be a sect or a religious association for insiders only, or an exceptional denomination). This indicates that both churches claim the title of "catholic church of Christ." Therefore it is inconceivable that for a long period of time A and B would not approach each other. The love of Christ and godliness ought to urge them to address each other. If we search for one another, we and others will recognize that we love God.

As long as we take our own and each other's claims seriously, we will always have questions to ask each other and probably also a few complaints to bring before one another. However, we know that we are accountable to each other in the duty to search for healing of a relationship that is chronically ill.

With God's blessing, dialogues of this sort will bring forth a collective knowledge of our shortcomings with regard to each other, and also a mutual prayer for

- deliverance from our collective powerlessness
- healing of the wounds that have been inflicted
- forgiveness of the shame that we have caused our Lord Jesus Christ in our personal and public life.

For meetings of this type we do not need (red, yellow or green) labels, or name tags, that are (either directly or distantly) derived from Article 29. Our

immediate source and norm we find in the first line of Article 27 of the Belgic Confession.

*It is and remains absurd that in one location there are two or more churches of Christ.*

### Do away with Article 29?

We will not do away with Article 29 as if it were an expired passport. We will gladly be addressed by others on the point of "being a true church." We desire to hear from other children of God what they have understood of Christ's work in this day and age. Furthermore, we also like to hear what these other persons comprehend of their confession's language when it speaks of the "yoke of Christ" and the reality of the "falsification" of the church.

We will be sure to have some questions about the past to ask of the person with whom we are speaking. There will also be warnings with the future in mind. Different questions will be asked of different churches, and different questions will be asked of us by these churches. If we would be able to discover ways in which we can speak with each other in a good and meaningful way, then a lot of good could come from that with God's blessing: humility, recognition and encouragement. And all this would be a little bit of collective imparting of the salvation that we have received in Christ, the Head of the Christian church.

<sup>1</sup>About the limited reach of Article 29 BC I have written before in the magazine *De Reformatie* (Nov. 13, 1993, 69, 115f)

<sup>2</sup>At this point we do not mention the fellow citizens in the same location of these church members: "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). 

## *Thanksgiving*

When all Thy mercies, oh my God,  
My rising soul surveys,  
Transported with the view I'm lost  
In wonder, love and praise.

Oh how shall words with equal warmth  
The gratitude declare  
That glows within my beating heart?  
But Thou canst read it there!

Thy providence my life sustain'd,  
And all my wants redrest;  
When in the silent womb I lay,  
And hung upon the breast.

When in the slippery paths of youth,  
With heedless haste I ran;  
Thine arm unseen convey'd me safe,  
And led me up to man.

When worn with sickness, oft has Thou  
With health renew'd my face;  
And, when in sin and sorrow sunk,  
Reviv'd my soul with grace.

Ten thousand thousand goodly gifts  
My daily thanks employ,  
Nor is the least a cheerful heart  
That tastes those gifts with joy.

Through every period of my life  
Thy goodness I'll pursue;  
And after death, in distant worlds,  
My strains of love renew.

Through all eternity to Thee  
A joyful song I'll raise;  
For oh! eternity's too short  
To utter all Thy praise!

*Addison*

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# Studying reality at the secular university

By J. Geertsema

## A new year of study

About this time, a new year of study has just started in schools, colleges, and universities. In all these institutions of learning, the object of study is what one could call reality. It is what God in his creation has given us (see the editorial in the previous issue). Especially at the universities, the different fields of study and the amount of knowledge constantly increase. This can make studying an exciting business. The goal of all study is to gain knowledge, dependable true knowledge which builds up life.

Most universities and colleges are secular institutions of learning. Few are Christian. I am not dealing here with the question whether one should study at a Christian or at a secular university. My aim is to help Christian (and other) students studying at a secular university to realise what they should be aware of in this place which does not reckon with God and his Word. When involved in studying an aspect of God's creation apart from the Creator, Christian students should watch out and be on the alert. They are the LORD's covenant children and servants of Christ. Therefore, they must take heed not to become an integral part of this world and its mind set, but to remain different.

## Maintain the antithesis

The calling here too is to maintain the antithesis which God instituted in paradise after the fall in sin between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15). The apostle Paul describes this antithesis in 2 Corinthians 6:14-17, "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For . . . what harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What has a believer in common with an unbeliever? . . . 'come out of them and be separate, says the LORD. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you. And you will be my sons and daughters, says the LORD

Almighty.'" God's Word concludes: "Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence to God." Loving the world means enmity toward God.

**Most universities and colleges are secular institutions of learning. Few are Christian.**

The Lord does not mean to say that his people cannot work or study in this world alongside unbelievers (see 1 Cor 5:9-11). However, He wants them not to "conform to the pattern of this world" (Rom 12:2). Believing Christian students will (and are to) apply to themselves what God's Word says in 1 Timothy 4:4-5, "For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the Word of God and prayer." This picture of the Christian believer expresses well the contrast with a non-Christian. Christian believers reckon with God and his Word and live in close communion with their God in their studying while the non-Christian does not do this. The secular university presents in this respect a typically non-Christian environment. This, in fact, means an anti-Christian surrounding of what is called in God's Word, "fools."

## Insightful books

The aim of this article is to aid the student in being aware of the character of the secular university "as God sees it." Hereby I refer to two books. The first one is from Francis A. Schaeffer, a well-known Christian author. It was published some twenty-five years ago and has the title, *How should we then live?* The second book is about ten years old and written by Eta Linnemann, a Chris-

tian New Testament scholar who turned from a fully liberal student and follower of her liberal professor into an "evangelical" believer. The title of this book is *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology.*<sup>2</sup> I will quote extensively from this book. Because the author has been an insider, both as student and as professor, and has been converted, she is quite sharp and outspoken, yet usually correct in her judgments as far as I can see. I mention these books because both are written very specifically for university students, with the very goal to help them to see what they should see.

Both books show the roots of the secular character of the present university and give the historical philosophical development up to our time. Even though I do not stand behind everything that is written, I wish that both books, especially the booklet of Dr. Linnemann (although it might be hard to get hold of), would be in the hands of every Christian student at any university (also Christian ones) for an eye-opener. The title of Linnemann's book gives the impression that she writes for theological students. In a way, this only applies to the second part. The first part deals with the historical philosophical development of all study at any western university. And even the second part presents instructive information for students in all disciplines. It shows that, at the secular university, theology is studied just like the other disciplines, in a "godless" manner.

## Studying creation the classical way

Dr. Linnemann states, "In the university, which from the start was an anti-Christian institution, there was soon no place for thinking which based itself consistently on God's revelation in his Word" (p. 32). She says further, "Every student who entrusts himself to the university must accept the yoke of the atheistic intellectual starting point as an inescapable necessity. . . . They are

permitted, to be sure, to have their faith in their private lives. . . . But they are forbidden to retain the living God and his Son Jesus Christ in their academic thinking, or to grant Him any material function therein. So they retain Jesus in their feelings, but they deny Him daily in their thinking, because this thinking follows atheistic, anti-Christian principles" (p. 33).

*Every student who entrusts himself to the university must accept the yoke of the atheistic intellectual starting point as an inescapable necessity.*

Both authors see the root of the present-day "anti-Christian" university in the Middle Ages. About the thirteenth century, the Church of Rome allowed its teachers (especially Thomas Aquinas [1225-1274] can be mentioned, Schaeffer, pp. 51-56) to study and adopt the ideas and concepts of the classical Greek philosophy. This meant not just Plato's ideas, but from then on, especially also Aristotle's ideas were being learned. The church itself went along with their learned leaders in accepting those ideas as reliable and dependable truth when it came to the study of creation (man and his world).

### **An improper contrast**

Herewith pagan thinking was adopted as truth in and by the church of Christ. For it meant, on the one hand, that a contrast (not just a distinction) was made and maintained between God/spirit/grace and earth/physical-biological life/nature (influence of Plato). On the other hand, it meant that the world and the different phenomena in the world received separate attention and became objects of study by themselves, apart from God, their Creator and his Word (Aristotle, through Thomas Aquinas, see Schaeffer, pp. 51-56). As a consequence, the academic world of those days accepted a contrast between the way to obtain knowledge about God, redemption, and eternal life, and the way to obtain knowledge about earthly man with his earth and life on it. Dependable knowledge about God and his salvation is gained through revelation in the Scriptures by faith. Dependable knowledge about man (as part of this earth) and the earth is gained through man's own careful scientific

observation and logical (rational) reasoning, apart from God's revelation in his Word.

What Aristotle meant is made clear from the description by Samuel Enoch Stumpf in his book about philosophy, *Socrates to Sartre*. He informs us that Aristotle:

invented the idea of the separate sciences. For him, there was a close connection between logic and science. . . . Science, as Aristotle understood it, consisted of true statements that accounted for the reasons why things behave as they do and why they *have* to be as they are. In this sense, science consists in the knowledge of the *fact that* and of the *reason why*. It includes both observation *and* a theory that explains what is observed. For example, one can observe steam coming from a kettle on the stove, but this mere observation does not by itself enable us to define "steam" in any systematic or scientific manner. A scientific statement about this observation would reflect a careful sorting out of the essential elements of this observation, setting aside all irrelevant details or "accidents" such as the particular fuel used for the fire and the kind of vessel used for the water, focusing squarely upon the special kind of event this is, the production of steam, and giving reasons for the occurrence of this event by relating heat, water, and steam in such a way that one can know, have proof, why and under what conditions heat and water produce steam. The most important thing in science is therefore the language in which it is formulated.<sup>3</sup>

This theory of Aristotle about the method and principle of obtaining dependable knowledge has been the rule at the university since the late Middle Ages until our time. It is only now losing its force (at least somewhat) in present day post-modernism (see the articles of Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff<sup>4</sup>).

### **Dividing knowledge**

The result of Aquinas's introduction of Aristotle's philosophy was, thus, a principal division in man's body of knowledge. The study of the knowledge about God (theology) was separated from all other study (philosophy, then the collective name for all other study). This foundational rift between grace and nature, and consequently between the assumed subjective faith-knowledge about God and salvation through reve-

lation, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the assumed objective, neutral, scientific knowledge about man and his world and life here on earth through man's own rational, critical observation and scientific reason, was at first very subtle and hardly visible.

Practically all scholars in the academic world in the Middle Ages and immediately afterward were Christians. They believed in God. They believed that the earth was created by Him. For them theology was the "queen" of all knowledge and study. Philosophy was her "handmaid." But gradually, the rift grew deeper and became more visible. This happened in the first place through the Renaissance (the 14th to the 16th centuries). The word means "rebirth" and points to the "rebirth" of the humanistic philosophy of the classical Greek and Roman period.

The thinking of Greek and Roman philosophy is characterized by the saying, "man is the measure of all things." In the Renaissance, the "handmaid" began to liberate herself from her subservient position under the "queen" and to conquer a position of independence and equality. In the subsequent philosophical movement of the Enlightenment (about the 18th century) and afterward, the "handmaid" became the "queen." The "queen" theology was subjected to her former "handmaid" human philosophy (including, among others, the sciences). Human reason, not God's revelation in his Word, determined what could be and was true and what could not be true. (The beginning of the rule of human reason over God's Word is visible in the struggle around the Canons of Dordt.)

*Man does not give a place any more to the living, active Creator in the study of his creation.*

### **Rejection of God and his Word**

The movement of the Enlightenment led eventually to the total rejection of God and his Word in all scholarship, not only in all the natural sciences and all humanities, but even in theology. Man again became entirely the measure of all things in academics. Man determined what his "god" had to be and was. The "god" he formed for himself in his rational thinking was his man-made and manlike idol.

This result is still present in the 19th and 20th centuries. Man does not give a place any more to the living, active Creator in the study of his creation. But also the liberal theological scholar has dismissed the living God from the study of theology and of the Bible. The Bible is no longer the book of the self-revelation of the living God. The study of theology is viewed as the study of the mythical faith-contents of what people in the Old and New Testament times believed. Theology has become the study of human religion as a human phenomenon. Man has also here become the measure of all things. Knowledge about God from above has become knowledge about the history of human religious ideas and concepts about "god" coming from below, from man himself. This knowledge about the religion of Israel and that of the early church could also only be obtained through historical critical (scholarly) observation and rational critical reasoning. Only the results of such study are said to present dependable truth. This point of what liberal theology is and how it works is the topic of the second part of Dr. Linnemann's book.

### Summarizing

To summarize the above, the secular university has agreed on this axiom, this foundational presupposition for all its study, that mostly all true dependable knowledge is and only can be obtained through observation of the world and through careful logic reasoning about what is observed. Dependable knowledge is that knowledge which is scientifically verifiable and verified. Here is not just the denial of God's active involvement in the world; here is the denial all together of God's very existence. Man has reasoned himself into an atheist, the "fool" of Psalm 14.

The above is a brief rendering of the picture of the historical development toward and the present condition of the secular university and all study there, including (Christian) theology, as Schaeffer and Linnemann paint it before our eyes. On this basis Linnemann comes to her conclusion that the secular university is "anti-Christian" and "god-less." Both authors protest against this studying of reality which is not the real, true reality, since the living God has no place in it. We must agree. This protest is correct. This leads us to the next question.

### Can knowledge be dependable?

In a separate interesting section (pages 64-71), Linnemann deals with

"The Dependability of Thought." She means scientific, rational human thinking as it is done at the secular university. She begins with stating:

We are accustomed to regarding thought that is disciplined and regulated by scientific principles as reliable. Further, we are accustomed, not only to distinguishing between faith and thought, but also to separating them from each other, so that faith is banned from the realm of thought, and thought deems itself to be excluded from the realm of faith. Both of these customary viewpoints which we have thoroughly accepted are highly deceptive.

*Restoration of human thinking toward dependability begins with regeneration through the Holy Spirit and the consequent humble submission to God's Word.*

This is because it is "through an anti-Christian decision" that "thought is so defined as to exclude God." What she means is that "in the perception of reality, the Creator of reality is not permitted to be taken into account." God teaches in his Word that "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of all wisdom." Over against this truth, the student at the secular university "gains the *impression* . . . that his thinking . . . is dependable." For "the student who undergoes or has completed critical study, is usually profoundly convinced of the dependability of scientific thought." This is so, even though today "philosophers of science are increasingly aware of the foundational crisis in science." Dr. Linnemann, then, makes the remark that this conviction of the dependability of critical scientific thinking by itself has no solid basis. It rests on "a confusion between the functional code system [that is, assumed presuppositions, J.G.] by means of which we have agreed to talk about reality and reality itself" (p. 65). These presuppositions, which have to function as a reliable foundation for studying reality, are "highly deceptive" since (she repeats) "in the perception of [this] reality, the Creator of reality is not permitted to be taken into account." Therefore, the decision to agree upon

these presuppositions is "an anti-Christian decision." (p. 64).

### Valid science

Dr. Linnemann acknowledges that scientific thinking has come and does come with true statements about reality. Science has discovered reliable facts in its research of creation. We can mention as examples many technical achievements in manufacturing machines, in electronic devices, in chemical products such as plastics, in medicines, and so on, which are based on discoveries of how creation works. The application of such "mechanisms" in creation determines our way of life in the 21st century. Thus, there are positive results of orderly thought, through which scientists have produced valid inventions. But, according to Linnemann, "all valid inventions are imitations or applications of the creation God himself has made. The principles God applied in his creation are recognized and applied. At best, then, the natural sciences are a rethinking of God's thoughts."

She presents as examples: "the production of paper out of wood" as "learned from the wasp," "aeronautical principles from birds," and "the principle of helicopter flight from the dragonfly." However, says Linnemann, "there exists the danger . . . of perverting the insights gained from God's creation through influences from tendencies which are inimical to God, man, and creation." Where man does not reckon with God as Creator, he does not take God's will into account either. With the insights gained from scientific research of creation, man goes his own way and comes with products that do not preserve and build up life, but have polluting and destructive results.

She mentions the jet air plane. Perhaps the gas guzzling and unsafe Concorde is even a better example. But also many of the insecticides and pesticides as well as certain medicines like the RU-486 have been destructive for life on earth. Especially the last hundred years have seen the extinction of a number of animals and the death of many people. While many inventions have a positive result, often the same basic invention is used for evil and destructive purposes when used for gaining riches or power or both. Looking at the many negative results, the question of the dependability of human scientific knowledge must certainly receive an answer that is negative to a large extent. And when these results are placed in the

light of God's will, this negative answer becomes so much more evident.

### Danger in the humanities

We read further that what is a danger in the natural sciences (the study of nature, such as physics and chemistry) becomes even more dangerous in the humanities (the study of man, such as anthropology, psychology, sociology, economics). For the humanities use examples from the natural sciences to establish the dependability of human thinking. In the humanities, however, human reasoning is much less objectively based than in the natural sciences; in the latter the "facts" are much more objectively verifiable. "The humanities lack the guiding safeguard of an external created order, if not always totally then at least substantially." Therefore, "if not grounded in God's Word, the humanities utterly lack objective footing, while the natural sciences possess a corrective at least in creation" (p. 67).

Further, this assumption that man is capable of "a neutral, objective and effective" dependable thinking is even more lacking a good basis because of "the reality of the Fall in sin (Gen 3), along with resulting human depravity and need for redemption" (p. 40). Fallen man is corrupted in his thinking. And his thinking is based on deception when he, in spite of this corruption, maintains that he is not corrupted. Restoration of human thinking toward dependability begins with regeneration through the Holy Spirit and the consequent humble submission to God's Word. It originates in the fear of the Lord. It has its basis in the gospel which teaches us that in Christ "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3; referred to on pages 24, 36, 59).

### Science in crisis

I like to end with what Linnemann says (quoted above) as a side-remark, namely that "philosophers of science are increasingly aware of the foundational crisis in science." This needs some elaboration. "Science" is here the natural sciences. Linnemann most likely alludes to the fact that the old certainties in the natural sciences are no longer certain since the impact of "the revolution in physics." This revolution was brought about through the relativity theory of Albert Einstein (1879-1955) and the theory of quantum mechanics of Max Planck (1858-1947), specifically as the latter was applied "to the structure

of the atom" by Niels Bohr (1886-1961). Physics after these scientists is called "the new physics." The old science was based on the "mechanical model" which is the theory that all things in nature work according to set laws (unchanging mechanics) of cause and effect in a deterministic system. The way in which the laws of nature work today is the same as it always has been in the past and will always be in the future. However, it was discovered that with the atom, things did not work according to this "mechanical model." The microscopic world of the atom "is unlike the macroscopic world familiar to us in everyday experience." In connection with this, I refer the reader to *The Soul of Science*, chapter 9, pages 187-189.<sup>5</sup>

The result of this "new physics" is for many a cause of fundamental uncertainty, not only in science, but also in life. With the old "Newtonian faith splintered upon the rocky shores of the new physics," a certain Mr. Shaw laments, "what is left of it? The orbit of the electron obeys no law, it chooses one path and rejects another . . . . All is caprice, the calculable world has become incalculable."<sup>6</sup>

**Consecrating your study to the Lord in a hostile, worldly environment is not easy.**

### The certainty of the Christian student

Well, as Christians, also as Christian students at the university, we do not panic. Our certainty is not science. It is not our human scientific observation and logical reasoning either. Our certainty and daily guide is the Word of the living, triune God who created all things and upholds them through his Son, who redeems and restores what was created through Him, and who sanctifies this restored creation through his Holy Spirit on the basis of his atoning blood, as a small beginning in this life already (Col 1:15-20 and 3:12-4:1).

We return here to 1 Timothy 4:4-5: "For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected." This includes the study of creation. "If," says Paul, "it is received with thanksgiving." This is the first element of the means of consecrating creation again: giving thanks for what God gives. The stu-

dents receive their study as a gift from the LORD God and they daily thank the LORD for it. Thanking God implies acknowledging Him as your God, your Creator-Redeemer-Sanctifier, and thus consciously serving Him in and with your study. In that way of giving thanks for your study, such study should not be rejected. "For," so the apostle goes on, "it is consecrated by the Word of God and by prayer." As a believer in God, you believe that your Saviour, God's Son, reconciled you with God through the blood of the cross and made you God's adopted child. You believe that He, through the Holy Spirit, regenerates you and makes you live out of faith, so that your life, including your study, is dedicated to your God and his service. This means the glory of his Name, the coming of his Kingdom, and obedience to his will. It includes the building of his people together with your brothers and sisters in and outside the university, being a hand and a foot for each other.

Consecrating your study to the Lord in a hostile, worldly environment is not easy. It means constantly and consistently seeking the wisdom and guidance of God's Word. For that Word, too, is the means for this consecrating. And this unceasing study of God's Word is (to be) accompanied by the third means of consecration: prayer. Word and prayer: listening to God and then asking for wisdom and strength from Him.

The Christian students who study in this way may trust that their Lord will guide them, even in godless surroundings.

More could be quoted. Enough has been said. Find the books. Read them, in particular the one of Dr. Linnemann. It will be really helpful for all who study at any university.

<sup>1</sup>Francis A. Schaeffer, *How should we then live? – The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture*, Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1976.

<sup>2</sup>Eta Linnemann, *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology. Reflections of a Bultmannian turned evangelical*, ET Robert W. Yarbrough, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990.

<sup>3</sup>Samuel Enoch Stumpf, *Socrates to Sartre: A History of Philosophy*, 5th rev. ed., New York etc.: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993, p.83-84.

<sup>4</sup>Clarion, vol. 49:7,8,9,10.

<sup>5</sup>Nancy R. Pearcey & Charles B. Thaxton, *The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy*, Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1994, pp. 187-189.

<sup>6</sup>Idem, p. 218.



By John van Popta

*Above all else, guard your heart,  
for it is the wellspring of life (Proverbs 4:23 NIV).*

In southern Alberta this year, we are experiencing the worst drought in decades: a drought of severity, some say, not seen since the *dirty thirties*. Each day the local newspapers tell us of farms whose wells and *dugouts* are drying up. The fields are parched and the cattle are being sold off because there is no water for them. Though in some areas irrigation is available for thousands of acres of farmland, vast areas of land have no water. The creeks and ponds are dry. Without water, life cannot exist. The fields are barren, the cattle thirsty, wildfires rage through tinder dry forests. Those who still have some water for their farms understand that it is a precious commodity.

In Israel there are no rivers that flow year round, except for the Jordan which flows from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. This river flows down a deep valley far below the farmlands of Israel. In ancient times water was collected and stored in cisterns or drawn from deep wells. Wells and springs have an important function in a land where there are no rivers. Wells were essential. In Genesis 21 and 26, we can read of the conflicts between Abraham and Isaac's herdsmen and those who worked for Abimelech. Isaac would dig a well and Abimelech's men would take it by force. Isaac would dig another and Abimelech would take it by force. Think of the story in Isaiah 7. Assyria is about to lay siege to Jerusalem and King Ahaz goes out to inspect the city's water supply. He would need to ensure that the spring and the pools and cisterns were well-guarded. Without water, a city would fall to siege in a short time. Years later, to ensure the security of the water supply, Hezekiah son of Ahaz, dug a tunnel to the spring outside Jerusalem so that even during a siege the city would have a secure water supply. The Gihon well was the wellspring of life. Without the well, there was no life. All life in Jerusalem flowed from that well.

"Guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. Above all else, do this!" Even as Ahaz and Hezekiah knew that the well that supplied Jerusalem was of the greatest strategic importance and needed to be guarded and kept safe from the enemy, so this proverb directs the young man to guard his heart. The first chapters of Proverbs are the words of a wise father to his son, from a teacher to his student. The master is setting before the apprentice wisdom for living. He tells his son to seek wisdom, to be faithful, to learn true love of God and neighbour. He urges obedience, commitment, and character: diligence, discipline, and devotion. He gives instruction about character, prudence, discretion, and sound judgment. He demands justice and gentleness. But above all else, do this: *Guard your heart!*

The heart is the centre of life. In the Proverbs, *the heart* often signifies what we think of when we speak of *the mind*. However, it can mean far more than that. The heart is the seat of emotion. It is the center of the will. It represents the whole inner being of man: who he is.

In the verses leading to our passage, we can read that the teacher says, "My son pay attention to what I say; listen carefully to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body." True life is not just something that you have. It is not static or superficial. Rather, life wells up, as truth is made one's own and then flows out.

The Lord Jesus might have been alluding to this verse when he said, ". . . for out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks" (Matt 12:34). Christ Jesus says that evil men bring forth evil and good men bring forth good. In another place the Lord Jesus Christ says that what comes out of a man's heart is what makes him unclean. It is out of men's hearts that wicked thoughts come: thoughts of sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly (Mark

7:21). Guard your heart from being taken over by the enemy, by the evil one. If the enemy takes over the well, then the city falls. If the enemy takes over your heart, then your life is his. If the enemy poisons the well then life dies off. "Above all else, guard your heart."

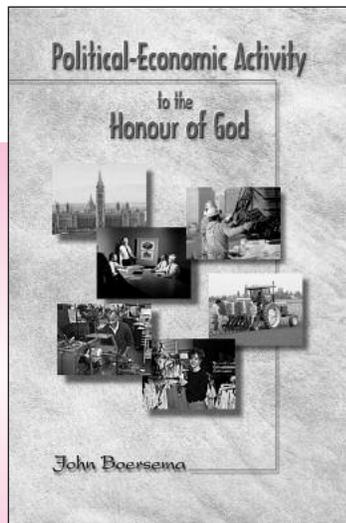
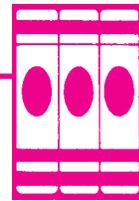
How then do we guard the heart? By listening to the words of the teacher, the master. Keep them within your heart (Prov 4:20). Even as Psalm 119:11 says: "I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you." It is the Word of God that we must use to guard our hearts. It is the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ that is our fortress and our defense. "Above all else, guard your heart." Do not let the wickedness of the world infiltrate your heart, but rather think about whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy. Then the God of peace will be with you (cf. Phil 4:8,9). Pray constantly that He will grant his grace and Holy Spirit to you that you might be able, above all else, to guard your heart.

Jesus says in John 7:38 that "whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." In another place it says that "the fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook" (Prov 18:4) and "the mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life"(10:11). The Lord Jesus Christ said to the woman at Jacob's well that he who comes to Him to drink will never thirst. He who comes to Jesus to drink will have a spring of water welling up to eternal life (John 4:13,14). Out of the heart flow living waters."Guard your heart."

Out of that source will come sweet water that will make your life flourish. You will be like trees planted along a stream (Ps 1:3). Life then is not a drought stricken land, with dry streams and empty dugouts and murky ponds and sloughs with stagnant water, but rather life will be a place of blessing and joy and celebration.

Rev. John L. van Popta is the minister of the Canadian Reformed Church of Coaldale, Alberta.





## Political-Economic Activity to the Honour of God

reviewed by C. Van Dam

John Boersema, *Political-Economic Activity to the Honour of God*. Winnipeg: Premier Publishing, 1999. Paperback, 355 pages; \$ 15.75 CAN

The title of this important study has been carefully chosen. This book undertakes to equip Christians to evaluate the economic policies of government or of political parties that seek their vote. It is, therefore, not simply about economic activity but about *political-economic activity*. This work also strives to measure everything according to the norms of Scripture and thus wishes to honour God.

The author, Dr. John Boersema, Professor of Business and Economics at Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ontario, is well-qualified for the task he has set himself. He draws not only on his scholarship but also his life experience, both in the business world as well as his involvement in the Christian Heritage Party where he worked on eco-

conomic policy development. The result is an impressive study that is balanced, practical and very carefully executed. The author recognizes the enormous complexity of his subject and repeatedly warns against simplistic approaches. His study also benefits from his desire to build on what has already been achieved by others in this field. For that reason, he spent a year in the Netherlands studying and critically interacting with the economic and financial policies of the Gereformeerd Politiek Verbond (GPV), a small Reformed party which holds two seats in the lower house of the Dutch Parliament. Since this party desires to base all its policies on Scripture, interaction with this party and their writings provided the author with excellent opportunities to probe questions such as: what makes their policies Christian? How do they relate to Scripture? What general Christian principles, if any, have they used to come to their positions?

Much material is covered in this publication, but the meticulous and clear approach of the author makes it accessible to the general reader. Furthermore, given that the purpose of this book is to equip Christians in the political arena, its focus remains practical, even as theoretical issues are discussed in some depth. It is impossible to do justice to this full work in a review for *Clarion*, but let me go through the chief contents and so hopefully whet the appetite of others to read this study.

### Orientation

After an introductory chapter, the author deals with the cultural mandate (Gen 1:26, 28; 2:15), "the first job description," and the related concept of stewardship as the biblical starting points for political economic reflection. "We must as God's stewards, develop the world to enable man to honour God" (p. 33).

In the third chapter, the derivation and use of principles and their relation to Scripture is discussed. The Bible does not always give direct answers to our

questions and so principles derived from Scripture must be used and applied. The author realistically notes that "many positions will be taken on practical, prudent grounds" (p. 43) but it is important to know when compelling biblical principles are involved that need to be heeded. The Ten Commandments (and the command to love the neighbour) are important for economic policy, as is also the realization of the pervasive nature of sin. Other essential principles for Christian economic analysis are biblical justice with its demand for equity and fairness, counting the cost, and personal responsibility. The concept of sphere sovereignty was not found to have strong biblical justification.

In chapter four, the goals of economic policy are detailed, the chief being full employment. Other goals include preserving the environment. Mindful of the dangers of materialism, Boersema wishes to speak neither of creating wealth nor of growth in and of itself as goals. Christians must distinguish between legitimate human needs and unlimited wants. "First priority must be given to whatever is necessary for all to carry out their God-given tasks" (p. 86). Price stability as a goal is important to counter the negative effects of inflation and deflation.

### Role of government

The next two chapters address the role and responsibility of government. Since God has given us governments to "restrain the licentiousness of men," this gives the government responsibilities, also in the economy, to provide a legal framework, to protect employees and consumers, and to help the poor. However, the principles of stewardship and personal responsibility should limit the government's involvement in economic matters.

When it comes to the directing of economic life, Boersema acknowledges that the market place is a means, albeit not a perfect one, to achieve our biblical goals. Christians should favour the market as a starting place

for economic decision making, although free enterprise should not be cloaked with biblical sanction. Only if a market solution is consistent with biblical principles (such as the protection of the weak and vulnerable in society) should it be supported. In Boersema's view, a completely unique Christian alternative to capitalism and socialism is utopian. Christians will move between the two with a preference for the market economy with its competition and incentives.

In the chapter on government and ownership, the following points are made. The Bible does not require or forbid either private or public ownership of property. Private ownership where it exists must be protected. It is conducive to the better exercising of personal responsibility and should, therefore, be encouraged. The government should own no more property than is required for it to exercise its task. Privatization should therefore be encouraged although its appropriateness should be evaluated on a case by case basis.

The question of course arises whether structural change is necessary to reflect better the biblical principles of developing the earth so that man can glorify God, of maintaining justice and

of providing for the poor and needy. Boersema's study suggests "that we should not be overly optimistic that Christian principles and goals will be better attained by the universal implementation of major change to economic structures" (p. 284).

### In conclusion

A final chapter pulls the main thoughts of the book together. The major conclusion is that because there is no biblically mandated Christian economic system, there are no easy and quick solutions to the problems we face in integrating faith and practice in economic matters. In a sober concluding comment, Boersema acknowledges that "the Christian approach must needs be an ongoing search for specific solutions to specific problems which best move us towards biblical goals. To expect a completely unique, different Christian alternative is utopian" (p. 302). Acknowledging that we live in a sinful world, Boersema concludes "All we can do is to simply do our work to the best of our ability as we seek to do political economy to the honour of God" (p. 302).

Six appendices, including one on the cultural mandate debate, as well as

a bibliography, conclude this important study. Unfortunately there is no index which would have greatly facilitated the use of this book as a resource. On the other hand, a full table of contents makes it possible to find major discussions on specific topics.

It is to be hoped that this book will be much studied and discussed, especially as we face a federal election within the next year. Complex economic issues, such as inflation and national debt, are meticulously explained and brought to the understanding of the average citizen. Invariably there may be differences of opinion on the use of a passage of Scripture here and there, or on economic policy itself, as Boersema himself illustrates where he differs with writings of the GPV with which he interacts. But almost always, Boersema's careful explanations are not easy to push aside. His arguments demand and deserve a hearing.

At a time when quick and easy solutions are sometimes offered on this continent, such as that the Bible mandates free enterprise (and most of our problems will be solved), it is gratifying to read a careful study such as this which seeks to apply all that is relevant in Scripture to the economic issues of the day. **C**

## BOOK NOTES

By C. Van Dam

### Conflict and Triumph

William Henry Green, *Conflict and Triumph: The Argument of the Book of Job Unfolded*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1999. Paperback, 177 pages. \$7.99 US.

This is a welcome reprint of a classic study of the main setup and lines of thought in the book of Job. William Henry Green was Professor of Biblical and Oriental Literature at Princeton Theological Seminary from 1851 to the year of his death in 1900. In those days,

Princeton was at the forefront in the defence of Scripture against liberalism. Although authored by an erudite scholar, this book is very accessible for the average reader. Green's purpose is to promote a holistic approach to Job so that one can understand the movement and thrust of the whole. Once that is realized, detailed study of its parts can be more profitably undertaken. In his preface, Green writes that he "will be par-

ticularly happy if any afflicted child of God can be assisted in drawing the waters of consolation from this inspired and copious source."

In ten chapters Green takes the reader through the highlights of Job and notes the points that are at issue. The book concludes with two appendices: "The Place of Job in the Scheme of Holy Scripture" and "The Doctrine of Immortality in the Old Testament." Recommended.

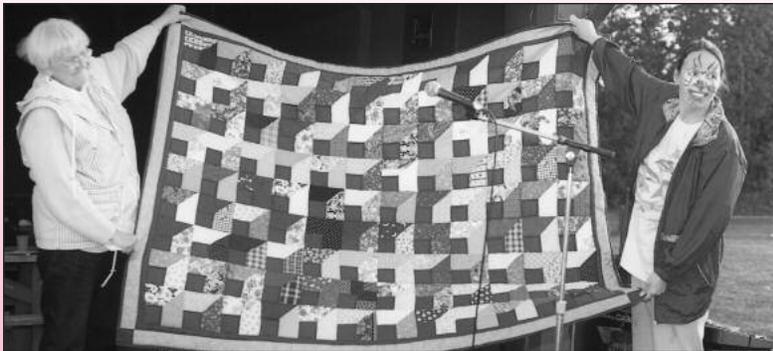
# Rev. A.J. Pol and family: Off to Carman West

By Theresa Westrik



*Rev. A.J. Pol receiving a watercolour painting from the congregation.*

*"Memories through an attic window." This quilt was presented by Riki Westrik (bottom left) to Inge Pol (bottom right) on behalf of the congregation.*



Carnival games, obstacle courses, face painting or a lively game of baseball – the list of activities at Guelph's annual church picnic seemed endless. On June 17, 2000, the sun shone brightly and the wind gently cooled Guelph participants as they gathered for an afternoon of fun in Maiden Park, located just outside of Guelph.

This year the church picnic took on a dual purpose: we got together to say farewell to the Pol family. Behind every painted smile, after the trophies had been won, even after a delicious barbecue, there was sadness in our hearts. Saying good-bye is never easy.

Reverend Pol and his family left Sumba, Indonesia and came to Guelph, Ontario in the summer of 1994. They

arrived with six children, most of whom were trilingual, speaking Indonesian, Dutch and English. As the years passed, the Lord blessed them with two healthy daughters. It was truly a blessing to see, each and every Sunday, the Pol family entering the sanctuary, one smiling child after the next, some of them even running to their pew seat!

After preaching the Word of life and truth week after week for six years, Rev. Pol received a call to Carman West. He, following God's will and guidance, accepted the call to leave Ontario and move to Manitoba. The time had come to say good-bye.

And so after an afternoon of fellowship and a delicious barbecue, the families all gathered together on a small patch

of grass. The group of well-wishers placed their lawn chairs in a semi-circle. The focus of the evening was on a small wooden stage set up just outside the park pavilion. The Pols had a front row seat to the action, and with a program in hand, listened to a wonderful variety of skits and songs.

The pre-school children started off the evening, followed by the school-aged children. Each group wished the Pol family God's blessings through their songs. Even the Pol family was invited on stage to participate in a trivia game. The Pols were split into two teams (you can do that when there are eight children), and they were asked questions about the families who lived in the Guelph congregation. Although it is not certain which team had won, they all proved to know their congregation intimately.

Two young women from Carman, recent newcomers to Guelph, shared some good stories about life in Carman. The evening would not have been complete without songs and skits performed by the Young Peoples Society, the Women's Society and the more senior members of our congregation. After the last song, Mrs. Riki Westrik, on behalf of the congregation, presented Mrs. Pol with a beautiful patchwork quilt entitled "Memories through an attic window." The families of the congregation created this unique quilt. Each family had an opportunity to make a square for the quilt and then write their names on the backside of the quilt. The squares were later sewn together with a matching border and with much love and care. Next on the program was a presentation from the new chairman of the council, Mr. Fred Westrik. He began his presentation by reminding us all of God's faithfulness to his church.

Even in the church of Guelph, Christ is busy gathering, defending and preserving his flock. Mr. Westrik thanked Rev. Pol, above all else, for his faithful

preaching of the gospel and his long hours of service in the midst of the congregation. Mrs. Pol was also addressed and thanked for her tireless efforts, as she too, a mother of eight, served the congregation members. At the end of his speech, the Pol children were called up and each received a small gift, a keepsake of Guelph. Finally Rev. Pol was presented with a beautiful water-colour painting of one of the old bridges in Guelph. Words of thanksgiving were spoken by Rev. Pol as the sun set and the evening drew to a close.

Reverend Pol and his family are leaving Guelph to go to Carman, but God will continue to preserve his church even during times of vacancy. The church in Carman West has gained a very compassionate and dedicated pastor and teacher. They have also gained a wonderfully warm and talented young family.

For those of you who live in this church community, do not be surprised



*The Pol family standing together on stage for the trivia game.*

when you hear the eldest Pol strum on a guitar, while the youngest beats on a tambourine. Listen, for it will be a sound pleasing to your ears. For those of you who have received this new family in your midst, do not be surprised if the

phone rings and you are invited to an Indonesian meal. Gladly accept the invitation, it is a cuisine that they have shared with many. Farewell to the Pols! May God richly bless you as you fulfill your calling in Carman West! C

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Please mail, e-mail or fax letters for publication to the editorial address. They should be 300 words or less. Those published may be edited for style or length. Please include address and phone number.

### Dear Editor:

I was saddened, as I am sure many were, with a statement made by Rev. Slaa in the July 7th issue of *Clarion* in "Treasures, New and Old" under the heading, "Trust in the Lord." The statement I am referring to was in regards to Abraham fearing for his life while sojourning in Egypt, disclaiming Sarai as his wife and presenting her as his sister. Rev. Slaa states, "As a result, the king of Egypt married Sarai!"

My first thought was, how is it possible that Rev. Slaa believes that a marriage between Pharaoh and Sarai actually occurred, since Abraham and Sarai were clearly under God's protection? This was the couple who in their old age were promised a son and through him the coming Saviour! God held them in the palm of his hand. Their welfare was of utmost concern to Him even when their actions proved that they did not trust their welfare to Him.

Turning to Genesis 12 where we read of this account, we read in verse 19, "Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister, so that I took her for my wife?'" (RSV). It is understandable, yet very sad, that one could easily from this translation of the verse, be misled to conclude that Pharaoh actually did marry Sarai if further study is not made. I would like to submit a few reasons why I believe this statement to be false and pray that Rev. Slaa will retract it as a result. My only hope is to speak the truth in love and do so as a humble servant in Christ.

To start with, there is probably no need for me to point out to Rev. Slaa that in the KJV verse 19 reads as follows: "Why saidst thou, She is my sister, so I *might* have taken her to me to wife?" I'm sure Rev. Slaa is quite aware of this. The removal of this one word could convey an en-

tirely different meaning. This fact should at least caution us in how we are to understand this verse if we believe the RSV to have a more accurate rendering. We cannot nor may we understand it to mean that "the king of Egypt married Sarai."

In the Matthew Henry Commentary there is an interesting statement on this matter. When the princes of Pharaoh saw Sarai and praised her to Pharaoh – and here I quote the commentary, "she was presently taken into Pharaoh's house, as Esther into the seraglio of Ahasuerus (Esth 2:8), in order for her being taken into his bed."

Let's suppose that Pharaoh's intentions were noble and that Sarai was indeed "taken" into his house to become his wife. From studying Esther, it appears that it was customary for women who were "taken" into a king's harem to undergo a purification process, which took as long as a year under the care and instruction

of eunuchs. Having completed this process, at the king's pleasure, they either became wives or concubines. So when we read that Pharaoh "took" Sarai for his wife, it is quite an assumption to make, that the marriage was a done deal if Sarai had to be "twelve months under the regulations for woman."

It is more likely that when Pharaoh took Sarai into his house, it was not with the intent to marry. That only became his excuse for taking her after her real identity became known. This is apparent in the account given in *The Works of Josephus – The Antiquities of the Jews*, as interpreted out of Hebrew Scripture. "Pharaoh the king of Egypt would not be satisfied with what was reported of her, but would needs see for himself and was preparing to enjoy her; but God put a stop to his unjust inclinations, by sending him a distemper, and a sedition against his government." He learned from the priests the cause of his afflictions, namely "his inclination to abuse the stranger's wife." Pharaoh was filled with fear upon having discovered her true identity and "excused himself to Abram, that supposing the woman to be his sister, and not his wife, he set his affections on her, as desiring an affinity with him by marrying her, but not as incited by lust to abuse her."

Whatever Pharaoh's intent, it is not really what is important here. The fact that God prevented him from defiling Sarai is the main thing and we know this for a surety in the light of what we find in Genesis 20. We find here an account of a similar in-

cident involving Abimelech, who also "took" Sarai. Here God Himself speaks to Abimelech in a dream, "Yes I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me, therefore I did not let you touch her" (verse 6).

Why, I ask would God protect her in one instance and not another? Why would He even bother if she had already been defiled in the household of Pharaoh? Well we know that our covenant God is constant and to suggest anything else would be to do Him a grievous dishonour. It would mean that God was not faithful to his promise. God of course chastised Pharaoh and prevented the progress of his sin just as he did with Abimelech. No marriage took place nor was Sarai defiled in any way. God prevented it.

Yes, in spite of their lack of faith, Abraham and Sarai were clearly under God's protection. They were promised this and we know that God is faithful to his promises. In 1 Chronicles 16:15, it is written that "He is mindful of his covenant forever." We read in verses 19-22, "When they were few in number and of little account, sojourners, wandering from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people, He allowed no one to oppress them; He rebuked kings on their account, saying, 'Touch not my anointed ones, do my prophets no harm!'" In Rev. Slaa's own words, "He is the faithful Father who cares for those whom He loves. He is the covenant God who delivers us from all our enemies."

Let us not dishonour Him then in what we believe according to this matter. If Abimelech was a "dead man" for "taking" Sarai, yet not having as much as "approached" her, (Gen 20:3, 4) then we also most surely can believe that God's intervention prevented her marriage to the king of Egypt!

A. Bareman, Grassy Lake, Alberta

## Response to Letter to Editor

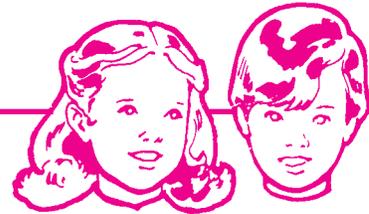
by Rev. J. Slaa

I have no reason for saying that Pharaoh *consummated* the marriage he made with Sarah when he took her into his house. Other evidence, like the Lord's infliction of serious diseases on Pharaoh's house, the account in Genesis 20 (where there is also the mention of diseases in verses 17, 18), and 1 Chronicles 16:21, 22, safely leads us to make this *conjecture* (this word from John Calvin on Gen 12). But I don't think this conclusion can be based on the wording of Genesis 12:19. The original states that Pharaoh "took for/as wife" Sarah. The phrase denotes the formal taking of a woman as wife. So also Abimelech sent for Sarah and took her (Gen 20:2).

The purpose of this example was to show how Abraham "dug himself into a hole" by not trusting in the LORD. Attempting to protect the promise, Abraham took matters into his own hands. Thanks be to God that He rescued Abraham and Sarah from this predicament so that the promise could still be fulfilled! God is faithful in spite of Abraham's unfaithfulness! 



By Aunt Betty



Have your parents ever allowed you to take your sleeping bag outside in the summer to sleep "under the stars?" Sleeping outside, without a tent, or a roof, or even a tree above you, is a lot of fun. You can then watch the sky and count the stars. Sometimes you see big stars and little stars. Some of the big stars aren't actually stars but are one of the planets. Sometimes, a tiny light that looks like a star will continuously move around the sky. That would probably be a satellite.

Maybe your Dad and Mom would let you do that some time. You can only ask. Maybe they'd even like to come and join you sleeping "under the stars!" Who knows?

Lots of love, Aunt Betty

## ANIMAL WORD SEARCH

by Busy Beaver *Melissa Heemsker*

C N R H L P I G U M I  
 J O C D T G O G F B Q  
 V Z W P X P O K C Y M  
 B F I M P E L A S W O  
 Q T U W S E R E T A U  
 J G N A V H E C H Z S  
 C A T U D S K R E F E  
 E I M Q R D N B X P G  
 K S W O C A J T L H O  
 G O H A Y V M K C U D

### FIND:

Horse Cow Dog Sheep Goat  
 Duck Cat Pig Ram Mouse

## Try these "FOR A CHANGE"

1. Change "b" to "z" at the end and a king of Israel into a king of Judah.
2. Drop the indefinite article from the end of the promised land and leave a place in Galilee where Jesus attended a wedding.
3. Change the middle letter from "l" to "r" and convert a king of Moab into a deliverer of Israel in the time of Deborah.
4. Put "Ma" before the father of Shem and obtain the father of Samson.
5. Change "C" to "N" for a start and convert a son of Adam into a place where Jesus raised a widow's son.
6. Change "b" to "d" and convert the place where Solomon dreamed and desired wisdom to the man who "with the three hundred men that lapped" beat the invading Midianites.
7. Change the final "m" to "h" and a son of Shem or a kingdom to the valley where David slew Goliath.
8. Change the first vowel of Sisera's killer and obtain a prophet and the book which precedes "Amos."
9. Put "s" for "h" as the last letter and change a king of Israel into the father of John the Baptist.
10. Alter "a" to "o" and change a rebel against Moses to the place where Joseph found his brethren, only to be sold by them.
11. Add "Am" at the beginning of a good king who reigned long over Judah and obtain the captain of Absalom's host.

## Name these people from the Bible

by Busy Beaver *Julie Vandavelde*

1. The man who stole from Jericho's plunder. \_\_\_\_\_
2. The woman who sold purple cloth. \_\_\_\_\_
3. The man who was killed by his jealous brother. \_\_\_\_\_
4. The woman whom David loved. \_\_\_\_\_
5. One of the twelve disciples, whom Jesus loved. \_\_\_\_\_
6. The woman who let the Israelite spies back to safety over the wall. \_\_\_\_\_



## FROM THE MAILBOX

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Melissa Heemsker*. It sounds like you had a lot of fun during the holidays. How far are you in swimming lessons? Camping sounds like it was lots of fun. Did you sleep "under the stars" or under a roof? Was it busy with all your cousins at Rock Point? Write

again, won't you, Melissa.

Welcome also to *Julie Vandavelde*. Thank you for your letter and puzzle. Sewing is fun, isn't it. It sounds like you live in a great place, to have lots of tree around to climb. Do you have a swing on one of your trees, Julie? Are your twin sisters identical, or can most people still tell them apart? Bye for now.