

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE • Volume 59, No. 1 • January 1, 2010



*Evolution
is an attack
on the truth
of
God's Word.*

Inside this issue

- Looking for our Common Ancestor
- Time Management
- Ten Reasons Why Evolution is Dangerous and Evil



Rev. Stam is minister emeritus of the Canadian Reformed Church at Hamilton, Ontario
cstam@sourcecable.net

Looking for our Common Ancestor

This matter is important because we need to teach and face the truth

It appears that there is an air-tight scientific case to declare that humans and chimpanzees have "a common ancestor." The proof for this astounding truth lies in our unfailing DNA. Don't blink; you might miss something.

Perhaps you know that DNA is the teeny-weenie molecule that contains genetic information in all living things and also carries it from one generation to another. If this DNA is the same, we must conclude that we come from the same stock. They know this at CSI. Even certain differences that exist between human and simian DNA can be explained by mutations, fusions, isolations, bottlenecks, drift, and other biological factors. Complicated stuff.

God did not just call mankind into existence but he formed man through personal touch

I read that this process of DNA building took place over the course of millions of years. I can understand that. It takes time to climb a mountain. But we are now floating in evolutionist waters. By way of consolation I add that there is a form of evolutionist thinking that is called *theistic evolutionism*. Theistic evolutionists believe that God used a "historical process of evolution to create this world." Sometimes you think that you can have your cake and get to eat it, too.

This matter is important because we need to teach and face *the truth*. I understand that. If science is right, we have to say so. If we use the benefits of science when it suits us, but deny the claims of science when it confuses us we would be *hypocritical*.

Cousin Magoo

Anyway, I have to get back to my relatives. I found an older "cousin" in Hoboken, NJ. His name is Magoo. He and I share what is termed "common ancestry." I gently broke the news to him that we are now proven relatives. He took it well, I must say, but I noticed a triumphant glint of superiority in his eyes. Sibling rivalry, already?

Chimps and humans both have in common that when they are puzzled, they scratch their heads. Magoo did this for quite a time. He also has the nasty habit of excitedly jumping up and down. The news of a common ancestor really excited him. Perhaps in his mind he was working out various scenarios. Magoo is no dummy. His DNA is strong.

I mentioned to Magoo that we *both* have a common ancestry. It is said that man did not come from apes, but apedom and mankind came from the same ancestor. That's rather precise. We are not sure, at this point, who the common ancestor actually was. Could be a blob. There is no famous fossil record of note that gives us any idea. The missing link is still missing. Magoo thought it was all rather vague and quite presumptive. I could tell he was disappointed.

Our discussion ended with a question mark as to *whom* might be our common ancestor. We did not find the answer, but it's a first step. When I mentioned to Magoo that he would still have to stay behind bars, in Hoboken, until all this was properly sorted out, he lost interest in the topic. What's the sense of a common ancestry, if you cannot experience equality?

The common ancestor

Magoo's skepticism notwithstanding, scientific evidence time and again seems to affirm the assumption that humans and chimps have common ancestry. There is perhaps a moment in time when



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Visscher; Copy Manager: Laura Veenendaal
Coeditors: R. Aasman, E. Kampen, K. Stam, C. Van Dam

ADDRESS FOR COPY MANAGER:

Clarion, 57 Oakridge Drive South, St. Albert, AB T8N 7H2
E-Mail: veenendaal@shaw.ca

ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5
Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202

Subscriptions: clarionadmin@premierpublishing.ca

Advertisements: clarionads@premierpublishing.ca

Website: www.premierpublishing.ca

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:

One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5

Subscription Rates for 2010

	Regular Mail	Air Mail
Canada*	\$49.00	\$ 81.00
U.S.A. U.S. Funds  	\$62.00	\$ 80.00
International	\$90.00	\$135.00

*Including 5% GST – No. 890967359RT

Advertisements: \$16.00 per column inch

Full Colour Display Advertisements: \$21.00 per column inch

We reserve the right to refuse ads.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada, Canada through the Publication Assistance Program (PAP), toward our mailing costs.

Cancellation Agreement

Unless a written subscription cancellation is received we assume you wish to continue to subscribe. You will be invoiced prior to the subscription renewal date.

Agreement No. 40063293; PAP Registration No. 9907; ISSN 0383-0438

Copyright © Premier Printing Ltd.

All rights reserved. No part may be reproduced in any manner without permission in writing from the publisher, except brief quotations used in connection with a review in a magazine or newspaper.

Useful Link: www.canrc.org

the line of chimps and humans split, and went their separate ways, maybe eons ago, but we cannot pinpoint the time. The time span of evolution is simply too long, strung out, and stressed out.

Even so, some Reformed scientists suggest that "common ancestry" gives the *only* logical and definitive answer to the question why chimps and humans have a similar DNA. The similarities simply cannot be ignored. The next hurdle must be taken. Must we conclude that the Creator "created us by means of an evolutionary process thereby giving us a real evolutionary history," together with common ancestors?

It is not possible at this point for me to explain the DNA "evidence." I wonder if we will ever be able to explain this satisfactorily in this life. "Now I know in part" (1 Cor 13:12). There is much we simply do not know. But there is also much that we do know. We should begin always with what we do know and work on that basis. I learned that once from a human relative who was a homicide investigator. He's probably retired and cynical by now.

What we do know

I am not a biologist and hardly a theologian. What we find in the Bible, however, is not human assumption but divine evidence. In Hebrews 11:1 we read that faith is "the evidence of things not seen" (KJV). The word evidence means that there is proof without a doubt. We may perhaps not see something, yet by faith we know it to be proven as true by the Word of God.

Perhaps here lies the main difference between believers and (most) scientists. A scientist is faced with what he sees, can analyze, and compute. A believer begins with the Word of God. Because we believe that God made man in his own image, as the Bible states, what we see is not unimportant, but it is secondary.

What we do know is that mankind was created in a different manner and for a different purpose than all other living beings. Mankind is *unique*, no matter what his DNA profile shows. In Genesis 1:27 it is stated twice: in the image of God He created them.

In This Issue

Editorial – Looking for our Common Ancestor
— K. Stam..... 2

Treasures – Time Management — J. Huijgen..... 5

Ten Reasons Why Evolution is Dangerous and Evil
— W. Bredenhof, W. Geurts, G. van Popta,
J. van Popta, J. Witteveen..... 6

Canticles — G. van Popta..... 10

Welcome to Rev. Wes Bredenhof — A. Vanderveen 11

Farewell or Welcome Back?
— G. Salomons 12

Education Matters – NPC 2009: "Light and Salt"
— O. Bouwman and K. Sikkema 16

Press Release – Regional Synod West..... 19

In Genesis 2 we find a more *detailed account* of the creation of man. Genesis 2 is not a different story from another source, but a providing of important specifics. I ask your attention for the fact that in Genesis 2:7 we find that God *formed* the man from the dust of the ground. Creating is usually done simply by the command of God's voice. The Bible then uses the verb "to create." But when we get a more detailed account of this event, we find the verb "formed." God did not just call mankind into existence but he formed man through personal touch, as a potter makes a master piece out of common clay. That makes us special. Sorry, Magoo.

What about similar DNA? Like all the living, mankind was created. All who live have a *common*

bond in this respect: *we are all creatures of and in this world.* We have a natural, earthly body (1 Cor 15:42-49). Therefore Jesus Christ had to come into the flesh and be made like his brothers in every way (Heb 2:17).

We do not need DNA to confirm this. Having a common bond, however, (being natural and earthly) does not mean having a common ancestor. Unlike all the living, mankind was formed separately by God's own hand and given breath by God's own mouth. Despite genetic theories, *we have the evidence of faith that mankind is uniquely created.* From a biblical perspective, there is no room for evolutionism. That being the case, there is no place for a common ancestor.





Rev. Jan Huijgen is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Attercliffe, Ontario
huijgen.j@gmail.com



MATTHEW 13:52

Time Management

"Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is."

Ephesians 5:15-17

There is an expression that says: "Work always fills up the time allotted for it." At the beginning of another year of the Lord, would that be true for you? Or do you have time for the Lord, and will you use the time that you have for the Lord? Our text speaks about this, about the time we have and in which we live. It teaches us to manage well our life and our time.

It would be easy to let the time that lies ahead be filled up with many things. Life is busy! But we should realize that God took the time in Christ Jesus to show us his love. He came into the world to save. We should realize that now we are light in the Lord (Eph 5:8).

How then should one live? The Apostle says: "Be very careful how you live." Literally, he speaks of walking – what we call the walk of life. Paul says, "Be careful in your walk of life." Our walk of life refers to the life that has its origin and destination in God, just like Adam who once walked in the Garden of Eden. Proper "walking" means that you live a life that has received its meaning from God. This kind of walking is a gift of God.

The Gentiles don't know this. They don't walk, because they don't have time. Gentiles run from one thing to another and they never can relax. But a child of God can walk – a child of God walks right toward

eternity! For this reason it says that we have to live carefully. That points at precision: "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light" (v. 8). Children of God have to watch precisely how we walk in the way of God.

Paul says we do that by being "wise." Such wisdom does not simply point at knowledge. No, when the Bible speaks about wisdom, it is the wisdom that distinguishes less-gifted Christians from the intellectual Gentiles. It has to do with a certain spiritual smartness. The Apostle says we must "make the most of every opportunity." That is how you are wise. We have to make the most of the present time for God.

But that is where we have a constant problem, for Satan will fill your time with everything except the service of the Lord. For "the days are evil," the times are wrong. Every day the rottenness of sin bursts out of the sores of this world. But even as we set out on a new year, let us be thankful that there is still opportunity to be dedicated to God.

And "do not be foolish." We have to understand what the Lord's will is. That doesn't mean that it is hard to understand, for it is the will of God which we see in Christ Jesus. The fact that we have the

Saviour Jesus Christ and that He did his redeeming work, is the will of the Lord for us. And that is what we have to understand. It is not too difficult. We don't have to ascend into heaven, or descend into the abyss. The Word, the will of God, is near us in our mouth and in our heart. That Word places the wisdom of God right in front of us. With that Word of God we should be busy all the time. For then we'll become wise, and we'll learn to be very careful. It will give us precision time management.

That is the way God wants us to be, as John Calvin once said, on the stage of life. He said that we are on a stage, the stage of the world. There is a Director and we know the will of the Director. From Him we can discern what is important. Let us then do the things that are important!

Live wisely therefore, making the most of the opportunities granted to you in the new year. You never know how long you will have the time. The clock is running, and we are getting closer to the end of all things. Who will take your opportunities? Satan? He will only waste your time. Or will God, who has promised to spend all his time on you? With God we will have eternal opportunities for life! **C**

Ten Reasons Why Evolution is Dangerous and Evil

Over the years, people in the Canadian Reformed Churches have traditionally viewed the theory of evolution as an enemy of the Christian faith. However, recently there have been voices encouraging us to reconsider this stance. This deeply concerns us. Now, just as in the past, we need to be firmly convinced that this theory stands opposed to the clear teachings of Scripture and that it has no place in a biblical worldview. In this article, we want to outline ten reasons why evolution should still be regarded as dangerous and evil and why it should be taught as such in our Reformed homes, schools, and churches.

Before we begin, we need to be clear about our definition of "evolution." We understand it to refer to a theory about the origins of life and the diversification of that life into various modern-day organisms, including man. According to this theory, all forms of life are related in common ancestry through an evolutionary process thought to have taken place over billions of years. Evolution teaches that all life is descended from a single-celled organism which in turn evolved from inert chemicals. Finally, we note that evolution is not merely a scientific theory but a foundational component of many unbelieving worldviews.

Evolution must regard Genesis 2:8 as mythical

In Genesis 2:4-7 we read that God formed man from the dust of the ground and then He breathed the breath of life into his nostrils and man became a living soul.

God created man (in Hebrew: *Adam*) from the dust of the ground (in Hebrew: *adamah*) and he became a living soul. This account of the creation of man resounds with the special character of this creative act of God. On the previous creation days, God said, "Let there be...!" And it was so. And it was all very good. But now in Genesis 2:7 we read of the Lord God, the covenant God, who in a special creative act, gives the breath of life to *Adam* formed from *adamah*.

Now, if evolutionists are right, then this is figurative language. Some biblical scholars have rejected a literal "potter" interpretation because they see this

as close to disrespect of God: "Did God fashion the liver, the lungs of clay?" they might ask. "God was not concerned with creating a scientific text when He told us of his creative work; He just wanted to communicate that man did not descend from the gods, but that He was part of this creation," they would say.

However, if this creation story is figurative, allegorical, mythical, or some other kind of story, other than history, then at Genesis 2:8 we have a problem. For God put that man He had *formed* into a garden. There, together with the woman, he was tempted to rebel against his Creator and fell into sin. Any literary approach to the narrative would make no distinction between the *forming* of the man in verse 7, and the *formed* man in verse 8. So if this is an allegorical myth, it must continue into the following verses. It would seem disingenuous to claim verse 7 to be myth, and verse 8 to be history.

Of course the story of the fall and the record of historical Adam are foundational to the New Testament doctrine of redemption and atonement. Paul and the Lord Jesus accept the historical reality of Adam. Paul, in Romans, works out the doctrine of substitutionary atonement based on the historical Adam. The doctrine of the covenant also is tied into a historical Adam.

Evolutionists, who claim that the human race descended from pre-adamite primates, need to be clear and honest: the Reformed doctrine of atonement and covenant would need to be rewritten, for there can be no real Adam formed from *adamah*. (JvP)

Evolution requires pre-Adamite human beings - Luke 3:38 disallows it

The genealogy of the Lord Jesus, as Luke gives it, ends with saying that Seth was the son of Adam, and that Adam was the son of God (Luke 3:38). In the Greek, the word "son" occurs only in verse 23 ("[Jesus] was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, of Heli, of Matthat, etc."). But "son" is clearly implied every time. Our English translation, supplying the word "son" in every instance, is not incorrect.

To be a son of someone is to have your existence from that person. Seth had his existence from Adam. To use an old expression, he was the fruit of Adam's loins. Adam had his existence from God – of course, in a way different from how Seth was of Adam. The point of comparison is that as Seth was directly of Adam, so Adam was directly of God.

The context of this verse is very instructive. The genealogy of Jesus is preceded by the account of his baptism. There the Father calls Jesus "my Son." Context is king. As the eternal Son of God has his existence directly from the God the Father, so Adam had his existence directly from God.

Those who believe that man and chimpanzees have a common (animal) ancestor will have difficulty with the position that Adam was the direct creation of God. They will suppose that Adam had ancestors, possibly human, assuredly animal. Luke 3:38 would contradict that supposition.

The only way to get around the conclusion that Luke 3:38 teaches that Adam was the direct creation of God (and not the offspring of another creature) is to take the position that Luke 3:38 is mythological. (GvP)

Evolution challenges God's self-revelation in Scripture

The scriptural doctrine of creation is not an issue that can be pushed to the side as a "non-essential" of the Christian faith. Many will claim that Darwinian evolution and the Christian faith can co-exist as partners, or at the very least as peaceful neighbours, that the matter of "how" God created is not as important as the fact *that* He created. However, Scripture repeatedly reveals that God's act of creation by the awesome power of his Word is intimately related to, and indeed one with, the central doctrines of our faith.

Why is our Lord and God worthy to receive glory and honour and power? Because He created all things and by his will they existed and were created" (Rev 4:11).

How can the Lord have the power to call his people and to redeem us? He is the One who created us; He is the one who formed us (Isa 43:1).

What is the true nature of the Son of God? Through Him the Father created the world and He upholds the universe by the word of his power (Heb 1:2, 3).

In Isaiah 40, the Lord speaks through his prophet, detailing the close relationship between his creative power and his personal work of redemption. His power

in creating the world and sustaining it, an infinite power and authority that had no need for millions, or billions, of years of evolutionary development, is intimately connected to his power to know his people personally, to save us, and to give us all that we need. The God who created the world in an instant, who arranged and filled the universe in an unimaginable, awesome show of power and might, is also our Redeemer (Isa 40:25-29).

The Darwinian doctrine of evolution takes the awe-inspiring creative power of God Almighty and places it in the hands of genetic mutations, chance, and aeons of natural selection and development. It creates a distance between God and his creation; it detracts from the power of God's creative Word; it subtracts from God's glory, and it paints a picture of the one true God that does not at all line up with his self-revelation in Scripture.

Who is our God? How should we live in the presence of such a God? "Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm" (Ps 33:8, 9). This is the God who has revealed Himself. This is the God we worship and adore. (JW)

Evolution surrenders the historicity of Adam and Eve

Many people who hold to the theory of evolution don't believe in a literal Adam and Eve. For them we today are simply the result of millions of years of evolving from lower forms.

However, God's Word in Genesis 2:7 tells that He created the first man out of the dust of the ground and the first woman from a part taken out of the man. They were made specifically by God and in his image.

If there was no literal Adam and Eve, then what about the fall? Where did sin come from? Without a fall into sin, do we still need a redeemer? Without Adam and Eve, then who is Jesus Christ?

What we learn from 1 Corinthians 15:22 is that not only was there a first Adam but that because of his sin, the sin that affected not only him but all his descendants too, there had to be a second Adam.

If we start with God's Word and if we believe the testimony that it gives us about what He did in creation and in redemption, then there couldn't have been development from pre-human ancestors. If we begin with God's Word, common ancestry with modern primates is out of the question. (WG)

Evolution eliminates the antithesis

Our first parents' tragic fall in Paradise destroyed the unity of humanity. When man fell, the united, God-honouring human race was permanently divided into two groups – the "seed of the woman" and the "seed of the serpent." "I will put enmity between you and the woman," the Lord told the serpent in Genesis 3:15, "and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

In subsequent history, that antithesis became clear, as the history of the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent is recounted on the pages of God's Word. At many points in the history of God's people, this antithesis has come under attack, as God's people have attempted to make peace with the enemy, or have simply forgotten about the importance of this "great divide."

Many will claim that Darwinian evolution and the Christian faith can co-exist as partners

"What does all of this have to do with the issue of Darwinian evolution as it relates to the Christian faith?" you ask. And the answer is, "Everything!" In Romans 1:18-25, the Apostle Paul informs us in no uncertain terms about the nature of those who reject the one, true God: "For although they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles."

We must never forget the antithesis, the vast chasm that God has placed between his people and unbelievers for our own benefit and for his glory. Scientists who begin by denying God and his role in the creation and preservation of the universe are, to use the words of Scripture, "the seed of the serpent." Claiming to be wise, they are actually fools. Beginning with the presupposition that there is no God, they become futile in their thinking. There is no middle ground; we must maintain the antithesis in every area of our lives, for the sake of God's people, and ultimately to the glory of the Almighty Himself. (JW)

Evolution devalues human life

In the early part of the twentieth century the province of Alberta and other Canadian jurisdictions enacted eugenics laws on the basis of evolutionary theory. Those with congenital disabilities were regularly sterilized to promote the development of the human race – in Nazi Germany, they were euthanized. Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood, built her pro-abortion ideology upon an evolutionary foundation. Even in the history of the Christian Reformed Church, an embrace of evolutionary dogma has often been associated with a denial of what the Bible teaches about the value of the unborn. Evolution teaches a materialistic view of humanity in which we are essentially bags of chemicals. Such a view, consistently held, results in the devaluation of human life from conception onward. (WB)

Evolution requires death before the Fall

The process of natural selection within the theory of evolution requires thousands, if not millions, of generations of our ancestors, many who were not quite human. They all lived, reproduced, and then died. In this process, dominant characteristics developed only by chance and others disappeared. It all led to progressively higher forms of life until human beings finally appeared on earth.

What the Bible teaches us is that not only did God create man, He created him very good. Then, in Genesis 2:17, He warned the first man and woman that if they disobeyed Him and sinned, this would lead to their death. The testimony of Romans 5:12 is that since sin entered the world through the one man Adam, death came to all men after him.

If death has no basis in sin (as the theory of evolution says), then what is the role of Jesus Christ as our Redeemer? Romans 5:17 tells us that He came to bring righteousness and life to those who die because they are descendants of the one man Adam.

When those who believe in the theory of evolution reject what the Bible teaches us about the origin of death as the consequence of sin, it's not just a matter of whether to take the first three chapters of Genesis literally. This actually throws into doubt the truthfulness of the rest of God's Word, including what He did for us through Christ as our Mediator. (WG)

Evolution cannot account for the uniformity of nature

The fact that the universe is orderly and regular makes science possible – this is the “uniformity of nature.” Evolutionists believe in the uniformity of nature, but it is inconsistent with the foundations of the theory of evolution. Those foundations cannot account for the world in which we live. Therefore, evolution and its associated worldviews cannot provide an adequate answer to the question of why we should believe that the future will reflect the present or the past. If all that exists is only matter (as most evolutionary worldviews claim), there is no basis for the uniformity of nature, and therefore no basis for science.

Appealing to some form of theistic evolution does not help. The Bible teaches that the uniformity of nature has its basis in God and his decrees. The same Bible also teaches that God created the universe in six normal days. It is inconsistent to accept one while denying the other. It is inconsistent to regard Genesis 1 and 2 as mythical or poetic while regarding Genesis 8:22 as literal. Like his secular counterparts, a theistic evolutionist has no credible way to account for the uniformity of nature and the foundations of science. (WB)

Evolution is incompatible with the biblical doctrine of marriage and family

According to Scripture (Gen 2:18-23), God created a wife for Adam and then officiated at the first wedding ceremony. The Bible teaches that marriage and family have their origin with God’s creation in Genesis. Evolutionary theory teaches, however, that marriage and family are social conventions that developed among evolving animals. This theory would suggest that family and marriage relationships are not written in stone and therefore we can expect them to continue to evolve. It is not a significant step from accepting evolutionary dogma to embracing the validity of homosexual relationships, polygamy, or even bestiality. If there is no essential difference between man and the animals, then man may certainly behave like an animal. The Bible teaches one thing and evolution something completely different – this is the antithesis established between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. If we are to maintain the biblical doctrine of marriage and family, we do well to see evolution for what it is: an attack on the truth of God’s Word. (WB)

Evolution falls outside the tent of the Reformed confessions

One of the great things about the Three Forms of Unity (TFU) is that they provide a big roomy tent under which Reformed confessors can discuss, even argue, theological points. For example, TFU subscribers can either believe there is such a thing as a covenant of works or that there is not, and have the room under the tent to discuss it. TFU subscribers can hold to either the Puritan or the Calvinian view of the application of the fourth commandment and have room to discuss their differences. This, alone, makes the TFU superior to some other Reformed confessions, which insist—to use the aforesaid examples—that one hold to the covenant of works doctrine and the Puritan understanding of the fourth commandment. The TFU get it right. They exclude Roman Catholic, Anabaptist, and Arminian heresies and errors, but do not push fellow Reformed confessors out into the cold and rain. But what about “theistic evolution”? Can that discussion take place under the big tent?

*We do well to see evolution
for what it is:
an attack on the truth of God’s Word*

Someone who holds to a teaching of evolution, “theistic” or other, has brought the discussion outside the tent. By way of our confessions, we say that we believe scripture to teach that Adam was a direct creation of God; we reject that Adam had human and/or animal ancestors.

One example from each confession should suffice to demonstrate the truth of this:

- Article 14 of the Belgic Confession says, “. . .God created man of dust from the ground and He made and formed him after His own image and likeness. . . .”
- Lord’s Day 3, referring to “our first parents, Adam and Eve,” says that “God created man good and in His image.”
- Canons of Dort, III/IV, I says, “In the beginning man was created in the image of God.”

Whether or not we have animal ancestry is not an intramural discussion. (GVP)





Rev. George van Popta is minister of the Jubilee Canadian Reformed Church at Ottawa, Ontario. gvanpopta@gmail.com

Canticles

Moses and the Lamb

1. Great and mar-velous are Your deeds,
 God Al-might-y, King of kings.
 Just and true are all Your ways,
 You are Rul-er of all things.
 King of a-ges, God on high,
 none can You, our Lord, de-fy.
 You have drowned the wick-ed beast;
 You have won the vic-to-ries.

2. All should fear You, O Lord God,
 and bring glory to Your name.
 You alone are holy, Lord;
 let all people praise Your fame,
 every nation worship You
 for the righteous things You do.
 Great and marvelous are Your deeds,
 God Almighty, King of kings.

In his vision of Revelation 15:1-3, John saw a great and marvelous sign: Seven angels with the seven last plagues of God against unrepentant man. Then he saw a sea of glass mixed with fire. Standing beside the sea were those who had been victorious over the beast. God had given them harps. These people of God sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb.

This is reminiscent of the drowning of Pharaoh and all his host in the Red Sea after the tenth plague. The people of God passed over safely. Once over, Moses and Miriam led the people of God in a song of deliverance and praise (see Exodus 15).

Here follows the New Testament Song of Moses and of the Lamb.

Welcome to Rev. Wes Bredenhof

The weekend of September 12 and 13, 2009 was one of joyful celebration for the Providence Hamilton congregation. In the two years since our institution, our pulpit had been filled twice every Sunday by visiting ministers, theological students and professors, and the occasional reading elder, but now we gladly received from the Lord's hand our own pastor and teacher in the person of Rev. W.L. Bredenhof!

Welcome evening

On the Saturday evening, we gathered at our usual meeting place, the gym of St. Catherine of Siena School. A bountiful dessert buffet, consisting of everything from fruit trays to delicious pies and trifles, was enjoyed by all. This was followed by a short program to welcome the Bredenhof family. Throughout the evening we read Scripture passages and sang songs relating to the theme of being welcoming and showing hospitality. Several societies and committees introduced themselves to the Bredenhofs, using songs, charades, hats, quizzes, a crossword, and gifts. As a welcome gift from the whole congregation, the Bredenhofs received a beautiful scrapbook of photos and written introductions to the membership, which will certainly come in handy as they acquaint themselves with their new church family.



Installation Sunday

The next morning we all gathered together again for Sunday worship. The atmosphere was joyful and the excitement almost palpable. Dr. A. J. deVisser led the worship service that morning and brought encouragement to both pastor and congregation as he preached on "A Humbling Fishing Experience" – Luke 5:1-11. The miraculous catch of fish is a promise that the Lord will bring people to his church through his Spirit. In the end, the Lord will have his multitude. Rev. Bredenhof has a special calling in this regard, but we must all be involved catching people alive for the Lord.

After the installation several letters of congratulations from churches in Classis Ontario West were read and two congregations had sent representatives to welcome Rev. Bredenhof and

encourage him in his new charge.

In the afternoon Rev. Bredenhof preached his inaugural sermon. The text was John 17:3 – "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." Our new pastor resolved to bring us to a greater knowledge of our God and the gospel of salvation, so that we do not become immune to its grandeur, but rather are impressed by it time and time again. To do so effectively, he needs the faithful support and prayers of the congregation.

As Pastor Wes has begun the work of preaching, pastoral visits, catechism teaching, and his many other duties among us, we are reminded week after week of the blessing God has given us in him. May these joyful days be the first of many for us as pastor and congregation. Soli Deo Gloria! **C**

Farewell or Welcome Back?

On Sunday, September 13, 2009 the Toronto congregation once again had to say "good bye" to another family who was involved in our Mission Field. This time it was to the Togeretz family, who served in Papua.

They had begun this work just over fifteen years ago, in March 1994. They began their work with the Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) and at that time requested the support of the Toronto congregation. As the Vegters had returned from the mission field at that time and we did not have a Mission Aid worker in what was then known as Irian Jaya, Toronto agreed to work together with the MAF. Under God's blessing they were located in Boma, which was the same area where the Versteegs were working.

Now fifteen years later we can only look back with thankfulness that Clarence was kept safe in all his flights and activities. This work was done in God's hands and was filled with many dangers and a lot of anxiety. Now they are back in Canada. This was not an easy decision, as they did love the work that they were doing. However, it was in the best interest of their children and family that they decided to come back to Canada.

Following this brief summary of the work that the Togeretz family was involved in, an opportunity was given for any delegates from the supporting congregations to address the Togeretz family. Br. Boot also read letters that had been received by a few of the supporting congregations. Rev. Versteeg also spoke



of few words with regards to the working relationship that he and his family had with the Togeretz family. Rev. Versteeg also noted that this time of repatriation would have challenges and struggles as well. He wished them God's blessing and guidance during this time of adjustment. Br. Barry VanOmmen, on behalf of the Mission Board, addressed the Togeretz family. He thanked them for the diligence in their work with the Mission Board. Many reports were received (albeit sometimes as the meeting were about to begin) and communication was positive and open between the Mission Board and the Mission Field.

Clarence and Jeanette were given the opportunity to address everyone present. They were also presented with a painting on behalf of the supporting churches.

Rev. den Hollander spoke a few words of appreciation as chairman of the Mission Board and then asked for a blessing over the meal we were about to receive. Once again the Action Committee provided a delicious BBQ for everyone present. After eating supper and enjoying a time of fellowship we once again went into the auditorium. Clarence and Jeanette showed up a video of their work in Papua.

Praise God for having kept the Togeretz family in his care during these last fifteen years as they served Him in Papua! It is our prayer that God will give you all you need as you continue to serve Him in Canada. 



Otto Bouwman
and Keith Sikkema



NPC 2009: “Light and Salt”

Mr. Otto Bouwman is principal of
Cornerstone Christian School in Lynden, Washington
obouwman@cornerstoneschool.us

Mr. Keith Sikkema is principal of
Dufferin Area Christian School in Orangeville, Ontario.
ksikkema@istop.com

Despite generally cool and damp weather conditions outside, the biennial National Principals Conference held in Crieff, Ontario from September 28-30, 2009 was characterized by a warm, relaxed, and upbeat atmosphere of collegiality, mutual support, and serious searching for a common understanding of key aspects of Reformed education. Besides the formal agenda with the usual speeches and workshops, ample time was available for relaxation and “professional interaction.” The thirty or so participants agreed that George Hofsink (principal, Covenant Christian School, Millgrove, Ontario) capably led the proceedings, and when one western principal publicly stated that “I immensely enjoyed myself,” he echoed the sentiment of many others.

Light and salt

The keynote presentation by Rev. Bill DeJong of Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church in Hamilton took its cue from Matthew 5:13-16. He wondered how the “outward” calling of the church can be reconciled with the predominantly “inward” focus of the Christian school and how the Christian school fits within a larger missional agenda to win our neighbours for Christ. His exploratory and discussion-provoking thesis was that “Reformed Christian schools should be *both* covenantal and missional.”

Rev. DeJong pointed out that, besides our attention for the covenant and the cultural mandate, our churches have entered a more missional or evangelistic phase. Understanding the former led to an early internal drive for building churches and schools, whereas the latter has us reach out to a world of cynicism, existentialism, and disrespect beyond. However, from Scripture we learn not only that the covenant is a bond of love between God and believers and their children, but also that its blessings extend beyond Israel, as the light of the world must be preached to all nations. The agenda of missions

is to be both salt and light. In Matthew 5:13, salt is for seasoning and flavour; and shining the light refers to living esthetically and ethically good lives as a holy and distinct people – not in Christian ghettos, but immersed in this world.

The rationale for our schools acknowledges that children are ill equipped to go to war and need to be trained before they can recognize the hidden agenda of the public system. Our schools are and should be parental, not parochial, as education is the responsibility of the parents. They are also covenantal, not missional, and do not need to lead children to become Christians. In the efforts of World Wide Christian Schools, on the other hand, as well as in various mission efforts of our churches, schools have been effective to lead children to a faith commitment even before the age of 14, to raise the esteem of the church in the community, and as an inroad for the gospel message to families. To maintain the Christian character of such schools, it is essential that membership, boards, and teachers are Christian. The speaker wondered: if there is no principle against such schools in the mission field, should there be one at home? In this context, Rev. DeJong referred sympathetically to John Bolt’s chapter on Reformed Christian Education in *Christian and Reformed Today* (Paideia, 1984, esp. pp. 121-122).

The discussion brought out that CRC schools that shifted to a missional purpose rather became more ecumenistic, and lost their original character. They also lost the community support that helped keep tuition down. Our schools should be in step with our church community and local mission is typically not a really high focus. At the same time, on an individual basis and in extraordinary circumstances, our schools have taken in unchurched students by special request, on the basis of temporary church membership, regular visitor, or sponsored refugee status.

We would need to be very up front with parents

about where the school is going. Participants agreed that our Christian commitment to and reputation for quality and excellence in itself is being a salt and light. Our schools' objective is not to be missional, but to educate. There would be no principle against starting a separate missional school in downtown Hamilton, for instance, perhaps as part of Streetlight Ministries—rather than changing Timothy Christian School to take on that role.

Discernment and apologetics

Tim Challies is the author of *The Discipline of Spiritual Discernment* (Crossway, 2007). Focusing on Hebrews 5:1-6:3, he compared Christian discernment with the skill of identifying counterfeit currency. While evangelicals may liken discernment to some mystical experience by which to recognize God's will, in Scripture it is about discriminating and distinguishing, about the skill of understanding and applying God's Word to understand and separate good from evil. Mature Christians must discern what is true about God and what that implies about how to live. Lack of discernment may be a sign of dead faith, of not actually being a Christian. Conversely, discerning Christians, led by the Spirit, have a growing and maturing faith, and the fear of the Lord is the beginning of their wisdom. Timothy must guard and proclaim the truth and then pass it on to faithful and trustworthy others. Our schools also need people who pass it on, people who will fight and even die for it. To defend the faith, we must know it, and grow in it. We may start with knowing Christian theology and catechism, but that does not make one a Christian. One has to submit his life to Christ. Teachers do well to challenge their students on this.

The discussion dwelt on aspects of skill in discernment, covenant automatism, and apologetics. God enables people to understand as much as they need to, but knowing should translate into doing. As we know more and better, we can become more discerning. Covenant automatism is to be rejected: it gives a false sense of security and the covenant also has an obligation. Young people go through a validation process of our hope before making public profession of faith. They also may know that when they fall into sin, they can build on God's promises. Apologetics is a mind-set of choosing right, articulating the reasons for those choices, and giving account of the hope that we have. Students must first learn and accept what that hope is before they can apply it in apologetic ways. This is different than following the rules: a legalist

learns all the rules; a Christian sees the big picture of the gospel of salvation, hope, and the kind of life it asks for.

In a separate presentation, attention was drawn to the International Apologetics Project. IAP hoped to create awareness of the significance of worldview and apologetics in the Reformed educational community, stimulate professional and staff development around this topics for teachers in grades 7 and up, and share resources. Currently, IAP materials from The Netherlands, Canada, and Australia are hosted on the teachers college website. Various high schools are developing apologetics courses. In The Netherlands, a series of professional development days focus on how teachers can be motivated as Christians. This is likely to carry through to ICRE III (in April, 2010) under the theme Faith in Education.

Another "Kampen report"

A highlight of the conference was Wednesday morning's presentation, given by Leo Kampen. Ten years ago he also addressed the principals, predicting what he figured would be pressure points for our school communities. This time, he looked back and also looked ahead.

Kampen had anticipated that the need for Canadian Reformed schools would not be entirely self-evident to the next generation. Today, we still struggle to clearly, positively, and simply express what makes our schools distinctive. Principals need to keep providing leadership at board tables, assisting in the ongoing articulation of our school identity. In the world of vision articulation, not only are we never done, but successful articulation is critical every generation again.

The second area Kampen explored was curriculum development. He had anticipated the need for ongoing, serious, coordinated, and intense curriculum work. He now concluded, "We had serious intent, but lacked serious execution." Though significant accomplishments are evident in the church history field, little real progress is evident in other areas. We need to work more effectively together, in a way that reflects our vision, towards a specific strategic plan. Our school societies face common challenges in curriculum areas, but actually work together only minimally. One area our schools need to do a better job is accommodating the needs of those students with special needs.

Ongoing shortages of staff were evident last time he spoke; since then there has been a slight



lessening of that pressure, though we certainly do not have a surplus of teachers. The speaker felt that, since the last time he spoke, teacher salaries have improved, as have employment practices. A reality that perhaps faces us with greater urgency today than previously, is the imminent retirement of a significant number of principals throughout our system. Are we being as proactive in this regard as we need to be? Principals and other stakeholders need to understand that principals are managers and need training in managerial skills.

The fourth area of focus was technology. Ten years ago, there was a need expressed for ongoing integration of computer technology in the classroom. Though by now computer labs are quite common in our schools, are they being used in a way that really integrates technology with the educational learning that goes on in the classroom? Computers also provide marvelous networking opportunities for teachers. Is that used adequately?

Finances have been a significant challenge for school boards for many years. In some communities, the system has relied too heavily on (indirect) diaconal support. Today, financial challenges continue for our boards, particularly because there is so much competition for the dollar from other (worthwhile) organizations. In reality, our schools need to financially be the number two priority in our communities – right behind our churches. Keep enlisting the support of young people and young couples in our communities. Use new technologies that assist in communication or regular financial transfers. A positive new initiative related to finances is the Harvest Endowment Foundation, which has been established to financially assist school communities. This initiative requires a very long term vision.

Last time Kampen addressed issues related to the above five issues; this time he added a sixth: boards and governance. During our discussion, this area received most of the attention. Kampen outlined the

need for boards to focus on the continued development of proper professional and managerial practices. For example, detailed board calendars, which outline tasks for individual board positions, are essential. Promote longevity of service and new board members ought to attend training seminars. Though Kampen initially promoted boards viewing their principals as the CEO of the educational organization, another suggestion emerged: that the principal is the Chief Operating Officer rather than the executive officer. There needs to be a very high level of mutual trust and confidence between principal and board. Schools should have five year strategic plans, which encompass all functional aspects of the schools. Lastly, boards were encouraged to use formal school evaluation opportunities.

*We must clearly, positively,
and simply express what makes
our schools distinctive*

The presentation and ensuing discussion were very positive. Wisely, the presenter ensured that the presentations were video-taped, enabling many others to interact with this material as well. Principals agreed that there was much material that would be very helpful for all stakeholders in our educational organizations, as we need the cooperation and support of the other members.

Conclusion

The NPC 2009 was a worthy conference. It provided principals with opportunities to wrestle with practical matters they face, and think through principalial issues. The main presentations gave food for thought and helped clarify our understanding of the character of our schools, the need for discernment, and the role of apologetics. In addition, the focus on long-term development will help individual schools as well as our school system focus our efforts. The conference was a key opportunity for principals to develop professionally in their leadership tasks.

The Education Matters column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association East. Anyone wishing to respond to an article written or willing to write an article is kindly asked to send materials to Clarion or to Otto Bouwman obouwman@cornerstoneschool.us



**Press Release of Regional Synod West,
held November 3, 2009, Abbotsford, British
Columbia**

1. Dr. R.C. Janssen, chairman of the convening church of Abbotsford, called the delegates to order and led in opening devotions.
2. The credentials were examined by the convening church and found to be in good order. The following delegates were in attendance:
 - a. From Classis Manitoba: Ministers: R. den Hollander, A.J. Pol.; Elders: R. Buist, W. Raap.
 - b. From Classis Alberta: Ministers: R. Aasman, J.P. Kalkman; Elders: M. Tams, J. VanVeen.
 - c. From Classis Pacific East: Ministers: R. Schouten, W. Wielenga; Elders: C. Dehaas and B. Meerstra.
 - d. From Classis Pacific West: H. Alkema, J. Visscher; Elders: H. Stel, A. VanDyke.
3. The following brothers were chosen as officers of Synod: as chairman, Rev. R. Aasman; as vice-chairman, Rev. R. Schouten, and as clerk, Dr. A.J. Pol.
4. Regional Synod was constituted. Dr. Janssen was appointed to serve Synod as advisor.
5. An appeal was received from Br. H. Voorhorst against a judgment of Classis Pacific West of October 7, 2008. Synod decided to not accede to this appeal. Br. A. VanDyke abstained from voting as he is an elder in the church of which the appellant is a member.
6. An appeal was received from Rev. R. Boersema against a judgment of Classis Pacific West of October 6, 2009. This appeal was sustained.
7. The Deputies of Regional Synod reported that they had attended Classis Pacific West of October 6, 2009, at which Candidate Mr. Ryan DeJonge underwent a peremptory examination. Br. DeJonge sustained his exam and the deputies report that they could give concurring advice.
8. The church for auditing the books of the Treasurer reported that they had audited the books of the Treasurer for the period from October 11 to October 20, 2009 and found everything to be in order.
9. Appointments.
 - a. Regional Synod Treasurer: Br. J. Moedt.
 - b. Church for Auditing the books of the Treasurer: Taber.
 - c. Church for the Archives: Providence CanRC Edmonton.
 - d. Church for the inspection of the Archives: Immanuel CanRC of Edmonton.
 - e. Deputies of Regional Synod:
 - i. Classis Alberta: Rev. R. Aasman; Rev. J. Louwerse (1st alternate); Rev. W. Slomp (second alternate).
 - ii. Classis Manitoba: Dr. A.J. Pol; Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer (1st alternate); Rev. J. Poppe (2nd alternate).
 - iii. Classis Pacific East: Rev. W. Wielenga; Rev. C. Bouwman (1st alternate); Rev. R. Ijbema (2nd alternate).
 - iv. Classis Pacific West: Dr. J. Visscher; Rev. A. Souman (1st alternate); Rev. J. Slaa (2nd alternate).
 - f. Delegates to General Synod:
 - i. Ministers: R. Aasman, P. H. Holtvlüwer, J. Louwerse, A. J. Pol, R. Schouten, J. Visscher. Alternates: C. Bouwman, W. Wielenga, J. Poppe and W. Slomp, in that order.
 - ii. Elders: C. Dehaas, R. Klaver, J. Kuik, W. Raap, A. VanDyke, W. Weidenhammer; Alternates: D. Schouten, L. Toet, J. VanLaar, and H. Stel, in that order.
 - g. Remuneration for lost wages for delegates: Maximum of \$200.00 per day and a maximum of \$1000.00 per week. Mileage: .45 per km.
 - h. Nominated for the Board of Governors of the Theological College: R. Aasman; alternates: A. Souman and T. Lodder, in that order.
10. Arrangements for the next Regional Synod: Convening church: Edmonton Immanuel; Date: November 2, 2010.
11. Question Period was held.
12. Censure according to Article 34, Church Order was considered unnecessary.
13. The Acts were read and adopted. The Press Release was approved.
14. The chairman led in closing devotions.

