

Clarion

Numbers 10:1-10

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*Is God's Word
authoritative
or current
scientific
theory?*

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- *When Science and Scripture Clash*
- *Hell Disappeared?*





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When Science and Scripture Clash

Science moves beyond its competence when it starts to pontificate about origins and how things were in the beginning

Currently an intensifying battle is being waged to win the hearts and minds of Christians to accept the evolutionary worldview as the correct one and to recognize that the biblical account of creation needs to be interpreted in that light. Well-known and respected theologians cause many orthodox believers to waver and doubt as they push evolutionary views through organizations such as BioLogos.¹ Some consider it anti-intellectual to reject evolutionary theories of the world's origins and to accept the clear testimony of Scripture. The effects of this conflict are also felt in our circles and the stakes are very high. At issue is the authority of Scripture and whether one can really believe the clear teachings of God's Word. In this editorial I would like to focus on one example of what happens when the clear teaching of Scripture is challenged. But first we need to remind ourselves of the nature of the struggle that we are engaged in.

The nature of the struggle

Evolutionary theory on the origin of creation is ultimately rooted in the conviction that God has little to do with the material world in which we live. This world came about by chance. Consistent evolutionists believe that there was no divine Creator. The fervency with which this article of faith is held is obvious from the heated attacks against those who would suggest that creation and the natural world can best be explained by an intelligent cause rather than a random undirected process of evolution. To suggest an intelligent cause is to suggest that God must be behind creation and he must be excluded! It is unscientific to presuppose God's existence and involvement in nature. The vilification of creationist scientists is even worse.

When evolutionary theories of earth's beginnings have such godless roots, the fruits of such thinking predictably contradict the Bible. While Scripture

teaches that God created man with a definite purpose and agenda, evolutionary theory denies any purpose of creation and man in particular. According to Neo-Darwinian theory (one popular interpretation of evolution), it all evolved randomly and boils down to a struggle for survival and only the most fit make it. While Scripture teaches that God created Adam and Eve as the first humans on earth, evolution denies this truth and speaks of Adam having ancestors. It is clear that evolutionary theory arises out of a worldview that is hostile to a biblical way of thinking and looking at the world.

But, someone may ask, has science not shown that Adam and Eve were not the first humans and they had animal ancestors? There are *interpretations* of the evidence to this effect, but such a view is not the same as a *fact*. It is beyond the limits of this editorial to go into depth, but a few comments are appropriate. Scientific theories are not neutral. Information is interpreted on the basis of certain presuppositions and one's worldview. It has been correctly said that "you can find scientific proofs for just about any world-view you happen to fancy. Any scientist could come up with equally good proofs for the opposite of evolution."²

With respect to the hypothesis that humans have animal ancestors because they share much genetic material (DNA), there are compelling scientific reasons to cast doubt on this theory. (See the sidebar with this article.) Furthermore, and more fundamentally, science moves beyond its competence when it starts to pontificate about origins and how things were in the beginning. In much current discussion this central fact is largely ignored. This limitation needs to be reaffirmed and underlined. Science as practised using the scientific method must deal with current phenomena and observable facts that can be recorded and measured. Proposed explanations find support



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when phenomena can be reproduced by scientific experiments or when they make predictions which are later verified. Science cannot know how this world and everything in it was made and scientists cannot reproduce God’s acts of creation. God’s work of making this world out of nothing must be accepted in faith on God’s authority as he has informed us in his Word (Heb 11:1-3). For this reason, the struggle against the dogma of evolution is ultimately about whose authority to accept – God’s or man’s.

To help us distinguish the spirits of the times, our Saviour has given us a helpful criterion. He commanded in his Word: “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. . . every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit” (Matt 7:15-17). We need to consider the fruits of evolution theory. Let us consider one recent example of interpreting the Bible with a view to evolution.³

Was Adam a real person?

One consequence of evolutionary theory has been the denial of the existence of Adam. The BioLogos website expounds this view because evolutionary theory demands it. If Adam did not exist, how then does one interpret the opening chapters of Scripture? Peter Enns of BioLogos has come up with a novel approach.

What’s Inside

Dr. Cornelis Van Dam begins Issue 4 with his editorial entitled “When Science and Scripture Clash.” He discusses the consequences when we deny the truth and authority of Scripture on the basis of current science. Readers will also find an interesting sidebar from Dr. Margaret Helder accompanying our editorial.

In this issue Dr. Wes Bredenhof begins a five-part series on the liturgical changes that took place in the Christian Reformed Churches of North America from 1964-1985. Part one focuses on turmoil in the 1960s.

The Ecumena column is back in this issue to discuss preparatory examinations for young men presenting themselves for the ministry. Rev. George van Popta compares and contrasts the process of these exams in the Canadian Reformed and United Reformed churches.

Regular columns Treasures New and Old and Education Matters are included in Issue 4. In addition, we also have a book review, two letters to the editor, and a Mission News insert.

Laura Veenendaal

The account of Adam's creation and subsequent disobedience is simply a late reflection of Israel's history. The history of Israel came first and "the Adam story was written to reflect that history. In other words, the Adam story is really an Israel story placed in primeval time. *It is not a story of human origins but of Israel's origins.*"⁴ The reasoning of Enns is as follows. As Israel was "created" by God at the Exodus after a cosmic battle against the gods, so Adam is created in Genesis 2 after the taming of chaos in Genesis 1. As Israel was given a land flowing with milk and honey, so Adam was given paradise. As Israel would remain in the land as long as they obeyed God, so Adam could remain in the garden as long as he obeyed God. Because of disobedience, Israel was sent out of the land of promise. Similarly Adam and Eve were evicted from paradise. In light of these analogies, Enns concludes that the paradise account must be a reflection of Israel's history. The end result of this type of thinking is that Genesis 1-3 do not give us divine revelation of historical events but only later fallible

human reflections. This is bad fruit and exposes evolution as a bad tree.

Apart from whether Enns' scenario is even logical, the objections against this type of de-historicizing of Genesis are obvious to those who take the authority of Scripture seriously. The creation narratives flow seamlessly into subsequent chapters of Genesis. If Genesis 1-3 are not historical, where then does history truly begin? If Adam is not historical then the genealogies which include Adam are also in error (Gen 5:1-3; 1 Chron 1:1-4; Luke 3:38). Furthermore, if Adam is not a real person, how can Scripture say that "just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous" (Rom 5:19)? If the first person in this verse, Adam, was an imaginary figure, what about Christ? Is he also fiction? The New Testament consistently presents Adam as a historical figure (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:22, 45; 1 Tim 2:13-14; Jude 14).

Editorial Sidebar

Margaret Helder

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Are Humans and Chimps Related?

What does it mean when scientists say that human and chimpanzee have 98.5% identical DNA? It is important to identify what is being compared. This particular comparison involves less than 3% of the whole collection of genetic information in these organisms. In other words, it is the protein coding regions (the "genes") which are compared and which are closely similar. For a nontechnical discussion including technical references see <http://www.create.ab.ca/dnabythenumbers/#more4101>. The genes may be similar between the two groups but large stretches of coding in and near many genes, have been found to be very different. On the assumption that both chimps and humans originally had the same genetic coding, scientists label these differences as INDELS or, in other words, deletions and insertions from an originally shared text. Of course this assumption may be completely inappropriate. The genetic information in these groups may have been separately designed. The point is however that these INDEL regions control how the genes are expressed and thus they lead to

the unique characteristics of each group. One recent technical article on the topic is Polavarapu et al., 2011. "Characterization and potential functional significance of human-chimpanzee large INDEL variation" at <http://www.mobilednjournal.com/content/2/1/13>. These authors found "Extensive, large INDEL variation exists between human and chimpanzee genomes" (p. 1). They speculate that these differences lead to major differences in expression of the similar genes.

Obviously the DNA is not so close after all. The numbers cited depend upon what is being compared. In the case of the 98.5% similarity, scientists extrapolate from small areas of similarity (the genes) to make the assumption that the whole genomes are similar. That, however, is not true. In actual fact, the only two well defined sections of DNA which have been comprehensively mapped in both chimpanzee and human are two tiny chromosomes: chromosome #21 and the male gender determining Y chromosome. While chimp and human chromosome #21 are indeed very similar, the Y chromosomes differ radically

Consequences

It is obvious that if you deny one part of Scripture on the basis of current science, you will need to deny other parts as well. God's Word is a unit. If evolutionary theory states that Adam could not have existed, how can science possibly live with the virgin birth of Christ or his resurrection from the dead? Current scientific knowledge does not support the likelihood of a dead body becoming alive. Why should one part of Scripture be subjected to current scientific norms and not other parts? It all comes down to which is authoritative: God's Word or current scientific theory?

There is a warning lesson in all of this. When a person accepts evolutionary theory of origins and denies biblical authority by rejecting the creation account of Genesis, it is a small but logical step to go on and deny the authority of all of Scripture. This is unbelief.

A Dutch dissertation has recently been published⁵ which shows that when the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKN), the so-called synodical churches, accepted evolutionary theories of origins, their view

of the authority of Scripture declined dramatically. Indeed, it no longer mattered whether Scripture related real historical events or not because the Bible was not direct revelation from God but a reflection of human experiences in their relationship with God. May the Lord our God spare us from such a development for in the end it will come at the cost of the gospel.

(Endnotes)

¹ See, e.g., R. Ostling, "The Search for the Historical Adam," *Christianity Today* 55:6 (June 2011) 23-27. Also available at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/june/historicaladam.html>.

² Oosterhoff, "Evolutionism and Education," *Clarion* 27 (1978) 193.

³ For other examples of fruits of evolutionary theory see W. Bredenhof and others, "Ten Reasons why Evolution is Dangerous and Evil," *Clarion* 59 (2010) 6-9.

⁴ Peter Enns, "Adam is Israel" (March 2, 2010) at <http://biologos.org/blog/adamisisrael#>. The emphasis is in the original text.

⁵ H.H. Kruyswijk, *Baas in eigen boek? Evolutietheorie en Schriftgezag bij de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (1881-1981)* (2011).



(see URL cited above at creat.ab.ca for technical references to this issue). However, even in the case of chromosome #21, we see significant INDEL variation between the species. "For example, in a comparison of human chromosome 21 and syntenic [comparable] chimpanzee chromosome 22, as many as 68,000 INDELS were identified" (Polavarapu et al p. 1). These regions of difference involve lengthy stretches of DNA from 80 bp (like letters) to 12,000 bp.

Creationists and evolutionists interpret such data differently. The former emphasize differences while the latter hypothesize that various processes took place like the action of retroviruses (which can insert their own DNA into a host genome or DNA). The evolutionists thus explain many differences between the two groups as the result of the action of viruses. Evolutionists also talk about ERVs (patterns of DNA said to represent retrovirus insertions and said to be common to chimps and humans.) And these scientists talk about human chromosome #2 which they claim represents two chimp chromosomes stuck together end to end. The data however do not really fit their claims (see articles on these topics at AiG and CMI websites).

In conclusion, the data do not, without many supporting assumptions, suggest any line of descent from chimps to humans. It is also obvious that we know relatively little about genes (DNA). Humans apparently share 50% DNA with bananas, but that does not make humans 50% banana!

For further reading:

A 2010 study that has contradicted claims of human-chimp DNA similarity is J. F. Hughes, et al, "Chimpanzee and human Y chromosomes are remarkably divergent in structure gene content," *Nature* 463 (7280): 536-539. For a summary see: J. Tomkins and B. Thomas, "New Chromosome Research Undermines Human-Chimp Similarity Claims," *Acts & Facts* 39:4 (2010) 45. Also see M. Helder, "Letter to the Editor," *Clarion* 59 (2010) 238, Frank Sherwin, "The Rapidly Unraveling Thread between DNA and 'Human Evolution,'" at <http://www.icr.org/article/rapidlyunravelingthreadbetweenDNAandhumanevol/> and Jeffrey P. Tomkins, "GenomeWide DNA Alignment Similarity (Identity) for 40,000 Chimpanzee DNA Sequences Queried against the Human Genome is 86-89%" at <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/arj/v4/n1/blastin>. For a fine collection of essays both theological and scientific, see Norman C. Nevin, ed., *Should Christians Embrace Evolution? Biblical and Scientific Responses* (2009).





MATTHEW 13:52

"If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out."
(Mark 9:43)

Hell Disappeared?

A while ago someone wrote, "Hell disappeared, and no one noticed." The topic of eternal punishment isn't nice to contemplate, but it is necessary. It's striking how often the Lord Jesus mentioned hell, and always to warn. In Mark 9 he describes it as the place where the fire never goes out, a place of unquenchable fire.

Many use the thought of eternal torment to discredit the Christian faith. Will a good God send people to hell and eternal torment? The well-known Anglican minister John Stott, who died last year, has suggested that hell is a place where those condemned are simply incinerated into non-existence. Rob Bell, former pastor of the Mars Hill Church in Grandville, Michigan, published a book in 2011 (*Love Wins*) in which he questioned the belief that a definite number of believers will spend eternity in heaven while everyone else is tormented in hell. He suggested that the Bible's speaking about hell is more metaphorical than factual. This comes down to the idea that hell is not eternal punishment.

Now, it's true that the Bible often uses metaphorical language to describe reality. However, in the Bible metaphors are used to describe realities which are greater than can be articulated in words or understood by human minds. In other words, hell itself is not a metaphor but a reality, and the metaphors used in the Bible and by our Lord signify a reality which is more terrible than can be comprehended.

Also when the Lord Jesus spoke about the fire of hell never going out, he wasn't using a metaphor simply to express a long time of punishment. It's true that sometimes words like "forever" are used in the Bible to denote a long period of time. In the context of hell, however, eternity can only mean that hell is actually endless. After all, if "eternal" doesn't mean forever with regard to hell, what would be left of its meaning with regard to heaven? In Matthew 25:46 Jesus said in connection with judgement day, "They will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." Both heaven and hell receive the same qualification of being "eternal." So with regard to hell, eternal is truly forever.

Does a good God send people to eternal punishment? Yes, he does: an eternal place of punishment does exist, created by God. If we accept this revelation in Scripture, then we see God as the Almighty who is perfectly just, as well as incredibly merciful. As just Judge he takes sin seriously. Unrighteousness isn't shoved under a rug, but dealt with.

The thing is, if we think small of God we'll also think small of sin and regard it as merely a mistake. But hell as eternal punishment causes us to think great of God. How great he is in conquering the evil that had such a hold on us! And how incredible is God's love for us too, to save us from such an awful place! Eternal hell teaches us to have the highest possible regard and gratitude for Christ's work of redemption. He suffered in body and soul the hellish pain and terror in

Treasures, New and Old

Jack Moesker



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our place, so we wouldn't ever have to be banished to hell.

Anyone who tries "to air-condition hell" then, undoes the depth of Christ's suffering for us, especially in his God-forsakenness on the cross. They also minimize the love of God who did not spare his Son this horror in order that we might receive eternal joy.

And let's never think that God sends people to hell against their wishes, but he gives them over to their desires. Think of Judas who betrayed Jesus; he was warned about what he was going to do, but he did it anyway, and was given over to it. Judas acted according to God's eternal plan to bring his Son to the cross for us (Luke 22:22), but God didn't force him. As C.S. Lewis wrote in *The Great Divorce*, in the end there will only be two kinds of people: people who say to God, "Your will be done," and people to whom God will say, "Your will be done."

Hell speaks of God's eternal wrath, but also God's eternal love. Let's always remain aware of how great a disaster we've been saved from through Christ. And may the knowledge of hell also make us urgent in calling others to Christ. I once read that the nineteenth century Scottish preacher Robert M'Cheyne asked his friend Andrew Bonar what he had preached about the previous Sunday. Bonar told him he had preached about hell. So M'Cheyne asked him, "Did you preach about it with tears?" I'm sure that's how Jesus preached about it. And that's how we also should think and speak of it.





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Liturgical Change in the Christian Reformed Church (1964-1985) Part 1 of 5

It's held by many that "change" is a dirty word in Reformed churches. To try and bring about change in Reformed churches, especially those with a predominantly Dutch background, is an exercise that few have patience for. We have traditions that have become comfortable to us, traditions that seem right and "Reformed" to us, and therefore change is not seen as necessary or desirable. We have a conservative ethos that resists rapid change.

Canadian Reformed readers will certainly see the truth in those statements. On the surface, some things have changed in our churches in the last sixty years. Dutch services have disappeared entirely. We no longer use the King James Version or the Revised Standard Version. We now have a *Book of Praise* with eighty-five hymns. However, when it comes to the core of it, if a person could enter a time machine and travel back to a 1950s-era Canadian Reformed worship service, there would be a lot that remains familiar. With regard to liturgy, little substantial change has taken place in sixty years. With some minor variations in some places, the same order of worship is followed, the same elements of the service are present, and the preaching of the Word remains central.

The same cannot be said for the majority of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC). In sixty years, there have been many cosmetic changes when it comes to liturgy, but there have also been some substantial changes in the way worship itself is understood. Now a word of caution: when we speak about the CRC, we have to recognize that we are not dealing with a homogeneous federation of churches. There have been widespread changes in many individual CRC congregations, but not all. Some local churches have embraced liturgical changes, while others have to one degree or another resisted.

Nevertheless, there has been an official development which one may trace through ecclesiastical records. It is this development that we're interested in with this series of articles.

In particular, I want to focus attention on the process of liturgical change in the CRC from 1964-1985. Especially with the early years of this period, I have some resources available to trace some developments in local situations, particularly in the Grand Rapids area. However, for the most part, I will be relying on official Acts of CRC Synods. We will see that these synodical records illustrate a development with regard to liturgy in the CRC. We will examine the liturgical changes of this period and attempt to account for them. We'll also briefly consider resistance to these changes. Finally, we want to learn what we can from this episode in CRC history.

A time of turmoil – the CRC in the 1960s

The decade beginning in 1960 was tumultuous for North American society in general. The times were changing and, from entertainment to politics, these changes were revolutionary in many respects. Authority was challenged by the youth of the era in unprecedented ways. Many of these revolutionary changes took place on college and university campuses across the United States. Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan was no exception.

The revolutionary changes sparked in this decade appear to have climaxed between 1968 and 1972 – years when the United States was facing the greatest criticism about its involvement with the war in Vietnam. Calvin College was racked with unrest in these years too. After the death of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, it was Calvin College (in cooperation with local CRC ministers) that led an ecumenical memorial service

Church News

Accepted the call by the Grand Rapids American Reformed Church:

Rev. K. Kok

of Blue Bell, Pennsylvania, USA

in Grand Rapids. That same year an article appeared in *The Banner* (the denominational magazine of the CRC) arguing for the legitimacy of the war in Vietnam. The students and staff of Calvin College were the ones who protested the loudest against this article. In May of 1970, a Roman Catholic priest spoke at Calvin and enthusiastically encouraged civil disobedience, a speech for which he was warmly applauded. More examples could be brought forward.

The important thing to note for our purposes is that this unrest was not limited to social and political life. It soon spread to include worship practices in the CRC, at least in the Grand Rapids area. For instance, in March of 1971 there was a presentation at Calvin College of the Andrew Lloyd Webber production which made a mockery of our Lord Jesus Christ. Two weeks later, as part of a Lent program, the services on the Knollcrest campus employed parts of the same blasphemous production as preludes and postludes. This was not an isolated incident.

We have a conservative ethos that resists rapid change

In 1968-69, the sermon in its "traditional" form came under attack in the University Hills CRC in Michigan. Said the pastor, J. Harold Ellens, "University Hills Church recognizes that the sermonic form for proclamation is not the best necessarily and certainly not the only mode for the church's proclamation." He further stated in a letter to the Association of Christian Reformed Laymen, "Whatever medium succeeds is God's medium of announcing His grace. That is proclamation." In a similar way, Donald H. Postema, a CRC chaplain at the University of Michigan, asked, "Is the monological sermon the only way for powerful proclamation? Could not choral reading,

try, drama, dance, film, dialogue, whatever form of communication that is available, be used to proclaim the message of God?"

We find the same Donald H. Postema in 1972 playing the part of Judas Iscariot in an Easter worship service at the Lagrave Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids. Others portrayed our Lord Jesus and the other disciples. Leading this service was Calvin Seminary professor Harold Dekker.

Under the leadership of Bernard Pekelder (a CRC minister), the worship services at Knollcrest continued to be a source of deviation from traditional CRC worship practices. The services were occasionally punctuated with filthy language (in prayer). They included music by such notables as Peter, Paul and Mary, the Rolling Stones, Johnny Cash, and the Beatles.

Although the CRC had not officially moved in any of these directions (via synodical initiatives or decisions), some of the churches of the Grand Rapids area were actively experimenting with worship and liturgy. They seem to have done so under the shadow of more radical developments at Calvin College and Seminary. These developments were not always initiated by students. In fact, many of those organizing, leading, and participating in these novel worship activities were ministers and professors. Among them we find professors Nicholas Wolterstorff, Harold Dekker, Melvin Hugen, and John Worst. Ministers included the above-mentioned Bernard Pekelder and Donald Postema. One seldom reads about students themselves leading these activities or pushing for a move in this direction. The changes appear to have come from above rather than from below. This pattern will become more evident as we proceed to look at the official developments.

Next time: Synod 1964.

C





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Ecumena

Learning from the Brethren

Usually this column zooms out to take a look at the church catholic, hence the rubric, "Ecumena." Today, however, we will focus in to compare how at least some United Reformed classes examine their students with how Canadian Reformed classes usually conduct this important work.

In the Canadian Reformed churches, a man who has completed his theological studies will present himself to be examined by the classis in which he lives. Church Order Article 4.b.1. says, "Only those shall be declared eligible for call within the churches who have passed a preparatory examination by the classis in which they live. . . ." This preparatory examination consists of a sermon proposal and of being tested in the exegesis of both the Old Testament and of the New Testament, and in the knowledge of the doctrine of the church.

Although there is some variation from classis to classis, the common practice is for the man, the "proponent," to present orally his sermon proposal to the members of Classis. He will have distributed it to the churches several weeks beforehand, so the delegates will have had an opportunity to read through it and form an initial opinion prior to hearing it. After the proponent presents his proposal, Classis will go into a closed session, which means that the meeting is restricted to the members of that classis and other office bearers present. Usually two ministers, called something fancy like *deputies ad examina*, will have made a careful study of the sermon and propose either that it be judged sufficient or insufficient. They will make their proposal either before or after the other delegates have had an opportunity to comment on the suitability and quality of the sermon. What should be considered is whether the brother has an aptitude for preaching, whether the sermon proposal was scripturally and confessionally sound, and whether the brother is able to bring the message of the text to the congregation.

While the proponent cools his heels elsewhere in the building, the classis determines whether the sermon is sufficient. If it is, the proponent is given the happy news and is then examined in Old Testament and New Testament exegesis, and doctrine. Should he sustain all four components of the examination, Classis will declare him eligible for call in the churches.

However, should the sermon be deemed insufficient, the brother is told this and all of the examination proceedings come to a halt. Some encouraging and pastoral words are spoken to him in private, prayer is offered, and the man, in varying degrees of devastation, leaves the building and heads home to try again at the next classis.

From contact with our United Reformed brethren, we have learned that, if the sermon is deemed insufficient, a somewhat different course is followed by many of their classes, one that, I think, is better. If the proponent fails on the sermon, he is often yet examined on the other subjects. This makes much sense. He will come to Classis very sharp on the topics of exegesis and doctrine. He will be disappointed that his sermon was considered to be lacking, but will be encouraged by doing well in the other parts of the examination. In almost every case, while the proponent may show some weakness in the sermon because of his inexperience, he will shine in showing his academic skills. After all, he has just completed many years of intensive academic work. With those parts of the examination behind him, he can go home encouraged to consider the comments he received on the sermon proposal, and to write another sermon without having to restudy the assignments on exegesis and doctrine. Those will happily be behind him.

I think we can learn something here from our United Reformed brethren. Why send a man home with all that exegetical and doctrinal knowledge bubbling in his brain and ready to burst forth? Let him demonstrate what he knows!

There is a second thing we can learn from our United Reformed brethren. In these sister churches of ours, a man is examined by his "home" classis. For instance, if the man goes to seminary from Edmonton, then it would be the classis Edmonton belongs to that would examine him. In our situation, one classis examines about ninety-five percent of the men since it is the classis they are living in at the time of the completion of their studies where they are examined. Since most of the students live in or near Hamilton, the classis there examines almost all the men. It is

questionable whether that is the best way to do it. It seems to me that it would be healthier for all involved, even for the whole federation of churches, if the responsibility for the preparatory examinations were distributed evenly among all the classes. A change in procedure here would make necessary a change to our Article 4.b.1 of the Church Order which specifies that the students be examined by the classis in which they live.

We can learn something here from our sister churches and United Reformed brethren.



Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I am rather concerned by the way vacant churches are calling ministers. It appears to me that they are only calling popular ministers; for why is it that certain ministers receive several calls a year, and other ministers receive one or no calls at all? It also concerns me that these vacant churches are not calling available candidates. These candidates have not only sacrificed a great amount of time and finances, they did it willingly and cheerfully in hopes of serving God's people as ministers one day. Yet, in the end while approved by the Theological College and by Classis, they did not receive a call; how else are these candidates going to get experience? My greatest concern is what message are these vacant churches today sending to the young men who are thinking of entering the ministry; are they going to think twice?

D. McNaughton

Dear Editor,

It is with interest that we read the articles, letters, and responses regarding women voting. Allow us to partake in the discussion.

On page 234 of Volume 60 of *Clarion* we read this suggestion in regards to the election of office bearers: "...the vote (is) advisory, stating a preference, leaving the final decision to consistory with the deacons."

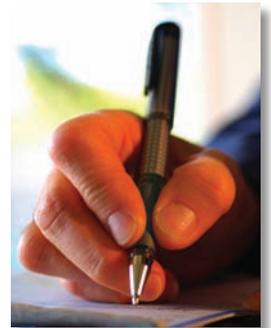
However, reading Acts 6 we observe that the Lord instructs the congregation, through the apostles, to choose amongst themselves qualified men who the apostles would appoint. The congregation put seven men forward whom the apostles appointed. The congregation decided who was to be appointed.

On page 248 the suggestion is made that the lot may have been used in Acts 6. However, the author does not define "the lot." A "pulling of a straw," "pulling a name out of a hat," etc. method is out of the question since the congregation is to choose.

Strong's Concordance gives this definition for lots: "kleros, *klay'-ros*; probably from Greek 2806 (*klao*) (through the idea of using *bits* of wood, etc., for the purpose); a *die* (for drawing chances); by implication a *portion* (as if so secured); by extension an *acquisition* (especially a *patrimony*, figurative); heritage, inheritance, lot, participate."

Acts 1:26 does give an indication how it was used there. "And they (plural) gave forth their (plural) lots (plural); and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles" (KJV).

We understand the word "lots" has the meaning of Strong's first definition, ". . . using *bits* of wood, etc.,



for the purpose," and the word lot in "the lot fell. . ." defined as "by extension an *acquisition*."

Two facts can be observed from this text. One: that the brothers gave forth their lots, and two: that Judas' lot in the ministry fell to Matthias.

Then there is the question: Were the women included in the choosing? We would reply that they were not, even though they may have been present, for two reasons.

The first is that in Acts 1:16 Peter addresses the "men and brethren." Men are emphasized. In the Hebrew language, one repeats a similar word or phrase to give emphasis. For example: John 3:11 (KJV): "Verily, verily, I say unto thee. . ." and Genesis 49:11 (KJV): "Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes."

The second reason being 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 (KJV): "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."

From the two reasons above we conclude that Peter addressed the men of the assembly, since they were the only ones that could respond.

In Issues 17 and 18 of Volume 60, a change in the Church Order (Art. 3) is suggested, especially

as it relates to ". . .the consistory shall appoint those elected." However, this point is based on the Word of God (Acts 1 and 6). A change would be in conflict with the Word of God.

From the above we conclude that election by the congregation is in harmony with the Word of God.

B. Van de Burgt, Agassiz, BC

Editorial Comment

Thank you for your letter to the Editor. A few comments:

- a) While it is true that the Greek text in Acts 1:16 may refer to men only, it is far from conclusive. Peter may have been addressing all the men present, only the remaining apostles present, or even the men and women present (cf. ESV Study Bible textual note on p. 2081);
- b) As for the "they" in verse 26, that too may be a reference to men only, apostles only, or to all present;
- c) As for the reference to 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, it has to do with authoritative teaching in the church and not with voting;
- d) Connecting an unclear text to a text that deals with another matter and then using both to form a definite conclusion is, at the very least, a questionable approach.

JV

*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.*



Peter Veenendaal
and Mark den Hollander



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Reaching All Learners

Getting together for a few days somewhere in Saskatchewan has become a tradition for teachers of Reformed schools in Alberta and Manitoba. The venue is not always the same and that makes it interesting, but also a little fearful for some. You see, we don't stay in four-star hotels when we have our annual Canadian Reformed Teachers Association West Conference. We usually stay in camps which are used all summer by children of various ages for Bible camp. With that information you will understand that very often the beds are shorter than some of the occupants. Usually, the conferences are intense enough that everyone sleeps well regardless of the bed length and everyone has a good time anyway.

We always appreciate good weather for driving and also for enjoying some downtime outdoors, and this year was marvelous on both of those counts. We remember snow storms which sometimes kept teachers away from home for an extended period of time. This year we had great weather for travelling as well as at the conference for walking, jogging, and canoeing. Arlington Beach Conference Center, on the shores of Last Mountain Lake, was a great place to enjoy nature, with a great variety of birds and a few snakes to keep the walks interesting. The staff at Arlington was very accommodating. We could not have asked for better and friendlier hosts.



Lorie Thiessen

Immanuel Christian School was hosting this year's event and organized keynotes and workshops around the topic of "Reaching All Learners," a topic that is certainly relevant for teachers of all grades and subjects. Four presenters came from Ontario and were generous in sharing their expertise with Western teachers. Ronn VanAndel and Tina Morris spoke on the topics of "Integration of Special Needs Students in High School Grades" and "Assessment of Students with Special Needs." Both work at Guido de Brès High School in Hamilton, and it was good to hear how one of our larger schools work in these areas. Both topics come to the fore in all of our schools, and sharing some of our experiences and struggles certainly helps us in our smaller schools.

George and Sharon Hofsink, also from Ontario, spent several hours providing us with insight on how to encourage our gifted students. Both have extensive experience in Ontario schools, George as a teacher and principal, and Sharon as a teacher and resource coordinator and consultant. Too often we have given a lot of our attention to students with special needs and have thought that the gifted ones could look after themselves. It is good that our Reformed schools are now at a point at which the gifted are recognized as students that need to be stimulated appropriately so they are not "bored to death" in our classrooms.

At the elementary level, Bernice Stieva and Valerie Slaa, both from Edmonton, led the workshops on "Inclusive Practices in the Elementary Grades." Both have worked as teachers in elementary grades and Bernice is now a teacher of teachers at King's College. They made it clear that it is not just enough to have students with special needs in our regular classes, but we need to also ensure that each one is being taught at his/her own personal level of learning.

Most of the other eight workshops dealt with topics closely related to the theme. Anyone who would like

to have more detailed information concerning the work done at this conference is welcome to contact Immanuel Christian School in Winnipeg, office@immanuelchristian.ca. One other popular activity was done on a potter's wheel. Fred Folkerts of Winnipeg showed his talents working with clay and was kept busy instructing others, who, after their first experience on the wheel, took home an attractive vase or bowl as a souvenir of a great conference.

In many of our teachers conferences, school publications, and staff professional development sessions, the term "covenant children" is one that gets "tossed" around quite a bit. We take it for granted that we are covenant schools. But exactly what that means can often fall by the wayside when we get into the nitty-gritty of curriculum work, assessments, and school activities. We know that our task is to equip our students for a life of service in God's kingdom, but we also know that these students are not a uniform group. They have each been given different talents, different challenges, and different ways of learning. We know them to be created uniquely and for a special purpose, but each student has to find a place in our schools and to have his/her needs met.

That's where inclusive education comes in. This term is chosen carefully. We often hear the word "inclusion" bandied about and that term certainly has its place. Inclusion believes that all students have a place in our classrooms, but that they also need to be educated. The goal of this conference was to work together to understand how all our covenant students can find a meaningful place in our classrooms, but also to have their learning needs met. That's inclusive education.

Consider the parable Jesus told concerning the talents. The focus of this parable is not the number of talents each received, but the focus is on the work that is being done with them. The analogy of the church as a body of believers (Rom 12 and 1 Cor 12) makes it very clear that within the communion of saints we have diverse gifts and tasks. This was done purposefully in order that the body of Christ would be built up (Eph 4).

Our classrooms are some of the places where students will learn how to live and act within the



Adventurous canoeists ready to leave

communion of saints. Despite diverse abilities, they each belong in our classrooms in order that through their interactions with their fellow believers, our students may learn how to build up the body of Christ, while using their talents to God's glory and the benefit of their neighbour.

Inclusive education therefore has two parts. The first focuses on meeting the diverse educational needs of our students within the classroom setting, the second covers the necessity and the benefits to the communion of saints in including all covenant children within a regular classroom.

We were thankful that, within our Reformed community we had access to the talented individuals who were willing to help equip us for this daunting task by presenting to us at our conference this year. We hope that our conference at Arlington Beach Camp will serve to better equip us for our work in Reformed education for the benefit of our communities and to God's glory.

Thursday evening entertainment at our teachers' conference is also a tradition we want to hold on to. This year our entertainment came to us in the person of Lorie Thiessen, a talented young lady who presented her monologue on the story told about Diet Eman's experiences during World War II in Holland. Anyone interested in this story just has to look for the booklet "Things We Couldn't Say." At the Arlington Beach Centre of the Arts there was not a dry eye at the end of Lorie's performance. Obviously, her message that "God's grace is sufficient" in Holland during the dark days of World War II had a very profound effect on everyone in the audience.

God has blessed us again with travelling mercies and with a helpful time together as brothers and sisters, encouraged in the daily task of teaching God's covenant children. All in all, the eighty-five educators who attended this conference had good times of learning, sharing, eating, and collegiality, and we look forward to next year's conference hosted by Coaldale Christian School staff.

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 Arthur Kingma abkingma@kwic.com



Teachers at workshop

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Written in Stone: The Ten Commandments and Today's Moral Crisis by Philip Graham Ryken (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2010).

Originally published in 2003 by Crossway Books

Whenever a book is written on a subject already written on before, one has to ask: is it worth it? Does this book bring something to the discussion that was missing, something valuable? Does it help in ways other books have not? If not, it would have been better not to have written it.

I had this question in mind when I was asked to review Philip Graham Ryken's *Written in Stone*, a commentary on the Ten Commandments for the average church member. It was developed out of Ryken's preaching to his Presbyterian congregation (PCA) and is intended to deepen the Christian's appreciation for the continuing relevance and application of God's law. This is precisely the goal each Reformed minister has in mind when preaching annually through the Ten Commandments courtesy of the Heidelberg Catechism, a practice we are blessed with. In Reformed circles, there are also already a number of helpful books on the Ten Commandments. So I wondered: would the membership of our churches be well-served by Ryken's book?

Ryken or Douma?

The question became more pressing when the footnotes referred frequently to a book quite familiar among us, Dr. Jochem Douma's *The Ten Commandments: Manual for the Christian Life* (1996). Out of the thirteen chapters, Douma's book is quoted (with approval) in all but five, indicating a significant reliance on Douma's insights. This, of course, is fine itself but my point is that it calls into question whether Ryken adds anything new or valuable to the discussion on the Ten Commandments.

My overall impression is that while there is little new (to those familiar with Catechism preaching and Douma's commentary) in the doctrine expressed, what is valuable is the popular style of this easy-to-read commentary. By comparison, Douma's work is a hard-cover book of over 400 pages with some chapters trending upward of thirty or even forty pages. Ryken's work is a paper-back of 240 pages with each chapter averaging about fifteen pages. Douma is more thorough and tends toward the technical, making for a more challenging, longer read (though also more satisfying for the serious inquirer). Ryken is more succinct, more

colloquial in his examples and language, and can be read in half the time. His addition of approximately ten study questions at the end of each chapter make his book ideal for a season of Bible study. In short, Ryken makes the teaching of God's law as confessed by Reformed and Presbyterian churches more accessible to the average person in the pew and that is the special value of his book.

Faithful and contemporary

As to his explanation of the commandments, much of it will sound familiar to our ears although Ryken has a knack for applying each commandment in a frank, contemporary manner. For example, under the seventh commandment, he discusses what, if any, "lines" should not be crossed by dating couples (p.154). His discussion of truth under the ninth commandment captures well the struggles we face in our post-modern age (p.192ff). In the opening chapters of the book, Ryken clearly lays out how God always intended his law to be received and then outlines basic principles in its interpretation. For example, there are two sides to every commandment so that even if God has stated it in the negative, its opposite is also commanded of us (e.g. "Do not steal" is also a command to work faithfully and give generously to those in need). Having these basic principles explained in writing will be helpful for all church members.

Ryken has also made a concerted effort to draw the lines of God's covenant law to the mediator of the covenant, Jesus Christ. The reader is shown how the Lord Jesus fulfilled each command with his perfect obedience. He is also reminded how Christ died for every one of our transgressions against these good laws and now aids us by his Spirit in obeying them. This helps to keep the proper, biblical perspective on law and gospel.

Redemptive-historical?

One of the other solid aspects of the book is that Ryken makes an effort to show each commandment's application from out of Scripture. Sometimes, however, the choice and explanation of a passage appears somewhat superficial. For example, to describe why the sin of Achan at Jericho led to the rout of Israel's army at Ai as, "the problem was that someone had violated the eighth commandment" (p.179) doesn't say enough. There was a particular circumstance, a transitional

redemptive-historical moment in which much was on the line for the LORD's glory and the nation's holiness and that needs to be taken into account to understand God's very strong response. Not every thief in the Bible was treated as Achan was because his was a unique violation of the eighth commandment.

Still, Ryken has produced a dependable book which simply (yet not simplistically) explains and applies God's law for God's people today. Voices – also

among Christians – can still be heard today that speak negatively about the law, that it is passé or against the leading of the Spirit. Ryken's book is a helpful antidote as it helps us see God's law as the blessing it is and learn to let the Spirit lead us in accordance with it. Perhaps with Douma's book on hand for reference, Ryken's book would make a useful guide for a season of Bible study or for personal meditation on God's law (Psalm 1). Recommended!



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

BIRTHS

With thankfulness to the Creator of Life
 we announce the birth of

MARISSA ANNE

Born January 5, 2012

Rob and Lori DeJong

Another grandchild for Fred and Ria DeJong and
 Wayne and Jane Oosterhoff

45 Heatherglen Crescent, Spruce Grove, AB T7X 3X4



*I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God
 while I have my being. Psalm 146:2*

We praise God for His precious gift to us, a son

JUDAH JOHN ALKEMA

Born December 28, 2011

to **Hendrik and Kristen Alkema (Kottelenberg)**

A brother for Avery and George

Judah is named with pride and love after our father
 John Kottelenberg

OBITUARIES

Forget not all his benefits. Psalm 103:1-5

On Saturday January 14, 2012 at the age of 78,
 after a short illness, the Lord took home to Himself

GRE (Grace) VAN SYDENBORGH – nee deBeer

Beloved wife of the late

John M. Van Sydenborgh (2003)

Dear Step-mother of

Wayne and Helen van Sydenborgh

Els and Pieter Nijenhuis

Albert and Nelly van Sydenborgh

Freddie and Gus Veenendaal

Theresa† and Gerald Veenendaal

Grace and Eric Stieva

Anne and Steve van der Molen

Rhea and Bill Muis

and their families

W. van Sydenborgh

5128 Mulberry Drive, Beamsville, ON LOR 1B8

Psalm 103

On Saturday, January 28th the Lord in his wisdom and
 faithfulness took to Himself our beloved aunt

“TANTE” STIEN HOFKINK – nee Brink

Hessenweg 30, 7771 R.E. Hardenberg, Nederland

She was 105 years old.

From all the Hofkinks in Houston and Smithers, BC

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