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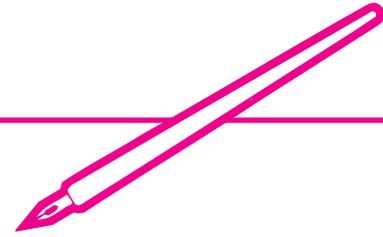


*Site of RCUS Synod -
Zion Reformed Church*

Numbers

10:1-10

By J. Visscher



Lonely in the Church

Is this really possible? Can someone who is a member of the church ever be lonely? After all, is the very nature of the church not found in the fact that it is an assembly, a congregation, and a fellowship of believers? Do we not confess in the Apostles' Creed that the church is "the communion of the saints?"

"Lonely in the church" – it just cannot be! It is almost a contradiction to even say this and an insult to even suggest it.

And yet, it does happen. As a pastor I have seen it, and I continue to struggle with it. My heart hurts when I see members who do not seem to fit in; when I see young people in a catechism class keeping to themselves, sitting in a corner and not really mixing with the rest; when I see adults who never get invited anywhere by anyone; when I see them eventually leaving or forever consigned to the fringes.

There are also folks who need company, crave to belong, ache to be part of a group; however, they always seem to end up on the outside looking in.

Causes, reasons, factors

Of course, I realize that many factors are at play here. A church may pride itself on its unity, but yet within that unity there is usually an almost endless variety of different faces and personalities. For example, in the church we have members who are really social butterflies. They make friends easily. They are approachable, good conversationalists, and inviting. We also have members who may not be quite so outgoing but who have their friends, relatives and acquaintances. They are quite content to be on their own and to socialize when they choose.

Still, these are not the only kind of people, either in the world or in the church. There are also folks who need company, crave to belong, ache to be part of a group; however, they always seem to end up on the outside looking in. They just do not belong. They do not fit in.

And why is that? It may be that their looks, habits or personalities turn other people off. There are people in life who come over and act in a vulgar manner. They have no table manners. They have an opinion on everything but a knowledge that amounts to nothing. Or, they accept your hospitality and then do not say anything. They have no opinions, no ideas, no insights on anything. In short, there are people who are the authors of their own misfortune.

Yet there are also others. There are members who are normal, friendly, and committed to the Lord, and yet excluded. Why is this? How can this be? It may be that the fault lies not so much with them as the church they are part of.

Unfortunately, there are churches that are composed of different groups, and it is just not that easy to get in. These members tend to invite only those over whom they know, like and share opinions with. Together they feel safe and comfortable. They can let down their hair, vent their spleens and give free reign to their opinions. They are not eager to let others into the inner circle because it disturbs the cozy equilibrium that has been created.

At the same time there are also churches that are dominated by large families. As a result, there are members who are content in socializing with their own relatives. As it is, they may not even have time to visit all the members of the clan, let alone be welcoming to outsiders, newcomers and non-relatives.

Evaluating the situation

Well, this is the situation, but now the question needs to be asked, "Should something be done about it? Should this situation be challenged or accepted? How do we respond?"

The basic starting point in answering questions of this nature should surely be the Word that God has given to us. Members, believers, children of God need to touch base first with what God says and then examine their actions and relationships in his light. Having said that, we need to ask, "Does God have something to say about all this? Is He concerned about the kind of interaction there is in his church? Is He at all interested in the social life of the church?"

The only conclusion that we can draw from the Scriptures is that it is the duty and the calling of the church to promote the closest possible bonds between its members.

My answer to that would be that God is very interested in all of this. It starts already with the second part of the summary of the law and with those words, "love your neighbour as yourself." Here we are not even talking about relationships in the church, but about those in the world at large. Yes, and also those need to be governed by love. And what is love but caring, compassion, concern, commitment to others and the willingness to seek their best always? In short,

the simple principle of love already dictates that we should deal with others as we want to be dealt with ourselves.

Hence, the question is this, "Would you like it if you came to a new congregation and everyone gave you the cold shoulder? Would you be happy if there was just no way to get close to others and make friends with them? Would you be pleased with a situation in which you just did not belong?" I doubt it. I seriously doubt it.

Now this is just for starters. What happens when we move beyond the general command to love our neighbour? What about the church? There we meet an even further elaboration on the love principle. The apostle Paul tells the Colossian believers and us that we need to dress ourselves "with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." He even adds "bear with each other (Col 3:12,13). The apostle Peter tells God's elect that they must have a "sincere love" for their brothers, and adds, "love one another deeply, from the heart" (1 Pet 1:22). And then there is the apostle John. What are his letters but epistles dominated by concerns about fellowship, love and true community?

What's inside?

The church is a communion of saints. It lives like a family, sharing all the joys and trials of its members. Sadly, it happens that within the church there are members who are marginalised and feel terribly lonely. The editorial by Dr. J. Visscher examines the causes of this problem and offers some solutions.

Dr. G. Nederveen concludes his series of articles on Theonomy. Dr. J. DeJong begins a two part article on developments in the field of homiletics. There have been some dramatic changes in the style of preaching in liberal churches. Dr. DeJong examines this also with a view to how it influences our churches.

We are informed about an encouraging decision by the Ontario government regarding financial support for those who send their children to private schools. This will bring financial relief to many of our families in Ontario who have not received benefits similar to those in Western Canada. May this indeed be a blessing for Christian education.

We have the address of Rev. K. Jonker to the recent RCUS Synod. In a subsequent issue we hope to have a report on that Synod. In the next issue we also hope to have a report on the recent URCNA Synod in Escondido, California. We may mention that Synod Escondido agreed to enter into Phase 2 of ecclesiastical fellowship with our churches. This is a wonderful development. It will, however, also need ratification by the individual congregations within the URCNA.

An article on a Faithworks trip to Haiti in issue 11 of *Clarion* was submitted by Jason Bouwman. Jason just sent an email to inform us that the article was actually written by Winston Bosch. Credit where credit is due.

RA



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The only conclusion that we can draw from the Scriptures is that it is the duty and the calling of the church to promote the closest possible bonds between its members. A church that is content to be clannish or cliquish is a church that needs to search its heart seriously about whether it even knows what being church is all about. If the love between God the Father and God the Son is to be a model for the church, then a church cannot and may not settle for anything less.

If a pastor is of the conviction that the fellowship level in the church he is serving is below par, he needs to address that.

What can be done?

The inescapable conclusion is, therefore, that a snobby church will not do. But that begs the question, "How to change it? What needs to be done?"

The place to start may very well be the pulpit. If a pastor is of the conviction that the fellowship level in the church he is serving is below par, he needs to address that. And what better way to do that than through the preaching? So how about a series of sermons on the letters of John for openers? Or how about spending a little more time on Lord's Day 21, Question and Answer 55 of the Heidelberg Catechism, which explains the expression "the communion of saints?"

As a follow-up, it may also be necessary for the elders of the church to have as a theme for their annual visits, "How

Warm is it in the Church?" Something like that may serve as a good reminder to the members, as an eye opener to others and as an incentive to many.

Another suggestion I would put forward, and that is one that is used in the church that I currently serve, is the setting-up of so-called "host families." This means that every Lord's Day one family at least is assigned to be the host, and strangers, visitors or even members who are lonely, are invited to come over and experience Christian hospitality. A further extension of this is a system whereby the deacons get involved and encourage certain members to invite those who are not adjusting or feeling at home in the congregation.

As for those members who are part of large families in a particular church, here is a suggestion: why not set at least one Sunday a month apart and tell the rest of the family that you love them but would rather they come some other day. Make it clear to them that this Sunday is reserved for other members of the church, especially for the singles and those who have no family in the area.

Permit me one last remark. Realize that regular coffee socials at the church, potluck dinners, activity evenings, these and more can also be organized and utilized to draw others in. "Where there is a will," as the saying goes, "there is always a way."

In closing, I urge you to find the ways and the means to deal with the lonely in your church. I am sure that they are there. Even without knowing you, I know that they are there. As a matter of fact, they are everywhere and we need to make a concerted and continual effort to deal with them. After all, is this not part of what our Lord expects from us and from his church on earth?



The preacher as listener — the role of the hearer in the preaching of the Gospel¹ (Part 1)

By J. De Jong

Our aim as faculty of the College in these addresses is to tell you something about the subjects we teach. This address focuses on the preaching – the subject of the discipline called homiletics at the College. A short discourse on a passage of Scripture used to be called a homily. Today we call this the sermon. Homiletics then has to do with the nature and production of homilies, sermons for the church. Sermons for the unchurched also have a certain homiletical shape and form, but they are not sermons in our traditional sense. Hence we leave that part of the subject to missiology, the study of church's task to proclaim the gospel to the ends of the earth.

I would like to introduce you to some aspects of what is currently called the “new homiletics.” It is very much in vogue in the mainline churches around us, and is popular on the continent as well. So we are dealing with pervasive movements in the liberal churches which also impact upon us. We need to keep abreast of these developments, if only to correct the dangers of one-sidedness and to be sure that we avoid the many pitfalls that the task of preaching presents. First we will look at the older view, then give a brief survey of the new approach, and then consider for ourselves whether in view of the new approach we need any new repositioning in the Reformed approach to preaching.

The older view

Let me begin with a brief survey of the older view with regard to preaching. In the older or standard homiletics in the Reformed world, preaching was seen as the explanation and applica-

tion of the Word of God. So too the sermon was defined as a public declaration in the midst of God's people of the good news of Jesus Christ, thus, the explication and application of a text of Scripture. The important element in the definition is the tie to the Word of God. The preacher must work with the original languages and the cultural context in which the texts of the Bible were written so that the message of the text is passed on to God's people today. Therefore one needed to know the original languages and study biblical archeology, the world of the Old Testament, the ancient near east and the world of the New Testament with the surrounding political and cultural circumstances.

So the emphasis fell primarily on exegesis and explication.

In all of this there was only slight attention given to the hearer in the pew. Indeed, the word had to be properly applied. Yet it was also stressed that people had to apply the word to themselves. So the emphasis fell primarily on exegesis and explication. Even the style of preaching known as the redemptive-historical method focussed specifically on ensuring that one does not remove the text from its historical setting, and that he thoroughly expounds that historical setting *before* making the transition to the congregation. For example, if one preaches on Ahab's and Jezebel's coveting of Naboth's vineyard, one cannot jump to someone's real estate in the twentieth century. You need to lo-

cate the text in its context, and unlock the messianic import of the text before making transitions to life with our possessions today. With regard to Old Testament passages, you can imagine that remains a difficult task, since the minister sometimes has the sense that the people in the pew are only really ready to listen once the application starts, and once it really concerns them and their place and task in the world.

Sermons of this type always have a theme and two or three points, and it is usually not until the last point that the listener hears what the text really means for him in his own life circumstances. Often the focus falls strictly on doctrinal content. Cornelius Plantinga Jr., dean of the chapel at Calvin Seminary in Grand Rapids, gives a slightly more exaggerated, but for us no less familiar picture of the older style and view. He says: “As a boy in the early 1950s I belonged to a church whose minister wore a tailcoat when he preached. Dressed in a cut-away coat and striped trousers, our minister would stand in the pulpit and deliver sermons as stiff as his collar.” The point of the sermon, Plantinga goes on to say, was strictly to pass on church doctrine. For example, a story, say, a narrative or parable, would be used “to illustrate some doctrinal truth he (the minister JDJ) had brought to it from the *Canons of Dort* or from the *Systematic Theology* of Louis Berkhof . . .”²

Here the pattern is the same. Texts, no matter what kind they were or of what part of Scripture they came from, were all pressed into the mould of strict and rigorous doctrinal preaching. Application always remained an issue of secondary importance.

The new hermeneutic

The new approach to preaching is based on what has been called the new hermeneutic. Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation. The expression “new hermeneutic” refers to a new way of interpreting the Bible. What is the new hermeneutic? How does it differ from the traditional view? The new hermeneutic is the term that is used to describe the new approach to Scripture which dominated the theological world especially in the sixties and seventies, and in modified forms still continues today. The new hermeneutic took the opinion that the Scriptures are really time bound documents, reflecting the faith experiences of the early church, the first hearers of the divine messages,

*The ground rule is this:
you do not interpret the text;
in effect,
the text interprets you!*

and the first people to be affected by divine actions. In the texts of the Bible one finds descriptions put into words of things that happened to people in their contact with God. Whether all things actually happened as described is a moot point for the new hermeneutic – in fact, for these authors that’s not a concern at all. The point is that something happened which was truly overwhelming and affected human thought and behaviour in heretofore unknown and unheard of ways. What’s more, it happened in such a way that people found new avenues and expressions to put all these things into words.

What then is the chief perspective of the new hermeneutic? Events that have happened in the past and that have been recorded in Scripture can and do happen again and again, every time God makes his presence known. Of course, so they say, we cannot control that presence. He comes as He wills in his own time and way. Yet we need to be in line and in tune with the people who have shared these experiences in the past. Hence we need to work carefully with the ancient texts, the texts of the Bible, and in working with them make room for God to continue to act in his wonderful way even to this very day. In other words, divine actions of the past need to happen again. They need

to reoccur, but then of course in ways far transcending the way they happened in the past. The ground rule is this: you do not interpret the text; in effect, the text interprets you! The text makes you aware of who you are and what your place is in the context of God’s unfolding work.

The new homiletic

How then can we describe the new homiletic?³ What is the role of the preacher in the process of interpretation? He becomes an important link in the chain of getting the Word of God to people today! He is the vehicle by which texts continue to speak to people today, that is, interpret people and bring transformation in people’s lives. He sits in his study, working with the text, but as he works with it, the ground is cleared for the event described in the text to happen again. And once this has affected him deeply he needs to pass this on in the sermon. The result must be that the sermon will also end up being an encounter of people with God so that they go away as people who have been re-formed and transformed, so that they look at the world in a totally new and different way.

D.J. Randolph

In order to highlight this approach let me briefly (perhaps too briefly) review with you three of the more well known representatives of the new method in order of their “appearance,” that is, the order in which their material first appeared in print. First D.J. Randolph.⁴ Let me give you his definition of preaching. “Preaching is the event in which the biblical text is interpreted in order that its meaning will come to expression in the concrete situation of the hearer.” Notice that the emphasis here falls on two things: first, preaching is an event, a happening or an encounter. Secondly, this event brings to expression the word of God in the concrete situation of the hearer. For a lot of people involved in preaching in America at the time, this book was the signal of a new approach.

F.B. Craddock

The next figure to carry forward on Randolph’s new approach is F. B. Craddock, the author of the so-called inductive approach to preaching. He published a little book called *As One without Authority* that went through many printings.⁵ The title already tells you the approach that Prof. Craddock

wants to take. In the old view the minister was one who had authority. He spoke, and everyone listened. His word was really the Word of God. His role in the congregation was authoritative, and he carried the signs of his authority with him. Think of Plantinga’s minister in the 1950s! Craddock says that this relation must change. The preacher must be as one without authority. He must not be deductive, going to Scripture and deducing a message and bringing that to the congregation, but he must be inductive, that is, he needs to let things happen to himself, and on that basis he can become a vehicle for the message to the congregation.

Of course, Craddock does not want to eliminate the Bible or throw out the texts. The texts, however, are dead in themselves, only letters on a page. Through your study of the text, the text needs to be awakened, it has to happen to you and you must let it happen to you. But then he takes a step further than Randolph. He says that the experiences and viewpoints of the listeners constitute a part of the experience of the Word of God in the sermon. A word is never something that you can pick up and drop off somewhere. A word involves a connection, and it is precisely in the connection between two communicators that truth happens. The happening changes both the speaker and the listener. A message, as it were, comes from the outside, it affects you and it affects the hearer. You are both affected at the same time, and one cannot be affected without the other.

What is the role of the preacher in the process of interpretation?

To describe his approach, Craddock uses the term to “overhear” the message.⁶ The minister must learn to overhear the text. He cannot just approach the text with his prejudices, but must learn to let these go. He must rid himself of his blinders, and so be in a position that he is free to listen and overhear. You need to capture some of the movement of the text, its goal, its aim, its energy or thrust. Then you can make your sermon. Your sermon is not one with a theme and points, but one with an energy and flow which is, as it were, dictated by the movement of the text, and

flows out of the text. Here, sermon structure is subordinate to the movement in the text. The preferred text here is, of course, a narrative, say a parable or an Old Testament account. Just as these passages follow a story pattern, have a certain plot line, go through a build up and come to a climax, so the sermon must follow a story line with similar features.

D. Buttrick

Then one final figure to whom we may refer is David Buttrick.⁷ He may be termed the leading representative of the new homiletics today. He has taken this approach one step further again. From Craddock he inherited the ideas of movement and flow. But he is less concerned to let the flow be dictated by the flow of the text. He agrees that the text has a certain movement or flow, a certain drive or energy pointing in a specific intentional direction. But he says, in the meeting between the person and the text, flows and movements can go differently. Something quite new can take shape.

In Buttrick's approach the minister is a facilitator. He is an agent to make something happen. He lives with his consciousness in our present world. He finds a certain world of consciousness in the text. But then in the mixing of these two worlds, he resets the ancient text into a field of meaning which is assessable for the hearer. Then he puts all this into words, and so comes up with a sermon. Is the sermon just the message of the text? No. The sermon is the message of the text crafted into language and thought forms that people understand today. So, for example, you are preaching on the parable of the talents, you will talk about people who put their money in the bank at a very low interest savings account versus people who really make great leaps with their money and learn to use it well. You will not talk about taking some silver and burying it in the ground since people don't do that today. You will end up rewriting the story in today's language, but only after being taken up into it yourself.

Summing up

If we then summarize the line charted by these selected representatives of this approach, you can say that step by step the place of the hearer has been isolated, and the importance of reaching the hearers has been empha-

sized more and more. They must be involved. They must be affected. In fact, it has gone so far that the experiences, anxieties and struggles of the hearers end up being a part of the message of the word of God in the sermon. The Word of God occurs in the encounter between the ancient text and the modern hearer as facilitated by the preacher. That began with Craddock, but it comes to full view in Buttrick's approach. In Buttrick you find a very wide margin as well. The preacher does not need to get his text from the Bible. In his approach, other ideas or topics can also generate a sermon.

In fact, it has gone so far that the experiences, anxieties and struggles of the hearers end up being a part of the message of the word of God in the sermon.

In the next article, I will elaborate a little more on this new method of preaching, and then offer some critique.

¹Text of an address given to several of the churches in Alberta and Manitoba, May 1999. I have slightly altered the text, and made some additions for clarity's sake.

²See his article "Dancing the Edge of Mystery. The new homiletics celebrates pilgrimage, not propositions." in *Books and Culture*, September/October 1999, pp. 16-19. Plantinga goes on to say: "Berkhof, by the way, sat at the end of a row on the south side of our church, benignly absorbing his own theology as it was preached to him."

³Although I vary the usage myself, essentially the leading proponents of the method prefer the term "homiletic" – focussing on method – rather than "homiletics" in order to mark off the new method from the various older theories and approaches to the science of **homiletics**.

⁴D.J. Randolph, *The Renewal of Preaching* (Fortress Press, 1969).

⁵F. B. Craddock, *As One Without Authority* (2nd ed., Abingdon Press, Nashville TN, 1979, first published in 1971).

⁶See F.B. Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel*, (Abingdon Press, Nashville TN, 1978).

⁷D. Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures*, (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1987). 



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Classis Ontario South, June 13, 2001, gave concurring advice (Art. 40, CO) to the church of Hamilton for the institution of a church in Glanbrook, ON, and to the churches of Lincoln and Smithville for the institution of a church in Grassie, ON. Both churches will, D.V., be instituted this summer.

Called by the church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA:

Rev. D.G.J. Agema

of the church at Attercliffe, Ontario.

Examined by Classis Central Ontario on March 9th, 2001 and received consent to speak an edifying word in the church (Art. 21, CO):

Student Walter Geurts

Student Geurts' certificate of consent is effective until May 2002, and he can be reached via email.

Examined by Classis Ontario South on June 13th, 2001 and declared eligible for call:

Student Carl Vermeulen

Moved:

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By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” Mark 16:16.

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Baptism . . . yes, this week in our church we will witness another baby being baptized. Yes, another baptism. Why is this being done? Is this just a tradition within our churches or is there more behind it all? Does baptism really have a meaning in our lives as we grow up, or when we are old or being cared for by others?

Let us look at what God teaches us in the summary of Lord's Days 26 and 27. It speaks there of washing. In order to wash oneself water is needed. Christ therefore uses the water of baptism as a symbol in a spiritual sense. As children we are being washed with this water to signify the removal of the impurity and sins of our soul. Not only do our bodies need cleansing, but also our souls.

Its necessity

As newborn babies, we are all conceived and born in sin. Holy baptism thus speaks of why it is so necessary to be washed. It shows us that if we are not washed in Christ's blood and Spirit we cannot really live. Christ promises that with this outward washing we receive the assurance of the inner washing of our souls. No, we cannot look at the water to save us. Rather through faith in Christ, we receive forgiveness of sins. What a comfort it is that through Christ's blood we can be redeemed from all our sins, including our actual and original sins.

Through baptism we also see the work of our Triune God. For we are not just baptized into the name of Jesus, but rather into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Yet we may think: what is the significance of all this? When we are baptized into the name of the Father, He seals an eternal covenant of grace with us. He adopts us to be his children, and promises to provide us with all good, avert all evil or turn it to our benefit.

Secondly, when we are baptized into the name of the Son, He promises that He washes us in his blood from all our sins, and unites us in his death and resurrection.

Thirdly, when we are baptized into the name of the Holy Spirit, we are assured by this sacrament that He will dwell in our hearts and make us living members of Christ. We cannot look at baptism as though it can give us faith. For faith can only be given and worked through the Holy Spirit. But we do not stop here. God also establishes an eternal covenant with us. He gives us his promises, and thus we are called to live for Him in love and service. This cannot be done in perfection, for by nature we are but weak and wretched sinners. But that does not mean that we should despair of God's mercy or continue in our sins: “for baptism is a seal and trustworthy testimony that we have an eternal covenant with God.” Through this we can see how baptism is beneficial for our whole life.

Witnessing a baptism

The water of baptism signifies that we are no longer children of wrath, but that we have been washed into

children of God. So when we witness a baptism on a Sunday, we see the minister dispensing this sacrament. Even more than that, we are being reminded every time what the Lord is giving us through this sacrament. Not only to this child but also to us something is given. We are being given a reminder that He has also promised to wash and cleanse our souls of all filth and unrighteousness. He also renews our hearts and fills us with all comfort, giving us true assurance of his Fatherly goodness.

For by baptism we are washed for life, yes for all eternity. The blood and the Spirit of Christ remains ours. This is Christ's sure and certain promise, which we can read in many verses of God's Word. All we have to do is believe this, and work with this certainty throughout our whole life. What a great source of strength and comfort!

How blessed we are to be baptized. All praise, honour, and thanks be to Him alone, who has covered all our many sins, and calls us his children.

*For children's children, through the generations,
The LORD shall work His glorious vindication,
His righteousness revealing, as of yore,
To those who keep His precepts in obedience
And to His cov'nant show their full allegiance,
His steadfast love endures for evermore.*

Psalm 103:7

Birthdays in August

- 4** **TERENCE BERENDS** will turn 25.
Anchor Home
361, Thirty Road RR 2
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0
- 5** **PHILIP SCHURMAN** will turn 42.
65 Lincoln Street West
Welland, ON L3C 5J3
- 9** **ROSE MALDA** will turn 44.
Oakland Centre, 53 Bond Street,
Oakville, ON L6J 5B4
- 18** **FENNY KUIK** will turn 49.
140 Foch Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R2C 5H7
- 23** **JACK DIELEMAN** will turn 29.
5785 Yonge Street, Apt. 704
Willowdale, ON M2M 4J2

Congratulations to you all. May our heavenly Father bless you in this new year that lies ahead of you, with much health and happiness. Till next month,

Mrs. C. Gelms and Mrs. E. Nordeman
Mailing Correspondence:
548 Kemp Road East
RR 2, Beamsville ON LOR 1B2
Phone: (905) 563-0380

The 255th RCUS Synod

By K. Jonker

From May 14-17, 2001, the Reformed Church in the United States held their 255th Synod in Menno, South Dakota. Rev. Klaas Jonker and Rev. Jack Moesker attended this RCUS Synod on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Below is Rev. Jonker's address to this Synod. In a future edition of *Clarion*, Rev. Moesker will report about the proceedings of this Synod. The official Website of the RCUS is <<http://www.rcus.org>>

Canadian Reformed fraternal address to the 255th RCUS Synod

Esteemed Brothers,

Greetings! With great excitement, Rev. Jack Moesker and I are present at your Synod this week. Last year we were present as observers from the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC). Today we are here as fraternal delegates. For last week our Synod Neerlandia decided to accept your offer of Ecclesiastical Fellowship which you extended to us at your 251st Synod in 1997.

Thankfully you did not grow impatient with us. For in 1993 you decided "that efforts to establish fraternal relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches be continued for a period not to exceed two years" (1993 Abstract p. 55/6). Well, it took us much longer than two years to greet each other as sister churches! Brothers, we thank you for your great patience. Of course, our ultimate thanks go to the Head of the church. He made us find each other!

On behalf of our churches, we greet you and wish you God's indispensable blessings for your churches and on your Synod work of this week.

Introducing our Canadian Reformed Churches

By way of introduction, I will first give you some numbers and figures. Our federation has forty-five churches in Canada and four churches in the USA. The federation is organized into

seven Classes, two Regional Synods (meeting once per year) and one General Synod (meeting once every three years). At the end of 2000, our membership stood at 15,429, of which 8,308 were communicant members.

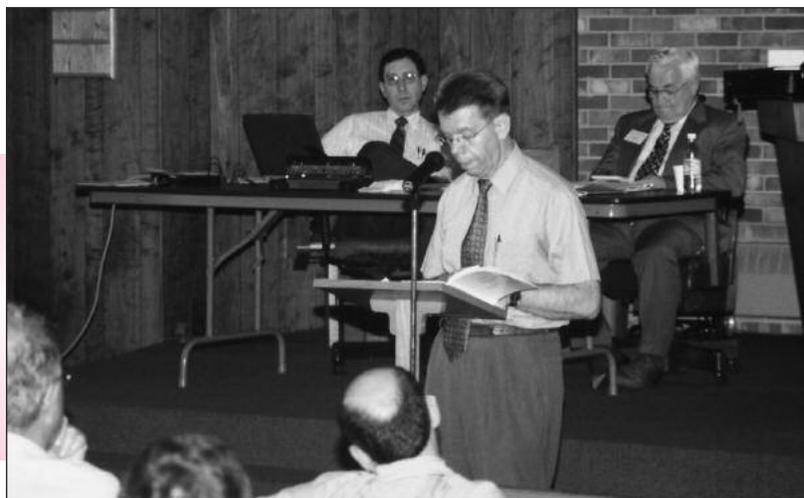
We have fond memories of the visits and meetings with your people and congregations.

Presently, forty-five ministers are actively serving our congregations; we have five retired ministers. Six ordained missionaries are working in our mission fields abroad (in Brazil and Papua New Guinea) and at home (in Hamilton (Ontario), Vancouver (B.C.) among Chinese immigrants and in Smithers (B.C.) among the natives. Separate Mission Aid societies look after the practical needs of the missionaries and their converts. The churches also have their own local evangelism projects. The Canadian Reformed Broadcasting Association is "the Voice

of the Church" in preparing gospel messages on the airwaves.

The mission work of Rev. Victor Atalah of the Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF) among the Arab Muslims also receives support among us. Most of our congregations have their own Christian schools. We also maintain a Canadian Reformed Teacher's College in Hamilton (Ontario). Among us we have care organizations for the handicapped and the aged, and organizations supporting our members by Bible study, etc. Last but not least our churches maintain their own training for the ministry through the Theological College in Hamilton with four full time professors.

Our churches maintain Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the GKN (liberated) in Holland, Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, the Presbyterian Church in Korea, and The Free Church of Scotland. After many, many years of contact, Synod Neerlandia has decided to establish Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC).



Rev. K. Jonker addressing Synod. In the background: Rev. V. Pollema, chairman; Rev. F. Walker, Clerk.

Many of our local congregations have contacts with United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA). Last week our Synod took an important step toward organic union with these churches. It was decided to enter phase two in our relations with this federation of Reformed churches. This decision opens the way for a local CanRC and a URCNA church to have pulpit exchange and Table fellowship. Finally, I may mention that the CanRC are a founding member of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).

The history of our contact

As early as 1984, our churches had contact with the RCUS. From 1987-1992, this contact took place via the Church at Carman. At that time, Carman was of the opinion that official recognition was impossible. Carman's difficulties especially concerned the doctrine of the church, the admission to the Lord's Supper, and erasure.

Our 1992 Synod (Lincoln) decided to make our contact with the RCUS a matter of all the churches. It mandated the Committee for this contact to investigate the RCUS with a view to entering into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship, making use of the findings of the church at Carman, Manitoba.

Our 1998 Synod (Fergus) didn't accept your 1997 offer to establish fraternal relations with us but considered that closer investigation should take place regarding admittance to the Lord's Supper, Sunday observance, the doctrine of the Church, erasure and the position of the Christian Reformed Church in North America among the NAPARC churches.



Interchurch Relations Committee: From R to L: Rev. Ron Potter, Rev. George Syms, Rev. Don Vance, Rev. Jim Sawtelle, Rev. Jonathan Merica, Rev. Maynard Koerner.

Our committee, comprising of the brothers Bill Gortemaker, Klaas Jonker, Art Poppe and Jack Moesker worked hard to tackle the outstanding issues. It is, indeed, with great thankfulness that we can say that an excellent rapport was established with your Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC). We have fond memories of the visits and meetings with your people and congregations.

We came to the following resolutions regarding the issues of our concern. Regarding the proper supervision of the Lord's Supper, we concluded "that the matter of the Lord's Supper celebration has been resolved, since members and guests alike are admitted in accordance with Lord's Day 30."

On the point of Sunday observance, we informed our churches that having

only one worship service per Sunday has been a long tradition within the RCUS. We could observe that in your teaching and preaching you strongly emphasize that on the Lord's Day people should use their time for the Lord. If members do not attend church regularly, they will be disciplined. We reported to our churches "that the matter of Sunday observance has been sufficiently discussed and cannot be a bar to ecclesiastical fellowship."

Due to our struggles of the past, the doctrine of the church is dear to our heart. Both our churches have different histories and struggles. This difference is reflected in our church views. We found that the RCUS speaks more in theological and practical terms about the Church, while we simply like to use our confessional language.

We concluded that the doctrine of the church in the RCUS is in agreement with the Reformed confessions. So we could report "that the doctrine of the church has been adequately discussed, and though there may be differing views in the RCUS, the statements of the Catechism and the Belgic Confession are binding."

Regarding the issue of erasure, we learned that the RCUS was not simply scrapping members off their rolls. The RCUS has the conviction that everyone must have a hearing in disciplinary matters. If, therefore, a person cannot be reached, and a hearing cannot take place, then erasure is the means to declare such a member outside of the body of Christ. The member who is erased cannot be readmitted unless he has received restoration. So



Zion Reformed Church

erasure is a form of discipline and therefore we wrote to our Synod "that the concept of erasure has been satisfactorily clarified."

The last item we had to discuss with you was the position of the CRCNA among the NAPARC churches. We wrote to our Synod that "the CRCNA has been suspended from NAPARC with agreement of the RCUS, and that the RCUS's membership in this body should not hinder our relationship with the RCUS at this time."

Through God's grace, we have found each other and are now sister churches!

Our findings resulted in the positive recommendation which is quoted in your Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee report page 2 that, "the Canadian Reformed Churches enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Reformed Church in the United States under the adopted rules."

As already indicated, on May 10, 2001, our Synod Neerlandia agreed with the committee's recommendation and therefore accepted your 1997 offer. Through God's grace, we have found each other and are now sister churches!

Some of our distinctives

Now I will inform you about some of our distinctives. As you know, our churches have a strong link with the Liberated Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Since 1991 they have been your sister churches.

Well, in the Netherlands, our covenant God preserved his church in a special way. While the roots of the Reformed faith are in Germany and Switzerland (in Heidelberg and Geneva) the Lord protected the Reformed faith especially in the Lowlands. He richly blessed the work of the renowned International Synod of Dort.

Throughout the centuries, the Reformed faith has been under attack, and the GKN in the Netherlands is not an exception in this respect. At the moment, our sister churches suffer heavily under the evil attacks of secularization. We pray that the Lord will grant them firmness and steadfastness to remain faithful.

In the past, the Head of the church made our Dutch sister churches persevere, especially in the church struggle of the 1940s. Then they rejected wrong teachings regarding the covenant and the Church. We are thankful that we still reap the gain of this faithful struggle. We are strongly anti-hierarchical.

Brothers, like yourselves, our churches want to be the pillar and foundation of the truth. We show this by being unapologetic in upholding God's Word as the inspired truth from God, and binding our membership to our Reformed Confessions which are a clear expression of the truth, and therefore the expression of our unity. Because of our history, governed and led by the Head of the church, we are also unapologetic in our emphasis of God's covenant with believers and their children, and our faith regarding the true Church of the Lord.

With you, we share our great love for the Heidelberg Catechism. No sum-

mary of the truth exceeds our beloved Catechism! This confession is thoroughly scriptural; it excels in clarity; it is also personal and very practical. The questions are often directed to each one of us personally as members of Christ's church.

In the dark world of today, we want to witness of Christ who is our Redeemer through his blood. He is our Lord and our covenant life shows our thankfulness to Him. True faith changes us from living in darkness into living in the light; from serving "the god of this age" into serving the Lord Jesus Christ; from being dead into being alive.

Such a radical change from death into life will never remain unnoticed. We impress upon our people that we should be the best citizens the nation has, pursuing our political calling as expressed in Belgic Confession article 36, and promoting the honour of God in civil matters.

Let's travel together toward the Day of our Lord.

On the labour scene, our churches take the following stance. Since the methods, practices and ideologies of today's secular trade unions conflict with the teaching of God's Word, we strongly believe that union membership and membership of the Canadian Reformed Church are incompatible. Thankful people of the Lord must place all their trust in Him, withdrawing it from all creatures (Heidelberg Catechism Q/A 94,125).



All Synod delegates.

As part of our Reformed heritage we expect that members send their covenant children to a Christian school where the Reformed faith is upheld. Our Church Order stipulates that the elders must ensure that parents do so. Because of this conviction, our members have been willing to endure great sacrifices for Reformed education.

In the mentioned matters and in others (like marriage, sexuality, abortion, euthanasia) we want to maintain our distinct position in the evil and apostate world of today. The underlying theme of all instruction in our churches is "live with and for the Lord to his glory!" The phrase "living with and for the Lord" wants to express that we do all our work in the Lord (1 Cor 15:58) for the coming of his kingdom.

We feel privileged that we don't have to tackle this work alone. In the past, we received support in giving our witness to the world from other sister churches and through the ICRC. Now that we have a close bond with you as faithful churches of the Lord in the Americas, we may count on your support in particular, since we live in close proximity of each other.

Please forgive our weakness by which we sometimes give the impression as if we are always right. However, we acknowledge that we, too, still have to grow toward maturity in Christ. Let us help each other in this spiritual growth now that we have found each other in unity. Let's travel together toward the Day of our Lord.

Exercising of our relationship

This brings me to the last point I would like to raise: how should we practice our relationship with one another? We have discussed our official rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship with your committee in December 1999 during our meeting in Manitowoc, WI. Then your Interchurch Relations Committee was agreeable to these rules since they are similar to those of our Dutch sister churches. (At this point I read the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship as adopted by Synod Lincoln Ontario, see Acts 1992, art 50, p33.)

These rules mainly concern the formal side of our ecclesiastical relationship. It is our wish that our relationship will not be maintained on this formal level only. We would like to see it developed into a living and productive relationship in which we actively share each other's riches. This first of all means that we should be



Synod's ecumenical committee meeting outdoors! (Temperature was around 30°C.)



Rev. Moesker in discussion with Rev. Ralph Pontier, observer delegate from URCNA.

willing to listen to and willing to learn from each other.

You have, for example, done a lot of work on your position papers. You have other publications about the confessions and church history. We have publications about the church, the covenant, Bible study and about other topics, like Christian education. We should share this material with one another.

Next, the work of mission and evangelism needs attention, as well as the training for the Ministry. These are areas in which we could be a hand and a foot to each other. We should also assist each other at a classical level by sending delegates to each other's meetings. We can participate in youth and adult study conferences, ministers' confer-

ences and family conventions, etc. Please place us on your mailing lists (see our Website for addresses)!

I would like to reiterate that our relationship should rise above the formal level of sending delegates to each other's meetings. Let us very concretely exercise our relationship in using our gifts readily and cheerfully for the benefit and well-being of each other (Lord's Day 21, Q/A 55)! May the Lord make us faithful so that we will exercise our new relationship actively and vigorously.

May He strengthen us so that you and we may fulfill our task in this dark and forlorn world, so that (as we read in 2 Cor 4:15) "the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God."

The God of peace be with you. 

Theonomy: What is there to re-construct? (Part 4)

By G. Nederveen

The last article investigated some of the biblical principles of interpreting Scripture as used by Gary North. I found him to be wanting in several respects. Old Testament passages like Exodus 23:27-30 and Deuteronomy 28:11-23 he transposes literally to today. In the three books I used as my source of information, North does not anywhere carefully define what he means by law, while he equates good works and law. This brings me to my evaluation and conclusion about Christian Reconstructionism.

Evaluation By what standard?

Gary North keeps on coming back to the same question: By what standard? His answer is: biblical law. Unfortunately he does not anywhere carefully define what he means by the law. So that leaves me wondering about the biblical standard North has in mind. He considers all biblical law "moral" law, and therefore valid. This creates difficulties. For example, Deuteronomy 23:19-20 has rules regarding lending money at interest. The Israelites were not allowed to charge each other interest; a foreigner could be charged. How would this apply today?

Let us recognize that the law in the Old Testament was God's unique gift to Israel. Psalm 147 can enlighten us here. God has revealed his word to Jacob, his laws and decrees to Israel. Then it comes: "He has done this for no other nation; they do not know his laws" (verses 19-20). Israel's relation as a nation under God was unique.

Therefore it is questionable whether the ideal of Christian reconstruction in returning to all Old Testament laws and applying them to society as a whole, is what God requires of us. Does God want a return to Old Testament times? Not at all. When God gave his law to Moses it was meant to regulate

life in Israel. They never had to force other nations to abide by it. Even the Ten Words of the covenant were for God's covenant people.

The real question

Basic to the whole question of theonomy as Christian reconstruction is the question: How did the law come about? When did it come into existence? The answer is: God gave his law to Israel at Mount Sinai. But is that not remarkable? You would think that God would have given his law right after the fall into sin. Would that not have been the proper time and place if it had to serve as a tool for dominion, as North repeatedly claims? After all, from the moment of the fall onward mankind would have to know what they should or should not do. In other words, from the moment of the fall mankind could have benefited from a set of rules.

God would not bring the nations to the law, but to Christ.

But that is not what happened. True, Abraham obeyed God's commands, decrees and laws (Gen 26:5), but God put his stamp on his very own people by giving them his law only after Israel had spent some 400 years in slavery in Egypt. The law is a covenant document. That's how the Bible speaks about the law of God. The Bible calls the Ten Commandments the Ten Words, or the Ten Words of the covenant (cf. Deut 4:13 RSV note). The Lord God even wrote them on two tables of stone. We can say that this law of God was his "love letter" to his covenant people. That it is a "love letter" is clear from the opening words. The first thing the Lord God did was re-

mind his people that they are free! He reminded them that He is the Lord their God who brought them out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. The first thing God did was remind them that He has brought them from slavery to freedom. They are free . . . and yet bound because they are not free to do as they please. He freed them so that they could serve Him in truth and with thankful hearts for deliverance received.

Deliverance preceded the giving of the law. That sent a clear message to Israel, and it sends a clear message to us. The message is that since the people lived without a codified law for so long, the law was never intended and can never be used as the means to righteousness and salvation. Not even the people of the Old Testament could gain life by strictly adhering to the law. That is why the law of the covenant was never intended as a set of rules to appease God's anger if we keep them. From the outset, the covenant law has been a law to live by out of thankfulness.

Deliverance preceded the giving of the law. And this places the law in the spotlight of the gospel. For the words "I am the Lord your God," are gospel. They are good news for his special people. He set them free from slavery and gave them his law to live by out of thankfulness.

From a New Testament perspective the exodus is one of the links in the golden chain of salvation. It foreshadowed the great exodus from slavery to sin and Satan. This release is granted to all who are in Christ. That is why Paul calls the law our "supervisor" that was put in charge to lead us to Christ (Gal 3:24-25). Maybe that is also the reason why Israel never had to impose its God-given laws on the other nations. For God would not bring the nations to the law, but to Christ. However, his special

people he brought to Christ via his gracious law of freedom.

Christ fulfilled the law. Paul confirms that in Romans 10:4 when he writes that Christ is the end of the law. In other words, we possess the law in a way different from Israel which received the law at Mount Sinai. That is because the Christian church has travelled beyond Sinai. We no longer stand at the foot of the mountain. We have moved on. In the Lord Jesus we have come from Sinai to Golgotha. In the New Testament church the Old Testament laws ceased to function as laws. What Christian reconstruction wants to do is bring us back into the danger of legalism where the works of the law take the place of God's grace in Christ.

Dr. Jochem Douma, in his book *The Ten Commandments*, observes that Christian reconstruction "brings us back

to the time in history before the fulfilling of the law by Christ, making Golgotha a second Sinai and Christ a second Moses" (379).

Christian reconstruction needs an overhaul.

And so we cannot applaud this movement in its aim. The law has been fulfilled. We no longer keep it in order to obtain righteous life with God. Christ has done that for us. At the same time, however, we do not shelve the law because its truth and substance remain for us in Christ Jesus. As we say in Article 25 of the Belgic Confession, we use "the testimonies taken from the law . . . to order our life in all honour, according to God's will and to His glory."

Conclusion

Above my speech I have as title: Theonomy: what is there to re-construct? The answer is: Christian reconstruction needs an overhaul. I concur fully with the sentiments expressed by Rev. R. Aasman:

We should observe that among some critics of theonomy there is the impression that theonomy has a wrong hermeneutic but at least is on the right track and gets us thinking. Let us be clear: theonomy or Christian reconstructionism has a wrong hermeneutic, wrong exegesis on essential passages and it is a wrong theology (*Clarion*, April 8, 1994, 164).

Gary North's writings are forceful and lucid, but upon closer inspection within the context of Scripture, they are not convincing. 

Psalm CXXXIII (Psalm 133)

If there be one whose thoughts delight to wander
In pleasure's fields, where love's bright streams meander,
If there be one who longs to find
Where all the purer blisses are enshrined, –
A happy resting place of virtuous worth, –
A blessed paradise on earth:

Let him survey the joy-conferring union
Of brothers who are bound in fond communion,
And not by force of blood alone,
But by their mutual sympathies are known,
And every heart and every mind relies
Upon fraternal, kindred ties.

O blest abode, where love is ever vernal,
Where tranquil peace and concord are eternal,
Where none usurp the highest claim,
But each with pride asserts the other's fame!
Oh, what are all earth's joys, compared to thee,
Fraternal unanimity?

E'en as the ointment, whose sweet odors blended,
From Aaron's head upon his beard descended,
Which hung awhile in fragrance there,
Bedewing every individual hair,
And falling thence, with rich perfume ran o'er
The holy garb the prophet wore:

So doth the unity that lives with brothers
Share its best blessings and its joys with others,
And makes them seem as if one frame
Contained their minds, and they were formed the same,
And spreads its sweetest breath o'er every part,
Until it penetrates the heart.

E'en as the dew, that, at the break of morning,
All nature with its beauty is adorning,
And flows from Hermon calm and still,
And bathes the tender grass on Zion's hill,
And to the young and withering herb resigns
The drops for which it pines:

So are fraternal peace and concord ever
The cherishers, without whose guidance never
Would sainted quiet seek the breast, –
The life, the soul of unmolested rest, –
The antidote to sorrow and distress,
And prop of human happiness.

Ah! happy they whom genial concord blesses!
Pleasure for them reserves her fond caresses,
And joys to mark the fabric rare,
On virtue founded, stand unshaken there;
Whence vanish all the passions that destroy
Tranquillity and inward joy.

Who practise good are in themselves rewarded,
For their own deeds lie in their hearts recorded;
And thus fraternal love, when bound
By virtue, is with its own blisses crowned,
And tastes, in sweetness that itself bestows,
What use, what power, from concord flows.

God in his boundless mercy joys to meet it;
His promises of future blessings greet it,
And fixed prosperity, which brings
Long life and ease beneath its shadowing wings,
And joy and fortune, that remain sublime
Beyond all distance, change and time.

Gerbrandt Brederode. Translated by Sir John Bowring.

Ontario to support private education

By K. Sikkema

A year and a half after the United Nations formally agreed that Ontario is violating international law by not funding non-Roman Catholic religious schools (*Clarion*, February 18, 2000), the Conservative Ontario government has announced a new tax credit that stands to benefit Canadian Reformed parents and parents from 700 other independent schools from kindergarten to grade 12. The "Equity in Education Tax Credit" starts by refunding 10% of the first \$7000 parents pay in tuition for each child enrolled in recognized private or religious schools during the 2002 taxation year, and is capped at \$3500 by the time the program is fully phased in by 2006. The government expects to lose \$300 million in revenue as a result of the program. At the same time, it announced \$350 million in new funding for public and separate schools, and \$293 million for post-secondary education over two years. The overall aim is to improve the quality of education in Ontario, according to Finance Minister Jim Flaherty. The program would also bring Ontario in line

with the provinces of Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia, which already support independent schools in some way. As the same government had previously committed itself not to start funding private or religious schools, the announcement came as a surprise to many, and reactions ranged from very positive to extremely negative. Public schools are currently funded at about \$6800 per child.

The overall aim is to improve the quality of education in Ontario, according to Finance Minister Jim Flaherty.

The Premier under fire

The Ontario education sector is frustrated with the leadership of Premier Harris. While funding had been cut by a reported \$1.3 billion when he came to

power, public schools were forced to make the overall teacher workload and compensation more comparable to those of other provinces. At the same time, a significantly more demanding curriculum was imposed on these schools without a reasonable phase-in period, and extra-curricular involvement was made mandatory rather than voluntary. Even though the latter requirement has been eased up somewhat, teachers still feel stressed. Some of the resulting negativism resounds in the current discussions. One Toronto-area public school principal expressed dismay that there was no money to fix up the pool in her school, while private schools would now be funded. Others feel that the money should be used for overdue textbook purchases. An editorial in the *Hamilton Spectator* recognized that "the tax credit isn't the disaster critics claim it is," but continued that "under the guise of freedom of choice for parents, the government will continue its practice of underfunding public education." "The government's dysfunctional relationship with teachers, their unions and other school staff has created morale problems that further erode the quality of education at public schools," the editorial concluded.

Critics were quick to claim that the program would not only benefit the rich, but also have other flaws. They failed to recognize, however, that only about 16% of Ontario's approximately 102,970 private school students pay tuition over \$12,000 per year. Dalton McGuinty, the leader of the Liberal opposition, has already promised to cancel the program if he wins the next election. NDP leader Howard Hampton, who believes the credit is only attractive to upper income families, would support that. Earl Manners, the head of the Secondary School Teachers Association,



Premier Mike Harris.

called the budget “the death-knell for public education.” Although the Minister of Finance denies it, the critics continue to speak of a “two-tier voucher system” which helps the wealthy and does nothing for the working families. The ongoing discussion also brings to light fundamentally different perspectives on the tasks of the home, the church, and the school in teaching the child. While some recognize that it “takes a village to educate a child,” others maintain that it is possible to leave religious education to the “church, synagogue, or temple,” and basic moral education to the home. Despite evidence to the contrary, many believe that it is possible for public education to be value free. Others maintain that a school may not teach values contrary to what the children learn at home – whether they be Christian, humanist, Muslim, or Jewish.

A welcome announcement – mostly

At the same time, the announcement was welcomed by many supporters of Ontario’s 733 private religious and cultural schools. A typical Canadian Reformed elementary school in

Ontario costs between \$450 and \$500 per family in monthly tuition, and high school tuition may add some \$400 to that amount for a total of roughly \$10,000 - \$11,000 per year. Although a portion of their tuition may be tax-deductible (depending on the school’s cost-per-student), a tax credit would come as a tuition refund rather than as a

Many Canadian Reformed families incomes fall in the low – or middle income range.

tax deduction. While some noted that it was “only a beginning,” others are happy to finally “get a break.” Many Canadian Reformed families incomes fall in the low – or middle income range. Through their regular and property taxes, these families pay for public education as well as their own, and our communities would certainly stand to benefit from the new tax credit. The Minister of Finance pointed out that the program was indeed aimed at helping out low and

middle-income families who have religious or cultural reasons to send their children to private schools.

Some are hesitant to welcome the credit, however, as any form of government funding might impact negatively on the schools. Even without funding, the changes the Ontario government imposed on the public schools has impacted significantly on our high schools, and, indirectly, our elementary schools. Whereas the latter were previously free to choose their own curriculum, the new standards the high schools must meet to issue Ontario Secondary School Diplomas force them to adapt their programs as well. There is also concern that a tax break may not do much for improving (sometimes lacking) parental involvement with the schools. At this time it is unclear which new regulations (if any) will be imposed to retain the status of a fiscally recognized religious school.

As we await the details of the new tax credit, there is gratitude to the Lord that a measure of justice and equity is in the making. May He continue to bless Reformed education and its supporting communities. C

LETTERS 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’d like to personally “thank” the Rev. Stam for his preference in leaving the Americans “out to dry.” In his editorial of March 30, 2001, he writes that he would like to see the American Reformed Churches unite with the URC in the United States while the Canadian Reformed Churches unite with the URC in Canada. He even admits that “the American segment of the URC is by and large unknown to us.” Yet he sees this as an excellent opportunity for his brothers and sisters in the

American Reformed Churches to unite with a group unknown to him. I don’t understand how he can see the American Reformed Churches to be compatible with the American URC when our own federation doesn’t see them as compatible. Talk about “left hanging out to dry.”

I may sound somewhat bitter and I do realize the reality exists that the American Reformed Churches could be viewed as “Churches Abroad” or “Sister Churches in a Foreign Land” and shoved off to join a federation with which you Canadians just

couldn’t agree with. If you don’t agree with them, how do you expect us to? Almost sounds like the “kiss of death” for the American Reformed Churches. It would seem a real gesture of love if you tasted the food to see if it was poisonous before you hand it to your sister.

H. TenHaaf
Grand Rapids, Michigan

It is hard to respond to sarcasm in which the original article is not even properly represented.

Cl. S.

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

Another year has gone by and school is over or is nearly over. Plans are made for the vacation period, plans for going away for a while, or staying at home or visiting friends or just going sightseeing in your own area. Have you ever done that – gone sightseeing in your own town? It is really amazing how much you miss when you live in a town for a long time. Sure, when visitors come, you show them all the normal things that everybody else sees. But what about those little places where you really like to go, your secret hiding places or something to see that is out of the ordinary? Surely they like to know what kind of fun you have in your own place. Imagine I came to visit you wherever you may be. Would you show me all your secret fun spots? I would love to see them. And I'm sure that other people would too, those who you don't get to see very often.

Have a lot of fun in your vacation.

Lots of love, Aunt Betty

July Birthdays	
13	Rebekah Barendregt
24	Kimberly VanderVelde
30	Becca Brasz

Puzzles

In Common

What have the members of each of the following groups in common?

1. Sinai, Gilboa, Hermon, Seir
2. Simon, James, Andrew, Matthew
3. Naaman, Miriam, Uzziah, Gehazi
4. Crete, Cyprus, Rhodes, Clauda
5. Eliab, Abinadab, Shammah, David
6. Baal, Rimmon, Dagon, Moloch
7. Lazarus, Eutychus, Jairus's daughter, the widow of Zarephath's son
8. The feeding of the 5,000, the cleansing of the 10 lepers, the healing of Bartimaeus, the stilling of the storm
9. Abana, Jordan, Arnon, Euphrates
10. The Second Adam, The Chief Corner-Stone, The Lion of the Tribe of Judah, The Good Shepherd



Aunt Betty

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The story continues: TROUBLE WITH RAINBOWS

Remember last time. Abi had fallen off her bicycle because she ran into a rainbow. Charlie from the gas station came to help her. They both enjoyed eating the rainbow, but they also had to clean up Mrs. Trimmer's garden because her roses had become all multicoloured.

The three of them went into the street to investigate. Charlie wiped away the melting colours and at the exact spot where the rainbow had joined the ground a metal disk was set into the road like a lid. "Weren't they laying pipes here, Agnes, about a month ago?"

Mrs. Trimmer nodded. "No end of both it was, all that digging and noise."

As they were talking, a cloud burst with rain and the three of them hurried onto Mrs. Trimmer's veranda for cover.

Through the rain, Abi could see of the colours of the broken rainbow slowly melting into inky runs of colour.

The rain eased and just when they thought everything was back to normal, out on the road, at the exact spot where the little metal lid sat, a brand new rainbow was forming.

"Wow!" said Abi.

"Amazing!" said Charlie.

"Don't move!" said Mrs. Trimmer. "This is an emergency! I'll phone for help."

The police were the first to arrive with their rescue truck and a patrol car. "Just in case," they said.

Next came the fire engines. They fixed their hoses to the fire hydrants. "Just in case," the chief said.

Another police car arrived and a van with people carrying television cameras. "Just in case," said a reporter.

Mr. Caprile came down from the corner shop and gave Abi a block of bubble gum, all fresh and powdery. "Just in case," he said.

Mrs. Trimmer put some hessian bags and an old table cloth on her roses, "just in case."

More and more people came. It was getting quite crowded. Someone said, "Abi, here's your dad."

Last of all came a truck with WATER DEPARTMENT written on its side. A couple of workmen got out and went over to the rainbow.

"Mm," the man from the Water Department said, "sounds like a trapped rain cloud to me." He pulled a serious face. "Now, stand back there. Make room."

Carefully the two men pried the metal lid away from the road. The rainbow shattered. It fell everywhere.

A loud oozing sound filled the air and from out of the ground squeezed a dark fluffy cloud. It burst with rain.

All the people packed up and ran for shelter.

"Come on, Abi," her dad said, and they rushed down to Charlie's garage.

Mrs. Trimmer took the cover off her roses and waved to Abi through the rain.

Abi thought she looked very wet.

Abi put her hand in her pocket and felt the block of bubble gum Mr. Caprile had given her. She slipped it into her mouth. It was hard and powdery.

Gradually the rain eased. Abi looked up at the sky. The little grey rain cloud had floated off, free at last.

Did you enjoy that? I thought it was a really nice story, and decided to share it with you all.