



Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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Conspiracy

*Forced
Assistance*

*Dealing with
Disagreements
in the Church*



A dead Christ is no threat. A living Christ is.



E. Kampen

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Conspiracy

Many people buy into the argument that you do not need a risen Jesus to preserve the essence of the Christian message

The fact that Good Friday and Easter function as part of the national holiday cycle is a reminder of the way the Christian faith has influenced western culture. It is striking, however, how these public holidays are marked by attacks on the Christian faith. Thankfully, these attacks do not take on a physical character where people bomb churches or kill Christians. The attacks are more refined. We might want to call them verbal hand grenades. However, refined or not, they are still attacks where forces conspire together in an effort to suppress the fact the Lord Jesus arose from the dead.

Attack on the Christian faith

We can see this in the news release at the end of February about a documentary to be aired on the Discovery Channel as well as on Vision TV, the Canadian multi-faith and multicultural channel, entitled *The Lost Tomb of Christ*. For a day or two, this documentary made it to the top news stories on the CBC website. The news release from the Discovery Channel started by saying, "New scientific evidence,

The redemption of life hinges on the resurrection of our Lord

including DNA analysis conducted at one of the world's foremost molecular genetics laboratories, as well as studies by leading scholars, suggests a 2,000-year-old Jerusalem tomb could have once held the remains of Jesus of Nazareth and his family. The findings also suggest that Jesus and Mary Magdalene might have produced a son named Judah."

Note the clever tactic of beginning with the term "scientific evidence" and referring to "leading scholars." This gives the impression of credibility. It easily will lead the reader to overlook the way the sentence continues by speaking of how these tombs "could have once held the remains." In other words, all that follows is pure speculation. When one reads the information provided, one is left wondering how four million dollars could be spent on producing a documentary on such speculation. Furthermore, one wonders how a publisher even decided to print a companion book, *The Jesus Family Tomb*.

As if this was not sad enough, it gets worse when one is informed of the reactions of biblical scholars to this documentary. It appears that one scholar was interviewed for the documentary, perhaps to give an impression of objectivity. Rather than flatly rejecting the claims, one "scholar" gives it a probability of "one, maybe a one and a half [out of ten]." A religious studies professor at the University of Toronto, addressing the suggestion Jesus married Mary Magdalene, is reported to have said, "...we would want to know how a married Jesus can be reconciled with Jesus teaching against sexual activity." Of the two voices brought in to defend the cause of the gospel, one speaks with a degree of hesitation about the resurrection, while the other misrepresents our Lord's teaching on marriage and sexuality.

Tempest in a teapot?

We may be inclined to write off such reports as ridiculous, not worthy of our attention. Furthermore, is this not a tempest in a teapot? It is well possible that many readers were never even aware of this documentary. On top of that, like so many of these things, after their two days in the news and a flurry



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of excitement, they are soon forgotten. To do so, however, would be naïve. We live in a world where people are enamoured by these kinds of reports. Only a year ago the movie *The Da Vinci Code*, which also had as premise that Jesus married and had children and died a natural death, caused a big stir and became the second highest grossing movie in the world for 2006. Many people's theological training takes exclusively via these types of documentaries that come across as authoritative by simply claiming to be scientific and having scholarly support. Furthermore, many people buy into the argument that you do not need a risen Jesus to preserve the essence of the Christian message. The producer, aware that his documentary might be seen as undermining Christianity, is reported to have said that this (alleged) discovery celebrates the existence of Jesus and his family and that Jesus' message of compassion, humility, love, and forgiveness resounds even today. Of course, in this he echoes the sentiments of those who wished to preserve the Christian faith without a cross and without a resurrection.

In all this, we have to keep in mind Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15. He considers the resurrection of our Lord Jesus as a matter of fundamental importance. He also indicated that "... if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is our faith. . . if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins" (14, 17). If you deny the resurrection, not only do you flatly contradict the preaching of no less than five hundred eyewitnesses of the risen Lord, but you also nullify the gospel. The Christian faith is not just a message of compassion, humility, love, and forgiveness on the horizontal level but about the reconciliation of God and humanity and the redemption of life that all hinges on the resurrection of our Lord. It is not surprising that exactly on the point of the resurrection the preaching met its strongest opposition and rejection, for talk of the resurrection leads to talk of Christ as a King who demands obedience and of Christ who will come to judge the living and the dead. We can think of the Apostle Paul preaching in Athens. People listened until they heard him speak about the resurrection of the dead. Then a good number of them sneered. A dead Christ is no threat. A living Christ is.

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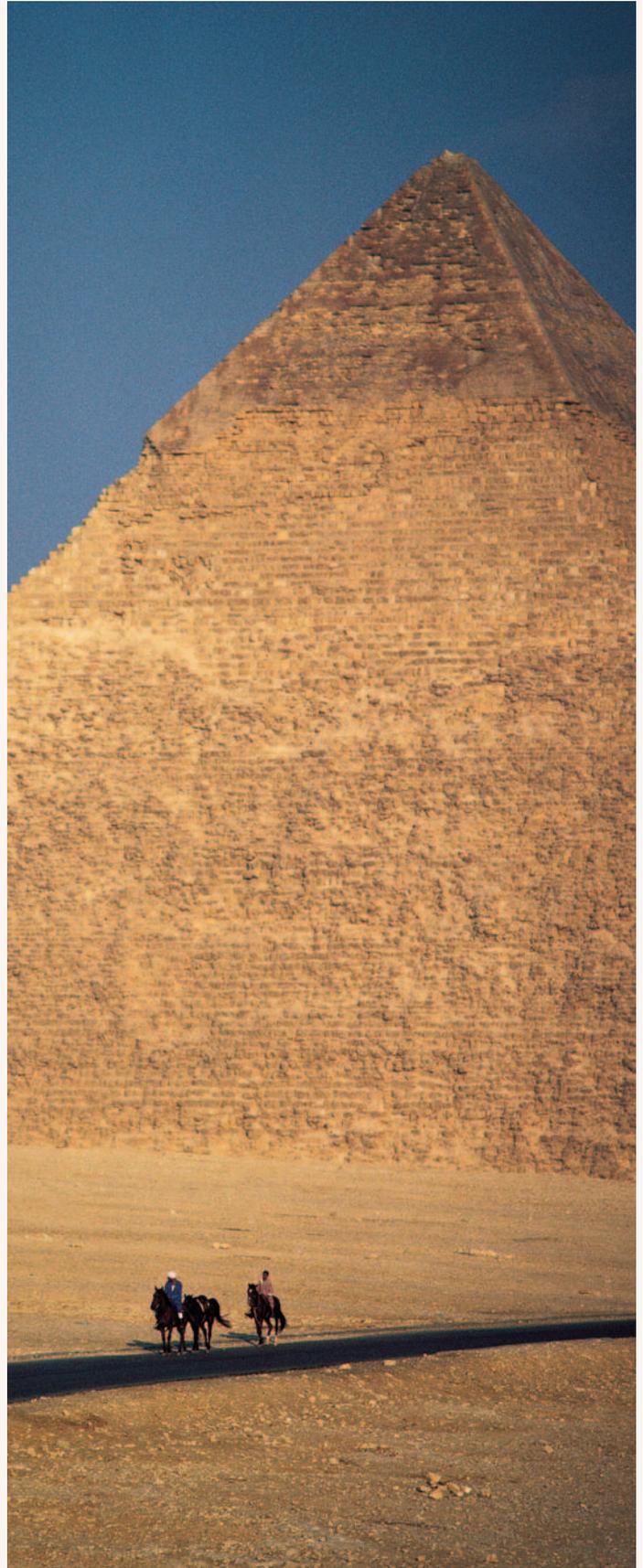
We can see that the evil one is still hard at work. He has his willing servants who sow doubt and who reinforce people in their doubt and unbelief. Because we live in a country where we can serve our gracious God according to his Word in freedom, we may lose sight of the fact that "the nations conspire and the peoples plot . . . against the Lord and his anointed" (Ps 2:1). It may be in vain, but they do it nevertheless.

What should we do with this?

First, we should take a reality check. Unbelief is strongly entrenched and is constantly reinforced by the indoctrination via the popular media. They pick their times well, reinforcing unbelief at those times of the year when the national holiday cycle might tweak people's memories of the Christian faith. Further,

Unbelief is strongly entrenched and is constantly reinforced by the indoctrination via the popular media

the evil one not only muffles the gospel but also muddles it by bringing forth representatives for the faith who do not unequivocally and clearly explain the Scriptures. Second, we should be far more suspicious of the media and all claims that begin based on "scientific evidence" and "scholars." Third, we should realize that in this age our words often fall on deaf ears. That does not mean we should stop speaking of our risen King but it does give added incentive to let our conduct show we have died with Christ and been raised with Him. Finally, and this is the most important, here is a matter for prayer. In expanding on the petition "Your kingdom come," the Catechism shows how this includes praying, "Destroy the works of the devil, every power that raises itself against Thee, and every conspiracy against Thy holy Word."



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Forced Assistance



MATTHEW 13:52

“As they led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.” Luke 23:26

Following his conviction and condemnation to death on the cross, the Lord Jesus was on his way to Golgotha. According to the law and to custom, the crucifixion had to take place outside the city. Also, the one who was condemned had to carry his own cross, because of the shame associated with the act. Jesus too had to carry his own cross.

But then something happened on the way. Jesus must have faltered and weakened so that He could no longer carry the cross. At that point, the soldiers forced a man named Simon (of Cyrene) to carry the cross for Jesus. Simon appears to be minding his own business, passing by on his way in from the country (Mark 15:21), when suddenly he became a participant in the crucifixion. Luke tells us that Simon was made to carry the cross behind Jesus.

Some commentators suggest that Simon is an example of *discipleship*.¹ They point to the Lord's earlier words in Luke, that people ought to take up their cross and follow Him. Luke 9:23, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Luke 14:27, "And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple." But we agree with those who consider such an interpretation "forced." Simon is not an example of discipleship. Far from it. He did not know the Master. There is no indication of sacrifice or loss on Simon's part. In addition, he was forced to help, which is the opposite of discipleship.

When considering this incident on the way to Golgotha, we must focus on what the Lord Jesus was doing and what He was experiencing. He was the Lamb of God, being led outside the camp to the slaughter. He was being treated as a vile criminal, made to carry his cross like the two murderers who were with Him. He was being subjected to extreme cruelty. In addition, think about what He had already suffered in the twenty-four hours prior to the cross-bearing: the betrayal of Judas, the sorrow of Gethsemane, the confrontation of the mob, the scattering of the disciples, the denial of Peter, the injustice of the Sanhedrin, the false conviction of Pilate, the horrible treatment of the soldiers. He was mocked, beaten, spit upon, and rejected. His body was tender and striped from scourging. His head was scarred and bloody from the crown of thorns. Then came the latest humiliation: Jesus had to drag a heavy cross on his weary shoulders, like He was some kind of murderer who deserved no compassion or pity. Is it any wonder that Jesus was at the end of his human strength? That He could muster no more? He had become so weak from all his suffering that He could no longer bear the cross. He was unable to walk any farther. He needed the help of a passerby. Even then, not one was found willing to help Him. He was all alone. Jesus therefore had to accept the further humiliation of *forced assistance*. He became the image of the deepest human misery and weakness. It was one more step into humiliation along the path to his death on the

cross. That's our Saviour! That was his suffering! That's what He did for us! He was humiliated so that we might be exalted. He was made a curse for us, so that we might receive God's blessing.

The gospel writer Mark, when describing this event, identifies Simon as "the father of Rufus and Alexander" (Mark 15:21). Apparently his sons were known in the early Christian church. Some draw a connection to Romans 16:13, "Greet Rufus, outstanding in the Lord, and his mother and mine." Since Mark's audience was the Roman Christians, this may very well be true. It means the service Simon rendered for Jesus, which was at first "forced" by the soldiers, eventually turned out to be a genuine blessing for himself, his family, and many others. The one who at first was forced to serve Jesus, later became a willing follower and disciple.

Every incident describing the life of Jesus, including the final moments before his death, teaches us about the love of our Saviour. Also the account of Jesus carrying his cross teaches it. The Lord's further humiliation of having to accept forced assistance impresses upon us what He was willing to suffer for our sake. In the full realization of that suffering, let us, with gratitude, follow the Lord Jesus in true discipleship.

¹For example, Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960, 1968). On Matthew 27:32, he says, "All that will approve themselves disciples indeed, must follow Christ, bearing his cross" (1353). In his thoughts of Mark 15:21, Henry states, "We must not think

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Dealing with Disagreements in the Church (Part 1 of 2)

The Dutch sister churches are going through a period of crisis. There are controversies on a wide variety of issues, but the dividing line is clear. It runs between those who promote or allow changes and new perspectives in a number of areas and those who object to this. The areas in question include hermeneutics, exegesis and preaching, worship style and liturgy, ethical issues like Sunday as day of rest and marriage and divorce, and the relationship with other churches and with the world at large. In the matter of relationships, the group that allows change favours a lowering of walls and thresholds, so that the church may be more welcoming to outsiders. The other group, adhering to a well-established ecclesiology and anxious to prevent contagion, thinks that the church should maintain its isolated position.

For lack of a better term, I will refer to that second group as the opposition. It forms a minority and it complains that its legitimate concerns are ignored by general synods and leading theologians. Some former members – a group of about 1250 – have seceded some years ago and established their own federation. Other members stay, but they refer to themselves as *verontrusten* – a Dutch term that can perhaps best be translated as “the disquieted” or

“the objectors” – and they keep voicing their criticism of the churches’ present direction.

On this side of the Atlantic there appears to be considerable sympathy for the second group. That is not surprising. In its defence of well-established beliefs and customs and in its opposition to the church’s tendency to open up to the world,

*We hear more from the
accusers than from
the accused*

this group honours a tradition that is as old as the church liberation of 1944, if not older. Most of our members grew up with that tradition and many still cherish it. Sympathy with the opposition is strengthened when rumours reach us about increasing worldliness among Dutch church members, a decline in church attendance, and (in some cases) an extravagant popularizing of worship style. One cannot but admit that such developments are disturbing.

Sources of information

An additional reason why there is a good deal of sympathy for the opposition is that much of what is known here in Canada about the Dutch situation comes via printed

sources and websites owned and directed by members of this group. These sources inform the readership, frequently in English, of perceived aberrations in lifestyle and worship. They also write of doctrinal developments which, in their opinion, show apostasy and a Bible-critical attitude among leading theologians. These sources seem to be more widely read among us than the explanations issued by the other side, which are often available in print only and demand a knowledge of the Dutch language. In short, we hear more from the accusers than from the accused, and this shows.

An influential digital source directed by opposition members is the website *eeninwaarheid.nl*. A “Letter to the Editor” published in this magazine on February 2 mentions it and recommends it to the readers of *Clarion*. In my response to that letter (March 16), I wrote that I intended to write about the way this website deals with church-related issues. I am doing so in the present article, the first of a two-part series.

I want to make clear from the start that I understand the concerns expressed by the site’s writers and by the opposition generally. I am also convinced that these writers are moved by love for the church and wish to serve the brotherhood. But I have serious

questions about the manner, tone, and method of their polemicizing. To formulate these questions, then, is the primary goal of this series. A secondary but related goal is to break through the one-sidedness of the information coming from this website (and from related sources). I hope to do that in the next instalment by giving attention to some of the arguments of the accused.

Tone and contents

The website in question was established in November 2005 by thirteen church members, who introduce themselves in an opening letter as non-theologians. Several of them, they add, are office bearers or have served as such. The authors express gratitude for "the many things that are good" in the church to which they belong. In the same breath they tell readers that they will stress not the positive elements, but rather what they perceive as negative developments in the church. When a dike threatens to collapse, they reason, one does not waste time celebrating the dike's strong construction in other areas, but focuses on the weak parts. Even more graphic metaphors are used. The letter speaks of a landslide (*aardverschuiving*) and of breaches that are being shot in the wall for the enemy to enter. In short, the situation is portrayed as critical and we are told that those who ignore the dangers or defend the accused by referring to their piety and good intentions are not soldiers of Christ but deserters. Who would dream, the letter asks rhetorically, of allowing a robber who enters a bank with loaded gun to defend himself by speaking of his good intentions?

"We have to be realistic," the letter tells us, "and not allow ourselves to be blinded by the reputation of church leaders." This is true enough, but it does not

imply the right to blacken the reputations of these men, individually and collectively. Yet this happens in this website and in other opposition documents. Is not the ninth commandment, and its interpretation in Lord's Day 43, binding on all in the disputes? Good intentions do not play a role here, either. The end does not justify the means.

The church is the only place to deal with divisions, disagreements, and accusations among brothers

As the above makes clear, the authors of this site do not mince words. Their language is critical, firm, uncompromising, at times sarcastic. The same applies to the contents of their writing. Especially striking is the authors' belief in the absolute correctness of their own view. I have visited the website on a number of occasions but have not found any acknowledgement that at least in some areas the critics could be in error, that there could be misinterpretations, or that just possibly there might be two sides to an issue. What the writers proclaim to be wrong is by definition wrong, and indeed very wrong. The introductory letter (which gives a good preview of the website's general tone) states, among other things, that the Dutch churches are abandoning the Reformed confessions; that at the Theological University doctrines are taught which "open the door for criticism of the Bible" (later the letter says that biblical criticism is already being taught); that the University Senate and the general synods allow such apostasy; and that the average church member ignores the dangers.

The authors admit that their group forms a minority in the church but add that this does not by itself disqualify their message. History shows, they point out, that prophets who preached repentance in the Name of the Lord were often thrown out. Also, most of the leading theologians opposed the Secession of the nineteenth century and the Liberation of 1944. Although admitting that such historical examples do not automatically establish the correctness of their views, they fail to state that there have been exceptions to the "rule" – witness the Reformed Church's condemnation of Anabaptists, Remonstrants, Socinians, the group around Dr. Geelkerken in 1926, and others, none of whom the critics would recognize as orthodox.

The better way

I have questions not only about tone and contents, but also about the method used. I agree that members who have gone the church-orderly way and received no satisfaction retain the right to express their concerns. But I do not believe that this should be done by means of the Internet. The introductory letter states that there is no other way, since the Reformed press gives critics only restricted space. No mention is made of a Dutch periodical like *Reformanda*, which for years has been the organ of choice for "disquieted" and alienated church members to voice their concerns. The use of that periodical made it possible to keep the discussion of church struggles within church boundaries, at least to some extent. The use of the worldwide web does not. It suggests that perceived aberrations and injustices can and should be publicized as widely as possible. Readers are in fact urged to inform the site of "disturbing developments in their own congregation or classis" so that the

rest of the country can hear about them "if such is desirable."

Such an approach is not in accordance with biblical guidelines. The Bible does not allow believers to publicize disagreements that exist among them nation-wide and even world-wide – for the information of both believers and unbelievers. Matthews 18 teaches that they should be dealt with within the smallest possible circle, the church or congregation being the widest and final one. 1 Corinthians 6 has a similar message. The church, we learn from Scripture, is the only place to deal with divisions, disagreements, and accusations among brothers.

It is true that following the biblical way does not necessarily guarantee that one wins his case. To have his appeals rejected when one is fully convinced that he is absolutely right is painful. Yet in such cases also the Bible forbids us to seek justice by worldly means. Scripture tells us to leave the matter with God. We are urged in 1 Peter 3 to suffer injustice willingly for the sake of Christ, who Himself suffered injustice so that we might be saved. The Apostle writes: "... Even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. . . . It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ died for sins once and for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God." Christians may entrust their grievances to Him who judges justly. This is the biblical way. Any other approach brings only further division, heartbreak, break-up of families and communities, and all the accompanying bitterness; it creates stumbling blocks for "the little ones" and it threatens to make the church of Christ the laughing stock of the world. Church history, also recent church history, provides many examples.

The case of the Corinthians

Reformed people are known for their zeal in protecting purity of doctrine. They know that the Word must rule and the Word alone: *sola scriptura*. Zeal for purity of doctrine is good, but let us not forget that doctrine also enjoins love. And love, in Paul's inspired words, is patient and keeps no record of wrongs, nor is it suspicious. As I hope to argue in more detail in the next instalment, I believe that suspicion plays a role in the Dutch church troubles, a suspicion that in large part is based on fear of change; and that all too often this mindset leads to misreading, misunderstanding, and misinterpretation. I further think that the opposition's complaint of not being listened to can be made by the other side as well. And I fear that what Luther called "indifferent matters" are not infrequently elevated to absolute, scriptural principles.

Reformed people are known for their zeal in protecting purity of doctrine

Some time ago, the editor of this magazine reminded us (in an article about the Dutch situation) of Calvin's words about the Corinthian church. I quote from the article, which appeared November 11, 2005:

Among the Corinthians no slight number had gone astray; in fact, almost the whole body was infected. There was not one kind of sin only, but very many; and they were no light errors but frightful misdeeds; there was corruption not only of morals but of doctrine. What does the holy apostle ... do about this? Does he seek to separate himself from such?

Church News

Called by the church of Lincoln, Ontario:

Rev. J. Huijgen

of Burlington-Waterdown, Ontario.

Called by the church of Hamilton, Ontario:

Rev. R. Aasman

of Edmonton (Providence) Alberta.

Accepted the call to Grand Valley, Ontario:

Rev. P.G. Feenstra

of Owen Sound, Ontario.

Retired (January 31, 2007) from performing the duties of his office according to Article 13, C.O.:

Rev. K. Jonker

of Winnipeg (Grace) Manitoba.

Does he cast them out of Christ's Kingdom? ... He not only does nothing of the sort; he even recognizes and proclaims them to be the church of Christ and the communion of saints (1 Cor 1:2). (*Institutes*, Book IV, Chapter 1, section 4.)

Like other churches, including our own, the Dutch churches are imperfect. But as Calvin reminds us, imperfections do not automatically make a church false. And indeed, members of the opposition (unlike those who seceded) have not applied that label to the Reformed churches. They are and hope to remain members. Their concern is that the churches continue to be faithful to Scripture. But this concern should convince them the more that the rules of Matthew 18, 1 Corinthians 6, and 1 Peter 3 must be followed by them, just as they must be followed by the rest of the brotherhood, on both sides of the ocean.

N.H. Gootjes



News from the College

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As I write, the first semester is behind us. The exams have been written, the marks have been given, and the second semester is in full swing. Perhaps the word "swing" is not the most proper word for a Theological College, but it cannot be denied that much activity has been going on here.

New activity

Prof. G.H. Visscher was involved in a theological discussion organized in Winnipeg and Carman, together with two colleagues from Mid America Reformed Seminary, Dr. J.M. Beach and Prof. A.D. Strange. The latter focused on the issue of the "federal vision," dealing with newer views on the covenant. Prof. Visscher discussed questions concerning the early chapters of the epistle to the Romans. The main issue was whether the traditional view that this important epistle focuses on justification by faith is correct, or whether a different approach to the teaching of the Apostle Paul needs to be adopted. The conference provided a good opportunity to bring such issues in discussion.

In the meantime, the work at the College continues and the lectures are given regularly. During this semester, Dr. Van Dam teaches an extra hour. The reason is that once in three years, an additional course is taught. A small section of the Old Testament is written in

Aramaic, a language related to Hebrew but yet different. This course allows the students to be able to read and study the whole of the Old Testament. We are grateful that Dr. Van Dam was again ready to teach this course.

We welcomed two governors of the College, who had come to Hamilton to supervise the teaching on behalf of the churches. This time, it was the turn of Rev. J. Moesker and Rev. W. Slomp to attend the lectures and to discuss with the professors about their work. We at the College are thankful for their coming.

In addition, these governors were found willing to discuss with the students their future calling, the practice of the ministry. An evening was organized where these governors presented first hand information about life in the manse. The transition from being a student to being a minister is considerable. Discussions such as these are helpful for future ministers, so that they have at least some idea of the life in the manse before they begin their ministry. The evening was much appreciated.

An important proposal

The governors had planned their visit to coincide with a meeting of the Board of Governors. An important issue was to be discussed, namely a proposal

prepared by the ad hoc Committee on Academic Enhancement which the Board of Governors had appointed to look into ways and means of improving the work at the College. One of the proposals of this committee was to expand the full-time teaching staff from four to five professors.

This issue has been discussed for some time within the Theological College. We realize that we are a small school with only limited resources, students, and supporting community. However, under God's blessing the work has grown since 1969. Originally, the teaching was done by three full-time professors and two lecturers who taught part-time. In 1980, the decision was taken to appoint a full-time professor of Ecclesiology and Diaconiology, instead of having two lecturers. Dr. K. Deddens was appointed and he was succeeded by Dr. J. De Jong. When Dr. A.J. de Visser was installed in 2004 as Professor of Diaconiology and Church History, Rev. J. de Gelder was appointed as lecturer, taking over the courses in Church Polity. This arrangement has lightened Dr. de Visser's workload, giving him more opportunity to specialize in Diaconiology. This has worked very well.

The Board of Governors decided that it was time for the next step in this development. They accepted

the proposal of its ad hoc Committee on Academic Enhancement and decided to ask the upcoming synod, which will meet in Smithers, to approve the creation of a fifth professorship and to charge the Board to come up with a concrete proposal for an appointment to Synod 2010. The idea is that this would be a Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies.

We are very excited about this development, though we understand that this will not be realized immediately. There should

be time for the College to organize everything properly and for the churches to financially adjust to the new situation. But we look forward to the time that this enhancement of our College will become reality. It will strengthen the Biblical and Dogmatic departments considerably. It will also lighten the teaching load (bringing it more in line with other seminaries) and give the professors much needed opportunity to do more research and writing and so enhance the work of teaching. Reformed

publications are needed to help train and equip future ministers. Part of the proposal of the Board of Governors is also that the Senate investigate the feasibility of starting a Master of Theology program. (We already have the legal right to offer the Th. M. Degree.) May the Lord bless these plans.

All in all, these are exciting times for the College. We are grateful for the opportunities the Lord has given to us. We will carefully proceed and pray for the blessing of the Lord on our plans.



Harold Leyenhorst and Henk Hoogstra

The Lands Down Under

Clang!!! The metal gate behind us falls shut. We're locked up! Slowly we walk across the court yard, heading for the prison door. Soon the daylight will fade behind us and our sentence inside will commence. Time will move slowly as our incarceration proceeds. Thankfully, it is not "real time" we're doing, but only a visit. The guard-turned-tourist guide begins his story with the history of Fremantle W. A. Prison. It is Saturday, July 14, 2006, mid-winter in this part of the southern hemisphere. We are the guests of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (the FRCA), sister churches which were established predominantly by immigrants from

The Netherlands in the early 1950s, located in the metropolitan Perth area and in Albany and Tasmania. Today Synod West-Kelmscott is not in session. Instead, the representatives of the sister-churches have been offered this day outing. A few volunteers have driven us to the prison and accompany us on the "Doing Time" and the "Great Escapes" tours at the institution. Thus we are initiated into the penal history of early Australian settlement, which focused on having convicts serve their time and populate British colonies after their release, a custom employed also in the settling of Canada and the Thirteen Colonies (USA).

Getting started

To date, the agenda of Synod is halfway finished. While some of the sixteen delegates hope that only a few more days may be needed to complete the business placed before them by their churches, others realize that some items require additional consideration and thus may prolong Synod beyond that time. As representatives of the Canadian/American Reformed Churches we arrived late Thursday but are able to join the proceedings Friday morning. The chairman, Rev. A. Veldman, welcomes us and asks us to stand to declare our adherence with the



Synod photos courtesy Mark Wegenaar.

The members of the synod with the representatives of the sister churches.

Bible and the Reformed Confessions. We are then seated between the delegates of the Indonesian and Korean churches.

What an experience this first day is! The FRCA has decided to conduct its business "on-line." Every member of Synod is seated behind a laptop. While discussions are progressing, various proposals are composed and sent around for consideration. Since there is no overhead projector to beam the material onto a screen, we feel "tuned out." On Monday we are "plugged in," able to be better informed and more involved. We pity the regular visitors who come to church faithfully to follow the proceedings. While they can listen to the debates, it is difficult to follow the matters under discussion. Summaries provided by the chairman at the beginning of each session and conversations during the breaks help to update them on decisions. Fortunately, as the days pass, the technical procedures are improved as well.

Synod West-Kelmscott is the first synod of the FRCA where all sister churches are represented. Delegates of each one receive the opportunity to address the assembly and convey the greetings on behalf of their federation. Rev. Pieter Niemeijer and Rev. Joe Plug of the Reformed Churches of The Netherlands (GKV), Rev. Tae Yun and Dr. Hae Moo Yoo of the Presbyterian Church of Korea-Kosin (PCK), and Rev. Umbu Hapu Pariamalina of the Gereja Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – located on East-Timor (GGRI-NTT) have gone before us. Also the representatives of the Reformed Churches of The Netherlands-Restored (GKH), the brothers Pieter Drijfhout and Joop Houweling, have been accorded the privilege of presenting their message. The day after the delegates of the CanRC address the assembly, Rev. Mendel Retief of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (VGKSA) becomes the last representative to take his turn. (He was since called, has accepted and may soon be

installed as minister of the Church of Kelmscott.) All delegates are invited to join in the debate whenever they think their knowledge may benefit the discussion. From time to time they are joined by FCRA deputies of various committees for further input on topics on which these previously-appointed members have advised Synod by means of their written reports, submitted three months in advance.

The setting

The Church of West-Kelmscott (1998) does not yet have its own building where services can be held every Lord's Day. Consequently, this Synod is hosted in the Free Reformed Church of Armadale (1951), a bustling city of 55,000 east of the city of Perth. Church-wise, Armadale is quite centrally located, among the other Perth suburbs where Free Reformed churches have been established. Within a twenty-five km radius you find the churches of Byford (1985), Darling Downs (2003),

Mount Nasura (1987), Rockingham (1992), and West-Kelmscott. Approximately 200 km to the south-west on the Indian Ocean is the small Bunbury (2001) congregation, which is considering splitting into two smaller churches to ease the distance many members have to travel each Sunday to attend services. The churches of Albany (1952) and West-Albany (1994) are almost 400 km south-east of Armadale, savouring its coastal location on the Southern Ocean. The churches of Launceston (1953) and Legana (1988), plus a house congregation in Hobart, complete the list of the almost 4000-strong federation. These last three are on the island of Tasmania, which lies at a distance of about 4000 km from Perth, to the south of the Australian continent. These churches and ministers are thus geographically isolated from others. Noteworthy is also the availability of Reformed education. Generous government grants have allowed many congregations to establish their own primary school, while the regional secondary schools are



The church building of Armadale, W.A. where Synod West Kelmscott was held.

located in Armadale and Albany. A visit to Fair Haven Retirement Village in Armadale allows for interaction with a dozen of its twenty-two residents and a view of the beautiful arrangement of the free-standing independent living units surrounding the hostel.

Relations with churches abroad

Preparation for synods includes work done by committees appointed at previous synods. As such, our Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad corresponds with similar committees of our sister-churches, as well as with others who seek contact with our federation for various reasons. Some of these desire ecclesiastical

fellowship; others seek financial support for their denomination or for its specific projects. Prior to our trip to Australia, we have contacted representatives of the GGRNI-NTT and GGRC-NTT (both in Indonesia), the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ), the PCEA (Australia), the PCK (Korea), the GKV and GKH (The Netherlands), as well as of the FRCA (Australia) and the VGKSA (South Africa), to arrange for meetings during our stay. Some let us know right away they looked forward to a discussion; others informed us they will not be present at this synod for a variety of reasons. Thus we are able to both attend Synod and strengthen the existing relationship and bond with others. We also meet with our Australian committee counterparts to discuss matters of mutual concern as well as to gather information on federations and denominations in closer proximity to them.

Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches is part of the agenda item listed as "Report Deputies Relations." Matters of common interest are reviewed, including the Theological Training in Hamilton and the future of the *Book of Praise*. While Synod Rockingham 2003 had expressed concern regarding the failure of candidates at our College to return to Australia, no



The delegate members of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia of Synod West Kelmscott 2006.

such observation is noted this time. The presence of eight (former) Canadians at the 2006 Synod table, the Revs. P. DeBoer, R. Eikelboom, W. Huizinga, J. Kroeze, J. Smith, and A. VanDelden, as well as the brothers B. Veenendaal and P. Witten, likely accounts for this. (Another two pastors, the Revs. J. Poppe and I. Wildeboer, the missionary in Papua New Guinea, may be mentioned as additional exchanges.) Synod decides to continue to support our College and to study whether the FRCA can be included in the Pastoral Training Program. While having adopted the *Book of Praise* for use in their churches, they are considering the possibility of publishing their own version, especially if our federation decides to approve additional hymns, and to update the text of psalms, hymns, and prose, including quotes of Scripture verses from the present RSV translation. New deputies are appointed who will study the copyright issue, the cost of printing, the need to update the language, and the expertise required to accomplish this. Our unity talks with the URCNA are also of special interest, as are our relations with other denominations, those of Presbyterian origin in particular. While the FRCA decide to maintain sister-church relations with the GKV, they do not grant this privilege to the GKH, but will maintain official relations with them, in order to assist in seeking reconciliation between the two federations on the basis of truth and love.

Travel

The state of Western Australia has suffered through a lengthy



The building of the Reformed Church of New Zealand in Pukekohe, N.Z.

period of drought. The Sunday prayers and those offered at Synod implore the Lord to send the much needed moisture. As we travel to Albany, where we spend a weekend enjoying the hospitality of family and friends, we experience God's answer to his people's pleas. Our visit to the south coast allows us to encounter the beautiful powdery white sand of their beaches, the mighty roar of the waves in The Gap, and the efficiency of their power-generating windmills. The flora is rather different from ours, yet the coastline reminds us of that in Washington and Oregon. All we see extols the greatness of the Creator. Heavy rainfall does not dampen our spirits as we return via the Margaret River area wineries, take a look at the

The Rotorua Bath House Museum is set in the Mt. Tarawera crater, Rotorua, N.Z.



Busselton jetty, and enjoy a quick stop in Bunbury. Driving in the left lane has become easier, but during evening travel we are reminded of the possibility of a marsupial encounter, evidenced by the occasional kangaroo carcass we see lying along the side of the road. In this connection we're told that the "roos" outnumber the Australian population of twenty million two to one!

"You must be looking for us!" It is 6:00 am and we catch the searching eye of Rev. Dirk Van Garderen as he scans the early arrivals at Auckland Airport. Our overnight flight has brought us to this sprawling city of the North Island, home to nearly twenty-five percent of the country's four million inhabitants. At the request of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand we have arranged to meet their representatives on their home turf. By mid-morning we settle into our Pukekohe quarters, a home offered to us while its owners are on holidays, and enjoy the loan of a car offered to us for the duration of our stay. This certainly simplifies being present for meetings at mutually convenient times, attending church services in different locales and go sightseeing when the opportunity arises.



These marsupials outnumber the residents of the Australian continent 2:1.

The first Reformed Churches of New Zealand were instituted in 1953 by predominantly European immigrants. They acknowledged the ultimate divine authority to the Word of God and adopted four creeds as its faithful summaries: the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dordt, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Westminster Confession of Faith. The federation is Reformed in character and is governed by the Church Order of Dordt; yet some Presbyterian terms are used for its government: sessions (=consistories) meet once a month and presbyteries (= classes) meet three times a year. A synod is held every three years. All churches meet in worship twice each Sunday and the proclamation of the Word is central in the services. Praise and prayer, collections, administration of the two sacraments, catechetical instruction, profession of faith, and Bible study are other familiar activities enjoyed on the Lord's Day and throughout the week. The federation adheres to confessional membership, infant baptism, and shares our view of the covenant. There are nineteen churches and two mission posts in the federation with a total membership of approximately 3500, spread over the North and South Islands. Students for the ministry usually attend the Reformed Theological

College in Geelong, Victoria, Australia (operated together with the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia). Graduates must do a one-year internship with another pastor in one of the RCNZ churches before they are declared eligible for call. Our Mission Board in Toronto enjoys a cooperative relationship with the RCNZ in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, where Rev. Stephen 't Hart is assisted by Walter and Jeannette Hagoort of the RCNZ.

Both in New Zealand and Australia we were struck by the use of Maori (aboriginal) names for cities and towns. You learn about these natives when you study the geography of these countries, but a visit is a potent reminder. Today more countries attempt to highlight their history and ancient culture by reverting to such names, for example South Africa and India. We see evidence of this custom when traveling the highway from Auckland to Pukekohe and visiting the geothermal valley at Rotorua, "Nature's Spa of the South Pacific," as well as at the bubbling mud pools and the sulphuric steam clouds and smells of neighbouring Whakarewarewa. Only a minor portion of the country is arable land. The landscape is dotted with flocks of sheep and cattle, objects of its well-known products. It is simply amazing to see so many different types of palm trees and other shrubs associated with warmer climates. Although temperatures hover close to freezing at night, heavy-laden citrus trees grace numerous gardens. Flowering shrubs, succulents, and bougainvilleas



Blooming proteas in the middle of the winter, Auckland, N. Z.

provide splashes of colour in many locations.

Sunday services are enjoyed in Bucklands Beach and Pukekohe. The first-named congregation is one of the metropolitan Auckland churches. A lot of outreach has taken place in this area and the composition of the attendees give evidence of that. Many believers of Korean and Indian and native descent submit to the discipline of God's Word and join the white worshippers in thanksgiving and praise. We are able to speak with a number of them during the coffee social following the service. The evening service in rural Pukekohe is not much different in style; the lack of an organ allows for the use of piano and guitar and the congregation of almost exclusively former European immigrants and their descendants is as welcoming to the Canadian guests as the worshippers in the morning fellowship have been. With hearts and voices united we may praise our God and Maker for the gift of his Son, whose redeeming work we all claim and whose Spirit unites his people to the ends of the earth, as we experience his great faithfulness with those who embrace Him "Down Under."



Derek Stoffels

Derek Stoffels is principal at Ebenezer Christian School in Smithers, British Columbia

Educational Alternatives (Part 2 of 2)



In the first article, the author introduced the topic of looking at alternative models of education and gave brief explanations of the Waldorf and Montessori approaches to schooling. This article looks at a few other approaches and concludes with lessons for us that can be learned from this study.

Free or democratic schools

These schools are not as standardized as Waldorf and Montessori school, so I will be relying on a well-known free school (Sudbury School) as representative of this alternative. For readers familiar with John Taylor Gatto – a vocal and fairly well-known critic of public education in the USA – this seems to be the alternative he leans towards.

The hallmark of free or democratic schools is that the students are given the liberty to decide for themselves how to spend their days. Regardless of age, students determine not only what they will do, but also when, how, and where they will do it. This freedom is considered the students' inviolable right.

Supporters of free or democratic schools hold several basic beliefs: that all people are curious by nature; that the most efficient, long-lasting, and profound learning takes place when started and pursued by the learner; that all people are creative if they are allowed to develop their unique talents; that age-mixing among

students promotes growth in all members of the group; and that freedom is essential to the development of personal responsibility.

What this means in free school practice, is that students initiate all their own activities and create their own environments. The physical building and grounds, the staff, and the equipment are there for the students to use as the need/desire arises. There are no planned programs or curricula since the students individually determine what they want to learn.

Free school advocates believe that all this will work only if the school setting is one in which students are treated as independent, trusted, and responsible people. As events arise, the students and staff are to function as a community in the framework of a participatory democracy. This means that "town-hall" type meetings are used to regulate the running of the school.

The core beliefs behind schools like the Sudbury School are that all people are born with an intense drive to understand and master their environment; that learning happens all the time, in whatever people do; that no one can decide for another what they should learn (or when, or how) or what constitutes a good use of their time; and that the only way a young person can learn to be responsible is by being given real responsibility from the youngest age.¹

Coalition of Essential Schools

The Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) partnership of more than 1000 schools has as their main goal the continued striving for improved student learning and achievement. They are essentially a reaction to the idea that many schools simply keep on doing whatever has been done before, instead of proactively seeking to improve. Ted Sizer is one of the main names associated with CES.

CES schools are characterized by certain emphases. They are to be rooted in the local community and responsive to the particular needs of the community they are in. To allow for a sense of community they are to be small (600 students maximum); they are to allow for mentoring and teacher/student time in small groups, often called advisories; and they are to be virtually autonomous from the school district they are in. Parents, students, and staff are all to have a say in what is done and how. To that end, democratic structures are set up to give a voice to parents and students. Student learning and promotion is to be based on mastery of the agreed-upon curriculum. This curriculum is to be student driven, and individualized to each student as much as possible. It should also follow the "less is more rule," which identifies a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge. It should provide opportunities for discovery learning and construction of meaning. The

student as worker, and teacher as guide or coach, is to be the model for interaction. Learning is to be evaluated via exhibition-based portfolios or work to the community. CES schools are also to commit to sharing best practices with other CES schools to build a larger community, each helping the other. That would be a good lesson for us to learn as schools.²

Dennis Littky and Elliot Washor (www.bigpicture.org) have formed a school that uses many of the CES principles, but is built around students being active in the workplace for a part of each week and then setting the educational goals for each student, based on the skills needed to complete the necessary tasks required by workers in that job or workplace. That way the students learn what they need to know and are hopefully motivated to learn, since they can see an immediate application or need for the learning.

What can we learn from this?

Each of the methods presented above share certain features or strengths that can be judged to have their root or at least a portion of it in biblical truths. Most of the truths I have in mind are connected to the basic and most positive biblical truth that begins in Genesis and continues to Revelation. That is, that man and woman are created in the image of God and consequently are of great importance and value. Psalm 8 is a clear expression of that truth. The people who espouse these alternate methods have rightly seen that you must accord every person great respect. However, since they do not seek their guidance from Scripture, they retain, at most, a kernel of the truth and obscure it with humanism. Nonetheless they can give us insight into and cause for reflection on how well we understand and live out that respect for people.

Another strength we can draw from their philosophies is the recognition that education must be

meaningful for the learner. Education that is biblically rooted cannot be a succession of pointless facts requiring simple memorization. For schooling to be educative, students must find meaning in life. They must be given learning opportunities that awaken their desire to live Christianly, learning opportunities that show them the way to live Christianly, to find the meaning God intends for them. Creativity in this and other areas should be stimulated and developed.

Students must be given learning opportunities that awaken their desire and show them the way to live Christianly

A third biblical truth that these forms of schooling have identified and attempt to address is that the whole person and all persons must be considered and reached where they are. Schooling may not take one form and one form only. God has bestowed a range of gifts, learning styles, and learning abilities on his people and schooling must help to develop those various gifts in the measure they are granted. All students are expected to develop all their gifts. Having said that, I believe there are particular gifts that must be developed to as high a level as possible by all, such as reading/hearing and seeking to understand the Word of God, singing praises to his name, giving to the communion of saints in time and service, etc. As Reformed people we have tended to neglect certain "less utilitarian" gifts such as the artistic musical and design gifts, often citing our financial limitations or government requirements. We need to take a good look at those arguments and see if we are acting with integrity in this area. If the government mandated a course, would we then

find the financial means to provide the course? Forcing all students into a particular mould is not consistent with Biblical teaching.

A fourth strength is that each of the alternative educational methods sees the importance of community. Most of the methods believe that large schools and certain structures like the typical high-school schedule prevent or at least significantly obstruct the building of meaningful communities. As inheritors of a method of schooling that is sometimes compared to factories and traced to Industrial Revolution type thinking, we need to evaluate how we do on this point. Are age-based grades and rigid schedules with distinct subjects the proper way to organize a school? Is grading student work an appropriate way to evaluate what God's covenant children have done?

The weaknesses of the various methods typically lie in the fact that they fail to acknowledge the antithesis. They take the kernel of the biblical truths that form their strengths, but because of their denial of God they inevitably distort the truth. They take mankind and make him the "be-all" and "end-all" to the exclusion of God. They deny truth where it will require submission by man. By not acknowledging God's absoluteness and sovereignty, nor man's depravity and need for the gospel message of redemption, they doom their efforts to failure. They believe that individuals construct meaning that can be different for each person. They seek happiness but fail to recognize that the only way to find it is, as Blaise Pascal is so often (mis)quoted as saying, "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every person, and it can never be filled by any created thing. It can only be filled by God, made known through Jesus Christ" (Sec. 148 of his *Pensees*. Pascal says essentially the same thing in a more complicated way).

It is at this point where the school based on Reformed principles has its strengths. Since we find our root in the Word of God, we tend to be better balanced. I do caution us, though, to look for our own weaknesses. We sometimes overreact to certain things. We may misunderstand the biblical teaching regarding man's depravity; we may use excuses of convenience to rule out certain changes that might require sacrifice on our part. We often follow the practices we have inherited without subjecting them to careful examination. We adopt

new practices without digging into the motives that drive them and unwittingly find ourselves in places we never intended to be. We impose a uniformity at times that is not biblically rooted. Too often we conform to the pattern of the world and consequently miss the mark as well. Our schools have moved past the survival mode of the early days and we are now at the point of settling into established grooves. Before we get more comfortable and entrenched, it would be time well spent if we took a long hard look at our practices to determine if indeed our schools are operating in

the most appropriate manner. If the conclusion is that we are not, then let us have the commitment and wisdom to make the necessary adjustments.

¹ A few websites might be of further interest: <http://www.sudval.org>; <http://www.sudburynetwork.org/model.htm>; and <http://www.albanyfreeschool.com/overview.shtml>.

² Additional insights are to be found at http://www.essentialschools.org/pub/ces_docs/schools/benchmarks/benchmarks.html or at http://www.cesnorthwest.org/18_criteria.htm.

Book Review

Reviewed by W.L. Bredenhof

A Time of Departing: How Ancient Mystical Practices are Uniting Christians with the World's Religions, Ray Yungen. (Silverton, Oregon: Lighthouse Trails Publishing Company, Second Edition 2006).

Additional Information: 240 pages, paperback, \$11.01 CAD (from amazon.ca)

Back in 1989, I attended a Calgary Study Weekend which featured one of our pastors speaking on the subject of the New Age Movement. At the time, I was unfamiliar with this and I thought the whole thing rather bizarre. It certainly didn't appear to be anywhere near the mainstream. However, eighteen years later this book makes very clear that the

New Age movement is alive, well, and flourishing. In fact, if your congregation has a church library, chances are you'll find authors there who have been influenced by it or who are directly promoting it.

In Christian circles, the New Age movement has taken on the guise of something called contemplative spirituality. It's also known as spiritual formation or spiritual disciplines. It promotes things like listening prayer, *lectio divina*, the silence, centering prayer and contemplative meditation. In this book, Ray Yungen exposes the roots both of ancient Christian mysticism (in Gnosticism) and contemporary mysticism (in eastern religions). He works carefully with the Bible to show that these so-called spiritual disciplines are not of God. He demonstrates how authors such as Thomas Merton, Brennan Manning,

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Richard Foster, Thomas Keating, Sue Monk Kidd, and Henri Nouwen are not orthodox Christians but syncretists. He also concretely shows us how these authors have influenced popular Christian writers and preachers such as Rick Warren, Philip Yancey, Gary Thomas, David Jeremiah, and Chuck Swindoll.

This is an alarming but important book. Not only are there popular authors promoting this false teaching, there are also influential Christian institutions in some of our communities. For instance, several Canadian colleges and universities are known to promote contemplative spirituality. Therefore, it's important that we know about this movement and how to evaluate it from a Biblical perspective. This book can help in sharpening our discernment. Highly recommended.



Letter to the Editor

I read with particular interest the article on "Substance Abuse" by Rev. C. Bouwman (Volume 56, Issue 1, Jan. 5, 2007). After reflecting on this for some time I wish to make a few comments.

As the author has noted, God finds it offensive for one of his image bearers to lie in a drunken stupor. As well, Proverbs states that "wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whosoever is led astray by them is not wise." Proverbs 23:29-35 also deals with the disease of alcoholism.

The alcoholic is, in that respect, sinning against the first commandment, putting one's trust in something instead of, or in addition to, the only true God. Furthermore I agree that on occasion an intervention may be necessary according to Matthew 18. To say, however, that substance abuse is simply a sin against God, is merely too simplistic.

Addiction, whether to substances, process addictions (gambling, Internet), or deprivation addictions (anorexia, bulimia), is a disease. Untreated, this disease leads to infirmity, institutionalization, and death, both spiritually and physically. Unfortunately, there is no cure for this disease and like a diabetic, the addict in recovery needs daily treatment for his / her disease. This is a spiritual disease that is cunning, baffling, powerful, and patient and has a definitive need for spiritual treatment. As stated in the *Big Book* the alcoholic

has a daily reprieve from the disease that is contingent upon the maintenance of his / her spiritual wellbeing.

Additionally, this disease can be much more complex in that a significant percentage of addicts suffer from a concurrent mental illness such as bipolar disorder, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), ADHD, depression, or schizo-affective disorder. Also, a significant percentage (and more so in female addicts) suffer from a traumatic abusive past (physical or sexual abuse).

I fear that the addict who is told that addiction is simply a sin against God, and thus told not to sin, without a program of recovery will continue or fall back into their addiction. Whether in the secular world or in the church community, my experience working in an addiction program dictates that this disease necessitates a daily recovery program including prayer, meditation, Scripture reading, Christian counselling, and a 12- step recovery program.

The addict must be responsible for treatment of his / her disease and as Gerald May has stated in his book *Addiction and Grace*, "the addict stands in the need of grace," not condemnation as simply a sinner.

G. Veenman M.D.

Letters to the Editor should be written in a brotherly fashion in order to be considered for publication. Submissions need to be less than one page in length.

Press Release

Press Release of the Board of Governors meeting held on January 10, 2007 at Hamilton

The chairman, Rev. J. Moesker, opened the meeting with Scripture reading and prayer. He welcomed all present and noted that the brs. G. J. Nordeman and R. Schouten were absent with notification. The minutes of the September 7, 2006 meeting were approved.

The main purpose of this meeting was to deal with a report from the Ad-hoc Committee for Academic Enhancement in which they recommend that the Board approach General Synod 2007 to begin the process of looking for a fifth professor. The Board agrees with this proposal and decides to pass on the recommendation to Synod and the

churches. The Board of Governors recommends that Synod Smithers 2007:

1. Approve the establishment of a fifth professorate. This professor will function as a professor of Biblical and Theological Studies;
2. Charge the Board to submit a recommendation for an appointment to Synod 2010;

- Mandate the Board to investigate the feasibility of starting a Master of Theology program;
- Require the Board to include in its triennial report the current status of publications and writings by the professors.

Further, the Board appointed a Committee consisting of W. Smouter (convener), L. Jagt, Dr. N.H. Gootjes, and Dr. C. Van Dam with the mandate:

- To conduct an administrative review of the college with a view to the administrative functions of the office, the

principal, the registrar, and the librarian;

- That upon completion of this review the advisability of a permanent versus a rotating principalship be addressed.

The committee is to present a status report by the September 2007 Board meeting.

The Board also discussed the lecture visit reports prepared by the Reverends G. Ph. van Popta and J. VanWoudenberg and learned that the application for permanent residency for Dr. A.J. de Visser and his family has been approved by the Canadian

government. This information was received with much gratitude to the Lord.

At the close of the meeting some words of appreciation were spoken to the governors J. Moesker, W. Oostdyk, and W. Smouter, who have served the Board for the past nine years on the Academic Committee and on the Finance & Property Committee.

Dr. G. Nederveen closed the meeting in prayer.

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



Advertisements:

Announcements of Weddings, Anniversaries (with Open House) should be submitted six weeks in advance.

BIRTHS

*The LORD has done great things for us and we are filled with joy.
Psalm 126:3*

With praise and thanksgiving to the LORD, we joyfully announce the arrival of our first born – a son

TRAVIS LUUK

Born December 18, 2006

Sjoerd and Lisa de Haan (van Raalte)

271 Clarke Street, Box 466, Arthur, ON N0G 1A0
vanraalte_lisa@hotmail.com



He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to his heart. Isaiah 40:11

We welcome with joy and love, our precious gift from God above

BETHANY HOPE

Born February 5, 2007

Thankful family, **Chris and Pearl Hoff (nee VandeBurgt)**

Faith, Genieva, Naomi
26012-58 Avenue, Langley, BC V4W 1K9
cphoff@telus.net

We praise and thank God, who has blessed our family with another covenant child. We have named our daughter

HANNAH ALICIA

Born on January 7, 2007

Herman and Rachel Van Veen (Vander Veen)

A little sister for *Carter*

PO Box 78, Waterdown, ON L0R 2H0



For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

Psalm 139:13, 14

With thankfulness to the LORD who has made all things well, we joyfully announce the arrival of our first born, a son

EZEKIEL KINGSLEY

February 27, 2007

Proud parents **Jason and Melissa Oosterhoff**

Ezekiel is the first grandchild to Tracey VanderVelde as well as the first grandchild to Jake and Grace Oosterhoff.
4210 Hixon Street, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B7