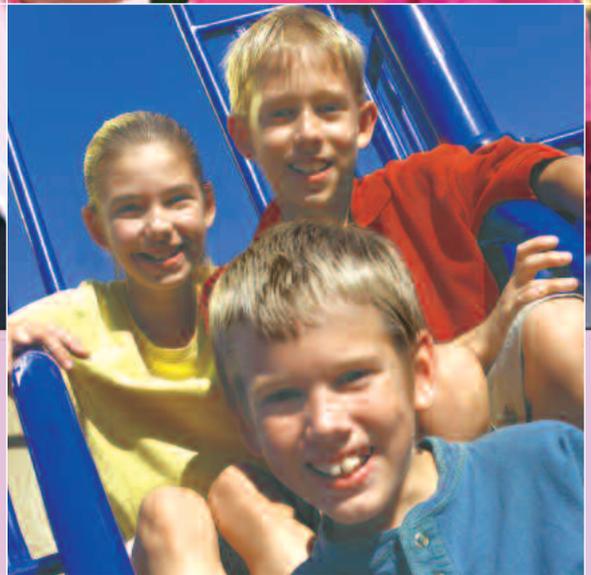


*Lord's Supper:  
Cause for  
Division?*

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*Christian Hope  
in the New  
Year*

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*A Biblical View of  
Marriage*

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# Lord's Supper: Cause for Division?

*There is always something quite comfortable about those old ways to which we have become accustomed over time.*

"The cup of blessing, for which we give thanks, is the communion of the blood of Christ". Those words had hardly left my lips during the service last Lord's Day (November 14, 2004). As the elders passed the cups through the church, the joy of the occasion was mixed with a feeling of dread as the thought occurred to me: "How terrible it must be when members of the body refuse to participate in the Lord's Supper because of one or the other objection to the way in which it is administered." Thankfully, there were no such objectors here, but I know of them elsewhere throughout the federation. How that must be hurtful to themselves, to their families, as well as to the body!

Upon further reflection, it occurred to me that perhaps I should write about it and attempt to convince them to do otherwise. When later a request came for me to write a guest editorial, I thought "Well, that's it then. I guess I will write it." So here it is: an open letter to all those who are inclined to refuse to partake of the Lord's Supper. Controversial, maybe. Helpful, may it be so.

## Understandable objections

To a certain degree, objections are understandable. After all, we are all creatures of habit. Change does not come easily. As far back as I can recall, in the churches I was a member of, and in the churches I pastored, it was done the same way: a table, with about four beakers, and people would walk up, take a seat, and return to their pews as others took their turn. It seemed to work, so why change?

Two factors seem to have particularly come to the fore. While pastoring a congregation of 700 people not that long ago, I recall having five or six tables in a row in a single service. Not all were happy that the sacrament which is meant to underline the preaching of the Word had forced the preaching out of the service. And then there were those who, because of health issues (which includes alcohol addiction), would pass the cup altogether. If I have it right, these concerns in particular

have led several consistories to judge that it would be in the best interests of the church community either to use individual cups at the table or in the pew.

## Principle or preference?

Honestly, I cannot say that I have been a big promoter of doing it this new way. There is always something quite comfortable about those old ways to which we have become accustomed over time.

I recall at one point also searching the Gospels to see to what degree indications could be found therein. Did the Lord Jesus cause the one cup to go around? Or did He indicate to the disciples that they should each take the cup that was before them as He did? Matthew (26:26) and Mark (14:23) seem to suggest that it was one cup ("He gave it to them, and said 'Drink from it...']"). So that would mean that we should have one cup for the whole church. But one cup for two or four hundred people is not really very feasible, is it? At that point, I concluded that the words of the gospel are *descriptive* rather than *prescriptive*. That is, they describe what the Lord Jesus did. They do not necessarily prescribe how the church has to do it through the ages. It makes good sense. After all, if what our Lord did is *prescriptive*, where does this stop? Should we then not be attempting to imitate more closely the way in which He broke the bread and gave it to the disciples? And what about the Lord's Supper table itself? The present practice of having a long table is not due to the Scriptures but to the influence of medieval paintings; Jewish sources tell us that the table was probably U shaped. That's the difficulty. If it's *prescriptive*, where exactly does the prescription begin and where does it end?

My conclusion to all this was: it is a matter of *preference* rather than *principle*. At home, we also prefer to eat at a table with family and guests; but sometimes the large number of guests does not allow for what we prefer. How many of us would set the table three or four times for a gathering of

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young people, for instance? Similarly in church: it was feasible for the Lord Jesus to celebrate as He did with the twelve others in his company. It may still be feasible in many of our small churches. But does not the larger company of people we have in many of our churches necessitate other ways? It's preference rather than principle.

And did you know that it has been a matter of preference for quite some time in Reformed churches? Many Reformation churches actually celebrated in an ambulatory manner; that is, they formed a long line and walked up to the minister one by one and then returned to their seats. That's why answer 75 of the Heidelberg Catechism says: "As surely as I receive from the hand of the minister... the bread and the cup of the Lord." It is along those lines then that many consistories have decided that it is *preferable* to alter a longstanding tradition.

*It is a matter of preference rather than principle.*

What should we do if we do not like it? Should we refuse to participate? Or, in the case of ministers, refuse to administer the Lord's Supper? That, however, would make it a matter of principle, which is extremely problematic. Where is the data that would allow us to make it a principial issue? The Lord's Supper cuts right to the heart of the believer's faith life and the church's communal life. Are the Scriptures so clear on this point that you would stake everything on this? You say that it is a matter of conscience? But think about that: is your conscience really more clear than the Word of God? We need to be very careful lest phrases about our conscience become easy excuses for our own stubbornness or resistance to change.

That is the first problem, my brother or sister: when you refuse to participate, you have made it into a matter of *principle*. And you lack the basis to do so.

**Protest in the church?**

That leads me to another concern. It is the fact that many of those who object to the manner in which the Lord's Supper is celebrated refuse to participate. Whether it is intentional or not, it really is a form of protest. And there is no room in the church of Jesus Christ for protests.

Allow me to clarify. Is it not true that every one of us is obligated to submit to the instruction and discipline of the church? Did we not agree to do so on the occasion of our profession of faith? Not that we may never disagree. But article 31 of the Church Order also tells us what we are to do if we

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believe we are wronged by the decisions of councils or consistories. You then have the right and the duty to appeal. If we do not agree with the words or the tune of a certain song, should we protest and refuse to sing? If we do not agree with a certain cause, should we protest and pass the collection bag? Is this the Christian way? Certainly not! For the sake of harmony in the church, you participate even if your heart is not behind that tune or that cause. And if you feel strongly enough that something is contrary to Scripture and/or confession, you appeal to the appropriate assemblies.

And really, there is something very good about doing this. For you see, when you protest by refusing to participate, you are actually rendering your voice ineffective. For what contribution does the protesting person then make? The consistory soon becomes annoyed with this approach, and any discussion quickly becomes inflamed. But when you participate even as you continue to appeal to them and others, you display a more appropriate attitude and you allow the arguments that you bring forth to be heard in a better way. And in the church of Jesus Christ, it is not about counting the heads of the protestors or the dissenters. It is about the strength of the arguments presented.

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*The person who appeals and participates honours the God-given authority structure and can be an effective part of the process.*

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You have to realize that decisions about how exactly the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated are necessarily corporate. They are not just up to you or me, but they are up to the governing body. The assemblies need to decide on the basis of arguments provided. I recall my Church Polity instructor, the late Rev. H. Scholten, telling us that we should even help those who write appeals against us. "Help them write it," he would say, "so that the arguments come on the table and decisions are properly made rather than dismissed on technicalities." The person who does no more than protest takes himself out of the decision-making process and balks against it. The person who protests even as he appeals undermines the very system that he is attempting to use. But the person who appeals and participates honours the God-given authority structure and can be an effective part of the process.

Let me make my point in a different way. We all know and detest today the method of terrorism and we laud the efforts to eradicate it from the face of the earth. Why? Because a terrorist fails to make use of the political process, but attempts instead to bring about change by causing havoc. Lest they encourage more such terrorism, the only answer that responsible governments can possibly give is to refuse to

negotiate with terrorists. There are, of course, a great many differences here, but there is one similarity. Those who refuse to participate despite the decisions of the assemblies are failing to make use of the appropriate process, and are creating havoc as well. The ecclesiastical assemblies, while wanting to reach out to such brothers and sisters, will not want to give in to their improper protest approaches, lest they encourage more of the same.

I see only trouble and hardship for you if you choose to go down this path. Think about it. What do you really hope to accomplish? Do you really think the church will change its approach because of your refusal to participate? And what does this say to the children? What will it mean for them on the day when they profess their faith? What kind of ideas will they have about the authority structures of the church? It does not take much for the train that goes down this track to spin out of control and head for disaster.

### **A better way**

And now, you also have to realize this. When, instead, you go ahead and participate and allow your voice to be heard by council or classis or synod, the responsibility for what happens in the church is with those assemblies to whom God has granted authority and who have heard your concerns. That means the responsibility no longer rests with you on this issue! It may be difficult for you to participate, and you may have your misgivings as you do so, but is it not comforting to know that then the Lord does not hold you responsible?

When you protest and fail to participate, the Lord will hold you responsible for that. It rests with you and you alone. But when you have allowed your voice to be heard in a Christian manner and to the best of your ability, then I am sure the responsibility is no longer yours. Doesn't that lighten the load?

You have to see that there is a better way. The church of our Lord Jesus Christ must know of the higher way of love (1 Cor 13:13). All of us need to seek unity, not division (Rom 16:17, Titus 3:10). Yes, a consistory must do that as well. They should have the unity of the whole body in mind when they make their decisions. But so must you and I. That means a willingness to accept things that I really do not prefer, a willingness to seek change for things to which I object, and always seeking change through the appropriate means and the right channels.

So this is my appeal to you, my brother or sister. Do you struggle with the way in which the Lord's Supper is celebrated in your church? You are not alone. But precisely therefore, let it be what it is supposed to be: a collective decision. Eat. Drink. The Lord Jesus commands you to do that. Ultimately, it's not about the manner. It's not about the external symbols. It's about what they point to, even if that pointing be feeble: his body, his blood. That's strong, for you and for your children.



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MATTHEW 13:52

# Christian Hope in the New Year

*“Set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.”*

1 Peter 1:13

A new year usually brings with it new expectations in almost every aspect of life: from medicine to farming. Will researchers discover a cure for cancer or other terminal diseases? Will advances in agriculture lead to an increase in crop productivity? New experiments will be conducted, new ideals born, new plateaus reached in space technology, genetic engineering, computer science. All the focus of such frenzied activity will be on the improved quality of life here and now. What sort of new conditions will be created for a longer, healthier, more prosperous life? The hope of our society, of the unbelieving world, does not extend beyond the present life. As church of Jesus Christ in this world we have to be careful that we don't get swept up in that shallow euphoria. We must set our hearts on the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Peter reminded his readers of precisely that in his first letter, “Set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

Peter had spoken about Christian hope already in verse 3, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Upon what is that hope fixed? Upon “an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you” (verse 4).

Verse thirteen begins with the word “therefore”, which means that what Peter is now going to say is based on, and includes, all that has preceded it. Because you have been born anew to a living hope, because you have an inheritance prepared in heaven, *therefore* set your hope fully upon the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. Peter, then, is urging them to keep their hope focused on the future advent of Christ. They can hope and long for it because, says Peter, at the revelation of Jesus Christ *grace* will be given to you.

In our way of thinking we receive *grace* now, but *glory* later. Peter shows us, however, that *grace* is not contrasted with *glory*, but is another name for *glory*. It is not the means toward attaining the final salvation, but it is that salvation in all its fullness. This unexpected word, describing the great object of our Christian hope, is filled with meaning. It tells us that the ultimate blessedness of being ushered into the city of God is purely and solely the result of the undeserved love of God. Literally it says “The *grace* that is being brought to you.” In Peter's conception it is already on its way! It is “being brought.” Upon that we fix our hope.

Let the year 2005 bring whatever God has decreed for it. Even if we could ascertain what that will be, what will it help us? The more we confine ourselves to *the grace that is being brought*, the more certain and powerful our hope. For

our hope rests entirely on Christ, who is coming to judge the living and the dead. Whoever hopes in Him will not be put to shame.

This hope must also be active and living. It requires strenuous effort on our part. Hope is one of those rich covenantal terms. It is an unshakeable *trusting* that God will bring salvation. It is a patient *waiting* for it, in his time and in his manner. And it is at the same time an eager *longing* for it. Trusting, waiting, longing.

We have to distance ourselves from the common meaning of the verb “hope” today. It's often used to convey doubt. For example, our friends might say, “Are you planning to visit us Friday evening?” And we respond, “I hope so!” We don't know for certain. One of the kids might get sick. The car might not start. We're not 100 percent sure. And so we use the word “hope” in the context of uncertainty. Nothing of that is in the Biblical meaning of hope. It is filled with rock-solid certainty, for the simple reason that the basis of hope is God's abiding. What He promises comes true.

The apostle enjoins us to “hope *fully*.” Perfectly. Unreservedly. This exhortation is so needful because our hoping is so often sporadic and broken. That Christ is coming back in glory we believe. We know that because God has told us so in his Word. But to *hope* upon that is something else! Hoping is praying

## Church News

Accepted the call to the Free Reformed Church of Launceston, Australia:

**Rev. R.J. Eikelboom**  
of Calgary, Alberta.

Declined the call to the Free Reformed Church of Darling Downs, Australia:

**Rev. R.J. Eikelboom**  
of Calgary, Alberta.

and preparing for, counting on and looking forward to, the coming grace, not just now and then but constantly – also in times of prosperity and abundance, as we enjoyed once again this past year. Do we hope like that? Fully? Is our heart, our mind, our strength, our soul always waiting for the Lord? Without that hope, how anxiously and fearfully we would enter the new year. The world has its wishes and dreams, but they will all perish with them.

We are so privileged. Our hope extends beyond the grave, beyond the needs of this present life. It reaches all

the way to the day of Christ's revelation. The man who hopes like that will *show* it in all his ways. It will influence his life, his character, his daily work. The expectation of the coming grace does not weaken us in our tasks here on earth, as others have sneeringly accused us. It's exactly that which gives us the strength and the dedication to work to God's glory. This present life is insignificant unless beyond it, and shaped by it, lies the life hereafter. No one can work as strenuously and rewardingly as the believer who knows that his works follow him into the eternal kingdom of his God and Father.



**J. Wiskerke van Dooren**

## Lord's Day 26

*Mrs. J. Wiskerke van Dooren published a Children's Catechism in Dutch. This has been translated with her permission.*

Last time we said that you would hear more about Holy Baptism and Holy Supper. Did you notice that I have added the word 'holy'? Do you know why?

When you eat chips or fried fries, you dip them in the mayonnaise. That is a kind of baptism. The meal you eat late in the day, you call 'dinner'. But you could also call it 'supper'. That is why in church the word 'holy' is added. Holy Baptism is a special kind of dipping. Holy Supper is a special kind of meal.

This time and the next time we will discuss Holy Baptism. When did baptism begin? Were Leah and Rachel baptized? No, they were not. What about David, was he baptized? No. Baptism began in the New Testament, when Jesus Christ had almost finished his work on earth. Just before He returned to heaven, He talked about it with his disciples. He said: "Soon, I will no longer be with you, and the Holy Spirit will be poured out. Then you must tell the gospel to all people in the world. And you must baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the

## Children's Catechism



Holy Spirit." Here, you see again the three persons together. Yet there is one God. I am sure you remember that.

But now we speak about baptism. The Lord Jesus himself instituted this baptism. Why? What do you do when your hands are dirty? You go to the tap and the water cleanses your hands. That is why the minister uses water when he baptizes. Water washes away dirt. You look clean and new. In much the same way, the blood of Christ washes away sins. When you see the water of baptism, you should think of Christ's blood taking away sins.

The Holy Spirit also promises that He will make the baptized baby new, so that it will live as the Lord Jesus wants it to live. We call that a God-fearing life. You are God-fearing when you honour God, and out of respect for God you always work to keep sin out of your life. Then you belong to Christ. Then you are no longer just one of the crowd. You have your own place with the Lord.



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# A Biblical View of Marriage (1)

*Marriage is a gift of God to his creation.*

## The present confusion<sup>1</sup>

Today's society is characterized by much confusion about the identity, place, and role of marriage. Many are bewildered and asking basic questions such as: what actually is marriage? If two people love each other, what's wrong with premarital sex or living together? And if you happen to be married and don't want to be married anymore, why not opt out and divorce?

If just about anything goes in our society, what is the place and sense of marriage? The question becomes even more urgent when you consider the arrival of so-called same-sex marriage. If you happen to be in love with someone of the same gender, why not formalize the arrangement and call it marriage? Is it not discriminatory to have only male-female marriages?

In this situation, what is a biblical view of marriage? How do we defend it?

## God is the starting point

First things first: if we want to understand marriage, we need to ask where it came from. Did it sort of develop in an evolutionary way during the time that humans evolved from lower forms of life or is it a gift, a wonderful design made by the great Designer, Almighty God, who created humanity, male and female? We need to confront this issue head on. The bottom line is

that marriage is not a chance idea, but marriage is a gift of God to his creation. So, if we want to know what marriage is really all about, we should listen to the One who designed it and gave it to us. Marriage is not our idea, but God's!

Many in our society would be inclined to say: "Don't talk to me about God. I don't believe He exists!" What do we do with that? Is that the end of our defence of a biblical view of marriage? No. We gently but firmly disagree and say that although people may deny God, such denial is done by suppressing the knowledge of God that the Lord has given to them. After all, according to God's Word (Rom 1:19-21) all people know God is there and is for real because his power and glory is evident from creation (also cf. Ps 19). Denying God is done against better knowledge. Also, their conscience testifies to the reality of God. To be human is to know and be aware of the Most High God.

And so central to our defence of marriage is God's existence and authority. We do not need to prove this. We must tell our society to listen to the One of whom their own conscience testifies. God himself gave the paradisaal gift of marriage. To Him we must listen. He, after all, speaks to us through his Word, holy Scripture. That Word is authoritative and it gives us the authority to speak to this issue in our society today. It is to God that we must listen.

Indeed, does not even our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) indicate in the preamble that "Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God?"

Let us now to consider God's design and intent of marriage.

## The original design and intent of marriage

When the Lord God made all things in the beginning, He crowned his work with the creation of man and He instituted marriage. It is imperative to realize how and why the Lord instituted marriage.

We read in Genesis 1 about day six of creation, that "God created man in his own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it'" (Gen 1:27-28).

There are several things to notice here that are relevant for us now. First, humans were created after God's image. This means that their identity and task is linked to heaven, to God. One implication of this is that humans are not animals. They are clearly differentiated from the animal world by having been made after God's image. To be human is not to be an animal. Second, this is the first time in Scripture that we read of male and female. The fact that this is the first mention of

gender is quite remarkable because earlier, on day five of creation, God had created the sea creatures and birds, and God “blessed them and said, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth’” (Gen 1:22).

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### *Central to our defence of marriage is God’s existence and authority.*

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Obviously their being fruitful presupposes sexual differences among the animals to enable procreation, but this fact is not expressly stated. Sexual differentiation is only specifically mentioned with respect to humanity. God had a purpose in that. The different genders are pointed out with humankind because unlike the animal world this sexual difference in humanity would be part of a relationship that is completely unique in all creation, the relationship of marriage, established by God Himself.

So Scripture here indicates that sexual relations among animals are of a different order than those among humans. Therefore gay studies on homosexual behaviour among animals to support their cause are irrelevant. Human sexuality is of a different order and is specifically linked to the institution of marriage as revealed by God in Genesis 2. This brings us to the account of marriage in Genesis 2.

### **A helper suitable for him**

It is important to see how marriage is introduced. The order of events is instructive. Prior to the gift of wedlock, God first had man name the animals which God brought to him. Why did God do this? To help man realize his

special place in creation. As he named the animals, Adam became aware of his uniqueness. He was not an animal. He was of a different order. He had dominion over them as shown by his giving the creatures each their name.

Furthermore, when he saw that all the animals were paired as male and female, he became aware of his own exceptional status and loneliness. He was a male all by himself. There was no female. He was solitary. When Adam realized this loneliness, God made a helper suitable for him (cf. Gen 2:18). This helper was by God’s design of the opposite gender, a woman, Eve. God provided the woman by causing Adam to fall into a deep sleep, taking from him one of his ribs to make Eve, and then presenting her to Adam (Gen 2:21-22).

Note: from one man, God created his counterpart, his helper suitable to him. How man jubilated when he received woman from the hand of God: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman’, for she was taken out of man” (Gen 2:23). Together they form one whole, a complete unit. So she was a helper fit for him. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). In this way God established marriage. It brings together male and female in a beautiful unity and wholeness because this is how God designed and made it. They fit together. As God Himself put it, He gave man, “a helper suitable for him.”

What does all this say about the marriage relationship? The words “helper suitable for him” indicate someone who corresponds to Adam. This helper is neither inferior nor superior to him, but she is his equal, his counterpart. The Lord therefore gave to Adam someone who will help him and provide deliverance from his solitude. Someone aptly wrote:

As a helper she complements him...and she completes him. . . . As they come together physically, intellectually, emotionally, there is a wholeness that did not exist before. . . . Man needed the woman to complete himself. That is why it was not good for him to be alone. Although it is not stated, the woman also needs the man to complete herself. When God gives the gift of celibacy, He provides grace to enable people to live in an incomplete manner. Their completeness must be found in Him. Yet that is not his ordinary way of doing things.<sup>2</sup>

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### *Marriage brings together male and female in a beautiful unity and wholeness because this is how God designed and made it.*

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Marriage is a great gift of God and the Lord Jesus also underlined that when He referred to God’s instituting marriage at the beginning and said: “What God has joined together, let man not separate!” (Mark 10:9).

In marriage, especially Christian marriage, male and female bind together into one beautiful unity that excludes loneliness and gives a safe and secure haven for a deep spiritual unity and intimacy. A profound joy is found in that intimacy for a wholeness is experienced that those who are alone miss. Part of the joy is that within the safe confines of marriage, in love and faithfulness, God’s gift of sex can be enjoyed (cf. Deut 24:5; Prov 5:15-19).



## Marriage and procreation

This gift of God means that there is more to God's design for marriage than making two individuals feel good as they form an emotional, spiritual and physical unity. This unity for mutual help is, to be sure, the first purpose of marriage. But there is a second purpose: God designed sex so that it would be directly linked with receiving children. When God gave marriage as a creation ordinance, He intended that children should be born into a family with a father and mother each having their distinctive roles. This divine design means that the family unit is the basic building block for society.

It is therefore noteworthy that when Adam rejoices in the gift of Eve, the Bible tells us that a man must *leave* his father and mother and *cleave* to his wife (Gen

2:24). In other words, the relationship of husband and wife at a certain point overrides the relationship of child to parent. With marriage, the relationship with father and mother becomes more distant. One leaves the parental home, and the new and permanent relationship of husband and wife takes its place. They are to cleave together. The nuclear family is the basic social unit in society.

Within that family setting, new life is received by means of the gift of sex. The children born experience the blessings of having a father and a mother who are really biologically their parents. In that intimate family setting, they learn the basics that will enable them to function productively in society. It all starts in the home, and the home as God has designed it is based on a marriage bond. Such a home is a strong

bulwark for the children, for marriage by definition is a trust relationship, a covenant (Mal 2:14), a life-long commitment as husband and wife.

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*This divine design means that the family unit is the basic building block for society.*

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As with anything that is beautiful and well-designed, once you start tampering with it, it breaks. And when something as beautifully designed as marriage breaks, it is like a magnificent vase that breaks. It becomes quite a mess. Of course, since the fall of Adam and Eve into sin, there has been a constant struggle to preserve this paradisaical gift of God. Through God's faithful favour and goodness to his creation, marriage has functioned virtually everywhere throughout history as a cornerstone of society. This pre-eminent place of marriage is coming under great stress today. But that topic is for the next article.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup>A short version of this material was presented at "Ignite our Culture Conference" in Burlington, Ontario, on November 13, 2004, sponsored by Equipping Christians for the Public Square Centre.

<sup>2</sup>Jay E. Adams, *Christian Living in the Home* (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1972) 48.

# Forty-First Annual Fraser Valley Women's League Day

## Standing in His Grace

It was a welcome cool day on June 23 when about 240 women gathered in the Abbotsford Canadian Reformed Church building for the forty-first annual Women's League Day. Joining the nine congregations in the Fraser Valley were some United Reformed, Free Reformed, and Vernon ladies. The theme for the day came from the comforting confession of Canons of Dort V, 3: "Those who have been converted could not remain *standing in that grace* if left to their own strength. But God is faithful, who mercifully confirms them in the grace once conferred upon them and powerfully preserves them in that grace to the end."

Mrs. Erica Holtvlüwer, from the hosting congregation of Aldergrove, capably got things started. The morning speaker from Surrey Maranatha Women's Society was then warmly introduced by Michelle Faber, and Jennie Van Driel presented her speech entitled "Encouragement and Comfort in God's Preserving Love," based on Romans 8:28-59.

### How can this be for our good?

Mrs. Van Driel addressed her speech to the "richest women in the world." We are children of the living God, bought at a great price, and precious to our Lord. We have also been richly blessed as a Reformed community, with churches and schools established by our parents and grandparents still flourishing. How true is the saying "God's kingdom first, and God will bless the rest."

And yet, we are not immune from the trials and tragedies of life in this world, as the pages of *Church News* attest: an ailing elderly woman remains in a nursing home while her healthy daughter dies suddenly, a young wife and mother struggles with a fatal tumour, a marriage crumbles into divorce, a prodigal child's lifestyle spirals into ruin, a daughter rejects her Christian faith and converts to another religion, a terrible accident, deep depression, loss of an unborn child, handicap, financial tensions, anxiety, and the list could go on.

When we experience trouble in our lives, we stagger at the blows from God's hand. It is natural for us as human beings to doubt and ask questions. Is God bringing trouble on us because we are so bad? Will we be able to hold on to our faith in the storm? And how can these things be for our *good* as it says in Romans 8:28?

When we look at the broader picture of our society, we see rampant materialism and moral decay. We fear what the future will bring, and we especially worry about our children growing up in a world that defies God's laws. Can persecution be far behind? Again, we may ask, does the Lord know what He is doing? Will we (and our children) be able to *persevere*?

### God preserves; we must persevere

What a jewel God's Word and our Reformed confessions are! They point us to the truth that God is sovereign and powerful and we are weak and sinful. Thus we are incapable of choosing Him, but rather He extends His grace to us freely and irresistibly (as opposed to the Arminian error which teaches that we can choose for God). Throughout a

Morning speaker  
Mrs. Jennie  
VanDriel





Afternoon speaker,  
Deb Oosterhoff

believer's life, He mercifully works in us, as the Author and Finisher of our faith. "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil 1:6).

We also need to be active in growing in that grace. "Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose" (Phil 2:12). When we see evidence of the Holy Spirit working fruits of faith in our lives, it motivates us even more to persevere in living every day for the Lord in gratitude (LD 24).

### **Are we still carrying our bag of potatoes?**

Living in this comfort is a daily challenge; however, we still have to deal with all manner of temptations, sins, and worries. Our speaker reminded us that we need to nourish our souls with the preaching of God's Word, and to meditate on its promises and warnings. We must learn to cast all our anxieties upon our Saviour, for He cares for us (1 Pet 5:7) and promises to give us rest (Matt 11:28). Christ's atonement is

finished; our worry can't add to it! Yet, so often, we are like a man walking along the road carrying a heavy bag of potatoes, who is picked up by another man in a wagon. After they ride along for some time, the driver asks the man why he hasn't put down his heavy bag of potatoes. "I don't want to trouble you too much, sir. You are giving me a ride already, so I'll just carry the potatoes myself."

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*We have been richly blessed as a Reformed community, with churches and schools established by our parents and grandparents still flourishing.*

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### **Spur each other on!**

In his mercy, Christ uses the members of his body to lighten the load we have to carry. In Hebrews 10:24 we

are exhorted to "Consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." We must be aware of the needs in our church community and offer help where we can. We should also show appreciation to those who have done an act of service well, give support to the new members, and prodding to the nominal ones. Encouragement is vital for enthusiasm, energy, joy, and commitment to thrive in the communion of saints!

After Jennie Van Driel's much-appreciated introduction, a remarkable discussion followed. Many women shared their personal experiences. Some of the issues we discussed included the need to have a godly sorrow for our sins, yet letting go of our guilt and the accusations of Satan because we are forgiven in Christ, the need to have more sensitivity and empathy for our sisters' inner struggles, the importance of bringing the Word and praying with a hurting sister, the blessing of community and how God shapes us through us helping others, the differences between God's discipline, testing, proving, and punishment, and the reminder to count our blessings to keep our difficulties in perspective.

### **What are the top priorities in our life?**

In the afternoon session, Pearl Van Kammen introduced the three women who prepared the speech on behalf of the Yarrow Women's Society, Deb Oosterhoff, Karen Gelderman, and Marion Vanderwel. Deb Oosterhoff presented the combined effort, entitled "Perseverance of the Reformed Woman." The application-rich introduction was structured around three priorities: serving our husbands, children and others.



*Young and old alike, enjoying fellowship and fine food!*

### **A wife of noble character**

Being a Christian wife involves being a helpmate who respects and submits to her husband. In our sinful world, this is no easy task. Much stress can be put on a marriage if a husband is lazy, financially irresponsible, makes poor decisions, or behaves foolishly. What is a wife to do if her husband gives up the spiritual leadership in the home? Is she to undermine him? Give up? Complain in front of others? Take over?

Instead, the wife struggling with such a husband needs to pray earnestly for him, discuss with him his responsibility before God, maintain his reputation in public, and encourage him. If there is no change, she should go to her pastor or elders for direction. By the "purity and reverence of our lives" (1 Pet 3:1, 2) we are to model obedience to our husbands. Abigail and Hannah are two examples of godly women in a difficult marriage who were rewarded by the Lord for their perseverance.

### **How are we "building our house"?**

A mother sets the tone in the home, and an attitude of contentment in our task is very important. "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord" (Col 3:23). As Christian mothers, our most important tone-setting tool is our personal study of God's Word, and then we must teach it to our children. In order to have the time and energy to do this (wisely called "building our house" in Proverbs 14:1), we need to be diligent in structuring our day. We need to limit our children's TV and computer time, encourage reading, supervise clothing, entertainment and friends, require chores, instill a good work ethic, and correct and direct our children in the way that they should go (Prov 22:6).

### **Supporting our sisters**

In addition to being wives and mothers, we are all sisters in the church. 1 Timothy 5:2 gives us the model to treat

older women as mothers and younger women like sisters. In order to support and serve each other effectively, we need to be involved with one another, especially in Bible study groups, but also in upbuilding friendships. We are to guard against jealousy and gossip, and not "let any unwholesome talk come out of [our] mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs" (Eph 4:29). The speaker concluded by saying that if the Lord is number one in our lives, we will be able to persevere as a Christian wife, mother, and sister in the church.

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*Encouragement is vital for enthusiasm, energy, joy, and commitment to thrive in the communion of saints!*

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Once again, a candid discussion followed the introduction. Working mothers balancing all their priorities while trying to maintain their sanity, God's provision for single mothers, and adjusting to one's identity as a young wife or new mother were discussed.

We ended the day with the rousing singing of the league day song, as women of God's church, standing in His grace. "Our salvation is secured/ For God's faithful Word is sure/ Therefore do we vow alliance/ To our God, though we are frail/ For in Christ is our reliance/ We will go the steepest trail."



# What's New???

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## A closer look

Descending from our lofty bird's-eye perch, we move in for a closer look. But we cannot report on everything. Also, some churches have not sent bulletins. Then you will suffer from the sin of omission.

## Aldergrove

The Rev. Holtvlüwer is a prolific writer. The Aldergrove bulletin is always filled with interesting and memorable information. This bulletin also keeps us up to date on what is important in our federation. Here follows a note from this bulletin regarding Bible translations:

### “Bible Translations: ESV and NIV

Council would like to make the congregation aware of a request from the Committee on Bible Translation soliciting any input we as church may have regarding the English Standard Version (ESV). If any member has such input, please forward it to Council so that it can be considered for passing on to the Committee.

Further, the CBT wishes to remind us of also this portion of their mandate: *To receive comments from churches and/or members about passages in the NIV in need of improvements; To scrutinize these comments and pass on valid concerns to the NIV Translation Center. Individuals may thus pass on their comments directly to the committee (via email, if possible)*”.

I carefully left out the address of the committee. You can find it in the Acts of

Synod. I wouldn't want Rev. Holtvlüwer to get a raft of unwanted email because of Cl. Spam.

## Immanuel Edmonton

We leave the verdant pastures of the Fraser Valley and move to the Prairie Provinces. That's an entirely different kettle of fish. Prairie people are very resourceful and have their own brand of humour.

Edmonton people do have a lot of fun, at least while the summer lasts. Below you find a description of a church picnic which contained some unusual activities and unlikely heroes. Names have been omitted to protect the innocent.

### “Church Picnic Pictures

Pictures of the church picnic are available for viewing on a table in the foyer. The pictures were taken with a digital camera and prints are 25 cents each. If you wish a copy of some, please write it on the lists. I will leave the pictures there for another couple of weeks.”

Nothing is free, I guess.

### “Church Picnic Thank-you

A big thank-you to all who made this year's church picnic a wonderful time enjoyed by all. A thank-you to all who helped out with the picnic and the events and a thank-you to all who came out and made it all worth while!!! The day started out at 7:00 AM with the canoe race, and although it was pretty chilly and

foggy, all nine canoes with eighteen participants eagerly set out on their way from the Devon Bridge to Laurier Park. Congratulations to all the participants, but alas in the end the race was won by. . . . As the morning progressed the picnic was getting started at Laurier Park, the weather had begun to warm and people began to arrive.

The day contained many enjoyable events for both young and young at heart. Among the events of the day: face painting or scalp painting, necklace making, different kinds of races, the parachute game, tug of war (which might next year be set up to be the acreage people against the city folk), the soccer game, arm wrestling and the watermelon eating contest. Among all these the most memorable are the arm wrestling contest and the watermelon eating contest. Many were the strained arms and faces in the arm wrestling contest.

In the watermelon eating contest it got very messy and the competition was fierce, but when all was eaten. . . took the prizes. . . congratulations!! A thank-you also goes out to H. N. for taking all the pictures he did. . . they are in an album on the table in the foyer for your viewing pleasure. If you wish to order any, just fill in your name and the picture number on the sheet he provided on the table. Thanks again everyone.”

I am almost tempted to order some photos, too, especially of the scalp-painting. We could make that into a national art form. We do have members who would excel in this category, either as artist or canvas.

## Barrhead

Someone in Barrhead keeps trying to be neighborly and regularly sends me the bulletin as an attachment. Take a look: attached you should find the bulletin for Barrhead and Neerlandia September 19, 2004. However, I cannot open attachments. My email program is designed to remove attachments, because it is often via the way of appendices that viruses and bacilli come into one's system.

Another sender has a very fancy program that wants me to use "adobe". Never heard of the place; must be something like "utopia". I am simply not very good at downloading.

Well, our journey eastward now brings us to Ontario's southern heartland.

## Streetlight Ministries

The church at Ancaster continues to conduct and promote Streetlight Ministries. Attempts are being made to gain enough support to call a missionary for this work. Here are two items from a press release of the board.

We read that a counselor is given the floor to speak about counselling: "He chooses to explain to us some things about psychological trauma. He defined trauma, differentiated among different types, gave examples of big-T and little-t trauma-causers, types of responses, and symptoms, both immediate and delayed. He then spoke especially about child abuse and its effects, even years later, and listed some 'red flags' that may

indicate child abuse. Finally he spoke briefly about treatment options. We then had a question-and-answer session, focusing especially on how this work derives from the Christian faith and uses an open Bible. The chairman thanked the counsellor for his presentation. Discussion on the presentation and contract is deferred to later in the meeting."

"Br. Richard Bultje reports on the Third International Mission Aid Conference he attended in B.C. this past August. Both he and (his wife) YuKyung highly appreciated the opportunity to attend this conference. Summaries of discussions and speeches will likely appear in upcoming issues of *Clarion*.

Richard highlights some aspects of his regular report: The Tuesday night division into three groups is going very well. Some of the clubs/study groups are just starting up again after the summer. Many people entered the SM Centre for the first time because of the VBS held there. With regard to the move of one SM attendee to Mississauga, Richard is asked if she is able to attend a ministry there. He replies that he will put her in touch with a URC missionary with whom he has contact."

There is also a report on preparations for the September 16 meeting between the Ancaster council and SM board and the delegates from the seven churches that were visited in June/July:

"Responses so far (5 of 7) are all positive about the ministry but negative as far as being able to give immediate financial support toward calling a missionary. Since calling of a home missionary was predicated on complete support, such a call will not happen this year. The meeting will go

ahead anyway as a discussion forum in the hopes of generating future support and keeping people interested. Ancaster Council will run this meeting. Several board representatives will also be present."

"There is a vision Committee (consisting of R. Bultje, Prof. Visscher, Dr. Oosterhoff, and Rev. van Popta): the chairman suggests that we ask the VC to consider the following questions and give the board advice:

- How can we keep the ministry moving (and deal with growth) now that a missionary will not be called this year?
- How can pastoral care be maintained with the contacts Richard now has?
- Would a morning service be feasible in addition to the evening one?"

## Ancaster

The Ancaster council generally makes important decisions. A committee report complete with cover memo, proposal, and an attachment is put into discussion. The Report was prepared by two members of council. Rev. van Popta had also received a copy of this report earlier. After our discussion, it is unanimously agreed to grant our minister a sabbatical leave of 3 to 6 months, duration and details to be determined.

I have myself benefited from sabbaticals, once to obtain my Master's degree in Kampen, and once to work on the publication of a book. Such a sabbatical is important not just for the minister involved but also for the churches in general. We hope that Rev. G.Ph. van Popta will find the time rewarding for himself and for his work.

## Rockway

I mentioned that Rev. C. VanderVelde resurfaced in Rockway. Here is what he writes in the Rockway bulletin:

“This is my first pastoral column after installation in Rockway last Sunday. Our family is starting to settle in as we arrange the various administrative details that come with a move from one province to another. If all went well this week, we are already sporting new Ontario license plates – a sure sign that we belong here. My wife and I would like to express our appreciation for the efficient manner in which the move to Rockway was arranged and carried out. Moreover, we can see that much hard work took place at the manse prior to our arrival! We especially would like to say thank you for the beautiful new deck that was built, as well as the new sidewalks that were poured, and the eye-pleasing landscaping that was done. It all helps in making the manse feel like a home. Thanks also for the birthday cake that was presented to me at the coffee social last Sunday. It was certainly a weekend of milestones for me – my 40th birthday on Saturday and my installation on Sunday.

If all goes as planned, construction of the Rockway church building will begin in earnest this week as the concrete for the floor and foundation is poured. The period of waiting during the summer was a disappointment for everyone, but now the work can start and we hope and pray that the LORD will bless this effort with success.”

## Toronto

In the church at Toronto the focus these days is much on building. We note the following:

### “Building Committee Update – A Hard Hat

Although the weather has caused some delays, quite a lot of progress has been made in the last couple of weeks. The plumbing and electrical work was done, and the floor was poured as planned. It is quite amazing the type of equipment that is available to accomplish this part of the construction. After the completion of the floor, the lower walls were erected and window frames installed. There is a lot of hidden work when erecting the walls. Iron bars are installed vertically and horizontally to strengthen the whole structure. The volunteers are able to assist in this work after a little instruction from the experts. Wearing 'hard hats', you would be hard pressed to distinguish the 'laymen' from the experts. It is expected, D.V., that the concrete will be poured into the already erected walls on either Tuesday or Wednesday. Some or all of the structured steel will be delivered early this week and erected so that a start can be made on the walls of the auditorium, which are considerably higher than the rest of the walls.

We hope that this update allows you to see a mental image as we progress, if you are unable to visit the site. For those who are able to take a look, we urge you to do so, and get caught up in this exciting project. We are thankful for the volunteers that make themselves available, both during the week and on Saturday, including a lot of young people. Some of the ladies are now

providing coffee and snacks for the Saturday crew, which is much appreciated, and also creates a most pleasant atmosphere! A sincere thank you to all who give their time and talent to see this project completed in the shortest time possible. May our Gracious God bless our plans and efforts, and keep us from harm as we go about our work.”

## Orangeville

As you may know, Rev. R. Pot left Orangeville to take up ministry in London, Ontario. He went with some extra baggage, called a “CamelPak”.

I sense that you are curious as to what this CamelPak entails. We'll stick to Rev. Pot's brief description and let your imagination run freely to fill in the rest. “The CamelPak is a quality biking accessory that will allow me to make exploratory excursions across the city of London while being supplied with ample refreshments.” Hmm.

There was no report in the London bulletin as to how this CamelPak was being used.

## Conclusion

Well, there's much more to tell, but my space and time are up. I plan to have this column appear more regularly to do better justice to the many things that are happening around us in the churches.

But first my wife and I will be visiting family in The Netherlands. There are many things going on in our Dutch sister-churches, also sad things, and we pray that things may turn for the better.

After I return, the Lord willing, we'll continue with this endeavour. Take care now, and till then.

<sup>1</sup>This submission is continued from the previous issue.

## A. Kingma and K. Sikkema

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# CRTA Convention

## October 28-29, 2004

On October 28 and 29, over 150 teachers converged on Hamilton for the CRTA Convention 2004. Most of them were from the Canadian Reformed schools in Ontario, but guests included teachers from Providence Reformed Collegiate and Heritage Christian School. Jerry Tillema of Bethel Books also displayed good Christian literature. At the opening in Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church, colleague Richard Tomlin characterized the convention as a time to learn, meet, share, relax, reflect, and praise God. The convention's theme and theme song also pointed to our reliance on our only Saviour: In Christ Alone. He placed this in the context of Ephesians 4, which calls us to keep the unity of the Spirit in love by using our gifts for building up the body of Christ.

The keynote speaker for this convention was Dr. John Van Dyk, Professor of Education and Director of the Center for Educational Services at Dordt College, Iowa. He spoke about teaching as a reflective practice. He had previously addressed various Canadian Reformed school teachers and principals, and is also active in helping people in some poorly-equipped third world contexts to become Christian teachers. He knew of no fundamental incompatibility between his understanding of Christian education and ours, and suggested that whatever differences there might be would not distract from our common goal of Christian education.

### Reflection

Dr. Van Dyk offered a three-point agenda for his main address: Obstacles that prevent reflection, what reflection is,

and how we reflect and about what. He indicated that in Christian classrooms there often is a gap between our view and our actions, or between our educational philosophy and our practice. For instance, he suggested, we may see our school as the body of Christ, while it often does not show that very well. While we would easily agree that reflection is important for our practice, it may in fact be inadequate. Indeed, there are many obstacles and derailleurs to our reflection. These include, among others, the time crunch (feeling too busy to reflect), vague mission statements (if our task is not focused in a clearly defined mission, anything goes), a stereotyped *theory vs. practice* dichotomy (just tell me what to do, rather than elaborating on philosophy), a lingering *spiritual vs. secular* dualism (giving a Christian coating on an otherwise secular program), textbooks (which easily dictate our curriculum), and a quantifiable assessment obsession (neglecting factors of love, compassion, and understanding that cannot be captured in numbers).

Addressing the nature of reflection, Dr. Van Dyk noted that it should be deliberate as well as informal and constant—much like prayer can be formal, or quiet, throughout the day. It can be a deliberate activity, in which one seeks to “cultivate the walk of God's Spirit with us.” Reflection implies an awareness of what is happening, and increases the ability to respond in a thoughtful way, rather than intuitively or mechanically. He introduced the word “conscientization” (to make explicit our tacit or implicit knowledge and assumptions rooted in our experience), and identified three of its key facets:

foundational reflection, reflective action, and reflective review. The first one is about our beliefs about God, the world, life, and our purpose in life. It reflects on how these beliefs are applied in our educational practice: there is something significantly amiss if they are not central to our teaching! In addition to reflection on the nature and purpose of schooling, our view of children, the curriculum, and teaching and learning, Dr. Van Dyk suggested that we also become aware of distorting spirits which operate in our philosophy and practice of learning and teaching. He suggested that we ask more “why” questions in our unit and lesson planning, that we surround ourselves with reminders that we are *called* to teach, and that we become thoughtful practitioners, cultivating a practice of walking-with-the-Spirit.

Finally, Dr. Van Dyk touched briefly on various levels of reflection. He included reflection about practical, immediate problems and practices, larger context and background issues, and about fundamental beliefs. He suggested that we identify what is normative, what are distortions, and what are “redemptive action” steps. He challenged us to foster reflection in the school culture through prayer, discussion, commitment, and seeking wisdom in the Biblical sense. This seeking of wisdom he understood as walking with God, trusting and believing, knowing and understanding, discerning and becoming aware of, evaluating and testing, and finally judging and acting rightly. He concluded that to teach is to be on a journey, preparing for works of service as part of our sanctification, and to increasingly manifest the image of God.

## Friday's devotional

On Friday we all took our places at the round tables in Guido's gym to join in singing praise to God and to read from his Word. Rev. D. Vandeburgt, minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Glanbrook, used the first part of Romans 6 as the basis for his devotional. He reminded us that we are first of all Christians with the beautiful task of building the next generation. Admittedly, teachers may lack time for reflection, yet we must continuously be busy with re-evaluating our lives in the light of God's Word. We so easily get caught up in our feelings and circumstances, or in the quagmire of pragmatism; however, we need to reflect and respond intentionally and wisely. And what do we reflect on? Romans 6 states that we are bound in Christ: we have died and are buried in Him; in Him we also live! Rev. Vandeburgt also reminded us of Lord's Day One where we confess "but I belong to my faithful Saviour." This faithful Saviour, he stated, covers "my guilty past, my insecure future, and my glorious resurrection." We have everything in Christ.

Rev. Vandeburgt admitted that reflection is more than awareness; it also involves action or doing. We must act out of that awareness. Romans 6 continues with "Do not let sin. . .," and "offer yourself to God." In the classroom, we must be God's instrument of righteousness. We must guide the students so that they know who they are, and then they act upon that awareness in the classroom and in the school.

## Workshops

After our devotional, the teachers could begin their second round of workshops. Teachers could choose from ten workshops that covered topics from decreasing bullying, poetry, making art fun, and primary physical education, to topics like effective discipline, learning disabilities and constructivism. To give our readers a sampling of the workshop, we will include reviews of two that we attended.

1. I chose to go to a workshop on Christianity and Islam in the twenty-first century. Dr. Goheen explained that Islam is not a religion that can fit simply into private lives as we westerners may think,



but one that desires to have a social-political community of peace in a geographical sense, where all society in a region submits to the shariah law. Muslims seek to establish that peace through *jihad* in the region of *dar al-harb*, the region of war, which in this twenty-first century is the humanistic, liberal West. Although not all Muslims may condone acts of terrorism, the element of converting the *dar al-harb* through different means is an essential part of their religion. Essentially, Muslims see the West as a civilization opposed to their own Muslim civilization. The Taliban belongs to the group that rejects the West and modernity. Other Muslims, usually more educated ones, either accept the West and modernity, or accept modernity but not Westernization. The latter group claims that Muslims can cultivate science, work in factories, or utilize advanced weapons, but do not need to change their political ideology or institutions. I sure learned a lot in this hour-and-a-half workshop! (AK)

2. Ron Morrish, a Niagara-based educational consultant with an international reputation, presented a workshop on "Effective Discipline and Classroom Management." He explained that various theories about controlling student misbehaviour in public school systems had failed because they were based on flawed research. All too often people provide excuses for misbehaviour, without addressing what Mr. Morrish believed to be the root of the problem: failure to teach and train children to

show plain old-fashioned respect. As the curriculum is taught in a sequence of simple concepts to more difficult ones, one should expect the most respectful behaviour from older students. Often, the contrary is the case.

Mr. Morrish suggested that good discipline begins with teaching what is expected, both at home and at school, and then insisting that children do as expected. Inadequate performance should not be an option: they must do it right, or do it over. Teenagers tend to act on impulse, as the part of their brain that makes them think twice is simply taking a back seat for a couple of years, until its development catches up with the rest. Hence, he suggested, it is important to ensure that proper behaviour is an automatic or near automatic response before they get to that stage (much like we will stop on red in the middle of the night when there is no traffic). With good discipline, students will need a tutorial (not a detention) in which time is spent re-teaching what they should have learned previously.

Practically, Mr. Morrish asserted that frantic, reactionary, and high-pitched power responses to misbehaviour are counter-effective; it is far better to lower the voice, to speak with authority, and to remind the child of what is expected. He did not mention it, but the Lord has indeed placed parents and teachers in a position of authority; the problem is that we need to learn again what that means for our practice. Mr. Morrish implied that lesson preparations which engage all

students in the learning are the best techniques for discipline and preventing misbehaviour. (KS)

## Conclusion

The workshop presenters were teachers from among us, from Redeemer University College, or other experts in their fields. Over 150 teachers could enjoy twenty-eight different workshops throughout the two days. The CRTA Convention 2004 was a thought-

provoking, uplifting, successful convention. Not only were we taught the importance of constant reflection, but we were also given more in-depth knowledge in various curricular areas. We were given practical tools to assist us in our unit or lesson planning, in our teaching techniques and in our understanding of assisting the variety of covenant children entrusted into our care. May God continue to bless the

professional development done in our Christian schools, so that the teaching of God's covenant children may be improved, strengthened and furthered.

*The Education Matters column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association East. Anyone willing to respond or interact to an article or anyone willing to write an article for us is kindly asked to send materials to Clarion or to Otto Bouwman [bouwman@surepost.net]*



## Press Release

### Release of the Board of Governors' meeting held at the Theological College in Hamilton on September 9, 2004

The chairman, Rev. J. Moesker, called the meeting to order. He led in opening devotions and welcomed all the governors as well as the Principal, Dr. C. Van Dam. The Minutes of the February 23, 2004 meeting were adopted and the agenda established.

The Academic Committee informed the Board that three students have been interviewed and admitted to the M.Div. program, and one student is admitted to the Diploma of Theological Education program. A female student has applied to take courses at the College for one year. The Committee also reported that it had appointed a sub-committee which will investigate the relationship of the Pastoral Training Program to the College curriculum.

The Finance and Property Committee presented their twenty-second Annual Report and the Audited Financial Statements for period ending Dec. 31, 2003. The Board is pleased that there is no increase in assessment for the 2005 Budget.

The Board dealt with the following reports:

- Governors' report on January 7-8, 2004 lecture visits. The governors concluded their positive report by expressing thankfulness to the Lord for the fact that the lectures were of good academic quality, clear, and biblically sound.

- Senate report that all the course work for 2003-2004 was completed in accordance with the adopted program of studies. Two proposals from the Senate to streamline the curriculum were approved by the Board.
- Principal's report which gave a well-rounded survey of College life during the last academic year.
- Registrar's report which highlighted a number of requests for information by prospective students and other interested parties.
- Librarian's report about attending a conference of the American Theological Library Association. This conference was beneficial to the Librarian in her work at the College.
- Bursary Fund Committees reported that there are some students who have received assistance through the Funds. The Board notes with gratitude that the Foreign Students Bursary Fund continues to receive donations from private individuals and also from deacons of various congregations.
- Governance Committee which is busy compiling the necessary information for the various Handbooks that will serve the Board, Faculty and Students. The Board re-appointed the brs. G. Nederveen and W. Smouter for another three year term, which expires in 2007.
- Ad-hoc committee regarding Rotating or Permanent Principalship unanimously recommended that, if possible, a permanent Principal with a part-time teaching load would be in the best interest of the College. This

recommendation will be studied in greater depth by a committee comprised of Dr. N.H. Gootjes, Dr. G. Nederveen, Mr. G.J. Nordeman and Dr. C. Van Dam.

These reports were received with much gratitude to the Lord.

A schedule for lecture visits during the next academic year was adopted. Rev. G. Nederveen and Rev. J. Van Woudenberg are appointed to visit lectures in the fall of 2004 while Rev. R. Schouten and Rev. W. Slomp are assigned to do the same in the spring of 2005.

Rev. Cl. Stam informed the Board that, due to health issues, he will be retiring from the active ministry later this month. For this reason, he will have to resign from his work as a member of the Academic Committee and Board of Governors. The chairman expressed the concern of everyone for the well-being of Rev. Stam. He thanked him for the work that he was able to accomplish on behalf of the College and commended Rev. Stam to the ongoing care of God. To replace Rev. Stam, the Board appointed Rev. G. Ph. van Popta, who is the first alternate for Regional Synod East appointed by General Synod Chatham 2004.

The Board finished the meeting by dealing with various items of correspondence which had been distributed by the Secretary of the Board. After Question Period was held, the chairman thanked everyone for their cooperation and the meeting was closed with prayer.

*On behalf of the Board of Governors,  
G. Nederveen, vice-chairman*

